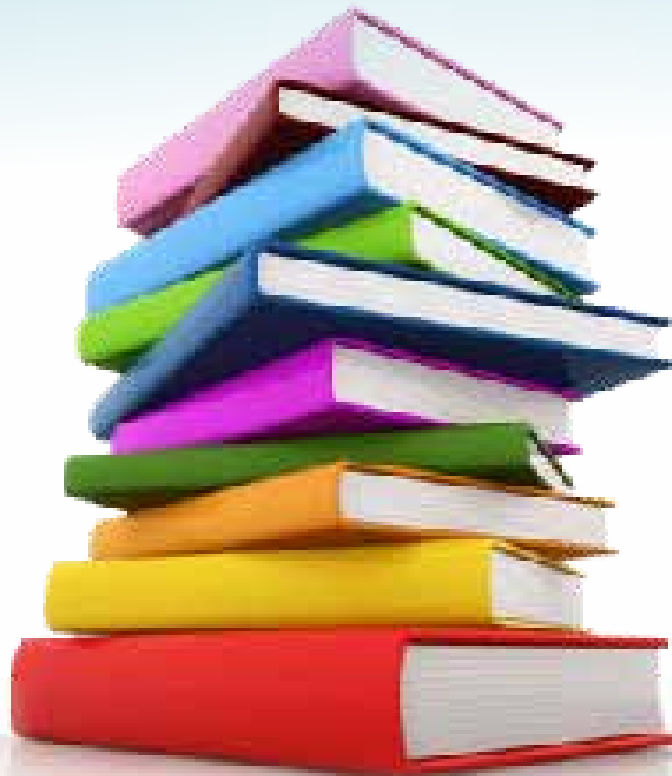




PLUTUS IAS Weekly

CURRENT AFFAIRS



PLUTUS IAS WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS 07-06-2021 to 13-06-2021

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CURRENT AFFAIRS

JUNE 2021

Media and Sedition (The Hindu, Governance, GS-2)

CONTEXT:

Sedition which is a colonial legacy, is included under IPC 124A. Recent case of Dua case which was quashed by the court, where the court specifically said that criticism of the government can't be included under Sedition.

- Included in IPC 1870. IPC 1860 was included by the meccaly committee.
- 124A was included on the recommendation of Sir James Stephe
- first used to prosecute Bal Gangadhar Tilak in 1897.



SUPREME COURT CASE:

- In 1995, the SC, in Balwant Singh vs State of Punjab, held that mere sloganeering which evoked no public response did not amount to sedition.
- Section 124A of the IPC, the provision for sedition, set out in Kedar Nath Singh (1962).
 - ▶ Criticism does not tantamount to sedition.

WAY FORWARD:

- The higher judiciary should use its supervisory powers to sensitize People, the magistracy and police to the constitutional provisions protecting free speech.
- The definition of sedition should be narrowed down
- Civil society must take the lead to raise awareness.

–Swarn Singh

Diminishing Options (The Hindu, GS-3, Economy)

CONTEXT:

Increase in the inflation in this COVID-19 times is influencing the monetary policy. RBI has taken the monetary policy on standstill i.e. neither increase or decrease in the repo rate.

WHAT IS MONETARY POLICY:

- It is a tool pursued by the RBI in a quantitative way to increase the decrease the repo rate.
- Monetary policy committee decides the matter which consists of 3 person from RBI and 3 from government
- The RBI governor is the ex-officio chairman of the committee.
- The RBI governor has the casting vote.



WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF INFLATION:

- Decrease the money supply to contain the inflation.
- But COVID-19 restrictions led to decrease in the production so too much money is chasing the few goods.
- But post-restrictions increase in the production will ultimately led to decrease in the inflation.

–Swarn Singh

Participatory Irrigation Management

CONTEXT:

The term participatory irrigation management (PIM) refers to the participation of irrigation users, i.e., farmers, in the management of irrigation systems. It is done by creating local water regulatory bodies like Pani Panchayat or Water Users' Associations (WUAs).

OBJECTIVES OF PIM

- Creating a sense of ownership of water resources and the irrigation system among the users, so as to promote the economy in water use and preservation of the system.
- Improving service deliveries through better operation and maintenance of the irrigation systems.
- Achieving optimum utilization of available resources, precisely as per crop needs.
- Increasing production per unit of water, where water is scarce and to increase production per unit of land where water is adequate.



CONSTRAINTS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF PIM

Lack of legal backup and policy changes: In many States, there is no or very little legal back up and clear-cut policy decisions at the Government level to take up PIM.

System deficiency: There are many problems like deterioration of old control and measuring structure, leakages and seepage at various places, erosion of banks and beds. These problems hinder farmers from taking over irrigation management.

Uncertainty of Water Availability: Farmers are reluctant to take on the responsibility for managing the system unless deliveries of water are made reliable, flexible, practical and responsive to need.

Fear of financial viability: Farmers are apprehensive to take irrigation management, due to the absence of surety of finance, it would be difficult for them to fulfil the requirement of funds for operation and maintenance.

Demographic Diversity: Due to variation in economic, ethnic, education levels etc. diversity of farmers, PIM is taking much time in India.

WAY FORWARD:

Rationalization of Water Rates: There is a dire need for rationalization of water rates so as to meet the expenditure on account of Maintenance of the irrigation system.

Women's Role in PIM: Considering the importance of women in terms of their numerical strength and the significant contribution they make to the agriculture labor force, there is a need for women to play an important role in the PIM.

Need For A Legal Framework: A model act can be framed by the parliament, which will ensure the systemic involvement of beneficiaries in the management of the irrigation system at various levels.

-Khyati Khare

Indo Russia Geometry

CONTEXT:

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was in New Delhi on a two-day visit to India and held delegation level talks with his Indian counterpart.

BACKGROUND:

Relations with Russia are a key pillar of India's foreign policy, and Russia has been a longstanding time-tested partner of India. Both countries signed "Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership" in October 2000. Traditionally, the Indo-Russian strategic partnership has been built on five major components: politics, defence, civil nuclear energy, anti-terrorism co-operation and space.

WHY RUSSIA IS IMPORTANT FOR INDIA?

- The historical character of the bilateral relationship.
- Even as India is diversifying its defense trade partners, Russia still dominates the Indian defense inventory to the tune of about 70 per cent.
- Russia remains the only partner that is still willing to give India critical technologies, such as a nuclear submarine.
- The emerging Russia-China strategic relationship has important security consequences for India.
- Russia also reaffirmed its "unwavering support" to India for a permanent seat in an expanded UN Security Council.
- Russia expressed its support for India's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.
- Both countries have mutual benefits in supporting struggle against terrorism, Afghanistan, climate change; organisations like SCO, BRICS, G-20 and ASEAN..

ECONOMIC TIES:

- Russia-India trade has not grown to great heights despite the encouragement of both states.
- Russia sees India – one of the fastest growing economies in the world – as a country that could alleviate Russia's economic problems. Make in India initiative has welcomed Russian companies from the public and private sectors.

- Russian firms have shown a willingness to invest in India in construction, major infrastructure projects such as dedicated freight corridors and industrial clusters, smart cities, and engineering services, sharing technologies and skills.
- Indian companies are exploring major investment options in Russia, especially in natural resources such as coal, fertilizers, hydrocarbons, minerals, and rare earth metals.
- Trade and investment relations are not up to the mark and this needs improvements.



ENERGY TIES:

- The Russia-India investments in the oil and gas sector and exports to third countries need to be energised.
- Russia is an important partner in peaceful uses of nuclear energy and it recognizes India as a country with advanced nuclear technology with an impeccable non-proliferation record.
- Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP) is being built in India with Russian cooperation.

POLITICAL TIES:

- New Delhi needs Moscow's support in the former's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.
- The Russians have backed the Indian position on Kashmir.
- India and Russia are engaged in several multilateral efforts that are greatly favoured by Russia such as the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.
- Annual Summit meeting is the highest institutionalized dialogue mechanism under the Strategic Partnership

ISSUES OF TERRORISM:

- Counterterrorism is another area where both countries find a convergence of interest.
- Both countries strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms, stressing the need for an effective global effort in dealing with the terrorist menace.
- They also called for the elimination, once and for all, of all terrorist “safe havens,” presumably referring to Pakistan.
- India and Russia also share concerns about the aggravation of the security situation in Afghanistan, including along its borders.
- India openly shared Russia’s concerns over developments in Syria.
- India’s stance on Syria will certainly help cement its ties with Russia countering the earlier feeling that India was not coming forward to support Russia in difficult times.

CULTURAL COOPERATION:

- There is a strong tradition of Indian studies in Russia.
- Apart from Hindi, languages such as Tamil, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Urdu, Sanskrit and Pali are taught in Russian Institutions.
- There is general interest among Russian people in Indian dance, music, yoga and ayurveda.
- There are regular cultural initiatives to promote people-to-people contacts between India and Russia

WAY FORWARD:

- India-Russian relationship is passing through an interesting phase.
- There are bilateral challenges that need to be overcome.
- The defense deals and nuclear energy cooperation should keep the India-Russian relationship afloat.
- India has to rebuild on its strengths and common concerns with the Russians.
- Need to focus on increasing trade and investment ties between India and Russia.
- India must attract Russian investors to tap the vast opportunities in India’s infrastructure space.

-Khyati Khare

Black Carbon and Glacier Melting

CONTEXT:

The report titled “Glaciers of the Himalayas: Climate Change, Black Carbon and Regional Resilience” says that the glaciers are melting faster than the global average ice mass. However, the strong policy on black carbon can sharply cut glacier melt. The research report is released by the World Bank and covers the Himalaya, Karakoram, and Hindu Kush (HKHK) mountain ranges.

BLACK CARBON:

- Black carbon is a kind of an aerosol.
- An aerosol is a suspension of fine solid particles or liquid droplets in the air.

- Among aerosols (such as brown carbon, sulphates), Black Carbon (BC) has been recognized as the second most important anthropogenic agent for climate change and the primary marker to understand the adverse effects caused by air pollution.
- It gets emitted from gas and diesel engines, coal-fired power plants, and other sources that burn fossil fuel. It comprises a significant portion of particulate matter or PM, which is an air pollutant.



SOURCE OF BLACK CARBON IN HIMALAYAN REGION:

Industry (primarily brick kilns) and residential burning of solid fuel together account for 45-66% of regional anthropogenic (man-made) BC deposition, followed by on-road diesel fuels (7-18%) and open burning (less than 3% in all seasons) in the region.

IMPACT OF DEPOSITS OF BC:

- It acts in two ways hastening the pace of glacier melt:
 1. By decreasing surface reflectance of sunlight.
 2. By raising the air temperature.
 3. Rate of De-glaciation: The rate of retreat of HKHK glaciers is estimated to be 0.3 metres per year in the west to 1.0 metre per year in the east.
- Full implementation of current policies to mitigate BC can achieve a 23% reduction but enacting new policies and incorporating them through regional cooperation among countries can achieve enhanced benefits.
- National Mission on Sustaining Himalayan Ecosystem (NMSHE) is one such policy adopted in India. It is one of the eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).

MEASURES TO BE TAKEN:

- In the Himalayas, reducing black carbon emissions from cookstoves, diesel engines, and open burning would have the greatest impact and could significantly reduce radiative forcing and help to maintain a greater portion of Himalayan glacier systems.
- Radiative forcing is a measure of the change in energy balance as a result of a change in a forcing agent (e.g., greenhouse gases, aerosol, cloud, and surface albedo) to affect the global energy balance and contribute to climate change.

STEPS TO BE TAKEN BY REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

- Review the policies on water management, with an emphasis on basin-based regulation and use of price signals (value of a particular action) for efficiency.
- Careful planning and use of hydropower to reflect changes in water flows and availability.
- Increasing the efficiency of brick kilns through proven technologies.
- There must also be greater knowledge sharing in the region.

-Khyati Khare

Model Tenancy Act

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CONTEXT:

Recently The Union Cabinet has approved the Model Tenancy Act to be sent to the States and Union Territories to enact legislation or amend laws on rental properties. The draft act had been published by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in 2019.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Written Agreement is Mandatory- Mandatory for there to be a written agreement between the property owner and the tenant.
- Establishes Independent Authority and Rent Court- Establishes an independent authority in every state and UT for registration of tenancy agreements and even a separate court to take up tenancy-related disputes.
- Maximum Limit for Security Deposit- Limit the tenant's advance security deposit to a maximum of two months rent for residential purposes and to a maximum of six months for non-residential purposes.
- Describes Rights and Obligations of Landlord and Tenant- The landlord will be responsible for structural repairs, except those necessitated by damage caused by the tenant, whitewashing of walls, and painting of doors and windows, etc. The tenant will be responsible for drain cleaning, switches, and socket repairs, kitchen fixtures repairs, replacement of glass panels in windows, doors, and maintenance of gardens and open spaces, among others.
- 24-hour Prior Notice by the Landlord: A landowner will have to give 24-hour prior notice before entering the rented premises to carry out repairs or replacement.
- The mechanism for Vacating the Premises: If a landlord has fulfilled all the conditions stated in the rent agreement – giving notice, etc.- and the tenant fails to vacate the premises on the expiration of the period of tenancy or termination of tenancy, the landlord is entitled to double the monthly rent for two months and four times after that.



TARGET SECTION:

It will apply to premises let out for residential, commercial, or educational use, but not for industrial use. It also won't cover hotels, lodging houses, inns, etc. It will be applied prospectively and will not affect existing tenancies.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SCHEME:

- The authority will provide a speedy mechanism in resolving disputes and other related matters.
- It will help overhaul the legal framework for rental housing across the country.
- It will enable the creation of adequate rental housing stock for all the income groups, thereby addressing homelessness.
- It will enable the institutionalization of rental housing by gradually shifting it towards the formal market.
- It is expected to give a fillip to private participation in rental housing as a business model for addressing the huge housing shortage.

CHALLENGES:

- The Act is not binding on the states as land and urban development remain state subjects.
- Like in the case with RERA (Real Estate (Regulation and Development Act), the fear is that states may choose not to follow guidelines, diluting the essence of the Model Act.

-Khyati Khare

Autonomy of Hong Kong

CONTEXT:

The Trump administration no longer regards Hong Kong as autonomous from mainland China. That sets the stage for the possible withdrawal of the preferential trade and financial status the U.S. accords the former British colony.

BACKGROUND:

- Hong Kong has long occupied a peculiar place in the international economic order. It's not an independent country but can enter trade agreements with other states on its own.
- It sets its own taxes and has its own currency.
- Though it's part of China, tariffs and customs control applied on Chinese goods don't apply to Hong Kong.
- When the Hong Kong government attempted to introduce national security legislation in 2003, an estimated 500,000 people turned out to protest against the bill on July 1, 2003—the largest protest the city had seen since its handover from the U.K. The bill was eventually shelved.
- Since then, the city's government hasn't attempted to introduce the legislation again.
- Pressure to enact the bill has increased since widespread unrest erupted in June 2019.
- But following the new law, countries are re-evaluating whether the city should continue enjoying its special trade privileges, or be treated as just another mainland Chinese city.
- Hong Kong's special status is now facing its most urgent crisis yet.



REASON:

- China's legislature has approved controversial national security laws for Hong Kong.
- The legislation, aimed at stamping out protests that have rocked the city for the past year, would ban "any acts or activities" that endanger China's national security, including separatism, subversion, and terrorism – charges often used in mainland China to silence dissidents and other political opponents.
- In short, the law bans sedition, secession, and subversion of China's central government.
- The law will drastically broaden Beijing's power over Hong Kong, which last year was roiled by anti-government protests calling for greater democracy and more autonomy from mainland China.

- It would also allow “national security agencies” – potentially Chinese security forces – to operate in the city.
- Critics say it threatens civil liberties in Hong Kong and undermines the “one country, two systems” arrangement that separates the region’s political, legal, and financial infrastructure from mainland China’s.

PRESENT STATUS OF HONG KONG:

- On 1 July 1997, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China and the Basic Law came into effect.
- The Basic Law is the constitutional document of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.
- It enshrines within a legal document the important concepts of “one country, two systems”, “Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong” and a high degree of autonomy.
- According to the Basic Law, Hong Kong’s political system and way of life remain unchanged for 50 years.

THE REACTION OF FIRST AND SECOND WORLD COUNTRIES:

The move is widely considered a severe blow to Hong Kong’s promised autonomy

- In a joint statement, Australia, Canada, the UK, and the US said: “China’s decision to impose the new national security law on Hong Kong lies in direct conflict with its international obligations.”
- They called on Beijing to work with the Hong Kong government and people to find a “mutually acceptable accommodation”.
- The UK separately said it would extend visa rights for as many as 300,000 Hong Kong British national (overseas) passport holders if China does not change tack.

ALL ABOUT SPECIAL STATUS OF HONG KONG:

- In the latest statement, US secretary of state Mike Pompeo declared that Hong Kong can no longer be deemed to have a high degree of autonomy from China.
- This designation underpins US-Hong Kong relations, as Washington has legislated that the city must remain “sufficiently autonomous” to justify special treatment from the US.
- Under the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act passed last year in support of Hong Kong’s months-long pro-democracy protests, the US government must annually verify to Congress that the city remains autonomous from China, or risks losing its special status with the US.
- Hong Kong’s special trade and economic status with the US exempts it from the tariffs and export controls imposed by Washington on mainland China.
- US senators have already introduced a bill that would impose sanctions on Chinese officials and firms who violate freedoms in Hong Kong.
- The fallout could potentially be much wider, such as bringing an end to the extradition treaty between US and Hong Kong.

THE REACTION OF CHINA:

- China has threatened the US with countermeasures if Washington decides to punish Beijing for its plans to enact the national security law, saying other countries have no right to interfere with Hong Kong’s internal affairs.
- Some Hong Kong politicians, including the pro-Beijing lawmaker Regina Ip, have tried to dismiss the prospect of US sanctions by saying they wouldn’t affect the local economy very much.

ITS IMPACT ON WORLD ORDER:

- The US could impose targeted sanctions and roll back certain privileges.
- Or it could deploy arguably its most aggressive retaliatory tool and revoke Hong Kong's special trade status.
- This is often referred to as the "nuclear" option and would be hugely damaging not just to Hong Kong's economy, but also to a lot of US businesses.

WAY FORWARD:

The US announcement is likely to infuriate Beijing and further strain relations between the two sides, following disputes over the coronavirus pandemic and a prolonged trade war.

-Khyati Khare

New Consulate General of India in Maldives

CONTEXT:

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister has approved the opening of the first Consulate General of India in Addu City, the Maldives in 2021.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

- The opening of a consulate general in Addu City will help augment India's diplomatic presence in the Maldives and make it commensurate with the existing and aspired level of engagement.
- Augmentation of India's diplomatic presence will provide market access for Indian companies and bolster Indian exports of goods and services.
- The opening of the consulate will also have a direct impact in augmenting domestic production and employment in line with the Indian government's goal of a self-reliant India or Atmanirbhar Bharat.

INDIA – MALDIVES RELATIONS:

- India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial links steeped in antiquity.
- Indians are the second largest expatriate community in the Maldives, with an approximate strength of 22,000. About 25% of doctors and teachers in the Maldives are Indians.
- Maldives occupies an important place in the ‘Neighbourhood First Policy’ and the ‘SAGAR’ (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision of the Government of India.
- Bilateral relations have also benefited from President Ibrahim Solih’s “India First” policy.
- India is currently implementing large infrastructure projects worth \$2 billion, such as ports, roads, bridges, water and sanitation, in the Maldives.
- The Maldives also received considerable assistance from India since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was the first country to receive made-in-India vaccines in January when New Delhi gifted 100,000 doses.
- This was preceded by health and humanitarian assistance provided in 2020, including nearly 12 tonnes of medicines, and a soft loan of \$250 million for budgetary support.

INDIA’S NEIGHBOURHOOD FIRST POLICY:

- “Neighbourhood First Policy” is part of India’s foreign policy that accords primacy to nations in India’s periphery.
- It also includes in its ambit the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) —a grouping that includes almost all countries of South Asia and some in South-East Asia.

-Khyati Khare

China’s Meeting with ASEAN: Warning or Challenge to QUAD

CONTEXT:

China is hosting a virtual meeting of ASEAN ministers on 7th and 8th June trying for financial cooperation and aligning COVID-19 restoration despite its criticism from Quad members.



KEY POINTS OF THE MEETING:

- This meet was a mark of the 30th anniversary of relations and similarly ‘focus on combating COVID-19, promoting economic recovery, [and] better dovetail[ing] strategic plans.’
- The discussion will also be about vaccine passports between China and ASEAN members and also about Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) with Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. China’s focus is possible on deepening financial relations after the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) commerce deal.
- China assumes that it is the US that has prompted the Philippines and Malaysia to raise disputes over the South China Sea dispute and it also forces ASEAN countries to confront China.
- China has termed Quad grouping as an ‘Asian NATO’ that has been criticized by group members.

QUAD:

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD, also known as the Quad) is an informal strategic alliance between the United States, Japan, Australia, and India that is maintained by talks between member countries. The diplomatic and military arrangement was widely viewed as a response to increased Chinese economic and military power, and the Chinese government responded to the Quadrilateral dialogue by issuing formal diplomatic protests to its members.

-Khyati Khare

Human Trafficking: Are We Revolving the Needles Anticlockwise

CONTEXT:

In the recent controversy over human trafficking and bonded labor in Punjab, the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India has defined the concept of bonded labor.

BACKGROUND OF THE RECENT CASE IN PUNJAB:

- Recently a dispute has arisen in the matter of human trafficking and bonded labor in Punjab.
- Ministry of Home Affairs released an advisory related to human trafficking in the border areas of Punjab.
- In the context of this advisory, a rumor was born that the Ministry of Home Affairs has held the farmers of Punjab responsible for human trafficking, although the Ministry of Home Affairs gives an explanation on this issue.
- In this dispute, the Supreme Court said that forced labor to pay less than the required salary is bonded labor.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING:

- Human trafficking is the process of trapping people through violence, deception, or coercion and exploiting them for financial or personal gain.
- Data has shown in trafficking, girls are compelled to sexually exploit. At the same time, individuals are forced to accept a risky work offer and work in construction sites, farms or factories. Women are recruited to work in private homes.
- This is a common problem in the border regions of India.

- Sexual exploitation, forced labor, promotion of begging, crime (such as increasing cannabis or dealing with drugs), domestic slavery, marriage or organ removal, etc. are the results of human trafficking.

DATA RELATED TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING:

- As estimated by the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) The most trafficked sections are women. 51% of trafficking victims in the world are women. 28% of children and 21% of men are victims of human trafficking.
- While smuggling comprises 63% of males and 37% of females. 72% of the women exploited in the sex industry are women. 43% of the victims are within national boundaries.

SOME CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS RELATED TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING:

- Article 21 of the Indian Constitution put forward the concept of a dignified life.
- Under Article 23 (1) of the Indian Constitution, human transport prohibits labor and trafficking in persons. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA) is the principal legislation for the prevention of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation.
- The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013 replaces Section 370 of the Indian Penal Code with Sections 370 and 370A IPC, which provides comprehensive measures to prevent human trafficking.
- Other specific laws related to trafficking in women and children are the Child Marriage Prohibition Act, 2006, Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act, 1976, Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, Violation of Human Organization Act, 1994.
- State governments have also enacted specific laws to deal with this issue. (Example Punjab Prevention of Human Smuggling Act, 2012)
- The Government of India is working on a plan to fight human trafficking through four 'P' models Prosecution (Prosecution), Protection (Prevention), Prevention (Prevention), and Partnership (Participation).

MEASURES TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT OF INDIA:

Administrative Measures:

1. **Anti Trafficking Cell (ATC):** An Anti-Trafficking Nodal Cell was set up in the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) of the Central Government (CS Division in 2006) to communicate various decisions and follow the action taken by the State Governments.
2. **Ministry of Home Affairs:** Ministry conducts coordination meetings with the Nodal Officers of designated anti-human trafficking units in all the States / Union Territories to solve the problem of human trafficking.

SOME STEPS OF HOME MINISTRY ARE AS FOLLOWS:-

- Ministry is working on effectiveness to combat the crime of human trafficking and increase accountability of law enforcement machinery, the Ministry of Home Affairs has issued a comprehensive advisory to all states / UTs.
- As part of a comprehensive scheme, the Ministry of Home Affairs has released funds for setting up anti-human trafficking units in 270 districts of the country in response to the law enforcement against trafficking of persons through training and capacity building in India.

3. Strengthening Capacity Building:

- To enhance the capacity building of law enforcement agencies and create awareness among them, police officers are trained at the regional level, state level, and district level civil officers.

4. Measures Taken by the Indian Judicial system:

- To train and sensitize the judicial officers of the trial court, human trafficking involves judicial colloquial hearings at the High Court level. The objective is to sensitize the judicial authorities about various issues related to human trafficking and ensure speedy court proceedings.
- So far, eleven judicial colloquies have been held in Chandigarh, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Odisha.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING:

- India has ratified the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) as the prevention, suppression, and punishment of trafficking, particularly in women and children.
- India has ratified the SAARC Convention on the Prevention and Combination of Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution. A regional task force was formed to implement the SAARC Conference.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on bilateral cooperation for the prevention of human trafficking in women and children between India and Bangladesh, rescue, recovery, repatriation, and reintegration of victims of trafficking was signed in June 2015.

WAY FORWARD:

- Experts observe that the main problem of human trafficking here is that in this human being is treated like a commodity and it causes human dignity to be violated. Its practice in a democratic country like India presents a negative image of India.
- To conquer the problem of Human Trafficking, it is necessary that the concept of socioeconomic and political justice described in the Preamble of India be ensured to all the citizens, to achieve the goal of fraternity.

-Khyati Khare

State Interventions, Lakshadweep's Future (Polity and Governance, GS-2, The Hindu)

CONTEXT:

Administration in the lakshadweep took the administrative decision for the reforms. On this point 4 legislations or laws/ rules have been enacted.

WHAT ARE THOSE LEGISLATION:

1. The Lakshadweep Animal Preservation Regulation, 2021;
2. The Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Regulation (PASA);
3. The Lakshadweep Panchayat Regulation, 2021 and
4. Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation 2021.

WHAT IS LAKSHADWEEP:

- India's smallest Union Territory
- It is an archipelago consisting of 36 islands
- Directly comes under the control of the Centre through an administrator.
- The Capital is Kavaratti
- Pitti island has a bird sanctuary.
- All are of coral origin (Atoll) and are surrounded by fringing reefs.

THERE ARE THREE MAIN GROUP OF ISLANDS:

1. Amindivi Islands
2. Laccadive Islands
3. Minicoy Island.

SOCIO-ECONOMY OF SOCIETY:

- The society is matriarchal.
- The religion is Islam.
- It also gives India a huge and exclusive economic zone with three distinct ecosystems: land, lagoon and ocean.
- Fishing is a primary occupation here.
- The language is Malayalam but in Minicoy it is Mahl.
- Vatteluttu was the earliest script used with its Sanskrit component.

ISSUE:

- Administrator's interference in the life of islander
 - ▶ Introduction of beef ban

THE GOONDA ACT:

- Already Very less crime rate
- Revoking of restrictions on alcohol for benefit of tourism is the one of issue.
- Mandatory quarantine if the island bound travellers
- Panchayat rules designed to restrict or decrease the population growth in a territory
 - ▶ According to NHFS-5 (2019-20), the total fertility rate is 1.4 (which is far behind the national average of 2.2)

WHAT CAN BE THE EFFECTS OF THESE RULES:

- 'One island, one resort' policy has kept pressure on reefs low due to a wide distribution of the tourist population.
- The business model is about giving coral reefs economic significance
 - ▶ Rich and healthy reefs are essential for private capital's
- Tourists will come because of the natural beauty and the sheer amount of marine life in inland

- Regulation is limited to ban on reef fishing and collection of corals, having no certainty to land acquisition that land will be acquitted by government
- Issue of Groundwater will be lost:-
 - ▶ Groundwater occurs as a thin lens floating over the seawater and is tapped by open wells replenished by the monsoon;
- New draft legislation seeks preventive detention for ‘antisocial activities’, and covers “cruel person” and “depredator of environment”.



WHY “NO” TO MALDIVES MODEL

- It will damage the socio economic fabric of island society
- Environmental destruction
- Grabbing of land by the cement mafias
- A new plan for Lakshadweep should be based on industry had to be people-centric and enrich the fragile coral ecology.
- Excessive centralisation

–Swarn Singh

A Necessary Reversion (The Hindu, Governance,GS-2)

CONTEXT:

Government’s COVID-19 policy went haywire when the central government decided for decentralisation of procurement of vaccines. Now because of the pressure from the media and the supreme court continuously asking about the centrality of procurement led to change in the heart of central government.

WHY GOVERNMENT HAS ADOPTED A DECENTRALISED POLICY:

- To decrease the fiscal deficit.
- To give authority to the state so that they can act according to circumstances.
- Health is a state subject.

EFFECTS OF CENTRALISED COVID POLICY:

- New and economic price discovery of COVID drug.
- One price for all states.
- Now procurement will be done by the central government there by a unified vaccine policy.
- State will have their administrative command

CHALLENGES FACED BY INDIA:

- Covid-19 is a airborne disease and also spread through contact with the surface.
- A huge and highly vulnerable Population
- Poor Public Hygiene despite the “Swachh Bharat (Clean India)” movements.
- As many people spit and sneeze openly on the roadside and on public walls
- The incubation period is not very accurate.
- Covid-19 usually follows what is known as a biphasic or dual-phase infection.
- Super Spreader Disease.
- Rumours on Social Media: people tend to rely on social media platforms where rumours spread faster than the virus.

WEAKNESSES IN INDIAN MODEL:

Institutional (Government and Governance) and Infrastructure:

- Lack of testing kits + relief materials like medical equipment, PPE, masks, and ventilators.
- Challenges in manufacturing testing kits and relief material indigenously and they are making india dependent on imports

COMMUNITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY:

- Lack of awareness among specific sections of the society , ignorance of society
- Psychological barrier relating to isolation
- Highly susceptible to diseases and poor immunity (India ranks 135 out of 195 on UNDP Health Index
- High incubation period ranging from 1 day to 14 days

ACADEMICIANS AND PRACTITIONERS

- Shortage of emergency healthcare infrastructure and professionals:
 - ▶ Doctor to patient ratio: 1:1445
 - ▶ Hospital beds to people ratio: 0.7:1000
 - ▶ Ventilators to population ratio 40000: 1.3bn

Innovation and Economy Drivers

Lack of flexible employee working arrangements

–Swarn Singh

Global Minimum Tax

CONTEXT:

At the G-7 meet held in London on 5th June 2021, a historic agreement was made to set the Global minimum tax rate.



KEY POINTS RELATED TO GLOBAL MINIMUM TAX:

- The main aim of the deal is to end the “30-year race to the bottom on corporate tax rates” as countries compete to attract multinationals.
- Major global economies are focusing on dispiriting multinationals from shifting profits and tax revenues to low-tax countries despite where their sales are made.
- Gradually, income from non-physical sources such as drug patents, software, and royalties on intellectual property has drifted to these jurisdictions, permitting companies to avoid paying higher taxes in their traditional home countries.
- The Biden administration hopes to reduce such tax base erosion without placing American firms at a financial disadvantage with its proposal for a minimum 15% tax rate and allowing competition on innovation, infrastructure, and other features.
- The ‘Global Intangible Low-Taxed Income,’ (GILTI), tax rate was only 10.5% – half the domestic corporate tax rate.
- The G7 talks feed into a much broader, existing effort. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has been synchronizing tax negotiations among 140 countries for years on rules for taxing cross-border digital services and holding back tax base erosion, including a global corporate minimum tax.
- The OECD and G20 countries plan to reach an agreement on both by mid-year, but the talks on a global corporate minimum are technically simpler and less disputable. If a broad consensus is reached, it will be extremely hard for any low-tax country to try and block an agreement.
- The minimum is expected to make up the bulk of the \$50 billion-\$80 billion in extra tax that the OECD estimates firms will end up paying globally under deals on both fronts.

MECHANISM OF GLOBAL MINIMUM WORK:

- The global minimum tax rate would apply to profits earned abroad.
- Governments could still set whatever local corporate tax rate they want, but if companies pay lower rates in a particular country, their home governments could “top-up” their taxes to the minimum rate, eradicating the benefit of shifting profits.
- The basic design of the minimum tax is not the concern but the rate is the most difficult issue.
- The discussion aims around the U.S. proposal of a minimum global corporation tax rate of 15% – above the level in countries such as Ireland but below the lowest G7 level.
- Any final agreement to this could pose a major consequence for low-tax countries and tax havens.
- The Irish economy has roared with the inflow of billions of dollars in investment from multinationals. Dublin, which has countered European Union efforts to harmonize its tax rules, is doubtful to accept a higher minimum rate without a fight.
- However, the battle for low-tax countries is less likely to be about ruining the overall talks and more about raising support for a minimum rate as close as possible to its 12.5% or looking for certain exemptions.

–Khyati Khare

Draft Rules for the Live Streaming of Court Proceedings

CONTEXT:

- The Supreme Court has released the Draft Model Rules for Live-Streaming and Recording of Court Proceedings recently.
- These Rules are part of the National Policy and Action Plan for the implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the judiciary.
- The Rules have to cover live-streaming and recording of proceedings in the High Courts, lower courts, and tribunals. Earlier, the Chief Justice of India (CJI) launched a tool of Artificial Intelligence (AI) based portal SUPACE in the judicial system aimed at assisting judges with legal research.



BACKGROUND:

- *The Supreme Court in Swapnil Tripathi v Supreme Court of India* (2018) had ruled in the favour of opening up the apex court through live-streaming.
- Apex court has held that the live streaming proceedings are part of the right to access justice under Article 21 (Protection of Life and Personal Liberty) of the Indian Constitution
- Gujarat High Court was the first high court that presented Livestream court proceedings followed by Karnataka high court.

DRAFT RULES:

- **Telecast of Proceedings:** All the proceedings in high courts can be telecast except the cases relating to matrimonial disputes, gender-based violence, those involving minors, and “cases, which in the opinion of the Bench, may provoke enmity and anger amongst societies likely to result in a breach of law and order”.
- **Deciding Authority:** The final decision as to whether or not to allow the Live-streaming of the Proceedings of cases, however, the decision of the Bench will be guided by the principle of an open and transparent established judicial process. The decision of the Bench shall not be justiciable.
- **Objections:** The rules allow for objections that can be filed against live streaming in specific cases at the stage of filing the case or at a later stage.
- **Record of Proceedings:** The draft rules have permitted for archiving of court proceedings for six months. The use of authorized recordings in their original form can be permitted by the court, inter-alia to disseminate news and for training, academic and educational purposes, etc.

RESTRICTIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- The Discussion amongst honorable judges notes made by them during hearings or communication between the advocate and their client will neither be telecast live nor archived.
- The rules have also prohibited recording or sharing the telecast on media platforms, including social media and messaging platforms, unless authorized by the court.
- Recordings can not be used for any commercial, promotional purposes, or advertising in any form.

ADVANTAGES:

- It can make the justice delivery system more affordable, transparent, speedy trials, and accountable by limiting the paper filings.
- It can be a time-saving process and hence can reduce the backlog of all pending cases and reduce the number of unscrupulous activities.

CONCERNS RAISED BY EXPERTS:

- There is a shortage of technical manpower in courts and a lack of awareness amongst litigants, advocates and their acceptance of the system change.
- It may result in a cybersecurity threat.
- The live streaming of the Courts can be susceptible to abuse. Thus, issues of privacy may arise in the country.
- Infrastructure, especially internet connectivity is a very big challenge in implementing the live proceedings of Courts.

WAY FORWARD:

- There is a need in our country for the deployment of a security system that provides secure access to case information for appropriate parties.
- Further, the government needs to develop the infrastructure that is necessary to support the e-court project.
- The Solutions that can address the challenges such as inordinate delays in disposal of cases in courts, facilitating access to the speedy resolution of commercial disputes by economic operators, making the justice system user friendly and affordable to all, and improving the quality of legal aid services in the country would be a welcoming step to drive the functioning of e-courts.

-Khyati Khare

BRICS and China

CONTEXT:

Recently the BRICS foreign minister meeting was held virtually.

THE OUTCOME OF THE MEETING:

At the end of the meeting, two statements is released

- First is on the “Meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs/International Relations”
- The second is on “BRICS Joint Statement on Strengthening and Reforming the Multilateral System”.



CHINA'S INSTANCE:

1. BRICS countries should pursue openness, inclusiveness, and cooperation, and reject “bloc politics and ideological confrontation”.
2. The BRICS countries are emerging markets and different from a few developed countries in their approach towards multilateralism and multilateral cooperation.
3. The BRICS countries emphasized the need to observe the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and are opposing exceptionalism and double standard.

IMPACT ON WORLD ORDER:

- These statements are revealing that China is totally in opposition to the formation of the QUAD grouping amongst the US, India, Australia, and Japan.
- China believes that this group is targeting or harming the interests of third parties.

BRICS:

1. BRICS is an acronym for the group of the countries of the world's leading emerging economies, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.
2. The British Economist Jim O'Neill coined the term BRIC to describe the four emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China in 2001 for the first time.
3. The grouping came into effect during the first meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers' in 2006.
4. South Africa joined BRIC in December 2010, after which the group adopted the acronym BRICS.
5. The Chairmanship of this forum is rotated annually among its members, in accordance with the acronym B-R-I-C-S.

Cooperation Mechanism-

COOPERATION AMONG MEMBERS IS ACHIEVED THROUGH:

1. Track I: Formal diplomatic engagement between the governments of states.
2. Track II: Engagement through government- institutions, e.g. state-owned enterprises and business councils.
3. Track III: Civil society and People-to-People interaction.

INDIA AND BRICS:

1. BRICS has emerged as the voice of developing countries, or the global south, and India is one of its important members.
2. With rising challenges on issues from WTO to climate change to terrorism, India believes BRICS has to protect the rights of the developing countries.
3. BRICS has put counter-terrorism, one of its prime goals this has been a success for India.

-Khyati Khare

Centre Announces Hike in MSP for Paddy, Pulses, Oilseeds (The Hindu, GS-3, Economy)

CONTEXT:

The Central government has hiked the minimum support price (MSP) for common paddy from last year's price of ₹1,868 to ₹1,940 a quintal for the coming kharif season.

WHAT IS MSP:

- ▶ The concept of MSP was first mooted in 1966-67 mainly to incentivise the farmers to use the dwarf 'miracle' wheat varieties during the green revolution.

- ▶ The Minimum Support Price or the MSP is commonly known as the way of protecting the farmers in India from the uncertainties of the markets as well as those of the natural things such as hailstorms, draught etc.
- ▶ A 'safety net' for the farmers, the MSP is the core of the agricultural revolution which made india a food surplus country.
- ▶ MSP is set by the cabinet committee of economic affairs.
- ▶ the cabinet committee of economic affairs is chaired by P.M.
- ▶ On the recommendation of The Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP), CCEA announces the MSP.
- ▶ CACP is an attached office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare
- Came in existence in January 1965.
- Crops include 14 crops of the kharif season, 6 rabi crops and 2 other commercial crops.
- There are 24 crops for which MSP is announced by the CCEA.



A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROCUREMENT PRICE AND MSP:

- It is the worth at which the govt. purchases the crop after harvesting is understood as procurement price.
- The main difference between the Procurement Price and MSP
 - ▶ MSP is said before sowing while PP is said after harvesting.
 - ▶ Since 1968-69, there's no practice of declaring separate Procurement Price and MSP. so now MSP is procurement price.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEMS WITHIN THE MSP:

- Lack of state machinery for procurement for all crops except wheat and rice.
- Crop production:
 - ▶ The crop production remains unviable.
 - ▶ The support prices that are being provided don't increase at par with increase in cost of production.
- MSPs have unequal access:
- The benefits don't reach all farmers and for all crops.
- The implementation is just too weak.
- Procurement related problems
 - ▶ Leaving only 1/3rd of cereals are for the open market.
- It prevents earning of profit by producers.
- This has created shortage of crops within the open market
- It has shifted consumption towards non-cereal foods
- lack of awareness about MSP
- Excess storage:
- Insufficient storage has resulted in huge piling of stocks
- Issues in WTO:
 - ▶ India's MSP scheme for several crops has been challenged by many countries within the WTO. for instance , Australia has complained of the MSP on wheat
- Ecological problem

VARIOUS COMMITTEES ON MSP:

- National Commission on Farmers: In 2004 under the chairmanship of Professor M.S. Swaminathan. suggestions to realize the goal of "faster and more inclusive growth". Recommended to repair minimum support prices(MSP) for crops at levels" atleast 50 per cent quite the weighted monetary value of production.

RAMESH CHANDRA COMMITTEE:

Examine the methodological issues in fixing MSP. The Commission suggested For calculation of cost family labour head should be considered as trained worker . The interest on capital should tend for the entire season. Post harvest costs, including cleaning, grading, drying , marketing and transportation should be included The committee recommended that the value 2 should be raised to 10% account for risk premium and managerial charges.

WAY FORWARD:

- The government must explore alternate models to spice up farmer's income.
- A counterpart of the MSP is that the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS), under which the government procures perishable commodities like vegetable items.
- Procurement system of the govt must be streamlined.
- To solve the matter of MSP, Both NITI and Economic Survey recommend Price Deficiency Payment (PDP).

–Swarn Singh

The Promise and Perils of Digital Justice Delivery (The Hindu, Indian Polity, Science and tech, GS-2,3)

CONTEXT:

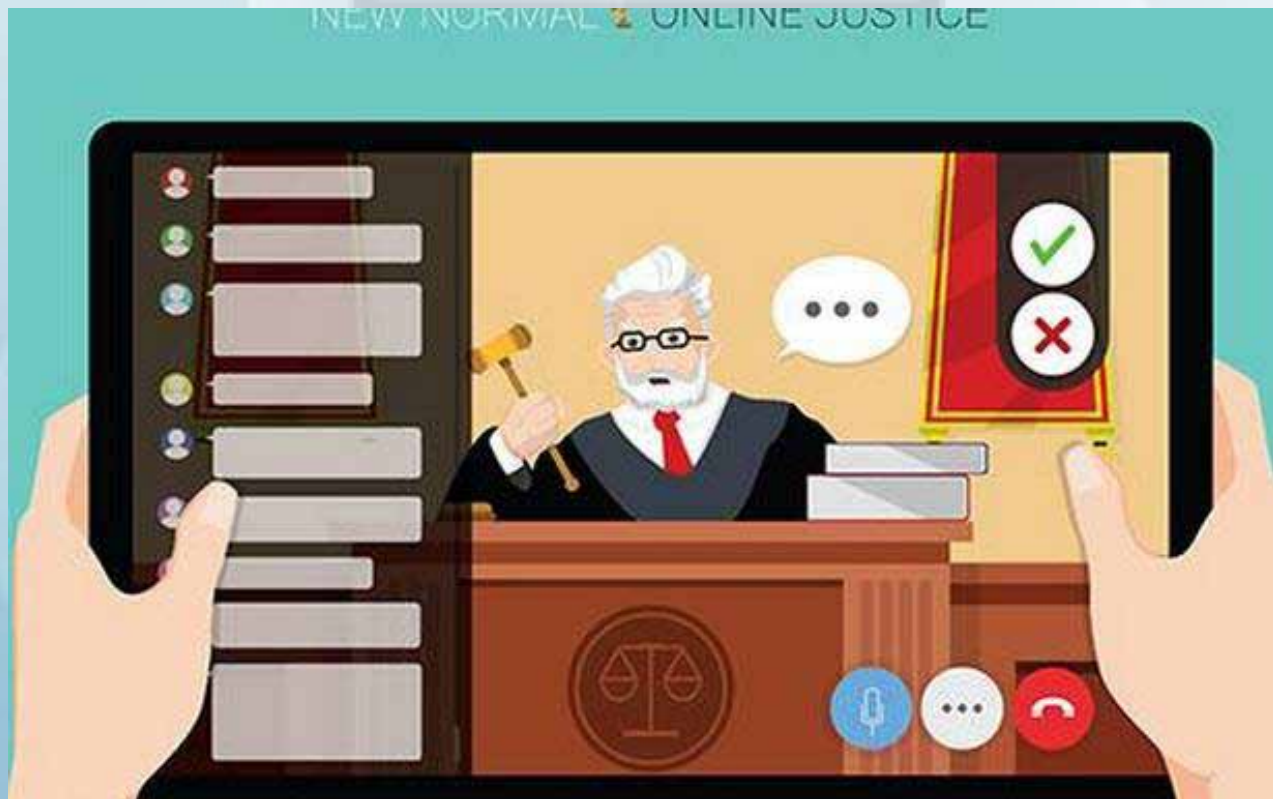
A e-court committee of the supreme court has suggested a total application of e-technology in the delivery of justice delivery. On this pretext, Phase -3 which is a 360 degree takeon on the overhauling of justice delivery is disputed.

ISSUES IN THE INDIAN JUDICIARY:

- Delay in the judgments, currently on around 3.7 cr cases are pending in the courts and these cases are as old as 30 years.
- Less number of judges.
- Lack of infrastructure.
- Lack of financial resources.
- Tussle between higher judiciary and executive.

HOW TECHNOLOGY WILL HELP IN IMPROVING THE FUNCTIONING OF JUDICIARY:

- Real time checking.
- Ease in accessibility and affordability
- It wil help in creating 360 profile of cases.
- A true e-tech integrated judiciary
- Quick justice



ISSUE IN THE 3RD PHASE OF E-COURT:

- When data from the courts and around the territory will be integrated then they may be a issue of right to privacy violation
- Issue of centralising the data
- Technology is not panacea
- R2P must be protected.
- Issue of data breach as indian systems are vulnerable.

WAY FORWARD:

- Data localisation rather centralisaion
- Technology is not the end rather means to achieve the end.

–Swarn Singh

Women Power in Indian Military

CONTEXT:

Recently two women officers have been selected to go up with helicopter pilot training for the very first time in the Army Aviation Corps. Both of them will join front-line flying duties after completion of their training in July 2022. Till now, in India women officers were assigned only ground duties in the Army Aviation Corps.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

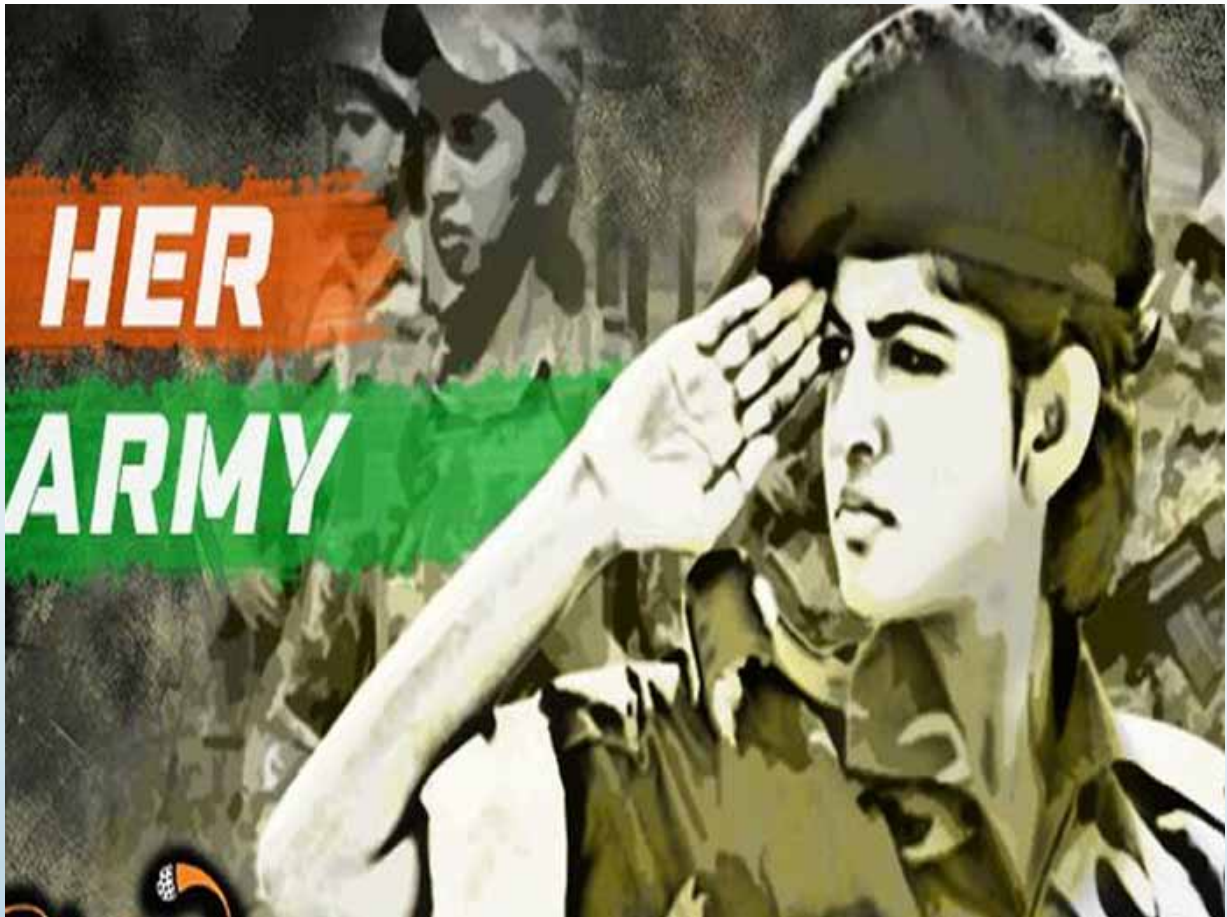
1. Deployment in the Armed Forces:

- ▶ The Army, Air Force, and Navy started the selection of women as short-service commission (SSC) officers in 1992.
- ▶ In history, it was the first time when women were allowed to join the military outside the medical stream.
- ▶ D-Day came for women in the military in 2015 when the Indian Air Force (IAF) decided to appoint them into the fighter stream.
- ▶ Last year the Apex court ordered the union government to grant permanent commission (PC) to female officers in the Army's non-combat support units on par with their male counterparts.
- ▶ The Apex court had rejected the government's stand of women officers' physiological limitations as being based on "sex stereotypes" and "gender discrimination against women".
- ▶ Women officers have been granted Permanent Commission in the Indian Army in all the ten branches where women are selected for SSC.
- ▶ Women are now qualified to occupy all the command appointments, at par with male officers, which would open avenues for further promotions to higher ranks for them.
- ▶ At the beginning of this year, the Indian Navy deployed four women officers on warships after a gap of almost 25 years.
- ▶ At present India's only aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya and fleet tanker INS Shakti are the warships that have been assigned their first women crews since the late 1990s.

- ▶ At the beginning of this year, the Army inducted the first batch of women into the Corps of Military Police, the first time that women joined the military in the non-officer cadre.
- ▶ However, It is to be noted that Women are still not allowed in combat arms like Infantry and Armored Corps.

2. Increment in Numbers:

- ▶ It has seen a growth i.e almost three-fold over the last six years in the numbers of women, with more avenues being opened to them at a steady pace.
- ▶ There are 9,118 women currently serving the army, navy, and air force in total. According to 2019 figures, women comprise just 3.8% of the world's army situations.



SIGNIFICANCE:

- Gender is not an obstacle: As long as an applicant is qualified for a position, one's gender should not be a ground for discrimination. In the era of the high technology battlefield, technical expertise and decision-making skills are becoming more valuable than simple brute strength.
- Military Readiness: Allowing a mixed-gender force can keep the military strong. The armed forces are often troubled by falling retention and recruitment rates. This can be solved by allowing women in the combat role.
- Effectiveness: The umbrella restriction for women candidates limits the capability of commanders in theater to pick the most capable person for the job.
- Tradition: Training will be required to facilitate the integration of women into combat forces. At present Cultures have changed and the masculine subculture can evolve too.

- Global Scenario: When women officially became eligible for combat positions in the American military in the year 2013, it was widely hailed as another step towards women's empowerment. In 2018, the UK military lifted a ban on women serving in close combat ground roles and cleared the way for them to serve in elite special forces.

WAY FORWARD:

- To keep Women out of command posts on the logic that the largely rank and file will have problems with women as commanding officers. Therefore, changes have to take place in the culture, norms, and values of not only the rank and file of the Army but also that of society and nation at large.
- The responsibility to usher these changes lies with the senior military, political leadership, executive, and society.

-Khyati Khare

The Rope of Federalism and An Unwanted Tug-of-war (GS-2, Polity, The Hindu)

CONTEXT:

Issue of alapan bandyopadhyay who was the chief secy of bengal government, here he attended the meeting of P.M. bit late and then abruptly ended it and went away with the C.M. he was served a notice under the section of 51b in disaster management act-2005.



FEDERAL FEATURES OF THE INDIA UNION

- Two governments i.e. Union Government and State governments
- Division of powers between the union and its constituents
 - ▶ The Seventh Schedule of the Constitution contains three lists such as the Union List, State List, and Concurrent List. here they have exclusive power in their sphere in the normal times.
- Supremacy of the Constitution
 - ▶ Basic structure of the Constitution is made indestructible by the Judiciary in kesavananda bharati case
- Partial rigidity of the Constitution means blend of flexibility and rigidity
- An Independent Judiciary
- Bicameralism or 2 houses of legislature.

BIG PICTURE ISSUES IN THE INDIAN FEDERALISM:

- Federalism is a system of government where power is divided between two governments i.e. central and state or regional.
- Regionalism
 - ▶ Example of recent bifurcation of andhra pradesh in to AP and telangana. Issue of gorkhaland.
- The refusal of the Central government to compensate for Goods and Services Tax (GST) shortfall on account of lower revenue which was a legal commitment.
- Issues in the recent Farm Acts
 - ▶ That allows farmers to sell their produce outside the APMC
 - ▶ Its aim is to promote inter-state trade but the Acts are and encroach upon the State list.
- Recent amendment in banking regulations by the central government by bringing cooperative banks under the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) supervision.

Supreme court intervention: State of West Bengal vs Union of India (1962)

- The Supreme Court held that the Indian Constitution is not federal.
- S R Bommai vs Union of India (1994),
 - ▶ Supreme Court held federalism a part of the basic structure of the Constitution.

MECHANISM TO SOLVE DISPUTE:

- ▶ The Supreme Court has used two mechanisms to solve the dispute between Centre and states over Seventh Schedule.
- Doctrine of Pith and Substance
- Doctrine of Colourable Legislation.
- The Doctrine of Pith and Substance
 - ▶ Constitutionality of legislation is upheld if it is largely covered by one list and touches upon the other list only incidentally.
 - ▶ Finding out the true nature of a statute.
- Pith denotes the 'essence of something' or the 'true nature', while substance states the most significant or essential part of something.
- The Doctrine of Colourable Legislation

- ▶ This is all about the competence of the legislature against an enacted law. This doctrine states the fact that what cannot be done directly, cannot also be done indirectly.

WAY FORWARD:

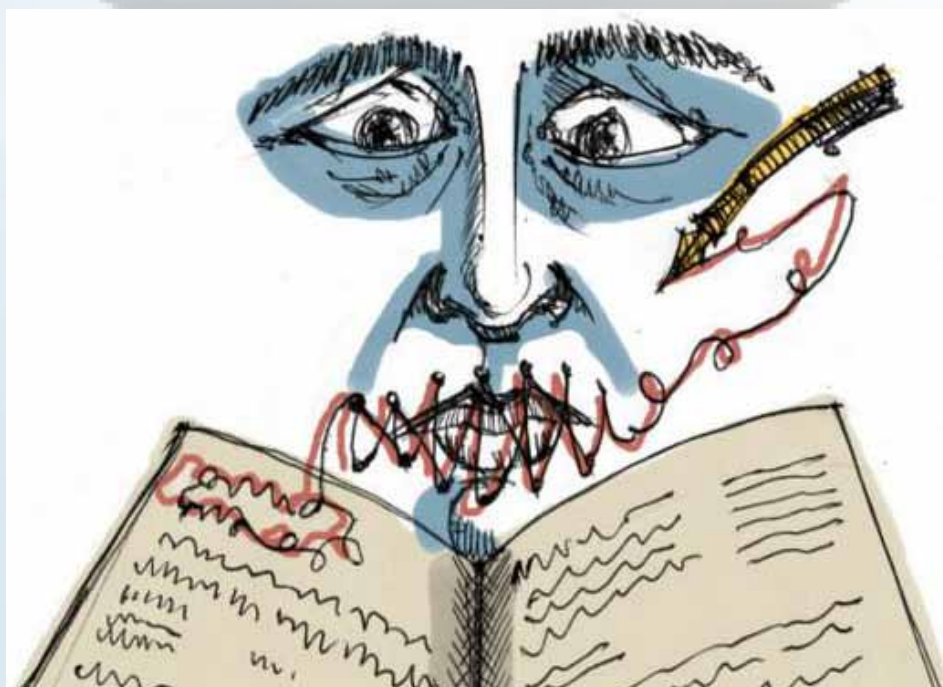
- A proper balance between the pillars of federalism, i.e. autonomy of states, national integration, centralisation, decentralisation, nationalisation, and regionalisation.
 - ▶ Extreme political centralisation or chaotic political decentralisation can both lead to the weakening of Indian federalism which ultimately hurt the interest of the common man.
- Reforms at the institutional and political level can deepen the roots of federalism in India. E.g.
 - ▶ The contentious role of the Governor in suppressing the states needs a review in the light of new challenges and opportunities
 - ▶ Proper utilisation of the institutional mechanism of the Inter-state Council under article 262 must be ensured to develop political goodwill between the Centre and the states on contentious policy issues.
 - ▶ The gradual widening of the fiscal capacity of the states has to be legally guaranteed without reducing the Centre's share.

–Swarn Singh

Should Retired Officials be Barred from Disclosing Information? (The Hindu, GS-2, Governance)

CONTEXT:

Recently the central government said that it prohibited retired officials of security and intelligence organisations from publishing anything about their work or organisation (Which may come under official security act) without prior clearance from the head of the organisation.



- Official Secrets Act 1923
- Which prohibits officials to publish, tell any one the information which he gets in the official capacity.

WHY THERE IS AN ISSUE OVER DISCLOSING THE INFORMATION:

- RTI which provides the people right to information.
- Government transparency is must in order of good governance
- Recent amendment in the whistleblower act also prohibits much information to be disclosed.
- There is no convention which allows the classified files to be declassified after some time as in the case of the USA. for example, declassify the Justice Mukherjee report on Subhas Chandra Bose and send it to the National Archives.
- A stable security policy is always hard to achieve since the boundaries of official secrecy cannot be clearly articulated.

WAY FORWARD:

- People must know what their representatives are doing when they become executive.
- A convention to be established that after some period of time files must be declassified.
- People's right to know must be secured.

–Swarn Singh

CHIME Telescope Yields Unprecedented Results (The Hindu, GS-3, Science and Technology)

CONTEXT:

Scientists with the Canadian Hydrogen Intensity Mapping Experiment (CHIME) Collaboration, who include researchers at the Punebased Tata Institute for Fundamental Research (TIFR) and therefore the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA).

WHAT IS FAST RADIO BURST (FRB):

- FRBs are oddly bright flashes of sunshine which is registering within the radio band of the spectrum (EM waves), which blaze for a couple of milliseconds before vanishing without a trace.
- FRB origins are still unknown and their appearance is very unpredictable.
- The first FRB was discovered in 2007

WHAT IS A MAGNETAR?:

- As per NASA, a magnetar may be a star , “the crushed, city-size remains of a star repeatedly more massive than our Sun.”
- The magnetic flux of such a star is extremely powerful, which may be over 10 trillion times stronger than a refrigerator magnet.

WHO ARE THE PARTICIPATING IN CHIME:

- CANAD + TIFR +NCRA



WHY ARE THEY SIGNIFICANT?:

- First noticed in 2018 by the Canadian observatory the waves have created ripples across the world for one reason — they arrive during a pattern.
 - This gave birth to theories that they might be from an alien civilization.
 - Initially, it had been believed that the collision of black holes or neutron stars triggers them.
- But the invention of repeating FRBs debunked the idea of colliding objects.

–Swarn Singh

Fast Tracking Freight

CONTEXT:

- Recently, NITI Aayog and Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) has released a Fast Tracking Freight report in India.
- A Roadmap for Clean and Cost-Effective Goods Transport, presenting key opportunities for India to reduce its logistics costs.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

- Increase in Freight Transport Demand: There is a growing demand for goods and services, therefore freight transport demand is expected to increase rapidly in the future.

- **India's Potential:** It has the ability to reduce its logistics cost by 4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and to achieve 10 gigatonnes of cumulative carbon dioxide emissions savings between 2020 and 2050
- **Accommodating More Urban Citizens:** As India's freight activity will grow five-fold by 2050 and about 400 million citizens are moving to cities, a whole system transformation can help uplift the freight sector.
- **To Make Freight Transportation Cost Effective:** Freight transportation is the prime backbone of India's growing economy. Efficient freight transport is also playing an essential role in analyzing the benefits of existing government initiatives such as Make in India etc.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- By increasing the rail networks in the country, promoting intermodal transport, improving warehousing, trucking practices, policy measures and pilot projects for clean technology adoption, and stricter fuel economy standards.
- When it is deployed at a large scale, the proposed solutions can help India in establishing itself as a leader in logistics innovation and efficiency in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

-Khyati Khare

Election Commissioner

CONTEXT:

Recently Former Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary Anup Chandra Pandey was appointed as the new Election Commissioner. It will restore the poll panel to its full strength as a three-member commission.

ABOUT ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA:

- The constitution of India under Article 324 provides for an Election Commission to be established for the superintendence, direction, and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls for the conduct of elections to parliament, state legislatures, and to the offices of President and the vice president.
- It came into place in accordance with the Constitution on 25th January 1950 (celebrated as national voters' day).



COMPOSITION OF ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA:

The constitution provides for the following provisions in relation to the composition of the election commission:

1. According to the constitution, the election commission shall consist of the Chief Election Commissioner and a number of other election commissioners, if any, as the president may think from time to time.
2. The appointment of the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners shall be made by the president of India.
3. The chief election commissioner shall act as the chairman of the election commission.
4. The president can appoint regional commissioners as he may consider necessary to assist the election commission after consultation with the election commission.
5. The conditions of service and tenure of office of the election commissioners and the regional commissioners shall be such as the President determines may by rule.

REMOVAL OF THE BODY:

- The Chief Election Commissioner of Election Commissioners can resign anytime to the president.
- They can also be removed before the expiry of their term in proven misbehavior.
- The Chief Election Commissioner can be removed from his office in the same manner or on the same grounds as a judge of the Supreme Court.

–Khyati Khare

Centre Unlikely to Allow Return of Four Kerala Women, Who Joined IS (The Hindu, GS-2, Internal Security, GS-3)

CONTEXT:

The four Indian women lodged in an Afghanistan prison are unlikely to be allowed to return to the country. They were accompanied by their husbands to join the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP).



WHAT IS ISIS:

- Started as an Al-Qaeda splinter group
- It started as the Jamaat al-Tawhid wal-Jihad
- It was established by the Jordanian Al-Zarqawi in 1999.
- Also called the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria or Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL)
- The ISIS aimed to create an Islamic state called a caliphate
- The group implements Sharia Law
- Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi and his group became directly involved ISIS

WHAT IS THEIR IDEOLOGY?:

- ISIL is a theocracy
- A proto-state
- A Salafi or Wahhabi group.
- They are follower of extremist interpretation of Islam
- These interpretations promote religious violence.
- These interpretations regard Muslims who do not agree with its interpretations as infidels or apostates.
- They are keen in restoration of the caliphate of early Islam with
 - ▶ All the political
 - ▶ Religious
 - ▶ Eschatological ramifications that this would imply.
 - ▶ A caliphate is an area containing an Islamic Leader known as a 'Caliph'.
 - ▶ This person is to be considered a religious successor to the Islamic prophet, Muhammad This leader will lead the entire Muslim community.

WHAT IS THEIR SOURCE OF REVENUE?:

- Tax and Proceeds from the occupation of territory
- Proceeds include control of banks, oil and gas reservoirs, taxation, extortion, and robbery.
- Kidnapping for ransom and abduction of people.
- Donations from Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia and Gulf states
- Charity is disguised as meant for humanitarian charity.
- Material and military equipment support provided by foreign fighters.
- Fundraising through modern communication networks such as Bitcoin and other crypto currency.

WHY WERE THEY SUCCESSFUL?:

- Unlike al Qaeda, ISIS has proven to be more brutal and more effective at controlling territory it has seized by making people under threat.
- they run a modern and an effective administration, In spite of their medieval ideology,
- Beneath the leaders are councils on finance, leadership, military matters, legal matters – including decisions on executions.

From the cabinet and the governors to the financial and legislative bodies, ISIS' bureaucratic hierarchy looks a lot like those of some of the Western countries.

–Swarn Singh

India's Election in UN Economic and Social Council

CONTEXT:

Recently India has been elected to the Economic and Social Council, which is one of the six main organs of the United Nations, for the 2022-24 term.



ABOUT THE BODY:

- The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is one of the integral parts of the United Nations system which is strengthening the three dimensions of sustainable development that is economic, social and environmental.
- It is a 54 member body.
- It is one of the central platforms for encouraging debate and innovative thinking, creating consensus on the action to be taken, and coordinating efforts to achieve internationally accepted goals.
- The body is also responsible for the follow-up to major UN conferences and summits.
- India got elected in the Asia-Pacific States category along with Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and Oman in the elections which was held on 7th June, 2021.
- From the African states, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Mauritius, Tunisia and the United Republic of Tanzania were elected while from the eastern European states, Croatia and the Czech Republic and from the Latin American and Caribbean states, Belize, Chile and Peru were elected.
- In the Economic and Social Council by-election, Greece, New Zealand and Denmark were elected for a term of office from January to December 2022 and Israel was elected for a term of office beginning January 1, 2022 and until December 31, 2023.
- India is currently serving the 2021-22 term as a non-permanent member of the powerful UN Security Council and will assume the Presidency of the 15-nation UN organ in August.
- The 54 ECOSOC members are elected for three-year terms by the General Assembly. Seats on the Council are allotted based on geographical representation with 14 allocated to African states, 11 to Asian states, six to eastern European states, 10 to Latin American and Caribbean states and 13 to western European and other states, according to the ECOSOC website.

–Khyati Khare

Refocused Vaccination Campaigns are Possible (The Hindu, GS-2, Governance)

CONTEXT:

There are many issues regarding the vaccination programme. Here the government couldn't prioritise the vaccination programme.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES IN VACCINATION:

- Less production, More demand.
- Transition from a lack of vaccine supply to one of greater availability.
- Prioritise people like the two octogenarians in Mumbai
- Local governments and municipalities should also prioritise vaccines for the historically marginalised

EXAMPLES OF STATE RUN VACCINATION PROGRAMME, CHHATTISGARH:

- The plan prioritised ration card holders specifically because they are poor and marginalised
- They also often lack access to mobile phones and the Internet,
- We have to make prioritisation of the marginalised when vaccine supply is limited

- According to WHO prioritising sociodemographic groups at significantly higher risk of severe disease or death should be the way forward.
- remove barriers to vaccination to minimise preventable disease and deaths.



CASE OF INDIA:

- India is depended and will continues to depend on the AstraZeneca vaccine, Why?
 - ▶ It was stable in a refrigerator for longer periods than mRNA vaccines
- Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and Auxiliary NurseMidwives (ANMs) have vast experience and expertise with campaign style must be exploited.
- Urban slums and neighbourhoods have poor access to and low levels of trust in the healthcare system
- Local governments are considering providing vaccines to older adults at door to door.
- We have to ensure that those who work for daily wages are able to get the vaccine
 - ▶ Vaccine distribution should be prioritised to districts of permanent domicile.
- Local planning will need to go handinhand with a refocus on equity and justice.
- Vaccines would be procured + equitably distributed to countries based on need through the COVAX facility which is an international alliance to fight COVID-19

SUPPLY CHAIN GAP:

- ▶ A Huge gap to vaccinate all its adult population.
- ▶ In India about 13% of its population has received a single jab and about 2% fully vaccinated and out of this most of are health professionals.
- ▶ Many countries have already vaccinated more than half their adult population for example Bhutan if single dose is been taken into account.
- Unequal Procurement Process:
- Digital Divide among rural and urban, among rich and poor, among middle class and lower class etc.

–Swarn Singh

Monsoon Malady

(The Hindu, GS-1, Geography, Issues in Urbanisation)

CONTEXT:

The monsoon over the greater Mumbai region has come to be characterised by the unsettling annual spectacle of collapsing buildings. An unsafe multi-storeyed building in a core area of the city has collapsed onto another. This incident led to the death of more than 11 people.



WHAT IS MONSOON:

- Derived from the Arabic word mausin or from the Malayan word monsin meaning 'season'
 - ▶ Monsoons are seasonal reversal winds
- These winds reverse their direction with the change of season.
- Indian Monsoons are Convection cells on a very large scale which are created due to heating and cooling of one or more area.
- India receives rainfall from south-west monsoon winds in summer and north-east monsoon winds in winter.

SOUTH-WEST MONSOONS

- They are formed due to an intense low pressure system formed over the Tibetan plateau.
- South-west monsoons bring intense rainfall to most of the regions in India which is the forerunner of agriculture in india.
- North-east monsoons bring rainfall to the mainly south-eastern coast of India.

NORTH-EAST MONSOONS:

- They are associated with high pressure cells over Tibetan and Siberian plateaus.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR SOUTH-WEST MONSOON:

- Intense heating of Tibetan plateau during summer months.
- Permanent high pressure cell in the South Indian Ocean (east to north-east of Madagascar in summer).
- Subtropical Jet Stream (STJ).
- Tropical Easterly Jet (African Easterly Jet).
- Inter Tropical Convergence Zone.
- Strengths of Low pressure over Tibet and high pressure over southern Indian Ocean.
- Somali Jet (Findlater Jet).
- Somali Current (Findlater Current).
- Indian Ocean branch of Walker Cell.
- Indian Ocean Dipole.

–Swarn Singh

Global Liveability Index

CONTEXT:

In the Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) Global Liveability Index of 140 cities around the world Auckland (New Zealand) has topped the list.



HIGHLIGHTS

1. Global Liveability Index: The index takes into account more than 30 qualitative and quantitative parameters spanning five broad categories: stability (25%), healthcare (20%), culture and environment

(25%), education (10%), and infrastructure (20%). Due to the covid , the EIU has added new indicators such as stress on health-care resources as well as restrictions around local sporting events, theatres, music concerts, restaurants and schools etc .Each factor in the city is rated on the measures such as acceptable, tolerable, uncomfortable, undesirable or intolerable.

2. General Scenario: Covid pandemic has caused liveability to decline because cities are experiencing lockdowns and significant strains on their healthcare system. This led to a high level of change in the rankings, with many of the cities that were previously ranked as the most liveable tumbling.
3. Austria's Vienna, number one in both 2018 and 2019, has slipped out of the top 10 after being heavily affected by Covid-19, and now ranks 12.
4. Auckland is at the top of the ranking owing to its successful approach in containing the Covid-19 pandemic, which has allowed its society to remain open and the city to score strongly on a number of metrics including education, culture and environment.
5. Damascus is the world's least liveable city because the effects of the civil war in Syria continue to take their toll.
6. Apart from cities in New Zealand, Australia and Japan, other cities in the Asia-Pacific region such as Taipei (Taiwan) (33rd) and Singapore (34th) are also performing well.

-Khyati Khare

