

CIVIL SERVICES MONTHLY



NOVEMBER 2020

16 Psyche

Pinaka Rocket System

- **Anthology on Mahatma Gandhi**
- **Two new Ramsar sites**
- **India Climate Change Knowledge Portal**
- **Code on Wages norms for the annual bonus**
- **Industrial Relations Code, 2020**
- **OPEC-India Dialogue**
- **Powers of Election Commission**
- **East Asia Summit 2020**
- **Policy on FDI in digital media**
- **Export Subsidy to Sugar industry**
- **Body Mass Index (BMI)**
- **'State of the Economy' report**

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Prelims Oriented Current Affairs

International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists

In News

Every year, the United Nations marks the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists on November 2.

This year, the day is celebrated under the theme: **Protect Journalists, Protect the Truth.**

Highlights

The Resolution chose the date in commemoration of the assassination of two French journalists in Mali on 2nd November 2013. The Resolution -

- Urges Member States to implement definite measures countering the present culture of impunity by condemning all attacks and violence against journalists and media workers.
- Urges Member States to ensure accountability, bring to justice perpetrators of crimes against journalists and media workers, and also ensure that victims have access to appropriate remedies.
- Calls upon States to promote a safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their work independently and without undue interference.

World Press Freedom Day

- The World Press Freedom Day is celebrated on May 3 by the United Nations. The day is celebrated to remind the governments about the importance of press and press freedom
- India dropped to 142 out of 180 countries in World Press Freedom Index, 2020.

Chandi Padvo

In News

Chandni Padva or Chandi Padvo is an occasion when **Surtis (Gujarati people from Surat)** enjoy a popular local variety of sweet Ghari, Bhushu (namkin).

The festival falls on a day after Sharad Poornima, **the last full moon day in the Hindu calendar.**

Ganga Utsav-2020

In News

The Ganga Utsav-2020 began virtually on November 2. The festival will continue till 4th of November.

- The event of Ganga Utsav activities broadly can be put in 6 broad themes. These broad themes are **Ganga Dialogue, Story Telling, Cultural Events, Mini Ganga Quest, Ganga Film Festival, and Release of Movies and Publications.**
- **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** is organising 'Ganga Utsav 2020'.

About Ganga Utsav:

- Ganga Utsav is a cultural and educational festival to celebrate the glory of the holy river Ganga.
- The aim is to connect masses to the cause of river rejuvenation and sensitive them about ecological issues through conversations and entertainment.
- Ganga Task Force conducted afforestation drive with NCC cadets and educational tour for youth in project area.
- On November 4, 2008, **Ganga was declared "National River"**.
- Since 2016, every year the NMCG has been celebrating Ganga Utsav on November 4, with an objective to promote stakeholder engagement and ensure public participation under the aegis of Ganga Knowledge Center.

Mission Sagar Phase II

In News

Indian Naval Ship Airavat arrived in Sudan with food aid as part of Mission Sagar-2.

- Under the mission, the Indian government is providing assistance to friendly foreign countries to overcome natural calamities and the coronavirus pandemic.

Mission Sagar

- Mission Sagar-II follows the first 'Mission Sagar' undertaken in May-June 2020, wherein India reached out to **Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros, and provided food aid and medicines.**
- As part of Mission Sagar-II, Indian Naval Ship Airavat will deliver food aid to **Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti and Eritrea.**
- Mission Sagar-II is in line with the vision of Security and Growth for All in the **Region 'SAGAR'.**
- It highlights the importance accorded by India to relations with her maritime neighbours and further strengthens the existing bond.

Kochi Metropolitan Transport Authority

In News

On November 1, the Kochi Metropolitan Transport Authority (KMTA) will come into effect in Kochi. Kochi is Kerala's financial centre.

- KMTA will work as an umbrella body to shape and preside over an integrated, seamless urban transport system in the city.
- In November, 2019, the Kerala Assembly passed the KMTA bill, clearing the way for metropolitan transport authorities to be formed in three cities in the state – Thiruvananthapuram, Kozhikode and Kochi.

About KMTA

- The KMTA will be an independent body. The body will be chaired by the state's transport minister with the transport secretary acting as vice-chairperson.
- It can have a maximum of 15 members including the district collector, city police commissioner, secretaries of local bodies, mayor, local MLA and representatives from state bus corporation.
- KMTA is responsible for operation, maintenance, development and supervision of public transport modes in urban areas in the city.

16 Psyche

In News

A recent study has found that asteroid 16 Psyche, which **orbits between Mars and Jupiter**, could be **made entirely of metal** and is worth an estimated \$10,000 quadrillion (\$10,000,000,000,000,000,000) — more than the entire economy of Earth.

- National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (Nasa) Hubble Space Telescope has discovered a metal-rich asteroid '16 Psyche' which is orbiting the Sun, in the main asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter.
- Researchers used the ultraviolet spectrum data collected by Hubble Telescope during two observations made in 2017.

Asteroid 16 Psyche?

- Located around 370 million kilometres away from Earth, asteroid 16 Psyche is one of the most massive objects in the asteroid belt in our solar system.
- It is potato-shaped asteroid and has a diameter of around 140 miles.
- The new research suggests that the asteroid may be mostly made of iron and nickel.
- It was first discovered on March 17, 1853, by the Italian astronomer Annibale de Gasparis and was named after the ancient Greek goddess of the soul, Psyche.
- The manner in which ultraviolet light was reflected from Psyche was very similar to the way in which iron reflects sunlight.
- This is an indication that oxidation is happening on the asteroid, which could be a result of the solar wind hitting the surface.

Fortified Rice Distribution Scheme

In News

The State Government of Chhattisgarh launched Fortified Rice Distribution Scheme through **Public distribution System (PDS).**

Fortified Rice

- The fortified rice is a mixture of iron, vitamin B-12 and folic acid enriched fortified rice kernel (FRK), that meets the nutritional requirements

in the diet and thereby help in controlling malnutrition and anaemia.

- It will be distributed through fair price shops.
- The government believes that micronutrients, which enable the body to produce enzymes and hormones essential for growth, can play a crucial role in the country.
- Rice is the fifth food item that the government is promoting with fortification — salt, edible oil, milk and wheat being the others.

Vigilance Awareness Week

In News

The Vigilance Awareness Week 2020 was concluded on the 2nd of November (started from 27th of October) with the theme "**Satark Bharat, Samridh Bharat**" (सतर्क भारत, समृद्ध भारत - **Vigilant India, Prosperous India**).

Aim

This vigilance awareness week campaign affirms our commitment to **promotion of integrity and probity in public life through citizen participation**.

New Initiatives

- "**Ideas Box on Good Governance Practices in a Pandemic**" has been launched and operationalised both on the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) as well as on the MyGov platform. This will crowd source ideas related to good governance.
- Social media tweets on the "**Best Practices in e-governance**" have been launched
- **Round table discussion** on "Satark Bharat, Samridh Bharat" (Vigilant India, Prosperous India) was held.
- The round table discussion focused on key issues of preventive vigilance in the pursuit of "**Naitik Bharat**" which included trainings in ethics of public service, social audit of ethical practices, development of measurable metrics for corruption and disproportionately high impact corruption has on governance.

Urban Mobility India (UMI) Conference

In News

The 13th **Urban Mobility India (UMI) Conference is being organized by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** on 9th November 2020.

Theme

The theme of this year's event is "**Emerging Trends in Urban Mobility**" with focus on innovative measures taken at national and international level to address the challenges posed by Covid-19 pandemic to provide accessible and convenient transport to the people.

Primary Objective

The primary objective of the conference is to disseminate information to the cities, whose officials attend the conference to help them keep up-to-date with latest and best urban transport practices globally.

iGOT e-learning Platform

In News

The Department of Personnel and Training has launched a learning platform to combat Covid-19 for all frontline workers to equip them with the training and updates in coping with pandemic.

The union health ministry has operationalised iGOT courses on the DISKHA platform on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Details

- iGOT platform provides self-contained training material for COVID-19 warriors comprising 56 modules, 196 videos and 133 training documents.
- The target group is doctors, nurses, paramedics, hygiene workers, technicians, auxiliary nursing midwives (ANMs), Central & State government officers, civil defence officials, various police organisations, National Cadet Corps (NCC), Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), National Service Scheme

(NSS), Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS), Bharat Scouts & Guides (BSG) and other volunteers.

- iGOT platform is designed to population scale, and will provide training to around 1.50 crore workers and volunteers in the coming weeks.
- To begin with, nine courses on iGOT have been launched on topics like basics of Covid-19, ICU care and ventilation management, clinical management, infection prevention through PPE, infection control and prevention, quarantine and isolation, laboratory sample collection and testing, management of Covid-19 cases, Covid-19 Training.
- There were more than 29 lakh enrolments for the courses. There were more than 13 lakh unique users spread across 729 districts. There were 50 districts where most healthcare workers received training.

100% motor vehicle tax exemption

In News

The State Government of Tamil Nadu recently notified that it will grant 100% motor vehicle tax exemption for Electric Vehicles.

- Earlier, the State Government had issued orders for 50% concessional rate to EV taxes. It has now been made to 100%.

Key Highlights

- The State Government has exempted taxes to both transport and non-transport vehicles.
- The State Government is already providing incentives to attract investments. The Tamil Nadu Government provides 100% GST reimbursement and 50% capital subsidy to the EV manufacturing units.
- The plan is to set up an EV park through these incentives. The park is to be set up in 300 acres of land.

Background

- Last year, Tamil Nadu announced a comprehensive EV policy, which gives incentives and subsidies for both supply side and demand side.
- The policy covers the EV ecosystem with incentives to EV charging stations developers and to tap components including battery and

cell manufacturing, electric motors, EV powertrains, battery management among others.

Indian Coast Guard ship C-452

In News

The ICGS C-452, designed and built by Larsen & Toubro has been commissioned in the Indian Navy.

Details

- The ship was indigenously built in India under the Make in India initiative.
- Recently, Defence Minister had commissioned the ICGS Sachet and two other interceptor boats namely C-451 and C-450 in Goa.
- The ICGS Sachet, the first in the series of five offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) has been designed and built indigenously by Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) and is fitted with state-of-the-art navigation and communication equipment.

Vessels of ICG

- The vessels currently serving the Indian Coast Guard are Samudra Class, Samarth Class, Vikram Class, Vishwast Class, Sankalp class and Samar class

MoU on Medical Product Regulation

In News

India and UK signed an MoU in the field of medical product regulation. The MoU was signed between United Kingdom Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency and Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO).

The MoU will help in establishing a framework for fruitful cooperation and exchange of information between the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) and the United Kingdom Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (UKMHRA) of United Kingdom in matters relating to Medical products regulation in line with their international responsibilities.

The main areas of cooperation between the two Regulatory Authorities include the following:

- Exchange of safety information, including Pharmaco-vigilance where there is a particular safety concern related to the other party. This includes safety concerns relating to medicines and medical devices.
- Participation in scientific and practical conferences, symposia, seminars and fora organized by India and the United Kingdom.
- Exchange of information and cooperation on Good Laboratory Practices (GLP), Good Clinical Practices (GCP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), Good Distribution Practices (GDP) and Good Pharmacovigilance Practices (GPvP).
- Capacity building in mutually agreed areas.
- Promote an understanding between the Parties of each other's regulatory framework, requirements and processes; and to facilitate future regulatory strengthening initiatives for both Parties.
- Exchange of information on laws and regulations regarding medicines and medical devices.
- Information exchange to support efforts to control unlicensed exports and imports.
- Coordination at the international fora.

MoU in the field of Health and Medicine

In News

India and Israel signed an MoU on cooperation in the field of Health and Medicine.

The MoU covers the following areas of cooperation:

- Exchange and training of medical doctors and other health professionals.
- Assistance in development of human resources and setting up of health care facilities.
- Exchange of information regarding regulation of pharmaceutical, medical devices and cosmetics.
- Sharing expertise for vulnerability assessment for health of citizens against climate risk and public health actions targeted towards mitigation and adaptation.
- Sharing of expertise for facilitating climate resilient infrastructure as well as providing

support for development of 'Green Healthcare' (climate resilient hospitals).

- Promote mutual research in various relevant areas.
- Any other area of cooperation as may be mutually decided upon.

MoU in the field of Telecommunication/ICTs

In News

India and United Kingdom signed an MoU on cooperation in the field of Telecommunication/Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The MoU will contribute in strengthening bilateral cooperation and mutual understanding in the field of Telecommunications/ICTs.

Areas of Interest for cooperation:

- Telecommunications/ICT policy and regulation
- Spectrum Management
- Telecommunication connectivity including mobile roaming
- Telecommunications/ICT technical standardizations and testing & certification
- Wireless Communications
- Technological development in Telecommunications/ICT including 5G, Internet of Things/Machine to Machine, Cloud Computing, Big Data etc.
- Security of Telecommunication Infrastructure, Security in the provision and use of telecommunication services
- Building capacity in high technology areas and exchange of expertise wherever possible
- Collaboration and Sharing of information on Research & Development on emerging technologies and innovation where appropriate
- Exploring opportunities for joint work in signatory countries and third countries on Telecommunications/ICT
- Facilitating Trade, investment and technology activities through Telecommunication/ICT industry delegations and visits, events, exhibitions etc. as mutually agreed
- Other forms of cooperation in Telecommunications/ICT as mutually agreed

upon by the Parties, falling within the scope of MoU.

MoU in the field of Astronomy

In News

An MoU is signed between Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), Bengaluru and the Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias (IAC) and the GRANTECAN, S.A. (GTC), Spain to develop scientific and technical collaborations in astronomy field.

- The activities to be carried out under this MoU will lead to:
 - I. New scientific results
 - II. New technologies
 - III. Capacity building through increased scientific interaction and training
 - IV. Joint scientific projects etc.
 - V. Development of segmented telescope technologies as well as the development of robotic telescopes and other future potential specific collaborations.
- The joint research training, projects, programmes, seminars and conferences are to be opened to all scientists under the programme.

India-Spain

- Spain is the seventh largest trading partner of India.
- The bilateral trade between the countries was 5.66 billion USD in 2017-18. During this year, the exports of India to Spain grew by 16.65%. the top exports of Spain are iron, textiles, steel, seafood, organic chemicals, leather and automobiles.
- Spain is the fifteenth largest investor of India. Indian investments in Spain is 900 million USD.

Naval exercise CARAT

In News

The Bangladesh and US navies launched the 'Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Bangladesh 2020' to expand relationships and broaden maritime awareness between the two countries. CARAT 2020 underscores the shared vision of US and

Bangladesh for a free, open, inclusive, peaceful and **secure Indo-Pacific region**.

Highlights

- The exercise demonstrates U.S.'s continuing commitment to work with the Bangladesh military to address shared maritime security concerns in the region and strengthen partnership to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific region.
- US navy stands shoulder-to-shoulder with Bangladesh in its commitment to a free and open maritime common.
- The CARAT exercises involve people to people interactions and a variety of professional exchanges.
- The sea-phase of the exercise will take place in the Bay of Bengal with ships from both countries.
- The events are designed to enhance interoperability between the two navies.
- U.S. and Bangladesh will work through coordinated deployment of surface ships, to include tactical maneuvers among other activities.

Pinaka Rocket System

In News

An advanced version of the DRDO-developed Pinaka missile flight was successfully test fired. An enhanced version of Pinaka rocket would replace the existing Pinaka Mk-I rockets which are currently under production.

Pinaka Rocket System

Pinaka Multi Barrel Rocket System (MBRS) comprises of:

- A free-flight artillery rocket having a maximum range of 38 km with different types of warhead and fuses.
- A multi-tube launcher vehicle
- A replenishment-cum-loader vehicle
- A replenishment vehicle and a command post vehicle.
- There are two pods containing 6 rockets each, capable of firing in salvo mode within 48 seconds. In light of the requirement of the Army for a free flight rocket with enhanced

range, ARDE has successfully developed Pinaka Mk-II rocket with 60 km range.

- Development was taken up to achieve longer range performance compared to earlier design with reduced length.
- The design and development have been carried out by Pune-based laboratories of DRDO, **Armament Research & Development Establishment (ARDE) and High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL)**.
- Rockets tested have been manufactured by M/s Economic Explosives Limited, Nagpur, to whom the technology has been transferred.
- All the flight articles were tracked by Range instruments such as telemetry, radar and Electro Optical Tracking Systems which confirmed the flight performance.

Background

DRDO began development of multi-barrel rocket system in the late 1980s. It is an alternate to the Russian Multi Barrel Rocket Launcher System called "Grad". **Pinaka was first used in Kargil war.**

International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict

In News

The International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict is an international day observed annually on November 6. The International Day was established on November 5, 2001 by the United Nations General Assembly.

- The day aims to ensure that the environment is not harmed during any armed conflict in any part of the world.

World Tsunami Awareness Day

In News

The UN General Assembly declared November 5 as World Tsunami Awareness Day. The day has been observed continuously every year since December 2015. It is observed to create cognizance among people of the Tsunami, most

importantly for the 700 million population living in low-lying coastal areas and islands.

- World Tsunami Awareness Day 2020 encourages the development of national and community-level, local disaster risk reduction strategies to save more lives against disasters. This year's theme promotes "Sendai Seven Campaign," target.
- By the year 2030, an estimated 50 per cent of the world's population will live in coastal areas.
- These regions are exposed to flooding, storms and tsunamis.

The Branded Royal butterfly

In News

The Branded Royal, rarely seen in India, fluttered through the Nilgiris after a gap of over 130 years. It was last recorded in 1888 by British entomologist.



Other rare species of butterflies sighted this year across the country include:

- The Blue Mormon, a black-coloured velvet-winged butterfly, a species endemic to the Western Ghats, showed up in Patna.
- The Spotted Angle butterfly, has been sighted in the reserve forests of Chhattisgarh.
- The Liliac Silverline, a protected species whose only known breeding population is in Bengaluru, was sighted for the first time in the Aravalli range of Rajasthan.

- Species like Common Birdwing, Common Jester, Painted Jezebel and Vagrant have made an appearance at Telangana in the Eastern Ghats.

MoU between India and Italy

In News

India and Italy signed 15 agreements in various sectors following a Virtual Bilateral Summit. The agreements signed will provide for cooperation in a diverse range of areas including energy, green energy, shipbuilding and media sector. The whole focus of the discussion was on economic ties.

Details

- The Summit provided an opportunity to review the broad framework of the bilateral relationship. The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen cooperation against common global challenges, including the Covid-19 pandemic. The leaders discussed many issues including political, economic, scientific & technological, space and defence cooperation.
- 15 MoUs/Agreements in various sectors such as energy, fisheries, shipbuilding, design, etc. were signed coinciding with the Summit.
- Both sides also decided to work closely on concluding at the earliest the migration and mobility partnership agreement.
- On regional and international issues, both sides agreed to coordinate closely at multilateral fora especially G-20.
- Italy will assume the Presidency of G-20 in December 2021 followed by India in 2022. Together, India and Italy will be part of the G20 Troika from December this year.**
- India welcomed Italy's decision to join the International Solar Alliance as soon as the ratification process is completed.

Metro Neo

In News

The Centre is planning to approve national standard specifications for Metro Neo. Metro Neo is a no-frills, low-cost urban rail transit system targeted at tier 2 and tier 3 cities.

About Metro Neo

- Metro Neo is a mass rapid transit system providing low-cost, energy-efficient and eco-friendly urban transport solution.
- Drawing traction power from overhead wires Metro Neo will not run on track but on road.
- The length of electric bus coaches will be 25/18 meter with carrying capacity 200 to 300 passengers.
- The buses will be air-conditioned with automatic door closing system, level boarding, and passenger announcement system along with passenger information system with an electronic display. Metro Neo will run on rubber tyres, not on tracks.
- These are comfortable, rapid, energy-efficient and less noisy compare to diesel buses plying on roads and environment friendly.

Earth observation satellite EOS-01

In News

India's latest all-weather earth observation satellite EOS-01 to be launched by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), using the workhorse rocket PSLV-C49.

- Nine other customer satellites will also be carried into space by the rocket. Four each are from the United States and Luxembourg, while another is a technology demonstrator from Lithuania.
- It will be launched from the launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota in southern Andhra Pradesh, close to Chennai.

Highlights

ISRO had planned more than 20 satellite launches in the fiscal year 2020-21, including high profile missions like Aditya L1, the first exploratory mission to Sun, and unmanned Gaganyaan, the precursor to India's first manned space flight.

Details of EOS-01:

- EOS-01 is nothing but another Radar Imaging Satellite (RISAT) that will work together with RISAT-2B and RISAT-2BR1 launched last year.

- EOS-01 was initially named RISAT-2BR2, and was supposed to be the third of the three-spacecraft constellation aimed at providing all-weather round-the-clock service for high-resolution images.
- EOS-01, ISRO is moving to a new naming system for its earth observation satellites which till now have been named thematically, according to the purpose they are meant for. For example, the Cartosat series of satellites were meant to provide data for land topography and mapping, while the Oceansat satellites were meant for observations over sea. Some INSAT-series, Resourcesat series, GISAT, Scatsat, and some more are all earth observation satellites, named differently for the specific jobs they are assigned to do, or the different instruments that they use to do their jobs.

Land and forest mapping and monitoring, mapping of resources like water or minerals or fishes, weather and climate observations, soil assessment, geospatial contour mapping are all done through earth-observation satellites.

National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority

In News

Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers has said that 42 anti-cancer drugs showed price reduction up to 90 per cent following National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority.

NPPA's price rationalisation initiated in February 2019.

Details:

- NPPA had launched a Pilot on **Trade Margin Rationalisation** for **42 anti-cancer drugs** as a step towards making the healthcare more affordable for the suffering patients.
- **All India Drug Action Network (AIDAN)** has also appreciated the steps taken by NPPA to curb profiteering in sale of anti-cancer medicines by capping the trade margin in public interest.
 - Today also, cancer remains as one of the leading causes of adult illness and death due to

chronic and non-communicable diseases (NCD) world-over including India.

- According to World Health Organisation (WHO), cancer is the second leading cause of death globally and in 2018 there were approximately 18 million cases globally, of which 1.5 million were in India alone.

- There were around 0.8 million cancer deaths in India in 2018 against 9.5 million globally. The numbers of new cases are estimated to double in India by 2040.

- **National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS)** is being implemented under National Health Mission (NHM) for up-to the district level activities.

- Under the ambit of Ayushman Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) is being implemented to reduce the financial burden for poor and vulnerable groups arising out of catastrophic hospital episodes and to provide access to quality health services.

- NPPA regulates the prices of all Drugs as per the **Drug Price Control Order (DPCO) 2013**.

- It fixes the Ceiling Price of scheduled formulations as per the list of medicines specified in the **National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)** which are included in the First Schedule of Drug Pricing Control Order (DPCO), 2013.

National Cancer Awareness Day

In News

National Cancer Awareness Day is observed on November 7 to educate people about cancer.

Details

- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), cancer is the second-deadliest disease which causes death among people. Union Health Minister first announced National Cancer Awareness Day in September 2014. He launched the state-level movement on cancer control, and encouraged people to report to municipal clinics for free screening.

Ro-Pax service

In News

Prime Minister to inaugurate the Ro-Pax terminal at Hazira and flag off Ro-Pax service between Hazira and Ghogha in Gujarat. Ro-Pax service is a water transport service project under Eastern Waterfront Development.

Benefits:

- Hazira-Ghogha Ro-Pax ferry service will work as a Gateway to South Gujarat and Saurashtra region. It will reduce the distance between Ghogha and Hazira from 370 Kilometres to 90 Kilometres.
- The reduced cargo travel time will result in huge savings of fuel approximately 9000 litres per day and will lead to reduction in CO2 emission by approximately 24 million tonnes per day.
- It will give an impetus to the tourism industry with ease of access to Saurashtra region and lead to creation of new job opportunities.
- With the onset of Ferry services, the port sector, furniture and fertilizer industries in Saurashtra and Kutch region will get a big boost.
- Eco-tourism and religious-tourism in Gujarat, especially in Porbandar, Somnath, Dwarka and Palitana will grow exponentially.
- The benefits of enhanced connectivity through this ferry service will also result in increased inflow of tourists in the famous Asiatic lion wildlife sanctuary at Gir.

Sichuan-Tibet Railway

In News

Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the construction of the new railway project connecting the country's southwest Sichuan province to Linzhi in Tibet close to the Indian border in Arunachal Pradesh, saying it would play a key role in safeguarding stability in the border areas.

- The Sichuan-Tibet Railway will be the second railway line into Tibet after the Qinghai-Tibet Railway project.



Details

- It will go through the southeast of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, one of the world's most geologically active areas.
- The Sichuan-Tibet Railway starts from Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province and travels through Ya'an and enters Tibet via Qamdo, shortening the journey from Chengdu to Lhasa from 48 hours to 13 hours.
- Linzhi, also known as Nyingchi, is located close to Arunachal Pradesh border.
- The India-China border dispute covers the 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control, the de-facto border between the two countries. China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of south Tibet which is firmly rejected by India.
- Linzhi also has an airport which is one of the five airports built by China in the Himalayan region.
- The Sichuan-Tibet Railway will accelerate and enhance the overall economic development of the Tibet region. It will also play an important role in safeguarding border stability.

US Election Results 2020

In News

- Joe Biden has become the 46th US President. Indian-origin Kamala Harris will become his Vice President.

- The new president will thereafter assume office on the 20th of January next year after the inauguration ceremony.

Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways

In News

Prime Minister on November 8 renamed the Ministry of Shipping as the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways.

Details

- The decision to change the name of the Shipping Ministry is part of government's efforts to revamp the ports and create world-class Inland Water Transport.
- The Ministry of Shipping encompasses within its fold shipping and port sectors which include Shipbuilding, Ship-repair, Major Ports, National Waterways, and Inland Water Transport.
- The capacity of the ports in terms of their berths and cargo handling equipment needs to be vastly improved to cater to the growing requirements of the overseas trade.
- The shipping industry needs to be enabled to carry higher shares of the sea-borne trade in indigenous bottoms.

Anthology on Mahatma Gandhi

In News

Nepal President has released a special anthology on **Mahatma Gandhi- 'My understanding about Gandhi'** in the Nepali language - during a ceremony at Kathmandu.

- An anthology is defined as a book that has a large collection of writings in similar form, from a similar time, or about a similar subject matter, but by various authors.
- The book has been brought out by the Embassy of India to cherish the values of the Mahatma's universal teachings with Nepali friends.
- The pictorial anthology in Nepalese has been released to celebrate 151st Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and to mark the culmination of the two years long celebrations of '150 years of Mahatma'.

World Science Day for Peace and Development

In News

Every year, the World Science Day for Peace and Development is celebrated on November 10, to ensure that citizens are kept well informed about the developments of science.

- This year the day was celebrated under the following **theme: Science for and with Society in dealing with Covid-19.**

The day highlights the significant role of science in society and the need to engage the wider public in debates on emerging scientific issues.

Purpose of the day

- Strengthen public awareness of the role of science for peaceful and sustainable societies.
- Promote national and international solidarity for shared science between countries.
- Renew national and international commitment for the use of science for the benefit of societies.
- Draw attention to the challenges faced by science in raising support for the scientific endeavour.

Dobra-Chanthi suspension bridge

In News

Uttarakhand CM inaugurates Dobra-Chanthi suspension bridge in Tehri-Garhwal district.

- This is the longest motorable (725 metre) single lane suspension bridge in India.
- This bridge will become a source of prosperity for the people living in the region.
- It will also help in economic development and tourism industry of the state.
- The Dobra-Chanthi bridge and the Tehri lake will become a major tourist destination in the coming years.

Anti-Satellite Missile

In News

A model of Anti-Satellite Missile installed inside the DRDO Bhawan premises was unveiled.

- 'Mission Shakti' was the country's first ever Anti-Satellite (A-SAT), where a fast-moving Indian orbiting target satellite in Low Earth Orbit was neutralised with pinpoint accuracy.
- This was a highly complex mission, conducted at extremely high speed with remarkable precision.
- The successful conduct of Mission Shakti made India the fourth nation in the world with the capability to defend its assets in outer space.



Fire Detection and Suppression System

- Earlier in the day, defence minister also witnessed the demonstration of Fire Detection and Suppression System (FDSS) for Passenger Buses.
- Demonstrations were given on Water Mist Based FDSS for Passenger Compartment and Aerosol Based FDSS for an engine fire.
- The DRDO's Centre for Fire Explosive and Environment Safety (CFEES) has developed the technology, which can detect the fire in the passenger compartment in less than 30 sec and then suppresses it in 60 sec thereby reducing the risk to life and property to a significant extent.

Mink

In News

Denmark, which has recorded more than 55,000 cases of COVID-19 so far, has also recorded over 200 human cases infected with

SARS-CoV-2 variants that are associated with farmed minks.

- After the Danish Public Health Authority discovered the mutated version of coronavirus in mink, the government decided to cull all of the country's over 17-million population of the animal.
- As per the WHO, six countries, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Italy and the US, have reported SARS-CoV-2 in farmed mink.



How did this strain emerge?

- Denmark has experienced extensive spread of SARS-CoV-2 on mink farms since June 2020, which was followed by virus transmission between the animals and a "spill back" to humans.
- Denmark is the world's largest mink producer, with a 15-17 million strong mink population. The country's mink population is valued at roughly 3 billion kroner.
- Minks can not only serve as a reservoir for SARS-CoV-2, but are also capable of spreading it to humans.
- Mink
- Mink are dark-colored, semi-aquatic, carnivorous mammals of the genera Neovison and Mustela, and part of the family Mustelidae, which also includes weasels, otters and ferrets.
- There are two extant species referred to as "mink": the American mink and the European mink.
- The European mink is listed by the IUCN as Critically Endangered due to an ongoing reduction in numbers.

National Education Day/ Rashtriya Shiksha Diwas

In News

Every year, India celebrates National Education Day on November 11. The day is celebrated to mark the birth anniversary of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. He was the first Education Minister of India.

History

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development on September 11, 2008 decided to commemorate the birthday of this great son of India by recalling his contribution to the cause of education in India.
- National education day is also a tribute to all the great contributions made by Maulana Abdul Azad in the field of the education system of Independent India.

TataMD CHECK

In News

- Tata Medical and Diagnostics Ltd's new diagnostic testing for COVID-19 'TataMD CHECK' has been developed in partnership with CSIR-IGIB (CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology).
- It has been approved by Indian Council of Medical Research and Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) and will be available through diagnostic centres and hospitals across India shortly.

Key Highlights

- It is the world's first CRISPR Cas-9 based diagnostic tool and is powered by FELUDA.
- CRISPR Cas-9 is a technology developed in India by CSIR- IGIB for COVID-19 testing. TataMD is the healthcare venture of Tata Group.
- TataMD CHECK is a paper strip-based test with an image-based visual result readout. It requires standard laboratory equipment and small batches of tests can be conducted.
 - It has a fast reaction time of 45-50 minutes in the laboratory and the total testing time from

RNA-extracted samples in the lab to result is 75 minutes only.

- This testing will be able to provide high quality and quick results and will not require highly trained staff. The simplicity of testing will make it available in the remote areas also.
- Regular quality control using sensors and AI-based result tool will help authorities and patients with the traceability of the sample, evidence of test, and test results accessible anywhere on cloud storage.
- TataMD CHECK testing kit will be manufactured in Chennai, Tamil Nadu in a quality-controlled production facility. At present, the production plant has a capacity of producing 1 million kits in a month.

FELUDA:

FELUDA or FNCAS9 Editor-Limited Uniform Detection Assay employs an indigenously developed, cutting-edge CRISPR technology (gene-editing technology) to detect the genomic sequence of SARS-CoV-2 virus.

National Common Mobility Debit card (NCMC)

In News

Karnataka Bank Ltd. has launched a new indigenous RuPay "National Common Mobility Debit (PuPay NCMC) card". Equipped as an international Contact-less, it is a debit cum prepaid and inter-operable transport card.

- It is expected to change the banking paradigm to a great extent, especially in retail payments by its unique features of 'Tap & Go' and 'Offline wallet' payments."

Key features of the card:

- Tap & Go (Contact-less): Make payments without dipping/inserting the card at PoS terminals.
- Effect payments at Toll plazas, Metro transits, Parking lots, Retail outlets, Smart cities etc.
- Wallet- Supports small ticket size offline payments through the value stored in the chip of the debit card.

- Enables domestic, and international transactions through ATM, PoS and e-Commerce.

Scorpene-Class Submarine INS Vagir

In News

The Indian Navy got its fifth scorpene class submarine, named 'INS Vagir' of Project 75 in the Arabian sea waters at Mumbai's Mazagaon Dock.

Details:

- The first of the Scorpene-class submarines, INS Kalvari, was launched in 2015 and commissioned into service in late 2017.
- The submarine was constructed by Defence public sector undertaking (PSU) Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders (MDSL).
- MDSL was working with French collaborator Naval Group on transfer of technology for the submarines under Project 75 (P75).

About Scorpene-Class Submarines:

- The Scorpene class of submarines can undertake multifarious tasks typically undertaken by any modern submarine which include anti-surface as well as anti-submarine warfare.
- This class of submarines is designed to remain submerged for longer durations and undertake operations such as intelligence gathering as well as participate in special operations during hostilities. Chile, Malaysia and Brazil are the other countries that possess these submarines.
- The state-of-the-art technology utilised for construction of the Scorpene class submarines has ensured superior stealth features such as advanced acoustic silencing techniques, low radiated noise levels, hydro-dynamically optimized shape and the ability to launch a crippling attack on the enemy using precision guided weapons.
 - MDL, till date, has built Leander and Godavari class frigates, Khukri class Corvettes, Missile Boats, Delhi and Kolkata class Destroyers, Shivalik class Stealth Frigates, the SSK submarines and it continues to contribute to the national security with its P-15B

Visakhapatnam class Destroyers and the P-17A class Stealth Frigates.

Sputnik V

In News

Russia's Sputnik V vaccine has demonstrated **"high efficacy"**, reducing by 92 per cent the possibility that would be clinically diagnosed with symptomatic Covid-19.

- Trials are crucial for India, where the vaccine is being tested on humans in mid- to late-stage.

Details

- The Russian sovereign wealth fund has partnered with Dr Reddy's to test the vaccine in India for approvals here.
- The trials evaluated efficacy among over 16,000 volunteers who received the vaccine or placebo 21 days after the first injection.
- There are two forms of the Sputnik V vaccine – **liquid**, which would have to be stored at minus 18°C and **lyophilised** (freeze dried), which can be stored at 2°C to 8°C.
- The lyophilised form was developed especially for the transportation of the vaccine to remote places.

Sputnik V

- Sputnik V is a human adenovirus vaccine that uses **two weakened and genetically modified common cold viruses** to carry the **code for the cells** in the human body to build **the Covid-19 spike protein** (the spiky outer layer of the SARS-CoV-2 virus).
- The body's immune system is expected to recognise this spike protein as a threat and develop an immune response to attack it, so that the real Covid-19 virus would not be able to cause harm when it tries to attack.

Asteroid 'Apophis'

In News

According to astronomers, an asteroid named 'Apophis' is expected **to pass extremely close or may hit the Earth in 2068** due to a phenomenon called **Yarkovsky effect**.

Discovered in 2004, asteroid Apophis is a 1,120-foot-wide (340-meter-wide) asteroid, about the size of three-and-a-half football fields.

Details

- Researchers at the University of Hawaii Institute for Astronomy (IfA) have announced the detection of Yarkovsky acceleration on the near-Earth asteroid Apophis. This acceleration arises from an extremely weak force on an object due to non-uniform thermal radiation.
- This force is particularly important for the asteroid Apophis as it affects the probability of an Earth impact in 2068.
- All asteroids need to reradiate as heat the energy they absorb from sunlight in order to maintain thermal equilibrium, a process that slightly changes the orbit of the asteroid.

Yarkovsky effect

- According to NASA, The Yarkovsky effect is named for the nineteenth-century Russian engineer who first proposed the idea that a small rocky space object would, over long periods of time, be noticeably nudged in its orbit by the slight push created when it absorbs sunlight and then re-emits that energy as heat.
- **The Yarkovsky effect is a force acting on a rotating body in space caused by the anisotropic emission of thermal photons, which carry momentum. It is usually considered in relation to meteoroids or small asteroids (about 10 cm to 10 km in diameter), as its influence is most significant for these bodies.**

Mechanism

- The Yarkovsky effect is a consequence of the fact that change in the temperature of an object warmed by radiation (and therefore the intensity of thermal radiation from the object) lags behind changes in the incoming radiation. That is, the surface of the object takes time to become warm when first illuminated, and takes time to cool down when illumination

stops.

- In general there are two components to the effect: Diurnal effect and Seasonal effect.

President's "Chair of Excellence" on National Security

In News

President approved the establishment of "President's Chair of Excellence on National Security" at the National Defence College (NDC).

- Colleges and universities across the world have "Chairs of Excellence" and other similar positions for professors to spur intellectual and academic calibre.

Details

- The President's Chair of Excellence on National Security will help in enhancing the intellectual capital of the college and also help in a long way in uplifting its credibility and reputation.
- The NDC is the only institution of strategic education within the national security apparatus but it is bereft of "significant resident academic and research expertise."
- The chair will be located at National Defence College, New Delhi and shall be provided all academic, administrative and logistic support.

Public Service Broadcasting Day

In News

The day is celebrated every year to commemorate the first and last visit of the Mahatma Gandhi to the studio of All India Radio, Delhi in 1947.

- Public Service Broadcasting Day is celebrated every year on November 12.
- During his visit to the All-India Radio station, Gandhi addressed people who were displaced after partition of Haryana and were temporarily settled in Kurukshetra.

All India Radio

- All India Radio is a public sector broadcaster of the country established in the year 1936.
- It is a division of broadcasting agency Prasar Bharati.
- All India Radio is the one of the largest broadcasting organisations in the world in terms of the number of languages of broadcast and the socio-economic spectrum and cultural diversity served by the broadcaster.
- AIR originates programming in 179 dialects and 23 languages.
- AIR has 470 Broadcasting centres across the country.
- Doordarshan is also a division of Prasar Bharati.

Prerna Sthal

In News

'Prerna Sthal' dedicated to work force of Naval Dockyard Visakhapatnam. The 'Prerna Sthal', Motivation Centre has been created with in-house efforts of the Naval Dockyard and is aimed as a symbol of the pride in self-reliance and a motivator for achieving Atma Nirbhar Bharat in repairs and refits of ships and submarines.

- The Prerna Sthal comprises a 30.5 m high National Flag Mast, inclusive of a 20x30 feet National Flag, unknown workers statues, and an arc-shaped building housing the capabilities of the Yard and its development over the ages.
- The dedication of 'Prerna Sthal' kick starts the Golden Jubilee Year activities of the Naval Dockyard which will commence from Mar 2021.

Statue of Peace

In News

- Prime Minister unveiled 'Statue of Peace' to mark the 151st Birth Anniversary celebrations of Jainacharya Shree Vijay Vallabh Surishwer Maharaj through video conferencing.
 - The 151-inch tall statue has been made from **Ashtadhatu** - 8 metals, with Copper being the major constituent, and is being installed at Vijay Vallabh Sadhana Kendra, **Jetpura, in Pali, Rajasthan**.

World Diabetes Day

In News

Every year, World Diabetes Day is celebrated on **November 14**. The celebrations of the World Diabetes Day is led by International Diabetes Federation.

- This year the World Diabetes Day is celebrated under the theme: Nurses make the difference for Diabetes.
- The World Diabetes Day was launched in 1991 by the World Health Organization and the International Diabetes Federation.

Diabetes

- Diabetes mellitus, commonly known as diabetes, is a metabolic disease that causes high blood sugar.
- The hormone insulin moves sugar from the blood into your cells to be stored or used for energy. With diabetes, your body either doesn't make enough insulin or can't effectively use the insulin it does make.
- Untreated high blood sugar from diabetes can damage your nerves, eyes, kidneys, and other organs.

There are a few different types of diabetes:

1. **Type 1 diabetes** is an autoimmune disease. The immune system attacks and destroys cells in the pancreas, where insulin is made. Thus, little or no insulin is produced. It's unclear what causes this attack. About 10 percent of people with diabetes have this type.

2. **Type 2 diabetes** occurs when your body becomes resistant to insulin, and sugar builds up in your blood. In this type, the glucose is unable to enter the cells to provide energy.

Prediabetes occurs when your blood sugar is higher than normal, but it's not high enough for a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes.

Gestational diabetes is high blood sugar during pregnancy. Insulin-blocking hormones produced by the placenta cause this type of diabetes.

Tristan da Cunha

In News

The isolated UK Overseas Territory of Tristan da Cunha, which is home to the world's most remote human settlement, declared the largest fully protected marine reserves in the Atlantic Ocean.

- This will close over 90 percent of their waters to harmful activities such as bottom-trawling fishing, sand extraction and deep-sea mining.



What is Tristan da Cunha?

- Tristan da Cunha, inhabited by less than 300 humans is a small chain of islands over 6,000 miles from London in the South Atlantic and the water around the islands are considered to be the richest in the world.
- The mountainous archipelago Tristan da Cunha is home to tens of millions of seabirds and several unique land birds.
- Some of its seabirds that are not found anywhere else in the world face threats including illegal and unregulated fishing activities, overfishing, plastic pollution and climate change.
 - The island group is also home to the World Heritage Site of Gough and Inaccessible Islands, which is one of the most important seabird islands in the world.

UK's Blue Belt Programme

- The programme protects the overseas territories of the country. It aims to achieve sustainable management of their marine environment. It was launched in 2017.
- After joining the UK's Blue Belt Programme, it will become the largest no-take zone in the Atlantic and the fourth largest on the planet. This means fishing, mining and any such activities will not be allowed.

Two new Ramsar sites

In News

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change announced the Lonar Lake (Maharashtra) and Sur Sarovar lake (Uttar Pradesh) have been added to the Ramsar sites.

- Lonar lake of Maharashtra is the only crater lake of the country.
- The Sur Sarovar lake is also called the Keetham lake.

Advantages

- Increased publicity and prestige for Lonar wetlands.
- Access to aid through grant fund
- Facilitate development of lake, policies for its wise use
- Encourage international cooperation and expert advice on problems of Lonar wetland.
- Help ensure survival of representative natural eco-systems of Lonar as well as rare and endemic species.

Ramsar Convention

- The Ramsar Convention signed on 2nd February, 1971, is one of the oldest inter-governmental accord signed by member countries to preserve the ecological character of their wetlands of international importance. The aim of the Ramsar list is to develop and maintain an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits.

- Wetlands declared as Ramsar sites are protected under strict guidelines of the convention.

Lonar Lake

- Lonar crater sits inside the Deccan Plateau, a massive plain of volcanic basalt rock leftover from eruptions of some 65 million years ago.
- Lonar crater is the result of a meteorite impact that occurred 50,000 years ago.
- The lake is high in salinity and alkalinity, as the lack of an outflow leads to a concentration of minerals as the lake water evaporates.
- Specialized microorganisms such as anaerobes, cyanobacteria, and phytoplankton survive in this harsh chemical environment.
- Outside the lake, there is a considerable diversity of plants and animals. Inhabiting the site are 160 species of birds including the vulnerable Asian woolly neck and common pochard, 46 species of reptiles, and 12 species of mammals including the iconic grey wolf.

Sur Sarovar

- The Sur Sarovar was originally created to supply water to the city of Agra in summer.
- The wetland soon became an important and rich ecosystem.
- The site's patchwork of different habitat types provides refuge to resident and migratory birds, and more than 60 species of fish.
- Threatened species include the vulnerable greater spotted eagle, sarus crane and catfish.
- Sur Sarovar is important for bird species which migrate on the Central Asian flyway and over 30,000 water birds visit the reservoir annually.

Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air-Missile (QRSAM)

In News

The indigenously developed Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile (QRSAM) achieved a direct hit on to a pilotless target aircraft at medium range and altitude in a test conducted by Defence Research and Development Organisation. During the test, radars tracked the pilotless target from the farthest range and

the missile was launched when target was within kill zone.

Features & Advantages

- Defence Research and Development Laboratory and Research Centre Imarat in Hyderabad; Electronic and Radar Development Establishment, Bangalore; Research and Development Establishment (Engineers), Pune; Instruments Research and Development Establishment, Dehradun; and Integrated Test Range, Chandipur, took part in the test.
- The weapons system elements have been manufactured through public sector undertakings — Bharat Electronics Ltd, Bharat Dynamics Ltd and private player L&T.
- The missile system was fully indigenous with active radio frequency seekers, electro-mechanical actuation systems sourced from various industries.
- The QRSAM, is a canister-based system, which means that it is stored and operated from specially designed compartments.
- In the canister, the inside environment is controlled, thus along with making its transport and storage easier, the shelf life of weapons also improves significantly.
- The QRSAM is a short range surface-to-air missile (SAM) system.
- It is primarily designed and developed by DRDO to provide a protective shield to moving armoured columns of the Army from enemy aerial attacks.
- The entire weapon system has been configured on a mobile and manoeuvrable platform and is capable of providing air defence on the move. It has been designed for induction into the Army and has a range of 25 to 30 km.
- The QRSAM weapon ensemble, consists of a fully automated command and control system, two radars — Active Array Battery Surveillance Radar, Active Array Battery Multifunction Radar — and one launcher.
- Both radars have a 360-degree coverage with "search on move" and "track on move" capabilities.
- The system is compact, uses a single stage solid propelled missile and has a mid-course inertial navigation system with two-way data

link and terminal active seeker developed indigenously by DRDO.

- The weapon system would be ready for induction by 2021.

National Press Day

In News

National Press Day is observed on **16th November every year** to celebrate free and responsible press in India. On this day, the **Press Council of India** started functioning as a moral watchdog to ensure that the press maintains high standards and is not constrained by any influence or threats.

History

- The **First Press Commission 1956** envisioned a committee to protect the ethics of journalism and freedom of the press in India.
- It led to the formation of a Press Council 10 years later.
- Press Council of India monitors all journalistic activities to keep the credibility intact.
- **Justice Chandramauli Kumar Prasad** is the present chairman of the Press Council of India.
- He has been appointed for a second term. He succeeded Justice Markandey Katju (2011-2014) to become the chairman of the council.

Team Halo

In News

The United Nations has collaborated with The Vaccine Confidence Project at the University of London's School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to undertake "Team Halo", an initiative which **aims to counter the misinformation around Covid-19 vaccines**.

- More than 100 scientists from different parts of the world have come together under the project.

Details

- Under the initiative, the scientists will **create social-media friendly videos on COVID-19**

vaccine science based on their personal experiences.

- Team Halo will act as a communication platform for the scientists working on COVID-19 vaccines.
- Globally, the initiative is supported by scientists who are involved in the race of coronavirus vaccine development across the world's top institutes.
- Team Halo aims to highlight the work undertaken by scientists in **the UK, USA, South Africa, Qatar, UAE, France, Spain, Peru, Canada, India and Brazil** and create a platform for communication between the scientists working on Covid-19 vaccines and the citizens of these countries.

India's role

In India, over 22 scientists have joined Team Halo from renowned institutes such as Institute of Medical Sciences and Sum Hospital, Bhubaneswar; PGIMER, Chandigarh; Nizams Institute of Medical Sciences, Hyderabad; IIT Indore; Christian Medical College, Vellore; SRM Research Institute, Chennai; and Deep Children's Hospital and Research Centre, Gandhidham.

Constitution Day/ Samvidhan Divas/ National Law Day

In News

Constitution Day or Samvidhan Diwas is celebrated annually in India on **26 November**. The day is also known as National Law Day. The day commemorates the adoption of the Constitution in India.

- On this day in 1949, the Constituent Assembly of India formally adopted the Constitution of India that **came into force on 26 January 1950**.

The day commemorates the pledge of **Purna Swaraj**, passed in the **Lahore session of the Congress in 1930**.

- The two months between the adoption and enforcement of the Constitution was used for reading and translation of the document from English to Hindi.

- The Constituent Assembly met for 166 days for two years, 11 months, and 18 days before the Constitution was finally adopted.
- The members of the Constituent Assembly signed two hand-written copies of the document on 24 January 1950 and two days later, it became the law of the land.

Significance

- The Constitution Day is celebrated as a mark of tribute to India's first Law Minister Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

Constitution of India

- The Constitution is a set of written principles and precedents of the Government of India that frames fundamental political principles, procedures, rights, directive principles, restrictions, and duties of the government and the citizens of the country.
- It **declares India to be a sovereign, secular, socialist, and democratic republic and assures its citizens' equality, liberty, and justice.**

Unlawful Religious Conversion Prohibition Ordinance, 2020

In News

Uttar Pradesh government has approved the **Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion Bill 2020** that seeks to bar 'forceful religious conversions', including for marriage.

- Uttarakhand had brought a similar law in 2018.
- The **Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act 2018** prohibits conversion by misrepresentation, force, fraud, undue influence, coercion, allurement or marriage. It also introduces jail term for the offence, which has been categorised as non-bailable.

About Uttar Pradesh's Ordinance

- The Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, 2020, **recommends 1-5 years imprisonment** if an accused fails to prove that the conversion of the woman was not for marriage or by use of force, allurement etc.

- The jail sentence for the **offence would be 3-10 years if the woman is from the SC/ST community** or is seen as part of mass conversion.

- The notice period to the district magistrate for the religious conversion has been doubled to two months from a month in an earlier draft.

Portal for Gender Certificate

In News

The Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry launched a national portal for transgender persons to apply for certificates and identity cards. The portal would help transpersons in applying for certificate and ID cards digitally without having to visit any government office.

Details

- Through the portal, they can monitor the status of their application that ensures transparency in the process.
- The issuing authorities are also bound by strict timelines to process the applications and issue certificates and identity cards without any necessary delays.
- Once the certificate and I-card are issued, the applicant can download them from the portal itself.

Under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, transpersons can apply for an ID card based on their self-perceived identity.

India Climate Change Knowledge Portal

In News

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change launched the India Climate Change Knowledge Portal. The portal will have all the major steps the Government is taking at both national and international levels to address the climate change issues.

- It will be a single-point information resource that provides information on the different climate initiatives taken by various Line Ministries enabling users to access the status on these initiatives.

- The portal captures sector-wise adaptation and mitigation actions that are being taken by the various line Ministries in one place including updated information on their implementation.

The eight major components included in the knowledge portal are:

- India's Climate Profile
- National Policy Framework
- India's NDC goals
- Adaptation Actions
- Mitigation Actions
- Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation
- International Climate Negotiations
- Reports & Publications

Mains Oriented **Current Affairs**

General Studies-I

Indian Heritage and Culture, History and Geography of the World and Society

Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman

In News

November 7 is celebrated as the birth anniversary of Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman, commonly known as CV Raman. Sir CV Raman was born at Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu on November 7, 1888.

About CV Raman

- Sir CV Raman received the Nobel Prize in 1930 for his work on the scattering of light and for the discovery of the effect named after him - Raman Effect.
- Sir CV Raman was 19 years of age when he joined the Indian Finance Service in Kolkata as Assistant Accountant General.
- During those times, he became familiarised with the first research institute in India - Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (IACS) - which allowed Sir Venkata Raman to do independent research in his interesting field of study and where he made the major contributions in acoustics and optics. His first research paper, on diffraction of light, was published in 1906 while he was still a graduate student.
- Sir CV Raman started his experiments for studying how light is scattered; and thus came the Raman Spectroscopy for observing the vibrational, rotational and other low-frequency modes in a system.
- In 1932 he along with one of his students discovered that photons of light exhibit angular momentum.

- In 1954, Sir CV Raman received the highest civilian award - the Bharat Ratna.
- Sir CV Raman retired from the Indian Institute of Science in 1948 and established the Raman Research Institute in Bengaluru in 1949. He served there as its director and remained active there until his death on November 21, 1970.

Air Quality Index

In News

Air quality improved in Delhi after winds picked up speed.

Specifications on Air Quality Index

An AQI between 0 and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe".

SAFAR

- The System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR) is a central initiative launched by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) in order to measure the air quality of cities.
- SAFAR measures the pollution level as well as location-specific air quality of an area to provide a clearer view at the grass root level.
- The Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune developed this Air Quality Forecasting system.
- It is operationalized by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Bharat Darshan–Dakshin Bharat Yatra

In News

The IRCTC will organise 'Bharat Darshan–Dakshin Bharat Yatra' from Hyderabad and Secunderabad to Tiruchirapalli, Thanjavur, Rameswaram, Madurai and Kanyakumari in strict adherence to Covid-19 norms from December 12 to 18.

- The package has been named Dakshin Bharat Yatra and it will cover major temples in South India such as Sri Ranganathaswamy temple in Srirangam, Tiruchirappalli, Brihadeeswarar temple in Thanjavur, Arulmigu

Ramanathaswamy temple in Rameswaram, Meenakshi temple in Madurai and Kanyakumari.

- Passengers should carry their own pillows, bed sheets, nylon rope for drying clothes, lock and key with chain to secure luggage, torch light, umbrella, medicines and light woolen clothes during the journey.

IRCTC

- IRCTC is a subsidiary organisation of the Indian Railways.
- It was incorporated on September 27, 1999.
- IRCTC handles online ticketing, tourism and catering & hospitality operations of railways.
- IRCTC has 5 Zonal Offices at New Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Secundrabad and Chennai.
- IRCTC have also started running private trains and its first private and fastest train of the country is "Tejas" which was first started on 24 May 2017 from Mumbai CST to Karmali, Goa.

Report on "vital statistics of India based on the Civil Registration System (CRS)"

In News

Arunachal Pradesh recorded the best sex ratio in the country while Manipur recorded the worst sex ratio, according to the 2018 report on "vital statistics of India based on the **Civil Registration System (CRS)**".

- **The Annual Report on Vital Statistics of India based on CRS – 2018 is prepared by the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India.**

- The ratio was determined on the basis of data provided by 30 States and Union Territories as the "requisite information from six States namely **Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal is not available.**

Sex Ratio

- The sex ratio is the ratio of males to females in a population.
- The sex ratio (number of females per thousand males) at birth of registered events is an important indicator to map the sex

differential of the population at the beginning of their life.

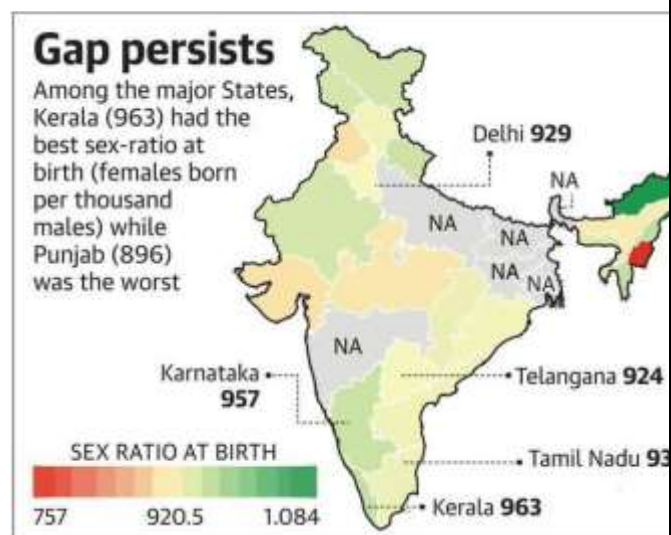
- CRS in India is the unified process of continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the vital events (births, deaths, still births) and characteristics thereof.

Advantages

- The data generated through a complete and up to date **CRS is essential for socio-economic planning and to evaluate the effectiveness of various social sector programs.**
- The data also serve as the cornerstone of public health system.

Birth Registration

- The number of registered births increased to 2.33 crore in 2018 from 2.21 crore registered births the previous year.
- The level of registration of births has increased to 89.3% in 2018 from 81.3% in 2009.
- The prescribed time limit for registration of birth or death is 21 days. Some States however register the births and deaths even after a year.
- Births and deaths reported after one year of occurrence shall be registered only on an order of the Magistrate of the First Class after verifying the correctness and on payment of the prescribed fee.



Key Findings

- Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland registered top two slots respectively followed by Mizoram and Kerala while Manipur and Lakshadweep have shown the lowest sex ratio at birth.
- Highest Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) based on registered events has been reported by Arunachal Pradesh (1084), followed by Nagaland (965) Mizoram (964) and Kerala (963).
- Lowest SRB has been reported by Manipur (757), Lakshadweep (839) and Daman & Diu (877) followed by Punjab (896).
- Assam recorded a sex ratio of 904, Meghalaya 942 and Tripura 945.
- Assam is one of the 13 out of 20 major States which have crossed 90% level of registration of births.
- Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya are among the 10 states in the category of 50 to 80 percent in registering within the stipulated time period of 21 days and Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland are under the category of less than 50 percent in completing the birth registration within time limit of 21 days.
- Arunachal Pradesh recorded 1,084 females born per thousand males, followed by Nagaland (965) Mizoram (964), Kerala (963) and Karnataka (957). The worst was reported in Manipur (757), Lakshadweep (839) and Daman & Diu (877), Punjab (896) and Gujarat (896).
- Delhi recorded a sex ratio of 929, Haryana 914 and Jammu and Kashmir 952.

Registrar General of India

- **RGI was founded in 1961** by the Government of India under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- It arranges, conducts and analyses the results of the demographic surveys of India including Census of India and Linguistic Survey of India.

Lok Virasat

Films Division (FD) is organising Lok Virasat, a festival of films on folk art and painting starting from November 27, 2020.

Details

An exclusive bouquet of documentary films on folk art and paintings - Lok Virsat - is being showcased, between November 27-29, 2020 on FD website and You Tube channel.

The films being streamed include

- The Kingdom of God , on the great Indian heritage of art and culture with focus on various folk art traditions,
- Bhavai - Fading Memories, a film on Bhavai - a folk art of Gujarat,
- Naman – Khele, a film on the ancient folk art performed in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra,
- Sahi Jata, The Fusion Cult, a film on the unique fusion of music and dance in the form of folk art on the back-drop of the ancient Orissa town of Puri and
- Therukoothu : Dancing For Life , a film depicting the age old Tamil folk art.

Low Pressure Area

In News

A low-pressure area had formed over **South Andaman Sea** and adjoining **South East Bay of Bengal and equatorial Indian Ocean**.

Pressure Systems

- Air expands when heated and gets compressed when cooled. This results in variations in the atmospheric pressure. The differences in atmospheric pressure causes the movement of air from high pressure to low pressure, setting the air in motion.
- Air in horizontal motion is wind. The wind redistributes the heat and moisture across latitudes, thereby, maintaining a constant temperature for the planet as a whole.
- The vertical rising of moist air forms clouds and bring precipitation.

Pressure Belts

On the earth's surface, there are seven pressure belts. They are the Equatorial Low, the two Subtropical highs, the two Subpolar lows, and the two Polar highs. Except for the Equatorial low, the others form matching pairs in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres.

General Studies-II

Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International Relations

Code on Wages norms for the annual bonus

In News

According to a new provision in the Code on Wages 2019, 'conviction for sexual harassment' can be a ground for denying bonus payouts to employees.

- As per the extant law, bonus dues are barred only in case of employees dismissed for fraud, violent conduct and theft or sabotage.
- The new Code is expected to become operational once the government notifies the rules.
- This move will serve as an additional deterrent apart from the Prevention Of Sexual Harassment (POSH) law of 2013.

POSH law guidelines

- As per the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) law of 2013, firms are required to form an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) to inquire into complaints of sexual harassment at the workplace.
- The Committee is required to make recommendations to employers on the action required according to its inquiry in such complaints.
- The ICC has the powers to decide if someone is guilty and report it further to the police, though not all sexual harassment cases translate into a police case.
- Under the POSH Act, sexual harassment includes any one or more of the following unwelcome acts or behaviour (whether directly or by implication):
 - Physical contact and advances
 - A demand or request for sexual favours
 - Making sexually coloured remarks
 - Showing pornography

- Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature.

Payment of Bonus Act, 1965

- The minimum bonus payable under the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 is 8.33% of the salary or wage earned by the employee during the accounting year.
- This bonus is subject to a maximum of 20% of such salary or wage.
- This bonus is applied to all employees earning a salary of up to Rs 21,000 a month.
- The salary and bonus payment limits are yet to be notified under the Code on Wages.
- Section 29 of the Code states that Notwithstanding anything contained in this Code, an employee shall be disqualified from receiving bonus under this Code if: He is dismissed from service for fraud or riotous or violent behaviour while on the premises of the establishment or theft, misappropriation or sabotage of any property of the establishment or conviction for sexual harassment.
- Other disqualification triggers are explicitly restricted to actions on an employer's premises, the trigger referring to conviction under sexual harassment does not include such a condition about the location of the incident.

Code on wage, 2019

- The code on wage 2019, consolidate four acts- payment of wages ct, 1936, minimum wage act, 1948, Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 and Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 — into a single code.
- The Second National Commission on Labour (Ravindra Varma, 2002) suggested consolidating all labour laws into four codes.
- The Code will have the same definition of the term “worker”; but, a person employed in a

supervisory capacity drawing up to ₹15,000 will also be considered a worker.

- Before wage code, there is, Minimum Wages Act, which provides to fix minimum wage in employment which has more than 1,000 workers to be first included in the Schedule, and, thereafter, minimum wages will be fixed as per law.
- The new Code has dispensed with the necessity of having minimum workers and inclusion in schedule.
- The central government will have the power to fix a floor wage. Once it is fixed, State governments cannot fix any minimum wage less than it.

Industrial Relations Code, 2020

In News

The Ministry of Labour notified the draft rules for the Industrial Relations Code, 2020. The rules are to be implemented by April 2021.

- The Industrial Relations Code, 2020, was among the three labour Codes passed by Parliament, subsumed three laws regarding industrial disputes, trade unions and standing orders, which lists details of service conditions of employees.
- It would supersede:
The Industrial Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1949,
The Industrial Tribunal (Central Procedure) Rules, 1954,
The Industrial Disputes (Central) Rules, 1957
The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Central Rules, 1946.

Key Highlights

- The draft rules enable employers to seek permissions and workers to submit a notice for strike electronically.

- The notice of strike would have to be signed by the secretary and five elected representatives of the registered trade union and given to the employer, with a copy sent to the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) electronically or otherwise.
- The rules also proposed establishing a re-skilling fund for retrenched workers.
- Under the industrial relation code, the government have allowed the firms up to 300 employees, to fire workers and shut the firm without prior government approval.
- But, if the authorities do not respond to their request, the retrenchment proposal will be deemed to be approved.
 - Hitherto, prior approval had been required. Firms with more than 300 workers need to apply for approval. Before these new codes, labour laws required a 30- to 90-day notice period before retrenching “workmen”, which is a class of mainly shop floor workers
 - Employers would have to electronically transfer an amount equal to 15 days of the last drawn wages of the retrenched workers or worker into an account maintained by the government within 10 days of the retrenchment.
 - The fund so received shall be transferred by the Central Government to each worker or workers account electronically within 45 days of receipt of funds from the employer and the worker shall utilize such amount for his re-skilling. re-skilling.
 - In the case of manufacturing units, plantations, and mines with 100 or more workmen, also required government approval.
 - Under industrial relation code, Unions will now have to give 60-day prior strike notice.
 - When proceedings are pending before a labour tribunal or the National Industrial Tribunal, workers cannot go on a strike for 60 days after they are completed.

Gilgit-Baltistan

In News

On November 1, observed every year in Gilgit-Baltistan as “Independence Day”, Pakistan Prime Minister announced that his government

would give the region “provisional provincial status”.

- When that happens, Gilgit-Baltistan will become the fifth province of Pakistan.
- Although, the G-B region is claimed by India as part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu & Kashmir as it existed in 1947 at its accession to India.

Details

- Gilgit-Baltistan is the northernmost territory administered by Pakistan, providing the country’s only territorial frontier, and thus a land route, with China, where it meets the Xinjiang Autonomous Region.
- The China Pakistan Economic Corridor has made the region vital for both countries.
- To G-B’s west is Afghanistan, to its south is Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and to the east J K. J&K.

What is the region’s current status?

- Though Pakistan, like India, links G-B’s fate to that of Kashmir, its administrative arrangements are different from those in PoK.
- While PoK has its own Constitution that sets out its powers and their limits vis-à-vis Pakistan, G-B has been ruled mostly by executive fiat. Until 2009, the region was simply called Northern Areas.
- It got its present name only with the Gilgit-Baltistan (Empowerment and Self-Governance) Order, 2009, which replaced the Northern Areas Legislative Council with the Legislative Assembly.
- The NALC was an elected body but had no more than an advisory role to the Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas, who ruled from Islamabad.
- The Legislative Assembly is only a slight improvement. It has 24 directly elected members and nine nominated ones.
- In 2018, the then PML(N) government passed an order centralising even the limited powers granted to the Assembly, a move linked to the need for greater control over land and other resources for the infrastructure projects then being planned under CPEC.

- The order was challenged, and in 2019, the Pakistan Supreme Court repealed it and asked the current government to replace it with governance reforms. This was not done.
- Meanwhile, the Supreme Court extended its jurisdiction to G-B and made arrangements for a caretaker government until the next Legislative Assembly elections.
- The last polls were held in July 2015, and the Assembly's five-term ended in July this year. Fresh elections could not be held because of the pandemic.
- It is not clear if the provincial status will come before or after the polls.

Geography of Gilgit Baltistan

- Gilgit-Baltistan is home to the world's highest mountain ranges.
 - The main ranges in this area are the [Karakoram](#) and the western [Himalayas](#).
 - The [Pamir](#) mountains are to the north and the [Hindu Kush](#) lies to the west.

Section 67 of the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act

In News

The Supreme Court has ruled on a question of law on whether statements recorded under **Section 67 of the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act** can be admissible as confessional statements during criminal trials.

- The judge ruled that statements recorded by officers under **the NDPS Act cannot be treated as confessions.**

Observations made by the supreme court

- According to court confessional statements made before an officer under section 53 of the NDPS Act if held as the basis to convict a person would be "a direct infringement" of constitutional guarantees".
- While it was submitted to the court that confessional statements before police officers were considered admissible in other special acts including the now-repealed **Terrorism and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act and Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA)**, the

court said that they were used with several safeguards contained in the Acts themselves.

- The court also held that when a reference is made to "police officers", it does not only mean a police officer belonging to a state police force but includes officers who may belong to other departments.

NDPS ACT,1985

- This act prohibits a person the production/manufacturing/cultivation, possession, sale, purchasing, transport, storage, and/or consumption of any [narcotic drug](#) or [psychotropic substance](#).
- The [Narcotics Control Bureau](#) was set up under the act.
- The bureau was come with into effect from March 1986.
- The Act is designed to fulfil India's treaty obligations under the:
 1. [Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs](#),
 2. [Convention on Psychotropic Substances](#),
 3. [United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances](#).

Section 67 of the NDPS Act

According to section 67 of NDPS Act, any officer authorized by the centre of the state may during an investigation, call for information from any person to examine whether there was any violation of the act.

Arguments

- Since the officers under Section 53 of the NDPS Act are not defined as "police officers" but are given the powers of an "officer-in-charge of a police station", confessions given to them should be admissible in evidence.
- The officers in the specialised anti-drug probe agency, NCB, can be deputed from various departments of the government including Central Excise, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Customs.
- The contrary opinion states that safeguards available for accused in international and Indian law, including the Constitution, also extend to accused under the NDPS Act. This includes any statement given by a person to a police officer

cannot be considered as a confession and cannot be enough to prove guilt.

Tele-Law

In News

Tele-Law has touched a new milestone with 4 Lakh beneficiaries having received legal advice under this through **CSCs (Common Service Centres)**.

Tele-Law

- Tele-Law programme was **launched by the Department of Justice** in 2017 to address cases at the pre-litigation stage.
 - Under this programme, smart technology of video conferencing, telephone /instant calling facilities available at the vast network of Common Service Centres at the Panchayat level is used to connect the indigent, down-trodden, vulnerable, unreached groups and communities with the Panel Lawyers for seeking timely and valuable legal advice.
 - The Tele-Law service is proactively outreached to groups and communities through a cadre of frontline volunteers provided by NALSA and CSC- e Gov.
 - The programme benefits people entitled to free legal aid under Section 12 of Legal Services Authorities, Act, 1987 that include women, children, Members of scheduled caste, scheduled tribes etc. to seek legal advice free of cost.
 - Tele Law web portal providing key information about the programme is available in 22 languages.
 - Tele-Law Dashboard has been developed to capture real-time data on cases registered and advice enabled.
 - E-Tutorial on use of Tele-Law mobile application has been uploaded on Tele-Law portal. Tele-Law pamphlets are also available in 22 languages on the Tele-Law portal.

NALSA

- Its formation date – 1995 under legal services authorities act 1987
- Its purpose - is to provide free legal services to eligible candidates and to organize Lok Adalats for the speedy resolution of cases

- Patron in chief – Chief justice of India
- At decentralized level - There is a provision for similar mechanism at the state and district level also headed by Chief Justice of High Courts and Chief Judges of District courts respectively

Aim of the law

- It primarily aims to **address issues at the pre-litigation stage**.
- In digitally connects marginalized and poor people with panel lawyers, to seek legal advice.
- It gives the facility of consultation through the use of video conferencing and telephone service available at the Common Services Centers situated at the gram panchayat level.
- E-Tutorial on use of Tele-Law mobile application has been uploaded on Tele-Law portal. Tele-Law pamphlets are also available in 22 languages on the Tele-Law portal.

Common service centre

It is the strategic cornerstone of national e-governance plan, which was approved in 2006.

Its commitment to the national common minimum programme to introduce e-governance on a massive scale.

The CSCs is that it will offer web-enabled e-governance services in rural areas, including application forms, certificates, and utility payments such as electricity, telephone and water bills.

OPEC-India Dialogue

In News

The OPEC Secretariat hosted the 4th High-Level Meeting of the OPEC-India Dialogue on 05 November 2020.

Key Focus of the meeting

- The meeting focused on the implications of COVID-19, discussing the repercussions of the pandemic and its significant impact on both the world economy and energy markets, including oil.
- Participants also deliberated on medium-term energy and oil prospects and challenges.

- OPEC and the Declaration of Cooperation (DoC) have been addressing the unparalleled impact of COVID-19 and the resulting severe market imbalance through swift and informed actions.

Highlights

- India is one of the world's fastest-growing economies.
- India imports around 80% of its oil from OPEC Member Countries.
- OPEC is critical for India's energy requirements as it:
 - caters to 78% of India's crude oil demand, 59% of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) demand, and nearly 38% of its liquefied natural gas (LNG) demand.
- In terms of value, India imported US\$92.8 billion worth of hydrocarbons from OPEC Member Countries during FY 2019-20.
 - This year India has filled **strategic petroleum reserves (SPRs)** to a capacity of 5.33 MMT under Phase I of its SPR Programme.
 - India will initiate the process of establishing another 6.5 MMT of commercial-cum-strategic petroleum storage at two locations under a PPP model.
 - India invited OPEC Member Countries to invest in this opportunity.
 - **The next High-Level Meeting of the OPEC-India Dialogue will be held in 2021, in New Delhi.**

OPEC

- OPEC was founded in 1960 in Baghdad by the first five members (Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela),
- Since 1965, it has been headquartered in Vienna, Austria. (Austria is not an OPEC member state)
- OPEC+ was formed in late 2016, to have more control over the global crude oil market.
- The current OPEC members are the following(13): Algeria, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, the Republic of the Congo, Saudi Arabia (the De facto leader), the United Arab Emirates and Venezuela.
- Former OPEC members are Ecuador, Indonesia and Qatar.

First India-Nordic-Baltic Conclave

In News

The first India-Nordic-Baltic Conclave was held virtually.

Focus of conclave

The Conclave focused on clean technologies and renewable energies, Artificial Intelligence, supply chain logistics and blockchain led transformation.

Nordic and Baltic countries meaning

Nordic countries are a group of five nations in Northern Europe-Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland, while Baltic countries are three countries--Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania who share a coastline with Baltic sea.

Details

- India has increased engagement with these countries and 2018 saw first India-Nordic summit in Sweden.
- Denmark will see the second India Nordic summit and this was one of the key outcomes of the India-Denmark virtual summit that took place earlier in 2020.
- India is keen to promote more resilient global supply chains and elaborated on India's Atmanirbhar Bharat-self-reliant policy that aims to promote entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and skill.

Academic Freedom Index (AFI)

In News

India has scored considerably low in the international Academic Freedom Index (AFI) with a score of 0.352.

About index

- **Academic freedom, in general, refers to a scholar's freedom to express ideas without risk of official interference or professional disadvantage.**
- Academic Freedom Index has been published by **Global Public Policy Institute** as a part of a global time-series dataset (1900-2019) in close cooperation with Friedrich-Alexander

University Erlangen-Nürnberg, Scholars at Risk and the V-Dem Institute.

- Global public policy institute is a [non-profit think tank](#) based in [Berlin](#).
- Institute was established in 2003.
- The institute focuses on topics related to foreign policy and global governance. Institute's mission is to improve global governance through research, policy advice and debate.

Details of index

- It tries to quantify the freedom of university scholars to debate politically and culturally controversial topics without fearing for their safety or studies.
- The scores are scaled 0-1.
- The index did not report data for 35 countries - including the United States and Australia.
 - Uruguay and Portugal top the AFI, with scores of 0.971 each, followed closely by Latvia (0.964) and Germany (0.960).

The AFI used eight components to evaluate the scores:

1. Freedom to research and teach
2. Freedom of academic exchange and dissemination
3. Institutional autonomy
4. Campus integrity
5. Freedom of academic and cultural expression
6. Constitutional protection of academic freedom
7. An international legal commitment to academic freedom under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
8. Existence of universities

India on index

- India has an AFI of 0.352, comparable to the scores of Saudi Arabia and Libya.
- It is in 5th position in South Asia.
- Countries like Malaysia (0.582), Pakistan (0.554), Brazil (0.466), Somalia (0.436) and Ukraine (0.422) have scored better than India.
- **India has not fared well in components like institutional autonomy, campus integrity, freedom of academic and cultural expression and constitutional protection of academic freedom.**

• Most universities in the country are subjected to unsolicited interference from governments in both academic and non-academic issues.

• A majority of appointments, to top-ranking posts like that of vice-chancellors, registrars, have been highly politicised.

• Such political appointments not only choke academic and creative freedom but also lead to corrupt practices.

• This promotes unhealthy favouritism and nepotism in staff appointments and student admissions.

• This reflects a 'rent-seeking culture' within the academic community.

Obscenity

In News

Model Milind Soman was booked by the Goa Police for obscenity, days after he posted a photograph of himself running nude on a beach in the state.

What is considered 'obscene'?

• For a book or object to be obscene, Section 292 of the IPC says it must be lascivious or lustful or have the effect of depraving or corrupting someone.

• The terms 'lascivious', 'prurient', 'deprave' and 'corrupt' have not been clearly defined, leaving room for interpretation by courts.

• The courts, for their part, have developed tests to determine whether something is 'obscene'.

Supreme court observation in this regard

• In 1965, the landmark **Ranjit Udeshi judgment** of the Supreme Court adopted the Victorian-era Hicklin test.

• The test assessed obscenity by the standard of someone who was open to immoral influences and was likely to be corrupted or deprived by the material in question

• In the **Aveek Sarkar case of 2014**, the Supreme Court did away with the British Hicklin test and adopted the American Roth test, instead.

- As per this test, obscenity was to be evaluated like an average person would, applying contemporary community standards.

What does Indian law say about obscenity?

- Section 294 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) punishes obscene acts or words in a public place.
- To be considered a crime, the obscenity must cause "annoyance to others".
- A person convicted under this law can face up to three months of imprisonment.
- Obscene books are similarly criminalised under Section 292.
- The law on obscenity has evolved with the advent of the Internet and social media.
 - Under Section 67 of the Information Technology Act, anyone who publishes or transmits obscene material in electronic form can be punished.

Law against religious conversion

In News

Haryana government is considering a law against forced religious conversions and has sought information about such a law already in force in Himachal Pradesh.

Last year, the Himachal Pradesh assembly passed the Freedom of Religion Bill, 2019.

What is the Himachal Pradesh anti-conversion law?

The state had already enacted a law in 2007 which prohibited conversion from one religion to another by force or fraud.

In the session of 2019, the state introduced a more stringent version of the legislation.

What does the law say?

- According to the Act, "no person shall convert or attempt to convert, either directly or otherwise, any other person from one religion to another by use of misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, inducement or by any fraudulent means or by marriage; nor shall any person abet or conspire such conversion".

- The Act does not cover a person re-converting to his "parent religion".
- It further says that any marriage done for the sole purpose of religion conversion may be declared null and void by a court on a petition by either party.

What happens if anyone wants to convert to any other religion?

- As per the Act, anyone who wishes to convert to any other religion will give a declaration to the district authorities at least one month in advance, specifying that one is doing so as per his/her "own volition or free consent".
- The religious priest who performs the conversion ceremony has to inform the authorities at least one month in advance.
- The district magistrate will then conduct an inquiry regarding the "intention, purpose and cause of proposed conversion".
- The conversion will be rendered illegal if the authorities are not informed in advance.

The burden of proof

The Act says that the burden of proof as to whether a religious conversion was not effected through force or fraud lies on the person so converted, or the person who has facilitated the conversion.

What is the punishment?

- All offences under the Act are cognizable and non-bailable.
- The violator can be punished with a prison term ranging from one to five years, along with a fine.
- In case the victim is a minor, woman or member of a Scheduled Caste or Tribe, the imprisonment may extend up to seven years.
- Failure to declare the conversion in advance can also result in imprisonment of up to two years.

The Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance

- The law makes conversion non-bailable with up to 10 years of jail time if undertaken unlawfully.

- The law requires that [religious conversions](#) for marriage in Uttar Pradesh be approved by a [district magistrate](#).
- the law itself contains no mention of love jihad.
- The ordinance was after the government launched 'Mission Shakti', a campaign for the safety and security of women in the state.

Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Bill, 2020

In News

The state Assembly has passed the Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Bill, 2020 paving way for more employment opportunities for locals in the private sector.

- Haryana too (after Andhra Pradesh) has announced it wants 75 per cent of private-sector jobs in the state, till a certain salary slab, reserved for local candidates.

Which all sectors will be covered under this Bill?

All the companies, societies, trusts, limited liability partnership firms, partnership firms and any person employing 10 or more persons and an entity, as may be notified by the government from time to time shall come under the ambit of this Act.

The definition of “employer” given in the Bill means a Company registered under the Companies Act, 2013 (Central Act 18 of 2013) or a Society registered under the Haryana Registration and Regulation of Societies Act, 2012 or a Limited Liability Partnership Firm as defined under the Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008 (Central Act 6 of 2009) or a Trust defined under the Indian Trust Act, 1882 or a Partnership Firm as defined under Indian Partnership Act, 1932 or any person employing 10 or more persons on salary, wages or other remuneration for manufacturing or providing any service or such entity, as may be notified by the government from time to time.

It shall not include the central government or state government or any organisation owned by the central or state government.

What does the “local candidate” mean?

- A candidate “who is domiciled in the State of Haryana” is called a local candidate and shall be able to avail the benefit of this reservation while seeking employment in the private sector.
- The candidate will also mandatorily have to register himself/herself on a designated portal while seeking benefit under this reservation.
- Employer too will have to make recruitments through this portal, only.

Does it mean 75% of the total workforce of an employer will be from Haryana only?

- No. Every employer shall be required to employ 75 per cent local candidates for the posts where the gross monthly salary or wages are not more than Rs. 50,000 or as notified by the government from time to time.
- The local candidates may be from any district of Haryana, but the employer shall have the discretion to restrict employment of local candidates from any district to 10 per cent of the total number of local candidates.
- It will, however, be also the employer’s discretion if he wants to recruit above 10 per cent employees from a particular district.

Will the employer be penalised for not following provisions of this Act?

Yes, the employer can be fined with a minimum Rs. 10,000 to a maximum Rs. 2 lakh once it is established that the employer has violated provisions of the Act.

Is this reservation Bill violative of Article 16 of the Constitution of India?

- Concerns were raised in Haryana Vidhan Sabha, called the Bill a violation of Article 16 of the Constitution of India.
- However, Haryana government claims that while Article 16 talks about the “public employment”, the Bill only pertains to “private sector employment”.

Article 16

- There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.
- No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State.
- Nothing in this article shall prevent Parliament from making any law prescribing, concerning a class or classes of employment or appointment to any office under the Government of, or any local or other authority within, a State or Union territory, any requirement as to residence within that State or Union territory] before such employment or appointment.
- Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State.
- Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any law which provides that the incumbent of an office in connection with the affairs of any religious or denominational institution or any member of the governing body thereof shall be a person professing a particular religion or belonging to a particular denomination.
- Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any economically weaker sections of citizens other than the classes mentioned in clause (4), in addition to the existing reservation and subject to a maximum of ten per cent. of the posts in each category.

UN Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ)

In News

Indian diplomat Vidisha Maitra was elected to the UN Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly.

- Maitra, the First Secretary in India's Permanent Mission to the UN, obtained 126 votes in the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Details

- The Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, which deals with administrative and budgetary issues, recommended Ms Maitra to the Assembly for a three-year term beginning 1 January 2021.
- The General Assembly which has 193 member-states, appoints members of the Advisory Committee based on broad geographical representation, personal qualifications and experience.

Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ)

- The Advisory Committee is an expert Committee of sixteen Members elected by the General Assembly for three years, based on a broad geographical representation.
- Members serve in a personal capacity and not as representatives of Member States.

- The Committee holds three sessions a year with total meeting time between nine and ten months per year.
- The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee are elected by the Members of the Advisory Committee.
 - The programme of work of the Advisory Committee is determined by the requirements of the General Assembly and other legislative bodies to whom it reports.
 - The Advisory Committee is serviced by a secretariat headed by an Executive Secretary, assisted by a Deputy.

Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT)

In News

PM to inaugurate Office-cum-Residential Complex of Cuttack Bench of Income Tax Appellate Tribunal. The Cuttack Bench of the ITAT was created and started functioning from 23rd May 1970. The jurisdiction of Cuttack Bench extends to the whole of Odisha.

Income Tax Appellate Tribunal

- ITAT is an important statutory body in the field of direct taxes and its orders are accepted as final, on findings of fact.
- ITAT was the first Tribunal to be created on 25th January 1941 and is also known as 'Mother Tribunal'.
- Starting with three benches in the year 1941, at Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta it has now grown to 63 Benches and two circuit benches spread across thirty cities of India.
- ITAT draws inspiration from its motto 'Nishpaksh Sulabh Satvar Nyay', which means impartial, easy and speedy justice. ITAT stands out for its uniqueness of imparting justice to the litigants, by an inexpensive, easily accessible forum free from technicalities, regarded for its expert knowledge on the subject of Direct Taxes, besides rendering expeditious justice.

Alimony guidelines

In News

The Supreme Court set down comprehensive guidelines on alimony while hearing a dispute between a Mumbai-based couple.

Judgment

- The Supreme Court leaned on Article 15(3) and Article 39, and a host of other laws while setting down these guidelines.
- It ruled that an abandoned wife and children will be entitled to 'maintenance' from the date she applies for it in a court of law.



How can the alimony be claimed?

The SC lay down that women can claim alimony under different laws, including,

- The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
- Section 125 of the CrPC, or
- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

It would be inequitable to direct the husband to pay maintenance under each of the proceedings.

Alimony and Maintenance

Alimony and maintenance both connote the existence of a duty on the part of one person to provide for the needs of another person or persons who are dependent on them.

Interim maintenance: While the legal proceedings are still underway, a husband

is required to pay maintenance for the wife, along with the expenses of the proceedings. The interim maintenance is payable from the date the petition is filed, till the time the final order is passed.

Permanent maintenance: When a decree of dissolution of marriage or judicial separation is obtained by the wife, the court may order that the husband shall pay the wife any particular amount fixed by the court, either periodically.

Constitutional safeguards

- Parliament and the courts have persistently enacted legislation to give women better rights.
- Article 15(3) and Article 39 are two key constitutional safeguards.
- Article 15(3) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.
- Article 39 directs state policy towards equal pay and opportunities for both men and women and protecting the health of women and children.

Issues related to Alimony and Maintenance in India:

- Maintenance and alimony are the only sources of livelihood hence discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth is a direct attack on the right to life, liberty and dignity, guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- The discriminatory maintenance and alimony reinforce patriarchal and stereotypical notions about women and thus any provision that perpetrates or reinforces discriminatory stereotypes against women is manifestly arbitrary.
- All the women don't have equal rights related to alimony in India which violate their right to equality as a fundamental right under the Indian constitution.
- In India, the women are much vulnerable due to patriarchal attitude of society towards women therefore, there should be clarity regarding alimony so that women can live a dignified life.

- Most of the girls in India get married at an early age and if they get a divorce then proper alimony is needed to sustain their life.
- In India, judicial proceedings take a long time and require enough money therefore interim maintenance is needed.
- Even after this many years of Independence and 70 years of India becoming a socialist secular democratic republic, laws relating to maintenance and alimony are not only complex and cumbersome but also against the constitutional mandate of being equal, rational and just.

The discriminatory grounds of maintenance and alimony are violative of Articles 14, 15, 21 of the Constitution.

Powers of Election Commission

In News

Supreme Court has put a stay on the Election Commission order removing Congress leader Kamal Nath from the list of star campaigners.

- While hearing the matter, **Supreme Court said prima facie Election Commission didn't have the power to remove a star campaigner.**

Election Commission's order

- The former CM made a distasteful personal remark about another party's woman candidate while campaigning for the Assembly by-election.
- This is why the **Election Commission of India's (ECI's) taken note of an alleged breach of "ethical and dignified behaviour" and revoked Kamal Nath as the "star campaigner"** in Madhya Pradesh.

Star Campaigners

- Section 77 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 is related to a candidate's election expenditure.
- This Section lets the political party itself decide who its leaders are.
- It also allows every party to submit a list of such 'star campaigners' to the election authorities.

What does revoking the star status mean?

- It means that the withdrawal of the right to campaign without incurring electoral expenditure on the candidates' account.
- As the poll regulator, the ECI must have the power to revoke the status of a campaigner, if there is a breach of campaign norms or the MCC.
- [MCC - The ECI's Model Code of Conduct lays down the standards of behaviour for political parties and their candidates contesting elections.

Election commission of India

- The Election Commission of India is an autonomous constitutional authority.
- It is responsible for administering [election processes in India](#) at national and state.
- This body administers elections to the [Lok Sabha](#), [Rajya Sabha](#), [state Legislative Assemblies](#), [state legislative councils](#), and the offices of the [President](#) and [Vice President](#) of the country.
- The Election Commission operates under the authority of the [Constitution](#) per Article 324.

Finger 8

In News

During the eighth Corps Commander-level talks in **Chushul**, People's Liberation Army ready to return to **Finger 8** near the Line of Actual Control on the north of **Pangong Tso**.

The proposal includes moving back troops, tanks and artillery to the depth areas on either side to reduce chances of any incident in a region.



Background

- According to India, the LAC passes through Finger 8 on the north bank of Pangong Tso. In May, Chinese troops came 8 km west, up to Finger 4.
- After an initial round of disengagement in early July, the Chinese stepped back from the base of Finger 4 to Finger 5, and Indian troops moved to Finger 3. But the Chinese refused to vacate the ridge of Finger 4, and have been there ever since.
- In late August, Indian troops surprised the Chinese by occupying dominating heights on the south bank of Pangong Tso, and in the larger Chushul sub-sector.

The strategic importance of location

- Indian troops positioned themselves on **Gurung Hill, Magar Hill, Mukhpari, Rechin La and Rezang La**. They now have a direct view of **China's Moldo Garrison, and the strategic Spanggur Gap**, which can be used to launch offensives — as the Chinese did in 1962.
- Indian troops also readjusted their positions on the north bank of the lake, occupying features to dominate Chinese positions on the ridgeline connecting Finger 3 and Finger 4. This scramble for heights led to warning shots being fired by the two sides.

The Line of Actual Control

LAC is a notional demarcation line that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory in the **Sino-Indian border dispute**. The term is said to have been used by **Zhou Enlai in a 1959 letter to Jawaharlal Nehru**.

Pangong Tso lake

- It is an [endorheic lake](#) spanning eastern [Ladakh](#) and [West Tibet](#).
- It is situated at an elevation of 4,225 m (13,862 ft).
- It is 134 km long and divided into five sub lakes, called *Pangong Tso*, *Tso Nyak*, *Rum Tso* (twin lakes) and *Nyak Tso*.
- The lake is 5 km (3.1 mi) wide at its broadest point. All together it covers 604 km².
- It is a saline lake.
- The lake is in the process of being identified under the [Ramsar Convention](#)

Details

- While there is no agreement on this proposal, India is considering the Chinese offer, and modalities for other friction areas are still under discussion.
- India's insistence on status quo ante – of troops returning to their April locations – and China's reluctance to disengage, especially on the Pangong north bank, has had the two sides deploying thousands of troops, tanks, artillery and air assets in the region.
- The proposal includes the creation of a temporary no-patrolling zone between Finger 4 and Finger 8 "to prevent any friction".
- According to the proposal, Troops on the south bank of Pangong Tso are also supposed to return to their original positions.

Status quo ante

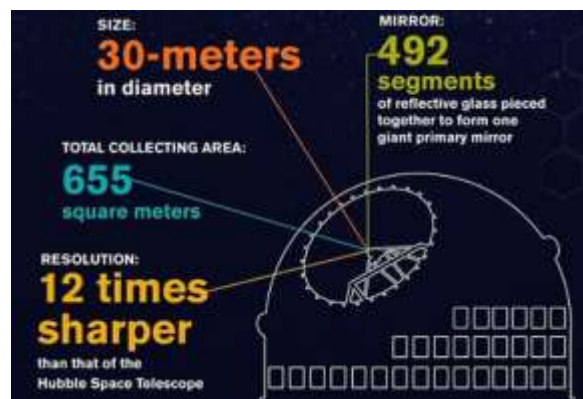
Status quo or Statu quo is a Latin phrase meaning the existing state of affairs.

Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) project

In News

Indian astronomers had worked closely with 2020 Physics Nobel Laureate Andrea Ghez on the design of back-end instruments and possible science prospects of the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) project being installed at Mauna Kea in Hawaii.

- The TMT project is an international partnership among CalTech, Universities of California, Canada, Japan, China, and India; through the Department of Science and Technology and the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).
- "Thirty Metre" refers to the 30-metre diameter of the mirror, with 492 segments of glass pieced together.



Details

- Once completed, it would be three times as wide as the world's largest existing visible-light telescope.
- The larger the mirror, the more light a telescope can collect, which means, in turn, that it can "see" farther, fainter objects.
- It would be more than 200 times more sensitive than current telescopes and would be able to resolve objects 12 times better than the Hubble Space Telescope.
- The TMT is designed for near-ultraviolet to mid-infrared (0.31 to 28 μm wavelengths) observations, featuring adaptive optics to assist in correcting image blur.
- One of its key uses will be the study of exoplanets, many of which have been detected in the last few years, and whether their

atmospheres contain water vapour or methane — the signatures of possible life.

Mauna Kea

- It is a [dormant volcano](#) on the [island of Hawai'i](#)
- Its peak is 4,207.3 m (13,803 ft) above sea level, making it the highest point in the state of Hawaii.
- Mauna Kea is the tallest mountain in the world, measuring 10,211 m (33,500 ft) in height.

Telescope

- The centrepiece of the TMT Observatory is to be a Ritchey-Chrétien telescope with a 30-metre (98 ft) diameter primary mirror.
- This mirror is to be segmented and consist of 492 smaller (1.4 m), individual hexagonal mirrors. The shape of each segment, as well as its position relative to neighbouring segments, will be controlled actively.

Scientific instrumentation

- Wide Field Optical Spectrometer (WFOS)
- Infrared Imaging Spectrometer (IRIS)
- Infrared Multi-object Spectrometer (IRMS)

TOP to the TOTAL scheme

In News

Under Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, Operation Greens Scheme TOP to TOTAL, 50% transportation subsidy is now made available for air transportation for 41 notified fruits and vegetables from North-Eastern and the Himalayan States to any place in India.

- Airlines will provide the transport subsidy directly to the supplier/consignor/consignee/agent by way of charging only 50% of the actual contracted freight charges and will claim the balance 50% from MoFPI as subsidy.
- The transportation subsidy was earlier extended under Operation Greens Scheme for Kisan Rail Scheme with effect from October 2020. Railways charge only 50% of freight charges on the notified fruits and vegetables.

Eligible Crops

- Fruits (21) - Mango, Banana, Guava, Kiwi, Litchi, Mousambi, Orange, Kinnnow, Lime,

Lemon, Papaya, Pineapple, Pomegranate, Jackfruit, Apple, Almond, Aonla, Passion fruit, Pear, Sweet Potato, Chikoo;

- Vegetables (20): - French beans, Bitter Gourd, Brinjal, Capsicum, Carrot, Cauliflower, Chillies (Green), Okra, Cucumber, Peas, Garlic, Onion, Potato, Tomato, Large Cardamom, Pumpkin, Ginger, Cabbage, Squash and Turmeric (dry)

Eligible airports

All the airports in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim (Bagdogra), and Tripura from North-East, and Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh among the Hilly States.

Operation green

- Operation Greens is a project of the [Ministry of Food Processing Industries](#).
- Its target is to stabilise the supply of [tomato](#), [onion](#) and [potato](#) crops (TOP crops) in [India](#).
- The scheme will also ensure their availability around the country, year-round without [price volatility](#).
- It was started in 2018-2019 [Union budget of India](#).
- It has been allocated Rs 500 crores to promote farmer producers' organisations (FPOs), agri-logistics, processing facilities and professional management.

Digital Life Certificate

In News

India Post Payments Bank, have launched the initiative of a chargeable doorstep service for submission of Digital Life Certificate through Postman.

- The facility to submit life certificate online through **Jeevan Pramaan Portal** to provide a convenient and transparent facility to pensioners for submission of Life Certificate.
- Jeevan Pramaan Portal was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in November 2014.

Indian Post Payment Bank

- IPPB is a public sector payments bank from India operated by the India Post.
- IPPB is operating with the Department of Posts under the Ministry of Communications.
- IPPB aims to utilize all of India's 155,015 post offices as access points and 3 lakh postal postmen and Grameen Dak Sewaks to provide doorstep banking services.
- IPPB offers savings accounts, money transfer and insurances through the third parties, bill and utility payments.

Jeevan Pramaan

- Jeevan Pramaan is an Aadhar based Digital Life Certificate for Pensioners. It was launched by Prime Minister on 10 November 2014.
- Jeevan Pramaan will do away with the requirement for a pensioner to submit a physical Life Certificate in November each year, to ensure continuity of pension being credited into their account.
- Jeevan Pramaan has been developed by the Department of Electronics and IT.

Details

- Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare roped in the India Post Payments Bank to utilise its huge network of Postmen and Gramin Dak Sevaks in providing doorstep facility to pensioners for submission of life certificate digitally.
- As a result, a huge number of pensioners across the country shall be able to avail doorstep service without visiting the bank branch.
- This facility shall be in addition to other facilities such as withdrawal of money from a bank account, etc. while sitting at home.

Draft Rules under Code on Social Security

In News

The Labour and Employment Ministry released draft rules under **the Code on Social Security, 2020**.

The Ministry notified the draft rules on November 13 and sought suggestions and objections within 45 days.

Key Highlights

- The rules have been framed for the implementation of **the provisions of the Code on Social Security, 2020, relating to the Employees' Provident Fund, Employees' State Insurance Corporation, gratuity, maternity benefit, social security and cess in respect of building and other construction workers (BOCW).**
- To avail the benefits of social security schemes that are framed under the code, the workers have to register in the portal of labour ministry.
- The rules provide for Aadhaar-based registration. This includes registration of gig workers, unorganized workers and platform workers on the portal of Central Government.

Rules

- When a worker migrates from one state to another, he is entitled to get the benefits from the states where he is currently working. It is the responsibility of the Building Workers Welfare Board to make sure the benefits reach the migrated workers.
- The rules also include gratuity to an employee who was on fixed-term employment.
- It also provides single electronic registration of an establishment and also single electronic cancellation of registration in case of closure activities.
- The rules provide the procedure for self-assessment and payment of cess by the Building and Other Construction Workers. For self-assessment, the employer shall calculate the cost of construction as specified by the State Public Works Department or Central Public Works Department. The cost of construction shall also be calculated based on the returns or the documents submitted to the Real Estate Regulatory Authority.
- The rate of interest for delayed payment has been reduced from 2% to 1% per month.
- Under the rules, the assessing officer has powers to direct that no machinery or material shall be disturbed or removed from the

construction site. The rules have withdrawn the powers of the officer to stop the construction work. Also, according to the new rules, the assessing officer shall visit the site only with prior approval of the Secretary of Building and Other Construction Workers boards.

East Asia Summit 2020

In News

15th East Asia Summit (EAS) was concluded on 14th November.

- The Summit discussed ways to strengthen the EAS platform and to make it more responsive to emerging challenges on its 15th anniversary and adopted the **Ha Noi Declaration**.
 - Besides the Ha Noi Declaration, the Summit also adopted four other Leaders' Statements on **Marine Sustainability, Epidemics Prevention and Response, Women, Peace and Security, and Steady Growth of Regional Economy**.

Ha Noi Declaration

- It reaffirmed the following declarations of the East Asia Summit
 - 2005 Kuala Lumpur Declaration
 - 2010 Ha Noi Declaration
 - 2011 Bali Declaration
 - 2015 Kuala Lumpur Declaration
 - The declaration emphasized ASEAN-centred regional architecture
 - The summit stressed the need to further enable the East Asia Summit as an effective platform.
 - It stressed upon the effective implementation of Manila Plan of Action to advance the Phnom Penh Declaration (2018-2022). It focuses on East Asia Development Initiative.

Key Highlights

- The minister expressed concerns over eroding trust in the South China Sea region.
- India's external affair minister spoke of the importance of adhering to international law, respecting territorial integrity and sovereignty, and promoting a rules-based global order.

- China claims sovereignty of all the South China Sea that holds huge hydrocarbon reserves.

- India has been promoting rules-based order in the region. This is mainly about adhering to the UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the sea).

- The Leaders also underlined the importance of cooperation in ensuring safe, effective and affordable access to COVID-19 vaccines.

- They called for greater cooperation in keeping the global supply chains open for an expeditious and sustainable economic recovery.

- Regional and international issues such as the South China Sea, the situation in the Korean peninsula and Rakhine state were also discussed.

East Asia Summit

- The East Asia Summit (EAS) is a regional forum held annually.

- Initially, it involves 16 countries in the East Asian, Southeast Asian, South Asian and Oceanian regions, based on the ASEAN Plus Six mechanism.

- Membership expanded to 18 countries including Russia and the United States at the Sixth EAS in 2011.

- Since its establishment, ASEAN has held the central role and leadership in the forum.

- EAS meetings are held after the annual ASEAN leaders' meetings and play an important role in the regional architecture of Asia-Pacific.

- The first summit was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 14 December 2005.

12th BRICS Summit

In News

Prime Minister will attend the 12th BRICS Summit **hosted by Russia** on November 17 virtually.

Theme: Global Stability, Shared Security and Innovative Growth.

- The summit is being held in the backdrop of the **75th anniversary of the United Nations** and the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Areas of discussion

Leaders would be discussing intra-BRICS cooperation and key issues in the global context, including:

- Reform of the multilateral system
- Measures to mitigate the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic
- Cooperation in Counter-Terrorism, trade, health, energy and people to people exchanges

BRICS

- BRICS is the acronym coined to associate five major emerging national economies: **Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.**
- Since 2009, the BRICS nations have met annually at formal summits.
- The BRICS is known as an influential bloc that represents over 3.6 billion people, or half of the world's population. The BRICS countries have a combined GDP of USD 16.6 trillion.
 - Bilateral relations among BRICS nations are conducted mainly based on non-interference, equality, and mutual benefit.

Important Information

- India will be taking over the Chairmanship of the BRICS, which would be the third BRICS Presidency for India since its inception after 2012 and 2016.
- **India will host the 13th BRICS Summit next year.**

Peruvian President

In News

The Peruvian President **Manuel Merino** was forced out of power meaning forced to resign.

Issue

- On November 9, 2020, **Martin Vizcarra**, the predecessor of Manuel was impeached by the Peruvian Legislature. He was impeached on the grounds of unproven charges of corruption.
- Vizcarra had promised an anti-graft agenda that initiated reforms to tackle corruption in the judicial and legislative branches of the Peruvian Government. This was seen as threats by most of the political parties in the country.
- Vizcarra is not affiliated with any political party.

- Vizcarra dissolved the 130-member unicameral legislative body in 2019 that triggered the constitutional crisis in the country. This led to parliamentary elections in January 2020.

- In the elections, Peru saw the historic division of parties. In the end, no party received more than 11% vote in the elections.
- Since the elections, Peruvian Congress had sought to remove Vizcarra from power.

Peru's constitution

- The current constitution of Peru was drafted and enacted in 1993 after the constitutional crisis in 1992.
- **The current constitution gives more powers to the president.**

Peru

- It is a country in western [South America](#).
- **Peru is a unitary presidential democratic republic.**
- It follows the multi-party system.
- Unitary means the Central Government is ultimately supreme. India is unitary.
- Peru follows the compulsory voting system. Meaning, if a citizen belonging to eligible age of voting (18-70 years) fails to cast his or her vote, he is punishable under law.

Malabar Exercise

In News

- The second phase of Exercise Malabar 2020 held in the Northern Arabian Sea.
- Participating countries: the navies of Australia, India, Japan and the United States.

History of Malabar exercise

- Exercise Malabar is a trilateral naval exercise involving the [United States](#), [Japan](#) and [India](#).
- Originally begun in 1992 as a bilateral exercise between India and the United States.
- Japan became a permanent partner in 2015.
- Past non-permanent participants include [Singapore](#) and Australia.
- The annual Malabar exercises include diverse activities, ranging from fighter combat operations from aircraft carriers

through [maritime interdiction operations](#), [anti-submarine warfare](#),

- Australia's participation in the drills in 2020, it was the first time in 13 years that all members of the regional grouping known as the [Quad](#) will be engaging militarily.

Policy on FDI in digital media

In News

Information and Broadcasting Ministry has issued a public notice to facilitate eligible entities involved in uploading/streaming of news and current affairs through digital media, to comply with the decision of Union Government, which had permitted 26% FDI under Government approval route.

Details

- The Ministry issued a public notice to facilitate eligible entities involved in uploading and streaming of news and current affairs through digital media, to comply with the decision of Government, which had permitted 26 per cent FDI under Government approval route.
- The entities having foreign investment below 26 per cent may furnish intimation to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting within one month.
- They have to provide details of the company, entity and its shareholding pattern along with the names and addresses of its Directors and shareholders.
- Any entity which intends to bring fresh foreign investment in the country has to seek prior approval of the Central Government, through the Foreign Investment Facilitation Portal of DPIIT.
- Every entity has to comply with the requirements of citizenship of the Board of Directors and the Chief Executive Officers.

FDI

A foreign direct investment (FDI) is an investment made by a firm or individual in one country into business interests located in another country. Generally, FDI takes place when an investor establishes foreign business

operations or acquires foreign business assets in a foreign company.

Golden visa

In News

UAE has approved a 'golden' visa grant allowing **10-year residency for certain professions including specialised degree-holders and others.**

Golden Visa

- The golden card is a long-term residency programme announced by the Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, in May 2019.
- The golden card was initially billed as a permanent residence system but the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs has clarified it as a long-term, 10-year visa.

Details

- The Dubai leader said that the visa grant will be for "all holders of doctorate degrees, all doctors, engineers in the fields of **computer engineering, electronics, programming, electricity and biotechnology**, outperforming accredited universities in the country.
- The visa will also be granted to "holders of specialized degrees in **artificial intelligence, big data, or epidemiology and viruses**.
- The visa opportunities also will be available for "first high school students in the country with their families.
- The emirate of Dubai, a Middle East trade and tourism hub, said it would grant visas renewable every five years to wealthy foreign retirees.

Why has this step taken?

- The UAE's economy has been hit by the coronavirus pandemic and low oil prices, prompting many expatriates to leave.
- It will attract talented professionals from various fields of expertise and further encourage innovation, creativity and applied research, adding to the appeal of a career in the UAE for the world's brightest minds.

Background

- Foreigners in the UAE usually have renewable visas valid for only a few years tied to their employment.
- In May 2019, the UAE started granting 5 and 10-year renewable visas.

Significance for India

- The decision would attract more Indian professionals and businessmen to the Gulf nation and strengthen the India-UAE Relations.
- It will also facilitate the return of Indians who want to resume work after the relaxation of Covid-19-related restrictions, for which India had requested the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in early November 2020.

India-Bahrain Agreements

In News

India and Bahrain Agree to Increase Defence and Maritime Security Cooperation.

Details

- Both nations agreed to strengthen in areas of **defence and maritime security, space technology, trade and investment, infrastructure, IT, FinTech, health, hydrocarbon and renewable energy**.
- The two sides discussed the entire gamut of bilateral issues as well as regional and global matters of mutual interest including cooperation and coordination in dealing with post-COVID challenges.
- India renewed invitation to Bahrain for visiting India for the 3rd India-Bahrain High Joint Commission meeting in the next few months.
- They expressed satisfaction on the operationalisation of **the Air Bubble arrangement** between the two countries.

Air bubbles (travel corridors or travel bubbles) are systems established between two countries that perceive each other to be safe and allow carriers of both the countries to fly passengers either way

without any restrictions.

India-Bahrain Relations

- Bahrain-India relations are the political, socio-economic, military and cultural ties between India and Bahrain.
- The Kingdom along with its **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** partners are amongst the world's most prominent supporters of India's candidacy for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

Bilateral Agreements/Memorandums of Understanding

- Extradition Treaty (January 2004)
- MoU on cooperation in the field of Information and Communication Technology (May 2012)
- MoU on the establishment of a Joint High Commission (February 2014)
- MOU on Water Resources Development and Management (February 2015)
- Agreement on cooperation in combating international terrorism, transnational organised crime and trafficking in illicit drugs, narcotics and psychotropic substances and precursors chemicals (December 2015)
- MoU for cooperation in the fields of Renewable Energy and Healthcare and Agreement on Exemption from Short Stay Visa for Holders of Diplomatic and Special/Official Passport (July 2018)
- MoU on cooperation in the exploration and uses of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes (March 2019)

Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill

In News

Scotland made sanitary products free to all women, becoming the first nation in the world to take such a step against **"period poverty"**.

Period Poverty

- "Period poverty" refers to the prevalent phenomena of being unable to afford products such as pads, tampons, or liners to manage menstrual bleeding.

- With 1 in 5 girls missing school due to lack of menstrual products, period poverty is important, yet often ignored public health crisis.

Details

- The measure makes tampons and sanitary pads available at designated public places such as community centres, youth clubs and pharmacies, at an estimated annual cost to taxpayers of 24 million pounds (\$32 million U.S.).
- In 2018, Scotland became the first country to provide free sanitary products in schools, colleges and universities.
- Now that Britain has left the EU, British Finance Minister has said he would abolish the “tampon tax” in January 2021.

Tampon Tax

- Tampon tax is a popular term used to call attention to tampons, and other feminine hygiene products, being subject to value-added tax or sales tax, unlike the tax exemption status granted to other products considered necessities.
- Proponents of tax exemption argue that tampons, sanitary napkins, menstrual cups and comparable products constitute basic, unavoidable necessities for women and thus should be made tax-exempt.

President’s Powers to Pardon

In News

The President of the United States of America (USA) has exercised his powers under the constitution to pardon his former National Security Advisor.

Pardon

It removes both the sentence and the conviction and completely absolves the convict from all sentences, punishments and disqualifications.

How US President Pardons

- The President of the US has the constitutional right to pardon or commute

sentences related to federal crimes. The US Supreme Court has held that this power is "granted without limit" and cannot be restricted by congress.

- Clemency is a broad executive power, and is discretionary which means the President is not answerable for his pardons and does not have to provide a reason for issuing one. But there are a few limitations.
- The USA has a Presidential system.
- Article II, Section 2 of the US Constitution says all Presidents "shall have the power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offenses against the United States, except in Cases of Impeachment."

How Indian President Pardons?

As mentioned in Article 72 of the Indian constitution, the president is empowered with the powers to grant pardons in the following situations:

Punishment is for an offence against Union law.

Punishment is by a military court.

A sentence that is of death.

Governor’s power of pardon

- As per article 161, Governor of a State has the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the state extends.
- Please note that the President can grant pardon to a person awarded death sentence.
- But a governor of a state does not enjoy this power.

Indo-US Civil Nuclear Energy agreement

In News

India and the United States have extended the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Energy agreement for another ten years. The agreement is also called **the 123 agreement**.

- India buys nuclear material from the United States based on this agreement. The extension

of the agreement was signed at **the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP)**.

The two Governments commit to:

- Promote cooperation on initiatives aimed at giving an impetus to nuclear safety and security, research and development.
- Deepen the dialogue on nuclear and other radioactive material security by collaborating on advanced projects.
- Wider inclusion of agencies of both Governments and relevant entities.
- Build on the international recognition of the GCNEP, and reinforce that the two countries are partners for nuclear and radioactive material security by jointly developing and /or delivering training and other capacity-building opportunities for regional and international partners, including online content.

Global Center for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP)

- **It is the first world nuclear energy partnership centre.**
- It was established in Kheri Jasaur village of Bahadurgarh tehsil of Haryana State.
- This centre facilitates deliberation and discussions of international experts on various issues including innovation in nuclear reactors and the nuclear fuel cycle, development of proliferation-resistant reactors, security technologies and the effects of radiation exposure.

Nuclear Power in India

- There are 22 nuclear power reactors in India. Currently, 3.22% of electricity in India is generated through nuclear power.
- India has limited Uranium reserves in the world. It approximately holds 54,636 tonnes of assured nuclear resources.
- According to the Nuclear Power Corporation of India, the nuclear resources of India are only sufficient to generate 10 GW of power for about 40 years. Therefore, India needs to import nuclear materials from foreign countries.

General Studies-III

Technology, Economic Development, Bio-diversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management

Corals

In News

The Mumbai civic body (BMC) received approval from the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) for translocating of the 18 coral colonies off the coast of Mumbai for the Mumbai Coastal Road Project.

Corals

- Corals exhibit characteristics of plants, but are marine animals that are related to jellyfish and anemones.
- Coral polyps are tiny, soft-bodied organisms. At their base is a hard, protective limestone skeleton called a calicle, which forms the structure of coral reefs.

There are 2 types of corals:

- Stony, shallow-water corals—the kind that builds reefs.
- Soft corals and deep-water corals that live in dark cold waters.

Coral Reefs

- Reefs begin when a polyp attaches itself to a rock on the seafloor, then divides, or buds, into thousands of clones. The polyp calicles connect, creating a colony that acts as a single organism.
- As colonies grow over hundreds and thousands of years, they join with other colonies and become reefs.
- There are soft corals as well, which are non-reef-building, and resemble bushes, grasses, trees.
- Coral reefs cover less than 1% of the ocean floor but they are among the most productive and diverse ecosystems on Earth. They are referred to as the rainforests of the sea for their biodiversity.
- Coral reefs are like underwater cities that support marine life.

Threat

- Climate change remains one of the biggest threats to corals. Around the world, this threat has been visible in the “bleaching” of corals.
- Coral reefs are under stress around the world. In particular, coral mining, agricultural and urban runoff, pollution (organic and inorganic), overfishing, blast fishing, disease, and the digging of canals and access into islands and bays are localized threats to coral ecosystems.
- Approximately 10% of the world's coral reefs are dead. About 60% of the world's reefs are at risk due to human-related activities.
- Over 50% of the world's coral reefs may be destroyed by 2030.
- In the Caribbean and tropical Pacific, direct contact between ~40–70% of common seaweeds and coral causes bleaching and death to the coral via the transfer of lipid-soluble metabolites.
 - Water temperature changes of more than 1–2 °C (1.8–3.6 °F) or salinity changes can kill some species of coral.

Coral Bleaching

- It is a process during which corals, under stress from warm weather, expel the algae that give corals their brilliant colours and live in their tissues and produce their food.
- The Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Australia has suffered six mass bleaching events due to warmer than normal ocean temperatures in 1998, 2002, 2006, 2016, 2017, and now 2020.
- The Great Barrier Reef is a UNESCO World Heritage site and home to one of the largest collections of coral reefs on the planet.

Corals in Mumbai and their translocation

- The corals found across rocky patches along the Mumbai coastline are mostly fast-growing and non-reef building corals.
- The colonies at Haji Ali will be translocated to Marine Lines and those at Worli to some distance away from the construction site.
- The translocation of corals is at a nascent stage along the Indian coastline. It is difficult and has not been very successful in India.

- Pilot projects at the Lakshadweep islands, and off the coast of Kutch and Tamil Nadu have been undertaken to study the survival rate, method and site of translocation, and creation of high heat-resistant coral colonies, etc.
- Experts are of the view that for a high survival rate, it is important to translocate corals in a place with similar environmental characteristics such as depth, current flow, amount of light, and pressure.



Importance of Coral reefs

- Coral reefs are like underwater cities that support marine life.
- They provide at least half a billion people around the world with food security and livelihoods.
- Coral reefs also act as 'wave breaks' between the sea and the coastline and minimise the impact of sea erosion.
- In India, Corals are under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972.
- Coral reefs also act as 'wave breaks' between the sea and the coastline and minimise the impact of sea erosion.

National Jal Jeevan Mission

In News

National Jal Jeevan Mission is organizing a conference with ministers in-charge of the rural water supply of all States and Union Territories to discuss various issues to implement the mission with speed, scale and skill.

- The goal of Jal Jeevan Mission is to ensure that every household has assured drinking water supply in an adequate quantity of prescribed quality on a long-term basis.

Components Under Jal Jeevan Mission

The following components are supported under JJM

- Development of in-village piped water supply infrastructure to provide tap water connection to every rural household
- Development of reliable drinking water sources and/ or augmentation of existing sources to provide long-term sustainability of the water supply system
- Wherever necessary, bulk water transfer, treatment plants and distribution network to cater to every rural household
- Technological interventions for removal of contaminants where water quality is an issue
- Retrofitting of completed and ongoing schemes to provide FHTCs at the minimum service level of 55 lpcd;
- Greywater management
- Support activities, i.e. IEC, HRD, training, development of utilities, water quality laboratories, water quality testing & surveillance, R&D, knowledge centre, capacity building of communities, etc.
- Any other unforeseen challenges/ issues emerging due to natural disasters/ calamities which affect the goal of FHTC to every household by 2024, as per guidelines of Ministry of Finance on Flexi Funds

Army Aviation Corps

In News

The Army Aviation Corps (AAC), the youngest Corps of the Indian Army, celebrated its 35th Corps Day on November 1.

- It is relevant in modern-day battlefields, including **Counter-Insurgency and Counter-Terrorism (CI-CT) operations**.

Origin & importance

- Its origin can be traced back to the raising of the **Army Aviation wing of the Royal Air Force in India in 1942, and the subsequent**

formation of the first Indian Air Observation Post in August 1947.

- The Air Observation Post units primarily acted as artillery spotters.
- In the wars of 1965 and 1971, the Air Observation Post helicopters played a key role by flying close to the enemy lines and helping ground assets spot targets.
- The Corps was raised as a separate formation on November 1 in 1986.
- The AAC now draws its officers and men from all arms of the Army, including a significant number from the artillery.
- Immediately after raising, the units of the Corps were pressed into action in **Operation Pawan** by the Indian Peacekeeping Forces, in the mostly jungle areas of Sri Lanka against the Tamil Tigers.
- Ever since AAC helicopters have been an inseparable part of fighting formations in all major conflict scenarios, and a life-saving asset in peace times.

President's colour

- Last year in October, President presented the President's Colours to the Army Aviation Corps in a ceremonial parade held at **Army Aviation Base at Nashik Road**.
- The President's Colours, which is a ceremonial flag, is awarded to military units or institutions as the symbol of their excellence, and as recognition of their contributions both during war and peace.

Minimum Requirements for Annual MBBS Admissions Regulations (2020)

In News

In a major step towards Medical Education reform, the National Medical Commission notifies "Minimum Requirements for Annual MBBS Admissions Regulations (2020)".

Key Details

- Notification issued replaces the "Minimum Standard Requirements for Medical Colleges, 1999 " of the erstwhile Medical Council of India (MCI).
- New Regulation shall apply to all new medical colleges proposing to be established,

and to the established medical colleges proposing to increase their annual MBBS intake from the academic year 2021-22.

The key changes

- The new Regulation has deleted the quantum of land required for setting up a medical college and its affiliated teaching hospitals.
 - The notification defines the minimum requirements of space for all student-centric areas in the institution and the functional areas required.
 - The Standards outlines the sharing of all available teaching spaces by all departments.
 - Mandating all teaching spaces to be enabled for e-learning and also digitally linked to one another.
 - A well-equipped "Skills Laboratory" for training students is essential now. It also defines a Medical Education Unit for training medical teachers in educational pedagogy.
 - The space required for Library and the number of books and journals have been rationalized and reduced.
 - Student counselling services have been mandated recognizing the increasing stress observed amongst medical students and residents in recent times.
 - The new regulation now mandates the availability of a fully functional 300-bed multi-speciality hospital for at least 2 years at the time of application for establishing a new medical college.
 - The human resource of teaching faculty has also been rationalized in the new Regulation. Over and above the minimum prescribed faculty, provision for "visiting faculty" has been made to enhance the quality of training.
 - Two new teaching departments have now become mandatory in all medical college hospitals for the training of undergraduate medical students. These include the Department of Emergency Medicine (which has replaced the earlier Casualty Department) and will ensure access and prompt, the appropriate response to emergencies particularly trauma; and the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation which shall fill a large gap for those in need of comprehensive rehabilitative care.

- The Regulation has also outlined "desirable" and "aspirational" goals beyond the minimum requirements stated in the standards to stimulate medical institutions to strive for excellence. These elements will be utilized by the National Medical Commission while rating the medical institutions in the country.

MCI(Medical Council Of India)

- National Medical Commission (NMC) is an [Indian](#) regulatory body of 33 members.
- It regulates [medical education](#) and medical professionals.
- It replaced the Medical Council of India on 25 September 2020.
- The Commission grants recognition of medical qualifications, gives accreditation to medical schools, grants registration to medical practitioners, and monitors medical practice and assesses the medical infrastructure in India.
- It was earlier established for 6 months by an ordinance in January 2019 and later became a permanent law passed by [Parliament of India](#).

National Monsoon Mission Report

In News

- A study carried out by the **National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER)**.
- The council carried out it on behalf of the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- Aim of the report is to evaluate the economic benefits of the government's investment in the **National Monsoon Mission**, found that accurate forecasting helps farmers and fishermen to save crores of rupees.
- The total annual economic benefits to agricultural households (farmers and livestock owners) from accurate weather forecasting by the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** and other agencies has been calculated at Rs 13,331 crore.

National Monsoon Mission

- The mission was launched by Ministry of Earth Sciences in 2012.

- Its vision is to develop a state-of-the-art dynamical prediction system for monsoon rainfall on different time scales.

Objective:

- To build an ocean-atmospheric model for –
- improved prediction of monsoon rainfall on the extended range to seasonal time scale (16 days to one season) and
 - improved prediction of temperature, rainfall and extreme weather events on short to medium range time scale (up to 15 days).

The government has so far invested around Rs 1,000 crore in the Mission.

National Council of Applied Economic Research

- NCAER is a New Delhi based non-profit think tank of economics.
- It was established in 1956.

Key Findings

- For every rupee spent by the government on the National Monsoon Mission, the country would gain economic benefits worth Rs 50, which is 50 times more benefit on the investment over the next five-year period.
- The most prominent weather services of IMD is the agro-meteorological services for farmers for their day-to-day operations.
- The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services provides ocean state forecasts and warnings to fisherfolks going out to the sea every day.
- 98 per cent farmers made modifications such as changing variety/breed of the crop, arranging storage of harvest, early/delayed harvesting, changed crop, early/delayed sowing, changed the schedule of ploughing/land preparation, changed pesticide application schedule, changed fertiliser application schedule and changed scheduled irrigation.
- 94 per cent of farmers surveyed said this helped them either avoid losses or increase income.
- 82 per cent fishermen surveyed reported using Ocean State Forecast (OSF) advisories before they venture into the sea every time,

and 95 per cent of them reported to have avoided empty trips by following OSF advisories.

- The study estimates this helped them save Rs 18.25 crore operational costs by avoiding venturing into the sea.
- Potential fishing zone (PFZ) advisories resulted in successful trips generating additional income of approx. Rs 1.92 crore.

Export Subsidy to Sugar industry

In News

The sugar industry has strongly reacted to Union Commerce and Industry Minister's announcement that the central government is not considering an extension of its export subsidy for the 2020-21 sugar season.

- The industry has warned of a 'vertical collapse' in the sector **due to excessive stock**.

Why is the sugar industry rooting for exports?

- At the start of the (October-November) sugar season, the industry draws up its balance sheet, which determines the availability of sugar for the next season.
- In case of unusually high stock, ex-mill prices remain low for the present season as well as for the upcoming season, which results in a liquidity crisis for the sugar sector.
- For the season which has started, the annual production is estimated to be 326 lakh tonne (without any diversion towards ethanol), and the season has started with an opening stock of 107 lakh tonne.
- The industry sources estimate sugar production being lower by 20 lakh tonne as mills are expected to produce ethanol, and thus the total available sugar balance in this season is expected to be 413 lakh tonne.
- This unusually high stock, without an export incentive like a government subsidy, will result in a 'vertical collapse of the sector'.

The solution to the issue

- One way of correcting this inventory is to promote export of at least 50 lakh tonne of sugar.
- Sugar mills export both white as well as raw (unrefined sugar which is brownish) sugar.

Why are mills reluctant to export sugar without a government subsidy?

- The mills' reluctance stems from the gap between the cost of manufacturing and the current price of raw sugar in international markets.
 - Sugar contracts at international markets are trading at Rs 21-22 per kg, while the cost of production is at Rs 32.
 - The price mismatch has ruled out any export prospects as this would lead to a further loss for the mills.
 - The export of last season was possible only because of the subsidy programme offered by the central government.
 - This subsidy had helped mills bridge the difference between production costs and international prices.

Background

- Mills are facing this problem at a time when Indian sugar has made its mark in the international markets.
- Other than the traditional markets of Bangladesh, Malaysia and Sri Lanka, Indian mills have also shipped their produce to newer countries like Iran, China, South Korea and Somalia.

Sugar industry of India

- Sugarcane is a native of the tropical Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. In India, sugarcane is planted thrice a year. Most of the sugar production in India takes at local Cooperative Sugar mills.
- The sugar industry is a big business in India. Around 525 mills produced more than 30 million tonnes of sugar in the last crushing season.
- This makes it the world's largest producer, unseating Brazil.

India is the world's largest consumer of sugar.

- According to data from the Indian Sugar Mills Association, the country's sugar mills will produce 35.5 million tonnes of sugar in 2018-19.

Facts:

- In the last 5 years, three States have dominated India's sugar production.
- **UttarPradesh** and **Maharashtra** together share 66 per cent of sugar production
- The processing of sugarcane generates bagasse, molasses and press mud. The Indian sugar industry has been using these by-products to generate bioethanol, electricity and many other products over the years.

PRASHAD Scheme

In News

Union Minister for Tourism & Culture inaugurated the **"Tourist Facilitation Centre"** facility constructed under the project **"Development of Guruvayur, Kerala"** under PRASHAD Scheme.

- The project for "Development of Guruvayur" under the scheme was approved by the Ministry of Tourism.
- The component viz. 'Tourist Facilitation Centre' has been completed. Other components of the projects are the CCTV Network Infrastructure, Tourist Amenities Centre and Multi-Level Car Parking. The CCTV Network has already been completed.

PRASHAD scheme

- Its full form is 'National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive.
- The scheme was launched by the Ministry of Tourism in the year 2014-15.
- Its objective is of integrated development of identified pilgrimage and heritage destinations.
- The scheme aimed at infrastructure development such as:
 - entry points (Road, Rail and Water Transport),

- last-mile connectivity,
- basic tourism facilities like Information/ Interpretation Centers,
- ATM/ Money exchange, eco-friendly modes of transport,
- area Lighting and illumination with renewable sources of energy,
- parking, drinking water, toilets, cloakroom, waiting rooms,
- first aid centres, craft bazaars /haats/ souvenir shops/ cafeteria,
- rain shelters, Telecom facilities, internet connectivity etc.
- The PRASAD scheme is 100% funded by the Central Government.
 - Around 30 infrastructural development projects have been identified under the PRASAD scheme.

Skylark satellite constellation

In News

- Skylark would be the first dedicated satellite constellation looking at managing the situation in space such as congestion, threats of collisions, and addressing space traffic management.
- Skylark satellite constellation is designed specifically for Space Situational Awareness (SSA).

The need of the hour

- Sputnik 1 was the first human-made object to orbit the Earth.
- There are 29,000 objects (at present) as debris (larger than 10 centimetres in diameter) in addition to the 2,500-plus active satellites in space.

Key Highlights

- **SSC tracks natural and artificial objects in the orbit around the Earth** and predicts where the objects are going to be at any given time. Its ground stations would be in Europe and Canada.
- It is **a constellation of 12 satellites** which would be equipped with optical sensors to monitor space objects including active and inactive satellites and debris that could pose a threat.

- The Canadian company has announced signing the contract for the first three satellites to build the constellation.
- It **plans to launch them by mid-2022** and the rest by 2024.
- Each satellite weighs about 200 kilograms and is equipped with a 60-centimetre long sensor.
- The set of three satellites form a spiral, so the constellation will have four spirals with different orbits, all of which will be circular and polar at about 575 kilometres from **the Earth's surface in the low Earth orbit (LEO)**.
- The system works on **NorthStar's algorithms** to provide space traffic data and collision avoidance navigation services, and the satellites are needed to get the data from the right perspective.

Challenges

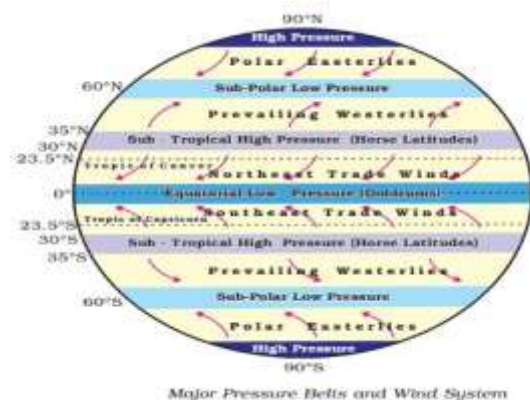
- Since Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin's first human spaceflight in 1961, numerous space missions have contributed to the build-up of debris.
- Most 'space junk' can reach a speed of nearly 29,000 kilometres per hour. Because of the amount of debris in LEO and the speed at which they are moving, current and future space-based services, explorations, and operations pose a safety risk to people and property in space and on Earth, according to NASA.

Space Station

A space-based satellite system has certain advantages over ground-based systems, including:

- Having multiple points of view for an object
 - Not reliant on weather changes and atmospheric interferences
- The ability to make

frequent



revisits

called the Circumpolar Low-Pressure Belt. This region is marked by violent storms in winter.

- Polar High-Pressure Areas

At the North and South Poles, between 70° to 90° North and South, the temperatures are always extremely low. The cold descending air gives rise to high pressures over the Poles. These areas of Polar high pressure are known as the Polar Highs. These regions are characterized by permanent Ice Caps.

Body Mass Index (BMI)

In News

India ranks third and fifth from the bottom respectively among countries where 19-year-old girls and boys have a low body mass index, according to a study in The Lancet. The study provides new estimates for height and BMI trends in 2019 across 200 countries.

Body Mass Index (BMI)

BMI is measured as the weight in kg divided by the square of the height in metres. World Health Organization guidelines define a normal BMI range as 18.5 to 24.9, overweight as 25 or higher, and obesity as 30 or higher.

BMI	Nutritional status
Below 18.5	Underweight
18.5–24.9	Normal weight
25.0–29.9	Pre-obesity
30.0–34.9	Obesity class I
35.0–39.9	Obesity class II
Above 40	Obesity class III

Key Findings

- The mean BMI of 19-year-old boys is 20.1 in India, compared to a high of 29.6 in the Cook Islands and a low of 19.2 in Ethiopia.

- Equatorial Low-Pressure Belts

This low-pressure belt extends from 0 to 5° North and South of Equator. Due to the vertical rays of the sun here, there is intense heating. The air, therefore, expands and rises as convection current causing low pressure to develop here. This low-pressure belt is also called as doldrums because it is a zone of total calm without any breeze.

- Subtropical High-Pressure Belts

At about 30° North and South of Equator lies the area where the ascending equatorial air currents descend. This area is thus an area of high pressure. It is also called as the Horse latitude. Winds always blow from high pressure to low pressure. So, the winds from subtropical region blow towards the Equator as Trade winds and another wind blow towards Sub-Polar Low-Pressure as Westerlies.

- Circum-Polar Low-Pressure Belts

These belts located between 60° and 70° in each hemisphere are known as Circum-Polar Low-Pressure Belts. In the Subtropical region, the descending air gets divided into two parts. One part blows towards the Equatorial Low-Pressure Belt. The other part blows towards the Circum- Polar Low-Pressure Belt. This zone is marked by the ascent of warm Subtropical air over cold polar air blowing from poles. Due to the earth's rotation, the winds surrounding the Polar region blow towards the Equator. Centrifugal forces operating in this region create the low-pressure belt appropriately

- For Indian girls, the mean BMI is again 20.1, compared to a high of 29.0 in Tonga and a low of 19.6 in Timor-Leste.
- The mean height of Indian 19-year-olds is 166.5 cm for boys and 155.2 cm for girls, well below the high of Netherlands boys (183.8 cm) and girls (170 cm).
- The 20 cm or higher difference between countries with the tallest and shortest mean height represents approximately 8 years of growth gap for girls and approximately 6 years for boys. For example, 19-year-old girls in India have the same mean height as 12-year-old Dutch girls.
 - In developing countries, like India, have a dual burden i.e., overnutrition and undernutrition.
 - The prevalence of overweight and obesity among adolescents of both Indian girls and boys is lower when compared to children of developed nations. The reasons could be several, like variations in the epigenetic, dietary intakes, familial, psychosocial, parental education, occupations, income etc.

THE TOP 3, THE BOTTOM 3, AND INDIA			
BOYS, AGE 19		GIRLS, AGE 19	
MEAN HEIGHT, 2019		MEAN HEIGHT, 2019	
Netherlands	183.8 cm	Netherlands	170.4 cm
Montenegro	183.3 cm	Montenegro	170.0 cm
Estonia	182.8 cm	Denmark	169.5 cm
India	166.5 cm	India	155.2 cm
Solomon Islands	163.1 cm	Nepal	152.4 cm
Lao PDR	162.8 cm	Bangladesh	152.4 cm
Timor-Leste	160.1 cm	Guatemala	150.9 cm
MEAN BMI, 2019		MEAN BMI, 2019	
Cook Islands	29.6	Tonga	29.0
Nauru	29.5	Cook Islands	28.9
Tuvalu	28.2	Nauru	28.6
India	20.1	India*	20.1
DR Congo	19.9	Romania	19.9
Niger	19.8	Timor-Leste	19.6
Ethiopia	19.2		
		* India 3rd from bottom	
Source: The Lancet			

Way Ahead

- There is the need for regular diet and nutrition surveys in India to avert the increase of overweight and obesity among children and adolescents.

- Overweight and obesity are mostly carried over to adult age and are causes for many metabolic disorders like insulin resistance, diabetes, hypertension, CVDs, stroke, and some cancers.

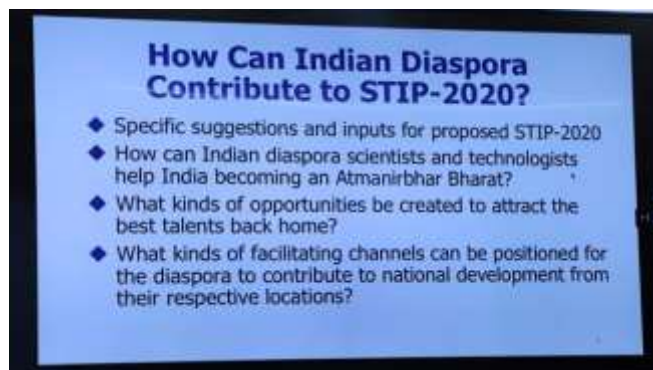
India's Science Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP) 2020

In News

In a first of its kind policy consultation, Science and Technology Minister interacted with the highly-skilled Indian diaspora to facilitate channels for them to contribute to India's Science Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP) 2020.

Aim

To connect the diaspora with Indian scientific and economic ecosystem to accelerate the growth in Science technology and innovation.



Details

- The upcoming policy aims to address both the first- and second-generation diaspora by facilitating institutional mechanisms for engagement with Indian ecosystem.
- The **VAIBHAV Summit** and the recently launched dedicated, one-stop platform for S&T diaspora engagement, **"PRABHASS"** are some proactive steps of the Government towards this engagement.
- The past few years have witnessed accelerated national growth placing India as a global STI leader.
- India is also actively engaged in emerging technologies such as nanotechnology.

- The formulation of STIP 2020 is driven by 4 interrelated tracks, 21 expert-driven thematic groups, and focused public discussions/consultations.
- The process aims to define priority issues for the national STI ecosystem, recommendations with aligned implementation strategies, expected deliverables, and a rigorous monitoring mechanism.

Significance

- The scientific diaspora contributes in both internationalization of science and technology development and boosting the country's technology intensity.
- Reinforcing their engagement will enable India to leverage its S&T expertise across the globe for robust growth in all areas of Science, Technology and Innovation.

Vision

The core vision of STIP 2020 is the decentralization of policy designing by making it a bottom-up and inclusive process. It aims to realign priorities, sectoral focus and methods of research and technology development with the goals of larger socio-economic progress.

VAIBHAV (Vaishwik Bharatiya Vaigyanik) Summit

- The VAIBHAV initiative aims to bring out the comprehensive roadmap to leverage the expertise and knowledge of global Indian researcher for solving emerging challenges.
- Vaishwik Bharatiya Vaigyanik (VAIBHAV) Summit is a collaborative initiative by S&T and Academic Organisations of India to enable deliberations on thought process, practices and R&D culture with a problem-solving approach for well-defined objectives.
- The aim of summit is to reflect in-depth on the collaboration and cooperation instruments with academia and scientists in India. The goal is to

create an ecosystem of Knowledge and Innovation in the country through global outreach.

Telemedicine service 'eSanjeevani'

In News

eSanjeevani, the national telemedicine service set up by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, has completed 7 lakh consultations. Over 10 thousand consultations recorded on eSanjeevani daily. It is shaping into the largest OPD services set up in the country.

Telemedicine

- As per the World Health Organisation (WHO), telemedicine is the delivery of health care services, where distance is a critical factor, by all health care professionals using Information Technology (IT) for diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease and injuries, research and evaluation, etc, all in the interests of advancing the health of individuals and their communities.
- Tele-consultation is one of the applications of telemedicine. It uses IT to facilitate communications between a patient and a doctor who are otherwise geographically separated.



About eSanjeevani

- The eSanjeevani's platform has enabled two variants of telemedicine namely - doctor to doctor (eSanjeevaniAB-HWC) and patient to doctor (eSanjeevaniOPD).
- The former is being implemented under the Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centre (AB-HWC). It aims to implement tele-consultation in all the 1.5 lakh Health and Wellness Centres in conjunction with identified

medical college hospitals in a 'Hub and Spoke' model.

eSanjeevaniOPD

- It was launched amid the Covid-19 pandemic to enable patient-to-doctor tele-consultations.
- Offered at no cost, this e-health service has made it convenient for the people to avail of the health services without having to travel. It enables two-way interaction and even generates a prescription slip.
 - It is hosting over 40 online Out Patient Department (OPD) services, more than half of these are speciality OPDs which include Gynaecology, Psychiatry, AntiRetroviral Therapy (ART) for the AIDS/HIV patients, Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) etc.

Western Ghats Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA)

In News

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the 2018 draft notification of the Ministry of Environment demarcating an area of 56,825 square kilometer spread across six states as the Western Ghats **Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA)**.

- The Western Ghats, spread across **Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu**, are recognised by UNESCO as one of the world's eight most important biodiversity hotspots.

Eco-Sensitive Area

- Eco-Sensitive Areas (ESAs) are located within 10 kms around Protected Areas, National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.
- ESAs are notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) under Environment Protection Act 1986.
- The basic aim is to regulate certain activities around National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries so as to minimise the negative impacts of such activities on the fragile ecosystem encompassing the protected areas.

Issue

- The plea filed by an NGO sought directions to the Centre and Kerala to **not implement the recommendations of Western Ghats Ecologically Expert Panel (WGEEP), also called the Gadgil Committee, and of the High-Level Working Group, also called the Kasturirangan Committee.**
- The plea also sought implementation of the recommendations of the Oommen V Oommen committee constituted in 2014 by the Kerala government to review the Kasturirangan committee report.

Gadgil Committee

- A committee headed by ecologist Madhav Gadgil also known as the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) in 2011 recommended that all of the Western Ghats be declared as the Ecological Sensitive Areas (ESA) with only limited development allowed in graded zones.
- The panel had classified the Western Ghats into Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESA) 1, 2 and 3 of which ESA-1 is high priority, almost all developmental activities (mining, thermal power plants etc) were restricted in it.
- It recommended the constitution of a Western Ghats Ecology Authority (WGEA), as a statutory authority under the Ministry of Environment and Forests, with the powers under Section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Kasturirangan Committee

The Kasturirangan Commission sought to balance the development and environment protection in contrast to the system proposed by the Gadgil report. The committee's major recommendations were:

- Instead of the total area of Western Ghats, only 37% of the total area to be brought under ESA.
- Complete ban on mining, quarrying and sand mining in ESA.

- No thermal power projects to be allowed and hydropower projects be allowed only after detailed study.
- Red industries i.e. which are highly polluting to be strictly banned.
- The report recommended exclusion of inhabited regions and plantations from the purview of ESAs making it a pro farmer approach.

Oommen V Oommen committee

- The three-member committee headed by the Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSBB) chairperson Oommen V Oommen was constituted in October 2013 in the wake of agitations, mainly in the high-range districts of Idukki, Wayanad and Kozhikode, against the draft notification issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), accepting the recommendations of the Kasturirangan Committee on Western Ghats conservation.
- The report of the state's panel submitted, has concluded that the method adopted by the Kasturirangan panel to identify ESAs cannot be justified.
- The panel points out that as per the Kasturirangan panel, if 20 per cent of the area of a village is ecologically sensitive, the whole village comes under ESA, even if the remaining 80 per cent is highly populated and urbanised.
- In a state like Kerala, where population density is very high, the Kasturirangan panel's identification of ESA leads to serious problems, says the state panel. A majority of the 123 ESA villages in Kerala have a population density more than 250 people/sq km, points out the panel.
- It recommends conducting physical verifications of the ESA villages identified by the Kasturirangan panel and Ecologically Sensitive Zone 1 & 2 suggested by the Western Ghats Ecology Experts Panel (WGEEP) headed by Madhav Gadgil.
- Within a village, says the state panel, all populated areas, farm land and plantations should be excluded from ESAs. The verification should be done by a committee consisting of representatives from local bodies, biodiversity management committees, revenue, forest and agriculture departments.

- The state panel also says the recommendation of the Kasturirangan report to maintain a 10 km buffer zone around the ESA is not practical since the areas are highly populated and declaring buffer zone will affect infrastructure development in these areas.

Details

- The draft notification would declare 123 agricultural villages in Kerala as ESA converting the semi-urban villages in the region into forests with no facilities and roads. It will affect 22 lakh people and cripple the economy of Kerala.
- Apart from that, it suggested that ESA in Kerala should be restricted to reserved forests and protected areas.
- The Kerala-based NGO sought that the 2018 notification of the ministry be declared as unconstitutional as it violates the right to life and livelihood of farmers guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- If 2018 notification implemented in Kerala, it would affect the livelihood of lakhs of farmers as their agricultural lands would come under the demarcated Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESA).
- According to the NGO, the Gadgil committee report was theoretically eco-friendly, factors such as population, practicality in displacement and source of livelihood were not considered.

1st BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting

In News

Finance Minister today participated in the 1st BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' Meeting under the Russian Chairmanship to discuss the BRICS Economic and Financial Cooperation agenda for 2020.

Agenda

The agenda of the meeting included discussions on the outcomes of G20 Saudi Presidency in 2020, a digital platform to encourage infrastructure investments and expansion of the membership of the New Development Bank.

Highlights

- The FinMin observed that the G20 has delivered some very significant initiatives including the G20 Action Plan in response to COVID-19. Additionally, the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative ensured immediate support to address the liquidity needs of low-income countries.
- On the ongoing international efforts to find a solution to the issue of taxation of digital economy, FinMin said that a consensus solution will play an important role in ensuring fairness, equity and sustainability of tax systems.
 - The BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors also discussed expansion of the membership of the New Development Bank (NDB).
 - The Finance Minister supported the expansion of the membership of NDB and emphasised the importance of regional balance.
 - India also shared the perspective on Russia's initiative to develop an integrated Digital Platform (Data Room).

BRICS

- BRICS is the acronym coined to associate five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. Since 2009, the BRICS nations have met annually at formal summits.
- The BRICS have a combined area of 39,746,220 km² and an estimated total population of about 3.21 billion, or about 27% of the world land surface and 41% of the world population.

G20

- The G20 (or Group of Twenty) is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 19 countries and the European Union (EU).
- Founded in 1999 with the aim to discuss policy pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability, the G20 has expanded its agenda since 2008 and heads of government, as well as finance ministers, foreign ministers and think tanks, have periodically conferred at summits ever since.
- Membership of the G20 consists of 19 individual countries plus the European Union.

- Collectively, the G20 economies account for around 90% of the gross world product (GWP), 80% of world trade, two-thirds of the world population, and approximately half of the world land area.

New Development Bank

- The New Development Bank (NDB), formerly referred to as the BRICS Development Bank, is a multilateral development bank established by the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).
- According to the Agreement on the NDB, the Bank shall support public or private projects through loans, guarantees, equity participation and other financial instruments. The NDB shall cooperate with international organizations and other financial entities, and provide technical assistance for projects to be supported by the Bank.
- The bank is headquartered in Shanghai, China.

PM-KUSUM

In News

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has recently issued orders to expand **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM)**. The target now is to achieve enhanced solar capacity of 30.8 gigawatt (GW) by 2022.

Background

- In February 2019, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs had approved the launch of the PM-KUSUM scheme.
- The scheme aims providing financial and water security to farmers. The scheme had aimed to add a solar capacity of 25,750 MW by 2022.

PM-KUSUM

The scheme now consists of three components.

1. The first is 10,000 MW of decentralised ground mounted grid connected renewable power plants up to 2 MW.
2. The second is installation of 20 lakh (up from 17.50 lakh) stand-alone solar powered agriculture pumps.

3. The third component is solarization of 15 lakh (up from 10 lakh) grid-connected solar powered agriculture pumps.

Benefits

- The scheme will stabilise income of rural land owners for a period of 25 years.
- The scheme makes sure that solar pumps will save the expenditure on diesel for running diesel pumps.
- The scheme will ensure if sufficient power is available for feeding rural load centre.
- The solar pumps will provide a reliable source of irrigation and also help reduce harmful pollution caused due to the diesel pumps.
 - The scheme is to benefit more than 17.5 lakh farmers over a period of four years. This has been estimated without adding grid load.

Food Coalition to prevent COVID-19 Food crisis

In News

The United Nations has created a new alliance to prevent COVID-19 food crisis. It was proposed by Italy and led by Food and Agriculture Organization.

- Proposed by Italy and led by Food and Agriculture Organization, the alliance aims to increase resilience of agricultural food systems, ensure global food access.

Impact

- The nCOVID-19 pandemic has pulled food systems apart, threatening food security and nutrition. At least 690 million people went hungry in 2019, according to the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report, 2020.
- Now, the pandemic could tip over 130 million more people into chronic hunger by the end of 2020, according to the report.

Coalition

- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations launched a Food Coalition on November 5, 2020.
- Italy and Netherlands delivered the financial resources and technical support to the coalition.

Italy has supported the alliance with an initial contribution of \$1.2 million.

- More than 30 countries have already expressed interest in joining the coalition.
- Countries must make sure that food value chains continue to function well and that the agricultural labour force and poor consumers, both rural and urban are not pushed beyond the poverty line.

The Food Coalition would work towards

- Mobilising resources, expertise and innovation
- Advocating for a joint and coordinated COVID-19 response
- Promoting dialogue and exchange of knowledge and expertise among countries
- Working towards solution-oriented plans and programmes
- Expanding international cooperation and partnership for a longer-term impact

Significance

The alliance would work as a network of networks and a multi-stakeholder coalition for a unified global action to support measures to ensure food access and increase the resilience of agricultural food systems in response to COVID-19.

Other Issues

- Global food prices continued to rise, according to the FAO Food Price Index also released November 5.
- The forecast for global cereal production was low, the output for 2020 was still expected to reach an all-time high.

Way ahead

COVID-19 has taught us that we need to increase the resilience of agri-food systems, to be ready to minimise risks and cope with them as they occur.

Hunger in India

India ranked 94 out of 107 countries in Global Hunger Index. With a score of 27.2 India has a high level of hunger issue. The index released by United Nations also said

that the world is not in track to achieve the second SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) called Zero Hunger.

'State of the Economy' report

In News

RBI has 'nowcast' that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for July-September quarter is set for a **contraction of 8.6 per cent.**

- India has already seen a decline of **23.9 percent in GDP in April-June.**
- The RBI is expecting a positive growth in the October-December quarter of 2020-21.

Recession & Nowcasting

- In economics, when the GDP growth rate is **negative for two consecutive quarters or more, it is termed recession.**
- 'Nowcasting' is the prediction of the present or the very near future of the state of the economy.

Risks

Unrelenting pressure of inflation despite imports

- The foremost (risk) is the unrelenting pressure of inflation, with no signs of waning in spite of supply management measures such as the imposition of stock limits on onion traders, imports of potatoes and onions and a temporary reduction in import duties on pulses.

Covid-19 wave hurting global growth

- The second major risk to the economy stems from the global economy now at risk from the second wave of Covid-19. External demand may collapse again as commodity prices seem to foretell, the recent recovery in exports could become stillborn.

Intensifying stress amongst households, corporates

- Lurking around the corner is the third major risk – stress intensifying among households and corporations that has been delayed but not mitigated, and could spill over into the financial sector.

Way forward

On the Covid-19 pandemic, contrary to global developments, there are growing signs of the receding of the health crisis in India and this has provided courage to people to engage in economic activity within norms of social distancing, masks and sanitisation.

Data centre policy

In News

The Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology released the draft data centre policy which said that the government will work towards providing "infrastructure status" for the data centre sector, at par with other sectors like Railways, Roadways, and Power.

Data Centre

It is a dedicated secure space within a building/centralized location where computing and networking equipment is concentrated for the purpose of collecting, storing, processing, distributing or allowing access to large amounts of data.

Data Centre Parks

These are specialized secure Data Zone, strategically located with the most conducive non-IT and IT infrastructure, and regulatory environment for housing mix of small scale/large scale clusters of Data Centres to serve the high needs of compute, storage, networking and provision of a wide range of data-related services.

Significance

- The status will help the sector avail long-term credit from domestic and international lenders at easier terms and will give a boost to the investments.
- The policy also aims to simplify clearances for setting up data centres in the country.

Highlights

- A chief component required for data centre infrastructure is an uninterrupted power supply

and the policy has addressed this in its key focus areas.

- The policy would facilitate data centre parks to setup own power generation units, and encourage use of renewable energy.
- The policy also proposed setting up of at least four 'Data centre Economic Zones (DCEZ)', as a Central Sector Scheme - DCEZ Scheme.
- The proposed DCEZs are intended to create an eco-system of hyperscale data centres, cloud service providers, IT companies, R&D units, and other allied industries.

Important Information

- Data centres will also be declared as an Essential Service under "The Essential Services Maintenance Act, 1968 (ESMA)" which means that there would be a continuity of services even during times of calamities or crisis.

Vision of the Draft Data Centre Policy

- Making India a Global Data Centre hub.
- Promote investment in the sector.
- Propel digital economy growth.
- Enable provisioning of trusted hosting infrastructure to fulfil the growing demand of the country and facilitate state of the art service delivery to citizens.

Way ahead

The need for data centre infrastructure in the country already poses a potential opportunity for investments, which can be further increased if India were to become a location of choice for global players.

Currently, there is no large-scale foreign investment in data centres in the country. India could essentially become a data centre hub for global enterprises, if the government has a clear cut policy around it.

Viability gap funding (VGF) scheme

In News

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the continuation and revamping of the Viability Gap Funding (VGF) Scheme under

the public private partnership (PPP) model till 2024-25.

- The Centre will continue to fund 20% of the total project cost (TPC) for economic infrastructure, it will also provide 30% of TPC for social infrastructure in the waste water treatment, water supply, solid waste management, health and education sectors.
- Scheme will move to ramp up the social infrastructure of the country and continue support to core sector infrastructure.

Viability gap funding/finance

- Viability Gap Finance means a grant to support projects that are economically justified but not financially viable.
- The scheme is designed as a Plan Scheme to be administered by the Ministry of Finance and amount in the budget are made on a year-to-year basis.
- Such a grant under VGF is provided as a capital subsidy to attract the private sector players to participate in PPP projects that are otherwise financially unviable.
- Projects may not be commercially viable because of the long gestation period and small revenue flows in future.
- The VGF scheme was launched in 2004 to support projects that come under Public-Private Partnerships.

Highlights

- The earlier VGF scheme was limited to projects concerning economic infrastructure.
 - The revamped VGF scheme will attract more PPP projects and facilitate private investment in the social sectors (health, education, waste water, solid waste management and water supply, among others).
 - Creation of new hospitals and schools will create many opportunities to boost employment generation.
 - Now, under this scheme, private sector projects in areas like wastewater treatment, solid waste management, health, water supply and education, could get 30% of the total project cost from the Centre.
- Separately, pilot projects in health and education, with at least 50% operational cost

recovery, can get as much as 40% of the total project cost from the central government.

- The Centre and States would together bear 80% of the capital cost of the project and 50% of operation and maintenance costs of such projects for the first five years.

Components of scheme

The new scheme will have two components.

The sub-scheme-1

- It would cater to social sectors such as waste water treatment, water supply, solid waste management, health and education sectors, which often face bankability issues on account of poor revenue streams.
- The projects eligible under the sub-scheme-1 should have at least 100 per cent operational cost recovery.
- The central government will provide a maximum of 30% of the total project cost (TPC) of the project as VGF. State government, sponsoring central ministry or statutory entity may provide an additional support up to 30% of TPC.

The sub scheme-2

- It will support demonstration or pilot social sectors projects. The projects may be from health and education sectors where there is at least 50% operational cost recovery.
- In such projects, central and state governments together will provide up to 80 per cent of capital expenditure and up to 50 per cent of operation and maintenance (O&M) costs for the first five years.
- The Centre will provide a maximum of 40% of the TPC of the project.
- In addition, it may provide a maximum of 25% of operational costs of the project in the first five years of commercial operations.

Operation Thunder 2020

In News

The India Customs intercepted a shipment of red sandalwood destined for the United Arab Emirates, during a month-long "Operation Thunder 2020".

- The operation is coordinated by the **Interpol** and the **World Customs Organisation**, which involved law enforcement agencies in 103 countries.

Background

- Thunder 2020 is the fourth in a series of 'Thunder' operations carried out annually since 2017.
- It has resulted in significant seizures and the arrest of thousands of suspects engaged in the illegal trade of wildlife and timber species.

Operation Thunder 2020

- Operation Thunder 2020 resulted in more than 2,000 seizures of wildlife and forestry products. It resulted in large seizures of protected wildlife and forestry specimens and product.
- This also triggering many arrests and investigations worldwide.
- The operation was focus on pre-identified routes and hotspots.
- The participating countries focused mainly on the species protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.
- It is an international agreement aimed at ensuring the international trade in wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.

World's fourth largest illegal trade

- Wildlife and forestry crime is the world's fourth largest illegal trade — a lucrative illegal business with far-reaching and devastating consequences not just for the environment but also for society, public health and global economics
- Wildlife and forestry crime often occurs hand in hand with tax evasion, corruption, money laundering and even murder.
- Organized crime groups are using same routes to smuggle protected wildlife as they do people, weapons, drugs and other illegal products.

Impact

- Operation Thunder 2020 show that the vital work of Parties to respond to wildlife crime in challenging global context.
- Strong, coordinated responses at all levels are needed to address the activities of transnational organized crime.
- This will disrupt illegal trade chains across range, transit and destination states.

World Customs Organization

- WCO is an intergovernmental organization headquartered in Brussels, Belgium.
- The WCO is noted for its work in areas covering the development of international conventions, instruments, and tools on topics such as commodity classification, valuation, rules of origin, collection of customs revenue, supply chain security, international trade facilitation, customs enforcement activities, combating counterfeiting in support of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), drugs enforcement, illegal weapons trading, integrity promotion, and delivering sustainable capacity building to assist with customs reforms and modernization.
- The WCO maintains the international Harmonized System (HS) goods nomenclature, and administers the technical aspects of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreements on Customs Valuation and Rules of Origin.

Interpol

- The International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO), commonly known as INTERPOL, is an international organization that facilitates worldwide police cooperation and crime control.
- Headquartered in Lyon, it has seven regional bureaux worldwide and a National Central Bureau in all 194 member states, making it the world's largest police organization.
- INTERPOL provides investigative support, expertise, and training to law enforcement worldwide, focusing on three

major areas of transnational crime: terrorism, cybercrime, and organized crime.

- Its broad mandate covers virtually every kind of crime, including crimes against humanity, child pornography, drug trafficking and production, political corruption, copyright infringement, and white-collar crime.
- The agency also facilitates co-operation among national law enforcement institutions through criminal databases and communications networks.
- INTERPOL is itself not a law enforcement agency.

Debt Pact of G20

In News

G20 finance ministers have agreed for the first time on a new joint framework for restructuring government debt, in anticipation that the coronavirus crisis will leave some poor countries in need of deep relief. This is because COVID-19 crisis has left the poorer countries at risk of failing to repay the loans.

Aim

The framework aims “to facilitate timely and orderly debt treatment” for countries eligible for a debt payment freeze put in place in April, but which only included private sector creditors on a voluntary basis.

Background

- Earlier the G20 countries agreed on G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative. Now, it is being signed as a pact with an upgraded framework. The pact has been made mandatory for the member country governments.
- The pact was initiated after Zambia announced that it cannot pay an overdue Eurobond by the deadline of November 13, 2020.

Details

- Major creditors, including China, will be expected to follow the common guidelines

laying out how debt which is deemed unsustainable can be reduced or rescheduled.

- The new framework outlined borrows heavily from the rules of the Paris Club, an informal grouping of mostly rich country governments that until now was the only joint forum for negotiating debt restructurings.
- Under the new framework, creditor countries will negotiate together with a debtor country, which will be expected to seek the same treatment terms from private sector creditors.
- The new framework also goes further than the debt freeze by requiring all public creditors to participate, after China was criticised by G20 partners for not including debt owed to its state-owned banks.
 - China has become a major creditor to developing countries in recent years, often by lending through institutions like China Development Bank and China EXIM.
 - But China is wary about debt write-offs and Beijing has defined the state-owned China Development Bank as a private institution, resisting calls for full participation in debt relief.

Paris Club

- It is an informal grouping that meets on monthly basis at Paris.
- The main objective of the grouping is to find workable solutions to payment problems faced by debtor nations.
- It has 19 member countries.
- Most of them are Scandinavian countries, European countries, USA and UK.

Why was China reluctant to accept the pact?

- China accounts to 63% of overall debt owed to G20 countries as of 2019.
- China is the biggest bilateral lender to more than hundreds of projects under its Belt and Road initiative.
- Most of the debtor countries owed by China are from Africa.
- It has been estimated that Chinese debt to African countries amount to 150 billion USD. China holds a third of sovereign debts of Africa.

Annual Pneumonia and Diarrhoea Progress Report

In News

India has made significant progress in its vaccination coverage to prevent child pneumonia and diarrhoea deaths, according to the latest annual Pneumonia and Diarrhoea Progress Report released by the International Vaccine Access Centre (IVAC).

About Report

- The report tracked progress by analysing 10 indicators on how countries are delivering key interventions- including breastfeeding, immunisation, care-seeking and antibiotics, oral rehydration solution (ORS), and zinc supplementation — shown to prevent pneumonia and diarrhoea deaths.
- Of the 15 focus countries included in the report, India is one of just four countries that exceeded targets for exclusive breastfeeding.

Key Findings

- India has improved its vaccination coverage to prevent deaths of children under five years of age from diseases like pneumonia and diarrhoea.
- India has achieved the global target of 90% coverage for three of the five vaccines whose coverage is monitored in the report.
- These vaccines are Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus (DPT) vaccine, Measles-containing-vaccine first dose, Haemophilus influenzae type B, pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV), and rotavirus vaccine.
- Overall, the world's health systems are falling short of ensuring that children have access to prevention and treatment services.
- India's coverage of rotavirus vaccine increased by 18 percentage points (35% rotavirus coverage in 2018 expanded to 53% in 2019), coverage against pneumococcal pneumonia increased by 9 percentage points (6% PCV coverage in 2018 expanded to 15% in 2019).
- Nearly every country included in the report lagged in access to treatments against pneumonia and diarrhoea.

- India failed to reach all four targets (breastfeeding, immunisation, care-seeking and antibiotics) for treatment, adding that the treatment for diarrhoea had the lowest coverage, with only 51% of children receiving ORS and 20% getting zinc.

Conclusion

- There was progress in India in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic threatens the hard-won gains because of disruptions caused in routine health services like immunisation and access to medical oxygen.

100-day agenda

- 100-day agenda is an unprecedented national scale-up of rotavirus vaccine. India completed it in 2019.
- This landmark vaccine expansion will help protect 26 million children born each year against life-threatening cases of rotavirus diarrhoea.

International Vaccine Access Centre (IVAC)

- IVAC builds knowledge and support for the value of vaccines.
- Since 2003, IVAC have served as a trusted partner for governments, international agencies, research groups, and non-profit organizations seeking to advance access to life-saving immunizations for all people.
- Located in the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, within the Department of International Health, IVAC work with diverse skills and research experiences.

Pneumonia

Pneumonia is an infection that inflames the air sacs in one or both lungs. The air sacs may fill with fluid or pus (purulent material), causing cough with phlegm or pus, fever, chills, and difficulty breathing. A variety of organisms, including bacteria, viruses and fungi, can cause pneumonia.

Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea is when your bowel movements become loose or watery. The definition of diarrhoea is passing loose or watery bowel movements 3 or more times in a day (or more frequently than usual). Diarrhoea occurs when the lining of the intestine is unable to absorb fluid, or it actively secretes fluid.

Pneumonia and diarrhea are leading killers of the world's youngest children, accounting for 29 per cent of deaths among children under age 5 – or more than 2 million lives lost each year. Yet, levels of prevention and treatment remain low, particularly among the poor.

Wholesale Price Index

In News

India's Wholesale Price Index (WPI) increased to 1.48% in October 2020. This was the highest in the past eight months.

Details

- Wholesale price index (WPI) inflation was 1.32% in September.
- The annual rate of inflation based on WPI Food Index, which comprises 'food articles' from primary articles group and 'food product' from manufactured products group, decreased to 5.78% in October from 6.92% in September. The government also revised the wholesale inflation for August to 0.41% from 0.16% earlier.
- Food inflation cooled to 6.37% in October from 8.17% in September. Inflation in vegetables and potato was 25.23 % and 107.70 %, respectively, in October.
- In the manufactured products category, inflation was at 2.12% compared to 1.61% in September. Fuel and power witnessed a 10.95% deflation in October.
- India's retail inflation, based on the consumer price index, was a six-year high of 7.61 % in October.

WPI

- Wholesale Price Index represents the price of wholesale goods. It mainly focuses on goods traded between corporation.
- The main objective of WPI is to monitor price drifts. It helps to assess microeconomic and macroeconomic conditions of the economy.
- The WPI is released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry
- The base year of Wholesale Price Index is 2011-12. Earlier it was 2004-05. It was revised in 2017.

Components of WPI

- The primary articles used to calculate WPI are divided into Food Articles and Non-Food Articles.
- The Food Articles include paddy, cereals, wheat, vegetables, milk, fruits, eggs, fish, etc.
 - The Non-food Articles are minerals, oil seeds and crude petroleum.
 - The WPI basket also includes fuel and power, manufactured goods.
 - The manufactured goods include apparels, textiles, paper, plastic, chemicals, metals, cement and many more.
 - The manufactured goods basket includes tobacco products, sugar, animal oils, etc.

Asset Monetization

In News

Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) signed an agreement with World Bank. Under the agreement, World Bank is to provide advisory services to DIPAM for asset monetization.

Asset monetization

Asset Monetisation is creating new sources of revenue by unlocking underutilized or utilised public assets.

DIPAM's plan

DIPAM is to facilitate monetization of non-core assets and enemy property of Rs 100 crores. There are plans to sell minority stakes in LIC.

Details

- DIPAM is mandated with facilitating monetization of non-core assets of government

CPSEs under strategic disinvestment or closure and enemy property of value of Rs. 100 crore and above.

- DIPAM has a framework for monetizing non-core assets.
- The World Bank advisory project, is aimed at analyzing public asset monetization in India and benchmarking its institutional and business models against international best practices as well as supporting development of operational guidelines and capacity building for their implementation.
- It is expected that this project would facilitate and accelerate the non-core asset monetization process and help unlock the value of these un-used/ marginally used assets which has the potential to substantially augment financial resources for further investments and growth.
- The amount raised through the sale of non-core assets would form part of the disinvestment proceeds.

DIPAM

- The Department of Disinvestment was set up as a separate Department on 10th December, 1999 and was later renamed as Ministry of Disinvestment from 6th September, 2001.
- From 27th May, 2004, the Department of Disinvestment is one of the Departments under the Ministry of Finance.
- The Department of Disinvestment has been renamed as Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) from 14th April, 2016.

Vulture Action Plan 2020-25

In News

Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change launched a Vulture Action Plan 2020-25 for the conservation of vultures in the country.

- There are nine recorded species of vultures in India — the **Oriental white-backed, long-billed, slender-billed, Himalayan, red-headed, Egyptian, bearded, cinereous and the Eurasian Griffon.**

Background

- Vulture numbers saw a steep slide (90 per cent in some species) in India since the 1990s in one of the most drastic declines in bird populations in the world.
- While the ministry has been carrying out a conservation project for vultures since 2006, the plan is to now extend the project to 2025 to not just halt the decline but to actively increase the vulture numbers in India.
- Between the 1990s and 2007, numbers of three presently critically-endangered species – the Oriental white-backed, long-billed and slender-billed vultures — crashed massively with 99 per cent of the species having been wiped out.
 - The number of red-headed vultures, also critically-endangered now, declined by 91% while the Egyptian vultures by 80%.
 - The Egyptian vulture is listed as 'endangered' while the Himalayan, bearded and cinereous vultures are 'near threatened'.
 - The crash in vulture populations came into limelight in the mid-90s, and in 2004 the cause of the crash was established as diclofenac — a veterinary nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) used to treat pain and inflammatory diseases such as gout — in carcasses that vultures would feed off.
 - The MoEFCC released the Action Plan for Vulture Conservation 2006 with the DCGI banning the veterinary use of diclofenac in the same year and the decline of the vulture population being arrested by 2011.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW
9 RECORDED SPECIES:
Oriental white-backed, long-billed, slender-billed, Himalayan, red-headed, Egyptian, bearded, cinereous and the Eurasian Griffon.
(4 CRITICALLY ENDANGERED, 1 ENDANGERED, 3 NEAR THREATENED)
THE CRISIS:
A massive dip in vulture populations came into limelight in the mid-90s, and in 2004 the cause of the crash was established as diclofenac, a veterinary nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug.



WHAT NEXT AFTER 2006 PROJECT:

- Testing of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs on vultures, development of new NSAIDs
- Covering two more species in the breeding programme that earlier focussed on 3 critically endangered species
- Additional conservation breeding centres and four rescue centres planned across India
- Nationwide vulture survey once in four years

- The action plan aims to carry forth what has already been set in motion by ensuring that sale of veterinary NSAIDs is regulated and livestock are treated only by qualified veterinarians.
- The four rescue centres have been proposed for different geographical areas like Pinjore in the north, Bhopal in ventral India, Guwahati in Northeast and Hyderabad in South India for treatment of vultures in the country.
- The plan includes instituting a system with the help of Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) which automatically removes a drug from veterinary use, such as Diclofenac, if it is found to be toxic to vultures.
- Under the 2020-25 plan, the ministry will also work for conservation breeding programme of Red Headed Vulture and Egyptian Vulture, and help states in establishing at least one 'Vulture Safe Zone' in each state for the conservation of the remnant population.

Vulture Conservation Breeding Programme

- The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) and Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) also established the Vulture Conservation Breeding Programme, which has been successful and had three critically-endangered species bred in captivity for the first time. Eight centres have been established and, so far, 396 vultures of the three species have successfully fledged.
- The Vulture Safe Zone programme is being implemented at eight different places in the country where there were extant populations of vultures.
- Attempts are made to secure the population of vulture by ensuring the minimum use of Diclofenac and an area is declared a Vulture Safe Zone only when no toxic drugs are found in undercover pharmacy and cattle carcass surveys, for two consecutive years, and the vulture populations are stable and not declining.

Vulture Action Plan 2020-25

AICTE's Lilavati Award-2020

In News

Education Minister "Nishank" virtually launched Lilavati Award-2020: **AICTE's Innovative education program to empower women.**

- The Lilavati Award is an initiative of the technical education regulator, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), and it aims to recognise efforts by AICTE-approved institutions to treat women with 'equality and fairness'.

Theme & Objective

With women empowerment as the theme, the objective of the award is to create awareness about issues like sanitation, hygiene, health, nutrition, literacy, and employment among women.

Details

- The government emphasized on the necessity to impart quality education to girl child to make them self-reliant, confident and successful.
- Government has launched several welfare schemes for the overall development of girl child and women such as Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, and CBSE Udaan Scheme.

Lilavati Award 2020

- The theme of Lilavati Award is **women's empowerment.**
- It aims to create awareness about issues like sanitation, hygiene, health and nutrition using "traditional Indian values".
- It also aims to create awareness about issues like literacy, employment, technology, credit, marketing, innovation, skill development, natural resources, and rights among women.
- The team has to showcase their work undertaken in the last two years from the date of announcement of the award for the cause of women empowerment.

Renewable Energy Investment Meeting and Expo (RE-INVEST 2020)

In News

PM Modi inaugurated the 3rd Global Renewable Energy Investment Meeting and Expo (RE-INVEST 2020) to woo investors for investing in **clean energy in India.**

- The theme of RE-Invest, 2020 is: **Innovations for Sustainable Energy Transition.**
- **India has set an ambitious target of having 175GW of renewable energy by 2022 and 450GW by 2030.**

About RE-INVEST

- The RE-INVEST will inform about the government's plans and programmes and also foster engagement among industry, investors and other stakeholders to take forward India's renewable growth story.
- The partner countries for the RE-INVEST 2020 are **Australia, Denmark, France, Germany, Maldives, the United Kingdom along with European Union and US agencies.**
- The partner states are **Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.**

Significance

- The event will provide a great opportunity to various countries, states, business houses & organizations to showcase their strategies, achievements and expectations.
- It would facilitate collaboration and cooperation with key stakeholders in India.

India's Solar Energy

- During the last six years:
 - Over Rs 4.7 lakh crore were invested, making the country a preferred destination for investment in clean energy.
 - renewable energy capacity has increased by two and half times.
 - Solar energy capacity has increased 13 times.

- The share of non-fossil fuel energy sources in our power generation capacity has increased to 136 GW, or about 36 per cent of our total capacity.
- By 2022, the share is expected to further increase to over 220 GW.
- India's plans for renewables for 2030 will translate into an investment opportunity of around Rs 1 lakh crore per year.

Initiatives by Government

- The efforts being taken by the government for creating an enabling ecosystem for **domestic manufacturing of solar PV cells and modules**.
- Government schemes alone have created a domestic demand and assured **market of around 40 GW of domestically manufactured solar PV cells and modules**.
 - Government recently announced **Production Linked Incentive** for manufacturing solar PV, which is expected to give a fillip to domestic manufacturing.
 - **KUSUM scheme** aims to replace 20 lakh diesel pumps with standalone solar pumps, solarize 15 lakh grid connected pumps, and 10 GW decentralized solar power plants in uncultivable lands of farmers within next four years. Initiative to include solarisation of agricultural feeders under the scheme has been taken.
 - The government has taken a number of facilitative policy measures to ensure "ease of doing business" for renewable energy in the country, and to address any emergent challenges.

SDG Investor Map

In News

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Invest India, have launched the 'SDG (sustainable development goals) Investor Map' for India with 18 Investment Opportunities Areas (IOAs) in six critical sectors such as education and healthcare to help the country achieve its development goals.

- Investing in the SDGs during the COVID-19 pandemic is crucial to 'building back better' and making the economy and our societies more resilient and sustainable.

Details

- The six focus sectors in the map include education, healthcare, agriculture and allied activities, financial services, renewable energy and alternatives and sustainable environment.
- The SDG Investor Map lays out pathways that can bring together private-sector investment and public sector support for six SDG-enabling sectors.
- A rigorous analytical process that included extensive consultations with major domestic and international investors, government stakeholders and think-tanks was carried out to identify the focus sectors and the IOAs within them.
- Of the 18 IOAs identified, 10 are mature investable areas that have seen robust private equity and venture capital activity, and feature companies that have been able to unlock scale and demonstrate profitability.
- The remaining eight IOAs are emerging opportunities, which have seen traction from early-stage investors.

White Spaces

The map has also identified eight 'white spaces', which have seen investor interest and have the potential to grow into IOAs in five to six years with policy support and private sector participation.

Key highlights of the SDG Investor Map

- The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the SDG financing gap by around 400 billion USD in creating international locations including the pre-COVID19 shortfall of around 2 to 2.5 trillion USD per annum.
- Around 50% of the selected IOA's have historical investments and have yielded Internal Rate of Return (IRRs) more than 20%.
- Around 84% of IOA's have investment time frames from short term (less than 5 years) to medium term (5 to 15 years).

Sustainable Development Goals

- The sustainable development goals were launched by the United Nations in order to address the urgent political, environment and economic challenges faced by the world.
- As India is home to 17 % of World Population it has a significant role in making a declaration of these goals. These scores were adopted at the 2015 United Nations General Assembly.
- There are 17 sustainable development goals that aims to end poverty, tackle climate change and fight in inequalities.

SDG goals of India

- India needs 2.64 trillion USD of investment to meet its United Nations sustainable development goals.
 - According to the Standard Chartered, SDG investment map, India needs 1558 billion USD for clean energy, 377.4 billion USD for Digital access, 505 billion USD for Transport infrastructure and 192 billion USD for clean water and sanitation.
 - According to the Standard Chartered, 7% of the country does not have access to Electricity.

Eradicating Tuberculosis by 2025

In News

Health Minister has aimed to eradicate Tuberculosis in India by 2025 and said that the active participation of journalists will help in large scale awareness generation among public.

Tuberculosis

- Tuberculosis (TB) is a contagious infection that usually attacks your lungs. It can also spread to other parts of your body, like your brain and spine. A type of bacteria called Mycobacterium tuberculosis causes it.
- TB is spread from person to person through the air. When people with lung TB cough, sneeze or spit, they propel the TB germs into the air. A person needs to inhale only a few of these germs to become infected.
- Tuberculosis is curable and preventable.

- People infected with TB bacteria have a 5–15% lifetime risk of falling ill with TB. Those with compromised immune systems, such as people living with HIV, malnutrition or diabetes, or people who use tobacco, have a higher risk of falling ill.

Key Facts

- A total of 1.4 million people died from TB in 2019 (including 208 000 people with HIV). Worldwide, TB is one of the top 10 causes of death and the leading cause from a single infectious agent (above HIV/AIDS).
- In 2019, an estimated 10 million people fell ill with tuberculosis (TB) worldwide. 5.6 million men, 3.2 million women and 1.2 million children. TB is present in all countries and age groups. But TB is curable and preventable.
- In 2019, 1.2 million children fell ill with TB globally. Child and adolescent TB is often overlooked by health providers and can be difficult to diagnose and treat.
- In 2019, the 30 high TB burden countries accounted for 87% of new TB cases. Eight countries account for two thirds of the total, with India leading the count, followed by Indonesia, China, the Philippines, Pakistan, Nigeria, Bangladesh and South Africa.
- Multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) remains a public health crisis and a health security threat. A global total of 206 030 people with multidrug- or rifampicin-resistant TB (MDR/RR-TB) were detected and notified in 2019, a 10% increase from 186 883 in 2018.
- Globally, TB incidence is falling at about 2% per year and between 2015 and 2019 the cumulative reduction was 9%. This was less than half way to the End TB Strategy milestone of 20% reduction between 2015 and 2020.
- An estimated 60 million lives were saved through TB diagnosis and treatment between 2000 and 2019.
- Ending the TB epidemic by 2030 is among the health targets of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



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