



MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

AUGUST 2022

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SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) under Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment released the draft National Policy for Persons with Disabilities. This policy, once approved, will replace the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, 2006.

CONTEXT OF THE NEW POLICY

1. India signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007.
2. Enactment of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 in line with the above convention.
3. Adoption of National Education Policy, 2020
4. Disability was earlier viewed only from medical perspective. However, there has been a paradigm shift in understanding disability. Today, it is viewed as socio-medical issue.

STEPS BY GOVERNMENT FOR EMPOWERMENT OF DISABLED

1. Creation of dedicated Department of Disability under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Rights of Persons with Disability, 2016.
2. Accessible India Campaign to make public infrastructure accessible.
3. Unique Disability Identity Card Project for creating a national database for persons with disabilities based on certification by competent authorities.
4. Disability Pension

5. Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS): Provides financial assistance to NGOs for education and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

6. Scheme of Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids/Appliances (ADIP Scheme): Provides grants to various implementing agencies (NGOs/National Institutes/DDRCs/ALIMCO etc.) for purchase/fitting of aids & assistive devices for physical rehabilitation of PwDs.

SALIENT FEATURES OF RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2016

Widened scope of disabled: The RPwD Act recognises 21 categories of disabilities. This will result in significant increase in number of disabled in the country.

- Added acid attacks victims, speech and language disability and specific learning disability etc.
- New categories of disabilities such as three blood disorders – Thalassemia, Hemophilia and Sickle Cell Disease.
- Dwarfism and muscular dystrophy have been indicated as a separate class of specified disability.

Additional Benefits:

1. Reservation in higher education.
2. Reservation in government jobs.
3. Reservation in allocation of land

Rights and Entitlements of PwDs:

- Right to equality and non-discrimination: Appropriate government to take measures to ensure that PwDs enjoy their rights equally with others.
- Community life: PwDs shall have right to live in community.
- Protection from cruelty and inhuman treatment: Appropriate government to take measures to protect PwDs

from being subjected to torture, inhuman, degrading and cruel treatment.

- Protection from abuse, violence and exploitation: Executive Magistrate/Police officer to take cognisance of such complaints, any penal/registered organisation may inform such cases to local Executive Magistrate.
- Protection and safety during emergency and natural disasters: District, State, NDMA to take appropriate measures to ensure inclusion of PwDs in disaster activities.
- Home & Family: No children with disabilities to be separated from his/her parents on ground of disability.
- Reproductive rights: No persons with disabilities to be subject of any medical procedure which may lead to infertility without free and informed consent.
- Legal Capacity: Persons with disabilities to have right to inherit property, control their financial affairs, have access to bank loans and other financial credit.

Penalties for offences committed against PwDs:

1. Violation of provisions of the Act and rules thereunder.
2. Fraudulently availing benefit meant for persons with benchmark disabilities.
3. Punishment for atrocities.

CHALLENGES TO INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT OF PwDs

1. PwDs due to socio-psychological and cultural reasons face stigma, discrimination and neglect.
2. Widespread underestimation of the abilities and potential of persons with disabilities due to public perception and prejudices, thereby creating a vicious cycle of under achievement.
3. According to Census 2011, literacy rate among PwDs is about 55%. Only about 5% of PwDs are graduate and above.
4. Changing the mindset and perception of society for developing empathetic understanding of problems of PwDs.
5. Infusing self-esteem and self-confidence in PwDs so that they know that their limitations can be overcome to a large extent by self-effort and better environment.
6. Creating an accessible built infrastructure, transportation system, ICT ecosystem etc by adopting universal design principles through appropriate technology adoption.
7. Challenges of financing disability:
 - a) Large population of PwDs are poor and added costs on account of disability management push them further into extreme poverty. Even middleclass families find it difficult to meet its medical, rehabilitative, transportation and other needs.
 - b) Annual expenditure of Central and State Governments for PwDs is not commensurate with their requirement. Budget allocation

- c) Not all states have notified rules for the implementation of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Rules

8. Not all states have constituted State Advisory Boards, District Level Committees, Designate District Level Courts, appointed independent commissioners for PwDs.

9. States/UTs should expedite the pace of implementation of UDID project

10. Quantity of disability pension needs to be enhanced to enable Divyangs live a dignified life.

PRINCIPLES OF NEW DRAFT DISABILITY POLICY

1. PwDs are valuable human resource.
2. PwDs are entitled to all rights and freedom equally with others.
3. Discrimination on grounds of disability is violation of inherent dignity.
4. There is diversity of PwDs
5. Need to promote and protect human rights across all categories of PwDs including those requiring high support.

Accessibility is about giving access of a product, service or facility to the individual. This implies whether all users can access an equivalent user experience when they encounter a product, service or facility.

When we consider PwDs, accessibility draws significance as it is the primary tool for their empowerment and inclusion.

The concept of barrier free was environment was understood earlier with built environment (Buildings etc). Slowly other dimensions of accessibility such as transportation and ICT ecosystem were considered as part of the concept of design for all.

FOCUS AREAS OF DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITY

1. Prevention, Early Identification & Intervention:

- a) A comprehensive national program on prevention of disability to be developed for entire gamut of disabilities covered under RPwD Act
- b) Need to upscale research-based survey on occurrence of disability at different localities.
- c) Primary health workers, ASHA, Anganwadi workers, Primary School teachers etc to be sensitised about causes of disability, early identification, rehabilitation, prevention of disability.

2. **Developing a network of Cross Disability Early Intervention Centres (CDEICs)** in every district to provide following services in accessible and appealing environment under a single roof:

- a) Screening & Identification: Identification of risk cases and referring for rehabilitative services.
- b) School Readiness: Preparatory classrooms

- c) Outdoor Common Services: Sports arena, sensory/thera-park.
- d) Therapeutic Services: Such as physiotherapy, speech therapy, occupational & behavioural therapy etc.
- e) Counselling Services: Parental counselling and training, peer counselling.
 - ✓ CDEICs need to equip with rehabilitation professionals and personnel like psychologist, special educator, activity teacher, nurse, paediatrician and other experts.
 - ✓ Networks of CDEICs should be extended to all the districts across the country.
 - ✓ ASHA and Anganwadi workers need to be equipped for early reporting of risk cases and sensitising parents
 - ✓ CDEICs should be integral part of awareness measures at sub- district and village level.

3. Certification of disability:

- a) District medical authorities to ensure that certificate is issued within 30 days of receipt of application.
- b) States/UTs to ensure availability of specialist at every certifying healthcare institution based on cluster approach or hiring.
- c) States/UTs to fix one day in fortnight for certification of disabilities at every certifying healthcare institution.
- d) Every district hospital to have equipment and facilities for testing blood disorder, locomotor, visual and hearing disability. Sign language interpreter to be deputed at every district hospital.

4. Education:

- a) States/UTs to insert a provision regarding compliance of provisions of RPwD Act, 2016 by educational institutions while recognising them.
- b) Every district to have nodal officer to oversee admission of students with disabilities in inclusive setup without discrimination.
- c) Provision of special schools or home-based learning system for children with disabilities who cannot join inclusive education. Ultimate objective of special schools/home-based learning will be prepared children with disabilities to join inclusive education.
- d) Monitoring of learning outcomes of children with disabilities.

5. Skill Development and Employment

- a) A dedicated national level employment portal for PwDs to be developed, meeting highest standards of accessibility. This portal will have all information related to employment (job listing (both private and public), recruitment process) and skill development. This portal will
- b) Every government and private establishment will report their vacancies to Ministry of Labour & Employment for updating in the portal.

- c) Above portal will act as employment exchange for PwDs by providing additional facility of registration of PwDs with their UDID number.

6. Sports, Culture & Education

- a) Setting up of dedicated disability centers, in each zone, with state-of-the-art facilities for training of PwDs with residential support.
- b) Encouraging Paralympic games at district, state and national levels.
- c) Ensuring accessibility of all mainstream sports facilities under Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and Sports Authority of India.
- d) Culture Ministry to develop a scheme for promoting fine arts and performing arts among PwDs. Acknowledging and propagating literary work of PwD and propagated at all levels.
- e) Upscaling cultural programs like Divya Kala Shakti focussed on dance and music but fine arts, painting, sculpture etc.
- f) Cultural program involving PwDs with disabilities to be held at State/District level which would

7. Accessibility:

- a) All local body building byelaws will incorporate accessibility standards under the harmonised guidelines for barrier free environment and space standard for PwDs/elderly or under National Building Code.
- b) All Centre/States/UTs to ensure that every new public building conforms to the accessibility standards at the planning stage and cost estimate will take into consideration accessibility features as per applicable norm.
- c) Architects/Civil Engineers to be sensitised to ensure inculcation of accessibility, universal design culture in all public infrastructure.
- d) Curriculum for engineering to have a component of accessibility and universal design.
- e) States/UTs will work out an action plan for making all their existing building accessible in a time bound manner.
- f) All new passenger buses to have accessibility features and existing passenger busses to be phased out.
- g) Efforts to promote accessible passenger cars for PwDs, accessible cab facilities at airports, railway stations etc. Drivers of such vehicles to be sensitised and trained about needs of PwDs.
- h) All airports, railways, ship vessels, metro to meet the accessibility standards.
- i) All websites of both government & private will meet GoI guidelines

8. Disaster Management

- a) Ensuring preparedness during normal times with proper coordination with various stakeholders.
- b) Sensitisation of local level authorities in handling PwDs and their specific requirements.

- c) Active role of State Commissioners of PwDs and District level authorities in maintenance of basic data, list of voluntary organisations and disability associations, protocols in management
- d) Involvement of PwDs and their associations in planning, implementation and monitoring of disaster risk reduction.
- e) Declaring a focal point for inclusive DRR for state level, regional level and other organisations at local level. A system of collaboration between the focal points will also be established by NDMA.
- f) Collecting sex, age and disability segregated data by disaster management authorities at district, state and national level.
- g) Conducting regular audits to ensure that all services related to disaster risk management are accessible and usable by NDMA/SDMA.
- h) Training of manpower in the field of disaster risk reduction in the context of implementing disability inclusive DRR by NDMA/SDMA.
- i) Priority to PwDs for evacuation is disaster situations and relief under disaster management fund.

9. Social Security

- a) Encourage States/UTs to develop appropriate social security policy for PwDs.
- b) States/UTs to consider universal coverage of PwDs under disability pension scheme subject to their economic capacity and development.
- c) Covering all PwDs under food security program.
- d) Provision of community centers for providing shelters with food and clothing facility to homeless persons with disabilities.
- e) Developing a comprehensive insurance program for PwDs for their health and life. IRDAI to sensitise insurance providers for ensuring PwDs are not discriminated against while seeking insurance coverage.
- f) Provision of higher interest for savings of PwDs.
- g) Developing schemes by States/UTs for providing caregiver allowance.
- h) Streamlining grant of guardianship as a support mechanism to PwDs.
- i) Creating better employment opportunities for PwDs and covering all PwDs in the age group of 18-59 years by States/UTs for support by unemployment allowance.
- j) Enhancing coverage of ADIP Program in effective manner and developing a mechanism for providing support

10. Strengthening institutional mechanism and capacity development:

- a) Each Central Ministry/Department should have a nodal officer on disability matters to be responsible for coordinating with DEPwD.
- b) Priority to be given for implementation of recommendations of Central Advisory Board on

Disability, highest policy recommending body on disability sector.

- c) National institutes/Composite Regional Centers (CRCs) to serve as focal point at the regional level to coordinate with concerned authorities on disability matters.
- d) National institutes and Composite Regional Centers (CRCs) should be involved under PM-DAKSH portal.
- e) Setting up of at least one National Institute or Composite Regional Center in every State/UT.
- f) Supporting District Disability Rehabilitation Centres in every district to provide single window facility for Divyangs at district level. Each DDRC should have facilities of Cross Disability Early Intervention.
- g) DDRCs should be located adjacent to District Hospitals/Health Care institutions. Each DDRC should be manned by rehabilitation personnel/community based inclusive development professionals.
- h) Rehabilitation centres at sub-divisional level on the model of DDRCs based on population of PwDs.
- i) Staff and personnel of DDRCs and State run rehabilitation centers including NGOs should be trained under National Institutes/Composite Regional Centers.
- j) Rehabilitation Council of India to take measures to develop well trained pool of rehabilitation personnel/professional to meet the requirement of all categories of PwDs.
- k) Setting up a University in Disability Studies and Rehabilitation Sciences to serve as a national resource centre on human resource development, inclusive universal design and assistive technology.

11. Protection of rights of PwDs:

- a) Need to develop a system to capture data relating to number of cases filed by PwDs in special courts, police stations and time taken for disposal of such cases.
- b) On receipt of complaints by office of Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD), action to be initiated within a week. Hearing and disposal of grievances of disabled should be in time bound manner.
- c) Office of State Commissioner need to be given due support of staff and other infrastructure.
- d) Common online platform for registering of complaint by PwDs. These complaints will automatically forward to CCPD, or respective State Commissioner based on the nature of the complaint.
- e) Sensitising public and private authorities to create an inclusive society. State commissioners along with State Governments need to conduct sensitizing workshop for District/State authority periodically.
- f) States/UT to constitute District level committees which could act as grievance redressal mechanism at the district level.

- g) States/UTs to designate special court in every district and appoint special Public Prosecutor for facilitating speedy trials of cases concerning rights of PwDs.
- h) National Legal Aid and State Legal Aid Authority need to develop schemes for PwDs for enabling them access to justice.
- i) Executive Magistrate may be designated in every district to deal with violence, abuse and exploitation of PwDs.
- j) Administration and police to be given orientation training about the rights of PwDs and their role and responsibility to protect their rights.

12. Disability Data Management:

- a) Unique Disability ID Card project should be linked with all service delivery mechanism through appropriate Application Programming Interface (API) integration.
- b) User establishments of UDID database to ensure privacy of PwDs while disseminating information.
- c) All educational institutions starting from preparatory school, Institutions offering distance learning/homebased learning, all government run healthcare institutions should capture UDID data and maintain disability disaggregated data.
- d) DOPT to develop a common database of employees with disabilities and their year-wise recruitment in all Central Government establishments and capture UDID number.
- e) All schemes and programs for individual citizens should capture disability disaggregated data on disability.

13. Research & development:

- a) Finding incidence and prevalence of different disabilities, region-wise based on scientific data, causes and possible interventions for minimising disability. b. Developing low cost, indigenous aids and assistive devices for which ALIMCO should play a lead role.
- b) Developing mechanism/tool for accessible education, sports, culture, health services.
- c) Framing a mechanism for accreditation of indigenous research products in disability sector for research finding to get translated into real outcomes for enhancing quality of life of PwDs.
- d) Identifying premier research institutions that are capable of undertaking quality research in disability sector in consultation with Department of Science & Technology.

14. Promoting Atmanirbhar Bharat in Disability Sector:

- a) Fully indigenise high end prosthesis i.e., below knee and above knee with local procurement of input raw material.
- b) Modernisation of ALIMCO with advanced equipment to increase production capacity of better-quality aids and assistive devices, to reduce import of these.

- c) ALIMCO to enforce rigorous quality control on its vendors and market products through chain of retailers. ALIMCO will undertake upgradation of knowledge and skills of its workforce to align it with the primary aim of improved product design and development and manufacturing new products.
- d) ALIMCO to apply best management practices to minimise cost for aids and assistive device and improve its share.
- e) ALIMCO to develop a network of retailers and set up repairing units through these networks.

15. International cooperation:

- a) MoUs with other countries for facilitating cooperation in research in access to scientific and technical knowledge, for promoting accessible and assistive technology and other areas.

4. Financing

- a) States/UTs/local governments to earmark sufficient funds for disability sector every year.
- b) Efforts need to be made to sensitise corporate sector for facilitating higher funds for empowerment of PwDs.
- c) All States/UTs to set up State Fund and popularise the fund for receiving donation for public for utilising it for empowerment of PwDs.
- d) Public private partnership needs to be explored for providing services to Divyangjan.

CONCERNS AGAINST THE POLICY

- Limited focus on political empowerment of disabled: Exclusion of disabled people from political space happens at all levels of the political process. For ex. Inaccessibility of voting process, barriers to participation in party politics or lack of representation at local level. Political parties do not find the disabled as the large electorate. The policy is silent on political empowerment of disabled. Ex. Chhattisgarh started the initiative of nominating at least one disabled person in each panchayat.
- Doctors especially those engaging with disabled were not involved during the framing of the policy.
- Lacks inter-ministerial coordination: There is no coordination with Union Health Ministry's draft of accessibility standards for healthcare.
- Does not provide pathways to mandate health professionals to acquire the right medical diagnostic equipment.
- Does little to ensure accessibility requirements are included in public procurement laws and policies.
- Policy is silent on repealing all types of guardianship that affect deaf blind people and persons with intellectual or psychological disabilities.

2. SDG localisation

LOCALISATION OF SDGS

SDG localisation can be defined as the process of recognising sub-national contexts in the achievement of 2030 Agenda and ensuring that sub-national governments drive the agenda right from the envisioning for the future of setting of the goals and targets, devising policies and strategies, establishing institutional mechanism for driving the agenda, budgeting, monitoring and building partnerships to achieve the goals envisioned.

In a country like India, achieving the SDGs is only possible through localisation, given the diversity of issues at the local level and the magnitude of the challenges.

ROLE OF SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS IN LOCALISING SDGS

- In India's polity is federated polity, States are best placed to put people first and ensure that no one is left behind.
- They have the constitutionally mandated role in designing and delivering developmental schemes and programs to people.
- Total expenditure of the States exceeds that of the Centre by 70%.
- Ability to achieve SDGs will depend on ability and actions of States, districts, cities and panchayats.

NEED FOR SDG LOCALISATION

- Constitutional imperative and mandate for localising the SDGs at the sub-national levels. Several subjects of significance that have a direct bearing on SDGs come under the State List or the Concurrent List. Ex. Public health, education, agriculture, water, transport, public order, local government etc. Constitutionally, it not possible to make progress on any of these subjects without anchoring the work at State level.
- Size, population & diversity and heterogeneity in terms of physical features, ecology, natural resource base, economic development, socio-economic attainments and stage of demographic transition. This diversity necessitates developing differential strategies for attainment of SDGs.
- Large population: Uttar Pradesh alone will be 5th largest country in terms of population, population of all districts in India is comparable to some country or other. Therefore, local development solutions and interventions which are cognisant of this scale need to be developed.
- Planning at national level for achieving SDGs will be ineffective in responding to diverse development status wherein advanced states is much better than bottom performing states.
- Decentralising governance closer to people allows for developing strategies that:
 - ✓ Better reflects ground realities
 - ✓ Enable agile decision making to emerging challenges.
 - ✓ Helps in ensuring wider ownership of sustainable development agenda.
- Localisation of the SDGs promotes cooperative and competitive federalism in the country. It enables the

governments at different levels to shoulder their responsibilities more effectively than any single central government.

- Localisation allows developing local solutions to local challenges by empowering the state/UTs and the local governments to identify and address developmental issues. States & UTs can learn from each other, thereby optimising time, efforts and resources.
- Localisation of SDGs is an excellent opportunity for governments at all levels to improve their capacity. For ex. In Statistical systems as SDGs require collection, collation and analysis of data where there has been no historical collection of data.

PILLARS OF INDIAN MODEL OF SDG LOCALISATION

There are four pillars upon which the success of the Indian model for localising SDGs rests:

Pillar I: Creating institutional ownership.

Pillar II: Establishing a robust review and monitoring system

Pillar III: Developing capacities for integrating the SDGs in planning and monitoring

Pillar IV: Adopting a 'whole of society' approach.

CREATING INSTITUTIONAL OWNERSHIP

- Political ownership (or ownership at the highest level) of the 2030 Agenda is important for localising the SDGs: Localising SDGs requires a 'whole of government' and 'whole of society' approach which cannot be realised without political ownership.
- Institutional structures dedicated to SDGs are integral to effective localisation of the Goals in the States: An institutional architecture with an anchor or nodal institution/department that is empowered to convene/coordinate and advise is a pre-requisite for actions on SDGs. The institution anchoring action on SDGs must have a 'bird's eye view' of all the dimensions of SDGs- economic, social & environmental and undertake critical analysis to guide actions related to the macro picture.
- Dedicated SDG centres/units play a critical role:
- Ownership can be ensured by aligning the long-term vision, strategy, plans and budgets of the states and UTs to the SDGs
- Integrating SDGs at the lowest levels of governance is critical.

ESTABLISHING A ROBUST REVIEW & MONITORING SYSTEM

- Need for establishing a system for reviewing and monitoring progress on SDGs, 'what gets measured gets done.'
- Localising SDGs at the sub-national level required capacity advancement at investment in statistical systems.
- Use of IT tools in important.
- Special surveys may need to be designed to ensure that 'no one is left behind.'
- Inculcating healthy competition among districts is useful.

DEVELOPING CAPACITIES FOR INTEGRATING THE SDGS IN PLANNING AND MONITORING

- Extent to which states can drive the SDG agenda is dependent on two factors: (a) ownership & (b) capacities at all levels.
- All levels of the government need to have capacities for integrating SDGs in planning, implementation and monitoring
- Progress on 2030 Agenda requires a diverse capacity set
- Process of institutionalising SDGs at the sub-national level mandates building local capacities.

DEVELOPING CAPACITIES FOR INTEGRATING THE SDGS IN PLANNING AND MONITORING

- Partnership among various stakeholders is critical to achieving the SDGs. Different categories of partners bring in their own skill set and expertise to the table and augment capacities which may be lacking with a particular institution in a particular domain.
- Civil Society Organisations bring out voices of most vulnerable sections of the population to the government and other stakeholders. They promote human rights of the most marginalised. Play an effective role in mobilising public opinion and action and influencing behaviour changes at local population level. There is tremendous potential for CSOs, those working in remote regions to participate in SDGs.
- Private Sector is critical for promoting sustainable growth, developing affordable and innovative solutions to development challenges, generating skilling and employment opportunities and contributing to progress. Corporate Social Responsibility provides an important framework for private sector to contribute to SDGs.
- Collaboration with academia, universities and research institutions is important for benefitting from cutting edge innovation and research.

WAY FORWARD

- SDG reform action plan must transform all aspects of public governance at all levels to be more inclusive and work synergistically towards sustainable development.
- Institutional architecture developed for localising SDG needs to drive a holistic development path focusing on the interconnectedness of social, economic and environmental needs.
- Monitoring of SDGs at the national and sub-national levels needs to intensify, focusing on issues that are at risk of missing the SDG goalposts.
- Capacity building is an extremely critical cross-cutting entry point for any progress on SDGs.
- Developing long-term strategic partnerships should be priority in the Decade of Action on 2030 Agenda.

LOCALISING OF SDGs in PRIs

- Ministry of Panchayati Raj is committed to the achievement of SDGs through Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyaan Scheme.

- RGSA scheme mandates to capacitate elected representatives for good governance through attainment of SDGs through participatory local planning at Gram Panchayat level.
- 17 SDGs have been reorganised into 9 goals through participatory local planning at Gram Panchayat level.
- Through the 9 identified goals, MoPR has been progressing in attaining the SDGs, but it is felt that more focused approach is required in localizing the concept of SDGs at the grassroots level.
- **Whole of Government Approach:**
 - (a) Localising SDGs in PRIs is to be recognised as responsibility of all ministries.
 - (b) States to issue clear guidelines to line departments for working in convergence with PRIs.
 - (c) Flagship schemes of ministries address various SDGs. Hence, pro-active participation of ministries along with PRIs is necessary to take outcomes to next level.
- **Local Indicator Framework:** The process of linking global indicators till the grassroots levels until Panchayats is ensured through localisation of SDGs.
 - ✓ Vision statement for each theme is broken down to Local Targets for Gram Panchayats to work on. Most targets link to the National Targets.
 - ✓ The targets are measured by indicators. These indicators are to form Local Indicator Framework. The LIF is in line with National Indicator Framework as would apply at Gram Panchayat level and some LIF are unique to Panchayat only.
 - ✓ 9 Themes have been identified for Panchayats:
 1. Poverty free and enhanced livelihood in villages.
 2. Healthy Village
 3. Child Friendly Village
 4. Water Sufficient Village
 5. Clean and Green Village
 6. Self-sufficient infrastructure in Village
 7. Socially secured Village
 8. Village with Good Governance
 9. Engendered Development in Village

Panchayat Dashboard to be developed at all Panchayats to reflect information of progress in Panchayat on SDGs. Best Practices portal to be linked to this dashboard. It will provide a workboard for panchayats to prepare GPDP.

Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP): The GPDP helps Panchayats in converging all the resources in setting local development agenda and finding local solutions to development issues. GPDP developed should be reflective of localisation of SDGs in rural areas and try to attain the targets of Local Indicator Framework (LIF).

Quality Circles: It is the essential mechanism for concurrent and continuous handholding and follow up. It enables regular, relevant, continuous program inputs, flexibility, mid-course corrections, feedback, process and output follow-up, monitoring and convergence. Quality circles enable exchange of information between PRIs and various partners.

- Quality Circle to be established with Panchayat Presidents representing from Gram Panchayats in the area, along with the field next level official and area Elected Representative of Block and District. NGOs and other partners working with Gram Panchayats to also be invited as part of Quality Circles.
- Quality Circles are to be at block/sub-block level and should meet every 2 months.

Other steps required:

1. Adoption of best practices and their documentation.
2. Incentivisation is necessary for action on SDGs and for recognition of efforts by Gram Panchayats.
3. Partnerships: From whole of government to whole of society approach needs to be followed with collaboration from NITI Aayog, Ministries, States, Universities, Women, Youth, Private Sector and Civil Society etc.
3. Roles & responsibilities need to be clearly spelt out for preventing overlap, finding gaps to fill and engage in planned manner.
4. Convergence: Convergence in actions of all actors should be explored to make all actors contribute and multi-dimensional impact.
5. Capacity building & Training: Effective Capacity Building & Training can bring sea changes. Design of Capacity Building & Training and IEC needs to be highly effective that the programme impacts the participants with the burning desire & motivation to work on the issues.
6. Evidence based monitoring at national level, state level and local level for continuous assessment.

REVAMPED RASHTRIYA GRAM SWARAJ ABHIYAN

- The scheme will help more than 2.78 lakh Rural local bodies including Traditional bodies to develop governance capabilities to deliver on SDGs through inclusive local governance with focus on optimum utilisation of available resources.
- Priority will be given to subjects of national importance:
 - (a) Poverty free and enhanced livelihood in villages.
 - (b) Healthy Village
 - (c) Child Friendly Village
 - (d) Water Sufficient Village
 - (e) Clean and Green Village
 - (f) Self-sufficient infrastructure in Village
 - (g) Socially secured Village
 - (h) Village with Good Governance
 - (i) Engendered Development in Village
- As panchayats have representation of SCs/STs/Women and are institutions closest to grassroots, strengthening Panchayats will promote equity and inclusiveness, social justice and economic development of the community.
- Increased use of e-governance by PRIs will help achieve improved service delivery and transparency.
- Establish institutional structure for capacity building of PRIs at national, state and district level with adequate human resource and infrastructure.

- Panchayats will progressively be strengthened through incentivisation based on nationally important criteria to recognise roles of Panchayats in attainment of SDGs and to inculcate spirit of healthy competition.
- No permanent post will be created under the scheme but need based contractual human resources may be provisioned for overseeing the implementation of the scheme and providing technical support to States/UTs for achieving goals under the scheme.

3. MISSION SHAKTI

Ministry of Women and Child Development has issued detailed guidelines for Mission Shakti aimed at strengthening interventions for Women Safety, Security and Empowerment.

OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHEME

- Mission Shakti is a scheme in mission mode aimed at strengthening interventions for women safety, security and empowerment.
- Seeks to realise Government's commitment for 'women-led development' by addressing issues affecting women on a life-cycle continuum basis and by making them equal partners in nation-building through convergence and citizen ownership.
- Seeks to make women economically empowered, exercising free choice over their minds and bodies in an atmosphere free from violence and threat.
- Seeks to reduce care burden on women and increase female labour force participation by promoting skill development, capacity building, financial literacy, access to micro-credit etc.

SALIENT FEATURES

- Mission Shakti has two sub-schemes: Sambal and Samarthya.
- Sambal sub-scheme is for safety and security of women.
- Samarthya sub-scheme is for empowerment of women.
- **Components of Sambal:**
 - ✓ Existing schemes of One Stop Centre, Women Helpline, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao.
 - ✓ A new component of Nari Adalats has been added. They are women's collectives to promote and facilitate alternative dispute resolution and gender justice in society and within families.
- **Components of Samarthya:**
 - ✓ Erstwhile schemes of Ujjwala, Swadhar Greh and Working Women Hostel.
 - ✓ Existing schemes of National Creche Scheme for children of working mothers and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) under umbrella ICDS have now been included in Samarthya.
 - ✓ A new component of Gap Funding for Economic Empowerment has also been added.

ABOUT NARI ADALATS

- Aims at providing with an alternate Grievance Redressal Mechanism for resolving cases of petty nature (harassment, subversion, curtailment of rights or entitlements) faced by women at Gram Panchayat level.
- They will be formed of committed and socially respected women chosen for that purpose.
- This platform will also be utilized for engaging with the public for awareness generation and getting feedback for improvement in the schemes and for effective public delivery of services.
- These will be provided logistic support through Gram Panchayats in convergence with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Ministry of Rural Development, and Common Service Centres (CSCs) run by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- Initially, it will be launched in identified States/UTs, preferably where Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) are heading the Gram Panchayats (GPs) in Aspirational Districts.
- Under this component, no remuneration to the selected members shall be provided. However, out-of-pocket expenses will be provided by the Ministry for organising the meetings and for providing the badge/ uniform to the members.

ECONOMY

1. ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT BILL, 2022

Most DISCOMs incur huge losses, which in turn reduces their ability to pay dues to power generating companies and repay loans to Banks. Poor financial health of the DISCOMs can cause negative domino effect on the economy. Hence, to improve electricity distribution, Government has introduced Electricity Amendment Bill, 2022. However, the bill has been opposed by states and farmer groups.

SALIENT FEATURES OF BILL

Retail Choice to Consumers: Presently, DISCOMs enjoy monopoly in distribution of electricity which in turn leads to lack of consumer choice and higher inefficiencies. Hence, the bill seeks to introduce competition in electricity distribution by allowing multiple DISCOMs to operate in a single area. This would give necessary choice to consumers with respect to electricity distribution company.

Renewable purchase obligation: The Bill adds that RPO should not be below a minimum percentage prescribed by the central government. Failure to meet RPO will be punishable with a penalty between 25 paise and 50 paise per kilowatt of the shortfall.

ABOUT RENEWABLE PURCHASE OBLIGATIONS

- DISCOMs required to purchase certain percentage of electricity from various renewable energy sources. This obligation to purchase renewable power is called Renewable Purchase Obligation.
- **Framework for RPOs?** Laid down under Electricity Act, 2003 and National Tariff Policy 2016
- **Types of RPOs:** Solar RPO and Non-Solar RPO. In 2020, Government declared that procurement of power from

large Hydropower Projects (more than 25 MW) and Ocean Energy would be considered as Non-Solar RPO.

- **Who lays down the Targets for RPOs?** Annual Targets laid down by State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs). Long term targets laid down by Ministry of Power.
- **Present Targets:** Long Term target to be met by 2022. Total RPO: 21% (Solar RPO: 10.5% + Non-Solar RPO: 10.5%)
- **Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs):** DISCOMs that exceed their RPO obligations can sell RECs to other DISCOMs that fail to meet RPO target. 1 REC is equal to 1 Mwh.
- **Present Status of RPO:** Compliance of DISCOMs with respect to meeting RPO targets has been consistently poor. Ex., RPO target for financial year 2019-20 was set at 17.5% but achievement on pan-India basis was merely 12.73%. The compliance is less than 55% of target for about 20 states.

REASONS FOR OPPOSITION TO ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT BILL, 2022

The Bill has been criticised for being anti-farmer, anticonstitutional and against interest of States.

Violation of Federal Principle: Electricity is under concurrent list. However, electricity distribution is responsibility of state governments. Opposition ruled states contend that the bill empowers centre to issue licenses to multiple discoms in a single area and hence encroaches upon states' powers.

Enabling Multiple discoms operating in a single area may lead to replacement of public sector monopoly by private sector monopolies wherein a single, large and deep pocketed private company may come to control electricity distribution.

Farmers and poor consumers are apprehensive that it may lead to end of electricity subsidies.

State-owned DISCOM Employees are fearing about future job losses.

2. INDIA INNOVATION INDEX

NITI Aayog, along with Institute for Competitiveness, has recently released third edition of India Innovation Index. The

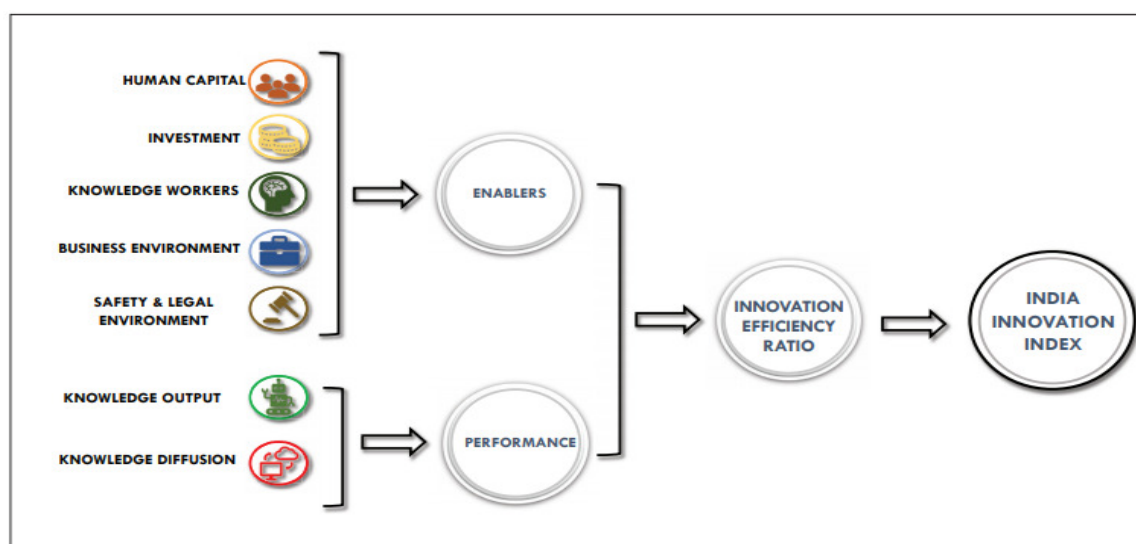
report examines innovation capabilities and performance of States and UTs. The first edition of the index was launched in 2019.

INDIA INNOVATION INDEX

• Functions:

- Ranking of states and UTs based on their index scores
- Recognizing opportunities and challenges
- Assisting in tailoring governmental policies to foster innovation.

• **Methodology:** Calculated as the average of the scores of its two dimensions - Enablers and Performance. Enablers are factors that underpin innovative capacities, grouped in five pillars:



- (1) Human Capital,
- (2) Investment,
- (3) Knowledge Workers,
- (4) Business Environment, and
- (5) Safety and Legal Environment.

Performance dimension captures benefits that a nation derives from inputs, divided in two pillars:

- (6) Knowledge Output and
- (7) Knowledge Diffusion.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

States have been bifurcated into three categories: major states, north-east and hill states, and UTs/small states.

Among major states, Karnataka occupies the first place, and it is followed by Telangana and Haryana. Among NE and Hilly States, Manipur and Uttarakhand are top ranked

states. Among UTs/small states are Delhi and Chandigarh are top ranked states.

Innovation index

The table lists the score and ranking of 17 major States in the third edition of NITI Aayog's India Innovation Index. Karnataka ranked first followed by Telangana and Haryana while Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Bihar were ranked at the bottom of the index



State	Score	Rank	State	Score	Rank
Karnataka	18.01	1	M.P.	12.74	13
Telangana	17.66	2	Gujarat	12.41	14
Haryana	16.35	3	Bihar	11.58	15
Maharashtra	16.06	4	Odisha	11.42	16
Tamil Nadu	15.69	5	Chhattisgarh	10.97	17

OTHER IMPORTANT INDICES TO MEASURE INNOVATION

Global Innovation Index (GII): Published by WIPO

Global Competitiveness Report: Published by World Economic Forum

International IP Index: Published by US Chamber of Commerce's Global Innovation Policy Centre.

3. FINANCIAL SERVICES INSTITUTIONS BOARD (FSIB)

Central Government has recently decided to replace Banks Board Bureau (BBB) with Financial Services institutions Bureau (FSIB) for recommending persons for appointment of financial services institutions.

BACKGROUND OF BANK BOARD BUREAU

- Banks Board Bureau (BBB) was set up in 2016 as a non-statutory body to recommend names of whole time Directors (WTDs) and non-executive Chairmen (NEC) of *Nationalized Banks, Public sector Insurance Companies and selected financial institutions such as EXIM Bank, SIDBI, NHB, NABARD, IIFCL and IFCI.*
- Last year, BBB was declared an incompetent authority by Delhi High Court, when a general manager at state-owned National Insurance Company challenged appointment of a person junior to him for Director's position by BBB. Consequently, 10–11 directors appointed by BBB had to vacate office.
- To end this logjam, BBB had to be struck down and a new body, namely, FSIB had to be put in place.

ABOUT FINANCIAL SERVICES INSTITUTIONS BOARD (FSIB)

- **Establishment of FSIB:** Set up under the Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance
- **Is FSIB a statutory body?** No, since it has not been set up through an act of the Parliament.
- **Composition:** 11 Members (All Members including Chairman are part time members)
 - ✓ Chairperson
 - ✓ 4 Ex-officio persons: Secretary, Department of Financial Services + Secretary, Department of Public Enterprises + Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India + Chairperson of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)
 - ✓ 3 Expert Members in field of Banking and Financial Institutions
 - ✓ 3 Expert Members in field of Insurance.
- **Functions:**
 - ✓ Recommend persons for appointment as **wholetime directors (WTDs) and non-executive chairpersons (NECs)** on Boards of Directors in Public Sector Banks (PSBs), Public Sector insurance companies (PSIs) and selected financial institutions such as **NABARD, NHB, SIDBI, EXIM, IFCI, IIFCL etc.**
 - ✓ Advise Government on matters relating to appointments, transfer, or extension of term of

office and termination of services of the said directors.

- ✓ Advise Government on desired management structure at Board level for PSBs, FIs and PSIs.
 - ✓ Advise Government on a suitable performance appraisal system.
 - ✓ Build a databank containing data related to performance of PSBs, FIs and PSIs.
 - ✓ Advise Government on formulation and enforcement of code of conduct and ethics for whole-time directors in PSBs, FIs and PSIs.
 - ✓ Advise Government on evolving suitable training & development programs for management personnel in PSBs, FIs and PSIs.
 - ✓ To help PSBs, FIs and PSIs in terms of developing business strategies & capital raising plan etc.
- **Methodology for making recommendations:** FSIB shall develop an appropriate methodology to search and recommend high-calibre persons for appointment as WTDs and NECs

4. NEW UPDATE ON E-NAM

Recently, Union Agriculture Minister launched Platform of Platforms under E-NAM portal. The new "Platform of platforms" would enable farmers and traders to avail various goods and services across agricultural value chain.

WHAT IS E-NAM?

- Pan-India Electronic portal to link the existing APMCs to create an Integrated domestic market ("One Nation, One Market").
 - Managed by Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC).
 - States interested to integrate their mandis with E-NAM are required to carry out following three reforms in their APMC Act.
- a) Single trading license (Unified) to be valid across the state
 - b) Single point levy of market fee across the state; and
 - c) Provision for e-auction/ e-trading as a mode of price discovery

WORKING MECHANISM



ABOUT PLATFORM OF PLATFORMS

It brings together different service providers on the single platform to streamline supply chain, reduce postharvest losses and ensure higher price realisation for farmers. It provides for:

FPO Module: Enables FPOs to upload pictures of their produce directly from collection centres without the need to come to Mandis.

Logistics Module: Link large logistic aggregator platforms with traders for the seamless transportation of Agriproduce.

Warehousing based Trading Module: Farmers can sell their produce directly from warehouses registered under warehousing Development and Regulating Authority (WDRA).

Fintech Module: Fintech companies can get integrated with the E-NAM to provide for services such as

- ✓ Price Information to farmers
- ✓ Link Farmers with bulk buyers
- ✓ Generate credit score for the farmers
- ✓ Link Farmers with the Banks to get credit

Integration with other platforms: Platforms that provide services across agricultural supply chain can also get integrated with the E-NAM:

- ✓ **Inputs:** Credit, Seeds, Fertilisers, Machineries, Price information etc
- ✓ **Information Dissemination:** Advisory Services, crop forecasting, weather updates, capacity building for farmers etc.
- ✓ **Post-harvest services:** Cleaning, Grading, Sorting & Packaging Service Provider

- ✓ **E-commerce:** Bring together buyers and sellers

BENEFITS

Farmers will be facilitated to sell the produce outside their state borders. This will increase farmers' digital access to multiple markets, buyers and service providers and bring transparency in business transactions with the aim of improving price search mechanism and quality commensurate price realisation

5. India's first International Bullion Exchange

Prime Minister has launched India International Bullion Exchange (IIBX), India's first International Bullion Exchange in GIFT-IFSC.

BACKGROUND

Despite being the second largest importer of gold in the world with a demand of nearly 1,000 tonnes, India lacks many key elements of the gold ecosystem.

- **Fragmented market:** There is no organised market for the trading of Gold in India.
- **Price taker rather than price setter:** Even though India is one of the major importers, India is unable to dictate prices of gold in the international market.
- **Poor infrastructure** in terms of Quality storage and vault facilities.
- **Import of Gold:** Currently, Gold is imported on a consignment model wherein RBI has nominated Banks and agencies to import Gold and then supply to traders and jewellers.

DETAILS ABOUT INDIA INTERNATIONAL BULLION EXCHANGE (IIBX)

India's first international bullion exchange situated in GIFT-IFSC in Gujarat. The exchange will not only facilitate trading of gold but would also set up necessary infrastructure to store physical gold and silver.

- **Components:** Bullion Exchange, Bullion Clearing Corporation and Bullion Depository.
- **Eligible participants:** Qualified jewellers and Nominated banks and agencies.
- **Imports:** Allow eligible qualified jewellers as notified by International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) to directly import gold through IIBX.
- **Trading:** Enable trading of bullion through Bullion Depository Receipts (BDRs) issued in electronic form by Bullion Depository
- **Products available for trading:** Gold 1 kg 995 purity and gold 100 gm 999 purity.
- **Regulation:** International Financial Services Centres Authority (Bullion Exchange) Regulations, 2020 notified by IFSCA.

BENEFITS

- **Gateway for imports** where all bullion imports for domestic consumption shall be channelised through the exchange.
- **Efficient Price Discovery** (synchronised prices with global gold prices).
- **Assurance** of quality of gold.
- **Impetus to the financialization** of gold in India

6. FLOATING SOLAR PLANT

India's largest floating solar power plant of 100 MW capacity, belonging to National Thermal Power Corporation has been commissioned at Ramagundam, Telangana. It is spread over 450 acres on Sri Ram Sagar Project reservoir located on Godavari River. This is the largest floating solar plant in the country in a single location as of now.

DETAILS ABOUT FLOATING SOLAR PLANT

Floating solar plant refers to an array of solar panels on a structure that floats on a body of water, typically an artificial basin or a lake. India's first floating PV plant of 10 KW was installed in a lake in Kolkata in 2014. NTPC has also set up 92 MW Floating Solar at Kayamkulam (Kerala) and 25 MW Floating Solar at Simhadri (Andhra Pradesh).

SIGNIFICANCE FOR INDIA

India has set up an ambitious renewable energy target of 175 GW by 2022 of which solar comprises 100 GW. Floating solar would be huge opportunity for India to realise this target.

ADVANTAGES

- **No land occupancy:** Main advantage of floating PV plants is that they do not take up any land.
- **Water Conservation:** Installation of solar panels on lake or reservoir leads to partial coverage of the water body leading to reduced evaporation.
- **Higher Efficiency of Panels:** Cooling effect of water on installed PV modules, helps reduce thermal losses which increases the efficiency of panels.
- **Longer Module Life:** Cooling effect on modules slows down long-term heat induced degradation of solar modules thereby leading to higher module and plant life
- **Easy Cleaning & Less Water Consumption:** Regular cleaning of solar modules is easier as water is readily available. Also, water loss is lesser as water used in cleaning the panels goes back into the reservoir.

CHALLENGES

- **Higher Investment:** Installing a floating solar power plant with current technologies requires at least thrice the investment cost compared to land-based solar power plants.
- **Other challenges:** Rusting of components from constant contact with water; anchoring the floats to water body so that they can withstand high velocity winds and floods.

- **Low Local manufacturing of floats in India** is another area that will require significant boost to meet such high requirements.

7. Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act

The Kerala government has expressed its opposition to a new set of proposed amendments to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act.

THE MINES AND MINERALS (DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATION) ACT (MMDR ACT), 1957:

- It forms the basic framework of regulating mining sector in India and mandates the requirement for granting leases for mining operations. The Ministry of Mines is responsible for the administration of the Act.
- It describes the procedure and terms for obtaining a mining or prospecting license in India.
 - ✓ Prior approval from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) is required for mining on forest land.
- This act is applicable to all minerals except minor minerals (such as river sand, which is under the purview of state governments) and atomic minerals.

RECENT AMENDMENTS IN PAST FEW YEARS

- **Prior to 2015**, mineral resources were granted on a "first-come, first-served" basis, which was discretionary and decision making was opaque.
- The process of renewing mining leases was proving to be an impediment to attracting large-scale investment in the mining sector.
- **The MMDR Amendment Act, 2015:** The Act was comprehensively amended in 2015 to bring several reforms in the mineral sector, notably:
 - ✓ Mandating auction of mineral concessions to improve transparency.
 - ✓ Establishing *District Mineral Foundation and National Mineral Exploration Trust*.
 - ✓ Stringent penalty for illegal mining.
- The Act was further amended in 2016 and 2020 to allow lease transfers for non-auctioned captive mines and to address the emerging issue of lease expiry.
- Furthermore, the MMDR Amendment Act, 2021, has been adopted for
 - ✓ Revitalising the mineral sector and by giving immediate boost to mineral production.
 - ✓ Promoting ease of doing business.
 - ✓ Other structural reforms.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

- **To Separate 8 Groups Of Minerals**

- ✓ As per the proposal, 8 out of 12 groups of minerals will be removed from **Part B** of the **1st Schedule** (critical & strategic minerals) of MMDR Act.
- ✓ They include lithium-bearing minerals, minerals of the 'rare earths' group containing **uranium and thorium**, beach sand minerals, etc.
- ✓ It has been proposed to create a new part (**part D**) in the **1st Schedule** and place the 8 minerals along with others like indium, gallium, graphite, nickel, cobalt and tin.
- **Concurrent Powers To Union Government:** The amendments will empower the Union government, along with the State governments, to sanction mining rights of minerals listed under *Part D of the 1st schedule*.

CRITICISM OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT

- As per MMDR Act and Mineral Concessions Rules, mining and the manufacture of value-added products should remain in the public sector.
 - ✓ According to the critics, some among the 8 minerals had great strategic importance, alleging that the proposal is an attempt to privatise the critical sector.
 - ✓ The proposals may lead to improper handling of strategically important minerals such as uranium by select private companies and is against the national interest.
- Under Entry 23 of List II (State List) and Article 246(3) of the Indian Constitution, State Assemblies can make laws on such minerals.
 - ✓ According to the Kerala government, the amendments are a breach of States' rights as minerals come under the purview of States.
 - ✓ Kerala is endowed with rich resources of Beach Sand Minerals (Monazite - primary source of thorium) and some of them are significant for their economy and have strategic importance too.

8 . Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS)

RBI recently allowed the **Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS)** to accept cross-border inward payments with an aim to ease the transaction process for non-resident Indians (NRIs).

BBPS

- BBPS is an RBI conceptualised system **owned and operated by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**. It was launched in August 2016 under the recommendation of G. Padmanabhan committee.
- It offers *interoperable and accessible* bill payment services to consumers via **digital channels** along with a **network of agents & bank branches**.
- BBPS also provides a standardised bill payment experience, centralised customer grievance redress mechanism and uniform customer convenience fee, etc.
- These bills can be for electricity, telecom, DTH, gas, water bills, insurance, loan repayments, education fees,

FasTag Recharge, municipal taxes, subscription fees, etc. in one single window.

- The **payment mode options** at BBPS are **Cash**, Cards (Credit, Debit & Prepaid), IMPS, UPI, Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS), Internet Banking and wallets.
- More than 20,000 billers have been onboarded on the system and more than eight crore transactions are processed on a monthly basis.

EXTENSION OF BBPS TO NRIS

- However, this system was till now available to only residents in India. Due to this, NRIs have been facing challenges in paying utility bills for their family and friends in India.
- Thus, to address this issue, RBI has allowed BBPS to accept cross-border inward payments.
- Apart from easing bill payments for NRIs in India, the development is also expected to increase **forex inflow** in India and **fee income** of banks and financial institutions.

9 . GOI ON BOOSTING ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Government of India has focused on enhanced public investment to address the twin crisis of demand and supply and boost economic growth and development. In this regard, let's look into recent trends in the Gross Capital formation and various problems and challenges.

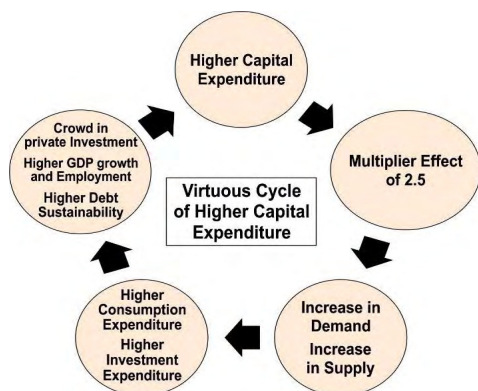
MEANING OF GROSS CAPITAL FORMATION

Gross Capital Formation (GCF) is calculated as **Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) + Changes in Stocks + Net acquisition of valuables**. Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) comprises of:

- Construction and Maintenance of fixed assets such as Infrastructure such as Dwellings, Roads, Railways etc.
- Machinery and Equipment (3) Intellectual Property Rights such as R&D, Software etc.
- Cultivated biological resources - Increment in Livestock and Plantation.
- Goods which remain unsold in a particular year are accounted under Changes in stocks.

TRENDS IN GROSS FIXED CAPITAL FORMATION (GFCF)

GFCF was around 34% of India's GDP in 2011-12. The increase in the GFCF in 2011-12 was attributed to economic stimulus provided by the Government to counter the economic slowdown due to Global financial crisis (GFC). Consequently, due to Twin balance sheet problem, GFCF declined to 30% in 2015-16. In last 2-3 years, Government has increased its investment on creation of infrastructure leading to increase in GFCF to around 32% of GDP. **How increase in Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) can boost Indian Economy?**



PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

Lower Investment: Even though the GFCF has increased to 32% of GDP, it is yet to reach its higher levels as seen in 2011-12.

Lower share of foreign capital in GCF at around 2.5% in 2019-20.

Lopsided Investment: Over 90% of GCF consists of Gross Fixed Capital Formation. Gross Fixed capital formation can be analysed in terms of investment in different sectors:

- **Agriculture:** Government needs to make higher investment in R&D, irrigation, marketing infrastructure etc. to double farmers' income. However, there has been *decline in investment in agriculture* in the last decade.
- **Industry:** There is a need for higher investment in advanced technologies to boost manufacturing sector and ensure success of "Make in India". However, just like agriculture, there has been *decline in investment in Industrial sector in last decade*.

- **Services:** Unlike agriculture and Industrial sector, share of investment in the services has increased in the last decade. *A major chunk of investment is done on Transport and communication such as Roads, Railways, ports, airports etc.*

Hence, a major share of GCF is dominated by investment in creation of infrastructure projects. The investment in agriculture and industry has declined at the cost of higher investment in infrastructure leading to poor income level of farmers and limited success of "Make in India".

10 . Digital platform business models

- Platform economy is the tendency for commerce to increasingly move towards and favour **digital platform business models**.
- It is any type of digital platform that uses the internet to connect dispersed networks of individuals to facilitate digital interactions between people.
- Within the platform economy there is a triangular relationship between three parties - the platform, the worker and the customer. It is the job of the platform to connect people with demand (the customer) to people that provide supply (the worker).
- There is a large variation between the function and type of digital platforms available in today's marketplace.
- It ranges from platforms providing services (e.g. Uber and Airbnb), to products (e.g. Amazon and eBay), to payments (e.g. Square, PayPal), to software development (e.g., Apple, Salesforce) and many more.
- The platform economy is also known as the creative economy, sharing economy, gig economy, or the peer economy.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. TRIAL BY MEDIA AFFECTS JUDICIAL TRIAL: CJI

Trial refers to examination before a competent tribunal, according to the law of the land, of the facts or law put in issue in a cause, for the purpose of determining such issue. A trial is the judicial examination of the Issues between the parties, whether they be issues of law or of fact. However, in some criminal cases, media activism and pre-trial publicity blurs the distinction between fact and fiction leading to unnecessary bias and prejudicial reporting. This negatively impacts the judicial process of trial along with rights of the accused. Further, the growing nexus between media and police ecosystem aids in media trial through half-baked information especially at trial stage when police has not filed their reports. It is in this context; Chief Justice of India has lamented the digital media for running Kangaroo Courts based on agenda driven debates as it disturbs the balance between freedom of expression and the right of the accused to get a fair trial. "One of the objects of the media (a newspaper) is to understand the popular feeling and give expression to it, another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments, and the third is the fearlessness to expose popular defects." Mahatma Gandhi

MEDIA RUNNING KANGAROO COURTS – CJI

- Chief Justice of India recently highlighted that digital media in India are running Kangaroo Courts with illinformed, biased and agenda-driven debates on issues pending in courts which are affecting justice delivery.
- CJI further stated that media trials cannot be the sole guiding factor in deciding cases and media has breached its responsibility, taking democracy two steps backwards, affecting people and harming the system.
- It is in this pretext, the growing nexus between police and media and how selective sharing of information of ongoing cases by eager police officers not only vitiates fair trial but also leads to unnecessary trial by media which ultimately harms the judicial process and the rights of the accused.

CRIMINAL CONTEMPT

- Biased reporting affecting judicial process is in violation of Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 as defined through criminal contempt.
- **Criminal Contempt** means the publication (whether by words, spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representations, or otherwise) of any matter or the doing of any other act whatsoever which—

- i. Scandalizes or lowers the authority of any court.
- ii. Prejudices, or interferes or tends to interfere with, the due course of any judicial proceeding; or interferes or tends to interfere with, or obstructs or tends to obstruct, the administration of justice in any other manner

KANGAROO COURTS

- Oxford Dictionary defines Kangaroo Court as an unofficial court held by a group of people to try someone regarded, especially without good evidence, as guilty of a crime or misdemeanor.
- Thus, it refers to proceedings or activities where a judgment is made in a manner that is unfair, biased, and lacks legitimacy.

FREEDOM OF PRESS

- **Supreme Court of United States in New York Times v Sullivan** held that free press creates a fourth institution outside government as an additional check on three official branches – legislature, executive and judiciary.
- **Objective of Free Press:** Freedom of press and media helps to provide comprehensive and objective information on all aspects of country's social, economic and political life. Media and Press serves as a powerful antidote to any abuse of power by government officials and as a means for keeping the elected officials responsible to the people whom they are elected to serve.
- **Article 19:** In India, freedom of press (print, digital and social media) is implied from the freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) but has not been mentioned specifically in the Constitution of India.
- **Sakal Papers v Union of India:** Supreme Court held that freedom of press is regarded as a species of which freedom of expression is a genus.
- **Brij Bhushan v State of Delhi:** held that in India under Art.19(1)(a) freedom of speech and expression authoritatively includes the freedom of press print and electronic media.
- **Reasonable Restrictions provided under Article 19(2)** are also applicable to the media as media cannot use freedom of expression to invoke violence, provide false information to provoke people for protest or incite violence, against sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.

SUPREME COURT ON MEDIA PUBLICITY IMPACTING FAIR TRIAL

- **Reliance Petrochemicals v. Indian Express Newspapers Bombay (Pvt.) Ltd.**, the Supreme court held that the Courts must not be swayed by public opinion or any media on a particular matter.
- **Ankul Chandra Pradhan v. Union of India:** Supreme Court has stated that publicity is no reason for denial of a fair trial.
- **State of Maharashtra v. Rajendra Jawanmal Gandhi:** Supreme Court stated that a media trial goes against rule of law and can result in miscarriage of justice and has stated that Judges are not to succumb to the media pressure.
- **Sahara India Real Estate Corp. v. SEBI:** Supreme Court believed that there had to be a delicate balance between the right to a fair trial and the right to freedom of expression.

HOW TRIAL BY MEDIA AFFECTS JUDICIAL TRIAL IN CRIMINAL COURTS?

- **Role of media (print and digital) is to provide unbiased information** to the public about general events happening in the society. These events include criminal cases filed against accused.
- **Affects Administration of Justice** - excessive publicity in the media about a suspect or an accused before trial prejudices a fair trial and amounts to undue interference with the administration of justice. This may lead to contempt of court against the media.
- **Nexus of Police & Media** - The media in such incidents ends up sensationalising the case based on half-baked information received through its police nexus. Such selective information provided by the police at initial trial stage is presented by the media in a selected and prejudicial manner.
- **Shape Political Opinion** - There are moments when certain police narrative is fed to the media to achieve certain political purpose or shape political opinion in the society. Such selective information at times also communalises the atmosphere leading to a charged atmosphere of hate and abuses which is encashed during elections.
- **Police providing different facts to media and Courts** - Another problem with media trial is that the information or evidence which is provided to the media in criminal cases to sensationalise the issue is seldom presented in the Court as evidence due to lack of corroborative value. This discrepancy helps media not only to sensationalise the case but also harms the reputation of the accused without the Court proving him guilty.
- **Unregulated divulgence of case details** by an eager police force and disproportionate reliance on this information by the media impacts the entire judicial process, prejudices the minds of the judges and affects

the statements of the witnesses. All these ultimately affect the outcome of the trial in Court.

- **Violates presumption of innocence and tarnishes image of the accused** – In criminal law, an accused is considered innocent unless proven guilty. Thus, one sided reporting of events by media violates the presumption of innocence of the accused and disturbs the entire trial process. This also affects the statements given by other suspects, victims of the crime and persons closely related to the case since the accused has already been painted guilty by the media.
- **Biased Media Reporting affects fair and equitable trial and leads to social and economic boycott of the accused** - as they are ostracized in public, it affects their privacy rights and makes them vulnerable to societal abuse. Such accused when released after facing long years of trial often face social ostracization and difficulties in retaining employment, making them vulnerable to crime and exploitation.
- **Example - Bhima Koregaon** - While the investigation was underway, the police exposed letters supposedly written by these activists that were still undergoing forensic analysis. While these letters received extensive news coverage, none of them was presented as evidence in court.
- **Competition within Media Industry leads to Politicisation of events** - Due to compulsion of competition in the industry (improve TRP ratings) and corporate and political nexus, media professionals ends up sensationalizing the issue. This helps to change perception of public and judges and overall impacts the trial process.
- **Thus, there is a need to follow the Guidelines issued by Ministry of Home on sharing sensitive information by the police to the media.**

MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS HAS ISSUED GUIDELINES (2010) ON MEDIA POLICY

- Only designated officers should disseminate information to the media on major crime and law and order incidents, important detections, recoveries and other notable achievements of the police.
- Police Officers should confine their briefings to the essential facts and not rush to the press with halfbaked, speculative or unconfirmed information about ongoing investigations.
- The briefing should normally be done only at the following stages of a case:
 1. Registration
 2. Arrest of accused persons
 3. Charge-sheeting of the case
 4. Outcome of case such as conviction/acquittal etc.
- In a case that attracts the interest of the media, a specific time may be fixed every day when the designated officer would make an appropriate statement on the investigation.

- In the first 48 hours there should be no unnecessary release of information except about the facts of the incident and that the investigation has been taken up.
- The general tendency to give piecemeal information/clues, on a daily/regular basis, about the progress/various lines of investigation, should be strongly discouraged so that the investigations are not compromised, and criminals/suspects do not take undue advantage of information shared by the Police authorities about the likely course of the investigation.
- Meticulous compliance with the legal provisions and Court guidelines regarding protection of the identity of juveniles and rape victims should be ensured, and under no circumstances should the identity of juveniles and victims in rape cases be disclosed to the media.
- Due care should be taken to ensure that there is no violation of the legal, privacy and human rights of the accused/victims.
 1. Arrested persons should not be paraded before the media.
 2. Faces of arrested persons whose Test Identification Parade is required to be conducted should not be exposed to the media.
- No opinionated and judgmental statements should be made by the police while briefing the media.
- In cases where National security is at stake, no information should be shared with the media till the whole operation is over or until all the accused persons have been apprehended.
- There should not be any violation of court directions and other guidelines issued by the authorities from time to time on this matter.
- Preferably, there should be one officer designated as the Public Relations Officer to handle the immediate information needs of all media persons and give the correct and factual position of any crime incident.

PROBLEMS IN IMPLEMENTING MHA GUIDELINES ON MEDIA POLICY

- **Centre's Lack of Jurisdiction:** These guidelines are to be implemented by respective state governments as 'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects under State List of 7th Schedule to Constitution and, therefore, State & UT Administrations are primarily responsible for prevention, detection, registration, investigation and prosecution of all crimes within their jurisdiction.
- **Poor Implementation by States:** Media Policy guidelines issued by most state on media policy have weak implementation mechanisms and their contents largely remains unknown to the public.
- **Lack of Dedicated Media Cell** - Most police departments do not have dedicated media cells due to weak enforcement of media policy and this allows officers at all levels in the police to share information with media.

Moreover, even if found out, no disciplinary or strict action is taken against such police officials.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- **Media needs to uphold Principles of Justice** – The media's immense power to shape narratives regarding public conceptions of justice makes it a close associate of the justice system, bringing with it a responsibility to uphold the basic principles of our justice system.
- **There is a need to implement recommendations of 200th Law Commission Report** (Trial by Media: Free Speech versus Fair Trial Under Criminal Procedure (Amendment to the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971) to debar media from reporting anything prejudicial to the rights of the accused from time of arrest to investigation and trial in criminal cases.
- **R.K. Anand v Delhi High Court** – Supreme Court observed that the media and the judiciary are institutions inhabiting separate spheres and their functions do not overlap. One cannot and must not use the other for discharge of its functions. Media should only engage in acts of journalism and not act as a special agency for the court. The impermissibility of freedom of speech and expression amounting to interference with the administration of justice due to the prejudicial nature of certain media coverage was also highlighted.
- **State Governments should enforce their media policy** based on the Guidelines of MHA and should also create a dedicated media cell to ensure proper information is given to media especially in sensitive criminal cases.
- It is in this regard the opinion expressed by India's CJI on digital media holding Kangaroo Courts with zero accountability becomes extremely important.

2 . CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (IDENTIFICATION) ACT, 2022

Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022 provides legal sanction to law enforcement agencies for "taking measurements of convicts and other persons for the purposes of identification and investigation of criminal matters". It came into effect from August 4, 2022.

Aim of the Act - Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022 provides legal sanction to law enforcement agencies for "taking measurements of convicts and other persons for the purposes of identification and investigation of criminal matters". While the legislation was enacted earlier this year, the Ministry of Home Affairs notified it to come into effect from August 4, 2022. It also repeals the existing Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920.

The 2022 Act defines Measurement – and it 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.

HOW WILL THE MEASUREMENTS HELP?

Measurements and photographs for identification have three main purposes:

- (i) establish the identity of the culprit against the person being arrested
- (ii) identify suspected repetition of similar offences by the same person and
- (iii) to establish a previous conviction.

REASONS TO INTRODUCE THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (IDENTIFICATION) ACT, 2022

<u>Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920</u>	<u>Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920 was enacted to authorise the taking of measurements and photographs of convicts and other persons. • The term "measurements" used in the 1920 Act is limited as it only allows taking finger impressions and foot print impressions of limited category of convicted and non convicted persons and photographs on the order of a Magistrate. • 1920 Act limited the category of prisoners whose records could be taken. Thus, it was considered necessary to expand the "ambit of persons" whose measurements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In present time, modern technology allows to capture and record appropriate body measurements with help of forensic experts. • Provides for legal sanction for taking appropriate body measurements of persons who are required to give such measurements. • Improve efficiency of investigation and will also help in increasing the conviction rate. • It is for these reasons, the Act seeks to (i) Expand Scope of "measurements" to include fingerimpressions, palm-print and foot-print impressions, photographs, iris and retina scan, physical, biological samples and their analysis, etc. (ii) Empower National Crime Records Bureau to collect, store and preserve the record of measurements and for sharing, dissemination, destruction and disposal of records. (iii) Empower a

can be taken as this will help the investigating agencies to gather sufficient legally admissible evidence and establish the crime of the accused person.

Magistrate to direct persons accused of criminal activities to give measurements.
(iv) **Empower police or prison officer** to take measurements of any person who resists or refuses to give measurements.

WHOSE MEASUREMENT CAN BE TAKEN?

- According to **IDENTIFICATION OF PRISONERS ACT, 1920**, following persons may be required to give photographs and specified details:
 - (i) persons convicted of certain offences (such as offences punishable with a minimum of one year of rigorous imprisonment)
 - (ii) persons ordered to give security for good behaviour or maintaining peace under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (Cr. PC), and
 - (iii) persons arrested in connection with an offence punishable with at least one year of rigorous imprisonment.
- According to **CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (IDENTIFICATION) Act, 2022** – following person would be required to give his/her measurements who has been –
 - (a) convicted of an offence punishable under any law for the time being in force
 - (b) ordered to give security for his good behaviour or maintaining peace under Criminal Procedure Code
 - ✓ to ensure the person does not disturb public tranquility/peace
 - ✓ to ensure the person does not indulge in seditious activities,
 - ✓ to ensure the person does not get involve in rioting
 - ✓ to ensure the person does not promote enmity between different groups on grounds religion, race, place of birth, residence, language etc.
 - (c) arrested in connection with an offence punishable under any law for the time being in force or detained under any preventive detention law.
- Further, a person shall also allow his measurements to be taken by a police officer or a prison officer in such manner as may be prescribed by the Central Government or the State Government.
- Arrested persons will not be obliged to give their biological samples unless they have committed an offence against a woman or a child, or an offence punishable with a minimum of seven years of imprisonment.

NATIONAL CRIME RECORDS BUREAU (NCRB) TO COLLECT SUCH MEASUREMENTS

- National Crime Records Bureau shall, in the interest of prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of any offence under any law for the time being in force:
 - (a) **Collect the record of measurements** from State or UT Administration or any other law enforcement agencies.
 - (a) **Store, preserve and destroy** the record of measurements at national level
 - (b) **Process such records** with relevant crime and criminal records; and
 - (c) **Share and disseminate such records** with any law enforcement agency
- The record of measurements shall be retained in digital or electronic form **for a period of 75 years** from the date of collection of such measurement.
- **Destruction of Records** – A person whose measurements were taken but
 - ✓ has not been previously convicted of an offence punishable under any law with imprisonment for any term; and
 - ✓ is released without trial or discharged or acquitted by the court after exhausting all legal remedies. **then all records of measurements so taken shall be destroyed from records unless directed otherwise by the Magistrate.**

RESISTANCE BY PERSON IN GIVING HIS MEASUREMENTS

- Refusal to give measurements under the Act will be considered an offence under Section 186 of Indian Penal Code which makes it an offence for obstructing public servant in discharge of their duties.
- Thus, if a person resists the authorities to collect his measurements, then it will be lawful for the police officer or prison officer to take such measurements in such manner as prescribed.

BAR OF SUIT

- No suit or any other proceeding shall lie against any person for anything done or intended to be done in good faith under this Act or any rule made thereunder.

Right to Privacy Judgment

Supreme Court in *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd) case* ruled Right to Privacy as an integral part of Right to Life and Personal Liberty as guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution. The Court held that these rights are recognised by the Constitution as inhering in each individual as an intrinsic and inseparable part of the human element which dwells within. However, right to privacy is not absolute and state can make law to restrict right to privacy. A law on invasion of life or personal liberty must meet the three-fold requirement of

1. **Legality**, which postulates the existence of law i.e. state action must have a legislative mandate
2. **Need**, defined in terms of a legitimate state aim i.e., there must be a legitimate state purpose
3. **Proportionality** which ensures a rational nexus between the objects and the means adopted to achieve them. This judgment forced the government to change its view on privacy of citizens. This was further helped by Judgment in

Aadhaar as it prohibited authentication of Aadhaar details by private organisations including corporates. (Ex. Airtel, Vodafone, Reliance etc.)

CONCERNS AGAINST THE ACT

- **Concerns on Triple Test for Privacy:** K.S. Puttaswamy Judgment held that state can interfere in privacy of individuals if it satisfied three test: 1. **Legality** 2. **Need** & 3. **Proportionality**. The law satisfies first two test of legality and need as measurements are taken in pursuance of a legitimate aim of state and is backed by a law passed by Parliament. However, it is the third test of proportionality which has been challenged on multiple counts.
- **Inclusion of Derivate Data Questionable:** derivative data such as “analysis” and “behavioural attributes” have raised concerns that data processing may go beyond recording of core “measurements.”
- **Predictive Policing** - That is some of these measurements could be processed for predictive policing and these records may be used against political or other activists including protestors.
- **Manner of Data Collection** - Concerns have also been raised on the manner of data collection as resistance by person is a punishable offence under IPC.
- **Process to destroy records will be easier said than done** and will be a cumbersome process.
- **Against Right to be forgotten** - retaining the people’s measurements for 75 years from the date of collection is in violation of the Right to be forgotten which is an essential part of right to privacy under Article 21 as highlighted in K.S. Puttaswamy Judgment.
- **Law criticised for being disproportionate and overburdening the system** - The necessity of taking measurements for investigation of offences is unclear, and such discretion is likely to result in abuse of the law at lower levels and overburdening of the systems used for collection and storage of these “measurements.” Given that these records will be stored for 75 years from the time of collection, the law has been criticised as being disproportionate.
- **Taking Measurements even for Petty Offences** – for investigation of offences is unclear and will probably lead to overburdening of systems used for collection and storage of these “measurements.”
- **Threat of Mass Surveillance** – Collection of Data through measurements can also result in mass surveillance, with the database under this law being combined with other databases such as those of the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS).
- **Bars court proceedings** for things done in good faith.

3 . Regional Languages In Higher Education

Background

The Mother tongue in India never got the importance they deserve in the higher education system as most of the higher educational institutions offer courses only in English

<u>Issues with English education at higher educational institutions</u>	<u>Advantages of using mother tongue in higher education</u>
<p>It has been <i>creating many problems particularly for students who had their education in mother tongue till senior secondary level</i> in the following way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It proved to be an obstacle in realizing their full academic potential: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. students face difficulties in understanding concepts, expressing their opinions and feelings in the classroom and in examinations b. Result of which is <i>poor learning outcomes</i> and development of <i>low self esteem</i>. ➤ Many students stop pursuing higher education for the fear of education in English thereby affecting Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education ➤ Students particularly from weaker sections of society such as SCs, STs, minorities and from rural background are at a stark disadvantage ➤ Drop outs from colleges: Such drop outs are higher among SCs, STs and minorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Will help in building an inclusive and equitable higher education system: particularly for SC/ST/Minority communities. ➤ Increase the availability of high-quality learning and print material in Indian languages including textbooks, workbooks, videos, plays, poems, novels and magazines. ➤ Promotes Linguistic Diversity & help prevent language-based discrimination ➤ Increases (GER): Reduces drop-outs Helps Students in realizing their full academic potential. ➤ Quality of education imparted at higher educational institutions will also get enhanced. <p>UNESCO's 2003 guidelines also supported instruction in mother tongue as a means of improving educational quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ R&D will get a boost in the country ➤ Even the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 had recommended that institutions of higher education should use mother tongue as medium of instruction and offer bilingual programmes

ISSUES WITH INTRODUCING REGIONAL LANGUAGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- *Neglect of English completely can diminish career prospects* in today's world.
 - ✓ 2016 report of Cambridge university titled '*Findings of English at work: Global analysis of language skills in the workplace*' highlighted that about 90% of employers in India say that English language skills are important for their organization.
 - ✓ According to *India Skills report 2019*, English figured among the top three skills along with learning

agility and adaptability that employers look for in India

- Availability of *well qualified faculty and learning material* in regional languages particularly in fields such as Engineering, Medicine, Law and applied sciences is a challenge
- Insignificant for Institutions with Pan-India Admissions: A regional language focus is not meaningful in a scenario where the institutes like IITs see entrants from across the country

MEASURES THAT WERE TAKEN TO PROMOTE MOTHER TONGUE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- *All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)* had given approval to 19 engineering colleges in 10 states to introduce engineering courses in six Indian languages.
- It also developed "*AICTE Translation Automation AI Tool*" that translates English online courses in Indian languages.
- **SWAYAM platform**- offering some popular courses in Indian languages
- NEP 2020 aims to increase the GER in higher education including vocational education from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035. Around 3.5 Crore new seats will be added to Higher education institutions.

CONCLUSION

While it is important to promote regional languages in the higher education, at the same time it is necessary to ensure that the students who receive education in regional languages also gain good command over English language so that they will be able to seize the opportunities (local, regional and global) of 21st century as recommended by NEP 2020.

4. PEGASUS SPYWARE

The SC said its technical expert committee could not find Pegasus spyware in the 29 mobile phones of complainants, but detected malware in 5 of them.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Justice Raveendran, who supervised the committee also made few recommendations to strengthen cyber security. This included:
 - ✓ **Enactment of amendment to existing laws and procedures for surveillance, particularly for securing the citizens' right to privacy**
 - ✓ **no non-state entity to use spyware**
 - ✓ **establishment of mechanism for citizens to raise grievances against illegal surveillance**
 - ✓ **setting up of a well-equipped independent primary agency to investigate cybersecurity vulnerability**

PANEL REPORT IN BRIEF

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PEGASUS PROCEEDINGS IN COURT

- > Pegasus not found in 29 mobile phones and devices submitted for scrutiny by an SC-appointed technical committee
- > Malware was detected in five devices, but data insufficient to determine it was Pegasus
- > Centre did not cooperate with the technical committee in the scrutiny of mobile phones and electronic devices to detect Pegasus
- > Report be kept secret, says Technical Committee(TC); some of the complainants too request report to be kept secret fearing leak of personal information
- > TC says its report contains data about malware information which may be misused and may create security problems as the application of the properties of the malware may lead to criminals to get a lead over law enforcing agencies
- > TC says information in its report can be misused to create new wares and more sophisticated malware using their expertise in design of malware systems and their knowledge about the mobile operating systems.
- > TC says contains information/research material related to malware, application of which may pose threat to national security apparatus
- > Oversight Judge, Justice R V Raveendran gives six recommendations for strengthening cyber security; creation of an exclusive primary agency to probe threats to cyber security; amendment of laws to protect citizens against illegal surveillance; no private party be permitted to carry out snooping
- > SC to hear the future course of action – creating an interim arrangement till Parliament fills the lacuna in surveillance laws – after four weeks



PEGASUS SPYWARE

- Pegasus is a malware/spyware developed by Israel's NSO Group.
 - ✓ Spyware is a type of malicious software/malware that is installed on a computing device without the end user's knowledge.
 - ✓ It invades the device, steals sensitive information.
- The spyware suite is designed to access any smartphone through **zero-click vulnerabilities remotely**.
- Once a phone is infiltrated, the spyware can access entire data on that particular phone.
- It also has real-time access to emails, texts, phone calls, as well as the camera and sound recording capabilities of the smartphone.

SNOOPING ROW

- A global collaborative investigative project has discovered that Israeli spyware Pegasus was used to target thousands of people across the world.
- The report claimed that, in India, at least 300 people were targeted.
 - ✓ This included two serving Ministers in the current government, three Opposition leaders, one constitutional authority, several journalists and business persons.
- The Pegasus row also reached the SC when the Editors Guild of India filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking direction for a probe by a special investigation team.

- In a judgment, the SC bench led by NV Ramana stated that national security ground raised by the State cannot totally exclude judicial review.
 - ✓ The SC emphasised the importance of free speech and press freedom and expressed concerns about unauthorised surveillance.

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE CONSTITUTED

- The Supreme Court constituted a technical committee under the oversight of Justice (retd) R.V. Raveendran to look into the allegations of snooping.
- The committee divided the court-appointed task into two areas:
 - ✓ One is regarding the inquiry itself.
- I.e., the fact-finding report regarding the use of Pegasus malware to target mobiles of Indian citizens.
 - ✓ Second is regarding recommendations about the enhancement of existing laws and procedures related to surveillance and securing rights including privacy, cyber security, etc.
- The committee has submitted its report to the three-judge Bench led by N. V. Ramana.

INDIAN LAWS ON SNOOPING

- **Section 5(2)** of The **Indian Telegraph Act, 1885**, states that the government can intercept a message or class of messages.
- This can be done only in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of an offence.
- In 1997, SC in its verdict in the **People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) vs Union of India** case said telephonic conversations are covered by the right to privacy. This can be breached only if there are established procedures.
- After that GoI established a procedure for surveillance.
 - ✓ Under **Rule 419A** of the Telegraph Rules, surveillance needs the sanction of the **Home Secretary** at the Central or State level.
 - ✓ But in unavoidable circumstance can be cleared by a **Joint Secretary or officers above**, if they have the Home Secretary's authorisation.
- In the **K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India** verdict of 2017, the Supreme Court further reiterated the need for oversight of surveillance.
 - ✓ It stated that surveillance should be *legally valid and serve a legitimate aim of the government*.
- **Section 69** of the **Information Technology Act, 2000** also facilitates government interception of any information through any computer resource.
 - ✓ The procedure for it is detailed in the Information Technology Rules, 2009.

5. ASYMMETRICAL FEDERALISM

As India completes 75 years of Independence, the time is apt for us to look at the *constitutional, institutional, political and*

fiscal arrangements that take into account the plurality of our country.

WHAT IS ASYMMETRICAL FEDERALISM?

- Asymmetrical federalism refers to a federal framework wherein the subunits within the federation possess unequal powers and rights.
- It involves providing greater autonomy to some states when compared with others.

NEED FOR ASYMMETRICAL FEDERALISM

- ✓ To undermine the **secessionist tendencies** in the country
- ✓ To promote **national integration** and ensure that India remains a mosaic
- ✓ To accommodate the **interests and aspirations of various groups** in the society particularly vulnerable and minority groups (Example: Tribals)
- ✓ To address specific local, historical and geographical contexts

ASYMMETRICAL ARRANGEMENTS IN INDIAN FEDERALISM

- India is a country with asymmetrical arrangements in its federal setup
- The Indian model of asymmetrical federalism is based on the *principle of weighted and differentiated equality that is "equal treatment of all states while being mindful that some states are more equal and unequal than others"*.
- The asymmetrical arrangements in Indian federalism are reflected in the following provisions of the Indian constitution:
 - ✓ Recently abrogated Article 370 that granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir
 - ✓ Special provisions and powers under Article 371 and Articles 371(A-J) to certain states.
- **Sub-state Asymmetries**
 - ✓ **Asymmetry at the level of Union Territories**
 - Delhi and Puducherry have legislatures while the other territories under the Centre don't have legislatures or ministerial council to advise the administrator
 - Notable difference also exists between Puducherry and Delhi in terms of their powers. For example, Delhi don't have powers over Police, Land and Public order which Puducherry have. Also, special status of Delhi as the NCT & appointment of the Chief Minister of Delhi by the **President** of India on the recommendation of the Lieutenant Governor (LG).
 - ✓ **Fifth and Sixth schedule of the Constitution**
- **Fiscal Asymmetry:** Asymmetry can be noticed in *horizontal devolution of funds* on the recommendations of Finance commission (Art 280) as well as in *non-statutory transfers* from centre to states (central sector and centrally sponsored schemes)

DISTINCTION BETWEEN POLITICAL ASYMMETRY AND CONSTITUTIONAL ASYMMETRY:

In India both Political and Constitutional asymmetry (Self-rule within shared rule) exists

Political asymmetry

- ✓ It pertains to differences between federal units in terms of their **territorial and demographic sizes**
- ✓ Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha can be taken as an example of political asymmetry where states don't have an equal standing and are represented according to their population.

Constitutional asymmetry

- ✓ It refers to asymmetry **between the states** in terms of their **legislative and executive powers**. For example, the abrogated Art 370 which grants special status to Jammu and Kashmir.
- ✓ Special provisions and powers extended to certain states in the omnibus Article 371. The parliamentary statute cannot be implemented in the northeast States mentioned above without the consent of the legislatures of these States.

6. REDUCE DELAY IN CASE DISPOSAL

Judicial system in India is under tremendous pressure to large pendency of cases. As of May 2022, over 4.7 crore cases are pending in courts across different levels of the judiciary. Of them, 87.4% are pending in subordinate courts, 12.4% in High Courts, while nearly 1,82,000 cases have been pending for over 30 years.

REASONS FOR INCREASING PENDENCY IN INDIA

"Subordinate Judiciary-Access to Justice 2016" Report of Supreme Court, capacity constraints are the main reasons for high level of increasing pendency of lower Courts.

- Subordinate judiciary works under a severe shortage of courtrooms, secretarial and support staff including Judges.
- Number of hearings and the time period taken to dispose of cases across the system suggest that there is a serious problem of cases management in procedure law in India.
- These infrastructural issues adversely affects the effective functioning of Courts.
- Adjournments are granted too easily and freely and in the absence of a fixed time table to dispose of cases leads to delays in disposing the case.
- Judicial manpower needs to be augmented according to increase in crime rate.

STEPS TO REDUCE DELAY IN CASE DISPOSAL

- **Filling judicial vacancies** – at all tiers of judiciary

- **Diverting cases from the courts to alternate dispute resolution forums:** such as Mediation, Lok Adalats and specialised Tribunals.
- **Introduction of Fast-track Courts, jail-adalats, prison court and plea-bargaining.**
- **Reducing Disposal Time for Cases** - Disposal time is measured as the time span between the date of filing and the date when the decision is passed.
- **Improve Case Clearance Rate (CCR)** - CCR is the ratio of the number of cases disposed of each year to the number of cases instituted in that year, expressed as a percentage. It is mainly used to understand the efficiency of the system in proportion to the inflow of cases. *(Both Disposal Time and CCR can be bettered by appointing more Judges in District & Subordinate Courts, High Courts and Supreme Court.)*
- **Short and Long Term Goals** - Reducing case pendency in the short term and achieving long term goal of reducing case life cycle between one and two years.
- **Streamline Judicial Appointments** – by identifying vacancies across sections of lower and higher judiciary.
- **Appointing Retired Judges to High Court and Supreme Court** to reduce backlog. For this, Supreme Court has also altered the Memorandum of Procedure.
- **Shifting Court workloads through creating Special Courts (255th Law Commission):** based on specialised areas such as commercial cases can be transferred to the commercial division and the commercial appellate division of High Courts. Similarly Special Courts within High Courts can be set up to address litigations pertaining to land, crime, Traffic Challans etc.
- **Merge and rationalize tribunals to enhance efficiency** – Tribunals Reforms Act
- **Creating Indian Courts and Tribunal Services (ICTS)** – It will focus on administrative aspects of the legal system. Major roles to be played by ICTS will be:
 - Provide administrative support functions needed by the judiciary
 - Identify process inefficiencies and advise the judiciary on legal reforms
- **Increase number of working days for judiciary to increase productivity** – reducing length of summer and winter vacations in High Courts and Supreme Court.
- **Undertrials languishing in prison** - As per Prison Statistics India 2020 Report, Number of undertrial prisoners has increased by 11.7% from 2019. Highest Number of Undertrials lodged in District Jail (50%), followed by Central Jails (36.1%) and Sub Jails (11.9%)

7. MISSING PLANTATION TARGET IN ODISHA: CAG

CAG has found concentration of plantation activities in easily accessible areas like land along the pathways, leaving the degraded patches in the middle of dense forest unplanted in Odisha — one of reasons cited for missing plantation target in the State. The audit agency further said as the database of degraded forest and non-forest land was not available with the department, target for compensatory afforestation programmes under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority was not achieved within the stipulated period of three years and hence, could not compensate the forest cover against the diversion of forest land.

AUDIT AS PER CAG'S (DUTIES, POWERS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE) ACT, 1971

- Completeness and accuracy of accounts is examined in audit to verify that there is proper voucher or proof of payment.
- Section 13 of Act enjoins on Comptroller and Auditor General duty to audit all expenditure from Consolidated Fund of India, of each State and UT having a Legislative Assembly.

AUDIT OF EXPENDITURE IS COMPREHENSIVE AND INCLUDES

1. **Audit against provisions of funds:** Audit against provision of funds is aimed at ascertaining whether the moneys shown in the accounts as having been disbursed, were legally available for and applicable to the service or purpose to which they had been applied or charged.
2. **Regularity audit** - The objective of regularity audit is to see whether the expenditure conforms to the authority, which governs it.
3. **Propriety audit** - Propriety audit is directed towards examining the propriety of executive action beyond the formality of expenditure to its wisdom, faithfulness and economy, and bringing to notice cases of waste, losses and extravagant expenditure.
4. **Efficiency-cum-performance or value for money audit** - is a comprehensive appraisal of the progress and efficiency of the execution of development and other programs and schemes wherein an assessment is made as to whether these are executed economically and whether they are producing the results expected of them.
5. **Systems audit** - organization and systems governing authorization, recording, accounting and internal controls are analysed and performance evaluated with reference to standards of quality.

COMPENSATORY AFFORESTATION FUND ACT, 2016

- Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016 provide for establishment of funds under the public accounts of India and the public accounts of each State and crediting thereto the monies received from the user agencies towards compensatory afforestation, additional compensatory afforestation, penal compensatory afforestation, net present value and all other amounts recovered from such agencies under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.
- Constitution of an authority at national level and at each of the State and UT Administration for administration of the funds and to utilise monies so collected for undertaking artificial regeneration (plantations), assisted natural regeneration, protection of forests, forest related infrastructure development, Green India Programme, wildlife protection etc.
- **Need for CAMPA FUND:** Because of developmental needs and creating infrastructure like dams, mining etc many a times a forest land must be diverted for non-forest produce which might result in loss of biodiversity. To compensate for the losses incurred, the government made compensatory afforestation mandatory.

WHAT IS COMPENSATORY AFFORESTATION?

- Forest conservation Act mandates that whenever forest land is diverted for non-forest purposes, an equivalent area of non-forest land has to be taken up for compensatory afforestation.
- Funds for this are to be imposed on whomsoever is undertaking the diversion. The land chosen for afforestation, if viable, must be in proximity of reserved or protected forest for ease of management by forest department.
- At the time of submission of project proposal to apply for forest clearance the applicant must attach an undertaking stating that they will bear the cost of compensatory afforestation as per existing rules & scheme.
- Forest department must provide details regarding area identified for afforestation. It is only after this, that the proposal goes to higher authorities for recommendations and approval.
- **2002:** Supreme Court (SC) In **TN Godavarman Vs Union of India** case, ordered that a Compensatory Afforestation Fund had to be created in which all the contributions towards compensatory afforestation and net present value of land had to be deposited.

IMPORTANT HIGHLIGHTS – COMPENSATORY AFFORESTATION FUND ACT, 2016

- National Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority's Chairperson - Union Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change
- State Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority's Chairperson - Chief Minister

of the State or a UT having no legislature, Lieutenant Governor or Administrator.

- Accounts of National Authority shall be audited by Comptroller and Auditor-General of India. Accounts of National Authority as certified by CAG or any other person appointed by him in this behalf together with the audit report shall be forwarded annually to the Central Government by the National Authority.
- National Authority shall prepare, its annual report, giving a full account of its activities during the previous financial year and forward a copy thereof to the Central Government, in such form and at such time, for each financial year.
- Central Government shall cause the annual report and audit report together with a memorandum of action taken on the recommendations contained therein to be laid as soon as may be after the reports are received before each House of Parliament

8. NOMINATED MEMBERS OF RAJYA SABHA

Article 80 of Indian Constitution provides for composition of Council of State. Twelve members are to be nominated by the President having special knowledge or practical experience in the field of Literature, science, art and social service and not more than 238 representatives of States and UTs are to be elected by the elected members of Legislative Assembly of State in accordance with system of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote. Accordingly, President has nominated 4 new members to Rajya Sabha namely musician Ilayaraja, track-and-field icon PT Usha, Telugu screenwriter V Vijayendra Prasad, and philanthropist and spiritual leader Veerendra Heggade. They are from the four southern states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka.

RAJYA SABHA

- Rajya Sabha should consist of not more than 250 members - 238 members representing States and UTs, and 12 members nominated by President.
- Rajya Sabha is a permanent body and is not subject to dissolution. However, one third of members retire every second year, and are replaced by newly elected members. Each member is elected for a term of six years.
- Vice President of India is ex-officio Chairman of Rajya Sabha. House also elects a Deputy Chairman from among its members.
- There is also a panel of "Vice Chairmen" in Rajya Sabha. The senior most minister, who is a member of Rajya Sabha, is appointed by the Prime Minister as Leader of the House.

ABOUT NOMINATED MEMBERS OF RAJYA SABHA

- **Conditions of Appointment:** Should be a citizen of India above 30 years of age & possessing such other

qualifications as may be prescribed by law of Parliament.

- Enjoy all powers, privileges and immunities available to any elected members of Parliament.
- Can take part in proceedings of House in normal manner.
- While the nominated members of Rajya Sabha have a right to vote in the election of the Vice-President of India, they are not entitled to vote in the election of the President of India.
- They can participate in the impeachment process of the President.
- A nominated member of a House shall be disqualified for being a member of the House if he joins any political party after the expiry of six months from the date on which he takes his seat after complying with the requirements of Article 99.
- A nominated member has also been exempted from filing his assets and liabilities under Section 75A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951 which requires the elected member to do so within 90 days of his making or subscribing oath/affirmation.
- Under Rule 3 of the Members of Rajya Sabha (Declaration of Assets and Liabilities) Rules, 2004, only elected members of the council are liable to furnish the declaration of their assets and liabilities, and assets of their spouse and dependent children.
- American Senate has no nominated members; all its members are elected.
- First woman nominated member of Rajya Sabha was Rukmini Devi Arundale (1952-56 & 1956-62).

<u>BENEFITS OF HAVING NOMINATED MEMBERS</u>	<u>CONCERNS FOR HAVING NOMINATED MEMBERS</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationale of having nominated members is to provide eminent persons a place in Rajya Sabha without going through process of election. • Such eminent personalities provide insights and their constructive feedback on several issues improves quality of debates and helps to fine tune certain legislations from their area of expertise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicisation of Nominated Route to Rajya Sabha – Eg: Former Chief Justice of India becoming member of Rajya Sabha. • Lack of participation and poor attendance of such nominated members further defeats the purpose of nomination. • Prioritising personal work over sessions of Rajya Sabha

9. TECHNOLOGY SOLUTION IN GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL MECHANISM

Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievance and Pensions has informed Parliamentary Standing Committee that the government is working to develop a “technology solution,” where grievances published in newspapers and on social media platforms can be suo motu registered on Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) for action by the authorities concerned. The information was mentioned in 119th Action Taken Report of the Committee on “Strengthening of Grievance Redressal Mechanism of Government of India.” Earlier, the Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice brought 111th Report on ‘Strengthening of Grievance Redressal Mechanism of Government of India’. The Committee has identified the shortcomings and suggested measures to facilitate effective and efficient redressal of public grievances. The Committee believes that an efficient and effective grievance redressal mechanism ensures accountability and increases citizen satisfaction, both of which are key elements of good governance.

IMPORTANCE OF GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL MECHANISMS

1. Grievance Redressal Mechanism of an organisation is an instrument to measure its efficiency and effectiveness.
2. Provides important feedback on the working of the organisation.
3. Ensures timely delivery of services

GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL MECHANISM OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AT THE APEX LEVEL

- There are primarily two designated nodal agencies in Central Government managing these grievances. These agencies are:
 1. Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions
 2. Directorate of Public Grievances, Cabinet Secretariat.

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS & PUBLIC GRIEVANCES (DARPG)

- **Nodal agency** in respect of policy initiatives on public grievances redress mechanism and citizen centric initiatives.
- **Role of DARPG** - undertake citizen centric initiatives in the fields of administrative reforms and public grievances to
 - ✓ ensure quality delivery of public services to the citizen in a hassle-free manner and
 - ✓ eliminate the causes of grievances.
- **Allocation of Business Rules, 1961**, allocates to DARPG the responsibility for **Policy, Coordination and Monitoring** of issues relating to
 - ✓ Redress of Public Grievances in general.
 - ✓ Grievances pertaining to Central Government Agencies.
- In accordance with federal principle of governance, grievances relating to States are forwarded to concerned State Government for appropriate action.

- DARPG has established the **Centralised Public Grievance Redress & Monitoring System (CPGRAMS)**.

DIRECTORATE OF PUBLIC GRIEVANCES (DPG)

- DPG was set up in Cabinet Secretariat in 1988. DPG was set up initially to look into individual complaints pertaining to four Central Government Departments, but now is handling grievances pertaining to 16 Central Government Organisations.
- DPG has been envisaged as an appellate body investigating grievances where the complainant had failed to get redress at the hands of internal machinery and the hierarchical authorities.
- Unlike the Department of AR&PG, DPG has been empowered to call for the files and officers for discussion to ensure grievance handling has been done in a fair, objective and just manner.
- DPG can also suggest suitable recommendations to be adopted by the concerned Ministry/department which must implement them within one month.

GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL MECHANISM (CPGRAMS)

- CPGRAMS is an online portal available to public 24x7 to lodge their grievances against the authorities on any subject related to service delivery. It is a single portal connected to all the Ministries/Departments of Government of India and States.
- CPGRAMS also facilitates tracking grievances through a system generated Unique Registration Number.
- The system enables Ministries/ Departments to take appropriate action and upload the **Action Taken Report (ATR)** on the system which can be viewed by the citizens online with the help of the unique registration number.
- Public grievances usually come in two forms: 1. Through CPGRAMS; and 2. Through post.**
- The grievances received by post are digitized and sent both through the System as well as by post to the Ministry/ Department/ State Government concerned.

CONCERNS EXPRESSED & RECOMMENDATIONS PROVIDED BY THE COMMITTEE

<u>Concerns Expressed</u>	<u>Recommendations of Standing Committee</u>
<i>Disposing Grievance without proper closure along with suggestion to visit another agency or subordinate office.</i>	Comply Instructions of DARPG – and Ministries or Departments must give valid reasons for closure.
<i>Most grievances received on CPGRAMS relating to states are disposed and not forwarded to respective states</i>	CPGRAMS should play the role of facilitator for the public without impinging on the nature of federalism and forward grievances to respective state government or their department. The performance of states on the portal can be left to them but the facilitation

	responsibility of the Centre cannot be shed when a public grievance is registered.
Lack of Awareness among people about grievance redressal mechanisms in most government departments and their subordinate offices.	Incorporate following in newer versions of CPGRAMS - Opening channels for effective communication, Promoting productive relationship, Mitigating and preventing adverse impact on stakeholder caused by department's operations, and more importantly Making stakeholders part of the process.
No efforts are made to hold satisfaction surveys to ascertain outcome of measures to redress grievances.	Need for More Analysis of Grievance Prone Areas and Departments - Major areas of grievances as recorded in CPGRAMS are employee related grievances, harassment, atrocities, corruption, civic amenities, labour issues etc.
Considerable variation across organisations in respect of number of grievances recorded, disposed off and pending	Best Suggestions from Public must be rewarded - feedback and suggestions on performance of grievance redressal system should be taken from public to improve effectiveness, efficiency and credibility of grievance redress mechanism and grievance prevention possibilities. Best suggestions should be rewarded and their implementation and value addition should be highlighted for improving credibility of the system.
Location specific complaints are tough to redress	Strengthen Public Interface Mechanisms for redress like Lok Adalats and Jan Sunvairs, taking it to the doorstep of the people needing redress.
CPGRAMS has not been uniformly operationalized in all organizations. Also, wide variations are apparent across the Ministries/ Departments and other organizations in respect of the extent of commitment, framework and processes instituted	There should be an overall review/evaluation of the procedure of handling grievances of the Ministries/ Departments/ Organisations in the Government of India.

and the capacity to handle grievances.	
<i>DARPG in collaboration with BSNL, operationalized a Feed Back Call Centre on disposed COVID-19 related public grievances received in CPGRAMS.</i>	The Committee recommends DARPG to create a Dashboard on the website pertaining to grievance redressal comprising performance indicators such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • average complaints per day, • disposal rate, • average disposal time, • Excellent/ Satisfactory Feedback, • Complaint shared from different channels.
<i>Ministries/Departments do not detect public grievances appearing in newspapers for Suo moto redressal.</i>	Ministries /Departments to undertake a regular review of grievances, which are raised in print and electronic media and include the analysis in the quarterly report submitted to the DARPG. It should also ensure that the review undertaken by them and the action taken on the suggestions are put on its website.

WAY FORWARD

- **Timely ventilation and redressal of grievances are necessary for any citizen friendly administration –** Therefore, the Committee recommends that there should be an overall review/evaluation of the procedure of handling **Gradual** grievances of the ministries/departments/ organisations in the government of India.
- **move towards One Nation –One Grievance redressal portal is a welcome step** - However, the committee recommends the department to ensure that certain features are incorporated while integrating CPGRAMS with state portals, namely, identifying right stakeholders for redressal, facility of auto forwarding delayed or specific kind of grievances to right team/person, among others.

GEO IAS

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

1. MONEY LAUNDERING

In Vijay Madanlal Choudhary vs Union of India, the apex court, upheld several provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, including those which relate to the power of arrest, attachment, and search and seizure conferred on the Enforcement Directorate (ED). Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 was enacted to fight against

the criminal offence of legalizing the income/profits from an illegal source. The Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 enables the Government or the public authority to confiscate the property earned from the illegally gained proceeds.

OBJECTIVES

- Prevent money-laundering.
- Combat/prevent channelising of money into illegal activities and economic crimes.

- Provide for the confiscation of property derived from, or involved/used in, money-laundering.
- Provide for matters connected and incidental to the acts of money laundering.

OFFENCES

Under PMLA, the commission of any offence, as mentioned in Part A and Part C of the Schedule of PMLA will attract the provisions of PMLA. Some Acts and offences, which may attract PMLA, are enumerated below:

- **Part A** enlists offences under various acts such as: Indian Penal Code, Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, Prevention of Corruption Act, Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, Copyright Act, Trademark Act, Wildlife Protection Act, and Information Technology Act.
- **Part B** specifies offences that are Part A offences, but the value involved in such offences is Rs 1 crore or more.
- **Part C** deals with trans-border crimes and reflects the dedication to tackle money laundering across global boundaries.

AUTHORITIES ENTRUSTED FOR INVESTIGATION

- **Enforcement Directorate** in Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government of India is responsible for investigating the offences of money laundering under the PMLA.
- **Financial Intelligence Unit – India (FIU-IND)** under the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance is an independent body reporting directly to the Economic Intelligence Council (EIC) headed by the finance minister. FIU IND is the central national agency responsible for receiving, processing, analysing, and disseminating the information relating to suspect financial transactions. It is also responsible for:
 - Coordinating and strengthening the efforts of national and international intelligence,
 - Investigations for pursuing the global efforts against money laundering and related crimes.
 - The scheduled offences are separately investigated by agencies mentioned under respective acts, for example, the local police, CBI, customs departments, SEBI, or any other investigative agency.

ACTIONS AGAINST PERSONS INVOLVED IN MONEY LAUNDERING

- Seizure/freezing of property, records and attachment of property obtained with the proceeds of crime.
- Any person who commits the offence of money laundering shall be punishable with –
- Rigorous imprisonment for a minimum term of three years and this may extend up to seven years.
- Fine (without any limit).

AMENDMENTS TO PMLA ACT 2019

Amidst the growing number of financial crimes and high-profile cases, the 2019 Act attempts to make the existing provisions stricter and better armoured to detect suspicious transactions. Additionally, the Act, along with the other amendments, has a greater aim of targeting money laundering and terrorist financing. The 2019 Act attempts to remove the ambiguity in the existing provisions by amending eight clauses of the PMLA.

KEY FEATURES

- **Proceeds of crime:** Expanded ambit of “proceeds of crime.” The scope now includes properties and assets created, derived, or obtained through any criminal activity related to the scheduled offence, even if it is not under the PMLA.
- The 2019 Act clarifies that it would be incorrect to interpret money laundering as a one-time, instantaneous offence that ceases with the concealment, possession, or acquisition or use or projection of the proceeds of crime as untainted property or claiming it as untainted.
- A person shall now be considered guilty of the offence of money laundering for as long as the said person is enjoying the “proceeds of crime” – thus, making the offence of money laundering a continuous offence.
- Legislative intent here appears to be to prosecute and attach all proceeds of crime, however remotely related. A key proposed change in the definition of “proceeds of crime” would allow the ED to proceed against assets of equivalent value located even outside the country.
- **Empowers Enforcement directorate:** Empowers ED to undertake search actions even in the absence of a report under Section 157 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC). The 2019 Act broadens the existing powers of the ED under the PMLA provisions – by bringing Sections 17 and 18 at par with Section 19 – where there is no pre condition to forward a report under Section 157 of CrPC or to seek warrants from the Court for making an arrest. An arrest can be made for an offence under the PMLA even in the absence of a First Information Report (FIR).
- **Special Courts** - Also includes a crucial amendment that **empowers the Special Court to restore confiscated assets to the rightful claimants even during the trial.** The amended Section 8(8) now allows the Special Court, if it deems fit, to consider the claims for the purposes of restoration of such properties also during the trial. Earlier, the assets could be restored only after completion of the trial.
- **ALLEGATION ALLEGED AGAINST MISUSE OF PMLA**
- ED does not disclose the Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) (an equivalent of the FIR) is considered an “internal document” and not given to the accused.
- This amounts to denial of basic rights of knowledge to the accused.
- Registering of ECIR is at ED’s discretion and after ECIR is registered, ED begins to summon accused persons and seeks details of all their financial transactions and of their family members.
- The accused is called upon to make statements which are treated as admissible in evidence without disclosing them the charge under which they are booked by ED.
- Throughout this procedure, the accused does not even know the allegation against him, as the only document which contains the allegation is the ECIR, which is not supplied to the accused persons.
- PMLA does not distinguish between an accused and a witness while they are summoned. This is important because procedure under criminal law makes a distinction between the accused and a witness.

- Selection of cases by ED have been politically motivated based on affirmation from the central government.

WAY FORWARD

1. Following recommendations of FATF in domestic economic laws.
2. Empowering regulators like RBI, SEBI etc to be vigilant towards money laundering.
3. Permanent cadre of Enforcement Directorate.
4. Use of Big Data analytics, Artificial Intelligence in tackling money laundering.
5. Evolving sectoral action plans to tackle money laundering in sectors which are prone to generation of money laundering such as Narcotics, Organised Crime, Educational Institutions etc.

2. CHINESE SHIP AT HAMBANTOTA PORT

The Sri Lankan government allowed the Chinese research ship, Yuan Wang 5, to dock at the southern port of Hambantota from August 16-22.

Background

- The Chinese ship Yuan Wang 5 - was en route from the Chinese port of Jiangyin and due in the Chinese-run Sri Lankan port of Hambantota on August 11.
- Upon learning that the government in Colombo had given clearances for the Chinese military vessel to berth at Hambantota, India expressed its concern.
- As a result, the **Sri Lanka Foreign Ministry asked China to defer the arrival** of its military ship until further consultations.
- Later, in a U-turn, Lanka allowed Chinese vessel to dock from Aug 16-22.

India's Concern

- The 'Yuan Wang 5' is a powerful tracking vessel whose significant aerial reach is reportedly *around 750 km*. This means that several ports in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh could be on China's radar.
- Reports have claimed that several vital installations in South India could be under threat of being snooped upon.
- India was worried that the surveillance vessel could be involved in mapping the ocean floor for **potential antisubmarine operations against the Indian Navy**.

3. INDIA – VIETNAM RELATIONS

India and Vietnam are celebrating 50th anniversary of their diplomatic relations. The two countries are a natural outcome of a growing convergence of their strategic and

economic interests, and their common vision for peace, prosperity and their people.

TRADE AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS

- During FY 2020–2021, bilateral trade between India & Vietnam reached US\$11 billion, with Indian exports to Vietnam amounting to US\$5 billion and Indian imports from Vietnam at US\$6 billion.
- India's trade deficit with Vietnam reduced from US\$ 2.2 billion during FY 1920 to US\$ 1.1 billion in FY 20-21.
- In FY 2020-21, for India, Vietnam was 15th largest trading partner globally and 4th largest within ASEAN, following Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia.

INVESTMENTS

- India's investments in Vietnam are estimated at around US\$ 1.9 billion including investments routed through third countries
- As of 2020, Vietnam has 6 investment projects in India with total estimated investment of US\$ 28.55 million.

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

- India has aided Vietnam within ASEAN framework.
- Under Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) framework, India has been taking up Quick Impact Projects, each valued at US\$ 50,000, in different provinces of Vietnam for development of community infrastructure.

STRATEGIC RELATIONS

- As an extension of its Act East policy, Vietnam has become a valuable partner in India's political and security engagements in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The two countries are working to address shared strategic concerns (such as energy security and open and secure sea lines of communication) and make policy choices without undue external interference.
- Both India & Vietnam face territorial disputes with and shared apprehensions about their common neighbour, China.
- Vietnam is of great strategic importance because its position enables it to control South China Sea.

MARITIME ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN INDIA-VIETNAM

- India's aspiration to counter an assertive China by strengthening Vietnam's military power.
- With India's increasing trade with East and Southeast Asia, India has begun to recognise importance of its sea lines of communication beyond its geographical proximity; South China Sea occupies a significant geostrategic and geo-economic position, resulting in India's renewed interests in South China Sea.
- India desires to intensify its presence to track potential developments in maritime domain that could affect its national interests.
- Indian Navy underlines importance of a forward maritime presence and naval partnership that would be critical to deter potential adversaries.

- India's maritime strategic interests in the region are well established, including the fact that almost 55% of India's trade with Indo-Pacific region passes through South China Sea.
- India sees an open & stable maritime common being essential to international trade and prosperity; therefore, it has an interest in protecting sea lanes.

STRATEGIC COOPERATION

- Both signed Joint Vision for Defence Cooperation and a MoU on mutual logistics support in 2022.
- A U.S.\$100 million Defence Line of Credit has been implemented, India has announced early finalisation of another U.S.\$500 million Defence Line of Credit to enhance Vietnam's defence capability.
- India is providing comprehensive underwater combat operation training to Vietnamese sailors at INS Satavahana in Visakhapatnam
- Vietnam is also exploring the possibility of acquiring Indian-manufactured surveillance equipment such as unmanned aerial vehicles.

COOPERATION ON REGIONAL FORUMS

- Both have found mutual convergences on cooperation in Indo-Pacific region and are synergising their efforts to work in bilateral, sub-regional and multilateral frameworks, such as Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), BIMSTEC, Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, ADMMPlus or ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus.
- Both countries are also looking at collaboration around the seven pillars of Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).

CHALLENGES

- India is one of the three countries (with Russia and China) with which Vietnam has a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
- Cultural attitudes place India lower in the hierarchy than Vietnam's most important partners.
- Vietnamese attitude towards China is to cooperate and struggle at the same time.
- Vietnam did not take any stand in the India-China LAC conflict, even when Vietnam wants India's cooperation on countering China in the South China sea.
- Indian investments in Vietnam lag not just China but also Japan, South Korea, and Singapore.

4. US NAVY SHIP IN INDIA

A US Navy ship named 'Charles Drew' made history when it landed in India for repairs and ancillary services at Larsen & Toubro's (L&T) Shipyard in Kattupalli, Chennai.

- ✓ This is the first ever repair of a US Navy ship in India.
- In April 2022, at the US-India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue both countries decided to look at the **possibility of using Indian shipyards for the upkeep** and repair of ships owned by the US Maritime Sealift Command in order to assist with mid voyage repairs of US naval ships.
- This move added a new facet to the rapidly growing Indo-U.S. strategic cooperation. It also signals **leveraging of the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)**-the military logistics agreement India signed with the U.S. in 2017.
- The event signifies the capabilities of Indian shipyards in the global ship repairing market. This shipbuilding project opens a new section of defence exports.
 - ✓ India currently has six significant shipyards with a **combined annual revenue of around \$2 billion.**
 - ✓ A brilliant example of the expansion of the Indian shipbuilding sector is the nation's first indigenous aircraft carrier, Vikrant.
 - ✓ India is also on its course to design and develop its first large-scale marine diesel engine over the next two to three years.

5. TRANS-HIMALAYAN NETWORK

*China and Nepal have agreed to build the so-called **Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network**. The network, dubbed as economic corridor between China and Nepal, is a part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).*

- China has also pledged \$118 million in grant assistance to Nepal to invest in various projects.
- This was decided in a meeting between the foreign ministers of the two countries.

The network involves the building of railways and communication networks.

- One such project is China-Nepal railway. Others include - Construction of a tunnel road; Upgrading of the **Araniko Highway**; restoration of border ports.

This network, however, has raised concerns in India. This is due to the fact that:

- It will lead to increased presence of China in Nepal, which is considered as India's strategic backyard.
- India has, so far, opposed the Chinese BRI due to the issue of sovereignty.
- India is worried that through this route increased Chinese goods will find access to the markets of Nepal.
- Since, India and Nepal share an open border, **experts fear that these goods will ultimately land in Indian market.**

SUMMITS AND ORGANISATIONS

1. MINERALS SECURITY PARTNERSHIP

- India is concerned that it is not finding a place in the Minerals Security Partnership.
- The Finance Ministry have communicated with the Ministry of External Affairs to explore the possibility of how New Delhi can join the 11-member group.

WHY INDIA HAS NOT BEEN INCLUDED IN THE PARTNERSHIP SO FAR?

- It is because the **country does not bring much expertise to the table**.
- In the group, countries like Australia and Canada have reserves and also technology to extract them and countries like Japan have the technology to process.

WHY INDIA WANTS TO JOIN THE PARTNERSHIP?

1. **Critical minerals are necessary for India's growth**

- India's growth strategy is powered by an ambitious shift in the mobility space through the conversion of a large part of public and private transport to electric vehicles (EVs).
- This, alongside a coordinated electronics manufacturing push, underlines the need to secure the supply of critical minerals.

2. **MSP has the potential to revamp supply chain of critical minerals**

- The new grouping could focus on the supply chains of minerals such as Cobalt, Nickel, Lithium and also the 17 rare earth (RE) minerals.
 - ✓ Cobalt, Nickel and Lithium are required for batteries used in EVs
 - ✓ Rare earth minerals are critical, in trace amounts, in the semiconductors and high-end electronics manufacturing.

3. **MSP As An Alternative to China**

- Currently, China has created processing infrastructure in rare earth minerals and has acquired mines in Africa for elements such as cobalt.
- The partnership is also seen as a part of a global 'China-plus-one' strategy adopted post the Covid-19 pandemic that caused massive supply-chain disruptions.
 - ✓ The strategy also known as Plus One, is the business strategy to avoid investing only in China and diversify business into other countries.

INDIA AND RARE EARTH (RE) METALS

- Rare earth comprises 17 elements and are classified as **light RE elements (LREE)** and **heavy RE elements (HREE)**.
- Some RE are available in India such as Lanthanum, Cerium, Neodymium, Praseodymium and Samarium.
 - ✓ India has the world's fifth-largest reserves of rare earth elements, nearly twice as much as Australia
- Others such as Dysprosium, Terbium, Europium that are classified as HREE are not available in Indian deposits in extractable quantity.
- Hence, there is a dependence on countries such as China for HREE, which is one of the leading producers of RE with an estimated 70% of the global production.
- In mid-2020, India, through a newly floated state-owned company, had signed an agreement with an Argentinian firm to jointly prospect lithium.
 - ✓ The State-owned company, **Khanij Bidesh India Ltd**, was incorporated in August 2019.
 - ✓ Its mandate is to acquire strategic mineral assets such as lithium and cobalt abroad.

2. INTERNATIONAL CHEMICAL SAFETY CARDS (ICSCS)

- **Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals (DCPC)** and **International Labour Organisation (ILO)** have signed an MoU to adopt the International Chemical Safety Cards (ICSCs) for **information dissemination** to the chemical industry.
- ICSCs are **data sheets** intended to provide essential *safety and health information* on chemicals in a clear and concise way.
- The primary aim of the Cards is to promote the safe use of chemicals in the workplace. The main target users are workers and those responsible for occupational safety and health.
- The ICSCs project is a common undertaking between **ILO and WHO**, with the cooperation of the **European Commission**.

3. G7 & G20

ABOUT G7

- The Grouping began as Group of Six in 1975- with a meeting of leaders of US, UK, West Germany, Italy, France and Japan, because of the Oil crisis and global currency exchange issues that decided to meet annually.
- The Group of 7 (G7) is an informal group of seven countries — the **United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan** and the **United Kingdom**, the heads of which hold an annual summit with European Union and other invitees
- Together the member countries represent **40% of global GDP** and **10% of the world's population**
- G7 has no legal existence, permanent secretariat or official members
- Leaders of G7 countries meet annually and discuss emerging global issues
- India has been a special invitee to the G-7 on several occasions in past two decades- including 5 consecutive years from 2005-2009 during global economic crisis. This year Indian PM was invited at summit.

KEY OUTCOMES OF 48TH G7 MEET

- India, Indonesia, Argentina, Senegal, South Africa and Ukraine were invited as guests.
- Criticised Russian aggression of Ukraine.
- **Statement on Global Food Security:** In the context of rising food prices and shortage, G-7 parties remained on target to raise \$100 billion and lift 500 million from malnutrition by 2030.
- Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, plan to mobilise \$600 billion over the next five years to counter BRI.
- **Statements on Climate change** and on Just Transition partnerships between the G7 and India, Indonesia, South Africa, Senegal and Vietnam.
- A Statement on Resilient democracies, which India also signed on to, committing to ensure free and fair elections, protection of civil society, promoting human rights online and offline, and achieving gender equality.

CHALLENGES FACED BY G7 GROUPING

- **Changing Economic Situation:** When constituted the G7 countries accounted for close to two-thirds of global GDP.
- They now account for less than a third of global GDP on a purchasing power parity (PPP) basis, and less than half on market exchange rates (MER) basis
- Seven largest emerging economies (E7, or “Emerging 7”), comprising Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia and Turkey, account for over a third of global GDP on purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, and over a quarter on MER basis. India's economy is already the third largest in the world in PPP terms.

- It is projected that India's GDP will increase to \$17 trillion in 2030 and \$42 trillion in 2050 in PPP terms, in 2nd place after China, just ahead of USA.

LIMITATIONS OF G7

- It is a “First World Elite Club” that has not grown its membership to include emerging economies like India and China.
- By cutting out Russia and China, the G-7 ensure the polarisation of the world into the two blocs, even as ties between Russia and China get stronger.
- G-7 countries are also military partners means that the economic agenda of the grouping often takes a backseat over political issues
- G7 failed to head off the economic downturn of 2007-08, which led to the rise of the G20.
- G7 has not raised concerns with respect to contemporary issues, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, the challenge of the Daesh, and the crisis of state collapse in West Asia.
- It had announced its members would phase out all fossil fuels and subsidies but has not so far announced any plan of action to do so.
- Unlike other institutions, G7 is not a formal institution with a charter and a secretariat.
- Lacks representation – Russia, China and India which are influential global players with important role in global economy are not members of this group.
- US president Donald Trump had challenged the unity of G7 members stating that contending that U.S. allies took advantage of the United States.
- There is a growing sense that China poses a “threefold threat” to G7 countries—economically, ideologically, and geopolitically.
- **TO counter BRI** – G7 leaders announced at 2022 summit - Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR INDIA?

- India's tightrope walk between the West and Russia China has just become more difficult- the G7 statement indicates a point of no-return
- The US-China rivalry is likely to step up in the IndoPacific with the new economic initiatives planned: from Indo Pacific Economic Forum to the PGII to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative- India joined the IPEF but India has not signed on to the PGII plan yet.
- India's partnerships with countries like Indonesia, Brazil, South Africa, ASEAN etc that are still seeking to balance ties with both blocs will get stronger.
- India's role as the balancing power in the room is evident: at the BRICS summit last week, India ensured that anti West language did not enter the text, while at the G-7 outreach, it ensured that statements condemning Russia and China were not part of the documents that India signed.

WHY WE NEED A NEW INSTITUTION

- A new mechanism is required to handle the emerging global challenges - Trade war, economic slowdown, Political turmoil in countries, counterterrorism & nonproliferation.
- There is need for including in it the seven future leading economies, plus Germany, Japan, the U.K., France, Mexico, Turkey, South Korea, and Australia
- Finding effective solutions to burning issues like Ukraine war, Global economic slowdown, Iran's nuclear program, peace and stability in Afghanistan, Gulf and West Asia, reduction in tensions in Korean peninsula and South China Sea.

G20 AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO G7

- Power and prestige of Group of Twenty (G20), a forum for finance ministers and central bank governors from nineteen of world's largest countries and EU, has surpassed that of G7.
- Emerging powers including Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa, whose absence from G7 was often noted, all belong to G20. Russia remains a member of G20.
- Group's member states represent about 85% of global GDP and three-fifths of the world's population.
- G20 was most effective during 2007-08 global financial crisis.

CHALLENGES WITH G20

- This could become a forum for Great Power Rivalry because of Presence of US, China and Russia in the aftermath of Ukraine crisis.
- At 2014 summit, hosted by Australia, leaders adopted a plan to boost their economies by a collective 2.1%, which they did not achieve.
- United States blocked a planned reference in the communiqué to the need to "resist all forms of protectionism." a communiqué to which all its members agreed
- In Argentina summit the G20 members adopted a communiqué to which all its members agreed. However, this communiqué did not include issues like trade, climate change, and migration.
- G20 has raised Voice for urgent restoration of the dispute settlement system to "contribute to predictability and security in the multilateral trading system".
- Despite being a member of G20, US under Donald trump had blocked the appointment to WTO appellate body. The new President Biden has yet not taken any action on this issue.
- G20 countries agreed to raise IMF reserves with a new SDR allocation of US \$650 billion, critics have argued that given the scale of financing challenge in emerging economies, it is not enough.
- G20 members have failed to break the impasse on climate goals—many countries disapproved of the idea of committing to keeping global warming below 1.5°C and phasing out coal. US, EU, Japan, and Canada want

the G20 to cap temperature rise at less than 1.5 degrees and phase out coal by 2025

'D10' COALITION OF DEMOCRACIES

- The combination of G7 and 3 other invitees- India, Australia and South Korea has drawn attention to an expanded 'D10' coalition of democracies
- First proposed by Boris Johnson, the original purpose of D10 was aimed to address China's growing technological clout in 5G as well as supply chain vulnerabilities that were exposed during pandemic
- But gradually, with the Joe Biden's efforts, the group is being seen as an alternate democratic arrangement against the authoritarian states such as China

ADVANTAGES OF PROPOSED D10 COALITION

- The proposed 5G alliance (as proposed by UK) may bring technology and Investment to India
- Membership in coalition of 10 large democracies not only increase the soft power of India but also gives a platform for India to pursue reforms in UNSC. (This coalition will give an opportunity to convince the major powers to make the way clear for India's candidature as a permanent member of UNSC)
- It acts as a bulwark against Chinese expansionism in Indian ocean and its Wolf warrior diplomacy in the India's neighbourhood
- Eventually if this coalition turns into a trade bloc, that will improve trade and investment opportunities for India (In the backdrop of lingering EU-India trade deal and pull out of RCEP)

CHALLENGES

- Economic Interconnectedness transcends across any rigid divisions of Democracies and dictatorships
- despite being a U.S. ally and a democracy, South Korea is wary of joining a formal D10 or Quad-plus alliance because its economy is interwoven with that of China
- EU is wary of any such coalition (D10) since it recently signed EU-China new investment treaty
- Even Indian can't afford to alienate friendly undemocratic powers like Vietnam, Iran or Russia, which are important for India's ambitions of becoming a 'leading power' in the world
- US and European powers are themselves not disassociated with undemocratic allies. U.S.'s allies in West Asia remain notoriously authoritarian, and European countries still cultivate client dictatorships in Africa.

COMPARISON BETWEEN G20 & G7

G20	G7
Includes emerging economies like India and China	It is a "First World Elite Club"
Russia – China along with US and EU are members.	Does not include Russia and China.
Formed after Global Financial crisis – 2008	Remnant of Cold war
Represents 85% of the	Role in Global GDP has

global GDP	reduced from 60% to 40%
Has representation from S. America, West Asia and Africa	Dominated by Transatlantic membership
China is a member	More anti – China in its orientation – PGII etc.
Can act as platform for resolution of WTO disputes.	Represents the interest of Developed countries at WTO, World Bank, IMF
In the context of Big Power Rivalry – Indo – Pacific, Ukraine crisis can act as an important platform negotiation between US - Russia and China	Only represents the Western interest in the Big Power Rivalry (Eco - Chamber)

CHALLENGES OF G20

- This could become a **forum for Great Power Rivalry** because of Presence of US, China and Russia in the aftermath of Ukraine crisis.
- The United States **blocked a communiqué to the need to “resist all forms of protectionism” a communiqué to which all its members agreed.**
- In Argentina summit the G20 members adopted a communiqué to which all its members agreed.

However, this communique **did not include issues like trade, climate change, and migration.**

- US is **reluctant to approve the appointment to WTO appellate body.**
- The G20 countries agreed to raise International Monetary Fund (IMF) reserves with a new SDR allocation of US \$650 billion, critics have argued that **given the scale of financing challenge in emerging economies, it is not enough.**
- The G20 members **have failed to break the impasse on climate goals**—many countries disapproved of the idea of committing to keeping global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius and phasing out coal.
- US, EU, Japan, and Canada want the G20 to cap temperature rise at less than 1.5 degrees and phase out coal by 2025

DEFENSE AND SECURITY

1. DEFENCE EXPORTS

India's defence exports touched a record Rs 13,000 crore in the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Private sector is playing a key role in boosting exports.

EXPORT TARGET - \$5 BILLION BY 2025

- In 2020, government had set a target of Rs 35,000 crore (\$ 5 billion) export in aerospace, and defence goods and services in the next five years.
- This is part of the turnover of Rs 1.75 lakh crore (\$ 25 billion) in defence manufacturing by 2025 that the government is aiming to achieve.

REASONS FOR LACK OF FOCUS ON DEFENCE EXPORTS EARLIER

- **Moral reasons:** The ideology that India being a pacifist, moral and responsible state should stay away from the dirty business of selling arms.

- **Corruption in defence exports:** Defence exports often involve commissions and bribes.

COMPOSITION OF EXPORTS

- There has been rise in defence PSU share from 10% to 30% on account of Rs 2,500 crore deal that India made with Philippines for Brahmos missiles.
- Remaining 70 % share is from private sector.
- Most India's defence export is in the aerospace sector, where Indian firms have been manufacturing several parts, including fuselage for foreign companies.
- All fuselages of American attack helicopter Apache sold across the world are now made in India by a joint venture between Boeing and Tata.
- Companies like Adani Defence and Lohia Group are making fuselages for several Israeli drones.
- Vietnam is procuring 12 Fast Attack Craft under a \$100 million credit line announced by India and discussions

are continuing to identify systems under the second line of credit of \$500 million.

- HAL has pitched its helicopters and the Tejas LCA to several Southeast Asian and West Asian nations and is in the race to supply the LCA to Malaysia.
- India inked \$375 million BrahMos deal with Philippines.
- Biggest beneficiary of India's defence exports in last five years has been Myanmar.
- According to SIPRI report on international arms transfer trends, roughly 50% of India's defence exports from 2017 to 2021 were to Myanmar, followed by Sri Lanka at 25%, and Armenia at 11%.

IMPORTANCE OF INCREASING DEFENCE EXPORTS

- Critical defence systems are not supplied by exporting countries.
- Technology denial regimes which limit transfer of technology.
- Play a crucial role in improving India's strategic relations with countries in strategically important geographies. Ex. Philippines in Indo-Pacific.
- From being an importer of Defence equipment, Exports can play a crucial role in earning much needed foreign exchange. A similar strategy is being deployed in the petroleum sector where despite being one the largest importer, India focuses on Exporting refined products.
- It can have a Rub-off effect on other manufacturing sectors like - Aircraft industry etc.
- Given security context of India's location and its focus on militarisation, focus on defence export would help in indigenisation of Defence production overall.
- PM highlighted that changing geopolitical reality was that many smaller nations were now worried about security and would look towards India as it had strength of low-cost, high-quality production.
- Private sector can play an important role in Defence production and exports.
- Great powers like US, Russia and West European countries are exporters of Defence equipment. With India wanting to play a key role in Global affairs defence exports would raise its prestige.

REASONS FOR LACK OF FOCUS ON DEFENCE EXPORTS

- **Moral reasons:** The ideology that India being a pacifist, moral and responsible state should stay away from the dirty business of selling arms.
- **Corruption in defence exports:** Defence exports often involve commissions and bribes.
- **Lack of availability of critical systems for exports.**

CHALLENGES IN INCREASING DEFENCE EXPORTS.

- **Licensed production:** large proportion of defence manufacturing in India involves licensed production which can act as a barrier to market-based development of the defence industry. For ex. UK is not allowing export of Tejas to Argentina as it uses components made in the UK.

- **Reputational setbacks from past exports:** Nepal had blamed Indian INSAS rifles provided by DRDO for its ineffectiveness in handling insurgency. In 2015, Ecuador terminated contract with HAL for 7 locally designed Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopters after four of them crashed within a short time.
- **Breaking monopoly of major defence exporters:** like US, Russia & Israel would be difficult. India will have to either cut into share of biggest exporters collectively accounting for 90.3% of trade.
- **Defence trade thrives on exporting country's sphere of influence.** Countries in India's sphere of influence have small defence budgets. India will need one or two major customers like all major exporting countries have, to boost its exports.
- World's largest importers of arms include countries like Egypt, China & Pakistan which India will not export to, even if they are willing.
- Countries like Saudi Arabia, Australia, Algeria, South Korea, Qatar & UAE are unlikely to abandon western suppliers and turn to India for meeting their requirement.
- **After sales service ecosystem:** Comprehensive after sales services is crucial for emerge as a reliable supplier of defence systems.

STEPS TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT

- Measures announced to boost exports since 2014 include simplified defence industrial licensing, relaxation of export controls and grant of no-objection certificates.
- Specific incentives were introduced under the foreign trade policy and the Ministry of External Affairs has facilitated Lines of Credit for countries to import defence product.
- In addition, defence attaches in Indian missions abroad have been empowered to promote defence exports.
- The Defence Ministry has also issued a draft Defence Production & Export Promotion Policy 2020.
- To boost indigenous manufacturing, the Government had issued two "**positive indigenisation lists**" consisting of 209 items that cannot be imported and can only be procured from domestic industry.
- In addition, a percentage of the capital outlay of the defence budget has been reserved for procurement from domestic industry.
- For the year 2021-22, about 63% of the capital outlay or about ₹70,221 crore will be done from domestic defence industry.
- **SPRINT CHALLENGES:** Launched to boost to usage of indigenous technology by inducting at least 75 new indigenous technologies/products in Indian Navy. Launched by NIIO in association with Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO).
- **iDEX Initiative**
- **Technology Development Fund** was established Ministry of Defence to promote self-reliance.

2. MADE-IN-INDIA DEFENCE EQUIPMENT

Defence Minister handed over several new indigenously-developed defence systems, including the F-INSAS, the Nipun mines, the Landing Craft Assault (LCA), to the Army.

<u>F-INSAS system</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> F-INSAS stands for Future Infantry Soldier As A System, a programme for infantry modernisation aimed at increasing the operational capability of the soldier. As part of the project, soldiers are being equipped with modern systems that are lightweight, all-weather-all-terrain, cost-effective and low maintenance. Weaponry system: Full-gear of F-INSAS system includes an AK-203 assault rifle, multi-mode hand grenade. Other gears: F-INSAS provides soldiers with ballistic helmets and ballistic goggles, along with a bullet-proof vest. The F-INSAS also comes with hands-free, secured advanced communications set for real-time exchange of information with the command post.
<u>Nipun mines</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These are indigenously designed and developed anti-personnel mines, termed by the DRDO as 'soft target blast munition'. ✓ They have been developed with the efforts of Armament Research and Development Establishment, a Pune-based DRDO facility, and Indian industry. These mines are meant to act as the first line of defence against infiltrators and enemy infantry. Anti-personnel mines are meant to be used against humans as against anti-tank mines that are aimed at heavy vehicles.
<u>Landing Craft Assault</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is meant to serve as a replacement for the boats with limited capabilities currently in use in the Pangong Tso lake. The LCA has been indigenously developed by Goa-based Aquarius ShipYard Limited. It is said to have better launch, speed and capacity to operate across water obstacles in eastern Ladakh.

3. MILITARY EXERCISES

<u>Exercise Pitch Black 2022</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Indian Air Force (IAF) took part in multiple missions with the participating Air Forces in the 1st phase of Exercise Pitch Black 2022 in Australia.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise Pitch Black is a biennial three-week multi-national large force employment exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).
<u>AL NAJAH-IV</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India and Oman carried out a nearly two-week military exercise beginning August 1, with a focus on counter-terror cooperation. This fourth edition, known as AL NAJAH -IV, was conducted in Rajasthan.
<u>Vijay Prahar</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a combat exercise between the elite Special Forces of India and USA. The 13th edition of the Vajra Prahar exercise was held recently in Himachal Pradesh.
<u>Exercise Udarashakti</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a bilateral exercise between Indian Air Force and Royal Malaysian Air Force. Recently, this exercise was held in Malaysia.
<u>Skylight Exercise</u>	<p>Indian Army has conducted a major pan-India exercise codenamed 'Skylight'. It is to test the <i>operational readiness and robustness of its hi-tech satellite communication systems in the event of an attack by an adversary</i>. and to train personnel manning these.</p> <p>Rationale behind this exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The idea was to <i>validate and showcase</i> the resilience of its communication capabilities in case <i>terrestrial connectivity is disrupted</i> in future conflicts. Space-based communications will then prove to be decisive. Hence, it is important to build and refine technical competence in this field. This exercise also assumes significance against the backdrop of China's long-standing thrust on "informatised" and "intelligentised" warfare. ✓ China is leagues ahead in space, cyberspace, robotics, lethal autonomous weapon systems, Artificial intelligence (AI) warfare. ✓ Keeping this in mind, Indian Army is also pursuing 'Quantum Computing and Communications' for much better and secure C4I2SR systems for wars of future. ➤ C4I2SR stands for command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, information, surveillance and reconnaissance.

GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. ILLEGAL MINING

A deputy superintendent of police (DSP) posted in Haryana's Nuh district was run over by a dumper truck carrying stones during a raid to check illegal mining in Tauru. Mining scams in India refers to a series of alleged widespread scams in various ore-rich states of India. Such issues span encroachment of forest areas, underpayment of government royalties, conflict with tribals regarding landrights. The spill-over of the effects of legal mining into issues such as Naxalism and the distortion of the Indian political system by mixed politics and mining interests, has gained international attention.

CAUSES OF ILLEGAL MINING

- Lack of coordination within Ministry of Environment and forests leading to illegal mining & consequential ecological damage.
- Lack of timely checks by Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM)
- Boundary of leased-out area are not clearly defined.
- Lack of timely renewals for mining.
- The responsibility is on the mine owners, who don't apply in time, and various regulatory authorities where the applications are not processed in time.
- Demand of cheaper mineral worldwide.
- Poor monitoring systems.
- Collusive corruption b/w miners and bureaucrats.

STATISTICS

- Himachal Pradesh (8500 cases in 2017)
- 90 mines are functioning in Goa without the mandatory permission from the National Board for Wildlife
- Illegal mining worth over Rs 22,000 crore in Jharkhand, 60000 crores in Odisha.
- Of a total of 187 mining lease holders in Keonjhar, and Mayurbhanj districts, Sundergarh 102 were

found to have had no environmental or forest clearance.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

1. **Mining Surveillance System (2016):** satellite-based monitoring system functioning on alarm led warning.
2. **Mining Tenement System:** computerisation and automation in the functioning at directorates of mining and geology
3. **Drone monitoring** at mining areas.
4. **Random checks and raids**
5. In 2017, SC directed companies and leaseholders will have to pay public exchequer a compensation equivalent to 100% value of the minerals they extracted illegally.

WAY FORWARD

- State governments and Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) should co-ordinate more.
- National, state and district level mine mapping.
- Computerized weigh bridge system to track mineral right from mine gate to port to avoid leakages.
- Railways needs to have a strict system to ensure that illegal mining ore is tracked.
- Port authorities need to check cargos while being loaded at the dockyards.
- Separate cadre of mining security force can be created.
- Inclusive mining to protect rights of tribal population and ensure economic expansion.

Hasdeo Aranya region

Chhattisgarh Legislative Assembly has unanimously passed a private member resolution urging Centre to cancel allocation of all coal mining blocks in the ecologically sensitive Hasdeo Aranya area. Hasdeo Aranya (Aranya means forest) lies in catchment area of Hasdeo river and is spread across in NorthCentral Chhattisgarh. Hasdeo river is a tributary of Mahanadi River which originates in Chhattisgarh and flows through Odisha into Bay of Bengal. Hasdeo forests are catchment area for Hasdeo Bango Dam built across Hasdeo river which

irrigates six lakh acres of land, crucial to a State with paddy as its main crop. Besides, forests are ecologically sensitive due to the rich biodiversity they offer and due to the presence of a large migratory corridor for elephants.

2. India's clean energy transition communicated to (UNFCCC).

Recently, India's updated climate pledge to the Paris Agreement received Union Cabinet's nod. The pledge will lay out India's clean energy transition pathway from now through 2030 and will be communicated to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The country submitted its first pledge in 2015. As per Paris Agreement's provisions, countries must 'update' their pledges every five years to make higher commitments to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions. Paris Agreement is a global treaty wherein some 200 countries agreed to cooperate to reduce GHG emissions and rein in climate change. The agreement seeks to limit global warming to well below 2°C, preferably to 1.5°C, compared to pre-industry levels.

PARIS AGREEMENT

Paris Agreement addresses crucial areas necessary to combat climate change. Some of the key aspects of the Agreement are:

1. **Long-term temperature goal (Art. 2):** Paris Agreement, in seeking to strengthen the global response to climate change, reaffirms goal of limiting global temperature increase to well below 2 degrees Celsius, while pursuing efforts to limit increase to 1.5 degrees.
2. **Global peaking and 'climate neutrality' (Art. 4):** To achieve this temperature goal, Parties aim to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) as soon as possible, recognizing peaking will take longer for developing country Parties, to achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of GHGs in the second half of the century.
3. **Mitigation (Art. 4):** Paris Agreement establishes binding commitments by all Parties to prepare, communicate and maintain a nationally determined contribution (NDC) and to pursue domestic measures to achieve them. It prescribes that Parties shall communicate their NDCs every 5 years and provide information necessary for clarity and transparency. To set a firm foundation for higher ambition, each successive NDC will represent a progression beyond previous one and reflect highest possible ambition. Developed countries should continue to take lead by undertaking absolute economy-wide reduction targets, while developing countries should continue enhancing their mitigation efforts, and are encouraged to move toward economy-wide targets over time in the light of different national circumstances.
4. **Sinks and reservoirs (Art.5):** Paris Agreement encourages Parties to conserve & enhance, as appropriate, sinks and reservoirs of GHGs of the Convention, including forests.
5. **Voluntary cooperation/Market- and non-marketbased approaches (Art. 6):** Paris Agreement recognizes possibility of voluntary cooperation among Parties to allow for higher ambition and sets out principles – including environmental integrity, transparency and robust accounting – for any cooperation that involves internationally transferal of mitigation outcomes. It establishes a mechanism to contribute to mitigation of GHG emissions and support sustainable development and defines a framework for non-market approaches to sustainable development.
6. **Adaptation (Art. 7):** Paris Agreement establishes a global goal on adaptation – of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change in the context of the temperature goal of the Agreement. It aims to significantly strengthen national adaptation efforts, including through support and international cooperation. It recognizes that adaptation is a global challenge faced by all. All Parties should engage in adaptation, including by formulating and implementing National Adaptation Plans, and should submit and periodically update an adaptation communication describing their priorities, needs, plans and actions. Adaptation efforts of developing countries should be recognized.
7. **Loss and damage (Art. 8):** Paris Agreement recognizes importance of averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage associated with adverse effects of climate change, including extreme weather events and slow onset events, and role of sustainable development in reducing the risk of loss and damage. Parties are to enhance understanding, action and support, including through Warsaw International Mechanism, on a cooperative and facilitative basis with respect to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.
8. **Finance, technology and capacity-building support (Art. 9, 10 and 11):** Paris Agreement reaffirms obligations of developed countries to support efforts of developing country Parties to build clean, climate-resilient futures, while for first time encouraging voluntary contributions by other Parties. Provision of resources should aim to achieve a balance between adaptation and mitigation. In addition to reporting on finance already provided, developed country Parties commit to submit indicative information on future support every two years, including projected levels of public finance. The agreement provides that Financial Mechanism of the Convention, including Green Climate Fund (GCF), shall serve the Agreement. International cooperation on climate-safe technology

development and transfer and building capacity in developing world are also strengthened: a technology framework is established under agreement and capacity-building activities will be strengthened through enhanced support for capacity building actions in developing country Parties and appropriate institutional arrangements.

9. **Climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation** and public access to information is to be enhanced under the Agreement.
10. **Transparency, implementation and compliance:** Paris Agreement relies on a robust transparency and accounting system to provide clarity on action and support by Parties, with flexibility for their differing capabilities of Parties. In addition to reporting information on mitigation, adaptation and support, Agreement requires that information submitted by each Party undergoes international technical expert review. The Agreement includes a mechanism that will facilitate implementation and promote compliance in a non-adversarial and non-punitive manner.
11. **Global Stocktake:** A “global stocktake”, to take place in 2023 and every 5 years thereafter, will assess collective progress toward achieving the purpose of Agreement in a comprehensive and facilitative manner. It will be based on best available science and its long-term global goal. Its outcome will inform Parties in updating and enhancing their actions and support and enhancing international cooperation on climate action.

INDIA'S NATIONAL DETERMINED CONTRIBUTION

India's first pledge, also known as a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), had three primary targets.

1. Reduce emissions intensity of the economy by 33–35 per cent below 2005 levels.
2. 40% of installed electric power from non-fossil-based energy resources by 2030.
3. Create an additional (cumulative) carbon sink of 2.5-3 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO₂e) by 2030 through additional forest and tree cover.

PANCHAMRIT STRATEGY

In 2021, Indian Prime Minister announced the following new five-point set of targets at COP 26 in Glasgow:

- India will increase its non-fossil fuel energy capacity to 500 gigawatts (GW) by 2030.
- It will meet 50 per cent of its energy requirements from renewable sources by 2030.
- The total projected carbon emissions will be reduced by 1 billion tonnes from now through 2030.
- The carbon intensity of its economy will be brought down to less than 45 per cent.
- India will achieve its target of net zero by 2070

- A press statement on August 3 confirmed that three of these five targets had been approved by the Union Cabinet.
- The country will target about 50% of cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuelbased energy resources by 2030.

UPDATED NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTION

India's NDC, or nationally determined commitments, have been updated with two promises, both of which are enhancements of existing targets, and would be submitted to UN climate body. Paris Agreement requires every country to set selfdetermined climate targets which must be **progressively updated with more ambitious goals every few years**.

Accordingly:

- India will now reduce its emission intensity by at least 45%, instead of just 33 to 35%, from 2005 levels by 2030.
- Ensure that at least 50% of its total electricity generation, not just 40 per cent, would come from renewable sources by 2030.
- Forestry target has not been touched.
- To put forward and further propagate a healthy and sustainable way of living based on traditions and values of conservation and moderation, including through a mass movement for 'LIFE' – 'Lifestyle for Environment' as a key to combating climate change.

INDIA'S CLIMATE TARGETS: EXISTING AND NEW

Target (for 2030)	Existing: First NDC (2015)	New: Updated NDC (2022)	Progress
Emission intensity reduction	33-35 per cent from 2005 levels	45 per cent from 2005 levels	24 per cent reduction achieved in 2016 itself. Estimated to have reached 30 per cent
Share of non-fossil fuels in installed electricity capacity	40 per cent	50 per cent	41.5 per cent achieved by the end of June this year
Carbon sink	Creation of 2.5 to 3 billion	Same as earlier	Not clear.

	tonnes of additional sink through afforestation		
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INDIA'S PROGRESS

Upward revision of two climate targets — those relating to reductions in emissions intensity and proportion of non-fossil sources in electricity generation — do not come as a surprise. India is on way to achieve its existing targets well ahead of the 2030 timeline. India's emissions intensity was 24% lower than 2005 levels in 2016 itself. It is very likely that 33 to 35% reduction target has already been achieved or is very close to being achieved. A further reduction of 10-12% from here, to meet the new target, does not appear too challenging, even though these reductions get progressively tougher to achieve. The other target — having at least 40% of electricity coming from non-fossil fuels — has officially been reached. According to latest data, 41.5% of India's current installed electricity capacity of 403 GW is now powered by non-fossil fuels. Renewables (wind, solar and others) alone account for more than 28% of this capacity while hydropower contributes over 11%. With most new capacity additions happening in renewable energy sector, a 10% rise in share of non-fossil fuels in electricity generation is not an unrealistic target.

<u>Promise</u>	<u>Whether included in INDC</u>
Non-fossil fuel electricity installed capacity to reach 500 GW	Not Included
At least 50 percent of total installed electricity generation capacity to come from non-fossil fuel sources.	Included
Reduction of one billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent from cumulative projected emissions between now and 2030	Not Included
At least 45% reduction in emission intensity of GDP by 2030	Included
Net Zero Status by 2030	Never intended to be part of NDC

Two prominent promises made in Glasgow have not been converted into official targets.

- Prime Minister had announced that India's non-fossil fuel electricity generation capacity would touch 500 GW in 2030.

- India would cut at least one billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent from its net projected emissions between now and 2030.

500 GW non-fossil fuel electricity capacity target for 2030 is not easy. Of the current installed capacity of 403 GW, over 236 GW, or 58.5% comes from fossil fuel sources, while non-fossil fuels, which include not just renewables like solar, wind hydropower, nuclear and others, make up only 167 GW. Capacity additions from non-fossil sources would have to triple in next 10 years to reach 500 GW target.

Total installed electricity capacity has more than doubled in last 10 years (from 199 GW in 2012 to 403 GW now), but it is not only because of non-fossil fuel sources. While renewables have seen an impressive increase, installed capacity from fossil fuels have also doubled during this period.

The promise to reduce at least one billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent from cumulative projected emissions till 2030 was even more problematic. It was also the target with least clarity.

It was the first time that India had enunciated any climate target in terms of absolute emission reductions. But it appears it was announced without much preparatory work. India does not have any official projection of its emissions in 2030.

Emissions pathway from now to 2030 is not clear. In the absence of a baseline, the target would have been meaningless.

3. DATA ON TIGERS

Union Minister of State for Environment presented data on tigers in Lok Sabha recently. According to him, 329 tigers got lost in India in past 3 years. Poaching and other natural or unnatural causes were responsible for the loss.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MINISTRY'S DATA ON TIGERS

- In 2019, India had lost 96 tigers; In 2020, it lost 106 tigers while 127 tigers were lost in 2021.
- Out of 329 deaths, 68 tiger died due to natural causes, 5 due to unnatural causes, 29 due to poaching and 30 due to seizure.
- Currently, 197 tigers have been put to scrutiny.
- Number of poaching cases has decreased from 17 in 2019 to 4 in 2021.

MINISTRY'S DATA ON ELEPHANTS

- India lost 307 elephants in past 3 years, due to poaching, poisoning, train accident and electrocution.
- 222 elephants lost their life to electrocution in past three years.
- 41 cases were reported in Odisha, 34 in Tamil Nadu and 33 in Assam.
- 45 elephants have died in train accidents.
 - 12 train fatalities were reported in Odisha while 11 in West Bengal.

- 29 elephants lost life to poaching. Out of this number, 12 deaths occurred in Meghalaya and 7 in Odisha.
- 11 elephants died due to poisoning, of which 9 deaths occurred in Assam.

Human-Animal Conflict:

- As per government's data, 125 people got killed in "tiger attacks" in last three years. 61 deaths occurred in Maharashtra and 25 in Uttar Pradesh.

REASONS FOR ANIMAL-HUMAN CONFLICT

- **Human population explosion:** Many human settlements are springing up at the edges of protected areas, as well as local people encroaching on forest grounds for farming and gathering food and fodder, putting further strain on forest's scarce natural resources.
- **Agricultural expansion and cultivation up to forest boundaries:** Increases availability of easily accessible food crops for wildlife in the farms outside forests bringing them in conflict with people.
- **Lack of protected area:** Only around 10% of world's surface area is covered by protected zones. In India, 35% tiger ranges currently lie outside protected areas.
- **Rapid and unplanned urbanisation:** Rapid urbanization and industrialisation have led to diversion of forest land to non-forest purposes, as a result, the wildlife habitat is shrinking.
- **Infrastructure development in forest areas like** electrification penetrating forest areas & increasing road density.
- **Destruction of natural animal corridors**
- **Increasing penetration of invasive alien species:** Due to proliferation of invasive alien species in forests, wildlife do not get to eat their traditional feed in search of which they get out of forest areas.
- Climate change is causing the threat of Human Wildlife conflict to escalate. Wildlife attacks on livestock may intensify in some regions as climate change forces predators and livestock to increase their spatial overlap and interactions.

So, human-animal conflict is increasing across the globe, but we do not see these kinds of news from other countries:

- That is because in almost all developed nations these species are kept in control so they don't destroy large crop areas.
- In developing countries, local people take matters into their own hands.
- Most countries follow "Boars eating crops, people eating boar": this is what allows farmers tolerate these otherwise problematic animals.
- India does not allow rural people to hunt animals, but neither does the government cull animals regularly despite their numbers shooting up.

WAY FORWARD

- Institutionally controlling the vermin population.

- Getting rid of the wildlife-territorial dichotomy of management.
- Forestalling the destruction of natural habitat.
- Developing forage and water bodies inside forests.
- Stalling the growth of invasive alien species in forests.
- Developing buffer zone around forests and according legal protection to corridors which connect protected areas.
- Developing nature-based solutions to reduce Human Wildlife conflict. For ex use of Honeybees to control Elephants in Project Rehab.

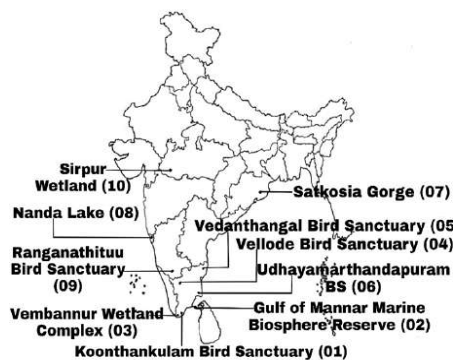
It is our greed that has destroyed vast tracts of forests and thousands of elephants and other animals over the last few decades. The poor farmer who inadvertently kills one elephant to feed us while making enough money for him is much less responsible.

4. NEW RAMSAR SITES

Three wetlands from Tamil Nadu and One each from Mizoram & Madhya Pradesh have been identified under Ramsar Convention, which is also called as "Convention on Wetlands". Thus, India has added Five new Ramsar Wetlands Sites of international importance. With the latest addition, total number of Ramsar Sites in India has reached to 54, as opposed to 49 earlier.

RAMSAR SITES

- **Pallikaranai Marsh Reserve Forest, Tamil Nadu:**
 - ✓ A Freshwater marsh in Chennai (Only surviving wetland ecosystem Chennai).
 - ✓ Counted among last remaining natural wetlands of South India.



- **Karikili Bird Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu:**
 - ✓ A protected area located in Kancheepuram District of Tamil Nadu. Located at 75 km from Chennai.
- **Pichavaram Mangrove, Tamil Nadu:**
 - ✓ Located near Chidambaram in Cuddalore District of Tamil Nadu.

- ✓ Covers an area of 1100 hectares and thus counted among largest mangrove forests in country.
- **Pala wetland, Mizoram:**
 - ✓ Largest natural wetland in Mizoram.
 - ✓ It is surrounded by green woodlands and known for rich diversity of animal species including several species of animals and birds.
- **Sakhya Sagar, Madhya Pradesh:**
 - ✓ This lake is an integral part of Madhav National Park in Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh.

Ramsar convention was established by UNESCO in, 1971. It is an intergovernmental environmental treaty, named after Ramsar city in Iran because it was signed there. The convention came into effect in 1975. It encourages international cooperation and national action to conserve wetlands and sustainably use their resources. Under it, wetlands of international importance are identified worldwide.

5. Report by (IPBES)

A report released by the *Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)* has stated that about 50,000 wild species globally can meet the needs of billions of people.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Dependence on Wild Species:**
 - ✓ About 70% of world's poor population is directly dependent on wild species.
 - ✓ 20% source their food from wild plants, algae and fungi.
- **Wild-Species-Important Source of Income:**
 - ✓ Use of wild species is an important source of income for millions of people worldwide.
 - ✓ Wild tree species account for two thirds of global industrial roundwood, trade in wild plants, algae and fungi is a billion-dollar industry, and even nonextractive uses of wild species are big business.
- **Local Variations:** About 34% of marine wild fish stocks are overfished and 66% are fished within biologically sustainable levels. There are significant local and contextual variations.
- **Unsustainable Logging of Tree Species:**
 - ✓ Survival of an estimated 12% of wild tree species is threatened by unsustainable logging.
 - ✓ Unsustainable gathering is one of the main threats for several plant groups, notably cacti, cycads and orchids.
 - ✓ Unsustainable hunting has been identified as a threat for 1,341 wild mammal species – with declines in large-bodied species that have low natural rates of increase also linked to hunting pressure.
- **Rural People are at Risk of Unsustainable Use:**

- ✓ Rural people in developing countries are most at risk from unsustainable use of Wild Species, with lack of complementary alternatives often forcing them to exploit wild species already at risk.
- ✓ About 50,000 wild species are used through different practices, including more than 10,000 wild species harvested directly for human food.
- **Cultural Significance leading to Exploitation:**
 - ✓ Certain species have cultural importance as they offer multiple benefits that define tangible and intangible features of people's cultural heritage.
 - ✓ The use of wild species is also a source of culturally meaningful employment for such communities, and they have engaged in the trade of wild species and materials since millennia.
 - ✓ Wild rice (*Zizania palustris* L.) is a cultural keystone species, providing physical, spiritual and cultural sustenance for many indigenous peoples in the Great Lakes region of North America
- **Drivers and Threats:** Drivers such as land- and seascape changes, climate change, pollution and invasive alien species that impact the abundance and distribution of wild species and can increase stress and challenges among the human communities that use them.
- **Illegal Trade:**
 - ✓ Global trade in wild species has expanded substantially in volume, value and trade networks over the past four decades.
 - ✓ Illegal trade in wild species represents the third largest class of all illegal trade – with estimated annual values of up to USD199 billion. Timber and fish make up the largest volumes and value of illegal trade in wild species.

6. 5th Elephant Reserve in the state Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu Government has notified its 5th Elephant Reserve in the state at *Agasthyamalai*. The announcement was made on World Elephant Day 2022 (12th of August). Agasthiyamalai is also a Biosphere Reserve.

ABOUT AGASTHYAMALAI ELEPHANT RESERVE

- It is situated at the southernmost end of the Western Ghats.
- The new reserve will be spread over an area of 1,197 sq. km.
- It will cover Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli areas.
- The **elephant reserve** status will put more of an emphasis on protecting and conserving elephants as indicator animals.

- 4 Existing Elephant Reserves in Tamil Nadu are:

ABOUT INDIAN ELEPHANT

- It is found in the central and southern Western Ghats, North East India, eastern India and northern India and in some parts of southern peninsular India.
- It is listed as Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; IUCN Red List: Endangered
- It occurs in 16 of the 28 states in the country.
- Karnataka had the highest number of elephants (6,049), followed by Assam (5,719) and Kerala (3,054).
- India has around 25000 – 29000 elephants in the wild. However, the tusked (male) in India are as threatened as the Tigers as there are only around 1200 tusked elephants left in India.

VARIOUS GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

- **Project Elephant** is a Central Government sponsored scheme launched in February 1992. Through it, the government helps in the protection and management of elephants to the states having wild elephants in a free-ranging population.
- **MIKE (Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants)** program was started in South Asia in 2003 after the conference of parties a resolution of CITES. The aim was to provide the information required by the *elephant range countries* for proper management & long-term protection of their elephant populations.
- **Campaign Haathi Mere Saathi:** The Ministry of Environment and forests in partnership with Wildlife Trust of India has launched this campaign in 2011. The aim was to increase public awareness and develop friendships between elephants and the local population.
- The government of India in the year 2010 declared Elephant as the **national heritage animal** on the recommendations of the standing committee of the national board for wildlife

7. PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES (PFAS)

Scientists have found that rainwater from many places across the globe is contaminated with **Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)**.

ABOUT PFAS

- PFAs are a diverse **group of human-made chemicals**.
- They are called **forever chemicals** because of their **tendency to stick around in the atmosphere, rainwater and soil for long periods of time**.

- PFAs are also listed in the **Stockholm Convention** which is a global treaty to protect human health & environment from persistent organic pollutants (POPs).
- It used to make non-stick cookware, water-repellent clothing, stain-resistant fabrics, cosmetics, firefighting forms and many other products that resist grease, water and oil.

HARM CAUSE BY PFAS

- A variety of health risks include decreased fertility, developmental effects in children, interference with body hormones, increased cholesterol levels and increased risk of some cancers.
- Recent research has also revealed that *long-term low-level exposure to certain PFAs* can make it difficult for humans to build antibodies after being vaccinated against various diseases.

HOW TO REDUCE THE EFFECT OF PFAS?

- There is no known method that can extract and remove PFAs from the atmosphere itself.
- To be safe do not consume contaminated water which is above the level specified by the state government.
 - ✓ Use an alternative water source for drinking, food preparation, cooking, brushing teeth and any other activity in which you may ingest.
- Must destroy the old contaminated material.
- Follow applicable advice or warnings in your area about agricultural products that may be contaminated with PFAS.

8. SPECIES IN NEWS

VILAYATI KIKAR



- It is an **invasive tree species** introduced under the British Empire as part of development of Delhi.
- It is **native to Mexico, South America and the Caribbean**.
- The tree does not let any other tree or shrubs survive around it.

- These trees can dry up underground aquifers through its deep-root system, going as far as 20 metres or more in search of water.

PENINSULAR ROCK AGAMA



- It is a **type of garden lizard** that has a strong presence in southern India.
- They **do not generate their own body heat, so they need to seek warmth from external sources like a warm rock** or a sunny spot on the wall.
- It is **listed as Least Concern in the IUCN red list**.
- It belongs to the **Precocial Species**- in which the young are relatively mature and mobile from the moment of birth or hatching.

PORTULACA OLERACEA



- It **also known as little hogweed, or parsley/purslane**.
- It has the evolutionary adaptations that help it to be both highly productive and drought tolerant, an unlikely combination for a plant.
- It is **widely distributed around the globe and is popular as a potherb in many areas of Europe, Asia, and the Mediterranean region**.
- It has been used as a folk medicine in many countries, acting as a febrifuge, antiseptic, and vermifuge.

SLOTH BEARS



- It is found in India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Nepal.
- It is myrmecophagous, which means that it feeds on ants and termites. It also eats fruits and honey.
- It is listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List and Schedule I under the Indian wildlife protection act, 1972.
- The Daroji Sloth Bear Sanctuary is Asia's first dedicated sanctuary for Sloth Bears, established in 1994 in Karnataka

MEGALODON



- It is **an extinct species of mackerel shark** which used to exist millions of years ago.
- It **roamed the oceans an estimated 23 million to 2.6 million years ago**.
- It was the **largest shark to ever swim through Earth's oceans**.
- It would have weighed around 70 tonnes and have length around 50 feet from nose to tail.

TASMANIAN TIGER



- Also known as the thylacine (a dog headed pouched dog), it was a carnivorous marsupial group thought to be extinct.
➤ Marsupials are mammals whose members are born incompletely developed and are usually carried and sucked in a pouch on the mother's abdomen.
- It was native to the Australian mainland and the islands of Tasmania and New Guinea.
- The last known thylacine died in captivity 80 years ago, in 1936 at the Hobart Zoo in Tasmania.
- It disappeared mainly due to over-hunting by humans, diseases and competition from the dingo, a wild dog native to Australia.

MUDHOL HOUND



- It is a **native dog breed** that comes from the border region of Karnataka and Maharashtra.
- These dogs are known for their loyalty, endurance, stamina and agility.
- Indian Air Force has recently decided to **induct these dogs to drive away birds and animals from the runway** to reduce the accidents during flight.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

GEO IAS

1 . PSLV Orbital Experimental Module or 'POEM'

Recently, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) achieved the feat of successfully launching the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module or 'POEM'.

ABOUT POEM

- PSLV Orbital Experimental Module is a platform that will help perform in-orbit experiments using the final and otherwise discarded stage of ISRO's workhorse rocket, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).
- The PSLV is a four-stage rocket where the first three spent stages fall back into the ocean, and the final stage (PS4) after launching the satellite into orbit — ends up as space junk. However, in the PSLV-C53 mission, the spent final stage was utilized as a "stabilized platform" to perform experiments.
- POEM will also derive its power from solar panels mounted around the PS4 tank and a Li-Ion battery. It

will navigate using four sun sensors, a magnetometer, gyros & NavIC.

Note: ISRO first demonstrated the capability of using PS4 as an orbital platform in 2019 with the PSLV-C44 mission that injected Microsat-R and Kalamsat-V2 satellites into their designated orbits. The fourth stage in that mission was kept alive as an orbital platform for space-based experiments.

ABOUT PSLV

- Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle is the workhorse launch vehicle of ISRO since 1994. It is the 1st operational launch vehicle of India.
- The PSLV is a launch system primarily developed to launch remote sensing satellites into sun synchronous orbits.
- PSLV is a 4-stage that uses alternate combination of liquid and solid fuelled rocket stages.
- While the 1st and 3rd stages are solid fuelled, the 2nd and the 4th stages are propelled by liquid fuel.
- Strap-on motors are used in the 1st stage of PSLV (solid stage) to provide additional thrust to the rocket.

- Additional thrust is needed in the 1st stage as the rocket must overcome the air resistance in the atmosphere to be launched in the orbit.
- PSLV can deliver payloads of up to:
 - ✓ 3,250kg to Low Earth Orbit
 - ✓ 1600 kg to Sun Synchronous orbit
 - ✓ 1400 kg to Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit

Launch Vehicle	Stages	Velocity in km/sec	Weight (Kg)	Orbit
PSLV XL	4-stage S-L-S-L	7.5	1750 1425	SSPO GTO
GSLV MK II	3-stage S-L-C	10	5000 2500	LEO GTO
GSLV Mk III	3-stage S-L-C	10	8000 4000	LEO GTO

2 . Fourth summit for Space Sustainability in London

U.K. hosted the fourth summit for Space Sustainability in London in collaboration with the Secure World Foundation. During the summit, the UK launched a new 'Plan for Space Sustainability'. The UK calls for an "Astro Carta" for space sustainability, based on the Artemis Accords model for sustainable space exploration. Outer space is considered a shared natural resource. The United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) in 2019 adopted a set of 21 voluntary, nonbinding guidelines to ensure the long-term sustainability of outer space activities.

CHALLENGES IN ACHIEVING SPACE SUSTAINABILITY

- **Orbital crowding:** With the emergence of large constellations and complex satellites, there is a risk of collisions and interference with radio frequencies.
- **Legal and insurance-related conflicts:** Overcrowding poses a direct threat to the operations and safety of a mission and is likely to cause legal and insurance-related conflicts.
- **Space debris:** After the completion of a mission, an 'end-of-life protocol' requires space objects to be moved to the graveyard orbit or to a low altitude. Neither of the options is sustainable in the long run.
- **Solar and magnetic storms:** These storms can potentially damage communication systems. Such space weather threats need to be addressed along with the efforts to identify the terrestrial carbon footprint of outer space missions.

DETAILS OF UK SPACE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

- To review regulatory framework of UK's orbital activity.

- To work with organisations such as G-7 and UN to emphasise international engagement on space sustainability.
- To try and develop safety and quality-related metrics that quantify sustainability of activities.
- To induce additional funding of \$6.1 million on active debris removal.
- Active debris removal and in-orbit servicing.
- Encouraging space research and development of technology to ensure reuse and recycling of satellites at every stage.
- UK confirmed investments in its **National Space Surveillance and Tracking Program**, which works on collision assessment services for UK-licensed satellite operators.

RECENT INITIATIVES OF INDIA ON SPACE SUSTAINABILITY

- **Project NETRA:** ISRO has initiated 'Project NETRA' to monitor space debris. Recently India and U.S. signed a new pact for monitoring space objects at the 2+2 dialogue.
- **Increased private participation:** With Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (In-SPACe), India expects an increased role of the private sector in India's space activities.
- **SPADEX:** To provide in-orbit servicing, ISRO is developing a docking experiment called 'SPADEX'. It looks at docking a satellite on an existing satellite, offering support in re-fuelling and other in-orbit services while enhancing the capability of a satellite. Hence, the SPADEX can increase the longevity of a mission and provide a futuristic option to combine missions/experiments.
- Despite these, India's debris footprint is minuscule. For example, India has 114 debris among the 25,182 pieces of sizes larger than 10 cm, in the lower earth orbits.

WAY FORWARD

- Active role of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) is needed to set equitable standards for the ease of activities.
- Many of the measures for sustainability are resource-consuming and expensive for medium-and-small space programs. Hence, there is a need for addressing the principles and rules that guide the activities in outer space with better clarity.
- Encourage the private sector with a set of sustainability guidelines to ensure optimum utilisation of resources and increase the safety and productivity of missions.

3 . DARK MATTER

Data from third run of LHC could provide evidence of physics beyond the Standard Model of Particle Physics such as dark matter and dark energy.

Standard Model explains how basic building blocks of matter interact, governed by four fundamental forces (strong, weak, electromagnetic and gravitational force).

OBSERVATIONS RELATED TO DARK MATTER

Historically the evidence for dark matter came from galaxy clusters. Galaxy clusters are made up of hundreds of galaxies, that are held together by the gravitational pull. They move around each other and how fast they move depends on the total mass of the cluster. The more mass the faster the galaxies move. However, galaxies and galaxy clusters move way too fast to explain this with mass that we can attribute to the visible matter. Similarly, velocity of the stars orbiting around centre of galaxy depends on total mass in the orbit. Stars in outer part of galaxy just orbit too fast around centre. The velocity must drop with distance from centre, but it doesn't. Instead, velocity of stars becomes approximately constant at far distance from galactic centre.

Gravitational lensing: Galaxies and galaxy clusters bend light that come from an object behind them. The object behind them appears distorted and the amount of distortion can help predict the mass of the lens. Again, the visible matter isn't enough to explain the observation. Fritz Zwicky conjectured in 1930s that there must be more matters in galaxies clusters, just that we can see it. This extra matter which invisible and undetected has been termed as Dark Matter.

DARK MATTER

- Roughly 27% of universe is dark matter which is responsible for holding the galaxies together. The matter we know and that makes up all stars and galaxies only accounts for 5% of the content of the universe.
- Dark matter interacts with gravity.
- It has not yet been observed directly. It doesn't interact with matter and is completely invisible to light and other forms of electromagnetic radiation making it impossible to detect.
- Scientists are confident it exists because of the gravitational effects it has on galaxies and galaxy clusters.

DARK ENERGY

- The expansion of universe is accelerating. Previously it was thought that pull of gravity will either slow down or even retract the expansion.
- Dark energy has been hypothesised as a repulsive force — a sort of anti-gravity.
- As is it evident, our universe is expanding, indicating that Dark Energy has a greater abundance than dark matter.

- Roughly 68% of universe is dark energy. It is a property of space so does not get diluted as space expands. As more space comes into existence, more of this energy-of- space appears. As a result, dark energy causes the universe to expand faster and faster.
- While Dark matter exerts a "pull" on the universe, Dark Energy has a contrasting expansionary effect. Einstein's gravity theory makes a prediction: "empty space" can possess its own energy. Because this energy is a property of space itself, it would not be diluted as space expands. As more space comes into existence, more of this energy-of-space would appear.

4. INDIA'S OWN "SPACEX-LIKE VENTURES"

Principal Scientific Adviser Ajay Kumar Sood stated earlier this month that the government would soon come up with a new space policy that could initiate the rise of India's own "SpaceX-like ventures".

NEED FOR PRIVATE SECTOR IN SPACE INDUSTRY

- **Increasing Demand:** Private sector investment will provide additional boost and increase entrepreneurship in the space sector after recent decision of central government on opening the sector for private participation.
- **Overall growth of space sector:** ISRO has a strong association with the industry, particularly with Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) like Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and large private sector entities like Larsen and Toubro.
- **Very less global contribution:** India's share is estimated at \$7 billion (just 2% of the global market).

INTERNATIONAL TRENDS AND EXPERIENCE

- SpaceX and its high-profile projects have highlighted increasing significance of private players in the space sector.
- Enhancing space technology through private sector would be beneficial to bolster connectivity and combat climate, related implications through a more secure and effective means.
- Private sector could meet the demand of spacecraft and equipment manufacturing.
- India has an advantage on IT services and telecom that could be leverage through private participation.

CONCERNS OF PRIVATE PARTICIPATION IN SPACE INDUSTRY

- **Data Risk:** Though space it gives an opportunity to entrepreneurs but raw data of ISRO in the hands of public is sensitive and consists of danger of misuse or improper utilization of data.

- **Regulation:** Though it's a profitable investment, regulation of private sector participation is not easy. The time taken for regulatory clearances and unstable political institutions can cause delays and hurdle in decision making of investors.
- **Revenue loss:** ISRO will lose a fair amount of money it is earning through its space activities. This will reduce government revenue.
- **Unfair commercial practices:** Allowing private sector may lead to lobbying and unfair means to get space projects or launch of any satellite for their own profit. It may also lead to leakage of sensitive information by private players to other countries and companies to make profit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **A facilitating foundation:** There needs to be a neutral facilitating foundation without any self-interest.
- **Demarcating space and defence:** To avoid conflict of interest and ensure national security.
- **Promoting start-ups:** A dedicated fund vehicle can be set up which would disburse money based on a national prize event, like Google's XPRIZE.
- **ISRO & Antrix providing mentorship:** Dedicated infrastructure to enable technology development (e.g., Berlin Alderson) should be allocated to space ventures emerging from India to assist them in the start-up stage.
- **Space laws:** Enactment of space legislations to define regulatory, legal, and procedural regimes with transparent timelines for pursuing space activities by the private space industry is currently at a nascent stage. *Space Activities Bill* needs to be enacted.
- **Manufacturing in space sector:** out programs like 'Make in India'.
- **Establishing think-tanks:** There is scope to establish an independent, wholly space- activities-focused thinktank like the European Space Policy Institute, constituting distinguished experts in the space field while preserving its independence in the preparation of its various research outputs, research materials and expert gatherings.

HOW IS PRIVATE SECTOR'S INVOLVEMENT REGULATED IN INDIA

- In 2020, Union government announced reforms in space sector enabling more private players to provide end-to-end services.
- Announcement for establishment of **Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe)** was made. It was mandated task of promoting, authorising and licensing private players to carry out space activities. As an oversight and regulatory body, it is responsible for devising mechanisms to offer sharing of technology, expertise, and facilities free of cost (if feasible) to promote non-government private entities (NGPEs).

- IN-SPACe's Monitoring and Promotion Directorate oversees NGPE's activities as per prescribed regulations and reports back in case any corrective actions or resolutions are required. ISRO shares its expertise in matters pertaining to quality and reliability protocols, documentations and testing procedure through IN-SPACe's 'interface mechanism'.
- Constituted in 2019, **New Space India Ltd (NSIL)**, is mandated to transfer the matured technologies developed by the ISRO to Indian industries. All of them are under the purview of the Ministry of Defence.

5. REGULATE NITRATE ABSORPTION IN PLANTS

Researchers led by those from National Centre of Biological Sciences, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bengaluru (NCBS-TIFR), have found a new pathway that regulates nitrate absorption in plants.

ABOUT THE NEW FINDINGS

- The gene MADS27, which regulates nitrate absorption, root development and stress tolerance, is activated by the micro-RNA, miR444, offers a way to control these properties of the plant.
- The researchers studied this mechanism in both rice (monocot) and tobacco (dicot) plants.
- At one level, it is known that hormone auxin is responsible for well-developed roots across all plants. Several genes are known to help with auxin production, improved nitrate transport and assimilation in plants.
- In addition to this route, several gene regulatory switches that regulate nitrate absorption and root development, such as the micro-RNA, miR444, are known in monocot plants, such as rice.
- The micro-RNA 'miR444' is specific to monocots. When this is not made, its target, MADS27, is produced in higher abundance, and it improves biosynthesis and transport of the hormone auxin, which is key for root development and its branching
- This regulatory miR444 switch is known to turn off at least five genes called MADS box transcription factor genes. The speciality of the MADS box transcription factors is that they function like switch boxes of their own. They bind to their favourite specific DNA sequences, and they switch the neighbouring genes "on."

THREE-PRONGED EFFECT

Researchers have studied a target gene of miR444 called MADS27, a transcription factor which hasn't been studied well before. They have found that this transcription factor has a three-pronged effect on the plant.

- Regulates nitrate absorption by switching “on” proteins involved in this process.
- Leads to better development of the roots by regulating auxin hormone production and transport.
- Helps in abiotic stress tolerance by keeping the main stress player proteins “on.”
- This is a new finding with a three-pronged effect, and it provides an alternate means of regulating and optimising nitrate absorption.

NITRATES USE IN PLANTS

- Nitrogen is one of the most important macronutrients needed for development of a plant. It is a part of chlorophyll, amino acids and nucleic acids.
- It is mostly sourced from soil where it is mainly absorbed in the form of nitrates and ammonium by roots. Nitrates play a role in controlling genome-wide gene expression that in turn regulates root system architecture, flowering time, leaf development, etc.
- Thus, while a lot of action takes place in the roots to absorb and convert nitrogen into useful nitrates, absorbed nitrates in turn regulate plant development apart from being useful as a macronutrient.
- Presence of nitrates is important for plant development and for grain production. However, overuse of nitrates in fertilizers can lead to dumping of nitrates in soil which leads to accumulation of nitrates in water and soil. This accumulation adds to soil and water pollution and increased contribution to greenhouse gases.
- To avoid this, there should be optimal use of nitrates. Also, since whole process of nitrate absorption takes place in roots, a well-developed root system is needed for this to take place optimally.

6. AzaadiSAT

- ISRO undertook the maiden flight of its newly developed *Small Satellite Launch Vehicle Developmental Flight 1 (SSLV-D1)* carrying ‘AzaadiSAT’.
- It is the **part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations**, to mark the 75th anniversary of Independence.
- SSLV also carried one of India’s Earth Observation Satellites (EOS-2) – that will have applications in mapping and developing various GIS applications.

Why Has The Mission Failed?

- **SSLV-D1 placed the satellites into 356 km x 76 km elliptical orbit instead of 356 km circular orbit. 76 km is the lowest point close to the surface of the earth.**
- **In such an orbit, the satellites would not stay for long and come back down.**
- The two satellites have already come down from that orbit and **they are no longer usable.**

- The failure of the **mission appears to have been the result of a faulty sensor.**

About Azaadi SAT

- It comprises 75 payloads.
- **These payloads have been built by 750 young girl students from 75 rural government schools of India.**
- It has **75 Femto experiments**, selfie cameras to click pictures of its own solar panels.
- It also comprises a solid-state PIN diode-based radiation counter that will measure the ionising radiation in its orbit, as well as a long-range transponder.

About SSLV

- It is a rocket that is **designed to orbit satellites weighing less than 500kg in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and 300 kg to Sun Synchronous Orbit (SSO).**
- It is a **3 stage Launch Vehicle** configured with three Solid Propulsion Stages and liquid propulsion-based Velocity Trimming Module (VTM) as a terminal stage.
- It will take only 72 hours to integrate, unlike the 70 days taken now for a launch vehicle.
- The other features include: flexibility in accommodating multiple satellites, Launch on demand feasibility, minimal launch infrastructure requirements, etc.

7. Langya Henipavirus (LayV)

- Cases of a novel Langya henipavirus (LayV) have been reported in Shandong and Henan provinces of China.
- It was discovered during surveillance testing of patients who had fever along with a recent history of animal exposure.

About LayV

- **The newly discovered virus is a phylogenetically (evolutionary) distinct Henipavirus.**
 - ✓ The types of Henipaviruses that had been identified prior to this included Hendra, Nipah, Cedar, Mojiang and the Ghanaian bat virus.
 - ✓ Cedar virus, Ghanaian bat virus, and Mojiang virus are *not known to cause human disease*. But Hendra and Nipah infect humans and can cause fatal illness
- This virus is known **to cause fever.**
- **Some infected also complained about the fatigue, cough, nausea, headache and vomiting.**

Where Has LayV Come From?

- In all likelihood, the **new virus has jumped from an animal to humans.**
- The LayV virus RNA **has been predominantly found in shrews**, which may be its natural hosts.
- There are **no clear answers yet about human-to-human transmission.**

8. ATAGS project

ATAGS howitzer became a part of the 21-Gun salute during the **75th anniversary of the country's freedom**.

- It is an **indigenous howitzer gun developed by the DRDO**.
 - ✓ Howitzer is an umbrella term for a category of long-range artillery guns.
- It set a world record for the longest unassisted projectile range of 48 kilometres.
- It **has an all-electric drive to ensure reliability and minimum maintenance over a long period of time**.
- It has advanced features like high mobility, quick deployability, auxiliary power mode, advanced communication system, automatic command and control system with night capability in direct fire mode.
- The **ATAGS project was started in 2013 by DRDO to replace older guns in service** in the Indian Army with a modern 155mm artillery gun.
- The specialised gun system is compatible with C4I (command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence) systems.

9. HAYABUSA-2

Scientists are scrutinising the material that was brought to earth from an asteroid named **Ryugu** by **Japanese space probe Hayabusa-2**. Now scientists are saying water and organic materials might have been brought to our planet from the outer edges of the solar system.

About Hayabusa-2

- It was launched in December 2014 for a six-year voyage to study the asteroid Ryugu.
- It is an **asteroid sample-return mission operated by the Japanese state space agency JAXA**.
- It **landed on the diamond-shaped asteroid Ryugu in July 2018**.
- The probe collected 5.4 grams of rocks and dust.

- It is a successor to the Hayabusa mission, which returned asteroid samples for the 1st time in June 2010.

Havabua-1

- Launched in 2003, It was a robotic spacecraft designed to collect & return asteroid samples back to Earth
- The **mission was performed on the asteroid named 25143 Itokawa**.
- The entire mission was completed in almost 7 years.

10. SPACE SITUATIONAL AWARENESS (SSA) OBSERVATORY

India's 1st commercial space situational awareness observatory will be set up in the **Garhwal region of Uttarakhand**. It will be set up by Digantara, a Bengaluru-based space sector start-up.

About SSA Observatory

- It refers to **keeping track of objects** (as small as 10 cm in size) **in orbit and predicting** their location, speed, and trajectory.
- It will track any activity in space including that of space debris and military satellites hovering over the region.

Significance of SSA Observatory

- It will be able to reduce the potential for collisions between satellites and other spacecraft.
- Improve the effectiveness of tracking and identifying pre-existing resident space objects (RSO).
- It will result in the creation of a hybrid data pool that will serve both the commercial and the defence sectors of the space industry.

CULTURE

1. TRIBAL FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Draupadi Murmu has been elected as India's first President from Tribal community. She belongs to Santhal tribal community. Her election to Presidentship brings us to relevance of Indian tribal revolts and movement in Modern Indian History.

SANTHAL TRIBE

- Also called as Santal which literally means a calm, peaceful man.
- Language:** Santhali, written in a script called **Oi Chiki** developed by Santhal scholar Pandit Raghunath Murmu. Santhali has been included as part of 8th schedule of Constitution of India.
- Habitation:** Mostly found in Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal. Earlier they were nomadic before settling in the Chotanagpur plateau. Later, migrated to Odisha and West Bengal.
- Demographic:** 3rd largest tribal community after Gonds and Bhils. But they have higher literacy rate compared to other tribes in Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal. This was a result of a pro-school education awareness since at least the 1960s.
- Many from the community have entered creamy layer of Indian society.
- Important personalities:** (1) Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren is a Santhal (2) Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAGI) Girsh Chandra Murmu etc.

Cultural features of Santhals

A. Religion: They are nature worshippers and could be seen paying obeisance at Jaher (sacred groves) in their villages. River Damodar is considered holy (crematory rites).
B. Attire: Dhoti and gamuchha for men and a shortcheck saree, usually blue and green, for women, who generally put on tattoos.

Santhal Society

A. Marriage system: Including elopement, widow remarriage, levirate, forced (rare) and the one in which a man is made to marry the woman he has impregnated. Divorce is not a taboo in the Santhal society. Either of the couple could divorce the other.

B. Profession: Most Santhals are agriculturists, depending on their farmlands or forests.

Artforms

- ✓ Musical instruments: kamak, dhol, sarangi and flutes.
- ✓ Their homes, called Olah, have a particular threecolour pattern on the outer walls.

- ✓ The bottom portion is painted with black soil, the middle with white and the upper with red.

Major Festivals & Rituals

- ✓ Jantal : First eating of rice
- ✓ Magha-sim : Dancing and merrymaking
- ✓ Erok-sim : For sowing seeds
- ✓ Iri-guldi-sim : Offering small millets to deity
- ✓ Saharai : Cattle worship
- ✓ Hariham-sim : At the time of Sprouting seedling
- ✓ Baha : Ritual for first fruit of Mahua and ceremonial hunting

SANTHAL REVOLT OF 1855-56

Background:

- After getting political and economic control of Bengal, Bihar and Odisha because of victory in Battle of Buxar, East India company imposed permanent settlement there (Lord Cornwallis).
- They invited many Santhals to settle in a specific forest area (Damin-i-Koh) in Rajmahal hills.
- But Santhals were exploited by the zamindars and English police.

Revolt:

- June 1855 many two Santhal leaders Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu declared rebellion against the East India company. Farmers, villagers and women took wide participation. They fought the police, damaged communication systems, and used guerrilla warfare.
- British used martial law to curb the rebellion and was successful by January 1856.

TRIBAL FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Gunda Dhur	Rebellion is also known as Bhumkal.
Ajmer Singh	Led the Halba rebellion in Chhattisgarh (1774-1779). Aimed to create an independent tribal state called Halba Dongar.
Birsa Munda	Led the Munda rebellion (Ulgulan). Also, known as Dharti Aaba.
Tilka Manjhi	Executed an armed rebellion against the British in 1785. He led the Santhal rebellion from 1771 to 1785.
Govind Guru	He was a tribal leader from Bhils. He led the Bhil rebellion 1913 in Rajasthan.
Lakshman Naik	He was a tribal civil rights activist from Southern Odisha region. He was a Gandhian leader. Led Tribal Movement Odisha during Quit India Movement.

Sidhu n Kanu	Leaders of Santhal Rebellion during 1855.
Alluri Sitaram Raju	Led the Rampa rebellion (Manyam Rebellion) in 1922.
Tribal Movements as part of 1857 Freedom Struggle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chero and Kharwar revolt in Chotanagpur plateau. • Bhils revolted in Vindhya and Satpura regions under the leadership of Bhagoji Naik and Kajar Singh.

TRIBAL REBELLIONS

REBELLION/ MOVEMENT	KEY POINTS
Chuar Uprising (1766-72 & 1795-1816)	Taken by tribesmen of Midnapore district against famine, enhanced land revenue and economic distress under British rule.
Ho uprising (1820-22 & 1831)	Taken by Ho and Munda tribe who revolted against Company's forces. Ho tribals were led by Raja Parahat against occupation of Singhbhum by British.
Kol Mutiny (1831)	Covered many parts of present-day Odisha and was led by Buddho Bhagat. It began because of large scale transfers of land from Kol tribe to outsider Sikh and Muslim farmers.
Khasi Uprising (1830s)	EIC wanted to build a road linking Brahmaputra valley with Sylhet in response to which Khasis, Garos, Khampis and Singhpos organized themselves to revolt under Tirath Singh.
Munda Revolt (1899-1900)	Led by Birsa Munda with an aim to establish Munda rule by killing thikadars (revenue farmers), jagirdars, rajas and hakims.
Kukis Revolt (1917-19)	Occurred in Manipur against British policies of recruiting labor during the First World War.
Naga Movement (1905-31)	Led by Jadonang in Manipur against British rule. Aimed to establish Naga Raj.
Heraka Cult (1930s)	Led by Gaidinliu in Manipur which led to formation of Naga Association in 1946.
Bhil uprising (1817-19 & 1913)	Bhils were tribes around Khandesh who revolted against EIC fearing agrarian hardships in 1817. During 1913 revolt aim at forming Bhil Raj.
Gond uprising (1940s)	Aim was to bring together the believers of Gond dharma.

2. VINAYAK DAMODAR SAVARKAR

National memorial and museum dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi has brought out a special edition of its monthly magazine dedicated to Hindutva leader Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.

ABOUT V D SAVARKAR

- Born in 1883 at Nashik in Maharashtra.
- Founded **Abhinav Bharat Society** (initially as **Mitra Mela, 1899**) along with brother G D Damodar in 1904. It was a secret society which also had connections with London
- He was involved with **India House** (founded by **Shyamji Krishna Varma in London** to promote nationalist ideas among youth).
- Savarkar went to London in 1906. He soon founded the Free India Society, along with Madam Bhikaji Cama based on the thoughts of the Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini
- Functioned as president of Hindu Mahasabha from 1937 to 1943. He called against Quit India Movement.
- Savarkar was convicted and sentenced to 50-years imprisonment also known as Kala Pani and transported in 1911 to the Cellular Jail in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Released in 1924.
- He later joined Tilak's Swaraj Party.
- He advocated for the use of Hindi as a national language. He also fought against untouchability and caste-based discrimination.

3. KANAGANAHALLI BUDDHIST SITE

- Bonalu, a traditional Hindu festival centred on the **Goddess Mahakali**, was recently celebrated.
- The festival is celebrated annually in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, and parts of Telangana.
- It is celebrated in the Hindu calendar month of **Ashada** that falls in July/August.
- Devotess offer **Bonam** (contraction of Bhojanam, which means a meal), containing cooked rice, jaggery, curd and neem leaves to the Goddess
- During the festival, people also hold '**rangam**' or forecasting the future, organise processions and cultural events.
- The **Telangana** government accorded the status of **state festival** to Bonalu after the formation of the new state in 2014.

4. MODHERA SUN TEMPLE

- The government recently announced that the Ahmedabad Railway Station will be developed on the theme of Modhera Sun Temple in the next five years.
- Modhera Sun Temple is located in **Mehsana**, neighbouring Ahmedabad district.

- Situated on the bank of the **River Pushpavati**, it was built in the **11th century** during the reign of **Bhima I** of the **Chalukya dynasty** in honour of the Sun God.
- Though it is a Hindu temple, no worship is offered at the temple now.
- A **UNESCO World Heritage Site**, the temple complex has three components:
 - ✓ **Gudhamandapa**, the shrine hall
 - ✓ **Sabhamandapa**, the assembly hall
 - ✓ **Kunda**, the reservoir
- The Sabha Mandap stands on 52 pillars, signifying the 52 weeks in a year. There are carvings of the sun on the walls to show its unity with air, water, earth and space.
- The temple is designed in such a way that during every equinox, the first ray of the rising sun would fall on a diamond placed on the head of the Sun God.

Miscellaneous

1. EXPERT PANEL TO REGULATE FREEBIES : SC

The Supreme Court called for an expert panel to regulate freebies offered during the elections by political parties. The Election Commission supported SC's decision to set up an expert committee. However, it declined to be part of this panel. EC said there are continuous elections in the country. Hence, any opinion/view/comment during deliberations in a multi-member body might amount to pre-decide the issue and disturb the level playing field.

Background

- The issue of Freebies is one of the important areas of electoral reform.
- As the name suggests, freebies are the things (goods or services) that are provided free of charge.
- The promise of distribution of unsustainable freebies in **election manifestos** to lure voters has reached absurd proportions in the country.
- Provision of free electricity/water/public transport, waiver of pending utility bills and farm loan waivers are often regarded as freebies.
- The list of freebies offered by political parties are endless-mixer grinders, gold for brides, washing machines, Free Cable TV connections, free electricity, free gadgets (laptops, smart phones) and so on.
- As per estimates, expenditure on freebies range from 0.1 – 2.7% of GSDP for different states.

Incongruence In Freebie Classification

- **Concessions To Corporate:** Corporate tax rates have been reducing and Budget documents show that in 2019-20, the effective tax rate (tax-to-profit ratio) declined as profits increased.
- Putting together all tax exemptions and concessions, including on foreign trade and personal income taxes, the revenue forgone each year is over ₹5 lakh crore.
- **Irony:** However, there is no pressure for a justification for these concessions in mainstream discussions and small amounts freebies is being questioned time and again.
- **Irrational Argument:** Few critics of freebies also include **welfare schemes** such as free or subsidised rations under the Public Distribution System (**PDS**), cooked meals under the **mid-day meal** scheme, supplementary nutrition through anganwadis, and work provided through the **MGNREGA** etc. in the definition of freebies.

Why Freebies Are A Cause Of Concern In Indian Democracy

- Freebies have a detrimental impact on the economic interests of the nation particularly on the **state government finances** because they
 - ✓ Impose huge burden on public exchequer-especially on states that faces major financial crunch.
 - ✓ Increases debt to GDP ratio thereby leading to vicious cycle of debt trap.
 - ✓ Affects investment climate and confidence on the country's economy

- Irrational freebies have impact on long term socio-economic development as they reduce the amount of funds available for provision of important public goods such as:
- Freebies have been contributing to rise of *immorality in politics* **quality education quality health care quality infrastructure better rule of law**
 - ✓ Promise of freebies before polls to lure voters is analogous to bribery (bribing voters) and undue influence thereby exploiting weakness of people.
- Freebies have a detrimental impact on the democratic interests of the nation as it:
 - ✓ disturbs the level playing field between the contesting parties and candidates during elections
 - ✓ shakes the roots of free and fair elections
- They create huge intergenerational equity issue as disproportionate increase in debt levels will get passed on to the future generations which is unjust.
- They are against the principles of good governance. *RBI in its report* titled “**State Finances: A Risk Analysis**” released on June 2022 flagged concerns over the rising debt levels in five states namely Punjab, Rajasthan, Bihar, Kerala, West Bengal where debts are already unsustainable and may deteriorate even further due to “non-merit freebies”. Punjab is expected to be worst hit as its debt-GSDP ratio is projected to exceed 45% in 2026-27.

What Led To The Rise Of Freebie Culture In India

- **Failure of Indian economy**
 - ✓ Our economy has not been able to provide sufficient number of high-quality jobs or even low-quality jobs to vast majority of Indians
 - ✓ Benefits of growth of economy has not trickled down to all parts of economy or all sections of society
 - ✓ Political regimes failed to create a sustainable income generating economy
- **Competitive Populism**
 - ✓ Even political parties are responding to the signals that they are getting from voters
- Promise of freebies in election manifestos can't come under corrupt practices *under sec 123 of the Representation of People act of 1951*.
- Various provisions of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) place a duty on the State to frame various welfare measures-This provided scope for political parties to promise freebies.

Possible Solutions To Deal With The Issue Of Freebies

- An **independent agency with a statutory status** can be constituted with the mandate to audit manifestos of political parties and make people aware whether such promise of freebies is feasible or not.
- Election Commission of India (ECI) can frame guidelines under the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) to govern content under election manifestos in consultation with political parties
- Interstate council a body enshrined under **Art 263** of the constitution is also best forum as both central and state

governments can come together to arrive at an understanding.

- Differentiating Subsidies and Freebies: There is a need to understand the impacts of freebies from the economic sense and connect it with the tax payers money.
- A system to review schemes periodically can be put in place so they don't go into perpetuity
- Union Finance commission can be empowered to allocate funds to the states by taking into consideration the debts of the state and the quantum of freebies granted.
- Creating an inclusive sustainable income generating economy.

Conclusion

Every freebie might benefit public in one or other way. But the given the limited financial resources available at the disposal of the government they should be utilized in best possible manner. A distinction needs to be made between merit (e.g. free toilets) and non-merit subsidies that are subsidies which are necessary and subsidies which are ill-afforded.

FREEBIES IN MEDICAL PROFESSION AND PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

The relationship between the *medical profession and pharmaceutical industry* has provoked intense scrutiny and attempted regulation in India. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has accused the makers of Dolo- 650 of indulging in “unethical practices” and giving away freebies (like sponsored trips to foreign countries) of around Rs 1,000 crore to medical professionals and doctors in order to get them to promote their products.

Dolo Scandal That Refuses To Die

• **Evidence:** The raids on Dolo-650 manufacturer Micro Labs Ltd for tax evasion led to uncovering evidence of large sums of money being used for freebies to doctors to prescribe Dolo.

• **Statistics:** The revenue generated by Dolo-650 increased by **289.6%** between the second quarter of 2020 and the second quarter of 2021.

✓ In the same time, revenue generated by two popular brands of paracetamol by GlaxoSmithKline, **Crocin** and **Calpol** increased by **53%** and **158.9%**, respectively.

• **Company's Claims:** Its executive VP stated that this amount would be around Rs 5-6 crore.

✓ He also mentioned that apart from normal samples, pens, writing pads, small printed books, hand sanitisers & masks, no major so-called freebies or big gifts were given.

• **Plea in Apex court:** The *Federation of Medical and Sales Representatives Association of India (FMRAI)*, moved the Supreme Court with the following claims:

✓ Since the market price of paracetamol up to 500 mg was regulated, the company moved to higher doses.

✓ In a bid to increase sales, freebies were given to prescribe Dolo 650 mg, the higher dose.

• **The PIL by FMRAI** has also alleged the **unethical marketing practices** by pharmaceutical companies in their dealings with healthcare professionals.

✓ As per the trade union body, **Indian Medical Council (Professional conduct, Etiquette and Ethics) Regulations of 2002** prescribes a code of conduct for doctors in their relationship with pharmaceutical and allied health sector

industry, and prohibit acceptance of freebies by medical practitioners from pharma companies.

✓ But it is **enforceable against doctors only** and does **not apply to drug companies**. This leads to anomalous situations where doctor's licenses are cancelled for misconduct and the pharma companies go scotfree.

Failure of Voluntary Ethics Codes

• **Fine Distinction:** Pharma companies need to inform and update doctors about their products. But the rather thin dividing line between **legitimate promotional activities and illegitimate incentivisation** has been a much contested one.

• **India Code:** In an attempt to draw this line, many countries have developed codes of conduct including India.

✓ The previous Medical Council of India (MCI) code and the upcoming ethics code of the **National Medical Commission** label *gifting and hospitality as unethical conduct*.

• **Internal Codes:** MNC pharma companies are supposed to be bound by internal codes, but they are ignored, owing to vested mutual interests of both pharma companies and medical professionals.

• **Moral collapse:** The pharma-doctor relationship is thus fertile territory for unreasonable incentivisation.

✓ Though many doctors believe they can stay neutral after accepting freebies, evidence clearly points otherwise. Appealing to the **good sense of both parties** through the lens of moral ethics has largely failed.

Pandemic-inspired Opportunity For Reform

• **Aware citizenry:** Covid has created a sense of urgency for **collective action** on healthcare and has made ordinary citizens acutely aware of the dangers of unregulated healthcare.

• **Induced Scepticism:** Drug prescriptions and costs are arousing suspicions. For instance, the bizarre prescriptions of antiviral drugs in Covid. It has led to demand for an actionable code for defining relationship between pharma and doctors in clear terms.

• **Stronger UCPMP:** FMRAI is asking SC for early implementation of the Uniform Code for Pharmaceuticals Marketing Practices (UCPMP) which is currently a voluntary code on paper.

✓ The apex court is also examining their plea seeking direction to Centre to give teeth to UCPMP by making it law, thus ensuring an effective monitoring mechanism & transparency as well as punishments for violations.

2. SHORTAGE OF ALL INDIA SERVICES (AIS) OFFICERS

The Central government is facing acute shortage of All India Services (AIS) officers. Only few AIS officers are on Central Deputation.

• The Cadre Deputation Reserve (CDR) is normally expected to be 40% of the total strength of the state cadre. Currently, the numbers from many states are reportedly even down to about 10%.

• According to Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), only 10% of mid-level IAS officers were posted with the Union Government in 2021, a sharp fall from 19% in 2014.

Constitutional And Legal Provisions As Well As Rules Governing AIS Officers

- **Article 312:** Provides procedure for creation of one or more All India services common to union and states.
- Entry 70 of List I of the 7th Schedule made AIS the subject of Centre's exclusive jurisdiction.
- **All India Services Act 1951** governs the recruitment and conditions of service of AIS officers.
- Central or state deputation of AIS officers from state cadres is regulated by **Rule 6 of the IAS (Cadre) Rules (1954)** and the corresponding rules governing the **IPS (Cadre) Rules (1954)** and the **IFoS (Cadre) Rules (1966)**.

Why Only Fewer AIS officers Are On Central Deputation?

- **Reluctance among them** to go on central deputation for reasons including:
 - ✓ Long hours of work and need for extreme care in preparation of reports going up the hierarchy.
 - ✓ Availability of fewer comforts than what is available at state level in terms of accommodation, Staff car, services of peon etc.
 - ✓ Faster promotions in states compared to Centre. The rules of promotion at the central and state levels are different.
 - ✓ Officers from the same state generally accept the relative comfort zone of serving in their home state
- States are not sponsoring adequate numbers of officers for Central deputation under their CDR obligations as:
 - ✓ They themselves are facing the shortage of AIS officials.
 - ✓ Chief Ministers of states are often reluctant to relieve competent (and sometimes favourite) officers.
- The central government's practice of accepting only such officers who are empaneled under a stringent process, prevent many willing officers

<u>Issues With Fewer AIS Officers On Central Deputation</u>	<u>How Central Deputation Benefits AIS Officers?</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative effect on the: • Increase in Work load on existing officials. • Their vision and implementation will get confined to states only which will make them remain parochial in their outlook. • All India services would lose its All-India character if the officials refuse to go on Deputation to Centre. • Too many vacancies in the Central Police Establishment comprising the paramilitary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological satisfaction of contributing to the <i>formulation of national policy</i> on various critical issues health, education, national security etc. • Officers will gain better and wider exposure. They can even get <i>opportunity to work with international agencies</i> and to deal with matters of international importance. • Broadens their Perspective on governance.

forces and investigating agencies like CBI and NIA has been affecting their overall functioning <i>posing a grave threat to internal security environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By being at key positions in the central government, they can serve the issues faced by their cadre state • They can carry back their newly gained skills and experience at the Centre to their respective states
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Steps Undertaken To Address The Shortage Of AIS Officials

- Central government recently proposed amendments to *Rule 6(1) of the IAS (Cadre) Rules*, the *IPS (Cadre) Rules* and the *IFoS (Cadre) Rules*. Under this, Union government will acquire for itself overriding powers to transfer AIS officers through Central deputation, doing away with the requirement of taking the approval of the State governments.
- Central government also issued an order on central deputation of DIG-level IPS officers. DoPT has said that IPS officers joining the Union at DIG level would no longer be required to be empaneled at that level with the Union Government, making the entire pool of DIG-level officers in every state eligible for central deputation.
 - ✓ Previously, a DIG-ranked IPS officer with a minimum experience of 14 years could only be deputed to the Centre if Police Establishment Board empaneled them as DIGs at the Centre.
- **Lateral Entry scheme** to recruit qualified personnel from the private sector functioning of several central government departments *policy formulation & implementation of central-sector schemes*

Issues/ Challenges Associated With Such Proposals/Orders

- **Increase in power asymmetry** in favor of center vis-a-vis to All India Service: The new order is being seen cautiously by several states as the Centre's attempt at pushing the envelope further on increasing its powers over officers serving in the states.
- **Anomaly in IPS cadre management at level of center over the years:** On one hand, states are releasing adequate number DIGs or SPs to the Centre, while on the other hand the Centre does not have enough posts if the total cadre reserve of IPS is calculated.
- **Populism:** States should ideally promote batches or *parts of it* according to the vacancies available. However, political executives often promote entire batches to please a certain section, in effect restricts promotional avenues for those below them
- **Career stagnation:** It is being faced by CAPF officers due to **fixed quote** for IPS officers in CAPFs/CPOs.
 - ✓ IPS officers have a quota of 40% in Central Police Organisations (CPOs) and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), *which cannot be filled by non-IPS uniformed officers*.
 - ✓ According to data sourced from various CPOs & CAPFs, out of 252 posts reserved for IPS officers at DIG level at the Centre, 118 (almost half) are vacant.

- ✓ Centre had, in Nov' 2019, written to states proposing to decrease this quota by 50%

Way Forward

- **Making it mandatory for AIS officers** to work for at least three years on central deputation between 9 and 25 years of service.
 - ✓ Even the *Sarkaria Commission on Centre-State Relations* had recommended that "there should be an *element of compulsion in the matter of deputation of AIS officers to the Union*".
- The *Inter-state council* constituted under **Art 263** to handle Centre-state related issues could be utilized by the Centre and states to *achieve consensus* on the issue of Deputation
- **Increasing the annual recruitment** of AIS officers that has been coming down drastically over the years.
- **Proper cadre review** in all states will release many IAS officers from '*non-strategic posts*'.
- Centre can consider the *utilization of services of the officers who are appointed to IAS by promotion or selection from the State Civil Services*.
- Centre can *relax cooling-off norms* on central deputation to retain them for longer periods as many of them will be willing to continue there on central deputation.
- AIS officers should be allowed to retain the salary drawn by them in the state and be provided with decent facilities as available at the state level.

3. CARBON TRADING MARKET

The Bill to amend the Energy Conservation Act, 2001 seeks to establish a domestic carbon market and facilitate trade in carbon credits. To achieve its climate targets, India **plans** to open a carbon trading market for major emitters in the energy, steel and cement industries.

About Carbon Markets

- It is a market, **where buying and selling of carbon emissions take place**, with the objective of reducing global emissions.
- At global level, **Kyoto Protocol & Paris Agreement**, both provide provisions for development of the carbon market.
 - ✓ In India, a similar scheme called **PAT** (perform, achieve and trade) allows units to earn efficiency certificates if they outperform the prescribed efficiency standards. The laggards can buy these certificates to continue operating.
- It can be a **compliance and voluntary type**.

How Carbon Market Works

- Each country has a cap on the amount of carbon they are allowed to release.
- Companies that pollute less can sell their unused pollution rights to companies that pollute more.

Legal Aspect of Carbon Trading In India

- The Multi Commodity exchange (**MCX**) started future trading in **January 2008** after the Government of India recognized carbon credit as commodities.

- The National Commodity and Derivative Exchange (NCDEX), by a notification and with due approval from Forward Market Commission (FMC), had launched Carbon Credit future contract.
 - ✓ Its aim was to provide transparency to markets and help the producers to earn remuneration out of the environment projects.
- Carbon credit in India is traded on NCDEX only as a future contract.

Examples of Carbon Trading In India

- **Jindal Vijaynagar Steel** - It has recently declared that by the next 10 years it will be ready to sell \$225 million worth of saved carbon.
- **Powerguda in Andhra Pradesh** - The village has made a claim of having saved 147 MT of CO₂. This was done by extracting bio-diesel from 4500 Pongamia trees in their village.
- **Handia Forest in Madhya Pradesh** - It is estimated that 95 very poor rural villages would jointly earn at least US\$300,000 every year from carbon payments by restoring 10,000 hectares of degraded community forests.

Significance of Carbon Market

- **Help Reduce Emission** - It has proven to be *one of the most effective drivers* of reducing emissions, offering the lowest-cost emission reductions.
- **Carbon-neutral by 2070** - It can help a long way in India's aim of turning carbon-neutral by 2070.
 - ✓ In 2019, India was criticized as the world's third highest polluter with 2.88 giga-tonnes (Gt) of CO₂. (China-10.6 Gt & US-5 Gt).
- **Encourage Private Sector Involvement** - Incentives in the form of carbon credits against the *deployment of clean technologies* will lead to the private sector involvement in climate action.
- **Lower Air Pollution Health Costs** - This would also have positive spill overs in terms of air quality improvement and hence reduced public health costs.
- It would **spur innovation** and **finance clean projects** from **Indian MSMEs**, which have huge scope for emission reduction.
- It will also provide greater liquidity to reduction certificates from India, encouraging greater reductions globally.

Challenges in Carbon Market

- **Inequities** – The marginal costs of emission reduction might be the same for two entities, but resource constraints may unfairly impact smaller sized firms.
- **Implementation costs** – Compared to a tax, a carbon market entails higher costs associated with market oversight, monitoring and ensuring compliance and trading infrastructure and security.
- **Ensuring compliance** – A weak compliance could threaten market stability by lowering the value of emission reductions.

- **Market Security and Fraud** - Ensuring security of allowances, especially from cyber-attacks, breaches and online fraud is a key concern for a carbon market.

Way forward

- **Ensuring compliance** would not only need strong institutional support for effective penalties and sanctions in cases of non-compliance but also infrastructure needed to monitor compliance. It is essential to **have adequate security measures** and a robust technical platform to ensure data security.

Energy Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2022

- The Lok Sabha has passed the Energy Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2022 which seeks to amend the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001**, last amended in 2010.
- The bill is aimed at putting in place provisions to make use of clean energy mandatory and paving the way for the setting of **carbon markets** in the country.
- The Act promotes energy efficiency and conservation. It provides for the regulation of energy consumption by equipment, appliances, buildings, and industries.

Key Proposals Under The Bill

- **Obligation to use non-fossil sources of energy** including *Green hydrogen, green ammonia, biomass, and Ethanol*.
 - ✓ The 2001 Act empowers the central government to specify energy consumption standards. The Bill adds that the government may require the designated consumers to meet a minimum share of energy consumption from non-fossil sources
 - ✓ Designated consumers include commercial buildings, industries such as mining, steel, cement, textile, chemicals, petrochemicals, Railways etc.
 - ✓ This consumption may be done **directly from a renewable energy source or indirectly via the power grid**.
 - ✓ Failure to meet the obligation for use of energy from non-fossil sources will be punishable with a penalty of up to Rs 10 lakh.
- **Carbon Trading**
 - ✓ The Bill empowers the central government to specify a carbon credit trading scheme.
 - ✓ The central government or any authorized agency may issue carbon credit certificates to entities registered under and compliant with the scheme.
 - ✓ The entities will be entitled to purchase or sell the certificate.
- **Energy Conservation Code For Buildings**
 - ✓ The 2001 Act empowers the central government to specify energy conservation code for buildings. The code prescribes energy consumption standards in terms of area.
 - ✓ The Bill amends this to provide for an 'energy conservation and sustainable building code'.
 - ✓ This new code will provide norms for energy efficiency and conservation, use of renewable energy, and other requirements for green buildings.
- **Applicability to Residential Buildings**

- ✓ Under the 2001 Act, the energy conservation code applies to *commercial buildings*: ➤ erected after the notification of the code, and
 - having a minimum connected load of 100 kilo watts (kW) or contract load of 120 kilo volt ampere (kVA).
- ✓ Under the Bill, the new energy conservation and sustainable building code will also apply to the office and residential buildings meeting the above criteria.
- ✓ The Bill also empowers the state governments to lower the load thresholds.
- **Standards For Vehicles And Vessels:**
 - ✓ Under the 2001 Act, the energy consumption standards are specified for equipment and appliances which consume, generate, transmit, or supply energy.
 - ✓ The Bill expands the scope to include vehicles and vessels (includes ships and boats).
 - ✓ Vehicle manufacturers in violation of fuel consumption norms will be liable to pay a penalty of up to Rs 50,000 per unit of vehicles sold.
- **Regulatory powers of SERCs:**
 - ✓ The 2001 Act empowers the State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs) to adjudge penalties under the Act.
 - ✓ The Bill adds that SERCs can also make regulations for discharging their functions.
- **Composition of Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) Governing Council:**
 - ✓ Under 2001 Act, the governing council of BEE has members between 20 and 26 in number.
 - ✓ The Bill instead provides that the number of members will be between 31 and 37.
 - ✓ It also provides for up to 7 members representing industries and consumers.

4. COASTAL REGULATION ZONE VIOLATIONS

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India tabled a report in Parliament on whether steps taken by the Union Environment Ministry to conserve India's coastal ecosystems have been successful. This latest report contains the observations from an *audit of Conservation of Coastal Ecosystems from 2015-20*. These reports are placed before the Standing Committees of Parliament.

Why Did CAG Undertake This Audit

- The CAG found that there were **large-scale CRZ violations in the coastal stretches**.
- Incidents of *illegal construction activities and waste from local bodies, industries and aquaculture farms* were reported by the media and this prompted a detailed investigation.
- The CAG has a constitutional mandate (under Article 151) to investigate and report on publicly funded programmes.

Major Findings of The Audit

- The Environment Ministry **hasn't notified the *National Coastal Zone Management Authority (NCZMA)* as a permanent body** and it was being reconstituted every few years.
 - ✓ In the absence of defined membership, it was functioning as an ad-hoc body.
- The **Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) members not being present** during project deliberations.
 - ✓ EAC is a committee of scientific experts and senior bureaucrats who evaluate the feasibility of an infrastructure project and its environmental consequences.
 - ✓ There were instances of the members of EAC being fewer than half of the total strength during the deliberations.
- The **State Coastal Zone Management Authority (SCZMA) has not been reconstituted in Karnataka** and the reorganization has been delayed in the states of Goa, Odisha and West Bengal.
- The District Level Committees (DLCs) of Tamil Nadu lacked participation from local traditional communities. In Andhra Pradesh, DLCs were not even established.
- The **projects were approved despite inadequacies in the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) reports**.

Centre's Obligations on Conserving the Coastline

- **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ)** notification was issued in 1991 under Environmental Protection Act, 1986, by Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) to regulate activities in coastal areas of India.
- The **CRZ** classifies coastal area into different zones to manage infrastructure activities and regulate them.

Different Zone in CRZ

- **CRZ- I** These are ecologically sensitive areas which are essential in maintaining the ecosystem of the coasts. These include national parks/marine parks, reserve forests, mangroves and corals/coral reefs etc. **These areas are situated between the high and low tide lines.**
- **CRZ- II** The areas that have already developed up till the shoreline of the coast. Construction of unauthorised structures is prohibited in this zone
- **CRZ-III** Rural and urban localities that are relatively undisturbed and do not belong to the first two categories are included in this zone.
 - Only specific activities related to agriculture or certain public facilities are permitted under this coastal regulation zone.
- **CRZ- IV** The zone constitutes water areas from the **low tide line up to territorial limits**, including areas of the tidal-influenced water bodies.
 - These areas include the coastal stretches in Lakshadweep, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and some other small islands, except those termed as CRZ-I, II, or III.
 - Activities such as fishing and other allied services are permitted in this zone.

Implementing Agencies of CRZ

- National Coastal Zone Management Authority (NCZMA) at the Centre,
- State/Union Territory Coastal Zone Management Authorities in every coastal State and Union Territory,
- District Level Committees (DLCs) in every district that has a coastal stretch.

Significance of CRZ

- It **protects environmentally sensitive areas** such as mangroves and coral reefs, which act as a barrier against tsunamis and cyclones.
- It **limits some types of operations within a specific distance** from the coast, such as big constructions, the storage or dumping of hazardous materials and mining.
- It **improves the lives of coastal communities**, such as fishermen and tribals.

Shailesh Navak Committee Report on CRZ

- It was established in June 2014. The committee recommended that the Central Government's regulatory authority in coastal areas be curtailed.
 - ✓ Except for projects that involve environmental permits, all other activities should be governed by *state and municipal planning authorities*.
- Based on the recommendations of the Committee, suggestions were made by the Coastal States and Union Territories and CRZ 2018 Notification was issued.

5. REPORT ON EMPLOYMENT STATUS

International Labour Organisation (ILO) has released the **Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022**.

Key Findings Of The Report

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The global number of unemployed youths is estimated to reach 73 million in 2022, a slight improvement from 2021 (75 million). However, it is still 6 million higher than the pre pandemic levels. • Between 2019 and 2020, those aged 15 to 24 experienced a much higher percentage loss in employment than the rest of the labour market. • The global youth unemployment rate is projected to be 14.9% in 2022. • In Europe and central Asia, the rate is predicted to be 16.4 %. In Asia Pacific, it is set to match the global average at 14.9 %. • In Latin America, it should hit a worrying 20.5 %, while in North America, the figure is 8.3 %. • The 12.7 % in Africa masks the fact that many youths have chosen to withdraw from the labour market altogether.
Regional differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High income countries are the only ones expected to achieve youth unemployment rates

	close to those of 2019 by the end of 2022. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meanwhile, in between low- and middle-income countries, the unemployment rates are projected to remain more than 1 % point above their pre-crisis values.
Gender Gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report highlights the significant gender gap in the employment to population ratio (EPR) across the globe. While the EPR for men stands at 40.3%, it is 27.4% for women. • The gap is largest in lower-middle-income countries, at 17.3 percentage points, and smallest in high-income states, at 2.3 points.
NEET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The share of youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) in 2020 -- the latest year for which a global estimate is available -- rose to 23.3%, up 1.5 percentage points from 2019. • This group of young people (around 280 million) is at a particular risk of seeing their labour market further deteriorate since this is a level not seen in the last 15 years. • Economists generally take the NEET rate as a better indicator of the employment situation, as a declining NEET rate implies further investment by people in their education and training. • However, the education being mostly online or distance, and falling family incomes during the pandemic, meant that youth had to give up their education and training as well, thus making it difficult for them to search new jobs.
Green and Blue Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the positive side, young people were well-placed to benefit from the expansion of the so-called green and blue economies, centered around the environment and sustainable ocean resources respectively. • The study said an additional 8.4 million jobs could be created for young people by 2030 through green and blue investments, notably in clean and renewable energies, sustainable agriculture, recycling and waste management.
Broadband Coverage & Healthcare Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report estimates that achieving universal broadband coverage by 2030 could lead to a net increase in employment of 24 million new jobs worldwide, of which 6.4 million would be taken by young people. • The report also estimates that investments in care sectors would create 17.9 million more jobs for young people by 2030.

Findings From India EPR

- In India, the youth *employment participation rate* (EPR) declined by 0.9 percentage points over the first nine months of 2021 relative to its value in 2020, while it increased by 2 percentage points for adults over the same time period.

- The situation is particularly severe for very young people aged 15-20 years.

Impact on Education

- In India, school closures lasted 18 months and among the 24 crore school-going children, only 8% of such children in rural areas and 23% in urban areas had adequate access to online education.
- School closures not only prevented new learning, but also led to the phenomenon of learning regression, that is, children forgetting what they had learned earlier.
- 92% of children on an average lost at least one foundational ability in language and 82% lost at least one foundational ability in mathematics.

Gender Gap in India

- India has a very low youth female labour market participation, and they experienced larger relative employment losses than young men in 2021 and 2022.
- Earlier, Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) had noted that the lower EPR is due to low female labour participation, which was just 9.2% in 2021-22, compared to 15% in 2016-17.
- Young Indian men account for 16% of young men in the global labour market, while the corresponding share for young Indian women is just 5%

Domestic Work

- Domestic work is a highly informal sector in India, and wages are extremely low.
- Reports of abuse suffered by young domestic workers are common, including verbal and physical abuse, and sexual exploitation.

Initiatives By The Government

- **UNICEF's Initiative (YuWaah):** The India chapter of Generation Unlimited (GenU) – YuWaah aims to ensure, the following by 2030:
 - ✓ Build pathways for 100 million young people to aspirational economic opportunities.
 - ✓ Facilitate 200 million young people to gain relevant skills for productive lives and the future of work.
 - ✓ Partner with 300 million young people as changemakers and create spaces for developing their leadership
- **National Youth Policy 2014** provides a holistic Vision for youth of India which is “to empower the youth to achieve their full potential.
- **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) 2008:** For generation of employment opportunities through establishment of micro enterprises in rural & urban areas.
- **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY):** Launched in 2015 for providing loans up to Rs. 10 lakh to the noncorporate, non-farm small/micro-enterprises.
- **Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY):** It has been launched by the Ministry of Labour and Employment for incentivising employers for promoting employment generation. The Government is paying the

entire employer's contribution towards EPF and EPS for all eligible new employees for all sectors for 3 years.

- Increased public expenditure on schemes like MGNREGA, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) and Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM)
- Other Flagship Programmes: Make in India, Digital India, Industrial corridors, etc.

How To Further Enhance Youth Employability In India?

- Upskilling of young people on new era skills including life skills, financial skills, digital skills, vocations skills etc.
- Strengthening National Career Service (NCS).
- Support in Job forecasting by exploring the gaps.
- Supporting direct dialogue and feedback mechanism among youth, policy stakeholders and industrial establishments

Way Ahead

- Undertaking the green, digital and care measures together as part of a big investment push would raise global GDP by 4.2.
- Investment in these sectors must be accompanied by the promotion of decent working conditions for all young workers.
- This includes ensuring that they enjoy *fundamental rights and protections including freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, equal pay for work of equal value, and freedom from violence and harassment at work.*
- Further, young people need well-functioning labour markets with decent job opportunities for those already participating in the labour market, along with quality education and training opportunities for those yet to enter it.

6 . PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj has submitted its recommendations w.r.t. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme.
- In its report, the committee has recommended to emphasise more on women-centric work under the scheme.

Major Recommendations

- **Women-centric Work**
 - ✓ The committee noted that the average percentage of women's participation in the workforce under MGNREG scheme, for more than 5 years, has been around 50% mark which is way higher than the stipulated one-third mark.

- ✓ This data reveals that the scheme is clearly seen by women as a route to a livelihood as compared to men. So, the government must take measures for better promotion of “women-centric works” through creation or linking of existing livelihood projects under the scheme.
- ✓ The committee has asserted that the aim should be to provide platforms for the rural women to strengthen their economic prowess even further.
- **Wage Parity**
 - ✓ The committee reiterates that the Ministry of Rural Development needs to bridge the wage disparity among states by notifying a uniform wage rate structure.
 - ✓ The report highlights the fluctuation in wage rates ranging from Rs 193 to Rs 318 across different states and UTs to emphasize its point.
 - ✓ The committee has proposed that the long-standing demand for increasing wages must be addressed through suitable linkage to the inflation index.
- The Supreme Court said it would carry out an interpretational correction in the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act and the Rules thereunder.
- As per SC, it would be discriminatory to bar an **unmarried woman**, who could have been exploited in a relationship or is vulnerable, from terminating her 20-24-weeks-old unwanted pregnancy when other similarly situated [married] women are permitted to do so under the law.
- **Observation Made By SC In The Above Case:**
 - ✓ **Contradicting Constitutions:** Denying an unmarried woman the right to a safe abortion *violates her personal autonomy and freedom*. A woman's right to reproductive choice is an inseparable part of her personal liberty under **Article 21** of the Indian Constitution.
 - ✓ **Contradicting Legislative Intent:** By replacing the word “**husband**” with “**partner**” in Section 3(2) of the MTP (Amendment) Act, 2021, the Parliament of India intended to include unmarried women and single women within the Act's scope. Excluding unmarried and single women from the statute's scope contradicts the legislation's intent.

Other Challenges Faced By MGNREGA

- **Inadequate Allocation:** Total budget allocation for MGNREGA this year was 34% less than the revised budget of the last financial year.
- **Delayed payments suppress demand:** 71% of the payments were delayed beyond the mandated 7-day period; 44% exceeded 15 days. It discourages workers to the extent that they do not ask for as much work as they would want to.
- **Caste-based payment delays:** Union government asks states to give 3 Funds Transfer Orders— one each for MGNREGA workers belonging to “SC”, “ST” and “Other” categories.
 - ✓ Non-SC, non-ST workers, who account for around 87% of all workers, were facing much longer payment delays. Payment of wages to workers has been erratic and non-uniform, triggering caste-based tensions among MGNREGA workers.
- **Lack of Awareness and Capacity among Rural Citizens:** Changes are being imposed without any consultations or adequate study.
- **Inadequate Social Audit and Accountability:** In many villages, no social audit has been conducted. The government officials’ shows the social audit process on paper only.
- Activists have been demanding an **increase in the wage rate for MGNREGA schemes**. It will be even more effective if the number of days for guaranteed work can be increased **up to 200 days** from the current 100 days. Govt. also needs to ensure a complete allocation and timely wage payments to workers.

7. MEDICAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY (MTP) ACT

MTP Amendment Act

- Last year Government **notified new rules** under which the gestational limit for Medical termination of pregnancy has been **increased from 20 to 24 weeks for certain categories** of women.
- The new rules come under the MTP Act, 2021. Under the new rules, **seven specific categories** will be eligible for termination of pregnancy up to 24 weeks:
 - **Survivors of sexual assault or rape or incest**
 - **Minors**
 - **Change of marital status during the ongoing pregnancy (widowhood and divorce)**
 - **Women with physical disabilities**
 - **Mentally ill women**
 - **Foetal malformation that has a substantial risk of being incompatible with life or if the child is born, he/ she may suffer from serious physical or mental abnormalities**
 - **Women with pregnancy in humanitarian settings or disaster or emergency situations**
- Medical Board will decide if a pregnancy may be terminated **after 24 weeks** due to **substantial foetal abnormalities**. All States and UTs will constitute a Medical Board consisting of a gynaecologist, paediatrician, radiologist/sonologist, and other members notified by the state government.
- **New Rules Regarding Medical board**
 - ✓ The medical boards are to either accept or reject the proposal for medical termination of pregnancy within three days of receiving the request.
 - ✓ The abortion procedure has to be done within 5 days of the board receiving the request

Significance Of MTP (Amendment) Act 2021

- Despite a sustained government push over years, contraceptive use in India is not very popular. Data from

NFHS 5 show that only 56.5% of couples in the country use modern contraceptive methods.

- According to a 2018 study by the Guttmacher Institute, 50% of pregnancies in six of the larger Indian states — Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh — are unintended.
 - Estimation of unintended pregnancies is important because many of them result in abortions and the availability of cheap and safe abortion services is one of the indicators of a robust health system.
- Several petitions have been filed in the Courts seeking permission for aborting pregnancies at a gestational age beyond the present permissible limit on grounds of foetal abnormalities or pregnancies due to sexual violence faced by women.
- Current changes are a step towards safety & well-being of women and many women will be benefited by comprehensive abortion care, under strict conditions, without compromising service & quality of safe abortion.
- The amendments will increase the ambit and access of women to safe abortion services and will ensure dignity, autonomy, confidentiality and justice for women who need to terminate pregnancy.

Issues Still Unaddressed

- Formation of a state medical board raises additional concerns of their access, particularly to women from rural areas.
- The Act requires abortion to be performed only by doctors with specialisation in gynaecology or obstetrics. There is a 75% shortage of such doctors in community health centres in rural areas.
- Only 53% of abortions are performed by a **registered medical doctor** and the balance are conducted by a nurse, auxiliary nurse midwife, family member, or self.
- No clarity regarding transgender persons whether they will be covered or not.

8. REVIEW OF GUARDIANSHIP AND ADOPTION LAWS

The department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice tabled its report, in both Houses of Parliament on the 'Review of Guardianship and Adoption Laws'.

Current Law On Guardianship

Indian laws accord superiority to father in case of guardianship of a minor.

HMGA, 1956	<p>The natural guardian of a Hindu minor in respect of the minor's person or property is the father, and <i>after him</i>, the mother. Provided the custody of a minor who has not completed the <i>age of five years</i> shall ordinarily be with the mother.</p> <p>✓ However, HMGA does not contain</p>
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	any <i>independent, legal or procedural mechanism</i> for deciding custody rights or declaring court-appointed guardians .
Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937	It says that the Shariat or the religious law will apply in case of guardianship, according to which father is the natural guardian, but custody vests with the mother until the son reaches the <i>age of seven</i> and the daughter reaches puberty though the father's right to general supervision and control exists.

Recommendations Of Parliamentary Panel On Guardianship And Child Custody

• Urgent Need to Amend HMGA (Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956)

- ✓ The existing law treats *mothers as subordinates to their husband*. Hence, the law violated the right to equality and right against discrimination envisaged under Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution.
- ✓ It recommended to accord equal treatment to both mother and father as natural guardians.

SC Judgment In Githa Hariharan vs RBI, 1999

- The Court challenged the HMGA for violating the guarantee of equality of sexes under Article 14.
- The court held that the term "after" should not be taken to mean "after the lifetime of the father", but rather in the absence of the father.
- But the judgment failed to recognise both parents as equal guardians, subordinating a mother's role to that of the father.
- Though the judgment sets a precedent for courts, it has not led to an amendment to the HMGA.
- **Joint Custody Of Children During Marital Disputes**
 - ✓ In cases of marital dispute, the panel says that there is a need to relook at child custody which is typically restricted to just one parent. In such cases, *mothers tend to get preference*.
 - ✓ The panel recommended that courts should be empowered to:
 - grant joint custody to both parents when such a decision is conducive for the welfare of the child, or
 - award sole custody to one parent with visitation rights to the other.

• On Adoption

- ✓ The Committee has said that there is a need for a new legislation that harmonises the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 & the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act (HAMA), 1956.
- ✓ It also said that such a law should cover the LGBTQI community as well.

Can Queer And Transgender People Adopt Children In India?

- The Adoption Regulations 2017 is silent on adoption by LGBTQI people and neither bans nor allows them to adopt a child.

- ✓ Its eligibility criteria for prospective adoptive parents says that they should be physically, mentally and emotionally stable, financially capable and should not have any life-threatening medical condition.
- ✓ Single men can only adopt a boy while a woman can adopt a child of any gender.
- ✓ A child can be given for adoption to a couple only if they have been in a marital relationship for at least two years.
- Activists say LGBTQI people who seek adoption face institutional discrimination because of stigma. Therefore, the law should be amended to include them as eligible candidates.

Other Recent Changes To Bring In Parity

- There has been change in rules regarding passport and Permanent Account Number (PAN) card that allows an applicant to furnish their mother's name if she is single parent. Ministry of external affairs liberalised its rule in 2016
- ✓ The new passport application form also does not require the applicant to provide the name of her or his spouse when they are divorced and neither are they required to provide the divorce decree
- Central board of Direct taxes amended Income tax Rules, 1962 in 2018 to remove the compulsory mentioning of Father's name on documents when a mother was a single parent.
- ✓ The new PAN application form also seeks the mother's name alongside the name of father.
- ✓ Applicants can also choose whether they want their father's name on the PAN card or their mother's name.
- But school certificates and lot of other documents insists father's name as guardian.

9. DEBUT EDITION OF COMMON UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE TEST (CUET)

The **debut edition** of *Common University Entrance Test (CUET)*, which has been split into **six phases**, has been marred by **technical glitches** and **administrative errors** so far causing exam cancellations at multiple centres and postponement of exams for several candidates. The general complaints were –

- **Overlapping Dates:** With dates for their CUET and CBSE compartment papers overlapping, a section of students find themselves in a tense situation.
- **Confusion Over Exam Dates:** Several CUET-UG aspirants are claiming that the exam dates mentioned on their admit cards have already passed while the date intimated to them earlier was different.
- **Administrative Error:** The students at some centers, who were to take exams, complained that they received question papers of other subjects. Consequently, due to postponement, the admission procedure to the universities will stretch into September. This will have a spiraling effect on undergraduate timetables that had already been upset by Covid-19 pandemic in the past two years. Also, many aspirants, after months of suspense in CUET-2022,

have decided to take *admissions into private universities* that are still largely non-participating institutions.

About CUET

- CUET is a revamped version of Central Universities Common Entrance Test (CUCET), launched in 2010 which failed to gather steam since only 14 central universities had adopted it until last year.
- **Rationale:** In pursuance of **National Education Policy, 2020**, CUET has been decided as a common entrance test for admission in central universities to reduce the burden on students, universities and the entire education system.
- **Description:** It is a computer-based test (CBT), conducted in **13 languages** namely Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Urdu, Assamese, Bengali, Punjabi, Odia and English.
 - ✓ CUET UG - 2022 may also be adopted by the State / Private / Deemed Universities.
 - ✓ It is the **common Platform for undergraduate (UG) admissions** in all central universities and is now the **second biggest entrance exam** in country, **surpassing JEE-Main's average** registration of 9 lakh.
 - ✓ NEET-UG is the biggest entrance test in India with an average of 18 lakh registrations.
- **Components:** CUET will essentially have three parts as follows:
 - ✓ **Language** (reading comprehension, vocabulary), **domain-specific knowledge** (27 domains on offer, student chooses at least one and maximum of six), **general test** (GK, current affairs, general mental ability, numerical ability, quantitative reasoning).
- **Registrations:** Over 1.4 million students have registered for admissions to UG courses in 44 central universities, 12 state universities, 11 deemed, and 19 private universities.
- **Magnanimous Exercise:** Aspirant being allowed to appear in up to 9 papers, resulting in more than 50,000 subject combinations, the CUET is conducted in more than 550 cities in country and 13 foreign centers.
- **Exemption:** International students are exempted from CUET and their admissions will be carried out on the existing **supernumerary basis**.
- **Conducting Body:** The National Testing Agency has been entrusted with responsibility of conducting the UG entrance tests for all the Central Universities (CUs) in CUET.
 - ✓ The Union Cabinet, in 2017, approved creation of NTA as an **autonomous** and **self-sustained** premier testing organization to conduct entrance examinations for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). NTA will be chaired by an **eminent educationist** appointed by Ministry of Education.

<u>Significance of CUET</u>	<u>Questionable Outcomes of CUET</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Platform: CUET will allow all students to appear for the exam and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snap-decision: The hurry and speed with which the decision for a single admission test was taken throughout the 40-odd central universities was disturbing.

<p>put everyone at one common level as compared to the <i>merit lists and cut off system</i> on UG admissions in the past.</p> <p>• Equity: CUET will provide equal opportunities to candidates across the country, especially those from <i>rural and other remote areas</i> and help establish better connect with the Universities.</p> <p>• Reduced Costs: Students may apply to more than one university as per their choice with one application form thereby reducing financial burden and increasing access.</p> <p>• Standardize Benchmarks: CUET would avoid multiple entrance tests, thereby providing uniform quality in the exam pattern & process and minimize corruption and irregularities in admissions.</p>	<p>• Ignoring University Specific Testing: Every central university in the country has special characteristics enshrined in its Act and Statutes which CUET ignores.</p> <p>• Discrepancy: The validity of unifying diverse institutions and programmes in one single test <i>without regard to natural regional variations</i> in institutional cultures and structures.</p> <p>• Unfair Common Testing: Every state has its own syllabus and exam pattern till higher secondary level. Putting all students then for single entrance would be unfair for many.</p> <p>• Coaching Bias: The students from rural and under-privileged who cannot afford private coaching would find it difficult to compete with urban students in CUET.</p> <p>• Federal Issues: A centralized exam keeps the state government out of the admission process. Also state reservation rules will not apply to CUET.</p> <p>• Limited Languages: Exam is not conducted in all official languages of India.</p> <p>• Lack of Manpower: The NTA conducts 15 different exams without adequate manpower. It does not have a full-time director-general.</p> <p>• Distorted Academic Calendar: Earlier, every university used to decide its academic calendar. However, now, the academic calendar is dependent on when the NTA holds entrance tests. The academic freedom of the universities is in a way getting subverted</p>
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Conclusion

- The smooth conduct of the CUET requires an upgrade in the IT systems of at least the network of centres where the examinations are held. Indeed, with 15 lakh registrations across 54,000 unique subject combinations, it must be on its toes to address the inevitable glitches.
- NTA must also now go out of its way to accommodate student requests for shifting test centres, fixing admit card errors etc.
- CUET is undoubtedly the way forward. But professional implementation of any reform is critical to maintaining public trust in it.

10 . FINANCIAL INCLUSION INDEX, 2022

India's financial inclusion index (FI-Index), for the year ending March 2022, has improved to 56.4 from 53.9 in the previous year. Conceptualized and constructed by RBI in **2021**, the index helps to determine and assess the extent of financial inclusion in India.

- It is a comprehensive measure that incorporates details of banking, investments, insurance, postal as well as the pension sector.
- It captures information on various aspects of financial inclusion on a **scale from 0 to 100**, where 0 represents complete financial exclusion and 100 indicates full financial inclusion.
- Published **annually**, the index has been constructed **without any base year** and reflects cumulative efforts of all stakeholders over the years towards financial inclusion.

Parameters

- There are three broad parameters with certain assigned weights: Each parameter consists of various dimensions computed based on **97 indicators**.
- **Access** stands for *access to bank branches, number of ATMs, banking correspondents and point-of-sales terminals per 1 lakh adults*.
- **Quality parameter** includes aspects such as *financial literacy, consumer protection, and inequalities and deficiencies in services*.

Significance Of The Index

- The various components of the index will help to measure financial services for use of internal policy making. It can be used directly as a composite measure in development indicators.
- It enables fulfilment of G20 Financial Inclusion Indicators requirements.
- It will also *facilitate researchers* to study the *impact of financial inclusion* and other macro-economic variables.

Various Government Measures For Financial Inclusion

- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY):** To ensure financial inclusion of all the households in the country by providing universal access to banking facilities. Under this, a person not having a savings account can open an account without the requirement of any minimum balance.
- **Integration of Financial Services:** Convergence of *Jan Dhan-Aadhar-Mobile (JAM) trinity* with the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) for targeted and accurate payments.
- **Swabhiman Campaign:** Aimed at giving more self-respect and confidence to people by making them aware of the financial sector of their country and banking services.
- **Insurance & Pension Schemes:** Atal Pension Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana and Jan Suraksha Yojana.
- **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojna:** Provides formal access of financial facilities to Non Corporate Small Business Sector thereby promoting bank finance to the unfunded segment of the economy.
- **RBI Initiatives:** This includes Priority Sector Lending (for providing a specified portion of the bank lending to

- few specific sectors), Opening of no-frills accounts (account with nil or very low minimum balance), Relaxation on know-your-customer (KYC) norms, Business correspondents (BCs) as intermediaries for providing financial services, Issuing Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) with NABARD, Project Financial Literacy
- **Digital Initiatives:** Initiatives like Digital India, payments banks and small finance banks have helped to improve the reach of formal financial services to economically disadvantaged sections thus providing financial services to both unbanked and underbanked population, especially in rural/remote regions.

- Financial inclusion calls for technology service providers, mobile network operators, corporate houses, and banking correspondents to develop efficient delivery models.
- Banks need to look after the needs & constraints of rural areas and not impose the urban models in rural areas.
- Financial literacy, awareness along with consumer protection needs to be focussed upon.
- If adequate measures are taken to tide over the existing problems, financial inclusion has the potential to amplify the benefits of economic growth to the poor.

Challenges To Financial Inclusion In India

Socio-Economic Factors

Low-income households, low savings and generally low levels of awareness hinder access to available financial products and services.

o Gender Gap in Financial Inclusion

Geographical Factors

Rangarajan Committee showed that financial exclusion is highest among households in the Eastern, North -Eastern and Central areas of country partly due to poor infrastructure. This coupled with *remoteness and less population* in some areas results in problems with access.

Limited Availability Of Technology

The lack of infrastructure and *cost effective & appropriate technology* for facilitating transactions at the doorstep is a hindrance to financial inclusion.

Financial Illiteracy & Digital Divide

Rural population, as a result, relies mostly on the informal sector for availing finance at high rates which lead to the vicious circle of poverty and debt repayment.

Perception of Obligation

The financial institutions are reluctant to serve small value and unprofitable customers with irregular income. Banks perceive inclusion as an obligation rather than a business opportunity.

Penetration About 5% of India's 6 lakh plus villages have bank branches. There are 296 underbanked districts in states with below-par banking services.

Implement Deficit For instance, the Jan Dhan scheme has resulted in the opening of many dormant accounts which never saw actual banking transactions.

Lack of Documents Such as Aadhaar card, income certificate, birth certificate, address proof etc.

Informal and Cash Dominated Economy

This combination of a huge informal sector along with a high dependence on cash mode of transaction poses an impediment to digital financial inclusion

Lack of Credit Penetration

High cost of credit in providing credit to low-income households and informal businesses due to lack of information available with formal creditors to determine their credit worthiness.

Conclusion

- There needs a multidimensional approach through which existing digital platforms, infrastructure, human resources and policy frameworks are strengthened and new technological innovations to be promoted.