

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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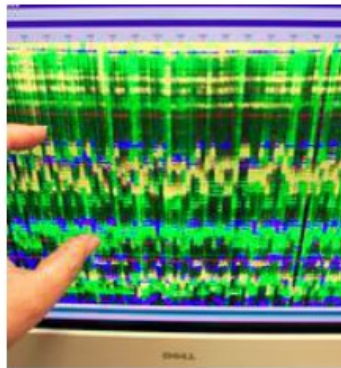
The National Institute of Animal Biotechnology (NIAB) focuses on conserving indigenous cattle breeds using advanced genetic technologies and developing vaccines to combat livestock diseases.

- Under the DBT's 'BioE3' policy, NIAB promotes bio-manufacturing and innovations in livestock health, diagnostics, biomolecules, and alternative proteins for a sustainable bio-economy.

Next-generation sequencing to map genetic blueprint of indigenous cattle

V. Geetanath
HYDERABAD

The National Institute of Animal Biotechnology (NIAB) is working to decode the genetic blueprints for conservation of indigenous cattle breeds using Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) data and genotyping technology to establish molecular signatures for registered cattle breeds. Institute Director G. Taru Sharma said the process will help in the cattle breeds purity for identification and conservation. The focus has also been on developing new generation vaccine platforms against livestock diseases crucial for animal health and reducing economic losses due to disease outbreaks, such as brucellosis in livestock and its impact on pu-



The focus is on developing new generation vaccine platforms against livestock diseases. AP

blic health.

The NIAB, working under the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), research and development efforts are well tuned towards 'BioE3 (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment) policy to boost bio-manufacturing in through biotechnological interventions to position the

country as a global leader, she said.

"We are keen to handhold the industry and biotech start-ups towards transforming the country's livestock-based economy not only for food/feed security but also for developing animal vaccines, diagnostics and new generation biomolecules," said Dr. Sharma, in an exclusive interaction.

A good number of 'bio-scaffolds' (for repairing tissues), both natural as well 3D printed, are being produced for cell/drug delivery, bio-banking and using animal stem cells enriched scaffolds as various therapeutic interventions. A 'bovine primary lung cell-based 3D-pulmosphere model' was developed for superior modelling of bovine tuberculosis and to es-

tablish anti-TB drug screening platform.

Scientists here are also working on generating biomarkers of susceptibility and resistance to TB in native and crossbred cattle. The DBT has outlined six thematic verticals for a circular bio-based economy to promote bio-manufacturing in sync with the newly announce Bio E3 policy including smart proteins or alternative proteins derived from animal/plant/cell/fermented-based sources recognized as a sustainable alternative, she pointed out.

In this context, NIAB has plans to use bacteriophages and their 'lytic' proteins as antibiotics alternatives to target mastitis pathogens such as staphylococci, E. coli and streptococci.

Analysis of the news:

- The National Institute of Animal Biotechnology (NIAB) is working to decode the genetic blueprints of indigenous cattle breeds using Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) and genotyping technology.

Next Generation Sequencing (NGS)

- Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) is an advanced DNA sequencing technology that enables rapid and high-throughput analysis of genetic material.

- It allows simultaneous sequencing of millions of DNA fragments, providing detailed insights into genomes, transcriptomes, and epigenomes.
- NGS is widely used in genomics research, clinical diagnostics, and biodiversity studies, offering faster, more cost-effective, and precise genetic data compared to traditional sequencing method.
- The goal is to establish molecular signatures for registered cattle breeds for identification and conservation.
- NIAB is developing next-generation vaccine platforms for livestock diseases like brucellosis, crucial for animal health and reducing economic losses.
- The institute, under the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), aligns its efforts with the 'BioE3' policy to promote bio-manufacturing.
- NIAB aims to support biotech start-ups in transforming the livestock-based economy through vaccines, diagnostics, and biomolecules.
- Six thematic verticals under the BioE3 policy focus on circular bio-based economy, including alternative proteins.

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2020

Ques: Consider the following statements:

1. Genetic changes can be introduced in the cells that produce eggs or sperms of a prospective parent.
2. A person's genome can be edited before birth at the early embryonic stage.
3. Human-induced pluripotent stem cells can be injected into the embryo of a pig.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 2 only
- (d) 1,2 and 3

Ans: d)

The constitution of Parliamentary Standing Committees for the 18th Lok Sabha is delayed due to disagreements between the government and the Opposition.

- The contentious committees include External Affairs, Finance, and Defence. These differences have resulted in a political deadlock.

Hectic negotiations on for control of House panels

Nearly three months after Lok Sabha polls, Standing Committees have not been formed owing to disagreements between the government and the Opposition over who would chair the panels

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Nearly three months into the 18th Lok Sabha, the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees have not been constituted because of disagreements between the Union government and the Opposition, on control of these panels.

There are 24 Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees. Sixteen of them fall under the ambit of the Lok Sabha and are chaired by Lok Sabha MPs, while eight are under the Rajya Sabha.

The Congress, according to its numerical strength, is entitled to chair four committees – three in the Lok Sabha and one in the Rajya Sabha. According to sources, the Congress was keen to chair committees on External Affairs, Finance, and Defence, but the government outrightly rejected the demand. The Congress later



Talks on: The Congress is entitled to chair four committees – three in the Lok Sabha and one in the Rajya Sabha. FILE PHOTO

conveyed it would settle for at least one of these, but the government rejected this proposal too. Instead, it offered Rural Development; Housing and Urban Affairs; and Labour, Textiles, and Skill Development.

Rajya Sabha panels

Among the eight panels headed by Rajya Sabha members, the Congress has demanded the committee on Home Ministry. The government instead is

offering Science and Technology, Environment and Forests, which Congress leader Jairam Ramesh headed in the last term.

Among other Opposition parties, the Trinamool Congress, the Samajwadi Party, and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) will get to head one committee each. The Trinamool has been silent on its choice, claiming that it never negotiates on the issue. Trinamool's Parliamentary Party Leader in

the Rajya Sabha, Derek O'Brien, said that he had not received a response to two letters he wrote to the government seeking clarity on the issue. "The BJP wants to turn Parliament into a deep, dark chamber. It's been exactly three months since the election results. No signs of committee being formed," Mr. O'Brien told *The Hindu*.

Sources said the Samajwadi Party, which has 37 members in the Lok Sabha, had requested to chair a panel that comes under the Rajya Sabha's ambit. "Most of our members are first-timers in Lok Sabha and do not have the necessary Parliamentary experience to head a committee," a senior member argued.

The move is aimed at allowing Rajya Sabha MP and senior party leader Ramgopal Yadav to head the panel. In the last Lok Sabha, he headed the Standing Committee on Health.

About Parliamentary Standing Committees:

- Parliamentary Standing Committees are permanent committees in the Indian Parliament, constituted to examine bills, budgets, and policies of various ministries and departments.
- There are 24 Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees, 16 under the Lok Sabha and 8 under the Rajya Sabha.
- These committees play a crucial role in scrutinising government work, providing expert opinions, and ensuring detailed legislative analysis.

- Members include MPs from both Houses, with

proportional representation of parties

- Their recommendations, though not binding, help shape parliamentary debates and decisions by allowing more detailed discussions on complex issues than in full parliamentary sessions.

Significance of Parliamentary Standing Committees:

- In-depth scrutiny: Provide detailed analysis of bills, budgets, and policies.
- Non-partisan discussions: Foster consensus-building across party lines.
- Expert inputs: Involve expert witnesses for specialised knowledge.
- Accountability: Enhance government accountability through questioning.
- Efficiency: Reduce Parliament's workload by examining issues in smaller groups.
- Transparency: Facilitate greater transparency in the legislative process.
- Legislative quality: Improve the quality of legislation through recommendations.

Challenges:

- Political influence: Committees may face political pressure, reducing their independence.
- Limited time: Tight schedules often restrict thorough examination of bills and policies.
- Non-binding recommendations: Governments are not obligated to implement committee suggestions.
- Lack of expertise: Some committee members may lack domain-specific knowledge, affecting quality.
- Delayed constitution: Delay in forming committees can hinder legislative oversight and scrutiny.
- Resource constraints: Limited research and technical support affect in-depth analysis.

Way Forward:

- Strengthen independence: Committees should operate without political interference for unbiased recommendations.
- Enhance expertise: Include domain experts or provide training to members.
- Timely formation: Ensure timely constitution of committees to avoid delays in legislative scrutiny.
- Make recommendations binding: Consider making certain committee recommendations mandatory.
- Increase resources: Provide committees with better research and technical support for detailed analysis.
- Public engagement: Encourage transparency and citizen participation in committee discussions.

UPSC Mains PYQ : 2023

Ques: Explain the structure of the Parliamentary Committee system. How far have the financial committees helped in the institutionalisation of Indian Parliament?

There is a growing movement to use regional languages in High Court proceedings to make justice more accessible.

- Despite constitutional provisions allowing this, its implementation remains limited due to concerns about language proficiency among judges and lawyers.

Use of regional languages in HCs remains limited

Soibam Rocky Singh
NEW DELHI

In a growing movement to make justice accessible, lawyers and experts are increasingly advocating for the use of regional languages in High Court proceedings, where English remains the official language.

Out of 25 High Courts, only four – Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar – are allowed to use Hindi in their proceedings.

In July, Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, while addressing a convocation function at Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University in Luck-

now, remarked that while judges and lawyers are familiar with English, many common citizens who bring their cases to court struggle to understand the legal process.

The Chief Justice also stated that in many countries, both legal education and proceedings are conducted in the regional language. This practice ensures that all citizens can access the legal system and aspire to become lawyers and judges.

As it stands, Article 348 (1) of the Indian Constitution mandates that all proceedings in the Supreme Court and High Courts be conducted in English, un-

Out of 25 High Courts, only four are allowed to use Hindi in their proceedings and legal documents

less Parliament decides otherwise. Meanwhile, Article 348(2) allows the Governor of a State to authorise the use of Hindi or any other official language in the State's High Court, provided the President consents.

Despite these constitutional provisions, the use of regional languages in High Courts remains limited. The issue was recently raised by MPs Dharmastha-

la Veerendra Heggade and Tejasvi Surya before the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, respectively, in questions to the Minister of Law and Justice. They inquired about the steps taken or proposed to promote the use of local languages in court practices, procedures, and arguments.

Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal responded that the government had previously received proposals from Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, and Karnataka to permit the use of regional language in the proceedings of their High Courts. The Chief Justice of India was consulted on these

proposals and, in 2012, after thorough deliberation with other judges, decided not to accept them.

One primary concern is the impact on judges and lawyers who are not proficient in regional languages. Senior advocate Sanjay Hegde acknowledged this issue, citing an instance in the Bihar High Court where a lawyer insisted on speaking in Hindi, but the judge, unfamiliar with the language, faced difficulties.

"There are such problems, but they are generally few and far between. These issues can be resolved through understanding between the Bar and the Bench," he said.

Use of regional languages in High Court:

- **Current Status:** Only four High Courts (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar) are permitted to use Hindi in their proceedings, while English remains the official language in all High Courts.
- **Constitutional Provisions:** Article 348(1) of the Indian Constitution mandates English for Supreme Court and High Court proceedings, unless Parliament decides otherwise. Article 348(2) allows State Governors to authorise regional languages in State High Courts with Presidential consent.
- **Recent Discussions:** Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud highlighted the need for regional languages in legal proceedings to make the justice system more accessible to common citizens.
- **Proposals:** Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, and Karnataka have proposed using regional languages in their High Courts. These proposals were reviewed but not accepted by the Chief Justice of India in 2012.

Challenges:

- **Language Proficiency:** Judges and lawyers may lack proficiency in regional languages, leading to communication difficulties and inefficiencies in court proceedings.
- **Uniformity Issues:** Ensuring consistent legal terminology and standards across different languages can be complex, potentially affecting the quality of justice.
- **Training Requirements:** Judges and legal professionals need extensive training to become proficient in regional languages, which may be time-consuming and costly.
- **Resource Constraints:** Developing and maintaining legal resources, such as case law and statutes, in multiple languages requires significant investment.
- **Legal Documentation:** Translating legal documents and maintaining accurate records in various languages can be challenging and may lead to errors.
- **Resistance to Change:** There may be resistance from the legal community accustomed to English, leading to delays and disputes.
- **Implementation Issues:** Coordinating and implementing language changes across different High Courts involves logistical complexities and administrative hurdles.

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2021

Ques: Explain Regarding the Indian judiciary, consider the following statements :

1. Any retired judge of the Supreme Court of India can be called back to sit and act as a Supreme Court judge by the Chief Justice of India with the prior permission of the President of India.
2. A High Court in India has the power to review its judgment as the Supreme Court does.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans : c)

Page 10 : Prelims Fact

Unified Lending Interface (ULI), the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) technology platform to enable frictionless credit, will be launched nationwide soon.

➤ Similar to Unified Payment Interface (UPI), which has

revolutionised the retail payment system in the country, ULI will transform the lending landscape.

What is the Unified Lending Interface by the RBI?

How will the ULI enable friction-less credit to farmers? How will it make things easier for lenders?

Lalatendu Mishra

The story so far:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), as part of its strategy to create digital public infrastructure in the country, has announced that a new technology platform called the Unified Lending Interface (ULI) would be introduced by the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub, Bengaluru which will enable friction-less credit to farmers and MSME borrowers to begin with.

What is ULI?

ULI is a platform that facilitates the seamless flow of a customer's digitised financial and non-financial data from multiple data service providers to lenders, making credit underwriting seamless and customer journeys frictionless for a diverse range of borrowers, according to Rajesh Bansal, CEO, Reserve Bank Innovation Hub. This platform facilitates seamless and consent based flow of digital information, including even land records

of various States. This will also bring down the time taken for credit appraisal, especially for smaller and rural borrowers without any credit history. The ULI architecture has common and standardised Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) designed for a 'plug and play' approach to ensure digital access to information from diverse sources. This will reduce the complexity of multiple technical integrations besides enabling borrowers to get the benefit of seamless delivery of credit and quicker turnaround time without requiring extensive and time-consuming documentation.

Lenders would gain access to customer data from various silos, including government databases (for example, land records) and satellite imagery through standardised APIs. And FinTechs can gain access to a variety of lenders on one platform and unlock opportunities to provide deeper customer insights.

How will it work?

For first time loan seekers without any

credit history or required documentation, availing a bank loan is near impossible. Now with ULI, digital credit information can be made available through a single platform which provides access to data providers and lenders to serve the needs of prospective borrowers.

While ULI facilitates access to data about the loan applicant's economic activities, it also allows financial sector players to access the data by connecting to the platform through a 'plug and play' model. Therefore, the loan applicants need not have to spend weeks to search and secure the documents. Instead the bank, the NBFC or the FinTech would fetch data about the applicant from sources available on the ULI platform.

For a dairy farmer seeking a loan, the lender can find data from the milk cooperative to know about cash flows; land ownership status from land records of States; and insights into his financial condition through farming patterns. So what was once a blind spot for the lender would turn into a visible customer to do

business with. With the help of ULI, the lenders can immediately know the income of the loan applicant and credit eligibility. Thus decision making would be automated and loans could be sanctioned and disbursed within minutes.

Tenant farmers who often find it difficult to access agricultural credit for inputs and raw materials as they do not have the land title to submit to the banks can also avail loans. By programming the end use for purchase of agricultural inputs, the ULI platform can give the required comfort to banks and thus establish the identity of a farmer not through his land holding but through the end use of funds being disbursed.

How did it start?

The RBI had on August 10, 2023 announced the setting up of a Public Tech Platform for Frictionless Credit which is now branded as the ULI. The central bank was of the view that with rapid progress in digitalisation, data required for credit appraisal must be available at a single point for digital credit delivery.

To address this situation, a pilot project for the digitalisation of Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loans of less than ₹1.6 lakh began in September 2022. The initial results of the KCC pilot, which got underway in select districts of Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, U.P., Maharashtra, were encouraging. According to the RBI, the pilot enabled doorstep disbursement of loans in assisted or self-service mode without any paperwork.

THE GIST

ULI is a platform that facilitates the seamless flow of a customer's digitised financial and non-financial data from multiple data service providers to lenders, making credit underwriting seamless and customer journeys frictionless for a diverse range of borrowers, according to Rajesh Bansal, CEO, Reserve Bank Innovation Hub.

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Background in which the Idea of Unified Lending Interface (ULI) Developed:

- With rapid progress in digitalisation, India has embraced the concept of digital public infrastructure (DPI) which encourages banks, NBFCs, fintech companies and start-ups to create and provide innovative solutions in
 - Payments,
 - Credit, and
 - Other financial activities.
- For digital credit delivery, the data required for credit appraisal are available with different entities like Central and State governments, account aggregators, banks, credit information companies and digital identity authorities.
- As these data sets are in separate systems, it creates hindrance in frictionless and timely delivery of rule-based lending.
- A pilot project for the digitalisation of Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loans of less than ₹1.6 lakh began in 2022.
- The initial results of the KCC pilot were encouraging as it enabled doorstep disbursement of loans without any paperwork.
- In 2023, the RBI had announced the setting up of a Public Tech Platform for Frictionless Credit which is now branded as the ULI.

What is Unified Lending Interface (ULI)?

➤ About: The ULI platform will facilitate a seamless and consent-based flow of digital information, including land records of various states, from multiple data service providers to lenders.

Objectives:

- It will cut down the time taken for credit appraisal, especially for smaller and rural borrowers.
- It is aimed to bring about efficiency in the lending process in terms of reduction of costs, quicker disbursement, and scalability.

Working:

- The ULI architecture has common and standardised APIs (Application Programming Interface), designed for a 'plug and play' approach to ensure digital access to information from diverse sources.
- For instance, taking the example of a dairy farmer seeking a loan. The lender can find data from the milk cooperative to know about -
 - Cash flows;
 - Land ownership status from land records of States; and
 - Insights into his financial condition through farming patterns.
- Thus, with the help of ULI the lenders can immediately know the income of the loan applicant and credit eligibility.
- Thus, decision making would be automated and loans could be sanctioned and disbursed within minutes.

Significance:

- The platform will reduce the complexity of multiple technical integrations by digitising access to customer's financial and non-financial data that otherwise resided in disparate silos.
- It is expected to cater to large unmet demand for credit across various sectors, particularly for agricultural and MSME borrowers.
- Tenant farmers who often find it difficult to access agricultural credit can also avail loans by establishing their identity not through his land holding but through the end use of funds being disbursed.
- The 'new trinity' of JAM-UPI-ULI will be a revolutionary step forward in India's digital infrastructure journey.
- JAM (Jan Dhan, Aadhar and Mobile) trinity is a tool used by the government to transfer cash benefits directly to the bank account of the beneficiary.

- (a) providing housing loan to poor people at cheaper interest rates
- (b) promoting women's Self-Help Groups in backward areas
- (c) promoting financial inclusion in the country
- (d) providing financial help to the marginalized communities

Ans: (c)



Term In News : Thanjavur Veena

Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, is renowned for making the Veena, the first musical instrument in India to receive a Geographical Indication (GI) tag.



About Thanjavur Veena:

	Details
Type	Saraswati Veena (a classical stringed musical instrument)
GI Tag	Received in 2012.
Crafting Materials	Jackfruit wood , known for its resonance and tonal quality.
Production Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Wood is cut, carved, shaped, and assembled. – Takes 15-20 days to complete. – Involves three parts: resonator (kudam), neck (dandi), and tuning box.
Other Types of Veena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Saraswati Veena (used in Carnatic classical music) – Rudra Veena and Vichitra Veena (used in Hindustani classical music) – Chitra Veena (used in Carnatic classical music)

Ques: With reference to India, the terms 'Halbi, Ho and Kui' pertain to:

- (a) Dance forms of Northwest India
- (b) Musical instruments
- (c) Pre-historic cave paintings
- (d) Tribal languages

Ans : d)



The Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill is knotty

On August 1, 2024, the central government introduced the Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha. Brought in in the wake of climate-induced disasters, the Bill shows much evidence of a further centralisation of an already heavily-centralised Disaster Management Act, 2005. This Act, in its current form, already mandates the creation of many authorities and committees at the national, State and district levels. The proposed Bill further provides statutory status to pre-act organisations such as the National Crisis Management Committee and a High Level Committee, complicating the chain of action to be followed in case of disasters. A repercussion of this top-down approach is seen when there is a delayed response to disasters, antithetical to the intent and purpose of the Act.

The Bill claims to strengthen the working of the National Disaster Management Authority and the State Disaster Management Authorities to prepare State and national level plans. It also establishes an 'Urban Disaster Management Authority' for State capitals and cities with municipal corporations. However, this intended decentralisation of functions without the necessary financial devolution creates more problems than it solves.

Centralisation as a concern

The amendment Bill goes on to dilute the wording of the National Disaster Response Fund by removing the purposes for which the fund shall be used. One of the major concerns of the Disaster Management Act has been the excess centralisation of decision making on funds, especially in situations where the disaster is severe. The severity of the disaster must necessitate a prompt response by the central government, currently absent in the Act. A similarly delayed response was witnessed when



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The Bill only strengthens the top-down approach, affecting vital cooperative federalism in disaster management

the disaster relief funds from the NDRF were denied to Tamil Nadu and disbursed much later to Karnataka.

In the backdrop of a looming climate crisis, there is a need to revisit the very idea of disasters under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

Restricted definition of 'disaster'

On July 25, 2024, the Minister of State of Science, Technology and Earth Sciences, in response to questions posed in the Lok Sabha, said that the government is currently not planning to classify heatwaves as a notified disaster under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. This statement concurs with the observations of the 15th Finance Commission which did not find merit in expanding the scope of notified disasters. The notified list of disasters eligible for assistance under the National Disaster Response Fund/State Disaster Response Fund are cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloud burst, pest attack, frost and cold wave.

This strict iteration of what constitutes a "disaster" in the times of climate change marks a sharp departure from the global narrative. Globally, there is enough consensus to classify heatwaves as climate-related disasters, given their ramifications on ecosystems and human health. According to the India Meteorological Department data, India had 536 heatwave days which is the highest number of heatwave days in almost 14 years. Rising heatwave days along with 10,635 human deaths due to heat or sunstroke in 2013-2022 portends a larger disaster in the making for the country.

The Disaster Management Act, 2005 and the proposed Bill fall short as the definition of a disaster (although wide enough to cover the idea of climate-induced disasters) remains restricted and static. This is because the notified list of

disasters under the Act restricts the inclusion of climate-induced disasters such as heatwaves which display regional variability and gradation specific to a geographical area. For example, a normal summer temperature of 40° C in several north Indian States may classify as heatwave conditions in the Himalayas. The definition however, is also not inclusive enough to be able to interpret a prolonged heatwave episode to be considered as a natural disaster even if its impacts are akin to an actual disaster such as floods in terms of the loss of human life. This poses a problem as the very nature of climate-induced disasters is incongruous to the idea of a traditional disaster under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and the proposed Bill. The incongruity is exacerbated by the localised nature and impact of climate-induced disasters.

Relevant issues

However, some questions are still valid. Is the proposed Bill adept to tackle contemporary challenges arising due to the disproportionate power dynamics between the central and State governments? Do States have to largely depend on the central government for the disbursal of funds? If the Bill claims to be an improvised version of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, it does very little in learning from the failures encountered during the implementation of the Act while dealing with past disasters. There is a need to re-visit the Centre's efforts in addressing the issue of financial preparedness when it comes to the management of and response to disasters. The conversation should not revolve around whether the Centre or State is responsible for the loss of lives in Wayanad, Kerala, but what is it that can be done to manage disasters and predict their future occurrence. After all, a blame game will only move away from realising the true spirit of cooperative federalism.

GS Paper 03 : Disaster and disaster management

(UPSC CSE (M) GS-3 : 2020) Discuss the recent measures initiated in disaster management by the Government of India departing from the earlier reactive approach. (250 w/15m)

UPSC Mains Practice Question Discuss the implications of the Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, 2024, on federalism and decentralised disaster response in India, with a focus on climate-induced disasters like heatwaves. (250 w /15 m)

➔ Between 2008-2010, India played a crucial role in fostering democracy in its neighbourhood.

➤ However, by 2024, political upheavals in countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Myanmar have challenged India's regional influence, prompting the need for sustained engagement and recalibration of its diplomatic strategies.

Key details about the Bill

- **Complicated chain of Action:** The proposed Bill further provides statutory status to pre-act organisations such as the National Crisis Management Committee and a High Level Committee, leading to confusion in case of disasters.
 - Repercussion of this top-down approach is seen when there is a delayed response to disasters, antithetical to the intent and purpose of the Act.
- **Giving planning powers:** Strengthen the working of the National Disaster Management Authority and the State Disaster Management Authorities to prepare State and national level plans.
- **Creation of Authorities:** It also establishes an 'Urban Disaster Management Authority' for State capitals and cities with municipal corporations.

Centralisation as a concern

- The intended decentralisation of functions without the necessary financial devolution creates more problems than it solves:
 - **Hazy wordings in the Bill:** The amendment Bill goes on to dilute the wording of the National Disaster Response Fund by removing the purposes for which the fund shall be used.
 - **Centralising tendencies:** One of the major concerns of the Disaster Management Act has been the excess centralisation of decision making on funds, especially in situations where the disaster is severe.
- **Absence of disaster severity coding:** The severity of the disaster must necessitate a prompt response by the central government, currently absent in the Act.
- **Denial of Funds:** Delayed response was witnessed when the disaster relief funds from the NDRF were denied to Tamil Nadu and disbursed much later to Karnataka.
- **Core concern:** In the backdrop of a looming climate crisis, there is a need to revisit the very idea of disasters under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
- **Restricted definition of 'disaster' :** the government is currently not planning to classify heatwaves as a notified disaster under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
- **Need for expanding the scope of notified disasters:** The notified list of disasters eligible for assistance under the National Disaster Response Fund/State Disaster Response Fund are cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloud burst, pest attack, frost and cold wave.
- **The Heatwave scenario:** Heatwaves are widely recognized as climate-related disasters due to their severe impact on ecosystems and human health. India experienced a record 536 heatwave days over nearly 14 years, with 10,635 deaths from heat or sunstroke between 2013 and 2022, signalling an impending larger disaster for the country.

➤ **Concerns with inclusion of heatwave as a**

disaster: The Disaster Management Act, 2005, and the proposed Bill are inadequate because their static definition of disasters limits the inclusion of climate-induced events like heatwaves, which vary regionally and are specific to certain areas.

- **Classification of Heatwaves:** A normal summer temperature of 40° C in several north Indian States may classify as heatwave conditions in the Himalayas.
- **Concerns with definition of Heatwave in Act:** It also fails to recognize a prolonged heatwave as a natural disaster, despite its impacts on human life being comparable to those of actual disasters like floods.
- **Conflict with old definition of disaster:** This creates a problem because climate-induced disasters do not fit the traditional disaster concept defined by the Disaster Management Act, 2005, and the proposed Bill. The issue is worsened by the localized nature and impact of such climate-related events.

Restricted Definition of Disaster

- On July 25, 2024, the government stated that heatwaves would not be classified as a notified disaster under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
- The notified list of disasters includes traditional natural disasters like cyclones, earthquakes, and floods but excludes climate-induced disasters like heatwaves.
- This stands in contrast to global consensus, where heatwaves are recognized as climate-related disasters.

About Notified Disaster:

- In India, the Disaster Management Act, 2005, defines a disaster as a "catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence" arising from natural or man-made causes that results in substantial loss of life, destruction of property, or damage to the environment.
- Currently 12 disasters are classified as Notified Disaster namely: Cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloud burst, pest attack and frost and cold wave.
- Presently the notified list of disasters eligible for National Disaster Response Fund/State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) assistance.

About National Disaster Management Authority

- The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) plays a crucial role in laying down policies, plans, and guidelines for disaster management in India.
- It aims to promote a national resolve to mitigate the damage and destruction caused by natural and man-made disasters through sustained and collective efforts.