

OFFICERS' PULSE

Issue no. 9 | 26th July to 1st August, 2020

COVERAGE.

The Hindu

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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) Governor's Discretionary Powers

Gs Paper 2- Role of Governor Constitutional Position of Governor

- **Article 163 (1)** essentially limits any discretionary power of the Governor only to cases where the Constitution expressly specifies that the Governor must act on his own and apply an independent mind.
- **Article 163 (2)** says if any question arises with respect to whether a matter falls under Governors' discretionary power or not, the **decision of the Governor with regards to the question shall be final** and anything done by the governor in his discretion will not be called into question.
- **Article 163 (3)** does not allow the courts to inquire into what advice was tendered by the Council of Ministers to the Governor.

Constitutional Discretion

- The Governor has constitutional discretion in the following cases:
- **Article 167:** Governor can seek any information from the chief minister with regard to the administrative and legislative matters of the state.
- **Article 200:** A bill shall be presented to the Governor and the Governor shall declare either that he assents to the Bill or that he withholds assent therefrom or that he reserves the Bill for the consideration of the President.
- **Article 356** empowers the Governor to recommend the imposition of President's Rule in the state in case he feels that there is a breakdown of constitutional machinery in the state.
- **Article 239 (2):** While exercising his functions as the administrator of an adjoining Union Territory (in case of additional charge) independently of his council of Ministers.

- Determining the amount payable by the Government of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram to an autonomous Tribal district council as royalty accruing from licenses for mineral exploration.

Situational discretion

- In addition to the above constitutional discretion (i.e., the express discretion mentioned in the constitution), the governor also has situational discretion (i.e., the hidden discretion derived from the exigencies of a prevailing political situation) in the following cases:
- **Appointment of chief minister:** As per **Article 164**, discretion is exercised in appointment of CM when a hung assembly turns up after the elections or when coalition partner suddenly withdraws the support from the ruling party.
- **Dissolution of the state legislative assembly:** As per **Article 174**, the Governor may Dissolve the Assembly if he/she is satisfied that the government has lost the majority in legislative assembly.
- **Dismissal of the council of ministers:** Since Council of Ministers under **Article 164 (2)** is collectively responsible to the state legislative assembly hence if a ministry has lost confidence of the house but refuses to resign, in that case Governor can dissolve the Ministry.

Why in News?

- The recent crisis in Rajasthan government has raised legal questions on the powers of the Governor to summon a House. The Rajasthan Governor has returned the proposal by the State Cabinet, seeking to convene a session of the Assembly.

What is a floor test?

- A floor test is primarily taken to **know whether the executive enjoys the confidence of the legislature.**
- It is a constitutional mechanism under which a Chief Minister appointed by the

Governor can be asked to prove majority on the floor of the Legislative Assembly of the state.

- When a single party secures the majority of the seats in the house, the Governor appoints the leader of the party as the Chief Minister.
- In case the majority is questioned, the leader of the party which claims majority has to move a vote of confidence and prove majority among those present and voting.
- The Chief Minister has to resign if they fail to prove their majority in the house. This happens both in the parliament and the state legislative assemblies.
- In situations when there are differences within a coalition government, the Governor can ask the Chief Minister to prove majority in the house.

2) Muslim Women Rights Day

Gs Paper 2- Issues related to women

Why in News?

- 1st August has been recorded in the country's history as "Muslim Women Rights Day" to mark first anniversary of the passage of Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019.

Provisions of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019

- The Act makes all declaration of talaq, including in written or electronic form, to be void (i.e. not enforceable in law) and illegal. It defines talaq as **talaq-e-biddat** or any other similar form of talaq pronounced by a Muslim man resulting in **instant and irrevocable divorce**. Talaq- e-biddat refers to the practice under Muslim personal laws where pronouncement of the word 'talaq' thrice in one sitting by a Muslim man to his wife results in an instant and irrevocable divorce.
- It also makes a declaration of talaq a **cognizable offence** (only if information relating to the offence is given by a married woman against whom talaq has been declared), attracting up to three years imprisonment with a fine.
- A married Muslim woman shall be entitled to **custody of her minor**

children in the event of pronouncement of talaq by her husband, in such manner as may be determined by the Magistrate.

- The Magistrate may grant **bail** to the accused. The bail may be granted only after hearing the woman (against whom talaq has been pronounced), and if the Magistrate is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for granting bail.
- The offence may be **compounded** (i.e. the parties may arrive at a compromise) by the Magistrate upon the request of the woman (against whom talaq has been declared).
- A Muslim woman against whom talaq has been declared, is entitled to seek subsistence allowance from her husband for herself and for her dependent children.

Important constitutional provisions for women in India

- **Article 14** - Equality before law for women
- **Article 15** - The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them .
- **Article 15 (3)**-The State to make any special provision in favour of women and children
- **Article 16**-Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State
- **Article 39(a)**-The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood ;
- **Article 39(d)**-Equal pay for equal work for both men and women
- **Article 42**-The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief
- **Article 46** - The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
- **Article 51(A)(e)**-To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the

dignity of women .

- **Article 243 D (3)**-Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat
- **Article 243 D (4)**-Not less than one- third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women

Special Initiatives and schemes for Women:

- **National Commission for Women** : In January 1992, the Government set-up this statutory body with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary, etc.
 - **Reservation for Women in Local Self - Government** : The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 by Parliament ensure one-third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas.
 - **The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000)** : The plan of Action is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child.
 - **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana**:It is a direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme under which cash benefits are provided to pregnant women in their bank account directly to meet enhanced nutritional needs and partially compensate for wage loss. A cash benefit of Rs. 5,000 in three instalments on
- fulfilling the respective conditionality-early registration of pregnancy, ante-natal check-up and registration of the birth of the child and completion of first cycle of vaccination for the first living child of the family.
 - **One Stop Centre Scheme**:It is a centrally sponsored scheme which provides for a range of services including police facilitation, medical aid, psycho-social counselling, legal counselling and temporary shelter to women affected by violence in an integrated manner under one roof.
 - **Nirbhaya Fund**: A dedicated non- lapsable corpus fund for implementation of initiatives aimed at enhancing the safety and security of women in the country.
 - **Sexual Harassment electronic-Box (SHe-Box)**: An online complaint management system for registering complaints related to sexual harassment at the workplace by women, including government and private employees.
 - **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)**: Beti Bachao Beti Padhao is one the flagship programmes of the Government. It is a tri-ministerial, convergent effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development. The scheme is envisaged to bring an improvement in Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) in the short term while Child Sex Ratio (CSR) with manifestation of over-all development such as improved health & nutrition, gender parity in education, better sanitation, opportunities and removal of asymmetries between the genders is endeavored in the long term.

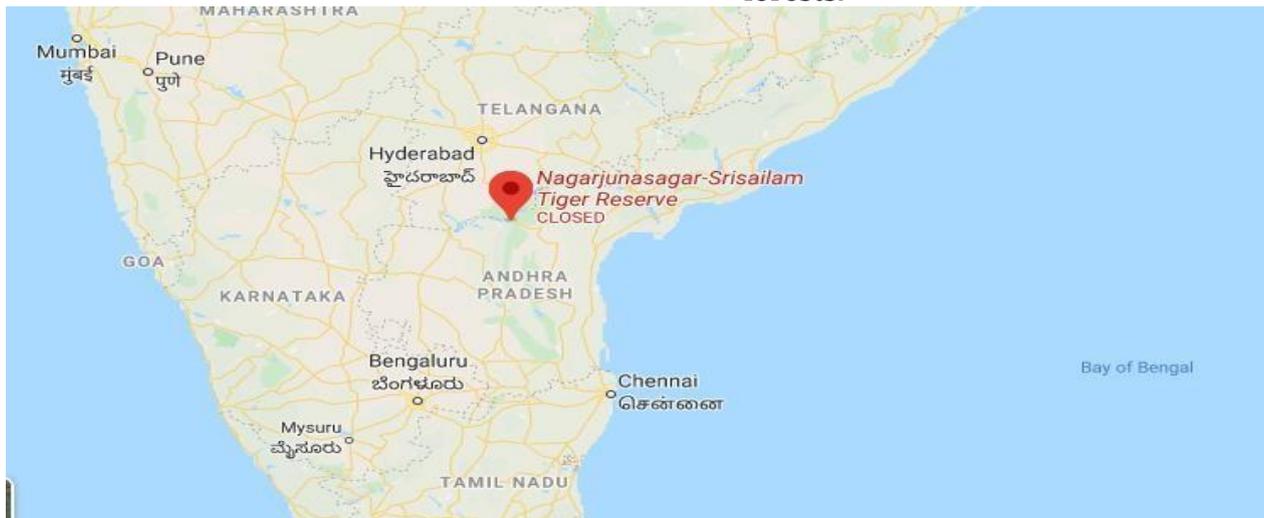
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ENVIRONMENT

1) Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve (NSTR)

About

- It is the **largest tiger reserve** in India.
- It is spread across 5 districts, some belonging to **Telangana state** and **Andhra Pradesh state**.



- These forests are also famous for **Srisailem temple** which is one of the prominent Lord Shiva temples.
- The mighty **River Krishna** which rises in Sahyadri Hills and makes its way through Maharashtra and Karnataka flows across Nallamala tiger reserve.
- The tiger reserve mostly has **deciduous forests**.

Why in the news?

- The tiger population in NSTR has seen a promising rise in number.
- According to the recent tiger census by the **Wildlife Institute of India** and the **National Tiger Conservation Authority** (2018), the reserve accounts 74 tigers in total (both AP and Telangana state).
- With the limited resources in hand, the forest department, the local tribes, and NGOs have made this possible.
- Steps like active surveillance by using sensor-based camera traps and ensuring 24 X7 patrolling by the personnel has yielded the rise in tiger population.

Wildlife Institute of India

- Wildlife Institute of India (WII) was established in 1982 as an autonomous institute of the **Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC)**.
- Its primary mandates are to:
 - carry out scientific and applied research on various issues of wildlife and biodiversity conservation,
 - build capacity in the field of wildlife management and conservation planning,

- provide technical inputs to MoEF&CC and other stakeholders.

About NTCA

- National Tiger Conservation Authority is a **statutory body** under the **MoEF&CC**.
- It performs functions as provided in the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.

2) Decrease in the population of periglacial flowers

What is a periglacial environment?

- The periglacial environment is a cold climate, frequently marginal to the glacial environment, and is characteristically subject to intense cycles of freezing and thawing of superficial sediments.

Botanical Survey of India



भारतीय वनस्पति सर्वेक्षण
BOTANICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

- The headquarters of BSI is located in **Kolkata**.
- The Botanical Survey of India (BSI) was established in 1890 with the objectives of exploring the plant resources of the country and identifying plant species with economic virtue.
- In 1954, the Government reorganised the BSI with the objectives of
- Undertaking intensive floristic surveys and collecting accurate and detailed information on the occurrence, distribution, ecology and economic utility of plants in the country;
- Collecting, identifying and distributing materials that may be of use to educational and research institutions; and
- Acting as the custodian of authentic collections in well planned herbaria and documenting plant resources in the form of local, district, state and national flora

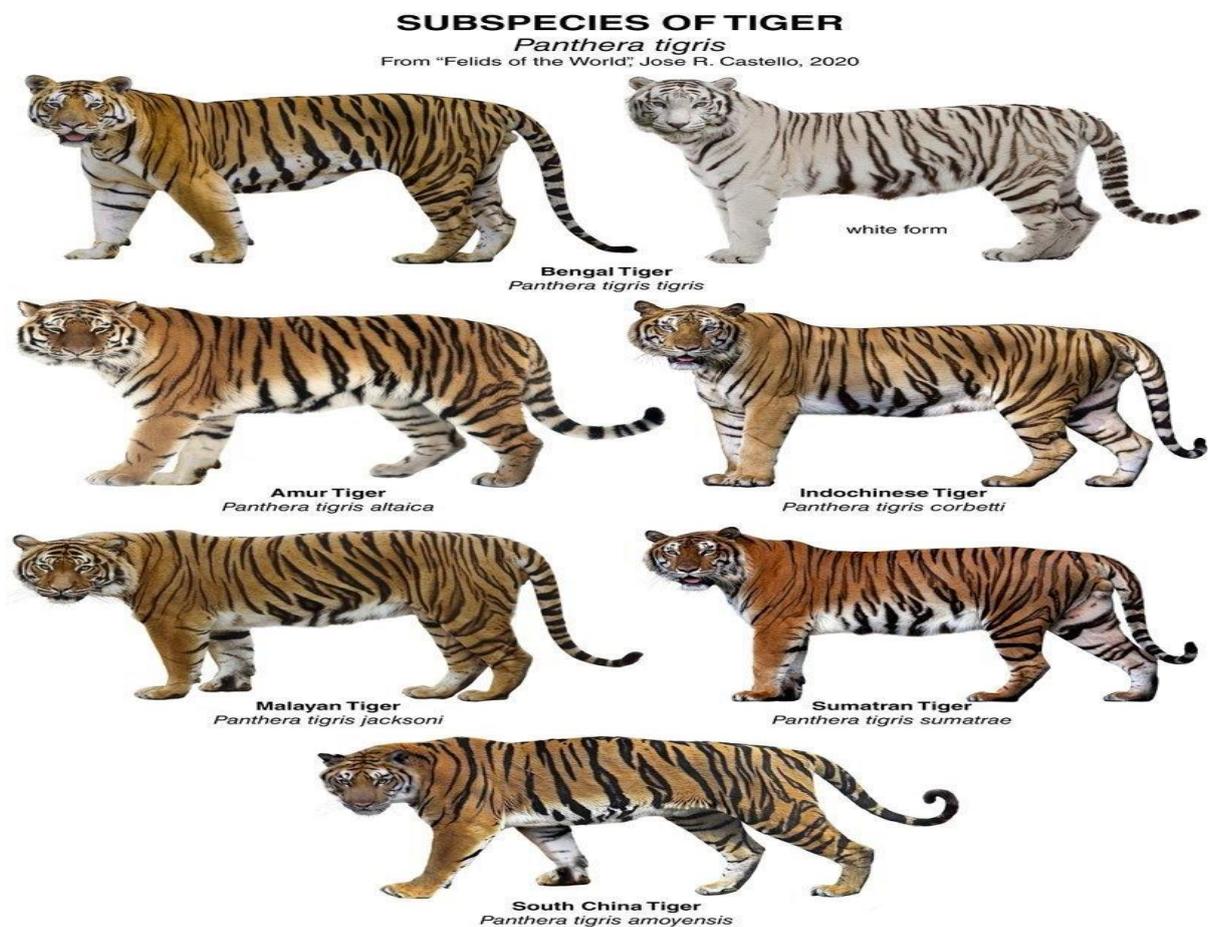
Why in the news?

- Many periglacial flowers have seen a decrease in their population due to climate change.

- Flowers such as Blue poppy, Himkamal, Wolly Ground Daisy, etc. have shown movement towards higher altitudes and decrease in population in existing lower altitudes.
- Acknowledging the phenomenon, Botanical Survey of India (BSI) have released a list of periglacial flowers which are vulnerable and showing decrease in population.
- The report also consists of invasive species which are taking upon the area of these flowers.

3) International Tiger Day

- July 29th is celebrated as Global/ international tiger day every-year. It is celebrated to signify the conservation of tigers and their importance in biodiversity.
- It has been celebrated since its declaration at **St. Petersburg Tiger Summit in 2010**.



Tiger

- It is a top carnivore animal. It is listed as **endangered** species by IUCN.
- Tigers are found mainly in the forests of tropical Asia, although they historically occurred more widely in drier and colder climes. But some species are also found in cold regions (Siberian Tigers of Russia) as well as marshy lands (Bengal tigers in Sundarbans).

Species of Tigers

- IUCN has recognized two tiger subspecies, commonly referred to as the **continental tiger and the Sunda island tiger**. All remaining island tigers are found only in Sumatra, with tigers in Java and Bali now extinct. These are popularly known as Sumatran tigers.
- The continental tigers currently include the Bengal, Malayan, Indochinese and Amur (Siberian) tiger populations, while the Caspian tiger is extinct in the wild. The South China tiger is believed to be functionally extinct.

St. Petersburg Tiger Summit

- It was the first global summit to protect tigers from extinction. It was hosted in the month of November in 2010.
- 13 tiger range Countries (countries in which tigers are found) participated in this event, namely **India**, Laos, China, Vietnam, Russia, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Thailand and Malaysia called for joint action and promised to **double the population of tigers by 2022 (Global Tiger Recovery Program)**.

Why Tigers are important for India?

- Being top predators tigers play an important role in conservation of the environment. It checks the population of grass-eating mammals, which in the absence of predators can cause severe deforestation and water crisis in the forest.
- India today is home to 70 per cent of the world's tiger population with 2967 tigers in the wild.
- **Madhya Pradesh** hosts most of the tigers as a state while **Jim Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand** houses the most number of tigers in any protected area.

- India started **Project Tiger** in 1973 with 9 Tiger reserves in the country and today we have 50 tiger reserves in the country.
- The **normal range where tigers used to be found before has been depleted** and India still has this umbrella species which is important for conserving the whole ecosystem.

What are the major Challenges for conservation of species in the long run ?

- The present tiger reserves might not be able to conserve the species in the long run because there is a **need for more corridors rather for the exchange of Gene pool**.
- In today's scenario, human-animal conflict is increasing day -by-day and the major reason lies in **fragmentation or shrinking of habitat**.
- Due to **illegal poaching** and illegal market, there is grave danger for the tiger species.
- The **local communities** whose livelihood is dependent upon the forest are being affected.
- The **inter-connectivity of Tiger reserves** is very poor due to which the translocation of tigers is difficult.

Way Forward:

- The **relocation of local communities** needs to be done which may supplement their livelihood and should be sustainable in nature.
- There is a need to **shift the focus from the Tiger reserves towards the network areas of tigers** through which man-animal conflict can be avoided.
- The most dominant factor like **Climate change** needs to be taken into account while framing our development as well as conservation strategy.
- Eg: Recently, a tiger was found in sikkim where it was never found before.
- **Eco-tourism** is making a way for tigers to get habituated with people and hence it needs to be promoted.
- Thus, the developmental plan should be framed by incorporating all the major issues especially the major issue of fragmentation of habitat and should adopt **new methods and techniques which should be more sustainable in nature**.

- Even though we have achieved a significant increase in tiger population there is a lot which needs to be done to conserve the flagship species as the country is more vulnerable to the dynamic climate.

Why in the news?

- As the population of tigers peak in the country scientists and environmentalists are worrying about the sustainability of Tiger Reserves.
- In a recent survey it was found that $\frac{1}{3}$ of the tigers live outside the tiger

reserves. (the areas outside the reserves where tigers are found are called SINKS and the reserve is called SOURCE).

- Out of 50 tiger reserves in India, nearly 17 are approaching the peak of their capacity at sustaining tiger populations.
- Experts are proposing the government to use under-utilised reserves so that management is better when we have a source-sink relationship.

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Map showing Tiger Reserves in India



ECONOMY

1) GI Tag

- **Effects of liberalization on the economy, Transport and marketing of agricultural produce**

About GI Tag

- A geographical indication (GI) is a sign used on products that have a **specific geographical origin** and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. In order to function as a GI, a sign must identify a product as originating in a given place.
- It is used for **agricultural, natural and manufactured goods**. Darjeeling tea became the first GI tagged product in India.
- The registration of GI is valid for **10 years** after which it needs to be renewed.

Legislations

- In India, GI is given under the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**.
- The Act is administered by the **Controller General of Patents, Designs & TradeMarks, GI (CGPDTM-India)** under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- India enacted its GI legislation to comply with India's obligations under the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (**TRIPS**) agreement.
- GI registration gives to the registered proprietor and its authorized users, the legal right to the exclusive use of the GI and also the right to obtain relief in case of its infringement.
- GI is a **collective intellectual property right** and is thus owned by all the producers within the defined GI territory unlike intellectual properties like patent and trademark which are owned by an individual or a business entity.

Why in News?

- **Kashmir saffron**, which is cultivated and harvested in the **Karewa (highlands) of Jammu and Kashmir**, has received the GI tag by the Geographical Indications Registry.

Significance

- Iran is the largest producer of saffron and India is a close competitor. With the GI tag, Kashmir saffron would gain more prominence in the export market and would help farmers get the best remunerative price.
- It is the **only saffron in the world** grown at an altitude of 1,600 m to 1,800 m AMSL (above mean sea level).
- The GI certification would also stop adulteration prevalent in the trade of Kashmir saffron.

2) Strategic sale of PSUs

Indian Economy, Effects of liberalization on the economy, Changes in industrial policy, Investment models

What is Disinvestment?

- Divestment or disinvestment means selling a stake in a company, subsidiary or other investments.
- Governments resort to divestment generally to reduce financial burden due to inefficient public sector undertakings (PSUs) and to improve public finances. It introduces competition and market discipline and helps to depoliticise non-essential services.

What is Strategic disinvestment?

- Strategic disinvestment implies the sale of a substantial portion of the Government shareholding of central public sector enterprises (CPSE) of **up to 50%, or such higher percentage** as the competent authority may determine, along with **transfer of management control**.

Nodal Authority

- The **Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM)** under the Ministry of Finance is the nodal department for the strategic disinvestment.
- **DIPAM and NITI Aayog** jointly identify PSUs for strategic disinvestment.

New Public Sector Enterprise Policy

- Recently, as a part of the **Aatmanirbhar Bharat package**, the government announced that it **will open all sectors to the private sector** including strategic sectors, and a new coherent policy in this regard will be unveiled.

- The proposed policy will notify the list of strategic sectors requiring the presence of at least one state-owned company along with the presence of the private sector. In all other sectors, the government plans to privatise public sector enterprises depending upon the feasibility.
- Even in the strategic sectors, no more than four PSUs will be allowed, with the rest being privatised, merged or brought under holding companies.

Why in News?

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman recently said that the government is working on completing the stake sale process of about 23 public sector companies whose divestment has already been cleared by the Cabinet.
- She said this would lead to consolidation of PSUs as well as scaling up of their operations.
- For the 2020-21 fiscal, the government has set a disinvestment target of ₹2.10 lakh crore. Of this, ₹1.20 lakh crore will come from disinvestment of public sector undertakings and another ₹90,000 crore from stake sale in financial institutions.

3) GST Compensations

Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, Indian Economy

What is it?

- The GST regime, launched on July 1, 2017, introduced a uniform indirect tax structure across the country by merging various state and local-level levies.
- Under the GST compensation Act 2017, states are guaranteed full compensation for any revenue loss for the **first five years** after the introduction of the GST.
- For the purpose of calculating the compensation amount in any financial year, year **2015-16 will be assumed to be the base year**, from which revenue will be projected. The growth rate of revenue for a state during the five-year period is assumed to be **14% per annum**.
- Any shortfall has to be compensated from the receipts of **Compensation Cess** levied on luxury goods and sin products such as liquor, cigarettes, aerated water,

automobiles, coal and other tobacco commodities.

Why in News?

- According to a finance ministry statement, the Union government released Rs 1,65,302 crore as GST compensation to states in the previous financial year ended March 31, even as compensation cess collection fell by over 42% that year.
- States had been protesting the delay in payment of pending compensation even before the COVID-19 pandemic led to a sharp fall in revenues and further delays, with some States even threatening legal action.
- GST revenue fell 41% in the first quarter of 2020-21, indicating that the shortfall in cess collections and likely delays in payments to States is likely to continue in the current financial year.

Related information

What is Cess?

- Cess is a tax that is levied by the government to raise funds for a **specific purpose**. For example: Secondary and Higher Education Cess.
- The proceeds from cess should be spent only for a specific purpose for which it is created.
- The Union government does not have to share proceeds from cess with the states as they are **not part of the divisible pool** that needs to be shared with states.

4) Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

Indian Economy, Government policies and interventions for development

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)

- The Code creates time-bound processes for insolvency resolution of companies and individuals. These processes will be completed within **180 days** (unless extended by a one time extendable period of **90 days**). If insolvency cannot be resolved, the assets of the borrower may be sold to repay creditors (known as *liquidation*).
- The resolution processes are conducted by licensed insolvency professionals (IPs). These IPs are members of insolvency professional agencies (IPAs).

- **Information utilities** (IUs) are established to collect, collate and disseminate financial information to facilitate insolvency resolution.
- The **National Company Law Tribunal** (NCLT) adjudicates insolvency resolution for companies and Limited Liability Partnerships. The **Debt Recovery Tribunal** (DRT) adjudicates insolvency resolution for individuals and partnership firms.
- The **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India** (IBBI) regulates the functioning of IPs, IPAs and IUs.
- IBC was later amended with the provision to **bar promoters from bidding for their own companies**. It prevented defaulters from regaining control of their companies at a cheaper value
- The code was again amended in 2019 which mandates a deadline for the completion of the resolution process **within 330 days, including all litigation and judicial processes**.

Background

- Recently, the union Cabinet approved a proposal to suspend initiation of bankruptcy proceedings against companies under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code for a period of six months, which could be extended to one year.
- The move is expected to provide relief for corporates as the pandemic and subsequent lockdown had significantly impacted economic activities.

Why in News?

- Former RBI deputy governor Viral Acharya said the suspension of insolvency laws for a year is "too long" and India should look at operationalising the bankruptcy rules in the next three months.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Dear students,

- In Pulse 8 (dated July 19-25), under "United Nations Security Council" topic, we had given "Recently, India became a non-permanent member of the Security Council for a **single year term of 2021-22**". It is an error. India has become a non-permanent of the UNSC for a **two year term starting on January 1, 2021**. We regret the error.

1) South China Sea dispute

Regional and global groupings and agreements, Important International institutions, Effect of policies on India's interests

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.
- In recent years China has built bases on artificial islands in the sea, saying its rights go back centuries.



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

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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?

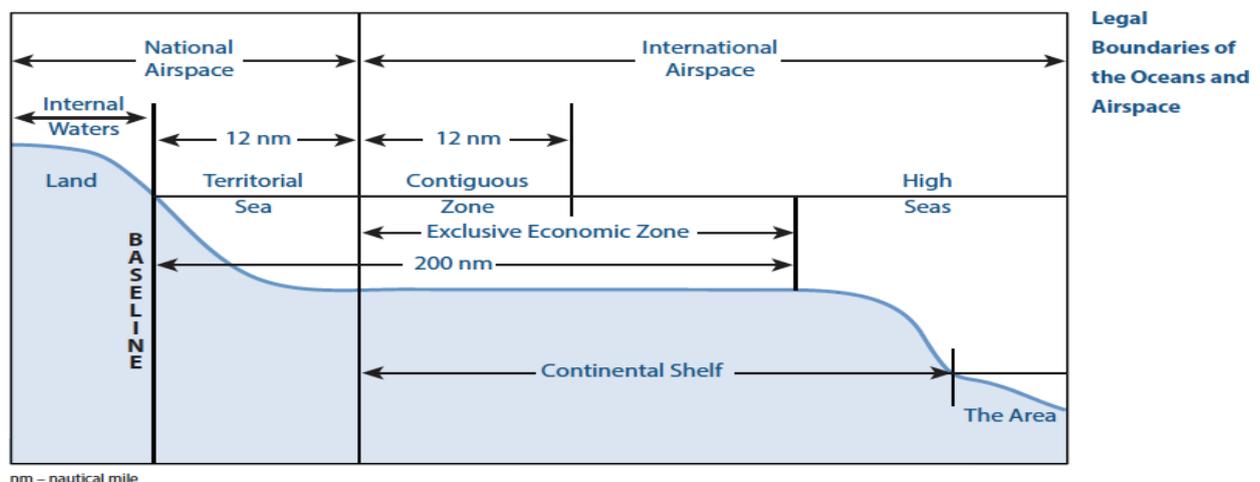
- Australia has formally rejected China's territorial and maritime claims in the South China Sea, aligning itself more closely with the US as tensions rise.

- In a declaration to the United Nations, Australia said the claims, which take in the majority of the sea, had "no legal basis".
- The declaration comes after the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declared Beijing's pursuit of territory and resources in the South China Sea as illegal, explicitly backing the territorial claims of Southeast Asian countries against China's.

Related information

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 :
 - **the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea,**
 - **the International Seabed Authority,**
 - **the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.**
- **India** is party to UNCLOS.
- UNCLOS classifies marine areas into five zones. They are:
 - Territorial sea
 - Contiguous zone
 - Exclusive economic zone
 - Continental shelf
 - High Sea



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 overflight, 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) China's quadrilateral dialogue

Regional and global groupings and agreements, Effect of policies on India's interests

Belt and Road Initiative

- China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aims to strengthen Beijing's economic leadership through a vast program of infrastructure building throughout China's neighbouring regions.
- Launched in 2013 by President Xi Jinping, the vast collection of development and

investment initiatives would stretch from **East Asia to Europe**, significantly expanding China's economic and political influence.

- The plan was two-pronged: the **overland Silk Road Economic Belt** and the **Maritime Silk Road**. The two were collectively referred to first as the **One**

Belt, One Road initiative but eventually became the Belt and Road Initiative.

- China's vision included creating a vast network of railways, energy pipelines, highways, and streamlined border crossings, both westward—through the mountainous former Soviet republics—and southward, to Pakistan, India, and the rest of Southeast Asia.

Land and Sea Corridors of the Belt and Road Initiative



- To date, **more than sixty countries**—accounting for two-thirds of the world's population—have signed on to projects or indicated an interest in doing so.

What are the potential roadblocks?

- The Belt and Road Initiative has also stoked opposition. BRI projects are built using **low-interest loans** as opposed to aid grants. Some BRI investments have involved **opaque bidding processes** and **required the use of Chinese firms**. As a result, contractors have inflated costs, leading to canceled projects and political backlash.
- Critics worry China could use **“debt-trap diplomacy”** to extract strategic concessions – such as over territorial disputes in the South China Sea or silence on human rights violations.

India's position

- India has tried to convince countries that the BRI is a plan to dominate Asia, warning of what some analysts have called a **“String of Pearls”** geo-economics strategy whereby China creates unsustainable debt burdens for its Indian Ocean neighbors in order to seize control of regional choke points.

- Meanwhile, India has provided its own development assistance to neighbors, most notably Afghanistan, where it has spent \$3 billion on infrastructure projects.

What is the CPEC project?

- China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) refers to a clutch of major infrastructure works currently under way in Pakistan, intended to **link Kashgar in China's Xinjiang province to Gwadar deep sea port** close to Pakistan's border with Iran.
- Several other road, rail and power projects are associated with the corridor, and the project seeks to expand and upgrade infrastructure across the length and breadth of Pakistan, and to widen and deepen economic ties with China.
- CPEC is **part of the larger Belt and Road Initiative**.
- CPEC was launched in 2015 when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Pakistan and it now envisages investment of over USD 60 billion in different projects of development in Pakistan.



Significance

- The goal of CPEC is both to transform Pakistan's economy—by modernizing its road, rail, air, and energy transportation systems—and to connect the deep-sea Pakistani ports of Gwadar and Karachi to

China's Xinjiang province and beyond by overland routes.

- This would reduce the time and cost of transporting goods and energy such as natural gas to China by circumventing the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea.
- The CPEC project is also strategically important for China. Currently, eighty percent of China's oil has to pass through the **Strait of Malacca**, a narrow stretch of water between the Indonesian island of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. In the event of a conflict, the Malacca Strait could easily be blocked by a rival nation, cutting off China from crucial energy resources. CPEC allows China to circumvent the Strait of Malacca and reduce its dependency on the strait.

India's position on CPEC

- India has been opposing the project as it **passes through Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)**, which New Delhi considers its own territory.
- India claims that the CPEC project encroaches on sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.

Why in News?

- Recently, China convened a rare quadrilateral dialogue with the Foreign Ministers of **Afghanistan, Nepal and Pakistan**, pledging to strengthen cooperation among the four nations in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic as well as boosting their economic recoveries, including through regional connectivity projects.
- China outlined several proposals at the meet, including for the four countries to cooperate under China's **Belt and Road Initiative**.
- China also proposed extending the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor** to Afghanistan, as well as taking forward an economic corridor plan with Nepal, called the Trans-Himalayan Multi-dimensional Connectivity Network.

3) Dispute settlement panels against India

Important International institutions, Effect of policies on India's interests, Bilateral relations

Dispute settlement mechanism of WTO

- According to the procedure established by the WTO, the first step to resolve a trade dispute is engaging in the **consultation process**.
- If two trading partners having a dispute could not resolve at that level, one of them can ask for a settlement of the **Dispute Settlement Body (DSB)** for hearing.
- The DSB's ruling can be challenged at the **appellate body**, the highest court for global trade disputes.

WTO's Appellate Body

- The Appellate Body is a standing committee of **seven members** that presides over appeals against judgments passed in trade-related disputes brought by WTO members.
- Members of the Appellate Body have four-year terms.
- In the selection process, WTO members follow the **consensus principle**, which means that the nomination of the Appellate Body members can only proceed smoothly with the agreement of all 164 members of the WTO.
- The Appellate Body **must have at least three sitting members** to hear an appeal.

Why in News?

- The WTO has set up two more dispute settlement panels, this time at the request of Japan and Taiwan, targeting import duties imposed by India on a number of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) products including mobile phones.
- The two new dispute settlement panels against India take up the number of panels constituted to examine the same tariff-related issue to three as the European Union had a panel established at the WTO last month.

4) Green Growth Equity Fund

Bilateral relations

What is it?

- The Green Growth Equity Fund (GGEF) was established in 2017 as a **joint UK-India fund** specifically designed to **promote sustainable energy projects**.
- The two countries have invested over £240 million of anchor capital into the fund, which is expected to raise up to £500 million from institutional investors.
- GGEF is registered as an **Alternative Investment Fund (AIF)** with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

Why in News?

- GGEF is starting to mobilise private investment.

About AIF

- Alternative Investment Fund means any fund established or incorporated in India which is a privately pooled investment vehicle which collects funds from sophisticated investors, whether Indian or foreign, for investing it in accordance with a defined investment policy for the benefit of its investors.
- **AIF does not include funds covered under the SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 1996, SEBI (Collective Investment Schemes) Regulations, 1999 or any other regulations of the Board to regulate fund management activities.**

Categories of AIF:

- 1) Category I AIF (venture capital funds, SME Funds, social venture funds, infrastructure funds, etc)
 - 2) Category II AIF (real estate funds, private equity funds, funds for distressed assets, etc)
 - 3) Category III AIF (hedge funds, private investment in public equity (PIPE) Funds, etc)
- In India, AIFs are regulated by the **Securities and Exchange Board of India (Alternative Investment Funds) Regulations, 2012**.

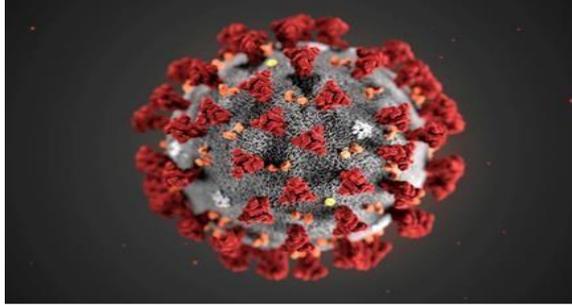
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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1) Is SARS-CoV-2 a latent virus?

GS 3: Science and Technology

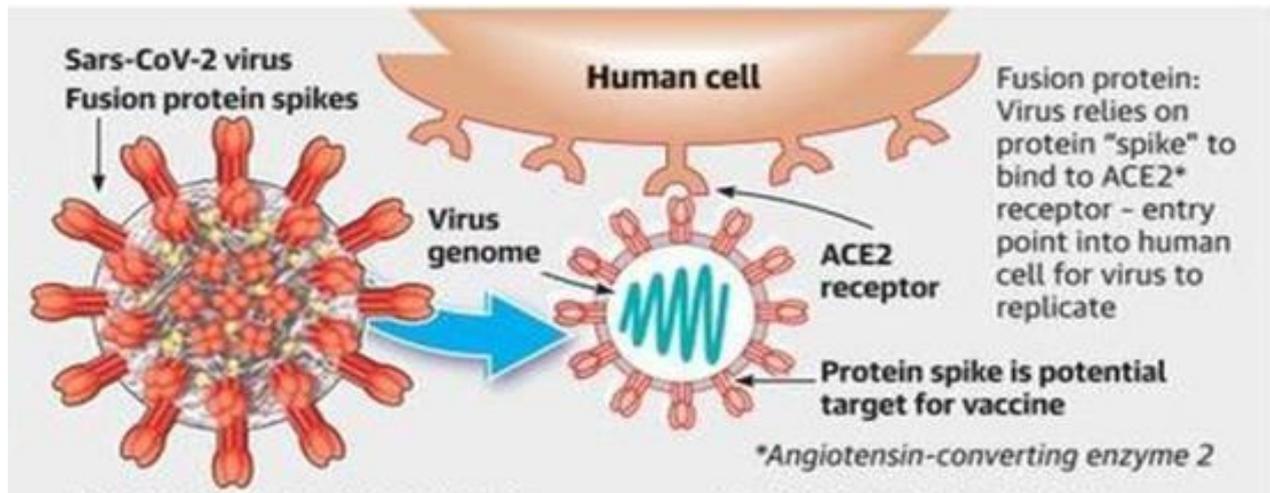
About SARS-CoV-2 virus



- The SARS-CoV-2 is a **corona virus** which is a large family of viruses with some causing less severe common cold to more severe diseases such as severe acute

respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).

- It is the causative agent of **COVID-19** influenza which has been declared as a pandemic outbreak.
- Like other coronaviruses, SARS-CoV-2 virus particles are **spherical** and have mushroom-shaped proteins called **spikes** protruding from their surface, giving the particles a crown-like appearance.
- The **spike binds and fuses to human cells**, allowing the virus to gain entry.
- The spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2 binds to the **cellular receptor** called **angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2)**, which serves as the **entry point into human cells**.



- But unlike in the case of SARS, the spike protein of the novel corona virus binds to the cell receptor with much higher affinity — 10- to 20-fold higher.
- The much greater binding affinity to the cell receptor explains the apparent **high human-to-human transmissibility** of the virus compared with the SARS corona virus.

Why in News?

- Ever since cases of 'reinfection' — people who had tested negative for COVID-19 testing positive again after a while — the question of **latency of the SARS-CoV-2 virus** is being hotly debated.

What is latency of a virus?

- A latent infection is when the virus in the body is **dormant or inactive** and **does not replicate within the host**.

- It however **possesses the capacity to be reactivated** at some point, causing a flare-up of the disease much later.
- The latent viral infections can be reactivated into a **lytic form**, in which there is replication of the viral genome.
- The latent (or persistent; but not chronic) infections are essentially static which **last the life of the host** and occur when the primary infection is not cleared by the adaptive immune response.
- Examples are Herpes simplex viruses type 1 and 2, varicella-zoster virus, HIV, Epstein-Barr virus (human herpesvirus 4), and cytomegalovirus.

Two categories of virus

- Viruses fall into two broad categories: chronic and acute; while a **chronic virus** will **infect its host for extended periods**

of time, often through the lifetime of the host.

- An **acute** infecting virus, such as influenza and rotavirus, is cleared from the body after a **few days or weeks**.
- A chronic virus can go into latency.

Does SARS-CoV-2 go into latency?

- There have been numerous cases around the world of people who got cured of Covid-19 testing positive for the infection again.
- Some experts have observed that the COVID-19 virus may have “reactivated” in the patients rather than them becoming re-infected.
- However, the latency of SARS-CoV-2 has **not yet been established conclusively**.

2) Tsirkon (Zircon) hypersonic cruise missile of Russia

GS 3: Science and Technology

About Tsirkon (Zircon) missile

- The **3M22 Zircon** (NATO reporting name: **SS-N-33**) is a **scramjet-powered maneuvering anti-ship hypersonic cruise missile** developed in Russia.
- The Zircon missile is strategically valuable due primarily to its speed.



- It has been reported that the missile can reach a speed upto **Mach 8**, which would make it the fastest in the world, making it **nearly impossible to defend** against due to its speed alone.
- Another valuable aspect of the missile is its **plasma cloud** (plasma is considered the fourth state consisting of ionized gas).
- During flight, the missile is completely covered by a plasma cloud that absorbs any rays of radio frequencies and makes the missile invisible to radars.

Why in News?

- The Tsirkon (Zircon) hypersonic cruise missiles, which **can be deployed on surface ships** are in their final phase of testing.

What are the Mach speeds?



Mach Number

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$$\text{ratio} = \frac{\text{Object Speed}}{\text{Speed of Sound}} = \text{Mach Number}$$



Transonic
Mach = 1.0



Supersonic
Mach > 1.0



Hypersonic
Mach > 5.0

Subsonic
Mach < 1.0

- The ratio of the speed of the aircraft to the speed of sound in the gas is called the Mach number in honour of **Ernst Mach**, a late 19th century physicist who studied gas dynamics.
- Thus, a plane travelling at the **speed of sound** is travelling at **Mach 1** or about **1225 kmph**.
- Mach 2 is twice the speed of sound and so on.

3) Operation Breathing Space

GS 2: Bilateral relations

GS 3: Science and Technology

Why in News?

- An Israeli team, led by a high ranking research and development (R&D) defence official, arrived in Delhi for the multi-pronged mission, codenamed “Operation Breathing Space”.

About Operation Breathing Space

- It is a India-Israel joint mission to work on the corona virus (COVID-19) response.
- The mission would be coordinated by **Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)**, and Indian **Ministry of Defence (MOD)** and the **Ministry of Health**.
- Under this, rapid tests are being developed which will provide results in less than 30 seconds if successful.
- The Israeli delegation led by the **Directorate of Defense Research and Development** of Israel, would conduct a series of tests to determine the

effectiveness of a number of rapid diagnostic solutions along with Indian scientists and the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.

New rapid tests

- Trials on new testing have been conducted at a special testing site at Dr Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital, New Delhi.
- Four different kinds of simple, non-invasive technologies have been used in the trials, which includes an audio test, a breath test, thermal testing, and a polyamino test which seeks to isolate proteins related to COVID-19.
- In the audio test, a patient's voice would be recorded and evaluated through **artificial intelligence and machine learning**.
- The breath test would involve making the patient blow into a tube, which would be analysed through specialised "high-frequency" methodology, using **Terra-Hertz (THZ) waves**.
- Isothermal testing allows detection of the virus in a saliva sample with the help of a chemical reaction and produces a result within 30 minutes, while testing using Polyamino acids too detects virus proteins in a saliva sample in a few minutes.

4) Spear Phishing

GS 3: Awareness in the fields of Science and Technology, Cyber security

What is Spear Phishing?

- Spear phishing is an **email or electronic communications scam** targeted towards a specific individual, organization or business.
- It is a targeted attempt to **steal sensitive information** such as account credentials or financial information from a specific victim, often for malicious reasons.
- Spear-phishing can also trick people into downloading malware or malicious codes after people click on links or open attachments provided in messages.

How is it done?

- This is achieved by acquiring personal details on the victim such as their friends, hometown, employer, locations they

frequent, and what they have recently bought online.

- The attackers then disguise themselves as a trustworthy friend or entity to acquire sensitive information, typically through email or other online messaging.

Spear-Phishing vs. Phishing

- Spear-phishing can easily be confused with phishing because they are both online attacks on users that aim to acquire confidential information.
- **Phishing** is a broader term for **any attempt to trick victims into sharing sensitive information** such as passwords, usernames, and credit card details for malicious reasons.



- The attackers often disguise themselves as a trustworthy entity and make contact with their target via email, social media, **phone calls** (often called "**vishing**" for **voice-phishing**), and even **text messages** (often called "**smishing**" for **SMS-phishing**).
- Unlike spear-phishing attacks, **phishing attacks are not personalized to their victims**, and are usually **sent to masses** of people at the same time.
- **Spear-phishing** attacks target a **specific victim**, and messages are modified to **specifically address that victim**, purportedly coming from an entity that they are familiar with and containing personal information.
- Spear-phishing requires more thought and time to achieve than phishing.
- Spear-phishing attackers try to obtain as much personal information about their victims as possible to make the emails that they send look legitimate and to increase their chance of fooling recipients.

- Because of the personal level of these emails, it is more difficult to identify spear-phishing attacks than to identify phishing attacks conducted at a wide scale.
- This is why spear-phishing attacks are becoming more prevalent.

Why in News?

- Twitter Inc, whose internal systems were breached recently, said the incident targeted a small number of employees through a **phone “spear-phishing”** attack.
- Previously, a series of high-profile Twitter accounts were hacked and were used to dupe other users to transfer digital currency, bitcoins to the hackers’ account.

News in Detail

- Attackers have targeted specific employees who had access to account support tools.
- Hackers had accessed Twitter's internal systems on July 15 to hijack some of the platform's top voices including U.S. presidential candidate Joe Biden, former U.S. President Barack Obama and billionaire Elon Musk and used them to solicit digital currency.
- Publicly available blockchain records show the apparent scammers received more than \$1,00,000 worth of cryptocurrency.

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ART & CULTURE

1) Gurjara-Pratihara Empire

GS 1: Indian culture

About

- The Gurjara-Pratiharas, or simply, the **Pratiharas (8th century CE - 11th century CE)** held their sway over **western and northern India**.
- The Pratiharas rose to fame in the late 8th century CE after **successfully resisting Arab invaders**.
- **Bhoja or Mihira Bhoja (c. 836-885 CE, title: Adivaraha)** was the most well-known king of this dynasty.
- The expansion of the Gurjara-Pratihara kingdom involved constant conflicts with other contemporary powers such as the **Palas** (eastern India) and the **Rashtrakutas** (southern India) known as the **tripartite struggle**.



Foreigners' account

- Primary literary sources for their history include the accounts of Arab merchants who visited India in this period like **Suleiman** (c. 9th century CE) and **al-Masudi** (visited Gujarat in 915-16 CE).
- All these writers refer to the Pratihara Kingdom as **al-Juzr** (derived from the Sanskrit Gurjara) and attest "to the great power and prestige of the Pratihara rulers and the vastness of their empire".

Art and Architecture

- The Pratiharas were known chiefly for their patronage of art, literature, sculpture and temple-building.

- The poet **Rajashekhara** was associated with Mahendrapala and Mahipala and left behind many works of note.
- The sculptural styles developed during the period were unique and remained an influence on later styles.
- The **nagara** style of Hindu temple architecture received a big boost under their rule.
- According to this style, the temple was built on a stone platform with steps leading up to it, with many regional variations.
- This style became very popular in northern India in the following centuries.

Why in News?

- Natesa idol which was stolen from India in 1998 is set to be returned to India.
- The Natesa icon was originally from the **Ghateswara Temple, Baroli, Rajasthan** and it belonged to the 9th century **Pratihara style** of Rajasthan.

About the idol



- The sandstone Natesa figure stands tall at almost 4 ft. in a rare and brilliant depiction of Shiva in the late 9th century Pratihara style of Rajasthan.
- A beautiful depiction of Nandi is shown behind the right leg of the Natesa icon.

PIB ANALYSIS

1) MAUSAM APP

GS Paper 3- Science and Technology

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Earth Sciences has recently launched Mobile App "Mausam" dedicated to the general public and designed to communicate the weather information and forecasts in a lucid manner without technical jargons.
- The mobile app has been designed and developed jointly by **International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)**'s Digital Agriculture & Youth (DAY) team, Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune and **India Meteorological Department**.

About:

- The app is an important tool for the dissemination of weather information and warnings in a user-friendly and attractive manner.
- The MAUSAM mobile App has the following 5 services:
- **Current Weather** -Current temperature, humidity, wind speed and direction for 200 cities updated 8 times a day. Information on Sunrise/ sunset and moonrise/ moonset are also given.
- **Nowcast**- Three hourly warnings of localized weather phenomena and their intensity issued for about 800 stations, and districts of India by State Meteorological Centres of IMD. In case of severe weather, its impact also is included in the warning.
- **City Forecast** – Past 24 hours and 7 day forecast of weather conditions around 450 cities in India.
- **Warnings**- Alerts issued twice a day for all districts for the next five days in colour code (Red, Orange and Yellow) to warn citizens of approaching dangerous weather. The colour code Red is the most severe category urging authorities to take action, Orange code prompts authorities and public to be alert and Yellow code prompts authorities and public to keep themselves updated.
- **Radar products**: Latest Station wise radar products updated every 10 minutes.

About IMD

- The India Meteorological Department was established in 1875. It is the National Meteorological Service of the country and the principal government agency in all matters relating to meteorology, seismology and allied subjects.
- **IMD's mandate**
- To take **meteorological observations** and to provide current and forecast meteorological information for optimum operation of weather-sensitive activities like agriculture, irrigation, shipping, aviation, offshore oil explorations, etc.
- To **warn against severe weather** phenomena like tropical cyclones, norwesters, dust storms, heavy rains and snow, cold and heat waves, etc., which cause destruction of life and property.
- ② To provide **meteorological statistics required for agriculture**, water resource management, industries, oil exploration and other nation-building activities.
- ② To conduct and **promote research in meteorology** and allied disciplines.
- ② To **detect and locate earthquakes** and to **evaluate seismicity** in different parts of the country for development projects.

ICRISAT

- It is a non-profit, non-political organization that conducts agricultural research for development in the drylands of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.
- It is headquartered in Hyderabad, Telangana.

2) Ayushman Bharat Scheme

About Ayushman Bharat

- Ayushman Bharat is an attempt to move from sectoral and segmented approach of health service delivery to a **comprehensive need-based health care service**. Ayushman Bharat adopts a continuum of care approach, comprising of two interrelated components, which are -
- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)
- Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs)

Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana

- Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY is the largest health assurance scheme in the world which aims at providing a **health cover of Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization** to over 10 crores poor and vulnerable families that form the bottom 40% of the Indian population.
- The households included are based on the deprivation and occupational criteria of **Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011 (SECC 2011)** for rural and urban areas respectively.
- PM-JAY subsumed the then **existing Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)** and the **Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme (SCHIS)**.

Key Features:

- PM-JAY is the world's largest health insurance/ assurance scheme fully financed by the government.
- It provides a cover of **Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization** across **public and private empanelled hospitals** in India.
- Over 10.74 crore poor and vulnerable entitled families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) are eligible for these benefits.
- PM-JAY provides **cashless access to health care services** for the beneficiary at the point of service, that is, the hospital.
- There is **no restriction on the family size, age or gender**.
- **All pre-existing conditions are covered from day one**.
- Benefits of the scheme are **portable** across the country i.e. a beneficiary can visit any empanelled public or private hospital in India to avail cashless treatment.
- Public hospitals are reimbursed for the healthcare services at par with the private hospitals.

Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs)

- Under this component, **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** 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.
- The emphasis of health promotion and prevention is designed to bring focus on keeping people healthy by engaging and empowering individuals and communities to choose healthy behaviours and make changes that reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases and morbidities.

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?

- The resilience of India's public health systems particularly in the rural hinterland was reflected through continued operationalization of the Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres (AB - HWCs) and continued delivery of non-COVID essential health services while also meeting the urgent tasks of prevention and management of COVID-19.

Role of HWCs during Covid times

- The AB-HWCs have been very useful in the pandemic as their **population-based screenings** for non-communicable diseases have provided the State health authorities a list of those with chronic diseases and the vulnerable, co-morbid population which has to be protected from COVID-19 on priority.
- Their ability to rapidly screen individuals with co-morbidities and provide advice for protection against infection has been instrumental in winning public trust.

- **Immunization sessions** have been organized by the HWC teams where medical checkups of pregnant women are ensured apart from the delivery of essential medicines to TB, leprosy, hypertensive and diabetic patients.
- 32,000 yoga sessions were conducted recently in AB-HWCs all across India.

3) India Report on Digital Education, 2020

GS Paper 2 - Government Policies and Interventions, Education

What's in the news?

- The **Ministry of Human Resource Development** has released the India Report on Digital Education 2020.

About:

- The report elaborates on the innovative methods adopted by the Ministry of HRD, Education Departments of States and Union Territories for ensuring accessible and inclusive education to children at home and reducing learning gaps.
- This report gives a better understanding of the various initiatives taken to facilitate remote learning and education for all by taking schools to the students.
- The quality digital education has acquired a new urgency in the present context of globalization, and the pandemic as well.

Initiatives by HRD Ministry

- It has initiated many projects to assist teachers, scholars and students in their pursuit of learning like
- **DIKSHA platform**-It is a platform for school education which offers teachers, students and parents engaging learning material relevant to the prescribed school curriculum.It currently support 18 languages and the various curricula of NCERT, CBSE and SCERTs across India. The platform is being leveraged and developed for school education, foundational learning programs and to support inclusive learning for underserved and differently-abled communities of learners and teachers.
- **SWAYAM**- SWAYAM is the national online education platform hosting 1900 courses covering both school (class IX to XII) And Higher Education (undergraduate, post graduate programs) in all subjects

including engineering, humanities and social sciences, law and management courses.

- **SWAYAM PRABHA**- It has 32 D2H TV channels transmitting educational contents on 24/7 basis. These channels are available for viewing all across the country using DD free Dish set top box and antenna. The channels cover both school education and Higher Education.
- **On Air**- Extensive use of Radio, Community radio and CBSE Podcast - Shiksha Vani
- Special e-content for visually and hearing impaired-**Developed on Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY)** and in sign language on NIOS website/YouTube
- Online Coaching: ITPAL for IITJEE/NEET preparation
- **e-PATHSHALA**-In this web portal NCERT has deployed 1886 audios, 2000 videos, 696 e-books (e-Pubs) and 504 Flip Books for classes 1st to 12th in different languages.
- **National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER)**- NROER portal has a total of 14527 files including 401 collections, 2779 documents, 1345 interactive, 1664 audios, 2586 images and 6153 videos on different languages.

Initiatives by State Governments

- Some of the major digital initiatives are SMILE (Social Media Interface for Learning Engagement) in Rajasthan, Padhai Tunhar duvaar (Education at your doorstep) in Chhattisgarh, Mission Buniyaad in NCT of Delhi etc.
- Some states have launched innovative mobile apps and portals as means to facilitate remote learning.
- Madhya Pradesh has launched Top Parent App, a free mobile app that empowers parents of young children (3-8 years) with knowledge and strategies around child development to help them meaningfully engage with their children.
- Assam has launched the Biswa Vidya Assam Mobile Application for class 6 to 10.
- States are also pioneering Whatsapp as a medium for education and to encourage

teachers, parents, and students to stay connected.

- Odisha Shiksha Sanjog - a Whatsapp based digital learning programme has been launched in Odisha that shares e- content with class groups in a streamlined way. Many states have had to be creative with low tech forms of teaching and instruction delivery with low or nil requirements of the internet.
- In Arunachal Pradesh, primary class students are receiving interesting Radio talks in their mother tongue through All India Radio, Itanagar.
- Ladakh is collaborating with NGOs like EMBIBE Bangalore and 17000 feet in providing online education to students even in low connectivity zones.
- NIOS & Swayam Prabha contents are disseminated focusing on children who are not connected to the internet and have limited access to radio & TV.
- Jammu & Kashmir has distributed free tabs to students, along with laptops & Braille tactile readers for visually impaired learners.
- Andhra Pradesh has started Toll Free Call Centre and Toll Free Video call centre for students for understanding critical topics and clearing their doubts.
- **Psychological well being** is also focused upon. **Mental well-being of children** is also taken care of through happiness classes channelized through SMS/IVR for primary grade children in the national capital.

4) New Education Policy 2020

GS Paper 2 - Government Policies and Interventions, Education

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet has approved the National Education Policy 2020. The new policy aims to pave way for transformational reforms in school and higher education systems in the country. This policy will replace the 34 year old National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986.

Key Highlights

School Education

- New Policy aims for **universalization of education from preschool to secondary level with 100 % Gross Enrolment**

Ratio (GER) in school education by 2030.

- NEP 2020 will bring 2 crore out of school children back into the mainstream through an open schooling system.
- The current 10+2 system to be replaced by a new **5+3+3+4 curricular structure** corresponding to ages 3-8, 8-11, 11-14, and 14-18 years respectively. This will bring the hitherto uncovered age group of 3-6 years under school curriculum, which has been recognized globally as the crucial stage for development of mental faculties of a child.
- The new system will have **12 years of schooling with three years of Anganwadi/ pre schooling.**
- Emphasis on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, no rigid separation between academic streams, extracurricular, vocational streams in schools; **Vocational Education** to start from Class 6 with Internships.
- NEP 2020 calls for the setting up of a **National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy** by the Education Ministry. States will prepare an implementation plan for attaining **universal foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary schools for all learners by grade 3 by 2025.**
- The policy states, the medium of instruction until at least class 5 (and preferably till class 8) should be **“home language or mother tongue or local/regional language”**. The policy gives the freedom to the state, region, and child to choose **three languages** to be learned. However, at least two of the three languages should be native Indian languages.
- Assessment reforms with **360 degree Holistic Progress Card, tracking Student Progress for achieving Learning Outcomes.**
- A new and comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, NCFTE 2021, will be formulated by the NCTE in consultation with NCERT.
- By 2030, the **minimum degree qualification for teaching will be a 4-year integrated B.Ed. degree.**

- Every state/district will be encouraged to establish "**Bal Bhavans**" as a special daytime boarding school, to participate in art-related, career-related, and play-related activities.

Fresh focus Key differences between the existing system and the NEP recommendations

Current system	Draft policy recommendations
▪ RTE covers Class 1 to Class 8	▪ RTE from preschool (age 3 onwards) till Class 12
▪ Anganwadis, preschools cover 3 to 6 age group	▪ Integrated primary school framework from age 3 to 8
▪ Focus on health and nutrition in anganwadis	▪ Anganwadis, preschools to be linked to local primary schools
▪ Rote learning, formal teaching in preschools	▪ Focus on play and discovery-based learning
▪ WCD Ministry oversees anganwadi system	▪ MHRD to oversee educational aspects



Higher Education

- **Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education to be raised to 50 % by 2035;** 3.5 crore seats to be added in higher education.
- The policy envisages broad based, multi-disciplinary, holistic Undergraduate education with flexible curriculum, creative combinations of subjects, integration of vocational education and multiple entry and exit points with appropriate certification.
- **UG education can be of 3 or 4 years with multiple exit options and appropriate certification within this period.**
- Academic Bank of Credits to be established to facilitate Transfer of Credits.
- Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), at par with IITs, IIMs, to be set up as models of best multidisciplinary education of global standards in the country.
- The **National Research Foundation** will be created as an apex body for fostering a strong research culture and building research capacity across higher education.
- **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)** will be set up as a single umbrella

body for the entire higher education, excluding medical and legal education. Public and private higher education institutions will be governed by the same set of norms for regulation, accreditation and academic standards. Also, HECI will be having four independent verticals namely,

- National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) for regulation,
- General Education Council (GEC) for standard setting,
- Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) for funding,
- National Accreditation Council (NAC) for accreditation.
- Affiliation of colleges is to be phased out in 15 years and a stage-wise mechanism is to be established for granting graded autonomy to colleges.
- Over a period of time, it is envisaged that every college would develop into either an Autonomous degree-granting College, or a constituent college of a university.
- High performing Indian universities will be encouraged to set up campuses in other countries, and similarly, selected universities, those from among the top 100 universities in the world will be facilitated to operate in India.

Others focus areas

- An autonomous body, the **National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)**, will be created to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to enhance learning, assessment, planning, administration.
- NEP 2020 emphasizes setting up of **Gender Inclusion Fund, Special Education Zones for disadvantaged regions** and groups
- New Policy **promotes Multilingualism in both schools and higher education.**
- **National Institute for Pali, Persian and Prakrit, Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation to be set up.**
- The Centre and the States will work together to increase the public investment in the **Education sector to reach 6% of GDP at the earliest.**

5) AIM-iCREST

Gs Paper 3 - Science and Technology

About:

- AIM-iCREST has been designed to **enable the incubation ecosystem** across the country.
- Under the initiative, the Atal Innovation Mission's (AIM) incubators are set to upscale and provided requisite support to foster the incubation enterprise economy that will help them to significantly enhance their performance and will be complemented by providing training to entrepreneurs, through technology-driven processes and platforms.
- This programme is unique also in its design as it is a combination of interactive practices in the field of incubation; enabling the incubators to support sustainable and successful startups

Implementation:

- AIM has joined hands with **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** and **Wadhvani Foundation** – organizations that can lend credible support and expertise in the entrepreneurship and innovation space.
- The partnerships will provide global expertise and showcase proven best practices to the AIM's incubator network.

About Atal Innovation Mission

- Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is Government of India's flagship initiative to promote a culture of **innovation and entrepreneurship** in the country.
- The Atal Innovation Mission has following two core functions:
 - **Entrepreneurship promotion** through Self-Employment and Talent Utilization, wherein innovators would be supported and mentored to become successful entrepreneurs.
 - **Innovation promotion** to provide a platform where innovative ideas are generated.
- The major initiatives of AIM are:
 - 1) **Atal Tinkering Labs**-Creating problem solving mindset across schools in India.
 - 2) **Atal Incubation Centers**-Fostering world class startups and adding a new dimension to the incubator model.
 - 3) **Atal New India Challenges**-Fostering product innovations and aligning them to the needs of various sectors/ministries.
 - 4) **Mentor India Campaign**- A national Mentor network in collaboration with

public sector, corporates and institutions, to support all the initiatives of the mission.

- 5) **Atal Community Innovation Center**- To stimulate community centric innovation and ideas in the unserved /underserved regions of the country including Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.
- 6) **ARISE**-To stimulates innovation and research in the MSME industry.

6) Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat**Gs Paper 1 - Art and Culture About****Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat:**

- The initiative 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 31st October, 2015 to commemorate the birth anniversary of Sardar Patel to **revive a sense of 'nationhood'**.
- The programme aims to **actively enhance interaction between people of diverse cultures** living in different States and UTs in India, with the objective of promoting greater mutual understanding amongst them.
- As per the programme, each year, every State/UT would be paired with another State/UT in India for reciprocal interaction between the people.
- It is envisaged through this exchange, that the knowledge of the language, culture, traditions and practices of different states will lead to an enhanced understanding and bonding between one another, thereby strengthening the unity and integrity of India.
- The broad objectives of the initiative are as follows:
 - 1) **To CELEBRATE** the Unity in Diversity of our Nation and to maintain and strengthen the fabric of traditionally existing emotional bonds between the people of our Country;
 - 2) **To PROMOTE** the spirit of national integration through a deep and structured engagement between all Indian States and Union Territories through a year-long planned engagement between States;
 - 3) **To SHOWCASE** the rich heritage and culture, customs and traditions of either State for enabling people to understand

and appreciate the diversity that is India, thus fostering a sense of common identity

- 4) **TO ESTABLISH** long-term engagements and,
- 5) **TO CREATE** an environment which promotes learning between States by sharing best practices and experiences.

Why in News?

- A webinar on the theme "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat - Bihar and Mizoram" was organized recently.

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News in Depth

AIR NEWS

1) SFURTI

Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections, Government policies and interventions for development

About the scheme

- SFURTI (Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries) was launched by the **Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)** in 2005 with the view to **promote Cluster development**.

Objective of the Scheme

- To **organize the traditional industries and artisans into clusters** to make them competitive and provide support for their long term sustainability
- To provide **sustained employment** for traditional Industry artisans and rural entrepreneurs
- To **enhance marketability** of products of clusters by providing support for new products, design intervention and improved packaging, and also the improvement of marketing Infrastructure
- To equip traditional artisans of the associated clusters with **improved skills and capabilities** through training and exposure visits
- To **strengthen the cluster governance systems** with the active participation of the stakeholders, so that they are able to gauge the emerging challenges and opportunities and respond to them in a coherent manner

Criteria for Selection of Clusters

- The selection of clusters will be based on their **geographical concentration** which should be around 500 beneficiary families of artisans/micro enterprises, suppliers of raw materials, traders, service providers, etc., located within one or two revenue sub-divisions in a District (or in contiguous Districts).

- The clusters would be from **khadi, coir and village industries, including leather and pottery**.
- The potential for growth in production and generation of employment opportunities will also be considered in selecting clusters under SFURTI.
- The geographical distribution of the clusters throughout the country, with **at least 10 per cent located in the North Eastern region**, will also be kept in view while selecting clusters.

Financial assistance & Nodal Agencies

- The financial assistance provided for any specific project shall be subject to a **maximum of Rs 8 crore**.
- The following agencies shall be designated as the Nodal Agencies for the Scheme:
 - **Khadi and Village Industries Commission** - for Khadi and Village Industry clusters
 - **Coir Board** - Coir based clusters

Who Can Apply

- Non-Government organizations (NGOs)
- Institutions of the Central and State Governments
- Semi-Government institutions
- Field functionaries of State and Central Govt.
- Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs)

Why in News?

- Vice Chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Khadi Village and Industries Board reviewed the status of SFURTI Clusters in the Union territory recently.

2) UDAN scheme

About the scheme

- In 2017, the **Ministry of Civil Aviation** launched the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) "UDAN" (Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik) which aims at **providing connectivity to un-served and under-served airports** of the country through

revival of existing air-strips and airports to make **flying affordable** to the common man who want to travel to and fro the Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities of the country.

- UDAN has a unique market-based model. Airline routes are allocated to operators selected through a **competitive bidding mechanism**.
- The scheme offers **viability gap funding** to companies in addition to waiver of certain statutory charges and taxes on jet fuel in order to offer affordable connectivity.
- Airlines have to set aside **50% of the total aircraft capacity** for cheaper fares to be offered at the rate of **Rs 2,500 per hour of flight**, in return for which airlines are given a subsidy by the Centre and the State government concerned.
- The airport that will be renovated under this scheme will be chosen after referring to the respective State government. Together with the State government the Central government will revive the dysfunctional and unserved airports of the country.
- The **Airports Authority of India (AAI)** is designated as the Implementing Agency under this Scheme.
- The scheme is now in its **fourth phase** with focus on bringing connectivity to priority areas like North East India, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, hilly states in other parts of the country, and islands.

Why in News?

- Recently, the Civil Aviation Minister flagged off the first helicopter service in Uttarakhand under the UDAN-RCS scheme.
- A total of 274 UDAN routes have been operationalized so far connecting 45 airports and 3 heliports since the launch of the first UDAN flight in 2017.

3) International Solar Alliance

About ISA

- International Solar Alliance (ISA) was launched in 2015 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former President of France Francois Hollande at the 21st session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP-21) in Paris, France.

- ISA was conceived as a coalition of **solar-resource-rich countries** (which lie either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn) to address their special energy needs.
- More than 60 countries have signed and ratified the ISA Framework Agreement.
- As guided by the Framework Agreement of the ISA, the interests and objectives of the ISA are as follows:
 - 1) To collectively address key common challenges to scale up solar energy applications in line with their needs;
 - 2) To mobilize investments of more than **USD 1000 billion by 2030**;
 - 3) To take coordinated action through programmes and activities launched on a voluntary basis, aimed at better harmonization, aggregation of demand, risk and resources, for promoting solar finance, solar technologies, innovation, R&D, capacity building etc.;
 - 4) Reduce the cost of finance to increase investments in solar energy in member countries by promoting innovative financial mechanisms and mobilizing finance from Institutions;
 - 5) Scale up applications of solar technologies in member countries, and
 - 6) Facilitate collaborative research and development (R&D) activities in solar energy technologies among member countries.
 - 7) Promote a common cyber platform for networking, cooperation and exchange of ideas among member countries;
- Most of the countries that are part of the ISA are from Asia, Africa, South America and the Pacific, are hydrocarbon-deficit with high energy demand and are grappling with issues ranging from lack of infrastructure, lack of manufacturing capacity and high energy tariffs. Therefore, it is increasingly important for these countries to get access to renewable energy (RE) at affordable prices.
- Countries that do not fall between the Tropics can also join the ISA and enjoy all benefits as other members, with the **exception of voting rights**.
- The Permanent Secretariat of ISA will be located in India at **Gurugram**, the first time that an inter-governmental treaty-

based alliance will have its headquarters in India. The Interim Secretariat of the ISA is located at the National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE), Gurugram.

Background

- For achieving the universalisation of the membership of the ISA beyond the tropics, the first General Assembly of the alliance, held on October 3, 2018, had adopted an amendment to the framework agreement on its establishment to expand the scope of membership to all member states of the United Nations, including those beyond the tropics.

Why in News?

- After the necessary ratifications/approvals/acceptances were obtained from the requisite number of ISA member countries, the above amendment has entered into force on July 15, 2020.
- It will enable member states of the UN to join the grouping, including those beyond the tropics.

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THE HINDU EDITORIALS

1) The chilling effect of criminal contempt

GS Paper 2- Judiciary

Contempt of Court

What is Contempt of Court?

- Contempt of court is an **act of disrespect or disobedience towards a judge or court's officers** or interference with its orderly process.
- According to the **Contempt of Courts Act, 1971**, contempt of court can either be civil contempt or criminal contempt.

Civil contempt

- It means **wilful disobedience** to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or other process of a court or wilful breach of an undertaking given to a court.

Criminal contempt

- It means the **publication** (whether by words, spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representations, or otherwise) of any matter or the doing of any other act whatsoever which
 - scandalises** or tends to scandalise, or lowers or tends to **lower the authority** of, any court; or
 - prejudices**, or interferes or tends to interfere with, the due course of any judicial proceeding; or
 - Interferes** or tends to interfere with, or obstructs or tends to obstruct, the administration of justice in any other manner.

Constitutional Provisions:

- Article 129:** Grants Supreme Court the power to punish for contempt of itself.
- Article 142(2):** Enables the Supreme Court to investigate and punish any person for its contempt.
- Article 215:** Grants every High Court the power to punish for contempt of itself.

Punishments for Contempt of Court:

- A contempt of court may be punished with **simple imprisonment** for a term which may extend to **six months**, or
- With fine which may extend to **two thousand rupees**, or with both, provided that the accused may be discharged or the punishment awarded may be remitted on

apology being made to the satisfaction of the court.

- The Supreme Court in 1991, ruled that it has the power to punish for contempt not only of itself but also of high courts, subordinate courts and tribunals functioning in the entire country.
- The High Courts have been given special powers to punish contempt of subordinate courts, as per Section 10 of The Contempt of Courts Act of 1971.

Why in the news?

- The Supreme Court initiated **suo motu proceedings for criminal contempt** against Prashant Bhushan, the lawyer and social activist for his tweet **criticising Chief Justice of India** and the role of Chief Justices in the last 6 years.

Need for contempt power

- Contempt power is needed
 - To **punish wilful disobedience to court orders** (civil contempt), as well as interference in the administration of justice and overt threats to judges.
 - To **insulate the institution from unfair attacks** and prevent a sudden fall in the judiciary's reputation in the public eye.

Arguments against contempt of court

Democracy defeated

- The need to "respect the authority and dignity of the court" has **monarchical origins** from when the King of England delivered judgments himself.
- But over the centuries, judges playing this adjudicatory role, showing extreme deference to judges does **not sit well with the idea of a democracy**.

A wide scope of contempt

- The definition of criminal contempt in India is **extremely wide**, and can be **easily invoked**.
- Also, **Suo motu** powers of the Court to initiate such proceedings only serve to complicate matters.

Against civil liberties

- A law for criminal contempt is completely **asynchronous with our democratic system** which recognises freedom of

speech and expression as a fundamental right.

- Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer famously termed the law of contempt as having a vague and wandering jurisdiction, with uncertain boundaries; contempt law, regardless of public good, may unwittingly trample upon civil liberties.

Chilling effect

- Liberal exercise of suo motu powers amount to the Court signalling that it will not suffer any kind of critical commentary about the institution at all.
- In this manner, the judiciary draws **resemblance with the executive**, in using **laws for chilling effect**.

Obsolete abroad

- Contempt has practically become **obsolete in foreign democracies**, with jurisdictions recognising that it is an **archaic law**, designed for use in a bygone era, whose utility and necessity has long vanished. For example,
 - England abolished the offence of “scandalising the court” in 2013.
 - Canada ties its test for contempt to real, substantial and immediate dangers to the administration.
 - American courts also no longer use the law of contempt in response to comments on judges or legal matters.

Arguments favouring contempt of court

Power from constitution

- The powers of contempt of the Supreme Court and High Courts are **independent of the Act 1971**.
- The contempt powers of the higher courts are **drawn from the Constitution** itself.
- So to delete the provision relating to ‘criminal contempt’ particularly ‘scandalising of courts’ will have **no impact on the power of the Superior Courts** to punish for contempt (including criminal contempt) in view of their inherent constitutional powers, as these powers are independent of statutory provisions.

Impact on subordinate judiciary

- The Act empowers the High Court to act if someone is in contempt of the subordinate courts. Diluting the Act would **expose the subordinate judiciary to acts of contempt of court**.

Adequate safeguards

- The 1971 Act contains “**adequate safeguards** to exclude instances which may not amount to criminal contempt” as defined under Section 2(c) of the Act 1971 which means that not all cases of contempt are considered.

Conclusion

- Examining an amendment to the Act to nix “scandalising the court” as a ground for contempt and **restrict contempt to only “wilful disobedience”** of directions/judgments of the court can be considered.
- Besides needing to revisit the need for a law on criminal contempt, even the **test for contempt needs to be evaluated**. It should not be allowed to be used as a means to prevent any and all criticism of an institution.

2) The majority cannot afford a balanced diet

Gs paper 2- Issues related to poverty and hunger

Context:

- A recent **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) analysis** shows that hundreds of millions of people in India above the international poverty line of \$1.90 purchasing power parity (PPP) per person per day **cannot afford a healthy or nutritious diet**.

Reason for poor nutrition

- The problem of poor nutrition in India is largely on account of the **unaffordability of good diets**, and not on account of lack of information on nutrition or tastes or cultural preferences.

About the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020 report

- It is a joint report issued **annually** by the **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, UNICEF, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization**.
- It presents the latest estimates on food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition at the global and regional levels.

Highlights of 2020 report

- The 2020 edition continues to signal that significant challenges remain in the fight

against **food insecurity and malnutrition** in all its forms.

- The report urges the transformation of food systems to reduce the cost of nutritious foods and increase the affordability of healthy diets.
- Almost **690 million people** around the world **went hungry in 2019**.
- High costs and low affordability also mean billions cannot eat healthily or nutritiously.
- As progress in fighting hunger stalls, the COVID-19 pandemic is intensifying the vulnerabilities and inadequacies of global food systems.
- While it is too early to assess the full impact of the lockdowns and other containment measures, at least **another 83 million to 132 million** people may go **hungry in 2020**.
- If recent trends continue, the **Zero Hunger target** of the Sustainable Development Goals will not be achieved by 2030.

What does the study want governments to do?

- **Mainstream nutrition** in their approaches to agriculture
- Work to cut cost-escalating factors in the production, storage, transport, distribution and marketing of food, including reducing inefficiencies, and food loss and waste
- **Support local small-scale producers** to grow and sell more nutritious foods, and secure their access to markets
- **Prioritize children's nutrition** as the category in greatest need
- Foster **behaviour change** through education and communication
- **Embed nutrition in national social protection systems** and investment strategies.

Types of diets

Basic energy sufficient diet

- This is one in which the required calorie intake is met by consuming only the **cheapest starchy cereal available** (say, rice or wheat).
- A requirement of 2,329 Kcal for a healthy young woman of 30 years is taken as the standard reference.

- This is **affordable to a poor person** or one defined as having an income of \$1.9 a day.

Nutrient adequate diet

- This is the one where the required calorie norms and the stipulated requirement of **23 macro- and micro-nutrients are met**. This diet includes least cost items from different food groups which costs **\$2.12 a day** that is **more than the international poverty line**.
- If a person with income just above the poverty line spent her entire daily expenditure on food (ignoring fuel, transport, rent, medicines or any other expenditure), even then she would not be able to afford the nutrient-adequate diet.
- The SOFI Report assumes that a person **cannot spend more than 63% of total expenditure on food** (that is, 37% would be required for non-food essentials).

Healthy diet

- This is one which meets the calorie norm and the macro- and micro-nutrient norm and also allows for **consumption of a diverse diet**, from several food groups.
- Defining a healthy diet is more complex than the other two diets, and the FAO uses actual recommendations for selected countries.
- The Indian recommendation includes consumption of items from six groups: **starchy staples, protein-rich food (legumes, meat and eggs), dairy, vegetables, fruits, and fats**.
- This costs **\$4.07 a day**, or **more than twice the international poverty line**.
- In other words, a healthy diet is totally unaffordable for those with incomes at even twice the poverty line.

What is this healthy diet?

- It includes 30 gm of cereal, 30 gm of pulses, 50 gm of meat/chicken/fish and 50 gm of eggs, 100 gm of milk, 100 gm of vegetables and fruit each, and 5 gm of oil a day.

How does this translate into numbers of people?

- The SOFI Report estimates that **18% of South Asians** (numbering 586 million people) **cannot afford the nutrient-adequate diet** and 58% of South Asians (1,337 million people) cannot afford the healthy diet.

Eye opening messages for India

Lower threshold

- Indian poverty lines of 2011-12, as defined by the **Tendulkar Committee**, amounted to ₹33 per day in urban areas and ₹27 per day in rural areas, and corresponded roughly to **\$1 a day at international PPP prices**.
- The Indian poverty line (there has been no redefinition in the last decade) is thus **lower than the international poverty line** used in the SOFI Report.
- **Unaffordability of healthy diet**
- Even those with **incomes of twice the international poverty line cannot afford a healthy diet**.
- Thus if we want to reduce malnutrition and food insecurity, we have to address the problem of affordability of healthy diets.

Inadequate government response

- Assuring at least **one nutritious meal** (with protein, fruits and vegetables) for the majority of our people particularly in this time of crisis is the responsibility of the government.
- Though the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana** offers an additional 5 kg of wheat or rice and 1 kg of gram or lentils a month free of cost to all households with ration cards up to November 2020 this is utterly **inadequate to address** the massive and growing problem of **malnutrition**.

3) Fewer species more disease

Gs paper 3- Environment

Gs paper 2- Issues related to social sector

- The COVID-19 pandemic has **impacted human life and the economy** in an unprecedented way.

Hypothesis about COVID-19 transmission

- It is not yet fully understood which species have contributed to the **transmission of COVID-19** and how. However, according to experts, there is strong evidence that it spread from a **wildlife market in Wuhan, China**. Two hypothesis have been discussed:
 - the **virus jumped from bats directly to humans**; and

- From **bats to pangolins** and then to humans.

Pandemic provides an opportunity

- The pandemic is an opportunity for the global community to **explore the consequences of its unscientific actions on nature** and prepare for behavioural change.

Consequences of human action on nature

- Scientists believe that the **loss of biodiversity**, and **wildlife trade**, have strong linkages with the emergence of epidemics.
- **Loss of biodiversity- Emerging pathogens**
- In order to **clear land for agriculture and development**, forests and habitats have been destroyed which led to **loss of several species**.
- The **IPBES Global Assessment Report** on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services shows that people **extensively encroach natural habitats**; hence biodiversity is declining significantly.
- By disturbing the delicate balance of nature, ideal conditions for the spread of viruses from animals to humans have been created.
- **Dangerous infectious diseases** (Ebola, Bird flu, MERS, SARS, Nipah, etc.) have been transferred from wild animals to humans.

Illegal trade of wildlife

- **Trafficking in wild plants and animals** and wildlife products has become one of the largest and most lucrative forms of organised crime.
- By deliberately pursuing and hunting certain species or by establishing monocultures, habitats and ecosystems are being damaged, fragmented or destroyed.
- Illegal wildlife smuggling is an emerging **threat to India's unique wildlife heritage**.

The way forward

Mainstreaming of biodiversity

- The mainstreaming of biodiversity is needed in our post-COVID-19 development programme.
- **Biodiversity management committee**, a local-level statutory body can play a significant role in this regard.

- **Mass biodiversity literacy** should be India's mission.
- **Rebuild environmentally responsible world**
- There is a need to revisit our relationship with nature and rebuild an **environmentally responsible world.**

Live in harmony with nature

- Nations should work towards **realising the 2050 vision for biodiversity**, 'Living in Harmony with Nature'.
- **'One health' approach** must be followed which considers the health of people, wild and domesticated animals, and the environment.
- There is an urgent need to **strictly regulate high-risk wildlife markets**, promote green jobs and work towards achieving carbon-neutral economies.

Strict enforcement of existing acts

- India should strictly enforce
 - The **Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972**, which prohibits the trade of 1,800 species of wild animals/plants and their derivatives;
 - The **Biological Diversity Act of 2002**;
 - Strategies and action plans including the **National Biodiversity Targets**; and
 - The **National Biodiversity Mission.**

Conclusion:

- Ecosystem integrity will regulate diseases and restrict the transmission of pathogens from one species to another.

4) A revolution in the policy mindset

Gs paper 2- Issues related to social sector, Effect of policies on India's interest

Context:

- As attention shifts from the immediate health and human effects of the pandemic to addressing its **social and economic effects**, governments and societies face unprecedented policy, regulatory and fiscal choices.
- The **SDGs — a commitment to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development, globally, by 2030** can serve as a guiding light in these turbulent times.

Grounds for optimism

- Though the pandemic has **exposed gaps** in many key systems there are many

workable strategies that countries have used to **accelerate progress** related to development goals and strengthen resilience.

1. Countries have taken steps to **extend universal health care systems** and **strengthen social protection systems**, including cash transfer and food distribution systems for vulnerable households.
2. Innovating to help the most disadvantaged access **financing** and small and medium-sized enterprise credits have also been vital.
3. Several countries have taken **comprehensive approaches to various forms of discrimination**, particularly related to gender and gender-based violence.
4. Partnerships, including with the private sector and financing institutions, have played a critical role in fostering **creative solutions.**
5. Institutions such as the **United Nations and Asian Development Bank have mobilised to support** a shared response to the crisis.

Way forward

People environment nexus

- Responses to the COVID-19 crisis must be centred on the well-being of people, empowering them and advancing equality.
- Driving change in the people- environment nexus to protect the health of people and natural resources is key to a future that does not repeat the crisis we are in today.

Revolution in policy mindset

- Part of the transformation needed are
 - Inclusive and accountable **governance** systems,
 - **adaptive institutions** with resilience to future shocks,
 - universal **social protection** and health insurance, and
 - stronger **digital infrastructure**

Precedents

- Several countries in Asia and the Pacific are developing **ambitious new strategies for green recovery** and inclusive approaches to development.
- For example, **South Korea** recently announced a New Deal based on two

central pillars: **digitisation and decarbonisation.**

- Many countries in the Pacific are focusing on “**blue recovery,**” seizing the opportunity to promote more sustainable approaches to fisheries management.
- **India** recently announced operating the **largest solar power plant** in the region.
- **China** is creating more jobs in the **renewable energy sector** than in fossil fuel industries.

Conclusion

- It is vital that the countries are **enabled to secure the support** they need to go beyond, to achieve the SDGs.

5) Needed a map for India's foreign policy

Gs paper 2- India and its neighbourhood relations, bilateral relations

India's bilateral relations then and now

SAARC

- India was seen as a **natural rising power in South Asia** and the Indian Ocean Region. It was the **de facto leader** of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
- But now SAARC is **out of position.**

Nepal

- India has historical and cultural ties with Nepal however now Nepal has **turned hostile** having adopted a **new map and revived border disputes** with India.

Sri Lanka and Bangladesh

- India enjoyed traditional goodwill and influence in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.
- Now, Sri Lanka has **tilted towards China**, which is undertaking massive infrastructure projects in the Indian Ocean Island while Bangladesh is **annoyed at the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.**

Afghanistan

- India had made investments worth billions of dollars in Afghanistan and cultivated vibrant ties with the post- Taliban stakeholders in Kabul.
- But now, when Afghanistan is undergoing a major transition, India is **out of the multi-party talks.**

Iran

- India had committed itself to multilateralism and the Central Asian

connectivity project, with Iran being its gateway.

- Recently, Iran has **inaugurated a railway link project** connecting the Chabahar port, on the Gulf of Oman, to Zahedan (which India was to have constructed) without India.

China

- India was competing and cooperating with China at the same time, while the long border between the two countries remained largely peaceful.
- But now, India is perhaps facing its **gravest national security crisis** in 20 years, with China having changed the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the western sector in its favour. The border saw violent clashes last month, leading to fatalities for the first time in 45 years.

How did we get here?

- Relative **decline in India's smart power**, especially in the neighbourhood and the extended neighbourhood, demands a deeper perusal of the foreign policy trajectory itself.
 - Problems which are more or less linked to this decline are
1. **Closer alignment of policy with the U.S. line**
 2. **Coupling of foreign policy with domestic politics**

The U.S. line

- India's official policy is that it is committed to **multilateralism.**
- Even after India started moving away from non-alignment, which it calls irrelevant in the post-Cold War world order, New Delhi maintained that **strategic autonomy** would remain the bedrock of its policy thinking.
- But there has been steady **erosion in India's strategic autonomy** which is evident from New Delhi steadily aligning its policies with U.S. interests.
- The **case of Iran** is the best example.
 - The **agreement to develop the Chabahar port** was signed in 2003. But India, under pressure from the U.S., was moving slowly, despite the fact that the project offered India an alternative route to Central Asia bypassing Pakistan.
 - **India voted against Iran** at the United Nations; scuttled an ambitious gas

pipeline project and cut down trade ties drastically.

- After the Iran nuclear deal was signed in 2015, India immediately stepped up oil purchases and expanded works at Chabahar.
- In 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi travelled to Tehran and signed a trilateral connectivity project with Afghanistan and Iran. But when U.S. President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the Iran deal in 2018 and reimposed sanctions on the country, India toed the U.S. line, bringing down its oil imports to zero.
- India deepened defence and military ties with the U.S.
- While India has been cautious of becoming an ally, it has steadily deepened military-to-military cooperation in the recent past — the **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) is one example.**

Domestic politics

- Two decisions taken by the government mainly keeping its domestic audience in mind have had **foreign policy consequences.**

Passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act

- Muslims, including those sub-sects persecuted in neighbouring countries, were by design excluded from the citizenship programme which drove new wedges between India and the countries that had a Muslim majority. For example,
- **Bangladesh took offence at the CAA** and the National Register of Citizens.

Abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

- It led to the suspension of fundamental rights in the Kashmir Valley for a prolonged period that damaged India's reputation as a responsible democratic power and gave **propaganda weapons to Pakistan.**
- The change of status quo in Jammu and Kashmir, including the bifurcation and reduction of the erstwhile State into Union Territories, could be another factor that prompted the **Chinese to move aggressively towards the border in Ladakh.**

Way forward

- India is a big power with one of the world's biggest militaries and is a natural naval force in the Indian Ocean.
- It does not lack resources to claim what is due in global politics but it **lacks strategic depth.**
- So to address the current crises, **India has to reconsider its foreign policy trajectory.**

6) RIC a triangle that is still important

Gs paper 2- India and its neighbourhood relations, bilateral relations

Context

- India attended a **virtual meeting** of the Foreign Ministers of **Russia, India and China (RIC)** last month.

Significance of RIC meeting

- Amid the tensions on the Line of Actual Control, the dominant calls were for a more **decisive westward shift in India's foreign policy.**
- A RIC meeting seemed not in harmony in this setting.

Statements at the meeting

- China called for opposing **bullying practices, rejecting power politics and supporting the rule of law** in international relations.
- Russia criticised **unilateral coercive measures** to settle scores with geopolitical rivals.
- India pointedly emphasised that for a **durable world order**, major powers should respect international law and recognise the legitimate interest of partners.

The initial years

- When the RIC dialogue commenced in the early 2000s, the three countries were positioning themselves for a transition from a **unipolar to a multipolar world order.**
- The RIC shared some non-West perspectives on the global order, such as an emphasis on sovereignty and territorial integrity, impatience on social policies and opposition to regime change from abroad.
- Their support for democratisation of the global economic and financial

architecture moved to the agenda of BRIC (with the addition of Brazil).

Is it an anti-U.S construct?

- It was **not an anti-U.S. construct** however all three countries considered their relationship with the United States an essential prop to their global ambitions.

Reasons for Simultaneous surge in India-U.S. ties

- India's relations with the U.S. surged, encompassing trade and investment, a landmark civil nuclear deal and a burgeoning defence relationship that met India's objective of diversifying military acquisitions away from a **near-total dependence on Russia**.
- As China was rapidly emerging as a challenger to its global pre-eminence, the U.S. saw value in partnering with a democratic India in Asia.
- China went back on the 2005 agreement, launched the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor**, worked to undermine India's influence in its neighbourhood and expanded its military and economic presence in the Indian Ocean.
- As U.S.-Russia relations imploded in 2014 (after the annexation/accession of Crimea), Russia's pushback against the U.S. included cultivating the Taliban in Afghanistan and enlisting Pakistan's support for it.

Concerns in RIC

- **The Indo-Pacific issue - Differing perceptions**
- For India, it is a **geographic space** of economic and security importance, in which a cooperative order should prevent the dominance of any external power.

- China sees our Indo-Pacific initiatives as part of a **U.S.-led policy of containing China**.
- Russia's Foreign Ministry sees the Indo-Pacific as an **American ploy to draw India** and Japan into a military alliance against China and Russia.

Way forward for India

- **Dilution of the Russia-China duopoly**
 - The ongoing **India-Iran-Russia project** for a sea/road/rail link from western India through Iran to Afghanistan and Central Asia, is an important initiative for achieving an effective Indian presence in Central Asia, alongside Russia and China.
- The bilateral arms of the **India-Russia-China triangle** will also remain important.
 - The defence and energy pillars of India's partnership with Russia remain strong.
 - Access to Russia's abundant natural resources can enhance our materials security — the importance of which has been highlighted by COVID-19.
 - With China too, while the recent developments should accelerate our efforts to bridge the bilateral asymmetries, disengagement is not an option.
- The current India-China stand-off has intensified calls for India to **fast-track partnership with the U.S.** However National security cannot be fully outsourced and India's quest for autonomy of action should be based on its geographical realities, historical legacies and global ambitions.

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RSTV BIG PICTURE

1) Tackling Human Trafficking

- Last month, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights warned that the Covid-19 pandemic would lead to a major increase in human trafficking.
- India's Home Ministry responded by issuing an advisory to its state governments earlier this month, with clear instructions to set up or improve local anti-trafficking networks.
- The Ministry has written to states and Union territories to expedite the setting up of new anti-human trafficking units (AHTUs) and upgrade the infrastructure of existing ones to combat and prevent human trafficking.

What are Anti-human trafficking units?

- The AHTUs are an **integrated task force to prevent and combat the menace of human trafficking.**
- Trained representatives from the police, department of women and child development, other relevant departments and renowned non-government organisations are part of the unit which was first established in 2007.

A Glance at the scale and magnitude of Human Trafficking

- According to International labour organisation's data of 2019, around 21 million people globally were prone to modern slavery out of which 68% people were forced labour, 22% were used for sex trafficking and around 10% were prone to state imposed enforced labour.
- In reality around **50-60 million people are prone to the menace of trafficking but there are no real records as well as it is prone to seasonal variations.**
- Though the magnitude of sex trafficking has declined but still **poor and economic backward people become victims of such crime.**
- Human trafficking is a **organised crime** and there is no country in the world which is bereft of this crime as well as there is **no single age group which is not the part and parcel of trafficking.**

- There is no action taken on this part so far even though we have various **legal frameworks like IPC, Juvenile justice act, Bonded labour act, UAPA etc. but no syndicate has been identified** and the advanced intelligence has proved to be a failure.
- Eg: Fake NGOs and shelter homes issue in Uttar Pradesh.
- As far as **India is concerned**, it is highly prone to this organised crime because of its **international borders** as well as its spear head location near to **Golden quadrilateral.**
- The **highest degree of trafficking is in the organ donation** and even the most prosperous countries are also victims of such crime.
- Eg: USA, Canada etc are highly prone to sex trafficking as well as forced labour.

What are the reasons or factors behind the raising of such crime?

- There are certain pull as well as push factors due to which millions of people are becoming victims of it and they are as follows :

Pull factors

- **Poverty:** Due to the poverty level which is currently prevailing in various countries leads to rise in such crimes because traffickers generate confidence in these people about the money, facilities etc. but real situations may be different.
- **Lack of micro-credit:** There is very less facility for availability of credit in certain remote areas which leads to a situation where forced labour, sex trafficking, bonded labours comes into picture for the sake of money as well as livelihood.

Push factors

- The **greedy thought** which is provided by traffickers to the people especially to the poor families makes them sell their children because the revenue generated out of trafficking is around 150 billion dollars.
- The **widow women and uneducated girls** are more susceptible to such crime because being part of a large family forces them to become victims of this menace.

What are the major challenges faced while addressing the issue?

- The major challenge lies with the **media** because in recent times the media is interested in just getting its TRP ahead instead of showing such crimes.
- Due to the **uprise in technology**, the traffickers have got the various pathways to fulfil their trafficking agenda.
- There are various **covert methods** which are used by traffickers to pressurise people and roots of such methods are not known.
- There are issues surrounding **Law enforcement** in the country which is not completely delineated towards controlling such crimes.

What needs to be done ahead?

- The first and foremost thing is there is a need to **create coordination among various law enforcement agencies, departments, police, NGOs** etc which may create an atmosphere of being more attentive as well as responsible towards the issue.
- The **national directory on trafficking is the need of the hour**.
- The **Information sharing** between various departments and agencies should be made more feasible.
- There is a need to **improve internal vigilance of police and law enforcement agencies** through correction of intelligence services.
- An effort should be made in **identifying the source as well as the origin countries** to resolve the issue.
- The **upgradation of Anti-human trafficking units (AHTUs)** can help for controlling the issue to a greater level.

Conclusion:

- The economic disparity in various countries has led to rise in such issues and the fundamental justice delivery system is not to the extent which makes us realise that organised crime needs an organised approach.

2) Northeast's Growth Potential

- Recently, the Prime minister mentioned that Northeast has the potential to become India's growth engine while establishing the foundation stone for the Manipur Water Supply Project.

Importance of North-East Region

- The North-east region is the most recent geographic territory which has been added to the Indian mainland and it **constitutes around 8% of the total area** and thus has expectations from mainland India because most of the time it is neglected in political, cultural and social terms.
- During the pre-partition days the North-east region was very important but after the partition it has **lost its connectivity with the rest of the countries**.
- The north-east is a **mega biodiversity region as well as it is strategically important in terms of creating connectivity with the south-east Asia**.
- In 1996, the first package for the North-east region development was announced and steps are being taken to bring peace and normalcy in the region.
- Eg: **Look East and Act East policy**
- The **social and educational attainment levels are very high as it is a diverse country with different ethnic communities**.
- Thus, the north-east region is strategically as well as ecologically an important area where there needs to be an integrated and innovative approach to achieve its full potential.

What is the actual growth potential and what needs to be done ahead?

- According to the North-east Vision 2020, there is a substantial gap between the majority states and level of economic development in the North-east region.
- The region has great potential in terms of **natural resources which can be utilised up to a great extent in order to fulfil the domestic needs and it has potential of fulfilling our 2/3rd of the needs**.
- Eg: Bamboo can be used for making biofuel which is a sunrise industry and it can help us to become domestically sustain in terms of biofuel without harming the environment.
- The north-east region is a gateway for south-east Asia through which our trade with these countries becomes viable.
- There is a **lack of Industrial progress and private investment** as far as the north-east region is concerned which

needs to be addressed because transaction cost is very high for investors.

- A **peaceful connectivity of the north-east with Bangladesh** can have a high economic impact.
- **Potential sectors need to be identified in terms of its growth potential.**
- Eg: Service based sector.

How to ensure private sector investment in the North-east region ?

- The literacy rate is high in the north-east region which can be used as a **catalyst for bringing in private investments.**
- The **identification of specific sectors** where private investment is needed is an essential step to utilise the potential.
- The investment can be ensured in **IT based activities.**
- The investment can help in providing **employment opportunities** to the local people.
- Thus, private investment can play a major role in raising the **socio-economic standard of the region.**

Way Forward:

- There is a growing positive environment in the north-east region which can be **sustained with maintenance of the law and order.**
- The **aspirations of the ethnic communities should be protected and safeguarded.**
- **Strengthening ecology along with the job creation** is the need of the hour.
- **Policies pertaining to the environment and ecology in the region should be stable.**
- Eg: Water management policy
- The growing **younger generation's potential needs to be utilised for mainstreaming the north-east region.**

Conclusion:

- The North-east region's future is bright if the uniqueness of the region is maintained and by improving the geographic connectivity it has a great economic potential for India.

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