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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

THE ISSUE OF ARTICLE 370 IS OVER: BUT THE ISSUE OF TERRORISM VICTIMS NEEDS TO BE OVER IN THE LIGHT OF THE SUPREME COURT DECISION

GENERAL STUDIES – INDIAN POLITY AND GOVERNANCE.

Why in the News?

On 11 December 2023, the **Honorable Supreme Court of India** delivered its historic judgment on the abrogation of **Articles 370 and 35A**. Through this decision, the **Supreme Court confirmed the sovereignty and integrity of India**, which every Indian cherishes in his mind. The Supreme Court held that the government's decision to abrogate Article 370 on August 5, 2019—which ended the **special status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir**—was taken to **promote constitutional integration and not disintegration**. The Court also accepted the fact that **Article 370 was 'temporary' in nature**.

PROCESS OF ABROGATION OF ARTICLE 370 BY PARLIAMENT/CENTRAL GOVERNMENT :

- **BY PRESIDENTIAL ORDER :**
 - In the Presidential Order of the year 2019, the Parliament introduced a provision and gave a new meaning to the 'Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir' as 'Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir' and then used the President's rule to abrogate Article 370. Through this, the powers of the Legislative Assembly were assumed.

BY RESOLUTION IN PARLIAMENT:

- Concurrent resolutions were passed by both Houses of Parliament, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, on 5 and 6 August 2019 respectively. These resolutions also repealed the remaining provisions of Article 370 and replaced them with new provisions.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR REORGANIZATION ACT:

- The **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act 2019** was passed by the Parliament on 5 August 2019. This Act **divided the State of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories – 'Jammu and Kashmir' and 'Ladakh'**.



REASON FOR ABROGATION OF ARTICLE 370 –

REASONS FOR UNIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATION:

- Article 370 hindered the full integration of Jammu and Kashmir into the Indian Union and at the same time it also created a feeling of separatism, which hindered the development of Jammu and Kashmir. It was also believed behind its integration that complete integration of Jammu and Kashmir into India would create better access to resources, infrastructure and opportunities for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

FROM A STRONG NATIONAL SECURITY PERSPECTIVE :

- Article 370 was being misused by Pakistan to support terrorism and separatism in Jammu and Kashmir region. Repealing it would strengthen national security as the Government of India would have greater control over this area and crack down on terrorist activities.

WITH A VIEW TO END DISCRIMINATION :

- Article 370 discriminated against women, Dalits and other marginalized groups in Jammu and

Kashmir. By repealing it, these groups will come under the ambit of Indian laws and they will get equal rights and opportunities.

WITH A VIEW TO ENSURE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN GOVERNANCE :

- Article 370 had created a lack of transparency in the governance of Jammu and Kashmir and in determining accountability. With its repeal, the state of Jammu and Kashmir will come under the ambit of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) and the Right to Information Act (RTI) , thereby ensuring better governance and accountability .

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT:

- Article 370 hindered economic development in Jammu and Kashmir. Repealing it would allow for more investment, tourism and job creation in the area.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DECISION GIVEN BY THE SUPREME COURT:

ARTICLE 370 IS A TEMPORARY PROVISION:

The Supreme Court held that Article 370 was a temporary provision and the state of Jammu and Kashmir had **no internal sovereignty**. The Supreme Court also held that Article 370 was a **‘temporary provision’ for two primary reasons**.

- It **served a transitional purpose** , which was to make an interim arrangement for the establishment of the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir, which was to draft the state constitution.
- Its objective was to **facilitate the integration of Jammu and Kashmir into the Union of India in view of the war-like situation prevailing in the state in the year 1947**.

THE GOVERNOR CAN ASSUME THE ‘ALL OR ANY’ ROLE OF THE STATE LEGISLATURE:

The Supreme Court, citing the landmark decision of **SR Bommai vs Union of India (1994)** (which deals with the powers and limitations of the Governor under President’s rule), held that the Gover-

nor is an **‘all or any’ member of the state legislature**.) can assume the role.

- The Chief Justice of India (CJI) said that the Governor (President in the case of Jammu and Kashmir) can act **‘all or none’ of the state legislature and such action should be judicially tested only in exceptional cases**.
- It is not necessary to take the consent of the state government to remove Article 370 : The Court said in its decision that the President, exercising the powers under **Article 370 (3) of the Constitution, can unilaterally notify that Article 370 has ceased to exist**. Is.
- The Supreme Court further held that there was no need for the President to obtain the concurrence of the State Government in this regard, as specified by the proviso to Article 370(1)(d).

RATIFICATION OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR REORGANIZATION ACT 2019 :

- The Supreme Court **confirmed the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act 2019 to the extent that the Union Territory of Ladakh was separated from the State of Jammu and Kashmir**.

THE VIEWS OF THE STATE LEGISLATURE ARE RECOMMENDATORY IN NATURE AND ARE NOT BINDING ON THE PARLIAMENT:

- The Supreme Court also said that **the views of the state legislature regarding the proposed reorganization** are recommendatory in nature and not binding on the Parliament.

DURING PRESIDENT’S RULE, PARLIAMENT IS NOT THE ONLY LAW MAKING BODY:

- The Chief Justice said that **the power of Parliament in a state under/during President’s rule is not limited to mere law making**. This also extends to executive action.
- The Court also said that when a proclamation under Article 356 is in force, there are a number of decisions which are taken by the Central Government on behalf of the State Government for the purpose of day-to-day administration.

- Every decision and action taken by the Central Executive on behalf of the State is not subject to challenge.
- Openly challenging every decision would lead to chaos and uncertainty.

Along with Holding Elections, Restoration of Statehood: the Supreme Court said that the Statehood of Jammu and Kashmir Should Be Restored as soon as Possible. he Ordered that the Elections to The Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir Should be Completed by 30 September 2024.

ESTABLISHMENT OF 'TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION:

- Justice Kaul, in his concurring opinion, has ordered a proposal to set up a 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' on the lines of the commission established after apartheid in South Africa to resolve the issues that have arisen since the 1980s. To address human rights violations by both state and non-state actors in Jammu and Kashmir.

ARTICLE 370: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.



- Article 370 in the Indian Constitution provided **special status to Jammu and Kashmir, which is a disputed area between India, Pakistan and China.**
- Its draft was written by Indian Constituent Assembly member N. Gopalaswami Iyengar and it was added to the Indian Constitution as a 'temporary provision' in the year 1949 .
- This provision allowed the state of Jammu and Kashmir to have its own constitution and flag, as well as autonomy in most matters except

defence, foreign affairs and communications.

- It was based on the terms of the Instrument of Accession, which was signed by Hari Singh, the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, to join India after the invasion of Pakistan in 1947.

EFFECT OF ABROGATION OF ARTICLE 370:

DECLINE IN TERRORIST INCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE:

There has been a **significant decline in the incidents of violence in Jammu and Kashmir** since the revocation of Article 370 .

- According to official figures, **the number of terrorist incidents** has declined by more than 50% in the last four years and security forces have killed more than 300 terrorists.
- The decline in terrorist incidents and violence can be attributed to a combination of factors, including increased security measures, better intelligence gathering and declining public support for extremism.

INITIATIVES OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

The government has implemented several initiatives to promote economic development in Jammu and Kashmir. For example – **Prime Minister's Development Package (PMDP) and Industrial Development Scheme (IDS).**

- These initiatives of the Central Government have led to an increase in investment, employment creation and economic growth in the region.
- Jammu and Kashmir as a union territory saw a **31% increase in tax revenue** .
- **Jammu and Kashmir's GSDP at constant prices grew at the rate of 8% during 2022-23** , while at the national level it stood at 7%.

HUGE INVESTMENT ALSO IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADVANCED INFRASTRUCTURE SECTOR IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR:

THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO INVESTED HEAVILY

IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE SECTOR IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR. THIS INCLUDES PROJECTS SUCH AS THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW ROADS, BRIDGES, TUNNELS AND POWER LINES. THESE REFORMS HAVE MADE IT EASIER FOR PEOPLE TO TRAVEL AND DO BUSINESS IN THE REGION.

HUGE GROWTH IN TOURISM SECTOR :

There has been a massive increase in the number of tourists visiting Jammu and Kashmir since the abrogation of Article 370 . This has been made possible by a combination of various factors including better security, better marketing and the introduction of new tourism initiatives.

- According to a report, Jammu and Kashmir **received 1.62 crore tourists in the year 2022, which is the highest in 75 years of India's independence.**

PATH TO SOLUTION/CONCLUSION:

- The recent judgment of the Supreme Court has not only reinforced the principles of **'One India, Best India'** but has also proved the importance of unity, mutual trust, development of nationalism and collective dedication for good governance. The judgment also reveals the Court's commitment to strengthening the fabric of our nation and reinforcing the values that define us as a society. Which can also be seen as an effort towards defining India as a strong democratic country and making it grow as a democratic country.

POST OFFICE ACT 2023

WHY IN NEWS?

- Both Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha has passed the **Post Office Act, 2023** which seeks to replace Indian Post Office Act, 1898 and simplify legislative framework to facilitate evolution of India Post into a **citizen-centric service network.**
- This legislation is an attempt to ensure the effective functioning of the Postal Department as a **messenger service and as a provider of bank-**

ing facilities.

NEED FOR NEW ACT?

- **38th Report** of Law Commission on **Indian Post Office Act, 1898** highlighted several concerns such as the Act provides for the interception on the ground of **'public emergency'**:
 - Since the term 'public emergency' has not been explicitly defined in the act, it provides a broad basis for interception, thus limiting citizen's **Right to Privacy** (upheld as Fundamental Right under **Article 21** in **Puttaswamy Case 2017**) & suspension of fundamental rights to speech and expression (**Article 19 (1)**).
 - Thus Law Commission recommended that Parliament should amend the existing laws relating to interception to ensure that they adhere to the Constitution.
- To Replace the **outdated** Indian Post Office Act of 1898
- To modernize and **enhance the efficiency** of the Postal Department.
- Addresses the evolving role of post offices, transforming them into **service-delivery institutions** and expanding their functions to **include banking facilities.**
- To adapt to the changing **demands of the digital era**, ensuring that postal services remain relevant and effective.
- To broaden the **authority of the Director General** of Postal Services beyond mail

PROVISIONS OF THE ACT:

- **Issuance of postal stamp:** India Post will have the **exclusive privilege** over issuing postage stamps.
- **Services to be prescribed:** India Post will provide services, as may be prescribed **by the central government.**
- **Director General to make regulations:** Provision for the appointment of a Director General,

who is authorized to create regulations for all activities essential to postal service provision.

- **Power of Interception:** Allows interception of postal articles on grounds such as **state security, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, emergency, public safety**, or contravention of the Act or other laws.
 - Any authorized officer appointed by the central government can conduct interceptions.
- **Examination of Postal Article:** Empowers an India Post officer to deliver the postal article to the customs authority or any other specified authority for handling.
- **Exemption from liability:** The government is **exempt** from liability for loss, mis-delivery, delay, or damage to postal articles, unless the central government **explicitly assumes liability**.
 - Officers are also exempt, except in cases of fraud or willful misconduct.
- **Removal of offence and penalties:** Provide for one offence or consequence that is unpaid amounts can be recovered as arrears of land revenue.

ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THE ACT:

- **High Government Control:** The provision allowing the interception and opening of parcels by the government may enhance control but also raise potential **issues of privacy and misuse**.
- **Loss of Exclusive Privileges:** The elimination of exclusive privileges for the central government in conveying letters and issuing postage stamps may impact traditional postal services.
- **Liability Concerns:** Shifting liability from the central government to the Post Office for its services may raise questions about accountability and responsibility.
- **Data Privacy and Security:** The expanded interception powers necessitate the establishment of robust data privacy and security measures to safeguard the personal

information of postal service users.

- **Differing Legislation for Couriers:** The absence of similar legislation for courier firms raises concerns about regulatory body.

WAY FORWARD:

The introduction of the new Post Office Bill (2023) marks a significant step in clarifying vague definitions, particularly regarding what constitutes a 'letter.' The bill's emphasis on digitalization marks a new step forward in the direction of **Digital India**. It also streamlines sorting processes & opens avenues for efficient mail and parcel delivery, including the possibility of **drone deliveries**. Overall, the changes reflect an adaptation to evolving needs, prioritizing legality, and enhancing security in the postal service landscape.

SCHEMES UNDER INDIAN POST OFFICE:

- **National Saving Recurring Deposit Account:** Government supervised savings system, requiring a minimum deposit of Rs. 10.
- **National Savings Time Deposit Account:** Offers accounts with varying maturity dates (1, 2, 3, and 5 years) for individuals or groups of up to three persons.
- **Senior Citizen Savings Scheme Account:** Fixed-income investment for individuals over 60, ensuring a steady flow of income after retirement, with a 5-year lock-in term.
- **Public Provident Fund Account:** Long-term investment plan with a 15-year lock-in period, offering a mix of security, earnings, and tax savings.
- **National Savings Certificates (NSC):** Government savings bonds for smaller savings and tax-saving investments, with a 5-year maturity period.
- **Kisan Vikas Patra Account:** Modest savings instrument encouraging long-term savings, doubling the principal in 9 years and 4 months.
- **Sukanya Samriddhi Account.**

HISTORY OF POST IN INDIA:

- **1296 CE:** Horse and foot postal system during the rule of **Allauddin Khilji**
- **1341 CE:** Ibn Battuta describes El Wolak (Horse carriers) and El Davah, (foot runners) during the reign of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq (1325-1351 CE)
- **1541 CE:** Sher Shah introduces horse dak on the 2000-mile stretch of road between Bengal and Sind (Grand Trunk Road)
- **1672 CE:** **Mysore Anche** is established by Maharaja Chikka Devaraya Wodeyar.
- **1766 CE:** **Robert Clive** sets up a regular postal system
- 1774 CE: Warren Hastings **organizes** the Post Office
- **1854 CE:** **Post Office Act XVII** introduced by Lord Dalhousie
- Indian Postal order was established in 1935 CE.

TRIBUNALS

Why in the news?

The highest court was deliberating on the question of whether the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT) had the authority to instruct the government to formulate a policy for appointing a Judge Advocate General (Air). While the AFT possesses the powers akin to a civil court, it lacks the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court or High Courts.

About Tribunals:

Tribunals are quasi-judicial bodies designed for the resolution of disputes in areas such as administration, taxation, environment, and securities. In India, these adjudicatory bodies offer an alternative to the conventional court system, aiming for prompt, cost-effective, and decentralized dispute resolution across various issues.

The formation of tribunals serves several purposes, including adjudicating disputes, determining rights

between opposing parties, making administrative decisions, and reviewing existing administrative rulings.

Key Features of Tribunals in India:

- **Principles of Natural Justice:** Tribunals in India adhere to the principles of natural justice, ensuring a fair and impartial hearing for all parties involved.
- **Not Bound by Civil Procedure Code (CPC):** Unlike traditional courts, tribunals are not constrained by the stringent rules of procedure and evidence outlined in the Civil Procedure Code.
- **Subject Expertise:** Tribunals often include members with specialized expertise in the subject matter under their jurisdiction.
- **Quasi-Judicial Powers:** Tribunals possess quasi-judicial powers, enabling them to hear evidence, examine witnesses, make factual determinations, apply the law to the facts, and issue binding decisions.
- **Appellate Authority:** Decisions made by tribunals can be appealed to higher courts. The appellate process allows for review by higher authorities, including High Courts and/or the Supreme Court.
- **Time-Bound Resolution:** The adjudicatory process in tribunals is typically swifter than the traditional court system, facilitating quicker and more efficient dispute resolution.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions:

The original Constitution lacked provisions regarding tribunals. The 42nd Amendment Act of 1976 introduced a new Part XIV-A, titled 'Tribunals,' consisting of two articles:

- **Article 323A:** Pertaining to administrative tribunals.
- **Article 323B:** Pertaining to tribunals for other matters.

Constitutional Provisions and Enacted Legislation on Tribunals in India

Provision	Description
Article 323A	Empowers Parliament to establish administrative tribunals for adjudicating disputes related to recruitment and conditions of service in public services at the Centre, states, local bodies, public corporations, and other public authorities.
Article 323B	Empowers both Parliament and state legislatures to institute tribunals for diverse matters, including Industrial and labor disputes, Foreign exchange, import and export, Land reforms, Food, The ceiling on urban property, Elections to Parliament and state legislatures, Rent, and tenancy rights, etc.
Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985	Enacted in reference to Article 323A, this Act grants the Central government authority to establish the Central Administrative Tribunal and state-level administrative tribunals. The legislation marks a significant step in providing expeditious and cost-effective justice to aggrieved public servants.

New Rules and Restrictions for Tribunals in India (2020)

New Rules for Tribunals (2020):

The 'Tribunal, Appellate Tribunal, and other Authorities (Qualifications, Experience and other Conditions of Service of Members) Rules, 2020' were formulated by the Ministry of Finance, exercising powers under Section 184 of the Finance Act 2017. These rules supersede the 2017 Rules, which were invalidated by the Supreme Court, prompting the government to reframe them in line with court principles.

Provisions of the New Rules:

- **Applicability:** The rules apply to 19 Tribunals, excluding Foreigners Tribunals.
- **Appointment:** Central Government appoints members based on the recommendations of the "Search cum Selection Committee" comprising the Chief Justice of India (CJI) or a nominated judge, the President/chairperson of the relevant

tribunal, and two government secretaries from the concerned ministry/department.

- **Removal:** The Search cum Selection Committee holds the authority to recommend removal and conduct inquiries into misconduct allegations.
- **Qualifications:** Only individuals with judicial or legal experience are eligible for tribunal appointments.
- **Term:** Tribunal members serve a fixed term of four years.
- **Independence:** Unlike the 2017 Rules, the 2020 Rules eliminate the provision for re-appointment of members.

Restrictions for Tribunals in India:

- **Jurisdiction of Tribunals:**
 - **Specialized Areas:** Tribunals have jurisdiction over specific legal domains like employment, tax, environment, or administrative law.
 - **Statutory Grant:** Their authority is conferred by statutes, defining the types of cases within their purview.
 - **Limited Appellate Jurisdiction:** Some tribunals possess limited appellate jurisdiction, reviewing decisions made by lower tribunals or administrative bodies.

Restrictions on Tribunals:

- **Limited Jurisdiction:** Tribunals operate within their designated areas and cannot exceed statutory authority.
- **Procedural Constraints:** Adherence to procedural rules outlined in the governing statute is mandatory.
- **Appeal Mechanism:** Decisions of tribunals may be subject to appeal, ensuring oversight, correcting potential errors, and upholding fairness.

ISSUE OF CHILDREN UNDERNUTRITION IN INDIA

Why in the News?

High levels of child **undernutrition** have been a persistent problem in India since Independence. Malnutrition is the condition that develops when the body is deprived of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients it needs to maintain healthy tissues and organ function:

- **Determinants** of undernutrition are multiple such as food intake, dietary diversity, health, sanitation, women's status & poverty.
- The most common measures of Childhood undernutrition are based on height forage i.e; Stunting or Chronic **undernutrition** and low weight for height i.e; Wasting or acute under-nutrition.

ISSUE OF CHILD UNDERNUTRITION IN INDIA:

- As per **Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2023** published by Concern Worldwide of Ireland and Welthungerhilfe (a German non-profit organization):
 - India **ranks 111th** out of 125 countries (further *slipped below 4 positions* since 2022) below Sri Lanka (60), Nepal (69), Bangladesh (81) & Pakistan (102).
 - As per the Index, India has the **highest Child wasting rate (18%)** in the world.
 - The Hunger Index measures countries' performance on 4 component indicators –
 - **CHILD STUNTING:** the share of children under the age of 5 who have **low height for their age: 35.5 %**
 - **CHILD WASTING:** the share of children under the age of 5 who have **low weight for their height: 18.7 %**
 - **CHILD MORTALITY:** the mortality rate of children under the age of 5: **4%**
 - **UNDERNOURISHMENT:** the share of

the population whose **caloric intake** is insufficient.

- As per National Family Health Survey (**NFHS-5**) **Report:**
 - Stunting has reduced from 38.4% to 35.5%, wasting from 21.0% to 19.3% and under-weight prevalence is down from 35.8% to 32.1%.
 - Women (15-49 years) whose BMI (Body Mass Index) is below normal has reduced from 22.9% in NFHS-4 to 18.7% in NFHS-5.

ISSUES RELATED TO METHODOLOGY OF ASSESSMENT:

As India envisages to become an **Upper Income** country by 2047 (Amrit Kaal), monitoring undernutrition among Children who will form the backbone of India's **demographic dividend (15-49 years)** in future is imperative for efficient data-based policymaking.

- India, like most other countries, uses the globally accepted World Health Organization (**WHO**) **Growth Standards** to measure malnutrition.
- However, there is an emergent debate on a number of issues related to the use of these growth standards in India, some of which are discussed below.
- The WHO standards are based on a Multi-centre Growth Reference Study (**MGRS**) that was conducted in 6 countries between **1997-2003** including Brazil, Ghana, **India**, Norway, Oman and the United States.
- The purpose was to determine the pattern of growth from birth to 5 years of children who did not face any known deficiencies in their environments.
- The MGRS took a prescriptive approach, with the specific aim of setting growth 'standards' (how children ought to grow, provided they have a healthy environment) and not growth 'references' (how children of the reference group grow).
- The sample for India in the MGRS was drawn

from a set of **privileged households living in South Delhi**, of children who met all the eligibility criteria for the study including having 'favorable' growth environment, being breastfed and having nonsmoking mothers.

Some researchers who have analyzed data from other surveys for India suggest that these standards **overestimate undernutrition**:

- For instance, even among children in households of the highest quintile in National Family Health Survey NFHS-5 (2019-21) **only 12.7%** meet requirements of a '**minimum acceptable diet**' as defined by WHO.
- Difference in **genetic growth potential** of Indians with respect to other Country and the influence of maternal heights on child growth.
- There are also **regional imbalances**, for example states like Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala are achieving much faster reductions in Undernutrition than other states.
- The Ministry of Women & Child Development has recently rejected the findings of Global Hunger Index (GHI) stating: "Proportion of Undernourished population indicator is based on Opinion Poll conducted on a small **sample size of 3000 people** in a country of 1.3 Billion people."
- According to the ministry, since April 2023, the number of measurement data for children under the age of five that have been uploaded to the **Poshan Tracker** has steadily climbed, rising from 6.34 crore in April 2023 to **7.24 crore** in September 2023.
- In light of these discussions, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has constituted a committee to revise the growth references for India & recommended a detailed rigorous study to be conducted across the country to examine child growth with the purpose of devising national growth charts.

STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO CURB UNDERNUTRITION:

- **POSHAN Abhiyaan**: The government of India

has launched the National Nutrition Mission (NNM) or POSHAN Abhiyaan to ensure a "**Mal-nutrition Free India**" by 2024.

- **Anemia Mukht Bharat Abhiyan**: Launched in 2018, the mission aims at accelerating the annual rate of decline of anemia from one to three percentage points.
- **Mid-day Meal (MDM) scheme**: It aims to improve nutritional levels among school children which also has a direct and positive impact on enrolment, retention and attendance in schools.
- **The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013**: It aims to ensure food and nutrition security for the most vulnerables through its associated schemes and programmes, making **access to food a legal right**.
- Pradhan Mantri **Matru Vandana Yojana (PM-MVY)**: Rs.6,000 is transferred directly to the bank accounts of pregnant women for availing better facilities for their delivery.
- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme**: It was launched in 1975 and the scheme aims at providing food, preschool education, primary healthcare, immunization, health check-up and referral services to children under 6 years of age and their mothers.
- **Eat Right India** movement by Food Safety and Security Authority of India – FSSAI.

INNOVATIVE WAY FORWARD:

- **Increase Financial Commitments**: There is a greater need to increase investment in women and children's health and nutrition to ensure their sustainable development and improved quality of life.
- **Outcome-oriented Approach**: India must adopt an outcome-oriented approach on nutrition programmes. There has to be direct engagement with nutritionally vulnerable groups (this includes the elderly, pregnant women, those with special needs and young children), and contribute toward ensuring last-mile delivery of key nutrition services and interventions.

- **Basic Education and General Awareness:** Various studies highlight a strong link between mothers' education and improved access and compliance with nutrition interventions among children.
- **Programmes' Monitoring and Evaluation:** There should be a process to monitor and evaluate programmes and address systemic and on the ground challenges.

There is a need to deliberate over effective policy decisions, monitor the implementation of schemes, and review nutritional status across States.

THERE IS NO PLACE FOR HIJAB RIGHT NOW: HIJAB BAN ISSUE AND FREEDOM OF RELIGION IN KARNATAKA

WHY IN DISCUSSION / NEWS ?

Recently the Supreme Court gave a divided judgment in the Karnataka hijab ban case.

- In the event of a split decision as described in the Constitution of India, the case is heard by a larger bench.
- The bench to which the case of a split decision is transferred may be a three-judge bench of the High Court, or an appeal may be made to the Supreme Court.
- Petitions by a section of Muslim students in Karnataka seeking permission to wear hijab in classrooms were rejected by the High Court in March 2022 on the grounds that it is not a part of essential religious practice in the Islamic faith and it was unnecessarily construed on grounds of religious freedom. But an appeal has been made for hearing.
- There is no longer any restriction on Muslim girl students wearing hijab in educational institutions of Karnataka. The Congress government made this announcement on 23 December 2023. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had made this announcement on December 22, 2023, at the inauguration of three police stations in Nanjangud in Mysuru district. Karnata-

ka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah argued behind this that in India it is the personal right/matter of any person to choose to wear any kind of dress and eat any kind of food. In India, behind such controversial matters is vote bank politics and appeasement.

- Recently, six students at a college in Karnataka's Udupi district were banned from entering the college for wearing hijab (a garment worn by some Muslim women in public). This issue raises legal questions on freedom of religion and whether the right to wear the hijab is constitutionally protected. Or it also has some different implications. This matter had reached the Supreme Court via Karnataka High Court. Ultimately it was decided that there will be a ban on sitting in the classroom wearing hijab in educational institutions. Will be allowed to come to class only wearing Uniform. Female students could come to school in hijab, but would have to take off their hijab before entering the classroom.



WHAT ARE ITS IMPLICATIONS?

According to the fundamental rights granted to Indian citizens by the Indian Constitution, Indian citizens have the following fundamental rights –

- **Freedom of conscience:** Freedom of conscience and to freely profess, practice and propagate religion.
- **Right to practice religion:** The right to declare one's religious belief and faith publicly and without fear.
- **Right to practice:** The right to practice religious worship, rituals, ceremonies and to demon-

strate beliefs and ideas.

- Right to propagate: To communicate or disseminate one's religious beliefs to others or to explain the principles of one's religion.

TEST OF ESSENTIAL RELIGIOUS CONDUCT:

- Over the years the Supreme Court has developed a practical test process for determining which religious practices can be constitutionally protected and which can be ignored.
- The Supreme Court in the year 1954 in the Shirur Math case said that the word 'religion' would include all the rituals and practices 'integral' under a religion. The test to determine what is 'integral' is called the 'essential religious practice' test.
- This test is often criticized by legal experts in relation to judicial determination of religious practices, as it leads the court to interfere in religious matters.
- Constitutional experts are of the opinion that the work of the court should be limited to restricting religious practices for the sake of public order and the court should not determine the practices necessary for any particular religion. In many cases the Court has applied this test to certain practices.
- The Supreme Court, in a judgment given in the year 2004, held that the 'Anand Marg sect' had no fundamental right to perform 'Tandav dance' on public roads, as it is not an essential religious practice of the sect.
- There are many instances in which the Court has also applied this test to individual liberty as these issues are considered to be largely community-based.
- In 2016, the Supreme Court had upheld the decision of the Indian Air Force to discharge a Muslim airman for having a beard.
- The Armed Forces Regulations, 1964 prohibit hair growth for armed forces personnel, except 'those personnel whose religion prohibits cutting or shaving of hair.'

- In one of its decisions, the Court essentially held that 'keeping a beard is not an essential part of Islamic practices'.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE COURT'S DECISION:

JUDGMENTS OF THE COURTS SO FAR ON THE ISSUE OF HIJAB:

- Two such petitions were filed before the Kerala High Court in 2015, challenging the dress code for all India pre-medical admissions, which permitted wearing of slippers with "salwar/pajama" and light, half-sleeved shorts. There was a provision to wear only clothes which did not have big buttons, badges, flowers etc.
- Accepting the contention of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) that the rule was only to ensure that the candidates do not use unfair means by hiding objects inside the clothes, the Kerala High Court has asked the CBSE to impose additional scrutiny on those students. Instructed to take measures who intend to dress in accordance with their religious custom, but which is contrary to the dress code.
- The Kerala High Court examined this issue more closely in the case Amna Bint Bashir v. Central Board of Secondary Education (2016). In this case, the Court held that the practice of wearing hijab is an essential religious practice, but did not strike down the CBSE rule.
- The Court once again allowed "additional measures" and safeguards in 2015. However, on the issue of school-prescribed dress, another bench ruled differently in the case Fathima Tasneem v. State of Kerala (2018).
- The single bench of the Kerala High Court said that- 'The collective rights of an organization will be given priority over the individual rights of the petitioner. ,

PROTECTION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM UNDER THE CONSTITUTION:

- Articles 25 to 28 of Part-3 (Fundamental Rights) of the Constitution provide the right to freedom of religion.

- Article 25 (1) of the Constitution guarantees 'freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practice and propagate religion'.
- It is a right that guarantees negative freedom, which means that the state will ensure that there is no interference or obstruction in exercising this freedom.
- The Constitution, like all fundamental rights, can restrict the right to public order, decency, morality, health and other state interests.
- Article 26 explains the freedom to manage religious affairs subject to public order, morality and health.
- According to Article 27, no person shall be compelled to pay any tax for the propagation or practice of any particular religion.
- Article 28 explains the freedom to attend religious instruction or religious worship in educational institutions.

SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM/WAY FORWARD:

- In the current political climate, the decision by the Government of Karnataka to mandate either a prescribed uniform or any dress in the "interest of unity, equality and public order" has been viewed as a majoritarian attempt in the guise of enforcing secular norms, equality and discipline in educational institutions. Also seen as a claim.
- A single decision that legitimizes this non-inclusive approach to education for people of any community, religion or caste and a single policy that can deny equal opportunities to Muslim women is not in the interest of the country. And it will also be unconstitutional.
- In schools, colleges or other educational institutions, hijab or any dress, religious or otherwise, should not be different from the uniform prescribed by the school, colleges or other educational institutions. Therefore, there should be reasonable scope for wearing any attire other than the uniform as long as it does not detract from the uniform, such as hijab or any other religious attire. Therefore, the uniforms pre-

scribed by schools, colleges or other educational institutions cannot be rejected on the basis of individual freedom of dress.

UNLAWFUL ACTIVITY PREVENTION ACT (UAPA)

WHY IN NEWS?

- A recent judgment by the Division Bench of the **Jammu and Kashmir High Court** in the case of journalist Fahad Shah has highlighted the issues related to **Personal liberty** guaranteed under **Article 21** of the Constitution arising due to application of the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)**, India's primary anti-terror statute.
- While granting bail to Mr. Shah, the court emphasized the need for circumspection in **enforcing anti-terror laws** that allow vast interference with personal liberty.
- The High Court raised concerns about the UAPA's procedural aspects, specifically, **Section 43-D(5)**, which **restricts bail** if accusations are deemed 'prima facie true.'
- The judgment rejected the government's argument that publishing an article could be considered an act of terror, emphasizing the need for common sense in criminal law. It underscored that the UAPA *should not extend to punishing alleged defamation of the country*.

WHAT IS UAPA?

- The Union government was considering a stringent law against **calls for secession** in the mid-1960s.
- Further, in March 1967, a **peasant uprising in Naxalbari** imparted a sense of urgency.
- Thus UAPA was passed in **1967** "to provide for the more effective **prevention of unlawful activities of individuals and associations**".
- As per the Act, Unlawful activity refers to any action taken by an individual or association intended to **disrupt the territorial integrity and**

sovereignty of India.

- The Act assigns **absolute power to the Central government**, by way of which if the Centre deems an activity as unlawful then it may, by way of an Official Gazette, declare it so.
- Under UAPA, both **Indian and foreign nationals** can be charged. It will be applicable to the offenders in the same manner, even if **crime is committed on a foreign land or outside India**.
- Under the UAPA, the investigating agency (NIA) can file a charge sheet in **maximum 180 days** after the arrests and the duration can be extended further after intimating the court.
- The **2004 amendment**, added “**terrorist act**” to the list of offences to **ban organisations** for terrorist activities, under which 34 outfits were banned. For example: **Khalistan Zindabad Force, Lashkar-E-Taiba, Jaish-E-Mohammed etc.**
- It has **death penalty and life imprisonment** as highest punishments.

UAPA AMENDMENT ACT 2019:

The provisions were made further stringent by the Amendment Act:

- The Act empowers the **Director General** of National Investigation Agency (NIA) to grant approval of seizure or attachment of property when the case is investigated by the said agency.
- The Act empowers the officers of the NIA, of the **rank of Inspector or above**, to investigate cases of terrorism in addition to those conducted by the DSP or ACP or above rank officer in the state.
- It also included the **provision of designating an individual as a terrorist**.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF UAPA:

- UAPA empowers the government to preventively act against individuals and organizations involved in or supporting terrorism thus **safeguarding the nation's security**.

- Designation of individuals and organizations like **Masood Azhar, Hafiz Saeed, and Lashkar-e-Taiba** as terrorists under UAPA, has enabled freezing of assets, travel bans, and sanctions thus **effectively fighting challenging issue of Terrorism**.
- Example: Use of UAPA in prosecuting and convicting **Ajmal Kasab**, the lone surviving terrorist of the **26/11 Mumbai attacks**, based on intercepted communications, electronic evidence, and modern investigative techniques.
- UAPA enables the **preventive detention** of individuals suspected of unlawful activities which is crucial for averting potential threats in cases lacking sufficient evidence for formal trials.
- UAPA amendments align with the United Nations Convention for the **Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism**, showcasing India's commitment to international efforts against transnational terrorism as guided by **DPSP of Article 51**.
- Severe penalties under UAPA in the case of the 2001 Parliament attack, **discourage individuals** from engaging in or supporting activities detrimental to the nation's security, as seen in the hanging of Afzal Guru.

CRITICISM OF UAPA:

- UAPA is criticized for its **low conviction rate**, which is around **2%** as per the Hindu report.
- The example of **Gaur Chakraborty** among others is cited wherein he spent **7 years** in prison during trial only to be acquitted of all charges, wherein the **imprisonment during trial itself amounted to punishment** as no bail is guaranteed.
- The broad and **vague definition of 'Terrorism'** potentially encompassing legitimate political activities or dissent under the label of 'terrorism.'
- Further, **Pre-emptive Arrests and Detentions** without bail, permitting arrests

based on suspicion or the anticipation of potential offences acts as **chilling effect to Fundamental rights** guaranteed under the Constitution.

- The Act also includes acts which “likely to threaten” or “likely to strike terror,” granting **broad powers** to label individuals, including ordinary citizens or activists, as terrorists without the actual commission of such acts.
- **Section 43(D)(5)** of UAPA **prevents the release of bail** if the police charge sheet indicates reasonable grounds for believing the accusation is prima facie true. Only a small percentage of detainees secured bail according to the **PUCL report**.

WAY FORWARD:

The **guidelines by Supreme Court** Judgements such as in **Arup Bhuyan v. State of Assam**, that “mere membership of a banned organization will not make a person a criminal unless he resorts to violence or incites people to violence” shall be strictly followed by agencies. The **principle of liberty** exists because of the rule of law and thus it is vital to **strike a balance between national security imperatives and the protection of individual rights**, fostering a legal framework that is effective, transparent, and accountable.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Consider the following statements in the context of Article 370.

- Article 370 was ‘temporary’ in its nature.
- The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act 2019 was passed by the Parliament on 5 August 2019.

Which of the above statement/statements is correct?

1. Only 1
2. Only 2
3. Both statement 1 and 2.
4. None of these.

Q2. Terms such as “El Wolak” & “El Davah” used by Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta in his book “Rihla” during the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq shows the efficient:

- a. Spy system
- b. Postal system
- c. Revenue collection
- d. Judicial machinery

Q3. Consider the following statements in context of Indian history:

1. Horse & foot based postal system was first devised by Muhammad Bin Tughlaq
2. Ibn Battuta describes the efficient Foot & Horse based postal system during Tughlaq dynasty in his book Rihla
3. It was Warren Hastings who introduced a regular Postal system in Colonised India

Which of the above statements is correct?

- a. Only one pair
- b. Only two pair
- c. Only three pair
- d. None of the above pair

Q4. Consider the following statements about Tribunals:

1. Members of tribunals are not eligible for reappointment.
2. Only individuals with judicial or legal experience are eligible for tribunal appointments.

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. Consider the following statements regarding

Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2023:

1. India ranks 107th out of 124 countries improving its place by 4 position
2. As per the Index, India has the highest child wasting rate in the world
3. The proportion of "Wasted" children is less than the proportion of "Stunted" children
4. India's ranks better than other South Asian countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh & Pakistan

Which of the above statements is correct?

- A. 2 and 3
- B. 1 and 3
- C. 2 and 4
- D. 1 and 4

Q6. Consider the following statements regarding the issue of wearing hijab on the basis of freedom of religion.

1. Articles 25 to 28 of Part-3 (Fundamental Rights) of the Constitution provide the right to freedom of religion.
2. The Constitution of India grants citizens the right to freedom of conscience and religion to freely profess, practice and propagate religion.
3. The Constitution, like all fundamental rights, can restrict the right to public order, decency, morality, health and other state interests.
4. According to Article 27 of the Indian Constitution, no person shall be compelled to pay any tax for the propagation or practice of any particular religion.

Which of the above statement/statements is correct?

- (a) Only 1 and 4
- (b) Only 1, 3 and 4
- (c) All of these.
- (d) None of these.

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	C
2.	B
3.	A
4.	C
5.	A
6.	C

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Discussing the main arguments behind the abrogation of Article 370, in the light of the Supreme Court's decision to abrogate Article 370, discuss how it affects the economic and infrastructural development and development of the tourism sector along with the violence in the Jammu and Kashmir region. Will the type affect?

Q2. Discuss the concept of judicial overreach in the context of tribunals, highlighting instances where tribunals may exceed their designated powers and encroach upon the authority of traditional courts.

Q3. "On The Basis of Freedom of Religion, any Religious Identity Should be free from any Public Display in any Public Places/ Places or Institutions." in the Light of this Statement, What is the Situation by the Government of Karnataka Regarding School Uniforms? Critically Evaluate the Orders/Decisions Given in the Same.

Q4. Indian government has recently strengthened the anti-terrorist laws by amending UAPA 1967 and NIA act. Analyze the changes in the context of prevailing security environment while discussing scope and the reasons for opposing UAPA by human rights organizations. (250 words, 15 Marks)

ECONOMY

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, sovereign 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:

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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 Indi-

cators (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.

5. 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.

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

WHY IN DISCUSSION / 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

Source: CMIE

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

Unemployment rate = $\frac{\text{Number of unemployed persons}}{\text{Number of employed persons} + \text{Number of unemployed persons}}$

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.

CHINESE BAN ON EXPORT OF RARE EARTH TECHNOLOGIES

WHY IN NEWS?

- China, the world's **top processor of Rare earths minerals**, on Thursday **banned the export of technology to extract and separate the strategic metals**, as it overhauled a list of **technologies deemed key to national security**.
- In October 2023, USA had put restrictions on exporting advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI) to China to prevent it from acquiring **cutting edge chips to develop AI technologies such as large language models that power applications such as ChatGPT**.
- For example, the Biden Administration had banned two Chinese chip startups, Biren and Moore Threads.
- In retaliation, Beijing exercised its lever as the **largest supplier of Rare earth metals needed for chip production**:
- In July 2023, China placed restrictions on some Gallium and germanium products. In December, restrictions were placed on several types of Graphites and a ban imposed on the export of technology for making rare earth magnets and technologies for extracting and separating rare earths.
- This can become a major energy security issue as China is the world's top processor of rare earths, accounting for 70% of the world's **production**.

WHAT ARE RARE EARTH MINERALS (REE)?

- They are set of **17 metallic elements**: Including **15 lanthanides on the periodic table in addition to scandium and yttrium that show similar physical and chemical properties to the lanthanides**.
- The 17 Rare Earths are: Cerium (Ce), dysprosium (Dy), erbium (Er), europium (Eu), gadolinium

(Gd), holmium (Ho), lanthanum (La), lutetium (Lu), neodymium (Nd), praseodymium (Pr), promethium (Pm), samarium (Sm), scandium (Sc), terbium (Tb), thulium (Tm), ytterbium (Yb), and yttrium (Y).

- NOTE: Gallium and germanium banned by China are NOT Rare Earth minerals.
- REEs are crucial in **manufacturing of Batteries**: Minerals like Cobalt, Nickel, and Lithium are required for batteries used in Electric vehicles.
- As per **NITI Ayog**: 80% of the country's two- and three-wheeler fleet, 40% of buses, and 30 to 70% of cars will be **EVs by 2030**.
- REEs are an essential component of more than 200 consumer products which includes mobile phones, computer hard drives, electric and hybrid vehicles, semiconductors, flat screen TVs and monitors, and high-end electronics.
- Industrial use**: Traditional uses like Cerium for glass polishing and lanthanum for car catalysts or optical lenses.
- Manufacturing of magnets**: neodymium, praseodymium and dysprosium, are crucial to the manufacture of magnets which are used in industries and also in wind turbines and Drones.
- Even futuristic technologies need these REEs. For example, **high-temperature superconductivity, safe storage and transport of hydrogen for a post-hydrocarbon economy**, environmental global warming and energy efficiency issues.
- They are called 'rare earth' because earlier it was **difficult to extract them from their oxides forms technologically**.
- They occur in **many minerals but typically in low concentrations to be refined in an economical manner**.

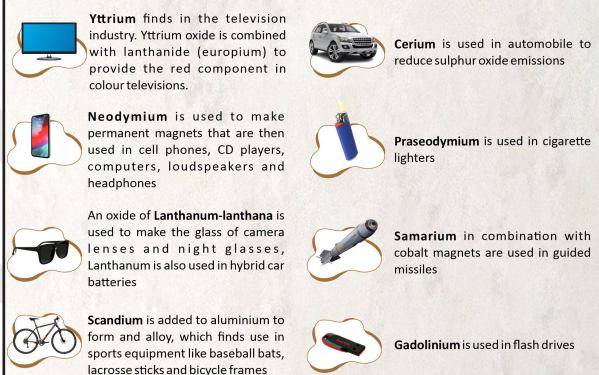
DOMINANCE BY CHINA:

- China has mastered the **solvent extraction process to refine the strategic minerals**, which Western rare earth companies have struggled to deploy due to technical complexities and

pollution concerns.

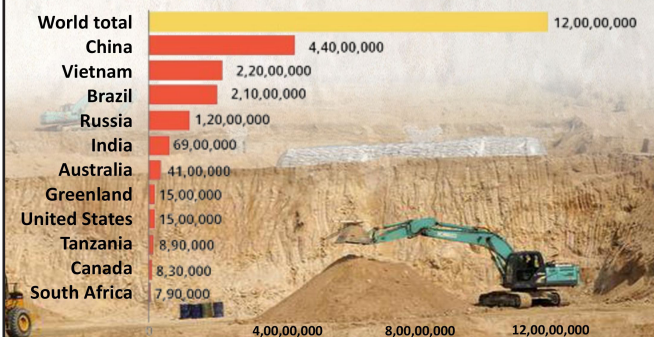
- China has over time acquired global domination of rare earths, even at one point, it produced 90% of the rare earths the world needs.
- Today, however, it has **come down to 60% and the remaining is produced by other countries, including the QUAD countries: Australia, India, Japan and United States**.
- China under Wolf warrior Diplomacy is using supply of Critical Earth minerals as tool of **Economic warfare**:
- Eg- China's ownership of Democratic Republic of Congo's **Cobalt mines which produces 70% of world's Cobalt output**.

WHERE ARE THE RARE EARTHS USED



WHERE ARE THE WORLD'S LARGEST RARE EARTH RESERVES

Reserves in metric tonnes of REO (rare earth oxides) as of 2020



ADVERSE IMPACT ON INDIA:

- Along with REEs, Critical minerals such as Lithium (White gold), cobalt & graphite etc. are crucial to country's **manufacturing & infrastructure development**.

- Green Energy based upon Semiconductors used to run batteries such as Lithium-Ion battery is imperative to meet India's **Net Zero target by 2070**.
- India has only **6% of the world's rare earth reserves**. It **only produces 1% of global output** and meets most of its requirements of such minerals from China.
- **High Import dependency due to concentration of extraction & processing of REEs in few regions:**
- For Example: India is **100% Import dependent for supply of critical minerals** such as lithium, cobalt, nickel, beryllium etc.
- REEs such as **Dysprosium, Terbium, and Europium** are not available in Indian deposits in extractable quantities.
- In India, **monazite and thorium** is the principal source of rare earths.
- Thus, in case of **Supply chain vulnerability** caused by export ban by China or Semiconductor chip war between USA & China can be detrimental to India's energy security concern and its target to become 3rd largest economy by 2027.
- High import dependency also leads to High **Current Account Deficit (CAD)**: Eg- India Imported worth ₹27,000 crore Copper in 2022.

ISSUES FACED BY INDIA:

- **Expensive exploration & mining of deep-seated minerals** such as gold, silver, copper, platinum etc
- **Limited investment in Research & Development of Technologies**: India spend only **1.7 % of its GDP** while China spends **17 times more** than India.
- For Example: India's share in Global mineral exploration budget stands **only at 1%**
- As per Geological Survey of India (GSI): India has done only **10% exploration of its Geological potential** while out of potential

sites discovered; only 2% sites have been mined. (Source: Hindu Report, July 2023)

- Due to this poor exploration & production, India has been denied membership in **Minerals Security Partnership (MSP)** launched by USA: which aims at catalyzing investment from governments and the private sector to develop supply chains of Critical minerals & challenge China's monopoly.
- In Mining & Exploration sector, there is **huge dependency on PSUs & Govt's Organizations** such as MECL, GSI etc.
- Example: **Indian Rare Earths Ltd (IREL)** which is a **Government of India Undertaking**, and **KMML**, a Kerala State Government Undertaking are actively engaged in mining and processing of beach sand minerals from placer deposits.
- **Low Private Sector Involvement**: Mining & Exploration is highly capital intensive & long gestation period which deter Private investment.
- Also, there is requirement of **Advance Technology** such as Aerial surveys, geochemical analysis, geological mapping etc. which are not available at remote locations and at ground level.
- **Environmental Impact**: The chief concern is that the REEs are bound up in mineral deposits with the low-level radioactive element like thorium, exposure to which has been linked to an increased risk of developing lung, pancreatic, and other cancers.

STEPS TAKEN BY INDIA:

- **MINES & MINERALS ACT 2023:**
 - To attract private investment in exploration of critical minerals: 6 minerals including Lithium has been removed from "critical & strategic" minerals category thus allowing private exploration.
 - To encourage prospective stage exploration: Drilling & subsurface excavation has been allowed.
 - National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET)

has been setup to Fund G4-G1 explorations.

WAY FORWARD:

- India should amend **Atomic Mineral Concession Act (2016)** which has reserved all beach Sand Mines deposits containing more than 0.75 per cent Monazite (source of REE) for government owned companies.
- Department for rare earths (DRE) could secure access to REEs of strategic importance by offering **viability gap funding to companies to set up facilities in the upstream sector.**
- **Australia Model:** “Junior explorer” private firms which have expertise to map commercially viable mines shall be incorporated who can further sell the research to bigger private companies which will eventually develop & operate mines.
- **Building up domestic capability:** There is a need to build domestic capability and broad-base supply sources for such an important and strategic raw material.
- Making it part of **Make in India campaign:** There is a need to make rare earth minerals a part of the ‘Make In India’ campaign, citing China’s ‘**Made in China 2025**’ initiative that focuses on new materials, including permanent magnets that are made using rare earth minerals.
- **Supply chain resilience:** The focus should be back on building cooperation on supply chain resilience which is a trade partnership for critical and emerging technology to deal with issues of climate, economy and pandemic impact.
- **QUAD Critical and Emerging Technology Working group:** It aims to develop supply resilience among Quad members which includes India, US, Japan, and Australia.
- **Green goals:** the critical minerals and emerging technology are the major need of the hour for achievement of green future goals.
- **Minerals Security Partnership (MSP):** India should try through diplomatic channels to enter this partnership.

Explanation: RARE EARTH MINERALS:

- They are set of **17 metallic elements:** Including **15 lanthanides on the periodic table in addition to scandium and yttrium that show similar physical and chemical properties to the lanthanides.**
- The 17 Rare Earths are: Cerium (Ce), dysprosium (Dy), erbium (Er), europium (Eu), gadolinium (Gd), holmium (Ho), lanthanum (La), lutetium (Lu), neodymium (Nd), praseodymium (Pr), promethium (Pm), samarium (Sm), scandium (Sc), terbium (Tb), thulium (Tm), ytterbium (Yb), and yttrium (Y).
- NOTE: Gallium and germanium banned by China are NOT Rare Earth minerals.
- REEs are crucial in **manufacturing of Batteries:** Minerals like Cobalt, Nickel, and Lithium are required for batteries used in Electric vehicles.
- As per **NITI Ayog:** 80% of the country’s two- and three-wheeler fleet, 40% of buses, and 30 to 70% of cars will be **EVs by 2030.**
- REEs are an essential component of more than 200 consumer products which includes mobile phones, computer hard drives, electric and hybrid vehicles, semiconductors, flat screen TVs and monitors, and high-end electronics.
- **Industrial use:** Traditional uses like Cerium for glass polishing and lanthanum for car catalysts or optical lenses.
- **Manufacturing of magnets:** neodymium, praseodymium and dysprosium, are crucial to the manufacture of magnets which are used in industries and also in wind turbines and Drones.
- Even futuristic technologies need these REEs. For example, **high-temperature superconductivity, safe storage and transport of hydrogen for a post-hydrocarbon economy,** environmental global warming and energy efficiency issues.
- They are called ‘rare earth’ because earlier it was **difficult to extract them from their oxides forms technologically.**

- They occur in **many minerals but typically in low concentrations to be refined in an economical manner.**
- China is the world's top processor of rare earths, accounting for 70% of the world's **production.**
- India has only **6% of the world's rare earth reserves.** It **only produces 1% of global output and meets most of its requirements of such minerals from China.**

CURRENT RELEVANCE OF A NEW ECONOMY FOR INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

WHY IN DISCUSSION/ NEWS ?

"May everyone be happy and may everyone be healthy. Let all look for the good, and let no one suffer." That is, "May all human beings in this entire world be happy, may all be free from disease, may all witness the good of each other and may no one suffer in this world." This proverb, written in ancient Indian scriptures, wishes the welfare and happiness of the entire creature. The concept of 'inclusive development' is not new in the Indian context. If you observe the ancient scriptures, they also contain the sense of taking all people together and since the time of development of Indian civilization (ancient times) who believed in the concept of 'Vasudevam Kutumbkam' and he called the entire world 'Vasudevam Kutumbkam' That is, it has been a country that believes in 'one family' namely India has always considered this entire world human civilization as a family or mutually related / allies and this is also affirmed in Indian theologies. of sustainable and inclusive development at the recently concluded G20 meeting hosted by India India has drawn the attention of developed and developing countries all over the world towards the need for the development of a new economy. During the hosting and meetings of the G20, the Prime Minister of India used the motto 'Vasudevam Kutumbkam' for the G20, which meant 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'. " This aptly reflects our vision for the G20 Presidency. The whole earth is like a family to us. In any family, the future of each member is closely linked to that of every other member. So, when we work together, we move

forward together, leaving no one behind . "



KEY OBJECTIVES/PRIORITIES OF A NEW ECONOMY FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH:

The priorities of the G20 meetings were also the following –

- Inclusive, equitable and sustainable development.
- Life (lifestyle for the environment).
- Women Empowerment.
- Digital public infrastructure and technology – enabling growth in sectors ranging from health, agriculture and education to commerce.
- Skills-Mapping, Culture and Tourism, Climate Finance, Circular Economy, Global Food Security, Energy Security, Green Hydrogen, Disaster Risk Reduction and Adaptation.
- Development cooperation, the fight against economic crime, and multilateral reform.

This concept of development emerged in a new form after 'globalization' arising from liberalization in the nineties because during liberalization, global economies got an opportunity to join together and this concept went out of the scope of countries and states and gained its importance in the global context. Was successful in maintaining. In India too, under liberalization, privatization and globalization in the nineties, India also moved towards a new economy under inclusive development and maintained its importance in the global context. At present, India is the fifth largest economy in the world, which is moving towards becoming the third largest economy in the world in the coming few years.

MEANING OF INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT:

The meaning of inclusive development can be understood on the basis of the following criteria –

- Inclusive development is taken to mean such development which creates employment opportunities and which proves helpful in reducing poverty.
- It includes providing equality of opportunity and empowering people for education and skills, that is, it includes promoting development with equality of opportunities.
- A form of development that not only creates new economic opportunities, but also ensures equitable access to such opportunities for all sections of society.
- Objectively, inclusive development refers to a situation where high growth rates of GDP per capita are reflected in high growth rates of GDP, accompanied by reduction in inequality between the distribution of income and wealth.
- Inclusive development focuses on providing basic amenities to all sections of the population, i.e. housing, food, drinking water, education, health as well as generating means of livelihood to live a dignified life. Along with all this, it is necessary to take care of environmental protection for inclusive development because development done at the expense of the environment can neither be called sustainable nor inclusive.

INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR NEW ECONOMY AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT:

- The concept of inclusive development was first introduced in the 11th Five Year Plan. The 11th Five Year Plan continued from the year 2007 to 2012 and was the second last Five Year Plan of India. The theme of which was – “Rapid and more inclusive development”. In this plan, the concept of inclusive development was introduced. It was said to improve the quality of life of all sections of people and provide them equality of opportunities.
- The 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17) completely

focused on inclusive growth and its theme was – “Rapid, Inclusive and Sustainable Development”. In this plan, special emphasis was given on poverty, health, education and providing livelihood opportunities. So that the growth rate of 8 percent prescribed in the plan can be achieved.

- Many schemes have been launched by the government to achieve inclusive development. These include- ‘Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana’, ‘Integrated Child Development Programme’, ‘Mid-Day Meal Scheme’, ‘MNREGA’, ‘Sarva- Education campaign’ etc.
- Keeping women in mind, schemes like ‘Start-up India’, ‘Support to Training and Employment Program for Women’ have been started by the government. Apart from this, schemes like ‘Women Entrepreneurship Forum’ and ‘Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana’ have been started by the government. Efforts also include financial inclusion efforts for women.
- Many initiatives/schemes have also been started by the government for financial inclusion. These include important schemes like ‘Mobile Banking’, ‘Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana’, ‘Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana’, ‘Senior Pension Insurance Scheme’ etc. Has been done
- Steps like Disability Act 1995, National Trust for Welfare Act 1999, SIPDA, Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan, Swavalamban Yojana and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Rules, 2017 have been taken by the government to include the persons with disabilities in inclusive development.
- ‘Soil-Health-Card’, ‘Neem-Coated-Urea’, ‘Pradhan Mantri Krishi-Irrigation Yojana’, ‘Pradhan Mantri Fasal-Bima-Yojana’ have been launched by the government to promote financial inclusion in agriculture sector and for farmers. And important schemes like ‘National Food Security Mission’ are being implemented.

METHODS OF MEASUREMENT OF INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT:

- Measuring a nation’s progress based on the progress of its poorest segment, i.e. measuring

per capita income based on the progress of the bottom 20 percent of the population, is the best way to measure inclusive growth.

- An indicator of healthy inclusive development is that if there is an increase in per capita income then it is an indicator of healthy inclusive development.
- If a country or state has to achieve high growth rate, then the weakest sections of the society will also have to be included in the mainstream pace of development. The concept of inclusive development depends on this.



NEED FOR INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT: RELEVANT IN THE PRESENT TIMES.

No country can develop in the absence of inclusive development. Inclusive development is not only economic development but it is also a social and moral imperative of economic development. The importance of inclusive development in the context of the development of the new economy can be understood on the basis of the following context –

- Inclusive growth is essential for sustainable development. Therefore, if development is not sustainable then a situation of decline will arise in the economy.
- Due to imbalance in income distribution, wealth will be concentrated in a few people, as a result demand for goods will decrease and GDP growth rate will also decrease. If there is no inclusive development, there will be imbalance in income distribution.
- Due to lack of uniform inclusive development, inequality increases in different parts of the

country due to which the deprived sections are not able to join the main stream of development.

- Disruptive tendencies like communalism, regionalism, racial and ethnic violence within the geographical boundaries of any country are born due to lack of inclusive development, which sometimes creates a situation of dissatisfaction in the country, as a result of which the geographical boundaries of the country deteriorate. Disruptive tendencies like communalism and regionalism are born.

CHALLENGES BEFORE INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT:

- Migration towards urban areas is having a negative impact on the agricultural economy due to which agricultural productivity is decreasing.
- Due to lack of basic facilities in villages, people migrate from villages to cities. Due to this, population pressure increases in cities.
- There is still a need to create permanent and long-term employment sources in rural areas because MNREGA and many other such employment related schemes are being implemented in rural areas but these cannot be included as permanent sources of employment.
- Corruption also has a negative impact on the country's economy by hindering the pace of inclusive development.

CONCLUSION / PATH TO SOLUTION / PATH FORWARD:

- At present, if the goal of rapid inclusive growth is to be achieved in India, then there will be a need to pay special attention to the agriculture sector, because the United Nations has set a target of eliminating all forms of poverty (unemployment, low income, poverty etc.) by the year 2030. The target is specified in Goal 1 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Since the agricultural sector in India provides employment to half of the total labor force. Apart from this, the government had also set a target of doubling the income of farmers by the year 2022, but the per capita productivity in this area is very low due to which it is associated with the

highest area of poverty. However, in a country with a large population like India, the biggest challenge is how to spread the benefits of development to all sections and all sections of the society and this is where the role of appropriate use of technology comes into play. The recently launched 'Digital India Programme' is a good initiative to face this challenge. Therefore, India is poised to become the leader of the G20 group of countries in developing a new economy for inclusive growth and the third largest economy in the world, growing at a very fast pace. Which is a sign of the bright future of India's strong and new economy among the countries with developed economies globally.

URBAN HOUSING CRISIS IN INDIA

Why in the news?

As per data from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, there is a deficit of suitable housing for approximately 19 million households in urban areas. Consequently, this housing shortage has resulted in a slum population of 65.5 million individuals residing in 13.7 million slum households within million-plus cities.

Factors Contributing to the Urban Housing Crisis in India

The urban housing crisis in India stems from a substantial disparity between the demand for housing in cities and the availability of suitable options, both in terms of quantity and quality.

- **High Population Density:** The significant migration from rural areas to million-plus cities has resulted in a severe shortage of housing space due to the escalating population density.
- **Sub-Optimal Utilization of Urban Land:** Urban land is often not utilized to its full potential due to fragmented and poorly recorded ownership, with multiple public sector organizations holding land under their jurisdictions. Additionally, restrictions on Floor Space Index/Floor Area Ratio artificially limit land availability, thereby driving up prices.

- **Rent Control Regime:** Stringent rental laws, which reduce returns on rental properties and make tenant eviction challenging, have discouraged new investments in rental housing. This stagnation in investment has contributed to a shortage of affordable housing in urban areas.
- **Inadequate Housing Finance:** Insufficient housing credit for Low-Income Groups (LIG) is a result of their weak creditworthiness and low disposable incomes. The informal nature of employment in the urbanizing Indian landscape has failed to provide social security or formal credit to the growing urban population, exacerbating the housing crisis.

Challenges:

The challenges associated with the housing crisis in India are multifaceted, impacting individuals, communities, and the overall well-being of cities.

- **Shortage of Affordable Housing:**
 - The demand-supply gap for affordable housing is substantial, with a reported deficit of about 19 million units in Indian cities, primarily affecting low-income groups.
 - Rising construction costs and a lack of a viable rental market contribute to the unaffordability of housing, especially for lower-income individuals who struggle to access cheaper loans and formal lending options.
- **Pressure on Urban Resources due to Rapid Urbanization:**
 - The rapid urbanization and migration from rural areas strain urban resources, leading to a scarcity of basic amenities such as water supply, sewage, and electricity in many housing projects.
 - Homelessness and inadequate housing further burden public services, impacting healthcare, infrastructure, and escalating environmental degradation issues such as urban heat islands, pollution, drainage problems, and water crises.

- **Slum Proliferation and Informal Settlements:**

- The lack of affordable formal housing results in many migrants living in slums and informal settlements, leading to social, health, and economic challenges.
- Homelessness creates difficulties in finding employment, accessing healthcare, and maintaining social connections, with a significant population living without stable shelter.

- **Gentrification and Displacement:**

- Gentrification, driven by wealthier residents moving into low-income neighborhoods, raises property values and rents, displacing long-term residents and eroding community cohesion and cultural diversity.

- **Housing Insecurity and Stress:**

- The lack of stable and affordable housing induces stress and uncertainty, negatively affecting mental and physical health, as well as overall quality of life for individuals and families.
- Housing insecurity contributes to urban crimes, including human trafficking, sexual assault, child labor, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, drugs, and suicides.

- **Growth of Unplanned Suburbs:**

- Deteriorating urban environments prompt out-migration towards nearby rural areas, leading to unplanned settlements and problematic future expansion plans that permanently alter the rural landscape.

Government Initiatives to Address the Urban Housing Challenge in India:

The government has implemented several initiatives to address the housing crisis in India, with a focus on providing affordable housing and improving living conditions. Some key steps include:

- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Housing for All – Urban):**

- **Objective:** Addressing urban housing shortages for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), Low-Income Groups (LIG), and Middle-Income Groups (MIG).

- **Beneficiaries:** EWS, LIGs, and MIGs with annual income caps of up to Rs 3 lakh for EWS, Rs 3-6 lakh for LIG, and Rs 6-18 lakhs for MIG.

- **Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM):**

- **Objective:** Providing financial assistance to urban local bodies for infrastructure and service development.
- **Implementation:** Launched in 2005, the mission focuses on comprehensive urban development.

- **National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy (2007):**

- **Objective:** Providing affordable housing and enhancing living conditions for urban residents, especially for low-income groups.

- **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT):**

- **Objective:** Improving basic services and infrastructure in urban areas, including water supply and sewerage systems.
- **Implementation:** Launched in 2015, it aims at holistic urban development.

- **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM):**

- **Objective:** Reducing poverty and vulnerability of urban poor households by offering opportunities for skill development and self-employment.
- **Implementation:** Launched in 2013, it focuses on empowering the urban poor through livelihood support.

Measures to be Taken:

To effectively address the challenges associated with urban housing in India, a comprehensive approach is essential. Here are suggested steps with

examples:

- **Robust Rural Development:**

- **Strategy:** Improve employment opportunities, amenities, and living standards in rural areas to reduce mass migration to cities.
- **Example:** Create multiple growth centers across the country, strategically positioned to distribute economic activities more evenly, reducing pressure on megacities.

- **Enhance Urban Planning and Governance:**

- **Strategy:** Strengthen urban planning to keep pace with rapid urbanization, update master plans, invest in infrastructure, and enforce land use regulations.
- **Example:** Implement single-window clearance systems for housing projects to reduce bureaucratic delays, as seen in ease of doing business reforms in Gujarat.

- **Promote Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):**

- **Strategy:** Encourage collaboration between the government and private developers to create affordable housing.
- **Example:** Offer incentives like tax benefits or provide land at subsidized rates to make projects financially viable for private developers.

- **Revise Rent Control Laws:**

- **Strategy:** Modernize rent control legislation to protect both landlords and tenants, encouraging landlords to rent out vacant houses.
- **Example:** Maharashtra's Rental Housing Scheme aims to stimulate the rental market through amendments to rent control.

- **Encourage Use of Innovative Building Technologies:**

- **Strategy:** Promote cost-effective and sustainable construction methods, such as prefabricated buildings, to reduce

construction costs and time.

- **Example:** Use precast technology in mass housing projects for efficient construction.

- **Expand the Scope of Affordable Housing Programs:**

- **Strategy:** Broaden programs like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) to cover not only house construction but also the development of surrounding infrastructure.
- **Example:** Ensure holistic development to create sustainable and inclusive urban areas.

- **Incorporate Inclusionary Zoning:**

- **Strategy:** Mandate a percentage of new developments for affordable housing.
- **Example:** New York City's Mandatory Inclusionary Housing program requires developers to include affordable housing in rezoned areas.

By implementing these steps, India can progress toward providing affordable, sustainable, and inclusive urban housing, aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. This holistic approach contributes to making cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, while also addressing poverty eradication and reducing inequalities for a better future.

INDIA'S SUSTAINABLE DIRECTION IN SHIPPING VALUE CHAIN: INDIA'S FIRST CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR GREEN PORTS AND SHIPPING

WHY IN DISCUSSION / NEWS ?

Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and AYUSH Shri Sarbananda Sonowal announced India's first National Center of Excellence for Green Ports and Shipping (NCoEGPS). The objective of the Center is to develop a regulatory framework and road map for adoption of alternative technologies to promote carbon neutrality and circular economy

(CE) in the sector of Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways in India. India aspires to increase the share of renewable energy in the total power demand in all its major ports, which is currently less than 10 percent, to 60 percent, to be met through power generated by solar and wind energy. India's first National Center of Excellence for Green Port & Shipping (NCOEGPS) has been launched by the Government of India at the recent "INMARCO 2022" held in Mumbai.

OBJECTIVE : –

- To promote carbon neutrality and financial economy in India and to make ports and shipping more environment friendly.
- INMARCO is a quadrennial international maritime conference and exhibition, hosted by the Institute of Marine Engineers (Government of India). That is, INMARCO organizes this program every four years by presenting its report on developing a road map for green ports and adoption of alternative technologies for shipping.

INDIA'S FIRST CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR GREEN PORTS AND SHIPPING (NCOEGPS) :

INTRODUCTION:

- It is a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MOPSW) as part of the Sagarmala Program of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways towards providing green solutions in the Ministry of Shipping and Waterways. Will work under the framework of.
- The information and implementing partner for this project is The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).

AIM OF THE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE:

- The objective of the Center is to develop a regulatory framework for green shipping and a road map for adoption of alternative technologies to promote carbon neutrality and circular economy (CE) in the shipping sector in India.
- Green shipping is the practice of using less resources and energy to transport people and goods by ship to protect the global environment

from environmental pollutants and greenhouse gases (GHGs) produced by ships.

- India aims to increase the share of renewable energy in the total power demand of each of its major ships to 60% from the current share of less than 10%.
- It will be implemented with the help of solar energy and wind energy.
- Center of Excellence is a team, a shared facility or a unit that provides the best leadership, practice, research, collaboration and training in a single location for a particular area.
- It promotes innovation.

OBJECTIVES OF INMARCO :

- Its main objective is to strengthen 'Make in India' in the field of ports, shipping and waterways and engineering by developing cutting-edge technologies and application products in this sector under 'Make in India Scheme'.
- The aim is to provide the most appropriate solutions to various challenges in these areas by enabling innovations.
- One of its main objectives is to create a competent work force for the industry equipped with state-of-the-art theoretical and practical knowledge by creating a pool of capable manpower.
- Its main objective is to identify and analyze the complex problems of this sector and provide assistance in solving the issues, in order to provide self-reliance to India in technology development through scientific study and providing short-term solutions through the technical branch.



IMPORTANCE OF INMARCO:

- INMARCO Mission is a major effort towards realizing the Lifestyle for the Environment (LiFE) movement as it aims to transform ports and make the shipping sector eco-friendly.
- India's first National Center of Excellence for Green Ports and Shipping will work with all ports, shipping and maritime states of India to understand their local problems and offer solutions through a scientific approach.

RELATED INITIATIVES LAUNCHED BY GOVERNMENT OF INDIA:

- The ports also aim to reduce carbon emissions per tonne of cargo by 30% by 2030.
- The Maritime Vision Document 2030 is a 10-year blueprint on India's vision of a sustainable maritime sector and vibrant blue economy.
- India has been selected as the first country under the Green Voyage 2050 project of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to conduct a pilot project related to green shipping.

GREEN VOYAGE 2050 PROJECT:

- The Green Voyage 2050 project is a project launched in May 2019 between the Government of Norway and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), which aims to transform the shipping industry into a low-carbon emitting future.
- The global partnership will help Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (Least Developed Countries) meet their commitments to climate change and energy efficiency targets relevant to international shipping by supporting the inaugural IMO Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Strategy. Developed Countries-LDC) is supporting the developing countries.
- One of the important objectives of Green Voyage 2050 is to encourage global efforts to demonstrate and test technology solutions.

REPORT PRESENTED BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL INLAND WATERWAYS:

- Inland waterways are a navigable river and canal system. The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) regulates and develops national waterways for inland shipping and navigation.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:**OPERATION OF NATIONAL WATERWAYS:**

- At present there are a total of 111 notified national waterways in India, out of which 23 have been made operational.
- Due to financial and staff constraints, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has said that 63 national waterways are currently not being developed by the ministry.
- A committee constituted by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways of India has suggested that these 63 waterways should not be developed at present as it is impractical.

**INTERMODAL CONNECTIVITY FOR TRANSPORTATION OF CARGO:**

- Under intermodal connectivity for transportation of cargo, the committee has said that connectivity of waterways with major ports, railways and roads will reduce the burden of transportation of cargo and will also reduce the cost of logistics.
- The Committee has suggested that in case of newly notified waterways, connectivity with rail, road and ports should be dealt with at the project completion stage itself.

LOW SHARE OF WATERWAYS:

- The average share of waterways in freight traffic in India is about 2%, compared to 4% in the USA, 14% in China, 48% in Vietnam and 49% in the Netherlands.
- India aims to increase the share of this sector to 5% by the year 2030.
- The Committee has recommended that the Ministry prepare an action plan on an urgent basis to harness and develop the potential of waterways as a sustainable transit option and tourism service.

IMPORTANT FACTS : –

- The center will utilize a number of technological measures to support the shipping and shipping sector and address various problems faced by the industry through scientific research.
- It will also provide valuable education, applied research and technology transfer in maritime transportation at local, regional, national and international levels.

This center will focus on 5 broad areas-

- Policy, Regulatory and Research,
- Human Resource Development,
- Network- key partners and strategic partners,
- Exploration- scope of work, results, projects and resources,
- Attached – Scope of work, results, projects and resources.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. The unemployment found in the agricultural sector in India in which more people are employed than required is called?

- Seasonal unemployment.
- Disguised unemployment.
- Structural unemployment.
- Marginal unemployment .

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding Rare Earth Elements (REE) often seen in the news:

- China accounts for more than half of the World's Rare Earth metals production
- REEs are set of 17 metallic elements including Gallium & Germanium
- REEs are used from manufacturing of Semiconductors to Cerium used for Glass polishing
- They are called as "Rare" metals because of their low availability in the world

Which of the above given statements is correct?

- 1,2 and 4
- 2 and 3 only
- 1,3 and 4
- 1, and 3 only

Q3. Consider the following statements in the context of development of a new economy for inclusive growth.

- The global agenda of sustainable development is possible only when all countries fulfill their share of responsibilities .
- India is one of the few countries in the world where forest and tree covered areas are continuously increasing despite the development process. The extent of tree covered area in India has reached 80.73 million hectares which is 24.6 percent of the total geographical area of the country.
- The agenda of the Rural Development Program revolves around its development mantra – "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" (inclusive development), which aims to ensure that the benefits of development reach the poor and deprived sections.
- Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jyoti Yojana aims to provide electricity at affordable rates and focus on green energy, clean energy to increase the power supply.

- Only 1, 3 and 4

- (b) Only 2 and 4
- (c) Only 1, 2 and 4
- (d) All of these.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) addresses housing shortages of only Economically Weaker Sections.
2. JNNURM, launched in 2005, provides financial aid to urban local bodies for comprehensive infrastructure development.
3. National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy (2007) aims to offer affordable housing and enhance living conditions for urban residents, especially the low-income groups.

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

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q5. Consider the following statements with reference to India's first National Center of Excellence for Green Ports and Shipping (INMARCO).

1. INMARCO is a quadrennial international maritime conference and exhibition, hosted by the Institute of Marine Engineers (Government of India).
2. INMARCO Mission is a major effort towards realizing the eco-friendly lifestyle movement.
3. The Green Voyage 2050 project is a project launched in May 2019 between the Government of Norway and the International Maritime Organization (IMO).
4. India aims to increase the sector's average share of waterways in freight traffic to 5% by 2030.

Which of the above statement/statements is correct?

rect?

- A. Only 1, 2 and 3
- B. Only 2 and 4
- C. None of these.
- D. All of these .

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	B
2.	D
3.	D
4.	B
5.	D

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. 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?

Q2. 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.

Q3. The world is in search of alternative supply chains. India with its reserves in rare earth elements must leverage this, in this context discuss the importance of Rare Earth Material. What should be the steps for boosting Rare Earth Material industry in India? Illustrate.

Q4. In a New economy for inclusive growth, can technological change create an inclusive future of work and promote inclusive growth? How can pollution be addressed while considering inequalities and injustices in the vision of inclusive development?

Q5. Discuss the role of urban housing policies in achieving sustainable development in India. Highlight the challenges associated with the urban

housing crisis and evaluate the effectiveness of government initiatives, such as Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, in promoting sustainable and inclusive urban development.

Q6. What is Sagarmala Project? How INMARCO is helpful in promoting carbon neutrality and financial economy in India and making ports and shipping more environment friendly? Discuss logically.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

COP 28 OF UNFCCC

WHY IN NEWS?

- Recently, the 28th Conference of Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was held in **Dubai**, United Arab Emirates.
- COP 28 aims to address the urgent challenges of **climate change** such as: Reducing **Greenhouse gas** emissions, **adapting** to the impacts of climate change, and **mobilizing financial resources** for climate action.
- COP28 plays a crucial role in advancing **international cooperation** and coordination to tackle the climate crisis and achieve the goals outlined in the **Paris Agreement 2015**.
- Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber has been recently chosen as the new President of COP 28

Paris Agreement on Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA): COP 28 was guided by Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) agreed upon in Paris Agreement:

- The GGA is a collective commitment under **Article 7.1** of the Paris Agreement aimed at “enhancing the world’s adaptive capacity and reducing vulnerability to climate change.
- It was proposed by the **African Group of Negotiators (AGN) in 2013** and established in 2015.
- GGA serve as a unifying framework that can drive **political action and finance** for adaptation on the same scale as mitigation.
- After years of slow progress, Countries agreed at **COP26 in 2021** to establish and launch a 2-year initiative to further define the GGA, called the **Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh work program (GlaSS)**.
- GGA sets following **Targets for countries:**

- By 2030**, all parties shall conduct **assessments** of climate hazards, climate change impacts and exposure to risks and vulnerabilities.
- Parties shall use these assessments to inform their formulation of National adaptation plans & policies.
- By 2027**, all the Parties have to establish multi hazard **Early warning systems (EWS)** for risk reduction and systematic observation to support improved climate related information and services.

NEED for Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA):

- As per **World Resources Institute (WRI)** a staggering 3.6 billion people — nearly **half of the global population** — are currently highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, from **droughts, floods and storms to heat stress and food insecurity** & this number will only continue to rise as long as global temperatures keep climbing.
- As per **State of Global Climate Report 2022** by WMO: Global temperature is **1.2° C above** 1850-1900 average and **2023-27** will be the warmest years on record despite “**Triple Dip**” La Nina.
- As per Inter-Governmental Panel for Climate Change’s (IPCC) “**Synthesis Report 2023**”: Humanity will miss the Paris Agreement target of **limiting global warming to 1.5° C** above from Pre-Industrial levels.

ISSUES being faced to implement Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA):

- Major concern is that the best mitigation efforts enshrined in the Nationally determined contributions (**NDCs**) of the **Parties** to the Paris Agreement are not in sight of restricting global average temperature below 1.5° C as compared to pre-industrial levels.
- They would rather nudge the world towards the **2.8° C** point by the end of the century

(2100).

- Difficulty in Linking of non-climatic “**domino**” **effects** such as: Rapid Urbanization, unsustainable consumption of resources, demographic shifts, rising economic inequalities among Global north & south and **Double burden** on Developing Countries (Large funds required for mitigation and adaptation & ensuring economic growth at same time to bring people out of poverty).
- Non-adherence of **Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR)** by developed countries.
- Lethargic improvement in **carbon removal technologies** and R & D on mitigation
- **Russia-Ukraine war** led supply chain disruptions has led to increasing use of fossil fuel by developed countries: For example, Germany has resorted to coal power plants after closure of **Nord Stream pipeline** with Russia.
- Issue of “**Climate change denial**”: Many countries has questioned the methodology of assessment and “Real” impact in impending future.

STEPS TAKEN IN COP 28 TO MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE

- **Loss and Damage (L&D) Fund**: It will be hosted by the **World Bank** for 4 years (2023-27), aligning with UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.
- All developing countries are eligible, and contributions are voluntary, with a specific percentage earmarked for Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.
- **Global Stocktake**: As per the Paris Agreement 2015, it was decided that countries would assess their progress for the **first time in 2023** and, then, every 5 years. Thus released Global Stocktake (GST) Report adopted **8 steps** to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees C including:
- **Tripling renewable energy** capacity by 2030 to at least **11,000 GW by 2030**
- Collectively **double the global energy efficiency** improvements from around 2% to over 4%

every year until 2030.

- **Phase-down** of unabated coal power
- Transitioning away **from fossil fuels** in energy systems, in orderly and equitable manner, so as to achieve Net zero by 2050
- Accelerating **Zero and low emissions technologies** e.g., Nuclear, CCUS, Hydrogen
- Reducing non-CO2 emissions e.g., **methane emissions** globally by 2030
- Emissions reductions from **road transport**
- **Phasing out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies**
The text maintains continuity with COP26, balancing global aspirations while recognizing diverse energy needs
- **Global Cooling Pledge**: 66 national signatories committed to a 68% reduction in cooling-related emissions by 2050
- **Climate Finance**: UNCTAD estimates that developed nations owe developing countries **\$500 billion in 2025** under the **New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)** for climate finance, confirmed in the Paris Agreement.
- The goal, starting at \$100 billion annually, allocates \$250 billion for mitigation, \$100 billion for adaptation, and \$150 billion for loss and damage.
- With the current \$100 billion goal unmet, developing countries face debt distress.
- **Triple Nuclear Energy: COP 28** calls to triple global nuclear energy capacity by 2050
- **Powering Past Coal Alliance (PPCA)**: PPCA, a coalition involving *governments, businesses, and organizations*, focuses on transitioning from unabated coal power to clean energy.
- **NOTE: India is not part of PPCA as it has not committed to phasing out of coal.**
- India highlights the necessity of using coal for developmental needs and emphasizes adherence to nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

- Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnership (**CHAMP**): 65 national governments signed commitments for enhanced cooperation with subnational governments in climate strategies.
- **Buildings Breakthrough Initiative**: The goal of the Buildings Breakthrough Initiative is to make near-zero emissions and resilient buildings the new normal by 2030.
- The initiative is co-led by France and the Kingdom of Morocco, coordinated under the umbrella of UNEP, and hosted by the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction (Global ABC)

INITIATIVES TAKEN BY INDIA IN COP 28:

- **Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA)**: It was launched at COP 28, led by the **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India.
 - The GRCA is a unique alliance covering **275+ global river-cities in 11 countries**.
 - Partner countries include Egypt, Netherlands, Denmark, Ghana, Australia, Bhutan, Cambodia, Japan and river-cities of The Hague (Den Haag) from the Netherlands, Adelaide from Australia, and Szolnok of Hungary.
 - GRCA highlights India's role in sustainable river-centric development and climate resilience.
 - The GRCA platform will facilitate knowledge exchange, river-city twinning, and dissemination of best practices.
- **Green Credit Initiative**:
 - India launched the Green Credit Initiative at COP28, to create a participatory global platform for exchange of innovative environmental programs and instruments.
 - There are two main priorities of the initiative are **water conservation and afforestation**.
 - The main purpose of this initiative is to boost voluntary environmental activities like tree

plantation, water conservation, sustainable agriculture, and waste management by **incentivizing it for big corporations and private companies**, bringing about a change in the climate issues faced by the country.

QATAR COURT PUTS INTERIM STAY ON DEATH SENTENCE OF EIGHT INDIANS

WHY IN DISCUSSION / NEWS ?

In a major relief to 8 former Indian marines sentenced to death in Qatar, on 28 December 2023, on the appeal of the Government of India, an interim stay has been put on the death sentence of all eight people. India's Ministry of External Affairs had approached the court in Qatar regarding this case, during the hearing of which the Qatari court reduced the death sentence.

Official sources of the Ministry of External Affairs of India have said that – "We (India) are waiting for the copy of the detailed decision." Our legal team is in touch with the families of the eight Indians regarding next steps. During the hearing, India's ambassador and officials based in Qatar were present in the court".

India's Ministry of External Affairs further said that – "We have stood with the families of the eight Indian people from the beginning. Considering the sensitivity of this matter, it would not be right for us to speak too much about it. We have been and will continue to raise this matter with the Qatari authorities."

WHO ARE THESE EIGHT FORMER INDIAN NAVY PERSONNEL?

The eight former Indian Navy personnel have been identified as Captain Navtej Singh Gill, Captain Birendra Kumar Verma, Captain Saurabh Vashishtha, Commander Amit Nagpal, Commander Purnendu Tiwari, Commander Sugunakar Pakala, Commander Sanjeev Gupta and Sailor Ragesh Gopakumar.

WHAT IS THE ALLEGATION AGAINST THEM?

Eight Indians working in Qatar-based Al Dahra Company (Qatar's private security company) are

accused of allegedly spying, for which recently a court in Qatar has issued a sentence to eight former officers of the Indian Navy. He has been sentenced to death on charges of espionage. The officials involved were arrested in August 2022 and charged with sharing confidential information.



BACKGROUND OF THE PRESENT CASE:

PETITION:

- The accused officers, who were working with Al Dahra (Qatar's private security company) in Doha, were accused of allegedly sharing classified information at the time of their arrest in Qatar in the year 2022.
- The Qatar-based company 'Dahra Global Technologies and Consultant Services', for which the eight former Indian Navy officers worked, was also involved in the production of advanced submarines of Italian origin, which are also known for their stealth warfare capabilities.
- The main thing to note is that the charges against the eight Indian officials have not been made public by the Qatari authorities.
- Earlier investigation process regarding the present case:
- Presently, the investigation process regarding this matter has been completed twice in March and June of the year 2023 and more have also been done. While these accused detainees were granted consular access on several occasions, the authorities of both the Indian and Qatari countries maintained the confidentiality of the case citing the sensitivity of the matter.

RESPONSE GIVEN BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

IN THE PRESENT CASE:

- The Government of India is exploring all possible legal options to secure the release of the eight accused former Indian Navy officers, while also expressing concern over the death penalty imposed by India on its citizens.
- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has reiterated its commitment to provide consular and legal assistance to the eight Indian former naval officers detained in Qatar, and has also coordinated with all major authorities related to the case. Made aware of its importance.

DIPLOMATIC IMPLICATIONS:

- While the large Indian diaspora contributes to boosting economic and diplomatic ties, this decision could potentially strain relations between India and Qatar. More than seven lakh Indian expatriates reside in Qatar. This increases the pressure on the Government of India to take the highest level of action to save the lives of the prisoners lodged in the jails there.
- Those NRIs in Qatar are known and highly respected for their honesty, hard work, technical expertise and law-abiding nature as they contribute in different areas of employment in NRI Qatar. Are giving.
- Remittances from Qatar to India by the Indian expatriate community are estimated to be around \$750 million per year.
- The current affair represents the first major crisis in India-Qatar relations, which have been generally stable until now.
- In the year 2016, along with the visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Doha, high-level meetings were also held between the two countries, after which meetings were also held between the two countries with the Emir of Qatar.
- An important supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to India is Qatar, which supplies a major

portion of India's LNG imports.

THE EXISTING OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO INDIA TO STOP THE PUNISHMENT OF NAVAL PERSONNEL ARE:

DIPLOMATIC OPTION:

- In the present case, India can hold direct diplomatic talks with the Qatar government to find a solution to the matter. Given the strategic and economic importance of relations between the two countries, India's diplomatic leverage can play an important role.
- The Indian government can also use diplomatic pressure to stop the death penalty.
- The idea is to use the agreement signed by India and Qatar in 2015 for the transfer of convicted prisoners so that they can serve their sentence in their home country. Such possibilities are also being considered by India.
- Filing an appeal against the decision by the Qatari court or NGOs and civil society can also raise this issue at the global level and pressure can also be put on Qatar by the United Nations.

LEGAL OPTIONS:

- According to Qatar's judicial system, persons sentenced to death can file an appeal within the Qatari legal system. Therefore, India's first step is to appeal within the judicial system in Qatar.
- India can ensure that detainees' right to appeal is properly followed by providing them with legal representation.
- If proper procedures are not followed or the appeal process is disorganized, India can invoke International Court of Justice (ICJ) jurisdiction.
- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) acts as a world court with two types of jurisdiction. That is, it is also to give advisory opinions in case of legal disputes between two states submitted by them (controversial matters) and on legal questions referred to it by the organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations (consultative proceedings).



IN WHICH CASES WAS INDIA INVOLVED IN THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ) JURISDICTION TILL NOW?

- Kulbhushan Jadhav case (India vs Pakistan)
- Right of passage over Indian territory (Portugal vs. India, ended in 1960).
- Appeals relating to the jurisdiction of the ICAO Council (India v Pakistan, abolished in 1972).
- Pakistani Prisoners of War Trial (Pakistan vs. India, ended in 1973).
- Air incident of August 10, 1999 (Pakistan vs India, ended in 2000).
- Obligations related to preventing the nuclear arms race and negotiating nuclear disarmament (Marshall Islands v. India, ended in 2016).

WAY TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM/WAY FORWARD:

- India needs to remain committed to the welfare and legal rights of its citizens while dealing with the complexities of international diplomacy and legal processes in Qatar. The way forward in this direction is likely to be challenging and may take time and require India to show determination.
- In this present case, as well as in the future, India may desperately need a combination of its diplomatic efforts, systematic legal actions and international cooperation for a successful and appropriate resolution of such problem/case. For which India needs to build very cordial and unbreakable diplomatic relations with other countries.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh work program (GlaSS) recently seen in the news is associated with which of the following:

1. Phasing down of unabated coal
2. Defining Global goal on Climate Adaptation
3. Achieving Climate Neutrality by 2070
4. Securing Climate Finance from Developed Countries

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding Climatic Phenomenon “La Nina” often seen in the news:

1. La Nina events represent periods of above average Sea surface temperatures across the East-central Equatorial Pacific
2. La Nina leads to colder winters in South & western Europe causing snowfall in the Mediterranean region
3. La Nina is characterized by lower than normal air pressure over the Western Pacific
4. La Nina usually brings in colder than normal winters in India

Which of the above statements is Correct?

- a. 1,2 and 3
- b. 1 and 4 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 2,3 and 4

Q3. 28th Conference of Parties of UNFCCC held in Dubai, UAE released Global Stocktake Report suggesting adoption of 8 steps to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees C. Which of the following steps does not form part of Global Stocktake 2023?

- A. Tripling renewable energy capacity by 2030 to at least 11,000 GW by 2030
- B. Phasing out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies

- C. Phasing out of fossil fuel such as Coal by 2050
- D. Doubling global energy efficiency improvements to 4% every single year by 2030

ANSWER: C

Q4. Consider the following statements with reference to the death sentences of eight former Indian sailors who have been granted interim stay by the Qatar court.

1. The eight Indians working in Al Dahra Company based in Qatar are accused of allegedly spying.
2. Consular access was also provided to these accused prisoners on several occasions.
3. India can use International Court of Justice (ICJ) jurisdiction in this case.
4. ‘Dahra Global Technologies and Consultant Services’ was also involved in the production of advanced submarines of Italian origin, which are also known for their stealth warfare capabilities.

Which of the above statement/statements is correct?

- A. Only 1, 2 and 3
- B. Only 2, 3 and 4
- C. All of these.
- D. None of these.

ANSWER

S. No.	Answer
1.	B
2.	D
3.	C
4.	C

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q.1. In the context of the interim stay on death sentence of Indian former naval personnel in Qatar, discuss the legal options before India and its impact on India-Qatar relations.

SOCIAL ISSUES

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (NHRC)

Why in the news?

Background:

- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has responded to a petition by instructing the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and six state governments to furnish information regarding victims impacted by Salwa Judum.
- The petition contended that those displaced and currently residing in forest areas across multiple states have been denied access to crucial welfare schemes. These include essential rights such as land rights, tribal status, social welfare benefits, and entitlements under the Forest Rights Act.
- Salwa Judum, characterized as a group of tribal individuals organized for resistance against outlawed armed Naxalites, was reportedly supported by the government machinery in Chhattisgarh.
- In 2011, the Supreme Court of India ruled against the arming of civilians in this manner, leading to the ban of Salwa Judum. The court directed the Chhattisgarh government to disband any militia force established to counter Maoist guerrillas.

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

- **Establishment and Legal Framework:**
 - The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) was established in 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, with a specific focus on safeguarding human rights within the country.
- **Watchdog Role:**
 - Its primary role is that of a vigilant guardian,

overseeing and protecting rights associated with life, liberty, equality, and the dignity of individuals.

• Composition of NHRC:

- The NHRC is comprised of a Chairman and five members.
- The Chairman is required to be a retired Chief Justice of India or a judge of the Supreme Court.
- Members include serving or retired judges of the Supreme Court, serving or retired chief justices of High Courts, and three individuals with expertise in human rights, ensuring diverse representation and a minimum inclusion of one female member.

Ex-officio Members:

- Includes chairpersons of various bodies as ex-officio members:
 - National Commission for Minorities
 - National Commission for Scheduled Castes (SCs)
 - National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (STs)
 - National Commission for Women
 - National Commission for Backward Classes
 - National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
 - Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities

Functions of NHRC:

- **Investigation and Prevention:** Enquire into violations of Human Rights or negligence in preventing such violations by public servants.
- **Legal Intervention:** Intervene in legal proceed-

ings involving allegations of Human Rights violations.

- **Prison Visits:** Visit jails and detention centers to assess the living conditions of inmates.
- **Review and Recommendations:** Review constitutional and legal safeguards for human rights, recommending measures for effective implementation.
- **Addressing Hindrances:** Examine factors like terrorism, naxalism, and militancy hindering human rights, suggesting remedial measures.
- **International Engagement:** Study international treaties on human rights and make recommendations for their effective implementation.
- **Research Promotion:** Undertake and promote research in the field of human rights.

Achievements of NHRC:

- **Mega Projects Intervention:**
 - Intervened in cases of displacement due to mega projects, disasters, and conflicts.
 - Examined Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill, 2007, and Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill, 2007, recommending relief measures for the displaced.
- **Police Force Misuse:**
 - Addressed excessive use of police force, particularly in cases involving Adivasis protesting the Narmada Project.
 - Recommended relief measures, dropping of charges, and adequate rehabilitation.
- **Suicide Prevention Measures:**
 - Took Suo motu cognizance of farmer suicides in Maharashtra.
 - Facilitated the formation of committees at the district level to monitor and assist farmers, providing financial assistance and suggesting solutions.
- **Adivasis' Rights Protection:**

- Responded to violence by Maoists and Salwa Judum in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh.
- Directed the examination of human rights violations by Naxalites and Salwa Judum, addressing living conditions in refugee settlement colonies.

● International Conventions Advocacy:

- Advocated for the ratification of the UN Convention against torture, emphasizing its importance for human rights in India.

Issues or Concerns with NHRC:

● **Recommendatory Nature:**

- The functions of the NHRC are recommendatory, lacking the power to impose punishment for human rights violations.
- Recommendations are non-binding on the concerned government or body.

● **Limited Powers Concerning Armed Forces:**

- NHRC has limited role, power, and jurisdiction in addressing human rights violations by armed forces.

● **Administrative Constraints:**

- As a Paris principle-compliant institution, administrative constraints hinder smooth functioning, lacking required infrastructure.

● **Financial Constraints:**

- The commission relies on grants from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), lacking financial autonomy for effective functioning.

● **Manpower Constraints:**

- Operates below sanctioned strength, resorting to hiring retired government officials due to increasing workload.

● **Lack of Legal Manpower:**

- The law division lacks adequate resources, facing a shortage of trained manpower in the field of human rights.

- **Lack of Suo Moto Uptake:**

- NHRC has been criticized for not taking suo moto action on arrests made under the UAPA law, related to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

- **Lack of Diversity:**

- Concerns about limited diversity as the Chairman and members are predominantly from the judicial fraternity, lacking mandatory representation of minorities, SCs, and STs.

- **Political Interference:**

- Composition of the selection committee favors the party in power, raising concerns about potential political interference.

- **Narrow Jurisdictions:**

- NHRC can only investigate complaints registered within 1 year, limiting its jurisdiction.

- **Control of Home Ministry:**

- Under the Home Ministry, NHRC investigating police-related human rights violations may raise concerns about independence.

Suggestions to Enhance NHRC's Effectiveness:

- **Constitutional Body Status:** Consider making NHRC a constitutional body, similar to the South African Human Rights Commission.
- **Parliamentary Report Presentation:** Propose tabling NHRC reports in parliament, with the government presenting an action taken report based on NHRC recommendations.
- **Mandatory Time Frame:** Amend the act to include a mandatory time frame for action taken and response formulation on NHRC recommendations.
- **Independent Cadre:** Develop an independent cadre of staff, including legal and human rights experts.
- **Financial Independence:** Provide the commission with financial autonomy to handle increas-

ing workload and responsibilities.

- **Expanded Jurisdiction:** Expand the period of jurisdiction, allowing NHRC to investigate matters older than 1 year.
- **Contempt Powers:** Accord NHRC with contempt powers to ensure the effective implementation of recommendations.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Consider the following regarding National Human Rights Commission (NHRC):

1. The Chairman is required to be a retired Chief Justice of India or a judge of the Supreme Court.
2. Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities is one of the ex-officio members

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.	Answer
1.	C

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the role and functions of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in India. Evaluate its effectiveness in safeguarding human rights, addressing violations, and promoting justice.

ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

ILLEGAL SAND MINING IN SON RIVER

WHY IN NEWS?

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has ordered a **complete stoppage of mining operations in the Son riverbed** located in Sonbhadra district, Uttar Pradesh.
- It was done to address the issue of **illegal mining** and impose environmental compensation on mining companies involved in the area.
- NGT Order as per **Down to Earth Report**:
 - Aquatic animals like “**alligators, gharial, tortoise** etc. can travel very long distances” and traveling of these aquatic animals from MP to UP, and Bihar cannot be ruled out.
 - Thus, NGT has directed that the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC) to consider the matter of declaring part of the Son River running through UP and Bihar as a **Wildlife sanctuary and Eco-sensitive zone (ESZ)** for the protection of gharials, and take action within 3 months.
 - The district magistrate and the UP Pollution Control Board (UPPCB) must ensure compliance within 3 months.

SON RIVER:

- The Son River, also known as the Sone River, is a perennial river flowing through **4 states**: Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar.
- It is the **second-largest southern tributary** of the Ganges River, following the Yamuna River
- The river originates near **Amarkantak Hill in Chhattisgarh** and eventually merges with the Ganges River **near Patna in Bihar**.
- Son forms a series of waterfalls at the edge of

Amarkantak plateau.

- The Son River is fed by several tributaries, including **Ghaghar**, Johilla, Chhoti Mahanadi, **Banas**, Gopad, **Rihand**, Kanhar, and North Koel River.
- It is associated with prominent dams and hydroelectric projects, such as the **Bansagar Dam** located in Madhya Pradesh.
- The **Rihand Dam** near Pipri in Uttar Pradesh is also situated on the Rihand River, a tributary of the Son River.
- Additionally, the **Koilwar Bridge**, constructed in 1862, is India's **oldest river bridge**, connecting Arrah with Patna and spans across the Son River.

HAZARDOUS IMPACT OF SAND MINING:

Sand mining extracts Natural sand and other types of sand from the environment, then processes them in order to retrieve their extracted value. This includes valuable minerals or metals as well as crushed stone, sand and gravel.

- It **changes riverbeds**, leading to soil erosion and destruction of fish habitat: This threatens the **survival of native species** adapted to their original habitat.
- Loss of sand from riverbeds can exacerbate **downstream flooding and sedimentation** in rivers and coastal regions.
- Moreover, sand mining can **lower the groundwater table** and give rise to water scarcity.
- Lastly, the disruption and degradation of habitat from sand mining often leads to a **loss of biodiversity in mangrove forests** as well.

CONSTITUTIONAL & LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF MINING SECTOR IN INDIA:

- **State List** in the **7th Schedule** to the Constitution of India mandates the State government to own

the minerals located within their boundaries.

- Similarly, **Central List** in the **7th Schedule** mandates the **Central government** to own the minerals within the Exclusive Economic zone of India (**EEZ**).
- In pursuance to this Mines & Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act of 1957 was framed.
- **Sand mining** is classified as a **minor mineral** under The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulations) Act, 1957 for which the absolute powers for deciding on procedures of seeking applications for and granting mineral concessions, fixing rates of royalty, dead rent, and power to revise orders **rest only with the State Government**.
- Example of other Minor minerals include building stones, gravel, ordinary clay, ordinary sand.
- For minerals specified in the **First Schedule** to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 approval of the Central Government is necessary.
- First Schedule contains minerals such as **coal and lignite, minerals of the "rare earths" group containing Uranium and Thorium**.

MEASURES TAKEN TO STOP ILLEGAL SAND MINING IN INDIA:

- Mines and Mineral Development and Regulation Act, **1957 (MMDR Act)**: It designates Sand as a minor mineral, so it is the jurisdiction of **State governments**.
- **2006 Environment Impact Assessment (EIA)**: The Supreme Court of India ruled that all sand mining operations, even those in **areas smaller than 5 hectares**, require permission & EIA clearance from Environment Ministry to prevent the adverse effects on plants, animals and rivers caused by sand extraction.
- **Sustainable Sand Management Guidelines (SSMG) 2020**: Ministry of Environment has published Guidelines for Socially Responsible Mining to encourage environmentally friendly

mining practices.

ENFORCEMENT AND MONITORING GUIDELINES FOR SAND MINING 2020

- **Source to Destination Monitoring**: Guidelines focuses on the effective monitoring of sand mining from the identification of sand mineral source to its dispatch and end-use by consumers and the general public through **drones and night surveillance**.
- **Audits**: States to carry out River audits & put detailed survey reports of all mining areas in the public domain.
- **Transparency**: Online sales and purchase of sand and other riverbed materials (RBM) for transparency in the process.
- **Enforcement**: It gives directions to States to set up dedicated task forces at district levels.
- In cases where rivers become district boundaries or state boundaries, the districts or states sharing the boundary shall constitute the combined task force for monitoring of mined materials, mining activity and participate in the preparation of **District Survey Reports (DSR)** by providing appropriate inputs.
- **Sustainability**: Conduct replenishment study for river bed sand in order to nullify the adverse impacts arising due to excessive sand extraction.
- **No riverbed mining will be allowed during the monsoon**.

NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL (NGT):

- NGT is a **Statutory body** created under the National Green Tribunal Act (2010) for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to **environmental protection and conservation of forests** and other natural resources.
- With the establishment of the NGT, India became the **third country** in the world to set up a specialized environmental tribunal, only after Australia and New Zealand, and the **first developing country** to do so.
- For fast justice delivery: NGT is mandated to

make disposal of applications or appeals finally **within 6 months** of filing of the same.

- The NGT has 5 places of sittings: **New Delhi** is the principal place of sitting and **Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai** are the other four.
- The Tribunal comprises of the Chairperson, the Judicial Members and Expert Members which hold office for term of **3 years or till the age of 65 years**, whichever is earlier and are **not eligible for reappointment**.
- There are to be **least 10 and maximum 20** full time Judicial members and Expert Members in the tribunal.
- The **Chairperson** is appointed by the Central Government in *consultation with Chief Justice of India (CJI)*.
- Tribunal has jurisdiction over all civil cases involving substantial question relating to environment including enforcement of any legal right relating to environment.
- In October 2021, the Supreme Court declared the National Green Tribunal's (NGT) position as a "unique" forum endowed with **Suo motu** (on its own motion) powers to take up environmental issues across the country.
- Being a statutory adjudicatory body like Courts, apart from original jurisdiction side on filing of an application, **NGT also has appellate jurisdiction to hear appeal** as a Court (Tribunal).
- The Tribunal is **not bound** by the procedure laid down under the **Code of Civil Procedure 1908**, but shall be guided by principles of 'natural justice'.
- An appeal against order of the NGT lies to the **Supreme Court**, generally within 90 days from the date of communication.
- The NGT deals with Civil cases under the 7 laws related to the environment, these include:
 - Water Act, 1974
 - Water Cess Act, 1977

- Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980
- Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981
- Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
- Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991
- Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH NGT:

- Two important acts – **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972** and **Forest Rights Act, 2006** have been kept out of NGT's jurisdiction.
- This restricts the jurisdiction area of NGT and at times hampers its functioning as crucial forest rights issue is linked directly to environment.
- The NGT decisions are being challenged in various **High Courts under Article 226**: power of High Courts to issue certain writs:
- Argument given by various body is that High Court holds superiority over the NGT, claiming '**High Court is a constitutional body while NGT is a statutory body**'."
- This is one of the weaknesses of the Act as there is lack of clarity about what kind of decisions can be challenged; even though according to the NGT Act, its decision *can be challenged only before the Supreme Court*.
- Decisions of NGT have also been criticized and challenged due to their **repercussions on economic growth and development**.
- The absence of a formula-based mechanism in **determining the compensation** has also brought criticism to the tribunal.
- The decisions given by NGT are **not fully complied by the stakeholders or the government**.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Son river recently seen in the news:

1. It is a perennial river which flows through three

states i.e; Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar

2. Son originates in Amarkantak Hills & merges with Ganga river in Patna
3. Ghagar, Banas & Rihand are tributaries of Son river

Which of the above statements is correct?

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 2 and 3
- C. 1 and 3
- D. 1,2 and 3

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding Sand mining in India:

1. As per the Constitution, all the minerals located within the State boundary is solely owned by respective State Government
2. As per Mines & Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act of 1957, jurisdiction to grant mineral concessions & fixing rates of royalty for Minor Minerals rest only with the State Government
3. Coal, lignite, Uranium & Thorium falls in the First Schedule of MMDR Act 1957 & can be mined only with approval of Central Government

Which of the above statements is Incorrect?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3
- C. 2 only
- D. 1 and 3

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding National Green Tribunal (NGT):

1. It is a Statutory body created for purpose of environmental protection, conservation of forests & safeguard of wildlife
2. NGT is mandated to dispose appeals within 6 months of filing of the same.

3. NGT is headed by the Chairperson which is appointed by the Chief Justice of India
4. NGT does not hold power of appellate jurisdiction
5. An appeal against order of the NGT lies only to the Supreme Court

Which of the above statements is Incorrect?

- A. 1,3 and 4
- B. 1 and 5 only
- C. 2,3 and 5
- D. 1 and 4 only

ANSWER

S. No.	Answer
1.	B
2.	A
3.	A

AGRICULTURE

UNDERSTANDING MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE (MSP) IN INDIAN AGRICULTURE

Why in the news?

The Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for Copra for the 2024 season have been approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister. This aligns with the government's pledge to set MSPs at a minimum of 1.5 times the all-India weighted cost of production, as declared in the Union Budget of 2018-19.

Definition and Purpose:

- Minimum Support Price (MSP) is a government-initiated market intervention in India designed to shield agricultural producers from significant drops in farm prices.
- It serves as a safety net for farmers, particularly during bumper production years, preventing distress sales.

Statutory Nature of MSP:

- MSPs do not have statutory backing, meaning that farmers cannot legally demand MSP as an absolute right.
- The absence of statutory support makes MSP a governmental policy rather than an enforceable entitlement for farmers.

Crops Covered by MSP:

- The government announces MSP for a total of 22 mandated crops, categorized into:
 - 14 kharif crops, including paddy, jowar, ba-jra, maize, and pulses.
 - 6 rabi crops, such as wheat, barley, and gram.
 - 2 commercial crops, namely jute and copra.
 - Additional crops like Toria and de-husked

coconut have their MSP determined based on related crops like rapeseed & mustard and copra, respectively.

Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP):

- Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) is another pricing mechanism specifically for sugarcane.
 - FRP represents the minimum price at which sugar mills purchase sugarcane from farmers.
 - The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs announces FRP based on recommendations from the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

Determining Minimum Support Price (MSP): Process and Factors Considered

- **Authority and Announcement:**
 - The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs is responsible for declaring the Minimum Support Price (MSP) at the onset of each sowing season.
 - The decision is influenced by recommendations put forth by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

Factors Considered by CACP:

- The CACP takes into account several factors when proposing MSPs, including:
 - Demand and supply dynamics of the commodity.
 - Cost of production for the specific crop.
 - Trends in domestic and international market prices.
 - Inter-crop price parity.
 - Terms of trade between agriculture and non-agriculture.

- Ensuring a minimum 50% margin over the cost of production.
- Evaluation of the potential impact of MSP on consumers.

Calculation Methodology:

The CACP relies on state-wise and crop-specific production cost estimates provided by the Directorate of Economics & Statistics in the Agriculture Ministry.

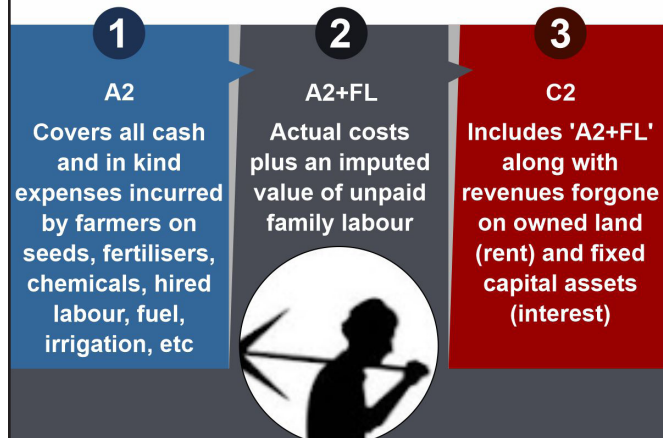
- The calculation involves three cost components:
 - A2 cost: Covers all direct paid-out expenses incurred by the farmer, including seeds, fertilizers, labor, and more.
 - A2+FL cost: Encompasses A2 cost plus an imputed value for unpaid family labor.
 - C2 cost: Represents the most comprehensive cost, factoring in rentals, interest on owned land and capital assets, in addition to A2+FL.

HOW ARE MSPs DETERMINED?

PLUTUS
IAS

The Centre fixes MSPs for every kharif and rabi cropping season based on recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices CACP

When a farmer grows a crop, he incurs costs, some of it explicit and some implicit or unpaid. The CACP considers the following costs:



Discrepancy in Formula Application:

- The National Commission for Farmers, led by MS Swaminathan, recommended MSP under the C2+50 percent formula, incorporating total costs (C2) and a 50% profit.
- However, the government presently announces MSP based on the A2+FL formula, creating a divergence from the Swaminathan Committee's recommendation.

Benefits and Challenges of Minimum Support Price (MSP) System

Benefits:

- **Income Security:** MSP ensures farmers a guaranteed minimum price, providing income security and shielding them from market price volatility.
- **Price Stability:** Stabilizes agricultural product prices, preventing extreme fluctuations and ensuring affordability for consumers.
- **Encourages Production:** Motivates farmers to increase production by offering a fair price for their crops, contributing to agricultural growth.
- **Food Security:** Promotes a consistent food supply by encouraging staple crop production, reducing reliance on imports, and enhancing domestic food security.

Challenges:

- **Distorted Crop Selection:** MSP focus on specific crops (e.g., rice, wheat) can lead to imbalanced crop selection, affecting agricultural diversity and sustainability.
- **Market Distortions:** MSPs may distort markets, influencing cropping patterns and causing surplus production, leading to storage issues and market inefficiencies.
- **Limited Coverage:** MSP system covers only a subset of crops, leaving those outside vulnerable to market fluctuations and price uncertainties.
- **Storage and Logistics Challenges:** Effective stor-

age and logistics infrastructure is essential for MSP operations; inadequate facilities can result in wastage and losses.

- **Fiscal Burden:** Implementation of MSPs imposes a fiscal burden on the government, requiring substantial resources for procurement and managing surplus stocks. This impacts the government's budget and fiscal health.

Strategies for a Sustainable Agricultural Future

- **Diversify Agriculture:**
 - Prioritize investments in animal husbandry, fisheries, and the cultivation of fruits and vegetables.
 - Promote crops that are not only nutritious but also offer higher income potential for farmers.
- **Encourage Private Sector Involvement:**
 - Incentivize private sector participation in agriculture.
 - Facilitate the development of efficient value chains through a cluster-based approach.
- **True MSP Intervention:**
 - Implement a genuine Minimum Support Price (MSP) intervention.
 - Intervene when market prices fall below a predetermined level, particularly in cases of excess production, oversupply, or price collapse influenced by international factors.
- **Sustainable Farming Practices:**
 - Promote sustainable farming methods to safeguard soil health and minimize environmental impact.
 - Encourage the adoption of organic farming practices.
- **Access to Credit and Insurance:**
 - Ensure farmers have access to affordable credit and insurance to mitigate risks associated with crop failure, pests, and natural

disasters.

PESTICIDES AND THEIR CONCERNS

Why in the news?

In Maharashtra, a region susceptible to droughts and crop failures, the menace of pesticide poisoning has resulted in numerous fatalities among farmers and agricultural laborers in recent years.

The Yavatmal district, grappling with the crisis, has witnessed the tragic demise of 20 farmers due to pesticide poisoning since 2017. Moreover, numerous individuals have endured health complications, including respiratory issues, skin rashes, eye irritation, neurological disorders, reproductive problems, and instances of cancer, underscoring the severe repercussions of pesticide exposure.

Introduction:

Pesticides, whether chemical or biological substances, serve the purpose of preventing, destroying, or controlling pests, finding applications in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. However, their misuse and overuse pose significant risks to human health and the environment, necessitating a closer examination of their types, impact, and regulatory framework.

Types of Pesticides:

- **Insecticides:** These chemicals protect plants from insects and pests that can harm crops.
- **Fungicides:** Designed to control the spread of fungal diseases in plants.
- **Herbicides:** Chemicals that kill or control the growth of unwanted weeds in cultivated areas.
- **Bio-Pesticides:** Derived from biological sources, such as animals, plants, and bacteria.
- **Others:** This category includes plant growth regulators, nematicides, rodenticides, and fumigants.

Pesticide Poisoning:

Pesticide poisoning refers to the adverse effects of

pesticide exposure on humans or animals. This phenomenon is broadly categorized into two types:

- **Acute Poisoning:** Results from a person ingesting, inhaling, or coming into contact with a large amount of pesticide in a short period.
- **Chronic Poisoning:** Occurs when an individual is exposed to low doses of pesticide over an extended period, leading to damage to various organs and systems in the body.

Recently Banned Pesticides:

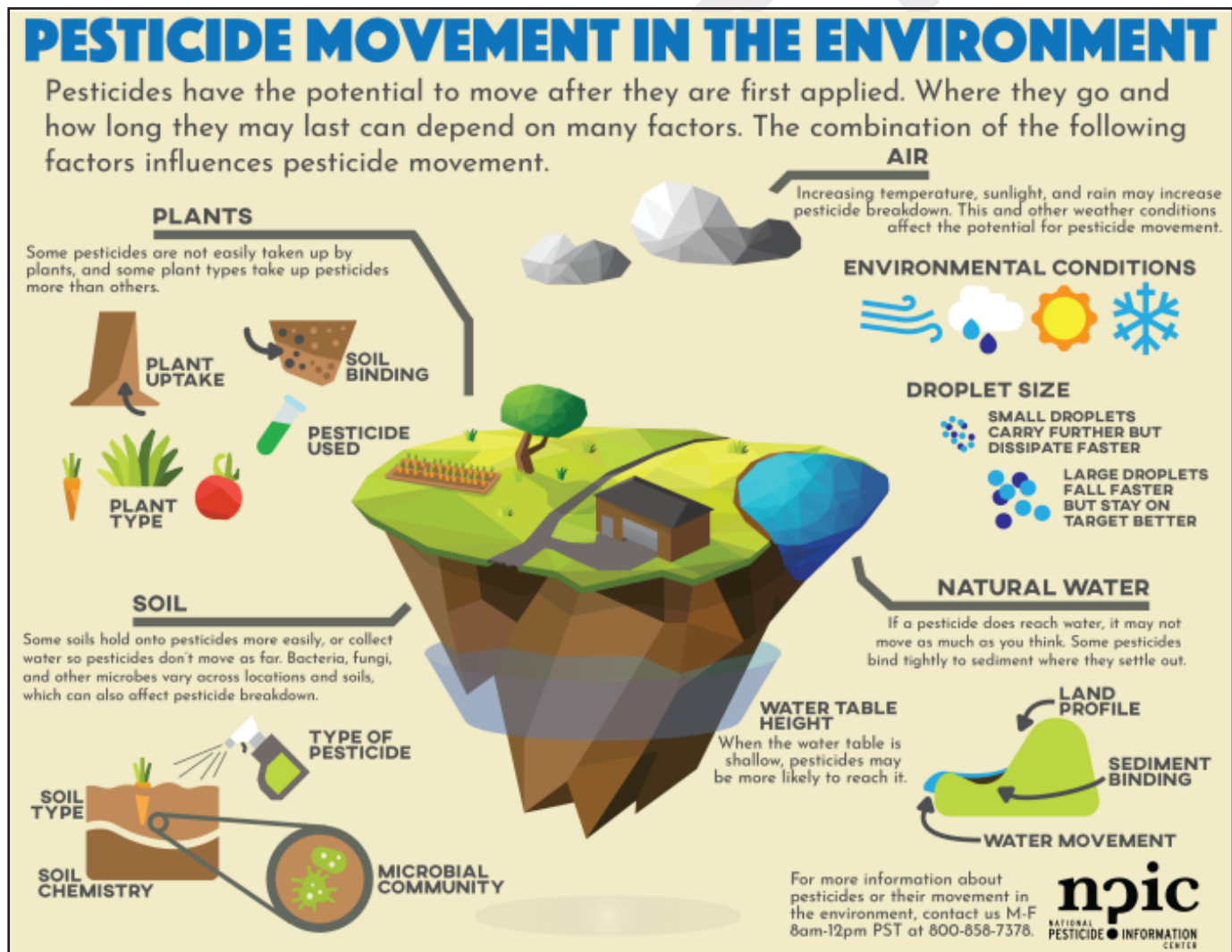
In 2023, the Indian government took the decision to ban three more insecticides — Dicofol, Dinocap, and Methomyl — in addition to monocrotophos, recognizing their adverse effects on health and the environment.

Regulation in India:

Pesticides in India are regulated under the Insecticides Act, 1968, and the Insecticides Rules, 1971. However, there are ongoing efforts to modernize and enhance the regulatory framework, as evidenced by the introduction of the Pesticide Management Bill, 2020, which aims to replace the existing legislation.

Concerns and Issues:

- **Effects on Farmers:** Chronic low-level pesticide exposure is associated with various nervous system symptoms, posing risks to farmers' health.
- **Consumer Impact:** Pesticides can enter the food chain, affecting consumers through a process known as biomagnification.



- **Agricultural Impact:** The continued use of pesticides has significantly contributed to the ecological, economic, and existential crises in the Indian agriculture sector.
- **Regulatory Challenges:** The division of responsibilities between the central and state governments complicates the regulation of pesticide use.

Way Forward:

- **Regulatory Reforms:** Strict enforcement of regulations to curb illegal sales and misuse of pesticides, along with penalties for violators.
- **Government Support:** Providing financial support to farmers to encourage the adoption of safer and more sustainable agricultural practices.
- **Community Awareness Programs:** Conducting awareness campaigns at the community level to educate people about the risks associated with pesticide use.
- **Compensation Mechanism:** Establishing a compensation mechanism for victims of pesticide poisoning, ensuring a swift and transparent process for filing claims and receiving compensation for medical expenses and economic losses.

Balancing the benefits of pesticide use with the associated risks requires a multifaceted approach involving stringent regulations, government support, community involvement, and a robust compensation mechanism. The proposed regulatory reforms and awareness programs are crucial steps towards sustainable pesticide management in India.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. With reference to Minimum Support Price (MSP), consider the following statements:

1. MSPs have statutory backing, thus farmers can legally demand MSP as an absolute right.
2. The government announces MSP for a total of 22 mandated crops

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

ANSWER

S. No.	Answer
1.	B

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Critically analyze the efficacy of Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) as a tool for ensuring farmers' welfare in India. Propose innovative solutions or alternative mechanisms that could address the limitations of the current MSP framework.