Syllabus subtopic: Appointment to various Constitutional Posts, Powers, Functions and Responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

Prelims and Mains focus: about the report and its significance; about CAG: powers, functions and independence

News: In a report tabled in Parliament on Monday, the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) pulled up the Army for deficiencies in the provision of special clothing, rations and housing for troops in high-altitude areas, including Siachen.

Audit of provisioning and procurement (2015-16 to 2017-18)

- There were delays of up to four years in the procurement of high-altitude clothing and equipment, leading to an acute shortage of essential clothing and equipment. There was a critical shortage of snow goggles, ranging from 62% to 98%. The troops had not been issued ‘multi-purpose boots’ from November 2015 to September 2016, and had to resort to the recycling of available boots.

- Furthermore, as the old models of face mask, jacket and sleeping bags were procured, the troops did not get the benefit of using improved products.

- Lack of research and development by defence laboratory led to a continued dependence on import.

- On the special rations authorised for troops in high-altitude areas to meet their daily energy needs, the CAG said substitutes for the scaled items were authorised on a “cost-to-cost” basis, and this resulted in the supply of a reduced quantity. This compromised the calorie intake of the troops by as high as 82%.

What did the report say on INDU?

- As for the Indian National Defence University (INDU), the CAG said the
The INDIAN Army University (INDU) was recommended by the Kargil Review Committee in 1999 to address the deficiencies in India’s security management system. The Union Cabinet accorded in-principle approval in May 2010 for establishing it in Gurugram at an estimated cost of Rs.395 crore. The land was acquired in September 2012; however, the setting up of the INDU is yet to fructify even after two decades of the Kargil War. The draft INDU legislation had been lying for approval with the Cabinet Secretariat since December 2017.

What did the report say on the ‘Housing project’ for the army?

- The housing project, aimed at improving the living conditions of the troops in high-altitude areas, was executed in an ad hoc manner.

- In the first two phases of the pilot project, extensive summer and winter trials were conducted. The third phase constituted the confirmatory trial, at a cost of Rs.63.65 crore. This was avoidable, since the first two phases were exhaustive.

- The sanction was not obtained from the competent authority for the main project, and the handing over of the assets, created under the pilot project, to the units got delayed beyond the stipulated time. There were discrepancies between the assets shown in the Numerical Asset Register and those on the ground.