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An Island Burning

The recent debt crisis in Sri Lanka has one clear lesson for policymakers across the globe, the price common citizens pay for fiscal profligacy and overlooking of macro-economic stability. Sri Lanka for the first time in its history defaulted on its foreign debt payments as it has forex reserve plummeted to $50 million and Sri Lanka had to pay $7 billion of foreign debt payment obligations in 2022.

Prior to the pandemic Sri Lanka was classified as an upper middle-income country by the World Bank. Today, over half a million people from the country have sunk back into poverty. Soaring inflation and rapidly depreciating currency have forced Sri Lankans to cut down on necessary consumption. The situation of the country is in such a crisis that Sri Lanka does not have enough foreign exchange to import fuel, medicines and other important necessary goods and services. Examinations had to be cancelled as Sri Lanka did not have enough resources to import ink and paper.

The economic instability also resulted in a political storm in the island. The suffering people of Sri Lanka came into the streets against the incumbent government. There were widespread calls for regime change. The coalition government headed by Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda seemed to be on backfoot. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa stepped down and seemed to have escaped the country. The combined political and economic storm does not augur well for Sri Lanka.

Let us look at the reasons for this economic turmoil.

**REASONS FOR FINANCIAL CRISIS:**

The Present Government headed by President Rajapaksa came into power in 2019. He initiated changes in the economic policy which have been led to the present crisis. However, there also some international reasons such as COVID-19 pandemic and Russian war with Ukraine.

1. **Large Tax cuts led fiscal instability:** In line with his election promises, President Gotabaya carried on large changes in the fiscal policy. The Value Added Tax (VAT) was reduced to 8% from 15% before that. Other levies such as 2% tax on domestic goods and services for funding infrastructure in the country was also removed. Capital gains tax on stocks was also removed. These tax changes led to Sri Lanka losing 1 million taxpayers from the tax net. Post the tax cuts, international sovereign credit rating agencies downgraded Sri Lanka's credit rating making it difficult for Sri Lanka to access international financial markets. All this was happening when the global economy was plagued by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to GDP contraction and increased fiscal expenditure for vaccination and providing economic support to ailing business and people led to zooming of fiscal deficit of Sri Lanka.

2. **Tourism got hit hard:** Tourism which was one of the mainstays of Sri Lanka’s economy got hit hard due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sri Lanka earned $4.4 billion in foreign exchange from tourism in 2018. However, this figure dropped steeply to $200 million in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, about 30% of visitors...
to Sri Lanka are from Russia, Ukraine, Poland and Belarus, the recent Russo-Ukrainian war has resulted in tourism not returning to its full potential even as the impact of COVID-19 has reduced.

3. **Move to Organic farming backfired:** President Gotabaya Rajapaksa last year mandated for the island country to shift to organic farming and shunning of chemical fertilisers. This led to steep fall in agricultural production. Sri Lanka, which was self-sufficient in Rice, became a net importer of rice. Rice production in Sri Lanka reduced by 20% and Sri Lanka was forced to import $450 million worth of rice. Export earnings from globally famous Sri Lanka Tea, which is one of the main export commodities for the country, fell steeply. Good sense has prevailed, and Sri Lanka has decided to step back from this policy.

4. **Russia’s war with Ukraine:** The Russian 'special military operation' against Ukraine added fuel to the fire and made things worse for Sri Lanka. The conflict led to global rise in crude oil prices, which led to increased foreign exchange outgo for financing oil & gas imports. Also, this has increased the prices of other important commodities such as fertilisers, oilseeds etc.

5. **Costly infrastructure projects:** The Sri Lankan government indulged into a series of costly infrastructure projects, expecting strong revenues and economic growth. The two marquee projects of Hambantota port and Colombo Port City together costed Sri Lanka $17 billion despite not generating any profits for Sri Lanka. The $15 billion Colombo Port City Project which was to house a special economic zone that would attract investments from domestic and foreign companies via tax exemptions. Hambantota port in the southern part of Sri Lanka is located in the political stronghold of Rajapaksa family. Despite promise these projects failed to generate any profits for Sri Lanka. Even more, Sri Lanka had to take costly loans to fund them and there is a fear of them falling in the hands of Chinese government.

**LESSONS FROM THE CRISIS**

1. **Abide by the gold standard of spending within our means:** This age-old wisdom is true for individuals and countries. Often countries indulge in politics of freebies and large, big-ticket expenditures which do not make economic sense. Politicians who are focused on winning elections promise these not realising the cost future generations will have to pay. The principle of inter-generational equity demands that debt of countries needs to be sustainable, fiscal deficit in check. Only this will allow and create conditions for long term sustainable growth and development.

2. **Social security net for citizens is an essential:** Crises are unpredictable and despite best efforts can come. Be it the COVID-19 pandemic or macroeconomic crises, the worst sufferers are the common people. This calls for countries to develop a robust social security system which takes care of vulnerable in times of need.

3. **Reworking of sovereign debt crises response system:** The G20 introduced the Debt Service Suspension Initiative and after its end G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments for Least Developed Countries. The scope of these initiatives needs to be widened. Global institutions such as IMF which is the lender of last resort need to be well capitalised with necessary quota and governance reforms to reflect the increasing weights of developing countries in global economy.

India came to help of Sri Lanka during the crisis giving crucial supplies of fuel and dollar swaps. The support of India has enhanced India’s profile in Sri Lanka as a trusted ally. This has been only possible due to resilience of Indian economy. Going forward too, the principle of fiscal rectitude and inter-generational equity should inform to ensure macro-economic stability as this not only wins us friends in the international arena but also improves lives of our citizens.

**JAIKRIT VATSAL**
Editor,
Focus Magazine.
Dear Students,

FOCUS is the Study Circle's monthly publication of contemporary issues and current affairs analysis. It is in fact a collective effort, by experienced educators in varied themes, of identifying current affairs in light of the UPSC syllabus, supplementing them with background information, explaining their related dimensions, lending them a generalist viewpoint and thus producing critical notes for the preparation of General Studies' syllabus.

The publication, as the name suggests, focuses solely on issues which are relevant to the factual as well as applied aspects of the General Studies' syllabus. That is how Focus covers all anticipated issues and themes for the upcoming Civil Services Examination (CSE).

Features

PART ONE | CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYSIS

- This month edition covers analysis of news from the immediately preceding month.
- All news/issues are categorized and clubbed syllabus-wise (International Relations, Polity & Governance, Science & Technology, Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude and so on) for efficient study.
- Background information has been added to provide context.
- Related and Additional information-dimensions have been explained to add depth to your understanding.
- Maps and figures have been provided for associative and retentive learning.
- Practice Questions

PART TWO | ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

- Coverage from varied sources

PART THREE | ESSAYS FOR YOU

- Selected essays from Rau's GSI students

For further understanding or discussion in any topic, please consult your respective professors.

Good Luck!

RAU'S IAS STUDY CIRCLE
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PART ONE

CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYSIS

logical .simple .targeted analysis & explanation of all relevant news of the month
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

# GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER III (MAIN)

REPORT OF SC APPOINTED COMMITTEE ON FARM LAWS

According to this committee, more than 85% of the farmers in India supported the Farm laws introduced by the Government. Hence, the repeal of these farm laws has gone against the interests of “silent majority” who had supported these marketing reforms.

Keeping in mind the importance of agricultural marketing from the perspective of UPSC Prelims and Mains, we would focus on the following dimensions:

- Importance of Agricultural Marketing
- Problems with Agricultural Marketing
- Critical Analysis of the 3 farm Acts (now repealed)
- Observations and Recommendations of SC appointed Committee
- Way Forward

IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURAL MARKETING

Importance:

- Enables the farmers to buy agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, seeds etc. at affordable prices.
- Provides price signals to the farmers with respect to planning for sowing of crops.
- An integrated domestic marketing system would considerably reduce the price variations in the agricultural commodities across India.
- 25 to 30 % of fruit and vegetables and 8 to 10 % of food grains are wasted annually due to lack of post-harvest losses.

PROBLEMS WITH AGRICULTURAL MARKETING IN INDIA

Agricultural is a subject placed under State List and accordingly, most of the State governments have enacted the Agricultural Produce Market Regulation Act (APMC Act) to regulate marketing.
Restrictive Regime: Under the present APMC Act, farm produce should be sold only at APMCs to the traders and middlemen. The farmers do not have the freedom to sell their produce outside APMCs directly to exporter, processor or end consumer. Hence, it leads to exploitation of the farmers by the middlemen and traders.

Fragmented Agricultural Marketing with about 2500 regulated APMCs, 5000 sub-market yards and thousands of Rural Markets or Grameen Haats. Hence, due to this fragmented marketing the agricultural commodities pass through multiple middlemen and traders leading to escalation in prices and also prevents the farmers from getting remunerative prices.

Lack of Access to APMCs: An average APMC in India serves an area of around 450 sq.km as against the recommendation of 80 sq.km given by M.S. Swaminathan Committee. On account of this, the farmers are forced to sell their produce at lower prices outside the APMCs.

Against Interests of Small and Marginal farmers who are forced to sell at lower prices due to their low marketable surplus and poor bargaining power.

Poor Infrastructure of the APMCs leading to improper storage and consequently higher post-harvest losses; No electronic auction platform

Imposition of Multiple Fees in APMCs which is estimated to be around 15% of the value of the agricultural produce; Increased prices and affect food processing Industries

Higher Post-harvest Losses in the range of 20-25% of produce accounting for Rs 92,000 crores loss.

1. Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020 (Now Repealed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMPORTANT PROVISIONS</th>
<th>CONCERNS RAISED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freedom to the farmers: This act enabled the farmers to sell their agricultural produce outside the APMCs anywhere in India and thus promote barrier free inter-state and intra-state trade. This had the potential to create &quot;One Nation, One Market&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy of States: Agriculture is a State Subject and the Central Acts would override State APMC Acts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploitative: Freedom to farmers to sell outside the APMCs would lead to exploitation by private sector.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phasing out of MSP: With the decline of APMCs, the procurement at MSP would be phased out.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Absence of Price Discovery: The APMC prices serve as a reference price for price discovery for one’s produce. If farmers sell produce outside APMCs, then it is difficult for a farmer to have a benchmark price.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Revenues: Various States raised the concern that mandi revenues will be affected due to lower mandi transactions in APMCs.</td>
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OBSERVATIONS OF SC APPOINTED COMMITTEE

Flexibility to the States: State APMC Acts will continue to govern the APMCs/regulated markets under that Act. The Central Acts would provide alternative marketing channels to farmers. So, a farmer would have option to either sell the produce within APMCs regulated through State APMC Act or in the trade area regulated under the Central act.

Redundant APMC Regime:

- Presently, Livestock and fishery form 40 percent of the Gross Value of Agricultural output. This sector is
outside the procurement support through MSP. These sectors are also growing much faster than other crops. Hence, the argument that only the APMCs and procurement support through MSP can offer remunerative price to farmers is flawed.

- Even for commodities that come under the purview of MSP, only around 25-30 percent of the production is transacted through the APMCs/regulated mandis. So, already a major chunk of agricultural commodities are sold outside the APMC regime.

- Hence, the Central act seeks to regulate the sale of agriculture produce outside APMCs.

**Procurement of Rice and Wheat:** Around 90 percent of rice production and 70 percent of wheat production is procured in Punjab and Haryana through the APMCs. This has in turn led to skewed cropping pattern with more emphasis on Rice and wheat and less focus on agricultural diversification in Punjab and Haryana.

**Higher Mandi Charges and Cess** imposed by the state Governments lead to increase in prices of agricultural commodities.

### 2. Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 (Now Repealed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important Provisions</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Potential Problems and Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective: Promote Contract Farming between Farmers and other stakeholders such as agribusiness firms, processors, wholesalers, exporters or large retailers.</td>
<td>Streamlines the supply chain by connecting the farmers directly with the buyers and reduce post-harvest losses.</td>
<td>Exclusionary in Nature due to fragmented land holdings and lower marketable surplus of small and marginal farmers; Exclude women farmers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract period: Minimum period of the farming agreement shall be for one crop season and the maximum period shall be five years.</td>
<td>Enhancement of Incomes by integrating farmers with bulk purchasers such as exporters and food processing industries.</td>
<td>Exploitation of Farmers due to lower bargaining power; Could lead to development of Monopsony market (one buyer dealing with multiple sellers and thus benefitting buyer).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum guaranteed price: The price to be paid for the purchase of a farming produce may be determined and mentioned in the farming agreement itself.</td>
<td>Access to Inputs such as Seeds, Capital, Fertilisers, technology etc.</td>
<td>Adverse Impact on Environment: Promote Monoculture farming; Promote harmful agricultural practices such as excessive water usage, fertilizer consumption; Destruction of forests and wildlife etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration of contracts: A State Government may notify a Registration Authority to provide for electronic registry for that State that provides facilitative framework for registration of farming agreements.</td>
<td>Promote higher Investment by providing price certainty.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispute resolution mechanism to be set up in the form of conciliation board by the sub-divisional magistrate.</td>
<td>Address Rural Indebtedness by reducing dependence of the farmers on moneylenders for meeting their credit needs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boost to Food Processing by providing access to good quality raw materials and hence provide greater fillip to the sector.</td>
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** OBSERVATIONS OF SC APPOINTED COMMITTEE**

**Existing legal framework:** All States except Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Delhi, Chandigarh and Puducherry already have legal provisions for contract farming in their APMC Acts. Punjab and Tamil Nadu have separate contract farming Acts. Hence, the argument that the Central Act to promote contract farming would be exploitative seems flawed.

**Success of Contract farming:** Contract farming is not new in India and various variants exist in several sectors. For example, contract farming has transformed the poultry sector from a mere backyard activity into a major organized commercial one with almost 80 percent production coming from organized commercial farms.
Similar, NESTLE's contract farming with the dairy farmers in Punjab has led to improvement in livelihood opportunities for the farmers.

3. Amendments to Essential Commodities Act (ECA), 1955 (Amendments- Repealed)

**ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES ACT AND ITS RATIONALE**

Used by the Government to regulate the production, supply and distribution of commodities which are declared as essential under the act. The list of items under the Act includes drugs, fertilizers, pulses and edible oils, and petroleum and petroleum products. The Central Government may add or remove a commodity from the schedule in consultation with the State Governments.

**HOW DOES IT WORK?**

If the Centre finds that a certain commodity is in short supply and its price is increasing, it can notify stockholding limits on it for a specified period. Anybody trading or dealing in a such a commodity, be it wholesalers, retailers or even importers are prevented from stockpiling it beyond a certain quantity. This improves supplies and brings down prices.

**HOW ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES ACT HINDERS THE AGRICULTURAL MARKETING?**

**Fails to realize stocking is essential:** The fear of bringing the agricultural commodities under the act has prevented the traders and processors from undertaking bulk procurement of agricultural commodities during bumper harvest season. Further, since almost all crops are seasonal, ensuring round-the-clock supply requires adequate build-up of stocks during the season.

**Poor investment in Storage infrastructure:** With frequent stock limits, traders have not invested in better storage infrastructure.

**Adverse impact on Food Processing Industry** since Stock limits curtails their Operations.

**Impact on agriculture exports:** Whenever the Government declares an agricultural commodity as essential, it imposes several restrictions on it including ban of export of such commodities.

**AMENDMENTS TO EC ACT, 1955 (REPEALED)**

**Reduced Scope of ECA, 1955:** Agricultural commodities to be outside the purview of Essential commodities Act, 1955. They would be brought out ECA only under exceptional circumstances such as war, famine, extraordinary price rise, and natural calamity of grave nature.

**Stockholding Restrictions:** Stockholding restrictions to be based on price rise - 100 percent increase in retail price for horticulture products or 50 percent increase in retail price in case of non-perishable agri products;

**OBSERVATIONS OF SC APPOINTED COMMITTEE**

The Amendment attempts to balance the interests of all stakeholders – farmers, traders, food processors, exporters and consumers – to enable agri-produce to move up the value chain. As agriculture is a seasonal activity, it is essential to store produce for the off-season to ensure smoothened availability of a product at stable prices throughout the year.

**BROAD RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON 3 FARM LAWS**

**Need for Farm laws:** A repeal of these Farm Laws would be unfair to the ‘silent’ majority who support the Farm Laws.

**Flexibility to States:** States may be allowed some flexibility in implementation and design of the Laws, with the prior approval of the Centre, so that the basic spirit of these Laws for promoting effective competition in agricultural markets and creation of ‘one nation, one market’ is not violated.

**Dispute Resolution Mechanism:** Alternative mechanisms for dispute settlement, via Civil courts or arbitration mechanism, may be provided to the stakeholders.

**High level Coordination body:** Agriculture Marketing Council, under the chairpersonship of Union Minister of Agriculture, with all States and UTs as members may be formed on lines of the GST Council to reinforce cooperative efforts to monitor and streamline the implementation of these Acts.

**Compensation Mechanism:** The implementation of Central Acts would lead to loss of revenues which states earn from APMCs. Hence, to compensate the states for their loss, a compensation mechanism on the lines of GST compensation mechanism may be incorporated.

**Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** The Government should consider in favour of completely abolishing the ECA Act, 1955 or take steps to substantially liberalize its provisions.
Despite rapid adoption of electric mobility, the share of electric vehicles sold in India is hardly around 1.3%. Hence, in the Union Budget 2022-23, the finance minister had announced for the Battery Swapping policy to encourage faster switch to Electric Mobility. In pursuance of such an announcement, the NITI Aayog has recently come out with the Draft Policy on Battery Swapping.

**HOW BATTERY SWAPPING WORKS?**

**Step 1:** People would be allowed to buy electric vehicles without batteries.

**Step 2:** People would lease or subscribe to batteries provided by battery recharging companies. People would either pay monthly or yearly subscription for the batteries or may decide to pay as per the use basis.

**Step 3:** Replace drained batteries with recharged batteries.

**SUCCESS STORY**

Bounce Infinity is a Bangalore based startup in the field of Electric Two-wheelers. It offers two choices to the customers -

(a) Purchase electric scooter with a battery

(b) Purchase Electric Scooter without a battery. Battery can be subscribed on a monthly or yearly basis.

Apart from manufacturing electric scooters, this company also operates network of battery charging stations. Hence, customers can easily replace their drained batteries with the newly charged batteries. Recently, it has become the first Indian company to achieve the feat of 10 lakh battery swaps in India.

**BENEFITS OF BATTERY SWAPPING**

**Reduce cost of Electric Vehicles:** The Battery alone accounts for more than 50% of the cost of electric vehicles. Hence, Battery swapping policy would lead to decrease in the initial cost of the vehicles and encourage more people to adopt electric mobility.

**Reduce Maintenance Cost:** The Electric batteries can be recharged for only finite cycles. Beyond 4-5 years, the older batteries would have to be replaced with the new ones. This can lead to higher maintenance costs. In case of Battery Swapping, Customers do not own batteries and hence this maintenance cost gets eliminated.

**Address anxiety issues related to Charging and Range:** Normally, people are reluctant to buy electric vehicles due to lower range (250-300 km) of electric vehicles and higher time taken for charging batteries. The introduction of Battery swapping would enable seamless travel without the need to worry much about range and charging. As people move from one place to another, they can simply switch their drained batteries with recharged ones and continue their travel without hassles.

**PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES**

**Demand-Supply Mismatch:** Presently, we need one electric battery for one vehicle. However, with the introduction of battery swapping, the number of batteries needed would increase.

**Non-Removable batteries:** Only few companies provide for removable batteries. If the batteries are in-built and cannot be removed, then battery cannot be swapped. For example, In case of Ola e-scooter, batteries cannot be removed from the vehicles and hence drained batteries cannot be replaced with the recharged ones.

**Lack of interoperability standards:** If the battery swapping policy has to be successful, batteries should be made interoperable across different manufacturers. For example, it should be possible for the batteries used in Ola e-scooters to be used in any other electric scooters such as Bounce infinity, Bajaj etc. Such interoperability standards would make it easier for the people to adopt electric mobility.

**Higher GST rate on Electric Batteries:** Presently, the GST rate on stand-alone electric batteries is quite higher at 18% and hence higher tax rate can be a disincentive for the battery recharging stations.

**Waste Management:** At the end of the battery lifespan, enormous amounts of electronic wastes such as cobalt, lithium, manganese oxide, nickel etc. get generated. Hence, there is a need to put in place efficient waste management systems.
recycling programme aimed at optimum recovery and minimal destruction of environment.

**NITI AAYOG’ DRAFT BATTERY SWAPPING POLICY**

**Interoperability standards:** Battery swapping services will need to ensure interoperability between EVs and batteries for the successful mainstreaming of battery swapping as an alternative. Accordingly, the policy aims to lay down the interoperability standards.

**Registration of vehicles with swappable batteries:** The policy provides for easier registration of the vehicles without electric batteries.

**Unique Identification Number (UIN)** to be assigned to the electric batteries for their tracking and monitoring. Similarly, a UIN number will be assigned to each Battery Swapping Station.

**Fiscal Support:**
- Demand side incentives offered under FAME Scheme for EV purchase can be made available to EVs with swappable batteries.
- Subsidies may be given by the Centre to the entities setting up battery swapping stations.
- State Governments may provide additional capital subsidies for the setting up of battery swapping stations.

**Rationalise GST Rates:** The GST council may recommend for the reduction in the GST rates on the electric batteries.

**Re-use and Recycling Ecosystem:** The Policy aims to promote the re-use of swap batteries after their End-of-Life (EOL) and fix the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).

**Nodal agencies:** The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) will be responsible for the implementation of battery swapping networks across the country. States and union territories (UTs) are responsible for the implementation and governance of the battery swapping ecosystem. Appointed state nodal agencies (SNAs) for EV public charging infrastructure will facilitate the rollout of battery swapping.

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**DECODING RBI’S STANDING DEPOSIT FACILITY (SDF)**

*In its latest Monetary policy, the RBI has decided to introduce Standing deposit Facility (SDF). So, what exactly is SDF and how does it work??*

**UNDERSTANDING REVERSE REPO**

The Reverse Repo is the rate at which the RBI absorbs liquidity from the economy. Under this route, the Banks can park their surplus funds with the RBI and earn an interest which is equal to Reverse Repo. However, when the Banks Park their funds under this route, the RBI would be required to give G-Secs as collateral to the Banks. So, the problem with the Reverse Repo route is that the RBI has to provide G-Secs every time the banks provide funds.

During times such as recent Demonetization, the RBI may not have adequate G-Secs to absorb huge amount of liquidity from the economy. Hence, to handle such kind of situations, the Urjit Patel Committee had recommended for the introduction of new tool known as “Standing Deposit Facility”.

**UNDERSTANDING STANDING DEPOSIT FACILITY (SDF)**

Introduced through an amendment to the RBI Act, 1934. The SDF works similar to Reverse Repo. However, SDF would be different from Reverse Repo in the following ways:

1. Under the SDF route, the RBI would not be required to provide G-Secs as collateral to the Banks. Hence, it would enable RBI to absorb huge amount of liquidity from the economy without G-Secs acting as collateral.
2. The SDF would be available for parking funds with the RBI on an overnight basis. But the duration of Reverse Repo could be longer.
3. Presently, Reverse Repo is 3.35%, while the SDF rate has been fixed higher at 3.75%.

### CHANGES IN THE MONETARY POLICY CORRIDOR

The RBI has also decided to replace Fixed Rate Reverse Repo in the monetary policy corridor with the Standing Deposit Facility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Earlier Monetary Policy Corridor</th>
<th>Modified Monetary Policy Corridor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repo placed in middle; MSF at 25 basis points higher and Reverse Repo at 65 basis points lower than Repo (Asymmetric Corridor)</td>
<td>Repo placed in middle; MSF at 25 basis points higher and SDF at 25 basis points lower than Repo (Symmetric Corridor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSF</td>
<td>4.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repo</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverse Repo</td>
<td>3.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDF</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SPECIAL PURPOSE ACQUISITION COMPANIES (SPACs)

Recently, the company law committee headed by Rajesh Verma has recommended the Government to amend the companies act to facilitate the entry of Special Purpose Acquisition Companies (SPACs). The SPACs have become the latest buzzword in the US Stock markets raising more than 50% of the capital in 2022.

**WHAT ARE SPECIAL PURPOSE ACQUISITION COMPANIES?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set of Sponsors come together to set up SPAC Company has no revenue or operations of its own</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sponsors invest 20% of the money in the SPAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue IPO and raise remaining 80% of money from other Investors Investors unaware as to where the money would be invested Hence, SPACs are also called as “Blank Cheque” Companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPAC would acquire unlisted private company (Say, Start up) within stipulated time period Indirectly, the company which gets acquired gets listed on the Stock Exchanges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits the Sponsors as it becomes easier for them to get listed on the stock exchanges through SPACs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits the Start Up Companies as they can get the capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits the Investors in terms of higher returns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PRESENT STATUS OF SPECIAL PURPOSE ACQUISITION COMPANIES

Global: SPACs are currently regulated and recognised across multiple jurisdictions such as the UK, USA, Canada, Singapore and Malaysia. The SPACs have raised more than 50% of the capital in the stock market in USA in 2020.

India:

International Financial Services Centre (IFSC): The GIFT city located in Gujarat enables raising of capital through SPACs. The International Financial Services Centre Authority (IFSCA) has already provided regulatory clarity on listing SPACs in International Financial Services Centre.

Domestic Market: The Capital market regulator i.e., SEBI has so far not enabled raising of capital through SPACs. Hence, the current regulatory framework of India is not supportive of the SPAC structure.

- **Need to have Operations**: The Companies Act 2013 requires that companies must commence operation within one year of incorporation. SPACs typically take 2 years to identify a target and perform due diligence. If SPACs are to be made functional in India, enabling provisions will have to be inserted in the Companies Act.
- **Criteria for listing**: If a company must get listed on the stock exchanges, it must be able to fulfil the eligibility criteria in terms of having certain assets and minimum profits etc. The absence of operational profits and net tangible assets would prevent SPACs from making an IPO in India.

PM MUDRA YOJANA COMPLETES 7 YEARS

#FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Recently, the Government celebrated 7 years of providing financial inclusion through Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY)

ABOUT MUDRA SCHEME

**Need**: Small scale enterprises lack access to formal credit from the Banks. Over 60% of such units are owned by persons belonging to Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe or Other Backward Classes. Hence, MUDRA scheme aims to promote financial inclusion and socio-economic development.

**Launched in**: 2015
**Implemented by**: Ministry of Finance

**Objective**: Provide loans of up to Rs. 10 lakhs to Non-Corporate Small Business Sector (NCSBS) which includes small manufacturing units, shopkeepers, fruits / vegetable vendors, truck & taxi operators, food-service units, repair shops, machine operators, small industries, artisans, food processors, street vendors and many others.

**Who can provide loans**: Loans are provided by last mile financers such as Public Sector Banks, Regional Rural Banks, Cooperative Banks, Private and Foreign Banks, Small Finance Banks, NBFCs and Micro-finance institutions.

**Benefits for last mile financers**: The loans provided by last mile financers get refinanced by Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency Ltd (MUDRA). Hence, MUDRA does not directly lend to individuals/Micro-enterprises. MUDRA is a refinancing institution.

**Eligible borrowers**: Both Individuals and Companies.

**PURPOSE OF LOANS**

- Business loan for Vendors, Traders, Shopkeepers and other Service Sector activities
- Working capital loan.
- Equipment Finance for Micro Units.
- Transport Vehicle loans such as auto rickshaws, small goods transport vehicles, tractors, tiller, two wheelers used for commercial use only
- Loans for agri-allied non-farm income generating activities such as pisciculture, bee keeping, poultry farming, etc. It does not include crop loans and loans for land improvement.

**TYPES OF LOANS**

- Shishu (loans up to Rs. 50,000);
- Kishore (loans from Rs. 50000 to Rs. 5 lakh);
- Tarun (loans from Rs.5 lakh to Rs. 10 lakh)

**Note**: The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) provides for overdraft facility on Jan Dhan accounts. Overdrafts of up to Rs 5000 availed on such Jan Dhan accounts are also classified as MUDRA Loans.
Rate of Interest on MUDRA loans: The interest rates are deregulated and the banks have been advised to charge reasonable interest rates.

Need for Collateral: Banks have been mandated by RBI not to insist for collateral for the loans given under MUDRA Scheme. Hence, MUDRA loans are collateral free.

DETAILS ABOUT MUDRA CARD

MUDRA Card is a debit card provided to the borrowers to withdraw the working capital given to them in the form of MUDRA loans. It is a RuPay debit card and can be used for withdrawing cash from the ATMs and to make payment through any ‘Point of Sale’ machines.

DETAILS ABOUT MICRO UNITS DEVELOPMENT & REFINANCE AGENCY LTD (MUDRA)

Genesis: Announced in the Union Budget 2015-16 and later incorporated as a company under the Companies Act. Registered as a NBFC with the RBI.

Ownership: Subsidiary of Small Industries Development bank of India (SIDBI). Presently, the authorized capital of MUDRA is 1000 crores.

Roles and Responsibilities:
- Refinance support to the last mile financers involved in giving MUDRA loans.
- Credit Guarantee support for the micro-loans.
- Imparting Financial Literacy at the grassroots level.
- Development support to micro-enterprises in terms of addressing knowledge and skill gaps.

RBI'S GUIDELINES ON DIGITAL BANKING UNITS

In the Union Budget 2022-23, the finance minister had announced setting up of 75 Digital Banking Units (DBUs) by Scheduled Banks across 75 selected districts in India. In accordance with such a proposal, the RBI has recently issued guidelines related to setting up of such DBUs in India.

MODELS OF DIGITAL BANKS

(Front-End Only) Neo-banks: These neo-banks partner with existing Banks to offer Banking services such as Deposits and loans. These neo-Banks do not have funds of their own, but they collaborate with the traditional banks to offer various banking related services. Examples: RazorPayX, InstantPay, Open, Niyo etc.

(Licensed) Digital banks: These entities are fully functional banks, regulated by the banking regulator and issue deposits and make loans on their own balance sheet. Presently, RBI does not allow such fully digital Banks to operate in India. Earlier, the NITI Aayog had argued in favour of such Banks in India.

(Autonomous) unit of traditional banks: These entities are essentially neo-banking operations of traditional banks that function autonomously and compete with stand-alone neo-banks. Examples include SBI’s Yono, 811 of Kotak Mahindra, DigiBank of DBS etc.

PRESENT STATUS IN INDIA

Presently, only those entities which are licensed by the RBI can undertake Banking related operations. As of now, the RBI does not allow Banks to be 100% digital. Hence, even though Banks can provide Banking services by leveraging technology (such as imobile of ICICI), the Banks must have mandatorily have physical branches. Hence, there is no provision for Licensed 100% Digital Banks in India.

PROPOSAL OF 100% DIGITAL BANKS BY NITI AAYOG

- To be licensed under Banking Regulation Act, 1949 as 100% Digital Banks.
- Provide Banking Services- Acceptance of Deposits, Giving Loans, provide insurance etc. without the need to have physical branches.
- No Physical Branches (No Brick and Mortar)
- Leverage Technology to provide Banking Services
- Also called as Challenger Banks- Newly created Banks which compete with longer established Banks through use of Digital Technology. Global Examples: Challenger Banks such as Starling Bank, Monese Banks in UK.
UNION BUDGET 2022-23
Proposal to set up Digital Banking Units (DBUs). However, these Digital Banking Units would not be set up by issuing licenses to 100% Digital Banks. Only the existing Banks in India which already have physical presence are allowed to open DBUs.

RBI’S GUIDELINES ON DIGITAL BANKING UNITS (DBUs)

Definition of Digital Banking Unit: A specialised fixed point business unit having certain minimum digital infrastructure for delivering digital banking products & services. So, just like how Banks can physical branches, the Banks can also open DBUs with minimal human interface.

Who can open DBUs?: All Domestic Schedumed Commercial Banks (excluding Regional Rural Banks, Payments Banks and Local Area Banks).

Products and Services offered by DBUs:
- Account Opening
- End to end digital processing of loans
- Internet Banking Kiosk
- Cash withdrawal and Cash Deposit only through ATM
- Digital Kit for customers: Mobile Banking, Internet Banking, Debit Card, Credit card and mass transit system cards
- Digital enrolment of customers for Atal Pension Yojana, PM Jeevan Jyoti Yojana etc.

Where can DBUs be opened? Both Rural and Urban areas without the need to get separate license from RBI.

TAX REVENUES HIT RECORD HIGH

Recently, the Ministry of Finance has published the data related to Tax revenue collections for the financial year 2021-22. According to the latest data, the Tax-to-GDP ratio has increased to its highest level of 11.7% in 2021-22.

IMPORTANT TERMS RELATED TO TAXATION

Gross Tax Revenue: The Gross Tax revenue includes all the taxes imposed and collected by the Centre. It includes both Direct Taxes (such as Corporate Tax, Income Tax etc.) and Indirect taxes (such as GST, Customs Duty, Union Excise Duty etc.)

Net Tax Revenue: The Net Tax Revenue is calculated as Gross Tax Revenue - (Transfer of States’ share of Taxes + Transfer to National Disaster Response Fund)

Tax-to-GDP ratio: Ratio of Total Tax Revenues to the Nominal GDP in a particular year. For example, if the Tax-
to-GDP ratio is 10%, then the Government gets 10% of its GDP in the form of Direct and Indirect taxes.

**Tax Buoyancy**: Measures the Responsiveness of Tax collections in response to changes in GDP. It is calculated as (Percentage change in Tax Collections / Percentage Change in GDP).

- Tax buoyancy of 1 denotes that, for every 1% increase in GDP, tax collections have also increased by 1%.
- Tax buoyancy of less than 1 denotes that, for every 1% increase in GDP, tax collections have increased by less than 1%.
- Tax buoyancy of more than 1 denotes that, for every 1% increase in GDP, tax collections have increased by more than 1%.

**IMPORTANT PRELIMS POINTERS ON PUBLIC FINANCE**

**Tax-to-GDP Ratio**: As per the Union Budget 2022-22, the share of Direct taxes has been usually higher than the share of indirect taxes in the last decade. However, for two financial years i.e., 2016-17 and 2021-22 (Revised Estimates), the share of direct and indirect taxes was almost same.

However, as per the latest data, the Tax-to-GDP ratio in 2021-22 has increased to its highest level of 11.7%.

**Share of Direct and Indirect taxes**: The latest data published by Ministry of Finance is different from the Budget Figures. Now, the share of Direct Taxes is 6.1% and share of indirect taxes is 5.6%. As far as Prelims exam is concerned, we need to go by the latest data published by Ministry of Finance.

**Tax Buoyancy**: The Tax buoyancy for the year 2021-22 is 1.9 (2.8 for direct taxes and 1.1 for indirect taxes)

**Contribution of different taxes in descending order**: GST (including CGST, UTGST and GST Compensation Cess), Corporate Tax, Income Tax, Union Excise duty and Customs duty. Amongst the direct taxes, corporate tax accounts for the highest share.

**FEDERAL TENSIONS OVER TAXES ON PETROL AND DIESEL**

The taxes on Petrol and Diesel have led to tensions between Centre and States. On one hand, the Central Government feels that the states are not reducing their VAT rates in line with the centre's cut in the excise duty. While on the other hand, states have expressed their inability to reduce the VAT rates since their financial position is poor due to the pending GST compensation dues from the Centre.

**UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS: AD VALOREM VS SPECIFIC DUTIES**
### Types of Indirect Taxes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Ad Valorem</th>
<th>Specific tax</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tax rate</td>
<td>Tax rate is defined in terms of value of the product</td>
<td>Tax rate is defined in terms of unit of product</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example:**
- GST: 3%, 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%
- State's VAT on Petrol and Diesel
- Central Excise duty on Petrol: Rs 27.9 per litre
- Central Excise duty on Diesel: Rs 21.8 per litre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collections depend upon</th>
<th>Value of Product</th>
<th>Volume of Sales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact of Increase in Prices of product (Assuming demand remains same)</td>
<td>Increase in collection</td>
<td>Remains same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of increase in collection</td>
<td>Increase in collection</td>
<td>Increase in collection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Demand

**Contribution to Inflation**
- Much higher impact on Inflation.
  - Earlier: 5% VAT on Fuel. Fuel prices = Rs 100. VAT applicable: Rs 5. Total Mkt prices = Rs 105

- Minimal impact on Inflation.
  - Earlier: Rs 5 Excise duty on Fuel. Fuel price = Rs 100. Excise duty applicable: Rs 5. Total Mkt price = Rs 105

### Present Tax Regime on Petroleum Products

Presently, both the Central and State Government impose taxes on Petrol and Diesel. The Central taxes on Petrol and Diesel include Basic Excise Duty, Special Additional Excise Duty, Road and Infrastructure Cess and Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess. This comes to be around Rs 27.9 per litre of petrol and Rs 21.8 per litre of diesel.
Apart from these central taxes, even the state governments impose their own tax in the form of VAT. Hence, there is a high incidence of Central and State taxes on Petrol and Diesel. These taxes alone account for almost around 60% of the cost of the petrol and diesel.

**GOVERNMENT’S TAX POLICY TOWARDS PETROLEUM PRODUCTS**

Whenever there is decline in the international crude oil prices, the Central Government usually increases the tax rates. Such a Government’s policy has a number of advantages:

1. The Higher Excise duty on Petrol and Diesel acts as an implicit carbon tax and nudges the economy to move towards greener fuels.
2. Enables the Government to earn more revenue, which can be used later as buffer, in event of increase in crude oil prices.
3. Enables the Government to raise revenue to undertake higher expenditure towards green energy projects.

**PRESENT REASONS FOR INCREASE IN THE PETROL AND DIESEL**

Last year, in 2020, the international crude oil prices were at all time low due to decline in the global demand due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, since then, the global crude oil prices have been rising on account of growing demand and Russia- Ukraine war.

**IMPACT OF INCREASE IN PETROL AND DIESEL**

- **Higher rate of Inflation:** Petrol and Diesel are important inputs in our economy. They are not only used for the purpose of transportation, but they are also used as raw materials in number of Industries. Hence, increase in their prices would inevitably lead to increase in the rate of Inflation.
- **Rupee Depreciation:** Higher import bill would lead to Depreciation in Rupee.
- **Higher Current Account Deficit:** As the Rupee depreciates, the imports become costly. The demand for oil is relatively inelastic i.e. in spite of increase in its prices, its demand would not reduce. Hence, as the import of oil becomes costly due to Rupee Depreciation, current account deficit would get further widened.

**STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT**

In 2021-22, the Centre had slashed the taxes on Petrol and Diesel by Rs 10. Now, the Centre has been asking the state Governments to reduce the VAT rates on the petrol and diesel to reduce the burden on the consumers. However, state governments are reluctant to reduce the VAT rates since their tax collections would get adversely affected. Moreover, the state governments have also been arguing that they have so far not received the GST compensation dues from the Centre for the financial year 2021-22 and hence their fiscal position is already strained.

**WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?**

Presently, Petroleum products such as Crude oil, Petrol, Diesel etc. are outside the ambit of GST. The GST council has been empowered to recommend the date on which these Petroleum products can be brought under the GST regime. Inclusion of these petroleum products under GST would do away with cascading effect of taxes on taxes and benefit the consumers. However, the states are reluctant to bring petroleum products under GST since it may lead to loss in their revenues.

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**GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

**EXTENSION OF ATAL INNOVATION MISSION**

The Union Cabinet has recently approved continuation of Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) till March 2023.

Atal Innovation Mission is set up under the (PRELIMS 2019)

(a) Department of Science and Technology
(b) Ministry of Labour and Employment
(c) NITI Aayog
(d) Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

**DETAILS ABOUT ATAL INNOVATION MISSION**

Year of launch: 2016

Objective: Promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country.
IMPORTANT PROGRAMMES

- **Atal Tinkering Labs**: Create a problem-solving mindset in the school going students.
- **Atal Incubation Centres**: Support startups in terms of labs and mentoring
- **Atal New India Challenge**: Support innovations based on advanced technologies in areas of National Importance and Social relevance
- **Atal Community Innovation Centre (ACIC)**: Promote innovation in Tier-II and Tier III cities
- **Applied Research and Innovation for Small and Medium Enterprises (ARISE)**: Promote innovation and research in MSMEs.

SLOW PROGRESS IN PM-KUSUM: CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

**#Policies**

With prices of Diesel skyrocketing, farmers are struggling to irrigate the crops using diesel run pumps. Solar pump sets are affordable and environment friendly, however, progress of the PM KUSUM has been tardy. Only 23% of the sanctioned 3.59 lakh solar water pumps have been installed so far.

**ABOUT PM KUSUM SCHEME**

KUSUM Scheme seeks to incentivise the farmers to set up solar powered plants in their fields so as to enable them to meet their energy needs and supplement their farm incomes. The idea is to enable "Annadata" to become "Urjadata". The PM KUSUM scheme is

**Three Components:**

1. **Setting up of 10,000 MW of Grid-Connected Solar and Other Renewable energy plants on Barren/Uncultivable land.** The surplus power generated can be sold to the DISCOMs.
2. **Off-Grid Areas**: Replacement of diesel agriculture pump sets with 20 lakh Solar Agriculture Pumps---> Reduce the dependence of farmers on diesel and meet their irrigation needs.
3. **Grid-connected Areas**: Replacement of diesel agriculture pump sets with 15 lakh Solar Agriculture Pumps---> Use the generated solar power to meet the irrigation needs and the excess solar power will be sold to DISCOMs.

**GOVERNMENT’S FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

Component A: In order to encourage DISCOMs to purchase power from the farmers, the Government provides performance based incentive to the DISCOMs.

Component B and C: Central Government: 30%; State Government: 30%; remaining 40% of the cost of the project would be incurred by Farmers themselves.

**BENEFITS**

*Environmental Benefit*: Saving of about 27 million tonnes of CO2 emission per annum.

*Economic Benefit*: Reduce financial burden on DISCOMs; Promote Renewable Energy; Reduce import of Crude Oil and improve Trade Deficit.

*Social Benefit*: Supplement Farm Income; Generate Self-Employment; Empowerment of Farmers.

**PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES**

According to a report from Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), PM KUSUM scheme is not a silver bullet to overcome challenges of irrigation supply, subsidy burden on DISCOMs and farmer distress.

*Missing financing mechanism*: The scheme requires up to 40 per cent financing by the farmer. In absence of access to formal credit in the rural India, farmers are finding it difficult to raise finances on their own.

*Over-Exploitation of Ground water*: Large scale deployment of solar pump sets could lead to over-exploitation of ground water.

*Inadequate Irrigation*: Solar pump sets may not be able to provide adequate irrigation in water scarce regions.
**Higher benefits for large farmers:** Income benefits through setting up solar power plants on the fields would benefit the large farmers more than the small and marginal farmers.

### STRATEGIES NEEDED

**Reducing Inter-state Disparity:** Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan together account for half of two lakh solar pumps currently deployed in the country; Target linked financial assistance to reduce the disparities.

**Reducing Intra-state Disparity:** Share of central financial assistance should be appropriated for small and marginal farmers/Women farmers.

**Give up One Size Fits-all approach:** Small and marginal farmers should be given a higher capital subsidy and long term loans with interest subsidies.

**Focus on Efficiency of Pumps:** Solarizing grid connected pumps must include replacement of the pump with more energy efficient newer age pumps.

**Focus on Post-harvest losses:** Use solar power for post-harvesting processes to promote local value addition and enhanced income levels.

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### RISING ECONOMIC COST OF FOOD GRAINS

**Economic Cost of Food Grains:** The cost incurred by FCI for the procurement of food grains is referred to as Economic Cost of Food grains. It comprises of 3 components

- Pooled cost of grains (weighted MSP of stock of food grains)
- Procurement incidentals (Labour charges, Transport charges, storage cost etc.) and
- cost of distribution.

**Decentralised procurement scheme:** Under this scheme, the States are encouraged to undertake the procurement of food grains on their own. It has been introduced to reduce the transportation and storage costs of FCI.

**Food grain stocking norms:** The Government of India has revised the Buffer Norms w.e.f. January, 2015 and the nomenclature of Buffer Norms has been changed to Food grain Stocking Norms. It has 2 components:

- **Operational Stocks:** For meeting monthly distributional requirement under TPDS and other welfare schemes.
- **Strategic Reserves:** To meet emergency situations. (Presently it is 5 MT)

**Note:** The norms are defined for a quarter of financial year i.e. how much buffer has to be maintained for each quarter of financial year.

**Central Issue Price:** Price at which centre allocates food grains to the states. It can be considered as the price at which food grains are sold through the network of fair price shops. For instance, it is Rs 1/2/3 per kg for nutrient-cereals/wheat/rice respectively. However, the central Issue Price (CIP) is defined in terms of Quintals (not in terms of Kg). Under the NFSA, the CIP is Rs 200/quintal in case of wheat and Rs 300/quintal in case of rice.

**Open-Ended Procurement Policy:** Under this policy, wheat and paddy offered by farmers within the stipulated period are purchased at MSP i.e. there is no limit on the procurement of the rice and wheat by the FCI. If farmers gets better price in comparison to MSP, they are free to sell their produce in open market else the FCI would be mandatorily required to procure the commodities.
PRESENT STATUS

On account of Open-ended procurement policy, the buffer stocks of Rice and Wheat have increased. In 2020-21, buffer stocks amounted to 97.2 million tonnes (mt), 143 per cent higher than the norm. Various problems and challenges have arisen on account of higher buffer stocks:

**Higher Costs**: Additional burden on the FCI. The FCI has accumulated higher debt and also become more dependent on the Government for the Food subsidy.

**Higher Food subsidy bill** on the Government making the entire Public Distribution system financially unsustainable.

**Impact on Agriculture**: Excessive focus on Rice and wheat has led to skewed cropping pattern, lack of crop diversification, depletion of ground water table, lower prices for the farmers etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF SUPREME COURT APPOINTED COMMITTEE ON FARM LAWS

**Adoption of Closed Ended Procurement Policy**: There has to be a cap on procurement of Rice and Wheat which is commensurate to the needs of the Public Distribution System (PDS). The savings from this capping may be utilized to enhance prize stabilization fund for other commodities such as nutri-cereals, pulses, oilseeds etc.

**Freedom of choice**: Give freedom of choice to beneficiaries of PDS to choose either cash transfers or grains.

**Agricultural Diversification**: Government must lay down road map for gradual diversification from paddy to more sustainable high-value crops, especially in Punjab-Haryana belt.

PM DAKSHA YOJANA

The Government has recently highlighted that around 2.7 lakh people belonging to poor and marginalized sections would be skilled under the PM Daksha Yojana

**Objective**: Enhance the skill set of the youths in the age group (18-45 years)

**Target Beneficiaries**: Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes/Economically Backward Classes/De-notified Tribes and Safai karamcharis including Waste picker

**Time period**: Implemented over the period of 2021-22 to 2025-26.

**KEY FEATURES**
- Free of cost training for the trainees through 100% grants by the Government.
- Stipend of Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500 per month per trainee for trainees.
- Wage compensation of Rs. 3000 per trainee
- Trained candidates to be provided with certification after successful completion of training and assessment. Trained candidates to be provided placement after assessment and certification.

Implemented by National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC), National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation (NBCFDC) and National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development Corporation (NSKFDC).

Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

FINCLUVATION

India Posts Payment Bank (IPPB) has recently announced the launch of Fincluvation to promote financial inclusion.

ABOUT FINCLUVATION

Need: On one hand, India Posts Payment Bank (IPPB) has larger physical presence in the rural and unbanked areas. While, on other hand, Fintech companies have adopted digital technology on much larger scale. Thus, IPPB and Fintech companies have complementary strengths for delivery of Banking services through Phygital network.

Phygital Banking: Combination of two words that is Physical and Digital. It is a form of banking that combines the advantages of digitalization with the comfort of a physical bank branch.

Details about Fincluvation: Under this initiative, Start-ups are invited to build technology-led solutions for
- Instant Paperless Micro Credit using alternate data sources
- Integration of Digital Payments with money order services of India Post
- Innovative solutions for promotion of financial inclusion.

IMPORTANCE OF UKRAINIAN CRISIS ON GLOBAL AGRICULTURAL MARKETS

Russia and Ukraine are among the most important producers of agricultural commodities in the world. Hence, the Russia-Ukraine war has led to supply side bottlenecks and rising global food inflation.

Russia and Ukraine account for almost 50% of sunflower, 20% of barley, 15% of wheat and 4% of maize production at the global level.

![Figure 1: Share in global production of selected crops (2016/17-2020/21 Avg.)](source)

In 2021, either the Russian Federation or Ukraine (or both) ranked amongst the top three global exporters of wheat, maize, rapeseed, sunflower seeds and sunflower oil, while the Russian Federation also stood as the world’s top exporter of nitrogen fertilizers, the second leading supplier of potassium fertilizers and the third largest exporter of phosphorous fertilizers.

Top Exporters of wheat: Russia, EU and USA
Top Exporters of Barley: EU, Australia and Ukraine
Top Exporters of Maize: USA, Argentina and Ukraine
Top Exporters of Sunflower: Ukraine, Russia and Argentina.

INDIA MOVES TO T+1 SETTLEMENT

The settlement refers to the official transfer of shares from the seller’s account to the buyer’s account. Earlier, India was following T+2 settlement and has now adopted T+1 settlement.

DETAILS

T+1 means that trade-related settlements must be done within one day of the transaction’s completion. Trades on Indian stock exchanges are currently settled in two working days after the transaction is completed (T+2). For example, if you buy shares on Wednesday, they will...
be credited to your Demat account by the next day, which is Thursday.

Now, with the adoption of (T+1) settlement, the trade gets settled within one day.

**Significance:** Most large stock markets, like in the US, Europe, Japan, still follow T+2 settlement cycle of trade settlement. India has now become the second country after China to go for T+1 settlement.

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**PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

**MCQs**

**Q.1) Consider the following statements about the Standing Deposit Facility (SDF):**
1. It is an additional tool of the Reserve Bank of India for absorbing liquidity without any collateral.
2. The SDF would replace the Fixed Rate Reverse Repo (FRRR) as the floor of the LAF corridor.
3. Deposits under the SDF will be eligible for qualification as both Cash Reserve Ratio and Statutory Liquidity Ratio.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only  
(b) 2 and 3 only  
(c) 1 and 2 only  
(d) 1, 2 and 3

**Q.2) Consider the following statements about ‘Guidelines for Establishment of Digital Banking Units (DBU):’**
1. A Digital Banking Unit can be opened in a section of an existing branch of banks.
2. Scheduled Commercial Banks will have to take permission of RBI before opening DBU branches.

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

**Q.3) Consider the following statements about SPACs:**
1. They are listed companies with no revenue or operations of its own.
2. Sponsors of SPACs have no financial commitment in them.

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

**Q.4) Consider the following statements:**
1. The share of the Direct Taxes has always been higher than that of the Indirect Taxes in the last decade.
2. The Tax-GDP Ratio has steadily increased in the last decade.
3. Presently, the Corporate Tax accounts for the highest share amongst the Direct Taxes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only  
(b) 3 only  
(c) 2 and 3 only  
(d) 1 and 3 only

**Q.5) Fincluvation, recently in news, is an initiative of which of the following:**
(a) Reserve Bank of India  
(b) Ministry of Finance  
(c) State Bank of India  
(d) India Posts Payment Bank

**Answers:** 1-c, 2-d, 3-a, 4-b, 5-d
UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

As the tenure of President Ram Nath Kovind as he completes 5 years in office in July 2022. The election for the office of the President of India will be notified in mid-June and polling will begin in July.

ELECTORAL COLLEGE FOR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION
- Article 54: President is elected by an Electoral College, which consists of elected members of both Houses of Parliament and elected members of Legislative Assemblies of all States and of NCT of Delhi and UT of Puducherry.
- This means the number of electors will be 4,896, 543 Lok Sabha MPs, 233 Rajya Sabha MPs, and 4,120 MLAs of all States, including NCT of Delhi and UT of Puducherry.

TERM OF OFFICE OF PRESIDENT
- Article 56: President shall hold office for a term of 5 years from the date on which he enters upon his office. He shall, however, continue to hold office notwithstanding the expiry of his term, until his successor enters upon his office.

NOTIFICATION OF ELECTION OF PRESIDENT
- According to Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952 – Section 4(3): Notification calling election of the President can be issued by Election Commission on any day within the period of 60 days before expiry of the term of office of the outgoing President. The election schedule shall be so fixed, that the President-elect is able to enter upon his office on the day following the expiry of the term of the outgoing President.
- Article 324: Authority to conduct elections to Office of President is vested in Election Commission.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM/PROCESS IN THE ELECTION OF PRESIDENT
- Article 55(3): Election of President shall be held in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote and secret ballot.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR A CANDIDATE TO CONTEST ELECTION FOR PRESIDENT’S OFFICE
- Article 58 lays down following eligibility conditions to contest the election to the Office of President:
  (i) Must be a citizen of India.
  (ii) Must have completed 35 years of age.
  (iii) Must be eligible to be a member of Lok Sabha.
  (iv) Should not be holding any office of profit under Government of India or Government of any State or under any local or other authority subject to the control of any of the said Governments.
- However, candidate may be holding office of President or Vice-President or Governor of any State or Ministers of the Union or any State and shall be eligible to contest election.

MANNER OF ELECTION OF PRESIDENT & VALUE OF VOTES
Constitution stipulates that there shall be uniformity, as far as practicable, in the scale of representation of the different States at the election (Article 55).

For securing such uniformity among the States inter-se as well as parity between the States as a whole and Union, a formula based on the population of each State is given in Constitution for determination of the value of vote which each elected MP and MLA of Legislative Assembly of each State.

Constitution (Eighty-fourth) Amendment Act, 2001 provides that until the publication of first census after the year 2026 have been published, the population of the States for the purposes of calculation of value of votes for Presidential Election shall mean the population as ascertained at the 1971-census.

Total Value of votes of all members of each State Assembly is worked out by multiplying the number of elective seats in the Assembly by the number of votes for each member, e.g., 175x159=27,825 for Andhra Pradesh.

Uttar Pradesh for instance, has the highest vote value for each of its MLAs, at 208. The value of one MLA’s vote in Maharashtra is 175, while that in Arunachal Pradesh is just 8.

The total value of votes of all the States added together is divided by the total number of elected members of Parliament (Lok Sabha 543 + Rajya Sabha 233) to get the value of votes per each Member of Parliament.

Thus, fixed value of each vote by an MP of the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha is 708. Meanwhile, the vote value of each MLA differs from State to State based on a calculation that factors in its population vis-a-vis the number of members in its legislative Assembly.

Finally, based on these values, total number of votes of all Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha MPs would be 5,59,408 (776 MPs X 708), and total votes of all MLAs from State Legislative Assemblies would come up to 5,49,495. Thus, the grand total vote value of the whole electoral college comes up to 10,98,903.

Before the voting, comes the nomination stage, where the candidate intending to stand in the election, files the nomination along with a signed list of 50 proposers and 50 seconders.

These proposers and seconders can be anyone from the total of 4,896 members of the electoral college from the State and national level. An elector cannot propose or second the nomination of more than one candidate.

A nominated candidate does not secure victory based on a simple majority but through a system of bagging a specific quota of votes. While counting, EC totals up all the valid votes cast by the electoral college through paper ballots and to win, the candidate must secure 50% of the total votes cast + 1.

Unlike general elections, where electors vote for a single party’s candidate, the voters of the Electoral College write names of candidates on the ballot paper in the order of preference.

Article 44 of Indian Constitution states that State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code in India. However, it is not so easy to make a uniform law on personal laws of all religions as each aspect of personal life like marriage, divorce, succession etc. are governed differently. So, Uniform Civil Code is an attempt to unify all civilian laws including personal laws for people of all faith living in India. UCC is the proposal to administer same set of secular civil laws to govern all people irrespective of their religion, gender, domicile, caste, etc. This law will be distinguished from public law and will subsume all laws covering marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption and maintenance of different religions into one codified law. However, so far it has been difficult to achieve uniformity in personal laws of all religion.

Proposal to Examine UCC by Uttarakhand CM: Uttarakhand Chief Minister announced an expert panel to examine the possibility of applying the UCC in the State.
Private Members' Bill proposed on UCC: Rakesh Sinha, a Rajya Sabha MP had moved a private member's Bill for a law on the UCC. A similar petition by Ashwini Upadhyaya is before the Delhi High Court as well.

Matter to be taken by 22nd Law Commission: Law Minister Kiren Rijiju in response to a written question, said “the matter is sub judice”. The Law Minister further stated that the matter requires an in-depth study of the personal laws governing different communities and could be taken up by the 22nd Law Commission Report.

Supreme Court's View on UCC: Even Supreme Court has indicated that government should explore the UCC to secure gender justice, equality and dignity of women. Supreme Court's view is based on several petitions claiming that personal laws governing the followers of certain faiths discriminate against women.

Proposal by Chancellor of Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Firoz Ahmed Bakht, asked Supreme Court to direct the government to constitute a judicial commission or a high-level expert committee to prepare a draft UCC in tune with international conventions which protect the rights of women. Mr. Bakht, who is also the grandnephew of Independent India's first Education Minister Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, says it is time to shed personal laws based on "patriarchal stereotypes".

UCC AND INDIAN CONSTITUTION

UCC has been provided for as a Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) under part IV of the Indian constitution. Article 44 provides of a Uniform Civil Code and reads “State shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India.”

The objective of this endeavour is to harmonise diverse cultural practices and address the discrimination meted out to various vulnerable groups under the garb of religious practices.

During the drafting of the constitution, UCC met with stiff opposition from various corners. Various minority religions especially the Muslims felt that UCC would curtail their freedom of religion, hence were apprehensive of replacing their personal laws with UCC.

It was due to this apprehension that UCC was envisaged that it will be achieved gradually and not all at once.

Nevertheless, having UCC embodied in DPSP reflects the intention of securing justice and equality for all citizens.

BENEFITS OF UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

• Protection of vulnerable sections, including women and religious minorities
• Promote nationalistic fervor through unity” as well as simplify the complex personal laws.
• Doing away with diversity in matrimonial laws, simplifying the Indian legal system and make Indian society more homogeneous.
• De-linking law from religion.
• Create a national identity and will help in containing fissiparous tendencies in the country.
• Establishing social justice and gender equality in family matters.
• Promote monogamy among all the citizen of India including Muslim and it will lead to betterment in the position of women.
• Remove prejudices against women regarding personal laws on divorce and maintenance.
• Strengthening the secular fabric of the country and promote unity.

UCC AND SUPREME COURT

a) Shah Bano case: In 1985, Supreme Court ruled in favour of Shah Bano, who had moved the apex court seeking maintenance under Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure after her husband divorced her. The then Chief Justice observed that a Common Civil Code would help the cause of national integration by removing disparate loyalties to law. The Court directed Parliament to frame a Uniform Civil Code.

Despite the Judgment, government in 1986, enacted Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, which nullified the Shah Bano judgment. The Act allowed maintenance to women only for 90 days after the divorce”.

b) John Vallamattom case (2003): Chief Justice Khare observed: “It is a matter of regret that Article 44 of Constitution has not been given effect to. Parliament is still to step in for framing a common civil code in the country.”
c) **S.R. Bommai case**: SC warned against “mixing politics with religion”. The court had worried whether a secular state should bring a code which can be perceived to be a threat to personal laws based on the religious beliefs of individual religions.

**Case of Goa**
Goa is the only state where Uniform Civil code exists. Goa Civil Code collectively called Family Laws, was framed and enforced by the Portuguese colonial rulers through various legislations in the 19th and 20th centuries. After the liberation of Goa in 1961, Indian State scrapped all the colonial laws and extended the central laws to the territory but made the exception of retaining the Family Laws.

**LAW COMMISSION REPORT ON UCC IN 2018**
- **UCC Neither Necessary nor Desirable**: Law Commission said that UCC is currently neither necessary nor desirable in India.
- **Need for Religion wise Amendment**: Law commission has recommended religion-wise amendment in personal laws to end discrimination against women within the communities.
- **Ensure Equality Within Community**: Urged the legislature to “first consider equality within communities i.e., between men and women rather than equality between communities”. This way some of the differences within personal laws which are meaningful can be preserved and inequality can be weeded out to the greatest extent possible without absolute uniformity.
- **Preserve Diversity of Personal laws in absence of Consensus through Codification**: In the absence of any consensus on a uniform civil code the Commission felt that the best way forward may be to preserve the diversity of personal laws (*Legal Pluralism*) but at the same time ensure that personal laws do not contradict fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution of India. To achieve this, it is desirable that all personal laws relating to matters of family must first be codified to the greatest extent possible, and then the inequalities that have crept into codified law, should be remedied by amendment.

**ARGUMENTS AGAINST UNIFORM CIVIL CODE**
- **Against Right to Freedom of Religion**: It will introduce State interference in religious affairs hence against the concept of secularism and may violate Article 25. This may go against S.R. Bommai Judgment which held - *Constitution has chosen secularism as its vehicle to establish an egalitarian social order. Secularism is part of the fundamental law and basic structure of the Indian political system.*
- May impact the cultural practice of some tribal communities in India.
- Considering the plural society of India, it will be a complex task to unify all personal laws of all religions, castes, communities, tribes etc. across the country.

**WAY FORWARD**
- Hence, when and if Uniform civil Code is brought into effect, it will have to ensure a balance between the protecting of fundamental rights and religious principles of different communities. Before enacting a common personal law, it is necessary to take into confidence all religion and communities of India.
- Further, steps can be taken to legislate on such common matters which are least controversial but with complete consent of every community in India. The idea is to provide uniformity in set of rules by consent and not to create more fissures and fault lines in the name of enforcing a uniform common law for India.

**MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION - PIB**
- Union Home and Cooperation Minister Shri Amit Shah presided over the 37th meeting of the Parliamentary Official Language Committee in New Delhi.
- Union Home minister unanimously approved sending of 11th Volume of the Committee Report to President of India.
- **Union Home Minister emphasized on three main points:**
  1. For implementation of the recommendations made from the first to the 11th Volume of the Committee’s report, a meeting should be held in July in which the Secretary of Official Language should inform members about the implementation of the Volume wise report.
  2. To give elementary knowledge of Hindi to students up to 9th class and to pay more attention to Hindi teaching examinations.
  3. Union Home Minister suggested to republish the Hindi dictionary by revising it.
• Prime Minister has decided that the medium of running the government is the Official Language, due to which the importance of Hindi will definitely grow – Article 343

• Hindi should be accepted as an alternative to English and not to local languages.

• Time has come to make the Official Language an important part of the unity of the country, when persons from States which speak other languages communicate with each other, it should be in the language of India.

• Unless we make Hindi flexible by accepting words from other local languages, it will not be promoted.

• 70 percent of the agenda of the Cabinet is prepared in Hindi now.

• 22,000 Hindi teachers have been recruited in eight states of the Northeast.

• Nine tribal communities in the Northeast have converted their dialects' scripts into Devanagari and all eight North East states have agreed to make Hindi compulsory in schools up to Class 10.

**ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED IN THE NEWS ARTICLE**

1. Making Hindi as "Link Language" instead of English.
3. Making Hindi Compulsory in CBSE.
4. Re-lettering milestones on national highways in Hindi.
5. Renaming well-known occasions or festivities only in Hindi or Sanskrit, such as Teacher's Day as Guru Purnima
6. Language should be used as an instrument of opportunity and not oppression as language is a means to an end and not an end in itself.

**SPEAKERS OF DIFFERENT LANGUAGES ACCORDING TO CENSUS 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>Percentage of Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>43.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>8.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marathi</td>
<td>6.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telugu</td>
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<td>Tamil</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarati</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS**

**ARTICLE 29 - PROTECTION OF INTERESTS OF MINORITIES**

(1) Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a *distinct language, script or culture* of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.

(2) No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them.

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF INDIA**

• Article 343(1) - The official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script. The form of numerals to be used for the official purposes of the Union shall be the international form of Indian numerals.

• Article 343(2) - provides that English shall also be continued to be used in official work of the Union for a period of 15 years from the date of commencement of the constitution, i.e., up to the 25th of January 1965.
Again, Article 343(3) made provisions for the continuation of English from 26th January 1965 by empowering the parliament to make laws to that effect.

Accordingly, Parliament passed The Official Languages Act, 1963 to provide for the languages which may be used for the official purposes of the Union, for transaction of business in Parliament, for Central and State Acts and for certain purposes in High Courts.

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT, 1963**

It allowed continuation of English language for official purposes of the Union and for use in Parliament even after 1965. As per the Act, both English and Hindi shall be used for certain specified purposes like resolutions, rules, general orders, notifications, press communiqués, administrative and other reports, licenses, tenders, etc.

The Act provides for the following –

- English language shall be used for purposes of communication between the Union and a State which has not adopted Hindi as its official language.
- For communication between states where only one state has recognised Hindi as its official language, then communication in Hindi shall be accompanied by a translation of the same in the English language.

Optional use of Hindi or other official language in judgments, etc., of High Courts - As from the appointed day (26th January, 1965) or any day thereafter the Governor of a State may, with the previous consent of the President, authorise the use of Hindi or the official language of the State, in addition to the English language, for the purposes of any judgment, decree or order passed or made by the High Court for that State. Where any judgment, decree or order is passed or made in any such language (other than the English language), it shall be accompanied by a translation of the same in the English language issued under the authority of the High Court.

A. 350A - Facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage — It shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups; and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities.

This provision was incorporated by the Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956 based on the recommendations of States Reorganisation Commission which was headed by Retired Justice Fazal Ali.

A. 351 - Directive for development of the Hindi language — It shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, wherever necessary or desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages.

**APPOINTMENT**

The President shall at the expiration of ten years by order constitute a Commission which shall consist of a Chairman and such other members representing the different languages specified in the Eighth Schedule as the President may appoint.

**DUTIES**

It shall be the duty of the Commission to make recommendations to the President as to –

- the progressive use of the Hindi language for the official purposes of the Union
- Restrictions on the use of the English language for all or any of the official purposes of the Union.
- the language to be used for all or any of the purposes mentioned in article 348 (Language to be used in Supreme Court and in every High Court – English language)
- form of numerals to be used for any one or more specified purposes of Union
- Any other matter referred by the President to the Commission regarding official language of the Union and the language for communication between the Union and a State or between one State and another State and their use.

In making their recommendations, the Commission shall have

- due regard to the industrial, cultural and scientific advancement of India
• Just claims and interests of persons belonging to the non-Hindi speaking areas regarding public services.

**COMMITTEE**

There shall be constituted a Committee consisting of 30 members, of which
- 20 members shall be members of the House of the People and
- 10 members shall be members of the Council of States to be elected by each House in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote.

The Committee shall examine the recommendations of the Commission and report to the President their opinion.

**SPECIAL OFFICER FOR LINGUISTIC MINORITIES (ARTICLE 350B)**

**APPOINTMENT**
- There shall be a Special Officer for linguistic minorities to be appointed by the President.
- Article 29 provides that any section of citizens residing in Indian territory shall have right to conserve distinct language, script or culture of their own.

**DUTY**

It shall be the duty of the Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under this Constitution and report to the President upon those matters at such intervals as the President may direct.

**REPORT**

The President shall cause all such Reports to be laid before each House of Parliament and sent to the Governments of the States concerned.

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**HOME MINISTRY ASK MORE TIME TO FRAME CAA RULES**

*Ministry of Home Affairs has sought another six months to frame rules of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA).*

**CAA was notified on 12.12.2019 and has come into force w.e.f. 10.01.2020.**

**CHANGE OF DEFINITION OF “ILLEGAL MIGRANT”**

- CAA primarily changes the definition of “illegal migrant” as provided in Citizenship Act, 1955 by providing a condition or stipulation for persons belonging to 3 countries and 6 religions.
- Prior to the amendment, Citizenship Act, 1955 defined illegal migrant as a foreigner who has entered India -
  1. Without a valid passport or other documents/authority as prescribed by law in that behalf; or
  2. With a valid passport or other documents/authority as prescribed by law in that behalf but remains therein beyond the permitted period of time.
- But, 2019 amendment has changed this above-mentioned definition by adding a condition or stipulation.
- The condition as per 2019 Amendment –Any person belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan, shall not be treated as illegal migrant for the purposes of this Act. If,
  1. They entered India on or before the 31st day of December 2014 and
  2. They have been exempted by the Central Government under
     • Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 or
     • from the application of the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946 or any rule or order made under the Foreigners Act, 1946,
- Citizenship granted through Naturalization: Government in India has reduced the period of residency from “not less than 11 years” to “not less than 5 years.”
- Exception: If the applicant has rendered distinguished service to the cause of science, philosophy, art, literature, world peace or human progress, then the central government may waive all or any of the conditions specified in the Third Schedule.
- CAA shall not apply to the following: The provisions of CAA shall not apply to tribal area of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram or Tripura as included in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution and the area covered under “The Inner Line” notified under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873.
CHANGES MADE FOR OVERSEAS CITIZENS OF INDIA UNDER CAA

- CAA has added new provisions under section 7D of Citizenship Act, 1955 which deals with cancellation of registration as overseas citizen of India on certain grounds.
- The new provision says that Central government may cancel the registration of overseas citizen of India if such person has violated any of the provisions of CAA or any other law for time being in force as may be specified by the Central Government.
- Further, no order for cancellation of registration of OCI shall be passed unless the Overseas Citizen of India Cardholder has been given a reasonable opportunity of being heard.

Relation between Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 & Inner Line Permit

- According to Section 3 of Citizenship Amendment Act, provisions of CAA shall not apply to tribal area of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram or Tripura as included in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution and the area covered under “The Inner Line” notified under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873.

ABOUT INNER LINE PERMIT & RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

- The Inner Line Permit was established by the British government under The Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations, 1873 to safeguard tribals of eastern part of Bengal. The 1873 regulation is also known as Inner Line Regulation (ILR) or Inner Line Permit (ILP).
- The system requires outsiders to obtain a permit from the government to enter the designated territory.
- It can be issued for travel purposes solely.
- The main objective of the ILP system is to provide a special protection of the distinct identity and safeguard for the peaceful existence of the indigenous people of the state where it is applicable.
- System of ILP is applicable in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. State of Manipur was added in the Inner Line Permit System in 2019.
- Last Year, the Meghalaya Assembly adopted a resolution for implementing the Inner Line Permit (ILP) regime in the state, which will impose restrictions on the entry and movement of ‘outsiders’ in the hill state.

IMPORTANCE OF CITIZENSHIP

- The Indian Constitution accommodates a very diverse society and integrates the notion of nationalism by providing each member full and equal citizenship, bestowed Indian citizens with fundamental rights including right to life, liberty, speech and equality (which cannot be unreasonably taken away by state without procedure established by law) and also provided each citizen who has attained the age of 18 years the right to vote.
- There is also a provision that the state should not discriminate against citizens on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, or any of them. The rights of religious and linguistic minorities are also protected.
- Granting of Indian citizenship to a diverse population is not based on any conditions whereby the person must give up their caste, religion, culture, tradition or practices.
- The provisions about citizenship in the Constitution can be found in Part Two and in subsequent laws passed by Parliament namely the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- The Constitution adopted an democratic and inclusive notion of citizenship as citizenship can be acquired by birth, descent, registration, naturalisation, or inclusion of territory. The rights and obligations of citizens are listed in the Constitution.

CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

- Part II of the Indian Constitution from Article 5 to 11 deals with Citizenship and provides three modes of acquiring Indian Citizenship:
  1. By Domicile
  2. Cases of Migration
  3. Process of Registration

1. Domicile

- Article 5 mentions of acquiring Indian Citizenship through domicile. Article 5 mentions that at the commencement of this Constitution, every person shall be a citizen of India who has his domicile in the territory of India and
  (a) who was born in the territory of India; or
  (b) either of whose parents was born in the territory of India; or
  (c) who has been ordinarily resident in the territory of India for not less than five years immediately preceding the commencement of the Constitution.
2. Migration

- Article 6 mentions about rights of citizenship of certain persons who have migrated to India from Pakistan.

- A person who has migrated to India from the territory now included in Pakistan shall be deemed to be a citizen of India at the commencement of this Constitution if:
  1. He or either of his parents or any of his grandparents was born in India as defined in the Government of India Act, 1935.
  2. If such person has migrated from Pakistan before 19th July 1948, he has been ordinarily resident in the territory of India since the date of his migration, or
  3. For persons migrated on or after 19th July 1948, he must be registered as citizens of India.

- However, no person shall be registered as Indian citizen, unless he has been resident in the territory of India for at least six months immediately preceding the date of his application.

Citizenship by Registration – Migrants & Persons of Indian origin residing outside India

- Article 7 allows citizenship by registration to such migrants who had after 1st March 1947 (during partition) migrated to Pakistan but returned to India under a permit for resettlement or permanent return issued by or under the authority of any law.

3. Registration

- Article 8 provides for acquiring Indian Citizenship by Registration for persons of Indian origin residing outside.

- Such persons of Indian Origin can register themselves with the diplomatic or consular representative of India in the country where he is for the time being residing.

Dual or Multiple Citizenship Prohibited

- According to Article 9, no person shall be a citizen of India by virtue of article 5, Article 6 or Article 8, if he has voluntarily acquired the citizenship of any foreign State.

Rights of Citizenship can be Regulated by Law Made by Parliament

- Article 10 – Every Citizen of India by virtue of this constitution shall continue to be Indian citizen subject to the provisions of any law that may be made by Parliament.

- Article 11 – Parliament has power to make any provision with respect to the acquisition and termination of citizenship and all other matters relating to citizenship.

**CITIZENSHIP ACT, 1955**

Parliament in its exercise of power under Article 11 enacted the Citizenship Act, 1955 which regulates modes of acquiring and terminating Indian Citizenship.

**Acquiring Citizenship**

- The Citizenship Act, 1955 provides for acquiring citizenship of India through the following ways:
  1. Citizenship by birth
  2. Citizenship by descent
  3. Citizenship by registration
  4. Citizenship by naturalisation
  5. Special provisions as to citizenship of persons covered by Assam Accord
  6. Citizenship by incorporation of territory

**Terminating Citizenship**

- The Citizenship Act, 1955 terminates Indian Citizenship through Renunciation, Termination and Deprivation.

**Renunciation of Citizenship**

- Indian citizens including Persons of Indian Origin and Overseas Citizen of India must surrender Indian Passport immediately after they gain nationality of the other country.

- When a person ceases to be citizen of India, every minor child of that person also ceases to be citizen of India. However, such minor children within one year of attaining full age (18 years) can resume their Indian citizenship.

- According to official gazette of 2015, all existing Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) card holder registered as such under new PIO Card scheme 2002 shall be deemed to be Overseas Citizens of India Cardholder.

**Termination of Citizenship different from Renunciation**

- Any citizen of India:
  1. who by naturalisation, registration or otherwise voluntary acquires citizenship of another country or
has at any time between 26th January 1950 and commencement of Citizenship Act 1955 had voluntarily acquired the citizenship of another country shall cease to be citizen of India upon acquisition of foreign citizenship.

- Termination of citizenship operates as per law because Indian Constitution does not allow for dual citizenship.

**Deprivation of Citizenship**

- If any person has acquired citizenship of India by fraudulent means, then the government of India is empowered to deprive the person of Indian citizenship if:
  - Registration or naturalisation certificate was obtained by fraud.
  - Citizen through his act or speech has shown disloyalty or disaffection towards the Constitution of India.
  - During any war, such citizen helped the enemy country through unlawful trade or communication.
  - The citizen within five years of naturalisation or registration has been sentenced to imprisonment in another country for a term of not less than 2 years.
  - If such citizen has not registered annually at an Indian consulate with an intention to retain Indian citizenship.

**WHAT ARE ELECTORAL BONDS?**

- Electoral Bonds are bearer instrument in the nature of a Promissory Note and are an interest free banking instrument.
- Electoral Bond shall be issued for any value, in multiples of Rs 1000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore from the Specified Branches of the State Bank of India (SBI).
- The purchaser would be allowed to buy Electoral Bonds only on due fulfillment of all the extant KYC norms and by making payment from a bank account. It will not carry the name of payee.
- The Electoral Bonds would have a life of only 15 days during which it can be used for making donation only to political parties which has secured not less than one per cent of the votes polled in the last general election to the House of the People or to Legislative Assembly.
- Every political party in its returns will have to disclose the amount of donations it has received through electoral bonds to the Election Commission.

**OPAQUENESS OF ELECTORAL FUNDING IMPACTS DEMOCRACY**

- In a Parliamentary democracy, citizens have the right vote and send their representatives to Parliament on sound knowledge and complete information about the representative and his political party.
- Political funding specially during elections is one of the most crucial information which a voter must know. Money is the most effective way of buying policy, of engaging in regulatory capture, and of skewing the playing field in one's own favour.
- This is enabled to a far greater degree when citizens are in the dark about the source of money. Supreme Court has long held that the “right to know”, especially in the context of elections, is an integral part of the right to freedom of expression under the Indian Constitution.
- By keeping this knowledge from citizens and voters, the electoral bonds scheme violates fundamental tenets of our democracy.
- It is equally important that if a democracy is to thrive, the role of money in influencing politics ought to be limited.

**OTHER DEMERITS OF ELECTORAL BONDS**

Opaqueness in election funding not only distorts the level playing field among political parties but also snatches from the voters their right to knowledge or information on electoral funding. Electoral Bonds brought as an alternative for cash donations and prevent flow of black money in elections has on the contrary made the fundings more opaque and corporate friendly as donations to electoral bonds are anonymous and limitless. For this reason, it has been alleged that electoral bonds are deeply destructive of democracy, compromise fair and democratic elections and violate core principles of the Indian Constitution.
• **Identity of Donor Unknown** - The identity of the donor will not be known to the receiver of the electoral bonds. Thus, through the disguised process of electoral bonds, the identity of the person will never be known. While the identity of the donor is captured, it is not revealed to the party or public. So, transparency regarding electoral funding is not enhanced for the voter.

• **No Upper Limit for Donation** - Any individual or company can make any amount of donations as there is no upper limit on donations. This will increase corruption as any money can be raised anonymously even by registering a fictitious or through shell companies.

• **Strengthen Corrupt Nexus** - This process of redeeming money through bonds without disclosure of name will penetrate and strengthen the nexus between corporate houses and political parties. Political parties may also start taking care of the highest bidder in such scenario and may grant them unreasonable favours which may affect our economy and business environment in the long run.

• **Aid Corruption & Red Tapism** - Business houses will expect favourable policies from the future government and the political party shall be obliged to obey when it comes to power. This nexus shall further increase corruption and red tapism in the society.

• **Frivolous Donations** - If identity of persons donating cash to political parties is not revealed, then it may lead to frivolous donations from unaccounted source.

• **Formation of Shell Companies to route funds** - Persons also includes companies and organisations. Hence shell companies can be formed just to route funds to buy electoral bonds without revealing the identity of such companies. Companies are also included as person as per Income Tax Act, 1961.

• **Restrictions on Company Removed** - Earlier only those companies which were in existence for at least 3 years were allowed to make contributions. Such a restriction was laid down to prevent the shell companies from influencing the political parties. Even this restriction has now been removed and hence concerns have been raised that the shell companies would end up influencing the policies of the Government.

• **Corporate Funding of Elections** - Earlier, the companies were prohibited from donating more than 7.5% of their average net profit over the previous 3 years to the Political parties. However, this restriction has now been removed. Going forward, even the loss-making companies could also make contributions through the Electoral Bonds.

• **Against Equality & Rule of Law** - Uncapping political donations and introducing a structural bias into the form of the donations violate both the guarantee of equality before law, as well as being manifestly arbitrary.

• **Lack of Transparency** - In a democratic country, voters need to be aware of how the political parties are funded to ensure greater transparency in the elections. However, by keeping the political donations anonymous, the electoral bonds violate the right of the citizens to know the information related to political funding.

• **Foreign Influence** - Election Commission cannot monitor the funding through Electoral Bonds as there is secrecy of donor, therefore it becomes difficult to know what is coming in is black money or not. Electoral Bonds can be misused for routing foreign money and thereby increase ability of other countries to influence Indian elections.

• **FCRA Amendment** - The amended Foreign Contribution Regulation (FCRA) rules enable the political parties to accept donations from foreign companies. This leaves a scope for the foreign companies in influencing Indian Politics.

• **Only Government can trace the donor** - As the donations are routed through the State Bank of India. So, it is possible for the Government to find out who is donating to which party, but this advantage is taken away from the opposition.

**PETITION FILED AGAINST CONSTITUTIONALITY OF ELECTORAL BOND STILL PENDING**

• Courts must be particularly sensitive to and cognizant of laws and rules that seek to skew the democratic process and the level playing field, and that seek to entrench one-party rule over multi-party democracy.

• In this regard, taking up the matter to settle the constitutionality of Electoral Bond by the Supreme Court before the next general elections will ensure parity in electoral funding for all political parties.
This will also ensure level playing field where democratic norms and practices will not be distorted in favour of only those in power.

**PUNJAB STAKING CLAIM ON CHANDIGARH**

**#CHANDIGARH #UNION TERRITORY #STATE REORGANISATION**

Punjab Reorganisation Act 1966 resulted in formation of a new state Haryana whose areas were carved out of Punjab, formation of UT of Chandigarh and transfer of certain territory from Punjab to Himachal Pradesh. Since then, Chandigarh has been the joint capital of both Punjab and Haryana. However, the present Chief Minister of Punjab has passed a resolution in Punjab Assembly urging the central government to transfer Chandigarh to the state of Punjab. This has started a political slugfest between Haryana and Punjab.

**ABOUT CHANDIGARH**

- The city was commissioned by the government in independent India to replace Lahore, which went to Pakistan after Partition, as the capital of Punjab. The city was designed by Le Corbusier in association with Pierre Jeanneret.
- Chandigarh is located on the foothills of the Shivalik Himalayas on village land acquired from what was then the Kharar tehsil of Ambala district. It was the capital of undivided Punjab from its inauguration in 1953 till 1966.
- Under the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966 following the Punjabi Suba movement, Haryana was carved out of the Hindi-speaking regions as a separate State while the hill regions of Punjab were merged with what was then the UT of Himachal Pradesh.
- Chandigarh was made a UT and has remained the joint capital of Haryana and Punjab with State assets divided between Punjab and Haryana in the ratio of 60:40.

**DEBATE ON THE STATUS OF CHANDIGARH**

- The resolution staking claim on Chandigarh was passed by Punjab Assembly after the Centre passed two rules impacting appointing of local officials.
- First, the Centre amended the rules governing the functioning of the Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) constituted under the Punjab Reorganisation Act.
- According to the 1966 Act, Bhakra Management Board consists of
  
  (a) a whole-time Chairman and two whole-time members to be appointed by the Central Government.
  
  (b) a representative each of the Governments of the States of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan and the UT of Himachal Pradesh to be nominated by respective Governments or Administrator.
  
  (c) two representatives of the Central Government to be nominated by that Government.
- Recently, Ministry of Home Affairs has amended the rules governing the functioning of Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB).
- The amended rules changed the eligibility criteria for the two full-time members of the Board which by convention has gone to officials from Punjab and Haryana. Based on the changed criteria, it will become difficult for the officers from the two states to meet all the technical qualifications.
- Second, Centre issued a notification bringing Chandigarh UT administration employees under Central Services Rules with effect from April 1, 2022 replacing the Punjab Services Rules.
- The decision of the centre is being viewed and interpreted as politically motivated.

**VARIOUS RESOLUTIONS/AGREEMENTS/ACCORD**

- Anandpur Sahib resolution 1973: Working committee of Shiromani Akali Dal constituted a 12-member sub-committee in 1972 to formulate comprehensive policies. The resolution included political, religious and raised the issue of Chandigarh and other areas which were not part of Punjab.
- Dharam Yudha Morcha was a political movement launched by Akali Dal in partnership with Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. It raised the concern of Chandigarh being converted into a UT and Punjabi speaking areas being transferred to Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.
- Views of Indira Gandhi: When Chandigarh was made joint capital of Punjab & Haryana, the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was determined to ensure that Chandigarh remains a joint capital.
Minister, Indira Gandhi indicated that the UT status to Chandigarh was temporary and that it would be transferred to Punjab with funds for Haryana for building its own capital.

- **Rajiv-Longowal Accord (1985):** As per the accord, Chandigarh was to be handed over to Punjab in 1986 but this never fructified after the assassination of Longowal and the long militancy till the mid-1990s.

**HARYANA TOO PASSED A RESOLUTION ON CHANDIGARH**

- Haryana state assembly also passed a resolution on the transfer of Chandigarh to Haryana.
- Haryana Government has urged the Centre to address unresolved issues which arose out of reorganization of Punjab and to ensure balance till the issues are resolved.
- Haryana government also urged the central government to take measures for the construction of the Sutlej Yamuna Link Canal in compliance with the Supreme Court's orders.

**DARLONG COMMUNITY INCLUDED IN THE SCHEDULED TRIBE LIST**

#DARLONG COMMUNITY #SCHEDULED TRIBE

Parliament has passed a Bill for the inclusion of the Darlong community as a sub-tribe of Kuki in the list of Scheduled Tribes of Tripura. Both houses of Parliament passed the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill-2022 with a voice vote.

**INCLUSION OF DARLONG COMMUNITY**

- Darlongs is a small community of around 11,000 people in Tripura.
- Inclusion of the Darlong community as a sub-tribe of Kuki will give it an identity in the list of Scheduled Tribes of Tripura.
- Kuki is one of the main tribal communities in Northeast India and the Darlong community in Tripura will become its 18th sub-tribe.

- The group is a small tribal clan but has produced a high number of educated people proportionate to its population in the state.
- People from the Darlong community, like many other tribal communities, are now serving in high positions in the state administration, academia, and public services.
- Tribal musicologist and Rosem (tribal instrument) maestro Thanga Darlong were conferred the prestigious Padma Shri award a few years back for his contribution to culture.

**DEMAND FOR SEPARATE ST STATUS**

- Darlongs, despite being Scheduled Tribes, were never given ST certificates. Since they were considered a generic tribe under the Kuki community, they were handed their tribal certificates as members of ‘Kuki’ community.
- The subsequent identity crisis among them, especially Darlong youths, who were equipped with modern education, culminated in the demand for a separate statutory identity of their own in 1995.

**SCHEDULED TRIBES**

- The framers of the Constitution realised that certain communities in the country were suffering from extreme social, educational and economic backwardness on account of the primitive agricultural practices, lack of infrastructure facilities and geographical isolation.
- The Constitution of India in Article 366 (25) prescribe that the Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 of the Constitution to be Scheduled Tribes.

**ARTICLE 342 (1)**

- The President may - with respect to any State or Union Territory,
- and where it is a State, after consultation with the Governor thereof,
- by a public notification,
- specify the tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within tribes or tribal communities as Scheduled Tribe

**ARTICLE 342 (2)**

- Parliament may be law
- include in or exclude from the list of Scheduled Tribes (prepared through Presidential notification)
any tribe or tribal community or part of or group within any tribe or tribal community

Based on Article 342, Parliament enacted THE CONSTITUTION (SCHEDULED TRIBES) ORDER, 1950 which contains a list of tribes or groups designated as Scheduled Tribes. This Order is amended from time to time to include more groups or communities within the ST Fold.

CRITERIA TO DESIGNATE AS ST

The criteria presently followed for specification of a community as a Scheduled Tribe are:

(i) indications of primitive traits
(ii) distinctive culture
(iii) geographical isolation
(iv) shyness of contact with the community at large, and
(v) backwardness

While the Constitution is silent about the criteria for specification of a community as a Scheduled Tribe. The words and the phrase "tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within tribes or tribal communities" in Article 342 must be understood in terms of their historical background of backwardness.

Primitiveness, geographical isolation, shyness and social, educational & economic backwardness due to these reasons are the traits that distinguish Scheduled Tribe communities of our country from other communities.

It considers the definitions of tribal Communities adopted in the 1931 Census.

These facts are the basis for the provision in Article 342(1) which mandates to specify the tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within tribes or tribal communities as Scheduled Tribe in relation to that State or Union Territory as the case may be.

Thus, the list of Scheduled Tribes is State/UT specific and a community declared as a Scheduled Tribe in a State need not be so in another State.

The Presidential notifications under Clause 1 of Article 342 of the Constitution are issued as the Constitution Orders.

TWITTER GOVERNANCE IN TELANGANA

#TWITTER GOVERNANCE #SOCIAL MEDIA

Twitter and other social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook are being regularly used by government officials as a mechanism to reach out to public in a transparent and accountable way. Let us understand the positives and drawback of use of social media for governance.

CRITICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- **Connectedness**: This attribute highlights the media's ability to connect and reconnect like-minded people or people interested in same topics and domains.
- **Collaboration**: The connections achieved on this media, enable people to collaborate and create knowledge. Such collaborations can be either open or closed. Wikipedia is an example of open collaboration which enabled creation of an open web-based encyclopedia through contribution from hundreds of thousands of people. GovLoop is an example of closed collaboration wherein experts' groups contribute on specific policy matters.
- **Community**: Connectedness and collaboration helps create and sustain communities. These communities can create awareness about various issues and can be used for seeking inputs into policy making, building goodwill or even seeking feedback into delivery of public services.

USE OF TWITTER TO ADDRESS GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- **Governance Outreach** - Telangana is the first State in India to experiment with 'Twitter governance', a model of governance which uses the social media site for outreach. Under this set-up, citizens facing health, social or civic issues post their concerns site and tag officials. Their problems are quickly resolved and news of this is often amplified by sections of the mainstream media.
- **Twitter handle** - At the heart of this set-up is the State Industry and Commerce Minister, K.T. Rama Rao, who is known by his handles @KTR, @KTRoffice and @KTRTRS. Mr. Rao has a reputation for quickly responding to concerns. He tags the officials concerned to ensure that necessary action is taken.
• Attracting Investments in State - Besides responding to citizens, Mr. Rao even reached out to the CEO of Tesla, Elon Musk, asking him to set up a Tesla unit in the State. “Our state is a champion in sustainability initiatives & a top notch business destination in India,” he tweeted on January 14. Earlier, he successfully got Kitex Garments to set up a unit in Warangal by using Twitter to communicate with the company officials.

• Managed Response during COVID - At the height of the migrant and food crisis during the first two waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minister’s team was very efficient.

BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR GOVERNANCE
• Increases Transparency and accountability: citizens have used social media to communicate, report and map issues in society. This has made the administration more accountable to meet citizens’ demands.
• Acts as a platform for communication: Government uses various twitter handles to communicate important message or information about policies to the citizens. It also acts as a platform for communication during crisis situations – epidemic, disasters, accidents etc.
• Results in citizens’ awareness on issues pertaining to administration and law and order situation in cities.
• Can lead to better and improved governance especially at local level.

LEGAL PROVISIONS
• RTI Act & IT Act: Social Media interaction by the government comes under the purview of the Right to Information Act 2005, Information Technology Act 2000 and other Rules and Regulations.
• Intermediary under IT Act: When Government department provides such social media facilities on its network, receives, stores or transmits any particular electronic record on behalf of another person or provides any service with respect to that record, they become intermediary under Section 2(1)(w) of the amended Information Technology Act, 2000.
• Section 79 of the amended Information Technology Act, 2000 provides the broad principle that intermediaries like Government departments providing social media facilities are generally not liable for third party data information or communication link made available by them.

• Section 79 of Information Technology Act, 2000: Exempts intermediaries from liability in certain instances. It states that intermediaries will not be liable for any third-party information, data or communication link made available by them.

CONCERNS ON GOVERNANCE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA HANDLES
• No Checks & Balances: Despite success of twitter governance as a model, this is far from being a perfect system. Twitter governance model has no checks and balances. Officials can ignore issues that they cannot act on or do not wish to act on. For instance, Right to Information (RTI) Act, which is fully offline in the State, is barely functional due to stamp shortage as well as reluctance on the part of officials.
• Adhoc Approach: While government does ensure immediate action and transparency by using Twitter model of governance, it could be criticised for using an ad-hoc approach for solving problems.
• Lack of Accessibility for common citizens as only tech-savvy people and those with social media access can benefit from this model. Telangana has a literacy rate of 72.8%. Twice the number of men use the Internet compared to women.
• Urban-rural divide is also sharp, with 60% of the people living in villages which have limited broadband access.

CONCLUSION
While Twitter governance is a starting point for delivering good administration, it must be accompanied by regular governance mechanisms which have built-in regulations.

NEW VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR NITI AAYOG
#NITI Aayog #Federalism
Government has appointed Suman K. Berry as the Vice-chairman of the NITI Aayog following the resignation of Rajiv Kumar. Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has accepted “the resignation of Rajiv Kumar.”
FORMATION OF NITI AAYOG

- NITI Aayog was formed by resolution of Union Cabinet in 2015 under Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961.
- The Aayog has been mandated to foster cooperative and competitive federalism, evolve a national consensus on developmental goals, redefine the reforms agenda, achieve SDG goals, function as a platform for resolution of cross-sectoral issues between Center and State Governments, capacity building and to function as a Knowledge and Innovation hub.

FUNCTIONS OF NITI AAYOG

- Composition: Governing Council of NITI Aayog, comprising Chief Ministers of all the States and Union Territories with legislatures and Lt Governors of other Union Territories, came into effect on 16 February 2015 via a notification by the Cabinet Secretariat.
- The meetings of Governing Council have been held under the chairmanship of the Hon’ble Prime Minister with Chief Ministers/Lt Governors of the States/UTs and other members of the Governing Council.
- The Governing Council is the premier body tasked with evolving a shared vision of national priorities and strategies, with the active involvement of States, in shaping the development narrative. The Governing Council, which embodies the objectives of cooperative federalism, presents a platform to discuss inter-sectoral, inter-departmental and federal issues to accelerate the implementation of the national development agenda.

WORK DONE BY NITI AAYOG

- NITI Aayog actively participates in designing strategic policies, fostering cooperative federalism, providing knowledge and innovation support and undertaking evaluation and monitoring of major investments.
- It has formulated the Make in India Strategy for Electronics Industry, a Model Land Leasing Law, laid down a National Energy Policy, prepared a Roadmap for Revitalizing Agriculture, designed a Developmental Strategy for Northeast and Hilly areas and undertook an appraisal of the 12th Five Year Plan.
- Recommended closure of sick PSUs, strategic disinvestment of other CPSUs and pushed for reforms in Medical Council of India and the University Grants Commission. It has also prepared a Model Agri Land Leasing Act, 2016.

GOVERNING COUNCIL OF NITI AAYOG
• **NITI Forum for North-East** to address various challenges in the region and recommend requisite interventions to achieve sustainable economic growth.

• **Sustainable Development in the Indian Himalayan Region**

• **Development Support Services for States and UTs** to achieve transformational and sustained delivery of infrastructure projects. DSSS has the following key objectives:
  - Establish Centre-State partnership model for cooperation
  - Reimagine and transform delivery of infrastructure projects
  - Establish PPPs as governance tools supporting larger development agenda
  - Address key structural issues that States face in conceiving, structuring and implementing infrastructure projects.
  - Build institutional and organisational capacities of States and State-level institutions to conceive, conceptualise, structure and implement infrastructure projects.

• **Project SATH-E,** ‘Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital-Education’ - aims to identify and build three ‘role model’ States for the school education sector.

• **E-Amrit** is a one-stop destination for all information on electric vehicles—busting myths around the adoption of EVs, their purchase, investment opportunities, policies, subsidies, etc.

The portal has been developed and hosted by NITI Aayog under a collaborative knowledge exchange programme with the UK government and as part of the UK-India Joint Roadmap 2030, signed by the Prime Ministers of the two countries.

**CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE**

**COMPETITIVE FEDERALISM**

• NITI Aayog endeavours to promote competitive federalism by facilitating improved performance of States/UTs.

• It encourages healthy competition among states through transparent rankings, in various sectors, along with a hand-holding approach.

• Some of the indices launched by NITI Aayog are School Education Quality Index, State Health Index, Composite Water Management Index, Sustainable Development Goals Index, India Innovation Index and Export Competitiveness Index.

• NITI Aayog also releases delta rankings for the performance of Aspirational Districts every month.

• The ranking of States in various social sectors based on quantitative objective criteria encourages them, and even districts, to improve their performance.

• NITI Aayog collaborates closely with all stakeholders, including the State/UT Governments, concerned Ministries/Departments in developing indicator frameworks, review mechanisms and capacity-building.

**CRITICISM OF NITI AAYOG**

- It has no role in influencing private or public investment.
- It does not seem to influence policymaking with long-term consequences. E.g., Demonetization and GST.
- As a think-tank, it should maintain a respectable intellectual distance from the government. Instead, it is seen doing uncritical praise of the Government-sponsored schemes and programs.
- It does not have the power to analyze the performance of various government schemes.
- It has not been able meet its mandate in terms of fulfilling needs of the states.
- It has been granted too-wide mandate and too-many powers which can be counter-productive and prone to misuse.

**WAY FORWARD –** NITI Aayog has played an important role not only in fostering cooperative federalism but also in encouraging states through rank-based monitoring to improve their performance in diverse sectors.

**TAMIL NADU CM HIGHLIGHTS ISSUES IN INDIAN FEDERALISM**

#FEDERALISM #CENTRALISING TENDENCY

*The recent speech by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin at the 23rd party congress of the Communist Party of India*
(Marxist) in Kannur, Kerala has flagged concerns on the kind of federalism practiced by the central government.

**FEDERALISM**

- Federalism is a system of government in which the power is divided between a central authority and various constituent units of the country.
- Usually, a federation has two levels of government. One is the government for the entire country that is usually responsible for a few subjects of common national interest.
- The others are governments at the level of provinces or states that look after much of day-to-day administering of their state. Both these levels of governments enjoy their power independently.

**CONSTITUTIONAL SCHEME FOR FEDERALISM**

- **Article 1** mentions that India that is Bharat shall be a Union of States. It means that states do not have power or right to secede away from the Union of India. Also, unlike USA, in India, different states have not formed because of an agreement among the states.
- **Article 3** empowers Parliament to create new States. It allows the federation to evolve, grow and respond to regional aspirations.
- When a new state is formed, Schedule I and Schedule IV of the Constitution shall be amended.
  - Schedule I - contains list of States and Union Territories
  - Schedule IV - provides for allocation of seats in Rajya Sabha. The allocation of seats in Rajya Sabha is made based on the population of each State.
- Constitution of India effectively establishes a system where the Union Government functions at the Centre and respective State governments functions at the provinces.
- The Constitution has demarcated each level of government by devising an elaborate scheme of distribution of legislative, administrative and financial powers between the Centre and the States.
- In this respect, **Article 246** clearly enumerates the Federal character of the Indian Constitution. It empowers
  - Parliament to make law under Union List
  - States to make law under State List and
  - both the Parliament and States to make law under Concurrent List.
- Independent judiciary is another essential feature of Indian Constitution.
- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar responded to the question as to why India is a “Union” and not a “Federation of States”: “The Drafting Committee wanted to make it clear that though India was to be a federation, the federation was not the result of an agreement by the States to join in a federation and that the federation not being the result of an agreement no State has the right to secede from it. The Federation is a Union because it is indestructible.”

**CONCERNS EXPRESSED ON FEDERALISM PRACTICED BY THE CENTRE**

- Excessive concentration of power
- Penalising non-BJP state governments on public policies
- Denying states their federal rights according to the Indian Constitution -
  - GST Council taking away state's autonomy to collect taxes
  - Dismantling Planning Commission which used to grant discretionary grants to states for specific purpose
  - Non-flexibility to states in admissions though NEET
- Revenue sharing model between centre and some states is out of line with Finance Commission's recommendations.
- Increasing use of cess and surcharge as mode of tax collection (which are not shared by states)
- Delay in release of grants by centre despite submission of "utilisation certificates" by states.

**GENERAL FINANCIAL RULES 2017 - Ministry of Finance - Department of Expenditure**

- In respect of recurring Grants: Ministry or Department concerned should release any amount sanctioned for the subsequent financial year only after Utilization Certificate in respect of Grants of preceding financial year is submitted.
- Release of Grants-in-aid more than 75% of the total amount sanctioned for the subsequent financial year shall be done only after utilisation certificate and the annual audited statement relating to Grants-in-aid released in the preceding year are submitted to the satisfaction of the Ministry/Department concerned.
Utilisation Certificate in case of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) Scheme: In case of the schemes covered under Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT), where the fund flow is directly from the Central Government to the beneficiaries, the intimation from the bank/National Payments Corporation of India (Aadhaar Payment Bridge) regarding deposit of the funds in the beneficiaries’ bank accounts, generated as per procedure prescribed by the Controller General of Accounts, may be treated as a Utilisation Certificate.

The Ministry/Department releasing the Grant should keep proper record and accounts relating to such direct releases under DBT to the beneficiaries bank accounts.

Governors actively participating in state's administration goes against the values enshrined in the constitution. This results in politicization of the office of Governor.

Forceful adoption of three language formula by the centre including mandatory learning of Hindi in schools. Union Home and Cooperation Minister Shri Amit Shah while presiding over the 37th meeting of the Parliamentary Official Language Committee, has stressed on providing elementary knowledge of Hindi to students up to 9th class and make Hindi as the official link language.

Delay by the Governor in sending Bills for President's Assent (NEET Bill of Tamil Nadu) if the Bill goes against the policy or ideology of central government.

Increasing Centralisation
- converting Bills into Money Bill
- Excessive use of ordinance
- Lack of debates in Parliament on key issues
- Passing of Bills without sending to Parliamentary Committees

Increasing use of Concurrent List by the Centre to frame laws for socio-economic development -
- Three Farm Laws
- Greater central role – Electricity Amendment Bill – Selection Committee - State Electricity Regulatory Commission

Administrative Issues
- Role of Governor
- Reserving Bills for President – Article 200
- Use of Article 356 to dismiss government
- Increasing interference of Governors & LG in daily administration – ignores elected government
- Special Powers of Governors under Fifth and Sixth Schedule
- lack of co-ordination with states on issues of health facilities of state – state list
- Concerns & Challenges in working of – Inter-state Council, Zonal Council, NE Council

Financial Issues
- Limited borrowing powers of state from outside India – Article 293
- Higher Share of Cess and surcharge collected by Centre (A-271) is not distributed among the States – Agri Infrastructure Cess
- Problems in Paying GST compensation Cess to States due to fall in revenue because of COVID.

OTHER ISSUES IN INDIAN FEDERALISM

Regional Issues
- Growing regionalism based on language, culture, ethnicity – demand for new states
- Increasing friction between states – boundary disputes (Assam-Mizoram), disputes on river-water sharing
- States (Haryana, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra, MP) providing reservation to locals in jobs – public & private
- Exercises such as Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN), NRC-Assam is further fuelling regional identity

Legislative Issues
Sharing of finance by states in Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) is also a burden on states.

Lack of Operational & Financial Autonomy to Implement CSS by states

Reducing number of Left Wing Affected Districts (recent report) impacts central assistance to such districts

Fiscal Deficit of State cannot exceed 3% of State’s GDP as per FRBM Act.

Centre’s Permission on future Borrowings through recently launched 50-year interest free loan for states

UNFOUNDED APPREHENSIONS AGAINST CRIMINAL IDENTIFICATION ACT

#CRIMINAL IDENTIFICATION ACT #SC JUDGMENTS #SELF-INCrimINATION

The purpose of the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act 2022 is to collect measurements to help law enforcement agencies to come to the right conclusions while solving the case. Criminal Procedure Code also provides for collection of specimens of the accused through examination. So, let us understand whether taking measurements or examination of the accused violates Article 20(3) of the Indian Constitution which states that no person accused of any offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself.

EXAMINATION OF ACCUSED BY MEDICAL PRACTITIONER AT THE REQUEST OF POLICE OFFICER (CR. PC)

- Registered Medical Practitioner at the request of police officer can examine an arrested person to afford necessary evidence to prove the crime.
- Whenever the person of a female is to be examined the examination shall be made only by or under the supervision of a female registered medical practitioner.
- “Examination” shall include the examination of blood, blood stains, semen, swabs in case of sexual offences, sputum and sweat, hair samples and fingernail clippings using modern and scientific techniques including DNA profiling and such other tests which the registered medical practitioner thinks necessary in a particular case.
- Incase of rape, the registered Medical Practitioner has to make a detailed report.

CONCERNS AGAINST CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (IDENTIFICATION) ACT, 2022

- Taking Measurements: The Act authorises police and prison authorities to take ‘measurements’ of convicts and others for identification and investigation in criminal matters and to preserve records.
- The Act seeks to repeal the Identification of Prisoners Act (IPA) of 1920, whose scope was limited to recording measurements which include finger impressions and footprint impressions of certain convicts and non-convict persons.
- Critics believe that the act is unconstitutional and may be subject to misuse.
- According to the 2022 Act Measurement - “includes finger-impressions, palm-print impressions, foot-print impressions, photographs, iris and retina scan, physical, biological samples and their analysis, behavioural attributes including signatures, handwriting or any other examination of accused by the medical practitioner at the request of police officer or examination of person accused of rape by medical practitioner.
- Identification of Prisoners Act (IPA) 1920: The scope of the ‘measurements’ in the 1920 Act was limited as “measurements” included only finger impressions and footprint impressions.
- The 2022 Act now includes physical measurements such as finger impressions, palm prints, footprint impressions, photographs, iris and retina scans; biological samples and their analysis; and behavioural attributes including signatures, handwriting; or any other examination referred to in Sections 53 or 53A of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973.
- Cr. PC provides for ‘examination’ of the accused by a medical practitioner using modern and scientific techniques including DNA profiling and other necessary tests which could provide evidence as to the commission of an offence.
- Section 311A of the Cr. PC empowers a magistrate to direct any person including an accused person to give
a specimen signature or handwriting for the purpose of any investigation or proceedings.

- **Merger of Scope of Examination & Measurements:** The enlarged scope of ‘measurements’ under 2022 Act merges the scope of ‘measurements’ in the IPA and provisions of the Cr. PC under Section 53A and 311 with the addition of modern techniques of identification such as an iris and retina scan.

- Thus, the Act does not empower the enforcement agencies additionally but only explicitly provides for various measurements and includes the use of the latest scientific techniques.

### SUPREME COURT JUDGMENTS

- **State of Bombay vs Kathi Kalu:** SC held that the person in custody giving his specimen handwriting or signature or impression of his thumb, finger, palm or foot, to the investigating officer, cannot be included in the expression “to be a witness” under Articles 20(3) of the Constitution.

- **SC in number of cases:** has held that taking a blood sample for the purpose of a DNA test, taking a hair sample or voice sample will not amount to compelling an accused to become a witness against himself, as such samples by themselves are not harmful and do not convey information within personal knowledge of the accused.

### PROHIBITION UNDER ARTICLE 20(3)

- **Selvi vs State of Karnataka (2010):** The only exceptions are scientific techniques, namely narcoanalysis, polygraphy and brain fingerprinting which the Supreme Court held to be testimonial compulsions if conducted without consent and thus prohibited under Article 20(3) of the Constitution.

- These tests do not fall under the scope of expression “such other tests” in Explanation of Section 53 of the CrPC. Thus, taking measurements under the Act for the purpose of investigation of a crime will not violate Article 20(3). However, validity of any new scientific technique, to be applied in future, would need to be evaluated on the touchstone of permissible restrictions on fundamental rights.

### CONCERNS HIGHLIGHTED

- **Does not explicitly bar:** taking measurements of juveniles. However, measurements if taken cannot be used for future reference based on Section 3 of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (General principles to be followed in administration of Act.)

- **Principle of fresh start:** All past records of any child under the Juvenile Justice system should be erased except in special circumstances. (THE JUVENILE JUSTICE (CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN) ACT, 2015)

- **Access to biometrics collected by Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI):** has been refused to law enforcement agencies on the pretext of ‘technology issues’ and strict provisions of the concerning law.

### CONCLUSION

- Use of better technology will only help in minimising the probability of errors.

- Rights of an individual will have to be considered in the background of the interests of society.

- Data proposed to be collected through measurements of convicts and others does not appear to be disproportionate with the stated objectives of the Act.

### AMENDING WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION ACT

**#Weapons of Mass Destruction Amendment #Legislation**

**Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act, 2005** was enacted to prohibit unlawful activities in relation to weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. The Act was passed to meet an international obligation enforced by the **UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540 of 2004**.

- In 2004, UN Security Council adopted **Resolution 1540** to address the growing threat of non-state actors gaining access to WMD material, equipment or technology to undertake acts of terrorism.

- To address this challenge to international peace and security, **UNSCR 1540** established binding obligations on all UN member states under **Chapter VII of the UN Charter - Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression**
• Nations were mandated to take and enforce effective measures against proliferation of WMD, their means of delivery and related materials to non-state actors.

**WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION ACT, 2005**

• It covers unlawful activities relating to biological, chemical and nuclear weapons and their delivery systems.

• **Restriction provided under 2005 Act:** Provides for integrated legal measures to exercise controls over the export of materials, equipment and technologies in relation to weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems and for prevention of their transfers to non-State actors or terrorists.

**REASON FOR AMENDMENT**

• In recent times, regulations relating to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems by international organisations have expanded.

• United Nations Security Council’s targeted financial sanctions and recommendations of Financial Action Task Force (FATF) have mandated against financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

• Thus, there is a need to amend the 2005 Act to provide against financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems to fulfil our international obligations.

**WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION AND THEIR DELIVERY SYSTEMS (PROHIBITION OF UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES) AMENDMENT BILL, 2022**

• Prohibits financing of any activity in relation to weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

• Empowers Central Government to:
  o Freeze, seize or attach funds or other financial assets or economic resources for preventing such financing.
  o Prohibit making available funds, financial assets or economic resources for any prohibited activity in relation to weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

**RESOLVING ASSAM-ARUNACHAL DISPUTE**

#INTER-STATE BORDER DISPUTE #ASSAM-ARUNACHAL

Chief Ministers of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh have decided to form district-level committees for settling their inter-state boundary disputes. The two States have decided to form 12 committees involving the districts sharing the boundary to come up with a solution. The boundary dispute between Meghalaya and Assam was solved based on the “fifty-fifty” or “give-and-take” model and the same model is being tried to solve the inter-state boundary dispute between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

**INTER-STATE DISPUTE (LOCALS NOT CONSULTED)**

• Assam has had boundary disputes with all other north-eastern States that were carved out of it as these divisions were based on administrative decisions where local tribals were not consulted.

• While Nagaland became a State in 1963, Meghalaya first became an Autonomous State in 1970 and a full-fledged State in 1972.

• Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram were separated from Assam as UTs in 1972 and as States in 1987.

• None of the new States accepted the “constitutional boundary” that they said was dictated by partisan administration of undivided Assam without consulting the tribal stakeholders.

• They also claimed that the disputed areas were traditionally under control of tribal chieftains who were not consulted before demarcating boundaries of states.

**ASSAM-ARUNACHAL BOUNDARY DISPUTES**

• Arunachal Pradesh and Assam have disputes at about 1,200 points along their 804 km boundary.

• The boundary issue dates back to 1873 when the British government introduced the inner-line regulation separating the plains from frontier hills that were later designated as North-East Frontier Tracts in 1915.

• In 1951, a Report was prepared by a sub-committee headed by Assam’s first Chief Minister, Gopinath Bordoloi. The Committee transferred 3,648 sq. km of
the “plain” area of Balipara and Sadiya foothills to the Darrang and Lakhimpur districts of Assam.

- North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) came into being in 1954, after a notification based on the 1951 report saw 3,648 sq. km of the “plain” area of Balipara and Sadiya foothills being transferred to the Darrang and Lakhimpur districts of Assam.

- Leaders in Arunachal Pradesh claim the transfer was done arbitrarily without consulting its tribes who had customary rights over these lands. While leaders in Assam say that the 1951 demarcation is constitutional and legal.

### STEPS TAKEN BY ASSAM & ARUNACHAL TO RESOLVE BOUNDARY DISPUTES

- Several efforts were made to demarcate boundary between Assam and NEFA/Arunachal Pradesh between 1971 and 1974.

- To end the stalemate, a high-powered tripartite committee involving Centre and the two States was formed in April 1979 to delineate the boundary based on Survey of India maps.

- About 489 km of the inter-state boundary north of Brahmaputra River was demarcated by 1984, but Arunachal Pradesh did not accept recommendations and staked claim to much of the areas transferred in 1951. Assam objected and approached Supreme Court in 1989, accusing Arunachal Pradesh of “encroachment”.

- Supreme Court appointed a local boundary commission in 2006. In its September 2014 report, the commission recommended that Arunachal Pradesh should get back some of the areas transferred in 1951 besides advising both the States to find a middle path through discussions. However, the suggestion did not work out.

### VARIOUS MECHANISMS TO SETTLE DISPUTES

- National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC)
  - Constitution contemplates a variety of mechanisms for the settlement of inter-State disputes.
  - Concept of Dispute has wide coverage in the Constitution and covers not only disputes that come up before the judiciary, but also disputes for whose resolution an extra-judicial machinery is contemplated by the Constitution.

- Constitutional Mechanisms includes:
  1. Judicial Mechanism under Article 131
  2. Solving dispute through Inter-State Council under Article 263
  3. Parliament altering the boundary under Article 3

### JUDICIAL MECHANISM – ARTICLE 131

- Article 131 confers original jurisdiction to Supreme Court of India to deal with disputes involving legal rights.

- Article 131 covers any dispute between:
  (a) Government of India and one or more States; or
  (b) Government of India and any State or States on one side and one or more other States on the other; or
  (c) Two or more States

### SOLVING DISPUTES THROUGH INTER-STATE COUNCIL – ARTICLE 263

- Under Article 263, there is provision for the formation of an Inter-State Council. Although this Council has several functions, it is also competent to tender advice regarding the resolution of inter-State disputes including boundary disputes.

- Functions to be discharged by the Council are:
  (a) inquiring into and advising upon disputes which may have arisen between States.
  (b) investigating and discussing subjects in which state/s and Union have common interest; or
  (c) make recommendations for better co-ordination of policy and action among states.

However, this function has not been given to the Inter-state council in the Presidential notification.

### GOVERNMENT ACCEPTED SARKARIA COMMISSION REPORT

- Commission on Centre-State Relations (Sarkaria Commission) in its report 1988 recommended that:
  (a) A Permanent Inter-State Council called the Inter-Governmental Council (IGC) should be set up under Article 263.
  (b) IGC should be charged with the duties set out in clauses (b) and (c) of Article 263, other than socio-economic planning and development.

- Government of India accepted recommendations of Sarkaria Commission to set-up an Inter-State Council
and notified the establishment of the Inter-State Council through Presidential Order in 1990.

- Government also established Inter-State Council Secretariat in 1991 headed by a Secretary to the Government of India.

**COMPOSITION OF THE INTER-STATE COUNCIL**

- Consists of:
  - Prime Minister – Chairman
  - Chief Ministers of all States – Members
  - Chief Ministers of Union Territories having a Legislative Assembly and Administrators of UTs not having a Legislative Assembly – Members
  - Six Ministers of Cabinet rank in the Union Council of Ministers to be nominated by the Prime Minister – Members

- Presidential Order of 1990 has been amended twice providing for Governor of a State under President’s rule to attend the meeting of the Council and nomination by the Chairman of permanent invitees from amongst the other Union Ministers, respectively.

**FUNCTIONS OF THE INTER-STATE COUNCIL**

- Making recommendations upon such subject and for better coordination of policy and action regarding any issue or subject matter.
- Inquiring into and advising upon disputes which may have arisen between/among States.
- Investigating and discussing subjects in which some or all the States, or the Union and one or more of the States have a common interest.
- Deliberating upon other matters of general interest to the states as may be referred by Chairman.

**STANDING COMMITTEE**

- Inter-State Council decided to set up a Standing Committee for continuous consultation and processing of matters for consideration of the Council.
- A Standing Committee was set up under the Chairmanship of the Home Minister in 1996.
- Functions of Standing Committee - The Standing Committee will
  - Have continuous consultation and process matters for consideration of the Council.
  - Process all matters pertaining to Centre-State Relations before they are taken up for consideration in the Inter-State Council.
  - Monitor the implementation of decisions taken on the recommendations of the Council.
  - Consider any other matter referred to it by the Chairman/Council.
  - Invite experts and persons eminent in specific fields to have the benefit of their views while deliberating upon the related subjects.

**PARLIAMENT ALTERING BOUNDARY UNDER ARTICLE 3**

- Parliament may by law
  - (a) form a new State (or UT) by separation of territory from any State or by uniting two or more States (or UT) or parts of States or by uniting any territory to a part of any State (or UT)
  - (b) increase the area of any State
  - (c) diminish the area of any State
  - (d) alter the boundaries of any State
  - (e) alter the name of any State

**BRANDING TRIBAL CHILDREN AS CRIMINALS UNDER POCOSO**

- **PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL OFFENCES ACT, 2012 (POCSO)** protects children from offences of sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography and provide for establishment of Special Courts for trial of such offences. The Act also provides for a SPECIAL COURT to hear cases against such offences. However, the tribal population of India who follow their customary practices of marriage (marrying before 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys) often run into conflict with the law of the land and end up in jail.

**CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS**

- **ARTICLE 13(3)(a)** – “Law” includes any Ordinance, order, byelaw, rule, regulation, notification, custom or usage having in the territory of India the force of law.
- **Article 366(25)** —Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution.
Under SIXTH SCHEDULE of the Indian Constitution – District Council and Regional Council can make laws for Marriage & Divorce and Social Customs among others.

SIXTH SCHEDULE provides for the Administration of Tribal Areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram as per Articles 244(2) and 275(1).

**LAWS ON AGE OF MARRIAGE**

- The minimum age of marriage is distinct from the age of majority which is gender neutral. An individual attains the age of majority at 18 years as per the Indian Majority Act, 1875.
- Special Marriage Act, 1954 and Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 also prescribe 18 and 21 years as minimum age of consent for marriage for women and men respectively.
- Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 in 1929 had set 16 and 18 years as the minimum age of marriage for girls and boys respectively. The law, popularly known as the SARDA ACT after its sponsor Har Bilas Sarda, a judge and a member of Arya Samaj, was eventually amended in 1978 to prescribe 18 and 21 years as the age of marriage for a woman and a man respectively.
- For Hindus, Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, sets 18 years as the minimum age for the bride and 21 years as the minimum age for the groom.
- However, Section 2(2) of Hindu Marriage Act excludes its application to the members of Scheduled Tribe within clause (25) of Article 366 of the Constitution unless the Central Government so directs. They are still governed by their customs.
- Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872 also prescribes the minimum age of marriage – 21 years for man and 18 years for woman.
- However, in Islam, the marriage of a minor who has attained puberty is considered valid.

**GENERAL CUSTOMARY PRACTICES AMONG TRIBALS**

- Tribals do not keep Birth Records: Most tribal people do not keep records date of birth and marry when they come of age and usually have children before they reach the legal age of marriage. Tribal boys sometimes get arrested as their wife bears children before the legally permitted age of 18 years.
- Diverse Customary Practices of Tribals: Tribal communities in India follow diverse practices, some of which are for survival and adaptation. For example, polyandry is practiced by Gallongs of Arunachal Pradesh, where brothers of a family who cannot afford a high bride price marry the same woman. This gives them an economic advantage. (Note: Polyandry is a form of polygamy in which a woman takes two or more husbands at the same time.)
- Lower Life Expectancy: Tribal communities have lower life expectancy which makes it natural for them to marry young before the age of 18 years old. Many tribal communities in the Nilgiris usually get girls married off early, that is, when their daughters attain puberty.
- Unawareness on Laws on Age of Marriage: Many tribal people are hardly aware of the existence of a law, or the age of majority, or the legal age for marriage.

**CUSTOMARY PRACTICES OF TRIBALS VIOLATES POCSCO**

- Reporting by Hospital Authorities: POCSCO mandates hospitals to report to the jurisdictional police station when girls below 18 years of age are admitted for delivery. On receipt of such reports, police authorities are mandated to register an FIR against the person responsible for the pregnancy. Thus, the law fails to make room for consensual relationships or validated marriages in some communities.
- Polyandry, child marriage and divorce among tribal communities, practised by them in their own unique ways, are recognised as customs. This should not be treated on the same pedestals of mainstream laws.

**IMPACT OF POCSCO AND SUCH LAWS ON TRIBALS**

- Arrest of Boys leads to social discord: This leads the married boys to believe that the child has brought bad luck for them and hence they either abandon their child or break off their marriage.
- Tribals will be discouraged to use medical care for delivery: Tribals only recently have started to utilise modern medical services for childbirth. However, if going to hospitals for childbirth leads to incarceration of their husbands, then they will be discouraged to seek proper medical care. This might result in the untimely death of the child or mother in case of any complications.
- Custodial Interrogation Results in Torture and incarceration in jail for weeks before getting bail. Bail is granted almost two weeks after their arrest, which means they are incarcerated as undertrials.
- Most of the Tribals do not receive Legal Help
REFORMS REQUIRED

- Laws must recognise the customary practices of tribals and accordingly should provide for certain exceptions. Thus, prosecution should not be made the norm in child marriage cases, especially when the act is valid in the eyes of personal custom that a person subscribes to.
- Child marriages solemnized in violation of upper age limits are voidable according to section 3 of The PROHIBITION OF CHILD MARRIAGE ACT, 2006: After the couple reaches the eligible age, the marriage is ratified and legalised. Criminal cases registered under the POCSO Act against tribal boys eventually end in acquittal for want of evidence or because of compromise. So, such arrest should be discouraged.
- Educating tribals about the health issues about the life of mother and newborn child at an early age.
- Awareness about POCSO Act: District Legal Services Authority of Kerala created a short film, Incha, in the Paniya language to educate tribals about the POCSO Act when more than 250 cases were registered against tribal men who had married girls under the age of 18.

WAY FORWARD

- Tribal Population should not be branded as a criminal for following their customary practices as this goes against the idea of social justice, tolerance and multiculturalism.
- POCSO as a law seeking to protect a vulnerable group should not be allowed to strip yet another vulnerable and marginalised group of its rights and customary practices.
- An amendment to POCSO Act is required to allow tribals to live their life with dignity and pride.

STANDING COMMITTEE DISCOURAGES ELEPHANT’S TRADE

#DRPSC #WILDLIFE PROTECTION ACT

Standing Committee of RAJYA SABHA on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change has recommended not to encourage sale and purchase of captive elephants. The committee has argued for a “careful balance” between traditions and conservation.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

- The parliamentary panel has urged the Union government to remove the controversial clause in the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021 that overrides the original Act, making an exception only for elephants.
- Section 43 of the principal Act clearly states: “No person having in his possession captive animal, animal article, trophy or uncured trophy in respect of which he has a certificate of ownership shall transfer by way of sale or offer for sale or by any other mode of consideration of commercial nature, such animal or article or trophy or uncured trophy.” The amended Bill introduces an exemption clause for elephants.
- Amendment to Section 43 says: “This section shall not apply to the transfer or transport of any live elephant by a person having a certificate of ownership, where such person has obtained prior permission from the State government on fulfilment of such conditions as may be prescribed by the Central Government.”

WILDLIFE (PROTECTION) ACT, 1972 - SECTION 2(31)

- “Trophy” means the whole or any part of any captive animal or wild animal, other than vermin, which has been kept or preserved by any means, whether artificial or natural, and includes:
  (a) Rugs, skins and specimens of such animal mounted in whole or in part through a process of taxidermy, and
  (b) Antler, bone, carapace, shell, horn, rhinoceros horn, hair, feather, nail, tooth, tusk, musk, eggs, nests and honeycomb.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

- Government could bring in additional checks to allow sale and purchase by religious institutions.
- The amended Bill also seeks to rework the protection Schedules. Instead of the present six Schedules in the principal Act, the Bill proposes three Schedules —
  o Schedule I for species that will enjoy the highest level of protection.
  o Schedule II for species that will be subject to a lesser degree of protection
  o Schedule III that covers plants.
• The Committee has highlighted discrepancies in the schedules - names of species are missing.

**CONSTITUTION OF DEPARTMENT RELATED PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

• The need to constitute some kind of Subject Specific Committees or the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees was felt for the last several years.

• In 1989, 3 Standing Committees were constituted which dealt with Agriculture, Science and Technology and Environment and Forests. These Subject Committees were to examine the activities of the concerned Ministries/Departments and to report as to what economies, improvements in organisation, efficiency or administrative reforms consistent with the policy approved by Parliament might be effected. Apart from other functions, these Committees were to examine the Annual Reports and Plan Projects/activities of the concerned Ministries.

• In 1993, it was finally decided to set up 17 Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees each consisting of 15 members of Rajya Sabha and 30 from Lok Sabha to cover various Ministries/Departments of the Union Government in order to further strengthen the accountability of the Government to Parliament.

• With the addition of 7 more Committees in July 2004, the number of Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees was raised to 24 but with reduced membership of 10 members from Rajya Sabha and 21 members from Lok Sabha.

**JURISDICTION**

• Of the total Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees, 8 were placed within the jurisdiction of the Chairman, Rajya Sabha and 16 within the jurisdiction of the Speaker, Lok Sabha.

• The Chairmen of the first 8 Committees are appointed by Chairman, Rajya Sabha and the remaining 16 by the Speaker of Lok Sabha.

• Rules 268 to 277 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Conduct of States and Rules 331 C to 331 N of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha govern the Constitution and functioning of these Committees.

**DRPSC UNDER RAJYA SABHA**

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**DRPSC MAKES THE EXECUTIVE ACCOUNTABLE BY**

(a) Considering the demands for grants of the related Ministries/Departments and report thereon. The report shall not suggest anything of the nature of cut motions.

(b) Examining Bills pertaining to the related Ministries/Departments, referred to the Committee by the Chairman or the Speaker and report thereon.
(c) Considering Annual Reports of the Ministries/Departments and report thereon; and
(d) Considering National Basic Long Term Policy Documents presented to the Houses, if referred to the Committee by the Chairman or the Speaker and report on such policy documents.

FUNCTIONING OF ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORATE

#EnforcementDirectorate #PMLA

PMLA was brought in to prevent parking of money outside India and to trace out the layering and the trail of money. The ED got its power to investigate these crimes under the Act. Whenever any offence is registered by a local police station, which has generated proceeds of crime over and above ₹1 crore, the ED steps in. The ED can also conduct search (property) and seizure (money/documents) if it suspects money has been laundered.

AGENCY ADMINISTERING THE PREVENTION OF MONEY LAUNDERING ACT, 2002

- Directorate of Enforcement in the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance is responsible for investigating cases of offence of money laundering under Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.
- Financial Intelligence Unit - India (FIU-IND) under Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance is central national agency responsible for receiving, processing, analysing and disseminating information relating to suspect financial transactions to enforcement agencies and foreign FIUs.
- FIU-IND is also responsible for coordinating and strengthening efforts of national and international intelligence, investigation and enforcement agencies in pursuing the global efforts against money laundering and related crimes.
- FIU-IND is an independent body reporting directly to Economic Intelligence Council (EIC) headed by Finance Minister.
- FIU-IND is a multi disciplinary body where personnel are inducted from different organizations namely Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC), Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI), Department of Legal Affairs and Intelligence agencies.

EGMONT GROUP

- As a global organization, Egmont Group facilitates and prompts the exchange of information, knowledge, and cooperation amongst member FIUs.
- In 1995, EGMONT GROUP of FIUs was established to enhance the exchange of intelligence between jurisdictions.
- It provides FIUs with a platform to securely exchange expertise and financial intelligence to combat money laundering, terrorist financing, and associated predicate crimes.
- For this purpose, Egmont Group has also put in place the Egmont Secure Web, which is a channel widely used for the exchange of information by members of the Group.

MONEY LAUNDERING

- Money laundering has been defined as “any process or activity connected with proceeds of crime including its concealment, possession, acquisition or use and projecting or claiming it as untainted property”.
- Proceeds of crime means any property derived or obtained, directly or indirectly, by any person because of criminal activity relating to a scheduled offence or value of any such property or where such property is taken or held outside the country, then the property equivalent in value held within the country or abroad.
- Money laundering is the processing of criminal proceeds to disguise their illegal origin.

THREE STAGES OR PROCESS OF MONEY LAUNDERING

1. Placement: Introducing illegal funds in the financial system by breaking up large amount of cash into less conspicuous smaller sums which are deposited directly into a Bank Account or by purchasing a series of instruments such as Cheques, Bank Drafts etc., which are then collected and deposited into one or more accounts at another location.
2. Layering: In this stage, continuous conversion or movement of funds takes place within the financial system through numerous accounts to hide their true origin and to distance them from their criminal source.
Money may be moved globally to such destination countries which do not cooperate in anti-money laundering investigations.

3. Integration: After the first two stages, the funds reach the legitimate economy, after getting inseparably mixed with the legitimate money earned through legal sources of income. These funds are then invested in real estate, business ventures & luxury assets, etc.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO TACKLE MONEY LAUNDERING

- In response to mounting concern over money laundering, Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on Money Laundering was established by the G-7 Summit in Paris in 1989 to develop a coordinated international response.
- One of the first tasks of the FATF was to develop Recommendations, which set out the measures national governments should take to implement effective anti-money laundering programmes.
- India is an active member of the FATF.
- International Conventions which India is signatory to
  - UN Convention against Corruption (2003)

PREDICATE OFFENCE

- The term “predicate offence” is usually used to describe money laundering or terrorist financing activities. According to Indian laws, every Scheduled Offence is a Predicate Offence.

INVESTIGATION OF MONEY LAUNDERING CASES

- As per Sections 48 & 49 of the PMLA, the officers of the Directorate of Enforcement have been given powers to investigate cases of Money Laundering.
- The officers have also been authorised to initiate proceedings for attachment of property and to launch prosecution in the designated Special Court for the offence of money laundering.
- Attachment means prohibition of transfer, conversion, disposition or movement of property by an order issued under Chapter III of PMLA.

DESIGNATED AUTHORITIES UNDER ACT

- There shall be the following classes of authorities for the purposes of this Act, namely:
  a. Director or Additional Director or Joint Director
  b. Deputy Director
  c. Assistant Director
  d. Such other class of officers as may be appointed for the purposes of this Act

POWERS OF AUTHORITIES UNDER PMLA

- The Director shall have the same powers as are vested in a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 while trying a suit in respect of the following matters, namely:
  a. Discovery and inspection.
  b. Enforcing the attendance of any person, including any officer of a reporting entity and examining him on oath
  c. Compelling the production of records
  d. Receiving evidence on affidavits
  e. Issuing commissions for examination of witnesses and documents
  f. Any other matter which may be prescribed.

- Director, Additional Director, Joint Director, Deputy Director or Assistant Director shall have power to summon any person whose attendance he considers necessary whether to give evidence or to produce any records during the course of any investigation or proceeding under this Act.
- Proceedings for summoning shall be considered as Judicial Proceedings.

POWERS AVAILABLE TO THE INVESTIGATING OFFICERS

- Provisionally attach any property derived or obtained, directly or indirectly, by any person because of criminal activity relating to a scheduled offence or the value of any such property.
- Conduct survey of a place.
- Conduct search of building, place, vessel, vehicle or aircraft & seize/freeze records & property.
- Conduct personal search
- Arrest persons accused of committing the offence of Money Laundering
- Summon and record the statements of persons concerned
• Retention of Property - for a period not exceeding 180 days.

**APPELLATE TRIBUNAL**

• Appellate Tribunal constituted under the Smugglers and Foreign Exchange Manipulators (Forfeiture of Property) Act, 1976 shall be the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders of the Adjudicating Authority and the other authorities under PMLA.

• Appeal must be filed within a period of 45 days from the date of receipt of a copy of the order made by the Adjudicating Authority.

• An Adjudicating Authority shall consist of a Chairperson and two other Members.

• One Member each shall be a person having experience in the field of law, administration, finance or accountancy.

• A person shall not be qualified for appointment as Member of an Adjudicating Authority
  (a) in the field of law, unless he— (i) is qualified for appointment as District Judge; or (ii) has been a member of the Indian Legal Service and has held a post in Grade I of that service.
  (b) in the field of finance, accountancy or administration unless he possesses such qualifications, as may be prescribed.

**CONTRACTING STATE**

• Contracting State means any country or place outside India in respect of which arrangements have been made by the Central Government with the Government of such country through a treaty or otherwise.

• “Tracing” means determining the nature, source, disposition, movement, title or ownership of property.

**SPECIAL COURTS UNDER PMLA, 2002**

• For trial of offence punishable under section 4 of PMLA, 2002, the Central Government, in consultation with the Chief Justice of the respective High Courts, by notification, has designated one or more Courts of Session as Special Court or Special Courts for such area or areas or for such case or class or group of cases as specified in the notifications.

• While trying an offence of money laundering under PMLA, 2002, a Special Court has also to try the offences, with which the accused may, under the Code of Criminal Procedure be charged at the same trial.

• Appeals against verdict of special courts are heard by respective High Courts of States.

**OFFENCES TRIABLE BY SPECIAL COURTS UNDER PMLA, 2002**

• An offence of money laundering punishable under Section 4 of PMLA, 2002 and any scheduled offence connected to the offence of money laundering, shall be triable by the Special Court constituted for the area in which the offence has been committed.

**SUPREME COURT RESTRICTS FOREIGN DONATIONS**

• Supreme Court has upheld restrictions made through an amendment in the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act and held that no one has a fundamental or absolute right to receive foreign contributions.

**NEED FOR FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION (REGULATION) AMENDMENT ACT, 2020**

• Increase in Annual Flow of Income: Annual inflow of foreign contribution had almost doubled between the years 2010 and 2019. However, many recipients of foreign contribution have not utilised the same for the purpose for which they were registered or granted prior permission under the said Act.

• Lack of Compliance such as submission of annual returns and maintenance of proper accounts. Due to this, the Central Government had to cancel certificates of registration of more than 19,000 recipient organisations, including non-Governmental organisations, during the period between 2011 and 2019.

• Criminal investigations due to misappropriation of funds by NGOs was initiated against dozens of such non-Governmental organisations which indulged in outright misappropriation or misutilization of foreign contribution.

• Need to strengthen compliance mechanism, enhancing transparency and accountability in the receipt and utilisation of foreign contribution worth thousands of crores of rupees every year.
- Facilitate genuine NGOs or associations who are working for the welfare of the society.

**FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION (REGULATION) AMENDMENT ACT, 2020 SEeks TO PROVIDE FOR**

(a) Include “public servant” within its ambit, to provide that no foreign contribution shall be accepted by any public servant.

(b) Prohibit any transfer of foreign contribution to any association/person.

(c) Reduce the limit for defraying administrative expenses from existing “fifty per cent” to “twenty per cent.

(d) Insertion of a new Section 12A empowering the Central Government to require Aadhaar number, etc., as identification document.

(e) Enabling the Central Government to permit any person to surrender the certificate granted under the Act.

(f) Ensure that every person who has been granted certificate or prior permission under section 12 shall receive foreign contribution only in an account designated as “FCRA Account” which shall be opened by him in such branch of the State Bank of India at New Delhi, as the Central Government may, by notification, specify and for other consequential matters relating thereto.

**SUPREME COURT JUDGMENT**

- Strict Regulatory Framework: The amendments only provide a strict regulatory framework to moderate the inflow of foreign funds into the country.

- Uncontrolled flow of money may Impact socio-economic structure: The presence/inflow of foreign contribution in the country ought to be at the minimum level, if not completely avoided. The influence may manifest in diverse ways, including in destabilizing the social order within the country.

- NGOs must look within for donors: The court said charity could be found at home and NGOs could look within the country for donors.

- Foreign Donation Not Good for a Self-Reliant Country like India: The third-world countries may welcome foreign donations, but it is open to a nation, which is committed and enduring to be self-reliant and variously capable of shoudering its own needs, to opt for a policy of complete prohibition of inflow/acceptance of foreign donation from a foreign source.

- Reflects Badly on the Country: Unregulated inflow of foreign donations would only indicate that the government was incapable of looking after its own affairs and needs of its citizens.

- Unregulated foreign funding strains government's efforts in regulation: The court noted how 19,000 certificates of registration under the FCRA were cancelled for violating statutory compliances. The annual inflow of foreign contribution had almost doubled between the years 2010 and 2019. There was a spurt of criminal investigations. Donations had been re-routed. Successive transfers and creation of a layered trail of money had made it difficult to trace the flow and final utilisation of foreign donations despite the “firm regime” in place since 2010.

- The amendments do not prohibit inflow of foreign contributions but are a regulatory measure to permit acceptance by registered persons or persons having prior permission to do so with condition that they must themselves utilise the entire contribution.

- Restricts are Reasonable: The court held that the restrictions in the amendments were “reasonable” and “founded on intelligible criteria”. It fixed accountability on the recipients, increased the efficacy of “continual supervision” over foreign contributions, did not discriminate and served the purpose of the FCRA 2010.

- Court allowed use of Indian Passport instead of Aadhaar: The court read down one of the provisions - Section 12(A) of 2020 Amendment Act, which mandated the production of Aadhaar card for registration. The Bench allowed the office-bearers of NGOs to use their Indian Passports as an identification document.

**FCRA ACT, 2020 INCOMPATIBLE WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW**

International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) has observed that the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Act, 2020 passed by Parliament is incompatible with international law.

- UN Human Rights Council in its Resolution 22/6 on Protecting Human Rights Defenders declared that “no law should criminalize or delegitimize activities in defence of human rights on account of the origin of funding”.

- UN Special Rapporteur on Assembly and Association has clarified that controls in laws should not “unduly obstruct the legitimate work” and need to be “fair,
CLAIMS MADE BY ICJ

- **Fail to comply with International Legal Obligations**: ICJ claimed that FCRA Amendment fails to comply with India’s international legal obligations and constitutional provisions to respect and protect the rights to freedom of association, expression, and freedom of assembly.

- **Impose Arbitrary Obstacles by the Government**: ICJ stressed that the Bill’s provisions would impose arbitrary and extraordinary obstacles on the capacity of human rights defenders and other civil society actors to conduct their important work.

- **Against Civil Societies in India**: ICJ noted that the restrictions in the Bill continued a larger pattern of threats and harassment faced by civil society in India. The Indian Government has sought to restrict human rights defenders from traveling outside India and used overbroad laws like sedition (Section 124A, Indian Penal Code) and Unlawful Activities Prevention, 1967 Act to arbitrarily arrest human rights defenders.

- **Restrict Access to Foreign Funding**: FCRA 2020 provides for overly broad rules and measures which would effectively restrict access to foreign funding particularly for public servants and smaller non-governmental organizations.

- **Adds government’s oversight**: Adds onerous governmental oversight, additional regulations and certification processes, and operational requirements, while simultaneously reducing the limit of administrative expenditure that can be allocated to foreign contributions to 20% from previous 50%.

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**BASICS OF FCRA**

**APPLICABILITY OF FCRA**

- As per Section 1(2) of FCRA, 2010, the provisions of the act shall apply to:
  - (i) Whole of India
  - (ii) Citizens of India outside India.
  - (iii) Associate Branches or subsidiaries, outside India, of companies or bodies corporate, registered or incorporated in India.

**ENTITIES THAT CAN FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION**

- Any “Person” can receive foreign contribution subject to following conditions
  - (a) It must have a definite cultural, economic, educational, religious or social program.
  - (b) It must obtain FCRA registration/prior permission from Central Government, specifically Ministry of Home Affairs.
  - (c) It must not be prohibited under Section 3 of FCRA, 2010.

**ENTITIES PROHIBITED UNDER FCRA**

- As defined in Section 3(1) of FCRA, 2010, the following are prohibited to receive foreign contribution:
  - (a) Candidate for election.
  - (b) Correspondent, columnist, cartoonist, editor, owner, printer or publisher of a registered newspaper.
  - (c) Judge, Government servant or employee of any corporation or any other body controlled or owned by the Government.
  - (d) Member of any legislature.
  - (e) Political party or office bearer thereof.
  - (f) Organization of a political nature as may be specified by the Central Government.
  - (g) Association or company engaged in the production or broadcast of audio news or audio-visual news or current affairs programmes through any electronic mode, or any other electronic form or any other mode of mass communication.
  - (h) Correspondent or columnist, cartoonist, editor, owner of the association or company referred to in point (g).
  - (i) Individuals or associations who have been prohibited from receiving foreign contribution.

**PERMISSION TO ACCEPT FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION**

- There are two modes of obtaining permission to accept foreign contribution according to FCRA, 2010:
  - (i) Registration
  - (ii) Prior Permission

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR GRANT OF REGISTRATION**

- For grant of registration under FCRA, 2010, the association should:
  - (i) Be registered under an existing statute like the
Societies Registration Act, 1860 or Indian Trusts Act, 1882 or Companies registered under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013 for Charitable Purposes

(ii) Normally be in existence for at least 3 years and has undertaken reasonable activity in its chosen field for the benefit of the society for which the foreign contribution is proposed to be utilised.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR GRANT OF PRIOR PERMISSION

• Prior permission is granted for receipt of a specific amount from a specific donor for conducting specific activities/projects. For this purpose, the association should meet following criteria:

(i) Be registered under an existing statute like the Societies Registration Act, 1860 or the Indian Trusts Act, 1882 or section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956 etc.

(ii) Submit a specific commitment letter from the donor indicating the amount of foreign contribution and the purpose for which it is proposed to be given; and

(iii) For Indian recipient organizations and foreign donor organizations having common members, FCRA Prior Permission shall be granted to the Indian recipient organizations subject to it satisfying the following:

(i) The Chief Functionary of the recipient Indian organization should not be a part of the donor organization.

(ii) At least 75% of the office-bearers/members of the Governing body of the Indian recipient organization should not be members/employees of the foreign donor organization.

(iii) In case of foreign donor organization being a single person/individual that person should not be the Chief Functionary or office bearer of the recipient Indian organization.

(iv) In case of a single foreign donor, at least 75% office bearers/members of the governing body of the recipient organization should not be the family members and close relatives of the donor.

CONDITIONS TO BE MET FOR THE GRANT OF REGISTRATION AND PRIOR PERMISSION

• In terms of Sec.12 (4) of FCRA, 2010, the following shall be the conditions for the grant of registration and prior permission:

(a) The ‘person’ making an application for registration or grant of prior permission-

(i) is not fictitious or benami.

(ii) has not been prosecuted or convicted for indulging in activities aimed at conversion through inducement or force, either directly or indirectly, from one religious faith to another.

(iii) has not been prosecuted or convicted for creating communal tension or disharmony in any specified district or any other part of the country.

(iv) has not been found guilty of diversion or mis-utilization of its

(v) is not engaged or likely to engage in propagation of sedition or advocate violent methods to achieve its ends;

(vi) is not likely to use the foreign contribution for personal gains or divert it for undesirable purposes;

(vii) has not contravened any of the provisions of this Act;

(viii) has not been prohibited from accepting foreign contribution;

(ix) the person being an individual, such individual has neither been convicted under any law for the time being in force nor any prosecution for any offence is pending against him.

(x) the person being other than an individual, any of its directors or office bearers has neither been convicted under any law for the time being in force nor any prosecution for any offence is pending against him.

(b) Acceptance of foreign contribution by association/person is not likely to affect prejudicially

(i) the sovereignty and integrity of India;

(ii) the security, strategic, scientific or economic interest of the State;

(iii) the public interest;

(iv) freedom or fairness of election to any Legislature;

(v) friendly relation with any foreign State;

(vi) harmony between religious, racial, social, linguistic,
regional groups, castes or communities.

(c) the acceptance of foreign contribution

(i) shall not lead to incitement of an offence;

(ii) shall not endanger the life or physical safety of any person.

**IMPORTANCE OF NGOs AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

- **Key Drivers of inter-governmental negotiations** ranges from regulation of hazardous wastes to a global ban on land mines and the elimination of slavery.
- **Promotes legal reforms** pushes government to undertake important reforms through legislations affecting rights and services for vulnerable sections of the society.
- **Helps in Capacity Building and filling development deficit in diverse sectors** health, education, environment awareness, social inclusion, skill enhancement etc.
- **Helps alleviation of Poverty & Hunger**
- **Supplements electoral democracy** by updating governments regularly of public opinion in favour of certain issues or concerns on certain welfare schemes.
- **Ensures Community Participation** by raising awareness on important national, Regional or Local Issues helps to strengthen participatory democracy in India.
- **Helps government to understand challenges of industry** eg: Finance Ministry organise sessions with FICCI, IFCI to understand concerns and challenges of different industrial sector
- **Competition among civil societies** is beneficial and productive for citizens & government.
- **Provides platform for vulnerable sections to raise their voice** eg concerns of prostitutes, LGBT, HIV victims, victims of custodial torture, manual scavenging, dalit violence
- **Ensures Women Empowerment** by providing livelihood measures

**CRITICISM OF NGOs**

- Unnecessary PIL filed in Courts without sufficient evidence. This has led to an increase of PIL culture in the High Courts & Supreme Court.
- Promote Vested Interests of groups whom they wish to support.
- Some NGOs involved in misuse of foreign funding received under FCRA.
- Create additional pressure on the government by providing misleading arguments.
- Cannot be said to be truly democratic as they represent small section of the society including those who fund their functioning.

**STANDING COMMITTEE CRITICISES PROGRAMMES FOR DENOTIFIED TRIBES**

#Denotified Tribes #IDATE COMMITTEE #RENEKE COMMISSION

Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment has criticised the functioning of the development programme for de-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT**

- **Budgetary Allocation Remains Unutilised**: Scheme for economic empowerment of DNT communities formulated to provide coaching, health insurance, facilitate livelihood and financial assistance for construction of homes for the members of DNT, with total outlays of Rs 200 crore for the period of five years from 2021-22 to 2025-26 were unutilised. However, due to non-spending of even a single rupee in 2021-22 has resulted in reduction of budgetary allocation to Rs 28 crore for 2022-23 against budgetary allocation of Rs 50 crore for 2021-22.
- **Delay in Scheme Formulation for DNT**: Department has already delayed in formulation of the Scheme for welfare of Denotified, Nomadic and Semi Nomadic communities.
- **No Decision Taken by Department to place DNTs under SC/ST/OBC Categories**: At present 269 such Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic communities are specified and a survey is now in under process to place these castes in SC, ST and BC categories.
However, the Department has not been able to take any decision till date.

**ABOUT DENOTIFIED TRIBES**
- Denotified Tribes (DNTs) are communities that were ‘notified’ as being ‘born criminals’ during the British regime under a series of laws starting with Criminal Tribes Act of 1871.
- These Acts were repealed based on the recommendation of Ananthasayanam Ayyangar Committee, 1949 by the Indian Government in 1952, and these communities were accordingly “De-Notified”.
- In India, roughly 10% of the population is Denotified and Nomadic.
- Renke commission estimated their population at around 10.74 crore based on Census 2001.
- While the number of Denotified Tribes is about 150, population of Nomadic Tribes consists of about 500 different communities.
- A few of these communities which were listed as de-notified were also nomadic.
- Nomadic and semi-nomadic communities are defined as those who move from one place to another rather than living in one place all the time.
- Most Denotified Tribes (DNTs) are spread across Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories. However, some DNTs are not covered in any of the SC, ST or OBC categories.

**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR DE-NOTIFIED, NOMADIC AND SEMI-NOMADIC TRIBES**

National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (NCDNT) was constituted by Government of India in February 2014 to prepare a state-wise list of castes belonging to De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes. Main recommendations of National Commission De-Notified Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (NCDNT) are:

1. Setting up of a Permanent Commission at the Centre for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities.
2. Setting up of a Separate Department/Directorate for DNT/NT communities in States.
5. Creating awareness among DNT/NT/SNT communities for their inclusion in mainstream.
6. Sensitization of different government officials, law enforcing authorities and local bodies so that DNT/NT/SNT do not get differential treatment and benefits of mainstream schemes reach to DNT/NT/SNT communities.
7. Schemes focusing DNT/NT/SNT communities for their health, education, housing, traditional art, traditional expertise.
8. Livelihood of DNT/NT/SNT communities is largely dependent on the forests. Review "Indian Forest Act" and "Wildlife Protection Act" to give them their natural habitats.

**ISSUES & CONCERNS OF DE-NOTIFIED, NOMADIC AND SEMI-NOMADIC TRIBES**

- **No Permanent Commission for DNTs:** The government felt that setting up a permanent commission would conflict with the mandate of existing commissions for SCs (National Commission for Scheduled Castes), STs (National Commission for Scheduled Tribes) and OBCs (National Commission for Backward Classes). The government therefore set up the DWBDNCs under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 under the aegis of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for the purpose of implementing welfare programmes.
- **Lack of Constitutional Support:** These tribes somehow escaped the attention of our Constitution makers and thus got deprived of Constitutional support unlike SCs and STs.
- **No categorisation:** A number of these tribes are categorised under SC, ST and OBC, many are not. However, 269 DNT communities are not covered under any reserved categories.
- **There is no permanent commission for these communities.**
- **No money spent in 2021-22 under the Scheme for economic empowerment of DNT communities.**
Budgetary allocation has been reduced to Rs 28 crore for 2022-23 against the budgetary allocation of Rs 50 crore for 2021-22.

- Vulnerable & Wrongly Stigmatised: Historically, Nomadic Tribes and De-notified Tribes never had access to private land or home ownership. National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC), 2002 held that DNTs have been wrongly stigmatised as crime prone and subjected to high handed treatment as well as exploitation by the representatives of law and order and general society.

- There are issues with the functioning of the Development and Welfare Board for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DWBDNC).

**MEASURES FOR THEIR WELFARE**

1. National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (NCDNT) was constituted in 2006 (Renke Commission)

2. Scheme for economic empowerment of DNT communities: Aims to provide coaching, health insurance, facilitate livelihood and financial assistance for construction of homes for the members of DNT.

3. National Commission for Denotified Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes, chaired by Bhiku Ramji Idate has submitted its report in 2018. The commission has identified these communities state-wise, assessing their development status and has recommended ways to uplift them and recommended the setting up of a permanent commission for these communities.

4. Development and Welfare Board for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DWBDNC) has been set up in 2019 under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment as society. A committee has been set up by the NITI Aayog to complete the process of identification of DNTs.

5. Anthropological Survey of India are conducting ethnographic studies of DNCs, with a budget of Rs 2.26 crore sanctioned.

6. Schemes for DNT: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is implementing the following schemes for the welfare of the DNTs:
   (i) Dr. Ambedkar Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship for DNTs: This Centrally Sponsored Scheme was launched w.e.f. 2014-15 for the welfare of those DNT students who are not covered under SC, ST or OBC.
   (ii) Nanaji Deshmukh Scheme of Construction of Hostels for DNT Boys and Girls.

### MEGHALAYA COUNCIL OPPOSES BORDER DEAL WITH ASSAM

**# KHASI HILLS AUTONOMOUS DISTRICT COUNCIL # BOUNDARY DISPUTE**

Assam and Meghalaya governments agreed to divide 36.79 sq. km of disputed areas in attempt to resolve a 50-year-old boundary dispute. The two governments had taken up six of 12 disputed sectors in the first phase of discussions. However, Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) has objected to the settlement as consent of the Council was not taken by both the state governments. The deal remains to be ratified by Parliament and the Assemblies of the two States concerned before the boundary is redrawn. The residents of two border villages fear they will lose the tribal rights if they are separated from Meghalaya.

**CLAIM OF KHADC**

- Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council has claimed that the disputed areas belong to private parties and Meghalaya government has neither the authority nor the right to hand them over to Assam.

- According to the Council, its consent is needed according to Section 41 of Right to Fair Compensation and Land Acquisition and Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 – which deals with Special provisions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

- Section 41 of Land Acquisition Act Makes Prior Consent Mandatory: The provisions highlights that no acquisition of land shall be made in Scheduled Areas unless prior consent of the concerned
  - Gram Sabha
  - Panchayats
  - Autonomous District Councils, at the appropriate level in Scheduled Areas under the Fifth Schedule to Constitution is obtained, in all cases of land acquisition in such areas.
• Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council is one of three tribal councils in Meghalaya created under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Each of them functions as a government within a specified territory. The other district councils are Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council and Garo Hills Autonomous District Council.

ADMINISTRATION OF SCHEDULED AREAS AND TRIBAL AREAS (ARTICLE 244)

1. Provisions of Fifth Schedule shall apply to the administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in any State other than the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

2. PART X of the Indian Constitution provides for the SCHEDULED AND TRIBAL AREAS. Article 244(2) under PART X provides that the provisions of Sixth Schedule shall apply to the administration of the tribal areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

Currently, there are ten such Councils in the region.

**Assam**
- Bodoland Territorial Council
- Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council
- Dima Hasao Autonomous District Council

**Meghalaya**
- Garo Hills Autonomous District Council
- Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council
- Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council

**Tripura**
- Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council
- Chakma Autonomous District Council
- Lai Autonomous District Council
- Mara Autonomous District Council

**RATIONALE FOR CONSTITUTION 125TH AMENDMENT BILL**

• Empowering Finance Commission: At present, there is no provision for recommendations of Finance Commission (Article 280) to provide separate funds for Autonomous District Councils in Sixth Schedule areas which results in inadequate socio-economic infrastructure in the Autonomous District Council areas.

• Enhancing Autonomy of Various Autonomous Councils: Various Memoranda of Settlement signed between the Government of India, States and Regional groups aim at enhancing autonomy of the existing Autonomous Councils, renaming Councils and increasing number of seats in concerned Councils.

• The 125th Constitution Amendment Bill aims to provide for the following:
  - Amend article 280 of Constitution enabling Finance Commission to recommend measures needed to augment Consolidated Fund of the States to supplement resources of Sixth Schedule Autonomous Councils, Village Councils and Municipal Councils.
  - Rename existing autonomous District Councils.
  - Increase number of seats in District Councils.
  - Provide for reservation of at least two seats for women in District Councils.
  - Transfer additional subjects to Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao Autonomous Territorial Councils.
  - Constitute State Finance Commissions in States having Sixth Schedule areas.
  - Conduct elections to all Autonomous Councils by State Election Commission.
  - Providing for disqualification of elected members on account of defection.

**PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

**MCQs**

Q1. Idate Commission and Reneke Commission were constituted for the welfare and development of?

(a) Scheduled Castes  
(b) Scheduled Tribes  
(c) Other Backward Class
(d) Denotified, Nomadic or Semi-Nomadic Tribes

Q2. Uniform Civil Code find a mention in which of the following parts of Indian Constitution?
(a) Fundamental Rights
(b) Directive Principles of State Policy
(c) Citizenship
(d) Fundamental Duties

Q3. Governing Council of NITI Aayog comprises the following?
1. Prime Minister
2. Chief Minister of all States and Union Territories
3. LG of Union Territories
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
(a) 2 and 3 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q4. Parliament has passed a Bill for the inclusion of the Darlong community as a sub-tribe of Kuki in the list of Scheduled Tribes of
(a) Tripura
(b) Arunachal Pradesh
(c) Meghalaya
(d) Assam

Q5. Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council, Garo Hills Autonomous District Council have been constituted in the state of
(a) Tripura
(b) Arunachal Pradesh
(c) Meghalaya
(d) Assam

Q1. Who are the Nomadic and Denotified tribes of India? Highlight the steps taken by the Government of India to improve their situation to bring them in the mainstream of regular life. (15 Marks)

Q2. Critically analyse the decision of Supreme Court which has approved extra restrictions imposed by the Government of India on unregulated foreign funding or donation made to NGOs working in India. (10 Marks)

Answers: 1 (d), 2 (b), 3 (d), 4(a), 5(c)
# INDIA – UK RELATIONS

Prime Minister of UK Boris Johnson visited India in April 2022. India and UK have been collaborating bilaterally as well as on issues of global importance. UK has been reasserting itself on the global stage post Brexit, which can be seen from its membership of AUKUS in the Indo-Pacific. In the Post-Brexit Economic Agenda both the countries expect to double the trade by 2030 along with early finalization of the Free Trade Agreement. In this backdrop let us understand the broad contours of India-UK relations.

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<td>• Merchandise trade between the two countries was $15.5 billion in 2019-20 with the trade balance in favour of India.</td>
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<td>• India is the second-largest source of foreign direct investment after the US in the UK.</td>
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<td>• UK is the 6th largest investor in India, after Mauritius, Singapore, Netherlands, Japan and USA.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>• India and the UK signed Defence and International Security Partnership (DISP) in 2015 to provide a strategic roadmap and direction to the evolving India-UK Defence Relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• UK is deploying Carrier Strike Group in Indian Ocean region this year in line with its strategic tilt to Indo-Pacific.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• UK will join the Indian-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Climate change</td>
<td>• India-UK Green Growth Equity Fund is mobilising institutional investments in renewable energy, waste management, electric mobility and environment sub-sectors in India.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Early operationalisation of the Global Green Grids-One Sun One World One Grid Initiative (OSOWOG) under ISA and IRIS platform under CDRI which were jointly launched by India and UK at COP26.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>• Successful partnership between Oxford University, AstraZeneca and Serum Institute of India (SII) on Covid19 vaccine demonstrated the potential of Indian and UK expertise working together to solve international challenges</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Multilateral    | • UK has been supportive of India's
**Collaboration**

- Permanent membership of UNSC and voted favourably in the roll-over decision on UNSC reforms to the 70th session of UNGA.
- UK is also a strong supporter of India’s membership of the NSG, MTCR, Australia Group and Wassenaar Arrangement.
- UK and India are current co-chairs of Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI). UK is also a member of ISA and supports its activities.

**Diaspora**

- Indian Diaspora in UK is one of the largest ethnic minority communities in the country, including approximately 1.6 million British nationals of Indian origin and about 3,51,000 NRIs living in the UK equating to almost 2.5 percent of the UK population and contributing 6% of the country’s GDP.
- At present there are sixteen Indian origin MPs in the UK Parliament and, out of these, five of them hold key Ministerial posts in the Government.

**TEN YEAR ROADMAP FOR INDIA-UK RELATIONS**

- Negotiate a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA)
- Doubling India-UK trade by 2030.
- Strengthening defence partnership, focusing on maritime and industrial collaboration
- Closer cooperation in a free and open Indo-Pacific.
- Maritime Domain Awareness, which includes new agreements on maritime information sharing
- Conclusion of a Logistics Memorandum of Understanding
- Cooperation and coordination in the UN, including at UNSC and UNFCCC, and other multilateral fora such as G-20, WTO, WHO, Commonwealth, IMF and World Bank.
- Promote and uphold a rules-based international system and work together to promote reformed multilateralism

**UK’S RENEWED ASSERTION POST BREXIT**

- UK is focusing to significantly increase its nuclear stockpile to counter threats posed by increasing military might of Russia and assertiveness of China.
- UK is looking towards India and Indo-Pacific Region to ensure that its strategic interests are protected and impact of Brexit on the economy is minimized.
- Britain has expressed its desire to acquire partner status of ASEAN.
- It is part of the AUKUS security Partnership that aims at countering China in the Indo – Pacific.

**IMPlications OF UK’S TILT**

Will declare the UK’s political commitment to the region, thereby developing a consensus against an assertive China.

- By aligning with US and Australia, it is amplifying its efforts by entering the regional security architecture.
- On intelligence gathering and sharing – a field the UK leads in – there is potential to cooperate more with key Indo-Pacific states such as Japan and India. Ex - 5 eyes
- Trade and investment will be a key dimension of the UK’s tilt and the UK’s changing relationship with China requires a diversification of trading partners.

**STAKES FOR INDIA – UK RELATIONS**

- Both view Indo – Pacific as an emerging theatre of Geo-politics. It provides an opportunity for a closer UK-India partnership.
- UK’s post-Brexit meritocratic immigration policy, along with its move to co-sponsor a motion at the UN that called out Pakistan’s failure to prevent the financing of terrorism, have helped put the relationship on a healthier footing.
- India has come to the realisation that, alone, the US is incapable of constraining China.
• Compared to its ties with Japan, Australia and France, the UK remains a relatively untapped strategic partner for India.

• On cybersecurity, the UK and India will be working multilaterally under the proposed D 10 to combat Huawei’s lead in 5G.

• The partnership between Oxford University, AstraZeneca and India’s Serum Institute serves as a blueprint for future cooperation on global health initiatives.

• Post Brexit – when UK is trying to diversify its economic partners – India can play a crucial role.

• Both are partnering on the issues of Climate change. Ex- Green Grid initiative and one sun on world one Grid at Glasgow COP26.

As India seeks to carve out a new role for itself in the evolving global order as a ‘leading power’ and the U.K. recalibrates its strategic outlook post-Brexit, this is a unique moment in India-U.K. ties. 

**INDIA-NEPAL**

**#BILATERAL**

PM of Nepal Sher Bahadur Deuba concluded his maiden visit to India recently. Various issues of bilateral and regional concerns were discussed besides the boundary dispute between both the leaders. In this backdrop let us understand various facets of India – Nepal relations in the context of India’s neighbourhood first policy and the associated challenges.

**BACKGROUND OF INDIA-NEPAL RELATIONS**

India Nepal relations are rooted in geography and history characterized by the term Roti - Beti ka sambhandh. Nepali elites are wary of the Big Brother attitude of India, while India views it from the view of being an elder brother. The Nepal treaty of Peace and friendship of 1950 provides the citizens of both the countries ‘National treatment’. However, the issues between the two nations spring up because of the Nepali nationalism which breeds upon the Anti - India sentiment. This attitude is clearly reflected in some recent issues between the countries including the 2015 Blockade, and the boundary dispute in the Kalapani region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Key Points</th>
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</table>
| Defence                 | • India has been assisting the Nepal Army in its modernisation by supplying equipment and providing training.  
                           | • Assistance during disasters, joint military exercises, adventure activities and bilateral visits are other aspects of India’s defence cooperation with Nepal.  
                           | • The ‘Indo-Nepal Battalion-level Joint Military Exercise SURYA KIRAN’ is conducted alternately in India and in Nepal.  
                           | • The Gorkha regiments of the Indian Army are raised partly by recruitment from hill districts of Nepal. |
| Disaster Assistance     | • Earthquake 2015 –                                                      |
|                         | • India sent the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams and special aircrafts with rescue and relief materials to Nepal. |
|                         | • India helped in restoring 3 power sub-stations in Kathmandu valley.  The total Indian relief assistance to Nepal amounted to over US$ 67 million. |
| Connectivity & Development | • India has been assisting Nepal in development of border infrastructure through upgradation of 10 roads in the Terai area; |
development of cross-border rail links at Jogbani-Biratnagar, Jaynagar-Bardibas; and establishment of Integrated Check Posts at Birgunj, Biratnagar, Bhairahawa, and Nepalgunj.
- The total economic assistance earmarked under ‘Aid to Nepal’ budget in FY 2019-20 was INR 1200 crore.
- The ‘India-Nepal New Partnership in Agriculture’ was launched with a focus on collaborative projects in agricultural research, development and education.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Energy Cooperation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nepal has 40000 MW of Hydropower potential. However, presently it produces only 1000 MW and imports about 600 MW electricity from India.</td>
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<td>Arun III project being undertaken by the Sutlej Jal Vidyut Nigam would generate 900 MW in the coming years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Asia’s first cross-border petroleum products pipeline, constructed and funded by Indian Oil Corporation Ltd., connecting Motihari in India to Amlekhgunj in Nepal was remotely inaugurated recently.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Economic Ties</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At around $8 billion, India accounts for about two third of the Nepal's external trade and provide transit for Nepal's external trade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian firms are among the largest investors in Nepal, accounting for more than 30% of the total approved foreign direct investments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is being alleged that India wants it to join a military alliance of the BIMSTEC countries when India called for a military exercise of the BIMSTEC countries.
- Nepal did not call out Pakistan for fostering terrorism in the aftermath of Pulwama attacks of 2019.

**SLOW PROGRESS ON DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS**
- There has been no progress on the 5000 MW Pancheswar multipurpose project on Mahakali River because of Nepal’s reluctance.
- Progress has also not been witnessed on the dam on Kosi River which would prevent flooding in both India and Nepal because of lack of willingness on the part of Nepal.
- India announced Rupees 100 crore grant for the development of Janakpur in 2018, but no proposal has been received from the Nepalese side.
- Such incidence highlights the lack of progress on the various development projects.

**2015 BLOCKADE**
- 2015 Nepal adopted a new constitution declaring it to be a Federal democratic republic.
- Seven provinces were carved out creating only one in the Madhesi region in the Terai foothills along the Indian border.
- The Madhesi community has been targeted by the hill people of Nepal for having close relationship with India. Their marriage rights were curbed by denying the citizenship rights to the foreigners marrying Nepalese.
- Madhesi's have had age old custom of marrying across the border and this restriction is targeted at the age-old Roi - Beti ties.
- Madhesi's were disaffected and there was great deal of unrest and andolan.
- This led to disruption of supply chain of goods, petroleum along the border region from India. The hill Nepalese blamed India for orchestrating this blockade.
- This event has led to a strongly negative feeling in the Nepalese minds against India, which they accuse of being responsible for the blockade.

**CONTENTIOUS ISSUES BETWEEN INDIA AND NEPAL**
- India’s refocus on BIMSTEC amidst stalled SAARC has not been well received by the Nepali political leaders.
BORDER ISSUE

- Nepal’s parliament gave approval to second constitutional amendment which gave legal status to the new political map of Nepal and its boundaries with India near the Lipu-Lekh pass.
- For the Nepal the Kali River originates from Limpiyadhura in the higher Himalayas, giving it access to a triangular-shaped land defined by Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh and Kalapani. (Originating from Treaty of Sugauli, (1814))
- Nepal shares a border of 1400 km with China in the Tibet region. China is Nepal’s second largest trading partner. It has undertaken various projects including the development of airports, hydropower etc.
- Nepal has been using the China card in its dealing with India under the pretext of balancing its relation between the two big neighbours.
- With increasing economic influence of China, Nepal does not want to be left out of this success story. It signed a MoU with China on the BRI in 2017.
- China has also started to intrude in the affairs of Nepal Army by providing training and supply of equipment. This is one of the biggest causes of concern for India because of Indian army’s links with the Nepal army.
- China is leveraging ties with the Maoist parties of Nepal and occasionally using the cheque book diplomacy to increase its influence.

GLOBALISATION

- Post 1990 Nepalese diaspora has moved out globally. A quarter of Nepalese population is living overseas. Due this the young leaders of Nepal are not schooled in India.
• This was particularly important because the Nepalese leadership which studied in India provided constant communication and better understanding and empathy between the two neighbours.

POLITICS DURING LOCKDOWN

• Victory of Nepalese Communist Party in 2017 was mainly based on the anti-India rhetoric after the Blockade of 2015.

• The two left parties Unified Marxist Leninist and the communist party of Nepal - Maoist Centre (CPN-MC) merged. However, issues started after such a merger about Power sharing and this opportunity was grabbed by China to meddle into the internal affairs of Nepal.

• However, such interference by China did not last long and the NCP unity did not last long and led to dissolution of Nepal's Parliament and the softening stance of the leadership towards India. This was followed by visits of RAW chief, Indian Army Chief and Foreign secretary.

• Finally, the PM KP Oli was removed with President inviting the Sher Bahadur Deuba, leader of the Nepali Congress as the PM. The new Pm is being seen as closer to India. India has been accused of meddling in the internal politics of Nepal.

WAY FORWARD FOR INDIA'S POLICY TOWARDS NEPAL

• India should remain fully engaged with Nepal at all levels and across the political spectrum.

• A hands-off policy will only create space for other external influences, some of which, like China, may prove to be hostile.

• However, such engagement should not be seen as intervention in the internal affairs of Nepal.

• India's engagement with Nepal, the Terai belt and its large Madhesi population plays a critical and indispensable role.

• Our engagement with Nepal must find a prominent place for Nepali citizens who are our immediate neighbours.

• The engagement should not just be limited to the political elites.

• India needs to appreciate that the people-to-people links between our two countries have an unmatched density and no other country, including China, enjoys this asset.

• To counter the Chinese influence, India needs to speed up unfinished projects that India has committed and create conditions of mutual trust which makes it difficult for China to leverage any dispute that arises in future.

• India cannot be complacent about its historical geographical and cultural ties with Nepal.

• India needs to understand that the Nascent Nepalese democracy will assert independence in its Foreign Policy. But it important for India to create conditions which makes it a go to country for Nepal in times of need.

• India also needs to work on its perception in the hill population of Nepal.

NEGEV SUMMIT AND WEST ASIAN QUAD

• The Negev Summit was hosted by Israel and attended by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his counterparts from Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, and the UAE to discuss regional security and economic cooperation in the spirit of the Abraham Accords, which normalized relations between Israel and several Arab countries. The Abraham accords also facilitated the formation of West Asian Quad of which India, Israel, US and UAE are members. In this context let us try understanding the formation of West Asian quad/Middle East Quad and its implications for India.

CONTEXT OF FORMATION OF MIDDLE EASTERN QUAD

• Abraham accords are smoothening the Israel – Arab Faultline. This has facilitated the initiation of the so-called New Quad in the Middle East involving US, Israel, UAE and India.

• The new Quad is being seen as a new Security architecture in the Middle East. This is shaping up at a time when the US is withdrawing from the region and a heightened presence of China.

OBJECTIVE OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN QUAD

Expanding economic and political cooperation in Middle East and Asia, including through trade, combating climate change, energy cooperation, and increasing maritime security.
**IMPORTANCE OF WEST ASIA FOR INDIA**

Post-independence India has strategic interests in West Asia. The Gulf states supply the bulk of India’s oil and natural gas, host large diasporas, promote trade and investment, and engage in security and intelligence cooperation.

### Key Points

**Oil and Gas**
- The Gulf-West Asia-North Africa region meets a major share of India’s energy needs—contributing over 60 per cent of India’s total imports of crude oil and over 85 per cent of India’s LNG requirements.
- Saudi Arabia used to be India’s largest supplier of crude oil. Presently, Iraq is the largest supplier. Share of Iran has fallen considerably after the US sanctions because of the failure of Iran-Nuclear deal.

**Diaspora**
- There are around 8 to 9 million Indians in West Asia. The numbers include 2.6 million in Saudi Arabia (in November 2019), 2.5 million in the United Arab Emirates, 800,000 in Kuwait, 700,000 each in Qatar and Oman, and 400,000 in Bahrain.
- These include managers, doctors, technicians, engineers, IT experts, chartered accountants, bankers, workers, and domestic help. In most of these countries Indians hold the number one rank in the number of expatriates. They are India’s goodwill ambassadors.
- A vast majority of the Indian community hails from Kerala.

**Remittances**
- This community has a significant impact upon the Indian economy, through inward remittances.
- India received over USD83 billion in remittances in 2020 according to the World Bank report. Most of these remittances are from the West Indian diaspora. India receives largest remittances from UAE.
- The remittances account for 3 per cent of India’s GDP. The impact of Gulf remittances on the Indian economy is significant.

**Trade**
- India’s trade with the West Asian nations in 2020 is shown in the graph below in million US dollars.
- At the end of fiscal year 2020, the value of trade India had with the United Arab Emirates was approximately 60 billion U.S. dollars.
- According to Indian Ministry of Commerce data for July 2018, trade with the Gulf in 2017-2018 was over 123 billion U.S. dollars.
- In 2008, the UAE had overtaken China to become our biggest trading partner, as thousands of
Indian companies established their presence in their Special Economic Zones.
- Saudi Arabia is India's fourth largest trading partner.

**Investment**
- The UAE-India Infrastructure Investment Fund aims at a target of 75 billion U.S. dollars to support investment in India's infrastructure, especially in railways, ports, roads, airports and industrial corridors and parks.
- Saudi Arabia is India's fourth-largest trade partner and has pledged an investment of $100 billion in India in various sectors such as petrochemicals, infrastructure, manufacturing, refining, and mining. Recently UAE has announced an investment of $7 billion in food corridor in India.

**Look West Policy**
- India's Look West Policy has been complemented by the GCC member states' “Look East” policy, with a focus on India and China, and other countries to their East.

**SIMILARITIES BETWEEN MEQ AND QUAD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. NO</th>
<th>MIDDLE EAST QUAD VS INDO - PACIFIC QUAD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>India and US are common members – signifying strategic closeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Israel would view it as a counter to Iran, While US sees IPQ as a counter to China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Both are not seen as military alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>IPQ has been focusing on global concerns like – Climate Change, COVID vaccines etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Similarly, MEQ has also called for Economic and Infrastructure cooperation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>IPQ countries take part in MALABAR exercise, While Israel has invited UAE as an observer to the Blue Flag Air force with India and US.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>For India both are partnerships beyond neighborhood having implications on the neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Both aim at broader goal of countering Chinese influence.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**DIFFERENCES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. NO</th>
<th>MIDDLE EAST QUAD</th>
<th>INDO – PACIFIC QUAD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A new concept – formed because of Abraham Accords over past 15 years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Strategic Focus is yet to be outlined. Strategic Focus – Free and Open Indo-Pacific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Role of other members is yet outlined Focuses on ASEAN centrality</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>It focuses on Economic collaboration through Private companies It focuses on goals to be achieved through G2G collaboration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>If it aims to counter Iran, India already has strong relations with Iran IPQ has been strengthened by the India - China border tensions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>No parallel military partnership with common objectives AUKUS can be seen as a parallel military partnership to the IPQ.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INDIA’S STRATEGY TOWARDS WEST ASIA**
- India follows “Look West Policy” towards West Asia.
- Mainly focussed on energy security owing to intractable political fault lines.
- Ensuring the stability and security of the Persian Gulf region.
- For a long time, India had to balance its relations with Israel and the Arab world.
• India's Policy is marked by the continuation of India's traditional diplomatic line of "non-interference" in the internal affairs.
• In line with this India has been pursuing the idea of 'strategic autonomy' in the region with a strong emphasis on Bilateralism.
• The other path is marked by the deepening of India's security ties with its Gulf Arab partners.
• India has walked a tight rope in intra-Arab disputes, carefully weighing its interests.

Does joining the middle east Quad marks a shift in India's approach towards the region!
• Membership of minilaterals like Quad in Indo-Pacific has been a consistent Policy Stance of India.
• The Abraham accords between Israel and UAE was an endorsement of India's balanced approach in the region.
• India has been balancing its relations amidst the existing faultlines.
  ➢ De-hyphenation towards Israel – Palestine.
• Quad's membership will be beneficial for India's interests in the region — trade, energy ties, fighting climate change and enhancing maritime security.
• It will boost ties with existing strategic Partners – Israel and UAE.
• Further the New Quad is yet to finalise its objectives clearly.
• In this context mere membership does not necessarily mark a shift in approach.

POSITIVE IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA'S INTEREST
• It would fill the gap the United States is leaving in the Middle East.
• It has the potential to transform the region's geopolitics and geoeconomics.
• The group can deepen its engagement on issues that concern India — trade, energy ties, fighting climate change and enhancing maritime security.
• It coincides with stronger relationship that India has with both Israel and the Gulf countries.
• It would further deepen India's cooperation with one of the most important partner UAE.
• It strengthens India-US engagement as strategic partners.
• It can be effective in countering China economically and politically.

AREAS OF CONCERNS
• The role of other Arabic Gulf powers like Saudi Arabia is yet to be ascertained in this partnership.
• An area of concern is that Except India the other three countries are adversaries of Iran.
• It causes concerns for India - Iran relations which are collaborating on strategic projects like Chabahar and connect Central Asia policy.
• The new Quad is yet to clarify its strategic objectives.
• US policy towards India has not been very concrete. It created a Parallel AUKUS in the Indo-Pacific. US withdrew from Afghanistan without taking India into confidence.
• In this backdrop the US needs to further clarify India's role in its strategic ambitions in the Middle east.

WAY FORWARD
• The new Quad has come at a time when Israel Arab relations are improving, China's presence in the middle east is increasing and US is withdrawing from the region.
• In such a scenario India's membership of the New Quad in the middle east can be crucial to India's interest in the peace and stability of the region.
• However, there are concerns that India's membership of the MEQ can have adverse impact on India's relations with Iran. However, India has carefully been treading a path of pursuing its interests in the region, without taking sides on the existing faultlines.
• Thus, India's membership of MEQ which has outlined a soft agenda of cooperation seems to be in line with its policy of "non-interference" in the internal affairs, pursuit of strategic autonomy and extension of Bilateralism to Minilaterals.

RAISINA DIALOGUE 2022

The seventh edition of India's premier global conference on global affairs was inaugurated by PM Modi with the chief guest for this edition - Ursula von der Leyen, the European Union Commission President. Let us glance through the key takeaways from this edition of the Raisina dialogue.
ABOUT THE DIALOGUE

• It is India’s premier conference on geopolitics and geoeconomics committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community.

• The Dialogue is structured as a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral discussion, involving heads of state, cabinet ministers and local government officials, who are joined by thought leaders from the private sector, media, and academia.

• The conference is hosted by the think tank Observer Research Foundation in partnership with Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

FOCUS AREAS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TAKEAWAYS</th>
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Remarks by External Affair minister

• Strategic Autonomy: Engaging the world with confidence about its identity, rather than behaving as a “pale imitation” of other nations. Stopping fighting and returning to Dialogue was key to resolve the Ukrainian crisis.

• Global role for India: Over the next 25 years an India that will be “more international” in terms of its commitments and responsibilities.

• Soft Power: Choices made by India had a larger influence globally and contributed to the spread of democracy in South Asia.

• Supply Chains: India should do more to develop reliable and resilient supply chains and transparent and trusted technologies that can benefit the world.

• Rule based World Order: The world order was impacted by several big shocks in the past two years, including the Covid-19 pandemic, the situation in Afghanistan and Ukraine, and the frictions between the West and Russia and the US and China. A self-reliant India should have the capabilities to take on greater responsibilities around the world.

Theme of 2022

“Terranova: Impassioned, Impatient, and Imperilled.”

Six Thematic pillars

1. Rethinking democracy: Trade, Tech and Ideology
2. End of Multilateralism: A Networked Global Order?
3. Water Caucuses: Turbulent Tides in the Indo-Pacific
4. Communities Inc: First Responders to Health, Development, and Planet
5. Achieving Green Transitions: Common Imperative, Diverging Realities
6. Samson vs Goliath: The Persistent and Relentless Tech Wars

UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Russia has been suspended from the Human Rights Council because of the ongoing Ukrainian Crisis.

The council is the central structure in the global human rights architecture, a political body with representatives drawn from General Assembly.

The UNHRC replaced the UN Human Rights Commission in 2006.
• The UNHRC has 47 members serving at any time with elections held to fill up seats every year, based on allocations to regions across the world to ensure geographical representation.

• There is no special privilege for more developed Western countries, as is the case with other multilateral institutions such as IMF or World Bank.

• It passes non-binding resolutions on human rights issues, besides overseeing expert investigation of violations in specific countries.

• The UNHRC holds regular sessions three times a year, in March, June, and September.

• Universal Periodic Review: The Universal periodic review (UPR) mechanism reviews all 192 UN member states every four years to "ensure universality of coverage and equal treatment of all Member States. "It provides opportunities to member states to declare what actions they have taken to improve human rights and to fulfil their obligations.

• Special Procedure: The special procedures of the Human Rights Council are independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective. The system of Special Procedures is a central element of the United Nations human rights machinery and covers all human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political, and social.

• Special Rapporteur: The titles Special Rapporteur, Independent Expert, and Working Group Member are given to individuals working on behalf of the United Nations (UN) within the scope of "special procedure" mechanisms.

The mechanism of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was incorporated into the functioning to give teeth to the organisation. The UPR, which has a national report from the state under review plus a compilation of UN information prepared by the Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, also allows for a summary of information from civil society actors.

ABOUT OHCHR

• The commissioner is the UN official with principal responsibility for promoting and protecting human rights.

• OHCHR is part of the UN Secretariat and supports the High Commissioner in the implementation of his/her mandate.

• OHCHR has lead responsibility for the promotion and protection of human rights, and for implementing the human rights program within the UN.

• It serves as the secretariat of both Charter-based bodies such as the Human Rights Council, and treaty-based bodies – i.e., the bodies established under the various international human rights conventions.

NATIONAL CYBER SECURITY STRATEGY

The Data Security Council of India (DSCI) has prepared a report focussing on 21 areas to ensure a safe and vibrant cyberspace for India. Some of the focus areas are large scale digitisation of public services, State-level cyber security etc. The report recommends a national framework which should be set in collaboration with institutions like the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and ISEA (Information Security Education and Awareness) to provide global professional certifications in security.

NEED FOR INDIA’S CYBER SECURITY STRATEGY

• Increasing number of Cyber-attacks: According to American cybersecurity firm Palo Alto Networks’ 2021 report, Maharashtra was the most targeted State in India — facing 42% of all ransomware attacks in India.

• One in four Indian organisations suffered a ransomware attack in 2021. Indian organisations witnessed a 218% increase in ransomware — higher than the global average of 21%.

• Software and services (26%), capital goods (14%) and the public sector (9%) were among the most targeted sectors

• Cyber-attacks Undermine the data privacy of the citizens.

• Cyber security threat is an emerging concern for India’s National Security.

OFFICE OF UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR)

The OHCHR at the United Nations provides the Special Rapporteurs with the personnel and logistical assistance necessary for them to conduct their mandates outlined in specific U.N. resolutions.
India has been victim to the Cyber-attacks number of times in the recent past:
- 2017: WannaCry and Petya Ransomware
- 2018: Aadhaar Software hacked and Aadhaar details of the people leaked online
- 2021: Pegasus issue

India is the third most vulnerable country to Cyber-attacks according to Internet Security Threat report published by Symantec.

OUTDATED CYBER SECURITY POLICY 2013
- It was created in the wake of Surveillance scandal of the American National Security Agency leaks by Edward Snowden back in 2013. Since then, new challenges have emerged which need to be addressed.
- India is among the top ten countries facing cyber-attacks.
- Cyber landscape has witnessed growing digitization as part of the Government’s Digital India push, as well as more sophisticated cyber threats, particularly the WannaCrypt and Petya ransomware attacks.
- The government must also proactively address India’s ability to respond effectively to cyber threats by outlining an institutional framework ensure the country’s digital safety.
- There is a need for outlining mechanisms for coordination between multiple agencies responsible for cyber security.
- There is great crunch of cyber security professionals that needs to be addressed.
- There has been little progress in the Public private partnership envisaged by the 2013 Policy.
- Another area of priority for a new cyber security policy must be fostering greater civil-military cooperation on cyber security.

CYBER THREATS CAN BE OF FOUR TYPES
- Cyber Espionage: The act or practice of obtaining secret information i.e., personal, sensitive, classified nature from individuals, competitors or governments using malicious software such as Trojan horses and spyware. Motive is to obtain secret information which could go against our national security.
- Cyber Attack: Targets computer information systems, infrastructures, computer networks. Motive is to damage or destroy targeted computer network or system. Impact: Destruction of Communication network.
- Cyber Terrorism: Convergence of terrorism and cyber space. Cyberspace has been used by terrorists for number of purposes such as Planning terrorist attacks, recruitment of sympathizers, spreading propaganda to radicalise people and to raise funding etc.
- Cyber warfare: Warfare conducted by a country or its proxies to attack the computer systems in other countries. Can Include- Theft, Vandalism (Defacing Web Pages), Destruction of Critical information infrastructure.

FOCUS AREAS OF CYBER SECURITY STRATEGY
- Large scale digitisation of public services: There needs to be a focus on security in the early stages of design in all digitisation initiatives and for developing institutional capability for assessment, evaluation, certification, and rating of core devices.
- Supply chain security: There should be robust monitoring and mapping of the supply chain of the Integrated circuits (ICT) and electronics products. Product testing and certification needs to be scaled up, and the country’s semiconductor design capabilities must be leveraged globally.
- Critical information infrastructure protection: The supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) security should be integrated with enterprise security. A repository of vulnerabilities should also be maintained.
- Digital payments: There should be mapping and modelling of devices and platform deployed, transacting entities, payment flows, interfaces and data exchange as well as threat research and sharing of threat intelligence.
- State-level cyber security: State-level cybersecurity policies and guidelines for security architecture, operations, and governance need to be developed.

SUGGESTIONS BY THE REPORT
- Budgetary provisions: A minimum allocation of 0.25% of the annual budget, which can be raised up to 1%
has been recommended to be set aside for cyber security. In terms of separate ministries and agencies, 15-20% of the IT/technology expenditure should be earmarked for cybersecurity. The report also suggests setting up a Fund of Funds for cybersecurity and to provide Central funding to States to build capabilities in the same field.

- Research, innovation, skill-building and technology development:
  - Investing in modernisation and digitisation of ICTs, setting up a short- and long-term agenda for cyber security via outcome-based programs and providing investments in deep-tech cyber security innovation.
  - A national framework should be devised in collaboration with institutions like the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and ISEA (Information Security Education and Awareness) to provide global professional certifications in security.
  - Creating a ‘cyber security services’ with cadre chosen from the Indian Engineering Services.

- Crisis management: Holding cybersecurity drills which include real-life scenarios with their ramifications. In critical sectors, simulation exercises for cross-border scenarios must be held on an inter-country basis.

- Cyber insurance: Developing cyber insurance products for critical information infrastructure and to quantify the risks involving them.

- Cyber diplomacy: Cyber diplomacy plays a huge role in shaping India’s global relations. To further better diplomacy, the government should promote brand India as a responsible player in cyber security and create ‘cyber envoys’ for the key countries/regions.

- Cybercrime investigation: Unburdening the judicial system by creating laws to resolve spamming and fake news. Charting a five-year roadmap factoring possible technology transformation, setting up exclusive courts to deal with cybercrimes and remove backlog of cybercrimes by increasing centres providing opinion related to digital evidence under section 79A of the IT act.

- Advanced forensic training for agencies to keep up in the age of AI/ML, blockchain, IoT, cloud, automation.

Law enforcement and other agencies should partner with their counterparts abroad to seek information of service providers overseas.

**DRAFT NATIONAL CYBER SECURITY STRATEGY 2021**

- In response to a question in parliament, the Centre clarified that it has “formulated a draft National Cyber Security Strategy 2021 which holistically looks at addressing the issues of security of national cyberspace.” Without mentioning a deadline for its implementation, the Centre added that it had no plans yet “to coordinate with other countries to develop a global legal framework on cyber terrorism.”

**NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL**

- All aspects of national security are deliberated upon by the National Security Council (NSC), the apex body, headed by the Prime Minister.
- Ministers of Home Affairs, Defence, External Affairs and Finance are its members.
- National Security Adviser is its Secretary.
- Three tier structure of the NSC comprises
  - the Strategic Policy Group (SPG),
  - the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) and
  - the National Security Council Secretariat.
- The SPG chaired by the Cabinet Secretary is the principal forum for inter-ministerial coordination and integration of the relevant inputs.
- The NSAB undertakes long-term analysis and provides perspectives on issues of national security.

**AL AQSA MOSQUE**

- Located in Old city of Jerusalem, Israel
- Considered to be third holiest site in Islam after Mecca and Medina.
- It is in proximity of Second Temple, the holiest site of Judaism. Hence, a flash point of Israeli-Palestine conflict.
- The site has been in news due to Abraham Accords which plan to open the Mosque to all faiths and not just for Muslims.
GOLAN HEIGHTS, WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP

US drops the term Israeli-occupied from references to the Golan Heights, West Bank and Gaza

U.S. Says Israeli Settlements in West Bank Do Not Violate International Law.

US has asserted to fully recognize Israel’s sovereignty over the Golan Heights.

Note: The Golan - like the West Bank and Gaza Strip, territories also taken by Israel in the June 1967 conflict - is regarded internationally as occupied under a U.N. Security Council resolution passed later that year.

LOCATION: ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

- Gaza Strip is a self-governing Palestinian territory on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, which borders Egypt on the southwest for 11 km and Israel on the east and north.

- Golan Heights is a fertile plateau which lies to the north and east of the Sea of Galilee.

- West Bank is a landlocked territory near the Mediterranean coast of Western Asia, bordered by Jordan to the east and Israel on the south, west and north.
Q.1) Which of the following countries participated in the Negev Summit:
1. India
2. UAE
3. Israel
4. USA
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
(a) 1 and 3 only  
(b) 2 and 3 only  
(c) 2, 3 and 4 only  
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q.2) Consider the following statements about Golan Heights:
1. It forms the boundary between Israel and Egypt.
2. It is located east of the sea of Galilee.
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

Q.3) Which of the following rivers flow from Nepal into India:
1. Ghaghra
2. Gandak
3. Mechi
4. Gomati
5. Sharda
6. Mahananda
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
(a) 1, 2, 3 and 4 only  
(b) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only  
(c) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only  
(d) 2, 4, 5 and 6 only

Q.4) Consider the following statements about UN Human Rights Council:
1. There are no permanent members of the UN Human Rights Council.
2. No member can hold membership of UN Human Rights Council for a more than two consecutive terms.
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

Q.5) Consider the following statements:
1. Negev Desert is located in Israel.
2. Jordan has access to the Red Sea.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only  
(b) 1 and 2 only  
(c) 2 and 3 only  
(d) 1, 2 and 3 only

Answers: 1-c, 2-b, 3-b, 4-c, 5-b
BILL ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE
# VULNERABLE SECTIONS

A private member bill was introduced in Lok Sabha, to amend Special marriages act (1954), that seeks to give equal rights of marriage to the LGBTQ community. In this context, let us analyse the issues related to LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) community.

SPECIAL MARRIAGE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2022

- Solemnization of special marriages between same sex: Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act or any other law for the time being in force, a marriage between any two persons of same sex may be solemnized under this Act, if at the time of marriage:
  o in case both the parties are male, each has completed 21 years of age.
  o in case both the parties are female, each has completed 18 years of age.
- Proposed to replace the words “husband” and “wife” with spouse in the Act.

NEED FOR THE AMENDMENT

- The objective of the bill is to ensure the right to freedom, privacy and equality to homosexual couple in terms of marriage as heterosexual couple are entitled to.
- Though homosexuality was effectively decriminalised by Supreme Court through its landmark judgement Navej Singh Johar Case, LGBTQ individuals are still unable to marry and create their own families and they have no access to rights that heterosexual couples are entitled to upon marriage, such as succession, maintenance and pensions, etc.

SC in K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) Case observed that ‘family, marriage, procreation and sexual orientation are all integral to the dignity of the individual and the privacy of the individual recognizes an inviolable right to determine how freedom shall be exercised’.

- It will also ensure that article 14 and article 21 of the Constitution are upheld and ensure that LGBTQ couples are provided with the rights they are entitled to.

LGBTQ ISSUES

- Marginalization and Social Exclusion: Due to the stigma attached to sexual orientation, LGBT people are relegated to the margins of the society. This marginalisation often excludes them from accessing basic services like Education, Healthcare, Housing, Justice etc.
- Poor economic condition: Dropping out of school due to harassment and discrimination at the workplace results in poor socioeconomic status for LGBT persons.
- Psychological distress: Stigmatization, discrimination and harassment in the daily lives of LGBT would have an impact on their Mental health.
- Criminalization: Lacking other means of support, many LGBT youth are forced to turn to criminalized activities to survive.
- Legal injustice: Homosexuality had been criminalised till few years ago. Even after it was decriminalised, there is still lack of legal recognition to the same sex marriages.

LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS IN FAVOUR OF LGBTQ

- In 2014, Supreme Court issued a sweeping judgment in NALSA vs Union of India, which held that transgender people should be legally recognised according to their gender identity, enjoy all fundamental rights, and receive special benefits in education and employment.
In 2018, Supreme Court in *Navtej Singh Johar Case* decriminalised homosexuality under Section 377 of IPC, as it is violative of right to freedom of life, privacy and equality of sexual minorities.

**TRANSGENDER PERSONS (PROTECTION OF RIGHTS) ACT, 2019**

- **Definition of Transgender:** The act defines a transgender person as one whose gender does not match the gender assigned at birth. It includes transmen and trans-women, persons with intersex variations, genderqueers, and persons with sociocultural identities, such as kinnar and hijra.
- **Self-identification:** A transgender person may make an application to the District Magistrate for a certificate of identity, indicating the gender as ‘transgender’.
- **Prohibition against discrimination:** Prohibits discrimination against a transgender person in
  - Education, employment and healthcare.
  - Access to goods, facilities, opportunities available to the public.
  - Right to movement, reside, rent, or otherwise occupy property.
  - Opportunity to hold public or private office.
- **Welfare measures by the government:** Mandated government to undertake measures to ensure the full inclusion and participation of transgender persons in society. It must also take steps for their rescue and rehabilitation, vocational training and self-employment, create schemes that are transgender sensitive, and promote their participation in cultural activities.
- **Offences and penalties:** Recognize the offences against transgender persons like forced or bonded labour; denial of use of public places; physical, sexual, verbal, emotional or economic abuse. Penalties for these offences vary between 6 months and 2 years, and a fine.
- **National council for transgender persons** to advise the central government as well as monitor the impact of policies, legislation and projects with respect to transgender persons. It will also redress the grievances of transgender persons.

**GENDER BIAS IN PERSONAL LAWS**

**#WOMEN_ISSUES**

Supreme Court is hearing a plea challenging gender bias in Hindu inheritance law. The petition draws attention to Section 15 of Hindu Succession Act, 1956 Act which mandates how the husband’s heirs have the first right over the self-acquired property of a woman who dies intestate.

**In Marriage:**
- Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 prohibits marriage of any women before the age of 18 but Muslim Personal Law mentions puberty or age of 15 years as minimum age of marriage for women. These differences between the age of consent for marriage contributes to the stereotype that wives must be younger than their husbands.
- Practice of Polygamy is permitted in Islamic law but only to the men and is frequently misused by persons of other religions also who convert as Muslims solely to solemnize another marriage.

**In Succession:**
- Under Hindu Succession Act, property of male and female intestates devolves differently. Section 15 of Hindu Succession Act, 1956 gives priority to the heirs of the husband over the parents of the deceased. If a Hindu woman dies without making a will, her husband can take all her property without leaving any share for her own mother or father. On the other hand, when a Hindu man dies, his blood relationship is given priority.

**In Custody:**
- Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956 requires women to take consent of their living husband to adopt a child is discriminatory.

This gender bias in personal laws reflects patriarchy inherent to many religions.

**PATRIARCHY AND RELIGION**

Religion perpetuates patriarchy through
- **Sacred Texts:** Gender roles and status of women and men in society are deeply tied to the way religious texts are interpreted. In many religious teachings,
women are given the role of nurturing, caring and giving birth reinforcing the gender norms in society.

- **Religious Organisations:** Despite widespread engagement of women in other religious activities, religious leaders and those authorized to interpret religious doctrine are predominantly men. There is conspicuous absence of women in position of religious authority. *Ex:* Barring entry of women into places of worship.

- **Religious Laws & Customs:** Religion also has an influence on cultural norms that lead to unequal treatment in terms of marriage, divorce, succession etc.

**HATTIS DEMAND FOR ST**

#TRIBAL ISSUES # VULNERABLE SECTIONS

Hatti community from Trans-Giri region of Himachal Pradesh has been demanding Scheduled Tribe Status since decades. Recently, Centre has assured to ‘favourably consider’ Hatti community’s inclusion among Scheduled Tribes.

**SCHEDULE TRIBES**

- Article 342 of the Constitution provides for specification of tribes or tribal communities which shall, for the purposes of the constitution, deemed to be scheduled tribes in relation to that State or UT.
- In pursuance of these provisions, the list of Scheduled Tribes is notified for each State or UT and are valid only within the jurisdiction of that State or UT and not outside.
- Parliament may by law include in or exclude from the list of Scheduled tribes specified in a notification.

**CRITERIA FOR SCHEDULED TRIBE STATUS**

For a community to be given Scheduled Tribe Status, it should meet the following markers:

- Indications of primitive traits
- Distinctive culture
- Geographical isolation
- Shyness of contact with the community at large
- Backwardness.

These criteria are not spelt out in the Constitution or laid out under any law but have become well established and accepted.

There are over 700 ethnic groups notified as Scheduled tribes across the states/UTs. According to 2011 census, Scheduled tribes consist of around 8.6% of the total population of India.

**STATES’ SHARE OF ST POPULATION OUT OF INDIA’S ST POPULATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 5 States/UTs</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lakshadweep</td>
<td>94.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>94.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagaland</td>
<td>86.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladakh</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STATES/UTS RANKED BY PROPORTION OF STs**

**PROBLEMS FACED BY TRIBES IN INDIA**

- **Loss of communal rights over forest:** Forest policies and regulations have snatched away traditional community rights of STs over forest produce. This has impacted the economic activities of tribes like food gathering, hunting, shifting cultivation.
- **Land alienation:** Acquisition of tribal lands for extraction of minerals and expansion of infrastructure projects alienated tribes of their lands.
• **Indebtedness and Bonded labour**: With the loss of communal rights over forest & agricultural land and lack of skill, they are forced to work as bonded labour.

• **Health and Nutrition**: According to NFHS-4, Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Under Five Mortality Rate (U5MR) and anemia in women for STs higher than other social groups. They also suffer from other diseases in higher proportions such as Sickle Cell Anemia, Malaria etc.

• **Literacy**: According to 2011 census, literacy rate of STs is around 59% which is way below the literacy rate of total population (73%).

• **Poverty**: As per NSSO estimates, ST people living below the poverty line in 2011-12 were 45.3% in the rural areas and 24.1% in the urban areas as compared to 25.7% persons in rural areas and 13.7% persons in urban areas below poverty line for all population.

• **Loss of tribal culture and identity**: Conversion of tribes into other religions; Industrialisation; urbanisation; Migration etc. resulted in loss of tribal way of life and their identity.

### CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS PROVIDED TO SCHEDULED TRIBES

- **Educational & Cultural Safeguards**
  - Article 15(4): Special provisions for advancement of other backward classes (which includes STs).
  - Article 29: Protection of Interests of Minorities (which includes STs).
  - Article 46: State shall promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
  - Article 350: Right to conserve distinct Language, Script or Culture.
  - Article 350: Instruction in Mother Tongue.

- **Social Safeguards**
  - Article 23: Prohibition of traffic in human beings and beggar and other similar form of forced labour.
  - Article 24: Forbidding Child Labour.

- **Economic Safeguards**
  - Art.244: Provisions of Fifth Schedule shall apply to the administration & control of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in any State other than the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura which are covered under Sixth Schedule, under Clause (2) of this Article.
  - Article 275: Grants in-Aid to specified States (Tribal Areas & Scheduled Areas) covered under Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution.

- **Political Safeguards**
  - Article164(1): Provides for Tribal Affairs Ministers in Bihar, MP and Orissa
  - Article 330: Reservation of seats for STs in Lok Sabha
  - Article 337: Reservation of seats for STs in State Legislatures
  - Article 334: 10 years period for reservation (Amended several times to extend the period.)
  - Article 243: Reservation of seats in Panchayats.
  - Article 371: Special provisions in respect of NE States and Sikkim
  - Service safeguards
    - Article 16(4) allowed the states to make any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the state.

  - Article 335 claims of the members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in the making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State.

### LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

**#DIVERSITY OF INDIA**

Recently, Home Minister suggested that states should communicate with each other in Hindi rather than English, while stressing that Hindi should not be an alternative to local languages. This led to the debate of “Hindi imposition”.

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In this context, let us understand the linguistic diversity of India and India's official language policy.

**LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY OF INDIA**

There is a popular aphorism that depicts India's linguistic diversity rather well: *Kos-kos par badle paani, chaar kos par baani* (The language spoken in India changes every few kms, just like the taste of the water).

- The 2011 linguistic census accounts for 121 mother tongues, including 22 languages listed in the 8th Schedule of Constitution.
- Indian constitution accommodated this linguistic diversity:
  - While Article 343 says “the official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script,” it also empowers the use of English indefinitely.
  - The provision coexists with the Eighth Schedule, which, as per Articles 344(1) and 351, permits the use of 22 languages as official languages.
  - Article 347, provides for the recognition and use of even those languages that are not the ‘official language’ of the State, allowing for greater State autonomy.

**GROWTH OF HINDI**

- Hindi is the most widely spoken language, with 52.8 crore individuals, or 43.6% of the population, declaring it as their mother tongue. The next highest is Bengali, mother tongue for 97 lakh (8%).
- Hindi has been India’s predominant mother tongue over the decades, its share in the population rising in every succeeding census. In 1971, 37% Indians had reported Hindi as their mother tongue, a share that has grown over the next four censuses to 38.7%, 39.2%, 41% and 43.6% at last count.
- Between 1991 and 2011, the number of Hindi native speakers in South India has nearly doubled. This, when the total population in these states has only gone up by 28%.

**EXPLANATION OF THIS RISE IN HINDI SPEAKING POPULATION**

- Population growth in native Hindi speaking states such as Uttar Pradesh (20%), Bihar (25%), Madya Pradesh (20%), Rajasthan (21%), Jharkhand (22%) above the national average growth rate of 17%.
- Increasing migration of Hindi speaking population to other states. According to the census, four states, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh accounted for 50% of India’s total inter-state migrants.

**THREE LANGUAGE FORMULA UNDER NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020**

- Keeping in view of the needs arising from increasing inter-state migration and to strengthens national integration, National Education policy (2020) suggested implementation of 3-language formula.
- New National Education Policy (NEP) recommends that all students will learn three languages in their school under the ‘formula’. At least two of the three languages should be native to India. **Ex:** If a student in Mumbai is learning Marathi and English, he/she will have to choose to learn another Indian language.
- There will be a greater flexibility in the three-language formula, and no language will be imposed on any State. The three languages learned by children will be the choices of States, regions, and of course the students themselves, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India.

**CONCERNS WITH THREE LANGUAGE FORMULA**

- Cognitive burden on young children: Several surveys, like ASER, have shown that a vast majority of children
are failing to learn to read with comprehension even in one language and script. It is completely unrealistic to expect children to acquire oral fluency and reading skills in three different languages.

- **Poor Implementation**: Earlier three-language formula was not implemented properly in most parts of the country.
- **Back Door Entry for Hindi**: Tamil Nadu has two language systems. The introduction of the new policy creates a fear among them that this would lead to the entrance of Hindi into the state from the back door.
- **Shortage of Non-Hindi teachers**: Scarcity of non-Hindi language teachers throughout the country.

**ADVANTAGES OF PRESERVING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY**

- Prevents regionalism, separatism and enhances national integration
- Administration becomes easier
- Access to education in mother tongue
- Preservation of traditional knowledge
- Cognitive ability of the children improves
- Social inclusion

**THREATS TO LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN INDIA**

According to People’s Linguistic Survey of India (PSLI) report, more than half of India’s languages may die out in 50 years. Around 190 languages are in various stages of endangerment in our country, more than any other country in the world. The reasons are:

- **Globalization**: Influence of transnational corporations has resulted in a central common language mainly English, which dominates regional dialects, and minority languages.
- **Nuclear family culture**: Grants less opportunities for youngsters to learn mother tongue, especially when both parents are working and grandparents are living separate.
- **Inter-culture, caste, race marriages**: Where a couple is from different cultural backgrounds, language of communication is often not the mother tongue, which impacts the next generation’s exposure to the native language.
- **Migration**: Towards metropolitans for accessing better education and employment opportunities, is preference to cosmopolitan language.

- **Increased use of Internet**: Nowadays, most of the communications and business is carried out online forcing the people to consume digital content in English as the cyber presence regional languages is negligible.
- **Lack of Education in Mother tongue** results in neglecting of many languages
- **Lack of script for tribal and languages spoken by fringe groups**: Only 6 tribal languages — Santali, Ho, Soura, Munda and Kui, have a written script. Lack of script makes it difficult to pass the language from generation to generation.
- **Assimilation policies of the Government**: States often try to assimilate linguistic minorities by imposing majority language upon them. Example: Compulsory Bengali in Gorkhaland.

**CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTION GIVEN TO LINGUISTIC MINORITIES**

**Article 29:**

- Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.
- No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them.

**Article 30:**

- All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
- The state shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.

**Article 345**: Legislature of a State may by law adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the State.

**Article 347**: President, subjected to his satisfaction, may demand any state govt to officially recognise any language, on which popular demand is made by the language speakers.

**Article 350 A & B:**

- It shall be the endeavour of every State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother
tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups.

**SHRESHTA**
- Scheme for Residential Education for Students in High Schools in Targeted Areas
- Implemented by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE)

Under the scheme, every year a specified number of meritorious SC students in States/UTs, whose parents' annual income is up to Rs. 2.5 Lakh, are selected for providing quality residential education in Top-class Private Residential High Schools, including Hostel facilities for SC students at free of cost from class 9th to class 12th. Entire cost of school fee and residential charges including mess charges, ranging from Rs. 1 Lakh to 1,35,000/- p.a. for each student, are paid to the Reputed Private Schools by the Department of Social justice and Empowerment.

**PRADHAN MANTRI ANUSUCHIT JAATI ABHYUDAY YOJANA (PM AJAY)**

The scheme has been created after merger of three schemes under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE)
- Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCA to SCSP)
- Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY)
- Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana (BJRCY)

**Objective:**
- Reduce poverty of the Schedule caste communities by generation of additional employment opportunities through skill development, income generating schemes and other initiatives.
- To improve socio-economic developmental indicators by ensuring adequate infrastructure and requisite services in the SC dominated villages.
- To increase literacy and encourage enrolment of SCs in schools and higher educational institutions by providing adequate residential facilities in quality institutions, as well as residential schools where required; in the aspirational districts/SC majority blocks and elsewhere in India.

**PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

**MCQs**

**Q1.** Consider the following statements:
1. Lakshadweep has the highest share of total Scheduled tribal population of India
2. Odisha has the highest number of Particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) in India

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

**Q2.** Consider the following statements:
1. SHRESHTA is a scholarship programme for the benefit of meritorious students belonging to scheduled category
2. Under the scheme the eligible students receive money directly to their bank accounts.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only  (b) 2 only
Q3. Consider the following statements:
1. PM AJAY has been created after merger of three schemes
2. Reduction of poverty of the Schedule caste communities is one of the objectives of the scheme
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

Q4. Consider the following statements:
1. The legislature of a state may adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the state or Hindi as the official language of that state.
2. President may demand any state govt to officially recognise any language on popular demand
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

Q5. Consider the following statements about The Transgender persons (Protection of rights) act, 2019:
1. The act allowed for self-identification of transgender
2. It mandated reservation for transgenders in education and public employment
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

Q1. Do you think the Transgender persons (protection of rights) act, 2019 ensure effective mechanism for protection and empowerment of Transgenders in the society? Discuss.

Q2. What are the threats to linguistic diversity in India and discuss the need to preserve the same.

Answers: 1-b, 2-a, 3-c, 4-c, 5-a
Prolonged dry spell coupled with unusually elevated temperatures in recent days has triggered many wildfires in Himachal Pradesh, destroying several hectares of forest cover across many parts of the hill State. The early onset of summer this year in the hills posed a major challenge to the State government’s efforts to control forest fires and with dry weather conditions and high temperatures expected to continue, the task has become more difficult.

**Forest Fire Facts**

India recorded 82,170 forest fire alerts nearly double the number reported during the same period past year, according to Global Forest Watch (GFW), an open-source monitoring application.

Warmer weather leads to rapid desiccation of fuel (wood, leaves and other inflammable materials found in forests). In such a scenario, even a small ignition is likely to become widespread.

Fires in forests are not unnatural. Small and controlled fires in the form of prescribed burning are very useful and essential for good natural forest development and regeneration. As they keep forest floor free from the natural annual buildup of the litter thereby reducing risk of catastrophic forest fire, improving silvicultural opportunities, increasing forage and habitat opportunities for wildlife, enhancing biodiversity etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATURAL</th>
<th>ANTHROPOGENIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deliberate causes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Accidental causes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Lightning</td>
<td>1. Collection of Non-Timber Forest Produce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Friction of rolling stone</td>
<td>2. Burning farm residues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Rubbing of dry bamboo clumps</td>
<td>3. Driving away wild animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Volcanic explosion</td>
<td>4. Throwing burning <strong>bidi/cigarettes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To clear path by villagers</td>
<td>5. Campfires by picnickers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. To encroach upon the</td>
<td>6. Sparks from vehicle - exhaust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Causes of Forest Fire**

**FOREST FIRES**

**Pollution**

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**Vaibhav Mishra**

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**Vidushi Tyagi**

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**FOCUS | MAY 2022 | RAU’S IAS**
### LOSSES FROM EXTENSIVE FOREST FIRES

- **Biodiversity change**: In the Himalayas, fires have made the situation less favorable for oaks to grow and more favorable for chir pine to grow.
- **Reduced soil moisture** creates a possibility of forest fire in future.
- **Reduce water infiltration** due to heat induced chemical and physical changes in upper layer of soil which makes it impervious.
- **Enhanced global warming** due to destruction of forest Carbon sequestration potential and addition of newer emissions such as carbon monoxide, methane hydrocarbons, nitric oxide and nitrous oxide that led to global warming and ozone layer depletion.

### Locations of frequent forest fires in India

- **Microclimate change** caused by removal of litter and duff, opening of the canopy by killing over storey shrubs and trees and darkening of the soil surface by residual soot and charcoal can increase insulation causing temperature increase.

### WAY FORWARD

- **Recognise forest fires as a disaster type and integrate them into national, sub-national and local disaster management plans**: National Plan on Forest Fires was launched by the Government of India in 2018 under the National Afforestation Program. This plan touches upon a wide range of activities, but financial constraints and operational dynamism remains a challenge. Forest fires should be recognised as a disaster type under the NDMA act. The recognition will enhance and strengthen the National Plan on Forest Fires by improving its financial allocation and through the creation of a cadre of trained forest firefighters under the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF).
- **Develop a forest fire-only alert system**: Currently, Forest Survey of India (FSI) and National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) use MODIS and Suomi NPP VIIRS information for near real-time monitoring of forest fires which does not segregate forest fires from other fires such as waste burning and crop burning. Hence, ground validation takes time and the scope for misinformation increases. As a first step, a forest fire ONLY alert system needs to be developed that can provide real-time impact-based alerts.
- **Enhance adaptive capacity**: Capacity-building initiatives targeted at district administrations and forest-dependent communities can avert the extent of loss and damage due to forest fires. Training on high technology-focused equipment (like drones) and nature-based modules such as creating effective forest fire lines can effectively mitigate the spread of forest fires.
- **Provide clean air shelters**: The state government/state forest departments (SFDs) should repurpose public buildings like government schools and community halls by fitting them with clean air solutions – like air filters – to create clean air shelters for communities worst impacted by fires and smoke from forest fires.
Prescribed burning approach: Mitigation of forest fire through fire suppression is only increasing the fuel load of the system, often resulting in out-of-control fires. Prescribed burning unless conducted in checks and balances has the risk of spreading across the forests.

Engagements of local communities: Local communities may be engaged in the process to ensure livelihood and develop a sense of ownership towards the forest. There should be clear protocol for alarming people living near forest to save lives and livelihood.

Firefighting action plans must be prepared for each forest range considering the climate, terrain, type of vegetation, availability of water, etc. Drought remediation measures should also be taken into considerations while making these action plans.

Creating a bioeconomy through community-engaged creation of functional value chains based on wood, non-wood products, agroforestry, and ecosystem services can help ensure livelihood security as well as to control forest fire.

Heat Waves typically occur between March and June, and in some rare cases even extend till July. The extreme temperatures and resultant atmospheric conditions adversely affect people living in these regions as they cause physiological stress, sometimes resulting in death.

CRITERIA FOR HEAT WAVE

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has given the following criteria for Heat Waves:

There are two conditions which need to be satisfied:

- Heat wave is considered if maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40°C or more for Plains, 37°C or more for coastal stations and at least 30°C or more for Hilly regions. Following criteria are used to declare heat wave:
  - Based on Departure from Normal
    - Heat Wave: Departure from normal is 4.5°C to 6.4°C
    - Severe Heat Wave: Departure from normal is 6.4°C
  - Based on Actual Maximum Temperature (for plains only)
    - Heat Wave: When actual maximum temperature is 45°C
    - Severe Heat Wave: When actual maximum temperature is 47°C

Declare heat wave, the above criteria should be met at least in 2 stations in a Meteorological subdivision for at least two consecutive days and it will be declared on the second day.

FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS FOR HEAT WAVE

- Transportation / Prevalence of hot dry air over a region (There should be a region of warm dry air and appropriate flow pattern for transporting hot air over the region).
- Absence of moisture in the upper atmosphere (As the presence of moisture restricts the temperature rise).
- The sky should be cloudless (To allow maximum insulation over the region).
- Large amplitude anti-cyclonic flow over the area.
- Heat waves develop over Northwest India and spread gradually eastwards & southwards but not westwards (since the prevailing winds during the season are westerly to north westerly).

India’s weather department issued a severe heatwave warning as temperatures soar, throwing millions of lives and livelihoods out of gear.

Main Facts

It is expected that extreme heat waves will become more common worldwide because of rising average global temperature. Since the beginning of the 21st century, this has increased by a degree Centigrade. This weather pattern, coupled with the El-Nino effect, is increasing the temperatures in Asia. Further, high humidity compounds the effects of the temperatures being felt by human beings.

Heat Wave

A Heat Wave is a period of abnormally high temperatures, more than the normal maximum temperature that occurs during the summer season in the North-Western parts of India.
But on some occasions, heat wave may also develop over any region in situ under the favourable conditions.

IMPACTS OF HEAT WAVES

- **Health Impacts:**
  - The health impacts of Heat Waves typically involve dehydration, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and/or heat stroke. The signs and symptoms are as follows:
    - **Heat Cramps:** Edema (swelling) and Syncope (Fainting) accompanied by fever below 39 i.e., 102°F.
    - **Heat Exhaustion:** Fatigue, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea, vomiting, muscle cramps and sweating.
    - **Heat Stroke:** Body temperatures of 40°C i.e., 104°F or more along with delirium, seizures or coma. This is a potentially fatal condition.

- **Agriculture:**
  - High temperatures can be damaging to agriculture. Plant growth is negatively impacted by high daytime temperatures and some crops require cool night temperatures.
  - Heat waves also increase the chances of livestock experiencing heat stress, especially when nighttime temperatures remain high, and animals are unable to cool off.
  - Heat-stressed cattle can experience declines in milk production, slower growth, and reduced conception rates.
  - Heat waves can exacerbate droughts and wildfires, which can lead to negative impacts on the agriculture sector.

- **Energy**
  - Warmer temperatures affect many aspects of the energy system, including production, transmission, and demand. While higher summer temperatures increase electricity demand for cooling, at the same time, they can lower the ability of transmission lines to carry power, leading to electricity reliability issues like rolling blackouts during heat waves.

In the ultimate analysis, we have no option but reduce the emission of greenhouse gases to tackle the climate crisis. But till a lasting solution is found, it is important to roll out heat action plans in regions vulnerable to heatwaves. Mitigation is of immediate concern regarding high summer temperatures and subsequent heatwaves. Both short term measures like advisories and long-term measures like afforestation must be simultaneously acted upon.

High-pressure circulation in the atmosphere acts like a dome or cap, trapping heat at the surface and favoring the formation of a heat wave.

A heat dome is caused when atmosphere traps hot ocean air, as if bounded by a lid or cap. They can be linked to climate change. The upper air weather patterns are slow to move referred to by meteorologists as an Omega block.

In still, dry summer conditions, a mass of warm air builds up. The high pressure from the Earth’s atmosphere pushes the warm air down. The air is compressed, and as its net heat is now in a smaller volume, so it must get hotter. As the warm air attempts to rise, the high pressure above it forces it down, to get hotter, and its pressure grows higher.

The high pressure acts as if a dome, causing everything below it to get hotter and hotter.
RESILIENCE STRATEGIES FOR EXTREME HEAT

- Identifying vulnerable populations and creating heat preparedness plans with all residents in mind, that may include steps like opening cooling centers during periods of extreme heat and adopting workplace heat stress standards.
- Installing cool and green roofs and cool pavement to reduce the urban heat island effect.
- Planting trees to provide shade and to cool the air through evapotranspiration.
- Pursuing energy efficiency to reduce demand on the electricity grid, especially during heat waves.

PREDICTING INDIAN MONSOON

India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast a 'normal' monsoon for this year, or 99% of Long Period
Average (LPA) of 87 cm. The IMD has a multi-stage monsoon forecast system. The April forecast usually has little detail on how much rain is expected during each of the monsoon months, and whether the rain will be lopsided or evenly distributed geographically. The IMD usually shares this in late May or early June, just around the time the monsoon is imminent over Kerala. The forecast in April is thus only a general indicator and of little public utility. A normal monsoon forecast this year is also predicated on the absence of an El Niño, a warming of the Central Pacific linked to the drying up of monsoon rains. However, another ocean parameter called the Indian Ocean Dipole, the positive phase of which is associated with good rains, has also been forecast to be ‘neutral’ or unhelpful for the monsoon.

IMD has changed its definition of the LPA, which is an indication of the average rainfall over a 50-year interval and, as per the norms of the World Meteorological Organization to which India is a signatory, should be updated every 10 years. For myriad reasons, the IMD stuck with an LPA number of 89 cm (the average monsoon rain from 1951-2000) until 2018, when it was updated to 88 cm (to reflect the average from 1961-2010). And now, to count for the 1971-2020 interval, the number is 87 cm.

While on the surface, it might look like India is losing just a centimetre of rainfall every decade, it must be remembered that this conceals wide shifts in rainfall when computed at the State and district levels as the monsoon rain is highly uneven. The IMD explains the loss of a centimetre every decade as part of a natural cycle of the monsoon where 30 years of less rain, or a ‘dry’ epoch, is followed by 30 years of a ‘wet epoch’. India began a dry epoch in the 1970-80 decade, the IMD says; it is now in a neutral phase and will enter a wet epoch in the decade, 2030-2040.

The IMD has presented research over the years documenting the changes in the weather and rainfall in recent years down to sub-district levels, and has said that global warming, in its tendency to heat the oceans, has certainly had a role to play. Much like the update to the average, the IMD must update some processes and lay stress on shorter forecasts, a month or a fortnight ahead, rather than maintain anachronistic traditions of long-range forecasts that are neither accurate nor useful.

ONSET & ADVANCE OF MONSOON

The guidelines to be followed for declaring the onset of monsoon over Kerala and its further advance over the country are enlisted below:

a) Rainfall

If after 10th May, 60% of the available 14 stations enlisted*, viz. Minicoy, Amini, Thiruvananthapuram, Punalur, Kollam, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Kochi, Thrissur, Kozhikode, Thalassery, Kannur, Kudulu and Mangalore report rainfall of 2.5 mm or more for two consecutive days, the onset over Kerala be declared on the 2nd day, provided the following criteria are also in concurrence.

b) Wind field

Depth of westerlies should be maintained upto 600 hPa, in the box equator to Lat. 10ºN and Long. 55ºE to 80ºE. The zonal wind speed over the area bounded by Lat. 5-10ºN, Long. 70-80ºE should be of the order of 15 – 20 Kts. at 925 hPa. The source of data can be RSMC wind analysis/satellite derived winds.

c) Outgoing Longwave Radiation (OLR)

INSAT derived OLR value should be below 200 wm-2 in the box confined by Lat. 5-10ºN and Long. 70-75ºE.

Northern Limit of Monsoon (NLM)

Southwest monsoon normally sets in over Kerala around 1st June. It advances northwards, usually in surges, and covers the entire country around 15th July. The NLM is the northern most limit of monsoon upto which it has advanced on any given day.

Withdrawal of SW Monsoon

a) Withdrawal from extreme north-western parts of the country is not attempted before 1st September.

b) After 1st September:

The following major synoptic features are considered for the first withdrawal from the western parts of NW India.

i) Cessation of rainfall activity over the area for continuous 5 days.

ii) Establishment of anticyclone in the lower troposphere (850 hPa and below)

iii) Considerable reduction in moisture content as inferred from satellite water vapour imageries and tephigrams.

FURTHER WITHDRAWAL FROM THE COUNTRY
Further withdrawal from the country is declared, keeping the spatial continuity, reduction in moisture as seen in the water vapour imageries and prevalence of dry weather for 5 days.

Withdrawal of SW monsoon is from the southern peninsula and hence from the entire country only after 1st October, when the circulation pattern indicates a change over from the south-westerly wind regime.

(a) Criteria for describing activity of southwest monsoon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive term</th>
<th>Specification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weak monsoon</td>
<td>Rainfall less than half the normal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal monsoon</td>
<td>Rainfall half to less than 1½ times the normal (Mention of &quot;normal&quot; monsoon may not be necessary in general).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active monsoon</td>
<td>• Rainfall 1 ½ to 4 times the normal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. The rainfall in at least two stations should be 5 cm, if that sub-division is along the west coast and 3 cm, if it is elsewhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Rainfall in that sub-division should be widespread to widespread.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigorous monsoon</td>
<td>• Rainfall more than 4 times the normal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. The rainfall in at least two stations should be 8 cm if the sub-division is along the west coast and 5 cm if it is elsewhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Rainfall in that sub-division should be widespread or widespread.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subdued Monsoon</td>
<td>• Spatial distribution of rainfall remains dry, isolated or scattered for two consecutive days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. Mean actual rainfall of that sub-division remains less than the normal for the consecutive two days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. The Forecast issued for the next 48 hrs on the day for the sub-division is also dry, isolated or scattered. Upon satisfying all the above criteria simultaneously, monsoon activity be described as subdued on the second day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BIO-DIGESTERS

#WASTE MANAGEMENT

The bio-decomposer namely Pusa Decomposer developed by The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has been used by the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi to total of 978,713 acres (3,91,485 ha) equivalent to about 2.4 million tonnes of straw management in this year.

Human waste disposal in innocuous form is an ever-growing problem leading to aesthetic nuisance, threat of organic pollution & several infectious diseases in epidemic proportions due to contamination of ground water and drinking water resources in highly populated and developing countries, like India. Less than 30% of Indians have access to the toilets. In rural areas about 10% of houses have toilets and rest of the people go to open defecation. Population in the cities although have better access to the toilets but only to the tune of ~70%. Untreated waste is responsible for several diseases like, dysentery, diarrhoea, amoebiasis, viral hepatitis, cholera, typhoid etc. taking the life of lakhs of children annually.

Bio decomposers degrade and converts the human waste into usable water and gasses in an eco-friendly manner. The generated gas can be utilized for energy/ cooking and water for irrigation purposes.

The process involves the bacteria which feed upon the faecal matter inside the tank, through anaerobic process which finally degrades the matter and releases methane gas that can be used for cooking, along with the treated water.

BIOMASS AS ENERGY

Biomass has always been an important energy source for the country considering the benefits it offers. It is renewable, widely available, carbon-neutral and has the potential to provide significant employment in the rural areas. Biomass is also capable of providing firm energy. About 32% of the total primary energy use in the country is still derived from biomass and more than 70% of the country’s population depends upon it for its energy needs. Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has realised the potential and role of biomass energy in the Indian context and hence has initiated a number of programmes for promotion of efficient technologies for its use in various sectors of the economy to ensure
derivation of maximum benefits. For efficient utilization of biomass, bagasse-based cogeneration in sugar mills and biomass power generation have been taken up under biomass power and cogeneration programme.

Biomass power & cogeneration programme is implemented with the main objective of promoting technologies for optimum use of country's biomass resources for grid power generation. Biomass materials used for power generation include bagasse, rice husk, straw, cotton stalk, coconut shells, soya husk, de-oiled cakes, coffee waste, jute wastes, groundnut shells, saw dust etc.

**POTENTIAL**

As per a recent study sponsored by MNRE, the current availability of biomass in India is estimated at about 750 million metric tonnes per year. The Study indicated estimated surplus biomass availability at about 230 million metric tonnes per annum covering agricultural residues corresponding to a potential of about 28 GW. This apart, about 14 GW additional power could be generated through bagasse-based cogeneration in the country’s 550 Sugar mills, if these sugar mills were to adopt technically and economically optimal levels of cogeneration for extracting power from the bagasse produced by them.

**TECHNOLOGY**

**Combustion**

The thermo chemical processes for conversion of biomass to useful products involve combustion, gasification or pyrolysis. The most used route is combustion. The advantage is that the technology used is like that of a thermal plant based on coal, except for the boiler. The cycle used is the conventional Rankine cycle with biomass being burnt in high-pressure boiler to generate steam and operating a turbine with the generated steam. The exhaust of the steam turbine can either be fully condensed to produce power or used partly or fully for another useful heating activity. The latter mode is called cogeneration. In India, cogeneration route finds application in industries.

**Cogeneration in Sugar and Mills**

Sugar industry has been traditionally practicing cogeneration by using bagasse as a fuel. With the advancement in the technology for generation and utilization of steam at high temperature and pressure, sugar industry can produce electricity and steam for their own requirements. It can also produce significant surplus electricity for sale to the grid using same quantity of bagasse. For example, if steam generation temperature/pressure is raised from 400°C/33 bar to 485°C/66 bar, more than 80 KWh of additional electricity can be produced for each ton of cane crushed. The sale of surplus power generated through optimum cogeneration would help a sugar mill to improve its viability, apart from adding to the power generation capacity of the country.

**Deployment**

The Ministry has been implementing biomass power/co-generation programme since mid-nineties. Over 800 biomass power and bagasse/non-bagasse cogeneration projects aggregating to 10170 MW capacity have been installed in the country for feeding power to the grid. States which have taken leadership position in implementation of bagasse cogeneration projects are Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. The leading States for biomass power projects are Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.

**SALIENT FEATURES**

- No bad smell in toilets from the tanks
- Faecal matter in the tank not visible
- No infestation of cockroaches & flies
- No clogging of digester
- Effluent is free from off odour and solid waste
- Reduction in pathogens by 99%
- Reduction in organic matter by 90%
- No maintenance required
- No requirement of adding bacteria/ enzyme
- No need of removal of solid waste
- Use of phenyl is permitted upto 84 ppm

**AVAILABLE MODELS**

- **Microbial inoculum (cold-active)**
  - Isolated, screened, selected and enriched through acclimatization and bio-augmentation
  - Can withstand freezing and thawing
  - Ability to inactivate the intestinal pathogens
- **High altitude model**
  - Material: Metal/FRP of cylindrical shape
o Works at low temperature as well as high temperature
  • Glacier model
    o Material: Metal/FRP of cylindrical shape
    o Provided with insulation and heating arrangement with solar system
  • Plain area model
    o Material: FRP/MS
    o Suitable for existing/independent toilet
    o Also available with top mounted toilets
    o Can be installed for single house/apartment/society/community
  • Island model
    o Material: FRP
    o Design involves longer path for treatment
    o Suitable for high water usages and areas with high water table
  • Biotank model
    o Low cost, simple design for onsite construction
    o Material: Brick / RCC structure/ FRP
    o REED BED SYSTEM (optional) improves effluent quality & can also be used to treat kitchen and bathroom wastewater
    o Final effluent safe and can be used for recycling or irrigation
    o Can be installed for single house/apartment/society/community

Biogas

Biogas is produced when bio-degradable organic materials/wastes such as cattle dung, biomass from farms, gardens, kitchens, industry, poultry droppings, night soil and municipals wastes are subjected to a scientific process, called Anaerobic Digestion (A.D.) in a Biogas Plants. Biogas Plant designs depend upon several factors and the feed stock to be processed is of paramount importance. Biogas is the mixture of gases (primarily methane (CH4) and Carbon di-oxide (CO2) and traces of Hydrogen Sulfide (H2S), Moisture) produced by the decomposition/breakdown of bio-degradable organic matter in the absence of oxygen from raw materials such as agricultural waste, cattle dung, poultry droppings, municipal waste, plant material, sewage, green waste or food/kitchen waste. Biogas has a calorific value of about 5000 kcal per m³.

The digested slurry produced from Biogas Plants as a by-product is a better source of nutrient enriched organic manure for use in Agriculture. It not only helps in improving the crop yield but also maintain soil health. There is ample potential of setting up biogas plants considering the livestock population of 512.06 million, which includes about 300 million (299.98 million) total population of bovines (comprising of cattle, buffalo, mithun and yak). The livestock sector contributes about significantly to India’s GDP and will continue to increase. The dissemination of biogas technology is a boon for Indian farmers with its direct and collateral benefits.

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy promoted installation of biogas plants by implementing 2 Central Sector Schemes under Off-Grid/distributed and decentralized Renewable Power. The following schemes were valid upto 31/03/2021:

i) New National Biogas and Organic Manure Programme (NNBOMP), for Biogas Plant size ranging from 1 cu.m. to 25 cu.m. per day.

ii) Biogas Power Generation (Off-grid) and Thermal energy application Programme (BPGTP), for setting up biogas plants in the size range of 30 m³ to 2500 m³ per day, for corresponding power generation capacity range of 3 kW to 250 kW from biogas or raw biogas for thermal energy /cooling applications

Biogas contains about 55-65 % of methane, 35- 44 % of carbon dioxide and traces of other gases, such as Hydrogen Sulphide, Nitrogen and Ammonia. Biogas, in its raw form, which is without any purification, can be used as clean cooking fuel like LPG, lighting, motive power and generation of electricity. It can be used in diesel engines to substitute diesel up to 80% and up to 100% replacement of diesel by using 100% Biogas Engines. Further, Biogas can be purified and upgraded up to 98% purity of methane content to make it suitable to be used as a green and clean fuel for transportation or filling in cylinders at high pressure of 250 bar or so and called as Compressed Biogas (CBG).

Initially, Biogas Plants were developed for digesting cattle dung. However, over a period, technology has been developed for the bio-methanation of various types of biomass materials and organic wastes. Biogas plant designs are now available from 0.5 M³ to 1000 M³ unit size or more and multiples of that can be installed for...
achieving higher Biogas Plant sizes, depending upon availability of the raw material such as for family/household, small farmers, dairy farmers and for community, institutional and industrial/commercial applications. The unit size of industrial and municipal wastes-based biogas plants may go up to 15000 M3 to 20000 M3 biogas production per day.

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**DAM SAFETY ACT, 2021**

More than three months after the Dam Safety Bill was passed by the Parliament, the Ministry of Jal Shakti has finally set up the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA). The Act comprehensively postulates for surveillance, inspection, operation and maintenance of dams to prevent disasters.

**NEED FOR A LEGISLATION FOR DAM SAFETY**

- Dams are artificial barriers on rivers which store water and help in irrigation, power generation, flood moderation, and water supply.
- Dams with a height of more than 15 metres or between 10 and 15 metres that meet certain extra design criteria are referred to as huge dams in India. India has 5,745 big dams as of June 2019. (Includes dams under construction).
- Of these, 5,675 large dams are operated by states, 40 by central public sector undertakings, and five by private agencies. Over 75% of these dams are more than 20 years old and about 220 dams are more than 100 years old.2, Most of these large dams are in Maharashtra (2394), Madhya Pradesh (906), and Gujarat (632).
- As a large amount of water may be stored in a dam's reservoir, its failure can cause large scale damage to life and property. Therefore, monitoring dam safety is essential for following reasons:
  - Deteriorating conditions: As dams get older, their design and hydrology fall out of step with current knowledge and practises. Dams' water holding capacity is being lowered because of massive siltation.
  - Dependent on Dam Managers: There is no proper system and understanding in terms of the downstream water requirement.
  - Dam surroundings: Dam safety is dependent upon other factors such as landscape, land-use change, patterns of rainfall, structural features, etc.
  - Failures: In the lack of a competent dam safety framework, flaws in the investigation, design, building, operation, and maintenance of dams may occur, resulting in serious events and, in some cases, dam failure.

**CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

- Central Dam Safety Organisation, under the Central Water Commission (CWC), provides technical assistance to dam owners, and maintains data on dams.
- National Committee on Dam Safety devises dam safety policies and regulations.
- Currently, 18 states and four dam owning organisations have their own Dam Safety Organisations.
- CWC provides that each dam owner should conduct pre and post monsoon inspections (covering site conditions, dam operations) every year. However, as per a CAG report on flood forecasting, from 2008 to 2016, of the 17 states studied, only two had carried out such inspections.

**KEY FEATURES OF THE ACT**

- Act applies to all specified dams in the country.
  - These are dams with: (i) height more than 15 metres, or (ii) height between 10 metres to 15 metres and satisfying certain additional design conditions such as, reservoir capacity of at least one million cubic meter, and length of top of the dam at least 500 metres.
- Obligation of dam owners
  - Dam owners will be responsible for the safe construction, operation, maintenance and supervision of a dam. They must provide a dam safety unit in each dam.
  - This unit will inspect the dams:
    i. Before and after monsoon season
    ii. During and after every earthquake, flood, calamity, or any sign of distress.
  - Functions of dam owners include:
    i. Preparing an emergency action plan
Geography, Environment, Biodiversity & Disaster Management

ii. Conducting risk assessment studies at specified regular intervals
iii. Preparing a comprehensive dam safety evaluation through a panel of experts.

- Dam safety authorities
  o The Act provides for dam safety regulatory and monitoring authorities at the national and state level. The functions of the national bodies and the State Committees on Dam Safety have been provided in Schedules to the Act. The central government can amend these Schedules through a notification.

- At the national level, it constitutes
  1. The National Committee on Dam Safety, whose functions include evolving policies and recommending regulations regarding dam safety,
  2. The National Dam Safety Authority, whose functions include implementing policies of the National Committee, and resolving matters between State Dam Safety Organisations (SDSOs), or between a SDSO and any dam owner in that state.
  3. The central government may notify the qualifications, and functions of the officers of the National Dam Safety Authority.

- At the state level, it constitutes the
  1. State Dam Safety Organisations (SDSOs), whose functions include keeping perpetual surveillance, inspecting, and monitoring dams.
  2. State Committee on Dam Safety which will supervise state dam rehabilitation programs, review the work of the SDSO, and review the progress on measures recommended in relation to dam safety, among others. State governments may notify the qualifications, and functions of officers of the State Dam Safety Organisations.
  3. They may also notify dam safety measures to be undertaken by owners of non-specified dams.

- Offences and penalties
  1. Anyone obstructing a person in the discharge of his functions under the Act or refusing to comply with directions may be imprisoned for a year. In case of loss of life, the person may be imprisoned for two years.

Jurisdiction of Parliament to frame a law on intra-state river dams
  o The Act applies to all specified dams in the country.
  - These are dams with:
    - Height more than 15 metres,
    - Height between 10 to 15 metres, subject to certain design and structural conditions.
    - This includes dams on both inter and intra-state rivers. The question is whether Parliament has the authority to frame a law on intra-state dams.
  o As per Entry 17 of the State List, states can make laws on water supply, irrigation and canals, drainage and embankments, water storage and waterpower, subject to Entry 56 of the Union List. Entry 56 of the Union List allows Parliament to make laws on the regulation of inter-state rivers and river valleys if it declares such regulation to be expedient in public interest.
  o The Act declares it expedient in public interest for the Union to regulate on a uniform dam safety procedure for all specified dams. However, given Entry 17, it is unclear how Parliament would have the authority to frame a law for dams on rivers where the river and its valley are entirely within a state.

Note that, the Dam Safety Act, 2010 was introduced in Lok Sabha under Article 252. This Article allows Parliament to make laws on subjects in the State List if two or more states pass resolutions requiring such law, and the law applies only to those states. Other states may adopt the law by passing resolutions. Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal had passed resolutions requiring a law on dam safety. The Preamble of the 2010 Act stated that Parliament has no powers to make laws for states with respect to providing uniform dam safety procedure.

- Functions of authorities may be changed through notification
  o The functions of the National Committee on Dam Safety, the National Dam Safety Authority, and the State Committee on Dam Safety are provided in Schedules to the Act.
  o Their functions include:
resolving issues between State Dam Safety Organisations (SDSOs), or between a SDSO and a dam owner,
- assessing potential impact of dam failure and coordinating mitigation measures with affected states,
- supervising dam rehabilitation programmes.

- These Schedules can be amended through notification. This implies that the core functions of these bodies can be changed by the government through notification without prior amendment of the Act by Parliament. The question is whether the Act should require an amendment by Parliament to change the core functions of such bodies.

- In various laws such as the Aadhaar Act, 2016, and the National Medical Commission Act, 2019, the functions of the regulatory body are specified in the Act with a provision to expand the functions through notification. Note that the functions mentioned in these Acts cannot be curtailed except through an Amendment Act passed by Parliament. In the 2010 Act, functions of all authorities were specified in the Act.

CLIMATE REFUGEES

Government made a statement in Lok Sabha about its strategy in place to deal with climate refugees.

CLIMATE REFUGEES

- A “refugee” is defined as a person who has crossed an international border “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees).

- In some contexts, the definition extends to persons fleeing “events seriously disturbing public order” (1969 OAU Convention 1984 Cartagena Declaration).

- Climate change affects people inside their own countries, and typically creates internal displacement before it reaches a level where it displaces people across borders.

- However, there may be situations where the refugee criteria of the 1951 Convention or the broader refugee criteria of regional refugee law frameworks could apply. People may have a valid claim for refugee status, for example, where the adverse effects of climate change interact with armed conflict and violence. Building on its study 'In Harm's Way,' in 2020, UNHCR issued Legal Considerations to guide interpretation and steer international discussion on such claims.

- Regardless, the term “climate refugee” is not endorsed by UNHCR, and it is more accurate to refer to “persons displaced in the context of disasters and climate change.”

LIFE - LIFESTYLE FOR ENVIRONMENT

#SUSTAINABILITY #CLIMATE CHANGE

At the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Glasgow, United Kingdom, India shared the mantra of LIFE - Lifestyle for Environment - to combat climate change.

Goal 12 of the SDG is to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns focussing on waste management (both municipal and hazardous), food loss reduction, waste recycling and reuse, and sustainability in industries such as tourism. SDG 12 calls for a change in present lifestyle to one that is more sustainable.

As part of the United Nations Decade of Action for attainment of SDGs, India has initiated several measures for promoting Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy, including for prevention and management of waste. Concepts of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and Circular Economy are based on principles of reduce-reuse-recycle and are relevant for promoting sustainable consumption and production. NITI Aayog has constituted Committees for development of circular economy (CE) action plans for distinct categories of wastes.


MoEFCC launched the Green Good Deeds (GGDs) movement as a social movement with the aim to bring
about mass environmental awareness in the society at all levels. GGDs are simple, practical steps that any individual may perform in day-to-day life to adopt an environment-friendly lifestyle. A compilation of such deeds has also been published under the title ‘Green Deeds & Habits for Sustainable Environment.’ Promotion of GGDs among school and college students has been taken up under the National Green Corps (NGC) “Eco-club” programme. Cleanliness drives, plantation drives, awareness on waste management, minimizing use of single-use plastic, eco-friendly celebration of festivals, etc. are some of the activities undertaken by Eco-club students.

COMPONENTS OF LIFE

• From dispose economy to circular economy: In a linear/dispose economy we mine raw materials that we process into a product that is thrown away after use. In a circular economy, we close the cycles of all these raw materials. It aims to increase the lifecycle of goods through reuse, recycling and repairs.

• 3Ps – Pro Planet People: People and planet are interconnected. Life as we know today cannot exist if either are destroyed. The aim is to encourage people to lead the lifestyle having a smaller carbon footprint, leading to a more sustainable use of the environment.

• Eliminating/ Reducing throw away culture: Under throwaway culture, economy is strongly influenced by consumerism. It features overconsumption and a preference for short-lived products, which maximise profit, rather than creating durable goods that don't need constant replacing.

• One World: Climate change is a global phenomenon. No individual country could solve this problem alone. Thus, there is need for international cooperation and coordination to better tackle the challenge.

MAKE SUSTAINABLE FOOD CHOICES

• Production, processing, packaging, and transportation of food is highly dependent on the use of fossil fuels and chemical fertilizers. These can harm our health and the health of the environment.

• A food system that provides healthy, sustainable choices, minimizes environmental impacts, and serves as a model for the broader public health community.

• Farmers can make their food more sustainable by limiting pesticide use and treating their animals humanely and responsibly. Consumers can select food produced close to home and reduce the impact of our food system on the environment by lessening the distance food travels from farm to table.

USE ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

• Pollutants released by vehicles increase air pollution levels and have been linked to adverse health effects, including premature mortality, cardiac symptoms, exacerbation of asthma symptoms, and diminished lung function.

• To minimize the damaging impact of our current transportation choices, try adopting more sustainable methods of travel.

MAKE GREEN UPDATES AT HOME

• Sustainably resourced and reclaimed materials

• Low flow sinks and toilets

• Energy-efficient appliances, lighting, and heating and cooling systems

• Smart home systems such as thermostats that can be controlled via apps

• Air-tight insulation to reduce energy leaks

• Dater filtrations systems

• Double-pane windows and doors that transmit little to no heat

• Solar panels

• Non-toxic paint, carpeting, and furniture with lower levels of volatile organic compounds (low-VOC).

DRIVERS OF LIFESTYLE OF A PERSON/ SOCIETY

• Values: They are the underpinning of way of life choices as individuals will consume to satisfy esteem loaded goals. Values can be at the individual or more extensive social or moral levels.

• Income level: This is one of the strongest lifestyle indicators and drivers of consumption. Also, there is compounded social pressure to maintain lifestyle levels once adopted.

• Ability: People's abilities are influenced by many things e.g., age, geography, climatic conditions, which in turn affect lifestyle decisions.

• Awareness: Awareness of consumption impacts, at the individual and collective levels, can shape choices. Awareness can have a multiplier effect.

• Knowledge: The availability (or the lack) of knowledge and information on products, services, and alternative
options can often encourage or hinder lifestyles choices.

- **Social norms and peers:** Our lifestyles are heavily influenced by those around us: family background, social circles, colleague expectations, professional decorum and social practices.
- **Media:** The media with its far reach into our lives is one of the strongest influences on values, social norms and lifestyles, spreading and accelerating the social norms of consumerism.
- **Market prices:** Market prices determine who can afford market options. When more sustainable products or services are priced higher than the less sustainable alternatives, the sustainable option is less competitive.
- **Technology:** Characteristics such as complexity, resource efficiency, indigenousness, and affordability influence the uptake and use of technologies.
- **Policies and institutional frameworks:** These have a powerful influence on all stakeholders and lifestyle directions. Hard (e.g., penalties and subsidies) and soft (e.g., nudging and voluntary standards) policy instruments can shift the entire consumption architecture.

### STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING LIFE

- **REDuse framework:** The Refuse, Effuse and Diffuse (REDuse) framework supports bottom-up approaches, encourages programmes and actions that directly empower individuals and households in their daily lives (and, indirectly, communities), enabling them to understand, create and/or choose the more sustainable lifestyle options.
- **Attitude-Facilitator-Infrastructure (AFI) framework** is a top-down approach to support government policy, business models, institutional arrangements, and actions that set the conditions necessary for sustainable lifestyles to thrive.
  - **Attitude** – pro-sustainability value orientation
  - **Facilitators/ Access** – institutional arrangements and enablers
  - **Sustainability infrastructure** – the hardware and systems of provision.

### FOREST COVER IN INDIA

National Forest Policy 1988 envisages to have a minimum of one-third of the total land area of the country under forest or tree cover. Continuous efforts are being made to achieve the goals as envisaged in the National Forest Policy and over the years the Forest and Tree cover of the country has been showing a positive trend. This increase may be attributed to plantation/ afforestation activities, better conservation and protection measures, natural regeneration and enhancement of existing forests.

The Forest Cover reported in India State of Forest Report does not make any distinction between the origin of tree crops (whether natural or manmade) or tree species and encompasses all types of lands irrespective of their ownership, land use and legal status. Thus, all the tree species along with bamboos, fruit bearing trees, coconut palm trees etc. on all the areas including forest, private, community, government or institutional land where coverage is more than one hectare and canopy density is more than 10% are termed as Forest Cover.

As per decision 19/Conference of Parties (CoP) 9-Kyoto Protocol, the forest can be defined by any country depending upon the capacities and capabilities of the country as follows: -

- **Forest** - Forest is defined structurally based on
  - Crown cover percentage: Tree crown cover- 10 to 30% (India 10%)
  - Minimum area of stand: area between 0.05 and 1 hectare (India 1.0 hectare) and
  - Minimum height of trees: Potential to reach a minimum height at maturity in situ of 2 to 5 m (India 2m)

India's definition of forest for India State of Forest Report (ISFR) purposes has been taken based on above three criteria only and very well accepted by United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for their reporting/communications.

National Mission for a Green India (GIM) is one of the eight Missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change. It aims at protecting, restoring and enhancing India’s forest cover and responding to Climate Change. The target under the Mission is 10 m ha on forest and
non-forest lands for increasing the forest/tree cover and to improve the quality of existing forest. The detail of state-wise funds released and utilized under the National Mission for a Green India during the last three years is given in Annexure-1.

Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO), NITI Aayog, has conducted the Evaluation of National Mission for a Green India in 2020-21 on aspects such as Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability, Impacts and Equity within the scheme and has further recommended the continuation of scheme.

**FINDINGS OF THE REPORT**

- **Forest cover changes:**
  - The country’s forest and tree cover has increased by 1,540 square kilometres in the last two years.
  - India’s forest cover has increased to 7,13,789 square kilometres, accounting for 21.71 percent of the country’s land area, up from 21.67 percent in 2019.
  - Tree cover has increased by 721 sq km.

- **Performance of states:**
  - **Biggest increases:** Telangana (3.07 percent), Andhra Pradesh (2.22 percent), and Odisha (3.07 percent) have the biggest increases in forest cover (1.04 percent).
  - **Deterioration:** Five states in the Northeast – Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland.
  - **States with Highest Forest Area/Cover:**
    - Area-wise: Madhya Pradesh > Arunachal Pradesh > Chhattisgarh > Odisha > Maharashtra.
    - Forest cover as percentage of total geographical area: Mizoram > Arunachal Pradesh > Meghalaya > Manipur > Nagaland.

- **Carbon Stocks:**
  - The total carbon stock in the country’s forests is estimated at 7,204 million tonnes, an increase of 79.4 million tonnes since 2019.

- **Mangroves:**
  - Mangroves have shown an increase of 17 sq km. India’s total mangrove cover is now 4,992 sq km.

- **Forest Prone to Fires:**
  - 35.46% of the forest cover is prone to forest fires. Out of this, 2.81% is extremely prone, 7.85% is very highly prone and 11.51% is highly prone.
  - By 2030, 45-64% of forests in India will experience the effects of climate change and rising temperatures.
  - Forests in all states (except Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Nagaland) will be highly vulnerable climate hot spots. Ladakh (forest cover 0.1-0.2%) is likely to be the most affected.

- **Bamboo Forests:**
  - Bamboo forests have grown from 13,882 million culms (stems) in 2019 to 53,336 million culms in 2021.

- **Forest cover in Tiger reserves:**
  - The forest cover in tiger corridors has increased by 37.15 sq km (0.32%) between 2011-2021 but decreased by 22.6 sq km (0.04%) in tiger reserves.
  - Forest cover has increased in 20 tiger reserves in these 10 years and decreased in 32.
  - Pakke Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh has the highest forest cover, at 97%.

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**FRONTIERS 2022: NOISE, BLAZES AND MISMATCHES**

A February report commissioned by the United Nations Environment Program on the environmental challenges posed by noise, wildfires and the disruption of biological rhythms of plants, animals and ecological cycles became controversial on account of the mention of a single city, Moradabad.

**EMERGING ISSUES ARE PRESENTED FRONTIERS REPORT, 2022: NOISE, BLAZES AND MISMATCHES**

- **Chapter titled Listening to Cities:** From Noisy Environments to Positive Soundscapes draws attention to noise pollution and its long-term physical and mental health impacts, along with measures that can be implemented to create positive and restorative soundscapes in urban areas.
• Chapter titled Wildfires Under Climate Change: A Burning Issue discusses the role of climate change and human influence in the changing wildfire regimes around the world, the impacts of wildfires on the environment and human health, and the measures that can help to prevent, respond and build resilience to wildfires.

• Chapter titled Phenology: Climate Change is shifting the rhythm of nature looks at how climate change is disrupting the life cycle patterns of plant and animal species, its consequences, and the need to address this issue by restoring ecological connectivity and biological diversity and most importantly, reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

NOISE POLLUTION
• The first chapter of the report, called Frontiers 2022: Noise, Blazes and Mismatches, deals with noise.
• It compiles studies about noise levels in several cities around the world and illustrates a subset of 61 cities and the range of dB (decibel) levels that have been measured.
• Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata, Asansol and Moradabad are the five Indian cities mentioned in this list and Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh was shown as having a dB range from 29 to 114. At a maximum value of 114, it was the second-most-noisiest city in the list.
• The first was Dhaka, Bangladesh at a maximum value of 119 dB.

CONTROVERSY IN THE REPORT
The first chapter of the February UNEP report compiles studies about noise levels in several cities around the world. Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata, Asansol and Moradabad are the five Indian cities mentioned in this list. Moradabad had never been suggested as an unusually noisy city. The author of that chapter said that the confusion stemmed from errors in the bibliography.

Adverse effects of noise pollution on public health range from mild and temporary distress to severe and chronic physical impairment.

INDIAN TENT TURTLE
#BIODIVERSITY #WILDLIFE

Indian tent turtle is listed in Schedule –I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and is thereby provided the highest degree of protection. There are no reports to indicate that the Indian tent turtle is on the verge of extinction due to illegal mining in Narmada River.

• The species is native to India, Nepal and Bangladesh, with three subspecies recorded from the region viz., P. t. tentoria, P. t. circumdata and P. t. flaviventer.
• P. t. tentoria occurs in peninsular India and is recorded from Orissa, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Madhya Pradesh.
• P. t. circumdata occurs in the western tributaries of Ganga and the rivers of Gujarat. It is found in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat.
• P. t. flaviventer occurs in the northern tributaries of Ganga and is recorded from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Assam.
• Its habitats include still water pools on river side and slow running water near the riverbanks. These are active swimmers and are mainly herbivorous.
• IUCN Status: Least Concern.

The Zoological Survey has not conducted any survey in the Narmada River on impact of illegal mining on Indian tent turtle and its effect on river ecosystem.
Q.1) **Consider the following:**
1. To flush growth of tendu leaves
2. Rubbing of dry bamboo clumps
Which of the causes given above is/are not responsible for forest fires?
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 Nor 2

Q.2) **Consider the following statements:**
1. Biogas contains about 55-65 % of methane, 35-44 % of carbon dioxide and traces of other gases, such as Hydrogen Sulphide, Nitrogen and Ammonia.
2. Biogas, in its raw form, that is without any purification, can be used as clean cooking fuel like LPG, lighting, motive power and generation of electricity.
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

Q.3) **Consider the following statements regarding Dam Safety Act, 2021**
1. The National Committee on Dam Safety, whose functions include implementing policies of the National Committee, and resolving matters between State Dam Safety Organisations (SDSOs), or between a SDSO and any dam owner in that state.
2. The National Dam Safety Authority, whose functions include evolving policies and recommending regulations regarding dam safety.
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

Q.4) **Consider the following statements about Indian Tent Turtle:**
1. It is a critically endangered species of turtle.
2. It is found in the marine environment.
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

Q.5) **According to the Frontiers Report, which of the following is most Noise Polluted City in the World?**
(a) New Delhi (b) Moradabad (c) Dhaka (d) Asansol

**Answers:** 1-d, 2-c, 3-d, 4-d, 5-c
In collaboration with Pine Labs, Google Pay has recently announced a new feature in India called 'Tap to pay for UPI,' which allows users to pay using their smartphones. Near Field Communication (NFC) technology is used to implement this functionality.

**NFC TECHNOLOGY**
- NFC technology is a short-range wireless networking technology that enables NFC-enabled devices to interact with one another and transmit information with a single touch.
- It makes it easy to pay bills, swap business cards, download coupons, and share a document with other people.

**WORKING OF NFC TECHNOLOGY**
- It uses electromagnetic radio waves to communication to allow communication between two devices to take place. Because transactions take occur over such a small distance, both devices must be equipped with NFC technology.
- Devices must be physically contacting or within a few centimetres of one another for data transmission to take place between them.

**HISTORY OF NFC**
- In 2004, consumer electronics firms Nokia, Philips, and Sony joined together to establish the NFC Forum, which specified the architecture for NFC technology to be used in new consumer-oriented devices.
- In 2007, Nokia introduced the world's first NFC-enabled phone.

**USE OF NFC FOR "TAP TO PAY" WITH UPI**
- Google Pay is the first UPI app to make the Tap to Pay functionality available on POS terminals, making it the first of its kind.
- Users having UPI accounts setup on Google Pay will be able to make payments simply by touching their NFC-enabled Android smartphones on any Pine Labs Android POS terminal.
- When customers touch their phones on the POS terminal, Google Pay app will instantly launch with the payment amount already pre-filled.
- Using their UPI PIN, users may then double-check the amount and merchant name, and then authenticate the transaction.
- The procedure is far quicker than scanning a QR code or manually inputting the UPI-linked cell phone number, which has been the customary method up till this point in time.

**APPLICATIONS OF NFC TECHNOLOGY**
- Used in contactless banking cards to facilitate money transactions.
- Generation of contactless public transportation tickets.
- Network and building security
- Inventory and sales monitoring
- Preventing auto theft and keeping track of library books.
- In speakers, home appliances, and other electrical items that we can manage using our mobile devices.
- May also be used to set up Wi-Fi and Bluetooth gadgets in our houses with a single touch.
- NFC-enabled wristbands may be used to track patient data in the hospital setting.
• Used for wireless charging.

SAFETY OF NFC TECHNOLOGY
• Using NFC technology, devices can communicate with each other while they are just a few centimetres apart from each other. This makes it more difficult for attackers to record the communication between devices when compared to other wireless technologies, which have a larger working distance.
• User of NFC-enabled device decides which entity NFC communication should take place with by using a touch gesture, making it more difficult for the attacker to establish a connection with the device.
• When compared to other wireless communication protocols, security of NFC communication is greater.

COMPARISON OF NFC WITH OTHER WIRELESS TECHNOLOGIES
• IrDA technology (Infrared Data Association) operates at small ranges (a few metres) and is based on the transmission of data through infrared light, and the two communication devices must be in direct line of sight to work. Currently, this technology is mostly used in the manufacture of remote-control devices. Bluetooth and Wi-Fi connections have mostly taken over for this technology in terms of big data transfer between computing devices.
• However, because of the longer operating distance required by these technologies, the receiver devices need their own power source. Consequently, the receiving device cannot be powered by the radiofrequency (RF) field, as is the case with Near Field Communication (NFC), according to the NFC forum.
• Another effect of the increased working distance is the need for the user to setup their device and link them together to communicate with the device.

RECOMBINANT VARIANTS OF SARS-COV-2

Recently, World Health Organization (WHO) announced the detection of an emerging variety of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, known as the XE recombinant.
Having these two SARS-CoV-2 lineages near one another creates a possibility for recombination to occur between the two lineages.

**HOW MANY RECOMBINANT VIRUSES HAVE BEEN DETECTED?**

- While recombination events have not been detected often in the SARS-CoV-2 virus throughout the pandemic, many recombinant lineages have been identified during the outbreak.
- Annotation of recombinant lineages by PANGO is indicated by a ‘X’ followed by an alphabet indicating the order in which they were discovered.
- Lineages such as XA, which was discovered in the United Kingdom and is a recombinant of B.1.177 and B.1.177, lineage XB discovered in the United States, and lineage XC discovered in Japan, which is a recombinant of B.1.1.7 (Alpha) and the AY.29 sub lineage of Delta, are examples of previously discovered and designated lineages.
- There are three novel recombinant lineages of SARS-CoV-2 that have been recently identified and are being tracked by the PANGO network. These are the XD, XE, and XF lineages.
- Even though XF is present in just a small fraction of the genomes in the United Kingdom, preliminary data from the nation indicate that the virus is transmitted across communities.

**EFFECT OF RECOMBINANT VARIANTS**

- Even though recombination has been discovered in SARS-CoV-2, it has not yet had a major influence on public health in a novel manner.
- When compared to the presently prevalent Omicron form, there is minimal evidence to imply that recombinant lineages have a more variable clinical result than the original.
- Determine the influence of these lineages on the epidemiology of COVID-19, further data will be required at this time, it is certain now.

**METHODS FOR IDENTIFICATION OF RECOMBINANTS**

- SARS-CoV-2 recombinant lineages are difficult to identify and track down, making this a difficult endeavour.
- Accomplish this, it would be necessary to have access to specialised tools and primary (or raw) data for genome sequences. This is necessary because similar variant combinations could arise from unintentional sequencing or analysis errors as well as contamination of sequencing experiments.
- Once the PANGO network has determined that samples in the cluster are descended from two distinct lineages of SARS-CoV-2, it may assign a lineage name to the group of recombinant genomes that formed the cluster.
- Additionally, there should be at least 5 genomes in the public domain that are members of the cluster, showing that the lineage is still being transmitted.
- Furthermore, while evaluating the sequencing data of these samples, it should be clear that there is no evidence of contamination and that the samples satisfy the criteria of a recombinant gene.

**WAY AHEAD**

- It is unknown how and why the viruses recombine since recombination are infrequent events.
- Follow the recombination of SARS-CoV-2 lineages, which may result in the formation of a viral lineage that is more effective at infecting humans and spreading from host to host, it is necessary to do genetic analysis on the virus.
- The monitoring of circulating SARS-CoV-2 genomes for indications of recombination would aid in the development of a better understanding of the virus’s continuous evolution, according to the researchers.
- It will also offer information if a more “disappointing” strain of the virus is discovered.

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**MICROBOTS FOR DRUG DELIVERY**

*The Hindu*

An Indian researcher has discovered that it is feasible to use light as a fuel to drive microbots in real-world situations with intelligent medication delivery that is selectively sensitive to cancer cells, according to the journal *Science*.

**MICROSWIMMERS**

- These microbots, which are made of the two-dimensional substance poly (heptazine-imide) carbon nitride (also known as PHI carbon nitride), are nothing like the miniaturised people they are based on.
These nanoparticles vary in size from 1 to 10 micrometres (a micrometre is one-millionth of a metre), and when stimulated by light, they can drive themselves forward.

In contrast to carbon nitride, which has strong photocatalytic characteristics, the two-dimensional PHI has a sponge-like structure that is replete of holes and voids and possesses charge storage properties.

The researchers discovered that the ions in the saline solution were able to flow through the pores of PHI carbon nitride without being trapped. Because of this, there was little to no resistance from the sodium ions.

**HOW DO THEY SWIM ACROSS THE BLOOD?**

- PHI carbon nitride microparticles displays photocatalytic activity. The incident light is transformed into electrons and holes, just as it would be in a solar cell.
- These charges operate as catalysts for processes in the liquid around them. The charges interact with the fluid in which they are suspended.
- The microbots (micro-swimmers) swim because of this reaction, which is aided by electric field generated by the particle.
- Whenever there is light, electrons and holes are formed on surface of swimmers’ bodies, which react with one another to form ions and an electric field surrounding the body of the swimmer.
- These ions migrate around the particle, causing fluid to flow around the particle in the process. As a result, the micro-swimmers are propelled by the fluid flow.

**ION MOVEMENT**

- The ions migrate from the light surface of the micro-swimmer to the back end of the device.
- The diffusion of the swimming medium in one direction causes the micro-swimmer to move in the opposite direction of the medium diffusion.
- This is analogous to a boat propelling itself in the opposite direction of the oar strokes.
- The particles are spherical in shape, and the incoming light lights one-half of the sphere while leaving the other half completely black.
- Since photocatalysis is light-driven, it can only occur on the brighter hemisphere.

- Micro-swimmers march in the direction of the light source as the ions flow from the bright side to the dark side of the ion channel.
• The Geostationary Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) has the potential of launching a bigger payload into orbit than the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).
• The PSLV can launch satellites into orbit with a total weight of up to 2000 kg and reaching altitudes of 600-900 km.
• The GSLV has a carrying capacity of up to 5,000 kg and a range of up to 36,000 km.
• In contrast to the PSLV, which is primarily intended for the delivery of earth observation or remote sensing satellites, the GSLV is intended for the launch of communication satellites.
• GSLV is responsible for delivering satellites into higher elliptical orbits, such as Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) and Geosynchronous Earth Orbit (GEO) (GEO).

VACCINES ARE ADMINISTERED INTO THE UPPER ARM

#SCIENCE #BIOLOGY #HEALTH

Everyone who has gotten a Covid-19 vaccination in the previous 16 months will recall receiving a fast prick in the upper arm because of the procedure.

REASONS BEHIND VACCINE ADMINISTRATION INTO UPPER ARM
• Most vaccinations are effective when delivered intramuscularly into deltoid muscle, in the upper arm.
• Deltoid the muscles have a well-developed blood supply system.
• The antigen is released by the muscle whenever a vaccination containing the antigen is put into it, and it is disseminated via the muscular vasculature, which is the arrangement of blood vessels in the muscle.
• An immune cell known as dendritic cells then picks up the antigen and transmits it to other cells in the immune system, which is how the antigen is detected in the first place.
• Antigen is transported to lymph node by dendritic cells, which are found in the lymphatic fluid.

• Immunogenicity — capacity of any cell or tissue to elicit an immune response — of certain vaccinations, such as the rabies vaccine, is increased when vaccine is delivered intravenously rather than orally.
• These vaccines have a decreased immunogenicity when injected in subcutaneous fat tissues situated at the thigh or hips, and there is a greater likelihood of vaccination failure when administered in these tissues.

ROLE OF T CELLS
• T cells (T lymphocytes) are leukocytes (white blood cell) and vital component of immune system.
• T cells are one of two basic kinds of lymphocytes (B cells are the other type), and they are responsible for determining the specificity of immune response to antigens (foreign substances). T cells are found in the bloodstream and lymph nodes.
• It has become clear that the lymph nodes include T cells and B cells, which serve as the body's principal protector cells.
• Once this antigen has been identified and distributed to T cells and B cells, we may begin to create an immune response against a specific virus.
• It might be any of the new viruses or any of the earlier viruses, for which we have been conducting vaccine campaigns in recent years.

OTHER OPTIONS FOR VACCINATION
• Contrarily, when vaccination is injected into subcutaneous adipose tissue [between the skin and muscle], which has a weak blood supply, absorption of the antigen vaccine is low and as a result, the immunological response may be compromised, leading to failure of the immune system.
• Similarly, additives that may be harmful may create a local response in the presence of other substances.
• Similarly, when vaccination is delivered intradermally, same effect might happen (just below outermost skin layer, epidermis).
• As a result, intramuscular route is currently the preferred option for most vaccinations.
• The muscles also contain less pain receptors than epidermis or subcutaneous tissue, which means that an intramuscular injection does not hurt as much as a subcutaneous or an intradermal injection.

VACCINES ARE NOT ADMINISTERED IN VEINS
This is done to guarantee 'depot effect,' or delayed release of drug over time, which allows for greater efficacy over a longer period.

When administered intravenously, vaccine is absorbed into blood in a brief period. It takes some time for the vaccination to be absorbed via the intramuscular route.

Wherever a vaccination program is implemented, it is implemented for benefit of public.

The oral route would be most convenient method of delivering the vaccination (like the polio vaccine).

The intramuscular method is preferred over the intravenous route for various vaccinations that must be provided intravenously or intramuscularly (allowing for more field-based administration). The intramuscular approach is preferred over the intravenous route from a public health standpoint.

**VACCINES ADMINISTERED THROUGH OTHER ROUTES**

- Scarification of the skin was used to administer one of the first vaccinations, which was for smallpox.
- Doctors eventually realised that there are better methods to vaccinate recipients.
- The intradermal route, subcutaneous route, intramuscular route, oral route, and nasal route were among options.
- There are just two exceptions to this rule, and both are medications that are still taken via the intradermal method. They are BCG (Bacillus Calmette–Guérin) and TB vaccinations, since both vaccines have been shown to be effective in clinical trials when delivered intradermally.

**WHO & TRADITIONAL MEDICINE**

In Jamnagar, Gujarat, Prime Minister Modi was joined by World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus for the ceremonial ground-breaking of the first-of-its-kind WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM).

**ABOUT TRADITIONAL MEDICINE**

Conventional medicine is defined by WHO as a "collective sum of indigenous and other cultures' knowledge, skills and practises that have been utilised throughout time to preserve health and to prevent, diagnose and treat physical and mental disease."

Its scope includes both traditional treatments such as acupuncture, ayurvedic medicine, and herbal mixes, as well as contemporary drugs like as chemotherapy and radiation therapy.

According to WHO, traditional medicine is used by 80% of world's population.

**TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN INDIA**

- When it comes to Indian tradition, it is frequently characterised as comprising practises and treatments that have traditionally been a part of it, such as Yoga, Ayurveda, and Siddha. It also includes practises and therapies that have been a part of Indian tradition through time, such as homoeopathy.
- There is a lot of Ayurveda and Yoga practise all around the nation.
- Tamil Nadu and Kerala are the states where the Siddha system is most widely practised.
- Most people in Leh-Ladakh and Himalayan areas like as Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Darjeeling, Lahaul & Spiti practise the Sowa-Rigpa System, which originated in Tibet.
- In also has Islamic heritage of Unani medicinal system.

**GLOBAL CENTRE FOR TRADITIONAL MEDICINE (GCTM)**

- It will seek to maximise the contribution of traditional medicine to global health by focusing on evidence-based research, innovation, and data analysis.
- Its primary priority will be the development of norms, standards, and recommendations.
- It will work to establish regulations and standards for traditional medicine goods, as well as to assist nations in developing a comprehensive, safe, and high-quality health-care infrastructure.
- It will assist efforts to execute the World Health Organization's Traditional Medicine Strategy (2014-23).
- It will function as the focal point for policy development, with a particular emphasis on developing a "convincing evidence foundation" for policies and "assisting nations in integrating it as appropriate into their health systems."
RATIONAL BEHIND WHO'S EMPHASIS FOR TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

- WHO members have said that traditional medicine is widely used in their countries.
- They have requested its assistance in developing a body of trustworthy evidence and data on traditional medicine practices and products. European Union has agreed to provide this assistance.
- WHO has discovered that national health systems and plans do not yet completely integrate traditional medicine personnel, recognised courses, and health-care facilities.
- It has emphasised the need of preserving biodiversity and long-term sustainability, given that around 40% of already licenced pharmaceutical products are derived from natural ingredients.
- It has been used for modernisation of methods through which traditional medicine is being explored. Evidence and trends in conventional medicine are being mapped using artificial intelligence (AI) technology.

VAGSHEER

Vagsheer is called after sandfish, which is a deep-sea predator living in the Indian Ocean’s deep waters.

The first submarine, the Russian-built Vagsheer, was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1974, and was decommissioned in 1997, after serving for over three decades.

The official name of the new Vagsheer will be announced at the time of its commissioning.

SPECIFICATIONS

- Vagsheer has a capacity of eight officers and up to thirty-five men.
- It is 67.5 metres in length and 12.3 metres in height, with a beam that measures 6.2 metres in width. When underwater, Vagsheer can attain speeds of up to twenty knots, and when it resurfaces, it can reach speeds of up to 11 knots.
- It is powered by four MTU 12V 396 SE84 diesel engines, 360 battery cells, and a Permanently Magnetised Propulsion Motor that is completely quiet while in operation.
- The hull, fin, and hydroplanes are all engineered to have the least amount of underwater resistance possible, and all the equipment within the pressure hull is installed on shock-absorbing cradles to provide greater stealth and manoeuvrability.

FEATURES

- Vagsheer is a diesel-powered assault submarine that is meant to engage in sea denial as well as access denial warfare against its adversaries.
- It is outfitted with a C303 anti-torpedo countermeasure system for further protection.
- It has the capability of transporting up to eighteen torpedoes or Exocet anti-ship missiles, or thirty mines in lieu of torpedoes, depending on the configuration.
- Advanced acoustic absorption methods, low radiated noise levels, and a hydrodynamically optimised form are some of the attributes that make it an excellent stealth weapon.
- Precision directed weaponry, either below or on the surface, may be used to launch a debilitating strike, causing widespread devastation.

VARIOUS CLASSES OF SUBMARINES IN INDIA

- Since 2012, the Chakra Class has been on a 10-year lease with Russia.
- Submarines of the Arihant class, which are nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines
- Diesel-electric attack submarines of the Shishumar Class, designed by the Indian Navy as a version of the Type 209 submarines produced by the German Navy.
- Kalvari DCNS Sindhughosh is a class of diesel-electric assault submarines developed by the French manufacturer DCNS. Kilo-class diesel-electric submarines constructed with the assistance of the Russian Federation.
- Scorpene-class submarines are French submarines that can conduct a wide range of duties, including anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, intelligence collection, mine laying and area monitoring, among others.

**SPACE BRICKS FROM MARTIAN SOIL**

With the aid of bacteria and urea, researchers from Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Indian Institute of Science (IISc) have created a method for making bricks from Martian soil.

**ABOUT SPACE BRICKS**

- ISRO and IISc have teamed together to create a new scalable method for producing space bricks using Martian Simulant Soil (MSS).
- The slurry was originally generated by combining Martian soil with guar gum, Sporosarcina pasteurii bacteria, urea, and nickel chloride (NiCl2).
- This slurry may be put into any form mould, and bacteria will convert the urea into calcium carbonate crystals over the course of a few days.
- These crystals, in combination with biopolymers generated by bacteria, serve as a cement that holds soil particles together.
- This process makes the bricks less porous, which was a concern with previous Martian brick-making technologies.
- The bacteria enter deep into the pore spaces, binding the particles together with their own proteins, reducing porosity and resulting in stronger bricks.

**SIGNIFICANCE**

- Previously, researchers have used a similar process to make bricks from lunar dirt.
- These 'space bricks' may be used to form building-like structures on Mars, facilitating human settlement.

**JUPITER’S MOON EUROPA**

According to Stanford University researchers, Europa, one of Jupiter’s moons, may contain an abundance of water pockets under structures known as double ridges, making it a potential contender for life in the solar system.

**ABOUT EUROPA**

- Europa is smaller than Earth's moon and has quarter of the Earth's diameter.
- Despite its scant oxygen atmosphere, Europa is regarded as one of the most promising locations in the solar system for finding circumstances suitable for life beyond Earth.
- Astronomers believe that underneath Europa's frozen surface, there is twice as much water as on Earth.
- Europa's ice shell 15-25 km thick and floating over an ocean that is 60-150 km deep.
- In 2024, NASA plans to launch the Europa Clipper mission. The module will circle Jupiter and travel close to Europa many times to collect data on the moon's atmosphere, surface and interior.

**NEW FINDINGS**

- Europa, whose surface is primarily solid water ice, is known to possess water underneath it.
- The twin ridges - the structures that are most frequent on Europa's surface and are identical to those observed on Earth's Greenland ice sheet. These ridges have shallow water pockets.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RECENT FINDINGS**

- The shallow water pockets under the double ridge boost the moon's potential habitability.
- The ice layer, which might be kilometers thick, has proven challenging to sample for scientists.
- According to fresh data, the ice shell is thought to be more of a dynamic system than a barrier.
• This indicates that the ice shell does not act like a solid block of ice but undergoes geological and hydrological processes.
• This points to active volcanism and, by extension, the potential of life.

BLUE STRAGGLER STARS

The eccentricities of blue straggler stars have been investigated by researchers from the Indian Institute of Astrophysics in Bengaluru, India.

ABOUT BLUE STRAGGLER STARS

• When a main-sequence star in an open or globular cluster is brighter and bluer than other stars at the main sequence turnoff point for the cluster, the star is referred to as a "blue straggler."
• Allan Sandage found the first blue stragglers in 1953 while doing photometry on the stars in the globular cluster M3. He was working on the globular cluster M3 at the time of his discovery.

WHAT DID THE INDIAN RESEARCHERS STUDY?

• Eccentricity is the divergence of a planet’s or star’s orbit from circularity, the higher the eccentricity, the greater the elliptical nature of the orbit. Eccentricity is measured in degrees per revolution.
• Additionally, UVIT instrument (Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope) of ASTROSAT, India’s first scientific observatory in orbit, was used to gather this information.

STELLAR AGING OF STARS

• It is vital to understand how stars are categorised to grasp what blue stragglers are.
• Because our Sun is a main sequence star, it is predicted that after it has turned all its hydrogen into helium, its core will get denser and its outer layers will expand. This is because our Sun has a mass and age that are consistent with this expectation.
• As a result, it will swell to the size of a red giant. After this phase, with its fuel depleted, the star will shrink, eventually becoming a smaller, cooling star known as a white dwarf star towards conclusion of its life span.

• We may plot a graph of a star’s colour, which indicates its surface temperature, against its magnitude, which is connected to total energy it emits, to examine star’s behaviour.
• If we do this for all the stars in a globular cluster, we will see that a huge percentage of them fall into a band known as the main sequence.
• Our Sun is also a main sequence star, and all main sequence stars are expected to follow a path of development like that of our Sun.
• A few celebrities, just at the point in their life when they should be increasing in size and cooling off, do the exact opposite.
• They get brighter, hotter, and bluer in colour, standing out on the colour-magnitude diagram from the cooler red stars in their proximity.
• They are termed stragglers because they lag their fellows in evolution, and blue stragglers because of their bright blue colour.

REASONS FOR BLUE STRAGGLERS BEHAVIOUR

• A blue straggler is larger and more active than predicted.
• One, they do not belong to cluster’s star family and hence are not anticipated to exhibit group traits.
• Second, the straggler absorbs stuff from the gigantic partner and becomes larger, hotter, and bluer, while the red giant shrinks to a normal or smaller white dwarf.
• Third theory is that straggler takes stuff from a companion star, but that this process is aided by a third star.

SMALL SATELLITE LAUNCH VEHICLE (SSLV)

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) hopes to complete all three of its Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) development missions by 2022.

ABOUT SSLV

• SSLV is an ISRO-developed small-lift launch vehicle having a payload capability of 600 kg to Low Earth
Orbit (500 km) or 300 kg to Sun-synchronous Orbit (500 km)

- It would aid in the launch of tiny satellites and allow for repeated orbital drop-offs.
- A specialised launch pad dubbed the Small Satellite Launch Complex (SSLC) will be built at Sriharikota in the future.
- SSLV launches will be managed after a new spaceport in Kulasekharapatnam in Tamil Nadu is completed.
- After entering the operational phase, a consortium of Indian companies, including New Space India Limited, would produce and launch the rocket (NSIL).

**VEHICLE DETAILS**

- **Dimensions:** Height of thirty-four metres, diameter of 2 m and 120 tonne mass.
- **Propulsion:** The vehicle will launch in four stages. The first three stages will employ solid propellant based on hydroxyl-terminated polybutadiene (HTPB), with a Velocity-Trimming Module as the fourth stage (VTM).

**SSLV VS. PSLV**

- The SSLV was created with the goal of commercially launching small satellites at a lower cost and with a greater launch rate than the Polar SLV (PSLV).
- The expected high launch rate is based on mostly autonomous launch operations and simplified logistics in general.
- A PSLV launch, for example, requires six hundred personnel, but the SSLV launch would be controlled by a tiny team of six individuals.
- Instead of months, the SSLV's launch readiness is predicted to be less than a week.
- SSLV can launch satellites weighing up to five hundred kilogrammes into low earth orbit, whereas PSLV can launch spacecraft weighing up to 1000 kg.
- The whole project would be completed in a brief period, and the cost to SSLV will be Rs 30 crore.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF SSLV**

- SSLV is ideal for simultaneously launching several microsatellites and allowing for multiple orbital drop-offs.
- SSLV’s development and production are intended to foster increased collaboration between the space industry and private Indian enterprises, which is a fundamental goal of the space ministry.

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**FIRST HUMAN CASE OF H3N8 BIRD FLU**

After acquiring multiple symptoms, including fever, a four-year-old kid was discovered to be infected with the H3N8 type of Bird Flu, according to China's National Health Commission (NHC). The H3N8 variation has already been found in horses, dogs, birds, and seals across the globe. However, no human instances of H3N8 have been documented before to this.

**ABOUT BIRD FLUE**

- Avian influenza, often known as bird flu or avian flu, is defined as "influenza produced by viruses adapted to birds."
- Although most avian influenza viruses do not infect humans, a few, such as A(H5N1) and A(H7N9), have caused significant illnesses in humans.
- There is no H5N1 vaccination available.
- Most avian influenza viruses do not infect people, but some, such as A(H5N1) and A(H7N9), do and cause illness or subclinical infections in humans and other animals.
- The highly pathogenic Avian (H5N1) virus subtype first infected humans in 1997 during a poultry pandemic outbreak in Hong Kong SAR, China.

**TYPES OF INFLUENZA VIRUS**

- Influenza viruses are classified as influenza A, B, C, or D.
- The two forms of influenza that produce epidemic seasonal illnesses every year are influenza A and B.
- Type A influenza viruses in Avian
  - Hemagglutinin (HA) and Neuraminidase, two proteins found on the surfaces of Type A viruses, are used to classify them (NA).
  - There are about 18 HA and 11 NA subtypes.
  - H5N1, H7N2, H9N6, H17N10, H18N11, and other combinations of these two proteins are feasible.
- Influenza C is mostly seen in humans, although it has also been found in dogs and pigs.
- Influenza D is mostly seen in cattle. In humans, it has yet to infect or cause sickness.
CAUSE OF CONCERN
• Concerns concerning animal and bird-borne viruses have increased since the origin of SARS-CoV-2 has been speculated.
• The introduction of new strains, especially among domesticated animals and birds, is a narrative of evolution and inevitability, and there are many examples of novel viruses infecting people.
• If avian influenza viruses exist in poultry, occasional avian influenza infection in humans is unavoidable, serving as a stark reminder that the possibility of an influenza pandemic remains.

SPREAD TO HUMANS
• Several subtypes and strains of avian influenza viruses have been discovered across the globe, some of which can kill people and others of which cause significant losses to chicken breeders.
• Although Human to Human transmission is uncommon, virus is severe and lethal in around 60% of cases.
• Even while humans may get the virus by plucking or culling an infected bird without adequate protection, or by being in a water body with infected bird droppings, there are no recorded cases of disease spreading by bird consumption.
• The symptoms of avian infection in humans are like those of any other seasonal flu — fever, body aches, sore throat, runny nose, headache, exhaustion, and so on — but it may rapidly become severe and cause respiratory trouble.

COUNTERING THE BIRD FLU THREAT
• India, being a major agricultural country with a substantial chicken sector, has adopted an avian influenza action plan developed by the Centre's Department of Animal Farming practices, Dairy and Fisheries.
• It includes a detailed procedure for doing preventative inspections and testing, reporting an epidemic, removing farm birds from an affected region, and compensating farmers.
• It is based on a broad-based periodic testing system for farm birds and wet markets, as well as the upgrading of apex scientific institutes like Bhopal’s National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases.
• Early detection and identification of viral subtypes aids in the implementation of containment strategies.
• Restrict the epidemic and reduce rumour mongering, public health messaging with recommendations on chicken eating during a suspected outbreak is critical.
• The effectiveness of the measures is inevitably dependent on how quickly the state’s animal husbandry machinery gathers samples and raises the alarm when a disease epidemic is impending.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED MOSQUITOES
Recent open-air research of genetically altered mosquitoes in USA has yielded encouraging findings. The study’s goal is to lower the number of wild Aedes aegypti mosquitos, which spread illnesses including chikungunya, dengue, zika, and yellow fever. The mosquitos had previously been studied in the field in Brazil, Panama, the Cayman Islands, and Malaysia, but no similar research had been done in United States.

ABOUT GENETICALLY MODIFIED MOSQUITOES
• In a lab, GM mosquitos are mass-produced to contain two kinds of genes:
  o A self-limiting gene that causes female mosquito progeny to die before reaching maturity.
  o Under a particular red light, a fluorescent marked gene shine. This enables scientists to spot GM mosquitos in the wild.
• GM mosquitos that have been created in the lab lay eggs. The self-limiting and fluorescent flag genes are present in these eggs.
• The self-limiting gene is carried by GM mosquito eggs that are discharged into a region. They are eligible to mate with wild females after they have hatched and developed to adulthood. The genes are handed down through the generations.
• When male OX5034 mosquitos mate with wild female mosquitoes, a protein called tTAV-OX5034 is produced, which inhibits female progeny from surviving.
Female offspring die before reaching adulthood. The predicted outcome is a reduction in the number of Aedes aegypti mosquitos in the region.

**RELATED CONCERNS**
- It is not a new idea to genetically edit insects to manage their number and prevent disease transmission. Scientists are now seeking to create ticks to avoid infections, which started a decade ago.
- Concerns ranged from modified mosquitos injuring humans to their influence on mosquito-eating creatures and other unexpected outcomes like the introduction of a dangerous virus.
- Experts predict that lowering mosquito population that spreads the virus will not be enough to prevent an epidemic.

**BERNARDINELLI-BERNSTEIN COMET**

*Image* Hubble Space Telescope of NASA verified that the massive Bernardinelli-Bernstein comet is the biggest ice comet nucleus ever observed by scientists. It has a diameter of around 129 kilometres. The nucleus is around fifty times bigger than the nuclei of most known comets, with a mass of approximately 500 trillion tonnes.

**ABOUT BERNARDINELLI-BERNSTEIN COMET**
- Astronomers Pedro Bernardinelli and Gary Bernstein spotted the comet in archived pictures from Dark Energy Survey at a Chilean astronomy station.
- It was found in 2010 and has been the subject of much research since then.
- The comet is thought to have formed in the Oort Cloud and has been travelling towards the sun for nearly a million years.
- Oort Cloud is a far-flung area of the solar system where most comets are thought to originate.
- Oort Cloud is still a theoretical idea since the comets that make it up are too faint and far away to be seen directly. Jan Oort, a Dutch astronomer, proposed the theory in 1950.
- Bernardinelli-Berstein comet has an estimated temperature of minus 348 degrees Fahrenheit and has a 3-million-year elliptical orbit.
- The dusty coma is caused by the sublimation of carbon monoxide (CO) from the surface.

**ABOUT COMETS**
- Comets are huge dust and ice particles that circle the Sun. Comets, often known as ‘dirty snowballs,’ are composed mostly of dust, pebbles, and ice, and may vary in size from a few miles to tens of miles.
- They heat up as they go closer to the sun, releasing dust and gas debris.
- When comets are distant from the sun, their solid parts, which are largely water, ice, and imbedded dust particles, become inactive.
- The frozen cometary surfaces evaporate and emit tremendous amounts of gas and dust when they get close to the sun, generating the massive atmosphere and tails.
- The expelled gases create a luminous head that may be as huge as a planet, while the debris produces a tail that can be millions of kilometres long.
- When a comet passes in front of the sun, it loses part of its substance and finally vanishes entirely.
- Due to gravitational forces, comets may sometimes be driven closer to the Sun and the Earth’s vicinity.
- While there are millions of comets circling the sun, NASA estimates that there are now more than 3,650 known comets.
- **Predictable Comets:** They are short-period comets that circle the sun in fewer than two hundred years.
- Many comets circle the sun in the Kuiper belt, which is in Pluto’s domain. Halley’s Comet, which arrives every 76 years, is one of the most well-known short-period comets. In 2062, Halley’s Comet will be seen.
- **Less Predictable Comets:** Less predictable comets may be discovered in Oort cloud, which is around 100,000 AU (Astronomical Unit) from the sun, or 100,000 times the distance between Earth and sun. It may accept to thirty million years for a comet in this cloud to complete one revolution around the sun.
COLOUR BLINDNESS

About Colour Blindness
• Colour blindness is defined as the inability to perceive colours normally. Colour blind people have trouble distinguishing between particular colours, primarily greens and reds, but also blues.
• Colour deficiency is another name for it.

Anatomy of Eye
• The retina has two kinds of cells that sense light.
  - Rods: These aid in the distinction of light and dark.
  - Cones: These aid in the detection of colour.
• Our brains use the information from these cells to experience colour. There are three kinds of cones that see colour: red, green, and blue.
• The lack of one or more of these cone cells, or their inability to function correctly, may cause colour blindness.

Types of Colour Blindness
• There are several types and degrees of colour blindness.
• Mild colour blindness may arise when all three cone cells are present but one of them is dysfunctional.
• When the light is excellent, persons who are colour blind may see all colours.
• Vision is black-and-white in the most severe form of colour blindness, meaning everything appears to be a shade of grey. This is a rare occurrence.

Causes of Colour Blindness
• Colour blindness is a disability that most individuals inherit from their parents (congenital colour blindness). This kind of colour blindness usually affects both eyes and lasts for the rest of the person's life.
• Medical Conditions: A issue with colour vision later in life might be caused by sickness, trauma, or poisons absorbed.
• If a condition causes colour blindness, one eye may be affected differently than the other, and the difficulties may increase with time.

Treatments of Colour Blindness
• Colour blindness is not yet treatable or reversible.
• It may, however, be partially remedied by using special contact lenses or colour filter glasses.
• Some studies show that gene replacement treatment may assist to improve the illness.

Gender Discrimination
• Colour blindness is more common in males than it is in women.
• Every tenth guy on the planet is thought to have some sort of colour deficiency.
• Men of Northern European ancestry are thought to be more sensitive.

Workplace Restrictions
• Colour blindness affects the capacity to accomplish particular vocations, such as piloting or entering the military, in several ways.
• However, it is contingent on degree of colour blindness and restrictions in existence in other jurisdictions.
• Colour vision insufficiency affects an estimated 300 million individuals worldwide.

Government’s Initiative
• Central Motor Vehicles Rules 1989 were revised in 2020 by Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to allow persons with moderate to medium colour blindness to get a driver's licence.

Nuclear Missile Sarmat

The Russian military has successfully tested its new Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in the face of intense opposition from Ukraine in the continuing conflict and heavy sanctions placed by the West on the country.

About Sarmat
• RS-28 Sarmat (NATO designation Satan-II) is capable of transporting ten or more warheads and decoys.
• Having a range of 11,000 to 18,000 kilometres, it is capable of shooting across either North or South Poles of the Earth.
• It will provide a substantial threat to the ground- and satellite-based radar monitoring systems of western nations, primarily USA.
• There are ten warheads in all, each of which is a Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle with a blast output of 0.75 MT.
• It will be the first Russian missile capable of transporting smaller hypersonic boost-glide vehicles. These are very manoeuvrable and difficult to intercept.
• It is a liquid-fueled missile, as opposed to the solid-fueled systems used by US intercontinental ballistic missiles.

SARMAT TRIBES
• Nomadic tribes who roamed the steppes of present-day Southern Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan during the early mediaeval era gave its name to the Sarmat.
• The equestrian and fighting skills of the Sarmatians were very advanced.
• In addition, the administrative ability and political knowledge of the Sarmatians contributed to their attaining extensive dominance by the fifth century BC.
• They controlled the territory extending between Urals and Don River.
• They crossed the Don River in the fourth century and defeated the Scythians, eventually displacing them as rulers of all southern Russia by the second century A.D.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q.1) SARMAT, a new class of missiles, has been recently launched by which of the following countries?
(a) Russia   (b) USA
(c) China    (d) Britain

Q.2) Consider the following statements about Colour Blindness:
1. Colour Blindness is due to genetic reasons only.
2. A colour blind person is not able to see only black and white colours.
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

Q.3) Consider the following statements about Oort Clouds:
1. Oort cloud is a region of our solar system beyond Kuiper Belt.

Q.4) Consider the following statements about Near Field Communication Technology:
1. It is a short distance communication technology over few meters.
2. No additional power source is required for NFC Technology.

Q.5) Blue Stragglers, an astronomical phenomenon, is related to which of the following?
(a) Stars   (b) Dark Energy
(c) Black holes    (d) Origin of Universe.

Answers: 1-a, 2-d, 3-a, 4-c, 5-a
RAJA RAVI VARMA
(1848-1906)

#MODERNINDIA #PERSONALITIES

One of Raja Ravi Varma’s significant paintings, Draupadi Vastraharan, will be going for auction for the first time. Raja Ravi Verma is also called as Father of Modern Indian Art.

ABOUT RAJA RAVI VARMA

- He was born at Kilimanoor in Kerala in 1848.
- He learnt watercolour painting from the royal painter Ramaswamy Naidu, and later trained in oil painting from Dutch artist Theodore Jensen.
- He specialised in Oil and water paintings. He focused on realised expression and skin tone.
- Varma combined European realism with Indian sensibilities.
- He was inspired from Indian literature, mythology and dance drama.
- He got three gold medals at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.
- He opened a Lithographic Press in Bombay in 1894 to take his art to masses. His lithographs increased the involvement of common people with fine arts and defined artistic tastes among common people.
- Important work: Shakuntala; Nair Lady Adorning Her Hair; There Comes Papa; Galaxy of Musicians; Damayanti talking with a swan and Maharaj Shivaji.
- 2014 Indian Hindi-language film, Rang Rasiya (English title: Colours of Passion) explores Varma’s inspiration behind his paintings.

LINGARAJA TEMPLE

#MEDIEVALHISTORY #TEMPLEARCHITECTURE

Central government has told the Odisha government that its ordinance to bring the 11th-century Lingaraja temple in Bhubaneswar and its associated temples under a special law is outside the legislative competence of the state legislature.

ABOUT LINGARAJA TEMPLE

- It is a Shaivite temple of Kalinga style.
- It is the oldest temple of Bhubaneswar, Odisha.
- Built by King Jajati Keshari in 10th Century and completed by King Lalatendu Keshari in 11th Century.
- Bhubaneswar is called the Ekamra Kshetra as the deity of Lingaraja was originally under a mango tree (Ekamra) as noted in Ekamra Purana, a 13th-century Sanskrit treatise.
- Lingaraja temple is maintained by the Temple Trust Board and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).
- The harmony between the two sects of Hinduism, Shaivism, and Vaishnavism, is seen in this temple where the deity is worshipped as Harihara, a combined form of Vishnu and Shiva.
- One of the finest examples of purely Hindu Temple in India” by noted critic and historian James Fergusson (1808-1886).
- Temple marks the culmination of the temple architecture in Bhubaneswar which was the cradle of the Kalinga School of Temple Architecture. The sprawling temple complex has one hundred and fifty subsidiary shrines.
- Temple can broadly be divided into four main halls. Garba Griha (Sanctum Sanctorum), Yajana Mandapa (the hall for prayers), Natya Mandapa (dance and
music hall) and Bhoga Mandapa (where devotees can have the Prasad (offering) of the Lord).

- The other attraction of the temple is the Bindusagar Lake, located in the north side of the temple
- Festivals associated are Shivaratri and Ashokastami.

ABOUT KALINGA TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE STYLE

- An inscription in the Amrtesvara Temple at Holal in Karnataka refers to four temple styles, Nagara, Kalinga, Dravida and Vesara. This inscription is dated to 1231 CE and belongs to the reign of the Seuna king Singhana.
- Kalinga style is identified as a sub-class under the Nagara category.
- As the name suggests, this temple style was mostly confined within the then Kalinga region, present Odisha.
- N K Bose’s “Canons of Orissan Architecture” was a milestone in understanding the Kalinga temple architecture.
- Silpaprakasha (written by Ramachandra Kaulachara in 10th-11th century CE) contains guidelines on Kalinga temple construction.
- Each temple has two sections, one describing the construction and decoration of jagamohana (praying hall) and garbha-grha (sanctuary).
- Other structures included nata-mandira (dance hall) and bhoga-mandira (kitchen).

Structural forms:

- Kalinga temple style is broadly classified into three main categories, namely Rekha, Pidha and Khakhara.
- Rekha-deul (temple) is distinguished with its square plan topped with a curvilinear tower.
- Pidha-deul, also referred as Bhadra deul, also has a square plan topped with a pyramidal tower composed of horizontal tiers arranged in receding manner.
- Khakhara deul is surmounted with a barrel-shaped (vault-shape) tower over a rectangular plan. Usually, these temples are dedicated to a form of Devi. (Note: Most of the Kalinga temples fall under the Rekha category.)
- Pitha is the platform over which the entire structure of the temple stands. It was not a mandatory part of a temple and many temples, early as well as late, do not have pitha in their plan.
- Bada is the vertical wall over which tower is supported.
- Gandi is the lower part of the tower.
- Mastaka is the upper part of the tower.
- Pabhaga is consisted of a set of mouldings. Early period temples used to have three mouldings at pabhaga which later increased to four and five in the later period temples.


**HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE**

- **Jangha** is the main and the largest portion of the bada. It is portion where most of the images of subsidiary deities are placed.
- **Baranda** is composed of a set of mouldings, varying from seven to ten, connecting the bada to the gandi. In later period temples, the jangha portion got divided into two storeys, tala-jangha and upara-jangha, separated by a madhya-bandhana.

## DEOGHAR BADYANATH JYOTIRLINGA

#TEMPLESOFINDIA #ARTANDCULTURE

Recently, a ropeway accident took place at Deoghar Jotirlinga at in Jharkhand.

**ABOUT DEOGHAR JYOTIRLINGA**

- It is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas. Jyotirlingas are holiest sites of Shaivism.
- They are often connected by mythological stories with Lord Shiva.
- Deoghar Jyotirlinga is a place known for healing of Ravana by Lord Shiva. Hence, Lord Shiva was called Vaidya/Baidya.
- This place is also known as one of the Shaktipeeth.
- It was praised by Adi Shankara.
- Annual pilgrimage known as Kanwar yatra is organised.
- Mughal emperor Akbar's brother-in-law built a pond at Deoghar known as Mansarovar.
- The main temple has a pyramidal tower with three gold vessels set compactly. These were gifted by Maharaja of Giddhaur, Raja Puran Singh. There are also five knives in a trident shape (Punchsula) as well as a lotus jewel with eight petals called Chandrakanta Mani.
- Along with the main temple of Baba Baidyanath, there are also 21 other temples. Some of the shrines you will find here are for Parvati, Ganesha, Brahma, Kalabhairav, Hanuman, Saraswati, Surya, Ram-Lakshman-Janaki, Ganga, Kali, Annapurna, and Lakshmi-Narayan. The Maa Parvati temple is tied to the Shiva temple with red sacred threads.

## OTHER ELEVEN JYOTIRLINGAS IN INDIA

1. Somnath - Gujarat
2. Mallikarjuna - Andhra Pradesh
3. Mahakaleshwar - Madhya Pradesh
4. Omkareshwar - Madhya Pradesh
5. Kedarnath - Himalayas
6. Bhimashankar - Maharashtra
7. Vishveshwar/Vishwanath - Uttar Pradesh
8. Triambakeshwar - Maharashtra
9. Nageshwar - Gujarat
10. Rameshwaram - Tamil Nadu
11. Ghrishneshwar – Maharashtra

## NEW YEAR FESTIVALS OF INDIA

#ARTANDCULTURE

13-14 April is celebrated as new year in many cultures across India.

**SOLAR NEW YEAR AND FESTIVALS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solar</th>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solar</td>
<td>Mesha Sankranti/Vaisakhi (Hindu Solar New Year)</td>
<td>Punjab, Haryana, Jammu, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand (Garhwa l and Kumaon), Nepalis (Sikkim, Darjeeling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar</td>
<td>Puthandu</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solar</td>
<td>Vishu (traditional)</td>
<td>Kerala</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solar</td>
<td>1st Chingam (Kollam era calendar)</td>
<td>Tulu Nadu</td>
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<td>Solar</td>
<td>Bisu Parba</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
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<td>Solar</td>
<td>Bwisagu</td>
<td>Bodoland, Assam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solar</td>
<td>Bohag Bihu</td>
<td>Assam</td>
</tr>
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</table>
1. **Rongali or Bohag Bihu (April):** As a new year also for harvesting and sowing.

2. **Kongali or Kati Bihu (October):** Lighting lamp and praying for protection of crop.

3. **Bhogali or Magh Bihu (January):** Crop harvest festival where bonfire (Meji) is lit. Contemporary to Makarsakranti.
   - **Festive food:** *pitha* (rice cake) and *larus* (traditional food made of rice, coconut)
   - **Attire:** Muga silk (golden silk)
   - **Dance:** Bihu *dhol* (traditional drum) is beaten with Bihu folk dance.

**Puthandu, Tamil Nadu’s New Year**
Another name: Varsha Pirappu.
Who: Tamil community in India and Sri Lanka
Significance: Celebrating spring season.
Rituals:
- Decorate their houses with ‘Kolam’ to welcome joy and prosperity in their homes.
- Turmeric bath is common among Tamil women.

**Vaisakhi**
Celebrated on 13 or 14 April every year in Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh.
Objective:
- Spring harvest festival for the Sikhs.
- Commemorates the formation of Khalsa Panth by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.
Rituals: Holy dip in sarovars, canals and rivers before joining the Mela celebrations.
Dance: Bhangra (Males) and Gidha (females)

**BIHU, ASSAM**

**Types:**

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**DR. BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR**

*ModernIndia #Personalities*

Nation has celebrated birth anniversary of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar on 14 April 2022.

**About B. R. Ambedkar**
- Chairman of the **Drafting Committee** of the **Constituent Assembly** and was a scholar par excellence, a jurist, an **Idealistic** emancipator and real nationalist.
HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

• Belonged to Mahar community of Mhow (MP).
• First to get Ph.D in Economics from London.

SOCIO-POLITICO AGENDA
• He was against the caste-based discriminations and untouchability in society.
• He condemned Hindu scriptures that he thought propagated caste discrimination.
• Part of Bombay Presidency Committee that worked with the Simon Commission in 1928.
• Established the ‘Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha’ to promote education and socio-economic improvements among the Dalits.
• Magazines like Mooknayak, and Bahishkrit Bharat.
• Advocated separate electorates for the ‘Depressed Classes’.
• In 1927, he organised Mahar Satyagraha.
• In 1930, Ambedkar launched the Kalaram Temple movement.
• Founded the Independent Labour Party (later transformed into the Scheduled Castes Federation) in 1936.
• Considered the Right to Constitutional Remedy as the soul of the Constitution.
• As Law minister fought vigorously for the passage of the Hindu Code Bill.
• In 1956, he converted to Buddhism, spreading Buddhist ideals.

ECONOMIC VIEWS
• He advocated a free economy with a stable Rupee.
• He also mooted birth control for economic development (Demand-scarcity argument).

RESEARCH WORKS:
2. Paper on: Castes in India their Mechanisms, Genesis and Development
3. In his work Who Were the Shudras?, Ambedkar tried to explain the formation of untouchables.

VALUE SYSTEM OF AMBEDKAR
• Democratic, peaceful, non-violent, and harmonious means
• Spirit of fraternity, compassion, and equity.

OTHER BOOKS OF AMBEDKAR
• Annihilation of caste (1936)
• Federation Versus Freedom (1939)
• Mr. Gandhi and Emancipation of Untouchables (1943)
• State and Minorities (1947)
• The Untouchables (1948)
• Buddha Or Karl Marx (1956)

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

MCQs

Q.1) Which of the following books or publication is associated with Bhim Rao Ambedkar?

1. Annihilation of caste
2. Buddha or Karl Marx
3. New India
4. Bandijivan

Select the correct answer using the code below:
(a) 1 and 3 only (b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1, 2 and 3 only

Q.2) Which of the following is not a solar festival?

(a) Makarsankranti (b) Guddi Parwa
(c) Rongali Bihu (d) Puthandu

Q.3) Which of the following is/are important work of Modern India painter Raja Ravi Verma?

1. Shakuntala
2. Nair Lady Adorning Her Hair
3. There Comes Papa
4. Galaxy of Musicians

Select the correct answer using the code below:
HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

Q.4) Rekha, Pidha and Khakara are structural style of
(a) Kalinga temple architecture
(b) Gujarati traditional recepies
(c) Saree styles of Odisha
(d) Types of Hoysalas temples

Which of the following is/are incorrect?
(a) 2 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answers to above MCQs: 1(b), 2(b), 3(d), 4(a), 5(d)
PART TWO

ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

Coverage from varied sources
Dhritarashtra in Mahabharata wanted his son Dhuryodhana to be the king of Hastinapur. In the process, he did many wrong things and failed to stop his son from doing wrong. In the end, the same son led to the destruction of whole Kuru Empire. This episode highlights the importance of inculcating values, moral and ethics in our younger generation.

**CHARACTER BUILDING AMONG CHILDREN IS IMPORTANT**

Gandhiji has declared ‘Knowledge without character’ as a deadly sin. Albert Camus said, ‘A man without ethics is a wild beast loosed upon this world’. Not focusing on character development of children will have huge repercussions for society –

- Crime against vulnerable sections like women and old age will increase.
- Juvenile delinquency, drug addiction etc. will increase.
- Lack of values like tolerance, empathy & compassion, fraternity will create social disharmony, communal tension, and regional tensions. This hinders growth and development.
- Greed in people will lead to unsustainable and non-inclusive development. Youth will focus on Kama and Artha and not on Dharma and Moksha. (Four Purusharthas)
- Narrow conception of life will push the coming generations towards materialism, consumerism and hedonism.

**VALUE BASED PARENTING**

Parents must adopt holistic approach to educate their children. This can be done through:

- ** Adopting democratic child rearing practices:** It must be ensured that in early phase attitude formation is positive about gender equality, pluralism & diversity, democracy among others.
- Parents must also ensure **value inculcation of honesty, dedication and compassion to achieve excellence and character.** They must act as a role model in this regard.
- Parents must use intangible goods like love, appreciation, spending time with them etc. to reward the child.
- Parents must ensure that correct observation learning is done by children. Like children shall not be exposed to violence shown on media.
- Teenage period is the most difficult time for children. Parents must keep a watch and provide correct guidance whenever a child requires it. They should act like a friend in this regard. Every word, facial expression, gesture, or action on the part of a parent gives the child some message about self-worth. It is sad that so many parents don't realize what messages they are sending.

John Dewey saw education as the foundation of democracy and as the key process for social reform.

**SOCRATIC DIALOGUE**

There is one aspect of discussion in Moral education regarding technique of development of morality among children. In this regard let's discuss Socratic dialogue technique – “teaching by asking instead of telling”. This method of questioning is named after the Greek philosopher Socrates (469 BC–399 BC). The Socratic method is a means of evaluating beliefs by examining contradictions among their implications or in other words: learn to make room in our minds for different ideas and perspectives no matter how much they challenge our current beliefs. The ultimate aim of
Socrates’ philosophical method is always ethical. It should make us aware of our misconceptions, delusions and self-deceptions and bring us to a better understanding of the good and thus help us attain the goal that all human beings desire – happiness (eudaimonia).

At the beginning of 20th century, the German philosopher Leonard Nelson developed the Socratic Dialogue method to philosophise dialogically in groups. The aim of a Socratic Dialogue is to achieve a genuine consensus about the answer to the general question. The starting point of the analysis is an example from a real life.

In the classroom, Socratic method can be used as a shared dialogue about values, principles and believes between teacher and students. For example, if the general question is: “What is friendship?” then students would choose an example that they “think” is an exemplary case of friendship. Both the teacher and students are responsible for pushing the dialogue forward through questioning. The “teacher”, or facilitator of the dialogue, asks probing questions trying to expose the values and beliefs which frame and support the thoughts and statements of the students. The teacher imparts no information. The inquiry is always open-ended. The classroom must share rules like raise hand to contribute, let others finish their sentences, be concise, use arguments that come from your own experience.

The relevance of Socratic dialogue for ethics and value education is high, since it enables us to reflect upon our own beliefs and put them in opposition to beliefs and attitudes of others. The rational dialogue is the cornerstone of every rational discourse and practice. It helps children to develop skills in oral communication, critical thinking, interpret and evaluate information, transform information into knowledge and knowledge into judgment and action, interpersonal skills, respect for others and intellectual honesty.

The ethical process is a steady experience. Because the teachers today are more and more involved in the general education of the child, they have a very important role for ethics education of children too. There is no possibility to educate ethically without the teachers’ experience of ethics. The most important part of this is a consciousness of necessity to overcome the self-interests and be more open for the common good. The children should face the reality of daily life in the community and interpersonal exchange. The pillar of this exchange is the teacher. Consequently, the teacher is also an example of the related autonomy. In this autonomy, the respect of person of pupils, parents and teachers in their relation to each other is included.

In dialogue, critical thinking could be achieved and children can be trained in exchange of human resources for this task of the healthy society. Not only the parents but especially teachers and educators should be more involved to dialogize critically as autonomous persons with the pupils about these ethical topics.
Case Study 1: You are a responsible district level officer in Maharashtra who is known for his efficiency and innovations in resolving issues at district level. Region under you is a drought prone area where major occupation of people is agriculture. Central Water Commission (CWC) has recently issued drought advisory for your district. It has asked for judicious use of water as water level available in nearby reservoirs is reducing at a very fast rate.

In fact, this problem is reoccurring, and you want to have some long-term solution for it. Monsoon will take at least 50 days to reach your district and replenish water reservoirs. What strategy can be adopted by you to redress the immediate problem and steps that can be taken in long term to redress the issue permanently?

(250 words, 20 marks)

Indicative Solution

The case presents a challenge for me and for the district administration to deal with water crisis and usher in good governance. Since the major occupation of people in the district is agriculture, the issue must be looked into with empathy, compassion and urgency.

Following are important issues in the case –

a) Test of my ability to solve the issue of water crisis.

b) Responsibility of local administration to pre-empt any crisis to avoid economic, social and emotional suffering of people.

c) Inclusive morality of people to use water judiciously, taking care for the needs of others.

Strategy to Redress the Immediate Problem

a) Wide scale dissemination of the Central Water Commission (CWC) drought advisory through different means – radio, Television, newspaper, gram panchayat, schools etc

b) Persuading people to self-fix the daily water consumption target to an optimal level. I myself can set example and declare my target. With support of locals it may become as mass campaign.

c) Encouraging recycling of water. Eg – kitchen refused water can be used in agricultural field.

d) Value inculcation and engagement by local leader to avoid ‘water-riot’ like situation.

e) A fund can be made to hedge the risk of farmers due to water scarcity. This may reduce economic burden, debt trap and social unrest.

Strategy for Long Term Solution

a) Introduction of micro-irrigation and other water efficient technique in agriculture with the help of governments under various welfare schemes.

b) Making agriculture climate-smart in the region. Since water crisis is perennial problem, farmers may switch crop like pulses, bajra etc, which require less water. Persuasion for behavioral change will be required by various government machinery.

c) Use of new technologies like ‘Oneer’ developed by CSIR for water purification making available the ample amount of drinking water. This would require emotional intelligence and compassion among the scientific community.

d) Increasing the water storage capacity in reservoirs, farm ponds etc.

e) Ground water recharge techniques to improve water table level.

f) Developing ‘conservation’ as a value in our society will help in judicious use of water.

Crisis also creates opportunity for mutual cooperation and improvement and innovation. I must deal with the situation with positivity and look for short-term and long-term solution.

Case Study 2: Mr. X is the head of a village Panchayat in Delhi NCR region. He is very popular among his community and people adore him for his leadership and...
humility. Communities belonging to different religions also lives in this village as well as nearby areas.

Small clashes are quite common but this time a murder has taken place. The son in law of Mr. X got killed in an altercation with a group of three young men who belonged to some other community. The fight started as his son in law objected to lewd remarks made against his wife by these three men.

The incident has led to immense tension and a Mahapanchayat has been called by community members. On the day of cremation, thousands of angry people have gathered in Mahapanchayat to decide on future course.

In this context, explain the contrasting emotions and dilemmas Mr. X is going through and what shall be his conduct? (250 words, 20 marks)

**INDICATIVE SOLUTION**

The case presents a highly charged-up situation which demands sound emotional intelligence to deal with.

Following are contrasting emotions Mr. X might be going through:

a) Grief due to death of son-in-law and emotional suffering of daughter and whole family.

b) Anger might also erupt due to his personal loss, especially on account of lewd remark against his daughter.

c) Sadness and frustration because of altercation and communal clashes in his village.

d) Since he is a humble man with leadership capacity, he must also have emotion of love, care, empathy, compassion, for the welfare of the entire village.

**DILEMMAS FOR MR. X**

a) To act as per the law or allow communal backlash for the mob at Mahapanchayat.

b) To focus on death of son-in-law or focus on my duties as a head of village panchayat.

c) To act as per negative emotion of anger or as per my leadership ability.

d) To focus on personal interest or larger public interest of communal harmony.

The situation is very tense and fragile on account the murder. There is also mob gathering in form of Mahapanchayat. It may lead to communal clashes as permanent rift. In such a scenario Mr. X must show extraordinary courage and leadership ability. He must take following course of action –

a) Act strictly as per the law. He must inform police, register FIR and ensure the culprits are punished.

b) Using emotional intelligence he must control passion, if any, in the crowd. He must inspire them to be law abiding citizens and have faith in the judicial process.

c) Personal enmity and hatred must not be allowed to take shape of communal clash. This will be disrespect to the deceased.

d) He must also comfort his daughter and family in the time of grief and help them think objectively.

It is said that true test of integrity is at the time of adversity. Mr. X must fall back on his values to come out of this painful situation without loss of values. This will serve the public interest and larger national interest of peace and communal harmony.
PART THREE

ESSAYS

of

THE MONTH

Selected essays from Rau’s GSI students
SILENCE OF GOOD IS MORE DANGEROUS THAN ACTION OF EVIL.

#PHILOSOPHICAL

SUBMITTED BY: RACHIT JAIN

Disclaimer: The viewpoints in the topic are strictly personal of the writer above. The role of Rau’s IAS Study Circle is to present the write-up in its original form, hence the study circle neither endorses nor rejects any viewpoint in the submission. The purpose is only to showcase the manner of writing.

Therefore, it is the sole responsibility of the reader to use his/her intellect to check the veracity of viewpoints.

Rohan was coming back from the public park on a Sunday morning, when he overheard screams and moaning coming from Sachin’s house. Sachin and Rohan have been friends since their childhood, and Sachin was recently married to Ruhi. Rohan immediately understood that the screams were from Ruhi, who might be a victim of domestic violence at the hands of Sachin. Rohan was shocked and immediately informed his wife, Rachna. Rohan wanted to call the police, but Rachna stopped him saying that they should not get involved in this case as it is their personal matter.

What should Rohan do now, should he call the police or stay a silent observer of a wrong being done? Even if the evil is Sachin, will keeping silent right on Rohan’s part? If he remains a mute spectator, will Rohan be any less guilty than Sachin? It is said that the only condition necessary for victory of evil, is for good men to do nothing.

The above situation highlights many such instances in life, where a person has the choice to speak against the injustice or turn a blind eye against it. It requires courage and high moral standards to overcome such situations. Ideally, Rohan must gather courage and inform the Police, fulfilling his duties as a citizen, a neighbor and a human. Remaining silent will not just make him an accomplice in the crime, but also have a bigger impact on the social fabric of the Nation built on the ideals of justice, equality and fraternity (Preamble).

Speaking truth to power!

Injustice caused to an individual, is an injustice to the entire society. If an oppressor, criminal or aggressor is not but behind the bars then he/she is a threat to the society. Even though a witness is not a perpetuator of the crime but by remaining silent only makes him/her a ‘helper’ or accomplice in the crime.

It is often seen that in such situations, witnesses often get scared, wooed by money, or intimidated by power. At times there exists threat to life as well. However, if a witness to the crime realizes the importance of breaking the silence, he/she would get the right moral direction to act.

Speaking truth to power request unflinching integrity, courage of conviction, and a sense of fraternity, to own that responsibility of doing the right thing for the society. For instance, Edward Snowden became a whistleblower against America’s CIA, just on the belief of doing the justice to the people and protecting their rights. He knew he had to leave his country (currently living in Moscow), but he found himself liable to inform his fellow citizens about the extent of breach of privacy happening in the name of ‘State Security’. He had the easier choice of letting it go and live his individual life in peace. But he chose the difficult path just because he realized the need to speak up.

Looking at the bigger picture!

The impact of keeping silent in the state of adversity has impacts which are not limited just to an individual’s life (Ruhí’s life in our anectode), but it has wider and larger impact on the society, state, and the world at large. For instance, S. Manjunath blowed the whistle against the corrupt practice of mixing lead in Petrol by some top
officials of Indian Oil Corp. Although unfortunately, Manjunath had to lose his life, but his courage to speak had a lasting impact – end of corruption by mixing lead as leaded Petrol was harmful for the environment, sense of distrust among citizens, the state had to strengthen the regulatory framework, shareholders of the company lost confidence, and the image of a PSU got tarnished at a global stage.

Another line of argument in favor of calling out the wrongs, is related to the duty of citizens and doing your part even when doing it gets hard. Stress needs to be put on the fact that silence of a ‘good’ citizen affects the entire society, when compared to the actions of an evil, which affects an individual victim. For example, an active citizenry can highlight the nexus of politicians with criminals and check the ever-increasing criminalization of politics.

In pursuit of creating a conducive environment for the people to come out and speak, without any fear of life or property, the state must play a much bigger and more active role.

State as an enabler!

There have been many cases in India’s since Manjunath’s courageous story where hundreds of witnesses have absconded from giving evidence, witnesses often do not turn up at the time of court hearings due to fear or greed of money. This reflects that the Indian state has failed to provide a protective environment for the innocent (yet very important) witnesses or whistle blowers, to come up and speak truth to power.

Although, the whistleblowers (protection) act has been passed, it has not yet been notified. It is high time now that the Government notifies it and implement it in letter and spirit.

Indian Police as well as Judiciary must take measures to provide safety to the witnesses in cases, where they are likely to face threats. This will ensure community policing, where the citizens can act as the eyes and ears of the Police. This will also fasten the judicial proceeding and reduce case-closure rates in lower judiciary.

India can also learn from innovative Global examples like in Germany, where Police has installed emergency alarms in every street, which the citizens can push on witnessing any crime being done to any person (known or unknown).

In conclusion, it is a moral duty of every individual to speak up against any injustice, because as Dante said, “The darkest places in hell, are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in times of moral crisis”.

Not just at the Individual level, but also for the Nation, it is important to raise voice at international forums against the oppressed and suffering states. For ex. India’s stand against violence in Myanmar after Military coup, or Human rights violations by Taliban in Afghanistan.

Hence, keeping silence is cowardice, and breaking the silence is a moral act of integrity and displays courage of conviction – acting as a strong force against the evil.
TOLERANCE IS THE ONLY WAY TO A ‘PEACEFUL SOCIETY’

#PHILOSOPHICAL

SUBMITTED BY: ABHISHEK SINGH

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Shane Warne recently passed away. He was one of the greatest spinners of his times. One interesting fact about his career is that he was at loggerhead with his captain and coach. Yet he took 700+ wickets, this was possible due to the on-field tolerance displayed by both Shane Warne and his captain. It was this ‘tolerance’ that created peaceful cooperation in the team, and it became the best cricket team for a decade.

Tolerance is the ability to entertain contrasting viewpoints without believing them. It also helps avoid anger. It is a wonderful virtue that can help solve various societal, political, environmental, economic and other issues.

India has a diverse society, with diversity comes diverse beliefs and viewpoints. These viewpoints sometimes become unnecessarily conflict against each other. The Mob lynching of Pehlu Khan, is a case in point. If people believed that Pehlu was carrying ‘cow meet,’ then they should have shown tolerance and patience. They should have taken the legal route. Intolerance led to death of an innocent and a scar on the secular fabric of India. This incident and others like this led to creation of binaries between various religious communities in Indian society.

This kind of intolerance is visible also in other facets of society. For ex. The recent controversy over Hijab ban in educational institutions in Karnataka is a case in point.

The Indian republic allowed Sikhs to wear pagris and carry kirpan, a religious obligation in public sphere. However, similar large heartedness and acceptance has not been shown towards Muslim females who demand that they be allowed to educate themselves while wearing Hijab. The Hijab ban will result in many females from minority communities dropping out of schools.

Intolerance is often visible in educated people as well. For example. People with a scientific bend often ridicule traditional knowledge and humanities subjects. There is a belief that not being scientific makes them less worthy. Gandhiji rightly said that intolerance is the enemy of correct understanding. Humanities help us in being humane and better understand emotions. Traditional knowledge has often been a source of many modern medicinal discoveries.

Climatic change has already started, and we have breached the 1.5°C limit. This was mentioned in the IPCC’s recent report. Climate Change is causing irreversible changes in weather patterns, increase in the sea water level etc. These changes are affecting the humanity in a negative way, particularly the poor who are most vulnerable.

The only reason behind this is our intolerant behaviour towards nature and our greed to dominate nature. We kept filling nature with dangerous pollutants and now nature is retaliating. During Covid-19 lockdown, nature was healing and reviving. This shows if we are tolerant towards nature and use its resources judiciously, we might solve the issue of climate change.

During the pandemic, many businesses were shutdown and people lost their jobs. It was the tolerant attitude of RBI and government that allowed for loan moratoriums helped business cope up with the loses and gave people...
higher levels of state support even when revenues were low.

Political scenario in our country have seems to have become intolerant. This can be seen by the ruckus created by Parliamentarians in Rajya Sabha during passage of controversial farm laws. The spirit of dialogue which is a basic ethic of democracy was missing from the party in power and opposition. Farmers whose lives were to be most affected by these controversial legislations were not adequately consulted. The bills were passed almost undebated. This incident reflects poorly on our democracy. The farmers left in the lurch mounted one of the largest protests in history of the country, which forced the government to take back the law. Politics should be founded on cooperation, inclusion and dialogue, only then politics can improve the lives of people.

The recent Russian – Ukraine conflict is also rooted in intolerance of nations. The Western power were intolerant to Russia’s security concerns, i.e., Russia did not want NATO on its doorstep. Russia too was intolerant; instead of using diplomacy it used military operations Russia declared this action on the pretext of injustice done by Ukrainian government in the Donbas region.

This episode should come as a teaching for Indians in resolving our border issues in North and North-east. Government of India should try to bring peace in the region by accommodating the aspirations of the people. We need to bring development in the region to create a welfare state. Establishing a welfare state will help in building trust among people and make citizen accept and tolerate government decisions.

**How to inculcate tolerance?**

Tolerance is a virtue, and any virtue can be internalised through practice and education. Tolerance can be propagated through the spread of knowledge about the benefits of tolerance. When people are educated, they beware aware of multiple viewpoints and lifeways. Helen Keller rightly said that the highest result of education is tolerance.

Tolerance at societal level also increases when society gives high value to tolerance and keeps tolerance at a high pedestal. There must be collective responsibility on families, educational institutions and other social actors to build tolerance among our family members, peers and citizens at large. It should be understood that tolerance is a virtue associated with strong people and not as virtue of the weak.

**But is tolerance the only way for a peaceful society?**

No tolerance is wrong when we tolerate injustice, violence and intolerance to others. For example, India would have never been free if our freedom fights keep tolerating the cruel rule of British. It needs to be highlighted, that when we oppose an unjust act, it should be through truth, reason and non-violence as was the case with India’s freedom struggle.

Also, tolerance often leads to callousness and soft approach. Gunnar Myrdal criticised India of being soft state which was not capable of taking and implementing decisions and had tolerance towards corruption.

For true peace along with tolerance, we also need justice as it is rightly said, “True peace is not just absence of violence but presence of justice.”

India has been a tolerant country. All major religious dominations of the world whether Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism etc. flourish here, this itself highlights the presence of tolerance in our country. Even our constitution was formed on the bedrock of tolerance. Constituent Assembly represented all major lines of thought and entire spectrum of Indian nation. Fundamental Rights are available to all and protected by the highest court of the land. This is the reason people from different religion and caste live side by side in harmony.

Despite a bloody partition in name of partition, millions of Muslims continue to thrive in our country. However, this spirit of tolerance, togetherness and Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam is today facing issues of religious fundamentalism, extremism and regionalism.

Our leaders and citizens at large must sit down and make a collective resolve to tackle these issues through dialogue and tolerance. This will make India a beautiful bouquet.
Save Water Today, Otherwise Tomorrow You Will Have to Pay

Essay of the Month

# Environmental Issues

Submitted by: Arun Pradeep

Disclaimer: The viewpoints in the topic are strictly personal of the writer above. The role of Rau's IAS Study Circle is to present the write-up in its original form, hence the study circle neither endorses nor rejects any viewpoint in the submission. The purpose is only to showcase the manner of writing.

Therefore, it is the sole responsibility of the reader to use his/her intellect to check the veracity of viewpoints.

It is not uncommon sight in India to see young mother walking in the scorching heat, with a child perched on her hips and a pot in one hand, to a hand pump or stream miles away from her home to scoop up a meagre amount of water meant to meet her family's needs for the day. It is also not uncommon to see the reckless wastage of life-giving water by people who experience no shortage of it, whether it is through long showers or by simply leaving the tap running while brushing or washing the dishes.

These contrasting episodes teach us two important lessons. Firstly, that water is the most important resource and those who lack it will go to any end to get it and secondly that if some people have enough water resources at their disposal, they don't value it and tend to waste it.

To truly understand the crisis of water, we must therefore understand and confront both these facets. We must realise how crucial water is and how we must rid ourselves of our myopia when it comes to using wisely.

Water: Foundation of Life and Existence

Perhaps there is no greater symbol of the importance of water than our constant search for it outside the confines of our planet. This is because, water is intrinsically linked to life itself. Life cannot exist as we know without water and where water exists, life must as well.

When it comes to our own species, it is commonly known that 70% of the human body, is composed of water. Naturally, this water is acquired from our surroundings, forming a part of our diet, both as a liquid and solid food we consume.

The agricultural sector is the largest consumer of water, consuming close to 80% of water in India. 90% of this water comes from underground aquifers. Paddy, a stable crop is many parts of world including India and China requires anywhere between 4,000 to 5,000 liters of water per kg. Animal sources of nutrition such as meat and dairy take even more water.

Apart from the obvious needs of water to drunk and consume food, the role of water in maintaining the lifestyle of an average human being is overlooked. Water is used in large quantities by thermal powerplants to produce electricity, by construction activities to build our houses and by manufacturers to produce everything from tanned leather to semiconductors.

Clearly, water is not just the biochemical foundation of life, but is central to our way of life and the existence of everything from the lowly mosses to the greatest of civilizations.

Despite this keystone like position of water resources, it is often ignored in terms of conservation efforts since it is considered a limitless resource, continuously replenished through the water cycle. But is this true?

A Bleak Tomorrow

Much need not be said about how the water cycle returns whatever water is used and released back into
the environment. What needs to be considered instead is that natural processes operate on their own rhythms and frequencies. If we draw more than what the Earth can replenish, a shortage is inevitable. The hardship and suffering experienced by the people of South Africa during ‘Zero Day’ when they ran out of their water budget, is a stark reminder that nature too has a limit to its patience.

The fact that we cannot remain where we are is also driven home by the phenomenon of climate change. Anthropically driven climate change spells doom for what little water we have. Higher temperatures leading to greater evaporation of surface water, sea level rise threatening to trigger ingress of saline water to surface and underground freshwater reservoirs and rapid melting of glaciers in the ‘Third Pole’, set to all but disappear by a third by 2100, all ring alarm bells that must be heeded.

What we do today, echoes in eternity. The repercussions of this crisis will fall squarely on the shoulders of those who come after us. Our sons and daughters will feel the sting of water stress more acutely than we will. This principle, called ‘intergenerational parity,’ an important component of sustainable development as defined by the Brundtland Commission casts a responsibility on the current generation to thus act as trustees of the planet and its resources, holding it in trust for future generations.

To avoid a bleak tomorrow, we must take stock of where we are and act today. This is doubly true for India, as the bleak future seems to be knocking at our door.

**India- At the edge of cliff**

India is home to over 16% of the world’s population. But it is meagerly blessed with only about 4% of the world’s water resources. Predictably, India is the 13th most water stressed country in the world with close to 600 million people facing water stress daily as per the NITI Aayog. While the natural lack of water resources commensurate with the large population, we have ourselves exacerbated the issue with unwise policy.

A combination of perverse subsidies offered by the MSP regime and the free hand provided by the easement act and power subsidies; our agriculture is famously water intensive. Irrigation efficiency hovers around 30-55% with an already distorted cropping pattern focused on rice, wheat and sugarcane grown in water stressed areas. Combined with an Agri-export policy encouraging water intensive crop exports, water starved India is ironically one of the greatest exporters of groundwater in the world.

The often-highlighted unwise use of water at individual levels comes to the fore at the urban centers of our country. Twenty-one cities are expected to run out of water by 2022, including mega metropolises such as Mumbai, Bengaluru & Chennai. Chennai for one already faced an acute shortage in 2020 with neighbouring states offering to transfer water by train to meet the crisis.

Energy and industry in India are no stranger when it comes to unwise utilization of water either, 40% of our thermal power plants are in water stressed locations. While industry does not use quite as much water as agriculture, it pollutes surface water at a prodigious rate. The picture of worshippers celebrating Chhatth puja in the toxic foam filled waters of the Yamuna a few weeks ago is the most recent reminder of the way we treat what little water we have.

With climate change entering the picture, India as the 5th most vulnerable country in the world, we are standing at a precipice. And at the edge of a cliff, progress is a step backwards.

**Stepping Back**

The importance of moderation and conservation has not escaped our policymakers. This is amply proved by the initiatives already enacted by the government.

PM-Krishi Sinchai Yojana along with expanding the supply of water, also intends to improve water use efficiency through the ‘Per drop more crop’ vertical. The Atal Bhujal Yojana focuses on groundwater water conservation. States like Haryana seek to correct the skewed cropping pattern through schemes like ‘Jal hi Jeevan Hai.’

The overuse of water resources by the industries is sought to be controlled through new groundwater
abstraction rules aimed at discouraging overuse through a water conservation free. India has positively engaged with countries like Israel to use techniques of grey water recycling to make water as productive as possible. The Samagra Shiksha Jal Suraksha Program aims at spreading awareness of water conservation among school students.

The recently published Central Water Management Index published by Niti Aayog has shown positive results, with 80% of states showing improvement in their management of water resources. However, it also warns us that progress is not sufficient with significant stress remaining in population dense, breadbasket states.

While the road ahead is still long, we have charted a course and documents like the Niti Aayog’s strategy for water resources, light the way ahead. The effective implementation of these policies and sincere behaviour change will prove crucial to avoiding the water crisis that waits just around the corner. We must all remind ourselves of the most salient lesson that Gandhiji gave us “The Earth has enough for everyone’s need but not for everyone’s greed.”
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