

Monthly



Current Affairs

Notes

JUNE

- ✓ Single Use Plastics
- ✓ Urban Agriculture
- ✓ Anti-Defection Law
- ✓ Open Network For Digital Commerce (ONDC)
- ✓ AI Ethics
- ✓ James Webb Telescope



GENERAL STUDIES 1	4	PM ANNOUNCES 10 LAKH JOBS IN NEXT 18 MONTHS	50
SANT KABIR	4	RBI TO LINK CREDIT CARDS TO UPI	51
BABA SAHEB AMBEDKAR	4	OPEN NETWORK FOR DIGITAL COMMERCE (ONDC)	51
ROLE OF CASTE IN ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION	6	BRINGING MSME INTO GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS	52
RECOGNISING WOMAN WORKER	7	NITI AAYOG REORT ON GIG ECONOMY	54
URBAN AGRICULTURE	8	REPO RATE HIKE: ITS IMPACT	55
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT	9	PAYMENTS VISION 2025	56
CONVERSION, UNLESS FORCED, IS NOT PROHIBITED: DELHI HC	10	STATES DEBT LEVELS	57
US SUPREME COURT ABORTION JUDGEMENT	11	PREPARING SOIL FOR THE FUTURE	58
TONGA ERUPTION	12	MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE (MSP)	60
MARINE HEATWAVES FUELLED CYCLONE AMPHAN	13	INDIA REACHES 100 UNICORNS	61
GENERAL STUDIES 2	14	5G SPECTRUM AUCTION	62
SEDITION	14	CANCER CURE	63
ANTI-DEFECTION LAW: MAHARASHTRA CRISIS	15	MINIPROTEINS TO FIGHT COVID-19	64
QUESTION OF RAJYA SABHA	17	TIANGONG SPACE STATION	65
WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT	18	BIOTECH SECTOR IN INDIA	66
COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS IMPLICATED IN FALSE CASES	19	EASING OF IP RESTRICTIONS ON VACCINES	66
PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION (PIL)	20	ECOSENSITIVE ZONE (ESZ)	67
NEEDED REFORMS IN HIGHER JUDICIARY	21	MICROPLASTICS IN ANTARTICA	68
ELECTORAL REFORMS	21	SINGLE USE PLASTICS	69
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY RULES	23	CRITICAL INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE	71
PRADHAN MANTRI GARIB KALYAN YOJANA (PMKGY)	23	SIPRI REPORT	71
AGNIPATH YOJANA	24	GENERAL STUDIES 4	72
BHARAT NEW CAR ASSESSMENT PROGRAM(NCAP)	25	AI ETHICS	72
NATIONAL MOBILE MONITORING SOFTWARE: NMMS APP	26	ISSUES WITH CIVIL SERVICES	73
CONSUMER EXPENDITURE SURVEY	27	IMPORTANT TOPICS FOR PRELIMS	74
CASTE BASED CENSUS	28	SPINY HORNTAIL	74
ACCESSIBLE INDIA CAMPAIGN	29	EX-KHAAN QUEST -2022	74
ISSUES FACED BY ELDERLY	30	EU GRANT UKRAINE CANDIDATE STATUS	74
NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT SURVEY (NAS)	31	INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY	75
INDIAN UNIVERSITIES COLLABORATION WITH FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES	32	NORTHERN IRELAND PROTOCOL	76
REPORT ON THE REFORMS IN CONTENT AND DESIGN OF SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS	32	38TH IND-INDO CORPAT	76
AYUSHMAN BHARAT DIGITAL MISSION	33	BRO CAFES	76
INDIA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS	34	NIA	77
ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC CO-OPERATION BIMSTEC	35	J&K TO HOST G20 NEXT YEAR	77
INDIA AND VIETNAM SIGN MUTUAL LOGISTICS AGREEMENT	38	PARAMESWARAN IYER WILL BE NEW NITI AAYOG CEO	77
INDIA-RUSSIA: 75 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP	39	HASINA OPENS PADMA MULTIPURPOSE BRIDGE	78
BRICS VIRTUAL SUMMIT	42	ISKANDER-M MISSILE SYSTEM	78
PARTNERSHIP FOR GLOBAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT (PGII)	43	FOOD SAFETY INDEX	78
CHINA'S GROWING FOOTPRINT IN PACIFIC ISLANDS	44	JAN SAMARTH PORTAL	79
IMPORTANCE OF THE GULF TO INDIA	45	NATGRID	79
WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO)	46	CERT-IN	80
GENERAL STUDIES 3	47	JAMES WEBB TELESCOPE HIT BY DEBRIS	80
CONTROLLING INFLATION	47	BRAHMOS MISSILE	81
IMPACT OF STAGFLATION ON MARKETS	48	WEB 5.0	81
BAD BANK	49	REUTERS INSTITUTE DIGITAL NEWS REPORT	82
PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEY (PLFS)	49	JYOTHIRGAMAYA	82
		TAMILNADU RECIEVES STOLEN ANTIQUITIES	83
		SANT TUKARAM TEMPLE	84
		BUDDHIST RELICS TAKEN TO MONGOLIA	85
		EARTHQUAKE IN AFGHANISTAN	86
		REGISTERED UNRECOGNISED POLITICAL PARTIES	86
		REMISSION FOR PRISONERS ON OCASSION OF 75 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE	87
		DISTRICT WISE MINORITIES	87
		NATIONAL E-VIDHAN APPLICATION (NEVA)	87

FED RATE HIKE	88
SOVEREIGN GOLD BOND SCHEME	88
BLACK SWAN EVENT	88
SURETY BOND	89
DUTCH DISEASE	89
ONE NATION ONE RATION CARD	89
PRADHAN MANTRI KISAN SAMPADA YOJANA (PMKSY)	90
NIRYAT PORTAL	90
SIKAR IN RAJASTHAN TOPS SCHOOL LEVEL PERFORMANCE	
GRADING INDEX FOR DISTRICT	91
FAT FINGER TRADE	92
INCREASING BOND YIELDS	92
FITCH UPGRADES INDIA RATINGS	93
NATIONAL FINANCIAL REPORTING AUTHORITY (NFRA)	93
APEDA ORGANISES MANGO FESTIVAL IN BAHRAIN	94
DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT DAY	94
FOUR NEW CORALS RECORDED FROM INDIAN WATERS	95
KERALA TO HAVE ITS OWN REGIONAL RED LIST OF BIRDS	95
UDAIPUR'S 'BIRD VILLAGE' TO BE DECLARED WETLAND	96
THE LAST LAUGH: WHERE ARE INDIA'S STRIPED HYENAS?	96
FALL OF A BIRD: GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD	97
NEW SPECIES OF GECKO FOUND	97
EMPEROR PENGUINS	98
FISHING CAT CENSUS	98
ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDEX – 2022	99
CHELONOIDIS PHANTASTICUS: A NEW TORTOISE SPECIES	100
WILD POLIO VIRUS	100
BLACK DEATH	101
NEPTUNE AND URANUS IN DIFFERENT COLOUR	101
CORBEVAX GETS NOD FOR BOOSTER DOSE	102
ANOCOVAX	102
ZERO COVID STRATEGY	102
PLACES IN NEWS	103
SENEGAL	
QATAR & BAHRAIN	
CHATREAUROUX, FRANCE	
GENEVA	
ASEAN COUNTRIES	
LLANOS BASIN, COLOMBIA	
MUNICH, GERMANY	
UAE	
PRACTICE QUESTIONS	104

GENERAL STUDIES 1

Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

SANT KABIR

Priority: High



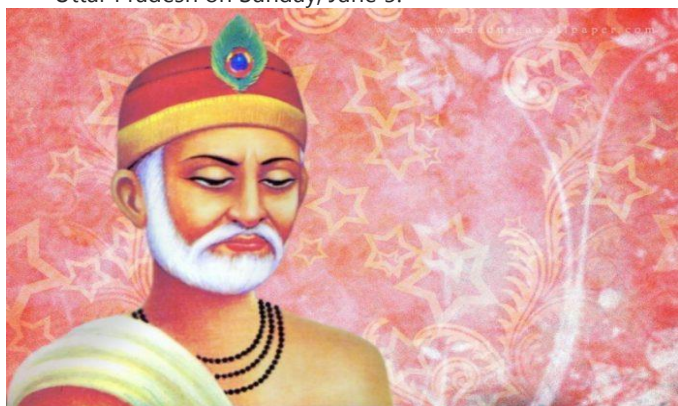
Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Kabir teachings; Kabir ka Dohe; Kabir Panth

Prepp Mains Booster: Critique on religion and caste.

Context:

- President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the Sant Kabir Academy and Research Centre, **Swadesh Darshan Yojana** and paid tribute to the Bhakti saint, Kabir at Maghar in Uttar Pradesh on Sunday, June 5.



About Kabir

- He was born in Varanasi and lived between the years 1398 and 1448, or till the year 1518 according to popular belief.
- He was from a community of 'lower caste' weavers of the Julaha caste, a group that had recently converted to Islam.
- According to one account, Kabir was born to a Brahmin widow, who placed him in a basket and set him afloat on a pond, after which he was rescued and adopted by a Muslim couple.
- He learned the **art of weaving**, likely studied meditative and devotional practices under the guidance of a Hindu guru and grew to become an eminent teacher and poet-singer.
- He composed his verses orally and is generally assumed to be illiterate. He was best known for his two-line couplets, known as '**Kabir Ke Dohe**'.
- Several of Kabir's verses and songs form a vital part of the **Guru Granth Sahib**.
- He is also believed to be (but not on strong historical grounds) a **disciple of the famous guru Ramananda, a 14th century Vaishnava poet-saint**.

Kabir's critique of religion and caste

- Kabir is in modern times portrayed as a figure that **synthesized Islam and Hinduism**.
- He did not only target the rituals and practices of both Hinduism and Islam, but also **dismissed the sacred authority** of their religious books, the Vedas and the Quran.

- Kabir argued that God existed inside everyone and not in temples or mosques.
- Kabir's **revolt against the caste system** also sought to do away with the complex rituals and ceremonies performed by the Brahmins.
- He argued that it was **only through bhakti, intense love or devotion to God could one attain salvation**. He proclaimed that people of all castes have the right to salvation through the bhakti tradition.
- Among the 5,00,000 indentured labourers that were taken to **Trinidad, Mauritius, Fiji and Guyana by the British** in the 19th to 20th centuries, many were and continue to be members of the Kabir Panth.

Kabir Panth

- Kabir's message of **egalitarianism** fostered a community of his followers called the Kabir Panth. A sect in northern and central India, **many of their members are from the Dalit community**.
- Historians estimate that it was established in India between 1600 and 1650, one or two centuries after his death.
- Today, the sect exists as a large and distinct community, with various sects under different spiritual leaders. However, all regard Kabir as their guru and treat the **Bijak** as their **holy scripture**.
- The **Bijak** contains works attributed to Kabir and is argued by historians to have been written in the 17th century.

The Freedom Struggle – its various stages and important contributors/contributions from different parts of the country.

BABA SAHEB AMBEDKAR

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: Facts about Dr B R Ambedkar

Prepp Mains Booster: Contributions of Dr B R Ambedkar



Key Facts:

Birth: Babasaheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar was born in 1891 in **Mhow, Central Province (now Madhya Pradesh)**.

Brief Profile:

- He is known as the **Father of the Indian Constitution** and was India's first Law Minister.
- He was the **Chairman of the Drafting Committee** for the new Constitution.
- He was a well-known statesman who fought for the rights of the Dalits and other socially backward classes.

- He was awarded India's highest civilian honour the Bharat Ratna in 1990.

Contributions:

- He **led the Mahad Satyagraha** in March 1927 against Hindus who were opposing the decision of the Municipal Board.
- In 1926, the Municipal Board of Mahad (Maharashtra) **passed an order to throw open the tank to all communities**. Earlier, the untouchables were not allowed to use water from the Mahad tank.
- He participated in **all three Round Table Conferences**.
- In 1932, Dr Ambedkar **signed the Poona pact** with Mahatma Gandhi, which abandoned the idea of **separate electorates for the depressed classes (Communal Award)**.
- His ideas before the **Hilton Young Commission served as the foundation of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**.

Election and Designation:

- In 1936, he **was elected to the Bombay Legislative Assembly as a legislator (MLA)**.
- He was **appointed to the Executive Council of Viceroy** as a Labour member in 1942.
- In 1947, Dr Ambedkar accepted PM Nehru's invitation to **become Minister of Law in the first Cabinet of independent India**.

Shift to Buddhism:

- He resigned from the cabinet in 1951, over **differences on the Hindu Code Bill**.
- He converted to Buddhism. He died on 6th December 1956 (**Mahaparinirvan Diwas**).
- **Chaitya Bhoomi** is a memorial to B R Ambedkar, located in Mumbai.

Important Works:

- **Journals:** Mooknayak (1920), Bahishkrit Bharat (1927), Samatha (1929), Janata (1930)
- **Books:** Annihilation of Caste, Buddha or Karl Marx, The Untouchable: Who are They and Why They Have Become Untouchables, Buddha and His Dhamma, The Rise and Fall of Hindu Women
- **Organisations:** Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha (1923) Independent Labor Party (1936) Scheduled Castes Federation (1942)

Relevance of Ambedkar in Present Times

- Caste system against which Ambedkar fought throughout his life is still a contested terrain.
- Dalits continue to bear the brunt of violence and discrimination.
- Today politics is all about **caste, race, religion, polarisation and mudslinging**. Ideology has taken a back seat in political discourses.
- Caste survives despite globalisation, scientific development and mass political mobilisation of the Dalits.
- Constitutionally guaranteed reservation for education and employment has no doubt made a mark. But the **social and economic justice that is due to the Dalits and tribals is still elusive**.

- The narrative of the development of SCs and STs is blemished by recurring instances of corruption, exploitation, exclusion, denial of justice, displacement and deprivation.

Dr B R Ambedkar contribution towards Constitutional Reforms:

- As **chairman of the Constitution's drafting committee**, he took meticulous measures to build a just society through liberty, equality and fraternity.
- His advocacy for **universal adult franchise** ensured that women had the right to vote immediately after Independence.
- His advocacy of **the Hindu Code Bill** was a revolutionary measure towards ameliorating women's plight by conferring on them the right to adopt and inherit.
- He contributed to developing **federal finance**.

Ambedkar as a pioneer in establishing many national institutions:

- **The Reserve Bank of India** was conceptualised from the Hilton Young Commission's recommendation, which considered Ambedkar's guidelines laid out in **The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution**.
- As a **labour member in Viceroy's Executive Council from 1942 to 1946**, he evolved numerous policies in the water, power and labour welfare sectors.
- His farsightedness helped in establishing **the Central Water Commission in the form of the Central Waterways, Irrigation and Navigation Commission (CWINC), Central Technical Power Board**.
- He helped in establishing **the integrated water resources management** through the establishment of the river valley authority, which actively considered projects like the Damodar River Valley Project, the Sone River Valley Project the Mahanadi (Hirakud Project), the Kosi and others on the Chambal and the rivers of the Deccan region.
- **The Inter-State Water Dispute Act, 1956, and the River Board Act, 1956** emanate from his vision.

Contribution for the welfare of labourers and Industrial Workers:

- As a member of the Bombay Assembly, Ambedkar opposed the introduction of **the Industrial Disputes Bill, 1937**, as it removed workers' right to strike.
- He contributed to the reduction of working hours to 48 hours per week, lifting the ban on the employment of women for underground work in coal mines, introducing the provisions of overtime, paid leave and minimum wage.
- He also helped to establish **the principle of "equal pay for equal work" irrespective of sex and maternity benefits. L**
- Ambedkar outrightly **opposed the communist labour movements**, their extraterritorial loyalties and their Marxian approach of controlling all means of production.

Ambedkar: Voice of the depressed classes

- Ambedkar was the voice of the Depressed Classes on every platform. As their representative at **the Round Table Conference**, he championed the cause of labour and improving the condition of peasants.

- During the **Bombay Assembly's Poona session in 1937**, he introduced a **Bill to abolish the Khoti system of land tenure in Konkan**.
- In Bombay, the **historic peasant march to the Council Hall in 1938** made him a popular leader of the peasants, workers, and the landless. He was the first legislator in the country to introduce a Bill for abolishing the serfdom of agricultural tenants.
- His essay titled '**Small Holdings in India and their Remedies**' (1918) proposed industrialisation as the answer to India's agricultural problem and is still relevant to contemporary debates.

Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.

ROLE OF CASTE IN ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

Priority: **Medium**

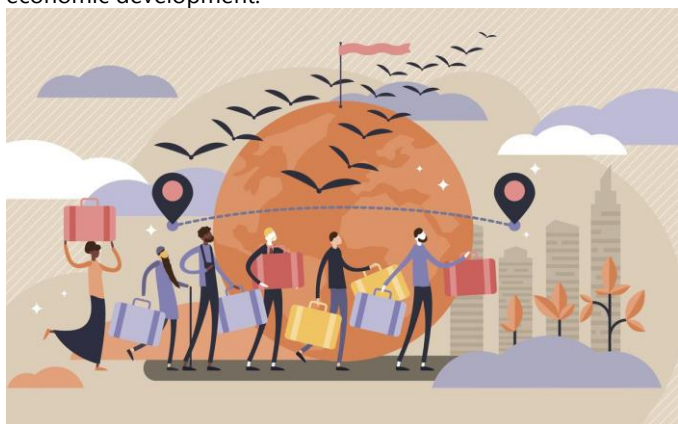


Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Mains Booster: Impact of Caste in Economic Transformation

Context:

Recent protests in India have been **against farm regulations, for caste-based reservations, and currently, there is a demonstration against the Agnipath scheme**. This has led scholars to analyze the relation between caste in India and its economic development.



What are the reasons for such protest?

- All of them, perhaps, are the results of simmering **unhappiness brought on by economic expansion without jobs** for at least two decades, as well as increased rural poverty and unhappiness.

How does it impede the economic transformation in India?

- **Theodore William Schultz** also emphasised the importance of human capital, specifically educated workers and entrepreneurs, for a smooth transition to modern industries.
- In the Global South, particularly in India, China, and South East Asia, structural transformation has varying results.
- It was because every country that achieved inclusive growth in the Global South was successful in implementing land reforms, building human capital, **investing in infrastructure, and starting industrialization in rural areas**.

How does caste impact economic transformation in India?

Caste in India affects India's economic transformation mainly in three ways. These include castes' relation with Land, Higher Education and Entrepreneurship.

Impact of caste on Land:

- The **pattern of land and capital ownership is influenced by the caste system**. Inequality in land ownership is the result.
- India currently has some of the greatest land disparities in the world. It began during British administration. To the detriment of other/labourers belonging to lower castes who cultivate granted/gifted lands, they gave property ownership to proper farmers who belong to particular castes.
- Because **Dalits and members of lower castes were not included in the post-independence land reforms**, it is still evident in the pattern of land ownership in India today.
- The **farm lobby has diminished in influence after the Economic Reforms of 1991**. The ability of the land to produce has been lost.
- With the exception of a few castes in western and Southern India, farm cultivators could not become capitalist entrepreneurs in the modern sectors.

Impact of castes on Higher Education:

- **Higher education has a bias in favour of the elite**. Additionally, it is discovered that **mass education has historically been neglected**.
- Since the advent of colonialism, the elite has dominated the Indian educational system who belonged to upper castes.
- The **development of human capital**, which was necessary for the expansion of industry, did not go well for India.
- **Chinese and other East Asian nations**, in contrast, made investments in primary education before gradually moving toward higher education.
- As a result, they built up human capital, which helped them succeed in the manufacturing industry. These nations **seized low-end manufacturing jobs, in contrast to India, which focused on high-end technological jobs**.

Impact of caste on Entrepreneurship:

- An obstacle to entrepreneurship was created by the caste system. It was accomplished through its strict social controls and networks, which in the modern economy have created barriers for some people and enabled economic mobility for others.
- **The lack of traditional merchant castes**, or the "**Vaishya vacuum**," is thought to be the cause of South India's relative success.
- In contrast, agricultural capitalists in South East Asian nations invested in urban businesses.

How to make transition in this situation?

- **Truncated transformation is a result of the interaction between caste and economy**, in part. Because caste is an active agent that inhibits economic development rather than a residual feature.
- The **accumulation of physical capital is essential** for economic transformation in developing countries, and the necessity of human capital is emphasised for a smoother transition to modern sectors, according to Arthur Lewis, a Nobel Prize winner for development economics, and William Schultz, an American economist who shared the award with him the same year.

- Therefore, a **focus should be placed on educating the workforce to raise productivity** as well as encouraging and incubating entrepreneurship, which is enhanced by education, training, experience, and other factors.
- **Policies designed to promote growth in the interim, which might span several decades**, would be more successful if they took into consideration the underlying caste networks that continue to influence educational, occupational, and locational choices in India.

Role of women and women's Organisation

RECOGNISING WOMAN WORKER

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: Facts about Women LFPR

Prepp Mains Booster: Reasons for poor Women LFPR; government initiatives to improve Women LFPR

Context:

- In March 2022, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) reported that **rural women's labour participation rate was 9.92 percent, compared to 67.24 percent for men.**



Findings and associated concerns

- According to CMIE, millions of people who left the labour market stopped looking for work because they **were dissatisfied with their inability to find work and believed there were no jobs available.**
- Workers who are willing to work but have given up looking for a job for various reasons are referred to as **'discouraged workers'** in nations such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, **and they are classified as unemployed.**
- This phenomenon, which is not documented in any official labour force surveys in India, is incorrectly **portrayed as women "falling out" or "leaving the labour market,"** giving the appearance that it was their decision, when in reality, women are driven out of employment.
- The situation on the ground is even worse than the CMIE says and the government denies. Women who **come from landless families or have small landholdings cannot afford to be "discouraged."** These are the **"obligatory" employees.**

Reasons for the fall in women's Labour Force Participation in India

Occupational segregation

- Between 1977 and 2017, the **contribution of services (39 percent to 53 percent) and industries (33 percent to 27 percent) to GDP** in India increased dramatically.
- **Rural men's employment in agriculture dropped from 80.6 percent to 53.2 percent**, although rural women's employment only dropped from 88.1 percent to 71.7 percent (NSSO data).

Increased mechanization

- Men supplanted women in agriculture as the usage of seed drillers, harvesters, threshers, and husking equipment grew. Power looms, button stitching machines, and textile machinery phased away women's labour in the textile industry.
- According to a McKinsey Global Institute estimate, **about 12 million Indian women may lose their jobs due to automation by 2030.**

The impact of income

- The necessity for a "second income" has decreased as household earnings have risen, particularly in the previous three decades. As a result, as a symbol of success, families removed women from the workforce.

Gender disparities in higher education and skill development

- Female enrolment in tertiary education increased **from 2% in 1971 to barely 30% in 2019.** (World Bank data).
- **Only 2% of working-age women had formal vocational training in 2018-19**, with 47 percent opting out of the labour force (NSSO, 2018-19).
- As a result, women make up only 17% of cloud computing employment, 20% of engineering roles, and 24% of data/artificial intelligence jobs (WEF, 2020).

Social norms

- Women continue to bear the **brunt of unpaid care work**, with women **spending an average of five hours per day on domestic chores** compared to 30 minutes for males (NSSO, 2019).
- Women's movement is severely limited, with **only 54% being able to go to a neighbouring market** on their own (NFHS, 2015-16).
- Wages, job advancement, and educational possibilities are frequently sacrificed by women in order to meet family duties, safety concerns, and other constraints.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has come as a shock in this scenario, resulting in enormous employment losses for women, particularly informal workers, and a slower recovery for women-led microbusinesses.

Steps taken by Government to improve women labour force participation

- **Adolescent Girls' Program** is to empower and improve the social standing of girls aged 11 to 18 years old through nutrition, life skills, home skills, and vocational training.
- **Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme** encourages community participation by involving Student Volunteers in rural women's empowerment.
- Working mothers who are employed can use the **National Crèche Scheme** to offer daycare for their children from 6 months to 6 years.
- **Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)** would give impoverished women with low-interest microcredit for a variety of livelihood and income-generating enterprises.

- **Workplace Sexual Harassment of Women Act of 2013** - Cover all women, regardless of age, in the public and private sectors, organised or unorganised.
- The government **increased paid maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks**, mandated crèche facilities in businesses with 50 or more employees, and allowed women to work night shifts with proper safety measures, among other things.
- The **Equal Remuneration Act of 1976**, currently incorporated into the **Code on Wages of 2019**, states that there must be no discrimination in an establishment based on gender in matters relating to wages paid by the same employer for the same or similar work performed by any employee.
- The government is **giving training to female workers through a network of Women Industrial Training Institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes**, and Regional Vocational Training Institutes in order to improve their employability.
- **SABLA** is a programme that provides out-of-school females with life skills and supplemental nutrition.

'Mission Shakti' includes the components such as;

- Women's Empowerment Hubs at the national, state, and district levels.
- Women's Hiplines, One-Stop-Shops
- Sakhi Niwas (Working Women's Hostels), Beti Bachao Beti Padhao.
- Palna (crèches for working women's children), etc.
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development implements the One Stop Centres and Universalization of Women Helpline initiatives to assist women who are experiencing violence or distress of any kind that may impact their ability to work.

Importance of Women in the workforce for India

- **IMF:** According to the International Monetary Fund, India's GDP might grow by 27% if the proportion of women working equals that of males.
- **India:** If roughly 50% of women could join the workforce, India's growth rate might be increased to 9% each year.

Suggestions to increase women workforce

- On both the demand and supply sides, using **tax policy to incentivize women into the job market**.
- **Child care facilities, migration facilities, forums for informal and formal mentorship** and linkages are examples of entry and continuation support services.
- **Regularize the employment of Asha workers**, Anganwadi teachers and aides, and cooks for midday meals by paying them regular wages.
- **Sensitization to issues such as domestic sexual division of labour by large-scale media** advertisements.
- **Minimum wage laws** and **Equal Pay Laws** to be implemented.
- All women workers should have identification cards and be protected under the **Unorganized Sector Social Security Act**, which was enacted in 2008.

Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

URBAN AGRICULTURE

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp prelims Booster: Meaning of Urban Agriculture

Prepp Mains Booster: Need, benefits, challenges of Urban Agriculture

Context:

- The Union finance minister has stated that India's cities should be "centres of sustainable living with an opportunity for all."



What is Urban Agriculture?

- Growing plants and rearing animals primarily for food and other domestic purposes within a city or town and its environs is referred to as **urban agriculture**.
- It also includes activities such as farming product production, processing, marketing, and delivery. A variety of production systems make up urban agriculture.
- They range from domestic production and processing at the home level to large-scale agriculture. This is frequently done near the city's outskirts.
- Urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA) is recognised by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) as an important contributor to food security, livelihood generation, particularly for women, poverty alleviation, and urban resilience and sustainability.

What is the need for Urban Agriculture?

- At least 55% of the world's population lives in cities, which eat 80% of the food produced globally.
- It is critical that **metropolitan areas become sustainable and liveable** in order to support such a large population while also dealing with climate change.
- **Food Security and financial stability** are provided by urban agriculture for city people.

What are the benefits of Urban Agriculture?

- **Economic Growth:** Urban farming helps to stimulate the local economy by creating jobs, generating income, and growing small businesses.
- **Development of Green Spaces:** Unused fields and wastelands can be cultivated as part of urban redevelopment. It increases the amount of green space available and minimises pollution.
- **Health & Wellness:** Urban agriculture brings fresh vegetables closer to the point of consumption. Urban farm fruit is considerably more likely to be perfectly ripe, nutritious, and produced in season.

- **Reduce Food Waste:** Food waste is reduced since people only create what they require. This significantly lowers food waste.
- **Environmental Management:** Urban agriculture plays an important part in urban environmental management since it can reduce urban heat islands and act as an urban lung, as well as offer aesthetic value.
- **Waste Management:** Because cities are having trouble managing and disposing of waste, urban agriculture may be able to help.
 - The use of properly treated sewage water for urban agriculture can help with wastewater disposal while also reducing the need for fresh water.
 - Furthermore, organic waste from the city can be composted and employed in the creation of food and flowers.

What are the challenges to the implementation of Urban Agriculture?

- The **current trajectory of urbanisation/industrialisation** in peri-urban villages or peri-urban areas is quite worrying. In the near future, this pattern will cause these locations to become **polluted and unhealthy**.
- In **endogenous or "subaltern" urbanisation**, the problems are numerous. The current process of "urbanisation" and urban growth in India is heavily **reliant on expanding cities and "census towns."**
- In Indian cities, **urban land-use planning (ULP) does not prioritise agriculture**. Agriculture is viewed as a mostly rural activity and source of income.

Case Study

There are only a few areas that represent cities' intended development into rural areas.

- (1) The planning area for **Ghaziabad city** - the entire agricultural green space substantially exceeds the area allotted in the master plan. UPA was identified as the most important type of GI for urban development or formal green spaces (parks, city forests, green buffers, and so on) in the plan.
- (2) Total agricultural land use in the **Loni** planned area exceeded the area designated in the master plan.
- (3) A "model" peri-urban settlement in the **Modinagar** planned region was discovered to have 50% of its land covered by UPA, with little change over time.

Way Forward

- In the future, urban farming could be a viable option for **guaranteeing food security in India** and around the world.
- **Proper urban land-use planning (ULP)**, institutional backing, public understanding of the benefits of urban agriculture, and government financial and technological support will all entice city people to embrace the concept of urban agriculture in India.
- Urban agriculture's continued growth can serve as an **urban regeneration tool for cities around the world**, bringing **social interaction, job possibilities, and environmental benefits** to urban regions.

Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelim Booster: Religious Freedom Report; US Commission on International Religious Freedom

Prepp Mains Booster: Constitutional Provision for Religious Freedom in India

Context:

- The **United States US Commission on International Religious Freedom** placed India under "**Countries of Particular Concern**" in the 2022 Religious Freedom Report.



About Religious Freedom Report

- In its **annual report to Congress on worldwide religious freedom**, the US State Department claims that attacks on members of **minority communities occurred throughout India in 2021**.
- The Indian government **stated its opposition to the US State Department's annual report on international religious freedom**, claiming that the assessments are based on prejudiced viewpoints.
- India responded to criticism in a US State Department report on religious freedom saying it's sad that "**vote bank politics**" is being used in international relations.
- India has **often raised problems of concern in its interactions** with the United States, **such as racially and ethnically motivated attacks, hate crimes, and gun violence**.

Constitutional Provisions relating to Right of Religion in India

- **Article 25:** Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion.
- **Article 26:** Freedom to manage religious affairs.
- **Article 27:** Freedom as to payment of taxes for the promotion of any particular religion.

- **Article 28:** Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions.

What does the report say?

- Last year, 'terrorists' allegedly targeted Hindu and Sikh minority in Jammu and Kashmir, according to the study.
- NGOs in India continue to **criticise the 2020 amendments to the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA)**, which reduce the amount of foreign funding that **NGOs, including faith-based organisations**.
- The government failed to prevent or stop attacks on religious minorities such as cow vigilantism, according to several NGOs.

CONVERSION, UNLESS FORCED, IS NOT PROHIBITED: DELHI HC

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Meaning of Religious Conversion; grounds on which it is allowed

Prepp Mains Booster: Laws for religious conversion; issues associated with religious conversion.

Suggested Reading: <https://bit.ly/3HaHT4J>

Context:

Recently, a bench of the Delhi High Court in a response to a petition regarding religious conversion in India held that a **religious conversion, unless forced, is not prohibited as every person has the right guaranteed under the Constitution to choose or profess any religion.**

State	Year	Ban on Conversion on Grounds of Force/Fraud/Greed	Ban on Conversion on Grounds of Marriage
Odisha	1967	Yes	No
Madhya Pradesh	1968	Yes	No
Arunachal Pradesh	1978	Yes	No
Chhattisgarh	2006	Yes	No
Gujarat	2003	Yes	No
Himachal Pradesh	2019	Yes	Yes
Jharkhand	2017	Yes	No
Uttarakhand	2018	Yes	Yes
Uttar Pradesh	2020	Yes	Yes

What was the petition about?

- The petition asked for direction on how to draft laws prohibiting religious conversions using coercion or threats, deception through gifts and monetary incentives, or through the use of black magic and superstition.
- The petition also argued that religious mass conversion violates not just the Constitution's Articles 14, 15, 21, and 25, but also the ideals of secularism.

What is Religious Conversion?

The practice where an individual changes his religion from one to another religion under his belief, conscience and wisdom.

What is the constitutional status of Religious Conversion in India?

- The Constitution of India, under **Article 25** guarantees the right to freedom of religion as Fundamental Right on every citizen.
- Article 25 guarantees the freedom of conscience, the freedom to profess, practice, and propagate religion to all citizens.
- However, **Article 25 does not give fundamental right status to the Right to conversion from one religion to another.**
- Supreme Court of India in **Rev Stanislaw vs Madhya Pradesh, 1977** while considering the issue whether the fundamental right to practise and propagate religion includes the right to convert, held that the right to propagate does not include the right to convert.

What are the laws regarding religious conversion in India?

- The Constitution of India under article 25 also allows the States to enact laws to prohibit the religious conversion by way of force, fraud and allurement. And also provides for registration of conversion.
- There has not been any government legislation that prohibits or regulates religious conversions.
- However, since 1954, Private Member Bills to govern religious conversions have been submitted in (but never adopted by) Parliament on several occasions.
- In addition, the Union Law Ministry stated in 2015 that Parliament lacks the legislative authority to implement anti-conversion legislation.
- Several states have passed 'Freedom of Religion' legislation over the years to prohibit religious conversions by force, fraud, or allurement.
- In this background, Karnataka became the 11th state to enact anti-conversion law in May 2022.

What is the rationale behind the enactment of anti-conversion laws?

- First, there are the **dangers of coercion**: Force does not just refer to physical force used to persuade someone to convert from one faith to another, but it also refers to mental force such as the **"threat of heavenly anger."** For example, if a missionary tells someone that only Christians are allowed to enter heaven — a key tenet of the faith — this could be interpreted as "forcing."
- The Orissa High Court affirmed this understanding of "force" in **Yulitha Hyde v. the State of Orissa (Physical and mental)**.
- Second, there's the **issue of allurement or inducement**: Odisha's anti-conversion statute defines allurement or inducement as **"any gift or reward, whether in cash or in kind,"** as well as "any provision of any benefit, whether pecuniary or otherwise." The court upheld this term in **Rev. Stanislaus versus. State of Madhya Pradesh (1977)**.
- Third, religious conversion is **not a basic right**: The Supreme Court ruled in **Rev. Stanislaus vs State of Madhya Pradesh (1977)** that religious conversion is **not a fundamental right that can be governed by the government**. The laws of both Odisha and Madhya Pradesh were upheld. This statute serves as the legal foundation for similar measures enacted by other states.

- Fourth, all anti-conversion laws implemented by various States have the **same goal: to limit communities' and individuals' capacity to convert** from one religion to another in the name of protecting vulnerable groups such as women, children, backward castes and untouchables.

What are the issues with anti-conversion laws?

- Several legal specialists have slammed such legislation, claiming that the concept of "love jihad" **lacks any constitutional or legal foundation**.
- They cited **Article 21** of the constitution, which states that everyone has the freedom to marry the person of their choice.
- Furthermore, under **Article 25, freedom of conscience guarantees the practice** and conversion of one's choice of faith, including not following any religion.

US SUPREME COURT ABORTION JUDGEMENT

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: Roe vs Wade Case; What is PMSMA; LaQshya

Prepp Mains Booster: Impact of the judgement on women; status of abortion in India

Context:



Recently the U.S. Supreme Court ended the constitutional right to abortion, overturning its landmark judgment on *Roe v. Wade* 1973 that had enshrined a woman's right to her body.

What is the recent US Supreme Court Judgment?

- The U.S. Supreme Court overruled *Roe v. Wade*, 1973 landmark decision granting women in America the ability to have an abortion before the 24-28 week mark, in a substantial restriction of women's rights.
- Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, a 1992 decision that supported *Roe*, was also reversed.
- Women's abortion rights, which have been legal for more than two generations, will now be governed by each State.
- About 20 States have laws regulating or outlawing abortions (which *Roe* has upheld till today).
- Now that *Roe* has been overruled, legislation prohibiting the operation are now in effect in thirteen states.**

What is the *Roe Vs Wade* case in the US?

- The *Roe v. Wade* case**—often referred to simply as "Roe"—ruled that abortion would be permitted up to the point of foetal viability, or the point at which a foetus may

survive outside the womb, overturning regulations that had made the procedure illegal in several states.

- Foetal viability was approximately 28 weeks (7 months) at the time of the "Roe" decision, which was rendered nearly 50 years ago. Experts now concur that medical advancements have lowered the threshold to 23 or 24 weeks (6 months or slightly less), and more recent studies suggest that this may even be as low as 22 weeks. About 40 weeks are usually required for a pregnancy.
- Many people believe that the woman's rights can be separated from the foetus at the point of viability.

How will this impact women?

Increase in "Unwanted Pregnancies":

- Unwanted pregnancies can limit a parent's ability to make decisions about their life, especially a mother, and can also be detrimental to their mental health and progress as a person.
 - Children that are unwanted at birth may also have less possibilities. The WHO links higher parental investments in their children's education to a higher possibility of children being born "desired," as one example.

State-determined fate:

- Abortion law is currently a matter for each state. The majority of US states are likely to restrict or outright prohibit access to abortion.

Psychological Effect:

- Women who were refused the option of having an abortion were more likely to continue communicating with a violent spouse and ultimately raise the child by themselves.
 - Higher levels of anxiety and despair have also been linked to being denied an abortion.
- Economic Impact:** Compared to women who had abortions, women who were refused them were more likely to be unemployed.
- Alternatives that are more dangerous:** The World Health Organization (WHO) admits that legal limits on abortion do not stop the practise. Instead, they pressure women to use riskier abortion procedures.

What is the status of Abortion in India?

- Abortion in India is not permitted to general public and is considered as a legal crime.** However it is allowed in certain conditions with adequate measures.
- The adoption of the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act in 1971**, abortion has been a legitimate option in India under certain conditions for the past 50 years.
- In order to make safe and legal abortion services more accessible to women, the Act was revised in 2003.
- In India, the decision to end your pregnancy, abortion, is entirely coincidental and cannot be a choice of women. There are four circumstances in which an abortion is permitted by law:
 - If continuing the pregnancy puts the mother's life or mental health at risk
 - If the foetus has any serious anomalies
 - if pregnancy resulted from a failed attempt at contraception (but this is only applicable to married women)
 - If a sexual assault or rape led to the pregnancy

Way Ahead:

- **A look for the midway ground:** Perhaps a woman's right to decide what to do with her unborn child must be weighed with the unborn child's right to life.
- The only difference is that the person carrying the embryo has the power to exercise an option, whilst the foetus does not.
- Legislators should put more emphasis on counselling, job security, social welfare, and financial support to encourage pregnant mothers to deliver their babies rather than outlawing abortion.

Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc., TONGA ERUPTION

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Location of Tonga; reason for Tonga eruption; Pacific ring of fire

Prepp Mains Booster: Distribution of volcanoes

Context:

- The greatest air explosion in recorded history occurred on January 15, 2022, when the **Hunga Tonga–Hunga Haapai volcano erupted**. A plume of ash was launched into the **upper atmosphere, and shock waves** were felt all around the planet.
- Over the last few decades, the Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai volcano has erupted on a regular basis.



Source: USGS

AFP

Probable Reason

- Even at temperatures of roughly 1200 degrees Celsius, if magma rises slowly into sea water, a thin film of steam occurs between the magma and water. This creates a

barrier that insulates the magma, allowing its surface to cool.

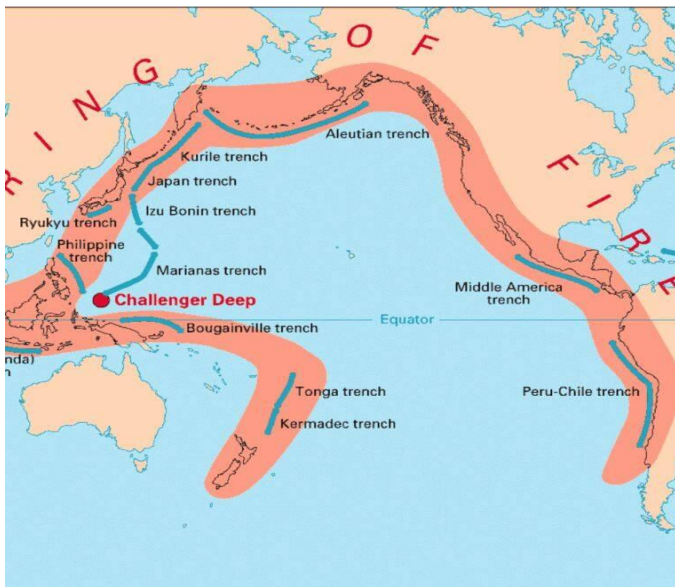
- However, when magma is blasted out of the ground while being full of volcanic gas, this procedure does not operate. Rapid magma entry disrupts any existing steam layers, bringing hot magma into close contact with cold water.
- According to our analysis of these prior eruptions, this is one of the large explosions the volcano is capable of generating on average once per thousand years.
- This phenomenon, which volcano scientists refer to as "**fuel-coolant interaction,**" is comparable to **chemical explosions fit for war**. The magma is torn apart by incredibly strong blasts.
- **New magma** pieces expose **hot inner surfaces to water, starting a chain** reaction. Explosions continue until volcanic particles are ejected and supersonic blasts are produced.

Consequences of Eruption

- The dramatic pyroclastic flows—**hot streams of ash and lava** that **rained down** over the submerged sides of the caldera—were likely caused by the eruption.
- The **surrounding seafloor** was transformed into a **white desert** by the advancing hot ash, which "**wiped away everything.**"
- **Tonga's Internet service, which still hasn't entirely been restored**, was disrupted by these floods, which also **propelled tsunamis** that swept across surrounding islands and rose up to **18 metres in height**.
- These flows stretched underwater for thousands of square kilometres after the eruption.
- The caldera's initial depth was just shallow enough so that water pressure did not dampen the explosion, yet deep enough so that massive amounts of water were pumped into the magma to fuel interactions.
- A **water-vapour plume from the eruption** rose to a height of 53 kilometres, high **into the stratosphere**.
- The water-vapour concentration of the stratosphere was raised by 146 teragrams (146 trillion grammes), or **10%, by this plume**, which has now completely encircled the planet. **This plume will likely stay in the atmosphere for at least a year.**

What is the Pacific Ring of Fire?

- The **Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai volcano** lies along the '**Pacific Ring of fire**'.
- **A region along the Pacific Ocean** marked by **active volcanoes and frequent earthquakes** is known as the **Pacific "Ring of Fire,"** Pacific Rim, or Circum-Pacific Belt.
- More than 450 volcanoes, or nearly 75% of the world's volcanoes, are found there. Additionally, **90% of earthquakes on Earth happen here.**
- With a length of more than 40,000 kilometres, **it extends from New Zealand** in a clockwise direction, passing via Tonga, the Kermadec Islands, **Indonesia**, Japan, the Philippines, and the **Aleutian Islands** before heading south along the western coasts of North and South America.



Why is the Pacific ring of fire prone to Earthquakes and Volcanoes?

- The **region is situated** along a **number of tectonic plates**, including the North American plate, the Pacific plate, the Philippine plate, the Juan de Fuca plate, the Cocos plate, and the Pacific plate.
- Every year, the **region experiences numerous earthquakes** and tsunamis as a **result of the movement of these plates**, or tectonic activity.
- Tectonic plates are moving **toward one another along a large portion of the Ring** of Fire, forming subduction zones.
- The opposite plate subducts or pushes down one plate. During this entire process each year, only one or two inches move.
- Rocks melt during this subduction**, turn into magma, migrate to the Earth's surface, and **trigger volcanic activity**.

What is a Submarine Volcano?

- Underwater vents or fissures in the surface of the Earth from which lava can erupt are known as submarine volcanoes.

Types of Submarine volcanic eruptions

- All seafloor spreading centres** have **submarine eruptions**, but these centres experience them more frequently because the plates there are separating quite quickly.
- In regions where **crustal plates meet**, one plate gradually sinks beneath the other until it is remelted. Submarine eruptions can also take place. These locations, **called subduction zones**, experience eruptions in a very different manner from spreading centres. Andesite, a byproduct of the melting of the subducting plate, is the type of rock typical of subduction zone volcanism.
- A third type of submarine eruption** occurs as a consequence of a **magma plume rising through the Earth's crust** overlying an area of melting in the Earth's mantle.

These eruptions are known as **hotspot volcanoes** and they often form chains of volcanic islands and seamounts that are older with increased distance from the surface location over

the rising magma plume. The rock type characteristic of hotspot eruptions is basalt.

MARINE HEATWAVES FUELLED CYCLONE AMPHAN

Priority: High



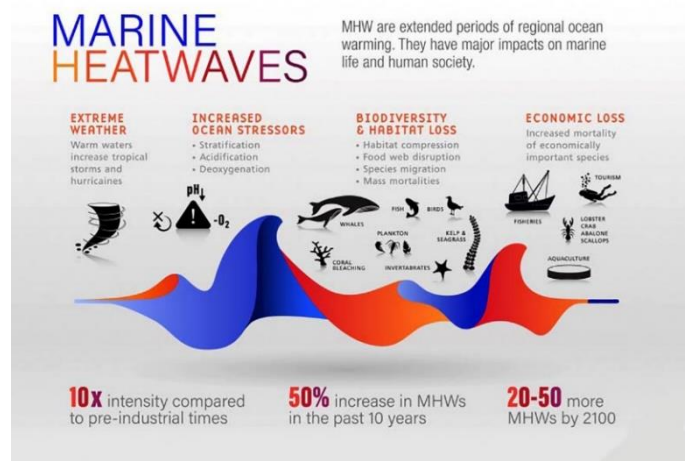
Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Conditions for formation of Cyclone; recent cyclones

Prepp Mains Booster: Reasons for formation of Cyclone Amphan

Context:

The researchers have claimed that the super-cyclone Amphan is said to have been triggered by **Marine Heatwaves (MHW)**.



What is the issue?

- A **powerful Marine Heatwave (MHW)** was discovered **beneath the cyclone's track**, with an abnormally high anomalous sea surface temperature of **more than 2.5°C, according to research**.
- This coincided with the cyclone's path, allowing for fast intensification in a short amount of time.

What are Marine Heatwaves?

- Heat waves are known to exist in the atmosphere. We've all experienced extended stretches of really hot weather.
- Heatwaves can also occur in the ocean, which are referred to as marine heatwaves (MHWs).
- When **ocean temperatures are unusually warm for a sustained period of time**, such as during a marine heatwave, it can have a substantial influence on marine ecosystems and enterprises.

When do they occur?

- Heatwaves can occur **both in the summer and in the winter**, when they are referred to as "winter warm-spells."
- These **winter events can have significant consequences**, such as in the southeast of Australia, where the spiny sea urchin can only colonise further south when winter temperatures exceed 12 degrees Celsius.

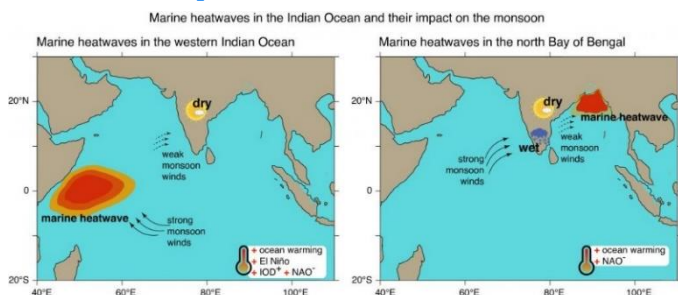
What causes marine heatwaves?

- A variety of causes can create marine heatwaves, and not all of them are equally relevant for each event.
- Ocean currents**, which can build up patches of warm water and air-sea heat transfer, as well as warming

through the ocean surface from the atmosphere, are the most common drivers of marine heatwaves.

- **Winds can amplify or dampen the temperature** in a maritime heatwave, and climate patterns like **El Nino** can alter the likelihood of incidents in specific areas.
- MHWs can be triggered by large-scale climate drivers such as the **El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO)**.

What are the Impacts of the MHWs?



- Heat waves in the ocean have an impact on ecosystem structure, promoting some species while suppressing others.
- After the 2011 maritime heatwave in Western Australia, for example, fish communities were significantly more "tropical" than before, **switching from kelp forests to seaweed turfs**.
- **Impacts on fisheries and aquaculture** can result in economic losses as a result of marine heatwaves.
- MHWs are especially **dangerous to temperature-sensitive organisms like corals**. **The Great Barrier Reef was severely bleached in 2016** due to maritime heatwaves across northern Australia.

How do we measure marine heatwaves?

- When seawater temperatures exceed a seasonally variable threshold (**typically the 90th percentile**) for **at least 5 days in a row**, it is called a marine heatwave.
- Heat waves that occur within two days of each other are considered part of the same occurrence.

Way Forward

- Marine heatwaves can damage marine ecosystems and cost the fishing, aquaculture, and ecotourism businesses money.
- However, their consequences are frequently hidden beneath the waves until it is too late.
- We can better predict future circumstances and preserve vulnerable maritime habitats and resources by increasing public awareness of these phenomena and expanding our scientific understanding of their physical properties and ecological implications.

GENERAL STUDIES2

Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

SEDITION

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is Sedition; Section 124A

Prepp Mains Booster: impact of the recent Supreme Court verdict on Sedition

Context:

- **Patricia Mukhim and Anuradha Bhasin**, two journalists, filed a petition in Supreme Court calling for the repeal of the sedition laws are currently being represented by Vrinda Grover.



What is the sedition law?

- **Section 124A** defines sedition as: "Whoever, **by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise**, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite **disaffection towards, the Government established by law** shall be punished with imprisonment for life, **to which fine may be added...**"
- The clause has the following three explanations:
 - The term "disaffection" **includes disloyalty and all hostile feelings**.
 - Comments **criticising government policies with the aim of changing** them through legal channels without inciting or attempting to incite hatred, contempt, or disaffection do not violate this section.
 - **Comments criticising government administrative** or other actions without inciting or attempting to incite hatred.
- Sedition is **a non-bailable offence under section 124A**, and it carries a sentence of **three years to life in prison as well as a fine**.
- The government seizes the **accused person's passport and forbids** them from **holding a position in the government**.
- By the way, the United Kingdom repealed the sedition charge in 2010.

What is the petition about ?

- The petition especially highlights **how the crime of sedition** has a negative **impact on press freedom**.
- While it is **a matter of fundamental rights**, democracy is also at stake.
- The SC **has maintained that press freedom** is a crucial component of democracy.
- **According to past experience**, the **crime of sedition** is deliberately intended to **scare and suppress journalists**.
- **This will have an adverse effect on press freedom** and consequences that go beyond the individual.
- **Not only are a person's rights being violated; society's voice as a whole is also being affected**, whether it be critical or opposing.

What is the Supreme court's recent stand on sedition ?

- Even though the clause has **not yet been ruled unlawful**, the SC's unprecedented action led to the suspension of an **existing criminal offense's enforcement and operation**.
- Rarely would the court act in this manner.
- The court has **emphasised the urgency that was required**.
- The order also sends a clear message **to all state and municipal governments that exercising citizens' rights to freedoms** should not be restricted through the use of the criminal justice system.

What is the concern about the law ?

- The law is **now used as a weapon against all civil freedoms** and is the preferred tool of governmental power.
- Regarding **freedom of speech and expression**, we **already have the UAPA as well as a number of provisions in the IPC, such as section 153-A**, a legislation designed to deal with individuals who use language to target a community.
- Those who speak out against police brutality and **atrocities against caste are being arrested and accused in such [section 153-A] cases**.
- Everyone in Indian society is exercising self-censorship as a result of the unmistakable stifling impact. Much more work will be required of the courts.

Where did the sedition legislation stem from?

- The legislation against sedition was included in **Thomas Macaulay's draft of the Indian Penal Code 1837**, but it was not included in the final version that was adopted in 1860.
- Legal professionals think this omission was unintentional.
- Through the Special Act XVII, **sedition was added to the list of crimes covered by section 124A of the IPC in 1890**.
- In 1955, the sentence, which had originally been life in prison, was changed to transportation "beyond the seas for the rest of his or her natural life."
- To quell political disagreement during the Independence struggle, the clause was frequently invoked.
- Famous freedom fighters including Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Annie Besant, Shaikat and Mohammad Ali, Maulana Azad, and Mahatma Gandhi have been the targets of several pre-independence proceedings under Section 124A of the IPC.
- The most famous sedition **trial of this period, Queen Empress v. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, took place in 1898**.

What is the Law Commission's position on sedition ?

- The Constituent Assembly resisted including sedition as a restriction on freedom of speech and expression under the then-Article 13, **according to the Law Commission of India's 2018 report**.
- It considered the clause to be a remnant of colonial rule that had no place in a free India.
- **The IPC's section 124A continued to apply to the crime**.
- **According to its opinion, section 124A should only be used where the goal of a given act is to disturb the peace**

or overthrow the government using force and illegal methods.

- The Commission advises that **section 124A of the IPC (sedition) must remain in place**;
- However, **it should be carefully examined to see if a suitable replacement** for the word "sedition" can be found.
- According to the paper, it is also important to consider whether the "freedom to offend" qualifies as hate speech.
- Additionally, it **calls for balancing the rights to free expression and sedition as well as putting protections in place to prevent abuse of the sedition accusation**.

What are some of the bills brought by parliamentarians in the past ?

- Section **124A of the IPC should be removed**, according to a private member's bill filed in **2011 by CPI MP D Raja but not passed by the Rajya Sabha**.
- **Shashi Tharoor**, a Congressman, sponsored a private member's bill in the **Lok Sabha in 2015 to change section 124A of the IPC to only define as "seditious"** those acts or words that directly lead to the use of violence or instigation of violence.

What are the country's Sedition cases according to NCRB?

- According to the **2020 National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report**, although there were 70 sedition cases filed in 2018, **no one was ever found guilty**.
- Similar to 2018, **only two people were found guilty despite 93 cases** being brought in 2019.
- **In 2020, 73 cases were also filed, but no one was found guilty of sedition**.
- In 2020, Manipur reported 15 sedition cases, followed by Assam (12), Karnataka (9), Uttar Pradesh (7), Haryana (6), and Delhi (5).

ANTI-DEFECTION LAW: MAHARASHTRA CRISIS

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is Anti-Defection Law; S R Bommai Case

Prepp Mains Booster: Provisions available to handle Hate Speech; Committees on Hate Speech

Context:

- Recently, the Anti-Defection Law has come into focus due to the ongoing political crisis in Maharashtra.
- All indications point to the law failing to support the stability of elected governments.
- In recent years, defections have caused the fall of numerous regimes, yet the defectors have not faced any deterrent consequences.



What is anti-defection law ?

- To **penalise specific politicians for changing parties**, the **Tenth Schedule of the Constitution**, also known as the anti-defection statute, was introduced into **the charter in 1985**.
- The procedure for how the **presiding officer of a legislature** may disqualify a **legislator on the basis of defection** based on a petition from any other member of the House is **outlined in the law for both state assemblies and the Parliament**.
- The Supreme Court broadened its **interpretation of the term** and held that an **MLA's actions can reveal whether they have abandoned their party**.
- Independent MLAs must also abide by the law. They are **not allowed to join political parties, and if they do, they risk losing their seats in the legislature**.
- The law allows for **two different types of defection**:
 - when a member willingly **leaves the party under whose symbol he was elected**; and
 - when a member **disobeys a whip issued by his party** ordering him to vote a certain manner or abstain from casting a ballot.
- While **voting against the party's whip is a fairly simple example** of defection, the other method of defection has **proven to be contentious and subject to legal action**.
- An individual who **"voluntarily gives up membership"** does not **only write a formal letter of resignation and switch parties**.
- The party that **loses a member to another sometimes infers this from the behaviour of the lawmaker**.
- The Supreme Court has **also found that a person's actions** can be used to determine whether they **"voluntarily gave up membership."**

How do MLAs avoid disqualification?

- A merger of one party with another will **not result in disqualification due to defection**, according to **paragraph 4 of the tenth schedule**. However, there is a rider. Only when **two-thirds of the party's total strength approves of the merger** is there a **deemed merger**. However, it is still unclear if the Deputy Speaker (the Speaker's position is empty) will initially recognise such a "union" and whether the legal authorities will follow suit.
- A **"split" in a legislature party** was **originally mentioned in the 10th Schedule** as an exemption to the disqualification requirement. It equates to a **"split" if**

one-third of a legislature party leaves it or joins another, and such legislators would not be disqualified.

- This turned out to be an escape strategy for lawmakers, **who could then band together and make up a third of the power of the legislature party**.
- The **91st Constitution amendment act of 2003, paragraph 3, which permitted the use of a split** to prevent disqualification for defection, was removed.
- For instance, **12 of the 17 Congress MLAs in Meghalaya** last year switched to the **All India Trinamool Congress**.
- The Bahujan Samaj Party's six MLAs in Rajasthan joined the Congress in 2019.
- Four of the six Telugu Desam Rajya Sabha MPs switched over to the BJP in the same year.

Role of Speaker

- It is the **Assembly Speaker**, who decides whether an **MLA** has defected from a party or a **faction that makes up two-thirds of a party**.
- However, the Maharashtra Assembly's Speaker seat is now open. 2019 saw the resignation of the final Speaker.
- According to **Article 180(1) of the Constitution**, the **Deputy Speaker** fills in for the **Speaker when that position is vacant**.
- He is required to abide by the laws established by the Maharashtra assembly under the **anti-defection statute**.

Applicability of anti-defection law

- There are currently **two paths that would result in legal adjudication**.
- First, any **Assembly MLA may petition the Speaker** to investigate allegations that a certain MLA has left their political party.
- Documentary proof must be submitted with such a petition**.
- The petition would then be **forwarded by the Speaker to the MLAs** that their colleagues are **accusing of defecting**.
- The MLAs **would have seven days—or whatever amount of time the Speaker deems necessary—to present their argument**.
- The **statute doesn't provide a deadline** for making a disqualification **determination**.
- However in **Keisham Meghachandra Singh v The Hon'ble Speaker of Manipur** the **Supreme Court mandated in 2020** that a presiding officer could only rule on an **anti-defection statute petition within three months**.

Judicial review

- The courts have **established some limitations** on when they can intervene in legislative proceedings.
- In **1992, a five-judge constitution bench of the Supreme Court** ruled that the **Tenth Schedule** hearings before the speaker are **comparable to tribunal proceedings** and can therefore be subject to judicial review.
- The decision made **by the speaker may be challenged** in court on **four different grounds**.
 - The **first occurs** when the **ruling is made without according** to the rules of **natural justice**, such as preventing the **other side from**

making their case and the judge sitting as the last arbiter in their own case.

- The second is **whether the judgement is unlawful.**
- The **third is whether the order was made in poor faith, or mala fide.**
- The order is deemed perverse **if it is based on "no evidence, or utterly untrustworthy evidence, and no reasonable person would act upon it,"** according to the fourth condition.
- According to the 1992 (**Kihoto Hollohan vs Zachillhu**) ruling, "**judicial review cannot be granted at a stage prior to a decision being made by the Speaker/Chairman.**"
- According to the ruling in **Nabam Rebia (2016)**, a **Presiding Officer** should not decide on **any defection complaints while a motion to have him removed is still pending.**

Role of Governor

- When there is political unrest in a state, **the governor plays a critical role.** Prior to 1994, governors would **quickly dissolve a state government** on the grounds that it lacked a majority in the state legislature and would advise imposing the president's administration.
- But with its decision in the **S R Bommai case in 1994**, the Supreme Court put an end to this practise.

How did anti-defection laws, which were once hailed as a panacea, failed to prevent the collapse of elected governments?

- Recent examples illustrate the many strategies used by parties, lawmakers, and Speakers to either get around the statute against defection or to further their own partisan political goals.
- These days, poaching the major Opposition parties without respect for the anti-defection law is the most frequent scenario. Speakers decide not to take action when the offended party seeks for disqualification, formalising the defection.

S.R. Bommai Case

- By setting out limitations, a **nine-judge Supreme Court Constitution Bench** issued the historic ruling on **March 11, 1994**, effectively putting an end to the arbitrary removal **of State administrations under Article 356.**
- The jury found that the **President's authority to remove a State administration is not absolute.**
- According to the ruling, **the President shouldn't use his or her authority before both Houses of Parliament** have approved of the proclamation (imposition of the president's rule).
- The President **can only suspend the Legislative Assembly** once the constitutional provisions governing the Legislative Assembly are suspended.
- Legislative Assembly dissolution is not a regular occurrence.
- The Court ruled that it should only be used when it is determined to be necessary to carry out the Proclamation's objectives.

- The **Proclamation expires at the conclusion of the two-month term** if it is rejected or **not approved by both Houses of Parliament.**
- In such a scenario, **the sacked government returns.**
- The **Legislative Assembly is awakened after perhaps** being kept in suspended animation declared the Court.
- The Court made it apparent that a Presidential Proclamation under **Article 356 is also open to judicial scrutiny.**
- The lawsuit put an end to the hostile Central government's arbitrary removal of State administrations.
- The court's decision also firmly said that the **Assembly's floor is the only place where the current majority government can be put to the test**, not the **Governor's arbitrary judgement**, who is frequently referred to as the Central government's agent.
- The **Court stated that the Chief Minister of each State** who must carry out his constitutional duties "will be in perpetual fear of **the axe of Proclamation falling on him because he will not be certain whether he will remain** in power or not.
- As a result, he has **to stand up every time from his seat without properly** carrying out his constitutional duties and achieving the desired goal in the interest of the State.

Way forward

Jurists have proposed redefining the merger clause, transferring the Speaker's adjudicative powers to another reputable authority, and even completely doing away with the law.

Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, the conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

QUESTION OF RAJYA SABHA

Priority: **Medium**



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is Rajya Sabha; Origin of Rajya Sabha

Prepp Mains Booster: Why Rajya Sabha should be abolished? ; Why it shouldn't be abolished.

What is Rajya Sabha?

- Rajya Sabha: The Upper House (Second Chamber or House of Elders) represents the Indian Union's states and union territories.
- Because the Rajya Sabha is never totally dissolved, it is known as the Permanent House of Parliament.
- The Indian Constitution's IV Schedule governs the distribution of Rajya Sabha seats among states and union territories.

What is Expected role of Rajya sabha?

- The 'Rajya Sabha,' or 'Council of States,' is the Indian parliament's second chamber, which dates back to the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919.
- As a permanent house (it never dissolves like the Lok Sabha, and one-third of its members retire every two years),
- the Rajya Sabha acts as a Revisionary House (reconsidering bills passed by the Lok Sabha)

- RS provides a degree of continuity in the underlying policies of laws passed by parliament.
- Rajya Sabha also serves to institutionalise the federal principle of power-sharing between the central government and the states.

However, the role and relevance of the Rajya Sabha have long been a source of contention, dating back to deliberations in the Constituent Assembly.

What are the arguments for abolition of Rajya Sabha?

Unable to protect the interest of the States:

- The primary responsibility of Rajya Sabha would be to protect the interests of the states vis a vis the Union.
- But, there is hardly any empirical evidence that substantiates that the Rajya Sabha has lived upto the task ever since it came into existence.

CAD And Opposition to RS:

- Lokanath Misra led the charge against the second chamber in the Constituent Assembly Debates stating that there was no need for the second chamber and also that it would not serve any useful purpose.
- Shibban Lal Saxena, was equally emphatic. According to him, the Upper House acts as a clog in the wheel of progress.

Wastage of Money: second chambers are out of relevance today. Constant disruption of session, walkout led to the reduced efficiency of Rajya Sabha and is leading to the waste of public money and time.

Undemocratic: Nomination 12 members, who will never seek the vote of the people, yet they may become ministers also, is a most undemocratic aspect of our Constitution. It has been alleged as place to accommodate senior defeated politicians

Not a true representation of a particular state:

- Representation of Peoples Act 1951 allows a person to file his nomination for Rajya Sabha from any state this leads to the case where some candidates may not represent the States and got elected on the support of political parties.
- This further creates the scenario of horse-trading, suitcase-culture- a wealthy businessman buying Rajya Sabha tickets and big leaders parachuting during the election of Rajya Sabha members.

What are the arguments in favour of Rajya Sabha?

Safety Valve of India's Federal Polity

- For a federal constitution to provide representation to the federation's units, bicameralism is required.
- Unlike the president, legislature, and judiciary, the Council of States operates as a safety valve inside the legislative, reducing federal tensions.
- In addition to the well recognised examples of responsible administration and judicial review, the Rajya Sabha is an important component of the constitutional checks and balances structure.

Review and Revaluation Role

- The founders of the Indian constitution planned to construct a house that would operate as a revisionary house to check the lower house's hasty legislation, which may be passed under populist pressures.
- In addition, when the ruling party has a veto-proof majority in the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha can prohibit the current government from practising authoritarianism.

A Deliberative Body

- Parliament is not just a legislative body, but also a deliberative one, allowing members to discuss key public concerns.
- As a result, the Upper House's job is to be a deliberative body in addition to balancing the Lok Sabha's "fickleness and enthusiasm."

Representing the Vulnerable Sections

- In the Lok Sabha, women, religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities are underrepresented (due to First Past the Post-Election System).
- As a result, an indirect election to the Rajya Sabha (through propositional representation) would allow them to participate in the nation's legislative process.
- As a result, the Rajya Sabha can accommodate those who may not be able to earn a public mandate.

Special Powers of Rajya Sabha: The Upper House also has some special powers, such as:

- the ability to move a subject from the State List to the Union List for a set amount of time (Article 249).
- To create an additional All-India Services (Article 312).
- When the Lok Sabha is dissolved, to declare an emergency under Article 352 for a limited time.

What reforms need to be taken in Rajya Sabha?

- One step toward preserving the Rajya Sabha's federal character would be to have members of the Rajya Sabha directly chosen by the inhabitants of a state.
 - Cronyism and patronage appointments will be reduced as a result of this.
- Also, a federal structure can be established to ensure that each state has equal representation in the House of Representatives, so that large states do not dominate the proceedings.
- To improve the level of debate in the House, a better nomination procedure is required.
 - The United Kingdom can serve as an example in this regard.
 - The Appointments Commission was established in 2000 as a result of the House of Lords Act of 1999, with the primary purpose of making recommendations for the appointment of non-party-political members to the House of Lords.
 - This commission has the authority to recommend Rajya Sabha nominations from under-represented groups.

Conclusion

The Rajya Sabha has remained a vanguard for political and social principles, a melting pot of cultural diversity, despite the ups and downs of Indian politics. It is also a flag-bearer for the sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic of India, alongside the Lok Sabha.

As a result, the Rajya Sabha should not be regarded as a "disruptive" branch of the legislature, and efforts should be taken to ensure that the Rajya Sabha continues to play an important role in Indian democracy.

WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Facts regarding Women in Parliament

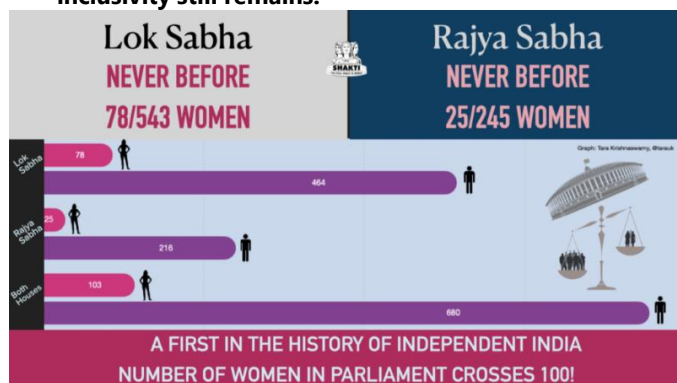
Prepp Mains Booster: need for Gender neutral language in the parliament

Context:

In the 21st century, when people of all genders are leading the world with compassion, and strength, it's time for the Indian Parliament to adopt gender neutral language.

Women in Indian Parliament

- India, with **5.5 percent women representation**, was leading the way in the quest for more inclusive world democracies at a time when women made up **only 1.7 percent of US Congress and 1.1 percent of UK Parliament**.
- Thousands of women across profession, class, caste, and religion contributed to struggle for India's Independence. **What happened in 1952 was a highly progressive step, but it appears that we have deviated from that road.**
- Despite having a woman Prime Minister, and President, and a higher ratio of female legislators than some other mature democracies in the past, **our challenge with inclusivity still remains.**



Need for gender-neutral language

- The **Rules of Procedure of the Rajya Sabha continue to refer to the Vice-President of India as the ex-officio Chairman.**
- The worrying prevalence of **masculine pronouns** implies a male-dominated power system. This is also noticeable in parliamentary debates.
- Most government responses to questions posed by Women Parliamentarians use the **salutation "Sir" rather than sir/madam.**
- Hardly any gender-neutral Act was passed** in the last decade. In terms of gender, almost all of them have made references to women not as leaders or professionals (such as policemen), but usually as victims of crimes.

What is gender neutral language?

- Gender-neutral language is a broad concept that encompasses the usage of non-sexist, inclusive, or gender-balanced terminology.
- The goal is to avoid using words that are prejudiced, discriminatory, or humiliating by implying that one sex or social gender is the norm.
- Gender-neutral and inclusive language also aids in the reduction of gender stereotyping, the promotion of social change, and the achievement of gender equality

What can be done?

- Rules of Procedure of Lok Sabha were made gender neutral in 2014**, under leadership of Speaker Meira Kumar. Since then, all documents have referred to each Lok Sabha Committee Head as Chairperson. It can be emulated in all spheres of Parliamentary discourse.
- Workshops can be organised to make legislators sensitive** about use of language that is gender neutral.

Trends in other countries

- Internationally, democracies that legalised universal suffrage after India**, such as Canada, Australia, and the United States, have now taken concrete measures towards gender-inclusive legislation and communication.
- In all types of legislation and legal documentation, the **Canadian Department of Justice has standards for adopting gender-neutral** vocabulary.
- Gender neutrality has been incorporated into the Australian government's writing Style Manual.
- In **2007, the House of Commons of the United Kingdom** determined that all laws will be written in a gender-neutral manner.
- Many Member States of the **European Union** have also debated and advocated language policies at various levels to ensure gender neutral language.

Examples of Gender-neutral language

- The term **'chairperson' can be avoided because it is commonly used to refer to women. For both sexes, the term 'chair' can be used.**
- Examples of gender-neutral term for professions are administrator, ambassador, Editor, Judge, Lawyer, Journalist and so on.
- Use of **plural forms such as 'officials shall carry out their duties'** instead of 'official shall carry out his/her duty'.

Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS IMPLICATED IN FALSE CASES

Priority: Medium

Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: Provisions for false implication in the IPC, Section 211 of IPC

Prepp Mains Booster: Arguments regarding need to compensate falsely implicated victims.

Context:

- Recently, a special investigating team of the **Narcotic Control Bureau from Delhi gave Aryan Khan and five others a clean chit in the drug case.**
- The Aryan Khan's story not only brought attention to his family's suffering, but also to the countless victims of malicious prosecution, many of whom are powerless.

Why do falsely implicated persons need to be compensated?

- If there is a misleading implication, there are various reasons why a person should be reimbursed.
- Our justice system is excruciatingly slow. There have been cases where people have been on trial for eight, ten, or

even more years. Not just a person, but also their family and children, can suffer from emotional trauma.

- There is a societal stigma attached. In a village where everyone knows who's who, even if they don't know each other well, the family of the wrongfully accused person is shunned. It is unlikely to occur in a large city such as Mumbai or Delhi.
- Children are also affected. When a child goes to school and the instructor or another student claims that the boy's father is a terrorist who is imprisoned, the child is bound to be affected.
- The Delhi High Court has declared several times that the person should be compensated for being held in jail despite the fact that he is entitled to bail and all of his papers are in order.

What needs to be done to prevent false implication of people?

- **Scrutiny of Seniors:** Senior personnel from law enforcement agencies will be scrutinised more closely. For example, in the case of Aryan Khan, a senior officer may have used his judgement and directed the too enthusiastic cops on the proper lines of investigation.
- **Prosecutors' Function:** They are not part of the police force or the investigative agency; they are court-appointed officials. When the investigative agency or police claim that a person is involved and want his custody, prosecutors might point out to the enforcement agencies that they are incorrect and that they should not seek custody.
- **Departmental Enquiry:** An errant officer may face a disciplinary investigation or be fired from service.
- In the event of unjust detention, the **state must also bear responsibility.**
- If the judicial officer believes or believes that the investigating agency lacks sufficient evidence or that the investigation is going horribly wrong, they **should not hand over custody to the agency or to prison.**

Does India need a new law to ensure disbursement of compensation?

- To establish a regular practice of compensation disbursement, **legislation must be introduced.** It's possible that one court in a small state think paying someone **₹5 lakh in compensation is a fine idea**, but a High Court in a larger state would reply, "What is ₹5 lakh? It's nothing; at the very least, we should provide ten lakh rupees.
- A false charge of offence made with the purpose to hurt is **defined in Section 211 of the Indian Penal Code.** It can result in a sentence of **two to seven years in jail.** This clause applies to wrongful prosecutions, but additional compensation legislation would be a good addition.

PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION (PIL)

Priority: High

Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Meaning of PIL; Important Judgements due to PIL

Prepp Mains Booster: Significance of PIL; Issue of Frivolous PILs; Ways to prevent it

Context:

Recently, a Supreme Court bench of justice B.R. Gavai and Hima Kohli initially asked the litigant **to pay ₹18 lakh, that is, ₹1 lakh for every one of the 18 minutes the case took up.**

Why did the apex court got angered?

- The court criticized the exceedingly deplorable habit of submitting frivolous petitions, which wastes judicial time.
- This time could be better spent addressing actual concerns.

What is Public Interest Litigation (PIL)?

- PIL stands for public interest litigation, and it demonstrates that justice is available to those who are socially disadvantaged.
- **Justice P. N. Bhagwati introduced it in 1979.**
- It is the primary vehicle through which India's **judicial activism** has flourished.
- It is consistent with the **ideals stated in Article 39A[a] of the Constitution**, which call for the use of law to preserve and deliver quick social justice.

How was it introduced?

- PIL is a deviation from the standard locus standi rule. Prior to the 1980s, the courts and the Supreme Court of India only heard cases from parties that were directly or indirectly harmed by the defendant.
- Only its original and appellate jurisdictions were used to hear and consider cases.
- The Supreme Court, on the other hand, began allowing cases to be brought on the basis of public interest litigation (PIL), which implies that even persons who are not directly involved in the case can submit problems of public interest to the court.
- It is the court's privilege to consider the PIL application.

Filing a PIL

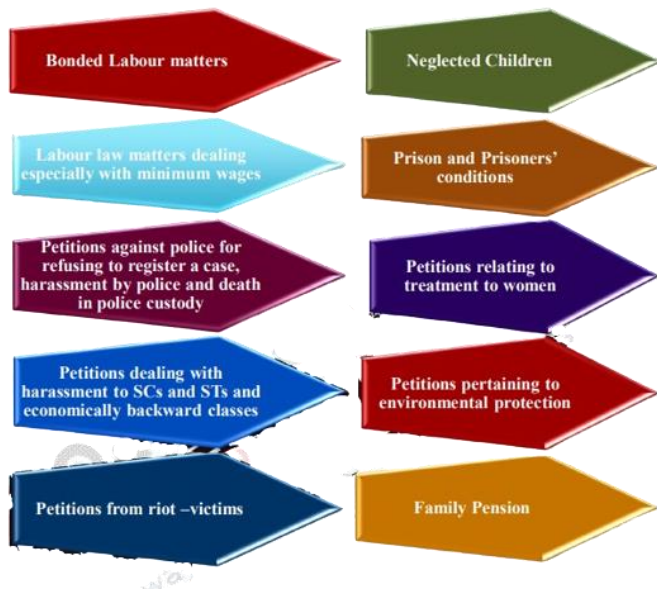
- Any citizen can submit a public case by filing a petition in the Supreme **Court under Article 32 of the Indian Constitution**; in the **High Court under Article 226** of the Indian Constitution; or in a **Magistrate's Court under Section 133** of the Criminal Procedure Code.

What are the parties against whom PILs can be filed?

- A PIL can be brought against the state government, the federal government, a local government, or a private party.
- In addition, after being contacted by state authorities, a private person may be named as a **'Respondent' in a PIL.**
- For example, if a private industry in Mumbai is polluting the environment, a PIL can be brought against the Mumbai government, the state pollution central board, and the private factory in question.

What is the importance of PIL?

- The essential rights to equality, life, and personality, which are guaranteed under Part III of the Indian Constitution, are described in greater detail in the PIL.
- It can also be used as a powerful tool for societal transformation or social welfare.
- By filing a PIL on behalf of the oppressed class, any member of the public or individual can seek redress.



What are the issues with PIL?

- **For Publicity:** Off late, PILs have become a tool for publicity. People file frivolous petitions which result in the wastage of time of the courts.
- People have used them with a **political agenda** as well.
- They **unnecessarily burden the judiciary** as filing of PIL will require the judiciary to list the petition for hearing. Even if the petition is eventually dismissed, the courts spend time of the judiciary and effort on them before dismissing them.
- PIL also **increases the number of cases pending** before the higher judiciary, which leads to the burden of pending cases. Delay in speedy hearing of other cases.

How do frivolous petitions waste time?

- In the higher judiciary, only judges have the authority to dismiss a petition at present. The SC or HC Registry just makes sure that the technical conditions for submitting a petition are met. As a result, regardless of the merits of the case, petitions are admitted to the court.
- This admitted petition will require at least one hearing before getting dismissed, which leads to loss in time of judiciary.

Way forward: Preventing frivolous PILs

In its **Balwant Singh Chauhan decision**, the Supreme Court issued eight directives to assist constitutional courts in distinguishing between legitimate and frivolous PIL petitions:

- It has directed each High Court to set its own criteria to encourage legitimate PIL applications while limiting the number of motivated ones.
- Before considering the petition, verifying the petitioner's credentials.
- Examining the contents for accuracy
- Ensure that the petition deals with concerns of "greater public interest, seriousness, and urgency," which necessitates prioritisation.
- Ensure that the PIL is not being used for personal advantage or an ulterior motive.
- Assuring that it is intended to address genuine public harm or injury

Conclusion

- PIL petitions have had a positive impact on Indian jurisprudence and have improved the lives of Indian citizens in general.
- People who are hampered by ignorance, indigence, or illiteracy benefit from such petitions.

NEEDED REFORMS IN HIGHER JUDICIARY

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Facts regarding Higher Judiciary; appointments; transfers; removal procedures

Prepp Mains Booster: What are the reforms needed in the Higher Judiciary

Context:

The retirement age of the judges of the Supreme Court of India is to be reportedly increased to 67 years.

Retirement ages of the judges of High Courts and Supreme Court

- **Retirement ages of High Court and Supreme Court judges should be uniform and standard.** Presently, High Court judges retire at 62 and Supreme Court judges at 65
- If the age limit for judges of both Supreme Court and High Courts are made the same, **many would prefer to be Chief Justices and senior judges in the High Courts** and these Courts will benefit from their expertise and experience
- It will **ease the pressure and competition to make it to the top court** to get additional 3 years owing to the differential retirement age

Cadre of public service for retired judges

- The **cadre will work as pool to make appointments to the constitutional and statutory posts** as well as other assignments
- They should get **the full pay and the facilities** of a judge of the Supreme Court
- A **culture of public service for senior judges** should be developed, and only those who fit in such culture should be a part of senior ranks

Reform in appointment process of Chief Justice of India

- There is **no constitutional justification for the Chief Justice of India being the Supreme Court judge with the most experience.** Also, there is no such requirement under the Constitution, and it was devised in the **Second Judges case (1993)**
- **Article 124** only states that the President will appoint every judge of the Supreme Court, and this includes the Chief Justice, and each of these judges shall hold office until they attain the age of 65 years.
- Instead of the shortened weeks and months that some CJIs receive, the **appointment should have a clear three year tenure.**

Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.

ELECTORAL REFORMS

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is Election Commission; Constitutional provisions regarding Election Commission
Prepp Mains Booster: Electoral reforms suggest by Election Commission.

Context:

Recently, EC issued six significant suggestions to the Law Ministry. The government has been asked by the EC to publish the guidelines for linking Aadhaar to voter IDs as well as the four deadlines for eligible citizens to register to vote.

Background

- The Opposition left the Rajya Sabha in protest as the Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021 was approved by voice vote and allowed for the integration of electoral roll data with the Aadhaar ecosystem.
- Parties had claimed that the administration rushed through the Bill's passage without holding a sufficient debate.
- This is also in light of the commission's action last month's action against "registered unrecognised political parties" (RUPPs). Over 2,100 RUPPs have been targeted as part of the EC's
- "graded action" campaign for breaking rules, including failing to submit a contribution report and notifying the EC of any changes to the organization's name, head office, office holders, or address.
- The commission has the authority to **register organisations as political parties** under **Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951**.
- However, the EC does **not have the authority to deregister parties** under any constitutional or statutory provisions.

Election commission

- The **administration of the Union and State election** processes in India is the purview of the **Election Commission of India**, an **independent constitutional body**.
- The organisation oversees the elections for **India's President and Vice President** as well as the **Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha legislatures**.
- Since January 25, 1950, the Indian Election Commission has been a separate constitutional authority.
- The Constitution calls for the appointment of a Chief Election Commissioner and one or more other Election Commissioners.
- Up until 1989, the Commission only had the Chief Election Commissioner; nevertheless, that year saw the first appointment of two Election Commissioners.

The proposals

- Many political parties register, but they never run for office. These organisations **only exist on paper**.
- It is also possible that political parties could be formed with the intention of receiving **income tax exemptions**.
- The EC had remarked in 2016, in its handbook of suggested electoral reforms,
- It would only be reasonable that the commission, which has the right to register political parties, is also empowered to deregister in appropriate instances.

- The EC is once again pressing for a change to Section 33(7) of the Representation of People Act, 1951, which would limit the number of seats a candidate might run from.
- The Act **now permits a person to run in up to two constituencies for a general election, a series of by-elections, or biennial elections**. The EC has also recommended changing Section 33 in 2004. (7).
- Additionally, it had suggested that **exit polls and opinion polls be banned**, and that there **should be certain limitations on** their use from the day that an election is initially announced until all of its phases have been completed.

Indian Constitution: Election Related Provisions

Part XV of the Indian Constitution contains the laws governing elections in that country. From the addition of names on the electoral roll to the creation of laws relevant to elections, the measures mentioned in **Articles (324 to 329)** encompass every aspect of conducting elections:

- Article 324** – Superintendence, direction and Control of Elections.
- The **Election Commission (EC)** of India is the **only entity** that has been given the authority to supervise, direct and control elections.
- Article 325** – Inclusion of Names in Electoral Roll
- According to Article 325, every constituency will have one electoral roll for both Parliamentary and Assembly elections and no person shall be included or excluded from the electoral roll on grounds of religion, race, caste and sex.
- Article 326** – Elections to the Parliament and State Assemblies Based on Adult Suffrage
- Article 327** – Power of Parliament to Formulate Laws
- The Parliament considers Article 327 as an anchor for formulating any law for matters pertaining to elections to either house of the Parliament or the State Legislatures.
- Article 328** – Power of State Legislature.
- The provisions of Article 327 are being replicated in this Article that empowers the state governments to establish new laws on "all matters relating to, or in connection with, the elections" to the state legislatures.
- Article 329** – Prohibits Court's Interference in Electoral Matters
- To prevent the judiciary from gaining supremacy and intervening in matters of governance, the Constitution has included Article 329.

Constitutional Amendments regarding electoral reforms

- A number of constitutional revisions had resulted from electoral reforms.
- The **39th amendment** to the Indian Constitution was passed in a **period of emergency** 1975. The modification was intended to **exempt the election of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the Prime Minister, the Vice President, and the President from judicial review**.
- Members of the Parliament or State Legislature who switch parties after elections are disqualified under the terms of the **52nd Amendment Act of 1985**.
- All seats in Municipalities and Panchayats** will be decided by direct election thanks to the **73rd and 74th amendments**.

- **Reservation of seats for SC, ST, and females** is another clause of the **73rd amendment**.

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY RULES

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Feature of IT Rules 2021

Prepp Mains Booster: Benefits and concerns regarding IT Rules 2021

Context:

The Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has released a draft proposal, inviting suggestions from the public about the amendments to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.



About Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021

- The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, was notified by the Central government on February 25, 2021, relates to the digital news publishers, including websites, portals and YouTube news channels, and Over The Top (OTT) platforms, which stream online contents such as web series and films.
- It is jointly administered by the Ministry of Electronics and IT, and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- The Rules provide for a code of ethics to be followed by digital news publishers and OTT platforms; A three-tier grievance redress mechanism, which includes:
 - Self-regulation by publishers at the first level
 - Self-regulation by Self-regulating bodies of the publishers
 - An oversight mechanism by the Central government

Key features of the Rules

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Identify 'first originator' of content that authorities consider anti-national
- Appoint grievance officer, resolve complaints in 15 days
- File monthly compliance report on complaints received, action taken

DIGITAL NEWS

- Follow Press Council of India, Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act norms.
- Self-regulatory bodies to oversee adherence to Code of Ethics
- I&B Ministry to form panel, oversight mechanism

OTT PLATFORMS

- Self-classify content into five age-based categories: U (universal), U/A 7+ (years), U/A 13+, U/A 16+, and A.

- Parental locks for any content classified as U/A 13+ or above.
- Age verification mechanism for content classified as 'A' (adult)

Concerns

- Intermediaries include telecom service providers, internet service providers, search engines, online marketplaces, payment sites, cyber cafes, messaging services, and social media sites.
- While many intermediaries are **mere storage providers, where they are unaware of the content being transmitted or stored** on their platform, other intermediaries may be aware of the user-generated content on their platform. This raises the question that to what extent intermediaries should be held **liable for the user-generated content** on their platform.
- There are growing concerns around **misuse of these platforms for the proliferation of illegal or harmful content** such as child sex abuse material, content provoking terrorism, misinformation, hate speech, and voter manipulation.
- Some platforms have been **self-regulating the publication of such content**. However, this has raised concerns about arbitrary actions taken by these platforms which could affect freedom of speech and expression.
- Certain grounds for restricting content may **affect freedom of speech**, some of these restrictions are subjective and overbroad, and may adversely affect the freedom of speech and expression of users of intermediary platforms.
- The 2021 **Rules do not restrict the extent or type of information that may be sought**. For example, the information sought may be personal data of individuals such as details about their interactions with others. **Such powers, without adequate safeguards**, may adversely affect the privacy of individuals.
- The Rules require significant social media intermediaries, to enable the identification of the first originator of information within India.

PRADHAN MANTRI GARIB KALYAN YOJANA (PMGKY)

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is PMGKY?

Prepp Mains Booster: impact of PMGKY

Context:

According to a **KPMG study** conducted in collaboration with the German institution KfW, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY)** has lowered the **likelihood of consumers consuming less food by 76 percent and reduced their utility usage by 75 percent**.

What are the findings of the Study?

- Citing the KPMG study, Ms. Sitharaman emphasised that the government has been responsive to crises, which found that the PMGKY, which was announced in 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, produced positive results because it was a timely response.
- Overall, the study found that **PMGKY support lowered the likelihood of borrowing money for 67 percent of all respondents**. So they lived their lives with dignity, and that is a research conducted by an independent organisation from the government that we can all learn from.
- **When the government adopts a targeted strategy to delivering aid rather than throwing money at the problem and seeks input from the ground**, it does so quickly, openly, and in a timely manner.
- Ms. Sitharaman also mentioned a research by an Indian School of Business professor **that linked the Ayushman Bharat scheme to a 21% decrease in out-of-pocket health spending and an 8% decrease in the tendency for impoverished households to borrow for emergency health purposes**.
- According to another study, loans sanctioned under the Emergency Credit Liquidity Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) had exceeded 3.19 lakh crore as of March 2022.

What is Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana?

- The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana / Package is a Rs 1.70 lakh crore relief package for the underprivileged to aid them in their fight against the CoronaVirus.
- This was launched in March 2020, with the goal of reaching out to the lowest of the poor with food and money so that they don't have trouble purchasing basic supplies and meeting basic necessities.
- **Insurance cover of Rs 50 Lakh per health worker** fighting COVID-19 to be provided under Insurance Scheme
- 80 crore poor people will get 5 kg wheat or rice and 1 kg of preferred pulses for free every month for the next three months
- **20 crore women Jan Dhan account holders to get Rs 500 per month for next three months**
- Increase in **MNREGA wage to Rs 202 a day from Rs 182** to benefit 13.62 crore families
- An **ex-gratia of Rs 1,000 to 3 crore poor senior citizen**, poor widows and poor disabled
- Government to front-load Rs 2,000 paid to farmers in first week of April under existing **PM Kisan Yojana to benefit 8.7 crore farmers**
- Central Government has given orders **to State Governments to use Building and Construction Workers Welfare Fund to provide relief to Construction Workers**

What are the Challenges regarding poverty?

- The bulk of vulnerable people living on or around the poverty line have been ignored by government programmes.
- Poverty reduction requires more than just high development.
- It is still seen among middle-income countries, which house more than half of the world's impoverished.
- Shocks like demonetisation and the pandemic have hampered progress in poverty eradication.
- The pandemic is the world's largest setback in the fight against poverty, and it will cause countries like India to miss their targets.

What is Way ahead ?**Need-based approach:**

- Policymakers frequently struggle to improve the well-being of the poorest people and families.
- People in extreme poverty usually have a variety of requirements that necessitate a variety of services.

Targeted delivery:

- The impact is visible for all of us to see when the government takes a targeted approach to providing aid rather than splashing money and takes input from the ground, and does it swiftly, in a timely, and transparent manner.

Bottom-up participation:

- Bottlenecks could be detected and remedied at the local level using a bottom-up strategy and well-planned implementation mechanism.
- This is accomplished through a social mobilisation method that encourages disadvantaged people to participate and empowers them.

Employment generation:

- Furthermore, poverty-stricken areas must be identified and infrastructure such as schools, roads, power, telecom, IT services, and training institutions must be provided.
- This will also aid in the creation of job opportunities, perhaps boosting income, skill development, health, and literacy.

AGNIPATH YOJANA**Priority:** High**Primary Source:** The Hindu**Prepp Prelims Booster:** What is Agnipath Yojana**Prepp Mains Booster:** Benefits and Concerns regarding the Scheme**Context:**

For **recruiting soldiers** across the **three services**, the government revealed its new **Agnipath programme**. The **Cabinet Committee on Security** has approved the new defense recruitment reform, which will go into action right away. The soldiers hired under the programme will be referred to as **Agniveers**.

Agnipath Scheme

- The majority of the **45,000 to 50,000 soldiers** who are recruited under the new plan will **exit the military in just four years**.

- **Only 25% of the total annual recruits** will be permitted to continue for an additional **15 years under a permanent commission**.
- Initially under the Agnipath scheme, aspirants between the **ages of 17.5 years and 21 years** were eligible to apply. But now the Union government raised the maximum age for **hiring under the Agnipath** initiative for the year 2022 **from 21 to 23 amid intense protests**.
- Recognizing that conducting recruitment during the **previous two years** has not been practicable, the government has decided to provide a **one-time waiver** for the **anticipated recruitment cycle in 2022**.
- **"All India, all class"** recruiting would be introduced **to the services**. This is particularly **important for the Army**, as the regiment structure now has caste and area bases but will eventually **do away with them to allow people from any caste, region, class, or religious background to join existing regiments**.
- The recruitment **standards will remain the same**, and recruitment will be done **twice a year through rallies**.
- Following selection, the candidates will **undergo six months of training** before beginning their three and a half year deployment.
- Importantly, **30% of their pay will be placed aside** during this time under the **Seva Nidhi scheme**, with **equal monthly contributions** from the government and interest accruing.
- Each soldier will **receive a lump sum payment of Rs. 11.71 lakh** at the conclusion of the four-year period that is **tax-free**.
- Additionally, they **would receive a Rs 48 lakh four-year life insurance policy**.
- In the event of death, the **reimbursement will exceed Rs 1 crore and include salary for any unspent time**.
- **Only 25% of the original batch will be hired back into their respective services** after four years, for a total of 15 years.
- The **initial four years will not be taken into account** for retirement benefits for **individuals who are re-selected**.

Benefits

- In turn, this will significantly **lower the defense pension bill**, which has long been a key worry for governments.
- There would be **a younger demographic in the armed services**, with young soldiers making up the majority.
- The plan is that the **average age of the forces**, which is **currently 32 years old**, will **drop to 26 years old in six to seven years**.
- Individuals who were **released would follow rules** and continue to interact with **Army facilities**.
- This possibility **would be available to young people** who wanted to experience **military life**.
- It is impossible to assess the impact of short-term soldiers on operations since, unlike conscripted soldiers in other nations, such as China, they are volunteers and **would work just as hard to prove their worth**.
- It will **produce warriors** that are **"future-ready,"**
- It would **expand employment prospects** and that these soldiers would be able to **find work in a variety of industries** thanks to the knowledge and expertise they had gained throughout their four-year service.

Concerns

- The decision will result in significantly **lower permanent force levels** for the nation's more than 13 lakh-strong armed services.
- The new system is **only for personnel below officer ranks** (those who do not join the forces as commissioned officers).
- When their four-year contract is up, those hired through the "Agnipath" scheme will receive a one-time lump sum payment of slightly more than 11 lakh rupees. **They do not, however, receive any pension benefits**.
- To sustain themselves and **their families, the majority of people must look for a second job**.
- The majority of the **technological manpower belongs to the Navy, Air Force, and several Army corps**. They cannot receive training in six months. This suggests that these organisations would be compelled to accept subpar performance, which occasionally could be critical and result in accidents, or spend a higher portion of their budgets only on training.
- **Reduced training time suggests that the person receives only the most fundamental military instruction** before being sent on duty.

BHARAT NEW CAR ASSESSMENT PROGRAM(NCAP)

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is Bharat NCAP; Objectives

Prepp Mains Booster: Challenges implementing it

Context:

Recently, the draft GSR (General Statutory Rules) announcement to implement Bharat NCAP received approval from the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (New Car Assessment Programme).

NCAP will go into effect on April 1, 2023, giving both importers and Indian automakers the opportunity of having their vehicles star-rated domestically.

The first nation to implement a programme for using crash tests to evaluate a car's safety requirements was the USA.



What is Bharat NCAP?

It is a brand-new programme for evaluating auto safety that suggests a system for giving cars "Star Ratings" based on how well they perform in crash tests.

The Bharat NCAP standard goes above and beyond the minimal legal standards and is in line with international benchmarks.

Bharat NCAP rating:

- The proposed Bharat NCAP evaluation will assign Star Ratings ranging from 1 to 5.
- Vehicles for this programme will be tested at facilities equipped with the requisite infrastructure, such as testing agencies.

Applicability:

- It will be applicable to locally produced or imported type-approved motor vehicles of category M1 having a gross vehicle weight less than 3.5 tonnes.
- In addition to the driver's seat, M1 category motor vehicles are utilised for passenger transportation and have eight seats total.

What is the objective of the Bharat NCAP?

Giving Consumers the Power to Make Informed Decisions:

- The new laws establish the idea of passenger automobile safety ratings and provide consumers the power to make informed choices.

Boosts Export Worthiness:

- The Star Rating of Indian Cars based on Crash Tests will boost the export-worthiness of Indian Automobiles and ensure passenger and structural safety in Cars.

Make Aatmanirbhar for the Automobile Industry:

- It will also prove to be a crucial tool in developing our automotive industry and achieving our goal of making India the world's top automotive hub.

What are the challenges?

- Larger infrastructure will be needed for large-scale testing, and a significant budgetary investment will be needed to deploy it successfully and quickly.
- With the exception of Delhi, which allocated nearly 20% of its total land allocation to the construction of transportation infrastructure, major cities in India have only allocated 6–10% of their total land allocation for this purpose.
- This results in inadequate transportation infrastructure in the cities relative to the population and its needs.

Way ahead

Incorporating the current Indian legislation, the testing process should be in line with global crash test protocols, enabling OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) to have their vehicles tested at India's own in-house testing facilities.

NATIONAL MOBILE MONITORING SOFTWARE: NMMS APP

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is NREGA; What is NMMS App

Prepp Mains Booster: Benefits and implementing Challenges

Context:

The **Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)** published the **NMMS app (National Mobile Monitoring Software)** in **2021**. With regard to its operations, the **National Rural**

Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) aimed to "enhance citizen supervision and boost openness."



What is the National Mobile Monitoring Software (NMMS) app?

- The Mahatma Gandhi NREGS worksite attendance may be tracked in **real-time using the NMMS App**, along with geotagged photos. This could speed up payment processing while also increasing citizen supervision of the program.
- For all of the Department of Rural Development's schemes, **including the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, PMAYG, and PMGSY, the Area Officer Monitoring App** enables them to submit their results online along with time-stamped and GPS-tagged photos of their findings.
- This would **also make it possible for field inspectors and supervisory authorities to retain better records of inspections**, and it would make it simpler to analyse the results for improved programme execution.

What are the objectives of the app?

- To increase "**citizen supervision**" or openness in the scheme's operation, it would ensure effective monitoring of the schemes. Additionally, it may make it possible for payments to be processed more quickly.

What are the main feature of the app?

- The **NREGA Mates, local women from the panchayat level who are chosen, trained, and sent to supervise NREGA labour locations, will use it.**
- **Real-time, geo-tagged attendance photos** would make it possible to track the attendance of employees. Once during each half of the day, the attendance will be recorded.
- All NREGA work locations were required by the MORD to have more than 20 employees. There is no option for manual attendance for the employees, barring unusual circumstances.

What are the benefits of NMMS app?

It would **deal with corruption, a growing issue in NREGA where money is being syphoned off** by fabricating attendance records.

What are the issues with the National Mobile Monitoring Software (NMMS) app?

- It **can track the attendance of employees who have set work hours**, which is **only present in a few states**. However, the majority of states base NREGA pay

calculations on the volume of work performed each day. Employees are not required to work a certain schedule.

- For employees who spend the full day on the jobsite, the NREGA app requires recording attendance. For **NREGA employees who end their work early and go handle other duties for the rest of the day**, such as running a tea stand or doing household chores, it will be extremely difficult.
- The employee must either travel twice to mark her attendance or spend the entire day at the workplace.

What are the implementation challenges of the app?

- In rural India, a **reliable network is lacking**. Many employees won't be able to register their attendance as a result, costing them a day's pay. Kerala and Jharkhand, for instance, kept track of such instances.
- It could be challenging for the **NREGA employees with disabilities** to record attendance. For instance, Tamil Nadu experienced it.
- Men who own smartphones are probably given preference** when choosing NREGA partners over women who don't. The NREGA Mates are required to have smartphones. Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh, for instance, have had such instances.
- The members **received insufficient instruction on how to utilise the programme**. This can result in mistakes being made while documenting employees' attendance, which could delay or prevent payments from being made.
- Uncertainty surrounds the efficiency of such an application** and its intended use. Workers would not have physical records of their attendance or proof of completed labour. For instance, because there was no tangible record as proof, labourers in the West Singhbhum District of Jharkhand were unable to prove their attendance and work completed.
- The **MORD hasn't been particularly clear about the extent of the corruption in NREGA** or how the NMMS is handling it. The performance of the app cannot be measured in terms of payment processing speed or transparency.
- Thus, the **NMMS is unaware of how NREGA actually operates in practise**.

Way Forward

The government should improve social audits, which have been successful in the past, rather than concentrating on one app or making other complicated technology reforms.

CONSUMER EXPENDITURE SURVEY

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is Consumer Expenditure Survey

Prepp Mains Booster: need for consumer expenditure survey

Context:

- From July, the government will begin a new **household consumer expenditure survey (CES)**.
- The **CES** is meant to be conducted **every five years** and covers around **1.2 lakh rural and 84,000 urban households**.
- Such recent national sample surveys were conducted in 2011–12 and 2017–18. Unfortunately, **the 2017–18**

survey's results were withheld due to mysterious "**data quality difficulties**."



What is the Consumer Expenditure Survey?

- The **Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES)** is typically carried **out every five years**.
- The **Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE)** of households and the distribution of households and people among the MPCE **classes are estimated by the NSS Consumer Expenditure Survey**.
- Its purpose **is to gather data on household spending on consumption of products and services (including food and non-food items)**.
- Following their publication, **the results are also utilised to rebase the GDP and other macroeconomic indices**.

What is the need for a Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES)?

Welfare programmes

- In a nation like India, **high growth rates and government welfare programmes** are meaningless if they **do not lead to the reduction in poverty**.
- Without data, it's **challenging to determine** whether this is occurring at all, much **less at a faster rate**.

Calculate poverty

- The **lack of official data after 2011–12** makes it **impossible to calculate poverty ratios and lines** based on consumer spending below a specific **threshold and the proportion of households** that fall below that deprivation threshold.

Identifying the recipients

- In contrast to the **current lack of data**, 2011–2 saw a surplus of data from both the **Rural Development Ministry's Socio Economic and Caste Census and the Decennial Census**.
- The latter information was actually **essential to identifying the recipients** of the present government's **own successful programmes**, including those that provided free LPG and electricity connections and rural houses and toilets.

Data-driven policymaking

- Other domains require **data-driven policymaking as well**: For instance, is the consumption of foods high in micronutrients (fruits and vegetables) and proteins (milk, legumes, eggs, and meat) increasing at the same rate as it did during the previous ten years?
- This question, which is important for future demand predictions, crop planning, and **dietary diversification programmes**, can only be satisfactorily answered by the CES.
- With Covid's shadow receding, the CES and Census should, over the next about 1.5 years, ideally give a lot of data to assist policymakers and researchers who presently rely on

private data providers like the **Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)** and **NielsenIQ**.

Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

CASTE BASED CENSUS

Priority: High 
Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Finding of SECC

Prepp Mains Booster: Benefits and Challenges of Caste Based Census

Context:

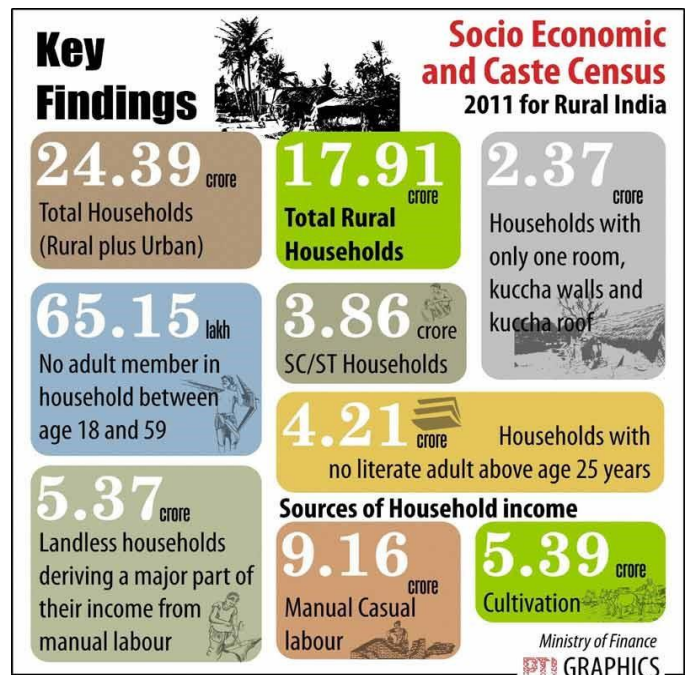
- An all-party meeting on the caste census chaired by Bihar CM Nitish Kumar held in Bihar unanimously decided to start the caste-based census very soon. Those to be involved in the mega exercise will be given proper training and the report will be published.

The history of caste census

- The **first census in India** was conducted in **1872** by the country's then colonial rulers, the British, in order to gain a better understanding of the people they governed over.
- Caste was one of the categories** under which data was collected, and this practice was continued **until 1931**, **when the number of Other Backward Classes was reported to be 52 percent**.
- However, in 1941, caste-based data was collected but not published. This was during World War II.
- After India got independence, it stopped this practice, and by 1951, the **only caste-based data collected was on Dalits and Adivasis**, meaning that no caste data for more than three-quarters of Indians had been collected.
- The caste status of households other than SCs/STs (Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes) could not be accurately captured in the 2011 **Socio-Economic Caste Census** performed by the Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Exercises in other States

- The Tamil Nadu government has formed a panel to develop a system for collecting caste-based data from the state's population and compiling a report.
- Caste counts have been conducted in states such as Karnataka, Odisha, and Telangana under the guise of a "socio-economic survey."



Need of caste census:

- India's **social equality programmes** will fail without caste census, and a caste census would assist to rectify this.
- There is no accurate estimate of the population of OBCs, groupings within OBCs, or other factors due to a lack of data.
- 'Aside from resolving the unnecessary mystery about the size of the OBC population, census enumeration **would yield a wealth of demographic information** (sex ratio, mortality rate, life expectancy), educational data (male and female literacy, ratio of school-going population, number of graduates), and policy relevant information about economic conditions (house-type, assets, occupation) of the OBCs,' according to the report.
- It might go a long way toward **bringing impartiality** to the reservations issue.
- According to the **Rohini Commission**, which was **established to investigate the equitable redistribution of the OBC quota** of 27%, there are about 2,633 castes covered by the OBC reservation.

Challenges

- It's the reality that **some castes' names appear** in both the **Scheduled Castes and the Other Backward Classes lists**.
- Concerns may also arise since **some people spell their caste differently than others**, resulting in an **inaccurate statistic**.
- The **enumerator is not a detective or a quality control officer**. The enumerator does not have the appropriate abilities or experience to decide whether or not a response is OBC.
- Some people worry that the caste census will **exacerbate social divisions**.
- Reservations** that were put in place for ten years have been in place for 75 years, and a **caste-based census would simply increase demand**.
- A census based on caste could **put India on hold, jeopardising its aspirations of becoming a worldwide superpower**.

- A **discrepancy in the overall number of OBCs**, the total number of OBCs in the country is 6,285, according to the central list, but this number rises to 7,200 if the list is generated by the states and Union Territories are included.
- **People use their clan, gotra, sub-castes, and caste names interchangeably**, and because the names have phonetic similarities, the castes may be misclassified.
- The inclusion of OBCs, Socially and Economically Backward classes, might jeopardise the census's credibility, hence it was not included in the 2021 census.

ACCESSIBLE INDIA CAMPAIGN

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: Feature and Components of AIC

Prepp Mains Booster: Benefits and Challenges of AIC

Suggested Reading: <https://bit.ly/3ttgx42>

Context:

The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) had written to chief secretaries of all States and Union Territories recently asking about the progress made on the various targets under the Accessible India Campaign. The deadline for proportion of targets was extended to March 2020 and then again to June 2022.



Accessible India Campaign

- Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan) is a nation-wide Campaign for achieving **universal accessibility for Persons with Disabilities** in December 2015.
- Its vision is to create a **barrier free environment for independent, safe and dignified living** of Persons with Disabilities.



- It has **three important verticals- the Build Environment, the transportation sector and the ICT ecosystem.**
- **Build Environment-** Measures should be undertaken to eliminate obstacles and barriers to **indoor and outdoor facilities including schools, medical facilities, and workplaces.**

Does the entire building need to be made accessible?

Yes, it is important that the entire building is made accessible so that all users of the building including officials, staff, residents irrespective of age, gender or disability can access the premises and are benefitted from an accessible building.

- **Transportation sector-** Enhancing accessibility to a number of areas including **air travel, buses, taxis, and trains.**
- **ICT ecosystem-** Societal barriers of infrastructure, and inaccessible formats should not stand in the way of **obtaining and utilising information in daily life.** The targets set under it relate to **websites, the audio-visual media and sign language interpreter.**

As per the Census 2011, there are 2.68 crore persons with disabilities in India.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

- After India signed and ratified the **United Nations Convention on Rights for Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2007**, the process of enacting a new legislation in place of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 began in 2010 to make it compliant with UNCRPD.
- **Accessibility became a Right for the Divyangjan** unlike previously, when it was being seen merely as a welfare measure. **Non-compliance of the provisions of the Act or Rules thereunder has been made punishable** by fines and imprisonment.
- **Disability** has been **defined based on an evolving and dynamic concept.**
- In RPWD Act, 2016, the list has been expanded from 7 to 21 conditions. The 21 disabilities are given below:

Blindness	Low-vision	Leprosy Cured persons
Hearing Impairment (deaf and hard of hearing)	Locomotor Disability	Dwarfism
Intellectual Disability	Mental Illness	Autism Spectrum Disorder
Cerebral Palsy	Muscular Dystrophy	Chronic Neurological conditions
Specific Learning Disabilities	Multiple Sclerosis	Speech and Language disability
Thalassemia	Haemophilia	Sickle Cell disease
Multiple Disabilities including deafblindness	Acid Attack victim	Parkinson's disease

- RPWD Act, 2016 provides that "the appropriate **Government shall ensure that the PWDs enjoy the right to equality, life with dignity**, and respect for his or her own integrity equally with others."
- All **Government institutions of higher education and those getting aid from the Government are required to reserve at least 5% of seats** for persons with benchmark disabilities.

- Every child with benchmark disability between the age group of 6 and 18 years shall have the right to free education.
- **4% reservation in Government jobs** for certain persons or class of persons with benchmark disability.
- **Central and State Advisory Boards** on disability are to be constituted to perform various functions assigned under the Act. **District level Committees** to be constituted by the State Government.
- Creation of **National and State Fund to provide financial support** to the persons with disabilities.
- Act provides for **penalties for offences committed against persons with disabilities**.
- **Designated special Courts** to handle cases concerning violation of rights of PwDs.

ISSUES FACED BY ELDERLY

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Mains Booster: status of elderly in India, issues faced by elderly

Context:

HelpAge India conducted a national survey to investigate senior adults' social security. On the eve of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, a report based on the survey results was released.

What is the report about?

A non-governmental organisation recently performed a survey with the participation of 4,399 older adults and 2,200 carers in 22 cities.

Who Released the report?

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

What are the key findings of the report?

- **Elders' financial situation:** 52 percent of those polled claimed they didn't have enough money, and 40 percent said they didn't feel financially secure. Furthermore, 57 percent of elders stated their spending exceeded their savings, and 45 percent said their pension was insufficient to support them.
- **Senior citizens who work:** Seventy-one percent of senior persons do not work, whereas 36 percent are willing to work and 40 percent wish to work "as long as feasible." Thirty percent of the elders said they would be willing to donate their time to various social causes.
- **Elders' health coverage:** 87 percent of elders reported having access to healthcare services within walking distance. However, 78 percent of seniors cited the lack of app-based online healthcare services, and a significant 67 percent of seniors said they do not have health insurance at this vital stage in their lives, with only 13 percent covered by government insurance schemes.
- **Elder abuse:** While 59 percent of elders believe that elder abuse is "common" in society, 10% say they have been victims.

What is the significance of the report?

a) The report highlights the need to pay greater attention to the social security of senior citizens in the country. HelpAge

India has been advocating for a universal pension of ₹3,000 a month,

b) Both financial planning for later years and social security needs much greater attention at present.

What is the status of Elderly in India?

- India is currently reaping the benefits of its demographic dividend. However, by 2050, the age group over 65 will be the fastest-growing age group.
- The proportion of elderly in the entire population of the country is predicted to rise from roughly 7.5 percent in 2001 to nearly 12.5 percent by 2026, and reach 19.5 percent by 2050.
- According to the **"Elderly in India 2021" report** published by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI), India's old-age dependence ratio is expanding at an alarming rate.
- The old-age dependency ratio increased from 10.9 percent in 1961 to 14.2 percent in 2011, with projections of 15.7 percent and 20.1 percent in 2021 and 2031, respectively.

Why there is Need to protect the elderly population?

- Elderly individuals have a wealth of personal and professional experience; society as a whole needs to use that knowledge for a better tomorrow.
- They can serve as a critical generational connection for future generations, offering support and stability to families and society as a whole.
- Grandparents in joint families play an important role in passing on values and morals to the next generation. As a result, you will be helping to raise better human beings and responsible citizens.
- Recognizing the accomplishments of elders would contribute to a more age-inclusive society that does not put one generation against the next.
- Their strong cultural impressions and social experiences act as a protective shield against intolerance, violence, and hate crimes.

What are the Challenges faced by the elderly population in India?

Social Obstacles

- Due to many factors such as western education, globalisation, and the nuclear family structure, the younger generation is increasingly neglecting senior elders.

Financial difficulties:

- Pension financing is insufficient: India spends only 1% of its GDP on pensions. In their current state, India's income support systems are incapable of meeting the needs of the elderly, who make up only 8.6% of the population.
- Managing the financial costs: The Indian economy still has a long way to go in terms of reducing the fiscal expenses of an ageing population.

Health-related difficulties:

- Increased health-care costs, as well as the high prevalence of Non-Communicable Diseases, pose a financial challenge for the elderly.
- Other health-related concerns, such as blindness, deafness, mental disease, and so on, are also common among the elderly.

Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT SURVEY (NAS)

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: Finding of NAS

Prepp Mains Booster: Issue of Gender, region and community disparity

Context:

- The outcomes of the **National Achievement Survey (NAS)**, the latest edition of which was carried out in the shadow of the prolonged closure of schools due to the Covid-19 pandemic, are supposed to guide interventions by authorities across the country to bridge the learning gaps among students enrolled in Classes 3, 5, 8 and 10.

What is the National Achievement Survey?

- The NAS is a **yearly activity** that is used to **assess the health** of the country's **educational system**.
- Between 2017 and 2021, the **reading and numeracy skills of school children in India deteriorated significantly across topics and grades**, according to a nationwide survey conducted by the **Union Ministry of Education**.
- It was **created by the Ministry of Education** and the **National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT)** to offer a snapshot of learning outcomes in major topics at the end of Classes 3, 5, 8, and 10 — essentially "what students know and can accomplish."
- These classes are widely regarded as significant milestones in a child's cognitive development.

Background of NAS:

- In 2001, the first edition of NAS was published.
- The survey was supposed to be an independent project of the NCERT at first, but it was quickly **subsumed into the government's flagship programme to achieve universalization of elementary education (UEE), the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**, which has now been subsumed into the **overarching Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan**.

Current status of Survey:

- The NAS was overhauled in 2017-18 in which students from all four grades were covered on the same day for the first time. **Furthermore, instead of states, districts were designated as reporting units**, resulting in a substantially larger sample size.
- NAS cycles had a sample size of 1-2 lakh kids until 2017-18, but in 2017-18, almost 20 lakh students were covered on the same day.
- The most recent round (in 2021) included 34 lakh pupils from 1.18 lakh schools across 720 rural and urban regions.

The Learning Curve

34 lakh students assessed in November 2021

- Class-wise varied indicators
- On parameters such as reading small texts, solving simple problems, and knowledge about fundamental rights and their violations



Class in progress: Survey captures Covid disruptions.

REPORT CARD: HOW STATES FARED

■ 2017 national avg ■ 2021 national avg

CLASS III

EVS

Rajasthan	75	68
Punjab	70	62
Kerala	69	62

LANGUAGE

Punjab	75	68
Kerala	70	62
Rajasthan	69	62

MATHS

Punjab	70	64
Rajasthan	65	57
Kerala	60	57

CLASS V

EVS

Punjab	59	57
Rajasthan	57	48
J&K	54	48

LANGUAGE

Punjab	69	58
Rajasthan	63	55
J&K	61	55

MATHS

Punjab	57	53
Rajasthan	53	44
J&K	48	44

CLASS VIII

LANGUAGE

Punjab	67	57
Chandigarh	64	53
Rajasthan	61	53

MATHS

Punjab	50	42
Chandigarh	46	36
Rajasthan	46	36

SCIENCE

Punjab	50	44
Chandigarh	50	44
Rajasthan	47	39

SOCIAL SC

Punjab	49	44
Chandigarh	48	44
Rajasthan	49	39

NAS Assessment:

- Until 2015-16, the poll evaluated students' ability using the core curriculum that states and UTs used.
- In 2017-18, the focus shifted to tracking the **progress of learning outcomes as outlined in the 2017 amendments to the Right to Education Rules**.
- The questions posed by the NAS are designed to determine whether students can read and perform **basic mathematical operations that are essential in everyday life**.
- The questions range in difficulty and complexity from one grade to the next.
- The survey also tests students' understanding in topics **relating to the Indian Constitution in the higher grades**.
- The poll includes schools **run by the central, state, and local governments, as well as government-aided and private unaided schools**.
- In Classes 3 and 5, students are assessed in language, mathematics, and environmental science; in Class 8, children are assessed in language, maths, science, and social science; and in Class 10, students are assessed in maths, social science, science, and English.
- Performance has declined in all grades compared to 2017 (only Class 10 pupils were examined in 2018).**

Disparity across Region ,gender and Community-wise:

- Almost every state's performance has declined since 2017, with the exception of Punjab and Rajasthan.
- In 2021, 14 states and four UTs scored worse than the national average in Class 3, four UTs and 18 states scored lower in Class 5, and 16 states and three UTs scored lower in Class 8.
- Between **boys and girls, there were no significant differences in scores**.
- There were, **however, slight variances between communities**.

- For example, in Class 8 science, **general category pupils scored 9 points lower than SCs, STs, and OBCs, who scored 28, 26, and 19 points higher.**
- According to the Pratham Foundation, which produces the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), The NAS findings underline the need for immediate actions to boost foundational learning levels.

INDIAN UNIVERSITIES COLLABORATION WITH FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: Types of Universities

Prepp Mains Booster: Steps taken by the government to promote Distance Learning

Context:

University Grants Commission (UGC) has **simplified its approval process for local universities to collaborate with their counterparts abroad**, to offer joint degrees, dual degrees, and twinning programmes.

Collaboration with foreign universities

- Criterion for approval process-** Any Indian Higher Education Institution (HEI) accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council that has
- a minimum score of 3.01 on a 4-point scale
- or featuring in the top 1,000 of the Times Higher Education or QS World University Rankings
- or top 100 list of the National Institute Ranking Framework
- Foreign institutes willing to enter a partnership must rank in the top 1,000 in either of the two world university rankings.
- UGC's regulations **do not allow** academic collaboration with foreign institutions for **online learning and open and distance learning (ODL)**

Merits of collaboration with foreign universities for distance learning

- Increased **access, equity, and inclusion** that will broaden scope of education to facilitate multiple pathways to learning
- These programmes impart education to people for whom the regular mode of learning is a distant dream owing to **financial, personal and professional constraints.**
- These programmes are more **affordable compared to the in-person programmes** and are therefore popular among disadvantaged sections.
- Distance learning will **expose more number of students to a diverse portfolio of subjects and specialisations**
- It will give them access to **international education at low cost** without spending huge amounts in terms of fee, travel, accommodation and living expenses.
- It will translate into more **rewarding career opportunities** for students

Various types of degree granting Institutions in India:-

Central Universities	These Universities are established by the Act of Parliament and are funded by the Central Government.
-----------------------------	---

Institutions of National Importance	These Institutions are established/declared by the Act of Parliament eg IITs, NITs, IIMs
State Universities	These Universities are established by the Act of the State Legislature concerned and are funded by the State Government.
Private Universities	These Universities are established by the Act of the State Legislature concerned and are self-financing Institutions.
Institutions Deemed to be Universities	These Institutions are declared by the Notification of the Government of India, on the advice of UGC, under Section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956.

Steps taken by the government to promote distance learning

- Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA) portal and mobile app is a storehouse of a large number of **eBooks and e-Contents**
- Swayam Prabha is **a group of DTH channels devoted to telecasting quality educational programmes** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It hosts new content daily for at least 4 hours. This gets repeated 5 more times in a day, allowing students to choose the time of their convenience.
- A comprehensive initiative called **PM e-VIDYA** is launched which **unifies all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education** to enable multi-mode access to education.
- Government of India in its Budget 2022-23 has announced establishment of **Digital University**, to provide access to students across the country, for world-class quality universal education with personalised learning experience at their doorsteps in different Indian languages and ICT formats.

REPORT ON THE REFORMS IN CONTENT AND DESIGN OF SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is NCERT?

Prepp Mains Booster: proposed changes in curriculum

Context:

The **Report on the Reforms in Content and Design of School Textbooks**, was produced by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth, and Sports. The new National **Curriculum Framework is being developed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)**. The revision of school textbooks is the key component of this procedure.

What about the recent curricular changes by the government?

- The Report on the Reforms in Content and Design of School Textbooks was recently **presented by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth, and Sports.**
- The new National Curriculum Framework, which will guide the curricula of national and State educational bodies, is already being developed by the NCERT.
- **Need for Changes:**
 - To eliminate false information and misrepresentations regarding national heroes
 - Lowering the amount of content pupils must learn
 - To explain the information



What are the proposed series of curricular changes?

- According to the Report, despite the vast diversity, school textbooks present a single story to millions of children. As a result, it suggests eliminating a number of facts.
- To remove, for instance, the history of the customs at Akbar's court, such as the Persian translation of Sanskrit works like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the Rajatarangini, etc.
- The government is attempting to correct "**unhistorical facts and misconceptions regarding national heroes**" in history textbooks. It holds that the ancient era is when India's true history occurred.
- Following then, it was altered by many invasions, conflicts, and carnage, which were primarily committed by Muslims.
- According to the ideas, it would be encouraged to integrate audio-visual materials and digital content accessible via QR codes to make school textbooks more engaging for students.

What are the issues with deletion/alteration of historical contents?

- **Governmental overreach:** By removing phrases and chapters, the government tries to prevent children from learning about specific procedures.
- **Idealised picture of society**-The second objective is to sanitise textbooks in order to provide an idealised view of politics and society.
- **Restatement of the moral foundations of socio-political processes** – The deletion aims to reframe how citizens and authorities interact.
- **Rupture historical interpretations of the past:** Historical interpretations of the past are shattered by the deletions, which violently attack the concept of history.

- **Suspend critical thinking-** This story forces students to put their critical thinking about the world aside and makes the past seem rigid and statist in their minds.
- **Creating up a new history:** In this new history, some towns are made to look bad, and it portrays a fragmented historical story that is vulnerable to the demands of local attitudes.
- **Narrowing the horizon within the country:** Higher-level textbooks no longer include non-Indian contexts.
- **Information and interpretation that have been altered:** It appears that caste, class, and gender discrimination in ancient Indian society are being glossed over.

What should be the way forward?

- The historians of New India should recreate the past in a way that would forge a "national community" that would transcend caste and community distinctions and whose members would be governed by national laws.
- The history of India is incredibly intricate and varied. It is unfair to lump it into basic histories of the enlightenment and dark eras.

AYUSHMAN BHARAT DIGITAL MISSION

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is ABDM; Heal by India initiative

Prepp Mains Booster: issue in implementing the initiatives

Context:

Recently, the Union Government announced it is building a comprehensive online repository of all varieties of healthcare providers in the country as part of the **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission** and the "Heal by India" initiative.



What is Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission?

- All Indian people will receive digital health IDs as part of this initiative, which will enable hospitals, insurance companies, and individuals to electronically access medical records as needed.
- On August 15, 2020, the Prime Minister revealed the Mission's pilot project from the Red Fort's ramparts.
- Six States and Union Territories are participating in the project's pilot phase.

Features of the mission:

- Every Indian citizen will now have a **unique health ID**, digitised health records with identifiers for doctors and healthcare facilities, and a digital health ecosystem.

- The Ayushman Bharat **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana** will oversee the programme.
- **HealthID, DigiDoctor, Health Facility Registry, Personal Health Records, e-Pharmacy**, and Telemedicine are its six main building blocks.
- The mission will be developed, deployed, and carried out in the nation by the **National Health Authority**.
- Equal opportunity will be given to private players to integrate and produce their own goods for the market.

What is the 'Heal by India' initiative?

'Heal by India' initiative is **meant to generate job opportunities abroad for India's trained professionals** in the health sector and enhance education to churn out quality human resources in health, thus helping them become eligible to work anywhere in the world.

What is the recent move about?

- According to reports, the Center is creating a **comprehensive online repository of every type of health-care worker** in the nation as part of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission and the "Heal by India" initiative.
- Such an initiative is urgently needed due to the fragmented state of data related to healthcare professionals.
- The main goal is to assist external parties, such as foreign patients and employers, in identifying the best Indian match for their individual requirements..

What are the reasons for such a move?

Soft power projection:

- India aspires to project its soft power through healthcare services in the post-COVID-19 age. The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), in reality, seeks to enhance international trade in medical and healthcare services.

What are the problems with creating an online repository of healthcare professionals?

- The main goal of developing an online repository is to assist external stakeholders, such as overseas patients and employers, in discovering the best Indian match for their individual requirements.
- **The relocation may result in worsening the country's position by way of exodus of medical healthcare personnel. The nation's own health interests will suffer as a result of this.**
- The plan suggests deregulation in the healthcare industry, which is contrary to accepted wisdom in the field.
- India has a deficit of medical professionals, according to a research by the WHO and the Public Health Foundation of India, to reach the required minimum ratio of healthcare professionals to the population, India needs to hire roughly two million more physicians and nurses.
- The skill mix of health professionals in India is uneven across a number of States.
- **By 2030, the density or skill mix of healthcare professionals is not projected to have changed significantly from their current rate of increase.**
- Some health care workers continue to be inactive and out of the workforce.

What are the other important measures taken by the government?

Focus has been placed on training various cadres of healthcare workers in the Union health Budget 2022. The government will make use of the district and sub-district levels' current capabilities. The Fifteenth Finance Commission advocated for such a course of action.

Way Forward

- The latter **need significant training investments** and represent a net outflow of resources from the home nation, thus the government should make a distinction between exporting things like vaccines and health-care workers.
- Additionally, **India cannot afford to spend its limited resources on medical tourism**. In developing nations like India, where health equity has already deteriorated, it will get worse.
- Since the nation is currently experiencing a severe lack of healthcare personnel, **now is not the time to seek medical tourism and out-migration**.
- At the national and sub-national levels, a healthcare professional online registration would be helpful.
- The advantages are:
 - The availability, distribution, and skill mix of the health workforce are very uneven.
 - Measures like an integrated public health cadre would benefit greatly from this.
 - The efforts will also assist with the training, use, and retention of more local labour.
- The objectives of national health should not be compromised by political, geographical, or cultural chauvinism.

India and its neighbourhood- relations.

INDIA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: Indus Water Treaty

Prepp Mains Booster: Recent developments and Way Forward in India-Pak Relations

Context:

Recently, the official delegation from Pakistan visited New Delhi to hold talks with its Indian counterparts. This was done under the aegis of the Indus Water Treaty. In this context some scholar analyses the present situation in India - Pakistan Bilateral relation.



What are the Recent Developments in India- Pak relations?

- Under the World Food Programme, India has been providing wheat consignments to Taliban-run Afghanistan via Pakistan.
- The Indian leadership has not targeted Pakistan as an enemy country since the Ladakh border crisis on the Line of Actual Control with China in the summer of 2020.
- In February 2021, the Indian and Pakistani army agreed to renew the truce along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir.

What are the possible challenges?

- Pakistan has set two requirements for re-engagement:
 - the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood, and
 - a statement of no demographic shift in the Kashmir Valley.
- Yasin Malik, a Kashmiri separatist leader, was recently sentenced. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation issued a strong statement of criticism in response to his imprisonment (OIC)
- Pakistan's environment is not conducive to constructive change. Domestic politics [Imran Khan gaining popularity against the elite], an economy in shambles, and other issues are causing problems.
- Pakistan and India are both nuclear-armed states that have threatened to fire missiles at each other after a series of disasters.

What is Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)?

It was signed in 1960 as a water-distribution arrangement between India and Pakistan. It develops plans to utilise the Indus and its tributaries as a source of water.

Indus Water Treaty:

- On September 19, 1960, it was signed in Karachi. The World Bank mediated the agreement.
- The treaty establishes a platform for information exchange between the two countries. It concerns the use of Pakistan's western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab) as well as India's eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej).
- It lets each country use the rivers that have been assigned to them for specific uses such as agriculture and hydroelectricity.
- The cooperative system is overseen by the Permanent Indus Commission. It ensures that the two countries meet once a year to discuss the treaty's numerous issues.

What are the challenges in implementation of the treaty?

- High politics have engulfed India-Pakistan relations, resulting in a political impasse between the two countries.
- The technical design elements of one or both hydroelectric dams have been a source of contention for both countries.
 - Although India is allowed to build hydroelectric power projects on western rivers, Pakistan has opposed the Kishanganga and Ratle plants, which are located on Jhelum and Chenab tributaries, respectively.
 - Pakistan has objected to the building and technical designs of the Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai hydro-electric stations, which are located on the Chenab's tributary, the Marusudar River.

- India has also expressed worry about Pakistan's obstruction of the Fazilka drain, which has resulted in water contamination in border areas.
- Pakistan urged the World Bank to help establish a Court of Arbitration to address conflicts over the Kishanganga and Ratle HEP plants, while India requested the appointment of a Neutral Expert on the Settlement of Differences and Disputes under the Treaty.
- As a result, the World Bank named a neutral expert and a chairman for the arbitration court. However, no satisfactory answer has been developed.

What are the achievements of the IWT?

- Despite their differences, both countries have thus far attempted to resolve all such situations amicably. Both parties have pledged to carry out the deal in its entirety.
- The treaty exemplifies a long-standing relationship between the two nations that has withstood the test of time.
- It has endured challenges, even war, and has served as a foundation for collaboration.
- The treaty is regarded as one of the region's and the world's oldest and most effective examples of water management cooperation. The 118th bilateral meeting, for example, attests to its efficacy.

Way Forward

Potential for cooperation

- The accord has the potential to aid in the fight against climate change. For 'future cooperation,' India and Pakistan might do cooperative river research to assess the impact of climate change.
- The treaty has a lot of potential for cooperation, prosperity, and maintaining peace and stability in the Indian subcontinent.
- Through frequent communication and interaction, the treaty can serve as a reference point for resolving other water-related challenges in the region.

Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC CO-OPERATION

Priority: Low



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: OIC Countries

Prepp Mains Booster: Significance of OIC to India

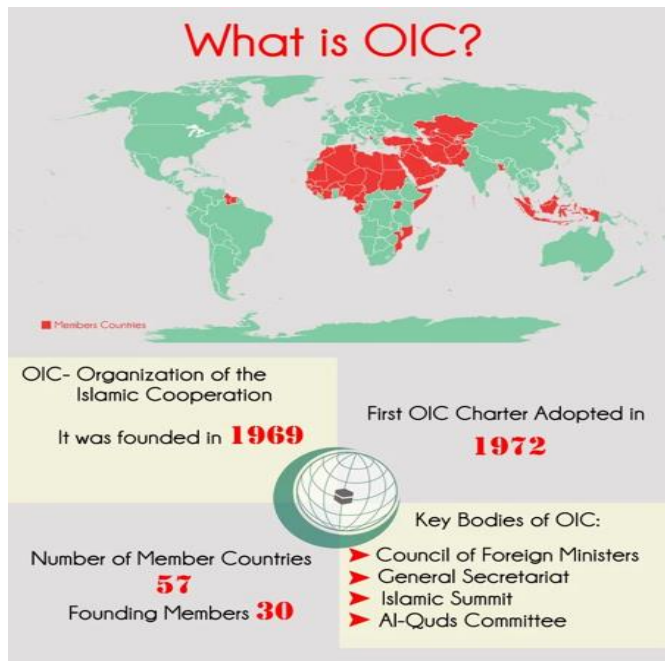
Context:

- India hit out at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) after it condemned the derogatory comments made by two BJP leaders on Prophet Muhammed and Islam.
- The official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs said the OIC's comments are "misleading and mischievous".

What is Organisation of Islamic Cooperation?

- With 57 member states, the OIC is the second largest international organisation after the United Nations.
- It is the Muslim world's unified voice.

- In the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among all peoples, it strives to promote and protect the interests of the Muslim world.
- Following an incident of arson at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem by a 28-year-old Australian in 1969, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference was created by the First Islamic Summit Conference in Morocco in September 1969 to marshal the Islamic world.
- Jeddah, Saudi Arabia is the headquarters.



Key Bodies in OIC:

Islamic Summit

- The OIC's top authority is the Islamic Summit, which brings together kings, heads of state, and governments from member states.
- It meets every three years to deliberate, make policy choices, provide direction on matters relating to the achievement of goals, and consider other topics that concern Member States and the Ummah.

Council Of Foreign Ministers:

- The Council of Foreign Ministers meets once a year and considers the means for the implementation of the OIC's general policy by adopting decisions and resolutions on matters of common interest in the implementation of the OIC's objectives and general policy, and reviewing progress in the implementation of decisions and resolutions adopted at previous Islamic Summits and Councils of Foreign Ministers.
- The CFM considers and approves the programme

General Secretariat

- The General Secretariat is the OIC's executive organ, tasked with putting OIC decision-making bodies' decisions into action.
- The Secretary General is in charge of it.
- The General Secretariat is made up of numerous departments that help the OIC run smoothly on a daily basis.

What is the Status of India's relationship with OIC as an organisation?

- India had been invited to the founding convention in Rabat in 1969 as the country with the world's second biggest Muslim population, but was humiliatingly removed at Pakistan's request.
- As India's economy strengthened and its relations with the United States improved, Saudi Arabia invited Delhi to join as an observer in 2006.
- India, on the other hand, declined to join, claiming that it did not wish to join a religious organisation. Second, there was a concern that under a grouping, mending bilateral relations with individual member states would be pressed, particularly on matters like Kashmir.
- Saudi Arabia dominates the OIC, although Pakistan, as the only Islamic country with nuclear weapons, has had a significant say since its creation.

What are the Changes in Relationships?

- India has been confident in riding over any declaration by the grouping after forming tight ties with major members such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia.
- India has repeatedly stated that J&K is a "integral part of India" and that the problem is "strictly internal to India," and that the OIC has no jurisdiction over the region.
- India made its first visit as a "guest of honour" at the OIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting in 2019.
- Bangladesh and the Maldives, two of India's closest neighbours, are members of the OIC. Both countries privately concede that they do not want their bilateral relations with India to be complicated over Kashmir.
- India has stayed out for a variety of reasons:
 - It did not wish to be a part of a religious organisation.
 - There was a concern that a grouping would put pressure on individual member states to improve bilateral relations, particularly on matters like Kashmir.
- Bangladesh, which hosted the 45th session of the Foreign Ministers' Summit in 2018, proposed that India, which is home to more than 10% of the world's Muslims, be granted Observer status, but Pakistan objected.

What is the Significance of OIC for India?

- The OIC's growing economic and energy interdependence on India has become increasingly critical in recent years.
- India maintains solid bilateral relations with practically all of the other members. Relationships with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

BIMSTEC

Priority: High

Primary Source: The Hindu

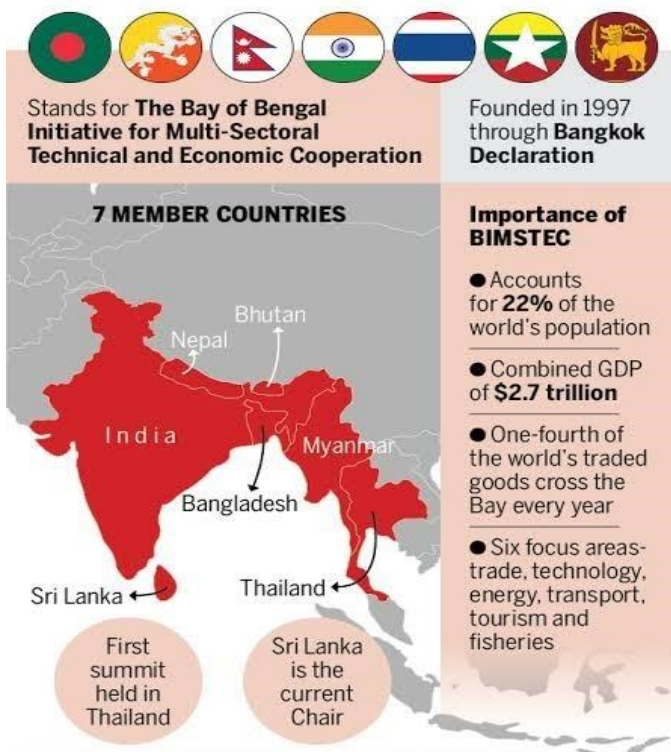
Prepp Prelims Booster: BIMSTEC Countries; Recent Summits
Prepp Mains Booster: Need of BIMSTEC; difference compared to other groups and Challenges

Context:

On June 6, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) completed 25 years.

BIMSTEC

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW



What is BIMSTEC?

- BIMSTEC is a multilateral regional organisation founded with the goal of boosting shared growth and collaboration in the Bay of Bengal region's littoral and surrounding countries.
- Members:** It consists of **seven countries**: five from South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka), and two from Southeast Asia (Myanmar and Thailand).
- It was created as BIST-EC in June 1997, with Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand as members, following the acceptance of the Bangkok Declaration.
- Expansion:** When Myanmar joined in late 1997, it was renamed BIMST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand Economic Cooperation), and it was eventually renamed BIMSTEC when Nepal and Bhutan joined in 2004.
- The first BIMSTEC Summit took place on July 31, 2004, and the organization's headquarters are located in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

What was the need of Grouping?

- Until the early twentieth century, the Bay of Bengal region was one of the world's most integrated regions.
- The region's feeling of community has almost completely dissolved since the 1940s, when residents of the region became independent and pursued distinct aims and alliance systems.
- As a result, the goal of forming the regional grouping was not to create a new region for collaboration, but to restore the Bay of Bengal region's connection and common interests.
- As a result, BIMSTEC serves as a link between South Asia and Southeast Asia, strengthening ties between the two regions.

What is the difference from other regional groupings?

- BIMSTEC is distinct from other regional groups such as SAARC or ASEAN since it is a sector-driven organisation.
- This means that members divide up areas of cooperation among themselves, such as trade, energy, transportation, fisheries, security, culture, tourism, and so on.
- BIMSTEC has continued to organise summits and meetings of Foreign Ministers beyond 2014, unlike the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
- BIMSTEC has conducted five summits so far, compared to the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), which has only held one since its founding in 1997. It has now agreed to meet every two years for regular summits.

Resurgence after 2016

- India is making a new push.
- Following the Uri incident (on an Indian military facility) in October 2016, India redoubled its efforts to promote the BIMSTEC.
- The BIMSTEC countries have backed India's proposal for a boycott of the SAARC meeting slated for November 2016 in Islamabad.
- As a result, the SAARC summit was postponed indefinitely, and India shifted its focus to other regional organisations such as BIMSTEC and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

What are the key achievements?

- Sectoral collaboration:** The organisation has made headway in combating terrorism, building security cooperation, and developing procedures and practises for better humanitarian and disaster relief management.
- Functional cooperation:** In fields including agriculture, trade, sustainable development, and connectivity, a slew of memorandums of understanding, agreements, and legal instruments lay the groundwork for expanding functional cooperation.
- Institutional framework:** To promote sectoral cooperation, institutions such as the Energy Centre and the Centre for Weather and Climate have been established.
- A new Charter has been drafted. The charter outlines the grouping's vision, as well as the roles of its member parts, and establishes legal personality.
- The sectors of collaboration have been prioritised. The number of sectors has been reduced from 14 to seven. Each member state will be designated as the sector's lead country.
- It has taken steps to improve the Secretariat's capabilities.
- Unlike the SAARC, BIMSTEC has continued to organise summits and Foreign Ministers meetings after 2014.
- In battling terrorism and developing security cooperation, the grouping has made strides. It has put in place structures and procedures to improve the management of humanitarian aid and disaster relief.
- To foster sectoral cooperation, the organisation has developed institutions such as an Energy Centre and a Centre on Weather and Climate.

What are the challenges?

- The constraints of South Asian countries have hampered BIMSTEC. As a result, it **grew slowly**.

- The geopolitics and geo-economics of the region are defined by the strategic competition between the United States and China in the twenty-first century. It's causing **new conflicts and opening up new possibilities**.
- Between member countries, there are internal tensions. The **flood of Rohingyas into Bangladesh, Myanmar's military coup**, which has resulted in a virtual boycott by a huge portion of the world community, and Sri Lanka's political and economic turmoil are just a few examples.
- Despite signing the Framework Agreement 18 years ago, it has yet to develop a **comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**.
- Despite summit declarations, concerned ministries and authorities have been unable to take action.
- **Infrastructure** (roads, rails, aviation, river, and coastal shipping linkages), energy, the digital and financial sphere, and institutions have all had weak connectivity. Despite the Asian Development Bank's backing for the Master Plan for Connectivity, this has happened (ADB).
- **Bilateral measures to expand transportation linkages**, such as those undertaken by India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan, have also been significantly delayed.
- The coalition has yet to begin working on the **Blue Economy**.

Way Forward

- Greater regional connectivity will necessitate more financial resources. It is possible to start the BIMSTEC Development Fund.
- The Bay of Bengal Community's (BOBC) vision should be realised. In this Indo-Pacific century, it has the potential to play a critical role in deepening links between South Asia and Southeast Asia.
- To promote the region's economic development, partnership with the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) is possible.
- Bangladesh, as the home of the BIMSTEC Secretariat, Thailand, as the representative of Southeast Asia, and India, as the largest state in South Asia, have specific responsibilities.

INDIA AND VIETNAM SIGN MUTUAL LOGISTICS AGREEMENT

Priority: **Medium**



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Mains Booster: impact of logistics agreement

Context:

Recently, India's Defence Minister was on a visit to Vietnam, where India and Vietnam have signed important agreements.



What are the key highlights of his visit?

Key Highlights:

Joint Vision Statement on India-Vietnam Defence Partnership towards 2030

- A Joint Vision Statement on India-Vietnam Defence Partnership for 2030 was signed by India and Vietnam.
- The document will expand the scope and extent of existing defence cooperation significantly.

\$500 million Defence Line of Credit extended to Vietnam

- India and Vietnam also agreed on the early finalisation of the \$500 million Defence Line of Credit extended to Vietnam.
- The implementation of the projects shall add substantially to Vietnam's Defence capabilities.
- It will also push India's vision of Make In India, Make for the World.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Mutual Logistics Support

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Mutual Logistics Support was also signed between India and Vietnam.
- It is the first time Vietnam has inked a big agreement with another country.
- In turn, India has reciprocal logistics agreements with a number of nations, including the United States, Australia, Japan, France, South Korea, and Singapore.
- This arrangement will allow their military to repair and replace supplies at each other's bases.

India's help towards setting up of Language and IT Lab

- India will also donate two simulators and a monetary grant, according to the Indian Defense Minister.
- It will be utilised to strengthen the capacity of the Vietnamese Armed Forces by establishing a Language and IT Lab at the Air Force Officers Training School.

What are Logistics Agreements?

- Administrative agreements are logistics agreements. They make it easier to acquire access to military installations in order to exchange fuel and establish mutually agreed-upon agreements. These agreements increase the military's operational turnaround time when operating outside of India by streamlining logistical assistance.
- India has inked various logistics agreements with Quad countries, France, Singapore, and South Korea, beginning with the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement with the United States in 2016.

What are India – Vietnam Relations?

Background:

- India and Vietnam have had traditionally close bilateral relations due to their long history of cultural and civilizational ties and mutual origins in the fight against colonialism.
- India presided over the International Commission for Supervision and Control.
- This group was constituted by the Geneva Accord of 1954 to assist in the peace process in Vietnam.

The Relationship upgraded to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

- India has consulate-level connections with both North and South Vietnam at the time.

- In January 1972, it established full diplomatic relations with the newly united Vietnam.
- India and Vietnam will commemorate the 50th anniversary of their diplomatic relations in 2022.
- In July 2007, the two countries' relations were raised to the level of "Strategic Partnership."
- Bilateral relations were elevated to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" in 2016, during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Vietnam.

Peace, Prosperity, and People: A Shared Vision

- A Joint Vision for Peace, Prosperity, and People guides contemporary developments in India-Vietnam ties.
- In December 2020, it was adopted at the first-ever India-Vietnam Virtual Summit.

Cooperation in trade and economics

- In the fiscal year 2012-23, bilateral trade between India and Vietnam increased by 27% to US\$ 14.14 billion.
- Indian exports to Vietnam was US\$ 6.70 billion, compared to US\$ 7.44 billion in purchases from Vietnam.
- Vietnam was India's 23rd largest trading partner globally in FY 2021-22, and the fourth largest within ASEAN, after Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia.
- The total value of India's investments in Vietnam is estimated to be over US\$ 1.9 billion, including those made through other countries.
 - India ranked 25th among countries and territories investing in Vietnam as of December 2021, with 313 valid projects for a total of US\$ 910.4 million.
 - As of 2021, Vietnam has six investment projects in India, totaling US\$ 28.55 million in investment
- Pharmaceuticals, information technology, chemicals, and building materials are the main areas of Vietnamese investment.

Partnership for Development

Projects with a Quick Impact (QIPs)

- India has been taking up QIPs in several provinces of Vietnam for the development of community infrastructure under the Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) framework. Each QIP is worth \$50,000.
- Since 2017, 27 QIPs have been completed in 23 Vietnamese provinces, while 10 additional projects are now being implemented in 10 provinces.

Cooperation in capacity building, training programmes, and scholarships

- Over the years, India has offered almost 3000 Vietnamese participants short-term courses in Indian institutions as part of its capacity-building support under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme.
- Vietnam is another of our e-ITEC partner countries with which we have ongoing programmes.

Cultural Conservation Projects in Vietnam

- India is donating \$2.25 million in technical assistance to Vietnam's Cultural Conservation Projects for the conservation and repair of ancient Cham sites.
- It is being carried out at the My Son World Heritage Site in Vietnam's Quang Nam Province.

Defense Cooperation

- The basic institutional framework is provided by the MoU on Defense Cooperation signed in 2009 and the Joint Vision on Defense Cooperation signed in 2015.
- The partnership is further strengthened by the recently signed Joint Vision Statement on India-Vietnam Defense

Partnership for 2030 and the Memorandum of Understanding on Mutual Logistics Support.

- Defence Policy Dialogue at the Deputy Ministerial level, Services Staff discussions, and High-Level Meetings between the Coast Guards are all part of the well-established bilateral annual exchange system.
- Another important area of our cooperation is cooperation in UN Peacekeeping Operations.

INDIA-RUSSIA: 75 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Mains Booster: Current Status of Indo-Russian Partnership; Achievements and Challenges in India – Russia Partnership

Context:

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two nations, Russian Ambassador to India Denis Alipov made the remarks that 'Russia deeply cherishes equal and respectful relations with India' in the Russia Digest magazine.



What is the present status of Relationship?

- India and Russia have enjoyed good relations since 1947. India and the Soviet Union signed the **Treaty of Peace and Friendship** in 1971 which was the manifestation of the shared goals of the two nations as well as a blueprint for the strengthening of regional and global peace and security.
- India and Russia signed a new Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in January 1993, and a bilateral Military-Technical Cooperation agreement in 1994, following the disintegration of the Soviet Union.
- Both countries **formed a Strategic Partnership in 2000**. The Strategic Partnership was upgraded to a "**Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership**" in 2010.

What are the areas of cooperation?

Political Relations

- The Annual Summit Meeting between India's Prime Minister and Russia's President is the highest-level institutionalised dialogue mechanism in the strategic cooperation between the two countries.
- The order of St Andrew the Apostle, Russia's highest state decoration, was recently bestowed upon Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Two Inter-Governmental Commissions:

- Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC),
- Military-Technical Cooperation (IRIGC- MTC), meet annually

Economic Relations

- Both countries' bilateral trade is focused in important value-chain sectors.
- Machinery, electronics, aerospace, automobiles, commercial shipping, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and other highly varied segments are included in these sectors.
- By 2025, the two countries want bilateral investment to reach \$50 billion and bilateral trade to reach \$30 billion.
- Between January and September of this year, total bilateral commerce between the two countries was USD 7.55 billion.

Defence partnership

- Military-technical cooperation between India and Russia has progressed from a buyer-seller model to one that includes collaborative research, development, and manufacture of modern defence technologies and systems.
- From October 19 to 29, 2017, Vladivostok hosted the first-ever Tri-Services exercise, dubbed "INDRA 2017."
- The BrahMos Cruise Missile programme, the Sukhoi Su-30, and the Tactical Transport Aircraft are only a few of the key defence partnership programmes.

Energy Security

- In the energy sector, Russia has built nuclear reactors in India (Kudankulam reactors), adopted a nuclear energy strategic vision, and offered oil, gas, and investment opportunities in Russia's fuel sector, such as Sakhalin I and others.
- India and Russia have the ability to create a nuclear reactor specifically for developing countries, which is a prospective field for collaboration.
- The joint venture between India's Reliance Industries Ltd. and Russia's Sibur, the country's largest petrochemicals producer, exemplifies the two countries' energy transformation cooperation.
- Both sides are looking at the possibility of constructing a hydrocarbon pipeline infrastructure that connects Russia and India.

Space technology

- In the sphere of space, India and Russia have a four-decade strong relationship.
- India's first two satellites, Aryabhata and Bhaskar, were launched by the erstwhile Soviet Union.
- India has received cryogenic technology from Russia in order to manufacture large rockets. In terms of space collaboration, the Soviet Union and India have a long history of cooperation.
- The two countries inked a collaborative lunar exploration agreement in November 2007.
- The ISRO and the Russian Federal Space Agency proposed Chandrayaan-2 as a collaborative lunar exploration project (RKA).
- Both are working together for the next Gaganyaan Mission.

Cultural Cooperation

- Both countries have had good cultural relations, ranging from people-to-people contacts (via programmes like

'Namaste Russia') to sharing educational excellence through institutes like the Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Centre.

- Indian dance, music, yoga, and Ayurveda have a considerable following among Russians.
- Because both Russia and India want a multipolar world, they are equally crucial in achieving each other's national goals. However, because of the changing geopolitical landscape, the relationship between the two countries is no longer as strong as it was during the Cold War.

What are the recent trends in bilateral ties?

- Despite our greatest efforts, divergences in this bilateral relationship are developing as underlying structural shifts in the international environment draw the two countries apart.
- Even in the past, the two have attempted to base their bilateral relations in the larger realities of a shifting global power balance.
- With the US changing the rules of global governance to address China's rising power, there is renewed concern that India and Russia need greater coordination in foreign policies to preserve their relations in the changing global order.
- Of course, India and Russia have a long-standing relationship, but it is changing in light of rapidly changing geopolitical realities.

What are the divergences in bilateral relations?

- While the two countries' senior leaders have continued to communicate with one another, divergences have emerged with alarming regularity.
- What should worry India is Russia's growing inclination toward Pakistan in order to earn favour with China.

Military-defence Complex

- Russia is the dominant supplier of arms to India, with the historic military and defence ties. Strains in relations are becoming apparent as India moves with military indigenization and import diversification.
- India's purchases from the United States and France have also been viewed as a point of contention between the two countries.
- This was due to Russian sources' unreliability, as seen by late deliveries, damaged parts, and ongoing disputes over pricing and warranties.

India-US ties

- Rapidly expanding links and a strengthening defence cooperation between India and the United States, as well as India's membership in the QUAD group led by the United States, has pushed Russia's foreign policy to align with China.
- The signing of the long-awaited Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) as well as other security-related agreements is expected to boost bilateral defence cooperation and provide India with access to advanced US defence technologies.
- Another positive outcome for India was Washington's declared solidarity on the problem of terrorism during the talks.
- However, a closer engagement with the U.S. is a challenge for India, as this relationship is not likely to be a partnership of equals, for the foreseeable future.

One Dimensional Trade

- The majority of India-Russia trade has been in the defence sector.
- Other obstacles to expanding commerce include a variety of factors that stymie India-Russia trade, such as connectivity issues, distance, insufficient banking links, onerous regulations on both sides, and Russia's stringent visa regime.

Change in Russia's foreign policy posture

- Russia is shifting its stance toward Pakistan, China, and even the Taliban.
- Pakistan – held a military exercise and inked a military-technical cooperation agreement for the supply of armaments and weapon development.
- China – strengthening strategic military ties; Russia providing advanced military technology to China; and embracing China's One Belt, One Road initiative.

Differences over the Indo-Pacific

- The Indo-Pacific idea is not well understood by both India and Russia.
- Russia is opposed to the phrase Indo-Pacific because it refers to a US-led endeavour aimed at containing China and Russia.
- The notion of QUAD is not accepted in Russia. Russia, on the other hand, is a proponent of the Asia Pacific paradigm.

What are the Steps taken to address the downturn in the relationship?

- **Sochi Informal Summit 2018:** The two have upped their strategic alliance to a "special privileged strategic partnership."
- **Reinforced defense ties:** Both countries completed deals for Su-400 air defence systems and a nuclear-powered submarine (Chakra III), as well as the manufacture of Ka-226 helicopters in India as part of the Make in India project.
- **India's Improving Trade Relations:** Russia The Strategic Economic Dialogue began in 2018 with the purpose of achieving a \$30 billion investment goal between the two countries by 2025.
- India took part in the Eastern Economic Forum (2020), which aims to help Russia's resource-rich Far East's economic growth.
- For the development of this region, India has granted a \$1 billion line of credit. There has also been a suggestion for a sea connection between Chennai and Vladivostok.
- **Strengthening Energy Cooperation:** Cooperation in the oil development in Russia, especially the arctic shelf, as well as cooperative development of projects on the Pechora and Okhotsk Seas shelf.
- Both parties urged for the building of the International North-South Transport Corridor to improve connectivity (INSTC).

What are the Recent Developments?

As Russia declares war on Ukraine, the impact will also be on the recovering economies around the world, including India.

India's position on the Ukraine issue:

- On the issue of Russian assaults against Ukraine, New Delhi has chosen a subtly pro-Moscow stance.

- India's Russia tilt should be viewed not only as a result of its long-standing alliance with Moscow, but also as a geopolitical necessity.
- The "China problem" is India's problem, and it requires help from both the US/West and Russia to solve it.

What are the implications of the war in Ukraine for India?

- It will bolster China's territorial ambitions: Russia's actions in Ukraine, which reject the concerns of the rest of the international community, including the United States, would undoubtedly bolster China's territorial ambitions.
- Russia's sanctions will have an influence on India's defence cooperation: India's defence cooperation with Russia may be impacted by the new sanctions system.
- China-Russia axis: The longer the conflict continues, the closer China and Russia will get, which will be detrimental to India.
- The focus will shift away from the Indo-Pacific: The more acrimonious the US-Russia competition grows, the less attention will be paid to the Indo-Pacific and China, which are India's primary concerns.

Way Forward

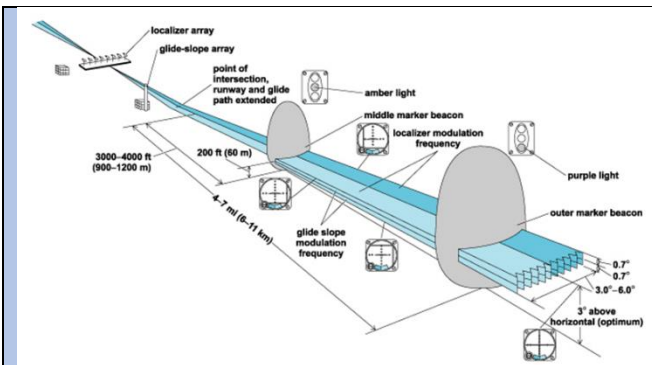
- India and Russia must assess their respective strengths and shared concerns, such as the development of collaborative initiatives in foreign nations.
- Eurasia as a focal point: India and Russia must investigate their options in the Eurasian continent.
- India must take use of Russia's ability to assist India in becoming defence self-sufficient.
- India must **strike a balance between its relations with Russia, China, and the United States:** After the US conducted a Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOP) in India's Exclusive Economic Zone.
- For the development of India's challenges, India must make use of Russia's scientific and technology basis.
- **Cooperation at Multilateral Forums:** Strengthening ties through multilateral organisations such as the BRICS, RIC, G20, East Asia Summit, and SCO, where possibilities for cooperation on mutually important topics exist.
- **Incorporating Russia into the Indo-Pacific narrative:** India should actively pursue and assist Russia's participation in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Prioritizing RIC in Indian Foreign Policy:** India must encourage mutually advantageous trilateral collaboration between Russia, India, and China, which could help to reduce mistrust and suspicion between the three nations.

India-Russia sign Radio Equipment deal

What is the contract all about?

- For the modernisation of 24 Indian airports, the Russian company RTS will manufacture 34 sets of Instrument Landing System (ILS)-734.
 - RTS is the world's largest radio equipment supplier.
- The contract was signed amid the conflict in Ukraine and Western pressure on India to diversify its defence dependency.
- The contract's successful completion will open up new possibilities for cooperative projects to improve India's airport infrastructure.

What is an Instrument Landing System (ILS)?



- The Instrument Landing System (ILS) is a standard precision landing assist developed by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). It is used to deliver accurate azimuth and descent guidance signals to aircraft for landing on the runway in normal or unfavourable weather circumstances.
- In Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) conditions, the instrument landing system facility is a very accurate and dependable means of getting to the runway.
- The ILS provides the necessary lateral and vertical guidance for a precision approach to be flown.
- The pilot may execute a precision approach once all components of the ILS system, including the approved approach procedure, are accessible.

BRICS VIRTUAL SUMMIT

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is BRICS

Prepp Mains Booster: Significance of BRICS

Context:

- A virtual meeting of the leaders of the BRICS countries will be hosted by Chinese President Xi Jinping. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to attend.
- China is eager for the grouping to expand and recruit additional members from underdeveloped countries.
- Leaders of invited emerging countries are anticipated to attend the upcoming summit under the "BRICS Plus" format.

What is BRICS?

- BRICS is an acronym for the grouping of the world's leading emerging economies, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- The BRICS Leaders' Summit has convened annually. It does not exist in form of an organization, but it is an annual summit between the supreme leaders of five nations.

When it came to inception?

- **Jim O'Neill, a British economist and then-chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management**, invented the acronym "BRIC" to represent the four emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China on November 30, 2001.
- He argued for BRIC based on econometric estimates that predicted the four economies would occupy significantly more economic space individually and collectively in the next 50 years or so and become among the world's greatest economies.



How it is formed?

- The grouping was constituted during the inaugural meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers in September 2006, which took place on the side-lines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.
- **In 2009, the Russian Federation hosted the first BRIC Summit**, which focused on themes such as global financial architecture reform.

Who are the members?

- In **December 2010, South Africa was asked to join BRIC**, and the group's acronym was changed to BRICS. In March 2011, South Africa attended the **Third BRICS Summit in Sanya, China**.
- According to the formula B-R-I-C-S, the chairmanship of the forum is rotated annually among the members.

What is the significance of the BRICS?

- It's a collection of the world's fastest-growing emerging and developing economies that seek to join the developed world's and global economic architecture.
- The significance of the BRICS is self-evident: **they account for 42% of the global population, 30% of land area, 24% of global GDP, and 16% of international trade.**
- **The G-20 includes the five BRICS countries.**

BRICS 2022

- In **January 2022, India handed over the BRICS Chairmanship to China**. For the year 2021, India has the chair.
- BRICS 2022's theme is **'Foster High-Quality BRICS Partnership Usher in a New Era for Global Development.'**
- **Events:** This year's summit will have a total of 25 events. As part of the BRICS Science Technology Innovation Steering Committee, India will host five events this year.

What is BRICS+?

About:

- It was proposed for **the first time by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in 2017**, with the goal of broadening the scope of BRICS to foster unity among developing countries and strengthen **South-South cooperation**.

Objective:

- The initiative aims to broaden the BRICS countries' outreach to the Global South and foster greater

collaboration with emerging markets and developing countries (EMDCs).

Why is it not a permanent arrangement?

- The BRICS Plus arrangement has **yet to be institutionalised** due to a lack of consensus among the grouping.
- **China's hegemony in BRICS**, as well as its growing influence in the Global South, has alarmed the other four members.
- China hopes to **forge regional and bilateral ties** across continents through the agreement, which might help it advance its **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.

Way Forward

- **Stabilizing the world:** The BRICS countries should play a key role in bringing the world's current events under control, particularly the Russia-Ukraine crisis.
- **Ensure a stable macroeconomy:** By leveraging NDB, CRA, and AIIB, it may considerably contribute to global economic growth and stability. By efficiently utilising the platform, it will be able to break the impasse in the Ukraine region and unclog the supply chain, restoring regular prices and supplies.
- **After the epidemic, the world is not the same as it was before.** The forum should use its influence-to-influence changes in developing-world government so that they can properly recover from the pandemic's aftermath.
- **Reforming the UNSC:** Because it is committed to a multipolar world, it should work tirelessly to change the UNSC so that it reflects the geopolitical paradigm of today's globe.

PARTNERSHIP FOR GLOBAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT (PGII)

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is G7; What is Belt and Road Initiative; What is PGII

Prepp Mains Booster: India and PGII

Context:

- US President Joe Biden and other G7 leaders formally **launched in Germany the Partnership for Global Infrastructure (PGII)**.
- **The 48th G7 summit** is being held in Germany.
 - To challenge China's leading trade and infrastructure push, the G7 group established the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII).



What are the key highlights of the summit?

Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) launched

- By using its economic weight to extend its diplomatic tentacles into the most remote corners of the globe, communist China has left a significant gap that PGII seeks to fill.
- By 2027, this alliance aims to raise \$600 billion for international infrastructure projects in developing nations.
- By 2027, the United States is expected to contribute \$200 billion, with the remaining G7 nations contributing an additional \$400 billion.
- Private enterprises' willingness to make substantial investments would be a key factor in determining how much money will be allocated to this endeavour.

Decided to prohibit the import of gold from Russia

- Russian gold imports were prohibited by the US and the other G7 nations in an effort to undermine one of Moscow's main sources of income while it continues to wage war in Ukraine.
- A significant export that brings in tens of billions of dollars for Russia is gold.
- It would assist in further cutting off Russia from the world financial system.

What is Partnership for Global Infrastructure (PGII)?

- The G7 leaders expressed their intention to create a transparent, high-impact, values-driven infrastructure cooperation at the 2021 G7 Summit.
- It served to promote the economic and national security goals of the US and its allies while also addressing the significant infrastructure needs of low- and middle-income countries.
- The Partnership for Global Infrastructure was formally formed by the participating leaders at the G7 meeting in 2022. (PGII).
- In accordance with this, the G7 leaders agreed to raise \$600 billion in both public and private funding over the course of five years to finance the infrastructure that emerging nations require.

Aim:

- To construct infrastructure that strengthens and diversifies supply networks, expands opportunities, and strengthens national security of member countries.
- Deliver high-quality, sustainable infrastructure that improves people's lives around the world.

Four priority pillars:

Climate and energy security

- Tackling the climate issue and enhancing global energy security through investments in infrastructure and energy technologies that are climate resilient.

Digital connectivity:

- constructing, extending, and implementing secure ICT infrastructure to drive economic expansion and support open digital societies

Equity and gender equality:

- By making investments in care infrastructure that expands women's options for economic engagement as well as better water and sanitation infrastructure that tackles gender differences in unpaid work and time utilisation, gender equality and equity are advanced.

Security and good health:

- Building and modernising health system infrastructure and advancing the security of global health.

India and PGII

- Under the PGII, the US unveiled a number of flagship projects. One of these projects will support infrastructure development efforts in India.
- Under this, the **Omnivore Agritech and Climate Sustainability Fund** will receive up to \$30 million in investments from **the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC)**.
- This is an impact venture capital fund that makes investments in businesspeople who are creating the **Indian rural economy, food systems, agriculture, and climate of the future**.
- The Fund looks to invest in businesses that improve India's food security and support climate resilience and adaptation.
- Additionally, it aims to **increase the smallholder farms' agricultural output** and profitability.

PGII and China

- By delivering game-changing initiatives to bridge the infrastructure gap in these nations, the PGII is considered as an effort to restrain China's influence in the developing world.
- It aims to compete with China's massive Belt and Road initiative.

What is the Belt and Road Initiative of China (BRI)?

- **One Belt, One Road (OBOR)**, another name for the Belt and Road Initiative, is a plan by China to build a **web of port, rail, and road developments spanning a number of nations**.
- Through an extensive programme of infrastructure construction throughout China's neighbouring areas, it seeks to bolster Beijing's position as the region's economic leader.
- The **"21st century Silk Road"** concept consists of a marine road of shipping channels, a belt of overland corridors (also known as the **Silk Road Economic Belt**), and other related infrastructure.

Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora.

CHINA'S GROWING FOOTPRINT IN PACIFIC ISLANDS

Priority: Medium



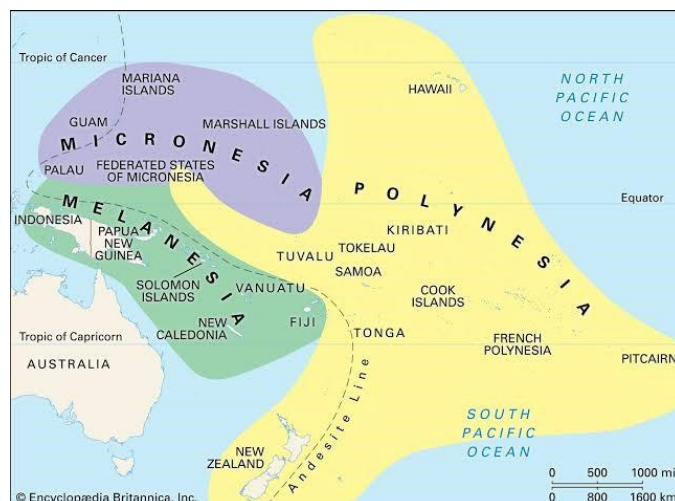
Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: Order of Pacific Islands

Prepp Mains Booster: Significance of China's footprint in PICs

Context:

- Foreign Minister of China is currently on a visit to **ten Pacific Island Countries(PICs)**, and has co-hosted with **Fiji the Second China Pacific Island Countries**.



What is his visit to Pacific Island countries about?

- China's attempt to push through a comprehensive framework agreement, the draught of which had been leaked earlier, failed to achieve support among the PICs during the Foreign Ministers meeting.
- This has sparked regional concerns about China's expanding reach in the Pacific Islands, as well as demonstrated China's regional limitations.
- China inked a contentious security agreement with the Solomon Islands, causing regional alarm.
- Two draft documents prepared by the Chinese side were leaked, drawing the attention of Pacific regional leaders as well as the international community at large.
- The **"China Pacific Island Countries (PICs) Common Development Vision"** and the **"China Pacific Islands Five Year Action Plan on Common Development (2022-2026)"** are two of the publications.

What are Pacific Island Countries(PICs)?

- They are a group of 14 countries located primarily in the Pacific Ocean's tropical zone, between Asia, Australia, and the Americas.
- Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tongatapu, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu are among them.
- Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia are the three separate parts of the islands based on physical and human geography.
- The islands have a modest land area and are dispersed across the Pacific Ocean's enormous equatorial sweep.

What is the Strategic Importance of PICs?

- Large EEZs have a lot of economic potential because of the abundance of fisheries, energy, minerals, and other marine resources that can be found there.
- In major power rivalries, these countries have served as launching pads for force projection and test beds for developing and demonstrating strategic capabilities.
- During the colonial period, the major powers competed for control of these strategic provinces.
- During World War II, the Pacific islands served as one of the most important battlegrounds.
- The 14 PICs are linked by common economic and security issues, have the same number of votes in the UN, and serve as a potential vote bank for larger powers seeking to organise international opinion.

What China seeks to achieve from the PICs?

- The PICs are strategically positioned in China's 'Far Seas,' control of which will enable China to develop an efficient Blue Water capable Navy, which is a prerequisite for becoming a superpower.
- **The need to influence the PICs has grown even more critical for China as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)** has developed as a prominent force in the Indo-Pacific vis-à-vis China.
- In China's Pacific calculus, the Taiwan issue is crucial. China, which regards Taiwan as a separatist province, is preparing for what appears to be an impending military assault. In this context, to end Western Domination of Pacific Island chains, which could obstruct reunion.

What are the Implications of China's Latest move?

- Because the PICs as a group did not agree with China's wide and ambitious demands, China was unable to reach an agreement on the arrangement.
- Prior to the meeting, the Prime Minister of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) wrote to all of the PIC governments, urging them to tread carefully when considering China's proposals, as they could jeopardise the PICs' sovereignty and unity, as well as drag them into major power struggles in the future.
- The United States and Australia, which have traditionally controlled regional dynamics, have been more cautious as China's diplomacy towards the Pacific Islands has intensified.
- Since the China-Solomon Islands agreement, the US has begun to reconsider its diplomatic priorities in the region.

What is the significance of the Indo-Pacific region for India?

- **Geo-Strategic significance:** The Indo-Pacific region is a multipolar region that accounts for more than half of world GDP and population.
- **Mineral Resources:** In addition to fish stocks, minerals, and offshore oil and gas, maritime zones have become key storage places.
- **Economic Development:** The Indo-Pacific region contributes for over 60% of global GDP, making it the most important contributor to global development.
- **Commerce:** This region contains many of the world's most important commercial choke points, like the Straits of Malacca, which are critical for global economic growth.

Way Forward

- Appropriate diplomatic manoeuvring, economic and military assertiveness, and the use of space as a building block for a multipolar world order are all essential for the realisation of India's goals in the region.
- In India's opinion, the best approach to manage a rules-based multipolar regional order and prevent any single country from dominating the region or its waterways is to collaborate with other like-minded countries in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Support for Indo-Pacific countries is required, as is building their capacity to make independent political decisions by assisting partners in combating corruption, especially through foreign aid and development initiatives.

IMPORTANCE OF THE GULF TO INDIA

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Countries opening to the Persian Gulf; Gulf Cooperation Council

Prepp Mains Booster: Importance of Gulf to India across different dimensions; Oil; Diaspora etc

Context:

- Following comments they made regarding Islam and the Prophet, the ruling BJP suspended its national spokesperson and fired its Delhi spokesperson, Naveen Kumar Jindal.
- The action occurred after three Gulf countries summoned Indian embassies to their countries to express their displeasure and seek a public apology from India.

Why is the Gulf region important to India?

- Except for the Jewish state of Israel, the Gulf region's ten countries account for one-fifth of the world's Muslim population and are among the Muslim world's most powerful voices.
- Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Jordan, and Yemen are all Gulf countries.
- The majority of Gulf countries have strong relations with India.
- Oil and gas, as well as trade, are the two most essential reasons for the partnership.
- Two more reasons: the large number of Indians who work in Gulf countries and the remittances they send home.



How much trade does India do with countries in this region?

- The **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**, which includes the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait, has emerged as a major economic partner of India, according to India's embassy in Riyadh.
- **UAE:** In 2021-2022, the UAE was India's third-largest trading partner, and second-largest in terms of both exports (\$28 billion) and imports (\$45 billion).
- **Saudi Arabia** was India's fourth-largest trading partner in 2021-22, with a total volume of \$42.9 billion.

- **Iraq** was India's fifth-largest trading partner in 2021-22, with a total trade value of \$34.3 billion.
- **Qatar:** Overall trade was \$15 billion, accounting for only 1.4 percent of India's total trade, but Qatar is India's largest natural gas supplier. Qatar is the source of 41% of India's total natural gas imports. The UAE accounts for another 11%.

How much oil does India import?

- In April, the Observer Research Foundation reported that imports met more than 84 percent of India's petroleum consumption, which comprised crude oil and petroleum products.
- Over the previous 15 years, the Persian Gulf countries' proportion of India's crude imports has stayed around 60%.
- Iraq was the largest oil exporter to India in 2021-2022, with a share of 22 percent, up from 9 percent in 2009-2010. For more than a decade, Saudi Arabia has supplied 17-18% of India's oil imports.
- Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates continue to be key oil exporters to India. Iran used to be India's second-largest oil exporter in 2009-2010, but due to US sanctions, its proportion dropped to less than 1% in 2020-21.

How many Indians work in the Gulf, and how much remittance do they send?

- More than 13.46 million Indian people work overseas, according to data from the Ministry of External Affairs. When people of Indian origin (those who have taken up citizenship in other countries and their descendants) are included, the total number exceeds 32 million.
- The Gulf has the highest number of non-resident Indians (NRIs), with 13.4 million. Over half of all NRIs live in the UAE (3.42 million), Saudi Arabia (2.6 million), and Kuwait (1.03 million).
- According to World Bank data, India was the greatest beneficiary of remittances from overseas in 2020, with \$83.15 billion. This was nearly twice as much as the next top recipient, Mexico, which received \$42.9 billion in remittances.
- The vast Indian diaspora in the Gulf is the major contributor

Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO)

Priority: **Medium**



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is WTO

Prepp Mains Booster: Outcome of MC12

Context:

Recently, the Minister of Commerce has held that India's concerns were successfully defended at **the 12th Ministerial Meeting (MC12), World Trade Organization (WTO)**.



What was India's main concern during the WTO ministerial meeting?

- **Agriculture-related issues such as MSP**, underlining the importance of the Public Stockholding Program in achieving the National Food Security Program or **PM Garib Kalyan Scheme**,
- **Waiver of TRIPS:** whether Covid 19 vaccines could get the TRIPS waiver as Covid Response measure.
- **Moratorium on e-commerce transactions** will be extended or not.
- **Fisheries:** whether there will be fishing limits, as our fishermen are concerned about illicit fishing, under-reporting, or outside regulation, such as IUU fishing, that would tie India's artisanal and traditional fishermen in the future.

What is the Outcome of the meeting?

On fisheries:

- Regarding the fisheries, **illegal, unreported, and uncontrolled (IUU) fishing** in our seas and elsewhere would be curtailed.
- Overfished areas would be subject to extremely severe regulations to recover fish stocks.
- Furthermore, **no subsidies will be granted for fishing outside of EEZs or RFMOs**.

On TRIPS :

- **Export, vaccination equity, accessibility, and affordability** will all benefit from the TRIPS judgement.
- A country can permit the manufacturing of vaccines that have been patented elsewhere, and there would be no need for consent, and exports would be unrestricted.
- In six months, a choice on diagnostics and therapeutics would be made.
- In the future, there would be a faster pandemic response and less trade obstacles in pandemics.

On the WTO reform :

- The WTO reform plan will make the organisation more efficient and nimbler.
- The dispute resolution organisation will be resurrected and will resume its duty in resolving trade issues.
- For developing countries, the reform would result in better trade outcomes.
- In the WTO reform agenda, there is a mention of Gender, Environment, and MSME.

On e-commerce:

- The ministerial meeting agreed to extend a moratorium on **applying duties to electronic transmissions (e-commerce)** until the next meeting.
- Major players such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union backed the extension of the moratorium.

- Allowing it to expire, they claimed, would jeopardise a global recovery already endangered by rising costs.
- Should the next meeting be postponed, the moratorium would end in March 2024, according to the agreement.

On World Food Programme:

- Meeting determined not to impose export prohibitions or limitations on products purchased by the World Food Programme for non-commercial humanitarian purposes.
- **Internal food security issues**, on the other hand, will take primacy.
- To put it another way, this agreement will not hinder any Member from taking measures to secure domestic food security in compliance with the relevant WTO accords.
- In addition, there is **no agricultural job programme**.
- This might be viewed as a positive conclusion for India, **as our agri-subsidies will no longer be scrutinised**.

What is the 12th Ministerial Meeting (MC12) of WTO?

- The summit began on June 12, 2022, at the World Trade Organization's headquarters in Geneva.
- Ministers from all around the world gathered to discuss the global trading system's functioning, make general remarks, and take action on the WTO's future work.
- Kazakhstan is a co-host of the conference.
- The MC12 conference was initially slated to take place in Kazakhstan in June 2020, however it was postponed owing to the COVID-19 epidemic.

What is the Duty on e-commerce?

- The WTO General Council accepted the work programme on e-commerce in September 1998, when e-commerce was still in its infancy.
- WTO members decided to keep not placing customs taxes on electronic transmissions as part of the work programme.
- This customs duty moratorium has been renewed on a regular basis at each Ministerial Conference.
- With the rise of e-commerce, there is concern that emerging countries, such as India, may become importers, resulting in a loss of Customs duty.
 - India wants e-commerce to be subject to customs duties.
 - The prohibition, which has been in place since 1998, has had a negative impact on developing countries in terms of lost earnings, according to the report.

GENERAL STUDIES 3

Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

CONTROLLING INFLATION

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

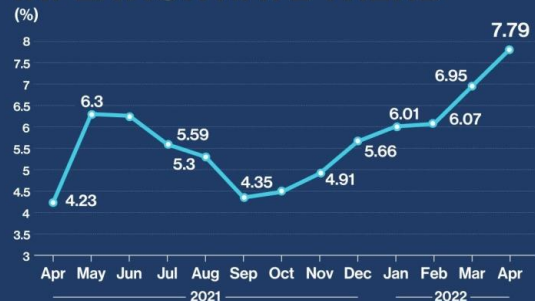
Prepp Prelims Booster: Reasons for inflation; Methods to reduce money supply in the economy

Prepp Mains Booster: Measure taken by RBI and Government to reduce Inflation

Context:

- With the revelation that **GDP growth will be 8.7% in 2021-22**, policymakers must have breathed a sigh of relief.
- It was fairly in line with expectations, based on a 6.6 percent decrease in GDP in 2020-21.
- The economy appears to have emerged from the shadow of Covid-19, and is only somewhat better than 2019-20.

INDIA'S 12-MONTH INFLATION RATE TREND



Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI)

Steps to deal with Inflation

Tightening monetary policy

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is required to maintain inflation at 4%, plus or minus 2%.
- By hiking the repo rate, the RBI has already begun the process of tightening monetary policy, although a little late in the game.
- However, how quickly it can return to pre-Covid levels is a question that requires a more thorough examination of the potential effects of its actions on GDP and inflation. As a result, a precise calibration would be required.
- It will remain below the predicted inflation rate, implying that depositors in banks with **negative real interest rates will continue to lose the real value of their money**.
- It just reflects the system's inherent bias in favour of **entrepreneurs in the name of expansion and against depositors, resulting in rising inequality in the system**.

Prudent fiscal policy

- Following **Covid-19**, which saw the Union government's fiscal deficit climb to **more than 9% in 2020-21 and 6.7 percent in 2021-22**, fiscal policy has been lax, but it now needs to be tightened.
- It may not happen, especially since increased **food and fertiliser subsidies, as well as reductions in fuel and diesel charges, will cost the government at least Rs 3 trillion more than the budgeted amount**.
- Unless tax collections improve significantly or the government goes all-out in monetising land and assets of public firms, **the fiscal deficit will almost certainly exceed the objective of 6.4 percent**.

Rational trade policy

- India responded with a ban on wheat exports and limits on sugar exports as a **knee-jerk reaction**.
- In the pretext of managing inflation, export restrictions/bans extend beyond agri-commodities to iron ore and steel, among other commodities.
- However, sudden export bans are poor trade policy and just reveal the government's panicked face.
- Instead of using abrupt prohibitions to favour consumers, a more mature approach to filtering exports would be to

use a progressive **process of minimum export prices and transparent export duties for short periods of time.**

- A liberal import strategy with lower tariffs across the board is a wise way to keep inflation in check at home.

Atma Nirbhar

- India must concentrate on two oils: crude oil and edible oils, if it wishes to be atma nirbhar (self-sufficient) in crucial commodities where import dependence is excessive.
- In the case of crude oil, **India is about 80% reliant on imports, while in the case of edible oils, imports account for 55 to 60% of our local consumption.**
- Agriculture can help in both circumstances.
- **Massive ethanol production from sugarcane and maize, particularly in eastern Uttar Pradesh and north Bihar,** where water is plentiful and the water table is refilled every two years or so through light floods, is one approach to lessen crude oil import dependency.
- In the case of edible oils, a large-scale planting initiative in coastal areas and the northeast is the best option.
- However, if we want to keep food inflation under control **in the long run, we must invest in increasing productivity and improving the efficiency of agricultural markets.**

IMPACT OF STAGFLATION ON MARKETS

Priority: Medium



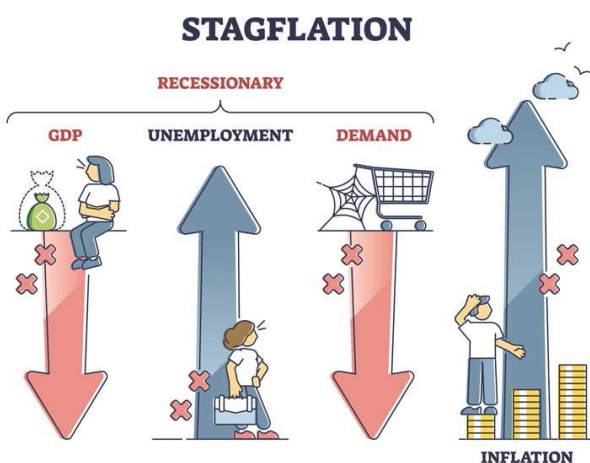
Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: Meaning of Stagflation; Reasons for Stagflation

Prepp Mains Booster: Measure to control stagflation

Context:

Authorities worldwide are trying to formulate an appropriate set of policies to ensure that the current inflation is cooled without triggering a recession.



What is stagflation?

- Stagflation is an economic condition in which the rate of inflation is high, the rate of economic growth falls, and unemployment stays high.
- Such an unfavourable combination is feared and can present a problem for governments, as most activities aimed at lowering inflation can increase unemployment, while policies aimed at lowering unemployment can worsen inflation.

- Stagflation was first recognised in the 1970s, when an oil shock caused fast inflation and significant unemployment in many industrialised economies.
- The Misery Index, which is the simple sum of the inflation and unemployment rates, was developed as a result of stagflation.
- According to the Phillips curve, inflation and unemployment are inversely related.

What has sparked the latest concerns about stagflation?

- **Covid-19:** The global economic slowdown was triggered by the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic and the measures taken to contain the virus's spread.
- **Fiscal and monetary measures:** Inflation was fueled by fiscal and monetary measures adopted to combat the slump, notably significant increases in liquidity in most advanced economies.
- **Ukraine War:** The ongoing crisis in Ukraine as a result of Russia's invasion and the subsequent Western sanctions against Moscow has thrown a new supply shock.

How to curb stagflation?

Stagflation is a difficult problem to solve.

- In general, monetary policy can aim to lower inflation (through higher interest rates) or boost economic growth (via lower interest rates) (cut interest rates). Inflation and recession cannot be solved by monetary policy at the same time.
- Reduced reliance on oil is one possibility for countries like India to make their economies less vulnerable to stagflation. Stagflation is mostly caused by rising oil costs.
- The only real solution is to boost productivity through supply-side measures, which allows for stronger growth without inflation.

What are the Steps needed to control stagflation in Indian economy?

- **Tax measures:** Reduced income and corporation taxes are the best policy measures since they tend to lower labour costs and increase demand for labour. In the same way, GST should be cut in order to keep prices from growing. The federal government should provide extra grants-in-aid to state and municipal governments to encourage them to minimise state and local sales.
- **Wage control:** To keep salary increases to a minimum, a wage control strategy with government intervention should be implemented. Firms are forced to reduce production and employment when wages rise. As a result, real income and consumer spending have decreased. Limiting salary rises can assist to break the wage inflation cycle and strengthen the economy.
- **Supply-side solutions:** Stagflation can be combated by increasing aggregate supply through supply-side measures such as privatisation and deregulation, which increase efficiency and lower production costs. Tax incentives must be used to encourage the private sector to spend more and expand supply.
- **Monetary policy:** Inflation reduction should be the major macroeconomic goal. In the short term, lowering inflation may result in increased unemployment and slower economic growth. However, once the price level is under control, this unemployment can be targeted.

Labour reforms: Frictions in the labour market should be decreased by shortening the time and cost of getting information about available jobs. Barriers to entry into a profession should be reduced, as should those that keep pay artificially high.

BAD BANK

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Meaning of Bad Bank, Features and functioning of it

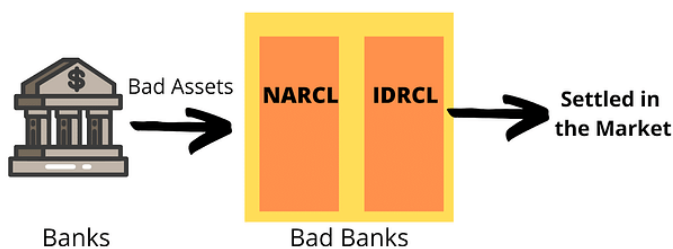
Prepp Mains Booster: Merits and Demerits of Bad Bank

Suggested Reading: <https://bit.ly/3aUZuBD>

Context:

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated that the **National Asset Reconstruction Company (NARCL)** and the **India Debt Resolution Company (IDRCL)** will take over and endeavour to resolve the first set of bad loans from banks.
- It's worth noting that the health of Indian banks' balance sheets has greatly improved in recent years, **with their gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio falling from 11.2 percent in FY18 to 6.9 percent in Q2FY22.**

Prepp



Not a Novel concept

- The **concept of a bad bank** has already been tested in countries such as the **United States, Germany, Japan, and others.**
- The **troubled asset rescue programme, better known as TARP**, was designed around the concept of a bad bank and executed **by the US Treasury** in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis.
- During the financial crisis, the **US Treasury purchased distressed assets** such as mortgage-backed securities from US banks and **later resold them when market circumstances recovered.**

Challenges for bad banks

- When it comes to the bad bank, **the majority of these problematic assets have already been completely funded** and recorded on bank books.
- In addition, there is a significant risk of moral hazard, commercial banks that have been bailed out by a bad bank are unlikely to change their practises. **After all, the safety net provided by a bad bank encourages these banks to lend irresponsibly, exacerbating the bad loan situation.**
- The most crucial aspect of these assets will be **how banks arrive at a valuation** for their transfer to the bad bank.

- The sale of **stressed assets to potential buyers** while also correcting the system's fundamental dilemma.
- Furthermore, **public sector banks will be both stockholders and customers of the bad bank**, posing the risk of the bad bank becoming nothing more than a **conduit for transferring bad debt from one book to another.**
- Former **RBI governor Raghuram Rajan** has been a vocal opponent of the notion, claiming that **a government-backed bad bank would simply transfer problematic assets from public sector banks to a bad bank, which would then be owned by the government.**
- Other analysts say that, unlike a bad bank established by the private sector, a government-backed bad bank will overpay for stressed assets.
- While this is excellent news for public sector banks that have been hesitant to take losses by **selling off their poor loans at low rates, it is bad news for taxpayers who will once again be on the hook** for bailing out insolvent institutions.
- We must not overlook the fact that a **bad bank will not be able to prevent future NPAs**

Benefits

- It will assist lenders in **moving problematic assets** to a bad bank and cleaning up their books.
- Banks will be able to **re-start lending after the bad bank releases capital.**
- It will be **more goal-oriented**, and thus better able to collect debts from borrowers.
- It is believed that establishing a bad bank can assist in the **consolidation of all bank bad debts into a single exclusive business.**
- Because it is backed by the government, it will not be hampered by governance flaws, a slow-moving legal system, or poorly constructed regulations, among **other concerns that plague ARCs.**
- Overall, it will provide a significant boost to the **macroeconomic environment.**

PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEY (PLFS)

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is PLFS; What is NSO; approaches of calculating unemployment

Prepp Mains Booster: findings of PLFS; challenges of measuring unemployment

Context:

As per the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** for 2020-21 released by **the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation**, the unemployment rate saw a decrease of 0.6% and fell to **4.2%** in 2020-21, compared with 4.8% in 2019-20

What does the survey say?

- Unemployment rate:** Data show the rate of joblessness fell to 4.2% in 2020-21, compared with 4.8% earlier.
- Rural areas** recorded an unemployment rate of **3%** and **urban areas** recorded an unemployment rate of **6.7%.**
- The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)** e., the percentage of persons in the labour force (that is, working

or seeking work or available for work) in the population was **41.6%** during 2020-21 (higher than 40.1% in 2019-20).

- **All-India female labour force participation rate (LFPR)** in usual status has increased from 2.3% in 2021 to 25.1% as compared to 22.8% a year ago
- **Worker Population Ratio** (the number of employed people per thousand people) was 39.8% (an increase from 38.2% of the previous year)
- **Migration rate:** The migration rate, according to the survey, is 28.9%. The migration rate among women was 48% and 47.8% in rural and urban areas, respectively.
- **Employment-related migration:** 4.4% of migration happened due to employment, which is a drastic reduction from the 10% in 2011
- **Reverse migration:** During the pandemic, reverse migration led to a higher rate of unemployment agglomeration in rural areas, which caused rural distress. However, the annual report on the unemployment rate shows a contradiction.

How does NSO collect sample?

The **National Statistical Office (NSO)** uses “**rotational panel sampling design**” in urban areas to assess the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), Worker Population Ratio (WPR) and the unemployment rate, and visits selected households in urban areas four times. There was, however, no revisit for the rural samples.

What does report indicate?

Overall, the report suggests **shifting the government's policy** directions as it has become **more rural-centric**. Creation of rural jobs other than in the agricultural sector and MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) could be priorities for the government at the Union and State levels.

What are Issues with the survey?

Experts point out that a second visit to the households in rural areas could have provided a bigger and larger picture of unemployment, which did not happen in the survey.

Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS): PLFS was launched by National Statistical Office (NSO) in 2017 and is India's first computer-based survey. It was constituted based on the recommendation of the **Amitabh Kundu committee**.

PM ANNOUNCES 10 LAKH JOBS IN NEXT 18 MONTHS

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: details regarding the job creation announcement

Prepp Mains Booster: employment scenario and employment trends

Context:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced that 10 lakh government jobs will be provided over the next 18 months on a mission mode.

What does the announcement mean?

- The issue of employment generation is one that can **no longer be kept out of the discourse in public sphere**

- **Private sector has not created many jobs**, particularly in more recent industries dominated by multinational corporations- service and industrial sectors.
- Even if the **gig economy or information technology sector have produced jobs**, they are either extremely high-skilled or low-skilled.
- There can be political fallouts of growing inflation, unemployment, and underemployment.

CHART 1

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION & EMPLOYMENT RATES

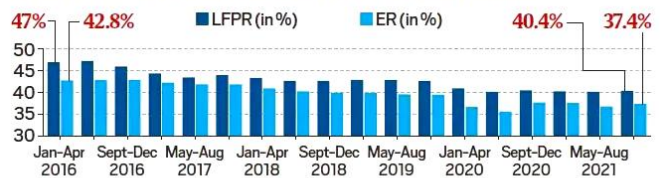
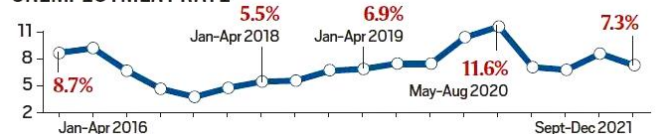


CHART 2

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



Employment trends in India

- At present, Employees' Provident Fund Organisation/National Pension System/Employees' State Insurance Scheme registrations and exits are used as indicators of the formal labour market. It might be deceptive because organisations might increase registrations in order to pass the cutoff and qualify for one of these. As a result, it actually shows formalisation rather than job creation.
- Reports show that over **85% of 10 lakh job aspirants could be consumed by existing Central government departments vacancies (8,72,243)**. So, it possibly does not lead to 10 lakh new jobs.
- Contrary to the intentions of more job creation, central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) have been cutting jobs in recent years
- A decline in the quality of jobs is visible with rise in the unpaid segment of self-employed, and increase in share of agricultural sector over the last three Periodic Labour Force Surveys.
- Also, **employment shares for men in informal sector lacking a safety net has risen from 71% to 75%, while for women it has increased from 55% to 57%**
- The employment issue is arguably the most difficult one facing the government in a young nation that is going through a demographic transition.

Limitations of private sector in job creation

- Private sector is directly influenced by market forces and get affected by disruptions more
- Many times private sector projects consume a lot of capital to generate relatively few jobs.
- Job creation is not at the heart of the private sector, profit making is.

Schemes for employment generation

1. **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)**- It provides **at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment** in a financial year

to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do **unskilled** manual work.

2. **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM)**- Its objective is to gradually organise 9–10 crore rural poor households into Self Help Groups (SHGs) and offer them long-term support so they can diversify their sources of income, raise their standard of living, and improve their quality of life.
3. **PM SVANidhi Scheme**- It was launched to provide working capital loans to Street Vendors in urban areas, to resume their businesses post pandemic.

RBI TO LINK CREDIT CARDS TO UPI

Priority: Medium



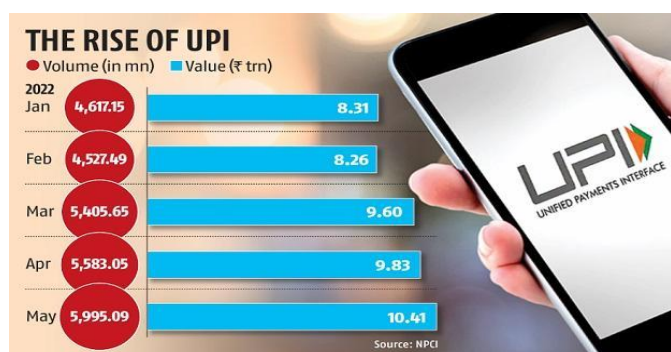
Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is UPI; What is MDR

Prepp Mains Booster: Importance of linking Credit Cards with UPI

Context:

The Reserve Bank of India has proposed to allow **the linking of credit cards with the Unified Payments Interface (UPI)**. It will first begin with the indigenous RuPay credit cards.



What is Unified Payments Interface (UPI)?

- UPI is a smartphone application that allows users to transfer money between bank accounts.
- It is a single-window mobile payment system **developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**.
- It eliminates the need to enter bank details or other sensitive information each time a customer initiates a transaction.
- It is a **real-time payment system**. It is designed to enable **peer-to-peer inter-bank** transfers through a single **two-click factor authentication process**.
- It helps in Utility Bill Payments, Over the Counter Payments, and QR Code (Scan and Pay) based payments.

Impact of the move

- It can possibly result in **credit card usage zooming up** in India given UPI's widespread adoption
- It opens up avenues to **build credit on UPI**
- It will provide additional **convenience to the users**
- It will **enhance the scope of digital payments**
- It will provide customers a wider choice of payments
- It will accelerate the country's transition into a cashless economy

Challenges in implementation

- some regulatory areas would have to be addressed before the linkage happens. For instance, it is not clear how the Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) will be applied to UPI transactions done through credit cards.

Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) is a fee that a merchant is charged by their issuing bank for accepting payments from their customers via credit and debit cards. According to a norm that has been in effect since January 2020, **UPI and RuPay attract zero-MDR**, meaning that no charges are applied to these transactions, which is a key reason behind the prolific adoption of UPI both by users and merchants.

- The MDR norm has faced pushback from the payments industry, which has argued that it limits the aggregators' ability to "invest in and maintain the financial infrastructure" of the payment ecosystem that they have built. Applicability of zero-MDR on UPI could also be a reason why other card networks such as Visa and Mastercard may not have been onboarded to UPI for credit cards yet.

OPEN NETWORK FOR DIGITAL COMMERCE (ONDC)

Priority: Medium



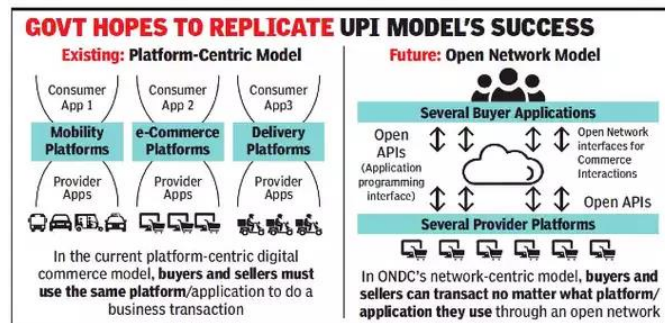
Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is ONDC

Prepp Mains Booster: features of ONDC

Context:

Recently, the Minister of Commerce and Industry said that **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) would democratize e-commerce** and will protect small businesses by granting them equal opportunity.



What is Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)?

- It is a network based on open protocol that will allow any network-enabled application to explore and engage with local commerce across segments, including mobility, shopping, food order and delivery, hotel booking, and travel, among others.
- The platform promises to open up new opportunities, break up digital monopolies, and let micro, small, and medium-sized businesses and independent merchants join online marketplaces.
- It is a **project of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's** Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

What are the features of ONDC?

Democratizes Digital Commerce:

- Attempting to democratise digital commerce by switching it from a platform-centric paradigm to an open-network, it is a first-of-its-kind worldwide endeavour.
- Buyers and sellers will be able to transact through an open network and be visible online, regardless of the software/platform they employ.
- By dissolving silos and creating a single network to spur innovation and scalability, it will enable businesses across all industries, from retail products, food, and mobility.

Conformity with the IT Act:

- Additionally, it will adhere to the developing Personal Data Protection Bill and the Information Technology Act of 2000.

Modelled on UPI:

- It is based on the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) project, which is widely regarded as a success.
- Regardless of the payment systems on which they are registered, the UPI project enables anyone to transfer or receive money.
- In a same vein, ONDC will see to it that vendors and buyers engage in business online independent of the platforms on which they are registered.
- As a result, a buyer who has an Amazon account can make a direct purchase from a seller who has a Flipkart store.

A practical option:

- Over time, ONDC ought to develop into a self-sufficient organisation that generates revenue for its operations and surplus for ongoing investments in technology, procedures, and network development.
- Given the substantial advantages it will provide to ecosystem players, this is a very practical alternative.

Confidentiality:

- It must take all the necessary steps to protect the privacy and confidentiality of networked data.
- Participants shall not be required to share any transaction-level data with ONDC.

What is its significance?

- By 2025, the Indian e-commerce market, which is currently worth \$700 million, is anticipated to reach a value of \$5.5 billion.
- By bringing in a variety of players, it hopes to spur more creativity.
- It aims to reduce online monopolies and increase diversity in the ecosystem of digital commerce.
- It tries to level the playing field for e-commerce titans like Amazon, Flipkart, and offline retailers who have been railing against these e-tailers' dishonest business methods.
- It seeks to advance open networks built utilising open sourced techniques, open standards, and open network protocols that are independent of any one particular platform.
- Additionally, it will make it possible for numerous small, medium, and micro businesses to join the digital revolution.
- It is anticipated to digitalize the entire value chain, standardise operations, encourage supplier inclusion, increase logistics efficiency, and improve value for customers.

BRINGING MSME INTO GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS

Priority: Medium

Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is MSME

Prepp Mains Booster: Significance of MSME; Government initiatives towards MSME

Context:

- Every year on **June 27, World MSME Day** is celebrated
- It gives us the chance to recognise their important contribution to job creation and sustainable development worldwide.

What is the significance of MSME?

Widespread distribution across economic sectors

- **One distinctive quality of MSMEs** is their widespread distribution across economic sectors, which enables them to provide a wide range of goods and services to satisfy **both domestic and international customers**.
- As diverse as India itself, the phrase "MSME" **unites a variety of companies, from little backyard businesses to cutting-edge IT and other technological start-ups**.



Contribution to the Economy

- The **MSMEs provide 8% of GDP, 45% of manufacturing output, and 40% of exports of the nation**, and that, uniquely, they require the least amount of investment for the highest returns.
- A thriving MSME sector has wider advantages for society as a whole, including **more jobs, a larger tax base, higher economic growth**, prosperous and productive communities, and a growth in domestic markets for goods and services.

Employment

- **Agriculture is the industry** that creates the most jobs, thus **the MSME sector has the ability to attract people** to participate in economic activities by way of Self-employment.

Potential

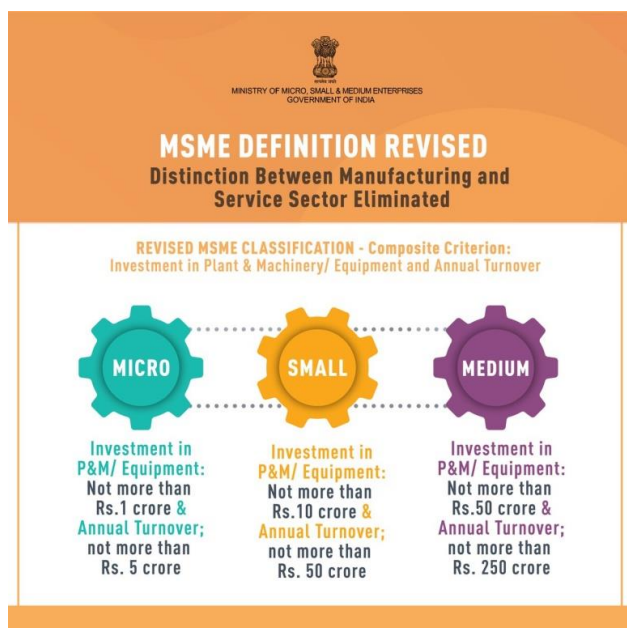
- India's small enterprises **have tremendous potential**.
- India is in the midst of a unique historical period with a potentially **enormous demographic dividend**.
- India must produce **a lot of employment in order to take advantage** of this opportunity, particularly for the one million young people who enter the labour force each month.

What is an MSME?

- The **definition for MSMEs** in the nation has been updated by the Union Ministry of **Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises** as a part of the **Atma Nirbhar Bharat package on May 13, 2020**. The revised criteria and

definition took effect on July 1st, 2020.

- After the **MSME Development Act** was established in **2006**, it has been 14 years, and the **Atma Nirbhar Bharat package** announced a **modification to the MSME definition**.
- According to this notification, the definition of **micro manufacturing and service** units has been **expanded to include investments of Rs. 1 crore and revenues of Rs. 5 crore**.
- The **small manufacturing and service** units **investment and turnover caps** have been raised to **Rs. 10 crore and Rs. 50 crore, respectively**.
- For **medium-sized businesses**, the investment will be **Rs. 50 crore and the revenue would be Rs. 250 crore**.



What are the challenges of MSME?

Diversity and complexity

- The diversity and complexity of Indian MSMEs cannot be fully addressed by any one narrative, policy, or strategy, but they do have certain significant things in common.
- While some MSMEs operate in accordance with the highest industry standards, the majority fall short of the current benchmarks for productivity, environmental sustainability, and employee health and safety.

Disruptions in the sector

- MSMEs, particularly those in the **services sector**, were significantly hit by the **pandemic's disruption**.
- Many of them were only just starting to make a fragile recovery due to their small size and lack of **access to resources** at a time when a new **conflict, supply shocks, and skyrocketing gasoline**, food, and fertiliser prices presented a slew of new dangers.
- The greatest disruption multiplier of them all, the ongoing **climate crisis**, serves as a backdrop to all of this.

High level of informality

- This is made worse by the **high level of informality** in the industry, where many businesses are not registered, and by the fact that neither employers nor employees are committed to following **labour and environmental rules**.

- Since **full compliance with all relevant laws** is required to engage in global value chains, informal businesses are unable to **get formal MSME support and funding**.

What are the steps taken by the government?

- The growth of the nation's MSME ecosystem has been correctly identified by the Indian government as a major priority for **achieving Atma Nirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India)**.
- The ambitious **"Make in India" initiative** by India seeks to establish the nation as a centre for global manufacturing by propelling it up the manufacturing value chain.
- The sector is being promoted and boosted by programmes like the production linked incentives (**PLI**) **schemes and the recently introduced zero effect zero defect (ZED) certification**.

Role of international organisations

- The UN system in India is supporting these and other **MSME development activities at the local, State, and national levels** to aid in the acceleration of this process.
- Organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women, IFAD, and others **are assisting MSMEs in navigating the rapidly shifting post-pandemic economic landscape**, which is being shaped by significant transitions, primarily digitalization, greening, and the reorganisation of value chains.

What needs to be done?

Digitalization

- Digitalization, also referred to as Industry 4.0—concerns the incorporation of digital technologies—such as **big data, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality—into business processes**.
- The digitalization of **smart manufacturing operations is still in its infancy, with few exceptions**.
- Therefore, **repeatable digital solutions tailored for MSMEs are required**, including digital upgrades for already-in-use machinery and equipment.

Environment

- **"Greening"** lessens the **negative effects MSME operations** have on the environment and encourages cleantech innovation and entrepreneurship **to hasten the shift to a low-carbon, circular economy**.
- A prime example of **how environmental and business benefits coexist is energy efficiency**.
- For instance, in 23 clusters spanning the brass, ceramic, dairy, foundry, and hand tool sectors, **UNIDO and the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) provided energy efficiency consultancy services to 695 MSMEs**.
- These MSMEs invested 157 crore of their own money during the cash-strapped COVID period, saving 13,105 tonnes of oil equivalent, 81 crore in annual operating costs, and averting the emission of 83,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases.
- Along with UNDP, the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations Institute for Training and Applied Research**, UNIDO and ILO support government initiatives on inclusive and green **transformation strategies for important manufacturing sectors** as part of the **Partnership for Action on Green Economy (UNITAR)**.

Resilience

- Production locations for **global value chains** are relocating and diversifying **across nations and regions** in an effort to strengthen **supply resilience in reaction to recent shocks**.
- The **PLI seeks to capitalise on the strategic potential** this poses for India. When a supply chain is relocated, suppliers are frequently more actively involved in product development and innovation.

Innovation

- This entails encouraging a **culture of innovation and constant** improvement that decreases **waste and raises productivity, safety, and quality**.

What are the impacts of various steps taken by the government and various international institutes?

Employment

- Over 7 lakh micro firms are receiving assistance from the **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)** to become economically sustainable, opening up prospects for **self-employment and microbusinesses as well**.
- Similar to this, the **ILO is assisting MSMEs in the creation and maintenance of jobs, working with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) and corporations**.

Productivity

- Over 150 MSMEs have improved productivity, aligned with international standards, and integrated into global supply chains, and the **Start and Improve Your Business programme has assisted over a lakh young people in five States** in starting businesses.

Way Forward

- The MSME segment needs to be widely elevated in order to fulfil the compelling vision of **India as a hub for world-class** manufacturing and services, progressing toward upper middle-income status, and **attaining the Sustainable Development Goals**.

What are the various initiatives by the government promoting MSME?

Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)

- The programme intends to provide financial support to **businesses that are self-employed in order to create job possibilities for unemployed youngsters and traditional craftspeople**.
- It is a programme of bank-financed assistance for establishing microbusinesses in the **non-farm sector**.

Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)

- The program's goal is to encourage first-generation entrepreneurs to become self-employed by providing credit guarantee funds for loans without third-party guarantees or collateral. Under this programme, both current and aspiring entrepreneurs are eligible.

Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI) programme

- The Ministry of MSME launched the Scheme of Fund for

Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI) programme to encourage the growth of clusters.

- The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is **the central organisation responsible for promoting Khadi cluster development**.
- The programme intends to **group traditional craftspeople and industries into clusters to help them** become more competitive in order to achieve long-term sustainability goals.

ZED (MSME Sustainable) Certification Scheme

- This programme is an extended effort to **help MSMEs embrace Zero Defect Zero Effect (ZED) practices**, motivate and reward them for achieving ZED Certification, and inspire them to act as MSME Champions.

MSME Samadhan Portal

- The Office of DC(MSME), Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), has launched a portal called MSME Samadhaan where Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) can submit their applications for delayed payments online.

Procurement and Marketing support Scheme

- The program's goal is to increase the marketability of the MSME sector's services and goods.
- Encouraging **access programmes and raising knowledge of numerous marketing-related subjects**.
- Spreading knowledge about e-marketing, the GeM portal, the GST, and other relevant topics, etc.

Credit linked capital subsidy scheme

- The programme provides a **15% upfront capital subsidy to new MSEs** that have established their facilities, as well as to existing MSEs with state-of-the-art technology, to facilitate **technology upgrades** (on institutional finance of up to INR 1 crore availed by them).

ASPIRE - A Scheme for Promotion of Innovation, Rural Industries and Entrepreneurship

- It is an initiative of the Ministry of MSME.
- It was started in **order to establish a network of technological centres, establish incubation facilities** to speed up **entrepreneurship, and support startups** for innovation in the **agro industry**.

NITI AAYOG REORT ON GIG ECONOMY

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is Gig Economy

Prepp Mains Booster: outcome of NITI Aayog Report

Context:

- NITI Aayog, recently published a paper **titled "India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy."**
- The report suggested financial incentives like tax rebates or start up grants for businesses with **roughly one-third of their workforce made up of women and persons with disabilities** in an effort to encourage the engagement of women in the gig economy.



What are the key Observations of The 'India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy' report?

- The **participation of the two demographic groups (women and divyangjan)** in the labour force of the nation has been hampered by structural impediments such as access to education and a lack of skills.
 - In India, the percentage of women who are in the labour force has remained low, fluctuating in recent years between 16 and 23 percent.
 - After getting married and finishing their schooling, women are more likely to take on platform positions.
 - The labour force participation rate for persons with disabilities (PwDs), who make up 2.11 percent of India's population, is 36 percent.
- **Gig workers are often employed by businesses under a contract and are not regarded as employees.** Some of the perks that ordinary employees enjoy are not available to them.
 - Platform and non-platform workers are the two primary categories of gig workers.
 - While non-platform gig workers are typically casual wage workers that work part- or full-time, platform workers are individuals whose work is dependent on online software programmes or digital platforms.
- **According to NITI Aayog, the gig economy employed more than 7.5 million people in 2020–21.**
 - In the following eight years, this number might increase to 23.5 million workers, or 4.1 percent of India's entire labour force.
- Currently, **medium skilled occupations make up approximately 47% of gig labour**, high skilled jobs make up about 22%, and low skilled jobs make up about 31%.

What are the NITI Aayog's recommendations for the gig economy?

- Businesses that **offer employment opportunities and have at least 30% of their workforce be women may receive financial incentives** such as tax rebates or start up grants.
- Similar to this, a platform that has strong PwD accessibility or participation may also be rewarded with financial incentives.
- Businesses should have a **higher percentage of female managers and supervisors** in order to prevent the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in employee communications.
- Businesses should have **policies that provide retirement and old age benefits** as well as additional insurance

coverage for contingencies like work-related injuries that could result in lost employment and income.

- As provided for in the Code on Social Security, 2020, such plans and policies could be developed and provided in conjunction with the government.

What are the Concluding remarks by NITI Aayog?

- Gig and platform businesses have produced jobs, but they are **usually tainted by low pay, unequal gender involvement, and a lack of prospects for promotion within an organisation.**
- Employees of businesses like Swiggy, Zomato, Ola, Uber, Urban Company, etc. have protested as a result.

What is Gig and Platform economy?

- **Gig economy:** Businesses prefer to **hire independent contractors and freelancers over full-time employees** in a gig economy, where temporary, flexible jobs are popular.
 - For those who are willing to utilise them, a gig economy produces less expensive, more effective services, like Uber or Airbnb.
 - The traditional economy of full-time employees, which usually prioritises professional growth, is threatened by the gig economy.
 - The advantages of the gig economy might not be available to people who do not access technical services like the internet.
- **Platform economy:**
 - The term "platform economy" describes the current trend in which business is drawn to and **favours digital platform business models.**
 - Platforms are **the underlying computer systems that can house online services** that link customers, business owners, entrepreneurs, and the general public by exchanging resources or offering goods for sale.
 - This phrase is used by business analysts to explain the competitive nature of technological innovation.

Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

REPO RATE HIKE: ITS IMPACT

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is Repo rate?

Prepp Mains Booster: Impact of Repo Rate Hike

Context:

The Reserve Bank of India raised the repo rate by another 50 basis points to 4.90% at its bi-monthly review in June. As a result of this shift, as well as the RBI's focus on withdrawing its accommodating policy in response to growing inflation, interest rates in the banking sector are projected to climb further.

What is the announcement of MPC?

- The policy repo rate under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) was increased by 50 basis points from 4.40 percent to 4.90 percent with immediate effect in the Monetary Policy Statement 2022-23, published June 8, 2022.

- As a result, the Reserve Bank's Standing Liquidity Facility (collateralised liquidity support) for Primary Dealers (PDs) will be available at the increased repo rate of 4.90 percent from June 8, 2022.

What are the reasons for the MPC's Decision?

Impact of Global Economy:

- Due to continued geopolitical tensions and sanctions, in less than 3 months, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has **lowered** its **global production growth prediction** for 2022 by 0.8% point to 3.6 %
- The World Trade Organization has **lowered** its forecast for **global trade growth** in 2022 by 1.7% points to 3.0%.

Impacts of the Domestic Economy:

There have been signals which point towards the upward inflation in future.

- With the third wave of COVID-19 fading, domestic economic activity is stable while urban demand appears to be stable, rural demand remains weak.
- Investment activity appears to be picking up steam, and in April, merchandise exports increased by double digits.
- The **overall liquidity** of the system remained in a huge **surplus**.
- As of May, 2022, **bank credit** has **increased** by 11.1% year over year.
- India's **foreign exchange reserves** fell by US\$ 6.9 billion to US\$ 600.4 billion in 2022-23 (up to April 22).
- Inflation:** Headline CPI inflation jumped to 7.0% in March 2022, up from 6.1% in February.
- Food inflation** surged 154 basis points to 7.5%, while **core inflation** grew 54 basis points to 6.4%.
- According to the IMF, inflation in Emerging Markets and Developing economies will rise by 2.8% to 8.7%.

What is the Impact of the rise in the key policy rates?

- On Indian Economy: In the short term, cost of capital is expected to go up with the rise in the interest rate of credit/loan.
- This may impact **Credit Growth Rate** in future in the smooth recovery of India
- May impact **infrastructure** projects with cost overruns.
- On people: increase in Repo Rate will result in rise in interest rates of loan
 - EMI of loan may be dearer, with rise in the interest rate of loan.
 - Cost of Home/car loan gets higher in future.

PAYMENTS VISION 2025

Priority: **Medium**



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is RBI's Payments Vision 2025

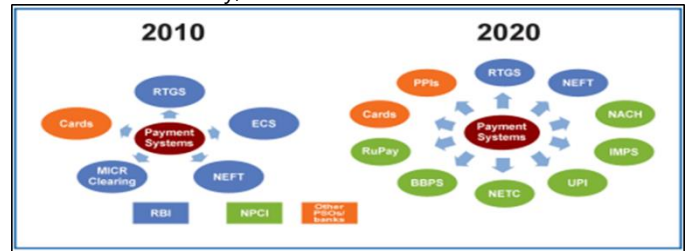
Prepp Mains Booster: objectives of Payments Vision 2025

Context:

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently released the Payments Vision 2025.
- The document offers a number of novel payment systems, as well as regulation of BigTechs, fintechs, and buy-now-pay-later (BNPL) systems, as well as the creation of a central bank digital currency (CBDC).

What are the benefits of payment systems?

- Payment systems help to promote economic progress, financial stability, and financial inclusion.



- One of the RBI's major strategic aims and goals has been to ensure that payment systems are safe, secure, reliable, accessible, affordable, and efficient.
- India has created one of the world's most advanced payment systems in the last decade.
- In May 2022, for example, UPI reported more than 595 Cr transactions totaling INR 10.4 Lakh Cr.
- RBI's function has evolved from that of a regulator, operator, and facilitator to that of a provider of an environment for the organized development of India's payments ecosystem.
- Since 2001, the RBI's Payments Vision documents have provided the strategic direction and execution strategy for this development.
- The current Vision document builds on the Payments Vision 2019-21 paper and explains the thought process for the period from December 2025 to December 2026.

What are the highlights of the Payments Vision 2025 document?

Five major themes:

- Integrity, inclusivity, innovation, institutionalisation, and internationalisation are the five fundamental topics in the vision document.

Core theme:

- It is built on the central theme of E-Payments for Everyone, Everywhere, Everytime (4 Es).
- The document aims to give customers with e-payment solutions that are safe, secure, rapid, easy, accessible, and affordable.

E-payments are getting a lot of attention:

- As it prepares for the next development of the industry, the RBI will take steps to streamline the country's e-payments infrastructure.
- In addition to OTPs, they involve the use of alternate authentication mechanisms such as biometrics and digital tokens to authenticate users.
- In addition, the central bank will promote the use of legal entity identification (LEIs) to facilitate cross-border payments and filter sanctioned companies.
 - The LEI is an alphanumeric identifier that is used to uniquely identify parties engaged in a financial transaction and to track payments more efficiently.
- The RBI also said that it will conduct research into the potential of establishing a digital payments protection fund (DPPF).
- The purpose of the DPPF is to provide security to deceived customers and payment instrument issuers.
- In addition, the RBI will establish a framework for geo-tagging payment system touch points across the country.

Technology:

- A clause in the Vision 2025 plan calls for the creation of a framework for internet of things (IoT)-based payment systems.
- Customers would be able to pay using linked devices other than their phones and tablets.
- In addition, the RBI plans to develop a new system for processing payments made through internet and mobile banking services.
- These services are currently delivered through payment gateways and other aggregators.

Reviewing legal-institutional infrastructure:

- The Reserve Bank of India will also conduct a thorough examination of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act.
- A Payments Advisory Council will be established by the central bank to assist the board in the regulation and supervision of payment and settlement systems (BPSS).
- Representatives from start-ups, consumer groups, digital payment providers, and other organisations will make up the PAC.

Introduction of a central bank digital currency (CBDC):

- The RBI has also stated that it is working to establish a CBDC in the country.
- It went on to suggest that various use cases for CBDCs would be examined in order to improve efficiencies in local and cross-border payment processing and settlement.

Other proposals:

- Other ideas include improving the Cheque Truncation System (CTS), including clearing and settlement from a One Nation One Grid perspective.
- It also advocated that BigTechs and FinTechs in the payments area be regulated.
- The BNPL technique should be investigated, and proper guidelines for BNPL payments should be devised, according to the vision statement.
 - In addition to traditional payment methods such as cards, UPI, and net banking, BNPL services have grown into a new payment mechanism.
 - This channel, which is provided by a few payment aggregators, routes payments between BNPL consumers and merchants through an existing nodal account (escrow account following permission).

What are the objectives Payments Vision 2025?

- The RBI intends to improve the scalability of payment systems as part of the effort.
- By 2025, the central bank wants to triple the number of digital payment transactions and reduce the number of cheque-based payments to less than 0.25 percent of all retail payments.
- The study also forecasts a 50 percent yearly growth in UPI payments and a 20 percent annual growth in IMPS and National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) (NEFT).
- The RBI will try to reduce the amount of cash in circulation as a percentage of GDP as part of its drive towards digital payments.

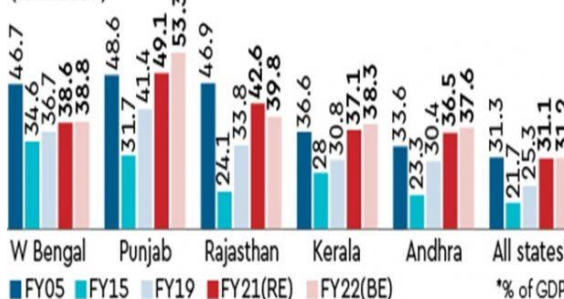
- It also plans to double the number of registered users for mobile-based transactions by 2025, with a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 50%.
- By 2025, it plans to grow debit card transactions at point of sale (PoS) by 20% and expand card acceptance infrastructure to 250 lakh touchpoints across the country.

Government Budgeting.**STATES DEBT LEVELS****Priority: Medium****Primary Source:** The Indian Express**Prepp Prelims Booster:** State Debt Levels**Prepp Mains Booster:** Reasons for high State Debts; Measures to reduce it**Context:**

- According to a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) assessment on state finances, the **five states with the highest levels of financial stress** are Bihar, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, and West Bengal.
- Among the 10 states identified **by the debt/GSDP ratio**, it was able to isolate a core sample of **highly stressed states**.
- It said that the states with the **highest debt loads were Punjab, Rajasthan, Kerala, West Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana**.
- These **ten states** are responsible for over **half of all state government spending in India**.

States' outstanding liabilities

(% of GSDP)

**What is the debt-to-GSDP ratio ?**

- The measure used to compare a state's public debt to its gross state domestic product is called the debt-to-GSDP ratio (GSDP). The debt-to-GSDP ratio accurately predicts a **state's capacity to repay its debts by contrasting what it owes with what it generates**.

What does the report say about the state's debt levels ?

- According to the report, **Punjab is anticipated to stay in the worst** situation because of continuing worsening in its fiscal situation and a predicted debt-to-GSDP ratio that would reach **45% in 2026–2027**.
- By **2026–2027**, it is anticipated that **Rajasthan, Kerala, and West Bengal** will have **debt-to-GSDP ratios higher than 35%**. To stabilise their debt levels, these states will need to take major remedial action.
- The states with the **highest debt loads** were **Punjab, Rajasthan, Kerala, West Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana**.

- The **benchmarks for fiscal deficit and debt** for the ten states, established by the 15th Finance Commission, **were exceeded by Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Punjab (FC-XV).**
- **While Madhya Pradesh overshot the fiscal deficit objective,** West Bengal, Kerala, and Jharkhand **also went over their debt targets.**
- **As they matched both requirements,** Haryana and Uttar Pradesh were outliers.
- According to **the RBI analysis, Rajasthan, Kerala, and West Bengal are expected to exceed the FC-XV targets for debt and fiscal deficit** in 2022–2023 (BE).

Reasons

- It said that some of these 10 states, including Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, and Kerala, **have seen a decline in their own tax collection over time,** making them economically more susceptible.
- The majority of these states' **non-tax revenue** has continued to fluctuate, sharply declining in recent years.
- According to **the report, general services, interest receipts, and economic services are where non-tax revenue is declining.**
- These states' **varying revenue expenditure shares in total expenditures range from 80 to 90%.**
- "Some states spend **about 90% of their earnings,** including Rajasthan, West Bengal, Punjab, and Kerala.
- Their **high revenue spending to capital outlay ratios** are indicative of poor expenditure quality as a result of this, **it added.**
- In states like Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Kerala, and Punjab, **committed expenditure—which includes, among other things, interest payments, pensions, and administrative costs—accounts for a sizeable portion (more than 35% of total revenue expenditure),** leaving little room in the budget for undertaking development expenditure, the report said.
- As a result, these states' **proportion of development spending is far smaller than that of the other states.**
- According to a study by the RBI, the **combined losses of DISCOMs in the five states with the highest levels of debt—Bihar, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, and West Bengal—accounted for 24.7% of all DISCOM losses in 2019–20, while their combined long-term debt represented 22.9% of all DISCOM debt.**
- The effects of tax spending on economic activity only last for approximately a **year, despite improving welfare.**
- Contrarily, **the effect of capital expenditure is greater and lasts longer,** with the peak effect appearing after two to three years, according to the study.

Impact

- State finances are susceptible to a range of unanticipated shocks that **could change their fiscal outcomes** and cause slippages in **comparison to their plans and expectations.**
- A reminder of the crucial significance of public debt sustainability comes from the current economic crisis in Sri Lanka, a neighbouring country. There are warning indicators of increasing stress in the budgetary circumstances of Indian states

- Shocks may cause some states' debt to expand significantly, making fiscal sustainability difficult.

Corrective measures

- State governments should limit their spending **on non-merit items in the near future** in order to **reduce their revenue expenses.**
- The states must work **to stabilise debt levels in the medium term**
- Large-scale changes in **the electricity distribution industry were also advised.** These changes would help discoms (power distribution businesses) cut losses and improve their operational and financial sustainability.
- Long-term, **raising the proportion of capital expenditures in the overall budget** will help produce long-term assets, **generate income, and improve operational effectiveness.**
- Additionally, in order to implement provisioning and other particular risk mitigation techniques **to effectively manage fiscal risks,** state governments must **frequently conduct fiscal risk analysis and stress** test their debt profiles.

What is FRBM Act?

The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act of 2003 places responsibilities on the government to establish a framework of financial restraints in the Indian economy.

Features of FRBM Act

- To assign the **responsibility of long-term macroeconomic stability and intergenerational justice** in fiscal management to the central government.
- The Act provides **for the establishment of debt and deficit ceilings** for the federal and state governments.
- Since then, **each State has passed its own Financial Responsibility Legislation,** which places a **3 percent limit on yearly budget deficits for each State's GSDP.**
- The NK Singh committee (established in 2016) recommendation is that by the **fiscal years 2022–23,** the combined debt of the state governments and the federal government **should not exceed 20 percent of GDP.**

Fiscal deficit: The fiscal deficit should be 2.5% of GDP by FY 2022–2023.

Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers.

PREPARING SOIL FOR THE FUTURE

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is Soil Conservation

Prepp Mains Booster: reasons for soil degradation and government measures to overcome that

Context:

- The Indian yoga guru and proponent of spirituality, Jagadish "Jaggi" Vasudev better known as **Sadhguru** made an effort to get in touch with academics, government officials, and international leaders in order to

coordinate efforts to save soil through his **"save soil campaign"** and his **100-day bicycle ride across 27 countries**.



What is soil conservation?

- The goal of soil conservation is to **stop the loss of the soil's topmost layer** due to erosion or to stop the soil from becoming **less fertile due to overuse, acidification, salinization, or other chemical soil contamination**.

Importance of soil conservation

- A major obstacle to **producing food sustainably** is extraordinary soil **degradation**.
- If no corrective action is taken, over 90% of the earth's soils might be deteriorated by 2050, **up from the current one-third degradation rate**
- While 145 million hectares in India are thought to have soil deterioration, it is estimated **that 96.40 million hectares — or nearly 30% of the entire geographical area — have land degradation**.
- Effort must be made to stop soil erosion because it not only **reduces soil fertility but also raises the risk of landslides and floods**.
- Reversing soil degradation is essential if we want to feed a growing global population, maintain biodiversity, and contribute to addressing the plant's climate crisis**, as stated by the Director-General of the FAO, Qu Dongyu, in his address to the **Global Forum for Food and Agriculture on January 28**.

What are the reasons for soil degradation?

- According to the **Food and Agriculture Organization's "State of Land, Soil, and Water" report**, **1,660 million hectares (or 29%)** of the world's 5,670 million hectares of land are ascribed to **human-induced land degradation**.
- Because of the **extensive use of fertilisers and pesticides**, the quality of the **soil has declined**, and **water bodies** and the food chain have been contaminated, posing major health concerns to humans and cattle.
- Soil pollution is a problem, according to the **FAO's most recent "State of the World's Land and Water Resources for Food and Agriculture"** report.
- The food we eat, the water we drink, and the air we breathe are all at risk because it knows no boundaries.
- One of the causes of the issue is the **excessive or incorrect usage of agrochemicals**.
- Since the start of the twenty-first century, the yearly production of industrial chemicals has **more than doubled to around 2.3 billion tonnes**, and by the end of the decade, it is expected to rise by 85%.

- Salinization**, which affects 160 million hectares of agriculture worldwide, is a further difficulty. "It is vital to address and stop soil degradation."
- A number of human activities contribute to soil degradation in addition to natural factors.

India's cultural ethos

- Mother Earth has **long been revered in India as a heavenly being**, and the nation's cultural ethos is deeply rooted in this belief.
- The **Vedas contain a great deal of reverence** references to mother earth.
- Indian farmers have long used sustainable and all-encompassing agricultural methods** because they are in sync with this heavenly knowledge.
- Agriculturists used **contemporary scientific methods** in response to changing **times and an expanding population**.

What are the achievements of India?

- "A Healthy Planet for Healthy Children,"** a publication by the **United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the World Future Council**, highlighted success stories from various nations, **including Sikkim in India**, which became the **first organic state in the world**, in order to emphasise the urgent need for action to **reduce dependence on pesticides** worldwide and to promote policies **advocating healthy and sustainable food systems** and agricultural production.
- Roughly **23 crore farmers have received soil health cards** through the Soil health card scheme.
- The programme has **benefited countless farmers** by raising crop production and their earnings in addition to **helping to improve the health of the soil**.
- India is on track to **restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030**.
- According to a 2017 research on this initiative by the National Productivity Council, **the application of fertilisers and micronutrients in accordance with the advice on the soil health cards** has resulted in an 8–10% drop in the usage of chemical fertilisers.
- Overall, it was reported that this led to a 5–6% rise in agricultural yields**.

What are the steps to be taken?

- To stop this worrying trend, it is now **necessary for governments and civil society around the world to act jointly**.
- Adopting **innovative policies and agro-ecological practises** that promote **wholesome and sustainable food production** systems is urgently needed given the mounting danger to global food security and the accompanying risk of major environmental damage.
- Sustainable land management techniques** are crucial to guaranteeing healthy soil because soil is a delicate and limited resource.
- They are essential for **both guaranteeing food security and preventing deterioration**.
- Numerous studies have shown that **natural farming and organic farming** are not only more affordable but also **improve the ecosystem of farms and the health of the soil**.

What are the various initiatives by the government?

Soil Health card scheme

- The **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare's Department of Agriculture & Cooperation** promotes the **Soil Health Card (SHC)**, a programme of the Government of India. A farmer will receive a printed report called a **Soil Health Card (SHC) for each** of his properties.
- It will include information on his soil's status for **12 parameters, including pH, EC, OC, Zn, Fe, Cu, Mn, and Bo** (Micro-nutrients), as well as N, P, and K (Macronutrients), S (Secondary-nutrient), and Mn, Fe, Cu, and Bo (Physical parameters).
- The SHC will also propose fertiliser and any necessary soil amendments for the farm based on this.
- The soil card will be issued to a farm once every three years.**

Soil Health Management(SHM) - Under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture(NMSA)

- During the **12th Plan**, "**National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)** will be implemented with the objectives **to make agriculture more productive, sustainable, and climate resilient; to conserve natural resources;**
- to adopt comprehensive soil health management practises;
- to optimise utilisation of water resources; etc.
- One of the most significant activities under NMSA is soil health management (SHM).**
- Through the **careful application of chemical fertilisers**, including secondary and micronutrients, along with organic manures and bio-fertilizers, SHM seeks to promote Integrated Nutrient Management (INM), which will increase soil health and productivity;
- Strengthening soil and fertiliser testing facilities to provide recommendations** to farmers for improving soil fertility based on soil test results;
- Ensuring **quality control requirements of fertilisers, biofertilizers, and organic fertilisers** under Fertilizer Control Order, 1985;
- Upgrading the **skill and knowledge of soil testing laboratory staff, extension staff, and farmers** through training and demonstrations;
- Promoting **organic farming practises, etc.**

NBSS BHOOMI Geo-portal

- To access various thematic information on the country's major physiographic regions, sub physiographic regions, agro-ecological regions (1992), agro-ecological regions (2015), and agro-ecological sub-regions, the National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning (NBSS&LUP) developed the NBSS BHOOMI Geo-portal.
- Based on soils, landforms, rainfall, temperature, length of the growing season, and irrigability, area/region-specific efficient and profitable crops and cropping sequences were identified.
- In order to assist web-based decision support system (DSS) for land use planning and dissemination of information about soil health cards at the village and farm level for Gujarat, the NBSS&LUP created an android-based mobile application on the CIS platform.

Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.

MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE (MSP)

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is MSP; What is CACP; Crops under MSP regime

Prepp Mains Booster: Advantages and disadvantage of MSP

Context:

- The Prime Minister's Union Cabinet increased the **minimum support price (MSP) for paddy by Rs.100 per quintal for the Kharif season 2022-23.**
- The rates for **14 Kharif crops have been raised**, with increases **ranging from 4% to 8%**. This is comparable to the MSP increase in 2021-22, which was in the range of 1% to 7%.
- The increased rates were published prior to the start of the planting season in order to ensure farmers' returns and boost their morale. This would provide farmers an indication of the price they would receive and assist them in deciding which crops to cultivate.
- The predominant **kharif crop is paddy.**
- The current increases are taking place against a backdrop of spiralling input rates, particularly due to dramatic increases in fertiliser rates.
- The government's fertiliser subsidy has grown at the same time "Despite the global increase in fertiliser prices, the government is providing a subsidy of 2.10 lakh crores this year".
- This is more than double the amount paid by the government last year, which was Rs. 1 lakh crore.

What is MSP?

- Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) are the **prices at which the government** buys certain commodities from farmers to protect them from price drops.
- It is an important **part of the Agriculture Price Policy**, and aims to provide **farmers with support while keeping costs low for consumers.**

Who decides MSP?

The government declares **MSP for agricultural crops** such as **cereals, pulses, oilseeds, and commercial crops every year at the start of both crop seasons**, based on the **recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)** and after taking into account the views of state governments and central ministries/departments concerned.

How is MSP determined?

The CACP considers the following considerations when making MSP recommendations:

- A minimum of 50% as the margin over the cost of production;
- A commodity's demand and supply;
- Its cost of production;

- Market price trends (both domestic and international);
- Inter-crop price parity;
- The terms of trade between agriculture and non-agriculture (that is, the ratio of prices of farm inputs and farm outputs); and
- The likely implications of an MSP on consumers of that product.

The **CACP forecasts three types of production costs** for each crop, at both state and national levels.

- **A2 covers all cash and kind costs directly incurred by farmers on seeds**, fertilisers, insecticides, hired labour, leased-in land, fuel, irrigation, and other items.
- **C2 is a more comprehensive cost that accounts in rentals and interest foregone** on owned land and fixed capital assets, respectively, on top of A2+FL.
- **A2+FL contains A2 plus an assumed value of unpaid family labour.**
- While CACP considers both A2+FL and C2 expenses **when suggesting MSP, it solely considers A2+FL costs when calculating return.**
- CACP uses **C2 costs as a baseline opportunity cost** to see if the MSPs they propose at least cover these costs in some of the big producer states.

What are the crops Covered Under MSP?

Minimum support prices (MSPs) for 22 mandated crops, as well as a fair and remunerative price (FRP) for sugarcane, have been announced by the government.

14 kharif crops, 6 rabi crops, and two other commercial crops are among the prescribed crops. Furthermore, the MSPs for toria and de-husked coconut are calculated using the MSPs for rapeseed/mustard and copra, respectively.

The following is a list of crops.

- Cereals (7) - paddy, wheat, barley, jowar, bajra, maize and ragi
- Pulses (5) - gram, arhar/tur, moong, urad and lentil
- Oilseeds (8) - groundnut, rapeseed/mustard, toria, soyabean, sunflower seed, sesamum, safflower seed and nigerseed
- Raw cotton
- Raw jute
- Copra
- De-husked coconut
- Sugarcane (Fair and remunerative price)
- Virginia flu cured (VFC) tobacco

Advantages of MSP

- The government uses it to control dramatic drops and rises in crop prices.
- It works as a safety net for farmers.
- Helps the government manage the growth of low-production crops by acting as a security to farmers
- It will assist the government in making these crops more affordable to those living in poverty.

Disadvantages of MSP

- If there is no MSP, the farmer can choose his crop based on his production costs and the amount of time he devotes to it.
- He is not obligated to sell the commodity right once;
- By planting the specific crop of the industrialist's choice, the farmer can contact industries for the best price.

- Farmers are concerned that industry may provide less than the product price since the government will not declare a minimum support price.

Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

INDIA REACHES 100 UNICORNS

Priority: Low



Primary Source: The Hindu

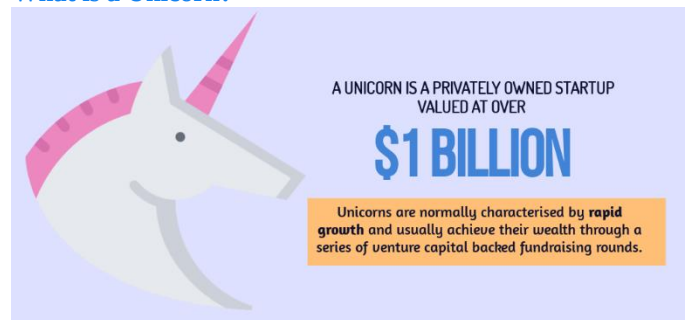
Prepp Prelims Booster: Meaning of Unicorn; recent Unicorn

Prepp Mains Booster: Schemes to promote Entrepreneurship; challenges for start-ups; overview of start-up culture in India

Context:

The Prime Minister complimented India's start up ecosystem, noting that the country had surpassed the milestone of 100 unicorns, each worth more than \$300 billion.

What is a Unicorn?



What are the common features of unicorns?

- **Disruptive innovation:** Almost all unicorns have caused a disruption in their respective fields; for example, Uber revolutionised commuting.
- **Technology-driven:** The company's business plan is based on the most recent technical advancements and trends.
- **Consumer-focused:** Their goal is to make things easier for customers and to become a part of their daily lives.
- **Affordability:** Another crucial feature of successful firms is their ability to keep costs low.
- **Privately owned:** Most unicorns are privately held, which increases their value when a larger corporation invests in them.
- **Software-based:** According to a recent survey, 87 percent of unicorn products are software, 7% are hardware, and the other 6% are various products and services.

Start-ups and Unicorns in India:

- After the United States and China, India has become the world's third largest start-up ecosystem. From 733 in 2016-17, the number of newly recognised start-ups climbed to over 14000 in 2021-22.
- In 2022, India's start up ecosystem surpassed the milestone of 100 unicorns, each worth more than \$300 billion.
- In 2021, 44 Indian start-ups became unicorns, bringing the total number of unicorns to 83, the majority of which are in the services sector.
- Unicorns have exploded in popularity in India during the last two years. In 2018, there were 17 Unicorns; in 2020, there were 38 Unicorns; and in 2021, there are 71 Unicorns

and counting. Many of these unicorns, which have raised more than \$9 billion in total funding, have seen their valuations skyrocket. This information was also included in the Economic Survey 2021-22.

What are the factors that led to growth of start-ups into unicorns?

- Due to many strategic as well as conditional factors, India has seen such quick increase of unicorns:
- Consumer acceptance of digital services expanded as a result of the epidemic, allowing start-ups and new-age companies to establish tech-focused businesses for clients.
- Many Indians have turned to internet services, which include anything from meal delivery to Edu-tech to e-grocery.
- Work-from-home culture aided start-ups in growing their user base, accelerating business expansion plans, and recruiting investors.
- Another factor that benefited the unicorn was the rise of digital payments.
- Several investors are pushing the GBF (Get Big Fast) approach, in which businesses try to grow swiftly by raising large sums of money and cutting prices in order to outperform their market competitors.
- Many companies become unicorns as a result of buyouts from large public corporations that would rather focus on acquisitions than investing in internal growth.

What are the Challenges to start-ups?

- **Lack of funding:** For start-ups, having sufficient funding is important.
- **Infrastructure:** There is a dearth of critical infrastructure like as incubators and science and technology parks.
- **Regulatory bottlenecks:** Obtaining the necessary approvals from government authorities to start a business remains a challenge.
- **Compliance:** For start-ups, bureaucratic inefficiencies are a huge challenge.
- Failure to capture the fundamentals of business: Several start-ups have failed to capture the fundamentals of business.
- **Lack of business innovation:** When it comes to new models, Indian start-ups are still lagging behind.
- **Non-competitive Indian Markets:** Most startups cater to a small percentage of Indians who dwell in cities.
- **Digital divide:** The majority of Indians living in rural areas and small towns are unaware of the existence of most startups.
- **Behavioural changes:** Inducing behavioural changes is expensive for new businesses because they must keep their customers interested throughout the process. The impact of changing consumer behaviour on a company can both positive and harmful.
- **Consumption of Services:** It appears that businesses and valuation experts estimate exponential demand growth over longer time periods, which could be an overestimation.

What are the Government initiatives for helping start-ups?

- **MUDRA Scheme:** This scheme allows start-ups to obtain bank loans to help them establish, grow, and stabilise their enterprises.

- **SETU (Self-Employment and Talent Utilization) Fund:** The government has set aside Rs 1,000 crore to promote self-employment and new job prospects, mostly in technology-related fields.
- **The E-Biz Platform:** It is India's first government-to-business portal, bringing together 14 regulatory clearances and licences in a single location.
- **Lending Guarantee Fund:** It was established by the Indian government to provide collateral-free credit to micro and small businesses (MSME).
- **Fund of Funds for Start-ups (FFS):** A 10,000-rupee corpus fund set up under SIDBI to support start-ups in accordance with the Start-up India action plan.
- **Tax breaks include a capital gain tax exemption,** the elimination of the Angel tax, a three-year tax break, and a tax break on investments beyond fair market value.

Way forward

- The Indian economy is growing, and new businesses are establishing themselves across the country. Unicorns are the best examples of how to efficiently capture a consumer base for prolonged periods of time. If the correct lessons are learnt and executed, more start-ups can become unicorns.
- To reach a bigger population, more consumer-centric models must be developed. The goal should not be restricted to urban regions, but should also include rural India, thus bridging the digital divide.

Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

5G SPECTRUM AUCTION

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is 5G

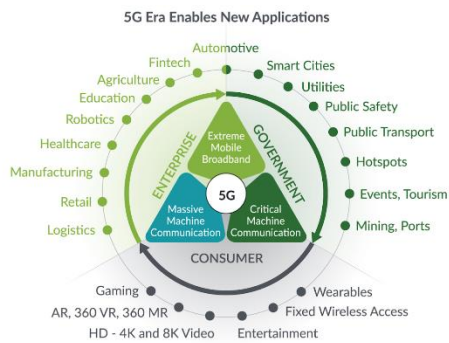
Prepp Mains Booster: Benefits and Challenges of 5G

Context:

- On 14th June, the Union Cabinet, presided over by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the **auction of spectrum that can be used to provide 5G services.** During the auction scheduled for the end of July, a total of 72,097.85 MHz (or 72 GHz) of spectrum with a 20-year validity period will be offered for sale.
- Spectrum in a number of Low (600 MHz, 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz), Mid (3300 MHz), and High (26 GHz) frequency bands will be up for auction.
- **Telecom service providers (TSPs)** are anticipated to use the **Mid and High band spectrum to bring out 5G services**, which would have speeds that are ten times faster than those offered by present 4G services.

Background

- This comes after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated in the Budget 2022 that the government would auction **telecom spectrum in 2022**, allowing private companies to **launch 5G services before March 2023.**



What are the benefits of 5G?

- The next generation of cellular technology, or 5G, will **offer ultra-low latency** communication that is **faster and more dependable**.
- The peak network speeds for 5G are anticipated to reach in the **region of 2–20 Gbps**, compared to roughly 25 Mbps for present 4G networks, as per the established standards.
- However, 4G speeds in India are currently **only averaging 6-7 Mbps but are constantly increasing**.
- Consumers should be **able to download data-intensive material**, such as 8K movies and games with improved visuals, quickly thanks to 5G technology.
- A considerably wider range of services and applications, **including telesurgery and real-time data analytics**, are projected to be supported by 5G as it serves as the foundation for new technologies like the **Internet of Things** and **machine-to-machine** connectivity.
- For these use applications, 5G's extremely low latency makes the technology appealing. **The amount of time it takes for data to go from its source to its destination is known as latency**.
- The **preceding mobile technologies—2G, 3G, and 4G—will continue to be used and may take ten or more years to fade out**, according to a report by a **government group on 5G—even after the introduction of 5G into the Indian networks**.
- By 2035, India's economy is anticipated to benefit from 5G to the tune of \$1 trillion.
- As a significant sector of the Indian economy, the telecom sector is anticipated to **contribute 8% of GDP in 2022**.

Challenges

- The **communication system will need significant infrastructure** upgrade in order to support the 5G rollout.
- For a smoother transition **from 4G to 5G**, consumers will be **financially responsible** for upgrading their cellular technology.
- Rapid 5G rollout may be hindered by telecoms'** insufficient capital, including Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea.
- The government has maintained the reserve price of 5G airwaves at its current level, a potential blow to carriers.
- High reserve prices** for the spectrum and **direct spectrum allocation to businesses** for the construction of **captive private networks** are two aspects of the future auctions that the telecom sector has called out.
- a little worldwide presence
- The **biggest drawback of 5G is that it** only has local availability and has limited worldwide coverage.

- Only urban areas will see** significant benefits from the 5G network, and rural areas may not experience coverage for several years.
- In addition, compared to other networks, **the costs of installing tower stations are significant**.
- Although 5G operates quickly at high speeds, it won't have the same range as 4G.
- Additionally, **tall structures and trees may block the frequency of the 5G network**, which will cause a number of issues.
- Because of this, it takes longer and costs more money to provide coverage with additional towers.
- Rain can **also interfere with 5G coverage**, which requires additional protection.
- Upload speeds in contrast, compared to 4G, the upload rates are not greater **than 100 Mbps**.
- A 5G connection on **a phone will cause a significant power drain, greatly reducing battery life**.
- In order to safeguard the battery from harm and other issues, producers must invest in new battery technology.
- One of the issues with 5G is cybersecurity since hacking will happen. The increase in bandwidth makes it simple for thieves to grab the database.

Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

CANCER CURE

Priority: Medium



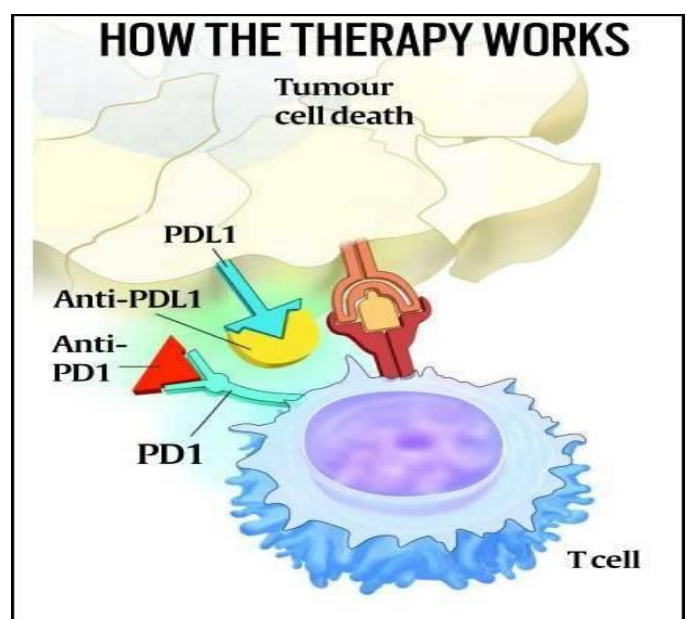
Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What are Monoclonal Antibodies; What are T-Cells; What are Checkpoint inhibitors

Prepp Mains Booster: importance of the trail and the mechanism of cancer cure

Context:

Twelve patients in the United States were **completely cured of rectal cancer without requiring any surgery or chemotherapy** (cancer treatment where medicine is used to kill cancer cells), in a medical trial.



About the trial

- The study was done by doctors from the **Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre in New York**, and its results have been published in the New England Journal of Medicine.
- The trial **used a monoclonal antibody called dostarlimab** every three weeks for six months for the treatment of a particular kind of stage two or three rectal cancer.

Monoclonal antibodies are laboratory-produced molecules engineered to serve as **substitute antibodies** that can restore, enhance, modify or mimic the immune system's attack on cells that aren't wanted, such as cancer cells.

- The participants of the trial had a **mismatch repair deficient stage II or III rectal adenocarcinoma**.
- All 12 patients had completed the treatment and were followed for six to 25 months after. **No cases of progression or recurrence had been reported** during the follow-up, as per the study
- The response shown in colon cancer in this study is 100 percent, it **needs to be validated involving a larger cohort of patients**

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the most common cancers are breast (2.26 million cases), lung (2.21 million cases), colon and rectum (1.93 million cases) and prostate (1.41 million).

What is mismatch repair deficient cancer?

- It is most common among colorectal, gastrointestinal, and endometrial cancers.
- Patients suffering from this condition **lack the genes to correct typos in the DNA** that occur naturally while cells make copies.
- The anomalies in the DNA result in cancerous growths in patients.



What is dostarlimab?

- Dostarlimab belongs to a **group of monoclonal antibodies called "checkpoint inhibitors"**.
- These are **synthetic antibodies which block the proteins that cancer cells produce** to prevent the body's immune system from attacking them.
- It is a **game of blocking the blocker**, so that the native immune system which has recognised the cancer threat is not impeded in launching its attack on the malignant cells.

- This form of immunotherapy does not attack the cancer cells directly but **unshackles the body's own able defenders**.

Cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for nearly 10 million deaths in 2020, or **nearly one in six deaths**.

What are Checkpoint inhibitors?

- They are **named according to the type of protein they block** — CTLA-4 inhibitors, PD-1 inhibitors and PD-L1 inhibitors.
- Dostarlimab** is an **inhibitor of the Programmed Cell Death Protein (PD-1)**.
- PD1 is a type of protein that regulates certain functions of the immune system, including by suppressing T cell activity, and **PD1 blockade therapy looks to release the T cells from this suppression**.

If you imagine the immune system to be a car, PD1 acts as the brakes for the T cells of the immune system. By giving the PD1 blockades, we release the brakes and allow the T cells to destroy the cancerous growth

What are T cells?

- They are also called T lymphocytes
- They are a type of white blood cell.
- T cells are part of the immune system and develop from stem cells in the bone marrow.
- They help protect the body from infection and may help fight cancer.

What does it mean for India?

- More research required:** The trial is a phase II one and conducted in a small set of patients with a short follow-up. Larger phase III studies are required to confirm the results and see whether this is a temporary phenomenon or can the cancer return aggressively.
- Most cases do not need surgeries:** These patients can be well managed with chemotherapy and radiotherapy as well. Around 10 to 15% of cancer patients actually do not need surgeries.
- High cost:** Immunotherapies are expensive and unaffordable for most people in India. An immunotherapy treatment can cost around Rs 4 lakh per month, with patients needing the treatment for six months to a year.
- Use in initial stages in India:** Precision medicine, such as using particular immunotherapy drugs for particular types of cancers, is still at a nascent stage in India.

Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nanotechnology, biotechnology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

MINIPROTEINS TO FIGHT COVID-19

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: Meaning and working of miniproteins
Prepp Mains Booster: Significance of miniproteins fighting COVID

Context:

A new **class of artificial peptides or miniproteins** (molecules) has been reported at Indian Institute of Science (IISc) that will help **fight COVID-19**. Researchers are planning to bring out **anti-viral drugs** as these miniproteins work by making viruses inactive. The team has applied for a patent currently.

What is the difference between antibiotics and antivirals?

Answer: Antibiotics help the immune system fight off bacterial infections and an antibiotic can usually treat many different types of bacterial infections. While **Antivirals are medications that help your body fight off viruses. Each antiviral only works against a specific virus. Bacteria typically reproduce outside of cells, making it easier for medicines to target them.** Because viruses replicate inside cells, they are harder to target, so antiviral drugs are more challenging to develop.

How does it work?

- It will **block the entry of certain viruses into the cells** and will also **clump the virus particles together** to reduce the infection levels.
- These **miniproteins are helical, hairpin-shaped peptides** and they pair up with one another forming a **dimer**.
- Each dimeric 'bundle' presents **two 'faces' to interact with two target molecules**. They are bound by high affinity and it is extremely difficult to denature them and when they bind to the target, they also dimerise these targets.
- Instead of the virus attaching to the cell and going inside, the viruses clump together as part which is engaged in binding to the cells is nullified
- Antibodies typically do not work this way and thus it is a different mechanism of drugs.
- This can help against several viruses and could also help in the field of oncology where there is no rapid mutation.

How was the study conducted?

- A **miniprotein called SIH-5 was used** to target the interaction between the Spike (S) protein of SARS-CoV-2 and ACE2 protein in human cells.
- The S protein is a trimer – a complex of three identical polypeptides. Each polypeptide contains a Receptor Binding Domain (RBD) that binds to the ACE2 receptor on the host cell surface. This interaction facilitates viral entry into the cell.

A **receptor-binding domain (RBD)** is a key part of a virus located on its 'spike' domain that allows it to dock to body receptors to gain entry into cells and lead to infection. These are also the primary targets in the prevention and treatment of viral infections

The **SIH-5 miniprotein was designed to block the binding of the RBD to human ACE2**. When a SIH-5 dimer encountered an S protein, one of its faces bound tightly to one of the three RBDs on the S protein trimer, and the other face bound to an RBD from a different S protein. This 'cross-linking' allowed the miniprotein to block both S proteins at the same time.

TIANGONG SPACE STATION

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: About Tiangong Space Station; International Space Station

Prepp Mains Booster: Significance of TSS

Context:

China's strategically significant space station project entered the final phase on Sunday as **three astronauts entered its orbiting module**



What is the project about?

- Tiangong space station** is the successor to China's Tiangong-1 and Tiangong-2 space laboratories, launched in 2011 and 2016, respectively.
- Its modular design is **similar to the International Space Station** operated by the United States, Russia, Japan, Canada and the European Space Agency.
- The **core capsule, named Tianhe (Harmony of Heavens)**, is about the size of a bus. **Containing life support and control systems**, this core will be the station's living quarters. It is 16.6m long and 4.2m wide.
- The three astronauts will cooperate with the ground team to complete the assembly and construction of the Tiangong space station, developing it from a single-module structure into a **national space laboratory with three modules — the core module, Tianhe, and two lab modules — Wentian and Mengtian**.
- It is expected to become fully operational by the end of the year 2022

International Space Station (ISS)

- It is a **modular space station in low Earth orbit**.
- It is a demonstration platform for new technologies and research laboratory for breakthroughs not possible on Earth, representing the most complex space exploration program ever undertaken.
- It has been **inhabited by humans for over two decades now**

Station activities and research have led to new products to purify air and water in our homes, use of cold plasmas in wound treatment, tracking technology for laser-eye surgery, and non-invasive temperature monitoring of babies in hospitals.

- It has helped to understand how humans can safely live in microgravity, make groundbreaking advancements in medicine and test technologies that will help us travel farther into space
- An **astronaut's usual stay** aboard the orbiting laboratory is around **six months**.
- Astronauts sleep in special sleeping bags secured to the wall of their personal crew quarters.

- In 2019, the station was **opened for commercial activities**, including private astronaut missions.

BIOTECH SECTOR IN INDIA

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is Start-Up; What is a bio incubator

Prepp Mains Booster: reasons for India becoming a Biotech Powerhouse

Context:

- India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared on June 9, 2022 that India's 'bio economy' has risen eight times in the last eight years, **to \$80 billion from \$10 billion, and that the country is not far from joining the top ten** countries in the global biotech ecosystem.
- The biotech sector's key focus areas are health, agriculture, energy, natural farming, and bio-fortified seeds.
- The Prime Minister praised the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (**BIRAC**) for its contribution to the country's development.

What are the reasons that India is recognized as a biotech powerhouse?

According to Prime Minister, there are five major reasons why India is regarded as a nation of biotech potential.

- First, the country's **diversified population and climatic zones**;
- second, India's **skilled human capital**;
- third, India's **ease of doing business**;
- fourth, India's expanding **demand for bio-products**; and
- fifth, India's own **biotech sector and its track record of success**.

Start-ups

- According to the Prime Minister, the number of start-ups in India has surged from a few hundreds to over 70 thousand in the last eight years.
- There were **70,000 start-ups in 60 different industries**. Biotech was linked with roughly 5,000 of these businesses.
- According to Mr. Modi, **every 14th company in the country is in the biotechnology industry, with over 1,100 such businesses forming** in the previous year alone.
- The number of biotech investors has climbed ninefold, and the number of biotech incubators and funding for them has increased sevenfold.
- From six in 2014 to 75 presently, the number of biotech incubators has expanded dramatically.
- The number of biotech goods has grown from ten to over 700 presently.

Schemes for Biotech support

Biotechnology Ignition Grant Scheme (BIG)

- It is **flagship programme of BIRAC**, which provides the right admixture of fuel and support to young startups and entrepreneurial individuals.
- It is the **largest early stage biotech funding programme in India**. Funding grant of upto Rs 5 Million to best in class innovative ideas to build and refine idea to proof-of-concept

- Bioincubators Nurturing Entrepreneurship for Scaling Technologies (BioNest)**
- Bio-incubation allows harnessing of the entrepreneurial potential of start ups by providing **access to infrastructure as well as mentoring and networking platforms** that the start ups could use during their fledgling days.
- Atal Incubation Centre- Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology (AIC-CCMB)** is a premier technology incubator supporting deep science startups. This incubation centre has become **a hub for life-sciences and biotechnology startups**

EASING OF IP RESTRICTIONS ON VACCINES

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What are Vaccines; What is IP

Prepp Mains Booster: impact on India

Context:

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has approved a proposal to waive patents on Covid-19 vaccines, nearly two years after India and South Africa proposed it.



12th WTO MINISTERIAL
CONFERENCE
GENEVA 2022
CO-HOSTED BY KAZAKHSTAN



Waiver for Covid-19 vaccine

- The decision was taken at 12th Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization in Geneva and is the right step towards vaccine equity, accessibility and affordability.
- Considering that vaccine supply is no longer a problem, as it was at the start of the year, the decision is seen to be a delayed one.
- Also, waiver of IP rights will not serve its purpose if third-world pharmaceutical companies lack the know-how to manufacture medicines and vaccines.

According to WHO, one-third of world's population currently lacks access to essential pharmaceuticals, and more than half of people in poor African and Asian nations lack access to even the most basic essential drugs.

What it means for India?

- It will make it easier to obtain approval for the manufacture of patented vaccines, allowing India to produce for both domestic and export markets.
- In the event of future pandemics, this is a progressive step toward ensuring access to and mass manufacture of important drugs and medicines.
- Unless an innovator company steps forward to assist another manufacturer, the process of developing a vaccine will remain difficult, even if IP restrictions are lifted.
- Patentee's know-how will be required to develop a marketable product.
- India's needs to address the issue of shortage of raw materials and low production capacity which are its major limiting factors.

WTO Agreements and public health

- WTO has recognised human health as being "important in the highest degree" and its agreements allow governments to take measures to restrict trade in pursuing national health policy objectives,
- Patent protection for medicinal items is especially important. It is an area where striking a balance between two public health goals- providing incentives for future drug discoveries and ensuring cheap access to present treatments, is critical.
- TRIPS Agreement contains provisions that enable governments to implement their intellectual property regimes in a way which takes account of immediate and longer-term public health considerations.
- Under certain conditions, TRIPS allows countries to limit patent owners' exclusive rights, for instance by granting compulsory licences

What is compulsory licensing?

- When a government authorises someone else to make a patented product or process without the approval of the patent owner or plans to utilise the patent-protected invention itself, it is known as compulsory licensing.
- It's one of the patent-related flexibilities included in the WTO's intellectual property agreement, the TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) Agreement.
- Compulsory licensing proponents argue that it is a way for governments to overcome access and price restrictions.
- Critics, however, argue that pharmaceutical corporations invest significantly into researching, creating, and getting new drugs approved. Compulsory licensing discourages them from investing in novel drugs since they are denied monopoly rights.

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

ECOSENSITIVE ZONE (ESZ)

Priority: High

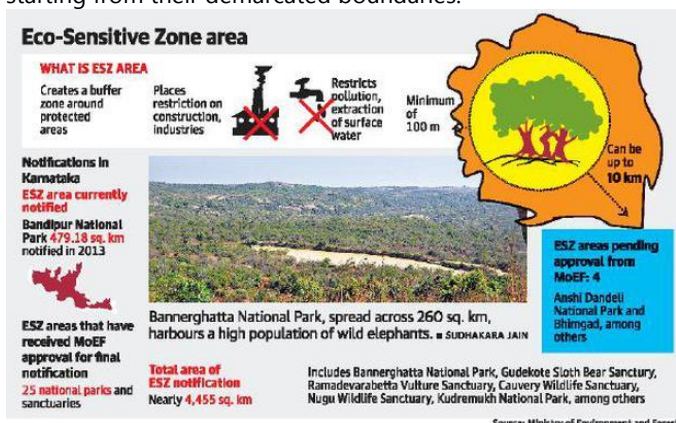
Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Meaning of ESZ; Activities permitted in ESZ

Prepp Mains Booster: Significance of ESZ

Context:

The Supreme Court directed that every protected area, national park and wildlife sanctuary across the country should have a mandatory **eco-sensitive zone (ESZ)** of a minimum one km starting from their demarcated boundaries.



What was the Supreme Court's Directive?

- According to the Supreme Court, every protected forest, national park, and animal sanctuary in the country **must have a one-kilometer eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) starting from its delimited boundaries.**
- The nation's natural resources have been devastated for years by mining and other activities, according to a three-judge Supreme Court panel.

What is the Supreme Court's Observation?

- In relation to natural resources, the state must also act as a trustee for the benefit of the general public in order to achieve long-term sustainability.
- If any national park or protected forest already has a buffer zone that extends over one kilometre, the court ruled that it would take precedence.
- If a statutory decision on the buffer zone's size is pending, the court's order to maintain the one-kilometer safety zone will apply until the law makes a final determination.
- The court also ordered each state and the territory to compile a list of existing structures within the ESZs and submit reports to the apex court within three months.

What is Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ)?

- The fragile area that occurs within 10 kilometres of protected places such as National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries is referred to as an Eco-Sensitive Zone.
 - The ESZ's width and manner of regulation may differ from one protected area to the next.
 - However, the ESZ could be as wide as 10 kilometres around the protected region as a general rule.
- The goal of establishing an Eco-Sensitive Zone is to act as a shock absorber for the protected regions.
- Under the Environment (Protection) Act of 1986, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) declares an ESZ around protected areas.

What are the activities prohibited around ESZ?

- Commercial mining,
- Stone quarrying,
- Crushing units,
- Tourism activities like flying over protected areas in an aircraft or hot air balloon,
- Setting up industries that cause pollution,
- Establishment of hydro-electric projects,
- Commercial use of firewood,
- Solid waste disposal or wastewater disposal, etc.

What are the activities permitted?

Activities permitted in the areas include -

- Ongoing agriculture and horticulture practices by local communities,
- Rainwater harvesting,
- Organic farming,
- Adoption of green technology and
- Use of renewable energy sources.

What is the significance of ESZ?

- The main goal is to control some activities in the vicinity of National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries in order to reduce

the harmful effects of such activities on the fragile environment that surrounds the protected areas.

- By controlling and supervising the activity around protected areas, these regions operate as "shock absorbers."
- These zones serve as a transition zone between places with high levels of protection and those with lower levels of protection.
- These regions aid in the reduction of human-animal conflict.
- The core and buffer management model is used to manage the protected areas, which also protects and benefits local residents.

MICROPLASTICS IN ANTARTICA

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What are microplastics; its sources

Prepp Mains Booster: impact of microplastics

Context:

- For the **first time**, scientists discovered **microplastics** plastic particles smaller than a grain of rice in **freshly fallen Antarctic snow**, which they believe has the potential **to alter climate by hastening ice melting**.
- The findings, which were recently published in the journal The Cryosphere, revealed a major threat to the Antarctic region.

What are microplastics?

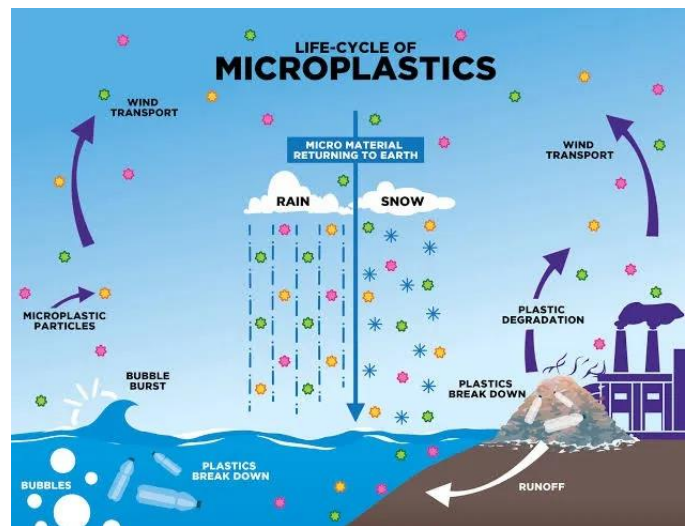
Microplastics are minuscule plastic particles that are **less than five millimetres** in length and can affect our oceans and aquatic life.

What are the sources of microplastics?

- Microplastics can be **found in a variety of places**, including bigger plastic waste that breaks **down into smaller and smaller fragments**.
- **Microbeads**, a form of microplastic, are extremely small bits of manufactured **polyethylene plastic** used as exfoliants in **health and beauty products** such as **cleansers and toothpastes**.
- These microscopic particles quickly **bypass water filtering systems** and end up in the **ocean**, posing a risk to aquatic life.

What is the impact of microplastics?

A buildup of microplastics causes growth retardation, hormone disruption, metabolic disturbance, oxidative stress, immunological and neurotoxicity malfunction, and genotoxicity behavioral changes.



What does the study say?

- The research is based on snow samples gathered in 2019 from **Antarctica's Ross Ice Shelf**.
- The researchers **discovered plastic particles** in every sample taken from remote **locations on the Ross Ice Shelf**, and they believe their discoveries will have worldwide implications.
- Microplastics have been discovered to have **harmful effects on the environment, limiting growth, reproduction, and general biological activities in creatures**, as well as having negative implications for humans, according to previous research.
- Microplastics **discovered in fresh Antarctic snow demonstrate** the reach of plastic pollution into even the



distant parts of the globe.

- The researchers discovered an average of 29 microplastic particles per litre of melted snow, which is higher than previous marine concentrations detected in the Ross Sea and Antarctic sea ice.
- Microplastics may have **traveled thousands of kilometers in the air**, according to atmospheric modeling, but the presence of people in Antarctica is likely to have left a microplastic 'footprint,' the researchers added.

Initiatives by the government to curb Plastic Pollution

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, has notified the **Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021**, which prohibits **identified single-use plastic items with low utility and high littering potential by 2022**, keeping in mind the negative impacts of littered plastic on both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.
- India proposed a resolution on combating **single-use plastic pollution at the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly in 2019**, emphasising the urgent need for the global community to focus on this critical issue. This resolution's approval at **UNEA 4** was an important step forward.
- With effect from **July 1, 2022**, the **manufacturing, import, stocking, distribution, sale, and use of the following single-use plastic commodities, including polystyrene and expanded polystyrene, will be outlawed.**
- The **Guidelines for Extended Producer Responsibility**, which were recently released, have been **granted legal force by the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021**, in order to ensure that Extended Producer Responsibility is implemented effectively.

SINGLE USE PLASTICS

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is Single Use Plastics

Prepp Mains Booster: impact of Single Use Plastics

Context:

- From July 1, "single-use plastic" will no longer be used, according to the Center. The prohibition was **announced in a gazette notification last year**, and the Ministry for Environment, Forests, and Climate Change has now identified a list of things that will be prohibited starting next month.
- The Ministry announcement states that starting on July 1, 2022, "the manufacturing, **import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of the following single-use plastic**, including polystyrene and expanded polystyrene, **commodities, shall be forbidden.**"



What is Single Use Plastics (SUP)?

- It refers to single-use plastic objects that are thrown away. One of the largest percentages of **plastic produced and used is single-use plastic**, which includes **food packaging, polythene bags, face masks, coffee cups, cling film, garbage bags, and bottles of shampoo, soap, and cosmetics.**
- Plastic comes in a variety of forms, including PET, HDPE, HDPE-HD, HDL, HDL-HDPE, linear low-density polyethylene (LLDPE), PVC, polypropylene, and Styrofoam.
- **Wafers, gutka packs, and shampoo sachets are examples of multi-layered plastic products manufactured by fusing several polymers and components. Any of these categories can apply to SUP.** Plastics eventually degrade into extremely hazardous microplastics.
- According to a 2021 research by one of Australia's charitable organisations, the Minderoo Foundation, **single-use plastics make up a third of all plastic produced worldwide and are made with 98 percent fossil fuels.**

What are the prohibited items?

- Earbuds, balloon sticks, candy and ice cream sticks, cutlery items like plates, cups, glasses, forks, spoons, knives, and trays, sweet boxes, invitation cards, cigarette packs, PVC banners measuring under 100 microns, and polystyrene for decoration are among the items the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has declared illegal.
- **In September 2021, the Ministry already prohibited polythene bags smaller than 75 microns; the previous maximum was 50 microns.**
- Beginning in December, polythene bags **smaller than 120 microns will also be prohibited.**
- According to ministry representatives, the prohibition is being implemented gradually to give producers **time to switch to thicker, easier-to-recycle polythene bags.**
- For bags that are 50 and 75 microns, manufacturers can utilize the same machine; **however, for bags that are 120 microns, the equipment will need to be modified.**
- The Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, also completely prohibit the use of sachets **to store, package, or sell gutkha, tobacco, and pan masala.**

How will the prohibition be put into effect?

- The **State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs)**, which will submit regular reports to the Center, as well as the CPCB from the Center, will monitor the ban.
- **At the national, state, and local levels, instructions have been given to all petrochemical companies, for instance, not to supply raw materials to businesses that manufacture the prohibited goods.**
- Additionally, **instructions have been given to SPCBs and Pollution Control Committees on how to change or cancel the permission to operate granted under the Air/Water Act to businesses that manufacture single-use plastic items.**
- Local governments **have been ordered to provide new commercial licences with the requirement that SUP**

items will not be sold on their premises and that any permits already in place would be revoked if it is discovered that they are doing so.

- **According to the Environment Protection Act of 1986**, anyone found in violation of the **ban faces a punishment of up to 5 years in prison**, a fine of up to **Rs 1 lakh**, or **both**.
- The SPCB may also require violators to pay environmental damage compensation.
- **Municipalities also have their own plastic trash regulations and criminal codes.**

Why are Single Use Plastics disastrous?

- By 2050, **it has been predicted that single-use plastic might contribute 5–10% of greenhouse gas emissions**, depending on the production trajectory currently in place.
- India ranks 94th out of the top 100 nations for producing the most single-use plastic garbage, behind Singapore, Australia, and Oman according to Australia's charitable organisation, the Minderoo Foundation.
- India produces **4 kg of single-use plastic garbage per person** yearly, with 11.8 million metric tonnes produced domestically and 2.9 million tonnes imported.
- **These microplastics then find their way into our food supplies** and eventually into our bodies.

How do other nations handle single-use plastic?

- A resolution to draft an agreement that will eventually make it legally binding for the signatories **to address the full life of plastics from production to disposal in order to end plastic pollution** was signed earlier this year by 124 countries, parties to **the United Nations Environment Assembly, including India.**
- **In 2002, Bangladesh became the first nation to outlaw thin plastic bags.** In July 2019, New Zealand became the most recent nation to outlaw plastic bags. 2020 saw the issuance of a phased-in ban on plastic bags in China.
- **68 nations had plastic bag bans in place as of July 2019 with various levels of enforcement.**
- The Single-Use Plastics Directive **entered into force in the European Union on July 2, 2021. (EU).**
- Single-use plastic plates, cutlery, straws, balloon sticks, and cotton buds cannot be sold in EU member states due to the directive's ban on certain single-use plastics for which substitutes are available. The same policy is applied to cups, expanded polystyrene food and drink containers, and all products made of oxo-degradable plastic.
- Plastic straws are totally prohibited in Vanuatu and the Seychelles.

Way forward

- The **lack of specific recommendations regarding alternatives to the ban has drawn criticism.**
- In its statement, the CPCB mentions biodegradable plastics, cotton bags, sustainable apparel, bamboo tableware and straws, wood from sustainably managed forests for domestic products, pottery without hazardous glazes, and ceramics.
- The **CPCB is required by the Plastic Waste Management Rules 2022 to create a sustainable packaging guideline** based on the following criteria: package designing that encourages reuse; package designing that is conducive to

recycling; recycled plastic content in plastic packaging material; and package designing for the environment.

However, nothing is publicly available yet.

- Need a **more thorough strategy to halt plastics imports and production.**
- Our main focus should be **on building political will to follow through.**
- Although we must aim for behaviour change communication.

Various initiatives to curb plastic waste

- The **two-month long awareness campaign**, which will include four online regional events and a social media campaign to spread the message of reducing plastic pollution to a wider audience, is being organised by GIZ, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), and **the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India.**
- "India Plastic Challenge – Hackathon 2021" to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in **the domain of combating plastic waste pollution and eliminating single use plastic.**
- India launched a resolution on combating **single-use plastic product pollution** at the **2019 United Nations Environment Assembly**, acknowledging the urgent need for the international community to concentrate on this crucial issue. This resolution's **approval at UNEA 4 was a notable development.**
- Through the **Swachh Bharat Mission**, the waste management infrastructure in the States and UTs is being upgraded.
- According to the **2016 Plastic Waste Management Rules**, the plastic packaging waste that is **not covered by the phase-out of specific** single-use plastic items must be collected and managed in a way that is environmentally sustainable under the **Extended Producer Responsibility of the Producer, Importer, and Brand Owner (PIBO).**
- The Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021 have given the Extended Producer Responsibility Guidelines that have been released legal standing in order to effectively implement it.
- A partnership between **WWF India and CII, the India Plastics Pact** is backed by WRAP, a global NGO located in the UK and anchored at the CII-ITC Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development (CESD). The Pact **aims to remove obstacles to circularity in the plastic packaging industry.**
- By promoting experience exchange, the creation of new policies, and motivation for additional pledges, **the UN Environment's Global Plastics Platform** will support the nations and cities that made these ambitious commitments.
- India is a **member of MARPOL** (International Convention on Prevention of Marine Pollution).

Challenges to internal security through communication networks, the role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention.

CRITICAL INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is Critical Information Infrastructure; National Cyber Security Policy

Prepp Mains Booster: How to protect CII

Context:

Government has declared IT resources of ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and NPCI as 'critical information infrastructure'.

About critical information infrastructure (CII)

- It constitutes assets, networks, systems, processes, and information that are crucial to the nation.
- Destruction of critical information infrastructure can have a devastating impact on national security and well-being of citizens
- It broadly includes sectors like energy, telecommunication, space, defence, public health and banking and finance
- The CII networks are usually interrelated and interdependent
- Core functionality of these critical sectors depend upon the CII

Protection of critical information infrastructure

- Under the Information Technology Act of 2000, the government has power to designate any database, IT network or communications infrastructure as CII
- National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Center (NCIIPC) is the lead organisation in charge of implementing all protective measures for the country's critical information infrastructure
- NCIIPC works to create a fool-proof firewall around the CII networks
- NCIIPC is responsible for all measures including research and development for protection of critical information infrastructure

National Cyber Security Policy- 2013

- Seeks to strengthen the regulatory framework so that cyberspace ecosystem is safe and secure
- Aims to protect and enhance resilience of critical information infrastructure by operating a 24x7 National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC)
- Sets requirements for security procedures in relation to the creation, acquisition, development, use and management of information resources
- Improved law enforcement capacities and effective cybercrime investigation, prosecution, and prevention
- One of the objectives is to prevent economic losses due to cybercrime and preserve the privacy of citizens' data

Security challenges and their management in border areas; linkages of organized crime with terrorism.

SIPRI REPORT

Priority: Medium



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is SIPRI; What is India's Nuclear doctrine

Prepp Mains Booster: Impact of SIPRI report; Challenges of reporting

Context:

- According to the Stockholm-based defense research organization SIPRI, India possessed 160 nuclear weapons as of January 2022.
- India and Pakistan both unveiled and continued to develop new nuclear delivery systems in 2021, giving the impression that they are increasing the size of their nuclear arsenals.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

- It is a private, independent organization that does research on weaponry, disarmament, and arms control.
- **SIPRI was founded in 1966** and offers policymakers, academics, the media, and the general public data, analysis, and **recommendations based on open sources**.
- It is based in Stockholm.
- The **Swedish Government** provides a **sizable portion of SIPRI's funding** in the form of an annual grant, and the organization was founded as a result of a Swedish Parliamentary resolution.
- In order to conduct its research, the Institute also **looks for financial assistance** from other institutions.

Cold War's nuclear arsenal reduction is coming to an end

- The United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) are the nine nuclear-armed states.
- Although the total number of nuclear weapons decreased slightly between January 2021 and January 2022, **the number will likely rise in the next ten years.**

Russia and USA

- The destruction of weapons that had been **retired from military service** a number of years earlier was the reason why the overall warhead stockpiles of the US and Russia **continued to fall in 2021**.
- In 2021, the number of warheads in the two nations' **usable military stockpiles** was largely **constant**.
- The strategic nuclear weapons deployed by both nations stayed inside the bounds of a bilateral nuclear arms reduction deal (2010 Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, New START).
- **New START does not impose** a cap on all **non-strategic nuclear weapon stocks**.
- Over **90% of all nuclear weapons** are jointly held by **Russia and the USA**.

China

- According to satellite pictures, China is now building over **300 new missile silos as part of a significant buildup of its nuclear weaponry.**
- According to the report, China possessed 350 nuclear bombs in both January 2021 and January 2022.
- The quantity of stockpiled warheads that may be used has changed, even if SIPRI's assessment of China's total inventory is unchanged from that for January 2021, due to the functioning of new launchers in 2021.

India

- According to Stockholm-based defense research tank SIPRI, **India possessed 160 nuclear weapons** as of January 2022 and appeared to be increasing its nuclear arsenal.
- India's stockpile climbed from 156 in January 2021 to 160 in January 2022.

Pakistan

- SIPRI noted in a statement that Pakistan too appeared to be increasing its nuclear arsenal.
- India and Pakistan both unveiled and continued to develop new nuclear delivery systems in 2021, giving the impression that they are increasing the size of their nuclear arsenals.
- It claimed that **Pakistan's nuclear stockpile stayed at 165** in January 2021 and January 2022

North Korea

- As a key component of its national security plan, North Korea continues to place a high priority on **its military nuclear program.**
- North Korea didn't test long-range ballistic missiles or nuclear explosions in 2021, but according to SIPRI, it has constructed up to 20 warheads and has enough fissile material for 45–55 warheads in total.

France

- France formally began work on a third-generation nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine program in early 2021. (SSBN).

United Kingdom

- Following decades of incremental disarmament initiatives, the UK stated in 2021 that it would raise the cap on the total number of warheads in its arsenal.
- The UK said that it would no longer publicly release information regarding the nation's operational nuclear weapon arsenal, deployed warheads, or deployed missiles, while simultaneously criticising China and Russia for their lack of nuclear transparency.

Significant developments towards the prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

- The last year saw a number of significant developments in nuclear diplomacy.
- Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)** entering into force in January 2021 after receiving the necessary **50 state ratifications.**
- Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action(JCPOA): These included the beginning of discussions on the United States rejoining the Iran nuclear deal, the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action**, and Iran returning to compliance with it
- New START between USA and Russia** was also extended for another **five years**

- China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States are the five nuclear-armed permanent members (P5) of the United Nations Security Council. In 2021, they worked on a joint statement that they released on January 3, 2022, stating that "**nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.**"
- In addition, they reaffirmed their commitment to upholding their duties under the **1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons**, as well as to non-proliferation, disarmament, and arms control agreements and pledges, and to working toward a world free of nuclear weapons.

Challenges

- Despite this, **all five P5 nations continue to build up or update** their nuclear arsenals, and they all seem to be emphasizing nuclear weapons more in their military plans.
- In the context of the conflict in Ukraine, **Russia has even publicly threatened** to use nuclear weapons.
- Due to the conflict, bilateral talks between **Russia and the US on strategic stability have stagnated**, and none of the other nuclear-armed governments are pursuing arms control talks.
- Furthermore, the **TPNW has drawn criticism from the P5 countries**, and
- The JCPOA negotiations are **still ongoing.**

India's nuclear doctrine

- Building and maintaining a credible **minimum deterrent**;
- A posture of "**No First Use**" nuclear weapons will only be used in retaliation against a nuclear attack on Indian territory or on Indian forces anywhere;
- Nuclear retaliation to a **first strike will be massive and designed** to inflict unacceptable damage.
- Nuclear retaliatory attacks can only be authorised by the **civilian political leadership** through the **Nuclear Command Authority.**
- Non-use of nuclear weapons** against non-nuclear weapon states;
- However, in the event of a major attack against India, or Indian forces anywhere, by **biological or chemical weapons, India will retain the option of retaliating with nuclear weapons**;

GENERAL STUDIES 4

Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, Determinants and Consequences of Ethics in - Human Actions; Dimensions of Ethics; Ethics - in Private and Public Relationships. Human Values - Lessons from the Lives and Teachings of Great Leaders, Reformers and Administrators; Role of Family Society and Educational Institutions in Inculcating Values.

AI ETHICS

Priority: High



Primary Source: The Indian Express

Prepp Prelims Booster: What is AI

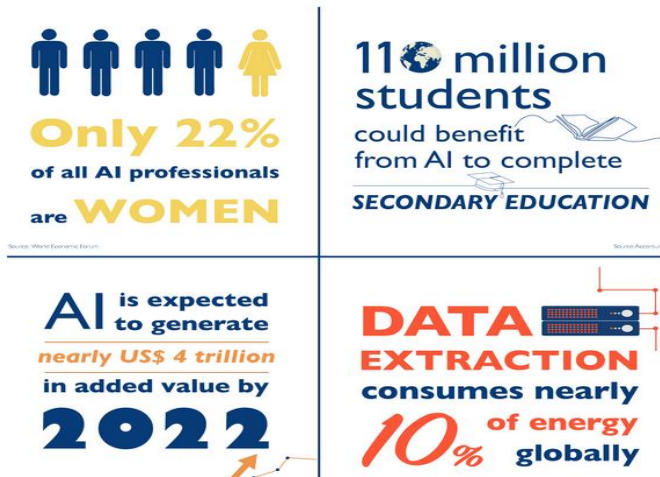
Prepp Mains Booster: What is AI Ethics

Context:

India, which is one of the world's largest markets for AI-related technologies, valued at over \$7.8 billion

What is Artificial Intelligence?

- Artificial intelligence uses computers and other devices to simulate how the human mind makes decisions and solves problems



Applications of Artificial intelligence

- Automatic speech recognition is being used to process human speech into a written format. Many mobile devices incorporate speech recognition into their systems to facilitate voice search.
- Online chatbots are providing customer services as they answer frequently asked questions around topics, like shipping
- AI technology enables computers and systems to derive meaningful information from digital images, videos and other visual inputs that has applications within photo tagging in social media, radiology imaging in healthcare, and self-driving cars within the automotive industry
- Using past consumption behaviour data, AI algorithms are used to make relevant recommendations to customers about the products
- AI-driven trading platforms make thousands or even millions of trades per day without human intervention.

Concerns with AI

- AI often produces biased results since the data used to feed it aren't always indicative of the diversity in our communities.
- For instance, while making up over a third of the world's population, according to Google Brain, China and India only make up about 3% of the photos in the widely used dataset ImageNet.
- Similarly, issues are emerging in facial recognition technologies, which are used to access our phones, bank accounts, and apartments, and are increasingly used by law enforcement to identify people. The error rate is high in the context of women and people with darker skin.
- During times of emotional and psychological distress, AI cannot be relied upon for disclosing or disseminating sensitive information as it may have tendency to state facts as they are without necessary context and way forward.

UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence includes the following:

- enacting actions to govern the entire AI system life cycle, from research and design to deployment and use
- Affirmative action should be taken to ensure that women and minorities are fairly represented on AI design teams
- emphasises the significance of proper data management, privacy, and information access
- It establishes the need for users to retain control over data, allowing them to access and delete information as needed.
- It also calls on member states to develop appropriate safeguards schemes for the processing of sensitive data, as well as effective accountability.

Probity in Governance: Concept of Public Service; Philosophical Basis of Governance and Probity; Information Sharing and Transparency in Government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen's Charters, Work Culture, Quality of Service Delivery, Utilization of Public Funds, Challenges of Corruption.

ISSUES WITH CIVIL SERVICES

Priority: Low



Primary Source: The Hindu

Prepp Prelims Booster: Meaning of Civil Service

Prepp Mains Booster: Weakness in Civil Service

Context:

Most countries in the world have a cadre of professional civil servants, but nowhere are new entrants to the system of government celebrated like in India. It's like the public itself hasn't overcome the colonial legacy of the civil service being the grandest of professions.

This has consequences, and must change.

Why society has a favourable view of civil services?

- Most ordinary people don't aspire for themselves or their children to join politics which is viewed as murky, the domain of the less-educated non-professionals. But the civil services are **highly aspirational**. It is due to the following reasons –
- For one, candidates are selected on **merit based** on an open examination and interview. One cannot inherit a position in the civil services, like in politics.
- Then there is the **job security** that comes with gaining entry. Unless a civil servant does an extraordinary wrong, she has a job for life, and steady, time-bound promotions which ensure that everyone retires at the top irrespective of performance.

What are the weaknesses in the civil services?

- In the perceived strengths of the civil services lie its weaknesses.
- The **single UPSC examination**, which most candidates take in their early or mid-20s, is treated as gospel. Often, it is used as an argument against lateral entry because unless people have passed that examination, they are deemed to not be meritorious or deserving of being in government. It is also used to determine career trajectories. Those who stood first or second in their batch while in their 20s are more likely to rise to important positions such as cabinet secretary or foreign secretary thirty years later when they

are in their late 50s. **Merit and competence cannot be judged by a single exam.**

- **The permanence of the job is a problem too.** Punishment for over-reach or misuse of power is a transfer, either from a weightier ministry to a lighter one or from high-profile capitals to geographically remote ones.
- The result is that all civil servants, never mind their ability or competence, **operate in a system of limited accountability** with few incentives to perform and plenty of opportunities to use and abuse their powers.

IMPORTANT TOPICS FOR PRELIMS

Current events of national and international importance.

SPINY HORNTAIL

Context:

- Recently, Dragonfly enthusiasts have recorded the presence of a rare dragonfly species named "Spiny Horntail" that was not seen in Kerala until now.



What is Dragonfly?

- A dragonfly is a member of the Odonata order of insects. Throughout much of the world, they are most typically found near freshwater areas.

What is Spiny Horntail?

- *Burmagomphus chaukulensis* (Spiny Horntail) is a dragonfly species.
- The Western Ghats are home to this species, which was discovered in Maharashtra earlier this year.
- The patterns on the lateral thorax and the unusual shape of the anal appendages distinguish this species from other *Burmagomphus* species.

What is Burmagomphus?

- *Burmagomphus* is a dragonfly genus belonging to the Gomphidae family.
- *Burmagomphus* was represented by three species prior to the discovery of *B. chaukulensis*: *B. cauvericus*, *B. pyramidalis*, and *B. laidlawi*.
- While *B. laidlawi* can be found all over the Western Ghats, *B. cauvericus* has a more limited range.
- The Western Ghats, as well as Peninsular India, are home to *B. pyramidalis*. The Western and Eastern Himalayas are home to all other species in the genus.

Why is a dragonfly important?

- Dragonflies are important to their environments both **as predators (particularly of mosquitos) and as prey to birds and fish**. Because these insects require stable oxygen levels and clean water, scientists consider them reliable bioindicators of the health of an ecosystem.
- Dragonflies are essential bio-indicators of an area's ecological health. Because they eat mosquitoes and other insects that transmit life-threatening diseases like Malaria and Dengue Fever.

What are Bioindicators?

- Plants, plankton, animals, and bacteria are examples of bioindicators that are used to monitor the health of the natural ecosystem in the environment. Lichens, for example, are excellent bioindicators of air quality.
- Algal blooms are frequently used to signify high levels of nitrates and phosphates in lakes and rivers, among other places.

EX-KHAAN QUEST -2022

Context:

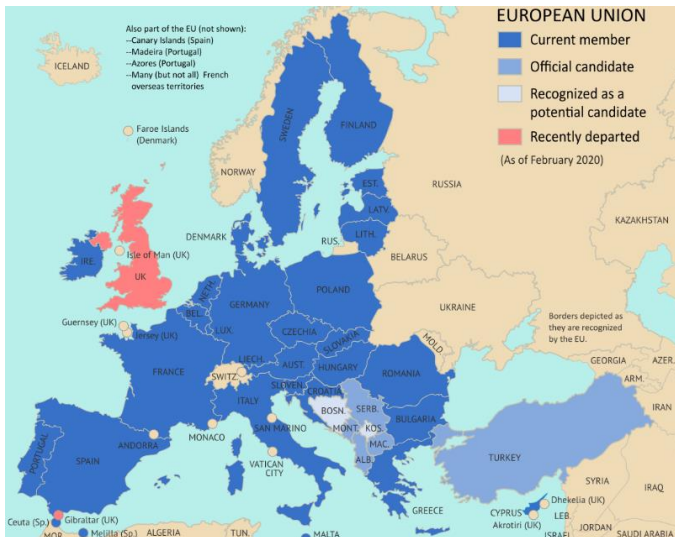


- At the Peace Support Operations Training Centre in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, the Multinational Peacekeeping Exercise "**Ex Khaan Quest -2022**" came to an end today.
- The exercise, which took place from June 6 to June 20, 2022, gave the military of 16 different nations an opportunity to learn from one another and exchange best practices.
- **Both the Command Post** exercise and the field training were attended by the Indian contingent, which was made up of **LADAKH SCOUTS** members.
- In order to improve multinational interoperability, a number of training events were **organised throughout the exercise**, including combat discussions, staff training, and mock tactical operations in accordance with the **United Nations (UN) mission**.

EU GRANT UKRAINE CANDIDATE STATUS

Context:

- Ukraine and Moldova have been suggested as candidates for EU membership by the European Union.
- It will bolster Kyiv's morale if the European Commission's decision is approved as anticipated at a session next week.
- This will make it possible to close the diplomatic gap between the EU and Russia in Eastern Europe.
- Russia has also not objected to the action.



What is the European Union?

- 28 nations make up the European Union, which functions as an economic and political organization.
- To put an end to centuries of struggle between European nations, which culminated in World War II, there was a desire to create a single political entity for all of Europe.

What are the Membership criteria of EU?

- A country must satisfy the Copenhagen Criteria in order to join.
- The primary requirements are the presence of a free market, a solid democracy, the rule of law, and acceptance of all EU laws, including the euro.
- There are three steps in the typical application process to join the EU.
- A nation receives the designation of an official candidate for membership during the first phase.
- The second stage is when the candidate country and the EU begin membership talks. This procedure entails the incorporation of EU law into national law and the planning of its implementation in judicial reforms and other reforms.
- When a candidate country has completed all requirements for membership and is in the third stage.

What are the various institution under EU?

European Council:

- It is a group that establishes the general political aims and direction of the European Union.
- Along with the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission, it is made up of the heads of state or government of the EU member states.
- Participating in its sessions is also the Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

European Parliament:

- It is the only parliamentary body in the European Union (EU) that EU members who are 18 years old or older directly elect.
- It performs the legislative duty of the EU along with the Council of the European Union (often referred to as "the Council").

Council of the European Union:

- It represents the executive governments of the EU member states and is a component of the essentially bicameral EU legislature.

European Commission (EC):

- It is the European Union's executive body and is in charge of making legislative proposals, carrying out decisions, maintaining EU treaties, and running the day-to-day operations of the EU.
- With 28 members, the Commission functions as a cabinet-style government.
- The Commission President, a candidate put up by the European Council and chosen by the European Parliament, is one of the 28 members.

The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU):

- It resolves legal disputes between national governments and EU institutions and interprets EU law to ensure that it is enforced uniformly in all EU member states.

The European Central Bank (ECB):

- It oversees monetary policy in the Eurozone, which consists of 19 member nations of the European Union, as the central bank for the euro.

INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY

Context:

Recently, Prime Minister Modi performed yoga at the major event on the International Day of Yoga in 2022, which was held in Mysuru, the city of Karnataka.



About International Yoga Day 2022:

- Prime Minister Modi practised yoga at an event on the International Day of Yoga in 2022, which was held in Mysuru, the city of Karnataka.
- Along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, more than 15,000 people attended the yoga celebrations at the Mysore Palace grounds.
- In keeping with the expanding health issues, the theme of the 2022 International Day of Yoga is "Yoga for Humanity," which promotes a holistic approach to physical activity.

What is International Yoga Day?

- India offered the proposal for the International Day of Yoga (IDY) before the start of the United Nations General Assembly's (UNGA) 69th session, which took place in 2014.
- In December 2014, the UN passed a resolution designating June 21 as International Day of Youth.
- Two Guinness World Records were set at the inaugural Yoga Day festivities in 2015 on Rajpath in New Delhi.
- With 35,985 participants, it was the largest yoga session ever.
- 84 different countries took part.

What is Yoga ?

- India is the country where yoga first emerged as a physical, mental, and spiritual discipline.
- The Sanskrit word "yoga" means "to join or to merge," and it represents the fusion of the physical body and the mental consciousness.
- It is currently performed in many different forms all over the world and is becoming more and more popular.
- The psycho-social treatment and rehabilitation of Covid-19 patients in isolation and quarantine benefit greatly from yoga.
- As part of its Global Action Plan for physical activity 2018–30, the World Health Organization (WHO) has also urged its member states to practise yoga.

NORTHERN IRELAND PROTOCOL

Context:

- The Northern Ireland Protocol Bill, proposed by the Boris Johnson administration, would allow the U.K. **to disregard certain terms of the Brexit agreement**.
- The proposed bill, according to the **European Union (EU), is illegal under international law**, and if it is passed, the U.K. will face legal repercussions.

What is the issue?

- The new legislation, yet to be tabled in Parliament, seeks **to reduce customs checks and paperwork for trade between Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) and Northern Ireland (which together with Great Britain forms the United Kingdom)**.
- The bill's main recommendations include creating a **"green lane"** with fewer clearances for goods that will stay in **Northern Ireland** while a **"red lane"** with more requirements examines goods headed for the EU; allowing London to make all spending and tax decisions **for Northern Ireland**; and resolving disputes outside of the jurisdiction of the **European Court of Justice** through independent arbitration and negotiations.
- Additionally, it suggests giving firms in Northern Ireland the option of using EU or UK standards.

What is the Northern Ireland Protocol?



- **Northern Ireland** was the **only part of the United Kingdom** that continued to share a land border with the

Republic of Ireland, an EU member, after the United Kingdom left the bloc.

- Since the product standards of the EU and the UK differ, inspections would be required before items could be transported from Northern Ireland to Ireland.
- The **Belfast Agreement, also known as the Good Friday agreement, which was a hard-won peace treaty**, brought an end to the two sides' protracted fighting.
- Because manipulating this border was deemed too risky, it was agreed to perform the checks **between Northern Ireland and Great Britain**.
- According to the protocol, Northern Ireland continues to be a part of the **EU single market and trade and customs checks** are conducted at its ports along the **Irish Sea for goods coming from the United Kingdom**.

38TH IND-INDO CORPAT

Context:

- From **June 13 to June 24**, the Indian Navy and Indonesian Navy are conducting the **38th iteration of the India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (IND-INDO CORPAT)**.
- The **Indonesian Navy** is represented by KRI Cut Nyak Dien, a Kapitan Pattimura (PARCHIM I) class Corvette, while the **Indian Navy** is represented by **INS Karmuk, an indigenously manufactured Missile Corvette** stationed at the Andaman and Nicobar Command, accompanied with a Dornier Maritime Patrol Aircraft.



Background

The two navies have been **conducting CORPATs along the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) annually since 2002** under the broad umbrella of this close maritime partnership in an effort to maintain safety and security for commercial shipping and international trade in this crucial area of the Indian Ocean Region.

BRO CAFES

Context:

- The Ministry of Defense (MoD) has authorized the **installation of wayside amenities** at 75 spots along various portions of roadways in **12 States and Union Territories (BRO)**.

- These are designed to give tourists access to essential comforts and services, increase economic activity in border regions, and create jobs for the local populace.
- These rest stops will be known as "BRO Cafes."



More about the initiative

- The plan calls for the **construction and management of wayside amenities** through **public-private partnerships with organisations** that will plan, construct, and manage the facility in accordance with BRO requirements.
- It is proposed to include amenities like two- and four-wheeler parking, a food court or restaurant, separate restrooms for men, women, and people with disabilities, first aid stations, MI rooms, and others.
- **A competitive approach** will be used to **choose licensees**.

What is the Border Road Organisation?

- The Indian Border Roads Organisation (BRO), a road building executive unit, supports and is currently **a part of the Indian Armed Forces**.
- In India's **border regions and friendly bordering nations, BRO builds and maintains road networks**.
- This covers infrastructure projects in 19 states, three union territories, including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, as well as close-by nations including **Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, Tajikistan, and Sri Lanka**.
- This infrastructure's upkeep, which includes tasks like clearing snow, is also the responsibility of BRO.
- **Shramena Sarvam Sadhyam is the organization's motto** (everything is achievable through hard work).
- BRO plays a vital role in renovating and constructing new **India-China Border Roads (ICBRs)**.
- For the "**highest altitude road**" in **Umling La**, BRO established a Guinness World Record in November 2021.
- Some of the greatest engineering marvels, including the **Atal Tunnel, Atal Setu, and Col. Chewang Rinchen Setu**, to name a few, was built by BRO.
- Arunank, Beacon, Brahmanak, Chetak, Deepak, **Dantak (Bhutan)**, Himank, Hirak, Pushpak, Sampark, Setuk (currently non-functional), Sewak, Shivalik, Swastik, Udayak, Vartak, and Vijayak are the **18 projects that the BRO is currently working on**.

NIA

Context:

Recently, former Punjab Police Chief and 1987-batch IPS officer Dinkar Gupta has been named Director General of the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The Appointments Committee has

given its consent for Gupta to serve as the NIA's director until his retirement on March 31, 2024.



About NIA:

- The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is the primary counter-terrorist task force of India.
- Under a signed decree from the Ministry of Home Affairs, the agency has the authority to handle the investigation of terrorism-related offences across states without the need for special consent from the states.
- The National Investigation Agency Act 2008, which the Indian Parliament approved on December 31, 2008 in response to the horrific 26/11 terrorist assault in Mumbai, gave rise to the Agency.

Composition:

The Indian Police Service and the Indian Revenue Service both provide officers for the NIA.

J&K TO HOST G20 NEXT YEAR

- The **G20 is made up of 19** of the top economies in the world and the **EU**. Its members account for more than 80% of the world's GDP, 75% of its commerce, and 60% of its population.
- Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, **China**, Germany, France, **India**, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States are the G20's member countries.
- **India has been a G20 member since the group's founding in 1999.**
- India will be a member of the **G20 Troika (preceding, current, and upcoming G20 Presidencies)** from December **1, 2021, through November 30, 2024**, according to the MEA.
- The G20 meetings will be held in **Jammu and Kashmir in 2023. After** the former State's special status under **Article 370 of the Constitution was revoked** and it was split into two Union Territories in August 2019, this **will be the first significant international summit to be hosted in Jammu and Kashmir**.

PARAMESWARAN IYER WILL BE NEW NITI AAYOG CEO

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pet project, the **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan**, was overseen by senior bureaucrat **Parameswaran Iyer**, who will now lead the NITI Aayog by replacing **Amitabh Kant**. His bid for the position was accepted by the **Cabinet's Appointments Committee**. The role will be held by Mr. Iyer for at least two years.

- Mr. Iyer currently serves as **the 2030 Water Resources Group's programme manager**. This **World Bank platform promotes water conservation**.
- On February 17, 2016, Kant was chosen to serve as the NITI Aayog's CEO for a two-year term. **Throughout his term, he received three extensions.**
- Under him the Niti Aayog assisted the Center in launching a number of initiatives, including Make in India and Digital India.
- NITI Aayog, Government of **India's top policy think tank, NITI Aayog** also known as the National Institution for Transforming India, was established on January 1, 2015, as a result of a decision passed by the Union Cabinet.
- In addition to **developing long-term, strategic plans and programmes for the Government of India, NITI Aayog** also gives the Center, States, and Union Territories pertinent technical guidance.

HASINA OPENS PADMA MULTIPURPOSE BRIDGE

Padma Bridge Project:

- The Padma Multipurpose Bridge spans the Padma River in Bangladesh and serves both road traffic and rail traffic.
- It links the southwest of the nation to the northern and eastern regions via Shariatpur and Madaripur.
- The Padma Bridge is regarded as the largest and most difficult piece of infrastructure ever built in Bangladesh.

Characteristics:

- The main bridge is 21.65 m wide and 6.15 km long, totaling 9.83 km when you count the road and rail viaducts at either end.
- The biggest warships can pass underneath since it is high enough.

Distance:

- It will significantly shorten the travel time between Dhaka and the west-facing cities of Khulna, Jessore, and Barisal.
- When the bridge's train line is operational, Dhaka might be three and a half hours away from Kolkata.
- It might completely change India's trade and communication.

Padma River:

- The Padma River is a significant river in Bangladesh.
- It is the Ganges' principal tributary.
- The Padma River is renowned for its severe bank erosion, fluctuating courses, and recurring sandbars.

Origin and course:

- At Giria in India's Murshidabad district, the Ganges divides into the Hooghly and the Padma.
- The Padma reaches Bangladesh from India close to Nawabganj, meets the Jamuna (the Brahmaputra's local name in Bangladesh), and keeps its name there.
- Then it reaches the Meghna close to Chandpur and takes on the name "Meghna."

Tributaries:

- The Mahananda is its principal tributary.
- Its main beneficiary is the Madhumati (called the Garai in its upper course).

Mouth: Bay of Bengal

ISKANDER-M MISSILE SYSTEM

Context:

- In order to combat an "aggressive" West, Russia has offered to supply **nuclear-capable missiles to its ally Belarus** in the upcoming months.
- It was announced **at the same time that the G-7 is meeting in Germany**, Russia has made the announcement.



What is the Iskander-M Missile?

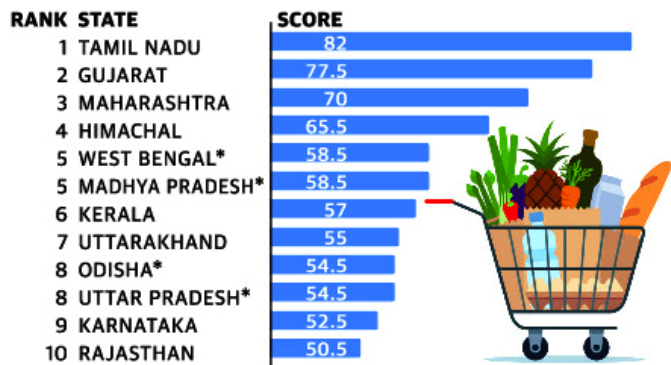
- The Iskander-M missile can carry **up to 700 kg of payload and has a 500 km range**. Both **conventional and nuclear warheads** can be carried by it.
- Iskander-M is a term used by **Russia to describe both the transporter-erector launch system and the short-range ballistic missile (SRBM)** it shoots. It is known by NATO as "SS-26 Stone."
- The SSC-7 and SSC-8 ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) **can also be fired by the system**.
- The Iskander-E system is intended for export, but the Iskander-M system has only ever been utilised by the Russian military.**
- The Iskander missiles** are reportedly **designed to fool missile defences** by flying on a **low trajectory and manoeuvring in flight** to strike targets with an accuracy of 2 to 5 metres, according to the US-based think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).
- According to the US-based Missile Defence Advocacy Alliance, conventional warheads can be **fitted with cluster bombs**, electromagnetic pulse (EMP) warheads, and bunker-busting ammunition (MDAA).
- Iskander-E, the export version, has a lower payload of 480 kg and a range of 280 km.**

FOOD SAFETY INDEX

Context:

Tamil Nadu topped the State Food Safety Index 2021-22 in Large States category, followed by Gujarat and Maharashtra this year. Among smaller states, Goa retained its top ranking. Among UTs, J&K, Delhi and Chandigarh secured the top three ranks.

Safety check | Tamil Nadu topped 20 large States in terms of food safety, according to the 4th State Food Safety Index. A look at the top 10 States



*Ranks 5 and 8 were shared by two States each

About World Food Safety Day

- On **7 June 2022**, the United Nations marked the **fourth global World Food Safety Day**
- This year's World Food Safety Day highlights the **theme "Safer food, better health."**
- United Nations General Assembly established World Food Safety Day in 2018 to raise awareness of this important issue. WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) jointly facilitate the observance of World Food Safety Day, in collaboration with Member States and other stakeholders.

JAN SAMARTH PORTAL

Context:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that it is critical to focus on making domestic banks and currencies a major part of the worldwide supply chain and trade as he launched **Jan Samarth**, a portal connecting 13 credit-linked government initiatives.

What is Jan Samarth Portal?

- "Jan Samarth" offers a **single-window application submission** system for **13 government schemes**, as well as **125+ MLIs (including all public sector banks)** to choose from.
- Faster loan processing is ensured by real-time checks** with the CBDT, GST, UDYAM, NeSL, UIDAI, and CIBIL, among others.
- The "Jan Samarth" portal will make **financing available via government schemes in the areas of agriculture, livelihood, and education.**
- There are now 13 government programmes on the Jan Samarth webpage, with more to come
- The "Jan Samarth" portal will **verify eligibility, grant preliminary approval, and forward the application to the chosen bank.**
- It would also keep the recipients **informed at every step of the journey.**
- It is **not necessary to visit multiple Bank branches.**
- Because of the ease of compliance, the Jan Samarth portal will serve as an **"end-to-end delivery platform,"** encouraging more people to apply for loans.
- This portal **will aid in the reduction of turnaround time and the faster approval** of loans to recipients.



New Series of coins

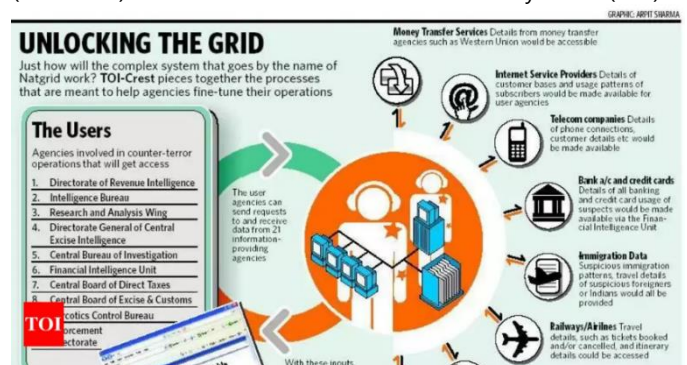


PM Modi also released a **special series of Re 1, Rs 2, 5, 10, and 20 coins**, which will have the '**Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav**' design but are not commemorative coins and will **be part of the circulation**, during the week-long events organised by the Ministry of Finance and Corporate Affairs as part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' from June 6-11.

NATGRID

Context:

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has curtailed the tenure of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) and moved him to the Border Security Force (BSF)



What is NATGRID?

- NATGRID is aimed at providing **cutting-edge technology to boost India's counter-terror capabilities**
- It is a seamless and **secure database for information on terrorists, economic crimes** and similar incidents to help bolster India's capabilities

- It has been envisaged as a **robust mechanism to track suspects and prevent terrorist attacks with real-time data** and access to classified information like immigration, banking, individual taxpayers, air and train travels

Who has access to the NATGRID database?

NATGRID database is available to prominent federal agencies including

- Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)
- Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)
- Enforcement Directorate (ED)
- Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs
- Central Board of Direct Taxes (for Income Tax Department) (CBDT)
- Cabinet Secretariat
- Intelligence Bureau (IB)
- Directorate General of GST Intelligence
- Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)
- Financial Intelligence Unit
- National Investigation Agency (NIA)

CERT-IN

Context:

- The country's cybersecurity agency is scheduled to issue a new set of clarifications on its latest cybersecurity directive soon.
- The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) is said to have assured clarity on the **six-hour timetable for reporting cybersecurity incidents, know-your-customer standards, and preservation of customer logs**, among other things, during a meeting with a select group of stakeholders on Friday.

What is CERT-IN?

- The 'Indian Computer Emergency Response Team' (CERT-In) is the country's national agency for cyber security incident response and proactive cyber incident prevention.
- CERT-In was established by the Central Government through a notification dated October 27, 2009, in accordance with section 70B (1) of the Information Technology Act, 2000. (IT Act, 2000).

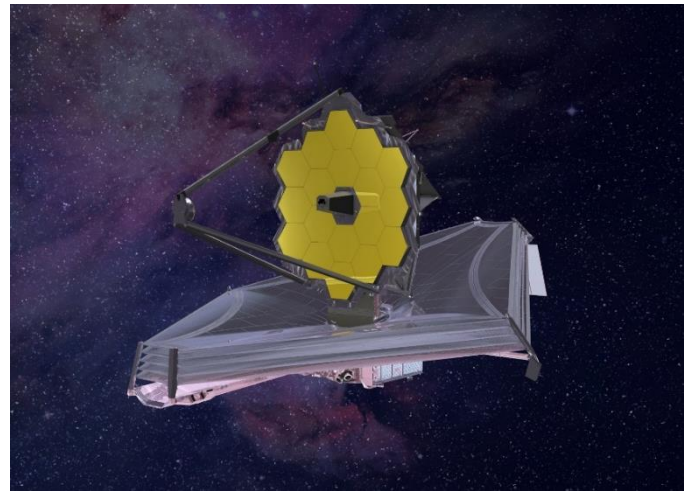
What is the Mandate of CERT-IN?

- Information on cyber incidents is **collected, analysed, and decimated**.
- Cyber security incident **forecasts and warnings**.
- As a **precautionary measure** in the event of a cyber security breach.
- Cyber incident response operations must be coordinated.
- Issue information **security practises, procedures, prevention, response, and reporting of cyber incidents** recommendations, advisories, and vulnerability notes and whitepapers.

JAMES WEBB TELESCOPE HIT BY DEBRIS

Context:

A tiny meteoroid struck the James Webb Space Telescope, knocking one of its gold-plated mirrors out of alignment



About James Webb Telescope

- It is an **orbiting infrared observatory** that will complement and **extend the discoveries of the Hubble Space Telescope**, with longer wavelength coverage and greatly improved sensitivity
- The **longer wavelengths enable Webb to look much closer to the beginning of time** and to hunt for the unobserved formation of the first galaxies, as well as to look inside dust clouds where stars and planetary systems are forming today
- Webb will be able to **see what the universe looked like around a quarter of a billion years (possibly back to 100 million years) after the Big Bang**, when the first stars and galaxies started to form.

Why is Webb an infrared telescope?

- It is only at infrared wavelengths that we can **see the first stars and galaxies** forming after the Big Bang.
- The universe is expanding**, and therefore the farther we look, the faster objects are moving away from us, redshifting the light.

Redshift means that light that is emitted as ultraviolet or visible light is shifted more and more to redder wavelengths, into the near- and mid-infrared part of the electromagnetic spectrum for very high redshifts.

- Star and planet formation in the local universe takes place in the **centers of dense, dusty clouds, obscured from our eyes at normal visible wavelengths**. Near-infrared light, with its longer wavelength, is less hindered by the small dust particles, **allowing near-infrared light to escape from the dust clouds**. By observing the emitted near-infrared light we can penetrate the dust and see the processes leading to star and planet formation.
- Objects of about Earth's temperature emit most of their radiation at mid-infrared wavelengths**. These temperatures are also found in dusty regions forming stars and planets, so with mid-infrared radiation we can see the glow of the star and planet formation taking place.

What are the things we can possibly learn through Webb?

- observe the era of our universe's history when galaxies began to form.
- how galaxies got supermassive black holes in their centers

- planetary systems hospitable to life; Webb could tell whether some Earth-like planets have enough water to have oceans.
- About dark matter or dark energy

BRAHMOS MISSILE

Context:

It has been 21 years since BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was first tested from a land-based launcher in Chandipur in June, 2001



About BrahMos

- BrahMos is a **two-stage missile** that has a **solid propellant booster engine**.
- Its **first stage brings missile to supersonic speed** and then gets detached.
- The **liquid ramjet or the second stage then takes the missile closer to three times the speed of sound** in cruise phase.
- The missile has a **low radar signature**, making it stealthy, and can achieve a variety of trajectories.
- Cruise missiles such as BrahMos are called standoff range weapons and are fired from a range far enough to allow the attacker to evade defensive counter-fire.
- The BrahMos has three times the speed, 2.5 times flight range and higher range compared to subsonic cruise missiles.
- It operates on the **"Fire and Forget" principle**, which means that it does not require any guidance after launch.

The name BrahMos represents Brahmaputra and Moskva rivers of India and Russia respectively. The company was established with capital of \$250 million with **50.5% from Indian side and 49.5% from Russian side**. It is a joint venture company set up by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Mashinostroyeniya of Russia.

Versions of Brahmos

- **Land Based Weapon Complex System-** It comprises 4 to 6 Mobile Autonomous Launchers controlled by a Mobile Command Post and a Mobile Replenishment Vehicle. It can be fired on three targets or in a variety of other combinations near simultaneously
- **Air Launched Weapon System-** On November 22, 2017, BrahMos was successfully flight-tested for the first time from a Sukhoi-30MKI against a sea-based target in Bay of Bengal. Since then, it has been successfully tested multiple times

- **Ship Based Weapon Complex System-** Indian Navy has been inducting BrahMos on its frontline warships since 2005. In its naval version, it has been designed for launch in either vertical or inclined mode from a moving or static maritime platform
- **Submarine Launch Version-** This version can be launched from around 40-50 metres below the water surface. The canisterised missile is launched vertically from the pressure hull of the submarine

Brahmos' Export Deal

- A deal was signed between **Philippines** and BrahMos Aerospace for supply of **shore based anti-ship variant of BrahMos supersonic cruise missile**
- This is the **first export order for the missile** and also the biggest defence export contract of the country
- It is thus a great boost to defence goods and services

WEB 5.0

Context:

Former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey has presented his vision for Web 5.0, a new decentralised web platform that aims to return "control of data and identity to users."

What is Web 5.0?

- The goal of Web 5.0 is to "create a more decentralised web that puts you in control of your data and identity."
- Simply said, Web 5.0 is a combination of Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 that allows people to "own their identity" and "manage their data" on the Internet.
- Both Web 3.0 and Web 5.0 envision an Internet free of government or corporate restrictions, as well as the prospect of catastrophic outages.
- Difference between Web 5.0 and Web 3.0: Web 3.0 is controlled by multiple "venture capitalists and limited partners," rather than being genuinely decentralised or owned by its users.

What are the use cases for Web 5.0?

There are two possible scenarios for how Web 5.0 will impact the future.

- **Identity management:** A digital wallet that securely manages a user's identity, data, and authorizations for third-party apps and connections.
- **Control over personal data:** For example, we can provide any music app access to our settings and preferences, allowing the app to carry our unique music experience across apps.

What are the previous versions of Web?

Web 1.0

- Web 1.0 is the first version of the internet, which was created in 1989 and became widespread in 1993.
- The internet in the early days of Web 1.0 was **primarily static web pages**, with people **visiting a site** and **then reading** and interacting with static information.
- Even if there were ecommerce websites in the beginning, it was still a closed environment, with consumers unable to generate content or leave reviews on the internet.
- Web 1.0 was the first version of the internet, and it lasted until 1999.

Web 2.0

- Web 2.0 began in some form in the late 1990s, but it wasn't until 2004 that the majority of its features were completely functional.
- The Web 2.0 era is **still in full swing**.
- **Users can generate content, participate and contribute** in the form of **comments, registering likes, sharing and uploading their images or videos**, and other similar activities, which distinguishes Web 2.0 from Web 1.0.
- The distinguishing feature of Web 2.0 is, first and foremost, a social media type of engagement.

Web 3.0

- The paradigm, a **decentralised internet** based on **blockchain technology**, would be distinct from the current Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 versions.
- **Users** will have **ownership shares in platforms and applications** in Web3, unlike presently, when platforms are controlled by IT behemoths.
- Web 3.0 was coined by **Gavin Wood**, the founder of Ethereum, a block chain technology startup, in 2014, and many others have since added to the concept.
- Due to the prominence of cryptocurrency in 2021, there were more conversations on Web3.

REUTERS INSTITUTE DIGITAL NEWS REPORT

Why in the news?

According to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report for 2022, public faith in news is eroding in over half of the countries studied, with major segments of the public, particularly younger age groups, turning away from news.

Scope of this report

- The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism commissions this annual study to track how news is consumed in various countries
- The findings are often not nationally representative because they are based on online questionnaires, especially in countries with poor internet access
- In general, the report examines how "the connection between journalism and a large portion of the public may be fraying."

Major highlights in the report

- People are becoming increasingly sceptical of news content.
- Traditional news media consumption has decreased in nearly all of the countries surveyed.
- Share of news consumers who claim they "avoid news" has increased across countries, which labels the behaviour "selective avoidance."
- Despite minor improvements in the proportion of people prepared to pay for online news (particularly in richer nations), growth in digital news subscriptions appears to be slowing.
- While Facebook remains the most popular social network for news, TikTok has become the fastest-growing network, hitting 40 percent of 18-24-year-olds, with 15 percent utilising the platform for news
- The average degree of trust in the news was found to be lower than the previous year, at 42 percent. Only seven of the 46 markets studied saw an increase in trust.

Fraying connections

Fewer people are reading news. This is why.

■ Too much politics/COVID-19 ■ Negative effect on mood ■ Worn out by amount of news ■ News is untrustworthy/biased ■ Leads to arguments
■ Nothing I can do with information ■ Feelings of powerlessness ■ Don't have time for news ■ Hard to understand



Reasons cited for declining trust in news content

- Indifference towards news and its importance
- Media's perceived political and other biases
- In France, on the other hand, lack of trust was directly linked to social class, with the 'haves' displaying higher levels of trust and the 'have-nots' seeing media as frequently aligned with the elites
- Perceptions of commercial or political interests wielding undue influence

What Report says about India

- India is a highly mobile-centric market

Respondents	How they access news
72%	smartphones
35%	computers

- Trust in traditional print brands and public broadcasters remained high.
- 84 percent of Indian respondents get their news from the **internet**, 63% from **social media**, 59% from **television**, and 49% from **print**

History of India and Indian National Movement.

JYOTIRGAMAYA

Context:

The Union Minister of Culture has inaugurated Jyotirgamaya-A festival showcasing the talent of unsung performers.

What is Jyotirgamaya?

- **Organized by:** Sangeet Natak Akademi
- **Purpose:** It is a festival where rare musical instruments from all around the nation participate, as do street artists, train performers, performers at temples, etc.
- **Significance:** The festival aims to raise awareness about the need to preserve both the art of making and the talent required to play rare musical instruments, as well as to offer "unheard" performers a chance to shine.

What is Sangeet Natak Akademi?

- India's national academy for music, dance, and theatre is called Sangeet Natak Akademi.
- It was established in 1952 by a resolution of the Indian government's then-Ministry of Education, with Dr. P.V. Rajamannar served as its first Chairman.

- The government of India fully funds it for the implementation of its projects and programmes, and it currently functions as an autonomous body under the Ministry of Culture.
- Establishing and maintaining organisations and initiatives of national significance in the performing arts is the responsibility of the Akademi.
- The Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowships (Akademi Ratna), Sangeet Natak Akademi Honors (Akademi Puraskar), and Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar are the awards granted by the Akademi.

TAMILNADU RECIEVES STOLEN ANTIQUITIES

Context:

Ten antiquities retrieved from Australia and the United States were handed over to the Government of Tamil Nadu recently.

What are antiquities?

According to the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972, an “antiquity” is an article or object that is at least 100 years old. These illustrate the science, art, crafts or customs or religion or literature of a bygone age, or anything of historical interest.

About the recovered items:



Dvarapala (Door Guardian)

Retrieved in 2020 from Australia, this stone sculpture belongs to the Vijayanagar dynasty dating to the 15th-16th century. He is holding a gada in one hand and has another leg raised up to the level of his knee. The sculpture was burgled from Moondreeswaramudayar Temple, Tirunelveli in 1994.



Nataraja

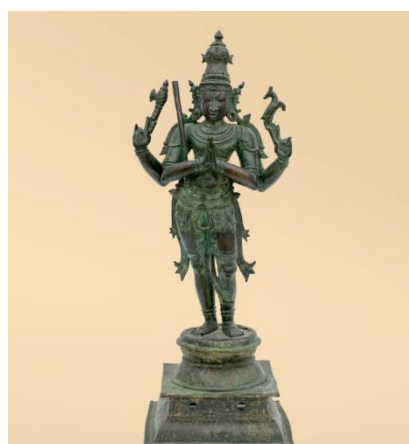
Retrieved in 2021 from the US, this image of Nataraja, a depiction of Shiva, in his divine cosmic dance form, is in tribhanga posture, standing on the lotus pedestal. It is dateable to the 11th-12th century. Possibly, ananda tandava or the Dance of Bliss is portrayed here. The sculpture was burgled from the strong room

of Punnaiallur Arulmigu Mariyamman Temple, Thanjavur, in 2018.



Kankalamurti

Retrieved in 2021 from the US, Kankalamurti is depicted as a fearsome aspect of Lord Shiva and Bhairava. The sculpture is four-armed, holding ayudhas such as damaru and trishula in the upper hands and a bowl and a trefoil shaped object, as a treat for the playful fawn, in the lower right hand. The idol is dateable to the 12th-13th century, and was stolen from Narasinganadhar Swamy Temple, Tirunelveli in 1985.



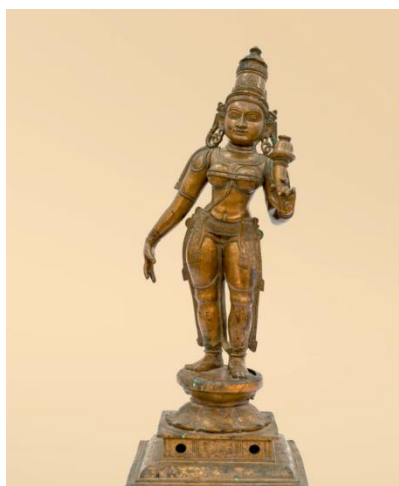
Nandikeshvara

Retrieved in 2021 from the US, this bronze image of Nandikeshvara, dateable to the 13th century, is shown standing in tribhanga posture with folded arms, holding an axe and a fawn in the upper arms, with his forearms in namaskara mudra. This sculpture was stolen from Narasinganadhar Swamy Temple, Tirunelveli, in 1985.



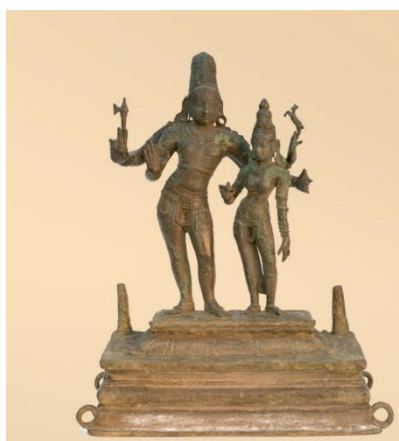
Four-armed Vishnu

Retrieved in 2021 from the US, dateable to the 11th century, and belonging to the later Chola period. The sculpture has Lord Vishnu standing on a padma pedestal holding attributes such as shankha and chakra in two hands; while the lower right hand is in abhaya mudra. It was stolen from Arulmigu Varadharaja Perumal Temple, Ariyalur, in 2008.



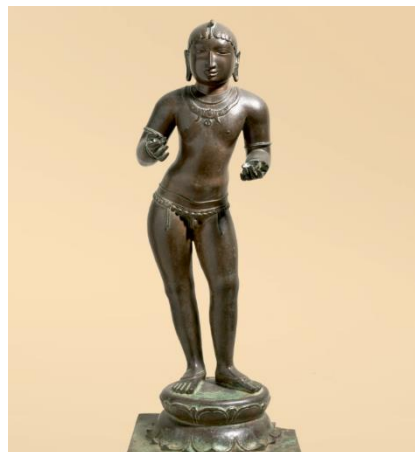
Goddess Parvati

Retrieved in 2021 from the US, the image depicts a Chola-period sculpture dateable to the 11th century. She is shown holding a lotus in the left hand whereas the right is hanging down near her kati. This sculpture was also stolen from Arulmigu Varadharaja Perumal Temple, Ariyalur in 2008.



Siva and Parvati

Retrieved in the year 2021 from the USA, the image of Lord Siva and Devi Parvati are seen standing on a rectangular lotus pedestal, placed on a high plinth. Siva is in tribhanga posture, shown four armed, holding a battle axe and fawn in upper two hands. His lower two hands are in Abhaya mudra and embracing Parvati, respectively.



Standing child Sambandar

Retrieved in 2022 from Australia. Sambandar, the popular 7th-century child saint, is one of the Muvar, the three principal saints of South India. The sculpture is dateable to the 11th century. The legend goes that after receiving a bowl of milk from Goddess Uma, the infant Sambandar devoted his life to composing hymns in praise of Lord Shiva. The sculpture displays the saint's childlike quality, while also empowering him with the maturity and authority of a spiritual leader. It was stolen from Sayavaneeswarar Temple, Nagapattinam, between 1965 and 1975.

International Treaties and Conventions that protect Artefacts and Antiquities:

1. **UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property** of 1970, commonly referred to as UNESCO Convention
2. **Geneva Convention on War**
3. **Hague Convention (1954)**

SANT TUKARAM TEMPLE

Context:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the **Sant Tukaram Shila Mandir in the temple town of Dehu in Pune** district of Maharashtra



About the Sant Tukaram Shila Mandir

- Shila refers to a rock that is currently on the Dehu Sansthan temple premises, and that for centuries has been the starting point of Wari, the annual pilgrimage to Pandharpur.
- Bhakti saint Sant Tukaram had sat on this piece of rock for 13 continuous days when challenged about the authenticity of the Abhyangs he had written.
- It is said that the saint had immersed his entire work in the **Indrayani river**; the work miraculously reappeared after 13 days, proving their authenticity.

The Warkari sect

- Sant Tukaram and his work are central to the Warkari sect spread across Maharashtra.
- His message about a **casteless society** and his denial of rituals had led to a social movement.
- Sant Tukaram is credited with starting the **Wari pilgrimage**.
- The Wari sees lakhs of devotees congregating in the temple towns of Dehu and Alandi to accompany the padukas of Sant Tukaram and Sant Dyaneshwar respectively as they start for Pandharpur.
- Participants finish their sowing before they set off. The pilgrims reach Pandharpur on the day of Ekadashi with the Chief Minister performing the mahapuja. The pilgrimage is being resumed after a gap of two years.

The Saints of Maharashtra

- From the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries Maharashtra saw a great number of saint-poets, whose **songs in simple Marathi** continue to inspire people.
- The most important among them were **Janeshwar, Namdev, Eknath and Tukaram** as well as **women like Sakkubai and the family of Chokhamela**, who belonged to the "untouchable" Mahar caste.
- This regional tradition of bhakti **focused on the Vitthala (a form of Vishnu) temple in Pandharpur**, as well as on the notion of a personal god residing in the hearts of all people.
- These saint-poets **rejected all forms of ritualism, outward display of piety and social differences based on birth**.
- In fact they even rejected the idea of renunciation and preferred to live with their families, earning their livelihood like any other person, while humbly serving fellow human beings in need. A new humanist idea emerged as they insisted that bhakti lay in sharing others' pain

BUDDHIST RELICS TAKEN TO MONGOLIA

Context:

Four Holy Relics of Lord Buddha are being taken to Mongolia for an exposition as part of Mongolian Buddha Purnima celebrations. A 25-member delegation, led by Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju, will accompany the relics on their journey.

About the Relics



- At the age of 80, according to Buddhist beliefs, **Buddha attained salvation in Uttar Pradesh's Kushinagar district**. The Mallas of Kushinagar cremated his body with ceremonies befitting a universal king.
- His **relics from the funeral pyre were collected and divided into eight shares** to be distributed among the Ajatsatrus of Magadha, the Licchavis of Vaishali, the Sakyas of Kapilavastu, Mallas of Kushinagar, Bullies of Allakappa, the Mallas of Pava, the Koliyas of Ramagrama and a Brahmana of Vethadipa.
- The **purpose was erecting stupas over the sacred relics**. Two more stupas came up — one over the urn in which the relics had been collected and the other over the embers.
- Stupas erected over the bodily relics of Buddha (Saririka stupas) are the earliest surviving Buddhist shrines.
- It is said that **Ashoka (272–232 BC)**, being an ardent follower of Buddhism, **opened up seven of these eight stupas, and collected major portion of the relics for enshrinement within 84,000 stupas** built by him in an effort to popularise Buddhism as well as the cult of the stupas.

What is Stupa?



- Sanskrit term stupa refers to a **heap**.
- From the **Vedic time** onwards, stupas were used as **burial mounds in India**
- The art of stupas reached its **pinnacle during the era of Ashoka**
- Stupa is made up of a cylindrical drum and a circular anda with a harmika and chhatra on top, which are mostly the same with minor variations in shape and size.

The Kapilavastu Relics

- The **four relics (being taken to Mongolia) come from among 22 Buddha relics**, currently housed at Delhi's National Museum. Together, they are known as the '**Kapilvastu Relics**' since they are from a site in Bihar believed to be the ancient city of Kapilvastu. The site was discovered in 1898.
- The discovery of an inscribed **casket in 1898 at the stupa site in Piprahwa** (near UP's Siddharthnagar) helped identify the place with the ancient Kapilavastu.
- The inscription on the casket's lid which refers to the relics of Buddha and his community, the Sakya, reads: 'Sukiti bhatinam sa-bhaginikanam sa-puta-dalanam iyam salila nidhare Bhaddhasa bhagavate sakiyanam.' 'It's meaning, according to Rhys Davis is: "this shrine for relics of the Buddha, the August One, is that of the Sakyas. The brethren of the distinguish One, in association with their sisters and with their children and their wives."

- The Relics will be accorded the **status of a State Guest** and will be taken in the same climate control case as it has been kept presently at the National Museum.
- Indian Air force has made available a special **airplane C-17 Globe Master** to carry the holy relics.
- The relics will be received in Mongolia by the Culture Minister of Mongolia; Advisor to the President of Mongolia and a large number of monks among other dignitaries.
- The Lord Buddha Relics available in Mongolia would also be displayed along with the relics from India.
- Two Bullet Proof casings as well as two ceremonial caskets are being carried by the Indian Delegation for both the Relics.

Indian and World Geography-Physical, Social, Economic Geography of India and the World.

EARTHQUAKE IN AFGHANISTAN

Context:

Recently, over 1,000 people are dead in the deadliest earthquake to hit Afghanistan in decades. The epicenter of the earthquake was close to the city of Khost, which is roughly 160 kilometers (100 miles) south of the Afghan capital Kabul and close to the country's border with Pakistan.



What caused the Earthquake in Afghanistan?

Hindu Kush geography:

- Geographically, Afghanistan is in the mountainous Hindu Kush region, which is a part of the Alpid belt, the second

most seismically active region in the world after the Pacific Ring of Fire. As a result, Afghanistan is prone to earthquakes.

- The Hindu Kush region, which has one of the highest rates of deep earthquakes worldwide, has been dubbed "one of the most seismically hazardous regions on earth" by the United States Geological Survey (USGS).
- The highly frequent earthquakes in this area are assumed to be the result of slow collisions between the Indian subcontinent and the Eurasian tectonic plate.
- Because of Afghanistan's unique geology and topography, seismic occurrences of this kind can be extremely destructive in countries like Afghanistan, where the infrastructure is poor and residents dwell in outlying mountain communities that are hard to access for emergency rescue workers.

Indian Polity and Governance

REGISTERED UNRECOGNISED POLITICAL PARTIES

Context:

- The **Commission** on 20 June 2022 **decided to delete 111 additional RUPPs** from the register as a follow-up to the 25 May 2022 decision to delete the 87 non-existent RUPPs.
- These 111 RUPPs' addresses for communication were legally required as part of the registration process under **section 29A(4)**;
- However, they have not complied with the requirement to notify the ECI of any **address changes under section 29A(9)**.
- In accordance with the Commission's ruling dated 25.05.2022, CEOs have reported that these RUPPs have either been verified to be nonexistent or that the postal department has returned their letters as undeliverable.

What are Registered Unrecognized Political Parties ?

Unrecognized parties are **those that have recently been registered**, did not receive **a sufficient number of votes** in the **assembly or general elections** to qualify as a state party, **or have never run in an election after being registered**.

Background

- The Election Commission of India issued an order dated May 25, 2022 urging the Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs) to ensure proper compliance.
- Chief Electoral Officers were given instructions in the aforementioned order to take the necessary steps to ensure that RUPPs complied with the pertinent sections 29A and 29C of the RP Act 1951.

More about the issue

- The Commission **further decided that any party** who felt **wronged by this could appeal to the concerned Chief Electoral Officer or Election Commission** within 30 days of the order's issuance with all supporting documentation, proof of compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, and updated information on office holders who are authorised signatories for financial transactions, **including year-by-year audited financial statements (including bank account)**.

- Sending the segregated list of these RUPPs to the appropriate CEOs and CBDT will enable them to take the necessary legal action.
- Additionally, a referral for required legal and criminal action against 3 RUPPs involved in **serious financial wrongdoing has been made to the Department of Revenue.**
- In order to take any necessary corrective action in accordance with the RP Act 1951 read with the pertinent sections of the IT Act 1961, a list of 1897, 2202, and **2351 RUPPs for non-submission of Contribution Reports in FY 2017–18, 2018–19, and 2019–20, respectively, has also been supplied.**
- The Revenue Department has also been given a list of 66 RUPPs that have requested income tax exemptions **without providing contribution reports as required by section 29C of the Act.**

REMISSION FOR PRISONERS ON OCCASION OF 75 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

Context:

To commemorate the 75th anniversary of Independence, the Union Home Ministry released a set of guidelines to the States and Union Territories on the grant of exceptional remission to prison inmates.

Who would be released under new guidelines?

- **Women and transgender convicts who are 50 years of age**
- **Male convicts who are 60 years and above** who have completed **50% of their sentence** period without counting the period of general remission earned
- **Physically challenged convicts with 70% disability and more** who have completed 50% of their total sentence period
- **Terminally ill convicts**, convicted prisoners who have **completed two-thirds (66%) of their total sentence** period
- **Poor prisoners who have completed their sentence** but are still in jail due to inability to pay fine imposed on them
- Persons who **committed an offence at age of 18-21 years and with no other criminal involvement** or case against them and who have completed 50% of their sentence period

Who are not eligible for remission

- **Death sentence convicts** or where death sentence has been commuted to life imprisonment
- Those convicted for **an offence where punishment of death has been specified as one of the punishments**
- Persons convicted with **sentence of life imprisonment**
- Convicts **involved in terrorist activities** or persons convicted under Acts meant to curb terrorism
- **Persons convicted for dowry death, counterfeiting currency notes, offence of rape & human trafficking**
- Those **convicted of serious offences** like those under Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, Immoral Trafficking Act, 1956, Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999, Black Money (Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015

Code of Criminal Procedure

- CRPC allows the government to suspend or remit a sentence or commute the sentence awarded to a person by any court
- **Suspension** is withdrawal of the sentence temporarily
- **Remission** means reducing the period of a sentence without changing its character
- **Commutation** implies substitution of a form of punishment for a lighter one

DISTRICT WISE MINORITIES

Context:

Recently a **public interest litigation (PIL) was filed in the Supreme Court of India seeking the directive to the Central Government to define the minority** and laying down the guidelines to identify the minority communities at district level.

What is the petition about?

- The **writ petition challenged Section 2(c) of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) Act 1992**, which empowered the Centre to notify minorities in defiance of the Supreme Court decision in the **T.M.A Pai case**, which stated that linguistic and religious minorities should be identified at the state level rather than at the national level.
- The petitioner argues that followers of **Judaism, Bahaism and Hinduism**, who are the real minorities in Ladakh, Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Kashmir, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Punjab and Manipur cannot exercise their Socio- Cultural Rights under Article 29-30 to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice because of non-identification of 'minority' at State level.

Who can decide the status of Minorities?

- As per the Constitution both, Centre and State, have concurrent power to decide the minorities in India.
 - Centre had given minority status to Jains in 2014.
 - States can also designate a religious or linguistic group as a minority community within its borders, as Maharashtra did in 2016 with Jews.
- Currently, Minority Educational Institutions or NCMEI Act 2004 empowers the central government to treat any community as a minority community in India.
 - In accordance with the Act, the Central Government has notified six communities in India as minority communities at the national level - Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis and Jains.

NATIONAL e-VIDHAN APPLICATION (NEVA)

Context:

A delegation of MLAs from Gujarat visited the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly on June 9, to learn about the novel e-Vidhan system for paperless proceedings that has been recently adopted by the UP state assembly.

About NeVA:

- **NeVA is a work-flow system deployed on NIC Cloud, MeghRaj** which helps the Chair of the House to conduct the proceedings of the House smoothly, **Hon'ble**

Members to carry out their duties in the House efficiently and to conduct Legislative Business of the House in a Paperless manner.

- NeVA is a device neutral and member centric application created to equip them to handle diverse House Business smartly by putting entire information regarding member contact details, rules of procedure, list of business, notices, bulletins, bills, starred/unstarred questions and answers, papers laid, committee reports etc. in their hand held devices/ tablets and equip all Legislatures/ Departments to handle it efficiently.
- **NeVA will completely eliminate the process of sending out a notice/request for collection of data.**
- The application hosts a secure page for each Member of the House for submitting questions & other notices.
- The aim of the project is to **bring all the legislatures of the country together, in one platform thereby creating a massive data depository** without having the complexity of multiple applications.
- **mNeVA** is a user-friendly Mobile App of NeVA which is available on Android as well as on iOS. mNeVA has made information on the conduct of business in Legislatures accessible anytime, anywhere to everyone.

GI Cloud (Meghraj)

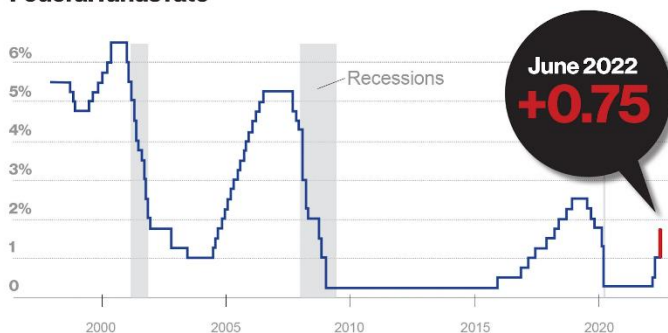
In order to utilize and harness the benefits of Cloud Computing, **Government of India embarked upon an ambitious initiative – “GI Cloud” which has been coined as ‘Meghraj’**. The focus of this initiative is to accelerate delivery of e-services in the country while optimizing ICT spending of the **Government**. **MeitY has embarked upon several initiatives in order to proliferate the Cloud adoption** across the various departments and agencies and streamline the processes involved.

Economic and Social Development – Sustainable Development, Poverty, Inclusion, Demographics, Social Sector initiatives, etc.

FED RATE HIKE

Context:

Federal funds rate



- The Fed, US central bank, announced last week that interest rates would increase by **75 basis points (or 0.75 percentage points)**.
- The Fed is using these actions to lower inflation to its target level of 2%. Inflation in the US is currently closer to 9%.
- The majority of analysts and commentators on the US economy note that every time the **Fed has attempted to**

lower inflation, even by just 2 or 3 percentage points, it has resulted in a recession.

- In other words, the US will enter a recession if the Fed persists in its determination to reduce inflation to 2 percent.

SOVEREIGN GOLD BOND SCHEME

Context:

The first tranche of Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2022-23 has opened for subscription



Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme

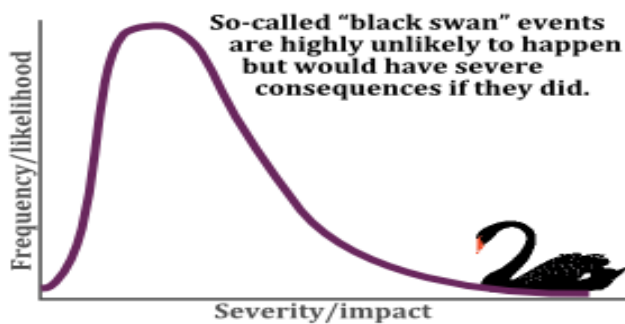
- It was introduced in 2015 with the goal of **reducing demand for physical gold** and shifting a portion of domestic savings formerly used to buy gold **into financial savings**
- **One gram of gold is the smallest amount** that can be invested. The bonds are issued on **behalf of the Indian government by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**
- Investors get a fixed rate of interest of 2.5% per annum payable semi-annually on the nominal value. It can be used as collateral for loans.
- There is no risk of storage or theft, **while with real gold, there are numerous concerns regarding safekeeping**. Investors do not have to pay for lockers in this scheme, thereby eliminating such expenditures
- Because the bonds are **backed by the Indian government**, they pose fewer risks to investors, making the investment safe and secure
- The bond can be **redeemed at current market price at maturity** or even before it matures. It will **mature in 8 years, with option to redeem it early after the fifth year.**

BLACK SWAN EVENT

Context:

- According to a **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) assessment**, India is expected to experience capital outflows of up to \$100 billion (about Rs 7,80,000 crore) in the case of a **large global risk scenario or black swan occurrence**.
- A Covid-type slowdown in real GDP growth, a Global Financial Crisis(GFC) -style narrowing of interest rate differentials with the **US, or a GFC-style spike in the volatility index (VIX)** all carry a five percent possibility of triggering portfolio outflows from India of the size of **3.2% of GDP, or \$100.6 billion in a year.**

The Black Swan



What is a black swan Event?

A black swan is **an unforeseen occurrence that goes beyond what is often anticipated** of a situation and could have **very negative effects**. Black swan occurrences are distinguished by their **great rarity, significant effects**, and the pervasive belief that they **were clear in retrospect**.

Example : U.S. housing market 2008 financial crisis, Zimbabwe's hyperinflation in 2008, The dotcom bubble of 2001, Covid-19 crisis.

SURETY BOND

Context:

- In order to resolve some of the legal and technical issues blocking general insurers from **introducing surety bonds**, which can substitute pricey Bank Guarantees, the Road Transport Minister met with the CEOs of some general insurance companies.
- The Ministry for Road Transport & Highways (MORTH) has urged insurance regulator IRDAI **to create a model product on Surety Bonds** in cooperation with **general insurers** in an effort to end the impasse surrounding the introduction of Surety Bonds.



Background

- In order to lower indirect costs for suppliers and contractors, the Finance Minister stated in the **Budget Speech that surety bonds** will be accepted in place of bank guarantees in government procurements.

- This may also be helpful for businesses who import gold.

What are Surety Bonds ?

- The primary (**contractor**), the surety provider (**insurance company**), and the **obligee** (the entity requiring the bond, such as a government entity) **all sign a contract known as a surety bond**.
- It offers **a way to transfer risk and serves as a guarantee** that the contractor will complete the assignment in accordance with the contract.
- In exchange for an **underwriting guarantee in the event of a project default**, contractors who purchase these unsecured bonds pay a premium to an insurer.
- The **surety firm pays the project owner** the agreed-upon sum in the event of a default.

DUTCH DISEASE

Context:

- According to **Edouard Mien and Michael Goujon's latest study, "40 Years of Dutch Disease Literature: Lessons for Developing Countries"**.
- Three sectors make up the framework of the phenomenon model: **energy** (often represented by oil, gas, or mining resources), **tradeables**, and **non-tradeables** of a tiny economy.

Background

- The phrase "**Dutch disease**" was **first used by 'The Economist'** in 1977 to refer to the **decline of the manufacturing sector in the Netherlands**, although it was **economists Peter Neary and Max Corden** who first put forth the **theory in 1982**.
- The Netherlands **found gas reserves in the North Sea in the 1960s**.
- Dutch exports of **all non-oil items are now less competitive** on the global market due to the following sale of oil and the strengthening of the Dutch currency.
- The country's capital investment fell and unemployment increased from 1.1 to 5.1 percent. **Following this, the nation over time saw a decline in the industrial sector.**

What is meant by Dutch Disease in economics ?

- The term "**Dutch Disease**" in economics refers to a situation when a nation **experiences unequal growth** in all economic sectors as a result of the discovery of natural resources, **particularly significant oil reserves**.
- According to the theory**, when a nation discovers natural resources and begins to **export them to other countries**, this causes the value of its currency to increase dramatically, **which in turn deters exports** from other industries and promotes imports of less expensive substitutes.

ONE NATION ONE RATION CARD

Context:

Assam recently became the 36th and final state to adopt the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) programme. As a result, the programme is now available in all the states and UTs,

allowing for the nationwide delivery of free and heavily discounted foodgrain security.

What is One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)?

- All eligible ration cardholders or beneficiaries covered by the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 can access their entitlements from anywhere in India.
- Its purpose is to enable migrant workers and their family members to purchase subsidised ration from any fair price shop anywhere in the country.
- Starting in August 2019, four states will be able to move their ration cards across them.
- These four states were Gujarat-Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh-Telangana. The nodal body in charge of carrying out this plan is the Department of Food and Public Distribution.

What are the Key Features?

- The program's participants are ration card holders who are qualified to purchase food items from fair-priced stores (FPS).
- Ration card members can purchase up to 5 kg of rice, wheat, and coarse grains each month for Rs 3/kg, Rs 2/kg, and Rs 1/kg, respectively.
- The NFSA, which was enacted in 2013, required this.
- These recipients are eligible to receive full or partial foodgrains from any FPS in the nation.
- The scheme also enables their family members back home, if any, to claim the remaining food grains on the same ration card. o This can be done through an existing ration card with biometric/Aadhaar identification in a seamless manner.

PRADHAN MANTRI KISAN SAMPADA YOJANA (PMKSY)

Context:

Applications are being accepted for the following sub-schemes of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY) by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries of the Government of India.

- Scheme for Creation of Infrastructure for Agro Processing Clusters (APC)
- Scheme for Creation/Expansion of Food Processing & Preservation Capacities [Unit Scheme] (CEFPPC)
- Scheme for Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure (Cold Chain)

- Food Safety and Quality Assurance Infrastructure (FTL)
- Operation Greens- long Term Interventions (OG)



What is the PM-SAMPADA Yojana?

- On May 3, 2017, the Government of India approved the SAMPADA- Scheme for Agro-marine Processing and Development of Agro-processing Clusters umbrella Central sector scheme, allocating a total of Rs. 6,000 crore for the implementation period 2016–2020, which coincides with the cycle of the 14th Finance Commission.
- The Ministry of Food Processing Industries will carry out the plan.
- Later, PMKSY was extended for a further year, from 2020 to 2021, with Department of Expenditure permission.
- The Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana (Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters) Central Sector Scheme will now continue with an allocation of Rs. 4600 crore till 31.03.2026, coinciding with the 15th Finance Commission cycle.
- The Ministry of Food Processing Industries will carry out the plan (MoFPI).

NIRYAT PORTAL

Context:

Recently, the Prime Minister has inaugurated the new premises of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry - 'Vanijya Bhawan'. During the Programme, Prime Minister has also launched a new portal - NIRYAT (National Import-Export Record for Yearly Analysis of Trade) - which is developed as a one stop platform for stakeholders to get all necessary information related to India's foreign trade.

Vanijya Bhawan:

- Vanijya Bhawan is the new premises of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The Department of Commerce and the Department for the Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, two departments of the Ministry, will use the Vanijya Bhawan, which is being built next to the India Gate (New Delhi) (DPIIT).

NIRYAT portal:

India's Export Monitoring Application

NIRYAT PORTAL

National Import-Export Record for Yearly Analysis of Trade (NIRYAT)



one-stop platform for stakeholders to get all foreign trade related information



easy monitoring of progress of India's exports

<https://niryat.gov.in>

- It is National Import- export record for yearly Analysis of Trade (NIRYAT)
- It is designed as a one-stop shop where stakeholders may access all the information they require about India's international commerce.
- It will discuss India's import and export analyses.
- All stakeholders will receive crucial real-time data from it.
- Important data on more than 30 commodity groups shipped to more than 200 nations in the world will be accessible via this platform.
- Information on district-specific exports will also be made available on this in the future.
- It will intensify efforts to turn the areas into significant export hubs.

SIKAR IN RAJASTHAN TOPS SCHOOL LEVEL PERFORMANCE GRADING INDEX FOR DISTRICT

Context:

- The Ministry of Education's Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSE&L) recently published the Performance Grading Index for Districts (PGI-D) for the Center for the academic years 2018–19 and 2019–20.
- The Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2019–20 for States and Union Territories was released in June 2021, with approval from the Union Education Minister.

THE GRADING INDEX

PARAMETERS CONSIDERED

Learning outcomes, Effective classroom transaction, infrastructure facilities and student's entitlements, school safety and child protection, digital learning and governance process



OVERALL SCORE

Percentage	Districts
Over 90%	0
* 81-90%	3
71-80%	86
61-70%	276
51-60%	238
41-50%	87
31-40%	39
* 21-30%	3
* 11-20%	2

DIGITAL LEARNING SCORE

Percentage	Districts
71-80%	8
61-70%	41
51-60%	71
41-50%	79
31-40%	83
21-30%	125
11-20%	146
Below 10%	180

DISTRICT SCORES

11-20%

Shi Yomi (Arunachal Pradesh), Lawngtlai (Mizoram)

21-30%

KraDaadi and Longding (Arunachal Pradesh), Mamit (Mizoram)

81-90%

Sikar, Jhunjhunu, Jaipur (all in Rajasthan)

What are the Report's Key Highlights?

Best Performers:

- The three Rajasthan districts that performed the best in the evaluation were.
- The three districts—Sikar, Jhunjhunu, and Jaipur—were noted in the report's "Utkarsh" grade in 2019–20, as opposed to the previous year, when no district was included in that category.
- In this grade, Rajasthan has the most districts (24), followed by Punjab (14), Gujarat (13), and Kerala (13).

Lowest performer:

- South Salmara-Mankachar (Assam), Alirajpur (Madhya Pradesh), North Garo Hills and South Garo Hills in Meghalaya, and Khowai (Tripura) were the districts with the lowest scores (1 out of 50) in this category in 2019–20.
- Without a single district in the **Ati-Uttam and Uttam** are the following 12 states and UTs:
 - Bihar, Goa, Jammu and Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura and Uttarakhand.

Progress:

- According to the research, there are now more districts overall.
- The number of districts in the "Ati Uttam" grade climbed from 49 to 86 between 2018–19 and 2019–20, demonstrating "amazing progress."
- There was an improvement in results for 33 districts, but there was no grade-level gain.

- Students' learning results, teachers' availability, and professional outcomes are all included in the outcomes category.
- Category for Digital Learning: Twenty districts have improved their scores by more than 20% from 2018–19, while 43 districts improved their scores by more than 10% from 2019–20.
- Infrastructure: 478 districts saw an increase in their score from 2018–19 to 2019–20.
- Out of these 478, 37 districts saw their scores rise by more than 20%, and 115 saw their scores rise by more than 10%, indicating grade-level improvement.

What is PGI-D?

- PGI-D creates an index for thorough study in order to evaluate the district-level performance of the educational system in schools.
- Based on information gathered from a variety of sources, including the 2017 National Achievement Survey (NAS), the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE +), and data provided by the relevant districts, the PGI-D evaluated district-level performance in school education.

Assessment Grades:

- The PGI-D assigns ten grades to the districts. For districts earning more than 90% of the total points in that category or altogether, the highest grade available is "Daksh."
- It is followed by "Utkarsh" (81–90 percent), "Ati Uttam" (71–80 percent), "Uttam" (61–70 percent), "Prachesta-1" (51–60 percent), and "Prachesta-2" (41 percent to 50 percent).
- The PGI-lowest D's grade, "Akanshi-3," is given for scores that are less than 10% of the total points.
- In neither of these years, any district received the highest "Daksh" grade.

FAT FINGER TRADE

Context:

- A 'fat finger' trade on the National Stock Exchange's (NSE) derivatives section may have resulted in a **loss of Rs 200-250 crore to a brokerage house**. This could be the largest trading blunder in the history of the home market.
- The most important stock exchange, National Stock Exchange (NSE) has issued a warning to stock brokers about fulfilling orders that appear to be non-genuine, which could cause a departure in the regular price discovery process.

What is Fat Finger Trade?



- A 'fat finger' trade is an **erroneous action** caused by **hitting the wrong key** in the market.
- Some of these orders, **which are placed at the extreme end of the operational range, are passively held in the order book**, according to the NSE.
- Trades resulting from **such orders**, which are issued at **unrealistic prices**, cause price anomalies.
- Few trading members had placed orders on the exchange platform at prices that **did not reflect the current market price** and were far distant from the last traded price, according to the exchange.
- Trading members are also placing orders at prices that are at the extreme end of the exchange's operational range and have **no obvious or economic logic when compared to the last traded price**, according to the statement.

NSE's Stance

- The NSE has asked its trading members to **refrain from initiating or executing transactions that appear to be non-genuine** on their own account or on behalf of their clients, as well as from engaging in practises that cause order book anomalies.
- They've been told to **put in place suitable internal systems and procedures to ensure** that such orders/transactions, including algorithmic trades, don't end up on the exchange's trading system.
- "Non-compliance with the circular will result in appropriate disciplinary action **which may include departure from trading terminals**."

INCREASING BOND YIELDS

Context:

- Recently, Reserve Bank of India has raised policy repo rates to combat inflation, which is anticipated to continue above 7% until September at the earliest.
- Bond yields, on the other hand, have increased to their highest levels in three years as a result of this.

What does it mean?

- Markets have already priced in the worst of the rate moves, as yields have risen.
- The increase shows that the financial system's cost of capital is rising, as are interest rates.
- As a result of the increase, the government will have to pay more as yield (or return to investors), raising borrowing costs.
- This will put upward pressure on the banking system's general interest rates.

Why are bond yields rising?

A rise in global oil costs, significant inflation, and a massive government borrowing programme are the causes.

What are the impacts on investors?

- The rise in yields indicates that investors are anticipating higher interest rates and are selling their bonds, as higher rates would cause the price of existing bonds to fall (and thereby capital loss on sale before maturity).
- Debt investors are going to be hit hard. When interest rates rise and bond prices fall, the net asset value of debt funds, which hold a significant amount of government securities in their portfolios, falls as well.

- It will also have an influence on corporate bonds, which are often more expensive than government bonds.
- Rising bond rates are generally bad news for equity investors since they increase a company's cost of capital and so damage its earnings.

Bond Yields vs Equity:

Bond yields are inversely related to equities, as a rise in bond yields necessitates an increase in the risk premium on equities.

What is the Relationship between Bond Price and Yield?

- The price of a bond is inversely proportional to its yield or interest rate; the greater the price, the lower the yield.
- Bonds are fixed-rate investments, which explains why there is an inverse relationship between price and yield.
- If interest rates are predicted to climb in the coming months, investors may sell their bonds and choose for higher-rate bonds afterwards.
- Bond investors, on the other hand, may buy bonds, driving up prices, if they expect interest rates will fall in the future, resulting in higher rates or yields on current fixed-rate bonds.

FITCH UPGRADES INDIA RATINGS

Context:

- On Friday, June 10, 2022, Fitch Ratings changed **India's outlook from 'negative' to 'stable,'** noting diminishing downside risks to medium-term growth as a result of a strong economic recovery and the easing of financial sector problems.
- However, due to the impact of inflation on development momentum, the global rating firm has decreased its **GDP growth prediction for 2022-23 from 8.5 percent expected in March to 7.8 percent.**

What is Sovereign Credit Rating?

- A sovereign **credit rating is an impartial assessment of a country's or sovereign entity's creditworthiness.**
- **Investors can use sovereign credit ratings to determine the level of risk** involved with investing in a country's debt, including any political risk.
- A credit rating organization will **examine the country's economic and political climate** at the country's request in order to award it a rating.
- For **emerging countries** seeking access to international bond markets, obtaining a **solid sovereign credit rating is usually required.**
- Countries with a **BBB- or higher rating from Standard & Poor's** are considered **investment grade**, while those with a **BB+ or lower** rating are considered speculative or "junk" grade.
- A **Baa3 or higher rating** is considered **investment grade**, whereas a **Ba1 or below** rating is considered speculative by **Moody's.**

Reasons for the rating agency's improvement in outlook

- **Despite near-term headwinds** from the global commodity price shock, Fitch expects India to expand **faster than its similarly rated peers**, but the country's public finances remain a credit weakness, with the debt

ratio essentially stabilizing, based on Fitch's expectations of "chronic significant deficits."

- While adjusting the outlook, the firm maintained India's long-term foreign currency issuer **default rating of 'BBB-,'** adding that this 'balances India's external resilience **from substantial foreign-exchange reserve buffers** against certain lagging structural indicators.'
- A BBB rating **indicates low default risk and adequate financial commitment** payment capability, **while poor business or economic conditions** are more likely to erode this capacity.
- While **India's debt-to-GDP ratio** has been **reduced in the short term due to high nominal GDP growth.**

What effect will the rating upgrade have?

- Because **foreign borrowing costs are linked** to a country's **rating** and the view of rating agencies on the country, an upgrade **normally lowers borrowing costs** for both the **government and the private sector.**
- Foreign investors are **more comfortable subscribing to government and business bonds** at lower rates as the risk of default decreases and the total debt servicing ability improves.

NATIONAL FINANCIAL REPORTING AUTHORITY (NFRA)

Context:

Centre said it is committed to strengthening the working of the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA), the independent regulatory body set up under the Corporate Affairs Ministry for the auditing profession.



राष्ट्रीय वित्तीय रिपोर्टिंग प्राधिकरण
National Financial Reporting Authority



National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA)

Constituted under	Section 132 of the Companies Act, 2013
Year of establishment	2018
Objectives	• to continuously improve the quality of all corporate financial reporting in India. • It recommends accounting and auditing policies and standards to be adopted by companies for approval by the Central Government • It monitors and enforces compliance with accounting standards and auditing standards • It oversees the quality of service of the professions associated with ensuring compliance with such standards and

	suggest measures for improvement in the quality of service
Regulatory authority over	- Companies whose securities are listed on any stock exchange in India or outside India; - Unlisted public companies having paid-up capital of not less than rupees five hundred crores or having annual turnover of not less than rupees one thousand crores or having, in aggregate, outstanding loans, debentures and deposits of not less than rupees five hundred crores as on the 31st March of immediately preceding financial year; - Insurance companies, banking companies, companies engaged in the generation or supply of electricity, companies governed by any special Act for the time being in force or bodies corporate incorporated by an Act in accordance Companies Act; - Any body corporate or company or person, or any class of bodies corporate or companies or persons, on a reference made to the Authority by the Central Government in public interest;

APEDA ORGANISES MANGO FESTIVAL IN BAHRAIN

Context:

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), in collaboration with the Indian Embassy and the Al Jazira Group, has started an eight-day Mango Festival in Bahrain



About the festival

- At eight different sites of Bahrain's Al Jazira group supermarket, 34 varieties of mangoes from the eastern states of **West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Odisha** are on display.
- It is part of APEDA's new 'Mango Festival 2022' programme to explore worldwide markets for Indian mangoes.

27 varieties of mango from West Bengal at display

- Other varieties at the show are:
Jharkhand- **Kamli and Biju**

Bihar- **Jardalu and Langra**
Odisha- **Benganpalli and Himsagar**
Uttar Pradesh- **Dusseri**

About Mangoes

- Mango is also known as the "**king of fruits**" in India, and ancient scriptures refer to it as Kalpavriksha (wish-granting tree)
- One mango can contain up to 40% of a person's daily fibre needs, making it an effective preventative against heart disease, cancer, and cholesterol build-up.
- The fruit also contains potassium, beta- carotene and antioxidants

Mango showers are pre-monsoon showers that aid in the ripening of mangoes. They are experienced in the states of Karnataka, Kerala, Konkan, and Goa. April showers or summer showers are other names for them.

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)

- It was established under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act passed by Parliament in 1985
- APEDA aims at development of industries related to scheduled export products through financial aid or other means, such as joint ventures, and various relief and subsidy schemes
- APEDA registers persons as exporters of the scheduled products
- APEDA fixes standards and specifications for the scheduled products for exports
- It carries out inspection of meat and meat products at various stages of processing
- It works to improve packaging and marketing of products

General issues on Environmental Ecology, Biodiversity and Climate Change – that do not require subject specialisation

DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT DAY

Context:

- Under the direction of the Union Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) organized **Desertification and Drought Day on 17th June**.
- The Ministry observes this day annually with the goal of raising widespread awareness of the crucial role that land plays in all environmental and economic issues that India and the rest of the world face.



What is Desertification?

The **U.N. Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)** defines it as "land degradation in **arid, semi arid and dry sub humid areas** resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities." Over the past few decades, some dryland areas have seen a rise in the range and severity of desertification.

FOUR NEW CORALS RECORDED FROM INDIAN WATERS

Context:

Recently, Scientists have recorded four species of a zooxanthellate corals for the first time from Indian waters.



What are the four new species of corals found?

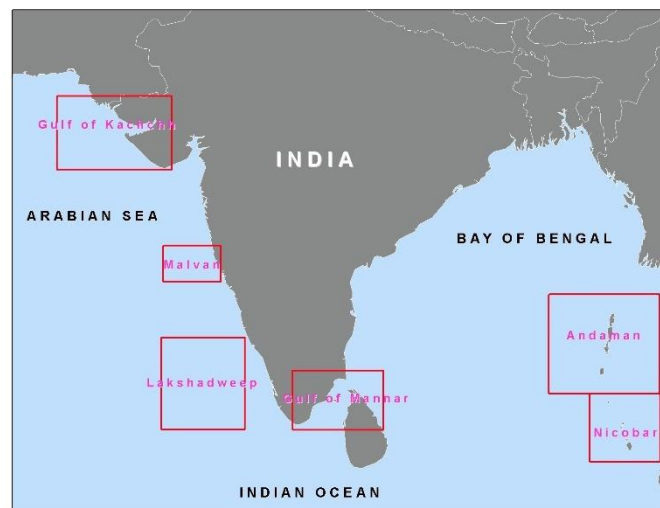
- The four new species of **azooxanthellate corals** found are:
 - Truncatoflabellum crassum,
 - T. incrustatum,
 - T. Irregular
 - T. Krasum.
- The Andaman and Nicobar Islands' waters are where these corals were discovered. They are both members of the Flabellidae family.
- They are solitary, non-reef forming corals with a greatly compressed skeletal system.

What are corals?

- Corals are marine invertebrates that belong to the phylum Cnidaria's class Anthozoa. Usually, they cluster into dense colonies made up of numerous similar individual polyps.
- Generally since they do not produce their own food like plants do, corals are considered to be animals. Corals have small arms that resemble tentacles that they use to scoop food out of the water and into their mysterious mouths.
- The crucial reef builders known as coral species live in tropical oceans and secrete calcium carbonate to create a rigid skeleton.
- Generally Coral polyps form a symbiotic relationship with the Zooxanthellae algae, where algae produces food for the Coral polyps and coral polyps provides them protection in the form of Coral Reef.

What are Azooxanthellate Corals?

- A class of hard corals known as azooxanthellate corals. They don't have zooxanthellae and get their nutrition from catching various types of planktonic organisms rather than the sun.
- They serve as deep-sea representatives, with the bulk of their species being found between 200 and 1,000 metres below the surface.
- In contrast to zooxanthellate corals, which are only found in shallow waters, they have also been documented from such areas.



Where are coral found in India?

- The Andaman and Nicobar Islands' surrounding seas are home to about 90% of the 570 species of hard coral that are known to exist in India.
- Less than 1% of the earth's surface is covered by the purest and oldest ecosystem, corals, which are home to around 25% of marine life.

KERALA TO HAVE ITS OWN REGIONAL RED LIST OF BIRDS

Context:

Soon, Kerala will have its own Red list of birds. The regional Red List evaluation will be carried out by the Bird Count India and the Kerala Bird Monitoring Collective, both of which are led by Kerala Agricultural University. Kerala will be the first State to have a region-specific red list of birds once it is available.



(Malabar Pied Hornbill)

What will be the Kerala Red list for birds ?

- Kerala will be the first State to have a region-specific red list of birds once it is available.
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recommendations will serve as the foundation for the assessment of the Red List of Birds in Kerala.
- The current red list is the global IUCN list. However, as the global assessment was developed in a global environment, it has some limitations.
- At the regional level, a species that is common on a global scale could be in danger.
- Additionally, the regional red list assessment will be carried out in accordance with IUCN rules.

What are the limitations of the IUCN red list ?

- **Issues with the IUCN List:** The global evaluation has limits because it was developed in a global environment. At the regional level, a species that is common on a global scale could be in danger.
- Kerala is home to 64 bird species that are listed as endangered on the IUCN global red list. In this, the White-rumped and Red-headed vultures are both in grave danger. Eleven species are considered vulnerable, including the steppe eagle, the banasura chilappan, and the nilgiri chilappan.

What are the criteria that the Kerala Red list will follow?

Kerala's regional Red List for the Bird will follow the IUCN guidelines for preparing the red list and have five main criteria.

Criteria:

- The population size reduction measured over 10 years or three generations
- Geographic range on the basis of the extent of occurrence or area of occupancy
- Small population size and decline
- Very small or restricted population
- Probability of extinction in the wild

How will the Regional Red List for Birds be prepared?

- The red list for the State will be created by the Kerala Bird Monitoring Collective in a year.
- Similar to how the Kerala Bird Atlas was created, it will be a decentralized procedure.
- The Regional Red List for Birds of Kerala will be created using the data from the Kerala Bird Atlas, which already has a sizable amount of data.
- The atlas, created between 2015 and 2020, provides a strong baseline data about distribution and abundance of diverse bird species in the State.
- It was conducted as a citizen science-driven activity with involvement from over 1,000 volunteers of the bird watching community.

UDAIPUR'S 'BIRD VILLAGE' TO BE DECLARED WETLAND

Context:

- **Menar in the Udaipur district, known as the "bird village"** after community-driven conservation initiatives, is about to be **declared Rajasthan's new wetland**.
- This will open the door for the Mewar region's rural heartland to receive the Ramsar site designation.

- The procedure for Menar's notification as a wetland has been started by the State government's Forest Department, which will acknowledge its function in the storage of sediment and nutrients and give the local authorities the ability to preserve the **Brahma and Dhandh lakes**.
- The two lakes **will be better able to increase aquatic plant life** and protect **biodiversity thanks to their wetland status**.
- The **Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules 2019** will ensure the protection of the freshwater lakes vital to the region's environment.



Background

- In the past four years, the residents of Menar, a village 45 kilometres from Udaipur, have created a healthy ecology for birds through patrolling, rescuing injured birds, and reporting any poaching attempts.
- The lakes were being maintained by volunteers known as Pakshi Mitras (friends of birds) to provide a refuge for birds.

What are the Ramsar sites in Rajasthan ?

Keoladeo Ghana in the Bharatpur district and **Sambhar Salt Lake** in the Jaipur district are the two wetlands that are now recognised as Ramsar sites in Rajasthan.

What are some of the migratory birds seen here ?

- The two lakes are home to more than 150 different local and **migratory bird species during the winter**.
- These include the **larger flamingo, the white-tailed lapwing**, the pelican, the marsh harrier, the **bar-headed goose, the common teal**, the greenshank, the pintail, the wagtail, the green sandpiper, and the red-wattled lapwing.
- Following the arrival of migratory birds from as far away as **Central Asia, Europe, and Mongolia, visitors and bird lovers swarm to the village**.

THE LAST LAUGH: WHERE ARE INDIA'S STRIPED HYENAS?

Striped Hyenas:

- A species of hyaena that is indigenous to North and East Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Indian subcontinent is the striped hyena.
- In the genus *Hyaena*, it is the sole surviving species.



Conservation Status:

- The IUCN has it on its Near-Threatened (NT) list.
- its global population is thought to be less than 10,000 mature individuals, it continues to face intentional and unintentional persecution, and its prey base is shrinking to the point where it may barely meet a continuing decline of 10% over the following three generations.
- The striped hyena is the smallest of the real hyenas, and it is largely a scavenger, however larger individuals have been observed to kill their own prey.
- The striped hyena is a monogamous species, which means it only has one mate at a time, and it is nocturnal, which means it only comes out at night.

FALL OF A BIRD: GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD

About:

- The Great Indian Bustard (GIB), the state bird of Rajasthan, is said to be the most seriously endangered bird in the country.
- As a symbol of the health of the grassland ecology, it is regarded as the flagship grassland species.
- Rajasthan and Gujarat are the only real places where it has a population. In Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh, there are small populations.
- The bird is always in danger from power transmission lines colliding with it or electrocuting it, from hunting, which is still common in Pakistan, from habitat loss and change brought on by massive agricultural growth, etc.



Protection:

- Protection Status:

- International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List: **Critically Endangered**
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES): **Appendix 1**
- Convention on Migratory Species (CMS): **Appendix I**
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule 1**

India's Concerns:

- The grassland habitat in the Cholistan desert, where the GIBs were killed, is very similar to the habitat in Rajasthan's Desert National Park (DNP), where the GIB's last remnant wild population is found.
- DNP is situated near the towns of Jaisalmer and Barmer, forming a part of the mighty Thar desert.
- It was declared as a National Park in 1981 to protect the habitat of the Great Indian Bustard.
- As Rajasthan shares the international border with Pakistan's Sindh and Punjab provinces, the birds will become an easy prey for the gun-toting poachers there.
- The hunting of the rare bird will not only drastically reduce India's GIB population, but will also affect the desert ecosystem.

Government's Initiatives:

- It is kept under the species recovery programme under the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
- The MoEFCC has also launched a program called '**Habitat Improvement and Conservation Breeding of Great Indian Bustard-An Integrated Approach**'.
- The objective of the programme is to build up a captive population of Great Indian Bustards and to release the chicks in the wild for increasing the population.
- Rajasthan government has launched 'Project Great Indian Bustard' with an aim of constructing breeding enclosures for the species and developing infrastructure to reduce human pressure on its habitats.

NEW SPECIES OF GECKO FOUND

Context:

- A gecko discovered in Visakhapatnam in 2017 was previously assumed to be a member of a known species, but it has now been classified as a new species.
- It was identified as **Eublepharis pictus**, after a phylogenetic analysis and morphological comparisons. It appears to be prevalent in the forests of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. They are also called **Painted Leopard Gecko**.



What is a Gecko?

- Geckos are **reptiles** that can be found on all continents with the exception of Antarctica.
- These vivid lizards have adapted to a variety of environments, including **rainforests, deserts, and freezing mountain slopes**.
- Geckos have evolved distinct morphological characteristics over time to help them live and evade predators.
- Day geckos are active during the day and feed on insects, fruits, and flower nectar, while **most geckos are nocturnal**.
- When protecting their territory or enticing a partner, most geckos emit noises like **chirping, barking, and clicking**.
- Geckos come in a variety of shapes and sizes. The endangered status of a species can range from least concern to critically endangered, depending on the species.

About Eublepharis Pictus

- IUCN Red List Status:** Not Listed yet, however, researchers suggest Nearly Threatened status
- Habitat:** Evergreen and mixed forests
- Geographical Distribution:** Common in forests of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana
- Threats:** Illegal smuggling and pet trade

What is the Significance of this discovery?

- With the addition of this new gecko species, the genus Eublepharis **currently has seven species**. Except for the East Indian Leopard Gecko, the new species is distinct from the rest of the Eublepharis genus.
- Geographically, the **Brahmani River**, which runs through the Eastern Ghats, **separates it from the East Indian Leopard Gecko**, with which it shares many characteristics.

What are the other Critically Endangered Geckos?

Gecko Species	Parameters
Thackeray's Dwarf Gecko	- Habitat: Forests; Artificial/Terrestrial areas - Geographical Distribution: Shevroy hills and Yercaud Town in Tamil Nadu - IUCN Status: Critically Endangered - Threats: Unchecked Urbanisation
Cnemaspis anaikattiensis	- Habitat: Forests; Wetlands - Geographical Distribution: Annaikatti hills, Western Ghats - IUCN Status: Critically Endangered - Threats: Wood logging and Timber crop harvest

EMPEROR PENGUINS

Context:

China has blocked efforts to step up protection of **emperor penguins that are increasingly threatened by the effects of global warming** as it reportedly wanted more time to consider the implications of upgrading the protection status of the penguins.



Emperor penguins

- The emperor penguins are **the largest living penguin species** standing around 115 cm tall.
- There are approximately 595,000 adult Emperor penguins in Antarctica.
- Once they have found a partner they usually mate for life and work together to keep their young fed and safe.
- They are **brilliant swimmers** and they have the deepest and longest dives for any bird.
- Emperor Penguins are extremely **accomplished divers that may remain submerged for up to 18 minutes** and reach depths of up to 500m. They are able to do this due to their **unusual blood haemoglobin composition, which allows them to function at low oxygen levels**.
- They are **well adapted to thrive in the freezing conditions** of the Antarctic. To preserve heat, they have a **dense double layer of feathers, large fat reserves and, proportionally, smaller beaks and flippers** compared to other penguins. This all helps prevent heat loss.
- Their **feet** are **adapted** to the icy conditions, containing **special fats that prevent them from freezing and strong claws for gripping the ice**.
- They also work together to **keep warm by huddling up in large groups**, shuffling round so each gets a turn in the warm centre.

Impact of climate change on emperor penguins

- Findings point to a grim future for the species if climate change is not mitigated.
- Changes in seasonal sea ice** are potentially a considerable **threat to breeding Emperor Penguins**.
- Ice is an essential as a platform needed for growing chicks. **Early ice break-up in warm years** has caused **chicks to be swept into the ocean and drowned**.

Projected declines in sea ice extent are likely to **reduce the number of krill** in the Southern Ocean, which would, in turn, have **profound effects on the Antarctic food chain**.

FISHING CAT CENSUS

Context:

Chilika Lake in Odisha has 176 fishing cats, according to a census conducted by Chilika Development Authority (CDA) in collaboration with The Fishing Cat Project



About the census

- It is the world's **first population estimation of the fishing cat, which has been conducted outside the protected area network.**
- The estimation was conducted in two phases. **Phase-I was conducted in 2021** in the 115 sq km marshland present in the north and north-eastern section of Chilika and its surrounding areas. **Phase II was conducted this year (2022)** in the Parikud side along the coastal islands of Chilika.
- A total of 150 camera traps were deployed in two phases with each fixed in the field for 30 days.
- Local fishermen and villagers** of Chilika were the primary participants in this exercise

In 2012, the fishing cat was declared as the State Animal of West Bengal

Fishing Cat

Features

- They are about **twice the size of a typical house cat**, with a powerful build and stocky legs.
- They are adept swimmers and **enter water frequently to prey on fish**, hence the name. It is known to even dive to catch fish.
- While diving underwater for prey, fishing cats are known to fold down their ears, creating a plug to prevent water from entering.
- They are nocturnal and apart from fish they also prey on frogs, crustaceans, snakes, birds, and scavenges on carcasses of larger animals.

Habitat

- They are found to be highly associated with **wetland habitats, mangroves, marshlands, rivers and streams.**
- In India, fishing cats are mainly found in the **mangrove forests of the Sundarbans**, on the **foothills of the Himalayas along the Ganga and Brahmaputra river valleys** and in the **Western Ghats.**

Threats facing the fishing cat

- Destruction of wetlands, which is its preferred habitat.
- Human settlement, drainage for agriculture, pollution, and wood-cutting
- Depletion of its main prey-fish due to unsustainable fishing practices.
- It is also occasionally poached for its skin.

Conservation Status:

- IUCN Red List:** Endangered.
- CITES:** Appendix II
- Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I

Chilika Lake



- It is Asia's **largest brackish water Lagoon** with estuarine character that sprawls along the east coast.
- It is the **largest wintering ground for migratory waterfowl found anywhere on the Indian sub-continent.**
- It is located at the mouth of the **Daya River, flowing into the Bay of Bengal**
- A number of islands are present in the lagoon, prominent among which are **Krushnaprasad, Nalaban, Kalijai, Somolo and Birds Islands.**

The **Nalaban Island** within the lake is notified as a Bird Sanctuary under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDEX – 2022

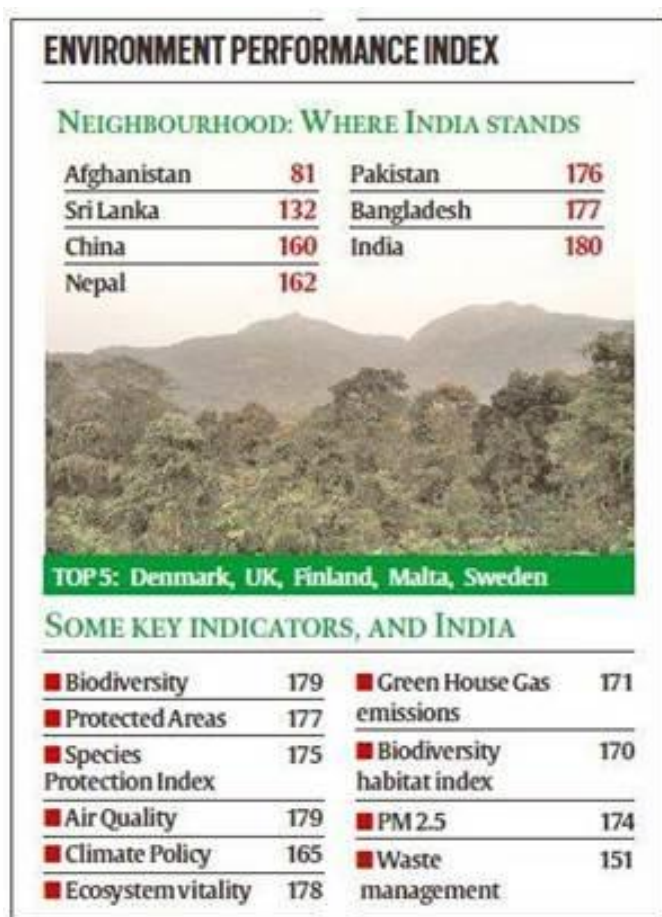
Context:

The recently released Environment Performance Index-2022, an international ranking system that measures environmental health and sustainability of countries, has ranked India last among 180 countries that have been ranked.

What are the key findings of the Environmental Performance Index 2022?

Topped by: Denmark
India:

- In the index, India is rated 180th. This is the last place out of 180 countries ranked. India was rated 168th in the world in 2020.
- According to the score, India has put economic expansion ahead of environmental sustainability.
- Observations:** Only a few nations, like Denmark and the United Kingdom, are on track to fulfil net zero-emission goals by 2050, according to EPI estimates.
- With rapidly expanding greenhouse gas emissions, countries like China, India, and Russia are heading in the wrong way.
- If current trends continue, four countries — China, India, the United States, and Russia — would account for more than half of global residual greenhouse gas emissions in 2050, according to the index.



What is *Chelonoidis phantasticus*?

- *Chelonoidis phantasticus* is a tortoise that belongs to the *Chelonoidis* genus.
- "Wonderful big tortoise," *Chelonoidis phantasticus*, means "fantastic gigantic tortoise."
- The Galápagos gigantic tortoise, also known as the Fernandina Island tortoise, is a tortoise that lives on the island of Fernandina in the
- The species was previously only known from a single specimen taken in 1906.

What are its Habitat and Distribution?

- The saddle-backed tortoise *Chelonoidis phantasticus* is adapted for browsing on taller plants such as *Opuntia* trees.
- At lower elevations, Fernandina habitat is mostly dry xeric brushland, but much of that habitat has been devastated by recent lava flows.
- The mesic and higher elevations of the few surviving areas of higher-quality habitat.

What is its IUCN Status?

- *Chelonoidis phantasticus* is listed as Critically Endangered in IUCN Red Data Book.

Where is Fernandina Island?

- Fernandina Island is the Galápagos Islands' third largest and youngest island, as well as the farthest west.
- The Galapagos hotspot, like the others, shaped the island.
- The island is home to an active shield volcano that has been erupting recently.

Where are the Galapagos Islands?

- The Galapagos Islands, which cover almost 60,000 square kilometres and are located in the Pacific Ocean about 1,000 kilometres from the South American continent, are a part of Ecuador.
- In 1935, Ecuador designated a portion of the Galapagos as a wildlife sanctuary, which became the Galapagos National Park in 1959. The islands were designated as UNESCO's first World Heritage Site in 1978.
- Marine iguanas, fur seals, and waved albatrosses are among the aquatic animals found on the Galapagos Islands.

General Science

WILD POLIO VIRUS

Context:

A top Health Ministry official said on Thursday that vaccine-derived poliovirus (VDPV) was found in environmental

About EPI:

- The **World Economic Forum**, in partnership with the **Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy** and the **Columbia University Center for International Earth Science Information Network**, launched the EPI, a **biennial index**, in **2002** as the Environmental Sustainability Index.
- EPI ranks 180 nations on climate change performance, environmental health, and ecosystem vitality using 40 performance indicators across 11 issue areas. These metrics show how near countries are to meeting stated environmental policy goals on a national basis.

Parameters:

- The EPI ranks 180 nations on climate change performance, environmental health, and ecosystem vitality using 40 performance indicators across 11 issue areas.
- These metrics show how near countries are to meeting stated environmental policy goals on a national basis. Overall, the EPI rankings show which countries are doing the greatest job of tackling environmental issues.

CHELONOIDIS PHANTASTICUS: A NEW TORTOISE SPECIES

Context:

- A tortoise species named Fernanda after her Fernandina Island was recently discovered after being assumed to be extinct for almost a century.
- In a publication published in Nature Communications Biology, researchers confirmed the findings.

surveillance of sewage samples from Kolkata, and not the wild poliovirus strain.



What is wild polio virus?

- Polio is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus that multiplies in the intestine and then spreads to the nervous system, causing paralysis.
- Because there is no cure for the disease, the patient will be disabled for the rest of his or her life. They're known as "wild polio virus" informally.

What are the Variants?

There are three types of wild poliovirus:

- Type 1: still exists but efforts are going on to eradicate it.
- Type 2: eradicated.
- Type 3: eradicated.

Transmission

- The virus is transmitted by person-to-person, mainly through the faecal-oral route or less frequently, by a common vehicle (contaminated water or food).
- Because the virus lives in the faeces of an infected person, people infected with the disease can spread it to others when they do not wash their hands well after defecating.

Endemism:

- Currently, wild poliovirus is endemic in two countries: Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- The detection of Type 1 outside the two countries where the disease is endemic demonstrates the continuous risk of international spread of the disease until every corner of the world is free of Type 1.

What are the Symptoms?

- **Minor ones:**
 - Tiredness
 - Nausea
 - Headache
 - Nasal congestion
 - Sore throat, cough
 - Stiffness in the neck and back and pain in the arms and legs
- **Major one:**
 - Polio infection causes permanent loss of muscle function (paralysis).
 - Polio may be fatal if the muscles used for breathing are paralysed or if there is an infection of the brain.

Cure: Though there is no cure for the polio vaccine. However, it is preventable by a vaccine.

What is Vaccine Derived Polio Virus (VDPV)?

- It's a weakened strain of the poliovirus that was originally included in the oral polio vaccine (OPV) but has now evolved to act more like the wild or spontaneously occurring virus.
- This means it can transmit more easily to people who have not been vaccinated against polio and come into contact with an infected person's faeces or respiratory secretions, such as via a sneeze. These viruses have the potential to cause sickness, including paralysis.

How is VDPV transmitted?

- The attenuated (weakened) vaccine-virus in the oral polio vaccination (OPV) activates an immunological response in the body. When a child is inoculated with OPV, the weakened vaccine-virus replicates for a limited time in the intestine, allowing the youngster to establish immunity by accumulating antibodies.
- The vaccine-virus is also excreted during this time. This ejected vaccine-virus can proliferate in the immediate community (and provide protection to additional children through 'passive' immunisation) in situations where cleanliness is poor, before eventually dying out.

BLACK DEATH

Context:

Black Death emerged in modern-day northern Kyrgyzstan around 1338-1339, nearly 7-8 years before it decimated much of the world, according to a study published in the journal Science on June 15.



About Black Death

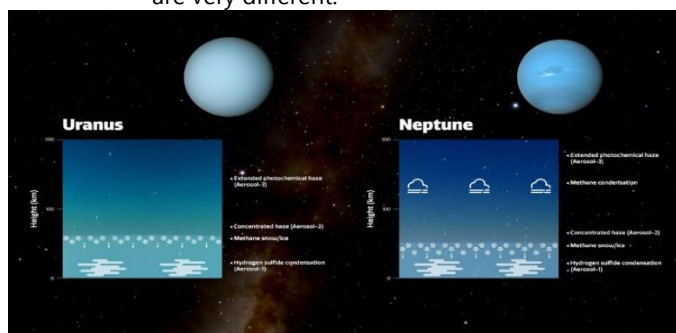
- The bubonic plague that swept Western Asia, Northern Africa, the Middle East, and Europe in 1346-53
- The Black Death, which killed millions, was caused by the **bacteria *Yersinia pestis* and spread by fleas** carried by rodent hosts, according to most academics
- The bacteria spread to human populations, who at some point transmitted it to others either through the vector of a human flea or through respiratory system

NEPTUNE AND URANUS IN DIFFERENT COLOUR

Context:

- Researchers from the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (**AURA**) developed a single atmospheric model that matches data from both Neptune and Uranus.
 - The model demonstrates that extra haze on Uranus accumulates in the planet's stagnant, sluggish atmosphere, giving it a lighter color than

Neptune. mon, such as identical masses, sizes, and atmospheric components, yet their colours are very different.



Why could this difference not be explained earlier?

- **Neptune** has a rich, deep azure colour at visible wavelengths, while Uranus is a notably light shade of blue.
 - The difference in colour between the two planets has finally been explained by astronomers.
- The **lack of reliable data** to compare was one reason.
 - Previous studies of each planet's spectrum focused on certain wavelength ranges.
 - Researchers used the **NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope**, the **Gemini North telescope**, and the **NASA Infrared Telescope Facility** to create a single atmospheric model that matches observations of both planets from the Hubble Space Telescope, as well as the Gemini North telescope and the NASA Infrared Telescope Facility.
- The **cloud around Uranus** is thicker than that around Neptune, according to the model.
 - **Uranus** has a lighter tone than Neptune due to its stagnant, sluggish atmosphere.
 - If there was no haze in the atmospheres of Neptune and Uranus, each would seem almost equally blue due to blue light dispersed in their atmospheres.

CORBEVAX GETS NOD FOR BOOSTER DOSE

Context:

- The Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) has approved Biological E. Limited's COVID-19 vaccine Corbevax as a heterologous COVID-19 booster dose to individuals aged 18 years and above after 6 months of primary vaccination (two doses) of Covaxin or Covishield vaccines for restricted use in emergency situations.
- The Biological E vaccine has been approved as the first heterologous prophylactic dose.

Types of Vaccines

- A vaccination can be designed in one of [three approaches](#). They differ in whether they use a whole virus or bacterium, simply the bits of the germ that trigger the immune system, or just the genetic information that supplies the instructions for manufacturing certain proteins rather than the entire virus.
- On April 10, private vaccination centres in India began offering prophylactic doses (a third shot) to all adults. Starting January 10, the vaccines were made available to frontline employees, healthcare workers, and senior citizens with comorbidities.

- Adults must wait nine months after the second dose before receiving the prophylactic shot, according to the Center. Last month, however, the law was changed for people travelling internationally to fulfil the requirements of various countries.
- Those planning to travel overseas should wait three months after their second shot to have their booster shot.

ANOCOVAX

Context:

Recently, India's first indigenously developed COVID-19 vaccine for animals, Anocovax, was launched by Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar. A kit has also been developed to detect the antibody in animals against SARS-CoV-2.

What is Anocovax?

- Anocovax is India's first COVID-19 vaccine for animals, especially pets like dogs.
- It is an inactivated SARS-CoV-2 (Delta) antigen vaccine and uses Alhydrogel as an adjuvant to boost immune response in animals.
- The Covid-19 vaccine for animals neutralizes both Delta and Omicron Variants.

Who developed the Anocovax?

Anocovax has been developed by the ICAR-National Research Centre on Equines (NRCE) in Haryana.

ZERO COVID STRATEGY

Context:

- Residents of Beijing were alarmed to learn that **China's taxing and unpopular zero-Covid curbs like mass testing**, targeted lockdowns, and **travel restrictions** might last for an **additional five years**, according to a **notification attributed to a high-ranking Chinese Communist Party official**.
- Beijing Daily published the notification first, followed by a number of state media sites. The "five year" remark was eventually dropped by the majority of publications.



What exactly is the "zero-Covid" approach?

- This **tactic employs rigorous lockdowns**, border closures, and **travel prohibitions in an effort to reduce the number of Covid-19 cases**.
- When the **epidemic first began**, Western nations devised a **mitigation strategy** that included working to flatten the curve while bolstering healthcare **infrastructure to handle potential flare-ups**.
- However, the elimination approach soon **gained popularity as a different tactic**. This tactic later

developed into a **zero-Covid or Covid-elimination regimen**.

- Governments worked to contain outbreaks to the very last case as part of the plan.

PLACES IN NEWS

SENEGAL

India-Senegal sign three MoUs for cultural exchange, cooperation in youth matters and visa free regime for officials



QATAR & BAHRAIN

- Vice President begins his three-day visit to Qatar; holds delegation level talks with the Prime Minister of Qatar
- Presence of 7.8 lakh Indian in Qatar as a testament to the close people-to-people ties between two countries – Vice President
- To boost export of Mangoes, APEDA organizes 8-day-long mango festival in Bahrain



CHATREAUROUX, FRANCE

PM congratulates Manish Narwal and Rubina Francis for winning Gold at Para Shooting World Cup in Chateauroux, France



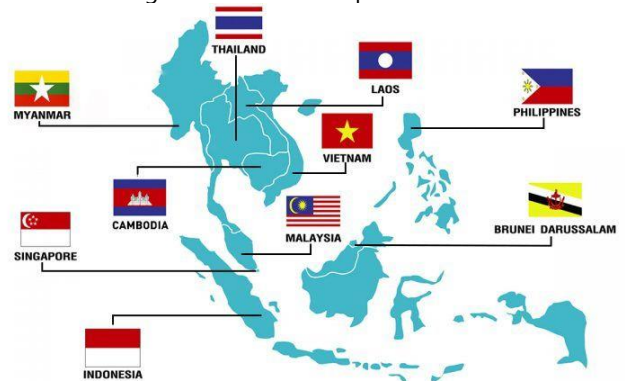
GENEVA

Intervention by Commerce & Industry Minister Shri Piyush Goyal at the G-33 Ministerial Meeting at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference held in Geneva



ASEAN COUNTRIES

PM meets Foreign Ministers and Representatives of ASEAN



LLANOS BASIN, COLOMBIA

ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL), the wholly owned subsidiary and overseas arm of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. (ONGC), the National Oil Company of India, has made an oil discovery in the recently drilled well, Urraca-IX, in CPO-5 block, Llanos Basin, Colombia.

COLOMBIA, LLANOS 34 BLOCK

FIG. 1



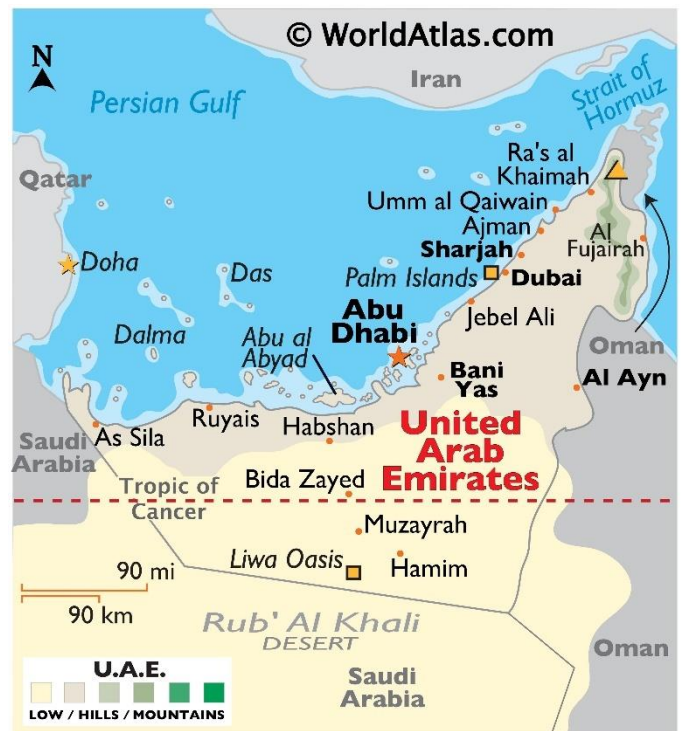
MUNICH, GERMANY

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi met President of Argentina, H.E. Mr. Alberto Fernandez, in Munich on the sidelines of G7 Summit on 26 June 2022.



UAE

Meeting between Prime Minister and President of the UAE and Ruler of Abu Dhabi His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan



PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. With reference to the National Assessment Survey, consider the following statements:

1. It is a biannual survey that assesses the health of the country's educational system.
2. It was created by the Ministry of Education and the National Council for Educational Research and Training.
3. It offers a snapshot of learning outcomes in major topics at the end of Classes 3, 5, 8, and 10.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 2 and 3 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 1 and 2 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

2. With reference to the Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ), consider the following statements:

1. It is an area within 10 kilometres of National Parks.
2. The Ministry of Tribal affairs declares an ESZ around protected areas.

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

3. The term "Tiangong" seen in the news recently, refers to

- a. It is a Chinese tank support combat vehicle.
- b. It is a space station by China
- c. It is a new species of snake found in Meghalaya.
- d. It is an anti-satellite weapon system of China.

4. In which of the following countries, does Vietnam share its border:

1. Cambodia
2. China
3. Thailand
4. Singapore

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

5. With reference to the same Tukaram, consider the following statements:

- 1. He established the Vithoba temple in Pandharpur.
- 2. He was opposed to casteism in Hindu society.

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

6. The term "Anocovax" seen in the news recently, refers to

- a. It is a new vaccine developed for humans.
- b. It is a new vaccine developed for pets.
- c. It is a new medicine to cure cancer.
- d. It is an anti-satellite weapon system of China.

7. With reference to the James Webb space telescope (JWST), consider the following statements:

- 1. It is a collaboration of NASA, ESA and the Canadian space agency.
- 2. It is a successor to the Hubble telescope.

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

8. With reference to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, consider the following statements:

- 1. It is an independent international organization devoted to conflict and disarmament studies.
- 2. It aims to make the world free of all weapons.

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

9. Consider the following Statements regarding Registered Unrecognised Political Party(RUPP).

- 1. RUPP are parties that did not receive a sufficient number of votes in the assembly or general elections to qualify as a state party.
- 2. RUPP may have never run in an election after being registered.

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

10. Consider the following Statements regarding Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme

- 1. It was introduced in 2015 with the goal of reducing the demand for physical gold.
- 2. One gram of gold is the smallest amount that can be invested.
- 3. It cannot be used as collateral for loans.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

1. (a); 2. (a); 3. (b); 4. (d); 5. (b); 6. (b); 7. (c); 8. (a); 9. (c); 10. (a)