

OFFICERS' PULSE

Issue no. 25 | 15th November to 21st November, 2020

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**AT A GLANCE
& IN DEPTH.**

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News @ a glance

POLITY

1) National Digital Health Mission

What is the National Digital Health Mission?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his 2020 Independence Day speech announced a major digital initiative in the form of National Digital Health Mission (NDHM).
- The project will provide a **health ID to every person in the country**, and benefit the poor. The prime minister said that whatever medicine a doctor prescribed, when was it prescribed, what were the reports - all this information will be linked to a person's health ID.

NDHM in Detail

- NDHM seeks to **provide efficient and affordable health coverage through a wide-range of data and infrastructure services**.
- The key feature of this mission is the **technology part** - it will leverage open digital systems to provide high-quality healthcare for all. It will integrate various digital health services to create an ecosystem which can assimilate existing health information systems.
- The government has said that it will ensure security and privacy of personal information.

What is a health ID?

- Under NDHM, Indian citizens will get a digital health ID which is basically a digital format of all his/her health records which will be linked to the registry of doctors and health facilities across the country.
- The government has said that enrollment in the initiative will be **voluntary**.
- The health ID will contain information about medical data, prescriptions and diagnostic reports and summaries of previous discharge from hospitals for ailments. The mission is expected to bring efficiency and transparency in healthcare services in the country.

Expected Benefits

- The NDHM aims to liberate citizens from the challenges of finding the right doctors, seeking appointment with them, payment of consultation fee, making several rounds of hospitals for prescription sheets and will empower all Indians with the correct information and sources enabling them to take an informed decision to avail the best possible healthcare.
- The NDHM comprises **six key building blocks or digital systems** - HealthID, DigiDoctor, Health Facility Registry, Personal Health Records, e-Pharmacy and Telemedicine - that will enable access to timely, safe and affordable healthcare through a 'citizen-centric' approach.

Implementing agency

- The **National Health Authority (NHA)**, the apex agency responsible for the implementation of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), has been given the mandate by the government to design, build, roll-out and implement the NDHM in the country.
- **Why in News?**
- Dr. Indu Bhushan, Chairman, National Health Authority, said the National Digital Health Mission will soon be ready for a nationwide roll-out.

- The digital health mission has been launched in six Union Territories and was set for an all-India launch.

2) Arunachal records best sex ratio

What's in the news?

- The Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, has released its 2018 report on the '**vital statistics on India based on the Civil Registration System**'.
- According to the report, Arunachal Pradesh recorded the best sex ratio in India with 1,085 females born per

thousand males, while Manipur fared the worst with just 757.

- **Sex ratio at birth is number of females born per thousand males.**

Highlights of the Report

- **Arunachal Pradesh** recorded 1,084 females born per thousand males, followed by Nagaland (965) Mizoram (964), Kerala (963) and Karnataka (957). The worst was reported in **Manipur** (757), Lakshadweep (839) and Daman & Diu (877), Punjab (896) and Gujarat (896).
- Sex ratio was determined on the basis of data provided by 30 states and Union Territories. Data was not available for six states namely Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.
- The report also added that the **level of registration of births** had increased to 89.3% in 2018 from 81.3% in 2009, with the **number of registered births** being 2.33 crore in 2018, after 2.21 crore in 2009.

Registrar General of India

- The office of Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India was founded in 1961 by the **Ministry of Home Affairs** for arranging, conducting and analysing the results of the demographic surveys of India, including **census and linguistic survey**.
- Apart from conducting the Population Census and monitoring the implementation of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act in the country, it has been giving estimates on fertility and mortality using the **Sample Registration System (SRS)**.

3) Forest rights Act

About the Act

- The Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 is a people-centric law for forests, which **recognises the rights of forest-dwelling communities to use and manage forest resources**.
- With more than 150 million forest dwellers, the scope of FRA is immense to protect their livelihoods, and engage them in sustainable forest management.

Rights under FRA

- **Title rights** – Ownership to land that is being farmed by tribals or forest dwellers subject to a maximum of **4 hectares**; ownership is only for land that is actually being cultivated by the concerned family, meaning that no new lands are granted.
- **Use rights** – to minor forest produce (also including ownership), to grazing areas, to pastoralist routes, etc.
- **Relief and development rights** – to rehabilitation in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement; and basic amenities, subject to restrictions for forest protection.
- **Forest management rights** – to protect forests and wildlife.

Eligibility

- To qualify as **Other Traditional Forest Dweller (OTFD)** and be eligible for recognition of rights under FRA, two conditions need to be fulfilled:
 - 1) Primarily resided in forest or forests land for three generations (75 years) prior to 13-12-2005, and
 - 2) Depend on the forest or forests land for bonafide livelihood needs.
- To qualify as a **Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribe (FDST)** and be eligible for recognition of rights under FRA, three conditions must be satisfied by the applicant/s, who could be “members or community”:
 - 1) Must be a Scheduled Tribe in the area where the right is claimed; and
 - 2) Primarily resided in forest or forests land prior to 13-12-2005; and
 - 3) Depend on the forest or forests land for bonafide livelihood needs.
- The FRA provides that a forest right conferred under the Act shall be **heritable but not alienable or transferable**, and shall be registered jointly in the name of both the spouses in case of married persons and in the name of the single head in the case of a household headed by a single person.

Process of recognition of rights

- The Act provides that the **gram sabha**, or village assembly, will initially pass a resolution recommending whose rights to which resources should be recognised.
- This resolution is then screened and approved at the **level of the sub-division** (or taluka) and subsequently at the **district level**.

- The **screening committees** consist of three government officials (Forest, Revenue and Tribal Welfare departments) and three elected members of the local body at that level. These committees also hear appeals.

Why in News?

- Claims over forest land of nearly 1,200 tribals in Hunsur taluk of Mysuru district, Karnataka, under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, was recently rejected by the local authorities.
- In Mysuru, 7,275 tribals had originally sought benefits under the forest rights Act (FRA), of which 755 were approved and 6,459 rejected.

4) National Population Register

What is the National Population Register?

- The National Population Register (NPR) is a **Register of usual residents of the country**.
- It is being prepared at the local (Village/sub-Town), sub-District, District, State and National level under provisions of the **Citizenship Act 1955** and the **Citizenship Rules, 2003**.
- It is **mandatory for every usual resident of India** to register in the NPR.
- A usual resident is defined for the purposes of NPR as a person who has resided in a local area for the past 6 months or more or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next 6 months or more.
- NPR **cannot be seen as a citizenship registration drive** since it **would include, for instance, any foreigner residing in a given locality for over six months**.

Present Status

- The data for the NPR is generated through house-to-house enumeration during the "house-listing" phase of the census, which is held once in 10 years.
- It was **collected in 2010** alongwith the houselisting phase of Census of India 2011. The update of this data was done during **2015** by conducting a door to door survey.
- Now, the government has decided to update the NPR along with the Houselisting phase of Census 2021 in all the States/UTs except Assam.

- Assam has been excluded because the National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise has already been conducted in the state.
- Both the NPR and Census are conducted by the **Office of the Registrar General** under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

What kind of data will NPR collect?

- NPR will collect both **demographic data and biometric data**. For biometric data it will depend on Aadhaar, for which it will seek Aadhaar details of the residents.

Why does the government want so much data?

- The objective of the NPR is to create a **comprehensive identity database of every usual resident in the country**. It will help the government formulate its policies better and also aid national security.
- It will streamline data of residents across various platforms and ease the life of those residing in India by cutting red tape.

How NPR differs from population census?

- The decennial census is the largest single source of a variety of statistical information on different characteristics of all persons in the country. The process began for the first time in **1872** when India was still under colonial rule.
- The Census is carried out under the **Census Act, 1948**.
- As opposed to this, the exercise of creating and maintaining a NPR began in the year **2010** to create a registry of usual residents of the country. NPR is conducted under the **Citizenship Act 1955 and the Citizenship Rules, 2003**.
- The Census data does not aim to collect information about individuals but to give an overall picture of the status or condition of residents of India and the overall population trends.
- The purpose of collecting and analyzing Census data is that it informs planning and policy, and helps in assessing the impact of existing government policies.
- While the Census Act makes it compulsory for the government to keep the data collected during census confidential and anonymous, there is no such requirement of confidentiality for NPR data under the citizenship rules. The NPR is a register that will be in the public domain with data of individuals.

Why in News?

- The office of the Registrar General of India has said the questionnaire of the National Population Register is being finalised.

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ENVIRONMENT

1) Lonar lake, Sur Sarovar declared as Ramsar sites



What is the Ramsar Convention?

- The Convention on Wetlands is the **intergovernmental treaty** that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.
- The Convention uses a **broad definition of wetlands**. It includes all lakes and rivers, underground aquifers, swamps and marshes, wet grasslands, peatlands, oases, estuaries, deltas and tidal flats, mangroves and other coastal areas, coral reefs, and all human made sites such as fish ponds, rice paddies, reservoirs and salt pans.
- The Convention was adopted in the **Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971** and came into force in 1975. Since then, almost 90% of UN member states, from all the world's geographic regions, have acceded to become "Contracting Parties".
- Under the three pillars of the Convention, the Contracting Parties commit to:
 - Work towards the **wise use of all their wetlands** through national plans, policies and legislation, management actions and public education;
 - Designate suitable wetlands for the **list of Wetlands of International Importance**

(the "Ramsar List") and ensure their effective management;

- Cooperate internationally on transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems, shared species, and development projects that may affect wetlands.
- The Secretariat in **Gland, Switzerland**, manages the day-to-day activities of the Convention, and publishes Convention documents and the "Ramsar List" of Wetlands of International Importance. It is administratively supported by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Montreux Record

- The Montreux Record is a register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.
- It is maintained as **part of the Ramsar List**.
- These wetlands are at **high risk of pollution and degradation and continuously monitored for their recovery**.
- Currently, **Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan)** and **Loktak Lake (Manipur)** of India are in the Montreux Record.

India's Ramsar Sites

- India has 41 Ramsar Sites. (See the following map).

Why in the News?

- Three lakes from India have been inducted into Ramsar Sites.
- **Lonar Lake of Maharashtra** and **Sur Sarovar**, also known as **Keetham lake**, in Agra are the lakes which have been inducted. **Kabar taal** is Bihar's first Ramsar site which was inducted.
- Lonar Lake is a site formed after a meteorite hit thousands of years ago.
- Keetham Lake in Agra supports many migratory birds during winter. Sur Sarovar Bird Sanctuary Located close to Keetham Lake.

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2) Deemed forest: SC nod awaited, BSY govt considers releasing 67% of it

What are deemed forests?

- There are forests that are notified either with the forest department or revenue department. Then there are those areas that are like forests but are neither recorded, nor notified.
- While the concept of deemed forests has not been clearly defined in any law including the Forest Conservation Act of

1980, the Supreme Court in the case of **T N Godavarman Thirumulpad (1996)** accepted a wide definition of forests under the Act.

- The apex court **broadened the definition of forest** to include not just land classified as forest under forest or revenue departments, but also those that are forests according to the definition of a forest. The Court had ordered that the states identify and classify these as deemed forests.
- Preservation of forest areas in India under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 has been

continuously **monitored by the Supreme Court** since the Godavarman case judgment in 1996.

- The state government must obtain clearances from the Supreme Court for affecting changes to land classified as deemed forests since the verdict.

Why in the news?

- The Karnataka Assembly has decided to declassify 6.64 lakh hectares of deemed forest and divert it to other economical use.
- The Karnataka government has requested the Supreme Court to give an order regarding the declassification.
- The state government says that the SC has unscientifically claimed all the land to be deemed forest.
- This classification has also brought hardship to farmers and mining. Hence they are claiming 6.64 lakh hectares out of 9.94 lakh hectares of deemed forest.

4)Elephant Man' Ajay Desai passes away in Belagavi

GS paper 3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment

Why in the news?

- Ajay Desai died due to heart ailment.



Who is he?

- He is fondly known as “Elephant Man”.
- He spent decades in the research of species specific behaviour of **Asiatic elephants**. He

was a pioneer in the study of elephant movements using radio collars.

- He studied human-elephant conflict and based on scientific research, he argued that deforestation and destruction of wildlife habitations were forcing elephants to come to villages and towns seeking food and water.
- He was also working on policy guidelines to mitigate human-elephant conflict under the National Elephant Action Plan (NEAP) which was to be submitted in due course.

5) Willow Warbler



About

- Willow warblers are migratory birds, breeding in Europe and migrating to southern Africa for the winter.
- They are insectivorous, but will eat berries and fruit in autumn. According to IUCN this species is **LEAST CONCERN**.
- Warblers are generally difficult to identify due to the small size and change in plumage (pattern of feathers) twice a year.

Why in the news?

- Willow Warblers sighted for the first time in the country at Punchakkari in Kerala.

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ECONOMY

1) MGNREGA

About the scheme

- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme is the largest social security scheme in the world — guaranteeing **100 days of work to any rural household** willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage.
- The act makes it obligatory for the State to give rural households work on demand. In case such employment is not provided within 15 days of registration, the applicant becomes eligible for an **unemployment allowance**.
- The **Ministry of Rural Development (MRD)**, is monitoring the entire implementation of this scheme in association with state governments.
- **One-third** of the stipulated workforce must be women.
- The employment will be provided **within a radius of 5 km**: if it is above 5 km extra wage will be paid.
- The wages are revised according to the **Consumer Price Index-Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL)**.
- Work site facilities such as crèche, drinking water, shade have to be provided.
- **Social Audit has to be done by the Gram Sabha**

Why in News?

- LibTech India, a Non-Governmental Organization, released its study on the difficulties faced by workers dependent on the MGNREGS.
- The study, based on a 2018-19 survey of almost 2,000 workers in Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, was sponsored by a research grant from Azim Premji University.

Highlights of the study

- **Additional burdens**
- Many of the rural workers dependent on the MGNREGS are forced to make multiple trips to the bank, adding travel costs and income losses, and face repeated rejections of payment, biometric errors and wrong

information, just to get their hands on their wages.

- For example, take a worker in Jharkhand who puts in a week of hard labour to earn ₹1,026 which the government credits directly into her bank account. The study found that almost 40% of the workers must make multiple trips to the bank branch to withdraw their money.
- Even in regular times, these last mile challenges make it hard for workers to access their own wages in a timely manner. During the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the situation is exacerbated as transport becomes harder, and there is no question of physical distancing at a rural bank.
- **Lack of financial inclusion**
- The study found that **only one in 10 workers get an SMS message that their wages have been credited**. A third of workers must visit the bank branch just to find out whether their wages have been credited.
- Another quarter of respondents said despite being informed that their wages had been credited, they found that the money was not in the accounts.
- **Biometric authentication failures**
- **Customer service points and banking correspondents** were meant to reduce the gap between workers and banks and bring service delivery to the doorstep.
- However, **40% of workers reported facing biometric authentication failures** at least once in their last five transactions at such agencies, and 7% reported that all five of their last transactions had failed due to biometric authentication issues.
- **Technical glitches**
- Almost 13% of workers had rejected payments, which are transactions that are stuck due to technical errors of the payment system, bank account problems or data entry errors. About 77% of them had no idea why their payments had been rejected, which means that rectification is not possible and all future MGNREGS payments to these individuals will also be rejected.

- Government data show that about ₹4,639 crore worth of payments were rejected in the last five years, and about ₹1,236 crore is still pending to be paid to workers.

2) RCEP

What's in the news?

- After eight years of negotiations, 15 Asia-Pacific nations have finally signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), hailed as one of the biggest free trade deals in history.
- It covers over 2.2 billion people and accounts for 30 per cent of the world's economy.
- The signatory countries include **10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members** — Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam — and their five trade partners — **Australia, China, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand.**

About RCEP

- Described as the “**largest**” **regional trading agreement** to this day, RCEP was originally being **negotiated between 16 countries** — **ASEAN members** and six countries namely **Australia, China, Korea, Japan, New Zealand and India.**
- The purpose of RCEP was to make it easier for products and services of each of these countries to be available across this region.
- The agreement also includes rules on intellectual property, telecommunications, financial and professional services, and e-commerce.
- Negotiations to chart out this deal had been on since 2013, and India was expected to be a signatory until its decision last November.

India's exit

- However, in November last year, **India announced its decision to not join RCEP.**
- This came amid concerns that elimination of tariffs would open India's markets to imports, which in turn could harm local producers.
- India had suggested some remedial measures. For instance, if imports rise beyond a threshold they should be allowed to impose some kind of barriers. But, the

other member countries of RCEP didn't agree to it.

Concerns of India

- **Imbalance in the negotiations between goods and services** was the main concern for India. Member countries pressured India to commit to **zero tariffs on more than 90 percent** of tradable goods with few exemptions.
- However, they were reluctant to India's proposal to allow **free movement of Indian skilled professionals** in the RCEP region.
- Indian industries were also worried that with RCEP allowing a wide range of goods to import at zero tariffs, **Chinese goods will flood India.** It will cause serious damage to the “Make in India” programme.
- India has **trade deficits with 11 of the 15 RCEP countries**, and some experts feel that India has been unable to leverage its existing bilateral free trade agreements with several RCEP members to increase exports.

Opportunities for India

- Despite these concerns, RCEP will offer India an opportunity to engage with China.
- It will give India a chance to stall some of its unfair practices such as giving subsidies unethically and stalling Indian products, such as **pharmaceuticals**, on the pretext of **quality control.**
- RCEP will give Indian exporters a window to be a part of global value chains.
- Also, there are concerns that India's decision would **impact its bilateral trade ties with RCEP member nations**, as they may be more inclined to focus on bolstering economic ties within the bloc.
- The move could potentially leave India with **less scope to tap the large market that RCEP presents** —the size of the deal is mammoth, as the countries involved account for over 2 billion of the world's population.

What are India's options now?

- India, as an original negotiating participant of RCEP, has the option of joining the agreement without having to wait 18 months as stipulated for new members in the terms of the pact.
- RCEP signatory states said they plan to commence negotiations with India once it submits a request of its intention to join

the pact “in writing”, and it may participate in meetings as an observer prior to its accession.

Way Forward

- However, the possible alternative that India may be exploring is **reviews of its existing bilateral FTAs** with some of these RCEP members as well as newer agreements with other markets with potential for Indian exports. Over 20 negotiations are underway.
- India currently has agreements with members like the **ASEAN bloc, South Korea and Japan** and is negotiating agreements with members like **Australia and New Zealand**.
- Two reviews of **India-Singapore Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)** have been completed;

the **India-Bhutan Agreement on Trade Commerce and Transit** was renewed in 2016; and the **India-Nepal Treaty of Trade** was extended in 2016.

- Eight rounds of negotiations have been completed for the review of the **India-Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**, which began in 2016. India has taken up the review of the **India-Japan CEPA** and **India-ASEAN FTA** with its trading partners.
- There is also a growing view that it would serve India’s interest to invest strongly in negotiating bilateral agreements with the US and the EU, both currently a work in progress.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1) United Nations Peacekeeping Forces

About UN Peacekeeping Forces

- The United Nations Peacekeeping Forces are employed by the UN to maintain or re-establish peace in an area of armed conflict.
- The UN may engage in conflicts between states as well as in struggles within states. The UN acts as an impartial third party in order to prepare the ground for a settlement of the issues that have provoked armed conflict.
- The UN Peacekeeping Forces may **only be employed when both parties to a conflict accept their presence.**
- The Peacekeeping Forces are subordinate to the leadership of the United Nations. They are normally deployed as a consequence of a **UN Security Council** decision. However, on occasion, the initiative has been taken by the **General Assembly.**
- Operational control belongs to the **Secretary-General and his secretariat.**

Two kinds

- There are two kinds of peacekeeping operations – **unarmed observer groups** and **lightly-armed military forces.** The latter are only allowed employing their weapons for self-defence.
- The observer groups are concerned with gathering information for the UN about actual conditions prevailing in an area.
- The military forces are entrusted with more extended tasks, such as keeping the parties to a conflict apart and maintaining order in an area.
- The first UN peacekeeping mission was a team of observers deployed to the Middle East in 1948, during the **1948 Arab-Israeli War.**

Why in News?

- With China significantly scaling up its troop contribution for United Nations Peacekeeping missions, India and the U.S. are looking to undertake training of military personnel for the missions from South East Asian countries on the lines of the ongoing initiative for African countries.

News in Detail

- **India** has consistently been **among the top troop contributing nations to the U.N.** and is the fifth largest with 5,424 personnel in eight countries. India has so far participated in 51 of the 71 missions and contributed over 2 lakh personnel.
- The U.S. on the other hand has never contributed ground troops but contributes 27% of the U.N. peacekeeping budget.
- In 2016, India and the U.S. began a joint annual initiative **“UN Peacekeeping Course for African Partners”** to build and enhance the capacity of African troop and police-contributing countries to participate in the U.N. and regional peacekeeping operations.
- While this is going on, the U.S. is keen on a similar initiative for South East Asian nations like Vietnam and others.

China's ascent

- China is significantly expanding its troop contribution to the U.N. in addition to the funding. It currently has over 2,500 troops in various U.N. missions and has committed another 8,000 troops as standby. Once implemented, it will make China the largest provider of troops to the UNPK.
- China presently contributes 12% of the U.N. regular general budget and 15% of the peacekeeping budget. India's contribution to the regular budget is 0.83% and 0.16% of the peacekeeping budget.

2) BRICS

About BRICS

- BRICS brings together five major emerging economies- **China, Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa.** It comprises 43% of the world population, having 30% of the world GDP and a 17% share in world trade.
- The grouping was formalised during the first meeting of **BRIC** (Brazil, Russia, India and China) Foreign Ministers on the margins of the UNGA in New York in September 2006.
- South Africa was added to the grouping in 2011 creating "BRICS".
- BRICS cooperation is aimed at complementing and strengthening existing

bilateral and multilateral relations among member countries.

- The **Chairship of the forum is rotated annually** among the members, in accordance with the acronym B-R-I-C-S.
- Cooperation among members is predicated on three levels or “tracks” of interaction, namely:
 - 1) **Track I:** Formal diplomatic engagement between the national governments
 - 2) **Track II:** Engagement through government-affiliated institutions, e.g. state-owned enterprises and business councils
 - 3) **Track III:** Civil society and “people-to-people” engagement.

Significant developments of BRICS

New Development Bank

- The NDB created by the BRICS countries formally came into existence at the Ufa Summit (Russia) in 2015.
- It was established with the objective of financing infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries, complementing the efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions toward global growth and development.
- In 2018, the NDB received **observer status** in the UN General Assembly.
- The five member nations – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – have an **equal shareholding in the NDB.**
- Voting power of each member is equal to the number of its subscribed shares in capital stock.
- All members of the United Nations could be members of the bank, however the share of the BRICS nations can never be less than **55% of voting power.**

Contingency Reserve

- The BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) is a framework for the provision of support through liquidity and precautionary instruments in response to actual or potential short-term balance of payments pressures.

Why in News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the 12th BRICS summit which was held recently.

3) Iran nuclear deal

Background

- The **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)**, more commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal, was reached between Iran and six world powers known as the **P5+1** (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) in July 2015.

What did Iran have to do to meet the requirements of the deal?

- According to this framework, Iran would **redesign, convert, and reduce its nuclear facilities** in order to lift all nuclear-related economic sanctions.
- The deal also allowed for the tracking of nuclear activities with robust transparency and inspections by the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).**

U.S. withdrawal from JCPOA

- The US President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, claiming it did not address Iran's ballistic missile programme or its roles in Middle Eastern conflicts.
- The US also re-imposed tough economic sanctions against Iran.
- Reacting to the US' withdrawal, Iran announced that it will breach its limits set on its nuclear activity by the 2015 deal.

Why in News?

- Iranian Foreign Minister said Iran would fully implement its 2015 nuclear deal if US President-elect Joe Biden lifts sanctions on Tehran.
- Earlier, Biden has pledged to rejoin the historic 2015 accord if Iran also returns to compliance.

4) Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

About APEC

- APEC is a regional economic forum established in 1989 to leverage the growing interdependence of the Asia-Pacific.
- APEC's aim is to create greater prosperity for the people of the region by promoting balanced, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and secure growth and by accelerating regional economic integration.
- APEC operates as a cooperative, multilateral economic and trade forum.

- The APEC Secretariat is based in **Singapore** and operates as the core support

mechanism for the APEC process.



Membership of APEC

- There are **21 member economies** at present. It includes Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; People's Republic of China; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; Peru; The Philippines; The Russian Federation; Singapore; Chinese

Taipei; Thailand; United States of America; Viet Nam.

- **India is a non-member.**

Why in News?

- A visual leaders' meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) was held recently.

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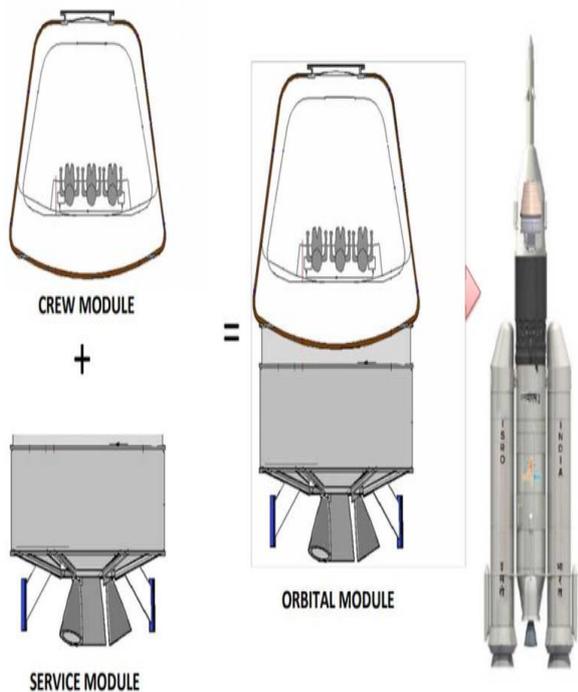
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1) Mission Gaganyaan

About the Mission

- Gaganyaan, announced by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2018, is the ₹10,000-crore **first Indian Human Space Flight Programme (HSP)** scheduled for **2022** when India completes 75 years of Independence.
- It is designed to have **3-7 crew members** spend **3-7 days in space** in a **400-km orbit (Low Earth Orbit or LEO)**.

GAGANYAAN : SYSTEMS



- With this, **India could potentially become the fourth country to send a man to space**, after the erstwhile USSR, the US and China. (Denmark also has a manned space flight scheduled for 2022)
- The first of the two pre-Gaganyaan flights with a humanoid will be launched soon along with some of the six shortlisted micro-gravity experiments.
- **GSLV Mk III** will be used to launch Gaganyaan as it has the necessary payload capability.
- The Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark III (GSLV Mk III), is a **three-stage** medium-lift launch vehicle developed by the ISRO.

- Primarily designed to launch communication satellites into geostationary orbit, it is also identified as launch vehicle for crewed missions under the Indian Human Spaceflight Programme and dedicated science missions like **Chandrayaan-2**.

Recent developments

- Four pilots from the Indian Air Force (IAF) were shortlisted to receive training as astronauts of Gaganyaan.
- The chosen astronauts have begun their 12-month training at the **Gagarin Research and Test Cosmonaut Training Centre (GCTC)** in Moscow.
- ISRO unveiled its first 'woman' astronaut 'Vyomamitra', a **Lady robot**. It is a **half-humanoid**.
- Vyommitra will ride to space in the first test flight of the human space mission, Gaganyaan.
- The humanoid will simulate the human functions required for space before real astronauts take off before August 2022.

Why in News?

- As part of steps to deepen cooperation in civil space activities, the space agencies of India and Australia are working together to position temporarily Indian tracking facilities in Australia.
- This would support India's planned human space flight programme-Gaganyaan.

Why Australia?

- Australia has many unique advantages in space, from the **geographical position in the southern hemisphere**, to the **wide-open spaces** and **relatively low light pollution**, and their expertise in satellite data applications.
- This made Australia an ideal partner for space debris tracking and space traffic management activities, world-leading earth observation services, efficient rocket technology and launch services, and remote asset management.

India-Australia Relations

- India, Australia space cooperation is underpinned by a formal Memorandum of Understanding signed between the two countries in 2012.

- Both nations have been collaborating since 1987 to support data calibration and laser ranging for Indian satellites, launching Australian satellites, and conducting joint research.
- At a virtual summit in June, both countries elevated the bilateral relationship to a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**, and put in place practical agreements on cybersecurity, emerging technology and critical minerals.

2) Fly ash

Fly Ash

- **Fly ash** is a **fine powder** that is a **byproduct** of burning pulverized **coal in electric generation power plants**.
- Fly ash is a pozzolan, a **substance containing aluminous and siliceous material** that forms cement in the presence of water. When mixed with lime and water, fly ash forms a compound similar to Portland cement.

Uses of fly ash

- Fly ash can be used as **prime material in many cement-based products**, such as poured concrete, concrete block, and brick.
- One of the most common uses of fly ash is in Portland cement concrete pavement or PCC pavement.
- **Road construction** projects using PCC can use a great deal of concrete, and substituting fly ash provides significant economic benefits.
- Fly ash has also been used as an **embankment and mine fill**.

Why in News?

- The National Thermal Power Corporation has developed geo-polymer aggregate from fly ash as a replacement to natural aggregates for use in building construction.

Why the need?

- It is a part of the concept of **waste-to-best** to make best use of fly ash generated in the thermal power plant.
- Geo-polymer aggregate will not only increase fly ash utilisation but also saves the environment. Further, the **requirement of land for ash ponds will be negligible**. Geopolymers are inorganic, typically ceramic, materials that form long-range, covalently bonded, non-crystalline (amorphous) networks.

- In fact, **fly ash based geo-polymer mortar will act as a binding agent**. The geo-polymer aggregates will help in **reducing carbon emission** and has great potential for **reduction of water consumption**.
- According to one estimate, the requirement of aggregates for infrastructure development in the country is about **2,000 million tonnes** every year.
- The aggregate developed by NTPC from fly ash will **help in meeting the demand** to a great extent and will also **reduce the impact on the environment** caused by natural aggregates which require **quarrying of natural stone**.

3) Indiscriminate use of Plasma Therapy

What is convalescent plasma?

- **Blood plasma is a yellowish liquid** that makes up about half the blood volume. **After a virus, your plasma contains antibodies** that help fight infection.
- People who have recovered from COVID-19 have antibodies to the disease in their blood. Doctors call this convalescent plasma.
- Researchers hope that convalescent plasma can be given to people with severe COVID-19 to boost their ability to fight the virus.
- Everyone who has suffered from a disease possibly carries what are called neutralising antibodies that when extracted via plasma and transfused on to others with the infection can help their immune system fight it off.

Why in News?

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has **warned against indiscriminate use of convalescent plasma therapy (CPT) for treating COVID-19**.

About the warning

- The report concluded that the therapy **did not lead to a reduction in progression** to severe COVID or all-cause mortality in the group that received CPT as compared to the group that did not receive CPT.
- **Benefits** of CPT in improving the **clinical outcomes, reducing severity of disease, duration of hospitalisation and mortality in patients** were dependent on the concentration of specific antibodies in

convalescent plasma that could neutralise the effects of SARS-CoV-2.

4) Cyber Attacks

What are those?

- A cyber attack is an **assault launched by cybercriminals using one or more computers against a single or multiple computers or networks**. A cyber attack can maliciously disable computers, steal data, or use a breached computer as a launch point for other attacks.
- Recent cyberattacks are **Dtrack, Ghostcat, MedusaLocker**.

Why in News?

- National Cyber Security Coordinator Lt. Gen. (retd.) Rajesh Pant said that around 4

lakh malware are found and 375 cyber-attacks are witnessed in India every day.

About NCCC

- The National Cyber Coordination Centre (NCCC) is an **operational cyber security and e-surveillance agency in India**.
- NCCC comes under the **Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.
- It is intended to **screen communication metadata and co-ordinate the intelligence** gathering activities of other agencies.

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DEFENCE

1) Extreme Weather Habitats

Why in News?

- The **Indian Army** has completed building extreme weather habitat for thousands of additional troops to remain deployed through the harsh winter.

About the new facility

- In order to ensure the operational efficiency of the troops deployed in winters, the Army has completed the establishment of habitat facilities for all the troops deployed in the sector.
- Apart from the **smart camps** with integrated facilities, which have been built over the years, **additional state of the art habitat with integrated arrangements for electricity, water, heating facilities, health and hygiene** have been recently created.
- The Army recently procured 15,000 extreme weather clothing from the U.S. under the bilateral logistics pact, Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Understanding (**LEMOA**), for the additional troops

deployed in Ladakh. LEMOA is a tweaked India-specific version of the Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), which the U.S. has with several countries it has close military to military cooperation.

Significance

Geographical

- The **altitude** in Ladakh where troops are deployed ranges from 14,000-18,000 feet and the area experiences up to 40 feet of **snowfall** from December onwards.
- Coupled with the wind chill factor, **the temperatures dip down to minus 30-40 degrees**, disrupting road access to the areas.

Strategic

- The Army has deployed thousands of additional troops and equipment in eastern Ladakh and along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) since the **stand-off** with China which began in early May.

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ART & CULTURE

1) Kakatiya Temple

About the temple

- The **13th century shrine**, which has been found in Warangal Urban district in **Telangana**, is unfinished but extraordinary and exquisite in its architecture.
- It contains a very wide ground plan possibly for a trikuta shrine with spacious provisions for erection of entrance portico, vestibules as well as sanctums.
- The character of the temple is **identical with the Thousand Pillar temple** built by Rudradeva Maharaja – the illustrious king of Kakatiya dynasty.
- **King Ganapati Deva (A.D.1199-1262) might have started** the edifice during the last years of his rule and it was not carried out by his successors either Rudramadevi or Pratapa Rudradeva due to their expeditions against enemies and revolt by chieftains.

Why in News?

- Structural remains of an uncompleted grand shrine of Kakatiyas has been found at Mamunoor in Warangal Urban district.

Famous constructions of Kakatiya Dynasty

Remnants of Swayambhu temple and Keerthi Thoranas, Warangal fort:

- The Warangal Fort was a huge construction with three distinct circular strongholds surrounded by a moat. **Four paths with decorative and lofty gateways known as Keerthi Thorana** or Hamsa Thorana, set according to the cardinal points, lead to the center where a huge **Shiva Temple (Swayambhu Gudi)** once existed.
- The archaeological remains through the explored ground plan of the **Swayambhu temple** suggests the huge dimensions of the temple, as corroborated by the contemporary work of Kridabhiramamu.
- The gateway is obvious but much of the temple is archaeologically significant for its clear visibility of the total temple complex along with gateways.
- The archaeological remains of Swayambhu temple complex and Keerthi Thoranas demonstrate both a creative masterpiece, and a continuity and transformation

through interchange of cultural values for many years of Indian and Asian art history.

Rudreswara Temple (Thousand pillars temple), Hanumakonda:

- Rudreswara Temple locally known as Veyisthambala Gudi (Thousand pillars temple) is one of the finest and earliest available examples of Kakatiya art, architecture and sculpture.
- It was **built by Rudra Deva**, and named after him as Sri Rudreswara swamy temple with the presiding deity as Rudreswara, in 1163 AD in the style of later Chalukyan and early Kakatiyan Architecture, star shaped and triple shrined (Trikutalaya).
- The temple is a fine specimen of architecture and sculpture with **One thousand pillars** implying that the temple has many pillars. There are richly carved pillars, perforated screens, exquisite icons; rock cut elephants and the monolithic dolerite Nandi as components of the temple.
- Strengthening of foundations like sand box technique, the skill of Kakatiya sculptors is manifest in adroit craftsmanship and **flawless ivory carving technique in their art**. The ingenuity of Kakatiya sculptors is visible in likes of lathe turned, and shiny polish in dolerite and granite stone sculpture and craft work of **Nava rangamandapa**.

Rudreswara (Ramappa) temple, Palampet:

- Rudreswara (Ramappa) temple is Situated 65 km from Warangal at Palampet. The Ramappa Temple, probably is the **only temple in India known by the name of the sculptor who built it**.
- The **head sculptor was Ramappa**, after whom the temple is known today, rather than after the presiding deity, Ramalingeswara, as is the general norm.
- The temple of Ramappa was built on behalf of the king, Kakati Ganapathi Deva by his chief commander Rudra Samani at a place called Ranakude in Atukuru province.
- This temple has been rightfully described as the **“brightest star in the galaxy of medieval temples of the Deccan”**.

- The temple is a **Shivalaya** and stands majestically on a 6 ft high star shaped platform. The hall in front of the sanctum has numerous carved pillars that have been positioned to create an effect that combines light and space wonderfully and the exquisitely chiselled walls and ceiling are unique to the time of Kakatiyan sculptors and empire.
- The sculptural work of dance postures in the temple appears like a frozen record of dances of the region in stone and was of great inspiration for the famous work 'Nritya Ratnavali', by Jayapa Senani. **The postures pertaining to Bharata Natya, Shrunnga, Bharunga, Rathi, Perini Nritya** etc., are engraved on the pillars and top-beams of 'Mukha Mandapam', The

mythological episodes such as 'Gopika Vastrapaharanam, Tripura samharm, Daksha Samharam, Ksheera Sagara Madhanam, Girija Kalyanam etc., stand for the highest standards of Kakatiya Sculpture. The 'Nagini' and other eleven devanarthakis are arranged as supporting beams on both sides of each entrance.

- For **more details** about **Kakatiya Dynasty**: <https://officerspulse.com/kakati-devi-temple/>

- Or Refer **Pulse 17- Page 16**

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PIB ANALYSIS

1) TRIFED

About:

- The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) came into existence in 1987. It is a national-level apex organization functioning under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**.
- TRIFED has its Head Office located in New Delhi and has a network of 13 Regional Offices located at various places in the country.
- TRIFED is engaged in procurement and marketing of tribal art and craft items through its chain of 40 retail outlets called **TRIBES INDIA** which offers a range of tribal products.

Objectives

- The ultimate objective of TRIFED is socio-economic development of tribal people in the country by way of marketing development of the tribal products such as metal craft, tribal textiles, pottery, tribal paintings and pottery on which the tribals depend heavily for a major portion of their income.
- TRIFED acts as a facilitator and service provider for tribes to sell their product.
- The approach by TRIFED aims to empower tribal people with knowledge, tools and pool of information so that they can undertake their operations in a more systematic and scientific manner.
- It also involves capacity building of the tribal people through sensitization, formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs) and imparting training to them for undertaking a particular activity.

Main activities to TRIFED include:

- Retail Marketing Development
- Minor Forest Produce Marketing Development
- Skill up-gradation & Capacity Building of ST Artisans and MFP Gatherers
- R&D Development/Intellectual Proprietary Rights (IPR) Activity

Why in News?

- TRIFED has expanded Tribes India product range.

- The new initiative includes products made by inmates of Central Jail of Jagdalpur.

About Tribes India

- The Tribes India E-marketplace is an effort to empower lakhs of tribal enterprises. It provides tribals a bigger market for their handicrafts and produces and helps them become self-reliant and build an Atmanirbhar Bharat.

2) Swachh Bharat Mission

About Swachh Bharat Abhiyan:

- Swachh Bharat Mission launched on 2nd October 2014 is a massive mass movement that seeks to create a Clean India by 2019.
- It has 2 components - **urban and rural**.
- SBM Urban aims for the elimination of open defecation, conversion of unsanitary toilets to pour flush toilets, eradication of manual scavenging, municipal solid waste management and bringing about a behavioural change in people regarding healthy sanitation practices.
- SBM Rural aims to make India an open defecation free country in Five Years.
- It seeks to improve the levels of cleanliness in rural areas through Solid and Liquid Waste Management activities and making Gram Panchayats Open Defecation Free (ODF), clean and sanitised.
- The **Urban component of the mission is implemented by the Ministry of Urban Development** and the **Rural component by the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti**.

Objectives

- To Elimination of open defecation, Eradication of Manual Scavenging, Modern and Scientific Municipal Solid Waste Management,
- To effect behavioural change regarding healthy sanitation practices,
- To Generate awareness about sanitation and its linkage with public health, Capacity Augmentation for ULB's and Creating an enabling environment for private sector participation.

Components -

- 1) Household toilets, including conversion of insanitary latrines into pour-flush latrines;

- 2) Community toilets
- 3) Public toilets
- 4) Solid waste management
- 5) Public Awareness and IEC (Information, Education and Communication).

Implementation -

- Behaviour change is the primary focus and fundamental tool for achievement of ODF outcomes.
- This is carried out through the Ministry's focused Information, Education and Communication (IEC) programme.

SBM ODF Plus and ODF Plus Plus Protocol

- To make ODF achievements sustainable and address the issue of holistic sanitation, there is a need to address the entire sanitation value chain.

Definition of Open Defecation

- Free city / ward A city / ward can be notified/declared as ODF city/ ODF ward if, at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating in the open.

- SBM ODF Plus (ODF+) & ODF Plus Plus (ODF++) are geared towards achieving this objective.
- The SBM ODF Plus (ODF+) protocol focuses on sustaining community/ public toilet usage by ensuring their functionality, cleanliness and maintenance.
- The SBM ODF plus Plus (ODF++) will focus on achieving sanitation sustainability by addressing complete sanitation value chain, including safe containment, processing and disposal of fecal sludge and septage.

Why in News?

- Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS), Ministry of Jal Shakti celebrated '**World Toilet Day**' (19 November), under 'Swachh Bharat Mission - Grameen (SBMG)' for promoting awareness on access to Safe Sanitation.

3) Mission Purvodaya

About the initiative

- Purvodaya in the **steel sector** is aimed at driving accelerated development of **Eastern India** through the establishment of an integrated steel hub.

Why in Eastern States?

- **Eastern states of India (Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Northern part of Andhra Pradesh)**

collectively hold ~80% of the country's iron ore, ~100% of coking coal and a significant portion of chromite, bauxite and dolomite reserves.

- There is the presence of major ports such as Paradip, Haldia, Vizag, Kolkata, etc., with >30% of India's major port capacity.
- In India's march towards a \$5 trillion economy, the 5 Eastern states can play a major role where the steel sector can become the catalyst.
- This Eastern belt has the potential to add more than 75% of the country's incremental steel capacity envisioned by the National Steel Policy.

About Integrated Steel Hub

- The proposed Integrated Steel Hub, encompassing Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, and Northern Andhra Pradesh, would serve as a torchbearer for socio-economic growth of Eastern India.
- The objective of this hub would be to enable swift capacity addition and improve the overall competitiveness of steel producers both in terms of cost and quality. The Integrated Steel Hub would focus on 3 key elements:
 - Capacity addition through easing the setup of Greenfield steel plants
 - Development of steel clusters near integrated steel plants as well as demand centres.
 - Transformation of logistics and utility infrastructure which would change the socio-economic landscape in the East.

Why in News?

- Addressing the 119th annual general meeting of Merchant's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Steel said that **Mission Purvodaya** will drive eastern India towards **self-reliance and contribute to making of an Aatmanirbhar Bharat**.

4) Indo-Thai Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT)

About CORPAT

- CORPAT builds up the **understanding and interoperability** between navies of India & Thailand and facilitates the institution of measures to prevent and suppress illegal

Unreported Unregulated (IUU) fishing, drug trafficking, maritime terrorism, armed robbery and piracy.

- It has been conducted **twice a year since 2005**, with the aim of keeping this vital part of the Indian Ocean safe and secure for commercial shipping and international trade.
- The objective of the Indo-Thai CORPAT is to ensure effective implementation of United Nations Conventions on Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS).

▪ **About UNCLOS**

- An international treaty that provides a regulatory framework for the use of the world's seas and oceans, inter alia, to ensure the conservation and equitable usage of resources and the marine environment and to ensure the protection and preservation of the living resources of the sea.
- It was adopted in 1982 and entered into force in 1994.

Significance

- It will enhance **strong bilateral ties and maritime cooperation** between India and Thailand.
- Indo-Thai CORPAT seeks to highlight India's peaceful presence and solidarity with friendly and harmonious countries towards ensuring **good order in the maritime domain**.
- The exercise is part of Indian Navy efforts to assist countries in the Indian Ocean Region with **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Surveillance, Search and Rescue and other capacity-building and capability-enhancement activities**.

Why in News?

- 30th edition of the Indo-Thai CORPAT (Indo-Thai Coordinated Patrol) was conducted recently.

5) RuPaY

About

- RuPay is the first-of-its-kind **domestic Debit and Credit Card payment network of India**.
- The name, derived from the words '**Rupee and 'Payment'**', emphasises that it is India's very own initiative for Debit and Credit Card payments.

- It is created by the **National Payments Corporation of India**.
- It was conceived to fulfil RBI's vision to offer a domestic, open-loop, multilateral system which will allow all Indian banks and financial institutions in India to participate in electronic payments.
- It is made in India, for every Indian to take them towards a "**less cash**" society.
- It is a highly secure network that protects against **anti-phishing**.

- **Anti-phishing** refers to efforts to block phishing attacks. Phishing is a kind of cybercrime where attackers pose as known or trusted entities and contact individuals through email, text or telephone and ask them to share sensitive information.

Benefits of RuPay Card:

- The benefits of RuPay debit cards are the flexibility of the product platform, high levels of acceptance and the strength of the RuPay brand-all of which will contribute to an increased product experience.
- **Lower cost and affordability:** Since the transaction processing will happen domestically, it would lead to lower cost of clearing and settlement for each transaction.
- **Customized product offering:** RuPay, being a domestic scheme is committed towards development of customized product and service offerings for Indian consumers.
- **Protection of information related to Indian consumers:** Transaction and customer data related to RuPay card transactions will reside in India.
- **Provide electronic product options to untapped/unexplored consumer segment:** There are under-penetrated/untapped consumers segments in rural areas that do not have access to banking and financial services. Right pricing of RuPay products would make the RuPay cards more economically feasible for banks to offer to their customers.
- **Inter-operability between payment channels and products:** RuPay card is uniquely positioned to offer complete inter-operability between various payments channels and products.

About National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)

- It is an umbrella organisation for **operating retail payments and settlement systems in India.**
- It is an initiative of **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Indian Banks' Association (IBA)** under the provisions of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.
- It has been incorporated as a "Not for Profit" Company under the provisions of Section 25 of Companies Act 1956 (now Section 8 of Companies Act 2013).

Why in News?

- Prime Minister of India and Bhutan launched RuPay card Phase-II that will allow Bhutanese card holders to access RuPay network in India.

6) UDAN

What is UDAN?

- Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik (UDAN) was launched as a **regional connectivity scheme** under the **Ministry of Civil Aviation** in 2016.
- It is an innovative scheme to develop the regional aviation market.
- The objective is to **create affordable yet economically viable and profitable flights** on regional routes so that flying becomes affordable to the common man even in small towns.
- The scheme envisages providing connectivity to un-served and underserved airports of the country through the revival of existing air-strips and airports.
- The **Airports Authority of India (AAI)** is designated as the Implementing Agency under this Scheme.
- UDAN 2-** Under UDAN 2.0, **Helipads were connected** with priority to the North-East and the hill states.
- UDAN 3- Inclusion of Tourism Routes** in coordination with the Ministry of Tourism, **Inclusion of Seaplanes** for connecting Water Aerodromes.
- UDAN 4- 78 new routes** under the 4th round of UDAN and also the operation of helicopter and seaplanes also been incorporated.

UDE DESH KA AAM NAAGRIK (UDAN)

India's Regional Air Connectivity Scheme

Aimed at bringing air travel within reach of the common man, Central Government has launched the UDAN scheme

Highlights

- Offers subsidy to airlines for flying to domestic airports with limited connectivity
- Fare cap of ₹ 2,500 per hour of flying by plane and ₹ 5,000 for helicopters
- State governments and airport operators will contribute to the scheme

- First flight under this scheme to take off in Jan 2017
- 50% seats of the UDAN flights to have a fare cap of ₹ 2,500 and the rest will have market-based pricing
- Applicable on flights of 200 km to 800 km distance
- Hilly, remote, island and security sensitive regions have no distance limit
- Centre will provide concessions on VAT and service tax to the airlines
- No landing charges, parking charges and Terminal Navigation Landing Charges
- A Regional Connectivity Fund will be created to fund the scheme

KBK Infographics

Objectives

- To make travel **affordable and accessible** to all.
- Ensuring connectivity** to the under-served areas in the country by the revival of existing airports and airstrips
- Ministry aims to operationalize around 1000 routes and develop more than 100 airports in the next five years.
- The Ministry aims to achieve this by focusing on operationalizing routes in the priority areas.

Why in News?

- Taking the next stride in boosting regional aerial connectivity in India under RCS-UDAN (Regional Connectivity Scheme – Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) of the

Government of India, the second direct flight commenced operations from Hyderabad, Telangana to Nashik, Maharashtra.

7) India-Luxembourg Virtual Summit

Why in News?

- The Prime Minister of India, and the Prime Minister of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, held the **first-ever India-Luxembourg Virtual Summit**.
- The two leaders acknowledged the growing convergences between India and Luxembourg on global issues of mutual interest.
- They shared the commitment to foster deeper understanding and cooperation between the two countries.



Key Highlights of the India-Luxembourg Virtual Summit

Economic Relationship

- **MoU between India International Exchange (India INX) and Luxembourg Stock Exchange:** It provides for cooperation in financial services industry, maintenance of orderly markets in securities respective countries, ESG (environmental, social and governance) and green finance in the local market.

- **MoU between Invest India and Luxinnovation:** It is aimed at supporting and developing mutual business cooperation between Indian and Luxembourg companies, including promotion and facilitation of inbound FDI.
- The leaders looked forward to the **17th Joint Economic Commission** between India and the Belgium-Luxembourg Economic Union to review the economic and trade relations.

Financial Relationship

- The two leaders welcomed the signing of cooperation agreements by the Luxembourg Stock Exchange with State Bank of India and the India International Stock Exchange. It is aimed at the importance of **green financing to promote green growth and sustainable development**.
- **Significance:** Luxembourg as a leading international financial centre in Europe, can act as an important bridge to help **connect India's financial services industry with international markets** and reach European and global investors.

Space and Digital Cooperation

- The leader of Luxembourg welcomed the successful launch of the PSLV-C49 mission by ISRO which included 4 satellites from Luxembourg.

Higher Education and Research

- The leaders noted with satisfaction the ongoing collaboration in the field of neurodegenerative diseases between the National Brain Research Centre and the Luxembourg Institute of Health and the Luxembourg Centre for Systems Biomedicine.

Culture and People-to-people Ties:

- In 2019, Luxembourg issued a commemorative stamp to mark the **150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi**.
- Both countries intend to conclude a Migration and Mobility agreement to further strengthen mobility as well as an agreement on an exemption of visas for holders of diplomatic and official/service passports.

EU-India relations

- The two leaders acknowledged the importance of the **India-EU Strategic Partnership** rooted in shared principles and **values of democracy, freedom, rule**

of law, and respect for human rights, for contributing to a safer, greener and more stable world.

- The leaders acknowledged that developing the India-EU economic relations will be

important in the context of post-COVID-19 economic recovery.

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News in Depth

AIR NEWS

1) Unnat Bharat Abhiyan

About the scheme

- Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) is inspired by the vision of **transformational change in rural development processes by leveraging knowledge institutions** to help build the architecture of an Inclusive India.
- The program was formally launched by the **Ministry of Education (MoE)** (formerly Ministry Human Resource Development) in November, 2014.
- The Participating Institute will **adopt at least five villages** in consultation with the District Collectors for the development activities under the UBA.

Objectives of UBA

- The main objectives of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan are as under:
- To engage the faculty and students of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in identifying development issues in rural areas and finding sustainable solutions for the same.
- Identify & select existing innovative technologies, enable customisation of technologies, or devise implementation methods for innovative solutions, as required by the people.
- To allow HEIs to contribute to devising systems for smooth implementation of various Government programmes.

UBA 2.0

- Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0 is the upgraded version of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 1.0. It was launched in 2018.
- The scheme is **extended to all educational institutes**; however under Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0 Participating institutes are selected based on the fulfillment of certain criteria.

- As of March 2020, under the scheme UBA, 13072 villages have been adopted by 2474 Institutes.

Interventions

- The technological interventions under the UBA cover different subjects broadly categorized like in the area of sustainable agriculture; water resource management; artisans, industries and livelihood; basic amenities (infrastructure & services) and rural energy system.
- Some technological interventions done under scheme UBA are; i) Safe Drinking Water by NIT Manipur and IIT Jodhpur; ii) Agriculture drone system by Santhiram Engineering College, Nandyal (A.P); iii) Improved Pottery Kiln in Farrukhnagar cluster by IIT Delhi, etc.

Why in News?

- Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank held a review meeting regarding the progress of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan Scheme.

2) PARAM Siddhi

About

- PARAM Siddhi is a high performance computing-artificial intelligence (HPC-AI) supercomputer established earlier this year, under **National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)** at **Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC)**.
- The supercomputer with Rpeak of 5.267 Petaflops and 4.6 Petaflops Rmax (Sustained) was conceived by C-DAC and developed jointly with support of **Department of Science and Technology (DST), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** under NSM.
- *In high-performance computing, Rmax and Rpeak are scores used to rank supercomputers based on their*

performance. A system's *Rmax* score describes its maximal achieved performance; the *Rpeak* score describes its theoretical peak performance.

- A petaflop is the ability of a computer to do one quadrillion (10^{15}) floating point operations per second (FLOPS).

Applications of PARAM Siddhi

- With the infusion of Param Siddhi-AI, the scientific and technology community in the country will further be enabled and empowered to solve multidisciplinary grand challenges of **healthcare, agriculture, education, energy, cybersecurity, space, AI applications, weather and climate modelling, urban planning, etc.**
- The AI system will strengthen application development of packages and will help testing of weather forecasting packages, geo-exploration packages for oil and gas recovery; packages for aero-design studies; computational physics and mathematical applications and even online courses for education.

Why in News?

- **India's newest and fastest supercomputer, PARAM-Siddhi AI**, has been ranked 63rd in the Top500 list of most powerful non-distributed computer systems in the world.
- A non-distributed computer system has all its components at a single location.
- The Top500 project tracks the most powerful supercomputers in the world, and is published twice a year.

Pratyush & Mihir

- PARAM-Siddhi is the second Indian supercomputer to be entered in the top 100 on the Top500 list.
- **Pratyush**, a supercomputer used for weather forecasting at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, ranked 78th on the November edition of the list. It was ranked 66th in the June rankings announced by the project.

- Another Indian supercomputer, **Mihir** (146th on the list), clubs with Pratyush to generate enough computing power to match PARAM-Siddhi.

Global Rankings

- Japanese supercomputer **Fugaku** (442 petaflops) and **IBM's Summit** (148.8 petaflops) are the two most powerful supercomputers in the world, according to the Top500 list.
- Chinese Sunway TaihuLight is number four on the list (93 petaflops), developed by the National Research Center of Parallel Computer Engineering & Technology (NRCPC) in China.

Related Information

About C-DAC

- Founded in 1988, the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) is the premier R&D organization of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** for carrying out R&D in IT, Electronics and associated areas.
- With the delivery of PARAM Supercomputers, C-DAC has been the forerunner of the ICT revolution in India, constantly innovating and leveraging its expertise in rolling out national level initiatives such as National Supercomputing Mission, Mission for Developing Digitally Inclusive and Smart Community (DISC) with focus on Agriculture, Health and Education, Cyber Security and Cyber Forensics Applications based on Biometrics and Bio-Informatics Applications including Cancer Research using Artificial Intelligence etc.
- C-DAC is also creating the peripheral frameworks required for high performance computing (HPC)-AI, which can be used by startups and researchers in the country.

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THE HINDU EDITORIALS

1) T-cell immunity and COVID-19

What is immunity?

- Immunity is your **body's ability to recognize germs** to prevent them from causing illness.
- The immune system's job is to help identify and **eliminate dangerous germs** that enter the body before they can cause disease or damage.

Types of immunity

- There are two types of immunity: **innate and adaptive.**

Innate Immunity

- Innate immunity is the immune system that is present when you are born which is the body's **first line of defense against germs.**
- It includes physical barriers, such as skin and mucous membranes, and special cells and proteins that can recognize and kill germs.
- Innate immunity is like first aid — an immediate response, **not strong enough to prevent pathology** if the virus is highly virulent or the 'inoculum'(infecting virus load) is heavy.
- Innate immunity then passes the baton to adaptive immunity, which takes several days to develop and become effective.

Adaptive Immunity

- Adaptive immunity is protection that your body builds when it meets and remembers antigens in the body.
- When your body recognizes antigens, it produces antibodies to fight the antigens. It takes about 14 days for your body to make antibodies. More importantly, the body memorizes this fight so that if it meets the same antigen again, it can recognize and attack more quickly.
- Antibody production is one of the most important ways that immunity is developed.
- There are two types of adaptive immunity: active and passive.

- 1) **Active Immunity** - antibodies that develop in a person's own immune system after the body is exposed to an antigen through a disease or when you get an immunization

(i.e. a flu shot). This type of immunity lasts for a long time.

- 2) **Passive Immunity** - antibodies given to a person to prevent disease or to treat disease after the body is exposed to an antigen. Passive immunity is given from mother to child through the placenta before birth, and through breast milk after birth. It can also be given medically through blood products that contain antibodies, such as immune globulin. This type of immunity is fast acting but lasts only a few weeks or months.

- **Based on the cells involved in immunity**

- Immunity can be classified as

- 1) **B cell mediated** or antibody mediated immunity and

- 2) **T cell mediated immunity.**

- Antibodies are **protein molecules** that recognise and bind to viral antigens.
- Some among them tend to **neutralise viruses** from infecting fresh host cells.
- Some viruses then adopt other mechanisms to infect host cells, and that is when T-cell immunity may come to the rescue.
- In most viral infections, the presence of antibodies in the blood is sufficient to classify individuals as immune.
- But unlike them, **antibodies for COVID-19 wane fairly soon.**
- In persons with asymptomatic infections or mild COVID-19, nearly half will have no detectable antibodies after two months.
- This phenomenon of short-lived antibodies and consequent re-infection is also seen in some other respiratory tract viruses.
- Generally, **re-infections are mild or asymptomatic**, presumably due to **protection afforded by T-cell immunity.**

Does disappearance of antibodies for the COVID-19-causing virus mean that protection after one infection does not last?

- Knowing that reinfection with symptoms has so far been proven in only about ten cases among millions infected, protective **immunity after the first infection** is probably **durable.**

- The observed protection in the face of non-detectable antibodies highlights the need to **study T-cell immunity**.

More long-lasting

- In COVID-19 infection, T-cell immunity is more **long-lasting than antibodies**.
- It resides in a subset of white blood cells called **T-lymphocytes**, or T cells. However, the test for assessing T-cell immunity is complicated and expensive.
- Serial evaluation of T-cell immunity can help determine its durability after vaccination.

Recent study findings from Karolinska Institute

- About **25% of blood donors in 2019**, prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 infection in Sweden, had **T-cell immunity against it**.
- This increased to 50% in 2020 after the pandemic had entered the country.
- These observations imply that prior exposure to some other coronaviruses had **evoked “cross-reacting” T-cell immunity** towards the COVID-19 coronavirus.
- In the same study, many contacts of proven COVID-19 patients had T-cell immunity, even though antibodies were undetectable.
- This indicates that in those exposed to the COVID-19 virus, **T-cell immunity occurs even without a detectable antibody response**.

How T cell mediated immunity is long lasting?

- Researchers found that the immune T cells had **‘stem-cell’ like characteristics** indicating their long-term survival and potential of quick multiplication.

Significance of T-cell immunity

- T-cell immunity is a better and more **durable marker** than antibodies of past infection for this novel virus.
- Those with T-cell immunity may **need no vaccine**, or only a single dose of a two-dose vaccine regimen.

Conclusion

- If India’s vaccination policy, when made, recommends that vaccines may be conserved for priority use for non-immune subjects, then, a **rapid T-cell immunity test** will be better than antibody tests.
- Therefore, developing simple and **rapid assays for T-cell immunity** should be a

priority for Indian scientists to work on, quickly.

2) Digital nation- On delivery of Citizen services

Context:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s speech about **digitalisation and its role in human life** at the Bengaluru Tech Summit.

Highlights of the speech

India- a digital nation

- **Affordable smartphones and Internet access** have made India a digital nation with an estimated 750 million connections and a thriving financial technology sector.
- **Digital platforms** providing goods and services, including online education and telemedicine, have **grown vigorously** during the COVID-19 pandemic, while many professionals have maintained productivity by working from home.
- India as a country is uniquely positioned to **leap ahead in the information era** since our local tech solutions have the potential to go global.
- **Digital India Mission** launched 5 years back is no longer being seen as any regular Government initiative and **Digital India has become a way of life** particularly for the poor and marginalised.
- Technology is the prime reason our schemes have gone beyond files and **changed the lives of the people** at such a speed and scale.
- For instance, with the emphasis on digitalisation, **Ayushman Bharat** made it possible to achieve measurable progress on the Universal Health Coverage component access to free, essential prescription drugs.

Challenges ahead

- Yet, it would be **premature to declare digital as a way of life in India**, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi put it at the Bengaluru Tech Summit.

Trust worthiness

- The true measure of digital nations is the **readiness of governments to use technology** to create open, participatory public systems that citizens consider trustworthy.

Need to extend to other sectors

- Though government-to-citizen services using Common Service Centres, advice to agriculturists, digital payments of welfare

benefits through bank accounts and, even legal advice online under the Tele-Law scheme represent a welcome move but if digital methods were **applied to other sectors**, such as **road safety**, the results could be dramatic, potentially reducing the accident mortality rate of about 1,50,000 deaths a year.

Transforming internal processes

- At a broader level, efficient digital government depends on **transforming internal processes, and fixing deadlines** for service delivery.

Conclusion

- If digital has to become a way of life, **redefining the labyrinthine functioning of citizen-centric services** would be a good place to start, with deadlines for government departments.

3) Threat or treat: on RCEP trade deal

- The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was signed into existence recently by 15 countries led by China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and the 10-state ASEAN grouping, creating one of the world's largest trading blocs.
- After seven years of protracted negotiations India decided last November to exit the grouping and justified its decision as protecting its economy from burgeoning trade deficits with a majority of the 15 RCEP members and had cited the grouping's refusal to accede to its requests on safeguards as a deal breaker.

Why should India review its decision?

COVID-19 induced economic impact

- With global trade and the economy sinking because of the COVID-19 pandemic, re-energising economic activity can be achieved with the help of RCEP.
- RCEP presents a unique opportunity to support economic recovery, inclusive development and job creation even as it helps strengthen regional supply chains.

Testament to economic realism

- RCEP members now account for about 30% of the global GDP and a third of the world's population hence it is imperative for India to acknowledge its significance.
- Vietnam, Philippines and some larger nations in the grouping have chosen to bury their geopolitical differences with China in order to prioritise what they collectively see as a mutually beneficial trading compact that would benefit their economies over the longer term.

Addressed issues that India flagged

- The summary of the final agreement shows that the pact does cover and attempt to address issues that India had flagged including rules of origin, trade in services, movement of persons and, crucially, remedies and safeguards.

Conclusion

- Acknowledging India's economic heft and value as a market, the RCEP members have not only left the door open should New Delhi reconsider its stance but have also waived a key 18-month cooling period for interested applicants.
- It would be in India's interest to dispassionately review its position and embrace openness rather than protectionism.

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INDIAN EXPRESS EXPLAINED

1) World Toilet Day 2020, and the state of sanitation in India



Why in the news?

- The United Nations has been celebrating November 19 as World Toilet Day since 2013.
- This day is marked to spread awareness about sustainable sanitation, access to hygienic toilets and the human costs of unsafe sanitation.

What is sustainable sanitation?

- Sustainable sanitation begins with a toilet that effectively captures human waste in a safe, accessible and dignified setting. The waste then gets stored in a tank, which can be emptied later by a collection service, or transported away by pipework.
- The next stage is treatment and safe disposal. Safe reuse of human waste helps save water, reduces and captures greenhouse gas emissions for energy production, and can provide agriculture with a reliable source of water and nutrients.

Why is it necessary to raise awareness?

- 4.2 billion people live without access to safely managed sanitation. Instead they often use unreliable, inadequate toilets or practise open defecation.
- Untreated human waste gets out into the environment and **spreads deadly and chronic diseases**. Sustainable sanitation systems, combined with the facilities and knowledge to practise good hygiene, are a strong defence against COVID-19 and future disease outbreaks.
- It ensures to tackle the global sanitation crisis and achieve **Sustainable Development Goal 6**: water and sanitation for all by 2030.

- According to the World Bank: “A lack of sanitation also holds back economic growth. Poor sanitation costs billions to some countries”. Countries lose their GDP due to premature deaths, the cost of health care treatment, lost time and productivity seeking treatment, and lost time and productivity finding access to sanitation facilities.

What are the benefits of sustainable sanitation?

- In 2015, 68% of the world population had access to improved sanitation facilities. In other words, almost one-third of people did not have access.
- Open defecation leads to the deaths of 1,000 children every day globally from diarrhoea related to poor sanitation and contaminated water sources.
- Safe sanitation, water supply and better hygiene can save the lives of 3.5 lakh children in a year.
- According to the WHO, “every dollar spent on sanitation yields about \$9 in savings on treatment, health-care costs and gains from more productive days.”

What is the state of sanitation in India?

- In India, **only 40% of the population** had access to **improved sanitation**. This is lower than countries like Sri-Lanka (95%), Bangladesh (60%) and Pakistan (60%).
- Improved sanitation is defined as facilities that “**ensure hygienic separation of human excreta from human contact**”. This includes facilities such as **flush/pour flush** (to piped sewer system, septic tank, pit latrine), **ventilated improved pit (VIP) latrine, pit latrine with slab**, and a **composting toilet**.
- According to Oxford University’s **Our World in Data**, poor sanitation, unsafe water sources, and no access to hand washing facilities are among the top factors in the country for deaths.
- Hence these issues need to be tackled and proper implementation of schemes such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan to have better ‘Improved Sanitation’.

2) How has the Supreme Court interpreted Article 32 over the years?

What is in the news?

- Recently Chief Justice of India, in Siddique Kappan journalist release case, said that the supreme court is “**trying to discourage**” individuals from filing petitions under Article 32 of the Constitution.
- CJI asked the journalist to approach High courts first and then approach the Supreme Court.
- Let us understand what Article 32 is and how the SC has interpreted this article over the years.

What is Article 32?

- Article 32 deals with the ‘**Right to Constitutional Remedies**’, or affirms the right to move the Supreme Court by appropriate proceedings for the enforcement of the rights conferred in Part III of the Constitution.
- The Supreme Court shall have **power to issue directions or orders or writs, including writs in the nature of habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, quo warranto and certiorari**, whichever may be appropriate, for the enforcement of any of the rights conferred by this Part
- Without prejudice to the powers conferred on the Supreme Court by clause (1) and (2), **Parliament may by law empower any other court** to exercise within the local limits of its jurisdiction all or any of the powers exercisable by the Supreme Court under clause (2).
- The right guaranteed by this article **shall not be suspended except as otherwise provided for by this Constitution.**
- **Only if any of fundamental rights is violated, a person can approach the Supreme Court directly under Article 32.**

What are the writs available under this?

- **Habeas Corpus:** By this writ the court directs the person or authority who has detained another person to bring the body of the prisoner before the court so as to enable the court to decide the validity, jurisdiction or justification for such detention.

- **Mandamus:** Mandamus is a command issued by a court to an authority directing it to perform a public duty imposed upon it by law.
- **Quo Warranto:** The writ of quo warranto is used to judicially control **executive action** in the matter of making appointments to public offices under relevant statutory provisions.
- **Certiorari:** A writ of certiorari or a writ in the nature of certiorari can only be issued by the Supreme court under Art. 32 and a High court under Art. 226 to direct, inferior courts, tribunals or authorities to transmit to the court the record of proceedings disposed of or pending therein for scrutiny, and if necessary, for quashing the same.
- **Prohibition:** A writ of prohibition is normally issued when inferior court or tribunal (a) proceeds to act without jurisdiction or in excess of jurisdiction (b) proceeds to act in violation of rules of natural justice or (c) proceeds to act under a law which is itself ultra vires or unconstitutional or (d) proceeds to act in contravention of fundamental rights.

Article 32 over the years

- **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar** in December 1948 during the constituent assembly debates called this article as the **very soul of the Constitution and the very heart of it.**
- In *Romesh Thappar vs State of Madras* (1950), the Supreme Court observed that Article 32 provides a “guaranteed” remedy for the enforcement of fundamental rights.
- In *Additional District Magistrate, Jabalpur vs S S Shukla (1976)*, the Supreme Court had said that **the citizen loses his right to approach the court under Article 32 during the emergency.**

High Court's Article 226

- In civil or criminal matters, the first remedy available to an aggrieved person is that of trial courts, followed by an appeal in the High Court and then the Supreme Court.
- When it comes to violation of **fundamental rights**, an individual can approach the High Court under Article 226 or the Supreme Court directly under Article 32. **Article 226, however, is not a fundamental right like Article 32.**

Conclusion

- There are several cases being observed under Article 32 by the Supreme Court.

- The judges have discretion whether an intervention is warranted in a case.
- The direction to approach the High Court's first has been a cause for delayed justice. Hence, a proper protocol should be

interwoven to give a faster justice mechanism.

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RSTV BIG PICTURE

1) Reforms in United Nation and other impaired bloc

- India's Permanent Representative to the UN recently spoke in the UN General Assembly on 'Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council'.
- He emphasised on reform of institutions like the UN, IMF, WTO and WHO to gain credibility.

Need for Reform

- In today's era, the UN is **not becoming resilient and responsive** towards the major threats like Globalisation, Terrorisism, Pandemic and Climate change and it provides solutions through the old structure and methods which is not conducive to solve the major issues surrounding the world.
- There is a lack of action on Intergovernmental negotiations and there are no records for the data.
- There is **growing influence of China** over the UN system which needs to be looked upon for getting an equal voice in the United Nations security council.

Major Areas of Reform

- **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)**- Rules of procedure and methods of working need to be altered.
- **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**- Alteration of membership even at permanent membership level.
- **Reform in the International Monetary Fund (IMF)** for betterment of the world.
- **World Health Organisation (WHO)**- need to be empowered to become more responsible structurally especially for fighting the pandemic.
- **World trade organisation (WTO)**- Dispute settlement mechanism needs to be strengthened and restructured.
- **Amendments to the UN Charter** is necessary.

Challenges Ahead

- Making changes or reforms in the UN is a **laborious process** because it takes so much of process for even reforming a document.

- The **UN presidency** is held currently by **Turkey which is very close to Pakistan** and there will be major roadblocks in bringing the reforms in the UN system.
- **Chinese influence** over various UN agencies and **non-reformist attitudes**.

Way Forward

- The focus should shift towards other **small agencies for reform** which may have an immediate impact.
- **Restructuring the international order** in a phased manner in context of new challenges.

Conclusion

- Reforms across the system is necessary and collaborative effort is needed for allowing developing and middle order countries to have equal representation and say at the United Nations.

2) Technology Solutions made in India

- Addressing the Bengaluru Tech Summit 2020 (BTS2020) virtually, the Prime Minister said it is time for tech solutions that are designed in India but deployed for the world, and the country is uniquely positioned to leap ahead in the information era.

India's potential in Tech-world

- In the last 5 years, India has moved from **traditional economy to Digital economy and is a one stop destination in terms of IT outsourcing services**.
- The Pandemic has created an **environment where people started to work remotely** and now there is a change in mindset of people which inturn has **surged the demand for online tools and innovative solutions towards various issues**.
- The potential is rising for India because now India is leading towards producing innovative solutions instead of just providing the services.
- India is heading towards becoming **self sufficient** in terms of solving various issues by domestic solutions.
- Eg: Make in India , Innovative India etc.

- As far as Industries are concerned, a **digital led revolution** is experienced especially in terms of a strong software service nation.
- The combination of **strong network, foundational softwares and apps** will make India head towards export led regime in terms of Technology.

What needs to be done for moving towards an IT led economy?

- India so far has not been known as a producing country in terms of technological solutions for which a **strong personnel ecosystem of IT networks, technology personnel working particularly for innovative solutions need to be created.**
- India needs to move towards **external branding of scaling the talent pool** especially in terms of **R&D** as more than 50% of R&D engineers work from India.
- **Domestic Market demand** for technological equipment needs to be addressed through Make in India initiative under the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal.
- **Performance linked incentive (PLI) policy can be linked with R&D** for maintaining domestic value chain and removing the handicaps in economies of scale.
- India's 200 billion dollar **export of IT services needs to expand** further.

Major Challenges

- The **investment in start-ups is very less.**
- Due to brain-drain, **technological capability is more diverted towards global countries** which is a major concern.
- **Policy level restrictions** are high in terms of technological innovation and service export.

Way Forward

- In order to retain technological capability, there is a need to create **high tech jobs domestically.**
- Linkages between **Industries and Academia** need to be built.
- An **industry led, design led, manufacturing, R&D led, Investment led** environment should be created for startups and companies to develop solutions without hindrance along with Government policy support.

Conclusion

- Digital economy is a key to realise a trillion dollar economy by government and industries working together because Digital India has become a way of life particularly for the poor, marginalised and for those in government.

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