

# OFFICERS' PULSE

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## COVERAGE.

The Hindu

The Indian Express

PIB

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## AT A GLANCE & IN DEPTH.

Polity and Social Issues

Economy

International Relations

Environment

Science and Tech

Culture

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# News @ a glance

## POLITY

### 1) National Statistical Organisation Survey on Digital Education Divide

#### Key Findings of the survey:

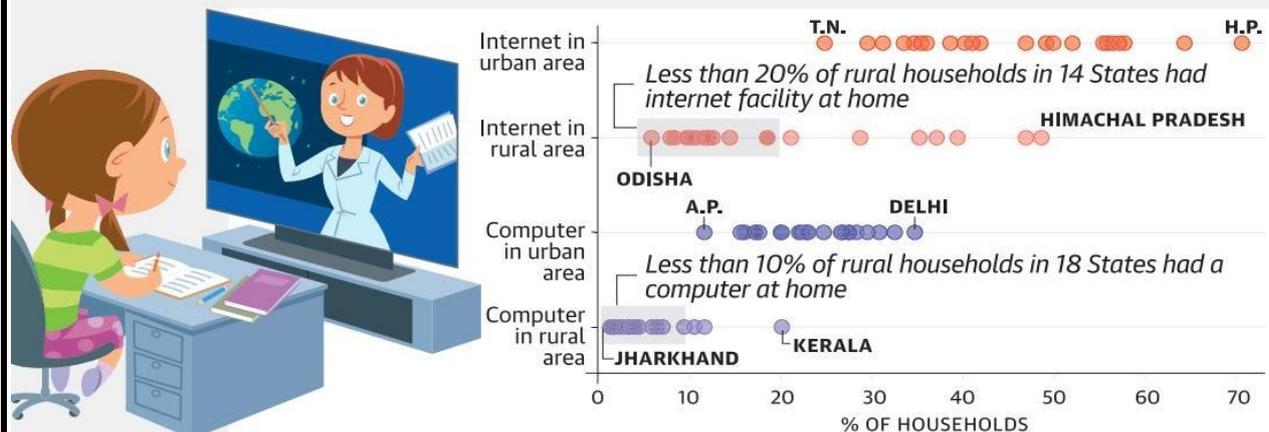
- Across India, **only one in ten households have a computer** — whether a desktop, laptop or tablet.
- Almost **25% of all homes have Internet facilities**, accessed via a fixed or mobile network using any device, including smartphones.
- Most of the **Internet-enabled homes are located in cities**, where 42% have

Internet access. In **rural India, however, only 15% are connected to the internet.**

- **20% of Indians above the age of 5 years had basic digital literacy** and just 40% in the critical age group of 15 to 29 years, which includes all high school and college students as well as young parents responsible for teaching younger children.
- The **national capital has the highest Internet access, with 55%** of homes having such facilities.

### Stark contrast |

A majority of households in rural areas across most States neither had a computer nor an internet connection\*, making it difficult for students to attend online classes. The graphs depict the percentage of households with a computer and an internet connection in rural and urban areas in select States



\* AS PER THE NSS EDUCATION SURVEY CONDUCTED BETWEEN JULY 2017 AND JUNE 2018

- **Himachal Pradesh and Kerala are the only other States where more than half of all households have Internet.**
- Odisha is at the bottom with **only one in ten homes having Internet.**
- There is **less than 20% Internet penetration, even in States with software hubs such as Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.**
- The biggest divide is by economic status, which the National Statistical Organisation (NSO) marks by dividing the

population into five equal groups, or quintiles, based on their usual monthly per capita expenditure.

- Even in Odisha, almost 63% of homes in the top urban quintile have Internet facilities.
- In the poorest quintile of rural Odisha, however, that figure drops to an abysmal 2.4%.
- **Kerala shows the least inequality with more than 39% of the poorest rural**

homes having Internet, in comparison to 67% of the richest urban homes.

- Himachal Pradesh also fares well, with 40% of the lowest rural quintile having Internet.
- Assam shows the starkest inequality, with almost 80% of the richest urban homes having the Internet access denied to 94% of those in the poorest rural homes in the State.

#### Why in News?

- A recent report on the latest National Statistical Organisation survey shows just how stark is the digital divide across States, cities and villages, and income groups.
- The survey on household social consumption related to education was part of the NSO's 75th round, conducted from July 2017 to June 2018.

## 2) Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi

#### About :

- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) is a **Central Sector Scheme** with 100% funding from the Government of India.
- It is being implemented by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**.
- It provides income support to **all landholding farmers' families** in the country to supplement their financial needs for procuring various inputs related to agriculture and allied activities as well as domestic needs
- The Centre transfers **an amount of Rs 6,000 per year, in three equal instalments**, directly into the bank accounts of the all landholding farmers irrespective of the size of their land holdings.

#### Exclusion:

- Institutional land holders,
- Farmer families holding constitutional posts,
- Serving or retired officers and employees of state/central government as well as PSUs and government autonomous bodies.
- Professionals like doctors, engineers and lawyers as well as retired pensioners with a monthly pension of over Rs 10,000 and

those who paid income tax in the last assessment year.

#### Identification of beneficiaries :

- The responsibility of identifying the eligible beneficiary farmers and uploading their data on PM-KISAN portal lies entirely with the **state governments**.

#### Why in News?

- A combination of factors, such as relaxation of norms in enumeration of farmers, delegation of the power of authentication, emergence of a syndicate and discrepancies in data concerning land holdings, have caused the ₹110 crore scam in the PM Kisan in Tamil Nadu.

#### News in Detail:

- The Central government, a year ago, introduced online provision for **self-registration of prospective beneficiaries**, after furnishing the required details.
- This arrangement allowed a section of field officials at offices of Assistant Directors of Agriculture to collude with private computer centres.
- Some of the officers were not tech-savvy, and that they had to be reliant on data entry operators for authentication. .
- The COVID-19 pandemic was used by the alleged culprits, as the field-level officers were occupied with immediate requirements of farmers and many could not visit their offices.
- There are **reports of multiple beneficiaries in families**.
- While a family may have four individuals, each owning farm lands, **there can be only one beneficiary in the family**.
- Thus the State government has sought the Centre's permission to make the submission of ration card details mandatory so that the problem of duplication can be eliminated.

## 3) Jammu and` Kashmir Integrated Grievance Redress and Monitoring System

#### What's in the news?

- Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) launched the Jammu and Kashmir **Integrated Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (JK-IGRAMS)**.

#### News in Detail:

- The system is being launched on a pilot basis in three districts — **Jammu, Srinagar, and Reasi** — and will gradually be rolled out in the remaining districts by October 2.
- It will replace the current portal that was launched in 2018.

#### Features :

- JK-IGRAMS will make the existing grievance redress and monitoring system mechanism more **robust and efficient**.
- In the revamped system, the deputy commissioners of respective districts will be the primary level of receiving, disposing and monitoring grievances.
- This will be a major step towards **reform and decentralisation**.
- There will be a minute by minute status update of the grievances on the portal.
- People can file and track their grievances in this system, the portal is linked with the CPGRAMS, in which grievances pertaining to the Union government can be forwarded to the Centre.
- Action will follow if any delay or callousness is found while addressing people's grievances. Thus holding accountability.

#### CPGRAMS ( Centralized Public Grievance Redress And Monitoring System)

- It is a government of India portal aimed at providing the citizens with a platform for redress of their grievances, developed by **National Informatics Centre (Ministry of Electronics & IT [MeitY]), in association with Directorate of Public Grievances (DPG) and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)**.
- The grievances received by the Department are forwarded to the concerned Ministries/Departments/State Governments/UTs, who are dealing with the substantive function linked with the grievance for redress under intimation to the complainant.
- The Department 'takes up' grievances every year depending upon the seriousness of the grievance and follows them regularly till their final disposal.
- This enables the Department to evaluate the effectiveness of the grievance redress machinery of the concerned government agency.

- Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances is the **nodal agency to formulate policy guidelines for citizen-centric governance** in the country.

#### Other recent Initiatives of J&K

##### Back to Village:

- It is an extensive programme of reaching out to the **people at the grassroots level to create in the rural masses an earnest desire for a decent standard of living**.
- The 'Back to Village' programme is aimed to involve the people of the **state and government officials in a joint effort** to deliver the mission of equitable development.
- The programme is **aimed at energizing Panchayats** and directing development efforts in rural areas through community participation.
- As part of this programme, civil servants will have to reach out to each Panchayat of the State, where they will stay for a specific period to interact and obtain feedback from the grassroots so as to tailor government efforts in improving delivery of village-specific services.
- The 'Back to Village' programme has been conceived with the **objective of ensuring that developmental initiatives are built on the feedback and cooperation of the people**, thus being more result oriented with greater probability of success than those which are top down.
- The essence of the 'Back to Village' programme is to emphasize the importance of ensuring, right from the beginning, **people's participation, not merely as an agent in the execution of the development works but as owners of the entire programme**.

#### 4) PM-CARES Fund Exempted From FCRA

##### What is PM CARES Fund?

- 'Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund' (PM CARES Fund)' is a dedicated **national fund with the primary objective of dealing with any kind of emergency or distress situation**, like posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to provide relief to the affected.

- **Prime Minister** is the **ex-officio Chairman of the PM CARES Fund** and Minister of Defence, Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Finance, Government of India are ex-officio Trustees of the Fund.

#### Key objectives :

- To undertake and support relief or assistance of any kind relating to a public health emergency or any other kind of emergency, calamity or distress, either man-made or natural, including the creation or upgradation of healthcare or pharmaceutical facilities, other necessary infrastructure, funding relevant research or any other type of support.
- To render financial assistance, provide grants of payments of money or take such other steps as may be deemed necessary by the Board of Trustees to the affected population.

#### Why in News?

- The PM CARES Fund has received exemption from all provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010.
- Section 50 of the FCRA allows the Central government to issue orders exempting any organisation (apart from political parties) from the provisions of FCRA if it feels it necessary or expedient in **public interest**, subject to conditions specified in the order.
- The PM CARES Fund is a **public charitable trust** registered under the **Registration Act, 1908**. It was not set up through a Central or State Act.
- The Fund is audited by an **independent auditor**, not by the CAG.
- *(For information about FCRA, refer Economy section)*

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# ENVIRONMENT

## 1) Waste to Worth programme

### Paddy Straw

- It is the crop residue left after harvest of paddy. It is majorly set on the fire after the harvest.
- Burning of paddy straw releases **greenhouse gases, air pollutants, particulate matter like elemental carbon and smoke that strongly impacts human health.**
- Burning of crop residue leads to **loss of nutrients and affects soil fertility.**
- The crop residue can be used to extract the biomass (organic matter) which can be used in industries of packaging, flooring, furniture, energy, and much more

### INDUS Forum

- INDUS Forum is an online community to establish partnerships between **India and the Netherlands.**
- The aim is to stimulate and realize sustainable and inclusive partnerships between Indian and Dutch companies.

### Why in the news?

- The Government of Andhra Pradesh, Government of the Netherlands, and Grameena Vikas Kendram Society for Rural Development (subsidiary of INDUS Forum) have signed an MoU and initiated a program called **WASTE TO WORTH.**
- 'Waste to Worth' strives to create a **circular business model** for paddy straw and other biomass-based upcycled products in India and prevent release of greenhouse gases emission caused by biomass burning.
- A circular business model ensures that materials are retained within productive use, in a high value state, for as long as possible. Circular business models serve to reduce the extraction and use of natural resources and the generation of industrial and consumer wastes.*
- An average of 1.5 crore tonnes of paddy straw is being generated in Andhra Pradesh every year, of which a large part is set on fire by farmers. This residue along with other crop residue is planned

to be converted to useful biomass through establishing 10 processing units across Andhra Pradesh by 2030.

- The aim to initiate and strengthen collaboration among the parties to enable the establishment of agricultural biomass-based industries to **generate income for farmers and agriculture labour** in rural Andhra Pradesh, support industrial development, and reduce environmental pollution caused by agricultural biomass burning.

## 2) August rainfall highest since 1926: IMD

### India Meteorological Department (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 and allied subjects.
- It comes under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences.**

### 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.
- To provide meteorological statistics required for agriculture, water resource management, industries, oil exploration and other nation-building activities.
- To conduct and promote research in meteorology and allied disciplines.

### Why in the news?

- IMD noted that India received the **highest rainfall in August 2020 since 1926.** India received 32.7 cm rainfall in Aug 2020 which was almost **27% more than normal rainfall.**

- The reason for huge rainfall was found to be **long-lasting low-pressure systems**, or **rain-bearing winds**, that formed in the Bay of Bengal and were vigorous enough to travel all the way from the south-eastern coast up to north-west India.
- Long periods of heavy rain followed by extended dry periods are a feature of climate change and are part of a general change in monsoon patterns over India.

### 3) California Wildfires

#### Wildfires/Bushfires

- A wildfire is an unplanned fire that burns in a natural area such as a forest, grassland, or prairie. Wildfires can ruin homes and cause injuries or death to people and animals.
- Wildfires can:
  - 1) Often caused by humans or lightning.
  - 2) Cause flooding or disrupt transportation, gas, power, and communications.
  - 3) Happen anywhere, anytime. Risk increases within periods of little rain and high winds.
  - 4) Loss to the Government crores of rupees each year.
- In India, 37,059 fires were detected in the year 2018.
- 54.40% of forests in India are exposed to occasional fires, 7.49% to moderately frequent fires and 2.40% to high incidence levels while 35.71% of India's forests have not yet been exposed to fires of any real significance.

#### Mitigation and Preparedness

- Most of the wildfires are man-made. Hence people nearby are asked not to burn the lighter debris which can fly and ignite grass and leaves. Campers in the forest are asked to have a controlled camp fire.
- A **natural or artificial control line/barrier** such as a road, waterbody etc. is constructed to withhold the spread of forest fire.

- **Aerial sprinkling of water** is also done to reduce the fire.
- Creating **awareness** among people and **scientific rescue plans** need to be charted.
- **Satellite based remote sensing technology and GIS tools** have been effective in better prevention and management of fires through creation of early warning for fire prone areas, monitoring fires on real time basis and estimation of burnt scars.

#### Sierra national Forest

- Sierra National Forest is a **U.S. National Forest** located on the western slope of central Sierra Nevada in Central California and bounded on the northwest by Yosemite National Park and the south by Kings Canyon National Park.



#### Why in the news?

- The United States' California state is experiencing its most dangerous wildfire.
- The wildfire in the Sierra National Forest is spreading almost 24 kilometers a day.
- This kind of extreme fire behaviour is driven by drought and warming temperatures which can be attributed to climate change.
- The fast spreading wildfire gives very less time for evacuation and mitigation.

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# ECONOMY

## 1) NGOs Foreign Funding

### Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010

- The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, (FCRA), 2010 and rules framed under it **regulate foreign contribution provided by certain individuals or associations to NGOs and others within India.**
- The objective is to prevent use of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality for any activity detrimental to the national interest.
- **All societies, companies, associations and NGOs** have to register themselves under the FCRA and fulfil definite criteria to be eligible for foreign funds.
- The registration is initially **valid for five years** and it can be renewed subsequently if they comply with all norms.
- Registered associations can receive foreign contributions for **social, educational, religious, economic and cultural purposes.**
- Filing of annual returns, on the lines of Income Tax, is compulsory.

### MHA's notification

- The government has used the act over the years to freeze bank accounts of certain NGOs who it found were affecting India's national interest for wrong purposes.
- In 2015, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) notified new rules, which **required NGOs to give an undertaking** that the acceptance of foreign funds is not likely to prejudicially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India or impact friendly relations with any foreign state and does not disrupt communal harmony.
- It also said all such NGOs would have to operate accounts in either nationalised or private banks which have core banking facilities to allow security agencies access on a real time basis.

### Who cannot receive foreign donations?

- According to Section 3(1) of the FCRA, **no foreign contribution shall be accepted by any—**

- 1) candidate for election;
- 2) correspondent, columnist, cartoonist, editor, owner, printer or publisher of a registered newspaper;
- 3) Judge, Government servant or employee of any corporation or any other body controlled or owned by the Government;
- 4) member of any Legislature;
- 5) political party or office-bearer thereof;
- 6) organisation of a political nature;
- 7) association or company engaged in the production or broadcast of audio news or audio visual news or current affairs programmes through any electronic mode, or any other electronic form as defined in section 2 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 or any other mode of mass communication;

### Why in News?

- The Union Home Ministry has suspended the license of six NGOs under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act.
- An FCRA licence is **mandatory** for a non-profit organisation to receive foreign funds.
- As of now, there are 22,457 NGOs or associations registered under the FCRA, while the licenses of 20,674 were cancelled and 6,702 are deemed to have expired.

## 2) Global Economic Outlook

### What's in the news?

- Fitch Ratings, a leading credit rating agency, has released its Global Economic Outlook (GEO).
- **Note:** GEO is different from the **World Economic Outlook** released by the **International Monetary Fund.**

### Highlights of the Report

- The report projected **global GDP to contract 4.4%** in the current year, but revised upwards China's growth estimate to 2.7% for 2020. This would be more than twice as deep as the great recession in 2009.
- Fitch Ratings cut its **2020 GDP forecast for emerging markets**, excluding China, to **(-)5.7%**, from **(-)4.7%** estimated in June.

### India's position

- Fitch has slashed **India's growth projection to (-)10.5%** from (-)5% estimated earlier after official data released last week showed the April-June 2020 quarter GDP contracted by 23.9%.
- The report noted that India imposed one of the most stringent lockdowns worldwide in April-June and domestic demand fell massively. Limited fiscal support, fragilities in the financial system, and a continued rise in virus cases hamper a rapid normalisation in activity.
- Fitch revised China's GDP growth forecast to 2.7%, from 1.2% in June, following the stronger-than-expected April-June outturn and continuing recoveries in investment, housing and exports.

## 3) Exchange Traded Funds

### What are ETFs?

- An exchange-traded fund (ETF) is a basket of securities that trade on an exchange. ETFs can contain all types of investments including **stocks, commodities, or bonds.**
- ETFs were started in 2001 in India.

- ETFs are in many ways similar to mutual funds; however, they are listed on exchanges and ETF shares trade throughout the day just like ordinary stock.
- The Government of India uses ETF to **disinvest its holdings in public sector companies.**
- **Gold-backed ETFs** are investment instruments that are based on price movements and investments in physical gold.

### Why in News?

- Gold ETFs witnessed an inflow in August, for the fifth month in a row, amid major economies staring at a recession due to the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.
- Net inflow in gold ETF category, reached ₹5,356 crore in the January-August period.
- With all major economies staring at a recession due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, gold, with its safe-haven appeal, has emerged as one of the best-performing asset classes and a preferred investment destination among investors.

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# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## 1) India, France, Australia hold first trilateral dialogue

### What's in the news?

- **India, Australia and France** held talks for the first time under a trilateral framework with focus on enhancing cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, a region that has been witnessing increasing Chinese military assertiveness.
- The virtual meeting was held with the objective of building on the strong bilateral ties that the three countries share with each other and synergise their respective strengths to ensure a peaceful, secure, prosperous and rules-based Indo-Pacific Region.

### Outcomes of the meet

- The three sides discussed economic and geo-strategic challenges and cooperation

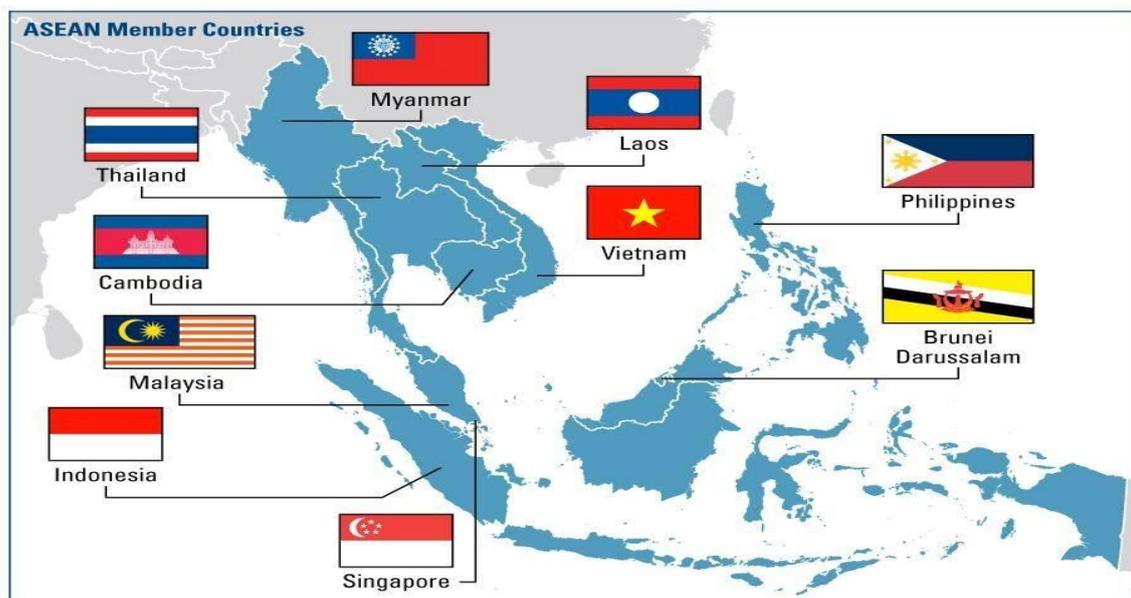
in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and domestic responses to the crisis.

- Cooperation on marine global commons and potential areas for practical partnership at the trilateral and regional level were also discussed, including through regional organisations such as **ASEAN, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Commission.**
- The three countries agreed to hold the dialogue on an **annual basis.**

### Related information

#### About ASEAN

- Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional & intergovernmental organisation of 10 countries of southeast Asia.



- Its members are **Thailand, Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, Singapore, Myanmar, Philippines, Brunei and Vietnam.**
- They work towards the progress of the southeast Asia region.

### About Indian Ocean Rim Association

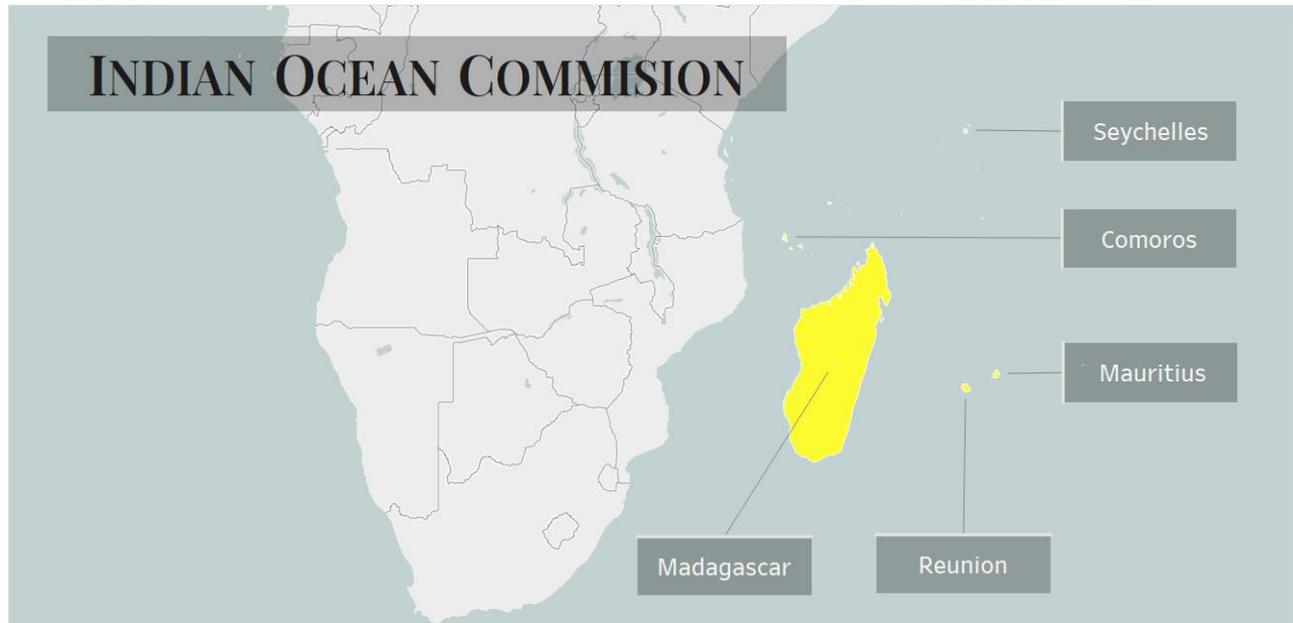


- IORA is an inter-governmental organisation which was established in 1997 to strengthen regional cooperation and sustainable development within the Indian Ocean region.
- IORA consists of 22 Member States (including **India**) and 10 Dialogue Partners.
- IORA became an observer to the UN General Assembly and the African Union in 2015.

- Decisions made within IORA are reached by **consensus** and commitments are undertaken on a voluntary basis.
- The IORA Secretariat is based in **Mauritius**. It is headed by a fixed term Secretary-General.

#### About IOC

- The Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) is an intergovernmental body created in 1984 that coordinates maritime governance in the south-western Indian Ocean.



- It consists of **five Member States**: The Union of the Comoros, France Reunion Island, Madagascar, Mauritius and the Seychelles.
- The IOC's mission is to unite Member States' forces and pool their resources, raise awareness of the special challenges that developing islands face and promote Indianoecania as a region of unique human, cultural and natural diversity.
- In 2020, India was accepted as an **observer** of the IOC.

## 2) India and Japan sign logistics agreement

### What's in the news?

- After years of negotiations, India and Japan have inked a landmark agreement- **Agreement on Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services**- that will **allow their militaries to access each other's bases for logistics support**.
- It is seen as a key development that comes in the backdrop of growing

concerns over China's military muscle flexing in the region.

### About the agreement

- The agreement provides for creation of an **enabling framework for closer cooperation and interoperability**, besides **allowing militaries of the two countries to use each other's bases and facilities for repair and replenishment of supplies** while engaged in bilateral training activities, United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Humanitarian International Relief and other mutually agreed activities.
- The pact, signed between the Indian Armed Forces and the Self-Defense Forces of Japan, will further enhance the depth of defence cooperation between the two countries and contribute to peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region.

### Similar agreements

- Following the agreement with Japan, India now has military logistics agreements with **all Quad countries**,

Australia, Japan and the U.S., significantly improving interoperability as they also operate several common military platforms.

- In June, **India and Australia** sealed a similar **Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA)** while resolving to scale up their overall defence cooperation.
- India has already signed similar agreements with **France and Singapore**.
- The **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)** inked with the US in 2016 gives India refueling facilities and access to American bases in **Djibouti, Diego Garcia, Guam and Subic Bay**.
- After India signed foundational agreement **Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)** with the U.S., it got access to encrypted communication systems for seamless communication.
- The one inked with France in 2018, in turn, also extends the Indian Navy's reach in south-western Indian Ocean Region (IOR) due to French bases in the **Reunion Islands** near Madagascar and **Djibouti** on the Horn of Africa.
- The MLSA with Australia will help us to extend the reach of our warships in **southern IOR as well as the Western Pacific region**.
- The pacts are crucial for India in the backdrop of China fast expanding its strategic footprint in the IOR after its first overseas military base at **Djibouti** became operational in August 2017.

#### India's growing naval presence

- There has been a sharp increase in India's maritime interactions with the Quad countries on a bilateral basis centred around **information sharing for improved Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)** in the Indian Ocean Region and Indo-Pacific.
- The **Andaman and Nicobar islands** located close to the strategic Strait of Malacca have been of interest to several countries including Australia and Japan. The maritime space around the Malacca Strait, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, is very critical for China's supply chain through sea routes.

- The Indian Navy has significantly expanded its deployment in the Indian Ocean Region, deploying a plethora of warships and submarines following the border row with China in eastern Ladakh.
- In June, the Indian Navy carried out a **maritime exercise with the Japanese navy** as part of efforts to bolster military cooperation.

#### In the pipeline

- India is also working on three logistics support agreements with **Russia, the U.K. and Vietnam**.
- The agreement with Russia, the **Reciprocal Logistics Support (ARLS)**, is expected to be signed in October.
- The agreement gives India access to Russian facilities in the Arctic region which is seeing increased global activity as new shipping routes open up and resources become available. India has recently announced investments in the Russian Far East.

### 3) International Criminal Court

#### About ICC

- The International Criminal Court (ICC) is a permanent judicial body established by the **Rome Statute** of the International Criminal Court (1998).
- It is an **independent judicial body distinct from the UN**.
- ICC investigates and tries individuals charged with the gravest crimes of concern to the international community: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression.
- The ICC was established as a court of last resort to prosecute the most heinous offenses in cases where national courts fail to act.
- It is headquartered in **The Hague, Netherlands**.

#### Membership

- Only those who ratified the Rome Statute are parties to ICC.
- 123 countries are States Parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC.
- Prominent countries that are not members include China, **India**, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Qatar, Israel, **USA** and Russia.

#### Jurisdiction

- The ICC can open an investigation into possible crimes in **one of three ways**:
  - a. a member country can refer a situation within its own territory to the court;
  - b. the UN Security Council can refer a situation; or
  - c. the prosecutor can launch an investigation into a member state proprio motu, or “on one’s own initiative.”
- The court **can investigate individuals from non-member states** if the alleged offenses took place in a member state’s territory, if the nonmember state accepts the court’s jurisdiction, or with the Security Council’s authorization.

#### Comparison of ICC and ICJ

S.No	International Criminal Court (ICC)	International Court of Justice (ICJ)
1	Independent judicial body distinct from the UN	Principal judicial organ of the UN
2	Handles prosecutions of individuals	Hears disputes between sovereign states
3	Established by the Rome Statute in 2002	Established in 1945 by the San Francisco Conference, which also created the UN
4	Only those who ratified the Rome Statute are parties to ICC	All members of the UN are parties to the statute of the ICJ, and nonmembers may also become parties
5	The judges are elected by the Assembly of States Parties, the court’s governing	The judges are elected by the UN General Assembly and the Security Council

	body.	
6	Headquarters of both the courts are situated at <b>The Hague</b> , Netherlands.	

#### Why in News?

- The U.S. announced sanctions, including asset freezes and visa bans against two officials of the International Criminal Court for an investigation into alleged war crimes by U.S. forces and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in Afghanistan since 2003.
- Announcing the decision, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called the ICC a “thoroughly broken and corrupted institution”, threatening that the U.S. will not tolerate the ICC’s illegitimate attempts to subject Americans to its jurisdiction.
- In particular, Mr. Pompeo pointed out that **the U.S. had never ratified the “Rome Statute”, which created the ICC in 1998, and thus was not subject to its rulings.**

#### Global response

- The U.S. decision has been criticised by the UN, the EU, 10 members of the UN Security Council, including the U.K. and France, as well as several international human rights agencies, all of which have called for the sanctions to be reversed.
- According to them, the U.S.’s action was a **setback to the international rules-based multilateral order**, and the decision to sanction anybody assisting the ICC will deter victims of violence in Afghanistan from speaking out.

#### India and ICC

- Although the U.S. was part of the founding movement to build the ICC to try cases of genocide and war crime, especially after the courts in Rwanda failed, it decided not to ratify the Statute in 2002.
- Countries like Russia, China and India, however, were never in favour of the Rome Statute or the ICC, and never signed on.
- For India, the decision was based on a number of principles. The ICC is a **criminal court**, unlike the International Court of Justice (which adjudicates on civil matters), and arrogates to itself the right to prosecute matters against countries that aren’t even signatories.

- India said that the **Statute gave to the UN Security Council a role in terms that violates international law** by giving the power to refer cases to the ICC, the power to block such references and the power to bind non-State parties to such decisions.
- India also objected to the **omission of cross-border terror, use of nuclear arms and weapons of mass destruction** from the areas the ICC would institute its investigations.

#### What are the concerns?

- While the U.S.'s concerns about the ICC are shared by India and other countries that weren't signatories, the U.S. action is seen as **another blow to multilateralism**.
- In the last few years, the U.S. has walked out of several UN agencies and international agreements, including the **Human Rights Council, UNESCO, the Paris climate change agreement and the Iran nuclear accord**.
- Particularly at a time the U.S. accuses China of disregarding international norms in the South China Sea and other areas, and of human rights violations in Xinjiang and Tibet, the U.S.'s pushback over the ICC's case in Afghanistan seems counterproductive.

#### 4) 5-point plan to de-escalate LAC stand-off

##### What's in the news?

- After the latest meeting in Moscow, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi said they agreed on a five-point course of action to disengage and reduce tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), where Indian and Chinese troops have been engaged in a four and a half month long stand-off.

- The two Foreign Ministers agreed that the border troops of both sides should continue their dialogue, quickly disengage, maintain proper distance and ease tensions.
- The meeting between the foreign ministers was facilitated and encouraged by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who hosted them at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meeting.

#### News in detail

- The five-point plan is:
  - 1) following the consensus between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping to "not allow differences to become disputes",
  - 2) disengaging quickly to ease tensions,
  - 3) abiding by the existing India-China border protocols and avoiding escalatory action,
  - 4) continuing the dialogue between Special Representatives National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Mr. Wang.
  - 5) Working towards new confidence-building measures (CBMs).
- Both sides also issued separate notes detailing their positions, indicating that several differences still remain in their agreement of the situation at the LAC, which has seen violent clashes, deaths of soldiers and gunfire exchanges for the first time in 45 years this summer.
- However, neither the joint statement, nor the respective notes issued specifically spoke of a return to the "Status quo ante" or positions prior to the stand-off in April. Nor do they specifically call on China to retreat from positions it has aggressed on at **Pangong Tso, Depsang** and other parts of the LAC.

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# SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

## 1) Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV)

### Why in News?

- The hypersonic air-breathing scramjet technology was successfully demonstrated by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)

### HSTDV

- It is an **unmanned scramjet** demonstration aircraft that can travel at hypersonic speed (**Mach 6**).
- It uses **hypersonic** air-breathing scramjet technology.
- *Hypersonic speeds are those which are five times or more than the speed of sound.*
- **India became the fourth country** to have demonstrated this technology after the USA, Russia and China
- Due to its high speed, most radars will be unable to detect it. It will also be able to penetrate most missile defence systems.
- It can be used to launch satellites at low cost & as a carrier vehicle for long range cruise missiles

### Scramjet Engine

- Air-breathing engines use oxygen from the atmosphere in the combustion of fuel. They include the turbojet, turboprop, ramjet, and pulse-jet.
- **Ramjet:** A ramjet is a form of **air-breathing** jet engine that uses the vehicle's forward motion to compress incoming air for combustion without a rotating compressor. **Ramjets** work most efficiently at **supersonic** speeds but they are not efficient at hypersonic speeds.
- *Vehicles that fly at supersonic speeds are flying faster than the speed of sound.*
- **Scramjet:** A **scramjet** engine is an improvement over the ramjet engine as it efficiently **operates at hypersonic speeds** and allows supersonic combustion.

## 2) Covid and Immunity of High Risk Patients

### What's in the news?

- Studies have found why **older people and people with underlying conditions** at particular risk have severe Covid-19.

### Findings of the study

- While these risk groups produce **greater quantities of** the immune cell known as '**T-helper cells**', their T-helper cells show impaired function.
- Advancing age and overall comorbidity scores were linked to a decrease in the proportion of cells producing an important messenger molecule.
- This stimulates other components of the immune response. In patients with risk factors, some of the SARS-CoV-2-specific T cells no longer function properly.
- The researchers were able to show a **correlation between** the frequency of virus-specific **T-helper cells and the patients' age**.
- The same positive correlation was also found in relation to the '**Comorbidity Index**', a measure expressing the severity of 19 different underlying medical conditions. The higher the patient's Comorbidity Index, the higher the number of SARS-CoV-2-specific T-helper cells in their blood.
- A protein called **PD-1** is known to act as a **molecular 'brake' on the immune system**. It regulates the immune response so as to prevent the immune system attacking the body.
- The researchers showed that the **virus-specific T-helper cells produced more PD-1 in patients with acute infection**, than in those with milder symptoms.

## 3) Plasma Therapy and Covid

### Plasma Therapy

- **Convalescent plasma therapy** uses **blood** from people who've recovered from an illness to help others recover.
- It works on the concept of **passive immunity**.
- The convalescent plasma therapy seeks to make use of the **antibodies developed in the recovered patient against the coronavirus**.

- The whole blood or plasma from such people is taken, and the plasma is then injected in critically ill patients so that the **antibodies are transferred** and boost their fight against the virus.

#### Why in News?

- A recent study spearheaded by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) found that Convalescent plasma therapy **failed to benefit coronavirus (COVID-19) patients**.
- It is the largest trial conducted across 39 hospitals in India.

#### Why could it have failed?

- Most previous studies on convalescent plasma **lacked standardization** and procedure control in **donor selection** and the **type or level of antibodies** in the convalescent plasma.
- This may explain the varied therapeutic effects seen across a variety of diseases or even across patients with the same disease
- Also, Covid-19 is known for its fast genetic mutation. Hence, the antibodies present in the plasma may not help everyone.

#### Indian Council of Medical Research

- **ICMR**, the **apex body** in India for the formulation, coordination and promotion of **biomedical research**, is one of the oldest and largest medical research bodies in the world.
- The ICMR is funded by the Government of India through the Department of Health Research, **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.

### ▪ Scramjet Engine

#### What's in the news?

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) performed a major technological feat when it flew a cruise vehicle at a hypersonic speed of Mach six for 20 seconds.

#### Science of scramjet Engine

- The DRDO called the cruise vehicle **Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV)**. The centrepiece of the HSTDV was the indigenously developed air-breathing scramjet engine, which formed the HSTDV's propulsion system.
- The critical technologies developed for the HSTDV mission were the scramjet engine and its ignition, sustaining the ignition, ethylene fuel, **generation of maximum energy** from the engine, development of materials to take care of the high temperatures that occurred due to air friction on the leading edges of the cruiser's wings, tail surface and nose tip, and controlling the HSTDV with minimum drag and maximum thrust.
- In an air-breathing scramjet engine, **air from the atmosphere is rammed into the engine's combustion chamber at a supersonic speed of more than Mach two. (Mach 1 is the speed of sound waves)**
- In the chamber, the **air mixes with the fuel to ignite a supersonic combustion** (supersonic means more than the speed of sound) but the cruiser's flight will be at a **hypersonic speed of Mach six to seven**. So it is called supersonic combustion ramjet or Scramjet.
- **Air from the atmosphere was then rammed into the scramjet engine's combustion chamber at a supersonic speed**. The air mixed with the atomised fuel, the fuel was ignited and the scramjet engine revved into action.
- Mastering the air-breathing scramjet technology will lead to the development of hypersonic missiles, faster civilian air transportation and facilities for putting satellites into orbit at a low cost.

# DEFENCE

## 1) Defence exports

### What's in the news?

- Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen. Bipin Rawat said that in the last three years, the country witnessed a staggering **700% growth in defence exports** - from ₹1,521 crore in 2016-17 to ₹10,745 crore in 2018-19, which is an all-time high and 19th in the list of defence exporters in 2019.

### Key points

- India is the **third largest spender** on defence around the world
- India accounts for **9.2% of global arms import**.
- With the aim to achieve a manufacturing turnover of \$25 billion or ₹1,75,000 crore, including exports of \$5 bn in aerospace and defence goods and services by 2025, in August, the Defence Ministry issued a draft 'Defence Production & Export Promotion Policy (**DPEPP**) 2020'
- A series of measures had been taken since 2014 to boost exports, including simplified defence industrial licensing, relaxation of export control and grant of No Objection Certificates (NOC).
- Defence Attaches in Indian missions are empowered to promote defence exports which would also strengthen defence diplomacy.

### DPEPP 2020

- The policy has laid out following goals and objectives:
- To achieve a turnover of Rs 1,75,000 Crores (US\$ 25Bn) including export of Rs

35,000 Crore (US\$ 5 Billion) in Aerospace and Defence goods and services by 2025.

- To develop a dynamic, robust and competitive Defence industry, including **Aerospace and Naval Shipbuilding industry** to cater to the needs of Armed forces with quality products.
- To reduce dependence on imports and take forward "**Make in India**" initiatives through domestic design and development.
- To promote export of defence products and become part of the global defence value chains.
- To create an environment that encourages **R&D, rewards innovation, creates Indian IP** ownership and promotes a robust and self-reliant defence industry.
- The Policy brings out multiple strategies under the following focus areas:
  - Procurement Reforms
  - Indigenization & Support to MSMEs/Startups
  - Optimize Resource Allocation
  - Investment Promotion, FDI & Ease of Doing Business
  - Innovation and R&D
  - DPSUs and OFB
  - Quality Assurance & Testing Infrastructure
  - Export Promotion

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## ART & CULTURE

### 1) Edneer Math seer

#### What's in the news?

- Kesavananda Bharati Swamiji of Edneer Mutt passed away at 80.

#### About Keshavananda Bharati:

- The seer, known as Srimad Jagadguru Sri Sri Sankaracharya Thotakacharya Kesavananda Bharati Sripadaganlavaru, headed the Edneer Mutt since 1961.
- A proponent of the **Advaita** philosophy, the seer belonged to the lineage of Thotakacharya, one of the first four disciples of reformer **Adi Sankaracharya**.
- He promoted a '**Yakshagana Mela**' (troupe) for nearly 15 years and this Mela performed programmes in Karnataka and Kerala.

#### Additional Details

#### Advaita Philosophy

- It is a school of **Hindu philosophy**, and is a classic system of spiritual realization in Indian tradition.
- Propounded by **Shankaracharya** (Adi Shankara) ( Born in Kaladi, Kerala in 788 CE.)
- He established **four Math** (Monastery) at **Shingeri, Puri, Dwaraka and Badrinath**- for propagation of Sanathana Dharma.
  - a. Sri Hastamalakacharya as the Acharya of the Govardhana Math in the East.
  - b. Sri Sureshwaracharya as the Acharya of Sringeri Sharada Peetham in the South.
  - c. Sri Padmapadacharya as the Acharya of the Dwaraka Math in the West.
  - d. Sri Totakacharya as the Acharya of Jyotir Math in the North.
- His major work is **Brahmasutrabhasya** (Bhashya or commentary on the Brahma Sutra).
- His most famous stotra is **Bhajagovinda Stotra**. He also composed the **Nirvana Shatakam**.
- The basic theme of Advaita is that the **one unchanging entity (Brahman) alone is real, while changing entities do not have absolute existence**. The world is Maya or illusion and only the Self is real. A person who realises this attains moksha (liberation of the soul).

- The doctrine says that there is **no difference between the Atman and the Brahman**. The individual soul is not different from Brahman. Hence, its name Advaita meaning **non-duality**.

#### Yakshagana



- **Yakshagana** is a traditional theatre form of **Karnataka**. It is a temple art form that depicts mythological stories and Puranas.
- It is performed with massive headgears, elaborate facial make-up and vibrant costumes and ornaments. **Usually** recited in **Kannada**, it is also performed in Malayalam as well as Tulu.
- It is performed with percussion instruments like chenda, maddalam, jagatta or chengila (cymbals) and chakratala or elathalam (small cymbals). Yakshagana is traditionally presented from dusk
- It is believed to have evolved from pre-classical music and theatre during the period of the Bhakti movement

### 2) Moplah Rebellion

#### Moplah Rebellion

- The Mappilas were the Muslim tenants inhabiting the Malabar region where most of the landlords were Hindus.
- Mappilas or Moplahs rose in revolt against their landlords in 1921.
- Their grievances centred around lack of security of tenure, high rents, renewal fees and other oppressive exactions.
- The Mappila tenants were particularly encouraged by the demand of the local

Congress body for a government legislation regulating tenant-landlord relations.

- It was led by **Variyamkunnath Kunjahammed Haji**.
- The **Khilafat** Movement had started in 1919 in India in support of the restoration of the caliphate in Turkey. The Indian National Congress (INC) was aligned with it.
- During the same time, the agrarian situation in Malabar was worsening with the low-class tenants suffering under the oppressive measures of the landlords who were patronised by the British.
- It became a movement directed against the British as well as the Hindu landlords of Malabar.
- In November 1921, 67 Moplah prisoners were killed when they were being transported in a closed freight wagon from Tirur to the Central Prison in Podanur. They died of suffocation. This event is called the **Wagon Tragedy**.
- The year **2021** will mark the **100th year anniversary of the Malabar/Moplah uprising** of 1921.

#### Why in News?

- Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) member C.I. Issac seeks removal of Malabar Rebellion leaders from the book, "Dictionary of Martyrs: India's Freedom Struggle 1857-1947" claiming that almost all the Moplah outrages were communal.

#### Additional Details

- The Non - Cooperation Movement has had four main causes:
  - a. Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and Resultant Punjab Disturbances
  - b. Dissatisfaction with Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms
  - c. Rowlatt Act

#### Khilafat Agitation

- The **Khilafat movement** in India arose out of the sentiments of the Indian Muslims to **protect** the institution of the **Khalifa in Turkey**.
- The Khalifa in Islamic tradition was considered as the successor to the Prophet Muhammad, religious leader and the custodian and protector of the Muslim holy places
- The Muslims in India launched the Khilafat movement to pressurise the

British to be lenient and preserve the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and the institution of Khalifa.

- In early 1919, a **Khilafat Committee** was formed under the leadership of the Ali brothers (**Shaukat Ali and Muhammad Ali**), **Maulana Azad, Ajmal Khan and Hasrat Mohani**.

#### ICHR

- Indian Council of Historical Research is an autonomous organization which was established under Societies Registration Act (Act XXI of 1860) in 1972. Its objectives are:
  - a. to bring historians together and provide a forum for exchange of views between them;
  - b. to give a national direction to an objective and scientific writing of history and to have rational presentation and interpretation of history;

### 3) Puri Jagannath temple

#### Why in news

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) infection among the priests is delaying the reopening of the world famous Shree Jagannath Temple.

#### About the temple

- Jagannath Puri temple is also called "**Yamanika Tirtha**" and the "**White Pagoda**"
- The temple is a part of **Char Dham** (Badrinath, Dwaraka, Puri, Rameswaram) pilgrimages
- The present temple was rebuilt from the 10th century onwards, on the site of an earlier temple, and begun by **King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva**, first of the Eastern Ganga dynasty
- Unlike the stone and metal icons found in most Hindu temples, **the image of Jagannath is made of wood** and is ceremoniously replaced every twelve or nineteen years by an exact replica.
- The famous **Rath Yatra** (Chariot Festival) is a 9 day-long event during which the three holy chariots carrying idols of Lord Jagannath, his brother Balaram (Balabhadra) and sister Subhadra are pulled by devotees.
- There are four gates to the temple- Eastern 'Singhdwara' which is the main

gate with two crouching lions, Southern 'Ashwadwara', Western 'Vyaghradwara' and Northern 'Hastidwara'.

#### 4) Arya Samaj

##### Why in News?

- Social activist, scholar, politician and Arya Samaj leader Swami Agnivesh passed away

##### About Arya Samaj

- **Revivalist movement** in the late 19th century
- Started in western India by **Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875**
- Considered **Vedas as infallible**
- Attacked Puranas, polytheism, idolatry, child marriage, and domination of the priestly class
- In 1882 the Arya Samaj formed a "**Cow Protection Movement**".
- They also started the **Shuddhi program**, to open the doors of Hinduism for those who had embraced other religions.

#### 5) Anti-Shia Protests

##### Why in News?

- Tens of thousands of anti-Shia protesters, including demonstrators linked to Sunni extremists, rallied in Pakistan's Karachi.

##### How the split happened

- A schism emerged **after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632**.
- He died without appointing a successor to lead the Muslim community, and disputes arose over who should shepherd the new and rapidly growing faith.
- Some believed that a new leader should be chosen by consensus; others thought

that only the prophet's descendants should become caliph.

- The title passed to a trusted aide, Abu Bakr, though some thought it should have gone to Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law.
- Ali eventually did become caliph after Abu Bakr's two successors were assassinated.
- After Ali also was assassinated, with a poison-laced sword at the mosque in Kufa, in what is now Iraq, his sons Hasan and then Hussein claimed the title. But Hussein and many of his relatives were massacred in Karbala, Iraq, in 680
- His martyrdom became a central tenet to those who believed that Ali should have succeeded the Prophet. (It is mourned every year during the month of Muharram). The followers became known as Shias, a contraction of the phrase Shiat Ali, or followers of Ali.
- **Shias consider Ali and the leaders who came after him as Imams.** Most believe in a line of 12 Imams
- **Sunnis emphasise God's power in the material world**, sometimes including the public and political realm, while Shias value martyrdom and sacrifice.
- More than **85 per cent of the world's 1.5 billion Muslims are Sunni**. They live across the Arab world, as well as in countries such as Turkey, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia. Iran, Iraq and Bahrain are largely Shia.

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## *PIB ANALYSIS*

### 1) First World Solar Technology Summit

#### About International Solar Alliance

- The launch of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) was announced by the **Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and former President of France Francois Hollande**, at the 21st session of United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP-21), 2015 in Paris, France.
- It 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.
- **87 Countries** have signed the Framework Agreement of the ISA and of these 67 have deposited their instruments of ratification.
- **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 **Assembly of the ISA** is the apex decision-making body which comprises representatives from each Member Country.
- ISA aims at lowering the cost of technology and finance and thereby facilitate deployment of over **1,000 GW of solar energy** and **mobilize more than USD 1,000 billion into solar power by 2030** in Member countries.
- Solar is a key source of affordable and reliable energy, thus it could play a significant role in achieving the universal energy access goal (SDG 7).
- The Permanent Secretariat of ISA will be located in India at **Gurugram, Haryana**.

#### Why in News?

- Recently, the first World Solar Technology Summit (WSTS) was organized by the International Solar Alliance.

#### About World Solar Technology Summit:

- It is an attempt to bring together scientists, engineers and member states to sit down together and think about what the challenges are in realising the dream

of making energy affordable and abundant.

#### Objectives

- To bring the spotlight on state-of-the-art technologies as well as next-generation technologies which will provide impetus to the efforts towards harnessing solar energy more efficiently.

#### News in Detail:

- The conference saw ISA signing four agreements, signalling its intent to focus on key areas of the solar energy sector.
- A partnership agreement between the Union Ministry of Renewable Energy, the World Bank and ISA on **One Sun, One World, One Grid**.
- A partnership between the Global Green Growth Institute and ISA on the promotion of a million solar pumps.
- A Memorandum of Understanding with the International Institute for Refrigeration, Paris and ISA.
- Partnership agreements on the implementation of 47 projects between ISA and National Thermal Power Corporation Limited.
- ISA also launched its technology journal, **Solar Compass 360**.

#### Related Information

##### About OSOWOG

- The idea of 'One Sun One World One Grid' (OSOWOG) was originally proposed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the first assembly of the International Solar Alliance in October 2018.
- OSOWOG is India's initiative to build a **global ecosystem of interconnected renewable energy resources**. The blueprint for the OSOWOG will be developed under the **World Bank's technical assistance programme** that is implemented to accelerate the deployment of grid connected rooftop solar installations.
- The underlying logic is that a grid spread across multiple time zones could balance intermittent renewables with other renewables: the setting sun in one part of the grid is made up for by solar, wind or hydropower produced in a distant place.

- OSOWOG is planned to be completed in **three phases**. The first phase will entail interconnectivity within the Asian continent; the second phase will add Africa and the third phase will globalise the whole project.

## 2) Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

### About:

- The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) is a flagship scheme for **focused and sustainable development of fisheries sector in the country** with an estimated investment of Rs. 20,050 crores for its implementation during a period of 5 years from **FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25** in **all States/Union Territories, as a part of AatmaNirbhar Bharat Package**.
- PMMSY aims at **enhancing fish production by an additional 70 lakh tonne by 2024-25, increasing fisheries export earnings to Rs.1,00,000 crore by 2024-25**, doubling of incomes of fishers and fish farmers, reducing post-harvest losses from 20-25% to about 10% and generation of additional 55 lakhs direct and indirect gainful employment opportunities in fisheries sector and allied activities.

### Aims and objectives of PMMSY

- Harnessing of fisheries potential in a sustainable, responsible, inclusive and equitable manner
- Enhancing of fish production and productivity through expansion, intensification, diversification and productive utilization of land and water
- Modernizing and strengthening of value chain - post-harvest management and quality improvement
- Doubling fishers and fish farmers incomes and generation of employment
- Enhancing contribution to Agriculture GVA and exports
- Social, physical and economic security for fishers and fish farmers
- Robust fisheries management and regulatory framework

### Implementation:

- The PMMSY will be implemented as an umbrella scheme with two separate components namely:

- Central Sector Scheme and
- Centrally Sponsored Scheme
  - Majority of the activities under the Scheme would be implemented with the active participation of States/UTs.
  - A well-structured implementation framework would be established for the effective planning and implementation of PMMSY.
  - For optimal outcomes, **'Cluster or area-based approach'** would be followed with requisite forward and backward linkages and end to end solutions.

### Why in News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi digitally launched the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana along with **e-Gopala App**.

### About e-Gopala App

- e-Gopala App is a **comprehensive breed improvement marketplace and information portal for direct use of farmers**.
- At present no digital platform is available in the country for farmers managing livestock including buying and selling of disease free germplasm in all forms (semen, embryos, etc); availability of quality breeding services (Artificial Insemination, veterinary first aid, vaccination, treatment etc) and guiding farmers for animal nutrition, treatment of animals using appropriate ayurvedic medicine/ethno veterinary medicine.
- There is no mechanism to send alerts (on due date for vaccination, pregnancy diagnosis, calving etc) and inform farmers about various government schemes and campaigns in the area.
- The e-Gopala App will provide solutions to farmers on all these aspects.

## 3) Urban Rejuvenation Mission: AMRUT and Smart Cities Mission

### About the schemes

- To recast the urban landscape of the country, to make urban areas more livable and inclusive besides driving the economic growth, the **Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs** has launched two **centrally sponsored schemes** namely the **Smart Cities Mission and the**

## Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT).

### About Smart cities mission

- Under the Smart Cities Mission, each selected city would get **central assistance of Rs.100 crore per year for five years.**
- This Mission of building **100 smart cities** intends to **promote adoption of smart solutions for efficient use of available assets, resources and infrastructure** with the objective of enhancing the quality of urban life and providing a clean and sustainable environment.
- Special emphasis will be given to **participation of citizens in prioritizing and planning urban interventions.**

### Approach

- It will be implemented through an **'area based' approach** consisting of retrofitting, redevelopment, pan-city initiatives and development of new cities.
- Under **retrofitting**, deficiencies in an identified area will be addressed through necessary interventions .
- **Redevelopment** enables reconstruction of an already built-up area that is not amenable for any interventions, to make it smart
- **Pan-city components** could be interventions like Intelligent Transport Solutions that benefits all residents by reducing commuting time.

### Focus

- Smart cities initiative, focus will be on core infrastructure services like:
  1. Adequate and clean Water supply,
  2. Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,
  3. Efficient Urban Mobility and Public Transportation,
  4. Affordable housing for the poor, power supply,
  5. robust IT connectivity,
  6. Governance, especially e-governance and citizen participation,
  7. safety and security of citizens,
  8. health and education and
  9. sustainable urban environment.

### Implementation

- Smart City Action Plans will be **implemented by Special Purpose Vehicles (SPV)** to be created for each city

and state governments will ensure a steady stream of resources for SPVs.

### About AMRUT

- AMRUT seeks to lay a foundation to **enable cities and towns to eventually grow into smart cities.**
- AMRUT adopts a **project approach to ensure basic infrastructure services** relating to water supply, sewerage, septage management, storm water drains, transport and development of green spaces and parks with special provision for meeting the needs of children.

### Coverage

- This Mission will be **implemented in 500 cities and towns each with a population of one lakh and above**, some cities situated on stems of main rivers, a few capital cities and important cities located in hilly areas, islands and tourist areas.

### Approach

- Implementation of this Mission **will be linked to promotion of urban reforms** such as
  1. e-governance,
  2. constitution of professional municipal cadre,
  3. devolving funds and functions to urban local bodies,
  4. review of Building bye-laws,
  5. improvement in assessment and collection of municipal taxes,
  6. credit rating of urban local bodies,
  7. energy and water audit and
  8. Citizen-centric urban planning.

### Funding

- Central assistance will be **to the extent of 50 percent of project cost** for cities and towns with a population of up to 10 lakh and one-third of the project cost for those with a population of above 10 lakh.
- Central assistance will be released in **three instalments in the ratio of 20:40:40** based on achievement of milestones indicated in State Annual Action Plans.

### Why in News?

- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs recently provided details about the on-going projects under AMRUT and Smart Cities Mission.

## 4) State Startup Ranking 2019

### About:

- The Start-up India initiative of the Government of India envisages to build a **robust Start-up ecosystem in the country for nurturing innovation and providing opportunities** to budding entrepreneurs.
- The key objective of the “**State Startup Ranking**” is to foster competitiveness and propel States and Union Territories to work proactively towards uplifting the startup ecosystem.
- The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** has published this report.
- It has been implemented as a capacity development exercise to encourage mutual learning among all states and to provide support in policy formulation and implementation.
- This is the **second edition of the States’ Startup Ranking Exercise**.

### Reform Areas:

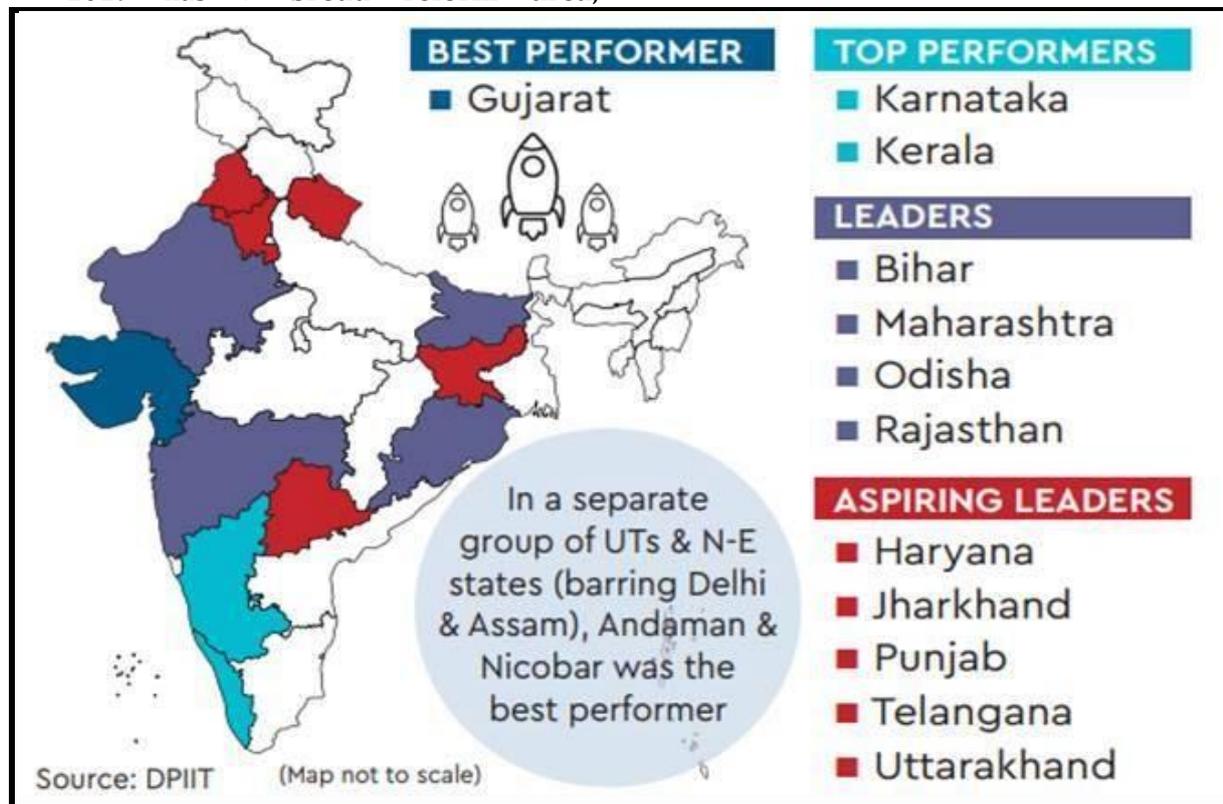
- The States’ Startup Ranking Framework 2019 has 7 **broad reform area**,

consisting of **30 action points** ranging from

1. Institutional Support
  2. Easing Compliances
  3. Relaxation in Public Procurement norms
  4. Incubation support, Seed Funding Support
  5. Venture Funding Support and
  6. Awareness & Outreach
- To establish uniformity and ensure standardization in the ranking process, States and UTs have been divided into two groups. While **UTs except Delhi and all States in North East India except Assam are placed in Category ‘Y’**. All other States and UT of Delhi are in **Category ‘X’**.

### Ranking Categories:

- For the purposes of Ranking, States are classified into 5 Categories:
1. Best Performers,
  2. Top Performers,
  3. Leaders,
  4. Aspiring Leaders and
  5. Emerging Startup Ecosystems.



- The Centre and states, coming together in the spirit of cooperation, collaboration and competition to promote startups, is really an important development.

### Significance:

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- The startups are the store-house of talent, knowledge and ideas, and the ranking will not only help the states and UTs, but also the entrepreneurs, and will help in expansion of the startups and launching of new ventures.
- It will also encourage women entrepreneurs actively into startups.

#### Why in News?

- The Results of the second edition of Ranking of States on Support to Startup Ecosystems were released by the Minister of Commerce & Industry and Railways .

## 5) Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework and Streets for People Challenge

### About Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework

- The Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework is a first-of-its-kind assessment framework on **climate relevant parameters**.
- It was launched in 2019 by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs**, with the objective to provide a **clear roadmap for Indian cities towards combating climate change while planning their**

### actions within the city including investments.

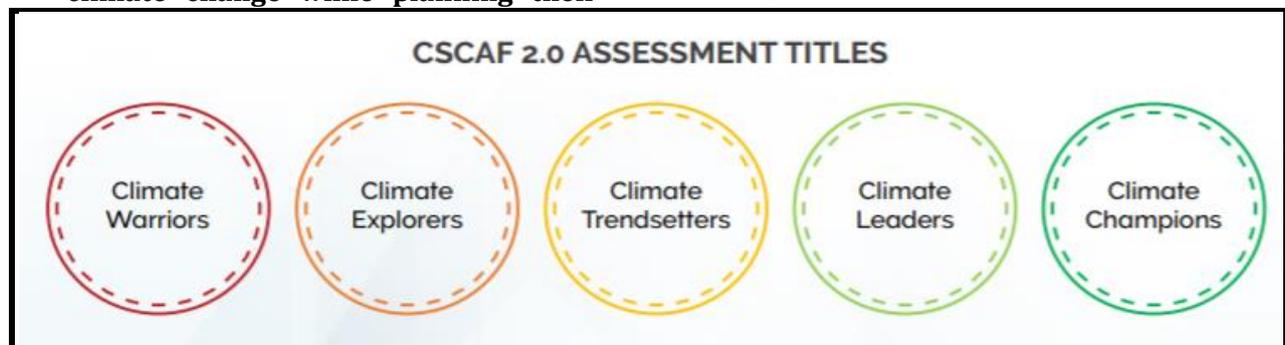
- The initiative intends to inculcate a climate-sensitive approach to urban planning and development in India.

#### Indicators of the Framework :

- It has 28 indicators across five categories namely;
  1. Energy and Green Buildings,
  2. Urban Planning, Green Cover & Biodiversity,
  3. Mobility and Air Quality,
  4. Water Management and
  5. Waste Management.
- The Climate Centre for Cities under National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) is supporting MoHUA in implementation of ClimateSmart Cities Assessment Framework.

#### About CSCAF 2.0

- The CSCAF 2.0 has been revised based on the experience of phase 1 implementation and feedback received from cities.
- A thorough review of the indicators, progression levels and data inputs have been conducted with cities and further validated and approved by the expert committee and the thematic sub group committee.



### About Streets for People Challenge

- The Streets for People Challenge is an initiative of the **Smart Cities Mission, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** to **inspire cities to create walking-friendly streets through quick measures, in response to COVID-19**.
- The Challenge will support cities across the country to develop a unified vision of streets for people in consultation with stakeholders and citizens.
- The Challenge **aims to create flagship walking initiatives in cities which focus on placemaking and liveability**.

- Cities will be required to reimagine their streets as public spaces through the lens of economic regeneration, safety, and child-friendly interventions, in order to ensure a green recovery from COVID-19.
- The **India Programme of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP)** will be the knowledge partner, providing guidance through the preparation of resource material and facilitating online peer-to-peer learning workshops.

#### Why in News?

- Recently, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) launched the Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework (CSCAF) 2.0, and 'Streets for

People Challenge' in a virtual event organized by the Smart Cities Mission.

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# News in Depth

## AIR NEWS

### 1) Initiatives and Challenges on National Nutrition week

- The National Nutrition week was held between September 1st to September 7th under the **Poshan Abhiyan**.
- The theme for National Nutrition Week 2020 is '**Eat Right, Bite by Bite**'.
- The September month is recognised as Poshan Maah or Nutrition month.

- POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) is a flagship programme of the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**, which ensures convergence with various programmes i.e., Anganwadi Services, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG), Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), National Health Mission (NHM), Swachh-Bharat Mission, Public Distribution System (PDS) and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).
- The mission targets to reduce **stunting, under-nutrition, anemia** (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce **low birth weight** by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively.
- The mission also strives to achieve a reduction in Stunting from 38.4% (NFHS-4) to 25% by 2022 (**Mission 25 by 2022**).

#### What is Malnutrition?

- Malnutrition is a **physical state of an unbalanced nutrition level**. It is due to undernutrition or overnutrition.
- Malnutrition is the **issue of overall development of the society** and it is multifactorial in nature for which multi-institutional cooperation is needed to solve this problem.

- There are various initiatives or measures taken by the government to contain this issue and try are as follows :

#### Initiatives for containing Malnutrition Agriculture Fund of India

- It was launched by the Prime Minister on September 1, 2020.
- It will consist of information related to crops that are grown in each district and their related nutritional value.

#### Nutrition monitoring program and Nutrition card for school

- The Nutrition card will act as a report card to spread awareness among the children about nutrition.
- A **unique nutrition park** has been created at the Statue of Unity, where people can witness the nutrition-related education along with other fun activities.

#### National deworming program

- It aims at eradicating intestinal worms also known as **Soil-Transmitted Helminths (STH)**, among children in the age group of 1-19 years.

#### Way Forward

- There is a need to **improve health infrastructure, status of women, availability of transportation, electricity etc.**
- The **local food needs to be recognised** based on their nutritional values.
- Around 35% of the population in India lives below the poverty line for which **enough food needs to be delivered which can be done through various schemes.**
- The issue of **anemia is a public health problem** which needs to be focussed in a comprehensive level.
- The **feeding practices** have to be taken into consideration for improving the child's health.

- The main focus should lie on **changing the behaviour of people and the perception of various groups of people.**

#### **Conclusion**

- The **nutrition and proper nourishment** play a crucial role in helping children and

students to attain their optimum potential.

- The **mental and intellectual development** is directly related to the quality of our food intake.

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## THE HINDU EDITORIALS

### 1) Blockchain technology and Voting

#### Context:

- The Election Commission recently held an online conference in collaboration with the Tamil Nadu e-Governance Agency (“TNeGA”) and IIT Madras, through which they explored the **possibility of using blockchain technology for the purpose of enabling remote elections.**

#### About Blockchain technology

- A blockchain is a distributed ledger of information which is replicated across various nodes on a “peer-to-peer” network for the purpose of ensuring integrity and verifiability of data stored on the ledger.
- Blockchain, sometimes referred to as Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT), makes the history of any digital asset unalterable and transparent through the use of decentralization and cryptographic hashing.
- A simple analogy for understanding blockchain technology is a Google Doc. When we create a document and share it with a group of people, the document is distributed instead of copied or transferred.
- This creates a decentralized distribution chain that gives everyone access to the document at the same time. No one is locked out awaiting changes from another party, while all modifications to the doc are being recorded in real-time, making changes completely transparent. But blockchain is more complicated than a Google Doc
- Blockchain is an especially promising and revolutionary technology because it helps reduce risk, stamps out fraud and brings transparency in a scalable way for myriad uses.
- Blockchain ledgers have traditionally been used as supporting structures for cryptocurrencies, such as Bitcoin and Ethereum; however, their use in non-cryptocurrency applications too has seen a steady rise.

#### Benefits of remote voting

##### Increases voter participation

- Remote voting helps to increase voter participation which had remained only

around **67%** in general elections by ensuring people, who had migrated from their native constituencies for various reasons to vote from wherever they were.

- It benefits **internal migrants** and seasonal workers, who account for roughly 51 million of the populace (Census 2011) and remotely-stationed members of the Indian armed forces in exercising their democratic right of voting.

#### Key issues, security concerns

##### Need for physical presence and biometric authentication

- Electors would still have to physically reach a designated venue in order to cast their vote where systems would use “white-listed IP devices on dedicated internet lines”, and that the system would make use of the **biometric attributes of electors.**
- (*IP whitelisting is a security feature often used for limiting and controlling access only to trusted users.*)
- Shortcoming in implementation of cryptographic protocols
- Blockchain solutions rely heavily on the proper implementation of **cryptographic protocols**. If any shortcomings exist in an implementation, it might stand to potentially unmask the identity and voting preferences of electors.
- This is against the **principle of secrecy** of ballots is an important postulate of constitutional democracy.
- *Section 94 of the Representation of People Act, upholds the privilege of the voter to maintain confidentiality about her choice of vote.*

#### Vulnerable to attacks

- An attacker may be able to clone the biometric attributes required for authenticating as another individual and cast a vote on their behalf.
- Physical implants or software backdoors placed on an individual system could allow attackers to collect and deduce voting choices of individuals.

#### Criticism of remote voting

##### Existing alternatives

- To resolve the issue of ballot portability, technological solutions which involve setting up entirely new, untested voting infrastructure may not be the answer when there exists solutions such as postal **ballots or proxy voting or 'One Nation, One Voter ID' system**, which allows individuals to vote out of their home State.
- Techno-solutionism hinders free and fair elections
- Optimism for technological solutions poses a threat and could stand to hinder free and fair elections in the future, if unchecked.

### Conclusion

- Digitisation, in itself, does not make processes more robust.
- Any solution to electoral problems must be **software independent** and **fault tolerable**, where failure or tampering of one mechanism or several would not affect the integrity or transparency of the overall process.

## 2) What is in a NAM and India's alignment

### About NAM

- The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was formed during the Cold War as an organization of States that did not seek to formally align themselves with either the United States or the Soviet Union, but sought to remain independent or neutral.
- NAM was officially founded in 1961, at the Belgrade Summit, drawing on the principles (also known as **Bandung Principles**) agreed at the Afro-Asian Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955.
- Such principles were adopted later as the main goals and objectives of the policy of non-alignment. The fulfillment of those principles became the essential criterion for Non-Aligned Movement membership.
- The ten principles of Bandung are followings:
  - Respect of fundamental human rights and of the objectives and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.
  - Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.

- Recognition of the equality among all races and of the equality among all nations, both large and small.
- Non-intervention or non-interference into the internal affairs of another -country.
- Respect the right of every nation to defend itself, either individually or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
- Non-use of collective defense pacts to benefit the specific interests of any of the great powers. Non-use of pressures by any country against other countries.
- Refraining from carrying out or threatening to carry out aggression, or from using force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.
- Peaceful solution of all international conflicts in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
- Promotion of mutual interests and of cooperation.
- Respect of justice and of international obligations.
- **India** is one of the founding members of the NAM.
- The following are considered to be the founding fathers and historic leaders of the Movement: Joseph Broz Tito (President of Yugoslavia), Gamal Abdel Nasser (President of Egypt), Jawaharlal Nehru (Prime Minister of India), Sukarno (President of Indonesia), and Kwame Nkrumah (President of Ghana).

### Significance of NAM

- The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) provided a platform for newly independent developing nations to join together to **protect their autonomy**.
- Disparate group from many continents broadly united around NAM's flagship campaigns for **de-colonisation, universal nuclear disarmament and against apartheid**.

### Declining relevance of NAM Post cold war

- De-colonisation was largely complete by then, the apartheid regime in South Africa was being dismantled and the campaign for universal nuclear disarmament was going nowhere.
- The NAM countries being **freed from the shackles of cold war**, were able to

diversify their network of relationships across the erstwhile east-west divide.

#### Alternatives for non alignment

- For a few years now, non-alignment has not been projected by our policymakers as a tenet of India's foreign policy.
- However, we have not yet found a universally accepted successor as a signature tune for our foreign policy.
- Successive formulations like **Strategic autonomy, Multi-alignment, Seeking issue-based partnerships or coalitions** have been coined and rejected.

#### Will Chinese actions make India shift towards alliance?

- In the wake of the current stand-off with China, there have been calls for India's foreign policy to make a **decisive shift towards the United States**, as the only viable option to counter China.
- However Indian government through its nuanced approach clarified that a rejection of non-alignment does not mean a rush to alignment and India will **not join an alliance system**.
- The fact is that **'alliance' is as much a Cold War concept as non-alignment**.
- During the Cold War, the glue that held countries of an alliance together was composed (in varying proportions) of ideological convergence and an existential military threat.
- With the disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the Warsaw Pact, this glue dissolved and the international options of alliance partners widened, just like those of NAM countries.
- The strategic interests of alliance partners are **no longer congruent** which is evident in the Euro-Atlantic alliance.
- The threat to the alliance partners today in the Asia-Pacific is from an **assertive China**, which they are reluctant to define as a strategic adversary, because of their economic engagement with it and the huge military asymmetry.

#### Way forward

- India will acquire a larger global profile next year, when it commences a two-year term on the UN Security Council.
- In that case, the strategic choices that it makes in its bilateral partnerships will be closely watched.

### 3) Empower the youth first

#### Context

- Demographic composition of India necessitates to empower youth to achieve the goal of self-reliance.

#### Status of youth in India

##### Who are youth?

- The 2014 National Youth Policy (NYP) defined youth as persons between 15 and 29 years which accounted for 27.5% of the population then.

##### Government expenditure on youth

- According to the NYP report, the Central government spends about ₹2,710 per youth on education, skill development, employment, healthcare and food subsidies.
- Assuming that States spend an equal amount, the total investment in our youth would be under 1% of the GDP, which is hardly commensurate with their population and potential.

##### Labour force participation

- As of 2017-18, youth participation in India's labour force was 38.3%.

##### Unemployment rate

- The 2018 State of Working India Report says that the youth unemployment rate to be at least 18.3% (3.47 crore youths).
- About 30% of youth fall under the 'neither in employment nor in education' category and 33% of India's skilled youth are unemployed.

#### The way forward

- The aspirational younger generation born after 1991 invariably hold the key to India's economic and political future. India has just a decade's time to seize the opportunity and realise this youth demographic dividend.

#### Launch an Indian Youth Guarantee Programme

- Indian Youth Guarantee (IYG) programme should be launched which is similar to the European Union Youth Guarantee (EU-YG) but tuned to our country's context.

### About EU-YG

- The Youth Guarantee is a commitment by **all Member States** to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good quality offer of employment; continued education; apprenticeship; traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.
- EU-YG emerged in 2010 at a time when youth unemployment rates were soaring above 20%.

- An IYG initiative, with statutory backing, can function as a facilitatory framework for ensuring gainful and productive engagement of youth.
- Its strategic goal should be to ensure that within a fixed time frame, young people graduating from college or losing a job either find a good quality job suited to their education and experience or acquire skills required to find a job through an apprenticeship.
- IYG will **consolidate the government's efforts** in targeting the youth and provide a one stop shop for schemes like Skill India, Startup India etc at a local level.

### Create a Youth Component Plan

- Create a Youth Component Plan, earmarking a specific percentage of funds under a separate head on the lines of the **Special Component Plan for the Scheduled Castes and the Tribal Sub-Plan**.
- The Youth Component Plan would be formulated by States/Union Territories/Central Ministries to channelise flow of outlays and benefits proportional to the percentage of youth population based on sub-regional requirements.
- While an urban youth employment programme will be a new intervention, rural youth employment should be instituted alongside MGNREGA.

### How would such a guarantee identify the needs of the youth?

- The Youth Development Index (YDI) in India serves as an advisory and monitoring tool for youth development.

- It helps recognise priority areas, gaps and alternative approaches specific to each State.
- The index also packs a new dimension of social inclusion to assess the inclusiveness of societal progress due to prevalence of systemic inequalities.
- YDI can be revisited and deployed to play a vital role in crafting a region-specific IYG.

### Conclusion

- A focus on our youth is the first step **towards self-reliance**.

## 4) Redefining a farmer

### Context

- There is a **need to formulate official definitions of farmers** that go beyond the land ownership criterion.

### Definition of farmer

- The population census defines **'cultivators' as a person engaged in cultivation of land** either 'owned' or held in kind or share.
- The 59th round of the Situation Assessment Survey (SAS) of farmers, conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), also stresses on **'possession of land'** either owned or leased or otherwise possessed for defining 'farmers'.
- Though various sources define farmers in its own way, the commonality between all of them is ownership of land.

### Is ownership of land an appropriate criteria to define a farmer?

- Traditionally, **land ownership is a mandatory criterion** for availing benefits under various agricultural schemes in India.
- Laws governing land leasing operate at different levels across India.
- The **Model Agricultural Land Leasing Act, 2016** was introduced to formalise land leasing based on the recommendation of an expert panel appointed by NITI Aayog. However, except a few States, a majority of State governments have not extended the scope of the Act to farmers.
- According to the 2015-16 agricultural census, about **2.65 million operational**

**holdings are either partially or wholly leased.**

#### **Impacts on farmers who do not own land**

- According to Census 2011, there are 11.8 crore cultivators and 14.4 crore agricultural workers.
- Most schemes meant for farmers' welfare, including the **procurement of wheat and paddy** at minimum support prices, are effectively available only for land owners.
- Those who cultivate or work on the land but do not own it are excluded from access to agricultural credit and interest subvention for farm loans.
- Access to subsidised crop inputs is difficult without identification as farmers.
- In the event of crop failure, compensation is only given to owners.
- Direct income support schemes such as PM-KISAN are limited to owners.
- Tax exemption is usually claimed by owners who give an unverified affidavit that they cultivate the land.
- The lessees do not benefit from crop insurance, loan waivers, moratorium and institutional credit and are forced to be at the mercy of moneylenders. The distress is reflected in the fact that tenant farmers account for a majority of farmer suicides reported in the NCRB data.

#### **Way forward**

##### **Refine the definition**

- Delinking of land as the defining criterion for a 'farmer' was done in the 70th round of NSSO.
- The definition adopted in the 70th Round of NSSO seems to be appropriate. It can be further refined to define a farmer as one who earns a major part of the income from farming.
- Similarly, the National Policy for Farmers, 2007 adopts a broad-based definition independent of 'land ownership' as well as 'value of produce'. This definition includes everyone engaged in agriculture and allied activities for livelihood, including persons engaged in shifting cultivation and collection of non-timber forest produce.

##### **Conclusion**

- **Adopting a broader definition of a 'farmer'** is a short-term solution to ensure inclusive and sustainable growth.

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## INDIAN EXPRESS EXPLAINED

### 1) Project Dolphin: Why is it important to save a declining river species?

#### Why in the News?

- The Prime Minister in his Independence Day speech announced **Project Dolphin**.
- Project Dolphin will be a 10-year project in the similar lines of Project Tiger and Project elephant.
- The idea is to increase the population of Gangetic Dolphins across the Ganga and other rivers.
- The details of the project are yet to be published by the government.

#### Gangetic Dolphin



- It is the **National Aquatic animal of India**. According to IUCN, it is listed as **endangered** species.
- According to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change about 1,272 dolphins are present in Uttar Pradesh and 962 in Assam.
- Ganges river dolphins once lived in the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems of Nepal, India, and Bangladesh. But the species is extinct from most of its early distribution ranges.
- The distribution range of the Ganges river dolphins in India covers **seven states** namely, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

- The Ganges river dolphin can **only live in freshwater** and is **essentially blind**. They hunt by emitting ultrasonic sounds, which bounces off of fish and other prey, enabling them to “see” an image in their mind (**echolocation**).
- October 5th is celebrated as National Ganga River Dolphin Day.

#### Why is it important to conserve this species?

- Being on the top of the aquatic food chain, the species is an **indicator species** of the well being of the rivers. They point at healthy river ecosystems and are the prime species indicating the conservation status of the river systems.
- Once upon a time this species was spread across the Ganga river from the Himalayas to the Ganga delta, but due to constructions of dams and immense pollution in the river, the dolphins are declining rapidly.
- By protecting this species and its habitat ensures conservation of aquatic lives of the river.

#### What are the previous steps taken by the government to conserve the Gangetic Dolphin?

- **Vikramshila Ganges Dolphin Sanctuary** was established in **Bihar** under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, to conserve this species. This species is under **Schedule I** of this act, which restricts its hunting and trade.
- The government also prepared the **Conservation Action Plan for the Ganges River Dolphin 2010-2020**.

#### Way Forward

- There have been many examples where conservation programmes have revived aquatic health such as the Rhine river and Salmon fish project.
- Taking them as examples the government should push for the revival of the Ganga and other aquatic systems.

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