GS-I

100 Years Of Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

In The New
13th April, 2019 marked the 100 years of the historical Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre.

Details
- The Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act of 1919, better known as the **Rowlatt Act**, came into force in March 1919, even though every single Indian member of the Central Legislative Council opposed it.
- The Rowlatt Act bestowed on the Government the power :
  o **to set up special courts** consisting of three High Court Judges for specified offences;
  o **to direct execution of bond for good behaviour**; internment within city reporting at police station; and abstention from specific acts; and
  o **to arrest anybody suspected of terrorist activities**, detain them for up to 2 years without trial, search a place without a warrant, and impose severe restrictions on the freedom of the press.
- It shocked most Indians who had expected to be rewarded, not punished, for willingly fighting alongside the British in the First World War.
- Immediately after the passage of the Rowlatt Act, **B.N.Sarma** resigned his office as member of the Imperial Legislative Council.
- **The Madras Satyagraha Sabha** under the leadership of C. Rajagopalachari, A. Rangaswamy Iyengar, G. Harisarvottama Rao and T. Andhinarayana Chetty opposed the Rowlatt Act.
- **Mahatma Gandhi** called for a satyagraha against the act (Rowlatt Satyagraha). The hartal was observed on 6 April 1919 after the Viceroy gave his assent to the Rowlatt Bill.
- But even before the satyagraha there were large-scale violent, anti-British demonstrations in Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, Ahmedabad, etc.
- In Punjab, the situation was tense under the oppressive regime of lieutenant governor Sir Michael O' Dwyer who had imposed martial law.
  o It was under his orders that Gandhi was arrested at Palwal near Delhi and prevented from entering Punjab.
  o He also directed that Amritsar's popular leaders **Satyapal** and **Saifuddin Kitchlew** be deported to some "unknown place". They had been agitating against the implementation of Rowlatt Act,
  o **On Baisakhi day**, people gathered in the small park for peaceful protest against arrest of their leaders.
  o The army surrounded the gathering under orders from **General Reginald Dyer,** who was given a free hand by **Governor Michael O' Dwyer**. The only exit point was blocked, and army opened fire on the unarmed crowd, killing more than 1000.

Aftermath
- **Mahatma Gandhi** was overwhelmed by the atmosphere of violence and **withdrew the Rowlatt satyagraha on 18th April, 1919.**
- **Rabindranath Tagore** renounced his knighthood in protest.
- On 14 October 1919, after orders issued by the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, the Government of India announced the formation of a committee of inquiry into the events in Punjab.
  o Referred to as the Disorders Inquiry Committee, it was later more widely known as the **Hunter Commission**.
  o Congress boycotted this committee.
  o The Hunter Committee did not impose any penal or disciplinary action because Dyer's actions were condoned by various superiors (later upheld by the Army Council).
  o Dyer was initially lauded by

conservatives in the empire, but in July 1920 he was censured and forced to retire by the House of Commons. He was disciplined by being removed from his appointment, was passed over for promotion and was prohibited from further employment in India.

- **Mahatma Gandhi**, in 1920, returned the Kaiser-i-Hind medal awarded to him after the Boer War by the British Government as a part of his movement against Punjab and khilafat injustice.

- The corrupt mahants of the Golden temple honoured General Dyer with a saropa (robe of honour), which led to the agitation that resulted in the formation of a committee known as Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), which was given the control and management of the Golden Temple, the Akal Takht, and other Gurudwaras.

- Accepting the report of the Repressive Laws Committee, the Government of India repealed the Rowlatt Act, the Press Act, and twenty-two other laws in March 1922.

- **Udham Singh**, a revolutionary belonging to the Ghadar Party assassinated **Michael O' Dwyer** in London, on 13 March 1940.

PLEA TO PROTECT ACCUSED IN SEXUAL ABUSED CASES ACCUSED

In The News

A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court to frame guidelines **to protect the reputation and dignity of persons accused of sexual offences**.

Concerns

- A person was **considered innocent unless proven guilty** by a court of law. If a person was falsely accused, his **reputation would be lost forever and exposed to public ridicule for no fault of his**. This would be **a violation of the fundamental right to life enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution**. It does not only destroy an individual's life but also creates a social stigma for the family members too.
- Disclosure of his identity, especially during trial, would lead to **media trial**. Besides, **considering the wide reach of social media, the person's name and even that of his family, which might include minors, would be exposed on the Internet**. This would be a violation of their fundamental **right to privacy**.

Increased Vulnerability

- In present times, where people are in a virtual world, the reputation and integrity of a person is always an easy target to destroy.
- It would be tragic that the person, even after being found innocent, would continue to be known as a suspected sex offender on social media because once his identity entered the public domain it would become searchable and permanent.
- The previous identification as a suspect will endure in the public sphere.

Need of the hour:

- some **preventive measures** must be taken so as to avoid and to deal with

such situations in the interest of justice.

- Amend **Section 228-A** of the Indian penal Code that provides punishment for disclosing the identity of the victims but does not provide any safeguard for protection of the identity and integrity of the accused in case of false accusation.
- Court should **frame the guidelines** like it had earlier framed in Vishaka & Ors. v. State of Rajasthan to protect the integrity of victim and to safeguard the victim from facing the social stigma.

Conclusion:

1. Supreme Court had on many occasions reinforced that the "right to reputation" is an integral part of Articles 21 and 19(2) of the Constitution of India.

2. Therefore, some preventive measures must be taken to avoid and deal with such situations in the interest of justice.

Few incidents:

- S. Nambi Narayanan (who is an Indian scientist and aerospace engineer and also awarded India's third highest civilian award the Padma Bhushan) was falsely charged with espionage and was later on cleared of all charges and had to put up a long fight to save his reputation.

- However, no amount of compensation could restore what he had lost in the process.

GREEN URBAN AREAS

In The News
CPWD recently organized **National Seminar on "Greenery and Landscaping"**.

Following recommendations were made during the Seminar:

1. Green Urban Areas play an important role in the social and natural sustainability and improve quality of life.
2. Greenery and Dense plantation have a major impact on the conservation of energy, and reduce the energy requirement of the building.
3. In order to maintain sustainable environment, pollution free clean air, it is essential to take up the plantation work.
4. Cost of land has increased manifold and high rise buildings are coming up, people are getting hardly any area for the greenery. Keeping in view the same, plantation, greenery and other environment friendly applications should be planned around the building by way of dwarf trees, small shrubs, ground covers, hanging baskets, creepers, etc.
5. There is need to adopt wood alternative in building construction. Use of alternate materials like Bamboo needs to be encouraged.
6. Orientation and proper training should be imparted to the persons engaged in landscaping and Horticulture, for implementation of the new technologies in this field to save the labour and cost of the project in long run.
7. Emphasis should be given for conserving and transplanting indigenous and grown up trees.
8. Herbal and medicinal plants need to be encouraged. Herbal plants are useful for keeping the life healthy.
9. Application of Organic Manure needs to be adopted for healthy and nutritious food.
10. Water conserving irrigation method like drip irrigation, Sprinkler irrigation and pop up system needs to be adopted.
11. Plants and greenery help in reducing adverse effects of climate change. Therefore every individual should adopt minimum one tree.
12. Green initiative needs to be taken up on a mission mode by every nation, every city, every society and every individual so that future generations may lead happy and healthy life.

What are Green Urban Areas/Spaces and why are they significant?

- Green spaces such as parks and sports fields as well as woods and natural meadows, wetlands or other ecosystems, represent a fundamental component of any urban ecosystem.
- Green urban areas facilitate physical activity and relaxation, and form a refuge from noise. Trees produce oxygen, and help filter out harmful air pollution, including airborne particulate matter. Water spots, from lakes to rivers and fountains, moderate temperatures.
- Urban parks and gardens play a critical role in cooling cities, and also provide safe routes for walking and cycling for transport purposes as well as sites for physical activity, social interaction and for recreation. Recent estimates show that physical inactivity, linked to poor walkability and lack of access to recreational areas, accounts for 3.3% of global deaths.
- Green spaces also are important to mental health. Having access to green spaces can reduce health inequalities, improve well-being, and aid in treatment of mental illness. Some analysis suggests that physical activity in a natural environment can help remedy mild depression.

RESILIENT CITIES ASIA-PACIFIC (RCAP)

In The News

4th Resilient Cities Asia-Pacific (RCAP) Congress 2019 was recently organized by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) in association with South Delhi Municipal Corporation.

Need for urban resilience and climate change adaptation:

- Current changes in climate, combined with rapid and often unplanned urbanisation, make Asia one of the regions of the world most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Increasing temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, intensification of extreme weather events and rising sea levels are already a reality in the region.
- At the same time, increasing population and spreading of human settlements in low lying, flood prone coastal areas magnify the risks coming from climate change related disasters, thus increasing the vulnerability of people, especially the urban poor, who live in hazardous areas. More than 60% of the world's population resides in Asia and the region was most affected by natural disasters.

What can be done?

- Town planners need to integrate sustainable solutions such as harvesting solar energy, enhancing green cover and water conservation as an essential part of town planning.
- Municipal administrators to accord priority to tree plantation, solid waste management, protection and rejuvenation of water bodies.
- Need for collaborative efforts of governments at state and center to reduce the divide by providing urban amenities in rural areas.
- Dependency on fossil fuel must be reduced and new forms of energy sources such as solar must be explored.

About Resilient Cities Asia-Pacific:

- It is the annual global platform for **urban resilience and climate change adaptation**.
- It is convened by **ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability** and co- hosted by the World Mayors Council on Climate Change and the City of Bonn.
- It was launched in **2010** with the goal of forging partnerships and dialogues that matter.
- The **Asia-Pacific Forum on Urban Resilience and Adaptation – Resilient Cities Asia Pacific Congress (RCAP)** is a response to heightened demand from the Asia Pacific Region, which encouraged ICLEI to expand the congress series to include Resilient Cities Asia-Pacific, bringing the event and the focus to the Asia-Pacific region, catering to the situation, challenges and opportunities of local governments specifically in this region.
- **Aim:** To provide an Asian platform for urban resilience and climate change adaptation where partnerships are forged and concrete dialogues are happening, with the ultimate goal of identifying solutions and creating lasting impacts for cities in the region.

Facts for Prelims:

- **ICLEI –** Local Governments for Sustainability is a global network of more than 1,750 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development.

KANDHAMAL HALDI

In The News

Odisha's Kandhamal Haldi (turmeric), famous for its healing properties, has received GI tags

Facts:

- The golden yellow spice, named after the district where it is produced, has been cultivated since time immemorial and is known for its medicinal value.
- Turmeric is the main cash crop of tribal people in Kandhamal. Apart from domestic use, turmeric is also used for cosmetic and medicinal purposes.
- More than 60,000 families (nearly 50% of Kandhamal population) are engaged in growing the variety. The crop is sustainable in adverse climatic conditions.

About GI tag:

- **What is it?** A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.
- **Significance of a GI tag:** Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.
- **Security:** Once the GI protection is granted, no other producer can misuse the name to market similar products. It also provides comfort to customers about the authenticity of that product.
- **Provisions in this regard:** GI is covered as element of intellectual property rights (IPRs) under Paris Convention for Protection of Industrial Property.
- At international level, GI is governed by **WTO's Agreement** on **Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)**. In India, **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection Act), 1999** governs it.

SARASWATI SAMMAN

In The News

Telugu poet K Siva Reddy has been selected for the prestigious Saraswati Samman, 2018 for his work Pakkaki Ottigilite which is a collection of poetry.

- Saraswati Samman is the annual award given to an outstanding literary work in any Indian language mentioned in Schedule VIII of the Constitution and published in 10 years preceding the specified award year.
- It is the highest recognition in the field of Indian literature in the country and carries a citation, a plaque and award money of ₹ 15 lakh.
- The award is presented by the KK Birla Foundation, a literary and cultural organisation that also gives the Vyas Samman for Hindi, and Bihari Puraskar for Hindi and Rajasthani writers of Rajasthan.

GARIA FESTIVAL

- Garia festival is an important festival for the Tripuri tribal community of the state. The Garia dance is very popular among the Tripuris and the Reangs. Symbolic of the worship of deities as well as of the socio- economic activities of the households, these dances represent hunting, fishing, food-gathering and various other activities.
- The Garia Puja is usually held from the beginning of the last day of the month of Chaitra till the seventh day of the month of April (*Vaishakha*).
- They offer prayers to a bamboo pole whom they considered as their Lord Garia and sought His blessings for a good and prosperous life.
- The devotees sacrifice roosters as part of the rituals during the puja.

HISTORY OF MUSLIM LEAGUE IN KERALA AND INDIA

In The News

Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Aditynath recnelty equated the **Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) with the pre-partition Muslim League**

About Muslim League:

- It was **a political party established in 1906 in the British Indian Empire**. Its strong advocacy for the establishment of a separate Muslim-majority nation-state, Pakistan, successfully led to the partition of British India in 1947 by the British Empire.
- The party **arose out of a literary movement begun at The Aligarh Muslim University** in which **Syed Ahmad Khan** was a central figure.
- The first stage of its formation was the **meeting held at Lucknow in September 1906**, with the participation of representatives from all over India.
- With global events leading up to World War II and the Congress party's effective protest against the United Kingdom unilaterally involving India in the war without consulting the Indian people, **the Muslim League went on to support the British war efforts**.

Evolution post- independence:

- Soon after Partition, the **All India Muslim League**, which had led the movement for Pakistan, was disbanded. Over the next few months, the party of Mohammed Ali Jinnah was succeeded by the Muslim League in West Pakistan and The All Pakistan Awami Muslim League in East Pakistan.
- In East Pakistan, the **Awami Muslim League** championed the cause of Bengali nationalism, and sought to chart a course independent from Punjabi-dominated West Pakistan. Under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, East Pakistan ultimately broke free from the West.

In India:

- In independent India, the All India Muslim League was succeeded by the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML).
- The IUML fought elections under the Constitution of India, and has always had a constant, if small, presence in Lok Sabha.
- The **IUML** is the strongest in **Kerala**, and has a unit in Tamil Nadu as well. It has long been recognised by the Election Commission of India as **a state party in Kerala**.

BATTLE OF KANGLA TOMBI

In The News

The Platinum Jubilee of the Battle of Kangla Tongbi War was commemorated on 07 Apr 2019 by Army Ordnance Corps at Kangla Tongbi War Memorial near Imphal honouring the valiant brave hearts of Ordnance Personnel of 221 Advance Ordnance Depot who made their supreme sacrifice in the line of duty during the battle of World War-II on the night of 6/ 7 April 1944.

About the Battle of Kangla Tongbi:

- It is considered one of the fiercest **battles of World War II**. It was **fought by Ordnance personnel of 221 Advance Ordnance Depot (AOD) on the night of 6/7 April 1944** against **Japanese forces**. **Japanese forces had planned a three pronged offensive to capture Imphal and the surrounding areas**.

- In their attempt to extend their line of communication to Imphal, the 33rd Japanese Division cut in behind the 17th Indian Division at Tiddim (Mynmar) and establishing themselves firmly on the main **Kohima – Manipur highway, started advancing towards Kangla Tongbi**. However, combatant role of AOD personnel shook the enemy and forced the Japanese to withdraw.

Significance:
- The Kangla Tongbi War Memorial is a mute testimony to this battle and the unflinching devotion to duty of the Ordnance personnel of 221 AOD, 19 of whom made the supreme sacrifice.
- It conveys to the world at large that Ordnance personnel, apart from being professional logisticians, are second to none in combat, being equally proficient soldiers, should the occasion demand.

MHA DISTRIBUTES SPECIAL KITS TO STATES, UTS TO HELP PROBE

In The News

Ministry of Home Affairs has distributed special kits to carry out immediate investigations into sexual assault cases. The Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits or 'rape investigation kits' are designed to carry out immediate medico-legal investigation.

Components and significance of the kits:

- Each of these kits **comprises essential items that will aid in furnishing evidence such as blood and semen samples in sexual assault and rape cases**, thus helping the prosecution to gather evidence against the accused.
- The kit has **a set of test tubes and bottles**, which mention contents and specifications.
- These kits also contain instructions on collection of evidence from the crime scene. The SAECKs would be sent to the closest laboratory and within two months the results would be out. The kits are expected to help law enforcement agencies to ensure effective investigation in a timely manner for better prosecution and convictions in sexual assault cases.
- The kits were procured with financial support **under the central government's 'Nirbhaya Fund'**, which was named after the 2012 Delhi gang-rape victim.

Background:

- Incidents of crime against women rose from 3,29,243 in 2015 to 3,38,954 in 2016.
- In 2015, as many as 34,651 cases of rape were registered in the country. The figure increased to 38,947 in 2016, according to the data of the National Crime Records Bureau.

WESTERN DISTURBANCE

In The News

The western disturbance has brought heavy rainfall across various parts of the country.
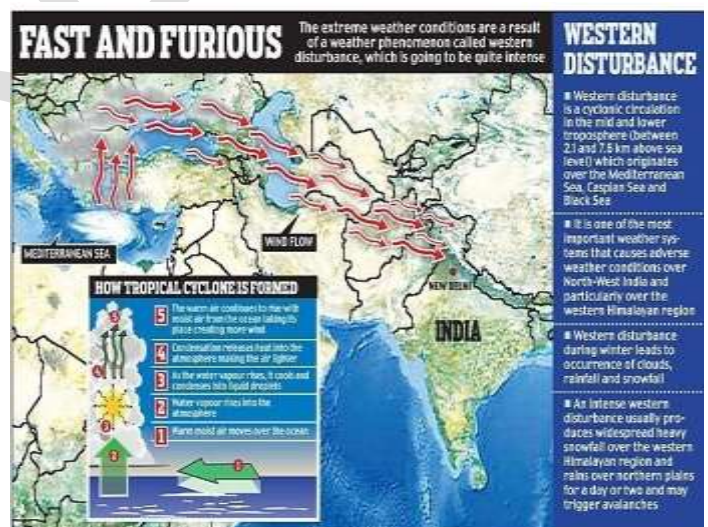
Formation:

- Western Disturbance originates in the Mediterranean Sea as extra-tropical cyclones. A high-pressure area over Ukraine and neighbourhood consolidates, causing the intrusion of cold air from Polar Regions towards an area of relatively warmer air with high moisture.
- This generates favourable conditions for cyclogenesis in the upper atmosphere, which promotes the formation of an eastward-moving extratropical depression. They gradually travel across the middle-east from Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan to enter the Indian sub-continent.

Impact:

- Plays important role in **bringing moderate to heavy rain in low-lying areas and heavy snow to mountainous areas of the Indian Subcontinent**.
- This disturbance is usually **associated with cloudy sky, higher night temperatures and unusual rain**. This precipitation has great importance in agriculture, particularly for the Rabi crops. Wheat among them is one of the most important crops, which helps to meet India's food security.
- **Excessive precipitation due to this disturbance can cause crop damage, landslides, floods and avalanches**. Over the Indo-Gangetic plains, it occasionally brings cold wave conditions and dense fog. These conditions remain stable until disturbed by another western disturbance. **When western disturbances move across northwest India before the onset of monsoon, a** **temporary advancement of monsoon current appears over the region**.

What is Western Disturbance?

- It is an extratropical storm originating in the Mediterranean region that brings sudden winter rain to the north-western parts of the Indian sub-continent. It is a non-monsoonal precipitation pattern driven by the westerlies.
- Extratropical storms are a global phenomenon with moisture usually carried in the upper atmosphere, unlike their tropical storms where the moisture is carried in the lower atmosphere. In the case of the Indian subcontinent, moisture is sometimes shed as rain when the storm system encounters the Himalayas.

CYCLONE FANI

In The News

- Cyclone Fani is likely to turn into a '**severe cyclonic storm**'.

- **It was formed at low pressure region in south east of Sumatra** (Indonesian island), which further intensified into a depression.

- **Classification of Tropical Cyclones:** The criteria followed by Meteorological Department of India (IMD) to classify the low pressure systems in the Bay of Bengal and in the Arabian Sea as adopted by World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) are as under:

1. **Terminology:** Cyclones are given many names in different regions of the world – They are known as **typhoons** in the China Sea and Pacific Ocean; **hurricanes** in the West Indian islands in the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean; **tornados** in the Guinea lands of West Africa and southern USA; **willy-willies** in north-western Australia and **tropical cyclones** in the Indian Ocean.

Type of Disturbances	Associated Wind Speed in the Circulation
Low pressure Area	Less than17 knots (<31 kmph)
Depression	17 to 27 knots (31 to 49 kmph)
Deep Depression	28 to 33 knots (50 to 61 kmph)
Cyclonic Storm	34 to 47 knots (62 to 88 kmph)
Severe Cyclonic Storm	48 to 63 knots (89 to 118 kmph)
Very Severe Cyclonic Storm	64 to 119 knots (119 to 221 kmph)
Super Cyclonic Storm	119 knots and above (221 kmph and above)

MANGO SHOWERS

In The News

o Mango showers is a colloquial term to describe the **occurrence of pre-monsoon rainfall**. They are notable across much of South and Southeast Asia, including India, and Cambodia.

o These rains normally **occur from March to April, although their arrival is often difficult to predict. Their intensity can range from light showers to heavy and persistent thunderstorms**.

o In India, the mango shower occurs as the result of thunderstorm development over the Bay of Bengal. **They are also known as 'Kaal Baishali' in Bengal, as Bordoisila in Assam and as Cherry Blossom shower or Coffee Shower in Kerala**.

Benefits: Towards the close of the summer season, pre-monsoon showers are common especially in Kerala, Karnataka and parts of Tamil Nadu in India. They help in the early ripening of mangoes, hence the names.

75th BATTLE OF KOHIMA

In The News

Recently 75th anniversary of the Battle of Kohima was observed by the Nagaland government.

About Battle of Kohima

- **Context:**
  - o **The British and Indian Fourteenth Army**, was building up logistical bases at **Dimapur and Imphal** for an eventual offensive into Burma in the course of Second World War.
  - o In March 1944, the **Japanese 15th Army began** an advance against India's north-east frontier to forestall a planned British invasion of Burma.
  - o The fighting in and around Kohima in the spring of 1944 was part of a larger Japanese offensive, known as **"Operation U-Go".**
- **Strategic location of Kohima -** This was the **route the Japanese intended to take to invade India from Burma, by capturing the British supply bases on the Imphal Plain** and cut the road linking Dimapur and Imphal at Kohima. With Imphal in their hands, the Japanese would be able to **interrupt air supplies to China and to conduct air attacks against India.**
- **Battle of Kohima:**
  - o It was fought between the **Allied Forces** and the **Japanese Army** on the **Naga Hills** in three stages from April to June 1944.
  - o The **Nagas** were drawn into it **on both sides** some with the British and some with the Japanese**.**
- **Consequences of the Battle:**
  - o The defeat sealed the fate of **Tokyo's imperial ambitions** in South Asia.
  - o The huge losses the Japanese suffered in the Battle of Kohima

weighed heavily on them during the next phase of the war, allowing the Allied to take control of Burma in 1945.

- o In 2013, the National Army Museum of London, **voted the Battle of Kohima and Imphal as "Britain's Greatest Battle"** beating out Battle of D-Day and Battle of Waterloo.
- o The Battle is often referred to as the **"Stalingrad of the East".**

Related News

Platinum Jubilee Commemoration of Battle of Kangla Tongbi – It was fought in 1944 and is considered one of the fiercest battles of World War II. Japanese forces had planned a three-pronged offensive to capture **Imphal** and the surrounding areas.

CHARMINAR

In The News

Recently, the south-west minaret of the Charminar suffered major damage.

Details

- Charminar (also referred as Arc de Triomphe of the East) is a monument and a mosque, which was completed in **1591 CE.**
- It is believed that **Mohammed Quli Qutb Shahi**, the fifth sultan of the Qutub Shahi dynasty had built the monument to commemorate the end of a deadly plague menace that had gripped the city then.
- It is located near the bank of the **river Musi.**
- It is an example for Indo-Islamic architecture combined with few Persian elements.

Qutb Sahi Dynasty (1518–1687),

- It was one of the five successor states of the Bahmani kingdom.
- The founder was Quli Quṭb Shah. Quṭb Shah declared his independence in 1518 and moved his capital to Golconda (later in 1591 capital was shifted to newly formed Hyderabad).
- Though they started off by introducing Persian as the official language; they later started using Telugu as the dynasty ruled Golconda for primary language of administration in the kingdom; earning them the title of 'Telugu Sultans'.
- 171 years, until the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb conquered the Deccan in 1687.
- Some examples of Golcondan Indo-Persian architecture are the Golconda Fort, tombs of the Qutb Shahis, Char Minar and the Char Kaman, Mecca Masjid and the Toli mosque.

KONYAK DANCE

In The News

- The Guinness World Records has acknowledged **Konyak Dance** as the **"largest traditional dance"**, in which around 4,700 Konyak Naga women in their colourful traditional attire came together to perform largest **"Traditional Konyak Dance".**
- It was organised during the "**Aoleang Monyu" festival** of the **Konyak tribe,** which is **celebrated in the first week of April** every year **to welcome the spring**

About Konyak Tribe

- **Konyak is one of the 16 Naga tribes,** known for its fierce **head-hunting** history.
- They mainly live in the Mon district of Nagaland however they are also found in **Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Myanmar.**
- They are easily distinguishable from other Naga tribes by their **pierced ears; and tattoos** which they have all over their faces, hands, chests, arms, and calves.
- Other **unique traditional practices** of Konyaks are: Gunsmithing, iron-smelting, brass-works, and gunpowder-making.
- **Konyak Dance:** Dancers dance to the beats of traditional instruments and sing a ceremonial song along the dance.

Spring Festivals of India

Festival	Region
Chapchar kut	Mizoram
Garia puja	Tripura
Myoko Festival	Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh
Moaste and Tsichye	Aos and the Rengma Tribe of Nagaland
Lai Haroba	Manipur
Mopin	Galo tribe in Arunachal Pradesh
Aoleang	Konyak tribe of Nagaland's
Gangaur	Rajasthan
Holi	North India
Vasant Panchami	North India
Tulip Festival	Kashmir
Bohag Bihu	Assam
Baisakhi	Punjab
Thrissur Pooram	Kerala
Gudi Padwa	Maharashtrian
Ugadi	Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka

BHARATI SCRIPT

In The News

An IIT Madras team of researchers has developed a **unified script for nine Indian languages,** named **Bharati script.**

About Bharati Script:

- **The Roman script** is used as a common script for many European languages (English, French, German, Italian etc.), which facilitates **communication across nations** that speak and write those languages. Likewise, if a common script is adopted across India, it can greatly facilitate communication across the country.
- Taking a cue from European languages, an IIT Madras team has been working since the last decade over developing such a script.
- The scripts that have been integrated include **Devnagari, Bengali, Gurmukhi, Gujarati, Oriya, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam** and **Tamil.**
- The team has now gone a step ahead-
  - It has developed a method for reading documents in Bharati script using a **multi-lingual optical character recognition (OCR) scheme.** It involves first separating (or segmenting) the document into **text** and **non-text**. The text is then segmented into paragraphs, sentences words and letters. Each letter has to be recognised as a character in some recognisable format such as ASCII or Unicode.
  - It has also created a **finger-spelling method** that can be used to generate a sign language for hearing- impaired persons. In collaboration with TCS Mumbai, the researchers have found a way for persons with hearing disability to generate signatures using this finger-spelling technique.
- The **objective of the project** is
  - to facilitate the spread of Bharati by creating awareness of it among the public, particularly the next generation
  - to facilitate ease of use of Bharati by developing software tools and applications.

TRANSGENEDER RIGHTS

In The News

In the judgment delivered in Arunkumar and Sreeja v. Inspector General of Registration and Others (2019), the Madras High Court, has extended enjoyment of civil rights, especially those pertaining to marriage, to transpersons.

- **Background:**
- The term 'transgender' refers to all those who differ in behaviour and appearance from the usual gender stereotypes. It includes transsexuals, transvestites (cross-dressers), intersexed individuals and gender queers. In the Indian context, it also includes social identities such as hijras, kinnars, aravanis, jogtas, Shivshaktis and aradhis.
- In 1861, Section 377 came into force during British rule, which criminalised sexual activities "against the order of nature".
- Last year, in a landmark verdict a constitutional bench of Supreme Court in **Navtej Singh Johar v/s Union of India** case declared parts ofSection
- 377 of IPC as **unconstitutional.**
- Naturally after this, there exist various legal rights and other rights extendable to transgenders. But, they were not examined by the Supreme Court.
- Now, the Madurai Bench judgment has **revised the legal construction of gender** and the conventional interpretation of terms such as **"bride" and "bridegroom"** found in the **Hindu Marriage Act**. The court has held that a **properly solemnised marriage** between **a male and transwoman** is valid under the **Hindu Marriage Act, 1955**, and the Registrar of Marriages is bound to register the same.

Rationale given by the court

- The court refers to **NALSA v. Union of India (2014),** which held that transgender persons have the right to decide their "**self-identified gender**".
- This led to court to interpret that, there **cannot be a legal bar any more** to extending civil rights such as marriage, succession or inheritance to LGBTQ couples who have decided to get married consensually, have married in accordance with the existing laws and **are not in violation of any other laws.**

Significance of the judgment

- **Empowers with right-based approach-** Now, legally transgender can enter into a marriage, have spouse and setup their own family in India. They have been provided right to marry and right to a family along with right of sexual orientation.
- **Helps in mainstreaming of transgender-** as It will put an end to the discrimination that many millions faced because of their sexual orientation or gender identity for so many years.
- **Boosts dignity and respect-** It will help transpersons to marry with dignity- e.g. in March 2018, a transsexual couple Preethisha and Premkumaran had embraced self-respect marriage conceived by Dravidian legend Periyar E V Ramasamy after they were shunned by temples which refused to solemnize their coming together.
- **Opens up a Pandora box-** where apart from marriage, all other civil rights could be given to them on the same premises used here.

Way Forward

- Legal and the law enforcement systems need to be empowered and sensitized on the issues of Transgender community. Special Grievance

Redressal Cells for their protection should be set up in all police stations.

- India should work towards legislation related to right to self-determination. Other such rights can be adopted as identified in the **Yogyakarta Principles**. The Supreme Court in the NALSA judgement had recognised Yogyakarta Principles and had ruled that they should be applied as a part of Indian law.
  - o The Yogyakarta Principles are a set of principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Other steps taken towards empowerment of LGBTQ

- **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016**: It defines a transgender person and prohibits discrimination in areas such as education, employment, and healthcare. It also provides for constituting a National Council for Transgender headed by the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- **Tamil Nadu**- provided for education, identity cards and subsidized food and free housing. Also the government established a transgender welfare board in 2008 (West Bengal, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka have also established the board)
- **Kerala**- Government brought the '**State Policy for Transgenders in Kerala 2015**' to provide the "right to live with dignity."

LEARNING OUTCOMES-BASED CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

In The News

Universities are revising all of its undergraduate programmes along the lines of UGC's Learning Outcome- based Curriculum Framework (LOCF), which is being opposed by some teachers particularly in Delhi University.

What is LOCF?

- LOCF guidelines, issued by UGC in 2018, aims to specify what graduates are expected to know, understand and be able to do at the end of their programme of study. This is to make student active learner and teacher a good facilitator.
- The outcomes will be determined in terms of skills, knowledge, understanding, employability, graduate attributes, attitudes, values, etc., gained by students upon the completion of the course.

Overall objectives of the learning outcomes-based curriculum framework

- Help **formulate graduate attributes**, qualification descriptors, programme learning outcomes and course learning outcomes that are **expected to be demonstrated by the holder of a qualification**;
- Enable prospective students, parents, employers and others to understand the nature and level of learning outcomes (**knowledge, skills, attitudes and values**) or attributes a graduate of a programme should be capable of demonstrating on successful completion of the programme of study;

- Maintain national standards and international comparability of learning outcomes and academic standards to ensure global competitiveness, and to **facilitate student/graduate mobility**; and
- Provide higher education institutions an **important point of reference** for designing teaching-learning strategies, assessing student learning levels, and periodic review of programs and academic standards.

University Grants Commission (UGC)
- It is a **statutory body**, established in **1956** with mandate of coordination, determination and maintenance of standards in institutions of **higher education.**
- It provides **recognition** to universities in India, and **disburses funds** to such recognized universities and colleges.
- **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) bill,** 2018 seeks to replace UGC by Higher Education Commission of India.

Choice Based Credit System
- It is a '**cafeteria' type approach** in which the students can choose courses of their choice, from unrelated discipline, in addition to the compulsory courses.
- Besides the core subjects, CBCS offers opportunities to **explore and learn other subjects** for holistic development of an individual, giving **interdisciplinary approach** to learning.

Why LOCF being opposed?
- Frequent changes in curriculum, as this is fifth change in last nine years including **switch from the traditional annual mode to the semester mode, introduction of CBCS.**
- These changes, introduced **to improve quality of education and world ranking**, are leading to opposite outcomes, as introduced without warning and timeframe.
- These changes have **disrupted the functioning of the system**, causing confusion among students.

NIRF FRAMEWORK 2019

In The News

Recently the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras has topped the list of higher education institutes in the National Institutional Rankings Framework list of 2019

NIRF 2019	
Categories	**Top Institution**
Overall	Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
Universities	Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru
Colleges	Miranda House, New Delhi
Engineering	Indian Institute of Technology Madras
Management	Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore
Pharmacy	Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi
Law	National Law School of India University, Karnataka
Architecture	Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur
Medical	All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi

- **About NIRF**
- The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) **was developed in 2015** by a 16-member Core Committee, appointed by the **Ministry of Human resource and Development.** The rankings are **published annually since 2016.**
- It outlines a methodology to rank educational institutions across the country based on **five** broad parameters —
  - o **Teaching, learning and resources;**
  - o **Research and professional practice;**
  - o **Graduation outcomes;**
  - o **Outreach and inclusivity; and**
  - o **Perception**.
- The ministry also constituted **an Implementation Core Committee** to oversee the implementation of the overall NIRF rankings.

Significance

- A ranking system fosters a spirit of healthy competition between institution in terms of **teaching talent, research talent, the most talented students, and most enlightened administrators**.
- Institutions- Colleges and Universities have even set up **special committees** to look into their performance and take measures to improve their ranking.

EAT-LANCET COMMISSION FOOD PLANET HEALTH REPORT RELEASED IN INDIA

In The News
EAT Lancet commission's Food Planet Health report was formally released in India

Background
- **Global food production of calories has kept pace with population growth, yet more than 820 million people still lack sufficient food, and many consume either low-quality diets or too much food.**
- **On the other hand, global food production practices constitute the single largest driver of environmental degradation and transgression of planetary boundaries with deforestation, conversion of forest land to agricultural ones, emission of GHGs, extraction of water resources, overuse and misuse of fertilizers and pesticides etc.**
- **To address the both, a radical transformation of the global food system is needed. The shift to healthy diet is likely to prevent approximately 11 million deaths per year, along with major environmental benefits.**
- The report for the first time proposed **scientific targets for what constitutes a healthy diet** derived from a sustainable food system.

Key highlights of the report

The report suggested **Five Strategies for a Great Food Transformation.**

- **Seek international and national commitment to shift toward healthy diets:** like increased consumption of plant-based foods – including fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and whole grains – and limiting animal source foods. This to be achieved by making healthy foods more available, accessible and affordable.
- **Reorient agricultural priorities from producing high quantities of food to producing healthy food**: which includes producing a diversity of foods that nurture human health and support environmental sustainability.
- The report for the first time proposed **scientific targets for what constitutes a healthy diet** derived from a sustainable food system.

Key highlights of the report

The report suggested **Five Strategies for a Great Food Transformation.**

- **Seek international and national commitment to shift toward healthy diets:** like increased consumption of plant-based foods – including fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and whole grains – and limiting animal source foods. This to be achieved by making healthy foods more available, accessible and affordable.
- **Reorient agricultural priorities from producing high quantities of food to producing healthy food**: which includes producing a diversity of foods that nurture human health and support environmental sustainability.
- **Sustainably intensify food production to increase high-quality output:** A new agricultural revolution which includes at least a 75% reduction of yield gaps on current cropland, implementing climate mitigation options including changes in crop and feed management, and enhancing biodiversity within agricultural systems. Also, to achieve negative emissions globally as per the Paris Agreement, making the global food system **a net carbon sink from 2040** onward.
- **Strong and coordinated governance of land and**

oceans: Which includes **zero-expansion policy** of new agricultural land into natural ecosystems and species-rich forests, restoring and reforesting degraded land and establishing international land use governance mechanisms. It also includes adopting a "**Half Earth**" strategy for biodiversity conservation (i.e. conserve at least 80% of preindustrial species richness by protecting the remaining 50% of Earth as intact ecosystems).

- **At least halve food losses and waste, in line with UN SDGs:** at the production side and at the consumption side. Both **technological solutions** applied along the food supply chain and **implementation of public policies** are required.

Planetary boundaries:
- They represent a system or process that is important for regulating and maintaining stability of the planet.
- They define global biophysical limits that humanity should operate within to ensure a stable and resilient Earth system—i.e. conditions that are necessary to foster prosperity for future generations.
- There are nine planetary boundaries-
  - Climate change
  - Bio diversity loss
  - Biogeochemical flows
  - Ocean acidification
  - Land use change
  - Freshwater use
  - Ozone depletion
  - Atmospheric aerosols
  - Chemical pollution

Related Information
- **EAT** is the science-based global platform for food system.
- **Lancet** is a peer-reviewed general medical journal.

STATE OF WORLD POPULATION REPORT-2019

In The News

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) recently released the 2019 edition of the **State of World Population report** titled **'Unfinished Business: the pursuit of rights and choices for all'**.

Highlights of the report
- **The 2019 State of the World Population Report reflects on the current state of sexual and reproductive health.**
  - **The year 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of UNFPA's founding and the 25th anniversary the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo.**
- **The report includes, for the first time, data on women's ability to make decisions over three key areas: sexual intercourse with their partner, contraception use and health care.**
  - **Women's sexual and reproductive autonomy was greatest in two countries: the Philippines and Ukraine, where 81 per cent of women are empowered to make these decisions for themselves.**
- **The report identifies major barriers to achieving sexual and reproductive health and rights for all in 2019, including a lack of access to modern contraceptives and sexual and reproductive health services, and struggles with gender inequality which diminishes power to make choices about our lives and future.**
- **The world's population rose to 7.715 billion in 2019, up from 7.633 billion the year before, with the average life expectancy remaining 72 years.**
- **India specific findings:**
  - India accounts for over **one-sixth** of the world's population in 2019 (1.37 billion out of 7.71 billion) and has grown at an average of 1.2 per cent annually between 2010 and 2019, more than double the annual growth rate of China.
  - While 67 per cent of the country's population was in the 15-64 age bracket, 6 per cent of the country's
  - population was of the age 65 and above.The **total fertility rate per woman declined** from 5.6 in 1969 to 2.3 in 2019.
  - India's **life expectancy at birth is lower than the world's** (69 years to 72), it scores higher than the global average in terms of access to healthcare during childbirth, and also has a much lower adolescent birth rate.

About UNFPA
- It is United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency.
- UNFPA calls for the realization of reproductive rights for all and supports access to a wide range of sexual and reproductive health services including voluntary family planning, maternal health care and comprehensive sexuality education.

About International Conference on Population and Development, 1994
- At the ICPD in Cairo, 179 countries adopted a forward-looking, 20-year Programme of Action (extended in 2010) which recognized that reproductive health and rights, as well as women's empowerment and gender equality, are cornerstones of population and development programmes.

GS - II

ARTICLE 370

In The News

The constitutional relationship between J&K and the Indian Union has been the subject of numerous discussions in recent times. Recently, Jammu and Kashmir, PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said that the relationship between the Union and the State would be over if Article 370 of the Constitution is revoked.

Important provisions under the article:

- According to this article, except for defence, foreign affairs, finance and communications, Parliament needs the state government's concurrence for applying all other laws. Thus the state's residents live under a separate set of laws, including those related to citizenship, ownership of property, and fundamental rights, as compared to other Indians.
- Indian citizens from other states cannot purchase land or property in Jammu & Kashmir.
- Under Article 370, the Centre has no power to declare financial emergency under Article 360 in the state. It can declare emergency in the state only in case of war or external aggression. The Union government can therefore not declare emergency on grounds of internal disturbance or imminent danger unless it is made at the request or with the concurrence of the state government.
- Under Article 370, the Indian Parliament cannot increase or reduce the borders of the state.
- The Jurisdiction of the Parliament of India in relation to Jammu and Kashmir is confined to the matters enumerated in the Union List, and also the concurrent list. There is no State list for the State of Jammu and Kashmir.
- At the same time, while in relation to the other States, the residuary power of legislation belongs to Parliament, in the case of Jammu and Kashmir, the residuary powers belong to the Legislature of the State, except certain matters to which Parliament has exclusive powers such as preventing the activities relating to cession or secession, or disrupting the sovereignty or integrity of India.
- The power to make laws related to preventive detention in Jammu and Kashmir belong to the Legislature of J & K and not the Indian Parliament. Thus, no preventive detention law made in India extends to Jammu .

How should the centre counter the growing unrest in the region?

1. Focus on investing in J&K's
2. What is needed at the moment is the deployment of new socio-cultural resources, and a new operational culture to wind down the militancy without alienating more locals who could either join or influence their relatives and friends to join various terrorist organisations.

What is Article 370?

Article 370 of the Indian Constitution is **a 'temporary provision'** which grants special autonomous status to Jammu & Kashmir.

- **Under Part XXI of the Constitution of India**, which deals with "Temporary, Transitional and Special provisions", the state of Jammu & Kashmir has been accorded special status under Article 370.
- All the provisions of the Constitution which are applicable to other states are not applicable to J&K.

PRIME MINISTER AND SADAR-E-RIYASATOF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Historical background:

- The J&K Constituent Assembly was constituted in September 1951 and dispersed on January 25, 1957. The J&K Constitution was adopted on November 17, 1956 but came into effect only on January 26, 1957.
- The Constituent Assembly resolved that **the head of state,** named **Sadr-e-Riyasat, would be elected by the Legislative Assembly for a term of five years and recognised by the President of India**.
- New Delhi agreed to allow J&K to recognise an elected Sadr-e-Riyasat instead of an appointed Governor**.**
- **Eligibility:** Only a permanent resident of J&K could become Sadr-e-Riyasat. Once elected by the Legislative Assembly, the Sadr-e-Riyasat had to be recognised and then appointed by the President of India.
- On the recommendation of the J&K Constituent Assembly, **the President issued a Constitution Order on November 17, 1952 under Article 370 saying that the state government means the elected Sadr-e-Riyasat, acting on the aid and advice of council of ministers**.
- **J&K** had its **own Prime Minister** and **Sadr-e-Riyasat** until **1965**, when the J&K Constitution was amended **(Sixth Constitution of J&K Amendment Act, 1965)** by the then Congress government, which replaced the two positions with Chief Minister and Governor respectively. **The state had nine more Prime Ministers before Independence**.
- **The first Prime Minister of J&K, appointed by Dogra ruler Maharaja Hari Singh**, was Sir Albion Banerjee (1927-29).
- **The Sixth Amendment to the J&K Constitution, carried out in 1965**, made a fundamental change to its basic structure.
- **Under Section 147**, an amendment is to be assented by the Sadr-e-Riyasat after a Bill is passed by a two-thirds majority of the House, while Section 147 itself cannot be amended by the state legislature, and neither can an amendment that changes the provisions of Constitution of India as applicable in relation to J&K.
- Sadr-e-Riyasat, however, was replaced with Governor across the J&K Constitution, except in Section 147 which could not be amended**. This has led to** the existence of two kinds of heads of state in the Constitution
  — Sadr-e-Riyasat as well as Governor. In 1975, a Presidential Order issued under Article 370 barred the J&K Legislature from making any change to the J&K Constitution regarding appointment and powers of the Governor.
- In December **2015,** the **J&K High Court** ruled that the **conversion of the post of Sadr-e-Riyasat into Governor was unconstitutional**. The 'elective' status of Head of the State was an important attribute of Constitutional autonomy enjoyed by the State, **a part of 'Basic Framework' of the State Constitution and therefore not within the amending power of the State legislature**. In terms of aforestated amendment Governor is appointed by the President and is to be Head of the State. **The office of Head of the State in wake of amendment ceases to be 'elective'**.

Recent demands:

- J&K's major parties **have been demanding restoration of J&K's autonomy to its original status as agreed during the 1947 negotiations**.

- In 2000, when the NC was in power after having won with a two-thirds majority in 1996, **the Legislative Assembly passed a State Autonomy Report, seeking restoration of the state's autonomy to the 1953 position**, which would have meant restoration of the Prime Minister and Sadr-e-Riyasat positions. The then Vajpayee government summarily rejected the resolution passed by the Assembly.

Easy to PICK – "UPSC Monthly Magazine" April- 2019

KEY CHANGES TO EGYPT'S CONSTITUTION

In The News

- **Egypt** is holding a three-day **referendum** on constitutional amendments that could allow President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to stay in office until 2030. Parliament this week overwhelmingly approved the proposals, which would also bolster the role of the military and expand the president's power over judicial appointments.

- Critics say they fear that **the changes will further limit the space for dissent after a wide-ranging security crackdown**.

What are the key changes?

- **An amendment to Article 140 of the constitution** extends the presidential **term to six years from four. An outright bar on any president serving more than two terms will change to a bar on serving more than two consecutive terms**.

- The amendments provide for the **creation of a second parliamentary chamber known as the Council of Senators**. It would have 180 members, two-thirds elected by the public and the rest appointed by the president.

- **Article 200 of the constitution on the role of the military is expanded**, giving the military a duty to protect "the constitution and democracy and the fundamental make-up of the country and its civil nature, the gains of the people and the rights and freedoms of individuals".

- The amendments also create **the post of vice president**, allowing the president to appoint one or more deputies. They task the president with choosing head judges and the public prosecutor from a pool of senior candidates pre-selected by the judiciary. They further create a quota setting women's representation in parliament at a minimum of 25 percent.

Concerns:

- Critics say the amendments are driven by Sisi and his close entourage, and by the powerful security and intelligence agencies. They also fear the changes thrust the armed forces into political life by formally assigning them a role in protecting democracy.

KHASI 'KINGDOMS' TO REVISIT 1947 AGREEMENT

In The News

A federation of 25 Himas or Khasi kingdoms that have a cosmetic existence today, plan to revisit the 1948 agreements that made present-day Meghalaya a part of India.

Needs:

The revisiting is aimed at safeguarding tribal customs and traditions from Central laws in force or could be enacted, such as the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill.

-Background:

- During the British rule, the Khasi domain was divided into the Khasi states and British territories. At that time, **the British government had no territorial right on the Khasi states and they had to approach the chiefs of these states if they needed land for any purpose**.
- After independence, the British territories became part of the Indian dominion but the **Khasi states had to sign documents beginning with the Standstill Agreement that provided a few rights to the states.**
- The 25 Khasi states had signed the **Instrument of Accession and Annexed Agreement with the Dominion of India between December 15, 1947, and March 19, 1948**. The conditional treaty with these states was signed by Governor General Chakravarty Rajagopalachari on August 17, 1948.
- The Khasi states, though, did not sign the **Instrument of Merger** unlike most other states in India.

Demand:

- Though the Constitution has provided self-rule to a considerable extent through tribal councils, there has been an increasing demand for giving more

teeth to the Khasi states.

HOW THE SUPEREME COURT JUDGE IS IS PROBED?

In The News

The allegations made by a former Supreme Court employee against the Chief Justice of India have brought the focus on the mechanism that exists to examine charges of misconduct against members of the higher judiciary.

How are allegations of misconduct against judges of High Courts and the Supreme Court dealt with?

- Allegations of misconduct against serving judges of the superior judiciary, that is, the various high courts and the Supreme Court, are dealt with through an '**in-house procedure**'.
- Most complaints may pertain to judicial conduct, and may be at the behest of parties aggrieved by the outcome of their cases. However, some may concern the personal conduct of judges.
- **Two purposes are served** by the adoption of an internal procedure to deal with such complaints:
  o when the allegations are examined by the judge's peers, outside agencies are kept out, and the independence of the judiciary is maintained.
  o awareness about the existence of a mechanism to examine such complaints will preserve the faith of the people in the impartiality and independence of the judicial process.
- The in-house procedure envisages that false and frivolous allegations can be rejected at an early stage and only those that are not baseless, and may require a deeper probe, are taken up for inquiry.

When was the in-house procedure adopted?

- A five-judge committee was formed to devise the procedure. The report of the committee was adopted by a resolution of the Full Court on December 15, 1999. This procedure has been adhered to since then. However, the in-house procedure was not in the public domain for many years.
- In 2014, a Supreme Court Bench directed the court's registry to make the in-house procedure public for the sake of transparency.

How does the in-house procedure work? What are the various steps?

- When a complaint is received against a High Court judge, the Chief Justice concerned has to examine it. If it is frivolous or concerns a judicial matter, she may just file the complaint and inform the Chief Justice of India.
- If she considers it serious, she should get a response from the judge concerned. If she is satisfied with the response and feels no further action is required, she may close the matter and keep the CJI informed. However, if the CJI feels a deeper probe is needed, she should send the complaint as well as the judge's response to the CJI, with her own comments, for further action.
- The procedure is the same if the CJI receives the complaint directly. The comments of the high court Chief Justice, the judge concerned and the complaint would be considered by the CJI. If a deeper probe is required, a three-member committee, comprising two Chief Justices from other High Courts and one High Court judge, has to be formed. The committee will hold a fact-finding inquiry at which the judge concerned would be entitled to appear. It is not a formal judicial proceeding and does not involve lawyers or examination or cross- examination of witnesses.
- If the charge is against a high court Chief Justice, the same procedure of

getting the person's response is followed by the CJI. If a deeper probe is deemed necessary, a three-member committee comprising a Supreme Court judge and two Chief Justices of other High Courts will be formed.

- If the charge is against a Supreme Court judge, the committee would comprise three Supreme Court judges. There is no separate provision in the in-house procedure to deal with complaints against the CJI.

What are the possible outcomes from the inquiry committee?

- If it finds that there is substance in the allegations, the committee can either hold that the misconduct is serious enough to warrant removal from office, or that it is not so serious as to warrant removal. In the former case, it will call for initiation of proceedings to remove the judge.

- The judge concerned would be advised to resign or take voluntary retirement. If the judge is unwilling to quit, the Chief Justice of the High Court concerned would be advised to withdraw judicial work from him, and the President of India and the Prime Minister would be informed of the situation.

- Such an action may clear the way for Parliament to begin the political process for impeachment. In case, the committee finds substance in the allegation, but it is not grave enough to warrant removal from office, the judge concerned would be advised accordingly, and the committee's report will be placed on record.

ENVIRONMENT POLLOUTION (PREVENTION & CONTROL) AUTHORITY

In The News

EPCA comes out with parking management plan for Delhi. In report, agency flags free parking on public land, multiplicity of agencies to be key cause of congestion and parking menace.

About Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA):

- EPCA was constituted with the objective of **'protecting and improving' the quality of the environment and 'controlling environmental pollution' in the National Capital Region**. The EPCA also assists the apex court in various environment-related matters in the region.
- EPCA is **Supreme Court mandated body** tasked with taking various measures to tackle air pollution in the National Capital Region.
- It was notified in **1998** by Environment Ministry under Environment Protection Act, 1986.

Composition:

- Besides the chairman, the EPCA has 14 members, some of whom are the environment secretary of the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCT), chairperson of the New Delhi Municipal Council, transport commissioner of the NCT, the commissioners of various municipal corporations of Delhi and professors at IIT Delhi and Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Functions:

- To protect and improve quality of environment and prevent and control environmental pollution in National Capital Region.
- To enforce **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)** in NCR as per the pollution levels.

Some of the key recommendations listed in the report are:

- Implementing agencies are unanimous that residential parking will have to be regulated and managed.
- Parking spill over from residential buildings will require management.
- Multiplicity of responsibility is at the core of the problems of governance in the city and parking regulations must not add to this.
- Pricing for residential parking should be determined jointly by the local agency and RWA/shop-keepers association but it must be based on the principle of charging differential and higher rates for additional cars.
- The local parking plan must ensure that there is provision for movement of emergency vehicles and green areas, parks and footpaths may not be allowed to be used for parking.
- The Delhi Police may be directed to greatly improve enforcement against illegal and unauthorised parking through state-of-the art equipment, including cameras and automated challans.

COMMITTEES TO HEAR AND DESCIDE ON COMPLAINTS AGAINST CIS & ICS

In The News

- The Centre is planning to setup bureaucrat-led committees to hear and decide on complaints against the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and Information Commissioners (ICs). This move has evoked sharp criticism from Right to Information (RTI) activists and former Information Commissioners.

- The proposed change would be in contravention to the current Right to Information (RTI) law and therefore is being seen by the CIC as "an attempt to erode its independence and undermine its role."

Concerns and issues associated with this move:

Central Information Commission must **function autonomously without being subjected to directions by any other authority under this Act (Section 12(4) or RTI Act)**. The committees proposed are not authorities under this Act. Government cannot create any such authority in the absence of any enabling provision in the Act.

What can be done?

The current proposal under discussion creates issues of conflict of interest. A possible solution, though there can be more, is the creation of a committee which will be comprised of one member from every party represented in either House to examine complaints against information officers of a serious nature.

- These may be vetted and screened for removal of frivolous or baseless allegations by another committee of MPs who are elected as Independents. The removal of these complaints should also be time-bound and designed such that there is no domination of treasury benches.

- There also needs to be a better process to handle complaints against these people but the complaints should be done within the commission itself and the finding should be published on the website. Of course, if there is a recording of every proceeding, it will go a long way in handling this kind of issue

Current checks and balances- Section 14 in The Right To Information Act, 2005:

- Subject to the provisions of sub-section (3), the Chief Information Commissioner or any Information Commissioner shall be removed from his office only by order of the President on the ground of proved misbehaviour or incapacity after the Supreme Court, on a reference made to it by the President, has, on inquiry, reported that the Chief Information Commissioner or any Information Commissioner, as the case may be, ought on such ground be removed.

- The President may suspend from office, and if deem necessary prohibit also from attending the office during inquiry, the Chief Information Commissioner or Information Commissioner in respect of whom a reference has been made to the Supreme Court under sub-section (1) until the President has passed orders on receipt of the report of the Supreme Court on such reference.

- Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1), the President may by order remove from office the Chief Information Commissioner or any Information Commissioner if the Chief Information Commissioner or a Information Commissioner, as the case may be:
  - is adjudged an insolvent; or

- o has been convicted of an offence which, in the opinion of the President, involves moral turpitude; or
- o engages during his term of office in any paid employment outside the duties of his office; or
- o is, in the opinion of the President, unfit to continue in office by reason of infirmity of mind or body; or
- o has acquired such financial or other interest as is likely to affect prejudicially his functions as the Chief Information Commissioner or a Information Commissioner.

- If the Chief Information Commissioner or an Information Commissioner is, in any way, concerned or interested in any contract or agreement made by or on behalf of the Government of India or participates in any way in the profit thereof or in any benefit or emolument arising therefrom otherwise than as a member and in common with the other members of an incorporated company, he shall, for the purposes of sub-section (1), be deemed to be guilty of misbehavior.

COMPETETION COMMISSION OF INDIA

About

The **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** was established under the **Competition Act, 2002** for the administration, implementation and enforcement of the Act, and was duly constituted in March **2009**.

- o Chairman and members are **appointed by the central government**. **The following are the objectives of the Commission:**
- o To prevent practices having adverse effect on competition.
- o To promote and sustain competition in markets.
- o To protect the interests of consumers.
- o To ensure freedom of trade.

Functions of the commission:

- It is the duty of the Commission to eliminate practices having adverse effect on competition, promote and sustain competition, protect the interests of consumers and ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.
- The Commission is also required to give opinion on competition issues on a reference received from a statutory authority established under any law and to undertake competition advocacy, create public awareness and impart training on competition issues.

The Competition Act:

The Competition Act, 2002, as amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007, prohibits anti- competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and M&A), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.

CENTRAL DRUG STANDARD CONTROL ORGANISATION (CDSCO)

In The News

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (**CDSCO**) has asked commonly-used antibiotics manufacturers to ensure its details be made available to the general public. This decision was taken considering directives from the National Co-ordination Centre of the Pharmacovigilance Programme of India (**PvPI**).

What is Pharmacovigilance Programme of India (PvPI)?

- **The PvPI was started by the Government of India on 14th July 2010 with the AIIMS New Delhi as the National Coordination Centre** for monitoring Adverse Drug Reactions (ADRs) in the country for safe-guarding Public Health.
- Pharmacovigilance is defined as **the science relating to the detection, assessment, understanding and prevention of adverse effects, principally long term and short term adverse effects of medicines**. The CDSCO has a nation-wide Pharmacovigilance Programme for protecting the health of the patients by promising drug safety.

About CDSCO:

- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is **the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) of India**.

Functions: Under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, CDSCO is responsible for approval of New Drugs, Conduct of Clinical Trials, laying down the standards for Drugs, control over the quality of imported Drugs in the country and coordination of the activities of State Drug Control Organizations by providing expert advice with a view of bring about the uniformity in the enforcement of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

- **CDSCO along with state regulators, is jointly responsible for grant of licenses of certain specialized categories of critical Drugs** such as blood and blood products, I. V. Fluids, Vaccine and Sera.

ENEMY PROPERTY

In The News

The government has sold enemy shares worth around Rs 1,150 crore in IT major Wipro to LIC and two other state-owned insurers.

What are enemy properties?

- Enemy properties are those properties that were left behind by the people who took citizenship of Pakistan and China.
- There are 9,280 such properties left behind by Pakistani nationals and 126 by Chinese nationals.
- Of the total properties left behind by those who took Pakistani citizenship, 4,991 are located in Uttar Pradesh, the highest in the country. West Bengal has 2,735 such estates and Delhi 487.
- The highest number of properties left by Chinese nationals is in Meghalaya (57).West Bengal has 29 such properties and Assam seven.
- The estimated value of all enemy properties is approximately Rs 1 lakh crore.

Enemy properties Act:

1. After the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965, the Enemy Property Act was enacted in 1968, which regulates such properties and lists the custodian's powers.
2. The government amended the Act in the wake of a claim laid by the heirs of Raja Mohammad Amir Mohammad Khan, known as Raja of Mahmudabad, on his properties spread across Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.
3. The government has vested these properties in the Custodian of Enemy Property for India, an office instituted under the Central government.

EWS QUOTA

In The News

In January, the **Rajya Sabha passed** the **Constitution Amendment Bill** guaranteeing **10% quota** in

education and employment to economically weaker sections (**EWS**) in the **general category**. **Who is eligible?**

- **Families that earn an annual income of less than ₹ 8 lakh and do not possess agricultural land of five acres or above** are eligible for the quota.

What's the issue now?

- As per the criteria, **95% of Indian households are eligible for reservation**. The Bill has served an unintended purpose, though: Reservation is no more the preserve of the so-called merit-less. **The proposed quota has transformed cynics of the reservation policy into champions of it**.

Questions raised?

1. Are economically weaker sections from the general category remain "excluded from attending the higher education institutions" in India "due to their financial incapacity"?
2. Why private educational institutions have been brought under its ambit?

The reality:

- It is true that SC/ST/OBC students remain **greatly under-represented**, especially in premier private educational institutions.
- This is despite the fact that the SC/ST/OBC population constitutes about 70% of the total population of India (NSSO, 2011-12).

Conclusion:

- The proposed policy seems to be **empirically unfounded**.
- By contrast, what emerges from the

NIRF data is the under-representation of the 'socially challenged category' in premier education institutions.

ELECTORAL BONDS

In The News

The Supreme Court of India in its **interim order** has asked all political parties to disclose, the **details of the donations** received by them through **anonymous electoral bonds**, in sealed covers to the Election Commission of India.

Background

- Electoral bond scheme was announced in **Union Budget 2017-18** in an attempt to "**cleanse the system of political funding in the country**."
- The electoral bonds were introduced by amendments made through the Finance Act 2017 to the **Reserve Bank of India Act 1934, Representation of Peoples Act 1951, Income Tax Act 1961** and **Companies Act**.
- However, there are certain provisions in the scheme, which raised an objection on **transparency of political funding itself**.
- Some petitioners had move to the Supreme Court for a plea to stay the Electoral Bonds Scheme.
- The Election Commission also filed an affidavit to the SC on some provisions in the scheme, which can have serious repercussions on political funding in the country.

Petitioner's arguments against the Electoral

 Bonds Scheme

- **Brings Opacity in the Political Funding-**
- Ordinary citizens are not able to know who is donating how much money to which political party, and the bonds increase the anonymity of political donations-
  - o The rules for declaring sources of funding for political parties are outlined in **Section 29C** of the **Representation of the People Act, 1951.** Prior to 2017, the Act said all registered

parties had to declare all donations made to them of over Rs.20,000. However, an amendment in finance act has kept electoral bonds out of the purview of this section. Therefore, parties will not have to submit records of electoral bonds received to the Election Commission for scrutiny.

  - o Further, political parties are legally bound to submit their income tax returns annually under **Section 13A** of the Income Tax Act, 1961. However, **the electoral bonds have also been exempt from IT Act**. Thus, removing the need to maintain records of names, addresses of all donors.

- **Opens up possibility of corporate misuse-** with the removal of the 7.5% cap on the net profits of the last three years of a company, corporate funding has increased manifold, as there is now no limit to how much a company, including loss-making ones, can donate. Hence, companies can be brought into existence by unscrupulous elements primarily for routing funds to political parties through anonymous and opaque instruments like electoral bonds.

- **Favors ruling party-** SBI being a government owned bank will hold all the information of the donors which can be favorable to the party in power and also deter certain entities from donating to opposition due to fear of penalization. E.g. the data revealed through the Right to Information shows that State Bank of India issued a whopping **Rs.1, 716 crore** in electoral bonds in just **two months of 2019** and the ruling party has received **94.6% of all the electoral bonds sold in 2017-18.**

Election Commission's arguments against the Electoral Bonds Scheme

- **Does not allow ECI to check violation of provisions in the Representation of the People Act-** as any donation received by a political party through an electoral bond has been taken out of the ambit of reporting under the Contribution Report. E.g. the Representation of the People Act, 1951 prohibits the political parties from taking donations from government companies.
- **Allows unchecked foreign funding-** An amendment to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) allow political parties to receive funding from foreign companies with a majority stake in Indian companies. It can lead to Indian policies being influenced by foreign companies.

Government's arguments for the Electoral Bonds

- **Limits the use of cash in political funding-** as earlier, massive amounts of political donations were being made in cash, by individuals/corporates, using illicit means of funding and identity of the donors was not known. Hence, the 'system' was wholly opaque and ensured complete anonymity.
- **Curbs black money-** due to the following reasons-
  o Payments made for the issuance of the electoral bonds are accepted only by means of a demand draft, cheque or through the Electronic Clearing System or direct debit to the buyers' account". Hence, no black money can be used for the purchase of these bonds.
  o Buyers of these bonds must comply with KYC

requirements, and the beneficiary political party has to disclose the receipt of this money and must account for the same.

- **Protects donor from political victimization-** as non-disclosure of the identity of the donor is the core objective of the scheme. Further, the records of the purchaser are always available in the banking channel and may be retrieved as and when required by enforcement agencies.
- **Has sufficient safeguards-** such as donations through bonds received from a domestic company having a majority stake is permitted, subject to its compliance with KYC norms and FEMA guidelines.
- **Eliminate fraudulent political parties-** which are formed on pretext of tax evasion, as there is a stringent clause of eligibility for the political parties in the scheme.

Some measures which can complement Electoral Bonds

- Switch to complete digital transactions.
- Donations above a certain limit be made public to **break the corporate-politico nexus.**
- Political parties should be brought under the ambit of RTI**.**
- Establish a **national electoral fund** where donors contribute and funds are distributed among different parties.

Conclusion

The electoral bonds scheme is a process in the right direction, however, the points raised by the petitioners and the ECI should be addressed so as to ensure that the intent behind their introduction is achieved completely.

MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

In The News

In the run up to the Indian General Election for the 17th Lok Sabha, various violations of the Model Code of Conduct have been witnessed.

About Model Code of Conduct (MCC)

- It is a set of guidelines laid down by the Election Commission to **govern the conduct of political parties and candidates** in the run-up to an election. This is in line with **Article 324** of the Constitution, which gives the Election Commission the power to supervise elections to the Parliament and state legislatures.
- It **comes into force the moment an election is announced** and remains in force till the results are declared. This was laid down by the Supreme Court in the **Union of India vs. Harbans Sigh Jalal and Others Case.**
- It is intended to provide a **level playing field** for all political parties, to keep the campaign fair and healthy, avoid clashes and conflicts between parties, and ensure peace and order. So, there are guidelines on general conduct, meetings, processions, polling booths, observers, election manifesto of political parties.
- Its main aim is to ensure that the ruling party, either at the Centre or in the states, **does not misuse its official position** to gain an unfair advantage in an election. There are guidelines on conduct of ministers and other authorities in announcing new schemes, using public exchequer for advertisements etc.

Evolution of Model Code of Conduct

- The origins of the MCC lie in the **Assembly elections of Kerala** in 1960, when the State administration prepared a '**Code of Conduct**' for political

actors.
- Subsequently, in the Lok Sabha elections in 1962, the ECI circulated the code to all recognised political parties and State governments.
- Implementation of MCC up to 1991 was not up to the mark as it was largely ignored by the political parties who often resorted to corrupt electoral practices such as populist announcements and fielding pliant officials, in lieu of fierce political competition.

- **Implementation of MCC after 1991**
  - The ECI (spearheaded by then **CEC T.N. Sheshan**) used **new means to enforce** the MCC. The ECI rebuked prominent political actors publicly and even postponed elections, thereby re-interpreting the ECI's power to fix election dates.
  - The burgeoning electronic media of the time reported these initiatives with enthusiasm, while candidates were happy to capitalise on the mistakes made by their rivals. Consequently, political actors began to take the MCC seriously.

Contemporary Challenges in implementing Model Code of Conduct

- **Emergence of new forms of electoral malpractices-**
  - **Manipulation through the media**- The misuse of the media is difficult to trace to specific political parties and candidates.
- **Weakened capacity of the ECI to respond to violations of MCC-**
  - **Weak or Delayed Response-** to inappropriate statements by

powerful political actors. Consequently, political actors are regaining the confidence to flout the MCC without facing the consequences.

o **Digital Content-** Most of the [election-related] information flow does not happen via the IT cells of political parties, but through third-party contracts. Even though, the ECI has evolved a self-regulatory social media code for major players, still many platforms such as Telegram and WeChat are becoming increasingly relevant for political mobilization.

o **Debate over some issues-** such as national security, disaster management. Some political parties alleged that the ruling party has misused such issues. But, the Election Commission has said that these issues do not fall under the ambit of MCC.

Implications of Poll Code Violations

- **Weakens the position of Election Commission-** whereby the credibility and authority of the commission is undermined.
- **Abuse the principle of free and fair elections-** whereby incidents such as use of money power or muscle power, does not allow equal competition between all participants.
- **Shifts the narrative from performance to identity-** whereby political parties ignore the MCC guidelines against using caste and communal feelings to secure votes.
- **Erosion of public trust in Indian democracy-** as the promise of free and fair elections is seemingly defeated.

Way Forward

- **Need to include people in the MCC-**

through mobile apps such as **'cVIGIL'** to enable citizens to report on violation of election code of conduct. If people reject candidates and parties that violate MCC, it will create an inherent pressure on contestants to abide by MCC.

- **Fast Track Court for Election Dispute-** so that whenever, the ECI takes a punitive action, its final order is obtained as soon as possible.
- **Strengthening Election Commission of India-** by greater transparency in appointments and removal of the election commissioners, reducing dependency on Central Government for paramilitary forces among others.

Legal Status of Model Code
- The MCC is **not enforceable by law**. However, certain provisions of the MCC may be enforced through invoking corresponding provisions in other statutes such as the **Indian Penal Code, 1860, Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, and Representation of the People Act, 1951**.
- The Election Commission has argued against making the MCC legally binding; stating that elections must be completed within a relatively short time (close to 45 days), and judicial proceedings typically take longer.
- On the other hand, in 2013, the Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice, recommended making the MCC legally binding and the MCC be made a part of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

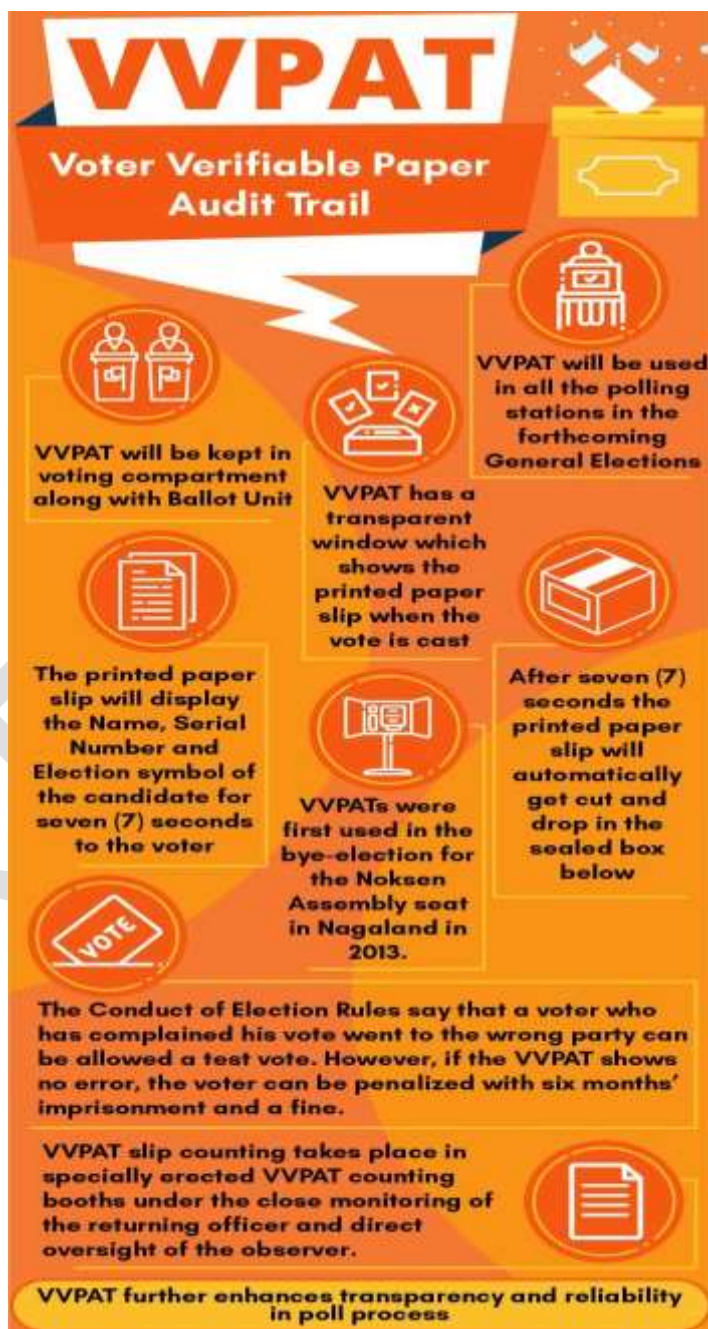
VOTER VERIFIED PAPER AUDIT TRIAL

In The News

- The Supreme Court recently increased voter verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) verification to **five random Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)** in each Assembly segment/constituency **"to ensure the greatest degree of accuracy, satisfaction in election process**.".
- Earlier, under the ECI guidelines, only the **VVPAT slips** from **one EVM in every Assembly** segment/constituency was subjected to **physical verification**.
- Recently, 21 Opposition parties appealed for VVPAT verification in 50% or 125 polling booths in each constituency due to the glitches observed in the VVPAT machines in various assembly elections.
- However, ECI pointed out various issues in implementation of 50% verification such as:
  - o VVPAT counting is a manual job and the **risk of error multiplies** with an increase in human intervention.
  - o Increased VVPAT slip counting would require **extensive training and capacity building** of election officials in the field.
  - o The **results of elections would be delayed** by six days if the Opposition parties' demand is met.
- A report by the Indian Statistical Institute, said that a sample verification of 479 EVMs and VVPATs out of a total 10.35 lakh machine would lift public confidence to 99.9936%.
  - o The increase to 5 EVMS would result in **8.6 times the sample size** recommended in the Indian Statistical Institute report.

VVPAT
Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail

VVPAT will be used in all the polling stations in the forthcoming General Elections

VVPAT will be kept in voting compartment along with Ballot Unit

VVPAT has a transparent window which shows the printed paper slip when the vote is cast

The printed paper slip will display the Name, Serial Number and Election symbol of the candidate for seven (7) seconds to the voter

After seven (7) seconds the printed paper slip will automatically get cut and drop in the sealed box below

VVPATs were first used in the bye-election for the Noksen Assembly seat in Nagaland in 2013.

The Conduct of Election Rules say that a voter who has complained his vote went to the wrong party can be allowed a test vote. However, if the VVPAT shows no error, the voter can be penalized with six months' imprisonment and a fine.

VVPAT slip counting takes place in specially erected VVPAT counting booths under the close monitoring of the returning officer and direct oversight of the observer.

VVPAT further enhances transparency and reliability in poll process

JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

In The News

Recently, there was an allegation of sexual harassment against the Chief Justice of India (CJI) made by a former Supreme Court employee, which has yet again triggered a debate between **judicial independence and judicial accountability**.

Background

- Indian Democracy runs on the principle of **'rule of law',** which implies that '**no one is above the law'.** The Constitution of India gives the role of its **guardian and protector** to the Judiciary of India.
- The Judiciary is the watchdog, which preserves and enforces the fundamental and legal rights against any arbitrary violations.
- However, there have been many areas and instances, where the **actions of judiciary itself have been questioned** on being contrary to this and hence the issue of accountability of the judiciary has sprung up.
- **Accountability** means any action taken by any authority requires **justifiable explanation** for that particular action. All public institutions and functionaries, whatever their role may be or wherever they stand in the hierarchy **have to be accountable** for their actions to the people of India.
- The Constitution follows the **principle of separation of power** where checks and balances exit on every organ's conduct. The two organs of the state of India- The Legislature and the Executive are accountable to the Judiciary and to the people at large. But, the question, which has come up, is, "**to whom is the judiciary accountable**?" and "**who is judging the j**udges?"

Areas where Judicial Accountability has been found lacking

- **Judicial Appointments -** The collegium system in India presents a unique system wherein the democratically elected executive and Parliament at large has no say in appointing judges.
- **Removal of Judges-** Impeachment under Article 124 (4) and Article 217 (1) of the Constitution is a long-drawn-out and difficult process along with its political overtone.
- **Conduct of Judges-** where judges have been alleged to have indulged in corruption (Justice Ramaswami Case, Justice Soumitra Sen), misappropriation, sexual harassment, taking post retirement jobs among others.
- **Opacity in the operations of Judiciary-** The judiciary claims that any outside body having disciplinary powers over them who compromise their independence so they have set up an "**in-house mechanism**" investigating corruption. (**l**ast year four senior most Supreme Court judges held press conference against the role of Chief Justice)

- ☐ **Information asymmetry with Judiciary-** Judiciary has virtually kept itself outside the purview of the **Right of Information Act**. The Supreme Court Rules undermined the RTI in four key ways as they do not provide for-
  1. a time frame for furnishing information
  2. an appeal mechanism
  3. penalties for delays or wrongful refusal of information
  4. makes disclosures to citizens contingent upon

"good cause shown"

- ☐ **Contempt of Court-** Using the powers under the Contempt of Court Act, judiciary has been alleged to silence the rightful critics also. **Judicial Overreach-** Judiciary has been praised on its activism towards resolving citizen's

grievances,however, in this process some of the decisions have encroached the line of overreach also.

In-House Mechanism to check Judicial Accountability
- In 1997, the Supreme Court adopted a charter called the
  'Restatement of Values of Judicial Life'.
- Also, other resolutions have been adopted, which require
  - Declaration of assets by every High Court and Supreme Court Judge/Chief Justice
  - Formulation of an in-house procedure to inquire into any allegation of misbehavior or misconduct against them, which is considered fit for inquiry by the Chief Justice of India and some of his senior colleagues.
- In 2002, **Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct** were adopted.

Implications

- **Erosion of public trust in judges and judicial system-** when there are issues of integrity and accountability of Judiciary.
- **Impacts the Independence of Judiciary-** when there is lack of accountability to match it.
- **Against the principles of Natural Justice-** e.g. when the Chief Justice decides the "Master of the Rolls" and Himself/herself is a party in any case.

Steps taken so far

- Contempt of Court (Amendment) Bill, 2003 was introduced.
- Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill, 2010 was introduced.
- Unanimous passing of the **National Judicial Appointments Commission Act** by the Parliament and state legislatures, which was struck down by the Judiciary.
- Draft **Memorandum of Procedure, 2016** is been discussed.

Measures which can be taken

- **Bringing a new Judicial standards and accountability bill** to establish a set of legally enforceable standards to uphold the dignity of superior judiciary and establish a new architecture to process the public complaints leveled against the judges.
- A more **formal and comprehensive Code of Conduct for Judges** should be put in place, which is **enforceable by law.**
- **The Contempt of Court Act** could be amended with following provisions-
  - Cases of contempt should not be tried by
- courts but by an independent commission of concerned district.
  - The Act should be amended to remove words, 'scandalizing the court or lowering the authority of the court' from the definition of criminal contempt.
- **A two-level judicial discipline model** with first level as a disciplinary system that can reprimand, fine or suspend judges for misdemeanors along with providing them some limited measures of immunity; and, second level as a system of removal of judges for serious misconduct, including corruption must be established.
- **Increasing the transparency in public hearing in the courtrooms-** Last year, the Supreme Court approved the live-streaming of court proceedings of cases of constitutional importance. This provision could be extended to the other cases and High Courts also.

Important Features of Draft Memorandum of Procedure (MoP), 2016
- Include "merit and integrity" as "prime criteria" for
  appointment of judges to the higher judiciary.
- **Performance Appraisal for promotion as chief justice of a high court**: by evaluation of judgments delivered by a high court judge during the last five years and initiatives undertaken for improvement of judicial administration.
- **Setting up a permanent secretariat** in Supreme Court for maintaining records of high court judges, scheduling meetings of the Collegium, receiving recommendations as well as complaints in matters related to appointments.

LATERAL ENTRY

In The News

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has selected **nine professionals** to work in the capacity of **joint secretaries** in the Government of India.

Background

- Earlier, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) had invited applications for 10 joint secretary- level posts to be hired on a short-term contract for three to five years depending upon the performance.
- Now, after the UPSC has recommended the candidates, their appointment has to be cleared by the Election Commission of India (EC) and the next government.
- Lateral Entry refers to the direct induction of domain experts at the middle or senior levels of administrative hierarchy, rather than only appointing regular recruits through promotion.
  - The debate of generalists vs. specialists has been an old one in the discussions of governance reforms.
  - Various professionals, commissions and political commentators have prescribed Lateral Entry.
  - Earlier in India, experts have been brought by the Government of India, at specific posts such as
  - the Reserve Bank of India, Chief Economic Advisor, NITI Aayog among others. But till now it has not become an institutionalised mechanism of recruitment.

Need of Lateral Entry

- **Bring new dimensions and fresh talent in Policy Making**- It is essential to have people with specialized skills and domain expertise in important positions as policy making is becoming complex in nature.
  - The IAS officers see the government only from within, lateral entry would enable government to understand the impact of its policies on stakeholders — the private sector, the non-government sector and the larger public.
  - First ARC had pointed out the need for specialization as far back as in 1965. The Surinder Nath Committee and the Hota Committee followed suit in 2003 and 2004, respectively, as did the second ARC.
- **Increase in efficiency and governance**-
  - Career progression in the IAS is almost automatic which could put officers in comfort zone. Lateral entrants could also induce competition within the system.
  - NITI Aayog, in its Three-Year Action Agenda for 2017-2020 had said that sector specialists be inducted into the system through lateral entry as that would "bring competition to the established career bureaucracy".
- **Increasing complexity in governance-** requires specialists and domain expertise, due to emergence of new issues like globalisation, digitalisation of governance, financial frauds, cybercrime, organized crime, terrorism, climate-change among others.
- **Fill the vacancy gap of officers**: According to a report by Ministry of

Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions there is a shortage of nearly 1,500 IAS officers in the country. The Baswan Committee (2016) had also supported lateral entry considering the shortage of officers.

- **Will help widen the talent pool for appointment-** Recruitment of IAS officers at very young age makes it difficult to test potential administrative and judgment capabilities. Some who are potentially good administrators fail to make it, and some who do make it, fall short of the requirements.

- **Challenges faced after Lateral Entry**

- **Scope of utility-** i.e. how far the government can leverage the expertise of entrants. Much will depend on how far the political executive is willing to facilitate the functioning of these external experts and whether an enabling environment is created for utilizing their full potential.

- **Difficult to ensure responsibility and accountability**- for the decisions taken by the private people during their service, especially given the **short tenures** of 3 to 5 years.

- **Lack of long-term stakes**: The advantage with the current civil service is that policy makers have long-term interests in government.

- **Lack of field experience**- Officers who will join might score on domain knowledge, but they may fall short on the experience of working in the "field".

- **May face resistance from the Bureaucracy-**
  - o **Lack of cooperation-** as existing officials might resist functioning with **outsiders** and inevitable tensions between **generalists and specialists** may surface.
  - o **Difficulty in adjusting to the bureaucratic work culture-** including manners of addressing each other, speed of

working, knowledge of rules, punctuality among others.
  - o **May demotivate them the existing officials-** as they won't have reasonable assurance of reaching top- level managerial positions from now on. By suggesting a contract-based system for positions of joint secretary and above, the signal would be sent out that only mid-career positions would be within reach in about 15-18 years of service and there would be considerable uncertainty about career progression thereafter.

- **Issue of Reservation**- It is unclear whether there would be reservation for recruitment through Lateral Entry or not.

Way Forward

- **Need to learn from earlier experiences**: The past experience of inducting private-sector managers to run public-sector enterprises has not been particularly satisfactory. For e.g. Air India, Indian Airlines etc.

- **Move towards longer tenures of lateral entrants-** to allow them sufficient time to settle, learn and implement their approach, blueprint for work.

- Various reforms apart from institutionalized lateral entry are the need of the moment such as:
  - o **Set up public administration universities for aspiring and serving civil servants**: It can create a large pool of aspiring civil servants as well as enable serving bureaucrats to attain deep knowledge of the country's political economy, increased domain expertise and improved managerial skills.
  - o **Deputation to Private Sector**-

A Parliamentary panel has recommended deputation of IAS and IPS officers in private sector to bring in domain expertise and competition.

o **Institutionalize goal setting and tracking for each department**- Each Ministry and government agency should set outcome-based goals with a clear timeline.

INDO-PACIFIC REGIONAL COOPERATION

In The News

Recently, the Ministry of External Affairs has setup a dedicated **Indo-Pacific division** for the matters related to the **Indo-Pacific**.

Background

- The "Indo-Pacific" idea was originally conceived in 2006- 07. The term 'Indo-Pacific' combines the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and the Western Pacific Region (WP) – inclusive of the contiguous seas off East Asia and Southeast Asia – into a singular regional construct.

Significance of the Indo-Pacific for India

- Greater Role in the Region- This concept is a shift from the Asia-Pacific (included North-east Asia, South-east Asia and Oceania), where India did not
- have a major role to play. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) launched in 1989 did not include India, as did the Asia- Europe Meeting (ASEM) launched in 1996, though India was admitted into ASEM in 2006. India still remains outside APEC despite stated US support for its inclusion. However, India is a key player in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Play Role of a Net Security Provider- where India is expected to assume the responsibility for stability in the region by following capacity building, military diplomacy, military assistance and direct deployment.
- Help achieve Economic Potential- India is targeting a sustained 7.5-8% economic growth and aims to be a $5 trillion economy by 2025. The Indo-Pacific can aid this as there is-
  - o Presence of natural resources- like oil and hydrocarbons in South China sea, which can help India diversify its import basket.
  - o Presence of high market potential- for Indian exports such as engineering services, ICT services etc.
  - o Development of North Eastern States- that can become a gateway for India to integrate with this region.
  - o Integration of Blue Economy Aspirations- where, ocean ecosystems bring economic and social benefits that are efficient, equitable and sustainable for the entire region.
- Ensure Freedom of Navigation- as the region includes some vital trade routes and world's vital choke points for global commerce, including the Straits of Malacca. Around 95% of India's foreign trade comes by the Indian Ocean.
- Develop a Security Architecture- as there are issues like territorial and water disputes between countries, piracy concerns, North Korean nuclear capability and greater militarization in the region.
- Containment of China- In the backdrop of China's aggressive expansionists tendencies including Belt and Road Initiative, String Of Pearls Theory, Indo-Pacific presents an opportunity to capitalise on China's key strategic vulnerability, viz., its energy lifelines transiting the Indian Ocean and to showcase Indian Navy's capability to moderate China's behaviour, thereby dissuading its future aggressiveness.
- Help achieve Strategic Objectives-
  - o Gives an extension to India's 'Act East Policy'-
  - o Entry in multilateral groupings- such as Nuclear Supplier's Group and permanent seat in UN Security Council.
  - o Create alliances with smaller powers- as it would entail continued engagement with China while simultaneously developing

strong

o Increasing role of ports- where different countries are trying to setup their bases in different ports of the region. E.g. India has secured access to Duqm port in Oman for military use and develop the Agalega Island in Mauritius. The Indian Navy has secured a logistics facility in Singapore that will allow it to refuel and rearm and has similar facilities in Vietnam.

Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD)

- The second edition of **Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD)** was held recently in New Delhi
- The Indian Navy launched this apex level conference in 2018, in recognition towards the importance of Indo-Pacific for the region.
- It is organised by the **National Maritime Foundation** as the Navy's Knowledge Partner.
- The permanent theme of this annual dialogue is a review of India's opportunities and challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The 2018 edition sought to highlight the opportunities that lay before India's maritime policy-shapers, policy-makers, and, the practitioners of the country's maritime policies.

Themes of 2019 Dialogue

o Practical solutions for achieving cohesion in the region through maritime connectivity.
o Measures to attain and maintain a free-and-open Indo- Pacific.
o A regional approach to the region's transition from a 'Brown' to a 'Blue' economy.
o Opportunities and challenges arising from the maritime impact of 'Industry 4.0'.
o How the twin conceptualizations of 'SAGAR' and 'SAGARMALA' might best be

made mutually reinforcing on a regional level.

Benefits of a separate Indo-Pacific Wing

• Bring Unified approach- Previously, there were separate desks for ASEAN region, Indian Ocean region which compartmentalized the approach. Hence, when the rules are becoming clearer and the idea of Indo-Pacific has crystalized, this unified division will bring all issues related to it under one umbrella for greater cohesion and focus.

• Improved Policy Making- MEA's territorial divisions are crucial for policy making. It will help in accelerating India's preparedness and drafts related to Indo-Pacific region.

• Help in easy coordination- With other countries re-orienting their approach towards Indo-Pacific, such a division in India will allow other countries to coordinate easily with a dedicated division.

Challenges

- **Need to build capacity-** India wants to stop Indo-Pacific from turning into a Chinese sphere of influence, but it doesn't have **sufficient resources to do so**. Neither does India have adequate economic resources to provide credible alternatives to China's Belt and Road Initiative nor does it have sufficient diplomatic capacity to meaningfully engage with all stakeholders at the same time like US and Russia. China's aggression and **debt trap diplomacy**, which impinge sovereignty, is going to test Indian diplomacy.
- **Seamless Connectivity-** between the countries in the region remains to be a concern.
- **Role of North- East States-** until they are developed, India's role may not be utilized to the maximum extent possible.
- **Heterogeneity in the region-** with different countries in terms of sizes,

ethnicities, aspirations, it becomes difficult to obtain a cohesive approach.

- **De-globalization-** The western world has been hit by a spate of protectionism, which creates hurdles to such cooperation on issues like tariffs, oil import etc for the common Indo-Pacific region.

Way Forward

- **India's entry into APEC-** should be accelerated and done as soon as possible.
- **Development of infrastructure investment initiatives-** to develop connectivity and inter-operability between the regions to encourage economic trade among others.
- **Increase the diplomatic coordination sphere-** from the current Quad countries to the larger region, so as to build larger consensus on the Indo-Pacific common concerns.
- The emergence of the Indo-Pacific as a geo-strategic concept is a welcome development. However, it needs further diplomatic movement and there needs to be greater clarity on economic issues.

Efforts taken by other countries towards Indo-Pacific

- **Quad-plus-** where India, Japan, Australia, U.S. and countries of ASEAN have come forward cooperate in the region.
- **Australia**- In 2013, Australia released its Defence White Paper making it first government articulation of Indo-Pacific and endorsing India's centrality in the Indo Pacific construct.
- **USA**-
  – It recently renamed its strategically important Pacific Command (PACOM) as the U.S. IndoPacific Command, indicating that for U.S. government, East Asia and the Indian Ocean Region are gradually becoming a single competitive space and India is a key partner in its strategic planning.
  – Even 2018 National Defence Strategy of US acknowledges Pacific challenges and signals America's resolve and lasting commitment to the Indo-Pacific.
- **Japan's** Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy rests on "two oceans" — Indian and Pacific — and "two continents" — Africa and Asia.
- **Indonesia-** has stressed on the cooperation in an open, transparent and inclusive dialogue.

INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

In The News

India's development partnership assistance, extended to countries through concessional loans, has more than doubled in the past five years.

Background

- With the achievement of independence, Indian Foreign Policy was guided by the principles of **Panchsheel** and **South-South Cooperation.** India, despite being a poor country, with limited resources, displayed an internationalist responsibility to share its modest resources and capabilities with other developing countries.
- It was believed that India could share its experience in various domains and could also learn from the experience of other developing countries. India was itself a receiver of **Overseas Development Assistance** of major multilateral organisations, but did not see any contradiction in a receiver of aid and also share its modest capacities with other countries.
- India thus started its **development partnership** with other nations, covering development, humanitarian and technical assistance to countries in different parts of the world.
- It is being implemented by various ministries and institutions with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) as the leading ministry.

Snapshot of India's Development Assistance

- **Training and Capacity Building-** During 2017-18, 10,918 civilian training slots were offered under ITEC Programme to 161 partner countries in various areas such as Agriculture, Food and Fertilizers; Banking, Finance, Education etc. e.g. 150 bureaucrats from Ethiopia are receiving Indian training.
- **Line of Credits-** From 2005-06 to January 2019, 274 LOCs aggregating to **US\$ 26.79 billion** have been extended to 63 countries in various sectors.
- **Study tours-** are undertaken at the specific request of ITEC partner countries.
- **Providing equipment-** like Dornier aircraft to Seychelles, helicopter to Maldives.
- **Humanitarian assistance-** like food items to Lesotho, Namibia; medical supplies to Zambia, Syria; building of houses in Nepal, Sri Lanka; NCERT books to Tanzania etc.
- **Aid for Disaster Relief-** like to Nepal after earthquake, even to Pakistan in 2010 when it faced floods.

Successes of India's Development Partnership

- Transformed into a foreign aid donor nation- In the financial year 2015-16 India gave Rs. 7719.65 crores as aid whereas it received Rs. 2,144.77 crore in aid from foreign countries and global banks. India ranks above 11 of the 28 OECD donors (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and is one of the largest development partners in certain regions.
- Commitment to Neighbourhood First- Most of India's foreign aid over the past decade has been directed towards its neighbours. An analysis says that 84% of this $1.6 billion Indian foreign aid is to be directed towards the South Asia, with Bhutan being allotted the largest share of 63% ($981 million). This is in consonance with India's aspiring status as a regional power.
  1. African Outreach- where India has contributed in the following ways-
  2. Pan-African E-Network Project: In 2004, India announced an initiative to bridge the digital divide and accelerate development on the African continent.
  3. TEAM-9 Initiative: The Techno-

Economic Approach for Africa-India Movement (TEAM-9), is a credit facility with a volume of 500m US$ launched in 2004 for eight African countries.

4. Duty Free Tariff Preference Scheme for Least Developed Countries.
5. Aid to Africa budget of the Ministry of External Affairs of India.

- **Rise of India's Soft Power-** In the AidData's, **Listening to Leaders 2018 report,** India rose to 24th position on a ranking of the most influential development partners. India also outperformed China on the 2017 helpfulness ranking.

Challenges faced

- **Lack of funds with Ministry of External Affairs-** The level of budgetary allocation towards the MEA has been criticized by several sources, including a parliamentary panel. Its corpus is smaller than that of Singapore and 2016-17 Union Budget committed less towards the Ministry than in the previous year.
- **Issues with the partner country-** including delays in statutory approvals and land acquisition, local protests (by environmentalists, vested interests and others), lack of necessary infrastructure and changes in the scope of the work.
- **Competition from China-** where China overtakes India in **capacity, finances** and military aid. E.g. to secure the oil fields in Africa. Also, India lags behind China in terms of **project completion and following timelines** as highlighted by the nations who are a part of the Belt and Road Initiative.
- **Lack of Global Linkages-** such as with China and other partners in African countries.

Significance

- **India characterizes such assistance as "development cooperation" and not foreign aid-** Unlike ODA, India does not posit a donor-recipient relationship; it sees assistance as a reflection of a mutually beneficial partnership. It is true that in recent years, the scale of such development cooperation has expanded, while ODA levels have either remained static or even declined.
- India's development cooperation is based on the **priorities set by the partner country**, with projects determined on the basis of friendly consultations.
- **Acceptance of Responsibility-** In keeping with India's growing stature in international affairs, we must willingly assume greater responsibility in promoting development in other developing countries.
- **Countering China-** in its relentless efforts to compete with India for power and influence in South Asia.

Conclusion

- India is yet to develop robust institutions and networks to manage this new role, to be able to direct and deliver its development assistance and its function in global institutions in the manner that meets its own strategic interests and contributes to a sustainable global development agenda.
- A cue could be taken from the **German Development Assistance Programme**, which has a well laid out list of objectives under the **Coalition Treaty – 'Shaping Germany's Future'**.
- India is a key actor in this new global development landscape for not only the money it will contribute

but also its influence in shaping future global development conversations and forging new southern alliances.

Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme
- It was instituted by a decision of the Indian Cabinet on 15 September 1964 as a bilateral programme of assistance of the Government of India.
- It is a demand-driven, response-oriented programme that focuses on addressing the needs of developing countries through innovative technological cooperation between India and the partnering nation.
- Under ITEC and its sister programme SCAAP (Special Commonwealth African Assistance Programme), 161 countries are invited to share in the Indian developmental experience acquired over six decades of India's existence as a free nation.

Development Partnership Administration (DPA)
- It is housed within the Ministry of External Affairs and is responsible for the overall management, coordination and administration of India's development partnerships.
- It has three Divisions (DPA - I, DPA - II and DPA - III).
- DPA I tracks grant projects in Africa and EXIM Bank- backed LoCs.
- DPA II manages capacity building and training programmes, along with grant assistance in Asia and Latin America, and humanitarian and disaster relief programmes.
- DPA III deals with the implementation of grant assistance projects in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Easy to PICK – "UPSC Monthly Magazine" April- 2019

BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

In The News

The second **Belt and Road Forum (BRF)** was recently held in Beijing, two years after first forum was held in May 2017.

About Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

- The BRI announced in 2013, is made up of a "belt" of overland routes and a maritime "road", which aims to connect Asia, Europe and Africa.
- The Belt refers to the Silk Road Economic Belt which comprises overland routes: connecting China, Central Asia, Russia and Europe.
- The Road refers to the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road designed to provide an impetus to trade from China to Europe through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, and from China through the South China Sea towards the South Pacific.

Importance of BRI

- In the wake of the global slowdown, BRI offers a new model of development to China to maintain its economic growth. OBOR envisions b**uilding networks of roadways, railways, maritime ports, power grids, oil and gas pipelines,** associated infrastructure projects which helps Chinese economy.
- BRI has **domestic and international dimension**: as it visualises a shift from developed markets in the west to developing economies in Asia, Africa and a shift in China's development strategy concentrating on provinces in central and western China instead of the developed east coast region.
- **Strategically important** as China utilises its economic clout to build it soft power.
- Criticism and Issues with BRI
- Debt-trap diplomacy of China where

BRI projects are pushing recipient countries into indebtedness and do not transfer skills or technology. For instance, Hambantota port, where Sri Lanka was forced to lease the port to China for 99 years. Also, there has been rethinking of projects in Malaysia, Maldives, Ethiopia and even in Pakistan.

- BRI represents political and economic ambitions of China making countries like the US, Japan, Germany, Russia, and Australia unhappy about the impact of Beijing's moves on their own economic and political interests.
- **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**, an important component of BRI, passes through Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, is the main reason for India signaling its displeasure over BRI and not participating in both the BRFs.
  1. Other concerns raised include:
  2. operational problems
  3. lack of information transparency
  4. lack of evaluation on the impact of regional social culture
  5. over-expansion of the scope of the types of BRI projects,
  6. environmental concerns stemming from
  7. China's infrastructure build out

Why India should join BRI?

- **India as a participant of Asian era:** Projected as **Project of the century,** BRI signals the political end of the old order where the G7 shaped the economic agenda. BRI involves 126 countries and 29 international organizations covering half of world's population**, and India may be isolated from this new economic order.**
- **Shaping global economic rules:** BRI is evolving standards of multilateralism, including linkages with the United Nations SDGs. The **IMF** described it as a "**very important**

contribution" to the global economy and is collaborating with the Chinese authorities on sharing the best international practices, regarding fiscal sustainability and capacity building. Being part of it, India can also shape new economic global rules.

- **A platform for voicing Indian concerns: Italy**, a member of the G7, also joined BRI, and **Japan** also sent special envoy, despite its reservations over project. India could also have **raised concerns by joining the BRF.**

- India should **provide alternatives and solutions**- rather than merely criticizing the project. India should improve its implementation performance so as to provide a viable option to other countries.

Why India is boycotting BRI?

- CPEC **violates India's sovereignty** as it passes through the part of the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir that belongs to India and no country can accept a project that ignores its core concerns on sovereignty and territorial integrity.

- India also raised concerns regarding **unsustainable debt trap**, environmental concerns, and transparency in assessment of project costs, and skill and technology transfer to help long term running and maintenance of the assets created by local communities.

- India is **too big to be isolated** and India's continued objection will make China to consider its core concerns.

Way forward

- India should highlight its territorial concerns to China and seek **appropriate response recognising India's** sovereignty.
- India should give a **South Asian character to the two BRI corridors** on India's western and eastern flanks, by

- linking them with plans for connectivity in the ASEAN and SAARC region.
- India can **cooperate with like-minded countries** like Japan, US, Australia to provide alternatives to BRI, e.g. Asia-Africa Growth Corridor etc.

Significance of the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF)

- It saw China deliberately seeking to **recalibrate how it is approaching the BRI** amid lingering concerns and challenges.
- In his remarks, Chinese President Xi Jinping not only talked about the progress made under the initiative but also addressed some of the concerns about the BRI, including **exclusivity, sustainability, and standards**.
- It saw the showcasing of China's efforts to address concerns with the unveiling of new initiatives - Chinese finance ministry's new **Debt Sustainability Framework**.
- However, India has boycotted both the BRFs citing territorial sovereignty and other reasons.

LIBYA CRISIS

In The News

India has evacuated its entire peacekeeping CRPF contingent from Tripoli in Libya.

Details

- The crisis in Libya began after the **'Arab Spring'** protests engulfed Libya along with other countries in the region including Tunisia and Egypt in early 2011.
- The **long-ruling dictator Muammar Gaddafi** was ousted after a bloody battle and finally killed in October 2011 bringing a brutal regime to an end.
- However, years after the revolution and successful elections, Libya still seems far from finding the perfect solution for governing this vast North African country.
- Libya is currently **split broadly between two administrations**, the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) under prime minister
- Fayez Al Sarraj, which is based the capital Tripoli, and the House of Representatives based in the eastern town of Tobruk.
- Recently the eastern Libyan Army Commander Khalifa Haftar ordered his forces, the Libyan National Army (LNA), to take over Tripoli — the capital of the United Nations-backed government (Government of National Accord) — amid reports of escalating political tension in the country.

- **About UN Peacekeeping**
- UN peacekeepers **provide security and the political and peacebuilding support** to help countries make the difficult, early transition from conflict to peace.
- UN peacekeepers (often referred to as **Blue Berets or Blue Helmets**) **can include soldiers, police officers, and civilian personnel.**
- UN Peacekeeping is guided by three basic principles:
  - o Consent of the parties
  - o Impartiality
  - o Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.
- For its services, UN Peacekeeping has also received the Nobel Peace Prize.
- UN deployed its **first peacekeeping mission in 1948 to Palestine**.
- Since UN doesn't have any military force, **troops are provided by member states on a voluntary basis.**
  - o India is the **fourth largest troop contributor** to UN peacekeeping missions (as of February 2019), as well as th**e first-ever all-female force** that helped to bring peace to Liberia in the wake of that country's brutal civil war.
- Peacekeeping soldiers are **paid by their own government** according to their own national rank and salary scale.
- The financial resources of UN Peacekeeping operations are the collective responsibility of UN Member States. Decisions about the establishment, maintenance or expansion of peacekeeping operations are taken by the United Nations Security Council.

Arab Spring
- The Arab Spring was a series of pro-democracy uprisings that enveloped several largely Muslim countries, including Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Libya, Egypt and Bahrain
- The Arab Spring began in December 2010 when Tunisian street vendor Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire to protest the arbitrary seizing of his vegetable stand by police over failure to obtain a permit.
- This served as a catalyst for the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia.
- Activists in other countries in the region were inspired by the regime change in Tunisia—the country's first democratic

parliamentary elections were held in October 2011—and began to protest similar authoritarian governments in their own nations.

- The participants in these grassroots movements sought increased social freedoms and greater participation in the political process. Notably, this includes the Tahrir Square uprisings in Cairo, Egypt and similar protests in Bahrain.
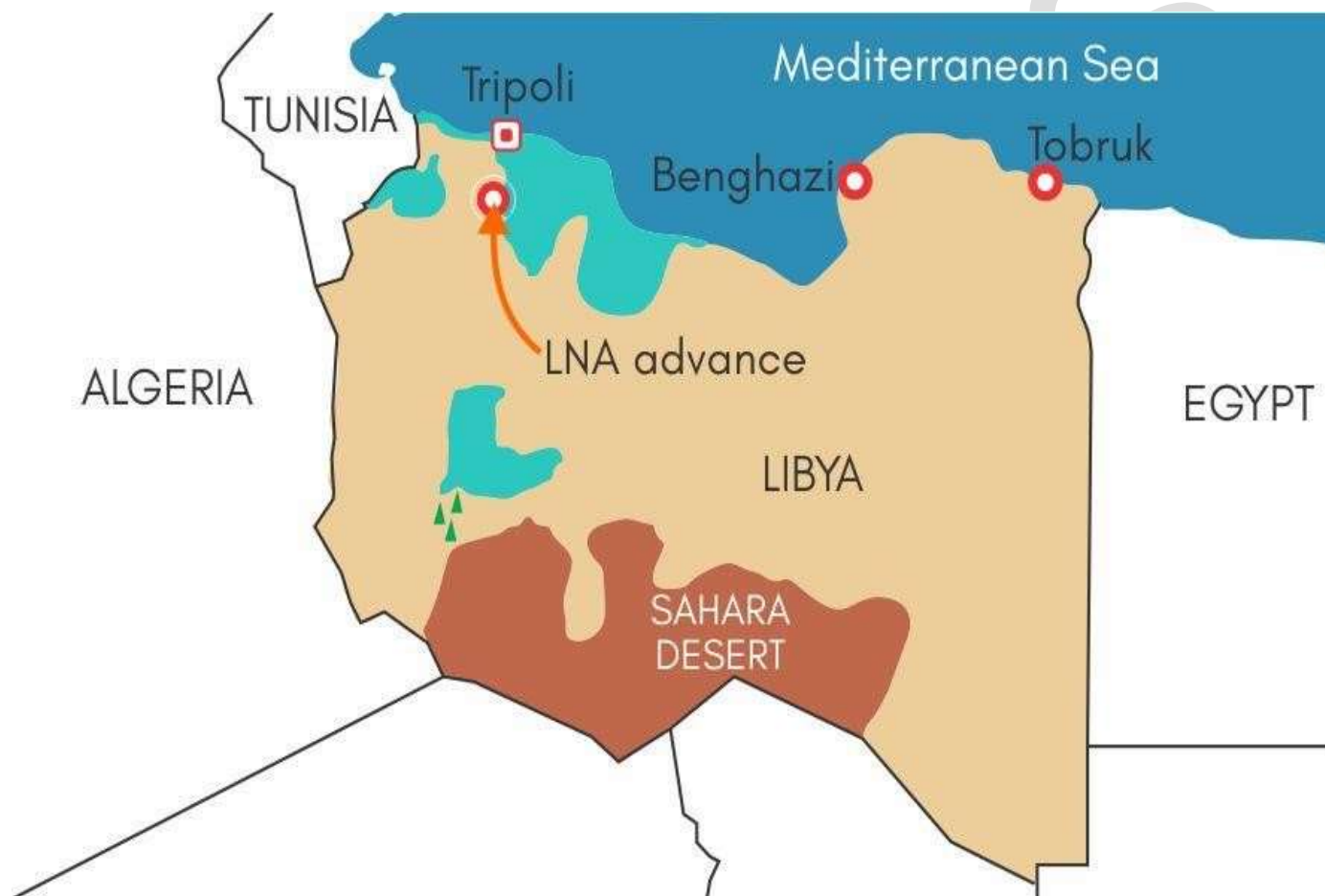
APPROXIMATE AREAS OF CONTROL (as of April 3, 2019)
Tobruk-based government backed by Haftar's Libyan National Army UN-backed Government of National Accord

▲ Gas or Oil facility   Other factions

UN DESIGNATESD MASOOD AZHAR AS GLOBAL TERRORIST

In The News

Recently, Pakistan-based terrorist leader Masood Azhar was added to the UN Security Council (UNSC) "**ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee" (1267 Committee)** sanctions list.

Details

- Sanctions Committee of the UN Nations Security Council was established under **Resolution 1267 in 1999**, which imposed limited sanctions on the Taliban.
- The Committee comprises all 15 members of the Security Council and makes its decision by consensus.
- **Meaning of Global Terrorist:** Once a person or entity is designated a terrorist by the Security Council, all the member of the United Nations, will have to establish a range of domestic mechanisms such as adoption of the list at the national level, or
- the use of nationally-based designations of individuals or entities appearing on them.
  - o A series of bans, including finances, travel and arms, will be imposed on the person or the entity.
- **Monitoring of Sanctions:** The sanctions committee oversees the implementation of the sanctions measures and reports annually to the Security Council on the implementation of these measures.

Significance

- **Broad global support with India-** which was reflected in the 13 co-sponsors for listing proposal in a 15 member UNSC. It has also **isolated Pakistan globally,** as apart from Saudi Arabia and Turkey, no other country supports Pakistan on this issue.
- **Affirms the Wuhan Spirit-**between India and China, which also makes **strategic space** for resolution of the different

irritants between the two countries.

- **Strategic Alignment: Quad members** (US, Japan and Australia) co-sponsoring the proposal, shows a key element of the **global fight against terrorism**.
- **Tap on terror financing**- Pakistan has to take the next steps required under UNSC 1267. If Pakistan does not do so, it faces a challenge as the Financial Action Task Force may **blacklist** it. It now gives a **legal basis** on which India pressurize Pakistan on taking verifiable and demonstrable action against Masood Azhar.
- **Symbolic victory**: The move is **unlikely to have any tangible impact** unless Pakistan cooperates, as Azhar will probably continue to run tame in Pakistan, just as Hafiz Saeed of LeT has, despite being designated in a list decade ago.

ARMS TRADE TREARTY

In The News

US President has announced that he will withdraw his country from the International Arms Trade Treaty.

Background

- The **Arms Trade Treaty** will be opened up for amendment in 2020.
  - USA cannot support certain proposed amendments like **gun control measures** which is viewed as threat to America's **second amendment right** to bear arms.
- US has said that treaty "**fails to truly address the problem of irresponsible arms transfers**" because other top arms exporters - including Russia and China - have not signed up to it.
- Also, according to the **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI),** the US arms industry accounted for 57 percent of the total Top 100 arms sales in 2017.
- It was endorsed by the UN General Assembly in April 2013, and entered into force on December 23, 2014.
- It regulates ammunition or munitions fired, launched, or delivered by the conventional arms covered under the treaty.
- It requires states to monitor their arms exports, and to ensure their weapons sales do not break existing arms embargoes.
- Nations also need to ensure the weapons they export do not end up being used for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes or terrorist acts. If they do find out the arms will be used for any of these, they need to stop the transfer.

Conventional Arms which ATT covers

- Battle tanks
- Armoured combat vehicles;
- Large-calibre artillery systems
- Combat aircraft
- Attack Helicopters
- Warships
- Missiles and missile launchers
- Small arms and light weapons

US SANCTIONS ON IRAN

In The News

- India is being forced to stop importing crude oil from Iran after the United States ended sanction waivers, known as **"Significant Reduction Exceptions"** on countries' importing oil from Tehran.

- The United States officially designated Iran's elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a foreign terrorist organization.
- The action marks the first time the United States has formally labelled another nation's military a terrorist group.

Background

- USA had decided to withdraw from **2015 Joint**
- **Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA),** with Iran and reinstate sanctions upon it because it was alleged that Iran was placing restrictions on the work of the inspectors of the **International Atomic Energy Agency** (IAEA).
  - Iran has retaliated by stating that Iran would not abide by the JCPOA. It has given a 60-day time-line to the EU-3 and other parties to the nuclear deal for restoring oil and banking channels.
  - As part of the plan, Iran was required to sell its surplus enriched uranium abroad, rather than store it inside the country.
- The US had granted waivers, known as **"Significant Reduction Exceptions"** that allowed India and seven other countries to continue importing reduced quantity of Iranian oil for six months ending May 1, 2019. Any imports would have triggered secondary sanction from US.
- As a result, Indian refiners have almost **halved their Iranian oil purchases** since

November, when the sanctions came into effect. India's oil imports from Iran **fell about 57 per cent** year-on-year in April

Implications for India

- **Impact on Energy Security-** India imports about 10% of its oil needs from Iran, which is bound to take a hit.
- **Negative impact on the economy-**
  - **Rising inflation-** Iran is the third-largest oil producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. Now Iran's supplies may fall by between 200,000 bpd and 1 million bpd. The price of oil has already shot up above the $70 mark in April, 2019.
  - **Widening Current Account Deficit-** given that the value of imports goes up with crude oil. It will further have effect on the **value of Rupee**, which may fall further.
  - **Impact on Capital Markets-** Indian benchmark indices slid by around 1.3%, as investors rushed to sell shares on concerns that rising oil prices could stoke inflation and adversely affect already repressed consumption.
- **Strategic Autonomy-** India envisages to assert it and balance the ties with both US and Iran. However, this seems to be eroding in favor of the US.

- Loss of favorable oil import- the substitute crude suppliers — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Nigeria and the US do not offer the attractive options that Iran does, including 60-day credit, free insurance and buying oil using Indian Rupee rather than spending crucial FOREX reserves.
- Probable impact on other strategic initiatives with Iran- such as

International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC), Chabahar port development.

- **Challenges faced by India**

- India has long been a proponent of a "rules-based order"- that depends on multilateral consensus and an adherence to commitments made by countries on the international stage and must stick to them despite adversarial behavior of some countries. Last year, the Minister of External Affairs had taken a stand that, India would recognise only UN sanctions, not "unilateral" ones. Hence, this decision is not in consonance with India's earlier stand.

- **Cannot afford to be seen anti-American-**
  - o NSG- USA is a strong backer of India's NSG membership. India's commitment towards JCPOA may complicate the matter as US might push India for support.
  - o Shanghai Cooperation Organisation- Recently China has suggested inducting Iran into the 8-member Eurasian security organization. If the proposal is accepted by the SCO, which is led by China and Russia, India will be a member of a bloc that will be seen as anti-American.

- Backlash by Iran- Iran has threatened to shut down the Strait of Hormuz, a key channel for global oil shipments.

- Tightening global situation- The US has also sanctioned Venezuela, and the OPEC and allied producers including Russia have voluntarily cut output, which has pushed up oil prices more than 35% in 2019.

Measures taken by India
- Focus on finding alternate sources of energy- minimising the impact on the Indian market.
- Diversification of oil imports- e.g.

importing crude oil, LNG and ethane condensate from the US. Also, Indian oil companies had until February 2018 acquired stakes in 27 countries including Australia, Brazil, etc. Recently, an Indian consortium picked up 10% in the Lower Zakhum offshore oil field in UAE, and IOCL acquired 17% in Oman's Makhaizna oilfield.

- Way Forward
- Building an alternative financial architecture- India, China, the EU and other affected entities should work
- on it, which is immune to the U.S.'s unilateral moves.
- Negotiate with US- to supply oil at favorable terms to help India cover the immediate import losses.
- Leverage partnership with other countries- such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE to negotiate long-term alternatives to energy dependence on Iran.

STRAIT OF HORMUZ

NEW UREA POLICY 2019

Cabinet Committee Economic Affairs has approved the extension of New Urea Policy 2015 for existing gas-based units.

Objectives:
- Maximizing indigenous urea production,
- Promoting energy efficiency in urea production and
- Rationalizing subsidy burden on the Government.

Features:
- Department of Fertilizers had notified this policy to make the domestic urea sector would **globally competitive in terms of energy efficiency.**
- It is applicable to the existing 25 gas based units.
- Under the Policy, **subsidy on production costs** is provided to 25 urea units when their production is beyond a certain production capacity as notified.
- 25 gas based urea plants are classified into three categories based on certain energy norms. These units are **eligible for concession based on energy norms** fixed for each group.
- It will drive urea units to select better technology and different measure to reduce energy consumption.
- It is expected that there would be reduction in the subsidy burden of the government in two ways - reduction in specific energy consumption norms and import substitution on account of higher domestic production.

GS- III

Aspire IAS The name associated with excellence

Office No - 5, Below Ground Floor, Apsara Arcade Building, Near Karol Bagh Metro Station, New Delhi - 110060 | WWW.ASPIREIAS.COM 9999801394, 8010068998 | Follow Us On

BLACK HOLE

In The News
Recently, the Event Horizon Telescope revealed the **first ever photograph of the shadow of a black hole**

About Black Hole
- A black hole is a region of space-time, which ex hibits the **property of extremely intense gravitational force,** which is so strong, that **nothing, not even light**, can escape it.
- Black holes were predicted by the **Einstein's theory of general relativity**, which showed that when a massive star dies, it leaves behind a **small, dense remnant core**.
- If the core's mass is more than about three times the mass of the Sun, the force of gravity overwhelms all other forces and **produces a black hole**.
- In the center of a black hole is a **gravitational singularity**, a one-dimensional point which contains a **huge mass in an infinitely small space, where density and gravity become infinite and space-time curves infinitely**, and the laws of physics as we know them **cease to operate**.
- Black holes **cannot be directly observed** because they themselves do not emit or radiate light, or any other electromagnetic waves that can be detected by instruments built by human beings. But the area just outside the boundary of the black hole (**Event Horizon**), which has vast amounts of gas, clouds and plasma swirling violently, **emit all kinds of radiations**, including even visible light. Hence, the **presence of black holes can be inferred** by detecting their effect on other matter nearby them.
- Now, the **Event Horizon Telescope** has captured the **just outside region** of a black hole, located 55 million light-years from Earth, at the centre of a galaxy named **Messier 87.** The image shows **a photon (light quantum)** can orbit the black hole without falling in**.** This is called the '**last photon ring'.**

Significance
- **Observed the unseeable-** For centuries, the concept of black hole has only been **theorized**, without any actual evidence of it. This is a remarkable confirmation of more than a century of theoretical work.
- **Capturing the event horizon requires perfection-** because the black hole is very small as compared to other celestial bodies and the light has to pass through all sorts of gases and material of the space and the Earth's atmosphere. The telescopes of EHT also have to synchronize in a perfect manner to be able to make simultaneous recordings of the radiations coming in from the black hole region.
- **Better understanding of the universe-** Scientists can compare the actual image with computer-simulated images used earlier to ascertain the differences, which could be explained by instrumentation, observation or other errors. This can provide a test for existing theories of the universe, and lead to a better understanding of black holes and the nature of the universe itself.
- **Enhances the understanding of gravitational force-** which can be useful for the Global Positioning Satellites in order to make them accurate to more than a few metres.

CHANDRAYAAN-2

In The News

ISRO is planning to launch Chandrayaan-2 mission.

Details

- **Chandrayaan-2** is a completely indigenous mission comprising of **an Orbiter, Lander (called Vikram) and Rover (called Pragyan)**.
- It will be launched by **Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mk III (GSLV-F10).**
- It will be ISRO's **first inter-planetary mission to land a rover** on any celestial body.
- The mission will attempt to **soft land a rover** 600km from the lunar south pole.
  - Only **three countries have ever soft-landed** on the moon— the United States, the U.S.S.R. and China.
- **Primary Objective**: To demonstrate the ability to soft-land on the lunar surface and operate a robotic rover on the surface.
- **Scientific Goals** include studies of lunar topography, mineralogy, elemental abundance, the lunar exosphere, and signatures of hydroxyl and water ice.
- **Scientific Payload**: It comprises a visible terrain mapping camera, a neutral mass spectrometer, a synthetic aperture radar, a near infrared spectrometer, a radio occultation experiment, a soft X-ray spectrometer and solar X-ray monitor.
  - The lander will carry a camera, seismometer, thermal profiler, and Langmuir probe, while the rover will hold cameras, alpha-proton X-ray spectrometer, and a laser-induced ablation spectroscopy experiment to analyse the lunar soil.

- It will also carry **NASA-owned laser retroreflector arrays** that allow scientists to make precise measurements of the distance to the Moon.

About Chandrayan-1
- Chandrayan-1 was launched by India in October, 2009 **using PSLV-C11**.
- **Primary Objective:** To prepare a three-dimensional atlas of both near and far side of the moon and chemical, mineralogical and photo-geological mapping of moon.

Findings of Chandrayan-1
- **Detection of Water** – Major finding was the detection of Water (H_2O) and Hydroxyl (OH) on the surface of the moon. The data revealed its presence in abundance around the polar region.
- **Magma Ocean Hypothesis** – It confirmed the Ocean Magma Hypothesis i.e. the moon was once completely in molten state.
- **New Spinel-rich Rock** – Data from Chandrayaan-1 have led to detection of new spinel-rich rock type on lunar far-side.
- **X-Ray signals detected** – It detected x-ray signals during weak solar flares thus indicating presence of magnesium, aluminium, silicon and calcium on lunar surface.

NASA DETECTS UNIVERSE'S FIRST MOLECULE

In The News

Scientists have detected **Helium hydride ion (HeH+),** the **first molecule** to be formed in our universe, for the first time ever.

More on the news

- Helium hydride, was detected roughly 3,000 light-years from Earth by NASA's **Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA).**

- It was detected in a **planetary nebula, NGC 7027**.

Planetary Nebula is a **cloud of dust and gas** in outer space formed when a star, at the end of its lifetime, blows off its outer layers as it runs out of fuel to burn.

Details

- Almost **14 billion years ago**, after Big Bang when universe cooled down, **ionised hydrogen and neutral helium atoms** reacted to form HeH+.

- As this process progressed, HeH+ reacted with neutral hydrogen and created molecular hydrogen, marking the **beginning of star formation and modern universe**.

- Scientists held that the **chemistry of the universe began with HeH+.** However, the lack of definitive evidence of its existence in interstellar space has been a dilemma for astronomy for a long time, which is now resolved.

Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA)

- It is a Boeing 747SP aircraft modified to carry a **106-inch diameter telescope**.
- It is a joint project of **NASA and the German Aerospace Centre**.

MALARIA VACCINE

In The News

- Government of Malawi recently launched the world's first malaria vaccine in a landmark pilot programme.

- The country is the first of three in Africa in which the vaccine, known as **RTS,S** (Trade name: **Mosquirix**), will be made available to children up to 2 years of age.
- Ghana and Kenya will introduce the vaccine later.
- Financing for the pilot programme has been mobilized through a collaboration among three key global health funding bodies: GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance; the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; and Unitaid.

RTS,S

- RTS,S/AS01 (RTS,S) is the **world's first malaria vaccine** shown to provide partial protection against malaria in young children.
- RTS,S aims to trigger the immune system to de**fend against the first stages of malaria when the Plasmodium falciparum parasite enters the human host'**s bloodstream through a mosquito bite and infects liver cells.
- The vaccine is designed to **prevent the parasite from infecting the liver**, where it can mature, multiply, reenter the bloodstream, and infect red blood cells, which can lead to disease symptoms.
- It has been developed by British pharmaceutical company **GlaxoSmithKline** in **partnership with the PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative (a non profit organisation).**

- **Malaria**
- Malaria is a communicable disease caused by *Plasmodium* **parasites** that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected **female Anopheles mosquitoes.**
- It is preventable and curable.
- In 2017, 5 countries accounted for nearly half of all malaria cases worldwide: Nigeria (25%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (11%), Mozambique (5%), India (4%) and Uganda (4%).

- **India and Malaria**
- As per the World Malaria Report 2017 of World Health Organization (WHO), the estimated malaria cases from India are 87% in South East Asia region.
- The **National Framework for Malaria Elimination (NFME) 2016-2030** lays out the vision, mission, broad principles and practices to achieve **the target of malaria elimination by 2030** synchronising with the Global Technical Strategy (GTS) for Malaria 2016-2030 of World Health Organisation (WHO).
- The Government has drafted **National Strategic Plan for malaria elimination (2017-2022)** wherein the country has been stratified based on the malaria burden into four categories – category 0 to category 3 and based on this the intervention of malaria control and prevention are being strengthened.

WHO Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016-2030

- Adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2015, it provides a technical framework for all malaria-endemic countries.
- It is intended to guide and support regional and country programmes as they work towards malaria control and elimination.
- The Strategy sets ambitious but achievable global targets, including:
  - Reducing malaria case incidence by at least 90% by 2030.

- o Reducing malaria mortality rates by at least 90% by 2030.
- o Eliminating malaria in at least 35 countries by 2030.
- o Preventing a resurgence of malaria in all countries that are malaria-free.

The Global Malaria Programme (GMP)
- The WHO Global Malaria Programme (GMP) coordinates WHO's global efforts to control and eliminate malaria by:
    - o setting, communicating and promoting the adoption of evidence-based norms, standards, policies, technical strategies, and guidelines;
    - o keeping independent score of global progress;
    - o developing approaches for capacity building, systems strengthening, and surveillance; and
    - o identifying threats to malaria control and elimination as well as new areas for action.

3-PARENT BABY

In The News

- Recently, a team of Greek and Spanish doctors has produced a baby from three people using maternal spindle transfer technique (a method of Mitochondrial Replacement Therapy).
- Background
- The mitochondria are organelles inside cells that are involved in releasing energy by producing adenosine triphosphate (ATP), the key energy currency that drives metabolism.
  - Mitochondria are referred to as the powerhouse of the cell.
- In addition to energy production mitochondria also helps to regulate the self-destruction of cells (aptosis), necessary for production of substances such as cholesterol and heme (a component of haemoglobin).
- While most of DNA is found in cell nucleus, some DNA is also found in the mitochondria, it is called mitchochondrial DNA (mtDNA).
- Mitochondria are inherited solely from the mother and this results into cases of babies been born with rare mitochondrial diseases if mother has the faulty mtDNA.
- Certain disorders caused due to mtDNA dysfunction are diabetes, respiratory disorders, Huntington's disease, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease etc.
- There is currently no cure for mitochondrial diseases.
- About "three-parent" babies
- Mitochondrial Replacement therapy (MRT) is a form of In Vitro Fertilization (Assisted Reproductive Technology).
- It is used to replace mother's faulty Mitochondrial DNA with healthy Mitochondria from a donor woman during IVF process, thus the name- "three-parent" baby.
- The resulting child is still conceived from two parents and will have nuclear DNA from the woman and her partner, and mitochondrial DNA from the donor.
- The donor's mitochondria contribute just 37 genes to the child, compared with more than 20,000 from the parents. That is a negligible amount and far less than one would gain from a blood transfusion or organ transplant.
- No other characteristics in terms of intelligence, eye colour, hair colour, height etc. are changed.
- Advantages: It could prevent severe genetic diseases being passed from mother to offspring and can be used to treat infertility.
- The United Kingdom became the first country in 2015, to have officially approved procedures to create "three-parent" babies.

Issues involved

- **Safety Implications**: Long term evolutionary implications and unintended consequences on the heredity and future generations are unknown.
- **Religious Grounds:** Some groups believe that technologies which manipulate or interfere with human eggs and embryos should not be used.
- **Social Issues**: These techniques being expensive, could benefit certain economically forward social groups only. It can also arise due to the tripaternal aspect, as children formed from these techniques might be subjected to mental agony due to discrimination or it may cause legal complications.
- **Ethical Issues:** Parents may misuse the technique to get "genetically modified" or "designer" babies.
- **Future Health Issues**: It could result in children being at higher risk of cancer and pre-matured ageing and would need to be monitored all their lives.

Way Forward

- MRT technique should be developed and administered in a regulated environment

such that it can be used to prevent fatal diseases while ensuring that it is not misused and only those who need it get access to it.
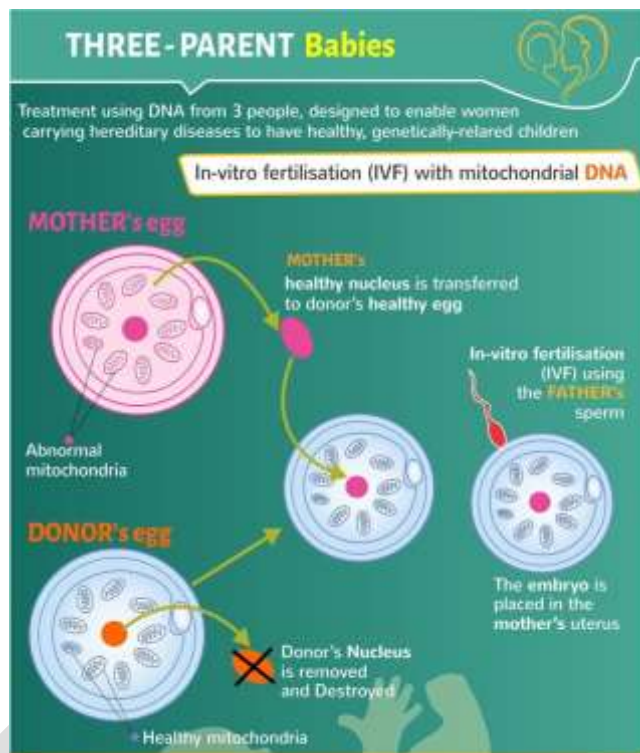
Process of MRT

The Process of **Mitochondrial Replacement Therapy** can be done by two methods – Pronuclear transfer and Spindle transfer.

Spindle Transfer

- In this method the spindle and associated chromosomes from the normal mitochondria are removed and destroyed and the spindle and related chromosomes form the mother's eggs/abnormal mitochondria are transferred to the emptied donor egg.
- The reconstituted egg is fertilised with sperm from father and the embryo with normal mitochondria and maternal and paternal genomes is transferred to the uterus.

Pronuclear Transfer

- In this method, first mother's eggs with abnormal mitochondria and the donated egg with normal mitochondria are fertilised with sperm.
- Then the pronuclei from the normal mitochondria are destroyed and the pronucleus from zygote of the abnormal mitochondria is transferred to the emptied zygote.
- After this procedure the embryo with normal mitochondria and maternal and paternal genome is transferred to the uterus.

Aspire IAS The name associated with excellence

Office No - 5, Below Ground Floor, Apsara Arcade Building, Near Karol Bagh Metro Station, New Delhi - 110060 | WWW.ASPIREIAS.COM | Follow Us On
9999801394, 8010068998

©2019 ASPIRE IAS All rights reserved.

PROTECTION OF PLANT VARITIES & FARMERS RIGHTS

In The News

- Recently, PepsiCo has **sued nine farmers in Gujarat** for alleged rights infringement on the grounds that they illegally grew its registered **FC-5 potato variety (or FL-2027)** used to make Lays chips.

- PepsiCo has invoked **Section 64** of the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001 to claim infringement of its rights, as company has patented FC-5 until January 2031 under the Act.

- Farmers groups **cite Section 39** of the **PPV&FR Act,** which specifically says that a farmer is allowed "to save, use, sow, resow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce including seed of a variety protected under this Act" so long as he does not sell "branded seed".

About the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001

- India as a signatory to World Trade Organization in 1994, was obliged under Article 27(3) (b) of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), either to adopt a sui genesis system for plant variety protection or join the Convention of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV).

- The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001" was enacted by adopting sui generis system.

- It's the world's only IPR legislation which grants intellectual property rights not only to the plant breeders but also to the farmers by protecting new, extant and farmers' varieties.

  •Unlike UPOV, the Act facilitates protection of not only new, but even extant (existing) varieties. That includes those notified under the Seeds Act (1966), farmers' varieties and varieties of common knowledge.

Objective

1. To recognize and protect the rights of farmers in respect of their contributions made at any time in conserving, improving and making available plant genetic resources for the development of new plant varieties.

2. To accelerate agricultural development in the country, protect plant breeders' rights; stimulate investment for research and development both in public & private sector for the development new of plant varieties.

3. Facilitate the growth of seed industry in the country, to ensure the availability of high quality seeds and planting material to the farmers.

•The protection period is for 15 years, and 18 years in the case of trees and vines.

•Establishes Plant Varieties Protection Appellate Tribunal (PVPAT): The decisions of the PVPAT can be challenged in High Court. The Tribunal shall dispose of the appeal within one year.

Functions of the Authority:

- Registration of new plant varieties and Maintenance of the **National Register of Plant Varieties for registration of new plant varieties**, essentially derived varieties (EDV) and extant varieties.

- **Facilitate development and commercialisation** of new varieties through formal linkages with agricultural universities, research

institutions and Krishi Vigyan Kendras

- **Developing DUS (Distinctiveness, Uniformity and Stability) test guidelines for new plant species**: DUS testing is a way of determining whether a newly bred variety differs from existing varieties within the same species (the Distinctness part), whether the characteristics used to establish Distinctness are expressed uniformly (**the Uniformity part**) and that these characteristics do not change over subsequent generations (**the Stability part).**
- **Maintenance of National Gene Bank** to store the seed material including parental lines submitted by the breeders of the registered varieties
- **Establish National Gene Fund (2007)**: It supports and reward farming /tribal/rural communities who are engaged in conservation, improvement and preservation of genetic resources of economic plants and their wild relatives.
- **Institute Plant Genome Saviour Community Award**, to community of farmers which is engaged in conservation, improvement and preservation of genetic resources of economic plants and their wild relatives, particularly in areas identified as agro-biodiversity hotspots.

Rights Under The Act

- **Breeders' Rights:** Breeders will have exclusive rights to produce,sell, market, distribute, import or export the protected variety. Breeder can appoint agent/ licensee and may exercise for civil remedy in case of infringement of rights.

- **Researchers' Rights:** Researcher can use any of the registered variety under the Act for conducting experiment or research. This includes the use of a variety as an initial source of variety for the purpose of developing another variety but repeated use needs prior permission of the registered breeder.

Farmers' Rights

- A farmer who has evolved or developed a new variety is **entitled for registration and protection** in like manner as a breeder of a variety.
- A farmer **can save, use, sow, re-sow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce** including seed of a variety protected under the PPV&FR Act, 2001 in the same manner as he was entitled before the coming into force of this Act provided farmer shall not be entitled to sell branded seed of a variety protected under the PPV&FR Act, 2001.
- There is also a provision for **compensation to the farmers** for non-performance of variety under Section 39 (2) of the Act, 2001; and
- Farmer shall **not be liable to pay any fee** in any proceeding before the Authority or Registrar or the Tribunal or the High Court under the Act. It will be paid **through National Gene Fund.**

CAPITAL ACCOUNT LIBERALISATION

In The News
- Recently, RBI's Deputy Governor has argued in favour of revisiting India's policies with respect to Capital Account Liberalisation.
- About Capital Account Liberalisation
- Foreign exchange transactions are broadly classified into two types: Current account transactions and Capital account transactions.
    - The Current Account represents a country's current transactions including exports, imports, interest payments, private remittances and transfers.
    - The Capital Account records the net change of assets and liabilities which include external lending and borrowing, foreign currency deposits of banks,
- external bonds issued by the Government of India, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Foreign Portfolio Investments in India (FPI) etc.
- In the early nineties, India's foreign exchange reserves were so low that these were not enough to pay for a few weeks of imports. Hence, India initiated reforms in Foreign transactions and in 1994, India allowed full current account convertibility in 1994. However, capital account transactions were not made fully convertible.
- **Currency convertibility** refers the ease with which a country's currency can be converted into gold or another currency in global exchanges. It
- indicates the extent to which the regulations allow inflow and outflow of capital to and from the country. Thus, for-
- **Current Account-** Indian rupee can be converted to any foreign currency at existing market rates for trade purposes for any amount.
- **Capital Account-** It means that ease with which, the foreign investors will be able to buy Indian assets such as bonds, equity

and Indian citizens will be able to buy foreign financial assets.
- Since, the last decade, the government and the central bank have been exploring ways and trajectory in which fuller capital account convertibility could be achieved.
- **Arguments in favour of Capital Account Liberalisation**
- **Bring in financial efficiency-** An open capital account could bring with it greater specialisation and innovation by exposing the financial sector to global competition.
- **Can attract larger foreign capital-** where external capital can supplement the domestic saving in the effort to mobilize resources for welfare and infrastructure.
- **Increase the choices for investments-** Residents get the opportunity to base their investment and consumption decisions on world interest rates and world prices for tradeables, which could enhance their interests and welfare.
- **Improves competitive discipline-** By offering the opportunity of using the world market to diversify portfolios, an open capital account permits both savers and investors to protect the real value of their assets through risk reduction.
- **Helps complement current account-** Capital controls are not very effective, particularly when current account is convertible, as current account transactions create channels for disguised capital flows.
- **Changed global scenario-** Capital controls are there to insulate domestic financial conditions from external financial developments. The influence of external financial conditions, however, has been increasing over the years even in countries with extensive capital controls and because the costs of evading the controls have declined and the attractiveness of holding assets in offshore markets have increased, capital controls are increasingly

becoming ineffective.

Arguments against Capital Account Liberalisation

- **Could lead to the export of domestic savings**- which can further erode the capacity of state to finance the national imperatives.
- **Could lead to greater tax avoidance-** It would weaken the ability of the authorities to tax domestic financial activities, income and wealth.
- **Could expose the economy to greater macroeconomic instability**- arising from the volatility of short-term capital movements, the risk of large capital outflows and associated negative externalities.
- **Premature liberalisation**- could initially stimulate capital inflows that would cause real exchange rate to appreciate and thereby destabilise an economy undergoing the fragile process of transition and structural reform. Once stabilisation programme lacks credibility, currency substitution and capital flight could trigger a Balance of Payment crisis, depreciation and spiraling inflation.
- **May lead to ineffective monetary policy-** due to speculative short-term movements in the interest rates, leading to other spiraling effects.
- Due to higher capital inflows following capital convertibility, the appreciating real exchange rate would **divert resources from tradable to non-tradable sectors** (like construction, housing, hotels and tourism etc.) and this would happen in the face of rising external liabilities ("**Dutch disease effect**").
- **Could lead to financial bubbles**- especially through irrational exuberance of investment in real estate and equity market financed by unbridled foreign borrowing.

Benefits of Capital Account Convertibility

- **Creating overseas assets-** currently is seen as a measure of dividend earning, rather it could be looked as value enhancement.
- **Acquisition of assets-** which are of strategic and economic importance, such as coalfields, oilfields etc. can bring long term dividends.
- **Relocation of Start-ups-** are using the holding company structure to invest in India because of the ease of raising capital in a foreign jurisdiction. This can be corrected and Start-ups can relocate in India.
- **Greater technological and strategic investments in India-** such as by defence companies, research companies etc.

Way Forward

- Given the trade-off between **growth/efficiency and stability** associated with capital flows, India's preference has strongly been in **favour of avoidance of instability**. Such an approach has imparted stability not only to the financial system but also to the overall growth process.
- The relative weights to efficiency and stability need to be **constantly reviewed** in the view of contemporary developments.
- While realizing that the impulses of growth could be supplemented with foreign capital, it is imperative to ensure that liberalisation of the capital account responds to the requirement of the economy in an appropriate, gradual and cautious manner.

Present Capital Controls in Indian Economy
- Capital control represents any measure taken by a government, central bank or other regulatory bodies to limit the flow of foreign capital in and out of the domestic economy.

- Some of the controls used presently are-
  o Cap on total FPIs in domestic securities with separate limits on different kinds of them.
  o Cap on External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs) and Masala Bonds together.
  o Restrictions on investors by their horizon of investment, such as, Insurance firms, Endowments and Pension Funds etc.
  o Restrictions on maturity of the underlying investment.
  o Restrictions to ensure that only relatively high credit quality borrowers tap into ECBs.

Committees on Capital Account Convertibility (1997, 2006)
- The Reserve Bank of India setup committees on capital account convertibility under the chairmanship of S.S. Tarapore in 1997 and 2006 respectively.
- The committee had supported the idea of full convertibility in the capital account. It recommended this to be done in a phased manner and subject to certain preconditions.
- **Some pre-conditions are-**
  o Fiscal Stability- low fiscal deficit
  o Price Stability- low inflation
  o Stability of financial institutions and markets
  o Low Non-Performing Assets

SMALL FINANCE BANKS

In The News

Recently data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) show that the small finance bank sector has been seeing remarkable growth in credit disbursement as well as deposits.

About Small Finance Banks (SFBs)

- These are **private financial institution** for the objective of financial inclusion without any restriction in the area of operations, unlike the Regional Rural Banks or Local Area Banks.

- They can provide basic banking services like **accepting deposits** and **lending** to the unbanked sections such as **small farmers, micro business enterprises, micro and small industries** and **unorganised sector entities**.

- Some of the **operational Small Finance Banks** in India are: Ujjivan SFB, Janalakshmi SFB, Equitas SFB, AU SFB, and Capital SFB.

- They were proposed by the **Nachiket Mor Committee of RBI**, as one of the **differentiated banking system** for credit outreach and announced in the **annual Budget of 2014.**

- Currently, SFBs constitutes **0.2% of the total deposits** of all scheduled commercial banks and makes up **0.6% of the total lending** undertaken by the scheduled commercial banks in India.

Need for Small Finance Banks

- **Differentiated banking to cater large population:** India has **second-largest unbanked population in the world** where more than **200 million people** do not have a bank account and many rely on **cash or informal financing.** Therefore, SFBs provide access to finance to a large unbanked population.

- **Priority sector lending:** SFBs play a key role in the **priority sector lending** space as their main focus is the **unserved and underserved segment**.

- **Financial inclusion of women:** Most of the Small Finance Banks were earlier **microfinance companies** - to provide loans to women. Now that these have become a bank, female customers can avail **full banking solutions**. Also, through different **CSR initiatives,** Small Finance Banks reach out to women customers and make them understand the need of **financial planning and banking services**.

- **Social Impact:** The SFBs are now looking beyond the simple metric of "income improvement" to other indicators of positive social impact, like **customer employment characteristics, customer distribution between urban and rural markets and women's engagement**. SFBs not only serve to provide banking solutions but **empower** the socio-economic progress of its consumers. RBI states that small banks will act as a **savings vehicle** to these segments of the population.

Regulations for SFBs
- They **cannot set up subsidiaries to undertake non-banking financial service activities.**
- They have Minimum paid-up equity capital requirement of Rs **100 crore**.
- The promoter's **minimum initial contribution** to the paid-up equity capital of such bank shall at least be 40% which can be gradually brought down to 26% within 12 years from the date of commencement of operations.

Regulations for SFBs

- **75%** of its Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC) should be advanced to the **priority sector as categorized by RBI.**
- It must have **25% of its branches set up in unbanked areas**.
- Maximum loan size to a single person **cannot exceed 10% of total capital funds; cannot exceed 15% in the case of a group.**
- They can undertake **financial services** like distribution of mutual fund units, insurance products, pension products, and so on, but **not without prior approval from the RBI.**
- They will be subject to all prudential norms and regulations of the RBI as applicable to existing commercial banks. For ex: **maintaining cash reserve ratio (CRR) and statutory liquid ratio (SLR)**.
- It can transform into a **full-fledged bank**, but only after RBI's approval.

Differentiated Banks
- They are banking institutions **licensed by the RBI** to provide specific banking services and products.
- Main aim for giving license to these banks is to **promote financial inclusion** and payments.
- Differentiated banks licensing was **launched in 2015**.
- They are of two types-**Payment banks and Small finance banks.**

Who can promote	Prepaid card issuers, telecom companies, NBFCs, Business correspondents, Supermarket chains, Corporates, Realty sector Co-ops and PSUs	Individuals/ professionals with 10 years experience in finance, NBFCs, microfinance cos, local area banks
What they must do	o Have a minimum capital of Rs. 100 cr o Maintain 75% of deposits in govt. bonds o Maintain 25% of deposits in other banks o Have at least 26% investment by Indians o Get listed if net worth crosses Rs 500 cr o Have 25% of branches in unbanked areas o Be fully networked and technology driven o Have Rs 1 lakh cap for deposits in one a/c	o Have a minimum capital of Rs.100 cr o Extend 75% of loans to priority sector o Have 25% of branches in unbanked areas o Maintain reserve requirements o Cap loans to individuals and groups at 10% and 15% of net worth o Have a business correspondent network
What they can do	o Offer internet banking o Sell mutual funds, insurance, pensions o Offer bill payment service for customers o Have ATMs and business correspondents o Can function as BC of another bank	o Sell FOREX o Sell mutual funds, insurance, pensions o Can convert into a full-fledged bank o Expand across the country o Transform into a full fledged bank, but only after RBI's approval.
What they can't do	o Offer credit cards o Extend loans o	o Extend large loans o Float subsidiaries o Cannot deal products

INDIAN STATISTICAL SYSTEM

In The News

Recently, there have been controversies and debates over the **credibility of data and statistics** published by different agencies including government bodies, independent think tanks and private players.

About Statistical Architecture in India

- India's modern statistical system took shape even before independence under the leadership of **Prof PC Mahalanobis** who was known as '**father of Indian Statistical System**'.
- The **Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation** (MoSPI) was later created in
- **1999** and the **National Statistical Commission** (NSC) was set up in **2005** in order to oversee the entire range of official statistics.
  - o The Ministry has **two wings**, one relating to **Statistics** and the other **Programme Implementation**. The Statistics Wing called the National Statistical Office (NSO) consists of the **Central Statistical Office (CSO)** and the **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)**.
- Although, India has the history of producing credible economic statistics, but recently a group of **108 economists and social scientists** called for restoration of "**institutional independence**" and integrity to the statistical organisations in India freeing critical data releases from '**political interference**.'

General Issues with Indian Statistics

- **Data sources are not available readily-** e.g. Agricultural prices are based on mandis or retail touch-points, where such data may not be final and there are changes after the data is released.
- **Non-availability of critical fiscal data such as the data on pay and allowances.**
- **Capacity Building-** the human and organisational resources of the statistical

agencies have not improved since the 1980s. The internal architecture needs a revamp to adapt to the changing data needs and data handling procedures.

- **Divergence in definitions and criteria-** of different indicators which are used by various agencies. It creates further differences between the numbers.
- **Large unorganised Sector-** that spans all the three segments — primary, secondary and tertiary — it is always problematic to get accurate data and a large number of proxies are used to arrive at output numbers. To top it all, the numbers have to be revised when fresh information is received, which makes it even more challenging.
- **Lack of transparency and reliability of fiscal data due to cash based accounting**
- **Lack of continuous long term series of fiscal data-** e.g. Trade data is based on how the reporting is done, and while the RBI-BOP data is straightforward as it looks at entry and exit of forex from the system in a particular time period, the data from the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics is subject to changes and, at times, the conclusions drawn could be different.
- **Time lag issues-** e.g. Both CMIE and NSSO are compiled over months, and this means they do not capture data at a particular point of time.
- **Non-standard templates at different levels of the government.**
- **Politicization of Data-** which has led to inflation and deflation of statistics to suit one's own performance, which does not corroborate with other crucial statistics. E.g. Divergence between high growth and low jobs in India.
- **Erosion of autonomy of institutions-** Senior officials of National Statistics Commission resigned recently over the holding back of jobs data.

Implications

- **Widening Trust Deficit on country's official data-** particularly on the GDP growth and employment/unemployment.
- **Global Image-** India's failing data credibility is now no longer confined to the local press but a subject the world has taken note of. The ratios such as fiscal deficit, debt, current account deficit are used for all global comparison.
- **Investors and Industries-** get impacted due to lack of predictability towards the country's economy.
- **Ineffective Policy Response-** e.g Reserve Bank of India's monetary policy decisions often go astray because of erroneous data provided by the government, as remarked by former RBI Governor Subbarao.
- **Lack of development-** e.g. there isn't enough information and data available in the public domain for us to understand the nutritional status and effectiveness of nutrition-related schemes of a particular district, block or village. This impacts developmental efforts of the government.
- **Absence of public accountability-** as there is lack of access to data for interested stakeholders. It also impedes policy implementation.
- **Impact on Public Discourse-** statistical integrity is crucial for generating data that would feed into economic policy-making and that would make for honest and democratic public discourse.

Way Forward

- The government should swiftly work on the draft recommendations made by these committees to bring a general consensus on them, along with working on the draft **National Policy on Official Statistics**.
- De-politicize official statistics- let the CSO rework the back-series numbers independently from the NITI Aayog which should not be in data compilation as there might be a conflict of interest.

- Whenever the base for national accounts is updated—as it should be to incorporate conceptual changes, statistical changes (such as methodological upgrades) or results of new surveys conducted closer to the base year—the old series should be routinely linked to the new series for providing comparable data.

- The NSC should be reconstituted at the earliest and steps taken to empower it with adequate resources as an independent watchdog. NSC should be the sole agency responsible for official statistics and reporting only to the parliament. In the long term NSC should be a statutory body.

- Rather than strive for speed in disseminating data on a more real-time basis, it would be better to tarry and provide final numbers even if there are lags involved. This would avoid the embarrassment of changing the discourse or commentary when reacting to new numbers.

- India's fiscal data system should be developed in the framework of 'information' federalism wherein cooperation, coordination and competition among the different tiers of federal governance would build up a modern state-of-the-art fiscal data system. This would require considerable investment of resources.

Success Story of Indian Statistics- The RBI
- The **monetary and banking data** of the Reserve Bank of India is probably the best in the country and respected everywhere.
- This is possible because the data flows from a regulated set of entities which have to comply with the structures.
- The presentation of accounts by banks has been homogenized to ensure that there is no ambiguity in definitions, and hence there are no revisions in the data.

WAYS AND MEANS ADVANCES

In The News

RBI, in consultation with Government of India, has decided that limits for Ways & Means Advances (WMA) for H1 of FY 2019-20 (April to September 2019) will be Rs 75000 crore.

About Ways & Means Advances (WMA)

- The Ways & Means Advances Scheme which commenced in 1997 was designed to meet temporary mismatches in the receipts and payments of the **central & state government**.
- Under the WMA system, the Reserve Bank extends **short-term advances** up to the pre-announced half- yearly limits, **fully payable within three months**.
- Interest rate for WMA is currently **charged at the repo rate.**
- The limits for WMA are mutually decided by the RBI and the Government of India.
- **Overdrafts are allowed** at an interest rate 2% above the repo rate, if WMA limits are breached. They cannot be extended beyond 10 consecutive working days.
- When 75% of the limit of WMA is utilised by the government, the RBI may trigger fresh flotation of market loans.
- Under **the WMA scheme for the State Governments**, there are two types of WMA– Special and Normal WMA.
  1. Special WMA is extended against the collateral of the government securities held by the State Government.
  2. After the exhaustion of the Special WMA limit, State Government is provided a Normal WMA which are unsecured advances at bank rate (Marginal Standing Facility). Normal WMA limits are based on three-year average of actual revenue and capital expenditure of the state.
- Whenever the government resorts to WMA, it effectively also adds to the liquidity in the system.

Government Securities
- A Government Security (G-Sec) is a tradeable instrument issued by the Central Government or the State Governments. It acknowledges the Government's debt obligation.
- Such securities are:
  o **Short term** (usually **called treasury bills**, with original **maturities of less than one year**)
  o **Long term** (usually called **Government bonds** or dated securities with original maturity of one year or more)
- In India, the Central Government issues both, treasury bills and bonds or dated securities while the State Governments issue only bonds or dated securities, which are called the State Development Loans (SDLs).
- G-Secs carry practically **no risk of default** and, hence, are called **risk-free gilt-edged instruments**.

CIRCULAR TRADING

In The News

Recently Mumbai High Court granted bail to those arrested for circular trading and evasion of GST.

Circular Trading?

- Circular trading refers to selling and buying of goods via shell corporations to artificially inflate turnover. There is no actual change in ownership or movement of goods.

- **For example**, a company "A" sold goods to another company "B**",** which sold the same goods to another company "C". Now, the third company "C" sold the goods to the first company "A". All this while, the goods were kept at a godown of first company.

- Here GST credits were paid on every lap of transaction. The series of sales helped the firms inflate turnover and avail larger valuations and loans. This amounts to tax evasion.

- This is illegal under Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices Regulations issued by SEBI. Ketan Parekh stock market scam of 1999 was also related to circular trading.

CHANGES IN E-WAY BILL SYSTEM

In The News

Recently the Finance Ministry has introduced changes in the e-way bill system to crack down on GST evaders.

More on news

- With various instances of malpractices in e-way bill generation getting detected, the Government decided to **rework the system for generation of e-way bill** by transporters and business. During **April-December 2018,** 3,626 cases of GST evasion involving ₹ 15,278 crore were detected.
- **Important Changes introduced:**
  - **Auto-calculation of distance between the source and destination**, based on the PIN codes.
  - **Blocking generation of multiple bills based on one invoice.** It would **permit extension of validity of the e-way bill** when the goods are in transit/movement.

About e-way bill

- **E-way bill or Electronic-way bill** is a document introduced under the GST regime that needs to be generated before transporting or shipping goods worth more than INR 50,000 within state or inter-state.
- **It** was **rolled out** on April 1, 2018, for moving goods from one state to another however for intra-state movement of goods it was rolled out in a phased manner.
- The **physical copy of e-way bill must be present with** the transporter or the person in charge of the conveyance and should include information such as goods, recipient, consignor and transporter.

- Upon generation of the E-Way Bill, on the common portal, **a unique E-Way Bill number called 'EBN'** is made available to the supplier, the recipient and the transporter.
- The portal has been developed by the **National Informatics Centre (NIC)**.

Easy to PICK – "UPSC Monthly Magazine" April- 2019

MUNICIPAL BONDS

In The News

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has allowed foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to invest in municipal bonds.

What are municipal bonds?

- They are debt securities issued by government or semi- government institutions who need funding for civic projects.
- Normally, they are issued and redeemed at par and carry a fixed interest rate.
- There are two types of municipal bonds
  1. General obligation bonds are issued for enhancing civic amenities such as water, sanitation, garbage disposal, etc. They generally are not backed by revenue from a specific project.
  2. Revenue bonds are issued for a specific purpose such as construction of a toll road or a toll bridge.
- Bangalore Municipal Corporation was the first urban local body (ULB) to issue Municipal Bond in India in 1997.

Need for Municipal Bonds

- **Improving urban infrastructure:** A High Powered Expert Committee (HPEC) on Urban Infrastructure estimated a requirement of Rs 3.92 million crores to provide urban services conforming to national benchmarks for urban infrastructure over a period 2012-31.
- **Alternative source of finance:** It may help corporations in raising funds without looking to State grants or agencies such as World Bank. Also, rating agency CARE estimates that large municipalities in India could raise Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500 crore every year considering municipal bond markets in US and

China touch around $3.7 trillion and in China $187 billion.

- **Attracting institutional investors:** They may ensure participation of large institutional investors such as pension funds and insurance companies by providing less risky avenues of investments to them

Challenges for Municipal Bond Market in India

- **Issues with municipal bond:** They are relatively less liquid instruments due to absence of secondary market for them, which results in investors having to hold municipal bonds until maturity.
- **Credit worthiness:** Earlier 94 cities which are part of Smart City Mission and Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), were rated by agencies such as CRISIL. Out of 94, 55 cities got investment grade rating (BBB- and above), while other 39 were rated below BBB-. **Reasons affecting credit worthiness include**:
  1. Thirteenth finance Commission data reflected that the **municipal tax to GDP ratio is a meagre 0.5 per cent** as compared to central tax to GDP ratio at 12 per cent.
  2. **Dependence of Municipal bodies for funds and unpredictability of transfers from State** governments to ULBs impact the outlook of financial position of ULBs.
- Except in a few big ULBs **the budgeting and accounting systems of ULBs still lack transparency** which leaves scope for misappropriation of assets and misleading picture of income and expenditure of ULBs.
- There may be **increased cases of default** when the debts on Municipalities increase too much as is happening in China currently.
- Further there are **no insolvency and**

bankruptcy laws and security enforcement laws applicable against municipalities unlike corporate sector.

Suggestions

- **Increasing the marketability** of the bonds by bringing them under EEE category (Where the initial investment, the interest earned and the maturity amount are all exempted from taxation) so that retail investors can be brought into the market.
- **Need to encourage establishment of bond markets:** Creating a secondary market for bond trading to tap long-term savings and allowing households or institutions to sell their long-term bonds before maturity.
- **Municipal bonds could be given the status of 'public securities'** so that they become admissible for statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) investment by commercial banks.
- Further urban infrastructure can be made part of **priority sector lending** to increase the demand for municipal bonds from institutional investors.
- Introduction of a debt recovery and bankruptcy law applicable to urban entities.
- Structural reforms at the governance level must also be undertaken to equip municipalities with the technical and financial expertise to generate adequate credit worthy municipal finance opportunities.

SEBI Guidelines on municipal bonds

As per the SEBI Regulations, 2015, a municipality or a Corporate Municipal Entity (CME) to issue Municipal Bonds should meet certain conditions:

- The ULB should **not have negative net worth** in any of three immediately preceding financial years.
- **Non-default:** The municipality should not have defaulted in repayment of debt securities or loans obtained from banks or financial institutions during the last 365 days.
- Municipalities need to contribute at least 20% of the project cost.
- **No willful defaulter:** The corporate municipal entity, its promoter, group company or director(s), should not have been named in the list of the willful defaulters published by the RBI or should not have defaulted on payment of interest or repayment of principal amount in respect of debt instruments issued by it to the public, if any.
- Municipal bonds should have **mandatory ratings above investment grade** for public issue.

DRAFT NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

In The News

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs released its first draft of the National Urban Policy Framework (NUFP), 2018.

Background:

- India has been urbanized at a fast pace in the last two decades, yet despite many efforts, India's cities are struggling to provide for their current population.
  - The **U.N. World Urbanization Prospects 2018** report states that about **34per cent India's population now lives in urban areas.**
  - This shows an urgent need to revisit the country's urban strategy.

- Building both on the international frameworks as well as the national missions, the National Urban Policy Framework (NUPF) outlines an integrated and coherent approach towards the future of urban planning in India.

- The NUPF is structured along two lines:
  (i) 10 core philosophical principles of urban planning, and
  (ii) These principles are then applied to ten functional areas of urban space and management.

- The framework provides recommendations on these functional areas.

10 Urban Sutras (Principles) of NUFP
- Cities are clusters of human capital
- Cities require a 'sense of place
- Not static Master Plans but evolving ecosystems
- Build for density
- Public spaces that encourage social interactions
- Multi-modal public transport backbone
- Environmental sustainability
- Financially self-reliant
- Cities require clear unified leadership

ASIAN TEA ALLIANCE

In The News

Recently **the Asian Tea Alliance (ATA),** a union of five tea-growing and consuming countries, was launched in Guizhou, China.

Details

- The forging of this alliance is an outcome of the signing of a memorandum of understanding in December 2018 between the **Indian Tea Association and China Tea Marketing Association**

- **Participating countries:** India, China, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Japan.
  It will work towards enhancing tea trade, promoting tea globally, and creating a sustainability agenda for the future of Asian tea.

Climatic Condition suitable for Tea
- Temperature: 210C to 290C is ideal for Tea. The lowest temperature for the growth of tea is 160C.
- Rainfall: 150-250 cm of rainfall is required for tea cultivation.
- Soil: Tea shrubs require fertile mountain soil mixed with lime and iron. The soil should be rich in humus.
- Land: Tea cultivation needs well drained land. Stagnation of water is not good for tea plants.

Climatic Condition suitable for Tea
- **Temperature:** 21^0C to 29^0C is ideal for Tea. The lowest temperature for the growth of tea is 16^0C.
- **Rainfall:** 150-250 cm of rainfall is required for tea cultivation.
- **Soil:** Tea shrubs require fertile mountain soil mixed with lime and iron. The soil should be rich in humus.
- **Land:** Tea cultivation needs well drained land. Stagnation of water is not good for tea plants.
- **Indian Tea Industry: At a Glance**
- As of 2018 India was the **second largest producer** of Tea in the world after China.
- India **stands fourth in terms of tea exports** after **Kenya, China and Sri Lanka** respectively.
- India is one of the **world's largest consumers of tea,** with about three-fourths of the country's total produce consumed locally.
- The **main tea-growing regions** are in **Northeast India (including Assam) and in north Bengal (Darjeeling district and the Dooars region) along with Nilgiris in south India.**

ARMED FORCES SPECIAL POWER ACT

In The News

After 32 years of imposition, Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) was partially withdrawn from three of the Arunachal Pradesh's nine districts by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

About AFSPA

- Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, enacted in the year 1958, **grants extra-ordinary powers and immunity to the armed forces** to bring back order in the "disturbed areas".
- Areas are considered disturbed "by reason of differences or disputes between members of different
- religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities".
- AFSPA **empowers the Governor of the State/Union territory** to issue an official notification declaring the state or a region within as a "disturbed area", after which the Centre can decide whether to send in armed forces.
- Some of these extra-ordinary powers include:
  - Fire upon anyone after giving warning who is acting against law & order in the disturbed area.
  - Arrest anyone without warrant.
  - Stop and search any vehicle or vessel.
  - Armed forces personnel have legal immunity for their actions.
- Presently AFSPA is enforced in the 5 states of North East (parts of Arunachal, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram & Nagaland) and J&K.
- AFSPA was removed from Tripura in 2015 and from Meghalaya in 2018.

Rationale behind imposition of AFSPA

- **Effective functioning:** It is essential for the armed forces to function effectively in insurgency and militancy affected areas.
- **Security of nation:** Provisions of this act have played a crucial role in maintaining law and order in disturbed areas. Thus, protecting **sovereignty and security of the nation**.
- **Protection of member of armed forces:** It is crucial to empower members of armed forces who **constantly face threat** to their lives at the hands of insurgents and militants. Its withdrawal would result in **poor morale**.
  - Extra-ordinary powers are also necessary as the armed forces **face asymmetric warfare** involving raids, ambushes, mines and explosive devices, sabotage etc.

Arguments against AFSPA

- It has been alleged that immunity granted by the act has led the armed forces to misuse the powers and commit offences like enforced disappearances, fake encounters and sexual assault.
- It leads to suspension of fundamental rights and liberties guaranteed to the citizens by the constitution. Thus, it weakens democracy.
- People's disillusionment with democratic setup is exploited by secessionists and terror sympathasizers, which leads to more violence & more counter violence creating a vicious cycle.
- Critics argue that this act has failed in its objective of restoring normalcy in disturbed areas although being in existence for about 50 years.
- Human rights violations in AFSPA areas are not inquired into and followed by adequate action. Thus, it is against the principle of natural justice.
- Justice Verma committee (on offenses against women in conflict areas) said AFSPA legitimizes impunity for sexual

violence E.g. Kunan Poshpora incident; Thangjam Manorama case in Manipur

- Justice Santosh Hegde Committee to investigate fake encounters in Manipur described it as a "symbol of oppression"
- Justice Jeevan Reddy Committee recommended removal of absolute immunity under AFSPA.

Way Forward

- It needs to be emphasized that **human rights compliance and operational effectiveness are not contrarian requirements**. In fact, adherence to human rights norms and principles strengthens the counter insurgency capability of a force.
- Protection for the armed forces must be accompanied by provisions that ensure responsibility and accountability, within the parameters of law. It is for this reason that robust safeguards need to be incorporated in the existing or any new law.
- The terms like "disturbed", "dangerous" and "land forces" need to be clearly defined to ensure greater clarity.
- Greater transparency in communicating the status of existing cases to include its display on the army and government's web sites.
- Proactive feedback to petitioners on action taken by the government in past human rights cases.

INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE

In The News

- Recently, Bolivia became the 74th country to sign the framework agreement of the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**.
- India is reaching out to the **'Lithium Triangle'** in South America which consists of Chile, Argentina and Bolivia.
- Khanij Bidesh India Ltd., (KABIL) consortium of three PSU companies including: National Aluminum Company (NALCO), Hindustan Copper (HCL) and Mineral Exploration Corp Ltd., (MECL) visited these countries recently

About ISA:

- It is an initiative jointly launched by India and France in 2015
- on the sidelines of COP-21 of UNFCCC in Paris.
- It was officially established on 6 December 2017, on the entry into force of the Framework Agreement.
- The membership is open to those solar resource-rich States, which lie fully or partially between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn, and are members of the United Nations.
  - The First Assembly at Delhi adopted the proposal made by India to expand the scope of membership of the ISA to all members of United Nations. This has not yet entered into force.
- Through this initiative, the countries share the collective ambition:
  - to address obstacles that stand in the way of rapid and massive scale-up of solar energy;
  - to undertake innovative and concerted efforts for reducing the cost of finance and cost of technology for immediate deployment of competitive solar generation; and
  - to mobilise more than 1000 Billion US Dollars of investments by 2030.
  - accelerate the development and deployment of over 1,000GW of solar generation capacity in member countries.
- The ISA has established five key programmes of action:
  - scaling up solar applications for agricultural use
  - scaling up solar mini-grids
  - scaling up solar rooftop
  - scaling up solar e-mobility and storage
- All costs relating to the running of the ISA will be funded through voluntary contributions of member-countries, partner countries, partner organisations and Strategic Partners.
- Funding under ISA is also been exempted to be treated as a foreign source of funding for Indian NGOs and other entities under the FCRA.
- It is a first treaty based international intergovernmental organization headquartered in India.
- The ISA Secretariat has launched a Solar Technology Application and Resource – Centre (iSTAR-C) to support capacity building efforts in the ISA member

countries.

- The ISA Solar Award (Kalpana Chawla Solar Award) to recognize solar scientists doing extraordinary work across ISA member countries.

- ISA has also been developing a Common Risk Mitigating Mechanism (CRMM) for de-risking and reducing the financial cost of solar projects in the ISA member countries.

Significance of ISA
- **Ensure Energy Security**
- **Integration of Global South and Global North**
- To **Solve Global Energy Poverty** as according to International Energy Association (IEA), there are more than "600 million people without access to electricity" in **Sub-Saharan Africa.**
- Creation of an **Alternative Electricity Energy Grid Based** on solar energy among various countries, to overcome a financial constraint in tapping solar energy.

RENEWABLE ENERGY CERTIFICATE

In The News

Recently, the Renewable Energy (RE) companies have moved the Delhi High Court, seeking an exemption for Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) under the goods and services tax (GST).

About Carbon Market in India

- In a bid to promote renewable energy market in India, the Government of India has framed policies under the Electricity Act, 2003 and the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).
- Consequently, India currently has two carbon market- based trading schemes in place-
  - o The Perform, Achieve & Trade (PAT), which is designed to accelerate implementation of cost-effective measures in energy efficiency in large energy-intensive industries.
  - o The Renewable Energy Certificate (REC), which designed to promote generation of renewable energy (RE) within the country.

Renewable Energy Certificates

- A Renewable Energy Certificate (REC) is a market-based instrument that certifies the bearer owns one megawatt-hour (MWh) of electricity generated from a renewable energy resource.
- Once the power provider has fed the energy into the grid, the REC they receive can be sold in the open market as a commodity. A pan-India market has been created for trading in RECs through two Power Exchanges namely, Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) and Power Exchange of India (PXIL).
- The price of RECs is determined by market demand, and contained between the 'floor price' and 'forbearance price' specified by the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC). These tariffs are reviewed periodically to reflect the average tariffs quoted in the latest RE Power Purchase Agreement (PPA).

- There is a concentration of RE potential in a few states, which means that the same level of Renewable Purchase Obligation compliance cannot be expected from all states. These leads to following implications-
- The low potential states have to resort to expensive cross-border procurement, accompanied with many regulatory hurdles and additional charges.
- Also, the surplus states with abundant renewable resources cannot absorb renewable power at preferential tariff. The State distribution companies (DISCOMS) with large shares of subsidised consumers end up bearing disproportionately high costs.
- So, this mechanism provides a **means to address the dispersed availability of renewable energy sources across various States in the Country**.

Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO)

- Launched in 2010, RPOs make it obligatory for distribution companies, open-access consumers and captive power producers to meet part of their energy needs through green energy.
- Pre-defined RPO target for all states currently ranges from 3 per cent to 10 per cent of the total energy requirement of the states. RPO is divided in two parts- solar RPO and non-solar RPO.
- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) introduced incremental annual RPO targets amounting to 21 per cent in 2022.

Other Benefits of REC Market

- **Promotion of stand-alone systems**- Since trade in RECs do not require transmission of electricity, the additional revenue from sale of RECs could help to improve viability of

standalone systems. In usual scenario it may not be economical to transmit electricity from such regions.

- **Competition in Electricity Market:** Separating the RECs from electrical energy, allows near **cost effective renewable energy** to participate in the power exchange in a competitive manner. Revenue from RECs may be helpful to address the cost disadvantage for such renewable energy technologies.
- **Attract Investment**: REC market helps provide appropriate opportunities for development of renewable energy based electricity generation.
- **Challenges of REC Market**

- **Voluntary in nature-** hence, creating a demand for RECs is a challenging task which leads to a supply- demand mismatch in the market.
- **Lack of awareness-** among corporates, individuals and NGOs for the RECs.
- **Regulatory Challenges-** The obligated entities prefer to continue to buy renewable power directly rather than using RECs, to comply with their RPOs owing to uncertainties in trading of RECs.
- **Low Solar REC trading-** which was affected following Central Electricity Regulatory Commission's (CERC) decision to reduce the floor and ceiling price of solar and non-solar RECs in March 2017.

Way Forward

- The REC mechanism holds potential in promoting renewable sources of energy and development of market in electricity, leading to the sustainable development of the country. It also provides avenue for voluntary buyers to go green and contribute to the sustainable development of the country.
- There is a need to sensitize voluntary buyers like industries and corporate

about their contribution to green energy & environment.
- Capacity building of all the stakeholders should be done including the state agencies and project developers.

PARAMETER	PAT	REC
NODAL BODY	Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under the aegis of the Ministry of Power (MOP)	Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)
TIMEFRAME	Launched in 2012; Currently in its 3rd Cycle, with each cycle being for 3 year	Launched in 2010; no definite cycle designed, but implementation is designed for annual cycles based on notification of RPOs.
METRIC	Energy Saving Certificates (ESCert) are measured in ton of oil equivalent (TOE) value; 1 ESCent- 1 TOE sav	REC Certificates are measured in Mwh value; 1 REC - 1 MWh
COVERAGE	Till date, 11 energy-intensive sectors have been notified for PAT- Aluminum, Cement, Chlor- Alkali, Fertilizer, Iron & Steel, Paper & Pulp, Thermal Power Plants, Textile, Railways, Refineries & Electricity Distribution Companies	2 categories of RECs; solar RECs and non-solar RECs. The following categories are included: Electricity distributors /suppliers such as Distribution Licensees, Captive Consumers, Open Access users
REGULATORY BODY	Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC)	Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC)
REGISTRY	Power System Operation Corporation Limited (POSOCO)	Power System Operation Corporation Limited (POSOCO)
TRADING PLATFORM	Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) and Power Exchange India Limited (PXIL)	Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) and Power Exchange India Limited (PXIL)

FLY ASH UTILISATION

In The News

- Various fly ash brick manufacturing units in the country have been closed due to difficulty in procurement of fly ash.
- Background
- Coal/Lignite based Thermal Power Generation has been the backbone of power capacity addition in the country. Indian coal is of low grade with ash content of the order of 30-45 % in comparison to imported coals, which have low ash content of the order of 10-15%.
- Large quantity of ash is, thus being generated at coal/lignite based Thermal Power Stations in the country, which not only requires large area of precious land for its disposal but is also one of the sources of pollution of both air and water.
- Hence, the Government of India and some states have mandated compulsory guidelines for utilization of Fly Ash.
- However, the Fly Ash Users have alleged that the generators have created artificial shortage of Fly Ash owing to following reasons-
  - o There is cartelization among thermal power plants in terms of supply of fly ash.
  - o Priority is given to road or other project contractors owing to "election compulsions" during the election time.

Fly ash
- It is a fine powder, which is the by-product of burning coal in thermal power plants.
- **Composition:** Fly ash includes substantial amounts of oxides of silica, aluminum and calcium. Element like Arsenic, Boron, Chromium, lead etc. are also found in trace concentrations.

Government Measures to promote Fly Ash Utilization

- Central Electricity Authority (CEA) on behalf of Ministry of Power has been monitoring since 1996-97 the fly ash generation and its utilization in the country at coal/ lignite based thermal power stations.
- Notifications by Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change on Fly Ash Utilization, with the latest coming in 2016 with following features-
  - o Mandatory uploading of details of fly ash available on Thermal Power Station's (TPS) website and updating of stock position at least once in every month;
  - o Increase in mandatory jurisdiction of area of application from 100 km to 300 km;
  - o Cost of transportation of fly ash to be borne entirely by TPS up to 100 km and equally shared between user and TPS for more than 100 km and up to 300 km;
  - o Mandatory use of fly ash based products in all Government schemes or programmes e.g. Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, etc
- Another government notification, released in February 2019 states that-
  - o The existing red clay brick kilns located within 300 km shall be converted into fly ash-based bricks or blocks or tiles manufacturing unit within one year from the date of publication of this notification.
  - o In order to encourage the conversion, TPS should provide fly ash at the rate of Re 1 per tonne and bear the full transportation cost up to 300 km to such units.

- Last year, the Prime Minister's Office had asked for multiplying the fly ash usage "by 10 times" in a time-bound manner in the country.

Advantages of Fly Ash Utilization
- Prevent Contamination of Water Resources- by preventing contamination of surface water through erosion, runoff, airborne particles landing on the water surface; of ground water moving into surface waters, flooding drainage, or discharge from a coal ash pond.
- Prevents Soil Erosion- Helps restrict usage of topsoil for manufacturing of bricks.
- Used in variety of construction works- Fly ash is a proven resource material for many applications of construction industries and currently is being utilized in manufacturing of portland cement, bricks/blocks/tiles manufacturing, road embankment construction and low-lying area development, etc. Flyash bricks have been found to show better strength.
- Used in Agriculture- as an agent for acidic soils, as soil conditioner — improving upon some important physio-chemical properties of the soil such as hydraulic conductivity, bulk density, porosity, water holding capacity, etc.

Way Forward
- Policy support: To promote the usage of fly ash, state and local governments should issue preferential policies that encourage its recycling, such as the preferential purchase of recycled fly ash products and reduction of the overall effective tax.
- Identifying prospective users: Areas having large prospective of fly ash utilization needs to be discovered for increasing the overall utilization of fly ash in India.
- Technological enhancements: Renovation and modernization of coal/lignite based Thermal Power Stations need to include the technological advancement required

to ensure development of dry fly ash.
- Creating a market: Renovation and modernization should also include a marketing strategy for the development of flyash based industries and making available fly ash and fly-ash based building products in the nearby markets.
- Spreading awareness: The road contractors and construction engineers need to know the benefits of using fly ash in construction.
- **Industry-Academia Partnership:** There is need to encourage industry-institute interaction for entrepreneur development, creating awareness and organizing training workshops.
  - New emerging areas such as Light Weight Aggregates and Geo-polymers, Coal Beneficiation Blending and Washing, etc. needs to focus for higher utilization of fly ash in the country.
  - In view of large quantity of fly ash generation, utilization of fly ash may be introduced as construction material in academic curriculum of Engineering, Architecture, Mining, Agriculture etc.

Other Measures taken by Government
- ASH TRACK- mobile application that gives plant-wise, utility-wise and State-wise ash utilization status in the country.
- Maharashtra- became the 1st state to adopt the fly ash utilization policy.
- Odisha has ordered the plants to subsidize the transport costs.
- NTPC in collaboration with Institutes like IIT-Delhi and IIT-Kanpur has initiated manufacturing of pre-stressed railway concrete sleepers.

BHARAT STAGE NORMS

In The News

Supply of Bharat Stage-VI grade petrol and diesel has begun in cities adjoining the national capital recently. Delhi in April 2018 became the first city in the country to leapfrog from BS-IV grade petrol and diesel to BS-VI fuels.

Bharat Stage Emission Norms

- These are norms instituted by the government to regulate the output of air pollutants from internal combustion engine equipment, including motor vehicles.
- To bring them into force, the Central Pollution Control Board sets timelines and standards which have to be followed by automakers.
- BS norms are based on European emission norms which, for example, are referred to in a similar manner like 'Euro 4' and 'Euro 6'.

Major Differences in BS VI

- **Selective Catalytic Reduction Technology-** It reduces oxides of nitrogen by injecting an aqueous urea solution into the system. Hence, NOx from diesel cars can be brought down by nearly 70%. In the petrol cars, they can be reduced by 25%.
- **Sulphur Content-** While the BS-IV fuels contain 50 parts per million (ppm) sulphur, the BS-VI grade fuel only has 10 ppm sulphur content.
- **Particulate Matter-** in diesel cars will be reduced by 80%.
- **Mandatory on-board diagnostics (OBD)-** which inform the vehicle owner or the repair technician about how efficient the systems in the vehicles are.
- **RDE (Real Driving Emission)** will be introduced for the first time that will measure the emission in real-world conditions and not just under test conditions.

About Bharat Stage Norms

- India introduced emission norms in 1991 and by 1996 most vehicle manufacturers had to incorporate technology upgrades like catalytic converters to cut exhaust emissions.
- The Supreme Court in 1999 made Centre notify Bharat Stage-I (BIS 2000) and Bharat Stage-II norms, broadly equivalent to Euro I and Euro II respectively.
- In 2014, Saumitra Chaudhary committee gave recommendations on Auto Fuel Vision Policy 2025 which had recommended implementation of BS-IV (2017), BS-V (2019) and BS-VI (2024) standards.
- In **2016**, the Union Government announced that the country would skip the BS-V norms altogether and adopt BS-VI norms by 2020.
- **Currently, BS IV norms have been enforced across the country since April 2017.** However, recently the Supreme Court of India ordered barring of sale of **Bharat Stage IV vehicles** from April 1, 2020.

Significance

- **Vehicular emission** is a major contributor to the worsening air quality of Indian cities. Emission of NOx, SO2, CO2 and particulate matter is taking a toll on people's health. In cities like Delhi, the PM2.5 level is more than 6 times the prescribed levels by WHO. These new norms will help reduce these vehicular pollution significantly.
- At the BS-VI level, the gap maintained between emissions from diesel and petrol, wherein diesel cars are allowed to emit more particulate matter and nitrogen oxide, narrows.

Challenges

- **Huge Cost for automakers-**
  - Moving to BS-VI directly will **require significant technological upgrades for which auto companies may have to invest heavily**.

- o Once the research and development is over, the task of setting up full-scale production comes up.
- Automakers were supposed to make their models BS IV compliant by April 1, 2017.While some automakers have met the targets and updated their products, there is a huge stock of vehicles left to be sold into the market. As per the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), the companies were holding stock of around 8.24 lakh such vehicles.
- **Timeframe-** Normally it takes 4 years to upgrade and here the companies have to skip the BS V altogether and upgrade directly to BS VI. **Smaller bonnet cars** of India may not be able to imbibe Diesel Particulate Filter in them which was supposed to be a **part of BS-V upgrade**.
- **Impact on buyers-** This can have the effect of making cars and other vehicles more expensive.
- Directly aping the Euro norms is problematic, considering that **driving conditions** in India are different from Europe.
- Further, improving the emission will not alone solve the problem of vehicular pollution as the number of **vehicles is disproportionately high** in Indian cities.

Way Forward

- A successful transition to BS-VI norms will be a landmark event for the country and it must be taken in a mission mode approach by all the stakeholders.
- Governments should incentivize the automobile manufacturers and partner the oil companies to manage this transition.

INDOOR AIR POLLUTION

In The New

A recent study has pointed out that **household emissions** remained one of the major factors behind air pollution.

Background

- **Indoor air pollution** refers to the degradation in physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of air in the indoor environment within a home, building, or an institution or commercial facility.
- As per the analysis carried out by researchers from IIT Delhi in collaboration with other universities, it was found that the use of **firewood, kerosene and coal** in the households contributed to about **40% of the PM pollution in the Gangetic basin districts.** This number varied across the country but household emissions remained one of the major culprits behind air pollution.
- The results showed that by eliminating household emissions the average outdoor air pollution levels could be reduced and brought within the national ambient air quality standards.

Major Causes of Indoor Air Pollution

- Use of Open Fires, unsafe fuels or combustion of biomass fuels, coal and kerosene.
- Gas stoves or badly installed wood-burning units
- Construction of more tightly sealed buildings- which accumulate more pollutants. It also leads to poor ventilation in houses, which do not allow cross ventilation of air in the indoors.
- Asbestos released from the construction material- is a big contributor to air contamination indoors. Increased use of synthetic material now days in construction has resulted in emission of toxins in the indoor air. Paints, coatings and tiles are main sources of asbestos.
- Volatile Organic Compounds- which originate mainly from solvents and chemicals. The main indoor sources are perfumes, hair sprays, furniture polish, glues, air fresheners, moth repellents, wood preservatives, and many other products used in the house.
- Tobacco Smoke- generates a wide range of harmful chemicals.
- Biological Pollution- which include pollen from plants, mite, hair from pets, fungi, parasites, and some bacteria.
- Formaldehyde- is a gas that comes mainly from carpets, particle boards, and insulation foam.

Impact of Indoor Air Pollution

- **On Health-** Indoor air pollution increases the potential of health risks such as respiratory illness, acute respiratory tract infection, stillbirth, lung cancer, leukemia etc. Indoor air pollution claims a million lives every year in India alone
- **On Women, Aged and Young Children-** they are the most affected, as they spend the majority of their time in the home.
- **On Cognitive abilities of children-** Indoor air pollution significantly affects problem solving, mathematical abilities, IQ and learning capabilities in children.
- **On Overall Productivity-** as it aids in following lifestyle changes like fatigue, dizziness, allergies, hypersensitivity coughing, sinus congestion etc.

Measures to reduce indoor emissions

- **Public Awareness-** spreading awareness among people about the issue and the serious threat it poses to their health and wellbeing**.**
- **Change in pattern of fuel use-** including

electricity, natural gas, LPG in urban areas; advanced biomass cooking, LPG and heating stoves in rural areas; substitution of coal by briquettes.

- **Energy efficiency for households-** Use incentives to improve the energy efficiency of household appliances, buildings, lighting, heating and cooling; encourage roof-top solar installations.
- **Improved Ventilation-** During construction of a house, importance should be given to adequate ventilation; for poorly ventilated houses, measures such as a window above the cooking stove and cross ventilation though doors should be instituted.
- **Inter-sectoral Coordination and Global Initiative-** Committed efforts between different sectors concerned with health, energy, environment, housing, and rural development.
- **Green Roofs-** that are planted with vegetation -- may improve the indoor air quality of commercial buildings.

Way Forward

- Tackling indoor air pollution and providing universal access to clean household energy is a great opportunity to improve health, reduce poverty, and protect the environment; thus, contributing significantly to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Government Measures taken for improving Indoor Air Quality
- **National Programme for Improved Chulhas**
- **National Biomass Cookstoves Initiative**
- **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana**
- **Neerdhur-** a novel multi-fuel domestic cooking stove, that apart from wood, other fuel like coal, cow dung and agricultural residue can also be used in it. It also saves 50% fuel and has high thermal efficiency.

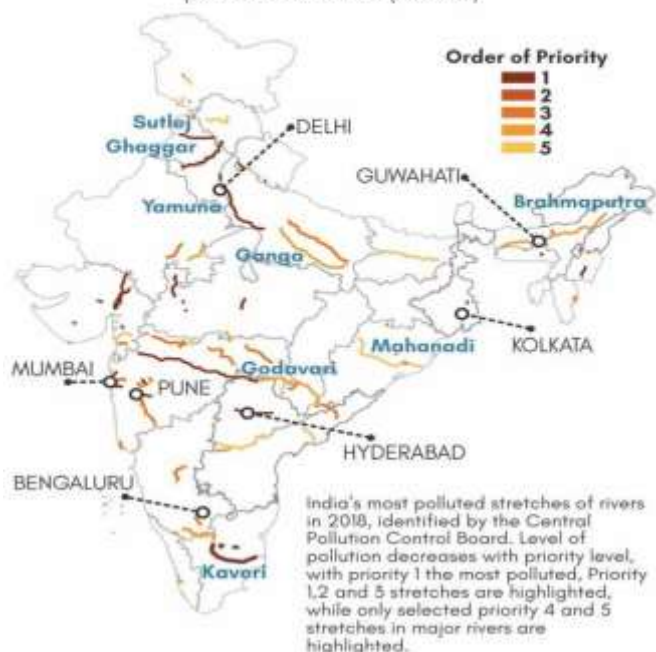# RIVER POLLUTION

In The News

- Recently, National Green Tribunal (NGT) has appointed a Central Monitoring Committee to prepare and enforce a national plan for reducing polluted river stretches across the country.
- The committee would comprise of:
  - representative of NITI Aayog;
  - secretaries of Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Urban Development and Ministry of Environment;
  - the director general of National Mission for Clean Ganga and
  - the Chairman of Central Pollution Control Board.
- The committee would also co-ordinate with the River Rejuvenation Committees of the states and oversee the execution of the action plans, taking into account the timelines, budgetary mechanism and other factors.
- CPCB will be nodal authority at national level, while Chief secretaries of states will be the nodal agency at state level.

INDIA'S MOST POLLUTED RIVER STRETCHES

Number of polluted stretches (Priority 1 indicates most polluted and 5 least polluted)

Order of Priority
1
2
3
4
5

India's most polluted stretches of rivers in 2018, identified by the Central Pollution Control Board. Level of pollution decreases with priority level, with priority 1 the most polluted, Priority 1,2 and 5 stretches are highlighted, while only selected priority 4 and 5 stretches in major rivers are highlighted.

River pollution in India

- According to an assessment by the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in 2018,** there were **351 polluted river stretches (302 in 2015)** in the country, with 45 of them being critically polluted.
  - The CPCB considers a BOD less than 3 mg/l as an **indicator of a healthy river**.
  - Maharashtra, Assam and Gujarat account for 117 of the 351 polluted river stretches.
  - The increase in numbers reflected **higher pollution levels** and **increase in water quality monitoring stations.**
- A report by Central Water Commission has highlighted that 42 rivers in India have at least two toxic heavy metals in quantities beyond the permissible limit. Ganga was found to be polluted with five heavy metals— chromium, copper, nickel, lead and iron.

Sources of river pollution:

- **Point source pollution:** It refers to the pollution entering the water way through a discrete conveyance like pipes, channels etc., from source such as industry.
- **Non- point source pollution:** It refers to the pollution that does not enter the water way through a discrete source but is accumulative in nature. These pollutants are:
  - **Natural contaminants** such as dry leaves, dead insects and animals, bird droppings etc.
  - **Agricultural contaminants** such as agricultural runoff containing fertilizers, pesticides etc.
  - **Industrial contaminants** such as industrial runoff containing industrial wastes.
  - **Microbial contaminants** such as Faecal & Total Coliform, especially during Cultural Congregation like Kumb in India.
  - **Human added contaminants**

such as organic matter through domestic discharges.

Ways to Abate River Pollution

- The enforcement towards **recycling and reuse of waste water** after treatment should be strictly implemented.
- The drains shall discharge sufficiently treated effluent in proportion to self-cleaning capacity of rivers.
- **Solid waste management** should also be clearly supported through policy initiatives and state of art technology for converting solid waste into useful resources.
- **Suitable bioremediation measures** may be taken on drains of small towns and STPs may be installed at all big cities so that they shall not discharge untreated water directly to the river.
- **Widespread and intense awareness programme** for the common public should be undertaken to inform them about the serious implications of river pollution.
- Provide sufficient water in the river for **ecological flow and dilution**. This can be made possible by:
  o Constructing storage structures at the upstream which can continuously release discharge for meeting dilution requirements.
  o Improving water use efficiency so that less diversion of water is needed for consumptive usage.

Steps taken to control river pollution

- **National River Conservation Plan:** to reduce the pollution load in rivers through implementation of various pollution abatement works, thereby improving their water quality.
- **National Water Monitoring Programme (NWMP):** Under it, CPCB monitors the water quality of both surface and ground water through a network of monitoring stations in the country.
- **Namami Gange programme for** effective abatement of pollution, conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga
- In the **interim budget 2019-2020,** Government's unveiled **vision for 2030** which include clean rivers, with safe drinking water to all Indians, sustaining and nourishing life and efficient use of water in irrigation using micro-irrigation techniques.

- To assess the efficacy of river cleaning programmes, the CPCB has been ordered by NGT to launch a **nationwide programme on biodiversity** monitoring and **indexing of the rivers.**
- NGT has also directed MoEFCCC to consider giving **environmental awards** to institutions and states that comply with orders and ensure a reduction in pollution.

About NGT

- It has been established in 2010 under the **National Green Tribunal Act** 2010.
- It has been established for **effective and expeditious disposal** of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.
- The Tribunal is not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, and is **guided by principles of natural justice.**
- It adjudicates matters relating to following Acts-
  o Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
  o Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
  o Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
  o The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991
  o Forest Conservation Act
  o Biological Diversity Act

Related Information
Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)

- It is the **statutory** organization constituted under the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.**
- Further, CPCB was entrusted with the powers and functions under the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.**
- It functions under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.**

PEATLANDS

In The News

- Recently, **United Nations Environment Assembly** in Nairobi, Kenya, has adopted its **first ever resolution on peatlands.**

- The adoption of the **global resolution on the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Peatlands** urges member States and other stakeholders to give greater emphasis to the conservation, sustainable management and restoration of peatlands worldwide.

- However, it **is not legally binding.**

What are Peats?

- Peats are a **heterogeneous mixture of plant material** (vascular plants, mosses and humus) that had accumulated in a **water-saturated area** and are only **partially decomposed** due to absence of oxygen.

- The natural areas covered by peat are called peatlands. Various types of peat are – swamp forests, fens, bogs or mires.

- They are **mostly found in permafrost regions** towards the poles and at high altitudes, **in coastal areas**, beneath **tropical rainforest and in boreal forests**. **Countries with largest peatland areas are** – Russia, Canada, Indonesia, USA, Finland etc.

- Several multilateral conventions take peatland into consideration such as UNFCCC, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, Convention on Biodiversity and United Nation Convention to Combat Desertification.

  o **Brazzaville Declaration:** was signed to promote better management and conservation of Cuvette Centrale Region in Congo Basin in the backdrop of the 3rd Conference of Partners of the Global Peatlands Initiative (GPI), 2018.

  o **Global Peatlands Initiative:** is an effort by leading experts and institutions to save peatlands as the world's largest terrestrial organic carbon stock and to prevent it being emitted into the atmosphere. It is led by UN Environment.

Importance of Peatland

- **Carbon Storage**: Although they cover less than 3% of the global surface, estimates suggest that peatlands

- contain twice as much carbon as in the world's forest.

- **Supporting water cycle:** They regulate water flow, exert a cooling effect during hot periods through evaporation and cloud formation, play an important role in retention of pollutants and nutrients and water purification, counteract eutrophication of water bodies and also prevent intrusion of salt water.

- **Supporting unique and critically threatened biodiversity**: The tropical peatlands are home to a number of endangered species, including Sumatran tigers, gorillas and orangutans.

- **Supporting livelihood**: They are source of berries, mushrooms and medicinal plants in boreal and temperate regions and of non-timber forest products in tropical regions. Even the peat itself is used as fuel.

- **As a cultural landscape and archive:** They hold some of the most evocative archeological discoveries of last decades such as 4th millennium BCE footpath 'sweet tracks'. They also record environmental changes

Threats to Peatlands

- Drainage for agriculture: Drained peatlands are mainly used for agriculture and forestry, and peat is extracted for horticulture and energy production. CO_2 emissions from drained peatlands are estimated at 1.3 gigatonnes of CO_2 annually. This is equivalent to 5.6% of global anthropogenic CO_2 emissions.

- Commercial Forestry: It is the second greatest cause of land-use changes in peatland

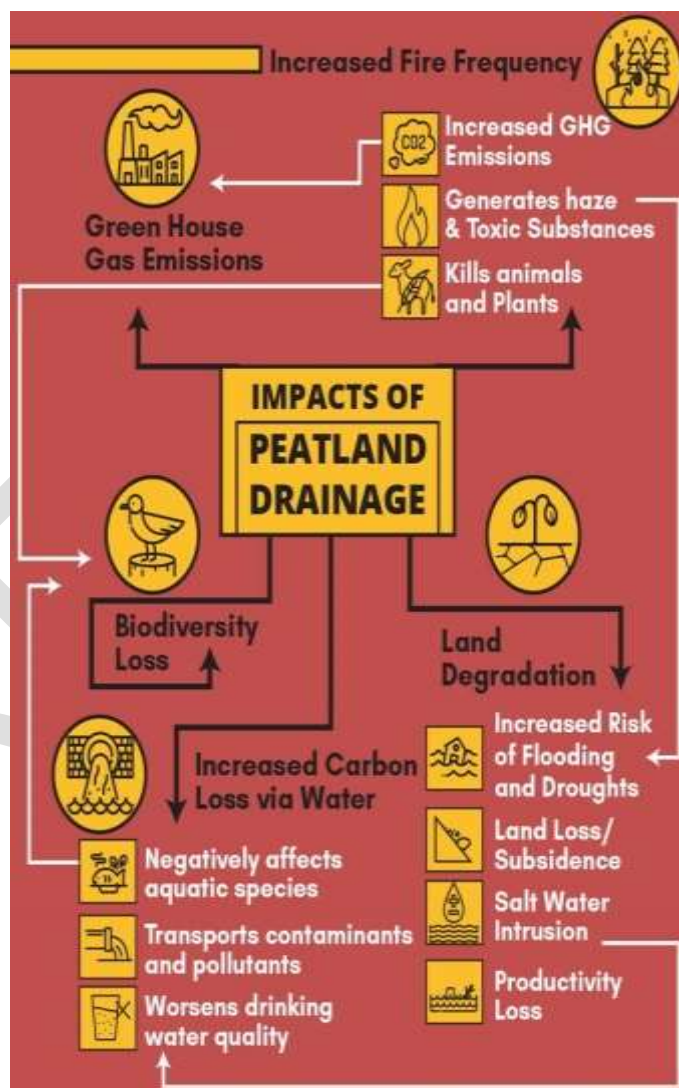mostly prevalent in Scandinavian countries, UK, Russia, South-East Asia etc.

- Peat extraction and usage: Peat as a source of energy is being used on a large scale by households. It is also used as raw material for producing growing media for professional horticulture and for home gardening.
- Infrastructure Development: Conversion of peatlands in coastal areas to meet the urban development, waste disposal needs, development of roads and other infrastructure.

Way forward

- A landscape approach is vital and good practices in peatland management and restoration must be shared and implemented across all peatland landscapes to save these threatened ecosystems and their services to people.
- Rewetting: It is an essential step in the restoration of Peatlands as they rely on waterlogged conditions for their survival.
- Plaudiculture and sustainable management techniques: It is a practice of crop production on wet soils, predominantly in peatlands. Other sustainable techniques could be cultivation of fish or pursuit of ecotourism.
- Legal and Fiscal environment and Polices: Various policies that have been put in place both at global as well domestic levels should be implemented properly.
- Local communities should receive support to sustainably manage their peatlands by preserving traditional non-destructive uses and introducing innovative management alternatives.
- Creating a market to finance peatland management: Using Funding mechanism such as Green Bonds, private capital (equity and debt), funding from government sources etc.
- Institutional framework for coordinated action: Integrated global partnerships should be established.
- Restricting new agriculture & industrial activities that threaten their long-term viability and developing long-term land use policies which favour conservation and protection of peatlands.
- Capacity building: Focused action is required with support from developed countries for capacity building, outreach and awareness raising.

GLOBAL ASSESSMENT REPORT ON BIODIVERSITY & ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

In The News

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) released its global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Details

- It's a first-of-its-kind report released by the IPBES. which is being hailed as the most comprehensive scientific evaluation ever made of the state of our nature, and gives a detailed account of health of the species that inhabit this earth.

- According to the report, the rate of global change in nature during the past 50 years is unprecedented in human history. The direct drivers of change in nature with the largest global impact have been (starting with those with most impact): changes in land and sea use; direct exploitation of organisms; climate change; pollution; and invasion of alien species. These five direct drivers result from an array of underlying causes − the indirect drivers of change.

- It says that 75% of Earth's land surface and 66% marine environments have been "significantly altered", and that "over 85%" of wetland area had been lost.

- However, on an average, these trends were less severe on areas controlled or managed by indigenous people and local communities.

About IPBES
- It is an indeendent intergovernmental body, established by member States in 2012.
- India is a member.
- The objective of IPBES is to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long- term human well-being and sustainable development.
- It is very similar in composition and functioning to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
- Like IPCC, IPBES does not produce any new science, it only evaluates existing scientific knowledge to make assessments and projections.

ECOLOGICAL SANITATION

In The News

There have been calls for greater adoption of Ecological Sanitation toilets under the Swatchh Bharat Abhiyan.

About Ecological Sanitation (Ecosan)

- Ecosan is a concept that treats various types of waste generated by humans as a resource, which can be safely collected, treated and reused to prevent pollution of water bodies and the environment. E.g. Ecosan toilets, compost pit, biogas plants, reed-beds for treatment of wastewater.
- The underlying aim is to close (local) nutrient and water cycles with as less expenditure on material and energy as possible to contribute to a sustainable development.
- The Ecosan is a dry toilet built on a raised platform, listed in the Swachh Bharat Mission's guidelines as suitable for dry areas with scarce water supply, coastal and flood-prone areas with high water tables, and rocky areas. But it has very few takers, due to the Swachh Bharat Mission's focus on pit toilets.
- In Ecosan Toilets, human excreta, urine and wash water are separated through specially designed toilet seats unlike the conventional water closets where all these are collected together.

Challenges Faced
- Lack of Participation
- Lack of Understanding
- Defective materials and workmanship
- Improper maintenance

ANIMAL CRUELTY ISSUES NOW UNDER FARM MINISTERY

In The News

Recently the Central Government has transferred **administrative control** and matters concerning **cow shelters, Prevention of cruelty to animals and its governing laws,** from MoEF&CC to Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare.

Background

- The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA) was originally administered by the **Ministry of Agriculture** after being enacted in 1960.
- It was transferred to the Ministry of Environment later when the government felt that **the law that regulates animal agriculture should be kept at an arm's length distance from the ministry whose sole purpose is to increase production**.
- Officials have called this measure a matter of administrative convenience as it has already been dealing with livestock issues such as loss of livestock due to natural calamities etc.

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960

- It was enacted to prevent the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals and to amend the laws relating to the prevention of cruelty to animals.
- The Animal Welfare Board of India was formed under this Act.
- Section 22 of the PCA Act restricts the exhibition and training of performing animals - as per the list maintained by the central government.
- MoEF published Gazette notifications under the PCA Act, in 2017, to regulate dog breeders, animal markets, and aquarium and pet fish shop owners.
- Central Government also brought out Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Market) Rules, 2017 which imposes ban of sale of cattle in animal markets for the purpose of slaughter.

Animal Welfare Board of India
- It is headquartered in **Haryana**.
- **Rukmini Devi Arundale** was instrumental in setting up the board and was its first chairman.
- It is generally chaired by a senior government official.
- The Board **oversees Animal Welfare Organisations (AWOs)** by granting recognition to them if they meet its guidelines.
- **Other functions include: Providing** financial assistance to recognised AWOs, **prescribing** changes to animal welfare laws and rules, **raising** awareness among the public.

UNESCO GLOBAL GEO-PARKS

In The News

Geological Survey of India (GSI) chose heritage locations in Maharashtra and Karnataka for UNESCO Global Geopark Network site status.

What is UNESCO Global Geopark Network Status?

- UNESCO Global Geoparks are **single, unified geographical** areas where sites and landscapes of international **geological significance** are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development.
- It aims to **enhance awareness and understanding** of key issues facing society, such as using our earth's resources sustainably, mitigating the effects of climate change and reducing natural disasters-related risks.
- The **Global Geoparks Network** (GGN) is a legally constituted not-for-profit organisation. Its membership is obligatory for UNESCO Global Geoparks.
- An aspiring Global Geopark must have a dedicated website, a corporate identity, comprehensive management plan, protection plans, finance, and partnerships for it to be accepted.
- At present, there are about 140 UNESCO Global Geoparks in 38 countries. As of now there is **no geo-heritage site from India** which is included under UNESCO Geopark Network.

About the sites chosen

- **St. Mary's Island and Malpe Beach in Karnataka** is a hexagonal **mosaic of basaltic rocks** in an island off Udupi. It is estimated to be an **88-million-yearold** formation that goes back to a time when Greater India broke away from Madagascar and was declared a national geo-heritage site in 1975.

- **Lonar Lake in Maharashtra** is the **world's oldest meteoric crater** formed around 50,000 years ago and the only one formed in basalt rock. It is a salt water lake and was declared a national geo-heritage site in 1979.

SUMMER PLOUGHING

In The News

Recently **concept of Summer Ploughing** has been gaining traction among the farmers for soil conservation.

About Summer Ploughing

- It is defined as the ploughing the field **across the slope** during hot summer with the help of specialized tools with **primary objective** of opening of the soil crust accompanied by **deep ploughing** and simultaneously **overturning of the soil** underneath to disinfect it with the help of piercing sun rays.
- The ploughing activity is taken up in the direction perpendicular to the natural flow of water/gradient or wind flow so that **soil erosion is arrested** and whatever small quantum of rain received gets into the soil preserving it for the crop to be sown during kharif.
- It is done **one month in advance** i.e. in the month of May for Kharif crops.

Benefits of summer ploughing

- **Increased permeability of Soil:** this further increases in-situ moisture conservation. Consequently, plant roots will get more moisture with less effort.
- **Improves Soil structure:** It improves soil structure due to **alternate drying and cooling**. Tillage **improves soil aeration** which helps in multiplication of micro-organisms. Organic matter decomposition is hastened resulting in higher nutrient availability to the plants.
- **Reduced toxicity:** Increased aeration also helps in **degradation of herbicide and pesticide residues and harmful allelopathic chemicals exuded** by root of previous crops or weeds which inhibit the growth of other nearby plants.
- **Reducing hazards of insects and pests:** Lot of insects and pests hibernate underneath the soil crust or stubbles during hot summer season. Due to overturning of the soil in summer ploughing the sharp rays of sun enters the soil and kills the eggs, larvae and pupae of soil borne insects and pests. It is also an important method to **control nematodes.**
- **Weeds Control:** Deep ploughing and overturning **uproots the weeds**. Consequently, the roots and stems of the weeds get desiccated and die. As a result, weed control and less application of weedicides is one of the major advantages of summer ploughing.

COALITION FOR DISASTER RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE

In The News

India has pledged Rs 480 crore to setup global "Coalition for Disaster resilient Infrastructure".

Background

- India announced the creation of a Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) after the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (2016), held in New Delhi.
- At the International Workshop on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (2019) held at New Delhi, agreement was reached among representatives from 33 countries to establish a Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.
- The CDRI is envisaged as a knowledge exchange and capacity development partnership. The coalition will work towards developing common standards in infrastructure building, financial and compliance mechanisms, appropriate governance arrangements, and invest in R&D that will also determine funding from multilateral banks onwards future investments by countries.

What is Disaster Resilient Infrastructure?

- Infrastructure that can stand any huge damage from any kind of natural disaster is known as Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. It encompasses structural and non-structural measures.
- Structural Measures involve adjusting engineering designs and standards to reflect disaster risk such as flood control systems, protective embankments, seawall rehabilitation, and retrofitting of buildings.
- Non-structural measures refer to risk-sensitive planning, enabling institutional frameworks, hazard mapping, ecosystem-based management, and disaster risk financing.

Why DRI?

- India suffered losses of $80 billion during the 20-year period. Globally, disaster losses are estimated at $520 billion per annum, pushing more than 26 million people into poverty every year.
- An estimate suggests that India needs about $1.5 trillion investment in the infrastructure sector in the coming 10 years which is going to pose a challenge since the country is prone to many disasters like earthquakes, floods, cyclones, etc
- **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030)** identifies investing in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) for resilience and to **"build back better"** in reconstruction as priorities.
- PM's **10-point agenda** announced during **Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (2016),** talks about 'working to ensure that all development projects are built to appropriate standards and contribute to the resilience of communities they seek to serve."
- **SDG Goal 9** recognizes disaster resilient infrastructure as a crucial driver of economic growth and development.

Steps to be taken

Primarily, there needs to be efforts in four broad thematic areas which include:

- **On Disaster Risk Assessment**: It would require good, time-series data on past hazards patterns (e.g. wind speeds, high flood levels) and capability to analyse this data to generate probabilistic risk assessments that can guide

investment in disaster resilient infrastructure.

- **On standards of design & implementation**: The national frameworks for design and construction standards must reflect the evolving understanding of natural hazards as well as advancements in engineering technologies.
- **On financing new infrastructure and mechanisms for covering risks**: Disaster Risk Financing strategy could include budget reserve funds as well as disaster risk transfer instruments like catastrophic bonds.
- **On reconstruction and recovery of infrastructure after disasters**: The "Build Back Better" principle must be followed not only for the structural design of the infrastructure but also in terms of management systems around it.

Second International Workshop on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure

It was organised at Delhi by the National Disaster Management Authority (**NDMA**) in collaboration with **United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR),** and in partnership with the **Global Commission on Adaptation, United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank.**

GS - IV

VOTING

In The News

With the General Elections going on to elect the 17th Lok Sabha, the act of voting is being debated as an ethical issue.

Reason behind ethical issue?

- **Beneficence:** Voting the right way is important as it is expected to largely benefit the public good.
- **Prudence:** An individual's vote, when cast correctly, significantly promotes their own interests. Moreover, it is prudent to vote from considerations of civic virtue and public-spiritedness.
- **Debt to society:** Citizens, who abstain from voting get a free ride on the provision of good government or fail to pay their "debts to society".
- **Saving democracy:** Voting tends to preserve stable democracy, but failing to vote threatens to undermine the confidence of the collective in the government (as people don't consider it representative enough).
- **Participation in furthering justice & rule of law:** Representatives act in the name of the citizens. Citizens count as partial authors of the law. Citizens, who refuse to vote, don't partake in the law making process and don't spread the cause of justice.

Challenges to ethical voting

- **Voting in exchange of cash or goods** goes against the grain of democratic election. It makes the process of voting a transaction for the personal good, rather than larger good of the society. A politician doling out money/freebies to buy electorate's votes sees it as an investment & it is almost certain that he would recover more by indulging in corrupt activities.
- The **act of buying/selling votes** goes against the tenet **'one person, one vote' or Right to Equality** (constitutionally guaranteed right under Article 14) as poor are more likely to sell their votes than are the wealthy, leading to political outcomes favoring the wealthy.
- Similarly, **voting on basis of caste or community identity** without making an informed decision, on whether it will enhance the larger community good, is not morally sound. In such a scenario, the Government would be more interested to **push sectarian agenda** (e.g. favors for a particular religious group, caste based reservations etc.) that appeases one particular group **rather than public good** which is to be beneficial for every social group (e.g. investing in primary education, rural infrastructure, environment etc).
- **Voting in favour of short-term populism**, which only intends to serve a particular group or section of the society, might not be good for the society on the whole. Similarly, common public voting for the lure of free user services (e.g. water, electricity etc) might end up compromising on the service quality.
- Majority voters **do not just choose for themselves, but for everyone**, including dissenting minorities, children, non-voters etc. To vote for self-interest at the expense of the common good is to vote in favor of subjugating others' interests. Voting for common good is essential to give everyone in society an equal stake.

Promoting Ethical Voting

- Educate the target population about voter registration, entire electoral process and related matters through hands-on experience. The motive must be to change the common perception that an individual vote has small 'expected utility'.
- EVM & VVPAT familiarization and education about robustness and non-tamperability of the same. Ensuring integrity of the electoral processes is key to nudge citizens to invest time and effort into acquiring political knowledge that translates into informed voting.
- Facilitate the target audience to understand

constitutional, legislative and legal provisions and roles of Election Commission, media and other stakeholders.

- Election Commission should form Electoral Literacy Clubs for future voters (e.g. children at secondary & senior secondary level) and new voters (e.g. in voters in colleges). 'Chunav Pathshalas' must be organized for youth and adults who have been outside the formal education system.

- Create voter campaigns to educate them to cast their votes without any inducement E.g. "Vote without Note", "No Vote for Note" etc. SVEEP Program of Election Commission is working effectively in this regard, with "Promoting Ethical and Informed Voting" one of its major objectives.

- Election Commission should identify expenditure sensitive constituencies and polling stations where focused campaign needs to be taken out on ethical voting. In such areas, Booth Awareness Groups (BAGs) can be formed for dissemination of information on ethical voting

Conclusion

The fundamental problem lies in viewing voting as a transaction, the aim of which is to get some benefit for an individual or a group. The act of voting is an ethical duty, of having to act not for individual benefit, such as money or ideology, but for the benefit of the larger society.

PT POINTERS

Easy to PICK – "UPSC Monthly Magazine" April- 2019

UK MODERN SLAVERY INNOVATION FUND

- **Context**: Britain has pledged £4 million to support the fund. The funding will also be used to run workshops on modern slavery in South Africa, improve support for survivors in India, and develop an online data hub to boost anti-slavery policies.
- **Modern Slavery Innovation Fund (MSIF):** It aims to tackle the root causes of modern slavery, strengthening efforts to combat slavery and reduce vulnerability, and build an evidence base to better understand what works in the future. Proposals should set out how they support at least one of the 6 objectives of the fund:
  1. Reduce Vulnerability to Exploitation
  2. Victim Support and Recovery
  3. Improve Global Co-ordination
  4. Improve Law, Legislation and Policy
  5. Encourage responsible business and slavery- free supply chains
  6. Improve the Evidence Base

BAN ON BURQA

- **Context**: The **Sri Lanka government** has issued a decree banning burqas and other face-covering garments, in light of the Easter Sunday attacks.
- The law does not specifically name burqas, niqabs or hijab worn by many Muslim women.
- A burqa is an outer garment that covers the entire body and the face, a niqab is a veil that also covers the face, while a hijab covers only the hair.
- **Concerns**: Activists saying the move "violated Muslim women's right to practice their religion freely".

INDONESIA TO SHIFT CAPITAL

- **Context**: Indonesia has announced its plans to move its capital **away from Jakarta**.
- **Need:**

- to ensure more equitable development of the country amid environmental concerns and overcrowding issues.
- major concerns behind the move is traffic congestion in the Capital.
- Another reason is that Jakarta is prone to annual flooding and is **one of the world's fastest sinking cities**.

NAVAL FLEET REVIEWS

- **Context:** China is planning to observe an international fleet review on April 23 at **Qingdao to mark the 70th anniversary of founding its naval forces**. Nearly 60 countries are sending naval delegations for the fleet review, including India (INS Kolkata and INS Shakti), Japan, South Korea and others. The **United States declined to be part of the show**.
- **What is it?** Naval fleet reviews intend to not only gather forces from other countries but make a statement about a nation coming of age in this domain. Such shows are intended to enhance confidence building. They as well seek to legitimize the official stance on various "core interests" but also seek consent and respect from other navies. These go a long way in ushering conventional deterrence in the region. Domestically, fleet reviews suggest to the coalescing of forces in supporting maritime agenda of the nation and the leadership.

MUELLER'S REPORT

- **Context:** The United States Department of Justice has released the special counsel Robert **Mueller's report**. **The report looks into alleged Russian collusion in the 2016 Presidential elections which saw incumbent US President Donald Trump rise to power.**
- The report states that the **Russian government- sponsored efforts to illegally interfere with the 2016 presidential election, but did not find that the Trump campaign or other**

Americans colluded in those schemes.

INDONESIA RELEASES SPECIAL STAMP ON RAMAYANA THEME

Indonesia has released **a special commemorative stamp on the theme of Ramayana** to mark the **70th anniversary of establishment of its diplomatic ties with India**. A specially signed version of the stamp will be on display at the Philately Museum in Jakarta.

IRAN, PAKISTAN AGREE TO SET UP JOINT BORDER 'REACTION FORCE'

- **Context:** Iran and Pakistan have agreed to set up **a joint border "reaction force" to counter terrorism.**
- **Background:** The announcement comes following tensions between the two countries who have in recent months accused each other of not doing enough to stamp out militants allegedly sheltering across the border.

IRAN, PAKISTAN AGREE TO SET UP JOINT BORDER 'REACTION FORCE'

- It is the **world's only floating nuclear power unit.** The plant was launched by **Russia** on May 19, 2018 at the St Petersburg shipyard.
- **Why in News?** It is ready to start commercial operations in Russia. The power plant is ready to start generating power after a series of comprehensive and successful tests on its twin KLT- 40 reactor system.

NEPALISAT-1

- **Nepal's first satellite NepaliSat-1** was recently launched into space from the Virginia-based station of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the US.
- NepaliSat-1 will collect information about the **country's topography and Earth's magnetic field**. The satellite is equipped with a 5MP camera to capture Nepal's topography and a magnetometer to collect data related to the Earth's magnetic field.
- The satellite was developed by two Nepalis Abhas Maskey and Hariram Shrestha at Japan's Kyushu Institute of Technology.

'RAAVANA-1' SATELLITE

- **Context:** Sri Lanka has launched its **first satellite 'Raavana-1'** into space from the **Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport** at NASA's Wallops Flight Facility on Virginia's East Shore. 'Raavana 1' weights around 1.05 kg. The lifespan of the satellite is around one and a half years.
- It is designed to **orbit the Earth 15 times a day at a speed of 7.6 km per second**.
- **'Raavana 1' was designed to accomplish five missions:** Its camera mission is to take pictures of Sri Lanka and its neighbouring countries. Its Lora Demonstration Mission is to validate the module to be used to data download next satellites. The Attitude Determination and Control Mission of 'Ravaana 1' involves the team trying to reduce the angular velocity of the satellite using magnetic torquers.