Syllabus subtopic: Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

News: The ambitious National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) project will be operational by December 31, 2020.

Prelims focus: About NATGRID and its features.

Mains focus: Significance and its criticisms

About NATGRID

- It is an ambitious counter terrorism programme.
- It will utilise technologies like Big Data and analytics to study and analyse the huge amounts of data from various intelligence and enforcement agencies to help track suspected terrorists and prevent terrorist attacks.
- It will connect, in different phases, data providing organisations and users besides developing a legal structure through which information can be accessed by the law enforcement agencies.
- NATGRID is a post Mumbai 26/11 attack measure.

Who can access the data?

The database would be accessible to authorised persons from 11 agencies on a case-to-case basis, and only for professional investigations into suspected cases of terrorism.

Criticisms:

1. NATGRID is facing opposition on charges of possible violations of privacy and leakage of confidential personal information.
2. Its efficacy in preventing terror has also been questioned given that no state agency or police force has access to its database thus reducing chances of immediate, effective action.
3. According to few experts, digital databases such as NATGRID can be misused. Over the last two decades, the very digital tools that terrorists use have also become great weapons to fight the ideologies of violence.
4. Intelligence agencies have also opposed amid fears that it would impinge on their territory and possibly result in leaks on the leads they were working on to other agencies.

Need for NATGRID

1. The danger from not having a sophisticated tool like the NATGRID is that it forces the
police to rely on harsh and coercive means to extract information in a crude and degrading fashion.

2. After every terrorist incident, it goes about rounding up suspects—many of who are innocent. If, instead, a pattern search and recognition system were in place, these violations of human rights would be much fewer.

3. Natgrid would also help the Intelligence Bureau keep a tab on persons with suspicious backgrounds.

4. The police would have access to all his data and any movement by this person would also be tracked with the help of this data base.