

OFFICERS' PULSE

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COVERAGE.

The Hindu

The Indian Express

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**AT A GLANCE
& IN DEPTH.**

Polity and Social Issues

Economy

International Relations

Environment

Science and Tech

Culture

CURRENT AFFAIRS WEEKLY
THE **PULSE** OF UPSC AT YOUR FINGER TIPS



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News @ a glance

POLITY

1) Central Bureau of Investigation

About CBI

- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), functioning under **Dept. of Personnel, Ministry of Personnel, Pension & Public Grievances**, Government of India, is the **premier investigating police agency in India**.
- It is also the nodal police agency in India which coordinates investigation on behalf of Interpol Member countries.
- CBI derives power to investigate from the **Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946**.

Cases handled by CBI:

- CBI has grown into a multidisciplinary investigation agency over a period of time. At present, it has the following divisions for investigation of crime:-
- **Anti-Corruption Division** - for investigation of cases under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 against Public officials and the employees of Central Government, Public Sector Undertakings, Corporations or Bodies owned or controlled by the Government of India - it is the largest division having presence almost in all the States of India.
- **Economic Offences Division** - for investigation of major financial scams and serious economic frauds, including crimes relating to Fake Indian Currency Notes, Bank Frauds and Cyber Crime.
- **Special Crimes Division** - for investigation of serious, sensational and organized crime under the Indian Penal Code and other laws on the requests of State Governments or on the orders of the Supreme Court and High Courts.

Suo Moto Cases

- CBI can suo-moto take up investigation of offences **only in the Union Territories**.

- The Central Government can authorize CBI to investigate a crime in a State **but only with the consent of the concerned State Government**.
- The **Supreme Court and High Courts**, however, can order CBI to investigate a crime anywhere in the country without the consent of the State.

Composition of CBI

- The CBI is headed by a Director. He is assisted by a special director or an additional director, and a number of joint directors, deputy inspector generals, superintendents of police and all other ranks of police personnel.

How is the CBI director appointed?

- Before the Lokpal Act was legislated, the CBI director was appointed by the DSPE Act. Now, the **Lokpal Act** governs the appointment of the CBI director.
- The CBI director is appointed by **the Centre** on the basis of the recommendation of a **search committee** comprising the Prime Minister as the chairperson, the Chief Justice of India (or supreme court judge) and the Leader of Opposition.
- Director of CBI has been provided security of two year tenure, by the Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003.

Why in News?

- The Tamil Nadu government has decided to hand over to the CBI the probe into the recent deaths of a father and son — Jayaraj and J. Benicks — at Sathankulam (Thoothukudi ,T.N).

2) Custodial Violence and Need for Police Reforms

What is Custodial Violence?

- The term custodial violence includes physical and mental torture inflicted upon a person in police custody. It is a crime against humanity and a violation of

human rights. It includes death, rape and torture.

Types of Custodial Violence:

- **Physiological Violence:** It includes mental torture by means of depriving him/her of basic needs such as food, sleep. It also includes threats and humiliations to break the confidence and morale of the victim.
- **Physical Violence:** In its ambit methods are employed to wreak physical assault on the victim.
- **Sexual Violence:** Sexual violence is employed through rape/sodomy and is generally directed towards social and psychological harassment of the victims.

Why in News?

- The alleged torture and killing of a father and son, in custody in Tamil Nadu points to a broken criminal justice system, and highlights the need for police reforms.

Constitutional Provisions regarding the safeguard for Custodial Violence :

- Article 20: Protection in Respect of Conviction for Offences
- Article 20(1): No ex-post-facto law - No person shall be
 - 1) Convicted of any offense except for violation of a law in force at the time of the
 - 2) Commission of the act, nor
 - 3) Subjected to a penalty greater than that prescribed by the law in force at the time of the commission of the act.
- Article 20(2): guards against double jeopardy for the same offense.
- Article 20(3): provides that no person accused of any offense shall be compelled to be a witness against himself.
- Article 21: provides that no person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law.
- Article 21(1) provides that no person who is arrested shall be detained in custody without being informed as soon as possible of the ground for such arrest, nor shall he be detained the right to consult and to be defended by a legal practitioner of his choice.
- Article 22(2) provides that every person who is arrested and detained in custody shall be produced before the nearest magistrate within a period of 24 hours .

Supreme Court Judgements on Custodial Violence

- The Supreme Court declared that any form of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment would be offensive to human dignity and constitute an inroad into this right to life.
- **D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal** - Under this case, the Supreme court of India observed that death in police custody that using torture to impermissible and offensive to Article 21.
- **Munshi Singh Gautam and others v. the State of MP** - It ruled that the dehumanising torture, assault in alarming proportions raise serious questions about the credibility of the rule of law and administration of the criminal justice system.
- **Prakash Singh v. Union of India, 2006** - It ruled a slew of reforms to be undertaken for overhauling of the Police system. Among other reforms, it ruled that every State should have a **Police Complaints Authority** where any citizen can lodge a complaint against policemen for any act of misdemeanour.

What is the need of Reforms?

- Between 2001 and 2018, 1,727 persons died in police custody. This includes both persons on police/ judicial remand and those just arrested and not produced before court. Only 26 policemen were convicted in this period for such deaths.
- Only 4.3% of the 70 deaths in 2018 were attributed to “injuries during custody due to physical assault by police”. The reasons recorded for the other deaths included suicide and death in hospitals during treatment.
- Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra recorded zero convictions despite recording more than 100 custodial deaths in the period.
- Apart from custodial deaths, more than 2,000 human rights violation cases were recorded against the police during the same period.

Reforms needed in Police System:

- Adoption of an effective mechanism for police will enable the police supervisory structures to reduce torture.
- Police reforms to include ethical Policing.

- Improvisation in recruitment process, Training and sensitisation of Police forces.
- Overhauling of the Criminal Justice System.
- Proper interrogation techniques coupled with use of scientific methods
- Implementation in letter and spirit of SC judicial ruling in Prakash Singh case.
- Judicial inquiry followed by exemplary punishment to the policemen who are found responsible for custodial deaths.

Other Reforms :

- Ratification of the UN Convention Against Torture which mandates a systematic review of colonial rules, methods, practices and arrangements for the custody and treatment of persons subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment.
- It will also mean that exclusive mechanisms of redress and compensation will be set up for the victim besides institutions such as the Board of Visitors.

Prison Reforms

- Capacity building of Prisons to ensure humane conditions and securing dignity of inmates.
- Adopting Novel concepts like Open prison
- Fixing Accountability by reporting of deaths to NHRC within 24 hours.

3) Namami Gange Programme

About:

- Namami Gange Programme is an Integrated Conservation Mission, approved as a flagship Programme by the Union Government in 2014 to accomplish the twin objectives of **effective abatement of pollution and conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga.**
- It is being operated under the **Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti.**
- The program is being implemented by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), and its state counterpart organizations i.e., State Program Management Groups (SPMGs). The main pillars of the programme are:
 - Sewerage Treatment Infrastructure
 - Industrial Effluent Monitoring.

- River-Front Development
- River-Surface Cleaning
- Biodiversity
- Afforestation
- Public Awareness

Why in News?

- The World Bank has approved a five-year loan to the Namami Gange project worth ₹3,000 crore (\$400 million) to develop and improve infrastructure projects to abate pollution in the river basin.

News in Detail:

- The Namami Ganga or the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) has already received ₹4,535 crore (\$600 million) from the World Bank valid until December 2021 as part of the first phase of the National Ganga River Basin project.
- So far, 313 projects worth ₹25,000 crore have been sanctioned under the mission.
- The loan would fund three new **'Hybrid Annuity Projects'** (*the government bears 40% of the project cost and the remaining amount is arranged by the developer*) in Agra, Meerut and Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh for the tributaries of the Ganga.
- Some of the projects include spillover projects from the first phase of the mission as well cleaning projects in tributaries such as the Yamuna and Kali rivers.
- Rs.1,209 crore is provided for the ongoing **DBOT-Design, Build, Operate and Transfer** (*It is a model in which a private partner is responsible to design, build, operate during the contracted period and transfer back the facility to the public sector*) projects in Buxar, Munger, Begusarai in Bihar.
- It would include institutional development, improving investment resilience to Covid-19 like emergency situations, performance based incentive for Urban Local Bodies and communication and management programmes.

4) New domicile rules in Jammu and Kashmir

Why in News?

- New domicile rules were formulated post the termination of the special constitutional status of Jammu and

Kashmir, which was reorganized into two Union Territories.

- These rules have brought succour and hope for a segment of its population that had to contend with fragmented citizenship rights for long.

New rules:

- Kashmiri migrants living in or outside J&K can get domicile certificates by producing their Permanent Residence Certificate (PRC), ration card copy, voter card or any other valid document.
- The domiciles have been defined as those who have resided for a **period of 15 years** in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Those who have studied for a period of **seven years and appeared in Class 10-12 examination** in educational institutions located in J&K.
- The new process will allow West Pakistan refugees, safai karamcharis and children of women who married non-locals to apply for jobs here.
- Bonafide migrants can apply with the Relief and Rehabilitation department by providing documents like electoral rolls of 1988, proof of registration as a migrant in any State in the country or any other valid document.
- Besides mitigating the historical deprivation of one segment, the changes will enable many others currently living in Jammu and Kashmir to get domicile and associated rights.

Concerns:

- There are concerns that the changes in domicile rules will lead to a huge influx into the region.
- Few sections interpret that a deliberate scheme to change the demographic character of the region is unfolding.
- The National Conference and the People's Democratic Party, both Valley-based parties, have reiterated their opposition to the changes.
- In the Jammu region also, there are concerns that there could be dispossession of land and a shrinking of economic opportunities for local people.

Benefits of openness:

- Movement of people across political and natural borders has been a constant feature of progress.
- Economic growth and vitality of a society often positively correlate with its openness towards the outside world.

Way Ahead:

- It is arguable that with relatively high rates of literacy, education and material standards, Jammu and Kashmir is not susceptible to any demographic or economic takeover by immigrants.
- A state-driven re-engineering of the demography of any place is not desirable, but the fear of such a scenario is no good reason to retreat into a fold of nativism.

ENVIRONMENT

1) El Nino

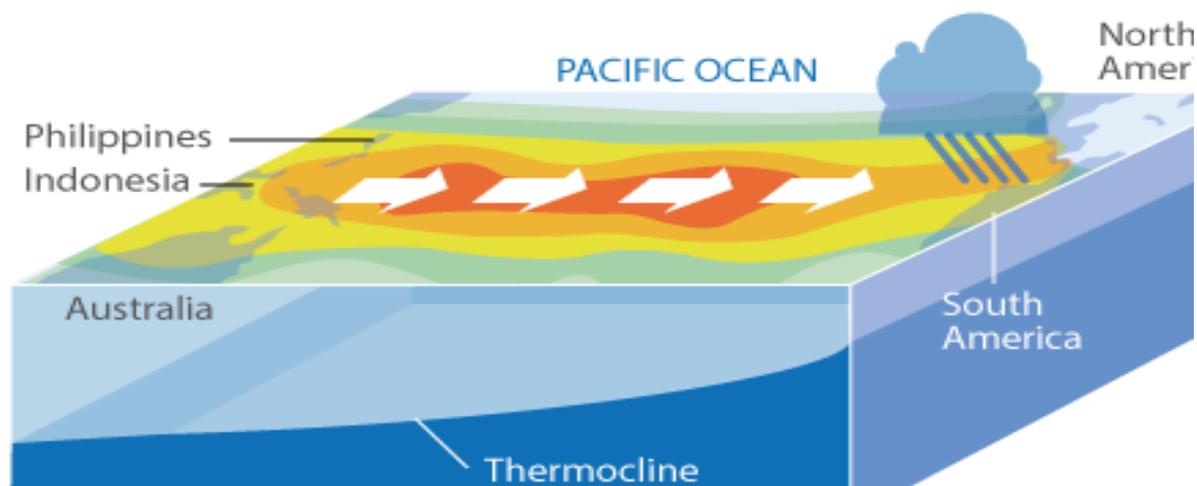
About

- El Niño is a climate cycle in the Pacific Ocean with a global impact on weather patterns.
- The cycle begins when warm water in the western tropical Pacific Ocean shifts eastward along the equator toward the coast of South America. Normally, these warm water pools near Indonesia and the Philippines. During an El Niño, the

Pacific's warmest surface waters sit offshore of north-western South America.

- There is also an opposite of an El Niño, called La Niña. This refers to times when waters of the tropical eastern Pacific are colder than normal and trade winds blow more strongly than usual.
- Collectively, El Niño and La Niña are parts of an oscillation in the ocean-atmosphere system called the El Niño-Southern Oscillation, or ENSO cycle, which also has a neutral phase.

El Niño conditions



- El Niños occur every three to five years but may come as frequently as every two years or as rarely as every seven years. Typically, El Niños occur more frequently than La Niñas. Each event usually lasts nine to 12 months.

Effects of El Nino and La Nina on India

- Since El Nino causes warm conditions during winter over the Indian subcontinent, during summer, it leads to dry conditions and **deficient monsoon**.
- Whereas La Nina results in **better than normal monsoon** in India.
- Crops such as Paddy, Maize, Groundnut, Guar, Castor, Tur, Moong and Bajra are severely affected by El Nino.

Last Glacial Maximum

- The most recent glacial period peaked 21,500 years ago was during the Last Glacial Maximum, or LGM.

- During this period ice-sheets covered North America and Eurasia, and sea-levels were much lower, with Adam's Bridge exposed so that the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka were contiguous.
- During this time scientists have predicted that an **Indian Ocean El Nino** existed.

Why in the news?

- According to a report published in 'Science Advances', scientists have predicted that with ongoing climate change, Indian Ocean can have its own El Nino by 2050, which is just a re-emergence of climatic conditions during the Last Glacial Maximum.
- This can severely affect our Monsoon pattern and it will pose another source of uncertainty in rainfall prediction and will likely amplify swings in monsoon rainfall.

- It could bring more frequent droughts to East Africa and southern India and increased rainfall over Indonesia.

2) New rules to regulate exotic animal trade

Exotic species

- Exotic species, often referred to as alien, nonnative, nonindigenous, or introduced species, are those that occur in areas outside of their natural geographic range.
- The presence of an exotic species may have a significant effect on the local ecosystem. The ecological impact varies; it may generally bring adverse effects to the ecological balance in an ecosystem or it may be beneficial.
- At other times, the effect is not too significant to cause major changes in the ecosystem.

Chief Wildlife Warden

- The Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW) is the statutory authority, under the Wildlife Protection Act, who heads the Wildlife Wing of the department and exercises complete administrative control over Protected Areas (PAs) within a state. Every PA is typically classified as a Wildlife Division and is headed by a Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF).

CITES and Appendices

- CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) is an international agreement between governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. Though it is voluntary for countries to join, but it is legally binding to the parties.
- Appendix I lists species that are the most endangered among CITES-listed animals and plants. They are threatened with extinction and CITES prohibits international trade in specimens of these species except when the purpose of the import is not commercial, for instance for scientific research. In these exceptional cases, trade may take place provided it is authorized by the granting of both an import permit and an export permit (or re-export certificate).
- Appendix II lists species that are not necessarily now threatened with

extinction but that may become so unless trade is closely controlled. It also includes so-called "look-alike species", i.e. species whose specimens in trade look like those of species listed for conservation reasons. International trade in specimens of Appendix-II species may be authorized by the granting of an export permit or re-export certificate. No import permit is necessary for these species under CITES. Permits or certificates should only be granted if the relevant authorities are satisfied that certain conditions are met, above all that trade will not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild

- Appendix III is a list of species included at the request of a Party that already regulates trade in the species and that needs the cooperation of other countries to prevent unsustainable or illegal exploitation. International trade in specimens of species listed in this Appendix is allowed only on presentation of the appropriate permits or certificates.

Why in the news?

- The Environment Ministry's wildlife division has introduced new rules to regulate the import and export of 'exotic wildlife species'.
- Under the new rules, owners and possessors of such animals and birds must also register their stock with the Chief Wildlife Warden of their States.
- Stockists of exotic species will have six months to declare their stock.
- The centre has given a list of exotic species according to Appendix I, II and III.
- This list does not include species listed under Wildlife Protection Act 1972.
- The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau is an organisation that is tasked with monitoring illegal trade.

Wildlife trafficking as a threat

- In its first global report on the illegal wildlife trade, released last week, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) described wildlife trafficking as a "global threat", which also has links with other organised crimes such as modern slavery, drug trafficking and arms trade.
- According to World Wildlife Crime Report 2016 of the UN, criminals are illegally trading products derived from over 7,000

species of wild animals and plants across the world.

- The illegal trade is estimated to generate revenues of up to \$23 billion a year.

3) Gynandromorphs

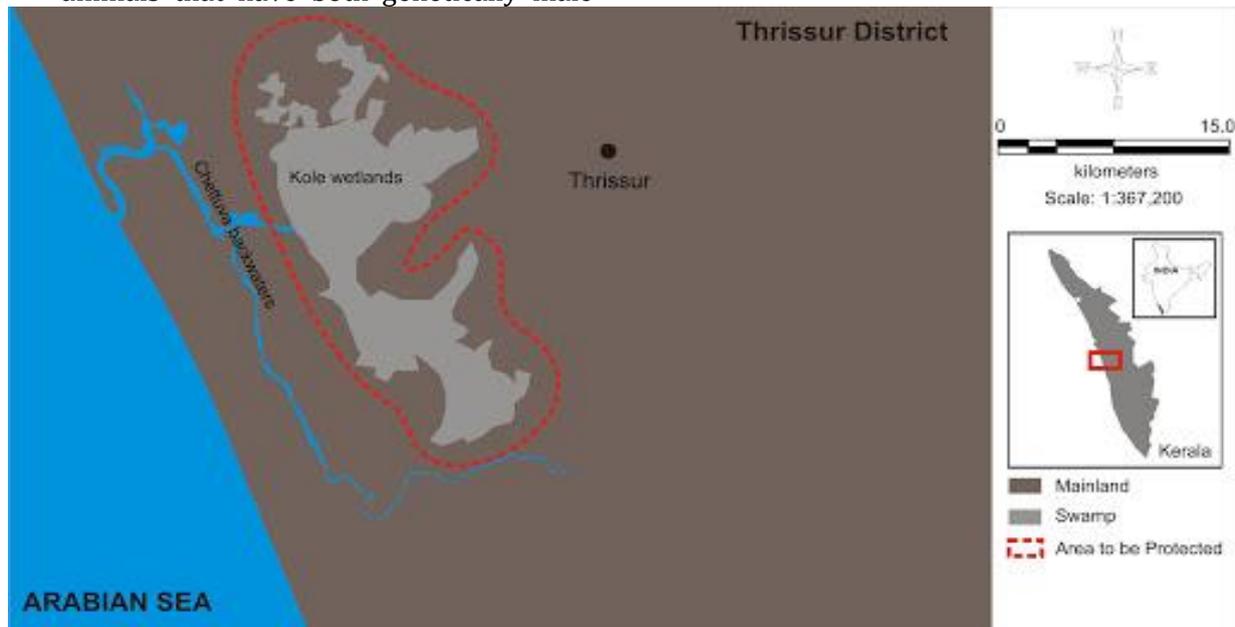
About:

- Gynandromorphs (“gyne” from Greek meaning female, “andro” for male, and “morph” meaning variety) are individual animals that have both genetically male

and female tissues and often have observable male and female characteristics.

- Gynandromorphs occur in insects, spiders, crustaceans, and other arthropods as well as in birds, but they are extremely rare, and discovering one in the field or in the laboratory is a major event.

Kole Wetlands



- The Kule wetlands are spread over Thrissur and Malappuram districts of **Kerala** extending from the northern bank of **Chalakydy river** in the south to the southern bank of **Bharathapuzha river** in the north.
- The name Kule refers to the peculiar cultivation practice carried out from December to May. “Kole”, a Malayalam word, indicates a field that gives a bumper crop, so long as floods do not damage it.
- The Kule areas are low-lying and have a central, narrow strip covering a long expanse, with many pockets running into cultivated land on either side. The region is naturally subject to salt-water ingress.
- During the monsoon, the entire region, which gets submerged under water, is cultivated by draining the water and by erecting bunds. Regulators are provided at certain strategic points to prevent the intrusion of saltwater into the Kule wetlands during the cultivation period.

- Grasses and sedges are found in shallow and drier zones. The main activity in and around Kule is **paddy cultivation**. As Kule is a large sprawling wetland, with human habitation all around, there are coconut and arecanut plantations, gardens and cultivated plants.
- It has been recognised as one of India's Important Bird Areas by BirdLife International.

Why in the news?

- Scientists have found some Gynandromorphs dragonflies (the Scarlet Skimmer) at Kule Wetlands.
- Further research has to be undertaken to investigate the influence of environmental factors on this phenomenon.

4) *Globba andersonii*

- This species was recently found in **Sikkim Himalayas**.
- This species was found near the Teesta river valley region after a gap of nearly

136 years. The last sighting of this plant was done in 1875.

- This species is also known as 'dancing ladies' or 'swan flowers'.
- According to IUCN it is classified as an "endangered" species.
- It is **narrowly endemic**, as this species is restricted mainly to the Teesta River Valley region which includes the Sikkim Himalayas and Darjeeling hill ranges.



5) Central Zoo Authority



- The Central Zoo Authority was established as a **statutory body** under the Ministry of Environment & Forests by the Government of India in the year 1992. The Authority consists of a Chairman, ten members and a Member Secretary.
- It is chaired by the **Environment Minister**.
- The main objective is to strengthen the national effort in conservation of the rich biodiversity of the country, particularly the fauna as per the **National Zoo Policy, 1998**.
- Other objectives of this Authority include-enforcing minimum standards and norms for upkeep and healthcare of animals in Indian zoos and to control mushrooming of unplanned and ill-conceived zoos.

- The authority lays down guidelines and prescribes rules under which animals may be transferred among zoos nationally and internationally.

Why in the news?

- The Environment Ministry has **expanded CZA** to include an expert from the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi, and a molecular biologist.
- In another decision, CZA has allowed zoos to take a call on opening them to visitors in the phases of unlock.

6) Nagarhole national park

About

- Nagarhole National Park also known as Rajiv Gandhi National Park is located in the two districts of **Karnataka**, namely **Mysore and Kodagu**.
- The park was established as a wildlife sanctuary in 1955 and was upgraded into a national park in 1988. In 1999, it was declared as a tiger reserve.
- The vegetation in this park predominantly comprises moist, tropical and mixed deciduous forest, with some portions being the dry deciduous type.
- Nagarhole National Park forms apart of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and together with Bandipur National Park and Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary to its South East and Wayanad to the South-West, is one of the last remaining and best protected habitats for endangered species like the Elephant and the Tiger.



Why in the news?

- There is a highway road which passes adjacent to Nagarhole National Park.
- This highway connects Mysore district in Karnataka to Tellicherry in Kerala, this highway has high vehicle movement.

- Issues such as drink and drive, road kills, over-speeding, forest fires, illegal tree felling etc are taking place.
- Hence the officials have decided to set up a time **stamped card system** for vehicles passing through.
- Under this system, the vehicles on approaching the forest check posts would be given the time stamped card, complete with details of the speed limit to be maintained and the exit time at the next



- Striped Hairstreak (1st in the image), was first recorded by Japanese entomologists in Hainan province of China. It was located in Vijaynagar bordering Myanmar.
- Elusive Prince (2nd in the image) was found on the periphery of the Namdapha National Park in Arunachal Pradesh. The scientific name of the Elusive Prince is Rohana tonkiniana, named after Tonkin in north Vietnam, where it was first recorded.
- India now has 1,327 species, up from 1,318 in 2015 along with other editions.

8) Death of Elephants in Botswana

Okavango Delta

- The Okavango Delta is a large low gradient alluvial fan or '**Inland Delta**' located in north-western Botswana.

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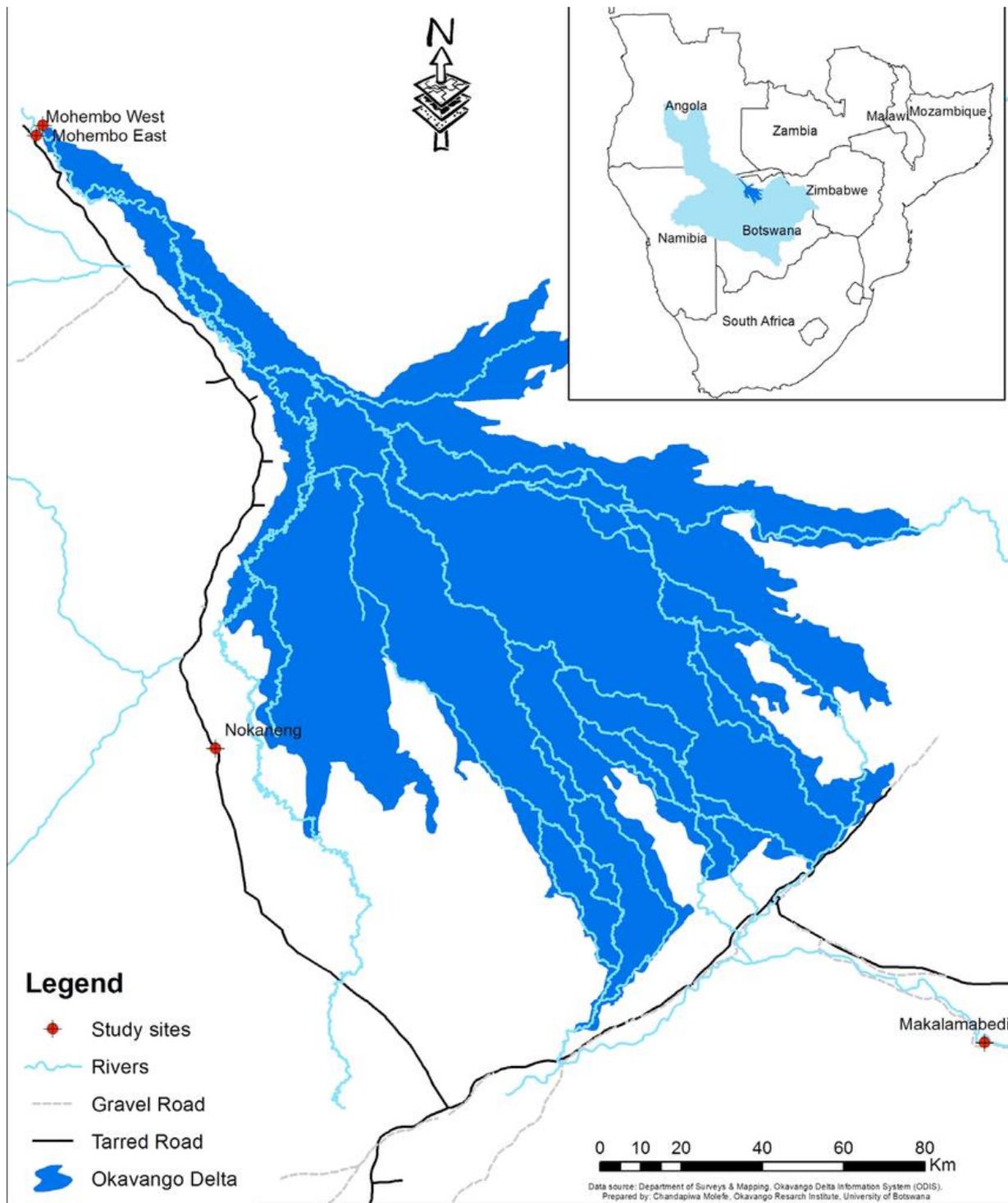
7) Two new butterfly species identified in India

Why in the news?

- Striped Hairstreak and Elusive Prince are two new butterfly species which are identified in India.



- The area includes permanent swamps which cover approximately 600,000 ha along with up to 1.2m ha of seasonally flooded grassland.
- The Okavango Delta is one of a very few large inland delta systems without an outlet to the sea, known as an **endorheic delta**, its waters drain instead into the desert sands of the Kalahari Basin.
- It is Africa's third largest **alluvial fan** (Alluvial fans are fan-shaped deposits of water-transported material) and the continent's largest endorheic delta.
- The 1000th site to be inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2014, the Okavango Delta is an important wildlife area protected by both the **Moremi Game Reserve**, on its eastern edge, and the numerous wildlife concessions within Ngamiland.



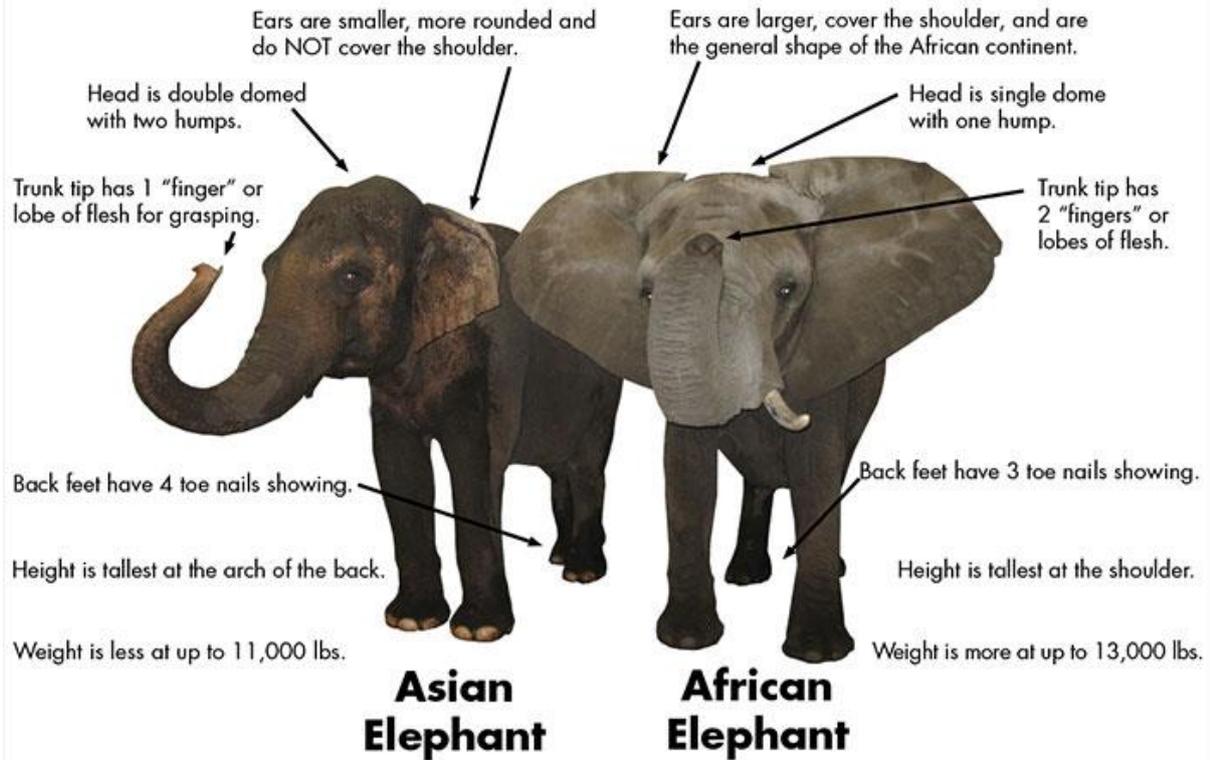
Botswana



- Botswana is a landlocked country in Southern Africa.
- It is currently Africa's oldest continuous democracy.
- Botswana is topographically flat, with up to 70 percent of its territory being the **Kalahari Desert**. It is bordered by South Africa to the south and southeast, Namibia to the west and north, and Zimbabwe to the northeast.

- Botswana hails the world's largest concentration of African elephants.

African Elephants



- The African elephant, largest animal on the Earth, whose herds wander through 37 countries in Africa.
- There are two subspecies of African elephants—the **Savanna (or bush) elephant and the Forest elephant**.
- Savanna elephants are larger than forest elephants, and their tusks curve outwards. In addition to being smaller, forest elephants are darker and their tusks are straighter and point downward.

Why in the news?

- Around **350 African elephants** were found dead in Okavango Delta, Botswana.
- Normally elephants deaths are due to anthrax (Anthrax is caused by a spore-forming bacterium. It mainly affects animals) or by poaching. But there is no evidence of both. The cause of death of these elephants is yet to be established.

ECONOMY

1) Marginal Standing Facility

About MSF

- Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) is the rate at which the banks are able to borrow overnight funds from RBI against the approved government securities.
- The scheme was introduced by RBI with the main aim of **reducing volatility in the overnight lending rates** in the inter-bank market and to enable **smooth monetary transmission** in the financial system.
- In March 2020, the RBI increased the cap for liquidity available under the marginal standing facility, **from 2 per cent to 3 per cent of their Net Demand and Time Liabilities (NDTL) — or deposits.**

Why in News?

- The RBI has decided to extend the enhanced borrowing facility provided to the banks to meet their liquidity shortages under the marginal standing facility scheme.
- This relaxation, which was granted till June 30, 2020, has now been extended till September 30.

2) Index of Eight Core Industries

About ICI

- The monthly Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) is a **production volume index.**
- The objective of the ICI is to provide an advance indication on production performance of industries of 'core' nature before the release of Index of Industrial Production (IIP) by the Central Statistics Office.
- These industries are likely to impact on general economic activities as well as industrial activities.
- The Eight Core Industries- **Electricity, steel, refinery products, crude oil, coal, cement, natural gas and fertilizers**- comprise 40.27 per cent of the weight of items included in the IIP.
- **Industry Weight (In percentage)**
 - 1) Petroleum & Refinery production - 28.04
 - 2) Electricity generation - 19.85
 - 3) Steel production - 17.92
 - 4) Coal production - 10.33
 - 5) Crude Oil production - 8.98

6) Natural Gas production - 6.88

7) Cement production - 5.37

8) Fertilizers production - 2.63

- ICI is released by the **Office of Economic Advisor**, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industries. The base year of the ICI is **2011-12.**

Why in News?

- According to the latest official data, the output of eight core infrastructure industries shrank by 23.4% in May due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown.
- The eight core sectors had expanded by 3.8% in May 2019.

2) Purchasing Managers' Index

What is PMI?

- Purchasing Managers' Index is an economic indicator which indicates the business activity & economic health of both the **manufacturing and service sectors.**
- PMI of India is published by Japanese firm **Nikkei** but compiled and constructed by **IHS Markit**, a London-based global information provider.
- Unlike the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), which indicates the changes in production volume or output, the PMI is an **investor sentiment tracking index** and is more dynamic in nature. They are derived from monthly surveys of about 400 private companies.
- Variables used for calculating the PMI are: Output, New Orders, Employment, Input Costs, Output Prices, Backlogs of Work, Export Orders, Quantity of Purchases, Suppliers' Delivery Times, Stocks of Purchases and Stocks of Finished Goods.

How to read PMI?

- While PMI >50 implies an expansion of business and economic activity, PMI <50 means contraction.

Why in News?

- According to the latest Manufacturing PMI, India's manufacturing activity contracted for a third straight month in June.
- While the Purchasing Managers' Index increased to 47.2 last month from 30.8 in May, it was still below the 50-mark separating growth from contraction.

3) India's external debt

What is external debt?

- External debt is the portion of a country's debt that is borrowed from foreign lenders through commercial banks, governments, or international financial institutions.
- **Governments and eligible corporations** can raise loans from abroad.

Components of external debt

- India's external debt includes
 - **Commercial Borrowings,**
 - **Sovereign Borrowings,**
 - **Non-Resident Deposits,**
 - **Trade credits.**

Why in News?

- According to RBI data, India's external debt stood at \$558.5 billion in March, an increase of \$15.4 billion compared with the year-ago period.
- **Commercial borrowings** remained the largest component of the external debt, with a share of 39.4%, followed by **non-resident deposits** at 23.4% and **short-term trade credit** at 18.2%.
- **U.S. dollar-denominated debt** continued to be the largest component of India's external debt, with a share of 53.7% at end-March 2020, followed by the Indian rupee (31.9%), yen (5.6%), SDR (4.5%) and the euro (3.5%).
- The RBI also said **debt service (principal repayments plus interest payments)** increased marginally to 6.5% of current receipts at the end of March compared to 6.4% in the same period a year ago. This reflects higher interest payments on commercial borrowings and lower current receipts.

4) Fiscal deficit

About FRBM Act

- Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act was enacted in 2003 which set targets for the government to reduce **fiscal deficits**. It was mandated that both states and centre would cut the fiscal deficit to 3% by 2008-09. The targets were put off several times.
- *Fiscal deficit = Total Expenditure – Total Receipts except borrowings*

- In 2016, the government set up a committee under **NK Singh** to review the FRBM Act.

Review committee

- The committee recommended that the government should bring down the fiscal deficit to 3% of the GDP by 2020, cut it to 2.8% in 2020-21 and 2.5% by 2023.
- It also suggested that India should adopt **debt-to-GDP ratio** as a new anchor of fiscal policy along with the fiscal deficit and gradually bring it down to 60 per cent — comprising 40 per cent for the Centre and 20 per cent for the states.
- The committee also allowed an **escape clause** under the FRBM Act that provides for a deviation from the estimated fiscal deficit on some exception cases such as:
 - Overriding considerations of national security, acts of war, and calamities of national proportion and collapse of agriculture severely affecting farm output and incomes
 - Far-reaching structural reforms in the economy with unanticipated fiscal implications
 - A sharp decline in real output growth of at least 3 percentage points below the average for the previous four quarters.
- The deviation from the stipulated fiscal deficit target **must not exceed 0.5 percentage points** in a year.
- Escape clauses provide flexibility to governments to overshoot fiscal deficit targets in times of need, enabling them to respond to economic shocks.

Budget Target

- During the Union Budget 2020-21, the Central government pegged the fiscal deficit target as a percentage of the GDP for FY20 and FY21 at 3.8 per cent and 3.5 per cent, respectively, **invoking the escape clause** in the FRBM Act.

Why in News?

- India's fiscal deficit reached Rs 4.66 lakh crore, or 58.6%, of the budget estimate in the first two months of 2020-21 as a pandemic-led lockdown affected the government's revenues.
- The government's fiscal deficit target estimated in the Union Budget 2020-21 was Rs 7.96 lakh crore, or 3.5% of the GDP, but is likely to be revised due to the

coronavirus' impact on the Indian economy.

5) Operation Twist

What is it?

- Operation Twist is an initiative of the RBI that aims to **control long-term bond yields and bring down interest rates on long-term borrowing**.
- It is a monetary policy intervention by the central bank, conducted through **Open Market Operations (OMOs)**, where the central bank is **buying long term government securities and at the same time selling short term government securities**.
- Buying long term securities and selling short term securities will reduce the yield of long term securities. This yield impact is the objective of Operation Twist.
- *Yield is the return an investor gets on his bond.*

Rationale behind Operation Twist

- Whenever there is a long-term investment deficit in the country and the investors are hesitant to make long-term investments in the economy, the government or the central bank jumps in to revive growth by lowering the interest rate for long-term investment ventures.
- As the central bank buys long-term securities (bonds), their demand rises which in turn pushes up their prices.
- However, the bond yield comes down with an increase in prices, because there is an **inverse relationship between the bond prices and their yields**.

How will it affect the economy?

- The interest rate in an economy is determined by yield. Thus, lower longer-term yields reduces long-term interest rates, which means people can avail long-term loans (such as buying houses, cars or financing projects) at lower rates.
- This also results in a dip in the expected returns from long-term savings which tilts the balance from saving towards spending.
- Hence, cheaper retail loans can help **encourage consumption spending** which is the largest GDP component in the economy.

Why in News?

- The RBI has announced to restart Operation Twist to soften long-term yields on July 2.
- The RBI will purchase longer tenure government bonds that are maturing in 2027, 2029, 2031 and 2033, while selling four securities of shorter maturity.
- Operation Twist was used by the RBI in December last year for the first time.

Related information

What are Open Market Operations (OMOs)?

- Open Market Operations are conducted by the RBI which involves sale or purchase of **G-Secs** to or from the market. The objective is to control the **money supply conditions**.
- If there is excess money supply (i.e. excess liquidity) in the market, the RBI resorts to sale of securities which reduces the volume of money. Similarly, when the liquidity conditions are tight, it buys securities from the market, thereby releasing money into the market.

What are Government Securities (G-Secs)?

- G-Secs are tradable instruments like bonds issued by the Central Government or the State Governments with a promise of repayment upon maturity.
- The Central Government can issue both treasury bills and bonds while the State Governments can issue **only bonds**, which are called the State Development Loans (SDLs).
- These securities are considered low-risk, since they involve the government and hence, are called **risk-free gilt-edged instruments**.

6) Trade deficit with China

What's in the news?

- According to the latest government data, **India's trade deficit with China fell to \$48.66 billion in 2019-20** on account of the decline in imports from the neighbouring country.
- Exports to China in the last financial year stood at \$16.6 billion, while imports aggregated at \$65.26 billion.
- The trade deficit stood at \$53.56 billion in 2018-19 and \$63 billion in 2017-18.
- China accounts for about **14% of India's imports** and is a major supplier for sectors like mobile phones, telecom,

power, plastic toys, and critical pharma ingredients.

Measures by India

- India has time and again raised concerns over the widening trade deficit with China. The government is framing technical regulations and quality norms for several products to reduce dependence on Chinese imports.
- It has also **imposed anti-dumping duties** on several goods, which are being dumped in the domestic market at below the average prices from China with a view to guarding domestic players from cheap imports.
- *An anti-dumping duty is a tariff that a domestic government imposes on foreign*

imports that it believes are priced below fair market value.

FDI

- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from China in India has dipped to \$163.78 million in 2019-20 from \$229 million in the previous fiscal.
- In April, India tightened FDI norms coming from the countries which share land borders with India. As per the amended FDI policy, a company or an individual from a **country that shares land border with India** can invest in any sector **only after getting government approval.**

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1) Italian Marines case

Background

- India has accused Chief Master Sergeant Latorre and Sergeant Girone — marines on board the *MV Enrica Lexie*, an Italian flagged oil tanker sailing from Sri Lanka towards Djibouti — of shooting dead two Indian fishermen at sea, approximately 20.5 nautical miles off Kerala in India's **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**. The incident happened on February 15, 2012.
- The unarmed victims aboard the fishing vessel *St Antony* were killed without warning, India has said. The marines defended that they had mistaken the fishermen for pirates.

What is the core legal dispute?

- It stems from India exercising criminal jurisdiction over the two Italians by filing a murder case and arresting them.
- While India maintained that the incident happened in Indian waters and also the fishermen killed were Indian, and hence the case must be tried as per its laws, Italy claimed that the shooting took place outside Indian territorial waters and its marines were on-board the ship with the Italian flag.
- In July 2015, Italy took the case to the **International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea**, an independent judicial body established under UNCLOS. The ITLOS referred the matter to the **Permanent Court of Arbitration**, an intergovernmental organisation based in The Hague in Netherlands.

Why in News?

- The Permanent Court of Arbitration has delivered its award in the *Enrica Lexie* case.
- The tribunal admitted that both India and Italy had concurrent jurisdiction in the matter but concluded that the marines

cannot be prosecuted due to the official immunity enjoyed by them.

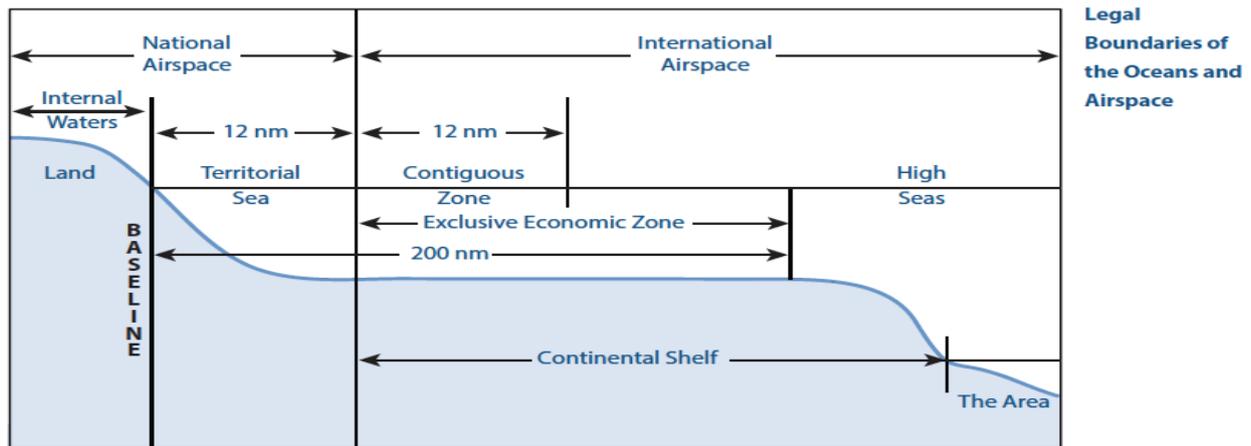
- In India's favour, the PCA found that the Italian vessel had violated the right and freedom of navigation of the Indian fishing vessel under UNCLOS, and that the action, which caused loss of lives, property and harm, merited compensation. It asked the parties to consult each other on the compensation due to India as a result.

India's response

- The Centre said the tribunal that it has taken a decision to accept and abide by the Award.
- India being a Party to the UNCLOS, in accordance with the provisions of the UNCLOS and the Rules of Procedure agreed by the Parties, the Award is **final and without appeal and shall be complied with by the parties to the dispute.**

About UNCLOS

- The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), also known as the **Law of the Sea Treaty**, is an international treaty which was adopted and signed in 1982. The Convention was formed to ensure freedom of shipping navigation at the sea.
- The Convention has created three new institutions on the international scene :
 - 1) The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea,**
 - 2) The International Seabed Authority,**
 - 3) The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.**
- India** is party to UNCLOS.
- UNCLOS classifies marine areas into five zones. They are:
 - 1) Territorial sea
 - 2) Contiguous zone
 - 3) Exclusive economic zone
 - 4) Continental shelf
 - 5) High Sea



nm - nautical mile

Territorial sea

- According to UNCLOS, the territorial sea can be defined as the area which extends up to **12 nautical miles** from the baseline of a country's coastal state. The territorial sea is under the jurisdiction of that particular country; however, foreign ships (both merchant and military) ships are allowed passage through it.
- This type of passage of territorial passage of foreign ships is known as an **innocent passage**. However, the right to the innocent passage can be suspended if there is a threat to the security of the coastal state.

Contiguous Zone

- The contiguous zone can be defined as the belt which **extends 12 nautical miles beyond the territorial sea limit**.
- A coastal state's control on this area is limited to prevention of actions which can infringe its customs, fiscal, and immigration laws. It can also act if any activity in the contiguous zone threatens regulations in the territorial sea.

Exclusive economic zone

- The exclusive economic zone can be defined as a belt of water which **extends up to 200 nautical miles** from the baseline of the coastal state. Thus it **includes both territorial sea and contiguous zone**.
- The exclusive economic zone provides the coastal state **control over all economic resources** such as fishing, mining, oil exploration, and marine research.
- The coastal state also has jurisdiction regarding protection and preservation of natural resources and marine environment.

Continental Shelf

- The continental shelf can be defined as the area whose outer limit **shall not exceed 350 nautical miles from the baseline** or **shall not exceed 100 nautical miles from the 2500 meters isobath**.
- *Isobath is a line connecting points of equal underwater depth.*
- The coastal state has exclusive rights for exploring and exploiting its natural resources in this area. The state also has the exclusive rights to authorize and regulate drilling on the shelf for all purposes.

High Seas

- High seas can be defined as the part of the sea that is **not included** in the exclusive economic zone, in the territorial sea, or in the internal waters of a coastal state or archipelagic waters of an archipelagic state.
- High seas are **open to all states** for freedom of navigation, freedom of over flight, freedom to construct artificial islands installation, freedom of fishing, and freedom of scientific research.

About PCA

- The Permanent Court of Arbitration was established by the **Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes**, concluded at The Hague in 1899 during the first Hague Peace Conference.
- The 1899 Convention was revised at the second Hague Peace Conference in 1907.
- The PCA is not a court in the traditional sense but provides services of an **arbitral tribunal** to resolve disputes that arise out of international agreements between

member states, international organizations or private parties.

- The cases span a range of legal issues involving territorial and maritime boundaries, sovereignty, human rights, international investment, and international and regional trade.
- The PCA has **no sitting judges: the parties themselves select the arbitrators.**
- The PCA is an official United Nations Observer. It is headquartered in The Hague, Netherlands.

Members

- The PCA has 122 Contracting Parties which have acceded to one or both of the PCA's founding conventions (1899 and 1907 Conventions).
- **India is a party** to the PCA according to the convention of 1899.

2) Brexit transition

Background

- Brexit ("British exit") refers to the United Kingdom's decision in a 2016 referendum to leave the European Union (EU), which is a group of 27 countries that operates as a cohesive economic and political block.
- The process of leaving the EU formally began in 2017, when the former British Prime Minister Theresa May triggered **Article 50** of the **Lisbon Treaty** (which gives any EU member state the right to quit unilaterally, and outlines the procedure for doing so).
- In January 2020, the process completed and Britain exited the EU and an 11-month transition period has started which ends on **December 31, 2020.**

What changes during the period and what remains the same?

Out of EU politics

- With Brexit Day, the United Kingdom leaves all of the European Union's political institutions. The UK had 73 Members of European Parliament, and they automatically lost their seats.

EU rules apply

- During the transition period, the UK will continue to obey EU rules and make payments to the EU. If it is involved in a legal dispute with an EU member country, the European Court of Justice will continue to have the final say.

New trade equations

- Out of the EU, Britain will have to build new trade relationships with countries outside the Union.

Freedom of movement

- During the transition, UK nationals will continue to be able to live and work in European Union countries. EU nationals who want to live and work in the UK, too, can do so.

EU Budget

- The UK will for now continue to contribute to the EU Budget. Existing schemes that are funded by EU grants will continue to be funded.

Why in News?

- German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that Britain will have to accept the consequences of having weaker economic ties with the European Union because of Brexit.

3) State of the World Population report

About UNFPA

- UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity.
- Guided by the 1994 **Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)**, UNFPA helps governments to formulate policies and strategies to support sustainable development and gender equality.

Why in News?

- The UNFPA has released its State of the World Population 2020 report.

Highlights of the report

- The report examines the issue of missing women by studying sex ratio imbalances at birth as a result of gender-biased sex selection as well as excess female mortality due to deliberate neglect of girls because of a **culture of son preference.**
- Excess female mortality is the difference between observed and expected mortality of the girl child or avoidable death of girls during childhood.

Findings from India

- One in three girls missing globally due to sex selection, both pre- and post-natal, is

from India — 46 million out of the total 142 million.

- The number of missing women has more than doubled over the past 50 years, who were at 61 million in 1970.
- India has the highest rate of excess female deaths at 13.5 per 1,000 female births or one in nine deaths of females below the age of 5 due to postnatal sex selection.
- However, the **advent of technology and increased access to ultrasound imaging** ensured that parents didn't have to wait for the birth of their girl child to kill her but could terminate a foetus upon knowing its gender. This resulted in the number of girls missing due to female foeticide exceeding those that were missing because of postnatal sex selection.
- According to estimates averaged over a five year period (2013-17), annually, there were 1.2 million missing female births, at a global level. **India had about 4,60,000 girls 'missing' at birth each year.**

Impacts

- These skewed numbers translate into long-term shifts in the proportions of women and men in the population of some countries.
- In many countries this results in a **"marriage squeeze"** as prospective grooms far outnumber prospective

brides, which further results in **human trafficking for marriage as well as child marriages.**

4) South China Sea dispute

Background

- Currently, among the most disputed topics in the world, in the South China Sea (SCS) dispute, the governments of six countries (Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and China) claim that they are the rightful owner of **Paracel and Spratly islands**, and among them, China has been the most aggressive one.
- The disputed sea is composed of approximately 100 to 230 islands wherein small islands called islets are usually included in it. Submerged in water, shoals, banks, atolls, reefs and cays, which covers an area of approx. 180,000 sq. km.³
- The Chinese government claims an enormous area under what is known as the **"nine-dash line"** that is over 2000 km long, starting from mainland China and reaching waters close to Indonesia and Malaysia. China maintains that the area has been under Chinese rule since ancient times.
- China has been building military bases on small islands and also expanding the area of islands artificially.



Importance of the South China Sea

- This sea route, connecting Asia with Europe and Africa, is an **important trade passageway** for international trade.

- The **Strait of Malacca**, along with the **Lombok Strait** and **Sunda strait** are all connected with SCS and responsible for oil and LNG imports by major countries such as China, Japan, Indonesia, South Korea, and others from Gulf countries.
- It is estimated that around 15 million barrels each day are transported through the Strait of Malacca, making it the **second busiest strait** after the Strait of Hormuz in terms of oil transportation with respect to volume.
- The economy of China depends upon the oil import in which 80% of the oil is transported through the Strait of Malacca and then through SCS to China, which means that full control and easy access through this strait is the justification behind economic prosperity of the Chinese nation.
- Apart from the strategic importance of the SCS, this region is also blessed with **large deposits of natural resources beneath the sea**.
- Aside from oil and gas reserves, this region is also gifted with **one-third of the total marine biodiversity of the Earth**, which means that substantial revenue can also be generated through **fishing** alone.

PCA award

- Following the dispute, the Philippines filed a case against China in the **Permanent court of arbitration (PCA)** under the dispute settlement provisions of the **UNCLOS**.
- In 2016, a tribunal of the PCA issued its **ruling against China's claims in the South China Sea**. The tribunal's five arbitrators ruled overwhelmingly in the Philippines' favor after finding that China had violated the sovereign rights of the Philippines in its exclusive economic zone.
- However, **China refused to participate in the arbitration and rejected the outcome**.

Why in News?

- The leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) held their annual summit recently.
- During the summit, ASEAN leaders said the 1982 UNCLOS treaty should be the basis of sovereign rights and entitlements in the South China Sea, in one of their

strongest remarks opposing China's claim to virtually the entire disputed waters on historical grounds.

Related information

About ASEAN

- ASEAN is a regional & intergovernmental organisation of 10 countries of southeast Asia.
- Its members are Thailand, Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, Singapore, Myanmar, Philippines, Brunei and Vietnam.
- They work towards the progress of the Southeast Asia region.

About PCA

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5) Kholongchhu project

What's in the news?

- India and Bhutan have signed a concession agreement on the 600 MW

Kholongchhu Hydroelectric Project (KHEL) for work to start on it.

- The 600 MW run-of-the-river project is located on the lower course of the Kholongchhu river in eastern Bhutan's Trashiyangtse district.
- The hydroelectric project will be the **first-ever Joint Venture project** to be implemented in Bhutan under an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) signed in 2014.
- The joint venture partners of the project are India's Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited (SJVN) and Druk Green Power Corporation Limited (DGPC).

India-Bhutan relations

- Cooperation in the development of the hydropower sector in Bhutan is the **centerpiece of the mutually beneficial economic cooperation between Bhutan and India**. Hydropower projects are of paramount importance for both our countries as they will serve to further integrate our economies, bring further prosperity, and enhance energy security for both the countries.
- The Kholongchhu project is one of four additional projects agreed to in 2008, as a part of India's commitment to help Bhutan create a total **10,000 MW of installed capacity by 2020**.
- India recently completed the **720 MW Mangdechhu hydroelectric project** which was jointly inaugurated earlier in August 2019 by the prime ministers of India and Bhutan.
- With this, four hydroelectric projects of bilateral cooperation (336 MW Chukha HEP, 60 MW Kurichhu HEP, 1,020 MW Tala HEP and 720 MW Mangdechhu HEP),

totalling over 2,100 MW, are already operational in Bhutan.

- Both sides are in the process of expediting the completion of other ongoing projects, including the **1200MW Punatsangchhu-1** and the **1020MW Punatsangchhu-2**.
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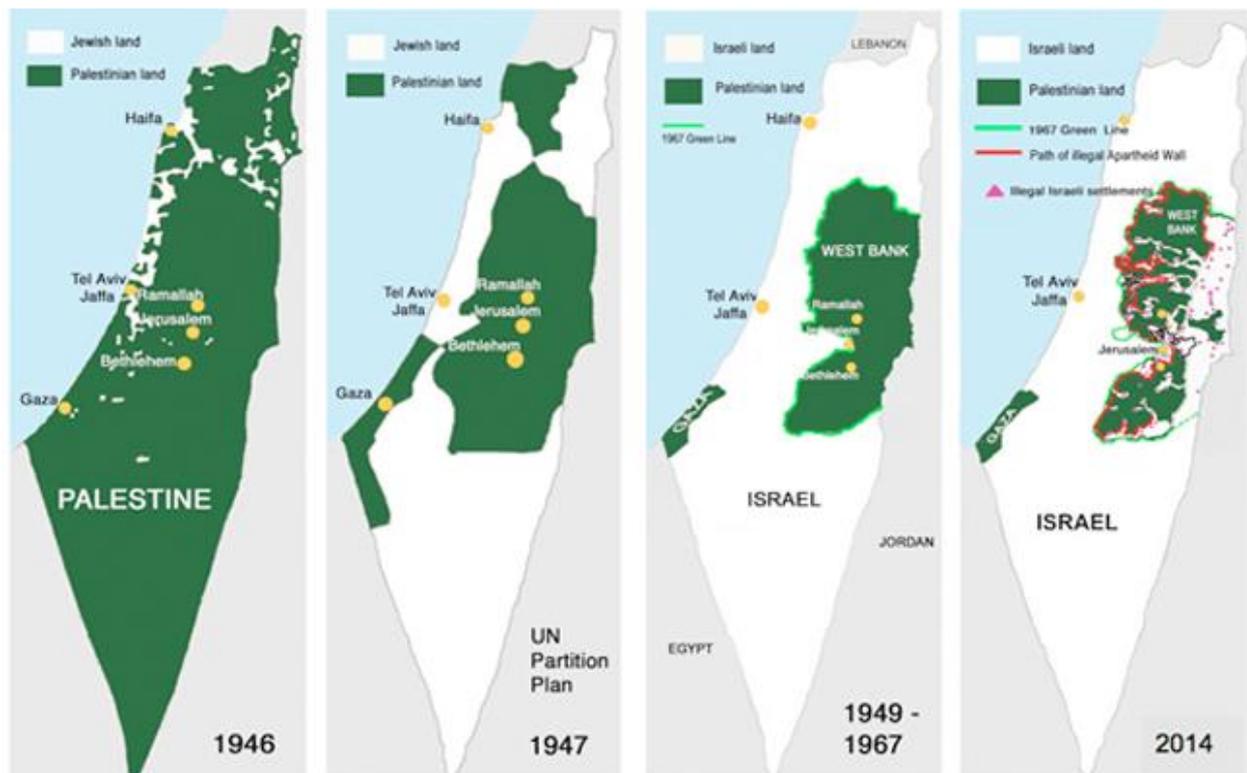
6) Israel-Palestine conflict

Background

- Jerusalem lies in the heart of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The tussle is over who gets to control the ancient city that is sacred to Jews, Muslims and Christians.
- After the end of the **First Arab-Israel War in 1948**, Jerusalem was partitioned into West and East, under Israeli and Palestinian control respectively.
- But in 1967, during the **Six-Day Arab-Israel War**, Israel occupied East Jerusalem from Jordanian forces, and Israel's Parliament declared the territory had been annexed to Israel.
- This marginalised the Palestinians, who wanted East Jerusalem to be their capital under the **"two-state solution"**.

What is it?

- Its basis is two separate states, Israel and Palestine, living peacefully side by side on the land between the western bank of the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.
- This territory would be divided broadly along the **pre-1967 armistice line or "green line"**
- **Jerusalem**, which both sides want as their capital, would be shared.
- Past negotiations have failed to make progress and there are currently no fresh talks in prospect.



Oslo Accords & India's position

- Despite Israel's hold over the Jerusalem, in 2016, the UN reaffirmed that Jerusalem's Palestinian territories were under "hostile occupation".
- Undeterred by the refusal of the international community to endorse the annexation, Israel further expanded settlements in the territories of East Jerusalem.
- Under the **Oslo Accords** of the 1990s, both Israel and the Palestinians agreed that the status of settlements would be decided by negotiations. But the negotiations process has been stalled for several years now.
- India has **traditionally backed a two-state solution** to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Why in News?

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently said he is planning to effectively annex parts of the occupied West Bank.

What is the West Bank?

- It is a chunk of land located - as the name suggests - on the west bank of the River Jordan and bounded by Israel to the north, west and south. To its east lies **Jordan**.

- Since the Six-Day War in 1967, also known as the Third Arab-Israeli War, the West Bank has been **occupied by Israel**. Both Israelis and Palestinians assert their rights to the territory of the West Bank and its disputed status and the conflict has not been resolved as yet.
- Between 2.1 million and 3 million Palestinian Arabs live in the West Bank under both limited self-rule and Israeli military rule.
- The West Bank is also home to some 430,000 Israeli Jews who live in 132 settlements built under Israel's occupation.
- The vast majority of the international community considers the settlements **illegal under international law**, though Israel disputes this interpretation.

Possible repercussions

- Palestine has sought the entire territory of the West Bank and the **Gaza strip** (a self-governing Palestinian territory on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea) for an independent Palestinian state in the future, to which they claim historical right.
- Israel, on the other hand, claims that it has historical and religious rights over the West Bank because it believes that the

territory is the ancestral land of the Jewish people.

- These annexation plans have been extremely controversial because it would mean Israel unilaterally declaring sovereignty over parts of occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank.

Such moves are also **contrary to the two-state solution** and have the potential to trigger further conflict in the region.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1) LIGO and VIRGO

GS 3: Awareness in the fields of Science and Technology

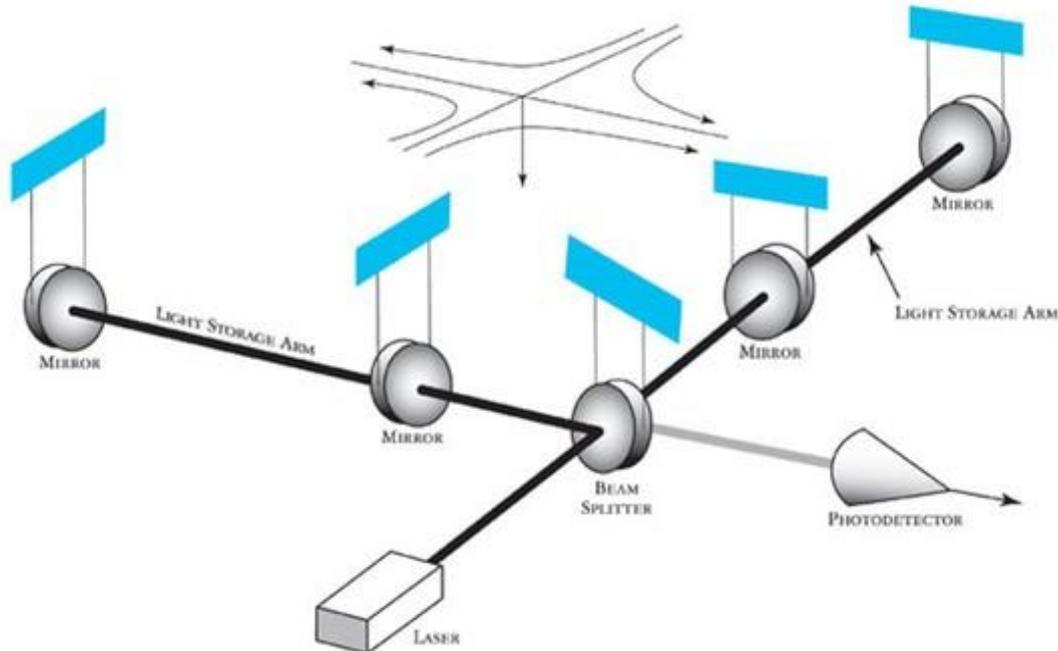
About LIGO

- LIGO stands for "**Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory**", the world's largest gravitational wave observatory.
- It is the **world's largest gravitational wave observatory**.
- LIGO exploits the physical properties of light and of space itself to **detect and understand the origins of gravitational waves (GW)**.
- LIGO consists of **two widely-separated interferometers** within the United States—one in Hanford, Washington and the other in Livingston, Louisiana—operated in unison to detect gravitational waves.
- LIGO is not like any other optical or radio telescope as it does not see electromagnetic radiation (e.g., visible light, radio waves, microwaves) since

gravitational waves are not part of the electromagnetic spectrum.



- Each LIGO detector consists of two arms, each 4km long, comprising 1.2m-wide steel vacuum tubes arranged in an "**L**" shape, and covered by a concrete shelter that protects the tubes from the environment.
- LIGO's interferometers can amplify the smallest conceivable vibrations enough that they are detectable and measurable.



- LIGO made its first detection of gravitational waves (in 2015), generated by a pair of colliding black holes some 1.3 billion light years away.

What is VIRGO?

- Virgo is a gravitational-wave interferometer designed, built and operated by a collaboration made up of 20 laboratories in 6 countries.

- It consists of two 3-kilometre-long arms, which house the various machinery required to form a laser interferometer.
- It is located in Santo Stefano a Macerata, near the city of Pisa, **Italy**.
- **Virgo and the LIGO Scientific Community** works together in many areas and has a specific agreement on the exchange of data.

Why in News?

- The LIGO Scientific and VIRGO Collaborations (LSC) have detected an unusual compact object whose mass falls in between that of a typical black hole and a neutron star.

More in the news

- When the most **massive stars die**, they collapse under their own gravity and leave behind **black holes**; when stars those are a bit **less massive** than this die, they explode and leave behind dense, dead remnants of stars called **neutron stars**.
- For decades, astronomers have been puzzled by a gap in mass that lies between neutron stars and black holes: the heaviest known neutron star is no more than 2.5 times the mass of our sun, or 2.5 solar masses, and the lightest known black hole is about 5 solar masses.
- With the above observations, scientists have announced the discovery of an object of 2.6 solar masses, placing it firmly in the mass gap.

2) Ka-226T light utility helicopters

GS 3: Science and Technology

About Ka-226T

- The Ka-226T is a **light, twin-engine multi-role helicopter** offered by **Russian Helicopters**, for military and civilian missions.
- The **Ka-226T is an India specific variant** of Ka-226 flown by the Russian border security and coast guard.
- The military version of Ka-226T is designed for operation in hard-to-reach upland conditions as well as hot and cold climates.
- It performs surveillance, reconnaissance, search and rescue (SAR), targeting, and transportation of cargo and troops.



- The helicopter also features a new transmission system and **Kamov coaxial rotor system**, including **three upper rotor blades and a set of three lower rotor blades**.
- The new rotor system **avoids the need for a tail rotor**, which ensures landings and take-offs from small sites.

Background

- In 2015, India and Russia concluded an **Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA)** for at least **200 Ka-226T** helicopters estimated to cost over \$1 billion.
- The Kamov-226T is meant **to replace** the ageing and obsolete **Cheetah** and **Chetak** fleets of the Indian Army and the Air Force.
- Of the 200, **60 helicopters will come directly** from the RH plant in **Russia** and remaining will be assembled in India from supply kits from RH.
- The **Indo-Russian Helicopters Limited (IRHL)**, a **joint venture between Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Russian Helicopters (RH)**, will assemble the Ka-226T helicopters in India.
- Several MoUs have already been signed with domestic companies by RH for localising assemblies such as fuselage, blades, radio station and landing gear among others.



- However, the deal for 200 Ka-226T utility helicopters remains stuck over the level of indigenisation.

Why in News?

- Russia has agreed to quickly address some urgent defence requirements sought by India and this was discussed during the recent trip of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to Russia. It includes deals for AK-203 assault rifles and Ka-226T light utility helicopters.

AK-203 deal

- AK-203 assault rifle deal has been held up over pricing decisions.

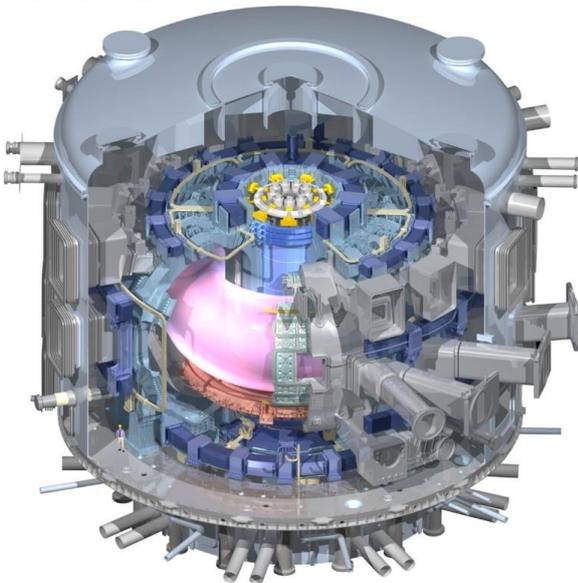


- The deal for over 7.5 lakh rifles of which one lakh would be imported and 6.71 lakh rifles manufactured by a joint venture (JV) **Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited (IRRPL)** at Korwa in Uttar Pradesh.

3) ITER Project

GS 3: Science and Technology, Indigenization of technology and developing new technology

What is ITER?



- ITER ("The Way" in Latin), (originally the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor), is one of the **most**

ambitious energy projects in the world today.

- ITER is an **experimental tokamak fusion reactor** facility under construction in Cadarache, **France** to prove the feasibility of **nuclear fusion as a future source of energy**.
- It is an **international joint experiment** in fusion, first launched in **1985**.
- The ITER Members—mainly **China, the European Union, India, Japan, Korea, Russia and the United States**—**35 nations** in total are now engaged in a **35-year collaboration** to build and operate the ITER experimental device.

What is Fusion reaction?

- Fusion is the **energy source of the Sun and stars**.
 - In the tremendous heat and gravity at the core of these stellar bodies, **hydrogen nuclei collide**, fuse into heavier **helium** atoms and **release tremendous amounts of energy** in the process.
 - Efficient fusion reaction is identified to be between **two hydrogen isotopes, deuterium (D) and tritium (T)**.
 - The DT fusion reaction produces the highest energy gain at the "lowest" temperatures.
 - **Three conditions** must be fulfilled to achieve fusion in a laboratory: very high temperature (on the order of 150,000,000° Celsius); sufficient plasma particle density (to increase the likelihood that collisions do occur); and sufficient confinement time (to hold the plasma, which has a propensity to expand, within a defined volume).
 - At extreme temperatures, **electrons are separated from nuclei** and a gas becomes plasma—often referred to as the **fourth state of matter**.
 - Fusion plasmas provide the environment in which light elements can fuse and yield energy.
 - In a tokamak device, powerful magnetic fields are used to confine and control the plasma.
- #### What is a Tokamak?
- The tokamak is an experimental machine designed to harness the energy of fusion.
 - Inside a tokamak, the energy produced through the fusion of atoms is absorbed as heat in the walls of the vessel.

- Just like a conventional power plant, a fusion power plant will use this heat to produce steam and then electricity by way of turbines and generators.

Significance

- It is a **carbon-free source of energy** based on the same principle that powers our Sun and stars.
- ITER's First Plasma is scheduled for December 2025. That will be the first time the machine is powered on.
- ITER will be the first fusion device to produce net energy (total power produced during a fusion surpasses the thermal power injected to heat the plasma).
- ITER will be the first fusion device to maintain fusion for long periods of time.
- And ITER will be the first fusion device to test the integrated technologies, materials, and physics regimes necessary for the commercial production of fusion-based electricity.

India and ITER

- India formally joined the ITER Project in **2005** and the ITER Agreement between the partners was signed in 2006.
- ITER Organization (IO) is the central team responsible for construction at site and operation, while the ITER partners created their own domestic agencies to deliver their commitments to ITER.
- **ITER-India, a wing of Department of Atomic Energy**, is the Indian domestic agency.

Why in News?

- The L&T Ltd despatched a giant Cryostat lid, the most complex and final assembly of Cryostat, the largest stainless-steel, high-vacuum pressure chamber in the world, to ITER site in France.
- The Cryostat's function is to provide cooling to the fusion reactor and to keep very high temperatures at its core under control.

4) Russian fighter jets: Su-30 MKI, MiG-29

GS 3: Science and Technology

GS 2: Bilateral relations

About Sukhoi Su-30 MKI

- The Sukhoi Su-30MKI is a **twin-seater**, highly maneuverable, **fourth-generation multirole combat fighter aircraft**.

- It was jointly developed by the **Sukhoi Design Bureau** of Russia and **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** for the Indian Air Force (IAF).



- A variant of the Sukhoi Su-30, it is a heavy, all-weather, long-range fighter.
- A new squadron, known as the 222 Squadron (**Tigersharks**) was stood up at the IAF's Thanjavur air base in Tamil Nadu.
- India achieved indigenously overhauling capability of the Sukhoi-30 MKI fighter jet. The IAF received the first domestically overhauled Su-30MKI in October 2018.
- The IAF operates 272 Su-30MKIs as of June 2020.

About MiG-29



- The MiG-29K fighter bomber aircraft from Russia is manufactured by RSK MiG and the Irkutsk Aircraft Production Association Joint Stock Company.
- The mission of the MiG-29 is to destroy hostile air targets within radar coverage limits and to destroy ground targets using unguided weapons in visual flight conditions.
- It is a twin engine aircraft.

Why in News?

- The Defence Ministry has approved deals worth ₹38,900 crore with Russia including procurement of 21 MiG-29 fighter jets for the IAF, upgrade of 59 of them and acquisition of 12 Su-30 MKI aircraft.

5) Pinaka, LRLAM, Astra Missiles

GS 3: Science and Technology

GS 2: Bilateral relations

About Pinaka missile system



- Pinaka is a **multi barrel rocket launch (MBRL) system** used by the Indian Army.
- It was developed by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- It is all-weather, indirect fire, free flight artillery rocket system.
- It provides a unique capability to accurately deliver a devastatingly lethal and responsive fire against a variety of area targets such as exposed enemy troops, armoured and soft skin vehicles, communication centres, air terminal complexes, fuel and ammunition dumps.
- The Pinaka weapon system consists of Rocket, Multi Barrel Rocket launcher, Battery Command Post, Loader cum Replenishment Vehicle, Replenishment Vehicle and Digicora MET Radar

Astra Missiles



- Astra is **India's first beyond-visual-range (BVR) air-to-air missile** indigenously designed and developed by **DRDO**.
- It is intended to engage and destroy aerial targets with high manoeuvrability and supersonic speeds.
- The missile's advanced air combat capabilities allow it to engage multiple high-performance targets.
- Astra was planned to equip the Indian Air force's Su-30MKI and Mirage 2000 multi-role combat fighters, and MiG-29 and MiG-21 Bison fighter jet platforms, Tejas light combat aircraft (LCA), as well as the Indian Navy's Sea Harrier jet fighter.
- The Astra missile is developed as part of the **Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP)** of the Indian Ministry of Defence.

LRLACM

- The **Long Range Land Attack Cruise Missile (LRLACM)** is a new home-grown, subsonic missile which will be inducted by mid 2023.
- The missile project has been designated to **Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE)**, a Bangalore-based **DRDO lab** developing unmanned systems.
- The LRLACM will be an **upgraded derivative of the Nirbhay missile**.
- Similar to Nirbhay, LRLACM too will be capable of **flying at low altitude with sea-skimming capabilities**.
- **Nirbhay**, a **sub-sonic long range land attack cruise missile** with a range of over 1000 km, had been under development by the DRDO.

Why in News?

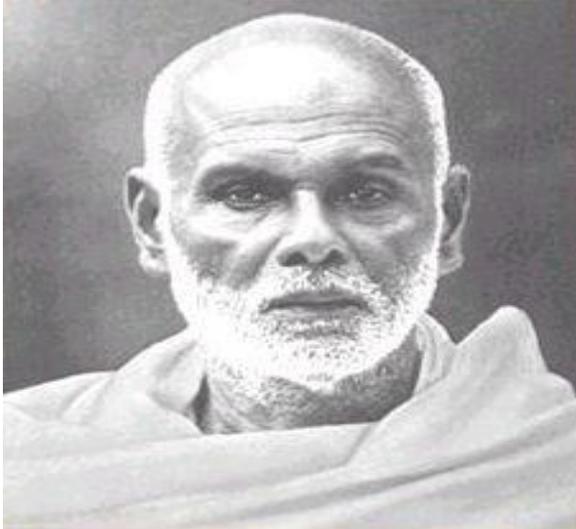
- India and Russia signed defence deals including Pinaka ammunition, armoured vehicle BMP upgrades and Software Defined Radio (SDR) for the Army, LRLAM systems of over 1000 km range and Astra missiles for the Navy and Air Force, all of which will be procured domestically.

ART & CULTURE

1) Shree Narayana Guru

GS 1: Indian Culture, Modern Indian history: personalities

About



- Sree Narayana Guru was born in **1856 C.E.** in the village of Chempazhanthi in **Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.**
- He became one of the greatest proponents and re-evaluators of **Advaita Vedanta**, the **principle of non-duality** put forward by **Adi Shankara.**
- He is considered **among the greatest social reformers** and philosophers of Kerala and India.
- He led a reform movement in Kerala by **rejecting the caste system** and promoting new values of spiritual freedom, **social equality** and upliftment of the downtrodden.
- The Guru worked hard as a **social educationist** and condemned discrimination in the name of caste, creed and religion.
- His famous words **“one caste, one religion and one god for mankind”** worked as a fresh wave in the socio-cultural realm of Kerala.
- In his renowned work **Atmopadesa Satakam**, which consists of **one hundred verses of self-instruction**, the Guru

proposes his **philosophy of egalitarianism.**

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Tourism has considered the revival of the Shree Narayana Guru (Sivagiri Sree Narayana Guru Ashram - Aruvipuram- Kunnumpara Sree Subrahmanya - Chembazhanthi Sree Narayana Gurukulam) spiritual circuit under the **Swadesh Darshan scheme.**

About Swadesh Darshan

- Swadesh Darshan Scheme was launched by the **Ministry of Tourism** in 2014.
- **Objective:** To develop **theme-based tourist circuits** in the country. These tourist circuits will be developed on the principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner.
- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** and efforts are made to achieve convergence with other schemes of Central and State Governments and also to leverage the voluntary funding available for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Central Public Sector Undertakings and Corporate Sector.

The scheme has following objectives:

- Position tourism as a major engine of economic growth and job creation;
- Develop circuits having tourist potential in a planned and prioritized manner;
- Promote cultural and heritage value of the country to generate livelihoods in the identified regions;
- Follow community based development and pro-poor tourism approach;
- Create employment through active involvement of local communities;
- Projects under the scheme shall be under the following identified themes; **Eco-tourism, Wildlife, Buddhist, Desert, Spiritual, Ramayana, Krishna, Coastal, Northeast, Rural, Himalayan, Tribal and Heritage.**

PIB ANALYSIS

1) Statistics Day

Why in News?

- Statistics Day was celebrated on June 29, 2020 on the birth anniversary of Prof. P C Mahalanobis.
- The theme of Statistics Day, 2020 is **SDG-3** (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) & **SDG-5** (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls).

Contribution of PC Mahalanobis to Statistics

- PC Mahalanobis (1893 -1972) was an Indian scientist and applied statistician. He is referred to as the **chief architect of Indian statistical system** as well as **father of statistical science in India**.
- He established the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) in 1931 and was made an autonomous body of the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation in 1959.
- He also helped in the establishment of the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO), the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).

- The National Statistical Office (NSO) is the Statistics Wing of the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation**.
- In 2019, the central government merged the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) and National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) into the National Statistical Organisation.
- NSO is mandated with the following responsibilities:-
 - acts as the nodal agency for planned development of the statistical system in the country
 - compiles and releases the **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** every month and conducts the **Annual Survey of Industries (ASI)**;
 - organizes and conducts periodic **all-India Economic Censuses**
 - prepares national accounts as well as publishes annual estimates of national product, government and private consumption expenditure, capital

formation, savings, etc. as also the state level gross capital formation of supra-regional sectors and prepares comparable estimates of State Domestic Product (SDP) at current prices;

P.C. Mahalanobis National Award

- In 2019, the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation instituted a new award, namely, the Prof. P.C. Mahalanobis National Award in Official statistics for recognizing outstanding achievement of official statisticians in Central Government, State Governments and Institutions. The award will be given on Statistics Day.

2) PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme

About:

- The Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) has launched the PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PM FME) scheme to bring in new technology, apart from affordable credit to help small entrepreneurs penetrate new markets.
- The scheme will be implemented for five years until 2024-25 and is expected to generate a total investment of Rs. 35,000 crore and 9 lakh skilled and semi-skilled employment.

Funding Pattern:

- It is a **centrally sponsored scheme** with an outlay of Rs. 10,000 crore.
- The expenditure under the scheme would be shared in 60:40 ratio between Central and State Governments, in 90:10 ratio with North Eastern and Himalayan States, 60:40 ratio with UTs with legislature and 100% by Centre for other UTs.

Key Features of the Scheme:

- **One District One Product (ODOP) Approach:**
- The States would identify food products for districts keeping in view the existing clusters and availability of raw material.

- The ODOP could be a perishable produce based or cereal based or a food item widely produced in an area. E.g. mango, potato, pickle, millet based products, fisheries, poultry, etc.

Credit Linked Capital Subsidy:

- Existing Individual micro food processing units desirous of upgradation of their unit can avail credit-linked capital subsidy at 35% of the eligible project cost with a maximum ceiling of Rs.10 lakh per unit.
- Seed capital at Rs. 40,000/- per SHG member would be provided for working capital and purchase of small tools.
- FPOs/ SHGs/ producer cooperatives or state owned agencies or private enterprise would be provided a credit linked grant of 35% for capital investment along the value chain.

Capacity building and research:

- Academic and research institutions under MoFPI along with State Level Technical Institutions would be provided support for training of units, product development, appropriate packaging and machinery for micro units.

What is the need for the scheme?

- There are about 25 lakh unregistered food processing enterprises which constitute 98% of the sector and are unorganized and informal. Nearly 66 % of these units are located in rural areas and about 80% of them are family-based enterprises.
- This sector faces a number of challenges including the inability to access credit, high cost of institutional credit, lack of access to modern technology, inability to integrate with the food supply chain and compliance with the health and safety standards.
- Strengthening this segment will lead to reduction in wastage, creation of off-farm job opportunities and aid in achieving the overarching Government objective of doubling farmers' income.

3) India Bans Chinese Apps

Why in News?

- India banned 59 apps originating from China, including very popular ones like the short video platform TikTok, UC

Browser, file sharing app ShareIt, and CamScanner.

Reason behind such move:

- These measures have been undertaken since there is credible information that these apps are engaged in activities which are **prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of state and public order.**
- The government had received complaints from various sources including several reports about misuse of some mobile apps available on Android and iOS platforms for stealing and surreptitiously transmitting users' data in an unauthorised manner to servers which have locations outside India.
- The **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre**, Ministry of Home Affairs and **Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-IN)** has also sent an exhaustive recommendation for blocking these malicious apps. They have also received many representations from citizens regarding security of data and breach of privacy impacting upon public order issues.
- Therefore, the decision has been taken in a bid to safeguard the interests of crores of Indian mobile users.

Computer Emergency Response Team - India (CERT-IN)

- CERT-IN is an organisation of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, established with the objective of securing Indian cyberspace.

Functions:

- Collect, analyze and disseminate cyber incident information
- Have an emergency protocol in place in the event of cyber-security breaches
- Coordinate all activities related to cyber-security response
- Create forecasts and alerts on cyber-security incidents
- Issue guidelines on prevention, reporting, and the response of cyber incidents
- Issue advisories and notes on vulnerabilities of the cyber-world
- Any other functions related to cyber-security

Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre

- Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre was set up to deal with all types of cybercrimes in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.
- It has seven components viz., National Cyber Crime Threat Analytics Unit, National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal, National Cyber Crime Training Centre, Cyber Crime Ecosystem Management Unit, National Cyber Crime Research and Innovation Centre, National Cyber Crime Forensic Laboratory Ecosystem and Platform for Joint Cyber Crime Investigation Team.

Legal basis for India's Ban

- The ban has been enforced under Section **69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000.**
- It offers the power to issue directions for blocking for public access of any information through any computer resource.

What will be the impact of the ban?

- Some apps on the banned list are very popular in India, especially TikTok, which has over 100 million active users in the country.
- New social media platforms like Helo and Likee, as well as video chat app Bigo Live are immensely popular among Indians .
- Most of these platforms have Indian creators, for many of whom this is the only source of income.
- Many of these apps have offices and employees in India, and a few thousand jobs could be at stake.

4) Accelerate Vigyan Scheme

About:

- 'Accelerate Vigyan' (AV) strives to provide a **big push to high-end scientific research** and prepare scientific manpower which can venture into research careers and knowledge-based economy.
- The aim of AV is to expand the **research base in the country**, with three broad goals
- consolidation / aggregation of all scientific training programs,
- initiating high-end Orientation Workshops and

- Creating opportunities for Research Internships.

Components of AV

ABHYAAS

- ABHYAAS programme is an attempt to boost research and development in the country by enabling and grooming potential PG/PhD students by means of developing their research skills in selected areas across different disciplines or fields. It has 2 components
- KARYASHALA- High-End Workshops
- VRITIKA- Research Internship.

SAMOOHAN

- Mission 'SAMOOHAN' aims to encourage, aggregate and consolidate all scientific interactions in the country under one common roof. It has 2 components
- SAYONJIKA- an open-ended program to catalogue the capacity building activities in science and technology.
- SANGOSTI- is designed to facilitate the scientific community to establish an interaction with other individuals and research groups to enhance knowledge exchange.

Why in News?

- The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) has launched a scheme called 'Accelerate Vigyan' (AV).

- SERB is a **statutory body** established under the Department of Science and Technology to promote and fund research in different scientific disciplines.
- It aims to build up best management systems which would match the best global practices in the area of promotion and funding of basic research.

5) National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority

About:

- The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority was set up as an attached office of the **Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers.**

Functions of NPPA:

- To implement and enforce the provisions of the Drugs Price Control Order (DPCO).
- To monitor the availability of drugs, identify shortages, if any, and to take remedial steps.

- To collect/maintain data on production, exports and imports, market share of individual companies, profitability of companies etc. for bulk drugs and formulations.
- To render advice to the Central Government on changes/revisions in the drug policy.
- The NPPA currently fixes prices of drugs placed in the **National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)** under **Schedule-I of the DPCO**.
- Non-scheduled drugs are allowed an increase of up to **10 per cent** in prices every year, which is monitored by the NPPA.
- NPPA can also fix the price for non-scheduled drugs by invoking extraordinary powers in public interest, under the DPCO, 2013.

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoH&FW) has identified a list of critical medical equipment for the Covid-19 and has requested the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority to ensure availability of the same in the country.
- NPPA, in exercise of powers conferred under DPCO, 2013, has called for price related data from manufacturers/importers of (i) Pulse Oximeter and (ii) Oxygen Concentrator to ensure that prices existing as on 1st April 2020 should not be increased more than 10% in a year.

Drug Prices Control Order, 2013

- Under the provisions of DPCO, 2013, the prices of drugs that figure in the National List of Essential Medicines are monitored and controlled by the regulator, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority.
- Paragraph 19 of the DPCO, 2013, deals with increase or decrease in drug prices under extraordinary circumstances.

National List of Essential Medicines

- NLEM is prepared by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- The primary purpose of NLEM is to promote rational use of medicines considering the three important aspects i.e. **cost, safety and efficacy**.
- The National List of Essential Medicines 2011 is adopted as the primary basis for determining essentiality, which constitutes the list of scheduled medicines for the purpose of price control.

6) Fit India Movement

About Fit India Movement:

- The Fit India Movement is a movement to take the nation on a path of fitness and wellness.
- It provides a unique and exciting opportunity to work towards a healthier India.
- It aims at behavioural changes – from sedentary lifestyle to physically active way of day-to-day living.
- As part of the movement, individuals and organisations can undertake various efforts for their own health and well-being as well as for the health and well-being of fellow Indians.
- A committee, headed by Sports Minister and comprising government officials, members of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), national sports federations, private bodies and fitness promoters, has been formed to take the movement forward.

Why in News?

- The government of India's flagship program Fit India is launching a series of interactive sessions with some of the top sportspersons of our country intended to inspire the school children.

News in Depth

AIR NEWS

1) Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana-Ayushman Bharat

About the scheme

- It is an umbrella of two major health initiatives, namely **Health and Wellness Centres** and **National Health Protection Scheme**.

Health and Wellness Centres

- Under this **1.5 lakh** existing Sub Health Centres (SHC), Primary Health Centres (PHC) and Urban Primary Health Centres (UPHC) to be transformed as **Health Wellness Centres (HWC)** by 2022.
- These centres will deliver Comprehensive Primary Health Care that is universal and free to users, with a focus on wellness and the delivery of an expanded range of services closer to the community.
- HWC are envisaged to deliver expanded range services that go beyond Maternal and child health care services to include care for non-communicable diseases, palliative and rehabilitative care, Oral, Eye and ENT care, mental health and first level care for emergencies and trauma , including free essential drugs and diagnostic services.

National Health Protection Mission

- AB-PMJAY provides a defined benefit cover of **Rs. 5 lakh per family** per year.
- This cover will take care of almost all secondary care and most of tertiary care procedures.
- To ensure that nobody is left out (especially women, children and elderly) there will be **no cap on family size** and age in the scheme.
- The benefit cover will also include pre and post-hospitalisation expenses.
- A defined transport allowance per hospitalization will also be paid to the beneficiary.
- Benefits of the scheme are portable across the country and a beneficiary covered

under the scheme will be allowed to take cashless benefits from any public/**private empanelled hospitals** across the country.

- The beneficiaries get an e-card that can be used to avail services across the country.

Eligibility criteria

- AB-PMJAY is an entitlement-based scheme with entitlement decided on the basis of deprivation criteria in the **SECC database**.

Implementation Strategy

- At the national level to manage, a **National Health Authority** has been set up. It will be chaired by the Minister of Health & Family Welfare which will enable the decision making at a faster pace, required for smooth implementation of the scheme.
- States/ UTs are advised to implement the scheme by a dedicated entity called State Health Agency (SHA).

Why in News?

- Under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, around 12.5 crore e-cards have been issued and almost 1 crore 10 lakh people have availed free treatment.

2) Defence Acquisition Council

About DAC

- Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) is **constituted under the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for overall guidance of the defence procurement planning process**.
- It includes **Defence Minister as Chairman** and chiefs of tri-services, Defence Secretary, Secretary Defence Research & Development, Secretary Defence Production, Director General (Acquisition), Chief of Integrated Staff Committees and Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence as members.

- The DAC is the **highest decision-making body** in the defence ministry for deciding on new policies and capital acquisitions for the three services and the Indian Coast Guard.
- The objective of the DAC is to ensure expeditious procurement of the approved requirements of the Armed Forces in terms of capabilities sought, and time frame prescribed, by optimally utilizing the allocated budgetary resources.
- The DAC has accorded approval for Capital acquisitions of various platforms and equipment required by the Indian Armed Forces for an approximate cost of Rs. 38900 Crore in its latest meeting.
- The meeting chaired by Defence minister Rajnath Singh focused on indigenous design and development. These approvals include acquisitions from Indian Industry amounting to Rs. 31130 Crore.

Why in News?

THE HINDU EDITORIALS

1) FATF and Pakistan

About FATF

- FATF is an **intergovernmental body established in 1989 on the initiative of the G7**
- It is a **“policy-making body”** which works to **generate the necessary political will** to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas
- The **FATF Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris**

Roles and functions

- Initially it was established to examine and develop measures to **combat money laundering**.
- In October 2001, the FATF expanded its mandate to incorporate efforts to **combat terrorist financing**, in addition to money laundering.
- In April 2012, it added efforts to **counter the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction**
- **Composition**
- The FATF currently **comprises 37 member jurisdictions** and 2 regional organisations, representing most major financial centres in all parts of the globe. It also has observers and associate members

Blacklist and Grey list

- **Black List:** Countries known as **Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs)** are put in the blacklist. These countries support terror funding and money laundering activities. The FATF **revises the blacklist regularly**, adding or deleting entries
- **Grey List:** Countries that are **considered safe haven for supporting terror funding** and money laundering are put in the FATF grey list. This inclusion serves as a warning to the country that it may enter the blacklist

Why in the news?

- **Financial Action Task Force**, the global watchdog group, has decided to **grant Pakistan** and other countries on its watch list a **three-month extension on fulfilling commitments**, in view of the pandemic.

Background of the issue:

- Pakistan was placed on the grey list or “increased monitoring” list in June 2018, and given time until October 2019, in order to complete a 27-point action plan on countering terror finance and anti-money laundering.
- Failing that, it would be put on the black list of “high-risk jurisdictions” facing severe financial sanctions.
- This means that in effect, Pakistan will have had at least one extra year to meet its deadlines, despite the fact that it has only completed about 14 points so far.

Pending reforms:

- The remainder is still difficult to carry out, and includes:
 1. Improving mechanisms to **curb terror financing**,
 2. Amending laws to **curb ‘Hawala’ transactions** and
 3. Placing **sanctions against cash couriers** who facilitate terror groups,
 4. Completing the **prosecution of groups banned by the UNSC**, and
 5. Converting **madrassas run by them into formal schools**.

Not on the right track

- Despite this being Pakistan’s **third stint on the FATF watch list** (prior occasions were in 2008 and 2012-2015), there is little evidence that it has yet internalised that message.
 - In a U.S. report on terrorism released last week, Pakistan remains a **“safe haven” for most UN proscribed groups**.
 - The report also adds that its **steps to prosecute** certain leaders of JeM and LeT are **inadequate**.
 - Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan’s reference in its Parliament to al-Qaeda founder Osama Bin Laden as a **“martyr”** underlines the **establishment’s attitude to these groups**.
 - Pakistan is counting on its role in facilitating the Afghanistan peace deal by pushing Taliban leaders to participate in order to mitigate its troubles at the FATF.

What is needed?

- Fulfilling the commitments **demands more accountability** by Pakistan on

terror groups, as well as a **shift within its ruling establishment** on the benefits of allowing such groups to exist at all.

Conclusion:

- Given the rigorous FATF action plan, and the combined pressure of countries in the group, Pakistan would do well to realise that **only clear and consistent actions would free it from the commitments at the FATF.**

2) Grain aplenty and crisis of hunger

Context:

- With the economic crisis continuing and the crumbling health system under the burden of rising COVID-19 cases, it is clear that it will take a long time for things to get back to “normal”.
- Among interventions to revive demand in the economy and create employment, it is absolutely essential that food support in the form of free/subsidised grains is made available to all without any disruptions.

Government measures for food support

Relief under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY)

- The central government announced as part of the relief package under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) that it would provide 5kg of foodgrains and 1 kg of pulses for free to all those who are beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) for three months as a measure to address hunger.

Expansion under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan package

- Under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan package, an additional eight crore individuals were covered for two months to ensure that migrants are included as it became obvious that many were not part of the NFSA.
- This meant, each State being given foodgrain to the tune of 10% more than what they normally get under the NFSA.

What needs to be done?

- To ensure that nobody is excluded and to compensate for the above said inadequate response Universal Public Distribution System (PDS) is required.

- Food support announced as part of the PMGKY and Atmanirbhar package should be extended for a longer period.
- Portability across States is an important and valid concern that needs to be ensured so that migrant workers can access their entitlements.

Can ONOC be a one stop solution?

About One Nation One Ration Card scheme

- Currently, ration cardholders can avail their entitlement of subsidised food grains under the National Food Security Act, only from the designated Fair price shop (FPS) within the concerned state.
- If a beneficiary were to shift to another state, he/she would need to apply for a new ration card in the second state.
- However, the migration of the poor from rural areas to urban locations is more commonplace.
- Thus, geographical location is one of the hindrances that migrant workers face in order to claim their quote of grains and subsequently get denied their right to food.
- To address the grim state of food security in the country and combat the problem of hunger, the government has started the ‘**One Nation, One Ration Card**’ facility.

Benefits of One Nation, One Ration Card

- The ONORC scheme attempts to address this gap in TPDS delivery.
- The scheme has been launched keeping in mind the **internal migration of our country**, since people keep moving to different states in search of better job opportunities and higher standards of living.
- As per Census 2011, 4.1 crore people were inter-state migrants and 1.4 crore people migrated (inter and intra-state) for employment.
- The new system, based on a technological solution, will identify a beneficiary through biometric authentication on electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) devices installed at the FPSs, and enable that person to purchase the quantity of foodgrains to which she is entitled under the NFSA.

- In the time of Covid-19 pandemic, the scheme proved immensely beneficial for migrant labourers, stranded and needy

persons to access their quota of food grains through ONOC portability.

- However it must be noted that ONOC is definitely not a solution to the immediate crisis of hunger that continues in the aftermath of the lockdown.

Real issue?

- The real issue is burgeoning food stocks along with widespread hunger.
- Foodgrain stock in the Food Corporation of India has now risen to almost 100 million MTs including unmilled paddy, while the buffer stock norms is 41 million MTs. This will increase even more as there is another week of procurement open in the rabi marketing season and of kharif crop in a few months.

March towards universalised PDS

- A universalised PDS giving 10kg of foodgrains per person per month for another four months requires about 47 million tonnes in total, assuming that nearly 85% of the population actually lifts their rations.
- PDS not being universalised immediately especially when food stocks are at such a historic high either hoping to get rid of grain through the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) or export them will leave people hungry which is nothing less than criminal.
- *(OMSS is where government sells the grains at prices lower than the procurement cost but much higher than the issue prices under PDS, so that the fiscal consequences can be contained)*

3) Making trade more digitised

Context

- India's exports in April 2020 contracted by 60% year-on-year. The steep decline in world trade lays bare the significance of a more digitised trading environment, with minimal manual touch points.

Upgradation, digitisation, automation

- Globally, digitisation of procedures and lower human intervention are the two major pillars that drive trade across borders.

Government measures

- The following and other interventions speak of the government's focus on effective logistics and smooth export-import (EXIM) procedures at Indian

borders which resulted in continuous improvement in India's Ease of Doing Business ranking, particularly in the 'trading across borders' parameter on which it ranked 68 in 2020.

- Post India's ratification of the Trade Facilitation Agreement of the World Trade Organization in April 2016, reforms focused on infrastructural Upgradation, digitisation and automation.
- Schemes such as Direct Port Entry and Direct Port Delivery, and the Radio Frequency Identification system and Single Window Interface for Facilitating Trade, were all aimed at reducing the time and cost of clearance of goods.
- The Port Community System was aimed at seamlessly integrating all maritime trade-related stakeholders on a single platform.
- e-SANCHIT (e-Storage and computerised handling of indirect tax documents) was aimed at reducing human intervention.

Need of the hour

- With the current crisis, ports across India demand a greater leap in trade facilitation measures to expedite the movement, release and clearance of goods.
- While different interventions of the government have positively developed the port ecosystem, there are still some gaps that need to be bridged.
- These are particularly with respect to the standardisation and coordination of processes across ports, and awareness and acceptability of new initiatives among the users which depends on the adaptability and ease of linkage between multiple systems.

Gaps to be filled

- Some of the delay in moving to a paperless trade ecosystem can be attributed to gaps in the effective implementation of digital platforms.
- Shortcomings in the functionality of the system and technical glitches result in limited use of the system or parallel use of hard copy.
- For example, the absence of a shipping line delivery order in customs and terminal systems results in usage of hard copy for cargo movement.
- Lack of connectivity/message exchanges between different stakeholders' systems results in delayed cargo clearance.

- Many issues with respect to training and capacity building amongst the users, restricts the optimal utilisation of digital platforms.

Way forward:

- With trade volumes contracting and economic indicators shrinking, the present crisis presents an opportunity to develop new systems and enhance existing platforms while at the same time changing the attitude of stakeholders on the ground.
- Enhanced integration of systems and coordination between them should ideally result in exchange of messages and sharing of input data between them on a real-time basis.
- Promoting use of a multi-stakeholder single platform like the Port Community System can streamline EXIM procedures, moving towards a digitally engaged and enhanced trading environment.

Conclusion:

- These efforts will be instrumental towards improving India's trading ecosystem and achieving the desired target of Ease of Doing Business (ranking under 50) set by the Prime Minister's Office.
- The more digitised our trade facilitation infrastructure, the more immune we will be to future disruptions.

4) Reviving SAARC to deal with China

Context:

- Over the past decade, hegemonic China has strengthened its economic and military ties with India's neighbours in South Asia as part of its global expansionism, which could pose a challenge for India

How does China exert its influence in India's neighbourhood?

Trade

- Over the past decade, China has replaced India as the major trading partner of several South Asian countries.
- For instance, the share of India's trade with Maldives was 3.4 times that of China's in 2008. But by 2018, China's total trade with Maldives slightly exceeded that of India.

- China's trade with Bangladesh is now about twice that of India.
- China's trade with Nepal and Sri Lanka still lags India's trade with those countries but the gap has shrunk.

Investments, loans and grants

- Hard infrastructure
- According to the American Enterprise Institute's China Global Investment Tracker, China has committed around \$100 billion in the economies of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Maldives, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka.
- China is now the largest overseas investor in the Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
- Their database shows that Chinese investment is concentrated in hard infrastructure – power, roads, railways, bridges, ports and airports.
- Nearly 80 percent of Chinese investments in South Asia have been in the energy and transport sectors, according to the tracker.

Financial systems

- Beyond hard infrastructure, China has also invested in the financial systems of these countries.
- For instance, Beijing has taken stakes in the Dhaka and Karachi stock exchanges and cultivated trade in Yuan between China and Pakistan.

Go beyond economics- loans

- China is accused of extending excessive credit with the intention of extracting economic or political concessions when countries cannot honour their debts.
- This raises fears that China's credit to its South Asian partners, particularly through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), could be a strategic disadvantage for India.
- Such fears were amplified after Sri Lanka had to lease out its Hambantota Port to China for 99 years, after being unable to service its debt.

Arms sales

- Chinese arms sales across South and Southeast Asia grew from \$386 million in 2008 to \$1.3 billion in 2016 before falling to \$759 million in 2018.
- China is the biggest arms supplier to Pakistan and Bangladesh today.

Strengthening navies

- Beijing is helping strengthen the navies of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka to enhance its footprint in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean.
- This is seen as part of an encirclement or 'string of pearls' strategy to contain India by building a network of military and commercial facilities in India's neighbourhood.

Hegemonic China

- According to a Brookings India study, most South Asian nations are now largely dependent on China for imports despite geographical proximity to India.

China- Pakistan

- Pakistan, an Islamic republic, has emerged as Communist China's closest ally and the two countries in recent years firmed up their all-weather alliance with USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the biggest overseas investment by Beijing.

China- Nepal

- Nepal is moving closer to China for ideational and material reasons.
- China has been making an effort to gain entry into SAARC, and Nepal has continuously backed and supported the proposal to include China as a member in the regional grouping.
- Since 1975, Sino-Nepalese relations have been close and grown significantly, with China being the largest source of FDI, while India still remains one of the major sources of remittance to Nepal.

China- Bangladesh

- China is supporting Bangladesh by offering tariff exemption to 97% of Bangladeshi products

China- Srilanka

- It has intensified its ties with Sri Lanka through massive investments.

Reinvigorating SAARC

- Several foreign policy experts argue that India's strategic dealing with China has to begin with South Asia. In this regard, it is important to reinvigorate SAARC, which has been in the doldrums since 2014.

About SAARC

- The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established in 1985 with 7 founding members. India is a founder member of SAARC.
- SAARC now comprises eight Member States: Afghanistan (joined in 2007), Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- There are nine observer countries namely Australia, China, European Union, Iran, Japan, Mauritius, Myanmar, South Korea, and the United States.
- The Secretariat of the Association is located in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Deviating from SAARC

- In the last few years, due to increasing animosity with Pakistan, India's political interest in SAARC dipped significantly. (India has been trying hard to isolate Pakistan internationally for its role in promoting terrorism in India)
- India started investing in other regional instruments, such as BIMSTEC, as an alternative to SAARC.

About BIMSTEC

- It stands for Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation and is an organization of seven member-states, dependent on the Bay of Bengal in some way.
- Its members include Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Nepal.
- Leadership is rotated in alphabetical order of country names.
- The permanent secretariat is in Dhaka.
- BIMSTEC is a sector-driven cooperative organization. Fourteen priority sectors of cooperation have been identified and several BIMSTEC centres have been established to focus on those sectors.

Issues

- Least integrated region
- According to the World Bank, trade in South Asia stands at \$23 billion of an estimated value of \$67 billion.
- South Asia is one of the least integrated regions in the world with intra-regional trade barely 5% of total South Asian trade, compared to 25% of intra-regional trade in the ASEAN region.

- While South Asian countries have signed trade treaties, the lack of political will and trust deficit has prevented any meaningful movement.

Way forward

- Revive South Asian economic integration
- India should take the lead and work with its neighbours to slash the tariff and non-tariff barriers.
- There's a need to resuscitate the negotiations on a SAARC investment treaty, pending since 2007.
- According to the UN Conference on Trade and Development, intra-ASEAN investments constitute around 19% of the total investments in the region.
- The SAARC region can likewise benefit from higher intra-SAARC investment flows.
- Deeper regional economic integration will create greater interdependence with India acquiring the central role, which, in turn, would serve India's strategic interests too.

Domestic challenges for India

- There are two major domestic challenges that India faces in revitalising SAARC.
- Divisive domestic politics
- Majoritarian politics influences foreign policy in undesirable ways.
- It dents India's soft power of being a liberal and secular democracy, which gives moral legitimacy to India's leadership in the region.
- This divisive domestic politics fuels an anti-India sentiment in India's neighbourhood.

Self reliance and protectionism

- It has been said that India needs to cut down its dependence on imports, thus signalling a return to the obsolete economic philosophy of import substitution.
- If this marks sliding back to protectionism, it is unsure if India will be interested in deepening South Asian economic integration.

5) Reforming India's digital policy

Context:

- The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has released its latest World Investment Report and projected

that FDI to developing Asian economies could drop by as much as 45%.

- However, even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, investments in digital services continue to flow at record levels globally, outpacing investment in nearly every other sector.

Need for digital services

- Digital services have become critical to every 21st century economy.
- Digital services are filling gaps when national or global emergencies interrupt more traditional modes of commerce.
- Digital services enable access to and delivery of a wide array of products across multiple sectors, from healthcare to retail distribution to financial services.

India and digital services sector

- India is an ideal destination for increased FDI flows in the digital services sector and offers undeniable potential for innovative homegrown start-ups because of its huge and increasingly digitised population.
- However, Indian government policies will be key determinants in how quickly and at what level the Indian economy attracts new investment, fosters Indian innovation, and expands its exporting prowess.

What should be done?

- Implementation of restructured pending reforms
- Currently, there are three pending reform measures under consideration that are likely to affect India's growth trajectory in digital services for years to come
- The Personal Data Protection Bill (PDPB),
- The e-commerce policy, and
- The Information Technology Act Amendments.
- Approaches in these regulatory reform efforts seem to emphasise a focus on protecting the domestic market for domestic companies and prioritising government access to data.
- It may be difficult to reconcile these approaches with India's strong interest in promoting data privacy, protecting its democratic institutions, and encouraging FDI and India's position as a global leader in information technology.
- Conclude negotiations on Bilateral trade agreement

- The course of the India-U.S. trade relationship is uncertain, as signs of progress are continually interrupted by setbacks in the form of new restrictions.
- India and the U.S. are yet to conclude negotiation on a bilateral trade agreement that could address some digital services issues.

Way forward:

- As India resumes its efforts to put into place a new architecture for digital services and as it pursues opportunities to attract new investment, the government and stakeholders might consider the full range of implications for the long-term.
- India will be host of the G20 nations in 2022, and it appears clear that post-COVID-19 international cooperation and approaches to good governance in the digital sphere will be top-priority initiatives.
- The steps India takes now could well establish itself as a true global leader.

6) India's torture culture needs to end now

Context:

- The alleged torture and killing of two Tamil Nadu traders, a father and son, by police pointed towards a broken criminal justice system and highlighted the need for police reforms and the ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT), according to a statement issued by the Executive Committee (India) of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI).

About UNCAT:

- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) is an international human rights treaty which mandates a global prohibition on torture and other acts of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment and creates an instrument to monitor governments and hold them to account.
- The UNCAT was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1984 and came into force on 26 June 1987.
- The absolute prohibition on torture and other acts of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment is also accepted

as a principle of customary international law.

Objective of the convention:

- The convention seeks to ensure that countries put in place various institutional mechanisms to prevent the use of torture.
- Each country that is party to the convention is required to carry out certain steps such as
 - legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent torture, and
 - Ensure that torture is a criminal offence, among others.

India yet to ratify UNCAT

- India signed the convention in 1997 but it remains among a handful of countries including which are yet to ratify the convention.

Need to ratify

- The National Human Rights Commission had said custodial violence and torture are already “rampant” in the country.
- About 1,731 people had died in custody in the 2019 a/c to NHRC report.
- The convention prevents extradition to a country where there is danger of torture and India has faced problems in extradition of criminals from foreign countries which can be sorted out by ratifying the convention.

Constraints

- A state which signs the Convention has to have a domestic law on the subject to outlaw and prevent custodial torture. Without such a law, there is no meaning to signing the Convention.
- In 2010, a weak Prevention of Torture Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha, and the Rajya Sabha later sent it to a Select Committee for review in alignment with the UNCAT.
- But the Committee's recommended law, submitted in 2012, never fructified, as the then UPA government allowed the Bill to lapse.
- By 2017, 273rd report of the Law Commission and an accompanying draft torture law was dismissed by the Supreme Court on grounds that the government cannot be compelled to make a law by mandamus; treaty ratification was a political decision; and that it was a policy matter.

Law Commission recommendation

- The Law Commission of India submitted its report on “Implementation of ‘United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment’ through legislation” to the Ministry of Law and Justice on October 30, 2017.
- In order to meet the obligations of the UNCAT, the Commission recommended amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.
- In addition, the Commission submitted a draft Prevention of Torture Bill, 2017 which defines acts that should constitute torture and prescribed punishments for such acts.

Definition of torture:

- The Commission observed that there is no definition of torture in the current Indian laws.
- According to the draft Prevention of Torture Bill, 2017, any public servant or an individual authorised by him indulges in an act of torture if they inflict on another person: (i) grievous hurt, (ii) danger to life, limb, or health, (iii) severe physical or mental pain, or (iv) Death for the purpose of acquiring information or punishment.

Punishment for acts of torture:

- In order to deter the use of torture, the Commission recommended stringent punishments for individuals who commit such acts.
- According to the draft Prevention of Torture Bill, 2017, punishment for torture includes imprisonment up to 10 years and fine. In case torture leads to death, the punishment includes death or life imprisonment in addition to fine.

Protection for individuals:

- The Commission recommended that an effective mechanism be put in place to protect victims of torture, complainants, and witnesses against possible violence and ill-treatment.
- The draft Prevention of Torture Bill, 2017 makes state governments responsible for protecting these individuals.

Compensation for torture:

- The Commission recommended amendments to the Code of Criminal

Procedure, 1973 to allow for payment of compensation in case of torture.

- The Commission recommended that courts should determine compensation on the basis of nature, purpose, and extent of injury caused to a person, among other factors.

Custodial injury:

- The Commission recommended amendments to the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 to ensure that in case a person sustains injuries in police custody, it will be presumed that these have been inflicted by the police.
- The burden of proof shall lie on the police authorities to explain such injuries.

Way forward:

- India must ratify the UNCAT as soon as possible for which it should consider enacting a torture prevention law by incorporating law commission’s recommendations.
- People’s movement including important stakeholders like the Bar, the media, civil society and student groups will bring about the necessary legislative changes that the Law Commission has suggested, and that encourages institutions to #EndTortureToday.

7) Integrated disease surveillance programme (IDSP)

About IDSP

- The Integrated Disease Surveillance Project was launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, in assistance with the World Bank, in 2004 for a period up to March 2010.
- The project was restructured and extended up to March 2012.
- The project continues in the 12th Plan with domestic budget as Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme under NHM for all States with Budgetary allocation.
- A Central Surveillance Unit (CSU) at Delhi, State Surveillance Units (SSU) at all

State/UT head quarters and District Surveillance Units (DSU) at all Districts in the country have been established.

Objectives:

- To strengthen/maintain decentralized laboratory based IT enabled disease surveillance system for epidemic prone diseases to monitor disease trends
- To detect and respond to outbreaks in early rising phase through trained Rapid Response Team (RRTs)

Programme Components:

- Integration and decentralization of surveillance activities through establishment of surveillance units at Centre, State and District level.
- Human Resource Development – Training of State Surveillance Officers, District Surveillance Officers, Rapid Response Team and other Medical and Paramedical staff on principles of disease surveillance.
- Use of Information Communication Technology for collection, collation, compilation, analysis and dissemination of data.
- Strengthening of public health laboratories.
- Inter sectoral Coordination for Zoonotic diseases

Data Management:

- Under IDSP data is collected on epidemic prone diseases on a weekly basis.
- The weekly data gives information on the disease trends and seasonality of diseases.
- The information is collected on three specified reporting formats, namely “S” (suspected cases), “P” (presumptive cases) and “L” (laboratory confirmed cases) filled by Health Workers, Clinicians and Laboratory staff respectively.
- Whenever there is a rising trend of illnesses in any area, it is investigated by

the Rapid Response Teams (RRT) to diagnose and control the outbreak.

IDSP Portal

- The IDSP portal is a one stop portal (www.idsp.nic.in) which has facilities for data entry, view reports, outbreak reporting, data analysis, training modules and resources related to disease surveillance.

Significance of IDSP

- The Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), the backbone of India’s disease monitoring network, is responsible for alerting the Centre and the wider world, on a weekly basis,
- About the emergence of disease outbreaks,
- A surge in novel pathogens,
- The rate of spread and remedial action taken.

Why in the news?

- The advent of COVID-19 appears to have concealed the country from any other disease alert by IDSP.

News in detail:

- The latest weekly report available on the IDSP website is Week 12 (March 16-22) which records a mere six outbreaks/disease alerts across the country is very less when compared to alerts in the same week the previous years.
- The neglect of other diseases has been independently borne out, for instance, by a reduction in the notifications of fresh tuberculosis infections and a general decline in claims under the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme.
- It is essential for IDSP in improving overall disease surveillance as well as providing timely updates to the public and international health agencies apart from COVID-19 surveillance.

INDIAN EXPRESS EXPLAINED

1) Why is India producing less and less oil?

- Since 2012, India's domestic production of Crude oil fell year after year.
- This led to an increase in imports from 81.8% in 2012 to 87.6% in 2020.
- It fell by 7.1% in May 2020 compared to May 2019 production.
- This has come in back of low demand due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Why is production falling?

- Ageing wells, that has become less productive.
- Lack of new oil discoveries in India.
- Long delays in operationalisation of production from discovered wells.
- Lack of interest from private players in exploration and production, due to long delay (5-7 years) in getting approvals.

Policy Changes Required:

- Existing Public and Private players have asked for reduced levies of oil production including oil cess, royalties especially when crude oil prices are below \$45/barrel.
- The Government introduced **Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP)** in 2019 to allow companies to carve out blocks that they are interested in and with lower royalties and no oil cess.
- However, existing players are calling for a relaxation of royalties and cess on block allotted under previous policies.

Note: OALP

- Open Acreage Licensing Policy gives an option to a company looking for exploring hydrocarbons to **select the exploration blocks on its own**, without waiting for the formal bid round from the Government.
- Under OALP, a bidder intending to explore hydrocarbons like oil and gas, coal bed methane, gas hydrate etc., may apply to the Government seeking exploration of any new block (not already covered by exploration).
- The Government will examine the Expression of Interest and justification.
- If it is suitable for award, Govt. will call for competitive bids after obtaining

necessary environmental and other clearances.

2) Environment Impact Assessment

- The United Nations hosted its first Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, 1972 which resulted in the **Stockholm Declaration of 1972**.
- The declaration emphasizes to lessen air, land, and water pollution and human impact on the environment.
- India enacted laws to control water (1974) and air (1981) pollution soon after.
- India legislated an umbrella **act for environmental protection in 1986** only after the Bhopal gas leak disaster in 1984.
- India notified **Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Norms in 1994** under Environmental Protection Act, 1986.
- Environment Impact Assessment or EIA can be **defined as the study to predict the effect of a proposed activity/project on the environment**.
- Every development project has been required to go through the EIA process for obtaining prior environmental clearance.

EIA Process

- **Screening:** Determines whether the proposed project requires an EIA
- **Scoping:** This stage identifies the key issues and impacts that should be further investigated.
- **Impact analysis:** This stage of EIA identifies and predicts the likely environmental and social impact of the proposed project and evaluates the significance.
- **Mitigation:** This step in EIA recommends the actions to reduce and avoid the potential adverse environmental consequences of development activities.
- **Reporting:** This stage presents the result of EIA in a form of a report to the decision-making body and other interested parties.
- **Review of EIA:** It examines the adequacy and effectiveness of the EIA report and provides the information necessary for decision-making.

- **Decision-making:** It decides whether the project is rejected, approved or needs further change.
- **Post monitoring:** This stage comes into play once the project is commissioned. It checks to ensure that the impacts of the project do not exceed the legal standards and implementation of the mitigation measures are in the manner as described in the EIA report.

Shortcomings of EIA Process

- Several projects with significant environmental impacts are **exempted** citing lesser investments conditions.
- Team formed for conducting EIA studies is **lacking the expertise**
- Public comments are not considered at an early stage
- **Lack of Quality and Credibility** of EIA
- **Strong political and bureaucratic stronghold on the EIA process**

Modification:

- The 1994 EIA notification was replaced with a modified draft in 2006 by reducing the number of stages in EIA.
- Now the **government redrafted it again** to make the process more transparent and expedient.

Issues

- The 2020 draft offers no remedy for the political and bureaucratic stronghold on the EIA process
- No information on projects concerning **national defence and security** shall be placed in the public domain.
- This opens a window for summary clearance for any project deemed strategic without having to explain why.
- Additionally, the new draft exempts a long list of projects from public consultation. For example, **projects such as roads and pipelines in border areas** will not require any public hearing. The 'border area' is defined as "area falling within **100 kilometres aerial distance from the Line of Actual Control** with bordering countries of India." That would **cover much of the Northeast, the repository of the country's richest biodiversity.**
- **Exempts most building construction projects** of built-up area up to **1,50,000 sq m.**
- Projects operating in violation of the Environment Act will now be able to

apply for clearance by paying more to the ecological damage caused.

Why in News?

- The Delhi High Court extended till August 11 the time for giving suggestions to the draft Environment Impact Assessment notification of 2020

3) COVAXIN

- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has approved India's indigenously developed COVID vaccine- COVAXIN to go for human/clinical trials.
- COVAXIN has been developed by **Bharat Biotech India (BBIL)** in collaboration with National Institute of Virology (NIV).
- Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has directed trial sites of COVAXIN to finish the human trials within August 15th 2020.
- But, many Bioethics experts have pointed out that rushing to clear the vaccine within a month can be harmful.

Stages from research to market

- The stages can be divided into 6 stages:

Stage 1	It is where R&D is done. It usually takes 2 to 4 years. But for COVID-19 it has been fast-forwarded due to the presence of technology and available genetic sequence of the virus.
Stage 2	It is called pre-clinical stage. It is where a vaccine is tested on non-humans such as cell-cultures, chimpanzees, guinea pigs, etc. It is to judge the possible immune response.
Stage 3	In this stage human trials are started. It can be divided into 3 phases based on the magnitude of the human trials. It usually takes 90 months to complete the process. Phase I: The vaccine is tested on a group of people and scientists measure antibodies in their blood. Phase II: Then the vaccine is tried on a few hundred people. In this stage 3 things are determined

	<p>Reactogenicity: Ability of the vaccine to produce common and adverse reactions.</p> <p>Immunogenicity: Ability to provoke immune response</p> <p>Safety</p> <p>Phase III: Here the vaccine is tried on thousands of people and here it is checked on various populations.</p>
Stage 4	Here the regulatory of the country is provided with details and then the vaccine receives the license. This process too takes longer. In the US, normally it takes 10 months to get a license.
Stage 5	It is the manufacturing stage. Manufacturing of vaccines requires a lot of investment and raw materials, even if a company gets a license it is hard to acquire the required equipment and scientific expertise. Big companies like Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson etc have a greater advantage.
Stage 6	Once the vaccine is in market its quality is monitored by both regulator and

	manufacturer
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- All above steps take several years of hard work and precision to make a vaccine successful.
- COVAXIN is now allowed to enter stage 3, but rushing in the upcoming stages can be harmful of the public.

What type of medicine is COVAXIN?

- It is an INACTIVATED vaccine, made using the killed COVID-19 vaccine.
- When they are injected into the persons, they cannot replicate.
- If injected into our body, our body can create antibodies against these dead viruses and the body shall remember this virus. If once again the alive viruses attack, these antibodies get activated and they will fight with them.

Is COVAXIN vaccine only vaccine around the world to be developed?

- No, there are several other vaccines which are running the races to eradicate the COVID-19.
- In India, companies like Zydus Cadila, Serum Institute of India and PanaceaBiotec are trying their luck. But most of them are in the preclinical stage.
- Among the global competitors the following chart will give details and stage in which they are in:

TOP COVID-19 VACCINE CANDIDATES			
COMPANY	CANDIDATE	PROGRESS	TIMEFRAME
University of Oxford-AstraZeneca	AZD-12222 (non-replicating vector)	In phase III trials	May reach market by the end of 2020
Moderna-NIAID	mRNA-1273 (RNA vaccine)	To begin phase III trials later this month	Hopes to have it ready by 2021
BioNTech-Pfizer	BNT-162b1 (RNA)	In phases I/II, phase III expected in July	Hopes to file for approval by October
Wuhan Institute of Biological Products-China National Biotec Group (Sinopharm)	Inactivated Covid-19 vaccine	Completed phase I and II, in phase III	Expects to produce 120 million doses a year once mass production begins
CanSino Biological Inc-Beijing Institute of Biotechnology	Ad5-nCoV (non-replicating vector)	Completed phases I and II; side effects in over 80% volunteers	Special approval given for use in Chinese military
Sinovac	Coronavac (inactivated vaccine)	Phases I/II results out; phase III planned soon	Company setting up a facility to push out 100 mn doses/year

Sources: WHO, Company press releases

Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)



Central Drugs Standard Control Organization

Directorate General of Health Services

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare

Government of India

- It is the Central Drug Authority for discharging functions assigned to the Central Government under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.
- New Delhi is its headquarters.
- **The major functions of this body are:**
 - Regulatory control over the import of drugs
 - Approval of new drugs and clinical trials
 - Meetings of Drugs Consultative Committee (DCC) and Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB)
 - Approval of certain licenses as Central License Approving Authority.

RSTV Big Picture

1) India - Japan Cooperation

- Recently, Indian and Japanese warships conducted naval exercises in the Indian Ocean
- The Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force described the manoeuvres as designed to “promote mutual understanding” and consisted of four warships, two from each country.
- The Japanese navy has become one of the principal partners of the Indian Navy.
- Indian naval ships take part in the exercise, both bilaterally with their Japanese counterparts and as part of the **Malabar Exercises**, which include the United States.

Views on Naval Exercise being a weapon for strengthening the relations:

- In the last 22 years, India-Japan relations have transformed **particularly in the security dimension** as both the countries have common outlook over security challenges in the surrounding region.
- Eg: G4 countries which do have commonality of interest.
- India and Japan can restrict the powers of China by engaging with various countries who also face the Chinese threat and the best route can be via conducting different exercises like naval exercise, military exercise etc.
- Eg: Last year, India and Japan joined the Philippines and USA for conducting exercises in the South China Sea.
- Even, Japan is in close vicinity of India through which they can conduct **Anti-submarine warfare as well as Maritime patrol warfare for the interoperability of the vessels.**
- Thus, it indicates that **likeminded countries can join hands in order to counter Chinese presence and it can be done by conducting such exercises.**

How has the relationship been shaped between India and Japan and how it can contain the presence of Chinese?

- In the span of 2014-2019, the relationship has evolved extraordinarily and as of now Japan is the **3rd largest investor in India.**

- The challenging point for both the countries is the **presence of China all around whether it is the South China Sea or Pacific Ocean or the Indian Ocean.**
- In some continents, Japan and India constraints to counter Chinese moves which is the major drawback for the evolving relationship.
- As of now, China faces problems with all the South-east Asian countries which can be proved as an **opportunity for India and Japan to join hands and collectively counter China for which maritime cooperation should be strengthened.**
- Thus, other countries should also help in **shaping the relations of India and Japan** and as far as Malacca Strait is concerned, India along with Japan has to safeguard it because it can be choked easily.
- Hence, **China cannot be curtailed but can be restrained** with the help of collective decisions by major and middle countries especially by collaborating with the South East Asian countries.

How can the Malacca dilemma be tackled as likeminded countries might join hands in Future against China?

- China has made its way by constructing various pipelines via land for the Oil supply but still China is dependent on sea routes to a large extent.
- It can be tackled by **forming a formidable maritime squad** because in order to make our presence in the region we need friends which are our neighbouring countries. eg: **Quad (+)**
- Thus, **India has to reduce its dependence on China** in order to strengthen its relations with other countries.

Other areas of cooperation between India and Japan:

- India can open its Economy to Japan in terms of **Skill India program, Make-in India program, Automobile, Infrastructure, IT, maritime security etc.**

- The trade between both the countries is growing but it should have a **wider extension in various areas.**
- Hence, both the countries should work on the **complementary areas where both are getting benefitted.**
- India should get an opportunity for becoming the manufacturing hub, technological hub, sea power and it should get **permanent membership at the United Nations** for which Japan can support India.
- Hence, **diversification in the economy** is the need of the hour.

Areas of Concern:

- There are 2 broader areas of concern for Japan as far as India is concerned and they are as follows:
- The opening of Indian economy in various areas is very slow which might affect Japanese trade because of certain restrictions in India.
- The pulling out of India from RCEP is a major disappointment for Japan because it was looking forward for India to join the RCEP in order to strengthen its relations.
- Thus, both the countries should resolve their concerns by **mutual understanding on various interests which are common for them.**

Way Forward:

- Japan has always been defensive instead of being offensive but now **India and Japan should join hands and try being offensive in order to tackle the chinese presence.**
- Japan has advanced technology especially in terms of **warship technology** which can be utilised by India in the upcoming future.
- Thus, India needs to **strengthen its democracy** by working upon the arrears of its relations with Japan in order to restrain China in the maritime domain.

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