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ESE-2021

(Preliminary Examination)

Current Issues

(November - 2021)

ACE is the leading institute for coaching in ESE, GATE & PSUs

Address: Sree Sindhi Guru Sangat Sabha Association, # 4-1-1236/1/A, King Koti, Abids, Hyderabad-500001.

Ph: 040-23234418 / 19 / 20 / 21, 040 - 24750437

19 All India 1st Ranks in ESE

62 All India 1st Ranks in GATE

Current Issues

(November - 2021)

POLITY OF GOVERNANCE

INDIA YOUNG WATER PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMME

Why in News

Recently, the Ministry of Jal Shakti has launched the first edition of the India Young Water Professional Programme.

- Its launch marks a significant milestone in Australia- India Water relationship. This Programme looks to prepare future water leaders.



KEY POINTS

About:

- This program has been taken up under the National Hydrology Project. It will be implemented by Australia India Water Centre (a consortium of Australian and Indian universities). It is focused on Engaged Training and Learning Model. The Program will aim to achieve its objectives through the 70-20-10 framework, which states that three types of experience are required to learn:
 - ✓ Experience 70% (learn and develop on the job)
 - ✓ Exposure 20% (learn and develop through others)
 - ✓ Education 10% (learn and develop through formal training)



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- It also focuses on gender equality and diversity, because sustainable water management can only benefit from the views and skills of all members of society.
- It is outcome-driven and the participants will be having certain tools and techniques by the time they are finished with the Programme.
- Based on the success of this edition, a second phase of YWP will be planned in the later half of the year 2022.

Aim:

- It aims to provide a structured platform for capacity building with strategic and long-term investment to support the water management reforms in India.
- To equip water professionals with the necessary skills, knowledge, behaviours and networks that will better enable them to contribute to the development and management of water resources in India, and to address the competency needs and priorities of the water sector in India.

Significance:

- It will help in breaking the silos of surface water vs groundwater and participants will learn to take a comprehensive view of water resources management

PRADHAN MANTRI AWAAS YOJANA – GRAMIN

Why in News

Recently, Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) has completed 5 years on 20th November, 2021.

- Earlier, it was reported that due to adverse impact of Covid-19, only 5.4% of the sanctioned houses under the PMAY-G, have reached completion for the year 2020-2021.
- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs implements the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban.



KEY POINTS

- **Launch:** To achieve the objective of “Housing for All” by 2022, the erstwhile rural housing scheme Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) was restructured to PMAY-G w.e.f 1st April, 2016.
- **Ministry Involved:** Ministry of Rural development.
- **Aim:** To provide a pucca house with basic amenities to all rural families, who are homeless or living in kutcha or dilapidated houses by the end of March 2022.
 - ✓ To help rural people Below the Poverty Line (BPL) in construction of dwelling units and upgradation of existing unserviceable kutcha houses by providing assistance in the form of a full grant.

MINERALS CONCESSION (FOURTH AMENDMENT) RULES, 2021

Why in News

Recently, the Ministry of Mines has notified the Minerals (other than Atomic and Hydro Carbons Energy Mineral) Concession (Fourth Amendment) Rules, 2021.

- It will amend the Minerals (other than Atomic and Hydro Carbons Energy Mineral) Concession Rules, 2016 [MCR, 2016].

Minerals Concession Rules, 2021

Amend the MCR 2016 and pave the way for:



KEY POINTS

Amendments:

Sale from Captive Leases:

- New rules inserted to provide a manner of sale of 50% of minerals produced from the captive leases.
- With this amendment, the way for releasing of additional minerals in the market by greater utilization of mining capacities of captive mines has been paved.
 - ✓ Captive mines are those that produce coal or mineral for exclusive use by the company that owns the mines, while non-captive ones are those that produce as well as sell the fuel.

Disposal of Overburden (OB):

- Provision added to allow disposal of overburden/waste rock/ mineral below the threshold value, which is generated during the course of mining or beneficiation of the mineral.
- This will enable ease of doing business for the miners.

Area for Grant of Mining Lease:

- Minimum area for grant of mining lease has been revised from 5 ha. to 4 ha. For certain specific deposits, minimum 2 ha. is provided.

Part Surrender for all Cases:

- Part surrender of mining lease area allowed in all cases.
- Earlier, part surrender was allowed only in case of non-grant of forest clearance.

Transfer of Composite Licence:

- Rules amended to allow transfer of composite licence or mining lease of all types of mine.

Objective:

- To increase employment and investment in the mining sector, increasing revenue to the States, increasing the production and time bound operationalisation of mines, increasing the pace of exploration and auction of mineral resources, etc.

WHISTLE BLOWER PORTAL: IREDA

Why in News

Recently, the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) has launched a ‘whistle-blower Portal’, as a part of ‘Vigilance Awareness Week 2021’.

- It is a part of IREDA’s “zero tolerance” of corruption. Through this portal, IREDA employees can raise concerns related to fraud, corruption, abuse of power etc.
- IREDA is a Mini Ratna (Category – I) Government of India Enterprise under the administrative control of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).

KEY POINTS

Whistleblowing:

- According to the Companies Act 2013, whistleblowing is an action aimed at drawing the attention of stakeholders to instances of unethical practices in an organization.
- A whistleblower can be anyone who chooses to expose wrong practices and has evidence to support the allegations.
- They can be either from within or outside the organization, such as current and former employees, shareholders, external auditors, and lawyers.
- In India, whistleblowers are protected by the Whistleblowers Protection Act, 2014.
- In January 2020, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) came out with a new mechanism to reward whistle-blowers and other informants for sharing information about insider trading cases.
 - ✓ Insider trading is an unfair and illegal practice in the stock market, wherein other investors are at a great disadvantage due to the lack of important insider non-public information about a company.

Vigilance Awareness Week:

About:

- It is celebrated every year in the birthday week of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, often referred to as the ‘Bismark of India’. It is observed by the Central Vigilance Commission.
 - ✓ National Unity Day or Rashtriya Ekta Diwas is celebrated on 31st October every year to mark the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.
- This year, Vigilance Week is being observed from 26th October to 1st November.

Theme:

- 'Independent India @ 75: Self Reliance and Integrity'.

Aim:

- Various activities are planned through the week, which are aimed at recognising the ills of corruption and promoting ways to combat it at an individual as well as systemic level.

CHARDHAM PROJECT

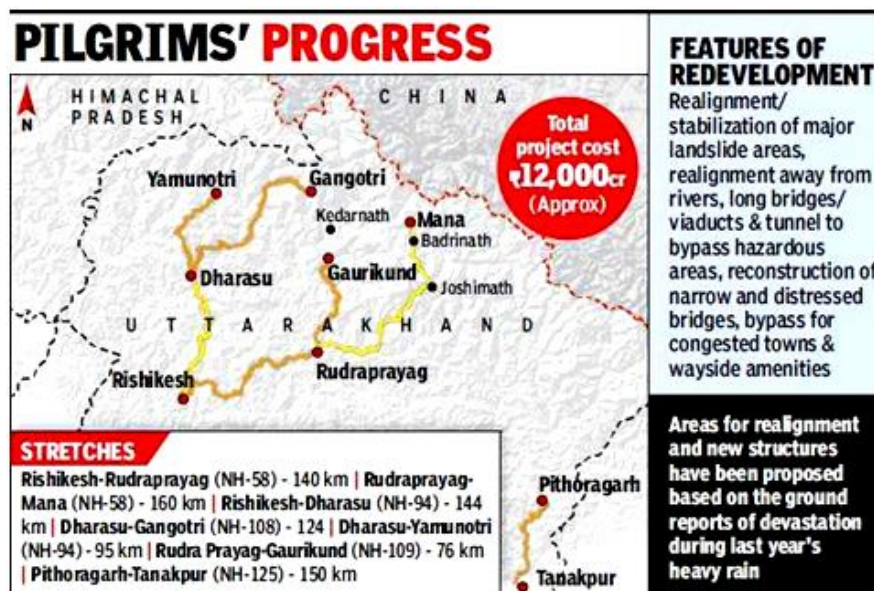
Why in News

- Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) has spoken of the need to balance national security concerns with environmental issues in the context of the Army's request to expand the CharDham Project (CDP) roads leading to the Indo-China border.
- The request came in the context of construction being carried out by China across the border. However, expansion of roads has been opposed by an NGO citing environmental concerns.

KEY POINTS

About Chardham Project:

- **Objective:** CharDham Pariyojana aims to "improve the connectivity to the Chardham pilgrimage centres (Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Yamunotri) in the Himalayas, making journeys to these centres safer, faster and more convenient.



- It will widen almost 900 km of highways connecting the pilgrimage sites and the Tanakpur-Pithoragarh stretch of National Highway (NH) 125, a part of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra route.

Role in National Security:

- This project can act as the strategic feeder roads which connect the India-China border with the Army camps in Dehradun and Meerut where missile bases and heavy machinery are located.

Implementing Agencies:

- Uttarakhand State Public Works Department (PWD), Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and the National Highway & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL).
 - ✓ NHIDCL is a fully owned company of the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways.

NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT SURVEY 2021

Why in News

Recently, the Union Government has conducted the National Achievement Survey (NAS) across India, assessing about 38 lakh students from 1.23 lakh schools in 733 districts in 36 States and Union Territories.

- The survey was last conducted in 2017 and was scheduled to take place in 2020. However, due to the Covid situation, it was postponed until this year (2021).

KEY POINTS

About:

- It is a nationwide survey to assess the learning outcomes and health of the education system.
 - ✓ It is the largest, nationwide, sample-based education survey conducted across India.
- It is undertaken by the Ministry of Education.
 - ✓ The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) conducted NAS 2021.
 - ✓ The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) designed an assessment framework and tools for NAS-2021.
- It provides a system-level reflection on the effectiveness of school education.
 - ✓ It collects information on relevant background variables such as school environment, teaching processes, and student home and background factors.
- It covers the whole spectrum of schools including Government schools (both State and Central government), Government-aided schools, and Private schools across India.

PM LISTS FIVE TRANSITIONS TAKING PLACE IN INDIA'S DIGITAL REVOLUTION

Why in News

- The Prime Minister. Shri Narendra Modi delivered the keynote address at the inaugural Sydney Dialogue via video conferencing on 18th November.

KEY POINTS

- Speaking on the theme of India's technology evolution and revolution, Shri. Narendra Modi listed five important transitions taking place in India**
 - ✓ (i) the world's most extensive public information infrastructure being built in India. Over 1.3 billion Indians have a unique digital identity, six hundred thousand villages will soon be connected with broadband and the world's most efficient payment infrastructure, the UPI.
 - ✓ (ii) use of digital technology for governance, inclusion, empowerment, connectivity, delivery of benefits and welfare,
 - ✓ (iii) India has the world's third largest and fastest growing Startup ecosystem.
 - ✓ (iv) India's industry and services sectors, even agriculture. are undergoing massive digital transformation.
 - ✓ (v) there is a large effort to prepare India for the future by investing in developing indigenous capabilities in telecom technology, AI and machine learning, cloud platforms and cloud computing.

JANJATIYA GAURAV DIVAS CELEBRATED ACROSS THE COUNTRY

- The nation celebrated Janjatiya Gaurav Divas on 15th November.



- The celebrations led by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi were marked by a large number of colourful cultural events and social activities at different places across the country including the birth place of Bhagwan Birsa Munda at Ulihatu in Khunti, Jharkhand.
- The Prime Minister inaugurated the Bhagwan Birsa Munda Memorial Park cum Freedom Fighter Museum at Ranchi on 15th November. On the occasion, the Prime Minister made an appeal to the people of the country to come together and salute the contribution of the tribal communities In India's freedom struggle and nation-building.

AZADI KA AMRIT MAHOTSAV: WCD CONDUCTS CAMPAIGN THEMED CHILDREN: IDEAS, RIGHTS & NUTRITION'

- As part of the ongoing 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav', the Ministry of Women and Child Development hosted a series of activities from 14th to 21st November 2021.
- Week-long events covering the theme of 'Children: Ideas, Rights & Nutrition' were held in Child Care Institutions.
- One of the major highlights was the 'Pan India Legal Awareness & Outreach Campaign' organized by the National Legal Services Authority.
- Addressing the valedictory ceremony of the campaign, Minister of Women and Child Development Smt. Smriti Irani stated that the Ministry of WCD has ensured through SAMVAD in collaboration with NIMHANS that over 1 lakh stakeholders are trained to help children in distress. Ministry of WCD under SAMVAD will organise workshops for professionals working with children on interventions (legal & mental health) and skills needed while dealing with child sexual abuse.
- These workshops will be held between 8 Jan-22 Feb 2022.

KASHI UTSAV CELEBRATES LUMINARIES OF VARANASI THROUGH CULTURAL EVENTS



- Kashi Utsav, a three day festival was organised in Varanasi from 16th to 18th November to celebrate the classic heritage and culture of Kashi, especially the centuries-old luminaries Goswami Tulsidas. Sant Kabir, Sant Raidas, Bhartendu Harishchandra, Munshi Premchand and Shri Jaishankar Prasad.
- The event commemorated these personalities from Kashi through panel discussions, exhibitions, film screenings, music, drama and dance performances.
- Held as part of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', Varanasi or Kashi was chosen for this festival by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, because of its rich cultural heritage and splendid history and resplendent beauty.

15TH NOVEMBER DECLARED AS JANAJATIYA GAURAV DIWAS

- The centre has declared 15th of November as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas in the memory of brave tribal freedom fighters so that coming generations could know about their sacrifices for the country India's freedom struggle was strengthened by several movements by tribal communities such as Santhals, Tamars, Kols, Bhils, Khasis and Mizos to name a few.
- The date coincides with the birth anniversary of Sri Birsa Munda who is revered as Bhagwan by tribal communities across the country.
- Birsa Munda bravely spearheaded a movement against British oppression giving a call for 'Ulgulan' (Revolution).
- The day will be celebrated every year and would recognize the efforts of the tribals for preservation of cultural heritage and promotion of Indian values of valour, hospitality and national pride.

COVAXIN GETS WHO NOD FOR EMERGENCY USE LISTING APPROVAL



- The World Health Organisation (WHO) has granted approval for Emergency Use Listing (EUL) to Covaxin, indigenously developed and produced by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech.
- At the G-20 summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had pushed for WHO nod for Covaxin, saying India will produce five billion Covid vaccine doses by 2022.
- This development has removed uncertainty around overseas travel by Indians inoculated with this vaccine.
- Moreover, EUL is also a prerequisite for a vaccine to be supplied through COVAX, the global Covid vaccine equity scheme.

PM INAUGURATES MORE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN KEDARNATH

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated a number of new development projects in Kedarnath, Uttarakhand, after reviewing the progress made in the reconstruction of infrastructure affected by the devastating deluge of 2013.
- The new projects worth over 180 crore rupees, include the redevelopment of Sangam Ghat, First Aid and Tourist Facilitation Centre, Admin Office and Hospital, two Guest Houses, Police Station, Command and Control Centre, Mandakini Aasthpath Queue Management and Rainshelter and Saraswati Civic Amenity Building.
- Meanwhile, the key infrastructure projects which have been completed include the Saraswati Retaining Wall Aasthpath and Ghats, Mandakini Retaining Wall Aasthpath, Tirth Purohit Houses and Garud Chatti bridge on river Mandakini. The projects have been completed at a cost of over 130 crore rupees.
- The PM also unveiled the statue of Shri Adi Shankaracharya dedicating a Samadhi to the ancient Indian philosopher and theologian.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

9TH BRICS SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY MINISTERS MEETING

Why in News

Recently, India's Minister for Science & Technology chaired the 9th BRICS Science & Technology Ministers meeting.

- Earlier, the Prime Minister chaired the annual summit of the BRICS which was held virtually.
- 2021 is an important landmark year in BRICS Cooperation as the grouping completed 15 years.



KEY POINTS

Highlights of Address:

- **Global Innovation Index:** The member countries should work towards a rightful place for BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) in the Global Innovation Index.
 - ✓ It can be achieved through further strengthening the cooperation in the field of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI).
 - ✓ BRICS Ranking in Global Innovation Index, 2021: India (46), China (12), Russia (45), Brazil (57) and South Africa (61).
- **Cooperation:** BRICS countries must come together and innovate cost effective, affordable, accessible, sustainable and scalable scientific solutions, as they face many similar and unique challenges.

BELARUS-POLAND BORDER CRISIS

Why in News

Recently, Belarusian and Russian paratroopers staged joint drills near the Polish and Lithuanian borders.

- It is taking place during a standoff between Belarus and the European Union (EU) over migrants camped in freezing forests at the frontier.

KEY POINTS

Background:

- In Belarus there were months of protests following the August 2020 election that gave authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko a sixth term in office.
- ✓ The opposition and the West rejected the result as a sham.



- Belarusian authorities responded to the demonstrations with a fierce crackdown that saw more than 35,000 people arrested and thousands beaten by police.
- The EU and the US reacted by imposing sanctions on the Belarus government.

- In May 2021 Belarus forcibly diverted a passenger jet and scrambled a warplane to arrest an opposition journalist in an act denounced by Western powers as “state piracy” (an act of piracy where the state is involved). After which the sanctions were further strengthened.
 - ✓ The Belarus government reacted by saying he would no longer abide by an agreement to stem illegal migration, arguing that the EU sanctions deprived his government of funds needed to contain flows of migrants.
 - ✓ And it would stop trying to prevent undocumented migrants and refugees from reaching the EU.
- The Belarusian opposition has urged the EU to take even tougher measures, including a trade embargo and a ban on transit of cargo via Belarus.
 - ✓ However the Belarus government has threatened to cut off Russian gas supplies to Europe through pipelines over Belarus. But Russia appeared to distance itself from that threat.

INDIA-FRANCE DEFENCE PARTNERSHIP

Why in News

Recently, at the India-France strategic dialogue, both countries resolved to expand the defence and security partnership by enhancing intelligence sharing, bolstering capabilities, expanding military drills and pursuing new initiatives in maritime, space and cyber domains



KEY POINTS

Highlights of the Dialogue:

- Support to ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’: France reiterated its commitment to India’s vision of “Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India)” and defence industrialisation, joint research and technology development in India across a wide range of advanced capabilities.
- France’s Indo-Pacific Strategy: France stressed its continuing commitment to the Indo-Pacific region as a “resident power”, and partnership with India as a “major pillar” of its strategy for the region.
 - ✓ Moreover, the French Presidency of the European Union (EU) in the first half of 2022 is expected to give a further shape to the EU’s engagement in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - ✓ A resident power is one that does not own territory or have a territorial presence in a particular region of the world, but is nevertheless a force to be reckoned with in the international politics of that region.

Significance of the Meeting:

- France’s reiteration to expand strategic cooperation with India has come after the unveiling of a new security alliance (AUKUS) by Australia, the UK and the US.
 - ✓ The unexpected announcement of the alliance, which involves building submarines for Australia, had angered the French government after Australia pulled out of a separate submarine deal with France.
 - ✓ AUKUS is a new trilateral security partnership for the Indo-Pacific, between Australia, the UK and the US (AUKUS).

ENRICHED URANIUM STOCKPILE BY IRAN

Why in News

Recently, Iran’s atomic agency said that its stockpile of 20% enriched uranium has reached over 210 kilograms.

- In April 2021, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said Iran had begun the process of enriching uranium to 60% fissile purity at an above-ground nuclear plant at Natanz.
- Under the historic 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and the World Powers, Iran was not meant to enrich uranium above 3.67%. Enriched uranium above 90% can be used for nuclear weapons.

KEY POINTS

Uranium Enrichment:

- Natural uranium consists of two different isotopes nearly 99% U-238 and only around 0.7% of U-235.
- ✓ U-235 is a fissile material that can sustain a chain reaction in a nuclear reactor.
- Enrichment process increases the proportion of U-235 through the process of isotope separation (U-238 is separated from U-235).
- For nuclear weapons, enrichment is required upto 90% or more which is known as weapons-grade uranium.
- Low-enriched uranium, which typically has a 3-5% concentration of U-235, can be used to produce fuel for commercial nuclear power plants.

DELHI DECLARATION ON AFGHANISTAN

Why in News

Recently, the Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan was held. The meeting was composed of National Security Advisors' (NSA) of regional countries and chaired by the Indian NSA.

- The meeting called for “urgent humanitarian assistance” to the Afghan people and urged close cooperation and consultation among the regional countries over the Afghan scenario.



- This is the third meeting of the Regional Security Dialogue (the earlier two meetings were held in Iran, in 2018 and 2019).

KEY POINTS

- Invited Participants: Afghanistan's neighbours such as Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and other key players including Russia, and China.
- **Need:** After the withdrawal of US forces and the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, India is concerned about security in the region.
 - ✓ There is a possibility of terrorism spreading from the territory of Afghanistan.

Highlights of the Delhi Declaration:

- Secure and Stable Afghanistan: Reiterated strong support for a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan while emphasising the respect for sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and non-interference in its internal affairs.
- **Condemning Terrorism:** Committed to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.
 - ✓ Urged the regional members to ensure that Afghanistan would never become a safe haven for global terrorism.
- **Ensuring Fundamental Rights:** That is, the fundamental rights of women, children and minority communities are not violated.
 - ✓ The assistance should be provided in non-discriminatory manner across all sections of the Afghan society.
- Collective Cooperation: Called for a collective cooperation against the menace of radicalization, extremism, separatism and drug trafficking in the region.
- **Central Role of UN:** Recalling the relevant UN Resolutions on Afghanistan, they noted that the United Nations' (UN) continued presence in the country must be preserved.
 - ✓ The recent UN Resolution 2593 reiterates the importance of combating terrorism in Afghanistan, including those individuals and entities designated pursuant to resolution 1267.

PAKISTAN PARLIAMENT PASSES BILL TO GIVE KULBHUSHAN JADHAV RIGHT TO APPEAL AGAINST CONVICTION



- Pakistan's Parliament has enacted a law to give Indian death-row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav, the right to file a review appeal against his conviction by a military court.
- India had approached the International Court of Justice, ICJ against Pakistan for denial of consular access to Jadhav and challenging the death sentence.
- After hearing both sides, the Hague-based ICJ issued a verdict in July 2019, asking Pakistan to give India consular access to Jadhav and also ensure review of his conviction.

DELHI REGIONAL SECURITY DIALOGUE OF 8 NATIONS CALLS FOR SECURE, STABLE AFGHANISTAN



- The Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan held on 10th November 2021 and attended by top security officials of Russia, Iran, and live Central Asian countries concluded with the joint Delhi Declaration.
- Discussions centered on Afghanistan's security situation, heightened risk of terrorism, and the impending humanitarian crisis.
- The NSA's noted the need to provide humanitarian assistance and emphasized that the land and air routes should be made available and no one should impede the process.

- In the joint declaration the eight countries "reaffirmed their firm commitment to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including its financing, dismantling of terrorist infrastructure and countering radicalisation, to ensure Afghanistan would never become a safe haven for global terrorism.
- "The declaration also recognized the need to form "an open and truly inclusive government that represents the will of all of the people of Afghanistan and has representation from all sections of their society"

LACK OF SERIOUSNESS ON CLIMATE FINANCE WILL JEOPARDIZE MITIGATION EFFORTS: BASIC COUNTRIES

- Taking the floor on behalf of BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China), India delivered the BASIC group statement at the joint stocktake plenary at COP26 at Glasgow. Delivering the statement, Ms. Richa Sharma, Lead Negotiator(India) and Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change said that BASIC countries support strong, credible domestic mitigation actions by developed countries without undue reliance on cheap offsets to maintain their high carbon, unsustainable lifestyles and towards this end, the grouping supports markets that are credible and have high environmental integrity and strong non-market approaches as well, Ms. Sharma highlighted that decisions of COP26 should remain within the confines of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement and be fully consistent with its guiding principles of Equity and Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities(CBDR-RC) and stated that the planet will benefit from strong implementation of the Paris Agreement, particularly in this critical decade.

INDIA, BHUTAN TO HAVE 7 NEW ENTRY/EXIT POINTS FOR TRADE

- India and Bhutan have decided to open 7 additional entry and exit points as part of measures to increase trade connectivity.



- The decision was taken at a commerce secretary-level meeting held between India and Bhutan on trade and transit issues.
- The new entry/exit points include the Nagarkata Land Customs Station; Agartala Land Customs Station; Pandu Port (Guwahati Steamerghat), Jogighopa Port, and Asian Highway 48 connecting Torsha Tea Garden in India and Ahllay In Bhutan as an additional route corresponding to the Land Customs Station at Jaigaon; Kamardwisa, and Birpara.
- The trade between India and Bhutan has more than doubled since 2014. It has reached 1083 million dollar in 2020-21 from 484 million dollar in 2014-15.

INDIA URGES GLOBAL COMMUNITY TO PRIORITIZE SOLAR POWER IN ENERGY DEPLOYMENT

- India has urged the global community to make solar power the priority in energy deployment at the COP26 Climate Summit in Glasgow, UK. Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav urged that grid interconnection will play a key role in revamping regional cooperation and transition to the low carbon power system.
- He was speaking at the special event organised by International Solar Alliance in partnership with UK under the theme Green Grid Initiative - One Sun One World One Grid (GGI-OSOWOG).
- All the speakers wholeheartedly supported the GGI-OSOWOG initiative announced jointly by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of UK Boris Johnson at the COP26.

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION IN 40TH SHARJAH INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR



- The Publications Division stall at the 40th Sharjah International Book Fair 2021 has received tremendous response, with books on Gandhi and India's Freedom Struggle attracting the most number of reading enthusiasts.
- Consul General of India in Dubai, Dr Aman Puri has appreciated Publications Division for making a significant contribution to publishing high quality books on a variety of subjects.
- India lead the international participation in the book fair with 87 publishers, including Publications Division, among 1566 publishers from all over the globe participating in the event.

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SDG URBAN INDEX: NITI AAYOG

Why in News

Recently, NITI Aayog under the Indo-German Cooperation released the inaugural Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Urban Index and Dashboard 2021-22.

- Earlier in June 2021, the third edition of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index and Dashboard 2020–21.



KEY POINTS

About:

- The index and dashboard are a result of the NITI Aayog-Germany's International Cooperation Agency (GIZ) and BMZ collaboration focused on driving SDG localization in our cities, under the umbrella of Indo-German Development Cooperation.
- It ranks 56 urban areas on 77 SDG indicators across 46 targets of the SDG framework.
- It will further strengthen SDG localization and institute robust SDG monitoring at the city level.

Ranking Scale:

- The urban areas are ranked on a scale of 0-100.
- A score of 100 implies that the urban area has achieved the targets set for 2030; a score of 0 implies that it is the farthest from achieving the targets among the selected urban areas.
- Overall or composite urban area scores are then generated from the Goal-wise scores to measure aggregate performance of the urban area.
- Urban areas have been classified as below based on their composite score:
 - ✓ **Aspirant:** 0-49
 - ✓ **Performer:** 50-64
 - ✓ **Front-Runner:** 65-99
 - ✓ **Achiever:** 100

Performance of the States:

- **Top Performers:**
 - ✓ Shimla, Coimbatore, Chandigarh, Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi.
- **Worst Performers:**
 - ✓ Dhanbad, Meerut, Itanagar, Guwahati and Patna.

GLOBAL DRUG POLICY INDEX 2021

Why in News

Recently, the inaugural Global Drug Policy Index was released by the Harm Reduction Consortium.

- It is a data-driven global analysis of drug policies and their implementation which comes at a time when the Indian government is reviewing the provisions of the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic substances act 1985.
- The Harm Reduction Consortium is a global consortium of networks aiming to challenge the global “war on drugs”, scale up access to harm reduction services, and advocate for increased resources for harm reduction.

RANKINGS OF SELECTED COUNTRIES

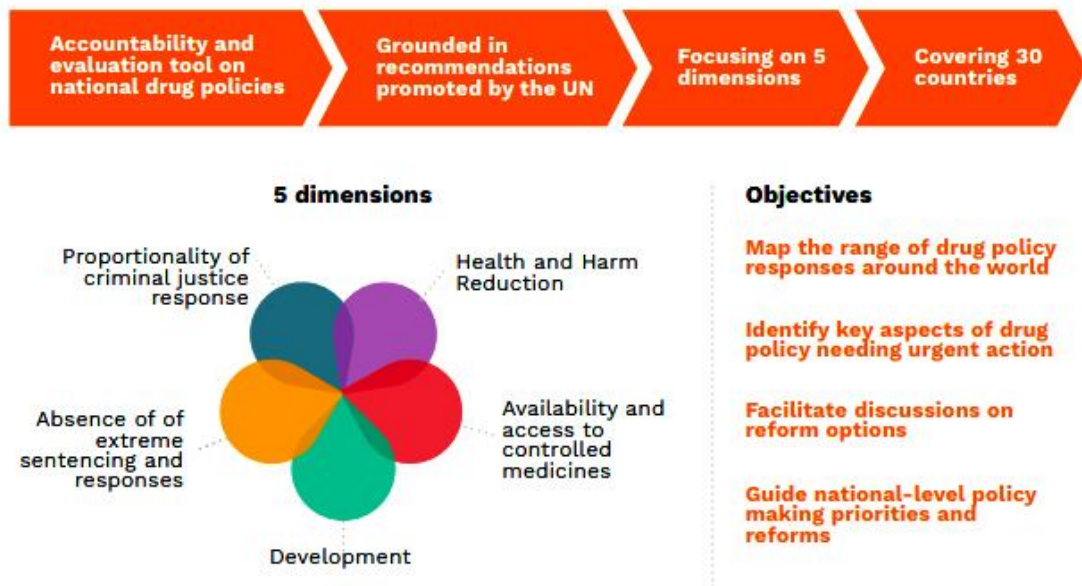
RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE
TOP 5		
1	Norway	74/100
2	New Zealand	71/100
3	Portugal	70/100
4	UK	69/100
5	Australia	65/100
18	India	46/100
BOTTOM 5		
26	Mexico	35/100
27	Kenya	34/100
28	Indonesia	29/100
29	Uganda	28/100
30	Brazil	26/100

KEY POINTS

- **About the Index:** It is a unique tool that documents, measures and compares national-level drug policies.
- It provides each country with a score and ranking that shows how much their drug policies and their implementation align with the United Nations principles of human rights, health and development.
- The Index provides an essential accountability and evaluation mechanism in the field of drug policy.
- It evaluates the performance of 30 countries covering all regions of the world.

Major Findings:

- The global dominance of drug policies based on repression and punishment has led to low scores overall, with a median score of just 48/100, and the top-ranking country (Norway) only reaching 74/100.



- Standards and expectations from civil society experts on drug policy implementation vary from country to country.
- Inequality is deeply seated in global drug policies, with the top-ranking 5 countries scoring 3 times as much as the lowest-ranking 5 countries.
 - ✓ This is in part due to the colonial legacy of the 'war on drugs' approach.
- Drug policies disproportionately affect people marginalised on the basis of their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.
- There are wide disparities between state policies and how they are implemented on the ground.
- With a few exceptions, the meaningful participation of civil society and affected communities in drug policy processes remains severely limited.

AWARDS

162 ATHLETES, 84 COACHES CONFERRED WITH SAI INSTITUTIONAL AWARD



- Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Shri Anurag Thakur conferred the first ever SAI Institutional Awards to 246 athletes and coaches on 17th November in New Delhi.
- A total of 162 athletes and 84 coaches have been conferred awards in the Outstanding Award and Best Award category for their performance in national and international competitions, with cash awards amounting to a total of Rs 65.02 Lakhs.
- The awards have been granted to the deserving candidates for their performances during the period of 2016-2020.

17 SCIENTISTS AWARDED SWARNAJAYANTI FELLOWSHIPS

- 17 scientists from across India have been awarded the Swarnajayanti Fellowships for their innovative research ideas and the potential of creating impact on R&D in different disciplines.
- The scientists with proven track record and selected through a rigorous three layered screening process will pursue basic research in frontier areas of science and technology.
- They will have the freedom and flexibility in terms of expenditure as approved in the research plan, under the scheme the awardees are facilitated by the Department of Science and Technology.
- Government of India, with support for all the requirements for performing the research including a fellowship of Rs. 25,000/- per month for five years, a research grant of 5 lakh Rupees, in addition to the salary they draw from their parent institution Grants for equipment, computational facilities, consumables, contingencies, national and international travel and other special requirements, are also covered based on merit of the project.

NATIONAL SPORTS AWARDS 2021



- National Sports Awards are given every year to recognize and reward excellence in sports. This year 12 sportspersons have been honored with the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award.
- They include Neeraj Chopra-Athletics, Ravi Kumar-Wrestling, Lovlina Borgohain-Boxing, Sreejesh P R-Hockey, Avani Lekhara-Para Shooting, Sumit Antil-Para Athletics, Pramod Bhagat-Para Badminton, Krishna Nagar-Para Badminton, Manish Narwal-Para Shooting, Sunil Chettri-Football, Mithali Raj-Cricket and Man-preet Singh-Hockey.
- Likewise, the Dhyan Chand Award for Lifetime achievement in Sports and Games 2021 have been conferred on Lekha K C-Boxing, Abhijeet Kunte-Chess, Davinder Singh Garcha-Hockey, ViKas Kumar-Kabaddi. and Sajjan Singh-Wrestling.
- The Arjuna Awards for outstanding performance in sports and games have been awarded to 35 sportspersons in different disciplines.
- 5 coaches have been honoured with the Dronacharya Award for outstanding coaches in the life time achievement category, while 5 other coaches have been honored In the regular category.

JCB PRIZE FOR LITERATURE

- On 13 November 2021, M. Mukundan's "Delhi; A Soliloquy", translated from Malayalam by E.V.Fathima and K.Nandakumar, was announced as the winner of the JCB Prize for Literature.
- The book narrates about ordinary people whose lives and stories have leached into the very soil and memories of Delhi.

SPORTS

PRESIDENT'S CUP SHOOTING CHAMPIONSHIP: MANU BHAKER AND JAVAD FOROUGHİ WIN AIR PISTOL MIXED TEAM GOLD



- Manu Bhaker in partnership with Olympic champion Javad Foroughi of Iran won the mixed air pistol gold in the Presidents Cup shooting championship in Wroclaw, Poland.
- The Indo-Iranian team beat Mathilde Lamolle of France and Artem Chemousov of Russia 16-8 in the match for the gold.
- In the individual women's air pistol, Manu Bhaker topped qualification with 585, two points ahead of Anna Korakaki.
- In men's air pistol, Saurabh Chaudhary with 581 points and Abhishek Verma with 580 marks qualified in the third and fourth spots behind Christian Reitz with 586 points while Javad Foroughi remained on 584.

AUSTRALIA LIFTS ICC T-20 WORLD CUP, BEATS NEW ZEALAND BY 8 WICKETS



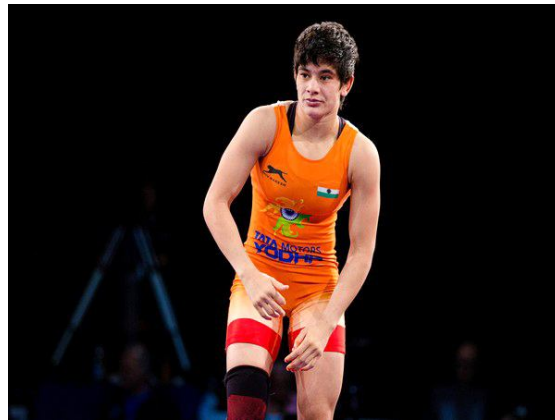
- Australia lifted their maiden T20 World Cup title as they defeated New Zealand in the final by 8 wickets in Dubai.
- Chasing a victory target of 173, Australia won the game with 7 balls to spare.
- Australian opener David Warner was declared Player of the series while Mitchell Marsh was declared Player of the Match.

MANIKA BATRA, ARCHANA KAMATH CLINCH WOMEN'S DOUBLES TITLE AT WTT CONTENDER TOURNAMENT



- Indian pair of Manika Batra and Archana Girish Kamath clinched the women's doubles title in the World Table Tennis Contender tournament in Lasko, Slovenia.
- Playing at the Sports Hall Tri Lilije, the Indian duo defeated the Puerto Rican team of Melanie Diaz and Adriana Diaz in straight sets By 11-3,11-8,12-10.
- Earlier, In the semi-finals of women's singles, Manika Batra won a Bronze medal after she went down fighting to Wang Yidi of China By 2-4.

SENIOR U-23 WORLD WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS-2021: INDIA BAGS FIVE MEDALS



- India won five medals, one silver and four bronze, at the recently concluded Senior U-23 World Wrestling Championships-2021 In Belgrade, Serbia.
- All of India's medals at the Belgrade meet came via the women wrestlers. Shivani Pawar won silver in 50kg while Anju, Divya Kakran, Radhika and Nisha picked up Bronze medals in the 55kg, 62kg, 65kg and 72kg weight classes, respectively.
- Congratulating the winners Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi said that their performance is special and will contribute to wrestling becoming even more popular across India.

AKASH KUMAR BAGS BRONZE IN 2021 AIBA MEN'S WORLD BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS



- Akash Kumar has won the Bronze medal in the 54-kg category at the 2021 AIBA Men's World Boxing Championships in Belgrade, Serbia.
- He received \$25,000 as prize money and a belt for his accomplishment. He suffered a 0-5 loss against Kazakhstan's Makhmud Sabyrkhan.

SUMMITS

18TH INDIA-ASEAN SUMMIT

Why in News

Recently, India participated in the 18th India-ASEAN Summit at the invitation of Brunei, the current Chair of ASEAN.

- The Year 2022 has been highlighted as India-ASEAN Friendship by the leaders.
- India-ASEAN Summit is held every year and provides an opportunity for India and Asean to engage at the highest level.



KEY POINTS

ASEAN in Act East Policy:

- The centrality of ASEAN in India's Act East Policy and in India's Vision for the wider Indo-Pacific Vision has been underlined.
- Welcomed the adoption of the India-ASEAN Joint Statement on cooperation for peace, stability and prosperity in the region, building upon the synergies between the ASEAN Outlook for the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).
 - ✓ Recently, India also addressed the 16th East Asia Summit, where it reaffirmed India's focus on a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific and the principle of Asean Centrality in the region.

India-ASEAN Connectivity:

- Exchanged views on enhancing India-ASEAN connectivity in broadest terms including physical, digital and people to people.
- India announced its support for establishing the ASEAN Cultural Heritage List to further strengthen India-ASEAN cultural connectivity.

G20 SUMMIT & CLIMATE CHANGE

Why in News

In the recently concluded G20 summit, the leaders made a commitment to reach carbon neutrality by or around mid-century.

- They have adopted the Rome Declaration (the current presidency of G20 countries is being held by Italy).
- Earlier, the G20 Climate Risk Atlas was released which provides climate scenarios, information, data and future changes in climate across the G20 countries.



KEY POINTS

Highlights of the Declaration:

- **Roadmap for COP 26:** It urged leaders of the world's biggest economies to put their action plans to tackle the global climate change crisis.
 - ✓ This is a significant step in the context of the upcoming UN climate conference (COP 26) in Glasgow, Scotland.
- **Restricting Aid to Coal Based Plants:** It included a pledge to halt financing of overseas coal-fired power generation by the end of this year (2021).
- **PPP Model of Finance Mobilisation:** Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) are the only way to achieve the trillions of dollars in annual investment needed to transition to clean, sustainable energy sources that will mitigate the warming of global temperatures.

Declaration by India:

- **Addressing Vaccine Inequality:** Underlining the need to address vaccine inequity across the world, India is ready to produce over 5 billion vaccine doses by the end of next year (2022).
 - ✓ India also emphasised on vaccine research, manufacturing and innovation.
- **One Earth One Health:** The vision of “One Earth One Health”, or the need for a collaborative approach in the international domain in the fight against the pandemic.
- **Resilient Global Supply Chains:** India highlighted the need for resilient global supply chains and invited G-20 countries to make India their partner in economic recovery and supply chain diversification.
- **Support for Global Minimum Tax:** India also lauded the G-20's decision to come up with a 15-percent architecture “more just and fair”.
- **Welcoming Indo-Pacific Strategy:** India welcomed the European Union's Indo-Pacific strategy and French leadership in it.

Associated Concerns:

- **Half-Hearted Steps:** The statement contained few concrete actions and made no reference to a specific 2050 date to achieve net-zero carbon emission.
 - ✓ Moreover, the statement removed references in a previous draft to the target to “reduce emissions significantly”.
- **No target for Phasing Out Coal:** It set no target for phasing out coal domestically, a clear nod to top carbon polluters China and India.
 - ✓ For example, China has not set an end date for building domestic coal plants at home.
 - ✓ Coal is still China's main source of power generation, and both China and India have resisted attempts for a G-20 declaration on phasing out domestic coal consumption.

- **No resolution on Vaccine Patent Waiver:** It did not touch upon the dispute over vaccine patent waivers.
- **Pressing India's developmental Imperative:** Climate negotiators from the US, EU and UK had made a number of visits to India over the past few months, pressing for India to update its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to include its target of 450 GW of renewable energy by 2030.

G20

About:

- It is an informal group of 19 countries and the European Union (EU), with representatives of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.
 - ✓ It does not have a permanent secretariat or Headquarters.
- The membership comprises a mix of the world's largest advanced and emerging economies, representing about two-thirds of the world's population, 85% of global gross domestic product, 80% of global investment and over 75% of global trade.

Members:

- Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the EU.

NEW PLEDGES AT COP26 SUMMIT

Why in News

Recently, leaders at the CoP26 global climate conference in Glasgow have pledged to stop deforestation by the end of the decade and slash emissions of methane to help slow climate change.

- Earlier, India announced that it will reach carbon neutrality by 2070 as part of a five-point action plan that included reducing emissions to 50% by 2030.

KEY POINTS

Methane Pledge:

- The European Union (EU) and the US have launched a landmark pledge to slash emissions of the powerful greenhouse gas methane, a commitment that could prevent 0.2 degrees Celsius of global warming.

- The alliance's members will seek to lower global emissions of methane - the second-largest contributor to climate change after carbon dioxide by 30% below 2020 levels by 2030.
- Besides the EU and the US, more than 103 countries have signed up so far, including major methane emitters like Nigeria and Pakistan.
 - ✓ The Global Methane Pledge (US), first announced in September 2021, now covers emissions from two-thirds of the global economy.
 - ✓ China, Russia and India - have not signed up, while Australia has said it will not back the pledge.

Deforestation Pledge:

- More than 100 national leaders pledged to halt and reverse deforestation and land degradation by the end of the decade, underpinned by USD 19 billion in public and private funds to invest in protecting and restoring forests.
 - ✓ In 2020, the world lost 258,000 sq km of forest an area larger than the United Kingdom, according to WRI's Global Forest Watch.

IMPORTANT TERMS AT COP 26

Why in News

Recently, five terms came up frequently at the 26th session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP26.

Important Terms

NET ZERO

Amount of greenhouse gases (the ones that cause the Earth to heat up) released in the atmosphere



Amount of these gases removed from atmosphere, through processes like photosynthesis, or physical removal using futuristic tech

- At Glasgow meet, PM Modi pledged Net Zero for India by 2070

MITIGATION

Refers to the reduction of greenhouse gases — the only way the rise in global temperatures can be halted in the long term

- At Glasgow meet, one of the main discussions was to increase the ambition of mitigation actions



ADAPTATION

All the ways in which human beings, and others, need to adapt to climate change and extreme weather patterns — making agriculture resilient, flood defences, etc

- At Glasgow meet, developed countries were asked to at least double their contribution for adaptation efforts in the developing world

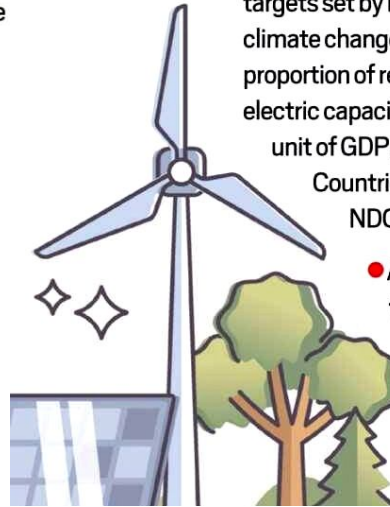


NDCs

Nationally Determined Contributions or targets set by individual countries to fight climate change. India's NDC: increasing proportion of renewable energy in installed electric capacity, decreasing emissions per unit of GDP, increasing forest cover.

Countries have to update their NDCs every five years

- At Glasgow meet, countries that had not submitted their NDCs for 2020 were asked to do so by 2022



CLIMATE FINANCE

All the money required to fund the actions needed to fight climate change. Money is needed for mitigation, adaptation, and to monitor actions countries are taking to keep global temperatures from rising beyond 2 degree Celsius from pre-industrial times.

- At Glasgow meet, developing countries asked developed countries to mobilise at least US\$ 1.3 trillion every year from 2030 onwards

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

OMICRON: NEW CORONA VARIANT

Why in News

The World Health Organization has declared the recently-discovered B.1.1.529 strain of Covid-19, to be a variant of concern.

- The virus was first detected in Southern Africa and it is renamed Omicron.



KEY POINTS

About:

- Omicron is placed in the most-troubling category of Covid-19 variants, along with the globally dominant Delta plus its weaker rivals Alpha, Beta and Gamma.
- This variant has a large number of mutations. Some of them are cause for serious concern because they may allow the new variant to evade immunity obtained from a past infection or via a vaccine.
 - ✓ However, there are no reliable estimates of just how much more transmissible the Omicron variant is compared to previous strains of the virus.
 - ✓ Apart from South Africa, Omicron has been detected in Israel in people coming from Malawi; Botswana; Belgium and Hong Kong.

Nomenclature:

- The WHO has decided to name the variants after the letters of the Greek alphabet, to avoid the countries that first detected them being stigmatised.
- WHO selected the name Omicron, instead of Nu or Xi, the two letters between Mu and Omicron. This is because:
 - ✓ Xi happens to be a popular surname in China (avoiding ‘causing offence to any cultural, social, national, regional, professional or ethnic groups’).
 - ✓ Nu could have been confused with the word ‘new’.

Situation In India:

- Seroprevalence studies indicate that a large proportion of the population has already been exposed to the virus providing some level of protection to subsequent infections.
 - ✓ Further, the immunisation campaign has gained momentum.
 - ✓ Approximately 44% of Indian adults have been fully vaccinated and 82% have received at least one dose.
- Scientists believe that prior infection followed by one or two doses of vaccination may have a larger protective effect than two doses of the vaccination alone.

Variants of Concern

- A variant for which there is evidence of an increase in transmissibility, more severe disease (e.g., increased hospitalizations or deaths), significant reduction in neutralization by antibodies generated during previous infection or vaccination, reduced effectiveness of treatments or vaccines, or diagnostic detection failures.
- The new Variants could kick off new wave(s) of epidemic transmission.

The WHO currently lists 5 variants of concern:

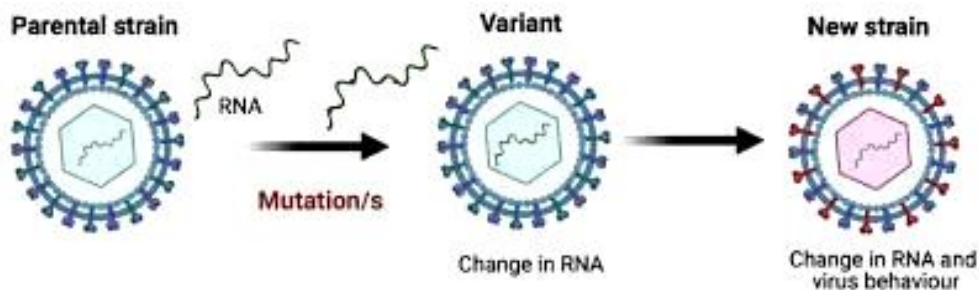
- ✓ Omicron (B.1.1.529), identified in southern Africa in November 2021
- ✓ Delta (B.1.617.2), which emerged in India in late 2020 and spread around the world
- ✓ Gamma (P.1), which emerged in Brazil in late 2020
- ✓ Beta (B.1.351), which emerged in South Africa in early 2020
- ✓ Alpha (B.1.1.7), which merged in Britain in late 2020.

Variants of Interest

- A variant with specific genetic markers that have been associated with changes to receptor binding, reduced neutralization by antibodies generated against previous infection or vaccination, reduced efficacy of treatments, potential diagnostic impact, or predicted increase in transmissibility or disease severity.
- **There are currently two:**
 - ✓ Mu (B.1.621), which emerged in Colombia in early 2021.
 - ✓ Lambda (C.37), which emerged in Peru in late 2020.

Mutation, Variant and Strain

- When a virus replicates it doesn't always manage to produce an exact copy of itself.
- This means that, over time, the virus may start to differ slightly in terms of its genetic sequence.
- Any changes to the viral genetic sequence during this process is known as a Mutation.



- Viruses with new mutations are sometimes called Variants. Variants can differ by one or multiple mutations.
- When a new variant has different functional properties to the original virus and becomes established in a population, it is sometimes referred to as a New Strain of the virus.
 - ✓ All strains are variants, but not all variants are strains.

LEARNING FARMING PRACTICES FROM WORLD

Why in News

- According to the recently appeared paper titled: “Integrated farming with intercropping increases food production while reducing environmental footprint”, small farm holders in India can grow more food and have reduced environmental footprint.

KEY POINTS

Findings of the Work:

“Relay Planting” Enhances Yield:

- Relay planting means the planting of different crops in the same plot, one right after another, in the same season.
- **Example:** Small farmers in Telangana, Karnataka and Maharashtra are earning money out of relay farming. They plant onions, turmeric, chillies, ginger, garlic and even some native fruits, thus making profit, during these relay times.
- It also means better distribution of labour, insects spread less, and any legumes actually add nitrogen to the soil.
- However, there are difficulties involved in relay cropping, namely mechanisation and the management requirements are somewhat higher.

Strip Cropping was More Fruitful:

- Strip cropping has been used in the US (where the fields are larger than those in India), where they grow wheat, along with corn and soyabean, in the same farm in an alternative manner. However, this needs large lands.
- In India, where there are large fields (such as the ones owned by cities and state governments), the land is divided into strips, and strips of grass are left to grow between the crops.
- Planting of trees to create shelters has helped in stabilising the desert in Western India.

Soil Mulching and No Till:

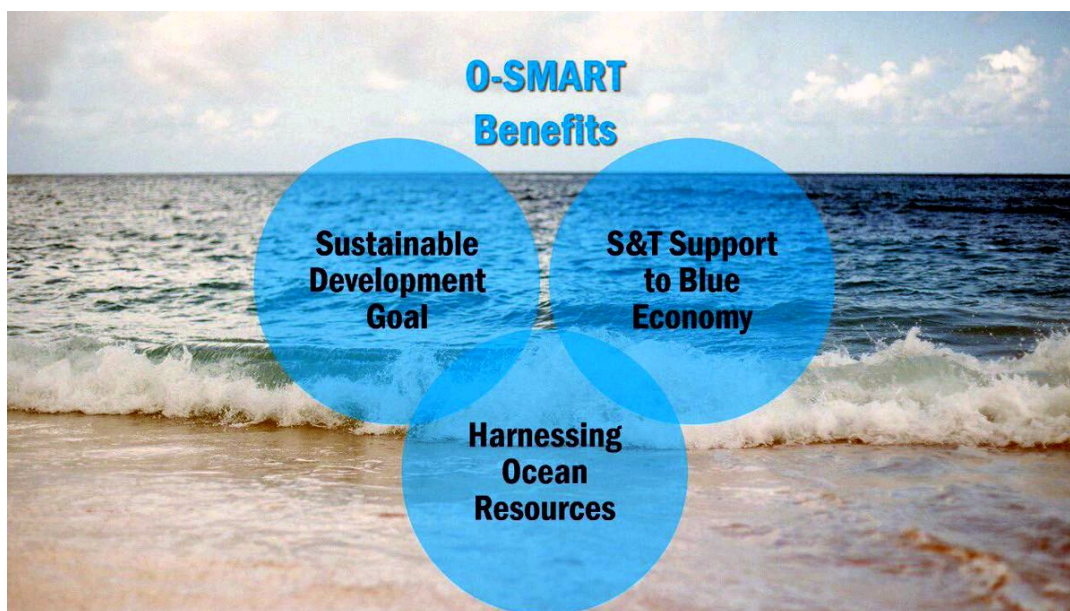
- “**Soil mulching**,” that is, available means such as crop straw, in addition to the major crop such as wheat or rice.
- “**No-till**” or a reduced tillage increases the annual crop yield up by 15.6% to 49.9%, and decreases the environmental footprint by 17.3%, compared with traditional monoculture cropping.
- While these methods are not easy for small farmers in India, they could be practised at least in larger farms such as the ones owned by industry and governments.
- Soil mulching requires keeping all bare soil covered with straw, leaves, and the like, even when the land is in use.
- Erosion is curtailed, moisture retained, and beneficial organisms, such as earthworms, kept in place. The same set of benefits are also offered by not tilling the soil.

SCHEMES

O-SMART SCHEME

Why in News

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the continuation of the ‘Ocean Services, Modelling, Application, Resources and Technology (O-SMART)’ Scheme for the period of 2021-26.



KEY POINTS

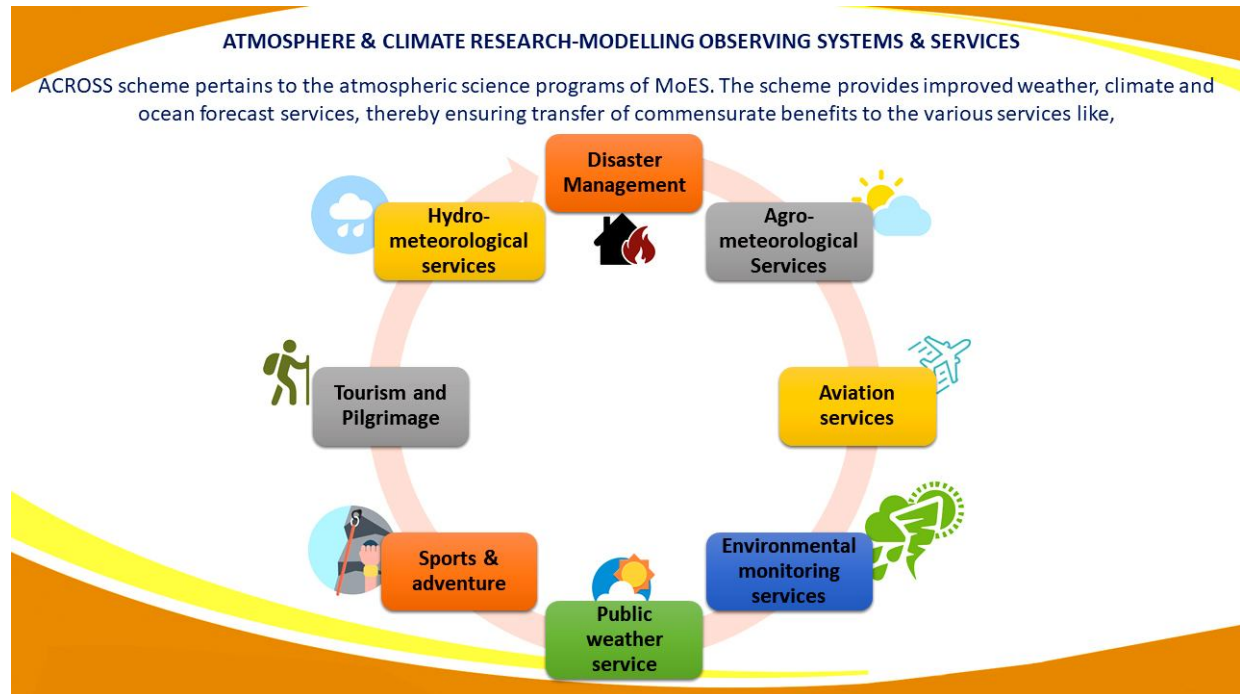
About:

- It is a government scheme that aims at promoting ocean research and setting up early warning weather systems.
 - ✓ It was launched in August 2018.
- It also aims at addressing ocean development activities such as technology, services, resources, science, and observations as well as offering required technological assistance for implementing aspects of the Blue Economy.
- It comprises seven sub-schemes which are being implemented by autonomous institutes of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).
 - ✓ Sub-Schemes are: Ocean Technology, Ocean Modelling and Advisory Services (OSMAS), Ocean Observation Network (OON), Ocean Non-Living Resources, Marine Living Resources and Ecology (MLRE), Coastal Research and Operation, Maintenance of Research Vessels

ACROSS SCHEME

Why in News

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the continuation of Atmosphere & Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems & Services (ACROSS) Scheme along with its eight sub-schemes to the next finance (15th) cycle of five years (2021-2026).



KEY POINTS

About:

- It pertains to the atmospheric science programs of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) and addresses different aspects of weather and climate services.
- Each of these aspects is incorporated as eight subschemes under the umbrella scheme “ACROSS”.
 - ✓ The sub-schemes are Commissioning of Polarimetric Doppler Weather Radars (DWRs), Upgradation of Forecast System, Weather & Climate Services, Atmospheric Observations Network, Numerical Modelling of Weather and Climate, Monsoon Mission III, Monsoon Convection, Clouds and Climate Change (MC4) and High Performance Computing System (HPCS).

PM LAUNCHES TWO CUSTOMER-CENTRIC RBI SCHEMES



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched two innovative customer centric initiatives of RBI (Reserve Bank of India) namely, the Retail Direct Scheme and the Reserve Bank - Integrated Ombudsman Scheme.
- The Retail Direct Scheme will ensure easier and safer access for smaller investors in government securities.
- Small investors will no longer be reliant on indirect investment agencies like banks, insurance companies or mutual funds.
- The provision of guaranteed settlement for government securities gives assurance of safety to citizens to invest their small savings.
- Meanwhile, the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme will go a long way in strengthening the grievance redressal system and making it more proactive.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECOLOGY

AMAZON DEFORESTATION

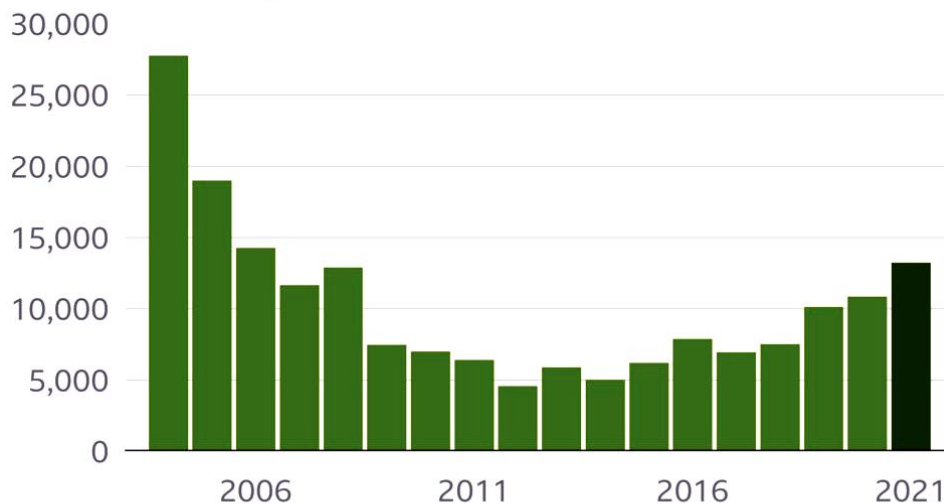
Why in News

Recently, it was found that the area deforested in Brazil's Amazon reached a 15-year high after a 22% jump from the prior year (2020).

- Earlier, a study showed that Amazon Forests have started emitting Carbon dioxide (CO₂) instead of absorbing it.
- Over time, global climate change and more deforestation will likely lead to increased temperatures and changing rain patterns in the Amazon, which will undoubtedly affect the region's forests, water availability, biodiversity, agriculture, and human health.

Amazon deforestation highest since 2006

Annual rate in square kilometres



Annual figures August to July

KEY POINTS

Drivers of Deforestation in the Amazon:

Cattle Ranching:

- One of the leading causes of deforestation in the Amazon Rainforest is linked to beef consumption.

- Vast areas of forest are cleared by cutting down trees and burning the forest down in order to create pasture land for grazing cattle.
- Brazil is a major supplier of beef to countries like the United States and China, exporting 1.82 million tons in 2019 alone.

Small-Scale Agriculture:

- It has long been touted as a major driver of deforestation in the Amazon Rainforest.
- As with ranching, small-scale agriculture requires the forest to be “slashed and burned” to clear the ground for crops and grazing of various types.

Fires:

- Unlike other types of forests, the Amazon did not evolve to burn.
- And in the Amazon basin, fires can actually be spurred by deforestation. As their name suggests, rainforests contain high levels of moisture, which helps buffer them from fire.

Industrial Agriculture Operations:

- Industrial agriculture operations are becoming increasingly common in the Amazon Rainforest.

Other Reasons:

- Mining operations, for sought-after minerals such as gold, account for further damage to the Amazon forest.
- Increased government incentives in the form of loans and infrastructure spending, including roads and dams.

NATIONAL INTERLINKING OF OF RIVERS AUTHORITY

Why in News

The Centre Government is contemplating creation of the National Interlinking of Rivers Authority (NIRA).

- NIRA is supposed to be an independent autonomous body for planning, investigation, financing and the implementation of the river interlinking projects in the country.

KEY POINTS

- NIRA will function as an umbrella body for all river linking projects and to be headed by a Government of India Secretary-rank officer.
- It will replace the existing National Water Development Agency (NWDA).
- It will coordinate with neighbouring countries and concerned states and departments and will also have powers on issues related to environment, wildlife and forest clearances under river linking projects and their legal aspects.
- NIRA will have the power to raise funds and act as a repository of borrowed funds or money received on deposit or loan given on interest.
- It will also have the power to set up a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for individual link projects.

Inter-Linking of Rivers Programme

- Origin of Idea: The idea was first mooted during the British Raj when Sir Arthur Cotton, a British general and irrigation engineer suggested linking the Ganga and the Cauvery for navigational purposes.

Aim:

- The Inter-Linking of Rivers programme (ILR) programme is aimed at linking different surplus rivers of the country with deficient rivers so that the excess water from surplus regions could be diverted to deficient regions.

GANGES RIVER DOLPHIN

Why in News

Recently, the Ministry of Jal Shakti released a guide for the safe rescue and release of stranded Ganges River Dolphins.

- The document has been prepared by the Turtle Survival Alliance and the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department (EFCCD) of the Uttar Pradesh Government.
- It was recognised as the National Aquatic Animal in 2009, by the Government of India.

KEY POINTS

- **Scientific Name:** Platanista gangetica gangetica.
- **Discovery:** It was officially discovered in 1801.
- **Habitat:** They live in the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems of Nepal, India, and Bangladesh.



- The Ganges river dolphin can only live in freshwater and is essentially blind.
- They hunt by emitting ultrasonic sounds, which bounces off of fish and other prey, enabling them to “see” an image in their mind. They are also called ‘susu’.
- **Population:** The global population of the species is estimated at 4,000, and nearly 80% found in the Indian subcontinent.

Significance:

- It is a reliable indicator of the health of the entire river ecosystem.

INDIA TO REACH CARBON NEUTRALITY BY 2070

Why in News

Recently, India announced that it will reach carbon neutrality by 2070 as part of a five-point action plan that included reducing emissions to 50% by 2030.

- India made this pledge at the Conference of the Parties (COP) 26 climate summit in Glasgow, where it also urged developed countries to deliver on their promise of climate financing.
- However, India hasn’t submitted an updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDCs) with these commitments to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) yet.

KEY POINTS

About:

- Net Zero is a state in which a country’s total emissions are offset by absorptions of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, like that done by trees and forests, and physical removal of carbon dioxide through futuristic technologies.

PM MAKES FIVE PLEDGES

- 1 India will increase its non-fossil energy capacity to 500GW by 2030
- 2 India will meet 50% of its energy requirements from renewable energy by 2030
- 3 India will reduce the total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes from now to 2030
- 4 By 2030, India will reduce the carbon intensity of its economy by 45% (from a previous target of 35%)
- 5 By 2070, India will achieve the target of net zero

WHAT IS NET ZERO?

Net zero refers to a balance where emissions of greenhouse gases are offset by the absorption of an equivalent amount from the atmosphere. Experts see net zero targets as a critical measure to successfully tackle climate change and its devastating consequences

PLEDGES BY TOP THREE EMITTERS

CHINA: Beijing announced no new pledges on Monday. It previously pledged net zero by 2060.

UNITED STATES: The US touted domestic legislation to spend \$555bn to boost renewable power and electric vehicles. It has pledged net zero by 2050.

INDIA: The country's economy will become carbon neutral by the year 2070

- More than 70 countries have promised to become Net Zero by the middle of the century, and this is being considered vital for meeting the Paris Agreement goal of keeping global temperatures within 2 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial times.
- India's Net Zero target of 2070 silences its critics but it is along expected lines.
 - ✓ The big thing here is not the target itself but the fact that India finally relented and decided to take up a target, something it had been holding back on for quite some time.
 - ✓ In its climate action plan submitted under the Paris Agreement, India had promised to reduce its emissions intensity, or emissions per unit of Gross Domestic Product, by 33 to 35% by the year 2030 compared to 2005 levels.

WORLD HERITAGE SITES & CLIMATE CHANGE

Why in News

The first ever scientific assessment of the amounts of greenhouse gases emitted from and absorbed by forests (2001-2020) in UNESCO World Heritage sites has found that forests in World Heritage sites play a vital role in mitigating climate change.

KEY POINTS

Mitigating Climate Change:

- World Heritage sites play a vital role in mitigating climate change by absorbing 190 million tons of CO₂ from the atmosphere each year.
- Carbon sequestration by world heritage forests over long periods has led to total carbon storage of approximately 13 billion tons of carbon.
 - ✓ If all this stored carbon were to be released into the atmosphere as CO₂, it would be akin to emitting 1.3 times the world's total annual CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels.
- However, ten forests released more carbon than they sequestered due to pressure from human activity and climate change, which is alarming.
- UNESCO under its World Heritage Marine Programme lists 50 sites across the globe for their unique marine values. These represent just one per cent of the global ocean area. But they comprise at least 15% of global blue carbon assets.
 - ✓ Blue Carbon is organic carbon that is mainly obtained from decaying plant leaves, wood, roots and animals. It is captured and stored by coastal and marine ecosystems.
- India's Sundarbans National Park (60 million tonnes of carbon) is among five sites that have the highest blue carbon stocks globally.

Reason for High Emissions:

- At some sites the clearance of land for agriculture caused emissions to be greater than sequestration.
- The increasing scale and severity of wildfires, often linked to severe periods of drought, is also a predominant factor in several cases.
 - ✓ Other extreme weather phenomena, such as hurricanes, contributed at certain sites.

INDIAN FLAPSHELL TURTLES

Why in News

Recently, forest officials from Odisha found 40 Indian flapshell turtles in baskets in an alleged smuggling racket.

KEY POINTS

About:

- The Indian flapshell turtle is a freshwater species of turtle and is found in many states.



- The “flap-shelled” name stems from the presence of femoral flaps located on the plastron. These flaps of skin cover the limbs when they retract into the shell.
- It is a relatively small soft-shell turtle with a carapace length of up to 350 millimetres.

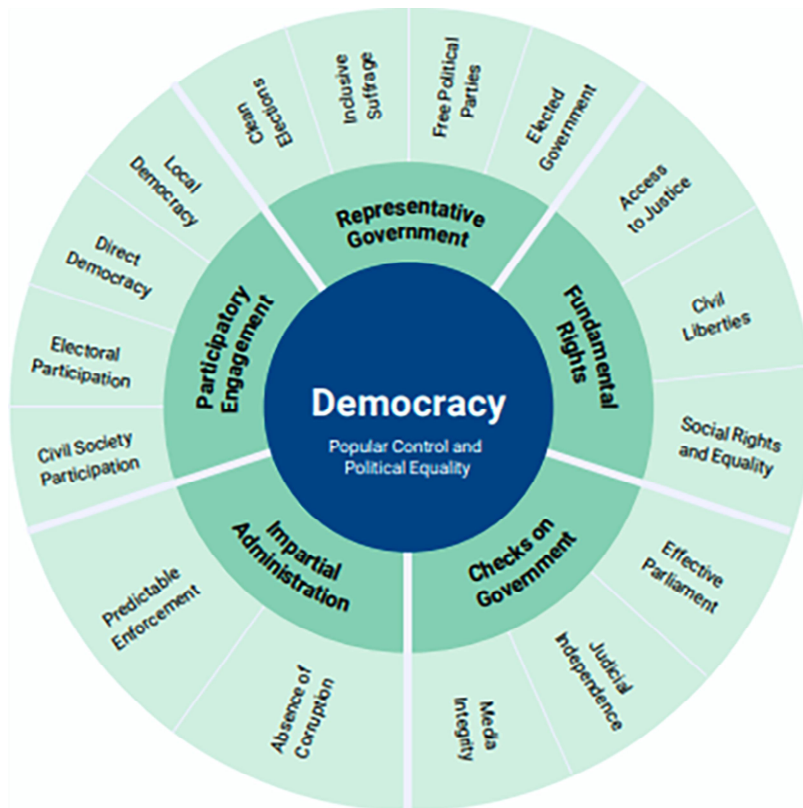
Scientific Name: Lissemys punctata

REPORTS

GLOBAL STATE OF DEMOCRACY REPORT 2021

Why in News

According to the recently released Global State of Democracy Report, 2021, the number of countries moving towards authoritarianism in 2020 was higher than that of countries becoming more democratic.



KEY POINTS

About:

- The report aims to influence the global debate and analyses current trends and challenges to democracy, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- It offers specific policy recommendations to spark new and innovative thinking for policymakers, governments and civil society organizations supporting democracy.
- It is released by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International- IDEA).

About International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance:

- International IDEA is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide.
- It was founded in 1995 and currently has 33 member states.
- International IDEA advances democracy worldwide, as a universal human aspiration and an enabler of sustainable development, through support to the building, strengthening and safeguarding of democratic political institutions and processes at all levels.

Highlights of the Report:

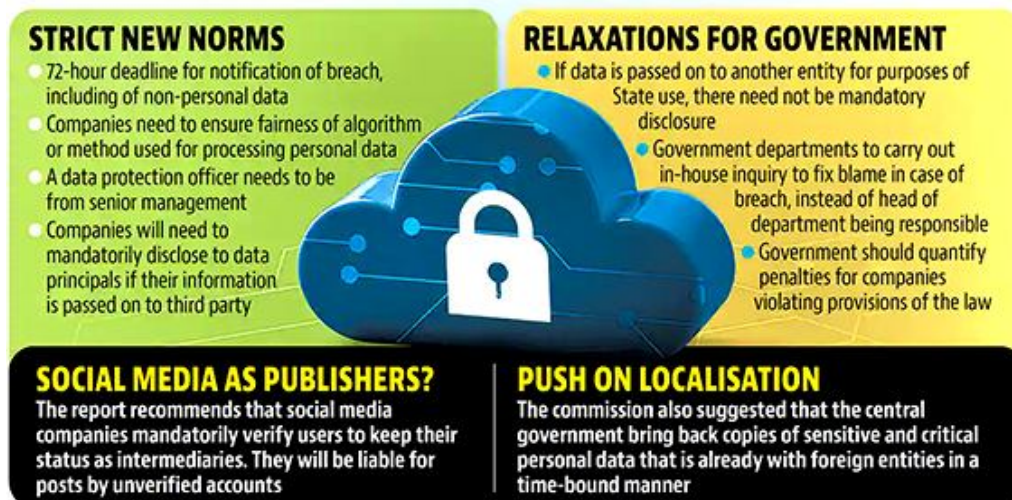
- **Democratic Decline:** Democratically elected Governments, including established democracies, are increasingly adopting authoritarian tactics.
- **Effect of Pandemic:** The pandemic placed considerable stress on democracy across the region by imposing inevitable restrictions on movement and - where governments were sensitive to criticism - also restrictions on freedom of expression.
 - ✓ The year 2020 was the worst on record, in terms of the number of countries affected by deepening autocratisation.
 - ✓ The pandemic has thus had a particularly damaging effect on non-democratic countries, further closing their already reduced civic space.
- **Popular Support:** This democratic backsliding has often enjoyed significant popular support.
- **Indian Scenario:** The report highlighted the case of Brazil and India as “some of the most worrying examples of backsliding.
- However, India remained in the category of a mid-level performing democracy as it has since 2000.

JPC REPORT ON THE PDP BILL

Why in News

Recently, a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) has finalised and adopted the draft report on The Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill, 2019 by a majority.

Key suggestions on data protection law



STRICT NEW NORMS

- 72-hour deadline for notification of breach, including of non-personal data
- Companies need to ensure fairness of algorithm or method used for processing personal data
- A data protection officer needs to be from senior management
- Companies will need to mandatorily disclose to data principals if their information is passed on to third party

RELAXATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

- If data is passed on to another entity for purposes of State use, there need not be mandatory disclosure
- Government departments to carry out in-house inquiry to fix blame in case of breach, instead of head of department being responsible
- Government should quantify penalties for companies violating provisions of the law

SOCIAL MEDIA AS PUBLISHERS?

The report recommends that social media companies mandatorily verify users to keep their status as intermediaries. They will be liable for posts by unverified accounts

PUSH ON LOCALISATION

The commission also suggested that the central government bring back copies of sensitive and critical personal data that is already with foreign entities in a time-bound manner

- The Bill will be soon tabled in the upcoming Winter Session of Parliament. The JPC has got five extensions to submit a report on the Bill in two years.

KEY POINTS

PDP Bill:

- It was first brought to the Parliament in 2019 and was referred to the JPC for examination at the time.
 - ✓ The Bill was drafted after a Supreme Court ruling that declared 'Right to Privacy' a fundamental right in August 2017, Puttaswamy judgment.
- It is commonly referred to as the "Privacy Bill" and intends to protect individual rights by regulating the collection, movement, and processing of data that is personal, or which can identify the individual.
- The Bill is landmark legislation meant to regulate how various companies and organizations use individuals' data inside India.
- The 2019 draft of the Bill proposed the formation of a Data Protection Authority (DPA), which would regulate the use of users' personal data by social media companies and other organizations within the country.

GLOBAL NUTRITION REPORT, 2021

Why in News

- According to the recently released Global Nutrition Report (GNR, 2021), India has made no progress on anaemia and childhood wasting.

Global Nutrition Targets

- In 2012, the World Health Assembly (the decisionmaking body of the World Health Organisation) identified six nutrition targets to be met by 2025. These are:
 - ✓ Reduce stunting by 40% in children under 5.
 - ✓ Reduce the prevalence of anaemia by 50% among women in the age group of 19-49 years.
 - ✓ Ensure 30% reduction in low-birth weight.
 - ✓ Ensure no increase in childhood overweight.
 - ✓ Increase the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months up to at least 50%
 - ✓ Reduce and maintain childhood wasting to less than 5%.

KEY POINTS

Major Findings:

Global Nutrition Targets:

- At the current rate of progress, the global nutrition targets will not be achieved by 2025 globally and in most countries worldwide.

Variation in Data Availability:

- There is substantial variation in data availability and progress towards the global nutrition targets across 194 countries. „
 - ✓ Only seven countries are on track to meet four of the six maternal, infant and young child nutrition targets by 2025, while no country is ‘on track’ to halt the rise in adult obesity or achieve a 30% relative reduction in salt/sodium intake

ECONOMY SCENARIO

INDIA BECOMES THE HIGHEST RECIPIENT OF REMITTANCES

Why in News

According to the World Bank's Migration and Development Brief, India has become the world's largest recipient of Remittances, receiving USD 87 billion (a gain of 4.6 % from previous year) in 2021.

- India is followed by China, Mexico, the Philippines, and Egypt.
- The United States being the biggest source, accounting for over 20% of all Remittances.



KEY POINTS

Factors for Remittance Growth:

- Migrants' determination to support their families in times of need, aided by economic recovery in Europe and the United States which in turn was supported by the Fiscal Stimulus and employment support programs.
- In the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Russia, the recovery of outward remittances was also facilitated by stronger oil prices and the resulting pickup in economic activity.

- The severity of Covid-19 caseloads and deaths during the second quarter (well above the global average) played a prominent role in drawing substantial flows (including for the purchase of oxygen tanks) to the country.
- Flows from migrants have greatly complemented government cash transfer programs to support families suffering economic hardships during the Covid-19 crisis.

REGULATING CRYPTOCURRENCY

Why in News

Recently, the Prime Minister of India chaired a meeting regarding the management of the cryptocurrency sector. Citing the unregulated nature of the crypto market, he called for taking progressive and forward-looking steps.

- At the moment, there is no legislature that covers cryptocurrencies in India. In India, owning cryptocurrencies is still not illegal. In 2020, the Supreme Court had struck down a ban on trading of crypto currency in India, which was imposed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

What is cryptocurrency?

Cryptocurrency

Cryptocurrency is a medium of exchange, created and stored electronically in the blockchain, using encryption techniques to control the creation of monetary units and to verify the transfer of funds. Bitcoin is the best known example.



Has no intrinsic value in that it is not redeemable for another commodity, such as gold.



Has no physical form and exists only in the network.



Its supply is not determined by a central bank and the network is completely decentralized.

- China has declared all cryptocurrency transactions illegal, effectively imposing a complete ban, whereas El Salvador has permitted Bitcoin as legal tender.

KEY POINTS

Benefits Associated with Cryptocurrency:

- **Fast and Cheap Transactions:** Cryptocurrencies are way cheaper to use to execute international transactions because the transactions don't have to be handled by a series of intermediaries before they reach their destinations.
- **Investment Destination:** There is a limited supply of cryptocurrency – partially like gold. Moreover, the last few years have seen the price of cryptocurrencies rising faster than other financial instruments.
 - ✓ Due to this, cryptocurrencies can become a preferred investment destination.
- **Anti-Inflationary Currency:** Due to high demand of cryptocurrency its prices have largely remained on a growing trajectory. In this scenario, people tend to hold more cryptocurrency than spending it.
 - ✓ This will cause a deflationary effect on currency.

Associated Concerns with Cryptocurrencies:

- **Bombardment of Advertisement:** The crypto market is seen as a way to earn quick profits. Due to this, there is bombardment of advertising, both online and offline, to lure people into speculating in this market.
 - ✓ However, there are concerns that these are attempts to mislead the youth through “overpromising” and “non-transparent advertising”.
- **Counterproductive Utility:** Unregulated crypto markets can become avenues for money laundering and terror financing.
- **Cryptocurrencies are Extremely Volatile:** Bitcoin skyrocketed from USD 40,000 to reach an all-time high of USD 65,000 (between January to April 2021).
 - ✓ Then in May 2021, it plunged and throughout June it remained below USD 30,000.
- **Macroeconomic and Financial Stability:** According to a Group of Crypto exchanges, crores of Indians have invested over Rs 6,00,000 crore in crypto assets.
 - ✓ The extent of investment exposure of Indian retail investors in this unregulated asset class, poses a risk to Macroeconomic and Financial Stability.
- **Stock Market Issues:** Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has flagged the issue that it has no control over the “clearing and settlement” of crypto currencies, and it cannot offer counterparty guarantee as is being done for stocks.
 - ✓ Further, whether cryptocurrency is a currency, commodity, or security has not been defined.

RBI INTEGRATED OMBUDSMAN SCHEME

Why in News

Recently, the Prime Minister has launched the integrated ombudsman scheme.

- In 2019 the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had launched the Complaint Management System (CMS) in order to improve the customer experience in the grievance redressal process of banking services.
- The PM has also launched the RBI's Retail Direct Scheme.

Ombudsman

- A government official who deals with complaints made by ordinary people against public organizations. This concept of Ombudsman arrived from Sweden.
- It means an officer appointed by the Legislature to handle complaints against a service or administrative authority.
- In India an Ombudsman is appointed to resolve grievances in the following sectors.
 - ✓ Insurance Ombudsman
 - ✓ Income Tax Ombudsman
 - ✓ Banking Ombudsman

KEY POINTS

About:

- It amalgamates three ombudsman schemes of RBI - banking ombudsman scheme of 2006, ombudsman scheme for NBFCs of 2018 and ombudsman scheme of digital transactions of 2019.
- The unified ombudsman scheme will provide redress of customer complaints involving deficiency in services rendered by RBI regulated entities viz. banks, NBFCs (Non banking Financial Companies) and pre-paid instrument players if the grievance is not resolved to the satisfaction of the customers or not replied within a period of 30 days by the regulated entity.
- It also includes non-scheduled primary co-operative banks with a deposit size of Rs 50 crore and above. The integrated scheme makes it a "One Nation One Ombudsman" approach and jurisdiction neutral.

Need:

- The first ombudsman scheme was rolled out in the 1990s. The system was always viewed as an issue by consumers.
- One of the primary concerns was the lack of maintainable grounds on which the consumer could challenge the actions of a regulated entity at the ombudsman or a rejection of the complaint on technical grounds, resulting in a preference for the consumer court notwithstanding the extended timelines for redressal.
- The move to integrate the systems (banking, NBFC, and digital payments) and expand the grounds for complaints is expected to see a positive response from consumers.

Features:

- The Scheme defines ‘deficiency in service’ as the ground for filing a complaint, with a specified list of exclusions.
 - ✓ Therefore, the complaints would no longer be rejected simply on account of “not covered under the grounds listed in the scheme”.
- The scheme is jurisdiction neutral and a centralised receipt and processing centre has been set-up in Chandigarh for initial handling of complaints in any language.
- RBI had created a provision for the use of Artificial Intelligence tools so that banks and investigating agencies could coordinate in a better way in the fastest time possible.
- The bank customers will be able to file complaints, submit documents, track status, and give feedback through a single email address.
- There will also be a multilingual toll-free number that will provide all relevant information on grievance redress.
- The regulated entity will not have any right to appeal in cases where an award is issued by the ombudsman against it for not furnishing satisfactory and timely information.

LEADS Report 2021

Why in News

Recently, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has released the Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) Report (Index) 2021.

KEY POINTS

About:

- The LEADS report is aimed at gauging the logistics performance of states and Union Territories (UT) and identifying areas where they can improve logistics performance.
 - ✓ It was launched in 2018.
- States are ranked based on quality and capacity of key infrastructure such as road, rail and warehousing as well as on operational ease of logistics including security of cargo, speed of terminal services and regulatory approvals.
- The report is structured along the three dimensions which collectively influence logistics ease- Infrastructure, Services, and Operating and Regulatory Environment which are further categorised into 17 parameters.

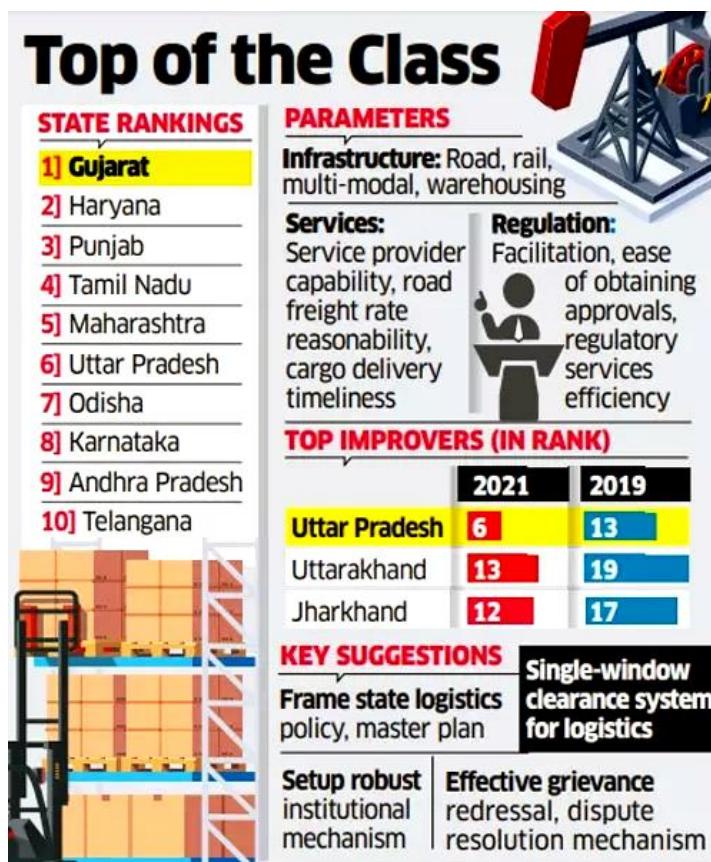
Need:

- India's logistics costs account for 13-14% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), compared to 7-8% in developed countries.
- The government was aiming to bring down logistics costs by 5% over the next 5 years.
 - ✓ Estimated logistics costs in India are currently about 14%, which is quite high compared to 8-10% globally.
- Efficient logistics was pivotal to bring ease and empowerment to businesses as well as citizens.
 - ✓ Logistics contributed immensely in our fight against Covid-19 by taking essential supplies including liquid Medical Oxygen throughout the country during the 2nd wave.

Ranking of States:

Top Performers:

- Gujarat, Haryana and Punjab have emerged as the top performers in the LEADS 2021 index respectively.
 - ✓ This is the third year in a row that Gujarat remained on top of the rankings.
- Delhi stands at the top rank among Other UTs.



- North Eastern States and Himalayan Region:
 - ✓ Jammu and Kashmir is the top ranker followed by Sikkim and Meghalaya.

CBIC GUIDELINES ON BLOCKING INPUT TAX CREDIT

Why in News

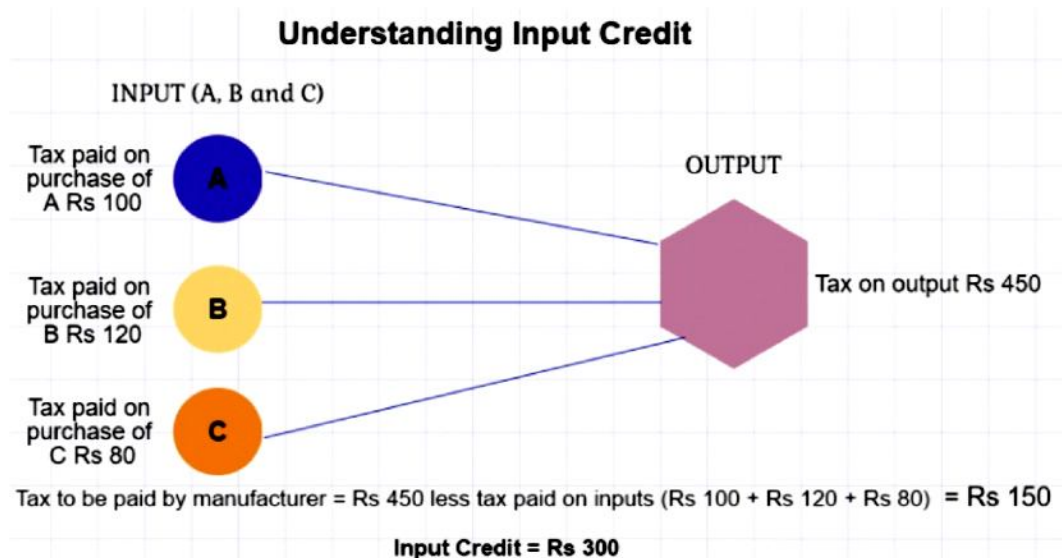
Recently, the CBIC (Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs) issued guidelines on blocking of tax credit by GST (Goods and Services Tax) field officers, saying that such blocking should be on the basis of 'material evidence' and not just out of 'suspicion'.

KEY POINTS

Input Tax Credit:

- It is the tax that a business pays on a purchase and that it can use to reduce its tax liability when it makes a sale.
- It means at the time of paying tax on output, one can reduce the tax that has already been paid on inputs and pay the balance amount.

- **Exceptions:** A business under composition scheme cannot avail of input tax credit. ITC cannot be claimed for personal use or for goods that are exempt.
- ✓ Composition Scheme is a scheme under GST which can be opted to get rid of tedious GST formalities. It can be opted by any taxpayer whose turnover is less than Rs. 1.5 crore.



COUNTRY'S FIRST FISHERIES BUSINESS INCUBATION CENTRE IN GURUGRAM

- The country's first-of-its kind, dedicated fisheries business incubation centre has been inaugurated in Haryana's Gurugram.
- The LINAC- NCDC Fisheries Business Incubation Centre has been set up at a cost of Rs. 3.23 crore to nurture fisheries start-ups under real market-led conditions.
- The centre is expected to serve as a milestone for the fisheries sector which is being given a big push under the central flagship Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) launched last year by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The incubation unit will provide handholding such as training, converting entrepreneurial ideas into business models and doling out seed money to the new as well as existing business entrepreneurs keen to make big in the segment.

NATIONAL INTERNET EXCHANGE OF INDIA LAUNCHES DIGITAL PAYMENT GATEWAY



- National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) has launched digital payments facilities across its three business units by integrating payment gateways on all its customer-facing websites. NIXI has partnered with PayU and NSDL to offer the payment gateway services.
- This integration will lead to increased ease of use for NIXI's customers by offering real-time payments, providing uninterrupted services and ensuring seamless experience to all stakeholders.

RBI GOVERNOR SHAKTIKANTA DAS SOUNDS ALARM ON CRYPTOCURRENCIES

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das cautioned investors on the potential pitfalls of cryptocurrencies.
- He said cryptocurrencies are a very serious concern from a macroeconomic and financial stability point of view.
- Shaktikanta Das's comments come at a time when the craze for cryptocurrencies is growing among Indian investors, especially the retail ones.
- The central government is yet to enact a law on cryptocurrencies. It is in consultation with industry experts and other stakeholders over the issue.

INDIA POSL, BAJAJ ALLIANZ INK PACT FOR TERM, ANNUITY PRODUCTS

- The India Post Payments Bank (IPPB), the Department of Posts and Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance Company (BALIC) have signed a strategic partnership for offering term and annuity products to customers through the Bank's extensive network of 650 branches and over 136,000 banking access points.
- The tie-up will enable customers, particularly from economically weaker sections, to become financially secure and empowered, and is in line with IPPB's objective of offering value added products and services to its customers.

RBI COMMITS TO SUPPORT FINANCIAL SYSTEM GREENING

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has said it is committed to integrating climate related risks into financial stability monitoring as well as exploring use of climate scenario exercises to identify vulnerabilities in the central bank-supervised entities.
- In its 'Statement of Commitment to Support Greening India's Financial System - NGFS', the RBI reiterated its willingness to contribute to the global response required to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement.
- The RBI had joined the Central Banks and Supervisors Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS) as a Member on April 23, 2021.

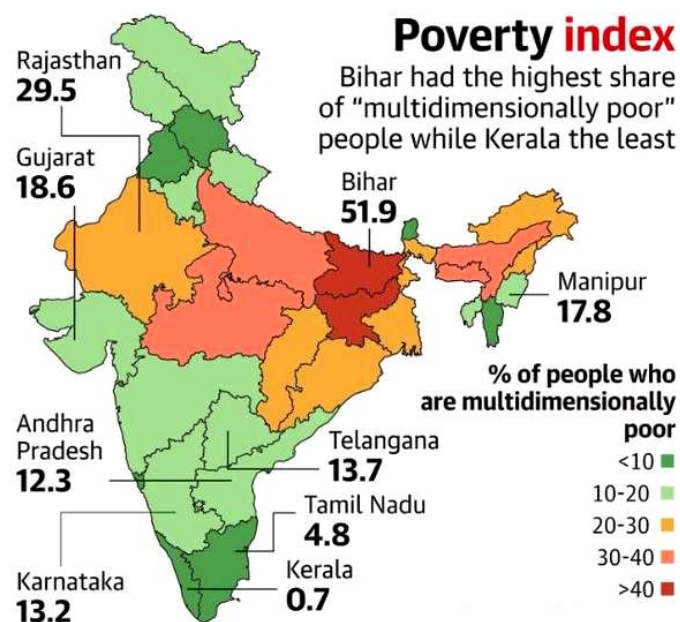
SOCIAL ISSUES

NATIONAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX: NITI AYOOG

Why in News

Recently, NITI Aayog has released the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

- Earlier, Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021 was released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI).



KEY POINTS

About:

- The MPI seeks to measure poverty across its multiple dimensions and in effect complements existing poverty statistics based on per capita consumption expenditure.
- According to Global MPI 2021, India's rank is 66 out of 109 countries. The National MPI is aimed at deconstructing the Global MPI and creating a globally aligned and yet customised India MPI for drawing up comprehensive Reform Action Plans with the larger goal of improving India's position in the Global MPI rankings.
- It has three equally weighted dimensions – health, education, and standard of living.
 - ✓ These three dimensions are represented by 12 indicators such as nutrition, school attendance, years of schooling, drinking water, sanitation, housing, bank accounts among others.

NUTRITION SMART VILLAGE INITIATIVE

Why in News

A programme on “Nutrition Smart Village” will be initiated to strengthen the Poshan Abhiyan.

- It will be part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, to commemorate the 75th year of Independence of India.

KEY POINTS

About:

- The initiative is in line with the Prime Minister's call to adopt and transform 75 villages.
- A total of 75 villages will be adopted by All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRP) centres and Indian Council of Agricultural Research –Central Institute for Women in Agriculture (ICAR-CIWA).

Objective:

- To promote nutritional awareness, education and behavioural change in rural areas involving farm women and school children.
- Harnessing traditional knowledge through the local recipe to overcome malnutrition.
- Implementing nutrition-sensitive agriculture through homestead agriculture and Nutri-garden.

Poshan Abhiyan:

About:

- Also called National Nutrition Mission, was launched on the occasion of the International Women's Day on 8th March, 2018.
- The Abhiyan targets to reduce Stunting, undernutrition, Anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively.
- It also targets to bring down stunting among children in the age group 0-6 years from 38.4% to 25% by 2022.

Poshan 2.0:

- Recently, the Ministry for Women and Child Development inaugurated Poshan 2.0 and urged all Aspirational Districts to establish a Poshan Vatika (nutrition garden) during the Nutrition Month (Poshan Mah) (from 1st September, 2021).

HEALTH INSURANCE FOR INDIA'S MISSING MIDDLE

Why in News

Recently, NITI Aayog has released a comprehensive report titled Health Insurance for India's Missing Middle.

- The report brings out the gaps in the health insurance coverage across the Indian population and offers solutions to address the situation.

KEY POINTS

Importance of Health Insurance:

- Health insurance is a mechanism of pooling the high level of Out of Pocket expenditure (OOPE) in India to provide greater financial protection against health shocks.
- Pre-payment through health insurance emerges as an important tool for risk-pooling and safeguarding against catastrophic (and often impoverishing) expenditure from health shocks.
- Moreover, pre-paid pooled funds can also improve the efficiency of healthcare provision.

PLACES IN NEWS

POCHAMPALLY IS ONE OF THE BEST TOURISM VILLAGES: UNWTO

Why in News

Recently, Pochampally village in Telangana was selected as one of the Best Tourism Villages by United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).

- The award will be given on the occasion of the 24th session of the UNWTO General Assembly in December 2021 in Madrid, Spain.
- The Union Ministry of Tourism has also drafted a Rural Tourism Policy which will not only promote tourism within our villages but also revitalise local arts and crafts and promote rural economy.
- Earlier, Rudreswara Temple, (also known as the Ramappa Temple) at Mulugu district, Telangana was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage list.



SRINAGAR- CREATIVE CITY OF CRAFT AND FOLK ARTS

Why in News



- On 8 November 2021, Srinagar the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir became one of the 49 cities selected worldwide to join the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN). Srinagar has been designated a "Creative City of Craft and Folk Arts".
- Srinagar is the sixth Indian city to join the list, Chennai and Varanasi (UNESCO cities of music) Jaipur (UNESCO city of crafts and folk arts), Mumbai (UNESCO city of the film) and Hyderabad (UNESCO city of gastronomy) were made to the list in the past in different categories.

INDIA'S CLEANEST CITY-INDORE

Why in News

- On 20 November 2021. President of India conferred the Swachh Survekshan Awards for 2021.
- Indore was ranked as the India's cleanest city for the fifth year in a row by Swachh Survekshan 2021 which is the central government's annual cleanliness survey to promote sanitation in urban centres under the Swachh Bharat Mission.
- Surat and Vijayawada were ranked second and third cleanest respectively in the category of cities with over 10 lakh population.
- Among the smaller cities with population between 1-10 lakh, New Delhi ranked first followed by Ambikapur in Chhattisgarh and Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh.
- Varanasi got top rank as the cleanest in the "Ganga town" category.
- Among the states with over 100 urban local bodies, Chhattisgarh was ranked on top for the third consecutive year. Among the states with less than 100 urban local bodies, Jharkhand got top rank. Ahmedabad Cantonment was adjudged "cleanest cantonment"

PERSONS IN NEWS

PRAVEEN SINHA IN INTERPOL

Why in News



- The CBI Special Director Praveen Sinha was elected as 'Delegate for Asia' on the executive committee of the International Criminal Praveen Sinha Police Organization (INTERPOL).
- He was elected to the panel on November 25, 2021 during the 89th INTERPOL general assembly in Istanbul, Turkey,
- Meanwhile, Ahmed Nasser Al Raisi of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was elected as the new President of INTERPOL.

BHARAT BIOTECH FOUNDER KRISHNAMURTY ELLA GETS HONORARY DOCTORATE



- Keladi Shivappa Nayaka University of Agricultural & Horticultural Sciences conferred its first honorary doctorate to Bharat Biotech International Limited Founder Krishnamurty Ella for his service in an affordable-vaccine production sector in India including Covaxin, the vaccine against against Covid-19.
- He was conferred at the 6th annual convocation at Navule campus. Ella's firm is conducting research on two more vaccines against Covid-19.

FIRST INDIAN LAYMAN TO BE CONFERRED SAINTHOOD

- After canonising nuns, priests and bishops so far, for the first time, a layman from India will be canonised by Pope Francis on May 15, 2022.
- Blessed Devasahayam from Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu was a Hindu converted to Christianity in the 18th Century.
- The Congregation for the Causes of Saints in the Vatican has formally announced the canonisation. Furthermore, it has also been announced that six other Blesseds from around the world will be canonised on May 15 next year at St Peter's Church in the Vatican.