

# OFFICERS' PULSE

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# News @ a glance

## POLITY

### 1) Tenure of CBI, ED chiefs extended to up to 5 years

#### About CBI

- The precursor to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was the **Special Police Establishment**, which was India's first agency to investigate corruption. It was set in **1941** by the British.
- In **1963**, the Home Ministry expanded its power and changed its name to the **Central Bureau of Investigation**. It is governed by the **Delhi Special Police Establishment Act (DSPE), 1946**.
- The CBI was established with a view to investigate serious crimes related to Defence of India, corruption in high places, serious fraud, cheating and embezzlement and social crime, particularly of hoarding, black-marketing and profiteering in essential commodities, having all-India and inter-state ramifications.
- CBI acts as an **interface** between the law enforcement agencies of India and other countries to ensure cooperation. It facilitates exchange and sharing of information by these agencies.

#### Supervision over CBI

- The superintendence of CBI related to investigation of offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 lies with the **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)** and in other matters with the **Department of Personnel & Training (DOPT)** in the Ministry of Personnel, Pension & Grievances.

#### NIA vs. CBI

- The National Investigation Agency has been constituted after the Mumbai terror attack in **November 2008** mainly for investigation of incidents of terrorist attacks, funding of terrorism and other terror related crime, whereas CBI investigates crime of corruption, economic offences and serious and organized crime other than terrorism.

#### CBI Director

- The **Lokpal Act, 2013** governs the appointment of the CBI director.
- The CBI director is appointed by the Centre on the basis of the recommendation of a **search committee** comprising:
  - the Prime Minister as the chairperson,
  - the Chief Justice of India and
  - the Leader of Opposition.
- In the absence of a formal Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, **the leader of the floor of the largest opposition party** takes part in the search committee meetings.

#### About ED

- Enforcement Directorate (ED) is a specialized financial investigation agency under the **Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance**, which enforces the following laws: -
  - **Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA)** - A Civil Law, with officers empowered to conduct investigations into suspected contraventions of the Foreign Exchange Laws and Regulations, adjudicate, contraventions, and impose penalties on those adjudged to have contravened the law.
  - **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA)** - A Criminal Law, with the officers empowered to conduct investigations to trace assets derived out of the proceeds of crime, to provisionally attach/ confiscate the same, and to arrest and prosecute the offenders found to be involved in Money Laundering.
- ED was established in 1956 with its headquarters at **New Delhi**.

#### Why in News?

- President Ram Nath Kovind has promulgated two ordinances that would allow the Centre to **extend the tenures of the directors of the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate from two years to up to five years**.

- The chiefs of the Central agencies currently have a fixed two-year tenure, but can now be given three annual extensions.
- While the change in tenure of the CBI Director was effected by amending the **Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946**, the changes to the tenure of the ED Director was brought in by amending the **Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003**.

## 2) Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme

### About the Scheme

- The Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) is meant to enable **Members of Parliament to recommend works of developmental nature** with emphasis on **creation of durable community assets based on locally felt needs** to be taken up in their constituencies in the area of national priorities namely drinking water, education, public health, sanitation, roads etc.
- The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation** has been responsible for the policy formulation, release of funds and prescribing monitoring mechanism for implementation of the Scheme.

### Features

- The MPLADS is **fully funded** by the Government of India. The **annual** MPLADS fund entitlement per MP constituency is **Rs. 5 crore**.
- Funds under the MPLADS are **non-lapsable**.
- **Lok Sabha Members** can recommend works within their Constituencies and **Elected Members of Rajya Sabha** can recommend works within the State of Election (with select exceptions). **Nominated Members** of both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the country.
- All works to meet locally felt infrastructure and development needs, with an emphasis on creation of durable assets in the constituency are permissible under MPLADS as prescribed in the scheme guidelines.
- The MPLADS funds can be merged with other schemes such as MGNREGA and Khelo India.

### Allocation for SC & ST

- The guidelines recommend MPs to suggest works costing at least 15 per cent of their

MPLADS entitlement for the year for areas inhabited by **Scheduled Caste population** and 7.5 per cent for areas inhabited by **Scheduled Tribe population**.

- In case there is insufficient tribal population in the area of Lok Sabha Member, they may recommend this amount for the creation of community assets in tribal areas outside of their constituency but within their State of election.

### Implementation

- Under MPLADS, the role of the MPs is limited only upto recommendation of works. Thereafter, it is the responsibility of the **District Authority** to sanction, execute and complete the works recommended by Members of Parliament within the stipulated time.
- The District Authority shall identify the Implementing Agency capable of executing the eligible work qualitatively, timely and satisfactorily. It shall be responsible for timely and effective implementation of such works.
- Information on MPLADS (the number and cost of works sanctioned, implementing agencies, projects completed, etc) should be made available to citizens under the **Right to Information Act**.
- **At least 10% of the projects** under implementation in the district are to be **inspected** every year by the district authority.

### Suspension of MPLADS

- In April 2020, the central government announced suspension of MPLADS for two years, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Suspension of the MPLAD Scheme was expected to make Rs 7,800 crore available to the government to fight COVID-19 .

### Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet has approved restoration and continuation of the MPLADS which was discontinued in view of COVID-19 pandemic.
- For 2021-22, it is only a partial restoration, since instead of ₹5 crore for each MP, the sum will only be ₹2 crore.

## 3) Annual Status of Education Report

### About ASER

- Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) is an annual survey that aims to provide

**reliable estimates of children's enrolment and basic learning levels in India.**

- It is conducted by **non-governmental organization Pratham.**

#### Why in News?

- NGO Pratham has released its Annual Status of Education Report 2021.
- The survey was conducted over 76,000 households with children aged six to 14.
- Due to the pandemic, ASER's 16th annual report was based on a **phone survey** assessing enrolment in schools and tuition classes, and access to devices and learning resources, rather than the organisation's usual face-to-face survey which assesses learning outcomes and children's competencies in reading and arithmetic skills.

#### Highlights of the Report

- The **percentage of rural children who were not enrolled in school doubled** during the pandemic. In 2018, only 2.5% of children were not enrolled in school. In both the 2020 and 2021 surveys, that figure had **jumped to 4.6%.**
- **Government school enrolment spiked significantly** from 64.3% in 2018 to **70.3%** in 2021. The shift to government school enrolment could be a result of financial distress, the closure of affordable private schools and the movement of migrants to rural areas.
- Although it is not clear if this is a permanent phenomenon or will be reversed post the pandemic, it is important to ensure that **government schools and teachers are**

**equipped and given the necessary resources** for this surge in enrolment.

- The survey found that while 92% of children had textbooks for their grade, **only a third in government schools had access to any other learning resources or support** in the form of worksheets, phone messages or any other sort of learning activities in the week of the survey.

#### Digital access

- **Smartphone access** was a challenge in the delivery of online education. Although **availability almost doubled to 68%, only a quarter of children even in homes with smartphones were able to access it whenever needed.**
- In smartphone owning households, 26% of children had no access to the device at all, while 47% had only occasional access. There were **major differences** in the experience of students from different States. For instance, 91% of students from Kerala and almost 80% from Himachal Pradesh had online education, but only 10% from Bihar and 13% from West Bengal.
- Going forward, there is a need for **device libraries**, so all children can have access to needed devices.
- During the pandemic, almost **40% of students took tuition classes**, as many parents struggled to provide the learning support students were not receiving from closed schools.

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# ENVIRONMENT

## 1) Norovirus Outbreak

### What is NoV and how does it spread?

- Norovirus, which infects people across age groups, is a bug similar to the **diarrhoea-inducing rotavirus**.
- NoV is a highly **contagious virus**.
- Norovirus causes **inflammation of the stomach or intestines**. This is called **acute gastroenteritis** which is an important cause of concern in children as well as adults worldwide.
- Norovirus is sometimes called the **stomach flu or stomach bug**.
- Disease outbreaks typically occur **aboard cruise ships, in nursing homes, dormitories, and other closed spaces**.

### Symptoms

- The initial symptoms of Norovirus are **vomiting and/or diarrhoea**.
- Patients also feel **nauseous, and suffer from abdominal pain, fever, headaches and body aches**.
- In extreme cases, loss of fluids could lead to **dehydration**.
- A person usually develops symptoms **12 to 48 hours** after being exposed to norovirus.

### Transmission

- NoV transmission occurs predominantly by the **faecal-oral route**, directly or indirectly, through the ingestion of **contaminated water or food or surfaces** which might have been contaminated when handled carelessly by an infected person or his caregiver.

### Treatment

- There is **no specific treatment and vaccine available**.
- Most individuals who are not very young, very old, or malnourished can ride it out with sufficient rest and hydration.
- More care is needed if very **young children, elderly or pregnant women** are infected.

### How common is Norovirus Infection?

- There are **685 million cases annually**, of which 200 million are detected among children younger than five years. Nearly **50,000 children** die every year due to diarrhoea caused by the virus.

### How can Norovirus be Prevented?

- Prevention is rooted in **hygiene**.

1. People should **wash their hands** thoroughly with soap and water before eating and after using the toilet.
2. **Fruits and vegetables** should be thoroughly washed before eating.
3. Shellfish like oysters, which might have been grown in contaminated waters, should be well-cooked.
4. **Boiled and safe drinking water** alone should be used.
5. Infected persons should rest at home and maintain utmost personal hygiene to prevent transmission.
6. During outbreaks, **surfaces must be disinfected** with a solution of hypochlorite at 5,000 parts per million.

### What makes NoV infections a public health concern?

- The transmission occurs at a **rapid pace** because of heavy **viral shedding** by the infected person.
- Even the lowest infectious dose is enough to set off extensive outbreaks, typically in environments such as **hostels, schools, hospitals or nursing homes**.
- Experts also point out that NoV could increasingly become a public health concern because of **rapid expansion of the food industry**.

### Why in news?

- An acute **diarrhoeal disease outbreak** was reported amongst students of the College of Veterinary Sciences at Pookode, in **Wayanad district of Kerala**, which were confirmed as Norovirus (NoV) by the authorities.
- The first documented **NoV outbreak in Kerala was in Alappuzha district** this year between June and August when 950 cases of acute diarrhoeal disease, mostly in children, were reported from the municipal area and the nearby panchayats.

## 2) India's Coal usage under Scrutiny

### What's the news?

- On the final day of the UN Climate Change Conference held in Glasgow, India's Minister for Environment read out a statement promising to **"phase down" rather than**

“phase out” the use of coal which has caused many to raise questions about India’s commitment to tackling climate change.

#### A Glance at India’s Coal Production

- Coal is used to meet over **70% of India’s electricity needs** and most of this coal comes from **domestic mines**.
- In **FY 2020-21**, India produced **716 million tonnes** of coal, compared with 431 million tonnes a decade ago.
- Since FY 2018-19, domestic production has stagnated and has been unable to meet the rising domestic demand, leading to a **rise in imports**.
- Most of the country’s coal production is limited to **Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh** with a total production of over 550 million tonnes, contributing to over **75% of the country’s total coal production**.
- The Prime Minister promised to **increase non-fossil fuel energy capacity to 500 GW by 2030, meet 50% energy needs from renewable sources and reduce carbon emissions by 1 billion tonnes** in a decade.

#### Why must dependence on coal be reduced?

- Since **carbon emissions** are considered the main culprit in global warming, countries have been committing themselves to turning carbon neutral by various dates.
- One key way to achieve carbon neutrality, wherein countries compensate for their carbon emissions by capturing an equal amount of carbon from the atmosphere, is to **reduce dependence on coal**.
- Coal is the **most polluting** among fossil fuels, and hence, its use in particular has come under scrutiny.

#### Why is it difficult for countries to phase down Coal Consumption?

- 1) According to an estimate by the Centre for Science and Environment, in order to **reduce emissions by 1 billion tonnes** means that India would need to **reduce its carbon output by 22% by 2030**.

- 2) India now meets about **12% of its electricity needs from renewable sources**, and increasing it to 50% by 2030 will be difficult.
- 3) While some renewable energy sources like solar are cheap but they are unreliable because of the **intermittency problem** as it requires the use of storage batteries, which adds to the cost.
- 4) Developing countries like **India and China** will not reduce their coal consumption or even stop it from rising further as Coal is the **cheapest and most reliable way** to meet their rising energy needs.
- 5) The pledges made by countries at COP26 to reach net zero emissions or to phase down coal are **not legally binding**.
- 6) Some leaders have proposed a carbon tax as an alternative to ensure that the price of coal reflects the cost of the damage it causes to the environment while **high carbon taxes** can cause a **drastic fall in coal output** and severely affect living standards unless alternative sources of energy step in to fill the gap.
- 7) Many **low-income countries** with low savings may not even possess the capital required to invest in renewable energy.
- 8) There is **not much economic incentive** for countries to limit or to end their massive reliance on coal.

#### Conclusion

- India also faces its own set of **structural problems in the power sector** that will make the transition towards clean energy harder.
- The **pricing of power**, for instance, is influenced by populist politics which may **hinder private investment** in renewable energy.

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# ECONOMY

## 1) Retail Direct Scheme for investors

### What's in the news?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has unveiled the Retail Direct Scheme for investors in government securities which was proposed by the RBI earlier this year.

### What is the Retail Direct Scheme?

- Under the Retail Direct Scheme, **small investors can now buy or sell government securities (G-Secs), or bonds, directly without having to go through an intermediary like a mutual fund.**
- It is similar to placing funds in debt instruments such as fixed deposits in banks. With the Government being the borrower, there is a **sovereign guarantee** for the funds and hence **zero risk of default.**
- Also, government securities may offer **better interest rates** than bank fixed deposits, depending on prevailing interest rate trends.

### How can individuals access G-Sec offerings?

- Investors wishing to open a **Retail Direct Gilt account** directly with the RBI can do so through an **online portal** set up for the purpose of the scheme. Once the account is activated with the aid of a password sent to the user's mobile phone, investors will be permitted to buy securities either in the primary market or in the secondary market.
- The **minimum amount for a bid is ₹10,000** and in **multiples of ₹10,000 thereafter.** Payments may be made through Net banking or the UPI platform.

### Why was it necessary to introduce this scheme?

- The RBI said the scheme would help **broaden the investor base and provide retail investors with enhanced access to the government securities market.**
- The Government intends to borrow up to ₹12 lakh crore this year ending March 31, 2022. The significant spike in borrowing — that is expected to spur infrastructure and social funding — follows a steep decline in the economy last fiscal.
- The Union Government, hence, wishes to broaden the base of investors signing up for bond purchases. The added benefit of the

Government accessing retail investors could be the **freeing up of room for companies to mop up funds from institutional investors**; funds that may otherwise have been cornered by the government to fund its expenses.

## 2) Integrated Ombudsman Scheme

### What is the Banking Ombudsman Scheme?

- The Banking Ombudsman Scheme is an expeditious and inexpensive forum for bank customers for **resolution of complaints relating to certain services rendered by banks.**
- It is introduced under the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949** by the RBI with effect from **1995.**

### Who is a Banking Ombudsman?

- The Banking Ombudsman is a senior official appointed by the RBI to redress customer complaints against deficiency in certain banking services covered under the grounds of complaint specified under the Banking Ombudsman Scheme.

### Grounds of complaints

- The Banking Ombudsman can receive and consider any complaint relating to the following deficiency in banking services:
  - non-payment or inordinate delay in the payment or collection of cheques, drafts, bills etc.;
  - non-acceptance, without sufficient cause, of small denomination notes tendered for any purpose, and for charging of commission in respect thereof;
  - non-payment or delay in payment of inward remittances;
  - non-adherence to prescribed working hours;
  - failure to issue or delay in issue of drafts, pay orders or bankers' cheques; etc.

### When can one file a complaint?

- One can file a complaint before the Banking Ombudsman if the reply is not received from the bank within a period of one month after the bank concerned has received one's complaint, or the bank rejects the complaint,

or if the complainant is not satisfied with the reply given by the bank.

- It should be noted that **one's complaint will not be considered by the Ombudsman if he/she has not approached his bank for redressal of his grievance first.**
- The Banking Ombudsman **does not charge any fee** for filing and resolving customers' complaints.

#### **Institutions covered under the Ombudsman Scheme**

- **All Scheduled Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks and Scheduled Primary Co-operative Banks** are covered under the Banking Ombudsman Scheme.
- In addition to this, the RBI has introduced separate ombudsman schemes for **Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and Digital Transactions** with similar guidelines.

#### **Why in News?**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched the integrated ombudsman scheme which aims to strengthen the grievance redress mechanism for consumers and make dispute resolution more "simpler, efficient and responsive".
- Prior to the introduction of this scheme, the RBI had **three different ombudsman schemes** to aid dispute resolution with respect to **banks, NBFCs, and digital transactions**. With the introduction of the integrated scheme, the **earlier ones stand repealed**.
- The integrated scheme makes it a "**One Nation One Ombudsman**" approach. There will be a single point of reference for the customers to file complaints, submit documents, track status of complaints and provide feedback.
- Besides **Non-Scheduled Primary Co-operative Banks with a deposit size of ₹50 crore and above** have been added to the ambit of the integrated ombudsman now.
- Complaints may be made either **physically** to the Centralised Receipt and Processing Centre or the RBI's offices; or **electronically** through the regulator's complaint

management system  
(<https://cms.rbi.org.in/>).

- The redressal will **continue to be cost-free** for customers of banks and members of the public.

#### **Related Information**

##### **Internal Ombudsman Scheme, 2018**

- To strengthen the grievance redressal mechanism for customers, the RBI introduced the 'Internal Ombudsman Scheme, 2018'.
- It mandates **Banks with more than 10 branches to have an Internal Ombudsman** to review complaints that were partially or wholly rejected by the respective banks.
- It aimed to ensure that the complaints of the customers are redressed at the level of the bank itself so as to minimize the need for the customers to approach other fora for redressal.

### **3) Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister**

#### **EAC-PM**

- Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) is a **non-constitutional, non-permanent and independent body** constituted to give advice on economic and related issues to the Government of India, specifically to the Prime Minister.
- The Terms of Reference of EAC-PM include analyzing any issue, economic or otherwise, referred to it by the Prime Minister and advising him thereon, addressing issues of macroeconomic importance and presenting views thereon to the Prime Minister.
- These could be either **suo-motu or on reference** from the Prime Minister or anyone else.
- The chairman is appointed from time to time when the body is constituted.

#### **Why in News?**

- A meeting of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) was held recently.

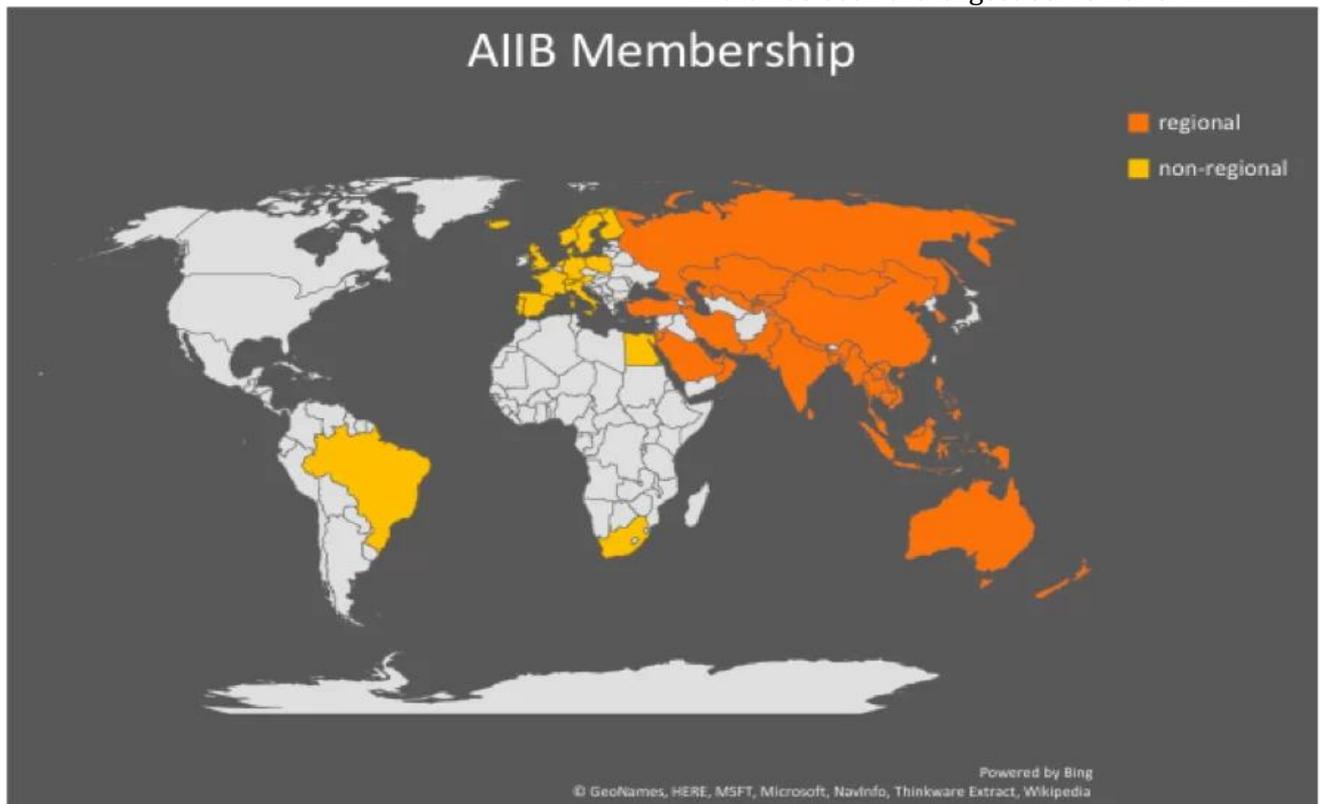
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## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### 1) Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

#### About AIIB

- The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is an international development bank that provides financing for infrastructure projects in Asia.
- Headquartered in **Beijing**, it began operations in 2016.
- It includes more than 100 members worldwide (**India** is a founder member of AIIB). AIIB consists of two classes of membership: **regional and non-regional members**.
- **China** is the largest shareholder with 26.6 per cent voting shares in the bank. **India** is the second largest shareholder with 7.6 per cent voting shares followed by **Russia** 6.0 per cent.
- **India** has been the largest borrower of AIIB.



#### Why in News?

- The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has approved a 150 million USD loan to the Government of India for implementation of

the Sustainable Urban services program for Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA).

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## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### 1) M87\*

#### About blackholes

- When **stars** much more massive than the Sun **reach the end of their lives**, they **collapse under their own gravity**, and the product of this collapse, most astronomers believe is a **black hole**.
- A **black hole has two parts**: At its **core** is a **singularity** – a point that is infinitely **dense**, as all the **remnant mass of the star** is compressed into this point.
- Then there is the **event horizon** – an **imaginary surface surrounding the singularity**, and the **gravity of the object** is such that once **anything enters** this surface, it is **trapped** forever.
- **Not even light can escape** the pull of the singularity **once it crosses the event horizon**. That is why, **we cannot see the singularity** at the heart of a black hole **but only see points outside the event horizon**.
- Hence, all the physics happening within the black hole's event horizon is indeed blocked from the view of the observer.

#### Background

- In **2019**, **astronomers** of the **Event Horizon Telescope** captured the first ever **image** of a **supermassive black hole (M87\*)** which was located at the **centre of a galaxy Messier 87 (M87)**.
- This black hole is calculated to be 6.5 billion times the Sun's mass and is 55 million light years away from the Earth.

#### Why in News?

- A scientific paper published recently brings in an **alternative explanation** for the compact **object** that was **imaged by the Event Horizon Telescope**. The authors say **M87\* is not necessarily a black hole** but could even be a **“naked singularity with a gravitomagnetic monopole.”**

#### News in Detail

- In many **scenarios** of stellar **collapse**, the **event horizon does not form**, and the

**singularity is exposed** to the outside, **without any event horizon shielding it**. If this object should exist, observers can, in principle, see the bare, or “naked” singularity as it is called.

- In the latest study, researchers show that **M87\* could be either a black hole or a naked singularity** and each of **these possibilities** could be **plain or coupled with** what is called a **gravitomagnetic monopole**.
- The **Event Horizon Telescope** collaboration **mapped it to a black hole only** and **did not consider** that it **might contain a gravitomagnetic monopole**.
  - Hence, there are 4 possibilities- M87\* could be a black hole (with or without gravitomagnetic monopole) or a naked singularity (with or without gravitomagnetic monopole)

#### How to understand what a gravitomagnetic monopole is?

- In the nineteenth century, James Clerk Maxwell unified **electricity and magnetism** as one combined phenomenon, showing that **light is an electromagnetic wave**. But there is an asymmetry between electricity and magnetism.
- While **positive and negative electric charges** can be found to **exist independently**, the **poles of a magnet are always found in pairs**, north and south bound together. For Example, if we break a magnet and we will get a smaller magnet having two poles.
- **Researchers** say that **mass is like electric charge and can exist independently**, thus it can be called a **“gravito-electric charge”**.
- In 1963, **Newman, Tamburino and Unti (NUT)** proposed a **theoretical concept** called a **“gravito-magnetic charge”** also called a **gravitomagnetic monopole**.

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# DEFENCE

## 1) Maritime Capability Perspective Plan (MCP)

### Why in News?

- The Navy is planning for a 170 ship force and has budgeted for a second indigenous aircraft carrier under its **Maritime Capability Perspective Plan (MCP)**.
- The Navy will soon commission the first **Project-15B** class stealth guided missile destroyer 'Visakhapatnam' and the **fourth Scorpene class submarine 'Vela'**.

### About Navy's plan

- The Navy currently has 130 ships and had earlier planned to achieve 200 ships, which was revised to 170 ships planned by 2027.
- The timeline is now being revised as the Navy is **revising its MCP for the next 15 years**, which is expected to be ready by next year and will be in line with the 10-year **Integrated Capability Development Plan (ICDP)**.

### Significance

- **China** has been **rapidly expanding its Navy**, rolling out more ships than any other country amid its expanding global footprint, **especially in the Indian Ocean Region**.

### About MCP

- The MCP lays down the **plans for force development and modernisation** over three plan periods from 2005-22. The **aim is to build a three-dimensional force** that is able to meet all future challenges.
- MCP caters for **capability dominant, and threat-cum-mission based approach**.

### About ICDP

- **Capability development** of the Indian armed forces comes from the Integrated Capability Development Plan (ICDP), a document that lays down the **planned procurement of desired equipment** over a span of 10 years. ICDP lays down the military equipment that the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force requires.
- **Preference will be given to indigenous design**, development and manufacturing of defence equipment. The time required for the procurement and delivery from foreign sources vis-à-vis the time required for

making it within India, along with the urgency and criticality of the requirement will be examined before deciding to proceed on categorisation.

### Related Information

#### Project 15B Guided Missile Destroyers

- The **Project 15B class of guided missile destroyers**, an improved variant of the Kolkata-class destroyers, are being built by Mazagon Dock Limited (MDL) for the Indian Navy.
- The Project 15B ships retain the hull design of the Kolkata-class destroyers but will **incorporate advanced stealth features and a high degree of automation**. The vessels will offer **improved survivability, sea keeping and high manoeuvrability**.
- The sleek hull design in combination with radar transparent deck fittings will make the vessels difficult to detect.
- With a state-of-the-art sensor package and weapons, the destroyers will be one of the world's most technologically advanced guided missile destroyers.

#### Role of P-15B:

- In the **current geopolitical environment**, the Indian Navy's obligations to protect a **massive coastline of 7516 kilometres and around 1100 offshore islands**, as well as a 2.01 million square kilometre **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**, have been increased.
- Destroyers of the P-15B class will play a key role in the **Indo-Pacific's oceans**, making the Indian Navy a formidable force.
- The guided missile destroyers are used for a variety of missions, **including escort duty** with the **Carrier Battle Group** to protect the Naval fleet from attacks from the air, sea, and land.

#### Other Recent Projects:

- **Project 75I-** <https://officerspulse.com/ins-karanj-the-scorpene-class-submarine-inducted-into-service/>

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## ART AND CULTURE

### 1) Rani Kamalapati

#### Who is Rani Kamalapati?

- **Rani Kamalapati**, the **Gond queen** of the region in the 18th century, was the widow of Ginnorgarh's chief, Gond ruler Nizam Shah.
- According to reports, **she built the seven-storey 'Kamalapati Palace'**, which presently serves as an Archaeological Survey of India-protected monument.
- Rani Kamalapati Palace is a secular architecture of the 18th century **built of Lakhauri bricks, cusped arches over crumpled pillars.**
- The merlons are shaped as water lotuses honouring the name of the Queen.

#### Why in News?

- The **Habibganj railway station in Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh)** has been renamed after **Gond queen Rani Kamalapati.**

#### Additional Details

##### How to change the name of a station?

- To **rename a village, town, city, or station**, an **executive order** is required.
- After receiving **no objections from the Ministry of Railways, the Department of Posts, and the Survey of India**, the **Union Home Ministry** gives its **approval** to the proposal to **change the name of any railway station or place.**
- For changing the **name of a state** (under **Article 3**), **amendment of the Constitution** with **majority** (majority of more than 50% of the members present and voting in the House) in **Parliament** is **needed.**

#### About Gonds

- The Gonds are one of the world's most populous **tribal groups.**
- It has been notified as a Scheduled Tribe.
- **Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Odisha** are the states where they live the most.
- Two types of **millet, kodo and kutki**, are their basic foods.
- According to the Gonds, **Gods rule the land, water, and air.**
- They primarily **speak Gondi, a Dravidian family** of unwritten languages.

- **Keslapur Jathra** is an important **festival** amongst the Gonds
- Another important **event** among the Gonds is **Madai.**
- They also celebrate **Dussehra**, a Hindu festival.
- The **Gusadi dance** is their most well-known performance.

### 2) Kalpathi Ratholsavam

#### Why in News?

- The festivities at Kalpathi Sree Visalakshi Sametha Sree Viswanathaswami Temple have resumed post the pandemic.

#### About the festival

- **Kalpathi Ratholsavam** (Kalpathi Chariot Festival) is an annual **Hindu Temple festival** in the Kalpathi village of **Palakkad district in Kerala.**
- The temple dates back to **1425**, where the **deities are Lord Siva** (Lord Viswanatha) and his consort Visalakshi.
- The ancient temple is nestled by the banks of the **Kalpathi river** which is also known as the **Nila river.**

#### About Kalpathi

- Kalpathy, the Brahmin hamlet of Palakkad, is noted for its unique architecture, music and Ratholsavam (chariot festival), is the **first heritage village in Kerala.**
- **Pragpur of Himachal Pradesh is the first heritage village in India.** A **heritage village is declared by the State government.**
- The **Agraharam**, the **traditional residential hamlet** which is believed to have been established by migrant Brahmins from Tanjore, will be well preserved under the initiative.

### 3) UNWTO

#### About UNWTO

- The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.
- Formed in **1975**, UNWTO's headquarter is in **Madrid, Spain.**
- UNWTO's membership includes 159 Member States (including **India**), 6 Associate Members and over 500 Affiliate

Members representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities.

#### Why in News?

- The **Pochampally Village in Telangana** has been selected as **one of the best Tourism Villages** by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation.
- The Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO initiative aims to award those villages which are outstanding examples of rural destinations and showcase good practices in line with its specified evaluation areas. It also aims to support villages to enhance their rural tourism potential through training and access to opportunities for improvement.
- Pochampally is often referred to as the **silk city of India** for the exquisite sarees that are woven through a unique style called **Ikat**.
- This style, **Pochampally Ikat**, received a **Geographical Indicator (GI status)** in 2004 and is also known as **Bhoodan Pochampally** to commemorate the Bhoodan movement that was launched by Acharya Vinobha Bhave from this village on April 18, 1951.

#### Related Information

##### About GI Tag

- A geographical indication (GI) is a sign used on products that have a **specific geographical origin** and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. In order to function as a GI, a sign must identify a product as originating in a given place.
- It is used for **agricultural, natural and manufactured goods**. Darjeeling tea became the first GI tagged product in India.
- The registration of GI is valid for **10 years** after which it needs to be renewed.
- It should be noted that registration of a product is **not compulsory**.
  - Registration affords better legal protection to facilitate an action for infringement
  - The registered proprietor and authorised users can initiate infringement actions
  - The authorised users can exercise the exclusive right to use the geographical indication.

#### Legislations

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

#### Bhoodan Movement

- The Bhoodan Movement, also known as the **Bloodless Revolution**, was started by Mahatma Gandhi's disciple **Vinoba Bhave** in 1951 at **Pochampally village**.
- It was a voluntary land reform movement. The movement saw **land owners gifting land to the landless**. Within six years, about 1.9 million ha were collected.
- Over the next two decades the movement took the shape of a law called the **Bhoodan Act** and put the government in charge of distributing land from the land bank.
- The movement later transformed into **Gramdan (village in gift) movement**, under which the whole or a major part of a village land was donated by not less than 75 per cent of the residents for equal

distribution among all village residents. Tribal areas were major participants in the Gramdan movement. Both the movements died eventually but left behind the land bank.

- In the past six decades the government has distributed around 971,000 ha of the bhoodan land among the landless. There are over 931,000 ha more to be distributed.

#### 4) Heritage Dhow

##### What is it?

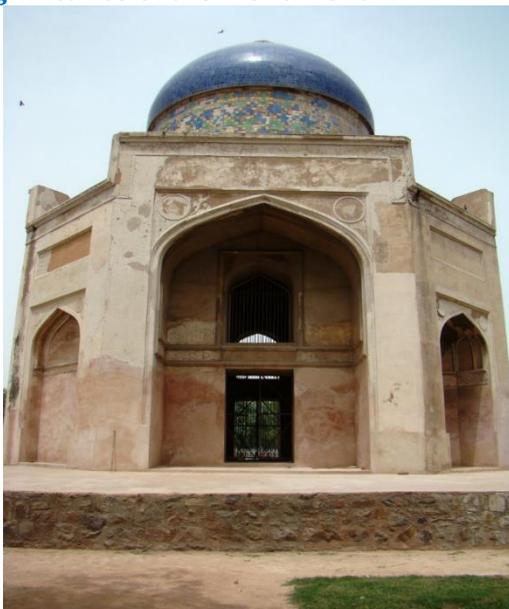
- **Dhow** is the **generic name** for a variety of **traditional sailing vessels used** in the **Red Sea and Indian Ocean region** with one or more masts and settee or sometimes lateen sails.

##### Why in News?

- Recently the term has been in news as the **Dhow** will be **showcased** among the exhibits at Qatar during the **FIFA World Cup**. For this a **special dhow** is being **built** in a village in **Kerala**.
- **Recreating the vessels** used by **Arab traders about 800 years** ago when they sailed to Kerala, the dhow being made at Kozhikode in Kerala will not have a single nail or metal piece. Instead, **traditional coir ropes** will hold together the teak pieces.

#### 5) Sabz Burj

##### Significance of the monument



- The Sabz Burj tomb is located in **New Delhi**. **Built in 1530**, it does not have any markings pointing to the identity of those buried under it.
- It is **thought** to be the **earliest surviving painted ceiling for any monument in India**.
- This is **one of the earliest**, if not the earliest, **Mughal buildings in India**.
- It is **presumed** to have been built shortly after 1526, when the Mughal armies under **Babur defeated the Lodi Afghan dynasty** and founded the Mughal empire in India. Sabz Burj is also **one of the earliest buildings in India with a double dome**.
- Its unique architecture is representative of the **Timurid style**.
- The monument **stands at the entrance to Humayun's Tomb** and would have originally stood within an enclosed garden.

##### Why in News?

- Restoration works of Sabz Burj are almost complete.

##### Additional Details

##### Humayun's tomb

- This tomb, **built in 1570**, is of particular cultural significance as it was the **first garden-tomb on the Indian subcontinent**.
- It **inspired** several major architectural innovations, culminating in the construction of the **Taj Mahal**.
- Humayun's Tomb was **built** with the **patronage of Emperor Akbar**.
- **Humayun's garden-tomb** is an **example of the charbagh** (a four quadrant garden with the four rivers of Quranic paradise represented), with pools joined by channels.
- **Humayun's garden-tomb** is also called the '**dormitory of the Mughals**' as in the cells are buried over 150 Mughal family members.
- The tomb stands in an extremely significant archaeological setting, **centred at the Shrine of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Sufi Saint, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya**.
- It was designated as a **World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1993**.

## PIB ANALYSIS

### 1) MGNREGA

#### About MGNREGA

- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme is the largest social security scheme in the world — guaranteeing **100 days of work** each financial year to **any rural household** willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage.
- The act makes it **obligatory** for the State to give rural households work on demand. In case such employment is not provided within 15 days of registration, the applicant becomes eligible for an **unemployment allowance**.
- The **Ministry of Rural Development (MRD)** is monitoring the entire implementation of this scheme in association with state governments.

#### Key Features

- **One-third** of the stipulated workforce must be women.
- **Work site facilities** such as creche, drinking water and shade have to be provided.
- The employment will be provided **within a radius of 5 km**: if it is above 5 km extra wage will be paid.
- The wages are revised according to the **Consumer Price Index-Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL)**.
- A **60:40 wage and material ratio** has to be maintained.
- Permissible works predominantly include water and soil conservation, afforestation and land development works.
- **Work site facilities** such as crèche, drinking water, shade have to be provided.
- **Gram sabhas** must recommend the works that are to be undertaken and at least 50% of the works must be executed by them.
- **Social Audit** has to be done by the Gram Sabha.

#### Funding

- Funding is shared between the centre and the states.
- The funding pattern of the scheme comprises 100% funding for unskilled labour cost and 75% of the material cost by

Central Government and rest shall be borne by the State Government.

#### Why in News?

- The Ministry of Rural Development has reached an important milestone with the completion of **Geographical Information System (GIS) plans** for 2 lakh Gram Panchayats (GPs) out of 2.69 lakh GPs under MGNREGA using remote sensing technology.
- GIS-based planning under MGNREGS is an initiative of the Ministry of Rural Development which helps the Gram Panchayat to **ensure a scientific & holistic approach for planning at the Gram Panchayat level**. It is an important tool to ensure participatory planning at the implementation level.
- It is helping in the development of quality assets at the Gram Panchayat level through proper planning and decision making.

#### About GIS

- The GIS is a computer-based tool for mapping and analyzing the geographic terrain and offers scientific choices of development works suitable to the area.
- This technology integrates common database operations such as query and statistical analysis with the unique visualization and geographic analysis benefits offered by the maps.

### 2) National Education Policy 2020

#### Background

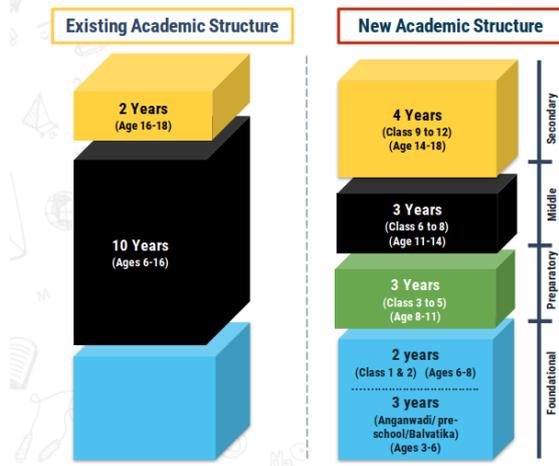
- Last year, the Union Cabinet approved the National Education Policy 2020. The new policy aims to pave way for transformational reforms in school and higher education systems in the country. This policy will replace the 34 year old National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986.
- The policy is based on the pillars of **“access, equity, quality, affordability, accountability”** and will transform India into a vibrant knowledge hub.

#### Highlights of the Policy

##### Early Childhood Care & Education

- The current 10+2 system to be replaced by a new **5+3+3+4 curricular structure** corresponding to ages 3-8, 8-11, 11-14, and

14-18 years respectively. This will bring the hitherto uncovered age group of 3-6 years under school curriculum, which has been recognized globally as the crucial stage for development of mental faculties of a child.



- The new system will have **12 years of schooling with three years of Anganwadi/ pre schooling.**
- New Policy aims for **universalization of education from preschool to secondary level with 100 % Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in school education by 2030.**
- NEP 2020 will bring 2 crore out of school children back into the mainstream through an open schooling system.

#### Reforms in school curricula and pedagogy

- The school curricula and pedagogy will aim for holistic development of learners by equipping them with the key 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, reduction in curricular content to enhance essential learning and critical thinking and greater focus on experiential learning. Students will have increased **flexibility and choice of subjects.**
- There will be no rigid separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams.
- **Vocational education** will start in schools from the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and will include internships.
- A new and comprehensive **National Curricular Framework for School Education, NCFSE 2020-21**, will be developed by the NCERT.
- NEP 2020 calls for the setting up of a **National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy** by the Education Ministry. States will prepare an

implementation plan for attaining **universal foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary schools for all learners by grade 3 by 2025.**

#### Medium of instruction

- The policy states, the medium of instruction until at least class 5 (and preferably till class 8) should be **“home language or mother tongue or local/regional language”**. The policy gives the freedom to the state, region, and child to choose **three languages** to be learned. However, at least two of the three languages should be native Indian languages.
- Assessment reforms with **360 degree Holistic Progress Card, tracking Student Progress for achieving Learning Outcomes.**

#### NCFTE 2021

- A new and comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, NCFTE 2021, will be formulated by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) in consultation with NCERT.
- By 2030, the **minimum degree qualification for teaching will be a 4-year integrated B.Ed. degree.**
- Every state/district will be encouraged to establish **"Bal Bhavans"** as a special daytime boarding school, to participate in art-related, career-related, and play-related activities.

#### Higher Education

- **Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education to be raised to 50 % by 2035;** 3.5 crore seats to be added in higher education.
- The policy envisages broad based, multi-disciplinary, holistic Undergraduate education with flexible curriculum, creative combinations of subjects, integration of vocational education and multiple entry and exit points with appropriate certification.
- **UG education can be of 3 or 4 years with multiple exit options and appropriate certification within this period.**
- Academic Bank of Credits to be established to facilitate Transfer of Credits.
- **Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs)**, at par with IITs, IIMs, to be set up as models of best multidisciplinary education of global standards in the country.

- The **National Research Foundation** will be created as an apex body for fostering a strong research culture and building research capacity across higher education.
- A **National Mission for Mentoring** will be established, with a large pool of outstanding senior/retired faculty – including those with the ability to teach in Indian languages – who would be willing to provide short and long-term mentoring/professional support to university/college teachers.

#### **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)**

- HECI will be set up as a single umbrella body for the entire higher education, excluding medical and legal education. Public and private higher education institutions will be governed by the same set of norms for regulation, accreditation and academic standards.
- Also, HECI will be having four independent verticals namely,
  - National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) for regulation,
  - General Education Council (GEC) for standard setting,
  - Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) for funding,
  - National Accreditation Council (NAC) for accreditation.
- Affiliation of colleges is to be phased out in 15 years and a stage-wise mechanism is to be established for granting **graded autonomy to colleges**.
- Over a period of time, it is envisaged that every college would develop into either an Autonomous degree-granting College, or a constituent college of a university.
- **Internationalization of education** will be facilitated through both institutional collaborations, and student and faculty mobility and allowing entry of top world ranked Universities to open campuses in our country.

#### **Others focus areas**

- The policy aims to achieve **100% youth and adult literacy**.
- An autonomous body, the **National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)**, will be created to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of

technology to enhance learning, assessment, planning, administration.

- NEP 2020 emphasizes setting up of **Gender Inclusion Fund, Special Education Zones for disadvantaged regions** and groups
- A new National Assessment Centre, **PARAKH** (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development), will be set up as a standard-setting body.
- New Policy **promotes Multilingualism** in both schools and higher education.
- **National Institute for Pali, Persian and Prakrit, Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation** to be set up.
- The Centre and the States will work together to increase the public investment in the **Education sector to reach 6% of GDP at the earliest**.

#### **Why in News?**

- The new National Education Policy lays emphasis on imparting teaching in the mother tongue in primary classes.
- The ST and SC Development Department of the Odisha government has started working on a project called '**Samhati**' to **address the language issues faced by tribal students in early grades or elementary classes**.
- Under Samhati, it has been decided that **all teachers of primary level would be provided functional knowledge of tribal languages** and ways of communicating with tribal students. In the first phase, 1,000 teachers would be asked to obtain these language skills.
- According to experts, mother-tongue based education is a welcome step. A tribal student sees the world through his own language. The most important aspect of mother-tongue based education is that it **helps save endangered tribal languages**. If language is saved, the culture will be preserved automatically.
- **Odisha** is home to 62 different tribal communities including 13 particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs), making it the State with the most diverse indigenous communities in the country.

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# News in Depth

## AIR NEWS

### 1) IRNSS

#### Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) - NavIC

- IRNSS is an independent **regional navigation satellite system** developed by the **Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)**.
- In April 2016, with the last launch of the constellation's satellite, IRNSS was renamed **Navigation Indian Constellation (NAVIC)**.

#### Range of NavIC

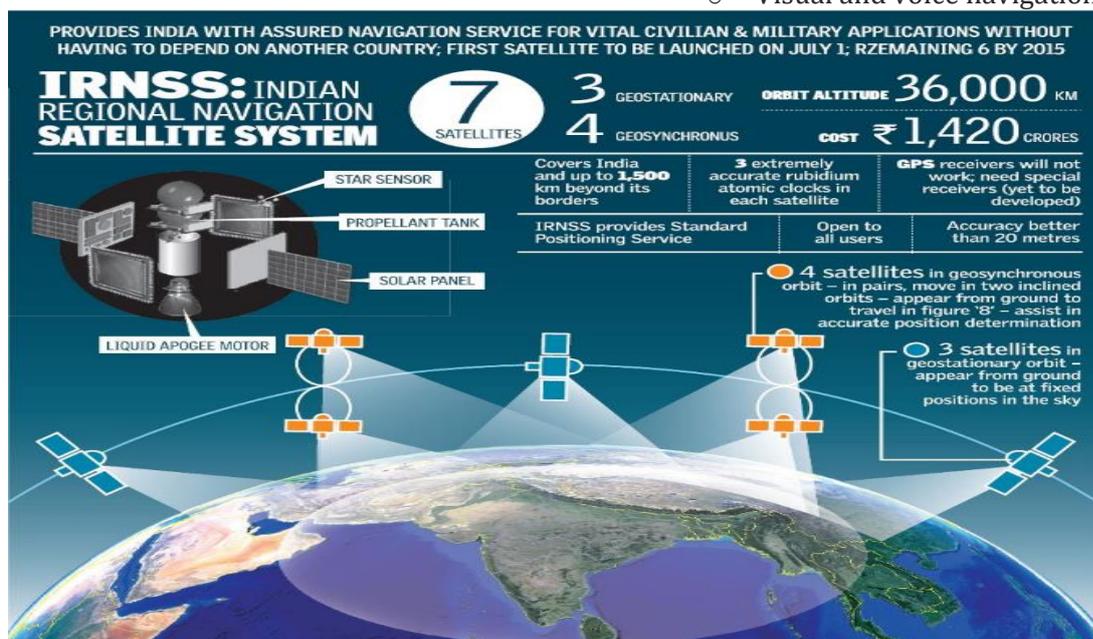
- It is designed to provide accurate position information service to users in India as well as the region extending up to **1500 km from its boundary**, which is its **primary service area**.
- Beyond that lies an **Extended Service Area**, that can extend up to the edges of the area enclosed by the rectangle imagined by latitudes 30 degrees South and 50 degrees North, and longitudes 30 degrees East and 130 degrees East.
- IRNSS will provide **two types of services**, namely, **Standard Positioning Service**

(SPS) which is provided to all the users and **Restricted Service (RS)**, which is an encrypted service provided only to the authorised users.

- The IRNSS System is expected to **provide a position accuracy of better than 20 m** in the primary service area.
- The space segment consists of the IRNSS **constellation of eight satellites** (with one being a replacement). Three satellites are located in the **geostationary orbit** and the remaining four are located in **geosynchronous orbits**.

#### Applications

- Applications of IRNSS include:
  - Terrestrial, Aerial and Marine Navigation
  - Disaster Management
  - Vehicle tracking and fleet management
  - Integration with mobile phones
  - Precise Timing
  - Mapping and Geodetic data capture
  - Terrestrial navigation aid for hikers and travelers
  - Visual and voice navigation for drivers



#### Why in News?

- Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu suggested ISRO to give a thrust to the indigenously-developed regional navigation satellite system, NavIC for global use.
- He urged ISRO to actively pursue the expansion of the NavIC system in terms of areas covered, services offered and its effective utilization to meet the national requirements.

## 2) Aspirational Districts Programme

### About the programme

- Launched in 2018, the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) is one of the largest experiments on **outcomes-focused governance** in the world.
- The ADP is **NITI Aayog's** flagship initiative to **uplift those backward 117 districts that are lagging behind in specific development parameters** of health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion, skill development, and basic infrastructure.

### Core Strategy

- The broad contours of the programme are **Convergence** (of Central & State Schemes), **Collaboration** (of Central, State level 'Prabhari' Officers & District Collectors), and **Competition** among districts driven by a spirit of mass Movement.
- With States as the main drivers, this program will focus on the strength of each district, identify low-hanging fruits for immediate improvement, measure progress, and rank districts.

### Selection of districts

- **117 districts** were identified using a composite index of key data sets that included deprivation enumerated under the Socio-Economic Caste Census, key health and education sector performance and state of basic infrastructure.

### Institutional framework

- **NITI Aayog** anchors the programme with support from Central Ministries and the State Governments.
- Officers at the level of Joint Secretary / Additional Secretary have been nominated to become the '**Central Prabhari Officers**' of each district.
- States have appointed state-nodal and Prabhari officers.
- An Empowered Committee under the Convenorship of the CEO, NITI Aayog will help in the convergence of various government schemes and streamlining of efforts.

### Focus Areas

- To enable optimum utilization of their potential, this program focuses closely on improving people's ability to participate fully in the vibrant economy.
- Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure are this programme's core areas of focus.

### Baseline Ranking

- The objective of the program is to **monitor the real-time progress** of aspirational districts based on 49 indicators (81 data-points) from the 5 identified thematic areas.
- Districts are aspiring to first catch-up with the best district within their State, and subsequently aspire to become one of the best in the country, by competing with, and learning from others in the spirit of **competitive & cooperative federalism**.

### Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet has given nod to provide 4G mobile services in over 7,000 villages of 44 aspirational districts across Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and Odisha. The mobile towers connectivity will be provided in Left Wing Extremist areas.

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## THE HINDU EDITORIALS

### 1) Creating safe digital spaces

#### CONTEXT

- Recognising that **school-related violence is an infringement of children's right to education and to health and well-being**, UNESCO Member States have declared the first Thursday of November as the **International Day against Violence and Bullying at School, including cyberbullying**.
- The **aim is to raise awareness** among students, parents, members of the school community, education authorities and others **about the problem of online violence and cyberbullying**.

#### CONCERNS

##### Exposure of tender age:

- In India, an **estimated 71 million children aged 5-11** years access the Internet on the devices of their family members, constituting about 14% of the country's active Internet user base of over 500 million.
- It should also be noted that **two-thirds of Internet users in India are in the age group of 12-29 years**.

##### Rise in cyber-bullying:

- **School closures as a response to the COVID-19 lockdowns** have led to an **unprecedented rise in unsupervised screen time for children and young people**, which in turn exposed them to a greater risk of online violence.
- Various reports have indicated **increased incidence of cyberbullying and online child sexual exploitation by adults**.

##### Impact on health and education:

- Published in 2019, UNESCO's report '**Behind the numbers: Ending school violence and bullying**' highlighted the extent of the problem, with **almost one in three students worldwide reporting being bullied at least once in the preceding month**.
- There is growing scientific evidence which suggests that **cyberbullying has negative consequences on the education, health and well-being of children and young people**.

- Data on school bullying demonstrates its harmful impacts on students' educational outcomes, mental health, and quality of life.
  - Children who are frequently bullied are **nearly three times more likely to feel left out at school than those who are not**.
  - They are also **twice more likely to miss out on school and have a higher tendency to leave formal education** after finishing secondary school.

##### Women at higher risk:

- A 2020 study by **Plan International**, revealed that **58% of girls in the Asia-Pacific region reported online harassment**.
- Globally, of the girls who were harassed, **14% who self-identified as having a disability** and **37% who identified themselves as from an ethnic minority** said they get harassed because of it.

#### WAY FORWARD

- At a time when COVID-19 lockdowns have resulted in online bullying, there is a need to redouble our efforts to tackle this menace.
- There is a need for **cyberbullying prevention interventions**, which should aim at **tackling all types of bullying and victimisation experiences** at the same time, **as opposed to each in silo**.
- Effective interventions also require **gender-sensitive and targeted approaches** that respond to needs of learners who are most likely to be the victims of online violence.
- Although online violence is not limited to school premises, **the education system plays a crucial role** in addressing online safety.
  - Concerted efforts must be made to **provide children and young people with the knowledge and skills to identify online violence** so that they can protect themselves from its different forms, whether perpetrated by peers or adults.
  - **Teachers also play a critical role** by teaching students about online safety, and thus supporting parental involvement.

- For those looking to prevent and counter cyberbullying, **the information booklet brought out by UNESCO in partnership with NCERT on Safe Online Learning in Times of COVID-19 can be a useful reference.**
- Similarly, to prevent the adverse effect of online gaming and the psycho-emotional stress that children could be undergoing, **the Department of School Education and Literacy has circulated exhaustive guidelines to raise children and parental awareness.**

### CONCLUSION

- Cyberbullying may take place in a virtual world, but it has a very real impact on the victim's health. Hence, it is imperative that digital and social media platforms are free of cyberbullying and learners have access to quality education.

## 2) Kabul, Kashmir and the return of realpolitik

### CONTEXT

- While the return of the Taliban to Kabul may have ended the violent warfare within Afghanistan, the **geopolitical contest to own the spoils of Taliban's victory has just begun.**
- **New Delhi's attempts at forming a regional consensus to stabilise Afghanistan, although wise and timely, will only achieve limited success,** thanks to the China-Pakistan coalition and its interests at play in and over Afghanistan.
- Further **India's advances to woo the Taliban and attempts to evolve a regional consensus on Afghanistan** might **deteriorate India-Pakistan relations** and pose challenges for India in Kashmir.

### IN POST-AMERICAN AFGHANISTAN

- While the recently held **Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan** was an important initiative to help Afghanistan stabilise, the two countries that are key to stabilising Afghanistan — **China and Pakistan** — **decided to stay away from it.**
  - **Russia or the Central Asian states have neither the ability nor the desire** to pursue a role in Afghanistan

autonomous from the larger Chinese or Pakistani designs there.

- **Iran has limited interests** in Afghanistan and is **unlikely to go against the Chinese plan** for the region, especially in the broader context of being under United States sanctions.

### CHINA'S INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN

- While China seems to be approaching Taliban-led Afghanistan in a cautiously slow manner, it is clearly poised to be in the driving seat of the regional, if not global, engagement with the region in the months ahead.
- It is a matter of time before Beijing recognises the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, and it is likely to coordinate its recognition along with that of Russia and Pakistan.
- **China's long-term vision for Afghanistan revolves around the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project** of which Afghanistan has been a part since May 2016.
- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is also viewed as a key component within the larger Chinese BRI project and **Afghanistan could eventually become part of CPEC** if and when the Taliban regime stabilises itself in the country.
- Hence, for China, there is a lot riding on the Taliban.

### PAKISTAN'S INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN

- Even though **Pakistan recognises the challenge to itself from an unstable Afghanistan**, its current Afghan strategy reeks of delighted attitude.
- While it lobbies the international community to help prevent Afghanistan slide into further turmoil, it is determined to keep India as far away from Kabul as possible even though the Taliban would like India to continue the engagement and offer development assistance.
- For Pakistan, **Afghanistan is the mother of all zero sum games.**

### DILEMMA— AID OR NO AID

- The international community is faced with a dilemma in providing aid to Afghanistan for following reasons:

- Taliban and Pakistan refer to the U.S.-led coalition as 'colonisers' who just vacated the Afghan territory; and on the other side they seek assistance from those very 'former colonisers'.
- In this situation if the West stabilises the country, they would still be called former colonisers, and Pakistan and China will benefit out of it geopolitically.
- So the question before the western leaders is **how to offer structured incentives to the Taliban, and when.**
- Second, if the U.S. and the West indeed send aid to Afghanistan, **it may or may not reach the people.** And yet, if they do not help, Afghans will suffer untold miseries.

### CHALLENGES FOR INDIA

- India faces dilemmas in Afghanistan to decide whether to engage the Taliban or not.
- Though the successive governments in Afghanistan, including the current Taliban regime have sought relations with India, this upsets Pakistan.
- Not too long ago, Pakistan refused to attend the regional security meeting on Afghanistan called by India.
- These instances indicate that **Pakistan would not like India to either develop close relations with the Taliban or be a part of any regional set up** to stabilise the country.
- More so, it is likely that the **more India gets close to the Taliban, the more the Pakistani side will increase the heat in Jammu and Kashmir.**
- Hence, this situation poses a dilemma for India, i.e.,
- if the Taliban regime is stabilised in Kabul without India's assistance to the country, the more it is likely to do Pakistan's bidding vis-à-vis India.
- On the other hand, the more India helps the Taliban-led Afghanistan, the more Pakistan will up the ante in Kashmir.
- However, India has little choice but to engage the Taliban.

### CHANGING POLICY OF PAKISTAN

- Although earlier Pakistan showed willingness to be conciliatory towards India on Kashmir, this gesture seems to have disappeared for now.

- This is at least partly due **to the Pakistani triumphalism about the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.**
- Since then, violence data show that the backchannel understanding is withering away with violence in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) spiking gradually.
- Also there has been **change in Pakistan's conciliatory approach on Kashmir**, as now it demands that India should fully revert to the pre-August 5, 2019 position on Kashmir.

### CONCLUSION

- With the centrality of Kashmir in Pakistan's foreign policy in the wake of the Taliban takeover of Kabul, it is likely to see more war of words and violence in the context of J&K.
- This will mean that **any possibility of India-Pakistan cooperation in Afghanistan would be very hard to achieve.** Beijing will play along; so will Iran and the Central Asian countries, for the most part.
- **For New Delhi then, the options are to coordinate its Afghan policy with Moscow, Washington and the various western capitals while steadfastly engaging the Taliban.**

## 3) More a private sector primer than health-care pathway

### CONTEXT

- The central government's flagship health insurance scheme, **the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)**, aims to **extend hospitalisation cover of up to ₹5 lakh per family per annum to a poor and vulnerable population of nearly 50 crore people.**
- Apart from AB-PMJAY and State-level government health insurance schemes, **small segments of the Indian population are covered under social health insurance schemes and private health insurance.**
- The government has been discussing how to **cover the left out segment of the population, commonly termed the 'missing middle'**, sandwiched between the poor and the affluent.
- Towards this, NITI Aayog has recently published a road map document entitled

**“Health Insurance for India’s Missing Middle”.**

- However, the report startles all hopes and expectations of a credible pathway to universal health coverage (UHC) for India.

### REPORT’S PROPOSAL

- The report proposes **voluntary, contributory health insurance dispensed mainly by private commercial health insurers** as the prime instrument for extending health insurance to the ‘missing middle’.
- Government subsidies, **if any at all, will be reserved for the very poor within the ‘missing middle’** and only at a later stage of development of voluntary contributory insurance.

### In-patient care

- **For hospitalisation insurance**, the report proposes a **model similar to the Aarogya Sanjeevani scheme**, although with lower projected premiums of around ₹4,000-₹6,000 per family per annum (for a sum insured of ₹5 lakh for a family of five).
  - There would be a **standard benefit package for all**, and the insured sum will be between ₹5,00,000 and ₹10,00,000.
  - **Insurance will be dispensed largely by commercial insurers** who would compete among themselves.

### Out-patient care

- The report **rightly acknowledges that OPD (outpatient department) expenses comprise the largest share of out-of-pocket expenditure on health care**, and concomitantly have a greater role in impoverishment of families due to health-care expenses.
- The report **proposes an OPD insurance with an insured sum of ₹5,000 per family per annum**, and again uses average per capita OPD spending to justify the ability to pay.
- However, the **OPD insurance is envisaged on a subscription basis**, which means that **insured families would need to pay nearly the entire insured sum in advance** to obtain the benefits.

### IGNORED FUNDAMENTAL PERCEPTS

The NITI report sweepingly ignores various fundamental precepts:

- The report’s proposal has a major **twist from the vision espoused by the high-level expert group on UHC a decade ago**.
- The group was highly sceptical about such a health insurance model as the instrument of UHC and **advocated a largely tax-financed health system although with private sector participation**.
- Also, **no country has ever achieved UHC by relying predominantly on private sources of financing** health care.
- Evidence shows that **in developing countries such as India, with an enormous informal sector, contributory health insurance is not the best way forward** and can be full of problems.

### OTHER ISSUES

- The model proposed by the report is a **little different from commercial private insurance**, except for somewhat lower premiums.
  - These low premiums are achieved by **reducing administrative costs of insurers through an array of measures**, including private use of government infrastructure, and possibly by switching to low-powered modes of physician payments.
  - Thus, the proposed model is vulnerable to nearly every vice that characterises conventional private insurance.
- Any attempt to provide UHC should be accompanied with **proper checks and balances, but nothing such has been discussed in the NITI report**.
- The route proposed by the report is unlikely to result in any significant reduction of out-of-pocket expenditure on OPD care. Thus, **beating the whole purpose of providing insurance**.
  - Any cost savings or benefits that accrue would be due to using low-powered physician payment modes and a more integrated and coordinated pathway of care.
  - However, their contribution is likely to be nominal and at least be partly offset

by the administrative costs involved in insurance.

- **Individuals are likely to be largely indifferent to such an OPD insurance scheme**, particularly if it restricts choice of health-care providers.
- The NITI report **defies the universally accepted logic that UHC invariably necessitates a strong and overarching role for the Government in health care**, particularly in developing countries.
- Rather than charting pathways for UHC in India, the **report is more about expanding the footprints and penetration of the private health insurance sector**.
- Further, the report looks to **attain the elusive UHC with few or no fiscal implications for the Government**. Such a position is highly concerning in the aftermath of COVID-19.
- On the contrary to such an idea, **the National Health Policy 2017 envisaged increasing public health spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2025**.

#### WAY FORWARD

- Despite relying predominantly on private insurers and a competitive model of insurance, certain **important checks and balances exist that have to be imposed**. For instance, consider checks imposed by Switzerland:
  - benefits are inscribed in legislation;
  - basic insurance is mandatory and not-for-profit;
  - cream-skimming and risk-discrimination are prohibited.
- The report suggests enrolment in groups as a means to counter adverse selection.
- The prevailing per capita expenditure on hospital care is used to reflect affordability of hospital insurance, and thereby, a possible willingness to pay for insurance.

#### CONCLUSION

- While making an attempt to achieve UHC, it is important to remember that **even free-of-cost government health insurance for the poor has little penetration in the country**, despite a nearly two decade-long legacy. Hence, the possible destiny of contributory private health insurance with modestly

lower premiums, for a target group that is not significantly well-off, is obvious.

## 4) Wide fault lines within the Global Climate Risk Index

### CONTEXT

- The address by Barbados Prime Minister at the 26th United Nations Conference of Parties, or COP-26, in Glasgow, Scotland, attracted global attention with her remark that **failure to provide critical adaptation finance as well as measuring the extent of loss caused by climate change with respect to “lives and livelihoods” was immoral**.
- This has again brought the **complexity in measuring climate risk** to the forefront.

### WHAT IS CLIMATE RISK

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), under the aegis of the United Nations, defines **climate risk as the likelihood of unfavourable impacts occurring as a result of severe climate events interacting with vulnerable environmental, social, economic, political or cultural conditions**.
- Quantitatively, it is the **product of the probability of a climate event occurring and its adverse consequences**.

### GLOBAL CLIMATE RISK INDEX

- Recent discussions around climate risk assessment and management have been based on the **“Global Climate Risk Index” (GCRI)**.
  - GCRI is published annually by **GermanWatch, a non-profit organisation**.
- The latest version of the GCRI, published in January 2021, ranked 180 countries based on the impact of extreme weather events and associated socio-economic data from 2000-2019.
  - **India has improved its rankings from last year. It is ranked 7th in the 2021 Index as compared to 5th in 2020 Index**.
- This index uses historical data to provide insights on exposure to extreme events.
- It cannot be used for linear forecasts about future climate impact.

## FAULT IN THE METHODOLOGY AND INTERPRETATION OF INDEX

- There are deep fault lines in the methodology and interpretation of the country rankings by the index:

### Rationale for Ranking:

- The GCRI ranks countries based on **four key indicators**:
  - number of deaths;
  - number of deaths per 1,00,000 inhabitants;
  - sum of losses in Purchasing Power Parity (in U.S. dollars);
  - losses per unit of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- Of these indicators, **two are absolute while the other two are relative** and the GCRI report provides no rationale for the selection of these macro indicators.

### The index suffers from exclusion errors and selection bias:

- Composite indicators are better constructed using micro indicators instead of macro indicators, which measure loss because isolating the effect of the loss of elements on GDP is filled with errors.
- Instead, a number of key micro indicators such as the total number of people injured, loss of livestock, loss of public and private infrastructure, crop loss and others are better candidates for assessing the composite loss resulting from climate change events.

### Omission of geological incidents:

- The index **accounts for information on weather-related events** like storms, floods, temperature extremes and mass movements.
- However, it **omits geological incidents** like earthquakes, volcanic eruptions or tsunamis, which may be potentially triggered by climate change and can have economic and humanitarian impact.

### Based on Invalid source of data:

- The ranking under the GCRI is done based on data collected by Munich Re's NatCatService, which is **not validated at the ground-level**.

- The data gaps particularly with regard to economic losses are based on experience, the prevailing intellectual property of MunichRe and the market value of elements at risk that are at best approximate values of economic losses.

## INDIA'S INITIATIVE TO ACCOUNT UNCERTAINTY

- Any discussion on measurement and management of climate risk is incomplete without **accounting for issues of uncertainty, scale and delays between action and response to climate change**.
- Therefore, climate change can at best be managed within a **comprehensive risk assessment framework**, which uses climate information to better cope with the impact of climate change.
- In this direction, India's latest module on the **National Disaster Management Information System (NDMIS) captures damages and losses caused by disasters and monitors** the targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- The NDMIS captures **details on parameters** like death, injury, affected population by categories as well as economic losses in social and infrastructure sectors due to weather and geological events on a daily basis.
- Thus, the data captured by the NDMIS includes all major climatic events.

## CONCLUSION

- Deploying effective approaches and principles to foster collaboration among climate risk information users and providers, along with enabling the implementation of effective management actions, will allow India to leapfrog on the targets envisaged in the Sendai Framework.

## 5) The defeat of hubris, a confrontation on hold

### CONTEXT

- The Union government has announced the repeal of three farm laws passed last year. It has marked a historic victory for the farmer's movement in India.

### BACKGROUND

- In 2020, the Union government took up on itself the task of legislating on agricultural marketing and passed the farm laws namely:
  - **The Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020**
  - **The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020**
  - **Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.**

#### **The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020**

- This legislation seeks to **give freedom to farmers to sell their produce outside the notified Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) mandis.**
- This is aimed at facilitating remunerative prices through competitive alternative trading channels.
- State governments are **prohibited from levying any market fee, cess or levy outside APMC areas.**

#### **The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020**

- This legislation seeks to give **farmers the right to enter into a contract** with agribusiness firms, processors, wholesalers, exporters, or large retailers for the sale of future farming produce at a pre-agreed price.

#### **The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020**

- It **deregulated the sale of six types of agricultural produce**, including cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onions and potatoes, by amending the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.
- Stock limits on these commodities may be **regulated only under extraordinary circumstances** which may include **(i) war, (ii) famine, (iii) extraordinary price rise and (iv) natural calamity of grave nature.**
- However, such limits will not be imposed at all on **food processors or value chain participants**, which/who will be allowed to store as much as allowed by their installed capacity. **Exporters** will also be exempted.

#### **Protests**

- After the legislation of the three contro

- versial farm bills, the **farmers' protests began from States such as Punjab and Haryana where the mandis were deeply rooted institutions** in the local economy and society.
- However, as days passed, the agitation **spread to western Uttar Pradesh and from there to many other States.**
- In a few months, the agitation threatened to **grow into a pan-Indian phenomenon** with a constant addition of local agrarian demands into the larger demand for the repeal of farm laws.
- Such **local customisation of the agitation** immensely helped in the cause of mobilisation.
- An **unusually large number of women actively participated** in the protests.

#### **SUPREME COURT'S STAND ON THREE FARM BILLS**

- The Supreme Court of India **refused to act swiftly on petitions filed before it.**
- Instead, **without consulting the protesting farmer's organisations, it appointed a committee** of four persons, **all of whom had publicly declared their support for the farm laws.**
  - As a result farmer organizations distanced themselves from the committee and continued with their agitation.

#### **LAWS WERE UNCONSTITUTIONAL**

- This **violated the federal principles as the Union government invoked Entry 33 of the Concurrent List to intervene into matters in Entry 14, Entry 26 and Entry 27 of the State List.**
- The farm laws **even interfered with Entry 28 of the State List, which were not subject to Entry 33 of the Concurrent List.**
- Apart from constitutionality, **the contents of farm laws were also widely criticised.**

#### **OTHER CONCERNS**

- It was feared that, with the weakening of the APMC Acts, a formal and regulated market might fragment itself into an informal and unregulated market.
- Mandi taxes were used to **invest in rural infrastructure in States such as Punjab.** But with weakening of mandis, such investment would be a tough task to manage.

- Even with the emergence of the private markets, **the structural problem of poor farm-gate aggregation of the produce of small and marginal farmers, would not be solved.**
  - (Farm gate marketing or farmgate sales describes a direct marketing method whereby farmers sell agricultural produce – mostly food – directly to the consumer, to restaurants and caterers, and to independent retailers)
- The **grievance redress mechanisms for contract farming** also came up for criticism.
- The overall thrust of the farm laws appeared to **encourage the participation of larger corporate players in agricultural markets rather than farmer-friendly organisations**, such as cooperatives or Farmer Producer Companies (FPC).
- Especially in the case of the **amendment of the Essential Commodities Act**, there was reasonable suspicion that a **handful of corporate players were to substantially benefit from investments in logistics, storage and warehousing.**

#### LEARNING FROM THE STATES EXPERIENCES

- **In 2006, Bihar had repealed its APMC law** with intentions to liberalise the farming sector, but the farmers' situation has become worse in the 14 years since then.
  - Bihar's example showed that **private investment was unlikely to flow into agricultural markets even if APMC Acts were annulled.**
  - In fact, the **exploitation of farmers by immoral traders intensified in Bihar after 2006.**
- **Kerala never had an APMC Act.** Yet, there was **little presence of private investment in its agricultural markets.**
- **Maharashtra delisted fruits and vegetables** from the ambit of APMCs in 2016. Still, the **inflow of private investment into agricultural markets was only marginal.**

#### CONCLUSION

- The agitation has led to a **positive politicisation of several agrarian demands**, including the need for stable markets and remunerative prices.
  - It has also boosted the **confidence that committed struggles matter.**

- For now, the repeal of the farm laws has put an end to an ugly and eminently avoidable chapter of confrontation between the Union government and the farmers.
- However, in the coming times, the **rural mobilisations around demands to address the larger and persistent agrarian crisis are likely to emerge and grow.**

## 6) The heavy lifting on climate action must begin

### CONTEXT

- Recently Conference of Parties 26 (COP26) was concluded at Glasgow, Scotland.
- Glasgow's success was that it **finished building the platform for climate action initiated through the Paris Agreement.**
- However, the true success depends on whether countries are receptive to these nudges.
- As without generating greater political support for implementation within countries, international negotiations do risk becoming a fiasco.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF COP26

#### Strengthened Paris Agreement

- Glasgow was **necessary for stronger action to address climate change** because it **put in place levers that stimulate domestic processes**, such as the formulation of domestic pledges or 'Nationally Determined Contributions' (NDCs).
- Glasgow **has strengthened the Paris Agreement mechanism of evoking pledges** from countries and financing them up over time.
- Also, it **requested countries to update and strengthen 2030 emission targets in their NDCs by the end of 2022**, earlier than previously expected; **created a benchmark of five yearly cycles for updates**; **urged countries to prepare long-term emissions strategies**; and **strengthened mechanisms to scrutinise both.**
  - Success at Glasgow was explicitly defined around **'keeping 1.5 degrees alive'** through such pledges.
- Even **India's announced its pledge for net zero by 2070.**

### **Partial win on Adaptation towards changing climate**

- Preparing for the reality that some climate impacts are unavoidable has long been neglected in global negotiations, reflecting a **global power imbalance that places less weight on the concerns of vulnerable nations.**
- In this context, it was a **partial win that Glasgow set up an explicit two year work programme for a 'global goal' on adaptation.**

### **Completion of Paris rulebooks elements:**

- There were two particularly important elements in the 'Paris Rulebook' that were completed in Glasgow.
  - First, the **transparency framework was completed**, which includes reporting rules and formats for emissions, progress on pledges and finance contributions.
  - The second key **was completion of agreed rules for carbon markets**, the complexities of which had hindered agreement for four years.

### **ISSUES INVOLVED**

- Although amidst the climate negotiations, Glasgow clarified the '**ambition cycle**', which had resulted in the form of enhanced pledges. But there are two problems with this interpretation:
  - The Paris, and Glasgow, **approach focusing on target-setting gives insufficient importance to the challenge of implementing those targets.**
- Long-term aspirational targets to 'keep 1.5 alive' get the headlines, but **detailed shorter term 2030 targets, for which today's politicians can be held accountable, have received less attention.**
- **A focus on shorter term targets and their implementation** — which India to its credit has been highlighting — will be important.
- By calling on countries to strengthen targets to align with the Paris Agreement objectives **without explicitly considering that countries have different roles and responsibilities in doing so risks side-stepping**, again, the long-standing issue of climate equity.

- Although Glasgow had **partial win on adaptation**, the important complementary agenda of '**loss and damage**' – **compensating for unavoidable impacts that go beyond adaptation** — received at most lip service.

### **CENTRAL ISSUE OF CLIMATE FINANCE**

- **Despite a decade-long commitment of \$100 billion to developing and least developed countries, no such financial assistance had been provided yet.**
- But beyond expressing 'deep regret' at this failure, Glasgow did no more than establish a work programme on post-2025 financing and continue tracking progress on the \$100 billion.
- The exception was a call to double adaptation finance by 2025.
- With already low current levels of finance and increasing climate threat, the **United Nations finds it difficult to finance current needs of \$70 billion which is on continuous rise.**
- Further, there were indications that the **climate finance discussion may become more complex.**
  - Developing countries have long insisted that publicly funded climate finance is a right devolving from the 'polluter pays' principle rather than aid.

### **CONCLUSION**

- **What Glasgow accomplished was necessary, if not sufficient, for accelerated climate action.** The meeting hit many, but not all, of its procedural benchmarks by building a foundation for the future.
- But the **real determinant of success or failure rests on national politics and popular support for climate change within countries.**
- **For India, these politics are complex** because they revolve around simultaneously balancing concerns over development and mitigating climate change.
- Hence, India needs a balanced view for consideration of both the objectives.

## **7) Exception to the rule**

### **CONTEXT**

- Recently a new ordinance has allowed **extending the tenures of the directors of**

**the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate from two years to up to five years.**

- The chiefs of the Central agencies currently have a fixed two-year tenure, but can now be given three annual extensions.
- The move **compromise the autonomy of both agencies.**

### CRITICISM

- The fixed tenure for certain posts **means their superannuation within that period will not end their term.**
- In effect, there is **an implied extension for an officer appointed to one of these protected posts** if the appointment comes within two years of retirement.
- A further extension that will take the officers' services well beyond superannuation, that too one year at a time, **will render the heads of two investigating agencies unacceptably beholden to the Government.**

### SUPREME COURT'S JUDGMENTS

**Vineet Narain vs Union of India (1997) Case**

- The new law goes against the **spirit of the Supreme Court judgment of this case**, in which it laid down a **dictum that the Directors of the CBI and the ED should have a minimum tenure of two years.**
- This was **to prevent their sudden transfer out of office** if their functioning goes against the interests of the regime of the day.
- While it **did not specifically bar longer terms or extensions**, the prospect of

getting an annual extension can be an **incentive for displaying regime loyalty in the discharge of their duties.**

### S.K. Mishra Case

- **In the case of the present Director of Enforcement, S.K. Mishra**, who was appointed for two years in November 2018, his services were extended by an order on November 13, 2020, **which amended the original term of appointment from two years to three years.**
- Further, **the Supreme Court declined to interfere with the one-year addition to his original term of appointment.**
- But the court stated that **extension of tenure granted to officers who have attained the age of superannuation should be done only in rare and exceptional cases and such extension should only be for "a short period".**
  - It also made it clear that **no further extension shall be granted to him.**

### CONCLUSION

- It is possible that the Government will abide by the SC orders and not give the benefit of the amendment to the present Director of Enforcement, but it does not manifest that **the act of authorising year-on-year extensions to future appointees would be any less detrimental to the public interest.**
  - If such circumstances become the rule, it will surely be a setback for the non-partial functioning of the two crucial investigating agencies of the country.

## INDIAN EXPRESS EXPLAINED

### 1) What is shale and its potential in India

#### Why in News?

- Recently, Cairn Oil & Gas has announced that it is partnering with a US-based firm to start shale exploration in the Lower Barmer Hill formation, Western Rajasthan.

#### What is shale oil? How does it differ from conventional crude oil?

- The key difference between shale oil and conventional crude is that the former, also called 'tight oil', is found in smaller batches, and deeper than conventional crude deposits.
- Its extraction requires creation of fractures in oil and gas rich shale to release hydrocarbons through a process called hydraulic fracking.
- Russia and the US are among the largest shale oil producers in the world, with a surge in shale oil production in the US having

played a key role in turning the country from an importer of crude to a net exporter in 2019.

#### What are the prospects of shale oil exploration in India?

- Currently, there is **no large-scale commercial production of shale oil and gas in India.**
- As per the policy guidelines notified by Government of India (GoI) for exploration and exploitation of shale gas and oil in India by National Oil Companies (NOCs), ONGC has identified 50 nomination PML (Petroleum Mining Lease) blocks under Phase-I.
- The exploratory efforts so far have led to the discovery of 65 small-to-medium sized hydrocarbon fields with about 356 million tonnes (oil and oil equivalent gas) of initial in-place on-land reserves.

### Prospective basins for phase 1 shale oil and gas exploration



## 2) What is PESA Act, and its implementation in Chhattisgarh

### Why in News?

- Recently, The Chhattisgarh government has formulated draft rules under PESA Act, 1996, terming it the Chhattisgarh Panchayat Provisions (Extension of the Scheduled) Rules, 2021.

### What is the PESA Act, 1996? Why are its rules being formed in the state now?

- The Panchayat (Extension of the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 or PESA, was enacted by the Centre to ensure **self-governance through gram sabhas (village assemblies) for people living in fifth schedule areas, which are mostly dominated by Adivasi communities.**
- It legally recognises the right of tribal communities, residents of the scheduled areas, to govern themselves through their own systems of self-government, and also acknowledges their traditional rights over natural resources.
- In pursuance of this objective, PESA **empowers gram sabhas to play a key role in approving development plans and controlling all social sectors.**
- This includes the processes and personnel who implement policies, exercising control over minor (non-timber) forest resources, minor water bodies and minor minerals, managing local markets, preventing land alienation and regulating intoxicants among other things.
- State governments were required to amend their respective Panchayat Raj Acts without making any law that would be inconsistent with the mandate of PESA.

### Why are rules under PESA important? What topics will be covered?

- PESA rules enable the residents of scheduled areas to strengthen their village-level bodies by transferring power from the government to the gram sabha, a body of all the registered voters of the village.
- The powers of gram sabhas include **maintenance of cultural identity and tradition**, control over schemes affecting the tribals, and control over natural resources within the area of a village.
- The PESA Act thus enables **gram sabhas to maintain a safety net over their rights** and surroundings against external or internal conflicts.
- Without proper rules, its implementation is not possible as it is an **exercise in decentralising the power** from institutionalised structures, back to the village residents.
- The laws, once formed, will give gram sabhas the power to take decisions not only over their customs and traditionally managed resources, but also on the minerals being excavated from their areas.
- The rules also give power to the gram sabhas over **management of resources over jal, jangal, zameen (water, forest and land)**, the three major demands of tribals; minor forest produce; mines and minerals; markets; and human resources.
- The gram sabha would have the powers to monitor and prohibit the manufacturing, transport, sale and consumption of intoxicants within their village limits.
- It also has a **duty to maintain peace and resolve conflicts** arising in the village, while protecting tribal customs and traditions, and encouraging customs.

For doubts and queries email us at [doubts@officerspulse.com](mailto:doubts@officerspulse.com)

## INFOGRAPHIC OF THE WEEK

### 1) CENTRAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

# Central Bureau of Investigation

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# About CBI

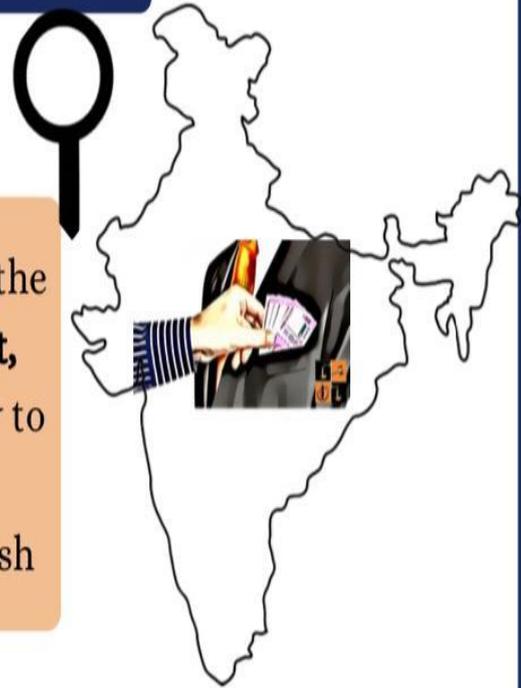
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## 1941

The precursor to the CBI was the **Special Police Establishment**, which was India's first agency to investigate corruption.

It was set in **1941** by the British



The Delhi Special Police Establishment



## 1946

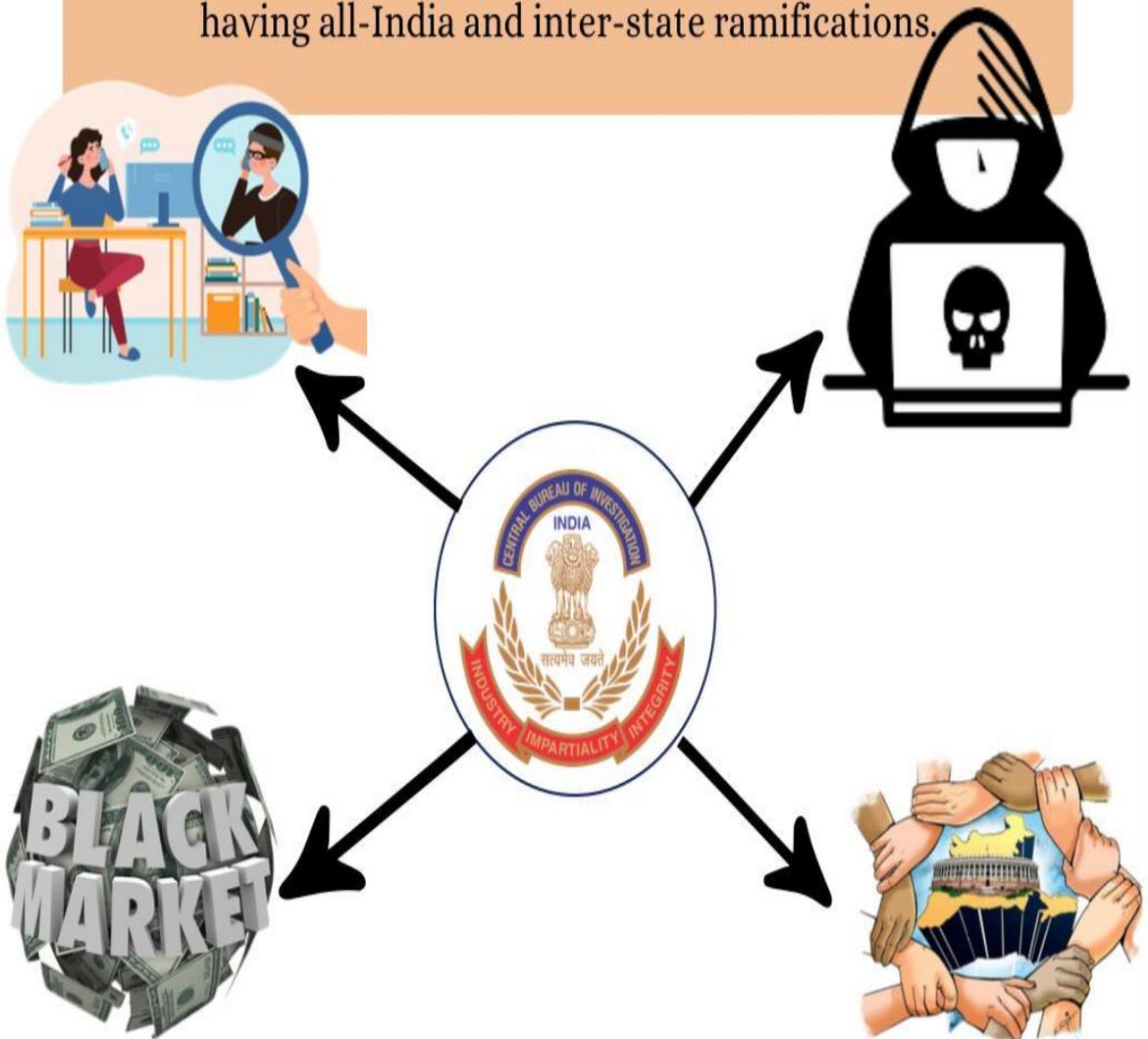
In **1963**, the Home Ministry expanded its power and changed its name to the Central Bureau of Investigation. It is governed by the **Delhi Special Police Establishment Act (DSPE), 1946.**



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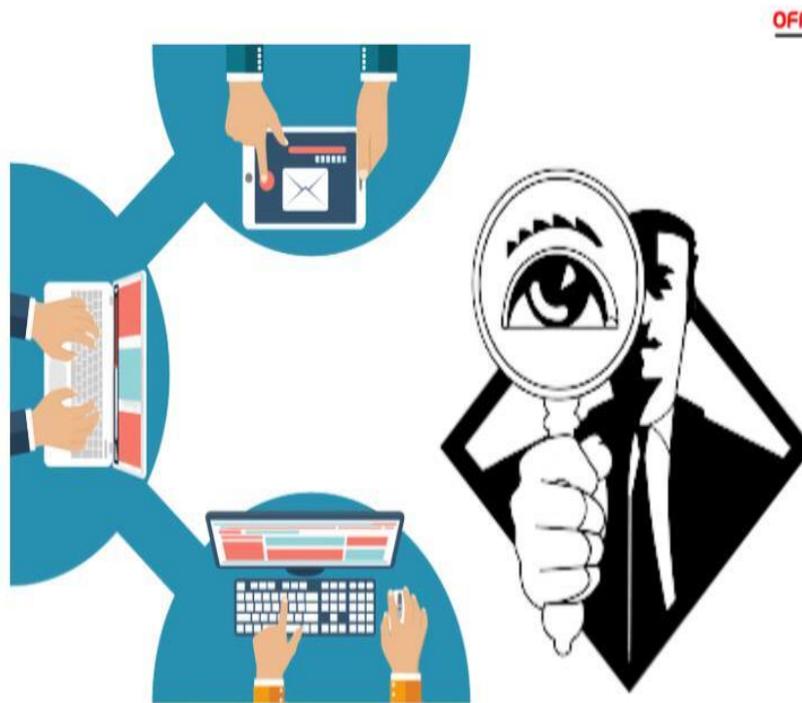
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The CBI was established with a view to investigate serious crimes related to Defence of India, corruption in high places, serious fraud, cheating and embezzlement and social crime, particularly of hoarding, black-marketing and profiteering in essential commodities, having all-India and inter-state ramifications.



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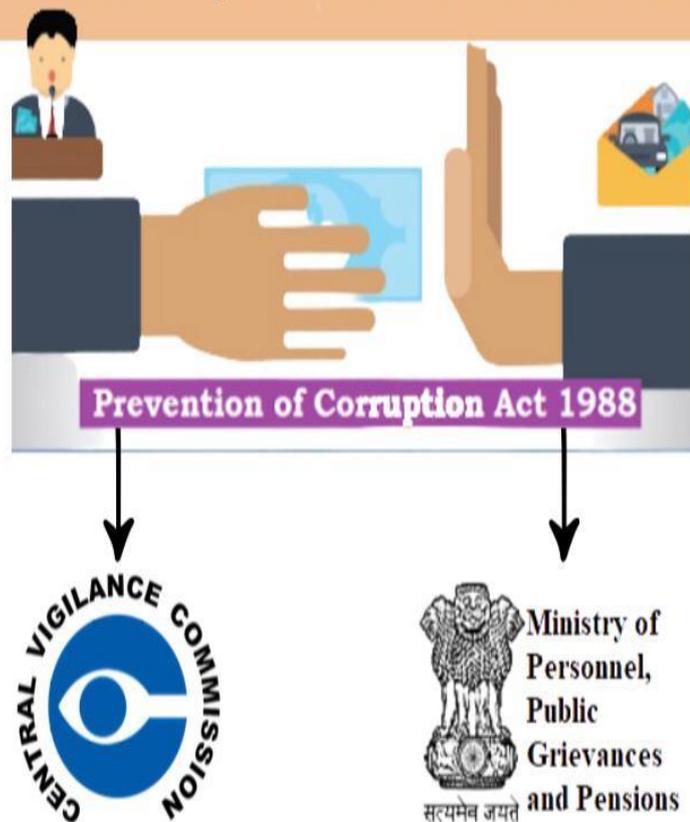
CBI acts as an **interface** between the law enforcement agencies of India and other countries to ensure cooperation. It facilitates exchange and sharing of information by these agencies.

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# Supervision over CBI

The superintendence of CBI related to investigation of offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 lies with the **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)** and in other matters with the **Department of Personnel & Training (DOPT)** in the Ministry of Personnel, Pension & Grievances



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# NIA vs CBI

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The National Investigation Agency has been constituted after the Mumbai terror attack in **November 2008** mainly for investigation of incidents of terrorist attacks, funding of terrorism and other terror related crime, whereas CBI investigates crime of corruption, economic offences and serious and organized crime other than terrorism.



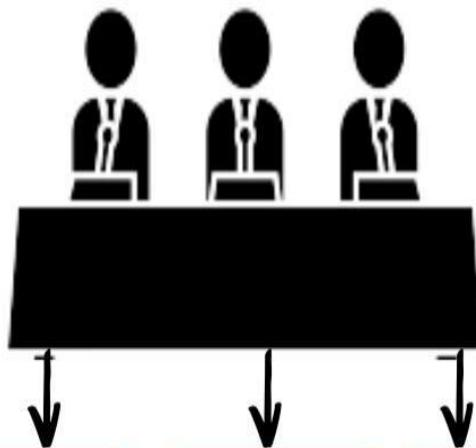
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# CBI Director

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Before the lokpal act was legislated, the CBI director was appointed by the DSPE Act. Now, the **Lokpal** Act governs the appointment of the CBI director.



the Prime Minister as the chairperson

the Chief Justice of India and

the Leader of Opposition

Now, the CBI director is appointed by the Centre on the basis of the recommendation of a **search committee** comprising:

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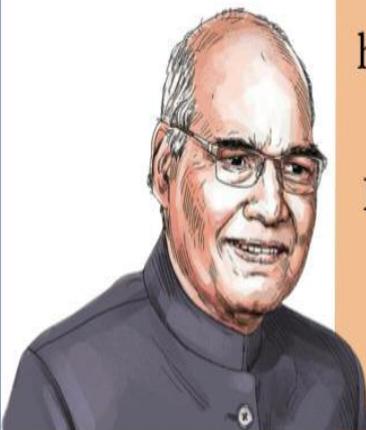
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SABHA

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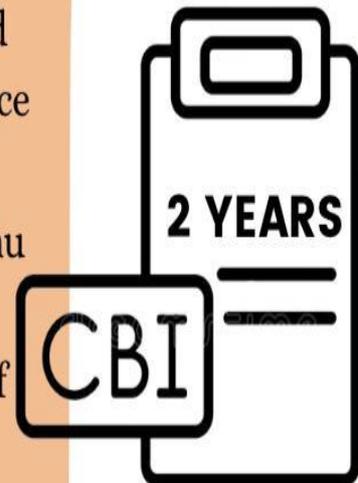
In the absence of a formal Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, **the leader of the floor of the largest opposition party takes part** in the search committee meetings.



## Why in News?



President Ram Nath Kovind has promulgated an Ordinance to extend the tenure of Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation up to five years. The present tenure of CBI is two years



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