

OFFICERS' PULSE

Issue no. 09 | 25th July to 31st July, 2021



REMEMBER
WHY YOU
STARTED

AT A GLANCE
& IN DEPTH.

COVERAGE.

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Economy
International Relations
Environment
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CURRENT AFFAIRS WEEKLY
THE **PULSE** OF UPSC AT YOUR FINGER TIPS



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News @ a glance

POLITY

1) SC quashes some provisions of 97th Amendment

What's in the news?

- The Supreme Court has struck down certain provisions of the Constitution (97th Amendment) Act, 2011. The Court held that the **Parliament could not have introduced a law regulating cooperative societies within states and Union territories** under the 97th Constitution amendment of 2011, **without first getting it ratified from half of the state legislatures.**
- However, the three-judge bench by a 2:1 majority held that the Constitution (97th Amendment) Act 2011 will be **valid and operational with regard to multistate cooperative societies** which relate to cooperative societies existing across many states or union territories.
- The ruling upheld a 2013 Gujarat High Court verdict that struck down parts of the amendment.

What is the 97th Constitutional Amendment?

- The 97th constitutional amendment, which dealt with issues related to effective management of co-operative societies in the country, was passed by Parliament in **December 2011** and had come into effect from **February 15, 2012.**
- The Union government, in its Statement of Objects and Reasons for the amendment, referred to the “weaknesses” in safeguarding the interests of members of cooperatives and the fulfilment of the objectives of these institutions.
- It referred to delayed elections, nomination of office-bearers for long durations, reduced accountability in management and inadequate professionalism in many societies.

Key Provisions

- Recognising that ‘cooperative societies’ came under **Entry 32 of the State List in the Seventh Schedule**, the Amendment proposed to **create a framework for the functioning of cooperative societies.**
- State laws on cooperatives should conform to this framework. It **introduced Part IXB** in the Constitution so that the **concept of cooperative societies gains constitutional recognition.** It was on the lines of Part IX, which deals with panchayats, and Part IXA, which deals with urban local bodies.
- The idea was to empower Parliament to frame laws for cooperative societies that function across States (multi-State cooperative societies) and State legislatures to make laws for all other cooperative societies falling under their jurisdiction.
- **The Amendment set out basic rules** such as a maximum of 21 directors in a society, a fixed term of five years for elected members, a six-month cap on the time limit for which a society’s board of directors can be kept under supersession or suspension, and reservation of one seat for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes, and two seats for women on the board of every cooperative society, that is, every society that has members from these sections.

What was the legal infirmity in the Amendment?

- In a legal challenge to the validity of the 97th Amendment, the **Gujarat High Court struck down Part IXB in its entirety on two grounds.** First, the Amendment required not only a two-thirds majority in Parliament, which was obtained, but **also had to be ratified by 50% of the State legislatures.** This was because the Amendment impinged on a subject over which only the State legislatures had law-making powers. In the absence of such

ratification, the Part was declared unconstitutional.

- It also ruled that the Part **violated the basic structure of the Constitution in that it was in breach of federal principles.**

What was the Supreme Court's view?

- The Centre's defence was that the Amendment did not alter the entry in the State List on 'cooperative societies'. In fact, it specified that the State legislatures would enact the relevant laws based on a common framework.
- It argued that there was no need for ratification by the Assemblies, as no subject was shifted from the State List to the Central or Concurrent List. However, the Supreme Court rejected the argument. The Amendment had the **effect of limiting and circumscribing the scope and extent to which States could frame laws on cooperative societies.** This impacted on their legislative power and would therefore amount to a change that would **require ratification by the Assemblies.**
- **All three judges** on the Bench that heard the Union government's appeals **agreed with the Gujarat High Court that the ratification by the State legislatures was required for Part IXB, and in the absence of such ratification, the Part had to be struck down.**
- However, the majority judgement (2:1) declared the **Part inoperative only in respect of cooperative societies that came under the States.** It would be **valid as far as multi-State cooperative societies were concerned as Parliament had the power to regulate their functioning.**

What now survives in the 97th Amendment?

- The Amendment added the words **"or cooperative societies"** to **Article 19(1)(c)** of the Constitution to expand the fundamental right to form associations or unions to cover cooperative societies too.
- It also **added a 'Directive Principle' through Article 43B,** which says: "The State shall endeavour to promote voluntary formation, autonomous functioning, democratic control and professional management of cooperative societies."
- **These clauses remain undisturbed.**

- In line with the Supreme Court's judgment, **Part IXB dealing with cooperative societies will survive, but only with reference to multi-State societies.**

How does the ruling affect the Cooperation Ministry?

- The Ministry of Cooperation was formed recently, apparently with a view to giving a fillip to the cooperative movement and reforming the functioning of cooperative societies.
- Until now, the subject was dealt with by the **Agriculture Ministry.** It administered the **Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002.**
- The new Ministry will continue this work. For now, it will not be in a position to compel States to bring their cooperative laws in conformity with the Centre's vision.
- Regarding the fate of the constitutional framework for all cooperative societies in the country, the Centre has the option of re-enacting the Amendment with a two-thirds majority in Parliament and obtaining ratification by 50% of the State legislatures.

2) Inland Vessels Bill, 2021

Highlights of the Bill

- A total of 4,000 kilometres of inland waterways are operational in the country. The Bill will regulate safety, security and registration of inland vessels.
- A key feature of the Bill is a **unified law for the entire country,** instead of separate rules framed by the States.
- The **certificate of registration** granted under the proposed law will be deemed to be valid in all States and Union Territories, and there will be no need to seek separate permissions from the States
- The Bill provides for a **central database** for recording the details of vessel, vessel registration, crew on an electronic portal.
- It requires **all mechanically propelled vessels to be mandatorily registered.** All non-mechanically propelled vessels will also have to be enrolled at district, taluk or panchayat or village level.

What's in the news?

- The Lok Sabha has passed the Inland Vessels Bill 2021.

- The Bill seeks to incorporate unified law for the country, instead of separate rules framed by the States.

Related Information

Inland waterways of India

- India has an extensive network of inland waterways in the form of rivers, canals, backwaters and creeks. These long waterways provide a good mode of transport across the cities as well as towns, like backwaters of Kerala, Canals in Gujarat and few waterways in Goa, West Bengal and Assam.
- The total navigable length is 14,500 km, out of which about 5,200 km of the river and 4,000 km of canals can be used by mechanized crafts. Still these **inland waterways are underutilized** in India as compared to other countries in the world.
- Its operations are currently restricted to a few stretches in the Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly rivers, the Brahmaputra, the Barak river, the rivers in Goa, the backwaters in Kerala, inland waters in Mumbai and the deltaic regions of the Godavari - Krishna rivers.
- **Freight transportation** by waterways is highly under-utilized in India compared to other large countries and geographic areas like the United States, China and the European Union. The total cargo moved (in tonne kilometres) by the inland waterway was **just 0.1% of the total inland traffic in India**, compared to the 21% figure for the United States. Cargo transportation in an organised manner is confined to a few waterways in Goa, West Bengal, Assam and Kerala.
- Water transportation is receiving significant attention in recent times since **logistics cost in India is one of the highest among major countries** – it is 18% in India versus 8-10% in China and 10-12% in European Union.
- While inland waterways are recognised as a **fuel efficient, cost effective and environment friendly mode of transport**, it has received lesser investment as compared to roads and railways. Since inland waterways are lagging behind other modes of transport, the **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** is working on new projects for waterways and better water transportation in India.

1. IWAI came into existence on 27th October 1986 for development and regulation of inland waterways for shipping and navigation.
2. It is a **Statutory Body under the Ministry of Shipping**.
3. The Authority primarily undertakes projects for development and maintenance of Inland Water Transport (IWT) infrastructure on national waterways through grants received from the Ministry of Shipping.

National Waterways Act 2016

- As per constitutional provisions, only those waterways which are **declared as National Waterways** come under the purview of the **Central Government** while the rest of waterways remain in the purview of respective **State Governments**.
- The National Waterways Act 2016, has **declared 111 rivers or river stretches, creeks, estuaries in India as National Waterways** for the promotion of Inland waterways in the country.
- The National Waterways Act mandates the Central Government to regulate these waterways for systematic and orderly development of shipping and navigation activities.
- It intends to create large-scale, commercial shipping and navigation systems in all these 111 waterways. These are expected to **realise the potential of cargo and passenger traffic**, including tourism and cruise, offer **seamless connectivity at lower per-unit cost and make transportation more efficient**.
- Spread across the Eastern, Western, Southern and Central regions of the country, these waterways cover nearly 15000 kilometres across 24 states and two union territories.
- The project would generate a series of **forward and backward linkages** with prospects to penetrate deep into the economy. The **multiplier effect** of the investment and its linkages can result in a virtuous cycle of all-round growth.

3) 100-days campaign of Jal Shakti Ministry

Background

- Last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had appealed to all States and UTs, to **reach every school and anganwadi centre with tap water connection on priority basis.**
- To translate the vision of the Prime Minister, a **100-days campaign** was launched by Jal Shakti Ministry on 2nd October last year to bring awareness and a sense of urgency to provide clean drinking water to children across the country.
- The 100-day campaign aimed at providing potable piped water supply for drinking and cooking purposes as well as tap water for hand washing and in toilets in every school, anganwadi and ashramshala or residential tribal school.

Why in News?

- Jal Shakti Ministry has announced that the **tap water supply has reached 66 per cent schools and 60 per cent anganwadi centres in villages** across the country.
- When the 100-day campaign was launched, about 40% of schools and anganwadis had tap water access.
- In less than ten months, provision of tap water has been made in Six lakh 85 thousand schools, six lakh 80 thousand anganwadi centres and two lakh 36 thousand Gram Panchayats and Community Healthcare Centres in villages across India.
- The **provision of clean tap water supply has been made in all schools and anganwadi centres in nine states and one Union Territories.** These States and UT are Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- Due to unsafe water, poor sanitation and hygiene, children are susceptible to water-borne diseases like diarrhea, dysentery, cholera and typhoid.

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ENVIRONMENT

1) IUCN's Green Status of Species

Why in the news?

- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which is a global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it, is coming up with a new Global measure called **Green Status of Species**.
- It will provide information about the **ecological functionality of a species within its range**, and also how much a species has recovered due to conservation efforts.

- IUCN already has a **Red List of Threatened Species**. To know more about it, read at <https://officerspulse.com/kerala-to-update-red-list-of-animals-birds/>
- It will provide more clear picture of what's going on with a species and which will be **important for conservation planning** and also measuring and celebrating the impact of past conservation
- The IUCN Green Status will classify species into **nine recovery categories** that will use **historical population levels** to indicate if a species has been largely depleted from its range or if it is nearing recovery.



- Nine species recovery categories are: not evaluated, indeterminate, fully recovered, slightly depleted, moderately depleted, largely depleted, critically depleted, extinct in the wild and extinct.
- In a pilot study on 180 species, Fifty-nine percent of tested species were considered largely or critically depleted.
- The assessment framework will also **measure the impact of past conservation efforts**, species' reliance on conservation action, and how much a species could gain in the next 10 years due to conservation action. It also offers a long-term view of species' recovery potential over the next 100 years. The new framework can help incentivize conservation action.
- Less than 2% of the surveyed species had a conservation impact metric of zero, which indicates that conservation has, or will, play a role in improving or maintaining species status for the vast majority of these species.
- The IUCN Green Status of Species **will be integrated** into the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, which will then provide a fuller picture of species' conservation status including both their extinction risk and recovery progress.
- The IUCN Green Status will be officially launched online at the start of the IUCN World Conservation Congress, which will

take place in Marseille, France, from Sept. 3-11, 2021.

2) 'Earth Overshoot Day' has shifted back to July 29, says WWF

What is Earth Overshoot Day?

- Earth Overshoot Day marks the date when humanity's demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year.
- We maintain this deficit by rapidly using the stocks of ecological resources and accumulating waste, primarily carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.
- Earth Overshoot Day is hosted and calculated by **Global Footprint Network**, an international research organization that provides decision-makers with a menu of tools to help the human economy operate within Earth's ecological limits.

How is the date determined?

- To determine the date of Earth Overshoot Day for each year, Global Footprint Network calculates the number of days of that year that Earth's biocapacity requires to provide for humanity's Ecological Footprint.

- Ecological Footprint is the impact of human activities measured in terms of the area of biologically productive land and water required to produce the goods consumed and to assimilate the wastes generated. More simply, it is the amount of the environment necessary to produce the goods and services necessary to support a particular lifestyle.

- The remainder of the year corresponds to global overshoot.
- Earth Overshoot Day is computed by dividing the planet's biocapacity (the amount of ecological resources Earth is able to generate that year), by humanity's Ecological Footprint (humanity's demand for that year), and multiplying by 365, the number of days in a year:
- $(\text{Earth's Biocapacity} / \text{Humanity's Ecological Footprint}) \times 365 = \text{Earth Overshoot Day}$

- **Earth Overshoot Day for 2021 lands on July 29.**

Why in the news?

- The overshoot day in 2019 and 2020 were July 29 and August 22 respectively. The shift in 2020 was due to decrease in footprint as the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world.
- But in 2021 the date shifts back to July 29, because of a 6.6 per cent increase in the global carbon footprint in 2020. In 2021 it will be even worse as there would be a 43 per cent year-over-year increase in deforestation.
- It is crucial to focus on measures such as cutting down on food wastage, commercial technologies for buildings, industrial processes and electricity production and cutting down on transportation.

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ECONOMY

1) Index of Eight Core Industries

About ICI

- The monthly Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) is a **production volume index**.
- The objective of the ICI is to provide an advance indication on production performance of industries of 'core' nature. These industries are likely to impact on general economic activities as well as industrial activities.
- The Eight Core Industries- **Electricity, steel, refinery products, crude oil, coal, cement, natural gas and fertilizers**- comprise **40.27 per cent of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP)**.
- **Industry Weight (In percentage)**
 1. Petroleum & Refinery production - 28.04
 2. Electricity generation - 19.85
 3. Steel production - 17.92
 4. Coal production - 10.33
 5. Crude Oil production - 8.98
 6. Natural Gas production - 6.88
 7. Cement production - 5.37
 8. Fertilizers production - 2.63
- ICI is released by the **Office of Economic Advisor**, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industries. The base year of the ICI is **2011-12**.

Why in News?

- According to the latest official data, output at India's eight core sectors grew by 8.9% in June.

2) Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Bill 2021

About DICGC

- Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) is a **wholly owned subsidiary of the RBI**, created by an act of parliament in 1961.
- DICGC provides insurance cover on bank deposits. The idea behind the DICGC is to boost the faith of the public in the banking system, and provide protection against the loss of deposits to a significant extent.

- In 2020, the RBI increased the DICGC insurance cover on bank deposits from Rs 1 lakh to **Rs 5 lakh**.
- **Banks covered by Deposit Insurance Scheme:** All commercial banks, Local Area Banks, Regional Rural Banks and Co-operative Banks.
- Deposit insurance facility of DICGC is **not available to depositors of NBFCs**.
- The Rs 5-lakh deposit insurance cover addresses 98.3 per cent of all deposit accounts by number, and 50.9 per cent of deposits by value. Globally, deposit insurance coverage is only 80 per cent and it covers only 20-30 per cent of deposit value.

Why in News?

- In a bid to ensure timely support to depositors of stressed banks, the Union Cabinet has given its approval to the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Bill 2021, which provides funds up to **Rs 5 lakh to an account holder within 90 days in the event of a bank coming under the moratorium** imposed by the RBI.
- *In this context, moratorium is a temporary suspension of activity until future events warrant lifting of the suspension or related issues have been resolved.*
- Earlier, account holders had to wait for years till the liquidation or restructuring of a distressed lender to get their deposits that are insured against default.
- In addition to this, the Deposit Insurance premium normally paid by banks to the DICGC is being raised from 10 paise for every ₹100 deposit, to 12 paise and a limit of 15 paise has been imposed. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman said this was only an enabling provision and the determination of an increase in the premium payable would involve consultations with the RBI and require government approval.
- The Bill will be taken to Parliament in the ongoing session.

3) NPAs fell to ₹8.34 lakh cr.

What is NPA?

- A non performing asset (NPA) is a loan or advance for which the principal or interest payment remains overdue for a period of **more than 90 days**.
 - Banks classify NPAs further into Substandard, Doubtful and Loss assets.
1. **Substandard assets:** Assets which have remained NPA for a period less than or equal to 12 months.
 2. **Doubtful assets:** An asset would be classified as doubtful if it has remained in the substandard category for a period of 12 months.
 3. **Loss assets:** Loss asset is considered uncollectible and of such little value that its continuance as a bankable asset is not warranted, although there may be some salvage or recovery value.
- With respect to agriculture, a loan granted for short duration crops will be treated as NPA, if the instalment of principal or interest thereon remains overdue for **two crop seasons**.
 - A loan granted for long duration crops will be treated as NPA, if the instalment of principal or interest thereon remains overdue for **one crop season**.

Why in News?

- Non-performing assets (NPAs) or bad loans of Scheduled commercial banks have declined by ₹61,180 crore to ₹8.34 lakh crore at the end of March 31, 2021.
- Scheduled commercial banks were carrying NPAs worth ₹8.96 lakh crore on their balance sheet at the end of March 2020.

4) World Economic Outlook

What is it?

- The World Economic Outlook (WEO) is an **International Monetary Fund's** report that provides analysis and forecasts of economic developments and policies in its member countries.
- The report encapsulates the state of the global economy and highlights risks and uncertainty that threaten growth.
- It is usually published twice a year.

Why in News?

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has released its latest World Economic Outlook.

Highlights of the Report

- The IMF has cut its economic **growth forecast for India to 9.5% for the 2021-22 fiscal year** as the onset of a severe second COVID-19 wave cut into recovery momentum.
- This forecast for 2021-22 is lower than the 12.5% growth in GDP that IMF had projected in April before the second wave took a grip.
- **For 2022-23, IMF expects economic growth of 8.5%**, larger than the 6.9% it had projected in April.
- India's economy is gradually recovering from a **deep contraction in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2021 (7.3%)** and a subsequent severe second wave of COVID-19.
- The GDP, which shrank from \$2.87 trillion in 2019-20 to \$2.66 trillion in the following year, is estimated to reach around \$4 trillion in 2024-25.
- Overall, the **global economy is projected to grow 6 % in 2021 and 4.9 % in 2022**.

About IMF

- The International Monetary Fund was conceived in 1944 at the **United Nations Bretton Woods Conference** in New Hampshire, United States.
- The IMF and the World Bank are called **Bretton Woods twins**.
- The IMF is a permanent observer at the UN.
- It is an organization of 190 countries. **India is a founder member** of the IMF.
- The mandate of the IMF as follows:
 1. To promote international monetary cooperation;
 2. To facilitate the expansion and balanced growth of international trade;
 3. To promote exchange stability;
 4. To assist member countries in correcting maladjustments in their balance of payments without resorting to measures destructive of national or international prosperity;
 5. To assist in the elimination of foreign exchange restrictions which hamper the growth of world trade.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1) NATO

About NATO

- Formed in **1949** with the signing of the **Washington Treaty**, NATO is a **security alliance of 30 countries from North America and Europe**.
- Established in the Cold War as a bulwark against Soviet aggression, NATO's fundamental goal is to safeguard the Allies' freedom and security by political and military means.
- **Article 5 of the Washington Treaty** states that an attack against one Ally is an attack against all — is at the core of the Alliance, a promise of collective defence.
- **Article 4** of the treaty ensures consultations among Allies on security matters of common interest, which have expanded from a narrowly defined Soviet threat to the critical mission in Afghanistan, as well as new threats to security such as cyber attacks, and global threats such as terrorism and piracy that affect the Alliance and its global network of partners.
- A "**NATO decision**" is the expression of the collective will of all 30 member countries since all decisions are taken by **consensus**.
- At present, NATO has **30 members**. In 1949, there were **12 founding members** of the Alliance: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States. The other member countries are: Greece and Turkey (1952), Germany (1955), Spain (1982), the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland (1999), Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (2004), Albania and Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2017) and North Macedonia (2020).
- NATO's Headquarters are located in **Brussels, Belgium**.

Why in News?

- NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg reiterated calls for a "negotiated settlement" with the Taliban in Afghanistan, admitting the country faced a deeply challenging security situation as foreign troops leave.

- He said that NATO will continue to support Afghanistan, including with funding; civilian presence; and out-of-country training.
- Since early May, violence has surged as the Taliban launched a sweeping assault just days after US-led NATO forces began a withdrawal which is now almost complete.
- The deadly advance has seen the insurgents capture scores of districts, border crossings and encircle several provincial capitals.
- The US descended on Afghanistan and its Taliban government in 2001 in the wake of the 9/11 attacks by Al-Qaeda, which had sought sanctuary in the country.
- There are serious fears that the Taliban's advance could see the collapse of the country and unravel the tenuous gains made in 20 years of costly involvement in the country.

2) South China Sea dispute

Background

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



Importance of the South China Sea

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

means that substantial revenue can also be generated through **fishing** alone.

PCA award

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

Why in News?

- Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin said that China's expansive claims in the South China Sea have no basis in international law.
- Mr. Austin criticised China's actions in the disputed sea, where Beijing has overlapping territorial claims with several Southeast Asian states.
- **China claims almost all of the resource-rich sea**, through which trillions of dollars in shipping trade passes annually, with

competing claims from Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

- Beijing has been accused of deploying a range of military hardware, including anti-ship missiles and surface-to-air missiles there, and ignored a 2016 PCA decision that declared its historical claim over most of the waters to be without basis.

Related information

About UNCLOS

- The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), also known as the **Law of the Sea Treaty**, is an international treaty which was adopted and signed in 1982. The Convention was formed to ensure freedom of shipping navigation at the sea.

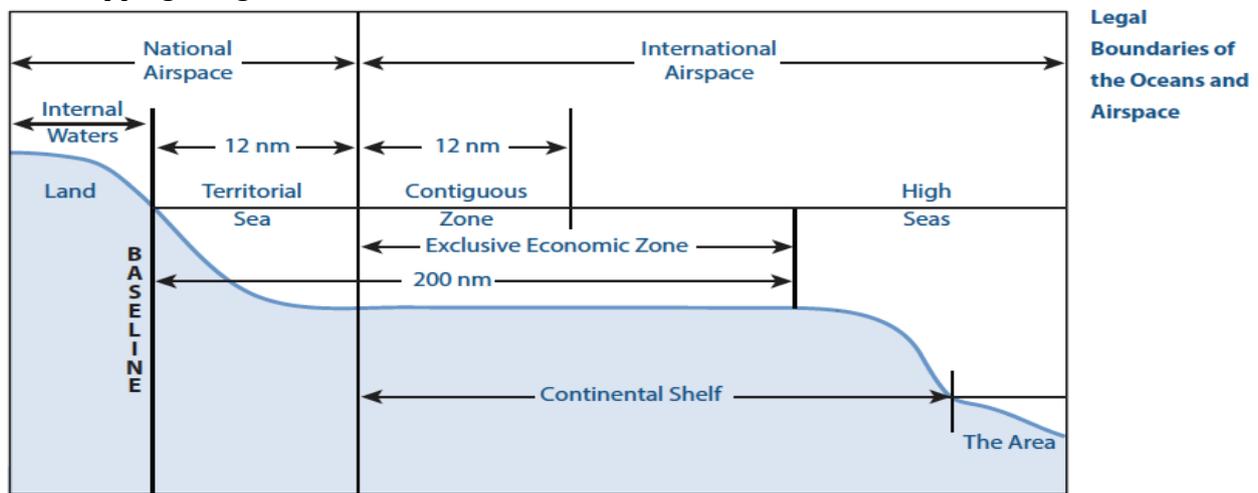
- The Convention has created three new institutions on the international scene :

1. **the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea,**
2. **the International Seabed Authority,**
3. **the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.**

- **India** is party to UNCLOS.

- UNCLOS classifies marine areas into five zones. They are:

1. Territorial sea
2. Contiguous zone
3. Exclusive economic zone
4. Continental shelf
5. High Sea



Territorial sea

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

Contiguous Zone

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

contiguous zone threatens regulations in the territorial sea.

Exclusive economic zone

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

Continental Shelf

- The continental shelf can be defined as the area whose outer limit **shall not exceed 350 nautical miles from the baseline or shall not exceed 100 nautical miles from the 2500 meters isobath**.

- *Isobath is a line connecting points of equal underwater depth.*
- The coastal state has exclusive rights for exploring and exploiting its natural resources in this area. The state also has the exclusive rights to authorize and regulate drilling on the shelf for all purposes.

High Seas

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

About PCA

- The Permanent Court of Arbitration was established by the **Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes**, concluded at The Hague in 1899 during the first Hague Peace Conference.
- The 1899 Convention was revised at the second Hague Peace Conference in 1907.

- The PCA is not a court in the traditional sense but provides services of an **arbitral tribunal** to resolve disputes that arise out of international agreements between member states, international organizations or private parties.
- The cases span a range of legal issues involving territorial and maritime boundaries, sovereignty, human rights, international investment, and international and regional trade.
- The PCA has **no sitting judges: the parties themselves select the arbitrators.**
- The PCA is an official United Nations Observer. It is headquartered in The Hague, Netherlands.

Members

- The PCA has more than 120 Contracting Parties which have acceded to one or both of the PCA's founding conventions (1899 and 1907 Conventions).
- **India is a party** to the PCA according to the convention of 1899.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1) Rafale

About Rafale

- The **Rafale is a twin-jet fighter** that can operate from either an aircraft carrier or a land base.
- The Rafale is a **multi-mission fighter** that can perform air dominance, aerial reconnaissance, ground support, in-depth strike, anti-ship strike, and nuclear deterrence tasks.
- Rafale fighters are "omnirole" fighters that can perform numerous mission types at the same time.
- The Rafale jets will constitute a **significant addition to India's MMCA** (Medium Multi-role Combat Aircraft) fleet.
- The most significant benefit of the Rafale is its **ability to deliver nuclear missiles**.

Why in News?

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) operationalised its second Rafale fighter squadron by formally inducting jets into the No. 101 Squadron at Air Force Station Hasimara in West Bengal.

2) Chandrayaan-3

Why in News:

- The government announced that Chandrayaan-3 mission is likely to be launched in late 2022.

Details of the mission

- The Chandrayaan-2 mission, launched in 2019, was scheduled to be an effort aimed at landing a rover on the Lunar South Pole.

- It was sent aboard the country's most powerful geosynchronous launch vehicle, the GSLV-Mk 3.
- However, the lander Vikram, instead of a controlled landing, ended up crash-landing and obstructed the effort at having the rover Pragyaan successfully travel on the surface of the moon.
- The Chandrayaan-3 is the successor to the Chandrayaan-2 mission and it will likely attempt another soft-landing on the lunar surface.
- It also involves various processes, including finalisation of configuration, subsystems realisation, integration, spacecraft level detailed testing and a number of special tests to evaluate the system performance on earth.

Additional Information

Significance of Chandrayaan 2

- Chandrayaan 2's Terrain Mapping Camera took photos of nearly 4 million square kilometres of the Moon's surface.
- Chandrayaan 2's Dual frequency Synthetic Aperture Radar(DFSAR) found lunar craters that may contain water.
- Chandrayaan-2 Large Area Soft X-ray Spectrometer (CLASS) found aluminium and calcium on the far side of the Moon.

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DEFENCE

1) Defence Industrial Corridors

Why in News?

- Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh have acquired land for the Defence Industrial Corridors (DIC).

What are DIC's?

- A defence corridor is a channel or route along which **domestic defence equipment manufactured** by the **public sector, the private sector, and MSMEs** is aligned to improve the operational capability of the defence forces.
- The DICs are aimed at **providing fillip to the defence manufacturing ecosystem**.
- These defence corridors will **aid** in the development of a **well-planned and efficient industrial base**, resulting in **greater defence production** in the country.

The need for DIC's

- **India is the world's second largest arms importer**, accounting for 9.5% of the total global arms imports during 2016-2020, according to data issued by the Stockholm

International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

- The corridors run parallel to existing defence public-sector firms, with the goal of ensuring **communication between different defence industrial units**.
- The defence industry is not only **one of the 25 sectors identified under the Make in India programme**, but it is also **one of the 10 'Champion Sectors'** that have been identified for special attention due to their "potential to become global champions, drive double-digit manufacturing growth, and generate significant employment opportunities."
- **Dhirendra Singh committee report (2015)** stated that "India currently lacks a structured framework and a robust system to prepare its human resources to address all issues related to building and maintaining defence systems."

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ART AND DEFENCE

1) Ashadha Purnima - Dhamma Chakra Day Programme

Why in News?

- The President of India recently said that the application of Buddhist values and principles in addressing issues of global concern will help in healing the world and making it a better place, while addressing the annual Asadha Poornima - Dharma Chakra Day.
- The Prime Minister said Lord Buddha's teachings have become all the more relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic and that India had shown how it could face adversities by following his path.
- He added that Lord Buddha is all the more **relevant in today's times of corona pandemic**. India has shown how we can face even the most difficult challenges by following the path of the Buddha.
- Today all the countries are **moving in solidarity** and becoming each other's strength by following the teachings of the Buddha.

Ashadha Purnima

- The auspicious day of Ashadha Purnima which falls on the first full moon day of the month of Ashadha as per Indian sun calendar is also known as Esala Poya in Sri Lanka and Asanha Bucha in Thailand. The day is also observed as Guru Poornima by

both Buddhists and Hindus as a day to mark reverence to their Gurus.

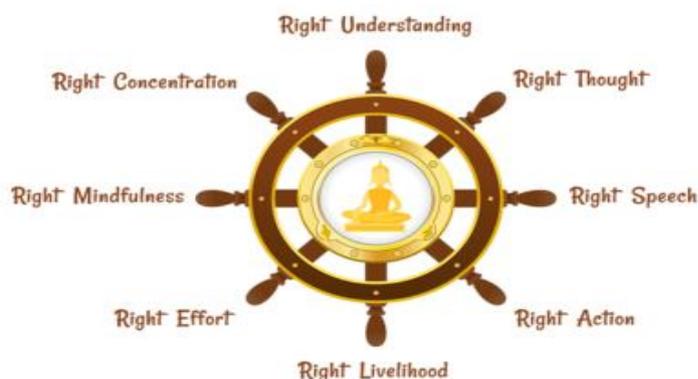
- It is the **second most sacred day for Buddhists after the Buddha Poornima or Vesak**.
- The **day marks Buddha's first teaching after attaining Enlightenment to the first five ascetic disciples (pañcavargika)** on the full-moon day of Asadha at 'Deer Park', Rīṣipātana in the current day Sarnath, near Varanasi, India.
- This teaching of Dhamma Cakka-PavattanaSutta (Pali) or **Dharma chakra Pravartana Sutra** (Sanskrit) is also known as the **First Turning of Wheels of Dharma** and **comprised of the Four Noble Truths and Noble Eightfold Path**.

Buddhism

The Four Noble Truths:

1. Human life is full of suffering and sorrow
2. Suffering and sorrow are caused by people's greedy desire for power, pleasure and possessions
3. Suffering and sorrow will end when people overcome their greed = Nirvana = enlightenment
4. People can overcome their greed and uncontrolled desires by adopting the Middle Way or Eightfold Path

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH



The Division of Wisdom

- 1.) Right Understanding
- 2.) Right Thought

The Division of Ethical Conduct

- 3.) Right Speech
- 4.) Right Action
- 5.) Right Livelihood

The Division of Mental Discipline

- 6.) Right Effort
- 7.) Right Mindfulness
- 8.) Right Concentration

How Budha's teachings are relevant today

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- The term "**Buddha**" refers to **someone who has gained enlightenment** and experienced a sense of awakening in order to create a peaceful, harmonious, and just society. Buddha's guarantee that suffering would cease; his emphasis on universal compassion and nonviolence; and his exhortation to strive for morality and moderation in all parts of life. Buddhism's worldwide appeal stems from its logical, reasonable, and straightforward solutions to the fundamental challenges that humans encounter
- The ongoing COVID pandemic demonstrates that the modern world's complexities bring with them greater uncertainties and crises.
- **Bioterrorism, climate change, global warming, radicalism, extremism,** and other challenges are unsettling humanity's conscience. In these troubled times, the Buddha's approach of introspection and awakening shows the way.
- **Buddha's "Atma Dipo Bhava" instruction** - that each man can be a light unto himself, a rescuer of himself via his efforts — is likely to change the individualist mindset.
- The Buddhist principles of moral behaviour, wisdom, compassion, and the decrease of trishna (greed) provide a foundation for a new world order. **Violence and conflict are reduced** on this planet, and progress occurs without depleting natural resources.
- Adopting **Buddha's "middle way"** of avoiding extreme opinions leads to the **avoidance of conflict, the reconciliation of differing viewpoints,** and the achievement of **consensus.**
- His **eight-fold path** has influenced **not only the spiritual landscape but also ethical and sustainable social, political, and commercial behaviours** around the world.
- His ideas are reflected in the **widely accepted Gandhian ethos,** and India is at the forefront of the **global fight against the corona pandemic.**
- **India** has established itself as the **world's pharmacy,** providing medical assistance to countries in need.
- Because peace and development are intertwined, the Buddha's prism can serve as a **guiding light** for all stakeholders, from **local institutions to global leaders,** to work together to **promote dialogue, harmony, and justice** based on compassion and wisdom.
- Buddha's teachings deepen the **modern relevance of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** by reinforcing our commitment to take decisive action to end disputes and bloodshed.

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PIB ANALYSIS

1) Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana

About:

- The “Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana” (MKSP), a sub component of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM), was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development in 2011.
- *DAY-NRLM was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development which aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms for the rural poor enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services.*
- MKSP seeks to **improve the present status of women in Agriculture**, and to enhance the opportunities available to empower her.
- MKSP recognizes the identity of “Mahila” (women) as “Kisan” (farmer) and strives to build the capacity of women in the domain of agro-ecologically sustainable practices.
- The primary objective of MKSP is to **empower women by making systematic investments to enhance their participation and create sustainable livelihood for rural women.**

Specific objectives of MKSP

- To enhance the **productive participation of women in agriculture**
- To create **sustainable agricultural livelihood opportunities** for women in agriculture
- To improve the **skills and capabilities of women** in agriculture to support farm and non-farm-based activities
- To ensure **food and nutrition security** at the household and the community level
- To enable women to have **better access** to inputs and services of the government and other agencies
- To enhance the **managerial capacities of women** in agriculture for better management of biodiversity
- To improve the capacities of women in agriculture to access the resources of other

institutions and schemes within a convergence framework.

Funding

- The **Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)** provides **funding support of up to 75% (90% for North East and hill states)** to the project submitted by the State Governments under MKSP. Balance is to be contributed by the **respective state governments** or any other donor agencies, national and international.

Why in the news?

- This information was given in a written reply by the Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare in Rajya Sabha recently.

2) I-STEM Initiative

About

- The **Indian Science Technology and Engineering Facilities Map (I-STEM)** is an initiative of **Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser** to the Govt. of India (PSA, GOI) launched in 2020.
- It is the national web portal for **sharing Research and Development facilities.**
- I-STEM portal facilitates researchers to access slots for the use of equipment, as well as to share the details of the outcomes, such as, patents, publications and technologies.

Goal

- The goal of I-STEM is to strengthen the R&D ecosystem of the country by
 1. **Connecting researchers with resources**
 2. **Promoting technologies** and scientific equipment development indigenously, and
 3. **Providing necessary supplies and support** to researchers by enabling them an access to existing publicly funded R&D facilities in the country through the I-STEM web portal.

Why in the news?

- The I-STEM project has been accorded an **extension for five years** until 2026 and enters its second phase with added features.

News in detail

- In the **first phase**, the portal is listed with more than 20,000 pieces of equipment from

1050 institutions across the country and has more than 20,000 Indian researchers.

- **Under Phase II**, the portal will **host indigenous technology products** listed through a digital catalogue.
- The portal will also provide a platform for the various **City Knowledge and Innovation Clusters** supported by the Office of PSA to enhance effective use of R&D infrastructure through leveraging collaboration and partnership built on a shared Science, Technology and Innovation ecosystem.
- It will also host and **provide access to selected R&D software** required to undertake research projects by students and scientists.
- The I-STEM portal in its new phase will be designed as a dynamic digital platform that will provide a **boost to research and innovation especially for 2 tier and 3 tier cities** and also for the emerging start-up ecosystem.

3) Meghdoot app

About

- Meghdoot is a simple and easy to use **mobile application which provides crop advisories to the farmers based on the weather information.**
- The Meghdoot app is a **joint initiative of India Meteorological Department (IMD), Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).**
- It provides forecasts relating to **temperature, rainfall, humidity, and wind speed and direction**, which play critical roles in agricultural operations and advisories to the farmers on how to take care of their crops and livestock.
- Advisories are available in both **English and local languages.**
- An interested user has to download the 'Meghdoot' application and sign in using their mobile number and preferred language.
- The app provides **district-wise advisories** on crop and livestock management issued by Agro Met Field Units (AMFU) **every Tuesday and Friday** based on the past and forecasted weather information.

- It will help the farmers to take **weather-sensitive decisions** like sowing of crops, pesticide and fertilizer application, irrigation scheduling and vaccination of animals.

Why in the news?

- This information was given by the Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare recently.

4) Conservation Assured|Tiger Standards (CA|TS)

About CA|TS

- CA|TS was developed by **tiger and protected area experts** and was officially launched in **2013.**
- It has been agreed upon as an accreditation tool by the **global coalition of Tiger Range Countries (TRCs).**
- It sets **minimum standards for effective management of target species** and encourages assessment of these standards in relevant conservation areas.
- CA|TS is a **set of criteria** which allows tiger sites to check if their management will lead to **successful tiger conservation.**
- CA|TS is organised under **seven pillars and 17 elements of critical management activity.**
- CA|TS is an **important part of Tx2**, the **global goal to double wild tiger numbers by the year 2022.**
- CA|TS is being implemented **across 125 sites in seven tiger range countries** and India has the **highest 94 sites**, out of which assessment was completed for 20 tiger reserves this year.

Why in the news?

- Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav announced recently that **14 tiger reserves in India have received accreditation of the Global Conservation Assured Tiger Standards (CA|TS).**
- The 14 tiger reserves, which have been accredited, are
 1. Manas, Kaziranga and Orang in **Assam**
 2. Satpura, Kanha and Panna in **Madhya Pradesh**
 3. Pench in **Maharashtra**
 4. Valmiki Tiger Reserve in **Bihar**
 5. Dudhwa in **Uttar Pradesh**
 6. Sunderbans in **West Bengal**

7. Parambikulam in **Kerala**
8. Bandipur Tiger Reserve in **Karnataka**
9. Mudumalai and Anamalai Tiger Reserves in **Tamil Nadu**.

5) Affordable Rental Housing Complexes scheme

About ARHC

- The **Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs** (MoHUA) has initiated an Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs) for urban migrants/poor as a **sub-scheme under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)**.
- *The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Programme was launched by the MoHUA which envisions Housing for All by 2022, when the Nation completes 75 years of its Independence.*
- The scheme was launched on 31st July 2020 as a part of the government's economic package to address the Covid-19 crisis. The scheme is in line with the vision of AtmaNirbhar Bharat.

Target beneficiaries

- A large part of the workforce in manufacturing industries, service providers in hospitality, health, domestic/commercial establishments, and construction or other sectors, labourers, students etc. **who come from rural areas or small towns seeking better opportunities** will be the target beneficiary under ARHCs.

Aims and objectives of ARHC

- To **address the vision of 'AtmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyan'** significantly by **creating a sustainable ecosystem** of affordable rental housing solutions for urban migrants/poor.
- To **achieve the overall objective of "Housing for All"** encompassing the need for affordable rental housing for urban migrants/poor. ARHCs will provide them dignified living with necessary civic amenities near their place of work.
- To create a **conducive environment by incentivizing Public/Private Entities** to leverage investment for creating affordable rental housing stock to take care of their own requirements for workforce and also cater to neighbouring areas, if they have available vacant land.

Features of the scheme

- **Existing vacant government funded housing complexes** will be converted into ARHCs through **Concession Agreements for 25 years**.
- Concessionaire will make the **complexes livable** by repair/retrofit and maintenance of rooms and filling up infrastructure gaps like water, sewer/ septage, sanitation, road etc.
- States/UTs will select concessionaires through **transparent bidding**.
- Complexes will **revert to Urban Local Bodies** after 25 years to restart the next cycle like earlier or run on their own.
- **Special incentives** like use permission, concessional **loan at priority sector lending rate**, tax reliefs at par with affordable housing etc. will be offered to private/ public entities to develop ARHCs on their own available vacant land for 25 years.

Why in the news?

- This information was given by the Minister of State in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in the Lok Sabha recently.

6) SAANS Campaign

What is Pneumonia?

- Pneumonia is an infection that **inflames the air sacs in one or both lungs**.
- The air sacs may fill with fluid or pus, causing cough with phlegm or pus, fever, chills, and difficulty breathing.
- A variety of organisms, including **bacteria, viruses and fungi**, can cause pneumonia.
- Pneumonia can range in seriousness from mild to life-threatening.
- It is most serious for infants and young children, people older than age 65, and people with health problems or weakened immune systems.
- The germs that cause pneumonia are **contagious**. Both **viral and bacterial pneumonia** can spread to others through inhalation of airborne droplets from a sneeze or cough. One can contract fungal pneumonia from the environment. However, it doesn't spread from person to person.
- **Vaccines** are available to prevent some types of pneumonia and the flu.

Background

- As per Sample Registration System Report (2010-13) of Registrar General of India, **Pneumonia contributes 16.9% of infant deaths and it is the 2nd highest cause of infant mortality.**
- As per **Health Management Information System (HMIS)** data, **under-five mortality rate in the country is 37 per 1000 live births, of which 5.3 deaths are caused due to pneumonia.**
- The government aims to achieve **a target of reducing pneumonia deaths among children to less than three per 1,000 live births by 2025.**

SAANS Campaign

- SAANS stands for **“Social Awareness and Actions to Neutralize Pneumonia Successfully”**. It is an initiative launched in 2019 in order to accelerate actions for reducing deaths due to childhood Pneumonia.
- The aim is to mobilise people to **protect children from pneumonia**, and train health personnel and other stakeholders to **provide prioritised treatment** to control the disease.
- The SAANS initiative encompasses **three pronged strategies**
- **Guidelines** on treatment and management of childhood Pneumonia including introduction of **use of Amoxicillin by Auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM).**
- **Capacity building of service providers** for identification and standardized management of Pneumonia.
- **Communication campaign** to ensure greater awareness of childhood Pneumonia among families and parents.

Why in the news?

- The Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare provided details about the SAANS campaign recently.

7) Shell Company

About:

- In India, there is **no clear definition** of what constitutes a shell company in either **Companies Act, 2013 or in any other Act.**
- It normally refers to a company **without active business operation** or significant assets, which in some cases are used for illegal purposes such as **tax evasion, money laundering, obscuring ownership, benami properties** etc.
- These companies can be **legal or illegal depending on a country's law.**
- In India, Shell companies come under the radar once they are found eligible to be prosecuted under any one of these three laws:

1. Benami Transaction (Prohibition) Amendment Act 2016

2. The Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2002

3. The Companies Act, 2013

- Under Section 248 of the Companies Act: **Registrar of Companies under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs** has powers to **remove name** of a company from register of companies where
 1. A company fails to commence its business within **one year** of its incorporation or
 2. The subscribers to the memorandum have failed to pay their **subscription within a period of 180 days** or
 3. A company is not carrying on any business or operation for a period of **two years.**

Why in the news?

- Government identified 2,38,223 companies as shell companies between 2018-2021.

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News in Depth

AIR NEWS

1) Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme

About PMEGP

- Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) is a central sector scheme administered by the **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises** since 2008-09.
- It is a major **credit-linked subsidy programme** aimed at **assisting first generation entrepreneurs for setting up micro enterprises** in the **non-farm sector** by helping traditional artisans and unemployed youth.
- At the national level, the Scheme is being implemented by **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)**, a

statutory organization under the administrative control of the Ministry of MSME, as the single nodal agency.

- At the State level, the Scheme will be implemented through State KVIC Directorates, State Khadi and Village Industries Boards (KVIBs) and District Industries Centres (DICs) and banks.
- Under the scheme, loans are being provided by all Public Sector Banks, selected Private Sector Banks and Co-operative Banks with **margin money subsidy** (refers to the amount that the government contributes to beneficiaries availing PMEGP loan) being given by the Ministry of MSME through KVIC.

Categories of beneficiaries under PMEGP	Beneficiary's own contribution (of project cost)	Rate of Subsidy	
		Urban	Rural
General Category	10%	15%	25%
Special Category (including SC/ST/OBC /Minorities/ Women, Ex-Servicemen, Physically handicapped, NER, Hill, and Border areas etc)	5%	25%	35%

Scope

- The scheme is applicable to all viable projects in **rural as well as urban areas**, under the Micro enterprises sector.
- The maximum cost of the project admissible under the manufacturing sector is **Rs.25 lakhs** and the business/services sector is **Rs.10 lakhs**.
- Only one person from a family** is eligible for obtaining financial assistance under the scheme.

- Assistance under the Scheme is available **only for new projects**.

Eligible Entrepreneurs / Borrowers

- Any individual, above 18 years of age
- The beneficiaries should have passed at least VIII standard, for setting up of project costing above Rs.10 lacs in the Manufacturing Sector and above Rs. 5 lacs in the business /Service Sector,
- Self Help Groups

- Institutions registered under Societies Registration Act, 1860
- Production Co-operative Societies
- Charitable Trusts

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises conducted an awareness programme of PMEGP.

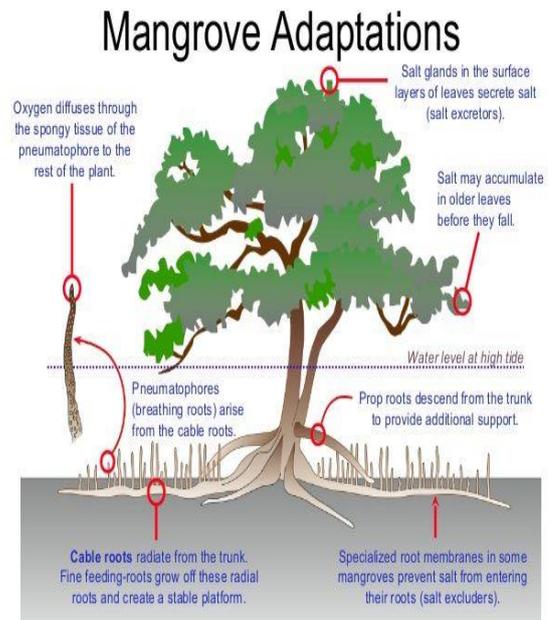
2) World Mangrove Day

What is Mangrove?

- Mangrove swamps are coastal wetlands found in **tropical and subtropical regions**.
- Mangroves belong primarily to the families **Rhizophoraceae, Acanthaceae, Lythraceae, Combretaceae, and Arecaceae**.
- They are characterized by **halophytic** (salt loving) trees, shrubs and other plants growing in **brackish to saline tidal waters**.
- These wetlands are often found in **estuaries**, where fresh water meets salt water.

Adaptation mechanisms

- Many mangroves characteristically have **prop roots** descending from the trunk and branches, providing a stable support system in the submerged conditions.
- Many mangrove species survive by **filtering** out as much as 90 percent of the salt found in seawater as it enters their roots. Some species excrete salt through glands in their leaves.
- Some mangroves have pencil-like roots called **pneumatophores** that grow out from the water surface. Pneumatophores facilitate the aeration necessary for root respiration in mangroves.
- Mangroves, like desert plants, store fresh water in thick **succulent leaves**. A **waxy coating** on the leaves seals in water and minimises evaporation.
- **Mangroves are viviparous**, their seeds germinate while still attached to the parent tree. Once germinated, the seedling grows into a propagule. The mature propagule then drops into the water and gets transported to a different spot, eventually taking root in a solid ground.



Significance of mangroves

- A **wide diversity of plants and animals** are found in mangrove swamps. Since these estuarine swamps are constantly replenished with nutrients transported by fresh water runoff from the land and flushed by the ebb and flow of the tides, they support a bursting population of bacteria and other decomposers and filter feeders.
- Because mangroves create dense foliage and close proximity of trees, they **protect shorelines from damaging winds and waves**. A series of studies in the early 2000s discovered that mangroves with an average height of 6-10 metres could shorten a cyclone's waves by 60%.
- Their protective role has been widely recognized especially after the devastating **Tsunami of 2004**.
- Mangrove forests **stabilize the coastline**, and help **prevent erosion** by stabilising sediments with their tangled root systems.
- Mangroves also have a **big impact on climate**. Mangroves are powerhouses when it comes to carbon storage. Studies indicate that mangroves can **sequester greater amounts of carbon** than other trees in the peat soil beneath. They store this carbon for thousands of years.
- The intricate root system of mangroves also makes these forests attractive to fish and other organisms seeking food and shelter from predators.

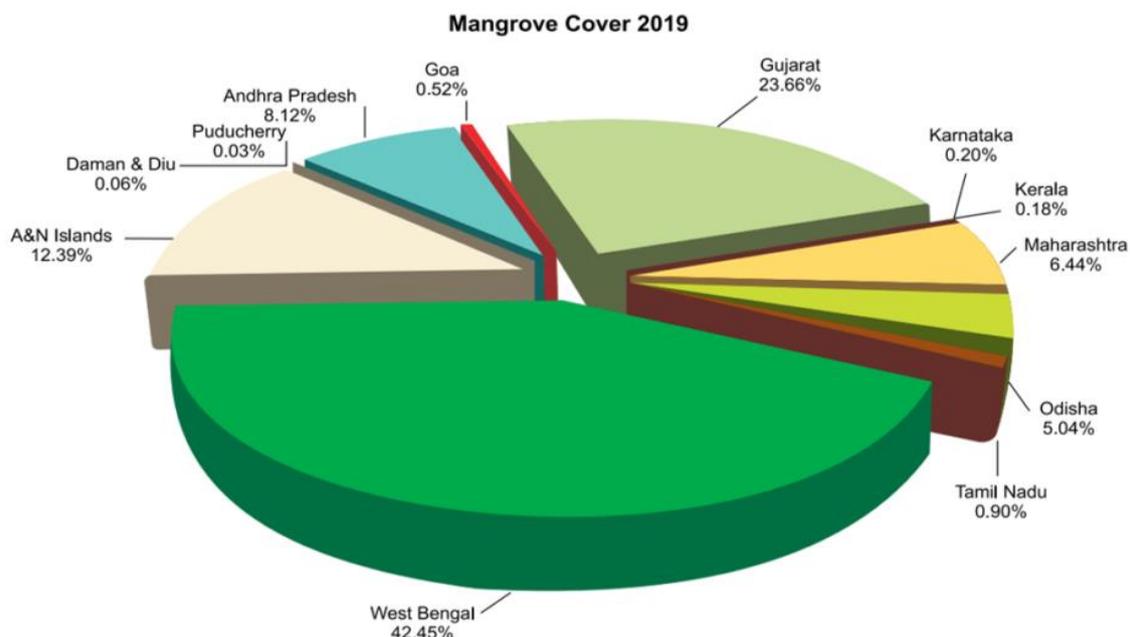
- Many people living in and around mangroves **depend on them for their livelihood**. The trees are a source of wood for construction and fuel. The ecosystem provides local fishermen with a rich supply of fish, crabs and shellfish. The ecosystem also supports tourism.

Where are mangrove ecosystems found?

- Mangroves can be found in more than 120 countries and territories in the tropical and subtropical regions of the world. The **largest extent of mangroves is found in Asia (42%)** followed by Africa (20%), North and Central America (15%), Oceania (12%) and South America (11%).

- In India, the **deltas of the Ganges, Mahanadi, Krishna, Godavari, and the Cauvery rivers** contain mangrove forests.
- The **Sundarbans in West Bengal is the largest mangrove region in the world** and a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**. It spans from the Hooghly River in West Bengal to the Baleswar River in Bangladesh.
- **Gulf of Kachchh** harbours one of the major mangrove formations of India. **Pichavaram in Tamil Nadu** has a vast expanse of water covered with mangrove forests. It is home to many aquatic bird species.
- The **backwaters in Kerala** also have a high density of mangrove forest.

FIGURE 3.1 Pie Chart showing Mangrove Cover in different States & UTs



What are the threats to mangroves?

- Scientists estimate that **at least one third of all mangrove forests has been lost during the last few decades**. Coastal development, including construction of shrimp farms, hotels, and other structures, is the primary threat to mangroves.
- Mangrove forests are cleared to make room for agricultural land and human settlements.
- Mangrove trees are used for firewood, construction wood, charcoal production, and animal fodder. In some parts of the world, there has been overharvesting which is no longer sustainable.

- Overfishing, pollution, and rising sea levels are the other threats to mangrove forests and their ecosystem.

Why in the news?

- World Mangrove Day was celebrated on July 26.
- Each year the day is celebrated to raise awareness of the importance of mangrove ecosystems as a unique, special and vulnerable ecosystem and to promote solutions for their sustainable management, conservation and uses.
- The International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem had been adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 2015.

3) AIM: Fostering Innovation

Atal Innovation Mission

- The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is a flagship initiative set up by the **NITI Aayog** to **promote innovation and entrepreneurship** across the length and breadth of the country.
- AIM's objective is to develop new programmes and policies for fostering innovation in different sectors of the economy, provide platform and collaboration opportunities for different stakeholders, create awareness and create an umbrella structure to oversee the innovation ecosystem of the country.

Initiatives under Atal Innovation Mission

Atal Tinkering Labs - at School Level

- AIM has launched the establishment of thousands of Atal Tinkering Labs enabling students from **grade 6 to grade 12** to have access to and tinker with innovative tools and technologies like 3D printers, robotics, miniaturised electronics do-it-yourself kits, thus stimulating a problem solving innovative mindset to solve problems in the community they are in.
- Some activities related to ATL Operational Excellence, Proactive Promotion of Innovation & Thought Leadership, Collaborations & Partnerships and New Initiatives by AIM:
 1. **ATL Gandhian Challenge** - launched in all schools along with UNICEF.
 2. **India Stamp Creativity challenge** - launched with UNICEF and India Post.
 3. **PM India Innovative Learning DHRUV Program** - AIM invited as key partner by MHRD.
- **Atal Incubators at Universities, Institutions, Industry Level**
- To promote creation of a supporting ecosystem for start-ups and entrepreneurs, AIM has been establishing world-class incubators called Atal Incubation Centres (AICs) in universities, Institutions, corporates, etc. that would foster innovative start-ups and become scalable and sustainable enterprises.
- **Atal Community Innovation Centres - Serving Unserved and Under-Served Regions of India**
- To promote the benefits of technology led innovation to the unserved/ underserved

regions of India including Tier 2, Tier 3 cities, aspirational districts, tribal, hilly and coastal areas, AIM is setting up Atal Community Innovation Centres (ACICs) with a unique partnership driven model wherein AIM would **grant up to Rs. 2.5 crore** to an ACIC subject to a partner proving equal or greater matching funding.

Atal New India Challenges - Product and Service Innovations with National Impact

- To create product and service innovations having national socio-economic impact, AIM has launched over 24 Atal New India Challenges in partnership with five different ministries and departments of the central government.

Applied Research and Innovation for Small Enterprises (ARISE)

- To promote innovation in a phased manner in the MSME/Start-up sector AIM will be launching ARISE along with partner Ministries so that great research ideas are converted to viable innovative prototypes followed by product development and commercial deployment.
- **Mentorship and Partnerships - with Public, Private sector, NGOs, Academia, Institutions**
- To enable all the initiatives to succeed, AIM has launched the "**Mentor India - The Mentors of Change**" programme, in collaboration with the public sector, corporates and institutions, to support all the initiatives of the mission.

Why in News?

- Atal Innovation Mission has successfully completed two-month-long **ATL Tinkerpreneur Summer Bootcamp**.
- The whole bootcamp was designed to instil an innovative mindset as well as to help students go from an idea to a venture in a short time, by trying, failing and trying again.
- Designed for high school students, 'ATL Tinkerpreneur' saw a record-breaking participation of over 9,000 participants across 32 states and 298 districts. It included over 4,000 girl participants.

4) Ayushman Bharat

About the scheme

- Ayushman Bharat is a flagship scheme of Government of India launched to achieve the vision of **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)**. It aims to undertake path breaking interventions to holistically address the healthcare system at the primary, secondary and tertiary level, by adopting a continuum of care approach.
- It is an umbrella of two major health initiatives, namely **Health and Wellness Centres** and **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)**.

Health and Wellness Centres

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

Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana

- It is one significant step towards achievement of **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** and **Sustainable Development Goal - 3** (SDG3: "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages").
- AB-PMJAY will provide financial protection to **10.74 crore** poor, deprived rural families and identified occupational categories of urban workers' families as per the latest **Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data** (approx. 50 crore beneficiaries) that form the bottom 40% of the Indian population. It will offer a benefit cover of **Rs. 5,00,000 per family per year**.
- The benefits of Rs. 5,00,000 are on a **family floater basis** which means that it can be used by one or all members of the family.
- This cover will take care of **almost all secondary care and most of tertiary care procedures**.

- To ensure that nobody is left out (especially women, children and elderly) there will be **no cap on family size and age** in the scheme.
- The benefit cover will also include **3 days of pre-hospitalization and 15 days post-hospitalization expenses** such as diagnostics and medicines.
- A defined **transport allowance** per hospitalization will also be paid to the beneficiary.
- Benefits of the scheme are **portable across the country** and a beneficiary covered under the scheme will be allowed to take cashless benefits from **any public/private empanelled hospitals** across the country.

Implementation Strategy

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

Why in News?

- Minister of Health and Family Welfare Mansukh Mandaviya informed Lok Sabha that 10 crore families have been covered in the country under the Ayushman Bharat scheme.
- Now 50 crore people are eligible for free treatment of up to an amount of Five lakh rupees under the scheme.

5) MyGov portal

About the Portal

- MyGov portal has been established as **Government of India's Citizen Engagement Platform** which collaborates with multiple Government bodies/ Ministries to engage with citizens for policy formulation and seeks the opinion of people on issues/ topics of public interest and welfare.
- MyGov platform is designed, developed and hosted by the **National Informatics Centre** under the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology.
- Since its launch on 26th July 2014, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, MyGov has more than 17.5 million registered users.

- Almost all Government Departments leverage MyGov platform for their citizen engagement activities, consultations for policy formulation and also to disseminate information to citizens for various Government schemes and programs.
- MyGov is amongst the most active profiles on Social Media. It has adopted multiple engagement methodologies like discussions, tasks, polls, surveys, blogs, talks, pledges, quizzes and on-ground activities by innovatively using internet, mobile apps, Interactive Voice Response

System (IVRS), SMS and outbound dialling (OBD) technologies.

- MyGov is part of **Digital India Corporation**, a Section 8 company under the Ministry of Electronics and IT.

Why in News?

- On the occasion of completion of seven years of MyGov platform, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that it stands tall as an effective example of participative governance and giving a voice to the country's youth power.

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THE HINDU EDITORIALS

1) Getting India's military convergence formula right

GS-3 Security Issues

NEWS

- **Chief of defence staff** recently described **Indian Air Force (IAF) as a supporting arm**. The statement was rebutted by **IAF chief Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria**. This has resulted in debate around essentials which should be there for **genuine military jointness of Indian military**.

CONTEXT

- The bump is caused by misinterpretation of an "oversimplification" done by the Chief of Defence Staff.
- Armies and navies have seen air power as an adjunct because of historical reasons
- Greatest exponent of air power in history, theorist **Tami Davis Biddle** based on experience has written that **aerial bombing cannot control the ground**.
- It is true that the Air force has such limitations. However, it is an important tool for both **deterrence and compellence**. Although from the Vietnam to Afghanistan war, air power has failed to deliver the **promised results to the U.S.** But it has assisted in victories in a great way.

PRESENT ISSUE WITH IAF

- Concern of the IAF about splitting its assets is genuine.
1. There is a shortage of about 25% **fighter squadrons**. On a pan India basis, there is a shortage of **400 pilots (almost 10% of their authorised strength)**.
 2. Service chief of the Air force both in present or in any future joint arrangement is responsible for **operational availability of assets**. Hence rebuttal by the Chief was needed as he must point out vulnerabilities and importance of the organisation.
 3. Rebuttal was further needed so as to **avoid the prospect of operational plans for the IAF being made outside the service**.

HOW TO PROMOTE SYNERGY BETWEEN SERVICES ?

- Following steps need to be taken to promote inter service coordinations:

- The Army and Navy should understand the importance of air power. The 67-year-old IAF is among the **top 10 air forces of the world** and has experience of operating almost every kind of aircraft.
- Confidence needs to be developed that staffed apex joint organisations can draw up **professional operational plans for air power** which can be done through **short term professional military education** at the staff level.
- In light of **dwindling budgets, a steadily deteriorating security situation and the march of technology** the need to synergise is the need of hour through taking appropriate measures:
 1. There should be a sequence of **written concepts, their refinement through consultation, simulation or tabletop wargaming, field evaluation and final analysis** before implementation which needs to strictly followed before reorganisation
 2. There is a need to address the issue of who gets what in the Joint structure. For example, an acceptable formula can be - giving **Western Command to Indian Army and the IAF, Northern Command to Indian Army, Maritime Command to Indian Navy and the Air Defence Command with the IAF**.
 3. This would help to address **issues like command and control, asset adequacy, individual service roles, operational planning under new circumstances and the adequacy of joint structures**.

WAY AHEAD

- As reorganisation is inevitable there is need for a **comprehensive National Security Strategy** to guide the services develop capacities required in their respective domains.
- There is also a need to **transform professional education and inter-service employment** to nurture genuine respect for others.
- Thirdly, armed forces **must resolve their differences among themselves**, as the politicians or bureaucrats cannot do it.

- There is a need to ensure **adequate good quality staff at apex joint organisations** to reassure **individual services and those in the field** that they are in safe hands.
- Last but not the least is to learn from other countries. We can **even have tailor-made solutions which are based on genuine thinking**. For genuine military jointness, a genuine convergence of minds is critical.

2) Needed, a more unified Asian voice for Afghanistan

GS-2 International relations, India and its neighbourhood

CONTEXT

- With the withdrawal of the **United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** presence, **Central Asia is emerging as a key player** that the **global Troika** of the **United States, Russia and China** are turning to.
- Three meetings namely **“Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) contact group on Afghanistan”, “SCO Defence Ministers in Tajikistan”, and “Central and South Asia conference on regional connectivity in Uzbekistan”** are turning the spotlight on the region’s role in dealing with the situation in Afghanistan.
- These developments provide an opportunity for India to build on them.

TALIBAN FACTOR

- Put plainly, events of the past few years, and the Same powers that invaded Afghanistan post 9/11 and **declared the Taliban leadership as United Nations Security Council-designated terrorists’** are now advocating talks with the Taliban.
- Troika is meeting with **Pakistan (Troika plus)** without including India in order to discuss Afghanistan’s future.
- As New Delhi has no ties with Taliban, **decisions of the Troika have kept India out** of a leading role in Afghanistan.

CHALLENGES FOR INDIA DIPLOMACY

- India has focused on building trade relations, taking up developmental projects and increasing educational and training opportunities for Afghan youth. Although these efforts have been appreciated but have their own limitations.
- New Delhi’s original hesitation in opening talks with the Taliban has cut India out of

the current reconciliation process. There are other factors which have cut India's roles in Afghanistan which includes

1. Blocking of India’s over-land access to Afghanistan due to ending of formal dialogue between India and Pakistan **from 2016 and trade from 2019**.
 2. India’s alternative route to Afghanistan through Chabahar though operational is cannot be viable or cost-effective also long as U.S. sanctions on Iran are there.
 3. India's access to China is not possible due to India’s boycott of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and tensions at the Line of Actual Control after the Chinese aggression in 2020.
- With so many doors closed, India should hope for the **five 'stans of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan)**. However, there are some caveats associated.

CAVEATS ASSOCIATED WITH CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

- **Uzbekistan** sees the rise of the Taliban in a different light from New Delhi. It has mended relations and ended border disputes with each of the other Central Asian States. It has made outreach to the U.S. and China to shift the traditional tilt towards Moscow.
- **Uzbekistan** moves on Afghanistan and is more focused on **trade and connectivity projects**. That’s why it publicly invited a Taliban delegation, at the same time promoted a number of ambitious trade and connectivity initiatives with the Ashraf Ghani government. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has plans for a modern version of the **Uttara Patha** (ancient northern trade route) connecting the **Indo-Ganges Plain with the southern territories of the Eurasian continent** through the historical cities of Takshila, Gandhara and Termez.
- Calculations of other Central Asian neighbourhood members are being taken using considerations like “connectivity for prosperity”. Hence, they are engaging with the Taliban for safe passage through Afghanistan

“STANS” SHARED INTEREST

- Although New Delhi’s room for manoeuvre with the Central Asian Republic appears limited, it is not without hope.

- Both India and the Central Asian States share common concerns about an Afghanistan overrun by the Taliban. They have worries of **battles at their borders, safe havens for jihadist terror groups inside Afghanistan and the spill-over of radicalism into their own countries.**

WAY AHEAD

- International funds in Afghanistan are dying off in the backdrop of Covid. Given shared interest, India needs to work with Central Asian Republic neighbours **to shore up finances for the government in Kabul** to ensure that the government structure does not collapse.
- India should use **SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** which has Central Asian countries to fight terror.
- India can support Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) through providing defence instruments for air power, given commitment as the first strategic partner of Afghanistan.
- Last but not the least, there should be focus on better India- Pakistan ties.

3) Lessons from India's food security response

GS-3 Issues of Buffer Stocks & Food Security NEWS

- There has been a reduction in the number of COVID-19 infections in India in the second wave. It is important to focus on the pandemic's disruptive impact on the food security and livelihoods of the poor and marginalised.

CONTEXT

- It has been two years since a deadly deadly virus hit the world.
- There has been '**dramatic worsening**' of world hunger in 2020. While the pandemic's impact has yet to be fully mapped, multi-agency reports like '**The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World**', estimates that around a **tenth of the global population** (up to 81.1 crore persons) were undernourished last year.
- However with respect to India, government measures taken to tackle the food crisis were effective.

MEASURES TAKEN BY INDIA TO HANDLE COVID EPIDEMIC

- India has made enormous progress in food production and self sufficiency in food over years and this was continued last year also.
- India in 2020 produced **over 30 crore tonnes of cereals** and had built up a food stock of **10 crore tonnes** registered record harvests. It also exported a **record 1.98 crore tonnes of rice and wheat** in FY21.
- It buffered **vulnerable and marginalised families during the food crisis** through its **robust Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)**.
- The Union government allowed States to go for allocations for six months in one go considering the surge in **demand for foodgrains** through the public distribution system.
- Government did not only focus on delivering present entitlement but focused on delivering Increase entitlements through dynamic **analysis of the food security scenario and feedback from different stakeholders.**
- It increased entitlements given to **National Food Safety Act (NFSA) beneficiaries** in 2020.
- under **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)**, 81.3 crore NFSA beneficiaries received an additional free of cost 5 kg of foodgrains per person per month and 1 kg of pulses per family per month (for eight months April -November 2020).
- Under the Atmanirbhar Bharat package, **8 crore migrants were provided free of cost 5 kg** of foodgrains per month, free of cost.
- **NGOs/civil society organisations** were allowed to buy **rice and wheat at subsidised prices** directly from **nearby Food Corporation of India (FCI) warehouses.**

CHALLENGES AHEAD

- Focus should be operationalizing the "**One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)**" scheme to its fullest. This will involve **massive digitisation of the supply chain.**
- Second steps involve focusing on **building resilient agriculture** to adapt to changing weather. It also involves introduction of **newer varieties of crops, efficient irrigation systems, and the promotion of crops as per the agro-climate zones.**

- Lost or wasted energy used for food production accounts for **about 10% of the world's total energy consumption**. Similarly annual greenhouse gas emissions associated with **food losses and food waste** reaches to around 3.5 gigatonnes of the CO₂ equivalent. There is also a need to prevent food wasted.
- There is a need to provide opportunities for **advancing food security and nutrition** through transforming food systems with the upcoming **UN Food Systems Summit, "Nutrition for Growth Summit" and the "COP26 on climate change"**. The outcomes of these events will certainly shape the actions of the **second half of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition**.

4) A judgment that must be taken in the right spirit

GS-2 Federalism, Constitutional amendments

NEWS

- The Supreme Court in a recent judgement of **Union of India vs Rajendra N. Shah** struck down the **97th Constitutional Amendment in a limited manner**.
- There have been very few cases of constitutional amendments (104 cases) and very very few cases (only seven cases before this case) where Constitutional amendments have been struck down since Independence.

CONTEXT

- The idea that the **cooperative sector ought to be controlled at the State level and not at the central or Union level** goes back all the way to the **Government of India Act, 1919 which placed cooperatives in the provincial list**.
- The scheme was carried forward into the **Constitution with Entry 32 of the State List in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution** conferring power on the State legislatures to **make laws pertaining to incorporation, regulation and the winding up of cooperative societies**.
- The **97th Constitutional Amendment** came into effect from **February 15, 2012** and brought many changes to the legal regime of cooperative societies.
- The amendment added "**cooperative societies**" to the **protected forms of**

association under Article 19(1)(c) and the Right to form Cooperative societies as fundamental right.

- It also inserted **Part IXB in the Constitution which lays down the details for governance of Cooperative societies**.

CONCERNS WITH THE AMENDMENT

- Indian constitution can be amended only by the **procedure provided in Article 368**.
- Amendment procedure requires a **majority of the total strength of each of the Houses of Parliament and two-thirds majority of those present and voting**.
- In the case of the Cooperative society amendment acts, there are **certain articles and chapters of the constitution** which can be amended only by an **additional requirement of special procedure**.
- The Special procedure requires that the amendment will also have to be ratified by the **legislatures of half of the States**.
- The **97th amendment act** was challenged on this ground because there was **no ratification by the states**.

LEGAL BATTLES

- **Gujarat High Court struck down the amendment in 2013** on the grounds that it does not comply with **special requirements under Article 368(2)**. Article 368(2) mandates ratification by the States.
- The judgement of Gujarat High court was challenged by the Union Government before the Supreme Court. The Union Government argued that the **amendment neither directly nor effectively changed the scheme of distribution of powers** between the Centre and the States.
- Challenging parties to the amendment on the other hand argued that **Part IXB, inserted by the 97th Amendment** impinged upon the legislative power of the States by casting **mandatory obligations upon the State legislatures to legislate in a particular way** in areas in which they ought to have had freedom. Also there are **certain provisions on the amendment which overrides** existing State legislations.

UNION OF INDIA Vs RAJENDRA N. SHAH CASE

- In the case, **the court took the example of the 73rd and 74th Amendments** which introduced the **chapters on panchayats and municipalities** respectively.

1. **The 97th amendment** had a similar impact on the legislative power of the States like that of the **93rd and 94th constitutional amendment act**. Hence, the amendments should have been passed by the **special procedure involving ratification by State legislatures**.
2. However, the court clarified that the judgment is confined to the **procedural lacuna** and does not go into the **question of the amendment being violative of the basic structure of the Constitution**.
3. Judgment also makes a distinction between **cooperative societies operating in one State and multi-State cooperative societies**.
 - The Court chose not to go deeper into the question of whether the amendment also required ratification in respect of **application to multi-State cooperative societies** while holding that a **ratification by half the State legislatures** would be necessary when it comes to **cooperative societies in one State**.
 - Minority opinion on the other hand considered that the whole amendment needs to be struck as the provisions as **multi-State cooperative societies could not exist independently** of the parts which pertain to cooperative societies.

WAY FORWARD

- Cooperative sector has always been in the **domain of the States or provinces** as the organising principles and mechanism of cooperatives **differ from area to area and depend on the industry or crop**.
- Homogeneity in this area would only result in **the creation of round holes in which square pegs no longer fit**.
- Hence, it is best that the Government stays away from further meddling in the cooperative sector, notwithstanding the **creation of the new Ministry**.

5) The wings of Pegasus, the epoch of cyberweapons

GS-3 Security issues, Cyber Security

NEWS

- Controversy around the **possible misuse of Pegasus spyware** has reignited a debate on the role of cyber weapons.
- Although **Pegasus spyware is by no means the ultimate cyberweapon**, it has

compelled nations to emerge from their deep slumber about the threat posed by such new age weapons.

EVOLUTION OF CYBER WEAPONS

- Cyber weapons at present are being touted as the **fifth dimension of warfare** in addition to land, sea, air and space. The problem with **Cyber weapons as the fifth dimension of warfare** is that it affects the domain of everyday life and hence privacy of individuals.
- Unlike nuclear devices of earlier time, right from its inception cyberweapons have been **classified as special weapons**.
- There have been dramatic transformations brought about by cyber technologies since the turn of the century because of **Moore's Law democratizing access to computing** and the **Internet which has opened a whole new avenue** for communication. This has eroded privacy in our present time.
- Advent of cyberweapons, although in primitive form can be seen a few decades ago.
- Earliest instances of this kind occurred in the 1990s when **Yahya Abd-al-Latif Ayyash** who served as the **chief bomb maker for Hamas** was assassinated by **Israel's domestic Intelligence Agency, Shin Bet** using a doctored phone containing explosives when he responded to a call from an unknown person.
- Even before the Pegasus Spyware present controversy, there have been many stories in circulation of the employment of the Pegasus spyware. For example, **in 2019 WhatsApp had sued NSO Group Technologies over allegations** that several hundreds of its users were the targets of the Pegasus spyware. Also the claims of the Israeli company that the spyware is sold only to governments and official agencies is unproven.

CYBERWEAPONS - A WORK IN PROGRESS

- Capacity of cyber weapons is being continuously enhanced. It is stated that Pegasus spyware can copy messages **that are sent or received, harvest photos and record calls, secretly film through the phone's camera, or activate the microphone to record conversations**, thus more or less can extract any file when installed on the computer.

1. It currently **employs 'zero click' attacks** by exploiting certain 'zero day' vulnerabilities found in operating systems. It does not require any interaction on the part of the phone owner.
2. This gives it the capacity to potentially **pinpoint where you are, where you have been, and whom you have met**. The NSO group even further plans to make spyware difficult to detect.
 - There has been a more deadly attack than Pegasus spyware in the last decade. It includes
 1. **2007 devastating cyberattack on Estonia's critical infrastructure,**
 2. **Stuxnet worm attack** on Iran's nuclear facility,
 3. **Shamoon virus attack** on Saudi Aramco(2012)
 4. **cyberattack on Ukraine's State power grid,**
 5. **2017 Ransomware attack (NotPetya)** which affected machines in as many as 64 countries
 6. **Wannacry attack the same year on the United Kingdom's National Health Service**
 7. **series of attacks this year on Ireland's Health Care System** and in the United States such as 'SolarWinds', etc.

CYBER WEAPONS- A GRAVE THREAT

- Cyber Weapons have become **weapons of choice not only during a conflict but even during peacetime**.
- It carries untold capacity to distort systems and structures both civilian or military. It can **interfere with democratic processes, aggravate domestic divisions** and, above all, unleash forces over which **established institutions or even governments have little control**.
- Given the threat we must be prepared for and guard against a **new epoch of cyber threats** employing **newer state-of-the-art cyberweapon** which is only bound to intensify both in the short and the medium term.

WAY FORWARD

- We need a careful analysis and assessment to deal with the threat of the Cyber weapons specially for dealing with '**zero day' vulnerabilities** which requires far more thought and introspection than **merely creating special firewalls or**

special phones that are 'detached' from the Internet.

- Need of the hour is not **only a deeper understanding of cyber technologies but also recognising the mindsets of those who employ spyware of the Pegasus variety**. Short term remedies are not long term solutions.

6) The long road to winning the battle against trafficking

CONTEXT

- **June 30** is celebrated as **United Nations World Day against Trafficking in Persons**.
- Anti-trafficking policy exists in India but where the system is found lacking is in the implementation of the laws relating to trafficking.
- According to **Child rights NGOs**, between April 2020 and June 2021, an estimated 9,000 children have been rescued after being trafficked for labor. This converts to 21 children being trafficked every day over nearly 15 months. In terms of distress call, India helpline received **44 lakh distress calls over 10 months**. These data point to increasing vulnerabilities for being trafficked.

INCREASING VULNERABILITIES FOR TRAFFICKING

- In recent times there have been increasing instances of Trafficking due to various reasons
- In the backdrop of the Covid epidemic, owners are **turning to cheap labour** to recoup their losses. Children as young as 12 are trafficked across States to work in factories in appalling conditions.
- **Child marriage** is another reason for increasing trafficking.
- A child rights NGO, working with the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights, has highlighted the problem of rampant child labor. As per the report
 1. The Corona virus has resulted in **income and economic crisis**, causing families' reduced capacity to care for children in the long-term.
 2. In some instances, there have been **loss of parental care** due to death, illness or separation. This has placed children at

heightened risk for violence, neglect or exploitation.

3. These factors have been even compounded by an erosion of some of the checks against **child labour and child marriage provided by law**, as well as the scrutiny of schools and society.
 - Increased access to the **Internet has also led to cyber-trafficking**. Popular social media platforms and free messaging apps are **often used to contact young people**, where young ones are often lure under the pretext of offering him employment.
 - Another reason for **increased trafficking is due to increased demand for child sexual exploitation material online** due to lockdowns.
 - **Absence of any identifiable authority to approach** other than the police who are often seen as threats themselves make it nearly impossible for trafficked persons to report the incident.
 - A recent report by the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime** says that traffickers are taking advantage of the loss of livelihoods and the increasing amount of time spent online to entrap victims by advertising false jobs on social media.

CHALLENGES IN REGULATION OF TRAFFICKING

- India is still **classified by the U.S. Department of State as a Tier-2 country** in its report on global human trafficking. This means that the **Government does not fully meet the minimum standards under U.S. and international law** for eliminating trafficking, but is making significant efforts to comply.
- Scant data on trafficking is posing a big challenge in fighting. Government admitted in Parliament as **recently as March 2021 that it does not maintain any national-level data specific** to cyber trafficking cases.

- Fight against trafficking is understaffed and not properly funded.

1. This can be illustrated by the state of the Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs).
2. AHTUs are specialized district task forces comprising police and government officials.
3. If properly **staffed and funded**, AHTUs could provide crucial ground-level data on the methods and patterns of traffickers. This can be used to strengthen **community-based awareness and vigilance activities**.
4. In 2010, 330 AHTUs were to be set up but RTI reports point out that only 225 AHTUs had been set up and that too on paper.

WAY FORWARD

- More focus needs to be on the implementation front where India is lacking. There is also need to bring in the **National Investigation Agency and increasing the punishment for offences, including the death penalty** as an option in some cases in the draft bill.
- Conviction rate in offences of trafficking is very less. Hence, special attention must also be paid to the **challenges prosecutors and judges face in trafficking cases**.
- Failure of investigation cannot be solved by the draft Bill's provision that accused traffickers must be presumed guilty unless they can prove the contrary.
- **Proper case management** must be introduced to give meaning to the fast track courts.
- Also there needs to increase the number of beneficiaries getting monetary compensation and there should be access to psychological counseling.
- Last but not the least is dealing with long term solutions for financial stress. This is because most victims of trafficking are from low-income communities for whom the novel coronavirus pandemic have wreaked havoc.

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INDIAN EXPRESS EXPLAINED

1) Dholavira and Ramappa temple made it to UNESCO's World Heritage List

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is a specialised agency of the United Nations (UN) based in Paris, France which was formed in 1946
- Its purpose is to contribute to **peace and security by promoting international collaboration** through education, science, culture and communication.
- UNESCO has **193 member countries (including India)** and it pursues its objectives through five major programs: education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture, and communication and information.
- The agency's permanent headquarters are in **Paris, France**.

World Heritage Site

- A World Heritage Site is a **landmark or area**, selected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for having cultural, historical, scientific or other form of significance, which is legally protected by international treaties.

UNESCO's World Heritage Convention, 1972

- The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage is an international agreement that was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in **1972**.
- It is based on the premise that certain places on Earth are of outstanding universal value and should therefore form part of the **common heritage of humankind**.
- It basically **defines the kind of natural or cultural sites** which can be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List.
- Cultural sites include monuments, such as architectural structures, art and science pieces, while natural sites include formations that are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view.

- In addition to these, UNESCO designates some sites as **Mixed heritage sites** which contain elements of both natural and cultural significance.
- The Convention sets out the duties of State Parties in identifying potential sites and their role in protecting and preserving them.
- By signing the Convention, each country pledges to conserve not only the World Heritage sites situated on its territory, but also to protect its national heritage.
- It explains how the **World Heritage Fund** is to be used and managed and under what conditions international financial assistance may be provided.

World Heritage Sites in India:

- There are 38 **UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India**. The sites are broken down into the following categories

- **Cultural Sites (30)**

1. Agra Fort (1983), Uttar Pradesh
2. Ajanta Caves (1983), Maharashtra
3. Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara at Nalanda, Bihar (2016)
4. Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi (1989), Madhya Pradesh
5. Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park (2004), Gujarat
6. Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus) (2004), Maharashtra
7. Churches and Convents of Goa (1986)
8. Elephanta Caves (1987), Maharashtra
9. Ellora Caves (1983), Maharashtra
10. Fatehpur Sikri (1986), Uttar Pradesh
11. Great Living Chola Temples (1987, 2004), Tamilnadu
12. Group of Monuments at Hampi (1986), Karnataka
13. Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram (1984), Tamilnadu
14. Group of Monuments at Pattadakal (1987), Karnataka
15. Hill Forts of Rajasthan (2013)
16. Historic City of Ahmedabad (2017), Gujarat
17. Humayun's Tomb, Delhi (1993)
18. Jaipur City, Rajasthan (2019)
19. Khajuraho Group of Monuments (1986), Madhya Pradesh

20. Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodhi Gaya (2002), Bihar
21. Mountain Railways of India Darjeeling,(1999), Nilgiri (2005), Kalka-Shimla(2008)
22. Qutb Minar and its Monuments, Delhi (1993)
23. Rani-ki-Vav (the Queen's Stepwell) at Patan, Gujarat (2014)
24. Red Fort Complex (2007), Delhi
25. Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka (2003), Madhya Pradesh
26. Sun Temple, Konârak (1984), Odisha
27. Taj Mahal (1983), Uttar Pradesh
28. The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement (2016), Chandigarh
29. The Jantar Mantar, Jaipur (2010), Rajasthan
30. Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai (2018), Maharashtra

Natural Sites (7)

- Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area (2014), Himachal Pradesh
- Kaziranga National Park (1985), Assam
- Keoladeo National Park (1985), Rajasthan
- Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (1985), Assam
- Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks (1988,2005), Uttarakhand
- Sundarbans National Park (1987), West Bengal
- Western Ghats (2012), Karnataka,Kerala,Tamilnadu, Maharashtra
- **Mixed Site (1)**
- Khangchendzonga National Park (2016), Sikkim

Why in the news?

- Ramappa temple in Telangana and Dholavira in Gujarat have attained UNESCO World Heritage site tag.

Dholavira site

- Located in the **Kutch district**, Dholavira (also known as Kotada timba) is a part of the **Indus Valley Civilisation** dating back to about 4,500 years ago.
- After Mohen-jo-Daro, Ganweriwala and Harappa in Pakistan and Rakhigarhi in Haryana of India, Dholavira is the **fifth largest metropolis of IVC**.
- The ancient city of Dholavira is one of the most remarkable and well-preserved urban settlements in South Asia dating from the

3rd to mid-2nd millennium BCE (Before Common Era).

- It is the **first site of the ancient Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC) in India to get the tag.**

Why makes Dholavira special?



- Discovered in 1968, the site is set apart by its unique characteristics, such as its **water management system, multi-layered defensive mechanisms, extensive use of stone in construction and special burial structures**.
- The site has a **fortified citadel, a middle town and a lower town with walls made of sandstone or limestone instead of mud bricks** in many other Harappan sites.
- A **range of artefacts of copper, shell, stone, jewellery, terracotta and ivory** had been found at the site.
- Unlike graves at other IVC sites, **no mortal remains of humans have been discovered at Dholavira**.
- **Remains of a copper smelter** indicate Harappans, who lived in Dholavira, knew **metallurgy**. It is believed that traders of Dholavira used to **source copper ore from present-day Rajasthan and Oman and UAE and export** finished products. It was also a **hub of manufacturing jewellery** made of shells and semi-precious stones, like agate and used to export timber.
- Such **beads** peculiar to the Harappan workmanship have been **found in the royal graves of Mesopotamia**, indicating Dholavira used to trade with the Mesopotamians. Its decline also coincided with the collapse of Mesopotamia, indicating the **integration of economies**. **Harappans, who were maritime people,**

lost a huge market, affecting the local mining, manufacturing, marketing and export businesses once Mesopotamia fell.

- From 2000 BC, Dholavira entered a phase of **severe aridity** due to climate change and rivers like Saraswati drying up. Because of a drought-like situation, people started migrating toward the Ganges valley or towards south Gujarat and further beyond in Maharashtra.

Ramappa Temple:



Distinct features:

- The foundation is built with the “**sandbox technique**”, the flooring is **granite** and the pillars **basalt**.
- The lower part of the temple is **red sandstone** while the white gopuram is built with light bricks that reportedly **float on water**.
- The temple’s sculptures of high artistic quality illustrate regional dance customs and Kakatiyan culture.

2) Microplastic pollution in river Ganga

Why in the news?

- Recently, a Delhi-based released a study titled, “Quantitative analysis of Microplastics along River Ganga”, which has found that the Ganga – which flows through five states covering about 2, 500 km before flowing into the Bay of Bengal – is heavily polluted with **microplastics**.

What are microplastics?

- Among the range of plastic debris that is found in water bodies, microplastics are the

- The **Ramalingeswara Temple** which is popularly known as the **Ramappa temple** dates back to **1213 AD**, was built by the patronage of the **Kakatiya ruler Ganapathi Deva** under the authority of his Chief Commander **Recherla Rudra**. It is located at Palampet, Mulugu district, near Warangal in the state of **Telangana**.
- It was built using **sandstone** and its construction is believed to have continued for over four decades.

most notorious because of their small size, on average microplastics are **less than 5 mm** in length or roughly equal to five pinheads.

- **Apart from humans, microplastics are harmful to marine species as well.**
- More than 663 marine species are affected by marine debris and 11 percent of them are said to be related to microplastic ingestion, the study says. Because microplastics are so small, they are **ingested by marine habitats including fish, corals, planktons and sea mammals and are then carried further into the food chain.**
- In the case of humans, most of the microplastics can be **found in food, water and food containers and their ingestion can cause health problems.**

What does the recent study about the levels of pollution in river Ganga tell us?

- Apart from microplastics, there were **other kinds of plastics as well such as single-use plastic and secondary plastic products.**

- Further, the study notes that **untreated sewage** from densely populated cities across the river's course, along with industrial waste and religious offerings that are wrapped in non-degradable plastic add a significant amount of pollutants into the river.
- As the river flows, these waste and plastic materials break down further and are eventually carried into the Bay of Bengal and then into the ocean which is the "ultimate sink" of all plastics that are used by humans.
- Essentially all along microplastics are flowing into the river system. It does reflect or suggest a **direct linkage between the poor state of both solid and liquid waste management.**

What are the efforts being made to clean the Ganga?

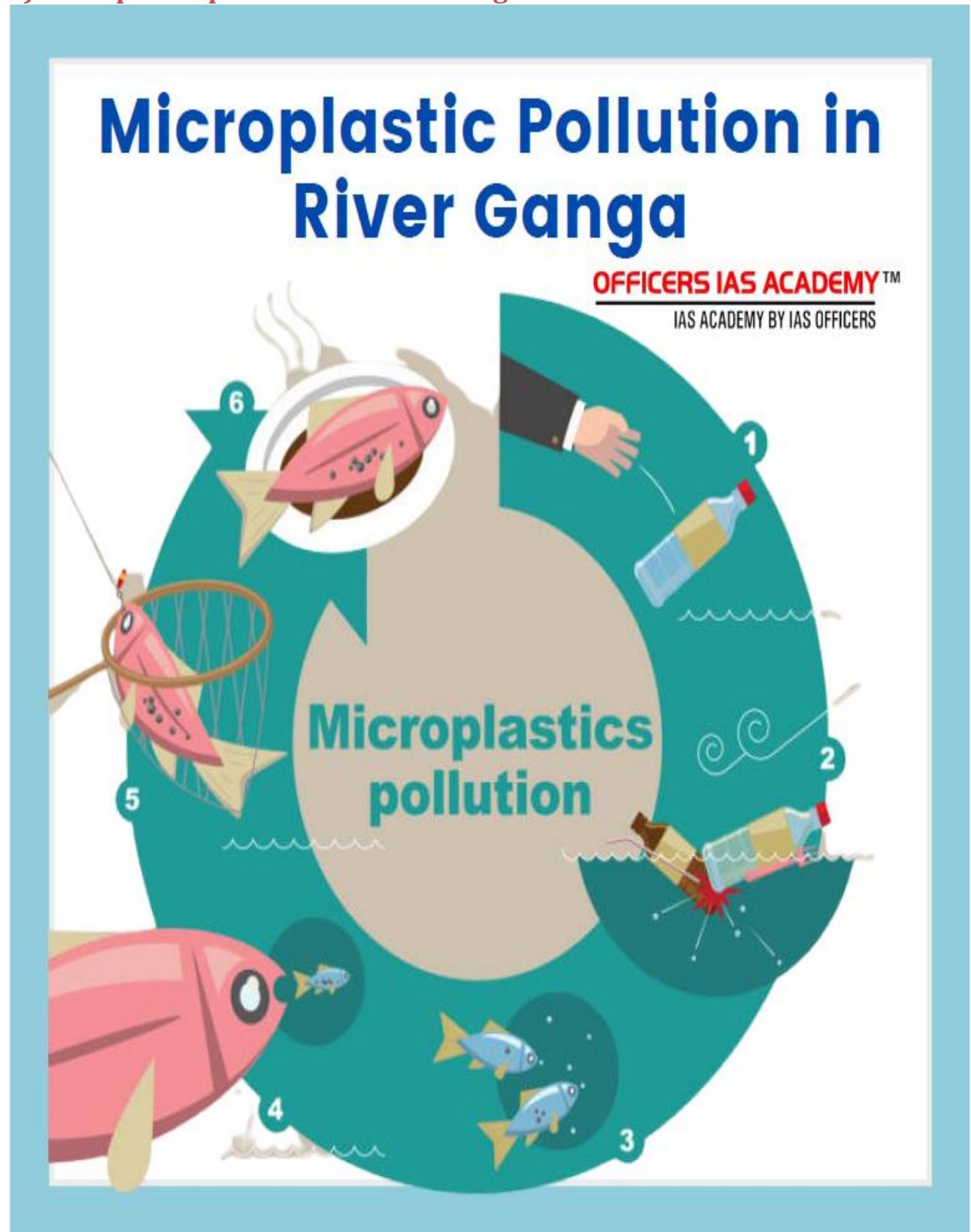
- Ganga has the **largest river basin in terms of catchment area in the country** and constitutes about 26 percent of India's landmass spread across 11 states, which supports 43 percent of the population.

- That the holy river Ganga is polluted is not a recent discovery, in fact, efforts to clean it have been ongoing for over 40 years. Most of them have focussed on creating sewage treatment capacities in the major urban centres along the river.
- In May 2015, the government approved the **Namami Gange** (which receives a 100 percent funding from the central government) **programme** to clean and protect the river. Programmes launched before this include the **Ganga Action Plan (GAP)** in 1985, the **IIT Consortium** (2011) for water diversion and effective treatment, and the **National Mission for Clean Ganga** in 2011.
- However, not only do none of these plans address pollution caused by microplastics but even otherwise these programs and schemes launched over the past decades on which millions of rupees have been spent so far, have yielded little success.

For doubts and queries email us at doubts@officerspulse.com

INFOGRAPHIC OF THE WEEK

1) Microplastic pollution in River Ganga



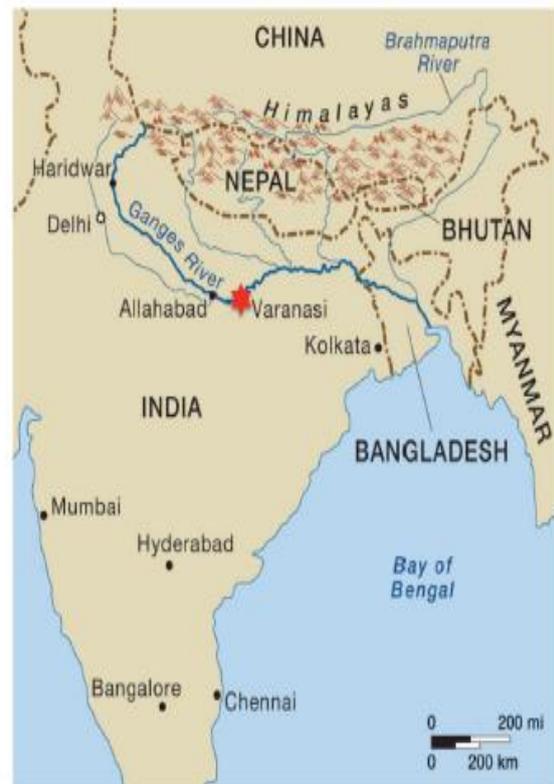
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Why in the news?

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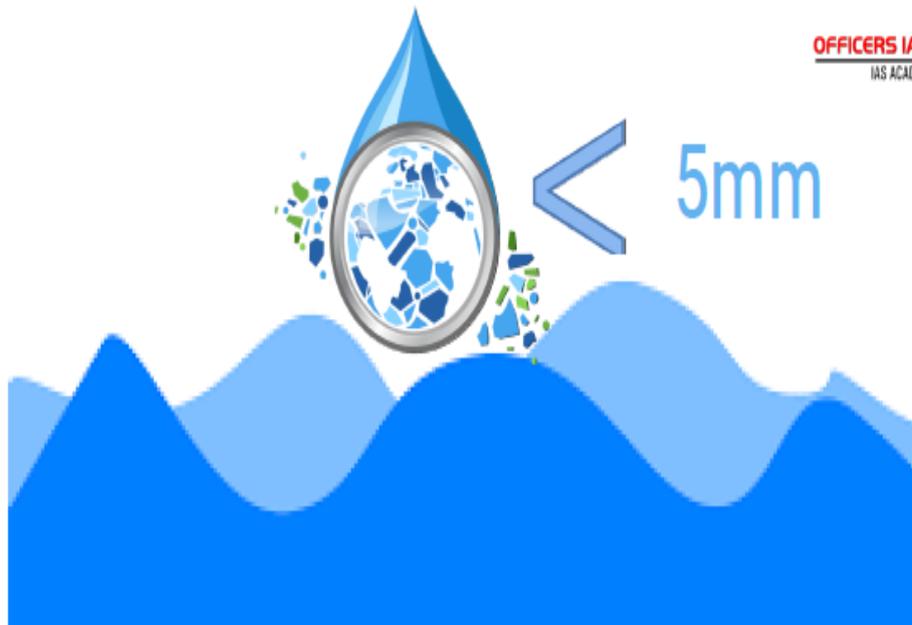


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What are microplastics?

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Among the range of plastic debris that is found in water bodies, microplastics are the most notorious because of their small size, on average microplastics are **less than 5 mm** in length or roughly equal to five pinheads.

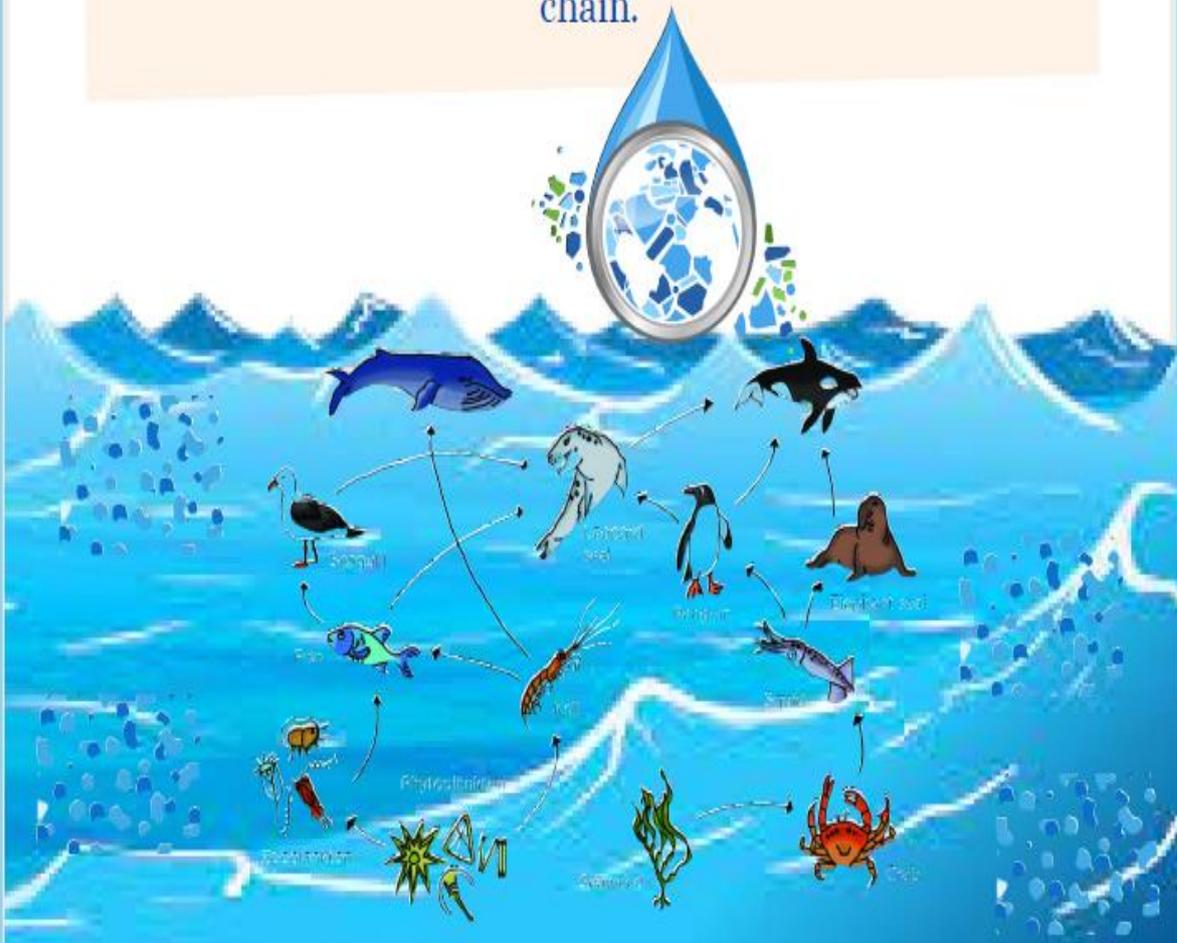


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What does the recent study about the levels of pollution in river Ganga tell us?

For the study, samples of Ganga's water were collected from Haridwar, Kanpur and Varanasi and microplastics were found in all of them.



- Haridwar
- Kanpur
- Varanasi



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Apart from microplastics, there were other kinds of plastics as well such as single-use plastic and secondary plastic products. Of the samples, those taken at Varanasi had the highest concentration of plastic pollution.



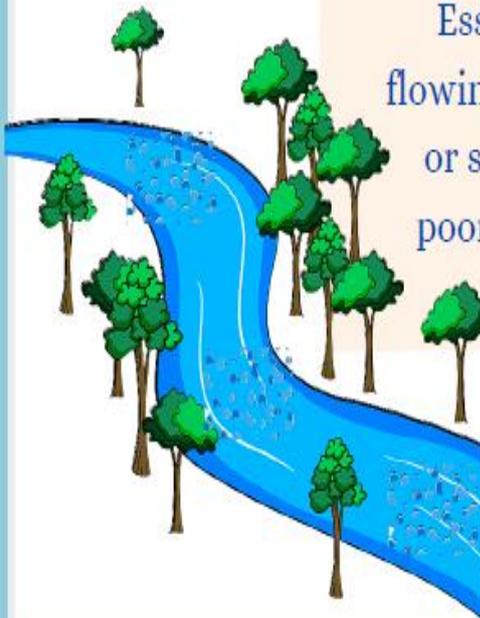
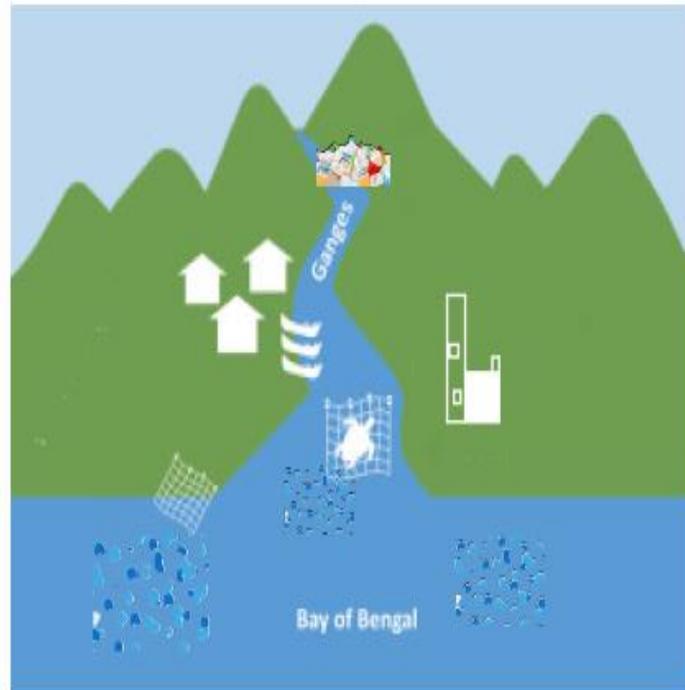

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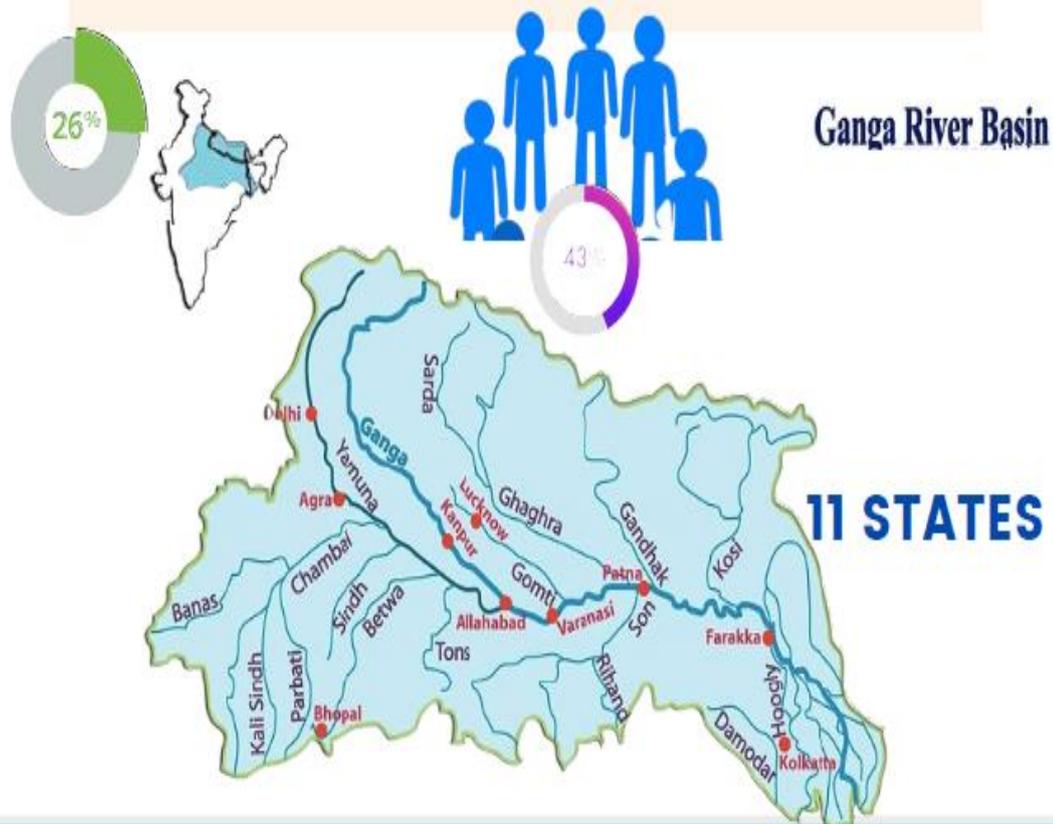


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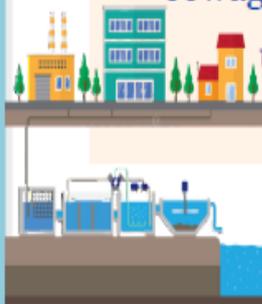
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Toxics Link

However, the Toxics Link study says that not only do none of these plans address pollution caused by **microplastics** but even otherwise these programs and schemes launched over the past decades on which millions of rupees have been spent so far, have yielded “little success”.



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