CIVIL SERVICES MONTHLY

MARCH 2021

CHAHAL ACADEMY

ONE STOP SOLUTION FOR CIVIL SERVICES

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- Inetrnational Day Of Forest
- Delhi world's most polluted capital
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PRELIMS

National Commission for allied and Healthcare professionals bill, 2021

Context:

- Lok Sabha has recently passed National Commission for allied and Healthcare professionals bill, 2021.

About National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professionals Bill, 2021:

i. Provisions:

1) It set up a commission to regulate the allied healthcare sector, standardise training and qualifications across the country.

2) The Bill will set up a regulatory structure for 50 categories of allied healthcare and try and shift the treatment of patients from being doctor centric to team centric.

ii. AIM: It establish a statutory body or commission that frames policies and standards, regulate professional conduct and qualifications for allied healthcare professionals, besides providing uniformity of service standards across institutions.

iii. COMPOSITION:

1) The chairman and vice-chairman of the body will be selected for two years and they would be eligible for re nomination for further two terms.

2) State governments will be represented in the commission, 12 seats have been set aside for them, and State-level commissions are also to be set up under the Bill.

Reasons for bringing the bill:

i. **The paramedics and allied healthcare workers are critical part** of the medical profession and their contribution is similar to doctors, if not more.

ii. The group of allied professionals is large and the bill is trying to regulate this field **by providing dignity to their roles.**

Paramedics and allied healthcare workers include: lab technicians, radiographers, dieticians etc.

ILO CODE: The standards for regulation, training, eligibility and service have been coded by international yardsticks and according to International Labour Code (ILO) codes.

The Bill had been pored over by the standing committee on health which had suggested 110 amendments of which 102 have been incorporated into the Bill, one of the reasons for bipartisan support for it.

Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN)

Context:

- ULPIN land database to be integrated with revenue court records, bank records, and Aadhaar.

About:

i. The Centre plans to issue a 14-digit identification number to every plot of land in the country within a year's time.

ii. It will subsequently integrate its land records database with revenue court records and bank records, as well as Aadhaar numbers on a voluntary basis,

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according to a Parliamentary standing committee report submitted to the Lok Sabha last week.

iii. Scheme has been launched in ten States this year and will be rolled out across the country by March 2022, the Department of Land Resources told the Standing Committee on Rural Development.

iv. "The Aadhaar for land": One Department official, who did not wish to be named, described it as "the Aadhaar for land", a number that would uniquely identify every surveyed parcel of land and prevent land fraud, especially in the hinterlands of rural India, where land records are outdated and often disputed.

v. MEASUREMENTS: The identification will be based on the longitude and latitude coordinates of the land parcel, and is dependent on detailed surveys and geo-referenced cadastral maps, according to a presentation the Department made to States in September 2020.

vi. COST: Integration of the Aadhaar numbers with the land record database would be done on a voluntary basis.

vii. Objective:

1) Creating a modern land record room in every district would cost ?50 lakh per district, while the integration of land records with the Revenue Court Management System would cost ?270 crore.

2) It also added that DILRMP's next phase would include "linkage of land record database with banks".

viii. SIGNIFICANCE: These components will enhance the service deliveries to the citizen of the country and will also function as inputs to the schemes of the other sectors like Agriculture, Finance Disaster Management etc

Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP) 2008:

- It began in 2008 and has been extended several times as its scope grew. It's due to come to an end next week, but the Department has proposed a further extension to 2023-24, to complete its original targets as well as expand its ambit with a slew of new schemes.
- The ULPIN is the next step in the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP).

OCI PRIVILEGES

Context:

- Recently, Some of the passengers were not allowed to board flights to India and were sent back from airports as they were not carrying their old foreign passports, which was required as per government rules.

About:

- The Overseas Citizens of India or OCI card is issued to people of Indian origin globally which gives them almost all the privileges of an Indian national

Provisions:

i. The OCI card gives a visa free travel to India.

ii. The OCI holders do not have the right of right to vote, government service and buying agricultural land.

iii. The OCI card, among other benefits, allows multiple entry, multi-purpose lifelong visa to an Indian-origin foreign national to visit India.

iv. Under the provisions of the OCI card, which gives the cardholder lifelong visa to India, those below 20 years and above 50 years need to renew their OCI card every time they have their passport renewed.

NEW POLICY:

i. People of Indian origin and the Indian diaspora having Overseas Citizens of India **(OCI) cards are now not required to carry their old, expired passports for travel to India, as required earlier**.

ii. However**, carrying a new passport is mandatory**.

'Define unfair trade practice for e-com'

ABOUT:

- A parliamentary panel has recommended that the government should offer a more **clear-cut definition of what constitutes 'unfair' trade practice** as well as spell out a practical legal remedy to tackle the issue, warning that there was a risk that **predatory pricing by e-commerce firms** may result in competition being wiped out and prove detrimental to consumers in the long run.

PREDATORY PRICING:

1. The panel has also recommended **fixing a cap on delivery charges levied by e-commerce firms**, as well as providing for penal provisions for violation of rules related to misinformation.

2. The committee noted that while e-commerce enterprises offer many benefits, the development of the segment has **rendered consumers vulnerable to new forms of unfair trade practices**, violation of privacy and issues of unattended grievances.

3. **Predatory pricing as a short-term strategy**, adopted by some of the market giants with deep pockets to sustain short-term losses and reduce the prices of their products below the average variable costs may lead to wiping out competition from the market and could be detrimental to the consumers in the long run.

4. Predatory pricing is a pricing strategy, using the method of undercutting on a larger scale, where a dominant firm in an industry will **deliberately reduce its prices of a product or service to loss-making levels in the short-term**.

'DIFFICULT TO PROVE':

1. It, however, added that from a legal standpoint it was **very hard to substantiate allegations of predatory pricing**, since the impact of such practice on the competition in the market would be very difficult to prove.

2. The Committee, therefore, recommends that there should be a more clear-cut definition of what constitutes Unfair Trade Practice and practical legal remedy to **tackle such circumventing practices by e-commerce entities** specifically multinational companies and kirana small vendors.

3. The panel also suggested that the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food

and Public Distribution should issue **broad guidelines for the fixation of delivery charges** charged by the marketplace entities along with a cap on the highest limits of the delivery charges in peak hours of service.

4. The Ministry should clearly **distinguish in the rules itself the cases of misinformation**, no information and the information which is otherwise correct but creates a false impression and provide for penal provision for each case in the rules itself," it said.

5. The Ministry should also clearly define **'drip pricing'**— wherein the final cost of the product goes up due to additional charges, and provide for protecting consumers against this by including penal provisions for violation.

CCI directs probe, terms new WhatsApp policy 'exploitative'

ABOUT:

1. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has launched an investigation **into WhatsApp's new privacy policy**, which was already under judicial scrutiny.

2. The antitrust body has taken a prima facie view that Facebook-owned WhatsApp's new policy is in **contravention of India's Competition Act** "through its exploitative and exclusionary conduct…in the garb of policy update".

3. It has also asked the director general to launch an anti-trust investigation under Section 26 (1) of the Competition Act and submit a report within 60 days.

NEW POLICY:

1. The probe into the instant messaging platform's policies follows not only the increasing scrutiny of the messaging platform's updated terms but also a **series of regulatory measures by Indian authorities against Big Tech companies**.

2. Recently in January, **WhatsApp's updated policy terms were first announced via an in-app notification to users**, asking them to agree to the new terms by February 8 or lose access to their accounts.

3. As both users and privacy activists raised the alarm, WhatsApp clarified that the changes were necessary to **help businesses through WhatsApp Business**. The deadline was later extended till May 15.

SUO MOTO COGNISANCE:

1. The CCI then decided to take **suo moto cognisance of the potential impact** of the policy and terms for WhatsApp's users and the market.

2. WhatsApp India, which has 53 crore users in the country, said it remained committed to "protecting people's personal communications with end-to-end encryption".

3. The users will **mandatorily need to accept the new terms** including the terms with respect to sharing of their data across all the information categories with other Facebook companies, in order to be able to use WhatsApp.

4. CCI said that the Commission is of

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prima facie opinion that the 'take-it-or-leave-it' nature of privacy policy and terms of service of WhatsApp and the information sharing stipulations mentioned therein, merit a detailed investigation in view of the market position and market power enjoyed by WhatsApp".

5. According to the CCI order, WhatsApp submitted that the policy update did not expand its ability to share data with Facebook and that the said update intended to "provide users with **further transparency about how WhatsApp collects, uses and shares data**".

6. The CCI said that the veracity of such claims would also be examined during the probe.

7. The CCI has pinpointed several other concerns with the new privacy policy including aspects such as the "**opacity, vagueness, open-endedness and incomplete disclosures**" hiding the actual data cost that a user incurs for availing WhatsApp services.

8. Users have not been provided with appropriate granular choice, neither upfront nor in the fine prints, to object to or opt-out of specific data sharing terms, which prima facie appear to be unfair and unreasonable for the WhatsApp users.

SC OBSERVATION:

1. In February this year, a three judge-bench headed by the Chief Justice of India agreed to hear a plea **challenging the latest privacy policy update announced by the platform**.

2. During the hearing of the case, the CJI-led Bench had observed that WhatsApp "may be $2-3 trillion companies", but **people valued their privacy more than money** and it was the court's duty to protect privacy.

3. Separately, a plea has also been filed in the Delhi High Court, which seeks to **restrain WhatsApp from rolling out the new policy update**.

4. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology had in its affidavit to the court, citing **five counts of violation of the 2011 IT Rules**, agreed with the position and asked court to restrain WhatsApp from coming out with the latest update in privacy policy.

5. Last year the **CCI had ordered a probe into Google's payments app for allegedly abusing its dominant position** to force app developers to use its billing system for in-app purchases, and for bundling Google Pay with Android smartphones sold in India.
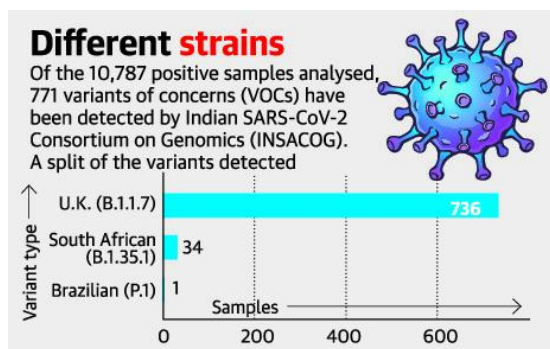
'Double mutant' coronavirus variant found

ABOUT:

1. A **unique "double mutant" coronavirus variant** — with a combination of mutations not seen anywhere else in the world — has been found in India, the Union Health Ministry said.

2. However, it is still to be established **if this has any role to play in increased infectivity** or in making COVID-19 more severe.

PRESENCE OF TWO MUTATIONS:

1. **Genome sequencing** of a section of virus samples by a consortium of 10 laboratories across the country, called the **Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics** (INSACOG), revealed the presence of two mutations, E484Q and L452R together, in at least 200 virus samples from Maharashtra, as well as a handful from Delhi, Punjab and Gujarat.

2. Mutations in the virus per se are not surprising but specific **mutations that help the virus evolve** to thwart vaccines or the immune system or are linked to a spike in cases or in disease severity are causes of concern.

3. While the two mutations have been individually identified in other variants of SARS-CoV-2 globally and have been **associated with a reduction in vaccine efficacy**, their combined effect and biological implications have not yet been understood.

4. In the days ahead, the INSACOG will submit details of this variant to a global repository called GISAID and, if it merits, classify it as a "variant of concern" (VOC).

Different strains
Of the 10,787 positive samples analysed, 771 variants of concerns (VOCs) have been detected by Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics (INSACOG). A split of the variants detected

U.K. (B.1.1.7) — 736
South African (B.1.35.1) — 34
Brazilian (P.1) — 1

VACCINE EFFICACY:

1. India has not yet conducted studies on **how vaccine efficacy is influenced by variants**, except for limited laboratory trials.

2. However, international studies have **shown reduced efficacy of vaccines** — particularly those by Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax — to certain variants. However, the vaccines continue to be significantly protective in spite of this.

3. So far, **only three global VOCs have been identified**: the U.K. variant (B.1.1.7), the South African (B.1.351) and the Brazilian (P.1) lineage.

4. So far, of 10,787 samples from international passengers, 771 instances of these VOCs have been identified in 18 States of the country.

5. After the new double variant has been submitted to GISAID, it will be categorised under a formal lineage, and will have its own name.

6. The identification of a new variant does not yet imply new public health measures, the Health Ministry said.

7. It would require the same epidemiological and public health response of increased **testing, comprehensive tracking of close contacts**, prompt isolation of positive cases & contacts as well as treatment as per National Treatment Protocol" by the States/Union Territories.

8. Separately, genome variation studies from Kerala have revealed the presence of other mutations associated with the ability **to help the coronavirus evade neutralising antibodies**.

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NITI group works on new policy to regulate civil society groups, member says for 'healthy partnership with govt'

ABOUT:

1. A NITI Aayog group is working on a national policy to **regulate civil society organisations** following directions from the Prime Minister's Office.

2. Constituted in September last year, the Working Group for Formulation of New National Policy for Voluntary Sector, chaired by Niti Aayog Vice-Chairman Rajiv Kumar, has begun receiving recommendations, including those from the Central Economic Intelligence Bureau under the Finance Ministry's Department of Revenue.

3. The working group includes Joint Secretaries of the **Financial Action Task Force division** of Department of Economic Affairs as well as the **Counter Terrorism and Counter Radicalisation Division/Combating of Funding of Terrorist Cell** in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

NATIONAL-LEVEL FRAMEWORK:

1. There is **no regulatory mechanism** at the national level to regulate the functioning of the civil society.

2. This is one of the initiatives of the Niti Aayog because no ministry focuses on it.

3. NITI Aayog plans to come up with a **national-level framework to self-regulate or regulate civil society organisations** who violate the government mandate and to bring some standard among them.

4. There are more than **32 lakh civil society organisations** registered under different Acts but the actual contributors to societal development are very few. Maybe some 4,000 have any impact on the ground.

5. Although a 2007 policy by the erstwhile Planning Commission is in place, the official said **several violations of the new regulatory additions**, including to the Foreign Contribution Regulation (FCRA), led to this call for a revamped policy.

DARPAN:

1. Niti Aayog launched a portal – **DARPAN** – in 2016 at the PM's recommendation for mandatory registration of civil society organisations. To receive tax exemptions, organisations must make a Unique ID on this portal.

2. The portal, with a little over 1 lakh registrations, collects data about funding through CSR, central ministries, state governments and FCRA.

3. Niti Aayog also insists on **GIS mapping of NGOs' projects** and is working on DARPAN 2.0.

REVAMPING OLD POLICY:

1. Last year, Parliament passed new restrictions under the FCRA, reducing foreign funds cap to 20 per cent among other measures.

2. Explaining the need to **revamp the old policy**, the government official also emphasised that the framework will ensure the Indian government abides by the guidelines of the FATF, a global body aimed at preventing

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money laundering and terrorist financing.

3. Many aspects of the 2007 policy were never implemented. The group aims to look at various aspects of the 2007 policy and may like to propose a clear action plan along with an **enabling policy for a healthy partnership between the government and the civil society organisations**.

4. The group also includes top officials from the ministries of Rural Development, Law and Justice, Home Affairs, Corporate Affairs as well as heads of Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini, Tata Trust, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Pradhan, Sulabh International, National HRD Network, Charities Aid Foundation, Give India Foundation, Global Givings and United Nations.

5. A separate group of at least 30 members – NITI CSO Standing Committee of Civil Society Organisations and Other Development Partners – was given a four-year mandate in August last year to also "**suggest improvements in existing laws and policies**" and improve "engagement of CSOs [civil society organisations]".

6. Its terms of reference includes: "the Standing Committee should also support the Government… relating to… schemes/programmes for the **youths of Jammu and Kashmir**."

7. This group has 17 sub-groups under thematic areas such as **Child Rights, Health, and Human Trafficking**.

8. However, several members of this group and sub-groups were unaware

of the **parallel policy making that Niti Aayog is engaged in**.

TRANSPARENCY:

1. Also at the Prime Minister's recommendation, Niti Aayog had launched a portal called DARPAN in 2016 for mandatory registration of civil society organisations. To receive tax exemptions, the organisations must make a **Unique ID on this portal**.

2. Government had come across through some studies that some **NGOs had engaged in embezzlement through duplicating their funds**.

3. Due to this, the PM insisted that there should be a single platform where all NGOs must register.

4. The portal, with a little over 1 lakh registrations, **collects data about funding through CSR, central ministries, state governments and FCRA**.

5. Niti Aayog has also been insisting on GIS mapping of NGOs' projects and is working on DARPAN 2.0.

6. A source said **CSR funding** is currently distributed mostly to Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.

7. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs is also creating a portal to help match corporates and other fund providers to CSR fund seekers, according to officials.

8. In the 2007 policy called "**National Policy on the Voluntary Sector**", the Planning Commission said it "will

encourage State Governments to review prevailing laws & rules and simplify, liberalise and rationalise them as far as possible".
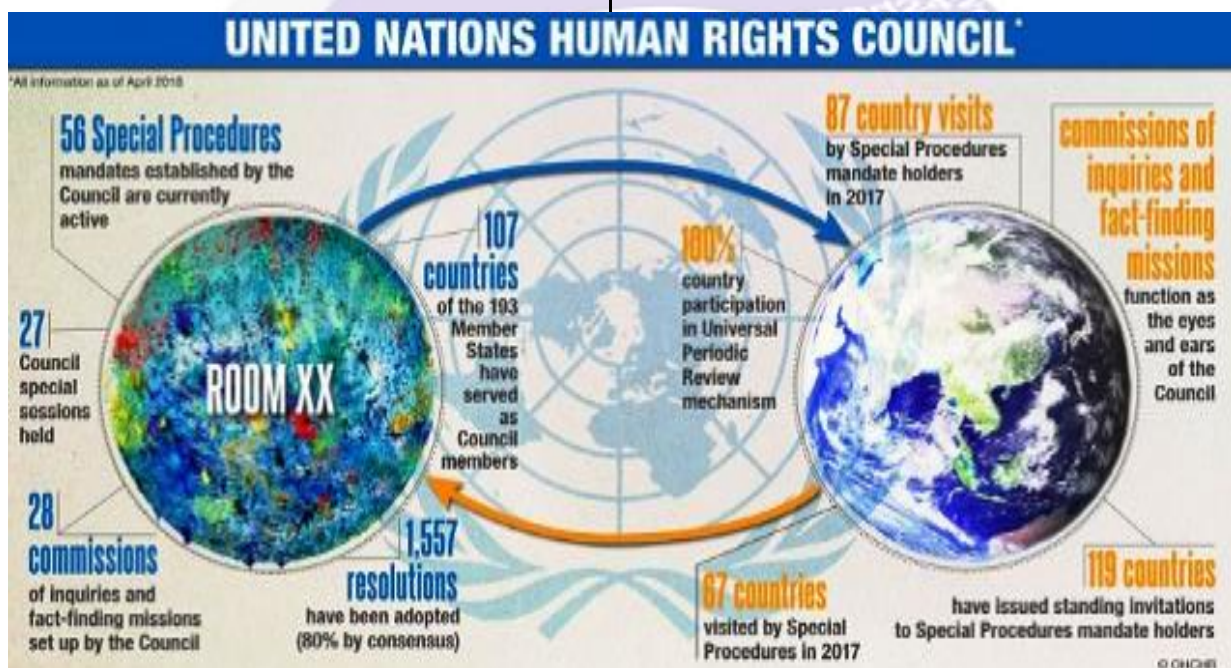
9. It recommended an "independent, national level, self-regulatory agency for the voluntary sector."

10. It also vocalised a need to "bolster public confidence in the voluntary sector by opening it up to greater public scrutiny."

11. After being amended in 2010, new rules under the FCRA by the Home Ministry in 2015 mandated that **NGOs do not accept foreign funds affecting the sovereignty and**

ABOUT:

1. **India recently abstained from a crucial vote on Sri Lanka's rights record** at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva.

2. The resolution on 'Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka' was, however, adopted after 22 states of the 47-member Council voted in its favour.

ABSTAIN:

integrity of India, along with other new measures.

12. In 2017, MHA amendments allowed political parties to receive funding from a foreign company's Indian subsidiary or foreign companies with more than half of their shares owned by Indians.

1. Sri Lanka, which had earlier deemed the resolution "politically motivated", was quick to **reject the UN move to collect and preserve evidence of war crimes** in the country, committed by the armed forces and the LTTE.

2. Without the consent and acceptance

of the country concerned, it cannot be implemented," Foreign Minister of Sri Lanks said.

3. The statement made clear Sri Lanka's resistance to the process envisaged in the resolution to **prosecute war criminals through an international evidence** gathering and investigation mechanism.

4. The money allocated — an estimated $2.8 million — for the effort would find better use towards **providing housing for the war-affected people**, the Minister said, even as scores of Tamils continue **seeking their lands and jobs** from his government.

5. Ahead of the vote, both the government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), which sought the exact opposite outcomes on the resolution, had **expressed hopes of obtaining India's support**.

6. Both sides appeared **sympathetic to India's abstention** that effectively amounts to support for neither party.

7. However, in an indication that Sri Lanka had **construed abstentions as support**, Foreign Minister thanked the 14 countries, including India, Japan and Nepal, that abstained from voting.

'SOLID SUPPORT':

1. Sri Lanka extended a "warm thank you" for the "solid support" shown by the 11 countries, including **China, Pakistan, Russia and Bangladesh**, that voted against the resolution, and in support of the Sri Lankan government.

2. On the other hand, welcoming the Council's adoption of the resolution, the TNA said **India must have decided to abstain** after "careful consideration" of various factors.

3. India's reference to "**two fundamental considerations**" — of supporting the Tamils for equality, justice, dignity and peace, and ensuring the unity, stability and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka has encouraged both the sides.

4. The Sri Lanka resolution was the first to be voted on using **the extraordinary e-voting procedures** established for the UNHRC 46th Session, which has been held virtually.

2001 FO32 ASTEROID

CONTEXT:

1. On 21 March 2021, the largest asteroid passed by Earth at its closest. It come closer than 2 million km to Earth, but it present a valuable scientific opportunity for astronomers who can get a good look at a rocky relic that formed at the dawn of our Solar System.

2. It is called 2001 FO32. There is no threat of a collision with our planet now or for centuries to come.

Speed & distance

1. For comparison, when it is at its closest, the distance of 2 million km is equal to 5¼ times the distance from Earth to the Moon.

2. Still, that distance is close in astronomical terms, which is why 2001 FO32 has been designated a "potentially hazardous asteroid".

3. During this approach, 2001 FO32 will pass by at about 124,000 kph – faster

than the speed at which most asteroids encounter Earth.

4. The reason for the asteroid's unusually speedy close approach is its highly eccentric orbit around the Sun, an orbit that is tilted 39° to Earth's orbital plane.

5. This orbit takes the asteroid closer to the Sun than Mercury, and twice as far from the Sun as Mars.

6. As 2001 FO32 makes its inner solar system journey, the asteroid picks up speed.

7. Later, the asteroid slows after being flung back out into deep space and swinging back toward the Sun. It completes one orbit every 810 days (about 2¼ years).

8. After its brief visit, 2001 FO32 will continue its lonely voyage, not coming this close to Earth again until 2052, when it will pass by at about seven lunar distances, or 2.8 million km.

9. Even if it is at the smaller end of the scale, 2001 FO32 will still be the largest asteroid to pass this close to our planet in 2021.

10. The last notably large asteroid close approach was that of 1998 OR2 on April 29, 2020. While 2001 FO32 is somewhat smaller than 1998 OR2, it will be three times nearer to Earth.

Studying the visitor

1. The March 21 encounter will provide an opportunity for astronomers to get a more precise understanding of the asteroid's size and albedo (i.e. how bright, or reflective, its surface is), and a rough idea of its composition.

2. When sunlight hits an asteroid's surface, minerals in the rock absorb some wavelengths while reflecting others.

3. By studying the spectrum of light reflecting off the surface, astronomers can measure the chemical "fingerprints" of the minerals on the surface of the asteroid.

4. Over 95% of near-Earth asteroids the size of 2001 FO32 or larger have been discovered, tracked, and catalogued.

5. None of the large asteroids in the catalogue has any chance of impacting Earth over the next century, and it is extremely unlikely that any of the remaining undiscovered asteroids of this size could impact Earth, either. Still, efforts continue to discover all asteroids that could pose an impact hazard.

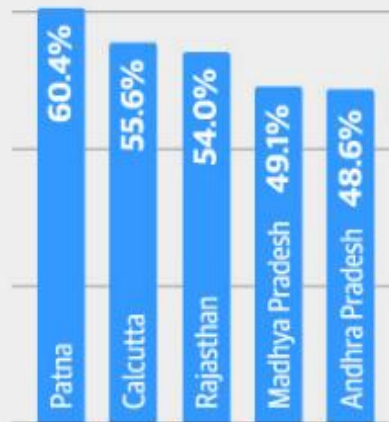## "Why no decision on list sent by Collegium", SC asks government

ABOUT:

1. The Supreme Court recently asked the government to clarify on the status of **55 recommendations made by the Collegium** for judicial appointments to High Courts six months to nearly a year-and-a-half ago.

2. Of the pending recommendations, 44 were made to fill vacancies in the Calcutta, Madhya Pradesh, Gauhati,
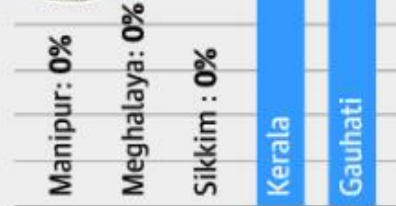
Short staffed

As of March 1, over 60% of the sanctioned strength of judges were vacant at the Patna High Court (in photo), the highest in % terms in India. Three High Courts, all from the northeast, had no vacancies

High Courts with highest vacancy %

- Patna: 60.4%
- Calcutta: 55.6%
- Rajasthan: 54.0%
- Madhya Pradesh: 49.1%
- Andhra Pradesh: 48.6%

High Courts with lowest vacancy %

- Manipur: 0%
- Meghalaya: 0%
- Sikkim: 0%
- Kerala: 14.9%
- Gauhati: 16.7%

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

A JURY OF JUDGES

WHAT IS THE COLLEGIUM SYSTEM?

- A forum which decides on **appointments, transfers (A/Ts)** of judges.
- Comprised of Chief Justice of India, **4 Supreme Court Judges**
- President merely **approves** CJI's choice
- Born from 'Three Judges Cases' which gave **primacy to CJI's call** on A/Ts
- Judiciary gets **greater say than Executive** on A/Ts

CRITICISMS

- **Administrative burden** of checking professional background data
- **Closed-door affair, lacks transparency**
- **Exclusivity** sidelines talented junior judges, advocates

SOME OF THE CHANGES SOUGHT:

- CJI cannot make unilateral choice
- Consulted judges' views need to be in writing
- Non-compliance must make CJI choice non-binding
- Transfer of judges reviewable only in case of non-compliance

Rajasthan and Punjab High Courts.

DELAY IN APPOINTMENTS:

1. These recommendations have been pending with the government for over seven months to a year.

2. The remaining 10 names have been pending with the government **despite their reiteration by the Collegium**.

3. They include five for the Calcutta High Court pending for one year and seven months. The recommendations of four names made by the Collegium to the Delhi High Court have been pending for seven months.

4. This is a matter of grave concern. When do you propose to take a decision?" a Special Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, asked Attorney General K.K. Venugopal.

5. The total sanctioned strength in the 25 High Courts is 1,080. However, the present working strength is 661 with 419 vacancies as on March 1.

6. The court asked Mr. Venugopal to enquire with the Union Ministry of Law

and Justice and make a statement on April 8 about their status.

7. The Bench handed over to Mr. Venugopal a chart containing the details of the 55 recommendations.

SETTING TIME FRAME:

1. Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul said on the 10 recommendations, some of which date back to a year-and-a-half, that "neither have they been appointed nor have you (government) given us a response".

2. Justice Kaul, who was accompanying the Chief Justice and Justice Surya Kant, said the "thought process" of both the government and the Collegium should be modulated.

3. He said a **time frame needed to be fixed for both the Collegium and the Ministry** to complete the appointment process.

4. Senior advocate and president of the Supreme Court Bar Association Vikas Singh said there was a **need to institutionalise a process for considering advocates practising in the top courts** to judgeships in the High Courts.

5. The Supreme Court has been repeatedly conveying to the government its growing alarm at the **judicial vacancies in High Courts**.

Right to counsel

CONTEXT:

1. Recently, the **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** told a special court in Mumbai that the arrested assistant police inspector

Sachin Waze, now suspended from Mumbai Police, was not cooperating in the probe against him and was insisting on his lawyer being present during interrogation.

2. Separately, Waze filed an application seeking to be allowed to meet his lawyer in privacy while he is in police custody.

Is access to a lawyer the right of an accused?

1. Across the world, **various rights are available to a person while in custody of an investigating agency** to prevent him or her from being forced into giving self-incriminating statements through means including torture.

2. The **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** affirms the right of an accused to be informed of the reasons for an arrest, the charges against him and the right to be provided legal assistance.

3. The **"Miranda rights" or "Miranda warning"**, as they are referred to in the US, require a police officer to inform a suspect being arrested that he has the right to talk to a lawyer for advice before being questioned and the right to have a lawyer with him during questioning.

4. In India, the safeguards available to a person in such circumstances are enshrined in the Constitution.

What does the Constitution say about the right of an accused to be defended?

1. **Article 22(1)** gives the fundamental right to every person not to be denied the right to be defended by a legal practitioner of his or her choice.

2. **Article 14** provides for equality before the law and equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.
3. **Article 39A**, part of the Directive Principles of state policy, states that equal opportunity to secure justice must not be denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities, and provides for free legal aid.
4. **Section 41D of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC)** states that an accused is entitled to "meet an advocate of his choice during interrogation, though not throughout interrogation".

Lawyers present during interrogation of an accused in custody:
1. Unlike in some countries, **lawyers in India are not allowed to be with an accused throughout their investigation**.
2. Apart from the provisions of **Section 41D of the CrPC**, courts also rely on the Supreme Court judgment in the **D K Basu case of 1997**, considered the guiding principles to be followed by investigating agencies in cases of arrest or detention.
3. The judgment states that "**an arrestee may be permitted to meet his lawyer during interrogation, though not throughout the interrogation**".
4. The Supreme Court stressed the safeguards for accused, but also spoke of "difficulties in detection of crimes", especially in cases of "hardcore criminals", and ruled that a lawyer cannot be permitted to remain present throughout the interrogation.

International Day of Forests
CONTEXT:

1. The United Nations observes **March 21 as the International Day of Forests**, commemorating the green cover around the world and reiterating its importance.
2. The **theme of the International Day of Forests for 2021 is "Forest restoration: a path to recovery and well-being".**
Why is the International Day of Forests celebrated?
1. The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed March 21 as the International Day of Forests (IDF) in **2012**.
2. The Day celebrates and **raises awareness of the importance of all types of forests**. On this day, countries are encouraged to undertake local, national and international efforts to organize activities involving forests and trees, such as tree-planting campaigns.
3. The Day is **celebrated by the United Nations Forum on Forests and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with governments, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other relevant organisations** in the field.
Annual themes
1. The theme for each year is chosen by the **Collaborative Partnership** on Forests.
2. This year's theme aims to **emphasise how restoration and sustainable management of forests** can help address climate change and biodiversity crisis.
3. It can also help produce goods and services for sustainable development, fostering an economic activity that creates jobs and improves lives.

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4. Themes of the International Day of Forests are **aimed to fit into the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030)**, which calls for the protection and revival of ecosystems around the world.

Significance of forests

1. Forests cover one third of the Earth's land mass, performing vital functions around the world. Around 1.6 billion people including more than 2,000 indigenous cultures depend on forests for their livelihoods, medicines, fuel, food and shelter.
2. Forests are the most biologically-diverse ecosystems on land, home to more than 80 per cent of the terrestrial species of animals, plants and insects.
3. Despite all these ecological, economic, social and health benefits, global deforestation continues at an alarming rate with 13 million hectares of forest destroyed annually.
4. Deforestation accounts for 12 to 20 percent of the global greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.

Anangpal II

CONTEXT:
1. The government has recently formed a **Maharaja Anangpal II Memorial Committee to popularise the legacy of 11th-century Tomar king, Anangpal II**.
2. Crediting him with giving Delhi its present name and also repopulating it, the National Monument Authority — which functions under the Ministry of Culture — has embarked on a mission to present "correct history" to the people through the works of historians, academics and archaeologists.

Who was Anangpal II/Anangpal Tomar?

1. He belonged to the **Tomar dynasty** that ruled parts of **present-day Delhi and Haryana** between the **8th and 12th centuries**.
2. The capital of Tomars changed many times from being initially at **Anangpur** (near Faridabad) during the reign of Anangpal I (who founded the Tomar dynasty in the 8th century), to **Dhillikapuri** (Delhi) during the reign of Anangpal II.
3. The Tomar rule over the region is attested by multiple inscriptions and coins, and their **ancestry can be traced to the Pandavas** (of the Mahabharata).
4. Anangpal Tomar II was **succeeded by his grandson Prithviraj Chauhan**, who was defeated by the Ghurid forces in the Battle of Tarain (present-day Haryana) after which the Delhi Sultanate was established in 1192.

His connection with Delhi

1. Anangpal II is credited to have established and populated Delhi during his reign in the 11th century.
2. He was instrumental in **populating Indraprastha** and giving it its present name, Delhi.
3. The region was in ruins when he ascended the throne in the 11th century, it was he who built **Lal Kot fort and Anangtal Baoli**.
4. He was the founder of **Dhillikapuri**, which eventually became Delhi."
5. Tomars and their Delhi link find mention in some modern-day literature as well.
6. **KA Nizami's Urdu book, Ehd-e-Wusta ki Dilli**, translated in English as Delhi in Historical Perspectives,

looks at Delhi across six centuries (from 1300 to 1800).

7. Tracing the antecedents of Delhi, Nizami refers to Persian annals that describe it as "Inderpat". And yet, according to his book, **Delhi formally emerged as a city only in the 11th century when Tomar Rajputs took over the mountainous Aravalli region**.

Every person may have to live on less water as per capita reservoir capacity decreases: UN

CONTEXT:
1. Built water reservoir capacity per person is decreasing globally as reservoir expansion has not been able to keep pace with population growth, said the United Nations World Water Development Report released on March 22, 2021 observed as World Water Day.

ABOUT:
1. While the world population is expected to reach nine billion by 2040, the projected reservoir volume seemed to be stabilising to be around 7,000 billion cubic metre.
2. The stabilising trend was visible since the 2000s, even as the population was on the rise.

REASONS FOR LOW RESERVOIR EXPANSION:
1. Decrease in storage capacity of existing reservoirs due to sedimentation
2. Losses in artificial reservoir storage due to sedimentation increase depreciation rates on investment capital, and therefore, decreases returns on investment.
3. They also increase the value of sediment abatement measures – implemented chiefly through nature-based solutions for improved catchment management.

IMPACT:
1. Artificial lakes and reservoirs also suffer significant losses from increased evaporation as compared to the evaporation from the original river.
2. These can be expected to be proportionately higher than the average in hotter arid regions, which is also where water tends to be scarcer.

WAY AHEAD:
1. Recognising comparative value of storage in, or the conjunctive use of natural systems, which is not only where most storage actually occurs but also where the main opportunities for sustainably increasing storage value can be found
2. Recognising the value of reducing demand
3. Increasing supply through measures like improved land management or water reuse
4. Using decentralised solutions

Gandhi Peace Prize for Mujib and Sultan Qaboos,Award recognises their visionary leadership: Culture Ministry

Context:
a. The Culture Ministry announced that the father of the nation of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the former Sultan of Oman, the late Qaboos bin Said Al Said, will be awarded the Gandhi Peace Prize for 2020 and 2019, respectively.
c. Rahman was chosen in "recognition of his outstanding contributions towards social, economic and political transformation through non-violent and other Gandhian methods".

d. SULTAN QABOOS: Regarding the 2019 prize. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos was a visionary leader whose twin policy of moderation and mediation in addressing international issues won him praise and respect across the globe.

i. H.M. Sultan Qaboos was the architect of the special ties between India and Oman. He had studied in India and always maintained a special relationship with India.

ii. The award recognised his leadership in strengthening the ties between India and Oman and his efforts to promote peace in the Gulf region.

e. The Ministry said the award carries ₹1 crore, a citation, a plaque and an item of traditional handicraft or handloom.

U.P., M.P. sign agreement on Ken-Betwa interlinking work

Context:

a. KEN AND BETWA LINKING: The governments of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have signed an agreement that nudges forward a long-stalled multi-crore, controversial project to link the Ken and the Betwa rivers and irrigate the water-deficient Bundelkhand region, spread over both States, and provide electricity.

b. OBSTACLES:

i. PANNA RESERVE: The project will partly submerge the Panna Tiger Reserve in M.P. and affect the habitat of vultures and jackals. After years of protests, however, it was finally cleared by the apex wildlife regulator, the National Board for Wildlife, in 2016.

ii. Monsoon blues: Then, the States were unable to come to an agreement on how water would be shared, particularly in the non-monsoon months.

iii. The project involves transferring surplus water from the Ken river in Madhya Pradesh to the Betwa in Uttar Pradesh and irrigating 3.64 lakh hectares in the Bundelkhand region of both States.

iv. DHAUDHAN DAM: The project involves building a 77-metre-tall and a 2-km-wide Dhaudhan dam and a 230-km canal.

c. This influences how the entire scheme is funded. The Centre was originally to fund 90% of the cost (₹37,611 crore in 2018) but a final decision is still outstanding.

d. However U.P., it is learnt, wanted a greater share of the water which Madhya Pradesh was unwilling. This prevented the signing of an agreement on water sharing that was ready in 2018.

Philippines accuses China of 'incursion' in disputed sea

Context:

• The Philippines accused China of "incursion" after more than 200 militia boats were spotted near a disputed reef in the South China Sea, in a rare rebuke of its superpower neighbour.

• The Philippine coast guard detected the boats "in line formation" at the boomerang-shaped Whitsun Reef, around 320 km (175 nautical miles) west of Palawan Island on March 7.

• The U.S. has previously accused China of using maritime militia to "intimidate, coerce and threaten other nations" over its claims to almost the entire South China Sea.

About South China Sea

i. It is south of China, east & south of Vietnam, west of the Philippines and north of the island of Borneo.

ii. Bordering states & territories : the People's Republic of China, the Republic of China (Taiwan), the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore and Vietnam.

iii. It is connected by Taiwan Strait with the East China Sea and by Luzon Strait with the Philippine Sea.

IMPORTANCE of South China Sea:

i. It contains numerous shoals, reefs, atolls and islands. The Paracel Islands, the Spratly Islands and the Scarborough Shoal are the most important.

ii. This sea holds tremendous strategic importance for its location as it is the connecting link between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. (Strait of Malacca)

iii. one-third of the global shipping passes through it, carrying trillions of trade which makes it a significant geopolitical water body.

iv. This sea has one-third of the entire world's marine biodiversity and contains lucrative fisheries providing food security to the Southeast Asian nations.

v. Huge oil and gas reserves beneath its seabed.

Webinar to discuss eradication of TB

Context:

- A webinar on "Eradicating Tuberculosis — The Clock is Ticking" was conducted as part of The Hindu Wellness Series presented by Macleods.

ABOUT TB (TUBERCULOSIS): 27% of world's cases in India

i. Mycobacterium Tuberculosis: spreads through air. It mimics other diseases, confusing doctors and delaying diagnosis. Cough and blood in sputum occur only in TB. Doctors don't think of TB until other treatments fail.

ii. India has a higher burden of new patients with TB than estimated earlier — § 2.8 million in 2015 compared to 10mn globally; Union health Ministry report:

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1) DR-TB: Drug resistant TB: 28% cases had resistance to one or the other anti-TB drug.

2) MDR-TB: 6.19% had Multi-drug resistance TD: about 1.5L cases.

3**) XDR TB: Extreme** Drug Resistance TB 2,666 cases are extensively drug resistance; Resistant to all known medicine.

4) Totally drug-resistant TB (TDR-TB): Resistant to all the 1st- and 2nd-line TB drugs.

211 cases/Lakh. (5/Lakh in W. Europe): For Elimination our target is 1/Lakh - by 2025.

iii. SDG global elimination target is 2030.

iv. Universal health care: Every country that has reduced TB incidence practices Universal health care. Identification: is the key.

PROGRAMES AND SCHEMES:

I. **National Strategic plan for elimination of TB or National Tuberculosis Elimination Program (NTEP)):** § As per National Strategic Plan 2017–25. this program has a vision of achieving a "TB free India".

ii. NIKSHAY Abhiyan: Provision of four Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) schemes of the programme – It provides incentives for nutritional support to TB patients.

iii. Moscow Declaration to End TB: 2017. 1st ministerial conference on ending TB.

iv. WHO End TB Strategy: 2035 Goals. 95% reduction in death, 90% reduction in TB incidence rate, 0 Catastrophic costs.

US India Artificial Intelligence (USIAI) Initiative launched

IUSSTF's USIAI Initiative:

i. It focuses on AI cooperation in critical areas that are priorities for both countries.

ii. USIAI will serve as a platform to discuss opportunities, challenges, and barriers for bilateral AI R&D collaboration, enable AI innovation, help share ideas for developing an AI workforce, and recommend modes and mechanisms for catalyzing partnerships.

About IUSSTF:

Indo-US Science and Technology Forum (IUSSTF)

- It is a bilateral organization funded by the Department of Science & Technology (DST), Governments of India, and the U.S. Department of States

- Research and technology in artificial intelligence is being promoted and implemented in the country through a network of 25 technology hubs working as a triple helix set up under the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS).

Necessity to scale up the S&T relationship between India and the United States:

i. to solve problems of both countries and overcome barriers for growth at the launch of the Indo-U.S. Science and Technology Forum's U.S. India Artificial Intelligence (USIAI) Initiative.

ii. "Indo-US relationship in the field of S&T": they have very old collaborations, have resulted in great benefits for both the countries. We need to further scale it up in various fields, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) can play a major role in the future. We have identified the barriers for growth in India that could be useful

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for the United States too.

Asset monetization by the government

Context:

i. To meet the aggressive target of raising around Rs 2.5 lakh crore through asset sales, the government has lined up plans to monetise assets including roads, electricity transmission, oil and gas pipelines, and telecom towers, sports stadia, among others. The assets shortlisted come under the purview of eight ministries.

ii. Asset monetization: It is the process of creating new sources of revenue for the government by unlocking the economic value of unutilized or underutilized public assets.

iii. National Monetization pipeline: The Niti Aayog is in the process of preparing a National Monetisation Pipeline for FY21-24 and has asked ministries to identify and share information on the assets to be included in the pipeline.

a. A Core Group of Secretaries for Asset Monetisation met last month to discuss the shortlist of assets identified for monetisation in 2021-22.

b. The sale of assets would occur over two years.

c. Plan includes awarding 150 passenger trains to private players; divestment of the equity stake of Airports Authority of India in the joint ventures that operate the Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Hyderabad airports; and leasing out stadiums such as the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in the national capital.

ASSET MONETISATION PLAN

Ministry	Target 2021-22	Assets
Railways	₹90,000 cr	50 stations, 150 private passenger trains
Telecom	₹40,000 cr	Telecom assets of BSNL, MTNL and Bharatnet
Road Transport and Highways	₹30,000 cr	Road length of over 7,000 km
Power	₹27,000 cr	Transmission assets of Power Grid
Youth Affairs and Sports	₹20,000 cr	Sports stadia
Civil Aviation	₹20,000 cr	13 airports of AAI. AAI's stake in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Hyderabad airports
Petroleum & Natural Gas	₹17,000 cr	Pipelines of GAIL, IOCL and HPCL
Shipping, Ports and Waterways	₹4,000 cr	Over 30 berths

iv. Reasons:

a. The PM puts a stress on the Private sector.

b. Shortfall in tax revenue.

c. Government's need to spend in welfare and development project.

Delhi: World's most polluted capital

Context:

i. Delhi has been ranked as the world's most polluted capital in a new report that placed India as having the third worst air quality out of 106 countries in 2020.

ii. Other cities: Delhi was followed by Dhaka and Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia. Within South Asia, Indian cities of Ghaziabad, Bulandshahr, Bisrakh Jalalpur, Bhiwadi and Noida were cited as the top five most polluted regional cities, all of which are part of the National Capital Region.

iii. The World Air Quality report by Swiss technology company IQAir,

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released on Tuesday, mentions that 22 of the top 30 most polluted cities globally are in India.

iv. Major sources of India's air pollution include: transportation, biomass burning for cooking, electricity generation, industry, construction, waste burning, and episodic agricultural burning.

v. "Despite widespread air quality improvements during 2019-20, air pollution in India is still dangerously high. India continues to dominate annual PM 2.5 rankings by city,"

vi. It is estimated that as much as 20% to 40% of Delhi's air pollution originates from Punjab farm fires.

More clarity on DFI - announced in the Union Budget 2021-22

About Development Financial Institution(DFI) –

i. It is to be created to act as a provider, enabler and catalyst for infrastructure financing. It would be capitalized with Rs. 20,000 crore.

a. Rs. 5 lakh crore lending portfolio to be created under the proposed DFI in 3 years

b. Debt Financing by Foreign Portfolio Investors to be enabled by amending InvITs' and REITs' legislations.

More details by the finance minister:

a. Management: The DFI is proposed to be managed by a professional board with at least 50% of the members as non-official directors, along with a tax-holiday of 10 years.

b. Investment: The DFI will begin with 100% government stake, which will then be brought down to 26%. The government would initially infuse ₹5,000 Cr and later ramp it up to ₹20,000Cr.

c**. Tax benefits**: this institution will have certain tax benefits which are being given to it.

iii. As of December 2019, she said, there were over 6,000 brownfield and greenfield projects requiring funding.

India's arms imports decreased by 33% between 2011–15 and 2016–20: SIPRI

SIPRI Report:

1. Arms imports decreased by 33% between 2011–15 and 2016–20 while India continues to remain the second largest arms importer after Saudi Arabia, according to a report from Swedish think tank Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

2. The overall drop in arms imports between 2011–15 and 2016–20 seems to be mainly due to its complex and lengthy procurement processes, combined with its attempts to reduce its dependence on Russian arms by diversifying its network of arms suppliers," the report released on Monday said.

3. RUSSIA: The report said Russia was the largest arms supplier in both years. "However, Russia's deliveries dropped by 53% between the two periods and its share of Indian arms imports fell from 70 to 49%."

4. U.S.A: It was the second largest arms supplier to India in 2011–15 but in 2016–20 India's arms imports from the U.S. were 46% lower than in the previous five-year period, making the U.S. the fourth largest supplier in 2016–20.

5. FRANCE AND ISRAEL: were the second and third largest arms suppliers in 2016–20.

i. "India's arms imports from France increased by 709% while those from Israel rose by 82%," the report said

adding that combat aircraft and associated missiles made up more than 50% of arms imports.

ABOUT SIPRI or Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

i. This think tank is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.

ii. It was established in 1966 at Stockholm (Sweden).

iii. It provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

PM slammed for calling 17th century Ahom general Lachit Borphukan a freedom fighter

Context:

a. He took Borphukan's name along with others who "contributed to the independence of the country" at a function to launch the 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' on March 12. The programme commemorated 75 years of India's independence from British rule.

ABOUT BORPHUKAN

i. Lachit Borphukan (24 November 1622 - 25 April 1672) was a commander **and Borphukan (Phu-Kon-Lung) in the Ahom kingdom**, located in present-day Assam, India, known for his leadership in the 1671 Battle of Saraighat that thwarted a drawn-out attempt by Mughal forces under the command of Ramsingh I to take over Ahom kingdom.

ii. BATTLE OF SARAIGHAT: Borphukan had in 1671 led the Ahoms in the Battle of Saraighat, considered the greatest naval battle on a river, to victory over the Mughals.

iii. He died in April 1672, almost two centuries before the Indian freedom movement had begun.

Online NATIONAL POPULATION REGISTER (NPR) FORMS:

a. The Centre will allow residents to fill columns in the NPR forms on their own through online mode, a month before door-to-door enumeration by Census officials starts. After filling the form online, residents will get a reference code that they could mention to the field enumerator at the time of her/his visit, according to a senior government official.

b. NO BIOMETRIC WOULD BE COLLECTED: The details of the respondent would get displayed on a mobile application developed in house for conducting the Census exercise but no "biometrics or documents" would be collected.

c. **THE FIRST PHASE OF CENSUS EXERCISE:** The House listing and Housing Census along with updating the NPR was scheduled to be held from April 1, 2020. It was postponed indefinitely due to this pandemic and is unlikely to be held this year.

d. SECOND PHASE OF CENSUS : the population enumeration — was to be concluded by March 5 this year.
○ Residents were to be given an option to self enumerate only in the second phase (the population enumeration). The NPR earlier collated in the years 2010 and 2015 has an electronic database of more than 119 crore residents.

e. UPDATION OF NPR: According to the recently published Ministry of Home Affairs' (MHA) annual report for the year 2019-20, there will be a three-pronged approach for updating the NPR database

i. self updating, wherein it is proposed to allow residents to update their own data

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fields after following some authentication protocols in a web portal

ii. updating of NPR data in paper format and

iii. mobile mode.

Bureaucrats cannot be State Election Commissioners: SC

Context:

1. The Supreme Court held that independent persons, and not government employees, should be appointed Election Commissioners.

2. A Bench led by Justice Rohinton F. Nariman, in a judgment, said giving government employees additional charge as Election Commissioners was a mockery of the Constitution.

3. The Bench held that people holding public office could not be appointed Election Commissioners and directed States to comply with the constitutional scheme of independent and fair functioning of election commissions. It said the independence of the panels could not be compromised.

4. **UNDER 73 AND 74 CAA(CONSITUTION AMENDMENT ACT): The** Constitution of India vests in the State Election Commission, consisting of a State Election Commissioner, the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for, and the conduct of all elections to the Panchayats and the Municipalities (Articles 243K, 243ZA).

NIO (NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF OCEANOGRAPHY) research in Indian Ocean

Context:

a. A 30-member team of scientists and

researchers from the (NIO) in Panaji and another 30 crew members onboard its research vessel Sindhu Sadhana will spend the next three months traversing the course of over 10,000 nautical miles in the Indian Ocean on a research project to reveal the internal working of the body of the ocean at a cellular level.

b. AIM: understanding the biochemistry and the response of the ocean to climate change, nutrient stress and increasing pollution.

c. The NIO's research project:

i. Team of 30 scientists and researchers — including six women — course the Indian Ocean from India's east coast, all the way to Australia, then onward towards Port Louis in Mauritius and up to the border of Pakistan, off India's west coast, gathering samples for genome mapping of microorganisms in the Indian Ocean.

ii. The researchers will collect samples from various stretches of the ocean at an average depth of about 5 km.

iii. The mapping of the Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and Ribonucleic acid (RNA) will show the nutrients present in them, and also those lacking in different parts of the ocean

d. Scientists learn from this genome mapping in the ocean.

i. This will help scientists understand the internal working of the ecosystem of the Indian Ocean.

ii. The research will enable scientists to identify the factors controlling the changes in RNA, DNA in the oceans, and various stressors impacting them.

iii. The ocean has several micronutrients like nitrates, sulphates and silicates, minerals like iron ore and zinc, and trace metals like cadmium or copper.

iv. The genome mapping will show the presence of which these microbes have adapted to, in addition to their reaction to atmospheric carbon dioxide. This will help in identifying which part of the ocean has a greater concentration of which mineral or element.

e. SIGNIFICANCE

i. The large pool of RNA, DNA library of the oceans will be utilised for using the Indian Ocean to human benefit in the future.

ii. It will enable an increase in the growing number of commercial biotechnology applications, extending from multiple anticancer treatments to cosmetics and industrial enzymes, to antiviral molecules

iii. It will result in new insights into taxonomy and adaptive capacity that can help optimize conservation efforts

f. Objectives:

i. Studying the interactions of trace metals and marine plant and animal life.

ii. Trace metals like cadmium or copper are supplied to oceans via continental run-offs, atmospheric deposition, hydrothermal activities and continental shelf interaction. They are essential for ocean productivity.

iii. It is important to understand the interactions of trace metals with marine biota "for having a holistic understanding about nutrient cycling and productivity of the oceans".

iv. The NIO's project is expected to generate new information about trace metals from underexplored regions of the Indian Ocean, the third largest water body in the world, covering about 20 per cent of the Earth's water surface.

Breakfast in schools plan faces delay

EXPANSION OF MID DAY MEAL SCHEME:

i. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education has recommended that all government schools start providing free breakfast in the coming academic year as part of an expansion of the mid-day meal scheme envisaged by the National Education Policy.

ii. In its submission to the panel, the Department said it had proposed two new components to the mid-day meal scheme during 2021-22 — an expansion of coverage from the current Class 1-8 students to include pre-primary students as well, and the provision of breakfast.

b.   PROBLEMS of Fund crunch: Education Ministry officials say a severe funding crunch is likely to delay the initiative. Free breakfasts would involve an additional budget of ₹4,000 crore, according to senior officials, but the School Education Department has seen a budget cut of almost ₹5,000 crore this year.

c. ABOUT MID DAY

i. Scheme: cooked mid day meal with 300 calories + 12 grams of protein to all children enrolled in classes one to five.

ii. History: GoI initiated National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) on 15 August 1995. By 1997–98, the scheme had been implemented across the country.

iii. Public Union for Civil Liberties Vs Union of India & others(Right to Food Case):

1)   Right to food a derived fundamental right: Article 21 when read together with   Art 39(a)[Right to adequate means of livelihood] and Article 47[Raising of the level of nutrition & standard of living of its people & improvement of public health as among

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its primary duties].

2**) Excess food stocks** with FCI should be fed to hungry citizens. This included providing mid-day meals in primary schools.

d. Problem in Mid-day Meal:

1. Cases of bad food.

2. Reports of Cheating.

3. Cast bias and discrimination.

4. Fund crunch

Army to showcase counter-terror skills in Dustlik-II
Exercise Dustlik-II:

a. It held between India and Uzbekistan from March 10-19, the Army showcased its Counter Insurgency (CI) and Counter Terrorism (CT) skills.

i. This year the focus was on people-centric intelligence based surgical operations, incorporating technological advancements to minimise collateral damage, a defence source said.

ii. **AIM**: The aim of the exercise is CI,CT operations in mountainous, rural and urban scenarios under United Nations (UN) mandate and the Army will share the experiences and lessons it has gained in Kashmir

iii. A lot of technology has been incorporated in CI, CT operations and efficiency has considerably gone up in operations which also helps in minimizing collateral damage which would also be showcased, the source stated.

b. India has a series of joint exercises scheduled in the next financial year beginning April 2021 including with Central Asian Republics — Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan — in addition to

Mongolia and Russia as part of its growing engagement with the region.

c. **UZBEKISTAN's IMPORTANCE**

i. Uzbekistan is important to India for security and connectivity to Central Asian region and also Iran.

ii. Underscoring the importance and adding that it is also one alternative India has with respect to Afghanistan.

iii. The Army's 13 Kumaon regiment, also called the Rezang La battalion for its heroic action in the 1962 war with China, has been nominated from the Indian side for the company level CI, CT exercise being held at Chaubatia, near Ranikhet in Uttarakhand. The validation exercise is scheduled on**.**

Over 72% rise in UAPA cases registered in 2019
Context:

a. There has been over 72% increase in the number of persons arrested under the UAPA in 2019 compared to year 2015, data provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in the Lok Sabha show.

b. **Number of cases**: In 2019, the highest number of such cases were registered in Manipur (306), followed by Tamil Nadu (270), Jammu & Kashmir (255), Jharkhand (105) and Assam (87) cases.

c. Union Minister of State for Home Affairs said, "Cases under the UAPA are investigated by the State police and the National Investigation Agency (NIA). As far as the NIA is concerned, so far 48 special courts have been constituted across the country for the speedy trial of terror-related cases."

d. **About UAPA((Unlawful Activities [Prevention] Act)**: It defines terrorists an enables their investigation by NIA(National investigation agency).

i. **Terrorism Organization:** Central government may designate an organisation as a terrorist organisation if it:
   1. **Commits** or participates in acts of terrorism,
   2. **Prepares** for terrorism,
   3. **Promotes** terrorism,
   4. or is otherwise **involved** in terrorism.
ii. **Terrorist Person:** It empowers the government to designate individuals as terrorists on the same grounds.
iii. **Investigation by NIA**:
   1. May be conducted by officers of the rank **of DSP or ACP** or above.
   2. It empowers the **officers** of the **rank of Inspector or above** of **NIA**, to investigate cases.

Tap water supply

Context:
Only half of government schools and anganwadis have tap water supply,
a. **TAPWATER SITUATION**: Only half of government schools and anganwadis have tap water supply, despite a 100-day campaign for 100% coverage being launched by the Jal Shakti Ministry in October 2020, according to information provided to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Water Resources.
b. **STATE LEVEL DATA**:
   i. Less than 8% of schools in Uttar Pradesh and
   ii. 11% in West Bengal and
   iii. 26% of anganwadis in Assam, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Bengal.
   iv. 100% coverage only in Seven States — Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Punjab.
c. **Anganwadi** and **Ashramshala** or residential tribal school was launched on October 2, Gandhi Jayanti. The 100day period should have ended on January 10, 2021. However , as of February 15, only 48.5% of anganwadis and 53.3% of schools had tap water supply.

India wants Chabahar port on key corridor (INSTC)

Context:

a. India wants Chabahar port to be included in the **13 - nation International North South Transport Corridor(INSTC)** that extends from India to Russia, and expand INSTC membership by including Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, said External Affairs Minister

b. Pitching for Chabahar in the INSTC which goes via Iran's biggest port Bandar Abbas, Mr. Jaishankar proposed that the land route via Kabul and Tashkent would form the INSTC's "Eastern corridor".

c. Establishing an eastern corridor through **Afghanistan** would maximise its potential. India has also proposed the inclusion of Chabahar in the INSTC route.

d. Iran's view: Predicting that Chabahar will change the "geo-economy" of the region, Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammed Eslami called for assistance from India in developing the project, both through the

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provision of cranes and other equipment at the port as well as rail tracks, signal and switching equipment for the Chabahar-Zahedan railway project. In a letter last November, Iran had also asked India to activate the $150-million credit line it offered during Iranian President Rouhani's visit to Delhi in 2018 for the project.

About INSTC:

i. It was originally decided between India, Iran and Russia in 2000 in St Petersburg, and subsequently included 10 other central Asian and west Asian countries: Azerbaijan Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus, Oman, Syria and Bulgaria as an observer.

ii. It envisions a 7,200-km-long multi-mode network of ship, rail and road route for transporting freight, aimed at reducing the carriage cost between India and Russia by about 30% and bringing down the transit time from 40 days by more than half.

Supreme Court says new rules to regulate OTT platforms lack teeth

a. Context:

i. New Guidelines for Social Media: Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, in which the government has prescribed self-classification of content into five categories based on age suitability. The OTT Platforms would be required to implement:

1**) Parental locks** for content classified as U/A 13+ or higher, and

2) Reliable age verification mechanisms for content that is classified as "A".

ii. Various FIRs against the makers of Web series 'Tandav'.

iii. The present hearing was in the case of 'Tandav', wherein the government informed court about the new rules.

b. **The Supreme Court said** that the government's new rules to regulate OTT (over-the-top) platforms lacked teeth to punish violators or to screen offensive content.

i. Mr. Tushar Mehta (the Solicitor General of India) agreed to consider drafting new regulations or even legislation to address the concern raised by the court about OTT platforms. "We can come out with it... We can come out with a draft and place it before the court.

ii. Implication: These rules can be amended further regarding provisions of OTT. OR a new law could be introduced.

Ease of Living Index 2020

Context:

The rankings under Ease of Living Index 2020 were announced for cities with a population of more than a million, and cities with less than a million people.

It is assessed by ministry of housing & urban affairs based on quality of life and the impact of various initiatives for urban development in the city.

a**. 111 cities participated** in the assessment exercise that was conducted in 2020.

b. The analysis categorises them into:

i**. Million+ populated cities** (those with a population of more than a million) and

ii. Less than Million populated cites (those with a population of less than a million) along with all the cities under the Smart Cities Program.

c. Million+ category:

i. Top performer: Bengaluru emerged as the top performer

ii. Followed by Pune, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Surat, Navi Mumbai, Coimbatore, Vadodara, Indore, and Greater Mumbai.

d. Less than Million category:

i. Top perfomer: Shimla was ranked the highest in ease of living

ii. followed by Bhubaneshwar, Silvassa, Kakinada, Salem, Vellore, Gandhinagar, Gurugram, Davangere, and Tiruchirappalli.

e. Ranking for Municipalities: Similar to the EoLI index, the assessment framework under MPI 2020 has classified municipalities based on their population- Million+ (municipalities having over a million population) and Less than Million Population.

i. In the Million+ category, Indore has emerged as the highest ranked municipality, followed by Surat and Bhopal.

ii. In the Less than Million category, New Delhi Municipal Council(NDMC) has emerged as the leader, followed by Tirupati and Gandhinagar.

IISc among top 100 natural sciences universities in world

About:

a. **25 Programs** — mostly in engineering — offered by higher education institutions in India rank among the top 100 in the world in their respective subject categories, according to the latest edition of the QS World University Rankings by Subject. Last year, this number stood at 26.

b. The **Indian Institute of Science**

broke into the top 100 in the natural sciences category of the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2021.

c. In **the broad engineering and technology category**, only three institutions made it to the top 100 the **IIT Bombay, Delhi and Madras** — in comparison to five institutions last year. The IITs Kharagpur and Kanpur dropped out of the top 100 though the former is one of the government's Institutes of Eminence (IoEs).

d. **The University of Delhi** was the highest ranked Indian institution in social sciences and management, but fell 48 places to drop out of the top 200.

e. **The All India Institute of Medical Sciences(AIIMS)** remained the only institution in the top 300 in life sciences and medicine, but also dropped more than 10 places.

About QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) World University Rankings

i. It uses four indicators: academic reputation, employer reputation, research citation per paper, and an index used to measure the productivity and impact of the published work of a scientist or scholar.

ii. Institutions are ranked according to five broad categories, as well as in 51 specific subjects.

Van Dhan Vikas Yojana – Empowering the tribals of **Jawadh**

TRIFED: Tribal Co-operative Marketing Federation of India.)
Under the Village connect initiative of TRIFED, to ensure that the initiatives are being implemented for uplifting the tribal population at the grassroot
> i. These programmes and initiatives have been implemented by TRIFED for

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making India self-reliant under the Atmanirbhar Abhiyan, with the motto, **Go Vocal for Local Go Tribal – Mera Van Mera Dhan Mera Udyam**.

ii. **'Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) & Development of Value Chain for MFP' Scheme**, has emerged as a major source of employment for the local tribals.

Malayali tribes:

- Situated in the **Tiruvannamalai district** of Tamil Nadu, Jawadhu hills is an extension of the Eastern Ghats. They constitute 92.60% of the total population in this block and their mainstay is through the non-timber forest produce and a variety of trees grown on this patta land.

About **Van Dhan Vikas Kendras initiative**:

i. **Aim**: to promote MFPs-centric livelihood development of tribal gatherers and artisans.

ii. It mainstreams the tribal community by promoting primary level value addition to MFP at grassroots level.

iii. **Significance**: Through this initiative, the share of tribals in the value chain of Non-Timber Forest Produce is expected to rise from the present 20% to around 60%.

Himalayan Serow spotted in Assam
Context:

- It is a mammal, somewhere between a goat and an antelope, has been confirmed as the newest creature to be spotted in Assam.
- The birders had sighted the colourful

Mandarin duck in the Maguri-- Motapung wetland near eastern Assam's DibruSaikhowa National Park. This duck was last spotted in Assam 118 years ago

About Himalayan serow

i. The Himalayan Serow (Capricornis sumatraensis thar) is a subspecies of the mainland Serow, native to the Himalayas.

ii. It was previously considered its own species, as Capricornis Thar.

iii. The Himalayan Serow is mostly blackish, with flanks, hindquarters, and upper legs that are a rusty red; its lower legs are whitish

iv. It is listed in CITES Appendix.

Swachh Survekshan 2021
CONTEXT:

- **MoHUA launched Field Assessment of Swachh Survekshan 2021**

Achievements of Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) Since its launch in 2014

i. **Sanitation:** 4360 Urban ULBs have been declared ODF, 2158 cities certified ODF+ and 551 cities certified ODF++. Moreover, 66 lakhs individual household toilets and over 6 lakhs community/ public toilets have been constructed/ or are under construction. Additionally, nearly 60,000 toilets across 2900+ cities have been made live on Google Maps.

ii. **Solid waste management**: 97% of wards have 100% door-to door collection while 68% of the total waste generated is being processed.

About ODF, ODF+ and **ODF ++** categories:

i. **ODF:** Open Defecation free. Those cities that have been certified as ODF

by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs(M/o H&UA)

ii. ODF+ and ODF++ are aimed towards proper maintenance of toilet facilities and safe collection, conveyance, treatment/disposal of all faecal sludge and sewage.

iii. **ODF+** : When toilets are maintained. It focuses on toilets with water, maintenance and hygiene.

iv. **ODF++** : When sewage systems operate. It focuses on toilets with sludge and septage management.

2nd Phase of Swachh Bharat Mission:

i. It was announced in the Union Budget, but cabinet approval is pending.

ii. It will be responsible for sewage management in all cities that have less than 1 lakh population.

iii. A major focus will be the segregation of waste at the source.

iv. Mission is planning on creating uniforms "like policemen" for "safaimitras", adding that "they played an important role in Covid-19."

Prerak Dauur Samman awards:

i. Give according to the state rankings, on the basis of ODF, ODF + and ODF ++ status.

ii. It includes categories of divya (platinum), anupam (gold), ujjwal (silver), udit (bronze), and aarohi (copper / aspiring).

PSLV-C51/Amazonia-1 Mission

CONTEXT:

• The main payload, **Brazil's Amazonia-1 satellite**(a 600kg satellite) launched by ISRO marks a new high point in space cooperation between the two countries that began nearly two decades ago.

• The launch was witnessed by the visiting Brazilian Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Marcos Pontes, and the heads of the Brazilian Space Agency (AEB) and the National Institute for Space Research (INPE) at Sriharikota.

ABOUT PSLV:

• PSLV is known as the workhouse of ISRO. Almost all of the commercial launches in India are done by PSLV.

About **New Space India Limited(NSIL)**, a competitor of Antrix has been launched by ISRO.

i. Wholly owned by GoI, under the administrative control of **DOS** [on 6th Mar 2019].

ii. It will commercially exploit the R&D work of ISRO centres & constituent units of DOS.

iii. It has been incorporated to carry out the following roles and functions as part of its mandate:

1. **Small Satellite technology transfer** to industry, wherein NSIL will obtain license from DOS/ISRO and sub-license it to Industries;

2. **Manufacture** of Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (**SSLV**) in collaboration with Private Sector;

3. **Productionisation** of **PSLV** through Indian Industry;

4. **Productionisation** and marketing of Space based products and services, including launch and application;

5. Transfer of technology developed by ISRO Centres and constituent units of DOS;

6. **Marketing spin-off technologies** and products/services, both in India and abroad;

   • **Spin-off technologies** are commercial technologies that were developed or improved by

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an agency's space program and benefit people everywhere. Ex:

a. ISROSIL, a type of high silica cloth trademarked by ISRO in 1983, is now used in various industries for insulation and thermal protection

Recent Reforms In ISRO's marketing strategy

Context:

b. **Preparations for the future market:** With the formation of the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center (IN-SPACe) — a regulatory agency — as well as plans of an independent tribunal to adjudicate disputes among private space entities, there is a potential explosion of market opportunities from space applications on the anvil.

c. There is still confusion on how exactly the responsibilities of NSIL differ from those of Antrix(ISRO's commercial arm which which takes space marketing related orders form private satellite makers on behalf of ISRO).

d. Private sector participation:

i. It currently plays a major role in developing launch and satellite infrastructure for ISRO. There are now several companies that offer myriad services.

ii. Many of these companies want to launch their own satellites, of varying dimensions, and the experience with ISRO has not been smooth always.

d. Challenges:

i. Litigation: The most conspicuous has been the controversy involving Devas Multimedia, to which the Government of India owes nearly $1.2 billion going by an order of a tribunal of the International Chamber of Commerce and upheld by a United States federal court last year.

ii. Solution: NSIL, it is said, is also a move by India's space establishment to insulate the prospects of the space industry in India from repercussions of the Devas-Antrix imbroglio.

e. NSIL is also expected to be more than just a marketer of ISRO's technologies;

f. It must see itself both as an Indian ambassador and disruptor in the space arena.

About Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe): To provide a level playing field for private companies to use Indian space infrastructure. It will also hand-hold, promote and guide the private industries in space activities through encouraging policies and a friendly regulatory environment.

The Simlipal forest fire, and why it is a matter of concern

Context:

a. They are a recurrent annual phenomenon, but are also brought under control due to short span of precipitation.

b. They are a recurrent annual phenomenon, but are also brought under control due to short span of precipitation.

i. With the onset of summers and towards the end of autumn: the forest area remains vulnerable to forest fires.

ii. This duration coincides with the shedding of deciduous forests in the forest areas. The fallen leaves are more vulnerable to catching fire and facilitate the spreading of these forest fires quickly over the entire forest area.

About Simlipal: which derives its name from 'Simul' (silk cotton) tree, is a national park and a tiger reserve situated in the northern part of Odisha's Mayurbhanj district.

i. It is the abode of 94 species of orchids and about 3,000 species of plants. The identified species of fauna include 12 species of amphibians, 29 species of reptiles, 264 species of birds.

ii. Total of 399 fire points have been identified in the fringe areas bordering the forest, close to the villages. "All of them have been attended to, and the fire is now brought under control.

India will be fully Atmanirbhar in Silk production in the next two years, says Union Textiles Minister Smriti Zubin Irani

Context:
a. **MOU SIGNED**: Central Silk Board (CSB) under the Ministry of Textiles and the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on a convergence model for implementation of Agro-forestry in the silk sector under the ongoing Sub-Mission on Agroforestry (SMAF) Scheme.
b. **AIM**: to incentivize the farmers to take up sericulture based Agroforestry models thereby contributing to Make in India and Make for the World
c. **SIGNIFICANCE**: This linkage will add another dimension to agroforestry for faster returns to the growers as well as support the production of the range of silks that India is famous for.
   i. The minister said that India will be fully Atmanirbhar in Silk production in the next two years.
   ii. Raw silk production in the country has increased 35% in the last six years.
   iii. More than 90 lakh people have got employment in raw silk production.

d. **SMAF (Sub-Mission on Agroforestry)**
i. **Aim**: to encourage farmers to plant multipurpose trees together with the agriculture crops for climate resilience and additional source of income to the farmers, as well as enhanced feedstock to inter alia wood based and herbal industry.
ii. The initiative of formalizing the collaboration in the sericulture sector is especially targeted for augmentation of sericulture host plants e.g. Mulberry, Asan, Arjuna, Som, Soalu, Kesseru, BadaKesseru, Phanat, etc. to be cultivated both as block plantations and border or peripheral plantations on farm lands.

RARE DISEASE
Context:
a. The Delhi High Court has set up a special committee to find a time bound solution on ways to provide treatment and therapy options to patients suffering from rare diseases seeking direction to the government to provide them uninterrupted free treatment in view of the exorbitant cost of treatment.
b. The High Court's direction came while hearing a bunch of petitions filed by patients suffering from rare diseases such as
i. **Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD)** : is a condition that causes progressive muscle degeneration and weakness in the victim.
ii. **Hunter's syndromes:** a rare disease that is passed on in families. It mostly affects boys and their bodies cannot break down a kind of sugar that builds

bones, skin, tendons, and other tissues.

c. **About rare disease:** A rare disease or orphan disease, is any disease that affects a small percentage of the population.

   i. Most rare diseases are genetic, and are present throughout a person's entire life, even if symptoms do not immediately appear.

   ii. These are characterised by a wide diversity of symptoms and signs that vary not only from disease to disease but also from patient to patient suffering from the same disease.

MAINS

GENERAL STUDIES- I

Target judicial patriarchy, not the judge

Context:

1. A survey by the Thomson Reuters Foundation (2018) and National Crime Records Bureau report (2019**) Shows**

rapes were reported in 2019 or **88 incidents of rape a day.**

2. The Challenge and Concern for India is, every hour, 39 instances of crime against women including four instances of rape are committed in India. **And rape cases have increased by 88% over** a decade. Four lakh cases of crimes against women were reported in 2019 .

National Crime Records Bureau report (2019):

1. A total of 4,05,861 cases of crime against women were registered during 2019, showing an increase of 7.3% over 2018 (3,78,236 cases).

2. Majority of cases under crime against women under IPC were registered under 'Cruelty by

Husband or His Relatives' (30.9%) followed by '**Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage** her

Modesty' (21.8%), 'Kidnapping & Abduction of Women' (17.9%) and 'Rape' (7.9%).

S. No.	Crime Head under IPC	Total Cases for Investigation	Charge-sheeting Rate	Total Cases for Trial	Total Cases Convicted	Conviction Rate
1.	Murder	48,553	85.3	2,24,747	6,961	41.9
2.	Rape	45,536	81.5	1,62,741	4,640	27.8
3.	Kidnapping & Abduction	1,73,245	37.3	2,45,914	3,952	24.9
4.	Rioting	79,004	86.8	5,06,152	5,207	19.4
5.	Hurt (including acid attack)	7,02,640	87.7	26,66,893	61,243	30.6

that India as the most dangerous country for women as many as 32,032

3. The crime rate registered per lakh women **population is 62.4 in 2019** in comparison with 58.8 in 2018.

Gender insensitivity India:

1. The recent observations by the Chief

should be viewed not as an infringement of a woman's chastity or virginity but a violation of her bodily integrity and sexual autonomy.

THE WORLD'S 10 MOST DANGEROUS COUNTRIES FOR WOMEN

Justice of India (CJI), **S.A. Bobde**, while granting bail to a government servant who is accused of repeated rape and torture of a 16-year-old child have been widely criticised though the Chief Justice of India has now denied having suggested marriage to the rape accused.

2. The worrisome issue is that legally speaking, rape is not even a compoundable offence and parties are not allowed to enter into compromise.

3. The real problem is that such avoidable utterances reflect the patriarchal mindset of our judges and the larger society. These statements demonstrate our gender insensitivity.

4. The Chief Justice of India said was similar to the Modi government's affidavit, in 2017, in the Delhi High Court. The RSS too had opposed marital rape being made a crime.

5. The Justice J.S. Verma Committee (2013), which was constituted after the Delhi gang rape (2012) had said that rape

6. This autonomy cannot be permanently lost by entering into marriage. Rape remains rape irrespective of the relationship.

In the higher judiciary: **(Verdict)**

1. The similar observations by other judges to understand the patriarchal attitude of judges. A few years ago, the top court orally asked a convict who had molested a girl 10 years ago to fall at her feet and that if she forgave him, the Court too would limit his sentence of imprisonment to the period already undergone.

2. In June **22, 2020 order while granting advance bail to the rape accused,** Justice Krishna S. Dixit of the Karnataka High Court asked why 'the victim had gone to her office at night'; why had she 'not objected to consuming drinks with him'

3. The Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court, in a strange ruling, had ordered that the sentence of the 'rape

convict can be cut if he agrees to pay ?1 lakh to the victim'. Of course, the poor victim accepted the offer.

4. The Bombay High Court in another case had ordered that breaking a promise of marriage is neither cheating nor rape. Here, the victim had filed for divorce from her husband to marry the accused.

5. Justice Mridul Bhatkar granted bail to the accused observing that 'it is an unfortunate case of frustrated love affair'.

6. T**he Madras High Court had granted bail to a rape** accused so that he could mediate with the victim. The Supreme Court had to quickly intervene to get the bail cancelled.

The Bhanwari Devi case and other case:

1. The shocking decision in Bhanwari Devi (1995); she was gang-raped in 1992. The acquittal order by the Rajasthan court gave absurd reasons such as a higher caste man cannot rape a lower caste woman for reasons of purity

2. A 2020 judgment from the Guwahati High Court treated refusal of applying sindoor (vermilion) and wearing conch shell bangles (shaka) as sufficient basis to grant divorce to the husband.

3. A few years ago, **the Madras High Court gave** an absurd order by directing that 'divorcees too should maintain sexual purity to claim alimony'.

4. Even a progressive judge like Justice M. Katju in D. Velusamy vs D. Patchaiammal (2010) had termed a second Hindu wife as a 'mistress' and 'keep', and thus not entitled to maintenance.

5. In Narendra vs K. Meena (2016), the top court held that under Hindu traditions, a wife on marriage is supposed to fully integrate herself with her husband's family and that if she refuses to live with her in-laws, it would amount to cruelty and the husband would be entitled to divorce her under the Hindu Marriage Act. The High Court had ruled in favour of the wife.

6. In Rajesh Sharma vs The State Of Uttar Pradesh (2017), a two judge Bench of Justices Adarsh Kumar Goel and Uday Umesh Lalit in yet another controversial order observed that there should be no automatic arrests on charges of cruelty. In this case, a demand of dowry was made for ?3 lakh and a car, which the wife's family was not able to meet.

And in 'Hadiya'

1. In **the infamous Hadiya (2017**) case too, some of the observations of the Kerala High Court about Hadiya's independent agency and powers of her father over her were equally shocking and patriarchal.

2. The Supreme Court in 2018 upheld the validity of her marriage and overruled the High Court's strange judgment; the fact is that the top court's order of investigation by the National Investigation Agency into the matter of marriage of two adults was absolutely erroneous.

India's worse performance:

World leaders vowed three years ago to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls by 2030, allowing them to live freely and safely to participate equally in political, economic and public life. But despite this pledge it is estimated that one in three women globally experience physical or sexual violence during their lifetime. Child marriage is still rife, with almost 750 million women and girls married before their 18th birthday, resulting in teen pregnancies that can put their health at risk and limiting schooling and opportunities.

6 key areas:

Healthcare | Discrimination | Cultural Traditions | Sexual Violence | Non-Sexual Violence | Human Trafficking

1. The survey asked respondents which five of the 193 United Nations member states they thought were most dangerous for women and which country was worst in terms of healthcare, economic resources, cultural or traditional practices, sexual violence and harassment, non-sexual violence and human trafficking.

2. Respondents ranked India the most dangerous country for women in terms of human trafficking, including sex slavery and domestic servitude, and for customary practices such as forced marriage, stoning and female infanticide.

3. Government data shows reported cases of crime against women rose by 83 percent between 2007 and 2016, when there were four cases of rape reported every hour.

Conclusion:

1. In normal circumstances, a wife is expected to be with the family of the husband after the marriage. She becomes integral to and forms part of the family of the husband'. Interestingly, though the wife is an integral part of her husband's family, yet she is not a coparcener under the Hindu **Succession Act.**

2. One hopes the controversy now will lead to greater gender sensitivity by our judges, at least in their oral observations and questions, if not the final judgments. It would be better to target patriarchy rather than the Chief Justice of India. Of course the power to ask questions too must reflect gender sensitivity.

3. India moving to the top of woman crime survey showed not enough was being done to tackle the danger women faced, more than five years after the rape and murder of a student on a bus in Delhi made violence against women a national priority.

"A road to progress"-women & white revolution

Context:

1. The achievements of Indian women in dairy farmers and contributing to India's 'White Revolution' are perhaps the greatest cause for celebrating the Women's History.

2.Despite of a majority of dairy farmers owning only small landholdings typically households with two to five cows is also a testament to the success of the dairy cooperatives models that were at the heart of Operation Flood.

The Operation Flood:

1. Operation Flood is the program that led to "White Revolution, launched on 13 January 1970, was the world's largest dairy development program and a landmark project of India's National Dairy Development Board (NDDB).

2. It transformed India from a milk-deficient nation into the world's largest milk producer, surpassing the United States of America in 1998 with about 22.29 percent of global output in 2018.

3. Within 30 years, it doubled the milk available per person in India and made dairy farming India's largest self-sustainable rural employment generator.

4. It was launched to help farmers direct their own development and giving them control of the resources they create. All this was achieved not merely by mass production, but by production by the masses; the process has since been termed as the "White Revolution".

5. If there was one technological breakthrough that revolutionized India's organized dairy industry, it was the making of skim milk powder out of buffalo milk. The man who made this possible was Harichand Megha Dalaya.

The approach for Milk production:

1. The approach made it possible to enhance backward and forward linkages in the dairy value chain, paving the way for freeing small farmers from the clutches of middlemen, and guaranteed minimum procurement price for milk.

2. A study by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) indicates that 93% of women farmers who receive training alongside financial support succeed in their ventures, compared to the 57% success rate of those who receive financial aid alone.

3. Institutionalizing such inputs, the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) now organises farmer's orientation programmes across the country, under which women farmers are trained in scientific best practices on animal health, fodder quality, clean milk production, and accounts management.

The Enhanced incomes:

1. According to latest data, there are more than 1,90,000 dairy cooperative societies across the country, with approximately 6 million women members.

2. A study conducted on Women Dairy Cooperative Society (WDCS) members across Rajasthan showed that with the income generated through dairying, 31% of the women had converted their mud houses to cement structures, while 39% had constructed concrete sheds for their cattle.

3. Importantly, women-led cooperatives also provide fertile ground for grooming women from rural areas for leadership positions. In many instances, this becomes the first step for women in breaking free from traditional practices.

4. Statistics indicate that small and marginal farmers have access to only 50-70% of the resources that large and medium farmers have.

5. The presence of collectives in the form of cooperatives and milk unions plays a significant role in enhancing the knowledge and bargaining power of women.

The Women-led companies:

1. It might be argued that the sixth plan had already broken this silence. A chapter on 'Women and Development' the first such in a "five-year plan document" stated: 'Efforts would be made to offer larger employment for them in the schemes for public distribution system, rural godowns, Oper-ation Flood II, dairy

development and social forestry and in armed forces'.

2. Recent years have seen the rise of women-led dairy unions and companies. To this end, the NDDB has played a proactive role in setting up women-led producer enterprises.

3. Last year, Amul Dairy released a list of 10 women dairy farmers who became millionaires by selling milk to the company.

4.For instance, Navalben Dalsangbhai Chaudhary from Vadgam earned almost ₹88 lakh by selling 2,21,595 kg of milk in 2019-20, and Malvi Kanuben from Dhanera earned about ₹74 lakh by selling 2,50,745 kg of milk.

5. Innovation in organisational structures has also spurred consistent growth in this sector.

Conclusion:

1. The Modernization of the sector would require introduction of procurement cold chains and fair and transparent milk procurement systems at the village level.

2. An increase in livestock population will not be sustainable for the sector without good quality fodder and feed and increased animal health coverage.

3. Dairy policy in India has otherwise not addressed itself to the central role of women in milk production and processing-to the detriment both of the dairy economy and of women. Such a policy might have enhanced India's dairy economy.

4. These testimonials of individual women dairy farmers are all the more remarkable for the fact that many of them have not had a formal education, but through the process of dairying and working with larger collectives, such as milk unions and

cooperatives, they have mastered the nuances of finance and marketing.

Dandi March-PM flagging off padyatra

CONTEXT:

1. With the Prime Minister flagging off the 'Padyatra' (Freedom March) from Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad and inaugurating the curtain raiser activities of the 'Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav' - a series of events will be organised by the Government of India to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of India's Independence launched 75 weeks before 15 August 2022 on 12 March 2021, the National Cadet Corps has taken upon itself to launch a nationwide action plan to promote one social activity every month commencing from March 2021.

2. The 24-day march from March 12 to April 5, 1930 was a tax resistance campaign against the British salt monopoly.

3. Based on Gandhi's principle of non-violence or Satyagraha, the march marked the inauguration of the civil disobedience movement.

4. The Dandi march was easily the most significant organised movement against the British Raj after the non-cooperation movement of the early 1920s.

5. In all the attention that it drove from the national and international media and world leaders, it was truly a turning point in the Indian Independence movement.

Why did Gandhi call for the Dandi March?

1. The 1882 Salt Act gave the British a monopoly in the manufacture and sale of salt. Even though salt was freely available on the coasts of India,

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Indians were forced to buy it from the colonisers.

2. Gandhi decided that if there was any one product through which the civil disobedience could be inaugurated, then it was salt.

3. "Next to air and water, salt is perhaps the greatest necessity of life," he said, explaining his choice, even though many in the working committee of the Congress were not too sure about it.

4. The British government, including the Viceroy Lord Irwin too did not take the prospect of a campaign against the salt tax too seriously.

5. Addressing a massive gathering in Ahmedabad on March 8, Gandhi declared his decision to break the salt laws. "That is for me one step, the first step, towards full freedom," he said as quoted in historian Ramachandra Guha's book, 'Gandhi: The years that changed the world (1914-1948)'.

6. Guha wrote, "Gandhi wanted this to be a long march, or pilgrimage perhaps, where his leisurely progress would enthuse people along the way and attract wider publicity too." Finally, he decided on Dandi to be the point at which the salt law would be broken.

What happened during the march?

1. There was great excitement in Ahmedabad on the eve of the march. A large crowd gathered around Sabarmati ashram and stayed through the night.

2. Gandhi wrote to Nehru that night, informing him about rumours of his arrest. That did not happen though and Gandhi woke up a free man the following day.

3. He gathered his walking mates, a group of 78 men, who were bona fide

ashramites. These included Manilal Gandhi from South Africa and several others from all across India.

4. "There were thirty-one marchers from Gujarat, thirteen from Maharashtra, lesser numbers from the United Provinces, Kerala, Punjab and Sindh, with Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Karnataka, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa sending one man apiece.

5. The diversity was social as well as geographical, for among the chosen marchers were many students and khadi workers, several 'untouchables', a few Muslims and one Christian," wrote Guha. Even though women too wanted to be part of the march, Gandhi preferred to keep it restricted to men alone.

6. Gandhi reached Dandi on April 5. The following day, early morning he proceeded along with the other marchers to the sea, where he picked up lumps of natural salt lying in a small pit. The act was symbolic, but was hugely covered by the press, and was the beginning of several other acts of civil disobedience in other parts of India.

What was the significance of the Dandi march?

1. The popularity gained by the march shook up the British government. It responded by arresting more than 95,000 people by March 31. The following month Gandhi proceeded to Dharasana salt works from where he was arrested and taken to the Yerawada Central Jail.

2. As Gandhi broke the salt laws in Dandi, similar acts of civil disobedience took place in other parts of India.

3. In Bengal, for instance, volunteers led by Satish Chandra Dasgupta walked

from Sodepur Ashram to the village of Mahisbathan to make salt. K.F Nariman in Bombay led another group of marchers to Haji Ali Point where they prepared salt at a nearby park.

4. The illegal manufacture and sale of salt was accompanied by the boycott of foreign cloth and liquor. What started as salt satyagraha soon grew into mass satyagraha. Forest laws were flouted in Maharashtra, Karnataka and the Central Provinces.

5. Peasants in Gujarat and Bengal refused to pay land and chowkidari taxes. Acts of violence too broke out in Calcutta, Karachi and Gujarat, but unlike what happened during the non-cooperation movement, Gandhi refused to suspend the civil disobedience movement this time.

6. The Congress Working Committee decided to end the Satyagraha only in 1934. Even though it did not immediately lead to self rule or dominion status, the Salt Satyagraha did have some long term effects.

7. "Indian, British and world opinion increasingly recognised the legitimate claims of Gandhi and the Congress for Indian Independence," wrote Richard L. Johnson who authored the book, 'Gandhi's experiments with truth: Essential writings by and about Mahatma Gandhi'. Moreover, the British also realised that control over India now depended completely on the consent of the India.

AICTE announced changes in entry-level qualification for engineering programmes: Physics and Mathematics no longer a pre-requisite for pursuing B. Tech or B.E.

a. Explanation: Every year, it brings out an 'Approval Process Handbook' (or APH)

that lays down the basic norms for recognising new technical education institutes, new programmes, and entry-level qualifications for admission to degree and diploma programmes, among other things. This year's handbook carries a change in the eligibility criteria for admission to the four-year B.Tech and B.E. programmes.

b. Earlier: Physics and **Mathematic**s were compulsory and the student could take 3rd subject from a list of 11 subjects -

Chemistry, Biotechnology, Biology, Computer Science, Information Technology, Informatics Practices, Agriculture, Engineering Graphics, Business Studies, and technical vocational subjects.

c. Now: a candidate is expected to have scored at least 45% in any three subjects out of the list of 14 provided in the new handbook, which are Physics, Mathematics, Chemistry, Computer Science, Electronics, Information Technology, Biology, Informatics Practices, Biotechnology, Technical Vocational subject, Engineering Graphics, Business Studies and Entrepreneurship. None of these subjects are compulsory, all are optional.

d. Reason: The growing spirit of interdisciplinary engineering education necessitates such diverse set of coucres. the new rule now states that institutes and universities can offer "bridge courses" to help such students with subjects (in this instance, Mathematics) they didn't have in Classes 11 and 12.

Patriarchal mind-set and Gender insensitivity in Judiciary:
Context:
a. The recent observations by the Chief Justice of India (CJI), S.A. Bobde,

while granting bail to a government servant who is accused of repeated rape and torture of a 16-year-old child have been widely criticised though the Chief Justice of India has now denied having suggested marriage to the rape accused.

    i. The worrisome issue is that legally speaking, rape is not even a compoundable offence and parties are not allowed to enter into compromise.

b. **India's condition vis-a-vis women:**

i. A survey by the Thomson Reuters Foundation in 2018 had rated India as the most dangerous country for women.

ii. According to a National Crime Records Bureau report (2019) as many as 32,032 rapes were reported in 2019 — or 88 incidents of rape a day. Every hour, 39 instances of crime against women including four instances of rape are committed in India. Reported rape cases have increased by 88% over a decade. Four lakh cases of crimes against women were reported in 2019.

c. **Justice J.S. Verma Committee (2013)'s view:** It was constituted after the Delhi gang rape (2012).

    i. It had said that rape should be viewed not as an infringement of a woman's chastity or virginity but a violation of her bodily integrity and sexual autonomy.

    ii. **Marital Rape:** This autonomy cannot be permanently lost by entering into marriage. Rape remains rape irrespective of the relationship.

d. **History of Patriarchy in Judiciary:**

    i. **Bhanwari Devi (1995) Case**: she was gang-raped in 1992. The acquittal order by the

Rajasthan court gave absurd reasons such as:

1. A higher caste man cannot rape a lower caste woman for reasons of purity;
2. Her husband could not have watched his wife being raped;
3. Men who are 60-70 years old cannot commit rape and one relative cannot commit rape in front of another relative.
4. It has been 25 years but the appeal against such a bizarre judgment has not been disposed of.

ii. 2020 judgment from the Guwahati High Court treated refusal of applying sindoor (vermilion) and wearing conch shell bangles (shaka) as sufficient basis to grant divorce to the husband.

iii. A few years ago, the Madras High Court gave an absurd order by directing that 'divorcees too should maintain sexual purity to claim alimony'.

iv. **D. Velusamy vs D. Patchaiammal (2010)** Even a progressive judge like Justice M. Katju had termed a second Hindu wife as a 'mistress' and 'keep', and thus not entitled to maintenance.

v. **Narendra vs K. Meena (2016)**: the top court held that under Hindu traditions, a wife on marriage is supposed to fully integrate herself with her husband's family and that if she refuses to live with her in-laws, it would amount to cruelty and the husband would be entitled to divorce her under the Hindu Marriage Act. The High Court had ruled in favour of the wife. Interestingly, though the wife is an integral part of her husband's family, yet she is not a coparcener under the Hindu Succession Act.

vi. **Hadiya (2017) case**: some of the observations of the Kerala High Court

about Hadiya's independent agency and powers of her father over her were equally shocking and patriarchal. Even though the Supreme Court in 2018 upheld the validity of her marriage and overruled the High Court's strange judgment, the fact is that the top court's order of investigation by the National Investigation Agency into the matter of marriage of two adults was absolutely erroneous.

GENERAL STUDIES II

Conclusion of Budget session

Context"

- The Budget session of Parliament ended, two weeks ahead of the original plan, as many political leaders are busy with campaigning for the forthcoming State Assembly elections.

 a. Trend of the last few sessions:

i. the Budget session of 2020 was curtailed ahead of the lockdown imposed following the novel coronavirus pandemic,

ii. a short 18-day monsoon session ended after 10 days as several Members of Parliament and Parliament staff got affected by COVID-19, and the winter session was cancelled.

iii. As a result, the fiscal year 2020-21 saw the **Lok Sabha sitting** for 34 days and the **Rajya Sabha** for 33, **the lowest ever.**

iv. During the session, 13 Bills were introduced, **and not even one of them was referred to a parliamentary committee for examination.**

v. No proper legislative scrutiny of proposed legislation as well as government functioning and finances.

b. No Bill scrutiny: Many high impact Bills were introduced and passed within a few days.

i. The Government of **National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021,** which is the Bill to change the governance mechanism of Delhi — shifting governance from the legislature and the Chief Minister to the Lieutenant Governor — was introduced on March 15 in the Lok Sabha, passed by that House on March 22 and by Rajya Sabha on the March 24.

ii. The **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2021**, amends the Mines and Minerals Act, 1957 to remove end-use restrictions on mines and ease conditions for captive mines; this Bill was introduced on March 15 and passed by both Houses within a week.

iii. The National **Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) Bill, 2021 —** to create a new government infrastructure finance institution and permit private ones in this sector was passed within three days of introduction.

iv. **The Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2021,** the Bill to increase the limit of foreign direct investment in insurance companies from 49% to 74% also took just a week between introduction and passing by both Houses.

v. In all, **13 Bills were introduced in this session**, and eight of them were passed within the session. This quick work should be read as a sign of abdication by Parliament of its duty to scrutinise Bills, rather than as a sign of efficiency.

c. Consulting House panels:

i. The **percentage of Bills referred to committees declined from 60% and 71% in the 14th Lok Sabha (2004-09) and the 15th Lok Sabha, respectively, to 27% i**n the 16th Lok Sabha and just 11% in the current one.

ii. In the past, Parliamentary committees have often done a stellar job. For example, the committee that examined the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code suggested many changes to make the Code work better, and which were all incorporated in the final law. Similarly, amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act were based on the recommendations of the Committee.

d. Money Bill classification:

i. The last few years have seen the dubious **practice of marking Bills as 'Money Bills'** and getting them past the Rajya Sabha. Some sections of the **Aadhaar Act** were read down by the Supreme Court of India due to this procedure (with a dissenting opinion that said that the entire Act should be invalidated).

ii. **The Finance Bills,** over the last few years, have contained several unconnected items such as restructuring of tribunals, introduction of electoral bonds, and amendments to the foreign contribution act.

iii. This year, Finance bill has made **major amendments to the Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956.** As this is a Money Bill, the Rajya Sabha cannot make any amendments, and has only recommendatory powers. Some of the earlier Acts, including the Aadhaar Act and Finance Act, have been referred to a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court.

iv. During this session, the Union Budget was presented, discussed and passed. The Constitution requires the Lok Sabha to approve the expenditure Budget (in the form of demand for grants) of each department and Ministry. The Lok Sabha had listed the budget of just five Ministries for detailed discussion and discussed only three of these; 76% of the total Budget was approved without any discussion. This behaviour was in line with the trend of the last 15 years, during which period 70% to 100% of the Budget have been passed without discussion in most years.

e. The missing Deputy Speaker:

i. A striking feature of the current Lok Sabha is the absence of a Deputy Speaker. **Article 93** of the Constitution states that "... The House of the People shall, as soon as may be, choose two members of the House to be respectively Speaker and Deputy Speaker…."

ii. **Usually, the Deputy Speaker is elected within a couple of months of the formation of a new Lok Sabh**a, with the exception in the 1998-99 period, when it took 269 days to do so.

iii. **By the time of the next session of Parliament**, two years would have elapsed without the election of a Deputy Speaker. The issue showed up starkly this session when the Speaker was hospitalised. Some functions of the Speaker such as delivering the valedictory speech were carried out by a senior member.

Centre vs Delhi govt again

WHAT THE BILL PROPOSES
- The term "Government" in any law by the legislative assembly will mean "Lieutenant Governor"
- The assembly shall not make rules or committees to consider day-to-day administration or conduct inquiries
- Rule or committee made before the new amendment comes into force "shall be void"
- Before taking any executive action, opinion of the L-G shall be obtained by a general or special order
- L-G shall have power to reserve for consideration any bill, and any of the matters outside the purview of the powers conferred on the legislative assembly

Bill will define responsibilities in line with the constitutional scheme of governance of national Capital, as interpreted by SC
— AMIT SHAH, UNION HOME MINISTER

DELHI GOVT'S RESERVATIONS
- Article 239AA says legislature can make laws on any matters on state and concurrent list except for issues relating to public order, police and land.
- SC's Constitution bench in 2018 recognised assembly's right, and said Union has exclusive powers only in the above 3 issues.
- SC said L-G should work with aid and advice of council of ministers
- SC order clarified that L-G has not been entrusted with any independent decision-making power
- While any matter of dispute can be sent to President, the SC said it does not mean every matter should be

After being rejected by people of Delhi, BJP seeks to drastically curtail powers of elected govt. Bill is dilution of SC judgment.
— ARVIND KEJRIWAL, CM

f. Abuse of Parliament in the past: The Monsoon Session of 2008 had set some interesting records as eight Bills were passed in the Lok Sabha within 17 minutes. No Winter session was held an Monsoon session was extended with breaks. This was done as the government wanted to use a parliamentary rule that a no-confidence motion could not be moved twice within a session;

g. Way Forward: Parliamentary scrutiny is key:

i. Parliament has the central role in our democracy as the representative body that checks the work of the government.

ii. It is also expected to examine all legislative proposals in detail, understand their nuances and implications of the provisions, and decide on the appropriate way forward.

iii. In order to fulfil its constitutional mandate, it is imperative that Parliament functions effectively. This will require making and following processes such as creating a system

of research support to Members of Parliament, providing sufficient time for MPs to examine issues, and requiring that all Bills and budgets are examined by committees and public feedback is taken.

Here is why the electoral bonds scheme must go

Context:

1. The Supreme **Court reserved** its order on a plea of a non-governmental organisation seeking a stay on the sale of fresh electoral bonds ahead of state assembly elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and the union territory of Puducherry.

2. The electoral **bonds in design and operation**, they allow for limitless and anonymous corporate donations to political parties. For this reason,

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Flow of funds

A look at what the petition filed by the NGO says:

■ The Finance Act of 2017 introduced the use of electoral bonds, which are exempt from disclosure under the Represen-tation of the People Act, 1951, opening doors to unchecked, unknown funding to parties

■ The amendments have re-moved the existing cap of 7.5% of net profit in the past three years on campaign donations by companies and have legalised anonymous donations

■ Contribution received by any eligible political party in the form of electoral bonds will be exempt from income tax

The Election Commission vide letter dated May 26, 2017 and the RBI in letters on 31.01.2017, 14.09.2017, 27.09.2017 had objected to electoral bonds and advised against the issuance of electoral bonds as a mode for donation to political parties

they are deeply destructive of democracy, and violate core principles of the Indian Constitution.

The electoral bonds:

1. In **2017, the Finance Act was** amended to implement electoral bond scheme under which bonds can be bought of any value in multiples of Rs 1000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh and Rs 1 crore from the SBI by anyone.

2. The name of the donar will not be there on the bond while the validity of the bond will be **for 15 days**. The eligible political parties---with more than one per cent voting share-can show it as the income from voluntary contributions for exemption from income tax.

3. Political parties registered under Section **29A** of the Representation of the People **Act, 1951, which have secured not less than 1%** of the votes in the last general election to an

Assembly or Parliament, are eligible to open current accounts for redemption of electoral bonds.

The democracy must mean this:

1. When **citizens cast their** votes for the people who will represent them in Parliament, they have the right to do so on the basis of full and complete information.

2. **There is no piece of information more important than the knowledge of who funds political parties.**

3. **Across democratic societies,** and through time, it has been proven beyond doubt that money is the most effective way of buying policy, of engaging in regulatory capture, and of skewing the playing field in one's own favour.

4. This is **enabled to a far greater** degree when citizens are in the dark
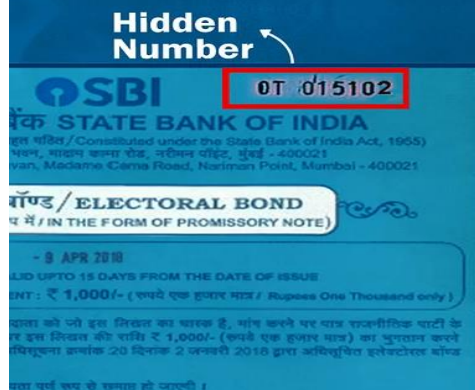
45

about the source of money: it is then impossible to ever know — or assess — whether a government policy is nothing more than a quid pro quo to benefit its funders.

5. The Indian Supreme Court has long held and rightly so that the "**right to know",** especially in the context of elections, is an integral part of the right to freedom of expression under the Indian Constitution.

6. By **keeping this knowledge** from citizens and voters, the electoral bonds scheme violates fundamental tenets of our democracy.

7. It is **equally important** that if a democracy is to thrive, the role of money in influencing politics ought to be limited.

8. In many advanced countries, for example, elections are funded publicly, and principles of parity ensure that there is not too great a resource gap between the ruling party and the opposition.

9. The purpose of **this is to guarantee** a somewhat level playing field, so that elections are a battle of ideas, and not vastly unequal contests where one side's superior resources enable it to overwhelm the other.

10. For this reason, in most countries where elections are not publicly funded, there are caps or limits on financial contributions to political parties.

A blow against democracy:

1. The electoral bonds scheme, however, removes all pre-existing limits on political donations, and effectively allows well-resourced corporations to buy politicians by paying immense sums of money.

2. **This defeats the entire** purpose of democracy, which as B.R. Ambedkar memorably pointed out, was not just to guarantee one person, one vote, but one vote one value.

3. However, **not only do electoral bonds** violate basic democratic principles by allowing limitless and anonymous donations to political parties, they do so asymmetrically.

4. Since the donations are routed through the State Bank of India, it is possible for the government to find out who is donating to which party, but not for the political opposition to know.

5. **This, in turn, me**ans that every donor is aware that the central government can trace their donations back to them.

6. Given India's long-standing misuse of investigative agencies by whichever government occupies power at the Centre, this becomes a very effective way to squeeze donations to rival political parties, while filling the coffers of the incumbent ruling party.

7. **Statistics bear this out**: while we do not know who has donated to whom, we do know that a vast majority of the immensely vast sums donated through multiple electoral

QUESTIONS FOR 'BIG BROTHER'

Hidden Number

0T 015102

SBI
STATE BANK OF INDIA

ELECTORAL BOND
IN THE FORM OF PROMISSORY NOTE

Do political parties know of hidden serial numbers on electoral bonds?

Does Election Commission know electoral bonds have hidden numbers?

Why was no disclosure made to the people and those buying bonds?

Isn't this illegal surveillance of political donors?

cycles over the last three years, have gone to the ruling party.

Gaps in government's defence:

1. The government has attempted to justify the electoral bonds **scheme by arguing that its purpose is to prevent the flow of black money into elections**,

2. **This justification falls apart under** the most basic scrutiny, it is entirely unclear what preventing black money has to do with donor anonymity, making donations limitless, and leaving citizens in the dark.

3. **The electoral bonds scheme allows** even foreign donations to political parties which can often be made through shell companies the prospects of institutional corruption including by foreign sources increases with the electoral bonds scheme, instead of decreasing.

The judiciary needs to act:

1. **One of the most critical** functions of an independent judiciary in a functioning democracy is to referee the fundamentals of the democratic process.

2. Governments derive their legitimacy from elections, and it is elections that grant governments the mandate to pursue their policy goals, without undue interference from courts.

3. The government itself **cannot in good faith regulate** the process that it itself is subject to every five years, the courts remain the only independent body that can adequately umpire and enforce the ground rules of democracy.

4. It is for this reason that courts must be particularly sensitive to and **cognisant** of laws and rules that seek to skew the democratic process and the level playing field, and that seek to entrench one-party rule over multi-party democracy.

5. There is little doubt that in intent and in effect, the electoral bonds scheme is guilty of both. Thus, it deserves to be struck down by the courts as unconstitutional.

6. The conduct of the Supreme Court so far has been disappointing. The

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petition challenging the constitutional validity of the electoral bonds scheme **was filed in 2018.**

7. The case, which is absolutely vital to the future health of Indian democracy, has been left unheard for three years. The Supreme Court's inaction in this case is not neutral,

8. **It is a matter of some optimism that a start was finally made when the Court heard the application for stay before this round of elections.**

Conclusion:

1. **The right to know has long been enshrined** as a part of the right to freedom of expression under constitution; furthermore, uncapping political donations and introducing a structural bias into the form of the donations violate both the guarantee of equality before law, as well as being manifestly **arbitrary.**

2. **The pleas argued that** it legitimized electoral corruption at a huge scale, while at the same time ensuring complete non-transparency in political funding. The challenge to those amendments via Finance Act is still pending.

3. **One can only hope that the Supreme** Court will stay the scheme so that it does not further distort the coming round of elections, and then proceed to hear and decide the full case, in short order.

Remove the wedges in India-Bangladesh ties
Context:

1. **The friendship between India and Bangladesh is historic**, evolving over the last 50 years. Political stability and policy continuity have helped Delhi and Dhaka deepen bilateral ties over the last decade. In contrast, political cycles in Delhi and Islamabad have rarely been in sync.

2. **Bangladesh's Declaration of Independence from Pakistan** 50 years ago and positive changes in India's relations with Pakistan has been elusive, including the different trajectories of India's eastern and north-western frontiers.

Now it is about cooperation:

1. The relationship remained cordial until the assassination of Bangladesh's founding President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in August 15, 1975, followed by a period of military rule and the rise of General Ziaur Rahman who became President and also assassinated in 1981.

2. It thawed again between (1982-1991) when a military led government by General H.M. Ershad ruled the country. Since Bangladesh's return to parliamentary democracy in 1991, relations have gone through highs and lows.

3. However, in **the last decade, India-Bangladesh** relations have warmed up, entering a new era of cooperation, and moving beyond historical and cultural ties to become more assimilated in the areas of trade, connectivity, energy, and defence.

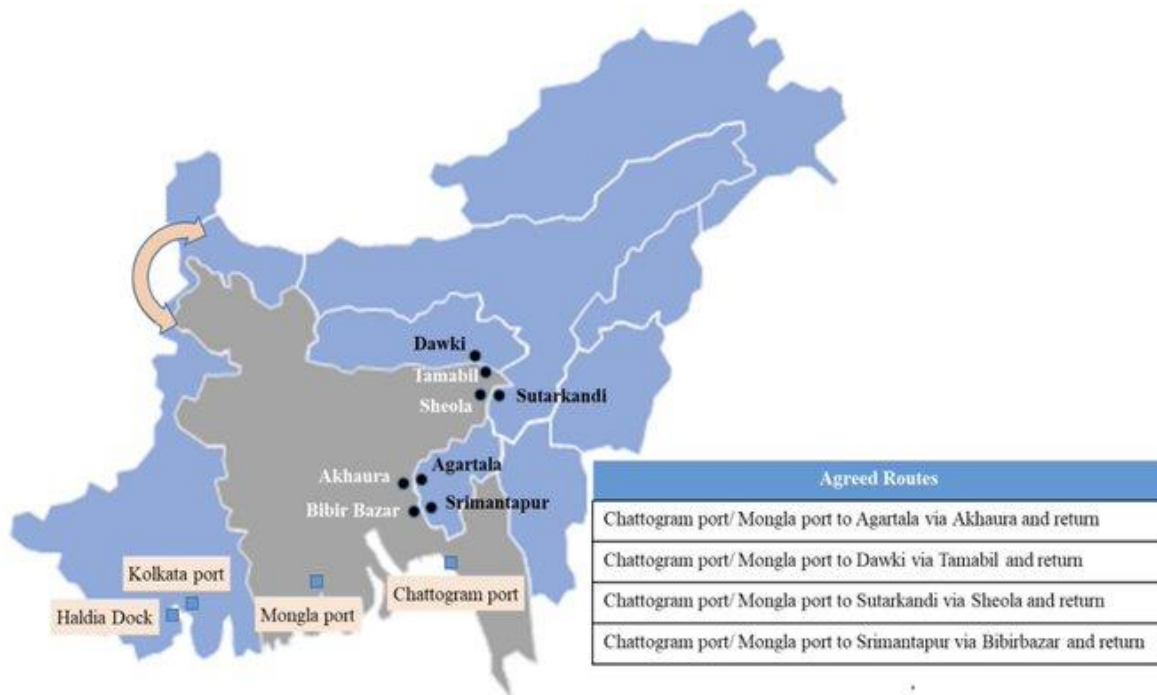**Bangladesh and India Achievement:**

1. Bangladesh and **India have achieved the rare feat** of solving their border issues peacefully by ratifying the historic Land Boundary Agreement in 2015, where enclaves were swapped allowing inhabitants to choose their country of residence and become citizens of either India or Bangladesh.

2. Bangladesh today is India's biggest trading partner in South Asia with exports to Bangladesh **in FY 2018-19 at $9.21** billion and imports at $1.04 billion.

3. India has offered duty free access to multiple Bangladeshi products. Trade could be more balanced if non-tariff barriers from the Indian side could be removed.

4. On the development front, cooperation has deepened, with India extending three lines of credit to Bangladesh in recent years amounting to $8 billion for **the construction of roads, railways, bridges, and ports.**

5. However, in eight years until **2019, only 51% of the first $800** million line of credit has been utilised whilst barely any amount from the next two lines of credit worth $6.5 billion has been mobilised.

4. Bangladesh accounts **for more than 35**% of India's international medical patients and contributes more **than 50% of India's** revenue from medical tourism.

5. **India and Bangladesh share 4096.**7 km. of border, which is the longest land boundary that India shares with any of its neighbours and security is very much impotent.

6. The much-awaited railway line between **Agartala to Akhaura in** Bangladesh will be completed by Sept 2021 and the process for acquisition of land and handing it over to the executing agency in both the countries has been completed.

7. **The 15.6 km-long Agartala-Akhaura railway** link connects Gangasagar in Bangladesh to Nischintapur in India and from Nischintapur to Agartala railway station.

8. **India and Bangladesh share 54 common rivers**. A bilateral Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) has been working since June 1972 to maintain liaison between the two countries to maximize benefits from common river systems,

9. **Highlighted that regional organisations** such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) have an important role to play.

The connectivity boost:

1. **Recently, a 1.9 kilometre long** bridge, the Maitri Setu, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, connecting Sabroom in India with Ramgarh in Bangladesh.

2. Three landlocked states of India viz. Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura will get access to open sea trade **routes**

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Agreed Routes
Chattogram port/ Mongla port to Agartala via Akhaura and return
Chattogram port/ Mongla port to Dawki via Tamabil and return
Chattogram port/ Mongla port to Sutarkandi via Sheola and return
Chattogram port/ Mongla port to Srimantapur via Bibirbazar and return

from Chattogram and Mongla ports via Indian ports.

3. **Tripura will be connected to Chattogram** Port through the Maitree Setu on Feni river at Sabroom in South Tripura and Ramgarh in Bangladesh. While Agartala is 135 kms from Sabroom, Chattogram port is 75 kms from Sabroom.

4. Cargo transportation through IBP waterway route from Kolkata/ Haldia to North **East is limited to 2000 ton** vessels. Now, larger ships carrying cargo destined for North East can call at Chattogram and Mongla ports thereby increasing trade volumes and reducing logistic costs.

5. Bangladesh allows the shipment of goods from its **Mongla and Chattogram** (Chittagong) seaports carried by road, rail, and water ways to Agartala (Tripura) via Akhura; Dawki (Meghalaya) via Tamabil; Sutarkandi (Assam) via Sheola, and

Srimantpur (Tripura) via Bibirbazar. This allows landlocked Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura to access open water routes through the Chattogram and Mongla ports

Bones of contention:

1. Despite the remarkable progress, the unresolved Teesta water sharing issue looms large. Border killings are yet to stop. India not only has failed to stop the border killings but at times has even justified them.

2. **The year 2020** saw the highest number of border shootings by the Border Security Force. The shots are fired at civilians, usually cattle traders, who are usually unarmed, trying to illegally cross the border.

3. **The government's** proposal to implement the National Register of Citizens across the whole of India reflects poorly on India-Bangladesh relations.

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4. It remains to be seen how India addresses the deportation of illegal Muslim immigrants, some of whom claim to have come from Bangladesh.

Keeping the momentum going

1. **Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives,** once considered traditional Indian allies, are increasingly tilting towards China due to the Asian giant's massive trade, infrastructural and defence investments in these countries.

2. **India-Bangladesh relations have** been gaining positive momentum over the last decade. As Bangladesh celebrates its 50 years of independence on March 26, 1971, India continues to be one of its most important neighbours and strategic partners.

3. **As the larger country, the onus** is on India to be generous enough to let the water flow and ensure that people are not killed on the border for cattle even if it is illegal when there are appropriate means for justice.

Conclusion:

1. **India 'Neighbourhood First Policy'** has been **losing its influence** in the region to China. Bhutan also does not abide by Indian influence as evinced by its withdrawal from the BBIN (Bhutan-Bangladesh-India-Nepal) motor vehicles agreement.

2. **China, in lieu of its cheque-book** diplomacy, is well-entrenched in South Asia, including Bangladesh, with which it enjoys significant economic and defence relations.

3. **The small but important steps can remove** long-standing snags in a relationship which otherwise is gradually coming of age in 50 years. To make the recent gains irreversible, both countries need to continue working on the three Cs — cooperation, collaboration, and consolidation.

Dormant Parliament, fading business

Context:

1. The Budget session of Parliament came to an end two weeks before schedule. Despite this, the Lok **Sabha recorded 114 per cent productivity** during the session.

2. **The Government decided to cut short the session, which was supposed to conclude on April 8, due to the upcoming assembly elections in five states.**

3. The Budget session of 2020 **was curtailed ahead** of the lockdown imposed following the novel coronavirus pandemic, a short 18-day monsoon session ended after 10 days as several Members of Parliament and Parliament staff got affected by COVID-19, and the winter session was cancelled.

The highlights of Budget session of Parliament:

1. **A total of 17 bills were introduced** in Lok Sabha and 18 bills were passed in the Lok Sabha during the session. This includes the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill and the Insurance (Amendment) Bill among others.

2. Almost 600 matters of urgent public importance were also raised by the Members of Parliament

3. The **fiscal year 2020-21 saw the** Lok Sabha sitting for 34 days (and the Rajya Sabha for 33), the lowest ever. The casualty was proper legislative scrutiny of proposed legislation as well as government functioning and finances.

meet at least twice a year. There are usually

There are three sessions in a year:

1. **The Budget Session (February to May);**
2. **The Monsoon Session (July to September); and**
3. **The Winter Session (November to December).**

High Productivity, Large Number of Bills Passed

Budget Session of Parliament 2021

- Productivity for Budget Session *2021* was **114%** for the Lok Sabha and **90%** for the Rajya Sabha

- Budget Session *2021* saw **24** sittings of the Lok Sabha and **23** sittings of the Rajya Sabha

- First part of the Budget Session saw **12** sittings of Lok Sabha and **11** sittings of Rajya Sabha

- **12** sittings of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha were held in the second part of the session

- **20** Bills were introduced; **17** in Lok Sabha and **3** in Rajya Sabha

- **18** Bills were passed by Lok Sabha and **19** Bills were passed by Rajya Sabha

(Source: Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs)

Constitution provision on Parliament meets:

1. **The president from time to time summons each House** of Parliament to meet. But, the maximum gap between two sessions of Parliament cannot be more than six months. In other words, the Parliament should

1. A '**session' of Parliament** is the period spanning between the first sitting of a House and its prorogation (or dissolution in the case of the Lok Sabha.

2. **During a session**, the House meets every day to transact business. The period spanning between the prorogation of a House and its

reassembly in a new session is called 'recess'.

No Bill scrutiny:

1. An **important development this** session has been the absence of careful scrutiny of Bills. During the session, 13 Bills were introduced, and not even one of them was referred to a parliamentary committee for examination.

2. In **all, 13 Bills were** introduced in this session, and eight of them were passed within the session. This quick work should be read as a sign of abdication by Parliament of its duty to **scrutinise Bills,** rather than as a sign of efficiency.

Consulting House panels:

1. This development also highlights the decline in the efficacy of committees. The percentage of Bills referred to committees declined from 60% and 71% in the 14th Lok Sabha (2004-09) and the 15th Lok **Sabha, respectively, to 27%** in the 16th Lok Sabha and just 11% in the current one.

2. Parliamentary committees have often done a stellar job. For example, the committee that examined the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code suggested many changes to make the Code work better, and which were all incorporated in the final law.

3. **Similarly, amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act were based on the recommendations of the Committee.**

4. Data compiled by PRS Legislative Research shows that o**nly 25% bill**s were referred to committees in the 16th Lok Sabha (2014-2019) as compared to **60**% in the 14th (2004-**2009) and 71% in the 15th Lok** Sabha (2009-14)

Money Bill classification:

1. Money Bill is **defined in Article 110** of the Indian Constitution. Money bills are concerned with financial matters like taxation, public expenditure, etc.

2. The bill is significant for Indian Polity and governance as many important issues. The last few years have seen the dubious practice of marking Bills as 'Money Bills' and getting them past **the Rajya Sabha.**

3. Some **sections of the Aadhaar** Act were read down by the Supreme Court of India due to this procedure (with a dissenting opinion that said that the entire Act should be invalidated).

4. The **Finance Bills,** over the last few years, have contained several unconnected items such as restructuring of tribunals, introduction of electoral bonds, and amendments to the foreign contribution act.

5. During this session, **the Union** Budget was presented, discussed and passed. The Constitution requires the Lok Sabha to approve the expenditure Budget (in the form of demand for grants) of each department and Ministry.

6. The **Lok Sabha had** listed the budget of just five Ministries for detailed discussion and discussed only three of these; 76% of the total Budget was approved without any discussion.

7. This behaviour was in line with the trend of the last 15 years, during which period **70% to 100% of the Budget** have been passed without discussion in most years.

The missing Deputy Speaker:

1. A striking feature of the current Lok Sabha is the absence of a Deputy Speaker**. Article 93 of** the Constitution states that "The House of the People shall, as soon as may be, choose two members of the House to be respectively Speaker and Deputy Speaker"

2. Usually, the Deputy Speaker is elected within a couple of months of the formation of a new Lok Sabha, with the exception in the 1998-99 period, when it **took 269 days to do so.**

3. **By the time of the next session of Parliament, two years would have elapsed without the election of a Deputy Speaker.**

4. The issue showed up starkly this session when the Speaker was hospitalised. Some functions of the Speaker such as delivering the valedictory speech were carried out by a senior member.

Parliamentary scrutiny is key:

1. Parliament has the central role in our democracy as the representative body that checks the work of the government.

2. It is also expected to examine all legislative proposals in detail, understand their nuances and implications of the provisions, and decide on the appropriate way forward.

3. **In order to fulfil its constitutional mandate, it is imperative that Parliament functions effectively.**

4. This will require making and following processes such as creating a system of research support to Members of Parliament, providing sufficient time for MPs to examine issues, and requiring that all Bills and budgets are examined by committees and public feedback is taken.

5. **In sum, Parliament needs to ensure sufficient scrutiny over the proposals and actions of the government.**

Functions of Parliament

What does parliament actually do?
Look at the prompts and come up with a list of the 7 functions you think parliament fulfils.

Debating major issues
Making law (Legislation)
Scrutinising the executive
Sustaining government
Representation
Financial scrutiny
Redress of grievances

Parliament's relevance in the law-making process.

Conclusion:

1. **Some things have improved over** the last few years, we have seen most Bills being discussed in the House and have had less disruptions. However, the scrutiny of Bills has suffered as they are not being referred to committees.

2. **While COVID-19 was undoubtedly a grave** matter, there is no reason why Parliament could not adopt remote working and technological solutions, as several other countries did.

3. **It is necessary to uphold the quality of legislation, and** by extension, the quality of governance in the country. A strong committee system is probably the only way to ensure

Alleging atrocities by the junta, some 500 people have crossed over into Mizoram seeking refuge.
Geography:
a. India and Myanmar share a 1,600-km long border and Mizoram alone has a 500-km long exposure to the eastern neighbour along the Chin state.

i. **Human Geography:** The Chin Hills, or theIndo-Chin hill ranges as they are often called, are a mountainous region in north-western Myanmar. At an elevation of 2100-3000 metres, this heavily forested mountain region was the home of numerous tribes that fall under the Zoumbrella.

ii. It may be mentioned that the Myanmar areas bordering Mizoram are inhabited by Chin communities who are ethnically Mizo brethren with whom the Mizos have been having

close contact throughout all these years even before India became independent.

iii. **Language:** Believed to have originated in China, the tribes migrated through Tibet to settle in Myanmar, and speak a group of the Tibeto-Burman languages.

Tribal History:

i. The Zo people include all the tribes that come under the **Chin-Kuki-Mizo ethnic group** spread across Myanmar, India and Bangladesh including a host of tribes, sub-tribes and clans such as Chin, Kuki, Mizo, Zomi, Paitei, Hmar, Lushei, Ralte, Pawi, Lai, Mara, Gangte, Thadou etc.

ii. **History of Migration:** But constant feuds among clans of different tribes and their kings(chieftains), drove many of the clans westwards, towards Mizoram and some parts of Manipur, in the 17th century. Here the tribes setup new villages and colonies, but even with their new identities, they remain socially and emotionally tied with the Chin tribes of Myanmar.

iii. **Age of insurgencies:** In the early 20th century, Mizos from Champhai district and elsewhere migrated to Myanmar, setting up villages in the Kalay-Kabaw valley. Many are believed to have joined the Myanmar army for lucrative employment. Many Mizo families also migrated to Myanmar in 1966 and 1986, when the Mizo National Front sought secession from India, to escape counter-insurgency operations from the Indian government.

Socio-cultural connections:

1. Religion: Both Chin People of Myanmar and Mizo tribes are predominantly Christian.

2. Marriages are often arranged across the border.

3. In border trade, Mizoram depends to a large extent on Myanmar for many essential commodities including beef, pork, good quality rice, fruits, and household utensils.

Limitations of India's Asylum Policy:

i. India is not a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, and it does not currently have a national law on refugees. In 2011, the Centre circulated to all states and Union Territories a Standard Operating Procedure to deal with foreign nationals who claimed to be refugees.

ii. Though India has been the strongest democracy in South Asia and has provided a safe haven for people fleeing persecution from as close as Sri Lanka and far as Iran.

iii. **Uneven treatment:** India does not have its own **asylum policy**, and is uneven in its treatment of people seeking refuge. Over the years, Tamils, Tibetans and Afghans have been welcomed.

iv. **Religious discrimination:** But with no tool-kit to distinguish political or humanitarian refugees from economic migrants, the government has started to discriminate between refuge seekers along religious lines, like in thecase of the Rohingya.

v. Under the Citizenship Amendment Act, only Hindus fleeing Islamic countries in the neighbourhood will be welcomed.

vi. Confusingly, India has also spoken up for non-refoulement, the principle of not sending refugees back to their home countries if it is likely that they will face persecution.

Way Forward: For a country that prides itself as a member of a democratic quadrilateral and borders several

politically unstable countries, India needs a better and more even-handed framework on refugees.

Supreme Court has boosted independence of SECs in holding local body elections

Context:

a**. One of the problem of Local governance is that the Local polls are often marred by violence, and charges of arbitrary delimitation and reservation of wards.**

b. Issue: A key factor in any local body polls being conducted in a free and fair manner is the extent to which the State Election Commissioner, the authority that supervises the elections, is independent and autonomous.

c. Problem: Unfortunately, most regimes in the States appoint senior bureaucrats from among their favourites to this office. In practice, SECs frequently face charges of being partisan. Routine exercises such as delimiting wards, rotating the wards reserved for women and SCs/STs and fixing dates for the elections become mired in controversy as a result.

d. The SC ruling: The Goa government had moved Supreme Court against a ruling of the High Court of Bombay at Goa which had quashed an order of the Goa government determining the reservation of seats in wards of five of the 11 municipal councils set to go to polls on March 20.

i. The ruling: The Supreme Court upheld the ruling of the HC that was of the opinion that the course adopted by the state government violates the constitutional mandate of law in reserving one-third seats for women in all local body polls.

ii. Further, Noting that the SEC in Goa was the state Law Secretary, the Supreme Court described it as the" most disturbing feature of the case". "The SEC has to be a person who is independent of the State Government as he is an important constitutional functionary who is to oversee the entire election process in the state qua panchayats and municipalities"

iii. It has described the Goa government's action in asking its Law Secretary to hold additional charge as SEC as a "mockery of the Constitutional mandate".

iv. By invoking its extraordinary power under Article 142 of the Constitution, the Court has asked all SECs who are under the direct control of the respective State governments to step down from their posts. In practice, most States appoint retired bureaucrats as SECs.

Significance:

i. It is clear that the governments will now have to find a way to appoint to the office only those who are truly independent and not beholden to it in any manner.

ii. The verdict will help secure the independence of SECs in the future.

iii. More significantly, the Court has boosted the power of the election watchdog by holding that it is open to the SECs to countermand any infractions of the law made by the State government in the course of preparing for local body polls.

iv. Regimes in the States would have to wake up to the reality that they cannot always control the local body polls as in the past.

The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021, was introduced in the Lok Sabha

Context:

a. The Bill proposes to amend Sections 21, 24, 33 and 44 of the 1991 Act.

b. It proposed that "government" of Delhi means the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi.

i. The Bill gives discretionary powers to the L-G of Delhi even in matters where the Legislative Assembly of Delhi is empowered to make laws.

ii. The proposed legislation also seeks to ensure that the L-G is "necessarily granted an opportunity" to give her/his opinion before any decision taken by the Council of Ministers (or the Delhi Cabinet) is implemented.

c. Reasons for bringing the amendment:

i. For structural clarity: The Section 44 of the 1991 Act deals with conduct of business and there is no structural mechanism for effective time-bound implementation of the said section. Section 44 of the 1991 Act says that all executive actions of the L-G, whether taken on the advice of his Ministers or otherwise shall be expressed to be taken in the name of the L-G.

ii**. For Harmonious relationship**: Bill will promote harmonious relations between the legislature and the executive, and further define the responsibilities of the elected government and the L-G, **in line with the constitutional scheme of governance of Delhi, as interpreted by Supreme Court**.

iii. Defining powers of LG: "Further, there is no clarity as to what proposal or matters are required to be submitted to Lieutenant Governor before issuing order thereon." The Bill adds that the L-G's opinion shall be obtained before the government takes any executive action based on decisions taken by the Cabinet

or any individual minister.

iv. Define Government: The Bill seeks to amend Section 21 of the Act and clarify the expression "Government", which in the "context of legislations to be passed by the Legislative Assembly of Delhi" shall mean the L-G of the NCT of Delhi "consistent with the status of Delhi as a Union Territory to address the ambiguities in the interpretation of the legislative provisions."

d. DELHI: Delhi is a Union Territory with a legislature and it came into being in 1991 under **Article 239AA of the Constitution inserted by the Constitution (69th Amendment**) Act, 1991.

i**. Article 239AA of** the Constitution says the **Council of Ministers will aid and advise the L-G in matters where the Legislative Assembly** has the power to make laws except where the L-G can exercise discretion.

ii. The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) Act was passed simultaneously to supplement the constitutional provisions relating to the Assembly and the Council of Ministers in the national capital.

iii. For all practical purposes, the **GNCTD Act** outlines the powers of the Assembly, the discretionary powers enjoyed by the L-G, and the duties of the Chief Minister with respect to the need to furnish information to the L-G.

iv. As per the existing Act, the Legislative Assembly of Delhi has the power to make laws in all matters except public order, police and land.

e. Now it is proposed to insert the following clause in the Act: "Provided that before taking any executive action in pursuance of the decision of the Council of Ministers or a Minister, to exercise

powers of Government, State Government, Appropriate Government, Lieutenant Governor, Administrator or Chief Commissioner, as the case may be, under any law in force in the Capital, the opinion of Lieutenant Governor in term of proviso to clause (4) of article 239AA of the Constitution shall be obtained on all such matters as may be specified, by a general or special order, by Lieutenant Governor."

i. "It further seeks to ensure that the LG is necessarily granted an opportunity to exercise the power entrusted to him under proviso to clause (4) of article 239AA of the Constitution, in select category of cases and also to make rules in matters which incidentally encroach upon matters falling outside the preview of the Legislative Assembly. It also seeks to provide for rules made by the Legislative Assembly of Delhi to be consistent with the rules of the House of the People," said MHA.

ii. Rules of legislative assembly: The Bill seeks to amend Section 33 of the Act that empowered the Delhi Assembly to make rules to conduct its business by inserting the clause that it shall not be inconsistent with the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in House of People.

f. Feb 2019 SC Judgement:

i. The Supreme Court judgment gave it a freer hand in terms of policy decisions to the elected government.

ii. Government insiders have maintained that it was because of the judgment that the government was able to clear policy decisions like giving free power to those using under 200 units, free bus riders for women and doorstep delivery of ration.

Finding a meaning for Quad

a. Context: The recently held virtual summit between the four quad leaders was not a merely a "talk-shop", but contained broad substance and deep symbolism.

b. Substance of the summit:

i. The vaccine initiative comes with an ambitious deadline: a billion vaccines by the end of 2022, made in India with U.S. technology, Japanese funding and Australian distribution networks to reach as many Indo-Pacific countries as possible.

ii. Partnership on Emerging Technologies & climate change: The four Quad countries will ensure emissions reduction based on the Paris accord as well as cooperate on technology supply chains, 5G networks, and biotechnology.

c. Powerful statements: US coordinated a joint statement — called "The Spirit of the Quad", and a joint article by the four leaders that committed to an open Indo-Pacific "free from coercion".

d. Implication: the early push for the Quad engagement is part of his promise that "America is back" in terms of global leadership, reaffirming regional alliances, and taking on the growing challenge from China.

e. For India: the new terms of the Quad will mean more strategic support after a tense year at the LAC, as also a boost for its pharmaceutical prowess, opportunities for technology partnerships, and more avenues for regional cooperation on development projects and financing infrastructure, especially in South Asia, where China has taken the lead.

f. Challenges of Engagement: All countries are focused mainly on gaining leverage on China

i. The new U.S. government is still exploring its own relationship with China;

ii. For Japan and Australia, China remains the biggest trading partner, a relationship that will only grow once the 15-nation RCEP kicks in.

iii. India, given its own ties with China, sensitivities over ongoing LAC disengagement talks, and its other multilateral commitments at the BRICS and SCO groupings, also displayed caution in the Quad engagement, keeping the conversation focused on what Mr. Modi called making the Quad a "force for global good" rather than pushing plans for a militaristic coalition.

iv. In that sense, **the Quad's new "summit avatar"** has given India yet another string to its bow, broadening India's interests on its geopolitical horizons even further.

China's View of QUAD:

a. Global Times perspective:

i. India's coalition with the QUAD — a "negative asset" for the BRICS as the Global Times was highlighting what it sees as a contradiction in India's participation in both the forums.

ii. "In moving closer to the US and the US-led Quad in recent years", the paper argued, Delhi has worsened "India-China and India-Russia relations" and halted progress "in the development of BRICS and SCO". The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is the Eurasian forum founded jointly by Beijing and Moscow a quarter of a century ago.

iii. Many have seen India's oscillation between the BRICS and Quad all these years as a reflection of Delhi's strategic confusions between the East and the West, and between Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific. But the Global Times sees a strategic pattern in Delhi's behaviour.

iv. From Beijing's perspective, India has taken advantage of the BRICS on issues like terrorism and gained access to regional cooperation in inner Asia. At the same time, Beijing sees Delhi's mobilising the Quad as balancing or even "blackmailing" China. Delhi's small band of realists might see that as a compliment coming from Beijing's hyper-realists.

b. The Reality: China as the real Threat: A rising China, in contrast, has emerged as the biggest challenge to India and the US is increasingly an important part of the answer.

i. With China's growing military power, the PLA has become more assertive on the contested boundary. Amidst the breakdown of peace and tranquillity on the border, the support from the US and its Asian allies has been valuable.

ii. On the Kashmir question, it is China that rakes up the issue at the UNSC while the US is helping India to block China's moves.

iii. On cross-border terrorism, the US puts pressure on Pakistan and China protects Rawalpindi.

iv. The US has facilitated India's integration with the global nuclear order while Beijing blocks Delhi's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

v. The US backs India's permanent membership of the UNSC, China does not.

vi. Delhi now sees the trade with China hollowing out India's manufacturing capability. Its objective on diversifying its economy away from China is shared by the US and the Quad partners.

vii. India opposes China's Belt and Road Initiative as a project that undermines India's territorial sovereignty and regional primacy. Delhi is working with Quad partners to offer alternatives to the BRI.

viii. Delhi sees China's rising military profile in the subcontinent and the Indian Ocean as a problem and is working with Washington to redress the unfolding imbalance in India's neighbourhood.

First summit of the leaders of the Quadrilateral grouping

Context:

a. A Quad vaccine initiative was announced in which India will manufacture American vaccines with Japanese funding and Australian logistical support for countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

b. Three working groups were also launched — Quad vaccine experts group, Quad Critical and Emerging Technology Working Group, and Quad Climate Working Group.

i. 'The Quad Vaccine Partnership: A factsheet' issued after the summit stated: "While ensuring that vaccines have been made available to our people, "Quad" partners will launch a landmark partnership to further accelerate the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. Together, Quad leaders are taking shared action necessary to expand safe and effective Covid-19 vaccine manufacturing in 2021, and will work together to strengthen and assist countries in the Indo-Pacific with vaccination, in close coordination with the existing relevant multilateral mechanisms including WHO and COVAX."

ii. The Quad Climate Working Group: "We have identified the climate challenge as a priority for the Quad and the Indo-Pacific region. We will establish a new Quad Climate Working Group focused on cooperation, both among ourselves and with other countries, to strengthen implementation of the Paris Agreement, including to keep a Paris-aligned temperature limit within reach."

i**ii. The Quad Critical and Emerging Technology Working Group**: "It will develop a statement of principles on technology design, development, and use; facilitate coordination on technology standards development, including between our national technology standards bodies and working with a broad range of partners." "Quad leaders recognize that a free, open, inclusive, and resilient Indo-Pacific requires that critical and emerging technology is governed and operates according to shared interests and values."

c. Chinese response: 'exclusive blocs' should not 'target third party

1. It said that the cooperation between nations should not "target or damage interests of a third party" and countries should not "pursue exclusive blocs".

2. "Exchanges and cooperation between nations should contribute to mutual understanding and trust among nations,".

d. About QUAD

1. The quadrilateral security dialogue includes Japan, India, United States and Australia.

2. All four nations find a common ground of being the democratic nations and common interests of unhindered maritime trade and security.

3. The idea was first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007. However, the idea couldn't move ahead with Australia pulling out of it.

4. 2007: Grouping was formed after 2004 India Ocean Tsunami, the idea was to better coordinate maritime capabilities for disaster situations.

5. India's Angle: India has always shown a lacklustre response to the

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Concept. Un 2018, PM Modi had said in Shangri La dialogue that India sees the Indo-Pacific as a "geographical concept", not a "strategy or a club of limited members".

1) Also, India is the only country in the Quad that shares a land boundary with China. A maritime engagement does not solve our Land border issue.

2) India also partners China in SCO, BRICS & RIC etc.

3) India has in the past taken a non-aligned path; and today has a multilateral approach with partners such as Russia, France, UK, EU & Germany.

4) However, world is increasingly shifting towards a new cold war; and old boxes of thinking are bound to shatter.

6. 2017 - Quad 2.0: Revived the old structure, now dubbed as Quad 2.0, which is now used to counter China's growing inroads into the region, despite denials that any particular country had been targeted.

Later Entry into Civil Services
CONTEXT:
- Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) issued an advertisement seeking applications "from talented and motivated Indian nationals willing to contribute towards nation building" for three posts of Joint Secretary and 27 of Director in central government Departments.

BACKGROUND:
i. Earlier, the government had decided to appoint experts from outside the government to 10 positions of Joint Secretary in different Ministries/Departments and 40 positions at the level of Deputy Secretary/Director.

ii. Joint Secretary is 3rd highest ranking official in the services after Secretary and Additional Secretary.

The Government's Plan:
- NITI Aayog, in its **three-year Action Agenda, and the Sectoral Group of Secretaries (SGoS)** on Governance in its report submitted in February 2017, recommended the induction of personnel at middle and senior management levels in the central government.
- These 'lateral entrants' would be part of the central secretariat which in the normal course has only career bureaucrats from the All India Services/ Central Civil Services.

Government reason for lateral Entry:
- On July 4, 2019, Minister of State for DoPT Jitendra Singh told Rajya Sabha that "Government has, from time to time, appointed some prominent persons for specific assignments in government, keeping in view their specialised knowledge and expertise in the domain area".

Problems of Lateral Entry:
a. IAS officers get promoted to joint secretary level after 17 years of service and remain at that level for ten years. The IAS and permanent system are strictly seniority-bound — nobody gets promoted ahead of time. That makes the average age of a joint secretary around 45. Now, if similar experience is required for lateral entry, it is unlikely that the best will join because in the private sector they rise to the top of their profession, in CEO or CXO positions, or tenured professorships, at that age.

b. Entry requirements need to be relaxed so that persons of 35 years of age are eligible. The logic extends to other ranks. IAS officers become secretaries to the government after 30 to 33 years of service, which means they are

55 or above. The best talent from outside would only join at 50 or less.

c. The second challenge is whether the system is facilitating lateral entrants for successor is indifferent to the point of failure. There are many dimensions to this. For a start, there are **several joint secretaries in each ministry who handle different portfolios. If assigned to an unimportant portfolio, the chances of not making a mark are high**. A cursory look at the portfolios of the eight laterally - hired joint secretaries doesn't suggest that they hold critical portfolios. One entrant has already quit.

Way Forward:

There must also be clarity in what precisely is the mandate for the lateral entrant.

GENERAL STUDIES- III

Cross border Electricity Policy:

Context:

- India has released new rules governing the trade of electricity across its borders. They define the contours of the South Asian electricity market, placing clear limits on who can buy from and sell into India.
- **Impact:**

i. Impact on neighbours: This has ramifications for the electricity markets of Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal, which, to varying degrees, have aligned their energy futures with the Indian market. The new rules show that India's approach is unmistakeably political. It attempts to balance China's growing influence in the region with developmental aims, both its own and the region's.

ii. Third Party Trade: The rules strongly discourage the participation of plants owned by a company situated in "a third country with whom India shares a land border" and "does not have a bilateral agreement on power sector cooperation with India"

iii**. Tripartite trade:** The rules place the same security restrictions on tripartite trade, say from Bhutan to Bangladesh through Indian territory.

iv. Surveillance Mechanism: To make things even more airtight, the rules establish elaborate surveillance procedures to detect changes in the ownership patterns of entities trading with India.

A regressive move:

i. In 2014, India used the framework of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to make historical moves towards liberalising electricity trade.

ii. China soon began to make its presence felt in the region, and India responded by walking back its free-market impulses. The **new guidelines in 2018** that tried to find a middle ground; these rules formalise that balancing act. They allow private sector participation but exclude Chinese investments.

iii. The Government of India, through ministries, regulators, planning bodies and utilities, determines the rules of the road. India's geographic centrality combines with its economic heft to give it a natural advantage in determining the shape of the market; all electrons must pass through it and most electrons will be bought by it.

Way Forward:

- India's ambition of anchoring a global super-grid called One Sun One World One Grid, or OSOWOG needs an institutional vision.
- It aims to begin with connections to West Asia and Southeast Asia and then spread to Africa and beyond.
- The South Asian lesson, contained in these latest rules, is that political realities will constantly collide with, and damage, expansive visions of borderless trade. Impartial institutions for planning, investments and conflict resolution are crucial to multi-country power pools.

Voluntary Vehicle-Fleet Modernization Program (VVMP) or "Vehicle Scrapping Policy"

Context:

a. Road Transport & Highways Minister announces Vehicle Scrapping Policy

b. AIM: creating an Eco-System for phasing out of Unfit and Polluting Vehicle.

c. OBJECTIVE:

i. To reduce population of old and defective vehicles,

ii. Achieve reduction in vehicular air pollutants to fulfil India's climate commitments

iii. Improve road and vehicular safety, achieve better fuel efficiency

iv. Formalize the currently informal vehicle scrapping industry and boost availability of low-cost raw materials for automotive, steel and electronics industry.

d. OLDER VEHICLES: They pollute the environment 10 to 12 times more than fit vehicles and pose a risk to road safety and in the interest of a clean environment and for rider and pedestrian safety.

The Policy proposes the following—

i. It is proposed that **commercial vehicles** be **de-registered after 15 years** in case of failure to get the fitness certificate.

ii. It is proposed **that Private Vehicles be de-registered after 20 year**s if found unfit or in case of a failure to renew the registration certificate.

iii. It is being proposed that all vehicles of the Central Government, State Government, Municipal Corporation, Panchayats, State Transport Undertakings, Public Sector Undertakings, and autonomous bodies with the Union and State Governments may be de-registered and scrapped after 15 years from the date of registration.

1. The scheme shall provide strong incentives to owners of old vehicles to scrap old and unfit vehicles through registered scrapping centres, which shall provide the owners with a scrapping certificate

Insights into Scrappage Policy

Cut-off Date:

i. It will take until April 1, 2022 for vehicles belonging to the government and the public sector to be scrapped,
ii. April 1, 2023 to identify junk heavy commercial vehicles through mandatory fitness checks, and
iii. Finally other vehicles by April 1, 2024.

Fitness based Criteria:

i. Automated Fitness Centres would be established in case of commercial vehicles and Non-Renewal of Registration in case of private vehicles.

ii. A Vehicle failing the fitness test or failing to get a renewal of its registration certificate may be declared as End of Life Vehicle.

iii. Criteria to determine fitness: emission tests, braking, safety equipment, among many other tests which are as per the Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989.

iv. The criteria is adapted from international best practices after a comparative study of standards from various countries like Germany, UK, USA and Japan.

Upon failure to get fitness certificate—

i. Commercial vehicles be de-registered after 15 years in case of failure to get the fitness certificate.

ii. Private Vehicles be de-registered after 20 years if found unfit or in case of a failure to renew the registration certificate.

iii. All government and PSU vehicles may be de-registered and scrapped after 15 years from the date of registration.

Incentives: The scheme shall provide strong incentives to owners of old vehicles to scrap old and unfit vehicles through registered scrapping centers, which shall provide the owners with a scrapping certificate

Challenges:

1. It will be no easy task, however, to put in place a **credible system of automated fitness checking centres** with help from States to assess whether commercial and private vehicles are roadworthy after 15 and 20 years, respectively, as the policy envisages.

2. **Enforcement will be key** to get them scrapped once they are found unfit for use and to stop them from moving to smaller towns.

3. **States** must also come on board to provide road tax and registration concessions, while the automobile industry is expected to sweeten the deal with genuine discounts on new vehicles.

4. Earlier enforcement of the amended Motor Vehicles Act of 2019 proved to be challenging because States are not entirely on board.

5. **Heavy commercial vehicles**, which contribute disproportionately to pollution — 1.7 million lack fitness certificates — pose the biggest challenge. **Many of these cannot be replaced quickly in the absence of financial arrangements for small operators,** who have opposed the new measures.

Advantages:

i. Manufacturers stand to benefit from a spurt in demand.

ii. Vehicle scrappage and replacement is seen internationally as a route **to rejuvenate COVID-19-affected economies** by privileging green technologies, notably electric vehicles (EVs).

iii. It is also as an initiative to **achieve net zero emissions** by mid-century under Paris Agreement commitments.

iv. The Automobile industry's share pre-COVID-19 was about 7.5% of GDP with significant downstream employment. The Centre has to arrive at a balance and have incentives that reward manufacturers of vehicles that are the most fuel-efficient.

Ecological scrapping, as a concept, must lead to high rates of materials recovery, reduce air pollution, mining and pressure on the environment.

FDI in India: above 60 billion dollar

Context:

Despite various challenges, the international investors are optimistic about India. Google, Facebook, Walmart, Samsung, Foxconn, and Silver Lake have been just a handful of the firms that made big ticket bets on India in 2020.

As a result, even as India experienced one of the world's sharpest economic contractions, it also saw the fastest growth in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows among all the major economies last year. India's $60 billion-plus tally for new annual FDI equity inflows was its largest-ever haul and a milestone in the agenda of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government in its second term. A significant share of India's FDI inflows arose from foreign investments directed solely at Reliance Jio.

Limitation: Meanwhile, India's latest FDI totals still lags behind the highest tallies in other markets such as China and Brazil.

4 Core reasons for this increased FDI influx

i. Sheer demographics: What India offers through its nearly 1.4 billion people and their growing purchasing power is uniquely valuable for multinationals with global ambitions. No other country outside of China has a market that houses nearly one in six people on the planet and a rising middle class of 600 million. Failure to compete for a share of Indians' wallets is not just a missed strategic opportunity; it's borderline malpractice at the boardroom level.

ii. Shifting geopolitics: Rising U.S.-China competition is redefining the global landscape for investment and manufacturing, forcing multinationals to rethink their footprints and production hubs. Savvy countries such as Vietnam have capitalised on this opportunity to great effect, but India is finally getting serious about attracting large-scale production and exports. Major multinational companies such as Samsung have invested billions in the Indian market, and manufacturers such as Cisco, Nokia, Ericsson, and Flex are reportedly weighing new investments that take advantage of fresh incentive programs.

iii. Rising digital connectivity: Cheap mobile data have powered a revolution across India's digital economy and connected an estimated 700 million Indians to the Internet. As Mr. Modi has said, more than 500 million Indians still remain offline, and the rise of these 'next gen netizens' is a key reason why leading global tech companies are investing in India and weathering acute policy pressure. Domestic Indian companies have also demonstrated their ability to innovate and deliver high quality services at scale. The partnerships and FDI flows linking multinationals and Indian tech firms will continue to unlock shared market opportunities for years to come.

iv. National resilience: Despite facing the scourge of the novel coronavirus head on, India has managed the pandemic better than many of its western peers and restored economic activity even before implementing a mass vaccination programme. These are remarkable developments, and yet they speak to India's underlying resilience even in the face of historic challenges. This ethos will serve India well as it navigates the complex challenges of the 21st century, and global investors are clearly taking note.

The Boon and Bane of AI

Context:

i. AI (artificial intelligence): Computer systems that can perform human like tasks. Such as: Speech recognition, translation into different languages, Visual recognition and even decision making.

a. Intelligence: It is the ability to take variables from our senses and to process these data points to make a decision. Such a system has a receptor, sensors, a memory (to store the data) and a processing unit (brain).

b. They can be of two types: Artificial intelligence (Machine AI) and natural intelligence.

c. Examples of AI: Robotics, Autonomous vehicles, Search Engines.

ii. Advantages of AI:

a. Ease of Living: It is embedded in the recommendations we get on our favourite streaming or shopping site; in GPS mapping technology; in the predictive text that completes our sentences when we try to send an email or complete a web search.

b. Ushers Development: AI can leapfrog us toward eradicating hunger, poverty and disease — opening up new and hitherto unimaginable pathways for climate change mitigation, education and scientific discovery. A study published in Nature reviewing the impact of AI on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) finds that AI may act as an enabler on 134 — or 79% — of all SDG targets.

c. Raises Productivity: Already, AI has helped increase crop yields, raised business productivity, improved access to credit and made cancer detection faster and more precise.

d. Brings Growth: It could contribute more than $15 trillion to the world economy by 2030, adding 14% to global GDP.

e. Google has identified over 2,600 use cases of "AI for good" worldwide. We are on the cusp of unprecedented technological breakthroughs that promise to positively transform our world in ways deeper and more profound than anything that has come before.

iii. Disadvantages:

a. **Disruptive: The** study in Nature also finds that AI can actively hinder 59 — or 35% — of SDG targets.

b. **Unequal access**: AI requires massive computational capacity, which means more power-hungry data centres — and a big carbon footprint. Then, AI could compound digital exclusion.

c. **Replaces conventional Jobs**: Robotics and AI companies are building intelligent machines that perform tasks typically carried out by low-income workers: self-service kiosks to replace cashiers, fruit-picking robots to replace field workers, etc.; but the day is not far when many desk jobs will also be edged out by AI, such as accountants, financial traders and middle managers. Without clear policies on reskilling workers, the promise of new opportunities will in fact create serious new inequalities.

d. Favours the wealthy: Investment is likely to shift to countries where AI-related work is already established, widening gaps among and within countries. Together, Big Tech's big four — Alphabet/Google, Amazon, Apple and Facebook — are worth a staggering $5 trillion, more than the GDPs of just about every nation on earth. In 2020, when the world was reeling from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, they added more than $2 trillion to their value.

e. Privacy Worries: The algorithm's never-ending quest for data has led to our digital footprints being harvested and

sold without our knowledge or informed consent. We are constantly being profiled in service of customisation, putting us into echo chambers of like-mindedness, diminishing exposure to varied viewpoints and eroding common ground. Today, the algorithms know us better than we know ourselves.

f. Social Engineering: They can nudge our behaviour without our noticing. Our level of addiction to our devices, the inability to resist looking at our phones, and the chilling case of Cambridge Analytica — in which such algorithms and big data were used to alter voting decisions.

iv. Analyzing the problem: It is neither enough nor is it fair to expect AI tech companies to solve all these challenges through self-regulation.

a. They are not alone in developing and deploying AI; governments also do so.

b. Only a "whole of society" approach to AI governance will enable us to develop broad-based ethical principles, cultures and codes of conduct, to ensure the needed harm-mitigating measures, reviews and audits during design, development and deployment phases, and to inculcate the transparency, accountability, inclusion and societal trust for AI to flourish and bring about the extraordinary breakthroughs it promises.

v. Solutions and strategies: The UN Secretary-General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation is a good starting point:

a. it lays out the need for multi-stakeholder efforts on global cooperation so AI is used in a manner that is "trustworthy, human rights-based, safe and sustainable, and promotes peace".

b. And UNESCO has developed a global, comprehensive standard-setting draft Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence to Member States for deliberation and adoption.

c. Many countries, including India, are cognisant of the opportunities and the risks, and are striving to strike the right balance between AI promotion and AI governance — both for the greater public good.

d. NITI Aayog's Responsible AI for All strategy, the culmination of a year-long consultative process, is a case in point. It recognises that our digital future cannot be optimised for good without multi-stakeholder governance structures that ensure the dividends are fair, inclusive, and just.

Disinvestment in Insurance sector

Context:

a. The Union cabinet has approved a proposal to amend the Insurance Act 1938 for raising the FDI limit to 74%, from the current 49%. A bill to amend the Act will be introduced in the ongoing budget session of Parliament.

b. Main Challenge of the Sector:

i. **Insurance penetration in India** continues to lag far behind other Asian economies, despite the presence of a large number of insurance companies there are 24 life insurance companies and 34 non-life insurance companies in the country.

ii. As per the Economic Survey 2020-21,

1) Insurance penetration (estimated as a % of insurance premium to GDP) in India has risen from 2.71% in 2001 to 3.76% in 2019, it is far lower than in countries like Malaysia (4.72), Thailand (4.99) and China (4.3).

a) And of this 3.76%, 0.94% was non-life

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insurance in 2019.

b) In comparison, the global insurance penetration stands at 3.35% in the life segment, and 3.88 in the non-life segment.

2) Insurance density (the ratio of premium to population) in India has risen from $11.5 in 2001 to $78 in 2019, it is way lower than other Asian economies — it stood at at $536 in Malaysia, $389 in Thailand and $430 in China.

c. Reasons of low penetration:

i. Increasing coverage ratio (ratio of Insurance cover to premium paid) is costly proposition considering the capital requirements imposed on insurance firms.

ii. Small capital size of the Indian insurance firms.

iii. The move is also likely to benefit the smaller players who currently have limited access to long- term committed sources of finance.

iv. This will also bring additional benefits in the form of greater technical know-how, global expertise in creating new products, and better underwriting skills

v. All this is to the advantage of the consumer and fostering competition.

d**. Privatization as a solution:** Increasing FDI limit could lead to a capital infusion in the insurance companies, helping them expand their coverage.

e. Challenges:

i. Even the existing limits haven't been fully utilized.

ii. Average foreign investment in both life & non-life, remains well below the current limits.

New Guidelines for Social Media: Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021

a. **Impact on OTT Providers:** For OTT service providers such as YouTube, Netflix, etc., the government has prescribed self-classification of content into five categories based on age suitability.

i. **U:** Online curated content that is suitable for children and for people of all ages shall be classified as "U", and

ii. **U/A 7+:** Content that is suitable for persons aged 7 years and older, and which can be viewed by a person under the age of 7 years with parental guidance, shall be classified as "U/A 7+" rating.

iii. **U/A 13+:**Content that is suitable for persons aged 13 years and above, and can be viewed by a person under the age of 13 years with parental guidance, shall be classified as "U/A 13+" rating;

iv. **U/A 16+:** content which is suitable for persons aged 16 years and above, and can be viewed by a person under the age of 16 years with parental guidance, shall be classified as "U/A 16+" rating.

v. **A:** Online curated content which is restricted to adults shall be classified as "A" rating.

vi. Platforms would be required to implement parental locks for content classified as U/A 13+ or higher, and reliable age verification mechanisms for content that is classified as "A"

b. **Advantage:**

i. **Level playing field:** Publishers of news on digital media would be required to observe the Norms of Journalistic Conduct of the Press Council of India and the programme code under the Cable Television Networks Regulation) Act, thereby providing a level playing field between the offline (print and television) and digital media.

ii. **Self-regulation:** The media would self-certify in such categories as mentioned above.

iii. **International Equivalents:**
   1.Australia: The Broadcasting Services Act, 1992 has provisions for classification of content, restricted access to certain kinds of content, industry codes and industry standards, complaint mechanism, etc. However, in Australia, classifications are advisory categories.
   2. UK: In the United Kingdom, the Office of Communications (Ofcom) and the Communications Act, 2003 regulate the communications landscape.

Expansion of Operation Greens:
CONTEXT:

- In the Union budget FY 2021-22, Finance Minister announced that Operation Green (OG) will be expanded beyond tomatoes, onions, and potatoes (TOP) to 22 perishable commodities. Although we don't know yet which other commodities have been included in OG.

Three basic objectives of Operation Greens(OG):

- It will work on the pattern of **Operation flood** (milk).
- The production & consumption centres will be linked properly &

necessary logistics support will be created for the movement of these products with NAFED as its Nodal Agency.

i. To take care of unevenness in the prices of three major vegetable crops of **TOP**(**Tomato, Onion & Potato**).

ii. It should build efficient value chains of these from fresh to value-added products with a view to give a larger share of the consumers' rupee to the farmers.

iii. It should reduce the post-harvest losses by building modern warehouses and cold storages wherever needed.

Problem:

- Only ₹500Cr have been initially set apart;
   i. Out of the Rs500, only Rs 50 crore were reserved for the price stabilization objective, wherein NAFED was to intervene in the market wherever prices crashed due to a glut, to procure some excess arrivals from the surplus regions to store them near major consuming centres.
1. **2019 Onion Episode**: the 55,000 Tonne of onions procured out of this amount failed to stabilize the price of Onion, which crossed ₹150/kg in various cities.
2. The following graph shows that the volitility has remained high even now and even now farmer gets a very small portion of profits out of the actual selling price of the crop. In contrast to this situation in the horticulture sector, in the milk sector. In cooperatives like AMUL, farmers get almost 75-80% of what consumers' pay.
   ii. Another Rs 450 crore(out of total 500Cr) has been reserved for developing integrated value chains

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projects. Such projects are given 50% grants-in-aid with a maximum limit of Rs 50 crore per project.

1. This subsidy goes up to70% in case the project is of a Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO).
2. **Problem:** As of February 23, six projects worth Rs 363.3 crore have been approved for the scheme, a mere Rs. 8.45 crore has been actually released, which may be because the scheme envisages the payment of subsidy on a reimbursement basis.

How to replicate the successes of Operation floods in Operation greens:

i. **Development of supply chains:** Operation flood(milk) took 20 years to develop such efficient supply chains.
ii. **Motivate leaders:** We need motivated leaders and specialists such as Verghese Kurien to replicate such successes.
iii. **Transparency:** the criteria for choosing clusters for TOP crops under OG is not very transparent and clear. The reason is while some important districts have been left out from the list of clusters, less important ones have been included.
iv. **Promotion of Innovation:** The scheme will have to be made innovative with new generation entrepreneurs, startups and FPOs.

Way Forward:

• The Budget announcement to create an additional 10,000 FPOs along with the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund and the new farm laws are all promising but need to be implemented fast.

China's Cyber Eye and India

Context:

• State backed Chinese firms have been reported to be targeting Indian Vaccine makers.
• India cannot remain defenceless and/or without adequate capacity in this sphere. The lack of expertise showed in the Maharashtra state government's inability to detect the malware in the MSEB servers in time, and has exposed the country's vulnerability.
• Cyber wars can be fought on many fronts, from a country's electoral politics to its banks and road traffic systems to its publishing houses and military operations.

National Cyber Power Index

• A **National Cyber Power Index** drawn up by the Belfer Center at Harvard University last year ranked India 21 out of 30 countries in cyberspace abilities.
i. The composite ranking was derived from expertise on seven parameters, broadly indicating intent and capacity: Defence, Offence, Surveillance, Control, Intelligence, Commercial and Norms.
ii. China was number 1, followed by the Netherlands, France, United States and Canada.
• **Problem:** The report concluded that India was among the 13 countries that did not exhibit either the intent or the capacity to use cyberspace to achieve policy goals.

Examples of such attempts:

i. In November, the government was apprised of a malware threat in segments of its power infrastructure — malware that was last month linked to a Chinese state-backed firm.

ii. Now, on 1st March, Goldman Sachs-backed cyber intelligence firm Cyfirma said a Chinese hacker group known as Stone Panda had "identified gaps and vulnerabilities in the IT infrastructure and supply chain software of Bharat Biotech and the Serum Institute of India", according to a Reuters report. These companies have developed Covaxin and Covishield.

Modus Operandi:

i. **Tracking digital footprint:** They collect information about relevant people from the web and social media platforms, and track research papers, articles, patents, and recruitment positions.

ii. **People of Importance:** They track not only influential political and industrial figures, but bureaucrats in key positions, judges, scientists and academicians, journalists, actors, sportspersons, religious figures, activists and even hundreds accused of financial crime, corruption, terrorism and smuggling.

Reasons for such attacks:

i. Border clashes.

ii. Things related to Chinese geo-political interests.

iii. These could be a part of long term strategy to lay ground for future operations.

iv. To target and extract intellectual properties, and gain competitive advantage over Indian companies.

Law in India:

- The collection of such data by Zhenhua does not violate any rules under the Information Technology Act of 2000, as nearly all of this data is available in the public domain.

Solutions:

1. Invest in technology and knowledge systems that can deal with it.

2. Government has approved the setting up of a tri-services Defence Cyber Agency in 2019.

3. An effective arm of national security can function only when its place is understood in a codified national security doctrine, which India surprisingly does not have.

4. A National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber- Physical Systems (NM-ICPS), with a budget of Rs 3,660 crore for the next five years, to strengthen the sector.

5.The Industrial Cyber security Standards (IEC62443) aimed at providing a flexible framework to address and mitigate current and future security in industrial automation and control systems, launched by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), has to be adopted soon.

Vulnerability: Critical infrastructure has become increasingly vulnerable to cyber-attacks.

i. Many of these critical infrastructures were never designed keeping security in mind and always focused on productivity and reliability, their vulnerability is more evident today.

ii. With devices getting more interconnected and dependent on the internet facilitating remote access during a pandemic, the security of cyber-physical systems has, indeed, become a major challenge for utility companies.