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ESE-2021

(Preliminary Examination)

Current Issues

(July - August - 2021)

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19 All India 1st Ranks in ESE

62 All India 1st Ranks in GATE

Current Issues

(July - August - 2021)

ECONOMY AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

BANKING

Forex reserves

- As of June, 2021, India has surpassed Japan, China, Russia and Switzerland to become the world's fifth-largest foreign exchange reserve holder with \$608.99 billion.
- The Reserve Bank of India and the Government of India are actively monitoring the country's external position and accordingly fine-tuning the various policies and regulations so as to ensure strong macroeconomic growth of India.
- India's balance of payments has surplused in both the capital and current accounts in the year 2020-21 which largely contributed to the gains in the foreign exchange reserves of the country.
- India's present foreign exchange reserves are sufficient enough to provide a buffer against unforeseen external shocks and also to cover imports for more than 18 months.
- The RBI's intervention in the foreign exchange market to smooth out valuation changes due to movement of the US dollar against other international currencies in the reserve basket, exchange rate volatility, movement in gold prices, inflow of aid receipts and interest earnings from the deployment of foreign currency assets are the main causes for the variation in the country's Forex reserves.
- A rising foreign exchange reserves which is accompanied by current account deficit shows a balance of payments surplus.

e-RUPI

- e-RUPI is a person and purpose-specific cashless digital payment solution.
- It is a contactless instrument for digital payment.
- It is based on a QR code or SMS string-based e-voucher, which is delivered to the mobile of the beneficiaries.
- The system will eliminate the need for any physical interface, mobile banking, debit, or credit cards by simply and directly allowing the beneficiary to avail the benefits by redeeming the codes at specific centers.



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- It is basically a prepaid voucher that can be issued directly to citizens after verifying mobile number and identity.
- The beneficiary can redeem the voucher without a card, digital payments app, or internet banking access, at the service provider.


What is e-RUPI?

A digital voucher developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) will be transferred directly to the mobile phone as an SMS string or QR code. e-RUPI users will be able to redeem the vouchers at the merchants accepting UPI e-Prepaid Vouchers.

How does it work?

The beneficiary registered for direct benefit transfer (DBT), registered with the govt using Aadhar, gets an SMS/QR code. Let us say for vaccination purposes. The person can show the SMS/QR code at the vaccination centre. After

DIGITAL BOOST



Where can the e-RUPI be used?

For now, only for schemes related to the Ministry of Health. Soon, it should be used widely for other DBT schemes of the government. However, the private sector can also use it to sponsor welfare schemes.

Is it an alternative to UPI?

No, but it is derived from UPI and uses NPCI infrastructure to work. For now, e-RUPI is used for DBT schemes in a targeted manner, in order to stop misuse of funds. It is not a standalone payment system but UPI for a specific purpose.


the scan, the beneficiary gets a code on the same number where he/she received the original SMS or QR that need to be shared with the official at the health centre for redeeming the amount, and the beneficiary can go for the vaccination.

FINANCIAL MARKETS

Fugitive economic offender

- UK High Court has granted fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi permission to appeal against a magistrates' court order, in favour of extradition to India to face charges of fraud and money laundering before the Indian courts, on mental health and human rights grounds.
- The U.K.'s Home Department, in April 2020, approved the extradition of diamond merchant Nirav Modi to India in connection with the Rs.13,758 crore Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud.

- This came two months after the Westminster Magistrates' Court in London ruled that a prima facie case was made out against him.
- A special court, in December 2019, declared diamond businessman Nirav Modi a fugitive economic offender, on a plea of the Enforcement Directorate.
- A person can be named an offender under the law if there is an arrest warrant against him or her for involvement in economic offences involving at least Rs. 100 crore or more and has fled from India to escape legal action.

HEAT ON ECONOMIC ABSCONDERS	
<p>■ Bill name: Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill</p> <p>■ Purpose: Catch alleged absconders. Nirav Modi, his uncle Mehul Choksi have been charged of defrauding PNB and leaving the country. Also Vijay Mallya</p> <p>■ What will govt do: Try to put bill before Parliament as early as second part of budget session starting next month</p>	 <p>Bill highlights</p> <p>■ ED to start proceedings in special court by first issuing notice to 'fugitive economic offender'</p> <p>■ If offender appears in six weeks, notice will be terminated</p> <p>■ Prosecution starts if he chooses to stay away from country and sends counsel</p>

- The investigating agencies have to file an application in a Special Court under the Prevention of Money-Laundering Act containing details of the properties to be confiscated, and any information about the person's whereabouts.
- The Special Court will issue a notice for the person to appear at a specified place and date at least six weeks from the issue of notice.
- Proceedings will be terminated if the person appears. If not the person would be declared as a Fugitive Economic Offender based on the evidence filed by the investigating agencies.
- The person who is declared as a Fugitive Economic Offender can challenge the proclamation in the High Court within 30 days of such declaration according to the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018.

TAXATION

Sovereign right to taxation

- The Indian government recently decided to withdraw the retrospective taxation amendment in the I-T Act introduced in March 2012.
- The Indian government had in 2012 retrospectively amended the Income-tax Act. This was in response to a Supreme Court verdict, which had held that Vodafone cannot be taxed for a 2007 transaction that involved its purchase of a 67 per cent stake in Hutchison Whampoa for \$11 billion.
- An act of sovereign power is one which cannot be prevented or annulled by any other power recognised by the constitution of the state is called Sovereign right.
- The Indian Constitution gives the government the right to levy taxes on individuals and organisations, but makes it clear that no one has the right to levy or charge taxes except by the authority of law. Any tax being charged has to be backed by a law passed by the legislature or Parliament.

RETROSPECTIVE TAX DISPUTE	
2004-2007: Cairn discovers oil in Rajasthan, lists on BSE	probe on transactions related to asset transfer from 2006, prior to IPO
Dec 2011: Vedanta completes acquisition of 58.5% in Cairn India from Cairn Energy	March 2015: Cairn Energy initiates international arbitration on case
Jan 2012: SC rules in favour of Vodafone in I-T case	Dec 2018: Arbitration tribunal rules in favour of Cairn Energy
March 2012: Government introduces retrospective amendments to tax laws	March 2021: India files appeal against verdict
Jan 2014: Tax dept begins	

- With the removal of the retrospective feature a clear and predictable taxation law and intent has been presented to the companies which are expected to structure their assets accordingly while doing deals hereon.
- It also provides clarity for deals between companies of countries where these are not covered under any tax treaty benefits.
- The companies stand to gain by withdrawing the litigation with the arbitration (for cases before 2012) and then there will be a refund of any taxes that have been already paid or refunded in respect of any demands that have been adjusted.

AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY

“Matsya Setu”

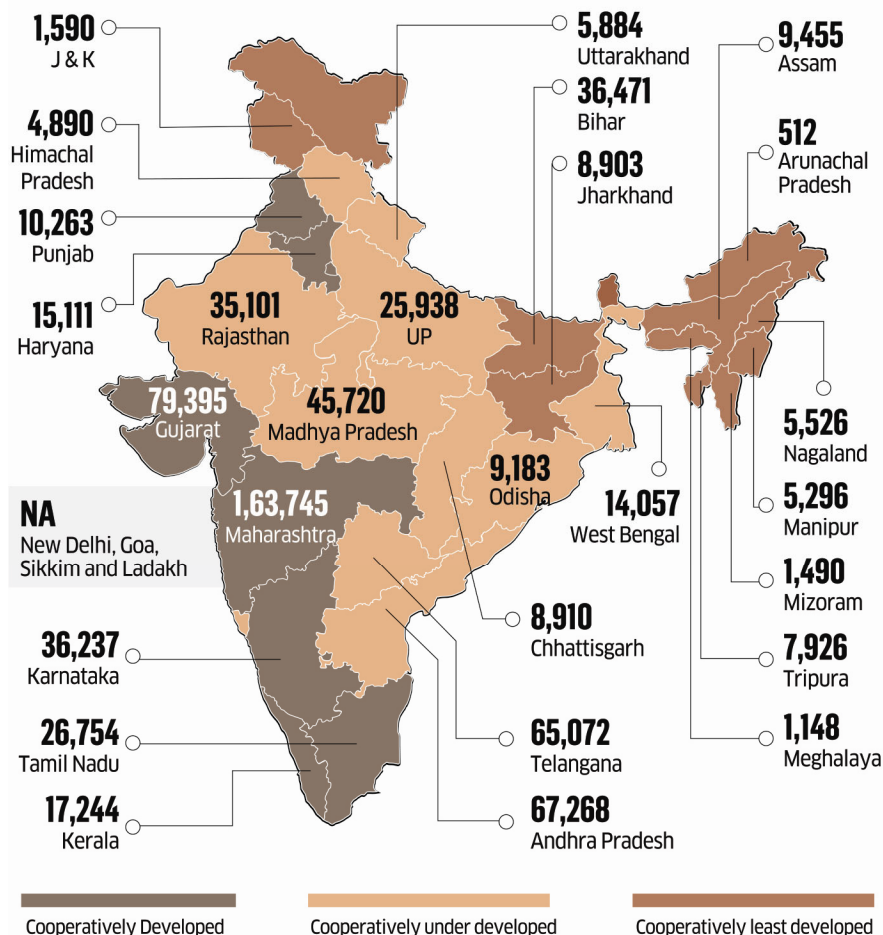
- Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Giriraj Singh launched Online Course Mobile App “Matsya Setu” for fishermen.
- Matsya Setu app was developed by ICAR-Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (ICAR-CIFA), Bhubaneswar.
- Funding support was provided by National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), Hyderabad.
- This app comprises of species-wise or subject-wise self-learning online course modules.
- On the app, renowned aquaculture experts will explain basic concepts and practical demonstrations regarding breeding, seed production and grow-out culture of commercially important fishes such as carp, murrel, catfish, scampi, ornamental fish and pearl farming.
- This online course app was launched with the aim of disseminating latest freshwater aquaculture technologies for aqua farmers across India.

‘Ministry of Co-operation’

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi led government announced for creation of a new Ministry of Cooperation.
- Before the creation of this ministry, the objectives of this ministry were looked after by the Ministry of Agriculture.
- The ministry was created with objectives of:
 - ✓ To realise the vision of "Sahkar se Samriddhi" (prosperity through cooperation).
 - ✓ To streamline processes for “Ease of doing business” for co-operatives and enable development of Multi-State Co-operatives (MSCS)
 - ✓ to provide a separate administrative, legal and policy framework for strengthening the cooperative movements in the country.
 - ✓ To deepen the cooperative as a true people-based movement reaching upto the grassroot level.
- With the creation of this ministry, there will now be a total of 41 central government ministries.
- Ministry of Cooperation is second ministry to be created since 2019, after the Modi government came to power for second term. After taking charge in 2019, government had created Jal Shakti ministry.
- However, it is all way different than new Ministry of Cooperation. Jal Shakti Ministry was created by integrating two existing ministries namely, Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, and Drinking Water & Sanitation ministry.
- This integration was done in line with Modi’s mantra of ‘minimum government, maximum governance.

COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN INDIA

Total: 7.09 lakh



Ubharte Sitaare Fund

- Finance minister has launched Rs 250 crore worth Alternative Investment Fund for export-oriented micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- The main purpose is to encourage MSMEs as they are vital to the economy in terms of creating jobs, fostering innovations and reviving the economy.
- To Identify Indian enterprises with potential advantages by way of technology, products or processes along with export potential, but which are currently underperforming or unable to tap their latent potential to grow.
- Ubharte sitaare fund is a type of Alternative investment fund.

- The Fund has been set up by Exim Bank and SIDBI (Small Industries Development Bank of India).
- The fund is a mix of structured support, both financial and advisory services.
- It will also have a Greenshoe Option of Rs 250 crore.
- The Fund covers potential companies, across various sectors such as pharma, auto components, engineering solutions, agriculture, and software etc.

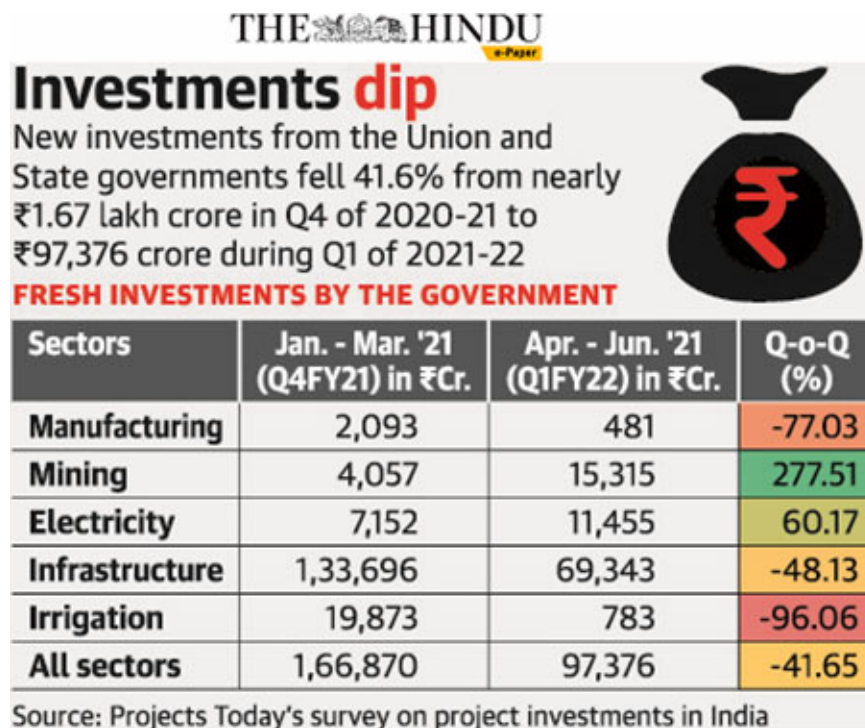
Alternative Investment Fund comprises pooled investment funds which invest in venture capital, private equity, hedge funds, managed futures etc.

Greenshoe option is an over-allotment option. In the context of an initial public offering (IPO), it is a provision in an underwriting agreement that grants the underwriter the right to sell investors more shares than initially planned by the issuer if the demand for a security issue proves higher than expected.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure spending

- The second wave of COVID-19 and a steep decline in new investment projects from government agencies dented fresh investment plans in the economy by 18% in the first quarter of 2021-22, compared with the previous quarter.



- Nearly 2,200 new projects entailing fresh investments of Rs.3,34,572.5 crore were announced during the quarter, compared with 2,716 new projects worth Rs.4,08,237 crore in the previous three-month period that had seen both private and public sector investments rebounding strongly for the first time since the pandemic hit India.
- Overall new investments from the Union and State governments fell 41.6% from nearly Rs.1.67 lakh crore in Q4 of 2020-21 to Rs.97,376 crore, as per Projects Today's survey on project investments in India during Q1 of 2021-22.
- New public sector irrigation and manufacturing projects also fell off the cliff by 96% and 77% respectively.

“Gati Shakti” infrastructure plan

- Gati Shakti will be a National Infrastructure Master Plan for our country which will lay the foundation of holistic Infrastructure.
- This scheme of more than 100 lakh crores rupees will result in new employment opportunities for lakhs of youth.
- The plan will help raise the global profile of local manufacturers and help them compete with their counterparts worldwide.
- It also raises possibilities of new future economic zones.
- A similar plan, called the National Infrastructure Pipeline was previously announced.

TO CUT COSTS

Identified industrial clusters under Gati Shakti Scheme

Food Processing Parks & Agro clusters	197
Fishing Clusters/ Harbours	202
Defence Corridors	2
Pharma & Medical Device Clusters	109
Textile Clusters/ Parks	90

- In the budget speech of 2019-2020, Finance Minister announced an outlay of Rs 100 lakh Crore for infrastructure projects over the next 5 years.
- NIP is a first-of-its-kind initiative to provide world-class infrastructure across the country and improve the quality of life for all citizens.
- It will improve project preparation, attract investments (both domestic & foreign) into infrastructure, and will be crucial for attaining the target of becoming a \$5 trillion economy by FY 2025.
- Covers both economic and social infrastructure projects.

ENERGY

First green hydrogen plant

- IOC, India's largest oil firm will build the country's first 'green hydrogen' plant at its refinery in Mathura.
- This decision has been undertaken with the view of preparing for a future to cater to the growing demands cleaner forms of energy.
- Earlier, 'grey hydrogen' production projects have been announced making use of fossil fuels such as natural gas.
- With Hydrogen fuel cell powered buses are plying on the road it will be essential to set up hydrogen power plants.

Types of Hydrogen Plants

Grey hydrogen	Blue hydrogen	Green hydrogen
Split natural gas into hydrogen and CO ₂	Split natural gas into hydrogen and CO ₂	Split water into hydrogen by electrolysis powered by water or wind
CO ₂ emitted in the atmosphere	CO ₂ stored or reused	No CO ₂ emitted

- Hydrogen is the latest buzz as it is a clean fuel but manufacturing it causes carbon by-products and it is energy-intensive.
- Through the process of coal gasification brown hydrogen is created while this process throws off carbon waste.

- Blue hydrogen uses carbon capture.
- The ultimate clean hydrogen resource is green hydrogen production and it uses renewable energy to create the hydrogen fuel.
- Hydrogen is also said to be a fuel for the future.

Private LNG Facility

- Minister for Road Transport and Highways inaugurated India's first Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facility plant at Nagpur.
- Ministry have also designed a policy that encourages development of imports substitute, cost-effective, pollution-free and indigenous ethanol, LNG, bio CNG and hydrogen fuels.
- Minister also underlined, surplus in rice, corn and sugar can be used as alternative fuel in order to prevent it from going to waste.
- LNG is natural gas, mainly methane (CH_4) with some mixture of ethane (C_2H_6), that has been cooled down to liquid form for easier non-pressurized storage & transport. It takes up around 1/600th of volume of natural gas in gaseous state. It is odorless, colorless, non-toxic and non-corrosive gas.

Vehicle scrappage policy

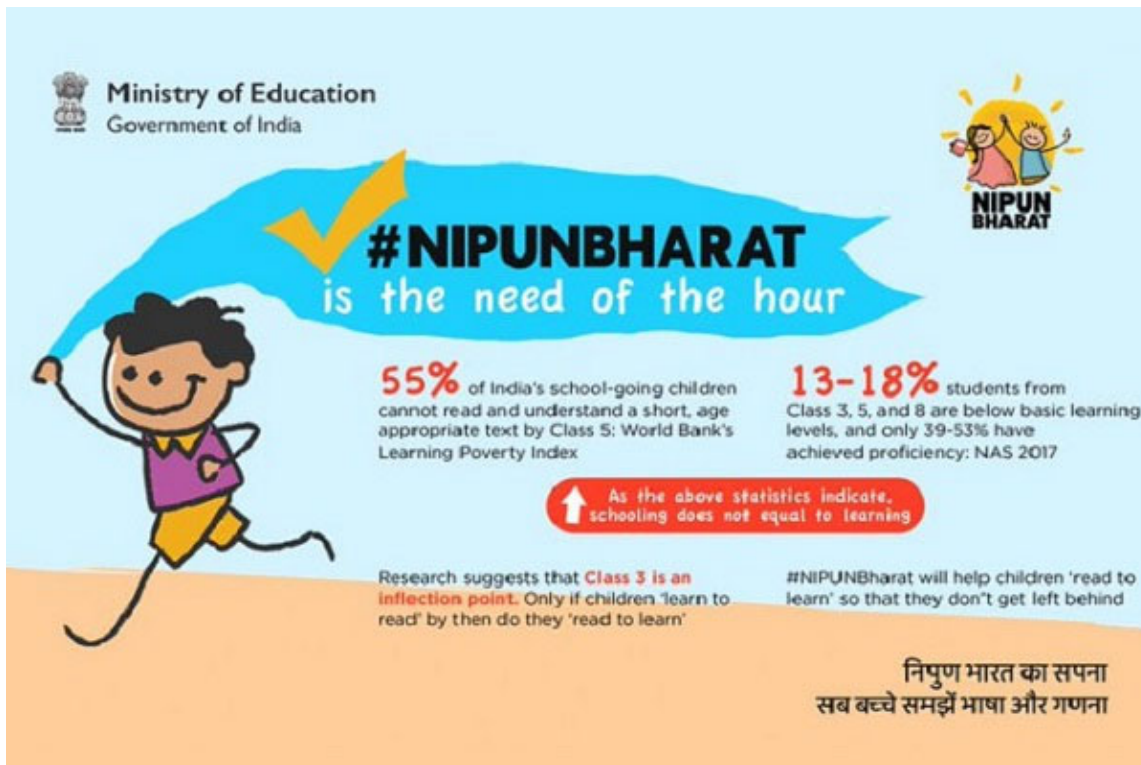
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently unveiled the National Automobile Scrappage Policy.
- Old vehicles will have to pass a fitness test before re-registration and as per the policy government commercial vehicles more than 15 years old and private vehicles which are over 20 years old will be scrapped.
- As a disincentive, increased re-registration fees would be applicable for vehicles 15 years or older from the initial date registration.
- The state governments may be advised to offer a road-tax rebate of up to 25% for personal vehicles and up to 15% for commercial vehicles to provide incentive to owners of old vehicles to scrap old and unfit vehicles.
- The vehicle scrapping policy is aimed at creating an eco-system for phasing out unfit and polluting vehicles in an environmentally friendly and safe manner.
- The initiative will promote a circular economy and make the process of economic development more sustainable and environment friendly.
- The potential benefit from scrapping a 15-year-old, entry-level small car will be Rs.70,000, whereas its resale value is around Rs.95,000. That makes scrapping unattractive.

ISSUES ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

EDUCATION

NIPUN Bharat Initiative

- Union government is set to launch a new scheme called “NIPUN Bharat Initiative”. It will be launched to improve numeracy, foundational reading, and understanding for early-stage students.
- NIPUN stands for “National Initiative for Proficiency in reading with Understanding and Numeracy”.
- This scheme would provide an enabling environment in a bid to ensure universal acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy.
- It will ensure that every child achieves desired learning competencies in reading, writing, and numeracy by end of Grade 3, by the year 2026-27.
- This initiative will be a part of school education programme, Samagra Shiksha.
- NIPUN Bharat initiative will be implemented by school education department of Union government. In order to implement it, a five-tier implementation mechanism will be set up at national, state, district, block, and school levels across all states and Union territories.



ASER Findings 2020

25% of school-going children in four to eight age group do not have age-appropriate cognitive and numeracy skills. Thus, there is a huge learning deficit at very early stage.

4% of children below age of six are able to recognize at least letters.

6% can do additions.

8% of children in Class II can read a text of classes below them.

8% of students in Class III, can read texts meant for students two levels below them.

Financial literacy curriculum for students

- Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) have partnered to introduce a financial literacy curriculum for students of Class VI.
- It was launched as part of new elective 'financial literacy' subject which will enable students to understand basic financial concepts at preliminary stage of their education.
- This textbook covers crucial topics with respect to financial awareness.
- It comprises of teamwork and basic financial concepts of Banking, security & modes of Digital Payments including Cards, UPI, Wallets, and more.
- It highlights about the origin of banking, transition from coins to paper money, types of banks and other operations & services carried out by banks.
- It also highlights the significant role of RBI and GOI in promoting Digital Payments movement from currency, banking, savings & investments to advanced concepts such as UPI, IMPS, USSD, NACH, mPoS, QR Codes, and ATMs.
- It covers all that a child might find very useful at later stage in their life.
- It also elaborates the role of UIDAI and importance of Aadhaar, and Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS).
- The new education policy (NEP) emphasizes on need of nurturing a digital mindset among students. This book will help in meeting this objective of NEP.
- This textbook focuses on overall digital payment system. It is a small module on financial literacy which will educate students on finance from an early age. It stresses on growth of money and refers to Skills Root.

HEALTH

WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Welfare Policy for street children

- Delhi government has formulated a policy for welfare of street children in light of covid-19 pandemic situation.
- Policy underlines the role of various stakeholders in promoting Covid- appropriate behaviour and generating awareness about the infection.
- It was prepared by Women and Child Development Department (WCD) of Delhi Government.
- Policy encourages direct participation of civil society organisations.
- It also highlights their role in identifying hotspot areas and distributing masks among those children.
- As per policy, district administration could consider training children rescued from streets as Civil Defense Volunteer, after they attain age of 18 years. It will provide them respectable employment. Trained children can also assist many other children who coming from a similar background.
- It proposes for composition of District Child Protection Convergence Committee (DCPCC) above the District Task Force to rescue children.
- District magistrate will act as chairperson of DCPCC along with other members like two members from NGOs & Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights representatives.
- NGOs will be tasked to bring all cases of children identified by them to their respective Child Welfare Committee.
- Women and Child Development Department of Delhi Government had constituted a 'District Task Force' to assist COVID-19 positive children who are in Child Care Institutes or who lost their parents due covid-19 virus

UN slams child marriages

- The UN has condemned underage forced marriages in Zimbabwe following the death of a 14-year-old girl reportedly during childbirth.
- Official statistics show that one in three Zimbabwean girls are married off before the age of 18.

Child marriages across the world:

- The total number of girls married in childhood stands at 12 million per year.
- Across the globe, levels of child marriage are highest in sub-Saharan Africa, where 35 per cent of young women were married before age 18, followed by South Asia, where nearly 30 per cent were married before age 18.

- Lower levels of child marriage are found in Latin America and Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

International efforts towards ending child marriages:

- 1979 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women provides that the betrothal and marriage of a child shall have no legal effect.
- The 1964 Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages says that States Parties to the present Convention shall take legislative action to specify a minimum age for marriage.
- The right to ‘free and full’ consent to marriage is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Although marriage is not mentioned directly in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, child marriage is linked to other rights – such as the right to freedom of expression, the right to protection from all forms of abuse, and the right to be protected from harmful traditional practices.
- In 2016, UNICEF, together with UNFPA, launched the Global Programme to End Child Marriage.
- The elimination of child, early and forced marriage is now part of the Sustainable Development Goals under Target 5 – achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

Problems associated with child marriages:

- Marriage before the age of 18 is a fundamental violation of human rights.
- Child marriage often compromises a girl’s development by resulting in early pregnancy and social isolation, interrupting her schooling and limiting her opportunities for career and vocational advancement.
- Girls who marry before 18 are more likely to experience domestic violence and less likely to remain in school.
- Child brides often become pregnant during adolescence, when the risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth increases – for themselves and their infants.
- Because child marriage impacts a girl’s health, future and family, it imposes substantial economic costs at the national level, too, with major implications for development and prosperity.
- Without further acceleration, more than 120 million additional girls will marry before their 18th birthday by 2030.

Laws to prevent child marriages in India:

- The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 to restrict the practice of child marriage.
- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 to address and fix the shortcomings of the Child Marriage Restraint Act.

WATER AND SANITATION

Anganwadis - tap water

- Over a third of government schools and anganwadis still do not have tap water access even 10 months after the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) launched a 100-day campaign to provide the facility.
- There has been minimal progress since a Parliamentary Standing Committee pulled up the JJM in a March report, pointing out the importance of repeated washing of hands as part of COVID-19 safety protocols for schools to reopen.
- The 100-day campaign to achieve 100% coverage, and provide potable piped water supply for drinking and cooking purposes as well as tap water for hand washing and in toilets in every school, anganwadi and ashramshala or residential tribal school, was launched on October 2, 2020.
- At the time, about 40% of schools and anganwadis already had tap water access.
- In fact, there is widespread disparity among States, with a few laggards pulling down the national average, despite the fact that nine States and Union Territories have already achieved 100% coverage. In Jharkhand and West Bengal, less than 15% of schools and less than 10% of anganwadis have tap water access. On the other hand, 80% of the schools in Uttar Pradesh have access to tap water.

‘Drink from tap’ facility

- Odisha government has declared Puri as the first city in the country to have city-wide safe drinking tap water that can be used directly for drinking and cooking without further filtration or boiling.
- Under Drink From Tap-Sujal Mission, people of Puri will be able to fetch water directly from the tap to drink. There is no need for storage or a filter. Tap water will be available 24×7.
- The move will now eliminate the usage of 3 crore plastic water bottles. This would mean the city will now be free from nearly 400 tonnes of plastic waste.
- The Sujal Mission was launched on October 13 last year to ensure quality tapped drinking water for more than 1.5 million people in more than 15 urban areas.
- It includes a 24/7 helpline centre with IVRS for grievance redressal, a mobile water testing laboratory and a quick response team for rapid redressal of water supply complaints.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Andhra launches IT policy for 2021-24

- Andhra Pradesh government has launched its new 'AP Information Technology Policy 2021-24' on June 30, 2021.
- This policy is expected to generate more than 55,000 jobs in next three years.
- In order to implement the policy, a robust and holistic business environment would be created.
- IT, Electronics and Communications Department would also be transformed into revenue centre in a bid to achieve self-sustenance.
- It will also create 1.65 lakh indirect employment and ensure a holistic ecosystem development.
- Policy will be in force till March 31, 2024.
- Andhra Pradesh will earn a revenue of Rs 783 crore in 10 years in the form of various taxes through this policy. Direct employment is also expected to infuse over Rs 2,200 crore year. It will thus lead to overall growth of economy through multiplier effect.
- New IT Policy links the incentive disbursement to realisation of committed direct employment which ensures transparent & effective utilisation of public funds.
- It offers end-to-end support for start-ups like plug & play office space, access to investors, & mentors, funds through venture capitals and private equity firms.
- Under the policy, government will establish incubation centers and organise hackathons & workshops for startups. Government will also establish an IT Emerging Technologies Research University in Visakhapatnam in order to develop State as leading contributor to national talent pool in IT & other emerging technologies.

Pradhan Mantri Dakshta Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi Yojana

- The government has launched 'PM-DAKSH' portal and app to make the skill development schemes accessible to the target groups of Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Safai Karamcharis.
- The scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment from the year 2020-21.
- Under the scheme, eligible target groups are being provided skill development training programmes on up-skilling/reskilling, short term training programme, long term training programme and entrepreneurship development program (EDP).
- Eligibility: Marginalized persons of SC, OBC, Economically Backward Classes, De-notified tribes, Sanitation workers including waste pickers, manual scavengers, transgenders and other similar categories.

- Most of the persons of target group are having minimal economic assets; therefore, provision of training and enhancing their competencies is essential for economic empowerment/ upliftment of these marginalized target groups.
- Many of the persons of target group belong to the category of rural artisans who have become marginalized owing to coming of better technologies in market.
- There is also a need to empower the women amongst the target group, who, due to their overall domestic compulsions, cannot be involved in wage employment which normally involves long working hours and sometimes migration to other cities.

BILLS, ACTS AND POLICIES

New population policy

- Every section of society must join in the awareness programme for population control, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said as he launched the State's population policy for 2021-2030.
- If there is no gap between the birth of two children, it will naturally affect their nutrition, he said, explaining the need for spacing and control in population.
- The new policy aims at decreasing the total fertility rate from 2.7 to 2.1 by 2026 and 1.7 by 2030, increase modern contraceptive prevalence rate from 31.7% to 45% by 2026 and 52% by 2030, increase male methods of contraception use from 10.8% to 15.1% by 2026 and 16.4% by 2030, decrease maternal mortality rate from 197 to 150 to 98, and infant mortality rate from 43 to 32 to 22, and under 5 infant mortality rate from 47 to 35 to 25.

THE HINDU

Future planning | The Uttar Pradesh Population Policy 2021-2030 was launched to reduce maternal and infant deaths in a time-bound manner. The policy aims to:



Baby steps: Yogi Adityanath encouraging a newly married couple to opt for family planning in Lucknow on Sunday. • PTI

- Decrease the **total fertility rate** (number of children per woman) from 2.7 to **2.1 by 2026** and **1.7 by 2030**
- Increase **modern contraceptive prevalence rate** from 31.7% to **45% by 2026** and **52% by 2030**
- Increase **male methods of contraception use** from 10.8% to **15.1% by 2026**
- Decrease **maternal mortality rate** (per 1,000 live births) from 197 to **150 by 2026** and **98 by 2030**
- Decrease **infant mortality rate** (per 1,000 live births) from 43 to **32 by 2026** and **22 by 2030**
- Decrease **under 5 mortality rate** (per 1,000 live births) from 47 to **35 by 2026** and **25 by 2030**

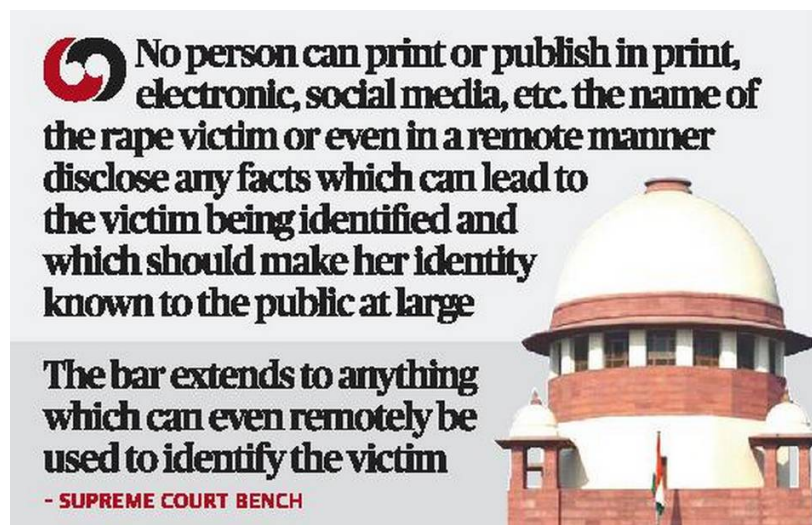
Awareness and extensive programmes would be held among those communities, cadres and geographical areas that have a higher fertility rate
U.P. POPULATION POLICY

We should not forget that the increase in population contributes to poverty in society. Hence, until all sections are made comprehensively aware, there will be a delay in fulfilling various goals
YOGI ADITYANATH, UTTAR PRADESH CM

- Targeting stabilisation, the draft of the policy also said the State would attempt to maintain a balance of population among the various communities.

Identity in sexual offence cases

- The Supreme Court has asked trial judges to take care to not reveal the identity of victims in sexual offence cases.
- The court said their privacy should be respected.
- The observation came in an order dismissing an appeal made against a Chhattisgarh High Court judgment in a case. The apex court noted that the Sessions Judge had mentioned the name of the victim.
- Section 228A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) prohibits the publication of the identity of rape victims or any other details which may reveal the identity.
- The bar, however, does not ostensibly extend to court judgments.




National quota for medical seats

- The Union Health Ministry has announced 27% reservation for the OBCs (Other Backward Classes) and 10% quota for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in the all-India quota (AIQ) scheme for undergraduate and postgraduate medical and dental courses from 2021-22.

The Quota story | A brief timeline of reservations under the all India quota (AIQ):

- AIQ was introduced in 1986 for domicile-free merit-based opportunities to medical aspirants of a State to study in a college in another State
- Under it, 15% and 50% of the UG and PG seats, in government medical colleges are allocated
- In 2007, the Supreme Court introduced reservation of 15% of seats in the AIQ for the SCs and 7.5% for the STs
- On July 19, the Madras High Court said that the Centre cannot delay indefinitely the implementation of reservation to OBCs under the scheme. It granted the Centre a week's time to indicate the mode and manner of implementation



- This decision would benefit every year nearly 1,500 OBC students at the undergraduate level (MBBS) and 2,500 such students at the postgraduate level, and around 550 EWS students in MBBS and around 1,000 such students in postgraduate courses.
- In 2007, the Supreme Court introduced reservation of 15% for SCs and 7.5% for STs in the scheme. When the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act became effective that year, providing for uniform 27% reservation to the OBCs, the same was implemented in all the Central educational institutions.

Deposit Insurance Credit Guarantee Corporation Bill

- The Union Cabinet cleared changes to the deposit insurance laws of the country. According to these changes up to Rs 5 lakh of funds will be provided to an account holder within 90 days in the event of a bank being put under moratorium by the RBI.
- Previously, account holders had to get their insured deposits had to wait for years till the restructuring or liquidation of a distressed lender.
- The deposit insurance premium has also been raised by 20% effective immediately and maximum premium limit by 50%.

DEPOSIT INSURANCE COVERAGE

Insurance limit (in ₹)

Jan 1, '62	1,500
Jan 1, '68	5,000
Apr 1, '70	10,000
Jan 1, '76	20,000
Jul 1, '80	30,000
May 1, '93	100,000
Feb 4, 2020	500,000

PREMIUM RATES PER ₹100 DEPOSIT

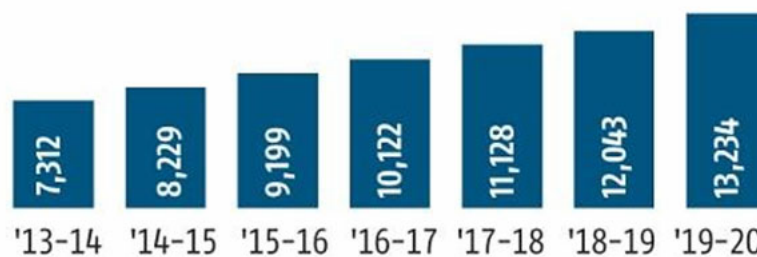
(Premium in □)

Jan 1, '62	0.05
Oct 1, '71	0.04
Jul 1, '93	0.05
Apr 1, '04	0.08
Apr 1, '05	0.10
Apr 1, 2020	0.12

PREMIUM INCOME

₹ crore

Source: DICGC
annual report
2019-20



- This premium is paid by the various banks to the DICGC.
- The current Rs 5-lakh deposit insurance cover was raised from Rs 1 lakh in the year 2020.
- Depositors normally have to wait for 8 to 10 years for the liquidation of a distressed bank before they receive their fund deposits. With the change in rule, depositors within 90 days will get insurance money without having to wait for the distressed banks to get liquidated.
- Currently, as premium for insurance cover, banks pay 10 paise on every Rs 100 worth deposits to the DICGC. This is being raised to 12 paise on every Rs 100.
- DICGC insures deposits in private and public banks, small finance banks, local area banks, cooperative banks, regional rural banks, payment banks as well as Indian branches of foreign banks.

The Juvenile Justice Amendment Bill, 2021

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill, 2021, which seeks to amend the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, was recently passed in Rajya Sabha.

According to the amendments:

- The District Magistrates have been further empowered under the Act to ensure its smooth implementation, as well as garner synergized efforts in favour of children in distress conditions.
- The DMs are also to check possible criminal backgrounds to ensure that no cases of child abuse or child sexual abuse are found against any member before they are appointed.



**DEEP
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Bill Passed in the Parliament

Parliament Passes Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection of Children) Amendment Bill 2021



The Bill seeks to strengthen child protection setup in the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015



Empowers District Magistrates to authorise adoption orders, to independently evaluate the functioning of District Child Protection Units, Child Welfare Committees, Juvenile Justice Boards, etc.



Eligibility parameters for appointment of CWC members redefined to ensure only the persons capable of rendering quality service are appointed



Offences where the maximum sentence is over 7 years imprisonment or no minimum sentence and minimum sentence less than 7 years to be treated as serious offences

DATED 30 JULY 2021



Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

The Act was introduced and passed in Parliament in 2015 to replace the Juvenile Delinquency Law and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children Act) 2000.

It allowed the trial of juveniles in conflict with law in the age group of 16-18 years as adults, in cases where the crimes were to be determined.

The nature of the crime, and whether the juvenile should be tried as a minor or a child, was to be determined by a Juvenile Justice Board.

The Act streamlined adoption procedures for orphans, abandoned and surrendered children and the existing Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) has been given the status of a statutory body to enable it to perform its function more effectively.

MPLAD Scheme

- The Union government has said that it is not considering any proposal to restore Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) funds for FY21 and FY22.
- From Rs.5,012 crore spent during 2018-19, an expenditure of just Rs.2,491.45 crore was taken up under the scheme in 2019-20.
- The government has said that the funds saved from the MPLAD Scheme have been utilised to enhance the allocation of funds for improving health infrastructure, provide free ration under PM Garib Kalyan Yojana, and free vaccination for the people.

MPLAD scheme:

- Launched in December, 1993.
- Seeks to provide a mechanism for the Members of Parliament to recommend works of developmental nature for creation of durable community assets and for provision of basic facilities including community infrastructure, based on locally felt needs.
- The MPLADS is a Plan Scheme fully funded by Government of India.
- The annual MPLADS fund entitlement per MP constituency is Rs. 5 crore.
- MPs are to recommend every year, works costing at least 15 per cent of the MPLADS entitlement for the year for areas inhabited by Scheduled Caste population and 7.5 per cent for areas inhabited by S.T. population.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

Three Bills to change Trump-era rules

- President Joe Biden has signed three separate bills that dismantle part of Donald Trump era.
- These laws,
 - ✓ Block payday lenders from avoiding caps on interest rates,
 - ✓ Restrict climate-warming greenhouse gas emissions from oil & gas drilling and
 - ✓ End rules on how Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) settles claims.
- Each of the rules signifies the return to common sense and a commitment to the common good.
- As per Biden administration, EEOC claims process had increased the risk of retaliation as it made easier for employers to demand identities of those with information about unlawful discrimination.
- Three bills were passed by House and Senate through Congressional Review Act. It allows Congress to overturn certain regulations that were in place for a short time.

Background

- Under former President Donald Trump administration, Office of Comptroller of Currency had allowed payday lenders to charge interest rates in excess to what was allowed by state.
- Payday lenders were allowed to partner with nationally chartered bank in order to make high-cost loans and avoid state usury laws. Trump had also loosened laws on methane emissions from leaks and flares in oil & gas wells.

‘Four Cuts’ Strategy

- Myanmar military, also known as Tatmadaw, have returned to its “four cuts strategy” in order to stamp out resistance to its rule after it seized power from elected government of Myanmar in Military coup on February 1, 2021.

Background:

- As per an independent researcher, ‘four cuts’ strategy was first developed in the 1960s.
- “Four cuts” doctrine was adopted in 1968 after Myanmar Military had had a chance to study British strategies during 1948-1960 Malayan Emergency. During that time, colonial power gradually choked off a communist insurgency.

- The “four cuts” was a doctrine which was designed to sever insurgents from their key inputs like funding, food, intelligence, and recruits. This strategy was first prosecuted against Karen rebellion before it was rolled out to deal with insurgencies.
- Military divided Myanmar into black, brown, and white zones in a bid to reflect insurgent-controlled, partially insurgent-controlled, and government-controlled areas. ‘Black zones’ were free-fire areas for the Military.
- Myanmar military had developed this strategy when it was struggling to fight Communist Party of Burma and Myanmar’s oldest ethnic armed group, Karen National Union.
- It was particularly used in Ayeyarwady Delta Region and Bago Yoma mountain range, during that time.
- As per Naw Htoo Htoo of Karen Human Rights Group, ‘four cuts’ strategy was used by Military in areas under KNU control. It targeted every person and village, which were having ties with KNU.
- Myanmar’s military has also used four cuts in Kachin State following a ceasefire between Tatmadaw and Kachin Independence Organization collapsed in 2011.

Mango diplomacy

- Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, has gifted 2,600 kg of Haribhanga variety of mangoes to Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi.
- Truck carrying 260 cartons of mangoes crossed Bangladesh-India border through Benapole port in Jessore.
- Mangoes are a “memento of friendship” between both the countries.
- Mangoes are of “Haribhanga variety” which are grown in Rangpur region of Bangladesh.
- Haribhanga mangoes typically weigh 200 to 400 grams and are round in shape, extremely fleshy and fibreless.
- Mango diplomacy has been a tradition of politics in Indian subcontinent. Dignitaries like former Pakistan Presidents Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf had also presented India with mangoes.

New Quad group

- The U.S., Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan have agreed in principle to establish a new quadrilateral diplomatic platform focused on enhancing regional connectivity.
- The parties consider long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan critical to regional connectivity and agree that peace and regional connectivity are mutually reinforcing.
- Recognising the historic opportunity to open flourishing interregional trade routes, the parties intend to cooperate to expand trade, build transit links, and strengthen business-to-business ties.

- Located at the heart of the historic Silk Road, Afghanistan was long the crossroads of commerce between Asian countries connecting them to Europe, and enhancing religious, cultural, and commercial contacts.
- By virtue of its location, Afghanistan can provide China with a base to spread its influence across the world.
- Since the announcement of the withdrawal of U.S. forces by August 31, violence has been rising and efforts to broker a peace settlement between the Afghan government and insurgent Taliban have slowed.

Bill to prevent Custodial Death

- Parliament of Pakistan has passed a bill to criminalise torture and prevent custodial killings by police or other government officials.
- This bill was adopted by Senate which is the upper house of bicameral parliament.
- As per this bill, public servant involved in torture will face up to 10 years imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs. 2 million.
- If a public servant, charged with duty of preventing torture, either intentionally or negligently fails to prevent it, he or she will be imprisoned up to five and will be imposed a fine of up to Rs. 1 million.
- Whoever commits, abets or conspires to commit offence of custodial death or custodial sexual violence, will be punished with imprisonment for life and a fine of up to Rs. 3 million.
- If a public servant, charged with the duty of preventing custodial death and custodial sexual violence, intentionally or negligently fails to do so, he or she will be imprisoned for seven years with a fine of up to Rs. 1 million.
- No one would be taken into custody to “extract information regarding whereabouts of a person accused of any offence or to extract evidence.
- Women would be taken into custody by a female official.
- As per bill, fine will be paid to victim or their legal heirs. If fine is not paid, public servant will face additional imprisonment of up to three years & five years

‘Right to repair’ movement

- United State President Joe Biden has signed an executive order for Federal Trade Commission to curb restrictions imposed by manufacturers limiting consumers’ ability to repair their gadgets on their own terms.
- The right to repair movement traces its origin to dawn of computer era in 1950s. Since then, activists and organisations worldwide have been calling for right of consumers to be able to repair their own electronics and other products under the ‘right to repair movement’.

REPAIR MANIFESTO

WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT

IF YOU CAN'T FIX IT, YOU DON'T OWN IT.

REPAIR IS BETTER THAN RECYCLING
Making our things last longer is both more efficient and more cost-effective than mining them for raw materials.

REPAIR SAVES YOU MONEY
Fixing things is often free, and usually cheaper than replacing them. Doing the repair yourself saves you money.

REPAIR TEACHES ENGINEERING
The best way to find out how something works is to take it apart.

REPAIR SAVES THE PLANET
Earth has limited resources. Eventually we will run out. The best way to be efficient is to reuse what we already have.



REPAIR CONNECTS PEOPLE AND THINGS | **REPAIR IS WAR ON ENTROPY** | **REPAIR IS SUSTAINABLE**

WE HAVE THE RIGHT:

- TO DEVICES THAT CAN BE OPENED
- TO REPAIR DOCUMENTATION FOR **EVERYTHING**
- TO REPAIR THINGS IN THE PRIVACY OF OUR OWN HOMES
- TO ERROR CODES & WIRING DIAGRAMS
- TO CHOOSE OUR OWN REPAIR TECHNICIAN
- TO REMOVE 'DO NOT REMOVE' STICKERS
- TO REPLACE ANY & ALL CONSUMABLES OURSELVES
- TO AVAILABLE, REASONABLY-PRICED SERVICE PARTS
- TO NON-PROPRIETARY FASTENERS
- TO TROUBLESHOOTING INSTRUCTIONS & FLOWCHARTS

BECAUSE REPAIR IS INDEPENDENCE SAVES MONEY & RESOURCES | **REQUIRES** CREATIVITY | **MAKES CONSUMERS INTO CONTRIBUTORS** | **INSPIRES** PRIDE IN OWNERSHIP

- This movement seeks get companies to make spare parts, tools and information on how to repair devices that are available to customers. They also want the repair shops to increase lifespan of products & keep them from ending up in landfills.

- Activists started this movement after arguing that these electronic manufacturers are encouraging a culture of ‘planned obsolescence’. It means, devices are designed to last a limited amount of time & to be replaced. This led to an immense pressure on environment and wasted natural resources.
- Manufacturing of an electronic device is a highly polluting process. It uses polluting sources of energy like fossil fuel, which adversely impact environment.
- Companies like Apple, Microsoft, Amazon and Tesla, have been lobbying against right to repair movement arguing that “opening up their intellectual property to third party repair services” or “amateur repairers” will lead to exploitation. It will also impact safety & security of their devices.
- Before US, United Kingdom had also introduced right-to-repair rules making it easier to buy & repair.

“Taiwan”

- Using the name “Taiwan,” Taiwan’s government will set up its first office in Europe, in the Baltic nation of Lithuania. The Taiwan government has come up with this decision as it seeks to strengthen its diplomatic presence across the globe with the ever increasing pressure from Beijing.



- This decision has drawn a rebuke from China while it was praised by the USA.
- The other diplomatic outposts of Taiwan on the continent are named “Taipei.”

- Taiwan Affairs Office of Beijing has issued statement saying that the formation of the Lithuania office is an attempt at seeking independence. China has also urged Lithuania to adhere to China's one-China principle.
- China has always firmly opposed any formal relations between Taiwan and other countries.
- China claims Taiwan to be its province under its one-China policy and it is officially known as the Republic of China.

Maglev train

- China rolled out a 600km per hr high-speed maglev train in Qingdao located in the Shandong Province of East China.
- Currently, maglev train is the fastest available ground vehicle.
- Shenzhen to Shanghai trip which took 10 hours will now be shortened to only 2.5 hours.
- The new maglev train displays a number of technological advancements which also include a 30% more efficient self-developed brake system.
- It took 19 months to develop the magnetic poles for the whirlpool brakes on this train and they can be recycled and can withstand vibrations.



- By using forged aluminium alloys a coupler was developed for the train which has a length of only 280 millimetres and weighs less than 30kg.
- 5G WI-Fi system and wireless charging will be provided to ensure smooth telecommunications.
- This project was started in the year 2016 and a prototype vehicle was developed in the year 2019 which made a trail run in June 2020.
- The maglev train can be customized accordingly from 2 to 10 cars with each car capable of accommodating more than 100 passengers.
- In the world, China has the largest high-speed railway network and covers 95% of its cities. By 2035, China aims to build 4,60,000 kilometres of highways, 25,000 kilometres of high-level sea lanes and 2,00,000 kilometres of railways.

U.S. combat mission in Iraq ends

- U.S. President Joe Biden and Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi sealed an agreement formally ending the U.S. combat mission in Iraq by the end of 2021, but American forces will still operate there in an advisory role.
- The agreement comes at a delicate time for the Iraqi government and could be a boost for Baghdad. Mr. Kadhimi has faced increasing pressure from Iran-aligned parties and paramilitary groups who oppose the U.S. military role in the country.
- For Mr. Biden, the deal to end the combat mission in Iraq follows decisions to carry out a withdrawal from Afghanistan and wrap up the U.S. military mission there by the end of August.
- Together with his agreement on Iraq, the Democratic President is moving to formally complete U.S. combat missions in the two wars that then-President George W. Bush began under his watch nearly two decades ago.
- A U.S.-led coalition invaded Iraq in 2003 based on charges that then-Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's government possessed weapons of mass destruction. Saddam was ousted from power, but such weapons were never found. In recent years, the U.S. mission was focused on helping defeat the IS militants in Iraq and Syria.

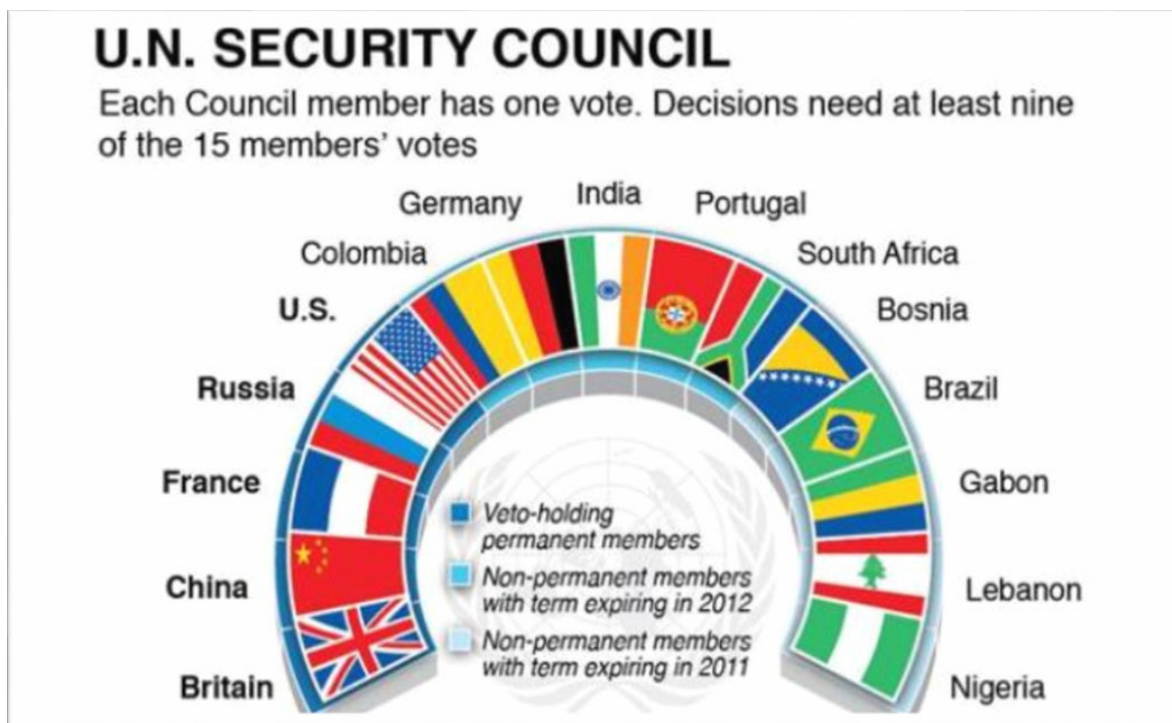
'Militarising' education

- Academics from Sri Lanka's state universities withdrew from online teaching and administrative duties in resistance to a government Bill that, they say, threatens to "militarise" education.
- "The Federation of University Teachers Associations' (FUTA) main demand is that the government keep military and civilian education separate.

- The KDU Bill, scheduled for parliamentary debate on August 6, seeks to change the governance structure of the University that was set up in 1980 as an Academy exclusively for the tri-forces, and named after Sri Lanka's former Prime Minister.
- The proposed changes could pave way for a greater military role in education policy and administration, academics warn.

UNSC presidency

- India has assumed the rotating Presidency of the United Nations Security Council for the month of August.
- This is India's tenth tenure.
- This is also India's first presidency in the UNSC during its 2021-22 tenure as a non-permanent member of the UNSC.
- The presidency of the Council is held by each of the members in turn for one month, following the English alphabetical order of the Member States names.
- It rotates among the 15 member-states of the council monthly.
- The head of the country's delegation is known as the President of the United Nations Security Council.
- The president serves to coordinate actions of the council, decide policy disputes, and sometimes functions as a diplomat or intermediary between conflicting groups.



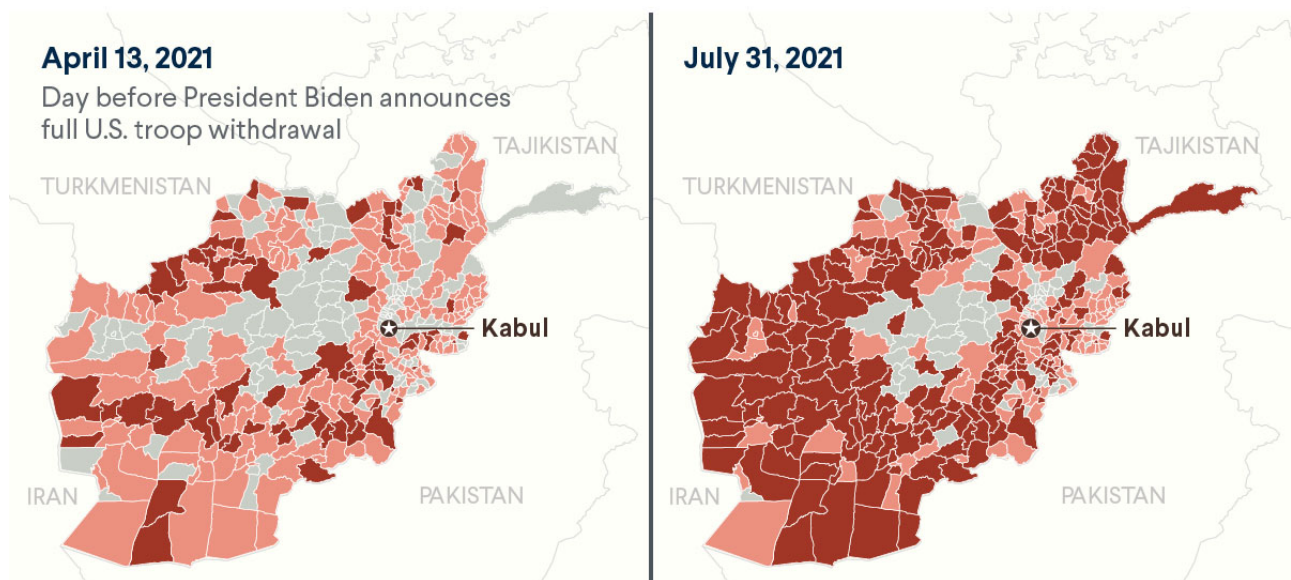
Afghanistan crisis

- Taliban recently seized more major cities and raced to take full control of Afghanistan with the U.S. and Britain deploying troops to evacuate their citizens.
- Non-governmental player Taliban has been making advances to return to power with sheer display of violence after USA's decision of withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Significance of Afghan stability :

- Can have spill over to Neighbouring central Asian countries like Tajikistan, Uzbekistan etc
- Taliban resurgence will revive extremism in the region and the region can become a safe sanctuary for LET, ISIS etc.
- Civil war in Afghanistan will lead to a refugee crisis in Central Asia and beyond.
- Afghanistan's stability will help the Central Asian countries with the shortest access to the seaports of the Indian ocean.
- Afghanistan has been an important link in the regional trade, cultural, playing the role of a connecting bridge for Central and the rest of the world.

Control by district: ● Taliban control or claim ● Contested ● Government control



India & Taliban:

- Taliban is now having a significant presence in Afghanistan.
- India is already having huge investments in Afghanistan. To secure assets worth \$3 billion, India should engage with all parties in Afghanistan.

- Taliban engaging with Pak deep state will not be in India's best interest.
- If India does not engage now Russia, Iran, Pakistan and China will emerge as the shapers of Afghanistan's political and geopolitical destiny, which for sure will be detrimental to Indian interests.
- The U.S. has announced a new, surprise formation of a "Quad" on regional connectivity — U.S.-Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan that does not include India.

UN peacekeepers

- External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar has announced the rollout of a technological platform in partnership with the UN — 'UNITE Aware' — to help enhance the safety of UN peacekeepers. The platform has been used in four UN missions.
- The minister has also outlined a four-point framework for securing the peacekeepers:
 1. Need for the deployment of proven, cost-effective and field-serviceable technologies that were environmentally friendly in their construction.
 2. Peacekeepers needed sound information and intelligence.
 3. Need for precise positioning and overhead visualisation.
 4. Investment in capacity building and training of peacekeepers with regard to technology.

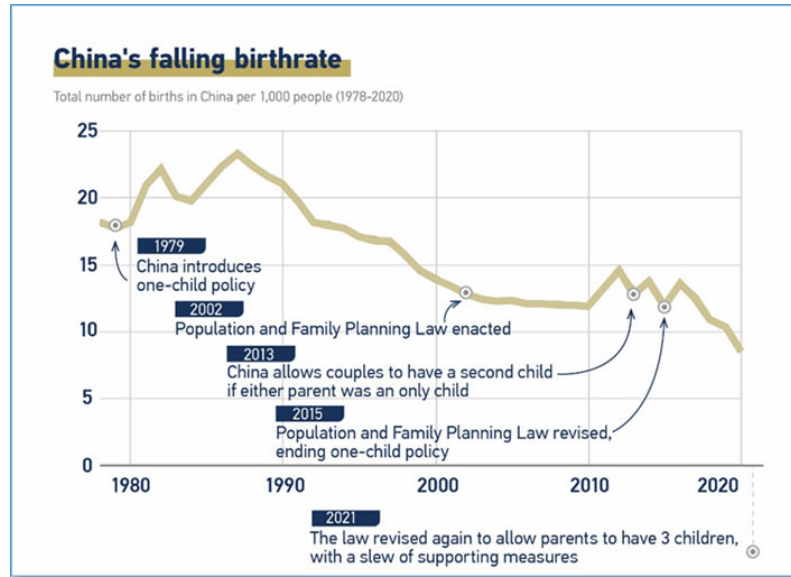


UNITE AWARE:

- UNITE AWARE is a mobile tech platform developed by India to provide terrain-related information to the UN peacekeepers so as to ensure their safety. It is being developed in partnership with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Operational Support.
- While decisions about establishing, maintaining or expanding a peacekeeping operation are taken by the Security Council, the financing of UN Peacekeeping operations is the collective responsibility of all UN Member States.
- Every Member State is legally obligated to pay their respective share towards peacekeeping. This is in accordance with the provisions of Article 17 of the Charter of the United Nations.
- The top 5 providers of assessed contributions to United Nations Peacekeeping operations for 2020-2021 are:
 - ✓ United States (27.89%).
 - ✓ China (15.21%).
 - ✓ Japan (8.56%).
 - ✓ Germany (6.09%).
 - ✓ United Kingdom (5.79%).

China's three-child policy

- China's legislature has formally amended the country's family planning rules to allow couples to have three children, also announcing a number of policy measures aimed at boosting declining birth rates.
- The changes come in the wake of China's once-in-ten year population census that recorded rapidly declining birth rates over the past decade.
- The National Bureau of Statistics said that 12 million babies were born last year, the lowest number since 1961.



- While the relaxation did result in some improvement in the proportion of young people in the country, the policy change was deemed insufficient in averting an impending demographic crisis.
- Experts say relaxing limits on reproductive rights alone cannot go a long way in averting an unwanted demographic shift.
- The main factors behind fewer children being born are:
 - ✓ Rising costs of living, education and supporting ageing parents.
 - ✓ Country's pervasive culture of long working hours.
 - ✓ Many couples believing that one child is enough, and some expressing no interest in having children.

ENVIRONMENT

Project Bold

- Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) in collaboration with the Border Security Force (BSF) in a first of its kind project has launched Project Bold with the primary aim of developing green cover in the Indian deserts of Rajasthan.
- On 27th July, 2021 KVIC along with the BSF planted 1000 bamboo saplings under Project Bold.
- The saplings were planted in Tanot village in Jaisalmer.
- Project BOLD, which stands for Bamboo Oasis on Lands in Drought will provide a green cover and will help in reducing the desertification of this area in Tanot. The bamboo plants will multiply in the coming years and at the current market rate of Rs 5000 per ton, this produce will generate nearly 5 lakh rupees of income which will help in supporting the local economy.
- Maintenance of the plants will be done by BSF.
- Bamboo can be used for making various things such as furniture, agarbatti sticks, musical instruments, and handicraft and paper pulp.
- Bamboo waste is also widely used in the making of fuel briquette and charcoal.
- Bamboos are also known for helping in conservation of water and it will be useful in drought-prone regions.

Tiger Corridor in Rajasthan:

- Rajasthan government has planned to develop a tiger corridor connecting Ranthambore tiger reserve, Ramgarh Vishdhari tiger reserve and Mukundra tiger reserve.
- Centre government have its nod for creation of Ramgarh Vishdhari sanctuary, recently.
- This sanctuary will link Ranthambore Tiger Reserve in Northeast side and Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve on southern side.
- A tiger corridor will be developed by relocating eight villages. It will be a functional corridor to deal with issue of overpopulation of tigers which Ranthambore tiger reserve is facing currently.
- Ranthambore Tiger Reserve has a population of above 65 tigers currently. On the other hand, Mukundra reserve is left with just one Tiger. Thus, this tiger corridor was proposed to balance the population distribution.

Ranthambore Tiger Reserve

- This reserve is located at the junction of Aravali and Vindhya hill ranges. It comprises of Ranthambore National Park, Sawai Mansingh sanctuary and Keladevi Sanctuaries.

- Typically, tropical dry deciduous forest is found here. Common tree species is 'dhak' (Butea monosperma), that is capable of withstanding long periods of drought. This tree is also called as 'Flame of forest'.
- It is one of many flowering plants adding colours to dry summer in the reserve. It is rich in wildlife with tigers at apex of food chain. It is also a home to leopards.

Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve

This reserve was established in 2013. It is located between two parallel mountains, Mukundra and Gagrola. It runs for a length of about 80 km.

Status of Leopards

Union Environment Ministry has released a new report titled- Status of Leopards, Co-predators and Megaherbivores-2018.

The report was released on July 29, 2021 — World Tiger Day.

Findings:

- India's official leopard count has increased 63 per cent from 2014-2018. There were 12,852 leopards in the country in 2018 (7,910 in 2014).
- The largest number of leopards have been estimated in Madhya Pradesh (3,421) followed by Karnataka (1,783) and Maharashtra (1,690).
- The government has also informed that there are 14 tiger reserves that had received the accreditation of the Global Conservation Assured|Tiger Standards (CA|TS), an accreditation tool agreed upon by tiger range countries. These include:
 - ✓ Manas, Kaziranga and Orang in Assam.
 - ✓ Satpura, Kanha and Panna in Madhya Pradesh.
 - ✓ Pench in Maharashtra.
 - ✓ Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Bihar.
 - ✓ Dudhwa in Uttar Pradesh.
 - ✓ Sunderbans in West Bengal.
 - ✓ Parambikulam in Kerala.
 - ✓ Bandipur Tiger Reserve of Karnataka.
 - ✓ Mudumalai and Anamalai Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu.

CA|TS has been agreed upon as an accreditation tool by the global coalition of Tiger Range Countries (TRCs) and has been developed by tiger and protected area experts.

CA|TS is a set of criteria which allows tiger sites to check if their management will lead to successful tiger conservation.

It was officially launched in 2013.

The Global Tiger Forum (GTF), an international NGO working on tiger conservation, and World Wildlife Fund India are the two implementing partners of the National Tiger Conservation Authority for CATS assessment in India.

Plastic Waste Management

- The Environment Ministry has notified the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021, which prohibit specific single-use plastic items which have “low utility and high littering potential” by 2022.
- The manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of the identified single-use plastic will be prohibited with effect from the 1st July, 2022.
- The ban will not apply to commodities made of compostable plastic.
- For banning other plastic commodities in the future, other than those that have been listed in this notification, the government has given industry ten years from the date of notification for compliance.
- The permitted thickness of the plastic bags, currently 50 microns, will be increased to 75 microns from 30th September, 2021, and to 120 microns from the 31st December, 2022.
- The Central Pollution Control Board, along with state pollution bodies, will monitor the ban, identify violations, and impose penalties already prescribed under the Environmental Protection Act, 1986.

Single-use plastic is a form of plastic that is disposable, which is only used once and then has to be thrown away or recycled like water bottles, straw, cups etc.

- According to World Wildlife Fund (WWF), plastic is harmful to the environment as it is non-biodegradable, takes years to disintegrate.
- Waste plastic bags are polluting the land and water immensely.
- Plastic bags have become a threat to the life of animals living on earth as well as in water.
- Chemicals released by waste plastic bags enter the soil and make it infertile.
- Plastic bags are having a negative impact on human health.
- Plastic bags lead to drainage problems.

Ramsar recognition

- Four more Indian sites have been recognised as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention taking the number of such sites in the country to 46.
- The new sites include:
- Sultanpur National Park, Haryana: More than 10 globally threatened, including the critically endangered sociable lapwing, and the endangered Egyptian Vulture, Saker Falcon, Pallas's Fish Eagle and Black-bellied Tern birds are found here.
- Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary, Haryana: It is a human-made freshwater wetland. It is also the largest in Haryana.
- Thol, Gujarat: It is a Wildlife Sanctuary in Gujarat lies on the Central Asian Flyway and more than 320 bird species can be found here. It supports more than 30 threatened waterbird species, such as the critically endangered White-rumped Vulture and Sociable Lapwing, and the vulnerable Sarus Crane, Common Pochard and Lesser White-fronted Goose.
- Wadhvana, Gujarat: It is internationally important for its birdlife as it provides wintering ground to migratory waterbirds, including over 80 species that migrate on the Central Asian Flyway. Pallas's fish-Eagle, the vulnerable Common Pochard, and the near-threatened Dalmatian Pelican, Grey-headed Fish-eagle and Ferruginous Duck are some birds found here.

40% of the world's species live or breed in wetlands.

Wetlands are "nurseries of life" – 40% of animals breed in wetlands.

Wetlands are "kidneys of the earth" – they clean the environment of pollutants.

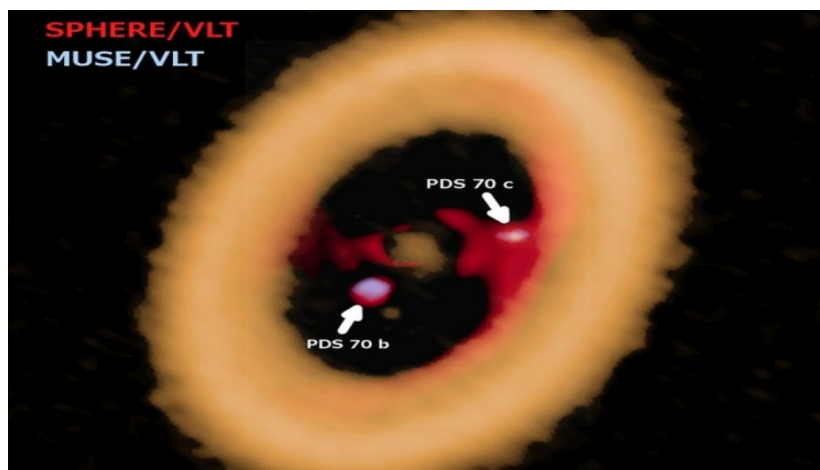
Wetlands "matter for climate change" – they store 30% of land based carbon.

Wetlands "minimize disaster risks" – they absorb storm surge.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

PDS 70c

- Scientists for the first time have spotted a moon-forming region around a planet beyond our solarsystem - a Jupiter-like world surrounded by a disc of gas and dust massive enough that it could spawn three moons the size of the one orbiting Earth.
- The researchers used the ALMA observatory in Chile's Atacama desert to detect the disc of swirling material accumulating around one of two newborn planets seen orbiting a young star called PDS 70, located 370 light years from Earth. A light year is the distance light travels in a year, about 9.5 trillion km.
- More than 4,400 planets have been discovered outside our solar system, called exoplanets.
- The orange-coloured star PDS 70, roughly the same mass as our Sun, is about 5 million years old. The two planets are even younger.
- Both planets are similar (although larger) to Jupiter, a gas giant. It was around one of the two planets, called PDS 70c, that a moon-forming disc was observed.



- Stars burst to life within clouds of interstellar gas and dust scattered throughout galaxies. Leftover material spinning around a new star then coalesces into planets, and circumplanetary discs surrounding some planets similarly yield moons.
- The dominant mechanism thought to underpin planet formation is called “core accretion”.
- In this scenario, small dust grains, coated in ice, gradually grow to larger and larger sizes through successive collisions with other grains.
- This continues until the grains have grown to a size of a planetary core, at which point the young planet has a strong enough gravitational potential to accrete gas which will form its atmosphere.

New Drug for Hepatitis C

- World's first affordable as well as effective new drug for hepatitis C has been registered by Malaysia. This new drug offers hope for accessible treatment to the millions of people around the world who are suffering from this disease.
- Hepatitis C has very few early symptoms, hence, making it very hard to diagnose and is said to be a silent killer.
- The drug which has been named ravidasvir has been approved for use along with an existing drug named sofosbuvir.
- This approval came five years after the Malaysian government had partnered with Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) to develop the drug.
- According to the World Health Organization, around 71 million people globally are thought to be living with Hepatitis C which is a blood-borne virus that is one of the leading causes of liver cancer and can lead to cirrhosis.
- Hepatitis C has no vaccine.

Hepatitis C

What you should know



What is it?

Hepatitis C is a virus that attacks the liver. Untreated, it can be life-threatening.

Can it be cured?

Yes! New treatments can cure hepatitis C for almost everyone.

It doesn't spread through...

Breastfeeding

Sharing eating utensils

Kissing, hugging or holding hands

Insect bites

Coughing or sneezing

How does it spread?

Used or shared needles, syringes or lancets

Sex

Sharing care items like toothbrushes or razors

Born to a mom with hepatitis C

Medical mishaps like needle injuries or unsterile instruments

What are the symptoms?

No symptoms

Stomach pain

Vomiting

Yellow eyes or skin

Am I at risk?

Go to www.tpchd.org/hepc and take a free online test to determine your risk.

People born between 1945 and 1965 are five times more likely to have hepatitis C.

- Hepatitis C medicines are very costly and are sometimes out of reach of the sufferers from the lower and middle income group countries.
- Cheaper treatment of this disease is going to help the sufferers and the countries are also being encouraged to conduct more testing for hepatitis. The WHO plans to eliminate this disease by reducing new infections by 90% and deaths by 65 % by the year 2030.

Biodiesel from chicken waste

- John Abraham, a veterinary-doctor-turned-inventor, has received the patents for inventing biodiesel from the waste of slaughtered chicken.
- This biodiesel offers mileage of around 38 km a litre. This biodiesel costs around 40% of the current diesel price and cuts down on pollution by half.
- The Kochi Refinery of Bharat Petroleum's in the year 2015 had issued a quality certificate for the biodiesel that he invented and since then a vehicle of the college was running on this biodiesel.
- Mr. Abraham stated that pigs and birds have single stomach which offers higher fat saturation and under room temperature this makes it easy to render oil.
- 1 liter of biodiesel can be produced from 100 kg of chicken waste.
- The lower pollution and higher mileage is because chicken waste contains 62% fat which offers key energy content of Cetane at 72, while in normal diesel it is 64 only.
- The high Cetane value of 72 in leads to shorter ignition delays which provides more time for fuel combustion and this leads to less exhaust emission and more efficiency. Smoke levels are also reduced by over 47%.

Food Fortification

- Centre has plans to mandatorily fortify rice and edible oils with vitamins and minerals.
- 15 States have been identified for implementing Centrally Sponsored Pilot Scheme on Fortification of Rice & its distribution through Public Distribution System.
- The Pilot Scheme has been approved for a period of three years beginning 2019-2020.
- Mandatory fortification would also harm the vast informal economy of Indian farmers and food processors, including local oil and rice mills, and instead benefit a small group of multinational corporations.
- Also, a major problem with chemical fortification of foods is that nutrients don't work in isolation but need each other for optimal absorption.

Undernourishment in India is caused by monotonous cereal-based diets with low consumption of vegetables and animal protein. So, instead of fortification of food, dietary diversity is a healthier and more cost-effective way to fight malnutrition.

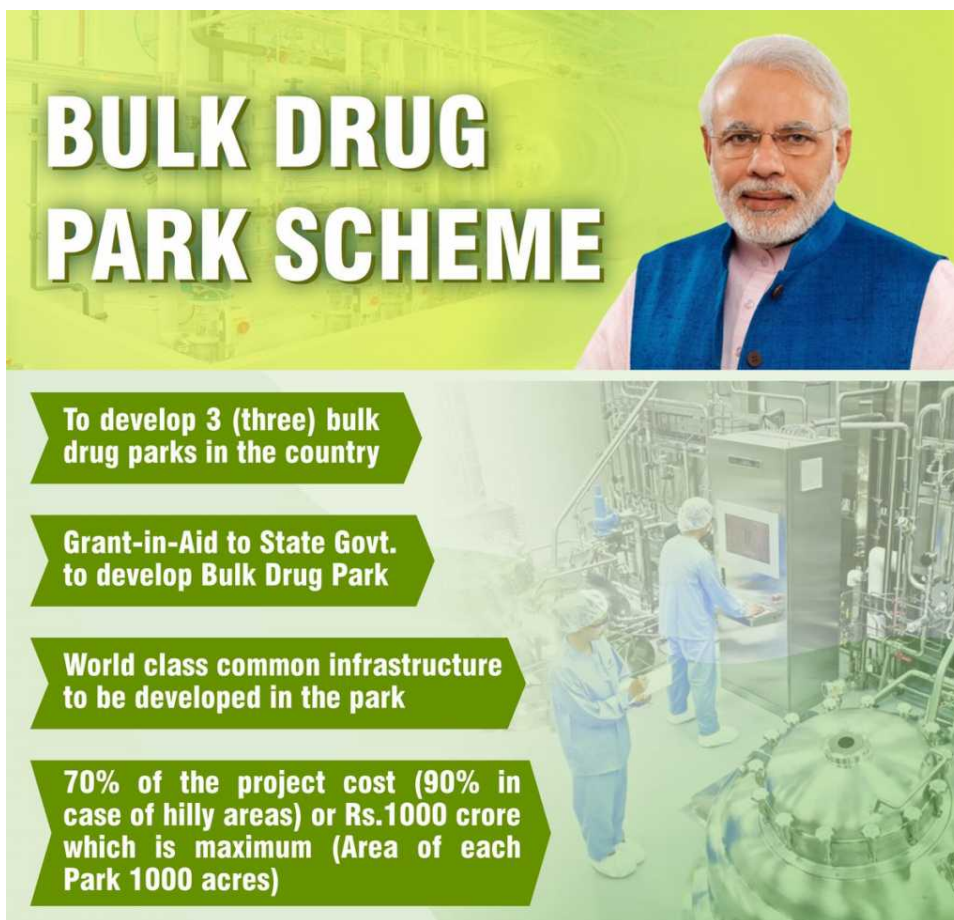
According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), food fortification is defined as the practice of deliberately increasing the content of essential micronutrients so as to improve the nutritional quality of the food supply and to provide a public health benefit with minimal risk to health.

Bulk Drug Parks Scheme

- A bulk drug is also called an active pharmaceutical ingredient (API).
- It is the key ingredient of a drug or medicine, which lends it the desired therapeutic effect or produces the intended pharmacological activity.
- They are prepared from multiple reactions involving chemicals and solvents.
- The primary chemical or the basic raw material which undergoes reactions to form an API is called the key starting material, or KSM.
- Chemical compounds formed during the intermediate stages during these reactions are called drug intermediates or DIs.
- India has one of the largest pharmaceutical industries in the world (third largest by volume).
- But this industry largely depends on other countries, particularly China, for importing APIs, DIs and KSMs.
- So, any disruptions in those countries would definitely affect the pharmaceutical industries here in India.
- For instance, this year, drug manufacturers in India suffered repeated setbacks due to disruption in imports due to Covid 19.

Bulk drug parks in India:

- A bulk drug park will have a designated contiguous area of land with common infrastructure facilities for the exclusive manufacture of APIs, DIs or KSMs, and also a common waste management system.
- These parks are expected to bring down manufacturing costs of bulk drugs in the country and increase competitiveness in the domestic bulk drug industry.
- A state can only propose one site, which is not less than a thousand acres in area, or not less than 700 acres in the case of hill states.
- Karnataka has sought the Centre's approval for the development of the Bulk Drug Park in Yadgir district under the Centre's Promotion of Bulk Drug Parks Scheme.



BULK DRUG PARK SCHEME

- To develop 3 (three) bulk drug parks in the country**
- Grant-in-Aid to State Govt. to develop Bulk Drug Park**
- World class common infrastructure to be developed in the park**
- 70% of the project cost (90% in case of hilly areas) or Rs.1000 crore which is maximum (Area of each Park 1000 acres)**

GM soybean

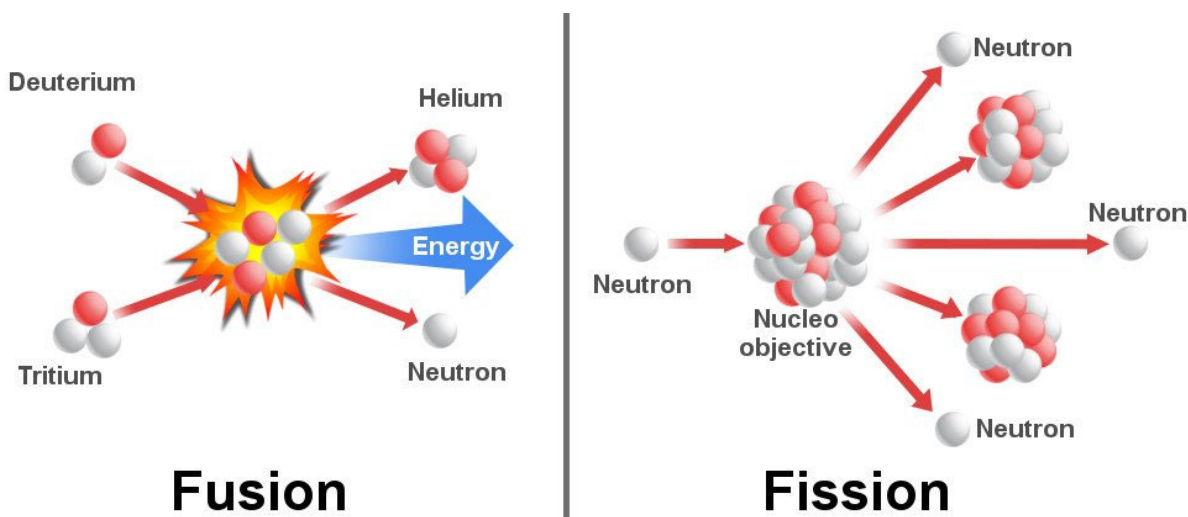
- The Union government has decided to allow the import of crushed genetically modified (GM) soybean, which is a major ingredient of poultry feed.
- The poultry industry has been crushed by multiple disasters over the last year and a half.
- In January 2020, a false rumour that COVID-19 could be spread by eating chicken meat led to a crash in demand.
- A year later, avian flu cases led to another crash, followed by a crippling rise in the prices of poultry feed.
- Besides, over the last three to four years, soy meal has been available at an average cost of Rs.34 to 36/kg. This month, it shot up to Rs.96/kg (Soy meal is the main protein ingredient in the feed).
- Environmental activists have raised concerns about the permission given for something derived from a genetically modified plant to enter the human food chain, given that India's regulatory system has yet to approve GM foods.
- Besides, the 1989 rules of the Environment Protection Act applied not just to GM organisms, but also products and substances thereof.

A GM or transgenic crop is a plant that has a novel combination of genetic material obtained through the use of modern biotechnology.

GM crop can contain a gene(s) that has been artificially inserted instead of the plant acquiring it through pollination.

Nuclear Fusion

- Physicists in California, using lasers the size of three football fields, have generated a huge amount of energy from fusion.
- Experts focused their giant array of almost 200 laser beams onto a tiny spot to create a mega blast of energy – eight times more than they had ever done in the past.
- Although the energy only lasted for a very short time – just 100 trillionths of a second – the scientists were able to create more energy than they are using.
- In this experiment, scientists used two isotopes of hydrogen, giving rise to helium.
- This offers hope for the development of a new clean energy source.
- Nuclear fusion is considered by some scientists to be a potential energy of the future, particularly because it produces little waste and no greenhouse gases.
- It differs from fission, a technique currently used in nuclear power plants, where the bonds of heavy atomic nuclei are broken to release energy.
- In the fusion process, two light atomic nuclei are “married” to create a heavy one. This is the process that is at work in stars, including our Sun.



DEFENCE**Essential Defence Services Bill 2021**

- The Bill aims to prevent the staff of the government-owned ordnance factories from going on a strike.
- It is meant to “provide for the maintenance of essential defence services.
- The Bill defines Essential Defence Services: It includes any service in any establishment or undertaking dealing with production of goods or equipment required for defence related purposes or any establishment of the armed forces or connected with them or defence.
- The Bill also empowers the government to declare services mentioned in it as essential defence services.
- It prohibits strike and lockouts in “any industrial establishment or unit engaged in essential defence services”.
- Besides, the bill has also defined strikes and punishments for violations.
- The Bill was recently passed by the Lok Sabha.

In June the government announced the corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board.

The government has claimed that the move is aimed at improving the efficiency and accountability of these factories.

However, fearing job loss, many federations announced the launch of indefinite strikes.

This was countered by the Essential Defence Services Ordinance which was promulgated on June 30. The Bill will replace this ordinance.

MISCELLANEOUS**AWARDS****Kuvempu Rashtriya Puraskar**

- Odia poet, Dr Rajendra Kishore Panda, has been awarded Kuvempu Rashtriya Puraskar 2020.
- Kuvempu Rashtriya Purashkar was instituted in memory of late poet laureate Kuvempu.
- Award comprises of a cash award of Rs 5 lakh, a silver medal, and a citation.
- This award was instituted by Rashtrakavi Kuvempu Trust in 2013 to honor literateurs for their contribution in Indian languages recognized by Constitution of India under schedule eight.
- Award has been conferred to writers from Malayalam, Urdu, Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi and Kannada.
- They were awarded at programs organized in Kuppali, Shivamogga district. This district is the birthplace of Kuvempu.
- Award is usually conferred on December 29, but in 2020 it was delayed because of COVID-19 pandemic.

About Dr Rajendra Kishore Panda

He was born on June 24, 1944. He writes in Odia language. He has published 16 poetry collections and a novel. He is a major Indian poet who helped in reaching the path of modern Odia poetry to great heights. He was conferred with Gangadhar National Award in 2010, and Sahitya Akademi Award in 1985. He was also awarded a D. Litt degree by Sambalpur University in 2004. His first collection of poems was Gaun Devata (Minor Gods) that was published in 1947.

UNDP Equator Prize

- Two Indian communities have bagged this year's UNDP Equator Prize. They have won this prestigious prize for their exceptional achievement in exhibiting innovative, local and various nature-based solutions for tackling climate change and biodiversity loss and also achieving their local development goals.
- Out of the ten winners globally, the two Indian winning organizations are the Snehakunja Trust and Aadhimalai Pazhangudiyinar Producer Company Limited.
- These two communities will win a prize amount of 10,000 USD.
- They will also get the opportunity to join a series of virtual events associated with the Nature for Life Hub, UN General Assembly and the UN Food Systems Summit later in this year.
- The winners from India will join a network of 255 communities that have received the Equator Prize from over 80 countries.
- The UNDP Equator Prize was started from 2002.

- Aadhimalai Pazhangudiyinar Producer Company Limited is a cooperative having 1700 member. It is run and managed entirely by the indigenous people from the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, Tamil Nadu. The work done by this community, in the past eight years, has improved the livelihood across 147 villages by marketing and processing a diverse range of crops and forest produce. Harvesting and agricultural practices are regularly monitored so as to ensure the product quality and also to prevent resource overuse.
- For 45 years, the Snehakunja Trust has protected the coastal ecosystems and sensitive wetlands in the Karnataka coast and the Western Ghats with a focus on community-based conservation and restoration. This organization has supported and helped hundreds of village forest committees and self-help groups to manage resources sustainably based on implementation of various natural farming techniques, traditional knowledge, usage of clean energy, promoting entrepreneurship, and also by providing community health services. Currently, this trust is piloting India's first blue carbon project.

Khel Ratna

- The Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna stands renamed as the "Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna" in honour of the hockey wizard.
- Dhyan Chand, a three-time Olympic gold medallist, is considered India's greatest hockey player. His birthday, on August 29, marks the National Sports Day, when the National Sports Awards are presented each year.
- Khel Ratna Award is the highest sporting award given by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports for the spectacular and most outstanding performance in the field of sports by a sportsperson over a period of four years.

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

Authors Name	Book Name
Dhaval Kulkarni	'Nathuram Godse: The True Story of Gandhi's Assassin'
Kavitha Rao	'Lady Doctors: The Untold Stories of India's First Women in Medicine'
Venu Madhav Govindu and Srinath Raghavan	'The Fourth Lion: Essays for Gopalkrishna Gandhi'
Jairam Ramesh	'The Light of Asia'
Kareena Kapoor Khan	'Kareena Kapoor Khan's Pregnancy Bible'


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Shivam Shankar Singh	‘The Art of Conjuring Alternate Realities: How Information Warfare Shapes Your World’
Yalamanchili Sivaji	‘Palleku Pattabhishekam’
Ashok Chakravarti	‘The Struggle Within: A Memoir of the Emergency’
Chryseis Knight	‘The Great Big Lion’
J.S. Ifthekhar	‘Urdu Poets and Writers – Gems of Deccan’
Bimal Jalan	‘The India Story’
Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra	‘The Stranger in the Mirror’
Dr C K Garyali	‘Bank With A Soul: Equitas’
Dr Beena Budki	‘Kashmir Ki Kyari Mein Aag Ki Lapte Aakhir Kab Tak?’
Ashok Lavasa	‘An Ordinary Life: Portrait of an Indian Generation’
Thillai Rajan, Joffi Thomas and Rohan Chinchwadkar	‘Shifting Orbits: Decoding the Trajectory of the Indian Start-up Ecosystem’
Michael Anthony Holding	‘Why We Kneel, How We Rise’
Kunal Basu	‘In An Ideal World’
Captain Ramesh Babu	‘My Own Mazagon’
Sanjay Gubbi	‘Leopard Diaries – the Rosette in India’
Manan Bhatt	‘Balakot Air Strike: How India Avenged Pulwama’
Rudrangshu Mukherjee	‘A Begum and A Rani: Hazrat Mahal and Lakshimibai in 1857’
Anuradha Roy	‘The Earthspinner’
Sudha Murty	‘How the Earth Got Its Beauty’
Vice President, M. Venkaiah Naidu	‘Accelerating India: 7 Years of Modi Government’
Major General Rajpal Punia & Ms. Damini Punia	‘OPERATION KHUKRI’
Retired SC Judge, Rohinton Fali Nariman	‘Discordant Notes: The Voice of Dissent in the Last Court of Resort’

Manreet Sodhi Someshwar	‘Lahore: Book 1 of the Partition Trilogy’
Subhadra Sen Gupta	Let’s Go Time Travelling Again: Indians Through the Ages
Boria Majumdar & Kushan Sarkar	Mission Domination: An Unfinished Quest
Vishram Bedekar	Battlefield
K J Alphons	‘Accelerating India: 7 Years of Modi Government’

INDICES AND REPORTS

Cybersecurity Index

- GCI is a project of International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to rank cybersecurity capabilities of nations across the globe. It is a trusted reference measuring commitment of nations to cybersecurity at a world level.
- It is published to raise awareness of importance and different dimensions of cybersecurity issues. Country’s level of development or engagement in the field of cybersecurity is assessed in five pillars:
 1. Legal Measures
 2. Technical Measures
 3. Organizational Measures
 4. Capacity Development and
 5. Cooperation
- And then data are aggregated into an overall score. GCI leverages capacity and expertise of different organizations in order to improve quality of survey, and to promote knowledge exchange in the fields of cybersecurity. ITU Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA) provides general foundation and framework for initiative.
- This ranking was announced at a time when government has been dealing with instances of cross-border cyber-attacks. In February 2021, several instances were observed where government domain email addresses were used to launch cyber-attacks.
- India has been ranked at 10th position in the cybersecurity index.
- India was ranked ahead of China (No. 33) and Pakistan (No. 79) in global cybersecurity ranking of countries.
- India has improved its ranking from 47 to 10 in United Nation’s ITU Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA).
- United States has been ranked first and is followed by United Kingdom.

- Improved ranking acknowledges multiple initiatives that India have taken along with CERT (Cyber Emergency Response Team).

CNE report

- According to a report released by “Coalition for Negative Emissions (CNE) & McKinsey”, Projects in development will remove only some fraction of the amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from air to meet the 2025 climate change goal.
- About 190 countries have signed Paris agreement which seeks to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- But the report highlights, even with pledges of big reductions in emissions several scientists believe removal technologies will be needed to meet this goal.

Key findings of report

- As per report, goal of keeping global warming within Paris Agreement target of 1.5 degree Celsius cannot be achieved without action to deliver 1 Gigatonne (Gt) of negative emissions globally by 2025.
- Report highlights, countries are required to remove a billion tonnes of CO₂ from atmosphere by 2025, if Paris target is to be met.
- This targeted reduction would require to be further increased by more than one billion tonnes annually.
- According to the report, current pipeline of projects in development could only remove about 150 million tonnes of CO₂ by 2025.

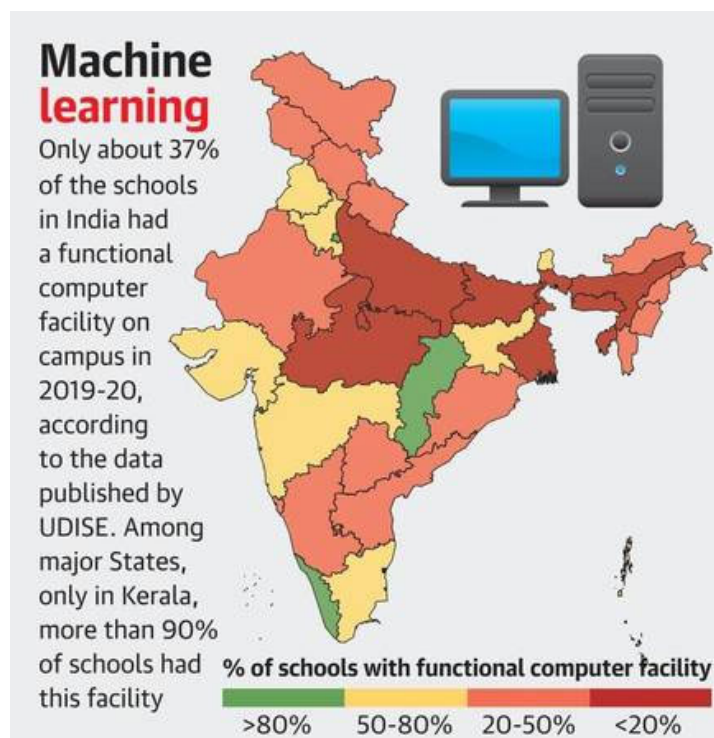
Concerns

- Scaling up the technology would lead to lower costs and an average cost of 30-100 pounds per tonne of CO₂ removed by 2050. Removal technology is expensive. Many countries have initiatives in place to put price on CO₂ emissions but prices are far too low to incentivise new projects.
- As per report, negative emission projects include-
- Bioenergy with technology capture & storage carbon emissions,
- Technology to directly capture & store emissions from air and
- Natural climate solutions such as afforestation.

In last academic year, only 22% schools had Internet

- In the academic year that ended with school closures due to COVID-19, only 22% of schools in India had Internet facilities, according to Education Ministry data.
- Among government schools, less than 12% had Internet in 2019-20, while less than 30% had functional computer facilities.

- This affected the kind of digital education options available to schools during the pandemic, as well as plans for hybrid learning in the days ahead.
- The Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) report collates data from more than 15 lakh schools across the country.
- The availability of digital education — whether via live, synchronous teaching on apps like Zoom, or through recorded lectures, emails, WhatsApp or educational apps — was largely dependent on whether schools, teachers and parents had access to the necessary infrastructure.
- In many Union Territories, as well as in the State of Kerala, more than 90% of schools, both government and private, had access to working computers.
- In States such as Chhattisgarh (83%) and Jharkhand (73%), installation of computer facilities in most government schools paid off, while in others such as Tamil Nadu (77%), Gujarat (74%) and Maharashtra (71%), private schools had higher levels of computer availability than government schools.
- However, in States such as Assam (13%), Madhya Pradesh (13%), Bihar (14%), West Bengal (14%), Tripura (15%) and Uttar Pradesh (18%), less than one in five schools had working computers. The situation is worse in government schools, with less than 5% of Uttar Pradesh's government schools having the facility.
- Only three States — Kerala (88%), Delhi (86%) and Gujarat (71%) — have Internet facilities in more than half their schools. This will make it hard for most schools to implement the options for hybrid learning as schools try to re-open with staggered attendance post the pandemic.

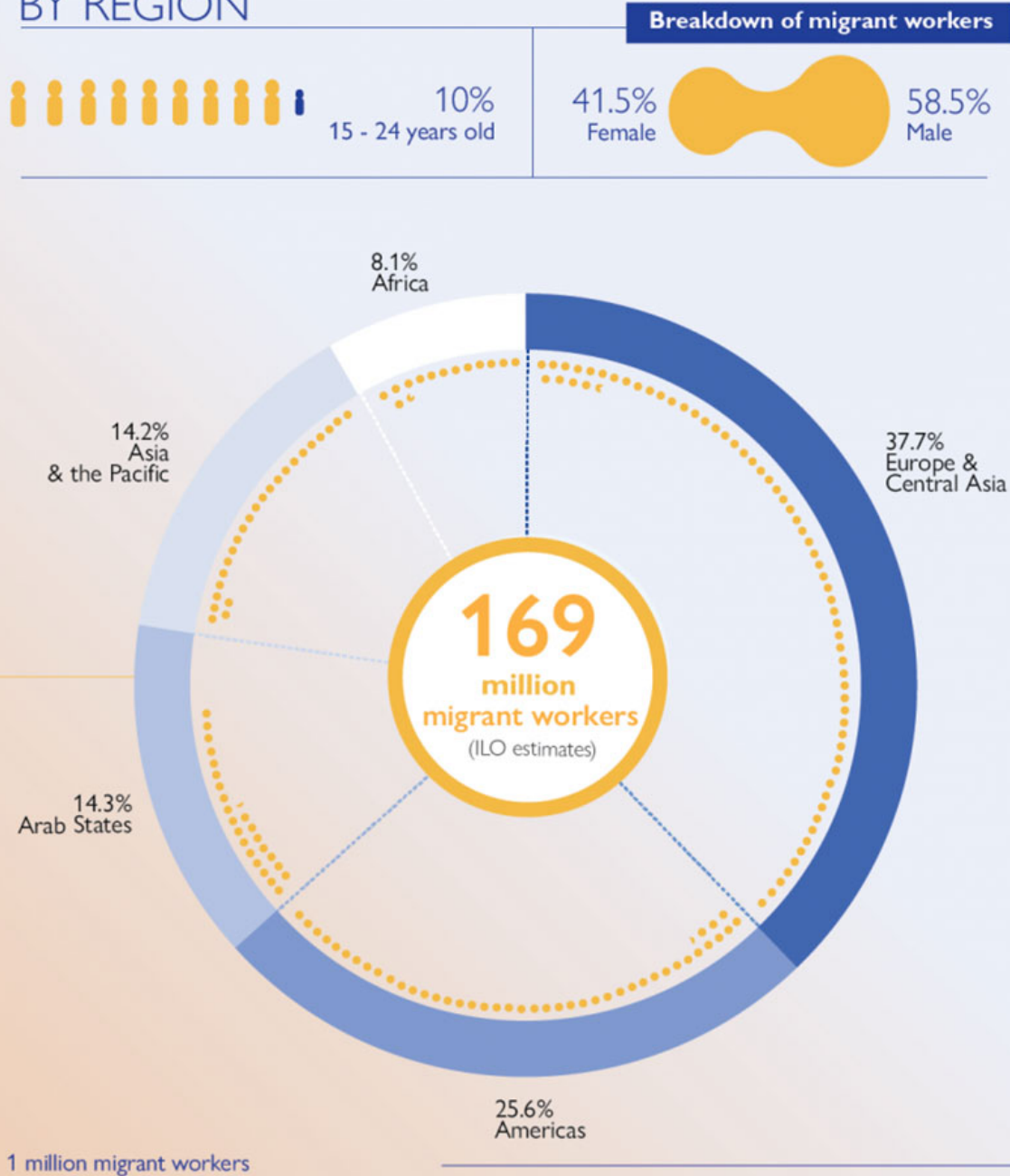


- The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) improved in 2019-20, with 98% of students in Classes 1-8 attending school, though the GER for secondary and senior secondary students stood at 78% and 51% respectively.
- The dropout rate at secondary level was 17% in 2019-20, with experts warning that dropouts are likely to surge due to the pandemic.

Report on International Migrant Workers

- International Labour Organisation (ILO) published its report on International Migrant Workers. Report was published amid COVID-19 pandemic and increased global industrialisation that have impacted world's economy by shift in workers crossing borders to look for employment.
- As per ILO report, number of international migrant workers has increased to 169 million globally. It has increased by 3% since 2017.
- Share of youth migrant workers (aged 15-24) has also increased by almost 2% (accounting to 3.2 million) since 2017.
- COVID-19 pandemic has exposed baseless situation of international migrant workers because number has increased from 164 to 169 million.
- As per report, migrant workers' situation has intensified their vulnerabilities, especially for women migrant workers amidst the covid-19 pandemic.
- Women are over-represented in low-paid and low-skilled jobs.
- Women migrant workers have restricted access to social protection and fewer options are available for support services.
- Because of high youth employment rates, share of youth among international migrant workers has increased to 10 percent in 2019 from 8.3 per cent in 2017.
- Europe, Central Asia and America host 63.3 per cent of all migrant workers.
- Migrant workers accounted for about 59 per cent of the world's international migrant population in 2017. But factors like economic inequalities and seeking employment have contribute towards rising labour migration.

DISTRIBUTION OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN 2019, BY REGION



Source: ILO, 2021.

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www.migrationdataportal.org

Migrant workers contribute to their country's economy and send their remuneration home which boost economy of their country of origin too. However, some unskilled migrant workers are vulnerable to violence of human trafficking. In order to provide them protection and management of migrant workers flow, ILO standards on migration provide for tools like Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 and Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949.

Trafficking in Persons Report

- Trafficking in Persons report 2021 was recently released by US State Department. As per the report, Covid-19 pandemic has increased vulnerability to human trafficking and interrupted existing anti-traffic efforts.
- According to the report, India did not meet minimum standards of eliminating trafficking.
- Chinese government was engaged in forced labour, including through mass arbitrary detention of Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, ethnic Kyrgyz, and other Muslims.
- Countries were not categorised on the basis of magnitude of country's trafficking problem but on the basis of efforts they made to meet minimum standards of eliminating of human trafficking.

Countries were designated on the basis of three-tier system:

- Tier 1 countries- Countries where governments completely comply with minimum standards of Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). TVPA is US's law on human trafficking. USA, UK, Australia, Bahrain and South Korea are tier 1 countries.
- Tier 2 countries- Countries whose governments do not comply with TVPA's minimum standards completely. However, they are making efforts to comply with those standards. India is in this category.
- Tier 3 countries- Countries where governments do not comply with minimum standards of TVPA and are not making significant efforts for same. Afghanistan, China, Burma, North Korea, Cuba, Eritrea, South Sudan, Iran, Russia, Syria and Turkmenistan are under this category.
- Special Case- There are some "Special Cases" like Yemen where civil conflict and humanitarian crisis makes it difficult to gain information.



Sustainable Development Goals Report

- Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021 was recently published by UN department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). It was launched at 2021 session of High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).
- Report highlights the impacts of COVID-19 on SDG implementation. It also identifies areas which require urgent and coordinated action.
- Report was prepared using data and estimates in Global SDG Indicators Database comprising of global, regional and country data & metadata on official SDG indicators.

Key findings of report:

As per report, there has been progress in availability of internationally comparable data on SDGs. Number of indicators included in global SDG database has increased from 115 in 2016 to 211 in 2021. However, covid-19 pandemic has disrupted data operations like population censuses, worldwide.

SDG 1: Global poverty rate is estimated to be 7% in 2030, missing the target of eradicating poverty.

SDG 2: 22% of children under 5 are stunted, 6.7% suffer from wasting, while 5.7% are overweight.

SDG 3: covid-19 has halted or reversed progress in health. It has reduced life expectancy.

SDG 4: 9% of children in grades 1-8 have come below minimum reading proficiency levels in 2020.

SDG 5: 25.6% of national parliamentarians are women, 36.3% are local government representatives while 28.2% are occupied at managerial positions.

SDG 6: 2 billion people do not have access to safe drinking water and 3.6 billion people are deprived of safely managed sanitation.

SDG 7: 2.6 billion people are vulnerable to dangerous and inefficient cooking systems.

SDG 8: covid-19 led to loss of 255 million full-time jobs.

SDG 9: Manufacture of medium- and high-tech products contributed for economic recovery in 2020;

SDG 10: For every 100,000 persons, 311 are refugees in 2020.

SDG 11: Half of world's urban population has access to public transport.

SDG 12: Global material footprint has increased by 70% between 2000 and 2017.

SDG 13: Global average temperature was at 1.2 Degree Celsius in 2020.

SDG 14: Dead zones have increased from 400 in 2008 to 700 in 2019.

SDG 15: During 2000-2020, 100 million hectares of forest were lost.

SDG 16: Child labor has increased to 160 million in 2020. It accounted for first increase for two decades.

SDG 17: About 3.7 billion people (half of world's population) are still not online.

Midday meals program

- Girls who had access to free lunches provided at government schools had children with a higher height-to-age ratio than those who did not, said a new study on the inter-generational benefits of the midday meal scheme.
- The paper showed that by 2016, the prevalence of stunting was significantly lower in areas where the scheme was implemented in 2005.
- More than one in three Indian children are stunted, or too short for their age, which reflects chronic undernutrition. The fight against stunting has often focussed on boosting nutrition for young children, but nutritionists have long argued that maternal health and well-being is the key to reducing stunting in their offspring.

91 YEARS OF THE MIDDAY MEAL SCHEME

1925 | Student meal scheme launched by Madras Municipal Corporation

Mid-1980s | Gujarat, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry also start similar schemes

1990-91 | States with similar programmes increase to 12

1995 | Students in 2,408 blocks to get free foodgrains under national programme

1997-98 | All blocks included

2004 | Cooked midday meal launched for all primary schools

2007 | In 3,479 backward blocks, scheme extended up to Class VIII

2008-09 | Students up to Class VIII in all govt-run or aided schools and madrassas and maqtabas avail of midday meal

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development

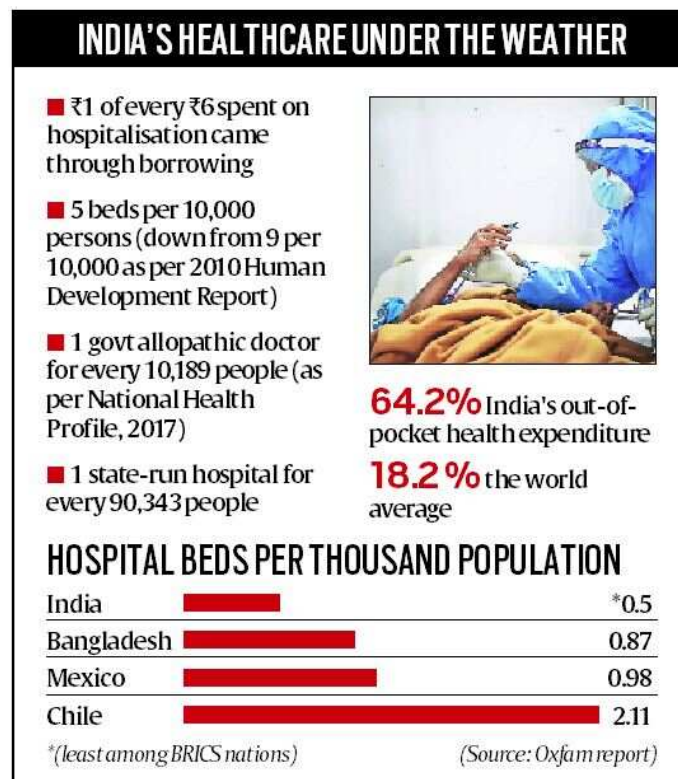
- Noting that “interventions to improve maternal height and education must be implemented years before those girls and young women become mothers”, the study has attempted a first-of-its-kind inter-generational analysis of the impacts of a mass feeding programme.
- It found that the midday meal scheme was associated with 13-32% of the improvement in the height-for-age z-scores in India between 2006 and 2016.

- The linkages between midday meals and lower stunting in the next generation were stronger in the lower socio-economic strata and likely work through women's education, fertility, and the use of health services, the paper said.

The scheme was launched in 1995 to provide children in government schools with a free cooked meal with a minimum energy content of 450 kcal.

Oxfam Report

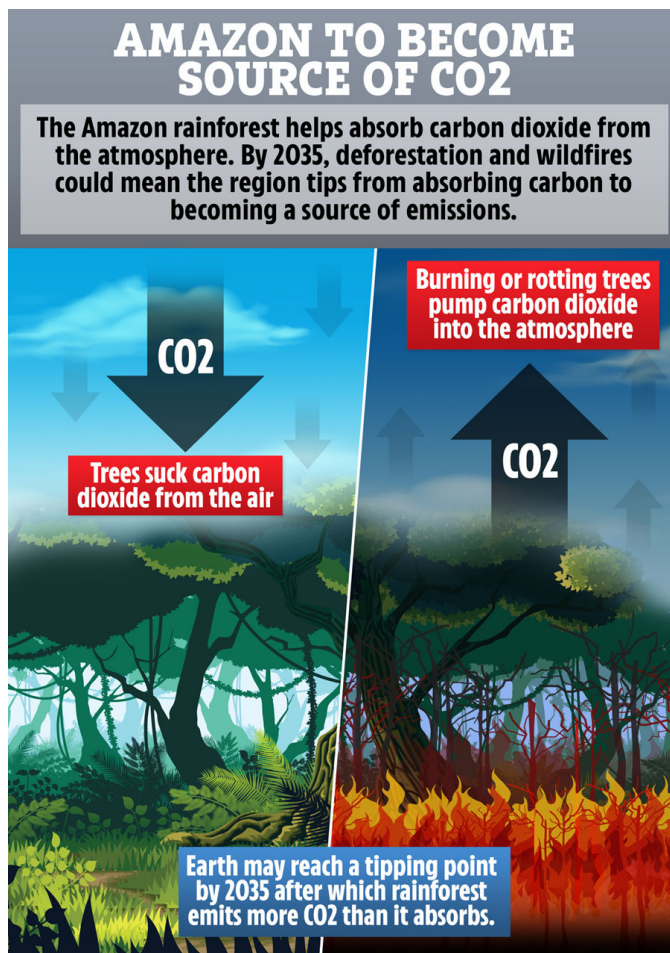
- The Oxfam report which is named 'Inequality Report 2021: India's Unequal Healthcare Story' was released. This report talks about how India's focus on supporting private healthcare while low spending on public healthcare systems has led to inequalities in accessing healthcare, especially during the ongoing pandemic.
- The report states that the states such as Telangana, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, that for the past few years have been reducing inequalities, especially healthcare inequalities between the general category and SC and ST populations, have less COVID-19 confirmed cases.



- On the other hand states, such as Assam, Bihar and Goa that have had higher GDP expenditure on health have higher Covid recovery rates.
- The Oxfam report has marked the state of Kerala as a success story in the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The report stated that the people in the higher income brackets and those with access to health infrastructure had less visits to hospitals and Covid centres than those who belongs to the lower income groups (LIG). People in the LIG faced more discrimination regarding the access of COVID-19 related medicines and healthcare.
- This report also points out the country's digital divide which has been ignored while administering the vaccine which is causing a vaccine inequality between the income groups as well as general and SC, ST categories.
- There have also been inequalities on the basis of gender. Men are better off than women.
- Also the urban population fared better than the rural population which has been measured on various health indicators.
- Less than one third of the country's household is covered by an insurance scheme of the Government.
- The out-of-pocket health expenditure of 64.2% in India is higher than the world average which stands at 18.2%. Exorbitant healthcare prices have forced many to incur debts and to their assets.

Amazon Rainforest – CO₂ emission

- As per a study published in science journal, Nature, parts of Amazon rainforest are emitting more carbon dioxide than they absorb.
- Study was conducted by making 600 flights over four areas of Amazon. It was led by researchers from Brazil National Institute for Space Research to collect data on amount of carbon dioxide present in atmosphere.
- As per research, role of Amazon rainforest as a carbon sink appears to be in decline. This could devastate the ecosystem and is a troubling sign for fight against climate change.
- Changes in Amazon are being driven by factors such as deforestation, wildfires, and climate change.
- According to study, four areas were emitting 410 million metric tons of carbon dioxide each year. Emissions were the result of fires, often set intentionally by humans.
- Four regions absorbed roughly 120 million metric tons of carbon. Thus, sections of Amazon were giving off 290 million metric tons as net emissions.



OTHERS

World Heritage tag

- In a major diplomatic triumph, the 13th century Ramappa temple in Palampet, Telangana, was declared as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. At the online meeting of the World Heritage Committee (WHC) in Fuzhou, China, the decision was reached after a consensus, with Norway opposing the inscription while Russia led an effort for the immediate inscription of the temple.
- A consensus with 17 countries backing the move ensured the inscription.



- The nomination for a World Heritage Site for the Ramappa and Kakatiya temples was made in 2014. The site was in the reckoning for inscription in 2020 but the WHC meeting was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Built by Racherla Senapati Rudrayya, a general of Kakatiya king Ganapatideva, in the 13th century, the main temple is flanked by the collapsed structures of the Kateshwarayya and Kameshwarayya temples in Palampet, about 220 km from Hyderabad.
- The foundation is built with the “sandbox technique”, the flooring is granite and the pillars are basalt. The lower part of the temple is red sandstone while the white gopuram is built with light bricks that reportedly float on water.
- The Harappan city of Dholavira, in present-day Gujarat, was also named the 40th Indian site on UNESCO’s World Heritage list.



- The ancient city of Dholavira is one of the most remarkable and well-preserved urban settlements in South Asia dating from the 3rd to mid-2nd millennium BCE (Before Common Era).
- Discovered in 1968, the site is set apart by its unique characteristics, such as its water management system, multi-layered defensive mechanisms, extensive use of stone in construction and special burial structures.
- A range of artefacts of copper, shell, stone, jewellery, terracotta and ivory had been found at the site. The two newly inscribed World Heritage Sites offer great insight into the knowledge and ways of life of earlier societies, customs, and communities.
- Located in the Kutch district, Dholavira is the larger of the two most remarkable excavations of the Indus Valley Civilisation dating back to about 4,500 years ago. The site had been on UNESCO's tentative list since 2014 and India had submitted its dossier in January 2020.

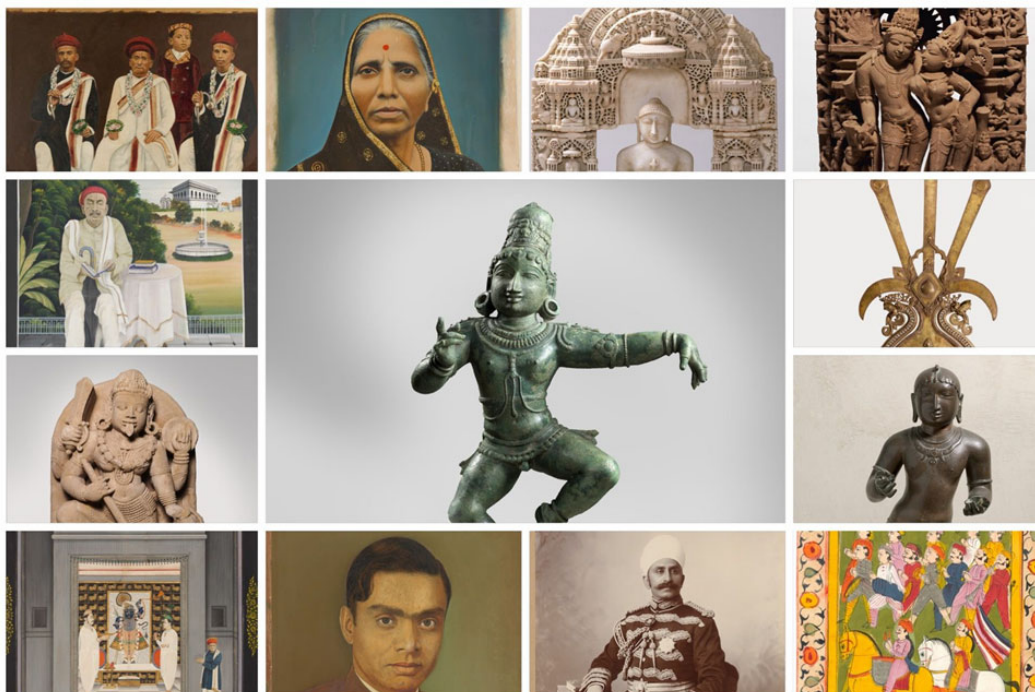
[Recent additions:](#)

- Buen Retiro Park and Paseo del Prado of Madrid, Spain have been added to UNESCO's World Heritage List.
- With this announcement the total number of World Heritage Sites in Spain goes up to 49 which is the third-highest globally only after Italy and China.

- Before the addition of these two sites none of the countries heritage sites were located Madrid, the capital of Spain.
- Buen Retiro Park is a green refuge with a total area 118 hectares located just at the centre of the capital city. The Paseo del Prado Boulevard features six museums, the famous Plaza de Cibeles square and the famous Fuente de Cibeles fountain.

Art works return to India

- The National Gallery of Australia (NGA) announced that it would return 14 works of art from its Asian art collection to India.
- The works include six bronze or stone sculptures, a brass processional standard, a painted scroll and six photographs.
- The decision to return the works is the culmination of years of research, due diligence and an evolving framework for decision-making that includes both legal principles and ethical considerations.



- The works being returned are:
 - ✓ child-saint Sambandar,
 - ✓ dancing child-saint Sambandar of 12th century belonging to Chola dynasty,
 - ✓ processional standard [alam], from Hyderabad,
 - ✓ arch for a Jain shrine (11th-12th century), seated Jina, 1163 from Mount Abu region, Rajasthan,
 - ✓ the divine couple Lakshmi and Vishnu [Lakshmi Narayana] (11-12th century), and
 - ✓ Durga Mahisasuramardini, from Gujarat.

Chief Minister of Uttarakhand

- Leader of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Pushkar Singh Dhami, took oath as eleventh chief minister of Uttarakhand.
- He sworn in as Chief Minister a day after he was elected as leader of BJP's legislature party in state.
- He was administered oath of office by governor Baby Rani Maurya at Raj Bhavan in Dehradun.
- Along with him, BJP MLAs Satpal Maharaj, Bansidhar Bhagat, Harak Singh Rawat, Bishan Singh Chuphal, Yashpal Arya, Subodh Uniyal, Arvind Pandey and Ganesh Joshi were also sworn in as ministers in new state cabinet.
- Tirath Singh Rawat (ex-CM) had resigned because of uncertainty over by polls he was required to win in order to continue as chief minister. As per rules, he had six months from his swearing in to be elected as member of legislative assembly to continue his term as Chief Minister. But the Election Commission of India (ECI) has option of not conducting bypolls if term of assembly is expiring in less than a year. Under this scenario, Rawat became ineligible to stay in office.

Additions in Tokyo Olympics

Four new sports have been introduced in the Tokyo Olympics.

They are:

1. Karate - Martial art, since the 1970s, has been a candidate for Olympic inclusion but the organizers never agreed to accept this sport until the Tokyo Games presented the perfect opportunity to showcase this sport from its homeland.
2. Skateboarding - Skateboard's debut was done by the organizers to attract the young audiences. The audiences will be able to see high-flying stunts and tricks. The competitors are between 12 to 47 years.
3. Surfing - Since the year 1995, the International Surfing Association has been lobbying for the inclusion of this sport, and it makes a debut in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.
4. Sport climbing - In recent years climbing has reached new heights and hence it makes its debut in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic. In the lead discipline, Climbers scale a 15-meter wall which is filled with variety of holds. Bouldering involves dynamic movements and in the Speed category a race to the top is held between the participants.

Ashwagandha



- The Ministry of Ayush has collaborated with the U.K.'s London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) to conduct a study on 'Ashwagandha' for promoting recovery from COVID-19.
- 'Ashwagandha' (*Withania somnifera*) is commonly known as 'Indian winter cherry'.
- It is a traditional Indian herb that boosts energy, reduces stress and makes the immune system stronger.
- It is classified as an adaptogen, which means that it can help the body to manage stress.
- Ashwagandha is widely grown in dry parts of subtropical regions. Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh are major ashwagandha growing states in India.
- Being a hardy and drought-tolerant crop, ashwagandha requires a relatively dry season throughout its growing period. Areas with 60-75 cm rainfall are suitable for its cultivation.
- Temperature between 20°C to 35°C is most suitable.
- It grows well in sandy loam or light red soils having pH 7.5-8.0. Black or heavy soils having good drainage are also suitable for ashwagandha cultivation.