

OFFICERS' PULSE

Issue no. 07 | 11th July to 17th July, 2021



**HAPPINESS
IS AN INSIDE
JOB**

**AT A GLANCE
& IN DEPTH.**

COVERAGE.

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Polity and Social Issues
Economy
International Relations
Environment
Science and Tech
Culture

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



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News @ a glance

POLITY

1) SVAMITVA

About the scheme

- SVAMITVA (Survey of villages and mapping with improvised technology in village areas) scheme is a collaborative effort of the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj, State Panchayati Raj Departments, State Revenue Departments and Survey of India**.
- It is a **central sector scheme** that aims to provide rural people with the **right to document their residential properties** so that they can use their property for economic purposes. The scheme is for surveying the land parcels in rural inhabited areas using **Drone technology**.

Objectives

- The outcome from the scheme would include updating the record of rights in the revenue/property registers and issuance of property cards to the property owners. This would facilitate **monetisation of rural residential assets** for credit and other financial services.
- It will also lead to creation of **accurate land records** for rural planning and determination of **property tax**.
- Through the SVAMITVA scheme, the government hopes that **property disputes and legal cases will be reduced**.
- Other gram panchayats and community assets like village roads, ponds, canals, open spaces, school, anganwadi, health sub-centres etc will also be surveyed and GIS maps will be created. These maps can be used to prepare better quality gram panchayat development plans.

Coverage

- There are about 6.62 lakh villages in the country which will be eventually covered in this scheme. The entire work is likely to be spread over a period of four years (2020 - 2024).

- Presently, the pilot phase is being approved for the year 2020-21. Pilot Phase will extend to **8 states** - Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan.
- The **Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR)** is the Nodal Ministry for implementation of the scheme. **Survey of India** shall work as the technology partner for implementation.

Why in News?

- Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Minister Giriraj Singh reviewed the progress made in implementation of SVAMITVA Scheme.

About Survey of India

- The National Survey and Mapping Organization, also known as the Survey of India, is the oldest scientific department of the Government of India.
- Set up in 1767, it is under the **Department of Science & Technology**.
- As the nation's **Principal Mapping Agency**, Survey of India ensures that the country's domain is explored and mapped suitably, provides base maps for expeditious and integrated development and ensures that all resources contribute with their full measure to the progress, prosperity and security of the country.

2) PENCiL Portal

About the portal

- The Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour (PENCiL) Portal is an electronic platform organised by the **Ministry of Labour and Employment** involving Centre, State, District, Governments, civil society and the general public in achieving the **target of child labour free society**.
- The portal was launched in 2017 under the Ministry of Labour and Employment's **National Child Labour Project (NCLP)**.

- *NCLP is a Central Sector Scheme launched in 1988 to rehabilitate children indulged in child labour. Under the scheme District Project Societies (DPS) are set up at the district level under the Chairmanship of the Collector/District Magistrate for overseeing the implementation of the project.*
- At district level **District Nodal Officers (DNOs)** are nominated to take action on the complaints of their respective districts. Complaints about child labour filed on PENCiL are forwarded to the DNOs for further action. Rescue measures are undertaken in coordination with police.
- Rescued children are sent to centres where they get an **education or are imparted vocational training**. Children less than 8 years are enrolled in schools under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan; children in the 8-14 year bracket are sent to special training centres (STCs) and 14-18-year-olds are enrolled in vocational (skill) training centres.
- **India has 1.01 crore child labourers**, according to Census 2011, against 1.26 crore in 2001.



Rehab Route

Three levels of schooling provided for rescued children

Less than 8 years
Enrolled in schools under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

8-14 years
Enrolled in special training centres

14-18 years
Enrolled in vocational training centres (non-hazardous industries)

Why in News?

- The government has appealed to citizens to report the instances of Child Labour on

PENCIL Portal or by calling on **Childline-1098**, India's first 24 - hour, free, emergency phone outreach service for children in need of care and protection.

Related Information

The Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016

- The Act amends the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. It **completely prohibits the employment of children below 14 years**.
- The amendment also **prohibits the employment of adolescents in the age group of 14 to 18 years in hazardous occupations and processes** and regulates their working conditions where they are not prohibited.

Exceptions

- While the Act prohibits the employment of children below 14 years in any occupation or process, they are **allowed to work in two cases**.
- They can help their families or family enterprises if the work is not hazardous and only after school hours or during vacations.
- They can also work as artists in an audio-visual entertainment industry (including in advertisements, films and television serials, or in sports activities other than circuses) if such work follows appropriate safety measures. Children can only do this kind of work if it does not affect their education.

Punishment

- Anyone who employs a child or adolescent or permits him/her to work without following the regulations mentioned in this Act and the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, can be **imprisoned from six months to two years or fined between Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 50,000, or both**.
- A person who has been convicted of a similar offence before can be imprisoned for 1-3 years. The parents or guardians of children or adolescents thus employed cannot be punished unless they violate the regulations mentioned in these Acts.

3) What makes the UAPA so stringent?

Context

- The death of Father Stan Swamy, a Jesuit priest and tribal rights activist, while in

judicial custody, has brought to focus the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) under which he was imprisoned.

- The stringent nature of UAPA which renders it difficult for one held under it to obtain bail, is being seen as one of the principal reasons for Fr. Swamy's death as a prisoner in a hospital.

What is the origin of the UAPA?

- The Union government was considering a stringent law **against calls for secession** in the mid-1960s. In March 1967, a **peasant uprising in Naxalbari** imparted a sense of urgency.
- In 1966, the President had promulgated the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Ordinance** "to provide for the more effective prevention of unlawful activities of individuals and associations".
- Its stringency created a furore in Parliament when it was tabled, leading to the **government dropping it**. Instead, the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967**, which was not identical to the ordinance, was passed.

What is its scope and how has it been expanded over the years?

- The Act provided for **declaring an association or a body of individuals "unlawful"** if they indulged in any activity that included acts and words, spoken or written, or any sign or representation, that supported any claim to bring about "**the cession of a part of the territory of India**", or its "**secession**", or which **questions or disclaims the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity**."
- Prior to the UAPA's enactment, associations were being declared unlawful under the **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1952**. However, the Supreme Court held that the provision on bans was unlawful because there was **no judicial mechanism to scrutinise the validity of any ban**. Therefore, the UAPA included provisions for a **Tribunal which has to confirm within six months the notification declaring an outfit unlawful**.
- In its present form, the Act, after the amendments in 2004 and 2013, covers the declaration of associations as unlawful, punishment for terrorist acts and activities, acts threatening the country's security, including its economic security (a term that

covers fiscal and monetary security, food, livelihood, energy ecological and environmental security), and provisions to prevent the use of funds for terrorist purposes, including money laundering.

- The ban on organisations was initially for two years, but from 2013, the period of proscription has been **extended to five years**.
- After the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), 2002, was repealed, the UAPA was expanded to include what would have been terrorist acts in earlier laws. The 2004 amendments were also aimed at giving effect to various anti-terrorism resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.
- In 2012, there was a set of amendments, which was notified from early 2013, seeking to bring the UAPA in line with various requirements of the **Financial Action Task Force**, an inter-governmental body, to **combat money laundering and terrorism financing**.
- In 2019, the Act was amended to **empower the government to designate individuals as terrorists**.

How do UAPA provisions differ from regular criminal law?

- Just like other special laws dealing with narcotic drugs and the now-defunct laws on terrorism, the UAPA also modifies the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) to give it more teeth.
- A **remand order can be for 30 days** instead of the usual 15, and the **maximum period of judicial custody before the filing of a chargesheet is extendable from the usual 90 days to 180 days**.
- The law also **makes it more difficult to obtain bail**.

What is the controversy about its bail provisions?

- Under Section 43D(5) of the Act, bail cannot be granted to a suspect if the court is of the opinion that there are **reasonable grounds to believe that the charges are prima facie true**.
- A Supreme Court judgment on this has clarified that this meant that the court considering bail should not examine the evidence too deeply, but must go by the prosecution version based on broad probabilities.

- This means that the **onus is on the accused** to show that the case is false but without inviting the court to evaluate the available evidence. This is why human rights defenders feel that the provision is

draconian, virtually rendering it impossible for anyone to obtain bail until the completion of the trial.

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ENVIRONMENT

Clarification:

Dear Students,

- In Pulse Issue no: 2 2021, "Turkey says it will defeat 'sea snout' outbreak in Marmara Sea" topic, it is given that "Turkish capital Istanbul is located on the banks of this sea."
- It is a **factual error**. Turkey's capital is **Ankara**. Istanbul is one of the largest cities of Turkey located on the banks of Marmara Sea.
- We Regret the Error.

1) Sikkim blossoms: smallest State home to 27% of India's flowering plants

Sikkim and biodiversity

- Sikkim is a state with tremendous biodiversity and has been identified as one of the HOT-SPOT in the Eastern Himalayas.
- The State is endowed with rich floral and faunal diversity. Species wise, the State harbors over 4500 flowering plants, 550 Orchids, 36 Rhododendrons, 16 Conifers, 28 Bamboos, 362 Ferns and its allies, 9 Tree Ferns, 30 Primulas, 11 Oaks, over 424 Medicinal plants, 144+ mammals, 550 Birds, 48 Fishes and over 600 Butterflies.
- While these figures are still not absolute, it may be kept in mind that this is only the mega-fauna and flora.
- The tremendous diversity of insects like beetles and moths as well as a host of other life forms is yet to be enumerated.
- Most of the high altitude medicinal plants are rare and endangered species. Sikkim also has 28 Mountains/Peaks, more than 80 Glaciers, 227 high altitude lakes/wetlands and over 104 rivers and streams.
- There are a number of plants whose medicinal values have been well recognized by local people as well as by different pharmaceutical, insecticidal and perfumery sectors.

Why in the news?

- A recent publication by the **Botanical Survey of India (BSI)**, 'Flora of Sikkim – A Pictorial Guide', found that Sikkim which comprises only 1% of Indian landmass

consists of 27% of all flowering plants found in the country.

- The publication details 532 species of wild orchids (which is more than 40% of all orchid species found in India), 36 species of rhododendron and 20 species of oak, and more than 30 species of high value medicinal plants, among other species.

Why this diversity?

- Sikkim has **different altitudinal ecosystems**, which provide opportunity for herbs and trees to grow and thrive.
- **People of the state are more connected to flora and fauna**. Eg: **Mita/Miti relationship**.
- From subalpine vegetation to the temperate to the tropical, the State has different kinds of vegetation that is the reason for such a diversity of flora.

Mita/Miti relationship

- In order to promote and revive the age-old tradition of forging brotherhood relationship with trees, the State Government has notified **Sikkim Forest Trees (Amity and Reverence) Rules, 2017** that allows any person to associate with trees standing on his or her private land or on any public land by entering into a **Mith/Mita or Mitini relationship** with a tree or trees.
- In which case, the tree shall be called a '**Mith/ Mit tree**'; or by adopting a tree as if it was his or her own child in which case the tree shall be called an '**Adopted tree**'; or by preserving a tree in remembrance of a departed relative in which case the tree shall be called a 'Smriti tree'.

2) Only 25 cities responsible for 52% of global urban GHG emissions: Study

Why in the news?

- A recent report published called "Keeping Track of Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Progress and Targets in 167 Cities Worldwide" found that **only 25 cities are responsible for 52% of global urban greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions**.

- It was conducted by a team of Chinese researchers, who examined 167 cities in 53 countries.

Findings of the report

- The biggest sources of emissions were **electricity generation, industry and transportation**.
- **Road transport** caused more than **30 percent of emissions** in a third of the cities. Other, less important emission sources were railways, waterways and aviation. These produced less than 15 per cent of the total emissions.
- Pollution levels had declined over time in 30 out of 42 cities between 2005 and 2016 such as Oslo, Houston, Seattle and Bogotá. Emissions grew in the remaining 12 cities. Rio de Janeiro, Johannesburg and Venice saw the biggest increases.
- Megacities in Asia such as **Tokyo in Japan and Shanghai in China** are among the biggest emitters.
- **Cities in the developed world**, such as those in Europe, Australia and the United States had significantly higher per capita emissions than cities in developing countries.

3) World Snakes Day

Why in the news?

- World Snake Day, held every year on **July 16**, aims to increase awareness regarding the over 3,500 snake species that exist across the world.
- The day aims to change the negative perception surrounding snakes and promote the love for all living beings — even the ones we fear.

About snakes

- Of 3,500 species of the snake around the world, only 600 are venomous.
- Snakes are **ectothermic**, meaning their body temperature is variable and regulated by external sources. Unlike mammals and birds that are able to internally regulate their body temperature, reptiles need to use sources of heat, like the sun, to warm up.
- While approximately 70% of snakes lay eggs, others don't. Snakes living in especially colder climates have live births because the eggs wouldn't survive outside.
- They don't have eyelids and **smell with their tongues** instead of nostrils.

- Snakes have very flexible lower jaws which allows them to eat animals who are 75% - 100% larger than their own head. The chemicals in their digestive tract will do all the work and break down the food once ingested.
- Snakes **lack external ears**. Then how do they sense sound? Well, bones in the lower jaw of snakes are capable of picking up sound waves from water or ground surface.
- Snake venom is actually modified saliva. Snakes use venom to immobilise and digest prey, and as a defence against threats.

Snakes and India

- The species commonly found across India are the non- venomous rat snakes; venomous such as spectacled cobras and the Russell's Viper.
- Of these 600 venomous snakes, 330 species are found in India.
- The most commonly found dangerous snakes are the ones called **the big four** — **common krait, Russel's viper, saw-scaled viper and Indian-spectacled cobra**.

Indian Krait



- It is also called common krait.
- It is identified by its glossy blue-black body with fine milky white bands.
- It is known to deliver bite **during night time**.
- The Common Krait is the most venomous; its venom is considered to be 15 times more toxic than that of the Indian cobra.

Russell's Viper



- Found across Indian subcontinent.
- The Russell's vipers ambush their prey, its patterned skin allows it to camouflage and merge with the background.
- These snakes are responsible for the most snake bite incidents and deaths by venomous snakes in Asia.
- The Russell's Viper produces a venom with a potent neurotoxin which affects the nervous system, causing paralysis and death if untreated.

Saw-Scaled Viper



- It's the smallest of the Big Four snake species, but it has the fastest strike.
- It is a very aggressive snake.
- The Saw-Scaled Viper also has a unique threat display, a "sizzling" warning sound produced by rubbing sections of their body together.

Indian Cobra



- It is known for its hood.

- The Indian Cobra average length is about 1.9 meters (6 feet).
- These snakes are revered in the Indian mythology and culture and are often seen with snake charmers.

Snake bites in India

- India is one of five countries that together account for 70 per cent of the world's snakebite deaths.
- In India, snakebites kill around 47,000 people per year, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- India's snakebite crisis is perpetuated by the fact that formal health care is either inaccessible or inadequate in rural areas.
- Almost all snakebite deaths were reported from areas with low elevation.
- 97 per cent of India's snakebite deaths occur in rural India, where snakes are typically found close to homes because rodents, on which they prey, thrive on the garbage and edible crops around homes.
- The monsoon months of June to September had almost half of the reported snakebite deaths.
- Those in the age group of 30-69 years accounted for nearly half of the total deaths.
- The big problem is that most of the venom used for the production of antivenom comes from one district in Tamil Nadu.
- Most of the major antivenom manufacturers in India source venom from the **Irula Snake Catchers' Industrial Cooperative Society** in Tamil Nadu, an initiative of the forest-dwelling Irulas who are known to be expert snake catchers.
- But research suggests that there is plenty of venom variability between populations of the same species depending on geographical location.
- So, antivenom produced largely by sourcing venom from one location cannot neutralise effects of venomous snakebites from across India.

4) Indian Grey Hornbill

About

- It is one of the Hornbill species found in India.
- This hornbill species is distributed in the Indian subcontinent, excluding Sri Lanka. It is found across India except Western Ghats,

some parts of Himalayas, North-east and Thar desert.



- The Indian grey hornbill species predominantly eat berries and fruits. They are monogamous (only one partner in lifetime).
- IUCN status: **Least Concern**

Why in the news?

- Recently Indian Grey Hornbill has been found breeding in the Chennai City which was not its geographical distribution area previously.

5) *Ichthyophis multicolor*



▪

Why in the news?

- It is a new 'multicolour' limbless amphibian found in Mizoram.

Amphibians are a group of cold blood animals which can live both on land and water. Water is essential for the early development of life. They have jelly skin. Eg; Frog, Toad, salamander, eel etc.

- It was earlier recorded in Myanmar.
- The species derives its scientific name from a **yellowish lateral stripe** separating its brownish upper part from a paler lower part.
- The length of the specimens varied from 310-501 mm.
- Its recording signifies the northeast region of India being a **dispersal route** for animals of South Asia to Southeast Asia.

Dispersal is an **ecological process** that involves the movement of an individual or multiple individuals away from the population in which they were born to another location, or population, where they will settle and reproduce.

- Researchers from Mizoram University who have discovered this species have pushed for awareness as such amphibians are often mistaken as snakes or eels or large earthworms and killed out of fear.

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ECONOMY

1) 'RBI Retail Direct' scheme

What are Government Securities (G-Secs)?

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

Why in News?

- The Reserve Bank of India has announced details of a scheme that would allow retail investors to directly buy and sell G-Secs on its platform, seeking to democratize the ownership of government debt securities beyond banks and managers of pooled resources such as mutual funds.
- Through **RBI's Retail Direct scheme**, an investor would be able to bid in G-Secs auctions and buy them in the secondary market as well.
- Retail investors will need to open and maintain a **Retail Direct Gilt Account (RDG Account)** with RBI to access its G-Sec platform.
- **RBI will not charge any fee** for maintaining an RDG Account. Using the RDG account, a saver can buy from the primary market, which is hitherto dominated by bond houses or institutional investors.
- The date of commencement of the scheme will be announced at a later date.

Eligibility

- To open an RDG Account, a retail investor should have a savings bank account, PAN (Permanent Account Number), KYC (Know Your Customer) documents, a valid email address and a mobile number. The RDG account can be held **either by one person or jointly**.

- **Non-resident retail investors will also be eligible** to invest in government securities, but as per the rules set by Foreign Exchange Management Act.

2) Wholesale Price Index

About WPI

- Wholesale Price Index measures and tracks the changes in the **price of goods in the stages before the retail level**. It provides estimates of inflation at the wholesale transaction level for the economy as a whole.
- WPI basket **does not cover services**.
- It is released by the **Office of Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- The base year is **2011-2012**.
- The index basket consists of commodities under 3 main categories in decreasing order of weightage: **Manufactured products, Primary Articles and Fuel and Power**.

Why in News?

- The Wholesale Price Index stayed high in June, with provisional data pegging it at **12.07%** following the record high of 12.94% in May.
- The high inflation rate is attributed to the **low base effect** from June 2020, which recorded -1.81% inflation, and the rise in prices of petrol, diesel, naphtha and Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF), as well as basic metals, food products and chemicals.

What is Base effect?

- The base effect is the **distortion in a monthly inflation figure that results from abnormally high or low levels of inflation in the year-ago month**.
- For example, the base effect can lead to an apparent under- or overstatement of figures such as inflation rates or economic growth rates if the point chosen for comparison has an unusually high or low value relative to the current period or the overall data.
- The base effect can lead to distortion in comparisons and deceptive results, or, if well understood and accounted for, can be used to improve our understanding of data

and the underlying processes that generate them.

3) Special Livestock Sector Package

What's in the news?

- In order to further boost growth in livestock sector and thereby making animal husbandry more remunerative to 10 crore farmers engaged in Animal Husbandry Sector, the Government has approved implementation of a Special Livestock Sector Package consisting of several activities by revising and realigning various components of Government of India's schemes for next 5 years starting from 2021-22.
- This package envisages Central Government's support amounting to Rs.9800 crore over duration of 5 years for leveraging total investment of Rs. 54,618 crore for 5 years.

News in detail

- As per this, **all the schemes of the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying will be merged into three broad categories** as Development Programmes which includes:
 1. The first will include the **Rashtriya Gokul Mission**, which focuses on the development of indigenous breeds, as well as the **National Programme for Dairy Development, the National Livestock Mission, and the Livestock Census and Integrated Sample Survey**.
 2. The second one includes the **Livestock Health and Disease Control scheme** and the **National Animal Disease Control Programme**.
 3. The third will merge the **Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund and the Dairy Infrastructure Development Fund**, and also incorporate support to dairy cooperatives and Farmer Producer Organisations engaged in dairy activities.
- The revised and realigned scheme component related to **Rashtriya Gokul Mission** is crucial for **development and conservation of indigenous breeds** and would also contribute in **improving the economic condition of the rural poor** as most of the low producing indigenous

breeds are with small and marginal farmers and landless labourers. The aim of the Mission would be to **deliver quality breeding inputs at the farmers' doorstep**. Implementation of RGM is crucial to enhance milk production and productivity of bovines, thereby making dairying more remunerative to poor farmers of the country.

- The realigned **National Programme for Dairy Development (NPDD)** will have two components.
 1. Component 'A' will be implemented with emphasis on milk procurement, processing, marketing and quality of milk and milk products.
 2. Component 'B' of NPDD will avail financial assistance from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as per project agreement already signed with them and will create strengthened or fresh infrastructure in 4500 villages.

Significance

- The **Livestock Sector** in our country has been **growing at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 8.15%** (at constant prices) from 2014-15 to 2019-20. This CAGR is higher than other sectors like manufacturing sector, which has shown 6.15%, Agriculture (Crop) sector which has shown 1.95% and services sector with 7.7% for similar period.
- Similarly, the **Poultry sector** is also **growing at (CAGR constant prices) of 10.5%** and playing an immense role in livelihood creation in the rural economy.
- Further, as per the estimates of **Central Statistical Office (CSO)** for sector wise Gross Value Added (GVA) of Agriculture and allied sector, the **percentage contribution of livestock sector as a percentage of total crop and livestock sector has increased from 28% (2014-15) to 34% (2019-20)**.
- The Dairy sector has been growing consistently with milk production increasing from 22 million MT in 1970 to 198 million MT in 2019-20.

4) Scheme to provide subsidy to Indian shipping companies

What's in the news?

- The Union Cabinet has approved a scheme under which **Indian shipping companies will be given a subsidy as they bid for global tenders** for the import of cargo by the government or government entities.
- As part of the scheme, the central government will provide a subsidy of up to Rs 1,624 crore in the next five years to the Indian shipping companies.

Why do Indian shipping companies need a subsidy to compete with global players?

- There are some major reasons why the Indian shipping industry needs a subsidy to compete with the rates offered by foreign players. These include - **lack of carrying capacity, inadequate large domestic ship manufacturing, or ship repair facility and international alliances by large shipping companies.**
- **Lack of carrying capacity & Inadequate large domestic ship manufacturing**
- India's national fleet is proportionately small when compared with its global counterparts, despite the country having a 7,500-km-long coastline, a growing national Exim trade, and **100 percent foreign direct investment (FDI) in shipping** since 1997.
- Currently, the **Indian fleet comprises a meagre 1.2 per cent of the world fleet in terms of capacity.** The **share of Indian ships in the carriage of India's EXIM trade has drastically declined from 40.7 per cent in 1987-88 to about 7.8 per cent in 2018-19.**
- Historically, all the shipping infrastructure in India has helped foreign shipping liners. Foreign ship owners carry our inbound and outbound cargo. This is the case in

container shipping too. Indian maritime business operators have preferred to be agents for foreign ship owners or container liners rather than becoming ship owners or container liners themselves. As a result, there is a **wide gap between carrying capacity and multi-folded cargo growth in the country.**

- While investment in the country's ship building industry has increased since 2014-15, the lack of government policy focused on increasing investment in the country's shipping industry, has limited the setting up of a large ship manufacturer in India.
- Private and foreign investment in the country's ship-manufacturing and repair industry has also remained low due to **high taxation on the country's shipyards, high interest in working capital in India, and lack of bank guarantees.**
- **International alliances**
- Most of the top shipping companies in the world have formed alliances to strengthen their balance sheets. Although this protects the carriers from potential capital issues due to vessel sharing and bailout agreements etc, it makes the industry less competitive for the customers.
- In addition, Indian companies are not a part of these international alliances due to their limited capacities and weak financial balance sheets.
- Foreign companies are able to take advantage of operational efficiencies, global clearances, and financial aid from their governments in order to provide better services at lower tariffs.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1) Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

About SCO

- Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation established in 2001.
- It's a Eurasian **political, economic and military** organisation aiming to maintain peace, security and stability in the region.
- Prior to the creation of SCO in 2001, **Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan** were members of the **Shanghai Five**.
- Following the accession of **Uzbekistan** to the organisation in 2001, the Shanghai Five was renamed the SCO.
- There are **eight member states** in the SCO at present. **India** and **Pakistan** became members in 2017.
- The **SCO Secretariat**, based in Beijing, is the main permanent executive body of the SCO.
- The organisation has **two permanent bodies** —

1. the **SCO Secretariat** based in Beijing and
2. The Executive Committee of the **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** based in Tashkent. RATS serves to promote cooperation of member states against the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism.

Objectives of the SCO

- To strengthen mutual trust among the neighbouring member states.
- To promote effective cooperation in various fields like economy, trade, politics, culture and research and technology.
- To ensure peace, prosperity, security and stability in the region, and
- To establish a democratic, fair and rational international eco-political order.

Why in News?

- Shanghai Cooperation Organisation leaders met on the sidelines of the grouping's conclave in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.
- **For doubts and queries email us at: doubts@officerspulse.com**

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1) Ransomware

Why in News?

- Senior police officers of the Interpol's member countries have endorsed measures to boost the role of its National Central Bureaus (NCBs), in view of the evolving ransomware threats.

What is ransomware?

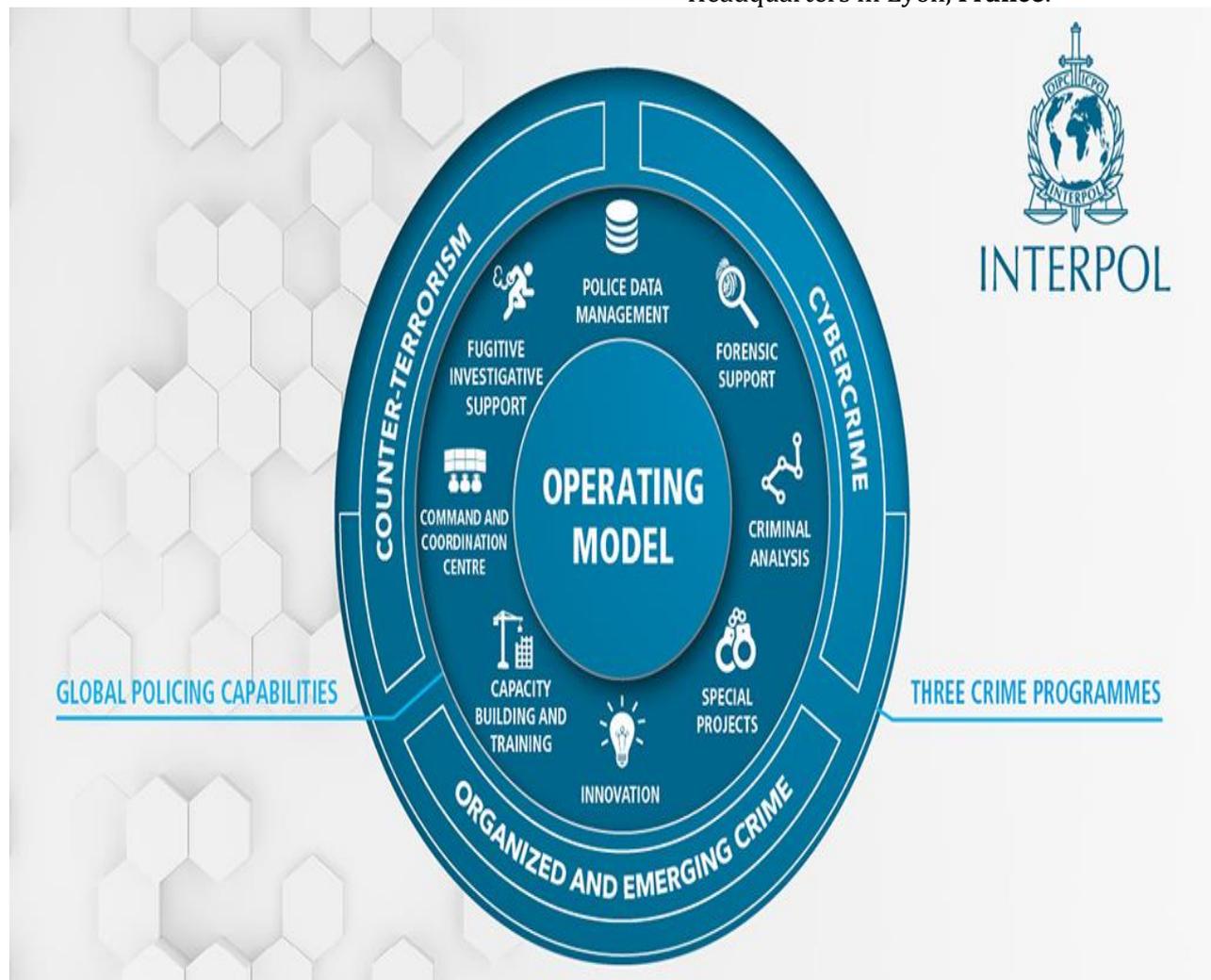
- **Ransomware** is **malware** that employs encryption to hold a victim's information at ransom. A user or organization's critical data is encrypted so that they cannot access files, databases, or applications.
- A **ransom** is then **demand**ed to provide access. Ransomware is often **designed to spread across a network** and target

database and file servers, and can thus quickly paralyze an entire organization.

- Ex: **WannaCry, NotPetya, Kaseya**
- **Malware-** is a term used to describe malicious software, including spyware, ransomware, viruses, and worms. Malware breaches a network through a vulnerability, typically when a user clicks a dangerous link or email attachment that then installs risky software
- To read about cyberattacks: <https://officerspulse.com/cyberattacks/>

Interpol

- The International Criminal Police Organisation, or **Interpol**, is a 194-member intergovernmental organisation.
- Headquarters in Lyon, **France**.



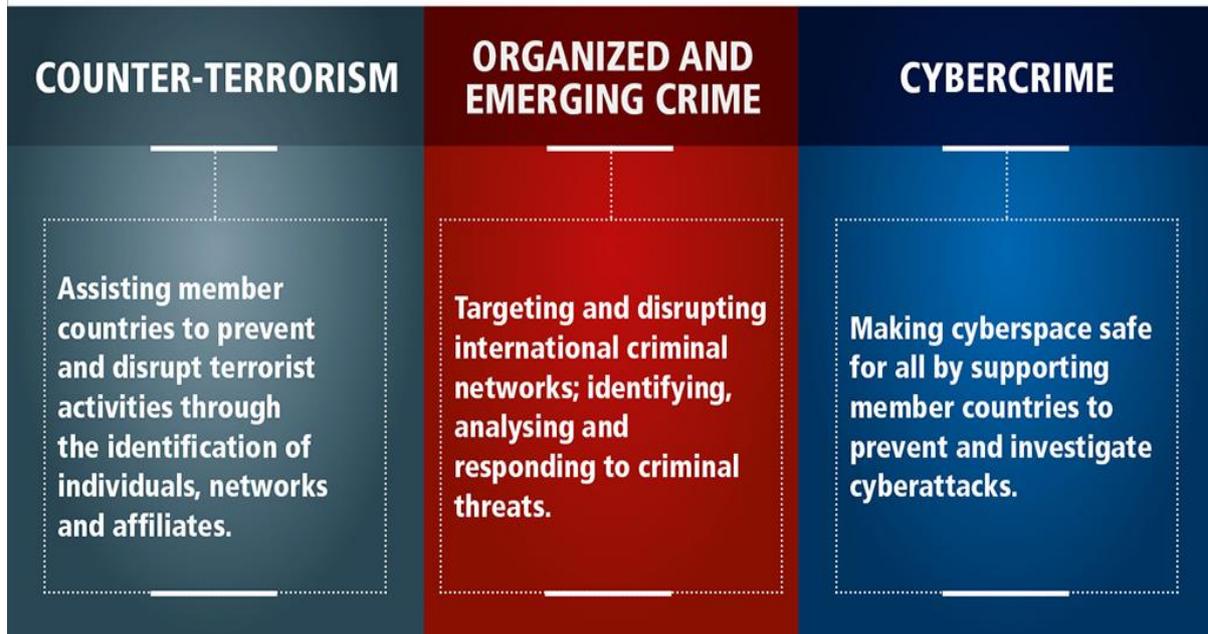
- Formed in 1923 as the International Criminal Police Commission, and started calling itself Interpol in 1956.

- **India** joined the organisation in 1949, and is one of its oldest members.

INTERPOL'S CRIME PROGRAMMES



We provide a range of policing expertise and capabilities to our member countries, supporting three main crime programmes:



- In each country, an INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB) provides the central point of contact for the General Secretariat and other NCBs.
- An NCB is run by national police officials and usually sits in the government ministry responsible for policing.
- In India, the Central Bureau of Investigation is the NCB for Interpol.



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DEFENCE

1) Light Combat Helicopter

Why in News?

- Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) is preparing to deliver the first batch of three



Light Combat Helicopters (LCH) to the Indian Air Force (IAF).

About the LCH

- The LCH, the **lightest attack helicopter in the world** weighing 5.5 tonnes, has been designed and **developed by the HAL** to meet the specific and unique requirements of the Indian armed forces and can operate at heights of 12,000 feet.
- It is a **two-seater attack helicopter** derived from the existing Dhruv helicopter.
- The LCH can be deployed in various roles, including **tracking slow-moving aerial targets, insurgency, destroying enemy defences, search and rescue, anti-tank and scouting**.
- The LCH is **effective** as both an **anti-infantry and anti-armour helicopter**.
- According to HAL, the LCH is a **potent weapon platform** with state of the art systems and highly accurate weapons capable of hitting any type of target by day or night.
- Other features of the LCH include its **ability to operate** in the **complete 'Area of Responsibility' (AOR)** and altitudes and has the **ability to carry adequate weapon load** at high altitudes under varied conditions.
- The Army Aviation operates smaller utility helicopters but does not have attack helicopters in its fleet and has for some time pitched for attack helicopters of its own to operate with its strike Corps. (The attack helicopter fleet is operated by the Air Force which provides close air support to the Army).
- The **IAF operates the older Mi-25 and Mi-35 Russian attack helicopters** which are in the process of being phased out and has recently inducted 22 AH-64E Apache attack helicopters from the U.S.

Other Helicopters in the arsenal

- Presently, the Army has 90 Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) and 75 **Rudra** weaponized ALHs in service which are indigenously designed and developed by the HAL in addition to around 160 **older Cheetah and Chetak** utility helicopters which are in need of urgent replacement.
- Amid the ongoing **standoff with China** in Eastern Ladakh, **LCH were deployed for operations at high altitude** in Leh at short notice to **support IAF missions, validating their capability**.

Need for LCH

- To know about ALH-
<https://officerspulse.com/indian-coast-guard-icg/>
- For doubts and queries email us at:
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ART AND CULTURE

1) Ayurveda

What is Ayurveda?

- Ayurvedic medicine is one of the **world's oldest medical systems** and remains one of India's traditional health care systems.
- It was developed more than 3,000 years ago in India.
- Ayurvedic treatment combines products (mainly derived from plants, but may also include animal, metal, and mineral), diet, exercise, and lifestyle.
- Ayurveda believes that **positive health** is the basis for attaining four cherished goals of life (**chaturvidha purushartha**) viz., Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha. All these four goals cannot be achieved without sound positive health.
- The **Sushruta Samhita** is one of the most important surviving ancient treatises on medicine and is considered a foundational text of Ayurveda.
- There are many books dealing with Ayurveda; among them, **Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Sangraha** are the three main pillars of Ayurveda.
- **Charaka Samhita and Ashtanga Samhita** mainly deal with **medical knowledge** while **Sushruta Samhita** deals mainly with **surgical knowledge**.

Issues associated with the growth of Ayurveda

- **Inadequacies of Ayurveda** in Treating Acute **Infections** and Other Crises, including **surgery**.
- **Lack of Homogeneity:** Ayurvedic medicinal procedures are not standardised. It's because the medicinal plants utilised in it differ depending on location, climate, and local farming practises.
- **Ayurvedic Pharmas' Misleading Propaganda:** Pharmaceutical companies made several therapeutic claims regarding their ayurvedic medications that were not supported by appropriate scientific evidence.
- **Lack of Recognition:** Ayurveda is not officially recognised as a medical field in numerous countries, which has resulted in

several restrictions on the use of Ayurvedic remedies.

- **Substandard Ayurvedic Research:** For the past five decades or so, Ayurvedic research has mostly been confined to hundreds of drug studies following standard protocols employed in other medical systems.

Improving the growth of Ayurveda

- **Reverse Pharmacology:** Herbal drug development requires novel approaches like reverse pharmacology that can fast-track drug development. This is because reverse pharmacology selects herbs that are already used in Ayurveda. These drugs are then evaluated during exploratory clinical studies.
- **New Millennium Indian Technology Leadership Initiative (NMITLI):** It is a flagship scheme to catalyze innovation centered scientific and technological developments as a vehicle to attain for Indian industry a global leadership position. It is a program of the **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research**. It is the largest public-private-partnership endeavor within the R&D sector in India. The Ayurvedic medicine system is one area of promising industrial potential for India on a global scale

Related Information

Ministry of AYUSH

- The **Ministry of Ayush** was formed in 2014 with a vision of reviving the profound knowledge of India's ancient systems of medicine and ensuring the optimal development and propagation of the Ayush systems of healthcare. It focuses attention towards education and research in **Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy**.

Why in News?

- PK Warriar, who transformed Kerala Ayurveda from a localised, tradition-bound treatment to a globally renowned healing system passed away recently.

2) Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav

What is it?

- Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav is a **series of events** to be organised by the Government of India to **commemorate the 75th Anniversary of India's Independence**.
- The Mahotsav will be **celebrated as a Jan-Utsav** in the spirit of Jan-Bhagidari throughout the length and breadth of the country.
- The Prime Minister **reiterated five pillars** i.e. **Freedom Struggle, Ideas at 75, Achievements at 75, Actions at 75 and Resolves at 75** as guiding force for moving forward keeping dreams and duties as inspiration.

Why in News?

- The Culture Minister said the National Archives' records related to freedom fighters would be digitised within a year as a part of the commemoration of 75 years of Independence next year.

3) Kanwar Yatra

What is it?

- The Kanwar Yatra is a pilgrimage organised in the Hindu calendar month of Shravana. **Shiva devotees** generally **walk** barefoot with **pitchers of holy water** from the Ganga or other holy rivers.
- The **legend** of the ritual goes back to the '**samudra manthan**', one of the episodes in Hindu mythology, which is narrated in the Bhagavata Purana, in the Vishnu Purana, and **explains the origin of 'amrita'** (elixir of life).
- An important **festival with similarities** to the Kanwar yatra in North India, called the **Kavadi festival, is celebrated in Tamil Nadu**, in which Lord Muruga is worshipped.

Why in News:

- The Uttarakhand government has decided to suspend this year's Kanwar Yatra in view of the COVID-19 situation.

4) Puri Rath Yatra

What is the Puri Jagannath Rath Yatra?

- Ratha Yatra (Chariot Festival) is a Hindu festival linked with **Lord Jagannath** held at **Puri, Odisha**.
- The Rath Yatra is a nine-day celebration during which thousands of devotees draw three holy chariots **carrying idols of Lord**

Jagannath, his brother Balaram (Balabhadra), and sister Subhadra.



Jagannath Temple

- Jagannath Puri temple is **called 'Yamanika Tirtha'** where, according to the Hindu beliefs, the power of 'Yama', the god of death has been nullified in Puri due to the presence of Lord Jagannath.
- The temple was built by **King Anatarvarman Chodaganga Deva of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty** in the 12th century.
- This **temple is part of the Char Dham pilgrimages** (Badrinath, Dwaraka, Puri, Rameswaram) and is **known as the "White Pagoda"**
- The temple has **four gates**: the main gate- the Eastern 'Singhdwara,' with two crouching lions, the Southern 'Ashwadwara,' the Western 'Vyaghradwara, and the Northern 'Hastidwara.'
- The **Aruna stambha or sun pillar**, which was originally at the Sun Temple at Konark, stands in front of the entryway.

Why in News?

- The world famous Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath started without devotees for the second year in a row in the coastal town of Puri.

5) Kesaria Buddha stupa

Why in New?

- The Kesaria Buddha stupa in Bihar is waterlogged following floods after heavy rainfall in the catchment areas of river Gandak in neighbouring Nepal.

About the stupa



- It is **regarded** as the **largest Buddhist stupa in the world** and has been drawing tourists from across several Buddhist countries.
- The original Kesaria stupa is **said to date back to the time of emperor Ashoka** (circa 250 BCE) as the remains of an Ashokan pillar was discovered there.
- The stupa mound **may even have been inaugurated during the Buddha's time**, as it corresponds in many respects to the description of the stupa erected by the Licchavis of Vaishali to house the alms bowl the Buddha has given them.
- Two great foreign travelers, **Faxian (Fahien) and Xuan Zang (Hsuan Tsang)**, had **visited** this place in ancient times and have left interesting and informative accounts of their travels. They have written at length about Kesaria's unique geographical location, cultural vibrancy, and ancient heritage. Lord Buddha, during his journey from Vaishali to Kushinagar, had spent a night at Kesariya where he reportedly made some historical revelations. These were later recorded in a Buddhist Jataka story.
- The **discovery of gold coins** bearing the **seal of the famous emperor Kanishka** of the Kushan dynasty goes on to further establish the ancient heritage of Kesaria.
- The **current stupa dates to the Gupta Dynasty between 200 AD and 750 AD** and may have been associated with the 4th century ruler Raja Chakravarti.

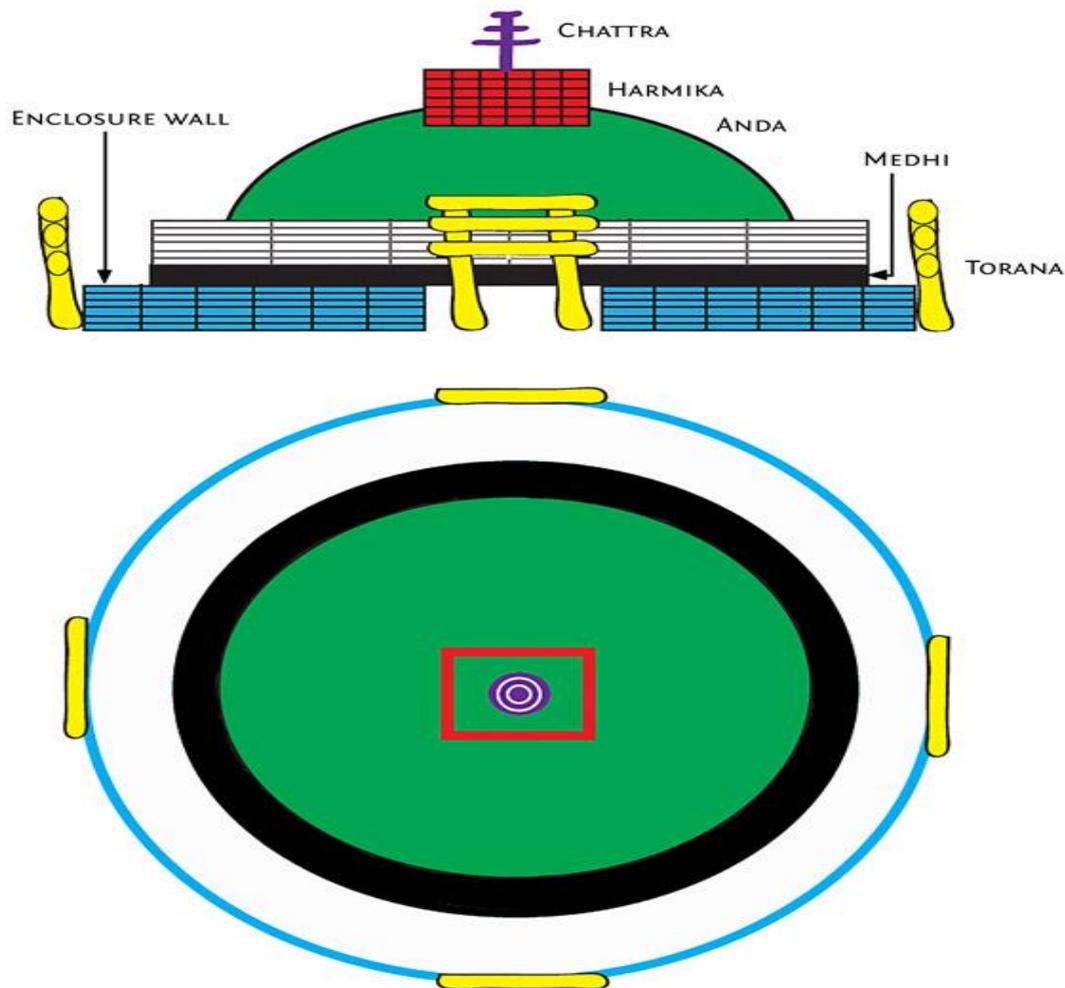
What are stupas?



- Stupas are **Buddhist commemorative monuments** usually **housing sacred relics associated with the Buddha or other saintly persons**. The hemispherical form of the stupa appears to have derived from pre-Buddhist burial mounds in India.
- Buddhist stupas were originally built to house the earthly remains of the historical Buddha and his associates and are almost

invariably found at sites sacred to Buddhism. The **concept of a relic was afterward extended to include sacred texts**. Miniature stupas and pagodas are also used by Buddhists throughout Asia as votive offerings. **Stupas were also built by adherents of Jainism** to commemorate their saints.

Stupa Architecture



- A **hemispherical mound (anda)**- The anda's domed shape (green color) recalls a mound of dirt that was used to cover the Buddha's remains. The earliest stupas contained actual relics of the Buddha; the relic chamber, buried deep inside the anda, called the tabena. Over time, this hemispherical mound has taken on an even grander symbolic association: the mountain home of the gods at the center of the universe.
- A **square railing (harmika)**- The harmika (red color) is a **square railing or fence** that **surrounds the mound of dirt**, marking it as a sacred burial site.
- A central pillar supporting a **triple-umbrella form (chattra)**- The chattra, in turn, was derived from umbrellas that were placed over the mound to protect it from the elements (purple color). The three circular umbrella-like disks represent the three Jewels, or Triantha, of Buddhism, which are the keys to a true understanding of the faith: (a) Buddha; (b) dharma (Buddhist teachings or religious law); and (c) sangha (monastic community).

- **Enclosure wall with decorated gateways (toranas)** at the four directions. The wall is marked in light blue highlights and the toranas in yellow. The Toranas are richly decorated with relief sculptures depicting Jataka tales, events in the life of the Buddha, and popular mythological figures.
- **A circular terrace (medhi)**- The terrace — surrounded by a similar three-bar railing — supports the anda and raises it off the

ground (black color); it likely served as a platform for ritual circumambulation.

- **Construction:** The stupa's **core was composed of unburnt bricks**, while the **outside surface was made of burnt bricks**, which were then covered in a thick coating of plaster, and the medhi and toran were embellished with wooden sculptures.

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PIB ANALYSIS

1) Extension of OBC Sub categorisation Commission

Why in the news?

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister has approved the **extension of the term of the Commission to examine the issue of Sub-categorization of Other Backward Classes**, by 6 months i.e. upto 31.1.2021.

Background

- The Commission headed by **Justice (Retd.) G. Rohini** was constituted under **Article 340** of the Constitution with the approval of the President on 2nd October, 2017.
- It was set up to examine the possibility of creating categories within OBCs for the reservation to **ensure “equitable distribution” of representation among all OBC communities.**
- Its **objectives** include
 1. To **examine the extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation** among the castes or communities included in the broad category of Other Backward Classes with reference to such classes included in the Central List;
 2. To work out a mechanism, criteria, norm and parameters through a scientific approach for **sub-categorisation within the OBCs;**
 3. To take up the exercise of identifying the respective castes or communities or sub-castes or synonyms in the Central List of OBCs and classifying them into their respective sub-categories.

Need for extension

- The Commission has come to the view that it would require some **more time to submit its report** since the repetitions, ambiguities, inconsistencies and errors of spelling or transcription etc. appearing in the existing Central List of OBCs need to be cleared.
- Also due to the **nationwide lockdown and restrictions on travel** imposed on account of COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission was not able to perform the task assigned to it.

- Therefore, the term of the Commission is being extended for a period of **6 more months** i.e. up to 31.1.2021.

Impact including employment generation potential:

- The Commission is likely to make recommendations for the **benefit of marginalized communities in the Central List of OBCs** which have not been able to get any major benefit of the scheme of reservation for OBCs for appointment in Central Government posts and for admission in Central Government Educational Institutions.

Article 340

- **Article 340 deals with appointment of a Commission to investigate the conditions of backward classes**
- The President may by order appoint a Commission consisting of such persons as he thinks fit to **investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes** within the territory of India and the difficulties under which they labour and to make recommendations as to the steps that should be taken by the Union or any State to remove such difficulties and to improve their condition and as to the grants that should be made for the purpose by the Union or any State the conditions subject to which such grants should be made, and the order appointing such Commission shall define the procedure to be followed by the Commission.
- A Commission so appointed shall investigate the matters referred to them and **present to the President a report** setting out the facts as found by them and making such recommendations as they think proper
- The President shall cause a copy of the report so presented together with a memorandum explaining the action taken thereon to be laid before **each House of Parliament.**

2) School Innovation Ambassador Training Program (SIATP)

What's in the news?

- Recently, the Union **Education Minister** and Union **Tribal Affairs Minister** jointly launched the **School Innovation Ambassador Training Program (SIATP)**.

About

- The innovative and one-of-its-kind training program for school teachers, it aims at **training 50,000 School Teachers** on Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Intellectual Property Rights, Design Thinking, Product development, Idea generation, among others.
- The program is a **collaborative effort by the Ministry of Education's Innovation Cell, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, CBSE and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)**.

Significance of the initiative

- The initiative will benefit the large number of schools for tribal children across the country as 'SIATP' will give **wings to the creativity** of the children.
- This programme will have far reaching consequences which will help to fulfil the Prime Minister's vision of a New India.
- The unique capacity building programme for teachers gives prominence to the development of creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and communication skills among children.

3) PRASHAD Scheme

About:

- The '**National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive**' (PRASHAD) was launched by the **Ministry of Tourism** in the year 2014-15 with the objective of **integrated development of identified pilgrimage and heritage destinations**.

Objectives

- **Rejuvenation and spiritual augmentation** of important national/global pilgrimage destinations;
- **Enhance tourism attractiveness** of identified pilgrimage destinations and heritage cities under integrated tourism development of heritage city in planned, prioritized and sustainable manner by providing world class tourism projects in them;

- Follow community-based development through '**Pro-Poor**' **tourism concept** and 'responsible tourism' initiatives.
- Assure active involvement of local communities through **employment generation**
- Creating awareness among the local communities about the importance of tourism for them in terms of increase in sources of income, improved living standards and overall development of the area.
- **Promote heritage** in the form of heritage structures especially under integrated tourism development of heritage city, local arts, culture, handicrafts, cuisine, etc., to generate livelihood in the identified places.
- Strengthen the mechanism for **bridging the infrastructural gaps** at identified pilgrimage destinations and throughout heritage cities.

Implementation Agency:

- The projects identified under this scheme shall be implemented through the **identified agencies by the respective State/ Union Territory Government**.

Funding Pattern

- The scheme shall be 100% centrally funded for the project components undertaken.

Expected Outcomes

- The outcome of the integrated development of Pilgrimage centers on a mission mode shall be regularly evaluated and measured on the following parameters:
 1. Increase in tourist footfall;
 2. Employment generation;
 3. Enhancement of awareness and development of skills & capacity to augment tourism with value added services;
 4. Increase in private sector participation in the identified tourist destinations;
 5. Integrated development of heritage cities.

Why in the news?

- The Prime Minister recently inaugurated various development projects in Varanasi under the PRASHAD Scheme.

4) NABARD

About NABARD

- NABARD was established in 1982 under the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Act, 1981.

- NABARD is an **apex refinancing agency** for the institutions providing investment and production credit for promoting the various developmental activities in rural areas.
- It is responsible for the development of the small industries, cottage industries, and any other such village or rural projects.
- NABARD also provides **direct term loans** at affordable rates of interest to certain activities like Designated Food Parks (DFPs) and food processing units in the DFPs.
- NABARD is **wholly owned** by the Government of India.

Functions of NABARD

Non-credit related:

- **Credit Planning and Monitoring**, Coordination with various agencies and institutions.
- **Assist in policy formulation** of GoI, RBI and State Governments on matters related to agricultural credit and rural development
- Institutional development and **capacity building of Cooperatives and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)** to strengthen the rural credit delivery system.
- Statutory inspection of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), State Cooperative Banks and District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs), voluntary inspection of State Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (SCARDBs) and their off-site surveillance
- **Promotional and developmental initiatives** in the areas of farm, off-farm, micro finance, financial inclusion, Convergence with Govt sponsored programmes.
- **Supporting the financial inclusion efforts** of Regional Rural Banks and Cooperative Banks
- Thrust on promotion of livelihood opportunities and Micro Enterprises
- Capacity Building of Personnel and Board Members of Credit Cooperatives and Staff of Rural Financial Institutions.
- Support for research and development, rural innovations, etc.

Credit related:

- **Refinance to Rural Financial Institutions** for investment credit (long term loan) and production and marketing credit (short term loan) purposes for farm and off-farm activities in rural areas.
- **Loans to State Governments** for developing rural infrastructure and

strengthening of the Cooperative Credit Structure

- **Loans for warehousing infrastructure** to State Governments, State/ Central government Owned/ assisted entities, Cooperatives, Federation of cooperatives, Farmers' Producers Organizations (FPOs), Federations of Farmers' Collectives, Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) / Cooperative Marketing Societies (CMS) or similar institutions, Corporates/ Companies, Individual entrepreneurs, etc.,
- **Direct lending to Cooperatives and Producers' Organization**, support to State owned institutions /corporations under NABARD Infrastructure Development Assistance and direct lending to individuals, partnership firms, corporates, NGOs, MFIs, Farmers' collectives etc. under Umbrella Programme for Natural Resource Management (UPNRM)

Why in the News?

- NABARD recently commemorated its 40th foundation day.

5) National AYUSH Mission (NAM)

About NAM

- The National Ayush Mission is a **centrally sponsored scheme** launched in 2014 by the **Department of AYUSH**, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- The basic objective of NAM is **to promote AYUSH medical systems** through cost effective AYUSH services, strengthening of educational systems, facilitate the enforcement of quality control of Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani & Homoeopathy (ASU &H) drugs and sustainable availability of ASU & H raw-materials.
- It envisages **flexibility of implementation** of the programmes which will lead to substantial participation of the State Governments/UT.
- The NAM contemplates establishment of a National Mission as well as corresponding Missions in the State level.
- NAM is likely to significantly improve the Department's outreach in terms of planning, supervision and monitoring of the schemes.

Vision

- To provide **cost effective and equitable AYUSH health care** throughout the country by improving access to the services.

- To **revitalize and strengthen** the AYUSH systems making them prominent medical streams in addressing the health care of the society.
- To **improve educational institutions** capable of imparting quality AYUSH education
- To promote the **adoption of Quality standards of AYUSH drugs** and making available the sustained supply of AYUSH raw-materials.

Objectives

- To provide cost effective AYUSH Services, with universal access through upgrading AYUSH Hospitals and Dispensaries, co-location of AYUSH facilities at Primary Health Centres (PHCs), Community Health Centres (CHCs) and District Hospitals (DHs).
- To **strengthen institutional capacity** at the state level through upgrading AYUSH educational institutions
- Support **cultivation of medicinal plants** by adopting Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) so as to provide sustained supply of quality raw-materials and support certification mechanism for quality standards, Good Agricultural/Collection/Storage Practices.
- Support setting up of clusters through convergence of cultivation, warehousing, value addition and marketing and development of infrastructure for entrepreneurs.

Components of the Mission

Mandatory Components

- AYUSH Services
- AYUSH Educational Institutions
- Quality Control of ASU &H Drugs
- Medicinal Plants

Flexible Components

- Out of the total State envelop available, 20% funds will be earmarked for flexible funds which can be spent on any of the items

given below with the stipulation that not more than 5% of the envelop is spent on any of the components:

1. AYUSH Wellness Centres including Yoga & Naturopathy
2. Tele-medicine
3. Sports Medicine through AYUSH
4. Innovations in AYUSH including Public Private Partnership
5. Interest subsidy component for Private AYUSH educational Institutions
6. Reimbursement of Testing charges
7. IEC activities
8. Research & Development in areas related to Medicinal Plants
9. Voluntary certification scheme: Project based.
10. Market Promotion, Market intelligence & buy back interventions
11. Crop Insurance for Medicinal Plants

Expected outcomes

- The expected outcomes of the mission are as follows:
- Better access to AYUSH healthcare services through increased healthcare facilities offering AYUSH services and better availability of medicines and trained manpower,
- Improvement in AYUSH education through a well-equipped enhanced number of AYUSH Educational institutions,
- To focus on reducing communicable/non-communicable diseases through targeted public health programmes using AYUSH systems of Healthcare.

Why in the news?

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the continuation of **National AYUSH Mission (NAM)** as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme from 01-04-2021 to 31-03-2026.

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News in Depth

AIR NEWS

1) PM-KUSUM Scheme

About the Scheme

- The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan (PM KUSUM) Scheme was launched in 2019 for **installation of solar pumps and grid connected solar and other renewable power plants** in the country.
- It was launched by the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy**.
- Under the scheme, farmers are provided subsidies for setting up stand-alone solar pumps and to solarise their grid-connected pump sets.
- This scheme enables farmers to set up solar power generation capacity on their barren lands and to **sell it to the power grid**.
- The Scheme consists of **three components**:

1) **Component A:** 10,000 MW of Decentralized Ground Mounted Grid Connected Renewable Power Plants of individual plant size up to 2 MW.

2) **Component B:** Installation of 17.50 lakh standalone Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps of individual pump capacity up to 7.5 HP.

3) **Component C:** Solarisation of 10 Lakh Grid-connected Agriculture Pumps of individual pump capacity up to 7.5 HP.

Benefits of the Scheme

- The Scheme will have substantial environmental impact in terms of **savings of CO2 emissions**. All three components of the Scheme combined together are likely to result in saving about 27 million tonnes of CO2 emission per annum.
- Further, Component-B of the Scheme on standalone solar pumps may result in **saving of 1.2 billion liters of diesel per annum** and **associated savings in the foreign exchange** due to reduction of import of crude oil.

- The scheme has **direct employment potential**. Besides increasing self-employment the proposal is likely to generate employment opportunities equivalent to 6.31 lakh job years for skilled and unskilled workers.
- In addition, the scheme would provide **additional income to farmers**, by giving them the option to sell additional power to the grid, through solar power projects set up on their barren lands.
- The scheme also reduces the government's burden of **power subsidy in the agriculture sector**.

Why in News?

- The Ministry of New & Renewable Energy issued a fresh advisory against fraudulent websites claiming registration under PM-KUSUM Scheme.

2) PM-KISAN

About the scheme

- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) is a Central Sector Scheme with 100% funding from Government of India.
- **Aim :** To augment the income of the farmers by providing income support to all landholding farmers' families across the country.
- The Scheme initially provided income support to all Small and Marginal Farmers' families across the country, holding cultivable land upto 2 hectares. Its ambit was later expanded w.e.f. 01.06.2019 to **cover all farmer families in the country irrespective of the size of their land holdings**.
- Under the Scheme an amount of **Rs. 6000/- per year** is transferred in three 4-monthly installments of Rs. 2000/- directly into the bank accounts of the farmers, subject to certain exclusion criteria relating to higher income status.

- **Eligibility** : All landholder farmer's families in the country are eligible for the PM-Kisan Scheme subject to the prevalent exclusion criteria. **Farmers who do not own any land are not eligible for this scheme.**
- **Excluded from the scheme**
 1. Institutional land holders,
 2. Farmer families holding constitutional posts,
 3. Serving or retired officers and employees of state/central government as well as PSUs and government autonomous bodies.
 4. Professionals like doctors, engineers and lawyers as well as retired pensioners with a monthly pension of over Rs 10,000 and those who paid income tax in the last assessment year.

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

Why in News?

- Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said that under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme, an amount of Rs 1.35 lakh crore has been transferred directly to bank accounts of more than 11 crore such farmers.
- In the budget of the current financial year, Rs 16 lakh crore lending target has been set up for the sector.

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THE HINDU EDITORIALS

1) A Kerala model for an anti-discrimination law

GS-2 Polity and Governance

CONTEXT

- Several forms of discrimination against individuals based on **religion, caste, ethnicity, marital status, gender, sexual orientation and even eating preferences** have become too common in our society.
- To address the issue, an anti-discrimination Bill have been drafted in Kerala and is expected to be introduced in the State Legislative Assembly.

Prohibition Clause:

- The **Bill prohibits** employers, landlords, traders, service providers, private persons performing public functions, and public authorities, from discriminating on grounds of caste, race, ethnicity, descent, sex, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, religious identity, tribe, disability, linguistic identity, HIV-status, nationality, marital status, dietary preference, skin tone, physical appearance, place of residence, place of birth, age or analogous characteristics which are beyond the control of an individual or those that constitute a fundamental choice.

Balances the anti-discrimination mandate with other rights guaranteed by the Constitution:

- The anti-discrimination mandate can be restricted in pursuance of a legitimate objective-
 1. For instance, a drama company putting up a production of the Ramayana can insist on only male applicants for the role of Ram.
 2. That would not be discrimination in the terms covered by the law.

Progressive diversification:

- The **Bill also introduces affirmative-action provisions** whereby **public authorities are obliged to progressively realise diversification of their workforces** by recruiting members of disadvantaged sections excluded from society, such as transgender persons or persons with disabilities.

Ensures bipartisan:

- Given the backlogs in our judicial system, the Bill establishes a **'Kerala Equality Commission'** to adjudicate complaints and to provide policy recommendations to the State government.
- Given that the proliferation of post-retirement public offices for judges does not go well for judicial independence, the **bill proposes appointments to the Commission by political process.**

AS PER DATA

- The **Housing Discrimination Project at Jindal Global Law School** has shown how extensive housing discrimination is across the country.
- **"Silent segregation"** on the grounds of marital status, gender, sexual orientation or eating preferences are followed in several housing societies and residents' associations.
- The recent **Pew Research Center Report** has confirmed that a substantial number of Indians prefer not to have a person from a different religious community as their neighbour.

CHALLENGES

Lack of laws:

- India is one of the few liberal democracies without comprehensive anti-discrimination legal framework a framework.
- Thus, **absence of a proper legal recourse** for those who suffer from discrimination makes matters worse.

Social prejudice:

- Despite the supreme court of India had struck down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, still the **members of LGBTQIA+ community continues to face strong social prejudice.**
- **Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code** was read down by the Supreme Court of India to exclude consensual relations between adults of the same sex.

Gaps in the constitutional provisions:

- The **article 15(1)** of the Constitution of India prohibits the state from discriminating against individuals on basis of certain protected characteristics such as religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth.

1. But it **does not bar private individuals or institutions from doing what the state is not permitted to.**
2. **Nor does it expressly list** ethnicity, linguistic identity, nationality, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance and other personal characteristics as prohibited grounds of discrimination.

Evolved forms of discriminations:

- The understanding of discrimination has been evolving over the years.
1. Now discrimination can be based on the combination of two or more grounds. This was highlighted by the **Supreme Court, in Patan Jamal Vali vs State of Andhra Pradesh.**
 2. In this case the court recognised **intersectional discrimination** — discrimination on the basis of the intersection of personal characteristics, such as that faced by Dalit women as Dalits, as women and in the unique category of Dalit women.

Indirect discrimination:

- Discriminatory practices may also be indirect in nature, whereby policies that seem neutral and not expressly targeted at a particular group, still cause a disproportionate adverse impact on disadvantaged sections of society.

NEED FOR LEGAL REMEDIES

- Since discrimination operates on a wide variety of grounds, legal remedies are needed for its victims.
- A **comprehensive anti-discrimination legal framework** is required to fill the existing legal lacunae.
- The **Sachar Committee, in 2006**, recognised the need for an anti-discrimination law. This was further reiterated by the **Expert Group on Equal Opportunity Commission.**

STATES CAN PLAY ACTIVE ROLE

- **States have a vital role in strengthening our right to equality.**
- Since a central Bill cannot cover subjects that are under the exclusive jurisdiction of State governments.
- The States should lead the way by enacting anti-discrimination laws in their respective jurisdictions.
- The **State legislature can use its powers under Entry 8 of List III in the Seventh**

Schedule to the Constitution to enact an anti-discrimination law that attracts civil penalties for those who engage in discriminatory practices.

- Thus, if States take the initiative, the demand for a national anti-discrimination law to cover services and institutions under the domain of the Union government will be reignited.

CONCLUSION

- **Though an anti-discrimination law is not a panacea for the problems of inequality and social prejudice that are deeply rooted in our society, it is still a necessary step in this direction.**

2) The power of scrutiny

GS-2 Judiciary

CONTEXT

- Recently the **Supreme Court of India has upheld the authority of a committee of the Delhi Assembly to summon a senior official of Facebook.**
- This verdict of the supreme court is an **extremely nuanced recognition of the extent of powers of State Assemblies** in matters regulated by an Act of Parliament.

BACKGROUND

- The question about the powers arose when Facebook's India vice-president was repeatedly summoned by Delhi Assembly's Committee on Peace and Harmony on the subject of the Delhi riots of 2020.
- **Facebook then argued** before the Supreme Court that **this was a case of overreach and that Delhi's law and order came under the central government.**
- Similar position was also taken by the central government, which argued that the Delhi Assembly had no jurisdiction in this matter as the **social media platforms are governed under the IT Act of Parliament.**

SUPREME COURT'S JUDGMENT

- In its judgment the Court not only upheld the summons but also stated that-
- **"The Assembly does not only perform the function of legislating, instead there are many other aspects of governance which can form part of the essential functions of the Legislative Assembly and consequently the committee."**
- Hence, pointed out that the **"inquisitorial" and "recommendatory" powers of a**

House can be used for better governance.

- Simultaneously, the court also cautioned the committee from “**transgressing into any fields reserved for the Union Government**”.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE JUDGMENT

- The verdict comes amid a long phase of discordance over legislative turf between the central government and the Delhi government.
- It also comes at a time when **social media intermediaries are legally fighting some aspects of the new IT rules that govern them.**
- Thus, **their responsibility toward the many legislatures will only become more heightened** because of this verdict.
- The Court refused to buy the argument that **social media intermediaries are “merely a platform for exchange of ideas without performing any significant role themselves”.**
- Rather it then linked what happens in these platforms to the real world.
- The Court said that the **misinformation on social media has “a direct impact on vast areas of subject matter which ultimately affect the governance of States”.**

CONCLUSION

- Despite the constraints of the powers of the Delhi Assembly vis-à-vis law and order, the Court found that its committee could still summon the Facebook India official without encroaching upon the turf of the Centre.
- Thus **opening the gates for scrutiny of social media platforms by other States**, which however have significantly more powers with respect to law and order. Hence, setting the stage for more scrutiny.

3) The upcoming crisis in Indian federalism

GS-2 Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure

CONTEXT

- **Since 1976, seats in the Lok Sabha have reflected the 1971 census and have not taken into account changes in the population.**

1. The primary reason for this has been unequal population growth among States.
2. India’s most highly developed and prosperous States have been successful at family planning, while the poorer States continue to expand.

- The freeze was thus a chance to **ensure that India’s most successful States are not punished politically for their success.**

RELATED CONCERNS

Shift in national power:

- The Indian Constitution may face an unprecedented crisis in 2026, due to **dramatic change in the composition of the Lok Sabha.**

1. Post 2026, when the freeze ends, there will be a seismic shift in national power towards India’s poorest and most populated States.
2. This **would generate much resentment** among the States that will lose political and economic power and influence.

- Hence, this calls for a **realignment in the balance between the democratic principle and the federal principle in the Indian Constitution.**

Big versus small States:

- There exists the possibility of **inherent contradiction between the principles of democracy and federalism, when federal units are unequal in size, population and economics.**

1. As in a democratic set up, all citizens are equal and are thus entitled to equal representation in governance.
2. But this would imply that bigger States are likely to dominate the national conversation over smaller States.
3. Hence, small States fear that they would get a smaller share of the pie economically, a much reduced say in national issues, and be irrelevant in the political governance of the country.

WAY FORWARD

- The **powers of States vis-à-vis the Centre contained in the Lists** and in the provisions dealing with altering boundaries of States **must be increased** to assuage the fear of smaller States that they will be dominated by bigger ones.
- The **role and composition of the Rajya Sabha**, our House of States, must be expanded.

- This would allow smaller States a say over national majoritarian politics that adversely impact them.
- Constitutional change and the change in financial redistribution between the States must require the **consent of all or nearly all States**.
- Serious thought must be given to **breaking up the biggest States into smaller units** that will not by themselves dominate the national conversation.

MEASURES TAKEN BY OTHER FEDERAL DEMOCRACIES

- In order to assuage concerned fear, federal democracies have incorporated into their governing structures various kinds of compromises to ensure a balance between democratic principles and federal ones.
- For example, **America** has protected smaller States by providing following provisions in favour of its states:
 1. **First**, national powers over the States are limited.
 2. **Second**, each State regardless of size had two seats in the Senate, giving smaller States an outsized role in national governance.
 3. **Third**, Presidents are elected by electoral votes, which means they must win States rather than the total national population.

CONCLUSION

- The unity of India is fundamental, but this unity does not depend on an overbearing Centre for its survival.
- National bonds of affection and patriotism will not be severed by devolution of powers, but may be strained when one part of the country is empowered over another.
- **Hence, efforts to ensure balance between democratic and federal principles.**

4) Disable unconstitutional sections

GS-2 Fundamental Rights, Judiciary

NEWS

- Several steps can be taken to ensure that people are not booked under laws held unconstitutional.

CONTEXT

- Recently, the Supreme Court had expressed shock that **despite its declaration of Section 66A of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 as being**

unconstitutional six years ago in Shreya Singhal vs. Union of India, criminal cases are still being registered by the police under this Section.

- As per the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), **1,307 cases had been registered since 2015** across States.

SECTION 66A OF IT ACT, 2000

- The section gave **authorities the power to arrest anyone accused of posting content on social media that could be deemed 'offensive'**.
- It provided punishment for sending offensive messages through communication services.
- A conviction could fetch a maximum of three years in jail and a fine.

SHREYA SINGHAL Vs UNION OF INDIA (2015)

- In this case, the Supreme Court had **declared Section 66A of the IT Act, violative of Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.**
- The court stated that the act does not come under the ambit of reasonable restrictions defined in Article 19(2).
- Also the court ruled that section **did not distinguish between speech that was merely "offensive or annoying"** and that which was guilty of inciting a disruption of public order.
- It had said that the expressions used in Section 66A were **open-ended, undefined and therefore arbitrary.**

CONCERNS

- Despite the **declaration of several provisions as unconstitutional, criminal cases are still being registered** by the police under these provisions.
- Other similar trends have been noticed regarding other provisions struck down by the Supreme court:
 - **Section 303 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)**, which provided capital punishment for murder by a person serving a life term in another case.
 - **Section 377 of the IPC**, which criminalised "unnatural sex".
 - **Adultery as defined under Section 497 of the IPC**, which was arbitrary, discriminatory and violative of the dignity of a woman.

WAY FORWARD

- **Police officers need to be educated** in order to avoid faulty registration of offences under sections held unconstitutional.
 - **Police must ensure that no FIR is registered under unconstitutional sections** and no one is harassed for the negligent actions of Station House Officers.
1. There should be **appropriate accountability measures** in place to fix responsibility on the erring officer.
 2. Those responsible for the negligence should not only be answerable to the courts for contempt but also be liable for departmental action.
- Also, the unconstitutional sections of the IPC can be **disabled in the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS)**.
 - The **Court must come out with appropriate guidelines** against the registering of FIRs under unconstitutional provisions.

5) Making welfare conditional is a stamp of coercion

GS-1 Population and Associated Issues; GS-2 Government Policies & Interventions

CONTEXT

- Recently, the government of **Uttar Pradesh has released a "Population Policy"**.
- The policy is intended to bring the **gross fertility rate in the State down from the existing 2.7 to 2.1 by 2026**.
- In order to achieve this policy, State's Law Commission has recently anvil a draft law, titled **the Uttar Pradesh Population (Control, Stabilisation and Welfare) Bill, 2021**.

PROPOSED LAW

- The Uttar Pradesh Population (Control, Stabilisation and Welfare) Bill, 2021, seeks to provide:
 1. a series of **incentives to families** that adhere to a two-child norm,
 2. Also it intends on **disentitling families** that breach the norm from benefits and subsidies.
- It promises **public servants who undergo sterilisation and adopt a two-child norm** several benefits. These include two increments during their service,
 1. **subsidy** towards the purchase of a house,

2. **maternity, or paternity leave**, with full salary and allowances, as the case may be, for up to 12 months,
3. **free health care and insurance coverage** for the spouse.

LIST OF PUNISHMENTS IN THE BILL

- The draft Bill contains a list of punishments, by the term "disincentives".
- A person who breaches the two-child norm will be **debarred from securing the benefit of any government-sponsored welfare scheme and will be disqualified from applying to any State government job**.
- Existing government employees who infringe the rule will be **denied the benefit of promotion**.
- Transgressing individuals will be **prohibited from contesting elections to local authorities and bodies**.

REASONS BEHIND PROPOSAL OF THIS BILL?

- The draft Bill echoes the U.P. government's new policy in claiming that the **State's ecological and economic resources are limited**.
- According to it, **unless population growth is regulated, the State will be unable to guarantee the provision of basic rights to all citizens i.e. state will be unable to achieve sustainable development**.
- Hence, to these ends, the draft postulates an array of measures.

CONCERNS

- The new proposal is worrying because it is likely to bring with it a host of other deleterious consequences:
 - The recommendations are **rooted in a culture of coercion**.
 - Also, **experiences from across the world demonstrate that laws of this kind do not work**.
 - They instead, **instil an attitude of discrimination**, with a burden imposed disparately on the most vulnerable groups in society.
- In **Suchita Srivastava & Anr vs Chandigarh Administration (2009)**, the Court found that a **woman's freedom to make reproductive decisions is an integral facet of the right to personal liberty guaranteed by Article 21**.
- This ruling was further endorsed by the **Supreme Court's nine-judge Bench**

verdict in **K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India (2017)**.

- The judgment pointed out that a **person's autonomy over her body as an extension of the right to privacy**.
- Further, the law can **worsen the case of aborting the girl child**.
- As, an already **skewed sex ratio may be compounded by families aborting a daughter** in the hope of having a son with a view to conforming to the two-child norm.
- The law could also lead to a **proliferation in sterilisation camps**, a practice that the Supreme Court has previously deprecated.

WAY FORWARD

- Experiences from other States in India show us that **there are more efficacious and alternative measures available** to control the growth of population.
- This includes processes aimed at **improving public health and access to education**.
- Also, the **Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has also acknowledged** the fact before the Supreme Court that **"international experience shows that any coercion to have a certain number of children is counter-productive and leads to demographic distortions"**.
- The Government further confirmed that India was committed to its **obligations under international law**, including the principles contained in the **International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action, 1994**.
- If we want the idea of India as a welfare state to mean something, the right to access basic goods cannot be made provisional on a person sacrificing her bodily autonomy.

CONCLUSION

- Like all other fundamental rights, **the right to privacy is not boundless**. But, as Puttaswamy clarifies, any restriction placed on the right must conform to a **doctrine of proportionality**.
- Hence, in pursuing public interest, it is essential that **governments ensure that individual liberties are encroached upon to the lowest degree possible**.
- On the contrary, the U.P.'s draft law shows that, if enacted, it will grossly impinge on the right to reproductive freedom.

6) India needs a renewed health-care system

GS-2 Health, Government Policies & Interventions, Issues Relating to Development

CONTEXT

- Recent reshuffle in the cabinet has given India a new Union Health Minister.
- The editorial emphasis on what does the new Health Minister need to learn from previous experience, and what unfinished tasks need to be taken forward.

TWO STATES AND COMPARISON

- The **availability of functional public health systems**, for any population is of most importance.
- This is evident by **comparing two States** which currently have the highest number of COVID-19 cases in India — Maharashtra and Kerala.
- The per capita gross State domestic product (GSDP) of both the states, reflect similar economic situations in each State.
- However, **their COVID-19 case fatality rates are hugely different** —such that a COVID-19 patient in Maharashtra has been over four times more likely to die when compared to one in Kerala.
- A major reason for such critical divergence is likely to be the **huge differences in the effectiveness of public health systems**.
 1. Kerala has per capita two and a half times more government doctors, and an equally higher proportion of government hospital beds when compared to Maharashtra.
 2. Also Kerala allocates over one and half times higher funds on public health every year.
- Hence, despite Maharashtra having a large private health-care sector, its weak public health system has proved to be a critical deficiency.
- In contrast, robust government health-care services in Kerala have translated into: a more effective outreach, timely testing, early case detection and more rational treatment for COVID patients, which all together reduce fatality rates.

WHERE SHOULD BE THE FOCUS?

Immediate attention to National Health Mission:

- A larger programme which requires the immediate attention of the Health Minister is the **National Health Mission (NHM)** as:
 1. Since 2017-18, **Union government allocations for the NHM have declined.**
 2. Thus, resulting in inadequate support to States for core activities such as immunisation, while systemic gaps affect the delivery of COVID-19 vaccination.
- **Doubling of the present central health Budget:**
 - The condition of the **National Urban Health Mission (NUHM)** remains pathetic.
 - This year's Central allocation for the NUHM is ₹1,000 crore, which is **less than ₹2 per month per urban Indian.**
 - **As recommended by the Parliamentary Standing Committee,** the Government must allocate ₹1.6-lakh crore for public health during the current year for reaching National Health Policy targets.
 - Thus doubling of the present central health Budget, could enable major strengthening of health services in rural and urban areas across the country.

Private sector regulation:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need of regulating rates and standards of care in the private sector.
- The massive hospital bills by this sector have caused untold distress among the poor and middle class.
- The 'Remdesivir panic' was caused due to major overuse of this medicine by unregulated private hospitals, despite the drug lacking efficacy to reduce COVID-19 mortality.
- Although various determinants have contributed to the Mucormycosis outbreak, irrational use of steroids in COVID-19 patients, especially diabetics, appears to be an important factor.

Ineffective implementation of the Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act (CEA):

- Despite accumulating evidence on the need for comprehensive regulation of private hospitals, the **central government is yet to take necessary steps to promote the implementation of the Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act (CEA).**
- This Act is not yet effectively implemented due to a major delay in notification of

central minimum standards, and failure to develop the central framework for regulation of rates.

- **Learning from stark market failures during the COVID-19 pandemic,** comprehensive regulation of private health care in public interest must be a critical agenda for the new Health Minister.

Curb further privatisation of health care:

- NITI Aayog has recently published the document, 'Investment Opportunities in India's Healthcare Sector'. This document **promotes further privatisation of health care.**
- **The report fails to acknowledge the negative aspects of unregulated private health care;** neither is there any mention of the need for regulation of private hospitals.
- Therefore, such recommendations can prove to be detrimental in the current situation considering the fact that India already has one of the most privatised health systems in the world.
- The Health Minister must assert his authority to stop further privatisation, which might benefit healthcare corporations and be damaging for ordinary people.

CONCLUSION

- Existing evidence from the COVID-19 pandemic provides a clear message- **a neglect of public health systems can mean large-scale, avoidable losses of lives.**
- Hence, public health services must be upgraded rapidly and massively as a topmost priority.
- **Building people's trust** in public health systems is critical.
- This would help in overcoming vaccination hesitancy while strengthening the promotion of healthy behaviours necessary to deal with the current wave of COVID-19 and prevent a third wave.
- This would be done best if the new Health Minister acts on three core health system lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic —
 1. **A need for strengthening public health systems;**
 2. **Regulating private health care,**
 3. **Preventing further privatisation of the health sector.**

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INDIAN EXPRESS EXPLAINED

1) India's Afghan investment

Why in the news?

- The Taliban's possible triumph in Afghanistan threatens not just India's diplomatic stakes in the country, but also 20 years and \$3 billion worth of Indian investment in various projects - dams, roads, trade infrastructure.

Indian projects across the country

- The **2011 India-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement** recommitted Indian assistance to help rebuild Afghanistan's infrastructure and institutions; education and technical assistance for capacity-building in many areas; encourage investment in Afghanistan; and provide duty-free access to the Indian market. **Bilateral trade is now worth \$1 billion.**



Indian Projects In Afghanistan

SALMA DAM:

- Already, there has been fighting in the area where one of India's high-visibility projects is located -the 42MW Salma Dam in Herat province.
- The hydropower and irrigation project, completed against many odds and

inaugurated in 2016, is known as the Afghan-India Friendship Dam.

- In the past few weeks, the Taliban have mounted attacks in nearby places, killing several security personnel. The Taliban claim the area around the dam is now under their control.

ZARANJ-DELARAM HIGHWAY:

- The other high-profile project was the 218-km Zaranj-Delaram highway built by the India' Border Roads Organisation.
- Zaranj is located close to Afghanistan's border with Iran. The \$150-million highway goes along the Khash Rud river to Delaram to the northeast of Zaranj, where it connects to a ring road that links Kandahar in the south, Ghazni and Kabul in the east, Mazar-i-Sharif in the north, and Herat in the west.

PARLIAMENT:

- The Afghan Parliament in Kabul was built by India at \$90 million. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the building in 2015.
- Modi described the building as India's tribute to democracy in Afghanistan. A block in the building is named after former Prime Minister AB Vajpayee.

STOR PALACE:

- In 2016, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Prime Minister Modi inaugurated the restored Stor Palace in Kabul, originally built in the late 19th century, and which was the setting for the 1919 Rawalpindi Agreement by which Afghanistan became an independent country.
- The building housed the offices of the Afghan foreign minister and the ministry until 1965. In 2009, India, Afghanistan, and the Aga Khan Development Network signed a tripartite agreement for its restoration.

POWER INFRA:

- Other Indian projects in Afghanistan include the rebuilding of power infrastructure such as the 220kV DC transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri, capital of Baghlan province to the north of Kabul, to beef up electricity supply to the capital.
- Indian contractors and workers also restored telecommunications infrastructure in many provinces.

HEALTH INFRA:

- India has reconstructed a children's hospital it had helped build in Kabul in 1972 —named Indira Gandhi Institute for Child Health in 1985 -that was in shambles after the war.
- 'Indian Medical Missions' have held free consultation camps in several areas. Thousands who lost their limbs after stepping on mines left over from the war have been fitted with the Jaipur Foot.
- India has also built clinics in the border provinces of Badakhshan, Balkh, Kandahar, Khost, Kunar, Nangarhar, Nimruz, Nooristan, Paktia and Paktika.

TRANSPORTATION:

- India gifted 400 buses and 200 mini-buses for urban transportation, 105 utility vehicles for municipalities, 285 military vehicles for the Afghan National Army, and 10 ambulances for public hospitals in five cities.
- It also gave three Air India aircraft to Ariana, the Afghan national carrier, when it was restarting operations.

OTHER PROJECTS:

- India has contributed desks and benches for schools, and built solar panels in remote villages, and Sulabh toilet blocks in Kabul.
- New Delhi has also played a role in building capacity, with vocational training institutes, scholarships to Afghan students, mentoring programmes in the civil service, and training for doctors and others.

ONGOING PROJECTS:

- India recently concluded an agreement with Afghanistan for the construction of the Shahtoot Dam in Kabul district, which would provide safe drinking water to 2 million residents.
- India also announced the start of some 100 community development projects worth \$80 million.

Bilateral trade relations

- Despite the denial of an overland route by Pakistan, India-Afghanistan trade has grown with the establishment in 2017 of an air freight corridor. In 2019-20, bilateral trade crossed \$1.3 billion.
- The balance of trade is heavily tilted—exports from India are worth approximately \$900 million, while Afghanistan's exports to India are about \$500 million.

- Afghan exports are mainly fresh and dried fruit. Some of this comes overland through the Wagah border; Pakistan has permitted Afghan trade with India through its territory. Indian exports to Afghanistan take place mainly through government-to-government contracts with Indian companies. Exports include pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, computers and related materials, cement, and sugar.
- Two air corridors — Kabul-Delhi and Herat-Delhi — are in operation now. Trade through Chabahar started in 2017 but is restricted by the absence of connectivity from the port to the Afghan border. Trade volumes are minuscule.

2) Why the Amazon forests are no longer acting as a carbon sink**Why in the news?**

- A recent study published in the Journal Nature, shows that the Amazon forests in South America, which are the largest tropical forests in the world, have started emitting carbon dioxide (CO₂) instead of absorbing carbon emissions.

The Amazon basin

- The Amazon basin is huge with an area covering over 6 million square kilometres, it is nearly twice the size of India.
- The Amazon rainforests cover about 80 percent of the basin and as per NASA's Earth observatory, they are **home to nearly a fifth of the world's land species** and is also home to about 30 million people including hundreds of indigenous groups and several isolated tribes.
- Other than this, the basin produces about **20 percent of the world's flow of freshwater into the oceans**. Over the last few years, the forest has been under threat due to **deforestation and burning**.
- Forest fires, according to Brazil's National Institute for Space Research (INPE), have doubled since 2013. One reason that they happen is when farmers burn their land to clear it for the next crop
- Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon, which comprises about two-thirds of the area of the rainforest, started in the 1970s and 1980s when large-scale forest

conversion for cattle ranching and soy cultivation began.

- NASA's Earth Observatory notes that state policies that encourage economic

development, such as railway and road expansion projects have led to "unintentional deforestation" in the Amazon and Central America.



Key takeaways from the study

- Over the years as fossil-fuel emissions across the world have increased, the Amazon forests have absorbed CO₂ from the atmosphere, helping to moderate the global climate.
- But because of significant levels of deforestation (over the course of 40 years) there has been a long-term decrease in rainfall and increase in temperatures during the dry season.
- Because of these reasons the eastern Amazon forests are **no longer carbon sinks**, whereas the more intact and wetter forests in the central and western parts are neither carbon sinks nor are they emitters.
- Another reason for the eastern region not being able to absorb as much CO₂ as it did previously is the **conversion of forests into agricultural land**, which has caused a 17 per cent decrease in the forest cover, an area that is almost the size of continental US.
- In the southeast region, which forms about 20 percent of the Amazon basin and has experienced about 30 percent of the deforestation in the last four decades, scientists have recorded a 25 per cent reduction in precipitation and a temperature increase of at least 2.7 degrees

Fahrenheit or 1.5 degrees Celsius during the dry months of August, September and October.

- This means that if the ability of tropical forests to act as carbon sinks is to be maintained, fossil fuel emissions need to be reduced and temperature increases need to be limited as well.

3) Hubble telescope

Why in the news?

- Recently, the safe mode was activated in the Hubble telescope after an onboard computer halt, leading to all non-essential systems being shut down - essentially meaning the telescope is not being used for astronomy observations for time being.
- The Hubble was put in safe mode after a problem appeared with its payload computer, which controls and coordinates the science instruments onboard the observatory.

Why is the Hubble telescope famous?

- Named after the **astronomer Edwin Hubble**, the observatory is the **first major optical telescope to be placed in space** and has made groundbreaking discoveries in the field of astronomy since its launch.

- The launch and deployment of Hubble in **April 1990** is said to be the “most

significant advance in astronomy since Galileo’s telescope.”



HUBBLE SPACE TELESCOPE

- It is larger than a school bus in size, has a 7.9 feet mirror, and captures images of deep space playing a major role in helping astronomers understand the universe by observing the most distant stars, galaxies and planets.
- Telescopes have a particular range of light that they can detect. **Hubble’s domain extends from the ultraviolet through the visible (which our eyes see) and into the near-infrared.**
- This range has allowed Hubble to deliver stunning images of stars, galaxies, and other astronomical objects that have inspired

people around the world and changed our understanding of the universe.

- The telescope has tracked interstellar objects as they soared through our solar system, watched a comet collide with Jupiter, and discovered moons around Pluto.
- Hubble has peered back into our universe’s distant past, to locations more than 13.4 billion light-years from Earth, capturing galaxies merging, probing the supermassive black holes that lurk in their depths, and helping us better understand the history of the expanding universe.

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RSTV

1) Drone Draft Rules: Impetus to Future Tech

Context

- The Union Civil Aviation Ministry has released the draft of the national drone policy, making it significantly easier for people and companies to own and operate drones, while also streamlining the certification process for manufacturers, importers and users.

Draft Drone Rules 2021

- The current draft of national drone policy will soon replace the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) Rules 2021 that was released on 12 March 2021.
- According to the draft Drone Rules 2021, **operating drones without a unique identification number will not be allowed, unless exempted.**
- Drone operators will have to generate a unique identification number of a drone by providing requisite details on the digital sky platform.
- It also has **safety features** such real-time tracking beacon, and geo-fencing, which are expected to be notified in future and a six-month lead time will be provided for compliance.
- An **interactive airspace map with green, yellow, and red zones** will be displayed on the digital sky platform.
- **No pilot licence** will be required for **micro drones** used for non-commercial use, **nano drones** and for research and development (R&D) organizations operating such drones.
- There will be no restriction on drone operations by **foreign-owned companies registered in India.**
- Import of drones and drone components will be regulated by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).
- Security clearance will not be required before any registration or licence issuance.
- Easier process prescribed for **transfer and deregistration of drones.**
- All drone training and testing to be carried out by an authorised **drone school.** DGCA shall prescribe training requirements, oversee drone schools and provide pilot licences online.

- No requirement of certificate of airworthiness, unique identification number, prior permission and remote pilot licence for R&D entities.
- **Approvals abolished:** unique authorisation number, unique prototype identification number, certificate of conformance, certificate of maintenance, import clearance, acceptance of existing drones, operator permit, authorisation of R&D organisation, student remote pilot licence, remote pilot instructor authorisation, drone port authorisation etc.
- The Ministry of Civil Aviation will also facilitate development of **drone corridors** for cargo deliveries and a drone promotion council will be set up to facilitate a business-friendly regulatory regime.

Additional Information

▪ Air space has been partitioned into Green Zone (automatic permission)

- It means the airspace from the ground up to a vertical distance of **400 feet (120 metre)** above ground level (AGL) that has not been designated as a red zone or yellow zone in the airspace map for drone operations
- The airspace from the ground up to a vertical distance of **200 feet (60 metre) AGL** in the area located between a lateral distance of **8 kilometre and 12 kilometre from the perimeter of an operational airport.**

Yellow Zone (controlled Airspace)

- It means the **controlled airspace** of defined dimensions above the **land areas or territorial waters** of India within which drone operations are restricted and shall require **permission** from the concerned air traffic control authority.

Red Zone (Flying not permitted)

- It means the **airspace of defined dimensions**, above the land areas or territorial waters of India, or any installation or **notified port limits** specified by the Central Government beyond the territorial waters of India; within which **drone operations shall be permitted only under exceptional circumstances** by the Central Government.

Classification of drones

- Drones shall be classified based upon the **maximum all-up weight including payload** as under
 1. **Nano drone:** Less than or equal to **250 gram**;
 2. **Micro drone:** Greater than **250 gram** and less than or equal to **2 kilogram**;
 3. **Small drone:** Greater than **2 kilogram** and less than or equal to **25 kilogram**;
 4. **Medium drone:** Greater than **25 kilogram** and less than or equal to **150 kilogram**;
 5. **Large drone:** Greater than **150 kilogram**.

Digital Sky Platform

- Digital sky platform is an initiative by the Ministry of Civil Aviation to provide a secure and a scalable platform that supports **drone technology frameworks**,

such as NPNT (no permission, no take-off), designed to enable flight permission digitally and managing unmanned aircraft operations and traffic efficiently.

Areas identified for application of Drone Technology by the policy

1. Agriculture and allied activities
2. Logistics sector
3. Entertainment Industry
4. Law enforcement agencies
5. Disaster management
6. Railways for track monitoring
7. Telecom sector for monitoring of towers
8. Defence sector
9. Healthcare services

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INFOGRAPHIC OF THE WEEK

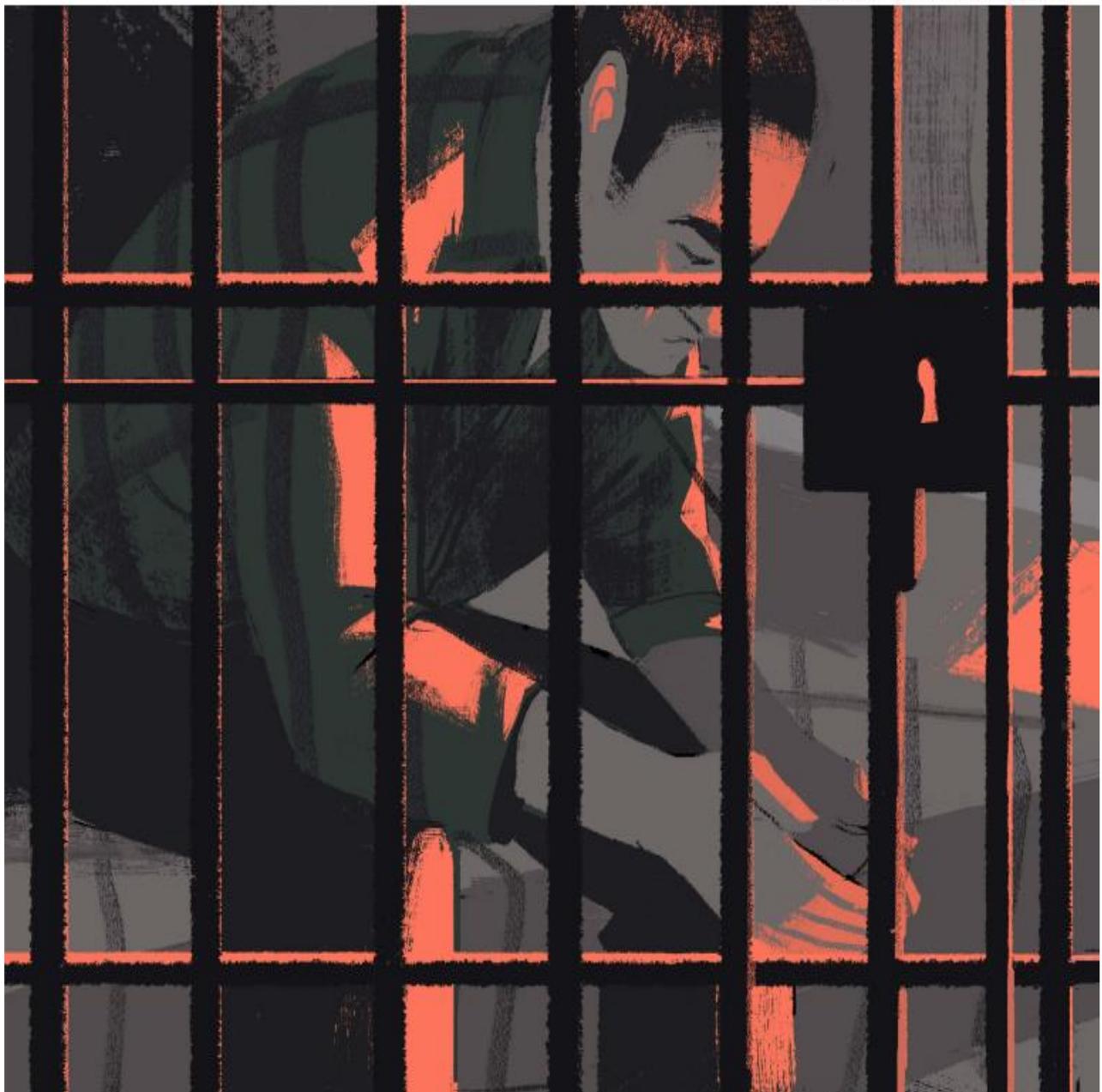
1) Seditio

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SEDITION

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CONTEXT



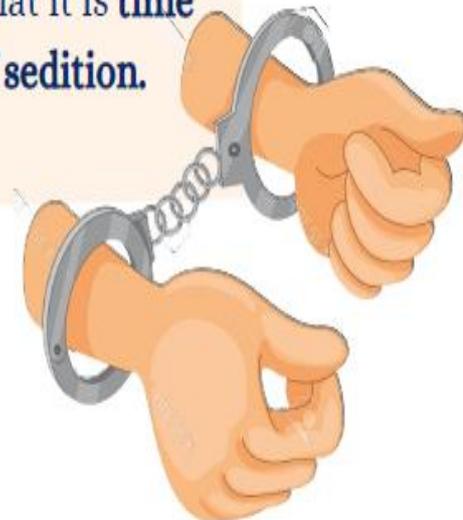
Supreme Court Cases



A Supreme Court Bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud recently flagged indiscriminate use of the sedition law against critics, journalists, social media users, activists and citizens for airing their grievances about the governments COVID-19 management.



The apex court opined that it is **time to define the limits of sedition.**



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LAW ON SEDITION (Section 124A)

Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), deals with sedition. It was drafted by **Thomas Babington Macaulay** and included in the IPC in **1870**.



1870



It states that 'Whoever, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into **hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the Government established by law**, shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to **three years**, to which fine may be added.'



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Sedition is a non-bailable offence. Punishment under the law varies from imprisonment up to three years to a life term and fine.



Non-Bailable Offence



PREVIOUS JUDGEMENTS ON SECTION 124A

In **Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar (1962)**, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of sedition and noted it as being a **reasonable restriction on free speech** as provided in **Article 19(2)** of the Constitution.

Article
19(2)



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It made clear that a **citizen has the right to say or write whatever she likes about the government**, or its measures, by way of criticism or comments, **as long as she does not incite people to violence** against the government established by law or with the **intention of creating public disorder.**



Following the Kedar Nath case, the **Bombay High Court**, in the case of cartoonist **Aseem Trivedi (2012)**, issued **guidelines** which the police must follow prior to invoking the provisions of sedition.



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These include an **objective evaluation of the material** to form an opinion on whether .

the words and actions cause disaffection, enmity and disloyalty to the government as they must be of the magnitude that they **incite violence or tend to create public disorder**



SEDITION



The Court also directed obtaining a **legal opinion in writing from a law officer of the district** who must give reasons on how the pre-conditions are met.

This needs to be followed by a **second opinion from the State's public prosecutor.**

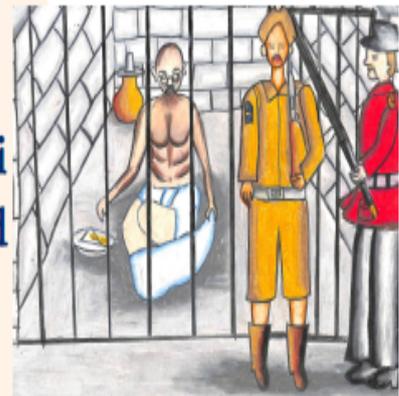
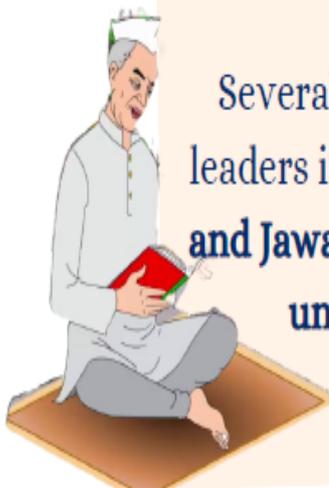


WHY THE LAW NEEDS RELOOK?

The sedition law has been in debate ever since it was brought into force by the colonial British rulers in 1860s.



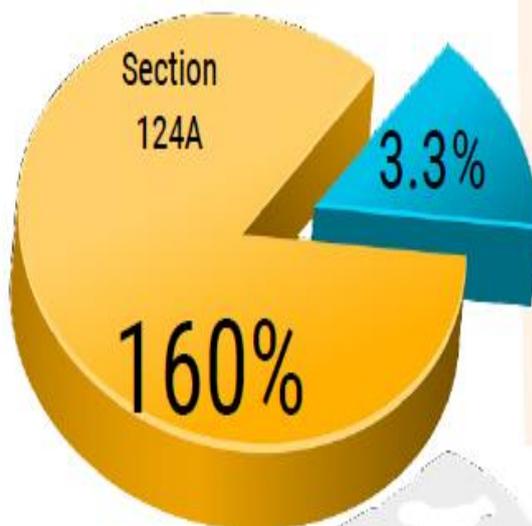
Several top freedom movement leaders including **Mahatma Gandhi** and **Jawaharlal Nehru** were booked under the sedition law.





Mahatma Gandhi described it as the “prince among the political sections of the Indian Penal Code designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen.”

Despite being cautioned by courts on numerous occasions, law enforcement agencies continue to misuse the provisions on sedition and ignore court directions. The problem therefore lies in the **poor implementation of the law and guidelines.**

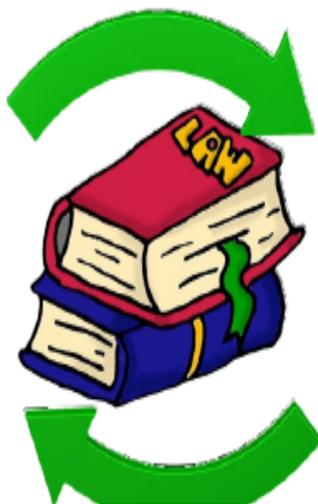
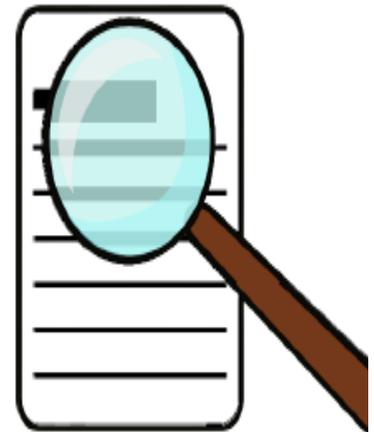


Based on data from the **National Crime Records Bureau**, between 2016 and 2019, the number of cases of sedition under Section 124A increased by 160%, while the rate of conviction dropped to 3.3% in 2019 from 33.3% in 2016.



Notably, out of these cases, **many charges fell outside the ambit of sedition.** Consequently, the staggering numbers have got people saying that “the aim is not to punish or convict anyone but to incarcerate them... the process itself is the punishment.”

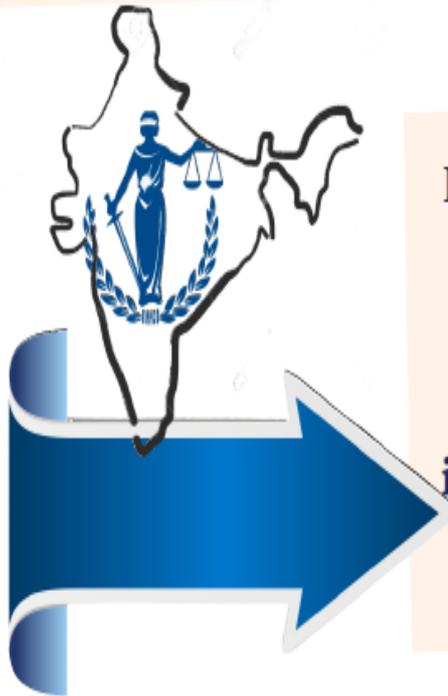
This data and the gross misuse of the legal provisions compel one to state that even though a Constitution Bench upheld the vires of the law of sedition, the **circumstances now require a complete relook at the provision.**



When the situation changes, the statute calls for a change as law cannot afford to remain static.

The U.K. has repealed the offence of sedition in 2010 and India is holding onto a relic of the British Empire.

~~SEDITION~~



In its consultative paper on sedition, the **Law Commission of India** said dissent and criticism of the government are essential ingredients of a robust public debate in a vibrant democracy.



The Commission, headed by former Supreme Court judge, Justice B.S. Chauhan, suggested it was time to rethink or even repeal **Section 124A.**



REPEAL

WAY FORWARD



The outcome of the question is unknown, but the discussion needs to be rekindled.



Till the law on sedition continues to remain on our statute book, courts must adopt an **effect-based test** followed in the west. The test **examines the effects of the seditious text rather than a content-based test which reviews the text alone.**





It is not the alleged seditious acts that are creating fragments in our society; it is in fact the persecution of individuals and labelling them that are really creating cracks in our socio-politico ecosystem.



In the words of **Martin Luther King, Jr.**
“We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.”



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