



EDEN IAS

NEWS IMPULSE

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NAVAL VERSION OF BRAHMOS TEST FIRED

Syllabus Section: Security/Defence technology

WHY IN NEWS?

- **India's Armed forces** – Army, Navy and Air Force- are conducting back to back tests of various version of BrahMos missile.

ABOUT BRAHMOS MISSILE:

- It derives its name from the combination of Brahmaputra (India) and Moskva (Russia) rivers.
- It is designed, developed and produced by BrahMos Aerospace, a joint venture company set up by DRDO and Mashinostroyeniya (DRDO).
- It is two-stage missile with solid propellant booster and liquid ramjet as the second stage.
- Cruise missiles like BrahMos are type of systems known as the 'standoff range weapons' which are fired from a range sufficient to allow the attacker to evade defensive fire from the adversary.
- The first test launch of the initial version BrahMos took place in 2001.
- The Indian Navy began inducting BrahMos on its frontline warships from 2005.
- Recent launch of Indian navy is BrahMos AshM (Anti Ship Missile) by INS Ranvijay.

SIGNIFICANCE OF HAVING LAND, SEA AND AIR-LAUNCHED BRAHMOS

LAND-BASED SYSTEM:

- The land attack version of BrahMos has the capability of cruising at 2.8Mach speed.
- With the upgraded capability the missile can hit targets at a range upto 400 kilometers with precision.
- Advanced versions of range above, 1,000 kilometers and speed upto 5Mach are to be under development.
- It has four to six mobile autonomous launchers. With each having three missiles on board that can be fired almost simultaneously.

SHIP-BASED SYSTEM:

- It has capability to hit sea-based target beyond radar horizon.
- The BrahMos from ship can be launched as a single unit or in a salvo upto eight in numbers separated by 2.5 seconds intervals.
- These salvo can hit and destroy a group of frigates having modern missile defence systems

AIR LAUNCHED VERSION:

- In Nov 2017, BrahMos was successfully flight-tested for the first time from IAF frontline fighter aircraft Sukhoi-30MKI against sea based target.
- BrahMos equipped Sukhoi-30s are considered as a key strategic deterrence for the adversaries both along the land borders and in the strategically important Indian Ocean Region.

SUBMARINE LAUNCHED VERSION:

- It has capability of being launched from around 50 meters below the water surface.

Source: PIB

MOUNT SEMERU

SYLLABUS SECTION: GEOGRAPHY

Why in News?

Thousands evacuated as activity in Indonesian volcanoes increases.

About:

- Mount Seemeru is an active volcano located in East Java, Indonesia.
- The volcano is located in the subduction zone where the Indo-Australia plate subducts under the Eurasia plate.
- The Mount Seemeru is a stratovolcano.

What is Stratovolcano?

- A stratovolcano is a tall, conical volcano composed of one layer of hardened lava, tephra, and volcanic ash.
- These volcanoes are characterized by a steep profile and periodic, explosive eruptions.
- The lava that flows from them is highly viscous, and cools and hardens before spreading very far.

Source- The Hindu

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MEGA FOOD PARK

Syllabus Section : Economy

Why in news?

Mega Food Park inaugurated in Punjab.

About :

- Mega Food Park is a scheme of the Ministry of Food Processing (part of the Government of India) with the aim of establishing a “direct linkage from farm to processing and then to consumer markets” through a network of collection centres and primary processing Centres.
- Its purpose was to increase processing of perishables from 6% to 20% and to increase India’s share in global food trade by at least 3% up to year 2015.

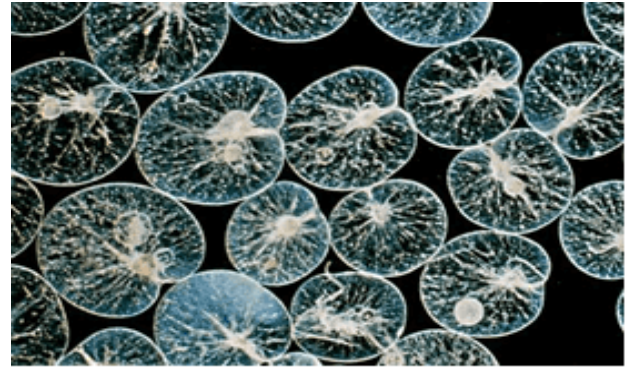
Highlights of scheme

- Government provides grants up to Rs 50 crores for each food park to a consortium of companies.
- 30-35 food processing units are expected to be established.
- Collective investment of companies is expected to be at least 250 crores.
- A turnover of 400-500 crore and employment generation of at least 30000 from each mega food park is expected.
- A total of 42 Mega Food Parks have been sanctioned so far by MoFPI in six phases.
- These MFPs are to ensure backward linkages to the farmers, SHGs, JLVs etc. & enhance farmer income.
- Each MFP is supposed to connect with 25000 farmers.
- Government has envisaged building quality labs at each of the food parks as well

Source – The Hindu

‘SEA SPARKLE’ HAS AFFECTED MARINE FOOD CHAIN

Syllabus Section: Environment, Ecology / Biodiversity



Bioluminescence is production and emission light by the living organism, and occurs due to chemical reaction, involving a light-emitting molecule and an enzyme called *luciferin* and *luciferase*.

- N. Scintillans grazes on other micro-organisms such as larvae, fish eggs, and diatoms. But the unicellular phytoplankton that live inside it can photosynthesise, turning sunlight into energy.
- They help their host cell survive even when food was scarce. Thus, N. Scintillans acts as both a plant and an animal,
- In September 2018 too such bioluminescence was witnessed along the Someshwara beach in Dakshina Kannada and Mattu in Udupi.

Source: The Hindu

U.S.-INDIA COUNTERNARCOTICS WORKING GROUP (CNWG)

Syllabus Section- Current events of national and international importance

Why in news

The officials of India and United States of America met virtually for the inaugural meeting of the U.S.-India Counternarcotics Working Group (CNWG) recently.

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About the Meeting

- The respective delegations engaged in wide-ranging deliberations focused on increasing collaboration on counternarcotics regulation and law enforcement. The two sides identified areas for joint action and resolved to continue their close coordination on this important issue.
- Both sides exchanged views on the broad array of narcotics-related challenges facing India and United States.
- They committed to strengthening their cooperation in curtailing the illegal production, manufacturing, trafficking, and distribution of pharmaceutical and illicit drugs, as well as the precursor chemicals used to manufacture them.
- Participants highlighted their efforts in combating drug trafficking in accordance with the rules and regulation of their respective countries and proposed to share best practices for countering synthetic opioids and precursor chemical diversion.
- The two sides also discussed initiatives to strengthen India's regional leadership role in building capacity for counternarcotics initiatives in South Asia; countering regional cross-border drugs trafficking and crime through enhanced sharing of operational intelligence; and expanding law enforcement cooperation on counternarcotics issues.
- Both sides also agreed to cooperate and assist each other in the arena of drug treatment and awareness against drug abuse.
- India and United States agreed to enhance their data sharing operations to combat the production, distribution, diversion, and export/import of drugs and precursor chemicals. Both sides agreed to continue these discussions at the CNWG meeting in the spring of 2021.

About US-INDIA CNWG

In February 2020, President Donald J. Trump and Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi announced their intent to establish a new bilateral Counternarcotics Working Group (CNWG) as a demonstration of their shared commitment to combating the threat that illicit drugs pose to their citizens. Envisioned to be held annually, the first CNWG held recently in last week of November 2020.

Source- PIB

PFIZER VACCINE

Syllabus Section- Science and Technology

Why in news

The UK on Wednesday became the first country to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against COVID-19, paving the way for mass vaccinations against the deadly novel coronavirus.

Significance

- When the first immunisation takes place of Pfizer's Covid-19 shot next week in the UK, it would mark the most rapid vaccine development for a pandemic in history following all the mandatory stages (the Russian and Chinese vaccines were approved before Phase III trials).
- From dosing the first trial participants on May 5 to getting approval for emergency-use authorisation in the UK in six months, the breakneck pace of developing the BNT162 vaccine by Pfizer and its partner BioNTech, which claims to offer up to 95 per cent protection against Covid-19, sums up the severity of the pandemic that has killed more than 1.46 million people and infected 62.8 million.
- Besides Pfizer, Moderna Inc, which was one of the first firms to start human clinical trials of its mRNA vaccine on March 16, has already applied for emergency use license in the US. Serum Institute of India, which is trialing a version of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine, is also expected to follow suit within the next two weeks. Oxford University had begun Phase I trials of its ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 vaccine on April 23.

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- The developments mark a remarkable turnaround since there was no antidote to the virus and the most optimistic prediction was a vaccine by the middle of 2021.
- According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the average time to develop and make a vaccine publicly available until now has been 16 years.
- In fact, the vaccine that comes remotely close in matching the Covid-19 pace is the mumps vaccine, which took close to 4 years to get all necessary permissions and licensing. So far, only smallpox has been declared officially eradicated by vaccination.

How Covid-19 vaccines were developed so fast?

- What aided scientists in developing a Covid-19 vaccine in record time is the fact that it was not required to be made from scratch.
- Scientists had begun making vaccines for SARS and MERS, which belong to the coronavirus family, during their outbreaks in 2003 and 2012, respectively, only to abandon the efforts when the outbreaks petered out.
- Moreover, Pfizer and Moderna have used the novel mRNA technology for their vaccines which are faster to develop as they do not require companies to produce protein or weakened pathogens for the vaccine.
- The genetic material mRNA is easy to make in a laboratory and manufacturing an mRNA vaccine rather than a protein one can save months in time.
- Also, it must be noted that for most of the Covid-19 vaccines on the cusp of release or those already granted approval, the mandatory clinical trial process -- designed to test whether the shots are safe and effective -- was compressed into months in normally what takes approximately ten years. For example:

Phase I: In this step, the experimental vaccine is given to humans, usually between 20-80 subjects, to test its safety and dosage besides gauging whether it stimulates the immune system. While this process typically takes one to two years, for Covid-19 trials, it was done in about three months.

Phase II: In this stage, about several hundred individuals, split into groups age-wise such as children and elderly, are dosed in a randomized, double blind, placebo-controlled study. This process usually takes about three years but for Covid-19 vaccines, it was completed in 2-3 months.

Phase III: This is the most crucial stage, where the vaccine candidate is given to thousands of people, and can typically take two to four years. However, most of the drugmakers combined this with Phase II to expedite the process.

• **Regulatory review:** After Phase III trials, the vaccine developer submits a license application to the regulatory authority in their respective country, and final approval may take months or years. However, in emergency situations, like the Covid-19 pandemic, authorities grant emergency-use authorisation (EUA) in weeks.

Source- Indian Express

CYCLONE BUVERI

Syllabus Section: Geography of India & World

Why in news?

The Deep Depression over the southeast and adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal has been intensified into a cyclonic storm. This has been named as 'Burevi' by the Maldives.

Highlights

- The Meteorological Department has highlighted that the cyclonic system is currently centered at about 400 km east-southeast of Trincomalee in Sri Lanka. It will cross the Sri Lankan coast near Trincomalee by December 2.
- It will emerge into the Gulf of Mannar and its adjoining Comorin area.
- It will also cross the shores between Pamban and Kanyakumari in southern Tamil Nadu.
- Tamil Nadu, Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Tenkasi, Ramanathapuram and Sivagangai districts will get heavy to very heavy rainfall at a few places.

About Tropical Cyclones

- The tropical cyclone is an intense circular storm which originates over the warm tropical oceans.

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- Tropical cyclone is characterized by low atmospheric pressure, high winds and heavy rain.
- The characteristic feature of tropical cyclones is the eye which is the central region of clear skies, warm temperatures and low atmospheric pressure.
- These storms rotate anticlockwise in the northern hemisphere while clockwise in the southern hemisphere. These storms have different names in different regions:
 1. Hurricanes in the North Atlantic and eastern Pacific
 2. Typhoons in South East Asia and China.
 3. Tropical cyclones in southwest Pacific and Indian Ocean region
 4. Willy-willies in north-western Australia.

Source: PIB

THE WORLD MALARIA REPORT 2020

Syllabus Section: Reports and Indices/ International organisations.

Why in news?

The World Malaria Report (WMR) 2020 was released by World Health Organization (WHO). The report has highlighted the estimated cases for malaria across the world on the basis of mathematical projections.

Findings of the report

- The report highlights that, India has made significant progress in reducing its malaria burden.
- As per the report, India is the only high endemic country that has reported a decline of cases by 17.6% in 2019 as compared to 2018.
- It also highlights that, the Annual Parasitic Incidence (API) has reduced by 18.4% in 2019 as compared to 2018.
- India also shows the largest drop in the malaria cases region-wide. Cases have reduced from 20 million to about 6 million.
- The percentage drop in the malaria cases is 71.8%.
- India's Malaria Morbidity has also decreased by 83.34%. Thus, it has achieved Goal 6 of the Millennium Development Goals that has set target to reduce the case by 50-75% between 2000 and 2019.

Source: PIB

THE WORLD TRADE REPORT, 2020

Syllabus Section: Reports & Indices / International Organisations.

Why in news?

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has released the World Trade Report, 2020.

Key highlights

- The report by the World Trade Organization analyses the adoption of government policies so as to foster the technological progress and digital innovation.
- The report highlights that due to covid-19 crisis, 115 countries have adopted new digital and industrial strategies.
- These digital and industrial strategies would boost the transition towards digital economy.
- The strategies include tax breaks that facilitate the digital innovation, policies to address access to the data, technological hub that maximize the knowledge diffusion.

About the World Trade Report

- The report is published annually with an aim to boost the understanding regarding the trends in trade, issues and policies.
- The 2020 version of the report focuses on technology and innovation policies. It also explains the role of the World Trade Organization in the changing world.

Source: WTO Publications.

LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Syllabus section - Polity

Why in News?

Karnataka Government yesterday launched the Karnataka Learning Management System which would help students learn anytime and anywhere.

About:

- It is based on digital technology for Government colleges.

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- It will have a progressive impact on the teaching of about 24,000 teachers and the learning of about 4.5 Lakh students in the state, the faculty of the Department of Collegiate and Technical Education.
- There will be analytics with scope for ranking of students, teachers and colleges, student's feedback, content rating and e-tracking of usage.
- This will also make 'learning from anywhere' possible during the pandemic.

Benefits of Learning Management System:

- Organizes eLearning content in one location.
- Provides unlimited access to eLearning materials.
- Easily tracks learner progress and performance.
- Reduces Learning and Development costs.
- Reduces Learning and Development time.

Source- News On AIR

ETHEREUM 2.0

Why in News?

Ethereum 2.0 is set to launch today on a system that is faster, cheaper and more environmentally friendly, than bitcoin which has crossed its all-time high of USD 20,000.

About Ethereum:

- It is the world's second largest cryptocurrency.
- Ethereum has a market cap of 70 billion USD compared to Bitcoin's 360 billion USD.
- Ethereum 2.0 will move from this proof of work system to 'proof of stake.'
- In this system, entities to validate the blockchain will be chosen by 'staking.'

Features:

- The main benefit will be a fall in the cost per transaction, charged by miners/validators.

- It will also allow ordinary people to earn some returns on their ethereum by participating in this new process of validation (staking).
- These returns will fall over time as the amount of ethereum staked goes up but is currently in around 18%.
- Bitcoin will be more seen as a store of value and ethereum, as a medium of transactions.
- Unlike other cryptocurrencies Ethereum offers a technological platform on which smart contracts can be built, for instance loan agreements.
- These contracts can be created by computer code without the intervention of courts or legal authorities and execute themselves (for instance, by automatically seizing collateral).

Source - livemint

IFSCA OBTAINS MEMBERSHIP OF INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INSURANCE SUPERVISORS (IAIS)

Syllabus Section: Economy

Why in News?

The International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) obtained membership of International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS).

About IAIS

- It is a voluntary membership organization of insurance supervisors and regulators from more than 200 jurisdictions, constituting 97% of the world's insurance premiums.
- It is the international standard-setting body responsible for developing and assisting in the implementation of principles, standards and other supporting material for the supervision of the insurance sector.
- In recognition of its collective expertise, the IAIS is routinely called upon by the G20 leaders and other international standard setting bodies.
- Established in 1994, the IAIS headquartered in Switzerlandis.

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Significance of the Membership

- IFSCA would have access to IAIS's global network and would be able to exchange ideas and information with other global regulators.
- This would help in developing a vibrant global Insurance hub in IFSC at GIFT City.
- Currently, 17 leading Insurance entities are operating from GIFT.
- This membership would go a long way in connecting IFSC with global insurance institutions and would facilitate IFSCA in joint development of global insurance business with other global centres.

About IFSCA

- The central government has established International Financial Services Centres Authority to regulate all financial services in International Financial Services Centres (IFSCs)
- Headquarters in Gandhinagar (Gujarat)
- The IFSCA will consist of nine members, appointed by the central government.

Include Chairperson, a member each from the RBI, SEBI, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), and the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)

Two members from the Ministry of Finance.

Two other members will be appointed on the recommendation of a Selection Committee.

Term: All members of the IFSC Authority will have a term of three years, subject to reappointment.

- The authority will regulate financial products such as securities, deposits or contracts of insurance, financial services, and financial institutions which have been previously approved by any appropriate regulator such as Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) etc., in an IFSC.

Source: PIB

GREEN CHARCOAL HACKATHON

Syllabus section – Environment and Ecology

Why in news?

Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy, launched the Green Charcoal Hackathon being organised by NVVN (NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam), a wholly-owned subsidiary company of NTPC.

About:

- The Hackathon displays the spirit of innovation, which pervades NTPC.
- The NTPC management encourages all young engineers to present innovation and new ideas.
- To encourage the participants, there was a provision for cash prizes worth up to ₹24 lakh in three categories for production of torrefied biomass pellets — 100 kg per day; 1,000 kg per day; 10 tonnes per day.

Importance

- This (Hackathon) is also innovation in the pursuit of reducing our carbon footprint.
- From that point of view, all competitors in the Hackathon should keep in mind that the process of converting this (agro residue) to charcoal should not lead to emissions
- Another key thing is the commercial model, which will depend on the cost of both the machine and charcoal production.
- The purpose of the event is to leverage the innovative Indian mind to bridge the technology gap with the prime objective to clean the air by eliminating farm fire, producing renewable energy out of the agro residue, to promote local entrepreneurship, and to increase the income of the farmers.

Source- The pioneer

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PASSAGE NAVAL EXERCISE (PASSEX)

Syllabus Section: Security / Defence Exercises

Why in news?

The Indian Navy (IN) has conducted Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with Russian Federation Navy (RuFN) in the Eastern Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Highlights of Exercise

- The exercise involves participation of RuFN guided missile cruiser Varyag, large anti-submarine ship Admiral Panteleyev and medium ocean tanker Pechanga. Indian navy is being represented by indigenously constructed guided missile frigate Shivalik and anti-submarine corvette Kadmatt along with integral helicopters.
- This exercise, being conducted in the Eastern Indian Ocean Region, reflects the strong long-term strategic relationship between the two countries and particularly, defence cooperation in the maritime domain.
- The exercise is aimed at enhancing interoperability, improving understanding and imbibing best practices between both the friendly navies, and would involve advanced surface and anti-submarine warfare exercises, weapon firings, seamanship exercises and helicopter operations.

About PASSEX

- PASSEXs are conducted regularly by Indian Navy with units of friendly foreign navies, whilst visiting each other's ports or during a rendezvous at sea.
- This exercise is being conducted on the occasion of 'Navy Day' of the IN on 4th December, which emphasizes the strong bonds of friendship shared between the two friendly militaries.
- This PASSEX would be another step towards strengthening Indo-Russian defence relations. The two navies have built a robust relationship through regular exercises such as INDRA Navy conducted biennially, with the last edition held in the Northern Indian Ocean Region from 4 to 5 September 2020.

Source: PIB

HYBRID RENEWABLE ENERGY PARK

Syllabus Section: Environment and Ecology

Why in News?

On December 15, PM will lay the foundation stone for 30.000MW hybrid renewable energy park close to the Indo-Pak border in Kutch district.

About hybrid renewable energy park

- The hybrid energy park project is one of the select projects of national importance that the PM reviews at his monthly PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation) system.
- The renewable energy park will have two zones, one, a 49,600 hectare hybrid park zone that will accommodate wind and solar power plants of 24,800 MW capacity and two, an exclusive wind park zone spread over 23,000 hectares.
- This site has been chosen because this is a complete wasteland. It will be located between Khavda village and Vighakot. This park zone will be located 6 km from the border.

Windmills near the border will also act as a boundary.

- The state government has allocated land to six developers.
 - Adani Green Energy Ltd (19,000 ha)
 - Sarjan Realities Ltd (9,500 ha)
 - NTPC Ltd (9,500 ha)
 - Gujrat Industries Power Company Ltd (4,750 ha)
 - Gujrat State Electricity Corporation (6,650 ha)
- The entire 23,000 ha at the exclusive wind zone park has been allotted to Solar Energy Corporation of India to set up wind projects.

Significance :

- India's installed capacity of renewable energy is 88,793.43 MW and the country has a target of 175,000 MW of renewable power by 2022. It will help in achieving the target.

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- The renewable energy park project is expected to attract investment of about Rs. 1.35 trillion and that the prime minister had given 2022 as the deadline for its completion.

Source: Indian Express

RAMAYAN CRUISE TOUR

Syllabus section – Art and culture

Why in News?

Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways announced that 'Ramayan Cruise Tour' on the Saryu river in Ayodhya will be launched soon.

About:

- It will be the first-ever luxury Cruise service on the Saryu river in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh.
- It aims to give mesmerizing experience to devotees with one-of-its-kind spiritual journeys while cruising through the famous ghats of the holy river Saryu.
- Tourists will be taken on the 'Ramcharitmanas Tour', of 1-1.5 hour duration, featuring an exclusively made video film of 45-60 minutes duration, based on Ramcharitmanas by Goswami Tulsidas, covering the period from the birth of Lord Ram to his Rajyabhishek.

River Saryu

- The Sarayu is a river that originates in Uttarakhand.
- It flows through Uttar Pradesh in India.
- It is a tributary of the Sharda River.
- This river is of ancient significance as it is mentioned in the Vedas and the Ramayana.
- The river is formed at the confluence of rivers karnali and mahakali.

Source – All India Radio

HSN CODE

Syllabus Section – Economy

Why in News?

The government has made it mandatory to mention 8-digit HSN or tariff code for 49 chemical based products while issuing Goods and Services Tax (GST) invoice, a move experts feel is aimed at curbing tax evasion.

About:

- Harmonised System, or simply 'HS' .It is a six-digit identification code.
- Of the six digits, the first two denote the HS Chapter, the next two give the HS heading, and the last two give the HS subheading.
- It is Developed by the World Customs Organization (WCO).
- Called the “universal economic language” for goods.
- It is a multipurpose international product nomenclature.
- The system currently comprises of around 5,000 commodity groups.

Application:

HSN classification is widely used for taxation purposes by helping to identify the rate of tax applicable to a specific product in a country that is under review. It can also be used in calculations that involve claiming benefits.

Significance:

- Over 200 countries use the system as a basis for their customs tariffs, gathering international trade statistics, making trade policies, and for monitoring goods.
- The system helps in harmonising of customs and trade procedures, thus reducing costs in international trade.

Source – Economic times

BANGLADESH SIGNS FIRST PREFERENTIAL TRADE AGREEMENT (PTA) SINCE ITS INDEPENDENCE

Syllabus section: International Relations/ Current events of International Importance

Why in news?

Bangladesh signed its first Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Bhutan allowing duty free access to a range of goods between the two countries. This is the first PTA Bangladesh has signed with any country in the world.

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Highlights

- The agreement was signed between Bangladesh Commerce Minister and Bhutan's Economic Affairs Minister in Dhaka. The agreement was signed on the occasion marking the 50 years of diplomatic ties between the two countries.
- Under the PTA 100 Bangladeshi products will get duty free access to Bhutan. At the same time, 34 items from Bhutan will get duty free access into Bangladesh. Further items can be added in the list later on the basis of discussion between the two countries.
- Goods like Jute and Jute products, baby clothes and accessories, men's trousers, jackets and blazers are among the 100 items from Bangladesh which will get duty free access to Bhutan.
- On the other hand fruit juice, natural honey, wheat flour jams, jellies and lime stone, quartzite etc from Bhutan will have duty free access to Bangladesh.
- The trade volume between the two countries is approximately 50 million dollars with 7.56 million of export and 42.09 million import into Bangladesh.
- Bangladesh is expected to sign 11 more PTAs and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with countries like Indonesia and Nepal by June next year.
- In 1971, Bhutan was the first country in the world, followed by India as the second, to recognize Bangladesh as an independent country.

Source: News on All India Radio

BASHAN CHAR ISLANDS

**Syllabus section: geography of world/
Places in news**

Why in news?

The government of Bangladesh has started the work of relocation of Rohingyas to the newly developed facility at Bhashan Char Island, as a part of partial relocation of the Rohingyas.

About Bhashan Char Island

- The Bhashan Char Island is a remote uninhabited island of Bangladesh, located in the Bay of Bengal. The Bhashan Char Islands are also called as the Floating Islands and Char Piya.

- The island, which spans for an area of 40 square kilometers is believed to have formed only in 2006, by Himalayan silt.
- The Bangladesh Government is relocating the Rohingya refugees to this island, which is located 60 kilometers from the mainland.
- Humanitarians oppose this move fearing poor livable conditions in the new island and demand for independent assessment by the United Nations.
- Environmentalists warn that the island is ecologically fragile are prone to floods and cyclones.
- The Government of Bangladesh is building a flood defence system in the island. Two long dams are being constructed under the protection system. The outer one being 12 feet high and the inner being 33 feet high.

Source: News on All India Radio.

THE HAYABUSA2 MISSION

**Syllabus Section: Science and Technology
/ Space Missions**

Why in news?

The Japan's Hayabusa 2 mission is set to return back to Earth by carrying the samples from the Ryugu asteroid that orbits the Sun. The mission is similar to NASA's OSIRIS-REX mission that brought back samples from asteroid Bennu. According to the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), this is the first time that a probe has visited a celestial body that is under 100 metres in diameter

What is the Hayabusa2 mission?

- The Hayabasu2 mission was launched in December 2014 when the spacecraft was sent on a six-year-long voyage to study the asteroid Ryugu and collect samples that it is now bringing back to the Earth.
- The spacecraft arrived at the asteroid in mid-2018 after which it deployed two rovers and a small lander onto the surface. In 2019, the spacecraft fired an impactor into the asteroid's surface to create an artificial crater with a diameter of a little more than 10 metres, which allowed it to collect the samples.

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- Hayabasu2's predecessor, the Hayabusa mission brought back samples from the asteroid Itokawa in 2010.

What is an asteroid?

- Asteroids are rocky objects that orbit the Sun, much smaller than planets. They are also called minor planets. According to NASA, there are 994,383 known asteroids, the remnants from the formation of the solar system over 4.6 billion years ago.
- Asteroids are divided into three classes. First, those found in the main asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter, which is estimated to contain somewhere between 1.1-1.9 million asteroids.

Source: The Indian Express

WEST BENGAL'S SWASTHYA SATHI SCHEME

Syllabus Section: Governance/ Social Justice

Why in news?

Recently West Bengal government has expanded the Swasthya Sathi scheme coverage to cover the state's entire population.

About the scheme

- Swasthya Sathi scheme is a health insurance scheme of the West Bengal government. It was launched in 2016.
- It provides basic health cover for secondary and tertiary care up to 5 lakh INR per annum per family.
- Both state-run and private hospitals are part of the scheme. The card under the scheme is issued to the female guardians of the families.

Updated features

- Every citizen and every family in the state are to be included in the scheme irrespective of their age group.
- The scheme is to be completely funded by the state government of West Bengal.
- The scheme will provide a smart card to each and every family of the state to avail the benefits under the scheme.
- The Smart Cards are to be issued in the names of the women members of the family.

- All the private and state-run hospitals are to be brought under the scheme
- Under the scheme, the State Government representatives will visit every household to complete the enrolment procedure. This is to be done under the Duarey Duarey Paschim bongo Sarkar initiative.
- The state government of West Bengal is to allocate 2,000 crores of rupees to implement the scheme
- So far, around 1,590 hospitals have been empanelled in the scheme. The scheme will cover 1.5 crore families, that is, 7.5 crore people.

Source: News on All India Radio

THE SMUGGLING IN INDIA REPORT 2020

Syllabus section: Economy / Reports and Indices

Why in news?

Recently on the occasion of 63rd Founding Day Celebrations of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, The Union Minister of Finance released the Smuggling in India Report 2019-20.

Key findings

- In 2019-20, the department of revenue intelligence (DRI) spearheaded the operations against the trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances
- The Directorate also busted an international drug smuggling racket with the seizure of 3.3 kg of cocaine under the 'Operation Calypso'.
- It detected 412 cases of smuggling resulting in the seizure of contraband worth 1,949 crore in 2019-20.
- It arrested 837 economic offenders and also unearthed 761 complex cases of Customs duty evasion amounting to 2,183 crore.
- The agency cracked down on smugglers and seized 174.50 metric tonne of red sanders apart from rescuing endangered animals and birds.

EDEN IAS - Educational Development & Enrichment Network

About Directorate of Revenue Intelligence

- The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence is the apex anti-smuggling agency of India, working under the Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India.
- It is tasked with detecting and curbing smuggling of contraband, including drug trafficking and illicit international trade in wildlife and environmentally sensitive items, as well as combating commercial frauds related to international trade and evasion of Customs duty.

Source: News on All India Radio

THE MALAYAN GIANT SQUIRREL

Syllabus Section: Environment, Ecology & Biodiversity

Why in news?

A first-of-its-kind study by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) under the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, has projected that numbers of the Malayan Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa bicolor*) could decline by 90 per cent in India by 2050, and if urgent steps are not taken, the species could be extinct in the country in subsequent decades.

Key findings of the survey:

- The population of the squirrel in India has declined by 30 per cent over the last two decades.
- Only 43.38 per cent of the squirrel's original habitat in India is now favorable to it and by 2050, the favorable zone could shrink to 2.94 per cent of the area the species was meant to inhabit.
- According to the study, the Malayan Giant Squirrel and its habitat are under threat from deforestation, fragmentation of forests, crop cultivation and over-harvesting of food, illegal trade in wildlife, and hunting for consumption. Slash-and-burn jhum cultivation in many areas of the Northeast contributes to destruction of its habitat.

About Malayan giant squirrel

- The Malayan Giant Squirrel is one of the world's largest squirrel species. It has a dark upper body, pale under parts, and a long bushy tail.

- The Malayan Squirrel is listed as "Near Threatened" on IUCN 2016 list and is listed as "protected" under India Wildlife Protection Act
- It is considered to be a "forest health indicator species" as their population indicates the health of the forest, of the vegetation and plants in the forest on which the species feeds, as well as that of the other symbiotic species that inhabit the region.
- Unlike the nocturnal flying squirrels, giant squirrels are diurnal, but arboreal (tree-dwelling) and herbivorous like the flying squirrels.
- It is currently found in parts of West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Nagaland in India.
- India is home to three giant squirrel species; the other two – Indian Giant Squirrel and Grizzled Giant Squirrel – are found in peninsular India.
- The Malayan Giant Squirrel is also distributed through Southern China, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Burma, the Malayan Peninsula, Sumatra, and Java. It is found mostly in evergreen and semi-evergreen forests, from plains to hills at elevations of 50 m to 1,500 m above sea level.

Source: The Indian Express

The Malayan Squirrel is listed as "Near Threatened" on IUCN 2016 list and is listed as "protected" under India Wildlife Protection Act

INVEST INDIA WON THE UNITED NATIONS INVESTMENT PROMOTION AWARD 2020

Syllabus Section: Economy

Why in news?

The United Nations (UNCTAD) has declared Invest India- the National Investment Promotion Agency of India- as a winner of the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award. The award ceremony took place on 7th December 2020 at UNCTAD Headquarters in Geneva.

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Key highlights

- The award recognizes and celebrates the outstanding achievements and best practices of Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) across the globe.
- The evaluation was based on UNCTAD's assessment of work undertaken by 180 Investment Promotion Agencies.
- The response of IPAs to the pandemic became the basis for the evaluation of the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award.
- UNCTAD highlighted good practices followed by Invest India, such as the Business Immunity Platform, Exclusive Investment Forum webinar series, its social media engagement and focus COVID response teams (such as business reconstruction, stakeholder outreach and supplier outreach) created as a response to the pandemic, in its publications.
- Invest India has also shared long-term strategies and practices being followed for investment promotion, facilitation and retention at UNCTAD's high-level brainstorming sessions.

About The Investment Promotion award

- This United Nations Investment Promotion Award is the most coveted award for Investment Promotion Agencies.
- UNCTAD is a central agency that monitors performance of IPAs and identifies global best practices. Germany, South Korea and Singapore have been some of the past winners of the award.

About UNCTAD

- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was established in 1964 to promote development-friendly integration of developing countries into the world economy.
- UNCTAD is a permanent intergovernmental body headquartered at Geneva in Switzerland.

About Invest India

- Invest India is the National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of India. It was set up as non-profit organization under the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP).
- It also serves Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, State Government of India.

Source: PIB

THE IUCN WORLD HERITAGE OUTLOOK 3 REPORT

Syllabus Section: Environment, Ecology and Biodiversity

Why in news?

The IUCN has published the World Heritage Outlook 3 recently. The IUCN report highlights that Western Ghats of southern India is threatened by population pressure, urbanization and climate change.

Key findings of the report

- The IUCN World Heritage Outlook 3 is builds on previous reports from 2014 and 2017.
- The report states that the conservation outlook of the mountain chain in the Western Ghats is of significant concern.
- The report further says, the state of values in the Western Ghats was considered as good at time of inscription. The state still remains so. However, there exists some concern regarding outside threats.
- The report also highlights that, the fragmentation caused because of the development pressure such as construction of roads, broadening of existing roads etc. in the Western Ghats is shrinking the availability of the wildlife corridors and other habitat outside the protected areas.
- Urbanisation, agricultural expansion, livestock grazing and forest fragmentation also pose treats to the species and habitats of the Western Ghats as per the report.
- Climate change will also exacerbate the system and has the potential to impact the large- scale monsoonal processes.

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This would impact the Western Ghats on a large scale.

Source: The Economic Times

GWALIOR AND ORCHHA CITIES WERE INCLUDED UNDER THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE CITIES LIST

Syllabus section: Art and culture

Why in news

The historical fort cities of Gwalior and Orchha in Madhya Pradesh have been included in the list of UNESCO's world heritage cities under its urban landscape city programme.

About Gwalior and Orchha cities

- Gwalior is known for its palaces and temples, including the intricately carved Sas Bahu Ka Mandir temple.
- The Gwalior Fort occupies a sandstone plateau overlooking the city and is accessed via a winding road lined with sacred Jain statues.
- Within the forts high walls is the 15th-century Gujari Mahal Palace, now an archaeological museum.
- Orchha is popular for its temples and palaces and was the capital of the Bundela kingdom in the 16th century.
- The famous spots in the town are Raj Mahal, Jehangir Mahal, Ramraja Temple, Rai Praveen Mahal, and Laxminarayan Mandir, the official said.
- After inclusion in the World Heritage City list, chemical treatment of historic spots like Mansingh Palace, Gujri Mahal and Sahastrabahu Temple will be done so that art inscribed on them will become more visible.

Source: The New Indian Express

FEMINIZATION OF RED SEA TURTLES DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Syllabus Section: Environment, Ecology and Biodiversity

Why in news?

A Team of researchers from the Saudi Arabia King Abdullah University of Science and Technology conducted a study and reported that the turtle population in Red Sea is turning female due to rise in sea temperature and climate change.

Key findings of the report

- They selected five sites in the region that are favored by Green Turtles and Hawksbill, The researchers collected data for every fifteen minutes for five months.
- According to the researchers, to maintain 50:50 ratio of males and females population, temperature of 29.2 degrees Celsius is required. Above this temperature, the turtle hatchlings will predominantly be female.
- The researchers during the study found that the temperature at four out of the selected five sites exceeded 29.2 degrees Celsius.

Conservation of Turtles

- According to IUCN, 80% of these turtles were lost in the last 10 years.
- Different turtles are classified differently by IUCN. The classification is as follows
 1. The Loggerhead and Green Sea Turtles are classified as "Endangered". Their population have declines by 50% in the last ten years
 2. Leatherback Turtles and Oliver Ridley Turtles have been classified as "Vulnerable".
 3. Leather back Turtle in Northwest Atlantic has been classified as "Endangered".
 4. Green Turtle, Kemp's Ridley Turtle and Hawksbill turtle have been classified as "Critically endangered".

Source: Down to Earth

CLIMATE CHANGE PERFORMANCE INDEX 2021

Syllabus Section: Environment, Ecology, and Biodiversity

Why in news?

India ranked high along with the European Union and the United Kingdom in the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2021 released by non-profit organization German watch. However, according to the reporting country needed to focus more on renewable energy, both, as a mitigation strategy and for its post-novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) green recovery.

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Key findings of the report

- India has ranked at 10th position in the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2021 for the second year.
- India has ranked high along with the European Union and the United Kingdom.
- India has received high ratings in all the categories of CCPI but in the renewable energy category, it has a medium performance.
- As per the report, no country is making enough efforts to meet the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

About CCPI

- The CCPI was released by a non-profit German watch. It was released in cooperation with the New Climate Institute and Climate Action Network (CAN).
- The Climate Change Performance Index compares 57 countries and the EU in the areas of Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Renewable Energies, Energy Use and Climate Policy, thus providing a comprehensive overview of the current efforts and progress of the countries analyzed.
- Besides, it measures how well countries are on track to meet the global goals of the Paris Agreement by evaluating the current status and future targets of each category with reference to a well-below 2°C pathway.

About German watch

- German watch is an international environmental think tank which is based in Bonn and Berlin (Germany).
- It is an independent development and environmental organization which works for sustainable global development.

Source: Down to Earth

EMERGENCY USE AUTHORIZATION

Syllabus section: Science and Technology

Why in News?

Bharat Biotech has applied for the emergency use authorization to the Drugs Controller General of India (DGCI) for its indigenously developed COVID-19 vaccine 'COVAXIN' recently.

Other Highlights

- With this step, Bharat Biotech based in Hyderabad has become the third applicant of the vaccine after Pfizer and Serum Institute of India to apply for the approval of emergency use in India. Serum Institute has applied for the vaccine which has been developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University.
- COVAXIN has been indigenously developed by Bharat Biotech in joint collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research- ICMR. The vaccine for the deadly virus is currently in phase 3 clinical trials which are being conducted at 18 sites across India with over 22 thousand volunteers.

About COVAXIN

- COVAXIN is India's indigenously developed vaccine. It has been developed by Bharat Biotech.
- Vaccine was developed in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).
- This vaccine is currently undergoing the Phase 3 of the trials. The trials are being conducted at 18 sites in India on over 22 thousand volunteers.

What is Emergency Use Authorization' mean?

- Emergency use approval for a drug is granted only after there is sufficient evidence suggesting that the medical product is safe and effective. However, the final approval is granted only after completion of the trials and by proper analysis of full data.

Source: The Hindu

NITI AAYOG AND PATNA HIGH COURT INITIATE A DRIVE FOR THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO ADVANCE ACCESS TO JUSTICE THROUGH ONLINE DISPUTE RESOLUTION(ODR)

Syllabus Section: Polity and Governance

WHY IN NEWS?

- NITI Aayog in association with Patna High Court, organized the inaugural meeting in a broader engagement on efficient and affordable access to justice for all, through the the interplay of technology, law and innovation in the post pandemic world.

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WHAT IS ODR?

- ODR is the resolution of disputes, particularly small and medium value cases, using digital technology and techniques of alternate dispute resolution (ADR), such as negotiation, mediation, and arbitration.

BENEFITS

- While courts are becoming digitized through the efforts of the judiciary, more effective, scalable, and collaborative mechanisms of containment and resolution are urgently needed. ODR can help resolve disputes efficiently and affordably.
- It is the start of a collaborative exercise that sets into motion the use of technology towards efficient and affordable access to justice.
- Judiciary is facing huge pendency of very old cases and new cases are arising. It requires a huge transformation in mindsets to deal with this challenge. This move will help in finding a solution and ensure justice is both effective and expeditious.”
- The meeting generated tremendous recognition of the opportunity that ODR presents.

SOURCE: PIB

MOLNUPIRAVIR, THE DRUG SHOWN TO STOP COVID-19 SPREAD IN 24 HOURS

Syllabus Section: Science and Technology

WHY IN NEWS?

- A new drug called Molnupiravir has been shown to stop the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in 24 hours. It has been published in the journal Nature Microbiology. And Indian researchers plan to apply to the drug regulator to conduct human trials with the drug.

ABOUT THE DRUG

- The antiviral drug Molnupiravir, or MK-4482/EIDD-2801, is taken orally. Molnupiravir is being developed by the biotechnology firm Ridgeback Biotherapeutics in collaboration with pharmaceutical firm Merck.
- The research team repurposed MK-4482/EIDD-2801 against SARS-CoV-2 and tested it on ferrets.

- This is the first demonstration of an orally available drug to rapidly block SARS-CoV-2 transmission.

IN ACTION

- In ferrets, the drug was shown to completely suppress transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in 24 hours.
- Researchers infected ferrets with SARS-CoV-2 and initiated treatment with MK-4482/EIDD-2801 when the animals started to shed the virus from the nose.
- Ferrets are a popular model for influenza and other respiratory infections because their lung physiology is similar to humans and researchers hope they will mimic aspects of Covid-19 in people such as its spread
- The drug basically stops replication of the copies of the virus's RNA in the cell.

Source: Indian Express

SINGAPORE TO HOST THE SPECIAL ANNUAL MEETING OF WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM IN 2021

Syllabus Section: Economy / International Organisations

Why in News?

The World Economic Forum will convene the Special Annual Meeting 2021 in Singapore from May 13-16, 2021. The World Economic Forum (WEF 2021) will be moved from Davos in Switzerland to Singapore due to COVID-19 concerns. The organizers announced the decision recently.

Other highlights

- The annual gathering will be moved out of Europe next year, as the organizers feel that the COVID-19 pandemic will make it challenging to host the event safely in Europe. The WEF is an annual gathering of political and business leaders.
- This is only the second time since its inception in 1971 that the event, which is usually held in January at Davos, will be hosted outside Switzerland. It will be held in Asia for the first time.
- Singapore was chosen as the new venue for WEF 2021 after careful consideration, as it has been largely successful in dealing with the pandemic.

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About WEF

- WEF is Swiss nonprofit foundation, based in Geneva. Founded in 1971
- It works to improve the state of the world through public-private cooperation.
- It serves as independent not-for-profit organization that works closely with other international organizations.
- WEF is best known for its annual winter meeting for five days in Davos, a mountain resort in Graubünden, in eastern Alps region of Switzerland.
- The meeting brings together some international political leaders, 2,500 top business leaders, selected intellectuals, and journalists to discuss the most pressing issues facing the world.

Source: weforum.org

NBCFDC & NSFDC UNDER M/O SOCIAL JUSTICE & EMPOWERMENT ENTERS IN TO MOA WITH PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK

Syllabus Section: Social Justice

WHY IN NEWS?

MoA was signed between Punjab National Bank and NBCFDC & NSFDC under m/o social justice & empowerment.

BENEFITS:

- The scheme is expected to benefit many entrepreneurs and self- help groups on a pan India basis.
- It will benefit OBC/SC SHGs with loans/ borrowings up to Rs.4.00 Lakh and OBC/SC individuals with loan/ borrowing up to Rs.2.00 Lakh with a quick interest subvention benefit of 5% directly into the standard accounts of borrowing SHGs/beneficiaries.
- Implementation of Interest subvention Scheme of Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India – Vanchit kai Samooohaur Vargon ki Aarthik Sahayta (VISVAS) Yojana for financial empowerment of economically marginalized OBC/SC SHGs & Individuals got a major boost with signing of Memorandum of Agreements (MoAs) by National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation (NBCFDC) and National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) with Punjab National Bank, a premier and leading Public Sector Bank.

VANCHIT IKAI SAMOOH AUR VARGON KO AARTHIK SAHAYATA YOJANA (VISVAS YOJANA)

OBJECTIVES

Under this scheme, interest subvention will be provided to Self Help Groups with 100% OBC members and OBC individuals who have taken loan for various income generating activities from those Lending Institutions who have signed MoA with NBCFDC.

ELIGIBILITY

- Members of Backward Classes, as notified by Central Government/State Governments from time to time.
- Applicant's annual family income should be less than Rs. 3.00 Lakh.
- SHGs must be registered with NRLM/ NULM/NABARD with more than two years of credit history
- SHGs/Individuals must have made all repayments timely to be eligible for Interest Subvention.
- All OBC Antoday Anna Yojana (AAY) card holders, and OBC individuals facing three or more Deprivations in terms of SECC-2011, as per records available at the relevant BDO Office shall be eligible for Interest Subvention.
- All OBC beneficiaries involved in Agricultural activities and getting coverage under the PM Kisan shall be eligible for coverage under Interest Subvention

SALIENT FEATURES

- | | | |
|------------------------------------------|---|---------------|
| (i) Maximum loan limit (for SHG) | : | Rs. 4.00 Lakh |
| (ii) Maximum loan limit (for individual) | : | Rs. 2.00 Lakh |
| (iii) Maximum Subvention Amount | : | @5% p.a. |

MODE OF PAYMENT OF SUBVENTION

Through Direct Transfer of Subvention Amount into operating account of SHG or Individual

PERIOD OF SCHEME

Valid for 2020-21 as of now. Further extension contingent on the evaluation of the Scheme by way of its impact assessment.

Source: **PIB**

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THE URBAN GOVERNANCE INDEX 2020

Syllabus section: Governance / Indices and Reports

Why in News?

The Praja Foundation recently published its 'Urban Governance Index, 2020'.

Highlights of the Governance Index

- The study was carried for over three years that is from 2017 to 2020. The index has ranked the states on a 100-point scale in the 42 indicators.
- The index highlights that, no state has developed 18 municipal functions to urban local bodies even Twenty-seven years after the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act was passed.
- The report highlighted that, no state has devolved all the municipal functions and the municipal bodies are dependent on the state for funds and decision-making.
- Some of the municipal functions out of total 18 include- solid waste management, Slum Improvement, water supply, up gradation and promotion of education.
- The report further said, there exists many urban governance schemes, policies and global and national level indices. But these schemes and indices focused only on the aspect of mapping the performance/delivery of urban services.

Performance of various states

- Odisha and Maharashtra ranked first and second respectively in the Governance Index. The report further finds that, Odisha and Maharashtra have the most accessible open data portal.
- Maharashtra and Kerala has been ranked first for devolution of financial power and accountability.
- Madhya Pradesh has been ranked first for active grievance redressal mechanism.
- These four heads are divided under four categories namely, empowered elected representatives & legislative structure, and empowered city administration, citizens and fiscal empowerment.

About the Praja foundation

- Praja is a non-partisan organization working towards enabling accountable governance since 1997.
- The Praja envisions improving the quality of life for all through simplifying people's lives, creating tools for better governance and making democracy work.

Source: The Indian Express

INDIA BELGIUM COLLABORATED TO DISTRIBUTE THE COVID 19 VACCINES

Syllabus Section: Current events of International Importance

Why in News?

India and Belgium have come together to work collaboratively to disseminate Covid-19 vaccines and therapeutics across the world.

Key highlights and significance

- The entire world has been affected amid the Covid-19 pandemic. So, distributing an effective Covid-19 vaccine entire nation is the greatest logistical challenge ever the world will face.
- India is having the vaccine manufacturing capacity while it is expected that Belgium will play its role in logistics and supply. Thus, both the nation will make sure vaccine is delivered across the world.
- This collaboration between India and Belgium is the largest distribution effort in the 21st century.
- India and Belgium partner will promote vaccine cargo transports from India through the global hub Belgium.
- Belgium has expertise in the handling of vaccines through its air cargo and Belgian airports.
- Challenges to this exercise are prioritization of beneficiaries, supply chain management, cold chain management, vaccine safety, surveillance and monitoring and reporting etc.

Source: The Hindu Business Lines.

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PM-WANI INITIATIVE (PUBLIC WI-FI ACCESS NETWORK INTERFACE)

Syllabus: Governance - Initiatives/ Schemes

Why in News?

The Union Cabinet chaired by PM Modi has recently approved the proposal to set up the public Wi-Fi networks across the country.

PM WANI Initiative

- The Wi-Fi networks will be used to strengthen the Wi-Fi services for the public. This Public Wi-Fi Access Network Interface will be known as PM-WANI.
- The approval has been given by the Public Data Office Aggregator in order to provide Wi-Fi services to the public by the Public Data Offices.
- Setting up of the Wi-Fi Networks will accelerate the proliferation of broadband internet services through a Public Wi-Fi network across the country.
- The Wi-Fi Networks would not require registration, license, or fee to get the broadband internet.

Key features

- Under the PM-WANI initiative, the public do not require to register themselves for Public Data Office Aggregators (PDOAs), PDOs and app providers. They just require to get themselves registered online with DoT through a registration portal.
- The interfaces do not require registration fee and registration will be provided within 7 days of application and these public Wi-Fi Hotspots will further boost the proliferation all across the country.
- The government expects that, this plan would be more business-friendly and in line with ease of doing business efforts.
- The Public Wi-Fi services will create network besides enhancing the income of small and medium entrepreneurs who helps in boosting the GDP of the country.
- The initiative would not require any License fee to provide the broadband internet services.

Source: The Indian Express

LAKSHADWEEP HAS BEEN DECLARED AS ORGANIC UNION TERRITORY

Syllabus Section: Geography of India/ Agriculture

Why in News?

The Union Territory of Lakshadweep has been declared as Organic Agricultural Area by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer's welfare.

Key Highlights

- The UT of Lakshadweep is second after Sikkim to achieve the status of 100% organic region. It is first in the Union Territories of India to achieve the status.
- The entire area of Lakshadweep has been certified as organic under the Union Government's Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (organic farming improvement programme).
- Lakshadweep has been separated from the main stream India geographically. There has been no shipment of chemicals and fertilizers to the island group for the last 15 years.
- The UT administration has been practicing farming only using inputs like compost, poultry manure, and green leaf manure. The UT has not made any expenditure for procurement of chemicals.

About Organic Farming

- It is technique that involves cultivation of plants and rearing animals in natural ways. It avoids use of synthetic substances to prevent soil fertility and ecological balances. By this, organic farming aims to minimize wastages and pollution. It involves biological methods.
- The main benefits of organic farming are lower input costs, environmental friendly, improve soil structure, premium price, etc.
- Uttarakhand was the first state to launch Organic Farming Policy in 2000.
- Sikkim was the first state to become 100% organic.

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Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana

- Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana is an elaborated component of Soil Health Management (SHM) of major project National Mission of Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA). Under PKVY Organic farming is promoted through adoption of organic village by cluster approach and PGS certification.

Source: The Hindu

HANUKKAH - THE JEWISH FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Syllabus Section: History - Art & Culture

Why in news?

The Prime Minister of India has greeted the people of Israel and Jewish people all over the world on the occasion of Hanukkah festival.

About the festival

- Hanukkah is the Jewish Festival of Lights and it remembers the rededication of the second Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, in Israel. (Hanukkah is the Hebrew and Aramaic word for 'dedication'.)
- Hanukkah lasts for eight days and starts on the eve of the Kislev 25, the month in the Jewish calendar that occurs at about the same time as December. Because the Jewish calendar is lunar, Kislev can happen from late November to late December.
- In 2020, Hanukkah will be from the evening of Thursday, 10th December until the evening of Friday, 18th December.
- During Hanukkah, on each of the eight nights, a candle is lit in a special menorah (candelabra) called a 'hanukkiyah'.
- There is a special ninth candle called the 'shammash' or servant candle which is used to light the other candles.
- The shammash is often in the center of the other candles and has a higher position. On the first night one candle is lit, on the second night, two are lit until all are lit on the eighth and final night of the festival.
- Traditionally they are lit from left to right. A special blessing, thanking God, is said before or after lighting the candles and a special Jewish hymn is often sung.

- The menorah is put in the front window of houses so people passing can see the lights and remember the story of Hanukkah.
- Most Jewish families and households have a special menorah and celebrate Hanukkah.

About Judaism & Jewish people

- Judaism is one of the oldest religions of the world, evolved in Egypt about 3,700 years ago.
- It believes in the unity and oneness of universal Creator.
- Judaism is the religion, philosophy and way of life of the Jewish people.
- Jews have been living in India for over 2,000 years ever since they first landed on West coast of India. Indian Jews are known as a peace-loving community. They follow Hebrew calendar.
- They have special thanks giving ceremony known as Eliyahoo-ha-Nabior i.e. 'gratitude to Elijah the Prophet', on festive occasions.

Indian Jews fall into five categories

- Bene Israel – meaning Children of Israel. Marathi speaking. Arrived in Maharashtra 2,100 years ago.
- Cochin Jews – arrived in India 2,500 years ago and settled down in Kerala as traders.
- Baghdadi Jews – Jews who came to India as traders from West Asia, mainly from Baghdad. They are settled mainly in Mumbai, Pune and Kolkata.
- Bene Menashe – The Manipur Jews constitute a community which sees itself as descendants of the Manasseh (Menashe) Tribe (which is one of the 10 lost tribes of Jews).
- Bene Ephraim – also called "Telugu Jews". They are a small group who speak Telugu. Their observance of Judaism dates to 1981.

Source: PIB

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THE ASEAN DEFENCE MINISTERS MEETING PLUS (ADMM PLUS)

Syllabus Section: International Relations/ Multilateral Groupings

Why in news?

Defence minister of India has attended the 14th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus organized online at Hanoi, Vietnam on 10 December 2020 that marked the 10th anniversary of ADMM Plus.

About ADMM Plus Annual Meeting

- ADMM Plus is an annual meeting of Defence Ministers of 10 ASEAN Countries and eight partner countries.
- It is platform for ASEAN and its eight dialogue partners (Australia, New Zealand, India, China, Russia, US, Japan and South Korea) to strengthen security and defence co-operation for peace, stability, and development in the region.
- It seeks to promote mutual trust and confidence between defence establishments of ASEAN and its eight partner countries through greater dialogue and transparency. It was established in 2010.
- It was held for first time in Hanoi, Vietnam in 2010, in which defence ministers of participating countries had agreed on five areas of practical cooperation, including counter-terrorism, maritime security, peacekeeping operations and humanitarian assistance.

About Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

- It is regional intergovernmental organisation comprising 10 Southeast Asian countries viz- Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Brunei and Laos.
- It promotes intergovernmental cooperation as well as facilitates political, economic, sociocultural, educational, military and security integration among its members and other Asian countries.
- It was founded on 8 August 1967. It is headquartered in Jakarta, Indonesia. India is full dialogue partner of ASEAN.

Source: PIB

THE KOCHI AND LAKSHADWEEP ISLANDS PROJECT (KLI PROJECT)

Syllabus Section: Governance Initiatives

Why in news?

The Union Cabinet has given approval for the Provision of Submarine Optical Fibre Cable Connectivity between Mainland of Kochi and Lakshadweep Islands (KLI Project).

About the KLI project

- The Project provides a provision of a direct communication link through a dedicated submarine Optical Fibre Cable (OFC).
- It will run in between Kochi and 11 Islands of Lakshadweep namely- Kavaratti, Agati, Amini, Kalpeni, Minicoy, Androth, Bangaram, Bitra, Kiltan, Chetlat and Kadmat.
- The estimated cost of the project is about Rs. 1072 crore. This also include the operational expenses for 5 years.
- The Project will be funded by the Universal Service Obligation Fund and It will be completed by May 2023.
- Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (BSNL) has been nominated as Project Execution Agency. While, the Telecommunications Consultant India Ltd. (TCIL) has been appointed as the Technical Consultant of the Project.
- It will assist the Universal Service Obligation Fund to facilitate the funding.

Significance of the Project

- The growth of the telecom infrastructure is linked with the economic and social development.
- Telecommunication connectivity also plays an important role in employment generation. Thus, this approval by the cabinet will improve the telecommunication facility in the Lakshadweep Islands. It will provide the telecommunication facility by providing the large bandwidth.
- The submarine connectivity project will also play an important role in the delivery of e-Governance services at the doorstep of citizens.
- It would also help in the potential development of fisheries, coconut based industries and high-value tourism.

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- The project also seeks for the educational development in term of Tele-education and health care in terms of telemedicine facilities.
- It will establish the numerous businesses, augment e-commerce activities and would provide adequate support to the educational institutes for knowledge sharing.

Source: PIB

CABINET APPROVES ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT ROJGAR YOJANA (ABRY)

Syllabus Section: Social Justice

WHY IN NEWS?

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has given its approval for Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY) to boost employment in formal sector and incentivize creation of new employment opportunities during the Covid recovery phase under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package 3.0.

ABOUT

- Cabinet has approved an expenditure of Rs. 1,584 crore for the current financial year and Rs. 22,810 crore for the entire Scheme period i.e. 2020-2023.

THE SALIENT FEATURES OF THE SCHEME

- Government of India will provide subsidy for two years in respect of new employees engaged on or after 1st October, 2020 and upto 30th June, 2021
- Government of India will pay both 12% employees' contribution and 12% employers' contribution i.e. 24% of wages towards EPF in respect of new employees in establishments employing upto 1000 employees for two years,
- Government of India will pay only employees' share of EPF contribution i.e. 12% of wages in respect of new employees in establishments employing more than 1000 employee for two years.

- An employee drawing monthly wage of less than Rs. 15000/- who was not working in any establishment registered with the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) before 1st October, 2020 and did not have a Universal Account Number or EPF Member account number prior to 1st October 2020 will be eligible for the benefit,
- Any EPF member possessing Universal Account Number (UAN) drawing monthly wage of less than Rs. 15000/- who made exit from employment during Covid pandemic from 01.03.2020 to 30.09.2020 and did not join employment in any EPF covered establishment up to 30.09.2020 will also be eligible to avail benefit
- EPFO will credit the contribution in Aadhaar seeded account of members in electronic manner,
- EPFO shall develop a software for the scheme and also develop a procedure which is transparent and accountable at their end.
- EPFO shall work out modality to ensure that there is no overlapping of benefits provided under ABRY with any other scheme implemented by EPFO.

Source: DD News

VIRTUALLY INAUGURATION OF THE ABTO (ASSOCIATION OF BUDDHIST TOUR OPERATORS) INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

Syllabus Section: Culture

WHY IN NEWS?

The Union Minister of State (IC) for Tourism & Culture Shri Prahlad Singh Patel virtually inaugurated the ABTO (Association of Buddhist Tour Operators) International Convention in New Delhi.

ABOUT

- ABTO Convention a three-day event is being held in partnership with Ministry of Tourism from 10-12 Dec 2020 in Bodhgaya, Bihar

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STEPS TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE BUDDHIST TOURISM IN THE COUNTRY

- Swadesh Darshan Scheme and PRASHAD Yojana.
- Ministry has sanctioned more than Rs 350 cr for the development of Buddhist Sites under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme and more than Rs.900 crore have been sanctioned under the PRASHAD Scheme.
- Signages in Sinhali language at Sanchi monument in Madhya Pradesh and Signages in Chinese language at Sravasti and Sarnath have been installed. (wherever footfall of foreign tourists from a particular country is more than one lakh; signages in their languages will be placed for their convenience and comfort).
- ASI is re-listing the Monuments and in the coming days, the number of the Monuments may increase significantly.
- The government is trying to provide tourist facilitators at significant locations to give correct information to tourists.
- The Tourism Ministry is making efforts to register accommodation units in the country in the Ministry's portal National Integrated Database of Hospitality Industry (NIDHI).

Source: PIB

JAGANANNA JEEVA KRANTHI SCHEME

Syllabus section- Society

Why in News?

Jagananna Jeeva Kranthi scheme launched.

About:

- Jagananna Jeeva Kranthi' scheme to distribute 2,49,151 sheep and goat units to the beneficiaries of YSR Cheyutha and YSR Aasara.
- the programme to launch distribution of 4.69 lakh units of cattle (cows and buffalos) to 4.69 lakh beneficiaries and today distribution of sheep and goat units to the beneficiaries was started.
- Each unit will have 5-6 months old 14 ewe lambs and one breeding ram or 14 weaned does (female goats) and one breeding buck
- scheme will give a boost to the rural economy.

- The women from SC, ST, BC and minorities, who are being provided ₹75,000 over a period of four year for free, are being shown a way to use the amount as a capital investment for a stable recurring income source

Major highlights:

- Under the scheme, beneficiaries are free to buy local sheep, goat breeds from the region of their choice or can avail the services of the committee to be set up with two veterinary doctors, officials from SERP and banks, which will guide them to choose proper sheep or goat units at a reasonable price.
- Beneficiaries can also sell the produce wherever they want.

Source-Indian express

KOLIWAR BRIDGE

Syllabus section – Economy

Why in news?

Union minister for surface transport Nitin Gadkari on Thursday inaugurated three lanes of the newly-built Koilwar bridge on river Sone through video conference.

Features:

- It will provide relief to commuters.
- The 1.5 km-long bridge has been built for Rs 266 crore and is parallel to the 138-year-old rail-cum-road bridge constructed during the British era.
- People will be able to commute between Patna and Bhojpur and Chapra to Bhojpur easily..
- The new bridge will be known as 'Vashishtha Narayan Singh Bridge'.

Koliwar Bridge

- The Koilwar Bridge , also named as Abdul Bari Bridge, at Koilwar spans the River Sone.
- This rail-cum-road bridge connects Arrah with Patna, the capital of Bihar state in India.
- The bridge was named after Professor Abdul Bari, academic and social reformer.
- This is the oldest operational railway bridge in India standing since 04 November 1862.

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- From 1862 to 1900, Koilwar bridge remained as the longest bridge in India.

Source- times of India

PLASMODIUM OVALE AND OTHER TYPES OF MALARIA

Syllabus Section: Science and Technology

WHY IN NEWS?

The soldier in Kerala is believed to have contracted Plasmodium ovale during his posting in Sudan, from where he returned nearly a year ago, and where Plasmodium ovale is endemic.

ABOUT

- P ovale rarely causes severe illness and there is no need for panic because of the case detected in Kerala
- P ovale is very similar to P vivax, which is not a killer form.
- Symptoms include fever for 48 hours, headache and nausea, and the treatment modality is the same as it is for a person infected with P vivax.
- It is termed ovale as about 20% of the parasitised cells are oval in shape.
- The Kerala case could be an isolated one and there are no recorded cases of local transmission so far.
- Malaria is caused by the bite of the female Anopheles mosquito, if the mosquito itself is infected with a malarial parasite
- There are five kinds of malarial parasites — Plasmodium falciparum, Plasmodium vivax (the commonest ones), Plasmodium malariae, Plasmodium ovale and Plasmodium knowlesi.
- Therefore, to say that someone has contracted the Plasmodium ovale type of malaria means that the person has been infected by that particular parasite.
- In India, out of 1.57 lakh malaria cases in the high-burden states of Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya and Madhya Pradesh in 2019, 1.1 lakh cases (70%) were cases of falciparum malaria, according to a statement by the Health Ministry

Source: Indian Express

MAHARASHTRA BILL ON SEXUAL CRIME

Syllabus Section: Governance

WHY IN NEWS?

The Maharashtra government this week presented a draft bill making changes to existing laws on violence against women and children. The Bill is proposed to be enacted as Shakti Act, 2020.

PURPOSE AND PROPOSAL

- Increase in crime against women is the reason for drafting of this bill.
- Bill proposes to make changes to the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.
- The changes will be done in existing sections of rape, sexual harassment, acid attack and child sexual abuse.
- It proposes death penalty in cases of rape, gang rape, rape by persons in authority, aggravated sexual assault of minors and in cases of acid attack when grievous injury is caused.
- The death penalty is proposed in cases which are heinous in nature and where adequate conclusive evidence is available and circumstances warrant exemplary punishment.
- The draft Bill proposes an additional law to deal with abuse of women on social media.
- Section 354E is added to include intentional acts creating “a sense of danger, intimidation, and fear to a woman” apart from insulting her modesty by any act, deed or words including offensive communication will be an offence with a maximum punishment of two years and a Rs 1 lakh fine.
- The Bill also makes provision for making a “false complaint” or provides false information in respect of offence committed stating that anyone who does that “solely with the intention to humiliate, extort or threaten or defame or harass” a person shall face imprisonment for a term up to one year or fine or both.

Source: Indian Express

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THE SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

Syllabus Section: Ecology and Environment

Why in news?

The ninth edition of the Sustainable Mountain Development Summit (SMDS) has held recently in DehraDun.

Key Highlights of the Summit

- Theme of the 9th summit: “Emerging Pathways for Building a Resilient Post COVID-19 Mountain Economy, Adaptation, Innovation and Acceleration”
- The ninth edition of the summit will focus on building the pathways toward a resilient and sustainable mountain economy.
- It seeks to build pathways for sustainable economy in light of the post COVID-19 scenario and Climate Change.
- The summit will help in pushing forward the agenda of mountain at the bigger national and international forums.
- The 9th edition of SMDS will be hosted by the Sustainable Development Forum Uttaranchal (SDFU).

About the Sustainable Mountain Development Summit

- This summit is an annual flagship event of Integrated Mountain Initiative (IMI). During the summit, mountain concerns are brought together at the regional and national level.
- This is the part of sustained effort that highlights the priorities of Indian Himalayan Region in developing the discourse of our country.
- The summit comprise of the 3-5 salient themes each year. These themes engage the immediate attention to the mountains and hills. These themes are identified for the threadbare discussion and debate.

Source: News on AIR

DRAFT INDIAN PORTS BILL, 2020

Syllabus Section: Governance

Why in News?

Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has opened up the draft Indian Ports Bill 2020 for public consultation. The bill will replace the Indian Ports Act, 1908

Draft Indian Ports Bill, 2020

- The draft Indian-Ports bill seeks to enable the structured growth and sustainable development of ports. This would attract more investments in the Port sector for the optimum utilization of the Indian Coastline.
- The bill seeks to organise an effective administration and management of ports.
- The bill provides measure to facilitate the conservation of ports with respect to the high number of non-operational ports.
- It will also ensure a greater investment in the Indian maritime and ports sector.
- The bill seeks to create improved, comprehensive regulatory frameworks in order to create new ports and management of existing ports.
- The bill will also create enabling environment for the growth and sustained development of the ports sector. It will be done by:
 - Constituting the Maritime Port Regulatory Authority
 - Formulating National Port policy and National Port plan
 - Formulating the specialised Adjudicatory Tribunals namely Maritime Ports Tribunal and Maritime Ports Appellate Tribunal. This would help in curbing the anti-competitive practices. Thus, it would ensure the speedy and affordable grievance redressal mechanism.

Significance

- It will ensure safety, pollution control, security, performance standards and sustainability of Ports. It will incorporate all the up-to-date conventions or protocols to which India is a party. It will help in promoting the marine safety and security. It will fill up the gaps to achieve the scientific development of Ports and Port Network

Source: PIB

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MAHASHARAD

Syllabus section: Polity and governance

Why in News?

Maharashtra's Department of Social Justice is all set to launch an ambitious scheme for distribution of assistive devices to lakhs of persons with disabilities through MahaSharad Digital Platform today to coincide with NCP chief Sharad Pawar's 80th birthday.

About:

- Maharashtra System for Health and Rehabilitation Assistance" or MahaSharad platform has been created to provide various devices to persons with disabilities free of cost through the Commissionerate for persons with Disability.
- Modern equipment and devices help divyang to lead life like normal individuals.
- Several people, organizations, private companies, industrialists and others are willing to make available such equipment for divyang.
- The MahaSharad platform will help such donors meet needy divyang.
- This is the first such experiment in the state to bring together the needy disabled people and various social groups who want to help them.

Source: The Hindu

NEW 'POLICY ON SCHOOL BAG 2020' BY THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Syllabus section: Polity and governance

Why in News?

The Union Education Minister proposed a new School Bag Policy 2020 that has recommended putting a maximum cap on the weight allowed to be carried by students.

Provisions of the policy:

- As per the new School Bag Policy 2020 proposed by the Education Ministry, the maximum weight of the school bags has been capped at 10% of the student's weight.
- In addition to this, the new policy also proposed that students below Class 2 will not be given any homework as per the proposal of the new policy.

- The new School Bag Policy proposed by Education Ministry is in line with the National Education Policy 2020.
- Along with capping of the weight of School Bags, the new policy also recommends that students below Class 2 shouldn't be given any homework, which will further reduce the weight of the bags carried by students.
- Also, the policy proposes setting up of student lockers on school premises, where students can keep their important books and other items that are used only in school and need not be carried to and back from school daily.
- To ensure compliance with the new School Bag Policy, schools will also be asked to get digital weighing machines / scales while another recommendation is about discontinuing wheeled carrier or trolley school bags.

Source: PIB

VISION 2035: PUBLIC HEALTH SURVEILLANCE IN INDIA

Syllabus section: Governance/Health Policies

Why in news?

NITI Aayog has released a white paper titled - Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India.

Key highlights

- **Vision:**
 1. To make India's public health surveillance system more responsive and predictive to enhance preparedness for action at all levels.
 2. Citizen-friendly public health surveillance system will ensure individual privacy and confidentiality, enabled with a client feedback mechanism.
 3. Improved data-sharing mechanism between Centre and states for better disease detection, prevention, and control.
 4. India aims to provide regional and global leadership in managing events that constitute a public health emergency of international concern.

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- **Vision 2035:** Public Health Surveillance in India is a continuation of the work on health systems strengthening. It contributes by suggesting mainstreaming of surveillance by making individual electronic health records the basis for surveillance.
 - Public Health Surveillance (PHS) cuts across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of care. Surveillance is 'Information for Action'.
 - The paper is a joint effort of Health Vertical, NITI Aayog, and Institute for Global Public Health, University of Manitoba, Canada with contributions from technical experts from the Government of India, States, and International agencies.
 - Surveillance is an important Public Health function. It is an essential action for disease detection, prevention, and control. Surveillance is 'Information for Action'.
 - In 2035
1. India's Public Health Surveillance will be a predictive, responsive, integrated, and tiered system of disease and health surveillance that is inclusive of prioritized, emerging, and re-emerging communicable and non-communicable diseases and conditions.
 2. Surveillance will be primarily based on de-identified (anonymised) individual-level patient information that emanates from health care facilities, laboratories, and other sources.
 3. Public Health Surveillance will be governed by an adequately resourced effective administrative and technical structure and will ensure that it serves the public good.
 4. India will provide regional and global leadership in managing events that constitute a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

Source: PIB

GRSE KOLKATA LAUNCHES HIMGIRI SHIP UNDER PROJECT 17A

Syllabus section: Defence Technology/ Science & Technology

Why in news?

Himgiri, which is the first of the three Project 17A ships being built at Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE), Kolkata, was launched recently.

Key Highlights

- Under the Project 17A program, a total of seven ships, four at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) and three ships at GRSE are being built with enhanced stealth features, advanced indigenous weapon and sensor fit along with several other improvements
- The ship has taken its name and crest of the second Frigate of the Leander Class of ships, which incidentally was launched 50 years ago in 1970.
- The launch of 'Himgiri' has showcased GRSE's commitment towards the building of three state-of-the-art warships of P17A for Indian Navy.
- Over the years, GRSE has emerged as a leading shipyard having built over 100 ships.
- P17A ships are the first gas turbine propulsion and largest combat platforms ever built at GRSE.

About project 17A

- Project 17A frigates are a design derivative of the Shivalik class stealth frigates.
- Construction of P17A ships differ in the very concept of warship building by way of adoption of the modern technology 'Integrated Construction (IC)' where the blocks are pre-outfitted before joining to reduce the build period of warships.
- The P17A class frigates are being built using indigenously developed steel and fitted with weapons and sensors along with Integrated Platform Management System. These ships are having stealth features.

Source: PIB

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MYRISTICA SWAMP TREEFROG

Syllabus section : Environment and Ecology

Why in News?

Myristica swamp treefrog, has been recorded for the first time in the Vazhachal Reserve Forest in Kerala's Thrissur district.

About:

- It's scientific name is *Mercuranamyristicapalustris*.
- These frogs are rare and elusive for the reason that they are arboreal and active only for a few weeks during their breeding season.
- During this season, there is a large aggregation of males that descend from the high canopy of the trees.
- The males vocalise in groups from the low perches in the swamps.
- They exhibit unique breeding behaviour.
- The breeding season, unlike for other frogs, starts in the pre-monsoon season (May) and ends before the monsoon.

Source: The Hindu

KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK AND TIGER RESERVE

Syllabus Section: Environment and Ecology

Why in News?

The park can now be explored by boats while bicycle tracks are being finalised. One can go trekking too.

About:

- It is a national park in Assam.
- Formed in 1908 on the recommendation of Mary Curzon, the park is located in the edge of the Eastern Himalayan biodiversity hotspots – Golaghat and Nagaon district.
- The sanctuary, which hosts two-thirds of the world's great one-horned rhinoceroses, is a World Heritage Site
- It is also recognized as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International for the conservation of avifaunal species.

- Much of the focus of conservation efforts in Kaziranga are focused on the 'big four' species— Rhino, Elephant, Royal Bengal tiger and Asiatic water buffalo.
- Kaziranga is crisscrossed by four main rivers — Brahmaputra, Diphlu, Mora Diphlu and Mora Dhansiri

Source: The Hindu

SCHEME FOR HYGIENE RATING AUDIT AGENCIES

Syllabus section: Government Schemes and Initiatives

Why in news?

Quality Council of India (QCI) at the behest of the FSSAI has come out with a Scheme for approval of Hygiene Rating Audit Agencies to scale up Hygiene Rating by increasing the number of recognised Hygiene Rating Audit Agencies in the country.

About Food Hygiene Rating System

- FSSAI's initiative of 'Food Hygiene Rating Scheme' is a certification system for food businesses supplying food directly to consumers, either on or off premise.
- The food establishments are rated based on food hygiene and safety conditions observed at the time of audit. The hygiene rating will be in the form of smileys (1 up to 5) and the certificate should be displayed prominently in the consumer facing area.
- The recognised Hygiene Rating Audit Agencies will be responsible for verifying the compliance with food hygiene and safety procedures laid by FSSAI and get Hygiene Rating.
- The scheme aims to allow consumers to make informed choices/decisions pertaining to the food outlets where they eat by encouraging food businesses to improve their hygiene and safety standards.
- Currently, this scheme is applicable for Food service establishments (such as hotels, restaurants, cafeteria, dhabhas, etc), sweet shops, bakeries and meat retail stores.
- The recognised Hygiene Rating Audit Agency will verify the compliance with food hygiene and safety procedures laid by FSSAI.

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Quality council of India (QCI)

- Quality Council of India (QCI) was set up in 1997 as an autonomous body
- It was setup jointly by the Government of India and the Indian Industry represented by the three premier industry associations i.e. Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)
- It aims to establish and operate national accreditation structure and promote quality through National Quality Campaign.
- The Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, is the nodal ministry for QCI.
- Chairman of QCI is appointed by the Prime Minister on recommendation of the industry to the government.

Source: PIB

OPERATION OLIVA

Syllabus section: Environment, Ecology & Biodiversity

Why in news?

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has launched 'Operation Oliva'. This operation has been launched in order to protect the endangered Olive Ridley turtles in Odisha.

Key highlights

- Two ships have been deployed in the Gahirmatha marine sanctuary of Rushikulya beach and Devi river mouth.
- These ships will look after the major nesting sites of the turtles.
- The coast guards would prevent the entry of fishing vessels into the prohibited zone.
- Apart from the ships, an aircraft has also been pressed as the part of the operation.
- Indian Coast Guard is working in coordination with the Forest department, fishery officials and marine police and keeping eyes on the illegal fishing in the restricted zone.

About Operation Oliva

- Operation Olive was launched by the Union government in the year 1999. It was launched to protect the marine species. The ICG headquarters at Paradip launches this operation every year off the Odisha coast.

Olive Ridley sea turtle

- The olive ridley turtle is also known as the Pacific Ridley sea turtle.. The species is the second smallest turtle in the world. It is also the most abundant of all sea turtles. The turtle is found in warm and tropical waters. It is commonly found in Pacific Ocean, Indian Oceans and warm waters of the Atlantic Ocean

Source: The Hindu

NATIONAL FAMILY HEALTH SURVEY 5

Syllabus Section- Health

WHY IN NEWS?

Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, released the Factsheets of key indicators on population, reproductive and child health, family welfare, nutrition and others for 22 States/UTs of the first Phase of the 2019-20 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) on Universal Health Coverage Day on 12th December, 2020

ABOUT NFHS

- The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) is a large-scale, multi-round survey conducted in a representative sample of households throughout India.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW), Government of India, designated IIPS as the nodal agency, responsible for providing coordination and technical guidance for the NFHS.
- Many indicators of NFHS-5 are similar to those of NFHS-4. However, NFHS-5 also includes new focal areas such as expanded domains of child immunization, components of micro-nutrients to children, menstrual hygiene, frequency of alcohol and tobacco use, additional components of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), expanded age ranges for measuring hypertension and diabetes among all, aged 15 years and above.

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- It provides an indicator for tracking 30 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that the country aims to achieve by 2030.
- In 2019, for the first time, the NFHS-5 sought details on the percentage of women and men who have ever used the Internet

KEY FACTS

- The Total Fertility Rates (TFR) has further declined since NFHS-4 in almost all the Phase-1 States and UTs. The replacement level of fertility (2.1) has been achieved in 19 out of the 22 States/UTs and only 3 states viz. Manipur (2.2), Meghalaya (2.9) and Bihar (3.0) have TFR above replacement levels now.
- Overall Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR) has increased substantially in most States/UTs and it is the highest in HP and WB (74%). Use of modern methods of contraception has also increased in almost all States/UTs.
- Unmet needs of family planning have witnessed a declining trend in most of the Phase-1 States/UTs. The unmet need for spacing which remained a major issue in India in the past has come down to less than 10 per cent in all the States except Meghalaya and Mizoram.
- Full immunization drive among children aged 12-23 months has recorded substantial improvement across States/UTs/districts. More than two-third of children are fully immunized in all the States and UTs except Nagaland, Meghalaya and Assam. In almost three-fourths of districts, 70% or more children aged 12-23 months are fully immunized against childhood diseases.
- On comparing NFHS-4 and NFHS-5 data, the increase in full immunization coverage is observed to be expeditious in many states and UTs. This can be attributed to the flagship initiative of Mission Indradhanush launched by the government since 2015.
- There is increase in the per cent of women receiving the recommended four or more ANC visits by health providers in many States/UTs.
- Institutional births have increased substantially with over four-fifth of the women delivering in institutions in 19 States and UTs. Institutional delivery is over 90 per cent in 14 out of the total 22 States and UTs. Almost 91% of districts recorded over 70% institutional deliveries of births in the 5 years preceding the survey.
- There has also been a substantial increase in C-section deliveries in many States/UTs especially in private health facilities.
- Sex ratio at birth has remained unchanged or increased in most States/UTs. Majority of the states are in normal sex ratio of 952 or above. SRB is below 900 in Telangana, Himachal Pradesh, Goa, DNH & DD.
- Child nutrition indicators show a mixed pattern across states. While the situation improved in many States/UTs, there has been minor deterioration in others. Drastic changes in respect of stunting and wasting are unlikely in a short period.
- For both women and men, there is a lot of variation in the high or very high random blood glucose levels across States/UTs. Men are more likely to have slightly higher blood glucose levels in the range of high or very high compared to women. The percentage of men with high or very high blood glucose is highest in Kerala (27%) followed by Goa (24%). Prevalence of elevated blood pressure (hypertension) among men is somewhat higher than in women.
- The percentage of households with improved sanitation facility and clean fuel for cooking has increased in almost all the 22 States/UTs over the last four years (from 2015-16 to 2019-20). The Government of India has made concerted efforts to provide toilet facilities to maximum households through Swachh Bharat Mission, and improved household environment through Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana in the country. For instance, the use of cooking fuel has increased more than 10 percentage point in all the States and UTs during the last 4 years with over 25 percentage point increase in states of Karnataka and Telangana.

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- Women's empowerment indicators portray considerable improvement across all the States
- /UTs included in Phase 1. Considerable progress has been recorded between NFHS-4 and NFHS-5 in regard to women operating bank accounts.

CAUSE OF CONCERN

- Anaemia among women and children continues to be a cause of concern. More than half of the children and women are anaemic in 13 of the 22 States/UTs. It has also been observed that anaemia among pregnant women has increased in half of the States/UTs compared to NFHS-4, in spite of substantial increase in the consumption of IFA tablets by pregnant women for 180 days or more.
- Sexual violence has increased in five states (Assam, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Meghalaya and West Bengal), as per the data.
- Female sterilisation continues to dominate as the modern method of contraception in states like Andhra Pradesh (98 per cent), Telangana (93 per cent), Kerala (88 per cent), Karnataka (84 per cent), Bihar (78 per cent) and Maharashtra (77 per cent).
- Male engagement in family planning continues to be limited and disappointing as seen by the low uptake of condoms and male sterilisation across states.
- Spousal violence has generally declined in most of the states and UTs, it has witnessed an increase in five states, namely Sikkim, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Assam and Karnataka. Karnataka witnessed the largest increase in spousal violence, from 20.6 per cent in NFHS 4 to 44.4 per cent in NFHS-5. Despite the efforts being made, it is alarming to see the increase in child marriages in a number of states

Source: PIB, IE

APEDA PROVIDES A PLATFORM TO SHIP THE RICE CONSIGNMENT FROM VARANASI REGION

Syllabus Section: Agriculture

WHY IN NEWS?

A flag-off ceremony of regional rice consignment was organised in Varanasi by APEDA considering the potential of rice export from Varanasi region.

About

- Chairman APEDA said that considering the potential of increasing exports of rice from Varanasi region, APEDA will prepare a perspective Action Plan for increasing export of Rice from Varanasi Region to enable all concerned stakeholders for taking necessary action in a time bound manner for achieving the target.
- Chandauli, Uttar Pradesh is popularly known as the Bowl of Rice "Dhaan Ka Katora of Uttar Pradesh" for non-basmati rice because of fertile lands of the Gangetic Plains.

About APEDA

APEDA was established by the Government of India under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act passed by the Parliament in December, 1985. The Act (2 of 1986) came into effect from 13th February, 1986. The Authority replaced the Processed Food Export Promotion Council (PFEPCC).

ASSIGNED FUNCTIONS

- In accordance with the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act, 1985, (2 of 1986) the following functions have been assigned to the Authority.
- Development of industries relating to the scheduled products for export by way of providing financial assistance or otherwise for undertaking surveys and feasibility studies, participation in enquiry capital through joint ventures and other reliefs and subsidy schemes;
- Registration of persons as exporters of the scheduled products on payment of such fees as may be prescribed;
- Fixing of standards and specifications for the scheduled products for the purpose of exports;

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- Carrying out inspection of meat and meat products in slaughter houses, processing plants, storage premises, conveyances or other places where such products are kept or handled for the purpose of ensuring the quality of such products;
- Improving of packaging of the Scheduled products;
- Improving of marketing of the Scheduled products outside India;
- Promotion of export oriented production and development of the Scheduled products;
- Collection of statistics from the owners of factories or establishments engaged in the production, processing, packaging, marketing or export of the scheduled products or from such other persons as may be prescribed on any matter relating to the scheduled products and publication of the statistics so collected or of any portions thereof or extracts therefrom;
- Training in various aspects of the industries connected with the scheduled products;
- Such other matters as may be prescribed.

PRODUCTS MONITORED

APEDA is mandated with the responsibility of export promotion and development of the following scheduled products:

- Fruits, Vegetables and their Products.
- Meat and Meat Products.
- Poultry and Poultry Products.
- Dairy Products.
- Confectionery, Biscuits and Bakery Products.
- Honey, Jaggery and Sugar Products.
- Cocoa and its products, chocolates of all kinds.
- Alcoholic and Non-Alcoholic Beverages.
- Cereal and Cereal Products.
- Groundnuts, Peanuts and Walnuts.
- Pickles, Papads and Chutneys.
- Guar Gum.
- Floriculture and Floriculture Products.
- Herbal and Medicinal Plants.

In addition to this, APEDA has been entrusted with the responsibility to monitor import of sugar.

Source: PIB

HOW PARLIAMENT MEETS

Syllabus Section: Polity and Governance

WHY IN NEWS?

The government has said that parties are in favour of doing away with the Winter Session, and that it would be appropriate to have the Budget Session in January.

SESSIONS OF PARLIAMENT

- The power to convene a session of Parliament rests with the government. The decision is taken by the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, which currently comprises nine ministers, including those for Defence, Home, Finance, and Law.
- India does not have a fixed parliamentary calendar. By convention, Parliament meets for three sessions in a year.
- A general scheme of sittings was recommended in 1955 by the General Purpose Committee of Lok Sabha. It was accepted by the government of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, but was not implemented.

What the Constitution says?

The summoning of Parliament is specified in Article 85 of the Constitution. Like many other articles, it is based on a provision of The Government of India Act, 1935

- This provision specified that the central legislature had to be summoned to meet at least once a year, and that not more than 12 months could elapse between two sessions.

Moved, delayed, stretched

- Over the years, governments have shuffled around the dates of sessions to accommodate political and legislative exigencies. In 2017, the Winter Session was delayed on account of the Gujarat Assembly elections.
- In 2011, political parties agreed to cut short the Budget Session so they could campaign for Vidhan Sabha elections in five states.
- Sessions have also been cut short or delayed to allow the government to issue Ordinances. For example, in 2016, the Budget Session was broken up into two separate sessions to enable the issuance of an Ordinance.

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Fewer House sittings

- Over the years, there has been a decline in the sittings days of Parliament. During the first two decades of Parliament, Lok Sabha met for an average of a little more than 120 days a year. This has come down to approximately 70 days in the last decade.
- One institutional reason given for this is the reduction in the workload of Parliament by its Standing Committees, which, since the 1990s, have anchored debates outside the House.
- However, several Committees have recommended that Parliament should meet for at least 120 days in a year.

This year, Parliament has met for 33 days. The last time it met for fewer than 50 days was in 2008, when it met for 46 days.

Source: PIB

CURRENCY MANIPULATION

Syllabus Section: Economy

Why in News?

The United States has once again included India in its monitoring list of countries with potentially “questionable foreign exchange policies” and “currency manipulation”

What is the meaning of Currency Manipulation?

- This is a label given by the US government to countries it feels are engaging in “unfair currency practices” by deliberately devaluing their currency against the dollar.
- The practice would mean that the country in question is artificially lowering the value of its currency to gain an unfair advantage over others, because the devaluation would reduce the cost of exports from that country and artificially show a reduction in trade deficits as a result.

Criteria Used to Put the country in the list.

An economy meeting two of the three criteria in the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015 is placed on the Monitoring List. Criteria's are:

1. A “significant” bilateral trade surplus with the US — one that is at least \$20 billion over a 12-month period.

2. A material current account surplus equivalent to at least 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) over a 12-month period.
3. “Persistent”, one-sided intervention — when net purchases of foreign currency totaling at least 2 percent of the country's GDP over a 12 month period are conducted repeatedly, in at least six out of 12 months.

Once on the Monitoring List, an economy will remain there for at least two consecutive reports “to help ensure that any improvement in performance versus the criteria is durable and is not due to temporary factors.

- The US Department of the Treasury Office of International Affairs, in its latest report to the US Congress, has included India, Taiwan and Thailand to its Monitoring List of major trading partners that “merit close attention” to their currency practices and macroeconomic policies.
- Other countries in the latest list comprise China, Japan, Korea, Germany, Italy, Singapore, Malaysia.
- India was last included in the currency watchlist in October 2018, but removed from the list that came out in May 2019.
- The designation of a country as a currency manipulator does not immediately attract any penalties, but tends to dent the confidence about a country in the global financial markets.

SOURCE – INDIAN EXPRESS

NORTH EASTERN REGION POWER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Syllabus section: economy

Why in news?

CCEA Approves RCE for North Eastern Region Power System Improvement Project.

About:

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved the Revised Cost Estimate (RCE) of the North Eastern Region Power System Improvement Project (NERPSIP) at an estimated cost of Rs.6,700 crore.

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- This is a major step, towards the economic development of the North Eastern Region through the strengthening of Intra-State Transmission and Distribution systems.
- This scheme is being executed through POWERGRID, a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) with six beneficiaries; Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura and targeted to be commissioned by December 2021.
- After commissioning, the project will be owned and maintained by the respective North-Eastern State Utilities.
- The government's commitment to the total economic development of the North Eastern Region and to strengthen the Intra-State Transmission & Distribution Infrastructure in the North Eastern Region is the foremost goal of this project.
- Its implementation will create a reliable power grid and improve North East Region States' connectivity to the upcoming load centers, thus extend the benefits of the grid-connected power to all consumers of beneficiaries in the North Eastern Region.
- The scheme shall also increase the per capita power consumption of these States, and shall contribute to the total economic development of the North-Eastern Region.
- Implementing agencies are hiring a considerable number of local manpower during the construction works, creating large employment for skilled and unskilled manpower of North Eastern Region.
- The additional manpower will be required for the Operation & Maintenance of these newly created assets as per standard norms, which will further create considerable employment opportunities for the North Eastern Region States.

Source: The Hindu

LIVELIHOOD ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Syllabus section: Economy

Why in news?

Inauguration of Livelihood Enterprise Development Programme on Bakery & Food Processing.

About:

- It envisages conduct of livelihood promotion programmes in clusters.
- There is provision for intensive training for skill building, refresher training, backward-forward linkages and handholding & escort supports.
- It also encompasses the complete value chain and offers end-to-end solution to the SHG members.
- It is to be implemented on a project basis covering 15 to 30 SHGs in a cluster of contiguous villages where from SHG members may be selected.
- The skill upgradation training is provided in batches of 25-30 members and covers agri & allied activities as well as rural off-farm sector activities.
- LEDP will not only facilitate promotion of sustainable livelihoods but also derive full advantage from promotional assistance.
- NABARD will provide grant support for skill upgradation programmes, establishment of demonstration unit and need based critical infrastructure.

Source : PIB

THE HALDIBARI – CHILAHATI RAIL LINK

Syllabus section: Economy/ Infrastructure Development

Why in news?

Hon'ble Prime Minister of India and Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh jointly inaugurated a railway link between Haldibari in India and Chilahati in Bangladesh during the PM level virtual bilateral summit recently.

About Haldibari – Chilahati rail link:

- **The Haldibari – Chilahati rail link** being made functional from 17.12.2020 is the 5th rail link between India and Bangladesh.

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- **The Haldibari** – Chilahati rail link was operational till 1965. This was part of the Broad Gauge main route from Kolkata to Siliguri during partition. Trains traveling to Assam and North Bengal continued to travel through the then East Pakistan territory even after partition.
- For example, a train from Sealdah to Siliguri used to enter East Pakistan territory from Darshana and exit using the Haldibari - Chilahati link.
- However, the war of 1965 effectively cut off all the railway links between India and the then East Pakistan.
- So on the Eastern Sector of India partition of the railways thus happened in 1965. So the importance of the reopening of this rail link can be well imagined.

Background of India - Bangladesh rail links

- The railway network of India and Bangladesh are mostly inherited from British Era Indian Railways. After partition in 1947, 7 rail links were operational between India and the then East Pakistan (up to 1965).
- Presently, there are 4 operational rail links between India and Bangladesh. They are, Petra pole (India) - Benapole (Bangladesh), Gede (India) – Darshana (Bangladesh), Singhabad (India)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh), Radhikapur (India)–Biorol (Bangladesh).

Source: PIB

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2020

Syllabus section: Economy/ Indices and Reports

Why in News?

The Human Development Report (HDR) 2020 has been released by The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recently. The report highlights that, India has been ranked to 131st position among 189 countries in the Human Development Index from its 130th position in 2019. This year, India has scored 0.640

Key Findings of the HDR 2020

- Theme of the Report: Human Development and Anthropocene

- Norway has been ranked at the first position. It is followed by Ireland and Switzerland. Hong Kong, Iceland and Germany have occupied the 4th, 5th and 6th position respectively.
- China has been ranked at 85th position while Pakistan has been ranked at 154th position.
- The report highlights that the life expectancy at birth in India was 68.8 while the maternal mortality ratio was 174.
- The Human Development Report was prepared on the basis of indicators like life expectancy at birth, political participation of women and maternal mortality rate.
- It further highlights that, as of 2017, the share of seats of women in Parliament of India was 11.6%.
- The report states that, India spent 3.8 % of its GDP on education in the year 2012 to 2017. But, the literacy rate in India was lowest to 74%. The literacy rate was lowest among the G20 countries.
- According to the report, the gross enrolment ratio for the pre-primary schooling was 13%, 75% for secondary schooling while 27% for the tertiary schooling.
- Report also highlights that, the labour force participation in the female category was 27.2 percent while for males it was 78.8 percent.

Source: The Hindu

NETWORK FOR SPACE OBJECT TRACKING AND ANALYSIS (NETRA)

Syllabus Section: Science and Technology

Why in news?

The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has established the Space Situational Awareness (SSA) Control Centre NETRA at Bangalore. It is a dedicated Control Centre that will help in monitoring, tracking and protecting India's space assets. SSA is an integral and indispensable part of the safe and sustainable space operations

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About NETRA Space situational awareness centre

- NETRA stands for NETwork for space object TRacking and Analysis. NETRA comprises of the components like radar, an optical telescope facility, and a control centre.
- The control centre coordinates between Indian agencies, their foreign counterparts and international bodies.
- It has been established by the Directorate of Space Situational Awareness and Management (DSSAM).
- SSA is the science to track the man-made as well as natural objects moving in the orbit.
- Similar control system has also been set by America, Russia and Europe to track the space objects and share collision warnings.

Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)

ISRO or Indian Space Research Organisation is India's space agency founded in 1969 to help develop an indigenous Indian space program. The head quarters of ISRO are located in Bengaluru. It is one of the 6 largest space agencies in the world today.

- ISRO maintains one of the biggest fleets of remote sensing (IRS) and communication (INSAT) satellites catering to the needs of the nation through a network of centres, offices, and research institutes in different parts of the country.
- ISRO has many facilities each dedicated to a specialised field of study in space. A few of them are as follows:
 1. Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), Thiruvananthapuram
 2. Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC), Thiruvananthapuram
 3. Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC-SHAR), Sriharikota
 4. Space Applications Centre (SAC), Ahmadabad
 5. National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), Hyderabad

ISRO Vision & Objectives

- **Vision:** ISRO's vision is stated as "Harness space technology for national development while pursuing space science research and planetary exploration."
- **Mission:**
 1. Design and development of launch vehicles and related technologies for providing access to space.
 2. Design and development of satellites and related technologies for earth observation, communication, navigation, meteorology and space science.
 3. Indian National Satellite (INSAT) programme for meeting telecommunication, television broadcasting and developmental applications.
 4. Indian Remote Sensing Satellite (IRS) programme for management of natural resources and monitoring of environment using space-based imagery.
 5. Space-based Applications for Societal development.
 6. Research and Development in space science and planetary exploration.

Source: PIB

MINISTRY OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES SIGNS A JOINT COMMUNIQUE AND 5 MOUS WITH MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS, TRIFED, ICAR, NSFDC, NAFED AND NCDC

Syllabus Section: Agriculture (Food Processing Industries)

WHY IN NEWS?

Ministry of Food Processing Industries signs a Joint Communiqué and 5 MoUs with Ministry of Tribal Affairs, TRIFED, ICAR, NSFDC, NAFED and NCDC defining convergence mechanism in implementation of PM FME scheme.

- To support the food processing industries in the country, the PM FME scheme was launched on 29th June 2020. The scheme is a part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan and the "Vocal for Local" campaign initiated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

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ABOUT THE SCHEME

- PM FME is a centrally funded sector scheme with an aim to provide financial, technical and business support to micro food processing units in the country. The total outlay of the scheme is \$ 1.3 Bn spread over a span of 5 years from 2020-21 to 2024-25. The funding under the scheme will be shared by the Centre and State governments in the following ratios:
 - o For States and UTs with legislature: 60% by Centre and 40% by State/ UT
 - o Himalayan and North Eastern States: 90% by Centre and 10% by State
 - o UTs without legislature: 100% by the Centre
- About 2 lakh micro food processing units will be given direct financial assistance in the form of credit linked subsidy under the scheme. Moreover, institutional architecture and common infrastructure facilities in the sector will also be given adequate support.

OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHEME

The main objectives of the scheme include:

- Formalization of micro units by means of GST, Udyog Aadhar and FSSAI registrations
- Financial assistance to individual units for upgradation of food processing facilities
- Quality improvement and skill development through trainings and technical knowledge
- Financial assistance to Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), Self Help Groups (SHGs), producer's cooperatives for setting up common infrastructure facilities
- Branding and marketing support to FPOs, SHGs and producer cooperatives
- Support and assistance in availing bank loans and preparation of detailed project reports (DPR)

CAPITAL SUPPORT

The PM FME scheme will provide financial assistance in capital investment activities under the following broad categories:

- For Upgradation of Individual Micro Food Processing Units, 35% credit-linked capital subsidy of the eligible project cost can be availed with a maximum ceiling of INR 10 lakh per unit.

- For capital investment along the value chain, a 30% credit linked grant will be made available to FPOs, SHGs and cooperatives.
- For SHGs engaged in food processing, INR 40,000 seed capital per SHG member would be provided in the form of grant for working capital and purchase of small tools.
- For development of common infrastructure facilities such as warehouse, cold storage and processing facility, a 35% credit linked grant would be made available to SHGs, FPOs, cooperatives, state owned agencies and private entrepreneurs.

The PM FME scheme derives inspiration from the One District One Product (ODOP) Programme of the Uttar Pradesh (UP) government which aims to create product-specific traditional industrial hubs across 75 districts of UP.

Source: PIB

GEOSYNCHRONOUS TRANSFER ORBIT (GTO)

Syllabus section: science and tech

Why in News?

The Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro)'s PSLV-C50 lifted off from the Sriharikota spaceport near Chennai, and successfully placed India's 42nd communications satellite CMS-01 (formerly GSAT-12R) into orbit 20 minutes after lift-off.

About:

- It is a communications satellite envisaged for providing services in extended C Band of the frequency spectrum and its coverage will include the Indian mainland and the Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands.
- The satellite is expected to have a life of over seven years.
- A satellite destined for a GSO is usually being put into a GTO by its launch vehicle using the launch vehicle's high-thrust engines first, then the satellite moves from GTO into GSO using its own (usually very efficient, but low-thrust) engines.

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- CMS-01 (formerly known as GSAT-12R [6]) is communication satellite designed and developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation. This satellite is replacement of aging GSAT-12.
- This satellite was successfully launched by Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle XL C50 on 17 December 2020.

Source: All India Radio

YOGASANA

Syllabus section: Art and culture

Why in news?

The Sports Ministry on Thursday formally recognized yoga Sana as a competitive sport, which will enable the ancient practice to avail government funding.

About:

- The move was made to encourage yoga, spread awareness about its benefits and to help improve physical and mental wellbeing of the people.
- National Yogasana Sport Federation of India (NYSFI) was also established for preservation and development of yoga as a competitive sport.
- It was recognized by the sports ministry as a National Sports Federation (NSF).
- The Sports Ministry will start by providing the NYSF with financial support to make their annual training and calendar.
- Yogasana will be inducted in future Khelo India Games programme.
- Pilot championship—National Individual Yogasana Sport Championship — has also been proposed to be organised.

National Sports Federation (NSF)

- The National Sports Federation of India (NSFOI) promote the fundamental principles of Sports at a national level within the framework of sports.
- NSFOIs are committed to the development of athletes and support the development of sport for all programs and high-performance sport in country.

Source: Indian express

'POSITIVE PAY SYSTEM' FOR CHEQUE TRANSACTIONS

Syllabus Section: Economy

Why in News?

On January 1, 2021, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will introduce the 'Positive Pay System' for cheque transactions above Rs 50,000 in a bid to enhance safety and eliminate frauds.

Positive Pay System For Cheque Transactions

The concept of Positive Pay involves a process of reconfirming key details of large-value cheques.

- Under this process, the issuer of the cheque submits electronically, through channels like SMS, mobile app, Internet banking and ATM, certain minimum details of that cheque (like date, name of the beneficiary, or payee and amount) to the drawee bank, details of which are cross-checked with the presented cheque by Cheque Truncation System (CTS).

Banks will enable the new system for all account holders issuing cheques for amounts of Rs 50,000 and above.

This facility is at the discretion of the account holder, banks may consider making it mandatory in case of cheques for amounts of Rs 5,00,000 and above.

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) will develop the facility of Positive Pay in CTS, and make it available to participant banks.

The new measure will cover approximately 20 per cent and 80 per cent of total cheques issued in the country by volume and value, respectively.

- The Cheque Truncation System (CTS) for clearing cheques is operational pan-India, and presently covers 2 per cent and 15 per cent of total retail payments in terms of volume and value respectively.

Banks had recently witnessed a rise in frauds involving high-value cheques. Positive Pay system is to augment customer safety in cheque payments and reduce instances of fraud occurring on account of tampering of cheque leaves

Source: Indian express

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ALL HAVE EQUAL RIGHT TO PRACTICE RELIGION

Syllabus section: Polity

Why in News?

Allahabad High Court grants protection to man booked under Uttar Pradesh anti-conversion ordinance.

About:

- Right to privacy as a basic fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- Article 25 provides that all persons have equal right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion, subject to public order, morality, health and other provisions of Part-III of the Constitution.
- The above-mentioned freedoms are subject to public order, health, and morality.
- This article also gives a provision that the State can make laws:
- That regulates and restricts any financial, economic, political, or other secular activity associated with any religious practice.
- That provides for the social welfare and reform or opening up of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all sections and classes of Hindus. Under this provision, Hindus are construed as including the people professing the Sikh, Jain, or Buddhist religions, and Hindu institutions shall also be construed accordingly.
- People of the Sikh faith wearing & carrying the kirpan shall be considered as included in the profession of the Sikh religion.

Source: The Hindu

IND-INDO CORPAT

Syllabus section: International relations

Why in news?

The 35th edition of India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (IND-INDO CORPAT) between the Indian Navy and the Indonesian Navy was held.

About:

- The Navies of India and Indonesia have been carrying out CORPAT exercise along their International Maritime Boundary Line since 2002.

- The exercise is held with the aim to ensure safety and security of shipping and international trade in the region.
- The exercise helps to suppress Illegal Unreported Unregulated (IUU) fishing, armed robbery, maritime terrorism, piracy.

SAGAR initiative

- Under the Government of India's vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region), the Indian Navy is organising Coordinated Patrols and Multi-lateral exercises with countries in the Indian Ocean Region.
- The other activities held under SAGAR are Exclusive Economic Zone surveillance, enhancing regional maritime security, passage exercises.

Source: PIB

FIVE-HUNDRED-METER APERTURE SPHERICAL TELESCOPE

Syllabus section: science and tech

Why in News?

Following the collapse of the historic Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico, China has opened the biggest radio telescope in the world up to international scientists. With this, China recently announced that it is open its world largest Five Hundred Metre Aperture Spherical Telescope to international scientists.

About:

- It is a radio telescope located in the Dawodang depression.
- It is the world's largest filled-aperture radio telescope and the second-largest single-dish aperture, after the sparsely-filled RATAN-600 in Russia.
- The telescope has a reflecting surface of 500-metres in diameter. However, only a circle of 300 metres diameter can be used at one time.
- It is located in a natural sinkhole. A sinkhole is formed due to erosion.
- It has super sensitivity to detect cosmic phenomena. This includes radio bursts and pulsars as well.
- It is also known as the "Eye of Heaven" or Tianyan.

Science mission

- Large scale neutral hydrogen survey
- Pulsar observations
- Leading the international very long baseline interferometry (VLBI) network

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- Detection of interstellar molecules
- Detecting interstellar communication signals (Search for extraterrestrial intelligence)
- Pulsar timing arrays

Source: Space.com

NATIONAL MIGRANT WORKER DATABASE

Syllabus section: geography

Why in News?

A national database of migrant workers should be collated at the earliest to ensure that if there is ever a repeat of a COVID-19-like pandemic, the relief measures should reach the intended beneficiaries, the Standing Committee on Home Affairs has noted in its report.

About:

- The database is to be created based on the twelve-digit Aadhaar number. The number will act a social security coverage to the migrants.
- All the unorganised workers will also be included separately in the database to help them get employment.
- The committee has recommended that the database should have details of skill set of the workers. Also, it should hold details of origin and destination state of the migrant workers
- The database will help to track the movement of the migrants.
- It will help the origin state and destination state to plan welfare measures including social security measures.

Source: The Hindu

HYPERSONIC WIND TUNNEL TEST FACILITY

Syllabus section: science and technology

Why in news?

Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) state-of-the-art Hypersonic Wind Tunnel (HWT) test facility placing India in a select group of nations with the technology. According to reports, only the United States and Russia have similar facilities.

Wind tunnel:

- Wind tunnels are large tubes with air blowing through them.

- The tunnels are used to replicate the actions of an object flying through the air or moving along the ground. Researchers use wind tunnels to learn more about how an aircraft will fly.
- NASA uses wind tunnels to test scale models of aircraft and spacecraft. Some wind tunnels are large enough to contain full-size versions of vehicles.
- The wind tunnel moves air around an object, making it seem as if the object is really flying.

What is Hypersonic Wind Tunnel Test Facility?

- The Hypersonic flow is a flow where the speeds are much higher than the local speed of sound. The hypersonic flow is generally defined as the flow at Mach 5 or greater.
- The Hypersonic test facility should simulate the flow features of this regime, that is, of flow rate Mach 5 or greater.
- It includes shock layer, viscous interaction layer, entropy layer and stagnation temperature of the flow.
- The recently inaugurated Hypersonic Wind Tunnel Test Facility will simulate hypersonic flow over a wide spectrum.
- It will play a major role in realizing highly complex futuristic aerospace and defence system.
- It is a high-pressure vacuum driven enclosed jet facility that has a Nozzle Exit Diameter of one metre.
- It will simulate Mach 5 to Mach 12. Mach is the multiplication factor to the speed of sound. It is called Mach Number.
- Mach number of the ratio between flow velocity past a boundary to the local speed of the sound. Mach 5 says that the speed is 5 times the speed of sound.

Source: The Hindu

EDEN IAS - Educational Development & Enrichment Network

KRISHNA GODAVARI BASIN'S R-CLUSTER

Syllabus listing: Economy

Why in News?

Reliance Industries Ltd and BP (British Petroleum) have announced the start of gas production from the R cluster, the deepest off-shore gas field in Asia.

About R cluster:

- The R cluster is an off-shore gas field which is a part of the KG-D6 block of the Krishna Godavari Basin.
- The other 2 deep-water gas projects in the block are Satellite Cluster and the MJ gas field.
- The R cluster is the deepest off-shore gas field in Asia and is expected to have a peak production of 12.9 MMSCMSD which is 10% of India's natural gas output at present.

Why it is important?

- The R cluster, along with the Satellite Cluster and MJ gas fields in the Krishna Godavari Basin are expected to produce around 30 MMSCMD (Million standard cubic metres per day) of natural gas or about 15% of India's projected demand for natural gas by 2023.
- The R cluster field alone is expected to have a peak production of 12.9 MMSCMSD or about 10% of India's current natural gas output.
- In FY20, demand for natural gas in India was around 153 MMSCMD around half of which is met through imports

Do they impact India's energy security efforts?

- All the three projects are being planned to boost the domestic production of natural gas.
- This will increase the share of natural gas in the energy basket of India from 6.2% now to 15% in 2030.
- This will decrease India's dependence on imports and improve energy security.

Source: Indian Express

STATUS OF LEOPARDS REPORT

Syllabus listing: environment and ecology

Why in news?

Released recently by the Environment Ministry.

Key findings:

- 60 percent rise in Leopard population across the Country; India now has 12,852 leopards.
- The States of Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra recorded the highest leopard estimates at 3,421, 1,783 and 1,690 respectively.
- As for region-wise distribution, the highest number of 8,071 leopards were found in central India and the Eastern Ghats
- Increase in the population of tigers, Asiatic lions and now leopards, shows how India is protecting its environment, ecology and biodiversity,

About leopard:

- Listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- Included in Appendix I of CITES.
- Listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.
- Nine subspecies of the leopard have been recognized, and they are distributed across Africa and Asia.

Source: The Hindu

POLITICAL CRISIS IN NEPAL

Syllabus Section- International Relations

Why in news?

Recently, Nepal Prime Minister K P Oli recommended dissolution of the House of Representatives, the lower of Parliament, a move promptly approved by President Bidhya Devi Bhandari.

This effectively ended the unity forced among the left forces that had led to the creation of the single, grand Nepal Communist Party three years ago. It plunged national politics into turmoil and the five-year-old Constitution into uncertainty, and raised questions about the haste with which the President approved Oli's recommendation.

Oli took the step when he realised that a factional feud within the party had reached the point of no return and he faced possible expulsion both as party chief and as Prime Minister. Since then, a dozen petitions have been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the dissolution with two years left of the present House's tenure. Each faction has also approached the Election Commission claiming it is the real party.

PM Oli's battles

Oli is fighting a losing battle in the party. He has declared that the next election will be held on April 30 and May 10 next year with him leading a caretaker government, but his fate will be decided by agitating crowds and the Supreme Court. There's also a movement for restoration of Nepal as a Hindu kingdom.

His move has created bitterness between the breakaway communist group he leads and other parties. On Monday evening, Oli got his followers to padlock the party office, effectively bringing it under his control, but going by the numbers in the dissolved Parliament, the Central Secretariat, the Standing Committee and the Central Committee, Oli is in a minority. But with Parliament dissolved and with a President seen as favourable to him, Oli will have the power to rule without being accountable to none.

The dissolution came hours before a Standing Committee meeting that was expected to order a probe into corruption charges levelled against him by party co-chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda.

The Unification & its end

Prachanda led the Maoist insurgency for a decade (1996-2006) before joining mainstream politics. Oli was a fierce critic of the politics of violence that caused more than 17,000 deaths. But Oli approached the Maoists in 2017 for a merger between their parties, pre-empting the possibility of an alliance between the Maoists and the Nepali Congress that may have come in the way of Oli's prime ministerial ambitions.

Oli was leading the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist, and Prachanda represented the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist). Following the merger, the two leaders agreed that they would lead the government by turn, a promise that Oli did not honour at the end of his two-and-a-half years, thus sowing the seeds of separation. Now, as a split appears inevitable, Oli is hoping to continue in power with those following him.

Questions over Constitution

What has happened has left a question mark over the Constitution of 2015, and its key features like federalism, secularism and republic. There are already popular protests on the streets.

The split in a party with a two-thirds majority has raised concerns that it may lead to a systemic collapse. "We will go for a decisive nationwide movement to have this Constitution dumped," said Balakrishna Neupane, convener of an ongoing citizens' movement.

Constitution & dissolution

Dissolution of the House is not new in Nepal, but this is the first such instance after the new Constitution of 2015 that places safeguards against dissolution. "The new constitution does not envisage such a step without exploring formation of an alternative government," said Dr Bhimarjun Acharya, a leading constitutional lawyer.

The 1991 Constitution, scrapped in 2006, had provisions for dissolution of Parliament at the Prime Minister's prerogative. During the time it was in force, Parliament was dissolved thrice. The first Parliament elected in 1991 was dissolved on the recommendation of Prime Minister G P Koirala after he failed to have a vote on thanks motion by the King passed in the House. The Supreme Court upheld that dissolution.

But in 1995, the Supreme Court rejected the dissolution by Prime Minister Manmohan Adhikary after a no-trust motion had been tabled but before the loss of majority was proved. The court held that the executive did not have the right to snatch an issue under consideration of the legislature.

The third time, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba dissolved Parliament in 2002 and the Supreme Court upheld it. King Gyanendra revived Parliament in April 2006.

Opposition stakes

The opposition Nepali Congress and the Madhes-based Janata Samajbadi Party have reasons to hope than an early poll will earn them a bigger space in Parliament. But it fears that the likely street protest and violence, besides the onset of rain in late April and early May, could be used as an excuse to further defer the election.

"I doubt elections will be held on the prescribed dates," said Shekhar Koirala, member of the Nepali Congress central committee. The Nepali Congress or the Janata Samajbadi Party have, however, not been very proactive in Parliament in countering the government.

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The Army

The Nepal Army has made it clear that it will remain neutral in the ongoing political developments. This implies that if Oli tries to rule with the help of security forces to maintain law and order and contain protests, it is uncertain how far the Army will play along.

The China factor

China has been a big factor in Nepal's internal politics since 2006. It is seen as having lobbied, visible or secret, to prevent the split. China has also invested in crucial sectors like trade and Investment, energy, tourism and post-earthquake reconstruction, and is Nepal's biggest FDI contributor. It has increased its presence in Nepal because of a perception that India played a crucial role in the 2006 political change.

Source- Indian Express

URBAN LOCAL BODIES (ULB) REFORMS

Syllabus Section- Indian Polity and Constitution

Why in news?

Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have taken the lead in undertaking the Urban Local Bodies (ULB) reforms. The two States have successfully completed the set of reforms in functioning of ULBs, as specified by the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance. To motivate the States to undertake reforms in various citizen centric sectors, the Ministry of Finance has linked a part of additional borrowing permission granted to the States to completion of reforms.

About

In view of the resource requirement to meet the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of India had on 17th May, 2020 enhanced the borrowing limit of the States by 2 percent of their Gross States Domestic Product (GSDP). Half of this special dispensation was linked to undertaking citizen centric reforms by the States. The States get permission to raise additional funds equivalent to 0.25 percent of GSDP on completion of reforms in each sector. The four citizen centric areas identified for reforms were (a) Implementation of One Nation One Ration Card System, (b) Ease of doing business reform, (c) Urban Local body/ utility reforms and (d) Power Sector reforms.

On successfully undertaking the ULBs reforms, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have been granted permission to mobilise additional financial resources to the tune of Rs.4,898 crore through open market borrowings. Out of these, Andhra Pradesh has received permission of Rs.2,525 crore, while Madhya Pradesh has been permitted to mobilize additional Rs.2,373 crore.

Objectives

Reforms in the urban local bodies and the urban utilities reforms are aimed at financial strengthening of ULBs in the State and to enable them to provide better public health and sanitation services. Economically rejuvenated ULBs will also be able to create good civic infrastructure. The reforms stipulated to achieve these objectives are:

- (i) The State will notify (a) floor rates of property tax in ULBs which are in consonance with the prevailing circle rates (i.e. guideline rates for property transactions) and (b) floor rates of user charges in respect of the provision of water-supply, drainage and sewerage which reflect current costs/ past inflation.
- (ii) The State will put in place a system of periodic increase in floor rates of property tax/ user charges in line with price increases.

Initiatives by Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh has come up with "the Madhya Pradesh Nagarpalik Vidhi (Dwitiya Sanshodhan) Adhyadesh, 2020 to implement the reforms and Andhra Pradesh has also issued an the Ordinance to amend the Municipal corporation Act, 1995, the Andhra Pradesh Municipalities Act, 1965, the Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation Act, 1979, the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Act, 1981 and the Andhra Pradesh Municipal Corporations Act, 1994 to effect the reforms.

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Besides additional borrowing permissions, the States completing three out of the four reforms are entitled to get additional financial assistance under the “Scheme for Financial Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure”. The Scheme was announced by the Finance Minister on 12th October, 2020 as part of AatmaNirbhar Bharat Package. It is aimed at boosting capital expenditure by the State Governments who are facing difficult financial environment this year due to the shortfall in tax revenue arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the scheme, an amount of Rs.2,000 crore is earmarked to reward the States who undertake the prescribed citizen centric reforms.

Besides the ULBs reforms undertaken by Andhra Pradesh & Madhya Pradesh, 10 States have implemented the One Nation One Ration Card System and 6 States have done the ease of doing business reforms, so far.

To facilitate more States to undertake the reforms and avail additional borrowings and additional assistance for Capital Expenditure, The Department of Expenditure, had recently extended the deadline for the States to complete citizen centric reforms in various sectors. Now, if the recommendation from the nodal Ministry concerned regarding implementation of the reform is received by 15th February, 2021, the State will be eligible for reform linked benefits.

Source- PIB

ISRAEL'S NATION STATE LAW

Syllabus Sections- Important International event/Current Affairs

Why in news?

- Approximately two years after Israel passed its controversial nation state law, the country's Supreme Court assembled on Tuesday this week for a special session to hear a petition by Arab-Israeli citizens and rights groups asking for the scrapping of this law. The petition asks for a declaration that articles in this law are unconstitutional, specifically those pertaining to Israel's official language and land allocation laws, which petitioners claim are discriminatory towards non-Jewish citizens.

- It has been a tumultuous year for Israel's President Benjamin Netanyahu's government and for the leader himself. Israel is scheduled to hold its fourth elections in two years after the country's two main parties in its unity government failed to meet a deadline in a dispute over government budgets.
- In the midst of this, Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption, has been aiming for a sixth term in the country's highest office, while simultaneously facing mass protests this year from citizens calling for his resignation. The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated the leader's problems, with protesters also accusing him of mishandling the outbreak.

What is the nation state law?

- Informally known as the 'nation state law', the 'Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People' is one of the 14 Basic Laws or constitutional laws of the State of Israel. The law allows Israel to identify itself as the nation-state of the Jewish people, and promotes Jewish people's right to self-determination. When enacted in 2018, it downgraded Arabic from the status of an official language to one that had special status.
- Among other clauses, it also allows the development of Jewish settlements. One of the first clauses in this law says, "the State of Israel is the national home of the Jewish people, in which it fulfills its natural, cultural, religious, and historical right to self-determination" and that the "right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people."

Which groups are impacted by this law?

- The law is symbolic and declarative, but critics argue that it particularly discriminates against the Arab minority in the country and excludes other communities that call the country home.
- As of 2019, Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics reported that 74.2 per cent of the population declared itself Jewish, while 17.8 per cent declared itself Muslim, 2 per cent Christian and 1.6 per cent Druze. The remaining 4.4 per cent include faiths such as Bahá'í etc. and those who do not belong to any of Israel's recognised faiths.

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- One of the main petitioners regarding this bill, Akram Hasson, an Israeli Druze politician who served as a member of Israel's Knesset from 2012-2019, has been a vocal critic of this law. In 2018, when the law had first been enacted, Hasson had said that the law was "extreme" and discriminated against minorities in Israel.
- This week, local news publication The Media Line quoted Hasson saying: "I want the court to change the articles that injure the Druze community and all minorities in Israel."
- The Druze can be found in Israel, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan and are an Arabic-speaking community. They do not identify as Muslims and have their own distinct religious practises. "We have no other country or alternative land, we've lived here since before the state was established, we have a blood and life bond with the Jewish people," Hasson had said. "We serve in the army and dedicate our lives to protect Israel."
- This law categorizes me as a second-rate citizen, despite me being loyal and loving of Israel, and respectful of its values and symbols."

What has Israel's Supreme Court said?

- The petition is still being heard, but during Tuesday's session, the court questioned whether the law indeed violated basic laws like liberty and human dignity, The Media Line reported.
- The court said that while the law "may not contain language some of us had hoped for," and that "it would have been preferable if the term 'equality' would have found its way into it," striking down a basic law passed by parliament was an "unprecedented and extreme measure," according to the news report.
- None of Israel's Basic Laws have been invalidated by the country's courts and legal experts believe that in this case, it is unlikely that the Supreme Court would intervene. Any changes to this law would involve consideration whether these laws actually violate principles of democracy and liberty in the country.

Source- Indian Express

AYUSHMAN BHARAT PMJAY SEHAT SCHEME

Context:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today launched Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) SEHAT scheme for the residents of Jammu and Kashmir, via video conferencing.

- The beneficiaries of Jammu and Kashmir were not covered under the Ayushman Bharat scheme.

ABOUT AB-PMJAY SEHAT

- The full form of SEHAT is social, endeavour for health, and telemedicine.
- Under this scheme, cashless health cover up to Rs 500000 will provide to all the beneficiaries
- The central government is going to ensure smooth implementation of the Scheme
- Under this scheme, SEHAT card will distribute to all the beneficiaries
- The beneficiaries have to show these cards in the hospital in order to avail cashless treatment
- All the eligible beneficiaries of Jammu and Kashmir can apply for the Scheme through common service centre operators

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- The central government is completing the database of residents of Jammu and Kashmir in order to implement Jammu Kashmir SEHAT Health Insurance.
- Around 1 crore beneficiaries will cover under this scheme.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

- Applicant must be a permanent resident of Jammu and Kashmir
- Each Citizen of Jammu Kashmir
- Aadhar card
- Voter ID
- Age proof
- Ration card
- Residence proof
- Passport size photograph
- Mobile number

SOURCE - PIB

ZERO COUPON BONDS: INNOVATIVE GOVT TOOL TO FUND PSBS

Syllabus Section- Indian Economy

Why in news

The government has used financial innovation to recapitalise Punjab & Sind Bank by issuing the lender Rs 5,500-crore worth of non-interest bearing bonds valued at par. The funds raised through issuance of these instruments, which are a variation of the recapitalisation bonds issued earlier to public sector banks, are being deployed to capitalise the state-run bank.

Though these will earn no interest for the subscriber, market participants term it both a 'financial illusion' and 'great innovation' by the government where it is using Rs 100 to create an impact of Rs 200 in the economy.

Significance

- Since these bonds are not tradable, the lender has kept them in the HTM bucket, not requiring it to book any mark-to-market gains or losses from these bonds.
- Financial market participants said the government seems to have found an innovative way to capitalise banks, which does not affect the fiscal deficit while at the same time provides much needed equity capital to the banks. But they also caution this may not be a permanent solution for the banking sector's problems.

What kind of bonds are these?

- Unlike the previous tranches of recapitalisation bonds which carried interest and were sold to different banks, these "non-interest bearing, non-transferable special GOI securities" have a maturity of 10-15 years and issued specifically to Punjab & Sind Bank.
- These recapitalisation bonds are special types of bonds issued by the Central government specifically to a particular institution. Only those banks, whosoever is specified, can invest in them, nobody else. It is not tradable; it is not transferable. It is limited only to a specific bank, and it is for a specified period. It is held at the held-to-maturity (HTM) category of the bank as per the RBI guidelines. Since it is held to maturity, it is accounted at the face value (and) no mark-to-market will be there. So, these are special kind of bonds issued by the government after proper (due diligence).
- Though zero coupon, these bonds are different from traditional zero-coupon bonds on one account — as they are being issued at par, there is no interest; in previous cases, since they were issued at discount, they technically were interest bearing.
- Now these are made zero coupon and besides that there is no difference, the said amount will be paid on the maturity as per the government notification.
- There is no coupon, it is zero coupon, it is issued at par and will be paid at the end of the specified period.

How do they differ from zero coupon bonds issued by private firms?

- Zero coupon bonds by private companies are normally issued at discount, but since these special bonds are not tradable these can be issued at par.
- There is a difference between zero coupon bonds issued by other corporates and these. You are absolutely right, normally zero-coupon bonds are issued at a discount, which are tradable also.
- Here, there is no question of trading and these are special types of bonds, which the government issues specifically to a specified person and it's issued at par.

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- While praising the government's move to inject equity in banks, two top finance industry executives, who wished not to be named, said that this move buys times but doesn't solve the problem permanently.
- It is issuing a zero-coupon bond aggregating to Rs 5,500 crore at par to Punjab & Sind Bank that will mature in tranches between 2030 to 2035. The market value of this bonds would be around Rs 2,750 crore. Punjab & Sind Bank, by investing in these bonds from held-to-maturity category, won't have to book mark-to-market loss and will value the bonds at cost, i.e. Rs 5,500 crore.
- The government will infuse Rs 5,500 crore into equity capital of Punjab & Sind Bank," one of the financial sector executives said.
- By doing so, the capital adequacy of Punjab & Sind Bank goes up by Rs 5,500 crore (instead of Rs 2,750 crore).

Source- Indian Express

TSO KAR WETLAND COMPLEX

Syllabus Section: Environment and Ecology

Why in News?

One more wetland in India has been added to the list of recognised sites of international importance under the treaty of Ramsar Convention, taking the number of such wetlands in the country to 42, the highest in South Asia. The latest site to be added to the list is a high-altitude wetland complex of two connected lakes, Startsapuk Tso and Tso Kar, in Ladakh.

About tso kar wetland:

- Tso Kar Basin is a high-altitude wetland complex, consisting of two principal waterbodies, Startsapuk Tso, a freshwater lake and Tso Kar itself, a hyper saline lake, situated in the Changthang region of Ladakh, India.
- It is called Tso Kar, meaning white lake, because of the white salt efflorescence found on the margins due to the evaporation of highly saline water.
- It is also an Important Bird Area (IBA) as per BirdLife International and a key staging site in the Central Asian Flyway.

About Ramsar convention:

- It is an international treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- It is named after the Iranian city of Ramsar, on the Caspian Sea, where the treaty was signed on 2 February 1971.
- Known officially as 'the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat' (or, more recently, just 'the Convention on Wetlands'), it came into force in 1975.

Source: economic times

INDIA'S FIRST DRIVERLESS METRO TO BE INAUGURATED

Syllabus Section: Economy

Why in News?

The inauguration of the first driverless metro train shows how fast India is moving towards smart systems.

About:

- The first 'driverless' train will roll out on Magenta Line of the Delhi Metro.
- Delhi metro is a network spread across the national capital and adjoining cities such as Noida, Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad and Bahadurgarh.
- The Centre has also notified changes in the Metro Railways General Rules, 2020 as the previous norms did not allow driverless services.
- The trials of DMRC's new 'driverless trains' were started in December 2017 where the automation of the new metro trains, that were equipped with Unattended Train Operations (UTO) and CBTC (Communication Based Train Control) signalling systems were tested .
- The driverless train operation (DTO) will only be applicable for Line 7 and Line 8 of the DMRC network which comes under the Phase III expansion.
- These corridors are equipped with an advanced signalling technology which makes the transition possible.

Source: Livemint

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CONSORTIA FOR MEDICINAL PLANTS

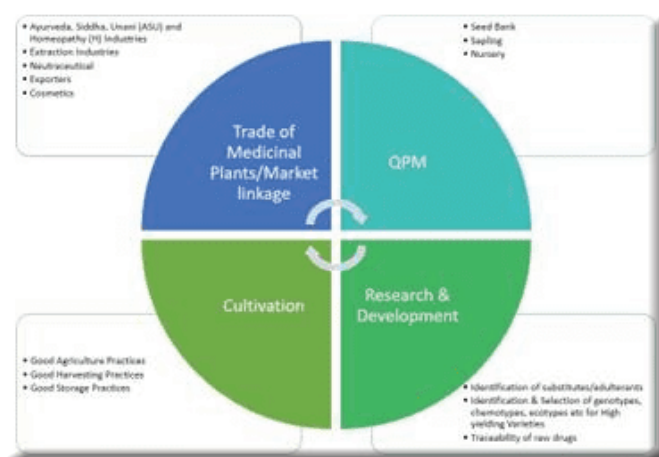
Syllabus Section: Environment and Ecology

WHY IN NEWS?

National Medicinal Plants Board Launches Consortia for Medicinal Plants

ABOUT

- NMPB Consortia will address/deliberate (not limited to) on Quality Planting Material, Research & Development, Cultivation, Trade of medicinal plants/ market linkage etc.
- National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB), Ministry of AYUSH envisages the necessity of connectivity between stakeholders in the supply chain and value chain of Medicinal Plants.
- To establish the linkage between the farmers and manufacturers, a 'Seed to Shelf' approach is being introduced, wherein, aspects related to Quality Planting Materials (QPM), Good Agriculture Practices (GAP's), Good Post Harvest Practices (GPHP's) would be addressed.
- In the first phase NMPB consortia is proposed for medicinal plant species - Ashwagandha (*Withaniasomnifera*), Pippali (*Piper longum*), Aonla (*Phyllanthus emblica*), Guggulu (*Commiphorawightii*), Satavari (*Asparagus racemosus*).



Source: PIB

PNEUMOSIL: INDIA'S FIRST INDIGENOUSLY CREATED VACCINE AGAINST PNEUMOCOCCAL DISEASE

Syllabus Section- Science and technology

Why in news?

Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) unveiled India's first indigenously developed pneumococcal vaccine on Monday. The world's largest vaccine manufacturer by doses, SII is also the maker of Covishield, the Indian version of the AstraZeneca-Oxford coronavirus vaccine.

About

- SII's pneumococcal vaccine, Pneumosil, was developed through a collaboration spanning over a decade with the health organisation PATH and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. He said the Serum Institute's vaccines are used in 170 countries and every third child in the world is immunised with one of its vaccines.
- The vaccine targets the pneumococcal bacterium, which causes pneumonia and other serious life-threatening diseases such as meningitis and sepsis, and is estimated to cause nearly four lakh deaths in children under five years of age each year worldwide.

Significance

- Pneumococcal disease is a significant contributor under-five mortality rate worldwide. In view of its widespread fatality, the World Health Organization in 2018 recommended the inclusion of the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) in routine childhood immunisation programmes in all countries.
- Serum's first indigenous PCV will be available in the market at an affordable price in single dose (vial and prefilled syringe) and multidose (vial) presentations. While PCVs have helped reduce pneumococcal deaths, they are difficult for many countries to afford. The unique feature of the WHO pre-qualified PCV is its composition which is specially tailored to the serotype of the bacterium, *S pneumoniae*, in India and other regions of the world.

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- Pneumosil has been extensively evaluated in five randomised controlled clinical trials and has demonstrated comparable safety and immunogenicity against licensed pneumococcal vaccines across diverse populations of India and Africa, where Pneumosil was administered to adults, toddlers and infants using different vaccination schedules, officials said. Based on the trials, Pneumosil was licensed by the Drugs Controller General (India) in July 2020.
- The vaccine also makes SII the world's third supplier of PCVs under the pneumococcal Advance Market Commitment, and the first developing country vaccine manufacturer to access the global PCV market.

Source- Indian Express

FINANCIAL GRANTS DISTRIBUTED TO NAMGHARS

Syllabus Section: Art and culture

Why in News?

The Union Home minister distributed financial grants to 8,000 Namghars (traditional Vaisnavite monasteries of Assam) under the Assam Darshan programme.

About:

- Namghars (literally meaning Prayer House) are places for congregational worship associated with the entire Assamese community and the Ekasarana sect of Hinduism, in particular, that is native to Assam.
- Besides forming the primary structure used for worship, they also function as meeting houses for congregations, as well as theatres for dramatic performances (bhaona).
- The Namghar, also called the kirtanghar, is also the central structure in the Sattras (monasteries of the Ekasarana religion) where the other buildings are positioned around it.
- Namghars were introduced in Assam by the Vaishnavite saints Damodaradeva, Madhavadeva and Sankaradeva for Assamese people where they can culture and practice naam (devotional songs) and Bhakti of God (devotion).

Source: The Hindu

MONPA HANDMADE PAPER

Syllabus section: Art and culture

Why in News?

KVIC Brings Alive 1000-yrs Old Monpa Handmade Paper Industry in Tawang to Revive the Heritage Art; a Historic Feat for North East

About:

- The art of making Monpa handmade paper originated over 1000 years ago.
- This handmade paper was a major source of livelihood for the locals.
- However, the handmade paper industry almost disappeared in the last 100 years.
- Recently, KVIC commissioned a Monpa handmade paper making unit in Tawang which aims at reviving the art and engaging the local youths with this art professionally and earn.
- The Monpa handmade paper, will be made from the bark of a local tree called Shugu Sheng, which has medicinal values too. Hence availability of raw material will not be a problem.

Source- PIB

DIGITAL OCEAN

Syllabus Section- Science and Technology

Why in news?

The Minister of Earth Sciences, Science & Technology, and Health & Family Welfare Dr.Harsh Vardhan inaugurated the web-based application "Digital Ocean" developed by Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) of M/o Earth sciences , during a Virtual Meeting held in New Delhi today.

Significance

- Digital Ocean is a first of its kind digital platform for Ocean Data Management.
- Since the ocean is a storehouse of infinite knowledge and 'Digital Ocean' helps to share this knowledge about the ocean with a wide range of users including research institutions, operational agencies, strategic users, academic community, maritime industry and policy makers. Dr harsh Vardhan lauded that Digital Ocean also provides free access to information to the general public and the common man.

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- It will play a central role in sustainable management of our oceans and expanding our 'Blue Economy' initiatives. Further, the Digital Ocean will be promoted as a platform for capacity building on Ocean Data Management for all Indian Ocean Rim countries.”
- Today we are looking at a large number of possibilities for harnessing the wealth of the ocean like the Deep Ocean Mission, research on alternate sources of energy, its mineral wealth, source of food among others. Deep Ocean Mission will help to explore the power of the ocean which will be reflected through data.
- The sharing of this data will become critical factors in achieving better outcomes for strengthening our economy. It will contribute to our vision of AatmaNirbhar Bharat.
- User Management component of Digital Ocean allows authentication of users, their roles and privileges of access to different data sets, categorization of data as per the data sharing guidelines, metadata management, mail management, usage statistics, system statistics, monitoring of observing platforms and addition of new data streams, etc.
- Digital Ocean will serve as a one stop-solution for all the data related needs of a wide range of users.

Source- PIB

CARBON CAPTURE UTILISATION AND STORAGE (CCUS) TECHNOLOGY

Syllabus Section- Environment and Ecology

Why in news

- According to a report by International Energy Agency (IEA), Global progress on the development of carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology from 2010-2020 was not on track to effectively control greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and achieve net zero emissions to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2050.
- CCS technology's target to restrict global warming to 2°C aims to capture 400 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions a year by 2025, but it is unlikely to be met, according to the report.

What is carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS)?

- CCUS technology is designed to capture CO₂ emissions from combustion of fossil fuels. It can absorb 85-95 per cent of CO₂ emissions in the atmosphere.
- The process starts with the capture of generated CO₂, which undergoes a compression process to form a dense fluid. This eases the transport and storage of the captured CO₂.
- The dense fluid is transported via pipelines and then injected into an underground storage facility. Captured CO₂ can also be used as a raw material in other industrial processes such as bicarbonates.

About

- INCOIS has adopted and developed various state-of-the-art technologies and tools through sustained and focussed oceanographic research for the timely dissemination of ocean information and advisory Services that includes Potential Fishing Zone (PFZ) advisories, Ocean State Forecast (OSF), High Wave Alerts, Tsunami early warnings, Storm Surge and Oil-Spill advisories, etc.
- Digital Ocean platform is a first of its kind platform for ocean data management. It includes a set of applications developed to organize and present heterogeneous oceanographic data by adopting rapid advancements in geospatial technology.
- It facilitates an online interactive web-based environment for data integration, 3D and 4D (3D inspace with time animation) data visualization, data analysis to assess the evolution of oceanographic features, data fusion and multi-format download of disparate data from multiple sources viz., in-situ, remote sensing and model data, all of which is rendered on a georeferenced 3D Ocean.

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Why is CCS crucial

- The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Special Report on Global Warming presents four scenarios for limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius: All require CO2 removal and three involve major use of CCS.
- The cement, iron and steel and chemical sectors emit carbon due to the nature of their industrial processes and high-temperature requirements. They are among the hardest to decarbonise. CCS can facilitate a just transition by allowing industries to make sustained contributions to local economies while moving toward net-zero.
- Enabling the production of low-carbon hydrogen at scale coal or natural gas with CCS is the cheapest way to produce low-carbon hydrogen.

Global progress on CCS

- CCS is absent from intended nationally determined contributions of most countries. Thus, it is clear that national policies have not accepted CCS as a promising technology.
- As of 2020, there were only 26 operational CCS facilities capturing around 36-40 million tonnes of carbon per year, according to the latest report by Global CCS Institute, an international think tank. Out of the 26 facilities having CCS worldwide, 24 were in the industries and two were coal-based power plants
- The cost on storage and transportation is one of the major bottlenecks for implementation of CCS. Looking at the importance of CCS in tackling climate change, experts are quite hopeful for the rapid development of the technology in the coming years. Policy support, however, will be crucial to bring the investment.

CCS in India

- Commercial availability of CCS in India depends largely on successful implementation of the technology in industrialised countries, which is currently shoddy.
- The most crucial requirement of a long-term CCS strategy for coal-based power in India is a reliable CO2 storage capacity assessment for the country. At the moment, CCS technologies are not economically feasible.

- Industries, especially steel and cement, have been proactively pursuing CCS as part of their emissions reduction ambitions. In September 2020, an 'Industry Charter' for near zero emissions by 2050 was agreed to by six Indian companies that will explore different decarbonisation measures including carbon sequestration.

Industries need to bring global experience to India

- Industries need to collaborate to bring down the cost and push such projects in India. Tata Steel in IJmuiden, Netherlands, has launched plans for a project to capture CO2 from its blast furnaces and transport it for storage in empty gas fields under the North Sea.
- The project is expected to lead to a 30 per cent reduction of CO2 from the steelmaking site. It aims to complete the project by 2027. It could lead to the reduction of three million tonnes of CO2 a year in the first phase, equivalent to 1.5 million tonnes of CO2-free steel every year or 1.3 million cars per year made from climate-neutral steel.

Indigenous innovation need support

- A small-scale CCS plant is already operational in India. A plant at the industrial port of Thoothukudi is capturing CO2 from its own coal-powered boiler and using it to make baking soda. It will lock up 60,000 tonnes of CO2 a year.
- The technology runs without subsidy or any other government policy support in India. Such projects bring hope for CCS for small industries.

Government initiative

- India's Department of Science and Technology has established a national programme on CO2 storage research and, in August 2020, made a call for proposals to support CCS research, development, pilot and demonstration projects.
- This is part of the accelerating CCS technologies (ACT) initiative, for which India has committed one million euros to support Indian participants. At least 16 countries, regions and provinces are working together in ACT to fund research and development that can lead to a safe and cost-effective CCUS technology.

Source- Down to Earth

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DEDICATED FREIGHT CORRIDOR IN UTTAR PRADESH

Syllabus Section- Infrastructure and development

Why in news?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a 351-km section between Khurja and Bhaupur in Uttar Pradesh for commercial operations of the Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) on Tuesday. He also dedicated to the nation a state-of-the-art Operation Control Centre in Prayagraj.

The total 2,843-km project — billed as the largest rail infrastructure being built in independent India — has been in the making since 2006 with little movement on the ground. It is finally ready to take off, albeit in phases.

What is the DFC?

- The DFC consists of two arms. The section launched on Tuesday is part of the 1,839-km Eastern DFC that starts at Sohnewal (Ludhiana) in Punjab and ends at Dankuni in West Bengal. The other arm is the around 1,500-km Western DFC from Dadri in Uttar Pradesh to JNPT in Mumbai, touching all major ports along the way.
- The 351-km section stretches between Khurja, the 12th stop after Sohnewal in the North, to New Bhaupur, near Kanpur. Other stretches are Sohnewal to Khurja (365 km), Bhaupur to Pandit DeenDayal Upadhyay (Mughalsarai) (400 km), then to Sonnagar in West Bengal (137 km), then to Dankuni via Gomoh in Jharkhand (538 km).
- There is also a section under construction between Dadri and Khurja to connect the Eastern and Western arms.

Why is it important?

- Around 70% of the freight trains currently running on the Indian Railway network are slated to shift to the freight corridors, leaving the paths open for more passenger trains.

- Built at a cost of Rs 5,750 crore through a loan from World Bank (which is funding a majority of the EDFC; the WDFC is being funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency), the new stations in this section are Bhaupur, Kanchausi, Achalda, Ekdil, Bhadan, Makhanpur, Tundla, Hathras, Daudkan and Khurja. This section passes through Kanpur Dehat, Auraiya, Etawah, Firozabad, Hathras, Aligarh and Bulandshahr districts in Uttar Pradesh.
- This is like building an entire railway network from scratch, independent of Indian Railways. All the installations are new. Including the stations, and that's why the names of a majority of its stations are prefixed with 'New', such as New Bhaupur, New Khurja etc.
- Tracks on DFC are designed to carry heavier loads than most of Indian Railways. DFC will get track access charge from the parent Indian Railways, and also generate its own freight business.

What trains will use the new section?

- Freight trains plying on this section from now on will help decongest the existing Kanpur-Delhi main line of Indian Railways, which currently handles trains at 150% of its line capacity. This section currently has over 50 passenger trains and around 60 goods trains jostling for paths daily. The new section means on the Indian Railway main line, more passenger trains can be pumped in and those trains can, in turn, achieve better punctuality.
- Foodgrain and fertilisers from the northern region are transported to the eastern and Northeast regions. From East and Northeast, coal, iron ore, jute and petroleum products are transported North and West.

What else will change?

- There are certain firsts for this section. For instance, 68 existing level crossings have been eliminated to augment speed, the only major section on Indian Railways that is free from any permanent or temporary speed restrictions. This in a way sets the bar for rest of the DFC to also make stretches free from speed restrictions, or "cautions" as they are termed in Railways.

EDEN IAS - Educational Development & Enrichment Network

- Freight trains usually suffer from unpredictable running times and low speeds of around 25 km per hour. But on this new section they can run at 50-60 kph.
- This section will also catch the freight traffic originating from key centres such as Kanpur Dehat, Aurayia, Etawah, Firozabad, Hathras, Aligarh and Bulandshahr. The existing industrial areas of Aligarh, Khuja, Firozabad, Agra and Bhaupur will become major growth centres of the area, the Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation projects in its business development plan.

What about the rest of the DFC?

- More sections will keep getting commissioned in the coming months.
- There is 61% progress in the Bhaupur to DeenDayal Upadhyay section, and 180 km of the 402 km will be complete by December 21, year while 22 km will

be done by June 2022. Thereafter the stretch to Sonnagar will see 100 km completed by March next year.

- The 401-km Khurja to Sanhewal section has had only 39% progress. It will be done by June 2022.
- A 46-km link between Khurja (Eastern) and Dadri (Western) will be ready by March 2021. By December 2021, Kanpur-Khurja area will get connected to the western ports of Kandla, Mundra, and Pipava, via the 127-km Dadri-Rewari section in the Western arm, its target advanced by several months.
- In the Western DFC, the section between Rewari (Haryana) and Madar (Rajasthan) has been completed. The subsequent sections are up to Palanpur in Gujarat (to be done in the next three months), then to Makarpura (by March 2022) and finally to JNPT (June 2022).

Source- Indian Express

