MONTHLY

CURRENT

AFFAIRS

MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER 2022

CONTENTS

GEO IAS [MONTHLY C.A – SEPTEMBER , 2022]

1. 10TH INDIA-BRAZIL-SOUTH AFRICA DIALOGUE FORUM (IBSA)
2. 7TH EASTERN ECONOMIC FORUM (EEF)
3. INDIA - NATO DIALOGUE

DEFENSE and SECURITY

1. INDIAN NAVY'S NEW ENSIGN
2. INDIA COOPERATION WITH BAHRAIN-BASED MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIP
3. CENTRE SIGNS A TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT
4. INDIA IN VOSTOK-22

GEOGRAPHY & ENVIRONMENT

1. NATIONAL MISSION FOR CLEAN GANGA (NMCG) NEW UPDATES
2. CAG ON COASTAL ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION
3. MIYAWAKI METHOD
4. ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF SHOONYA CAMPAIGN
5. REPORT BY CAG ON FLY ASH
6. EXTINCTIONS OF MARINE SPECIES
7. SPECIES IN NEWS

SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY

1. IAD
2. HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATED INFECTION SURVEILLANCE-INDIA SURVEY

3. PUBLIC DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE
4. IMPLEMENTATION OF AFRS BY NCRB
5. HEALTH & NUTRITION
6. DEFENCE PRODUCTION CAPABILITIES FOR SELF-RELIANCE AND EXPORTS
7. DARK SKY RESERVE AT HANLE IN LADAKH
8. PNEUMONIA CASES IN ARGENTINA
9. PRADHAN MANTRI TB MUKT BHARAT ABHIYAAN
10. MOBILE BANKING TROJAN' VIRUS

CULTURE

1. GARBA FOLK DANCE
2. RAJA RAVI VARMA
3. SHUMANG LEELA
4. THEYYAM

MISCELLANEOUS

1. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX (HDI) 2021-2022
2. SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE STATUE AT INDIA GATE
3. EIGHT NAMIBIAN CHEETAHS WERE RELEASED
4. ETHICS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
5. THE ODR POLICY PLAN FOR INDIA
6. TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION HUBS (TIH), AT DST-NSF
7. INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK (IPEF)
8. INDIA-BANGLADESH TIES NEW UPDATES
9. NATIONAL LIST OF ESSENTIAL MEDICINES (NLEM)
10. SMILE-75 INITIATIVE

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. NAMASTE

- NAMASTE stands for National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem.
- It is a Central Sector Scheme of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) as a joint initiative of MoSJE and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MOHUA).
- NAMASTE envisages safety and dignity of sanitation workers in urban India by creating an enabling ecosystem that recognizes sanitation workers as one of the key contributors in operations and maintenance of sanitation infrastructure thereby providing sustainable livelihood and enhancing their occupational safety through capacity building and improved access to safety gear and machines.

OUTCOMES OF NAMASTE SCHEME

- Zero fatalities in sanitation work in India
- All sanitation work in performed by skilled workers
- No sanitation workers come in direct contact with human faecal matter.
- Sanitation workers are collectivised into SHGs and are empowered to run sanitation enterprises.
- All Sewer and septic tank sanitation workers (SSWs) have access to alternative livelihoods.
- Strengthened supervisory and monitoring systems at national, state & ULB levels to ensure enforcement and monitoring of safe sanitation work.
- Increased awareness of amongst sanitation services seekers to seek services from registered and skilled sanitation workers.

COVERAGE

- Five hundred cities (converging with AMRUT cities) will be taken up under this phase of NAMASTE. The list of cities will be notified at an appropriate time. The category of cities that will be eligible are given below:
- All Cities and Towns with a population of over one lakh with notified Municipalities, including Cantonment Boards (Civilian areas),
- All Capital Cities/Towns of States/ Union Territories (UTs), not covered in 4(i),
- Ten Cities from hill states, islands and tourist destinations (not more than one from each State).

COMPONENTS

- Enumeration
  - ✓ NAMASTE envisages identifying Sewer/Septic Tank Workers (SSWs) with a focus on informal workforce who are engaged in hazardous cleaning operations.
  - ✓ The database will enable Ministry of Skill Development and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (including DAY-NULM, SBM 2.0 and AMRUT) to reach the SSWs and their families and provide them necessary support for collectivisation, skill building and linking with social and financial benefits.
  - ✓ The survey would be conducted by City NAMASTE Managers and validated by the concerned ULB.
- Extending Insurance Scheme Benefits: For providing a safety net to identified SSWs and their families they will be covered under the Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY). The premium for AB-PMJAY for those identified SSWs families who are not covered earlier shall be borne under NAMASTE.
- Livelihood Assistance:
  - ✓ NSKFDC will provide funding support and subsidy(capital +interest) to the sanitation workers, SHGs of SSWs and private sanitation service organizations (PSSOs) to procure sanitation related equipment and vehicles under SUY for total mechanization of cleaning operations.
  - ✓ Identified SSWs and their dependants will be given counselling on available livelihood choices and an opportunity to acquire alternative skills if they so desire.
  - ✓ Depending on their personal preference, an SSW may choose to continue working in the sanitation sector, thereby becoming eligible for receiving capacity building training.
  - ✓ Alternatively, the worker may choose to explore an alternative livelihood option or an entrepreneurial venture. In case the workers decide to adopt an alternate livelihood of their choice, skilling and EDP support will be provided to these workers. The workers may start a new livelihood project as an individual or as a group interested in same option.
- Saturation with Social Security Schemes' benefits: The identified sanitation workers and their family members will be extended benefits of all the social

security schemes being implemented by various departments in the area, like:
- ✓ Food Security (Ration)
- ✓ Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana
- ✓ Scholarship Schemes at pre matric and post matric level
- ✓ Enrolment of out of school, school-going-age children
- ✓ Atal Pension Yojana
- ✓ Pension Schemes for older persons, widows, orphan, physically challenged etc.
- ✓ Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana(PM-SBY)
- ✓ Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PM-JJBY)
- ✓ Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana
- ✓ Allotment of free land/plots
- ✓ Anganwari
- ✓ Coaching for entrance exams and service.

2. MANTHAN

- Office of Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government of India launched the Manthan Platform.
- Manthan Platform aims to promote collaboration at scale between industry and the scientific research and development ecosystem to help meet India's sustainability goals in alignment with the UN SDGs.
- Manthan can potentially change the landscape of science and technology based social innovation and solutions in India.
- Facilitate knowledge transfers and interactions through information exchange sessions, exhibitions and events to develop a framework for future science, innovation and technology-led growth.
- Empower to scale up the interactions among stakeholders, facilitate research and innovation, and share challenges in various emerging technologies and scientific interventions, including those that make a social impact.

3. GRAMEEN UDYAMI

- National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has launched the second phase of Grameen Udyami Project to augment skill training in tribal communities for their inclusive and sustainable growth.
- Grameen Udyami is a unique multi-skilling project, funded by NSDC that aims to train 450 tribal students. It is being implemented in 6 states: Maharashtra,

Gujarat, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh & Jharkhand.
- Training under the project will be conducted in following jobs roles: Electrician & Solar PV Installation Technician, Plumbing & Masonry, 2-Wheeler Repair & Maintenance, IT/ITES with e-Governance, Farm Mechanisation.

4. NEW RULES IN JUVENILE JUSTICE AMENDMENT ACT , 2022

Following the enactment of Juvenile Justice Amendment Act, 2021, the Government of India recently notified the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection Amendment) Model Amendment Rules 2022.**
The recently amended rules for implementing the **Juvenile Justice Act** prohibit anyone *associated with an organisation receiving foreign funds from serving on Child Welfare Committees (CWC).*
JUVENILE JUSTICE (CARE OR PROTECTION OF CHILDREN) ACT/JJ ACT, 2015
- The Act was introduced (by the Ministry of Women and Child Development) and passed in **2015** to replace the Juvenile Delinquency Law and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000.
- One of the main provisions of the Act is allowing the trial of juveniles in conflict with law in the age group of 16-18 years as adults.
  - ✓ Under the Act, offences committed by juveniles are categorised as heinous (with minimum or maximum sentence of 7 years), serious (with 3-7 years of imprisonment) and petty offences.
  - ✓ It provides that an offence which is punishable with imprisonment between 3- 7 years to be cognizable (where arrest is allowed without warrant) and nonbailable.
  - ✓ According to the Act, juveniles charged with heinous crimes and between the ages of 16-18 years would be tried as adults and processed through the adult justice system.
  - ✓ The nature of the crime and whether the juvenile should be tried as a minor or a child, was to be determined by a Juvenile Justice Board.
- The second major provision is with regards to adoption.
  - ✓ The Act streamlined adoption procedures for orphans, abandoned and surrendered children and the existing Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) has been made a statutory body to enable it to perform its function more effectively.
- The State Government may, by notification, establish one or more Child Welfare Committees (CWC) for each district or group of districts to exercise the powers conferred under this Act.
  - ✓ The Committee shall be composed of a Chairperson and four other members, at least one of whom shall be a woman and another a child expert.

JJ (CARE OR PROTECTION OF CHILDREN) AMENDMENT ACT, 2021

- The amendment has been based on a **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights** (NCPCR) report (2018-19) in which over 7,000 Child Care Institutions (CCIs or children's homes) were surveyed.
- The report found that 1.5% of CCIs do not conform to rules and regulations of the JJ Act and 29% of them had major shortcomings in their management.
- It also found that not a single CCI in the country was found to be 100% compliant to the provisions of the JJ Act.

The Amendments:

- According to the Act, serious offences will also include offences for which the maximum punishment is more than 7 years in prison and the minimum punishment is not prescribed or is less than 7 years.
- It provides that offence which is punishable with imprisonment between 3-7 years will be noncognizable.
- Both heinous and serious crimes have also been clarified for the first time, removing ambiguity.
  - ✓ This provision has been made to ensure that children, as much as possible, are protected and kept out of the adult justice system.
- Instead of the court, District Magistrates (DMs), including Additional District Magistrates (ADMs), can now issue adoption orders under the JJ Act.
  - ✓ This is to ensure faster case resolution and increased accountability.
- The new amendment prohibits the opening of any new CCI without the sanction of the DM.
  - ✓ Now, DMs are also responsible for ensuring that CCIs falling in their district are following all norms and procedures.
- The DM will also carry out background checks (including educational qualifications) of CWC members, who are usually social welfare activists, as there was no such provision then.
- The CWCs are also to report regularly to the DMs on their activities in the districts.

ABOUT THE NEW RULES

- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection Amendment) Model Amendment Rules 2022 **modify several aspects of the JJ Act**, including those governing adoption, foster care, sponsorship, as well as the eligibility criteria for CWCs.
- The Model Rules state that a person associated with **an organisation receiving foreign contribution** shall not be eligible to be a Chairperson or member of the Committee.
  - ✓ As per the Chairperson of NCPCR (Priyank Kanoongo), those on CWC have the power of a magistrate and are equivalent to government officials, who are barred under Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010, from receiving foreign funds.
- It also states that anyone involved in the implementation of the JJ Act in any NGO or organisation that creates a **conflict of interest** will be ineligible to serve on a CWC.
  - ✓ It goes on to say that anyone with "any family member" or "close relation" working for an NGO is ineligible to be on a CWC.
- Anyone involved in rescue and rehabilitation in the district, as well as anyone representing someone running a CCI or a member of the Board or Trust of any NGO, is not eligible to serve on a CWC.
- Retired judicial officers have also been omitted from the category of persons who can be considered for appointment to a CWC.

CRITICISM OF THE NEW RULES

- The rules are broadly worded, with no definition of who is a family member or close relative.
- This reduces the pool of human resources available for CWC appointments. Many CWCs have yet to be appointed because they cannot find members to fill those positions.

ECONOMY

1. *DIGITAL PAYMENT SYSTEMS UNDER RBI*

Recently, a discussion paper by the RBI on the Digital Payments has stirred up hornet' nest. In its discussion paper, the RBI had asked stakeholders if merchant discount rate (MDR) should be brought back for Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions. However, the Finance Ministry ruled that UPI should be treated as "Digital Public Good" and rejected any plans to impose charges on UPI transactions.

PAYMENT AND SETTLEMENT SYSTEM
System that facilitates transfer of money from a payer to the beneficiary. It includes both paper based payments such as cheques, drafts as well as electronic payments such as Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS), National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT), Immediate payment Service (IMPS), UPI etc.

Payment systems under RBI: Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) and National Electronics Fund Transfer (NEFT). The RTGS system is used for high-value transactions wherein minimum transaction amount should be Rs 2 lakhs and above.

Payment systems under National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI): Umbrella organization for operating retail payments and settlement systems. It is an initiative of RBI and Indian Banks' Association (IBA).

- ✓ RuPay Contactless: Allows cardholders to wave their card in front of contactless payment terminals without the need to physically swipe or insert the card into a point-of-sale device.
- ✓ Unified Payments Interface: Real-time interbank payment system for sending or receiving money.
- ✓ BHIM App: BHIM is a mobile app for Unified Payments Interface. The BHIM apps has 3 levels of authentication.
- ✓ Bharat BillPay: One-stop ecosystem for payment of all bills
- ✓ Immediate Payment Service: Real time interbank payment system
- ✓ National Financial Switch: Network of ATMs in India.
- ✓ BharatQR: A common QR code built for ease of payments
- ✓ Card Networks operated by Non-Banks: Visa, MasterCard, American Express etc.

MERCHANT DISCOUNT RATE (MDR)
What is it?: MDR is a fee charged for the merchants by the bank for accepting payments from customers through credit/debit cards/QR Code in their establishments. The merchant discount rate is expressed in percentage. This charge is in turn distributed among three stakeholders— *customer's bank, merchant's bank and payment system operator (Visa, Mastercard, NPCIRuPay or BharatQR).*

ZERO MDR ON RUPAY AND UPI PAYMENTS
Government has amended the Payments and Settlement Systems Act (PSS Act), to waive off merchant discount rate (MDR) on UPI and Rupay cards to promote cashless economy. This came into effect from Jan 1, 2020. Further, in December 2021, the Government came up with the scheme to compensate the payment system operators (PSOs) for their loss on the zero MDR on Rupay and UPI.

RBI'S ARGUMENT FOR IMPOSITION OF MDR ON UPI CHARGES
- Higher Cost for the Payment System Operators (PSOs): According to the RBI, payer's bank, beneficiary's bank, NPCI and UPI app collectively incur Rs 2 as cost for transaction value of Rs800. With UPI's total transaction value exceeding Rs 10 lakh crore a month, the total cost works out to be around Rs 30,000 crores.
- Higher Financial burden on Government: Since the Government needs to compensate the PSOs for their loss on Zero MDR on UPI, the financial burden on the Government would increase.
- Improve Payment Infrastructure: The failure rate with UPI transactions is increasing (at over 1.4 per cent) due to poor infrastructure and inefficiencies of PSOs. The imposition of MDR on UPI payments would improve the financial position of PSOs and encourage them to invest more in upgrading infrastructure.
- Adverse impact on Fintech sector: Number of fintech companies such as Paytm, Google pay etc. have integrated UPI into their apps for facilitating digital payments. The waiver on MDR charges through UPI would lead to reduced profits, discourage innovation and hurt the fintech sector. In the long run, this could hurt the entire digital payments ecosystem.
- Create level playing Field: UPI acts as a funds transfer system like IMPS. Therefore, it could be argued that the charges in UPI need to be similar to charges in IMPS for fund transfer transactions.

COUNTER ARGUMENTS
- Role of NPCI: The NPCI, which has developed UPI, has been set up as non-profit entity with primary objective of promoting cashless economy. Hence, role of the NPCI should be to promote UPI based payments through Zero MDR Charges. Imposition of MDR charges on UPI payments would go against its stated objective.

- **Role of UPI as Cash:** Due to increase in digital payments, the UPI has become substitute for cash. Just like charges are not imposed on cash payments, no charges should be imposed on UPI payments as well.
- **Long term benefits:** Zero MDR on UPI payments can reduce usage of cash and promote digital payments. Hence, in the long run, it would reduce RBI's expenses on printing and handling currency notes. These savings could offset the present cost of Zero MDR on UPI payments.
- **Digital Public Good:** UPI as "Public Good" has improved financial inclusion, benefitted small merchants, improved ease of payments and promoted cashless economy.

2. SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURS IN TRANSFORMATION AND UPSKILLING PROGRAMME

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has recently launched the **US Startup SETU – Supporting Entrepreneurs in Transformation and Upskilling programme** in the Bay Area of San Francisco.
- The programme has been launched to focus on **specific issues** related to the startup ecosystem in India.
- SETU is designed to break the geographical barriers between mentors based in US that are willing to invest in **entrepreneurship** and **sunrise startups** in India.
- The initiative would connect startups in India to US-based investors and start-up ecosystem leaders with mentorship and assistance in
various areas including *funding, market access and commercialization.*

NEED FOR THE INITIATIVE
The **Early Warning Indicators** for the economy and the preparedness to deal with them
- It is estimated that about 90% of the start-ups and more than half of the well-funded startups fail in their early days. Lack of experience in handling the business is a key issue, and founders require the right guidance for taking a decision and moral support.
- As India heads towards becoming a supreme start-up destination, the right guidance at the right time is paramount.

MAARG
- SETU is supported by the *Startup India initiative* **MAARG** (Mentorship, Advisory, Assistance, Resilience, and Growth) **programme**, which is a one-stop solution finder for Indian startups.
- The **portal** was created with the intention of allowing people from all over the country to connect with mentors.
- The core functions of MAARG are to improve ease of access, use Artificial Intelligence for matchmaking,

schedule meetings virtually, host masterclasses, analytics etc.
- Over 200 mentors have been successfully on-boarded on MAARG around the world to date.

3 . EXTERNAL COMMERCIAL BORROWINGS (ECBs)

The Reserve Bank of India has recently relaxed the ECB norms to check Rupee Depreciation.
EXTERNAL COMMERCIAL BORROWINGS (ECBs)
ECBs are commercial loans that eligible resident entities can raise from outside India, i.e. from a recognized nonresident entity. The ECBs are governed under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999.
Currency of borrowing: Both Foreign currency denominated and Rupee denominated loans.
Forms of borrowing: Loans from foreign Banks, Bonds and Debentures, Trade Credits beyond 3 years.
Eligible borrowers: All entities eligible to receive FDI.
Minimum Average Maturity Period (MAMP): 3 years and above in most of the cases. However, they are certain exceptions where maturity period can be 1 year.
Routes for borrowing:
- Automatic Route: Eligible borrowers can borrow without seeking prior approval of RBI.
- Approval Route: Prior approval of RBI needed.

Limit: All eligible borrowers can raise ECB up to $ 750 million or equivalent per financial year under the automatic route.
BENEFITS OF ECBS FOR BORROWERS
- Interest rates may be lower as compared to domestic market.
- Borrow large volume of funds
- Loans are available for longer maturity period.
- Corporates can raise ECBs from internationally recognised sources, such as banks, export credit agencies, international capital markets etc.
- ECBs are in the form of foreign currencies. Hence, they enable the corporates to have foreign currencies, to meet the import of machineries etc.

RISKS INVOLVED
Exchange rate risk: Since the principal and interest is to be paid in foreign currencies, the company gets exposed to exchange rate risks. The depreciation of the rupee raises debt servicing burden for the borrowers.
Higher Debt burden: Low interest rates prevailing in other countries may lead to higher borrowings leading to adverse impact of financial position of borrower.
RELAXATION OFFERED BY RBI
Increase in annual borrowing limit under ECBs from $750 million per financial year to $1.5 billion. This relaxation is available for ECBs to be raised till December 31, 2022. It is basically done to increase in the supply of foreign currency and check Rupee depreciation.

4. ONE NATION ONE FERTILISER

- The Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers announced that it will implement One Nation One Fertiliser (ONOF), under which **a single brand and logo** for fertilisers will have to be used by all manufacturers.
- This will be done under the Centre's fertiliser subsidy scheme newly renamed as **Pradhanmantri Bhartiya Janurvarak Pariyojna (PMBJP).**
- As a result, from October, all subsidised fertilisers will be sold across the country under a single brand name — 'Bharat'.

Details of ONOF

- Under the scheme, all fertiliser companies (public & private sector), State Trading Entities (STEs) and Fertiliser Marketing Entities (FMEs) will be required to use a single **Bharat brand** for fertilisers and **logo** under PMBJP.
- The single brand name for urea or di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) or muriate of potash (MOP) or NPK (Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium) will be Bharat Urea, Bharat DAP, Bharat MOP and Bharat NPK, irrespective of the manufacturer.
- The new Bharat brand name and PMBJP logo will cover **two-thirds** of the front of the fertiliser packet.
- The manufacturing brands can only display their name, logo, and other information on the remaining one third space.

Reasons For The Move

- The price of the most used fertiliser, **urea**, is controlled by the government, meaning all manufacturing companies sell at an MRP fixed by the government, which is just 10-20% of production costs. The government provides 80-90% of the cost of production to the manufacturers in the form of a subsidy.
- The MRPs of non-urea fertilisers are, *on paper, decontrolled*. But companies cannot get subsidy if they sell at MRPs higher than that **informally** indicated by the government.
- Thus, there are some 26 fertilisers on which government bears subsidy and also effectively decides the MRPs.
- The **fertiliser subsidy bill** of the government is huge each year (expected to be over **Rs. 2 lakh crore** in 2022- 23) and only second to the food subsidy in terms of expenditure.
- The government possibly wants the farmers to know the financial burden it incurs in providing fertilisers at a cheaper rate.

Freight Subsidy

- Moreover, the government also pays manufacturers, **freight subsidies**- or the cost of ferrying their products to the end-user, which is estimated to be **Rs. 6,000 crore** per year.
- While the government decides where manufacturers can sell their products under the **Fertiliser (Movement) Control Order, 1973,** due to the freight subsidy provided, manufacturers tend to sell across longer distances.
- For instance, the indigenous urea produced by a plant in Uttar Pradesh moves to Rajasthan and the urea produced by a plant in Rajasthan moves to Uttar Pradesh.
- *Brand-wise demand for fertilisers in specific areas is one of the reasons for this movement.*

Benefits of ONOF

- If manufacturers stop selling urea under individual brands, there would be no need for companies to move fertilisers across states, thus reducing the fertiliser subsidy expenditure.
- It will streamline the supply process without bottlenecks, reduce transit time, increase the availability basket and lead to timely availability of fertilisers.
- It will also help in **checking the diversion** of about 10 lakh tonnes (lt) of **urea** for non-agricultural use, estimated to be a loss of Rs 6,000 crore to the exchequer.

Issues with ONOF

- It will disincentivize fertiliser companies from undertaking marketing and brand promotion activities. Any company's strength ultimately is its brands and farmer trust built over decades.
- However, they will now be reduced to contract manufacturers and importers for the government.
- This could impact the quality of fertilisers and discourage manufacturers from bringing newer and more efficient products into the market.
- Currently, in case of fertilisers not meeting the required standards, the blame is put on the company. But now, that may be passed on fully to the government.
- It would also act as a disincentive for fertiliser companies to take up **field programmes** to introduce efficient methods of nutrient application as part of their market promotion activities.
- Further, a government brand will add another layer of regulation to the sector where almost every aspect- from product pricing to cost structure to geographical distribution and sale- is controlled by the government.

5. INDIA BECAME WORLD'S FIFTH LARGEST ECONOMY

- Recently India became world's fifth largest economy, after it overtook the United Kingdom. The other economies making the top five are the **US, China, Japan and Germany**.

- The result is based on the calculations by **Bloomberg** using the *IMF database and historic exchange rates.*
- India's GDP in the quarter ending March 2022 was **$854.7 billion**, while UK's GDP was $816 billion.
- Furthermore, due to India's fast-growing economy, there is likely to be a huge gap between India and the UK within the next few years.
- While India beating the UK is mathematically correct, other factors need to be taken into account as well.

Population Size

- This is one of the most fundamental differences between the two countries.
- As of 2022, India has a population of 1.41 billion while the UK's population is 68.5 million. In other words, **India's population is 20 times that of the UK's**.

GDP Per Capita

- Since there is such a stark difference between the population of the two countries, **GDP per capita** provides a more realistic comparison of income levels.
- In 2021, IMF data showed that the per capita or the average income of a Britisher was $47,203. In comparison, the average income of an Indian was $2,283 or less than 5% of the average British income.
- In 2021, **India's per capita income was ranked 145th in a list of 193 countries** for which data was available. India was placed above Kenya and below the Solomon Islands. The UK was ranked 22nd.

Poverty Levels

- Low per capita incomes often point to high levels of poverty.
- At the start of 19th century, the UK's share in extreme poverty was considerably higher than India's. However, now the relative positions have reversed even though India has made significant strides in curbing poverty.

Human Development Index

- The end goal of higher GDP and faster economic growth is to have better human development parameters.
- The Human Development Index is a composite of health, education and standard of living parameters. The chart below shows that, despite its improvement, **India might still take a decade to be where the UK was in 1980**.
  - ✓ Performance of UK in HDI 2022 – 0.93 (score), very high category (HDI tier)
  - ✓ India's performance in HDI 2022 – 0.633 (score), medium category (HDI tier).

Universal Healthcare Coverage (UHC)

- The UHC Index is measured on a scale from 0 (worst) to 100 (best).
- It is based on the average coverage of essential services including reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, infectious diseases, noncommunicable diseases and service capacity and access.

- The chart shows that faster economic growth and the government's policy focus on healthcare schemes since 2005 have made a distinct improvement for India, there is still a long way to go.

6 . *MAHARATNA STATUS*

- **Rural Electrification Corporation** (REC) Ltd. was recently accorded the status of a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE).
- REC achieved this status due to its adaptability, resilience, and consistent performance even during the global Covid-19 pandemic.
- In FY22, REC made its highest ever net profit of ₹10,046 crores and reached a net worth of ₹50,986 crores, due to its cost-effective resource management and strong financial policies.

REC

- Incorporated in 1969, REC is a **Non-Banking Financial Company** (NBFC) focusing on power sector financing and development across India.
- It **provides financial assistance** to state electricity boards, state governments, central/state power utilities, independent power producers, rural electric cooperatives and private sector utilities.
- REC has played a key role in the success of the flagship schemes such as **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana** and **SAUBHAGYA.**
- It has contributed towards achieving village and household electrification in the country.
- It is currently playing the role of *nodal agency* for **Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS)**, for revamping the distribution sector to reduce the financial & operational issues.

Criteria For Grant Of Maharatna Status

- CPSEs fulfilling the following criteria are eligible for the grant of Maharatna status:
  - ✓ Should have Navratna status & be listed on Indian stock exchange with minimum prescribed public shareholding Average annual turnover of more than Rs 25,000 crore during the last 3 years.
  - ✓ Average annual net profit after tax of more than Rs. 5,000 crore, during the last 3 years
  - ✓ Average annual net worth of more than Rs. 15,000 crore, during the last 3 years
  - ✓ It should also have significant global presence/international operations.

Impact of Maharatna Status

- The status will give more autonomy to REC's Board while taking financial decisions.
- The Board can make equity investments to undertake financial joint ventures and wholly-owned subsidiaries, mergers and acquisitions in India and abroad, subject to a ceiling of 15% of the net worth of the concerned CPSE, limited to Rs.5,000 crore in one project.

- The Board can also structure and implement schemes related to personnel and human resource management and training. They can also enter into technology Joint Ventures or other strategic alliances.

7. BLUE BOND

Recently, Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has released the consultation paper on Blue Bonds. In its consultation paper, the SEBI has highlighted the need to have framework for the issuance of Blue Bonds. It has also argued for revisiting the framework for the Green Bonds to reduce the practice of Greenwashing by the companies.

GREEN BONDS: CONCEPT AND FRAMEWORK IN INDIA

- The Green Bonds are the bonds which are issued for financing green energy projects such as Renewable energy, clean transportation (including mass/public transportation), sustainable water management, waste management, biodiversity conservation etc. In 2007, World's first Green Bonds "Climate Awareness Bond" was issued in Europe.
- In 2016, SEBI issued the guidelines for the issuance of Green Bonds in India. Subsequently, Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) issued Green Bonds for Electrification of Railways. Several private sector companies such as Adani Energy have also issued Green Bonds.

PRESENT STATUS OF GREEN BONDS IN INDIA

As per the Economic Survey 2019-20, climate bonds worth $ 10 billion were issued in the first half of 2019 in India. India occupies the 2nd spot (after China) in terms of Green Bond Issuances. Further, in Union Budget 2022- 23, the finance minister has announced that Centre would issue Sovereign Green Bonds for funding Green Energy projects.

SCOPE FOR BLUE BONDS

Blue economy is the "sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of ocean ecosystem. (World Bank). The Blue economy currently comprises 4.1% of India's economy. India has tremendous scope for deployment of blue bonds in various aspects of the blue economy, like:

- ✓ Oceanic resource mining: Mining of polymetallic nodules present in Indian ocean can help India improve availability of nickel, copper, cobalt and manganese.
- ✓ Sustainable fishing: Money raised through Blue Bonds can be used to promote sustainable fishing and end exploitative fishing devices like bottom trawlers.
- ✓ Promote Offshore Wind Energy: Government has set a target of 5 GW of offshore wind installations by 2022 and 30 GW by 2030.

- ✓ Coral Conservation: India can invest in technologies like bio-rock to rejuvenate the corals.
- ✓ Promote Eco tourism along the Indian beaches.

GREENWASHING

- Greenwashing refers to the practice of channelling proceeds from green bonds towards projects or activities having negligible or negative environmental benefits. Various companies in the past have been accused of greenwashing wherein companies have diverted the money raised through Green Bonds towards other activities.
- Countries such as China and the European Union (EU) have issued their own detailed classification regarding assets eligible to be financed through 'green' bonds. However, India does not have a detailed classification of such assets.
- In this regard, SEBI has proposed that the list of sectors identified as "eligible" for Green Bonds would be reviewed and updated accordingly.

8 . SOVEREIGN GOLD BONDS

On behalf of the Central Government, the RBI recently issued the second tranche of Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGBs) for the year 2022-23. In this regard, let us look at important aspects of Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGBs).

DETAILS OF SOVEREIGN GOLD BONDS (SGBs)

What are Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGBs)? : Government securities denominated in grams of gold. They are substitutes for holding physical gold. Investors have to pay the issue price in cash and the bonds will be redeemed in cash on maturity. The Bond is issued by Reserve Bank on behalf of Government of India.

Features:
- ✓ Denomination: Bonds are issued in denominations of one gram of gold and in multiples thereof.
- ✓ Investment Limits: Minimum investment: 1 gm and Maximum Investment: 4 kg for individuals.
- ✓ Interest rate: 2.50 per cent per annum.

Working Mechanism: As an Investor, you can buy sovereign Gold Bond of a denomination ranging from 1 gm to 40 kg. On buying this bond, you would be entitled to an annual rate of interest of 2.5%. Upon the maturity period (i.e. after 8 years), you can redeem the bond and get cash which is equivalent to the current market value of the Gold.

Example: Let's say, u have bought SGB with face value of 1 gm of Gold (Say, at Rs 3000) initially. Later, after 8 years, the price of the Gold in the market could have increased to Rs 5000. So, you would be entitled to get Rs 5,000 upon redemption of this Gold Bond. This in addition to annual rate of Interest of 2.5%.

BENEFITS FOR THE INVESTORS

- Superior alternative to holding gold in physical form.

- Option to sell the SGB in the stock exchanges (Applicable only after minimum 5 years)
- Risks and costs of storage are eliminated.
- Investors are assured of the market value of gold at the time of maturity and periodical interest.
- SGB is free from issues like making charges and purity in the case of gold in jewellery form.

CHALLENGES WITH SOVEREIGN GOLD BONDS (SGBS) SCHEME
- Cultural Affinity towards Physical Gold
- Physical Gold used as a Status Symbol in Indian Society.
- Poor Awareness among the retail Investors
- Need for the Demat account to invest in SGB can act as major hindrance
- Lock-in period of 5 years wherein the Investor cannot sell the SGB for an initial period of 5 years.

9 . INDIA HAS ACHIEVED ITS TARGET OF BLENDING 10% ETHANOL BLENDING

Recently, Prime Minister Modi has announced that India has achieved its target of blending 10% sugarcane-extracted ethanol in petrol, ahead of schedule. However, according to some of the experts achieving the target of 20% Ethanol blending by the end of 2025 is going to be daunting. In this regard, let us look into various dimensions of Ethanol Blending in India.

UNDERSTANDING BIOETHANOL
Produced from sugar containing materials (sugar cane, sugar beet, sweet sorghum etc), starch containing materials (corn, cassava, rotten potatoes, algae etc.) and cellulosic materials (Bagasse, Wood waste, Agricultural and forestry residues etc).

DIFFERENT GENERATIONS OF BIOETHANOL
- First Generation Bioethanol: Generated from food crops with high levels of starch and sugar. First generation biofuel production competes with food production for water and arable land, and may also contribute to resource depletion such as water shortages, and soil and water degradation
- Second Generation Bioethanol: Do not compete against food supplies as they are based on non-food raw material. It uses non-food crops and feedstock such as Agricultural waste, bagasse, municipal waste etc.
- Third Generation Bioethanol: Uses specially engineered Algae whose biomass is used to convert into biofuels. The microalgal biomass can use nutrients (carbon, nitrogen, phosphate or sulphur) from industrial waste streams to create high concentrations of biomass.

PRESENT STATUS OF ETHANOL PRODUCTION
- Nodal Department: Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) is the nodal department for production of fuel grade ethanol in the distilleries in the country.
- Eligible raw materials: sugarcane-based raw materials - Molasses, sugarcane juice / sugar / sugar syrup, surplus rice with Food Corporation of India (FCI) and Maize.
- Administered Pricing Mechanism (APM) for Ethanol:
  - ✓ Ethanol produced from sugarcane sources: Decided by Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) • Ethanol produced from Food grains: Decided by Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs)
- Annual Production of Ethanol: 330 crore litres.
- Blending percentage: 10%

INITIATIVES TAKEN
- National Policy on Biofuels 2018: Under the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Program, an indicative target of 10% ethanol blending with petrol by 2022 and 20% blending by 2030 was laid out. This policy was later amended to prepone the 20% Ethanol blending target from 2030 to 2025.
- Interest Subvention Scheme for enhancement and augmentation of the ethanol production capacity: Government bears interest subvention against the loan availed by project proponents for setting up of new distilleries or expansion of existing distilleries
- Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN (Jaiv Indhan- Vatavaran Anukool fasal awashesh Nivaran) Yojana aims to provide financial support to Integrated Bioethanol Projects using lignocellulosic biomass and other renewable feedstock for promotion of Second Generation Bioethanol.
- Reduction in Goods & Service Tax (GST) on ethanol meant for EBP Programme from 18% to 5%.

STRATEGIES
- Flex Fuel Vehicles: Flex Fuel Engine technology (FFE) is a well-accepted concept in Brazil, representing over 80% of the total number of new vehicles sold in the country. The Flex fuel vehicles used in Brazil operate with E27 or E100 Hydrous ethanol or any blend between these two.
- Encourage use of water saving crops: Production of ethanol from maize and such other low water consulting feedstock may be encouraged.
- Tax Incentives for E20 blended vehicles: Globally, vehicles compliant with higher ethanol blends are provided with tax benefits.
- Pricing of Ethanol blended fuel should be lower than normal petrol to compensate for the reduction in the fuel efficiency.
- Single window clearance for speedy clearances for new and expansion projects for ethanol production.

10 . *SETTLEMENT OF ACCOUNTS*

- Beginning October 1, the new account settlement system for the stock broking industry will be effective.
- Under the guidelines issued by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) in July, the trading members will have to settle the accounts on a monthly or quarterly basis on the first Friday of the month or quarter

Settlement of Accounts

- SEBI mandates stockbrokers to settle i.e., transfer the available credit balance from trading account to bank account, at least once in a quarter (90 days) or 30 days.
- The process of transferring the unutilised funds back into the bank account is called **Running Account Settlement** or **Quarterly Settlement of Funds**.
- The **funds are transferred back to the primary bank account of the customer** that is linked to the trading account.
- As per the latest guidelines, the settlement will now be done on the first Friday of the quarter or the month *depending upon the option selected by the customer*.
- If the first Friday of the quarter is a trading holiday, then such settlement shall happen on the previous trading day.

Impact	Concerns
• It will help to protect the investors by preventing the misuse of money lying in trading accounts of investors for long periods. • It will help brokers develop a system just like banks, which credit interest in the accounts of their customers at the end of the quarter. This will give certainty to investors and trading members. • If a customer has **more than one demat account** with different brokers, having one settlement date for the entire industry will make it easier for the investors to keep track of their funds in all accounts as they would all get settled on the same day.	• However, brokers are worried that bunching of all settlements on one day (as against individual settlement dates for different clients in 30 or 90 days) may create challenges for the industry as a whole. • Brokers will have to organise cash which could otherwise be in their working capital. • It will also lead to a decline in volumes in the following trading session as clients will have to transfer funds from their bank accounts to their trading accounts in order to trade.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1 . CENTRAL CIVIL SERVICES (CONDUCT) RULES

Senior IAS officer Smita Sabharwal, who is secretary in Chief Minister's Office (CMO) in Telangana has expressed against Gujarat government's decision to release 11 convicts in the Bilkis Bano case. This has triggered a debate in political and bureaucratic circles regarding expressing against decision of government while in duty.

ISSUE AT HAND
- Whether bureaucrats and public servants openly express their views against an act or decision of central o state government.
- Whether such expression against government's decision is covered under Article 19(1)(a) or restricted by Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules of 1964 as ground of reasonable restriction under Article 19(2). Different opinions have been expressed on tweet of Smita Sabharwal against decision of remission in backdrop of Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules of 1964.

RULE 9 OF CENTRAL CIVIL SERVICES (CONDUCT) RULES OF 1964
- No Government servant shall, in any radio broadcast, telecast through any electronic media or in any document published in his own name or anonymously, pseudonymously or in the name of any other person or in any communication to the press or in any public utterance, make any statement of fact or opinion
  - ✓ which has the effect of an adverse criticism of any current or recent policy or action of the Central Government or a State Government

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR	ARGUMENTS AGAINST
In a democracy, right to criticize government is a Lipika Paul v. State Of Tripura: Tripura High Court held - "As a Government servant the petitioner is not devoid of her right of free speech, a fundamental right which can be curtailed only by a valid law." The petitioner	**Rule 9 of Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules Decision of Remission can be said to be an executive action** of State Government of Gujarat and hence covered under Rule 9. **Approach association to**

was entitled to hold her own beliefs and express them in the manner she desired, subject to not crossing the borders laid down in Conduct Rules which were applicable in Tripura. **Subverts Rule of Law – It has been argued that decision to release prisoners guilty of gang rape and murder not only subverts spirit ofconstitution and rule of law but also goes against judicial verdicts. In such exceptional circumstances, bureaucrat had expressed as opinion because it is the duty of civil servant is to uphold constitutional principles in letter and in spirit and the rule of law. Rule 9 of Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules is not only stringent but also vaguely worded -** Releasing criminals who had committed heinous crimes prematurely, without application of mind cannot be termed as a policy of the executive. **Increasing use of Social Media in present times -** Times have changed drastically, prohibition on use of social media even by a

express dissent - If any bureaucrat feels very strongly about something that is being done or acted upon by government, then such officers should approach associations rather than expressing opinion on social media platforms. **Instill Discipline –** Whole purpose of Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules is to instill discipline among officers for overall **Dissent Notes are given during policy deliberations -** There is a process of decision making. Right from below, matter is examined, pros and cons are taken up, bureaucracy is given an opportunity to examine all aspects, write their notes of objection or support, and finally it reaches political executive. When a policy is decided, it must be obeyed and complied with by bureaucracy. **Lack of Authority –** Being an officer serving under Telangana

bureaucrat to express her opinion is too devoid them of their fundamental right of speech and expression. Nowadays, many government officers and ministers are encouraged to communicate government policies to public through social media	Government, Ms. Sabharwal has no authority to express her opinion on decision of Gujarat Government as she is not a stakeholder in the decision-making process.

2 . PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES FOR MPs

Congress members forced adjournments in Upper House when Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge received summons from Enforcement Directorate to appear while the House was in session. Addressing the concerns of the MP, former Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu said that members have a wrong notion that they have a privilege from action by investigating agencies while session is on.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISONS FOR PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES

- Parliamentary privileges (Art 105 & 194) are special rights, freedom of speech, immunities, exceptions enjoyed by members of the two houses of Parliament and their committees.
- Privileges includes
  - ✓ Immunity from any Court proceedings in with respect to anything said or any vote given by member in the Parliament.
  - ✓ Immunity from any Court proceedings against the publication of any report, votes, paper etc. by or under authority of the Parliament.
- These rights are also given to those individuals who speak and participate in any committee of Parliament, which includes Attorney General of India and Union Ministers.
- *President, who is integral part of the parliament, does not enjoy these privileges.*
- Article 105 (3) was amended by Constitution 42nd and 44th Amendment and now has two aspects.
  1. Powers, privileges and immunities of each Houses of Parliament, its Members and Committees shall be such as may be defined by Parliament by law in time.
  2. Till such powers, privileges and immunities are defined by Parliament, shall be same as that was enjoyed by House of Commons as on 26th January 1950.

- Article 105 (3) has avoided direct reference to House of Commons but effectively such privileges continue till Parliament frames a law.
- Parliament has not yet codified its privileges.

FREEDOM OF PUBLICATION - ARTICLE 361-A

- Article 361-A was added by Constitution 44th Amendment which says that no person shall be liable to any proceedings, civil or criminal in any Court of law in respect of any publication in a newspaper of a substantially true report of any proceedings of either House of Parliament or Legislative Assembly, unless the publication is proved to have been made with malice. A similar immunity is extended to broadcast on air. Newspapers were not immune to publications of parliamentary proceedings prior to 44th Amendment.
- In the Searchlight case, SC ruled that publication of inaccurate or mashed version of speeches delivered in the House or misreporting the proceedings amounts to breach of privilege. The Court held that publication of those parts of proceedings by a newspaper which were expunged by the House amounts to breach of privilege of the House and the offending party can act despite protection from Article 361A.
- Supreme Court held that House could impose prohibition on publication of any debates, proceedings even if such prohibitions amounted to violation of freedom of speech and expression under Article 19 (1)(a).

INCORPORATION OF PRIVILEGE UNDER SECTION 135A OF CIVIL PROCEDURE CODE (CPC)

- Former Rajya Sabha Chairman emphasised that under Article 105 of Constitution, MPs enjoy "certain privileges so that they can perform their parliamentary duties without let or hindrance".
- "One of the privileges is that a MP cannot be arrested in a civil case 40 days before the commencement of the session or committee meeting, and 40 days thereafter.
- This privilege is already incorporated under Section 135A of Civil Procedure Code (CPC), 1908,". However, the privilege does not extend to criminal cases as highlighted under Section 135A of CPC.
- However, in connection with criminal matters, MPs "are not on a different footing than a common citizen. It means that a MP does not enjoy any immunity from being arrested in a criminal case during the session or otherwise.

CIVIL PROCEDURE CODE (CPC) PROVIDES EXEMPTION ONLY IN CIVIL CASES

Section 135A - Exemption of members of legislative bodies from arrest and detention under civil process

1. No person shall be liable to arrest or detention in prison under civil process –
   a. if he is a member of –
      i. Either House of Parliament, or

ii. Legislative Assembly or Legislative Council of a State, or
iii. a Legislative Assembly of a Union territory, during continuance of any meeting of such House of Parliament or of Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Council.

b. if he is a member of any committee of
   i. Either House of Parliament, or
   ii. Legislative Assembly of a State or Union territory, or
   iii. Legislative Council of a State, during continuance of any meeting of such committee.

c. if he is a member of—
   i. either House of Parliament, or
   ii. a Legislative Assembly or Legislative Council of a State having both such Houses, during continuance of a joint sitting, meeting, conference or joint committee of Houses of Parliament or, Houses of State Legislature and during forty days before and after such meeting, sitting or conference.

d. Thus, Section 105A of CPC *provides protection to members of Parliament and State Legislatures against arrest and detention in the following circumstances (but only in Civil Cases):*
   i. During continuance of proceedings in the Parliament or State Legislature.
   ii. During continuance of proceedings of any Committee of the Parliament or State Legislature.
   iii. 40 days before or after a joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament or the State Legislative Assembly and State Legislative Council.

PRECEDENT & SUPREME COURT JUDGMENT

- Ruling given by former Chairman of Rajya Sabha Dr. Zakir Hussain was referred. *"Members of Parliament do enjoy certain privileges so that they can perform their duties. One such privilege is freedom from arrest when the* Parliament *is in session. This privilege of freedom from arrest is limited only to civil cases and has not been allowed to interfere in the administration of criminal proceedings."*

- Anandan Nambiar vs. Chief Secretary, Government of Madras (1966): SC held that if a MP was arrested underprovisions of Preventive Detention Act 1950, the right to attend proceedings and cast a vote cannot be claimed by the member.

- State of Kerala Vs K. Ajith (2021): SC held that elected legislators cannot claim privilege or immunity to stand above sanctions of criminal law and ruled out withdrawal of criminal case against MLAs in relation to damage of public property caused by MLAs during a ruckus in Kerala Legislative Assembly.

ARTICLE 361 - PROTECTION OF PRESIDENT AND GOVERNORS

1. President, or Governor, shall not be answerable to any court for exercise and performance of powers and duties of his office or for any act done in exercise and performance of those powers and duties.

2. No criminal proceedings shall be instituted or continued against President, or Governor of a State, in any court during his term of office.

3. No process for arrest or imprisonment of President, or Governor of a State, shall issue from any court during his term of office.

4. No civil proceedings in which relief is claimed against President, or Governor of a State, shall be instituted during his term of office in any court in respect of any act done or purporting to be done by him in his personal capacity, whether before or after he entered upon his office as President, or as Governor of such State, until expiration of two months next after notice in writing has been delivered to President or Governor, or left at his office stating the nature of the proceedings, the cause of action therefor, the name, description and place of residence of the party by whom such proceedings are to be instituted and the relief which he claims.

3 . *DRAFT TELECOMMUNICATION BILL 2022*

Central government, in an effort to overhaul the regulatory framework of the Indian Telecom space, had come up with a new Draft Telecommunication Bill 2022 and invited feedback and suggestions from public over it.

NEED FOR A NEW LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- To *replace and consolidate outdated British era laws* governing the telecom sector such as:
- To *create level playing field* between **Telecom entities** and **OTT** (Over-the-top) players that provide calling and messaging services by bringing the latter within regulatory framework
  - ✓ The telecommunication services (**Airtel**, **Vi**, **Jio**) had to incur high costs of licences and spectrum, while OTT communication players(**WhatsApp**, **Telegram)** used their infrastructure to offer free services.
- To keep pace with the changing nature of telecommunication and technologies.

- To bring in a world class regulation in line with global best practices.
- To protect users from cyber frauds .
- To address bottlenecks in the rapid expansion of telecom infrastructure as the existing regulatory framework based on **Right of way rules 2016** has had a limited impact.
- To provide certainty regarding spectrum management.

KEY PROPOSALS OF THE DRAFT BILL

- Internet-based and OTT communication services such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Facetime, Google Meet etc. to come under definition of Telecom services.
- OTT services will **need licenses** to operate.
- Entities that have been granted licence have to identify the user of their platforms via a verifiable mode of identification
  - ✓ To prevent cyber fraud, the Bill provides that the identity of the person sending a message through telecom services shall be available to a user receiving it.
- **Spectrum** should primarily be allocated through **auction;** but for *specific functions related to government and public interest like defense, transportation and research* the spectrum is assigned through administrative process.
- Equip government with power to **intercept communication** in the interest of sovereignty, integrity or security of India, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, or preventing incitement to an offence.
- Power to government to terminate spectrum allocations partly or in full, if it determines that assigned spectrum has *remained unutilized for insufficient reasons* over a period of time.
- Dilution in some crucial powers and responsibilities of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI):
- TRAI may direct operators "to abstain from predatory pricing"
- **Simplify the framework for mergers, demergers, acquisitions or other forms of restructuring**, by only requiring intimation to the licensing authority
- In case a telecom entity in possession of spectrum goes through insolvency or Bankruptcy, the spectrum assigned to that entity will revert to central government control. Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 Indian Wireless Telegraphy act, 1933 Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950 by eliminating the need for the government to seek **regulator's recommendations before issuing licenses** by removing the provision that empowered TRAI to **request the government to furnish information or documents** necessary to make such recommendations
- **Right of way enforceable at the state and municipal corporation level.** A public entity that owns the land **has to Grant** right-of way permission expeditiously unless it gives a substantive ground for refusal. This legal framework is key to the rollout of 5G services.
- **Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)** which was created under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, will be referred to as the "**Telecommunication Development Fund**".

✓ USOF is name for the levies collected by the Centre from telecom companies with a view to ensuring funding & development of communication services in rural & underserved areas.
✓ Currently, USOF has a surplus cash of around Rs. **60,000 crore lying unutilised**.

CONCERNS RAISED BY THE BILL

- Centre **can't** take coercive action against **states or Municipal corporations** to impose right of way rules as **land is a state subject.**
- OTT communication platforms are already regulated under **IT Act** to protect interest of consumers and keep platforms in check. Additional regulatory burden would increase the compliance cost and curb innovation in the sector.
- More clarity is also required as to how government plans to regulate OTT communication services.
- Government's power to tap into all kinds of communications without making sure that the common man has a **legal protection in the form of data protection law** is problematic.
- Adversely impact the consultative role of TRAI weakening its position as it excludes the obligation of the government to consult TRAI on licensing issues.
- Communications over WhatsApp are typically end-to-end encrypted and therefore can't be intercepted.

4 . *A DECISION TO LIVE STREAM SC PROCEEDINGS*

In a landmark move, the Supreme Court (SC) of India had taken a decision to live stream *all the proceedings of Constitution Benches* on a regular basis for the general public. The move has been touted as a significant reform in the functioning of Judiciary. Earlier, in *Swapnil Tripathi V. Supreme Court of India 2018*, the SC has held that the *Court proceedings of national and constitutional importance* shall be live-streamed in larger public interest.
Global Scenario: Across the world, live-streaming of judicial processes is an established practice. Examples include Canada, US, UK, Australia, Brazil, South Africa etc.
Live streaming in High Courts: Six high courts across India have been live streaming their proceedings which include *Gujarat, Odisha, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Patna, and Madhya Pradesh.*

Importance Of Live Streaming By Supreme Court	Concerns Surrounding Live Streaming
• Promotes **transparency and accountability** in the functioning of the Judiciary which are considered to be hallmark of democracy	• Much like live telecast of parliament, the Live streaming could lead to **grandstanding or**

• Significantly enhance the **public's right to know** about happenings in the court. It is to noted that '*Right to access Information*' is a part of Fundamental right under *Article 19(1)*. • Will help in strengthening the **trust and confidence** of public over the Judiciary's functioning • **Accessibility**: Help in overcoming the **barriers of distance** as Citizens from any corner of the country can be informed about proceedings in the SC. • Help in **De-congestion of courts** • Helps in **legal research and training** • Will improve conduct of lawyers and judges in the court halls • The video archives will be an excellent opportunity to identify and address systemic patterns that affects judicial functioning	**showmanship** by lawyers or Judges • Fears of irresponsible and motivated use of content. For example, Judges Observations during court proceedings can be extracted and used out of context on **social media platforms**. • May lead to **judicial populism**- Judges may act to maximize individual exposure • Cases may get sensationalized • Lack of digitally trained court officials • Judges during hearings may not ask questions or make comments that could be perceived as unpopular.

5 . *A MAJOR STEP IN PLUGGING GAPS ON DEATH SENTENCE*

The Supreme Court (SC) has referred to a **five-judge constitution bench** to 'frame **uniform guidelines** for the trial courts' due to lack of clarity on the manner in which the sentencing decisions are arrived at in cases relating to death penalty. This intervention by the SC is seen as a major step in plugging gaps in the way in which trial courts award the death sentence.

LEGAL MANDATE ON SENTENCE HEARING RELATING TO DEATH PENALTY

- Sec 235 of CrPC talks about "Judgment of acquittal or Conviction"
  - ✓ Sec 235(1) states that "after hearing arguments and points of law, the judge shall give a Judgment in the case"
  - ✓ Sec 235(2) states that "*if the accused is convicted*, the Judge shall, *hear the accused on the question of sentence and then pass sentence*".

- Sec 354(3) of CrPC
  - ✓ When an offence is punishable with death or imprisonment for life, the judgment shall **state the reasons** for the *sentence* awarded, and *if the sentence is death, "special reasons" for the sentence*.
  - ✓ In line with this directive under Sec 354(3) CrPC, ***Bachan Singh case*** laid down a *sentencing framework* that requires courts *to weigh aggravating and mitigating circumstances of both the crime and the accused* and ensure that the option of life imprisonment is unquestionably foreclosed.

BACHAN SINGH VS STATE OF PUNJAB (1980)

- ✓ While maintaining that death penalty can be awarded only in 'rarest of rare cases', the SC has mandated a ***separate sentence hearing*** of the accused.
- The *importance of a separate sentence hearing* on the issue of mandatory imposition of death sentence was reiterated in several other judgments such as *Santa Singh v. State of Punjab*, *Muniappan v. State of Tamil Nadu*, *Malkiat Singh v. State of Punjab* etc.
- Thus, while the importance of separate sentence hearing on death penalty has been emphasized by various judgments, there are question marks on when a separate sentence hearing is supposed to take place before imposing death sentence on the guilty.

WHEN A SEPARATE SENTENCE HEARING IS SUPPOSED TO TAKE PLACE?

- There are *conflicting rulings* as to when a separate hearing is supposed to take place.
- At least three SC rulings have allowed *separate sentencing hearing on the same day as the conviction* and therefore death sentence can be granted on the same day of conviction.
- However, some three-judge decisions have ruled that same-day sentencing in capital offences **violate the principles of natural justice**.
- In 'Dattaraya v State of Maharashtra', a 2020 ruling, a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment on the grounds that an *adequate sentencing hearing* was not held.
- The adequate sentence hearing **can't happen on the same day** of conviction as the judge is required to consider not just factors that necessitate awarding the highest sentence (**aggravating factors**), but also the **mitigating circumstances**.
  - ✓ Further, collecting information on mitigating factors will take time for defence team & requires expertise in different fields like mental health, social work & anthropology etc.
  - ✓ The five-judge constitution bench is going to decide when a separate hearing is supposed to take place whether it is on the same day or at a future date after conviction.

WHAT ARE MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES?

- Mitigating circumstances are those factors that necessitate the reduction of a sentence.
- The SC while referring the issue to a larger bench listed mitigating circumstances that are to be accounted at the time of sentence hearing. These include: *Note*: Aggravating circumstances are those factors that necessitate awarding of the highest sentence.

ISSUES IN CURRENT SENTENCING REGIME RELATING TO DEATH PENALTY

- Non-consideration of Mitigating factors while awarding death penalty:
  - ✓ The Trial courts in India have **heavily relied only on aggravating factors** (circumstances of the crime) to decide the outcome of the crime contrary to the constitution bench decision in Bachan Singh (1980) case which emphasized on the relevance of mitigating factors in capital sentencing.
- Same day sentencing: In complete defiance of the spirit of **individualized justice** envisaged under Sec 235(2) CrPC, in several cases the trial courts have awarded death sentence on the same day of the conviction order instead of adjourning sentence hearing to a future date.
  - ✓ Even when the sentence hearings are not conducted on the same day, it was noticed that **barely time is given** for meaningful sentence hearings.
- Frequent usage of '**collective conscience and society's cry for Justice approach'** to the complete exclusion of mitigating factors:
  - ✓ *Bachan Singh case (1980)* had placed *no importance on the role of public opinion* in deciding the outcome while creating a sentencing framework for courts deciding between life imprisonment and the death penalty.
  - ✓ *Machhi Singh V. State of Punjab (1983)*: made public opinion relevant to capital sentencing by stating that death penalty might be deserved in cases where the conscience of the society had been shaken up.
  - ✓ As a result of Machhi Singh case, the SC had frequently used the "collective conscience and society's cry for justice" approach to impose death penalty.
  - ✓ This approach however has the criticized by the SC itself in '*Santosh Kumar Satishbhushan Bariyar v. State of Maharashtra'* for *want of clarity around the meaning of 'collective conscience' and the counter majoritarian role of courts.*
- *Factors such Possibility of life imprisonment, reformation had hardly been considered according to a study by Project 39A.*

6 . *SECTION 354A OF INDIAN PENAL CODE*

A sessions court in Kerala, while granting anticipatory bail recently to an author and social activist in a case of alleged sexual harassment, observed that offence under Section 354A of Indian Penal Code ('Assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty') is not prima facie attracted when the complainant was wearing 'sexually provocative dresses'. (Kerala High Court has since stayed the order of Sessions Court). The observation based on submitted photographs was not only an outraging remark on woman's constitutional right to dignity, life, personal liberty, bodily autonomy and privacy but also an exhibition of "Freudian slip" by Judge of Sessions Court.

FREUDIAN SLIP IMPACTS JUDGMENT

- Leaking of Unconscious Mind: According to Sigmund Freud, bits of unconscious mind leak out into conscious behaviors, and this prompts one to say something other than what he or she had intended.
- Resurfacing of Suppressed Desires: These memory lapses and errors happen when thoughts or desires someone has either suppressed (consciously pushed away) or repressed (buried without thinking) resurface.
- Definition: In psychoanalysis, a Freudian slip is defined as an error in speech, memory or action that occurs due to the interface of an unconscious subdued wish or internal train of thought.
- Judge's Remarks Reflects Prejudicial & Patriarchal Mindset: Terming a woman's dress as 'sexually provocative' by the Judge while deciding a case of sexual harassment can be a result of the objectification of woman in the society which is very typical of patriarchal mindset which is suppressed.
- Such reasoning diminishes the office and reflects prejudice or bias which runs throughout judicial and legal fraternity especially at lower Courts and administration.

GUIDELINES – SC IN APARNA BHAT VS STATE OF MADHYA PRADESH (2021)

- Avoid Language which diminishes Judicial Office: SC had held that "the use of reasoning/language which diminishes offence and tends to trivialize the survivor [in gender violence cases] is especially to be avoided under all circumstances.
- Judgment should be based on facts and not on past conduct: Victim's past behaviour or clothing should not be an indicator to be misused in the ongoing case. Such past behaviour (if any) should not enter judicial verdicts or orders or be considered relevant while making a judicial decision.
- Past behaviour of Victim cannot be a reason to grant bail to the accused. *Thus, the controversial comment of Sessions Court's judge is a clear violation of the guideline provided by Supreme Court.*

ANTICIPATORY BAIL

- Section 438 Cr. PC : When any person has reason to believe that he may be arrested on an accusation of having committed a non-bailable offence, he may apply

to High Court or Court of Session for a direction under this section.

- Example of Non-Bailable Offence: Murder (S.302) IPC, Dowry Death (S.304-B) IPC, Attempt to murder (S.307) IPC, Voluntary causing grievous hurt. (S.326) IPC, Kidnapping (S. 363) IPC, Rape (S. 376) etc.

ANTICIPATORY BAIL MAY BE GRANTED UNDER A FEW CIRCUMSTANCES

- A special case is made out that would suggest that there are ample grounds to assume that the applicant may be detained for unreasonable grounds.
- The allegations were made with a false intent or to cause the claimant to be injured/humiliated and arrested.
- The arguments against the claimant are ambiguous or generic.
- The name of the accused is not mentioned in the FIR.
- The applicant satisfies the Court that he is from a respectable family, has deep roots in society, and is not likely to abscond from or avoid the Court's proceedings or to hinder the investigation in any way.
- A plaintiff is an influential individual against the defendant who is a weak person or if a case is brought against a political rival.

WHEN CAN ANTICIPATORY BAIL BE REFUSED?

- The risk of the applicant absconding if cognizance is taken by the trial court, or the trial court has issued a warrant of arrest.
- The applicant has previously been imprisoned for any cognizable offense on conviction.
- Where the applicant can influence the investigation to his advantage.
- When the evidence produced suggests that the accused is guilty of crime or wrong doings.

NEED TO INCLUDE FEMINIST JURISPRUDENCE

- A remedial measure to cure the patriarchal mindset of the socio-legal system would be the inclusion of feminist jurisprudence in the curriculum for law students and a sensitisation of legal practitioners and judicial officers about feminist jurisprudence.
- Feminists Jurisprudence influences laws on sexual and domestic violence, inequality in workplace, gender based discrimination and other rights affecting women.

STANFORD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PHILOSOPHY SAYS:

- Feminist philosophy of law identifies pervasive influence of patriarchy and masculinist norms on legal structures and demonstrates their effects on material conditions of women and girls and those who may not conform to cisgender norms.
- It considers problems at intersection of sexuality and law; develops reforms to correct gender injustice, exploitation, or restriction.
- Feminist legal philosophy is an effort to examine and reformulate legal doctrine to overcome entrenched bias and enforced inequality of past as it structures human concepts and institutions for the future.

- Even Indian Laws over the period of years have incorporated the ideals of feminist jurisprudence by recognising the rights of women and providing safeguards against infringement of right or bodily privacy.
- The problem however is not merely of legislations, but to implement such legislations in a traditional male dominated society where most important offices of legislature, executive and judiciary is manned by men. In this backdrop, former Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramanna had asked women to fight for their right and ask for reservation at all levels of judiciary.

PROGRESSIVE LEGISLATIONS IN FAVOUR OF WOMEN

- VISHAKHA GUIDELINES IN CASES OF SEXUAL HARSSMENT AT WORKPLACE – Issued by Supreme Court in 1997 (Vishakha vs. State of Rajasthan) and led to enactment of *Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act.*
- SECTION 498A of IPC & PROTECTION OF WOMEN FROM DOEMSTIC VIOLENCE ACT - addresses cruelty of husband or his relative, defines domestic violence which includes sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse.
- PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL OFFENCES (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2019 entails amendments to POCSO Act by including death penalty for aggravated sexual assault on children, besides providing stringent punishments for other crimes against minors (specially girls). The proposed changes in Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act provides for fines and imprisonment to curb child pornography.
- MEDICAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY ACT, 1971 allows for aborting pregnancy by medical doctors (with specified specialisation) on certain grounds.
- MEDICAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2020: Increases upper limit for termination from 20 to 24 weeks for certain categories of women, removes this limit in case of substantial foetal abnormalities, and constitutes Medical Boards at state-level.
- ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY (REGULATION) ACT, 2021: regulates assisted reproductive technology services such as in-vitro fertilisation centres, sperm or egg banks and curb unethical practices such as sex selection.
- SURROGACY (REGULATION) ACT, 2021: constitute National Assisted Reproductive Technology and Surrogacy Board, State Assisted Reproductive Technology and Surrogacy Boards and appointment of appropriate authorities for regulation of the practice and process of surrogacy, Allows only altruistic surrogacy, which involves no monetary compensation to surrogate mother other than medical expenses and insurance coverage during pregnancy and provides eligibility criteria for couples.

DESIRABILITY OF GREATER WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN INDIAN JUDICIARY

- Help to address prevailing gender imbalance.
- Improve gender sensitisation of judicial orders – e.g.: addressing rights of women especially in cases of heinous crimes including cases of rape, murder and domestic violence.
- Help to improve gender specific infrastructure within Court premises – separate toilets for women.
- Ensure women empowerment in the judicial arena.
- Encourage women to pursue law as a career choice.
- Improve ratio of women law graduates and women judges.

RESERVATION FOR WOMEN IN JUDICIARY

MERITS	DEMERITS
• Ensure equitable representation in Courts and bridge gender gap. • Help in gender sensitisation in judicial orders, specially for cases related to women. Ex. domestic violence, women right over property etc. • Improve gender specific infrastructure within Court premises – separate toilets for women. • Improve gender sensitivity within Court premises • Will lead to women empowerment in judicial field • Encourage women to pursue law as a career choice – boost legal education • Help to improve ratio of women law graduates to that of women.	• Inadequacy of women reservation needs to be proved at state level, else reservation may violate the principles on which reservation is sought. • Chances of women reservation being utilised mostly from upper caste women as there are very few women from SC/ST/OBC community pursuing legal profession. • Appointment process for lower judiciary varies across states, hence it will be difficult to ensure uniformity in reservation for women across states.

SUGGESTION
- Providing reservation is a good move but should not be considered as the only move to improve women representation in Indian legal system.
- Women should be encouraged to accept law as a career choice and suitable reservation to women candidates must be provided at entry level.
- Within the set of reservation for women in higher judiciary, another subset of reservation must be

provided to women from backward class including SC/ST women in higher judiciary.
- There is a need to bring at least one Judge in Collegium of Supreme and High Court for equitable representation.
- State Governments must bring a law to provide reservation in lower judiciary to women and members of backward class.
- Create All India Judicial Service providing reservation to women, OBC, SC & ST Communities.

WAY FORWARD –
Greater representation of women across judicial hierarchies will help to achieve constitutional goals of social and economic justice along with SDG-5 and 10 - gender equality and reduced inequalities. Such representation will not only help to sensitise judgments especially where rights and modesty of female is at question but also avoid instances of Freudian slip by male dominated workplace.

7. BAN ON CONVERSION THERAPY

Based on judgment of Madras High Court, National Medical Commission (NMC) has written to all State Medical Councils (SMCs) to ban "conversion therapy" for LGBTQIA community and declared the practice as a "professional misconduct" under Indian Medical Council (Professional Conduct, Etiquettes and Ethics) Regulations, 2002. NMC also empowered SMCs to take disciplinary action against medical professionals who breach guideline.

- National Medical Commission (NMC) has been constituted by an act of Parliament known as National Medical Commission Act, 2019.
- Aims of National Medical Commission are to:
  - ✓ Improve access to quality and affordable medical education.
  - ✓ Ensure availability of adequate and high-quality medical professionals in all parts of country.
  - ✓ Promote equitable and universal healthcare that encourages community health perspective and makes services of medical professionals accessible to all the citizens.
  - ✓ Encourages medical professionals to adopt latest medical research in their work and to contribute to research.'
  - ✓ Objectively assess medical institutions periodically in a transparent manner.
  - ✓ Maintain a medical register for India.
  - ✓ Enforce high ethical standards in all aspects of medical services.
  - ✓ Have an effective grievance redressal mechanism.

CONVERSION THERAPY

- Conversion therapy, sometimes called "reparative therapy" or "gay cure therapy" tries to change someone's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Providers of such therapy claim these therapies can make someone heterosexual or "straight" but there's no evidence to support this.
- In practice, it means trying to stop or suppress someone from being gay, or from living as a different gender to their sex recorded at birth.
- It can include talking therapies and prayer, psychiatric treatment, drugs, exorcism and even violence, with the aim being to make the individual a heterosexual.
- According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), other health experts, conversion therapy poses risk of causing or exacerbating mental health conditions, like anxiety, depression stress and drug use which sometimes even lead to suicide.

DECISION OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

- Court was hearing plea of same-sex couple who sought police protection from their parents. (Parents often file case of missing person when their adolescent son or daughter run away with another person of the same sex)
  • Court Issued Interim Guidelines - Based on appeal, interim guidelines were issued for police, activists, Union and State Social Welfare Ministries, and National Medical Commission, regarding LGBTQIA+ community, to "ensure their safety and security to lead a life chosen by them."
- Prevented the Practice - The ruling prohibited any attempt to medically "cure" or change sexual orientation of LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual or of any other orientation) people. • Action against medical professionals - Court urged authorities to act against "professionals involving themselves in any form or method of conversion therapy," which could include withdrawal of licence to practice medicine.
- Directed Police to Close Cases of Consenting LGBTQIA Adults – "without subjecting them to harassment", if it found on investigation that the parties were consenting adults belonging to LGBTQIA+ community.
- Need to Sensitise Parents - Court stated that there is a need to sensitise the parents because first point of abuse often begins at home, with teenagers being forced to opt for "conversion" therapies.
- Provision of Legal Assistance - Community should be provided with legal assistance by District Legal Services Authority in coordination with law enforcement agencies.
- Implement the law – Agencies to follow Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020, and Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, in letter and spirit.

- Sensitisation Program for the LGBTQIA Community - for an all-out effort to understand the community and its needs. Based on decision of Madras High Court, National Medical Commission issued the directive to State Medical Councils on August 25 to ban the practice of Conversion Therapy.

8 . S.C JUDGEMENT IN THE MATTER OF AIFF

In a significant development in Indian football, Supreme Court has terminated mandate of Committee of Administrators (CoA) - which was constituted by Court- to manage affairs of All-India Football Federation (AIFF).

WHAT HAPPENED EARLIER?

- Supreme Court had ordered holding of AIFF elections under aegis of CoA, giving 36 eminent players voting rights.
- However, FIFA - 'Federation Internationale de Football Association' - was not in favour of individual members forming the electoral-college and accordingly suspended AIFF on August 15 with immediate effect over "flagrant violations of the FIFA Statutes".
- FIFA had cited "undue influence from third parties" in its suspension order and said that under-17 Women's World Cup scheduled to be held in India in October 2022 could not be held as per the schedule.
- FIFA had made it clear that it wanted an elected body, and not a court-appointed entity like CoA, to manage AIFF affairs.

SUPREME COURT'S (SC) ORDER

- To ensure conduct of U-17 Women's World Cup in India: SC modified the earlier directions relating to the CoA and the elections of AIFF to facilitate the revocation of the AIFF suspension and to ensure that India can host the Under-17 women's World Cup in October 2022 as scheduled.
- Remove Third Party Interference created by CoA: Supreme Court passed this order in the light of decision taken by FIFA to suspend AIFF, which construed functioning of CoA as "third party interference".
- Transfer of Management: The court has now transferred day-to-day management of AIFF from hands of CoA to federation's administration led by its Acting Secretary-General.
- The Court extended election program by one week.
- New Electoral College will now comprise representatives of member associations of States and Union Territories (35+1).

IMPORTANT FACTS

- India hosted under-17 men's World Cup 5 years ago in 2017.
- 2022 FIFA World Cup is scheduled to take place in Qatar in November-December 2022. This will be first World Cup ever to be held in Arab world and second

World Cup held entirely in Asia – 2002 in South Korea and Japan – won by Brazil.

- In 2018, France won FIFA World Cup by defeating Croatia in finals. This was second World Cup victory for France after their victory in 1998 by defeating Brazil.

9 . *CHANGES MADE IN CRIMINAL LAWS*

All social, human and economic development depends on rule of law and maintenance of law and order is a critical function of government. In this backdrop, the need for police reform is ever more imperative because of the pace with which our society is moving. Our police still function on feudal style and is still governed by colonial Police Act 1861 which was authoritarian in nature as it was made in aftermath of 1857 Sepoy Mutiny. Despite the challenges in functioning of police in India, several noteworthy reforms have also taken place in the criminal justice system to address the problems faced by the society. So, in this discussion let us go through the changes taken place so far in India's criminal justice system and steps taken towards police reforms.

POLICE UNDER STATE LIST OF SEVENTH SCHEDULE

- Police is under State List under Seventh Schedule of Indian Constitution and accordingly state government enjoys jurisdiction over functioning of police and overall law and order in society. The transfer and posting also lies in hand of Home Ministry of State governments.

State List

Entry 1: Public order (but not including the use of any naval, military or air force or any other armed force of the Union or of any other force subject to the control of the Union or of any contingent or unit thereof in aid of the civil power).

Entry 2: Police (including railway and village police) subject to the provisions of entry 2A of List I.

Union List

Entry 2A: Deployment of any armed force of the Union or any other force subject to the control of the Union or any contingent or unit thereof in any State in aid of the civil power; powers, jurisdiction, privileges and liabilities of the members of such forces while on such deployment.

[Entry 2A is inserted by Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976]

CHANGES MADE IN INDIA'S CRIMINAL LAWS OVER YEARS

- Probation of Offenders Act, 1958 shifted perspective of criminal justice system from deterrence-based model (to punish) to reformative approach in dealing with criminals based on their good conduct. The legislation provided for release of offenders on probation or after admonition or stern warning or release of offenders after paying some compensation for loss or injury caused to any person due to such offence committed by the convict.
- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961: Realising urgent need to check the social evil of dowry, the Act made it a punishable offence to give or take dowry.
- Changes made in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) over years
- Adding Section 498A (cruelty by husband and his relatives on the wife) and Section 304B (dowry death) along with certain amendments in the Evidence Act.
- Section 304B - Dowry Death: When death of wife is caused any burns or bodily injury or occurs otherwise than under normal circumstances within seven years of her marriage and it is shown that soon before her death she was subjected to cruelty or harassment by her husband or any relative of her husband for, or in connection with, any demand for dowry.
- Widening of Definition of Rape based on Justice Verma Committee's recommendations (after Nirbhaya incident in Delhi). Committing of Rape of women under 16 years of age is punishable with rigorous imprisonment for not less than twenty years, but which may extend to imprisonment for life, which shall mean imprisonment for the remainder of that person's natural life and shall also be liable to fine.
- Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 – prevent commission of offences of atrocities against members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; it has constituted Special Courts for the trial of such offences and provides for the relief and rehabilitation of the victims of such offences.
- Comprehensive laws such as Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, have been enacted.
- Information Technology Act has been strengthened to prevent cybercrimes.
- National Investigation Agency has been constituted after the deadly 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai to investigate and prosecute offences affecting national security.
- Changes have been made in Unlawful Assemblies Prevention Act by recognising individuals as terrorists.

IMPORTANT JUDICIAL DECISIONS IMPACTING CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

- Supreme Court granted relief to LGBTQ+ community by reading down Section 377 of IPC.
- Custodial torture and sexual harassment of women have been held to be violations of fundamental rights.

- Jurisprudence of providing compensation to victims of crime has evolved over time.
- Right to privacy has been recognised as a fundamental right under Article 21.
- Supreme Court has suspended pending criminal trials and court proceedings under Section 124A (Sedition) and has asked Union of India to reconsider British-era law.
- Attempts have been made to blend elements of inquisitorial system into (prevalent) adversarial system by making judicial inquiry into custodial death and custodial rape mandatory and dig out truth to punish the guilty.
- In the inquisitorial system, Courts actively participates in investigation whereas in adversarial system, Courts do not participate in investigation process. The inquisitorial process grants more power to judge who oversees the process, whereas judge in adversarial system serves more as an arbiter between claims of the prosecution and defence. Despite these progressive changes, police are often accused to go beyond its mandated powers of arrest which at times also lead to custodial torture during an investigation. Many committees have been constituted and recommendations made to reform criminal justice system in general and police, but not much has been achieved.

IMPORTANT STEPS TAKEN IN INDIA ON POLICE REFORMS

- *Gore committee on police training (1971-73):* recommended enlarging content of police training from law and order and crime prevention to a greater sensitivity and understanding of human behaviour.
- *National police commission 1977:* recommended insulating police from illegitimate political and bureaucratic interference.
- *Padmanabhaiah Committee 2000:* recommended that constables, and police force in general, should receive greater training in soft skills (such as communication, counselling and leadership) given they need to deal with the public regularly.
- *Police Act Drafting Committee (or Soli Sorabjee Committee)*: drafted a new Model Police Act to replace colonial 1861 Police Act.

PRAKASH SINGH JUDGEMENT – 2006

Prakash Singh, former Director General of Police filed a petition in Supreme Court in the year 1996 and sought major changes to the police structure. Supreme Court gave the final verdict in 2006 where it directed states and UTs to comply with *seven binding directives* on police reforms. These directives result in institutional and structural reforms in police in India. They are:

1. Constitution of a State Security Commission: as a watchdog body to oversee the functioning of the police, with its recommendations being binding on the State Government.
2. Selection of State DGP from out of a panel prepared by UPSC, and provision for a minimum tenure of two years for the DGP so selected, irrespective of his date of superannuation.
3. A minimum two-year tenure for other police officer, except under specified circumstances.
4. Separation of investigation from law and order, duly ensuring full coordination between the two wings.
5. Creation of Police Establishment Boards to deal with transfers, postings and other service-related matters of police officers, including disposal of their appeals on being subjected to illegal or irregular orders.
6. Constitution of Police Complaints Authorities at the State and District levels to investigate complaints against police officers.
7. Constitution of a National Security Commission at the Union level to prepare panels for selection of Chiefs of Central Police Organisations and to review measures to upgrade their effectiveness, etc.

SC ALSO SET UP THREE MEMBER K.T. THOMAS (2008)

- *To implement decisions of Prakash Singh, Supreme Court in 2008* set up a three-member Monitoring Committee chaired by former SC Judge *K.T. Thomas* with a twoyear mandate to examine compliance state by state and report back to it periodically.
- The committee submitted in 2010 that no state fully complied with the SC and expressed dismay over total indifference of police towards reforms in its functioning.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

- Government has reviewed Model Police Act, 2006 and accordingly has drafted Draft Model Police Bill, 2015. The drafting committee has tried to incorporate essence for making police more responsive, efficient and citizen friendly.
- Most states passed new laws or amended their existing laws considering Model Police Act, 2006 drafted by Soli Sorabjee Committee.
- In 2018, Supreme Court restrained state governments from appointing Director-General of Police (DGP) without first consulting the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).
- State governments concerned must send to UPSC names of the probable officers to be appointed as DGP three months before incumbent DGP is to retire. This judgment was in line with the recommendations given in Prakash Singh Judgment.
- In 2020: A five-member Committee for Reforms in Criminal Law has been set up by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs *chaired by the vice-chancellor of National Law University, Delhi - Balraj Chauhan*. The mandate of the committee is to *recommend reforms in criminal laws of the country* in a principled, effective and

efficient manner, which ensures the safety and security of the individual, the community and the nation and which prioritizes the constitutional values of justice, dignity and inherent worth of the individual.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- Trust deficit between police and citizens needs to be bridged by improving and incorporating soft skills and ensuring investigation in an impartial manner.
- There is a need to stop unwanted and mechanical arrests without proper investigation.
- More offences need to made bailable and compoundable. Compoundable offenses are those offenses where, complainant i.e., victim enters a compromise, and agrees drop charges against accused. However, such a compromise should be a "Bonafide,"

compromise (in good faith) and not under pressure from the accused or the police.
- Use of technology and forensic techniques must be encouraged to enhance quality of evidence. Specialised wings need to be established to deal with newer types of crime.
- State Government must produce their own Police Act based on Draft Model Police Bill, 2015 suggested by Soli Sorabjee Committee to break the shackles of the past.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

GEO IAS

1. *TAIWAN ISSUE*

US Speaker of House of Representatives visited Taiwan. This visit was opposed by China. China pointed to take violent measures against the visit. China believes that the visit will compromise 'One China Policy'. One China Policy refers to US and larger world's recognition of sovereign rights of China over Taiwan.

BACKGROUND

- Present day China is Known as People's Republic of China, while Taiwan is Known as Republic of China.
- RoC was declared on December 29, 1911under leadership of Dr Sun Yat-sen, founder of Kuomintang (KMT) Party.
- Under leadership of General Chiang Kai-shek, a civil war started between Chinese communist Party and KMT resulting in victory of the former, which led to retreat of KMT to Taiwan, while Communists taking control of Mainland China (PRC).

- Since 1949 PRC believes that Taiwan must be reunified with the mainland.
- During the cold war RoC was the only 'China' recognised at the UN until 1971.
- US inaugurated ties with the PRC and finally PRC was recognised as the actual China replacing Taiwan.
- US backs Taiwan's independence but officially subscribes to PRC's "One China Policy", which means there is only one legitimate Chinese government. Thus, Taiwan is not part of any international organisations where sovereignty is a condition.
- Ukraine war, rise of China and US led initiative of countering China especially in the Indo-Pacific region has increased the focus on Taiwan.
- Scholars argue that in recent years, US has diluted its 'One China' policy and taken up an ambiguous stance over the issue.

IMPORTANCE OF TAIWAN

- One of the most important manufacturers of silicon chips which are bedrock of modern electronics industry. (TSMC)
- Access to Taiwan will increase the EEZ of China giving access to critical marine resources.
- Access to Taiwan will increase Chinese Navy's reach significantly.
- China considers Taiwan as one of its' core national interest issues.
- Taiwan has been important manufacturing and industrial centre in East Asia.

INDIA AND TAIWAN

India has been following the One China Policy with regards to the issue of Taiwan and Hong Kong. However, in the context of turbulence in India China relations owing to the Galwan Valley clash there has been a call for reviewing the One China policy that India has followed till date.

ONE CHINA POLICY AND INDIA

- Communist Party of China (CPC), after it occupied mainland China in 1949, pushing out then ruling Kuomintang Party to Formosa, now known as Taiwan, communist regime came up with One China policy.
- It staked claim on a much bigger territory of Tibet, then under a Buddhist order government with practically no military, besides Taiwan.
- China occupied Tibet by 1950 and consolidated its military stranglehold on the region through the decade.
- It has been aiming to capture Taiwan since then but in the face of global opposition, China has not dared to carry out its designs across the Formosa Strait in the South China Sea.
- India was among the first countries to recognise communist rule in China. Through the 1954 SinoIndian Trade Agreement, India also acknowledged Chinese control of Tibet.
- India's support to One China policy remained in limbo until 2003. It was during this intervening period that China built its south Tibet claim over Arunachal Pradesh.'
- In 2003, then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee signed a joint declaration with his counterpart Wen Jiabao in Beijing. This declaration recognised that the Tibet Autonomous Region is part of the territory of the People's Republic of China.

INDIA - TAIWAN RELATIONS

- Diplomatic relations have improved between India and Taiwan since 1990s, but they do have official diplomatic relations.

- India recognises only the People's Republic of China (in mainland China) and not the Republic of China's claims of being the legitimate government of Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau.
- However, Taiwan views India's rising geopolitical standing as a counterbalance to the PRC's dominance in the region.
- As a part of its "Look East" foreign policy, India has sought to cultivate extensive ties with Taiwan in trade and investment and cultural ties.
- India-Taipei Association was established in Taipei in 1995 to promote non-governmental interactions between India and Taiwan.
- In 2002, the two sides signed the Bilateral Investment Promotion & Protection Agreement.
- In 2019, India - Taiwan trade volume was US$7 billion, growing at a rate of 20% year on year.
- Major Taiwanese exports to India include integrated circuits, machinery and other electronic products. India is also keen to attract Taiwanese investment particularly in hi-tech and labour-intensive industries. More than 80 Taiwanese companies and entities currently have a presence in India.

CHANGE IN STANCE OF INDIA

- In 2020, two members of Indian Parliament virtually attended newly elected President Tsai's swearing in ceremony and praised Taiwanese democracy, thereby sending what some have termed a warning message to China and signalling a strengthening of relations between the Tsai and Modi administrations.
- In 2020, Indian government appointed a top career diplomat, Joint Secretary Gourangalal Das, former head of U.S. division in India's Ministry of External Affairs, as its new envoy to Taiwan.
- Ahead of Taiwan's national day, the Chinese embassy in India penned a letter to Indian media houses asking them to adhere to the government's One-China policy.
- Indian External Affairs Ministry brushed away the Chinese criticism by simply saying that the Indian media is free to carry what they want. Significantly, MEA did not re-iterate India's One-China policy.
- MEA in its communiques with China has stopped highlighting One China Policy.
- Despite recognition of One-China policy has been adamant on its claims on India's territory of Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh.
- The hostilities have only increased in recent years.
- Many Taiwanese companies are planning to remove their manufacturing centres and shift to India. This will create employment and economic growth in India.

ARGUMENTS FOR RECONSIDERING ONE CHINA POLICY

- China has never followed the One-India policy.
- It recently announced that it does not accept Ladakh as a Union Territory, and while ignoring Indian objections constructs roads through disputed GilgitBaltistan.
- Simultaneously, it diplomatically censures India whenever there are visits by Indian leaders or foreign diplomats to Arunachal Pradesh.
- China has also blocked foreign funding for developmental projects in Arunachal claiming it to be disputed.
- China has supported insurgencies in the Northeast.

2 . *THE ASIAN PALM OIL ALLIANCE (APOA)*

- The Asian Palm Oil Alliance (APOA) was **launched** during the **Globoil Summit** at Agra.
    - ✓ Globoil Summit is one of the World's Leading Edible Oils and Agri Trade Conference, Exhibitions & Awards. 2022 marks the 25th year celebration of Globoil India.
- It includes edible oil trade associations from five palm oil importing countries in South Asia – **India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal**.
- The idea is to gain collecting bargaining power and make imports sustainable.

APOA

- Unlike their counterparts in the EU, the industry associations of Asian palm oil importing countries are **not involved** in shaping the global discourse on sustainable palm oil in a collective way.
- Instead, Asian stakeholders, in the last two decades were forced to follow sustainability standards **that do not reflect Asian market realities**.
- The formation of APOA will empower several Asian countries, for whom palm oil is a source of affordable food and nutrition.
- It will safeguard the economic and business interests of the palm-oil consuming countries and will work towards increasing the consumption of sustainable palm oil in member countries.
- Membership of APOA would be further expanded to include companies or industry bodies associated with production or refining of palm oil across the continent.

PALM OIL

- Palm oil is an edible vegetable oil derived from the fruit of the oil palm.

- It is used in the food manufacturing, cosmetics, biofuels. It provides the foaming agent in soaps, shampoos and detergents.
- **Asian markets** are responsible for about **40% of the demand**. Europe accounts for about 12% and the US for 2%.
- Global palm oil production is dominated by **Indonesia and Malaysia**. These two countries, together, account for around **85% to 90% of total global palm oil production**.
- Indonesia and Malaysia are also the biggest palm oil exporters in the world.
- India is the largest importer of palm oil in Asian region and accounts for 15% of global imports.
    - ✓ **India's annual imports of edible oil** is around **13-14 million tonne** (MT). Around 8 MT of palm oil is imported from Indonesia and Malaysia, while other oils, such as soya and sunflower, come from Argentina, Brazil, Ukraine and Russia.
- China with 9%, Pakistan with 4%, and Bangladesh with 2% of global imports are the other significant countries with a stake in palm oil production and trade.

3. *INDIA, JAPAN 2+2 MEET*

The **second** India-Japan 2+2 ministerial dialogue took place recently in Tokyo, Japan.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Without specifically naming Russia or China, during the summit, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to a rules based global order that respects sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- During the summit, the Japanese side expressed its resolve to examine all options necessary for national defence, **including so called counterstrike capabilities**.
- The Japanese side also expressed its determination to fundamentally reinforce Japan's defence capabilities and to secure substantial increase of Japan's defence budget required for it.
- While acknowledging Japan's determination to reinforce its defence capabilities, Indian side expressed its support to work towards enhanced security and defence cooperation.
- The two sides also concurred to *launch* the **Joint Service Staff Talks** between the Japan Joint Staff and the Indian Integrated Defence Staff.
- India side welcomed:
    - ✓ The participation of Japan for the **first time** in the **multilateral exercise MILAN** and
    - ✓ The **operationalization of the Agreement** (signed in Sept. 2020) **Concerning Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services** between the Self-Defense Forces of Japan and the Indian Armed Forces in the exercise.

ABOUT 2+2 MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE
- The 2+2 dialogue is a format of meeting of the **foreign and defence** ministers of India and its allies on strategic and security issues.
- A 2+2 ministerial dialogue enables the partners to better understand and appreciate each other's strategic concerns and sensitivities taking into account political factors on both sides. • India has 2+2 dialogues with four **key strategic partners**: US, Australia, Japan, and Russia.

2+2 WITH JAPAN
- India and Japan held their inaugural 2+2 minister level dialogue in **November 2019**.
- The idea of such a 2+2 meeting was initiated during the summit meeting between Modi and Abe in Tokyo in October 2018.
- India and Japan have had a 2+2 foreign and defense dialogue led by **secretary level officers** from **2010.**

4. BOLSTER CRITICAL MINERAL SUPPLY CHAINS

It is a US-led partnership initiative of 11 nations that aims to bolster critical mineral supply chains. A cause of concern for India is that despite its ambitious renewable energy program which requires these critical minerals, it has not been included in the partnership.

MEMBERS OF MINERALS SECURITY PARTNERSHIP
US and 10 partners — Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Sweden, United Kingdom, and European Commission — have come together to form the MSP. (Note India is not a member of it).

OBJECTIVES OF MINERAL SECURITY PARTNERSHIP
- The new grouping is aimed at catalysing investment from governments and private sector to develop strategic opportunities.
- The focus on supply chains of minerals such as Cobalt, Nickel, Lithium, and the 17 'rare earth' minerals.
- It is primarily focused on evolving an alternative to China, which has created processing infrastructure in rare earth minerals and has acquired mines in Africa for elements such as Cobalt.
- China is one of the leading producers of REEs, with an estimated 70 per cent share of the global production.
- China doesn't just dominate supplies; it also has a head start of close to 25 years over other countries in developing the skills required for exploring and processing critical minerals.

ABOUT RARE EARTH ELEMENTS
- The 17 rare earth elements (REE) include the 15 Lanthanides (atomic numbers 57 — which is Lanthanum — to 71 in the periodic table) plus Scandium (atomic number 21) and Yttrium (39). REEs

are classified as light RE elements (LREE) and heavy RE elements (HREE).
- They are called rare earth because it is difficult to extract them from their oxide form technologically
- They occur in many minerals but typically in low concentration to be refined in an economical manner.
- The 17 elements are Cerium (Ce), Dysprosium(Dy), Erbium(Er), Europium(Eu), Gadolinium(Gd), Holmium(Ho), Lanthanum(La), Lutetium(Lu), Neodymium (Nd), Praseodymium(Pr), Promethium(Pm), Samarium(Sm), Scandium(Sc), Terbium(Tb), Thulium(Tm), Ytterbium(Yb) and Yttrium(Y).

IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL MINERALS
- Critical minerals are essential components of several modern-day appliances, including smartphones and computers.
- They are building blocks of green technologies like solar panels and wind turbines and are indispensable for the transition to electric battery-driven cars. Hybrid vehicles, semiconductors, flatscreen TVs and monitors, and high end electronics.
- International Energy Agency expects the demand for some of these minerals, such as lithium, to grow more than 40 times in the next two decades

RARE EARTH ELEMENT DISTRIBUTION IN WORLDINDIAN SCENARIO
- India has world fifth largest deposit of rare earth elements but most of the needs are fulfilled by China.
- Some REEs are available in India — such as Lanthanum, Cerium, Neodymium, Praseodymium and Samarium, etc However Rees, such as Dysprosium, Terbium, and Europium, are not available in Indian deposits in extractable quantities
- India is seen as a late mover in attempts to enter the lithium value chain, coming at a time when EVs are predicted to be a sector ripe for disruption.

CONCERNS FOR INDIA
- Supply: India's plans towards electrification i.e., 80 percent of the country's two- and three-wheeler fleet, 40 percent of buses, and 30 to 70 per cent of cars will be EVs by 2030 will be jeopardised.
- Technology status: The reason for India's exclusion is also that India does not bring much expertise to the table, which India will further have no access to by not being part of the grouping.
- Dependence: If India is not able to self-extract rare earth or become a part of the alliance, then it will be dependent on other countries and particularly China. The dependence will be like that of dependence in the case of Oil.

WHAT CAN INDIA DO?
- Indian private sector needs to be encouraged to undertake exploration drive in Indian Ocean region to prospect for rare earth material.
- A majority of deposits after China are with Quad countries, India can partner with quad members to

- ensure that partnership dimensions under alliance can be broadened.
- Creation of a new department for rare earth is required to play role of enabler, thus taking it away from IREL (PSU under department of Atomic energy)
- There are also suggestions that India should open its REE sector to attract capital, competition and innovation.

STEPS TAKEN BY INDIA
- India's state-owned company has signed agreement with Argentinian firm for exploration of Lithium, a critical component of batteries.

- India has formed a PSU named KABIL for sourcing domestic supplies of critical minerals for domestic industry.
- India and Australia have decided to enter a critical mineral investment partnership to offset technological and hardware requirements.

SUMMITS AND ORGANISATIONS

1. *10TH INDIA-BRAZIL-SOUTH AFRICA DIALOGUE FORUM (IBSA)*

The **10th** India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum **(IBSA) Trilateral Ministerial Commission** meeting took place in New York.
- India is the incumbent IBSA Chair and will be hosting the **6th IBSA Summit** on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in November 2022. So far, only 5 IBSA summit has taken place (5th IBSA Summit – Tshwane, October 2011).

INDIA-BRAZIL-SOUTH AFRICA DIALOGUE FORUM (IBSA)
- IBSA is a unique Forum which brings together India, Brazil and South Africa, three large democracies and major economies from three different continents, facing similar challenges.
- The dialogue forum was created in 2003, with the adoption of **Brasília declaration**.
- IBSA does not have a headquarters or a permanent executive secretariat.
- Cooperation in IBSA is on three fronts:
  - ✓ As a forum for *consultation and coordination on global and regional political issues*. E.g., the reform

of the global institutions of political and economic governance, WTO/Doha Development Agenda, climate change, terrorism etc.
  - ✓ Trilateral collaboration on concrete areas/projects: This is done through 14 working groups and 6 People-to-People Forums, for the common benefit of three countries.
  - ✓ Assisting other developing countries by taking up projects in the latter through **IBSA Fund.**
- The **United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)** is the **fund manager** of IBSA fund.
- Each IBSA member country is required to contribute $1 million per annum to the fund.
- Through this initiative, development projects are executed in fellow developing countries.
- It has, since its inception, allocated over US $44 million, supporting 39 South-South cooperation development projects in 35 partner countries with the majority being Least Developed Countries.
- IBSA Fund received the 2010 MDG Award for South-South cooperation.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF IBSA: IN BRIEF

- The three Foreign Ministers have been meeting regularly to provide a coordinated leadership to the grouping. The recent meeting in New York was 10th such meeting.
- While the *IBSA Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (IBSA Fund)* is small in monetary terms, it has succeeded in implementing many development projects in diverse countries.
  - ✓ IBSA projects cover Haiti, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Burundi, Palestine, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Sierra Leone.
  - ✓ A sports complex has been completed and inaugurated in 2011 in Ramallah under the IBSA Fund.
- India has been running an innovative *IBSA Visiting Fellows Programme* through the Delhi-based think tank, Research and Information System for Developing Countries.
- One of the most significant commitments of the IBSA towards enhancing economic ties was the initiative to establish the **MERCOSUR-SACU** (Southern African Customs Union)-**India** Trilateral Free Trade Agreement (TFTA).

2. 7TH EASTERN ECONOMIC FORUM (EEF)

- Recently, PM Modi virtually addressed an online plenary session at the 7th Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) — held in the Russian city of Vladivostok.
- At the summit, PM Modi said that Russia can become an important partner for the Indian steel industry with the **supply of coking coal.**
- PM Modi's comments came against the backdrop of concerns raised by the West, including the US and Europe, over countries buying oil from Russia.
- Hence, India's willingness to increase economic cooperation with Russia *is a sign that India's foreign policy is driven by its national interests. It is not going to be dictated by the Western blocs.*

EASTERN ECONOMIC FORUM (EEF)

- The EEF It was established by the President Vladimir Putin, in 2015.
- The forum aims to support the economic development of Russia's Far East, and to expand international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Since its establishment, more than 17 different countries have invested in the Far East. These include countries like China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and Vietnam.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RUSSIA'S FAR EAST (RFE)

- The region encompasses one-third of Russia's territory and is rich with natural resources such as fish, oil, natural gas, wood, diamonds and other minerals.

- The region's resources contribute to 5 % of Russia's GDP. Procuring and supplying them is an issue due to the unavailability of personnel.
- RFE is geographically placed at a strategic location, acting as a gateway into Asia

INDIA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH RUSSIA'S FAR EAST (RFE)

- India is the first country in the world to open a consulate in Vladivostok (Sangam' of Eurasia and Pacific).
- Indian PM was the chief guest at 5th EEF (2019), first by an Indian Prime Minister.
- In 2019, India announced a commitment to an "Act Far-East" policy, with an aim to increase cooperation with this area. India gave a line of credit worth USD 1 billion for investment in this region.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND COMMERCE:

- India and Russia agreed to open a maritime route between Chennai and Vladivostok to give impetus to cooperation between India and Russian Far East.
- This connectivity project along with International North-South Corridor (INSC) will bring India and Russia physically closer.
- **Energy**: Indian workers are participating in major gas projects in the Amur region, from Yamal to Vladivostok and onward to Chennai.

3. INDIA - NATO DIALOGUE

Recently it was revealed that, India held a dialogue with North Atlantic Treaty organization in 2019 in secrecy. India engaged in talks with focus on areas of cooperation on Global issues of mutual concerns, without committing to any military or bilateral cooperation. In this context let us understand the significance of this dialogue.

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

- NATO is a political and military alliance of 28 European countries and two countries in North America (United States and Canada).
- It was set up in 1949 by the US, Canada, and several western European nations to ensure their collective security against the Soviet Union
- NATO's core tasks are: Collective defense, Crisis management & Cooperative security.
- Principle of 'Collective Defense' under which an attack against one or several of NATO members is considered as an attack against all.
- The principle of collective defence is enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.
- NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time in its history after the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States.
- NATO membership is open to any other European country which adheres to the principles of NATO and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area.

SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA-NATO TALKS

- NATO was engaging with China and Pakistan in bilateral dialogues. Since China and Pakistan are crucial in India's Geo-Strategic calculations, India's engagement with NATO would add a key dimension to India's growing engagement with the US (Quad, 2+2 dialogue) and Europe.
- Engaging with NATO in a political dialogue would provide India an opportunity to bring about a balance in NATO's perceptions about the situation in regions and issues of concerns to India.

OUTCOMES OF DIALOGUE

- There was a convergence in the perspectives of both India and NATO on China, terrorism, and Afghanistan, including Pakistan's role in Afghanistan
- However, common ground was not reached on the issue of Russian aggression against Ukraine.
- Given the coupling of European Economies with China, the NATO members have mixed views about the China which is seen as a challenge as well as an opportunity.
- On Afghanistan, NATO sees Taliban as a Political entity which is not in line with India's stand.
- Both had convergence on the issue of Maritime Security.
- In NATO's view, India, given its geo-strategic position and unique perspectives on various issues, was relevant to international security and could be an important partner in informing the alliance about India's own region and beyond.

CONCERNS

- NATO is seen as relic of the Cold War era where India exercised non – alignment.
- Engaging with NATO would be seen as being part of an alliance.
- Given NATOs perception of being an expansionist block would be a setback to India's image.
- Could impact India's relations with Russia, given antiRussia stance of

WAY FORWARD

However, India has been exercising a policy of Strategic autonomy which aims at engaging with countries and groupings based on its interests. At a time when NATO is engaging with Pakistan and China, India needs cannot remain isolated.

DEFENSE AND SECURITY

1. *INDIAN NAVY'S NEW ENSIGN*

India's biggest ever indigenous military project – the **aircraft carrier** INS Vikrant – was commissioned by PM Modi at the Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) Kochi, Kerala.

- So far, such aircraft carriers were only made by developed countries. India has taken a step towards being a developed country by being part of the league.
- On this occasion, PM Modi also unveiled the Indian Navy's new ensign. [For details on INS Vikrant, refer topic *"Cochin Shipyard delivers aircraft carrier to Navy"* in Recitals - July 2022.]

THE INDIAN NAVY'S ENSIGN

- As the name suggests, a naval ensign is **a flag** that is installed atop naval warships, on ground stations, at air bases and other institutions used as **a form of maritime identification.**
- Every country's navy has its own ensign which can be the same as their country's flag or a distant one.

TRACING THE HISTORY OF INDIA'S NAVAL ENSIGN

- The existing ensign of the Indian Navy draws its origin from the colonial past.
- On October 2, 1934, the naval service was renamed **Royal Indian Navy** (RIN), with its headquarters at Bombay (now Mumbai) and the ensign also changed to the one which used by the Royal Navy till 1950.
  - ✓ Pre-Independence ensign of the Indian Navy had the red George's Cross on a white background with the Union Jack of the UK on the top left corner.

- **From 1950 to 2001**, the navy's ensign was the St George's Cross - red cross on a white background, with the **national flag** in the upper canton before it was changed in 2001.
  - ✓ The Saint George's Cross is named after **a Christian Warrior Saint** who is believed to have been a crusader during the third crusade.
  - ✓ This cross also serves as the flag of **England** which is a constituent of the United Kingdom.
- **Between 2001 and 2004**, the Indian Navy adopted an Indianized ensign that showed only the Indian flag and the navy crest, bringing in commonality with the flags of the Indian Air Force and Indian Army (the Army and Air Force adopted their current ensigns in 1950).
- **In 2004**, the Indian Navy returned to its pre-2001 ensign with the addition of the **state emblem** placed at the intersection of the cross.
- The next change in ensign came in **2014 when "Satyamev Jayate"** were placed under the **national emblem** at the centre of the St George's Cross.

THE NEW ENSIGN AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

- The new ensign now features the national emblem (encircled by an octagonal shield and sitting atop an anchor) with the Tricolour on the upper canton (top left corner of the flag).
- The Saint George's Cross has been removed from the Indian Navy's new flag in **an effort to distance itself from its "colonial past."**
- Beneath the anchor is the Navy's motto '**Sam No Varunah**' (Oh Varuna, be auspicious to us).
- The golden border surrounding the national emblem draws inspiration from the seal of Indian emperor **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj** and depicts steadfastness.
- Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj placed a high priority on maritime prowess, laying the foundation for a modern naval force **in the 17th century.**
  - ✓ Shivaji built ships in towns such as Kalyan, Bhivandi, and Goa, both for trade and to establish a fighting navy. He also built a number of sea forts and bases for repair, storage and shelter.
  - ✓ The fleet grew to reportedly 160 to 700 merchant, support and fighting vessels. He started trading with foreigners on his own after possession of eight or nine ports in the Deccan.

- **Kanohji Angre** (the Maratha Navy commander) led the Maratha navy and is credited with creating a solid naval foundation that assured the Marathas were a maritime power to be reckoned with.
  - ✓ He ensured that the merchants plying their trade for the Maratha empire were protected on the seas. He set up a base in Colaba with more bases at Suvarndurg and Vijaydurg near Ratnagiri.
- The Indian Navy has always recognized these facts, naming a training facility in Lonavla as INS Shivaji and a shore-based logistics and administrative centre of the Western Naval Command in Mumbai as INS Angre.
- The octagonal shape of the national emblem has been designed to **represent eight directions**, symbolising the multi-directional reach and multi-dimensional operational capability of the Indian Navy.

2. INDIA COOPERATION WITH BAHRAIN-BASED MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIP

India formally commenced cooperation with Bahrain-based multilateral partnership, Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) as an associate member. CMF is the latest in a series of multilateral engagements by the Indian Navy as part of India's widening military diplomacy and will strengthen cooperation in regional security in the Western Indian Ocean.

ABOUT COMBINED MARITIME FORCES

- It was established in 2002 with backing from USA as a counter terrorism organisation for protecting international waters with only 12 members under its ambit then.
- The mandate of the organisation has broadened since its inception to include counter narcotics, counter smuggling, and piracy operations
- CMF is a multinational naval partnership to promote security, stability, and prosperity across approximately 3.2 million square miles of international waters, which encompass some of the world's most important shipping lanes
- The 34-nation grouping is commanded by United States naval forces central command (NAVCENT) and is headquartered in Bahrain.
- It is a flexible organisation and members are not bound by either a political or military mandate

INDIA AND CMF

- India has in past cooperated with CMF on various occasions.
- India has two ships posted round the clock between Gulf of Aden and Persian Gulf for anti-piracy and antismuggling operations as its own effort.
- As India is joining as associate member India will not reportedly get to command the task forces and also had a limited say in operations.

- Other Asian members of the grouping includes Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, and Seychelles

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOVE
- REGIONAL SECURITY: India participation will not only ensure better regional security in the western Indian Ocean region but will also boost India's credentials as a net security provider and as a responsible regional power.
- MARITIME DIPLOMACY: It will further contribute towards widening and strengthening of maritime diplomacy of India both at group level and individual state level as seen with recent maritime engagements. Further the organisation works on principle of Rules based international order which will be beneficial for India to safeguard its interest in Indian ocean region which is emerging as new area of contestation.
- ENERGY & TRADE SECURITY: It will help better safeguard its security interest (as 70% of oil requirement and 90% of international trade is dependent on waters) while at the same time ensuring safety of its seafarers thus help in realising the ideals of blue water economy.
- SAFETY & SECURITY: Huge Indian diaspora working in fragile and conflict prone areas of Middle East and West Asia can be rescued in the event of any exigencies in future.

3. *CENTRE SIGNS A TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT*

- The Centre, **Assam government** and 8 armed adivasi groups signed a **tripartite agreement** to end the decades-old crisis of *adivasis and tea garden workers.*
- The eight adivasi groups together comprised **1,182 cadres**. These groups are:
  - ✓ All Adivasi National Liberation Army (AANLA), AANLA (FG), Birsa Commando Force (BCF), BCF (BT), Santhal Tiger Force, Adivasi Cobra Militant of Assam (ACMA), ACMA (FG) and Adivasi People's Army (APA).
  - ✓ These groups have been on a **ceasefire pact** with the government of India since **2016.**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT
- The major provisions of the agreement included fulfilling *political, economic, and educational aspirations.*
- This agreement also aims at protecting, preserving, and promoting social, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic identities.
- An **Adivasi Welfare and Development Council** would be established by **Government of Assam**.
- Necessary measures would be taken for the rehabilitation of cadres of armed groups and for the welfare of tea garden workers.

- A special development package of **₹1,000 crore** would be provided over a period of 5 years for infrastructure development in Adivasi-populated villages and areas.

WHY THIS COMMUNITY CHOSE VIOLENT PATH?
1. Historical Injustice
- ✓ These Adivasis, who settled in the Assam tea gardens, were subjected to various forms of torture (slave like conditions) and sufferings under the **colonial regime.**
- ✓ Also, the British planters, in collusion with administration, had systematically grabbed the lands of the indigenous tribal population in Assam almost throughout the colonial period.
- ✓ Their conditions hardly changed in post-colonial period. As a result, in the post-colonial period, they increasingly mobilized themselves at various levels.

2. Identity Politics
- ✓ The tea tribes form a distinct population of Assam and are **demanding Scheduled Tribe status** from the state to counter the unequal distribution of power and resources in present-day Assam.
- ✓ This has unleashed social and political tensions.

3. Persecution Faced
- ✓ The violence upon the community had increased following the rise of **ethnic nationalism** and related militancy in Assam.
- ✓ There were two ethnic clashes between **Bodo and Adivasi** during the **1990s** at the height of Bodoland statehood movement.

DISTURBED AREAS IN NORTH EAST
- The Home Minister said the disturbed areas under the **Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)** had been reduced from a large part of the northeast.
  - ✓ This happened because of the improvement in the security situation.
- About 60% of **Assam** is now free from the AFSPA.
- In **Manipur**, 15 police stations in 6 districts were taken out of the periphery of the disturbed area.
- In **Arunachal Pradesh**, the AFSPA remains in only three districts and two police stations in one district.
- In **Nagaland**, the disturbed area notification was removed from 15 police stations in seven districts.
- In **Tripura and Meghalaya**, the AFSPA was **withdrawn completely.**

4. *INDIA IN VOSTOK-22*

- Recently, Russia held its annual military exercises in its eastern region, with about **13 countries including India and China** sending contingents. This exercise is known as Vostok-22.
- The exercises in Vostok-2022 were the first such multilateral exercises to be held since the Russian war in Ukraine began.
- **INDIA'S PARTICIPATION –**
  - ✓ India only sent its **army contingent**. It did not take part in the maritime section of the two-part event.

- ✓ This is because the maritime part of the exercises was to be held in the **Sea of Okhotsk** and the **Sea of Japan**, near the disputed South Kuril Islands
- Both Russia and Japan claim their sovereignty on South Kuril Islands.
  - ✓ India's decision not to take part in the naval exercises is believed to be in deference to Tokyo's sensitivities.
  - ✓ By sending an army contingent to join Russian and Chinese troops in the exercises at this time, New Delhi aimed to send following messages:
- The first is its continuing relationship with Russia despite the Ukraine war.
- The second is to signal balance and non-alignment in the current crisis.

- India participates in routine Indo-Pacific exercises with its Western partners including the Quad, as well as in bilateral exercises, like the India-U.S. Yudh Abhyas.
- By staying away from the maritime exercises, New Delhi has shown both its sensitivity to Japan's concerns on maintaining the status quo over the disputed islands, as well as stressing the importance of territorial sovereignty and integrity for India.

.

GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. *NATIONAL MISSION FOR CLEAN GANGA (NMCG) NEW UPDATES*

Ashok Kumar, Director General of National Mission for Clean Ganga, spoke about Arth Ganga model during his virtual keynote address to Stockholm World Water Week 2022. Since 1991, Stockholm International Water Institute has been organising World Water Week every year to address global water concerns. Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the first meeting of the National Ganga Council in Kanpur.

NATIONAL GANGA COUNCIL
- National Ganga Council will be overall responsible for the superintendence, direction, development and control of River Ganga and the entire River Basin (including financial and administrative matters) for the protection, prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution in River Ganga and its rejuvenation to its natural and pristine condition and to ensure continuous adequate flow of water in the River Ganga and for matters connected therewith.
- It is headed by Prime Minister.

- First meeting of the Council was aimed at reinforcing the importance of a 'Ganga-centric' approach in all departments of the concerned states as well as relevant Central Ministries.
- PM also talked about transition from Namami Gange to Arth Ganga.

ABOUT ARTH GANGA
- 'Arth Ganga' or a sustainable development model with a focus on economic activities related to Ganga.
- As part of this process, farmers should be encouraged to engage in sustainable agriculture practices, including zero budget farming, planting of fruit trees and building plant nurseries on the banks of Ganga.
- Priority could be given to women Self Help Groups and ex-servicemen organizations for these programs.
- Such practices, along with creation of infrastructure for water sports and development of camp sites, cycling and walking tracks etc , would help to tap the 'hybrid' tourism potential of the river basin area- for purposes of religious as well as adventure tourism.
- The income generated from encouraging eco-tourism and Ganga wildlife conservation and cruise tourism etc. would help to generate sustainable income streams for cleaning of Ganga.

SIX VERTICALS UNDER ARTH GANGA

- Zero Budget Natural Farming, which involves chemical-free farming on 10 km on either side of the river, and promotion of cow dung as fertiliser through the GOBARdhan scheme.
- Monetization and Reuse of Sludge & Wastewater, which seeks to reuse treated water for irrigation, industries and revenue generation for Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).
- Livelihood Generation Opportunities, by creating haats where people can sell local products, medicinal plants and ayurveda.
- Increase public participation by increasing synergies between the stakeholders involved with the river.
- Promote cultural heritage & tourism of Ganga and its surroundings, through boat tourism, adventure sports and by conducting yoga activities.
- Promote institution building by empowering local administration for improved water governance.

NATIONAL MISSION FOR CLEAN GANGA (NMCG)
- NMCG was registered as a society in 2011 under the Societies Registration Act 1860.
- It acted as implementation arm of National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) which was constituted under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act (EPA),1986.
- NGRBA has since been dissolved with effect from 2016, consequent to constitution of National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga (referred as National Ganga Council)
- NMCG envisages five tier structure at national, state and district level to take measures for prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution in river Ganga and to ensure continuous adequate flow of water so as to rejuvenate the river Ganga as below:
  1. National Ganga Council under chairmanship of Prime Minister of India.
  2. Empowered Task Force (ETF) on river Ganga under chairmanship of Union Minister of Jal Shakti (Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation).
  3. National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).
  4. State Ganga Committees.
  5. District Ganga Committees in every specified district abutting river Ganga and its tributaries in the states.

NAMAMI GANGE
- Launched in 2014.
- It is a comprehensive initiative integrating various government efforts and activities with aim of pollution abatement (Nirmal Dhara), conservation and rejuvenation of Ganga (Aviral Dhara).
- Some of the notable achievements:
  - ✓ Zero waste creation by paper mills
  - ✓ Reduction in pollution from tanneries

- ✓ Central Government has made commitment of Rs. 20,000 crores for 2015-20 to the five states through which Ganga passes, to ensure adequate as well as uninterrupted water flows in the river.
- ✓ Rs. 7700 crores have already been spent so far, prominently for construction of new sewage treatment plants.

CLEAN GANGA FUND
Government has set up Clean Ganga Fund (CGF) to facilitate contributions from individuals, NRIs, corporate entities for funding Ganga rejuvenation projects.

2. CAG ON COASTAL ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION

Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) tabled a report in Parliament on whether steps taken by Union Environment Ministry to conserve India's coastal ecosystems have been successful. CAG frequently undertakes 'performance audits' of government programmes and ministries. This latest report contains the observations from an audit of 'Conservation of Coastal Ecosystems from 2015-20.' 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.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK
- Government has issued notifications under Environment Protection Act, 1986, to regulate activities along India's coasts particularly regarding construction activities.
- Coastal Regulation Zone Notification (CRZ) 2019, implemented by Ministry, classifies the coastal area into different zones to manage infrastructure activities and regulate them.

THREE INSTITUTIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF CRZ NOTIFICATION
- National Coastal Zone Management Authority (NCZMA) at the centre
- State/Union Territory Coastal Zone Management Authorities (SCZMAs/UTCZMAs) in every coastal state and UT.
- District Level Committees (DLCs) in every district that has a coastal stretch and where the CRZ notification is applicable.

EXPERT APPRAISAL COMMITTEES (EAC)
- Exist at Union as well as state levels (State Expert Appraisal Committee or SEAC) to advise government on environmental clearance of development projects.

- EAC at centre and states are constituted under Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification 2006.
- Developmental works or projects have been categorised as Category A and Category B Projects.

PRIOR ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE - CATEGORY A & B PROJECTS
- All projects or activities included as Category 'A' including expansion and modernization of existing projects or activities shall require prior environmental clearance on the recommendations of an Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) under MoEF&CC.
- All projects or activities included as Category 'B' will require prior environmental clearance from the State/Union territory Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA). SEIAA shall base its decision on the recommendations of a State or Union territory level Expert Appraisal Committee (SEAC).
- State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAAs) are very important arm of MoEF&CC for implementation of EIA Notification at the State level and they have been delegated powers to consider and grant environmental clearance (EC) for all proposals under Category B.

THREE STEPS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION – SCREENING, SCOPING AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION
- Screening: Scrutiny of Application seeking prior environmental clearance for Category B Projects by the concerned State level Expert Appraisal Committee (SEAC). The projects requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment report shall be termed Category 'B1' and remaining projects shall be termed Category 'B2' and will not require an Environment Impact Assessment report.
- Scoping: refers to the process by which the Expert Appraisal Committee in the case of Category 'A' projects or activities, and State level Expert Appraisal Committee in the case of Category 'B1' projects or activities determine detailed and comprehensive Terms Of Reference (TOR) addressing all relevant environmental concerns for the preparation of an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Report in respect of the project or activity for which prior environmental clearance is sought.
- Public Consultation: refers to the process by which the concerns of local affected persons and others who have plausible stake in the environmental impacts of the project or activity are ascertained with a view to taking into account all the material concerns in the project or activity design as appropriate.

INTEGRATED COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT PROJECT (ICZMP)

- Government has also implemented the world bank assisted project in identified stretches of Gujarat, Odisha and West Bengal from 2010 to 2020 with a purpose of protecting and conserving coastal and marine environment of the country.
- This includes development of Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan, prevention of soil erosion, shelterbelt plantation, mangrove plantation, strengthening requirements for ecosystem monitoring, biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihood of coastal communities.

KEY AUDIT FINDINGS
- Institutional Framework:
  - ✓ **National Coastal Zone Management Authority – NCZMA**
    - → MoEF&CC has not notified NCZMA as a permanent body and it is reconstituted every few years
    - → In the absence of defined membership, it was functioning as an ad-hoc body.
    - → Further, the composition of NCZMA was not uniform over years.
  - ✓ **Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC)**
    - → EAC granted clearances without domain experts as they were not present during the project deliberations.
    - → EAC were less than half of the total strength during the deliberations as there was no fixed quorum for EAC members.
    - → State/Union Territory Coastal Zone Management Authorities – SCZMA
    - → SCZMA was not reconstituted in the state of Karnataka and there was delayed reconstitution in the states of Goa, Odisha and West Bengal.
    - → SCZMAs held meetings without fulfilling the quorum requirements and lacked representation from relevant stakeholder bodies.
    - → SCZMAs in many states did not have sufficient manpower to perform their mandate.
  - ✓ **District Level Committees**
    - → DLCs of Tamil Nadu lacked participation from local traditional communities.
    - → In Andhra Pradesh, DLCs were not established at all.
    - → In Goa, DLCs were formed after a delay of six years. DLCs are yet to be reconstituted in two coastal districts of Karnataka as on March 2021.
- Project Clearances under CRZ Notifications

- Projects were approved despite inadequacies in the EIA Reports
- Consultants involved with preparation of EIA Report were not approved or accredited
- Usage of outdated baseline data
- Non-evaluation of environmental impacts of project
- Non-addressal of disasters which the project area was prone to
- Activities forming a part of mitigation plans like mangrove conservation/replantation, biodiversity conservation plan, rainwater harvesting plan failed to be included in Environment Management Plan.
- SCZMA rather than recommending projects to relevant authorities, granted clearance on its own.
- SCZMAs had recommended many projects without the submission of mandatory documents.

- **Post Clearance Monitoring and Enforcement of CRZ Notifications**
  - Project Proponent failed to comply with conditions mentioned in the Clearance and did not submit the mandatory half yearly compliance reports to the Regional Offices of MoEF&CC.
  - Consent to Establish (CTE) or Consent To Operate (CTO) not taken from concerned State Pollution Control Board.
  - SCZMAs failed to take action against CRZ violations and the DLCs too failed to identify violations and report the same to SCZMAs.
- **Conservation of Coastal Ecosystems**
  - Despite serious reduction and degradation of the live coral cover in the Gulf of Mannar Islands, no viable strategy to mitigate the propagation of the invasive species had been devised by the Department of Forest, Tamil Nadu.
  - Issues such as absence of a monitoring system for coral reefs, and non- preparation of management plans for turtle nesting sites in Goa were observed.
  - Prohibited activities like infrastructure development in areas of coastal sand dunes were observed in Goa.
  - Gaps in the efforts to conserve mangroves in Goa and Gujarat were noticed.
  - Sewage treatment plants were either altogether absent or were functioning without any monitoring leading to discharge of harmful effluents into coastal waters.
- **Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project**
  - Although the entire work of mapping of Hazard Line (considers possible rise of sea level due to climate change) was completed in 2018, the

ground demarcation of Hazard Line was yet to be done by MoEF&CC.
  - Integrated Management Plans (IMPs) for Critically Vulnerable Coastal Areas (CVCAs) were yet to be prepared by the coastal states.
  - In Gujarat, there was underutilisation of instruments procured under project due to which the study of physiochemical parameters of soil and water of the inertial area of Gulf of Kutch was not conducted.
  - Objective of effective sea patrolling in Gahirmatha Sanctuary remained unachieved.
- **Sustainable Development Goals 14**
  - The stakeholder map prepared for Sustainable Development Goal-14 misses out a few significant stakeholder organisations like Indian Coast Guard and Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
  - State Indicator frameworks had not been prepared by the states of Maharashtra and Kerala.

WAY FORWARD
These reports are placed before Standing Committees of Parliament, which select those findings and recommendations that they judge to be the most critical to public interest and arrange hearings on them. In this case, Environment Ministry is expected to explain omissions pointed out by the CAG and make amends.

3. *MIYAWAKI METHOD*

By the help of Miyawaki method in less than one year, an unused one-acre plot of land in Kuharianwali village, Punjab developed into the forest.

ABOUT MIYAWAKI METHOD
- It is a technique pioneered by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki that helps build dense, native forests in a short time.
- It **involves planting dozens of only native species** as close as possible **in the same area** which not only saves space, but the planted saplings also support each other in growth and block sunlight reaching the ground, thereby preventing the growth of weed.
- It becomes maintenance-free after the first three years.
- The approach is supposed to ensure that plant growth is **10 times faster** and the resulting plantation is **30 times denser than usual**. Miyawaki method helps to create a forest in just 20 to 30 years, while conventional methods takes 200 to 300 years.

WHAT IS THE MIYAWAKI METHOD?

- Named after Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki who invented it
- It involves planting of several species very close together in a small pit
- Plants draw nutrients from each other and become healthy
- A dense forest, which grows naturally in 300 years is created in 30-35 years
- Trees grow 10 times faster, and absorb 30 times more carbon dioxide
- Density is 30 times that of normal tree plantations

MIYAWAKI FORESTS IN VADODARA

Private farm, Sun PharmaRoad	VMC's Rajivnagar STP, Harni
Area	**12,000** square feet	Area	**16,000** square feet
Number of trees planted	**3,500**	Number of trees planted	**4,000**

Bhoj village, Padra
Forest department's demonstration plot
Area | **30 x 10 metre**
Number of trees planted | **831**

- The purpose of creating these types of forests is that they are **suitable for urban areas,** where greenery is becoming a challenge.
- They help lower temperatures in concrete heat islands, reduce air and noise pollution, attract local birds and insects, and create carbon sinks.

MIYAWAKI FOREST AREAS IN INDIA
- In 2010, the **first-ever Miyawaki forest was created in Toyota's industrial land in Bidadi**, Bengaluru.
- The **country's largest Miyawaki forest is in Hyderabad planted across 10 acres.**
- The 4.75 acres of Miyawaki forest was created on Indian Railway Institute of Disaster Management land in Hejjalla, Bengaluru.

4. ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF SHOONYA CAMPAIGN

NITI Aayog commemorated the one-year anniversary of Shoonya Campaign.

ABOUT SHOONYA CAMPAIGN
- It is a **consumer awareness campaign to reduce air pollution by promoting the use of electric vehicles (EVs)** for **ride-hailing** and **deliveries.**
- It was **launched by the Niti Aayog and Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI)** in September 2021.
- It is a corporate-led campaign.
- The campaign has 130 industry partners, including ride-hailing, delivery and EV companies.

NEED FOR SHOONYA CAMPAIGN
- Rapid global urbanization and e-commerce sales are driving significant growth in urban freight and mobility demand.
- In India, these sectors are expected to grow at a CAGR (Compound annual growth rate) of 8% through 2030. If this demand is met by internal combustion vehicles (ICE), it would significantly increase local air pollution.

- Compared to ICE vehicles, **EVs do not emit Particulate matter (PM) or NOx emissions**, they release 60% less CO2 and have 75% lower operating costs.
- It supports India's 5-point agenda (Panchamrit), announced at COP 26, to reduce carbon emissions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF SHOONYA CAMPAIGN
Till April 2022, the estimated number of **electric deliveries and rides completed** by corporate partners via the Shoonya campaign was close to **20 million and 15 million**, respectively.
- ✓ This translates to a carbon dioxide emission savings of over 13,000 tonnes.

5. Report by CAG on Fly Ash

- According to a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), three thermal power plants dumped fly-ash in low-lying areas without permission from the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB).
- The three thermal powers are operated by Torrent Power, Adani Power and Tata Power.

CONCERNS REGARDING FLY ASH
- **Many heavy metals are found in it**, including nickel, cadmium, arsenic, chromium, lead.
- **Its particles are toxic air pollutants,** can trigger heart disease, cancer, respiratory diseases and stroke.

INITIATIVES TAKEN TO TACKLE WITH FLY ASH
- An official notification came in **1999** and it outlined some methods for the constructive use of fly ash to manufacture *cement, concrete blocks and bricks etc.*
- In 2021, NTPC Limited had invited Expression of Interest for sale of fly ash.
- A **web portal** for monitoring the data of fly ash (*generation and utilization)* of Thermal Power Plants and a mobile based application titled "**ASHTRACK**" has been launched.

FLY ASH MANAGEMENT AND UTILIZATION MISSION
- The **National Green Tribunal (NGT) directed the constitution of this Mission in January 2022**.
- Its primary goal will be to coordinate and monitor the handling & disposal of fly ash and associated issues.
- It will also look after how 1,670 million tons of legacy (accumulated) fly ash could be utilized in least hazardous manner.
- The **secretary of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)** will be the nodal agency for coordination and compliance.

FLY ASH NOTIFICATION 2021
- Fly Ash Notification 2021 was issued under the **Environment (Protection) Act 1986.**
- Prohibiting dumping and disposal of fly ash discharged from coal or lignite based thermal power plants on land or into water bodies
- Centre has made it mandatory for such plants to ensure 100% utilization of ash in an eco-friendly manner, and

introduced for the first time a **penalty regime** for non-compliance based on 'polluter pays' principle.

- The amount, collected by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) from the thermal power plants, will be used towards the safe disposal of the unutilised ash.

PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJANA (URBAN)
It has focused on new construction technologies such as using fly ash bricks that are innovative, environmentally friendly.

6. EXTINCTIONS OF MARINE SPECIES

A new study has highlighted that shallow-water mining could trigger local extinctions of marine species.

ABOUT SHALLOW WATER MINING

- It is a **mining which takes place in the sea at a depth of less than 200 meters**, occurring on the **continental shelf** with easier access to the coast.)
- It is **opposed to deep-sea operations** that target less accessible resources and require specialised technology.
  - ✓ The part of the ocean that lies below a depth of 200 m is defined as deep sea, and the process of extracting minerals from this area is known as deep sea mining.
- Compared with **terrestrial mining and deep-sea mining operations**, it *may save operational costs,* as mining takes place closer to shore and uses existing technology.

IMPACT OF SHALLOW WATER MINING

- It involves removing **sediment-bearing minerals**, which offer refuge to seafloor organisms. This could trigger local extinctions and changes in species composition.
- Ploughing the seafloor releases plumes, which could **impact water quality**.
- Other impacts could be the **release of harmful substances from the sediment** and disturbance from noise and light.
- In near-shore areas, **mining activities are likely to overlap with other maritime sectors**, such as fisheries. This results in a higher likelihood of conflict over resource access.

7. SPECIES IN NEWS

MORINGA

- It is a fast-growing, drought-resistant, deciduous trees that are native to India and Bangladesh.
- It is often called the drumstick tree, the miracle tree, the ben oil tree, or the horseradish tree.
- It has been used for centuries due to its medicinal properties and health benefits. It also has antifungal, antiviral, antidepressant, and anti-inflammatory properties.
- It is also used for water purification.
- It has various healthy compounds such as vitamins, important elements such as Iron, Magnesium etc. and is extremely low on fats and contains no cholesterol.

TOMISTOMA

- It is a freshwater large, slender-snouted crocodilian species native to south-east Asia.
- It is distributed across part of Borneo, peninsular Malaysia and Sumatra.
- It is frequently associated with peat swamp forest.
- It shares its habitat with two other types of crocodilians; The saltwater crocodile and the Siamese crocodile.
- It is listed as Endangered in IUCN Red List.

SEA CUCUMBER

- It is a marine invertebrate that live on the seafloor found generally in tropical regions. They are crucial to maintain the balance of ocean habitats.
- Major threats to this species are illegal Trading and smuggling for food and traditional medicine.
- It has no limbs or eyes, or blood.
- Lakshadweep has created the world's first conservation area for sea cucumbers.
- It is listed under Schedule I in the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

SPOTTED DEER

- It is also known as chital or axis deer.
- It is sexually dimorphic, males are larger than females, and antlers are present only on males.
- The upper parts are golden to rufous, completely covered in white spots.
- It is listed as least concern in the IUCN Red List and under Schedule III of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act (1972).

WHALE SHARK

- It is a slow-moving, filter-feeding carpet shark & the largest known extant fish species.
- It is found in open waters of tropical oceans & is rarely found in water below 21 °C.
- Despite its size, it does not pose any danger to humans. It is a docile fish and sometimes allow swimmers to catch a ride.

- It is listed as Endangered in IUCN Red List.

CARACAL

- It is a medium-sized and locally threatened cat species.
- It has been widely reported to be on the brink of extinction in India.
- It is also known by its persian name Siyahgosh or 'black ears'.
- In India it is found mostly in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.
- Besides India, it is found in several dozen countries across Africa, the Middle East, Central and South Asia.
- It is listed as Least Concern in IUCN Red List and under Schedule I in Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

GHATIANA DWIVARNA

- A new Crab Species has been discovered from Karnataka.
- It is the 75th crab species to be found in India.
- The name of this new species of crab is derived from a Sanskrit word 'dwivarna' which means two-colored.
- It is a venomous and non-edible species of crab.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1 . IAD

An IAD was successfully test flown in a **Rohini sounding rocket (RH300 Mk II)** from Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station (TERLS). Rohini sounding rockets are routinely used for **flight demonstration of new technologies** being developed by ISRO.

ABOUT IAD

- It serves to **decelerate an object** plunging down through the atmosphere. It is a **technique used for an atmospheric entry payload**.
- It was **designed and developed by ISRO's Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC).**
- It was initially folded and kept inside the payload bay of the rocket.
- **At around 84 km altitude, it was inflated and it descended through the atmosphere** with the payload part of a sounding rocket.
- It has **systematically reduced the velocity of the payload** through aerodynamic drag and followed the predicted trajectory.
- It has huge potential like recovery of spent stages of rocket, for landing payloads on to Mars/ Venus and in making space habitat for human space flight missions. ISRO is planning the 200th **successful** launch of the Rohini **RH-200** sounding rocket in a row.
- RH-200 of the Rohini sounding rocket family has completed 198 consecutive successful flights.
- The 199th launch will happen in October 2022 during the World Space Week (4th-10th October) celebrations. The 200th will take place either towards the end of October or the beginning of Nov 2022.
- '200' in the name denotes the diameter of the rocket in mm. Other operational Rohini variants are RH-300 Mk-II and RH-560 Mk-III

2 . HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATED INFECTION SURVEILLANCE-INDIA SURVEY

- A year-long surveillance of hospital-acquired infections (HAIs) across the country reveals a grim picture of superbugs (or drug-resistant microorganisms) victory over medicines.
- The survey was conducted by the newly formed **Healthcare Associated Infection Surveillance-India.**

HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATED INFECTION (HAI) SURVEILLANCE-INDIA PROJECT

Under this cooperative agreement, AIIMS-New Delhi collaborated with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to\

- **Strengthen** the national capacity for surveillance of HAIs to serve the need for reliable AMR data.
- **Leverage** the existing capacities for microbiology and robust academic capabilities of the ICMR-AMR network.
- **Support** successful patient care and to measure, track and report the magnitude and types of AMR and HAI threats affecting India.

FINDINGS OF HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATED INFECTION (HAI) SURVEILLANCE-INDIA

- According to the **first-ever** year-long surveillance, superbugs were widely present in Indian hospitals.
  - ✓ The presence of superbugs indicates resistance to older antibiotics and the need for costly last-resort antibiotics (such as carbapenem and colistin).
- **Intensive Care Units (ICUs) are hotbeds for HAIs.**
  - ✓ Most doctors are aware that ICU patients in India who stay for long periods become infected with **gramnegative microorganisms**, which are more difficult to treat than gram-positive organisms found in ICUs of western countries.
  - ✓ The findings confirm the magnitude of these gram-negative infections
- Gram-negative bacteria are surrounded by a thin peptidoglycan cell wall, which itself is surrounded by an outer membrane containing lipopolysaccharide. Gram-positive bacteria lack an outer membrane but are surrounded by layers of peptidoglycan many times thicker than is found in the Gram-negatives
- It was discovered that **38.1%** of patients with bloodstream infections and another 27.9% with UTIs died within 14 days, and the HAIs in these cases were possibly only associated complications that did not directly contribute to death.

- HAI surveillance serves as a benchmark for hospitals. For example, if a hospital has a HAI rate of 4 per 1,000, one can compare it to other hospitals.
- The findings highlight the importance of improving hospital infection control practices and implementing practices to reduce irrational antibiotic use.
- To prevent the emergence of newer superbugs, an audit of hospital antibiotic use could be conducted, revealing how many hospitals follow the rules.

3 . PUBLIC DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Recently, India has made several efforts to become a digital society by building a large citizen-scale Public Digital Infrastructure with a significant push from the government. Government of India and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have been promoting simplification and transparency to increase the speed of interaction between individuals, markets, and the government. With the commencement of the Digital India mission in 2015, the payments, provident fund, passports, driving licenses, crossing tolls, and checking land records all have been transformed with modular applications built on Aadhaar, Unified Payments Interface(UPI), and the India Stack. However, the existing different digital infrastructures are not interconnected as a design. There is need for a technical integration for interoperability. As more networks grows it increases the cost and creates inefficiency.

BLOCKCHAIN SIGNIFICANCE OF BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY

Art & Culture	Storing the digital artefacts related to documents in a Blockchain makes it secure and immune to tampering.
Society	Globalisation, Population census, Poverty and nutritional data
Governance	• Student's certificates, scholarship details etc., can be stored in a Blockchain network. Various stakeholders such as educational institutions, different departments can become partners and have student's records stored on consensus basis. • Bring transparency in the spending of government grants – Canada. • Switzerland is the first place in the world to accept Bitcoin payments for tax purposes. • Smart contracts.

	• E-Courts: Data from multiple entities such as police, judiciary, legal department, etc. can be stored in a coordinated manner. • The key features of e-governance are trust and accountability which are very well supported by the Blockchain technology.
Health care	By establishing a secure chain of network blockchain can help in handling the patient records, consent forms, billings and public health monitoring.
Economy	• Singapore is using Blockchain to enable cross-border payments. • Transparency in energy grid by tracking data and finances related to it. – Chile. • Real estate deals – Sweden • Land registry and cadastral register based on the Blockchain to collect property taxes – Ghana. • Supply chain network – the track and trace capability of Blockchain network makes it possible to avoid any inadvertent mistakes
Technological adoption/ diffusion	NFT can work on blockchain; Cryptocurrency and other digital currencies are based on blockchain.

United Arab Emirates has Smart Dubai initiative, which aims to become the first city fully powered by Blockchain by 2021 and enhance everything from healthcare and education to traffic management and environmental sustainability.

CHALLENGES IN BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION

- Technology Adoption: With plethora of Blockchain platforms being developed, a careful analysis of return on investment, governance, security & privacy and throughput must be taken into consideration while understanding suitability of Blockchain in an application context.
  - ✓ Scalability: The current transaction processing rate of Blockchain platforms varies from 7tps (transactions per second) to 3500 tps depending on individual platform's applicability to a particular domain, architectural considerations, consensus approach, number of nodes in deployment, etc.
  - ✓ Interoperability: Interoperability across various Blockchain platforms is still in its infancy and lot of work is required to address this issue.
  - ✓ Data Format: The success of utilizing Blockchain capabilities depends on how well the transaction data format has been defined in a multi-party environment

and keenly observing its related characteristics such as its dependency on other information.

- **Regulatory Compliance:** While advocating the usage of Blockchain for an application domain, it is important to study compliance to applicable regulatory provisions and their implications, if any, with respect to the chosen application domain. Based on the requirements, additional regulatory policies may be evolved.
- **Identification of Suitable Use Cases:** Different applications have different levels of security, privacy and data storage requirements depending on the number of participating entities and hence suitability of Blockchain in a particular application context needs to be analysed carefully.
- **Awareness & Skill Set:** Availability of skilled manpower who understands Blockchain potential and its applicability to a particular application domain is required for successful implementation of the technology.
- **Data Localization** requires data about citizens or residents of a country to be collected, stored and processed inside the country, before being transferred / shared internationally. To restrict the data flow and localizing the data, countries have introduced new data laws. European Union introduced data protection law called the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation). In the Indian context, the proposed Personal Data Protection Bill would govern the collection, storage and processing of personal data, including their transfer outside the country under certain conditions.
- **Disposal of Records:** Right to be forgotten is one of the requirements in the proposed Personal Data Protection Bill. As records stored on Blockchain are immutable, to enforce this requirement, appropriate measures must be taken while implementing the Blockchain technology.

INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE BLOCKCHAIN

- MeitY has supported a multi-institutional project titled "Distributed Centre of Excellence in Blockchain Technology". Blockchain technology-based solution for property registration has been developed and is piloted at Shamshabad District, Telangana State.
- C-DAC's mission on Blockchain technology:
  - (a) National Blockchain Framework for cross domain applications addressing the performance, scalability, interoperability, security and privacy challenges.
  - (b) eSign integration with Blockchain based proof-ofexistence (PoE); and
  - (c) development and large-scale deployment of applications.
- IIT Kanpur is working on Blockchain technology focused on development of protocols and research on validating the property of tamper resistance which is prominently used in Blockchain and application development.
- NITI Aayog is working on various Blockchain use cases. NITI Aayog has developed a Blockchain based system for fertilizer subsidy.
- Telangana and Tamil Nadu have released the policy documents towards adopting the Blockchain technology.

Various use cases like land registry, farm insurance and digital certificates have been successfully developed.

- Government of India has started a Future Skills Prime program for upskilling and reskilling in the domain of Blockchain to address the need for growing the talent pool in the country through NIELIT and C-DAC.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF AFRS BY NCRB

Rapid deployment of facial recognition system by the government without any law in place poses a huge threat to privacy rights and freedom of speech and expression. Approval has been accorded for implementation of Automatic Facial Recognition System (AFRS) by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). AFRS will use police records and will be accessible only to Law Enforcement Agencies. This will facilitate better identification of criminals, unidentified dead bodies and missing/found children and persons.

PURPOSE OF AFRS SOFTWARE

- *AFRS is a software that recognizes, records and matches faces against various government databases from photos and videos taken from public and private sources. Its purpose is to find missing children, who may be recorded on CCTV, track criminals across a country.*
- *It was used recently at the rally of Prime Minister of India to recognise such people who could have raised protest the government based on footage recorded from earlier protests.*
- *According to reports, people at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan had to pass through a metal detector, during which a camera captured a photo of their faces and scanned it against a database in a matter of seconds.*

HOW DOES THE SOFTWARE WORK?

- *The police's AFRS is different from facial recognition systems used on smartphones which are based on the ISO 19794-5 standard meant for consumer biometrics.*
- *Whereas, police's software is more "restrictive", as per National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) document seeking proposals for the system. It measures facial features and uses the measurements to create a "template" to be matched against other.*
- *Law enforcement's software is meant to work in various light conditions, detect make-up, plastic surgery or ageing and work against sketches of subjects.*

DATABASES WHICH AFRS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO

- *AFRS will have access to various government databases such as Passports, Aadhaar, Immigration, Visa and Foreigners' Registration Tracking database, Ministry of women and child development's KhoyaPaya and the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System.*
- *It can match a photo against many and compare one photo with another. The more the data, the better is the output.*

- A centralized web application will be hosted in the crime record bureau's data centre in Delhi which will be made available to all police stations in India.

FACIAL RECOGNITION USED AT INTERPOL

- INTERPOL Face Recognition System (IFRS) contains facial images received from more than 160 countries which makes it a unique global criminal database.
- IFRS is coupled with an *automated biometric software* This system can identify or verifying a person by comparing and analysing patterns, shapes and proportions of their facial features and contours.

FACTORS IMPORTANT IN FACIAL RECOGNITION

Unlike fingerprints and DNA, which do not change during a person's life, facial recognition must consider different factors, such as:

- Ageing
- Plastic surgery
- Cosmetics
- Effects of drug abuse or smoking
- Pose of the subject

Working with good quality images is also crucial. Low or medium quality images may be not searchable in the IFRS system. Even if they are searched, the accuracy of the search and the results themselves can be significantly affected.

NO ACTIVE GUIDELINES FOR FACIAL RECOGNITION TRACKING (AFRT) SYSTEM

- There are currently 16 different Facial Recognition Tracking (FRT) systems in active utilisation by various Central and State governments across India for surveillance, security or authentication of identity.
- Another 17 are in the process of being installed by different government departments. While FRT system has seen rapid deployment by multiple government departments in recent times, there are no specific laws or guidelines to regulate the use of this potentially invasive technology.
- FRT system without appropriate guidelines poses threat to fundamental rights to privacy and freedom of speech and expression because it does not satisfythe threshold the Supreme Court had set in its landmark privacy judgment in the 'Justice K.S. Puttaswamy Vs Union of India' case.
- Thus, there seems to be no guidelines, policies, rules or standard operating procedure governing the use of facial recognition technology in India.
- In the context of Article 21, an invasion of privacy must be justified based on a law which stipulates a procedure which is fair, just and reasonable.
- An invasion of life or personal liberty must meet the three-fold requirement of
    1. *Legality*, which postulates the existence of law.
    2. *Need*, defined in terms of a legitimate state aim; and
    3. *Proportionality* which ensures a rational nexus between the objects and the means adopted to achieve them

- *Positive Aspects of Privacy* imposes an obligation on the state to take all necessary measures to protect the privacy of the individual.
- *Negative Aspects of Privacy* restrains the state from committing an intrusion upon the life and personal liberty of a citizen.

USES OF AFRS OR FRT

- Police in Delhi are using the technology for wider security and surveillance and investigation purpose, which is a function creep.
- A function creep happens when someone uses information for a purpose that is not the original specified purpose.
- Delhi police, with the help of automated facial recognition system (AFRS), was comparing the details of people involved in violence during the antiCitizenship Act protests in Jamia Millia Islamia with a data bank of more than two lakh 'anti-social elements'.
- This raises the doubt about the usage of AFRS and its regulation including violation of rights of individuals.

CHALLENGES OF UNREGULATED USE OF AFRS

- Violation of fundamental right to privacy
- Increases illegal mass surveillance without proper regulations or need
- Leads to profiling of citizens based on religion
- Automates discriminatory policing
- Targeting protestors against any government through identification
- Impacts fundamental right to liberty – freedom of speech & expression
- Problem of FALSE POSITIVE - Inaccurate result can lead to falsely implicating someone else
- Problem of FALSE NEGATIVE – system does not recognise the person
- False Negative can lead to exclusion of people from government schemes or policies

COMPANIES HAVE PUT A MORATORIUM ON SALE OF SUCH TECHNOLOGIES

- Many cities and states in the U.S. have either completely banned the usage or impose moratorium on the usage of facial recognition tech.
- Companies like IBM, Microsoft have decided not to sell these technologies to law enforcement at all. Even Amazon has imposed a moratorium. Facial recognition technology has not only been invasive, inaccurate and unregulated but has also been unapologetically weaponised by law enforcement against people from different race or religion.

CONCLUSION & WAY FORWARD

- India is facing a facial recognition pandemic, one without any safeguards or remedies for the harms of exclusion, profiling and surveillance.
- Without urgent action, such systems of mass surveillance will erode democratic liberties and threaten the rights of lakhs of Indians.

- *Thus, government must provide specific guidelines on the use and against misuse of AFRS. Government must lay down specific guidelines in the upcoming Data Protection Law against misuse of AFRS.*

5. *Health & Nutrition*

- Trans fats: are the most harmful of all saturated fat. They are abundant in vegetable ghee — vanaspati and similar oils. (Vanaspati ghee is partially hydrogenated vegetable oil made from vegetable sources; it is different from dairy ghee.). High amounts of trans fatty acids (which make up 30%-40% of some oils) are highly injurious to the heart, liver, pancreas, and blood arteries.
- About 3-4 teaspoons of oil should be consumed daily, including the oil used in cooking.
- An entirely oil-free diet will do harm in the long run, since essential fatty acids in oils are required by the body.
- One component of fats, monounsaturated fat (oleic acid), when consumed instead of other fats, was highly effective in reducing blood fats and medication in patients with diabetes. This type of fat is abundant in olive oil and canola oil, we in India have used a similar oil, mustard, for centuries. Other rich sources of monounsaturated fat are avocados, pistachios, walnuts, almonds and sesame.
- The astounding success of Mediterranean diets in improving almost all health parameters besides improving the condition of diabetics, averting heart disease, and increasing lifespan, could be due to the use of olive oil among other healthy food — nuts, which are rich in monounsaturated fats, and vegetables.
- The second type of 'good' fat is polyunsaturated fat — one example is omega-3 fatty acids, of which fish are a rich source. However, many Indians do not eat fish; and fish is often not easily available in several parts of the country, and could be contaminated, for example with mercury.
- In general, levels of these fats are low in the blood of Indians, impacting blood fat levels and heart health adversely.
- Ghee and coconut oil
  - ✓ The intake of saturated fats carries an extremely high risk of arterial clogging and heart attacks (even though some recent opinions vary). A particularly adverse component of saturated fats is palmitic acids, a major component of palm oil and dairy ghee, which could, besides acutely increasing the risk of heart disease, also lead to the growth of cancer cells.
  - ✓ dairy ghee is replete with saturated fats (60%-80%) and palmitic acid.
  - ✓ Coconut oil, which is widely used in the southern states, too is rich in saturated fats and palmitic acids. It has been found to raise bad blood cholesterol (LDL), the prime determinant of artery blockages.

- All saturated fats get deposited in the liver, causing its shrinkage (fibrosis and cirrhosis), something we have seen increasingly. We need better and more robust research data — and until then, we should decrease the intake of these oils.

HOW SHOULD WE STAY HEALTHY

One should keep your eyes open, and scan nutrition labels for the quantity of saturated fats, palm oil, and trans fatty acids. One should consume more fresh fruit and vegetables and use limited quantities of healthy oils in rotation and in combination. One should try not to reuse and reheat any oil.

STEPS TAKEN BY FSSAI

- Heart Attack Rewind: The 30 second public service announcement that will help support FSSAI's global target of eliminating trans-fat in India by the year 2022, a year ahead of the global target by the World Health Organization (WHO) for complete elimination of trans fat. It is a follow-up to an earlier campaign called "Eat Right".
- Eat Right Campaign: launched in 2018. Edible oil industries took a pledge to reduce the levels of salt, sugar, saturated fat and trans-fat content by 2% by 2022.
- Swasth Bharat Yatra, an initiative started under "Eat Right" campaign is a Pan-India cyclothon to engage citizens on issues of food safety, combating food adulteration and healthy diets.
- FSSAI has stated that the food establishments which use trans-fat free fats/oils and do not have industrial trans-fat more than 0.2 gms per 100 gm of the food can display 'Trans Fat Free' logo in their outlets and on their food products.
- In 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the REPLACE action package to support governments to eliminate industrially produced TFA from the global food supply by 2023. According to the World Health Organization, approximately 5.4 lakh deaths take place each year globally because of the intake of industrially produced trans fatty acids. The WHO has called for the global elimination of trans fats by 2023.
- As part of the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals, the global community has committed to reducing premature death from non-communicable diseases by one-third by 2030. Global elimination of industrially produced trans fats can help achieve this goal

6. *DEFENCE PRODUCTION CAPABILITIES FOR SELF-RELIANCE AND EXPORTS*

To provide impetus to self-reliance in defence manufacturing, multiple announcements were made under 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Package'. In implementing such framework and to position India amongst the leading countries of the world in defence and aerospace sectors, Ministry of Defence (MoD) has formulated a draft Defence Production and Export Promotion

Policy 2020 (DPEPP 2020). The DPEPP 2020 is envisaged as overarching guiding document of MoD to provide a focused, structured and significant thrust to defence production capabilities of the country for self-reliance and exports.

OBJECTIVES OF DEFENCE PRODUCTION AND EXPORT PROMOTION POLICY

- To achieve a turnover of Rs 1,75,000 Crores (US$ 25Bn) including export of Rs 35,000 Crore (US$ 5 Billion) in Aerospace and Defence goods and services by 2025.
- To develop a dynamic, robust and competitive Defence industry, including Aerospace and Naval Shipbuilding industry to cater to the needs of Armed forces with quality products.
- To reduce dependence on imports and take forward "Make in India" initiatives through domestic design and development.
- To promote export of defence products and become part of the global defence value chains.
- To create an environment that encourages R&D, rewards innovation, creates Indian IP ownership and promotes a robust and self-reliant defence industry. A day after a made-in-India howitzer gun, the ATAGS, was used for the first time in the ceremonial 21-gun salute during the Independence Day celebrations, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Tuesday handed over several new defence systems, including the F-INSAS, the Nipun mines, the Landing Craft Assault (LCA), to the Army.

ABOUT F-INSAS SYSTEM

- F-INSAS stands for *Future Infantry Soldier as A System*, a program 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-weatherall-terrain, cost-effective and low maintenance.
- The full-gear of F-INSAS system includes an AK-203 assault rifle, which is a Russian-origin gas-operated, magazine-fed, select-fire assault rifle.
- It has a range of 300 metre and is being made at Korwa near Amethi in a Russia-India joint venture.
- A contract for over six lakh AK-203 rifles was signed in December last year between the Ministry of Defence and the Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited (IRRPL).
- On the weaponry front, other than the AK-203, the FINSAS includes a multi-mode hand grenade, which can be used in defensive and offensive modes.
- In defensive mode, the grenades are to be hurled when the thrower is in a shelter or has a cover, while the target is in the open and can be harmed by fragmentation.
- In the offensive mode, the grenades do not fragment, and the adversary is harmed by the blast or is stunned. The weapon kit also has a multi-purpose knife for close quarters combat.
- F-INSAS provides soldiers with ballistic helmets and ballistic goggles for protection against small projectiles and fragments, along with a bullet-proof vest. The helmet and the bullet-proof jacket can protect the soldier against

9 mm bullets and ammunition fired from AK-47 rifles. For target acquisition, the soldier has rifle-mounted holographic sight for fast and accurate aiming with a range of 200 metre. The helmet has a mounted night-vision device for operating in low-light conditions, and the option of installing a thermal imager sight. Thermal imagers covert infrared energy from objects into thermal images.

- F-INSAS also comes with hands-free, secured advanced communications set for real-time exchange of information with the command post and fellow soldiers for enhanced situational awareness.
- All these items have been sourced from Defence Public Sector Undertakings, and private Indian industries. They have been indigenously designed by the Indian entities, including the DRDO and the ordnance factories ecosystem.

WHAT IS F-INSAS MODELLED ON?

- F-INSAS is one among many soldiers modernisation programs across the world. The US has Land Warrior, while the UK has FIST (Future Integrated Soldier Technology). According to estimates, over 20 armies around the world are following such programs.
- The DRDO had conceptualised the F-INSAS (not to be confused with INSAS or Indian Small Arms System) in line with the targets of the Army's Infantry Soldier Modernisation Program with an aim to optimise the soldier's performance across the full spectrum and duration of a military operation.

ABOUT NIPUN MINES

- Nipun mines are indigenously designed and developed anti-personnel mines, termed by the DRDO as 'soft target blast munition'.
- These mines are meant to act as the first line of defence against infiltrators and enemy infantry.
- They have been developed with the efforts of Armament Research and Development Establishment, a Pune-based DRDO facility, and Indian industry.
- Anti-personnel mines are meant to be used against humans as against anti-tank mines that are aimed at heavy vehicles.
- They are smaller in size and can be deployed in large numbers.
- The Army has said that the mine will provide protection to the troops on the borders and is more potent and effective than the existing anti-personnel mine in its arsenal.

ABOUT LANDING CRAFT ASSAULT

- Landing Craft Assault (LCA) is meant to serve as a replacement for the boats with limited capabilities currently in use in the Pangong Tso lake.
- The LCA, which has been indigenously developed by Goa-based Aquarius Shipyard Limited, is said to have better launch, speed and capacity to operate across water obstacles in eastern Ladakh. Similar vessels are already in operation in the Indian Navy.

7. *DARK SKY RESERVE AT HANLE IN LADAKH*

The Department of Science & Technology (DST) has announced the setting up of India's 1st dark sky reserve at Hanle in Ladakh**. World's 1st International Dark Sky Reserve is Mont-Megantic, located in Canada.**

ABOUT DARK SKY RESERVE

- **It is a** public or private land **with a distinguished nocturnal environment and starry nights that has been developed responsibly to prevent light pollution.**
- **The** International Dark Sky Association (IDSA) is a U.S.-based non-profit organisation that designates sites as international dark sky places **(parks, sanctuaries, reserves,** communities, and Urban Night Sky Places) **depending on the criteria they meet.**
  - ✓ **According to the IDSA, these reserves consist of a** core area **meeting minimum criteria for sky quality and natural darkness, and a peripheral area that supports dark sky preservation in the core.**

GOAL OF DSR CREATION

- **It will** identify and honor public or private lands **and their surrounding communities for exceptional commitment to success in implementing the ideals of dark sky preservation.**
- **It will** promote eco-and Astro-tourism **and provide international recognition for such sites**
- **It will** promote protection of nocturnal habitats**, public enjoyment of the night sky and its heritage and ideal for professional and amateur astronomy.**

ABOUT HANLE DSR

- **Situated at a height of 4,500 metres above sea level** at Hanle, **it will come up** within the Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary**.**
- **The Department of Science and Technology and experts from the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), Bengaluru, are providing scientific and technological support.**
- **The primary** objective is to promote astronomy tourism **in a sustainable and environment-friendly manner.**
- **India is still in the process of filing its nomination to IDSA.**
- Long and harsh winters **with minimum temperatures dropping to minus 40°C make large parts of the UT highly inhabitable. This** aridity, limited vegetation, high elevation and large areas with sparse populations, all make it the perfect setting for long-term astronomical observatories **and dark sky places.** Process of Site Becoming a DSR
- **Individuals or groups can nominate a site for certification to the IDSA.**

- **There are** 5 designated categories, namely International Dark Sky parks, communities, reserves, sanctuaries and Urban Night Sky Places.
- **The IDSA considers a piece of land suitable for dark sky place only if:**
  - ✓ **it is either publicly or privately owned;**
  - ✓ **is accessible to the public partially or entirely during the year;**
  - ✓ **the land is legally protected for scientific, natural, educational, cultural, heritage and/or public enjoyment purposes;**
  - ✓ **the core area of the land provides an exceptional dark sky resource relative to the communities and cities that surround it,**
  - ✓ **the land offers prescribed night sky brightness either for a reserve, park or sanctuary.**
- **Between 2001 and January 2022, there have been 195 sites recognized as International Dark Sky Places globally.**

INDIAN ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATORY (IAO)

- **It is located in Hanle near Leh in Ladakh.**
- **It has** one of the world's highest located sites for optical, infrared and gamma-ray telescopes**.**
- **It is operated by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bangalore.**
- Telescopes located at Hanle observatory- **The Himalayan Chandra Telescope (HCT), High Energy Gamma Ray (HAGAR) Telescope, Major Atmospheric Cherenkov Experiment (MACE) Telescope and GROWTHIndia.**

8. *PNEUMONIA CASES IN ARGENTINA*

A cluster of pneumonia cases in Argentina has been identified as Legionellosis.

ABOUT LEGIONELLOSIS

- **It is a** type of pneumonia **caused by legionella bacteria, found naturally in** freshwater.
- **It** doesn't spread from person to person**. It spreads via inhalation of contaminated aerosols from contaminated water, which could come from — air conditioning cooling towers, evaporative condensers, hot and cold-water systems, humidifiers and whirlpool spas.**
- **Many people exposed to the bacteria don't develop symptoms.**
- **Those who do develop symptoms may experience cough, fever, chills, shortness of breath, muscle aches, headaches and diarrhoea.**
- **There are** no vaccines that can prevent Legionnaires' disease**.**
- **It requires treatment with antibiotics and most cases of this illness can be treated successfully.**

9. PRADHAN MANTRI TB MUKT BHARAT ABHIYAAN

The President of India launched 'Pradhan Mantri TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan' to eliminate TB by 2025. It's an initiative of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW). Its objectives are –

→ **Provide** additional patient support **to improve treatment outcomes of TB patients**
→ **Augment** community involvement **in meeting India's commitment to end TB by 2025**
→ Leverage Corporate Social Responsibility **(CSR) activities**

COMPONENTS

- Ni-kshay Mitra Initiative**: It is to ensure additional diagnostic, nutritional, and vocational support to those on TB treatment. Ni-kshay Mitra (Donor) are those who can support by adopting health facilities, blocks/urban wards/districts/states for accelerating response against TB to complement government efforts.**
- Ni-kshay Digital Portal: **It will provide a platform for** community support **for persons with TB.**

ABOUT TUBERCULOSIS

- **It is** caused by a bacterium called Mycobacterium tuberculosis**.**
- **In humans, it most commonly affects the lungs but it can also affect other parts of your body, including the kidneys, spine or brain.**
- **It is** spread from person to person through the air**.**
- **Common symptoms are cough with sputum and blood at times, chest pains, weakness, weight loss, fever.**
- **It is a** curable disease, treated by the standard 6-month course of 4 antibiotics**.**
- **Bacillus Calmette Guerin (BCG) vaccine is a vaccine primarily used against TB.**
- **According to WHO, more than 4100 people lose their lives to TB every day.**

TB AND INDIA

- India has the highest number of TB cases in the world**, accounting for about 26% of world's total TB cases.**
- **It is estimated that every year 26 lakh people suffer from this disease and about 4 lakh people die from this disease.**
- **In 2018, the UN committed to end TB globally by 2030, but** India announced it would try to eliminate TB in India by 2025, five years ahead of the UN's target**.**

BPAL (SHORT ANTI-TB REGIMEN)

- **It is a 6-month, all-oral, three-drug regimen that is used to treat people with highly drug-resistant forms of TB.**
- **BPaL is a combination of three newer antibiotics –** bedaquiline**,** pretomanid **and** linezolid**.**

INDIAN INITIATIVES TO ELIMINATE TB

- National TB Elimination Programme **- It provides, various free of cost, quality tuberculosis diagnosis and treatment services across the country through the government health system.**
- The Nikshay Ecosystem **- It is the National TB information system which is a one-stop solution to manage information of patients and monitor program activity and performance throughout the country.**
- Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY) **- It aimed at providing financial support to TB patients for their nutrition.**
- TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign **- Launched in 2019, it is showcasing the highest level of commitment for the elimination of TB.**
- The Saksham Project **- It is a project of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) that has been providing psycho-social counselling to DR-TB patients.**
- Joint Effort for Elimination of Tuberculosis (JEET) **- It is the largest private health sector engagement initiative for TB. The Government of India has partnered with the Global Fund to launch JEET.**

10. MOBILE BANKING TROJAN' VIRUS

- The new mobile banking Trojan' virus SOVA is targeting Indian customers.
- A Trojan Virus is a type of malware that downloads into a device and disguised as a legitimate program.
- It can stealthily encrypt an android phone for ransom and is hard to uninstall.
- It can add false overlays to a range of apps and mimic over 200 banking and payment applications in order to con the Android user.
- It was earlier focusing on countries like the US, Russia and Spain. It added several other countries, including India, to its list of targets.

CULTURE

1 . *GARBA FOLK DANCE*

Gujarat's famed traditional dance form Garba has been nominated by India for inclusion in the UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list.

ABOUT GARBA

- What: folk dance
- Where: State of Gujarat
- When: mostly during the *Navaratras (Nine-day festival in Oct-*Nov*)*
- By: both men and women
- Dance is performed around a centrally lit lamp (*Garba deep*) or a picture or statue of the Goddess Shakti. The word garba comes from the Sanskrit word for womb and so implies gestation or pregnancy — life. This lantern represents life, and the foetus in the womb in particular. The dancers thus honour Durga, the feminine form of divinity.
- Attire: traditional dressing male is *kediyu* while the traditional female dress is *chaniya choli*.

UNESCO'S LIST OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN INDIA

UNESCO established lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage for ensuring better protection of important intangible cultural heritages and create awareness.

India's Entry's in UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage

- Koodiyattam (Sanskrit theatre): A combined dance drama conducted by Chakyars who play the male caste traditionally in Kerala. Women of Nambiar caste play female roles.
- Ramlila: Popular folk theatre in Uttar Pradesh. It is an enactment of Ramayana using songs, dances and dialogues, during the Dussehra. It is performed by male actors, who do the role of Sita as well. The play is staged annually over ten or more successive nights, during the "Sharad Navaratras."
- Tradition in Vedic chanting: Oral tradition of Vedas consists of pathas, "recitations" or ways of chanting Vedic mantras. Such traditions of Vedic chant are oldest unbroken oral tradition in existence, fixation of the Vedic texts as preserved from early Iron Age.

- Ramman: Ritual theatre of Garhwal region. Celebrated by Hindu Community in Saloor-Dungra villages of Painkhanda Valley in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand.
- Mudiyettu: A traditional ritual theatre in Kerala. It depicts the mythological tale of a battle between Goddess Kali and demon Darika. The dance in the village temples, called Bhagavati Kavus.
- Kalbelia: Performed by Kalbelia tribe in Rajasthan. Kalbelia dance movements resembles that of a serpent. Traditionally, Kalbelia tribe was known for its frequent movement from one place to another and the occupation of catching snakes and trading snake venom. The songs are based on mythology.
- Chhau: A tribal martial art dance performed in Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal. There are three subgenres of this dance based on the place of their origin, Purulia Chhau (West Bengal), Seraikella Chhau (Jharkhand) and Mayurbhanj Chhau (Odisha).
- Buddhist Chanting of Ladakh: Recitation of sacred Buddhist texts in the trans-Himalayan Ladakh region in the state of Jammu & Kashmir.
- Sankirtana: A ritual singing & dancing art form of Manipur. Performed to mark religious occasions of Manipuri Vaishnavites. Practiced at temples, performers narrate life of Lord Krishna through songs and dances. Musical instruments used are Cymbals and Drums.
- Traditional Brass & Copper craft of Utensil making among Thatheras of Jandiala Guru in Punjab: An oral tradition of metal utensil making among 'Thathera' community in Punjab. Metal is heated and moulded into thin plates with curved shapes. Utensils have functional as well as ritualistic purpose. Metals used are brass, copper and Kansa (an alloy of zinc, tin and copper). Recommended for medicinal purposes in Ayurveda texts. Patronized by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 19th century.
- Nowruz: Indicates beginning of New Year for Parsis. Also celebrated as Spring festival by Kashmiris. Denotes Zoroastrian respect for the environment.
- Yoga: Consists of a series of poses, meditation, controlled breathing, word chanting and other techniques to help a person build self-realization. Traditionally, transmitted through Guru-Shishya Parampara.
- Kumbha: It (festival of sacred pitcher) is largest peaceful congregation of pilgrims on earth, during which participants bathe or take a dip in a sacred river. Held at

Allahabad, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nasik every four years by rotation.

- **Durga Puja in Kolkata:** Annual festival celebrated in September or October, most notably in Kolkata, West Bengal. It marks ten-day worship of the Hindu Goddess Durga. In the months preceding the festival, small artisanal workshops sculpt images of Durga using unfired clay pulled from Ganga. The worship of the goddess then begins on the inaugural day of Mahalaya when eyes are painted onto the clay images to bring the goddess to life. It ends on the tenth day, when the images are immersed in the river from where the clay came.

2. *RAJA RAVI VARMA*

Ahead of 175th birth anniversary fete of legendary artist Raja Ravi Varma, who revolutionised Indian aesthetics and redefined art practice during colonial era, erstwhile royal family of Kilimanoor has urged Union government to posthumously confer Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian award, on him.

ABOUT RAJA RAVI VARMA
- He was born at Kilimanoor, Kerala.
- He learnt watercolour painting from royal painter Ramaswamy Naidu, and later trained in oil painting from Dutch artist Theodore Jensen
- **Specialisation:** Oil and water paintings. He focused on realised expression and skin tone. Varma combined European realism with Indian sensibilities. He was inspired from Indian literature to dance drama.
- **Achievements:** Three gold medals at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.
- **Role towards masses:** He opened a Lithographic Press in Bombay in 1894 to take his art to masses. His lithographs increased the involvement of common people with fine arts and defined artistic tastes among common people.
- **Legacy:** 2014 Indian Hindi-language film, Rang Rasiya (English title: Colours of Passion) explores Varma's inspiration behind his paintings.

IMPORTANT WORKS
- Shakuntala
- Nair Lady Adorning Her Hair
- There Comes Papa
- Galaxy of Musicians
- Damayanti talking with a swan
- Maharaj Shivaji

3. *SHUMANG LEELA*

- The 50th All Manipur Shumang Leela Festival 2021-2022 was held in Imphal.
- Shumang Leela is a traditional form of theatre in Manipur. Literally, Shumang means courtyard and Leela means

play. Thus, Shumang Leela means a play of the courtyard and is generally performed in open spaces.
- The form has been prevalent since the time of monarchical rule in Manipur but the proper form of Shumang Leela had its inception in 1895 A.D.
- It is believed to have descended from Lai-haraoba (ritual ceremony of pleasing the God).
- The roles of female artists are all played by male actors, called Nupi shabis and male characters are played by female artists in case of female theatre groups.
- Shumang Leela groups of the early stage attempted to preserve and promote humanism, tolerance, devotion, truth and justice through their performances.
- The present-day performances focus on the issues of moral values, unity and integrity.

4. *THEYYAM*

- The word Theyyam comes from Deivam that stands for God in Malayalam.
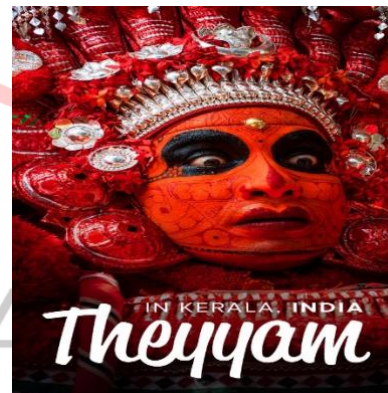
- **Where:** Northern Malabar Region of Kerala
- Theyyam is performed by males, except the Devakoothu theyyam; the Devakoothu is the only Theyyam ritual performed by women. Devakoothu is performed only in the Thekkumbad Kulom temple.
- There are approximately 400 types of Theyyam, including Vettakkorumakan, Vishnumoorthy Theyyam, Muchilot Bhagavathi and Sree Muthappan.
- It encompasses dance, mime and music.
- Myth of the Theyyam relates to tribal worship of ancestors, heroes, Mother Goddess, animals, serpents and trees with rituals differing in each form.
- The ceremonious dance is accompanied by the chorus of such musical instruments as Chenda, Elathalam, Kurumkuzal and Veekkuchend.
- Each artist represents a hero with great power.
- Performers wear heavy make-up and adorn flamboyant costumes.

- The headgear and ornaments are truly majestic and fill one with a sense of awe and wonder. From December to April, there are Theyyam performances in many temples of Kannur and Kasaragod.
- The story is sung in the form of narrative songs by the performer to the accompaniment of the chenda

(traditional percussion) and ilathalam (traditional cymbals) prior to the performance

Miscellaneous

1. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX (HDI) 2021-2022

- According to the Human Development Index (HDI) 2021, India ranks 132 out of 191 countries, following a decline in its score. The decline is consistent with the global trend since the outbreak of COVID-19.
- The Index is part of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) recently issued Human Development Report (HDR) 2021-2022.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX (HDI)

- It is a statistical composite index (first published in 1990 by UNDP), which measures average achievement of a country in 3 basic dimensions - Health as measured by life expectancy at birth Knowledge measured by expected and mean years of education Standard of living measured by per capita gross national income (GNI)
- It was developed by Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq and is now used to assess a country's development as part of the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report (UNDP-HDR).
- HDR presents:
  - ✓ Human Development Index (HDI)
  - ✓ Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI),
  - ✓ Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI),
  - ✓ Gender Inequality Index (GII) since 2010 and
  - ✓ Gender Development Index (GDI) since 2014.

These were launched to track poverty, inequality and gender empowerment across different dimensions of human development.

- HDI also embodies Amartya Sen's "capabilities" approach to understand human well-being, which emphasizes the importance of ends (like a decent standard of living) over means (like income per capita).

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2021-2022

- According to the recent report, global progress is reversing, as the 'Human Development' has fallen for two years in a row (2020 and 2021).
- Globally, nine out of ten countries' human development performance has slipped due to multiple crises such as COVID-19, war in Ukraine and environmental challenges.
  - ✓ This indicates that global human development has stalled for the first time in 32 years.
- A significant contributor to the HDI's recent decline is a global decline in life expectancy, which has fallen from 72.8 years in 2019 to 71.4 years in 2021.
- The latest HDR highlights that stress, sadness, anger and worry have been increasing over the last decade and are now at record levels as the new normal takes shape.
- The world is still not transitioning to a post-Covid-19 build-back-better scenario.
- On the contrary, developing countries across the globe are entering a period of sharp social, political and economic divergence, adversely affecting the most vulnerable and increasing gender inequality (which increased 6.7% globally).
- Asian Region: At 73 and with an index value of 0.782, Sri Lanka emerged as the best performer in the Indian sub-

continent. It was followed by China (79 and 0.768), Bhutan (127 and 0.666), Bangladesh (129 and 0.661), India (132 and 0.633), Nepal (143 and 0.602) and Pakistan (161 and 0.544)

INDIA'S PERFORMANCE IN 2021

- India is ranked 132 out of 191 countries in the 2021 HDR's HDI. In the 2020 HDI, India was ranked 130th out of 189 countries.
  - ✓ India's HDI value fell owing to a drop in life expectancy from 69.7 to 67.2 years.
  - ✓ In 2020, too, India recorded a decline in its HDI value (0.642) in comparison to the pre-Covid level of 2019 (0.645).

	India	World Average
HDI value	0.633 (0.642 in 2020)	0.732
Life expectancy at birth	67.2 years	71.4 years
Expected years of schooling	11.9 years	12.8 years
Mean years of schooling	6.7 years	8.6 years
Gross national income per capita (2017 PPP)	$6,590	$16,752.

- According to the GII, India ranks 122 out of 170 countries, with a value of 0.490.
  - ✓ This indicates that India's GII value improved slightly in the latest report compared to the 2020 index (0.490 vs 0.493), despite gender inequality worsening between 2019 and 2020.
  - ✓ The GII measures inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions – Reproductive health, Empowerment and the Labour market.

INFERENCE

- According to UNDP, comparing rankings across countries is inaccurate because the HDI was calculated for 189 countries in 2020 and 191 countries this year.
- Despite the decline in India's HDI value, it continues to outperform the average human development in South Asia.

- Since 1990, India's HDI value has been steadily catching up to the global average, indicating a faster rate of progress in human development than the global average.

2. *SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE STATUE AT INDIA GATE*

PM Modi inaugurated newly refurbished Kartavya Path (renamed *Rajpath*)**, and unveiled** Subhas Chandra Bose statue **at India Gate. These were undertaken as part of Central Vista Redevelopment Project that began** in February 2021.

  - ✓ **The revamped road now has: new pedestrian underpasses, improved parking spaces, new exhibition panels and upgraded night lighting, refurbished canals, added green spaces etc.**
- Kingsway or Rajpath **is the 3 km long stretch of road running from the Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate.**
- **Tripura High Court held that "A government servant is entitled to hold his/her own beliefs and express them in the manner one desired, subject to not crossing the borders laid down in the conduct rules which were applicable in Tripura.**
- **One can't be prevented from expressing his views merely he is a government employee. In a democratic society every institution is governed by democratic reforms. Healthy criticism is a better way to govern public institution.**
- **It was built by British architects** Edwin Lutyens **and Herbert Baker as ceremonial boulevard representing the spirit of '**Might and power of Imperial rule in India**'**
- **It was** named 'Kingsway' to honour the erstwhile British Emperor of India, King George V**.**
  - ✓ **In 1911, British government in India decided to move their capital from Calcutta (now Kolkata) to Delhi.**
- **Post-independence 'Kingsway' was renamed as Rajpath (Hindi translation of 'Kingsway') but it essentially remained one of the markers of our slavery and colonial subjugation.**
  - ✓ **Queensway running perpendicular to it was rechristened as Janpath.**

KARTAVYA PATH: ERASING THE SYMBOL OF SLAVERY

- **Revamping of the Rajpath ('**Avenue Of State**') and changing its name to 'Kartavya Path' ('**Avenue Of Duty**') had** turned Rajpath, the symbol of slavery into a matter of history**.**

- **This** name change **is in tune with values and principles of democracy and a contemporary, new confident self-assured India.**
- **Unlike the Rajpath which signified the spirit of '**Might and power of ruler**' the name 'Kartavya' signifies the** spirit of "Duty, Public ownership and empowerment".• **The new name** would essentially remind our parliamentarians, ministers and officers who now go on the path to perform their respective duties with sincerity **rather than looking upon themselves as '**power centre**s'** thereby removing another trace of colonial mindset.
- **It will also inspire everyone who visits or crosses the road to perform their duties towards the country, the society, and their families.**
- **In Short,** *Kartavya Path* **is an avenue that reminds us of our Kartavya /duty (an Indian Value) rather than the might of colonial rule in India** Acting on similar lines, Central Government over the last few years has been making efforts to free administration of the colonial practices and erase the remnants of colonial era. These include**:**
- Self-attestation of certificates **disallowing the need to attest certificates by a gazette officer.**
- New naval ensign(flag) **with Tricolor and the seal of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Naval forces.**
- Installation of iconic Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose statue in the Grand Canopy **at the India Gate, which once had the statue of Geroge V. The canopy reminded us of our colonial subjugation for decades.**
- **Merger of** Amar Jawan Jyoti **with the flame of National war Memorial on January 2022**
- Repeal of more than 1500 redundant colonial-era laws **since 2014.**
- Merger of Railway Budget with Union Budget **in 2017**
- Advancing of Budget to the first of February **from the last day of February**
- **Renaming three islands of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago in 2018**
  - ✓ **Rose Island was renamed as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep.**
  - ✓ **Neil Island as Shaheed Dweep.**
  - ✓ **Havelock island as Swaraj Dweep.**
- **India's national song '**Vande Mataram' **replaced the popular Christian hymn '**Abide With Me' **to conclude the Beating Retreat ceremony.**
  - ✓ **Beating Retreat ceremony in 2015 saw some major changes with Indian classical instruments such as sitar, tabla and santoor make their debut, thus infusing indian flavour. All the changes bound to have decolonizing impact on generations.**

ABOUT CENTRAL VISTA REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

- **The whole project is estimated to cost** Rs 20,000 crores**.**
  - ✓ **Around Rs 1,000 crores will be used for the construction of a new Parliament.**
- **The project is estimated to be completed by 2024.**
- Nodal Ministry**: Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs**

Central Vista	**Central Vista Redevelopment Project**
• It is the India's central administrative area located in New Delhi • During the colonial era, British architects 'Edwin Lutyens' and 'Herbert Baker' has designed the central vista complex. • It was inaugurated in 1931 and comprised of: ✓ Rashtrapati Bhavan ✓ Parliament House ✓ North and South Blocks ✓ Record office which was later named as the National Archives. ✓ India Gate monument ✓ Civic gardens on the either side of the Rajpath	• It was conceived in September 2019 involving multiple projects spread over six years and estimated to cost 20,000 crore rupees • The planned redevelopment works include: ✓ The new triangular parliament building with increased seating capacity for future expansion ✓ Chambers for Members of Parliament. ✓ Central Vista Avenue ✓ 10 buildings of the Common Central Secretariat ✓ Central Conference Centre ✓ Additional Buildings for National Archives ✓ Facilities for security officials ✓ Official residences for the Vice President, PM ✓ Executive Enclave with Prime Minister's Office ✓ New Indira Gandhi National Center For Arts ✓ Conversion of North & South blocks into Museum ✓ Cabinet Secretariat, National Security Council Secretariat and the relocation of National Museum in North and South Block etc.

WHY IS CENTRAL VISTA REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT LAUNCHED?
- Present Parliament building dates back to 1920s and showing signs of distress and overuse.
- To Consolidate all Ministry offices at one place
  - ✓ At present, 39 Ministries are housed on the central vista, whereas around 12 Ministries have offices outside the vista at different places creating obstacles in smooth coordination and cooperation among different Ministries.

- ✓ As part of the redevelopment, all the 51 Ministries are proposed to be located at one location within the central vista.
- Improving productivity and efficiency of administration
    - ✓ Presently there is poor construction quality of office buildings, inefficient use of land in government buildings, inadequate facilities and outdated infrastructure inside the office buildings.
- Strengthening cultural and recreational facilities in the central vista:
    - ✓ Central vista currently has Haphazard Parking facilities, tired landscape and no amenities. The idea is to address all these issues and get a livelier landscape with more facilities for civic users Concerns Expressed Over This Project
- Negative effects on environment particularly on green cover as well as on air quality with demolition and reconstruction of structures.
- Multi-crore Tax funded project will cause huge financial burden on the exchequer.
- Pumping funds into it during two years of lockdown is unjustifiable.
- Demolition of history.

GRAND STATUE OF NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE AT THE INDIA GATE CANOPY

- This 28-feet tall statue is carved out of single piece of *black granite* sourced from a quarry in Khammam in Telangana.
- It has been readied by a team of sculptors led by Arjun Yogiraj.
- Till 1968, the canopy of the India Gate was occupied by the statue of King George V.

3. EIGHT NAMIBIAN CHEETAHS WERE RELEASED

Eight Namibian cheetahs, five females and three males, were released into Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park (KNP) by the Prime Minister of India.

• The cheetah is believed to have disappeared from the Indian landscape in 1947 when Maharaja Ramanuj Pratap Singh Deo of Koriya princely state hunted down and shot the last three recorded Asiatic cheetahs in India.

• The Asiatic Cheetah was officially declared extinct in India in 1952.

ABOUT REINTRODUCTION

- **Releasing a species in a habitat that enables it to survive is referred to as reintroduction.**
- **It is recognised as a strategy to conserve threatened species and restore ecosystem functions.**

WHY REINTRODUCE CHEETAH NOW?

- **It is the** flagship species of the grassland**, therefore, with the reintroduction, these dryland ecosystems of India will have a chance to return to their natural state.**
- **It is a** part of our heritage **and it is the only large carnivore that has been extirpated, mainly by over-hunting in India in historical time.**
- **The Supreme Court of India had also given its approval in January 2020 to introduce cheetahs in a suitable habitat.**

REASONS FOR EXTINCTION

- Ruthless bounty-hunting **by the British and the pomp of the royal shikar (hunting) by the kings led to its extinction.**
- Human-wildlife conflict**, loss of habitat and loss of prey, and** illegal trafficking**.**
- **The** advent of climate change and growing human populations **have made these problems worse.**

Why Has Kuno National Park Been Chosen For Relocation?	Why Did India Select Namibian Cheetah?
• **It is** located in the Chambal region**; spread over an area of over 750 sq km and has a conducive environment for the cheetahs.** • It is assessed to be **capable of supporting** 21 Cheetahs **.** • **The protected area,** comprising a considerable population of prey **like four horned antelopes, chinkara, nilgai, wild boar, spotted deer and sambar.**	• **In the** early 1970s, India had approached Iran for Asiatic cheetahs, but had been refused**. •** **Namibian cheetahs have been selected based on an assessment of their health, disposition and ability to contribute genetics that will result in a strong founder population.** • Namibia **has the largest population of Cheetahs in the world, earning it the title** "Cheetah Capital of the World."

CHALLENGES OF THE PROJECT

- **Critics of the project have pointed out that the gene flow in such a small group of cheetahs is a matter of concern.**
    - ✓ Gene flow between populations can help maintain genetic diversity and prevent **inbreeding** (parent and offspring, full brother and sister or half brother and

sister). However, experts point out that South Africa has already undertaken similar projects within the continent, in which measures are taken to ensure gene flow. India is expected to follow the same.
- ✓ Over the next 5 to 10 years, 5-10 cheetahs will be relocated to India annually.
- ✓ From time to time, some of these cheetahs from India will be brought back, and taking some others there. This will ensure the proper gene flow.
- ✓ Ministry officials, meanwhile, pointed out that even if this movement does not take place, gene flow is unlikely to be a problem in India because of the country's animal corridors that allow animals to move around.

- **Kuno national park could soon be the only location in the world to host wild populations of four major big cat species – tiger, lion, leopard and cheetah. There is no science available currently to suggest that all four can coexist comfortably in the same habitat.**
- **Because of this plan**, 169 villages would need to be displaced.
- **The success of this project depends on the survival of cheetahs in the Indian environment which is different from Namibia.**

CHEETAH MITRAS

- **It has been established as part of the reintroduction campaign.**
- **They are a group of about 400 young people, who have been educated to increase cheetah awareness among residents of nearby villages.**
- **They will protect the cheetah and also ensure that human-animal conflict is avoided.**

CHEETAH

- **It is one of the oldest of the** big cat species **and also the** world's fastest land mammal.
- **It is** native to Africa and central Iran.
- **The** Asiatic cheetah, which is now found only in Iran**, is classified as a** critically endangered species **in the IUCN Red List.**
- **The** African cheetahs **are classified as** a vulnerable species **in the IUCN red list.**
- **African cheetahs are bigger in size as compared to Asiatic cheetahs.**

KUNO NATIONAL PARK (MADHYA PRADESH)

- **It was** established in 1981 as a wildlife sanctuary but in 2018, **it was given the status of a** national park.
- Kuno River, **one of the major tributaries of** Chambal River **flows through the entire length bisecting the National Park division.**

4 . *ETHICS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE*

The debate over AI, whether it is "good" or "bad" for humanity, rages on as industries with an impact on society's social, economic, and political structure implements AI systems. Some considerations that need to be considered are: Will we see widespread unemployment because of AI systems replacing humans? How can AI be protected from being applied improperly or dangerously? Effects of AI on human personhood and dignity? Democracies now must deal with concerns like information manipulation in the runup to elections and potential hacking into election process itself due to consequences of private and/or public ownership of AI systems. According to World Economic Forum, some ethical issues highlighted by development of AI systems include unemployment, inequality, racism, security, and 'rights of a robot.' Recently, national and international organisations have begun to take these issues into consideration as they examine the best way to regulate AI systems. Along with trade associations and nonprofits, private sector is also expressing its opinions. For instance, commercial corporations like Microsoft, Google, SAP, and IBM have developed ethics guidelines to be considered while building AI systems. Considering the scale and reach of these companies, and the fact that they are at forefront of development of AI technology, the perspectives of private companies on ethical principles governing use of AI systems is valuable. Ethical principles that need to be developed to guide AI converge around following principles:

Transparency is typically defined as "improving explainability," "ensuring disclosure," and "in the areas of data use, human-AI interaction, automated decision making, and understanding purpose of AI systems," with the main goals being to increase trust in AI systems and as a crucial first step to safeguard legal rights while using AI systems. Although there is a push for increased disclosure in a way that is accessible to non-experts, the understanding of what may be shared is still unclear due to the drive to safeguard creators of AI systems' intellectual property rights.

Justice and fairness: Usually, this category focuses on justice or prevention of bias or discrimination, but in other situations, the conversation has expanded to include effects of AI on diversity, job market, democratic governance, due process rights, etc. Incorporating these standards into technical standards and codes, increasing transparency, educating public about potential effects of AI systems on rights, increasing auditing or monitoring of AI system performance, strengthening current legal frameworks to account for problems brought on by AI systems, and other suggestions have been made to improve AI systems in these areas.

Non-malfeasance: The discussion surrounding the nonmalfeasance principle has mostly focused on requirement for security and safety in deployment of AI systems, i.e., that AI systems should not cause any anticipated or inadvertent harm. These conversations have notably focused on cybersecurity risks including hacking and possibility that technological development may outstrip capacity for

regulation. The many forms of harm that have been taken into consideration include bodily harm, privacy erosion, safety concerns, detrimental effects on social wellbeing, and more. Interventions in AI at design stage, such as privacy by design, multidisciplinary collaboration, setting industry standards, enhanced monitoring, etc., are some suggested answers.

Responsibility and accountability: The discussion surrounding these principles includes a wide range of topics, such as advice on integrity, clarifications of culpability, and provision of remedies in cases when AI systems may potentially cause harm. There is also a lack of clarity regarding whether accountability is viewed differently in case of AI systems compared to humans.

Privacy: In the case of privacy, most jurisdictions link to the need to safeguard one is right to privacy, and problem is typically framed as one of data security or protection. Stakeholders have given privacy by design, differential privacy, data minimization, and access restriction some thought as potential answers. There are proposals for privacy laws to change to reflect AI.

Beneficence: The idea of beneficence refers to promotion of everyone's well-being, peace, and happiness as well as development of socioeconomic opportunities & economic prosperity.

Freedom & autonomy are topics that are discussed in relation to measures that place users at centre of the system, safeguarding freedom of expression, informational self-determination, freedom to use multiple platforms, and other positive aspects of freedom. However, freedom and autonomy have occasionally been used to refer to unfavourable aspects of freedom, such as freedom from technology experimentation, manipulation, and surveillance. Most times, it is thought that ensuring that people have enough choices and knowledge about AI and how it interacts with outside world serves to uphold freedom.

Trust: Discussions of trust concept have traditionally focused on ensuring that users and society at large trust AI systems. This is made possible by other factors described above, such as accountability, explainability, transparency, etc., to meet expectations of public.

Dignity: When the issue of dignity is brought up, it only refers to human beings. Accordingly, AI systems should be designed in a way that does not in any way undermine, weaken, or erode human dignity, but rather works to protect and uphold it.

OECD Principles on AI, 2019, are the most well-known AI ethical recommendations. These principles served as foundation for human-centered principles approved at G-20 Summit in 2019. In both documents, a list of five principles—human-centered values and fairness, transparency and explainability, robustness, security and safety, and accountability—that were endorsed by member countries is presented. In 2020,

Global Partnership on AI (GPAI) was founded with the goal of promoting ethical and human-centric development and application of AI in a way that is consistent with those rights,

fundamental freedoms, and our common democratic values. GPAI seeks to involve a wide range of stakeholders from business, civil society, governments, and academia to work together across four Working Groups: (a) Responsible AI; (b) Data Governance; (c) Future of Work; and (d) Innovation & Commercialisation. AI ethics initiatives have largely generated vague, highlevel principles and value statements that do not translate to very specific recommendations. The next concrete step from a policy perspective would be for international and national bodies to filter down these principles into concrete actionable form, that balances, to the extent possible, business needs of private parties with the larger social good.

5 . *THE ODR POLICY PLAN FOR INDIA*

There is a need to leverage Online Disputes Resolution (ODR) Mechanism to address the needs of growing e-commerce market in India. NITI Aayog released the report DESIGNING THE FUTURE OF DISPUTES RESOLUTION: THE ODR POLICY PLAN FOR INDIA, to scale dispute avoidance, containment and resolution online. The roll out of the stated recommendations in the report can help make India a world leader in using technology and innovation through Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) for effective access to justice for every individual.

OPEN NETWORK FOR DIGITAL COMMERCE (ONDC)

- Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) is an initiative aiming at promoting open networks for all aspects of exchange of goods and services over digital or electronic networks. ONDC is to be based on opensourced methodology, using open specifications and open network protocols independent of any specific platform.
- The foundations of ONDC are to be open protocols for all aspects in the entire chain of activities in exchange of goods and services, like hypertext transfer protocol for information exchange over internet, simple mail transfer protocol for exchange of emails and unified payments interface for payments.
- These open protocols would be used for establishing public digital infrastructure in the form of open registries and open network gateways to enable exchange of information between providers and consumers. Providers and consumers would be able to use any compatible application of their choice for exchange of information and carrying out transactions over ONDC.
- Thus, ONDC goes beyond the current platform-centric digital commerce model where the buyer and seller must use the same platform or application to be digitally visible and do a business transaction.
- ONDC is expected to make e-Commerce more inclusive and accessible for consumers. Consumers can potentially discover any seller, product or service by using any compatible application or platform, thus increasing freedom of choice for consumers. It will enable the consumers to match demand with the nearest available

supply. This would also give consumers the liberty to choose their preferred local businesses. Thus, ONDC would standardize operations, promote inclusion of local suppliers, drive efficiencies in logistics and lead to enhancement of value for consumers.

EXAMPLES OF ODR USED BY GOVERNMENT

- National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has mandated platforms in the UPI ecosystem to adopt the ODR for complaints and grievances connected to failed transactions.
- Ingram, SEBI SCORES (or the Securities and Exchange Board of India SEBI COm plaints REdress System)
- RBI CMS (or the Reserve Bank of India Complaint Management System)
- MahaRERA (or the Maharashtra Real Estate Regulatory Authority)
- MSME Samadhaan (or the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Delayed Payment Monitoring System)
- RTIOnline (or the Right to Information Online) are other examples of ODR systems that are widely used in the country.

ABOUT ONLINE DISPUTE RESOLUTION - (NITI AAYOG)

- ODR is the resolution of disputes, particularly small and medium-value cases, using digital technology and techniques of ADR, such as arbitration, conciliation and mediation.
- It refers to the process of using technology for dispute avoidance, containment and resolution outside the traditional court system. As a dispute resolution avenue, it can be provided both as an extension of the\ public court system and outside of it.
- ODR has the potential to help reduce the burden on the court and efficiently resolve several categories of cases. It may also be integrated to support the judiciary through technology integration in court annexed Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) centres, via e-lok adalats and be introduced within Government departments for internal disputes.

TACKLING CHALLENGES (NITI AAYOG)

- Structural Level: it suggests actions to increase digital literacy, improve access to digital infrastructure and train professionals as neutrals to deliver ODR services.
- Behavioural Level: need to adopt ODR to address disputes involving Government departments and ministries.
- Regulatory level: the report recommends a soft-touch approach to regulate ODR platforms and services. This involves laying down design and ethical principles to guide ODR service providers ato self-regulate while fostering growth and innovations in the ecosystem.
- Operational Level: Need to address privacy and confidentiality concerns.
- The report also stresses on strengthening the existing legislative framework for ODR by introducing necessary amendments to statutes.

6 . TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION HUBS (TIH), AT DST-NSF

Experts from India and United States interacted to bring out best plans for joint research projects that would be implemented through Technology Innovation Hubs (TIH), at DST-NSF Joint Research and Development Projects Kick-off Workshop. The workshop was organised by IIT Delhi in association with DST to discuss how the projects to be implemented by the six TIHs identified under NM-ICPS for collaborative research and development.

- Six TIHs under NM-ICPS have been identified for collaborative research and development with NSFsupported institutions.
- These projects aim at adding the component of international collaboration to existing research projects in both countries.
- The Hubs are part of National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems and comprise academic researchers and industry partners.

Technology Innovation Hubs identified under National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NMICPS) would:

- ✓ Leverage unique resources, such as test beds and datasets available in India and in the US.
- ✓ Expand collaborations on critical technologies like Al and advanced wireless.
- ✓ Encourage student and researcher exchange programs.

CYBER-PHYSICAL SYSTEMS

- Cyber-Physical System (CPS) combines digital/ cyber elements with physical objects (e.g., machines, autonomous vehicles) and data with capabilities of communication, data collection & processing, computing, decision making and action.
- Cyber-Physical Systems allow organizations to take timely and optimal interventions/ actions. CPS is an integrated system involving Sensors, Communication, Actuators, Control, interconnected computing networks and data analytics.
- Several potential uses include driverless cars that safely interact with one another on smart roads, using sensors in the home, scientists will be able to solve difficulties brought on by climate change, improve agricultural methods, and identify changes in human health.
- Therefore, there is a need to create an integrated and overarching National platform to bring convergence among all stakeholders towards CPS technology development and effective implementations.

NATIONAL MISSION ON INTERDISCIPLINARY CYBERPHYSICAL SYSTEMS

- It is a comprehensive Mission aimed at complete convergence with all stakeholders by establishing strong

linkages between academia, industry, Government and International Organizations.

- The Mission will work with all concerned Ministries/Departments to identify their technology needs, develop solutions and technical support in CPS implementation.
- The proposed Mission would act as an engine of growth that would benefit national initiatives in health, education, energy, environment, agriculture, strategic cum security, and industrial sectors, Industry 4.0, SMART Cities, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) etc.
- Mission will have four major activities i.e.
  → Technology Development,
  → Human Resource & Skill Development,
  → Innovation, Entrepreneurship & Start-Up Ecosystem and
  → International Collaborations.
- The Mission implementation would create a foundation and a seamless ecosystem from education, human resource, R&D, technology development, innovation to commercialization.
- It will generate Indian Start-ups, Intellectual Property (IP), Licensing & Monetization, jobs, enhance skills and world class product development resulting in technology driven economic growth. The proposed Mission will –
  → Secure India's future by creation of a CPS ecosystem
  → Generate significant qualitative and quantitative improvement in research, development and higher education in Science, Technology and Engineering disciplines,
  → Develop home- grown applications for national needs and capability to solve multi-disciplinary Grand Challenge problems,
  → Create conducive environment for Scientific breakthroughs and Innovations,
  → Position India in league with other nations, in terms of capacity and derive several direct and indirect benefits.

7 . *INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK (IPEF)*

- First in-person ministerial meeting of Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) was held in Los Angeles. India was represented by the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry.
- At the summit, India opted to stay out of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework's (IPEF) trade pillar.
  ✓ The IPEF has four pillars with the member nations given flexibility to choose which pillars they want to be part of.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMIT

A. 1st Pillar -Trade: The meeting outlined an ambitious agenda which entails more robust efforts to promote a rules-based, transparent and clean trading system.
B. 2nd Pillar -Supply Chain
- Member countries committed to improving transparency, diversity, security and sustainability in supply chains to make them more resilient, robust and well-integrated.
- Greater information sharing and investment in supply chains, including identification of critical sectors and critical goods within critical sectors to minimise disruptions.
  ✓ IPEF countries have agreed to establish criteria for critical sectors and goods.
- Partner countries have agreed to increase resilience and crisis response mechanism in these critical sectors.
  ✓ This will involve identifying choke points within supply chains.
C. 3rd Pillar — Clean Economy
- Member countries agreed to accelerate efforts in pursuit of greenhouse gas emissions mitigation and elimination, enhanced energy security and climate resilience and adaptation.
- They have also agreed on the goal to reduce emissions across priority sectors, recognised the importance of sustainable land use and water solutions.
- The new economic framework has committed to create incentives to facilitate the clean energy transition.
D. 4th Pillar — Fair Economy
- They have agreed to work on anti-corruption by effectively implementing and accelerating progress on the UN Convention against Corruption, standards of the Financial Action Task Force.
- On taxation, IPEF members have agreed to pursue exchange of information between tax authorities in line with international standards.

INDIA'S STAND AT THE SUMMIT

- India decided to join three pillars of IPEF - India has joined the supply chain, decarbonisation and infrastructure, and anti-tax and corruption pillars of the IPEF. However, it has decided to remain out of the trade pillar.
- Reasons for India not joining the trade pillar - So far, official reason has not been given. However, trade experts say India may have some genuine concerns regarding certain aspects of the trade pillar that perhaps go beyond WTO obligations.
- India's decision of not joining the trade pillar is reflective of a new approach.
  ✓ India's decision to stay away from the trade pillar of IPEF highlights an evolving consensus in New Delhi's approach to global partnerships.

- ✓ This new consensus has some deepening gridlines:
- staying off multilateral trade pacts, sticking to bilateral deals that progressively build on an early harvest scheme;
- actively integrating into specialised global supply chain arrangements such as for rare earths or pharmaceutical ingredients; and
- restricting multilateral exposure to focused agreements such as tackling black money or cryptocurrency rules.

INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK (IPEF)

- According to an insight paper on IPEF, put out by the US Congressional Research Service, the IPEF is not a traditional trade agreement. Rather, it would include different modules (4 pillars) covering:
- Countries would have to sign up to all of the components within a module, but do not have to participate in all modules.
- The 14 members of IPEF are -- Australia, Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and the US.

KEY FEATURES

- The fair and resilient trade module will be led by the US Trade Representative and include digital, labour, and environment issues, with some binding commitments.
- IPEF is not a free trade agreement. Neither is it a security pact. The agreement is more of an administrative arrangement.
- The IPEF will not include market access commitments such as lowering tariff barriers, as the agreement is more of an administrative arrangement.

ORIGIN OF IPEF

- US President Biden first spoke about the IPEF at the October 2021 East Asia Summit.
- At this summit, he said that the United States will explore with partners the development of an Indo-Pacific economic framework.
- This framework will define our shared objectives around: trade facilitation, standards for the digital economy and technology, supply chain resiliency, decarbonization and clean energy, infrastructure, worker standards, and other areas of shared interest.
- The forum was launched in May 2022 on the side lines of Quad summit at Tokyo..

8 . *INDO-BANGLADESH TIES NEW UPDATES*

Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina paid an official visit to India. She held bilateral meeting with Indian PM during which the two sides signed 7 agreements covering railways, science and technology, space cooperation, media, and water sharing.

LIST OF AGREEMENTS/ MOUS EXCHANGED

1. MoU on withdrawal of Water by India and Bangladesh from common border river Kushiyara

✓ This is the first such pact between them in over 25 years — the Ganga water treaty was signed in 1996.

✓ This pact will benefit people in *southern Assam and Sylhet in Bangladesh.*

2. MoU on training of Bangladesh Railway personnel in India
3. MoU on Collaboration in IT systems such as FOIS (Freight Operations Information System) etc.
4. MoU on Training and Capacity Building Programme for Bangladesh Judicial Officers in India
5. MoU on Cooperation in the Areas of Space Technology
6. MoU on Scientific and Technological Cooperation
7. MoU on Cooperation in Broadcasting

LIST OF PROJECTS INAUGURATED/ANNOUNCED

- Unveiling of Unit I of Maitree Power Plant
  - ✓ The 1320 (660x2) MW super critical *coal-fired thermal power plant* at Rampal, Khulna is being set up with Indian Development Assistance.
  - ✓ For this project, India's contribution amounts to USD 1.6 billion.
- Inauguration of Rupsha Bridge
  - ✓ The 5.13 km Rupsha rail bridge will connect for the first time Mongla Port with Khulna by rail, and thereafter to Central and North Bangladesh.
  - ✓ It will also ensure connectivity to the Indian border at Petrapole and Gede in West Bengal.
- Supply Of Road Maintenance & Construction Equipment And Machinery To Bangladesh
- Khulna Darshana Railway Line Link Project
  - ✓ The project is upgradation of existing (doubling of Broad Gauge) infrastructure linking the current cross border rail link at Gede-Darshana to Khulna.
  - ✓ It will further augment the rail connections between the two countries.
- Parbatipur - Kaunia railway line: The project will connect to the existing cross border rail at Birol (Bangladesh)-Radhikapur (West Bengal) and will enhance bilateral rail connectivity.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MEETING

- Negotiations On A Comprehensive Trade Pact: The two sides also decided to start negotiations on a Bilateral *Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).*
- Scholarship for '71 war soldiers' descendants: Bangladesh PM announced the Mujib scholarship for the direct descendants of Indian soldiers killed or grievously injured in the 1971 Bangladesh war. As many as 1,984 Indian Army personnel were killed in the war.

INDIA-BANGLADESH BILATERAL RELATION

- 2021 marks the triveni of events that have epochal significance:

- Bangladesh's decision to establish a memorial in remembrance of the sacrifices made by members of Indian armed forces in 1971 was a key step towards preserving this history of shared sacrifice.
- Bangladesh is India's biggest trade partner in South Asia and India is the second biggest trade partner of Bangladesh.
- Bilateral trade between India and Bangladesh has grown steadily over the last decade and in the FY 2020-21, bilateral trade reached $10.17 bn. During this period, Bangladesh Export to India stood at $1.28 billion while import from India stood at $8.6 billion.
- Bangladesh's exports to India primarily ride on ready-made garments.
- India offered duty-free and quota free entry to Bangladesh goods under the (South Asian Free Trade Area) SAFTA agreement in 2011.
  - ✓ However, after Bangladesh graduates from the Least Developed Country (LDC) status, it will no longer be able to avail this facility.
  - ✓ Hence, India and Bangladesh is considering signing a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.
- India-Bangladesh Friendship Bridge 1 (also known as Feni Bridge) has been constructed which will connect *Tripura with Chittagong port* of Bangladesh.
- A ship carrying cargo from Bhutan To Bangladesh was flagged off from Assam in July 2019. It sailed over river Brahmaputra and the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route. This was the first time an Indian waterway is being used as a channel for transport of cargo between two countries, using India for transit.
- To boost sub-regional connectivity, Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) was signed in June 2015. In January 2018, Bangladesh, India and Nepal had agreed on the text of the operating procedures for passenger vehicle movement in the sub-region under BBIN MVA.
- Energy cooperation between the two sides has also shown a lot of positivity. Indian state Tripura supplying a total of 160 MW of power to Bangladesh in addition to the 500 MW the country is receiving from West Bengal since 2013.
- In September 2018, Indian PM and his Bangladeshi counterpart jointly inaugurated the construction of a friendship pipeline project through video conferencing. The 130-kilometre India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline Project will connect Siliguri in West Bengal in India and Parbatipur in Dinajpur district of Bangladesh.
- India gifted one lakh anti-malarial tablets of hydroxychloroquine and 50,000 surgical gloves to Bangladesh. It also donated 30,000 COVID-19 test kits to Bangladesh.
- India assisted the neighbouring countries including Bangladesh under SAARC framework. It provided training to the medical staffs of member countries and took lead role in creating the *SAARC COVID-19 emergency fund.*

- In January 2021, India supplied 2 million doses of Made-in-India Covid-19 vaccines to Bangladesh under Vaccine Maitri initiative.

CONCLUSION

The two countries have several irritants in their bilateral relationship which includes - *National Register of Citizens (NRC) issue in Assam; Citizenship Amendment Act, Rohingya crisis and border management* (Illegal immigration, cattle smuggling, drug Trafficking etc.). Despite these issues, the two countries have made remarkable progress in all areas, fully justifying this era, being referred to as a Shonali Adhyay or a golden era in our relationship.

9 . *NATIONAL LIST OF ESSENTIAL MEDICINES (NLEM)*

Union Health Ministry has released revised National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM), 2022 comprising of 384 drugs across 27 therapeutic categories. This latest list added as many as 34 new drugs and dropped 26 old ones from the previous list.

- For the first time, four patented drugs have been added to the list:
  - ✓ Bedaquiline and Delamanid- used in the treatment of multiple drug-resistant tuberculosis
  - ✓ Dolutegravir- Used to treat human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection
  - ✓ Daclatasvir- Used in treating viral infections such as Hepatitis C
- No drug used specifically for the treatment of Covid -19 is included in the new list.

Significance Of NLEM	Criteria For Inclusion Of A Medicine In The NLEM List
• Listing of drugs in NLEM ensures that the drug is accessible in sufficient quantity, at affordable cost, and with assured quality and safety. • Promote rational drug use and improves the overall quality of health care. • Helps hospitals create their drug policies such as which medicines to be used. • Helps in optimum utilization of healthcare	• Essentiality: The drug must be critical and essential for curing a disease. • Changing Disease Burden With Time: ✓At one point, TB might be more important to tackle, at the next moment another disease like covid-19 may become more important ✓So, the prevalent disease is considered while preparing the list • Efficacy and Safety: The medicine shall have proven efficacy and safety profile

resources and better management of medicines • It can also be a guiding document for: ✓State governments to prepare their list of essential medicines ✓Procurement and supply of medicines in the public sector. ✓Reimbursement of the cost of medicines by organizations to its employees. ✓Reimbursement by insurance companies. ✓Identifying the 'MUST KNOW' domain for the teaching and training of health care professionals.	based on scientific evidence. • Cost-Effectiveness: The NLEM guidelines state that the total price of the treatment must be considered while including the drug in NLEM. Only unit price may not be the best Benchmark for this. • Fixed Dose Combinations (FDCs): The single dose medicines are considered for inclusion in NLEM. FDCs are only included if they have a proven advantage concerning the therapeutic effect • Turnover: High sales turnover alone is not considered a good benchmark to include it under NLEM • Drug should be licensed in India by Drugs Controller General India (DCGI).

HOW MEDICINES ARE ELIMINATED FROM NLEM LIST?
- If it is banned in India.
- If Reports of concerns about Drug safety emerge.
- If a medicine with better efficacy and cost effectiveness is available in the market.
- If the Disease, for which the drug is used, is no longer a public health concern in India.
- In case of antimicrobial drugs, the drug has been rendered ineffective due to resistance.

HOW NLEM BRINGS PRICES UNDER CONTROL?
- When the NLEM is released, the Department of Pharmaceuticals under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers adds them in the Drug Price Control Order (DPCO).
- Once it is added, the list attracts the attention of National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) as it is legally required to regulate the prices of drugs added to the NLEM under the DPCO.
   - ✓ NPPA will cap prices for the medicines in the list and the companies are not allowed to sell above the price ceiling.
   - ✓ Every year the prices of medicines in the NLEM are increased or decreased only on the Whole Sale price index-based inflation.

NATIONAL PHARMACEUTICAL PRICING AUTHORITY (NPPA)

- It is a regulatory body, established in 1997 by the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 1995, under the provisions of section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 to regulate or control the prices of medicines in India.
- The authority consists of a Chairperson of the status of the Secretary to the Government of India, members having expertise in the field of pharmaceuticals, economics and cost accountancy and member secretary of the status of joint secretary/ additional secretary to the Government of India.
- Functions of NPPA:
   - ✓ Implement and enforce the provisions of DPCO in accordance with the powers delegated to it;
   - ✓ To fix/revise prices of controlled bulk *drugs and formulations* and enforce price and availability of medicines in the country;
   - ✓ Monitor the prices of decontrolled drugs in order to keep them at reasonable levels;
   - ✓ Recovering amounts overcharged by the manufacturers;
   - ✓ To identify shortages, if any, and to take remedial steps;
   - ✓ to collect/maintain data on production, exports and imports, market share of individual companies, profitability of companies etc. for bulk drugs and formulations;
   - ✓ to undertake and/ or sponsor relevant studies in respect of pricing of drugs/ pharmaceuticals;
   - ✓ to render advice to the central government on changes/ revisions in the drug policy and in the parliamentary matters relating to the drug pricing.

10 . *SMILE-75 INITIATIVE*

- SMILE stands for 'Support for Marginalised Individuals for Livelihood & Enterprise'.
- It is an initiative of Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment to make our cities/town and municipal areas begging-free and make a strategy for comprehensive rehabilitation of the persons engaged in the act of begging through the coordinated action of various stakeholders.
- Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has identified 75 Municipal Corporations to implement comprehensive rehabilitation of persons engaged in begging under this initiative.
- 75 Municipal Corporations in collaboration with NGOs and other stakeholders will cover several comprehensive welfare measures for persons who are engaged in the act of begging with focus extensively on rehabilitation, provision of medical facilities, counselling, awareness, education, skill development, economic linkages and convergence with other Government welfare programmes etc.