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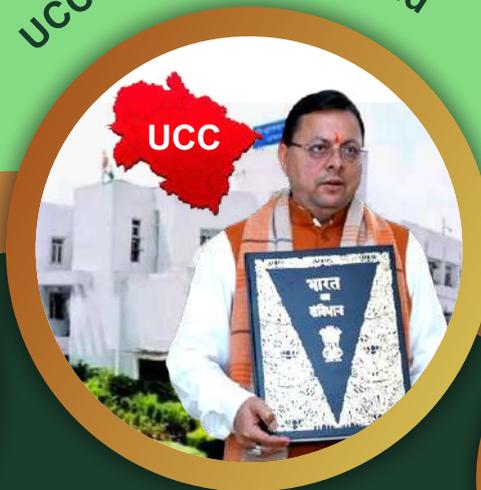
Monthly Current Affairs
March 2024

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Interim Budget for 2024-25



UCC Bill in Uttarakhand



AI Act European Union



Key Highlights:

- Interim Budget for 2024-25
- UCC bill in Uttarakhand
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Smart Gram Panchayat Project
- Artificial Intelligence Act of the European Commission

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Foreword

Dear Aspirants,

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

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

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

Team
Plutus IAS

Sources:

The Hindu | The Indian Express | The Economic Times | Press Information Bureau | PRS Legislative Research | IDSA: Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis | Yojana and Kurukshetra | Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Debates.

OUR TOP RANKERS

AIR-27



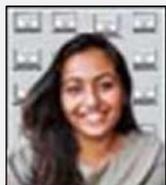
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Divyanshu Choudhary

AIR-268



Nitish Rajora

AIR-612



Mahima Madan

AIR-706



Rijul

Are
You
Next?

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MARCH 2024 CURRENT AFFAIRS

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ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23 OF NATIONAL COMMISSION OF SCHEDULE CASTES (NCSC)



Why in the News?

The President of India recently received the **National Commission of Schedule Castes' (NCSC) Annual Report 2022-23** from the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. The findings provide numerous suggestions on the topics entrusted to the Commission regarding the protection of Constitutional Safeguards for Scheduled Castes (SCs) as stipulated in India's Constitution.

About the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)

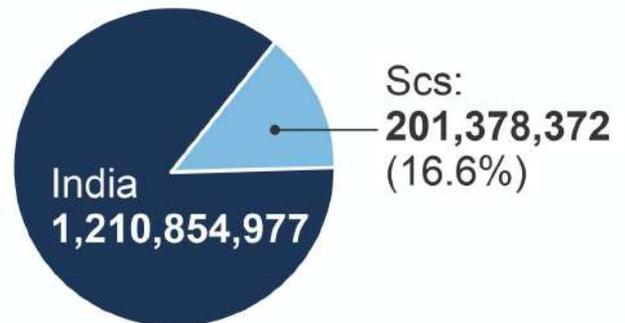
The **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)** is a constitutional authority that works to protect the rights of scheduled castes (SC) in India. **Article 338** of India's constitution addresses this commission.

- It establishes a National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, tasked with investigating and monitoring all matters relating to the safeguards provided for them, investigating specific complaints, and participating in and advising on the socioeconomic development planning process, among other things.
- **Composition:**
 - Chairperson.
 - Vice-chairperson.
 - Three other members.

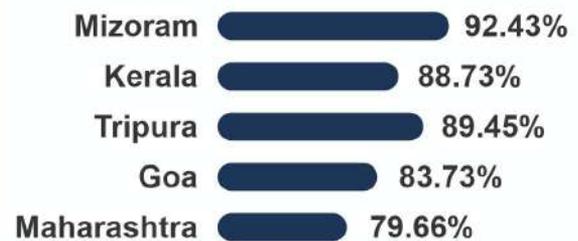
They are appointed by the President of India through a warrant bearing his hand and seal.

Scheduled Castes in India

Population (Census 2011):



States with highest SC Literacy Rate



Literacy Rate:



Sex Ratio:



Functions of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes

Safeguarding Rights:

One of the core functions of the NCSC is to work towards the effective implementation of constitutional safeguards and protections provided for Scheduled Castes. This includes overseeing the reservation policies, ensuring equal opportunities, and preventing discrimination.

Inquiring into Complaints:

The Commission has the jurisdiction to investigate particular complaints and concerns concerning the Scheduled Castes' denial of rights and safeguards. It can investigate cases of discrimination, atrocities, or denial of benefits and recommend necessary actions to the concerned authorities.

Monitoring and Evaluating Safeguard Implementation:

NCSC is tasked with monitoring and evaluating the implementation of various safeguards and programs intended for the welfare of Scheduled Castes. This involves reviewing the progress of initiatives aimed at their educational, economic, and social advancement.

Advisory Role:

The Commission provides advice to the President of India on matters related to the welfare and development of Scheduled Castes. It can offer recommendations for policy formulation, legislative measures, and executive actions to improve the conditions of the Scheduled Castes.

Inquiring into Specific Cases of Atrocities:

NCSC investigates and inquires into specific cases of atrocities committed against Scheduled Castes. This includes offences such as untouchability, harassment, violence, or any form of discrimination based on caste, and the Commission recommends actions against the perpetrators.

Promoting Socio-Economic Development:

NCSC works towards the socio-economic development of Scheduled Castes by advocating for their

rights in various sectors, such as education, employment, and healthcare. The Commission strives to bridge the gaps in development indicators between Scheduled Castes and other communities.

Reviewing Constitutional and Legal Safeguards:

The Commission reviews the safeguards provided in the Constitution and other laws for the Scheduled Castes and recommends amendments or modifications as deemed necessary to ensure their effective implementation.

Raising Awareness and Sensitization:

NCSC undertakes initiatives to raise awareness and sensitisation about the rights and issues faced by Scheduled Castes. This includes organising campaigns, workshops, and outreach programs to promote social inclusion and eliminate discrimination.

Facilitating Social Justice:

The Commission plays a crucial role in facilitating social justice by ensuring that Scheduled Castes have equal access to opportunities, resources, and benefits. It aims to create an environment where individuals from Scheduled Castes can lead dignified lives without facing discrimination.

Issues Related to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes

Implementation Gap:

Despite the constitutional mandate, there is often a significant gap between the policies formulated for the welfare of Scheduled Castes and their effective implementation. The NCSC faces challenges in ensuring that the intended benefits reach the targeted population due to bureaucratic hurdles and lack of accountability.

Delayed Redressal:

One major issue is the delay in addressing complaints and grievances filed by members of Scheduled Castes. The lengthy bureaucratic processes and procedural complexities often result in delayed justice, undermining the purpose of the Commission's existence.

Limited Enforcement Powers:

The NCSC lacks enforcement powers, limiting its

ability to ensure the implementation of its recommendations. While it can make recommendations and report on violations, the Commission relies on other authorities to enforce its directives, which may not always be effective.

Inadequate Representation:

Some critics argue that the composition of the NCSC does not always adequately represent the diversity within Scheduled Castes. Issues related to gender, regional disparities, and sub-caste variations may not receive sufficient attention, affecting the Commission's ability to address the nuanced challenges faced by different sections.

Political Interference:

There have been instances where the NCSC has faced allegations of political interference, impacting its independence. Political considerations in appointments and decision-making processes may compromise the Commission's ability to function impartially.

Limited Awareness:

Lack of awareness among Scheduled Castes about their rights and the role of the NCSC remains a challenge. This hinders the Commission's outreach efforts and its ability to address issues at the grassroots level.

Insufficient Resources:

The NCSC often faces challenges due to inadequate financial and human resources. Insufficient staff and budget constraints limit the Commission's capacity to handle the increasing volume of complaints and conduct comprehensive reviews of welfare programs.

Need For Judicial Powers:

Critics argue that providing the NCSC with judicial powers would enhance its effectiveness. Currently, the Commission relies on other institutions for legal action, and empowering it with direct judicial authority could expedite the resolution of cases.

Monitoring Private Sector:

The NCSC faces challenges in monitoring and ad-

ressing discrimination against Scheduled Castes in the private sector. While it can intervene in public sector cases, its jurisdiction over private enterprises is limited, creating a gap in safeguarding the rights of Scheduled Castes in various employment sectors.

Coordination with States:

The effectiveness of the NCSC depends on effective coordination with state governments. Issues arise when there is a lack of cooperation or differing priorities between the national and state authorities, hindering the seamless implementation of welfare measures.

UCC BILL IN UTTARAKHAND

Why in the News?

Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhami tables UCC Bill in the State Assembly. The UCC drafting group was chaired by Ranjana Prakash Desai, a retired Supreme Court judge.

Key highlights of Uttarakhand's UCC draft report

- The committee's key proposals include the **prohibition of polygamy, halal, iddat** (a mandatory period of waiting for women following the dissolution of a Muslim marriage), **triple talaq, and child marriage, a uniform age for girls' marriage across all religions, and mandatory registration of live-in relationships.**
- The proposed UCC seeks to promote gender equality by treating men and women equally in areas such as inheritance and marriage.
- The Code is also likely to grant Muslim women an equal property stake, as opposed to the current 25% share granted under Muslim personal rules.
- The minimum marriage age for men and women will stay the same: **18 years for women and 21 years for males.**
- The bill exempts Scheduled Tribes (STs) from its

provisions. The state's tribal population, which is roughly 3%, has been vocally opposing UCC since they were granted special status.

About the Uniform Civil Code

- UCC aspires to replace distinct religious personal laws with a focus on marriage, divorcing, adoption, and inheritance, as governed by **Article 44** of the constitution.
- **Article 44** of the Indian Constitution is a directive principle of state policy (DPSP). It emphasises that the state should work to create a unified civil code for all people of India.
- This code would be a unified collection of personal laws that would apply to every citizen, irrespective of religion.
- **Goa** is India's sole state with a UCC, which follows the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867.

Law Commission's Stance:

- The **21st Law Commission**, led by former Supreme Court judge **Justice Balbir Singh Chauhan**, issued a consultation paper on "Reforms of Family Law" in **2018**, stating that the "formulation of a Uniform Civil Code is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage".
- I recognise the passage of more than three years after the publication of the initial consultation document. In **2022**, the **22nd Law Commission**, led by **Justice (Retd) Rituraj Awasthi**, published a notification asking for feedback on the UCC from various stakeholders, including the general public and religious bodies.

The stance of the Supreme Court of India on UCC

- In the **Mohd. Ahmed Khan vs Shah Bano Begum case in 1985**, the Court criticised the lack of execution of Article 44 and advocated for its full implementation. Such a demand was reinforced in the following cases, including **Sarla Mudgal v. Union of India (1995)** and **John Valiamattom v. Union of India (2003)**.
- **José Paulo Coutinho vs. Maria Luiza Valentina Pereira case, 2019**: The Court lauded Goa as a "shining example" where "the UCC is applicable

to all, irrespective of religion, with the exception while safeguarding certain limited rights" and advocated for its nationwide implementation.



UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

All sections of the society irrespective of their religion shall be treated equally according to a National Civil Code - the Uniform Civil Code.

THEY COVER AREAS LIKE

- Marriage
- Divorce
- Maintenance
- Inheritance
- Adoption
- Succession of Property

It is based on the premise that there is necessarily no connection between religion and personal law in a civilized society.

"UCC refers to a common set of laws governing civil right of every citizen"
Article 44 of Directive Principle sets duty of state for implementing UCC.

TIMELINE

- 1954** Passage of Special Marriage Act provides permission of civil marriage above any religious personal law
- 1956** Hindu code bill passed dividing personal laws in - Common Indian Citizen - Muslim Community
- 1986** Rajiv Gandhi governments law in Shah Bano case widens the difference in civil rights.
- 2003** Then President Dr. Abdul Kalam supported UCC
- 2015** Supreme court asserted the need of UCC.

The dialogue for UCC was started by the Law Commission in the year 2016

Status of Personal Laws in India

- The Constitution's **Concurrent list** includes personal law matters like marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Both the Parliament and the state legislatures have the authority to pass legislation on any of the issues included in the Concurrent List.
- The Parliament codified Hindu personal laws into four parts in 1956:
 - The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
 - The Hindu Succession Act, 1956
 - The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956

- The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956

In the context of these regulations, the term 'Hindu' encompasses Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists.

- Muslim personal laws are not codified and are based on religious texts. However, certain aspects of them are expressly recognised in acts such as the Shariat Application Act, 1937, the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939, and the Muslim Women (Protection of Marriage Rights) Act, 2019.
- Christians, Zoroastrians, and Jews are also Subject to their laws.

Need for a Uniform Civil Code

- **Equality and Justice:** One of the UCC's founding values is to promote equal treatment and justice for all citizens, regardless of religious convictions. It seeks to remove discriminatory practices and create a unified set of rules covering personal concerns such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption.
- **Secularism:** A UCC is viewed as a step towards reaching the constitutional Concept of secularism, which requires that laws not be based on religious concerns. It advocates that the state should not favour any specific religion and should treat all citizens fairly.
- **Women's rights:** Proponents of the Uniform Civil Code say that it will bring about gender justice by eliminating gender-based discriminatory practices seen in personal laws. This includes topics like divorce, maintenance, and inheritance, in which women may experience uneven treatment under current religious rules.

Criticism of the Uniform Civil Code

- **Religious and cultural diversity:** Critics believe that India is a diverse country with various religious and cultural customs and that enforcing a consistent set of rules may violate this diversity. They believe that personal laws enable communities to maintain their unique customs and traditions.

- **Minority rights:** Some claim that a UCC may disproportionately affect minority communities since it is regarded as imposing majority ideals on them. There are fears that it may violate the rights of religious and cultural minorities to practise their traditions.
- **Social acceptance:** Implementing a UCC may face opposition from diverse segments of society who are firmly committed to their religious practices. A lack of social acceptance may lead to noncompliance or opposition to the planned changes.
- **Political sensitivities:** A Uniform Civil Code is a politically delicate issue that has been debated for decades. Policymakers may be cautious to address it because of the potential response from religious communities, and it frequently becomes a problematic topic during political debates.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



Why in the News?

A recent report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology has brought up certain issues with India's Fintech industry. Concerns have been voiced by the committee regarding the dominance of foreign-owned fintech apps in the Indian ecosystem. Additionally, it has suggested that financial applications held by regional players be promoted.

Significant observations of the report

- **Indian Fintech apps struggle for acceptance: BHIM UPI's uphill battle for market share:** Despite the surge in fintech popularity, Indian apps face an uphill battle for consumer preference. The market share for NCPI's BHIM UPI languishes at a meagre 0.22% in terms of transaction volume, reflecting a low adoption rate.
- **Fraud to Sales ratio: A steadfast guardian amidst rising transaction tides:** As the fintech transaction volume has skyrocketed over the past five years, the Fraud-to-Sales ratio remains resilient at

0.0015%. This metric signifies the proportion of fraudulent transactions to the total, underscoring a commendable security track record.

- **Fintech's Dark Side: Unraveling the Web of Money Laundering through financial apps:** The shadowy underbelly of fintech emerges as scamsters exploit these platforms for money laundering schemes. A glaring example is the Abu Dhabi-based app Pyppl, manipulated by Chinese investment scamsters to launder illicit funds within the Indian borders.
- **Foreign Titans rule the roost in Indian fintech: A Duel between Walmart's PhonePe and Google's dominance:** The landscape of Indian fintech is unmistakably coloured by global giants, with Walmart-backed PhonePe and Google-supported Google Pay reigning supreme. PhonePe commands an impressive 46.91% of the market share in transaction volume, closely trailed by Google Pay at 36.39%.
- **Regulatory Conundrum: Navigating the challenges of governing local vs. foreign fintech apps:** Delving into the complexities of regulation, the committee scrutinises the feasibility of entities like RBI and NPCI in overseeing local apps versus their foreign counterparts. The inherent challenges lie in the multi-jurisdictional operations of foreign apps, posing a formidable regulatory conundrum.

Important recommendations by the report

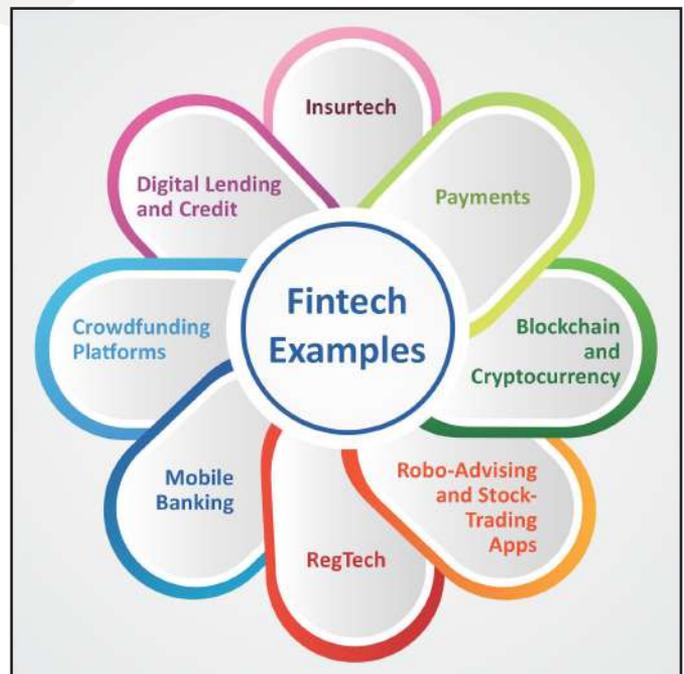
- **Sculpting the Digital Payment Landscape: Amplifying consumer reach for UPI growth:** Pioneering a vision for market equilibrium, the committee suggests a multifaceted approach. Both existing and emerging players, be they banks or non-banking entities, are encouraged to broaden their consumer outreach. This concerted effort aims to propel the growth of UPI payments through diverse platforms, painting a landscape where market equilibrium becomes an achievable reality.
- **Navigating Transaction Seas: Imposing a 30% Volume Cap on Third-Party Apps:** In a bid to maintain a fair playing field, the committee proposes a cap, limiting individual third-party apps

such as PhonePe and Amazon Pay to initiate transactions, ensuring they do not surpass 30% of the cumulative transactions executed across interfaces in the preceding three months. This aligns seamlessly with NPCI's earlier guidelines.

- **Harmonising the Digital Symphony: A Call for robust regulation in payment apps:** With the surge of digital platforms transforming payment landscapes in India, the committee advocates for robust regulatory frameworks for digital payment apps. This recommendation underscores the need for effective oversight to navigate the evolving digital payment ecosystem securely.

What is Fintech?

The fintech sector, a blend of finance and technology, is reshaping the financial landscape with innovative solutions. Leveraging technologies like AI and blockchain, fintech offers streamlined and accessible financial services. From mobile payments to robo-advisors, it enhances efficiency, accessibility, and inclusivity. However, regulatory challenges and cybersecurity concerns underscore the need for a careful balance between innovation and security in this rapidly evolving domain.



About Parliamentary Committees

- In India, parliamentary committees play a crucial role in **scrutinising and overseeing various**

aspects of governance, ensuring transparency and accountability. These committees are instrumental in the effective functioning of the parliamentary system, providing a platform for in-depth examination of issues beyond the scope of regular parliamentary proceedings.

- There are **two main types of parliamentary committees** in India: **Standing Committees** and **Ad Hoc Committees**.
 - **Standing Committees** are permanent bodies that are constituted for a specific purpose and continue to exist from one House to another. Examples included are the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), the Estimates Committee, and the Committee on Public Undertakings.
 - **Ad Hoc Committees** are temporary and are formed for a specific task or inquiry, disbanding once their assigned work is completed.
- The **functions of these committees are diverse and extensive**. They review bills referred to them, examine budget allocations, scrutinise the performance of government ministries, and conduct inquiries into matters of public importance. The Public Accounts Committee, for instance, focuses on auditing government expenditures to ensure fiscal responsibility, while the Estimates Committee assesses budget proposals for their feasibility and efficiency.

SMART GRAM PANCHAYAT PROJECT



Why in the News?

The Union Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj recently launched the 'Smart Gramme Panchayat: Revolution towards Digitization of Gram Panchayat' Project at Paprou Gram Panchayat in Begusarai District, Bihar, signifying a significant step forward in rural India's digital empowerment.

About Smart Gram Panchayat Project

- The initiative seeks to **expand the Prime Min-**

ister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI) Service to Gram Panchayats in Begusarai, representing a significant shift in rural connectivity. Begusarai is at the forefront of digital transformation in Bihar, providing Wi-Fi services to all Gram Panchayats under the PM-WANI Scheme.

- The PM-WANI initiative seeks to provide **Wi-Fi connectivity to all Gramme Panchayats in the district by 2026**.
- The project, financed under the redesigned Rashtriya Gramme Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), aims to reach 455 Gramme Panchayats spanning 37 Blocks in Begusarai and Rohtas Districts, with execution monitored by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
- The **focus is on leveraging technology to enhance access to online services in vital sectors** such as health, education, and skills, aiming to elevate the quality of life in rural areas. Beneficiaries include students, farmers, artisans, and Women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
- The initiative plans to establish robust mechanisms for **Operation & Maintenance (O&M)** to ensure the sustained impact of the project over time. The plan would enable the government to realise its commitment to promoting inclusive growth and empowerment, including the ambitious objective of **transforming 3 crore women into 'Lakhpati Didis'**.
- The overarching goals include **bridging the rural-urban divide**, promoting accountability and efficiency in local self-governance, and empowering communities through digital footprints.

About PM-WANI

The PM-WANI initiative, **launched by the Department of Telecom (DoT)** in December 2020, serves as a pivotal scheme **aimed at enhancing the proliferation of public WiFi hotspots**. Its primary objective is to establish a robust digital communication infrastructure, particularly in rural areas.

Framework:

PM-WANI functions as a framework empowering various entities, including shopkeepers, tea stall

owners, or Kirana store proprietors, to establish public Wi-Fi hotspots and offer internet services to customers. **This framework aligns with the National Digital Communications Policy, 2018 (NDCP)**, which emphasizes building a resilient digital communications infrastructure.

Significance:

To facilitate a conducive environment for local businesses and small establishments to become Wi-Fi providers, PM-WANI exempts last-mile Public Wi-Fi providers from licensing, registration, and fees payable to DoT.

PM-WANI Ecosystem:

The PM-WANI ecosystem comprises **four key elements:**

- **Public Data Office (PDO):** Responsible for establishing, maintaining, and operating Wi-Fi hotspots, PDOs procure internet bandwidth from telecom or internet service providers to provide last-mile connectivity.
- **Public Data Office Aggregator (PDOA):** This entity provides PDOs with aggregation services such as authentication and accounting, allowing them to deliver services to end users more efficiently.
- **App Provider:** The entity developing applications for user registration, discovering PM-WANI compliant Wi-Fi hotspots, and authenticating potential users.
- **Central Registry:** The Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DoT) maintains information on App Providers, PDOAs, and PDOs.

Benefits of PM-WANI:

- Expansion of Internet access in rural and remote areas.

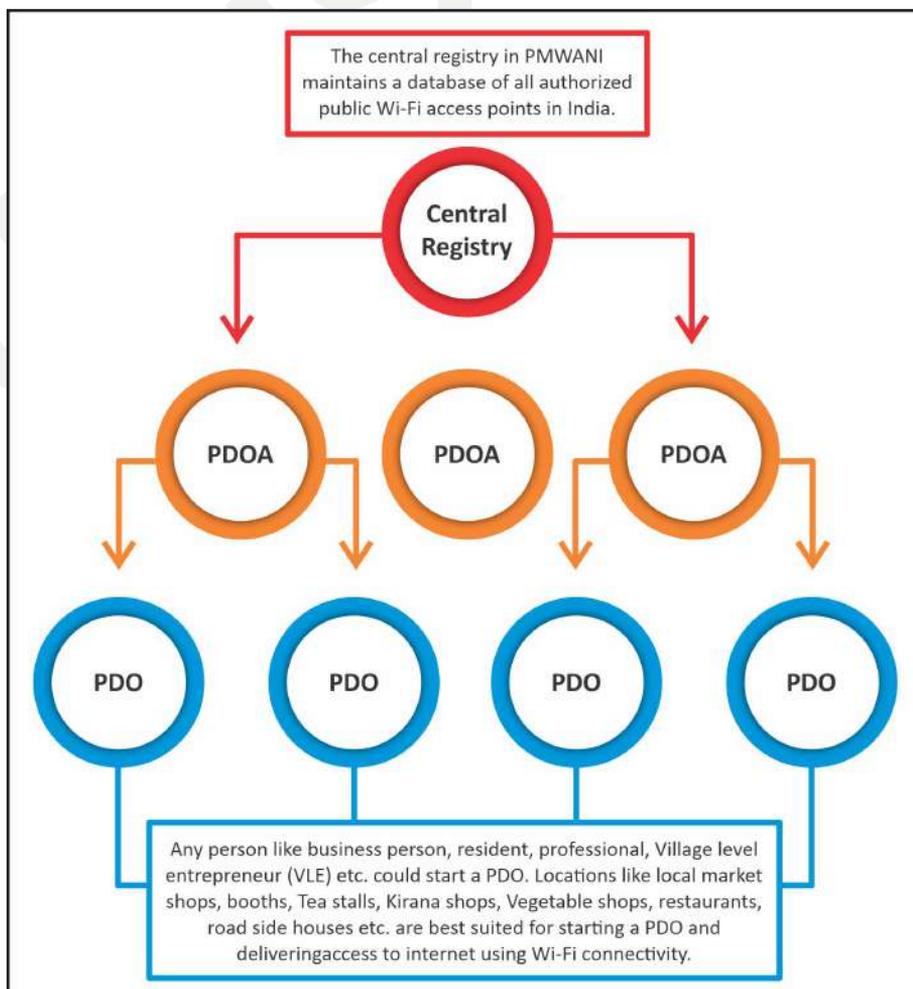
- Affordability and convenience compared to high-cost mobile technologies like 5G.
- Stimulating innovation and fostering competition in the internet market.

About Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)

The RGSA , initiated **by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj in 2018**, underwent a revamp and received approval as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, slated for implementation from 2022-23 to 2025-26. This revamped scheme focuses on enhancing the capacity of Elected Representatives (ERs) of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

Objectives:

The **primary goal of the revamped RGSA** is to **augment the governance capabilities of Panchayats**, enabling them to effectively contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) falling within the jurisdiction of Panchayats.



Training components:

Under this scheme, it is **mandated to provide basic orientation training for ERs of Panchayats within six months of their election**, along with refresher training within two years. The funding structure for State components follows a 60:40 ratio between Central and States, except for Northeast Hilly States and UT of J & K, where the ratio is 90:10. In other Union Territories, the Central share stands at 100%.

Key focus areas of RGSA :

- **Strengthening Panchayat-SHG convergence:** The scheme emphasizes reinforcing the synergy between Panchayats and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and provides training at various levels on e-governance and the Localization of SDGs.
- **Utilization of emerging technologies:** RGSA places emphasis on leveraging emerging technologies for interactive capacity building and standardized training methods.
- **Digital literacy and leadership roles:** The scheme is dedicated to capacitating PRIs by imparting knowledge on digital literacy. It enhances leadership roles to align with contemporary governance practices.

PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS (PREVENTION OF UNFAIR MEANS) BILL 2024



Why in the News?

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, was tabled in the Lok Sabha by Union Minister Jitendra Singh. The bill stipulates that cheating and irregularities in competitive examinations will result in a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a fine of up to Rs 1 million.

Background

- Over five years, there have been at least 48 examples of exam leaks in 16 states. More than 1.5 crore people applied for 1.2 lakh openings.
- Long wait times between cancellation and re-exams (up to two years). It causes uncertain-

ty and distress to aspirants and families.

- Few arrests have been made, and investigations continue without resolution. Identifies flaws in the secure administration of infallible tests.

Key provisions of the Public Examinations Bill

- The Bill **aims to improve openness, fairness, and reliability in public examinations**, as well as reassure youth that their hard work will be rewarded and their future is secure.
- The bill applies to central recruitment and entrance exams held by the Union Public Service Commission (**UPSC**), Staff Selection Commission (**SSC**), Railway Recruitment Boards (**RRBs**), Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (**IBPS**), and National Testing Agency (**NTA**).
- In addition to the approved public examination authority, the new rule will apply to all central ministries and departments, as well as their recruitment offices.

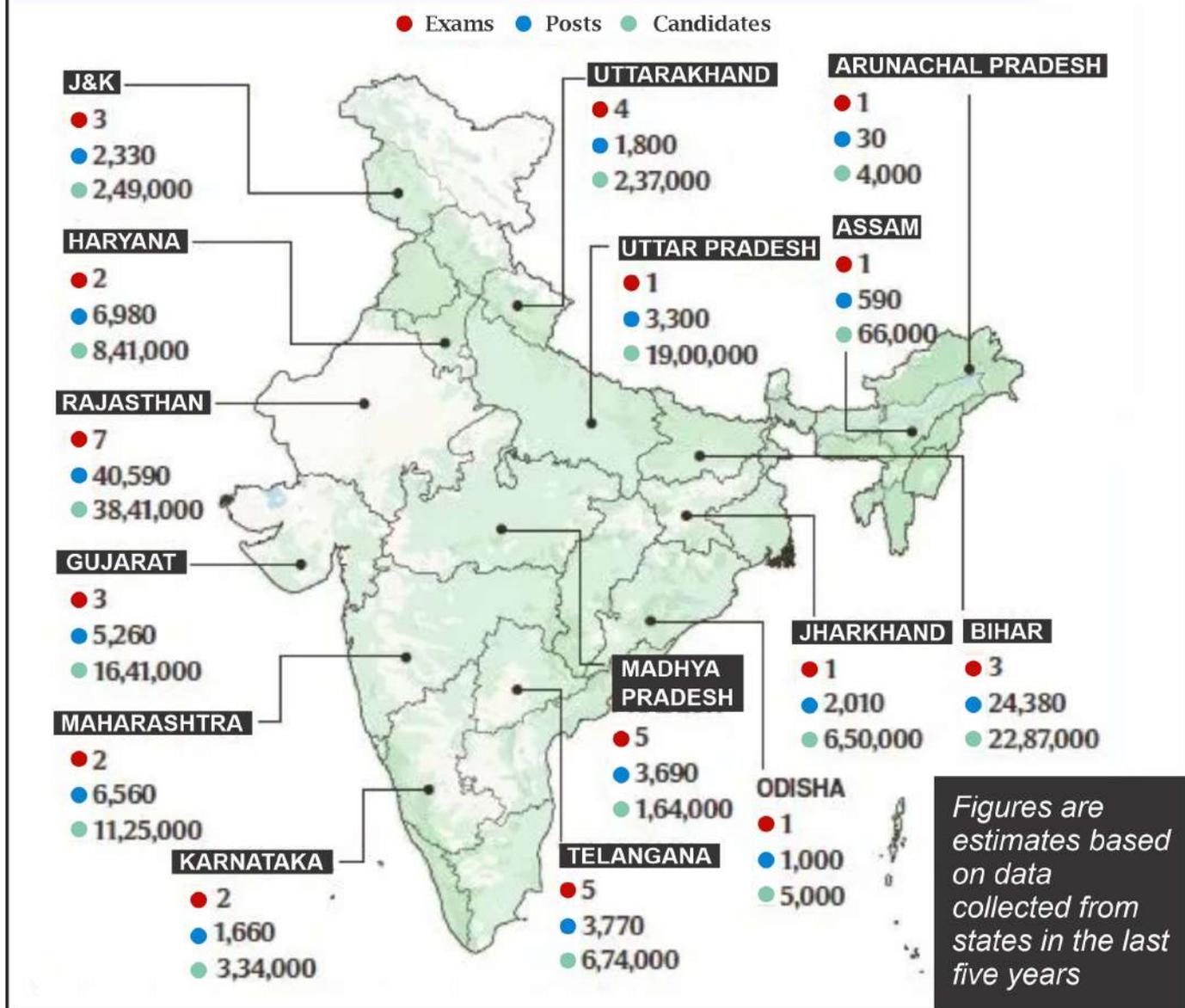
Punishments:

- The bill imposes a **three- to five-year prison** sentence for involvement in paper leak instances. However, **if a link to organised crime is confirmed**, a prison sentence of **up to ten years** is imposed.
- It charges a **Rs 1 crore fine** and recovers inspection costs from firms.
- It further states that if convicted, a corporation may be restricted from giving public exams for years.

Section 9 of the Bill addresses the nature of offences under the new legislation. Offences under the new bill are **cognizable, non-bailable, and non-compoundable**.

- **Cognizable:** arrest without a warrant is possible.
- **Non-bailable:** bail is not guaranteed. A magistrate will decide if the accused is eligible for bail.
- **Non-compoundable offences:** It cannot be withdrawn by the complainant, even if both

15 states, leaks in 41 job-recruitment exams



parties reach an agreement. A trial will undoubtedly follow for the accused.

Investigation

- The law proposes that officials not under the level of deputy superintendent of police or assistant commissioner of police oversee such cases.
- According to the measure, the government can also refer the investigation to a central agency.
- In essence, this allows the police to act on their

own and arrest people without a warrant.

What are the advantages of the Public Examinations (Prevention of unfair means) Bill 2024?

- The measure will reassure young people that their honest and genuine efforts in public examinations will be fairly rewarded.
- The hefty punishments and fines will **dissuade the country's organised paper leak crime mafia**. They will be deterred from attempting to exploit the examination system's flaws.

- The bill proposes the formation of a high-level **National Technical Committee** on public examinations, which will offer suggestions to improve the security of the computerised examination process.
- It will prevent question paper leaks in recruiting examinations.

Concerns with the Bill

- **Loopholes**— The bill **exempts students from facing criminal sanctions**. They have been placed under the administrative rules of the relevant public examination authority. However, paper-leak gang members may use this loophole by appearing as students and avoiding hefty criminal penalties.
- **Discretion of state governments**— The measure allows **state governments to design their own acts using the model bill as a guideline**. However, state governments have already shown partisan interests in writing model legislation, such as the Model APLM Act.
- **Scope of subordinate legislation**— The law **allows for the creation of subordinate legislation**, such as rules under the act. The executive authorities will have significant discretion in implementing the statute.
- The bill does **not specify the composition or qualifications of the National-Technical Committee** on Public Exams members. The central government's selection of members may be partisan.

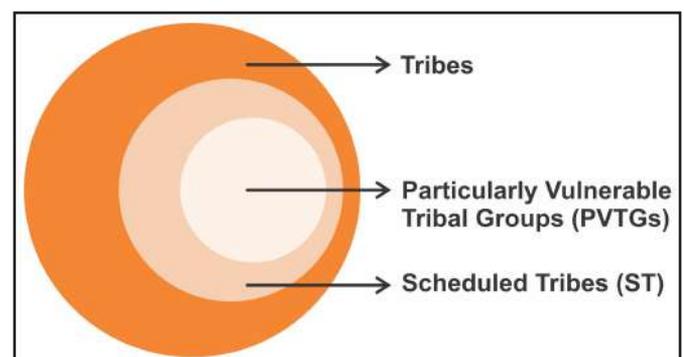
INCLUSION OF NEW TRIBES IN STs

Why in the News?

The Rajya Sabha has passed the Constitution (STs) Order Amendment Bill 2024 and the Constitution (SCs and STs) Order Amendment Bill 2024, both presented by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. This paved the path for the inclusion of several new communities on the Odisha STs list, as well as synonyms and phonetic variations of existing tribes on the Andhra Pradesh and Odisha ST lists.

Key provisions of the Bill

- Among the additions were seven Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (**PVTGs**) (a subset of STs): **four in Odisha and three in Andhra Pradesh**.
- These PVTGs' independent names were expressly inserted as synonyms or sub-tribes of communities that were previously on these States' ST lists.
- In Odisha, PVTG communities include **Pauri Bhuyan** and **Paudi Bhuyan**, which are synonyms of the Bhuyan tribe, **Chuktia Bhunjia**, a sub-tribe of the Bondo Poraja tribe, and **Mankidia**, a synonym for the Mankirdia tribe.
- In Andhra Pradesh, the PVTG communities used **Bondo Porja** and **Khond Porja** as synonyms for the **Porja tribe** and **Konda Savaras** as a synonym for the Savara tribe.
- These groups belong to PVTGs and have been included in the scheduled list after 75 years of independence.
- The Bill also included synonyms, phonetic variations, and sub-tribes for at least 8 existing communities on the State's ST list.
- Furthermore, Odisha's ST list was increased with the addition of two new communities. These are —
 - The **Muka Dora** community (and synonyms) is in the undivided Koraput District, which encompasses Koraput, Nowrangapur, Rayagada, and Malkangiri districts.
 - The **Konda Reddy** (or synonyms) community.



About PVTGs

- PVTGs are particularly vulnerable among tribal communities. Because of this feature, more developed and assertive tribal groups receive a significant portion of tribal development monies, necessitating the allocation of more funds for PVTG development.

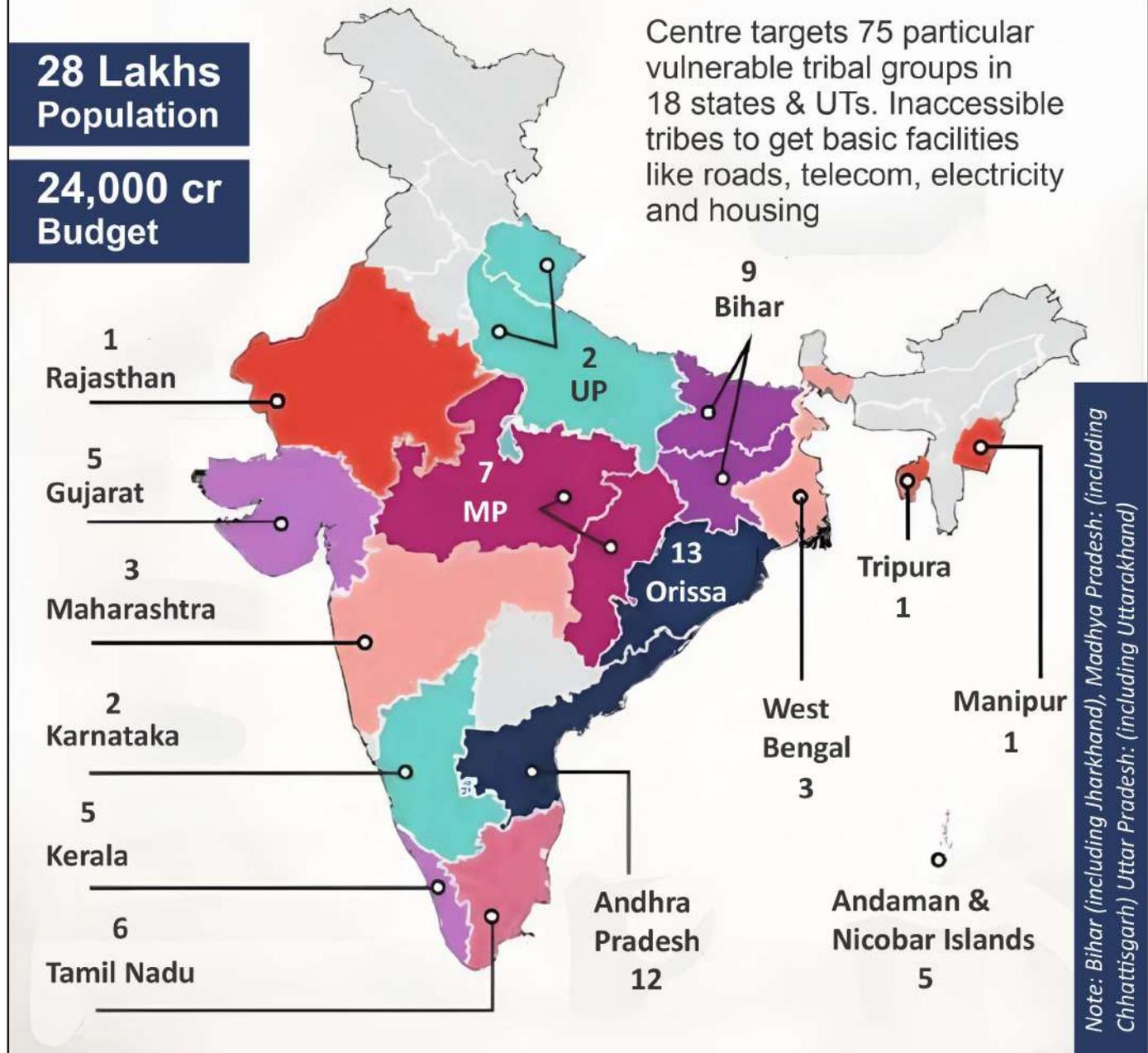
- In this backdrop, the Government of India classified 52 tribal tribes as PVTGs in 1975, based on the **Dhebar Commission's suggestion**.
- There are **75 PVTGs** out of 705 Scheduled Tribes.
- The PVTGs are scattered across 18 states and one Union Territory (UT) in the country (2011 census).

HOUSING FOR 75 VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS

28 Lakhs Population

24,000 cr Budget

Centre targets 75 particular vulnerable tribal groups in 18 states & UTs. Inaccessible tribes to get basic facilities like roads, telecom, electricity and housing



Note: Bihar (including Jharkhand), Madhya Pradesh: (including Chhattisgarh) Uttar Pradesh: (including Uttarakhand)

- Odisha has the highest number of PVTGs (almost 2.5 lakh).
- Characteristics of PVTGs:
 - Population – stagnant/declining
 - Economy – Subsistence level
 - Literacy Level – extremely low
 - Technology – pre-agricultural

Initiatives for tribal groups

- **PM Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN)** is an initiative aimed at protecting and nurturing tribal groups, particularly those on the verge of extinction. It covers 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in 18 states and union territories, covering 22,544 villages in 220 districts. The initiative emphasizes the government's commitment to uplifting tribal communities, preserving their cultural heritage, and integrating them into mainstream development.
- **Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra** focuses on welfare schemes like sanitation facilities, financial services, electricity connections, food security, healthcare, and clean drinking water.
- **The PM PVTG Development Mission** program aims to improve the socio-economic status of PVTGs, with a budget of Rs 24000 Crore for Scheduled Tribes. The mission includes providing basic facilities like safe housing, clean drinking water, education, health, nutrition, and better access to roads for backward scheduled tribes.
- **Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS)** was established in 1997-98 to provide quality education to Scheduled Tribes (ST) in remote areas. It aims to provide opportunities for high and professional courses, employment, and overall development. Each school has a capacity of 480 students, catering to Class VI to XII. Grants under Article 275(1) of the Constitution support the establishment of these schools. Eklavya Model Day Boarding Schools (EMDBS) are proposed for higher ST population density in iden-

tified Sub-Districts.

- **“Development of PVTGs”** Under the system, state governments submit conservation-and-development (CCD) plans based on their needs. States receive 100% grants-in-aid under the scheme's terms.

SUB-CATEGORISATION OF SC COMMUNITIES

Why in the News?

The Indian government has formed a high-level committee, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, to examine the issue of dominating Scheduled Caste (SC) communities obtaining more benefits than the most backward. This initiative is specifically in response to the **Madiga** community's requests in Telangana.

Mandate given to the committee

- The committee's principal goal is to **investigate alternate approaches to resolve issues raised by diverse SC communities** across the country.
- While the group was formed in response to the Madiga community's concerns, **its scope goes beyond a single community or state.**
- It strives to examine and devise a **mechanism for the equal distribution of benefits, plans, and initiatives** to the most backward communities among the country's over **1,200** Scheduled Castes, which have been pushed out by more forward-thinking and dominating ones.

About Sub-Categorisation of SC in India:

- **Sub-categorisation** is the process of dividing or classifying a larger category into smaller, more precise subcategories depending on certain criteria or qualities. In the context of SC in India, **sub-categorisation** may imply further classification within the SC group based on characteristics such as socioeconomic position or historical disadvantage.
- **Madigas of Telangana:** The **Madiga community**, which accounts for 50% of all SCs in Tel-

angana, has struggled to gain access to government incentives intended for SCs due to the Mala community's dominance. Despite their large number, the Madiga group claimed to have been excluded from SC-related projects. They have been fighting for the sub-categorisation of SCs since 1994, and it was this demand that prompted the establishment of the **Justice P. Ramachandra Raju Commission in 1996**, followed by the National Commission in 2007.

Legitimacy of Sub-Categorisation within Castes

- Several states, including **Punjab, Bihar, and Tamil Nadu**, have attempted to implement reservation laws at the state level in order to subdivide SCs over the last two decades. The Supreme Court is building a larger Constitution Bench to decide the case, causing all plans to be stalled in the courts.
- **E. V. Chinnaiah vs. State of Andhra Pradesh (2004)**: In this decision, the Supreme Court ruled that once a community is listed on the Presidential List for Scheduled Castes under **Article 341** of the Constitution, they are merged into a single bigger class of people, casting a wide net for reservation reasons. The Bench ruled that the State lacked legislative authority to create sub-classifications within a single class, which would violate the Right to Equality.

The Union Government's stance

- In **2005**, the Union government investigated legal possibilities for sub-categorising SCs. At the time, the former Attorney General of India stated that this was feasible, but only if there was **"unimpeachable evidence to indicate a necessity"**.
- Furthermore, both the National Commissions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes opposed altering the Constitution at the time. They contended that establishing a sub-quota within the present quota is insufficient, highlighting the urgent need to prioritise the disbursement of existing initiatives and benefits to these areas.

Article	Provisions	Description
Article 15 (5)	Special provisions for backward classes, SCs, STs in admissions to private educational institutions, aided or unaided.	Added by the 93rd amendment in 2005. Allows states to make special provisions for admission of these categories in private institutions.
Article 16(4)	Reservation of vacancies in public services.	Permits the state to reserve certain vacancies in public services for backward classes not adequately represented in those services.
Article 16(4B)	Consideration of unfilled vacancies.	Allows the state to treat unfilled reserved vacancies as a separate class of vacancies, not subject to the 50% reservation limit.
Article 340	Power to appoint a Commission.	Provides the President with the authority to appoint a Commission to investigate the conditions of backward classes and recommend measures for their advancement.
Article 338B	Constitutional status for National Commission.	Through the 102nd Amendment, grants constitutional recognition to the National Commission for Backward Classes, enhancing its role in safeguarding the interests of backward classes.

Arguments in Favour:

- **Graded Inequalities**: The primary justification for sub-categorization arises from perceived graded inequalities among Scheduled Caste (SC) populations.
- **Access Disparities**: The argument is that even within marginalised areas, some have less access to basic facilities, resulting in more forward communities continually receiving advantages despite outnumbering the more backward ones.
- **Requirement for Separate Reservation**: Advocates contend that the best course of action is to divide towns into smaller groups and reserve separate reservations for the less developed SC category.

Arguments Against:

- **Addressing the root cause**: The SC and ST Commissions dispute the idea that making different reservations within a category addresses the issue's underlying causes.
- **All levels of representation**: The commissions stress the importance of representation at all levels and argue that the more regressive SC communities lag far behind the more progres-

sive SC groups.

- **Inadequate Candidates:** Even with reserved seats at higher levels, the consideration of the most backward SCs may not have enough candidates to maintain the current disparity.
- **Prioritising Current Programmes:** To ensure thorough upliftment, both commissions advise sending current programs and government benefits to these sections before considering any further classification.

DEMAND FOR STATEHOOD BY LADAKH

Why in the News?

The Union Territory of Ladakh recently shut down due to demands for statehood and constitutional protection under the 6th Schedule.

What are their demands?

- **Safeguards through the 6th schedule:** Advocating for constitutional safeguards to protect indigenous peoples' cultural, linguistic, and territorial rights.
- **Campaigning for Ladakh's statehood:** The goal is to elevate Ladakh from its current Union Territory status to that of a full-fledged state, giving it greater political autonomy and decision-making power.
- **Job reservations:** Calling for restricted employment opportunities for Ladakh's young to enable equal access to economic resources and opportunity.
- **Separate parliamentary seats:** We propose creating separate Parliamentary seats for Leh and Kargil, taking into account each region's distinctive demographic and geographical characteristics.

Background

- Ladakh, which was previously part of the state of Jammu & Kashmir, became a Union Territory in August 2019 after Article 370 was repealed and the state was divided into two independent

Union Territories.

- Since then, the region has wrestled with its new administrative position, seeking for greater autonomy and the preservation of its cultural and demographic identity.

Reasons for Ladakh's interest in Sixth schedule inclusion:

Sense of neglect: The predominantly Buddhist Leh district has long sought Union Territory status, feeling neglected by the previous Jammu and Kashmir state government, which was dominated by politicians from Kashmir and Jammu.

Limited powers of councils: The existing councils in Ladakh lack inclusion in the sixth schedule and have limited authority, primarily involving the collection of local taxes such as parking fees and land allotment vested by the central government.

UT Status without Legislature: Unlike the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh lacks a legislature. Despite having four MLAs in the former J&K assembly, the current administration is solely in the hands of bureaucrats, making the government seem more distant than Srinagar.

Concerns over domicile policy: Changes in the domicile policy in Jammu and Kashmir have sparked fears about Ladakh's land, demography, and cultural identity. The removal of Article 35A, which protected the rights of permanent residents, has led to apprehensions about land transfer to non-tribals.

Impact of Article 370: Under Kashmir's governance, Ladakh experienced a loss of development, political aspirations, identity, and language due to Article 370. The fear is that external forces may induce demographic changes and job losses for locals.

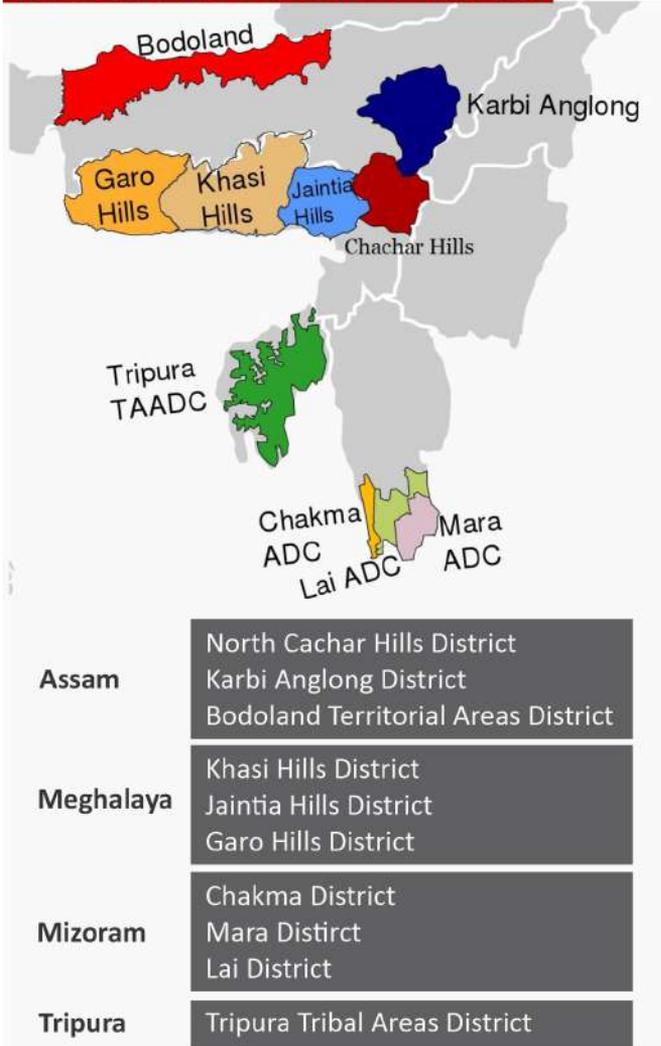
Administrative challenges: The accountability of Ladakh's Council officers to the central government hampers decision execution. Granting autonomy to the Council under the sixth schedule could resolve this issue.

Statehood demand: A coalition of religious, social, and political representatives from Leh and Kargil is advocating for full statehood, surpassing the sixth schedule. They also seek protection for local land

and job opportunities.

About 6th Schedule of the Constitution

AUTONOMOUS DISTRICT COUNCILS



- The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution outlines the administrative structure for specific regions in **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram**, designating them as Autonomous Districts and Regions. This framework aims to **protect the cultural, linguistic, and land rights of the indigenous populations in these areas**. The Governor, under this schedule, has the authority to establish administrative centers and modify territorial boundaries within these autonomous regions.
- Initially comprising two parts, the Sixth Schedule now encompasses ten regions spread across the four states. Each region has distinct legis-

lative, executive, judicial, and financial powers. The key features of the Sixth Schedule include:

- **Executive Functions:** District and Regional Councils are responsible for overseeing the development and management of public amenities like schools, dispensaries, highways, and waterways. They also play a role in determining educational policies for primary schools.
- **Legislative Functions:** District Councils in autonomous regions have the authority to enact laws concerning land, forests, village administration, marriage, social norms, and more, subject to approval from the state governor.
- **Judicial Functions:** Council Courts handle disputes involving Scheduled Tribes within the district, with jurisdictional limitations on crimes punishable by death or a minimum five-year sentence.
- **Financial Functions:** District and Regional Councils are involved in formulating budgets, imposing taxes on businesses, trades, and goods, and granting permits for mineral mining within their jurisdiction.
- The **significance of the Sixth Schedule** lies in providing a framework for the autonomous governance of tribal areas. It **ensures the preservation of indigenous rights and cultures while facilitating local development and administration**. Through its provisions, the Sixth Schedule aims to empower tribal communities by granting them legislative, executive, judicial, and financial autonomy within specified regions.

LOW POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN INDIA VS: WOMEN'S RESERVATION BILL ACT 2023



Why in the News?

- Recently, after the Indian Parliament passed the Nari Shakti Vandan Bill or Women's Reservation Bill Act, 2023 and it was decided that 33 per cent participation of women in the mainstream

politics of India has been decided, the debate has ended whether Providing reservation within political parties or in Parliament and state legislatures could be the best route to increase women's representation in Indian politics.

- The Nari Shakti Vandan Bill or Women's Reservation Bill Act, 2023, the 106th constitutional amendment to the Constitution of India, reserves one-third of the seats for women in the Lok Sabha, state legislatures and the Delhi Assembly. This will also apply to seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.



Important Constitutional changes made by the Women's Reservation Bill 2023 :

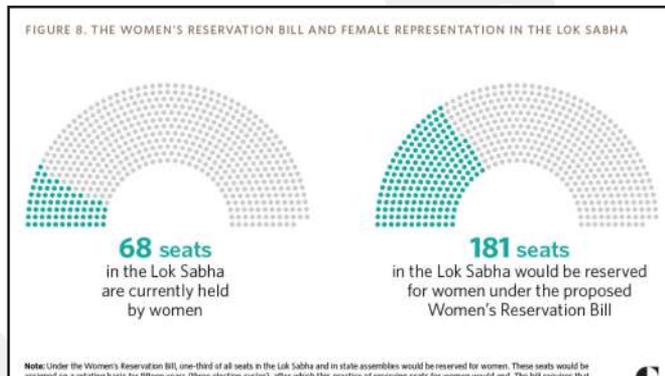
- Article 330 (A): The Bill has included Article 330 (A) which is inspired by the provisions of Article 330 on reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- Article 332 (A): This Article, introduced by the Women's Reservation Bill, provides for reservation of seats for women in every State Assembly.
- Amendment in Article 239 (AA): It has been added in the Bill that this law made by the Parliament, Article 239AA (2)(B) will also apply to Delhi, National Capital Territory.

Key features of Women's Reservation Act 2023 :

- The Women's Reservation Bill 2023 aims to reserve one-third of all seats in the Lok Sabha and state legislatures for women.
- This Act will also reserve seats for women among the reserved seats. The allocation of re-

served seats will be determined by the authority appointed by the President of India.

- This Act will also reserve one-third seats for women in the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories.
- The reserved seats will be allocated by rotation in different constituencies in different states or union territories of India.
- Period of Reservation: This Act will remain in force only for 15 years from the date of commencement.



Background of Gender Inequality in Politics :



- **Women have been historically marginalized in politics:** Women, who constitute almost half of the world's population (49.58 percent), have historically been politically marginalized in both developed and developing countries.
- **Social reforms started in the 19th century:** Starting from the middle of the 19th century, social reform movements not only attempted to bring about comprehensive improvements in the social status of women in the society but these movements were also successful in improving the social status of women.

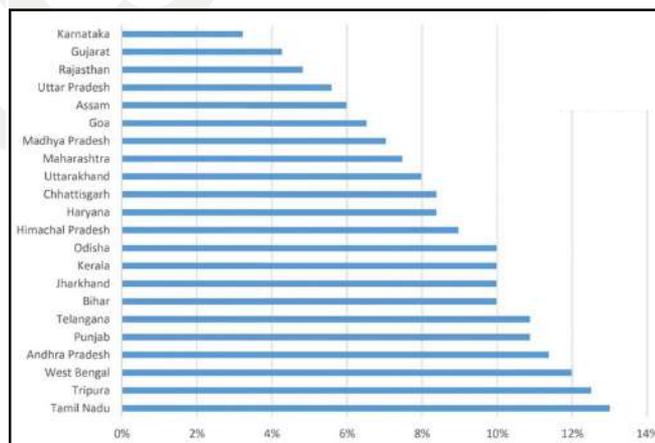
- **United Nations Charter of 1945:** The Charter of the United Nations Organization (UNO), started in 1945, supports women's rights.
- **International Bill of Rights of Women:** With the rise of the feminist movements of the 1960s and 70s, in 1979 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which is often considered an international bill. Article 7 of this convention includes the rights of women and the right of women to hold political and public office.
- **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): In 2000 :** UN member states adopted the Millennium Declaration and outlined eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015, including promoting gender equality. It was done.
- **Achieving gender equality under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Empowering women:** In January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focused on women's right to equal participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. Target 5 of which aims to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", thereby ensuring "full and effective" rights for women.

Current status of Women's Representation in world politics :

- **Above average representation:** Women's representation in politics in the Americas, Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa is at or above the global average.
- **Below average representation:** In Asia, the Pacific, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), women are below average in politics.
- **Global average female representation in politics:** As of May 2022, the global average of women's representation in politics in the national parliaments of different countries was 26.2 percent.
- **Diverse representation in Asian countries:** The situation in South Asian countries is worse than

others. IPU data for May 2022 shows that women's representation in politics was 34 percent in Nepal, 21 percent in Bangladesh, 20 percent in Pakistan, 17 percent in Bhutan and 5 percent in Sri Lanka.

- The political representation of women in India's Lok Sabha (lower house) has been slightly less than 15 percent.
- According to 2021 World Bank data, female representation in Afghanistan's previous parliament was 27 percent.
- According to the United Nations, as of September 2022, 28 out of 193 UN member states had 30 women serving as elected heads of state and/or government.
- **Paradox in active participation:** There is a contradiction between the rapid increase in women's participation as voters in elections and other political activities and the slow growth of women's representation in parliament.



Major components to assess the representation and direct participation of women in Indian politics:

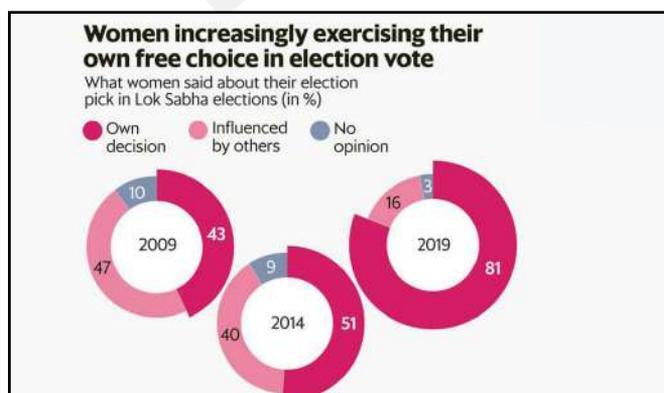
Following are the main criteria or major components to assess the representation and direct participation of women in Indian politics –

- **Women as voters:** In the last Lok Sabha elections in 2019, women voted almost at the same rate as men, which was seen as an important contribution towards gender equality in Indian politics and India's progress. It was also called

the “silent revolution of self-empowerment” of women in Indian politics. The increased participation of women in democracy and mainstream politics of India, especially since the 1990s, is attributable to several factors.

- **Women as candidates:** With the changing times in India, the number of women candidates in parliamentary elections has increased significantly, but their ratio is still very low compared to male candidates. In the Lok Sabha elections held in the year 2019, only less than 9 percent of the total 8,049 candidates contested the Lok Sabha elections.
- **Women’s representation in the Indian Parliament:** Women’s participation as voters has increased significantly in elections in recent years. The data on women’s representation in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha shows that the proportion of women representatives has been very low compared to their male counterparts.
- The proportion of women representatives elected to the Lok Sabha was the highest so far in the 2019 elections, and was less than 15 percent as a proportion of total MPs.
- The number of women candidates and MPs varies significantly from state to state and from party to party.
- In the current Lok Sabha (17th), Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal have the highest number of women MPs. In percentage terms, Goa and Manipur had fielded the highest proportion of women candidates.

Major reasons for Low Female Representation in Parliament and State legislatures :



- **Inaccessibility to family-political ties or institutions:** Most political parties in India may, in theory, promise to provide adequate representation to women in their party constitutions, but in practice, Indian political parties give very few tickets to women candidates. Let’s give. A study found that a large section of women who get party tickets have family-political connections, or are ‘dynastic’ politicians. With normal avenues of access into mainstream politics limited, such political connections are often the entry point for women.
- **Perception that women have less chances of winning elections in India:** Even at present, it is widely believed in the political circles of India that women candidates have less chances of winning elections as compared to male candidates. . As a result, various political parties provide fewer tickets to women in elections.
- **Challenging Structural Conditions:** Election campaigns in India are extremely demanding and time consuming. Female politicians with family commitments and child care responsibilities often have difficulty participating fully.
- **Extremely unsafe environment for women:** Women politicians face frequent insults, inappropriate comments, abuse and threats of abuse, making participation and contesting elections extremely challenging.
- **Expensive and expensive electoral system:** The electoral system in India is extremely costly and expensive. As a result, election financing is also a major obstacle in India as many women are financially dependent on their families. Contesting parliamentary elections can be extremely expensive, and requires massive financial resources to be able to mount a strong contest. In the absence of adequate support from their parties, women candidates are forced to arrange their campaign financing on their own. This is a major challenge that hinders their participation.
- **Internalized Patriarchal System:** Indian societies are known to have an ‘internalized patriarchal system’, where many women consider it their duty to give priority to family and home

rather than political ambitions.

Importance of women's participation in law making process :



- **Political empowerment of women:** Legislative representation is fundamental to political empowerment, enabling participation in the law making process. Legislatures play an important role in enhancing debates and discussions on various aspects of governance and holding the government to account.
- **For gender equality:** A key indicator of the extent of gender equality in parliamentary politics is in providing appropriate representation to women in the Parliament of India.
- **Women bring diversity and skills to politics:** According to political scientist Anne, "Women bring diverse skills to politics and provide role models for future generations; They appeal for justice between the sexes.
- **To facilitate women's specific interests and policy-making:** Inclusion of women in Indian politics facilitates the representation of women's specific interests in state policy-making and creates conditions for a revitalized democracy that is based on representation and participation. Bridges the gap between.
- **Less likely to be criminal and corrupt and highly effective:** Women legislators perform better on economic indicators than their male counterparts in their constituencies, a study found. Additionally, women legislators are less likely to be criminal and corrupt. They are more influential and less susceptible to political opportunism.

FLOOR TEST IN BIHAR ASSEMBLY



Why in the News?

On February 12, the Bihar Legislative Assembly took a floor test amid the current political change in the state. Nitish Kumar, the chief minister of Bihar, was elected again.

About floor test

- The term refers to the **majority test**. If there are any doubts about a State's Chief Minister (CM), he or she can be required to show the House's majority. In the event of a coalition administration, the CM may be expected to call a vote of confidence and secure a majority.
- **When there is no clear majority** and more than one individual has a stake in forming the government, the Governor may call a special session to determine who has the majority.
- Some legislators may be absent or decide not to vote. The numbers are then calculated using only the MLAs who were present to vote.
- **Article 174** of the Constitution grants the Governor the authority to summon, dissolve, and prorogue the state legislative assembly. Additionally, **Article 174(2)(b)** empowers the **Governor to dissolve the Assembly based on the advice of the cabinet, but discretion is allowed when doubts arise about the Chief Minister's majority.**
- **Article 175(2)** enables the Governor to summon the House and call for a floor test to ascertain the government's numerical strength. **However, these actions are constrained by Article 163**, which mandates the Governor to act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, led by the Chief Minister.

Discretionary power of Governor

- When the Assembly is in session, the Speaker can initiate a floor test, but during recess, Ar-

Article 163 provides the Governor with residual powers to call for a floor test. The discretionary powers of the Governor, as outlined in **Article 163(1)**, are limited to situations expressly specified by the Constitution, where independent decision-making is necessary.

- The Governor can exercise discretionary power under **Article 174** when the Chief Minister loses support and the majority is questionable.

Judgements and Case laws

- The Supreme Court's observations on the Governor's role in calling for a floor test include the 2016 case of **Nabam Rebia and Bamang Felix vs Deputy Speaker**, where the court held that **the Governor's power to summon the House should be exercised in consultation with the Council of Ministers**. The court highlighted that the Governor, as a nominee of the President, does not have overriding authority over the elected representatives of the people in the State Legislature.
- In the **Shivraj Singh Chouhan & Ors versus Speaker 2020 case**, the Supreme Court upheld the Speaker's powers to call for a floor test when there is a prima facie belief that the government has lost its majority. The Governor retains the authority to order a floor test if the available material indicates the need to assess the government's confidence through such a test.

About composite floor test

- The **Composite Floor Test is employed when multiple individuals assert their claim to establish a government**. If the majority is unclear, the governor may convene a special session to determine which contender commands the majority support.
- The **majority is calculated based on the members present and voting**. This process can be executed through a voice vote, where members express their support verbally, or through division voting. It is important to note that some legislators may be absent or opt not to cast their votes. In division voting, electronic gadgets, ballots, or slips may be utilized for the

voting process.

- The individual with the majority will assume the responsibility of forming the government. However, in the event of a tie, the speaker may exercise the casting vote to break the deadlock.

ELECTORAL BOND SCHEME VS: VIOLATION OF RIGHT TO INFORMATION AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION



Why in the News ?

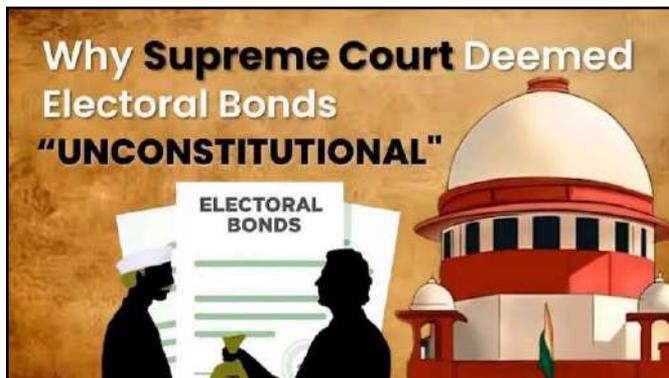


- On 15 February 2024, the Supreme Court of India canceled the electoral bond scheme launched by the Central Government, calling it unconstitutional.
- According to the Supreme Court, this is a violation of freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(A) of the Constitution.
- During the hearing of this case, the Supreme Court said that Indian citizens have the right to information provided by the Indian Constitution.
- The Supreme Court has asked the State Bank of India to give all the information to the Election Commission from the month of April 2023 till now and the Election Commission of India has also asked to give this complete information to the Supreme Court.

Gradual developments related to the Validity of the Electoral Bond Scheme in India :

Electoral bond scheme in India is a way of funding various political parties. In a case related to the validity of the electoral bond scheme, a five-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court has giv-

en a historic verdict on 15 February 2024, cancelling it.



- In India, the Electoral Bond Scheme was introduced in the Parliament through the Finance Bill in the year 2017.
- On September 14, 2017, an NGO called 'Association for Democratic Reforms' (ADR) filed a challenge in the Supreme Court against this scheme as the lead petitioner.
- On October 03, 2017, the Supreme Court issued notice to the Central Government and the Election Commission of India on the PIL filed by that NGO.
- On January 2, 2018, the Central Government

notified the Electoral Bond Scheme in India.

- On November 7, 2022, the electoral bond scheme was amended to increase the number of sale days in a year from 70 to 85, where any assembly election can be scheduled.
- On October 6, 2023, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India D.Y. The Supreme Court bench headed by Chandrachud referred the petitions against the scheme to a five-judge constitution bench.
- On October 31, 2023, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India D.Y. A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chandrachud began hearing petitions against the plan.
- On November 2, 2023, the Supreme Court reserved its decision on this scheme.
- On February 15, 2024, the Supreme Court of India gave a unanimous verdict striking down the electoral bond scheme, saying that it violates the constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression as well as the right to information guaranteed to Indian citizens by the Indian Constitution. Does.

Electoral Bonds Scheme Notified

To help cleanse the political funding system in the country

Nature

- Bearer instrument in the nature of a Promissory Note
- Interest free banking instrument

Eligibility

- A citizen of India or a body incorporated in India
- On fulfillment of all the extant KYC norms
- By making payment from a bank account



Value

- Issued/ Purchased in multiples of Rs.1,000, Rs.10,000, Rs.1,00,000, Rs.10,00,000 and Rs.1,00,00,000
- Available from the Specified Branches of the State Bank of India (SBI)

Lifespan

- Shelf life of only 15 days
- Can be used for making donation only to the political parties registered u/s 29A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951

Period of Purchase

- Available for purchase for a period of 10 days each in the months of January, April, July and October, as may be specified by the Government

The Supreme Court of India had agreed to focus mainly on two important issues during the hearing related to the electoral bond scheme. Those two important issues are as follows –

- Violations of citizens' right to information about the legality of secret donations to political parties and the financing of political parties, potentially fueling corruption.
- These issues relate to violation of Constitutional Articles 19, 14 and 21.

Introduction and background of Electoral Bond Scheme :

- The electoral bond system in India was introduced in the Parliament through a Finance Bill in the year 2017 and was also implemented in the year 2018.
- Electoral bonds in India serve as a vehicle for individuals and institutions to make donations to registered political parties under the scheme without keeping the names of the donors secret or making public.

Features of Electoral Bond Scheme :

- Under the electoral bond scheme in India, State Bank of India issues bonds of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore.
- This bond issued by State Bank of India is interest free and is payable on demand by the holder.
- This bond can be purchased by any Indian citizen or any institutions established in India.
- Electoral bonds in India can also be purchased individually or jointly.
- This electoral bond issued by State Bank of India is valid only for 15 days from the date of issue.

Authorized issuing banks for Electoral Bonds in India:

- The authorized issuing bank for electoral bonds in India is the State Bank of India.
- In India, electoral bonds are issued only through designated State Bank of India branches.



Eligibility of Political parties to buy Electoral Bonds in India :

- Under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, only those political parties registered in India, which have secured at least 1% of the votes cast for the Lok Sabha or the Legislative Assembly in the last general election, can issue this electoral bond. Are eligible to purchase.
- In India, electoral bonds can be purchased only through digital medium or cheque.
- In India, encashment of electoral bonds can be done only through the authorized bank account of the political party.

Transparency and Accountability towards Electoral Bonds :

- Political parties in India are required to disclose their bank account details to the Election Commission of India.
- To ensure transparency in electoral bonds, donations are made through banking channels.
- In India, it is mandatory for various political parties to give details of the use of money received from electoral bonds.

Benefits of Electoral Bond Scheme in India :

- The money received under the Electoral Bond Scheme in India increases the transparency of the election funding expenses of various political parties in India.
- Political parties are liable to disclose the use of funds received under the Electoral Bond Scheme or as donations.
- Under the Electoral Bond Scheme there is a reduction in cash in kind or cash transactions.
- Donors' names are kept secret or the confidentiality of the donor's identity is protected.

Main concerns and challenges related To Electoral Bond Scheme in India :**Electoral Bond Scheme being contrary to its basic idea:**

- The main reason for criticism of the electoral bond scheme in India is that it works completely contrary to its basic idea or objective, which is to bring transparency in electoral funding.
- A section of critics regarding the electoral bond scheme in India argue that the secrecy of electoral bonds is applicable only to the public and opposition parties and does not apply to political parties receiving donations.

Strong possibility of extortion under Electoral Bond Scheme :

- In India, electoral bonds are sold through the state-owned bank (SBI), which allows the ruling government to know who is funding its opponents' parties.
- Under the Electoral Bond Scheme it provides the facility to the ruling party or the current government to recover money especially from the big companies or sometimes it facilitates the ruling party to harass that person or that company for not giving money to the ruling party. It also shows the strong possibility of. It somehow provides an unfair advantage to the ruling party.

Strong Possibility of the right to information being**compromised :**

- The Supreme Court of India has long held that the right to information is an integral part of the right to freedom of expression (Article 19) under the Indian Constitution, especially in the context of elections.
- In India, the Central Government made several amendments to the Electoral Bond Scheme through two Finance Acts, Finance Act, 2017 and Finance Act, 2016, both Finance Acts were passed in the Lok Sabha as '**Money Bills**'.
- Petitioners had challenged the electoral bond scheme in the Supreme Court of India, calling these amendments '**unconstitutional**', a **violation of the 'principles of separation of powers' and a series of 'fundamental rights'**.

Against fair and free election process :

- Electoral bonds in India do not provide any details of the source of funds received by Indian citizens.
- Keeping the names of donors given in the form of electoral bonds secret or not making their names public, the effect of the said anonymity does not apply to the then ruling political parties or the government, which always demands data from the State Bank of India (SBI). By doing this you can access the details of the donor.
- This means that the government in power can take advantage of this information and disrupt free and fair elections.

Against the basic concept of Indian Democratic system :

- In India, the Central Government, through an amendment in the Finance Act 2017, has given exemption to political parties to declare the name of donations received through electoral bonds.
- No citizen or voter of India ever knows which person, which company or which organization has provided how much funds to which party through electoral bonds.

- In a representative democracy of any country with a democratic system, citizens cast their votes for those who represent them in the Parliament. Therefore, the citizens of India should have the right to know how much money any political party has received through electoral bonds.

Focusing on the profits of big corporate houses and big business houses :

- The electoral bond scheme in India has opened the door to unlimited corporate donations and secret financing by Indian and foreign companies to various political parties in India, which can have serious implications for Indian democracy.
- Big business houses benefit from 100% tax exemption on donations made by corporate and even foreign entities in India under the electoral bond scheme.

Promotion of crony capitalism :

- The electoral bond scheme in India removes all previously existing limits on political donations and allows corporations with effective resources to finance elections. As a result, the path to crony capitalism is paved.
- Crony capitalism is a capitalist economic system characterized by close, mutually beneficial collusion between businessmen and government officials. Due to which there may be a threat to India's democratic system.

AISHE REPORT

Why in the News?

More women than males have enrolled in higher education over the previous eight years, according to the newly released 2021-22 All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE).

About All India Survey On Higher Education (AISHE) report:

- The **All India Survey on Higher Education**

(AISHE) Report is a thorough and systematic project launched by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, to collect and analyse data on the country's higher education system. The **major goal of AISHE** is to give reliable and up-to-date information regarding many sectors of higher education, including enrollment trends, infrastructure, faculty, and other pertinent factors.

- The AISHE Report, which is published annually, **plays an important role in developing policies and strategies for the growth of higher education in India.** It examines both traditional and unconventional institutions, providing insights on the variegated landscape of educational institutions across the country.
- The report normally **includes information about student enrollment, faculty composition, infrastructure facilities, gender distribution, and exam outcomes.** It enables policymakers, researchers, and educational institutions to discover trends, evaluate policy impacts, and make educated decisions to improve the quality and accessibility of higher education.
- One prominent component of the AISHE Report is its **emphasis on inclusivity**, which includes data on student enrollment from many social groups and backgrounds. This helps to assess the success of affirmative action measures and ensures equal access to education.
- The AISHE Report is an important resource for a variety of stakeholders, including government authorities, academic institutions, and researchers, since it promotes evidence-based decision-making and the continuing improvement of India's higher education system. As an updated document, the AISHE Report reflects the dynamic character of higher education, providing a comprehensive overview of the sector's progress and difficulties.

The major findings of AISHE report 2021-22 are:

- The AISHE report 2021-22 was done over the academic session 2021-22. AISHE 2021-22 registered 1,168 universities/university level institutions, 45,473 colleges, and 12,002 stand-

alone institutions.

- The poll included responses from 1,162 universities, 42,825 colleges, and 10,576 stand-alone institutions.

Number of Institutions as per AISHEReport:

- **Since 2014-15, 341 universities or university-level institutes have been formed.** Out of 1168 registered universities, 685 are government-managed (240 by the central government and 445 by the state government), 10 are private deemed (aided), and 473 are private (unaided).
- There are **17 universities** specifically for women. It was 11 in 2014-15. In 2021-22, there were **18 Open Universities** (1 Central University, 16 State Universities, and 1 State Private University).
- **Enrollment in higher education:** Higher education enrollment is projected to reach over 4.33 crore in 2021-22, up from 3.42 crore in 2014-15.
- **Female enrollment** in higher education has risen to 2.07 crore (32% increase since 2014-15). The total number of pass-outs has climbed to 1.07 crore in 2021-22 from 95.4 lakh in 2020-21.

Caste-based enrollment:

- **Caste breakdown of all enrolled students in 2021-22:** The student body is made up of 15.3% Scheduled Caste, 6.3% Scheduled Tribe, 37.8% Other Backward Class, and 40.6% from other categories.
- **Scheduled Caste student** enrollment has risen to 66.23 lakh in 2021-22, up from 58.95 lakh the previous year. The enrollment of **Scheduled Tribe** students has increased to 27.1 lakh in 2021-22 from 24.12 lakh in 2020-21.
- The number of **Scheduled Tribe Female** students enrolled grew to 13.46 lakh in 2021-22 from 12.21 lakh in 2020-21. While **Minority enrollment** has risen to 30.1 lakh in 2021-22 from 21.8 lakh in 2014-15.

Enrollment in states:

- The **top six states** in terms of student enrollment are Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil

Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, and Rajasthan. They account for **53.3%** of the overall student enrollment.

- In 2021-22, there were approximately 15.98 lakh faculty/teachers in higher education, with 56.6% being male and 43.4% female.
- The number of educators in 2021-22 has increased by 46,618 from 2020-21.

VAIBHAV INITIATIVE



Why in the News?

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) recently announced the inaugural batch of students under the **Vaishvik Bhartiya Vaigyanik (VAIBHAV)** project, a strategic initiative focused at strengthening short-term cooperation with Indian-origin scientists working overseas. The Vaibhav scheme shares features with the Visiting Advanced Joint Research Faculty (Vajra) initiative, which was launched in 2018.

About Vaibhav Scheme

- In **2023**, the government will launch the VAIBHAV fellowships programme **to connect the Indian STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine) diaspora** with Indian educational and R&D institutions for collaborative research work, resulting in the sharing of expertise, wisdom, and innovations in frontier areas of science and technology.
- The VAIBHAV Fellow would select an Indian institution for partnership and could stay up to **2 months per year for a maximum of 3 years**.
- The VAIBHAV fellows are intended to engage with their Indian counterparts and help kick off research activities in the host university in cutting-edge science and technology.
- The **DST, Ministry of Science and Technology**, will implement the VAIBHAV fellowships programme, which will award outstanding scientists/technologists of Indian origin that are con-

ducting research in their respective countries.

- **Incentives:** Fellowship would comprise a **fellowship grant** (INR 4,00,000 per month), foreign and domestic travel, lodging, and contingencies. Host institutions get research funding to help them collaborate.
- It promotes international cooperation in scientific research and encourages information exchange and expertise infusion inside Indian academic and research organisations.

About Visiting Advanced Joint Research Faculty scheme

- **VAJRA (Visiting Advanced Joint Research) Faculty Scheme** is a dedicated programme for overseas scientists and academics, with an emphasis on NRI and PIO/OCI, to work as adjunct / visiting faculty for a set length of time in Indian government-funded academic and research institutes.
- The Scheme recognises the importance of collaborative research as a critical component of information sharing among academics for updating and obtaining knowledge and skills, as well as drawing on multiple viewpoints to tackle a common problem.
- During their stay, faculty members might also teach or guide students. The Faculty will spend **at least one month and no more than three months every year** working at an Indian university.
- Even when the assignment is completed, the Indian host institution may retain him or her for an extended period of time. The part-time faculty position will be initially offered for one year and can be renewed annually.
- **Incentives Offered:** The VAJRA Faculty will be paid a sum of USD **15000 in the first month** of participation in a year and USD **10000 per month** in the other 2 months to compensate for their travel and honorarium.
- While no independent funding is offered for items such as housing, medical/personal insurance, and so on, the host institute may consid-

er offering additional assistance. The payout to the academics will be in Indian rupees.

Vaibhav Vs. Vajra

The Vaibhav Fellowship Programme primarily seeks assistance from the Indian diaspora, with a focus on translational successes in crucial areas of scientific research. While **Vajra Scheme** is Available to all foreign scientists, it encourages short-term visits by foreign professors to Indian institutions, hence providing a greater platform for global cooperation.

PRELIMS QUESTION

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The main objective of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is establishing a theocratic state
2. A Uniform Civil Code covers criminal law
3. UCC primarily seek to protect the right to equality

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three
- (d) None

Q2. Which personal matters does a Uniform Civil Code aim to govern?

- (a) Economic policies
- (b) Educational reforms
- (c) Matters related to religion
- (d) Marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. The primary objective of reservations in India is economic development
2. The Mandal Commission was established during the tenure of Rajiv Gandhi
3. 103rd Amendment introduced Article 16(4B)

allow the State to make provisions for reservation in matters of promotion to SCs and STs in public services

How many of the statements above are correct?

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three
- (d) None

Q4. In the context of reservations, what does the term “creamy layer” refer to?

- (a) Economically privileged individuals within reserved categories
- (b) Individuals with fair skin complexion
- (c) Highly educated individuals
- (d) Individuals from urban areas

Q5. With reference to Indian Constitution, consider the following statements:

1. Under Article 340, the President can establish a Commission with members chosen by him to study the situation of socially and educationally disadvantaged groups in India.
2. Article 340 was added by the 102nd Amendment to the Constitution.
3. National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) was formed under the provisions of the 102nd Amendment Act, 2018.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) None

Q6. Consider the following pairs

Tribe	State
-------	-------

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1) Limboo (Limbu) | Sikkim |
| 2) Karbi | Himachal Pradesh |
| 3) Dongaria Kondh | Odisha |
| 4) Bonda | Tamil Nadu |

Which of the above pairs are correctly matched?

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

Q7. Consider the following statements about Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India:

1. PVTGs reside in 18 States and one Union Territory.
2. A stagnant or declining population is one of the criteria for determining PVTG status.
3. There are 95 PVTGs officially notified in the country so far.
4. Irular and Konda Reddi tribes are included in the list of PVTGs.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3
- (b) 2, 3 and 4
- (c) 1, 2 and 4
- (d) 1, 3 and 4

Q8. What is the NCSC’s primary role in terms of advising the President of India

- (a) Legislative drafting
- (b) Constitutional amendments
- (c) Advisory on matters related to Scheduled Castes
- (d) International diplomacy

Q9. Which of the following are the discretionary powers given to the Governor of a State?

1. Sending a report to the President of India for

imposing the President's rule Appointing the Ministers

2. Reserving certain bills passed by the State Legislature for consideration of the President of India
3. Making the rules to conduct the business of the State Government

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Q10. Consider the following statements:

1. Justice Verma Committee recommended the implementation of the Common Eligibility Test
2. The primary objective of introducing the Common Eligibility Test is to enhance the competitiveness in the private sector
3. NTA was established in 2018.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three
- (d) None

Q11. Which of the following is/are the aim/aims of the "Digital India" Plan of the Government of India?

1. Formation of India's own Internet companies like China did.
2. Establish a policy framework to encourage overseas multinational corporations that collect Big Data to build their large data centres within our national geographical boundaries.
3. Connect many of our villages to the Internet and bring Wi-Fi to many of our schools, public

places and major tourist centres.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q12. The fundamental object of the Panchayati Raj system is to ensure which among the following?

1. People's participation in development
2. Political accountability
3. Democratic decentralisation
4. Financial mobilisation

Select the correct answer using the code given below

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

Q13. Consider the following statements regarding Research and Development (R&D) in India:

1. The Department of Science and Technology (DST) is a key government agency overseeing R&D initiatives in India.
2. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is primarily focused on healthcare research.
3. The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is the largest autonomous research and development organization in India.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three

(d) None

Q14. Consider the following statements:

1. The primary objective of the Sixth Schedule is to protect the minority languages
2. Governor of the state appoints the tribal advisory councils in the Sixth Schedule areas
3. Article 244 of the Constitution empowers the President to declare an area as a Scheduled Area

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Q.15. Consider the following statements regarding electoral bonds.

1. In India, the Electoral Bond Scheme was introduced in the Parliament through the Finance Bill in the year 2017.
2. The authorized issuing bank for electoral bonds in India is the Reserve Bank of India.
3. Electoral bonds in India can be purchased through cash, digital medium, demand draft, ATM and cheque.
4. Electoral bonds are interest free and payable on demand by the holder.

Which of the above statement/statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1 and 3.
 (b) Only 2 and 3
 (c) Only 2 and 4
 (d) Only 1 and 4

Q.16. Consider the following statements regarding low political representation of women in India.

1. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

were designed to promote gender equality.

2. The actual structure of Indian society is not based on patriarchal nature, but India has a matriarchal system.
3. In India, women's usual avenues of access to mainstream politics are limited. That is why often only 'dynastic' women are able to enter politics.
4. The Women's Reservation Bill 2023 aims to reserve two-thirds of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha and state legislatures.

Which of the above statement/statements is correct?

- (a) Only 1 and 4
 (b) Only 2 and 3
 (c) Only 1, 2 and 4
 (d) Only 1 and 3

Q17. Consider the following statements:

1. Estimates Committee examines the annual reports of ministries and departments
2. President appoints the chairpersons of parliamentary committees in India
3. Committee on Petitions focuses on conducting inquiries into matters of public importance
4. SEBI developed and launched the UPI platform in India

How many of the statements above are correct?

- (a) Only one
 (b) Only two
 (c) Only three
 (d) All four

Q18. Consider the following statements:

1. University Grants Commission (UGC) is the primary regulatory body overseeing higher education in India

2. National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in India primarily focuses on Vocational education and skill development
3. University Grants Commission (UGC) is responsible for conducting the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) in India

How many of the above statements are correct? . . .

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

ANSWERS

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

MAINS QUESTION

Q1. Evaluate the role of the NCSC in addressing complaints and grievances filed by Scheduled Castes. How effective has the Commission been

in providing redressal and ensuring justice for instances of discrimination or atrocities?

Q2. Analyze the role of media and social platforms in the spread of leaked exam content. Discuss the ethical responsibilities of media outlets and social media platforms in preventing the dissemination of such materials.

Q3. Discuss the role of Panchayati Raj in promoting grassroots governance. How it contributes to the overall development of rural areas.

Q4. Evaluate the effectiveness of reservation for women in Panchayati Raj institutions as a strategy for women's empowerment. Discuss the challenges and successes associated with this approach.

Q5. In your opinion, how has the implementation of the Right to Education Act impacted the quality of primary education in the country?

Q6. Explain the historical background and significance of the Sixth Schedule. How did it address the unique administrative needs of tribal areas in India?

Q7. Compare and contrast the provisions of the Sixth Schedule with those of the Fifth Schedule. Highlight the distinctive features that differentiate the administration of scheduled areas in these two schedules.

Q8. Examine the significance of parliamentary committees in controlling and overseeing government finances. How do these committees act as watchdogs, ensuring responsible fiscal management and preventing financial irregularities? Provide examples to illustrate their impact.

Q9. Explore the challenges faced by researchers in India, particularly in terms of funding, infrastructure, and collaboration. How can these challenges be addressed to enhance the quality and quantity of research output?

Q10. Examine the key provisions and principles that a Uniform Civil Code seeks to establish. How do these align with the values of equality, justice, and secularism?

Q11. Assess the impact of a Uniform Civil Code on

women’s rights, focusing on aspects such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption. How does it contribute to or hinder gender equality?

Q12. In your view, has the reservation system led to the emergence of a more inclusive and diverse society in India? Why or why not?

Q13. Do you believe that the reservation system fosters a sense of dependency among certain communities, or does it empower them to compete on an equal footing? Share your perspective.

Q14. Examine the socio-economic challenges faced by scheduled tribes in contemporary society. What are the key factors contributing to their marginalization, and what strategies can be implemented to address these issues effectively?

Q15. Discuss the conservation and protection of tribal lands and natural resources. How can sus-

tainable development practices be implemented to balance the needs of scheduled tribes with environmental preservation?

Q16. Evaluate the role of the NCSC in addressing complaints and grievances filed by Scheduled Castes. How effective has the Commission been in providing redressal and ensuring justice for instances of discrimination or atrocities?

Q17. Discuss the essential conditions for exercise of the legislative powers by the Governor. Discuss the legality of re-promulgation of ordinances by the Governor without placing them before the Legislature.

Q18. Highlighting the main reasons for low political representation of women in India, discuss how the Women’s Reservation Bill 2023 unties the ‘knots of patriarchy’ or is it a violation of equality of opportunity.

NCERT BATCH

UPSC CSE 2024-25



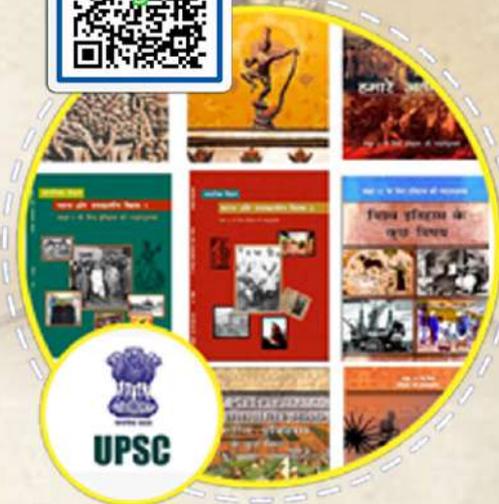
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NORTHERN IRELAND PROTOCOL



Why in the News?

After two years of deadlock, Northern Ireland now has a functioning administration led by Michelle O'Neill of Sinn Féin and Deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly of the Alliance Party.

The Northern Ireland protocol

- After the United Kingdom left the European Union, **Northern Ireland remained the sole constituent, having a land border with another EU member, the Republic of Ireland.** The United Kingdom is made up of Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales), as well as Northern Ireland.
- Because the EU and the UK have **distinct product standards**, border inspections would be required before products could be transported from Northern Ireland to Ireland. However, a free border between the two was critical to the 1998 Good Friday deal.
- Keeping this in mind, the **Northern Ireland Protocol was negotiated in 2020 between the United Kingdom and the EU.** The protocol is a trade deal negotiated in 2020 by the United Kingdom and the European Union.
- Under this agreement, both the **United Kingdom and the European Union agreed that products would be inspected between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.** This agreement effectively established a de facto border across the Irish Sea between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

- Northern Ireland continues to obey many of the EU's laws, allowing vehicles to move across the border without being inspected. The protocol was signed as part of the Brexit departure deal, which has now been confirmed under international law.
- However, **this protocol infuriated unionists**, who saw it as undermining Northern Ireland's relationship with the United Kingdom. As a result, the Unionists refused to allow a government to form after Northern Ireland's May 2022 elections, and Stormont was unable to function.

The UK's new plan

- The goods are split into two different lanes.
- Goods destined only for Northern Ireland go into the **Red Lane** and are not checked
- Goods destined for Ireland and the EU go into the **Blue Lane** and checks are carried out



Efforts made to resolve the issue

Windsor Framework

The framework comprises **two essential components**:

- The implementation of a system with **designated green and red lanes for goods remaining in Northern Ireland and those bound for the EU, respectively.**
- Additionally, it introduces the **'Stormont Brake,'** empowering Northern Ireland legislators and

the UK government to reject any EU regulations perceived as detrimental to the region.

- **British goods designated for Northern Ireland will utilise the green lane at ports**, streamlining the process with minimal paperwork and checks. Conversely, goods intended for Ireland or other EU destinations must use the **red lane**, subject to customary customs procedures and inspections.
- The newly introduced Stormont Brake enables the elected Northern Ireland Assembly to challenge proposed EU regulations affecting the region significantly and persistently. To enact this opposition, the Assembly requires the support of 30 members from at least two political parties, after which the British government holds the authority to veto the legislation.

A new plan titled 'Safeguarding the Union' by the UK

A recent agreement has been achieved following the **rejection of the Windsor Framework by Unionists** who deemed the proposed measures insufficient. The UK government has now unveiled a new arrangement outlined in a document titled '**Safeguarding the Union.**'

The **key provisions of this agreement** are as follows:

- The **green lane** is now referred to as the UK Internal Market channel, where checks and customs paperwork have been further reduced to encompass only "risk and intelligence-based checks" related to "criminality, smuggling, and disease."
- The "**Internal Market Guarantee**" provision stipulates that a minimum of 80% of goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland will utilise this channel.
- The UK government is committed to providing a **financial assistance package of £3.3 billion** to support the fiscal needs of Northern Ireland.

Governance system of Ireland

Historical context:

Northern Ireland, **established in May 1921** through the partitioning of Ireland, encompasses the six

northeastern counties of the island. **In 1922**, the remaining part of Ireland gained independence from British rule, becoming the present-day Republic of Ireland, with Dublin as its capital. Despite this, Northern Ireland maintained its affiliation with the United Kingdom, leading to tensions between those loyal to the Crown and those advocating for integration with the Republic. **Presently, individuals aligned with the British Union are known as unionists, while those supporting a unified and independent Ireland are referred to as nationalists.**

Belfast agreement or the Good Friday agreement:

By the late **1960s**, a violent conflict had erupted in **Northern Ireland** between those favouring continued UK affiliation and those aspiring to join Ireland. In 1998, the Good Friday Agreement was signed, bringing an end to the hostilities and establishing a distinctive governance system for Northern Ireland.

Distinctive Governance System of Ireland:

Stormont, located in the Parliament buildings in Belfast, **serves as the seat of power where both unionists and nationalists** actively participate in a shared governance arrangement. Cooperation between both factions is essential for the effective functioning of the government. The political group securing the majority of votes in elections assumes the role of First Minister, while the opposing side takes the position of Deputy First Minister, holding equal authority in this unique system.

INDIA – GREECE BILATERAL RELATIONS

Why in the News?



- India -Greece Under bilateral relations, with the aim of further deepening the strategic partnership between the two countries, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis will visit India on a two-day (21-22 February 2024) state visit on 21 February 2024.
- This is the first visit of a Greek head of state to India after a gap of 15 years.
- During his state visit to India, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis will be the chief guest and keynote speaker at the Raisina Dialogue in the national capital.
- The Prime Minister of Greece will also be accompanied by senior officials and a high-level business delegation. Before returning to Athens, he will also visit Mumbai.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Greece on 25 August 2023 was the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Greece in the last 40 years.
- On this occasion, the President of Greece Katerina Sakellaropoulou addressed the Prime Minister of India, "**The Grand Cross of the Order of Honour**" Honored with.
- Prime Minister of India in Athens '**Tomb of the Unknown Soldier** But tribute was also paid.



The Strategic partnership between India and Greece:

There are several major areas of cooperation un-

der the strategic partnership between India and Greece, some of which are as follows –

Defence and Security :

- India and Greece have agreed to cooperate in maritime security, counter-terrorism, cyber security, and defence industry. Furthermore, decisions have been taken in the India-Greece dialogue at the level of National Security Advisors (NSAs).

Maritime security and International law :

- Both India and Greece have agreed to abide by the provisions of maritime law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), with both countries having ancient and long-standing maritime perspectives on seafaring.

Culture and Tourism :

- Both India and Greece have attempted to cooperate in promoting all forms of art and preserving ancient sites. This also includes cooperation with UNESCO.

Trade and Investment :

- India and Greece aim to double bilateral trade by 2030 and have agreed to explore new opportunities to cooperate in various sectors such as new energy, infrastructure, pharmaceuticals, agriculture and innovation.

Mobility and Migration Partnership Agreement (MMPA) :

- The leaders of both India and Greece have exchanged views on the Mobility and Migration Partnership Agreement (MMPA) to enhance dialogue in areas such as digital payments, shipping, pharmaceuticals, and education.
- Through this partnership, India and Greece have opened the way for partnership and cooperation in various fields, which will help in the empowerment and promotion of partnership between the two countries.

Important facts:

The 'Grand Cross of the Order of Honor' is the sec-

ond highest civilian honour in Greece, after the 'Grand Cross of the Order of the Redeemer'. The award was established in 1975 and features the head of the goddess Athena, with the inscription "Only the righteous/just should be honoured". The award is presented to individuals who have played a significant role in the fields of politics, diplomacy, culture, science, or social service in promoting the interests and values of Greece.

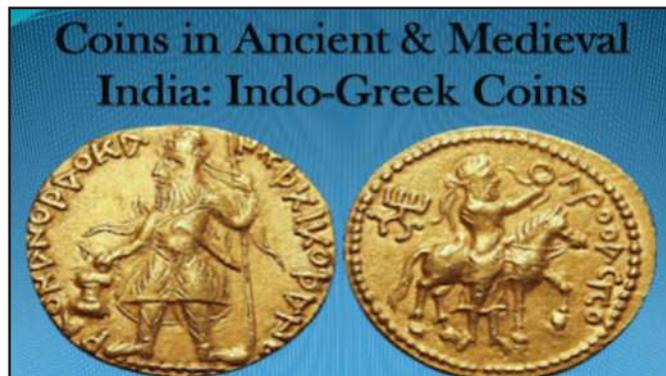
Beginning of Historical relations between India and Greece :



- Historical relations between Greece and India began 2500 years ago when Alexander the Great expanded his campaigns to the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent. Diplomatic, trade, and cultural relations between India and Greece are mentioned by the Greek traveller Megasthenes in the fourth century BC. Chanakya has also described the achievement of ambassadorship between India and Greece in his Arthashastra.
- Currently, trade between India and Greece is growing, and trade between the two countries is expected to reach US\$2 billion in the year 2022-23. India also sends aluminium, organic chemicals, fish, and crustaceans (crab and shrimp) to Greece, while Greece sends mineral fuels, mineral oils, and aluminum foil to India.
- India hosted Greece's largest commercial exhibition, 'Honored Country' at the 84th Thessaloniki International Fair (TIF), 2019 Participated as. Furthermore, both the countries are cooperating with each

other in various fields such as education, cultural exchange, and economic development.

Cultural relations between India and Greece :



- Dimitrios Galanos, a Greek Indologist, spent 47 years in India and translated many Hindu texts into Greek.
- A "Dimitrios Galanos" Chair for Hellenic Studies was established in September 2000 at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.
- Indian Council for Cultural Relations is offering annual scholarships for Greek students to study in India. Greek Indologist Professor Nicholas Kazanas was honoured with the Padma Shri award in 2021.

Political relations between India and Greece :

- Mutual diplomatic relations between India and Greece were established in May 1950. Greece opened its embassy in Delhi in 1950, and India opened its embassy in Athens in 1978. Greece is known to support each other on issues of core national interest, such as Kashmir and Cyprus. Greece also supports India's demand for permanent membership of the expanded United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Defence relations Between India and Greece :

- The year 1998 saw a spurt in defence cooperation between India and Greece, which envisages cooperation in areas such as military training, joint training, defence industry cooperation, etc. The Indian Air Force participated in INIOCHOS-23. The exercise was conducted at Andravida Air Base, Greece, from 24 April 2023 to 04 May 2023. Indian Air Force (IAF) with four

Su-30 MKI and two C-17 aircraft organised by the Hellenic Air Force **A multinational air exercise INIOCHOS-23** participated in.

One of the main facts about Greece is that it is located in Southern Europe, bordered by Albania, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Turkey. Greece is one of the oldest civilisations in the world and is considered the birthplace of Western civilisation. Its capital is Athens, and the language is Greek. The longest river in Greece is the Aliakmon River, and the highest mountain in Greece is Mount Olympus. It is the birthplace of democracy, philosophy, theatre, and the Olympic Games, with a parliamentary republican form of government and dominated by the Pindus and Taurus mountains. Its currency is Euro.

Conclusion/ Way Forward :



- Bilateral relations between India and Greece are extremely important from historical, cultural, and philosophical perspectives. There has been a mixture of cultures between these two countries, dialogue with each other, and exchange of abstract and abstract knowledge towards each other.
- Historically, relations between India and Greece began during the time of the Maurya dynasty emperor Chandragupta Maurya and the Greek emperor Alexander. Alexander fought with the Indian kingdoms and reached India with his army. In India, Chandragupta Maurya defeated him and created a great empire in the Indian subcontinent. Thus, relations between India and Greece continued even after the time of Alexander.
- Culturally, India and Greece have maintained

their unique cultural heritage. Greek literature, art, and philosophical thought influenced Western cultural development in India, while Indian literature, scriptures, and art have retained their distinct identity. It is this diversity and richness that strengthens the ties between Indian and Greek cultures.

INDIA – UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE) RELATIONS



Why in the News?



- The visit of the Indian Prime Minister to the UAE in February 2024 is significant from the point of view that he has gone there to inaugurate a temple built by Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan, a resident of Bochasan in Abu Dhabi. This is the seventh visit of the Indian Prime Minister since 2015, reflecting the growing importance of bilateral relations.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Indian community at the **'Ahlan Modi'** event in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, on 13 February 2024. During this, he interacted directly with about 65 thousand people in the Indian community living in the UAE. India's PM Modi said- **"Across the ocean, I have brought to you the fragrance of the soil in which you were born. I have come with a message, another message for your 140 crore Indian brothers and sisters that India is proud of you."**

- The program organised in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, started with the national anthems of both countries. As Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi entered the open-air stadium, members of the Indian diaspora chanted **'Har Har Modi, Ghar-Ghar Modi', 'We Love Modi', 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai', and 'Jai Shri Ram'**. He was welcomed with the proclamation of.
- The Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, has visited the UAE for the third time in the last eight months. He paid a bilateral visit in July 2023 and then travelled to COP28 in November, where he was given the rare honor of being the only guest to address the formal opening session.
- Sheikh Mohammed also visited Delhi in September 2023 for the G-20 summit as one of India's special invitees.
- Sheikh Mohammed visited India to participate in the **Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in January 2024** as the chief guest.
- At a time when diplomatic relations in global politics are widely considered important for mutual trade, the deep personal relationship between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, is a testament to India and the United Arab Emirates. The long-standing bilateral relations between the Emirates are being viewed globally as a new relationship in the making.
- This is a relationship between India and the UAE where trust and credibility are more important than diplomatic reciprocity and protocol, where convergence of strategic interests is driven by regular interactions to lay the foundation of one of India's most dynamic and consequential bilateral relations. Get a boost.
- The Prime Minister greeted the people of Indian origin who participated in the 'Ahlan Modi' program by saying 'Namaskar' amid slogans of 'Modi Modi' at the Zayed Sports Stadium in Abu Dhabi. He said he was overwhelmed by the affection from the Indian community at the event.

- In the context of current global political and diplomatic relations, India and the UAE are partners in progress and the relationship between India and the UAE is one of talent, innovation and culture.
- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been awarded the **'Order of Zayed'**, the highest civilian honour of the United Arab Emirates.
- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has gone on a two-day visit to the United Arab Emirates. He inaugurated the largest Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi, the capital of UAE on 14 February 2024.

Significance of the Current Visit of the Prime Minister of India to the United Arab Emirates :

- This current visit of the Prime Minister of India is also important because it is scheduled by the religious calendar for the **'inauguration of the grand Hindu temple' in Abu Dhabi, UAE.**
- The presence of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was also seen as a reminder that during his first visit in August 2015, he had requested the UAE leadership to provide land for a Hindu temple in the UAE. Will cater to the religious and spiritual needs of the emirate's large Hindu community.
- The inauguration of the Hindu Temple by the Prime Minister of India in Abu Dhabi, UAE, on 14 February 2024 has no doubt created excitement among the 3.5 million Indian people/Indian citizens in the UAE. A mega event named Ahlan (Welcome Modi) was also organised at the Zayed Sports City Stadium in Abu Dhabi.
- Also includes the Prime Minister of India's address as the guest of honour at the 11th World Government Summit in Dubai.
- Often referred to as Dubai's version of Davos, it is a major annual conference that attracts government leaders, heads of international organisations, leading industrialists and thinkers from around the world.
- The main theme of this year's summit is **'Shap-**

ing the Governments of the Future' and provides an important platform for India to present its views to an influential global audience.

Bilateral relations between India and United Arab Emirates:



- In 1972, bilateral diplomatic relations were established between India and the United Arab Emirates.
- The visit of the Prime Minister of India to the UAE in August 2015 marked the beginning of bilateral relations and a new strategic partnership between the two countries.
- Following the visit of the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi to India as the Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations of India in 2017, India and the UAE took forward bilateral relations and worked towards building a comprehensive strategic partnership. Started.
- Under this, the bilateral relations between India and the United Arab Emirates were given impetus to start negotiations for the **India-UAE comprehensive economic partnership agreement**.

Bilateral Economic relations between India and United Arab Emirates :



- Under the mutual bilateral relations between India and UAE, the mutual economic partner-

ship between India and UAE has increased. As a result, in the year 2022-23, bilateral trade between India and UAE will reach US \$ 85 billion. UAE is India's third-largest trading partner and second-largest exporter.

- Under the mutual bilateral relations between India and UAE, a target has been set to increase bilateral goods trade to more than US\$ 100 billion and services trade to US\$ 15 billion in the coming five years.
- The UAE's investments in India are estimated to be around US\$11.67 billion, making it the ninth largest investor in India, as a trade agreement also enables two-way investment flows.
- Many Indian companies have set up their manufacturing units in the UAE as joint ventures or in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for cement, building materials, textiles, engineering products, consumer electronics, etc.
- Many Indian companies have also invested in tourism, hospitality, catering, healthcare, retail and education sectors in the UAE.
- Under India's revised strategy of Free Trade Agreements (FTA), the Government of India has provided priority to at least six countries/territories, with UAE topping the list for Early Harvest Deals (or Interim Trade Agreements). The UK, European Union, Australia, Canada, Israel and a group of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are some of the other such countries/regions.
- The UAE had also earlier announced plans to pursue bilateral economic agreements with India and seven other countries (UK, Turkey, South Korea, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Israel and Kenya).

To Revive And Strengthen Bilateral Economic Relations Between India And Uae :

- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also expected to launch the much-awaited Bharat Mart in Dubai, which is also a major initiative of Dubai-based DP World and India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry. This will promote the exports of Indian micro, small and medium enterprises by providing them retail, warehousing and facilities.

- Logistics facilities in the Jebel Ali Free Zone area of Dubai, DP World to allow Indian manufacturers of machinery, electrical and electronics products, auto components, medical devices, furniture, apparel, processed foods, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and handicrafts to ship their products. will build approximately 800 showrooms and 18 warehouses over the next 24 months on a 1.3 million square feet plot to showcase and reach buyers and markets in Iran, Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East. ,
- The Bharat Mart project comes on the heels of the ambitious India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which completed its first year in 2023 and has already seen India's trade with the UAE grow by 16% to \$85 billion. This has strengthened the UAE's position as India's third-largest trading partner and second-largest export destination.

Regional Issues :

- The talks between Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi and Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed also reviewed the ongoing war in Gaza, Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and the deteriorating situation in the region in the context of the clear and present danger.
- Longer shipping times, higher freight costs and a potential rise in oil prices could pose significant risks to India's economic growth in trade relations between India and the UAE.
- It is important for the Indian government to coordinate closely with key regional partners such as the UAE as well as countries such as Saudi Arabia. At the same time, Egypt will also have to ensure that India's interests are protected.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as 'partners in progress'. PM Modi, while greeting the people of Indian origin in an event organised in Abu Dhabi on 13 February 2024, described the relationship between the two countries as an ideal for other countries of the world. He said that both countries are creating new history in the third decade of the 21st century. India wishes that our partnership continues to grow

stronger every day.



Conclusion/Solution:

- In the current global politics, the unique combination of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between India and the UAE and Bharat Mart has the potential to provide a strong boost to India's manufactured goods exports. Even though early steps to start trading in national currencies promise to reduce transaction costs. The MoU signed at the bilateral talks will further strengthen economic relations between India and the UAE.
- There are many other major achievements that both India and the UAE can legitimately take credit for.
- Indian Institute of Technology Delhi has launched its Master's Program in Energy Transition and Sustainability at its interim campus in Abu Dhabi.

SWEDEN TO JOIN NATO (NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION)

Why in the News?

A significant obstacle was removed from Sweden's NATO membership bid when the Turkish parliament approved it. All of the current members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) must consent to a new member joining. Sweden's joining has been resisted by Turkey and Hungary for virtually the entire time.

The Reason why Sweden wants to join NATO?

- Sweden remained neutral during the two World Wars and the Cold War and has not engaged in

combat for the past 200 years. Although it co-operated with NATO and joined the European Union in recent years, it never made it clear that it intended to join the military alliance.

- However, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, this neutrality had to be given up. Sweden and Finland submitted applications for membership in NATO in 2022 as the general public's support for joining the alliance grew.
- Finland's proposal was approved, but Sweden faced strong opposition from Hungary and Turkey.

Turkey's opposition to Sweden's bid

- **Protests burning Qurans were held in Sweden.:** The government claims that laws pertaining to freedom of speech protect it. This made their relationship with Turkey even more strained.
- **Assistance to a terrorist Kurdish group:** Sweden, according to Turkey, has been softer on organisations that it considers terrorists, including the militant Kurdish militia.
- **US consents to provide Ankara with 40 F-16 fighter aircraft:** Experts have connected the US's agreement to supply 40 F-16 fighter jets to Ankara, the capital of Turkey, with Turkey's backing of Sweden. The transaction is now anticipated to proceed, even though the US had not stated that the agreement would be contingent on Turkey's conduct in Sweden.

Benefits to NATO after joining of Sweden

- Nearly the whole Baltic Sea coastline—aside from the portion under Russian authority—will be a part of NATO if Sweden joins.
- This will simplify supply lines, give the alliance strategic locations near Russia, and facilitate the defence of maritime assets.
- Despite its small size, Sweden's military is up to date and has experience from previous NATO missions. Its superior aircraft and submarine capabilities are noteworthy.

About the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

- NATO is a **security alliance** of 31 nations from North America and Europe, which was established in 1949 following the signing of the **Washington Treaty**. Finland became the alliance's 31st member in April of 2023.
- NATO's **primary objective** is to use both military and political methods to protect the freedom and security of its members.
- It is an arrangement of **collective defence** in which sovereign member states consent to defend one another against external attacks.
- An attack on one ally is an attack against all, according to **Article 5 of the Washington Treaty**. The pledge of mutual defence found in this article serves as the foundation of the Alliance.
- **Functions:**
 - In order to address concerns, foster trust, and ultimately avert conflict, NATO **encourages democratic values** and provides members with the opportunity to communicate and work together on defence and security-related matters.
 - NATO is dedicated to **resolving conflicts amicably**. If diplomatic attempts prove fruitless, it possesses the military might to carry out crisis management actions.

PRELIMS QUESTION

Q1. Consider the following pairs:

International agreement/ set-up	Subject
1. Alma-Ata Declaration	Healthcare of the people
2. Hague Convention	Biological and Chemical Weapons
3. Talanoa Dialogue	Global Climate Change
4. Under2 Coalition	Child Rights

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

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

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. The Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community, a precursor to the European Union
2. The European Commission is the EU's executive branch responsible for implementing decisions and managing policies
3. The Treaty of Lisbon, signed in 2007, aimed to enhance the EU's democratic governance

How many of the statements above are correct?

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

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization):

1. NATO was established in response to the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War.
2. The North Atlantic Treaty, which founded NATO, was signed in 1949.
3. Article 5 of the NATO treaty stipulates that an attack against one member is considered an attack against all.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three
- (d) None

Q4. Consider the following statements in the context of mutual relations between India and the**United Arab Emirates.**

1. The Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, has visited the UAE four times in the last eight months.
2. Sheikh Mohammed visited India to participate in the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in January 2024 as the chief guest.
3. The Indian community was addressed by India's Defense Minister Rajnath Singh at the 'Ahlan Modi' event in Abu Dhabi.
4. India's Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar has been awarded the 'Order of Zayed', the highest civilian honor of the United Arab Emirates.

Which of the above statement / statements is/ are correct?

- (a) Only 1 and 3
- (b) Only 2 and 4
- (c) Only 3
- (d) Only 2

Q5. Consider the following statements in the context of India-Greek bilateral relations.

1. This is the first visit of a Greek head of state to India after a gap of 25 years.
2. India honored Greek Indologist Professor Nicholas Kazanas with the Padma Shri award in 2021.
3. The Grand Cross of the Order of Honor is Greece's highest civilian honour.
4. Greece opened its embassy in Delhi in 1950 and India opened its embassy in Athens in 1978.

Which of the above statement/statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1 and 3
- (b) Only 2 and 4
- (c) Only 1, 2 and 4
- (d) Only 1 and 4

ANSWERS

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

MAINS QUESTION

Q1. Explain the significance of Article 5 in the NATO treaty. How does the principle of collective defence operate within the alliance?

Q2. Highlight the key provisions of the India-United Arab Emirates Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement and discuss how the economic, strategic and strategic relationship between India and the United Arab Emirates is playing a supporting role in making India a developed nation?

Q3. In the context of current Geo-political relations, discuss how Greece is the gateway to Asia and India is the gateway to Europe.

Q4. How has the European Union influenced immigration policies and the free movement of people within its borders?

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EMPLOYER RATING SURVEY

Why in the News?

In a progressive move towards promoting gender equality and enhancing women’s workforce participation in India, the Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) have collaboratively launched the **Employer Rating Survey**. This initiative aims to assess and encourage employers’ commitment and support for fostering a more inclusive work environment for women.

Understanding the Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO):

The EPFO is a governmental organization entrusted with managing the provident fund and pension accounts for the organized sector workforce in India. Administered by the Ministry of Labour & Employment, Government of India, it operates under the Employees’ Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952. Boasting one of the world’s largest clientele, the EPFO plays a crucial role in overseeing the financial transactions related to social security on an extensive scale.

Key aspects of the Employer Rating Survey:

- Launched at the event “**Women in the Workforce for Viksit Bharat,**” the survey seeks to evaluate and rate employers based on their commitment and support for increasing women’s participation in the workforce.
- It serves as a comprehensive tool to gauge progress and efforts made by employers in cre-

ating an environment conducive to women’s employment.

- The survey comprises a detailed questionnaire distributed to approximately 300 million customers nationwide, covering aspects such as the existence of internal committees for addressing sexual harassment, provision of crèche facilities, transportation during late hours, and adherence to equal pay principles.

State of Women’s Labor Force Participation in India:



- While the **Women’s Labor Force Participation**

Rate (LFPR) has seen improvement in recent years, a considerable portion of this increase pertains to unpaid work.

- According to the **Periodic Labor Force Survey (PLFS)**, the female participation rate rose to **27.8%** in **2022-23** from **17.5%** in **2017-18**. However, the majority of this increase is attributed to women categorised as “helpers in household enterprises” who do not receive regular salaries. In contrast, the **LFPR for males** increased from 75.8% in 2017-18 to 78.5% in 2022-23.

Causes of Lower Women’s Participation in the Labour Force:

- **Patriarchal Social Norms:** Deep-rooted norms and gender roles limit women’s access to education and employment. Societal expectations often prioritise women as caregivers, discouraging their active involvement in the workforce.
- **Gender Wage Gap:** Women in India face significant wage disparities compared to men. The 2022 World Inequality Report highlights that men capture 82% of labour income, acting as a deterrent for women in seeking formal employment.
- **Unpaid Care Work:** Women shoulder a disproportionate burden of unpaid care and household duties in India, restricting their time and energy for paid work. This unequal division poses a significant obstacle to women’s participation in the labor force.
- **Social and Cultural Stigma:** Some communities associate social and cultural stigma with women working outside the home. Prevailing norms questioning women’s roles in the workforce contribute to lower labor force participation rates.
- **Lack of Flexible Work Options:** The absence of flexible or remote work options, particularly for women with familial responsibilities, hinders their ability to balance work and family commitments. Employer reluctance to adopt flexible policies contributes to women’s underrepresentation.
- **Limited Access to Education:** Unequal access

to education impedes women’s entry into the labor force. Girls in some regions face barriers in accessing quality education, limiting their skill development and employment opportunities.

- **Inadequate Support Systems:** The absence of support systems, such as crèche facilities, hinders working mothers. Without childcare support, women may struggle to balance work and family responsibilities, leading to a decline in workforce participation.
- **Occupational Segregation:** Women are often concentrated in specific industries, contributing to occupational segregation. Limited representation in certain sectors restricts women’s choices and opportunities for career advancement, perpetuating gender inequalities in the workforce.

Impact of Higher Women’s Labor Participation on society:

Higher women’s labour participation positively impacts society in various ways:

- **Economic Growth:** Increased involvement of women in the workforce directly contributes to economic growth by enhancing productivity and overall economic output.
- **Poverty Reduction:** Access to income-generating opportunities for women helps lift households out of poverty, leading to improved living standards, better education, and healthcare access.
- **Human Capital Development:** Educated and economically active women positively influence the education and health outcomes of their children, contributing to improved human capital development and societal progress.
- **Gender Equality and Empowerment:** Higher women’s workforce participation challenges traditional gender norms, fostering gender equality and enabling women to have greater control over their lives.
- **Reduced Gender-Based Violence:** Economic

empowerment through employment reduces women’s vulnerability to gender-based violence, providing financial independence and the ability to make choices aligned with well-being.

- **Fertility and Population Growth:** Studies show that as women participate more in the workforce, fertility rates tend to decline, contributing to more sustainable population growth.
- **Labor Market and Talent Pool:** Increasing women’s participation addresses skill shortages, leading to a more efficient allocation of talent and resources in diverse and inclusive workplaces.
- **Innovative Solutions and Perspectives:** A diverse workforce, including women, brings a range of perspectives, fostering innovation and creativity within organizations for effective solutions to societal challenges.

Initiatives to safeguard Women’s Employment:

Various initiatives and labour codes have been implemented to safeguard women’s employment in India. The Code of Wages, 2019, Industrial Relations Code, 2020, Social Security Code, 2020, and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, are instrumental in ensuring fair labor practices. Additionally, schemes such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, One Stop Centre, SWADHAR Greh, NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR, Mahila Police Volunteers, Mahila Shakti Kendras, and the NIRBHAYA Fund are aimed at addressing gender-related challenges.

Way forward:

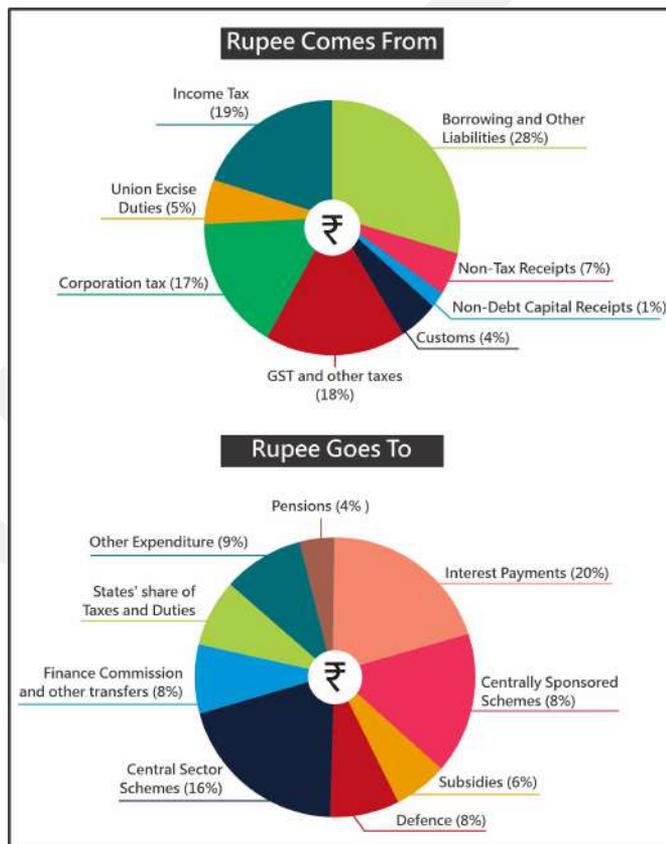
- To truly enhance women’s workforce participation, discussions on gender equality must transcend compartmentalising women’s lives into work and personal spheres.
- Policy solutions should be derived from women’s negotiations within their cultural context, emphasising increased autonomy and flexible work options.

INTERIM BUDGET



Why in the News?

The Interim Budget for 2024-25 was just tabled in parliament. It aims to reach ‘Viksit Bharat’ by 2047, with all-round, widespread, and inclusive growth.



About Interim Budget

An interim budget is submitted by a government in transition or its final year of power prior to general elections. The interim budget’s objective is to ensure that government expenditure and critical services continue until the next government can present a full budget after taking office.

Major highlights of the Interim Budget 2024-25

Capital expenditure:

An **11.1%** increase in the capital expenditure budget for 2024-2025 was announced. The capital ex-

penditure is scheduled at Rs 11,11,111 crore, which represents **3.4% of GDP**.

Economic growth projections:

For fiscal year 2023-24, real GDP growth is expected to be **7.3%**, in line with the RBI's revised growth prediction. The International Monetary Fund raised India's growth forecast to 6.3% for fiscal year 2023-24. It also expects India to become the third-largest economy by **2027**.

Revenue and expenditure estimates for 2024-25:

Total receipts are estimated at Rs 30.80 lakh crore, excluding borrowings. Total expenditure is estimated at Rs 47.66 lakh crore. Tax receipts are estimated at Rs 26.02 lakh crore.

GST collections:

It reached **₹1.65 lakh crore** in December 2023, surpassing the ₹1.6 lakh crore threshold for the sixth time.

Fiscal deficit and market borrowing:

The fiscal deficit is expected to be **5.1% of GDP in 2024-25**, with a target of lowering it to less than 4.5% by 2025-26 (as indicated in the budget 2021-22). The gross and net market borrowings through dated securities in 2024-25 are anticipated to be Rs 14.13 and 11.75 lakh crore, respectively.

Taxation:

The Interim Budget keeps the current rates of direct and indirect taxes, including import charges. Corporate taxes are **22%** for existing domestic enterprises and **15%** for selected new manufacturing companies. Under the new tax regime, taxpayers earning up to ₹7 lakh are not required to pay any taxes. Certain tax incentives for start-ups and investments are prolonged by one year up to **March 31, 2025**

Infrastructure:

- **Railways:** Three important economic railway corridor projects will be implemented: energy, mineral and cement corridors, port connectivity corridors, and high traffic density corridors. Forty thousand regular rail bogies

will be upgraded to **Vande Bharat standards** to improve safety, convenience, and passenger comfort.

- **Aviation:** The **UDAN** programme includes the expansion of current airports as well as the comprehensive development of new airports.
- **Urban Transport:** Promoting urban development through Metro Rail and NaMo Bharat.

Housing sector:

The government intends to subsidize the development of **30 million affordable homes** in rural areas. The Housing for Middle-Class initiative will be created to encourage the middle class to buy or build their own homes.

Healthcare sector:

Promoting Cervical Cancer Vaccination for Girls (9-14 Years). **Mission Indradhanush's immunization activities** will be carried out through the U-WIN platform. They are expanding the Ayushman Bharat programme to cover all ASHA, Anganwadi, and assistants.

Agricultural sector:

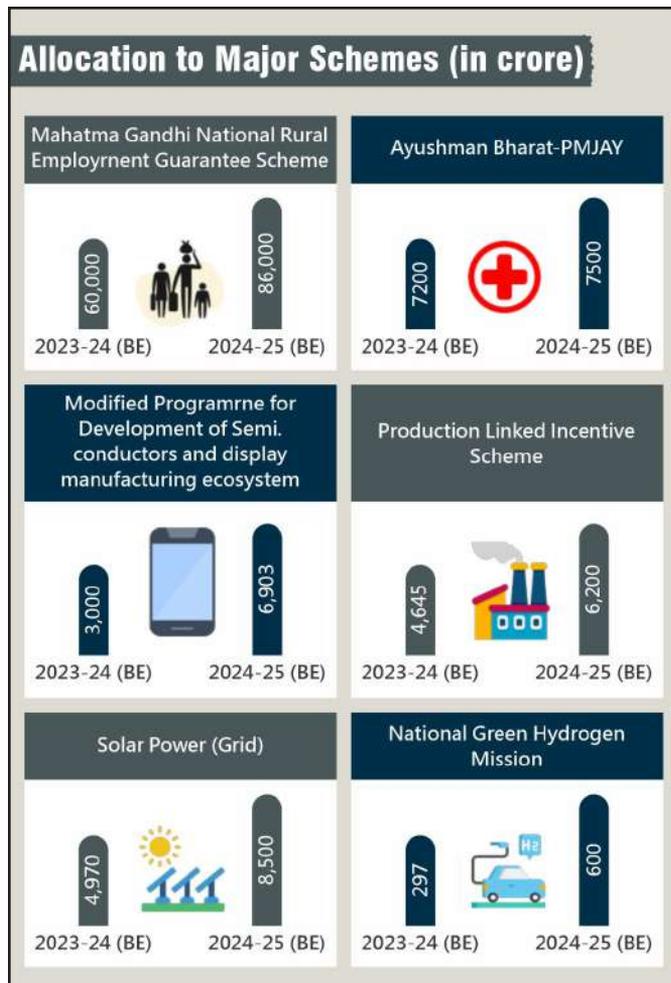
Promoting the use of 'Nano DAP' for a variety of crops across all agro-climatic regions. Developing strategies to help dairy farmers and combat Foot and Mouth Disease and strategising for AtmaNirbharta (self-reliance) in oilseeds, including research, procurement, value addition, and crop insurance.

Fishery sector:

Creating a new department, 'Matsya Sampada,' to meet the demands of fishermen.

For states capex:

The continuance of the fifty-year interest-free financing arrangement for capital spending by states was announced. A total outlay of Rs 1.3 lakh crore, with Rs 75,000 crore set aside for fifty-year interest-free loans to assist state-led reforms. The eastern area will receive special attention in order to become a strong driver of India's economy.



PM MATSYA KISAN SAMRIDHI SAH-YOJANA

Why in the News?

The Cabinet approves the “Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY),” a Central Sector Sub-scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada for micro and small fishing firms. It reports to the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairy.

Goals and objectives of PM-MKSSY:

- **Formalisation:** Gradual formalisation of the unorganised fisheries industry by self-registration of fishers, fish farmers, and support workers on a National Fisheries industry Digital Platform, which includes the development of work-based digital IDs for fish workers to improve service

delivery.

- **Ensuring Safety and Quality Assurance:** Performance grants are used to incentivize micro and small businesses to adopt and expand fish and fishery product safety and quality assurance systems, as well as to create and maintain jobs.
- **Aquaculture Insurance:** Offering a one-time reward to recipients who purchase aquaculture insurance.
- **Incentivizing Value-Chain Efficiencies:** Providing performance grants to fisheries and aquaculture microenterprises to improve value-chain efficiencies, including employment creation and maintenance.
- **Access to Institutional funding:** Improving access to institutional funding for fisheries sector micro and small businesses.

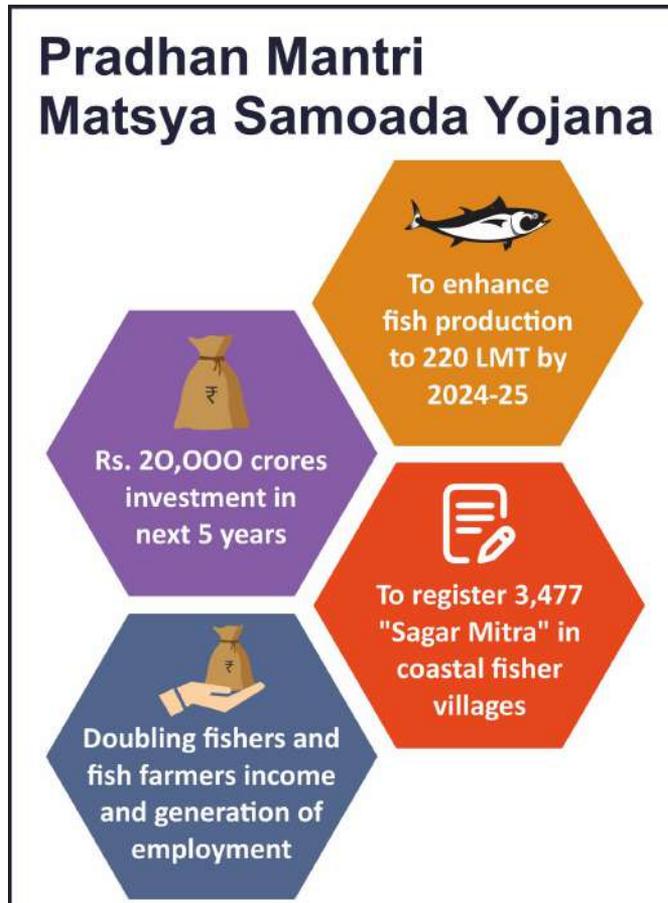
Expenditure

The Sub-scheme will be implemented as a **Central Sector Sub-scheme under the Central Sector Component** of the PMMSY with an estimated outlay of **Rs.6,000 crore**, comprising 50% public finance, i.e. Rs.3,000 crore, including external financing from the **World Bank and the AFD**, and the remaining 50%, i.e. Rs.3,000 crore, being anticipated investment from beneficiaries/private sector leverage. It will be implemented for four years, from fiscal year 2023-24 to fiscal year 2026-27, throughout all states and UTs.

Fisheries sector in India

- **Fisheries and aquaculture** are significant sources of food, nutrition, employment, and money in India. At the primary level, the sector employs about 25 million fishers and fish growers, with twice as many employed further up the value chain.
- India is the world’s **third largest fish producer**, accounting for **8% of worldwide production**, and ranks second in aquaculture production.
- In **2021-22**, fish production is expected to be 16.24 million tonnes (MTs), with 4.12 MTs coming from marine sources and 12.12 MTs coming

from aquaculture.



Challenges faced by the fisheries sector

Overfishing:

Overfishing happens when fish are harvested at a rate that surpasses their natural reproduction, resulting in the depletion of fish populations. This could lead to the collapse of fisheries and have a severe influence on the ecology.

Illegal, Unreported, And Unregulated (IUU) Fishing:

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing hampers fisheries management efforts since it operates outside the legislation. It can lead to overfishing, endanger marine ecosystems, and create unfair competition for legal fishermen.

Pollution:

Agricultural runoff, industrial discharges, and plastic trash can contaminate water bodies, compromising the health of fish and other aquatic creatures.

Pollutants can also build in fish tissues, providing health concerns to humans who consume polluted seafood.

Invasive species:

The introduction of non-native species into new environments can disrupt local ecosystems and harm native fish populations. Invasive species may out-compete native species for resources or spread illness.

Habitat degradation:

Human activities such as coastal expansion, pollution, and destructive fishing techniques have the potential to destroy vital fish habitats such as coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds. Loss of habitat lowers fish breeding and feeding grounds.

Climate change:

Climate change influences fish populations by changing ocean temperatures, currents, and prey distribution. It can also cause ocean acidification, which has an impact on the health of marine creatures and fisheries productivity in general.

Limited access to markets and resources:

Market and resource access is typically a difficulty for small-scale fishers. A lack of infrastructure, technology, and financial assistance can limit their capacity to compete in the global market.

Significance of PMMSY

- **Job Creation:** It is expected to produce 1.7 lakh new jobs, with a focus on hiring 75,000 women, as well as 5.4 lakh additional employment opportunities in the micro and small firm value chain.
- **Performance-Based Incentives:** The gradual transition from traditional subsidies to performance-based incentives in fisheries
- **Addressing Aquaculture Crop Losses:** To enhance production and productivity, address aquaculture crop losses caused by disease through aquaculture insurance coverage. Improve export competitiveness with value addition, value realisation, and value creation.

- **Value Chain Efficiencies:** Increased income due to improved profit margins related to value chain efficiencies
- **National Fisheries Digital Platform:** To establish a National Fisheries Digital Platform to equip 40 lakh small and micro-enterprises with work-based IDs.
- **Job Creation:** It is expected to produce 1.7 lakh new jobs, with a focus on hiring 75,000 women, as well as 5.4 lakh additional employment opportunities in the micro and small firm value chain.

RBI'S REPORT "FINANCES OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS"



Why in the News?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released a report titled 'Finances of Panchayati Raj Institutions' for fiscal year 2022-23, which throws light on the financial dynamics of India's Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI). According to the report, local taxes and levies provided only 1.1 per cent of Panchayats' overall revenue.

Key findings of the Report

State revenue share and disparities:

Panchayats continue to get a little portion of their state's revenue. For instance, in **Andhra Pradesh, revenue receipts of Panchayats constitute only 0.1% of the State's own revenue**, while in **Uttar Pradesh**, it comprises **2.5%**, the highest among states. There are significant variations among states in terms of the average revenue earned per Panchayat, with Kerala and West Bengal leading with average revenues exceeding Rs 60 lakh and Rs 57 lakh per Panchayat, respectively.

Financial statistics:

In the fiscal year 2022-23, Panchayats registered a total revenue of **Rs 35,354 crore**. A meagre **Rs 737 crore** was generated through their own tax revenue, which includes taxes on professions and

trades, land revenue, stamps and registration fees, property taxes, and service tax. **Non-tax revenue** amounted to **Rs 1,494 crore**, mainly from interest payments and Panchayati Raj programs. Notably, **Panchayats received Rs 24,699 crore in grants from the Central government and Rs 8,148 crore from State governments.**

Chart 1: The chart shows the revenue receipts of panchayats in 2022-23. Figures in %

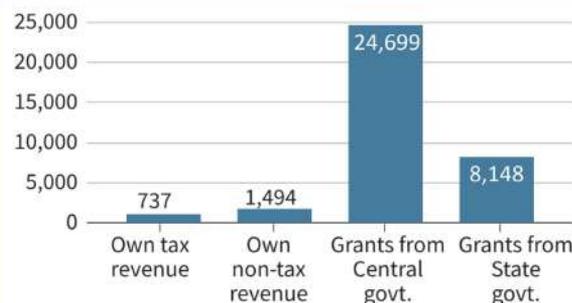
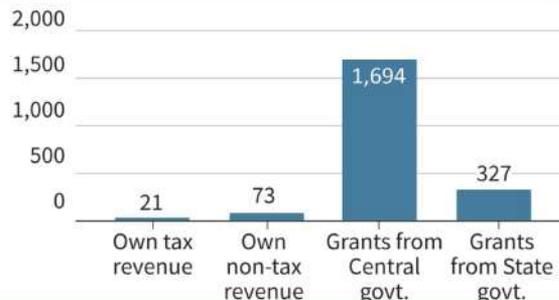


Chart 2: The chart shows the average revenue per panchayat in 2022-23. Figures in Rs. thousand



Revenue structure:

Only **1% of the revenue collected by Panchayats is derived from taxes**, with the majority originating from grants provided by the Central and State governments. Data indicates that **80% of the revenue** is sourced from Central government grants, while 15% is obtained from State government grants.

Per panchayat revenue:

On average, each Panchayat earned only **Rs 21,000 from its own tax revenue and Rs 73,000 from non-tax revenue**. Conversely, grants from the Central government totalled approximately Rs 17 lakh per Panchayat, with State government grants reaching over Rs 3.25 lakh per Panchayat.

RBI recommendations:

The RBI advocates for **promoting greater decentralization and empowering local leaders and officials**. It suggests measures to enhance the financial

autonomy and sustainability of Panchayati Raj, emphasizing transparent budgeting, fiscal discipline, community involvement in development prioritization, staff training, and rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, the report underscores the importance of raising public awareness about PRI functions and encouraging citizen participation for effective local governance.

Financial Resources available to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are:

- Funding originates from the **Central Finance Commission**, specifically through tax devolution, and additional grants allocated by the Central Government.
- Finances collected by the State government on behalf of local bodies, known as State Finance Commissions Transfer, encompass tolls, taxes, duties, fees, and grants-in-aid.
- In accordance with **Article 243-H**, PRIs have the authority to impose, gather, and allocate taxes, duties, tolls, and fees.

Funding issues faced by Panchayats:

Dependency on Grants: Panchayats heavily rely on grants from the Central and State governments, making them financially dependent. Inadequate grants can hinder their ability to implement developmental projects and provide essential services.

Inadequate Own Revenue Generation: Panchayats face challenges in generating sufficient revenue through local taxes and fees. Limited financial autonomy restricts their ability to fund local initiatives and reduces self-sustainability.

Unequal Distribution of Funds: The distribution of funds among Panchayats is often unequal, leading to disparities in resource availability. Some Panchayats receive more financial support than others, exacerbating regional imbalances in development.

Limited Fiscal Devolution: The devolution of financial powers to Panchayats is not always comprehensive. This limited fiscal devolution impedes their ability to make independent financial decisions and address local needs effectively.

Lack of Transparency in Fund Allocation: In some cases, the allocation and utilisation of funds may lack transparency, leading to mismanagement and corruption. This can undermine the intended impact of funds on local development.

Insufficient Capacity Building: Panchayats may face challenges in effectively utilising funds due to a lack of administrative and financial management capacity. Adequate training and capacity-building programs are essential to enhance their financial management skills.

Unpredictable Funding Patterns: The unpredictability of fund releases from higher levels of government can create uncertainty for Panchayats in planning and executing long-term projects. Timely and consistent funding is crucial for sustained development.

IEA'S REPORT INDIAN OIL MARKET OUTLOOK TO 2030 REPORT

Why in the News?

The International Energy Agency (IEA) recently published the Indian Oil Market Outlook to 2030 report, which examines how India's involvement in the global oil market may change between now and 2030. The report examines energy transition patterns that may affect oil demand in various industries, and how these changes may impact the country's energy security.

What does the report say?

India's preeminence in Oil demand growth:

Projections indicate that India will emerge as the primary contributor to global oil demand growth until 2030, **surpassing China by 2027**. The anticipated surge in India's oil demand is estimated to reach approximately 1.2 million **barrels per day (bpd)** by 2023, constituting over a third of the projected global demand growth of 3.2 million bpd by 2030. The outlook for India's total oil demand projects an increase from 5.48 million bpd in 2023 to 6.64 million bpd in 2030. This growth is attributed to robust economic expansion, population growth,

and demographic factors.

Investments in the refining sector:

Indian oil companies are making substantial investments in the refining sector to meet the escalating domestic oil demand. Over the **next seven years, India is expected to add 1 million bpd of new refinery distillation capacity**, surpassing any other country globally outside of China. Additional significant projects are under consideration, potentially exceeding the anticipated 6.8 million bpd capacity.

Role in global oil markets:

India is positioned to maintain its role as a crucial exporter of transportation fuels to markets in Asia and the Atlantic Basin. **Since 2022**, India's influence as a global swing supplier has grown, particularly with the redirection of Asian diesel and jet fuel due to the loss of Russian product exports to European markets. **In 2023, India ranked as the fourth-largest exporter of middle distillates globally and the sixth-largest exporter of refinery products** at 1.2 million bpd. The forecast indicates that new refining capacity will initially boost global product supplies to 1.4 million bpd through the mid-decade before slightly declining to 1.2 million bpd by 2030 due to the rise in domestic demand.

Increased fuel demands:

Diesel/gasoil is identified as the predominant driver of oil demand growth in India, contributing nearly half of the nation's increase and over one-sixth of the total global oil demand growth by 2030. Jet-kerosene demand is poised to experience substantial growth at an average rate of 5.9% per year, albeit from a lower baseline compared to other countries. India's average fuel consumption is expected to increase by 0.7%, as the country's growing fleet of electrified vehicles helps to offset a larger increase in demand.. The electrification trend is also expected to lead to modest growth in gasoline demand, while increased investments in production facilities are anticipated to drive LPG demand.

Crude oil imports:

India's crude oil imports are predicted to rise by more than a fourth to 5.8 million **barrels per day** by 2030, due to sustained demand growth and falling

domestic supply. Currently, India relies on imports to fulfil over 85% of its oil requirements, making it the **third-largest global consumer of crude oil after the US and China**. The nation's domestic consumption, as per oil ministry data, stands at around 5 million bpd.

Biofuels in decarbonisation:

Biofuels are expected to play a pivotal role in India's transport sector decarbonisation. India currently stands as the **world's third-largest producer and consumer of ethanol**, with domestic production tripling over the last five years. Supported by ample feedstocks, political backing, and effective policy implementation, India's ethanol blending rate of approximately 12% ranks among the world's highest. India has expedited its timeline for doubling nationwide **ethanol blending in gasoline to 20%, aiming to achieve this by Q4 2026**. However, meeting the 20% ethanol blending target within this accelerated time frame poses several challenges, primarily related to rapidly expanding feedstock supplies.

Major Oil Refineries in India



Efforts in Energy transition:

The increased adoption of **Electric Vehicles (EVs)** is anticipated to play a pivotal role in the transport sector's decarbonisation. Projections estimate

that the combined impact of new EVs and energy efficiency improvements will prevent an additional **480,000 barrels per day of oil demand in the 2023-2030 period**. Without these gains, India's oil demand would reach a significantly higher 1.68 million bpd by 2030 compared to the current forecast.

Challenges:

Despite making efforts to attract foreign upstream investment, domestic crude oil production is expected to continue declining over the medium term due to a lack of new discoveries. In 2023, India ranked as the world's second-largest crude oil net importer, **having increased imports by 36%** over the past decade to 4.6 million bpd to meet rising refinery intake. The continued expansion of refining processing is expected to further elevate crude oil imports to **5.8 million bpd by 2030**, posing significant implications for India's security of supply.

Recommendations:

India's current oil stock holding levels equate to 66 days of net-import cover, with **Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) stocks covering seven days**. In comparison, IEA member countries maintain a stockpile equivalent to **90 days of their demand**. While India holds an associate member status and is not a full member of the agency, there is a need to enhance its capacity to respond to potential oil supply disruptions. Strengthening and implementing SPR programs and enhancing oil industry readiness are crucial steps to mitigate the impact of emergencies such as wars on energy supplies.

FARMERS' PROTEST FOR MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE (MSP)

Why in the News?

A prominent demand of the farmers protesting in Delhi is the passage of legislation to ensure minimum support prices (MSP) for all crops, as proposed by the Dr M S Swaminathan Commission.

What are the demands of farmers?

- **Granting Legal Standing to MSP:** The introduction of legislation to confer obligatory legal sta-

tus to Minimum Support Price (MSP) in accordance with the recommendations put forth by the MS Swaminathan Commission.

- **Debt Relief:** Complete forgiveness of debts for farmers and labourers;
- **Implementation of the Land Acquisition Act of 2013:** Including provisions necessitating written consent from farmers prior to acquisition and compensation at a rate four times the collector rate;
- **Exit from WTO:** Advocating for India's withdrawal from the World Trade Organization (WTO) and a cessation of all free trade agreements;
- **Pension Assistance:** Provision of pensions for both farmers and farm labourers;
- **Employment under MGNREGA:** Amplifying the employment tenure under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to 200 days annually (as opposed to 100), with a daily wage of Rs 700, and interlinking the scheme with agricultural activities.

What is the Minimum Support Price?

- MSP is a **form of governmental intervention**, crafted to safeguard farmers from significant declines in the pricing of their produce and to help them prevent financial losses.
- The Indian government establishes MSP for **24 different commodities** biannually, with the aim of shielding farmers from price drops during favourable crop years. When the market price falls below the declared MSP, the government commits to purchasing the entire quantity from farmers at the MSP, serving as a protective measure. This strategy encourages agricultural production, ensuring a consistent supply of essential food grains in India.
- MSPs not only establish a benchmark for prices in the specified commodities but also **influence pricing in alternative crops**. A genuine MSP involves government intervention whenever market prices dip below a predetermined level, particularly in instances of surplus production, oversupply, or price collapses influenced by global factors.

- Beyond its role in stabilizing prices, MSP serves as an incentive for the cultivation of various crops crucial for nutritional security. This includes coarse cereals, pulses, and edible oils, where India relies on imports, emphasizing the multifaceted utility of the MSP mechanism.

How is the Minimum Support Price (MSP) calculated?

- The determination of the **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** involves the **consideration of both explicit and implicit costs** borne by farmers. Explicit costs encompass expenditures such as chemicals, fertilisers, seeds, and hired labour, while implicit costs include factors like family labour and rent. These variables are denoted as **A2, FL, and C2**.
- **A2 signifies the costs associated with inputs** like chemicals, fertilisers, seeds, and hired labour for the growth, production, and maintenance of crops.
- **A2 + FL** encompasses both actual and implicit costs, incorporating family labour. C2 comprises A2 + FL along with fixed capital assets and rent paid by farmers.
- In addition, the **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)** takes various other factors into account:
 - Crop costs and cultivation costs per hectare vary by region.
 - Cost of production per quintal and regional disparities.
 - Market prices of relevant crops and their variations.
 - Other production and labour costs, along with associated fluctuations.
 - Prices of commodities bought or sold by farmers and any price fluctuations.
 - Information on product supply, such as area, imports, yield, exports, production, and stockpiles, is shared with governmental authorities or industries.

- Demand information across regions, encompassing total and per capita consumption, trends in the processing industry, and capacity.

Reasons behind no legalisation of MSP till now

Several challenges have hindered the government's willingness to provide a legal guarantee to the Minimum Support Price (MSP). These issues include

- **Heavy Subsidy:** The current MSP system places a significant subsidy burden on the government, leading to an escalation in the fiscal deficit within the annual budget.
- **Challenges in Foodgrain Management:** The government lacks the necessary physical resources to procure, store, and market large quantities of produce. This limitation arises when there are no buyers willing to pay the MSP, creating difficulties in effective foodgrain management.
- **Consistent Increase in MSPs:** The continual rise in MSPs results in overflowing Food Corporation of India (FCI) godowns. Additionally, the elevated MSP makes it challenging for the FCI to sell its stocks in the international market at a profitable rate.
- **Sale Outside APMC:** The majority of the sales for crops covered under MSP do not occur within Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs). Consequently, there is no recorded information on the purchasers or seller farmers involved in these transactions. Ensuring MSP for such transactions becomes impractical, especially when small and marginal farmers sell their produce to village traders operating outside the purview of APMCs.

PAYTM PAYMENTS BANK LTD FORBIDDEN FROM RECEIVING NEW DEPOSITS

Why in the News?

Paytm Payments Bank Ltd has been forbidden by the Reserve Bank of India from receiving new deposits and conducting credit transactions commencing in March 2024. This ruling essentially prevents Paytm Payments Bank from providing all of its

PAYMENTS BANK	SMALL FINANCE BANK
Can accept deposits, but only up to 1 lakh per individual customer	Allowed to take deposits of any amount
Can't lend in any form	Can lend but the focus will on small lending
Can open small savings accounts	Can finance small business units, small marginal farmers, micro and small industries and unorganised sector entities
Can provide remittance services	Can provide remittances as well as credit cards
Allowed to issue automated teller machine (ATM) or debit cards	Allowed to issue ATM or debit cards
Not allowed to issue credit cards	Has to ensure that 50% of loan portfolio constitutes advances of up to 25 lakh
Can distribute products such as mutual funds, insurance and third-party loans	Can distribute financial products such as mutual funds, insurance and pension

main services, including accounts and wallets.

What does the RBI direction say?

- Prevented Paytm Payments Bank from providing almost all of its core services. After February 29, Paytm will no longer accept deposits or top-ups in any customer account, prepaid instrument, wallet, FASTags, National Common Mobility Card (NCMC), or other similar services.
- The RBI stated that the nodal accounts of parent company One97 Communications and Paytm Payments Services should be cancelled as soon as possible, but no later than February 29.
- Settlement of all pipeline transactions and nodal accounts, commenced on or before February 29, must be completed by March 15, and no transactions will be permitted beyond that date.
- Customers are free to withdraw or spend money from their Paytm accounts, which include savings and current accounts, prepaid instruments, FASTags, NCMC, and so on, as long as they do not exceed their available balance.

About Payment Banks

- Payment banks, a brainchild of the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, emerged in 2014 as a new breed of financial institutions aimed at bridging the gap between traditional banks and unbanked segments of the population. It was based on the recommendations of the **Nachiket Mor Committee**. Unlike their full-fledged counterparts, payment banks come with a distinct set of features and limitations, catering to a specific financial needs

Key characteristics of Payment Banks:

- **Limited deposit taking:** Payment banks can accept deposits up to **₹200,000** per customer, encouraging convenient savings without hefty initial sums.
- **No credit facilities:** Unlike traditional banks, they cannot issue loans or credit cards, focusing solely on deposit and payment services.
- **Digital-first approach:** They leverage technology to provide digital and mobile banking solutions, ensuring wider accessibility and financial

inclusion.

- **Basic financial products:** They offer services like bill payments, money transfers, debit cards, and limited overdraft facilities.

Benefits for customers:

- **Easy access to banking:** Payment banks simplify entry into the formal financial system, especially for individuals who lack access to traditional bank branches.
- **Convenient digital services:** Their digital focus makes banking more accessible and user-friendly, particularly for tech-savvy customers.
- **Security and regulation:** Backed by the RBI, payment banks offer a secure environment for deposits and transactions.
- **Financial inclusion:** They play a crucial role in bringing unbanked and underbanked populations into the mainstream financial system.
- **Low-Cost Services:** Payment banks often operate with lower overhead costs due to their digital-first approach and limited service offerings. Thus, can provide services with lower fees and reduced or no minimum balance requirements.
- **Quick and Easy Account Opening:** Payment banks often simplify the account opening process, allowing users to register and access basic banking services quickly.

Limitations to consider:

- **Deposit restrictions:** The cap on deposits might not suit individuals with higher savings requirements.
- **Limited product range:** The absence of credit facilities and certain investment options restricts their service scope compared to traditional banks.
- **Transaction charges:** Some payment banks levy transaction charges, which might not be ideal for frequent users.
- **Dependency on Technology Infrastructure:** Payment banks heavily rely on technology for

their operations. Any disruptions in digital services can hinder their ability to provide services.

- **Low Transaction Volumes:** In certain regions or during economic downturns, payment banks may face challenges in achieving sufficient transaction volumes.

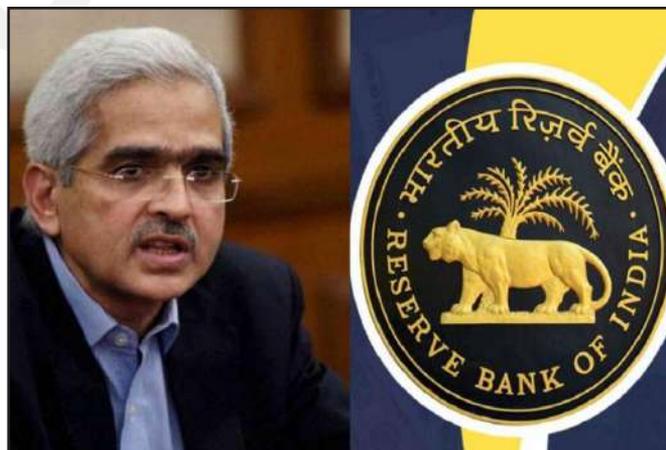
India right now has 6 Payment Banks:

- Airtel Payment Bank
- India Post Payment Bank
- Fino payment bank
- Paytm Payment Bank
- NSDL Payment Bank
- Jio Payment Bank

MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE (MPC) OF RBI



Why in the News?



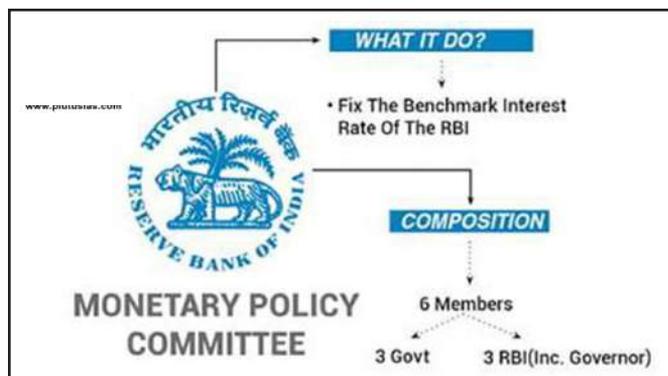
- In February 2024, the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has ensured that inflation is increasingly in line with the target by keeping interest rates unchanged and by sticking to its stance of 'withdrawal of accommodation', as well as RBI's It has been chosen as a prudent option to continue the objective of the Monetary Policy Committee.



Monetary Policy Committee:

- Monetary Policy Committee is a committee constituted by the Government of India which was formed on June 27, 2016 to make interest rate determination more useful and transparent. Policy making in India has been handed over to a newly constituted Monetary Policy Committee by amending the Reserve Bank of India Act.
- In May 2016, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Act, 1934 was amended to provide for a flexible inflation targeting framework. The amended RBI Act also provides that the Government of India will set an inflation target once every 5 years in consultation with the Reserve Bank. The first meeting of the MPC was held on 3 October 2016 in Mumbai.
- Under Section 45ZB of the RBI Act, 1934, which has been amended in the year 2016, the Central Government has the right to constitute a six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).
- Section 45ZB states that the Monetary Policy Committee will determine the policy rate necessary to achieve the inflation target.
- The decision of the Monetary Policy Committee in India will be binding on banks.

Composition of Monetary Policy Committee:



- The Chairman of the Monetary Policy Committee is the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India and at present the Chairman of the Monetary Policy Committee is the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Shaktikanta Das.
- As per Section 45 ZB, the Monetary Policy Committee of RBI will consist of 6 members.
- The Governor of RBI is its ex-officio Chairman.
- The deputy governor is in charge of monetary policy.
- It has an officer of the Bank nominated by the Central Board as its member.
- Three persons are appointed by the Central Government in the Monetary Policy Committee.
- Under this process, competent and impartial persons having knowledge and experience in the field of economics or banking or finance or monetary policy will be appointed.

Tenure of Members of The Monetary Policy Committee:

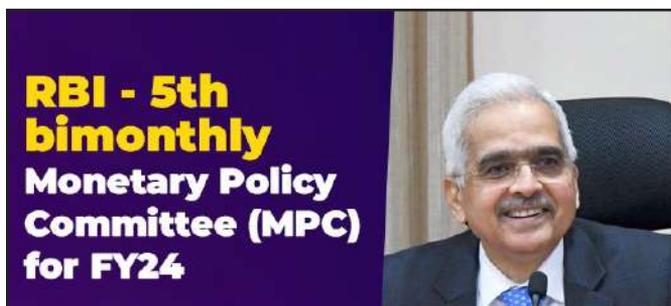
- The tenure of the members of the Monetary Policy Committee will be only for four years, and they will not be eligible for reappointment.
- Members of the Monetary Policy Committee are appointed for a term of four years only.

Present Members of The Monetary Policy Committee of India:

At present the following are the 6 members of the Monetary Policy Committee of India –

- Shaktikanta Das (Governor of RBI)
- Michael Debabrata Patra (Deputy Governor)
- Ashima Goyal
- Shashank Bhide
- Rajeev Ranjan
- Jayant R. Varma.

Monetary Policy:



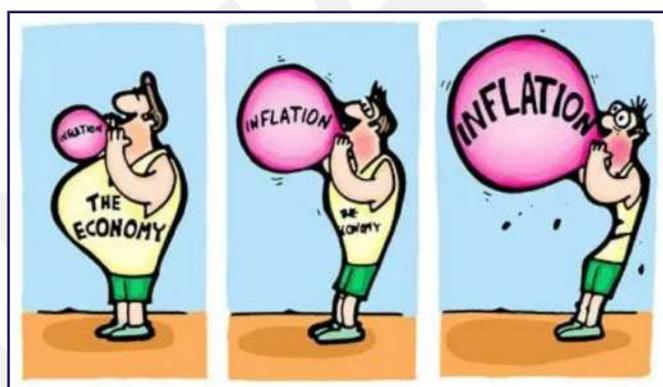
- Monetary policy refers to the policy of the central bank regarding the use of monetary instruments under its control to achieve the objectives specified in the Act.
- The primary objective of RBI's monetary policy is to maintain price stability while keeping growth in mind. Price stability is an essential pre-condition for sustainable development.
- The amended RBI Act, 1934 also provides for setting of an inflation target (4% + -2%) by the Government of India in consultation with the Reserve Bank once every five years.

Objective Of Monetary Policy Committee:

The objectives of the Monetary Policy Committee are as follows –

- The primary objective of RBI's monetary policy is to maintain price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth.
- Price stability is a necessary condition for sustainable development.
- The work of the Monetary Policy Committee is also to prepare the citizens of the country to face the challenges of an increasingly complex economy.
- The function of the Monetary Policy Committee is also to maintain inflation at a certain level (4%+/-2%). The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is responsible for keeping the inflation target at 4% (with a deviation of 2%).
- Improving the repo rate and reverse repo rate is also the work of the Monetary Policy Committee.

- Determining the policy interest rate is also the work of the Monetary Policy Committee.
- The function of the Monetary Policy Committee is also to provide reasonable price stability.
- Keeping the business cycle stable is also the work of the Monetary Policy Committee.
- The work of the Monetary Policy Committee is also to pay attention to exchange rate stability.
- It is also the job of the Monetary Policy Committee to accelerate the growth of the economy.
- The work of the Monetary Policy Committee also includes focusing on employment creation in the country.



Indian Economy And Banking Terminology:

Repo Rate:

- The interest rate at which the Reserve Bank provides overnight liquidity to banks on the collateral of government and other approved securities under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF).

Reverse Repo Rate:

- The interest rate at which the Reserve Bank receives liquidity from banks on a daily basis under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF).

Liquidity Adjustment Facility:

- The Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) includes daily as well as term repo auctions.
- The purpose of term repos is to facilitate the development of an interbank term money market, which in turn can set market-based benchmarks

for pricing loans and deposits and thus improve the transmission of monetary policy.

- RBI also conducts variable interest rate reverse repo auctions, as required under market conditions.

Marginal Standing Facility (MSF):

- It is a facility under which scheduled commercial banks can charge a penal rate of interest by borrowing an additional amount of overnight currency from the Reserve Bank of India up to a limit in their Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) portfolio.
- It acts as a safety valve to the banking system against unexpected liquidity shocks.

Corridor:

- The MSF rate and the reverse repo rate determine the corridor for daily movement in the weighted average call money rate.

Bank Rate:

- It is the rate at which the Reserve Bank is ready to buy or exchange bills of exchange or other commercial papers. The Bank Rate is published under Section 49 of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.
- This rate is linked to the MSF rate and hence changes automatically when the MSF rate changes with the policy repo rate.

Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR):

- The share of net demand and time liabilities that banks are required to maintain as cash balances with the Reserve Bank is notified by the Reserve Bank in the Gazette of India from time to time.

Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR):

- The share of net demand and time liabilities that banks hold in secured and liquid assets such as unencumbered government securities, cash and gold.
- Changes in SLR often affect the availability of resources in the banking system for lending to the

private sector.

Open Market Operations (OMO):

- These include both outright purchase/sale of government securities and infusion/absorption of sustainable liquidity respectively.

Market Stabilization Scheme (MSS):

- It was started in the year 2004 for monetary management in India.
- In this, surplus liquidity of a more permanent nature arising from large capital inflows is absorbed through the sale of short-term government securities and revenue bills.
- The cash raised is kept in a separate government account with the Reserve Bank.

CONCLUSION / SOLUTION:

- External members are government nominees who are appointed on the basis of the recommendations of a search cum selection committee consisting of the Cabinet Secretary (Chairman), the RBI Governor and the Secretary of the Department of Economic Affairs (Union Finance Ministry). Nominated members must have knowledge in the field of economics, banking or monetary policy.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Monetary Policy Committee of RBI.

1. The members of the Monetary Policy Committee are appointed for a term of six years only.
2. The Chairman of the Monetary Policy Committee is the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India.
3. In India, the decision of the Monetary Policy Committee is binding on the banks.
4. Members of the Monetary Policy Committee are eligible for reappointment.

Which of the above statement/statements is correct?

- (a) Only 1, 2 and 3
- (b) Only 2, 3 and 4
- (c) Only 1 and 4.
- (d) Only 2 and 3

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. The objective of the “Beti Bachao Beti Padhao” scheme in India is to ensure women’s safety in workplaces
2. “Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)” function as a comprehensive support system for women at the district level.
3. SWADHAR Greh” primarily focuses on providing assistance to Victims of human trafficking and domestic violence

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 2 and 3
- (c) 1 and 3
- (d) None

Q3. Which scheme aims to provide temporary accommodation, rehabilitation, and support for women in distress, including those without family support?

- (a) Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)
- (b) Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
- (c) SWADHAR Greh
- (d) NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR

Q4. What is the difference between “vote-on-account” and “Interim Budget”?

1. The provision of a “vote-on-account” is used by a regular Government, while an “interim budget” is a provision used by a caretaker Government.
2. A “vote-on-account” only deals with the expenditure in the Government’s budget, while an “interim budget” includes both expenditures

and receipts.

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:

1. The Prime Minister is responsible for presenting the annual budget in India
2. The “Pink Book” of the Indian budget is associated with the Defence aspect
3. The annual financial statement of the government is commonly known as the Finance Bill

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three
- (d) None

Q6. The fundamental object of the Panchayati Raj system is to ensure which among the following?

1. People’s participation in development
2. Political accountability
3. Democratic decentralisation
4. Financial mobilisation

Select the correct answer using the code given below

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

Q7. Consider the following statements:

1. The role of the District Planning Committee in Panchayati Raj is to Coordinate development activities in the district
2. The term duration for Panchayats as per the 73rd Amendment Act is 5 years
3. 21 years is the minimum age to contest elections for the post of a Panchayat Samiti member

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Q8. Consider the following statements:

1. 'Vanami Shakti' initiative is associated with the empowerment of Women in fisheries sector
2. The 'Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF)' is administered by NABARD
3. Odisha has implemented the 'Sagar Tatva' initiative for sustainable fisheries management
4. The primary objective of the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) is to Promote recreational fishing

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Q9. What does A2 + FL represent in the calculation of MSP?

- (a) Actual costs only
- (b) Implicit costs only
- (c) Both actual and implicit costs
- (d) Fixed capital assets only

Q10. Consider the following statements:

1. In the case of all cereals, pulses and oil seeds, the procurement at Minimum Support Price (MSP) is unlimited in any State/UT of India.
2. In the case of cereals and pulses, the MSP is fixed in any State/UT at a level to which the market price will never rise.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q11. Consider the following statements:

1. 200,000 is the maximum deposit amount allowed in a payment bank.
2. Payment banks can provide loans to farmers
3. Payment banks primarily operate through on-line platforms

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three
- (d) None

Q12. What is the name of the government initiative that aimed to boost financial inclusion through various measures, including the introduction of payment banks?

- (a) Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)
- (b) Atal Pension Yojana (APY)
- (c) Stand Up India
- (d) Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

Q13. Consider the following statements:

1. The coal sector was nationalised by the Govern-

ment of India under Indira Gandhi.

2. Now, coal blocks are allocated on a lottery basis,
3. Till recently, India imported coal to meet the shortages of domestic supply, but now India is self-sufficient in coal production.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q14. Which of the following is/are the characteristic/characteristics of Indian coal?

1. High ash content
2. Low sulphur content
3. Low ash fusion temperature

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	D
2.	B
3.	C
4.	B
5.	B
6.	C
7.	B
8.	C
9.	C

10.	D
11.	B
12.	A
13.	A
14.	A

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. What do you understand about repo rate and reverse repo rate? Discuss how the Monetary Policy Committee of RBI affects the Liquidity Adjustment Facility and Statutory Liquidity Ratio in the development of the Indian economy. Present rational opinion.

Q2. Discuss the impact of deep-rooted patriarchal norms on women’s access to education and employment opportunities in the context of women’s development in India. Suggest measures to address these challenges.

Q3. Examine the significance of education in breaking gender disparities. Discuss how limited access to quality education can perpetuate inequalities and hinder women’s participation in the labour force. Propose policy measures to address this educational gap.

Q4. Assess the potential impact of an expansionary fiscal policy introduced in a government budget on the overall economy. Discuss how it may influence inflation, employment, and economic growth.

Q5. Discuss the importance of sustainable fisheries management in India and the potential consequences of inadequate measures on both the environment and the economy.

Q6. How can the integration of modern technology, such as satellite imagery and data analytics, contribute to the enhancement of fisheries management and productivity in India?

Q7. How is India planning to address the security implications of relying on imports for over 85% of its oil requirements, and what measures are in place to diversify and secure its sources of crude oil?

Q8. How does India plan to balance its growing oil demand with the need for energy security, considering the projected increase in crude oil imports and declining domestic production?

Q9. Discuss the role of Minimum Support Price (MSP) and subsidies in agriculture. How do these mechanisms influence farmers' decisions, crop choices, and overall agricultural practices?

Q10. Examine the environmental implications of the subsidies provided in agriculture, particularly

in the context of water usage, pesticide application, and land management.

Q11. Evaluate the effectiveness of financial literacy initiatives conducted by payment banks in educating users about the benefits and responsible use of digital banking services.

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INTOLERANCE VERSUS THE PATH TO A PLURALISTIC CIVIL SOCIETY IN INDIA

Why in the News?



- Recently, during the inaugural session of the new Parliament building of India, a controversy erupted after copies of the Indian Constitution were gifted to the Members of Parliament (MPs), as the preamble of the gifted copies of the Indian Constitution contained the word 'socialist'. The words 'and' 'secular' were removed.
- Subsequently, the debate in civil society across India focused on whether any of these words define the true spirit of the Constitution of India?
- The meaning of the opening words of the Preamble/Preamble of the Indian Constitution is – **'We the people of India'**.

Preamble of the Indian Constitution:

"We, the People of India, having resolved to constitute India into a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic Republic, and to all its citizens:

Social, Economic and Political Justice,

Freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship,

To achieve equality of status and opportunity,

And in all of them,

To promote fraternity, which ensures the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation,

"With strong resolve, in our Constituent Assembly this day, 26th November, 1949 (Miti Margashirsha Shukla Saptami, Samvat 2006 Vikrami), we hereby adopt, enact and dedicate this Constitution."

- India is not dominated by any external power and the state has its own independent power, it simply means that the citizens of India have the power to elect the heads of the state and other representatives and also have the power to criticize them.
- The nature of the State of India is stated in the Preamble of the Constitution of India. They are – Socialist, Sovereign, Secular, Democratic, Republic.
- The Preamble of the Constitution also includes objectives like liberty, justice, fraternity and equality. In the words of Sir Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer, the President of the Constituent Assembly, who played an important role in the drafting of the Constitution, "The Preamble of the Constitution is the reflection of our long-term dreams."
- Member of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly. M. Munshi described the Preamble as **'The future of our sovereign democratic republic'**. Similarly, another member of the Constituent Assembly, Pandit Thakur Das

Bhargava called the Preamble of the Constitution the **“Soul of the Constitution”**.

Directive Principles of State Policy (Dpsp):

Constitutional provisions:

- DPSP is included in Part IV (Articles 36-51) of the Constitution of India.
- Article 37 of the Indian Constitution talks about the provisions of Directive Principles.

Background:

- The Directive Principles contained in the Indian Constitution are taken from the Constitution of Ireland. It is noteworthy that Ireland itself had taken this principle from the Constitution of Spain.
- Such ideas can be seen in the Declaration of Human Rights and declarations of independence by the American colonies, as well as the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya.
- In India, similar guidelines were provided in the Government of India Act 1935.

Good Governance:

- Good governance means a good governance system that is accountable to the people. In practice it concerns all those processes; Through which such an environment is created in the society in which all individuals get a chance to move towards excellence as per their potential.
- The characteristics of good governance have been clarified by institutions like the Planning Commission and World Bank.

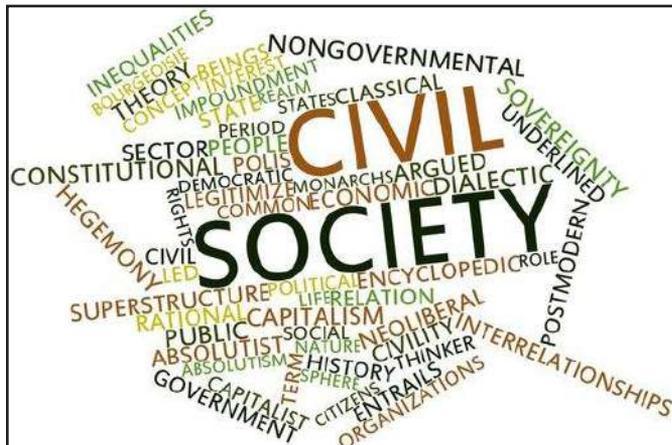
The main features of good governance can be seen as follows –

- Free and fair elections and democratic transfer of power.
- Accountability and transparency of government institutions.
- Decentralization of power and public participation in administration.

- Timely availability of socio-economic services.
- Economy and efficiency of administration.
- Ethics in Administration.
- Establishment of rule of law.
- Promotion of interests of the deprived sections of the society.
- Emphasis on environmentally sustainable development.
- Civil society means such social organizations other than government and business organizations which serve the public voluntarily and in the spirit of social welfare. Non-governmental organizations, consumer organizations, environmental groups and cooperative organizations formed for social purposes are examples of civil society.
- At present their role is very important in implementing the concept of a public welfare state. By connecting with the public, these organizations present the real wishes of the public to the government and implement the concept of good governance by promoting public participation in governance. The Right to Information Act, considered a milestone in the direction of transparency, is the result of the Right to Information movement of civil society. Apart from this, civil society under the leadership of Anna Hazare has also made an important contribution in passing the famous Lokpal Bill. They also increase accountability in governance by making the public aware of government policies, programs and shortcomings. Being committed to ethical trends, many altruistic organizations also establish ethical values in governance. Apart from this, as a non-governmental organization, they also increase the quality of administration by efficiently implementing many government schemes.
- Like the successful implementation of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao or Ayushman Bharat Yojana or Nari Shakti Vandan Yojana is an excellent example of good governance.
- The role of civil society in good governance in

India is very important.

Pluralistic theory:



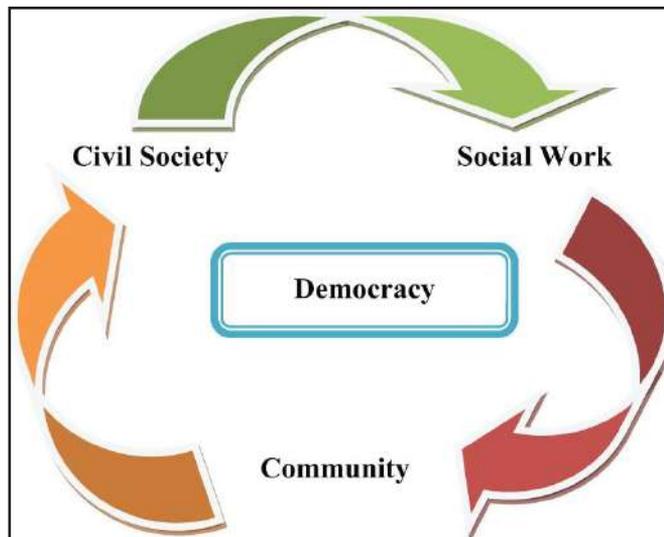
- A pluralistic society is a society where many groups with unique ideologies and values work collaboratively to influence government policies and are active in the governance process. Groups in a pluralistic society may be determined by culture, religion, or common ideologies and values.
- The ideology that emerged against the monistic notion of sovereignty is called political pluralism or multi communism. Thus, pluralism can be said to be a reaction against the monistic concept of sovereignty which, although it wants to maintain the existence of the state, considers it necessary to end the sovereignty of the state.
- According to pluralist ideology, state power is not sovereign and autocratic. The existence of many other communities existing in the society limits the state power. To fulfill his needs, a person not only accepts membership of the state, but also accepts membership of many other communities and associations along with the state. In such a situation, complete power cannot be given to a single state. Famous scholar Hasio has written in this regard that – **“A pluralistic state is a state in which there is not only one source of power, it is divisible into different areas and should be divided.**

Pluralist thinkers:

- Pluralistic ideology has been propounded by many writers and thinkers, including Gierke,

Maitland, Figgis, Digvit, Crewe, Paul Bunker, A. D. Lindley, Durkham, Miss Follett, Ernest Barker, G. The names of D.H. Cole and Harold Laski can be mentioned prominently.

Principles of Pluralism:



- **The state is only a community:** Pluralists do not accept the state as an omnipresent, omnipotent and moral institution. According to him, on the basis of the present condition and structure of the society, the state is nothing but a community like other communities. The needs of human life are multifaceted and the state cannot fulfill all the needs of man. Due to this, apart from the state, other communities also have a useful existence. The work of the state is mainly related to the political aspect of life and according to pluralists it should be limited to its own area, so that other communities can independently develop adequately in all aspects of an individual's life.
- **Pluralists differentiate between state and society:** Like idealists, pluralists do not consider state and society as one but accept them as different units. Pluralism considers the state as a community equal to other communities and describes society as a much broader organization than the state. The state is the only part of the society which cannot be a companion of the society in terms of its purpose and scope.
- **Pluralists believe in controlled state power:** Pluralism rejects unlimited sovereignty and

considers sovereignty as limited in both internal and external areas. The power of the state in the internal sphere is limited by its own nature and the rights of its citizens and communities, and in the external sphere the power of the state is limited by international law and the rights of other nations. Thus, pluralism is opposed to the autocratic power of the state both in the internal and external spheres.

- **According to pluralism, law is independent and superior to the state:** Pluralists, unlike the traditional proponents of sovereignty, consider law to be independent and superior to the state. In this regard, the views of French thinker Duguit and Dutch thinker Crave are noteworthy. According to Duguit, 'Law is independent of political organization, superior to it and prior to it. Without law, social unity or organization or dependence of humans on each other is not possible. The personality of the state is a mere imagination. Law limits the state, the state does not limit the law.' Crabb has also expressed similar views.
- **Pluralism believes in decentralization:** Pluralism does not believe in a centralized state like idealistic philosophy, rather it considers decentralization as the basis of the real usefulness of the state. According to pluralism, local problems are no less important and these local problems cannot be solved by the method of centralization of power. According to the pluralists, the state should decentralize its centralized power and divide it among other communities on the basis of the system of professional representation and thus a federal social organization should be established.
- **Pluralism is not opposed to the existence of the state:** Pluralists oppose the autocratic power of the state, but like anarchism or communism, they are not in favor of destroying it completely. Instead of destroying the nation, they want to limit the powers of the state. According to the pluralists, the monistic theory of sovereignty is nothing but 'blatant nonsense'. The nature and importance of the state of a pluralistic society will be the same as that of other associations and institutions. Pluralists are ready to give pri-

ority to the state over other unions, because the state will act as an arbitrator to resolve mutual disputes between unions, but they are ready to accept the state in its aggressive and autocratic form. It is not, which has been propounded by 'singularist thinkers'.

- **Pluralism is a democratic ideology:** Though pluralism is opposed to the present form of the state, it is not opposed to the democratic system. Pluralism never accepts the use of violent methods to achieve its objectives. From beginning to end he believed in professional representation and secret ballot. In fact, the aim of pluralism is to establish a democratic state in place of a totalitarian state, in which the organization of governance is from the bottom up. They consider equal distribution of sovereignty among other unions as a symbol of the democratic system.
- **Pluralism believes in professional representation:** Pluralist thinker G. D.H. Cole is a special supporter of the principle of professional representation in democracy. Pluralists consider the method of regional representation to be unfair and flawed, because individuals elected on the basis of region can represent them in real form. In such a situation, only this method of representation, which is based on business, can be considered appropriate. A farmer's interests cannot be represented as well by a lawyer living near him as by a farmer living in a distant area who understands his difficulties. For this reason, according to pluralists, constituencies should be decided on the basis of occupation.

Criticism of Pluralism:

- **The logical conclusion of pluralism is anarchy:** The main basis of criticism against pluralism is that the natural result of accepting pluralistic ideology will be a state of anarchy. If every community is considered equal to the state and they are also given proportional rights of sovereignty, then a lawless situation will arise in the society. Pluralistic thinkers are also aware of this fact. For this reason, even after dividing sovereignty into communities, pluralism gives the state the power to establish coordination

and harmony among different communities of the society, but such work cannot be done by the state until it is given a statutory mandate. Do not attain the highest position in terms of vision.

- **Pluralism is based on some misconceptions:** Pluralism is based on some misconceptions. It is wrong to think that the field of work of every community is completely separate from each other and human work can be divided into such departments which have no relation with each other. In the present organization of society, traditional conflict of different interests and beliefs is quite natural. In such a situation, if there is no final legal authority in the society, then due to mutual conflict between different communities, an unhealthy environment will arise, in which human progress will become almost impossible. Therefore, it is false for the pluralists to believe that every community will continue to perform its duties without any conflict.
- **All communities are not of equal status:** An important argument against the pluralist ideology is that in this ideology all the communities of the society are considered to be of equal status. It is a grave mistake of the pluralists to consider every community equal to the state. In fact, due to its special functions of the state institution, its situation is different and special from all other communities.
- **Pluralism attacks the imaginary monistic enemy of sovereignty:** One basis for criticism of pluralism is that the autocratic sovereignty which pluralism attacks has not been propounded by any other proponent of state power except Hegel. All thinkers like Bodden, Hobbes, Rousseau, Austin etc. definitely accept some natural, moral or practical control on the sovereignty of the state. The gist of his statement is simply that sovereignty cannot tolerate the existence of any power equal to itself and this is an irrefutable truth.
- **Pluralism is full of contradictions:** A serious thing against pluralism is that the pluralistic ideology is full of contradictions. Theoretically, pluralists reduce the powers of the state and give

it equality with other communities, but when they come to practice, they accept that political society cannot be imagined without making any one institution sovereign. . In this way they indirectly accept state sovereignty, this can be seen in all pluralist thinkers.

- **Individuals will not be free in a pluralistic system:** Pluralists have this misconception that if the state controls other communities, an individual will get an environment of freedom for the development of his personality, in fact this is not the case. Those who oppose state control in the name of freedom of communities can go further than the state in violating individual rights when they come to power. In the Middle Ages the Church severely persecuted dissenters, and Brainy and Galileo suffered severe torture at the hands of their own countrymen.
- **State cannot be a federation of communities:** The statement of Lindsay, Barker and other pluralists that the state is a federation of communities has been harshly criticized by critics. There is a fundamental difference between the situation of the state and other communities. While other communities are concerned with a particular interest of human beings, the state is concerned with their universal or widespread interests. For this reason, apart from the state, no other community can claim to be the symbol of man's complete personality.
- **Pluralism is anti-patriotic:** Due to reducing the importance of sovereignty and state and being international in its ideology, pluralism opposes the patriotic feeling of the citizens, which cannot be called appropriate and practical. No matter what may be said against state power and no matter how important international ideas are considered, it cannot be denied that patriotism has its own place and importance in the present day states.

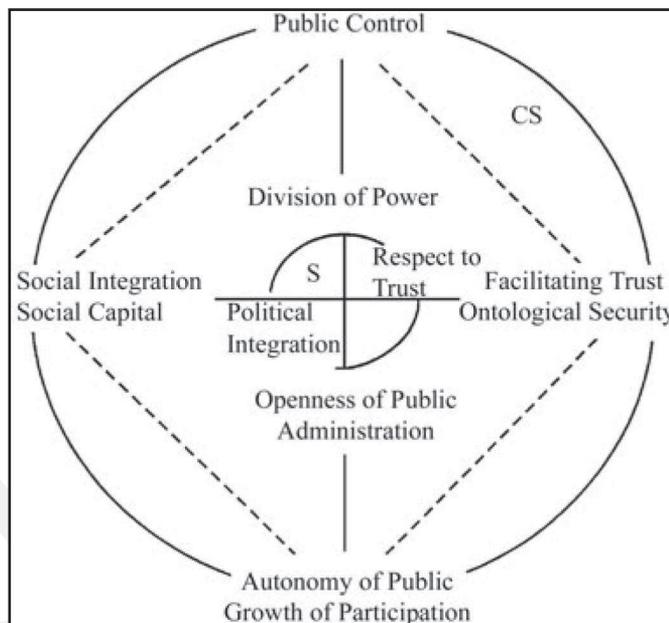
Importance of Pluralism:

- Despite presenting an exaggerated picture of the fragmented form of state power and the importance of unions, there is a lot of truth in the pluralistic philosophy. In the words of Gattil – “Pluralism is a timely and welcome reaction

against rigid and principled legalism and Austin's theory of sovereignty."

- Pluralism emphasizes the increasing importance of non-political associations. It warns against interference by the state in the proper sphere of action of the communities and propounds that not only should these communities be recognized by the state but these communities should be given a greater degree of autonomy in their sphere of action. Keeping in view the outward-looking needs of human life in the present times, this idea of pluralism can be called praiseworthy. Accepting this idea of pluralism in proper form will not only help in the development of an individual's personality but will also essentially increase the efficiency of the state.
- Despite the ongoing debate on intolerance in India, India is a pluralistic society and the Indian Constitution guarantees a secular nation with diversity and equal respect for all sects and religions.
- In the year 2022, the Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu had said that – 'It is not Indian culture to degrade any culture, religion or language.' He called upon every citizen to thwart efforts to weaken India and unite and unite the nation. Called upon to take the responsibility of protecting the interests of.
- The Vice President underlined that – **"India's civilizational values teach respect and tolerance for all cultures and isolated incidents cannot weaken the secular ethos of India. Condemning efforts to malign India's image on the international stage, Shri Naidu reiterated that India's parliamentary democracy and pluralistic values are models to be emulated for the world."**
- An excellent example of the concept of pluralism in the democratic system of India is that the population of India is about 1 billion 40 crores, in which there are more than 4635 communities, out of which 78 percent are not only linguistic and cultural categories but also social categories. Religious minorities constitute 19.4 percent of our population, of which Muslims

constitute 13.4 percent, which is approximately 160 million in number. Human variations are both sequence and local. We, the de jure sovereign people, are in reality a fragmented 'we', divided by thorny gaps yet to be bridged. About 22 percent of our people live below the official poverty line and despite recent improvements, overall health and education indicators for our population remain far below desirable.



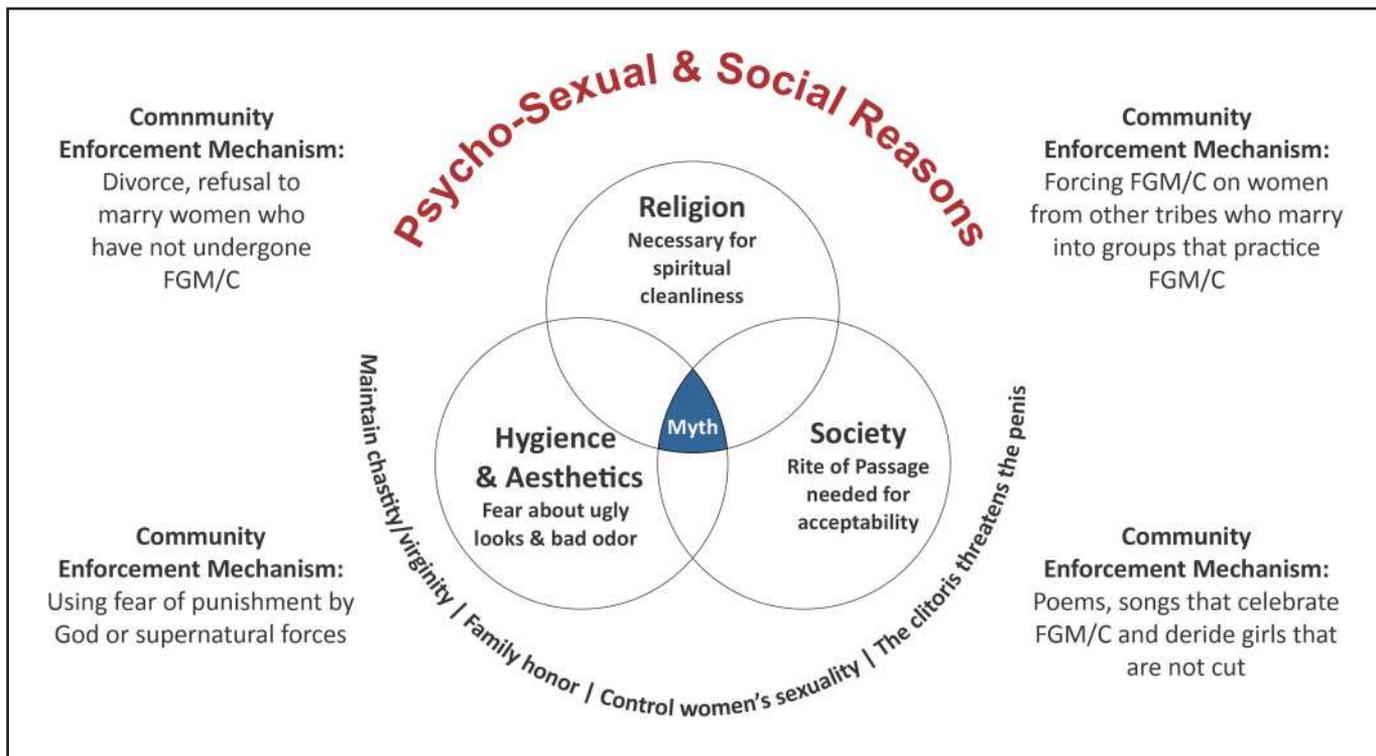
FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Why in the News?

According to recent reports from UN agencies, around 4.4 million girls worldwide could become victims of female genital mutilation by the year 2024.

About Female Genital Mutilation

- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** refers to procedures involving the modification or harm to female genitalia for non-medical or cultural motivations. Internationally, it is acknowledged as a violation of human rights, impacting the well-being and dignity of girls and women.
- While the **majority of those subjected to FGM reside in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab**



States, this practice is also observed in certain countries in Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America.

- The **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** notes that despite uncertain origins, FGM appears to have predated both Christianity and Islam, with historical evidence such as Egyptian mummies displaying characteristics of the practice.
- Additionally, the ancient Greek historian **Herodotus** asserted that in the fifth century BC, circumcision was practiced by the Phoenicians, Hittites, and Ethiopians.

Motives behind Female Genital Mutilation

In various regions, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is carried out for diverse reasons, classified by the **UNFPA into five categories:**

- **Psycho-Sexual Reasons:** FGM is employed as a means to control women’s sexuality, with the removal of genitalia, especially the clitoris, believed to curb perceived insatiable desires.
- **Sociological or Cultural Reasons:** Viewed as part of a girl’s initiation into womanhood and an integral aspect of a community’s cultural

heritage.

- **Hygiene and Aesthetic Reasons:** Some communities consider external female genitalia as unattractive and unclean, prompting FGM for hygiene and aesthetic purposes.
- **Religious Reasons:** While not endorsed by Christianity or Islam, FGM may be justified using “supposed” religious doctrines, according to the UNFPA.
- **Socio-Economic Factors:** In certain communities, FGM is a prerequisite for marriage, particularly where women are economically dependent on men.

Moreover, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** highlights additional motives, including “ the attempt to ensure premarital virginity and the belief that FGM reduces libido, aiding in resisting extra-marital sexual acts”. FGM may also be linked to cultural ideals of femininity and modesty.

Challenges in combating Female Genital Mutilation (FGM):

- **Cultural and Social Norms:** FGM often finds its roots in cultural and social norms, functioning as a tradition passed down through generations

within communities. The task of altering these deeply ingrained beliefs and practices proves to be a formidable challenge.

- **Lack of Awareness and Education:** Within communities where FGM is prevalent, there is a significant lack of understanding regarding the detrimental consequences associated with the practice. The absence of awareness and education about the physical and psychological health risks linked to FGM contributes to its perpetuation.
- **Lack of Adequate Data Collection and Reporting:** Efforts to address FGM are impeded by limited data collection and reporting on its prevalence. The absence of comprehensive information hinders a clear understanding of the issue's scope and undermines the effective targeting of interventions.

Status of FGM in India

- As of right now, the nation does not have legislation outlawing the practice of FGM. The Ministry of Women and Child Development stated in 2017 that “currently there is no public information or study which proves the practice of FGM in India” in answer to a petition filed in the Supreme Court.
- However, according to some other unofficial reports, procedures of FGM are **prevalent amongst the Bohra community**, primarily in the states of Maharashtra, Kerala, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh.

Global efforts towards elimination:

- Since 2008, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have jointly spearheaded the most extensive global initiative dedicated to eradicating female genital mutilation (FGM).
- In 2012, the UN General Assembly officially designated February 6th as the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, with the overarching goal of intensifying and directing efforts toward eliminating this practice. The **Theme for 2024 was “Her Voice. Her Future,”**

GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUITY



Why in the News?



- ‘Alliance for Global Good – Gender Equity and Equality’ program launched by India at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting held in Davos, Switzerland from January 15-19, 2024.
- The World Economic Forum (WEF) has lauded India's inclusive and remarkable growth story under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for its agenda of “**Women-led growth**” and its philosophy of “**Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas**”. The government has been praised.

Global Good-Gender equity and equality coalition:

- The initiative “**Women-led Development**” agenda launched by the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi has been globally supported at the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2024, with the committed support of more than 10,000 businesses from across the WEF world.
- At the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF), India participated in the spirit of “**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**”, aligning with the WEF's overarching theme “**Rebuilding Trust**” for

a shared future marked by global cooperation. Ready to shape.

- At WEF 2024, the Indian official delegation is led by **Union Minister of Women and Child Development Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani, Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Housing and Urban Affairs Shri Hardeep Singh Puri, Union Minister of Railways, Communications, Electronics and IT Shri Ashwini Vaishnav, Shri RK Singh, Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry** and other senior officials of the Government of India participated.
- The Forum meeting announced the launch of the **“Global Good-Gender Equity and Equality”** with the support and collaboration of WEF and the Government of India.
- Announcing the launch of this alliance, Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani said – **“In a place where only politics is involved with the flow of money, we are here to join hands with industry, enterprise and humanity in this grand alliance. Being able to bring together the best.”**
- The collaboration has received support from industry leaders including Mastercard, Uber, Tata, TVS, Bayer, Godrej, Serum Institute of India, IMD Lausanne and over 10,000 industry partners.
- The alliance was organized and led by the CII Center for Women’s Leadership and supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- The World Economic Forum has joined the alliance as a ‘Network Partner’ and Invest India as an ‘Institutional Partner’.
- In view of India’s enduring commitment to **‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’** and its continuous efforts towards **“Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas and Sabka Prayas”** for **‘One Earth, One Family, One Future’**, the **Global Alliance for Gender Equality (‘Alliance for Global Good – Gender Equity and Equality’)** will definitely advance all gender related issues strongly.
- This year’s unique initiative at WEF was the first-ever Women’s Leadership Lounge (We Lead Lounge) by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), led by the Union Minister of Women and Child Development.
- The lounge hosted various panel discussions and meetings on the topics of “women-led development” and increasing women’s participation in the economy, bridging the digital gender gap, promoting women’s health, etc.
- The **“We Lead”** lounge also showcased hand-crafts made by women entrepreneurs and products made by the Tea and Coffee Board of India for women-driven global prosperity.
- Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani participated in eight sessions of this annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF). These include **‘Restoring Confidence in Global Systems’, ‘BRICS in Expansion’, ‘Can India Seize Its Moment’ and ‘Country Strategy Dialogue on India’**. Her meaningful interventions in these sessions focused the attention of all the countries attending the meeting on the policies and initiatives of the Government of India with special emphasis on gender equality and women-led development.
- Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani, Additional Union Minister of WEF, held bilateral meetings with leaders from across the world. She met Her Excellency Noor Ali Alkhulaif, Minister of Sustainable Development of Bahrain, Her Excellency Mrs. Karien van Gennep, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Social Affairs and Employment of the Netherlands and Her Excellency Ms. Caroline Edstadler, also discussed issues of mutual interest and potential cooperation with Her Excellency Ms. Caroline Edstadler, Federal Minister for the European Union and the Constitution, Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria.



World Economic Forum:

- The World Economic Forum was founded in 1971 as a non-profit organization and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The World Economic Forum engages society's foremost political, cultural, business and other leaders to shape the regional and industry agenda at the global level.

Some major reports issued or published by the World Economic Forum:

- Global Energy Transition Index
- Global Competitiveness Report
- Global IT Report (joint report with INSEAD and Cornell University)
- global gender gap index report
- Global Travel and Tourism Report

UN Women:

- UN Women was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2010 to accelerate progress in meeting the needs and rights of women and girls around the world.
- UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards to achieve gender equality and engages governments and citizens to design and implement laws, policies, programs and services that benefit women and girls. Work together with society.
- UN Women's four key strategies focus on strategic priorities such as women's leadership and political participation, women's economic empowerment, ending violence against women, and peace, security and humanitarian action.

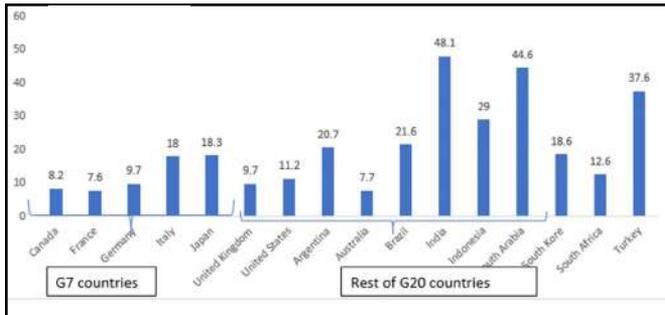
Initiatives started by India to reduce Gender gap:

Following are some of the major initiatives launched by India to reduce the gender gap in social, economic and political life –

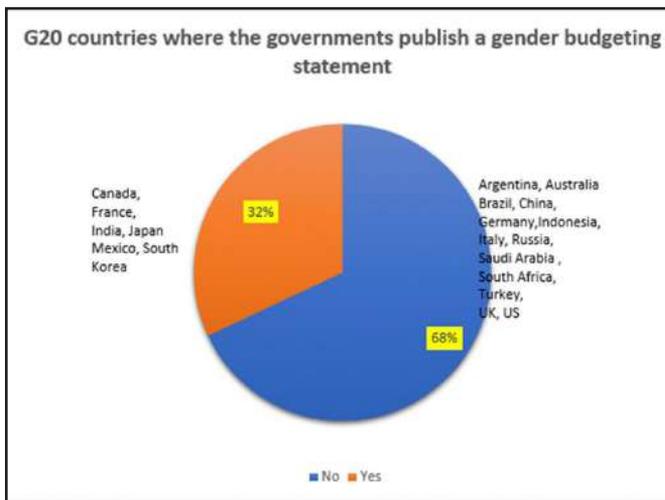


- **Mahila Shakti Kendras:** Mahila Shakti Kendras have been established by the Government of India with the aim of empowering rural women by enhancing their skill development and connecting them with employment opportunities.
- **Kasturba Gandhi Girls Schools:** In India, Kasturba Gandhi Girls Schools have been started by establishing them in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs).
- **Sukanya Samridhi Yojana:** Sukanya Samridhi Yojana has been started by the Government of India. Through this scheme, girls have been empowered financially by opening bank accounts.
- **Women Entrepreneurship:** To promote women entrepreneurship, the government has launched programs like Stand-up India and Mahila e-Haat (online marketing platform to support women entrepreneurs/SHGs/NGOs), Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Program (ESSDP). Have done.
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao:** The main objective of launching the 'Beti Bachao – Beti Padhao' program by the Government of India is to increase the number of girl children in the country and to ensure the guarantee of safety, survival and education of the girl child.
- **Rashtriya Mahila Kosh:** The main objective of Rashtriya Mahila Kosh launched by the Government of India is to provide various livelihood opportunities to poor women and loans at concessional rates and terms for income generating activities through an apex microfinance organization. Have to provide.
- **Political Reservation:** The government has reserved 33% seats in Panchayati Raj institutions for women.

- **Capacity building aimed at empowering elected women representatives:** The main objective of this program is to empower women to participate effectively in governance processes and make them self-reliant.



Conclusion / Solution:



- According to the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index 2023, there has been a slight improvement in India’s ranking in terms of gender equality. However, despite this, India is still far behind the countries around the world. Despite an improvement of eight points in India’s ranking this time compared to last year, India’s ranking is at 127th among 146 countries across the world. In the World Economic Forum’s 2022 report, India’s ranking was 135 among 146 countries.
- In terms of gender equality, the ranking of India’s neighboring countries Nepal, Bhutan, China, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh is much better than India. In which Bangladesh has got 59th rank, China has got 107th rank, Nepal has got 116th rank, Bhutan has got 103rd rank and Sri

Lanka has got 115th rank. Whereas Pakistan has been placed at 142nd rank.

- The World Economic Forum report states that Iceland has had the best performance among countries around the world, which has reduced the gender gap by more than 90 percent for the 14th consecutive year.
- This report states that while equality in pay and income has increased in India, the share of women in senior positions and technical roles has decreased compared to last year. Whereas in terms of political empowerment, India has recorded equality of 25.3 percent, which is the highest since the report came in 2006.
- The share of women in ministerial positions is very low in countries around the world. 75 countries of the world have about 20 percent or less women ministers. Countries like India, Turkey and China have less than seven percent women ministers, while countries like Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon have almost zero women ministers.



SWACHH BHARAT MISSION (RURAL) PHASE II: A CRITICAL VIEW OF THE SANITATION MIRACLE IN RURAL INDIA

Why in the News?

- Swachh Bharat Mission, the world’s largest sanitation initiative, was launched by the Prime Minister of India in 2014 as a tribute to the birthday of Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi, to achieve open defecation free India by October 2, 2019. More than 10 crore individual household toilets were constructed un-

der this programme. Due to which in India the percentage which was 39% in the year 2014 became almost 100% in the year 2019. Because by then about 6 lakh villages in India had declared themselves open defecation free (ODF).

- The studies of cleanliness surveys conducted under the Swachh Bharat Mission clearly show that the Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (SBM-G) campaign has made a significant impact in the economic, environmental and health sectors in the Indian society and the campaign has especially contributed to the empowerment of women and self-respect of women. This also led to the achievement of SDG 6.2 (sanitation and hygiene) 11 years ahead of schedule.
- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi has recently approved the second phase of Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) till 2024-25. This will focus on improving facilities in public toilets (ODF Plus) after eliminating open defecation, which will also include continuation of the open defecation free campaign and solid and liquid waste management (SLWM). In this program, work will be done to ensure that not even a single person is left out and every person uses the toilet.
- Lack of sanitation has been considered as a major problem in India. Even after 67 years of India's independence, in 2014, about 10 crore rural and about 1 crore urban households in India did not have clean toilets and 55 crore people, or about half the country's population at that time, defecated in the open.
- The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS) has advised all States to re-verify that there are no rural households that are unable to use toilets and to ensure that if any such household is identified, it should be provided necessary assistance for construction of individual household toilet so that no one is left behind under this programme.
- The main objective of Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (Phase 2) is to maintain the ODF status of all 6 lakh rural villages and improve the sanitation level by providing solid and liquid waste management as ODF Plus by 2024-25.
- Over the past decade, improving sanitation coverage has been one of the major public policy miracles in India. Access to water and sanitation is Goal 6 among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals envisioned by the United Nations.
- Public sanitation programs have a long history in the country, beginning with the launch of the highly subsidized Central Rural Sanitation Program (CRSP) in 1986.
- The Total Sanitation Campaign in 1999 marked a shift from a high-subsidy system to a low-subsidy system.
- The Public Sanitation Program evolved into a mission under the Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G) in 2014 to make India open defecation free (ODF) by October 2019. Encouraged by the achievements under SBM, The government launched the second phase of SBM-G. The focus here was on sustainability of initial achievements by promoting solid and liquid waste management and covering households previously left out. The government aims to transform India from ODF to ODF Plus by 2024-25. According to government data, about 85% of villages in India have become ODF Plus. Yet, this impressive performance also needs to be viewed from the perspective of behavioral change that will truly bring sustainability.

Main provisions of Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural) campaign:



- Swachh Bharat Mission Rural (SBM-G) Phase-II will be implemented in mission mode with a total outlay of Rs 1,40,881 crore for the period from 2020-21 to 2024-25. This will be a good model of synergy between different dimensions of funding as out of this, Rs 52,497 crore will be

allocated from the budget of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation while the remaining funds will be allocated from the 15th Finance Commission and MNREGA. Especially for solid and liquid waste management. The fund will be funded from funds being issued under revenue generation models.

- The focus is on providing access to IHHL to the left out and newly emerging households to achieve the target of ODF Plus villages. Under this campaign, biodegradable waste management through composting and setting up bio-gas plants; Collection, separation and storage facilities for plastic waste management; Construction of soak pits, waste stabilization ponds etc. for greywater management; And the program also includes faecal sludge management through co-treatment and setting up of FSTPs in existing sewage treatment plants/faecal sludge treatment plants (STP/FSTP) in urban areas.
- There are three progressive stages of ODF Plus villages. A village which retains its ODF status and has arrangements for solid waste management or liquid waste management is considered as an ODF Plus Aspirational Village. A village that maintains its ODF status and has both solid waste management or liquid waste management in place is considered an emerging ODF Plus village. On the other hand, an ODF Plus model village is one that retains its ODF status and has arrangements for both solid waste management and liquid waste management.
- Under this programme, the provision of providing an amount of Rs 12,000 to new eligible households as per existing norms to promote construction of Individual Household Latrines (IHHL) will continue. Funding norms for Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) have been rationalized and the number of households has been replaced by per capita income. Additionally, financial assistance to Gram Panchayats (GP) for construction of community sanitation complex (CMSC) at village level has been increased from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 3 lakh.

Fund sharing structure under Swachh Bharat Mission Rural (SBM-G):

- The Swachh Bharat Mission Rural (SBM-G) program will be implemented by the States/UTs as per the operational guidelines, which will be issued to the States shortly. The fund sharing structure for all components between the Center and the States is 90:10 between the North-Eastern States and Himalayan States and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, 60:40 between the other States and 100:00 between the other Union Territories.

Indicator base for monitoring ODF Plus:



The SLWM component of ODF Plus is monitored based on output-outcome indicators of the following four key areas –

- Plastic Waste Management.
- Biodegradable Solid Waste Management (SLWM) (which includes animal waste management).
- gray water management and
- Fecal sludge management.
 - The second phase of Swachh Bharat Mission Rural (SBM-G) will continue to boost employment generation and rural economy sector through construction of household toilets and community toilets, as well as infrastructure for SLWM such as compost pits, absorbents Will continue to encourage pits, waste stabilization ponds, treatment plants etc.
 - The Cabinet's approval for Swachh Bharat Mission Rural (SBM-G) Phase II will help rural India effectively meet the challenge of solid and liquid waste management and

thereby significantly improve the health of villagers in the country.

Requirements for construction of toilets under Swachh Bharat Mission Rural (SBM-G):

Provisions under Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) cont..

- **School toilets** - Department of School Education and Literacy
- **Anganwadi toilets** - Women and Child Development.
- Triggering 'Behaviour change' by **intensifying IEC campaign and Inter Personal Communication (IPC)**.
- **Outputs (Construction) and Outcomes (Usage)** will be monitored.
- Innovative, **Low cost and User friendly technologies** for toilet and Solid and Liquid Waste Management to be pursued.
- States, which performs well in their IEC campaign, behavioural change and toilet construction effort under the Swachh Bharat Mission to be **Incentivised**.

The following qualifications are required for construction of toilets under Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (SBM-G) –

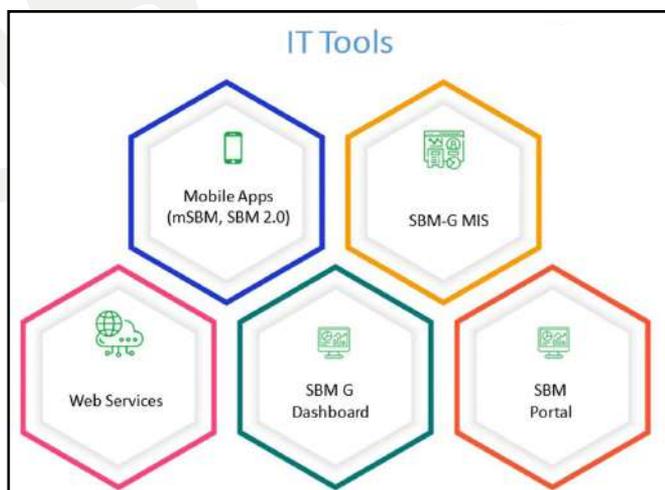
- The construction of the toilet will have to be completed in one go, which must include a double pit toilet, water tank, a wash basin for hand washing and a double pit toilet.
- A round block made of bricks or cement must be inserted in the pit.
- In a double pit toilet, the size of each pit should be 4 feet deep, 4 feet long and 4 feet wide and the distance from one pit to the other should be at least 3 feet.
- Both these pits should be near the toilet which should be connected to a section box. The distance between them should be at least one meter and this pit must be at a distance of at least 15 meters i.e. 40-45 feet from any tap or water source.
- The beneficiary of the toilet must have a bank account so that the amount allocated for the construction of the toilet can be sent directly to his bank account through DBT.
- Only one toilet will be constructed on one ration card.

Process for obtaining financial assistance in Toilet construction:

- Before getting a toilet built, it is mandatory for

the applicant to inform the village Sarpanch of Village Secretary. To get financial assistance after construction of a toilet, the applicant can first obtain the form from the village Sarpanch or Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) office.

- The applicant can fill all the information required in the form and after getting it certified by the Sarpanch, can submit it either to the Sarpanch or directly to the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) office. The applicant also has to attach a color photograph of himself/herself along with the form.
- The toilet is surveyed by the authorized officer and it is seen whether the toilet is properly constructed or not. Along with this, it is also checked whether the toilet is being used or not. If satisfied after investigation, the amount of financial assistance is deposited in the bank account of the person by the authorized officer.



Conclusion / Solution:

- If the government wants to transform India from open defecation free to open defecation free plus status by 2024-25, it needs to identify the gaps in the current programme.
- The receipt of Cabinet approval for Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural) Phase-2 will help rural India effectively meet the challenge of solid and liquid waste management and improve the health of villagers in the country.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. From which part of the Constitution is the phrase “We the people of India” mentioned in the Constitution of India taken?

1. From the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of India.
2. From the fundamental duties mentioned in the Constitution of India.
3. From the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution of India.
4. From the Preamble/Preamble of the Constitution of India.

Which of the above options is correct?

- (a) Only 1 and 4
- (b) Only 2 and 3
- (c) Only 3
- (d) Only 4

Q2. Which scheme focuses on promoting the well-being of pregnant women and lactating mothers by providing them with cash incentives for better nutrition and healthcare?

- (a) Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)
- (b) Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)
- (c) Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY)
- (d) Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP)

Q3. The Swadhar Greh scheme provides shelter and support to

- (a) Widowed women
- (b) Pregnant women
- (c) Women in distress without family support
- (d) Women entrepreneurs

Q4. Consider the following statements with refer-

ence to Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural) in India.

1. In India, Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) has played an important role in the empowerment of women.
2. Under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), India has seven stages of open defecation free (ODF) plus villages.
3. In the second phase of Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), only one toilet will be constructed per ration card.
4. In the second phase of Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), a lump sum amount of fifty thousand is provided to the beneficiaries for the construction of toilets.

Which of the above statement /statements is correct?

- (a) Only 1, 2 and 3
- (b) Only 2, 3 and 4
- (c) Only 2 and 4
- (d) Only 1 and 3

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Global Alliance for Gender Equality and Equity.

1. The Global Coalition for Gender Equality and Equity is organized by the World Economic Forum.
2. In the year 2024, the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum was held in Davos, Switzerland.
3. The theme of the World Economic Forum in the year 2024 was ‘Rebuilding Trust’.
4. The alliance was organized and coordinated by the CII Center for Women’s Leadership and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Which of the above statement / statements is/ are correct?

- (a) Only 1, 2 and 3
- (b) Only 2, 3 and 4

- (c) None of these.
- (d) All of these.

ANSWERS

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

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. What is the importance of pluralistic principle in any democratic State/ Nation? Critically evaluate how the principle of pluralism protects the unity and integrity of India in the context of intolerance in India

Q2. Explore the role of cultural diversity and migration patterns in either perpetuating or challenging the practice of Female Genital Mutilation globally.

Q3. Evaluate the impact of educational initiatives and awareness programs in mitigating the prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation.

Q4. Explaining the various dimensions of the Global Alliance for Gender Equality and Equality, discuss what are the obstacles in the way of gender equality and equality for men and women in India? Present a rational opinion.

Q5. Highlighting the main features of the second phase of Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), discuss how this program has played an important role in the empowerment of women in India and in the field of economic, environmental and health management ?

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ACT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Why in the News?

In response to fears of excessive regulation of **Artificial Intelligence** (AI) in Europe, the European Commission has introduced a set of rules aimed at fostering AI innovation. Following the political agreement reached in December 2023 on the EU AI Act, which is the first-ever comprehensive law on AI globally. The European Commission aims to encourage the development, deployment, and use of trustworthy AI within the European Union (EU).

About Europe's AI innovation plan

- The European Commission has initiated a comprehensive plan to support startups and small businesses in Europe for the development of trustworthy AI. **Key components of the plan** include acquiring, upgrading, and operating AI-dedicated supercomputers to facilitate fast machine learning and the training of **large general-purpose AI (GPAI) models**.
- GPAI models are versatile AI systems capable of performing a wide range of tasks with minimal modification and are at the forefront of the plan. The initiative aims to broaden the use of AI to include public and private users, including startups and SMEs.
- The plan also focuses on supporting the AI start-up and research ecosystem by assisting in algorithmic development, testing, evaluation, and validation of large-scale AI models. **The goal is to enable the creation of diverse emerging AI**

applications based on GPAI models.

Why is the EU putting emphasis on AI innovation lately?

Challenges of Over Regulation: Europe's focus on AI innovation stems from concerns about overregulating AI and lagging behind American companies **like OpenAI and Google** in terms of visible AI innovation. The EU has faced accusations of preemptively regulating AI before its widespread adoption across the continent.

- **AI Act Criticism:** The **AI Act implemented in December 2023** has faced criticism for its rules governing AI use within the EU.
 - While it provides clear guidelines for law enforcement agencies, it also imposes strict penalties on companies violating the regulations.
 - The Act restricts facial recognition technology and the use of AI to control behaviour.
 - It allows the government **real-time biometric surveillance** in public areas only under specific serious threats.

About the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act:

- **Risk Classification System:** In a groundbreaking move, the AI Act proposes a risk-based regulatory system, categorising AI systems into unacceptable risk, high risk, and low or minimal risk segments.
- **Unacceptable Risk:** AI systems posing a threat to people, like cognitive manipulation and biometric identification, are banned.
- **High Risk:** Systems operating critical infrastruc-

The 4 Types of Risks in the E.U. AI Act



ture or impacting fundamental rights are labelled as high risk. Compliance requirements and obligations for providers are outlined in the Act.

- **Risk Management for High Risk:** The Act outlines risk management efforts for high-risk systems, including documentation, transparency, and human oversight.
- **Low or Minimal Risk:** AI systems must meet minimum transparency standards, enabling users to make informed judgements.
- **Generative AI Softwares need to comply:** Specifically targeting generative AI software like **ChatGPT**, the AI Act mandates compliance with transparency requirements. These include **disclosing the AI origin of content, implementing safeguards against illegal content generation, and publishing summaries of copyrighted data used in the model's training.**

Comparison of the EU's plan with India's approach

- **Similarities with India's Strategy:** The EU's plan shares similarities with India's approach to AI innovation. India is also striving to develop its own **sovereign AI**, build computational capacity, and offer compute-as-a-service to startups.
- **India's Capacity Building programmes:** India

aims to build a computing capacity of 10,000-30,000 GPUs through a **public-private partnership model** and an additional 1,000-2,000 GPUs through the PSU Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (**C-DAC**). The government is exploring incentive structures, including a capital expenditure subsidy model and a usage fee, to encourage private companies to establish computing centres.

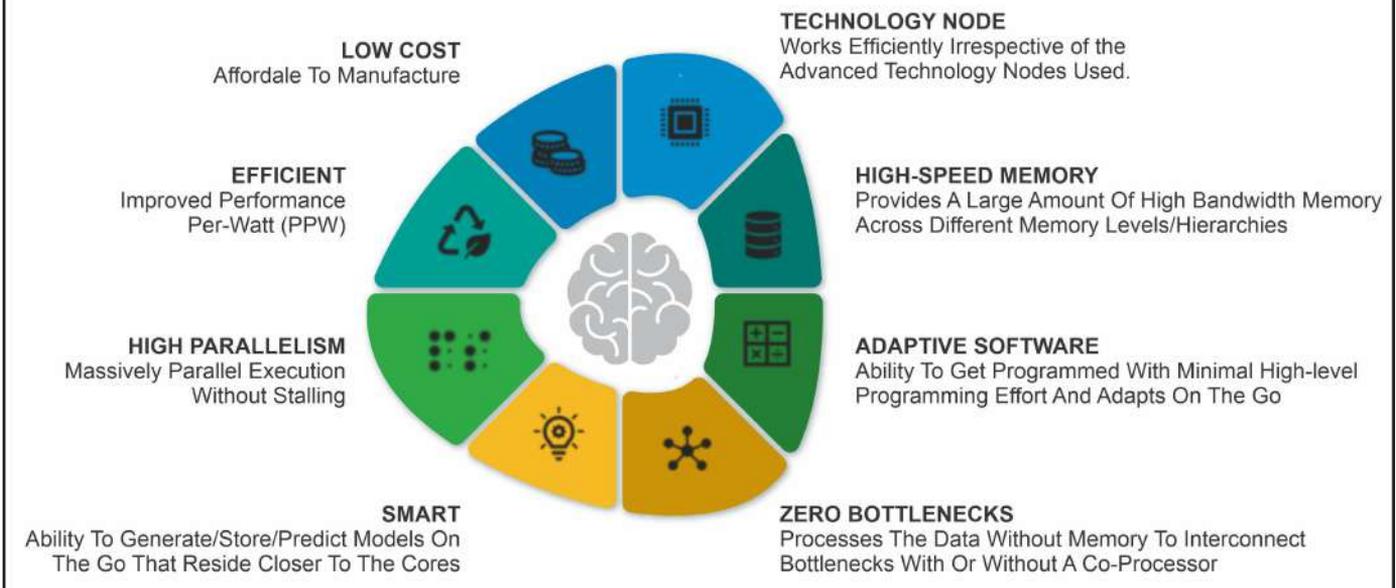
- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** Similar to the EU's plan, **India aims to create a digital public infrastructure (DPI) using the GPU assembly**, allowing startups to utilise computational capacity at a reduced cost. This innovative approach eliminates the need for startups to invest in expensive GPUs, reducing a significant operational cost.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) CHIPS

Why in the News?

In a stunning display of tech prowess, Kerala's Digital University has unleashed the **Kairali AI Chip**, propelling India onto the global edge of the AI stage. This silicon marvel isn't just a chip; it's a paradigm

THE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM-ON-A-CHIP



shift, ushering in an era of intelligent machines operating closer to the data's origin.

About Kairali AI chip

- Kairali embraces the burgeoning world of edge AI, where **computations occur directly on devices where data arises**.
- It can help smartphones translate languages on the fly, analyse complex images instantly, or make personalised recommendations without sending the data anywhere.
- This **decentralised intelligence**, powered by Kairali, promises **faster processing, lower latency, and enhanced data privacy** – a perfect recipe for revolutionizing countless applications.

Some potential uses-

- **Agriculture**: The chip revolutionizes precision farming, providing real-time monitoring of crop health, soil conditions, and environmental factors, optimizing resource usage for enhanced crop yields.
- **Aerospace**: The chip elevates Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and satellites by offering advanced processing power for navigation, data collection, and real-time decision-making with minimal power consumption. It also enhances

the capabilities of drones for applications such as delivery services and environmental monitoring.

- **Mobile Phones**: Enhancing the efficiency of smartphones, the chip enables advanced features like real-time language translation, improved image processing, and AI-driven personal assistants.
- **Security and Surveillance**: The chip facilitates faster and efficient facial recognition algorithms, threat detection, and real-time analytics through its edge computing capabilities.
- **Automobile**: Serving as a game-changer for autonomous vehicles, the chip provides essential computing power for real-time processing of sensory information, ensuring safe and efficient autonomous driving.

About AI chips

- AI chips, often called artificial intelligence chips, are **specialised processors** that improve the efficiency of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tasks. These chips play an important role in **speeding up the computation-intensive tasks that machine learning and deep learning algorithms require**.
- **Unlike traditional Central Processing Units (CPUs)**, which are general-purpose, AI chips

are optimised for specialised tasks, resulting in quicker and more energy efficient processing.

- **One famous type of AI chip** is the Graphics Processing Unit (**GPU**), which was originally meant to render visuals in video games but has since been repurposed for parallel processing tasks required by AI.
- Furthermore, **Field-Programmable Gate Arrays (FPGAs)** and **Application Specific Integrated Circuits (ASICs)** are gaining popularity because they can give even better efficiency by tailoring hardware to specific AI workloads.

How AI chips work

- It is a **collection of computer programmes or algorithms** which stimulate activity and brain structure.
- **Deep Neural Networks (DNNs)** go through a training phase in which they gain new skills based on previous data.
- DNNs can then infer by using the skills learnt during deep learning training to make predictions on previously unknown data.
- Deep learning may accelerate and simplify the collection, analysis, and interpretation of massive volumes of data.
- Chips like these, with their hardware designs, compatible packaging, memory, storage, and connectivity solutions, enable AI to be incorporated into a wide range of applications, transforming data into information and subsequently knowledge.

Benefits of AI (Artificial Intelligence) chip-

- **Enhanced Performance:** AI chips are intended to address the special needs of artificial intelligence applications, resulting in much quicker processing rates and higher performance than standard processors. This acceleration is especially important for the complicated computations used in machine learning and deep learning techniques.
- **Energy Efficiency:** AI processors are optimised for parallel processing, which allows AI work-

loads to be executed more efficiently. This not only speeds up processes but also lowers energy usage, making AI systems more sustainable and cost-effective in the long term.

- **Specialised Features:** Unlike universal processors, AI chips are designed for specific AI applications. This specialisation allows them to excel at tasks like picture recognition, natural language processing, and data analysis, resulting in more accurate and efficient outcomes.
- **Scalability:** AI chips help to scale AI systems. Their architecture enables smooth integration with a variety of devices, ranging from edge devices such as smartphones and IoT devices to data centres, offering scalability to meet the expanding demands of AI applications.
- **Optimised Hardware Layout:** Manufacturers are always optimising the design of AI chips to increase efficiency and effectiveness. This optimisation takes into account size, weight, and power consumption to ensure that AI-powered devices can be used in a variety of applications and situations.
- **Real-time Processing:** AI chips allow for real-time data processing, which is vital in applications such as autonomous vehicles, where split-second decision-making is required for safety. This skill is especially useful in cases that require quick responses, such as cybersecurity and surveillance.

INSAT 3DR



Why in the News?

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned that there is a good chance of “very dense fog” in Delhi, Chandigarh, and Haryana. Additionally, maps from the INSAT 3D and occasionally the INSAT 3DR satellites have been included with IMD notifications.

About Insat 3DR

- The IMD forecasts and monitors the weather

using INSAT-3D and INSAT-3DR satellite data.

- Like INSAT-3D, INSAT-3DR is a sophisticated meteorological satellite from India that is outfitted with an atmospheric sounder and an image system.
- An atmospheric sounder records the changes in an air column's physical characteristics with height.
- It has one visible band and multiple infrared channels ranging from longwave to shortwave wavelengths.
- The noteworthy enhancements integrated into INSAT-3DR are:
 - Middle Infrared imaging to provide images of low clouds and fog at night.
 - Two thermal infrared bands can be imaged to improve the accuracy of sea surface temperature (SST) estimation.

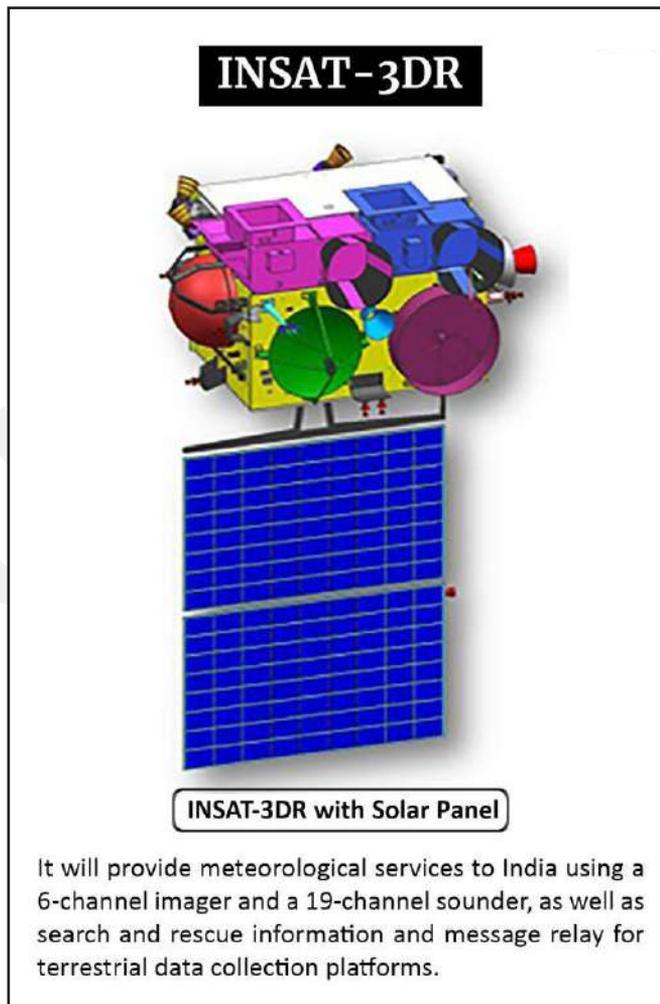
Payloads in Insat 3DR

- **Multi-Spectral Imager:** It would take pictures of the planet every 26 minutes to give data on a range of factors, such as winds, cloud motion, and sea surface temperature.
- **Sounder:** It will provide you with data on humidity and temperature.
- **Data-Relay Transponder:** It is intended to receive data related to oceanography, hydrology, and meteorology.
- **Satellite-assisted search and rescue transponder:** It will be utilised to receive and transmit alarm signals from aviation and maritime distress beacons, among other sources.

Imaging process:

- **Light capture:** Sunlight and infrared radiation emitted from Earth are captured by the mirror and focused by the telescope.
- **Spectral separation:** Dichroic filters separate the incoming light into different wavelength bands (visible, infrared) and direct them to specific detectors.

- **Detection:** Each detector converts the incoming radiation into electrical signals according to its sensitivity.
- **Signal processing:** The electrical signals are amplified, digitized, and processed onboard the satellite.
- **Data transmission:** The processed data is transmitted to Earth receiving stations for further analysis and interpretation



Key features:

- **Multispectral imaging:** INSAT-3DR captures images in six wavelength bands, providing information on various atmospheric and surface features.
- **High resolution:** The imager offers spatial resolutions ranging from 1 km (visible band) to 4 km (infrared bands), capturing detailed information.

- **Rapid scanning:** The scanning mechanism allows for frequent observations of the Earth, with an image of the entire disk generated every 26 minutes.
- **Advanced capabilities:** The imager includes features like:
 - **Middle Infrared band:** Provides night-time images of low clouds and fog.
 - **Dual Thermal Infrared bands:** Enhances accuracy in estimating sea surface temperature (SST).
 - **Rapid scan mode:** Offers even faster observations over specific regions for tracking severe weather events.

Applications:

The data gathered by INSAT-3DR's imaging system has numerous applications, including:

- **Weather forecasting:** Predicting weather patterns, cyclones, and other severe events.
- **Climate monitoring:** Tracking changes in global temperatures, cloud cover, and other climate indicators.
- **Ocean monitoring:** Monitoring sea surface temperature, currents, and potential fishing zones.
- **Disaster management:** Providing crucial information for disaster preparedness and response efforts.

About India Meteorological Department

Established in 1875, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) serves as the nation's primary weather authority. Its responsibilities are vast and crucial, encompassing:

- **Observing and Monitoring:** IMD operates a vast network of observatories, radars, and satellites, constantly gathering data on temperature, rainfall, wind, and other atmospheric conditions. This real-time monitoring helps understand weather patterns and predict future events.
- **Forecasting and Warnings:** From daily weather forecasts to issuing timely warnings about cy-

clones, heatwaves, and floods, IMD plays a critical role in safeguarding lives and livelihoods. Their accurate predictions enable proactive measures, minimising weather-related damage.

- **Climate Services:** IMD provides long-term climate data that are vital for agriculture, water management, and disaster preparedness. Understanding past and present trends helps predict future climate scenarios and mitigate potential risks.
- **Research and Development:** IMD actively researches advancements in weather forecasting techniques, satellite technology, and climate modelling. This continuous innovation improves the accuracy and scope of their services.
- **International Collaboration:** IMD actively participates in global weather organisations, sharing data and expertise, contributing to global weather prediction models, and benefiting from international knowledge exchange.
- **Impact on Daily Life:** From farmers planning their crops to airlines optimising flight routes, IMD's services touch every aspect of life in India. Their work ensures informed decision-making, promotes economic activity, and protects lives in the face of nature's fury.

HYBRID VEHICLES



Why in the News?

HSBC Global Research recently published a note recommending that, over the next 5-10 years, India prioritise the adoption of Hybrid Vehicles as a Sustainable Mobility Solution before switching to full Battery Electric Vehicles. Hybrid vehicles combine a normal internal combustion engine and an electric propulsion system.

Key highlights of the research

- **Lower Carbon Emissions:** According to the research, hybrid vehicles presently emit less carbon than both electric and traditional internal

combustion engine (ICE) vehicles for equivalent-sized vehicles. Specifically, hybrids produce 133 g/km of CO₂, and EVs emit 158 g/km. This analysis takes into account overall emissions, which include car emissions (tank-to-wheel) as well as emissions from crude mining, refining, and electricity generation.

- **Hybrids enjoy a decade-long advantage:** It shows that emissions from EVs and hybrids may take up to a decade to converge. During this time, hybrids are expected to be at least 16% less polluting than EVs.
- **Hybrids are a practical medium-term solution:** HSBC believes that hybrid and compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles are viable medium-term solutions for India in the next 5-10 years as the country transitions to full electrification. The practicality is due to both the cost of ownership and India's decarbonisation ambitions.
- **Convergence of emissions:** According to the study, emissions from EVs and hybrids could converge in 7 to 10 years. This convergence is predicted to occur if India's non-fossil power generation share rises to 44%. Even at 40% by 2030, hybrids are expected to release 8% less CO₂ than EVs.
- **Challenges in Electric Vehicle Adoption:** It identifies barriers to widespread EV adoption, such as the necessity for upfront subsidies, the relevance of charging infrastructure, the source of electricity (mostly coal-fired in India), and reliance on the global lithium value chain for battery production.

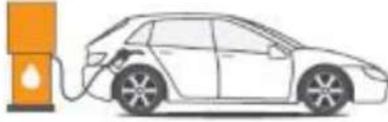
About Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs)?

- BEVs are electric vehicles powered by high-capacity batteries. They do not have an Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) and emit no exhaust pollutants. BEVs use electric motors to power the wheels, resulting in rapid torque and smooth acceleration.
- BEVs use modern battery technology, specifically Lithium-ion batteries. Li-ion batteries provide higher energy density, longer range, and better performance.

- **Charging Infrastructure:** BEVs need a network of charging stations to recharge their batteries. Charging infrastructure consists of several types of chargers:
 - Level 1 (Household outlets).
 - Level 2 (Dedicated Charging Stations)
 - Level 3 (DC fast chargers).
- Public charging stations, workplaces, and residential structures all contribute significantly to the expansion of the charging infrastructure.

Challenges in the adoption of Battery Electric Vehicles

- **Upfront Cost and Subsidies:** The success of EV adoption in countries like Norway and the US is attributed to state subsidies. In India, tax breaks and subsidies tend to benefit the middle or upper middle classes, posing a challenge in ensuring equitable distribution and reaching a broader demographic.
- **Charging Infrastructure:** Unlike leading EV adopters such as China and Norway, India faces a significant shortage of operational charging stations for its growing EV market. The dominance of two- and three-wheelers with diverse charging requirements further complicates the situation. The article suggests that investing in charging infrastructure is more effective than providing upfront purchase subsidies.
- **Supply Chain Issues:** Concerns are raised about the global concentration of the supply chain for crucial components like lithium-ion batteries. With more than 90% of lithium production concentrated in a few countries and other key inputs sourced from specific regions, India's dependence on imports raises stability concerns for the supply chain.
- **Consumer Awareness and Education:** Lack of consumer awareness about the benefits of battery electric vehicles (BEVs) and misconceptions regarding capabilities, charging infrastructure, and overall cost-effectiveness hinder adoption. Consumer preferences for internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles based on brand loyalty,



1. Non-plug-in hybrid EVs (HEVS)

Instead of using an external plug to charge the vehicle, the electricity generated by the HEV's braking system is used to recharge the battery. This is called 'regenerative braking' and is also used in BEV's, PHEVs and FCEVs.

 Petrol



3. Fuel cell electric vehicles (FCEVs)

Use a fuel cell instead of a battery, or in combination with a battery or supercapacitor, to power their electric motors. FCEVs are typically fuelled by hydrogen and usually provide greater range than BEVs.

 Electricity



2. Plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs)

Powered by a combination of liquid fuel and electricity. They can be charged with electricity using a plug but also contain an internal combustion engine that uses liquid fuel.

 Petrol  Electricity



4. Battery electric vehicles (BEVs)

Fully-electric, meaning they are solely powered by electricity and do not have a petrol, diesel or LPG engine, fuel tank or exhaust pipe. BEV's are also known as 'plug-in' as they use an external electrical charging outlet to charge the battery

 Electricity

resale value, and comfort, coupled with limited knowledge about EV benefits, further contribute to the challenge.

About Hybrid Vehicles

Hybrid vehicles revolutionise transportation by seamlessly **combining internal combustion engines with electric motors**. The integration of these power sources enhances fuel efficiency, reduces emissions, and elevates overall performance. **Some of its key features are:**

- **Dual Power Systems:** Integration of internal combustion engine and electric motor. Enables independent or combined power, ensuring versatility in diverse driving conditions.

- **Regenerative Braking:** An electric motor acts as a generator during deceleration or braking. Converts kinetic energy into electricity, stored for future use, enhancing energy efficiency.
- **Fuel Efficiency:** The electric motor assists the internal combustion engine during acceleration. Reduces engine workload, leading to better mileage and decreased reliance on traditional fuels.
- **Reduced Emissions:** Contributes to environmental sustainability by lowering emissions. Electric motor use during low-speed or idling reduces greenhouse gases and pollutants.
- **Different Hybrid Types:** Various configurations like parallel, series, and plug-in hybrids. Offers

simultaneous, electric-generated, or externally charged driving options.

- **Battery Technology:** Incorporates advanced batteries (NiMH or lithium-ion) for energy storage. Lightweight, durable, and powerful, ensuring efficient electric motor performance.
- **Transition to Full Electric Mode:** Some hybrids operate in full electric mode for short distances at lower speeds. Particularly beneficial in urban settings, emphasizing emissions and noise reduction.

Steps taken to encourage Electric Vehicles

- The **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) 2020** aspires to ensure national fuel security by encouraging hybrid and electric vehicles across the country. The ambitious goal is to sell 6-7 million hybrid and electric automobiles each year beginning in 2020.
- The **GST-Goods and Services Tax** on electric vehicles and chargers/charging stations has been decreased from 12% to 5% and 18% to 5%, respectively.
- The **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME)** plan, launched in 2015, intends to encourage electric mobility by providing financial incentives for improving electric transportation infrastructure.
- **FAME 2** – It was launched in 2019 with a budget of 10,000 crores to stimulate demand for Electric Vehicles (EVs) by offering upfront subsidies and developing EV charging infrastructure.

NEXCAR19: REVOLUTIONIZING CANCER TREATMENT



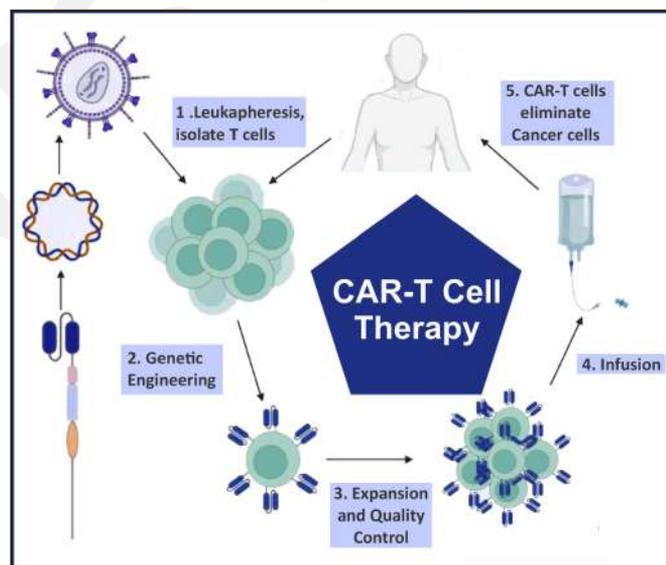
Why in the News?

Months after India's medicinal authority approved CAR-T cell therapy, Dr. (Col) V K Gupta became one of the first patients to get it. **NexCAR19** is India's first indigenously created CAR-T cell treatment. ImmunoACT (an IIT Bombay-incubated firm) received commercial authorisation for NexCAR19 from the

Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) in November 2023.

About Car-T Cell therapy

- The therapy marks a significant advancement in cancer treatment. Unlike chemotherapy and immunotherapy, which require mass-produced injectable or oral drugs, **CAR T-cell therapies use the patient's cells.**
- They are engineered in the laboratory to **stimulate T-cells**, a kind of immune cell, to attack tumours.
- These modified cells are then put back into the patient's bloodstream after being programmed to proliferate more efficiently.
- CAR T-cell treatment is now **licensed for leukaemias** (cancers of the cells that make white blood cells) **and lymphomas.**



How does CAR-T cell therapy work?

- This therapy involves drawing the patient's blood to **harvest T-cells**, which are immune cells that play an important role in eliminating cancer cells.
- In the laboratory, researchers modify these cells to express certain proteins on their surface, known as **chimeric antigen receptors (CAR)**, which have an affinity for proteins found on the surface of cancer cells.

- This change in cellular structure enables CAR T-cells to successfully bind to and eliminate tumours. The tumour's demise concludes with its elimination by the patient's immune system.
- The immune system is activated in CAR T-cell treatment when the transformed T-cells are re-introduced into the body, allowing for progressive and persistent tumour death as these cells multiply.

Why is it better than other Cancer treatments like chemotherapy?

- While chemotherapy and immunotherapy may extend a cancer patient's life by a few months or years, cell-and-gene therapy is **intended to cure and provide long-term benefits**.
- It simplifies treatment by providing a single treatment [as opposed to multiple chemotherapy sessions].
- It provides a lifeline for cancer patients who have not responded to treatment.

About Nexcar19

- **NexCar19 is a form of CAR-T and gene therapy created in India by ImmunoACT, an IIT Bombay-incubated firm.** This therapy is intended to target cancer cells expressing the **CD19 protein**.
- This protein works as a flag on cancer cells, allowing CAR-T cells to detect and bind to them, thus initiating the process of elimination.
- India is currently among the first developing countries to have its own CAR-T and gene therapy platforms.

Eligibility and treatment process

- **Intended Patients:** People with **B-cell lymphomas** who have not responded to traditional treatments (such as chemotherapy).
- **Procedure:** The patient contributes blood; **T-cells** are changed in the lab and reinfused 7-10 days later. Recovery normally takes two weeks.

Effectiveness and unique features

- Approximately **70%** of patients react to Nex-

CAR19 treatment, and some achieve complete remission.

- **Lower drug-related toxicities**, such as decreased neurotoxicity and Cytokine Release Syndrome (CRS), have been shown in laboratory and animal investigations.
- Research for paediatric patients is currently being conducted at Tata Memorial Hospital, assuring wider applicability.

Availability and affordability.

- **ImmunoACT** is in the process of acquiring licenses and forming partnerships with hospitals in numerous locations, including Tata Memorial, Nanavati, Fortis, and Jaslok.
- ImmunoACT, which is **initially priced at Rs 30-40 lakh**, seeks to reduce the cost to Rs 10-20 lakh over time, making the therapy more accessible.
- Approval by regulatory organisations such as CDSCO should result in insurance coverage, though the extent may differ, and conversations with insurers and the government are ongoing.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND ESSENTIAL MEDICINES IN INDIA: NEED FOR NEW RESEARCH



Why in the News?



- Recently a free trade agreement has been signed between India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).
- **The Central Government is headed by the Chairman of the 15th Finance Commission, N.**

K. Singh has presented his recommendations for creating a dedicated Development Financial Institution (DFI) to invest in the health care sector.

- One bone of contention in the free trade agreement between India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is related to intellectual property rights, which has been an issue since 2008.
- Switzerland and Norway, which are key members of EFTA, also have many pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies from India underpinning the healthcare sector globally.
- The nature of the pharmaceutical industry is such that it costs a lot of money to discover a useful, effective drug, and it costs relatively little to make generic copies. Its demand is much higher than its capacity. As a result, there are constant disputes between inventors and generic drugs.

Introduction to Primary Health Care:

- Primary health care health and well-being in society, which is based on the needs and priorities of individuals, families and communities. It addresses more comprehensive determinants of health and focuses on the broader and inter-related aspects of physical, mental and social health and well-being.
- It provides holistic care for health needs throughout life and not just for specific diseases. Primary health care involves the treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care of individuals as best they can, taking into account the daily needs of the individual and the wider environment.
- Primary health care is rooted in a commitment to justice and equity and recognition of the fundamental right to the highest attainable standard of health.
- According to Article 25 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights – **“Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and essential social ser-**

vices”

- Primary health care is often considered an important component of human development, taking into account economic, social and political aspects. Which is also called selective primary health care.

Meaning of Public Health Care by World Health Organization:

The World Health Organization has given a comprehensive definition of public health care based on three components. These are as follows –

- Meeting the health needs of people through comprehensive promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative care throughout a person’s life, with primary care strategically placed as central components of integrated health services. To prioritise vital health care services through and through public health actions targeted at families and populations.
- Systematically addressing the broad determinants of health through evidence-informed public policies and actions across all sectors, including health services at the social, economic, environmental and behavioural levels of individuals. And
- As advocates of policies that promote and protect individual and public health and well-being, as co-developers of health and social services, and as caregivers and providers of care to others to maximise health This includes empowering individuals, families and communities.

Importance of Primary Health Care in the Public Health System:



Modernising primary health care and placing it at the centre of efforts to improve health and well-being is extremely important for the following three reasons:

- Primary health care needs to respond to rapid economic, technological and population changes that affect the health and well-being of all. Drawing on the broad spectrum of primary health care, it examines and modifies policies to address the social, economic, environmental and occupational determinants of health and well-being. Treating people and communities as key actors in producing their own health and well-being is vital to understanding and responding to the complexities of our changing world.
- Primary health care has proven to be a highly effective and efficient approach to address the major causes and threats to health and well-being today, as well as to handle emerging challenges that threaten health and well-being in the future.
- Investing in public health has also proven to be a good value investment, as there is evidence that quality primary health care reduces total healthcare services costs and increases efficiency by reducing the rate of hospitalisation of individuals.
- Addressing increasingly complex health problems requires a multidisciplinary approach, integrating health-promoting and preventive policies.
- Public health solutions that impact human communities and health services that are people-centered. Primary health care includes important components of health care and is essential in improving health security and preventing health threats such as epidemics and antimicrobial resistance, through community engagement and education, prudential assessment, and necessary public health actions, such as: This is possible only through supervision.
- Developing community and public health care systems contributes to health sector sustainability, which is important for the health system to withstand shocks.
- Public health services and stronger primary health care are critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and universal health

coverage. It will contribute to the achievement of other goals beyond the Health Goals (SDG-3), including reducing poverty, hunger, gender equality, clean water and security, work and economic growth, inequality and climate risks.

World Health Organization's response to Public Health care:

The World Health Organization recognises the central role of primary health care in achieving health and well-being for all. WHO works closely with both developed and developing countries of the world for the following reasons:

- The World Health Organization recognises the central role of primary health care in achieving health and well-being for all. WHO works with other countries to:
 - To enable countries to develop inclusive policies, country leadership based on primary health care and health systems that work to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and universal health coverage.
 - Addressing widespread inequity and the determinants of health through multi-sector work.
- Key Takeaways**
- Primary health care covers most of the health needs across the lifespan, including prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care.
 - At least half the world's 730 million people do not receive full coverage of essential health services.
 - Of the 30 countries for which data are available, only 8 spend more than \$40 per American per year on primary health care.
 - A workforce qualified for the purpose is essential to deliver primary health care, yet the world has an estimated shortfall of approximately 190 million health workers.

Arguments in favour of transferring 'Health' to the concurrent list:

- **Increase in the responsibility of the Centre:** Moving health to the concurrent list will give the Center more scope to implement regula-

tory changes, provide better healthcare and strengthen the responsibilities of all parties.

- **Rationalisation and Simplification of Acts:** The health sector has a plethora of acts, rules and regulations and rapidly growing institutions, yet the sector is not properly regulated. Uniformity in functioning can be ensured by transferring health to the concurrent list.
- **Centre's Expertise:** The central government is technologically superior to the states in the health sector as it is supported by a number of research bodies and departments dedicated to the management of public health. States, on the other hand, do not have the technical expertise to independently design comprehensive public health policies.

Arguments against transferring 'Health' to the Concurrent List:

- **Right to Health:** It is neither necessary nor sufficient to guarantee the provision of accessible, affordable and adequate health care to all. The right to health is already provided through Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees protection of life and liberty.
- **Challenges of Federal Structure:** Transferring more subjects from the State List to the Union List will weaken the federal nature of India. Trust Co-operative Federalism: The Center has to use its powers in such a way that it helps the states in fulfilling their constitutional obligations like providing adequate, accessible and affordable health care to all.
- **More responsibility at the Centre:** The Centre already has more responsibilities, which it struggles to deal with. Taking on more responsibilities will help neither the states nor the Center discharge their constitutional responsibilities.
- **Encouraging States:** 41% of the taxes collected by the state go to the central government. The Center should encourage the states to discharge the expected responsibilities, at the same time the Center should also focus on fulfilling its responsibilities by using its own resources.



Conclusion/Solution:



- Even though health is a subject in the state list, the states should accept the Centre's constructive cooperation on it.
- NITI Aayog's health index, financial assistance through insurance-based programs (Ayushman Bharat), better regulatory environment for healthcare providers and medical education are examples that can nudge states in the right direction.
- Public health and sanitary hospitals and dispensaries are listed in the State List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India.

- State List – It contains the subjects under which the state can make laws.
- The principle of data exclusivity exists in agreements involving European countries as well as many developing countries. Had it been effective in India, it could have significantly disrupted the Indian pharmaceutical industry.
- India is also a major exporter of affordable medicines.
- Indian officials have rejected data exclusivity as a negotiating point in the FTA, although a leaked draft of the agreement suggests it is still on the table or in existence.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Health care in India comes under which list of the Constitution?

- (a) It is listed in the State List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India.
- (b) It is listed in the Concurrent List of the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution of India.
- (c) It is listed in the Union List of the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution of India.
- (d) It is listed under the Fundamental Duties under the Preamble of the Constitution of India.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Big Data in AI supplies the large datasets used for training AI models
2. Machine learning is a subfield of AI focuses on creating systems that can independently make decisions without explicit programming
3. Natural language Processing(NLP) is the programming languages for AI

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three

(d) None

Q3. The concept of “singularity” in AI means which one of the following?

- (a) A point in the future where AI surpasses human intelligence
- (b) A programming language for AI
- (c) The process of creating sentient machines
- (d) A type of neural network architecture

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. AI chips in autonomous vehicles can be used to enhance safety features
2. AI chips in edge devices reduce the latency by processing AI tasks locally
3. General-purpose computing is a key feature of AI chips

How many of the above statements are true?

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three
- (d) None

Q5. Consider the following statements:

1. Ministry of Earth Sciences is responsible for the administration of IMD
2. INSAT satellites operate in Geostationary Orbit
3. C-band is commonly used by INSAT satellites for telecommunications services

How many statements given above are correct?

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three
- (d) None

Q6. What is the purpose of the Doppler Weather Radar used by IMD?

- (a) Air traffic control
- (b) Earthquake prediction
- (c) Cyclone tracking and precipitation estimation
- (d) Solar radiation measurement

Q7. Which one of the following statements best describes the role of B cells and T cells in the human body?

- (a) They protect the environmental allergens. body
- (b) They alleviate the body's pain and inflammation.
- (c) They act as immunosuppressants in the body.
- (d) They protect the body from diseases caused by pathogens.

Q8. Consider the following statements:

1. T cells are genetically modified in CAR-T cell therapy
2. CD19 is commonly targeted in CAR-T cell therapy for B-cell malignancies
3. The primary purpose of the chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) in CAR-T cell therapy is to suppress the immune response

Which of the above statements are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3
- (b) 1 and 2
- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q9. Consider the following statements:

1. The inverter play in an electric vehicle Converts Direct Current to Alternating Current
2. Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle is a type of electric vehicle that uses both an internal combustion engine and an electric motor
3. In a hybrid vehicle, the term "full electric mode" imply Operation without an internal combustion engine

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three
- (d) None

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	A
2.	B
3.	A
4.	B
5.	C
6.	C
7.	D
8.	B
9.	C

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Highlighting the shortcomings in public health services in India, explain why there is a need to invest more in developing generic drugs and new research methods in public health services in India?

Q2. Explain the role of INSAT satellites in disaster management. How do they contribute to early warning systems and emergency response?

Q3. Describe the underlying principles of CAR-T cell therapy and how it differs from traditional cancer treatments.

Q4. Discuss the environmental impact of widespread electric vehicle adoption. Consider factors such as reduced emissions, resource extraction for battery production, and the overall sustainability of electric transportation.

Q5. Considering the environmental impact of technology, how can the design and manufacturing of AI chips be optimized to minimize their carbon footprint?

Q6. As AI chips become increasingly integrated into everyday devices, how do you foresee the ethical implications and privacy concerns associated with the widespread use of AI in various aspects of our lives, and what measures should be taken to address these issues?

Q7. How has artificial intelligence (AI) influenced and transformed the field of healthcare? Provide specific examples of AI applications and their impact on patient care, diagnosis, and medical re-

search.

Q8. Discuss the ethical considerations and potential risks associated with the use of artificial intelligence in decision-making processes, particularly in areas such as criminal justice, finance, and hiring practices.

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UPSC CSE 2024-26

COURSE
DURATION **2 YEARS**

 **4th March.**

 **03:15 PM**



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NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PROMOTION OF SEAWEED CULTIVATION



Why in the News?

The National Conference on Promotion of Seaweed Cultivation was recently held in Gujarat's Kutch region at Koteswar (Kori Creek). Its goal was to establish seaweed farming throughout India, focusing on encouraging the practice to increase fish farmers' income and diversify their marine output.

About Seaweeds

- Seaweeds, often called **macroalgae**, are a broad category of photosynthetic organisms that are found in abundance in marine habitats.
- Seaweeds have many uses for humans and are essential to marine ecosystems while being frequently overlooked by larger marine animals.
- Red, green, and brown algae are examples of seaweeds. Seaweeds can develop in lakes, rivers, the ocean, and other bodies of water

Seaweed distribution:

Seaweeds are found in many habitats throughout the world's oceans, ranging from deep-sea ecosystems to intertidal zones. Several variables, including temperature, light availability, nutrient levels, and substrate type, affect the spread of seaweeds.

- **Intertidal Zones:** Many seaweed species have adapted to the shifting conditions in these areas, where they are periodically submerged at high tide and exposed to the air during low tide. There are difficulties in this ecosystem, like

desiccation and uneven light levels. Seaweeds like Ulva (sea lettuce) and Fucus (rockweed) are common intertidal species.

- **Subtidal Zones:** A range of seaweed species can find a stable habitat in subtidal zones, areas outside low tide. Large brown algae of the species Laminaria, known as kelps, are characteristic subtidal zone residents that create dense underwater forests in cooler seas. There is a wide variety of marine life in these kelp forests.
- **Deep-Sea Environments:** Some red algae can survive in the marine environment because they are acclimated to low light levels. Certain red algae may survive in deeper seas without sunshine, adding to the seafloor's richness. Coralline algae and their calcified structures influence coral ecosystems in the deep ocean.

Central seaweed beds in India:

The beaches of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, as well as the area surrounding Lakshadweep and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, are rich in seaweed resources. There are notable seaweed beds around Mumbai, Goa, Varkala, Karwar, Vizhinjam, and Pulicat in Tamil Nadu, Ratnagiri, Andhra Pradesh, and Chilka in Orissa.

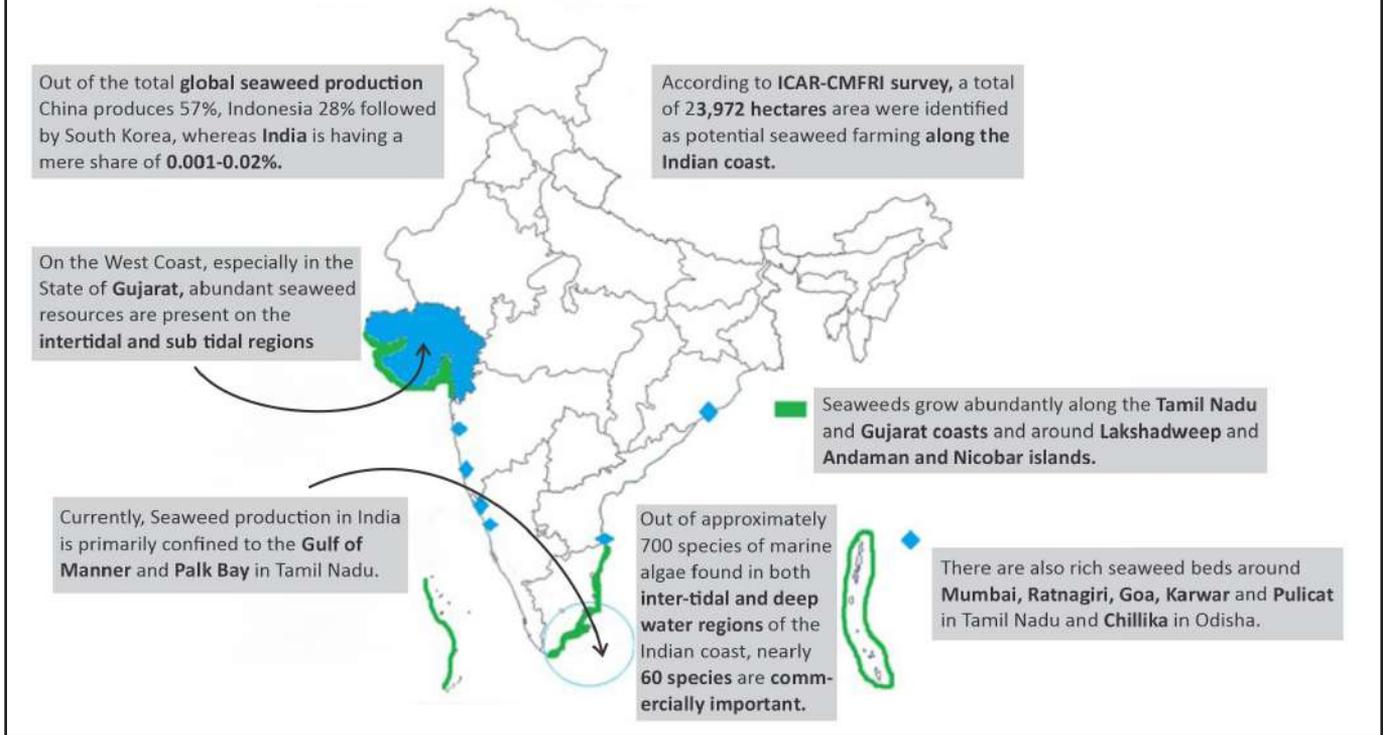
Ecological significance of seaweeds:

Seaweeds hold immense ecological significance, contributing to the health and functioning of marine ecosystems in several ways.

Oxygen production:

Seaweeds are primary producers capable of photosynthesis, converting sunlight into energy. During this process, seaweeds absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen, contributing significantly to the ox-

Prospects for seaweed cultivation in India



oxygen levels in marine environments. This oxygen production is crucial for supporting aquatic life, especially in areas with high seaweed biomass.

Habitat and shelter:

Seaweeds provide habitat and shelter for a diverse array of marine organisms. The three-dimensional structures created by seaweeds, such as kelp forests, offer hiding places, breeding grounds, and feeding areas for fish, invertebrates, and other marine life. These habitats enhance overall biodiversity in coastal and subtidal zones.

Nutrient cycling:

Seaweeds play a vital role in nutrient cycling within marine ecosystems. Seaweed's uptake of nutrients from the water helps regulate nutrient levels and prevent excessive nutrient runoff, which can lead to issues such as algal blooms. This nutrient cycling contributes to the overall health and balance of marine ecosystems.

Coastal protection:

Certain species of seaweeds help stabilize coastlines by reducing the impact of waves and storms.

Seaweed beds can act as a natural buffer, absorbing wave energy and preventing erosion of coastal areas. This coastal protection is precious in regions vulnerable to storm surges and rising sea levels.

Applications of seaweeds

- In culinary realms, they are cherished in **Asian cuisines**, with red algae-derived Nori featuring prominently in sushi rolls. Moreover, red algae contribute to the food industry through agar-agar and carrageenan as gelling agents and stabilisers in various products.
- Seaweeds exhibit **pharmaceutical potential**, with extracts displaying anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and antiviral properties, sparking ongoing research for medicinal use.
- **In agriculture**, seaweeds act as natural fertilisers and soil conditioners, enhancing plant growth and resilience.
- Their carbohydrate-rich composition positions certain seaweeds as a promising **biofuel feedstock**, contributing to sustainable energy alternatives.

Challenges in the conservation of seaweed

Climate change impact:

Rising temperatures and ocean acidification threaten seaweed populations, disrupting physiological processes. Conservation strategies must tackle the broader context of climate change for effective mitigation.

Habitat degradation:

Coastal development, pollution, and destructive fishing practices compromise seaweed ecosystems. Conservation measures should prioritise habitat protection, restoration, and sustainable coastal development practices.

Overharvesting and exploitation:

Unregulated harvesting for food, pharmaceuticals, and biofuel production raises concerns. Conservation efforts must implement sustainable practices, regulations, and monitoring to prevent overexploitation.

Invasive species:

The introduction of invasive species poses a threat to native seaweeds, disrupting ecological balance. Conservation strategies should focus on the prevention and mitigation of the impact of invasive species.

Pollution and contamination:

Agricultural runoff, industrial discharges, and marine debris negatively impact seaweed health. Conservation efforts must address pollution sources and promote sustainable waste management practices.

Disease outbreaks:

Like any organism, seaweeds are susceptible to diseases, leading to rapid population declines. Conservation strategies involve monitoring, understanding causes, and implementing prevention and management measures.

Lack of public awareness:

Limited awareness hinders conservation efforts. Educational initiatives are crucial to raising aware-

ness about Seaweed's roles in marine ecosystems and the need for conservation.

Global connectivity:

Seaweeds, part of interconnected marine ecosystems, require global conservation efforts. Collaborative initiatives and international partnerships are crucial for effective conservation on a worldwide scale.

Government initiatives

- The **mission of Seaweed Mission** is to commercialise seaweed production and processing to add value. It also seeks to extend farming over 7,500 km of shoreline in India.
- Establishment of Multi-Purpose Seaweed Park in Tamil Nadu.

ATMOSPHERIC RIVER



Why in the News?

California, US, is currently dealing with an exceptional weather event known as an Atmospheric River, also known as the Pineapple Express Storm, which has the potential to dump up to 8 trillion gallons of rain in California.

What is an Atmospheric river?

- An atmospheric river is a **plume of moisture, or water vapour**, that flows from the tropics to deposit heavy rain or snow on a location. **Atmospheric rivers are thin bands that form on the eastern side of powerful mid-latitude storms.**
- On average, the Earth contains **four to five active atmospheric rivers** at any given time. Each transports a comparable amount of liquid water that flows past the mouth of the Amazon River. When this atmospheric river reaches land, it discharges moisture, resulting in severe snowfall and rain.
- The rain in California is part of a meteorological pattern known as the **Pineapple Express**, an at-

atmospheric river that originates in the subtropical waters surrounding Hawaii.

- According to studies, atmospheric rivers endure about 20 hours along a coastline. A single atmospheric river can travel across the ocean for up to five days.
- Furthermore, an atmospheric river can cause a single region along the coast to be swamped with torrential rains for 12 to 72 hours.

Impact of El Niño on Atmospheric rivers

- El Niño is a natural climate trend **when warm ocean temperatures in the tropical Pacific cause heavy rainfall and storms**. Every year, an average of seven to ten strong atmospheric rivers make landfall in California.
- El Niño years **deliver greater moisture, increasing the frequency of atmospheric rivers along the West Coast of the United States**. However, it is unclear if El Niño is solely responsible for increased precipitation and storm intensity.

Pineapple Express

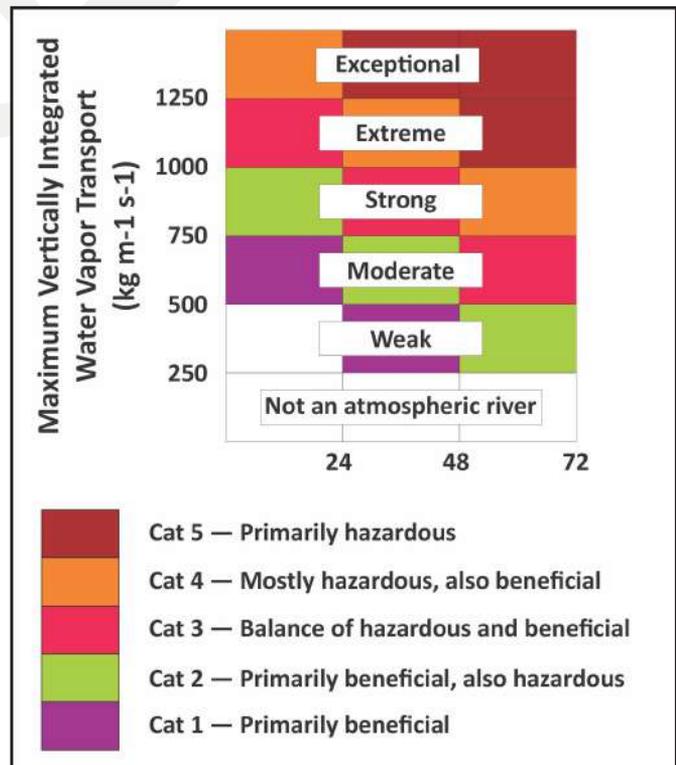
- The “**Pineapple Express**” is a well-known **example of an atmospheric river storm** that dumps torrential rains on the US West Coast, particularly California.
- This name comes from the fact that **these storms draw moisture from the tropical waters around the Hawaiian Islands**, simulating an “express” train of moisture from Hawaii, which is sometimes connected with pineapples.
- This atmospheric river, powered by a strong southern branch of the polar jet stream, transports moist, warm mT air from as far away as the Hawaiian Islands.

Categories:

- **Category 1 (Weak):** In this category, an atmospheric river is a milder and shorter weather event that has largely favourable impacts, such as 24 hours of light rain.
- **Category 2 (Moderate):** A Category 2 atmospheric river is an ordinary storm that has large-

ly positive impacts but is also potentially hazardous.

- **Category 3 (Strong):** A Category 3 atmospheric river is more strong and lasts longer, having both helpful and harmful effects. For example, a storm in this category could dump 5-10 inches of rain over 36 hours, replenishing reservoirs while also bringing some rivers close to flood stage.
- **Category 4 (Extreme):** A Category 4 atmospheric river is largely harmful, but it also has some advantages. A storm with this rating might produce enough heavy rain over several days to cause several rivers to flood.
- **Category 5 (Exceptional):** A Category 5 atmospheric river is mostly dangerous. An atmospheric river that lasted more than 100 hours over the Central California coast during the 1996-97 New Year’s holiday season. The severe rain and runoff caused more than \$100 billion in damage.



The influence of Atmospheric river

- The **consequences of atmospheric rivers** can be profound in the regions they impact. The in-

tense precipitation associated with these phenomena can result in **floods, landslides, and mudslides, causing damage to properties and, unfortunately, loss of life.** Moreover, atmospheric rivers have the potential to disrupt water availability by overwhelming reservoirs and other water-related infrastructure. In specific instances, these weather systems can induce conditions resembling **droughts by diverting moisture away from areas crucial for agriculture and other industries.**

However, it is crucial to recognize that not all atmospheric rivers lead to adverse effects. Many are mild systems that bring **beneficial rain or snow**, playing a vital role in maintaining water supplies. Some regions heavily depend on these systems for a substantial portion of their **yearly precipitation.** Appreciating the possible outcomes of atmospheric rivers is essential for readiness and effective management, considering these systems are integral components of the Earth's water cycle.

CAMEROON ADOPTED THE NAGOYA PROTOCOL

Why in the News?

Cameroon, a country located in central Africa and having a high biodiversity with around 11,000 plant, animal, and microbe species, recently adopted the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing, a United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) accord.

What was the reason for Cameroon to sign the Nagoya Protocol?

- **Preserving Traditional Knowledge:** Many plants, animals, and microorganisms contain valuable genetic information or resources, such as genes for creating medications or crops. Traditional knowledge refers to the indigenous and local communities' knowledge, innovations, and practices about these resources.
- **Benefiting Local Communities:** The firms' revenues did not assist the communities where the plants were collected. Adopting the Na-

goya Protocol contributes to the **protection of indigenous and local communities' rights and interests**, as well as the promotion of biodiversity-driven innovation and development.

- **Stopping Biopiracy and Equitable Sharing of Resources:** Both genetic resources and conventional knowledge are **important for bioprospecting**, which involves exploring biological material for new sources of medications, food, and products. Bioprospecting can also contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. For example, **Prunus Africana**, a Cameroonian plant, is **used to create prostate cancer treatments**, yet foreign corporations pay USD 2.11 per kilogramme and sell the resulting pharmaceuticals for USD 405.

About Nagoya Protocol:

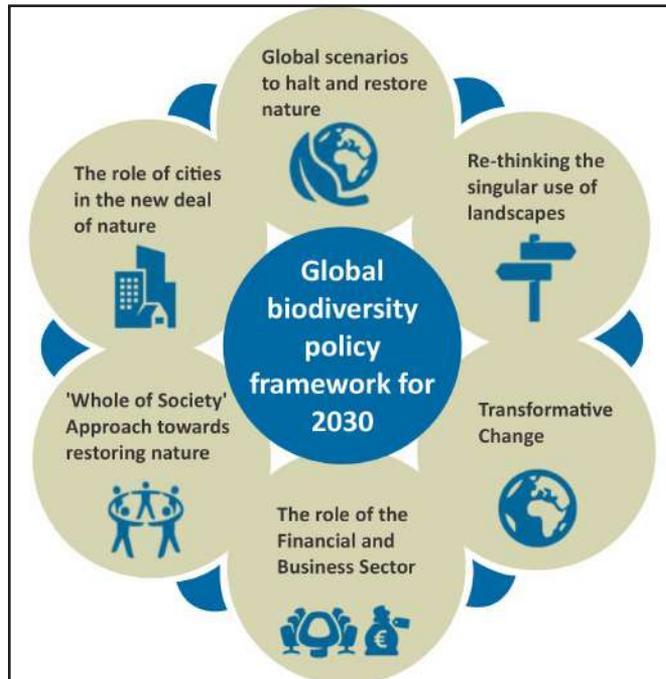
- The Nagoya Protocol, which **focuses on Accessibility to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits** arising from their Use (the Protocol), is a legally binding worldwide agreement that carries out the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) access and benefit-sharing provisions.
- It was **accepted by the CBD in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010** and went into effect on October 12, 2014, 90 days following the deposit of the 50th instrument of ratification.
- It establishes a transparent legal framework for the proper fulfilment of **one of the CBD's three objectives:** the fair and equitable distribution of benefits deriving from the use of genetic resources.

What are its advantages?

- It creates a framework that allows researchers to **gain access to genetic resources for biotechnology research, development, and other activities** in exchange for a fair share of any advantages derived from their use.
- This gives the **research and development sector the confidence** it needs to invest in biodiversity-related research.
- **Indigenous and local communities may bene-**

fit from a legal framework that recognises the significance of traditional knowledge connected with genetic resources. **India signed the Nagoya Protocol in 2011** and ratified it in October 2012. India ratified the CBD at the 11th Conference of Parties (COP), held in Hyderabad.

About the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):



- The CBD, which now has **196 contracting parties**, is the most comprehensive and legally binding international agreement on nature protection and the sustainable use of natural resources.
- It was opened for signatures at the **1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development** in Rio de Janeiro.
- It has **three main objectives**:
 - The preservation of biological diversity (including genetic diversity, species diversity, and habitat diversity).
 - The sustainable utilisation of biological diversity.
 - The equal distribution of advantages derived from the use of genetic resources.

- Two globally binding agreements were adopted within the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity to help execute the CBD's objectives.
- **The Cartagena Protocol:** In 2000, countries adopted the Cartagena Protocol, which governs the cross-border movement of living-modified organisms (LMO) and went into effect in 2003.
- **The Nagoya Protocol**, enacted in **2010**, establishes a legally binding framework for access to genetic resources as well as the fair and equitable distribution of benefits resulting from their utilisation.

HUMBOLDT'S ENIGMA

Why in the News?

In recent years, Humboldt's enigma has received more attention in the study of ecology as researchers seek to comprehend the unexpected richness seen in alpine habitats, contradicting conventional wisdom.

About Humboldt's Enigma

- For ages, explorers and naturalists have sought to identify the variables that contribute to biodiversity concentration.
- **Alexander von Humboldt** (1769-1859) was a polymath who observed natural occurrences in subjects such as **geography, geology, meteorology, and biology**.
- Humboldt's varied research suggested a **link between temperature, height, and humidity** on the one hand **and** species occurrence patterns – or **biodiversity** – on the other.
- Two centuries later, a group of biogeographers, or scientists who study the relationship between diversity and location, employed new methods to reexamine the drivers of biodiversity.
- They provided their own account of the relationship between biodiversity and mountains,

dubbed Humboldt's enigma.

What is Humboldt's Enigma?

- Humboldt's enigma suggests that biodiversity is not limited to Earth's tropical regions.
- It implies that regions other than the tropics, such as hilly areas, have tremendous biodiversity.
- **For example**, in India, biodiversity is not limited to the tropical regions of MP, Chhattisgarh, and the Western Ghats but also includes such areas as the eastern Himalayas, where climate variations and a diverse geological makeup contribute to abundant biodiversity.

Drivers of Mountain Biodiversity:

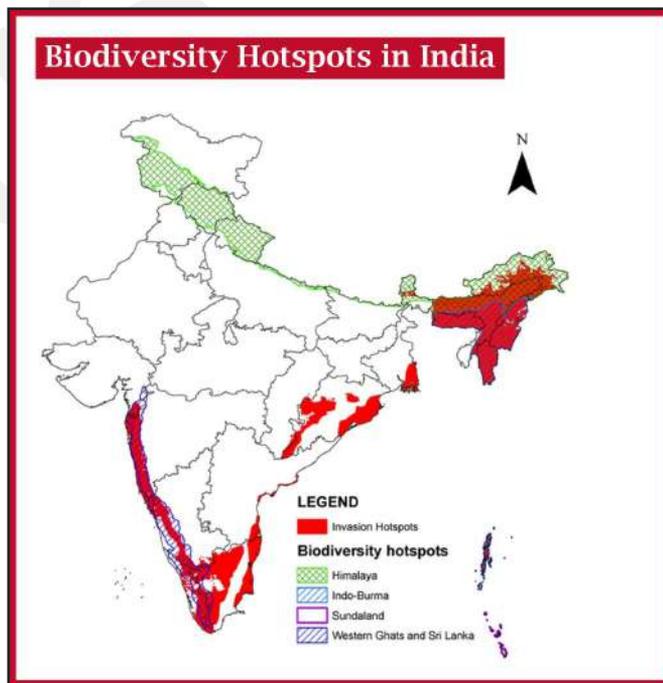
- Geological processes:
 - Mountains serve as 'cradles' and 'museums' for biodiversity.
 - Uplifts and other geological events produce new environments in which new species can arise ('cradles').
 - Furthermore, climatologically stable mountains act as 'museums,' preserving species for long periods.
 - The Northern Andes, notably Chimborazo, exemplify this by spanning a wide diversity of biomes across short distances.
- Geological heterogeneity:
 - Mountains with firm geological heterogeneity have increased biodiversity.
 - The various compositions of rocks create various habitats, promoting biological diversity.
 - This occurrence is especially common in tropical mountains, adding to their distinctive biological tapestry.

Eastern Himalaya: A case study

- The Eastern Himalaya presents an anomaly in terms of biodiversity beyond the tropics. The

Eastern Himalaya has extraordinary variety, contradicting the usual tropical biodiversity paradigm.

- Climate variability and geological heterogeneity contribute to high biodiversity.
- Different temperatures and rainfall amounts on the same mountain support a variety of biomes.
- According to the **World Wildlife Fund**, the Eastern Himalayas support thousands of diverse species, including over **10,000 plants, 900 bird species, and 300 animal species**. Many of them are either endangered or highly endangered.
- Its meadows host the densest populations of Asian elephants, Bengal tigers, and one-horned rhinos. Its mountains shelter snow leopards, Himalayan black bears, takins, red pandas, and golden langurs, while its waterways are home to the world's rarest dolphins (Gangetic).



Challenges in identifying the pattern of biodiversity richness:

- A significant restriction of scientists' attempts to explain biodiversity patterns is a lack of fine-grained data on where species appear.
- There is a shortage of research & development.

- Several locations, particularly in India, remain understudied.
- We cannot expect to comprehend a location's genuine biodiversity without employing contemporary genomic technologies.

WATER (PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF POLLUTION) AMENDMENT BILL, 2024

Why in the News?

The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Amendment Bill, 2024 has recently been passed by the Parliament.

Key provisions mentioned in the Water (Prevention And Control Of Pollution) Amendment Bill, 2024

- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1974 has long been a cornerstone of India's environmental legislation, ensuring the sustainable management of water resources.
- The recent modification aims to resolve several deficiencies and adapt regulatory structures to current demands.
- Amendments to the Water Act are also necessary to bring it in line with the Air Act, as both laws contain comparable provisions.

Important amended provisions:

- The **decriminalization of minor offenses** in the context of water pollution is a key focus, aiming to **eliminate concerns about imprisonment for technical or procedural lapses**. The underlying rationale is to establish penalties that match the seriousness of offenses, fostering compliance without excessively burdening those involved.
- **Specific types of industrial plants can be exempted from certain legal restrictions**, as per the revised bill, granting the central government the authority to make such exceptions. This includes provisions related to the establishment of new outlets and discharges outlined in **Section 25**. The goal is to **simplify regulatory pro-**

cesses, minimize redundancy in surveillance efforts, and reduce unnecessary challenges for regulatory agencies, ultimately enhancing efficiency.

- To **improve regulatory oversight and standardization across states**, the bill introduces measures that **empower the central government**. This includes the ability to set guidelines for appointing chairpersons of State Pollution Control Boards and issuing directives on the approval, rejection, or revocation of industry-related consents. The legislation also **outlines specific mandatory qualifications, experience requirements, and procedures to ensure the fair appointment of chairpersons.**
- The current modifications apply to Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Union territories (although the **original Act applies to 25 states only**). They substitute imprisonment for "minor" offences with **finer ranging from ₹10,000 to ₹15 lakh.**
- However, operating or constructing an industrial unit without SPCB permission is still a serious offence punishable by up to six years in prison and a fine.

Challenges associated with the bill

- **Lack of Supervision:** The provision granting exemptions for specific industrial categories from obtaining consent may pose a risk of heightened pollution levels if not effectively regulated.
- **Questionable Adjudication Process:** Allowing the central government to designate adjudication officers could raise concerns regarding the fairness and independence of the adjudication process.
- **Centralized Nomination Process Concerns:** The centrally prescribed nomination procedures by the central government for appointing chairpersons of State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) may compromise the autonomy of state governments.
- **Diminished Deterrence:** The replacement of imprisonment provisions with penalties for violations against pollution standards might lessen

the deterrent impact.

- **Unchecked Discharge Hazards:** Insufficient oversight may lead to uncontrolled discharge of pollutants into water bodies, jeopardizing water quality and public health.
- **Potential Administrative Inefficiencies:** Expanding the entities authorized to file complaints may result in overlapping jurisdictions and administrative inefficiencies, potentially causing delays and bureaucratic obstacles.



About Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974

The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, enacted in 1974, stands as a pivotal legislative framework in India designed to address and manage water pollution. This comprehensive legislation aims to prevent and control water pollution, emphasising the restoration and maintenance of water wholesomeness.

Constitution of Control Boards

Under this Act, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) were established, playing crucial roles in the enforcement and implementation of pollution control measures. The CPCB, formed in September 1974, operates as a statutory body under the Ministry of

Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Dual Responsibility under the Air Act, 1981

An important extension occurred in 1981 when the CPCB was entrusted with responsibilities under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act. This dual role underscores its significance in addressing both air and water pollution issues.

Amendments in past

The Act underwent amendments in 1978 and 1988, focusing on clarifying ambiguities and empowering the Pollution Control Boards. These amendments strengthened the regulatory framework and expanded the powers of the Boards to effectively address emerging challenges.

Key Provisions and Industry Compliance

The Act mandates industries and local bodies to obtain prior consent from State Pollution Control Boards before initiating operations that involve the discharge of domestic sewage or trade effluent into water bodies. The Boards may grant consent with specified conditions or refuse, accompanied by written reasons.

REPORT ON RENEWABLE ENERGY BY CLIMATE ANALYTICS

Why in the News?

Think-Tank Climate Analytics recently released a report titled “Tripling renewables by 2030: Interpreting the global goal at the regional level,” which estimates the necessary investments and describes what a 1.5°C-aligned rollout of renewables would entail locally.

Significant findings of the report

Tripling renewable efforts for achieving the 1.5°C target:

To meet the 1.5°C goal outlined in the Paris Agreement, the global capacity for renewables must increase to 11.5 TW by 2030, marking a 3.4-fold rise from 2022 levels. This necessitates diverse regions to adapt at varying rates, influenced by the impera-

tive to phase out fossil fuels and anticipated growth in electricity demand.

Investment requirements:

Meeting the 1.5°C-aligned target demands a USD 12 trillion investment in the power system by 2030, averaging USD 2 trillion annually from 2024 onward. Approximately two-thirds of this investment would be allocated to renewable installations, with the remainder dedicated to grid and storage infrastructure.

Contributions from different regions:

Asian Region: Asia emerges as the most substantial contributor, accounting for approximately 47% of the required 8.1 TW additions in global renewable capacity by 2030. Asia is notably the region making significant progress in tripling renewables in line with the 1.5°C goal, **driven by notable growth in China and India, compensating for slower advancements in countries like South Korea.**

However, the persistent construction of coal-fired power plants in China and India poses a considerable risk, potentially jeopardising a 1.5°C-aligned transition in the power sector or resulting in substantial stranded assets.

Sub-Saharan Africa: Scaling rapidly at 6.6 times, Sub-Saharan Africa benefits from low existing renewable capacity and high energy access needs. The forecasted 66% per capita growth in electricity demand from 2020 to 2030 in the region contributes to a renewables scale-up rate double the global average. However, achieving this accelerated roll-out requires a significant increase in international climate finance.

OECD Region: The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) contributes the second-largest share of global capacity additions, **accounting for approximately 36%.** Renewable scaling in this region occurs at a slower pace of 3.1 times due to modest electricity demand growth and a higher existing renewable capacity in 2022.



Investment gap and possible solutions:

A substantial investment gap exists, with the world projected to fall short by USD 5 trillion between 2024 and 2030. Bridging this gap could be achieved entirely by redirecting investments from fossil fuels to renewables and grids, aligning the power sector with the 1.5°C target.

Policy guidelines:

Alongside escalating renewable efforts, governments must terminate public support and subsidies for fossil fuels to effectively reduce emissions. To steer endeavours towards this goal, governments require a transparent roadmap and information on investment and climate finance needs. Civil society needs benchmarks to hold governments accountable for their commitments.

Challenges and urgency:

Sub-Saharan Africa confronts significant challenges,

including insufficient investment and international support, potentially denying millions the advantages of renewable energy. Urgent action is imperative to secure financing and support renewable deployment in less affluent regions, ensuring the fulfilment of the COP28 pledge.

Indian initiatives toward clean energy

India has been at the forefront of adopting and promoting initiatives aimed at transitioning towards cleaner and more sustainable energy sources. These efforts align with the global push to combat climate change and enhance environmental sustainability. Several key initiatives exemplify India's commitment to clean energy:

National Solar Mission (NSM):

Launched in 2010, NSM sets an ambitious target of deploying 100 GW of solar power capacity by 2022. This mission focuses on increasing the share of solar energy in the country's energy mix, promoting solar technology adoption, and fostering research and development in the solar sector.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY):

While not exclusively an energy initiative, PMUY, launched in 2016, aims to provide clean cooking fuel to households below the poverty line. By distributing LPG connections, the program reduces reliance on traditional biomass for cooking, contributing to a cleaner environment.

National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy:

Introduced in 2018, this policy encourages the development of hybrid projects that combine both wind and solar energy generation. By leveraging the complementary nature of wind and solar resources, India seeks to enhance overall renewable energy capacity and grid stability.

Fame India scheme:

The Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME) India Scheme, initiated in 2015, aims to accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) and their manufacturing. By incentivising EV adoption, the scheme contributes to reducing vehicular emissions and promoting a

cleaner transportation system.

CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES COP 14

Why in the News?

Samarkand, recently Uzbekistan, has served as the venue for the conclusion of the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP) to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS 14).

Significant highlights of CMS COP 14

Acceptance of listing proposals:

- All involved parties have reached an agreement to embrace the listing proposals for **14 migratory species**, which include the Eurasian lynx, Peruvian pelican, Pallas's cat, guanaco, Lahille's bottlenose dolphin, harbour porpoise, Magellanic plover, bearded vulture, Blackchin guitarfish, Bull ray, Lusitanian cownose ray, Gilded catfish, and Laulao catfish.
- The **primary objective of these listings is to strengthen protective measures and promote conservation initiatives for these species.**

Focus on threats:

- Various threats to migratory species were identified, including habitat degradation, fragmentation, illegal trade, bycatch, contaminants, and human activities like fencing, oil and gas development, mining, and underwater noise.
- Incorporating these species into the **CMS appendices is aimed at mitigating these threats and advocating for their conservation.**

Collaboration and conservation endeavors:

- The proposals underscore the significance of collaborative efforts among a range of states to address challenges faced by migratory species, engage in research activities, and implement conservation projects.
- Range states, denoting countries or territories

Conservation of Migratory Species



within the natural geographical range of a particular species, play a direct role in managing, conserving, and protecting both the species and its habitat.

- The **emphasis has been placed on preserving existing populations, enhancing connectivity, safeguarding habitats, and restoring population levels.**

Regional and global conservation initiatives:

- The acceptance of the proposals reflects a commitment to addressing conservation challenges at both regional and global levels.
- Measures have been recommended to protect specific populations, such as the Baltic Proper population of the harbour porpoise and the Mediterranean Sea populations of various species, while also considering broader conservation strategies.

International cooperation:

- Range states collaborated to propose amendments to the listings and the adoption of conservation measures.

- Countries such as North Macedonia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Chile, Argentina, Peru, Brazil, Uruguay, Ecuador, Panama, and others supported the listing proposals and called for unified efforts to safeguard migratory species and their habitats.

Recognition of endangered status:

- A number of species have been listed in the IUCN Red List as “Vulnerable,” “Endangered,” or “Critically Endangered” because of population loss and other concerns. These species include the Peruvian pelican, Lahille’s bottlenose dolphin, and Magellanic plover.
- Listing these species in CMS appendices is intended to elevate their conservation status and provide support for habitat protection.

About convention on the Conservation Of Migratory Species

Introduction To CMS:

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, commonly known as the Bonn Convention, stands as a vital environmental

treaty operating under the United Nations Environment Programme. Originating in Bonn, Germany, it was signed on 23 June 1979. This international accord serves as a global platform, addressing the conservation and sustainable utilisation of migratory animals and their habitats.

Global Conservation Mandate:

CMS holds the distinctive position of being the only global and UN-based intergovernmental organisation exclusively dedicated to the conservation and management of terrestrial, aquatic, and avian migratory species across their entire range. Recognising the significance of conserving migratory species, the convention underscores the need for special attention to species facing unfavourable conservation statuses.

Diverse Conservation Instruments:

Participating CMS Parties engage in various activities, ranging from legally binding treaties, termed Agreements, to less formal instruments like Memoranda of Understanding. The decision-making body of the convention is the Conference of Parties (COP).

CMS Appendices: Key Components

Appendix I:

This section of CMS catalogues endangered migratory species and imposes prohibitions on activities impacting these species. The focus is on stringent measures to protect and preserve these vulnerable populations.

Appendix II:

Appendix II features species with an 'unfavourable conservation status,' as defined by the Convention. It encourages range states to collaboratively formulate agreements for the conservation and management of these species, emphasising a cooperative approach.

- India's Role in CMS
 - **Long-standing Partnership:** India has been a committed party to the CMS since 1983, reflecting its dedication to international conservation efforts.

- **Specific Collaborations:** India has further strengthened its commitment by signing non-legally binding Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) with CMS. These agreements showcase India's specific efforts to contribute to the conservation and management of these migratory species.

WILDLIFE (PROTECTION) LICENCING RULES, 2024

Why in the News?

The central government has enacted the **Wildlife (Protection) Licencing (Additional Matters for Consideration) Rules, 2024**, which update the Wildlife Trade Rules, 1983, resulting in major modifications to the licensing process and the exclusion of some species.

About wildlife licencing rules 2024

- **Schedule I:**
 - According to the guidelines established in **1983, no such permission** shall be granted to trade in a wild species designated in **Schedule I or Part II of Schedule II to the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972** unless the central government has previously consulted.
 - This criterion has been removed in the revised guidelines, which state that **no such licence** shall be issued if it relates to any wild animal listed in **Schedule I** to the Act, except with the prior consultation of the Central Government.
 - This implies that the limits on **Schedule I** species, which include creatures that require the highest protection, such as **tigers, elephants, rhinos**, and so on, remain in effect, with a provision for consultation.
- **Schedule II:**
 - The revised guidelines make a substantial

modification by removing licensing limitations for species classified in **Schedule II** of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.

- This means that licences for trading **Schedule II** species can be awarded without the need for central government consultation or approval, as was previously needed.
- The new rules also specify the factors that authorised officers must consider when granting licences, such as the applicant's capacity, the source and method for acquiring supplies, the sheer number of existing licences in the area, and the repercussions for hunting or trade of the relevant wild animals.

Concerns regarding the new rules

- **Exemption from Schedule II Species:**
 - The announcement does not explain why licensing restrictions for **Schedule II** species have been abolished.
 - **Schedule II** includes key species such as endangered mammals, birds, turtles, geckos, and snakes. The omission of these species from licensing regulations raises worries about the extent of protection they will receive.
 - The absence of clarity warrants additional inspection to ensure that the amended guidelines effectively address conservation objectives while not jeopardising the preservation of fragile wildlife.
- **Rationalisation of schedules**
 - The Wildlife Protection Act of 1972's schedules were rationalised in The **Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act of 2022**, resulting in modifications to species categorization.
 - Prior to the 2022 amendment, timetables were based on species endangerment levels. The current rationalisation could have changed the criterion for categorising species.
 - Experts argue whether the absence of certain species from Schedule II is con-

sistent with the rationalisation process, or whether those species have gained in numbers, justifying a lower degree of protection.

What is the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972?

- The **Wild Life (Protection) Act of 1972** establishes a legislative framework for **protecting diverse kinds of wild animals and plants**, managing their habitats, and regulating and controlling commerce in wild animals, plants, and products derived from them.
- The statute also establishes timetables for plants and animals that receive varied levels of government protection and supervision.
- Following the passage of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 became **applicable to the UT of J&K and Ladakh**.

About the latest amendment is the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022.

There are now **4 schedules**, down from **6** previously.

- **Schedule I** includes animal species that receive the greatest level of protection.
- **Schedule II** includes animal species that have a lesser degree of protection.
- **Schedule III** includes protected plant species.
- **Schedule IV** for classified specimens under **CITES** (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The inverter play in an electric vehicle Converts Direct Current to Alternating Current
2. Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle is a type of electric vehicle that uses both an internal combustion engine and an electric motor

3. In a hybrid vehicle, the term “full electric mode” imply Operation without an internal combustion engine

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three
- (d) None

Q2. Consider the following statements:

- 1. Seaweeds are a staple in Asian cuisine
- 2. Agar-agar is derived from fungi and is used as a gelatin substitute in the food industry
- 3. Seaweed species thrive maximum in the Inter-tidal zone

How many of the above statements are *Not* correct

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three
- (d) None

Q3. Consider the following statements:

- 1. The Troposphere layer is most directly affected by humidity
- 2. The atmospheric rivers in the context of drought-like conditions can exacerbate droughts
- 3. The winter season is typically associated with the highest frequency of atmospheric rivers in certain regions

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Q4. What is/are the importance of the ‘ United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification’? (UPSC Prelims-2016)

- 1. It aims to promote effective action through innovative national programmes and supportive international partnerships.
- 2. It has a special/particular focus on South Asia and North Africa regions, and its Secretariat facilitates the allocation of major portions of financial resources to these regions.
- 3. It is committed to a bottom-up approach, encouraging the participation of local people in combating desertification.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q5. Consider the following statements:

- 1. Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a financial mechanism to support the objectives of the CBD
- 2. The Nagoya Protocol addresses issues related to Climate change adaptation
- 3. CBD aims to achieve a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2030.
- 4. Montreal is the headquarters of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) All four

Q6. If you travel through the Himalayas, you are likely to see which of the following plants are nat-

usually growing there. (UPSC Prelims-2014)

1. Oak
2. Rhododendron
3. Sandalwood

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q7. Which biome is known for having the highest biodiversity?

- (a) Desert
- (b) Rainforest
- (c) Tundra
- d) Grassland

Q8. What is the role of keystone species in maintaining biodiversity?

- (a) They are the most abundant species in an ecosystem.
- (b) They have no impact on the ecosystem.
- (c) They play a crucial role in maintaining the structure and function of an ecosystem.
- (d) They are invasive species.

Q9. Consider the following statements

1. Central Pollution Control Board (CPC) operates under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
2. Under the Water Act, 1974, State Pollution Control Boards can grant or refuse consent with written reasons
3. Amendments in 1978 and 1988 to the Water Act primarily aimed at weakening the regulatory framework

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Q10. Consider the following statements:

1. The Kyoto Protocol aims to protect the ozone layer
2. The main objective of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is conservation of Biodiversity
3. GEF acts as the financial mechanism for the Montreal Protocol
4. Basel Convention is associated with addressing the transboundary movement of hazardous waste

How many of the statements above is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Q11. With reference to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which of the following statements is/are correct? (UPSC Prelims-2015)

1. IUCN is an organ of the United Nations, and CITES is an international agreement between governments.
2. IUCN runs thousands of field projects worldwide to manage natural environments better.
3. CITES is legally binding on the States that have joined it, but this Convention does not take the place of national laws.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q12. Consider the following statements regarding the Wildlife Protection Act:

1. Wildlife Protection Act prohibits the use of Chemicals for agriculture
2. The Act allows for the establishment of Zoo and Safari parks
3. The Act provides legal safeguards to plants under Schedule I

How many statements given above are correct?

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three
- (d) None

ANSWERS

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

MAINS QUESTION

Q1. Discuss the environmental impact of widespread electric vehicle adoption. Consider factors such as reduced emissions, resource extraction for battery production, and the overall sustainability of electric transportation.

Q2. Explain the significance of reducing plastic pollution in the context of sustainable ocean conservation. Provide practical solutions for minimising plastic waste in marine environments.

Q3. Analyse the economic and social aspects of sustainable ocean conservation. How can sustainable practices be economically viable and socially equitable for communities dependent on marine resources?

Q4. Explore the various weather phenomena associated with atmospheric rivers. How can these weather events impact local ecosystems, agriculture, and infrastructure?

Q5. Examine the challenges associated with predicting and forecasting atmospheric rivers. How do advances in meteorological technologies contribute to improved understanding and preparedness for these weather events?

Q6. Explain the concept of “keystone species” in the context of biodiversity conservation. Provide examples and discuss their significance in maintaining ecosystem stability.

Q7. Reflect on the role of education and awareness in biodiversity conservation. How can environmental education programs contribute to fostering a sense of responsibility and sustainable practices among communities?

Q7. Describe the major biodiversity hotspots in India. Analyze the factors that contribute to the high concentration of species in these regions and discuss the conservation efforts being undertaken to preserve these hotspots.

Q8. Analyze the role of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) in the pollution regulatory framework of India. How do EIAs contribute to sustain-

able development and environmental protection?

Q9. Evaluate the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as it relates to industries' responsibility in pollution control. How can CSR initiatives contribute to a sustainable and eco-friendly industrial landscape?

Q10. Discuss the economic challenges associated with establishing clean energy infrastructure nationally. How can countries overcome financial barriers to invest in renewable technologies and transition away from traditional energy so

Q11. What are the primary challenges and threats faced by migratory species, and how do these impact their conservation status?

Q12. Explain the significance of the Wildlife Protection Act in India. How does it contribute to the

conservation and protection of biodiversity?

Q13. Discuss the role of different schedules in the Wildlife Protection Act. Provide examples of wild-life species listed under various schedules.



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UAPA



Why in the News?

The Supreme Court recently refused bail to Gurwinder Singh, an accused in an alleged Khalistan module. He has been accused of being involved in a bigger conspiracy with Sikhs for Justice, a pro-Khalistan organisation banned by the Indian government. Courts have occasionally granted bail under the UAPA, despite its tougher bail terms. They have construed Section 43D (5) to permit bail in some extraordinary circumstances.

About Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)

This Act aims to deal with terrorist activities, activities that threaten India's integrity and sovereignty, and the more effective prevention of certain illegal activities by people and groups.

About UAPA

- The law covers the entirety of India and is applicable to both Indian citizens and foreign nationals. In addition, this Act's provisions also apply to: (a) Indian citizens living abroad; (b) those working for the government, wherever they may be; and (c) individuals on ships and planes registered in India, wherever they may be.

Key provisions of UAPA:

- **Declaration of Unlawfulness:** The Act confers absolute authority upon the central government. If the government deems any association to be or to have become an unlawful as-

sociation, it can declare such an association as unlawful through an official notification in the Gazette.

- **Chargesheet Filing:** The investigating agency is permitted to file a chargesheet within a maximum period of 180 days following arrests, with the possibility of further extensions after informing the court.
- **Punishments:** The Act prescribes the death penalty and life imprisonment as the most severe punishments.
- **Section 3** of the UAPA Act grants the government the authority to designate an association "unlawful". Declaring an entity as unlawful includes criminalising its membership and forfeiting the organization's assets.
- **Section 4:** To have the prohibition approved, the government must send a notification to the Unlawful Activities Prevention Tribunal within 30 days of publishing the gazette notification.
- **Section 7:** The government has the authority to ban the use of funds from an unlawful group.
- **Section 8:** All locations used by the illegal association can be reported and seized.

Amendments to the act till now

- **2004 Amendment:** In 2004, the inclusion of the "terrorist act" in the list of offenses allowed the banning of organizations engaged in terrorist activities. Prior to this amendment, "unlawful" activities were associated with actions related to secession and cession of territory.
- **2019 Amendment:** The 2019 amendment grants the Central Government the authority to iden-

tify individuals as terrorists based on specific grounds. It also **authorizes the Director-General of the National Investigation Agency (NIA)** to approve the seizure or attachment of property during NIA investigations. Additionally, officers of the NIA, with a rank of Inspector or above, are now empowered to investigate terrorism cases, a responsibility previously limited to officers with the rank of Deputy Superintendent or Assistant Commissioner of Police.

Evolution of Prominent Anti-Terror Laws in India:

1967

The Unlawful Activities (prevention) Act, 1967

1987

Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act. 1907 (TADA)

1999

The Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act.1999 (MCOCA)

2002

Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), 2002

2008

The National Investigation Agency Act, 2008

Supreme Court's stance on Section 43d(5) of UAPA:

- The Supreme Court, through various rulings, has shaped the interpretation of **Section 43D(5)**. In the 2019 **case of Zahoor Ahmed Shah Watali**, the court emphasized accepting the state's case without delving into its merits while considering bail applications.
- Subsequent cases, such as **Union of India v K A Najeer** in January 2021, acknowledged bail as an exception under UAPA. The Court acknowledged that it could override the legislative in-

tent against bail if there was a significant delay in completing the trial, and if the period of incarceration exceeded a substantial portion of the prescribed sentence.

- However, in July 2023, the Supreme Court, in the **case of Vernon Gonsalves v State of Maharashtra**, diverged from the Watali ruling on the application of the "prima facie true" test. The court must conduct some basic analysis of the evidence's value during the bail examination and be convinced of the quality of evidence for the test to be satisfied.
- The existence of conflicting opinions from benches with an equal number of judges raises the prospect of future benches resolving the discrepancy. Should significant disagreement persist, a larger bench may be required to settle the legal interpretation.

EXPANSION OF THE JURISDICTION OF BSF



Why in the News?

The upcoming hearing in the Supreme Court focuses on the contentious expansion of the Border Security Force (BSF) jurisdiction in Punjab, following a 2021 notification by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Punjab government has met this move with resistance, sparking a legal battle.

Understanding the role of BSF: safeguarding India's borders

- Established after the India-Pakistan war in **1965**, the BSF is a pivotal component among the seven Central Armed Police Forces of India.
- Operating **under the Ministry of Home Affairs**, the 2.65-lakh strong force is strategically deployed along the borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh, involved in tasks ranging from guarding the Indo-Pakistan International Border to participating in Anti-Naxal Operations.
- Notably, the BSF also plays a significant role in **UN peacekeeping missions**.

Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF)



CRPF

Central Reserve Police Force



CISF

Central Industrial Security Force



AR

Assam Rifles



SSB

Sashastra Seema Bal



BSF

Border Security Force



NSG

National Security Guard



ITBP

Indo-Tibetan Border Police

Reasons behind BSF jurisdiction extension

- The jurisdiction of the BSF, designed to **secure India's borders**, empowers it to make arrests, conduct searches, and seize assets under various laws.
- **Section 139(1) of the BSF Act** grants the central government authority to designate areas near the borders for the BSF to prevent offenses under specified acts.
- The **extension of jurisdiction**, outlined in an October 2021 notification, expanded the BSF's reach **from 15 to 50 kilometers along the borders of Punjab, West Bengal, and Assam**.
- This decision was prompted by the escalating use of drones and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) for activities such as **spying and arms smuggling**.

- Furthermore, they cited reasons for addressing **cattle smuggling challenges** and establishing a uniform 50-kilometer limit across states.

Challenges raised by states and federalism concerns

- The extension of BSF's jurisdiction has sparked concerns regarding the **encroachment on state powers** related to police and public order.
- States argue that this move interferes with their exclusive legislative authority, **violating constitutional provisions**.
- Some states perceive this as a **departure from the principles of Federalism**, challenging the distribution of powers between the central government and states.
- **Geographical differences** further complicate matters, with densely populated regions like

Punjab facing a different impact compared to sparsely populated areas like Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Strategies for Effective Border Management

- To manage borders efficiently without compromising state jurisdiction, a **collaborative approach** between central and state law enforcement agencies is essential.
- Establishing frameworks for **information sharing, coordination, and creating joint task forces** with personnel from both central and state police are crucial steps. Involving state police in border surveillance, akin to successful models employed by the Coast Guard and Indian Navy, ensures mutual vigilance and comprehensive coverage.
- **Investment in advanced surveillance technologies**, including drones and sensors, is recommended for enhanced border monitoring. A clear legal framework outlining roles, responsibilities, and jurisdiction is imperative, along with protocols for addressing cross-border incidents through joint investigations when required.
- **Regular consultations** between central and state authorities and continuous dialogue platforms are essential to adapt strategies based on evolving security dynamics.
- **Diplomatic initiatives** for international cooperation with neighboring countries on border security matters, including joint initiatives, information sharing, and coordinated patrols, contribute to addressing transnational security challenges.

Constitutional viewpoint on deployment

The central government has the authority to deploy forces to protect states from external aggression and internal disturbance, even if the state is hesitant to accept central forces. If a state opposes the deployment of Union forces, the Centre should issue directives **under Article 355**. If the state fails to adhere, the Centre may take further actions under **Article 356** (President's Rule).

END-TO-END ENCRYPTION AND RIGHT TO PRIVACY

Why in the News?



- On the one hand, in the context of compliance with India's proposed Online Security Bill (OSB) for the entire country, the head of WhatsApp has said that – **“WhatsApp will not comply with India's Online Security Bill (OSB), which effectively Prohibits “end-to-end (E2E) encryption.”** Apple has announced that – **“It will further increase the data points protected by end-to-end encryption (E2EE) on iCloud from 14 to 23 categories, as a result of which the protection of consumers' privacy can be ensured. “**

Main objectives of sharing data – Breach – Research:

- According to a recent survey-research conducted by Apple, which is also called data-breach-research, the total number of data breaches in India from the year 2013 to the year 2021 is three. Has increased more than times. Only in the year 2021 . In this year alone, data of 1.1 billion personal records has been revealed.
- With this end-to-end encryption, even if someone's personal data is breached in the cloud, the user's data will remain completely safe. This additional layer/level of encryption will somehow prove to be extremely valuable from the right to privacy and security of personal data point of view to deal with the hacking attacks launched by some funded groups and also from data theft and other security point of view.

What is Encryption ?



- One way to protect data from unauthorized access or tampering is called encryption. This process involves converting data into a secret code that only the intended recipient can understand. It is useful for various cases. Such as securing mutual online communications, storing sensitive information among themselves and verifying their digital identities, etc.

There are mainly two types of encryption-

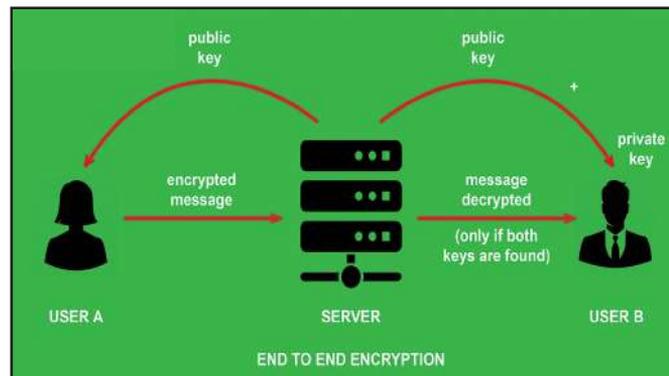
- Symmetrical and
- Asymmetric.
 - Symmetric encryption uses a single key to encrypt and decrypt data, while asymmetric encryption uses a pair of keys – one public and one private. One thing to note is that any public key can be shared with anyone, but in asymmetric encryption the private key is always kept secret.

Working mechanism of End-To-End encryption:

- Any end-to-end encryption relies on an elegant but complex cryptographic system to protect the data in transit or shared between two devices. The key element is asymmetric cryptography, which uses pairs of keys – public and private – to secure communications. The public key encrypts the data, while the private key decrypts it.
- It is a communication process that encrypts the data being shared between two devices.
- This prevents third parties such as Internet Service Providers (ISPs), cloud service providers and cyber criminals from accessing

the data, especially when one's personal data is being transferred.

Mechanisms used in End- To- End encryption:



- Cryptographic keys used to encrypt and decrypt messages are stored on endpoints.
- The process of end-to-end encryption uses an algorithm that converts standard text into an unreadable format.
- This format can only be opened or read by people with decryption keys, which are stored only on the endpoints and are not shared with any third parties, including service providing companies.

Usefulness of End-To-End encryption in mutual communication:

- End-to-end encryption has long been commonly used in India when transferring business documents, financial statements, legal proceedings and personal conversations.
- It can also be used to control the authorization of users when accessing any stored data.
- End-to-end encryption is used to secure user-to-user communications.
- It is commonly used to secure any passwords, ensure the security of stored data, and also for provisional protection of data security on cloud storage.

British online security bill:

- The Online Safety Bill (OSB) is a British proposed legislation to impose 'duty of care' obligations on online platforms to improve online safety.

Whose work is motivated by forcing Internet service providers to work to improve online security.

- Section 110 of the Terrorism and Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA) Content Identification and Online Safety Bill (OSB) empowers the regulator to issue notices to most internet service providers, including private messaging apps, to prevent terrorism and Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA) can be investigated and immediately removed from internet platforms.
- The Online Security Bill (OSB) does not mandate the removal of end-to-end encryption but would require any messaging app to scan all messages to flag such content, which would actually mean removing security mechanisms such as encryption. To break.
- The Online Security Bill (OSB) is seen as contradictory to the fundamental rights of an individual such as privacy and freedom of expression which allow states or governments to restrict and monitor the individual's fundamental rights such as privacy and freedom of expression.

Online Security Bill (OSB) in India:

Information Technology Act 2000:

- This Act brought by the Government of India regulates and guides the electronic and wireless modes of communication in the country. It exempts us from making any concrete provision related to encryption or making any strict policy at the concrete level, which makes this Act a matter of concern from the point of view of the question of privacy of consumers and it is a major step forward in the field of information and technology in India. Also demands making a concrete guideline.

Digital Media code of conduct – Rules 2021:

- Through what is commonly called traceability, the Government of India has made it mandatory for messaging platforms with more than five million users in India to 'enable the identification of the first originator' of the message.

The Government of India has mandated this through the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

- This information about the person who first sent the message, the number of times he has sent a message and the number of times he has forwarded it is also contained in this Code of Conduct rule.
- WhatsApp's penetration rate in India is over 97%, while in the United Kingdom it is around 75%. Because there are 487.5 million WhatsApp users in India where the messaging platform accounts for 22% i.e. 2.24 billion monthly active users.

Benefits of End-To-End Encryption (E2EE):

End-To-End Encryption helps in providing security in mutual communication:

- End-to-end encryption helps provide security in communications because end-to-end encryption uses public key cryptography, which stores the private key on endpoint devices. Messages can only be decrypted using these keys, so only people with access to the endpoint device are able to read the message.

Helpful in keeping safe from third parties:

- End-to-end encryption (E2EE) also serves to ensure that consumers or users are protected from malicious parties, including Internet data service providers, cloud storage providers, and companies that handle encrypted data.

It is free from any kind of interference:

- The decryption key does not need to be provided with E2EE as it is already available to the recipient.
- If a message encrypted with the public key is tampered with during transmission, the recipient will not be able to decrypt it and will not be able to access the tampered content.

Unreadable and forced to comply with Government regulations:

- Many industries are bound by regulatory laws/requirements or compliance laws that require encryption-level data protection as a primary requirement. So end-to-end encryption (E2EE) can help organizations keep data secure by making it unreadable.

Disadvantages of End- To- End Encryption (E2EE):

it is extremely complex to define endpoints:

- Some end-to-end encryption (E2EE) implementations in India allow encrypted data to be encrypted and re-encrypted at certain points during transmission.
- In this it clearly defines and differentiates the endpoints of the communication circuit. If the endpoints are compromised in any way, the encrypted data may be exposed. Therefore, it is extremely complex to define the endpoints of a communication circuit.

Excessive provision of confidentiality:

- Governments and government law enforcement agencies have always expressed concern that end-to-end encryption (E2EE) can protect people sharing illegal content because service providers are unable to provide access to the content to law enforcement.

Lack of protection For Metadata and Facilitating data misuse:

- In any type of mutual communication, messages are encrypted, information related to the message such as date of message and sender's information etc. is visible even after sending the message, making it vulnerable to those who misuse the data in any way. It may prove helpful.

The Legal framework currently in place in India for End-To-End Encryption (E2EE):

Currently, India Lacks Any Specific Legislation Related To End- To- End Encryption (E2EE):

- At present, there is no specific law regarding end-to-end encryption (E2EE) in India. Although many industry standards governing the banking, finance, and telecommunications industries in-

clude minimum encryption standards that are used to protect mutual transactions, these are limited to certain specific sectors and are not easily accessible to common consumers. Unable to access.

Restrictions on End- To- End Encryption (E2ee) Technologies:

- Currently, as per the terms of the licensing agreement between ISPs and DoT in India, consumers or users are not allowed to use encryption standards larger than 40 bits using symmetric key algorithms or comparable methods without prior approval. , while in India itself there are several additional rules and recommendations that allow the use of encryption levels higher than 40 bits for specific regions of India.

Conclusion: / Solution Path:

- Through the Information Technology in India (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, the Government of India seeks to encourage self-regulation of these social messaging platforms while protecting the right of individuals to privacy and freedom of expression. It keeps and guides these messaging platforms keeping in mind the privacy of the consumers, but still there are some criticisms which draw our attention towards government regulation in this regard as it is related to the issue of individual privacy. Lives. Only by finding a solution to this, the concept of India as a democratic and public welfare state can be confirmed.

It rules do not follow Human Rights conventions:

- India's new information technology (IT) rules violate the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) under the Human Rights Convention. Article 19(3) of the ICCPR provides for freedom of speech and expression. Which is for national security and public opinion or public health and morality. It is being said that all these things are being stopped due to the new IT rules.

The Government will manage the data of common users:

- Despite there being a freedom of expression law in India, Special Messengers Company says that the government is monitoring the company and rapidly removing user generated content. This violates the right to freedom of expression in India. Common citizens of India have expressed concern that a system is being prepared to remove content from digital platforms. Due to which those working between consumers and the company can take advantage of it.

The main reason for the dispute between the Government of India and WhatsApp:

- There is an ongoing dispute between the Government of India and WhatsApp regarding the end-to-end encryption (E2EE) technology of WhatsApp. Last month, WhatsApp had opposed the IT rule. It was alleged that consumers' right to privacy is in danger. The UN has been supporting end-to-end encryption (E2EE) since its inception. They believe that this is an effective technical safeguard. This protects the right to privacy.

Government collects data to protect the Unity and integrity of India and to prevent Communal Riots/Violence:

- When any violence or messages harming the unity and integrity of India go viral. It is used when a woman is being portrayed in a compromising position or in an inappropriate manner or when sexual issues related to children have to be explored. So who has spread the message and for what purpose can be found out.
- There is tension between WhatsApp and the Government of India regarding the rule of traceability. End-to-end encryption is designed to protect the privacy of users. The government's argument is that if they get to read the messages of all the users, they will easily detect the person spreading rumors on social media and prevent any kind of communal riots or violence while implementing measures to safeguard the unity and integrity of India. Can be stopped.

FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION REGULATION ACT, 2010 (FCRA)



Why in the News?

- This month, the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 2010 (FCRA) registrations of two well-known NGOs, World Vision India (WVI) and Centre for Policy Research (CPR), were terminated.
- The MHA claimed that CPR misappropriated money to harm India's economic interests and used it to finance demonstrations and legal challenges against development initiatives.
- WVI's registration was terminated due to suspected FCRA violations that occurred between 2012–13 and 2020–21. Of all the non-governmental organisations registered under the Act in 1986, WVI has received the greatest amount of foreign donations.

Statistics

- Since 2015, more than 16,000 NGOs' FCRA registrations have been cancelled due to "violation."
- As of January 22, there were 16,989 FCRA-registered NGOs operating in the country. Risks of money laundering and terrorist financing.
- According to a 2012 MHA report, India's non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are vulnerable to money laundering and terrorism financing.
- As a result, actions are being taken to ensure strict enforcement and coordination with international law enforcement agencies.

About Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA)

- The FCRA is being implemented under the supervision of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- In order for foreign donations to persons and

organisations to be compliant with the principles of a sovereign democratic republic, the law aimed to control such donations.

Some important features of FCRA

- The FCRA requires that every person or NGO seeking to accept foreign funds be:
 - To open a bank account with the State Bank of India in Delhi to receive foreign funds.
 - To use the money strictly for the purposes for which they were received and as specified in the Act.
 - Registered under the Act.
 - File annual returns and do not transfer monies to another NGO.
- **FCRA prohibits the acceptance of foreign funds from-**
 - Election candidates, journalists, and media broadcasters.
 - Organisations that have a political nature.
 - Members of legislative bodies and political parties, or their officeholders,
 - Judges and government employees,
- **How is registration under FCRA tool place?**
 - NGOs requesting foreign funding have to submit an online application in a certain format, together with all required papers.
 - Individuals or organisations having specific cultural, economic, educational, religious, or social programmes are eligible for FCRA registration.
 - After receiving the NGO's application, the MHA performs inquiries on the candidate through the Intelligence Bureau and handles the application appropriately.
 - FCRA registration remains valid for **five years** after being approved. NGOs are expected to seek renewals **within 6 months** of their registration expiring.

- The MHA must approve or decline the application **within 90 days**.

● Cancellation under FCRA

- The government maintains the power to withdraw an NGO's FCRA registration if it detects a violation of the Act.
- Registration may be cancelled if an NGO does not engage in reasonable activities for the benefit of society for two years or becomes extinct.
- The Central Government believes that revoking the certificate is in the public's best interests.
- An audit reveals problems in an NGO's finances, such as the misuse of foreign funds.
- A cancellation order cannot be issued unless the individual or NGO involved has been given a reasonable opportunity to be heard.
- When an NGO's registration is terminated, it is ineligible to re-register for three years.

INTERNET SHUTDOWN AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION



Why in the News?

- Twitter/X had approached the Karnataka High Court to challenge several blanket blocking orders issued by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology during the first round of farmers' protest in India in the year 2020 – 21. The single bench judge of the Karnataka High Court had initially rejected this petition of X, but later the appeal of Twitter/X firm was accepted by the Karnataka High Court and the hearing is going on.
- The current judgment of the Karnataka High Court has reinforced the idea that government authorities can block any content or block any level of content on the basis of valid reasoning without the need to give notice to the originators of the content or even call for an account.

But has wide authority in issuing orders.

- The appeal of social media Twitter/X in the recent judgment given by the Karnataka High Court will definitely clarify the rights and obligations of social media companies in India to show or disseminate any content on their platforms.
- As far as the government is concerned, it is not at all concerned about the impact such actions have on India's reputation as a free, open and democratic society, which is just one of the social media companies in the country. Beyond the presence of a large consumer base is a major reason for working.
- Recently, the issue of internet shutdowns and arbitrary restrictions on social media by governments in various states of India has become a cause of major controversy, raising questions of freedom of expression regarding political and social protests in India.
- The state governments of Haryana and Rajasthan and the central government have been seen getting involved in this dispute during the farmers' movement. State governments have raised this issue without any prior notice and without any solid and sound strategic reasons, which is not only reducing public support but also creating debate on the right to freedom of expression granted to Indian citizens by the Constitution of India. It has started.
- The central government in India has decided to issue notices to social media platforms using their tools to block accounts that they associate with those who oppose them negatively.
- In India, this may be a remedial measure for the governments in power, but it is important to be careful that this behavior of the governments does not infringe the freedom of expression of the individual.
- Yet social media platform
- This dispute between social media platforms and governments shows the need for caution and justice in the exercise of power.
- In India, it is important for both governments and citizens to ensure that the idea of freedom

and diverse streams of thought in the society and a pluralistic society are supported, but it should not be misused so that it can harm India's prosperity and the country's unity and integrity. There should be no shortage of any kind nor should there be any impact on the unity and integrity of the country.

Provisions related to Internet Shutdown:

According to Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act 1885, the rules related to temporary suspension of telecommunication services include the following provisions –

Indian Telegraph Act 1885, Section 5(2):

- Under this section, temporary suspension of telecommunication services is allowed. In case of public emergency and public safety, the Home Secretary of the Union or State is empowered to order suspension of telegraph or wire service (including the Internet). It requires review by a committee within five days, and cannot be issued for more than 15 days at a time. In case of extreme necessity in any particular situation, the Home Secretary of the Union or State or an authorized Joint Secretary level or above officer can issue an order.

Requirement of review committee:

- According to this, whenever such an order is issued, it should be reviewed by a review committee within five days.

Duration of the order to temporarily suspend telecommunication services:

- The duration of such order issued at a time cannot exceed 15 days.

Authorized orders in case of Emergency:

- If there is an urgent situation, an officer of Joint Secretary level or above authorized by the Union or State Home Secretary can also issue orders.

Section 144 of the code of criminal procedure:

- Under this section, the District Magistrate, Sub-Divisional Magistrate or any other Executive Magistrate is empowered to issue orders

specifically prescribed by the State Government for prohibiting or preventing nuisance or disturbance of public peace. Suspension of Internet services: Such order may also include suspension of Internet services in a particular area for a specified period.

- Thus, these provisions clearly establish the rules related to Internet shutdown and empower the government to take necessary steps in situations of public safety or emergency.

Effects of Internet shutdown:

- Internet shutdown violates the fundamental rights provided under Article 19(1) (a) and Article 19(1) (g). **Supreme Court case Anuradha Bhasin vs Union of India (2020)** I hold that freedom of speech and expression and freedom to practice any profession through the Internet enjoys constitutional protection under Article 19(1)(a) and Article 19(1)(g).
- **Internet shutdown also violates the Right to Information** Which has been declared a fundamental right under Article 19 by the Supreme Court in the case of Raj Narayan vs. State of Uttar Pradesh (1975).
- **It also violates the Right to Internet which was declared a fundamental right under Article 21 by the Kerala High Court in the case Fahima Sheerin vs. State of Kerala.**

Financial results:

- Internet shutdowns can have serious economic consequences. Businesses that depend on the Internet for operations, sales, and communications may suffer financial losses. Startups and small businesses may be particularly affected by this.
- According to 'Top 10 VPN **There was a loss of Rs 2,091 crore (\$255.2 million) in the first half of 2023 due to internet shutdown in India.**

Obstacles and Disruptions Arising in the Field of Education:

- In India, Many educational institutions use online platforms for teaching and learning. Internet shutdowns disrupt students' access to educational

resources, making it difficult for students to continue their studies. Due to which there may be obstacles and disruptions in their education.

Censorship and Trust Concerns:

- Internet shutdowns can lead to a lack of trust in the government and authorities. They may also raise concerns about censorship and lack of transparency.

Disruption in the Event of a Disaster or Response:

- from internet shutdown Communication and coordination of people can be affected, especially in case of any kind of emergency and during any crisis. A United Nations (UN)-backed report highlights that internet shutdowns affect people's security and well-being, hindering information flows and humanitarian aid.

Disruption in the Field of Health Care:

- The reasons caused due to internet shutdown Various studies have shown that internet shutdowns have a significant impact on the delivery of immediate medical care, hampering the supply of essential medicines and maintenance of equipment, limiting the exchange of health information between medical workers, and disrupting essential mental health support. have a significant impact on health systems.

International results:

- Internet shutdowns may also attract international attention and condemnation. This can harm a country's reputation and its relations with other countries. It is noteworthy that India ranks third in the world in terms of internet shutdowns. India ranked second in the world in terms of internet shutdowns in the first half of the year 2023. According to a report by US-based digital rights advocacy group Access Now, 58% of all recorded shutdowns globally occurred in India alone.

Impact on journalism and reporting:

- Journalists rely on the Internet to report events and share news with the general public. Internet shutdowns can hamper their ability to col-

lect and disseminate information, thereby compromising the public's right to know.

- The right to freedom of the press was declared a fundamental right by the Supreme Court in the cases *Indian Express vs. Union of India* (1986) and *Bennett Coleman vs. Union of India* (1972).

Arguments given in favor of Internet Shutdown:

Stopping Hate Speech and Fake News:

- According to one argument given in favor of internet shutdown, by shutting down the internet in India, the spread of unrealistic information like hate speech and fake news can be stopped in India, which can prevent violence and riots on communal or caste basis. Is .
- For example – the Indian government announced an internet shutdown during the farmers' agitation and demonstrations, in an effort to stop rumors and misconceptions from spreading during the farmers' agitation and demonstrations.

For Smooth Functioning of Public Order and Maintenance of Peace and Security:

- According to another argument given in favor of internet shutdown, by controlling the protests in India, through internet shutdown, the government can maintain public order, people's safety and peace in the society, which will help the experts and security forces to prevent any untoward incident. Indications regarding the incident are given even before it happens. For example – After the removal of Article 370 in India, an attempt was made to maintain security authority by shutting down the internet in Kashmir.

For National Security:

- According to another argument given in favor of Internet shutdown, through Internet shutdown in India, the government can deal with cyber attacks and protect itself from external threats by being conscious of national security. For example – during the standoff with China, national security was protected by suspending internet services in border areas.

Control over Dissemination and Promotion of Objectionable Material:

- According to another argument given in favor of Internet shutdown, Internet shutdown in India can control the distribution and consumption of such material or its dissemination and promotion can also be controlled which may be harmful or objectionable. For example – in some areas the government has blocked Internet access to prevent the spread of objectionable images or videos.

Argument given in Opposition Regarding Internet Shutdown:

- Many thinkers who oppose Internet shutdowns have argued that such harsh restrictions could risk undermining democracy and accountability. He says that the Internet provides a means for citizens to access information, express opinions, participate in public debate and hold officials accountable for their actions. It could follow that an Internet shutdown would destroy all these qualities and governments might be unable to keep their followers vigilant about their rights.
- Furthermore, Internet shutdowns may enable authoritarian governments to silence critics and create distorted information echo chambers. In a way, it can support authoritarianism and create a medium for spreading objectionable ideas, which can increase social disintegration.
- Some thinkers insist that an Internet shutdown is an ineffective and counterproductive measure, as it does not address the root causes of the problems it is supposed to solve. For example, it may not succeed in preventing violence and terrorism, but may instead increase anger and resentment among affected populations.
- Additionally, an Internet shutdown may not stop the spread of fake news and hate speech, but may instead create an information vacuum that actors can take advantage of. This may increase the disintegration of various prosperity and weaken social harmony.
- Some thinkers also believe that Internet shutdowns can be considered arbitrary measures

and open to abuse, as they are often implemented without due process, transparency, or judicial oversight. This could lead to the danger of giving too much power to local authorities, allowing them to use it to resort to their own political interference. This proves that as an arbitrary measure of Internet shutdown, governments should ensure that it is imposed only in special circumstances, and that it meets all levels of judicial process and quality standards.

Ways to deal with Internet shutdown:

The following suggestions can be made in terms of appropriate steps to deal with Internet shutdown-

Strengthening the legal and Regulatory Framework:

- Both the central and state governments in India should ensure that the legal and regulatory frameworks governing Internet shutdowns are strong and fully comply with international human rights standards.
- The government should amend the Telegraph Act and its regulations so that they fully comply with constitutional and human rights standards.

Ensuring Accountability of Officials:

- Increase transparency and ensure accountability of authorized officials of both the Central and State governments in India who order and enforce Internet shutdowns.
- Provide effective remedies for people/citizens affected by internet shutdown and ensure their safety is guaranteed.

Looking for Alternative Options:

- In India, the government should consider other less intrusive measures instead of internet shutdown, such as correcting law and order disturbances, dealing with communal violence and terrorism, blocking specific websites or content, issuing warnings, civil society And this could include engaging the media, deploying more security forces.

To Ensure Compliance with the guidelines of the

Supreme Court:

- Governments in India should fully comply with the Internet shutdown guidelines given by the Supreme Court of India, which provide for Internet suspension to limit access only for a temporary period. The orders issued under the suspension rules for internet shutdown should fully follow the principle of proportionality and the government should avoid extending their duration.

If the governments in India take steps in the right direction by adopting these suggestions, then the social and economic impact regarding internet shutdown can be reduced and human rights can be fully observed in India.

Conclusion / Path to Solution:

- The Supreme Court, High Court or other courts in India should take action against governments issuing orders blocking content on social media.
- Internet shutdowns and the use of arbitrary restrictions on freedom of expression on social media can be a harmonious way to raise social, political and cultural questions, but their impact can be both positive and negative.
- Internet shutdown can be used for security and self-defense purposes. In case of any unsafe situation or objection, governments may try to protect people by shutting down internet services. This may be an uncomfortable procedure, but it may be necessary to save life.
- Banning freedom of expression on social media can increase mutual opposition in the society. This can lead to the suppression of independent and thoughtful ideas, leading to people becoming retail. A state of conflict of views can arise between people looking at social media from different viewpoints, which can cause deep conflicts in the society.
- The use of such restrictions by governments can stifle opposition criticism of ruling structures and render people's voices invisible or mute. Social media can be a crowdsourcing tool that can bring people together and make them aware of social and political issues.

- Instead of internet shutdowns or banning social media, positive and lively dialogue should be promoted so that people can freely and openly share their ideas with each other.
- Internet shutdowns and restrictions on freedom of expression on social media may be used in necessary situations, but must be done carefully and harmoniously. To maintain prosperity, justice, and harmony in society, governments should take steps in the appropriate direction, so that people can have greater participation and express their views freely.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Section 43D(5) of UAPA sets strict criteria making bail difficult
2. State Government has the power to declare an association as unlawful under UAPA

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Ministry of Defense oversees the functioning of the BSF
2. Indian Coast Guard is not part of the Central Armed Police Forces
3. BSF is primarily responsible for guarding Coastal borders

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only

(c) 2 and 3

(d) 1 and 3

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the Online Security Bill (OSB) in India.

1. The Online Safety Bill (OSB) is a British proposed legislation to impose 'duty of care' obligations on online platforms to improve online safety.
2. Section 110 of the Terrorism and Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA) Content Identification and Online Security Bill (OSB) empowers the regulator to issue notices to most internet service providers.
3. Through traceability, the Government of India has made it mandatory for messaging platforms with more than five million users in India to 'enable the identification of the first originator' of a message.
4. There are four types of end-to-end encryption.

Which of the above statement /statements is correct?

- (a) Only 1, 2 and 4
- (b) Only 2, 3 and 4
- (c) Only 2 and 4
- (d) Only 1, 2 and 3

Q4. Consider the following statements in reference to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA)?

1. It regulates acceptance and utilization of foreign contributions and hospitality
2. Only political parties are required to register under FCRA
3. The primary objective of FCRA is to ensure transparency and accountability in the receipt and utilization of foreign contributions
4. Minister of Defence under FCRA administer and implement the provisions of FCRA

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) One
(b) Two
(c) Three
(d) Four

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding Internet shutdown and freedom of expression in India.

1. The Central Government has decided to block social media accounts by issuing notices to social media platforms, calling them an example of negative deterrence.
2. Twitter/X had filed an appeal in the Karnataka High Court to challenge several blanket blocking orders issued by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in India.
3. Internet shutdowns by governments in India cannot stop the spread of hate speech and fake news.
4. Internet shutdown is an ineffective and counterproductive measure, as it does not address the root causes of the problems.

Which of the above statement/statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1, and 3
(b) Only 2, 3 and 4
(c) Only 1 and 4
(d) Only 1, 2 and 4

ANSWERS

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

MAINS QUESTION

Q1. Discuss the implications of Section 43D(5) of the UAPA on an individual's right to freedom of speech and expression. How does the stringent bail provision potentially affect the exercise of this fundamental right in the context of counter-terrorism measures?

Q2. Examine the roles and responsibilities of the Border Security Force (BSF) in safeguarding India's borders. Highlight its contributions and challenges in maintaining border security.

Q3. How does the current online security bill in India and the individual's right to privacy and expression contradict each other? Give a logical explanation.

Q4. Explain the key objectives of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) and how it aims to regulate foreign contributions in India.

Q5. What do you understand about Internet shutdown and freedom of expression? Discuss that in India Internet shutdown for citizens how does it violate freedom of expression? Give a logical explanation.

Q6. Examine the challenges posed by transnational crimes, such as smuggling and human trafficking, to India's border security. Propose strategies and policies to address these challenges effectively.

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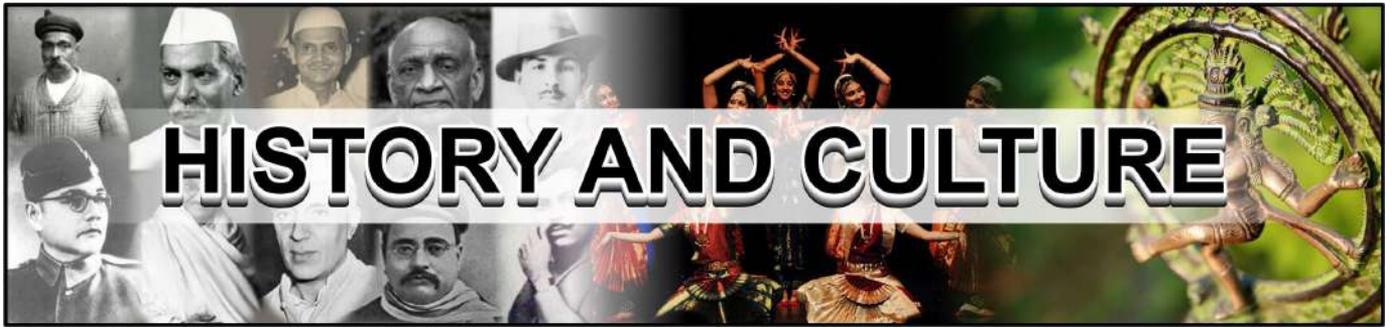
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SAPINDA MARRIAGE



Why in the News?

In a recent legal development, the Delhi High Court, in the case of **Neetu Grover v. Union of India & Ors, 2024**, deliberated on the constitutionality of **Section 5(v)** of the **Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 (HMA)**, which prohibits marriages between Hindus if they are “Sapindas” of each other. This article delves into the context of the legal challenge, the petitioner’s arguments, the court’s ruling, and a comprehensive understanding of Sapinda marriages, their regulations, and a comparative analysis of similar laws in other countries.

Context and legal challenge:

- **Petitioner’s Arguments:**
 - In 2007, the court declared the petitioner’s marriage void after her husband demonstrated that they had entered into a Sapinda marriage, and the woman did not belong to a community where such marriages were considered a custom.
 - The petitioner challenged the constitutional validity of **Section 5(v)**, contending that Sapinda marriages are prevalent even without proof of custom.
 - She argued that the section, which requires an established custom for Sapinda marriages, **violates the right to equality under Article 14** of the Constitution. Additionally, the petitioner asserted that the consent of both

families should validate the marriage.

- **Delhi Court’s Order:**

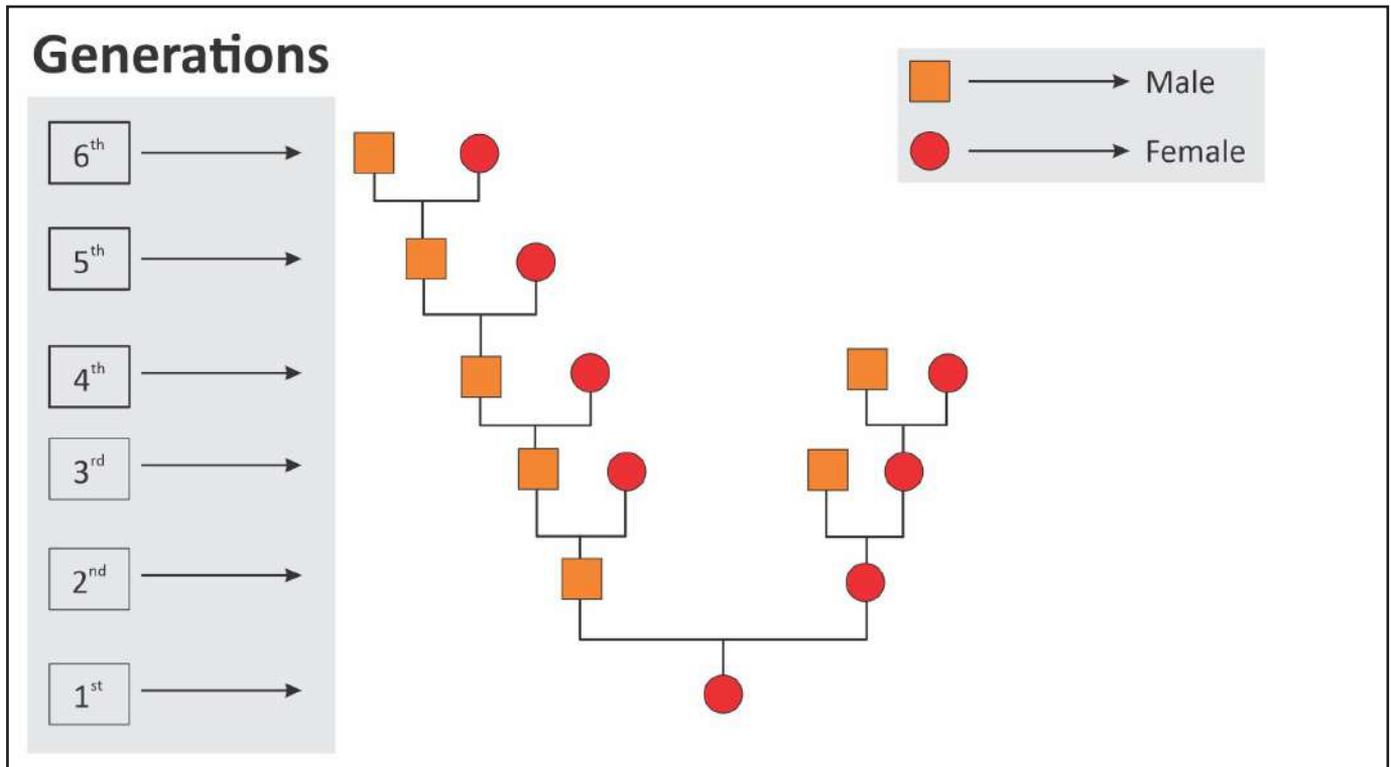
The Delhi High Court dismissed the argument, emphasizing the absence of “stringent proof” of an established custom presented by the petitioner. The court maintained that the regulation of partner choice in marriage is permissible and found no violation of the right to equality. The court stressed the need for “cogent legal grounds” to show that the prohibition against Sapinda marriages was unconstitutional.

Understanding sapinda marriages:

- **Definition and Lineal Ascendants:** A Sapinda marriage involves individuals related within a specified degree of closeness. As defined under **Section 3 of the HMA**, two persons are considered Sapindas if one is a lineal ascendant of the other in the limits of Sapinda relationship or if they share a common lineal ascendant within those limits.
- **Lineal Ascendant Restrictions:** The HMA restricts marriage with close relatives within a specified number of generations. On the mother’s side, the prohibition extends up to three generations, while on the father’s side, it reaches up to five generations
- **Section 5(v) of HMA 1955: Declaration of Void Marriages:** Marriages violating **Section 5(v)** as Sapinda marriages, without an established custom, are declared void, rendering them invalid from the beginning.

Exceptions:

The exception, **outlined in Section 5(v)**, allows marriages if the customs of the individuals permit Sap-



inda marriages. An established custom within the community, tribe, group, or family, continuously and uniformly observed for a long time, serves as a valid exception. The definition of “custom” in **Section 3(a)** requires continuous, uniform observance and legitimacy among Hindus to have the “force of law.” Certain conditions must be met for a custom to be valid.

Comparative analysis:

- **France and Belgium:** Abolished the crime of incest, allowing marriages between consenting adults. Incest is an act of sexual contact or marriage between a male and a female who are closely related by blood.
- **Republic of Ireland:** While recognizing same-sex marriages, the law on incest has not been updated to explicitly include individuals in same-sex relationships.
- **United States:** Generally bans incestuous marriages in all 50 states, with variations in laws related to incestuous relationships between consenting adults. Some states, like New Jersey and Rhode Island, allow such relationships under specific conditions.
- **Italy:** Incest is considered a crime only if it caus-

es a “public scandal,” implying a legal framework that considers circumstances.

- **Portugal:** Portuguese law does not criminalize incest, suggesting marriages between close relatives may not be prohibited.

ASIAN BUDDHIST CONFERENCE FOR PEACE (ABCP)



Why in the News?

The 12th General Assembly of the **Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace (ABCP)**, a voluntary mass movement of Asian Buddhists, was recently held in New Delhi.

Important highlights of 12th general assembly of ABCP-

- **Theme: Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace (ABCP) – “The Buddhist Voice of Global South”,** symbolises India’s commitment, as evidenced by its G20 leadership and the Voice of Global South Summit.
- **Constitutional Recognition of Buddha’s Influ-**

ence: The **image** of Lord Buddha in the artwork of the Indian Constitution was highlighted, particularly in **Part V**, where he appears in the section on Union government.

- **India's commitment to Buddha's path:** India was shown as a nation guided by Buddha's principles. India was recognised for its proactive involvement in building the Buddhist circuit and creating the India International Centre for Buddhist Culture.

About Asian Buddhist Conference For Peace (ABCP)-

- ABCP was created in **1970 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia**, as a voluntary Buddhist movement that included both monastic (monk) and lay members.
- ABCP was then formed by **Buddhist dignitaries from** India, Mongolia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, the Soviet Union, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, South and North Korea.
- **Aim:**
 - The **major goal** of the conference is to investigate and **discuss** Buddhism's role in promoting **global peace**. Delegates from several Asian countries engaged in in-depth discussions, sharing views and experiences on how Buddhist precepts might be applied to today's difficulties and conflicts.
 - The conference's goal is to **sow the foundations of harmony and cooperation**, instilling a sense of shared responsibility for the welfare of the planet.
 - The conference also functioned as a **melting pot** of numerous cultural manifestations, featuring traditional Buddhist ceremonies, art, and music from several locations. These cultural interactions not only **honoured the diversity** of Asian Buddhist heritage, but also reinforced the common ideals that undergird Buddha's teachings.

Using Buddhist teachings in good governance

- **In policymaking:** The Buddha's emphasis on

maintaining the Right View—which avoids distortion and delusion—aligns with the values of openness, impartiality, and evidence-based decision-making, which are cornerstones of effective governance. For instance, Bhutan's index of Gross National Happiness, which is based on Buddhist principles, attempts to gauge public well-being in addition to financial metrics.

- **Compassionate Governance:** Leaders are encouraged by the fundamental teachings of the Buddha to take into account the needs and suffering of all citizens, not only members of particular groups.
- **Good Conduct in Leadership:** Public servants can be held to the Buddha's Five Precepts, which include refraining from violence, stealing, lying, sexual misbehaviour, and intoxication.
- **Discourse and Peaceful Conflict Resolution:** The Buddha's focus on Right Speech and Right Action encourages civil discourse and peaceful resolution of disputes. This can be used in inter-faith discussions, international diplomacy, and even domestic political discourse.

How teachings of Buddha can help in present-day worlds?

- **Guiding light during uncertain times:** The ageless teachings of Buddha are a great source of wisdom and comfort in the hectic and volatile world of today. His understanding of the essence of suffering, transience, and the way to enlightenment offers a compass for navigating the difficulties of the modern world.
- **Accepting Transience: Managing Transition:** The impermanence of everything and the certainty of change are highlighted in the teachings of the Buddha. Understanding and appreciating impermanence becomes a powerful tool in managing uncertainty, building resilience, and gracefully adjusting to life's ups and downs in a world that is continuously changing.
- **Having empathy in a divided world:** Buddha's dedication to compassion becomes a transformational force in a divided period. Compassion towards oneself and others fosters healing, em-

pathy, and tolerance. These ideas strike a chord as a solution to the interpersonal and societal tensions that define the contemporary environment.

- **Being Aware in the Digital Age:** We are constantly exposed to a deluge of information, diversions, and stimulation in the digital age. In this digital chaos, the mindfulness teachings of the Buddha provide a haven of calm. People can anchor themselves in the midst of turmoil by practicing mindfulness through meditation and present-moment awareness, which promotes mental clarity and emotional well-being.
- **Against Materialism:** Buddha's teachings promote disengagement from worldly pursuits as a route to genuine contentment in a culture driven by consumerism. Realising the fleeting nature of worldly belongings, people can free themselves from the never-ending need for approval from others and discover enduring happiness in the simplicity of the now.

PRELIMS QUESTION

Q1. Consider the following statement regarding Buddhism:

1. The concept of "Anatta" means "No Soul"
2. Sanskrit is the primary language used in the earliest Buddhist scriptures
3. Bodhisattva is a compassionate one on his way to Enlightenment.

How many of the above statement is/are correct?

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three
- (d) None

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Hindu Family Law governs Hindu marriages in India

2. Sikh community follows the 'Anand Karaj' ceremony for marriage
3. Indian Penal Code prohibits bigamy in India

Which of the statements above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 2 and 3
- (c) 1 and 3
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q3. What is 'Kanyadaan' in the context of Hindu marriages?

- (a) Bridal attire
- (b) Marriage ritual
- (c) Dowry exchange
- (d) Giving away the bride

ANSWERS

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

MAINS QUESTIONS

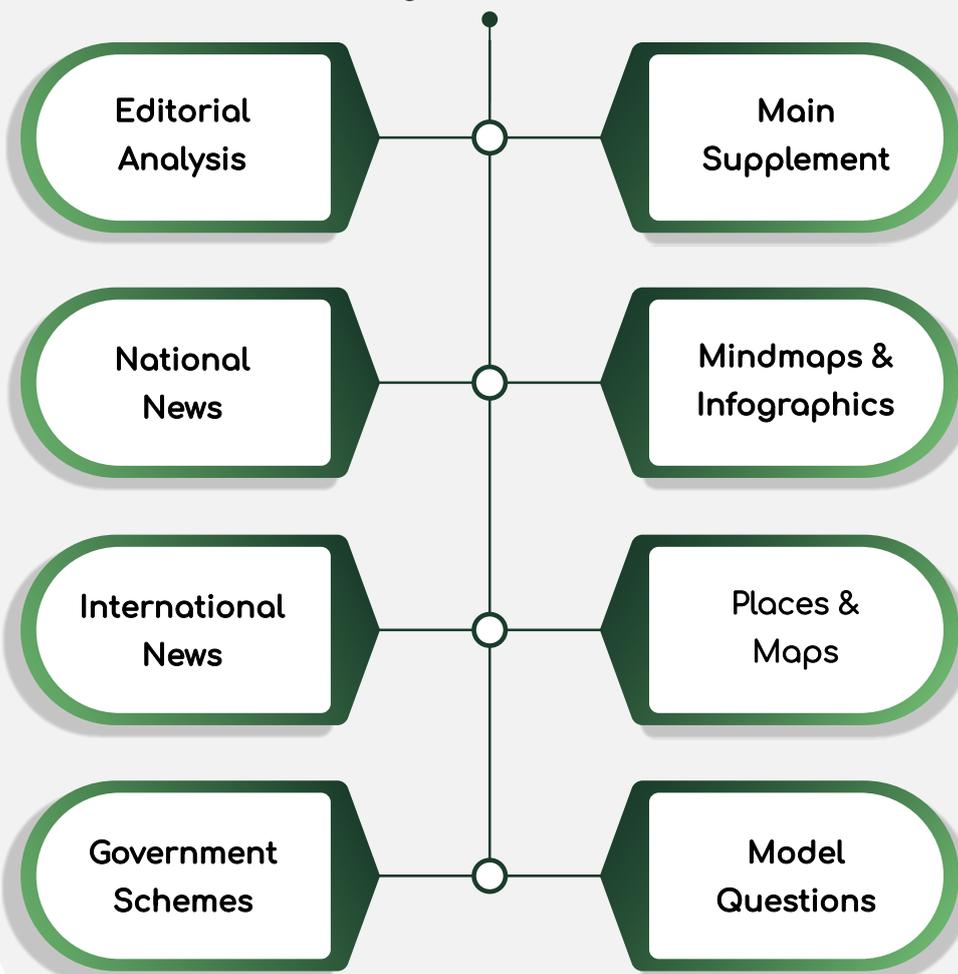
Q1. Why is the Pala period considered as the most important period in Indian Buddhism's history?

Q2. Jaya Jaitly's recommendation proposes equalizing the legal marriage age at 21. Do you believe this will truly achieve gender parity, or are there deeper societal factors that need to be addressed alongside legal changes?

Q3. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006 raised the legal marriage age to 18 for women. What are the biggest challenges to enforcing this law effectively, and what strategies could be implemented to address them?



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