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## All India Trade Union Congress

### In The News

Recently, All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) turned 100.

### About AITUC

- AITUC was **formed in 1920 by leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai**, Narayan Malhar Joshi, Joseph Baptista, Diwan Chaman Lal etc. to provide labour representation for India at the International Labor Organization (ILO).
- **Lala Lajpat Rai was elected as the first president** of AITUC and Dewan Chaman Lal as the first general secretary.
  - C.R. Das, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose also served as AITUC presidents.
- **Gaya session of the Congress (1922) welcomed formation of the AITUC** and a committee was formed to assist it.
- Later, AITUC was split to form National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) in 1929 and Red Trade Union Congress (RTUC) in 1931.
- In the aftermath of Second World War, AITUC played significant role in the foundation of World Federation of Trade Unions (international federation of trade unions).

**National freedom movement:** In the beginning of 20th century, participation of laborers in the freedom movement increased and formation of unions also increased. Mahatma Gandhi linked the freedom movement directly with the labor welfare.

### Factors that led to formation of Trade Unions

- **Influenced by world labour movements:** Russian Revolution in 1917 was a great impetus for Indian labour movement as the working class along with peasantry captured power first time.
- **Industrial unrest:** Strikes in Bombay against extension of working hours and protest against imprisonment of Tilak etc. led to working class to wage a mass struggle.
- **Oppression and exploitation under British rule:** The self-sufficient Village economy was shattered with no new structures in place, creating impoverished peasantry and landless labour force.

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## Malnutrition In India

### In The News

NITI Aayog has released 3<sup>rd</sup> progress report (October 2019-April 2020) on Poshan Abhiyan.

### Key findings of the report

- Report takes stock of the roll-out status on the ground and implementation challenges encountered at various levels in Poshan Abhiyan.
- NITI Aayog warns that **Poshan Abhiyan must be stepped up in order to meet the targets** set by the Centre to reduce stunting, wasting, and anaemia by 2022.
- **Hence report suggests:**
  - Critical importance on **improving complementary feeding** to tackle stunting.
  - **Quality and reach of Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS) food** and improvements in the screening and referral are imperative to tackle wasting.
  - **Multipronged approach is needed** to tackle micronutrient deficiency
  - **Campaigns such as Anaemia Mukh Bharat** are bringing visibility to issues within the health sector.
  - **Urban food systems and urban health service delivery** (dominance of private sector) pose new challenges.

### How severe is India's malnutrition problem?

- According to **National Family Health Survey-4**,
  - More than a third of children under five suffer from stunting and wasting
  - 40% of children between one and four are anaemic.
  - Over 50% of pregnant and non-pregnant women were found to be anaemic.
- According to **Global Nutrition Report, 2020:**
  - Report has underscored **the possibility of India missing its global nutrition targets by 2025.**
    - ✓ India will miss targets, for all the four nutritional

**indicators for which there is data available**, i.e. stunting, anaemia, childhood overweight and exclusive breastfeeding.

- Inequalities are evident for stunting, with **stunting prevalence being 10.1% higher in rural vs urban areas.**
- India has been ranked **94 on the 2020 Global Hunger Index (GHI)**, lower than neighbours like Bangladesh and Pakistan.
- Malnutrition affects cognitive ability, workforce days and health, **impacting as much as 16% of GDP** (World Food Programme and World Bank).

### POSHAN (Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition) Abhiyaan/ National Nutrition Strategy

- Launched in 2018, it is a multi-ministerial convergence mission with the vision to ensure **attainment of malnutrition free India by 2022** in a phased manner, through a life cycle approach, by adopting a synergised and result oriented approach.
- **50% of the cost is being borne by the World Bank** or other multilateral development and the remaining 50% is divided between the centre and state/UTs.
- **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)** is implementing it by anchoring it with the Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS)
  - ICDS Scheme was launched in 1975 for providing for supplementary nutrition, immunization and pre-school education to the children. it is seen as one of the world's largest community-based programs for early childhood development.
- **Core pillars of POSHAN Abhiyaan**
  - ICDS-CAS (Common Application Software)
  - Convergence
  - Behavioural change, IEC Advocacy
  - Training and Capacity building

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- Innovations
- Incentives
- Grievance Redressal.

## Malnutrition vs hunger

- Malnutrition refers to **deficiencies, excesses, or imbalances** in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients.
- It addresses **3 broad groups of conditions**:
  - **Undernutrition** includes
    - ✓ Wasting (low weight-for-height)
    - ✓ Stunting (low height-for-age) and
    - ✓ Underweight (low weight-for-age)
  - **Micronutrient deficiencies** (a lack of important vitamins and minerals) or **micronutrient excess**
  - Overweight, obesity and dietary related **noncommunicable diseases** (such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers).

## What hinders the eradication of malnutrition from India?

- **Paradox related to production and Accessibility**: In India, food grain yields have risen 33% over the last two decades, however, consumer's access to rice, wheat and other cereals has not increased at the same rate, due to population growth, inequality, food wastage and losses, and exports.
- **Conservative target**: India's targets are conservative as compared to the global target defined by the World Health Assembly in 2012. India lacks policy to deal with all these issues in holistic and mission mode.
- **Increasing diversity in consumption**: The energy and nutritional intake from cereals has decreased in both rural and urban India, and largely substituted by increased consumption of other food items such as milk and dairy products, oils and fat and relatively unhealthy food such as fast food, processed food, and sugary beverages, which has likely contributed to the emerging problem of obesity in India.
- **Targeted Public Distribution System (PDS) and Nutritional Intake**: PDS has provided a critical nutritional supplement to

the people across all states in India. However due to poor targeting, poorest 30 percent of households had lower capacity to access food.

- **Under-utilization of fund under POSAHN Abhiyaan**: Funds remaining under-utilized indicate non-adherence of the financial norms and targeted beneficiaries not being covered. In 2019-20 only 32.62% of the allocated fund was utilised. In 2017-18 it was 92.58%.
- **Slow roll out of activities by the States/UTs**: West Bengal has not joined the Poshan Abhiyaan and Odisha started activities under Poshan Abhiyaan only from October, 2019.

## What will it take to eradicate malnutrition from India?

- **Enhance the effectiveness of the POSHAN Abhiyaan**
  - **Implement POSHAN-plus strategy** which apart from continued strengthening the four pillars (technology, convergence, behavioural change and capacity building) of the Abhiyaan also requires addressing the governance challenges of National Health Mission (NHM)/ ICDS delivery mechanism and renewed focus on
    - ✓ **Complementary feeding** (usually targeted at the age range of 6-24 months)
    - ✓ **Investments in education of girls and women**, reduce early marriage and early pregnancy, improving care during and after pregnancy etc.
  - **Availability of regional food items and cultural preferences may also be integrated with this abhiyaan to make it inclusive.**
- **Enhance the reach of the POSHAN Abhiyaan**: Since the Anganwadi centres (AWCs) are at the heart of POSHAN Abhiyaan, it is imperative to enhance their reach. Therefore, mini Anganwadi centres should be set up so that children, pregnant and lactating women who may not be able to travel longer distances, have easier access to them.

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- **Institutionalise Capacity Building:** Regular trainings for Anganwadi; availability of basic amenities such as electricity, growth monitors, supplies are imperative for proper functioning of the AWCs and the effective provision of services.
- **Strengthen Coordination:** All the programmes of the government having direct or indirect impact on the nutrition must be brought under the POSHAN Abhiyaan.
- **Nurture Community Approach:** Despite strong efforts, community involvement in POSHAN Abhiyaan has been substandard. State specific efforts should be made (keeping in view the diversity and intersectionality of the society) for ensuring community participation.

## Conclusion

Nutrition goes beyond just food, with economic, health, water sanitation, gender perspectives and social norms contributing to better nutrition. This is why there is a **need to have a multipronged approach**. Such approach would not only eliminate the malnutrition but also **eradicates the underlying social, economical and political causes of malnutrition**.

## Rashtriya Ekta Diwas

### In The News

Observed on **31st October** across the nation.

- It marks the occasion of **the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**.

### Recently:

The government, in **2014**, decided to observe Sardar Patel Jayanti Day as Ekta Diwas. This occasion provides an opportunity to re-affirm the inherent strength and resilience of the nation to withstand the threats to its unity, integrity and security.

### About Sardar Vallabhai Patel:

Sardar Patel is credited with **uniting all 562 princely states** in pre-independent India to build the Republic of India.

### Role in the Indian National Movement:

- 1917– Elected as **the Secretary of the Gujarat Sabha**, the Gujarat wing of the Indian National Congress.
- 1918– Led a massive **“No Tax Campaign”** that urged the farmers not to pay taxes after the British insisted on tax after the floods in Kaira.
- Supported **the non-cooperation Movement** launched by Gandhi and Patel toured the nation with him.
- 1928– When the lands of farmers were seized after they refused to pay the extra tax to the government, Patel helped the farmers by striking a deal between the government and farmers’ representatives.
- 1930– Imprisoned for participating in the famous **Salt Satyagraha** movement initiated by Mahatma Gandhi.
- 1931– Elected as **the President of Indian National Congress in its Karachi session** where the party deliberated its future path.
- Patel was also compelled to use coercion by launching **‘Operation Polo’** to liberate and integrate Hyderabad after the Nizam of Hyderabad entertained false

hopes of either joining Pakistan or remaining independent.

### Who gave him the title "Sardar"?

Women of Bardoli bestowed the title **‘Sardar’** on Vallabhbhai Patel, which means ‘a Chief or a Leader’.

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## Birsa Munda

### About

Birth anniversary of Birsa Munda was observed on **November 15th**.

- In recognition of his impact on the national movement, the state of Jharkhand was created on his birth anniversary in 2000.

### Who was he?

Birsa Munda was a folk hero and a tribal freedom fighter hailing from the Munda tribe. He was a spearhead behind the Millenarian movement that arose in the Bihar and Jharkhand belt in the 19th century under the British colonisation. He is also known as **‘Dharti Abba’ or the Earth Father**.

### Birsait:

Birsa wanted to reform the tribal society and so, he urged them to let go of beliefs in witchcraft and instead, stressed on the importance of prayer, staying away from alcohol, having faith in God and observing a code of conduct. Based on these, he started **the faith of ‘Birsait’**.

### Achievements:

Birsa started a movement called **‘Ulgulan’, or ‘The Great Tumult’**. His struggle against the exploitation and discrimination against tribals led to a big hit against the British government in the form of **the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act being passed in 1908**. The act restricted the passing on of land from the tribal people to non-tribals.

## Guidelines For Matrimonial Cases

### In The News

In a judgement, the Supreme Court has laid down **guidelines for matrimonial cases.**

- The judgment was based on a **matrimonial plea from Maharashtra** on the question of payment of maintenance by a man to his wife and son under **Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.**

### As per the Supreme Court guidelines (Have a brief overview):

- Deserted wives and children are entitled to alimony/maintenance from their husbands from the date they apply for it in a court of law.
- A violation would lead to punishment, such as civil detention and even attachment of the property of the latter.
- The plea of the husband that he does not possess any source of income ipso facto does not absolve him of his moral duty to maintain his wife, if he is able-bodied and has educational qualifications.
- Both the applicant wife and the respondent husband have to disclose their assets and liabilities in a maintenance case. Any earlier case filed or pending under any other law should also be revealed in court.
- The expenses of the children, including their education, basic needs and other vocational activities, should be factored in by courts while calculating the alimony.
- Other factors such as “spiralling inflation rates and high costs of living” should be considered, but the wife should receive an alimony which fit the standard of life she was used to in the matrimonial home.

### Implications:

These uniform and comprehensive guidelines should be followed by family courts, magistrates and lower courts while hearing applications filed by women seeking maintenance from their estranged husbands.

### Need for:

Women deserted by husbands were left in dire straits, often reduced to destitution, for lack of means to sustain themselves and their children.

## Typhoon Goni

### In The News

Typhoon Rolly or Goni has hit Philippines.

### Hurricanes, typhoons and cyclones: What's the difference?

They are all the same thing: **tropical storms**. But they are known by different names in different locations.

1. In the North Atlantic Ocean and Northeast Pacific, they are called **hurricanes**.
2. But if the same type of disturbance takes place in the **Northwest Pacific Ocean**, it is known as a typhoon.
3. And in the South Pacific and Indian Ocean, **cyclone** is the correct term.

### How storms form?

- Air rises quickly when it is heated by warm sea water.
- As the air cools down again it is pushed aside by more warm air rising below it.
- This cycle causes strong winds. Over the sea, a tropical storm can whip up huge waves.
- When these waves reach land they can flood large areas, including towns and cities.
- Over land the strong winds can cause a lot of damage - they can flatten homes, knock over trees and even tip over cars.

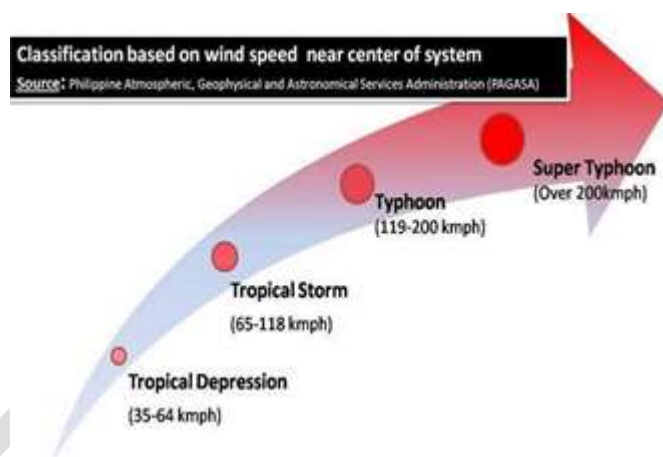
What are the different parts of a cyclone's structure?

**The eye:** The eye of the storm is **the centre**. It's a **relatively calm space**. When the eye passes over an area, winds slow down and everything feels like it has cleared up. The part that comes after the eye usually inflicts the most damage.

**The eyewall:** This is where the most effective part of a cyclone rests. The eyewall houses extremely high wind speeds, causing damage to both lives and property. It is a ring of thunderstorms, and changes in the eye or the eyewall affects the storm's intensity.

**Rainbands:** These are the outer parts of a cyclone where sudden bursts of rain happen. There can also

be gaps between rainbands where no rain or wind occurs.



## What is La Niña?

### In The News

The **La Niña** weather phenomenon is back in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean after nearly a decade's absence, the **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** said in its latest **Global Seasonal update** released October 29, 2020.

### Implications:

- La Niña will result in sea surface temperatures between two and three degrees Celsius cooler than average.
- La Niña could last into 2021, affecting temperatures, precipitation and storm patterns in many parts of the world.

### What is La Niña?

It means **the large-scale cooling of ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean**, together with changes in the tropical atmospheric circulation, namely winds, pressure and rainfall.

- It has **the opposite impacts on weather and climate as El Niño**, which is the warm phase of the **El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO)**.

### Weather changes because of La Nina:

1. The Horn of Africa and central Asia will see below average rainfall due to La Niña.
2. East Africa is forecast to see drier-than-usual conditions, which together with the existing impacts of the desert locust invasion, may add to regional food insecurity.
3. It could also lead to increased rainfall in southern Africa.
4. It could also affect the South West Indian Ocean Tropical Cyclone season, reducing the intensity.

## Hurricane Iota

### In The News

Hurricane Iota has made landfall in **Nicaragua in Central America** and has developed into a category five storm.

### When do hurricanes occur?

The **Atlantic Hurricane season** runs from June to November and covers the Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, while the **Eastern Pacific Hurricane season** runs from May 15 to November 30.

- **Hurricanes** are categorised on the **Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale**, which rates them on a scale of 1 to 5 based on wind speed.
- **Hurricanes** that reach **category three or higher** are called ‘**major hurricanes**’ because of their potential to cause devastating damage to life and property.

### What are hurricanes and how do they form?

Tropical cyclones or hurricanes **use warm, moist air as fuel**, and therefore **form over warm ocean waters near the equator**.

- As NASA describes it, when the warm, moist air rises upward from the surface of the ocean, it creates an area of low air pressure below.
- Air from the surrounding areas rushes to fill this place, eventually rising when it becomes warm and moist too.
- When **the warm air rises and cools off, the moisture forms clouds**. This system of clouds and winds continues to grow and spin, fuelled by the ocean’s heat and the water that evaporates from its surface.
- As such storm systems rotate faster and faster, **an eye forms in the centre**.
- Storms that form towards the north of the equator rotate **counterclockwise**, while those that form to the south spin **clockwise** because of the rotation of the Earth.

### What is the difference between a hurricane and a tropical storm?

There is no difference. Depending on where they

occur, hurricanes may be called **typhoons or cyclones**.

- As per NASA, the scientific name for all these kinds of storms is **tropical cyclones**.
- The tropical cyclones that form over the Atlantic Ocean or the eastern Pacific Ocean are called

**hurricanes** and the ones that form in the Northwest Pacific are called **typhoons**.

Tropical storms that form in the Bay of Bengal or the Arabian Sea are called **cyclones**.

**‘Nivar’**

After cyclones ‘Amphan’, ‘Nisarga’ and ‘Gati’, ‘Nivar’ is heading towards Karaikal in Puducherry and is expected to make the landfall on November 25.

- **Nivar** is the third name to be used from the new list of names for North Indian Ocean Cyclones, released in 2020. It was **suggested by Iran.**
- ‘Amphan’, which was **proposed by Thailand**, was the last name in the 2004 series.
- ‘Nisarga’, which hit Maharashtra in June, was **a name given by Bangladesh** while **India had proposed**

‘Gati’, which made landfall over Somalia on November 22.

**How are Cyclones named?**

The **names for tropical cyclones in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea are suggested by** Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Yemen as per the formula agreed by World Meteorological Organisation and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in its 27th session in 2000.

- Each country provides **13 names.**

**In the latest list, India had proposed:**

Gati (speed), Tej (speed), Marasu (musical instrument in Tamil), Aag (fire) and Neer (water), among others, for the new list.

**The names of the next few cyclones adopted by member countries in April 2020 are as follows:**

Burevi (Maldives), Tauktae (Myanmar), Yaas (Oman), and Gulab (Pakistan). These are among the 169 names suggested by the 13 countries.

## Manual Scavenging

### In The News

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launched the ‘Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge’ in 243 cities across the country to end manual scavenging by 2021.

### More on news

- Under the campaign, **sewers and septic tanks in 243 cities will be mechanized and a helpline created to register complaints** if manual scavenging is reported. Cities which reach the end result will receive prize money.
- Its mission is to **prevent any loss of life** due to the issue of ‘hazardous cleaning’ of sewers and septic tanks.
- The measures are part of the **Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan (Clean India initiative).**

### Background

- **Manual Scavenging:** It is the practice of manual cleaning of human excreta from **service/ dry latrines**.
  - The scavengers crawl into the dry latrines and collect the human excreta with their bare hands, carry it as head-load in a container to dispose it off.
  - **Service/dry latrine** is a type of toilet which is waterless and from which human excrement is collected from buckets, cesspools and privies manually.

- **Status:**

According to the data collected by the Safai Karmachari Andolan (SKA), UP is among states with the **highest number of dry and service latrines**.

- A recent government survey conducted in 170 districts in 18 States identified **54,130 people engaged in this job** as of July 2019.
- As per the data collated by SKA, there were **1,870 sewer deaths reported in India** from 1993- 2019 with maximum sewer death occurring in Tamil Nadu.

Reasons why manual scavenging still persists in

### India

- **Continued presence of insanitary latrines:** There are about 2. 6 million insanitary latrines (dry toilets) that require cleaning by hand.
- **Lack of infrastructural and institutional Machinery:** The numerous operational activities along the sanitation chain — emptying and conveyance of faecal sludge, sewer maintenance, treatment, and end use/disposal have often been invisible or at least disregarded in regulatory frameworks.
  - Due to engineering defects in septic tank, **machine cannot clean it after a point and require manual cleaning.**
- **Social perception:** It is a caste based and hereditary profession and defined as a "cultural occupation" attached to lower castes.
  - The blindness is fostered by the fact that manual scavengers come from among the Dalits; the **lack of opportunity and education compels them to continue** in their inherited work.
- **Loopholes in the legal protection:** 2013 Act bans ‘hazardous cleaning’ of septic tanks and sewer pits, but only if the workers are not provided ‘protective gear’ and ‘other cleaning devices’. But it **does not define what the ‘protective gear’ is**.
  - The Act does not address critical aspects of provisions like the **rehabilitation** of those who were liberated from manual scavenging before passing the law in 2013.

### Key challenges and risks associated with manual scavenging:

- **Occupational and Environmental Health and Safety:** They are exposed to hazardous gases and biological and chemical agents in septic tanks, sewers, pumping stations, and treatment plants
  - Mostly work without any form of **personal protective equipment**

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(PPE).

- Many informal and temporary sanitation workers operate with **little to no formal training** on the occupational risks of their work.
- **Legal and Institutional Challenges:** They often suffer because of informal nature of work, weak legal protection and lack of enforcement of existing rules.
- **Social Challenges:** Low-grade, unskilled sanitation workers often face social stigma and discrimination. This is especially true when sanitation is linked to a caste-based structure
  - This stigma compounds the **social ostracizing and limitations on social mobility** that workers face and often results in intergenerational discrimination and form a **multigenerational poverty trap**.
- **Exposure to diseases:** Human faeces and urine are carriers of Hepatitis A, pinworms, Rotavirus, and E.coli exposing the workers to cholera, hepatitis, typhoid, tuberculosis, etc.

(especially local governments) to assess and mitigate the occupational risks of all types of sanitation work, including national standard operating procedures, municipal- level oversight of sanitation service providers.

- **Adoption of technology** to end manual scavenging.
  - The **Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board** is using 70 mini jetting machines that can access narrow lanes and smaller colonies to clear the choked sewer pipes.
  - In Thiruvananthapuram, a group of engineers has designed a **spider-shaped robot called “BANDICOOT”** that cleans manholes and sewers with precision.
- **Advocate for sanitation workers** and promote their empowerment to protect worker rights and amplify workers’ voices through unions and associations.
- **Build the evidence base to address the issues of quantification of the sanitation workforce** and documentation of challenges that workers face and good practice in improving working conditions.
  - **Research institutions, universities, along with national and municipal governments** could collaborate in addressing the key knowledge gaps in the sector.

## Areas for Action

- **Reform policy, legislation and regulation** that acknowledges and professionalizes the sanitation workforce along the sanitation service chain.
  - First, **recognize all types of sanitation work** and provide the frameworks that enable the organization and empowerment of sanitation workers; workers’ right to organize needs to be protected.
  - Second, **promote the gradual formalization and mechanization** of the work.
  - Third, **articulate protection mechanisms**, covering measures such as **personal protective equipment (PPE)**, training, regular health checks, insurance, and treatment for workers to mitigate their occupational risks across the sanitation chain.
- **Develop and adopt operational guidelines**

## Conclusion

Thus, protecting the manual scavengers is not only a matter of rights, health, and dignity of the workers themselves, but it also is key to ensuring a sufficiently large, formalized, and protected workforce to deliver and sustain safely managed sanitation services with dignity, as has been called for under the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

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## Regulation On OTT Platforms

### In The News

The Union government has recently brought Over the Top (OTT) platforms, such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and others, under the ambit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B ministry).

### About News

- The **Films and Audio-Visual programmes made available by online content providers** have been brought under the jurisdiction of I&B ministry through a notification that amends the **Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961** using the clause (3) of **Article 77 of the Constitution**.
  - Article 77 (3) allows the President to make rules for the more convenient transaction of the business of the Government of India, and for the allocation among Ministers of the said business.
- The notification also **brought news and current affairs content on online platforms** under the purview.
- Earlier the digital media platforms were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) while other media such as print, television and radio were under the I&B ministry.
  - The user-generated content, such as what is streamed on YouTube or Facebook, will continue to remain under MeitY.

### Background

- The Centre has been mulling the idea of a regulatory board for OTT platforms since 2019 and has asked the major online-streaming players several times to firm up a self-regulatory model as well.
- In January 2019, the **Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)** had put out a code called the ‘Code of Best Practices for Online Curated Content Providers’.
- In February, 2020, IAMAI released a ‘Code for Self-Regulation of Online Curated

**Content Providers’** which was signed by around 15 several digital platforms by September.

- The code had guidelines regarding Classification of Content, Parental and/or Access Control, Age Classification/Maturity Ratings etc. and set up a two-tier **Complaint Redressal mechanism**-
  - Tier-I at the OCCP level- a Digital Content Complaint Forum (“DCCF”) created internally by the OTT platform; and
  - Tier-II at the industry level- a body under the IAMAI set up by the signatories known as the Online Curated Content Providers Governing Council.
- It **prohibited five types of content** – including those that deliberately and maliciously disrespect the national emblem or national flag, any visual or story line promoting child pornography, any content that maliciously intends to outrage religious sentiments and content that deliberately and maliciously promotes or encourages terrorism.
- However, the **proposed self-regulatory mechanism was rejected by the I&B Ministry** stating that it lacks independent third-party monitoring, does not have a well-defined Code of Ethics, does not clearly enunciate prohibited content, and at the second and third-tier level there is an issue of conflict of interest.
- In October, 2020 a **Supreme Court bench issued notices to the central government, I&B Ministry and IAMAI** on a petition to regulate OTT platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime etc through an autonomous body.

**Need of regulating OTT platforms**

**Rapid growth in OTT industry:** India is

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currently the world's fastest growing OTT market, and is all set to emerge as the world's sixth-largest by 2024. The Indian OTT market is set to reach Rs 237.86 billion by FY25, from Rs 42.50 billion in FY19.

- **Lack of oversight:** While the Press Council of India (PCI) looks after the print media, the television news channels come under News Broadcasters Association (NBA) and Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) monitors films, there is at present no law or autonomous body governing digital content or OTT platforms.
  - Also, there is no specific law for content regulation on online services.
- **Receipt of several complaints from the public:** Several PILs have been filed in courts across the country underlining the concern and need to regulate online content.
- **Concerns regarding objectionable content:** Without appropriate regulation, online platforms can be potentially used for spreading fake news and hate speech and can publish obscene or violent content. Such content can damage social fabric and has potential to reach and affect children due to increasing accessibility of mobiles and computers.
- **Parity in treatment of content:** The film industry in India has voiced concern that while their industry requires a Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), digital content on OTT platforms is made available to the public at large without any filter or screening.

be created to look into citizen complaints in relation to content made available by respective OCCPs.

- **Formulating broad guidelines:** The Government can frame guidelines that cover principles laid out in statutes like The Information Technology Act, 2000, Indian Penal Code, 1860, Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, Copyright Act, 1957 etc., to aid OTT platforms in self regulating its content.

## Way Forward

- **Model combining state censorship and self regulation:** A multi-stakeholder approach to self-regulation can be adopted, that safeguards the creative freedom of content creators and artists, and protects the interests of consumers in choosing and accessing the content.
- **Establishing global ratings system:** A standard rating system for content and quotas for indigenous content on OTT platforms can be created.
- **Independent mechanism for complaints redressal:** An autonomous organization can

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## Capitals For Andhra Pradesh ?

### In The News

As per the Andhra Pradesh Decentralization and Inclusive Development of All Regions Bill, 2020, Andhra Pradesh State will have Visakhapatnam, Amaravati and Kurnool respectively as the executive, legislative and judicial capitals of the State.

### Arguments in favor of 3 capitals

- **Historically recommended:** It was the central theme in recommendations of all major committees set up to suggest a suitable location for the capital of Andhra Pradesh.
- **Distributed development:** Different regions gain from a decentralized arrangement as governmental activities are the fulcrum around which developmental activities spring up and boost local economy. Justice B N Srikrishna Committee, set up to look into the demand for a Telangana state, noted “concentration of development efforts in Hyderabad is the key reason for demand of separate states”.
- **Planned Urbanization:** It is better to work against a primate city with high population density and move in favour of mid-sized cities with decent economies.
- **Avoiding financial crunch:** It is expected that the new arrangement will come at a fraction of the earlier cost for Amaravati as it would buy into existing infrastructure of Kurnool and Vishakhapatnam.
- **Concerns over food security:** KCS Committee raised concerns of food security when taking away thousands of acres of fertile land for urbanization by developing Amaravati as capital in single region.

- **Lack of proper infrastructure:** success of distributed development depends on a well-developed infrastructural network linking the growth centers. Andhra Pradesh lacks these linkages now.
- **Environmental impact of densification:** KCS committee warned about the environmental impact of intensification and densification in cities, with a special reference to Visakhapatnam. Also, Visakhapatnam region is prone to cyclones.
- **Not the only way for decentralization:** For decentralized development, the best way possible is strengthening of the local bodies. This not only results in the development of even remote areas but also improve governance.

### Conclusion

For the 3 capitals idea to be successful, including technology and frequent use of digital communication to reduce the delay in decision making, improved coordination between legislature and executive shall be done. This can also lead to reduction in overall logistics cost for the state.

Simultaneously, there is a need to strengthen local bodies- by providing more funds, delegating more functions and providing better functionaries- to achieve inclusive and overall decentralized development.

### Why it is being criticized?

- **Might hamper coordination:** Governmental arms, especially the bureaucracy and ministers are required to do frequent consultations. Separation and distance of the two might hamper coordination during assembly sessions.

## INDIA- NEPAL

### In The News

Recently, Foreign Secretary visited Nepal to improve bilateral ties between two countries.

### Background of India Nepal relations

- **India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950** forms the bedrock of the special relations that exist between India and Nepal.
- **Nepalese citizens avail facilities and opportunities on par with Indian citizens** in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty.
- Nearly **8 million Nepalese citizens** live and work in India.

### Recent shifts in relations

- **Boundary disputes:** Despite India's objection, Nepal issued a new political map that included disputed areas including the Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani (Parts of Uttarakhand).
- **Changing nature of traditional business ties:** For many small and medium Nepali businesses, it is now easier to trade with China as rules have made it harder to do business with India.
  - Despite open borders, complex regulatory requirements (complex documentation, difficulty in cash movement etc.) have complicated import-export between the two countries.
- **Ideological basis-** The communist parties in Nepal have favored China and consistently protested against India. This time around the Nepali Congress also favored them.
- **China factor:** China opening port facilities to Nepal and providing access to Trans Himalayan Railway reduces Nepal's dependency on India. Also, Nepal has joined China's Belt and Road Initiative.
- **India's alleged role in Nepal's internal politics:** India's implicit support for the 2015 blockade on the landlocked country,

anti-Indian sentiments have been running high.

### Measures needed to strengthen relations

- **Amendments to the Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1950:** Nepal wants amend certain clauses in the 1950 Treaty like the one which requires it to seek India's permission to import arms from third countries. The **Eminent Persons' Group set up jointly by the two countries to review their bilateral relations** also recommended revision of the treaty.
- **Addressing Infrastructure need of Nepal:** Nepal has been calling for expeditious implementation of mega Indian projects like Pancheshwar multi-purpose project and asked for investment in sectors like hydropower, agriculture, tourism, infrastructure and IT.
- **Strengthening Economic cooperation:** It holds immense significance and potential for both the countries. There is a need to craft a new approach that allows ordinary Nepalis to access opportunities India's economic growth offers.
- **Nepal needs to assuage India's concerns about Chinese activities** in Nepal. India needs to minimize interference by acknowledging Nepal's strategic, political and economic compulsions. Also, Nepal should also keep an eye on illegal activities like human trafficking, black money dealings and terrorist intrusions which constitute a major security concern for the Indian establishment.
- **Revival of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC):** Though India has been engaging through, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the Bangladesh Bhutan India Nepal Initiative (BBIN) etc. the institutional and multisectoral cooperation under SAARC rooted in South Asian identity cannot be replaced.

## Conclusion

Centuries of social, cultural, political, strategic, and economic ties can only remain strong if they can remain relevant to changing times. The governments of India and Nepal must **reset the narrative and modernize their policies** so that the ties between people thrives again. India should put all major bilateral issues on the table for renegotiation — including the 1950 treaty, national treatment to Nepali citizens in India, trade and transit arrangements, the open border and visa-free travel.

## India And Nuclear Disarmament

### In The News

UN General Assembly adopted two resolutions which were sponsored by India - ‘Convention on the Prohibition of the use of Nuclear Weapons’ and ‘Reducing Nuclear Danger’ under the ‘Nuclear weapons’ cluster. These resolutions manifest India’s commitment towards the goal of nuclear disarmament.

### More on the resolutions

- The “**Convention on the Prohibition of the use of Nuclear Weapons**”, tabled by India since 1982 in the General Assembly requests the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to commence negotiations on an international convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances.
- The resolution on “**Reducing Nuclear Danger**”, tabled since 1998, draws global attention to the risks of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons and underscores the need for a review of nuclear doctrines. It calls for concrete steps to reduce such risks, including through de-alerting and de-targeting of nuclear weapons.

### India’s role in global nuclear disarmament

- India has **always been an ardent supporter of multilateral nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.**
- On numerous occasions, India has taken the opportunity to be a driving force for attaining universal, complete and non-discriminatory disarmament:
  - o In 1965, India was **amongst the Non-Aligned Eight in the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee (ENDC)** that advocated for de-linking disarmament and non-proliferation
  - o India **opposed to signing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**, which it views as discriminatory because of its grouping of countries that divided the world into “nuclear haves” and “nuclear have-

nots’.

- o India **proposed a comprehensive proposal for “complete and universal nuclear disarmament”** to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Disarmament in 1988, which came to be known as the **Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan.**
- o India **has not signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)** due to the failure of the treaty to include a commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework.
- o Still it has observed a voluntary **nuclear testing moratorium since May 1998.**
- o Through its **Nuclear doctrine in 2003**, India has asserted its continued commitment to the goal of a nuclear weapon free world through global, verifiable, and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament.
- o **India has also opposed the recent enforcement of Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)** which India believes is not a comprehensive instrument on disarmament as it excludes the verification of nuclear armaments.
- o India maintains that the Geneva-based **Conference on Disarmament (CD) is the single multilateral disarmament negotiation forum.**
- o India is also in support of a non-discriminatory, universal, and verifiable **Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT)** that is being negotiated in CD.
  - ✓ **FMCT is a proposed international agreement** that would prohibit the production of the two main components of nuclear weapons: highly-enriched uranium (HEU) and plutonium.

### Challenges for India’s vision of Nuclear Disarmament

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- **Ongoing Modernization of Nuclear weapons:** Although the inventories of nuclear warheads continue to decline overtime, all the nuclear states are either developing or deploying new weapon systems or have announced their intention to do so.
  - For example-US is making a **Miniaturised nuke** which will ensure shrinkage of power and enable tactical applications.
  - China and Russia are developing **hypersonic glide vehicles**, and Russia is probably developing a **nuclear- armed, nuclear powered underwater vehicle**.
- **Lack of consensus among major nuclear powers**
  - The USA withdrew from the **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, 1987** and Russia formally suspended its obligations under it.
  - Uncertainty over continuation of **Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START) treaty** between Russia and US beyond February 2021.
  - Discussions on denuclearization between **the North Korea and the USA lost traction during 2019** and by the end of 2019 the **Iran nuclear deal (2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action)** was largely non-functional.
- **Global perception for India:** Even as India's dominant assumption of its nuclear weapons has been determined by the effectiveness as a deterrence mechanism, the international community, from time to time, finds discrepancies in India's ideology and its ability to actively promote nuclear disarmament (even if it is not actively increasing it either).
- **India's regional security dilemma:** Consideration of regional developments (such as Pakistan's development of tactical nuclear weapons and its close relationship with China) in India's defence policies is although detrimental to India's quest for a

Nuclear Weapon Free World (NFWF) but cannot be downplayed in the context of regional stability.

## Conclusion

The non-proliferation and global disarmament discussions require a monumental shift towards more dialogue. The lack of concrete responses from the nuclear powers has perpetuated a gridlock situation. This provides **India with an opportunity to articulate the pertinence of non-proliferation and disarmament dialogue**, which can also strengthen the credibility of India as a responsible stakeholder in the regional and global nuclear context.

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## OPEC

### In The News

The OPEC Secretariat hosted the 4th High-Level Meeting of the OPEC - India Dialogue via videoconference.

### More about News

- The meeting focused on the implications of **COVID-19**, discussing the repercussions of the pandemic and its significant impact on **both the world economy and energy markets**, including oil and the post-COVID scenario.
- OPEC reiterated that **India's support for the producer-consumer dialogue** has greatly contributed to the Organization's success in pursuing the sustainability of the oil market.
  - **Producer-consumer dialogue** is a process of informal, global dialogue on energy at the level of ministers involving at present some 60 key energy countries. It also involves the industry within the Business Forum.
- During the dialogue, **India invited OPEC member countries to invest** in establishing 6.5 MMT of commercial-cum-strategic petroleum storage under a PPP model.
- Meeting also addressed the **issue of Asian Premium and term contracts**.

### About OPEC

- OPEC is a **permanent intergovernmental organization of 13 oil-exporting nations**, originally found by **Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela** at the Baghdad Conference on September 1960.
- OPEC's **objective is to co-ordinate and unify petroleum policies** among member countries, in order to
  - secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers;
  - an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations;

- The **OPEC Secretariat is the executive organ of OPEC located in Vienna**; it also functions as the Headquarters of the Organization.
- It is **headquartered at Vienna, Austria**.
- While, **OPEC+ consists non-OPEC oil producing countries** Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Russia, South Sudan and Sudan along with the 13 OPEC member countries.
- According to current estimates, **79.4% of the world's proven oil reserves are located in OPEC Member Countries**, with the bulk of OPEC oil reserves in the Middle East, amounting to 64.5% of the OPEC total.
- **India is not OPEC member.**
  - **India is world's third-largest oil importer** and 78% of crude oil, 59% of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), and nearly 38% of its liquefied natural gas (LNG) demand is catered by OPEC.
  - **India's oil demand is forecast to rise** from 4.7 million barrels per day in 2019 to 10.7 million bpd by 2045.

### Issues in India OPEC relation

- **Sanctions on Iran:** Various member countries of OPEC along with the US are creating pressure to cut down the imports from Iran, that has raised serious supply concerns for India.
- **Asian Premium:** Saudi Arabia meanwhile charges premium; the extra charge being collected by OPEC countries from Asian countries when selling oil.
- **Depletion of forex:** Major trade with OPEC member states is in US dollar or Euro, which reduces the forex reserve of India.
- **Market instability:** Due to competition and production adjustment there is fluctuation in oil prices that makes hard to maintain stability of rupee and import management.

### Conclusion

OPEC should **do away with discriminatory**

a fair return on capital to those investing in the industry.

**Asian Premium** pricing mechanism to make global level playing pricing mechanism. Also there is need to **use rupee instead of dollar or euro** to buy crude oil to reduce the current account deficit and improving the trade with the OPEC member countries.

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## Forest Rights Act

### In The News

The Jammu and Kashmir administration recently said that it was in the process of implementing the Forest Rights Act, 2006 to grant the rights to forest dwellers in the region.

### About Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA)

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, or Forest Rights Act, 2006 was enacted to protect the marginal and tribal communities and other forest dwellers and balance environmental conservation with their right to life and livelihood.

Key features of the FRA are:

- Following rights have been granted to Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers:
  - **Title rights** - i.e. ownership - to land that is being cultivated by tribals or forest dwellers as on 13 December 2005, subject to a maximum of 4 hectares.
  - **Community rights** - to grazing areas, fishing, accessing water bodies in forests, to pastoralist routes, etc. and to **intellectual property and traditional knowledge** related to biodiversity and cultural diversity
  - **Relief and development rights** - to rehabilitation in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement; and to basic amenities, subject to restrictions for forest protection.
  - **Forest management rights** - to protect, regenerate or conserve or manage any community forest resource which the communities have been traditionally protecting and conserving for sustainable use.
  - **Right to collect and sell minor forest produce (MFP):** These include forest products like tendu leaves, honey and other products that have commercial value.
- **Eligibility to get rights under the Act:** is confined to those who "primarily reside in forests" and who depend on forests and

forest land for a livelihood. Further, either the claimant must be a member of the Scheduled Tribes scheduled in that area or must have been residing in the forest for 75

- **Authority:** The Act provides that the Gram Sabha, will initially pass a resolution recommending whose rights to which resources should be recognised. This resolution is then screened and approved at the level of the sub-division and subsequently at the district level.

### Importance of Forest rights in India

- **Reversing the historical Injustice:** The Act helps in recognising the rights that were denied to forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers since colonial times.
- **Poverty alleviation and inclusive growth:** FRA helps in securing traditional livelihood of forest-dwelling communities by granting them access to the forest products and forest land and facilitating commercial trading in MFPs.
- For Example, around 50-gram sabhas in the Gondia district of Maharashtra organised a federation that guaranteed competitive prices and bonus for the communities for their product collection and earned Rs 2.5 crore by selling Tendupatta.
- **Conservation of forests:** FRA recognizes the symbiotic relationship of the forest dwelling communities with the forests and allows them to manage and conserve the forest using their traditional wisdom.
- For example, the forest cover in community forest reserves in Maharashtra increased from 6.81% in 2000 to 9.32% in 2014.
- **Decentralization:** It provides for democratic decentralisation through Gram Sabhas which facilitates communities to discuss, debate, decide, plan, and effectively implement forest management plans leading to their empowerment.

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- **Curbing extremism:** Implementation of FRA in Left Wing Extremism affected districts not only leads to the development of forest dwellers but also build a relationship of trust and bond between them and the government, thereby reducing land conflict and other grievances.

## Concerns regarding implementation of FRA

- **Little progress in recognition of rights:** FRA has the potential to secure the forest rights of at least 200 million tribals and other traditional forest dwellers over 40 million ha (50 per cent of India's forest land) covering 177,000 villages. However, only 13 per cent of the 40 million ha has been demarcated under the FRA by the environment ministry.
- **Inadequate efforts to promote co-existence and preservation:** Despite Community Forest Resource (CFR) having being recognized, there have been few efforts from the state forest departments to move towards co-existence and supporting and recognizing CFRs by gram sabhas.
- **Diversion of tribal Lands:** There have been instances where plantations by forest agencies are being done on land used by tribal communities and other traditional forest dwellers that are entitled to these lands under FRA.
- As per a study, there has already been a diversion of around 0.39 million hectares (ha) of forest land between 2008 and 2019.
- **Relocation in violation of FRA:** Several people have been denied rights or relocated from Protected areas or critical wildlife habitats without prior assessment whether co-existence is possible and exercising forests rights would lead to irreversible damage to the habitat or species.
- **Discrepancies and delays in the process of recognising claims:** A large number of claims have been pending, rejected or the area recognized has been drastically reduced without any proper reasons along

with imposition of extra-statutory and extraneous conditions in the title for recognised rights.

- The situation has been worsened due to misinterpretation of the law by officials, illiteracy among forest dwellers, lack of awareness about their rights and little knowledge about procedure for filing claims.
- **Other issues:** Inadequate financial and administrative support to implement the law; lack of coordination between the tribal, revenue and forest department; poor or non-functioning of district and sub-division level committees; dissatisfactory Rehabilitation and compensation, etc.

## Way Forward

- **Organizing large scale awareness campaigns:** Efforts should be made to reach out through radio, television and other media to ensure that people receive the basic communication regarding salient provisions of the Act, interpretation of community right etc.
- **Intensive capacity building approach:** Sub-division and district administration officers, especially revenue, forest and tribal functionaries entrusted with the task of processing forest rights have to be systematically trained not only the procedural requirements under FRA but also the challenges and contexts of forest resource use and access pattern.
- **Participation of civil society:** There is a need to identify NGOs working in the area to provide assistance to tribal communities in filing applications, resolving issues of caste certificates, identification and measurement of land and negotiating with the officials to resolve conflicts.
- **Using technology to strengthen outreach:** Technology needs to be utilised to support implementation and make the process more efficient and effective. For instance, GPS survey maps can be used to resolve competing claims at the local level.
- **Expedite the process of claims:** There is a need for reviewing all rejected and pending

claims to individual and community forest rights expeditiously.

- **Ensuring transparency and accountability:** on decision making related to claims procedure. The reasons for rejection or delay in recognition of claims should be conveyed to the claimants.

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## Legalising Betting In India

### In The News

Minister of State for Finance has pitched for legalizing betting in India.

### About betting

- Betting is defined as the action of gambling money on the outcome of a race, game, or other unpredictable event.
- **Public Gambling Act, 1867** is the general law governing gambling in India. However, the state legislatures have been entrusted with significant regulatory leeway to form state specific gambling law.
- There are **no specific central laws governing online gambling in India**. Most of the Gambling Legislations have been enacted prior to the advent of virtual or online gambling and hence these primarily refer to gaming/gambling activities at the physical premises.
- Countries like Australia, United Kingdom, South Africa, Sri Lanka and New Zealand have taken a step in this direction, legalizing and regulating betting in sports.

### Arguments in favor of legalizing betting

- **Revenue source:** Legalising betting will be helpful in the generating income for the government by reducing the illegal spot-fixing, betting practices etc. in India. According to a KPMG study (in 2010), Indian gambling market is estimated at around \$60 Billion, while recent studies peg the value at a higher number.
- **Recommended by Supreme Court mandated committee:** Justice Lodha committee recommended the legalization of betting in Cricket. It opined that a regulatory framework would enable the government in differentiating betting from match fixing.
- **Will augment other sports infrastructure:** The money earned from betting can be used to augment infrastructure for other sports and tourist facilities. Globally sports betting and gambling are utilised to generate funds for good causes and promotion of sports.

- **Check on illegal activities:** This will help in curbing growth of illegal trade and commerce, and corrupt practices such as spot-fixing and match-fixing being employed in sports, particularly cricket. It could ensure detection of fraud and money laundering and would create transparency.
- **Preventing loan-sharking:** Decriminalization of these activities could prevent people from being subjected to loan-sharking, i.e., incurring debts and borrowing loans at exorbitant rates.
- **Better enforcement mechanism:** Regulation would empower agencies to identify and prevent instances of gambling by minors and ‘problem-gamblers’ as well as save the public from any kind of inconvenience at the hands of the law enforcement authorities.
- **At par treatment:** It has also been argued by many that since horse-racing has always been considered legal (as it is considered game of skill), gambling and betting activities should also be treated alike.

### Arguments against

- Such activities **expose and exploit the vulnerable sections of society** and are not consistent and in conformity with the Directive Principles of State Policy.
- It **may breed corruption, match fixing and may give rise to various criminal activities**. Also, some state governments expressed that such activities are unethical and not in the interest of the public at large.
- It has been proven to result in financial losses, **causing an adverse impact on one’s economic state, personal**

### life and social life.

- The existing policy (National Sports Development Code of India, 2011), the current socio-economic atmosphere in the country and the **prevalent social and moral values do not encourage betting and gambling**.

## Way forward

- Betting and gambling transactions should be linked with operator's as well as player's/participant's Aadhaar card/PAN card, so as to ensure transparency and State supervision.
- The cap on the maximum amount that can be staked in a wager could be fixed by law and be strictly implemented.
- Gambling transactions can be made cashless, making use of electronic means of payment such as credit cards, debit cards, net-banking, Virtual Currencies (like Cryptocurrency), etc.
- Stringent law(s) should be put in place to control Foreign Direct Investment and at the same time, to prevent money laundering, while also implementing necessary tax reforms.
- Websites advertising gambling must compulsorily ensure that there is no objectionable or pornographic content on display on their portals/platforms.
- The Parliament may also enact a model law for regulating gambling that may be adopted by the States.

## Bill On Right To Recall Panchayat Member

### In The News

The Haryana Panchayati Raj (Second Amendment) Bill, 2020 passed in the state Assembly.

- The amendment is aimed at increasing their accountability to the voters.

### The Bill:

- Provides the right to recall members of Panchayati Raj institutions to those who elected them.
- Gives women 50% reservation in these rural bodies.
- Provides 8% reservation to the “more disadvantaged” among the Backward Classes.
- Allows the recall of village sarpanches and members of the block-level panchayat samitis and district- level zila parishads if they fail to perform.

### Procedure to be followed:

1. To recall a sarpanch and members of the two bodies, **50% members of a ward or gram sabha have to give in writing that they want to initiate proceedings.**
2. This will be followed by a secret ballot, in which their recall will require **two-third members voting against them.**

### The key mandatory provisions of the 73rd and 74th amendments, are:

- Regular direct elections to all local bodies.
- Setting up of state-level election commission and finance commissions.
- Mandatory reservation of seats for Dalits and Adivasis in every local body, proportionate to their share in the population.
- 33% reservation for women.
- Setting up of District Planning Committees that consolidate plans of rural and urban bodies.

## Procedure To Provide Party Symbol

### In The News

In a major setback for the Kerala Congress (M) PJ Joseph faction, which is part of the UDF in the state, the **Kerala High Court** has dismissed the petitions challenging the Election Commission's order declaring the group led by Jose K Mani as the official Kerala Congress (M) and granting it the official election symbol of “two leaves”.

- The Court said it **cannot, in the exercise of the jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, interfere with the finding of the Commission.**

a pool of nearly 200 “free” symbols that are allotted to the thousands of unrecognised regional parties that pop up before elections.

### How are symbols allotted to political parties?

As per the guidelines, to get a symbol allotted:

1. A party/candidate has to provide a list of three symbols from the EC's free symbols list at the time of filing nomination papers.
2. Among them, one symbol is allotted to the party/candidate on a first-come-first-serve basis.
3. When a recognised political party splits, the Election Commission takes the decision on assigning the symbol.

### Powers of Election Commission:

The **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968** empowers the EC to recognise political parties and allot symbols.

- Under Paragraph 15 of the Order, it can decide disputes among rival groups or sections of a recognised political party staking claim to its name and symbol.
- The EC is also the only authority to decide issues on a dispute or a merger. The Supreme Court upheld its validity in Sadiq Ali and another vs. ECI in 1971.

### How many types of symbols are there?

As per the **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) (Amendment) Order, 2017**, party symbols are either:

1. **Reserved:** Eight national parties and 64 state parties across the country have “reserved” symbols.
2. **Free:** The Election Commission also has

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## Election Of American President

### Who can become the President of the United States of America (USA)?

A candidate should be:

1. A natural-born citizen of the United States.
2. A resident of the United States for 14 years.
3. At least 35 years old.

### Who can vote?

The US President and Vice President are not elected directly by the people. Instead, they are chosen by “electors” through a process called the “Electoral College”.

### How does the electoral college work?

The number of electors from each state is roughly in line with the size of its population. Each state gets as many electors as it has lawmakers in the US Congress (representatives in the House and senators).

- There are 538 electors in total.
- Each elector represents one electoral vote, and a candidate needs to gain a majority of the votes - 270 or more - to win the presidency.

### What happens if no candidate gets a majority?

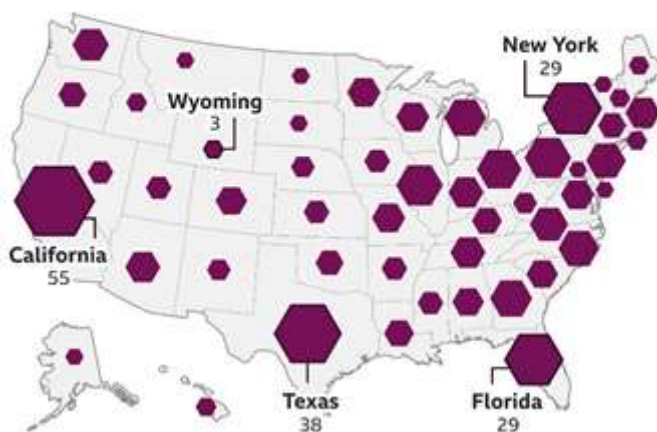
The House of Representatives, the lower house of US lawmakers, will then vote to elect the president.

- This has happened only once, when in 1824 four candidates split the electoral vote, denying any one of them a majority.
- With two parties dominating the US system, this is unlikely to happen today.

### US 2020 election: The electoral votes allocated to each state

270 out of 538 are needed to win the presidency

● Size shows electoral votes per state



Source: usa.gov

BBC

## Can states refuse to implement Central laws?

### In The News

Rajasthan passes Bills to stall Centre's farm laws. The three Bills, pertaining to the State amendments to the Central statutes, were:

1. The Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) (Rajasthan Amendment) Bill, 2020.
2. The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services (Rajasthan Amendment) Bill, 2020.
3. The Essential Commodities (Special Provisions and Rajasthan Amendment) Bill, 2020.

### What's the main issue here?

The three agriculture laws are a clear infringement on the states' right to legislate.

- The main subjects of the three acts are **agriculture and market** that are essentially **state subjects as per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution**.
- However, the Central government finagled its way into the legislation by misconstruing its authority on **food items, a subject in the Concurrent List**, as authority over the subject agriculture.
- However, food items and agricultural products are distinct categories as many agricultural products in their raw forms are not food items and vice versa.

### What does the Constitution say on this?

**Agriculture is in the state list under the Constitution.**

**But, Entry 33 of the Concurrent List** provides Centre and the states powers to control production, supply and distribution of products of any industry, including agriculture.

- Usually, **when a state wants to amend a Central law made under one of the items in the concurrent list, it needs the clearance of the Centre.**
- When a state law contradicts a Central law on the same subject, **the law passed by Parliament prevails.**

### Why the Constitution has envisaged such an arrangement?

This is an arrangement envisaged as most Parliament laws apply to the whole of India and states amending the Central laws indiscriminately could lead to **inconsistencies in different regions on the application of the same law**. In matters of trade and commerce, this could especially pose serious problems.

### The other option available with the states is:

To take Centre to the Supreme Court over the validity of these laws.

- **Article 131** of the Constitution provides exclusive jurisdiction to the Supreme Court to adjudicate matters between the states and the Centre.
- **Article 254 (2)** of the Constitution empowers state governments to pass legislations which negate the Central acts in the matters enumerated under the Concurrent List.
  - A state legislation passed under Article 254 (2) **requires the assent of the President of India.**

### Redefining state agricultural markets:

Another way is **to pass a state law that redefines state agricultural markets as the trade area** that is specified in the Central law (the agricultural market is a place where farmers sell their produce).

Once the notion of a state market is equivalent to the Central government's notion of the trade area, state

governments can easily add specifications and additional measures.

- A state law can include a provision that says that **MSP will be applicable to all state agriculture markets.**
- Since state markets are equivalent to the Centre's notion of the trade area, a state clause will be automatically applicable to the trade area that is mentioned in the Centre's Bill too.

Since there is no reference in the Central Bills about MSP, the question of inconsistency does not

## One Nation, One Election

arise at all **In The News**

PM recently again pitched for ‘**One Nation, One Election**’, saying it is the need of the country as elections taking place every few months hamper development works.

- This was suggested at the recently held **80th All India Presiding Officers Conference**.
- He also suggested that **only one voter list should be used for Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and other elections**.

**What is 'One Nation, One Election'?**

It refers to holding elections to Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, Panchayats and Urban local bodies simultaneously, once in five year.

**But, what are the challenges posed by frequent elections?**

1. Massive expenditure.
2. Policy paralysis that results from the imposition of **the Model Code of Conduct** during election time.
3. Impact on delivery of **essential services**.
4. Burden on crucial **manpower** that is deployed during election time.
5. Puts **pressure on political parties**, especially smaller ones, as elections are becoming increasingly expensive.

**Benefits of Simultaneous Elections:**

- **Governance and consistency:** The ruling parties will be able to focus on legislation and governance rather than having to be in campaign mode forever.
- **Reduced Expenditure of Money and Administration.**
- **Continuity** in policies and programmes.
- **Efficiency of Governance:** Populist measures by governments will reduce.
- The **impact of black money on the voters** will be reduced as all elections are held at a time.

**Impact on Regional parties:**

There is always a tendency for voters to vote the same party in power in the state and at the Centre

in case the Lok Sabha polls and the state elections are held together.

**For simultaneous elections to be implemented, Changes to be made in Constitution and Legislations:**

1. Article 83 which deals with the duration of Houses of Parliament need an amendment.
2. Article 85 (on dissolution of Lok Sabha by the president).
3. Article 172 (relating to the duration of state legislatures).

**The Representation of People Act, 1951 Act** would have to be amended to build in provisions for stability of tenure for both parliament and assemblies. This should include the following crucial elements:

1. Restructuring the powers and functions of the ECI to facilitate procedures required for simultaneous elections
2. A definition of simultaneous election can be added to section 2 of the 1951 act.

## Judge Recuses Himself From Jagan Case

### In The News

Justice U.U. Lalit of the Supreme Court has **recused himself from hearing separate writ petitions** that sought action against the Andhra Pradesh government and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for levelling “false, vague and political allegations” against Supreme Court judge N.V. Ramana and other High Court judges.

### Why?

The judge withdrew from the case because he had, as a lawyer, represented some of the parties involved in the case.

### What is a recusal?

**Judicial disqualification**, referred to as **recusal**, is the act of abstaining from participation in an official action such as a legal proceeding due to a conflict of interest of the presiding court official or administrative officer.

### General Grounds for Recusal:

Motions to recuse or disqualify judges and other adjudicators have been made for all sorts of reasons.

- Most commonly such motions are predicated upon a claim that **the judge is biased in favour of one party, or against another, or that a reasonable objective observer would think he might be**. But such motions are also made on many other grounds, including the challenged judge’s:
  1. Interest in the subject matter, or relationship with someone who is interested in it.
  2. Background or experience, such as the judge’s prior work as a lawyer.
  3. Personal knowledge about the parties or the facts of the case.
  4. Ex parte communications with lawyers or non-lawyers.
  5. Rulings, comments or conduct.

- **Justice J. Chelameswar** in his opinion in **Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India (2015)** held that “Where a judge has a pecuniary interest, no further inquiry as to whether there was a ‘real danger’ or ‘reasonable suspicion’ of bias is required to be undertaken”.
- Besides, In taking **oath of office**, judges, both of the Supreme Court and of the high courts, promise to perform their duties, to deliver justice, “without fear or favour, affection or ill-will”.

### Are there any laws in this regard?

There are **no definite rules on recusals by Judges**.

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## The Chief Minister: Appointment, Power, Function and Position

### In The News

Janata Dal (United) president Nitish Kumar has been elected leader of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) legislature party in Bihar. He will now take oath as **Chief Minister of the State for the fourth consecutive term.**

### Appointment:

The Chief Minister is **appointed by the governor.**

- **Art. 164 of the Constitution** provides that there shall be a Council of Ministers with the Chief Minister at its head to aid and advise the governor.

### Who can be a Chief Minister?

After general election to the State Legislative Assembly, the party or coalition group which secures majority in this House, elects its leader and communicates his name to the Governor. The Governor then formally appoints him as the Chief Minister and asks him to form his Council of Ministers.

- When no party gets a clear majority in the State Legislative Assembly, the Governor normally asks the leader of the single largest party to form the government.

### Tenure:

Theoretically, the Chief Minister holds office during the pleasure of the Governor. However, in actual practice the Chief Minister remains in office so long as he continues to be the leader of the majority in the State Legislative Assembly.

- The Governor can dismiss him in case he loses his majority support.
- The State Legislative Assembly can also remove him by passing a vote of no-confidence against him.

### Powers and Functions of the Chief Minister:

- To Aid and Advise the Governor.
- The Chief Minister is at the Head of the Council of Ministers.
- He is the Leader of the House.
- He has to communicate to the Governor all the decisions of the council of

ministers relating to the administration of the states.

- All the policies are announced by him on the floor of the house.
- He recommends dissolution of legislative assembly to the Governor.
- He advises the Governor regarding summoning, proroguing the sessions of State Legislative Assembly from time to time.

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## Poshan Abhiyaan

### In The News

**NITI Aayog** has released a review report on Poshan Abhiyaan.

### Suggestions made:

- The programme must be stepped up to meet the targets set by the Centre to reduce stunting, wasting and anaemia by 2022.
- Graduate to a **POSHAN-plus strategy** which apart from continued strengthening the four pillars of the Abhiyaan also requires renewed focus on other social determinants in addition to addressing the governance challenges of NHM/ICDS delivery mechanisms.
- Lay as much emphasis on complementary feeding as it does on breastfeeding. This can help avert 60% of the total stunting cases in India.

### About Poshan Abhiyaan:

- The programme seeks to improve nutritional outcomes for **children, pregnant women and lactating mothers**.
- Launched in 2018 with specific targets to be achieved by 2022.

### It aims to reduce:

- Stunting and wasting by 2% a year (total 6% until 2022) among children.
- Anaemia by 3% a year (total 9%) among children, adolescent girls and pregnant women and lactating mothers..

**The target of the mission** is to bring down stunting among children in the age group 0-6 years from 38.4% to 25% by 2022.

### Background:

More than a third of the children under five face stunting and wasting and 40% aged between one and four are anaemic. Over 50% of pregnant and other women were found to be anaemic, said the National Family Health Survey 4 released in 2016.

## Extradition

### In The News

The Supreme Court has refused a plea made by the lawyer of fugitive businessman Vijay Mallya to discharge him from the case and gave the Union government six weeks to file a status report on the progress made in extraditing him from the United Kingdom.

### Background:

India has been pressing the UK to extradite Mallya after he lost his appeals in the British Supreme Court in May against his extradition to India to face money laundering and fraud charges.

However, the UK government had indicated that Mallya is unlikely to be extradited to India anytime soon, saying there is a legal issue that needed to be resolved before his extradition can be arranged.

### What is Extradition?

As defined by Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, 'Extradition is the delivery on the part of one State to another of those whom it is desired to deal with for crimes of which they have been accused or convicted and are justifiable in the Courts of the other State'.

### When can it be initiated?

An Extradition request for an accused can be initiated in the case of under-investigation, under-trial and convicted criminals.

- In cases under investigation, abundant precautions have to be exercised by the law enforcement agency to ensure that it is in possession of prima facie evidence to sustain the allegation before the Courts of Law in the Foreign State.

### What is the Legislative Basis for Extradition in India?

The **Extradition Act 1962** provides India's legislative basis for extradition. It consolidated the law relating to the extradition of criminal fugitive from India to foreign states. The Indian Extradition Act, 1962 was substantially modified in 1993 by Act 66 of 1993.

### Who is the nodal authority for Extradition in India?

The Consular, Passport & Visa (CPV) Division, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India is the Central/Nodal Authority that administers the Extradition Act and it processes incoming and outgoing Extradition Requests.

An alleged offender may not be extradited to the requesting state in the following cases:

1. **No treaty** – In absence of a treaty, States are not obligated to extradite aliens/nationals.
2. **No treaty crime** – Extradition is generally limited to crimes identified in the treaty which may vary in relation to one State from another, as provided by the treaty.
3. **Military and Political Offences** – Extradition may be denied for purely military and political offences. Terrorist offences and violent crimes are excluded from the definition of political offences for the purposes of extradition treaties.
4. **Want of Dual Criminality** – Dual criminality exists when conduct constituting the offence amounts to a criminal offence in both India and the foreign country.
5. **Procedural considerations** – Extradition may be denied when due procedure as required by the Extradition Act of 1962 is not followed.

## National Food Security Act 2013

### In The News

Government weeds out 4.39 crore bogus ration cards under NFSA since 2013.

### National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013:

The objective is to provide for food and nutritional security in human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity.

### Key features:

**Coverage and entitlement under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS):** The TPDS covers 50% of the urban population and 75% of the rural population, with uniform entitlement of 5 kg of food grains per person per month. However, the poorest of the poor households will continue to receive 35 kg of food grains per household per month under Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY).

**Subsidised prices under TPDS and their revision:** For a period of three years from the date of commencement of the Act, Food grains under TPDS will be made available at subsidised prices of Rs. 3/2/1 per kg for rice, wheat and coarse grains.

**Identification of Households:** The identification of eligible households is to be done by States/UTs under TPDS determined for each State.

### Nutritional Support to women and children:

Children in the age group of 6 months to 14 years and pregnant women and lactating mothers will be entitled to meals as per prescribed nutritional norms under Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Mid-Day Meal (MDM) schemes. Malnourished children up to the age of 6 have been prescribed for higher nutritional norms.

**Maternity Benefit:** Pregnant women and lactating mothers will also be receiving maternity benefit of Rs. 6,000. **Women Empowerment:** For the purpose of issuing of ration cards, eldest woman of the household of age 18 years or above is to be the head of the household.

**Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** Grievance redressal mechanism available at the District and State levels.

**Cost of transportation & handling of food grains and Fair Price Shop (FPS) Dealers' margin:** the expenditure incurred by the state on transportation of food grains within the State, its handling and FPS dealers' margin as per norms to be devised for this purpose and assistance to states will be provided by the Central Government to meet the above expenditure.

**Transparency and Accountability:** In order to ensure transparency and accountability, provisions have been made for disclosure of records relating to PDS, **social audits and setting up of Vigilance Committees.**

**Food Security Allowance:** In case of non-supply of entitled food grains or meals, there is a provision for food security allowance to entitled beneficiaries.

**Penalty:** If the public servant or authority fails to comply with the relief recommended by the District Grievance Redressal Officer, penalty will be imposed by the State Food Commission according to the provision.

## National Population Register

### Context:

The office of the Registrar-General of India (RGI) has clarified that the schedule, or the questionnaire, of the **National Population Register (NPR)** is “being finalised” and the information about the expected date of the first phase of Census 2021 is “not available”.

### Background:

A question was filed recently under the **Right to Information Act** seeking information on the expected date of the first phase of the Census — **House listing & Housing census** — and an update of the NPR that was earlier scheduled to begin on April 1.

- The two were to be conducted simultaneously from April to September, but were postponed indefinitely on March 25 due to the pandemic.

### What is National Population Register (NPR)?

It is a **Register of usual residents** of the country.

- It is being prepared at the local (Village/sub-Town), sub-District, District, State and National level under provisions of the **Citizenship Act 1955** and the **Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003**.

- It is **mandatory** for every **usual resident of India** to register in the NPR.

**Objective:** To create a comprehensive identity database of every usual resident in the country. The NPR was **first collected in 2010** and then **updated in 2015**.

### Who is a usual resident?

A usual resident is defined for the purposes of NPR as a person who has resided in a local area for the past 6 months or more or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next 6 months or more.

### NO SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS NEEDED

➤ NPR, a pan-India exercise excluding Assam, will seek info regarding date & place of birth of a usual resident's mother and father as well as his/her identity details like Aadhaar, passport, driving licence & voter ID

➤ A 'usual resident' is defined as a person who has resided in an area for the past 6 months or more or who intends to reside in that area for next 6 months

➤ Data will be recorded as

declared by respondent & no proof or supporting documents will be sought

➤ Sharing Aadhaar, passport, driving licence & voter ID details will be **voluntary**. **PAN details won't be sought**

➤ **No biometrics will be collected during NPR**, though the same can be sourced from UIDAI if needed on the basis of Aadhaar

➤ **NPR was last prepared in 2010** along with Census 2011, followed by updation in 2015



## China To Build A Major Dam On Brahmaputra River

### In The News:

Amid simmering border tension with India along the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)** in Eastern Ladakh, China is planning to build a major hydropower project on Brahmaputra River in Tibet and a proposal for this has been clearly put forward in the **14th Five-Year Plan to be implemented from next year.**

Nagaland and West Bengal.

- The Brahmaputra valley supports the lives of several indigenous communities.

### Response from India and Bangladesh:

Proposals for dams on the Brahmaputra have evoked concerns in India and Bangladesh, the riparian states, and China has downplayed such anxieties saying it would keep their interests in mind.

### What are India's concerns?

1. China's dam building overdrive is a concern because **there are no bilateral or multilateral treaties on the water.**
2. China believes dam building on the Brahmaputra **helps it assert claim over Arunachal Pradesh.**
3. India believes China's projects in the Tibetan plateau **threaten to reduce river flows into India.**
4. Dams, canals, irrigation systems can turn water into a **political weapon** to be wielded in war, or during peace to signal annoyance with a co-riparian state.
5. Denial of hydrological data becomes critical when the flow in the river is very high.
6. China is contemplating northward re-routing of the Yarlung Zangbo.
7. Diversion of the Brahmaputra is an idea China does not discuss in public, because it implies devastating India's northeastern plains and Bangladesh, either with floods or reduced water flow.

### Significance of Brahmaputra river for India:

The Brahmaputra flows for over 3,000km through Tibet, India and Bangladesh.

- It is crucial for India too as its basin is a critical water source for Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim,

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## West Bank And Issues

### In The News:

Mike Pompeo recently paid **the first visit by a U.S. Secretary of State to an Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank**, in a parting show of solidarity with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by the outgoing Trump administration.

- He also issued guidelines for Israeli products made in settlements to be labelled **“Made in Israel” or “Product of Israel”** when imported to the United States, removing the distinction between products made within Israel and those produced in occupied territory.

### Implications:

Mr. Pompeo’s visit departed from past policy that had kept top U.S. officials away from settlements, which Palestinians view as obstacles to a viable future State.

### Background:

Palestinians accused Mr. Pompeo of helping Israel to cement its control over West Bank land that they seek for a State.

### Where is West Bank?

It is a **landlocked territory near the Mediterranean coast of Western Asia**, bordered by **Jordan to the east and by the Green Line separating it and Israel on the south, west and north**. The West Bank also contains a significant section of the western Dead Sea shore.

### What are the disputed settlements here? Who lives there?

- The West Bank was **captured by Jordan after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War**.
- Israel snatched it back during the **Six Day War of 1967**, and has occupied it ever since. During this war, the country defeated the combined forces of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan.
- It has built some 130 formal settlements in the West Bank, and a similar number of smaller, informal settlements have

mushroomed over the last 20-25 years.

- **Over 4 lakh Israeli settlers** — many of them religious **Zionists** who claim a Biblical birthright over this land — now live here, along with some 26 lakh Palestinians.
- The territory is still a point of contention due to a large number of **Palestinians who live there and hope to see the land become a part of their future state**.
- When Israel took control of the land in 1967 it allowed Jewish people to move in, but **Palestinians consider the West Bank illegally occupied Palestinian land**.

### Are these settlements illegal?

The **United Nations General Assembly, the UN Security Council, and the International Court of Justice** have said that the West Bank settlements are violative of the **Fourth Geneva Convention**.

- Under the **Fourth Geneva Convention (1949)**, an occupying power “shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies”.

Under the **Rome Statute** that set up the **International Criminal Court in 1998**, such transfers constitute war crimes, as does the “extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly”.

### India's views:

India: India traditionally believes in the **2-state solution and supports the establishment of a sovereign independent and a viable state of Palestine**. However, India’s support for Palestine has not deterred its growing relationship with Israel.

## Armenia, Azerbaijan Agree On Peace Deal

### Context:

Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed on a deal with Russia to end fierce clashes over **Nagorno-Karabakh**.

has close ties to Azerbaijan, while Russia is allied with Armenia - although it also has good relations with Azerbaijan.

### Background:

Three earlier cease-fire agreements, brokered by Russia, the France and the United States, quickly broke down. The latest Russian effort is distinct for sending peacekeeping troops and for the sweeping concessions Armenia accepted to avoid battlefield losses.

### What was the conflict all about?

A simmering, decades-long conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over **the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh** erupted in late September into the worst fighting the area had seen since a vicious ethnic war in the 1990s.

- Skirmishes have been common for years along the front lines of **Nagorno-Karabakh, which is internationally recognized as a part of Azerbaijan but is home to ethnic Armenians.**

### Why this conflict flared again recently?

1. The region is an ethnic tinderbox.
2. A local fight drew in regional powers.
3. Warning signs went ignored.

### The story of Nagorno-Karabakh:

- Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan, but its population is majority Armenian. As the Soviet Union saw increasing tensions in its constituent republics in the 1980s, Nagorno-Karabakh voted to become part of Armenia - sparking a war which stopped with a ceasefire in 1994. Since then, Nagorno-Karabakh has remained part of Azerbaijan but is controlled by separatist ethnic Armenians backed by the Armenian government. Until recently, negotiations mediated by international powers had failed to deliver a peace agreement.
- Armenia is majority Christian while Azerbaijan is majority Muslim. Turkey

## Sino-British Joint Declaration

### In The News:

Britain has accused China of breaking its international treaty obligations, after four pro-democracy lawmakers were ousted from Hong Kong's legislature on security grounds.

- Britain said the new rules to disqualify elected assembly members was “a clear breach of the **legally binding Sino-British Joint Declaration**”.

### What is it?

- It is an **agreement signed by Britain and China** in 1984 to settle the future of Hong Kong.
- The two governments agreed China would reassume control of Hong Kong, which was occupied by Britain after **the Opium War** in 1840, from July 1, 1997.
- The declaration was later deposited with the United Nations.

### What are the main points of the joint declaration?

- It states that China's basic policies regarding Hong Kong which “**will remain unchanged for 50 years**”, including the promise that **the city would retain a high degree of autonomy**.
- It also states that Hong Kong's legal and judicial system would also be unchanged for 50 years after 1997.
- It held that Britain would be responsible for the administration of Hong Kong until 1997 and the Chinese government would give its cooperation.

### Is the joint declaration still valid now that Beijing governs Hong Kong?

The high degree of autonomy that Beijing pledged to grant Hong Kong has been a thorny subject since the 1997 handover.

The issue was exacerbated in June 2014 when the State Council released a white paper stating that **Beijing had**

### “comprehensive jurisdiction” over Hong Kong.

- Now, China says the declaration was “now void and covered only the period from the signing in 1984

until the handover in 1997”.

But, the Britain argues the agreement remained in effect and was a legally binding agreement that must be honoured.

## What is the Opec+?

### In The News:

After news of a highly effective Pfizer vaccine against Covid-19 and Saudi Arabia's assurance that an **OPEC+ oil output deal could be adjusted to balance the market**, Oil prices have jumped.

### What is the Opec+?

Opec+ refers to **the alliance of crude producers, who have been undertaking corrections in supply in the oil markets since 2017.**

**OPEC plus countries include** Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Russia, South Sudan and Sudan.

### What is OPEC?

1. **The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was founded in Baghdad, Iraq, with the signing of an agreement in September 1960 by five countries namely Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. They were to become the Founder Members of the Organization.**
2. **OPEC is a permanent, intergovernmental organization.**
3. **OPEC's objective is to co-ordinate and unify petroleum policies among Member Countries, in order to secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers; an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations; and a fair return on capital to those investing in the industry.**
4. **It is headquartered in Vienna, Austria.**
5. **OPEC membership is open to any country that is a substantial exporter of oil and which shares the ideals of the organization.**

## Islamic Cooperation countries (OIC)

### In The News

India has lashed out at **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** (formerly Organization of the Islamic Conference) and rejected unwarranted references about Jammu & Kashmir made in resolutions adopted at the **47th Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) session**.

- India has said that OIC has "**no locus standi** in matters strictly internal to India, including that of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir".

### About OIC:

- It is **an international organization founded in 1969**, consisting of 57 member states.
- It is **the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations**.
- The organisation states that it is "**the collective voice of the Muslim world**" and works to "safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony".
- The OIC has **permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union**.
- **Permanent Secretariat** is in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

### Significance of OIC for India:

OIC's growing economic and energy interdependence with India has become important in recent times.

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## Haryana To Reserve 75% Private Jobs

### In The News

**The Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Bill, 2020** has been passed paving way for more **employment opportunities for locals in private sector.**

**local candidates** was challenged in the Andhra Pradesh High Court which observed that “it may be unconstitutional”.

### Key provisions of the Bill:

- **Sectors to be covered:** All the companies, societies, trusts, limited liability partnership firms, partnership firms and any person employing 10 or more persons and an entity, as may be notified by the government from time to time.
- **Exclusion:** It shall not include the central government or state government or any organisation owned by the central or state government.
- **Posts covered:** Posts where the gross monthly salary or wages are not more than Rs. 50,000 or as notified by the government from time to time.
- **Exemption:** The employer may claim exemption where adequate number of local candidates of a desired skill, qualification or proficiency are not available.
- **The employer may be penalised with fine** upto Rs. 5 Lakh for not following provisions of this Act.

### Concerns expressed by experts:

- Haryana's Bill may be in violation of **Article 16**. But, Haryana government claims that while **Article 16 talks about the “public employment”, the Bill only pertains to “private sector employment”**.
- Besides, it may not be in the interest of industry.
- There are apprehensions that if Haryana implements this kind of a reservation, other states will also follow the same and that shall result in a “complete chaos”.
- Previously, **Andhra Pradesh’s decision of introducing 75% reservation for**

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## GST TUSSLE

### In The News

Recently, a tussle had ensued between the Centre and States as there was an estimated shortfall of Rs. 30,000 crores in the GST Compensation Cess.

#### What is GST Compensation Cess and the tussle over it?

GST was implemented through the GST (101<sup>st</sup> Amendment Act), 2016 as a long pending indirect tax reform. It is a single tax that replaces multiple other indirect taxes. The Centre lost out on its power to levy taxes such as excise duty, while the States could no longer levy entry tax, VAT etc. To allay the fears of States regarding loss of revenue, following mechanism was made:

- GST (Compensation to States) Act, 2017 was enacted:
  - o Under the Act, the percentage of **annual revenue growth of a State has been projected to be 14%**. If the annual revenue growth of a State is less than 14%, the State is entitled to receive compensation under the statute.
  - o The **compensation payable to a State** shall be provisionally calculated and **released at the end of every two months period**.
- The generation of revenue under the Act would happen through a GST Compensation Cess:
  - o The cess comprises the **cess levied on sin and luxury goods for five years**.
  - o The entire cess collected during the year is required to be **credited to a non-lapsable Fund (the GST Compensation Cess Fund)**.
  - o The collected compensation cess flows into the CFI and is then **transferred to the Public Account of India**, where the GST compensation cess fund has been created.

The issue arose when payments due for August-September 2019 were delayed. Since then, all subsequent payouts have seen cascading delays. The problem has aggravated and further compounded due to following reasons:

- **Persistent Economic Slowdown:** The slowdown has impacted the demand and consumption levels and has thus dented the overall GST collections (both Centre and States).
- **Effect of the Pandemic:** The pandemic has given an economic shock to the Indian Economy which has dented the tax collection expectations (including the collections from GST Compensation Cess) of both Centre and States.
- **Estimation of 14% revenue growth unrealistic:** The high rate of 14%, which has compounded since 2015-16, has been seen as delinked from economic realities. In the initial meetings of the GST Council, a revenue growth rate of 10.6% (the average all-India growth rate in the three years preceding 2015-16) was proposed but 14% revenue growth was accepted “in the spirit of compromise”.

As a result of these issues, the stalemate reached at a point where States were looking at the GST shortfall of Rs. 30,000 crore and the Centre being in no position to provide for it.

#### What is State's stance on the issue?

Since the GST Compensation acts as a **harbinger of State's trust on Centre**, non-compliance on this agreement has the potential to erode the trust between the Centre-State relationship. In this context, several States have expressed following issues:

- **Centre not honoring its moral and legal obligation:** Finance Ministers of both Kerala and Punjab have argued that the Central Government has a legal, and a moral obligation to compensate the State Governments for the revenue shortfall. A deadlock so early in the implementation of GST has made States skeptical about the future of Fiscal Federalism.
- **Ineffectiveness of the GST Council:** Any dispute regarding GST is to be handled by the GST Council but in the recently concluded 39th GST Council meeting, no steps were taken to create such a dispute resolution mechanism. With a 1/3<sup>rd</sup> voting

power, the Centre has a virtual veto over the decision making in the council (since 3/4<sup>th</sup> majority is needed to pass a decision). This has made the States question the functioning structure of the Council itself.

- **Resort to legal proceedings:** In the absence of an alternate remedy, the only option left for states like Kerala and Punjab is to approach the Supreme Court under Article 131 of the Constitution. Such a judicial remedy to establish fiscal federalism of the states would erode even the limited institutional capital present between Centre and States.

## What is Centre's stance on the issue?

The stand of the Centre on these issues is not based solely on the response to the States but in the background of **low economic growth and negative tax buoyancy rates** (percentage change in tax revenue to percentage change in GDP) which is in addition to almost 25% reduction in collection of Corporate taxes. In this background, the Centre has taken following stands:

- The Centre has refused to compensate the States immediately but has **provided the States with two options** (to make good either the shortfall in compensation arising from GST implementation or the overall shortfall).
  - o **Option 1:** It offered states to borrow the shortfall arising out of GST implementation, to be borrowed through issue of debt under a special window coordinated by the Ministry of Finance. The option is to ensure steady flow of resources similar to the flow under GST compensation on a bi-monthly basis.
  - o **Option 2:** It has offered the states to borrow the entire compensation shortfall (including the COVID- impact portion) through issue of market debt. The states will not be required to repay the principal from any other source. However, the interest shall be paid by the states from their own resources.

☐ The Centre has alongside contended that the revenue shortfall is on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, which

is an 'Act of God', stating that it has **no legal**

**obligation to compensate the States** in this scenario.

- It has also argued that the inflows to the **GST Compensation Fund are to be made from the GST Compensation Cess** and if that is inadequate, the Centre is not obligated to supplement it by diverting flows from other sources.

## The Resolution

The stalemate was finally broken with **all 28 States and 3 UTs with legislatures going with the Option 1** provided by the Centre. Under this option, the Centre has operationalized a special borrowing window of 1.1 lakh crore of which 30,000 crore has been already borrowed by Centre on behalf of the States.

The primary advantage states have here is that the interest on the borrowing under the special window will be paid from the cess as and when it arises until the end of the transition period. After the transition period, principal and interest will also be paid from proceeds of the cess, by extending the cess beyond the transition period for such period as may be required. The states will not be required to service the debt or to repay it from any other source. Moreover, states will also be given permission to borrow the final instalment of 0.5 per cent of GDP (to be availed under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan) even without meeting the pre-conditions.

As this being the debt of the State, it will not reflect in the fiscal balance sheet of the Centre thus creating a **win- win in the short term for both sides**.

## What are the concerns that remain?

Although the immediate issue has been resolved but the helplessness experienced by the States and Centre's

response on the issue has highlighted several potential concerns for the future:

- **Apprehensions regarding changing Dynamics of Fiscal Federalism:** The estimated Rs 30,000 crore shortfall has come at a time when waning fiscal federalism is a burning issue. For instance, Centre's latest decision to suspend the Members of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) Scheme and divert

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that money to the Consolidated Fund of India is being cited as a step towards the centralization of country's financial resources.

- **Persistence of crises in the absence of revenue augmentation:** The central issue in the GST tussle is the shortage of fiscal resources available collectively to both Centre and States. If the revenues do not get augmented, either one or both will have to face the brunt.
- **Expression of doubt by States on Centre fiscal credibility:** Many of the states have expressed doubt over transparency in handling of GST Compensation Cess. For instance, the CAG had reported that the Union government in the very first two years of the GST implementation wrongly retained Rs 47,272 crore of GST compensation cess that was meant to be used specifically to compensate states for loss of revenue.

adhering to the procedure established by the GST Compensation Act, and decreasing over-reliance on cesses and surcharges could repose the lost faith of States in Centre's Fiscal Management.

## Way forward

- **Rebuilding institutional capital to soothe the Centre-State relationship:** Efforts could be made **rejuvenate and rekindle the Inter-State Council** as the body not only has constitutional backing but its mandate and nature of participation is ideally suited for a larger federal role.
  - o Alongside the Inter-State Council, efforts could be made to **increase political capital through institutions like Chief Minister's Conference.**
- **Widening the ambit of GST for revenue augmentation:** The current coverage of GST excludes electricity, petrol, diesel and real estate, as also agriculture. Widening the ambit of GST could provide a larger base for taxation in the long run.
- **Structural reforms:** The augmentation of revenue in the long-term will require structural reforms like reviewing of GST on continuous basis and increasing tax compliance.
- **Increasing transparency in Fiscal management:** Increasing transparency in areas like working of GST Council,

## RBI's Debt Restructuring Scheme

### In The News

Rating agency Crisil has said that as many as 99% of companies rated by it were unlikely to opt for the one-time debt restructuring scheme.

- The finding is based on a preliminary analysis of 3,523 non-micro small and medium enterprise (MSME) companies.
- This is despite two-thirds of the rated entities being eligible for restructuring, based on the parameters proposed by the KV Kamath committee.

Improving business sentiment and the ongoing, gradual recovery has minimised the need to avail of the facility, according to Crisil.

### Background:

In August this year, RBI set up a committee headed by K.V. Kamath on restructuring of loans impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

- The Committee was tasked to recommend parameters for one-time restructuring of corporate loans.

### Recommendations made by the Committee:

1. **Graded approach** to restructuring of stressed accounts based on severity of the impact on the borrowers- Banks can classify the accounts into mild, moderate and severe as recommended by the committee.
2. **Five financial parameters** to gauge the health of sectors facing difficulties- total outside liabilities to adjusted tangible networth, total debt to earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (Ebitda), debt service coverage ratio (DSCR), current ratio and average debt service coverage ratio (ADSCR).
3. **26 sectors** have been identified including auto, aviation, construction, hospitality, power, real estate and tourism.

### Applicability of these recommendations:

- The committee was to scrutinise restructuring of loans above ₹1500 crore.
- The resolution under this framework is

applicable only to those borrowers who have been impacted on account of Covid.

- Only those borrowers which were classified as standard and with arrears less than 30 days as at March 1, 2020 are eligible under the Framework.

### Why these measures were necessary? How serious is the debt problem?

Corporate sector debt worth Rs 15.52 lakh crore has come under stress after Covid-19 hit India, while another Rs 22.20 lakh crore was already under stress before the pandemic.

- This effectively means Rs 37.72 lakh (72% of the banking sector debt to industry) remains under stress.
- This is almost 37% of the total non-food bank credit.
- Besides, Companies in sectors such as retail trade, wholesale trade, roads and textiles are facing stress. Sectors that have been under stress pre-Covid include NBFCs, power, steel, real estate and construction.

## Negative Yield Bonds

### In The News

Last week, China sold negative-yield debt for the first time.

- 5-year bond was priced with a yield of – 0.152%, and the 10-year and 15-year securities with positive yields of 0.318% and 0.664%.

### What are they?

These are **debt instruments that offer to pay the investor a maturity amount lower than the purchase price of the bond.**

- Can be issued by central banks or governments.
- Here, **investors pay interest to the borrower to keep their money with them.**

### Then, why do Investors buy such bonds?

- Such instruments are usually in demand during times of stress and uncertainty. This is to protect their capital from significant erosion.
- From currency fluctuations to deflation, there are scenarios in which purchasers of negative-yield bonds can come out ahead.

### Relationship between Bond Price and Yield:

A bond's **price moves inversely with its yield or interest rate**; the higher the price of a bond, the lower the yield.

The reason for the inverse relationship between price and yield is due, in part, to **bonds being fixed-rate investments.**

1. Investors might sell their bonds if it's expected that interest rates will rise in the coming months and opt for the higher-rate bonds later on.
2. Conversely, bond investors might buy bonds, driving the prices higher, if they believe interest rates will fall in the future because existing fixed-rate bonds will have a higher rate or yield.

**What is the key factor driving this demand today?**

1. It is the **massive amount of liquidity injected by the global central banks** after the pandemic began that has driven up prices of various assets including equities, debt and commodities.
2. Many investors could also be temporarily parking money in negative-yielding government debt for the purpose of **hedging their risk portfolio in equities.**
3. In case the fresh wave of the Covid-19 pandemic leads to further lockdowns of economies, then there could be further negative pressure on interest rates, pushing yields down further, and leading to profits even for investors who put in money at the current juncture.

## MSP And Procurement

### In The News

The recently passed Agri.-reform Bills have created apprehensions among farmers that these legislations will ultimately lead to the dismantling of the MSP regime.

### Procurement regime in India

The procurement mechanism in India functions as an assured market for farmers and plays a role to guide the cropping patterns and incentivize production. To enable procurement Government has instituted a floor price for agricultural produce, namely Minimum Support Price (MSP). MSP serves as a Procurement Price and is used as a market price benchmark. Government notifies MSPs annually for 23 commodities inclusive of 14 kharif, 7 rabi and 2 calendar year season crops. In addition to these 23 crops, Government also notifies Fair and Remunerative Prices (FRP) for sugarcane and jute. The Government notifies MSPs based on the recommendations of an independent body, called **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)**.

### A2 vs. C2 debate

The CACP determines the MSP based on the expenses incurred by the farmer. It is determined in following manner:

- **Expenses incurred (A2)** is estimated by considering cost of production, changes in input price, trends in market prices, demand and supply situation, inter-crop price parity, effect on general price level, effect on cost of living, international market price situation, etc.
- The final MSP is determined as a **function of expenses incurred (A2) and the imputed value of family labour (FL)**.

There have been demands for considering a different costing method (C2). Adopting C2 will entail following changes:

- It would include the **rent paid for any leased-in land**, the **imputed rent** for the owned land, the **interest on owned fixed capital**, and **imputed value of wages to**

**family labour**, in addition to the Cost A2.

- It is also argued that **50 per cent of Cost C2 should be added as the profit component**, for determining the MSP.

With the aforesaid framework for MSP, the existing procurement mechanisms by the government are implemented under:

- **Price Support Scheme (PSS):** Applicable in case of MSP notified crops.
- **Market Intervention Scheme (MIS):** To support commodities, for which MSPs are not notified - fruits/vegetables/other horticultural products.
- **Price Stabilization Fund (PSF):** A scheme to protect consumers from rising prices.
- **Food Corporation of India operations for Central Pool:** Wheat and Paddy is procured to meet buffer norms and for meeting targets of the public distribution system.

### Reform initiated through PM-AASHA

An umbrella scheme has been initiated to further ensure remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce, namely Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA). Following are the key components of the Scheme:

- **Price Support Scheme (PSS):** In Price Support Scheme PSS, physical procurement of pulses, oilseeds and Copra will be done by Central Nodal Agencies with proactive role of State governments.
- **Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS):** Under PDPS, direct payment of the difference between the MSP and the selling/modal price will be made to pre-registered farmers selling his produce in the notified market yard through a transparent auction process. All payment will be done directly into registered bank account of the farmer. This scheme does not involve any physical procurement of crops.
- **Pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPPS):** In addition to PDPS, it has been decided that for oilseeds, states have the option to roll out Private Procurement Stockist Scheme (PPSS) on pilot basis in

selected district/APMC(s) of district involving the participation of private stockist.

## What are the prevalent issues with the procurement framework in India?

- **Limited reach of procurement:** Status of procurement linked to MSP has not been secular either in terms of crops covered or geographic spread. For example, in case of wheat, of the average of 33 per cent of marketed surplus procured, 90 percent procurement is accounted only from Punjab, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh.
- **Largely benefited wheat and paddy farmers:** The procurement of other MSP notified commodities has not been very encouraging. For instance, procurement of oilseeds remained at abysmally low 0.66 percent of the total production.
- **Poor operation of the Price Support Scheme** as can be seen with total procurement of pulses being at only 10 percent of the marketed surplus.
- **Procurement of perishables under MIS is still negligible.**
- **Delayed action:** Market participants have argued that delayed intervention on part of the government in distress situation **benefits the intermediaries more than the farmers.**
- **Shift in production and consumption patterns:** The price and procurement-based interventions have contributed towards higher supply and a supply driven shift towards rice-wheat consumption and cropping. The unseen consequence of this calorie-dominant food security approach has been nutritional deficiency.

## What can be done to overcome these issues and strengthen the procurement system in India?

Following recommendations have been suggested by the Report of the Committee on Doubling Farmer's Income

(chaired by Ashok Dalwai):

- **Adopting a more robust system of procurement:** It recommended, that in addition to strengthening the existing procurement schemes, more such tools be

developed and deployed to **enhance the support and its reach across the country & across crops**, besides **improving speed of response and effectiveness of procurement**, in cases where prices may drop below MSP.

- **Timely market interventions:** Market interventions are also triggered by price linked eventualities. The extent and time of any market intervention should aim also at normalizing the fluctuations in market prices and more importantly the downslide of prices due to temporal post-harvest gluts.
- **Increasing diversification in procurement interventions** There is need to revisit the strategy on demand and supply, including PDS system, for balancing the nutritional security of the population. Such interventions should therefore have differentiated outcomes and appropriate sunset clauses.

## PLI SCHEME

### In The News

Recently, the Government had announced addition of 10 sectors to the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme.

### What is Production Linked Incentive (PLI)?

Production Linked Incentive refers to a rebate given to producers. This rebate is calculated as a certain percentage of sales of the producer (sales referred in it can be total sales or incremental sales). For example, PLI scheme for Electronics Sector offered a rebate of 4-6% on the incremental sales of the producer.

### Government announcement and PLI Scheme in India

Before this announcement, the Centre had rolled out the PLI scheme already for **Mobile Manufacturing and Specified Electronic Components, Critical Key Starting materials/Drug Intermediaries and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients and Manufacturing of Medical Devices.**

With this announcement, the Government has expanded this scheme to 10 more sectors with incentives worth 2 lakh crore over a 5-year period. The additional sectors are:

- Advance Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery
- Electronic/Technology Products
- Automobiles & Auto Components
- Pharmaceuticals drugs
- Telecom & Networking Products
- Textile Products: MMF segment and technical textiles
- Food Products
- High Efficiency Solar PV Modules
- White Goods (ACs & LED)
- Specialty Steel

The final proposals of PLI for individual sectors will be appraised by the **Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC)** and approved by the Cabinet. Savings, if any, from one PLI scheme of an approved sector can be utilized to fund that of another approved sector. Any new sector for PLI will require fresh approval of the Cabinet. With regard to nature of the scheme, following can be cited as key features of the PLI Scheme-

- The **scheme is outcome-based**, which means that incentives will be disbursed only after production has taken place.
- The calculation of incentives is **based on incremental production** at a high rate of growth.
- The scheme **focuses on size and scale** by selecting those players who can deliver on volumes.
- The **selection of sectors** covering cutting-edge technology, sectors for integration with global value chains, job-creating sectors and sectors closely linked to the rural economy, **is highly calibrated.**
- Also, the design of the earlier PLI scheme for electronics is such that it is **compatible with World Trade Organization commitments** as the quantum of support is not directly linked to exports or value-addition.

### What are the potential benefits that may incur from the Scheme?

- **Increasing strategic autonomy:** Efforts have been made to become self-sufficient (or ‘Atmanirbhar’) in sectors which are of strategic importance. For instance-
  - **Telecom equipment** forms a critical and strategic element of building a secured telecom infrastructure and India aspires to become a major original equipment manufacturer of telecom and networking products.
- **Utilizing the Comparative advantage:** In some sectors the domestic industry has comparative advantage over other countries, focusing on these sectors could generate higher returns. For instance-
  - **The Indian pharmaceutical industry** is the third largest in the world by volume and 14th largest in terms of value. It contributes 3.5% of the total drugs and medicines exported globally. India possesses the complete ecosystem for development and manufacturing of

pharmaceuticals and a robust ecosystem of allied industries.

- **Increased ability to tap the high global and domestic demand:** This will help satisfy the growing domestic demand in the respective sectors and also give a fillip to exports.
  - India is expected to have a USD 1 trillion **digital economy** by 2025. Additionally, the Government's push for data localization, Internet of Things market in India, projects such as Smart City and Digital India are expected to increase the demand for **electronic products**.
- **Developing the nascent but high-potential sectors:** These sectors may not be significant but in the present socio-economic context, present high potential.
  - The growth of the **processed food industry** leads to better price for farmers and reduces high levels of wastage. Specific product lines having high growth potential and capabilities to generate medium- to large-scale employment can be tapped.
- This step has been touted as a ‘game-changer’ for the manufacturing sector as it is expected to **attract foreign players, generate employment** in the country (with focus on labour intensive sectors like Textile), **increase exports** and consequently integrate the economy with the global supply chain.
- From the perspective of industry, the scheme indicates an **attitudinal shift from ‘discouragement’ to ‘encouragement’** for large industries and simultaneously provides the much-needed fiscal space required during the Pandemic.

## What are the potential issues with the scheme?

- **Gradual withdrawal of scheme critical to long-term development:** The incentives should be well-crafted and temporary so that the industries receiving support can mature and become economically viable without protection. Keeping them in place for too

long may slow down, rather than accelerate growth in these sectors.

- **Designing sector specific incentives:** The implementation of PLI scheme in the Electronics sector and Pharmaceutical sector has highlighted that every sector has to have different eligibility thresholds. Given the large range of activities covered in the 10 sectors, effectively determining the thresholds for each could become a difficult task.
- **May interfere natural economic processes:** In the long run, an economy can become competitive only when sectors can die and be born. Resources get reallocated to sectors that see higher productivity growth. External interference may hinder optimized allocation of resources.
- **The sectors that don't get an incentive are at a relative disadvantage:** The limited resources of the economy in the form of Capital and human resources will be nudged towards incentivized sectors thus indirectly disincentivizing other sectors.

## What can be done to ameliorate these issues and further improve the scheme?

- **Pre-defined Sunset clause on scheme:** It will not only be beneficial for the sector in the long-term, it will also encourage the individual players to see it as a one-time opportunity for capacity building.
- **Improve technological competence:** The breathing room created by these incentives could be used by the industry players to increase their technological competence and transition towards becoming globally competitive.
- **Improve business environment:** It can be done by improving transparency and predictability in the policy framework. For example, simplification of taxation regime or easing the land acquisition process etc. This becomes even more important for industries which are outside the purview PLI Scheme.
- **Managing the real exchange rate**

**better to strengthen the export regime:** The real exchange rate (adjusted for inflation) in India has appreciated 19% in the last decade on account of both Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI). This appreciation negatively effects the overall exports. Thus, ensuring minimal real exchange rate appreciation is critical to boosting exports in the long run.

- **Reinvigorating the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP):** Several industry experts have highlighted that large scale production can only be achieved if the supply side bottleneck of infrastructure is satisfied. The plan proposed by the NIP can provide a way forward.

## Polavaram Project

### In The News:

Andhra Pradesh government recently said that it is planning to complete **the Polavaram project** by 2022 kharif season, and six other projects — **Vamsadhara-Phase 2, Vamsadhara-Nagavali link, Owk tunnel-2, Velugonda- Phase 1 and Nellore and Sangam barrages** — in 2020-21.

(Note: Please try to have an overview of important irrigation projects and rivers across which they are being built. Also, locate them on the map.)

### About the Polavaram project:

- The dam is being **built across the Godavari River in Andhra Pradesh.**
- It will facilitate an inter-basin **transfer to the Krishna river basin through its Right canal.**
- Its **reservoir spreads in parts of Chhattisgarh and Orissa States also.**
- The project is a multipurpose major terminal reservoir **project for development of Irrigation, Hydropower and drinking water facilities.**
- The project was **accorded national status in 2014** in the Andhra Pradesh Bifurcation Act and its design was changed.

## Kalvari Class Of Submarines

### In The News:

Indian Navy's **fifth Kalvari-class Diesel Electric attack submarine INS Vagir** was launched recently at Mazgaon Dock in Mumbai.

- The other vessels in the class are INS Kalvari, INS Khanderi, INS Karanj, INS Vela and INS Vagsheer.

### About Kalvari Class of submarines:

This class of submarines have **Diesel Electric transmission systems** and these are primarily attack submarines or '**hunter-killer**' type which means they are designed to target and sink adversary naval vessels.

- **They can be used** in anti-warship and anti-submarine operations, intelligence gathering and surveillance and naval mine laying.
- These submarines are built under **Project 75** and their design is based on **the Scorpene class of the submarines**.
- Being constructed by the public sector shipbuilder **Mazagon Dock Ltd (MDL)** in Mumbai.
- Design is **based on Scorpene class of submarines** designed and developed by French defence major Naval Group formerly DCNS and Spanish state owned entity Navantia.

## India's Deep Sea Mission

### In The News:

India will soon launch an ambitious ‘Deep Ocean Mission’.

- Required approvals are being obtained for the mission.

### About the Mission:

The mission proposes to explore the deep ocean similar to the space exploration started by ISRO about 35 years ago.

**The focus of the mission** will be on deep-sea mining, ocean climate change advisory services, underwater vehicles and underwater robotics related technologies.

- **Two key projects** planned in the ‘Deep Ocean Mission’ report include a **desalination plant** powered by tidal energy and a **submersible vehicle** that can explore depths of at least 6,000 metres.

### Significance:

- The mission will give a boost to efforts to explore India's vast Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf.
- The plan will enable India to develop capabilities to exploit resources in **the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB)**.

### Potential:

**India has been allotted 75,000 square kilometres in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB)** by UN International Sea Bed Authority for exploration of poly-metallic nodules.

- **CIOB reserves contain** deposits of metals like iron, manganese, nickel and cobalt.
- It is envisaged that **10% of recovery of that large reserve can meet the energy requirement of India for the next 100 years.**

### What are PMN?

**Polymetallic nodules** (also known as **manganese nodules**) are potato-shaped, largely porous nodules found in abundance carpeting the sea floor of world oceans in deep sea.

**Composition:** Besides manganese and iron, they contain nickel, copper, cobalt, lead, molybdenum, cadmium, vanadium, titanium, of which nickel, cobalt and copper are considered to be of economic and strategic importance.

## Sentinel-6 Satellite

### In The News:

The **Copernicus Sentinel-6 Michael Freilich satellite** is designed to monitor oceans.

- It was recently launched from California aboard a **SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket**.
- This is a part of the next mission dedicated to measuring changes in the global sea level.

### What is the mission?

- The mission is called the **Jason Continuity of Service (Jason-CS) mission**.
- It is designed to measure the height of the ocean, which is a key component in understanding how the Earth's climate is changing.
- It has been developed jointly by the European Space Agency (ESA), NASA, European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (Eumetsat), the USA's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the EU, with contributions from France's National Centre for Space Studies (CNES).

### What will the satellite do?

- Provide measurements of global sea-level rise.
- Send pulses to the Earth's surface and measure how long they take to return to it, which will help scientists measure the sea surface height.
- Measure water vapour along this path and find its position using GPS and ground-based lasers.

### Significance of the Mission:

This data will allow improvements in both short-term forecasting for weather predictions in the two-to-four-week range (hurricane intensity predictions), and long-term forecasting, for instance for seasonal conditions like **El Niño and La Niña**.

### Why is it important to measure the height of the

### ocean?

1. With this, it is possible to observe the height of the oceans on a global scale and monitor critical changes in ocean currents and heat storage only from space.
2. It helps scientists foresee the effects of the changing oceans on the climate.
3. In order to measure and track changes in the oceanic heat budget, scientists need to know the ocean currents and heat storage of the oceans, which can be determined from the height of the sea surface.

**Other satellites that have been launched since 1992 to track changes in the oceans on a global scale include:**

The TOPEX/Poseidon, Jason-1 and OSTN/Jason-2, among others.

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## Chang'e-5 probe

### In The News

It is an **unmanned spacecraft** launched by China recently.

- The probe is named after **the mythical Chinese moon goddess**.
- **The rocket is comprised of four parts:** an orbiter, a returner, an ascender and a lander.
- The objective of the mission is **to bring back lunar rocks, the first attempt by any nation to retrieve samples from the moon in four decades**.
- If successful, **China will be only the third country to have retrieved samples from the moon, following the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s**.
- This will **help scientists learn about the moon's origins, formation and volcanic activity on its surface**.

### Identified location for the collection of samples:

The Chinese probe will collect 2 kg of surface material from a previously unexplored area known as **Oceanus Procellarum** — or “**Ocean of Storms**” — which consist of a vast lava plain.

### The Chang'e-5 mission is expected to realize four "firsts" in China's space history:

1. The first time for a probe to take off from the surface of the Moon.
2. The first time to automatically sample the lunar surface.
3. The first time to conduct unmanned rendezvous and docking in lunar orbit.
4. The first time to return to Earth with lunar soil samples in escape velocity.



## Pfizer vaccine

### In The News

A vaccine jointly developed by Pfizer and BioNTech was 90 per cent effective in preventing Covid-19 infections in ongoing Phase 3 trials.

### What is Phase 3 trial?

During phase three vaccine trials the emphasis for drugmakers is on both determining **the efficacy and the safety of a vaccine**.

- This is done so that explicit data can be presented to the various global and national bodies which govern the approval and registering of drugs.
- If the vaccine is determined effective and relatively safe it will be approved for distribution.

### How the vaccine was developed?

- The Pfizer and BioNTech vaccine uses **messenger RNA (mRNA) technology**, which relies on synthetic genes that can be generated and manufactured in weeks, and produced at scale more rapidly than conventional vaccines.
- **Unlike traditional vaccines**, which work by training the body to recognise and kill proteins produced by pathogens, **mRNA tricks the patient's immune system to produce viral proteins itself**. The proteins are harmless, but sufficient to provoke a robust immune response.

### Challenges ahead:

1. Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine is among the ones **requiring storage at ultracold temperatures**. But, billions of people are in countries that don't have the necessary infrastructure to maintain the cold chain for either existing vaccines or more conventional coronavirus candidates.
2. Many questions also remain including **how long the vaccine will provide protection**.
3. WHO has also warned that **there was a funding gap of \$4.5bn that could slow access to tests, medicines and vaccines in low- and middle-income countries**.

### But, in general, why do we need to vaccinate?

The big idea behind vaccinating the public is **to reach an inflection point where so many people will have**

**taken the vaccine that the virus doesn't have enough viable hosts to continue jumping from person to person** and, eventually, as the overwhelming number of people who are essentially partially-immune increase, the virus dies out. This is a form of **herd immunity**.

## Things you need to know about mRNA vaccines

### In The News

The novel **m-RNA vaccine candidate** of the Pune-based Gennova Biopharmaceuticals was approved for funding as early as July by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT).

- Being a **biological product that requires genetic manipulation**, it needs to be cleared by the **Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation (RCGM)**, a DBT body, before it can approach the Drug Controller General of India for human trials.
- It is now being said that this vaccine may be ready in March.

### First of all, how do vaccines work?

Vaccines work by **training the body to recognise and respond to the proteins produced by disease-causing organisms, such as a virus or bacteria.**

Traditional vaccines are made up of **small or inactivated doses of the whole disease-causing organism, or the proteins that it produces**, which are introduced into the body to provoke the immune system into mounting a response.

### What are mRNA vaccines?

mRNA vaccines **trick the body into producing some of the viral proteins itself.**

- They work by using **mRNA, or messenger RNA**, which is **the molecule that essentially puts DNA instructions into action.**
- Inside a cell, mRNA is used as a template to build a protein.

### How it works?

1. To produce an mRNA vaccine, scientists produce a synthetic version of the mRNA that a virus uses to build its infectious proteins.
2. This mRNA is delivered into the human body, whose cells read it as instructions to build that viral protein, and therefore create some of the virus's molecules themselves.

3. These proteins are solitary, so they do not assemble to form a virus.
4. The immune system then detects these viral proteins and starts to produce a defensive response to them.

### Significance of mRNA vaccines:

There are two parts to our immune system: **innate** (the defences we're born with) and **acquired** (which we develop as we come into contact with pathogens).

- **Classical vaccine molecules** usually only work with the acquired immune system and the innate immune system is activated by another ingredient, called an **adjuvant.**
- Interestingly, **mRNA in vaccines could also trigger the innate immune system**, providing an extra layer of defence without the need to add adjuvants.

## Spike In Ammonia Levels In Yamuna

### In The News:

Ammonia levels in the river, flowing into Delhi from Haryana, had reached nearly 3 parts per million (ppm) on Thursday, almost six times above the acceptable limit of 0.5ppm.

### What is the acceptable limit?

The acceptable maximum limit of ammonia in drinking water, **as per the Bureau of Indian Standards, is 0.5 ppm.**

### What is ammonia and what are its effects?

Ammonia is a colourless gas and is used as an industrial chemical in the production of fertilisers, plastics, synthetic fibres, dyes and other products.

- It consists of hydrogen and nitrogen. In its aqueous form, it is called **ammonium hydroxide**.
- This inorganic compound has a pungent smell.
- **Occurrence:** Ammonia occurs naturally in the environment from the breakdown of organic waste matter.
- It is lighter than air.

### Contamination:

It may find its way to ground and surface water sources through industrial effluents or through contamination by sewage.

- If the **concentration of ammonia in water is above 1 ppm it is toxic to fishes.**
- In humans, long term ingestion of water having ammonia levels of 1 ppm or above may cause damage to internal organs.

### How does it enter the Yamuna?

The most likely source is believed to be effluents from dye units, distilleries and other factories in Panipat and Sonapat districts in Haryana, and also sewage from some unsewered colonies in this stretch of the river.

### What needs to be done?

1. Stringent implementation of guidelines against dumping harmful waste into the

river.

2. Making sure untreated sewage does not enter the water.
3. Maintain a sustainable minimum flow, called the ecological flow. This is the minimum amount of water that should flow throughout the river at all times to sustain underwater and estuarine ecosystems and human livelihoods, and for self regulation.

### Challenges ahead:

1. Delhi dependent on Haryana for up to 70 per cent of its water needs.
2. Haryana, with a large number of people involved in agriculture, has water paucity issues of its own.
3. Both states have argued over maintaining 10 cumecs (cubic meter per second) flow in the Yamuna at all times.
4. Both states have approached the courts several times over the past decade to get what they call an equitable share of water.
5. The lack of a minimum ecological flow also means accumulation of other pollutants. After water is extracted from the river for treatment in North East Delhi, what flows is mostly untreated sewage and refuse from homes, run off from storm water drains and effluents from unregulated industry.

## Project Lion

### About Project Lion

Six new sites apart from the Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary were identified under **Project Lion** that was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 15, 2020.

### The six new sites include:

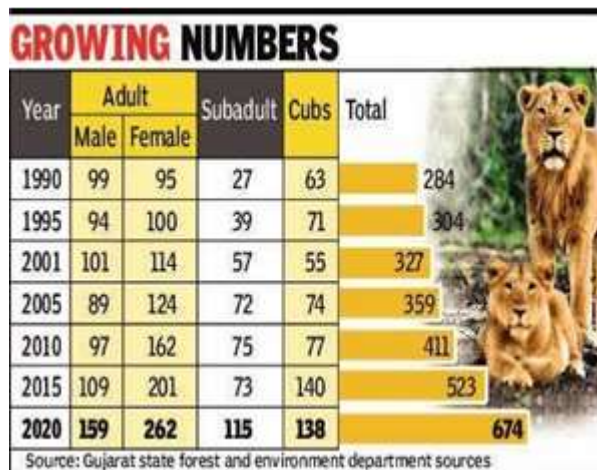
1. Madhav National Park, Madhya Pradesh.
2. Sitamata Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan.
3. Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan.
4. Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh.
5. Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan.
6. Jessore-Balaram Ambaji WLS and adjoining landscape, Gujarat.

Lion relocation has been talked about since 1995, when the Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary was identified as an alternate site. What is the need for relocation?

- The **population in Gir has low genetic diversity**, making it vulnerable to threats of extinction from epidemics.
- Lions are found in Gujarat across an area of 30,000 sq km called **the Asiatic Lion Landscape (ALL)**.
- Besides, the 2013 Supreme Court order directed Gujarat to relocate lions to the Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary.

### About Asiatic Lions:

Listed as ‘**Endangered**’ under the IUCN Red List. Its population is restricted to the state of Gujarat in India (Gir National Park).



## Bio-Decomposer Technique

### In The News

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has said that **the bio-decomposer technique of converting stubble into manure has shown success.**

- This claim was based on the initial results from a farm where **the bio-decomposing solution, developed under the guidance of the PUSA Institute,** was being tried out by the Delhi government.

### What next?

- The government would now present this alternative in the Supreme Court owing to its effectiveness and cost.
- This solution can also be tried by farmers in Punjab and Haryana.

### How were these bio-decomposers formed?

**Pusa Decomposer is a mix of seven fungi** that produce enzymes **to digest cellulose, lignin and pectin in paddy straw.**

- The fungi thrive at 30-32 degree Celsius, which is the temperature prevailing when paddy is harvested and wheat is sown.

### How these decomposers are used on fields?

- A liquid formulation is formed using decomposer capsules and fermenting it over 8-10 days and then spraying the mixture on fields with crop stubble to ensure speedy bio-decomposition of the stubble.
- The farmers can prepare 25 litre of liquid mixture with 4 capsules, jaggery and chickpea flour. The mixture is sufficient to cover 1 hectare of land.
- It takes around 20 days for the degradation process to be completed.

### Benefits of PUSA decomposers:

1. Improves the fertility and productivity of the soil as the stubble works as manure and compost for the crops and lesser fertiliser consumption is required in the future.
2. It is an efficient and effective, cheaper, doable and practical technique to stop

stubble burning.

3. It is an eco-friendly and environmentally useful technology.

## Coastal Regulation Zone Norms

### In The News

The **Supreme Court** has extended the mandate of **one-member committee of retired Kerala High Court judge Justice K Balakrishnan Iyer** constituted to determine the compensation paid to **flat owners of Maradu municipality of Kochi district**, whose houses were demolished for being in violation of **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ)** norms in the state.

### What's the issue? (Just try to know background of the issue):

On September 23, last year the top court had observed that illegal construction in coastal areas of Kerala is a "colossal loss" to the environment and expressed shock over a spate of unauthorised structures coming up at Kochi's Maradu.

- Coming down heavily on the Kerala government for not complying with its orders to demolish four apartment complexes built in violation of **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ)**, the top court had asked the chief secretary to conduct a survey to gauge the extent of devastation caused to nature.
- On May 8, 2019 the apex court had directed that such buildings be removed within a month's times, which were constructed in a notified CRZ, which was part of the tidally-influenced water body in Kerala.

### What are CRZ norms?

Under the **section 3 of Environment Protection Act, 1986** of India, Coastal Regulation Zone notification was issued in February 1991 for the first time.

In **2018-19**, fresh Rules were issued, which aimed to remove certain restrictions on building, streamlined the clearance process, and aimed to encourage tourism in coastal areas.

### Objectives:

- They restrict certain kinds of activities — like large constructions, setting up of new industries, storage or disposal of hazardous material, mining, reclamation

and bunding — within a certain distance from the coastline.

### What are the restrictions?

- The **restrictions depend on criteria** such as the population of the area, the ecological sensitivity, the distance from the shore, and whether the area had been designated as a natural park or wildlife zone.
- The latest Rules have a **no-development zone of 20 m** for all islands close to the mainland coast, and for all backwater islands in the mainland.

For the so-called **CRZ-III (Rural)** areas, two separate categories have been stipulated.

1. In the densely populated rural areas (**CRZ-IIIA**) with a population density of 2,161 per sq km as per the 2011 Census, the no-development zone is 50 m from the high-tide level, as against the 200 m stipulated earlier.
2. **CRZ-IIIB** category (rural areas with population density below 2,161 per sq km) areas continue to have a no-development zone extending up to 200 m from the high-tide line.

### Implementation:

While the CRZ Rules are made by the Union environment ministry, implementation is to be ensured by state governments through their **Coastal Zone Management Authorities**.

## Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)

### In The News

The air quality of Delhi and Noida continued to be in the ‘severe’ category for the sixth consecutive day.

So, the newly formed **Commission on Air Quality Management**, as an interim measure, has given the **CPCB powers to operationalise measures under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) on air pollution.**

### What is GRAP?

The GRAP is a set of emergency measures to be implemented to control air pollution depending upon the air quality.

- **Approved by the Supreme Court in 2016.**
- The plan was **prepared by Environment Pollution (Prevention & Control) Authority.**
- It works only as **an emergency measure.** When the air quality shifts from

poor to very poor, **the measures listed have to be followed since the plan is incremental in nature.**

### Overview of the plan:

1. The plan requires action and coordination among 13 different agencies in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan (NCR areas).
2. At the head of the table is the EPCA, mandated by the Supreme Court.
3. Before the imposition of any measures, EPCA holds a meeting with representatives from all NCR states, and a call is taken on which actions has to be made applicable in which town.

### About the Commission on Air Quality Management:

Set up through the ‘**Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas**

**Ordinance 2020**’ in October this year.

- The Commission will supersede bodies such as the central and state pollution

control boards of Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, UP and Rajasthan.

- It will have **the powers to issue directions to these state governments on issues pertaining to air pollution.**

### Composition:

It will be a **permanent body and will have over 20 members.**

**Chairperson:** To be chaired by a government official of the rank of Secretary or Chief Secretary.

### Jurisdiction:

**Exclusive jurisdiction over the NCR, including areas in Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan,** in matters of air pollution, and will be working along with CPCB and ISRO, apart from the respective state governments.

## Blue Tide

### In The News

The tide producing a **fluorescent blue hue**, popularly known as **bioluminescence**, recently made an appearance at Mumbai's Juhu Beach and Devgad Beach in Sindhudurg, along Maharashtra's coastline.

### Background:

Bioluminescence has been an annual occurrence along the west coast since 2016, especially during the months of November and December.

### Why is it caused?

The spectacle occurs when phytoplankton (microscopic marine plants), commonly known as **dinoflagellates**, produce light through chemical reactions in proteins. **Waves disturb these unicellular microorganisms and makes them release blue light.**

Main factors for its occurrence could be eutrophication – the reduction of oxygen in the water – which makes the phytoplanktons very dominant.

### Why it is dangerous?

The spectacle may be beautiful, but it may also be a signal of danger. **Many of the species in this group are toxic.** If dinoflagellates reproduce rapidly, they may cause so-called ‘**red tides**’.

- During this period all the animals (molluscs, fish, etc.) that feed on dinoflagellates

also become toxic due to the accumulation of high amounts of toxins from dinoflagellates.

- It is dangerous to eat such sea animals because the toxins that are contained in them may have various unpleasant effects: some merely irritate the bowel and cause food poisoning, whereas others, being neurotoxins, may even have an effect on memory.
- Some species, such as the sea sparkle (*Noctiluca scintillans*) are not as toxic, but may have other unpleasant effects.



## Kerala's New 118A Law

### In The News

Kerala Government has introduced **Section 118A in the Kerala Police Act**, to penalise ‘offensive,’ ‘abusive,’ and ‘threatening’ social media posts.

- This has been introduced through the ordinance route.

### According to the new law:

“Whoever makes, expresses, publishes or disseminates through any kind of mode of communication, any matter or subject for threatening, abusing, humiliating or defaming a person or class of persons, knowing it to be false and that causes injury to the mind, reputation or property of such person or class of persons or any other person in whom they have interest shall on conviction, be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years or with fine which may extend to ten thousand rupees or with both.”

- This means that a person can face three years in jail and a fine of Rs 10,000 for any social media post

that is considered “offensive” or “defamatory”.

- This is not just for writing or creating such a post, but those who share that post or opinion will also face the same kind of punishment.

### Need for:

A similar law was repealed by the Supreme Court in 2015 along with **Section 66A of the IT Act — Section 118(d) of the Kerala Police Act** — for being a threat to free speech.

- Therefore, this new law has been brought in to **‘fill the gap’** left by the repealing of the two laws, which

leaves current laws ‘inadequate’ to prevent crimes online which have ‘caused considerable distress to the women in our society’ and cyber attacks that are ‘turning into a threat to privacy’.

### Why is the law being criticised?

Experts have called this law as draconian because:

1. It is being seen as **an attempt to stifle not only dissent but also freedom of speech and expression.**
2. It has **resurrected the “same legal vices”** the Supreme Court had **“trashed”** by scrapping Section 66 A of the IT Act.
3. The law is **unspecific and indistinct and can be indiscriminately misused by individuals or even the government and the police**, who may use it against those whom they simply disagree with.
4. Though the Kerala government claims it is to **fight cyber crimes against women**, that has **not found any mention in the law either.**
5. It restricts speech without any domain limitation, it restricts Article 19 of the Constitution in an active way and is **not protected by Article 19(2).**
6. It will effectively be a **DDOS attack (denial-of-service attack)** on the police functioning on the state, as well as on the police. There will be a huge rush of FIRs filed against all kind of issues between people.
7. It gives power to the police to file suo-motu cases against anyone.

### Old 118(d)

2011 amendment to Kerala Police Act  
Invalidated by SC with 66A in 2015

“any person who cause annoyance to any person in an indecent manner by statements or verbal or comments or telephone calls or calls of any type or by chasing or sending messages or mails by any means shall, on conviction be punishable **with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years or with fine not exceeding ten thousand rupees or with both**”

### 118A

Punishment for making, expressing, publishing or disseminating any matter which is threatening, abusive, humiliating or defamatory - Whoever makes, expresses, publishes or disseminates through any kind of mode of communication, any matter or subject for threatening, abusing, humiliating or defaming a person or class of persons, knowing it to be false and that that causes injury to the mind, reputation or property of such persons or class of persons or any other person in whom they have interest shall on conviction, be punished **with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 3 years or with fine which may extend to ten thousand rupees or with both**

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## Nudging

### Introduction

Decisions made by real people often deviate from the standard template of the rational human being. This has generated the need for newer strategies to predict and mold behavior. Drawing on the psychology of human behavior, behavioral economics and social psychology the idea of ‘nudge’ can be used to encourage people towards desirable behavior.

### What is Nudging?

Nudging can be defined as a “a set of actions” which are used to change people’s behavior without affecting their independence or significantly changing the available economic incentives. For example, the Indian Government nudged consumers to forgo the LPG subsidy when the campaign was changed from “give it up” to “think about the subsidy”. This nudged indirectly encouraged people to think and tapped their emotional side without changing the economic incentive.

Recently, the nudge based behavioral change has been getting global acceptance. For instance, Economic Survey 2018-19 also talked about nudging as an economic policy tool. Following can be cited as reasons why Nudge theory is gaining popularity:

- **Looks beyond the cognitive boundaries, biases or habits:** Most of the behavioral change ideas are based on assumptions regarding human behavior and are structurally incapable of incorporating habits, biases or cognitive boundaries. Nudge theory on the other hand integrates insights from these issues by engaging with behavior at microeconomic level.
- **Soft nature of intervention:** Every human being has a natural **psychological reluctance**. As a result, hard interventions like prohibitions, bans etc. are most times immediately followed by non-compliance. Nudge interventions on the other hand maintain the freedom of choice and hence have higher acceptability. Nudges work on tendencies rather than radical change.

### How can Nudge practice be used to encourage more desirable behavior?

- **Encourage ‘collective good’ over ‘individual choice’:** For people to sacrifice their individual choice, it becomes important for them to believe that their act can create a difference. This belief can be nudged by changing cultural norms or providing them regular encouragement. For example, Swachh Bharat Campaign has increased the cultural threshold for cleanliness which encourages people to refrain from littering.
- **Making ‘desirable action’ easy:** If desirable options are easy to comply, they tend to drastically increase the desirable behavior. For example, making organ donation in case of a fatal accident an auto-enrollment or opt-out rather than an opt-in policy, would lead to an immediate spike in the rates of organ donation as has been seen in several countries.
- **Altering the cultural pre-occupation:** Many times, the traditional or cultural practices are not in line with the desirable behavior, which creates friction. For example, the Air pollution and bursting crackers in Diwali issue in NCT Delhi. Here **nudging the cultural ideal towards environmentally friendly choices** like green crackers could be a viable policy intervention.
- **Providing real and immediate incentives:** Providing immediate incentives conditions the desirable outcome as rewarding and thus changing behavior in the long run.
- **Countering the lack of information and misinformation:** In the era of post-truth, many decisions are guided by misinformation and the circulating fake news. For example, misinformation about the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccine. Regular nudges in the form of advertisements, encouragement by doctors can help counter this misinformation and increase the acceptance for vaccines.
- **Implementing tough and inconvenient solutions:** The initiatives taken during the

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COVID-19 pandemic would have been impossible, since the citizens had to sacrifice their freedom without any immediate incentive. But the nudges in the form of addresses by the PM and the cultural context created by the authorities encouraged people to behave in desirable manner.

## Is nudging public behavior ethical?

- Nudging operates at a psychological level altering behavior, choices and actions. The fact that the citizens are not outrightly aware of the intervention happening on them creates certain ethical issues:
- **Limited real autonomy:** Some experts argue that nudging interferes in decisions made by the stakeholder without consciously informing them thus creating a scenario where nudging entity could force the nudged entity towards a certain outcome. For example, the government should not impose their goals and values on citizens, in societies where individuals hold very different conceptions of what is good.
- **Potential manipulation of citizens:** The sense of manipulation depends on the methodology followed for Nudging. For example, opting for opaque methods of nudging which are personally motivated could be termed as manipulation. For example, private players nudging consumers to buy their product to generate profits can be termed manipulation.
- **Shifting burden to citizens:** Several experts have alleged that moving towards a Nudge based policy regime would lead to shifting of accountability from actions of government to behavior of citizens. For example, if a nudge-based policy doesn't generate the desired outcomes, it could be argued that the reason is public behavior and not poor governmental efficacy.
- Although, these apprehensions have a real possibility to get manifested, efforts could be taken to overcome these issues.
- **How can nudge behavior be used both ethically and effectively?**
- **Increasing awareness with regard to the concept of Nudge:** Keeping entities actively informed regarding the policies being

undertaken by the Government increases transparency in the policymaking on one hand and simultaneously gives entities an opportunity to make an informed choice on their decisions. Thus, allaying the fears related to real autonomy and manipulation.

- **Scientific basis for creating policy structure:** Scientific evaluations should be made to decide which areas are suitable for nudge-based interventions and also which type of nudge would be most suited for the situation.
- **Working on case-to-case basis:** Similar nudge policies generate different response in different people and different situations. For example, cash incentive may help increase the participation in vaccine drives in some areas and may not help in some areas. Consequently, every case and every region has to be dealt individually.

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## What is 16 Psyche?

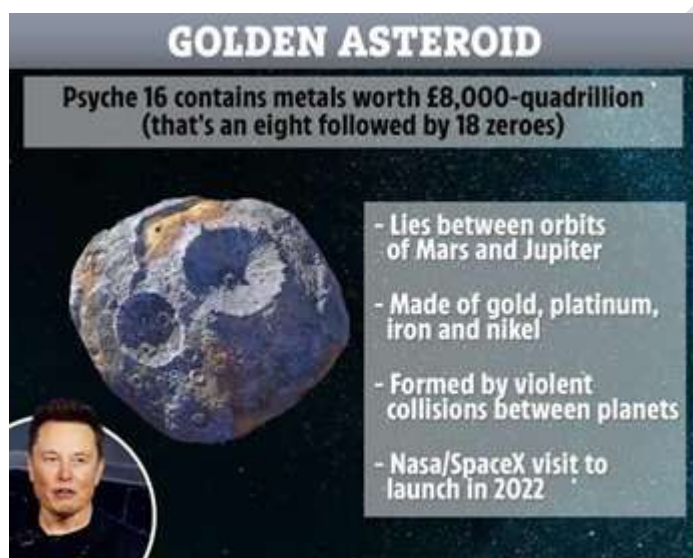
- It is an asteroid which **orbits between Mars and Jupiter**.
- Located around 370 million kilometres away from Earth in **the asteroid belt**.
- First discovered in **1853** and was named after the ancient **Greek goddess of the soul, Psyche**.

### Why in News?

A recent study has found that this asteroid could be made entirely of metal and is worth an estimated

\$10,000 quadrillion — more than the entire economy of Earth.

- Images from **NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope** has shown that the surface may mostly **comprise iron and nickel**, similar to the Earth’s core.



## Ezhuthachan Puraskaram

- Instituted in 1993, it is **the highest literary honour of the Kerala government**.
- Given by **the Kerala Sahitya Akademi**.
- The award is named after **Thunchaththu Ezhuthachan**, the father of the Malayalam language and consists of a cash prize of ₹5,00,000 and a citation.

### About

Writer Paul Zacharia has been selected for the 28th Ezhuthachan Puraskaram.

## Kevadia Tourism Circuit

PM Modi recently inaugurated 17 tourism projects around **the Statue of Unity (SoU)**, now called **the ‘Kevadia Tourism Circuit’**.

### Key points:

- **Kevadia** is a village in the tribal Narmada district. It is home to **the Sardar Sarovar Dam reservoir on the Narmada river**.

**Kevadia circuit** covers 35 tourist spots including the Valley of Flowers, Vishwa Van, Cactus Garden, Butterfly Garden.

## Mansar Lake Project

### About:

**Mansar Lake Development Plan** in Jammu and Kashmir was inaugurated recently.

- The project is eyed to attract almost 20 lakh tourists every year and create employment for 1.15 crore man-days with an income generation of ₹800 crore per year.

### About Mansar lake:

Mansar Lake is situated 62 km from Jammu.

**Surinsar-Mansar Lakes** are designated as Ramsar Convention in November 2005.

## Travancore Tortoise

It is a large forest tortoise growing up to 330 millimetres in length.

- **Status:** IUCN Red list - **vulnerable**; Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act: Schedule IV.
- **Distribution:** restricted to the Western Ghats, in the Indian states of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

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## Maharani Jindan Kaur

- She was the youngest wife of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.
- She was also the mother of Maharaja Duleep Singh, the last ruler of the empire, who was raised by the British.
- She led a spirited resistance to the encroachment of the British into the Punjab, but was eventually forced to surrender.

### Why in News?

In news for the auction of some of her jewellery at Bonhams Islamic and Indian Art sale in London earlier this week.

## Virtual Global Investor Roundtable

PM to chair VGIR on 5th November, 2020.

Organized by the **Ministry of Finance**, Government of India, and **National Investment and Infrastructure Fund**.

It is an exclusive dialogue between leading global institutional investors, Indian business leaders and the highest decision makers from the Government of India and Financial Market Regulators.

## Nurturing Neighborhoods Challenge

- **Launched** by the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry.
- It is a **challenge for cities to develop and implement initiatives to improve the quality of life of young children, caregivers and families.**
- It will be **open for the 100 Smart Cities, cities with population of more than 5 lakh and State/Union Territory capitals.**

## Luhri hydropower project

- Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved funding to the tune of ₹1,810.56 crore for the 210 megawatt (MW) **Luhri hydropower project on the Satluj river in Himachal Pradesh.**
- The project is **located in Shimla and Kullu districts.**

## Important Butterfly Species

**Note:** The following species and their sightings is based on an article given in today's the Hindu News Paper. It is not necessary to mug up the names of all these species. Just have a brief overview.

### Context:

Butterfly season usually begins with the onset of the South-West monsoon; and the buzz tends to continue post-monsoon, well into February. This year, especially, many rare species have been sighted across the country.

### Key points:

- **Striated Five-ring** was sighted at Neyyar, Kerala in 2015-16 after 100 years.
- **The Nilgiri Plain Ace** was rediscovered by butterfly enthusiasts after 130 years.
- **Marbled Map butterfly** recorded for the first time in Visakhapatnam is protected under Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act. This 'rare' species is confined to the hilly forests of Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bhutan and Myanmar.
- **Malabar Banded Peacock** is endemic to South India.
- **Tree nymph**, a large white butterfly with black spots resembling white paper wafting through the air. It is also endemic to South India.
- Recently, **Branded Royal**, rarely seen in India, made news when it fluttered through the Nilgiris after a gap of over 130 years.
- The **Blue Mormon**, a black-coloured velvet-winged butterfly, a species

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endemic to the Western Ghats, showed up in Patna.

- **The Spotted Angle butterfly** has been sighted in the reserve forests of Chhattisgarh.
- **The Liliac Silverline**, a protected species whose only known breeding population is in Bengaluru, was sighted for the first time in the Aravalli range of Rajasthan.

## Data Maturity Assessment Framework (DMAF)

Launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

- It is a framework to evaluate the data ecosystems of cities.
- This will support cities in the creation of a ‘culture of data’ under the DataSmart Cities initiative of the Smart Cities Mission.

**The core objective of this framework is to enable cities to assess their own data maturity with respect to a standardized framework covering aspects of enabling policies, governance structures, data management, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement at the city level.**

## Leishmania donovani

CSIR-CDRI scientist won an award for his work on defining the survival tactics of **Leishmania donovani**. **Key points:**

- *Leishmania donovani* is a protozoan parasite that infects macrophages and is a causative agent of visceral leishmaniasis (Kala-Azar).
- It infects the mononuclear phagocyte system including the spleen, liver and bone marrow.

## A madrasa for transgenders in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has opened its **first Islamic school for transgender Muslims** with clerics calling it a first step towards integrating the discriminated minority into society.

## Tristan da Cunha

- Tristan da Cunha is inhabited by less than 300 humans.
- It is a small chain of islands over 6,000 miles from London in the South Atlantic and the water around the islands are considered to be the richest in the world.
- It is an **UK Overseas Territory**.
- It was recently declared **the largest fully protected marine reserves in the Atlantic Ocean at 687,000 square kilometres**.



## National Monsoon Mission

Launched by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** in 2012.

- Aim to develop a state-of-the-art, dynamic monsoon prediction system for short, medium, and long-range forecasts.
- The successful development of a **Global Ensemble Forecast System for short and medium-range prediction at 12 kilometers** was made possible due to the National Monsoon Mission.

## Avadhanam

- ‘Avadhanam’ is an exciting literary performance that involves solving tricky literary posers, improvising poems and tests a person's capability of performing such multiple tasks simultaneously.
- It originated as a Sanskrit literary process and is revived by poets in Telugu and Kannada in modern times.

### In The News

The Vice President Shri M Venkaiah Naidu has observed that ‘avadhanam’ as a literary feat has greatly contributed to the Telugu language’s glorious tradition.

## Shahtoot Dam

India set to build **Shahtoot Dam in Afghanistan**, provide drinking water for 2 million residents of Kabul.

- The dam would **come upon the Maidan river tributary of Kabul river.**

## Constitution day

Constitution day which is also known as **the Samvidhan Divas** is celebrated every year on **November 26 to mark the day on which the Constitution of India was adopted.** While the adoption of the Constitution took place on **November 26, 1949**, it came into effect on **January 26, 1950.**