PLUTUS IAS

Monthly Current Affairs December-January 2023-24

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SC on Article 370

Article 370

Suspension of MPs

GPAI Summit

Key Highlights:

- NCRB 2022 Report
- SC upholds abrogation of Article 370
- Delimitation and Reservation Bills of J&K
- Largest Suspension of MPs from Parliament
- Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI)

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Foreword

Dear Aspirants,

This magazine by the Plutus IAS team is designed in such a fashion that it holistically covers all the relevant and important topics for the Civil Services Exam to make aspirants exam-ready. Plutus IAS Current Affairs Magazine is a secondary source of information; the newspaper will remain the primary source for the preparation of Current Affairs.

Now, Current Affairs are no longer merely current; they are Contemporary Affairs. Questions asked in both Prelims as well as the Mains assess the conceptual clarity of an aspirant. This magazine is prepared with the aim of helping you understand the interlinkages of both Static and Dynamic news events and internalize the concepts required to crack this examination.

The Plutus IAS team wishes you all the best. Prepare for the UPSC Civil Services Examination with a calm, composed, or serene mind and some patience to crack this examination in one go.

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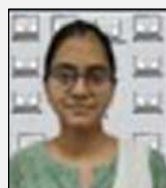
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POLITY & GOVERNANCE

LARGEST SUSPENSION OF MPS FROM LOK SABHA AND RAJYA SABHA

Why in the News?

Recently, 146 MPs from both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha belonging to the Opposition have been suspended from Parliamentary sessions due to their role in causing disruptions.

What are the rules on the suspension of MPs?

- The fundamental rule dictates that the responsibility and duty to uphold order and ensure the smooth functioning of the House lie with the Presiding Officers i.e the **Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha**.

- The Presiding Officers — the Speaker of Lok Sabha and Chairman of Rajya Sabha plays the major role in suspensions of Members of Parliament (MPs).

- In the **Lok Sabha**, the Speaker's actions are guided by Rules 373, 374, and 374A of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business, while in the **Rajya Sabha**, the Chairman acts as per Rules 255 and 256.

- **Rule 373 and Rule 255**: These rules authorize the presiding officers to instruct an MP to leave the House in the event of any disruptive behavior.

- **Rule 374 and Rule 256**: Should an MP persistently disrupt the proceedings, the presiding officer has the authority to "name" the legislator. Subsequently, the House can propose a mo-

tion to suspend the MP for the remainder of the session.

- **Rule 374A**: It was introduced in the Lok Sabha's Rule Book in 2001, this rule grants the Speaker the ability to address severe and disorderly behavior. Under this provision, an MP identified by the Speaker is automatically suspended for either five days or the duration of the session's remaining part. This rule removes the need for the House to pass a motion for suspension. This provision has not been incorporated by Rajya Sabha in its procedures.

How long can MPs be suspended for and the implications of suspension?

MPs can be suspended for the remaining part of the session only.

Implications

- Suspended members cannot enter the chamber or attend the meetings of the committees.

- Suspended members are not eligible to give notice for discussion or submission.

- Members lose the right to get a reply to his questions.

- They will not be eligible to give notice for discussion or submission.

However, the House at any point of time can reinstate a suspended member by passing a motion.

Can courts intervene in a matter of suspension of MPs?

Article 122 of the Constitution indicates that parliamentary proceedings cannot be questioned before a court. However, in some cases, courts have intervened in the procedural functioning of legislatures like Maharashtra Legislative Assembly passed a resolution in its 2021 Monsoon Session suspending 12 BJP MLAs for a year. Thereafter, the matter came before the Supreme Court, which held that the resolution was ineffective in law beyond the remainder of the Monsoon Session.

Motivation behind Suspension of MPs

- **Disorderly Conduct**: Suspensions may be imposed in response to disorderly conduct, disruptions, or unruly behavior during parliamentary sessions. Such actions can impede the smooth functioning of the legislature and compromise the decorum essential for productive debates.

- **Breach of Parliamentary Rules**: MPs may face suspension if they violate specific parliamentary rules, procedures, or ethical guidelines. This could include actions that contravene the established code of conduct for parliamentarians.

- **Unparliamentary Language**: The use of offensive or unparliamentary language is a common reason for suspension. Utterances that are disrespectful, derogatory, or inflammatory may lead to disciplinary measures, including suspension, to maintain the dignity of parliamentary proceedings.

- **Physical Altercations:** Instances of physical altercations or aggressive behavior within the parliamentary premises may result in the suspension of involved MPs. Such incidents are considered serious breaches of conduct and can lead to immediate disciplinary actions.

- **Defiance of Speaker's Authority:** Refusing to comply with the Speaker's directives, challenging the authority of the presiding officer, or engaging in acts of disobedience can be grounds for suspension. This is crucial for maintaining order and ensuring the smooth functioning of parliamentary sessions.

- **Ethical Violations:** Actions that are ethically questionable, such as conflicts of interest, corruption, or other ethical violations, may prompt disciplinary action, including suspension, to uphold the integrity of parliamentary proceedings.

- **Repetitive Offenses:** MPs who repeatedly engage in disruptive behavior or violate parliamentary norms may face suspension as a means of deterring such actions and maintaining discipline within the legislative body.

Possible Implication of the Suspension:

The suspension of Members of Parliament (MPs) in Parliament carries several implications, affecting both the individuals involved and the functioning of the parliamentary system. Here are some key implications:

- **Denial of Participation:** Suspended MPs lose their right to participate in the proceedings of the house during the period of suspension. This includes attending sessions, voting on bills, and engaging in debates. The denial of participation is a significant consequence, as it hinders the suspended members from fulfilling their legislative responsibilities.

- **Impact on Representation:** The suspension of MPs may impact the effective representation of the constituencies they represent. Constituents may be deprived of their elected representatives' contributions and voice in parliamentary activities during the period of suspension.

- **Disciplinary Measure:** Suspension is often a disciplinary measure taken by the parliamentary authorities in response to actions deemed inappropriate or a breach of parliamentary rules. It serves as a means of maintaining order, decorum, and the integrity of parliamentary proceedings.

- **Political Ramifications:** Suspensions can have political ramifications, affecting party dynamics and inter-party relationships. The suspension of MPs may lead to debates on the fairness of the disciplinary action and influence public perceptions of the political parties involved.

- **Legal Challenges:** Suspended MPs may choose to challenge their suspension through legal means, arguing that the disciplinary action is unjust or violates parliamentary norms. Legal challenges can lead to further scrutiny of the grounds for suspension and the procedures followed.

- **Preservation of Parliamentary Decorum:** The suspension of MPs is intended to uphold the dignity and decorum of parliamentary proceedings. It serves as a deterrent against disruptive behavior and actions that could undermine the functioning of the legislature.

- **Duration and Review:** Suspensions are typically of a specific duration, and the parliamentary rules may allow for a review of the suspension. This review process provides an opportunity for suspended MPs to appeal and seek a reconsideration of the disciplinary action.

Challenges and Criticisms

The suspension of MPs in India has been met with criticism and scrutiny which are as follows:

- **Potential for Abuse:** Critics argue that the power to suspend MPs could be misused for political expediency, stifling dissent and opposition

within the legislative framework.

- **Need for Transparency:** There is a perceived lack of transparency in the criteria and process for suspending MPs, leading to allegations of arbitrary and unfair disciplinary actions.

- **Legal Ambiguities:** The legal framework governing MP suspensions lacks clarity in certain aspects, necessitating reforms to ensure consistency, fairness, and adherence to constitutional principles.

The Way Forward

Addressing the challenges associated with the suspension of MPs in India requires a multi-faceted approach:

- **Reform of Parliamentary Rules:** There is a need to revisit and reform the rules governing MP suspensions to ensure transparency, accountability, and adherence to democratic norms.

- **Enhanced Dialogue:** Promoting constructive dialogue among parliamentary members to foster mutual respect and understanding, thereby reducing the need for disciplinary actions.

- **Public Awareness and Engagement:** Raising public awareness about the importance of parliamentary decorum and the role of MPs in upholding democratic values, fostering a culture of responsible governance.

Conclusion

The suspension of MPs in India is a complex issue that intersects with various aspects of parliamentary democracy, including representation, accountability, and governance. While it serves as a mechanism for maintaining order and discipline within the legislative framework, it also raises significant questions and challenges that warrant critical examination. As India continues to strengthen its democratic institutions, addressing the complexities surrounding MP suspensions becomes essential to ensure the effective and equitable functioning of parliamentary democracy.

SUPREME COURT UP-HOLDS ABROGATION OF ARTICLE 370

Why in the News?

A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court has upheld the Abrogation of Article 370

Background:

Following the abrogation of Article 370, several petitions were submitted challenging this decision. On August 28, 2019, the Supreme Court acknowledged these petitions and decided to hear them. To address the legal challenges surrounding the abrogation of Article 370 and the subsequent bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories, the Supreme Court formed a five-judge bench.

The Supreme Court recently delivered its verdict on the Union government's 2019 move to amend Article 370 of the Constitution, which resulted in the abrogation of the special status granted to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. The court's decision validated the Constitutional order that revoked Article 370.

Key Highlights of the Judgement:

- **Unique Status of Jammu and Kashmir:**

  ○ The Supreme Court asserted that Jammu and Kashmir did not retain any element of sovereignty after its accession to India in 1947.

  ○ Despite an initial proclamation by Maharaja Hari Singh to retain sovereignty, his successor, Karan Singh, issued a proclamation stating that the Indian Constitution would prevail over all other laws in the state.

  ○ A proclamation on November 25, 1949, by Yuvraj Karan Singh, repealed the Government of India Act, 1935, and affirmed the applicability of the Indian Constitution to Jammu and Kashmir.

  ○ The court emphasized that Jammu and Kash-

mir has always been an integral part of India.

- **Statehood Restoration:**

  ○ The court deemed the reorganization of the erstwhile state into Union Territories in 2019 as a temporary measure.

  ○ It directed the Centre to work towards the restoration of statehood and the conduct of Legislative Assembly elections.

- **Article 370 – Temporary Provision:**

  ○ The Supreme Court clarified that Article 370 is a temporary, transitional provision.

  ○ It highlighted that the temporary provision served a specific purpose during the war-like situation in the state in 1947.

- **Abrogation of Article 370:**

  ○ The court upheld both presidential proclamations of August 2019, which effectively abrogated Article 370.

  ○ It referred to the 1994 ruling in 'SR Bommai v Union of India,' stating that the President's orders were not prima facie malafide or an extraneous exercise of power during President's rule.

- **Truth and Reconciliation Commission:**

  ○ Justice Sanjay Kaul recommended the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate alleged human rights violations by both state and non-state actors in Jammu and Kashmir.

  ○ The commission would serve as an official mechanism to acknowledge and address past wrongdoings for the resolution of historical conflicts.

Article 370: A Chronological Overview

- Article 370, residing in Part XXI of the Constitution, pertains to 'Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions.' It grants special autonomy to the region of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) within the Indian constitutional framework.

Timeline:

- **Constitutional Provision:**

  - Article 370 exempts J&K from the applicability of most parts of the Indian Constitution.

  - It allows the state to draft its own Constitution and places restrictions on Parliament's legislative powers.

- **Abrogation of Article 370:**

  - On August 5, 2019, the Indian government took a historic step by revoking nearly all of Article 370.

  - The President issued The Constitution (Application to Jammu And Kashmir) Order, 2019, replacing 'Constituent Assembly' with 'Legislative Assembly [of Jammu & Kashmir]' in Article 370(3).

  - While technically amending the interpretation clause Article 367, the order utilized Article 370(1) for this purpose.

  - A Statutory Resolution in the Rajya Sabha abrogated most of Article 370, made possible during President's rule in the state.

  - On August 6, 2019, Parliament passed the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, 2019, leading to the bifurcation of the state into two Union Territories: Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

  - Jammu & Kashmir was provided with a legislative assembly.

SUPREME COURT'S INQUIRY INTO ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

Why in the News?

Recently, a Constitution bench consisting of five judges in the Supreme Court commenced the hearing of petitions that challenge Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955. This provision was incorporated

into the statute subsequent to the endorsement of the Assam Accord.

Background:

A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court recently addressed concerns about the impact of an "unlimited influx" of illegal migrants from Bangladesh on demographics and resources allocated for Indian citizens. The court, during the hearing of related petitions, questioned the applicability of Section 6A, granting Indian citizenship benefits to illegal migrants, solely in Assam and not in West Bengal, which shares a larger portion of the Bangladesh border.

Supreme Court's Directives:

- The court directed the Home Secretary to submit an affidavit by May 11, 2023, detailing the estimated inflow of illegal migrants into India, especially in Assam, post-March 25, 1971.

- The affidavit is expected to outline the measures taken by the Centre to address illegal immigration and provide specifics on the extent and timelines for border-fencing.

- The government is instructed to furnish details regarding illegal immigration along the West Bengal border after March 25, 1971.

Central Government's Defense:

- The central government refutes claims of unfairly burdening Assam with illegal migrants, contending that different states can be classified differently based on historical and geographical grounds.

- Arguing against allegations of arbitrariness, the Centre asserts that Article 14's guarantee against non-arbitrariness does not mandate universal application of laws, emphasizing the need for differentiation based on dissimilarity or the nature of individuals concerned.

Assam Accord:

The Assam Accord emerged as a Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) following the Assam Movement (1979–1985), a significant uprising in the state. The movement aimed to address the issue of illegal im-

migrants, primarily Bangladeshi, and sought the detection, disenfranchisement, and deportation of such individuals.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN ASSAM
RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION

	2001 (cr.)	2011 (cr.)
Total	2.7	3.1
Hindu	1.7	1.9
Muslim	0.8	1.1

%Growth Rate

29.59%   10.89%   17.07%

LANGUAGE COMPOSITION | Native Speaker
1991   2011

	Assamese speakers	Bengali speakers
1991	57.8%	28.9%
2011	48.3%	21.6%
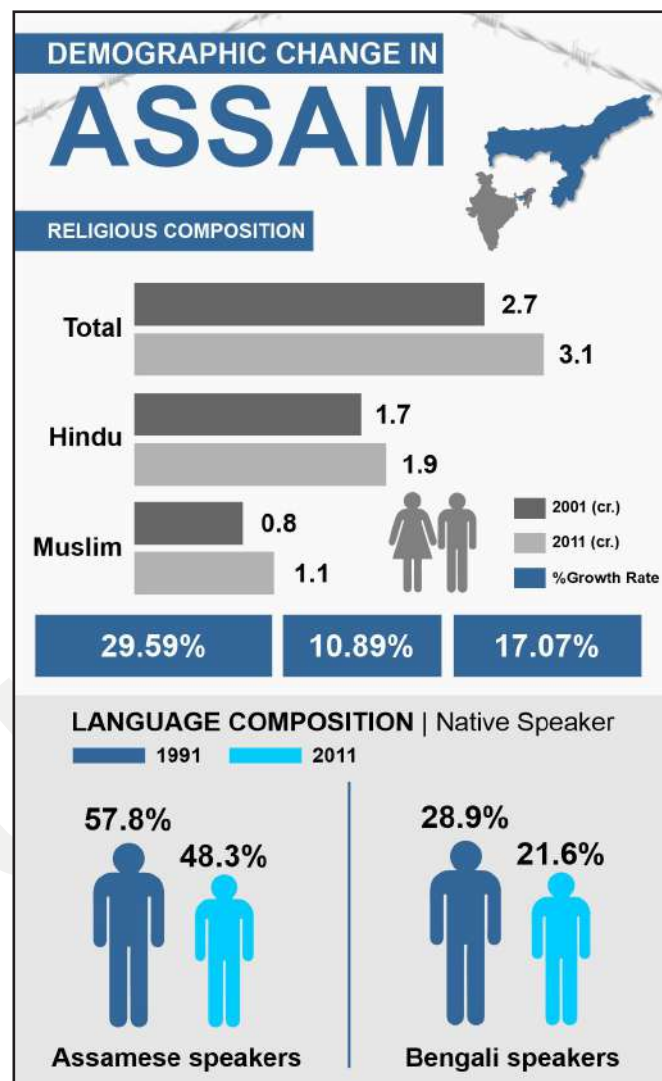
Terms of the Assam Accord:

Border Security Measures:

- The Accord mandated the erection of physical barriers, like walls and barbed wire fencing, along the Bangladesh-India border.

- Security forces were deployed for land and river patrols to prevent infiltration.

Classification of Immigrants:

- Immigrants who entered Assam before January 1, 1966, were considered Indian citizens and allowed to vote.

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- Those entering between January 1, 1966, and March 24, 1971, were granted Indian citizenship but prohibited from voting for the first 10 years.

- Immigrants arriving on or after March 25, 1971, were classified as illegal and subjected to expulsion.

Political Impact:

- The Accord led to the conclusion of the Assam Movement and enabled leaders of the agitation to form a political party and establish a government in Assam.

Introduction of Section 6A:

- Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955, was introduced to implement the provisions of the Assam Accord.

Challenges To Section 6A:

- **Supreme Court Proceedings:** The Supreme Court is currently hearing petitions challenging the constitutional validity of Section 6A.

- **Concerns Raised by Indigenous Groups:** Indigenous Assamese groups argue that Section 6A acts as a lure for illegal migrants to settle in Assam, gaining Indian citizenship.

- **Alleged Violation of Rights:** Petitioners claim that the special provision is arbitrary, singles out Assam, violates Article 14, and contributes to an influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh.

- **Proposed Cut-off Date:** Petitioners, led by the Assam Sanmilita Mahasangha (ASM), advocate for establishing 1951 as the cut-off date for inclusion in the National Register of Citizens instead of 1971.

- **Discriminatory Nature:** The core argument is that Section 6A, with its different cut-off date for Indian citizenship in Assam, is discriminatory, arbitrary, and violates the rights of indigenous Assamese people.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS BILL

Why in the News?

Recently, the new telecom bill was introduced in Lok Sabha

Background:

The Telecommunications Bill, 2023, is introduced as a strategic response to the evolving landscape of the telecommunications sector, recognizing its pivotal role as a key driver of economic and social development and the gateway to digital services. The legislation is formulated to address the dual imperatives of ensuring the security of the nation's telecommunications networks and fostering a regulatory environment conducive to digitally inclusive growth.

Key Highlights of the Telecommunications Bill, 2023:

- **Repeal of Existing Laws:**

  o The bill repeals three foundational legislations: the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885; the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933; and the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950.

  o Concurrent amendments to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Act, 1997.

- **Authorization for Telecom-related Activities:**

  o Central government authorization mandated for various activities, including providing telecommunication services, establishing, operating, maintaining, or expanding telecommunications networks, and possessing radio equipment.

  o Existing licenses retain validity, either for the period of their grant or five years, if the period is unspecified.

- **Assignment of Spectrum:**

  o Spectrum allocation through auction, with

exceptions for specified purposes such as national security, disaster management, weather forecasting, transport, satellite services, and public broadcasting.

○ Empowerment of the central government to re-purpose or re-assign any frequency range.

● **Powers of Interception and Search:**

○ Authorization for the interception, monitoring, or blocking of messages on specified grounds, including public safety, public emergency, security of the state, prevention of incitement of offenses, or maintaining public order.

● **Extraordinary Government Powers:**

○ Provision for temporary possession of telecom infrastructure, network, or services during public emergencies.

○ Suspension of telecom services under similar circumstances.

○ Authorized searches by government-appointed officers for unauthorised telecom network or equipment possession.

● **Powers to Specify Standards:**

○ Central government empowered to prescribe standards and assessments for telecom equipment, infrastructure, networks, and services.

● **Right of Way:**

○ Facility providers entitled to seek a right of way over public or private property for the establishment of telecom infrastructure.

○ Right of way to be provided on a non-discriminatory and non-exclusive basis to the extent possible.

● **Protection of Users:**

○ Central government's authority to implement measures protecting users, including obtaining prior consent for specified messages, creation of "Do Not Disturb" regis-

ters, and mechanisms for reporting malware or specified messages.

● **Appointments to TRAI:**

○ Amendments to the TRAI Act, allowing individuals with at least 30 years of professional experience to serve as the chairperson and those with at least 25 years of professional experience to serve as members.

● **Digital Bharat Nidhi:**

○ Retention of the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) under the 1885 Act, renamed as Digital Bharat Nidhi.

○ Expanded scope to allow fund utilization for research and development (R&D).

● **Adjudication Process:**

○ Appointment of an adjudicating officer by the central government for inquiries and orders against civil offenses.

○ Adjudicating officer must hold a rank of joint secretary or above.

○ Appeals against orders to be made before the Designated Appeals Committee within 30 days.

○ Committee members to be officers of the rank of at least Additional Secretary.

○ Further appeals to TDSAT (Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal) within 30 days for breaches of terms and conditions.

● **Offences and Penalties:**

○ Specification of various criminal and civil offenses with corresponding penalties.

○ Providing telecom services without authorization, unauthorized access to telecom network or data, and breach of terms and conditions are subject to imprisonment, fines, or both.

The Telecommunications Bill, 2023, aims to establish a contemporary legal framework, ensuring the

security and regulation of telecommunications networks while propelling the nation towards a digital future.

WHAT'S IN THE BILL

- **It seeks to allow the central government** to take over any telecom service or network in case of public emergency
- **Defines telecommunications services** as "any service for telecommunications", doesn't specify internet— based calling or messaging
- **Seeks to allow the central government to intercept** any message between individuals
- **Bats for allowing a senior private sector executive** as TRAI chairperson
- **Calls for three—year jail or ₹2 crore fine** or both for illegal phone
- **Stays silent on taking back spectrum** from insolvent telcos

INSURGENCY IN MANIPUR

Why in the News?

Union Home Minister Amit Shah declared the formalization of a peace accord with the Meitei separatist organization, the United National Liberation Front (UNLF), in Manipur. Additionally, he conveyed optimism that this development would serve as a catalyst, inspiring other valley-based insurgent groups (VBIGs) to engage in the peacebuilding process.

Historical Background of Manipur:

- Post the Anglo-Manipur War of 1891, the King-

dom of Manipur was annexed by Britain.

- Manipur became a British protectorate and later joined India in October 1949, achieving separate statehood in 1972.

Rise of Insurgency:

- Manipur's integration into India resulted in the emergence of insurgent organizations. These groups advocated for an independent state within Manipur's borders, rejecting the merger with India as involuntary.

- Insurgency issues surfaced in the late 1960s and 1970s, with the founding of the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) in November 1964.

Reasons For Insurgency:

- **Merger with India:**

  ○ Resentment among Meiteis, the majority community, due to declining influence post-Independence.

  ○ Meitei insurgency initiated in the 1960s against the merger with the Indian Union.

- **Ethnic Conflict:**

  ○ Diverse ethnic population with Meiteis in the Valley, Nagas in surrounding hills, and Kukis interspersed.

  ○ Overlapping territorial interests and conflicts between Kukis and Nagas, as well as Nagas and Meiteis.

  ○ Demand for Nagalim (Greater Nagaland) includes Naga-inhabited areas of Manipur, while Meiteis seek to preserve historical unity.

- **Lack of Socio-economic Development:**

  ○ Topographical challenges hinder economic development and socio-economic transformation.

  ○ Persistent issues of corruption, mismanagement of funds, and failure to empower common people contribute to dissatisfaction.

Insurgency in Manipur

MEITEI DOMINATED
Thoubal, Imphal East, Imphal West, Kakching, Bishnupur

KUKI-ZOMI DOMINATED
Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, Pherzawl

NAGA DOMINATED
Senapati, Ukhrul, Kamjong, Noney, Tamenglong

CHANDEL TENGNOUPAL
have Kukis, Nagas, and Meiteis; Chandel has more Kuki-Zomi tribes while Tengnoupal more Naga tribes
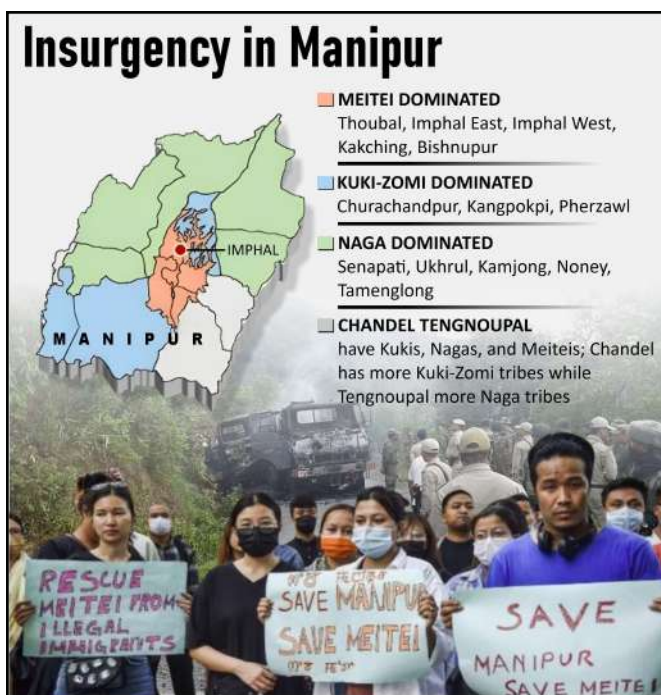
Key Highlights of the Manipur Peace Deal

● **Peace Agreement Overview:**

  ○ The specifics of the peace deal have not been publicly disclosed, but experts suggest that it primarily centers around a Suspension of Operations (SoO).

  ○ The SoO entails a mutual agreement between the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) and security forces to refrain from conducting operations against each other.

● **Implementation of SoO:**

  ○ Both the UNLF and security forces commit to not engaging in operations against each other.

  ○ Identified areas within the valley will be designated for building UNLF camps where cadres can stay alongside their arms and ammunition, supervised by the Manipur government and armed forces.

  ○ Talks for a comprehensive peace accord will proceed following the establishment of SoO arrangements.

● **About UNLF:**

  ○ Formed on November 24, 1964, the UNLF is the oldest insurgent group based in the valley.

  ○ Originated with the secession demand from India, led by Arembam Samarendra Singh.

  ○ Initially proscribed and banned under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.

  ○ Armed wing, the Manipur People's Army, established in 1990.

  ○ Two factions currently exist under the chairmanship of Khundongbam Pambei and NC Koireng.

● **Area of Operation:**

  ○ UNLF's operational areas encompass the valley regions of Manipur and some villages in the Kuki-Zomi hill districts.

  ○ Historically operated from camps and training bases in Myanmar's Sagaing Region, Chin state, and Rakhine state, with Myanmar military patronage.

  ○ Facing challenges in Myanmar due to attacks against the military junta by Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) and People's Defence Forces (PDFs).

● **Current Status:**

  ○ One faction of the UNLF faction led by Koireng remains opposed to peace talks.

  ○ The Manipur government withdrew from the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement in March 2023.

  ○ Tripartite SoO agreement reached in 2008, involving the Centre, Manipur state, and Kuki-Zomi insurgent groups, aimed at initiating political dialogue.

  ○ Withdrawal attributed to alleged influence on agitation among forest encroachers by the Zomi Revolutionary Army and the Kuki National Army.

JUSTICE GITA MITTAL COMMITTEE ON MANIPUR VIOLENCE

Why in the News?

The interim report concerning the May 2023 violence in Manipur has been submitted to the Supreme Court by the Justice Gita Mittal committee.

Background:

On May 3, 2023, violent ethnic clashes erupted in Manipur between the Meitei people in the Imphal Valley and the Kuki-Zo tribal community from the surrounding hills. The catalyst for the violence was a 'Tribal Solidarity March' protesting the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. The Manipur High Court's order, directing the state government to recommend ST status by May 29, further intensified tensions.

Immediate Causes and Impact:

The violence resulted in more than 175 casualties, with 94 unclaimed bodies in state mortuaries. Over 70,000 people were displaced from their homes. The genesis of the conflict lies in the historical ST status of the Meitei community, seeking restoration after the merger of Manipur with the Indian Union.

Justice Gita Mittal Committee:

In response to the escalating situation, the Supreme Court appointed a three-member committee, led by former Jammu and Kashmir High Court Chief Justice Gita Mittal, in August 2023. Empowered to submit reports directly to the Supreme Court, the committee recently presented its thirteenth interim report.

Major Findings and Recommendations:

- The committee's key findings center on the sensitive issue of handling the deceased. It recommends directing victims' relatives to perform the last rites, with state intervention if necessary.

- The report highlights external pressures from civil society organizations, alleging interference

with last rites due to "vested interests" and to extract "unwarranted" concessions from state authorities.

- The committee urges the Supreme Court to intervene by compelling the next of kin to claim bodies and conduct last rites. Additionally, it recommends prohibiting civil society organizations from obstructing or interfering with the solemn process.

Ethnic Diversity in Manipur:

Manipur is characterized by its diverse population, primarily divided into three main ethnic communities: Meiteis residing in the valley, and 29 major tribes in the hills, categorized into two primary ethno-denominations – Nagas and Kuki-Chins.

Meiteis:

- **Population:** With a majority presence of over 50%, Meiteis are the predominant ethnic group in Manipur, primarily residing in the Imphal Valley.

- **Religion:** Meiteis predominantly follow the Hindu religion, contributing to the religious pluralism within the state.

Naga Group:

- It Comprises various tribes such as Zeliangrong, Tangkhul, Mao, Maram, Maring, and Tarao.

- Represents a significant portion of the hill communities in Manipur, each tribe contributing to the rich cultural tapestry of the region.

Chin-Kuki Group:

- Encompassing tribes like Gangte, Hmar, Paite, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zou, Aimol, Chiru, Koireng, Kom, Anal, Chothe, Lamgang, Koirao, Thangal, Moyon, and Monsang.

- The term 'Chin' refers to people in the neighboring Chin state of Myanmar, while in the Indian side, they are known as 'Kukis.'

- Certain groups like Paite, Zou, Gangte, and Vaiphei identify themselves as Zomi, distancing from the term 'Kuki.'

- **Population:** Constituting 25% of Manipur's de-

mographic landscape, Kukis predominantly inhabit the hilly regions of the state.

- **Religion:** The majority of Kukis adhere to the Christian faith, contributing to the religious diversity in Manipur.

Cultural Commonalities:

- Despite diverse ethnicities, all groups in Manipur share Mongoloid origins, fostering close similarities in culture and traditional practices.

- The legend among various tribes, including Meiteis, narrates their origin from a cave in the north, underlining a shared historical narrative.

Cultural Distinctions:

- Meiteis, residing in the valley, exhibit cultural

differences from the surrounding hill tribes by predominantly following Hindu customs.

- This cultural distinction adds a layer of diversity to Manipur's social fabric, where religious practices contribute to the unique identity of each community.

Shared Heritage:

- The coexistence of Meiteis in the valley and diverse tribes in the hills reflects the harmonious integration of various ethnicities in Manipur.

- The shared heritage, despite cultural nuances, emphasizes unity in diversity, creating a mosaic of traditions that contributes to the cultural richness of the region.

Manipur's ethnic faultlines: Kuki-Meitei divide & recent unrest

There are 16 districts in Manipur, but the state is commonly thought of as divided into 'valley' and 'hill' districts.

■ Valley areas

In these hill areas, which comprise the bulk of Manipur's geographical area, live 15 Naga tribes and the Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi group.

Imphal (East and West)

Kukis and Nagas point out that tribal areas are 90% of state's geographical area, but the bulk of its budget and development work is focused on the Meitei-dominated Imphal valley.

The Manipur valley is encircled by skirts of low hills that spread into Nagaland and Mizoram.

While tribals can buy land in the valley, Meiteis are prohibited from buying land in the hills

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DELIMITATION AND RESERVATION BILLS OF JAMMU KASHMIR

Why in the News?

Recently, the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2023, and the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023 were approved by the Lok Sabha.

Background:

In the historical context of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, the process of delimitation for Lok Sabha seats adhered to the Indian Constitution, while the delimitation of Assembly seats operated independently under the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution. However, a significant turning point occurred on August 5, 2019, with the abrogation of Article 370, leading to Jammu and Kashmir losing its special status and being reconstituted as a Union Territory.

Subsequently, in March 2020, the Union government established a Delimitation Commission tasked with delimitation in Jammu and Kashmir and four northeastern states—Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, and Nagaland. Initially set to conclude within a year, the Commission faced delays due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a one-year extension.

The culmination of the delimitation process saw the publication of orders by the Delimitation Commission regarding the restructuring of assembly and parliamentary constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir. This restructuring was further reinforced through the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2023, which played a pivotal role in shaping the new political landscape of the region.

Delimitation Orders and Legislative Changes:

● The completion of delimitation resulted in increased legislative assembly seats from 107 to 114 through the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment)

Bill, 2023:

● Introduced in Lok Sabha in July 2023, the bill amends the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019.

● The Act initially reorganizes Jammu and Kashmir into the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir (with legislature) and Ladakh (without legislature).
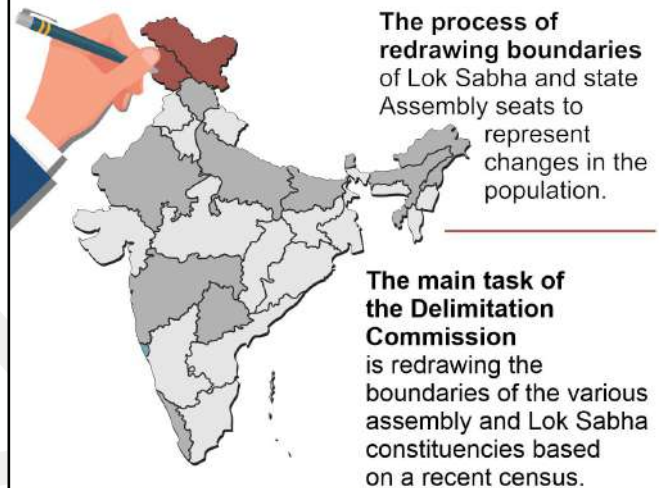
Key Features:

● **Legislative Assembly Seats:**

○ The 2019 Act set the Jammu and Kash-

mir Legislative Assembly seats at 83; the amendment increases this to 90.

- ○ Reserves 7 seats for Scheduled Castes and 9 seats for Scheduled Tribes based on the Delimitation Commission's report.

- ● **Nomination of Kashmiri Migrants:**

  - ○ The Lieutenant Governor may nominate up to 2 members from the Kashmiri migrant community to the Legislative Assembly, with one being a woman.

  - ○ Defines migrants and includes those not registered due to various circumstances.

- ● **Nomination of Displaced Persons:**

  - ○ The Lieutenant Governor may nominate 1 member representing displaced persons from Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, including successors-in-interest.

  - ○ Specifies criteria for defining displaced persons based on historical events.

Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023:

- ● Introduced in Lok Sabha in July 2023, this bill amends the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act, 2004.

Key Features:

- ● **Socially and Educationally Backward Classes:**

  - ○ Original Act included people residing in specified areas and weak and underprivileged classes.

  - ○ The amendment substitutes weak and underprivileged classes with other backward classes as declared by the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, removing the original definition

- ● **Commission Recommendations:**

  - ○ The government may make inclusions or exclusions from the category of weak and underprivileged classes based on Commission recommendations.

- ○ The Bill deletes the definition of weak and underprivileged classes from the Act.

APPOINTMENT OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS IN INDIA

WHy in the News?

The Rajya Sabha has approved legislation aimed at overseeing the appointment process of the Election Commission of India. This bill ensures that the status of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two Election Commissioners (ECs) remains equivalent to that of Supreme Court judges. In contrast, the preceding bill had intended to diminish their service conditions by bringing them in line with those of a Cabinet Secretary.

Background:

On August 10, the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023, was introduced in the Rajya Sabha, attempting to modify constitutional provisions governing the Election Commission (EC). The bill, seeking to align EC members' service conditions with those of a Cabinet Secretary, faced criticism for downgrading their status equivalent to Supreme Court judges.

Reintroduction and Key Amendments:

The Bill resurfaced in the Rajya Sabha on December 12, accompanied by significant amendments aiming to restore the status of EC members. These amendments aimed to maintain the CEC and two ECs on par with judges of the Supreme Court.

Key Highlights of the Bill:

- ● **Panel Composition Changes:**

  - ○ Removes the Chief Justice of India (CJI) from the selection committee, replacing them with a Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.

  - ○ Includes the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha as a committee member.

- **Selection Criteria:**

  - Requires EC members to have held a post equivalent to Secretary to the Government of India.

  - Emphasizes integrity, knowledge, and experience in the management and conduct of elections.

- **Selection Process:**

  - Involves a Search Committee headed by the Law Minister proposing a panel of names to the selection committee.

  - The Selection Committee, chaired by the PM, includes the Leader of the Opposition and a Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.

  - Allows the consideration of candidates outside the Search Committee's panel.

- **Terms and Tenure:**

  - Maintains the CEC and ECs' terms at six years or until the age of 65, with salaries equivalent to Supreme Court judges.

- **Repeal of Act:**

  - Repeals the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991.

- **Removal Procedure:**

  - Aligns CEC's removal with that of an SC judge; election commissioners can only be removed based on the CEC's recommendation.

- **Legal Protection:**

  - Introduces a provision protecting current and former CECs and election commissioners from civil or criminal proceedings related to their official duties.

Criticism:

Some Opposition leaders criticize the Bill for replacing the CJI in the selection committee with a Cabinet Minister, raising concerns about the potential for the government to dominate candidate selection.

About Election Commission of India

The Election Commission of India, a permanent and independent body, is empowered by Article 324 of the Constitution to conduct elections for Parliament, State Legislatures, and the offices of the President and Vice-President.

APPOINTMENT OF CEC & ECS

OLD PROCESS — President Appoint on Advice of Government

INTERIM PROCESS — Committee Comprising PM, LOP, CJI

NEW PROCESS — Committee Comprising PM, Lop, Cabinet Minister
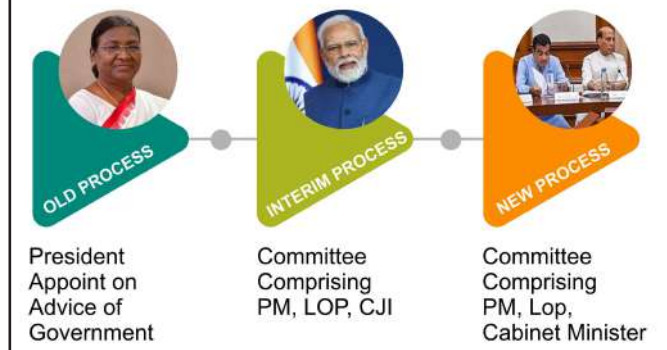
Appointment and Tenure:

- **Legislative Framework:**

  - Article 324(2) grants the power of appointing the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs) to the President, subject to any law framed by Parliament.

  - No specific legislation has been enacted for this purpose.

- **Current Appointment Process:**

  - The President appoints CEC and ECs based on the advice of the Union Council of Ministers, led by the Prime Minister.

  - They serve a term of six years or until the age of 65, receiving the same status, salary, and perks as Judges of the Supreme Court.

- **Removal Process:**

  - The CEC can only be removed in the same manner and on the same grounds as a judge of the Supreme Court.

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  ○ Retiring Election Commissioners are not barred from further government appointments.

Supreme Court's Intervention:

- **Constitutional Bench Ruling:**

  ○ A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court addressed petitions advocating a selection process akin to the CBI Director's appointment.

- **Disapproval of Current System:**

  ○ In March 2023, the Supreme Court unanimously disapproved of the existing system where the Centre appoints members of the Election Commission.

- **Call for Legislative Action:**

  ○ Pointing to Article 324(2), the Court urged Parliament to enact a law specifying criteria for selection, service conditions, and tenure of the CEC and ECs.

- **Interim Panel Appointment:**

  ○ Until a law is enacted, the apex court established an interim panel consisting of the Prime Minister, Chief Justice of India, and the Leader of the Opposition for making these appointments.

CERT-IN EXEMPTED FROM THE PURVIEW OF RTI

Why in the News?

In a recent development, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has issued a notification exempting the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) from the purview of the Right to Information Act, 2005.

This move places CERT-In under the list of 26 other intelligence and security organizations already excluded from the RTI Act. The Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, had previously informed the Rajya Sabha about the ongoing inter-departmental consultation on this matter in March 2023.

Background:

CERT-In, functioning under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, now stands alongside various intelligence and security organizations exempted from the RTI Act. This decision follows the government's authority, as outlined in the RTI law, to amend the Second Schedule to include or exclude intelligence or security organizations. The exemption highlights the government's approach to balance transparency and national security.

Key Provisions of the Right to Information Act, 2005:

The Right to Information Act, 2005, derives from the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression under Article 19 of the Constitution. Its fundamental objectives include empowering citizens, promoting transparency, and ensuring accountability in government functioning.

Key Provisions of The RTI Act are as Follows:

- **Section 4:** Public authorities are obligated to maintain records in a catalogued and indexed manner to facilitate the right to information.

- **Section 6:** Individuals can request information in writing from the Central or State Public Information Officer, specifying the particulars sought.

- **Section 7:** Public Information Officers must either provide information or reject the request within 30 days, citing reasons specified in Sections 8 and 9.

- **Section 19:** Individuals aggrieved by a decision or non-receipt of a decision within 30 days can appeal to a senior officer in the respective public authority.

Exemptions Under the Act:

Certain exemptions under the RTI Act include information related to defense, national security, or personal details. Before the RTI Act, India's information disclosure was restricted by laws like the Official Se-

crets Act, and the RTI Act played a pivotal role in relaxing such restrictions.

Coverage Under RTI:

The RTI Act extends to the entirety of India, covering bodies constituted under the Constitution, laws, or government notifications, as well as NGOs substantially financed by the government. Private bodies owned, controlled, or substantially financed by the government are also directly covered.

Cybersecurity:

Cybersecurity, also known as computer security or information technology security, is a critical domain focused on protecting computer systems and networks from cyber-attacks. These attacks can lead to information disclosure, theft, or damage to hardware, software, and electronic data.

Cyber-Attack Landscape in India:

As of Q1 2023, India has witnessed a sharp increase of over 29% in the number of cyberattacks compared to Q4 2022, with more than 500 million cyberattacks blocked in India out of 1 billion global attacks

Current Legal Framework:

Surprisingly, despite the escalating cyber threats, India currently lacks a dedicated cybersecurity law. The absence of such legislation raises concerns about the legal and regulatory mechanisms in place to address and mitigate cyber risks.

The Role of Cert-In:

The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), established in 2004, operates under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. Serving as the national nodal agency for cybersecurity, CERT-In plays a pivotal role in defending the Indian Internet domain against cyber threats.

Functions of CERT-In in Cybersecurity:

● **Information Collection and Analysis:** CERT-In collects, analyzes, and disseminates information on cyber incidents, staying vigilant to emerging threats.

● **Forecasting and Alerts:** The agency issues forecasts and alerts regarding potential cybersecurity incidents, aiding in proactive risk management.

● **Emergency Response Measures:** In the event of a cyber security incident, CERT-In formulates and executes emergency measures to contain and address the situation promptly.

● **Coordination of Response Activities:** CERT-In acts as a central coordination hub for cyber incident response activities, ensuring a unified and effective response.

● **Guidelines and Advisories:** The agency proactively issues guidelines and advisories related to information security practices, procedures, and prevention strategies to enhance overall cyber resilience.

SPECIAL CATEGORY STATES IN INDIA

Why in the News?

The recent Supreme Court ruling clarified that Article 370 is solely a characteristic of asymmetric federalism, distinct from possessing internal sovereignty.

Background:

India, with its myriad regions, cultures, languages, and religions, is recognized for its diversity. The Constitution of India acknowledges this diversity, providing certain states and territories with autonomy and special status based on historical, geographical, political, or cultural factors.

Constitutional Basis:

Under Part XXI of the Indian Constitution titled "Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions," special provisions are outlined. While intended to be temporary, these provisions have endured for decades, triggering ongoing debates and analyses.

Special Category States (SCS) in India:

To address varying levels of development, resourc-

es, and challenges among states, the central government designates some as Special Category States. This concept was introduced in 1969 by the Fifth Finance Commission, employing the Gadgil formula to offer preferential treatment in terms of central assistance and tax benefits.

Criteria For SCS Designation:

The criteria for granting Special Category Status include:

- Hilly and difficult terrain

- Low population density or a large tribal population

- Strategic location along international borders

- Economic and infrastructural backwardness

- Non-viable nature of state finances

List of Special Category States:

Initially limited to Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, and Nagaland, the list expanded to include Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Uttarakhand. Telangana, formed in 2014 after bifurcation from Andhra Pradesh, is the latest addition.

Benefits of Special Category Status:

The benefits afforded to Special Category States include:

- Higher share of central plan assistance (90% grant and 10% loan compared to 30% grant and 70% loan for non-SCS states).

- Increased allocation of funds for externally aided projects.

- Rebates in income tax rates and excise duty for industries.

- Preferential treatment in the devolution of central taxes and duties.

- Relaxation of norms for centrally sponsored schemes.

- Additional assistance for disaster relief.

Controversies Surrounding Special Category Status (SCS)

Issues Related To Special Category Status:

- **Lack of Constitutional or Legal Basis:**

  - SCS lacks a constitutional or legal foundation and is subject to the discretionary decision of the National Development Council (NDC) or the central government.

- **Criteria Lack Uniformity or Transparency:**

  - The absence of uniform or transparent criteria for granting SCS has led to claims from states like Bihar, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh, asserting their eligibility based on backwardness indicators.

- **Ambiguity in Duration or Review:**

  - Ambiguity surrounds the duration or review of SCS, with some states receiving it on a temporary basis (e.g., Jammu and Kashmir, Telangana), while others have enjoyed it for decades.

- **Absence of Impact Assessment or Evaluation:**

  - There is a lack of clear evidence demonstrating that SCS has catalyzed faster growth or development in the beneficiary states.

- **Fiscal Discipline and Accountability Concerns:**

  - Some states have faced accusations of misusing or diverting funds meant for specific purposes, raising questions about fiscal discipline and accountability.

Special Provisions in States:

- **Jammu and Kashmir:**

  - Historically significant for its accession to India post the 1947 partition, it was granted special status under Article 370. However, in 2019, the central government revoked this status, reorganizing the state into two union territories.

- **Nagaland**:

  - Characterized by a predominantly Naga

population seeking self-determination, Nagaland was created in 1963 under Article 371A. It enjoys special rights to preserve customs, traditions, land, and resources. The Framework Agreement of 2015 aims to address the Naga issue through peaceful dialogue.

- **Assam:**

  - Boasting a diverse, multi-ethnic society, Assam received special powers under Article 371B. The Assam Accord of 1985 addresses issues of identity, language, immigration, development, and autonomy.

- **Sikkim:**

  - Formerly an independent kingdom, Sikkim joined India in 1975. Article 371F protects its existing laws, land rights, religious practices, and democratic institutions. The Sikkim-Darjeeling Agreement of 1973 grants financial assistance and development schemes.

Objectives and Challenges of Special Provisions in India:

Objectives of Special Provisions:

- **Respect and Protection of Identity:**

  - Upholding the distinct identity, culture, and rights of the people residing in states with special provisions.

- **Promotion of Socio-economic Development:**

  - Facilitating socio-economic development and welfare in these states to bridge developmental gaps.

- **Ensuring Participation in National Mainstream:**

  - Ensuring active participation and representation of these states in the national mainstream to foster inclusivity.

- **Maintenance of Peace and Stability:**

  - Contributing to the maintenance of peace and stability in these regions, acknowledging their unique challenges.

- **Strengthening National Unity and Integrity:**

  - Reinforcing national unity and integrity by recognizing and accommodating diversity within the constitutional framework.

Challenges and Limitations:

- **Creation of Alienation or Discrimination:**

  - Special provisions may instigate a sense of alienation or discrimination among states or regions without similar privileges.

- **Potential for Separatist Tendencies:**

  - There is a risk that some groups or individuals may exploit these provisions to fuel separatist or secessionist tendencies for personal gain.

Arguments for Special Provisions	Arguments against Special Provisions
Accommodating Diversity: Recognizes and respects unique histories, cultures, and needs of different states.	Potential for Inequality: Critics argue that special provisions create advantages for certain states, disadvantaging others without such privileges.
Promoting Regional Development: Offers special financial assistance and administrative flexibility to address developmental disparities.	Challenges to National Integration: Excessive autonomy may fuel regionalism and separatist tendencies, hindering national unity.
Strengthening National Unity: By addressing grievances and fostering inclusion, these provisions can strengthen the bond between diverse states	Implementation Challenges: Coordinating varied provisions among states poses challenges in terms of complexity and resource requirements.

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- **Conflicts Between Central and State Governments:**

    - Special provisions can lead to conflicts or disputes between the central and state governments, involving issues like jurisdiction, authority, resources, or policies.

- **Impediment to Uniform Implementation of National Laws:**

    - The presence of special provisions may impede the uniform implementation or enforcement of national laws or schemes in these states.

- **Influence by External Factors:**

    - External factors or pressures from neighboring countries or international organizations may influence the application or continuation of these provisions.

Beyond Constitutional Articles: Examining Fiscal Devolution, Administrative Flexibility, and Equal Representation

Fiscal Devolution:

The Finance Commission plays a vital role in allocating central taxes to states based on need and population, aiming to recognize and address fiscal disparities. Special Category States, including Jammu and Kashmir (previously) and certain Northeastern states, receive additional financial assistance due to their unique challenges.

Administrative Flexibility:

States possess the authority to customize their administrative structures and policies to local contexts, particularly in crucial areas like education, healthcare, and social welfare programs.

Equal Representation:

The Rajya Sabha ensures equal representation for each state irrespective of population size, providing smaller states with a more influential voice in national decision-making processes.

Way Forward:

The ongoing debate surrounding special provisions necessitates a thoughtful approach to strike the right balance between state autonomy and national unity. Addressing historical imbalances and regional needs remains a crucial challenge. Key steps include:

- **Reviewing Existing Provisions:**

    - Regularly assessing the effectiveness and relevance of special provisions to ensure alignment with India's evolving needs.

- **Transparency and Accountability:**

    - Ensuring clear communication and responsible implementation of these provisions to address concerns about inequality and misuse.

- **Finding Common Ground:**

    - Promoting communication and collaboration between states and the Central government to establish a more robust foundation for a unified and fair India.

Conclusion:

The special provisions outlined in Part XXI of the Constitution reflect India's commitment to federalism, democracy, and diversity. Designed to address specific challenges and aspirations of certain states, these provisions aim to integrate them with the broader Indian framework without compromising their unique identities. They exemplify India's flexibility and adaptability in navigating its intricate realities.

BHARATIYA NYAYA SANHITA BILL 2023

Why in the News?

Recently, the Lok Sabha passed three Bills through a voice vote, signaling a significant step towards the comprehensive reform of India's criminal justice system by replacing outdated colonial-era laws. Among these, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill 2023 introduces substantial modifications to the Indian Penal Code it intends to supplant.

Background:

The Indian Penal Code (IPC), drafted in 1834 by the first Law Commission under the chairmanship of Thomas Babington Macaulay, came into effect in January 1860. The BNS Bill, introduced in 2023, seeks to replace the IPC with a more modern and updated set of laws. In contrast to the IPC's 511 sections, the BNS Bill is designed with 356 provisions, reflecting a streamlined and contemporary approach to criminal legislation.

Key Reforms in Recent Indian Legislation:

The recent legislative changes in India aim to overhaul the criminal justice system by replacing colonial-era laws with a distinctly Indian ethos. Three crucial bills, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, and Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, 2023, have been introduced to replace the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), and the Indian Evidence Act, respectively.

New Offenses under Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023:

- **Deceitful Promise to Marry:**

  - Clause 69 addresses the love jihad narrative, criminalizing deceitful promises to marry.

  - Criminalizes consensual sexual activity through the provision on sexual intercourse not amounting to the offense of rape.

  - Targets false promises of marriage, employment, promotion, inducement, or marriage after suppressing identity.

- **Provisions on Mob Lynching:**

  - Codifies offenses related to mob lynching and hate-crime murders, punishing mobs of five or more individuals committing murder.

  - Punishments extended from life imprisonment to death.

  - Originally proposed minimum sentence aligned with murder charges.

- **Dealing with Organized Crime:**

  - Marks a significant shift by bringing organized crime under ordinary criminal law.

  - Eliminates the need for special state legislations, such as the Maharashtra Control of Organized Crime Act, 1999.

  - Uniform punishment for attempting or committing organized crime; severity depends on whether death is involved.

- **Petty Organized Crime:**

  - Introduces a distinct category criminalizing activities like theft, snatching, cheating, unauthorized selling of tickets, unauthorised betting or gambling, selling of public examination question papers.

  - Drops the overbroad language causing "general feelings of insecurity" from the earlier version.

- **Terrorism:**

  - Adopts language from the Unlawful Atrocities Prevention Act, expanding the scope of terrorism within ordinary criminal law.

  - Borrowing definitions from the Philippines Anti-Terrorism Act, 2020.

  - Broader provisions on terror financing compared to UAPA, raising questions about concurrent operation and procedural differences.

- **Provision on Attempted Suicide:**

  - Criminalizes attempts to commit suicide with the intent to compel or restrain a public servant from discharging official duties.

  - Prescribes jail term up to one year with community service.

  - Aims to prevent self-immolations and hunger strikes during protests.

Provisions Repealed Under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023:

- **Unnatural Sexual Offenses (Article 377):**

  - Section 377 of the IPC, criminalizing homo-

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sexuality and unnatural sexual activities, has been repealed.

○ Concerns arise due to the total omission of Section 377, as it could still be useful in addressing non-consensual sexual acts, especially given the gendered nature of rape laws.

○ The Supreme Court in 2018 declared Article 377 unconstitutional only in the context of criminalizing consensual homosexual relationships.

● **Adultery:**

○ The offense of adultery, previously deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 2018, has been omitted under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

● **Provision on Thugs:**

○ Section 310 of the IPC, labeling individuals associated with robbery or child-stealing as "thugs," is fully omitted under the BNS.

○ Criticized for attaching colonial notions of criminality, especially concerning certain tribes.

Changes Added to Existing Laws:

● **Gender Neutrality:**

○ While rape laws continue to apply only to women, the BNS introduces gender neutrality in other laws, especially those related to children.

○ Offenses dealing with procuration of a girl (366A of the IPC) made gender-neutral.

BNS Bill, 2023: Key Highlights

- Adultery — Omitted as per Supreme Court's 2018 ruling (Joseph Shine v. Union of India)
- Same-Sex Relations — No punishment for "unnatural sexual offenses against men"; Aligned with Supreme Court's Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018) ruling
- Marital Rape — Excludes sexual acts with wife above 18 years from rape definition
- Murder — Covered in provision 101 of BNS Bill (IPC Section 302); Penalties: Life imprisonment, death sentence
- Speedy Legal Procedure — Charge-sheet: Within 90 days, extendable by 90 days with court permission; Investigations concluded within 180 days; Trial and judgment within 30 days
- Sedition — Section 124-A of IPC; Punishable by life imprisonment or up to 3 years + fine; Covered in provision 150 of BNS Bill; Acts endangering sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India
- Terrorism — Defined in BNS Bill (not in IPC); Intent to threaten India's unity, integrity, security; Intimidating public, disturbing public order; Applies to acts in India or foreign countries
- Defamation — Penalty: Simple imprisonment up to 2 years, fine, community service, or combination
- Mob Lynching — Capital punishment introduced; Option: 7 years imprisonment or life imprisonment
- Sexual Exploitation — Criminalizes sexual exploitation on pretext of marriage, job, promotions, or identity concealment

- ○ Uniform age limit of 18 for both males and females in the offense of kidnapping minors (Section 361 of the IPC).

- **Fake News:**

  - ○ Introduces a new provision in place of Section 153B of the IPC, criminalizing the publication of false and misleading information.

  - ○ It aims to combat the spread of fake news, addressing concerns related to national harmony.

- **Sedition:**

  - ○ Despite initial claims of repealing the law on sedition, the BNS introduces the offense under a new name (from rajdroh to deshdroh) with a broader definition.

  - ○ Encompasses aiding through financial means acts of subversive activities and encouraging separatist sentiments.

- **Mandatory Minimum Sentence:**

  - ○ Section 303 of the IPC, which mandated a death sentence for murder committed by a life-convict, was struck down in 1983 as unconstitutional.

  - ○ The BNS modifies this provision, prescribing a punishment of death or imprisonment for life, meaning the remainder of the person's natural life.

Conclusion:

The adoption of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and associated reforms represents a significant transformation in India's criminal justice system. Beyond numerical changes, these reforms signify a reclaiming of India's identity, shedding the colonial legacy that had left indelible marks on the system. The paradox of India's criminal justice system, deeply influenced by colonial history, is being addressed through these legislative changes.

ADVOCATES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2023

Why in the News?

The Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023, underwent significant legislative progress, securing approval in both the Rajya Sabha in August 2023 and the Lok Sabha during the recent winter session. The primary focus of this bill is to streamline the legal system by eliminating touts, leading to the repeal of the archaic Legal Practitioners Act, 1879, and amendments to the Advocates Act, 1961.

The bill aligns with the government's commitment to declutter the legal framework by repealing outdated laws, such as the Legal Practitioners Act, 1879, that have lost their relevance over time.

Background

The legal landscape governing practitioners in India has witnessed significant changes over the years, transitioning from the Legal Practitioners Act of 1879 to the more comprehensive Advocates Act of 1961.

Legal Practitioners Act of 1879:

- The primary objective of the 1879 Act was to consolidate and amend the law concerning Legal Practitioners in specific provinces.

- Section 2 of the Act defined a legal practitioner to encompass advocates, vakils, or attorneys of any High Court.

- The Act introduced a novel definition of the term "tout," characterizing them as individuals who, in consideration of remuneration from a legal practitioner, secure the employment of that practitioner in legal business.

Advocates Act of 1961:

- Enacted in 1961, the Advocates Act aimed to amend and consolidate laws related to legal practitioners. It also provided acfor the establishment of Bar Councils and an All-India Bar.

- Replaced three previous Acts governing legal practitioners: the Legal Practitioners Act of 1879, the Bombay Pleaders Act of 1920, and the Indian Bar Councils Act of 1926.

Repeal of the Legal Practitioners Act of 1879:

- The Law Commission, in its 249th Report titled 'Obsolete Laws: Warranting Immediate Repeal,' recommended the repeal of the 1879 Act.

- Acknowledging these recommendations and those of the All-India Bar Committee in 1953, the Advocates Act of 1961 was enacted.

Key Features of Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023

- The Bill empowers High Courts, district judges, sessions judges, district magistrates, and revenue officers to create and publish lists of touts.

- Authorities can exclude individuals named in the tout lists from court premises.

- Empowered authorities can direct subordinate courts to conduct inquiries into the conduct of individuals suspected to be touts.

- Inclusion in the tout list requires due process, ensuring individuals have an opportunity to contest their inclusion.

- Individuals acting as touts while listed may face penalties, including imprisonment for up to three months, a fine of up to Rs 500, or both.

ALL INDIA JUDICIAL SERVICE: CURRENT RELEVANCE AND CHALLENGES

Why in the News?

The first citizen of India and the 15th President of the country, Shrimati Draupadi Murmu, on the occasion of Constitution Day on 26 November 2023, established an All India Judicial Service (AIJS) to ensure equal representation of India's diversity in the judiciary. He also emphasized that the aim of justice is to make it accessible and equitable to all, which is yet to happen in India.

- The President said – **"A more diverse representation of India's unique diversity on the Constitutional Bench and Bar Councils certainly helps in better serving the ends of justice. "One way**

to accelerate this diversification process could be to create a system in which judges can be recruited from diverse backgrounds through a merit-based, competitive and transparent process." In such a situation, there could possibly be an All India Judicial Service, which would be able to **"select talented youth from across the country and nurture and promote their talent from lower to higher levels"** to create a larger pool of talent. **"Such a system can also provide opportunities to under-represented social groups,"** She said.

- The Government of India has recently proposed to pass a Bill to set up the All India Judicial Service (AIJS) for recruitment of officers for subordinate courts through an entrance examination.

- Immediately after independence, provision was made for an All India Judicial Service (AIJS) on the lines of the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service, but due to certain reasons, the All India Judicial Service has not been created yet.

- The idea of AIJS is currently being proposed in the backdrop of judicial reforms, particularly related to checking of vacancies and pending cases in the judiciary. The establishment of AIJS is a positive step, but it faces several constitutional and legal hurdles.

What is All India Judicial Service (AIJS)?

Introduction:

- It is a proposed centralized recruitment system **for judges at the level of** Additional District Judges and District Judges in all states .

- Its aim is to centralize the recruitment of judges, similar to **the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) model, and hand over charge of states to successful candidates.**

- As per the recommendations of the Law Commission reports of the years **1958 and 1978**, the AIJS aims to address structural issues such as differential pay, recruitment against vacancies and standardized nationwide training.

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee reconsidered the support for the All India Judicial Service in the year 2006.

Constitutional basis:

- **Article 312 of the Constitution** provides for the establishment of the AIJS on a proposal **supported by not less than two-thirds of the members of the Rajya Sabha,** similar to the Central Civil Services.

- However **Article 312(2)** states that the AIJS cannot include any post below the level of **District Judge (defined in Article 236).**

- **According to Article 236**, a District Judge includes Municipal Civil Court Judge, Additional District Judge, Joint District Judge, Assistant District Judge, Chief Justice of Small Causes Court, Chief Presidency Magistrate, Additional Chief Presidency Magistrate, Session Judge, Additional Session Judge and Assistant Sessions Judge.

Need:

- **AIJS will ensure uniform and high standards** of selection and training of judges, thereby enhancing the quality and efficiency of the judiciary.

- **AIJS will fill the vacancies of judges** in lower courts, currently **around 5,400 posts are vacant in the lower judiciary across the country and 2.78 crore cases** are pending in the lower judiciary mainly due to inordinate delay in conducting regular examinations by the states.

- AIJS will increase the representation and diversity of judges from different regions, genders, castes and communities reflecting the **social**

structure of the country.

- **AIJS will reduce the scope for judicial or executive interference** in judicial appointments, thereby ensuring **the independence and accountability of judges.**

- AIJS will create a pool of talented and experienced judges who can be appointed to the higher judiciary, thereby improving the future prospects of judges and their mobility.

Present situation:

- Due to different opinions in this regard among all the major stakeholders in India, no **consensus** has been reached on AIJS till the year 2023.

- This highlights the challenges in achieving consensus on the proposal to establish AIJS.

How are district judges currently recruited?

- The current system consists of **Articles 233 and 234** which empower the states to appoint district judges, which is managed through the State Public Service Commissions and the High Courts, as the High Court exercises jurisdiction over the subordinate judiciary in the state. Is.

- A panel of High Court judges interviews the candidates after the examination and selects them for appointment.

- All judges up to the level of District Judge of the lower judiciary are selected through the Provincial Civil Services (Judicial) Examination. PCS (J) is commonly known as Judicial Services Examination.

- Article 233 deals with **the appointment of District Judges.** The appointment, posting and promotion of District Judges in any State shall be made by **the Governor of the State** in consultation with the High Court exercising jurisdiction over such State.

- **Article 234** deals with **the recruitment of persons other than District Judges** to the judicial service.

What are the concerns regarding AIJS?

- This would be a violation of **the federal struc-**

ture and the autonomy of the States and High Courts, which have the constitutional power and responsibility to administer the subordinate judiciary.

- This would lead to conflict of interest and dual control over judges, who would be **answerable to both the Central and State governments .**

- This will disregard the local laws, languages and customs of different states, which are essential for the effective functioning of the judiciary.

- This will impact the morale and motivation of **existing judicial officers** , who will be deprived of opportunities and incentives for career advancement.

The way forward to move towards solving the problem:

- Dialogue and consultation should be facilitated with states, high courts and legal experts to address concerns and garner support for AIJS.

- Consideration should be given to implementing AIJS on a pilot basis in select states to assess its impact and gradually address the concerns.

- Designing AIJS with flexible mechanisms that allow adaptation to local methods, languages and customs should also ensure effective functioning without neglecting regional nuances.

- Proposing a clearly defined transition period during which existing judicial officers can smoothly adapt to the new system while minimizing disruptions.

- There is a need to put in place a periodic review mechanism to assess the impact of the AIJS on the federal structure, autonomy and effective functioning of the judiciary and make necessary adjustments as required.

- Develop an incentive structure within the AIJS that motivates and recognizes the contributions of existing judicial officers while addressing concerns related to career advancement.

Constitutional Perspective For AIJS:

- **AIJS was first proposed by the 14th Report of the Law Commission in the year 1958 .**

- By the 42nd Constitutional Amendment in the year 1976, Article 312(1) was amended to empower the Parliament to make laws for the creation of one or more All India Services, including AIJS, with equal powers for both the Union and the States. Is.

- Under Article 312 , the Rajya Sabha is required to pass a resolution supported by at least two-thirds of its members present and voting. After this, Parliament will have to make a law to create AIJS.

- This means that no constitutional amendment will be required for the establishment of AIJS.

- The Supreme Court of India also supported this in the case 'All India Judges Association vs Union of India' (1993) and said that AIJS should be established.

Benefits of AIJS:

- **Number of judges as per population ratio:** A Law Commission report (year 1987) recommended that India should have 50 judges per million population as compared to (then) 10.50 judges.

- This figure exceeds 20 judges in terms of the current sanctioned strength, but is much lower than the US or the UK (107 and 51 judges per million people, respectively).

- AIJS thus envisages bridging the inherent gap in the judicial sector.

- **Higher representation of marginalized sections of the society :** According to the government, AIJS is an ideal solution for equal representation of marginalized and deprived sections of the society.

- **Attracting talent:** The government believes that if such a service comes up, it will help in creating a pool of talented people who can later become part of the higher judiciary.

- **'Bottom-up' approach:** 'Bottom-up' approach in recruitment will also be helpful in dealing with issues like corruption and nepotism in the lower judiciary. This will improve the quality of

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the justice system in the lower levels of the society.

Related Challenges:

- **Dichotomy between Articles 233 and 312:** According to Article 233, recruitment to the subordinate judiciary is the prerogative of the State.

- This has led many states and high courts to oppose the idea as being against federalism.

- If the fundamental power of the states to make such rules and control the appointment of district judges is taken away, it may go against the principle of federalism and the basic structure principle.

Note:

- **Article 233 (1) of the Constitution** states that "The appointment of persons to be District Judges in any State and the posting and promotion of District Judges shall be made by the Governor of that State after consultation with the High Court exercising jurisdiction in relation to such State." Will do."

- **Linguistic barrier:** Since cases are argued in lower courts in local languages, there are apprehensions as to how a person from North India can get a hearing in a southern state. Thus another fundamental concern regarding AIJS is the language barrier.

- **Constitutional Limit:** Clause 3 of Article 312 imposes a restriction that the AIJS shall not include a post not lower than the post of District Judge. Thus the appointment of subordinate judiciary through AIJS may face constitutional hurdles.

- **Weakening the administrative control of the High Court:** The creation of AIJS will lead to erosion of control of the High Courts over the subordinate judiciary, which may affect the independence of the judiciary.

Conclusion:

The number of pending cases and crores of prisoners lodged in the jails in the name of 'undertrial' in Indian jails certainly demands the establishment of a clean, transparent, competitive and merit based recruitment system which ensures speedy disposal of cases. To recruit a large number of skilled and qualified judges. However, before AIJS comes into the legislative framework, there is a need to build consensus and take a decisive step towards AIJS. At the same time, governments also need to create mutual coordination between Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha so that in future All India Judicial Service posts are created. In the direction of creation, the mutual deadlock between the judges appointed by the Collegium and the government should be ended and the way can be paved for positive initiatives towards the creation of posts like All India Judicial Service.

DISQUALIFICATION OF MEMBER OF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (MLA)

Why in the News?

BJP MLA Ramdular Gond who was recently sentenced to **25 years of rigorous imprisonment** for raping a girl 9 years ago, has been disqualified as a member of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly.

According to the **Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1951**, a lawmaker sentenced to imprisonment for **2 years or more** shall be disqualified "from the date of such conviction" and remain disqualified for another **6 years after serving time.**

- **Representation of the People Act (RPA):**

  ○ The holding of **free and fair elections** is the sine-qua-non of democracy. To ensure the conduct of elections in free, fair and in an impartial manner, the constitution-makers incorporated **Part XV (Articles.324-329)** in the constitution and empowered Parliament to make laws to regulate the electoral process.

  ○ **The Election Commission of India (ECI)** is the watchdog of **free** and **fair elections** in the country and **Article 324** of the Constitution provides for its establishment.

  ○ In this context, the Parliament has enacted the Representation of the People Act **(RPA),**

1950 and Representation of the People Act,1951.

- **Salient Features of RPA Act 1951:**

  ○ Regulates the **actual conduct of elections** and by-elections.

  ○ It provides administrative **machinery** for conducting elections.

  ○ It deals with the **registration of political parties.**

  ○ It specifies the **qualifications and disqualifications** for membership of the Houses.

  ○ It provides provisions to **curb corrupt practices** and other offenses.

  ○ It lays down the procedure for settling **doubts and disputes arising out of elections.**

- **Qualification for Contesting Elections in India as per RPA 1951:**

The Parliament has laid down the following **qualifications** (for contesting election) in the RPA,1951:

  ○ A person must be an **elector in the constituency.**

  ○ The person must be a member of a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe **(SC/ST)** in any state/UTs if he/she wants to contest a **seat reserved** for them.

  ○ **The minimum age** for becoming an MLA/MPs (Lok Sabha) is **25 years.**

  ○ At the panchayat and municipality levels, the minimum age limit for contesting elections is **21 years.**

- **Disqualification of MPs and MLAs as per RPA 1951:**

  ○ **Section 8 (3)** of the Act states that if an MP or MLA is convicted for any other crime and is sent to **jail** for **2 years or more,** he/she will be disqualified for **6 years** from the time of release.

  ○ Even if a person is on **bail** after the conviction and his appeal is pending for disposal, he is disqualified from contesting an election.

  ○ **Section 8(4)** allowed convicted MPs, MLAs and MLCs to continue in their posts, provided they appealed against their conviction/sentence in higher courts **within 3 months** of the date of judgment by the trial court.

  ○ The Supreme Court in July 2013 struck down section 8(4) of the RPA, 1951 and declared it ultra vires and held that the **disqualification takes place from the date of conviction.**

PRELIMS QUESTION

Q1. Which of the following have provisions for the disqualification of a Member of Parliaments?

1. Rule of Procedure of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha

2. Constitution of India

3. RPA, 1951

4. Schedule 1 of constitution

How many statements are correct:

(a) Only 1

(b) Only 2

(b) Only 3

(d) Only 4

Q2. With reference to the Supreme Court's verdict on Article 370, consider the following statements:

1. The Supreme Court affirmed that Jammu and Kashmir retained an element of sovereignty after its accession to India in 1947.

2. Karan Singh's proclamation to retain sovereignty was upheld by the court.

3. The reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir into Union Territories in 2019 was deemed a permanent measure by the court.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Q3. With reference to the Assam Accord, consider the following statements:

1. The Assam Accord resulted from the Assam Movement (1979–1985), addressing the issue of illegal immigrants, primarily from Bangladesh.

2. The Accord mandated the erection of physical barriers, such as walls and barbed wire fencing, along the Bangladesh-India border for enhanced security.

3. Immigrants who entered Assam before January 1, 1966, were considered Indian citizens and allowed to vote.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1, 2 and 3

(d) 1 and 3 only

Q4. With reference to the Telecommunications Bill, 2023, consider the following powers of the Government:

1. Authorization for interception, monitoring, or blocking of messages solely on grounds including public safety.

2. Grants extraordinary powers for temporary possession of telecom infrastructure and authorized searches for unauthorized network or equipment possession.

Which of the following is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q5. In the context of Manipur's insurgency, consider the following statements:

1. The Meitei insurgency in the 1960s was primarily driven by resentment among the Meiteis due to declining influence post-independence.

2. Ongoing clashes between diverse ethnic populations, including Meiteis, Nagas and Kukis, are attributed to overlapping territorial interests and conflicts.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q6. The United National Liberation Front (UNLF) is associated with which of the following:

(a) Meitei

(b) Naga

(c) Kukis

(d) Rohingya

Q7. Consider the following statements regarding Manipur's Ethnic Communities:

1. Meiteis constitute the majority ethnic group in Manipur.

2. Meiteis primarily reside on the hills of Manipur

3. Meiteis are primarily Christian by faith

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

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Q8. With reference to the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2023, consider the following statements:

1. The amendment increases Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly seats from 83 to 90, with reserved seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

2. The Lieutenant Governor can nominate up to 2 members from the Kashmiri migrant community to the Legislative Assembly.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q9. With reference to Election Commission, consider the following statements:

1. The Chief Election Commissioner has overriding powers over other Election Commissioners

2. Election Commission is a Constitutional Body under Article 213 of the Constitution

3. Election Commission also conducts the election of Panchayats under its mandate

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Q10. With Reference to the Statements Above, Consider the Following:

1. The RTI Act Includes Exemptions For Information Related to Defense, National Security, or Personal Details.

2. The Rti Act also Covers Private Bodies Owned, Controlled, or Substantially Financed by the Government.

Which of the Statements Given Above is/are Correct?

(a) 1 Only

(b) 2 Only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 Nor 2

Q11. Consider the following pairs:

1. Nagaland : Article 371-A

2. Assam : Article 371-B

3. Sikkim : Article 371-E

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Q12. Regarding the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill 2023 recently seen in the news, consider the following statements:

1. It abolishes Sedition Law.

2. It makes the Rape Law Gender Neutral i.e victim can be a male or a female.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q13. Regarding the The Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023 recently seen in the news, consider the following statements:

1. The Bill empowers only the High Courts and Supreme Court to create and publish lists of touts.

2. The Act introduced a novel definition of the term "tout".

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q14. Consider the following statements with reference to All India Judicial Service in India .

1. The authority for appointment and management of District Judges and Subordinate Courts in India is exercised through the State Public Service Commissions and the High Courts of the respective States.

2. The All India Judicial Service aims to centralize the recruitment of judges, similar to the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) model, and assign charge of states to successful candidates.

3. Article 312 of the Constitution provides for the establishment of the AIJS on a proposal supported by not less than two-thirds of the members of the Rajya Sabha, similar to the Central Civil Services.

4. AIJS was first proposed by the 14th Report of the Law Commission in the year 1958.

Which of the above statement/statements is correct?

(a) Only 1, 2 and 3

(b) 1, 3 and 4 only

(c) None of these

(d) all of which

Q15. Consider the following statements regarding Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1951:

1. Any Member of Parliament (MP) convicted for crime and sent to jail for 2 years or more stands disqualified from the Parliament for 6 years from the time of release

2. In case a person is on bail after the conviction and his appeal is pending for disposal, he can take part in due elections

3. Section 8(4) allows convicted MPs to continue in their posts, provided they appeal against their conviction in higher courts within 3 months of the date of judgment by the trial court.

Which of the above statements is correct?

(a) 1 and 2

(b) 3 only

(c) 2 and 3

(d) 1 only

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	C
2.	D
3.	C
4.	B
5.	B
6.	A
7.	A
8.	B
9.	D
10.	C
11.	B
12.	D
13.	D
14.	D
15.	D

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. What are the tools to ensure accountability of the Executive. To what extent, the Parliament is able to ensure accountability of the executive in India. Critically Analyze?

Q2. Discuss the implications and significance of the Supreme Court's verdict on the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. Analyze the constitutional and historical aspects involved in

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the decision, considering the legal framework and the court's reference to previous rulings.

Q3. Discuss the multifaceted challenges posed by illegal migration in India, considering its socio-economic, political, and cultural implications.

Q4. Examine the constitutional and democratic implications of the provisions in the Telecommunications Bill, 2023.

Q5. In the context of insurgency in Manipur, critically analyze the multifaceted factors contributing to the persistent unrest in the region. Discuss the historical background, ethnic complexities, and socio-economic dimensions that have fueled and sustained the insurgency.

Q6. Discuss the recent ethnic violence in Manipur, highlighting the underlying causes, and the socio-political implications for the region. Evaluate the role of historical factors, administrative decisions, and societal dynamics in contributing to the unrest.

Q7. Discuss the socio-political and constitutional implications of the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. Critically assess the challenges and opportunities arising from the integration of Jammu and Kashmir into the Union of India.

Q8. Evaluate the Significance of the Election Commission of India (ECI) in Safeguarding Democratic Values.

Q9. The recent Decision to Exempt the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-IN) from the Purview of the Right to Information Act, 2005 has Sparked Discussions on the Balance between Transparency and National Security. Analyze the Implications of this Decision, Considering the key Provisions of the RTI act and its Role in Promoting Transparency and Accountability in Government Functioning.

Q10. Examine the significance associated with the special category status conferred upon certain states in India. Also, analyze the controversies surrounding special category states

Q11. Discuss the Significance and Objectives of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill 2023 in Overhauling India's Criminal Justice System.

Q12. Critically Examine the Implications of the Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023, on Legal Practice in India. Analyze the Bill's Impact on Streamlining the Legal System.

Q13. Discuss how the establishment of All India Judicial Service in India is a positive step in the field of judiciary in the context of recruitment of judges from diverse backgrounds through merit-based, competitive and transparent process for speedy and accessible justice system in India. ? Describe its current relevance by discussing the constitutional and legal obstacles to its creation.

Q14. Discuss the significance and contemporary relevance of the Representation of People Act, 1951 (RPA Act, 1951) in the Indian electoral system. Analyze its various amendments, and their impact on the conduct of free and fair elections.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION (OIC)

Why in the News?

India has dismissed a statement from the OIC regarding the Supreme Court's verdict affirming the revocation of Article 370, which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

Background:

India strongly rejected remarks by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) expressing concern over the Supreme Court's verdict on Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.

The External Affairs Ministry spokesperson termed the OIC's statement "ill-informed and ill-intended," questioning its alignment with a human rights violator and promoter of cross-border terrorism. It was emphasized that such statements undermine the credibility of the OIC.

The OIC had expressed concern over the Supreme Court's verdict and reaffirmed solidarity with the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The Supreme Court's decision to uphold the revocation of Article 370 includes ordering the restoration of statehood by September 30, 2024.

Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC): An Overview

- **Establishment:** Founded in September 1969 after a summit in Rabat, Morocco, prompted by the criminal arson of Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem.

- **Size and Population:** Second-largest organization globally after the United Nations.It represents over 1.8 billion people.

- **Collective Voice:** Acts as the collective voice of the Muslim world, advocating for their interests in economic, social, and political domains.

- **Objectives:**

  ○ Aims to preserve Islamic values.

  ○ Safeguards and defends national sovereignty and independence of member states.

  ○ Contributes to international peace and security.

- **Membership:** Comprises 57 member states spanning four continents.

- **Headquarters:** Located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

- **Official Languages:** Recognizes Arabic, English, and French as its official languages.

Historical Background:

- In 1969, India, with the world's second-largest Muslim community, was invited to the founding conference of the OIC but was ejected at Pakistan's insistence.

- India stayed away due to concerns about joining a religiously founded organization and potential strain on bilateral relations, particularly on issues like Kashmir.

Observer Status and Ongoing Relations:

- In 2018, Bangladesh proposed India for Observer status at the 45th session of the Foreign Ministers' Summit, but Pakistan opposed it.

- India advocates for a more inclusive approach within the OIC, expressing reluctance to join an organization built on religious foundations.

- Despite reservations, India, with strengthened ties to influential OIC members like UAE and Saudi Arabia, remains confident in managing statements from the grouping.

Organization of the Islamic Cooperation

It was founded in **1969**

First OIC Charter Adopted in **1972**

Number of Member Countries **57**

Founding Members **30**

Key Bodies of OIC:
- Council of Foreign Ministers
- General Secretariat
- Islamic Summit
- Al-Quds Committee
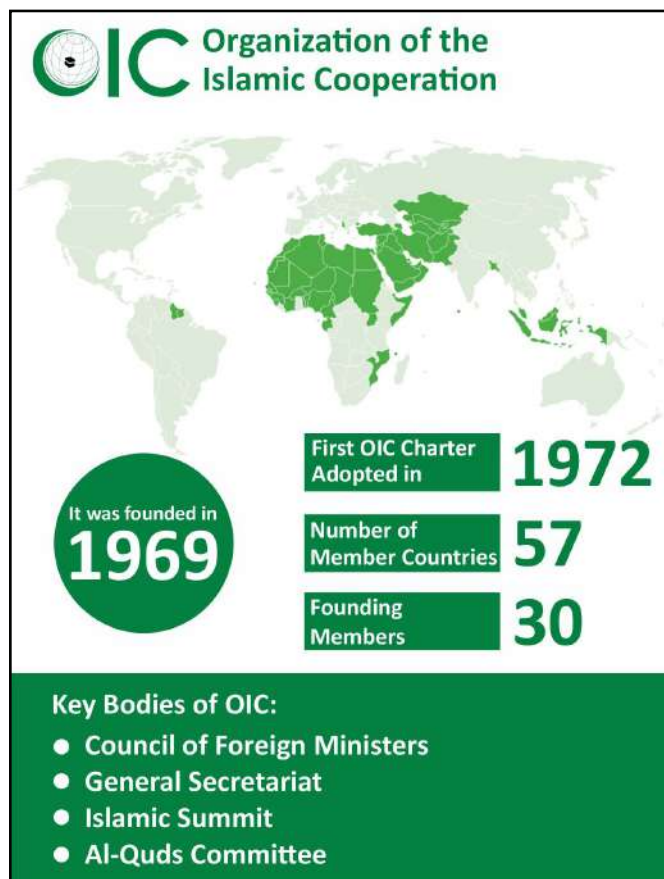
Kashmir Issue and OIC Statements:

- The OIC has, at times, expressed concerns and called for resolutions aligning with the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

- In 2018, the OIC General Secretariat condemned the killing of Kashmiris by Indian forces, a stance consistently rejected by India.

- India maintains that J&K is an integral part of the country, and the OIC has no standing on the issue.

Diplomatic Milestones:

- In 2019, India made its first appearance at the OIC Foreign Ministers' meeting as a "guest of

honour," marking a diplomatic victory.

- This move was significant during heightened tensions with Pakistan post the Pulwama attack.

Recent Developments and Criticisms:

- In 2022, the OIC called on the UN Human Rights Council regarding the hijab issue in Karnataka schools.

- The OIC urged India to ensure the safety and well-being of the Muslim community, criticizing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, and the Babri Masjid verdict.

GOLAN HEIGHTS

Why in the News?

India has cast its vote in support of a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution expressing profound concern about Israel's failure to withdraw from the Syrian Golan Heights.

Geography:

- Located in southwestern Syria, Golan Heights is a rocky plateau about 60km southwest of Damascus.

- Bounded by the Jordan River, the Sea of Galilee, Mount Hermon, Wadi Al-Ruqqād River, and the Yarmūk River.

- Boat-shaped, covering approximately 1,150 square kilometers with dimensions of 44 miles north to south and 27 miles east to west.

History:

- Seized by Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War from Syria.

- Majority of Syrian Arab inhabitants displaced during the conflict.

- Establishment of an armistice line and Israeli military control.

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- Settlement activities initiated by Israel, leading to a contested demographic landscape.

- Unsuccessful Syrian attempt to reclaim the region in the 1973 Middle East conflict.

- 1974 armistice signed with the deployment of a UN observer force along the ceasefire line.

- Unilateral Israeli annexation in 1981 solidified geopolitical tensions.

Current Situation:

- Over 30 Israeli settlements in the Golan, considered illegal under international law.

- Population includes approximately 20,000 Syrians and 20,000 Israelis, fostering a complex social fabric.

- Ongoing tension between Israel and the international community regarding settlements.

Strategic Significance:

- Elevated vantage points provide a clear view of the Syrian capital, Damascus, enhancing military and surveillance capabilities.

- Golan serves as a watershed, contributing to the Jordan River's water supply.

- One-third of Israel's water supply is believed to come from the Golan.

- Fertile land in the region supports agriculture, adding to its strategic importance.

VESSEL WITH 20 INDIANS ON BOARD HIT BY DRONE

Why in the News?

Japanese owned & Liberia flagged merchant Vessel **Chem Pluto** with 21 crew members (20 Indians & 1 Vietnamese national) sailing from UAE to New Mangalore port (India) faced drone attack by Iran backed **Houthi militants** in the Red Sea region, just outside Indian **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).**

- The attack took place around **217 nautical miles** from the Porbandar coast in the Arabian Sea.

- The Indian Coast Guard and the Navy swung into action:

  - **ICGS Vikram** escorting the ship

  - Monitoring & visual inspection through **Dornier Aircraft**

- **India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ):**

  ○ The 1982 Law of the **UNCLOS** defines an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as a zone in the ocean over which a nation enjoys rights that allow using and exploring marine resources including wind and water energy generation and natural gas and oil extraction.

  ○ The country also has the responsibility to conserve the **living and non-living resources** in the zone under this law.

  ○ The convention is presently recognized globally as a treaty that handles matters related to the laws of the sea.

  ○ It has been ratified by **164 UN member** states and other parties. India ratified the law in 1995, under which it **sets the limit of territorial waters.**

  ○ It starts at the edge of the sea, extending outward to a distance of 200 n-mi from the baseline. It stretches into the sea ending at 12 n-mi from the baseline which means it includes the contiguous zone.

  ○ The Exclusive Economic Zone [EEZ] of India is the **18th largest in the world** covering Mainland India, Lakshadweep, and Andaman-Nicobar Islands.

  ○ Maldives and Sri Lanka frontiers the Exclusive Economic Zone.
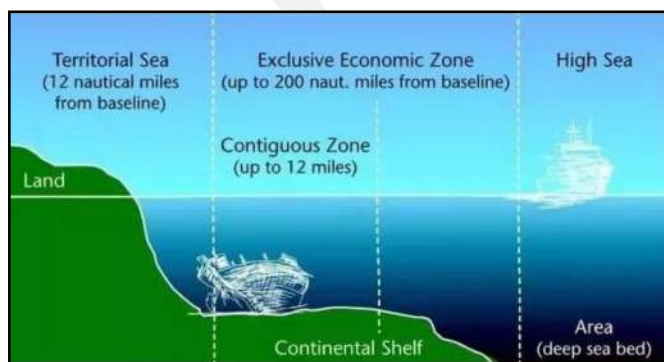
- **Houthi Militants:**

  ○ The Houthis are a large clan belonging to the Zaidi Shia sect, with roots in **Yemen's** northwestern Saada province.

  ○ The Houthi movement, officially called Ansar Allah (Supporters of God), began in the

1990s against the dictatorship of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

  ○ Today, the Houthis are one faction in a bloody **civil war** that has raged in Yemen since 2014.

  ○ The Houthis, **backed by Iran**, are a part of what Iran calls, **"The Axis of Resistance"** : an informal **anti-Israel and anti-West** political and military coalition that it leads.

  ○ Other notable groups in the Axis include **Hezbollah and Hamas.**

  ○ In Yemen, the Houthis are fighting against the Sunni-led internationally recognized Yemeni government, backed by **Saudi Arabia and the UAE.**

- **Impact on International Relations:**

  ○ The maverick role played by Iran through its terror proxies in the Middle-East with scant regard to international law shows the **vulnerability of the Indo-Pacific** as Tehran is targeting global maritime security with impunity.

  ○ This will raise the **cost of commercial shipping** through the Red Sea as the majority of vessels will take the Cape of Good Hope route to reach the West but will have little repercussions for Iran.

  ○ Not only Iran is coercing the region with its lethal tactics, it is also seriously hurting the economic interests of **Sunni states** like Saudi Arabia, Jordan and UAE by creating serious instability in the region.

  ○ Wary of US Sanctions, Commander of the Revolutionary Guards of Iran, Mohammad Reza Naqdi has further threatened to close the **Mediterranean Sea, Gibraltar** and other waterways

- **India - Iran Relations:**

  ○ **Strategic Location**: Iran is located at a stra-

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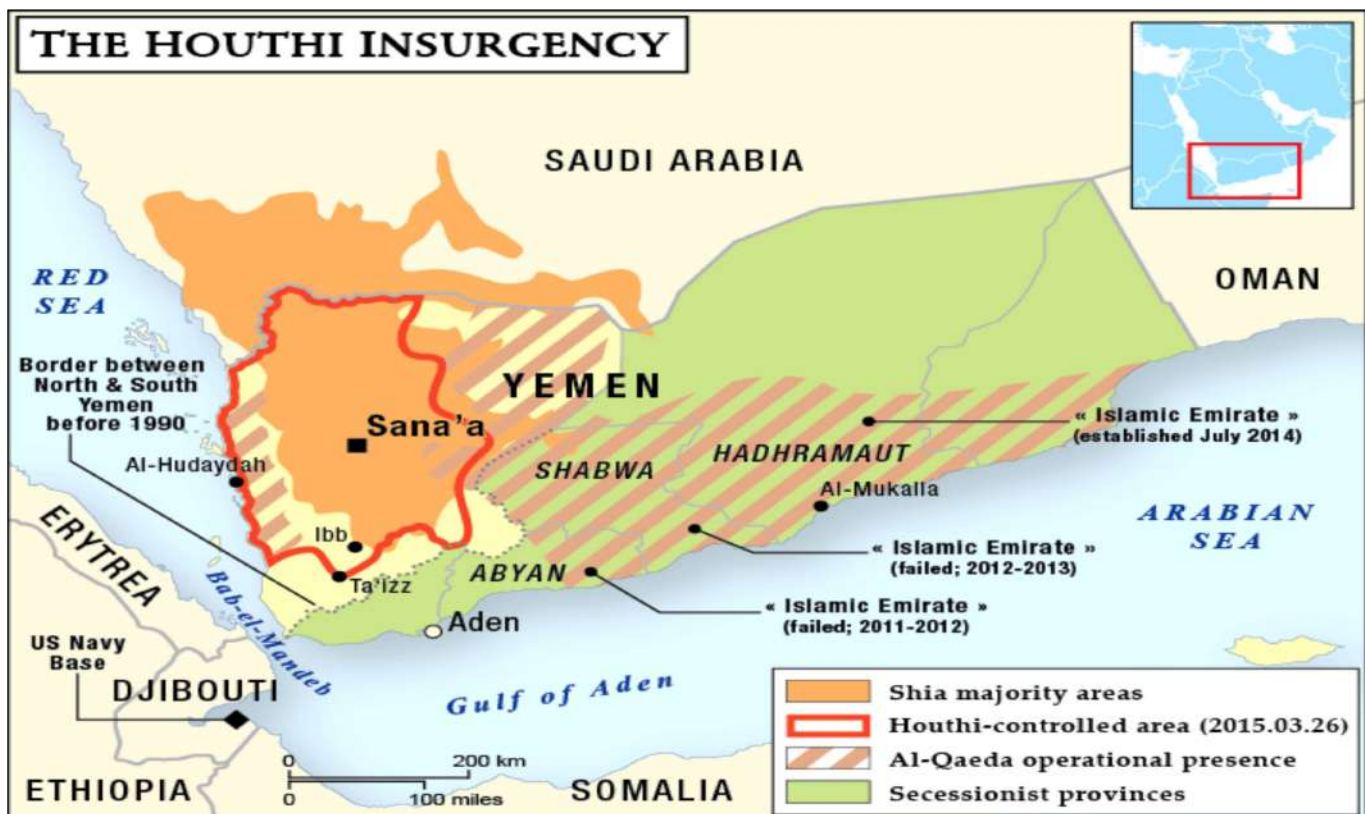
tegic and crucial geographical location between the **Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea.**

- **Connectivity**: Iran is important to India as it provides an **alternate route** of connectivity to Afghanistan and **Central Asian republics,** in the absence of permission for India to use the land route through Pakistan.

- **Natural Resources:** It sits on one of the largest deposits of crude oil and natural gas in the world.

- Iran act as important **Export destination** for India with India exporting petroleum products, rice, machinery & instruments, primary and semi-finished iron & steel, drugs/pharmaceuticals & fine chemicals, manmade yarn & fabrics, tea, rubber manufactured products, etc

- **Major Projects:**

  - Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India **(TAPI)** gas pipeline ii.   C h a - bahar container terminal project

  - Chabahar-Zaranj railway project, etc.

  - The **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):** aims to connect India, Iran, Afghanistan, Russia, Central Asia, and Europe through multi-modal transport thus reducing the transit time of goods drastically.

- **Issues in India - Iran Relations:**

  - The stoppage of oil imports from Iran after May 2019 owing to **U.S. sanctions (CAATSA)** following the revocation of the **Iran nuclear deal** has negatively impacted India's energy security.

  - India's close relations with **Israel,** and Iran's ties with **China,** including signing a

- **25-year strategic partnership agreement** acts as bone of contention.

  - Iran-backed **Houthis** in Yemen launching drone attacks against Saudi Arabia and UAE, who are close partners of India.

  - Militant activities in Arabian sea have com-

promised Indo-Pacific maritime security and raised questions over India's role as **Net Security Provider (NSP)** in the region.

- **Steps To Take:**

  ○ India and Iran have the potential to forge a common and effective policy of engagement with Afghanistan in the future

  ○ Recent rebalancing has taken shape in the West Asian region and this offers great potential to strengthen India-Iran ties.

  ○ For a long time, India's growing ties with the Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE were seen as a **"zero-sum game"** pitted against their rivalry with Iran.

  ○ The **UAE and Qatar** recently held good talks with Iran. The Iranian President has already visited Qatar and Oman this year.

  ○ Syria and Iraq are slowly consolidating and are positively disposed toward Iran.

  ○ The **Abraham Accords** signed with Israel give hope towards the acceptance of Israel by the regional countries as a potential partner and not necessarily a foe.

  ○ All these developments work well for India, as it has close and good relations with the Gulf countries, Iran, and Israel.

  ○ India and Iran, therefore, have a lot that can be achieved together. The assertive diplomacy being practiced by India, emphasizing on standing by its neighbors and friends and focusing solely on fulfilling its national interests, is a refreshing change.

- **Red Sea Region:**

  ○ The Red Sea is a **semi-enclosed tropical basin**, bounded by northeastern Africa, to the west, and the **Arabian peninsula**, to the east.

  ○ It extends between the **Mediterranean Sea**, to the north-west, and the Indian Ocean, to the south-east.

  ○ At the northern end, it separates into the **Gulf of Aqaba and the Gulf of Suez**, which is connected to the Mediterranean Sea via the **Suez Canal.**

  ○ At the southern end, it is connected to the **Gulf of Aden**, and the outer Indian Ocean, via the Strait of **Bab-el-Mandeb.**

PRELIMS QUESTION

Q1. Regarding the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) recently seen in the news, consider the following statements:

1. India is one of its founding members

2. Recently OIC has intervened in Kashmir issue on India's behalf

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. Regarding the Golan Heights recently seen in the news, consider the following statements:

1. It lies on the Syria-Jordan border.

2. It lies west of the Sea of Galilee.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the Red Sea often seen in the news:

1. At the northern end, Red sea separates into Gulf of Aqaba & Gulf of Suez connecting to Mediterranean Sea via the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb

2. At the southern end it is connected to the Gulf of Aden, and the outer Indian Ocean, via the Suez canal.

Which of the above statements is correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q4. Consider the following statements in context to Current Geo-Political events:

1. TAPI gas pipeline often seen in news includes Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India

2. Iran is located at a strategic and crucial geographical location between the Persian Gulf & the Caspian Sea

3. The International North-South Transport Corri-

dor (INSTC) aims to connect India, Iran, Afghanistan, Russia, Central Asia, and Europe through multi-modal transport

Which of the above statements is correct?

(a) 1 and 2

(b) 3 only

(c) 2 and 3

(d) 1 and 3

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	D
2.	A
3.	D
4.	C

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Examine the evolving relationship between India and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Assess the impact of India's rejection of OIC statements recently and its efforts to navigate the organization, highlighting key diplomatic challenges and achievements.

Q2. In the context of evolving global dynamics, discuss the changing perspectives of India on the Israel-Palestine conflict

Q3. What are the challenges between India-Iran relations and how can it be resolved? Give examples to support your answer.

NAMO DRONE DIDI INITIATIVE

Why in the News?

Recently, the Prime Minister has announced NAMO Drone Didi Initiative

Background:

The cornerstone of constructing a robust and advanced nation lies in the empowerment of women, particularly when they thrive economically and actively contribute to the prosperity of rural areas. A notable example of such an initiative is the recent announcement by the Prime Minister, known as the NAMO Drone Didi, disclosed during an engagement with recipients of central government schemes.

Introduction:

The NAMO Drone Didi Initiative is a groundbreaking effort to revitalize farming practices and uplift rural women in India. By providing drones to 15,000 women-led Self Help Groups (SHGs), the initiative seeks to revolutionize agriculture and empower women as key players in the rural economy.

Key Features:

- **Empowering Rural Women with Drone Technology:**

  ○ Extending drone access to 15,000 women SHGs for farmers' rental, fostering technological integration into rural life.

  ○ Elevating rural women by placing them at the forefront of the economy through cut-ting-edge drone technology.

- **Pioneers of Agricultural Revolution:**

  ○ Cultivating a new agricultural revolution led by women drone pilots.

  ○ Generating employment opportunities as drone pilots, mechanics, and spare-part dealers, reinforcing the economic backbone of rural communities.

- **Opportunities for Start-ups:**

  ○ Paving the way for dynamic start-ups in drone aeronautics.

  ○ Unleashing untapped potential in the emerging sector, contributing to economic growth and innovation.

- **Effective Fertigation System:**

  ○ Harnessing drones as efficient fertigation systems for innovative liquid fertilizers.

  ○ Addressing challenges in traditional fertilization methods, fostering equity in agrarian family culture.

- **Time and Labor Savings:**

  ○ Application of pesticides and fertilizers through drones streamlining processes, reducing physical toil.

  ○ Granting farmers more time for productive agricultural work.

India's Fertiliser Challenges:

- **Import Dependency:**

  ○ Despite being a significant fertiliser produc-

er, India grapples with import challenges due to resource inadequacies.

○ The pandemic and geopolitical situations add complexity to the sector.

Overcoming Challenges:

● **Revival and Setting up New Plants:**

○ Government initiatives under the Atmanirbhar Bharat scheme successfully revive dormant fertiliser units.

○ Establishment of new units reduces import dependence and shields farmers from price volatility.

● **Fertiliser Subsidies:**

○ Government subsidies ensure timely and affordable access to fertilisers for farmers.

● **Efficient Fertigation System Development:**

○ Indigenous research yields liquid nano fertilizers.

○ Integration of drone technology addresses the challenge of developing an efficient fertigation system.

Role Of Kisan Drones:

● **Efficient Fertigation System:**

○ Kisan Drones automate spraying systems, introducing a time-saving and efficient application method.

○ Overcoming challenges associated with conventional spraying methods.

Future Prospect Of Namo Drone Didi Initiative:

● Gamechanger for Women's Empowerment:

○ Poised to be a transformative force, propelling women's empowerment and rural prosperity.

○ Anticipated to spearhead a modern agricultural revolution with the support of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Samriddhi Kendras.

CONCLUSION:

The NAMO Drone Didi Scheme not only revolutionizes agriculture but also uplifts women, establishing them as the backbone of the rural economy. It signifies a critical stride towards achieving Viksit Bharat or a developed India.

CREDIT RATING AGENCIES (CRAS)

Why in the News?

Sovereign ratings provided by credit rating agencies are widely regarded as a reliable measure of the default and credit risks associated with a rated sovereign. These ratings, in turn, play a crucial role in

determining the cost of funds borrowed by a country. However, a closer examination of the rating methodologies employed by credit rating agencies reveals several issues.

About Credit Rating Agencies (CRAs)

Credit Rating Agencies (CRAs) are independent organizations tasked with assessing the creditworthiness of individuals, corporations, and governments. Their primary role involves evaluating and assigning credit ratings to debt securities and financial instruments issued by these entities. The resulting credit ratings offer crucial insights for investors and other market participants, aiding in risk assessment.

Key Features of Credit Rating Agencies:

- **Credit Ratings:**

  - CRAs employ alphanumeric symbols or letter grades (e.g., AAA, AA, A, BBB) to rate debt instruments or issuers.

  - Higher ratings indicate lower credit risk, assisting investors in gauging the safety of their investments.

- **Independence:**

  - Maintaining independence and objectivity is a core principle for CRAs.

  - Unbiased opinions on credit risk are essential to facilitate well-informed investment decisions.

- **Issuer-Pays Model:**

  - Traditionally, CRAs were compensated by the issuers of the securities they rated.

  - Concerns about potential conflicts of interest prompted efforts to improve transparency in the rating process.

- **Regulatory Mechanism:**

  - Many countries have regulatory bodies overseeing CRAs to ensure transparency, accuracy, and fairness in assessments.

  - Regulatory oversight helps address concerns related to conflicts of interest and

maintain the integrity of credit ratings.

- **Types of Ratings:**

  - CRAs provide ratings for diverse debt instruments, including corporate bonds, municipal bonds, government bonds, and asset-backed securities.

  - Issuer credit ratings reflect the overall creditworthiness of a company or government.

Evolution of Major Sovereign Rating Agencies:

Pre-Bretton Woods Institutions:

  - Sovereign credit ratings predate the establishment of Bretton Woods institutions.

  - Globally recognized agencies, Moody's, Standard & Poor's (S&P), and Fitch, played crucial roles.

Moody's:

- Established in 1900, Moody's issued its first sovereign ratings just before World War I.

- Holds the distinction of being the oldest among the major rating agencies.

Standard & Poor's and Fitch Origins:

- In the 1920s, Poor's Publishing and Standard Statistics, which later evolved into Standard & Poor's (S&P), initiated the practice of assigning ratings to government bonds.

- These agencies have since become prominent players in the sovereign rating landscape.

Importance of Sovereign Ratings:

- **Creditworthiness Marker:**

  - Assess the creditworthiness of governments.

  - Crucial indicator for global investors regarding a government's ability and willingness to repay debt.

- **Assess the Borrowing Ability:**

  - Similar to individual credit ratings, sover-

eign ratings impact a country's borrowing capacity.

- Higher ratings indicate more reliable borrowers.

- **Interest Rates Impact:**

  - Governments with strong repayment history and assets enjoy lower interest rates.

  - Lower sovereign ratings lead to higher interest rates, affecting both governments and businesses within the country.

- **Set Safety Benchmark:**

  - Governments serve as a benchmark for safety in a country.

  - Low sovereign ratings indicate higher risk, impacting the entire economic landscape.

- **Global Investments and Borrowing Costs:**

  - Poor sovereign ratings limit borrowing capacity for developing countries, hindering economic productivity.

  - Affect global investments and a country's ability to attract capital.

- **Impact on Poverty and Economic Productivity:**

  - Favourable ratings facilitate easier borrowing, enabling countries to leverage resources for development.

  - Poor ratings hinder economic growth, posing challenges to poverty alleviation and productivity.

Indian Government's Critique of Rating Agencies:

- **Opaque Methodology and Bias Against Developing Economies:**

  - The Finance Ministry criticizes the lack of transparency in rating methodologies, citing biases against developing economies.

  - Highlights Fitch's bias favoring high foreign ownership in banking, disadvantaging nations with a public-sector-dominated banking industry.

- Emphasizes the discriminatory nature of assessments, neglecting the developmental role of public sector banks in fostering financial inclusion.

- **Transparency in Selection of Experts:**

  - The government raises concerns about the non-transparent selection of experts consulted for rating assessments.

  - Lack of clarity in the expert selection process adds complexity to an already intricate methodology.

- **Unclear Assignment of Weights for Parameters:**

  - The Finance Ministry contends that rating agencies fail to clearly convey the assigned weights for each parameter.

  - Fitch's provision of numerical weights for some parameters is criticized for ambiguity, as these are deemed illustrative rather than definitive.

- **Questionable Use of Composite Governance Indicator:**

  - The government questions the reliance on the composite governance indicator, weighted at 21.4, derived solely from the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI).

  - The WGI, based on subjective assessments, is criticized for incorporating perception-based surveys on aspects like freedom of expression, rule of law, and corruption.

  - Excessive reliance on subjective appraisals, coupled with the Qualitative Overlay, raises concerns about the objectivity of the rating process.

- **Subjectivity and Arbitrary Indicators:**

  - Criticism is directed at the influence of the composite governance indicator and perceived institutional strength, surpassing the collective impact of other macroeconomic

fundamentals in determining credit rating upgrades.

○ Developing economies are said to face the challenge of demonstrating progress along arbitrary indicators constructed from one-size-fits-all perception-based surveys.

NATIONAL PENSION SYSTEM (NPS)

Why in the News?

The Union Home Minister's recent announcement to deliberate on the restoration of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) has reignited discussions on the National Pension System (NPS).

As a retirement benefit scheme introduced by the Government of India, the NPS aims to provide a regular income post-retirement for all its subscribers.

Key Features of the National Pension System (NPS):

● **Inception and Expansion:**

  ○ Launched on January 1, 2004.

  ○ Initially for new government recruits, it was extended to all citizens, including those in the unorganized sector, on a voluntary basis from May 1, 2009.

● **Voluntary Nature:**

  ○ Open to all citizens, allowing flexibility in investment amounts at any time.

● **Permanent Retirement Account Number (PRAN):**

  ○ Each subscriber is assigned a unique PRAN for account identification.

● **Portability:**

  ○ NPS accounts and PRANs remain constant despite changes in employment, location, or state, accessible from anywhere in India.

● **Regulatory Authority:**

  ○ Governed by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).

● **Defined Benefit Absence:**

  ○ Unlike traditional pension schemes, NPS lacks a defined benefit at exit; accumulated wealth depends on individual contributions and investment returns.

● **Investment Structure:**

  ○ Individual savings are pooled into pension funds managed by PFRDA-regulated professionals.

  ○ Diversified portfolios include Government Bonds, Bills, Corporate Debentures, and Shares.

● **Corpus Growth and Withdrawal:**

  ○ Contributions accumulate until retirement, with market-linked returns.

  ○ Subscribers can exit before retirement or opt for superannuation.

● **Two Personal Accounts under PRAN:**

  ○ Tier I Account: Non-withdrawable, designed for retirement savings.

  ○ Tier II Account: Voluntary savings with withdrawal flexibility, not eligible for tax benefits.

Prospects of Restoring the Old Pension Scheme (OPS):

● The government's consideration of restoring OPS prompts a reevaluation of retirement benefit schemes, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach between voluntary contributions and defined benefits.

● The committee's report will likely play a crucial role in shaping the future of pension schemes in India.

Aspect	Old Pension Scheme	National Pension Scheme (NPS)
Guarantee of Income	Guarantees a lifelong income post-retirement.	Participants contribute, and the scheme does not guarantee a fixed income.
Financial Responsibility	Government bears the expenditure on the pension.	Employees contribute, and the government may match the contributions.
Monthly Payment	Assures a fixed monthly payment, typically 50% of the last drawn salary.	Contributions are invested in earmarked schemes with potential market-linked returns.
Contribution Structure	The entire financial responsibility lies with the government.	Employees contribute a portion, and the government may contribute as well.
Investment of Funds	Not applicable, as the government bears the financial burden.	Funds are invested in earmarked investment schemes through Pension Fund Managers.
Withdrawal at Retirement	Monthly pension payment continues, as per the predetermined amount.	At retirement, a portion (60%) can be withdrawn tax-free, while the remaining (40%) is invested in annuities.

RAT-HOLE MINING

Why in the News?

Recently, the efforts to rescue workers trapped in the Silkyara-Barkot tunnel have brought attention to the use of horizontal auger machines and the adoption of rat-hole mining practices.

Horizontal Auger Machines:

Definition and Functionality:

- Also known as horizontal boring machines or directional drills. It is a specialized tool for creating horizontal bores or underground tunnels without surface disturbance.

- Comprise a rotating helical screw blade (auger) attached to a central shaft or drill.

- Commonly used in construction, utility installations, and infrastructure projects.

Working Mechanism:

- It is positioned at the bore's starting point on the surface.

- It consists of a drill head with a rotating auger or drill string. The auger cuts through soil, rock, or other materials underground.

- Rotation is powered by hydraulic or mechanical systems and the material removal is facilitated by drilling fluid or mud pumped through the drill string.

Rat-Hole Mining:

- It is a method of extracting coal from narrow, horizontal seams, prevalent in Meghalaya. It involves narrow pits ("rat holes") dug into the ground for coal extraction.

- Miners descend using ropes or bamboo ladders to reach coal seams.

- Manual extraction using primitive tools like pickaxes, shovels, and baskets.

Types of Rat-Hole Mining:

- **Side-Cutting Procedure:** Narrow tunnels dug

on hill slopes until the coal seam is found. Coal seams in Meghalaya are typically thin, less than 2 meters.

- **Box-Cutting:** A rectangular opening is made, followed by a vertical pit, and horizontal rat-hole-sized tunnels for coal extraction.

Environmental and Safety Concerns:

- Unregulated mines lacking safety measures.

- Potential for land degradation, deforestation, and water pollution.

- Hazardous working conditions, accidents, injuries, and fatalities.

Ban on Rat-Hole Mining:

- Banned by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in 2014 and retained in 2015. cited reasons include flooding during the rainy season, resulting in deaths and environmental damage.

- Despite bans, challenges persist due to economic factors and the lack of alternative livelihoods.

MACROECONOMIC CAUSES/ REASONS OF EMPLOYMENT CRISIS IN INDIA/UNEMPLOYMENT PREVALENT IN INDIA

Why in the News?

According to a recent study, fewer people are currently employed in agriculture and agriculture-related sectors, yet the change in the unemployment rate has also been weak.

- People leaving agriculture are working in greater numbers in construction sites and unorganized sectors of the economy than in factories.

Unemployment Rate in India : Historical Data

The following is the unemployment rate data for the last 10 or 15 years in India, which can be understood from this chart/graph –

Year	Unemployment rate (percentage)
2023	10.05 (in October)*
2022	7.33
2021	5.98
2020	8.00
2019	5.27
2018	5.33
2017	5.36
2016	5.42
2015	5.44
2014	5.44
2013	5.42
2012	5.41
2011	5.43
2010	5.55
2009	5.54
2008	5.41

Method of Measuring Current Unemployment Rate In India:

Currently the following is the way to measure the current unemployment rate in India –

- The past and present unemployment rate in India is an important economic indicator expressed as a percentage which varies depending on the prevailing economic conditions.

- When job opportunities reduce during economic recession, unemployment starts increasing. Conversely, during periods of economic growth and prosperity, the unemployment rate is expected to decline, with many job opportunities available to the public.

- The formula to calculate the current unemployment rate in India is as follows:

- Unemployment rate = number of unemployed persons/citizen labor force come on

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- Unemployment rate = Number of unemployed persons / (Number of employed persons + Number of unemployed persons)

To be classified as unemployed, a person must meet specific criteria:

- They must be at least 16 years of age and available for full-time work in the last four weeks.

- They should actively seek employment during this period.

- Some exceptions include individuals who have been temporarily laid off and are actively seeking to rejoin their previous jobs.

Types of Unemployment:

Disguised Unemployment:

- This is a situation in which more people are employed than are actually required.

- It is mainly found in agricultural and unorganized sectors of India.

Seasonal Unemployment:

- This unemployment is observed during certain seasons of the year.

- Agricultural laborers in India have very little work throughout the year.

Structural Unemployment:

- It is a category of unemployment resulting from an imbalance between the jobs available in the market and the skills of workers.

Cyclical Unemployment:

- This is a result of the business cycle, where unemployment increases during recessions and decreases with economic growth.

Technical Unemployment:

- This is the reduction in employment due to changes in technology.

Frictional Unemployment:

- Frictional unemployment refers to the time gap between jobs when a person is looking for a new job or changing jobs.

Vulnerable Unemployment:

- This means that people are working informally without proper job contracts and thus have no legal protection.

- These individuals are considered 'unemployed' because their work is never recorded.

Employment in Agriculture Sector:

- In the year 1993-94, agriculture constituted about 62% of the country's employed labor force.

- The labor percentage in agriculture (based on data from the National Statistical Office's Periodic Labor Force Survey) had fallen by about 6% points by 2004–05 and by 9% points over the next seven years.

- This declining trend in labor percentage continued at a slow pace in the subsequent seven years.

- The share of agriculture in India's workforce declined from 61.9% to 41.4% between 1993-94 and 2018-19.

- It is estimated that as per the per capita GDP level in the year 2018, India's agriculture sector should employ 33-34% of the total workforce.

- Thus, this 41.4% does not represent a substantial deviation from the average workforce.

Employment Trends in India:

Agriculture:

Trend Reversal:

- There has been a continuous change in this trend in the last two years, due to which the share of people employed in agriculture has increased to 44-45% in the year 2020-21.

- This is primarily related to Covid-induced economic disruptions.

Structural Changes:

- The migration of labor out of agriculture that India has seen over the past three decades or more does not qualify as what economists call "structural change."

- Structural change involves the shift of labor from agriculture to sectors, particularly manufacturing and modern services, where productivity, value added and average incomes are higher.

- Along with agriculture, their share in total employment in sectors like manufacturing (and mining) has also declined.

- Surplus labor from agriculture is being absorbed into manufacturing and services on a large scale.

- The process of structural change in India has been weak and flawed.

- Despite the temporary halt due to Covid, labor movement into non-agricultural sectors continues, but that surplus labor is not moving towards higher value-added non-agricultural activities, especially manufacturing and modern services.

- Labor transfer is taking place within the low-productivity informal economy.

Service Area:

- The service sector includes relatively well-paying industries such as information technology, business process, outsourcing, telecommunications, finance, health care, education and public administration.

- Most of the jobs are related to service sector employment like small retailing, small eateries, domestic help, sanitation, security staff, transportation and other similar informal economic activities.

- The low share of employment in organized enterprises, defined as those employing 10 or more workers, also shows that the employment situation in India is pathetic.

Growing Employment Opportunities in Information Technology Sector:

- The combined headcount of India's top five IT

companies (Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Wipro, HCL Technologies and Tech Mahindra) has increased from 55 lakh to 15.69 lakh between 2020-22.

- This is an increase of 4.14 lakh or about 36% over the post-Covid pandemic period, when most other sectors except agriculture were losing jobs and wages.

- The number of combined employment in these five companies is higher than the combined employment of Indian Railways and the three defense services.

- Much of the recent success in the IT sector has been a result of exports, which have led to job creation.

- India's net exports in software services have increased from $84.64 billion in 2019-20 to $109.54 billion in 2021-22. Which is also related to the issue of employment generation in many ways.

Possible Measures to Curb Unemployment:

To Provide Skill Training to Workers Engaged in Agriculture:

- The government should give priority to schemes that enhance the skills of the workforce engaged in the agricultural sector.

- This will provide a dual benefit by promoting skills and knowledge in the agriculture sector and at the same time it will help the workers to look for other better areas of employment.

Promotion of Labour-Intensive Industries:

- There are many labour-intensive manufacturing sectors in India such as food processing, leather and footwear, wood products and furniture, apparel, textiles and clothing etc.

- Every industry requires a special package to generate employment.

Decentralization of Industries:

- To provide employment to people in every region, it is necessary to decentralize industrial

activities.

- Development of rural areas will help in reducing migration of rural people to urban areas thereby reducing pressure on employment in urban areas.

Government Initiatives to Reduce Unemployment Rate:

To reduce India's huge population and the current unemployment rate, the following initiatives or schemes are also being run by the government to solve the problem of unemployment and to provide employment to maximum people –

- 'Support for Marginalized Persons for Livelihood and Enterprise (SMILE) Scheme .

- PM Daksh Yojana .

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) .

- Prime Minister Skill Development Scheme .

- Startup India Scheme .

The Way Forward to Solve the Problem of Unemployment:

- According to the National Sample Survey Survey (NSSO) , the unemployment rate for persons aged 15 years and above in urban areas declined to 6.8 per cent during January-March 2023 from 8.2 per cent a year ago . This positive development suggests a possible turnaround in the job market amid the current economic complexities. However, continued vigilance and effective policy measures are critical to promote sustainable job growth and secure the country's future prosperity.

- Unemployment remains a serious concern in India, with fluctuations being seen across various sectors of employment in India. According to a recent report by Bloomberg, which references Center for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data for July, the overall unemployment rate in India stands at 7.95 percent by July 2023.

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB)

Why in the News?

The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have entered into an agreement for a $250 million policy-based loan.

- **Establishment:**

  o The Asian Development Bank (ADB) was established on December 19, 1966, as a regional development bank.

- **Headquarters and Field Offices:**

  o ADB is headquartered at 6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong, Metro Manila 1550, Philippines.

  o It maintains 42 field offices in Asia and the Pacific, with representative offices in Washington, Frankfurt, Tokyo, and Sydney.

- **Aim and Mandate:**

  o ADB positions itself as a social development organization committed to poverty reduction in Asia and the Pacific.

  o Its objectives include fostering inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable development, and regional integration.

  o These goals are pursued through investments in various sectors, such as infrastructure, healthcare services, financial and public administration systems, climate change preparedness, and natural resource management.

- **Membership:**

  o ADB started with 31 members and has now expanded to include 68 members.

  o Membership is open to members of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and non-regional developed countries.

Share Holding and Voting Power
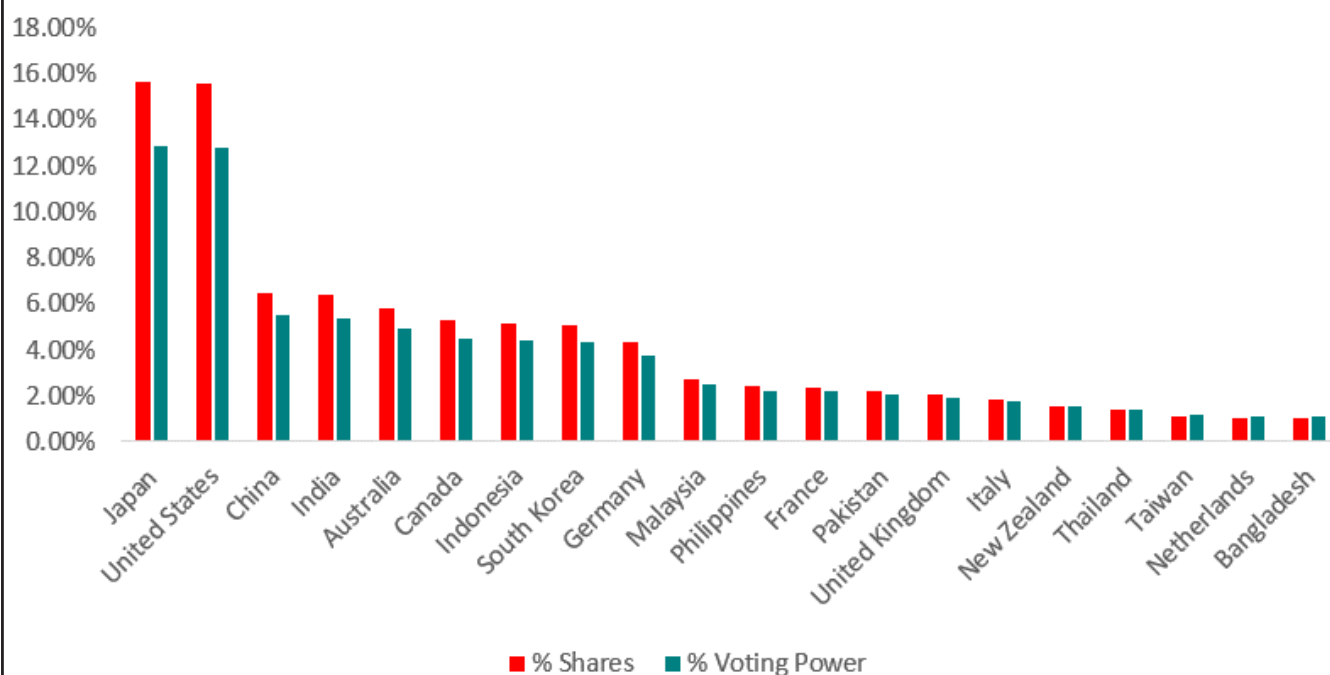
- **Decision-Making and Votes:**

  - ADB's decision-making process mirrors that of the World Bank.

  - The number of votes held by a member corresponds to the number of shares it owns, distributed in proportion to capital subscriptions.

  - Japan currently controls the highest number of shares, constituting approximately 15.5% of the bank's ownership.

Board of Governors:

- **Highest Policy-Making Body:**

  - The Board of Governors, consisting of one representative from each member state, serves as the highest policy-making body of the ADB.

  - This board elects the twelve members of the Board of Directors, including their deputies.

- **Composition:**

  - Eight of the twelve directors represent regional (Asia-Pacific) members, while the others represent non-regional members.

- **Election of President:**

  - The Board of Governors is responsible for electing the president, who also serves as the chairperson of the Board of Directors and manages the overall functioning of ADB.

President:

- **Term and Re-election:**

  - The president holds a five-year term and is eligible for re-election.

  - Traditionally, the president has been Japanese, reflecting Japan's significant shareholding in the bank.

Areas of Focus:

- **Aligned with SDGs:**

  - ADB's development initiatives align with the World Bank's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- **Key Areas:**

  - The bank prioritizes key areas, including Education, Health, Transport, Energy, Finance

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Sector, and Climate Change.

- **Sustainable and Inclusive Growth:**

  - ADB aims to foster sustainable and inclusive economic growth by financing projects in education and health.

  - It also contributes to improving capital markets and business infrastructure in target countries.

- **Specialized Areas:**

  - ADB engages in specialized areas such as Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), Information Technology, Regional Cooperation and Integration, etc.

  - These serve as secondary capacity-building programs to complement primary focus areas.

RBI DIRECTIVES ON BANKS' AND NBFCS' INVESTMENTS IN ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENT FUNDS (AIFS)

Why in the News?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued fresh guidelines to banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) concerning their involvement in Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs).

RBI's Objective:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued directives to banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) to enhance oversight and mitigate risks associated with investments in Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs). The aim is to prevent financial vulnerabilities, including the risk of evergreening.

Key Directives:

- **Restrictions on Investments in AIFs with Downstream Investments:**

  - Banks and NBFCs are prohibited from investing in AIFs with downstream investments in debtor companies of the bank, directly or indirectly.

  - "Debtor company" refers to a company with which the regulated entity has had loan or investment exposure in the preceding 12 months.

- **Addressing Evergreening Concerns:**

  - The directives aim to address concerns related to evergreening, which involves extending new credit to cover interest payments on existing debts.

- **Regulatory Concerns on Certain Transactions:**

  - RBI notes concerns about transactions where entities substitute direct loan exposure with indirect exposure through AIF investments.

- **Liquidation of Investments:**

  - If a bank or NBFC is invested in an AIF making downstream investments, it must liquidate within 30 days from the downstream investment or circular issuance date.

- **Provision and Capital Deduction:**

  - In cases where liquidation is not feasible within the stipulated time, a 100% provision on such investments is mandated.

  - Investments in subordinated units of AIFs with a 'priority distribution model' are subject to full deduction from capital funds.

Overview of Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs):

- **Regulation and Types:**

  - AIFs in India are regulated by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

  - They are categorized into Category I, II, and III based on investment focus and strategies.

- **Categories of AIFs:**

  - Category I AIFs: Invest in startups, SMEs, infrastructure, etc., with certain tax benefits.

  - Category II AIFs: Include private equity, debt funds, real estate funds, etc.

  - Category III AIFs: Hedge funds using complex trading strategies for short-term returns.

Category	Type of AIF	Investment Focus	Incentives/Concessions from Government/Regulators
Category I	Start-ups, SMEs, Government-approved sectors	Economically and socially viable sectors	May receive incentives from the government
Category II	Private Equity Funds, Debt Funds	No specific incentives or concessions	No incentives or concessions
Category III	Hedge Funds, Short-term return-focused funds	Short-term returns, Open-ended funds	No incentives or concessions

- **Features:**

  - SEBI regulates AIFs for investor protection and market stability.

  - Primarily accessible to sophisticated investors with higher risks compared to traditional avenues.

  - Structured as trusts, companies, or limited liability partnerships (LLPs).

- **Benefits:**

  - Exposure to diverse asset classes and investment strategies.

  - Higher returns compared to traditional options due to the focus on alternative assets.

  - Managed by experienced fund managers.

- **Challenges:**

  - Higher risks due to investment in less liquid and alternative assets.

  - Lock-in periods restricting fund withdrawals.

  - Impact of regulatory changes on AIF structures.

Conclusion:

Investing in AIFs in India presents both opportunities and challenges. While offering diversification and potentially higher returns, investors must carefully assess strategies, track records, fees, and risks. SEBI's regulatory framework aims to ensure transparency and investor protection in the dynamic landscape of alternative investments.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. With reference to the NAMO Drone Didi Initiative, consider the following statements:

1. The initiative aims to provide drones to 15,000 women-led Self Help Groups (SHGs) to revolutionize agriculture and empower rural women.

2. The initiative focuses on the development of drone technology for efficient fertigation systems, addressing challenges in traditional fertilization methods.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. With reference to the provided information on the National Pension System (NPS), consider the following statements:

1. The NPS was initially launched for new government recruits and later extended to all citizens

2. The NPS Tier II Account is designed for non-withdrawable retirement savings.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

PLUTUS IAS

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. With reference to the rat-hole mining, consider the following statements:

1. Rat-hole mining is a method of extracting coal from narrow, horizontal seams, prevalent in Maharashtra.

2. The Supreme Court banned rat-hole mining in 2014.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q4. The unemployment found in the agricultural sector in India in which more people are employed than required is called?

(a) Seasonal unemployment.

(b) Disguised unemployment.

(c) Structural unemployment.

(d) Marginal unemployment **.**

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	C
2.	A
3.	D
4	B

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the potential impact of integrating drone technology in agriculture, with a specific emphasis on the NAMO Drone Didi Initiative in India.

Q2. Examine the impact of sovereign credit ratings on the borrowing costs of nations. How do these ratings influence economic policies and global investments in developing economies?

Q3. In light of the ongoing discussions regarding the potential revival of Old Pension Scheme (OPS), critically assess the implications of such a move on India's pension landscape

Q4. Evaluate the reasons behind the National Green Tribunal's (NGT) ban on rat-hole mining.

Q5. What do you understand by unemployment and unemployment rate? Explaining the current situation of unemployment in India, discuss the major initiatives and programs being run to solve the problem of unemployment.

STATE-WISE DISPARITIES IN MGNREGA SOCIAL AUDITS

Why in the News?

Kerala stands out as the sole state across the nation to have successfully conducted a social audit for all village panchayats under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

Overview of State Performance in Mgnrega Social Audits

- **Top Performers:** Kerala leads the way as the only state to achieve 100% coverage of gram panchayats in MGNREGA social audits. Following closely are Bihar (64.4%), Gujarat (58.8%), Jammu and Kashmir (64.1%), Odisha (60.42%), and Uttar Pradesh (54.97%).

- **Moderate Achievers:** Telangana (40.5%), Himachal Pradesh (45.32%), and Andhra Pradesh (49.7%) have covered 40% or more villages in social audits, representing moderate success in the implementation of MGNREGA.

- **Lagging Behind:** Madhya Pradesh (1.73%), Mizoram (17.5%), Chhattisgarh (25.06%), and Rajasthan (34.74%) are states with lower percentages, indicating a need for improvement in MGNREGA social audit coverage.

Understanding Social Audit in the Context of Mgnrega

- **Definition and Purpose:** Social audit is a process for measuring, understanding, reporting, and improving an organization's social and ethical performance. It serves as a vital instrument for assessing the social accountability of an organization.

- **Role in Development Programs:** Social audits enable end-users to scrutinize the impact of developmental programs, bridging gaps between vision/goal and reality, and between efficiency and effectiveness.

- **Significance Post 73rd Amendment:** The concept of social audit gained significance after the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution, emphasizing the role of local self-governance.

Mgnrega and Social Audit Integration

- **Legislative Framework:** Section 17 of the MGNREGA Act mandates the gram sabha to monitor the execution of works, with social audits playing a central role in ensuring continuous public vigilance.

- **Social Audit Units:** Each state establishes independent social audit units, separate from implementing authorities. These units are entitled to funds equivalent to 0.5% of the MGNREGA expenditure incurred by the state in the previous year.

- **Audit Standards:** The Comptroller and Auditor General set auditing standards, including quality checks of infrastructure, preventing financial misappropriation, and ensuring adherence to procedures.

- **Frequency and Scope:** Social audits are to be conducted in every Gram Panchayat at least once in six months, encompassing a comprehensive review of all aspects of MGNREGA implementation.

- **Outsourcing and Independence:** Rule 4 of Audit of Schemes Rules, 2011, mandates states to establish an independent organization, the Social Audit Unit (SAU), ensuring autonomy and preventing conflicts of interest. Outsourcing to NGOs with relevant experience is encouraged.

In conclusion, understanding the state-wise variations and the integration of social audits in MGNREGA provides valuable insights into the effectiveness and challenges of this crucial social welfare program.

RARE DISEASES

Why in the News?

The Health Ministry has ensured the availability of generic drugs to facilitate the care and treatment of four medical conditions: Tyrosinemia-Type 1, Gaucher's Disease, Wilson's Disease, and the Dravet-Lennox Gastaut Syndrome.

About Rare Diseases

Rare diseases, also known as orphan diseases, pose unique challenges due to their low prevalence in the population.

Characteristics of Rare Diseases:

- Rare diseases are debilitating lifelong condi-

tions occurring infrequently in the human population.

- WHO defines rare diseases with a prevalence of 1 or less per 1000 population.

- In India, a prevalence of less than 100 patients per 100,000 people is considered as a rare disease.

EXAMPLES OF RARE DISEASES:

- **Tyrosinemia-Type 1:**

  ○ A rare autosomal recessive genetic metabolic disorder.

  ○ Characterized by a deficiency of the enzyme fumarylacetoacetate hydrolase (FAH).

  ○ Results in the abnormal accumulation of tyrosine, potentially causing severe liver disease.

- **Gaucher's Disease:**

  ○ Characterized by the accumulation of glucocerebroside in organs.

  ○ Organs, particularly the spleen, liver, and bone marrow, enlarge and may suffer impaired function.
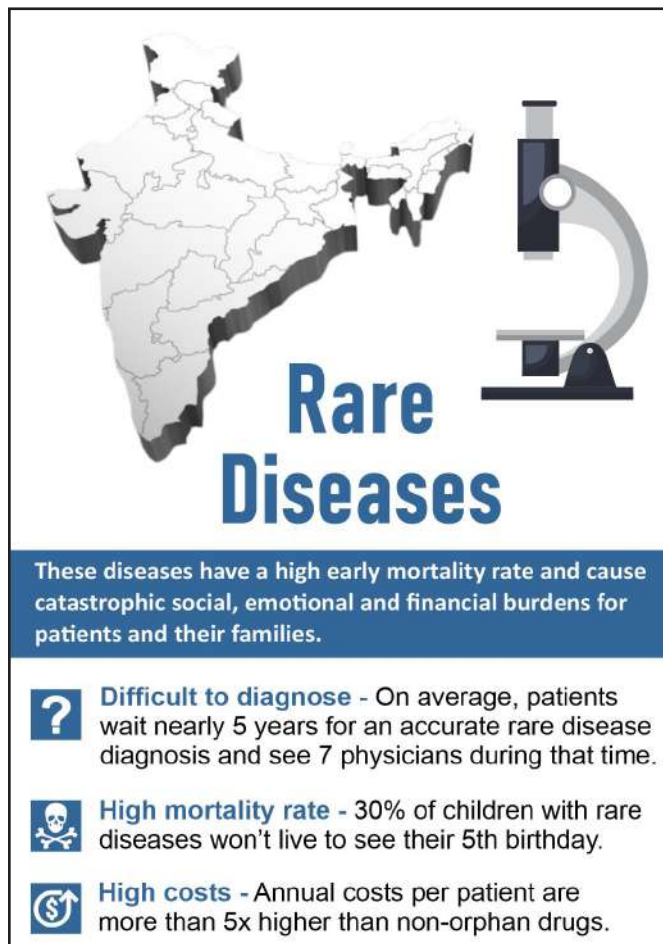
- **Wilson's Disease:**

  ○ A rare genetic disorder leading to the accumulation of copper in organs.

○ Affects the liver, brain, and cornea.

● **Dravet-Lennox Gastaut Syndrome:**

○ Two distinct types of epileptic syndromes.

○ Dravet syndrome: A severe form of epilepsy beginning in infancy.

○ Lennox-Gastaut syndrome: Childhood-onset epilepsy with multiple seizure types and cognitive impairment.

These diseases have a high early mortality rate and cause catastrophic social, emotional and financial burdens for patients and their families.

? Difficult to diagnose - On average, patients wait nearly 5 years for an accurate rare disease diagnosis and see 7 physicians during that time.

High mortality rate - 30% of children with rare diseases won't live to see their 5th birthday.

High costs - Annual costs per patient are more than 5x higher than non-orphan drugs.

Rare Diseases in India:

● Approximately 450 rare diseases identified, with 80% of patients affected by around 350 rare diseases.

● Estimated burden of 80 to 96 million cases annually in India.

● 70-80% of rare diseases are genetic, and the majority remain asymptomatic until later in life.

● Less than 5% of rare diseases in India have avail-

able therapies.

Government Interventions:

● **National Policy for Rare Diseases, 2021:**

○ Aims to lower the incidence and prevalence of rare diseases through an integrated preventive strategy.

○ Encompasses awareness generation, screening, and counseling programs.

● **Production Linked Incentive Scheme 2.0 for Pharmaceuticals:**

○ An INR 15,000 Crore initiative supporting orphan drugs development.

○ Targets Category 1 pharmaceutical goods in the Production Linked Incentive Scheme.

● **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO):**

○ Provisions for fast-track processing of applications for rare disease drugs in drug trials and experimental therapies.

○ Exemption of application fees for potential drug candidates.

● **Genomics for Understanding Rare Diseases: India Alliance Network (GUaRDIAN):**

○ A non-profit clinical genomics research network.

○ Establishes a network of clinicians and scientists for extensive clinical genomics research in India.

● **Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR):**

○ Establishes the Indian Genetic Disease Database (IGDD).

○ Tracks mutations in causal genes for genetic diseases common in India, providing insights to physicians and researchers.

Rare diseases present significant challenges globally, and India is actively addressing these challenges through policy interventions, financial incentives,

and research initiatives. The collaborative efforts of government bodies and research networks aim to enhance awareness, diagnosis, and treatment options for individuals affected by rare diseases in the country.

HIV/AIDS

Why in the News?

World AIDS Day is observed every year on December 1 to spread awareness about HIV/AIDS.

Background of Origin of HIV in Humans:

- HIV infection in humans has its roots in a type of chimpanzee in Central Africa. Research indicates that the transfer of the virus from chimpanzees to humans likely occurred as early as the late 1800s.

- The chimpanzee version of the virus is known as the simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV). SIV is endemic in chimpanzee populations and has a genetic similarity to HIV.

- The transmission from chimpanzees to humans is believed to have taken place during hunting activities. Humans, while hunting chimpanzees for meat, came into contact with the infected blood of these animals.

About HIV/AIDS

- HIV/AIDS is a chronic and potentially life-threatening condition caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

- The virus targets the immune system, rendering individuals more susceptible to infections and diseases.

Transmission:

- Primarily a sexually transmitted infection (STI), transmitted through sexual contact.

- Spread can also occur through contact with infected blood, often associated with illicit injec-

tion drug use or needle sharing.

- Mother-to-child transmission can happen during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding.

HIV/AIDS

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (**AIDS**) is a disease of the immune system caused by Human Immunodeficiency Virus (**HIV**).

ORIGINS

The likelihood is that HIV emerged from Simian Immunodeficiency Virus (SIV), an ancient disease that is widespread in wild apes.

SPREADS

SEX, DRUGS, PREGNANCY

Spreads from an infected person via unprotected sex, intravenous drug use & from Mother to child during pregnancy. It can't reproduce on its own can't survive outside the body.

HOW IT ATTACKS

IMMUNE SYSTEM ATTACKED

It kills white blood cells that work to keep the body free from illness & disease. When enough of these cells are killed off, it leaves the body open to infection and disease.

HOW ITS PREVENTED

NO VACCINE, NO CURE

There is currently no vaccine or cure for AIDS or HIV. Prevention is through safe sex (ie condoms), clean needles & treatment for expectant Mums.

THE POSITIVES

47% New HIV infections have been **reduced by 47%** since the peak in 1996.

51% AIDS-related deaths have been **reduced by more than 51%** since the peak in 2004.

Progression to Aids:

- In the absence of treatment, HIV has the potential to advance to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

- AIDS represents an advanced stage of the infection, characterized by severe immune system damage.

Treatment:

- No definitive cure for HIV currently exists; individuals have the virus for life once infected.

- Effective management is achievable through antiretroviral therapy (ART).

- ART helps control the virus, allowing for a long and healthy life while minimizing the risk of transmission to partners.

Prevention:

- Engaging in safe sexual practices and employing barrier methods can lower the likelihood of sexual transmission.

- Avoiding sharing needles and practicing safe injection practices can prevent transmission through blood contact.

- Prevention of mother-to-child transmission involves interventions during pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding.

HIV/AIDS in India:

- **Declining Numbers:** Over the last decade, the incidence of HIV in India has significantly decreased, reflecting positive strides in combating the epidemic.

- **National AIDS Control Organization (NACO):**

  ○ NACO, a Government of India organization, plays a pivotal role in managing HIV patients, providing a robust network for diagnosis, treatment, and control.

  ○ It operates through 35 HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Societies across the country.

- **Medical Advancements:** The availability of Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Treatment (HAART) has notably improved the prognosis for HIV patients in the past two decades.

- **Historical Context:**

  ○ The National AIDS Committee was formed in 1986 after the first AIDS case was detected in India.

  ○ The increasing spread of the epidemic led to the launch of India's first National AIDS Control Programme (1992-1999) in 1992, with the establishment of NACO to oversee its implementation.

Legal Framework – HIV and AIDS (Prevention & Control) Act, 2017:

- Enacted in 2017, this central legislation safeguards and promotes the rights of individuals affected by HIV and AIDS.

- Came into effect on September 10, 2018, with the primary goal of preventing and controlling the spread of HIV while protecting the legal and human rights of those impacted.

- Focuses on combating stigma and discrimination, creating an enabling environment for improved service access.

- Addresses the rights of healthcare providers and emphasizes diagnostic facilities related to Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART) and opportunistic infection management.

- Establishes a robust grievance redressal mechanism, including a State-level Ombudsman and establishment-level Complaints Officer, ensuring speedy resolution.

NCRB 2022 REPORT

Why in the News?

The annual report on crime in India for the year 2022 was unveiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB):

- **Establishment and Mission:**

  - Established in 1986, headquartered in New Delhi, and falls under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

  - Formed based on recommendations from the National Police Commission in 1977 and a Task Force in 1985.

  - Primary responsibility: Collect and analyze crime data as defined by the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Special and Local Laws.

- **Functions:**

  - Serves as a repository of crime information, aiding investigators in tracing crimes and criminals.

  - Acts as a national warehouse for fingerprint records of Indian and foreign criminals.

  - Facilitates the identification and tracking of criminals operating across state borders by utilizing fingerprint searches.

  - In 2009, entrusted with monitoring, co-ordinating, and implementing the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS) project.

  - In 2017, launched the National Digital Police Portal, providing services such as online complaint filing.

- **Reports Published:**

  - Publishes the prestigious "Crime in India" report along with the Prisons Statistics India Report.

NCRB 2022 Report on Crime in India:

- **Decline in Registration:**

  - In 2022, 58,24,946 cognizable crimes were registered, a 4.5% decline from the previous year.

  - Comprising 35,61,379 IPC crimes and 22,63,567 Special & Local Laws crimes.

- **Crime Rate Trends:**

  - Crime rate per lakh population decreased from 445.9 in 2021 to 422.2 in 2022, considered a better indicator.

- **Crime Against Women:**

  - A 4% increase in crime against women in 2022, with 4,45,256 cases registered.

  - Dominated by categories like Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives, Kidnapping & Abduction of Women, and Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty.

- **Cybercrime Reporting:**

  - A significant 24.4% increase in reporting of cybercrime, totaling 65,893 cases.

  - Predominantly cases of fraud, extortion, and sexual exploitation.

- **Suicides:**

  - A 4.2% increase in reported suicides in 2022, with 1,70,924 cases.

  - Major reasons include Family Problems, Marriage Related Problems, and Illness.

- **State-wise Trends:**

  - States/UTs with the highest charge sheeting rate under IPC crimes: Kerala, Puducherry, and West Bengal.

Limitations and Considerations:

- **Data Accuracy:**

  - NCRB data records registered crime, not the actual occurrence, reflecting potential variations in awareness and reporting.

  - Principal Offence Rule may lead to undercounting, focusing on the most severe offense in a single FIR.

  - Local-level inefficiencies impact data accuracy, as recorded reasons for incidents depend on individual understanding.

- **Socio-economic Factors:**

  ○ NCRB acknowledges the omission of socio-economic causative factors in crime reporting.

- **Factors Affecting Data:**

  ○ Fear of uncooperative or hostile police responses may deter certain groups from registering cases.

  ○ Shortage of police officers or unfilled vacancies at the local level can hinder data collection.

NCRB Report

AGAINST CHILDREN:
1,62,449
(8.7%)
20,762 in Maharashtra
20,415 in MP

CRIME AGAINST WOMEN:
445,256
(3.9% from 2021)

AGAINST SENIOR CITIZENS:
28,545
Against SC/STs: **6,75,000 (14%)**
Corruption cases: **4,139 (10.5%)**
Offences Against State
(UAPA Sedition, OSA): **5,610 (8%)**
Murder: **28,522 (2.6%)**

NATURE OF CASES

- 31.4% Cruelty by husband or his relatives
- 19.2% Kidnapping abduction
- 18.7% Outraging Modesty
- 7.1% Rape

UP records most cases: 65,743

FIXED-DOSE COMBINATION (FDC) PROBLEM

Why in the News?

A recent study conducted by academics from India, Qatar, and the United Kingdom and published in the Journal of Pharmaceutical Policy and Practice reveals concerning findings. The study underscores the prevalence of unapproved and, in some cases, banned fixed dose combinations (FDCs) of antibiotics being marketed in India.

Background:

The study, utilizing pharmaceutical industry sales data, unveils critical insights into the prevalence of unapproved and banned Fixed Dose Combinations (FDCs) of antibiotics in the year 2020.

Disturbing Statistics:

- **Unapproved FDCs:** A staggering 60.5% of antibiotics FDCs, comprising 239 formulations, were found to be unapproved based on the sales data.

- **Banned FDCs:** An additional 9.9%, constituting 39 formulations, were still being sold despite being officially banned in the country.

Concerns About Antibacterial Microbial Resistance (AMR):

The revelation that a significant proportion of these unapproved or banned FDCs includes antibiotics raises alarming concerns. This is particularly pertinent due to the escalating prevalence of antibacterial microbial resistance (AMR) in India.

Understanding Fixed Dose Combination (FDC) Phenomenon:

- **Definition:** FDCs represent combinations of one or more established drugs, often employed to enhance patient compliance in the treatment of certain diseases.

- **Rationale for FDCs:** In scenarios where a patient requires multiple medications for a specific treatment, the use of FDCs can streamline

the process and improve compliance. By consolidating multiple drugs into a single tablet or syrup, the likelihood of patients forgetting to take individual medications is reduced.

- **Positive Example:** Notably, diseases like AIDS have seen documented success in using FDCs, significantly enhancing patient compliance and, consequently, improving treatment outcomes.

Therapeutic Considerations:

- **Therapeutic Efficacy:** The interaction between different drugs within FDCs can impact their efficacy, potentially enhancing or inhibiting each other's effects, leading to unpredictable outcomes.

- **Toxicity Concerns:** The formulation of FDCs carries the risk of creating metabolites or by-products that may be more toxic than the individual components. Rigorous evaluation during the formulation process is crucial.

- **Excipient Interaction:** Even though excipients are considered inactive, they can interact with active ingredients or among themselves, influencing the overall performance and safety of the formulation.

Features of Fixed-Dose Combination

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	CAUTIONS
• Convenient — Once-daily dosing — Low pill burden — No food restrictions • Potert • Safe • Tolerabk • Few drug interactions • Thymidine-sparing	• Potential for 48-hour gap in therapy with 1 omitted dose • Lack of flexibility in dosing — Dose reduction of only one of the agents is not possible	• Unanticipated interactions • Potential long-term toxicities

Example of Fixed-Dise Combination HIV Drug

Efavirenz (600 mg) + Emtricitabine (200 mg) + Tenofovir DF (300 mg) = Atripla

Regulatory Challenges:

- **Unregulated FDCs:** The issue of unregulated

FDCs has been longstanding, with regulatory amendments granting power to the central government to prohibit drugs lacking therapeutic value. However, enforcement has been deficient, and the lack of prosecution for violations raises concerns about regulatory oversight.

- **State-level Enforcement:** State drug controllers' failure to adhere to laws and issue manufacturing licenses for unapproved FDCs adds to regulatory challenges, highlighting the need for consistent enforcement.

Pharmaceutical Industry Dynamics:

- **Regulatory Evasion and Pricing Strategies:** The use of FDCs by the pharmaceutical industry to evade regulations, particularly the Drugs (Prices Control) Order (DPCO), is a significant concern. Combining drugs enables companies to bypass government-set price regulations for individual drugs, potentially impacting market competition and pricing.

- **Lack of Standards:** The diverse range of FDCs and the absence of clear testing standards contribute to challenges in ensuring the quality of these combinations. The lack of recognized standards allows manufacturers to establish their own testing protocols, raising questions about result reliability.

- **Dubious FDC Combinations:** The introduction of FDCs without a sound medical rationale, such as combining unrelated drugs, raises concerns about the safety and efficacy of these combinations, posing potential risks to patient health.

- **Competition and Pseudo-Innovation:** Creating FDCs to circumvent market competition for individual drugs can lead to pseudo-innovation. This strategy allows companies to claim uniqueness and charge higher prices until competitors introduce similar products, impacting market dynamics.

Emphasis on Rigorous Scientific Evaluation:

- **Scientific Evaluation:** The approval process for FDCs must undergo comprehensive scientific evaluation, encompassing preclinical studies and clinical trials explicitly designed to assess

safety, efficacy, and potential interactions of combined drugs.

Establishment of Strict Regulatory Standards:

- **Global Standards Adoption:** Regulatory agencies globally adhere to stringent standards for FDC approvals. This involves not only evaluating individual drugs but also scrutinizing interactions, synergies, or antagonisms. Implementing comparable standards in India is imperative.

Implementation of Post-Market Surveillance:

- **Continuous Monitoring:** Beyond approval, the implementation of post-market surveillance is crucial. Real-world monitoring of FDC use helps identify unexpected side effects or interactions that may not have been apparent during the pre approval stages.

Prioritizing Patient Safety:

- **Central Role in Approval:** Patient safety should be the focal point throughout the approval process. Striking a balance between therapeutic innovation and patient well-being is essential for the responsible introduction of FDCs into the market.

GLOBAL STATUS REPORT ON ROAD SAFETY 2023

Why in the News?

Recently, Global Status Report on Road Safety was released by WHO

Key Findings from the Road Safety Report:

- **Global Decline in Road Traffic Deaths:** Positive strides with a 5% annual reduction in global road traffic deaths, reaching a total of over 1.19 million per year. Despite the improvement, the persistently high numbers remain a cause for concern.

- **Vulnerability of Youth and Children:** Road accidents emerge as the leading cause of mortality among individuals aged 5 to 29 years, highlight-

ing a critical issue affecting the younger population globally.

- **Road Safety Challenges in India:** India experiences a concerning surge in road crash deaths, witnessing an increase from 1,50,785 in 2018 to 1,53,792 in 2021, presenting a complex scenario demanding attention.

- **Disparities in Global Progress:** Disparities persist among countries, with some achieving a reduction in road traffic deaths. Notably, low and middle-income nations, while having a minimal share of the global vehicle count, contribute to 90% of road traffic fatalities.

- **Vulnerable Road Users' Predicament:** More than half (53%) of road traffic fatalities involve vulnerable road users, encompassing pedestrians, motorcyclists, cyclists, and users of micro-mobility devices.

- **Infrastructure and Safety Concerns:** Challenges include insufficient road infrastructure, inadequate pedestrian safety measures, and gaps in legislation addressing risk factors like speeding, drunk driving, and vehicle safety standards.

- **Legislative Gaps and Urgent Recommendations:** A limited number of countries align with WHO's best practices for road safety laws. The anticipated doubling of the global motor vehicle fleet by 2030 underscores the pressing need for enhanced legislation and infrastructure to curb road traffic deaths on a global scale.

Road Safety Challenges in India:

India's rapid economic growth has spurred a surge in vehicle ownership, fostering convenience and progress. However, this accelerated expansion has concurrently given rise to intricate challenges in ensuring road safety, encompassing various aspects of the nation's dynamic landscape.

Challenges:

- **High Accident Rates:** Despite representing only 1% of the world's vehicles, India contributes to a staggering 11% of global road traffic deaths, translating to approximately 1.5 lakh lives lost annually. This alarming disproportion under-

scores a critical road safety concern.
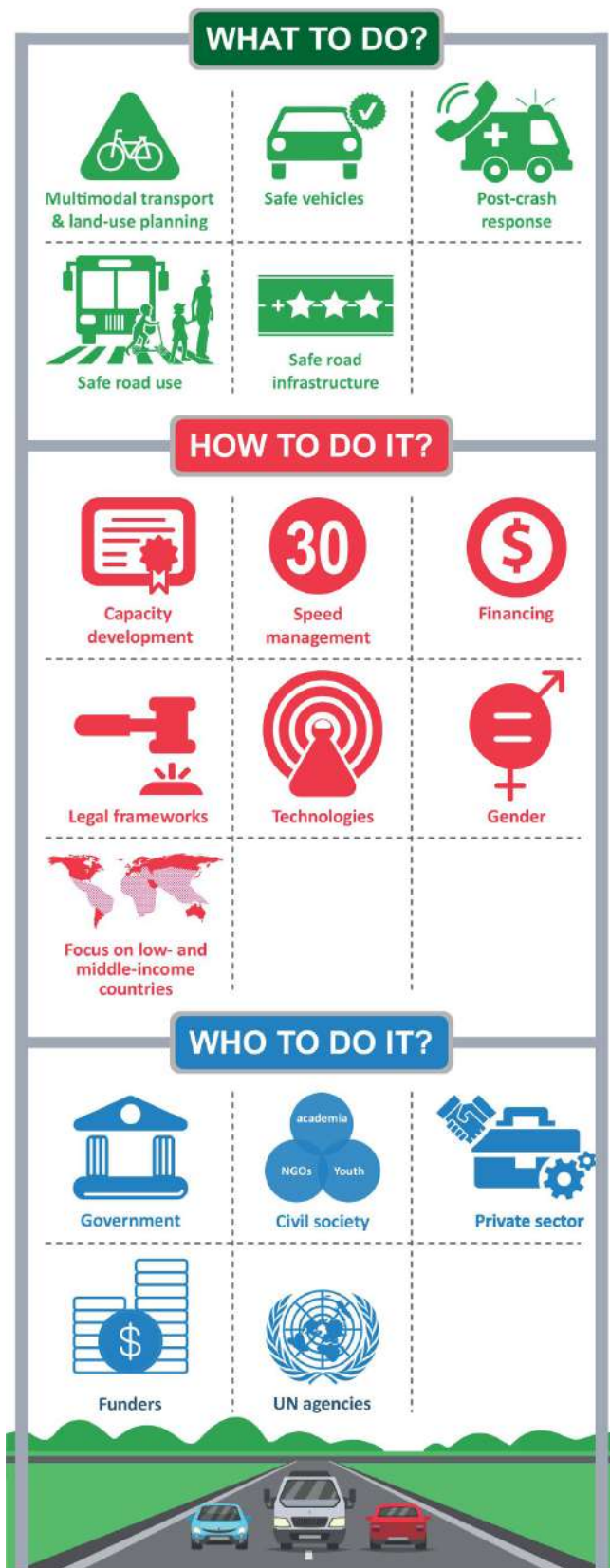
- **Vulnerable Road Users:** Pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists face heightened risks due to inadequate infrastructure and insufficient awareness. The incomplete or poorly designed roads often neglect the safety of non-motorized users, leading to a higher incidence of accidents involving these vulnerable road users.

- **Speeding and Reckless Driving:** Disregard for traffic rules and exceeding speed limits emerges as a significant contributor to accidents. Behavioral issues, particularly reckless driving, play a substantial role in exacerbating the overall road safety challenge.

- **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Unsafe road surfaces, absence of accurate lane demarcations, and insufficient signage collectively pose risks to road safety. The critical role of infrastructure in ensuring safe road usage is compromised when deficiencies in these aspects persist, leading to increased accident rates.

- **Drunken Driving:** Despite legal prohibitions, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs remains a serious concern. The prevalence of this behavior poses a substantial threat to overall road safety, despite regulatory measures in place.

- **Weak Enforcement:** Insufficient traffic monitoring and lax enforcement of road safety laws hinder progress. The existence of regulations alone is not enough; effective enforcement is crucial to ensure compliance and mitigate the lenient approach towards road safety.

In navigating the complex road safety landscape in India, addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach involving infrastructure development, behavioral changes, and robust enforcement mechanisms.

Addressing Road Safety Challenges in India:

- **Stricter Laws and Enforcement:** The implementation of the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act 2019, with heightened penalties for traffic violations, serves as a deterrent against dangerous driving. Strengthening legal consequences is pivotal for promoting safer driving practices.

- **Focus on Vulnerable Road Users:** Initiatives

such as dedicated cycling lanes and pedestrian walkways prioritize the safety of vulnerable road users. Targeted infrastructure improvements play a crucial role in creating a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

- **Road Safety Awareness Campaigns:** Promoting responsible driving habits and educating the public about traffic rules are paramount. Informative campaigns contribute to a culture of responsible behavior on the roads, fostering safer driving practices.

- **Investing in Infrastructure:** Upgrading roads, installing proper signage, and implementing intelligent traffic management systems significantly improve safety. Addressing infrastructure deficiencies directly tackles challenges posed by inadequate roads and signage.

- **Technological Advancements:** Utilizing technology such as driver assistance systems and advanced traffic monitoring enhances safety measures. The integration of technology in road safety measures provides real-time monitoring and assistance, contributing to safer road conditions.

Initiatives in Road Safety

Global Initiatives:

- **Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety (2015):**
  - This declaration, signed at the second Global High-Level Conference on Road Safety in Brazil, involves India as a signatory. The goal is to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3.6, aiming to halve the global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2030.

- **Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030:**
  - The UN General Assembly adopted the resolution "Improving global road safety," setting an ambitious target to prevent at least 50% of road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030. Aligned with the Stockholm Declaration, this Global Plan emphasizes a holistic approach to road safety

- **International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP):**
  - A registered charity committed to saving lives through safer roads on a global scale.

Initiatives in India:

- **Motor Vehicles Amendment Act, 2019:**
  - This act introduces increased penalties for traffic violations, defective vehicles, and juvenile driving. It establishes a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund for compulsory insurance coverage and mandates the creation of a National Road Safety Board by the Central Government.

- **Carriage by Road Act, 2007:**
  - This act regulates common carriers, limiting their liability and facilitating the declaration of the value of goods for determining liability in case of loss or damage due to negligence or criminal acts.

- Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act, 2000:
  - This act controls land within National Highways, the right of way, and traffic moving on National Highways, aiming to remove unauthorized occupation.

- **National Highways Authority of India Act, 1998:**
  - Enabling the constitution of an authority for the development, maintenance, and management of National Highways, addressing various facets related to their functioning.

Conclusion:

The report emphasizes the immediate need for a global commitment to prioritize road safety, especially for vulnerable road users. It underscores the imperative of addressing legislative gaps, enhancing infrastructure, and elevating safety standards. Governments worldwide must unite in concerted efforts to reduce road traffic deaths and create safer roads for everyone.

AYURVEDA GYAN NAIPUNYA INITIATIVE (AGNI)

Why in the News?

The Central Council for Research in Ayurveda Sciences (CCRAS) recently launched the 'Ayurveda Gyan Naipunya Initiative' (AGNI) with the aim of promoting evidence-based medical practices in the field of Ayurveda.

Objectives of AGNI Initiative

- **Platform for Innovative Practices:** AGNI provides a dedicated platform for Ayurveda practitioners to report their innovative practices and share experiences in treating various disease conditions.

- **Culture of Evidence-Based Practice:** The initiative focuses on fostering a culture of evidence-based practice among Ayurveda practitioners, emphasizing the importance of scientific validation.

- **Research for Mainstreaming Practices:** AGNI aims to undertake research to mainstream pragmatic Ayurvedic practices by subjecting them to scientific validation and evidence-based appraisal.

- **Documentation and Publication:** CCRAS, in consultation with the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM), will document and publish reported medical practices and therapeutic regimens for educational and academic purposes.

- **Database Creation and Capacity Building:** The initiative involves creating a comprehensive database through applications and enhancing capacity through training in research methods and good clinical practices.

- **Further Research Collaboration:** CCRAS plans to conduct further research on reported medical practices, collaborating with Ayurveda practitioners and relevant institutes/organizations to validate and mainstream these practices.

About CCRAS

The Central Council for Research in Ayurveda Sciences (CCRAS) serves as the apex research organization dedicated to coordinating, formulating, developing, and promoting research on scientific lines in Ayurveda.

Additional Initiatives by CCRAS

- **SPARK Program:** The Studentship Program for Ayurveda Research Ken (SPARK) targets undergraduate scholars, aiming to boost scientific research in Ayurveda colleges and hospitals.

- **PG-STAR Program:** The Scheme for Training in Ayurveda Research for PG Scholars (PG-STAR) focuses on postgraduate scholars, providing training opportunities to enhance research skills.

- **SMART Program:** The Scope for Mainstreaming Ayurveda Research in Teaching Professionals (SMART) program is designed for teachers, encouraging research integration into teaching practices.

About Ayurveda

Ayurveda, a natural system of medicine originating in India over 3,000 years ago, is derived from the Sanskrit words 'ayur' (life) and 'veda' (science or knowledge), translating to the knowledge of life.

National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM)

- **Establishment and Role:** NCISM, a statutory body constituted under the NCISM Act, 2020, is committed to improving access to quality and affordable medical education. It ensures the availability of high-quality medical professionals in the Indian System of Medicine across the country.

- **Objectives:** NCISM promotes equitable and universal healthcare aligned with national health goals. It encourages medical professionals to adopt the latest research and maintains a medical register while enforcing high ethical standards in all aspects of medical services.

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UN COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (CSOCD)

Why in the News?

The Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations recently led an informative member-state briefing in anticipation of the 62nd session of the UN Commission for Social Development.

- **Background:**

  - Established since the inception of the United Nations, CSocD is a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

  - Originally known as the Social Commission, it advises ECOSOC and governments on a broad spectrum of social policy issues.

- **Purpose:**

  - Primary goal: Advance social development and formulate policies to address global social issues.

  - Focus areas: Poverty eradication, social inclusion, and promotion of equitable and sustainable development.

  - Key responsibility since 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen: Follow-up and implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

- **Membership:**

  - Started with 18 members, now has 46.

  - Members elected by ECOSOC for four-year terms based on equitable geographical distribution.

- **Meetings:**

  - Annual meetings at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, usually held in February.

- Forums for member states, international organizations, and civil society representatives to discuss and address social development issues.
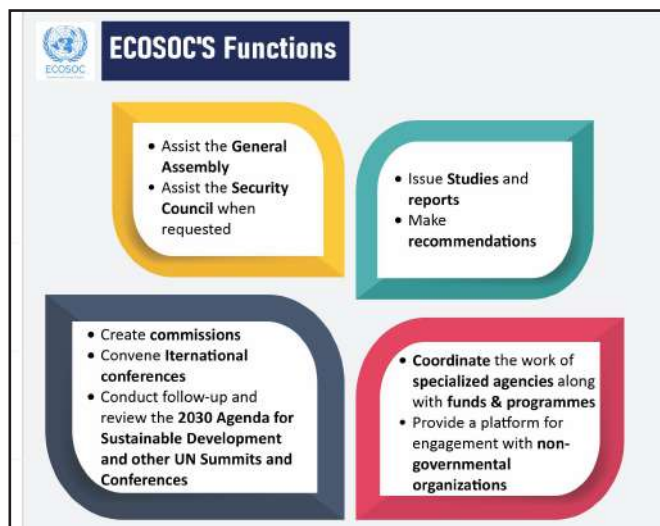
Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC):

- **Background:**

  - One of the six principal organs of the UN, established by the UN Charter in 1945.

  - Responsible for directing and coordinating economic, social, humanitarian, and cultural activities of the UN.

- **Membership:**

  - Consists of 54 members elected for three-year terms by the General Assembly.

  - Continuous re-election of four of the five permanent Security Council members due to significant funding contributions to ECOSOC's budget, the largest among UN subsidiary bodies.

- **Functions:**

  - Coordinates economic and social fields within the UN, overseeing 15 specialized agencies, five regional commissions, and eight functional commissions.

  - Central forum for discussions on international social and economic issues, formulating policy recommendations for member

states and the UN system.

- **Decision-Making:**

  ○ Decisions made by a simple majority vote.

  ○ Annual presidency rotation.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR)

Why in the News?

The 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was observed on December 10, 2023. The UDHR stands as a seminal document that safeguards human rights and fundamental freedoms for every individual.

Background:

In a historic moment on December 10, 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) gained approval from the UN General Assembly during a pivotal meeting in Paris. This landmark document served as a foundational element in shaping the post-World War II international order, responding to the atrocities of the war and seeking to establish a shared understanding of the fundamental rights and freedoms inherent to all individuals.

About:

The UDHR, a concise document comprising a preamble and 30 articles, delineates a comprehensive array of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. These rights, deemed universal, extend to all people, irrespective of nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion, or any other status. While not a legally binding treaty, the declaration has profoundly influenced the development of international human rights law, acting as a wellspring of inspiration.

Features:

- **Preamble:**

  ○ Sets forth the rationale behind the declara-

tion, emphasizing the inherent dignity and equal, inalienable rights of all members of the human family.

- **Articles:**

  ○ Encompasses 30 articles articulating a broad spectrum of rights, including the right to life, liberty, and security, freedom of religion, expression, and assembly, the right to work and education, and the right to an adequate standard of living.

  ○ Asserts equality before the law and the right to seek asylum from persecution in other countries.

Achievements of UDHR:

- Acknowledged for inspiring over 70 global and regional human rights treaties.

- Catalyst for the decolonization movement, anti-apartheid movement, and various freedom struggles worldwide, addressing issues such as gender, LGBTIQ+ rights, and racism.

Current Situation:

- Amidst challenges to human rights in conflicts such as Israel-Hamas, Russia's war in Ukraine, and internal conflicts in Myanmar and Sudan.

- UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres notes instances of misuse and abuse of the declaration for political gain but emphasizes its continued relevance.

- Amnesty International asserts that despite being ignored or exploited, the UDHR remains a testament to the possibility and realization of a global vision for human rights.

Conclusion:

The 75th anniversary of the UDHR underscores its enduring significance, with the document continuing to shape discussions on human rights globally. While challenges persist, its successes and failures serve as lessons for the world to honor its principles and strive for a more just and equitable future.

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF
HUMAN RIGHTS

Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948, the Universal Declaration states fundamental rights and freedoms to which all human beings are entitled.

You have the responsibility to respect the rights of others.

No one can take away any of your rights.

- We are all born free and equal.
- Everyone is entitled to these rights no matter your race, religion, sex, language, or nationality.
- Everyone has the right to life, freedom, and safety.

No one has the right to hold you in slavery.

No one has the right to torture you.

You have a right to be recognized everywhere as a person before the law.

We are all equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law.

You have the right to seek legal help if your rights are violated.

No one has the right to wrongly imprison you or force you to leave your country.

You have a right to a fair, public trial.

Everyone is innocent until proven guilty.

You have the right to privacy. No one can interfere with your reputation, family, home, or correspondence.

You have the right to travel.

You have the right to seek asylum in another country if you are persecuted in your own.

Everyone has the right to a nationality.

All consenting adults have the right to marry and to raise a family.

You have the right to own property.

Everyone has the right to belong to a religion.

You have the right to think and voice your opinions freely.

Everyone has the right to gather as a peaceful assembly.

You have the right to participate in the governance of your country, either directly or by helping to choose representatives in free and genuine elections.

VOTE

You have the right to social security and are entitled to economic, social, and cultural help from your government.

Every adult has the right to a job, a fair wage, and membership in a trade union.

You have the right to leisure and rest from work.

Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their family.

Everyone has the right to an education.

Everyone has the right to freely participate in the culture and scientific advancement of their community, and their intellectual property as artist or scientist should be protected.

We are all entitled to a social order in which we may enjoy these rights.

Everyone's rights and freedoms should be protected unless they obstruct the rights and freedoms of others.

FREEDOM

No State, group, or person can use this Declaration to deny the rights and freedoms of others.

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HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN INDIA

Why in the News?

A flight transporting 303 passengers, predominantly of Indian nationality, is anticipated to arrive at Mumbai airport at approximately 2:20 pm from France, following a three-day delay prompted by suspicions of human trafficking. Originally destined for Nicaragua, the A340 aircraft was immobilized near Paris following an anonymous tip.

Understanding Human Trafficking:

Human trafficking, an illicit trade involving humans, encompasses activities such as sexual slavery, commercial sexual exploitation, organ extraction, forced marriage, forced labor, and domestic servitude. It ranks as the third-largest organized crime globally, following drugs and arms trade.

Prevalence in India:

In 2022, India's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported identifying over 6,500 human trafficking victims, with 60% being women and girls. Experts posit that actual figures may be significantly higher due to underreporting.

Constitutional and Legislative Provisions:

- **Constitutional Prohibition:** Article 23(1) of the Indian Constitution prohibits trafficking in human beings or persons.

- **The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act 1956 (ITPA):** This legislation is pivotal for preventing trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation.

- **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013:** Amended Section 370 of the Indian Penal Code to address various forms of human trafficking, including child exploitation and forced organ removal.

- **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012:** Specifically protects children from sexual abuse and exploitation.

- **Other Relevant Legislation:** Acts such as the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, and Transplantation of Human Organs Act address specific aspects of trafficking.

Government Measures:

The Government of India, through the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), has implemented several measures to combat human trafficking:

- **Anti-Trafficking Cell (ATC):** MHA established an Anti-Trafficking Nodal Cell to coordinate efforts and monitor actions taken by state governments.

- **Comprehensive Scheme for Strengthening Law Enforcement:** MHA released funds to establish Anti-Human Trafficking Units in 270 districts across India.

- **Capacity Building:** Training of Trainers (TOT) workshops on combating human trafficking for police officers was conducted nationwide to enhance their skills.

- **Judicial Colloquium/Seminar:** High-level Judicial Colloquiums on human trafficking aim to train and sensitize trial court judicial officers.

Way Forward:

- **Strengthen Enforcement:**

  ○ Enhance collaboration among law enforcement agencies for more effective and coordinated efforts.

  ○ Ensure strict implementation of existing legislation, with a focus on proactive measures.

- **Public Awareness and Education:**

  ○ Conduct nationwide campaigns to raise awareness about the various forms of human trafficking.

  ○ Integrate anti-trafficking education into school curricula to empower the younger generation.

- **Victim Support and Rehabilitation:**

  ○ Establish and strengthen rehabilitation pro-

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grams for survivors, addressing physical, psychological, and economic needs.

- ○ Encourage public-private partnerships to create job opportunities for survivors.

- **International Cooperation:**

  - ○ Strengthen collaboration with international organizations and neighboring countries to curb cross-border trafficking.

  - ○ Share best practices and intelligence to enhance the global fight against human trafficking.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. With reference to Social Audit, consider the following:

1. The process of social audit is aimed at measuring and improving an organization's social and ethical performance.

2. Social audits play a crucial role in allowing end-users to assess the impact of developmental programs and addressing gaps in efficiency and effectiveness.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. With reference to States Performance in MGNREGA Social Audits, consider the following:

1. The state of Kerala is the only one to achieve 100% coverage of gram panchayats in MGNREGA social audits.

2. Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram are among the top performing states

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. With reference to the rare diseases, consider the following statements:

1. Rare diseases are always Zoonotic diseases.

2. WHO defines rare diseases with a prevalence of 1 or less per 1000 populations.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q4. With reference to HIV/AIDS, consider the following statements:

1. HIV/AIDS is primarily transmitted through sexual contact.

2. Mother-to-child transmission can occur during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding.

3. Antiretroviral therapy (ART) is a definitive cure for HIV.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1, 2 and 3

(d) 1 and 3 only

Q5. With reference to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), consider the following statements:

1. The NCRB, established in 1986, operates under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

2. The NCRB was formed based on recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q6. With reference to Fixed-Dose Combinations (FDCs):

1. FDCs combine established drugs to enhance patient compliance.

2. They streamline treatment by consolidating multiple drugs, reducing the chance of missed doses.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q7. Regarding the Global Status Report on Road Safety 2023 recently seen in the news, consider the following statements:

1. It is released by WHO annually.

2. It shows that there is a increase in road accidents related deaths globally

3. Number of road accidents related deaths have decreased in India, according to the report.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Q8. Consider the following Programs:

1. SPARK Program

2. PG-STAR Program

3. SMART Program

How many of the above are related to the devel-

opment of Ayurveda?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Q9. With reference to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), consider the following statements:

1. ECOSOC is one of the six principal organs of the UN, established by the UN Charter in 1945.

2. The decision-making process in ECOSOC involves annual presidency rotation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q10. With reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), consider the following statements:

1. It was signed in the preceding year of world war II.

2. Right to seek asylum is one of the rights under UDHR.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	C

2.	A
3.	B
4.	A
5.	A
6.	C
7.	D
8.	C
9.	C
10.	B

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the role and significance of social audits in the effective implementation of government welfare schemes, with a focus on its impact on accountability, transparency, and bridging the gap between policy objectives and ground-level outcomes.

Q2. Discuss the unique challenges posed by rare diseases, commonly referred to as orphan diseases, emphasizing their low prevalence in the population.

Q3. Discuss the burden of disease in India Also, analyze the socio-economic disparities in health outcomes and propose measures to address them for achieving a healthier and more equitable society.

Q4. Evaluate the role of the NCRB in addressing these challenges and to enhance the accuracy and comprehensiveness of crime data in India.

Q5. Discuss the challenges and opportunities associated with the concurrent issues of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and the use of Fixed-Dose Combinations (FDCs) in the context of healthcare in India. Assess the strategies that could be adopted to address these issues and promote effective public health management.

Q6. Analyze the Implications of India's Position in the Global Status Report on Road Safety. Discuss the Significance of International Collaborations and Domestic Policies in Addressing Road Safety Concerns

Q7. Examine the relevance and challenges of integrating traditional medicine systems into mainstream healthcare. Assess the measures necessary for the harmonious coexistence of traditional medicine with modern healthcare practices

Q8. Analyze the significance of India's engagement with the UN in promoting its national interests and advancing a multipolar world order.

Q9. Discuss the enduring significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 75 years since its adoption. Analyze its impact on shaping the global discourse on human rights, addressing challenges, and influencing international relations.

Q10. Discuss the socio-economic factors that make individuals susceptible to human trafficking. How can targeted social and economic interventions help prevent the trafficking of vulnerable populations?

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (GPAI)

Why in the News?

The New Delhi declaration has been unanimously embraced by the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), an alliance comprising 29 member countries.

About Global Partnership On Artificial Intelligence (GPAI)

Inception and Launch:

- Proposed by Canada and France at the 2018 G7 summit.

- Officially launched in June 2020.

Membership Growth:

- Initially started with 15 member countries.

- Currently expanded to 29 member countries.

- Notable members include India, the United States, the UK, France, Japan, Canada, etc.

- China, a significant tech superpower, is not part of the alliance.

Hosting and Structure:

- Hosted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Objectives of GPAI:

- Responsible Development of AI:

  - Guides the responsible development and use of AI.

  - Emphasizes respect for human rights and democratic values.

- **Bridge the Gap:**

  - Multi-stakeholder initiative addressing the disparity between AI theory and practice.

- **International Cooperation:**

  - Brings together expertise from science, industry, civil society, governments, international organizations, and academia.

  - Aims to foster international cooperation on AI-related priorities.

- **Cutting-Edge Research:**

  - Promotes advanced exploration and practical initiatives in the field of artificial intelligence.

The New Delhi Declaration:

The New Delhi Declaration marks a pivotal commitment by GPAI, positioning the partnership at the forefront of shaping the future of AI with a focus on innovation and collaborative efforts among member nations. The declaration underscores key elements:

- **Innovation and Collaboration:**

  - GPAI pledges to lead in creating collaborative AI innovations, particularly in applications for healthcare, agriculture, and beyond.

- **Global Governance Leadership:**

  - Members unanimously agree to take the

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lead in global discussions on AI governance, prioritizing safety and trust in its development.

- **Inclusivity and Global Reach:**

  - GPAI commits to becoming an inclusive movement, extending its reach to countries in the Global South. The goal is to ensure that the benefits of AI, along with its platforms and solutions, are accessible to all.

- **Acceleration of Regulations:**

  - Like-minded countries are urged to expedite the establishment of granular regulations around AI before the next GPAI meeting in Korea. The focus is on ensuring a comprehensive regulatory framework for responsible AI use.

- **Granular Definition of Rules:**

  - GPAI acknowledges the necessity to delve into the specifics, defining intricate rules that dictate how users interact with AI.

- **Addressing Opportunities and Risks:**

  - The declaration recognizes the imperative to harness new opportunities while mitigating risks associated with AI development and deployment.

  - This includes concerns around misinformation, unemployment, lack of transparency and fairness, protection of intellectual property and personal data, as well as threats to human rights and democratic values.

- **Equitable Access to Resources:**

  - The need for equitable access to AI resources is acknowledged, emphasizing that societies must consider, account for, and address this need to build competitive and beneficial AI solutions for all.

Significance of the New Delhi Declaration:

The New Delhi Declaration holds particular importance as it marks the first gathering of GPAI members following the emergence of generative AI

platforms like ChatGPT and Google Bard, thrusting discussions on AI into the mainstream.

Key Points of Significance Include:

- **Mainstream Recognition:**

  - The meeting coincided with the rise of prominent generative AI platforms, elevating the discourse on AI to the mainstream for GPAI members.

- **Thematic Priority in Agriculture:**

  - GPAI members collectively recognized the importance of supporting AI innovation in agriculture, designating it as a new "thematic priority."

- **India's Push for Agriculture:**

  - India played a crucial role in advocating for agriculture as a priority sector for AI innovation within GPAI.

- **Resilient Agricultural Practices:**

  - The declaration's emphasis on AI in agriculture is pivotal for implementing resilient practices that enhance productivity and production in the sector.

- **Sustainable Food Production:**

  - The development and access to trustworthy AI applications are highlighted as essential for ensuring sustainable food production systems. This is critical for building capac-

ity in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Significance for India:

The New Delhi Declaration holds special significance for India, reflecting a substantial victory for the country in the following ways:

- **Collaborative Approach:**

  ○ India's persistent advocacy for a collaborative approach in building AI systems is acknowledged. This aligns with the country's efforts to promote its model of digital public infrastructure (DPI) globally.

- **Sovereign AI System:**

  ○ Access to computing capabilities from GPAI member nations is seen as a boost to India's plans of developing a sovereign AI system. This strategic move is essential for countering dominance from a limited number of foreign companies in the AI space.

EU REACHES HISTORIC DEAL ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE REGULATION

Why in the News?

Policymakers in the European Union have reached a preliminary agreement on groundbreaking regulations that will govern the utilization of artificial intelligence (AI).

Background:

On December 8, EU member states and lawmakers reached a landmark agreement on the formulation of rules governing artificial intelligence (AI), including models like ChatGPT. Despite the prolonged negotiations, these regulations are slated to come into effect no earlier than 2025, allowing for considerable technological advancements in the interim.

Key Highlights of the Artificial Intelligence Act:

- **Origins and Objectives:** Initially drafted in 2021, the Artificial Intelligence Act aims to introduce transparency, trust, and accountability to the realm of AI. It seeks to establish a comprehensive framework to address risks posed to safety, health, fundamental rights, and democratic values within the EU.

- **Two-Tier Approach:** The Act adopts a two-tier approach, featuring transparency requirements applicable to all general-purpose AI models, with more stringent provisions for high-powered models.

- **Database of High-Risk AI Systems:** The legislation proposes the creation of an EU-wide database cataloging high-risk AI systems. It also outlines parameters for the inclusion of future technologies in this database, provided they meet the defined high-risk criteria.

- **Balancing Act:** Striking a balance between promoting the adoption of AI and preventing potential harms associated with certain applications, the legislation reflects a nuanced approach.

THE EU ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ACT

On April 21, 2021 the EU Commission published its proposal for an Artificial Intelligence Act.

Here is what you need to know

Limited prohibited uses
1
2 Regulation of high-risk A1 systems
3 Ex-ante/ex-post requirements
4 GDPR-trained?
5 What comes next?

Establishment of the EU AI Office:

- **Monitoring and Sanctions:** The Act empowers the EU to monitor and penalize violators through a newly established body, the EU AI Office, affiliated with the commission.

- **Enforcement Measures:** The EU AI Office holds the authority to impose fines amounting to sev-

en percent of a company's turnover or 35 million euros—whichever is greater.

Approval Process:

While a deal has been reached, formal approval from member states and the EU Parliament is still required to enforce the AI regulations.

Global Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence Regulation:

- **European Union's Progressive Approach:**

  - In May 2023, the European Parliament made strides toward a comprehensive regulatory framework with a preliminary agreement on the Artificial Intelligence Act. This ambitious legislation seeks to establish an EU-wide database for high-risk AI systems, with provisions allowing for the inclusion of future technologies meeting defined criteria.

- **United States: A Hands-Off Stance:**

  - The U.S., in contrast, currently lacks a comprehensive regulatory framework for AI and has adopted a relatively hands-off approach to governance in this rapidly evolving technological landscape.

- **China's Stringent Regulations:**

  - China, in a departure from the U.S., has implemented some of the world's first nationally binding regulations for AI. Over the past year, it introduced laws specifically targeting certain types of algorithms, notably focusing on the regulation of recommendation algorithms and their impact on information dissemination.

- **India's Evolving Position:**

  - Initially adopting a stance of not considering specific laws for AI regulation, India has signaled a potential shift in perspective. Leading up to the G20 summit in September 2023, government officials hinted at the prospect of regulating AI. The upcoming Digital Personal Data Protection Bill 2022 is expected to extend its reach to AI developers, treating them as data fiduciaries re-

sponsible for the use of personal data.

- **India's Role on the Global Stage:**

  - Prime Minister Modi expressed India's commitment to a significant advancement in AI, emphasizing its potential to empower citizens. India, as a co-founder of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), will host the GPAI Summit 2023 in New Delhi from December 12-14. With 28 member countries and the EU, GPAI aims to guide the responsible development and usage of AI on the international stage. India's active involvement signals its dedication to contributing to the evolution of AI governance and technology.

ANTHRAX

Why in the News?

Recently, there has been an outbreak of Anthrax disease in Zambia.

About Anthrax

Anthrax, an infectious disease caused by the bacterium Bacillus anthracis, presents a considerable threat due to the resilience of its spores in the environment. This article delves into the various modes of transmission in humans, diagnostic approaches, available treatments, and preventive strategies against anthrax.

Modes of Transmission in Humans

- **Cutaneous Anthrax:** The most prevalent form occurs when spores make contact with compromised skin, resulting in distinctive skin lesions.

- **Gastrointestinal Anthrax:** Arising from the consumption of contaminated meat, this form initially manifests symptoms akin to food poisoning before progressing to severe abdominal issues.

- **Inhalational Anthrax:** Recognized as the deadliest form, it initiates with flu-like symptoms and

swiftly advances to severe respiratory distress and shock, primarily caused by inhaling anthrax spores.

Diagnosis

● The identification of Bacillus anthracis in blood, skin lesions, or respiratory secretions relies on laboratory tests such as cultures, PCR, or ELISA. Anthrax exposure is not confirmed by a single test, necessitating a comprehensive approach integrating clinical findings and specialized tests.

Treatment

● Antibiotics such as ciprofloxacin, doxycycline, or levofloxacin demonstrate efficacy in treating anthrax infections. Severe cases may warrant hospitalization for supportive care, encompassing fluid drainage and mechanical ventilation.

Prevention

● Vaccines, tailored for both animals and humans, particularly target high-risk groups. Mitigating contact with potentially infected animals or their products is essential, emphasizing proper hygiene and handling procedures for animal products to avert transmission.

Conclusion

Comprehending the modes of transmission, facilitating prompt diagnosis, and ensuring timely treatment are pivotal in managing and preventing the spread of anthrax. Vaccination and meticulous adherence to safety protocols play indispensable roles in safeguarding both human and animal populations from this infectious disease.

About Zambia

Geographical Overview:

Zambia, situated in south-central Africa, is a landlocked country surrounded by eight neighboring nations—Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Its strategic location makes it a hub in the heart of the continent.

Economic Significance:

Renowned as one of the world's major producers of copper and cobalt, Zambia plays a pivotal role in the global electronics industry. In addition to these minerals, the country exports a diverse range of agricultural products, including maize, tobacco, sugar, cotton, and flowers. This economic diversity contributes significantly to Zambia's position in the international market.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity:

English serves as the official language, fostering communication and administrative processes. However, Zambia's cultural landscape is rich and varied, with over 70 local languages spoken across the nation. Prominent among these are Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, and Lozi, reflecting the country's linguistic tapestry.

Tribal Identity:

Zambia is characterized by a tapestry of tribes, each contributing to the nation's cultural mosaic. Key tribes include the Lozi, Bemba, Ngoni, Tonga, Luvale, and Kaonde.
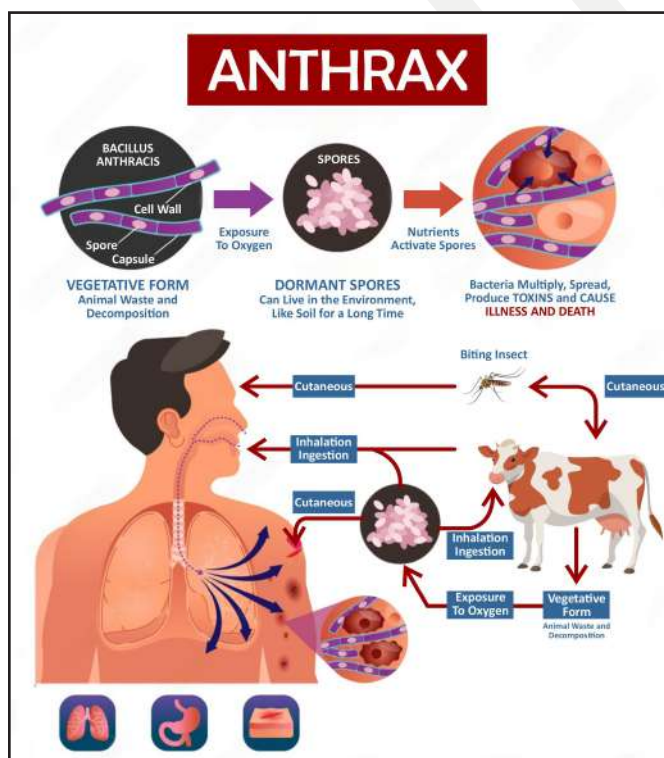
AMRIT TECHNOLOGY

Why in the News?

Recently, AMRIT Technology for water purification was showcased by Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) – Madras

About AMRIT Technology:

AMRIT Technology, developed by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) – Madras, is a cutting-edge solution designed to address water quality issues by efficiently removing arsenic and metal ions from water.

Key Features:

- **Nano-Scale Iron Oxy-Hydroxide:** The technology incorporates nano-scale iron oxy-hydroxide, which exhibits selective removal of arsenic as water passes through it.

- **Versatility:** AMRIT is versatile, catering to both domestic and community-level water purification needs.

- **Alignment with Jal Jeevan Mission:** The technology aligns with the overarching objectives of the Jal Jeevan Mission, contributing to the mission's goal of providing safe and potable tap water to rural households across India.

Recognition and Recommendation:

- The 'Standing Committee' of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation has recommended AMRIT Technology for consideration in addressing water and sanitation challenges, highlighting its efficacy and potential impact.

Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM): Transforming Rural Water Supply

The Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), launched in August 2019 by the Government of India, aims to ensure the provision of safe and sufficient tap water to rural households. The mission is implemented collaboratively with states, where they assume responsibilities for planning, execution, and maintenance of water supply schemes.

Progress Highlights:

- **Baseline Status (August 2019):**

  - At the initiation of JJM, only 16.8% (approximately 3.23 Crore) of rural households had tap water connections.

- **Current Status (As of 07.12.2023):**

  - A significant development is evident, with approximately 10.53 Crore additional rural households now equipped with tap water connections.

  - Presently, out of the total 19.24 Crore rural households in India, around 71.51% (approximately 13.76 Crore households) have access to tap water supply within their homes.

State Responsibilities:

- **State Control:**

  - Drinking water falls under state jurisdiction, granting states the autonomy to select water technology for piped supply schemes, particularly in addressing water quality issues.

- **Government Support:**

  - The central government provides crucial support to states by offering technical and financial assistance for the successful implementation of JJM.

  - Collaborates with esteemed institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) to provide guidance on suitable technologies, especially those addressing water quality concerns.

Understanding Arsenic: Properties, Uses, and Concerns

Arsenic, a naturally occurring chemical element denoted by the symbol 'As' and atomic number 33, is commonly found in the Earth's crust in various forms, both inorganic and organic compounds.

Properties and Occurrence:

- **Physical Properties:**

  - Arsenic appears as a gray, metallic-looking solid at room temperature with a metallic luster.

  - It can manifest in different forms, including yellow, black, and gray, with the yellow form being the most unstable.

- **Chemical Properties:**

  - Reacts with oxygen and water but does not dissolve in non-oxidizing acids.

  - Forms diverse compounds, both organic and inorganic, exhibiting various chemical behaviors.

- **Occurrence:**

  - Naturally found in soil, rocks, water, air, and living organisms.

  - Commonly coexists with other elements such as sulfur, oxygen, and metals, especially in minerals.

Uses and Applications:

- **Historical and Industrial Uses:**

  - Historically employed in medicine, agriculture, and cosmetics.

  - Once widely utilized in manufacturing processes, including wood preservatives, pesticides, herbicides, and certain metal alloys.

- **Current Applications:**

  - Semiconductor Industry: Arsenic plays a crucial role in the production of semiconductors, gallium arsenide-based electronics, and solar cells.

  - Pharmaceuticals: Arsenic compounds have been explored for medical treatments, particularly in some cancer treatments.

  - Agriculture: Formerly used in pesticides and herbicides, but its application has been restricted due to its toxicity.

Health and Environmental Concerns:

- **Toxicity:**

  - Highly toxic, elevated exposure can lead to severe health issues.

  - Inorganic arsenic compounds are particularly dangerous, associated with various health problems such as cancers (skin, lung, bladder), skin lesions, cardiovascular diseases, and developmental issues.

- **Environmental Impact:**

  - The contamination of water sources by arsenic poses a notable environmental threat.

  - Groundwater contamination with arsenic is a global issue, representing a major public health risk in specific regions.

Sources of Arsenic:

Arsenic, occurring naturally in the Earth's crust, can infiltrate groundwater, particularly in regions with specific geological formations. Anthropogenic sources, including industrial activities like mining, smelting, and pesticide use, contribute to arsenic contamination.

Health Risks:

Chronic exposure to arsenic in drinking water poses significant health risks, leading to skin lesions, and cancers of the skin, bladder, and lungs. Long-term ingestion can result in cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and developmental issues in children.

Detection and Measurement:

- **Testing Methods:**

  - Analytical techniques like atomic absorption spectroscopy (AAS) and inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (ICP-MS) are employed for measuring arsenic levels.

  - On-site screening of water for arsenic contamination can be conducted using field test kits.

- **Regulations:**

  - International standards, with the World

Health Organization (WHO) guideline set at 10 µg/L, define safe arsenic levels in drinking water.

- Regular monitoring and adherence to these standards are crucial for safeguarding public health.

Mitigation Strategies:

- **Treatment Technologies:**

  - **Coagulation-Filtration:** Chemical addition to bind arsenic, followed by filtration to remove arsenic precipitates.

  - **Adsorption Methods:** Use of activated alumina, iron oxide, or activated carbon to absorb arsenic.

  - **Ion Exchange and Reverse Osmosis:** Techniques for arsenic removal through ion exchange or selective filtration.

- **Community Interventions:**

  - Implementation of community-level water treatment systems with cost-effective technologies is crucial for affected regions.

  - Public awareness campaigns about arsenic dangers and the significance of safe water sources are essential.

Challenges:

- **High-Cost Barriers:**

  - Advanced treatment technologies come with high costs, presenting barriers, particularly in low-resource regions.

- **Sustainable Access:**

  - Ensuring sustainable access to safe water sources and regular monitoring in arsenic-affected areas remains challenging.

- **Ongoing Research:**

  - Ongoing research focuses on developing low-cost, efficient arsenic removal technologies suitable for diverse settings.

- **Collaboration:**

  - Collaborative efforts involving scientific institutions, governments, and NGOs are crucial for implementing effective arsenic mitigation strategies.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Regarding the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) recently seen in the news, consider the following statements:

1. It is an initiative proposed and initiated by India in partnership with the USA.

2. China is not a member country.

3. It emphasizes respect for human rights and democratic values.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Q2. With reference to the Artificial Intelligence Act of EU, consider the following statements:

1. The legislative proposal suggests establishing a pan-European database that compiles information on high-risk AI systems.

2. The Act features a two-tier approach, applying transparency requirements to all general-purpose AI models, with more stringent provisions for high-powered models.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. Anthrax disease is caused by:

(a) Bacteria

(b) Virus

(c) Protozoa

(d) Fungi

Q4. Regarding the AMRIT Technology for water purification recently seen in the news, consider the following statements:

1. It is especially designed to be used for filtering out non-metal impurities

2. The technology incorporates nano-scale iron oxy-hydroxide to remove toxic material

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	B
2.	C
3.	A
4.	B

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Analyze the significance of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) and the commitments outlined in the New Delhi Declaration in shaping the future of AI governance.

Q2. Discuss the ethical dimensions and implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in contemporary society. Analyze the challenges posed by AI in areas such as privacy, bias, accountability, and job displacement. Examine the strategies and frameworks that can be implemented to address these ethical concerns and ensure responsible development and deployment of AI technologies.

Q3. Evaluate the Efficacy of Pandemic Management Strategies in India. Discuss Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic and Propose Recommendations for Enhancing Future Pandemic Resilience in the Country.

Q4. Assess the prospects of ensuring universal access to clean water in India. Discuss the impact of water quality on public health and the environment and propose comprehensive strategies for sustainable water management in the country.

LOSS AND DAMAGE FUND

Why in the News?

- The COP28 climate conference in Dubai marked the official launch of a loss and damage fund aimed at assisting vulnerable nations in managing the effects of climate change.

Background:

- The announcement of the loss and damage fund initially took place at COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, the preceding year.

- The fund's initial financial support is anticipated to total $475 million.

  ○ The UAE, serving as the host, committed $100 million to the fund.

  ○ The European Union demonstrated significant support with a pledge of $275 million.

  ○ The United States contributed $17.5 million to the fund.

  ○ Japan, in a show of commitment, allocated $10 million to support the initiative.

Loss and Damage Fund Overview:

- **Global Financial Package:** The Loss and Damage Fund is a global financial package designed to support the rescue and rehabilitation of countries experiencing the cascading impacts of climate change.

- **Responsibility and Compensation:** Rich na-

tions, deemed responsible for the climate crisis due to their industrial growth, are obligated to pay compensation to poorer nations facing the adverse effects.

- **Impact on Vulnerable Countries:** Despite having a low carbon footprint, some nations are disproportionately affected by rising sea levels, floods, droughts, cyclones, impacting lives, livelihoods, biodiversity, cultural traditions, and identities.

Complexity of Loss and Damage:

- **Lack of UNFCCC Agreement:** There is no universally agreed-upon definition of loss and damage within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

- **Categorization:** Loss and damage are often classified as economic or non-economic. Economic losses involve quantifiable monetary impacts, while non-economic losses are challenging to assign a monetary value to.

Industrialization's Role in Climate Change:

- **Historical Responsibility:** The Industrial Era since 1850 has disrupted Earth's natural mechanisms for greenhouse gas production and absorption.

- **Emission Responsibility:** The US, the UK, and the EU contribute to 50% of all emissions, while India's historical emissions account for only 3%. China, the largest emitter in recent years, is responsible for 30% of global emissions annually.

Extent of Climate Crisis-Induced Loss and Damage:

- **Financial Impact:** Over the past two decades, 55 vulnerable countries have collectively suf-

fered $525 billion in losses due to climate crisis-induced events.

- **Future Projections:** Estimated losses are expected to reach $580 billion annually by 2030, with projections indicating a continued increase as global warming persists.

United Nations Climate Change UAE

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES DUBAI

30 Nov - 12 Dec 2023

COP28

Loss and Damage Fund Launched at COP28 to Help Developing Countries Battle Climate Change

The fund's initial financial support is anticipated to total $475 million.

- UAE-$275 million.
- European Union-$100 million.
- United States-$17.5 million.
- Japan-$10 million.

COP28 Summit's Climate Disaster Fund:

- **Positive Development:** The COP28 climate conference in Dubai saw a positive start with member countries agreeing to establish a climate disaster fund.

- **Fund Source:** Rich nations like the US, the UK, and the EU, along with some developing countries, contribute to the fund.

- **Interim Host:** The World Bank will serve as the interim host for four years, although some developing nations initially expressed concerns about potential financial control by richer nations.

- **Fund Scale and Operation:** The scale and replenishment cycle remain unclear, but the urgency necessitates a fund in the trillions. Key aspects, such as contributors and fund size, are yet to be determined.

- **Voluntary Payments:** Contributions to the fund are voluntary, and all developing countries are eligible to directly access the resources.

SATPURA TIGER RESERVE (STR)

Why in the News?

In a significant archaeological discovery, the Satpura Tiger Reserve's forest department has recently unearthed a rock painting in Narmadapuram, Madhya Pradesh, dating back 10,000 years.

Location:

- Situated in the Narmadapuram district of Madhya Pradesh, the Satpura Tiger Reserve (STR) occupies a prime position within the expansive Satpura ranges of the Central Indian Landscape.

- Geographically, it lies to the south of the Narmada River, creating a distinctive triangular watershed between the Narmada and Tapti Rivers.

- Integral to the Deccan bio-geographic zone, the reserve is also a vital component of the Pachmarhi Biosphere Reserve.

Extent and Connectivity:

- Extending over an impressive 10,000 sq. km, the Satpura Tiger Reserve stands as a critical segment of one of the world's largest tiger habitats.

- Encompassing the forest areas of Betul, Harda, Khandwa, and Melghat forest divisions, it forms an extensive and interconnected ecosystem.

- Remarkably, the reserve boasts corridor connectivity with Pench National Park, further enhancing its ecological significance.

Human Evolution and Geological Significance:

- Beyond its ecological richness, the STR holds

cultural and historical value with more than 50 rock shelters, providing a window into human evolution spanning from 1500 to 10,000 years ago.

● The reserve's geological features include the Deccan trap series, Gondwanas, and Metamorphic rocks, adding to its scientific importance.

Flora:

● Characterized by diverse mixed forests, the STR is predominantly composed of Sal and Teak, contributing to its unique ecosystem.

● Noteworthy tree species within these mixed forests include jamun, baheda, palash, mahua, saja, bija, tendu, arjun, semal, salai, kusum, achar, and more.

● Furthermore, the reserve serves as the northern extremity of the Western Ghats, hosting 26 species from the Himalayan region and 42 species from the Nilgiri area.

Fauna:

● The Satpura Tiger Reserve boasts a rich tapestry of wildlife, including iconic species such as tigers, leopards, spotted deer, sambar, barking deer, chousingha, Indian gaur, blue bull, and jungle cats.

● In addition to charismatic megafauna, the reserve is home to a diverse array of co-predators, birds, reptiles, and fish, contributing to its status as a biodiversity hotspot.
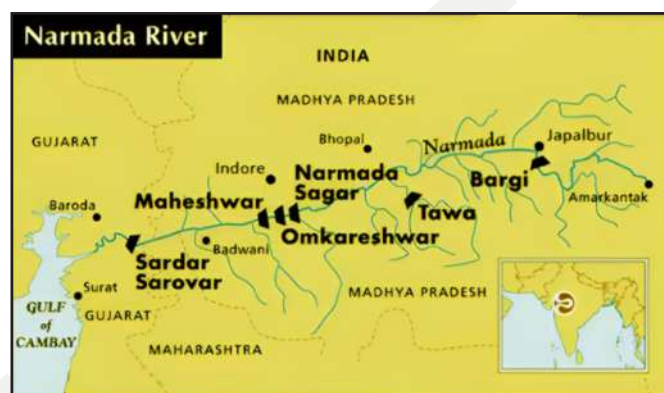
Narmada River

Key Facts	Narmada River	Tapi River
Geographical Location	Serves as a boundary between North and South India.	Situated in central India.
Origin	Amarkantak peak of Maikal mountain, 1,312 km west of source.	Betul district of Madhya Pradesh.
Flow Direction	Flows westward, empties into the Gulf of Khambhat.	Flows westward, empties into the Gulf of Khambhat.
Geographical Features	West-flowing river in a rift valley between Vindhya and Satpura Ranges.	West-flowing river through the central Indian peninsula.
Drainage Area	Drains Madhya Pradesh, parts of Maharashtra, and Gujarat.	Drains Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Gujarat.
Tributaries (Right)	Hiran, Tendori, Barna, Kolar, Man, Uri, Hatni, Orsang.	Purna, Girna, Panzara, Waghur.
Tributaries (Left)	Burner, Banjar, Sher, Shakkar, Dudhi, Tawa, Ganjal, Chhota Tawa, Kundi, Goi, Karjan.	Tawa, Bori, Aner.
Major Dams	Omkareshwar and Maheshwar dams.	Ukai Dam in Gujarat, Ghatghar Dam in Maharashtra.

GLOBAL RIVER CITIES ALLIANCE (GRCA)

Why in the News?

The Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA) has been initiated by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), the implementing body for the government's flagship Namami Gange program.

The Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA) is a collaborative initiative modeled after India's River Cities Alliance, established by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) under the Ministry of Jal Shakti and the National Institute of Urban Affairs under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in November 2021.

Participating Nations and Support:
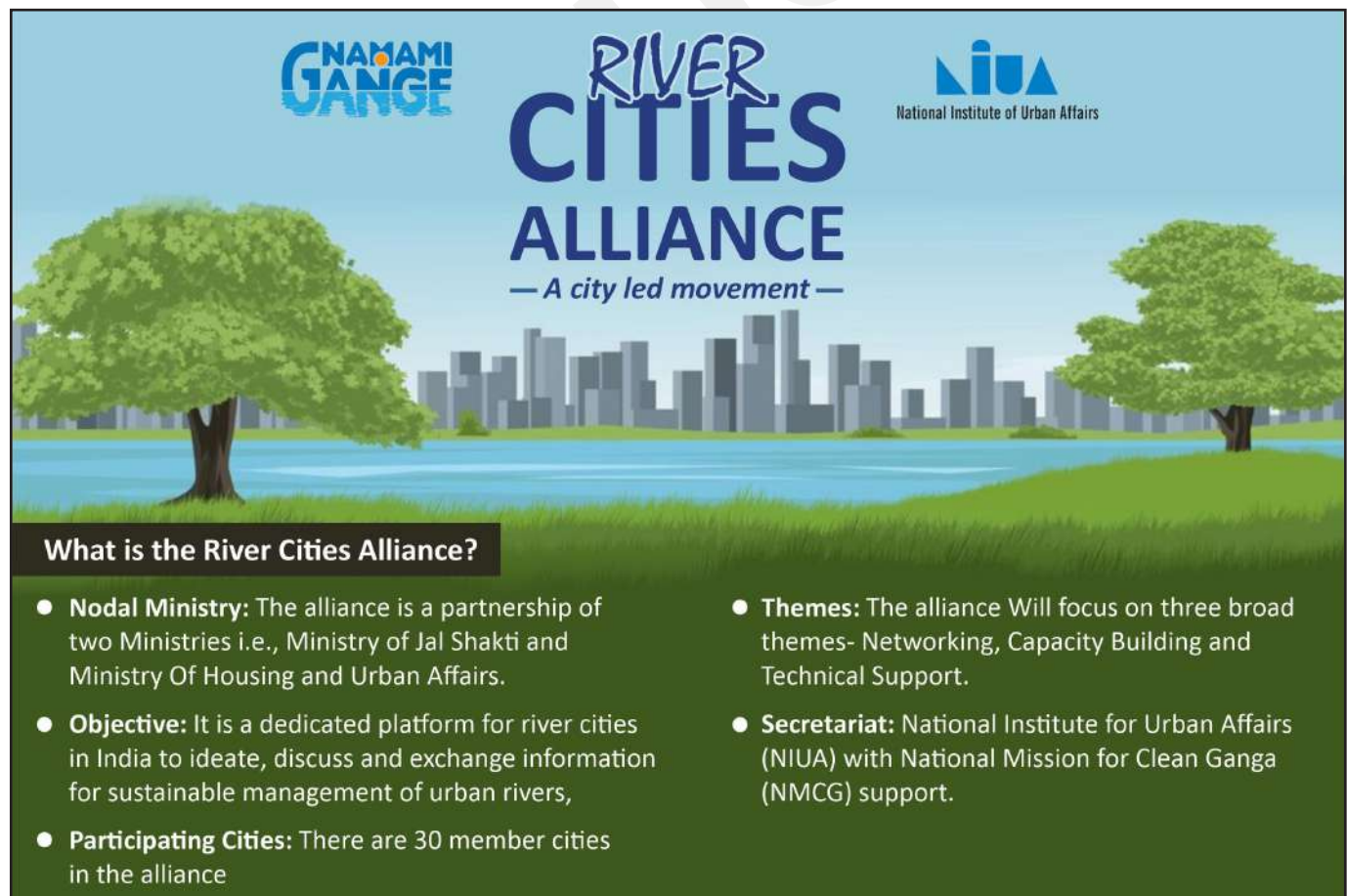
- Nine nations are part of the GRCA, including India, Denmark, Cambodia, Japan, Bhutan, Australia, Netherlands, Egypt, and Ghana.

- Multilateral funding agencies such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank have pledged their support for the initiative.

Focus Area of Work:

- The GRCA focuses on capacity building and knowledge exchange in integrated river management to address climate change impacts on ecosystems.

- The collaboration includes a comprehensive water monitoring program, sharing best practices for renaturing urban areas, and restoring aquatic ecosystems for sustainable urban development.

- Initiatives extend to restoring urban forests and lakes connected to rivers, emphasizing the importance of green spaces.

What is the River Cities Alliance?

- **Nodal Ministry:** The alliance is a partnership of two Ministries i.e., Ministry of Jal Shakti and Ministry Of Housing and Urban Affairs.

- **Objective:** It is a dedicated platform for river cities in India to ideate, discuss and exchange information for sustainable management of urban rivers,

- **Participating Cities:** There are 30 member cities in the alliance

- **Themes:** The alliance Will focus on three broad themes- Networking, Capacity Building and Technical Support.

- **Secretariat:** National Institute for Urban Affairs (NIUA) with National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) support.

River Cities Alliance in India:

- The River Cities Alliance in India serves as a platform for river cities to ideate, discuss, and exchange information for the sustainable management of urban rivers.

- It is a collaborative effort between the Jal Shakti Ministry and the Housing & Urban Affairs Ministry. The National Institute for Urban Affairs (NIUA) and the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) have joined forces for launching the River Cities Alliance.

Objectives:

The primary objective is to provide participating cities with a platform for discussing and exchanging vital information on sustainable urban river management. This includes reducing impacts on rivers and water bodies, minimizing water footprints, preserving architectural heritage, and developing self-sufficient water resources through reuse and recycle strategies.

Current Developments:

- The River Cities Alliance in India currently comprises 142 river cities, serving as a dedicated platform for members to enhance the state of urban rivers within their administrative boundaries.

- Recently, the NMCG signed a Memorandum of Common Purpose with the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI), representing 124 cities/towns along the Mississippi River, USA, on the sidelines of COP28.

- The collaboration will discuss comprehensive water monitoring, best practices for urban area renaturation, and initiatives for sustainable urban development.

- This collaborative effort showcases a commitment to proactive environmental stewardship and innovative solutions for sustainable river management on a global scale.

ETHANOL BLENDING IN PETROL

Why in the News?

As more than 100 countries committed to tripling global renewable energy capacity by 2030 at COP28 in Dubai, India finds itself delicately navigating its ethanol blending target.

Background:

The ethanol-blended petrol (EBP) in India witnessed a significant rise from 1.6% in 2013-14 to 11.8% in 2022-23. However, the ambitious goal of achieving a 20% ethanol blending target by 2025 is facing challenges. Issues such as low sugar stocks in 2022-23 and the anticipated shortfall in sugarcane production this year have added complexity to India's ethanol blending trajectory.

About Ethanol Blending:

Ethanol blending in petrol is a sustainable practice involving the mixing of ethanol, a biofuel derived from sugars, with petrol to create blended fuels. India, in its pursuit of energy security and environmental sustainability, has been actively implementing an Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP).

Common Blends:

- E10 Blend: Comprising 10% ethanol and 90% petrol, E10 is the standard blend used in ethanol blending.

- E20 Blend: A higher ethanol blend with 20% ethanol and 80% petrol, offering increased biofuel content.

Ethanol Production:

- Ethanol is produced through the fermentation of sugars by yeasts or via petrochemical processes like ethylene hydration.

Ethanol Blending Targets:

- India initiated its Ethanol Blending Programme in 2003 to reduce crude oil imports, cut carbon emissions, and enhance farmers' incomes.

- The National Policy of Biofuels 2018 set targets of 20% ethanol blending in petrol and 5% bio-diesel blending in diesel by 2030.

- Reflecting commendable progress, the government advanced the ethanol blending target to 20% by the Ethanol Supply Year 2025-26, showcasing the success of the program.

Recent Achievements:

- In 2022, India's ethanol blending program achieved a notable milestone, reaching 10% ethanol blending in petrol.

- The advancements underscore India's commitment to sustainable energy practices and reducing dependence on conventional fuels.

Biofuel Association:

- In India, biofuels are predominantly linked to first-generation (1G) ethanol, derived from food crops such as sugarcane and food grains.

Benefits:

- **Reduced Dependence on Non-Renewable Fossil Fuels:**

  ○ Ethanol, derived from renewable sources like corn, sugarcane, or biomass, helps diminish reliance on non-renewable fossil fuels.

  ○ India's substantial petroleum imports (185 million tonnes in 2020-21, costing USD 551 billion) underscore the significance of reducing dependence on conventional fuels.

- **Reduced Greenhouse Gas Emissions:**

  ○ Ethanol's oxygen content enhances fuel combustion, leading to more complete burning and reduced emissions of pollutants like carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide.

- **Improved Efficiency:**

  ○ Higher octane rating in ethanol improves the octane level of blended fuel, contributing to better engine performance and efficiency.

- **Boost to Farmer's Income:**

  ○ Ethanol production from farm residue offers a dual benefit by increasing farmers' income and reducing air pollution associated with stubble burning.

Challenges:

- **Food Security Concerns:**

  ○ Lower sugar production projections (9% fall at 337 lakh tonnes for the 2023-24 marketing year) raise concerns about diverting sugar for ethanol production.

  ○ Adverse weather conditions, such as weak monsoons in cane-growing districts, may further impact sugar production, potentially turning India into a net sugar importer.

- **Grain-Based Ethanol Transition:**

  ○ The shift towards grain-based ethanol, particularly through organized maize-feed supply chains, raises concerns about food security.

  ○ There is a risk of diverting food grain cultivation areas for ethanol production, impacting the availability of essential food resources.

- **Environmental Concerns:**

  ○ Water-Intensive Agriculture: Cultivating water-intensive crops like sugarcane for ethanol production contributes to significant groundwater depletion, raising environmental concerns.

  ○ Agriculture's GHG Emissions: Diverting crops from food production to fuel production increases greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the agriculture sector, countering efforts to reduce emissions in the transport sector.

  ○ No Reduction in NOX Emissions: While ethanol reduces emissions like carbon monoxide, it does not address nitrous oxide emissions, a major environmental pollutant with detrimental effects.

- **Challenge of Scaling Up:**

  ○ Balancing economies of scale with the ener-

PLUTUS IAS

gy needs and costs associated with biomass collection and transport poses a challenge in scaling up ethanol production.

○ The significant increase in ethanol production capacity (from 423 crore litres in 2019-20 to 947 crore litres in 2022-23) indicates a need for additional capacity (8-10 billion litres) to achieve the 20% petrol-ethanol blending requirement in 2023.

○ The non-implementation of amended provisions of the Industries (Development & Regulation) Act, 1951, by all states poses a significant hurdle to ethanol blending in India. Restrictions on the inter-state movement of ethanol hinder the smooth operation of the blending program.

Way Forward

● **Exploring Ethanol from Wastes:**

○ India has a unique opportunity to position itself as a global leader in sustainable biofuels by redirecting its focus towards producing ethanol from wastes.

○ This shift not only promises significant climate benefits but also addresses air quality issues, as these wastes are often burned, contributing to smog.

● **Addressing Water Crisis Concerns:**

○ The evolving ethanol policy must be crafted with careful consideration to avoid driving farmers towards water-intensive crops, preventing the exacerbation of the existing water crisis in a country already grappling with acute shortages.

○ Given that rice, sugarcane, and wheat account for about 80% of India's irrigation water, policy adjustments are crucial.

● **Prioritizing Crop Production:**

○ In the face of depleting groundwater, limited arable land, unpredictable monsoons, and declining crop yields due to climate change, there is a pressing need to prioritize food production over crops intended for fuel.

● **Exploring Alternative Mechanisms:**

○ To meet the primary goal of emissions reduction, it is imperative to assess alternative mechanisms such as increased adoption of electric vehicles and the installation of additional renewable generation capacity to facilitate zero-emission recharging.

○ Evaluating and incorporating diverse strategies will contribute to a comprehensive and sustainable approach to emissions reduction.

CYCLONE – MICHAUNG

Why in the News?

Recently, rain began to pummel several districts in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh as Cyclone Michaung intensified into a super cyclonic storm, causing a large amount of loss to lives and properties.

Current status of cyclone Michaung:

● On December 3, rains began to pummel Chennai as Cyclone Michaung, soon to intensify into a super cyclonic storm, parked itself roughly 100 km east of the city. By the next morning, most areas had recorded more than 120 mm of rain, with a few recording more than 250 mm. The storm, centered around 80 km southeast of Nellore and 120 km north-northeast of Chennai at 5.30 pm on December 4, moved northward along the Andhra Pradesh coast, bringing heavy rain to most of Tamil Nadu, parts of Andhra Pradesh, and southern Odisha.

● According to the statement of the India Meteorological Department (IMD), cyclonic storm Michaung intensified into a 'severe cyclonic storm' with a maximum sustained wind speed of 90 to 100 kmph and gusting to 110 kmph on December 4 afternoon.

● The A.P. State Disaster Management Authority (APSDMA) stated that the cyclone is likely to weaken in the next few hours. However, heavy rain will continue for a few more hours.
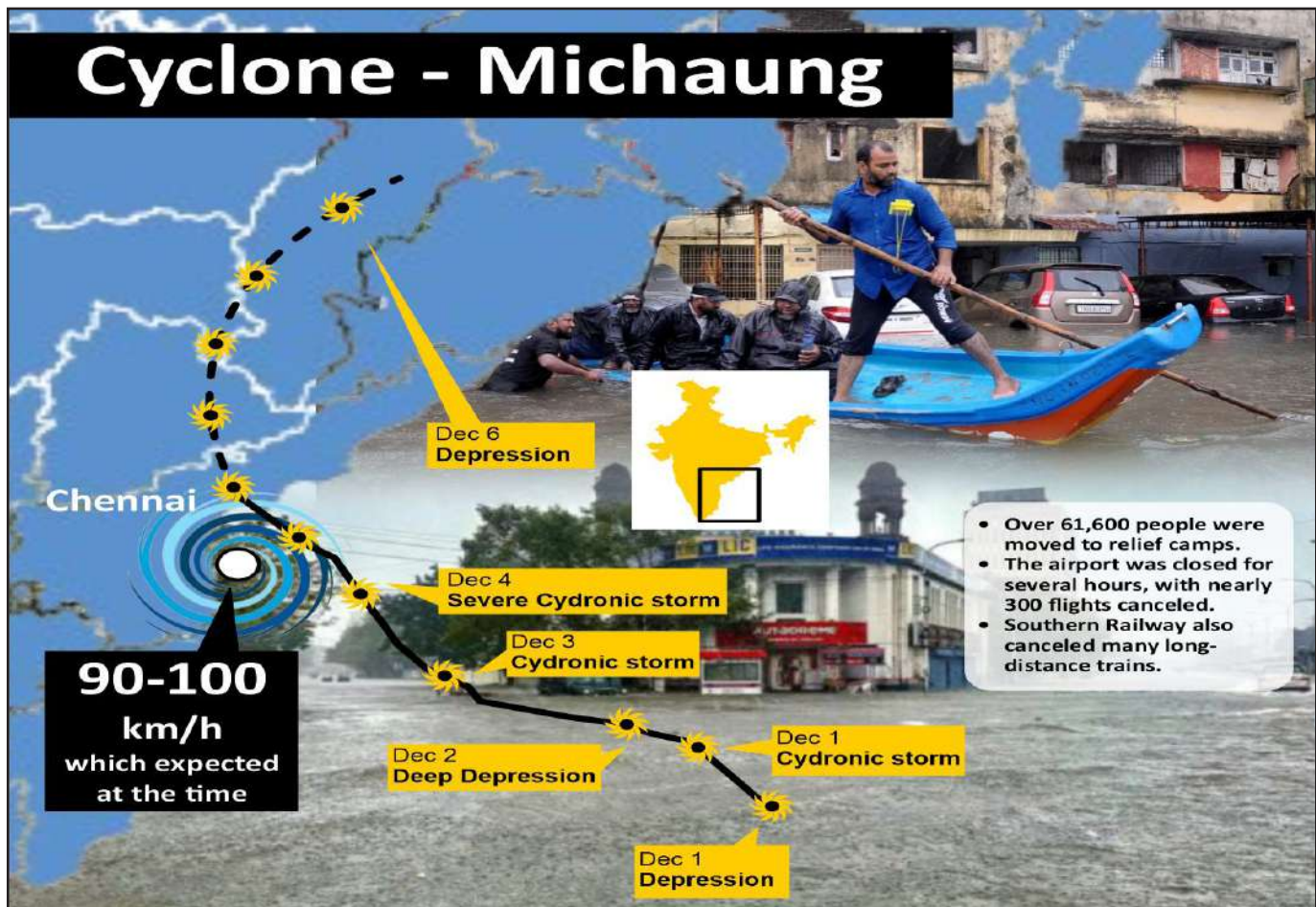
What is a Cyclone?

Cyclone is a region of low atmospheric pressure surrounded by high atmospheric pressure resulting in swirling atmospheric disturbance accompanied by powerful winds.

Preparedness:

- Over 61,600 people were moved to relief camps.

- Suspension and cutoff of power supply were taken as a precautionary measure.

- The airport was closed for several hours, with nearly 300 flights canceled.

- Southern Railway also canceled many long-distance trains.

- The IMD has issued a red alert for a few districts that will receive extremely heavy rainfall on 5 December and marked red are West Godavari, Konaseema, Eluru, Prakasam, Krishna, NTR, Bapatla and Guntur.

- The districts that are likely to receive very heavy rainfall and marked orange are: East Godavari, Kakinada, YSR Kadapa, Nellore and Alluri Sitaramaraju.

- The north coastal Andhra Pradesh region, as well as Tirupati, Annamayya and Nandyal, is marked yellow, as it is expected to receive heavy rainfall.

- The government declared a holiday for educational institutions on 5 December and advised private companies to permit employees to work from home.

Consequences of Cyclone Hazard

- Loss of life: Seven people in Chennai and five people in Andhra Pradesh were killed.

- Destruction of infrastructure: Parked vehicles were either marooned or floating, and there was uprooting of electric poles, along with a few instances of walls and roofs of houses col-

lapsing.

- Inundation of seawater: Occurred in low-lying areas of coastal regions, resulting in the brimming of water bodies and the release of surplus water from reservoirs.

- Landfall: Between Nellore and Machilipatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

- Loss of vegetation, crops, and food supplies: Uprooting of a large number of trees.

- Severe disruption in communication and transportation: Included the shutdown of Chennai airfield, railways and roadways.

Post Disaster Relief:

- The Army and the NDRF rescued residents on boats in some areas.

- Additional workforce and necessary additional equipment are being sourced from neighbouring districts to undertake relief operations in Chennai and Andhra Pradesh.

- State agencies, including the Fire and Rescue Services and police personnel were involved in relief and rescue operations.

- Around 13 Ministers were deputed to oversee relief and rescue operations, besides deploying more senior IAS officers on the field.

Favorable Conditions: Listed below are some of the identified favorable conditions:

- A warm sea surface (temperature in excess of 26–27°C) and associated warming extending up to a depth of 60m with abundant water vapor in the overlying air (by evaporation).

- High relative humidity in the atmosphere up to a height of about 5,000 meters.

- Atmospheric instability that encourages the formation of massive vertical cumulus clouds due to the condensation of rising moist air.

- Low vertical wind shear between the lower and higher levels of the atmosphere does not allow the heat generated and released by the clouds to be transported from the area (vertical wind

shear is the rate of change of wind between the higher and lower levels of the atmosphere).

- The presence of cyclonic vorticity (rate of rotation of air) that initiates and favors the rotation of the air cyclonically.

- Location over the ocean, around 5–25° latitude away from the equator.

Cyclone Risks in India

- In India, 8 percent of the total landmass is prone to cyclones. India has a coastline of about 7,516 km, with 5,400 km along the mainland, 132 km in Lakshadweep, and 1,900 km in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

- Four states (Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, and West Bengal) and one Union Territory (Puducherry) on the east coast, and one state (Gujarat) on the west coast, are highly vulnerable to cyclone disasters.

- There are 13 coastal states and Union Territories (UTs) in the country, encompassing 84 coastal districts affected by tropical cyclones.

- More cyclones occur in the Bay of Bengal than the Arabian Sea, with the ratio approximately 4:1.

Cyclone Warning System in India

Low pressure and the development of cyclones can be detected hours or days before they cause damage. Satellites track the movement of these cyclones, based on which people are evacuated from areas likely to be affected. However, predicting accuracy is challenging, and accurate landfall predictions can only provide a few hours' notice to threatened populations.

India has one of the best cyclone warning systems in the world. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) is the nodal department for wind detection, tracking, and forecasting cyclones. Cyclone tracking is done through INSAT (Indian National Satellite) satellites. Cyclone warnings are disseminated through various means, such as satellite-based disaster warning systems, radio, television, telephone, fax, high-priority telegram, public announcements, and

bulletins in the press. These warnings are communicated to the general public, the fishing community, especially those at sea, port authorities, and commercials.

Cyclone Hazard Mitigation

- Cyclone Shelters: Use public buildings in densely populated coastal areas as cyclone shelters, designed with a blank façade and minimal apertures facing prevailing winds. The shorter side of buildings should face the storm for less wind resistance, with earth berms and green belts to reduce impact.

- Rapid dissemination of warnings, especially to government agencies and marine entities;

- Coastal Belt Plantation: Establish green belts to act as a buffer against strong winds and floods, sustaining less damage. Forests provide a wide buffer zone, hindering cyclones from freely traveling inland.

- Hazard Mapping: Utilize meteorological records to create hazard maps, illustrating areas vulnerable to cyclones, estimating severity, and predicting damage intensities in a region.

- Land Use Control: Designate vulnerable areas for least critical activities, regulate land use through policies, and enforce building codes. Avoid settling in floodplains and mark key facilities in land use plans.

- Flood Management: Incorporate flood mitigation measures to address torrential rains, strong winds, storm surges, and potential landslides in cyclone-affected areas.

- Improving Vegetation Cover: Plant trees and maintain vegetation to secure soil, prevent erosion, slow runoff, and act as windbreaks.

- Coastal Shelterbelt Plantations: Develop shelterbelt plantations along the coast to break severe wind speeds and minimize devastating effects.

CLIMATE CHANGE: FUTURE AND CHALLENGES

Why in News?

India has emerged as the voice of developing countries on the issue of climate change under the leadership of the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi in the Delhi Declaration (Delhi Agreement) signed during the hosting of the G-20 conference in the year 2023. During the G-20 conference, in the Delhi Agreement, the idea of green belt for 'sustainable development' under the leadership of India has been put forward, which has been accepted by the whole world.

Developing countries need financial assistance and technology transfer for the development of their country, unless the technology transfer from the developed countries of the world to the developing countries is done properly, the whole world will not be able to achieve development with climate and environmental protection. Will not be able to achieve the target.

Why do we need action?

- Climate change is a global problem today that is now affecting every country on every continent. Not only is it disrupting national economies, it is also affecting human lives, and in the future, it will affect the present and future of people, communities and countries even more.

Current reference:

- The issue of climate change is well known around the world. It cannot be denied that climate change is currently the biggest challenge facing the global society and dealing with it has become the biggest need of the present time. Data show that the average temperature at the Earth's surface has increased by about 1.62 degrees Fahrenheit (i.e., about 0.9 degrees Celsius) since the end of the 19th century. Apart from this, the sea water level has also increased by about 8 inches since the last century. Statistics clearly show that the present time is to

think seriously towards climate change.

What is climate change?

- In general, climate refers to the average weather in a given area over a long period of time. Therefore, when there is a change in the average weather of a particular area, it is called climate change.

- Climate change can be felt not only in a particular place but also in the entire world. If we talk about the present context, its effect is being seen almost all over the world.

- The climate has changed many times throughout the history of the Earth and many incidents of climate change have occurred.

- Scientists who study the Earth say that the Earth's temperature is continuously increasing. The Earth's temperature has increased by 1 degree Fahrenheit in the last 100 years. This change in the Earth's temperature may be very small in number, but any such change can have the biggest impact on mankind.

- Some effects of climate change can still be felt today. Due to increase in the earth's temperature, glaciers are melting and the water level of the oceans is increasing, as a result the risk of natural disasters and sinking of some islands has also increased.

Our changing climate:

Climate change is affecting our planet (Earth) from one pole to the other. NOAA monitors global climate data and following are some of the changes recorded by NOAA in recent years –

- From 1901 to 2020, global temperatures rose by about 1.8°F (1°C).

- Sea level rise has increased from 1.7 mm/year during most of the twentieth century to 3.2 mm/year since 1993.

- Glaciers are shrinking: The average thickness of 30 well-studied glaciers has decreased by more than 60 feet since 1980.

- The area covered by sea ice in the Arctic in late summer has decreased by about 40% since 1979.

- The amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased by 25% since 1958 and by about 40% since the Industrial Revolution.

- Snow is melting earlier than the long-term average.

- Due to climate change

Greenhouse Gases:

There is a layer of greenhouse gas around the Earth, this layer includes gases like methane, nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide.

- This layer of greenhouse gases is essential in maintaining the temperature balance on the earth's surface and according to analysts, if this layer is not there then the temperature of the earth will reduce significantly.

- As human activities are increasing in the modern era, the emissions of greenhouse gases are also increasing and due to which the global temperature is increasing.

Main greenhouse gases:

- **Carbon dioxide –** It is considered the most important greenhouse gas and is emitted due to both natural and human causes. According to scientists, most of the emissions of carbon dioxide come from burning fossil fuels for energy. Statistics show that after the Industrial Revolution, there has been a 30 percent increase in the amount of carbon dioxide globally.

- **Methane –** Decomposition of organic matter

is a major source of methane. It is noteworthy that methane is a more effective greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, but its quantity in the atmosphere is less than that of carbon dioxide.

- **Chlorofluorocarbon –** It is mainly used in refrigerants and air conditioners etc. and it has a very adverse effect on the ozone layer.

Change in land use:

- Deforestation for commercial or personal use is also a major factor in climate change. Trees not only provide us with fruits and shade, but they also absorb important greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The way trees are being cut at present is quite worrying, because trees act as a natural mechanism for absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and with their destruction, we will lose that natural mechanism as well.

- In some countries such as Brazil and Indonesia, deforestation is the leading cause of greenhouse gas emissions.

Urbanization:

- Due to urbanization and industrialization, there has been a lot of change in the way of living of people. The number of vehicles on roads around the world has increased significantly. Changes in lifestyle have contributed significantly to the emission of hazardous gases.

Effects of climate change:

High temperature:

- Greenhouse gas emissions from power plants, automobiles, deforestation, and other sources are warming the Earth relatively quickly. The global average temperature has been rising continuously over the past 150 years and the year 2016 was recorded as the hottest year. Increased temperatures can also be attributed to an increase in heat-related deaths and illnesses, rising sea levels, increased intensity of hurricanes, and many other dangerous consequences of climate change. A research has found that if the issue of greenhouse gas emissions is not taken seriously and efforts are not made to re-duce it, then the average temperature of the earth's surface may increase by 3 to 10 degrees Fahrenheit by the end of the century.

Change in rainfall pattern:

- Irregularities of floods, droughts and rains etc. have increased significantly in the last few decades. All this is happening as a result of climate change. There is a lot of rainfall in some places, while in some places there is a possibility of drought due to lack of water.

Rise in sea level:

- Globally, during global warming, glaciers melt and sea level rises, due to which the risk of submergence of islands around the sea also increases. People living in small island countries like Maldives are already looking for alternative destinations.

Loss of Wildlife Species:

- Rising temperatures and changes in vegetation patterns have forced some bird species into extinction. According to experts, one-fourth of the Earth's species could become extinct by the year 2050. In 2008, polar bears were added to the list of animals that could become extinct due to sea level rise.

Spread of diseases and economic losses:

- Experts have predicted that as a result of climate change in the future, diseases like malaria and dengue will increase further and will be difficult to control. According to World Health Organization (WHO) data, more than 150,000 people have died due to heat waves since last decade.

Forest fire:

- Prolonged heat waves caused by climate change have created hot and dry conditions suitable for wildfires. According to data from the Brazil-based National Institute for Space Research (INPE), since January 2019, Brazil's Amazon forests have faced a total of 74,155 forest fires. It has also come to light that the incidence of fire in the Amazon forest has increased by 85 per-

cent since last year (2018).

Climate Change and Food Security:

- Food shortage may arise due to reduced crop production due to climate change, and problems like land degradation may also arise.

- Asia and Africa are already dependent on imported foods. These areas may become vulnerable to drought due to rapidly rising temperatures.

- According to the IPCC report, low-altitude areas are already seeing declines in yields of crops like wheat and corn.

- The nutritional quality of crops is decreasing due to increase in the amount of carbon in the atmosphere. For example, due to high carbon environment, the nutritional value of wheat is decreasing by 6% to 13% of protein, 4% to 7% of zinc and 5% to 8% of iron.

- Crop yields are falling due to the heat wave in Europe.

- The Bloomberg Agriculture Spot Index, a price gauge of nine crops, fell to its lowest level in a decade in May. The volatility of this index reflects the instability of food security.

Global efforts to tackle climate change:

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a United Nations body responsible for conducting scientific assessments related to climate change. In which there are 195 member countries.

- It was established in 1988 by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

- Its purpose is to provide regular scientific assessments of climate change, its impacts and potential future risks, as well as to inform policymakers' strategies for adaptation and climate change mitigation.

- IPCC assessments provide governments at all levels with scientific information that can be used to develop climate-resilient policies.

- IPCC assessments play an important role in international negotiations to combat climate change.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):

- It is an international agreement aimed at controlling the emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

- This agreement was made during the Earth Summit in June 1992. After the signing of this agreement by various countries, it came into force on March 21, 1994.

- Annual meetings of the UNFCCC have been organized continuously since 1995. Under this, the much-discussed Kyoto Protocol was signed in the year 1997 and targets were set by the developed countries (countries included in Annex-1) to control greenhouse gases. Under the Kyoto Protocol, 40 industrialized countries have been kept in a separate list Annex-1.

- The annual meeting of the UNFCCC is known as the Conference of the Parties (COP).

Paris agreement:

- The Paris Agreement is an international agreement to deal with climate change.

- From 30 November to 11 December 2015, representatives of governments from 195 countries met in Paris to discuss a possible new global agreement to combat climate change.

- The Paris Agreement, consisting of 32 pages and 29 articles aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, is recognized as a landmark agreement to curb global warming.

Climate change issues and India's efforts:

National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC):

- The National Action Plan on Climate Change in India was launched in the year 2008.

- Its objective is to sensitize public representatives, various agencies of the government, scientists, industry and communities about the threat posed by climate change and measures to combat it.

This action plan mainly includes 8 missions:

- National Solar Mission.

- National Mission for Advanced Energy Efficiency.

- National Mission on Sustainable Habitat.

- National Water Mission.

- National Mission for Sustainable Himalayan Ecosystem.

- National Mission for Green India.

- National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture.

- National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change.

- Apart from this, State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC) have been prepared by the States and Union Territories of India, which is in line with the objectives of NAPCC.

International Solar Alliance (ISA)

- The International Solar Alliance is a treaty-based international intergovernmental organization of solar energy-rich countries.

- The International Solar Alliance was launched by India and France on November 30, 2015 during the Paris Climate Conference.

- Its headquarters is in Gurugram (Haryana).

- The key objectives of the ISA include achieving more than 1000 GW of solar power generation capacity globally and mobilizing approximately $1000 billion for investment in solar energy by 2030.

- The first meeting of the International Solar Alliance was organized in New Delhi.

Protective measures to prevent climate change:

- The use/use of fossil fuels should be reduced as much as possible.

- Natural sources of energy should be adopted, like solar energy, wind energy etc.

- Forests and trees should be saved from cutting and more trees should be planted.

- Materials that are difficult and impossible to decompose like plastic should not be used.

- Natural and renewable sources of energy should be adopted in greater numbers and quantities – like solar energy, wind energy etc.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. With reference to the Loss and Damage Fund established during the COP28 climate conference, consider the following statements:

1. The World Bank will serve as the interim host for the Loss and Damage Fund.

2. Contributions to the fund are mandatory for all member countries.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. With reference to the Satpura Tiger Reserve (STR), consider the following statements:

1. STR is situated in the Narmadapuram district of Madhya Pradesh.

2. Geographically, it lies to the south of the Tapti River.

3. The reserve boasts corridor connectivity with Pench National Park.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1, 2 and 3

(d) 1 and 3 only

Q3. Regarding the Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA) recently seen in the news, consider the following statements:

1. It is a United Nations Led Initiative.

2. It is to be supported by the World Bank

3. All SAARC nations are part of the initiative.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. Ethanol is mixed in diesel to produce Gasoline.

2. In 2022, India's ethanol blending program reached 30% ethanol blending in fuel.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q5. Which of the following can be considered as some initial conditions for the emergence of a tropical cyclone?

1. Strong Coriolis force

2. Large variations in the vertical wind speed

3. A pre-existing weak low-pressure area

Select the correct answer using the codes below:

(a) 1 and 3 only

(b) 1 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1 and 3 only

Q6. Consider the following statements in the context of global warming and changing climate change.

1. The International Solar Alliance is a treaty-based international intergovernmental organization of solar energy-rich countries.

2. Its headquarters is in Gurugram (Haryana).

3. The first meeting of the International Solar Alliance was organized in New Delhi.

4. The Paris Agreement is an international agreement to combat climate change.

Which of the above statement/statements is true?

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only.

(b) Only 2, 3 and 4.

(c) None of these.

(d) all of which.

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	A
2.	D
3.	A
4.	D
5.	A
6.	D

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the critical role of financial mechanisms in addressing the challenges posed by climate change. Examine the necessity for a robust financial framework to support climate adaptation and mitigation efforts globally, considering the recent developments at the COP28 conference in Dubai.

PLUTUS IAS

Q2. Examine the critical role of wildlife corridors in mitigating human-animal conflicts, with a specific focus on their importance in ecological conservation. Assess the challenges and benefits associated with establishing and maintaining these corridors

Q3. Examine the objectives, composition, and focus areas of the Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA) in the context of sustainable urban river management.

Q4. Evaluate the significance of ethanol blending in petrol as a sustainable approach for India's energy security.

Q5. How can Disaster Resilient Infrastructure be comprehended as a means to minimize the loss of life and property during cyclone-associated events? Additionally, explore the challenges associated with securing essential infrastructure in the aftermath of a cyclone.

Q6. Review the steps taken by India while discussing the impacts and solutions to climate change in the context of increasing global warming?

PLUTUS IAS

MH-60R SEAHAWK HELI-COPTER

Why in the News?

Lockheed Martin has delivered the sixth MH-60R "Romeo" helicopter to the Indian Navy. The company anticipates concluding the delivery of all MH-60R helicopters ordered by India by the year 2025.

Acquisition and Specifications:

India has entered into a contract with the United States for the acquisition of 24 MH-60R helicopters, investing $2.6 billion. This deal encompasses India-specific modifications and the integration of advanced weaponry, including Hellfire air-to-surface missiles and Mark 54 anti-submarine torpedoes.

Operational Range and Capabilities:

Renowned for its multi-role capabilities, the MH-60R Seahawk excels in anti-submarine warfare (ASW), maritime surveillance, anti-smuggling, anti-piracy, and search-and-rescue missions. Equipped with cutting-edge sensors, systems, and weapons, it provides a versatile platform for diverse naval operations.

Deployment and Operational Significance:

● **Aircraft Carrier Operations:**

○ Deployed on India's aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya, the MH-60R significantly enhances aerial capabilities.

○ Successful landings on INS Vikrant and INS Kolkata attest to their compatibility for car-

rier-based operations.

● **Strategic Maritime Security:**

○ Induction of MH-60R helicopters strengthens India's maritime security, bolstering anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare capabilities.

○ Key roles include patrolling critical maritime zones, safeguarding territorial waters, and countering maritime threats.

● **Versatility and Operational Flexibility:**

○ The MH-60R's adaptability for various missions ensures operational flexibility, addressing diverse maritime challenges like piracy, smuggling, and search-and-rescue operations.

Indigenous Integration and Future Plans:

● **India-Specific Modifications:**

○ Ongoing modifications tailor the helicopters to meet the Indian Navy's operational needs and adapt to the specific maritime environment.

● **Strategic Partnership with the United States:**

○ This procurement underscores the strategic defense partnership between India and the United States, providing access to advanced military technology and equipment.

Operational Features:

● **Enhanced Maritime Surveillance:**

○ State-of-the-art sensors monitor surface vessels and submarines, ensuring effective threat detection.

- **Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW):**

  ○ Utilizes sophisticated sonar systems to detect and engage submarines with torpedoes and depth charges.

- **Anti-Surface Warfare (ASuW):**

  ○ Engages and neutralizes surface threats using precision-guided missiles and rockets.

- **Search and Rescue (SAR):**

  ○ Capable of medical evacuation and SAR operations, serving as a crucial asset in maritime emergencies.

MH-60R Seahawk Overview:

Design and Capabilities:

- Derived from Sikorsky's S-70B Seahawk, built by Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation (now part of Lockheed Martin).
- Advanced sensors include AN/APY-9 radar, sonobuoys, acoustic sensors, ESM, and RWR for surveillance and threat detection.
- Armed with Hellfire missiles, Mark 54 torpedoes, and precision-guided rockets for anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare.

Multi-Mission Capabilities:

- Versatile platform designed for ASW, ASuW, search and rescue (SAR), and ISR missions.
- Conducts anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, search and rescue, medical evacuation, and maritime surveillance.

INS IMPHAL

Why in the News?

On November 28, 2023, the crest of Yard 12706 (Imphal), the third vessel among the quartet of Project 15B stealth-guided missile destroyers, was revealed by the Defense Minister, Shri Rajnath Singh, in New Delhi.

About INS Imphal:

INS Imphal, the third vessel in the Visakhapatnam-class of stealth-guided missile destroyers, stands as a testament to India's prowess in naval construction. With a remarkable blend of indigenous technology and strategic design, this imposing warship is a key asset in the nation's maritime defense capabilities.

Key Specifications:

- **Size and Displacement:**

  ○ Length: 164 metres

  ○ Displacement: Over 7500 tonnes

- **Speed:**

  ○ Impressive speed of over 30 knots (approximately 55 kmph)

- **Capabilities:**

  ○ Versatile platform capable of a wide range of tasks across maritime warfare.

- **Indigenous Content:**

  ○ Boasts an impressive 75% indigenous content, showcasing India's technological advancements.

  ○ Features Medium Range Surface-to-Air missiles, BrahMos surface-to-surface missiles, Indigenous Torpedo Tube Launchers, Anti-Submarine Indigenous Rocket Launchers (Larsen & Toubro, Mumbai), and a 76mm Super Rapid Gun Mount (BHEL, Haridwar).

Symbolism In Crest Design:

- The crest design is rich in symbolism, featuring the Kangla Palace and 'Kangla-Sa.'

- Kangla Palace: An important historical and archaeological site in Manipur, serving as the traditional seat of the past kingdom.

- 'Kangla-Sa': A mythical being from Manipur history, depicted with a dragon's head and lion's body. Symbolic as the guardian/protector of the people, it is also the state emblem of Manipur.

Historical Significance:

- INS Imphal holds the distinction of being the first capital warship named after a city in the northeast – Imphal, the capital of Manipur.

Project-15B:

Project-15B (P 15B) marks a significant milestone in India's naval capabilities, with four Guided Missile Destroyers under construction at M/s Mazagaon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, Mumbai. Initiated in 2011, these vessels are poised to be among the world's most technologically advanced destroyers, featuring cutting-edge weaponry, advanced stealth attributes, and a high degree of automation.

Project-15B
- INS Visakhapatnam
- INS Mormugao
- INS Imphal
- INS Surat

Key Features of P-15B Ships:

- **Weaponry:**

  - Equipped with BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles and long-range Surface-to-Air Missiles (SAM), enhancing both offensive and defensive capabilities.

  - Boasts indigenous weapons systems, including medium-range Surface-to-Air Missiles (SAMs), torpedo tube launchers, anti-submarine indigenous rocket launchers, and a 76-mm super rapid gun mount.

- **Ships under Project 15-B :**

  - The first ship, INS Visakhapatnam

  - INS Mormugao, the second ship

  - INS Imphal, the third ship

  - INS Surat, the fourth ship

Role of P-15B:

- In the context of India's vast coastline, 7516 Kms and 1100 offshore islands, and a 2.01 million sq km Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), P-15B plays a pivotal role in enhancing the Indian Navy's capabilities.

- Positioned for duties in the Indo-Pacific, these guided missile destroyers are vital for safeguarding against air, surface, and underwater threats, contributing significantly to the Indian Navy's potency.

Other Recent Projects:

- **Project 75 (I):**

  - Envisions indigenous construction of submarines with state-of-the-art Air Independent Propulsion system.

  - Estimated cost: Rs. 43,000 crore.

- **Project 75:**

  - The program involves building six Scorpene-Class attack submarines.

  - Undertaken with technology transfer from French company Naval Group at the Mazagon Dock Limited.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. 'MH-60R Seahawk' recently seen in the news is a:

(a) New attack helicopters purchased by India from USA

(b) Torpedo developed by DRDO

(c) India's latest Nuclear power propelled Submarine

(d) India's first Solar powered Coast Guard Ship

Q2. Under which of the following programmes the latest, INS Imphal-destroyer Ship was made?

(a) Project 75

(b) Project 15-B

(c) Project 15-A

(d) Project 75 (I)

Q3. Consider the following:

1. INS Visakhapatnam

2. INS Mormugao

3. INS Mangalore

4. INS Surat

How many of the above are ships under Project-15B?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) Only three

(d) All four

ANSWER

S. No.	Answers
1.	A
2.	B
3.	A

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Examine the significance of modernizing security hardware in the context of contemporary national security challenges. Discuss the key areas where modernization is crucial, and analyze the impact of updated security technologies on enhancing the effectiveness of defense and law enforcement agencies.

Q2. Discuss the strategic significance and challenges associated with India's pursuit of a Blue Water Navy in the context of enhancing maritime security.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

GURU NANAK

Why in the News?

Guru Nanak Jayanti commemorates the birth of Sikhism's founder and the inaugural among its nine gurus, Guru Nanak, also known as Baba Nanak. Sikhs observe this occasion with a vibrant procession named Nagar Kirtan, where congregations joyfully sing hymns and visit gurudwaras.

- **Birth and Early Life:** Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born on Purnima Tithi in the month of Kartik in the year 1469 in Rai Bhoi Ki Talwandi, now known as Nankana Sahib in Pakistan. His teachings emphasized oneness, equality, and selfless service.

- **Spiritual Journeys:** In the first quarter of the 16th century, Guru Nanak embarked on extensive spiritual journeys, known as 'udasiya.' He traveled to various regions, including Hindu and Muslim pilgrimage centers, spreading his message of oneness and purity. His travels reached as far as Sri Lanka, Baghdad, and central Asia, with his last journey to Mecca and Madina.

- **Founding Sikhism:** Guru Nanak founded Sikhism, a monotheistic religion that blended Hindu and Muslim influences. The followers of his teachings came to be known as Sikhs. The holy text of Sikhism, the Guru Granth Sahib, preserves Guru Nanak's words in the form of 974 poetic hymns.

- **Guru Nanak's Philosophy:** Guru Nanak's philosophy centered around "Ik Onkar," emphasizing the oneness of God, equality among individuals regardless of caste or creed, and the importance of selfless service. His teachings revolved around compassion, honesty, and devotion to a righteous life.

- **Legacy and Succession:** Guru Nanak's disciples, known as Sikhs, followed a routine of early rising, bathing in cold water, reciting morning prayers, and engaging in hymns and selfless service. Guru Nanak chose Guru Angad as his successor, giving him the name Angad, meaning 'of my own limb.' This tradition continues with the practice of 'langar,' where people contribute labor to help the needy.

- **Death and Legacy:** Guru Nanak passed away on September 22, 1539. His legacy lives on in Sikhism, and his teachings continue to inspire millions, promoting a life of righteousness, equality, and service to humanity. Guru Nanak Jayanti is celebrated by Sikhs worldwide, honoring the profound impact of the first Guru of Sikhism.

Guru Nanak Dev's Relevance for Modern India:

Vision of Equality:

- Despite India's aspirations as a superpower, caste hierarchy persists in societal structures.

- Guru Nanak Dev's vision of a casteless society, exemplified by practices like Langar (collective cooking and sharing of food), Pangat (partaking food without caste distinctions), and Sangat (collective decision-making), offers a blueprint for establishing an egalitarian society.

Social Harmony:

- Rising intolerance, mob lynching, and right-wing vigilantism threaten India's secular nature

and social harmony.

- Guru Nanak Dev's concept of "Jeeye kaa ik daata" promotes the idea that the entire world is God's creation, emphasizing the equality of all.

- This philosophy echoes the Sanskrit saying "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," portraying the world as one family.

- Guru Nanak Dev's teachings of forgiveness, patience, forbearance, and kindness provide a foundation for fostering social harmony.

Creating a Just Society:

- Inequality is identified as the root cause of social evils.

- Guru Nanak Dev advocated the principles of "kirat karo, naam japo, and vand chhako" (work, worship, and share), emphasizing the importance of honest labor and sharing with the needy.

- The concept of "dasvandh" or donating one-tenth of earnings to the needy reflects a commitment to social responsibility and change.

- The central role of selfless service to mankind, known as "Seva," is a guiding principle in Sikhism.
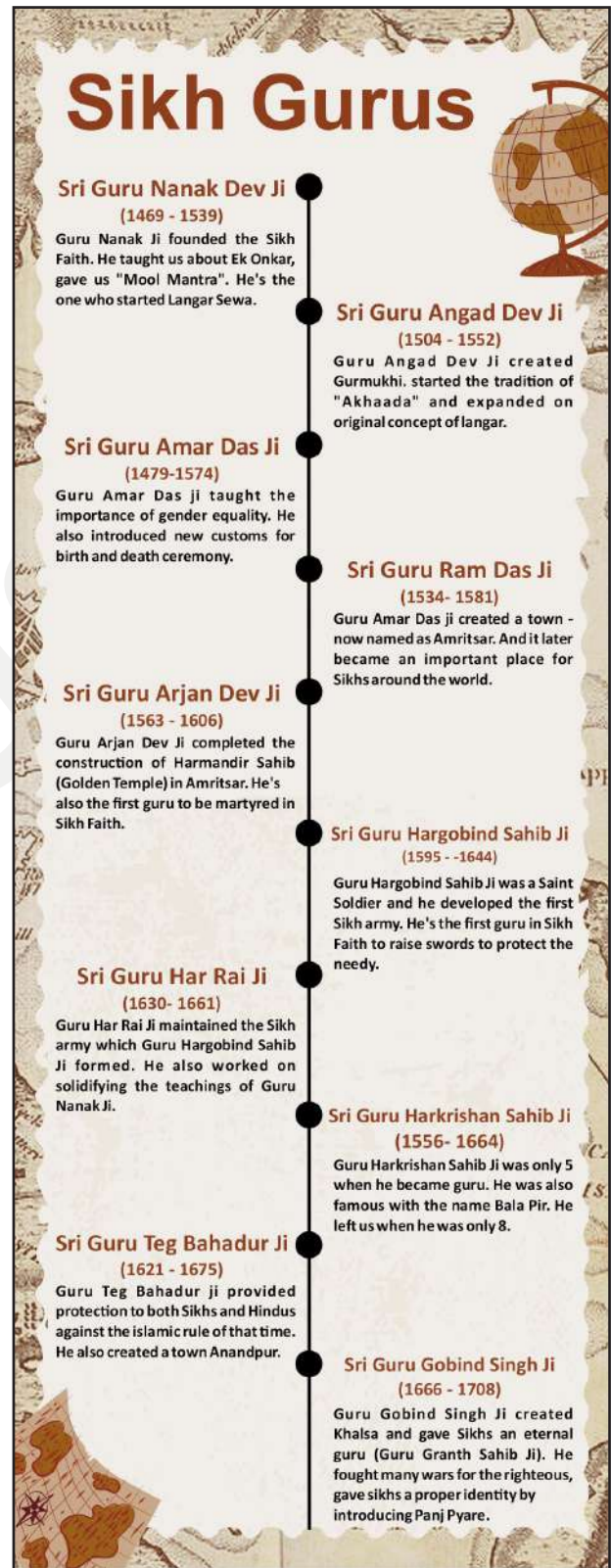
Gender Equality:

- Guru Nanak Dev challenged the oppression of women, asserting their equality by questioning, "How can women be inferior when they give birth to men?"

- He emphasized that women, like men, share the grace of God and are equally responsible for their actions.

- Guru Nanak Dev's teachings underscore respect for women and advocate for gender equality.

Bringing Peace:

- Despite India-Pakistan tensions, the inauguration of the Kartarpur corridor presents an opportunity for regional normalization.

- Guru Nanak Dev's teachings, emphasizing unity and transcending religious and national boundaries, can inspire improved relations between India and Pakistan.

- The Kartarpur corridor could serve as a catalyst for peace, not only between the two nations but also for the broader South-Asian region.

Sikh Gurus

Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji
(1469 - 1539)
Guru Nanak Ji founded the Sikh Faith. He taught us about Ek Onkar, gave us "Mool Mantra". He's the one who started Langar Sewa.

Sri Guru Angad Dev Ji
(1504 - 1552)
Guru Angad Dev Ji created Gurmukhi. started the tradition of "Akhaada" and expanded on original concept of langar.

Sri Guru Amar Das Ji
(1479-1574)
Guru Amar Das ji taught the importance of gender equality. He also introduced new customs for birth and death ceremony.

Sri Guru Ram Das Ji
(1534- 1581)
Guru Amar Das ji created a town - now named as Amritsar. And it later became an important place for Sikhs around the world.

Sri Guru Arjan Dev Ji
(1563 - 1606)
Guru Arjan Dev Ji completed the construction of Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) in Amritsar. He's also the first guru to be martyred in Sikh Faith.

Sri Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji
(1595 - -1644)
Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji was a Saint Soldier and he developed the first Sikh army. He's the first guru in Sikh Faith to raise swords to protect the needy.

Sri Guru Har Rai Ji
(1630- 1661)
Guru Har Rai Ji maintained the Sikh army which Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji formed. He also worked on solidifying the teachings of Guru Nanak Ji.

Sri Guru Harkrishan Sahib Ji
(1556- 1664)
Guru Harkrishan Sahib Ji was only 5 when he became guru. He was also famous with the name Bala Pir. He left us when he was only 8.

Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Ji
(1621 - 1675)
Guru Teg Bahadur ji provided protection to both Sikhs and Hindus against the islamic rule of that time. He also created a town Anandpur.

Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji
(1666 - 1708)
Guru Gobind Singh Ji created Khalsa and gave Sikhs an eternal guru (Guru Granth Sahib Ji). He fought many wars for the righteous, gave sikhs a proper identity by introducing Panj Pyare.

NOLAMBA DYNASTY

Why in the News?

In recent historical investigations into the Nolamba Pallavas, researchers have discovered ancient inscriptions, hero stones, and depictions of Shiva Linga and Nandi idols.

The Nolamba Dynasty, often referred to as Nolamba Pallavas, played a crucial role in shaping the political landscape of South India from the 8th to the 12th centuries C.E. Unearthed artifacts, including inscriptions, hero stones, and Shiva Linga idols, provide insights into their historical significance.

Political Influence:

The Nolambas initially served as feudatories to prominent dynasties such as Pallavas, Chalukyas of Badami, Gangas, and Rashtrakutas. Later, they aligned with the Chalukyas of Kalyani. Their dominion, known as Nolambavadi, encompassed regions in southeast Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh.

Capital Shift:

The dynasty's early capital was Chitradurga, but it was later relocated to Hemavati in modern Andhra Pradesh during the 8th to 10th centuries AD. This shift marked a significant era in Nolamba rule.

Founder and Origins:

Mangala Nomabathi Raja (735–785 A.D.) is recognized as the founder of the Nolamba dynasty. Inscriptions suggest that they emerged as governors during the supremacy of the Pallavas and Chalukyas. Their existence intertwined with political changes, especially after the Chalukyas lost territories to the Pallavas.

Rise and Fall:

Initially linked to the Banas and Vaidumbas, the Nolambas faced political shifts with the Chalukyas regaining control. The defeat of Pallava chiefs by the Chalukyas led to the emergence of the Nolambas. However, their decline came at the hands of Ganga king Marasimha, who claimed the title Nolambakulantaka.

Religious Legacy:

The Nolambas, devout Shaivites, left a cultural imprint through grand temple complexes dedicated to Lord Shiva. Notable examples include the Kalleshwara Temple in Aralaguppe, the Bhoganandishwara Temple in Nandi, and the Ramalingeshwara Temple in Avani.

Temples Built by Nolamba Dynasty

Ramalingeshwara Temple in Avani

Kalleshwara Temple in Aralaguppe

Bhoganandishwara Temple in Nandi
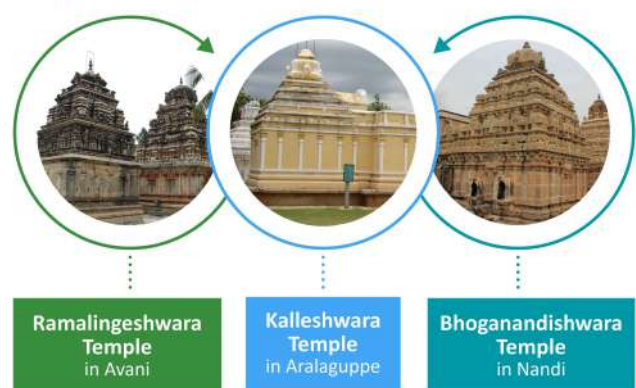
The Nolamba Dynasty, despite its historical significance, often remains overshadowed. Through their political maneuverings, capital shifts, and religious patronage, the Nolambas left an indelible mark on South Indian history, as evidenced by the unearthed relics and temple structures that stand testament to their once-flourishing rule.

8TH WONDER OF THE WORLD

Why in the News:

Angkor Wat, in the heart of Cambodia, has beaten Pompeii in Italy to become the eighth Wonder of the World.

Location:

● Situated in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

● Largest religious monument globally, covering

PLUTUS IAS

1,200 sq meters with intricately carved bas-reliefs.

Historical Significance:

- Constructed in the 12th century by Khmer Emperor Suryavarman II.

- Initially a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu, later converted to a Buddhist temple.

- Transition depicted in carvings showcasing scenes from Hindu and Buddhist mythology.

- Part of an extensive complex including the Bayon Temple in Angkor Thom.

Key Features:

- Architectural brilliance with sandstone block construction.

- 15-foot-high wall, wide moat for protection.

- Bas-reliefs depicting deities and narratives from Hindu and Buddhist traditions.

- Symbolic five lotus-shaped towers representing Mount Meru.

Interesting Facts:

- Also known as Yasodharapura, derived from the Khmer word "nokor" meaning "kingdom."

- UNESCO protection for its archaeological and cultural significance.

- Breathtaking sunrise spectacle attracting tourists.

Pompeii: Ancient Roman City

Location:

- Near Naples, Italy, by the Bay of Naples.

History:

- Founded around the 6th century BC, influenced by Greek and Etruscan cultures.

- Became a Roman colony around the 1st century BC.

- Catastrophically buried by Mount Vesuvius eruption in 79 AD.

Key Features:

- Excavated ruins reveal streets, buildings, houses, public spaces, temples, and artifacts.

- Showcase of Roman architecture, including villas, temples, theaters, and an amphitheater.

- Renowned for exquisite frescoes, mosaics, and artifacts.

Cultural Significance:

- Provides invaluable insights into ancient Roman life, architecture, art, and urban planning.

- UNESCO World Heritage Site, major tourist destination, and educational resource.

Conclusion:

Angkor Wat and Pompeii, both wonders with unique historical and cultural significance.

Angkor Wat's architectural magnificence and UNESCO's efforts make it a compelling destination.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. With reference to Guru Nanak, consider the following statements:

1. Guru Nanak believed in monotheism.

2. Guru Nanak laid the foundation of Khalsa Panth.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the Nolamba Dynasty?

1. The Nolambas initially served as feudatories to Chalukyas of Badami

2. The Nolambas built Chennakesava temple at Belur.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. consider the following statements:

1. Angkor Wat Temple is situated in Ho chi Minh province of Cambodia.

2. It is Purely a Buddhist temple.

Select the correct answer using the codes below:

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	A
2.	A

3.	D

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. In the context of Guru Nanak and the inception of Sikhism, discuss the fundamental principles and teachings propagated by Guru Nanak. How did his spiritual journeys and experiences shape the foundation of Sikhism

Q2. Evaluate the role of Dravidian architecture in shaping the religious landscape and regional identity in South India.

Q3. Discuss the cultural expanse of Indian civilization in Asia, highlighting key influences, interactions, and exchanges that have contributed to shaping the diverse cultural landscape of the region.

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