



CURRENT AFFAIRS

June 2021

Copyright © by Classic IAS Academy

All rights are reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of Classic IAS Academy.

Table of Contents

Page 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Right to Reservation in Promotions for PwDs2. Recusal of Judges3. AGI's tenure Extended4. Supreme Court's Ruling on ONORC System for Migrant Workers5. Electronic Weighing Machines at Fair Price Shops6. MoU for Seaplane Services in India7. Jal Shakti Abhiyan-II8. Corporatization of Ordnance Factory Board9. Helpline for Cyber Fraud10. Inland Vessel Act11. Strategy to Promote Medical, Rural and MICE Tourism12. Censorship of Films in India13. Delimitation in Jammu and Kashmir14. Mission Karmayogi15. 6 Years of Transformative Urban Missions16. PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme17. Beed Model of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana18. I-Familia Global Databaseto Identify Missing Persons19. Horticulture Cluster Development Programme20. Time to Define Limits of Sedition SC21. Mega Food Park Scheme22. Bamboo Market Window on GeM Portal23. World Bamboo Day24. Council of Scientific and Industrial Research25. Incredible India Tourist Facilitator Certification Programme26. Performance Grading Index (PGI)27. Model Panchayat Citizens Charter28. World Food Safety Day29. Draft Rules for Live- Streaming Court Proceedings30. e-Courts Project31. YUVA Scheme for Young Writers32. Surakshit Hum Surakshit Tum Abhiyan Aspirational Districts33. Railways Gets 5 MHz Spectrum34. Fast Tracking Freight in India NITI Aayog35. Rengma Nagas Demand Autonomous District Council36. AISHE-202037. Online Module for Compiling Out-of-School Children's Data38. Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization Scheme39. India Abstains from Latest Resolution Against Israel40. Maldives' UNGA Presidency41. Atlantic Charter42. 47th G7 Summit43. Zen Garden - Kaizen Academy44. FATF Retains Pakistan on Grey List45. Global Expansion of Nuclear Arsenal SIPRI Report46. Tax Inspectors Without Borders Programme47. 8th ADMM-Plus Meeting48. Antonio Guterres 2nd Term UN Secretary General49. China as a Security Risk NATO50. Chemical Weapons Convention51. Antarctic Treaty52. New Chinese Militia Units for High Altitudes53. Agristack The New Digital Push in Agriculture54. Gujarat International Maritime Arbitration Centre (GIMAC)55. Integrated Power Development Scheme56. Biotech-KISAN Programme57. World Competitiveness Index58. US' Digital Millennium Copyright Act59. World's First Genetically Modified Rubber Assam60. G20 Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting61. Drone Survey Mandatory for All National Highways Projects62. Minimum Support Price63. Disability Early Intervention Centres
----------	---

Current Affairs June-2021

Page | 3

1. Right to Reservation in Promotions for PwDs:

- Recently, the Supreme Court of India has held that persons with physical disabilities have the right to reservation in promotions also.
- A disabled particular person can avail the advantage of reservation for promotion even when she or he was recruited within the common class or developed the incapacity after gaining employment.

In Details:

- The case was based on a claim under the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.
- This Act has been replaced with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016.
- The Kerala Administrative Tribunal rejected the plea of applicant stating that the rule of Recruitment in the State of Kerala, General Rules and other orders issued by the Government under Section 32 of the 1995 Act did not provide for any reservation in promotions.
- The Kerala High Court set aside the decision of the Kerala Administrative Tribunal.

What is importance of this judgement?

- The 1995 Act recognizes the right to reservation in promotion.
- Identification of posts for reservation as per Section 32 of the 1995 Act is a prerequisite for appointment; but appointment cannot be frustrated by refusing to identify posts.
- The absence of provision for reservation in the recruitment rules will not defeat the right of a PwD as such right flows from the legislation.
- Reservation to promotion can be given to a PwD even if the person was not originally appointed in the PwD quota.
- Further, the responsibility to provide equal opportunities to disabled persons does not end with giving them reservation at the time of recruitment.
- Legislative mandate provides for equal opportunity for career progression, including promotion.
- Thus, it would be negation of the legislative mandate if promotion is denied to PwD and such reservation is confined to the initial stage of induction in service.
- This would in fact result in stagnation of the disabled in a consequential frustration.

Constitutional Framework for Disabled in India:

- Article 41 of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) states that State shall make effective provision for securing right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, within the limits of its economic capacity and development.
- State Subject: The subject of 'relief of the disabled and unemployable' is specified in the state list of the Seventh Schedule of the constitution.

Right of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016:

- It fulfills the obligations to the United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), to which India is a signatory.
- Disability has been defined based on an evolving and dynamic concept.
- The types of disabilities have been increased from 7 to 21.
- The Act added mental illness, autism, spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, chronic neurological conditions, speech and language disability, thalassemia, hemophilia, sickle

cell disease, multiple disabilities including deaf blindness, acid attack victims and Parkinson's disease which were largely ignored in earlier act.

- In addition, the Government has been authorized to notify any other category of specified disability.
- It increases the quantum of reservation for people suffering from disabilities from 3% to 4% in government jobs and from 3% to 5% in higher education institutes.
- Every child with benchmark disability between the age group of 6 and 18 years shall have the right to free education.
- Government funded educational institutions as well as the government recognized institutions will have to provide inclusive education.
- Stress has been given to ensure accessibility in public buildings in a prescribed time frame along with the Accessible India Campaign.
- The Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities and the State Commissioners will act as regulatory bodies and Grievance Redressal agencies, monitoring implementation of the Act.
- A separate National and State Fund will be created to provide financial support to the persons with disabilities.

2. Recusal of Judges:

- Recently, two Supreme Court (SC) judges have recused themselves from hearing cases relating to West Bengal.
- It 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.

Reason for Recusal:

- When there is a conflict of interest, a judge can withdraw from hearing a case to prevent creating a perception that he carried a bias while deciding the case.
1. The conflict of interest can be in many ways such as:
 2. Having a prior or personal association with a party involved in the case.
 3. Appeared for one of the parties involved in a case.
 4. Ex parte communications with lawyers or non-lawyers.
 5. An appeal is filed in the SC against a judgement of a High Court (HC) that may have been delivered by the SC judge when he was in the HC.
 6. In a matter of a company in which he holds shares unless he has disclosed his interest and there is no objection to it.
 7. The practice stems from the cardinal principle of due process of law that nobody can be a judge in her own case.
 8. Any interest or conflict of interest would be a ground to withdraw from a case since a judge has a duty to act fair.

Rule for Recusal:

- There are no formal rules governing recusals, although several SC judgments have dealt with the issue.
- In *Ranjit Thakur v Union of India* (1987), the SC held that the test of the likelihood of bias is the reasonableness of the apprehension in the mind of the party.
- The judge needs to look at the mind of the party before him, and decide that he is biased or not.

Concerns associated:

- **Undermining Judicial Independence:** It allows litigants to cherry-pick a bench of their choice, which impairs judicial fairness. Also, the purpose of recusal in these cases undermines both independence and impartiality of the judges.

- Different Interpretations: As there are no rules to determine when the judges could recuse themselves in these cases, there are different interpretations of the same situation.
- Delays the Process: Some requests for recusal are made with the intent to intimidate the court or to get better of an 'inconvenient' judge or to obfuscate the issues or to cause obstruction and delay the proceedings or in any other way frustrate or obstruct the course of justice.

3. AGI's tenure Extended:

- Recently, the central government has extended the term of K.K. Venugopal as Attorney General (AG) for one more year.
- This is the second time the Centre has extended his tenure. Venugopal received his first extension of term in 2020.
- He would be in command of the government's legal defence in several sensitive cases pending in the Supreme Court, which includes the challenge to the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution and the Citizenship Amendment Act.
- The Attorney General (AG) of India is a part of the Union Executive. AG is the highest law officer in the country. Article 76 of the Constitution provides for the office of AG of India.

Appointment and Eligibility:

- AG is appointed by the President on the advice of the government.
- S/he must be a person who is qualified to be appointed a judge of the Supreme Court, i.e. s/he must be a citizen of India and must have been a judge of some high court for five years or an advocate of some high court for ten years or an eminent jurist, in the opinion of the President.
- **Term of the Office:** Not fixed by the Constitution.
- **Removal:** Procedures and grounds for the removal of AG are not stated in the Constitution. S/he holds office during the pleasure of the President (may be removed by the President at any time).

4. Supreme Court's Ruling on ONORC System for Migrant Workers:

- Recently, the Supreme Court directed all states and Union Territories (UT) to implement the One Nation, One Ration Card (ONORC) system by 31st July 2021.
- The scheme allows migrant labourers covered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) to access food at any fair price shop with his or her ration card in any part of the country.
- Right to Food is a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution. It may be interpreted to include the right to live with human dignity, having the right to food and other basic necessities.

Importance of Migrants:

- There are around 38 crore workers engaged in the unorganized sectors (National Statistics Office (NSO) data of 2017-2018).
- These unorganized workers did not have any permanent source of employment and have engaged themselves in small time vocations and occupations at various places away from their native places.
- Contributions of these labourers towards different projects, industries, make considerable additions in the economic development of the country.

What is ONORC System?

- ONORC was launched in August, 2019.
- The ONORC scheme is aimed at enabling migrant workers and their family members to buy subsidised ration from any fair price shop anywhere in the country under the NFSA.
- To promote this reform in the PDS, the government has provided incentives to states and also set a precondition for additional borrowing by states during the Covid-19 pandemic last year.

- Under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, about 81 crore people are entitled to buy subsidised food grains - rice at Rs 3/kg, wheat at Rs 2/kg, and coarse grains at Re 1/kg – from designated fair price shops.
- However, NFSA beneficiaries were not able to access their PDS (Public Distribution System) benefits outside the jurisdiction of the specific fair price shop to which they have been assigned.
- By introducing ONORC, the idea was to reform the PDS, which has been historically marred by inefficiency and leakages.

Technology Used:

- ONORC is based on technology that involves details of beneficiaries' ration card, Aadhaar number, and electronic Points of Sale (ePoS). The system identifies a beneficiary through biometric authentication on ePoS devices at fair price shops.
- The system runs with the support of two portals - Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS) and Annavitran.
- While the Annavitran portal maintains a record of intra-state transactions - inter-district and intra-district - the IM-PDS portal records the inter-state transactions.

Benefits:

- Under the ONORC, the beneficiaries from one state can get their share of rations in other states where the ration card was originally issued.
- ONORC will also give the beneficiaries the opportunity to opt for the dealer of their choice.
- It will be particularly beneficial for women and other disadvantaged groups, given how social identity (caste, class and gender) and other contextual factors (including power relations) provide a strong backdrop in accessing PDS.
- This will help achieve the target set under SDG (Sustainable development Goals) 2 (Ending hunger by 2030). Also, it will address the poor state of hunger in India, as highlighted by the Global Hunger Index, where India has been ranked 94 out of 107 countries.

5. Electronic Weighing Machines at Fair Price Shops:

- The Central Government has asked the States Governments to buy electronic weighing machines for ration shops from electronic Point of Sale devices (ePoS) savings.
- For this, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs has amended the Food Security (Assistance To State Government Rules) 2015 to encourage the states to generate savings through judicious use of e-PoS devices.

In details:

- About the Food Security (Assistance to State Government Rules) 2015:
- Additional Margin to Fair Price Shops: The rules were notified to give additional margin to fair price shop dealers for sale through e-PoS as an incentive to ensure transparent recording of transactions at all levels.
- The margin on food grain sold through ePoS is provided as "Fair Price Shop dealers margin".
- It is meant to go towards the cost of purchase, operation and maintenance of the point of sale device, its running expenses and incentive for its use.

Benefits of Amendment:

- The integration of ePoS devices with electronic weighing scales will ensure the right quantity to beneficiaries in the distribution of subsidised food grains under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 as per their entitlement.
- It will ensure greater transparency in the Public distribution system (PDS) regime. It will reduce food grain leakages.
- The distribution through ePoS devices ensures that subsidised food grains are provided to the rightful beneficiary through biometric authentication.

National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013:

- It was notified on 10th September, 2013
- Objective: To provide for food and nutritional security in the human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantities of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity.
- Coverage: 75% of the rural population and upto 50% of the urban population for receiving subsidized foodgrains under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).
- Overall, NFSA caters to 67% of the total population.
- NITI Aayog has recommended reducing the rural and urban coverage under the NFSA to 60% and 40%, respectively.

Public Distribution System (PDS):

- The PDS is an Indian food Security System established under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution.
- PDS evolved as a system of management of scarcity through distribution of food grains at affordable prices.
- In June, 1997, the Government of India launched the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) with focus on the poor.

Functioning:

- The Central and State Governments share responsibilities in order to provide food grains to the identified beneficiaries.
- The centre procures food grains from farmers at a minimum support price (MSP) and sells it to states at central issue prices. It is responsible for transporting the grains to godowns in each state.
- States bear the responsibility of transporting food grains from these godowns to each fair price shop (ration shop), where the beneficiary buys the food grains at the lower central issue price.
- Many states further subsidise the price of food grains before selling it to beneficiaries.

Reform Linked Borrowing:

- Recently, there was announcement made by the Union Government that states were able to borrow an extra Rs. 1.06 lakh crore in 2020-21 (FY21) due to the Reform Linked Borrowing window.
- It aims to provide an additional leeway to states in order to cope with the adverse effects of Covid-19 pandemic on the economy.
- This was a nudge, incentivising the States to adopt progressive policies to avail additional funds.
- In October 2020, the Central government had linked permission for additional borrowing of 1% of their GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product) to implementation of four critical reforms, which are:
 1. Implementation of One Nation One Ration Card System,
 2. Ease of doing business reform,
 3. Urban Local body/ utility reforms and
 4. Power Sector reforms.
- Under this reforms-linked borrowing window, states were to get access to funds of up to Rs 2.14 lakh crore on completion of all the four reforms.
- For states completing three of the four reforms, the Centre would provide additional funds assistance of Rs. 2,000 crore for capital expenditure.
- For FY 2021-22, the net borrowing ceiling for states has been fixed at 4% of the projected GSDP (about Rs 8.46 lakh crore), based on recommendations of the Fifteenth Finance Commission.

One Nation One Ration Card System (ONORC) Reforms:

- This was aimed to ensure that the beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and other welfare schemes, especially the migrant workers and their families, get ration from any Fair Price Shop (FPS) across the country.
- Other aims of the intended reform were to better target beneficiaries, elimination of bogus/ duplicate/ ineligible ration cards and thus enhance welfare and reduce leakage.
- For this, the reform conditions stipulated Aadhar Seeding of all Ration Cards, biometric authentication of beneficiaries and automation of all the FPS in the State.

'Ease of Doing Business' Reforms:

- It is to facilitate a better environment and seamless process for entrepreneurs and companies to operate.
- The reforms stipulated in this category are:
 - Completion of first assessment of 'District Level Business Reform Action Plan'.
 - Elimination of the requirements of renewal of Registration certificates/approvals/licences obtained by businesses under various Acts.
 - Implementation of a computerized central random inspection system under the Acts.

Urban Local Body/ Utility Reforms:

- These reforms are aimed at financial strengthening of ULBs (Urban Local Bodies) in the States and to enable them to provide better public health and sanitation services to citizens.
- It required states to notify floor rates of property tax and of water and sewerage charges. This was in consonance with stamp duty guideline values for property transactions and current costs in urban areas.

Power Sector Reforms:

- There are three parameters a state must meet under the power sector reforms - reduction in Aggregate Technical & Commercial (AT&C) losses, targeted reduction in Average Cost of Supply and Average Revenue Realisation (ACS-ARR) gap, and direct benefit transfer (DBT) of electricity subsidy to farmers.

Existing Provisions related to borrowing:

- Chapter II of Part XII of the Constitution of India deals with borrowing by the Central Government and State Governments.
- It comprises two provisions - Article 292 which covers borrowing by the Central Government and Article 293, which covers borrowing by State Governments.
- Article 293 (3) requires State Governments that are indebted to the Central Government to seek the consent of the Central Government before raising further borrowings.

6. MoU for Seaplane Services in India:

- The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and the Ministry of Civil Aviation signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Development of Seaplane Services in India.
- India's first seaplane service started operation between Kevadia and Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad in October 2020, under Sagarmala Seaplane Services.

Key Points:

- This MoU envisages developing non-scheduled and scheduled operation of seaplane services within territorial jurisdiction of India.
- Seaplane services will be developed as a part of the RCS-UDAN (Regional Connectivity Scheme-Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) initiative of the Civil Aviation Ministry.
- The Shipping Ministry would identify and develop waterfront aerodromes and other required infrastructure.
- The Civil Aviation Ministry will select potential airline operators through a bidding process. It will also incorporate the location and routes as identified by the Shipping Ministry.

Possible Benefits:

- This MoU will help in expediting the development of new water aerodromes and also operationalisation of new seaplane routes in India.
- It will not only enhance seamless connectivity across the nation by promoting eco-friendly transportation through seaplanes but also give a boost to the tourism industry.
- It will lead to an increase in tourism and hotel business at the local level. It will also serve employment to local people.
- Establishment of water airports will contribute to an increase in the level of current social infrastructural facilities (healthcare, education, community housing, etc.) at the proposed sites.

UDAN Scheme:

- Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) was launched as a regional connectivity scheme under the Ministry of Civil Aviation in 2016.
- The objective of the scheme is to create affordable yet economically viable and profitable flights on regional routes so that flying becomes affordable to the common man even in small towns.
- The scheme envisages providing connectivity to un-served and underserved airports of the country through the revival of existing air-strips and airports. The scheme is operational for a period of 10 years.
- Under-served airports are those which do not have more than one flight a day, while unserved airports are those where there are no operations.
- Financial incentives from the Centre, state governments and airport operators are extended to selected airlines to encourage operations from unserved and under-served airports, and keep airfares affordable.

About UDAN 4.1:

- The UDAN 4.1 focuses on connecting smaller airports, along with special helicopter and seaplane routes.
- Some new routes have been proposed under the Sagarmala Seaplane services.

Sagarmala Seaplane Services:

- It is an ambitious project under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
- The project is being initiated under a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) framework through prospective airline operators.
- The project execution and implementation would be through Sagarmala Development Company Ltd (SDCL), which is under the administrative control of the Ministry.
- To provide connectivity and easier accessibility to remote locations, SDCL is exploring plans to leverage the potential of the vast coastline and numerous water bodies/rivers across India by commencing seaplane operations.
- Several destinations are envisaged for seaplane operations. Seaplanes will utilise the nearby water bodies for take-off and landing and thus connect those places in an economical way as conventional airport infrastructure like a runway and terminal buildings are not required for seaplane operations.
- The routes may be operated under the government's subsidised UDAN scheme.

7. Jal Shakti Abhiyan – II:

- Recently, the Minister of Jal Shakti has urged all MPs to support the ongoing “**Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch The Rain**” campaign in their respective constituencies and states.
- The Abhiyan with the theme- “Catch the Rain where it falls, when it falls’ was launched on the occasion of world water day (22nd March 2021).
- It covers all rural and urban areas of all districts of the country.

- Jal Shakti Abhiyan-I of 2019, covered only 1592 water stressed blocks out of 2836 blocks in 256 districts of the country.
- National Water Mission, under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, is the nodal agency for its implementation.
- A total of almost Rs. 14,000 Cr worth of water conservation related work is completed/ongoing under the MGNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) of Dept of Rural Development.

Objectives:

- The campaign aims at tapping rainwater by constructing artificial recharge structures, revitalizing existing ponds and water bodies, creating new water bodies, provisioning check dams, rejuvenating wetlands and rivers before the onset of monsoon.
- It is also planned to create a data-base of all water bodies in the country by geo tagging them and using this data to create scientific and data-based district level water conservation plans.

Schemes related to Water Conservation:

Jal Jeevan Mission:

- An initiative under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, aims to ensure access to piped water for every household in rural India.
- Government of India has restructured and subsumed the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) into Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) to provide Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) to every rural household i.e., Har Ghar Nal Se Jal (HGNSJ).

Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban):

- In the Budget 2021-22, Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban) was announced under the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry to provide universal coverage of water supply to all households through functional taps in all statutory towns in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal- 6 (clean water and sanitation).

National Water Mission:

- It was launched with the objective of conservation of water, minimising wastage and ensuring more equitable distribution both across and within states through integrated water resources development and management.
- NITI Aayog's Composite Water Management Index:
- With the objective of achieving effective utilization of water, NITI Aayog has developed the Composite Water Management Index.

Atal Bhujal Yojana:

- It is a central sector scheme worth Rs. 6,000 crore for sustainable management of groundwater with community participation.
- It envisages people's participation through the formation of 'Water User Associations', water budgeting, preparation and implementation of Gram-panchayat-wise water security plans, etc.

8. Corporatization of Ordnance Factory Board:

- Recently, the Union Cabinet approved a plan to corporatise the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB).
- 41 factories across the country will be dissolved into seven new Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU). The newly created entities will be 100% owned by the government.
- These entities will be responsible for different verticals of the products such as the Ammunition and Explosives group will be engaged in production of ammunition while a Vehicles group will engage in production of defence mobility and combat vehicles.
- All OFB employees in the production units will be transferred to the new corporate entities on a deemed deputation initially for a period of two years without altering their service conditions as central government employees.

- Pension liabilities of the retirees and existing employees will continue to be borne by the government.

Ordnance Factory Board:

- It is an umbrella body for the ordnance factories and related institutions, and is currently a subordinate office of the Ministry of Defence (MoD).
- The first Indian ordnance factory was set up in the year 1712 by the Dutch Company as a GunPowder Factory, West Bengal.
- It is a conglomerate of 41 factories, 9 training Institutes, 3 regional marketing centres and 5 regional controllers of safety.
- Headquarters: Kolkata
- Significance: A major chunk of the weapon, ammunition and supplies for not just armed forces but also paramilitary and police forces comes from the OFB-run factories.
- Production includes: Civilian and military-grade arms and ammunition, explosives, propellants and chemicals for missile systems, military vehicles, armoured vehicles, optical devices, parachutes, support equipment, troop clothing and general store items.

Reasons for Corporatization:

- A performance evaluation by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in its report for 2019 on the OFB highlights a few of the lacunae, which ails this organisation.
- Overheads (expenses not directly attributed to creating a product or service) constitute a staggering 33% of the overall allotted budget for the year.
- The major contributors being supervision costs and indirect labour costs.
- Delayed Production: The Ordnance factories achieved production targets for only 49% of the items.
- More than half the inventory (52%) was store-in-hand, procured for manufacture but not used within the year by the factories.
- The Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, also calls for the Corporatisation of OFB for: 'improving autonomy, accountability and efficiency in ordnance suppliers'.

Importance of new structure:

- The restructure would also help in overcoming various shortcomings in the existing system of the OFB by eliminating inefficient supply chains and provide these companies incentive to become competitive and explore new opportunities in the market.
- It will allow these companies autonomy as well as help improve accountability and efficiency.
- The restructuring is aimed at transforming the ordnance factories into productive and profitable assets, deepen their specialisation in product range, enhance competitiveness and improve quality and cost-efficiency.

Apprehensions:

- One of the main apprehensions of the employees is that corporatisation (ownership and management lies with the government) would eventually lead to privatisation (transfer of ownership and management rights to the private player).
- The new corporate entities would not be able to survive the unique market environment of defence products that has very unstable demand and supply dynamics.
- Restructuring will result in greater autonomy and lesser government control over the corporation but there is a fear of job loss.
- The corporatisation of OFB is likely to transform ordnance factories into a modernised, state of the art facility with flexible and better decision making in its functioning.
- There is a need to have a reflective road-map for the plan. This can help to ease the apprehensions regarding the corporatization.

9. Helpline for Cyber Fraud:

- The Ministry of Home Affairs has operationalised the national Helpline 155260 and Reporting Platform for preventing financial loss due to cyber fraud. The helpline was soft-launched on 1st April.
- The National Helpline and Reporting Platform provides a mechanism for persons cheated in cyber frauds to report such cases to prevent loss of their hard earned money.
- Also, a National Cyber Security Strategy 2020 is being formulated by the Office of National Cyber Security Coordinator at the National Security Council Secretariat.
- Cyber Security is protecting cyber space including critical information infrastructure from attack, damage, misuse and economic espionage.
- Critical Information Infrastructure: According to Section 70(1) of the Information Technology Act, CII is defined as a “computer resource, the incapacitation or destruction of which, shall have debilitating impact on national security, economy, public health or safety”.

Cyber Fraud:

- It is the crime committed via a computer with the intent to corrupt another individual’s personal and financial information stored online.
- It is the most common type of fraud and individuals and organisations need to be vigilant and protect their information from fraudsters.
- The helpline has been made operational by the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), in coordination with the Reserve Bank of India, all major banks, payment banks, wallets and online merchants.
- The Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System has been developed by I4C to integrate Law Enforcement Agencies and Banks and Financial Intermediaries.
- The facility empowers both the banks and the police, by leveraging new-age technologies for sharing online fraud related information and taking action in almost real time.
- Since its soft launch, in a short span of two months, the helpline has assisted in saving more than Rs 1.85 crore.

Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre:

- The scheme to set up I4C was approved in October 2018, to deal with all types of cybercrimes in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.

It has seven components:

1. National Cyber Crime Threat Analytics Unit
 2. National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal
 3. National Cyber Crime Training Centre
 4. Cyber Crime Ecosystem Management Unit
 5. National Cyber Crime Research and Innovation Centre
 6. National Cyber Crime Forensic Laboratory Ecosystem
 7. Platform for Joint Cyber Crime Investigation Team.
- States and Union Territories have given their consent to set up Regional Cyber Crime Coordination Centres. This state-of-the-art Centre is located in New Delhi.

Other Initiatives to Tackle Cybercrime:

- Draft Personal Data Protection Bill, 2018 (based on the recommendation of Justice BN Srikrishna Committee) to secure citizens data.
- Cyber Swachhta Kendra: The "Cyber Swachhta Kendra" (Botnet Cleaning and Malware Analysis Centre) is a part of the Government of India's Digital India initiative under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

- Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-IN): It is an organisation of the MeitY, with the objective of securing Indian cyberspace. It is the nodal agency which deals with cybersecurity threats like hacking and phishing.

Related International Convention (Budapest Convention):

- The Council of Europe's (CoE) Cybercrime Convention, also known as the Budapest Convention is the sole legally binding international multilateral treaty on cybercrime. It coordinates cybercrime investigations between nation-states and criminalizes certain cybercrime conduct.
- It was opened for signature in 2001 and came into force in 2004.
- The Budapest Convention is supplemented by a Protocol on Xenophobia and Racism committed through computer systems.
- India is not a party to it. India recently voted in favour of a Russian-led UN resolution to set up a separate convention. The resolution seeks to set up new cyber norms considered as a counter alternative to the US backed Budapest Accord.

10. Inland Vessel Act:

- Recently, the Union Cabinet approved the Inland Vessels Bill, 2021, which will replace the Inland Vessels Act, 1917 after passing in Parliament.
- The Bill will regulate safety, security and registration of inland vessels.

Key Features of the Bill:

- A key feature of the Bill is a unified law for the entire country, instead of separate rules framed by the States.
- The certificate of registration granted under the proposed law will be deemed to be valid in all States and Union Territories, and there will be no need to seek separate permissions from the States.
- The Bill provides for a central database for recording the details of vessel, vessel registration, crew on an electronic portal.
- All non-mechanically propelled vessels will also have to be enrolled at the district, taluk or panchayat or village level.
- It enlarges the definition of 'inland waters', by including tidal water limit and national waterways declared by the Central Government.
- It also deals with pollution control measures of Inland Vessels. This Bill directs the Central Government to designate a list of chemicals, substances, etc. as pollutants.

Inland Waterways:

- India has about 14,500 km of navigable waterways which comprise of rivers, canals, backwaters, creeks, etc.
- As per the National Waterways Act 2016, 111 waterways have been declared as National Waterways (NWs).
- **NW-1: Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly River System (Prayagraj-Haldia)** with length 1620 km is the longest National Waterway in India.
- The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) is implementing the **Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP)** for capacity augmentation of navigation on the **Haldia-Varanasi** stretch of Ganga (part of NW-1) with the technical and financial assistance of the World Bank.

Utilization:

- About 55 million tonnes of cargo is being moved annually by IWT (Inland Water Transport), a fuel-efficient and environment-friendly mode.
- However, freight transportation by waterways is highly underutilized in the country as compared to developed countries.

- The Ministry of Tourism has formulated three draft strategies with roadmaps for promoting Medical and Wellness Tourism, for development of Rural Tourism and for promotion of MICE Industry in India.
- India has been ranked 34th out of 140 countries on the World Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2019, released by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

What is Medical and Wellness Tourism (MWT)?

- Describes the rapidly growing practice of travelling across international borders to obtain healthcare services.
- It may be broadly classified into three categories - Medical Treatment, Wellness & Rejuvenation and Alternative Cures. Now it is often referred to as Medical Value Travel (MVT).

Scope in India:

- State of the Art Medical Facilities: Top of the line medical and diagnostic equipment from global international conglomerates are available.
- Reputed Healthcare Professionals: Reputation for high-quality medical training and also fluent in English to converse with foreigners.
- Financial Savings: The cost of quality of medical procedures and services are low in India.
- Alternative Cures: India has a unique advantage of offering Yoga, Ayurveda & Naturopathy for treatment.

12. Censorship of Films in India:

- The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has recently sought public comments on its draft Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which proposes to bring back its “revisionary powers” over the Central Board of Film Certification.
- The new Bill will also “make the process of sanctioning of films for exhibition more effective, in tune with the changed times and curb the menace of piracy”.
- The Supreme Court of India (SC) in November 2000, had upheld a Karnataka High Court order which struck down the Centre’s “revisional powers in respect of films that are already certified by the Board”. However, the SC had opined that the Legislature may, in certain cases, overrule or nullify the judicial or executive decision by enacting an appropriate legislation”.

Provision of Draft Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, 2021:

- **Granting Revisionary Powers:** The government on account of violation of Section 5B(1) of the Cinematograph Act, 1952 can order for “re-examination” by the certification board of an already certified film, following receipt of complaints.
- Section 5B(1) deals with the principles for guidance in certifying films. It is derived from Article 19(2) of the Constitution and is non-negotiable.
- Under Section 6 of the existing Cinematograph Act, 1952, the Centre is already empowered to call for the record of proceedings in relation to certification of a film and pass any order thereon.
- The Central Government, if the situation warranted, has the power to reverse the decision of the Board.
- **Sub-division of Existing UA Category:** The provisions relating to certification of films under “unrestricted public exhibition (U/A)” category are proposed to be amended so as to sub-divide the existing UA category into age-based categories like U/A 7+, U/A 13+ and U/A 16+.
- **Film Piracy:** In most cases, illegal duplication in cinema halls is the originating point of piracy. At present, there are no enabling provisions to check film piracy in the Cinematograph Act, 1952. The draft Bill proposes to insert Section 6AA which prohibits unauthorised recording.
- **Punishment for Piracy:** Section 6AA of the draft legislation makes piracy a punishable offence.

- The punishment of imprisonment for a term upto three years and with a fine which shall not be less than Rs 3 lakh but which may extend to 5% of the audited gross production cost or with both.
- The recommendations of the Justice Mukul Mudgal Committee of 2013 and the Shyam Benegal Committee of 2016 had also been considered while drafting the legislation.

Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC):

- It is a statutory body under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, regulating the public exhibition of films under the provisions of the Cinematograph Act 1952.
- The Board consists of non-official members and a Chairman (all of whom are appointed by Central Government) and functions with headquarters at Mumbai.
- Films can be publicly exhibited in India (on cinema halls, T.V. channels) only after they have been certified by the Central Board of Film Certification.

At present, films are certified under 4 categories: U, U/A, A& S.

1. Unrestricted Public Exhibition (U)
2. Unrestricted Public Exhibition - but with a word of caution that Parental discretion required for children below 12 years (U/A)
3. Restricted to adults (A)
4. Restricted to any special class of persons (S)

Provisions for Censorship:

- Article 19(2) of the Constitution authorises the government to impose, by law, reasonable restrictions upon the freedom of speech and expression in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.
- The Cinematograph Act, 1952 also provides for similar provisions as stated under Article 19(2).

13. Delimitation in Jammu and Kashmir:

- Recently, the delimitation exercise has started in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).
- The completion of the delimitation exercise will mark the political process in the Union Territory (UT) that has been under Centre's rule since June 2018.

What is Delimitation?

- Delimitation is the act of fixing or redrawing the limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies (Assembly or Lok Sabha seat) in a country or a province having a legislative body, as per the Election Commission.
- The delimitation exercise is carried out by an independent high-powered panel known as the Delimitation Commission whose orders have the force of law and cannot be questioned by any court.
- The exercise has been carried out over the years to redefine the area of a constituency-based on its population size (based on the last Census).
- Aside from changing the limits of a constituency, the process may result in change in the number of seats in a state.
- This exercise also involves reservation of Assembly seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in accordance with the Constitution.

Objective:

- The key aim is to have equal representation to equal segments of the population in order to ensure a fair division of geographical areas so that all political parties or candidates contesting elections have a level playing field in terms of a number of voters.

Constitutional Basis for Delimitation:

- Under Article 82, the Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after every Census.

- Under Article 170, States also get divided into territorial constituencies as per Delimitation Act after every Census.
- Once the Act is in force, the Union government sets up a Delimitation Commission.
- However, the first delimitation exercise was carried out by the President (with the help of the Election Commission) in 1950-51.
- The Delimitation Commission Act was enacted in 1952.
- Delimitation Commissions have been set up four times — 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002 under the Acts of 1952, 1962, 1972 and 2002.
- There was no delimitation after the 1981 and 1991 Censuses.
- **Delimitation Commission:** The Delimitation Commission is appointed by the President of India and works in collaboration with the Election Commission of India.

Composition:

1. Retired Supreme Court judge
2. Chief Election Commissioner
3. Respective State Election Commissioners.

Delimitation in Jammu and Kashmir:

- The delimitation exercise in J&K in the past has been slightly different from those in the rest of the country because of the region's special status.
- The delimitation of Lok Sabha seats was then governed by the Indian Constitution in J&K, but the delimitation of Assembly seats was governed separately by the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution and Jammu and Kashmir Representation of the People Act, 1957.
- However, Jammu and Kashmir lost its special status and was divided into two Union Territories (J&K and Ladakh) after the abrogation of its special status under Article 370, on 5th August, 2019.
- Following this, a special delimitation commission was constituted on 6th March, 2020 to carve out Assembly and Parliament seats in the UT.

Issues with Delimitation:

- States that take little interest in population control could end up with a greater number of seats in Parliament. The southern states that promoted family planning faced the possibility of having their seats reduced.
- In 2002-08, Delimitation was done based on the 2001 census, but the total number of seats in the Assemblies and Parliament decided as per the 1971 Census was not changed.
- The Constitution has also capped the number of Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha seats to a maximum of 550 & 250 respectively and increasing populations are being represented by a single representative.

14. Special Purpose Vehicle for Mission Karmayogi:

- Recently, a three-member task force has been formed to help the government in bringing major bureaucratic reforms through its ambitious “Mission Karmayogi”.
- The Centre has recently approved the ‘National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building – Mission Karmayogi’ to effect a transformational shift from rule based training to role-based capacity development of all civil services in the country.
- The Programme also aims to enhance citizen experience for government services and improve availability of competent workforce.
- To effectively roll out this competency driven mission, a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), namely ‘Karmayogi Bharat’, would be set up as a not-for-profit company.
- It will be set up under section 8 of Companies Act, 2013 as a 100% government-owned entity.

- The SPV will be responsible to deliver and manage design, implement, enhance and manage a digital platform and infrastructure, manage and deliver competency assessment services, and manage governance of telemetry data and ensure provision of monitoring and evaluation.
- The task force shall submit its recommendations on organisational structure for the SPV aligning its vision, mission and functions.

Objectives of Mission Karmayogi:

- It is aimed at building a future-ready civil service with the right attitude, skills and knowledge, aligned to the vision of New India.
- It aims to prepare Indian civil servants for the future by making them more creative, constructive, imaginative, proactive, innovative, progressive, professional, energetic, transparent, and technology-enabled.

Reason for Mission:

- At present bureaucracy is facing challenges like- Rule orientation, political interference, inefficiency with promotions, and generalist and specialist conflict.
- To change the status quo of civil services and bring about the long pending civil services reforms.
- Features:
 - Tech-Aided: The capacity building will be delivered through iGOT Karmayogi digital platform, with content drawn from global best practices.
 - Coverage: The scheme will cover 46 lakh central government employees, at all levels, and involve an outlay of Rs. 510 crores over a five-year period.
 - Shift from Rules to Roles: The programme will support a transition from “rules-based to roles-based” Human Resource Management (HRM) so that work allocations can be done by matching an official’s competencies to the requirements of the post.
 - Integrated Initiative: Eventually, service matters such as confirmation after probation period, deployment, work assignments and notification of vacancies will all be integrated into the proposed framework.

Recent Bureaucratic Reforms:

- The Government has ended the hegemony of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), the apex bureaucratic cadre, with respect to appointments at the level of joint secretary (JS).
- Instead, appointments to posts have been drawn from other cadres also like the Indian Revenue Service, Indian Accounts and Audit Service and the Indian Economic Service.
- Similarly, the Union government has also encouraged lateral induction of personnel from the private sector.

Cyber Capabilities and National Power Report: IISS:

- According to a report by International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), an influential think tank, India’s offensive cyber capability is “Pakistan-focused” and “regionally effective”, and not tuned towards China.

Countries Under Observation:

- The report has done a qualitative assessment of cyber power in 15 countries.
- Four members of the Five Eyes intelligence alliance – the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.
- Three cyber-capable allies of the Five Eyes states – France, Israel and Japan.
- Four countries viewed by the Five Eyes and their allies as cyber threats – China, Russia, Iran and North Korea.
- Four states at earlier stages in their cyber power development – India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam.

Assessment Criteria:

- The methodology analyses the cyber ecosystem of each state and how it intersects with international security, economic competition and military affairs. The countries are assessed in seven categories:
 1. Strategy and doctrine
 2. Governance, command and control
 3. Core cyber-intelligence capability
 4. Cyber empowerment and dependence
 5. Cyber security and resilience
 6. Global leadership in cyberspace affairs
 7. Offensive cyber capability

India Specific Observations:

- Despite the geo-strategic instability of its region and a keen awareness of the cyber threat it faces, India has made only “modest progress” in developing its policy and doctrine for cyberspace security.
- India has some cyber-intelligence and offensive cyber capabilities but they are regionally focused, principally on Pakistan.
- However, the military confrontation with China in the disputed Ladakh border area in June 2020, followed by a sharp increase in Chinese activity against Indian networks, has heightened Indian concerns about cyber security, not least in systems supplied by China.
- India is currently aiming to compensate for its weaknesses by building new capability with the help of key international partners – including the US, the UK and France – and by looking to concerted international action to develop norms of restraint.
- India’s approach towards institutional reform of cyber governance has been “slow and incremental”, with key coordinating authorities for cyber security in the civil and military domains established only as late as 2018 and 2019 respectively.
- The key authorities work closely with the main cyber-intelligence agency, the National Technical Research Organisation.
- The strengths of the Indian digital economy include a vibrant start-up culture and a very large talent pool.
- The private sector has moved more quickly than the government in promoting national cyber security.
- The country is active and visible in cyber diplomacy but has not been among the leaders on global norms, preferring instead to make productive practical arrangements with key states.

15. 6 Years of Transformative Urban Missions:

- Recently, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) organised an online event to commemorate six years of the three transformative Urban Missions viz. Smart Cities Mission (SCM), Atal Mission for Urban Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U).
- The day also marked the 45 years of establishment of National Institute of Urban Affairs, an autonomous body of MoHUA, tasked to bridge the gap between research and practice on issues related to urbanization.

Progress/Achievements:

PMAY-U:

- 1.12 crore houses sanctioned and over 83 lakh houses grounded under PMAY-U.
- 16 lakh families benefited from PMAY-U’s Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS).

- Government investment under PMAY-U created around 689 crore person days of employment translating into around 246 lakh jobs.
- Affordable Rental Housing Complexes scheme under PMAY-U for urban migrants/poor has elicited remarkable response on ground.

AMRUT:

- So far, 1.05 crore household water tap connections and 78 lakh sewer/ septage connections provided under AMRUT Mission.
- About 88 lakh street lights were replaced with energy efficient LED lights leading to energy savings.
- 84.6 lakh tons carbon footprint was reduced through various initiatives under AMRUT, as per The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).

SCM:

- 70 cities have developed and operationalised Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs) under Smart Cities Mission.

India Smart Cities Awards 2020:

- The awards were given across the themes of Social Aspects, Governance, Culture, Urban Environment, Sanitation, Economy, Built Environment, Water, Urban Mobility.
- Themes such as Sustainable Business model of ICCC and Innovation award especially in Covid-19 Management are added this year.
- Indore & Surat won the City Award jointly this year for their overall development and Uttar Pradesh won the State award.

Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework 2.0:

- Launched in September, 2020 with an aim to provide an overarching roadmap to formulate, implement and monitor urban climate actions in India.
- The top 9 performing cities which have been awarded 4 star rating are Surat, Indore, Ahmedabad, Pune, Vijayawada, Rajkot, Visakhapatnam, Pimpri-Chinchwad and Vadodara.

16. PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme:

- The Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme, launched under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, completed its one year on 29th June.
- The PMFME Scheme is currently being implemented in 35 States and Union Territories (UTs).
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI).

Funding Details:

- It is a centrally sponsored scheme with an outlay of Rs. 10,000 crore.
- The expenditure under the scheme would be shared in 60:40 ratio between Central and State Governments, in 90:10 ratio with North Eastern and Himalayan States, 60:40 ratio with UTs with legislature and 100% by Centre for other UTs.

One District One Product (ODOP) Approach:

- The States would identify food products for districts keeping in view the existing clusters and availability of raw material.
- The ODOP could be a perishable produce based or cereal based or a food item widely produced in an area. E.g. mango, potato, pickle, millet based products, fisheries, poultry, etc.
- Other Focus Areas:
- Waste to wealth products, minor forest products and Aspirational Districts.

- Capacity building and research: Academic and research institutions under MoFPI along with State Level Technical Institutions would be provided support for training of units, product development, appropriate packaging and machinery for micro units.

Financial Support:

- Upgradation of Individual Micro Food Processing Units: Existing individual micro food processing units desirous of upgrading their units can avail credit-linked capital subsidy at 35% of the eligible project cost with a maximum ceiling of Rs.10 lakh per unit.
- Seed Capital to SHG: Initial funding of Rs. 40,000- per Self Help Group (SHG) member would be provided for working capital and purchase of small tools.

Status of Indian Food Industry:

- The Indian food and grocery market is the world's sixth largest, with retail contributing 70% of the sales.
- The Indian food processing industry accounts for 32% of the country's total food market, one of the largest industries in India and is ranked fifth in terms of production, consumption, export and expected growth.
- It contributes around 8.80 and 8.39% of Gross Value Added (GVA) in Manufacturing and Agriculture respectively, 13% of India's exports and 6% of total industrial investment.

National AI Portal:

- The 'National AI Portal', celebrated its first anniversary on 28th May, 2021.
- It is a joint initiative by the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY), National e-Governance Division (NeGD) and NASSCOM.
- NeGD: In 2009, NeGD was created as an Independent Business Division under the Digital India Corporation (a not-for-profit company set up by MeitY).
- NASSCOM: A not-for-profit industry association, is the apex body for the IT and IT enabled products and services sector in India.
- It serves as a central hub for Artificial Intelligence (AI) related news, learning, articles, events and activities etc., in India and beyond.

About Artificial Intelligence (AI):

- It describes the action of machines accomplishing tasks that have historically required human intelligence.
- It includes technologies like machine learning, pattern recognition, big data, neural networks, self algorithms etc.
- AI involves complex things such as feeding a particular data into the machine and making it react as per the different situations.
- AI is being used across different industries including finance and healthcare.
- As per a report by PwC, India reported a 45% increase in the use of AI, the highest among all countries, following the outbreak of the virus.

Recent Examples of Use of AI in India:

- For the Covid-19 Response: An AI-enabled Chatbot was used by MyGov for ensuring communications.
- **In Judicial System:** An AI based portal 'SUPACE' is aimed at assisting judges with legal research.
- **In Agriculture:** ICRISAT has developed an AI-power sowing app, which utilises weather models and data on local crop yield and rainfall to more accurately predict and advise local farmers on when they should plant their seeds.
- **In Disaster Management:** An AI-based flood forecasting model that has been implemented in Bihar is now being expanded to cover the whole of India to ensure that around 200 million people get alerts and warnings 48 hours earlier about impending floods.

- In Banking & Financial Services Industry: Few banks in India have adopted AI to increase digitisation to improve customer experience and use algorithms in risk management (for example, fraud detection).

Initiatives Taken to Boost Use of AI:

- The National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence (NITI Aayog, June 2018) which is focused on inclusive AI (AI for all), and the New Education Policy (NEP, 2020) which addresses the need to inculcate AI in the curriculum are the right strategic steps to encourage core and applied research.
- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MTA) has inked a MoU with Microsoft to support the digital transformation of schools such as Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) and Ashram Schools, among others under the Ministry.
- US India Artificial Intelligence (USIAI) initiative has been launched to scale up the science and technology relationship between India and the United States.
- In 2020, India joined the 'Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI)' as a founding member to support the responsible and human-centric development and use of AI.
- 'RAISE 2020 - Responsible AI for Social Empowerment 2020', a mega virtual summit, was jointly organised by the NITI Aayog and the MeitY.
- The larger aim of the program "Responsible AI for Youth" is to provide an equal opportunity to all Indian youths - in urban, rural and remote corners of India - to become human-centric designers who can create real AI solutions to solve economic and social impact issues of India.

Barriers to Adoption of AI:

- Limited understanding of AI: Many Indian companies may have not yet understood the full benefits of leveraging AI in their companies.
- Low Investments and Less Evolved Startup Ecosystem: Startup/investment funding ecosystem in India is yet to scale up in terms of AI startups and service providers.
- Limited Availability of AI Trained Talent: There is limited infrastructure to 'democratise' and scale-up important AI skills such as deep learning and neural networks.
- Way Forward
- Global Lessons: Countries like China, USA and Israel currently lead the way in terms of AI adoption. India can consider a few learnings from these countries to further scale-up its AI ecosystem while keeping in mind the overall social development and inclusiveness agenda.
- Clear Central Strategy and Policy Framework: AI adoption in India can be accelerated through the formulation of more focused policies related to innovation, for example, patent control and security. Malicious use of AI should be managed as well.
- Collaboration among Government, Corporates and Academia: These three critical stakeholders need to work synergistically to undertake actions like nurturing entrepreneurship, promoting re-skilling, encouraging research and development, and driving the policies on the ground.

17. Beed Model of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana:

- Recently, the Maharashtra Government asked the Prime Minister for state-wide implementation of the 'Beed model' of the crop insurance scheme Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY).
- Beed is a district of Maharashtra located in the drought-prone Marathwada region.
- 80-110 Formula: This model is also called 80-110 Formula.
- Under this plan, the insurer's potential losses are restricted.

- The insurance firm does not have to entertain claims above 110% of the gross premium. The state government has to bear the cost of compensation above 110% of the premium collected to insulate the insurer from losses (bridge amount).
- However, if the compensation is less than the premium collected, the insurance company would keep 20% of the amount as handling charges and reimburse the rest to the state government (premium surplus).

Reason for Implementing this Model:

- Another Source of Fund: In most years, the claims-to-premium ratio is low. In the Beed model, the profit of the insurance company is expected to reduce and the state government would access another source of funds.
- Reduce the Burden of Financing PMFBY: The reimbursed amount can lead to lower budgetary provision for PMFBY by the state for the following year, or help in financing the paying the bridge amount in case of a year of crop loss.

Flaws in PMFBY:

- Fiscally-stressed states have over the years dissented to footing the premium bill for the PMFBY, resulting in insurers not honouring the farmers' claims on time.
- In 2020, far-below-normal monsoon rainfalls in central Maharashtra's Beed district dissuaded insurers from covering farmers in the district under the PMFBY for kharif 2020.
- Questions remain on how the state government is going to raise the excess amount, and how the reimbursed amount would be administered.
- For farmers, this model does not seem to have any direct benefit.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana(launched in 2016):

- It provides a comprehensive insurance cover against failure of the crop thus helping in stabilising the income of the farmers.
- Scope: All food & oilseed crops and annual commercial/horticultural crops for which past yield data is available.
- Premium: The prescribed premium is 2% to be paid by farmers for all Kharif crops and 1.5% for all rabi crops. In the case of annual commercial and horticultural crops, the premium is 5%.
- Premium cost over and above the farmer share is equally subsidized by States and Gol.
- However, Gol shared 90% of the premium subsidy for North Eastern States to promote the uptake in the region.

Use of Technology under PMFBY:

- Crop Insurance App:
 - Provides for easy enrollment of farmers.
 - Facilitate easier reporting of crop loss within 72 hours of occurrence of any event.
- Latest Technological Tools: To assess crop losses, satellite imagery, remote-sensing technology, drones, artificial intelligence and machine learning are used.
- PMFBY Portal: For integration of land records.

Performance of the Scheme:

- The Scheme covers over 5.5 crore farmer applications on average per year.
- Aadhar seeding (linking Aadhaar through Internet banking portals) has helped in speedy claim settlement directly into the farmer accounts.
- One notable example is mid-season adversity claims of nearly Rs. 30 crore in Rajasthan during Rabi 2019-20 Locust attack.

PMFBY 2.0 (PMFBY was revamped in the 2020 Kharif Season):

- **Completely Voluntary:** Prior to 2020, the scheme was optional for farmers who did not have loans pending, but mandatory for loanee farmers. Since 2020, it has been optional for all farmers.
- **Limit to Central Subsidy:** The Cabinet decided to cap the Centre's premium subsidy under the scheme for premium rates up to 30% for unirrigated areas/crops and 25% for irrigated areas/crops.
- **More Flexibility to States:** The government has given the flexibility to states/UTs to implement PMFBY and given them the option to select any number of additional risk covers/features.
- **Investing in ICE Activities:** Insurance companies have to spend 0.5% of the total premium collected on information, education and communication (IEC) activities.

18. I-Familia: Global Database to Identify Missing Persons:

- Recently, the Interpol has launched a new global database named "I-Familia" to identify missing persons through family DNA and help the police solve cold cases in member countries.
- It is the first of its kind, I-Familia is a global database for identifying missing persons based on international DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) kinship matching.
- The database seeks to identify missing persons or unidentified human remains when direct comparison is not possible, by using DNA samples from family members instead.
- Family members must give their consent for their data to be used for international searching.
- It builds on Interpol's long-standing success in direct DNA matching.

I-Familia has three components:

- A dedicated global database to host the DNA profiles provided by relatives, held separately from any criminal data.
- DNA matching software called Bonaparte.
- Interpretation guidelines, produced by Interpol, to efficiently identify and report potential matches.
- In the event of a match, notifications are sent to the countries that supplied the DNA profile from the unidentified body and from the family respectively.

Significance:

- There is growing international concern about the number of missing persons and unidentified victims around the world due to increased international travel, the prevalence of organized crime and human trafficking, the rise in global migration, conflicts and natural disasters.
- All countries have unsolved missing persons investigations as well as human remains that cannot be identified using their national systems alone.

Direct DNA Matching vs Kinship DNA Matching:

- A direct DNA sample from the missing person, for example a prior medical sample or a personal item such as a toothbrush, can be compared to the DNA from an unidentified body or human remains to see if a match can be found. This type of identification has been carried out via the Interpol DNA Database since 2004.
- Biological relatives share a percentage of their DNA, depending on their relationship. In the event that a DNA sample from the missing person cannot be obtained for direct matching, DNA from close family members (parents, children, siblings) can also be compared. This is where I-Familia is set to make a difference.

Interpol:

- The International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) is an intergovernmental organization that helps coordinate the police force of 194 member countries.
- Each of the member countries hosts an Interpol National Central Bureau (NCB). This connects their national law enforcement with other countries and with the General Secretariat.
- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is designated as the National Central Bureau of India.
- It is headquartered in Lyon, France.
- Interpol Notices are international requests for cooperation or alerts allowing police in member countries to share critical crime-related information.

19. Horticulture Cluster Development Programme:

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has launched the Horticulture Cluster Development Programme (CDP) in order to promote the export of horticultural produce.
- Horticulture is the branch of plant agriculture dealing with garden crops, generally fruits, vegetables, and ornamental plants.

Cluster Development Programme (CDP):

- It is a central sector programme aimed at growing and developing identified horticulture clusters to make them globally competitive.
- Horticulture cluster is a regional/geographical concentration of targeted horticulture crops.

Implementation:

- It will be implemented by the National Horticulture Board (NHB) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.
- In a pilot phase, the programme will be implemented in 12 horticulture clusters out of the total 53 clusters selected for the programme.
- These clusters will be implemented through Cluster Development Agencies (CDAs) which are appointed on the recommendations of the respective State/UT Government.

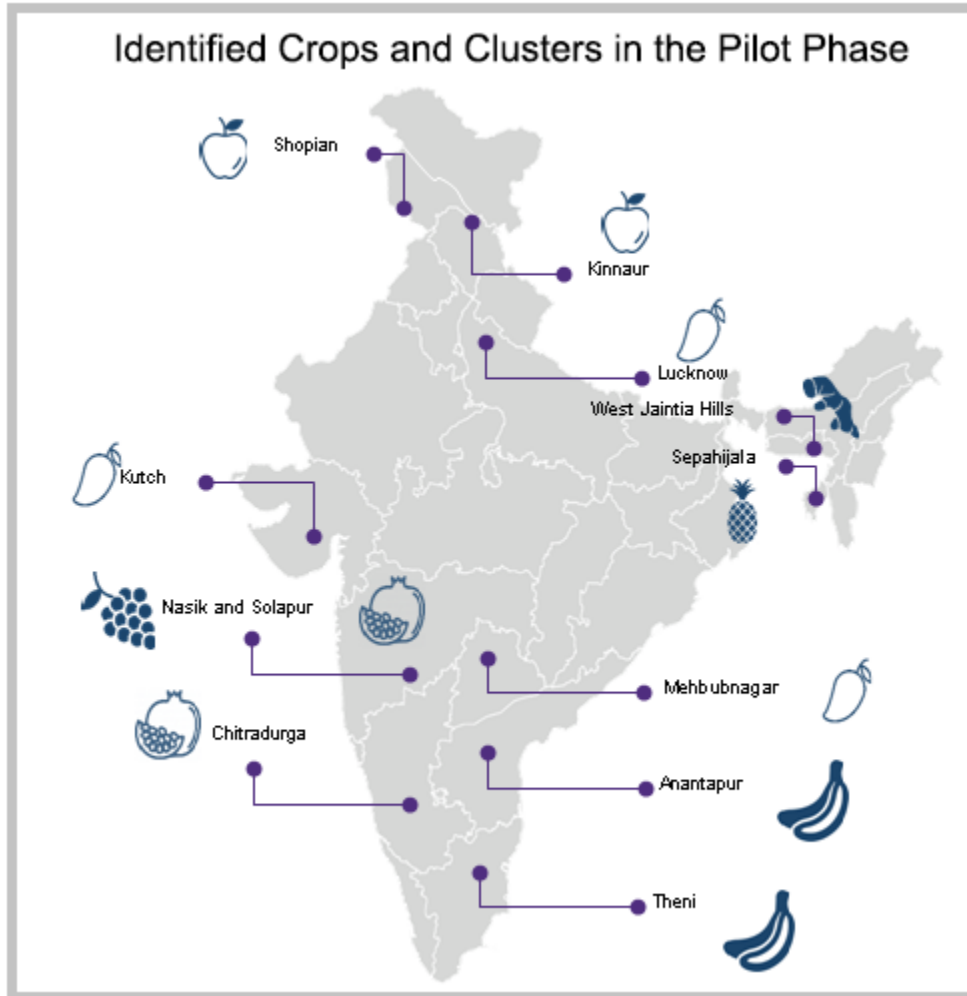
Objectives:

- To address all major issues related to the Indian horticulture sector including pre-production, production, post-harvest management, logistics, marketing and branding.
- To leverage geographical specialisation and promote integrated and market-led development of horticulture clusters.
- To converge with other initiatives of the Government such as the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund.

Expected Benefit:

- The programme will benefit about 10 lakh farmers and is expected to attract an investment of Rs. 10,000 crore when implemented in all the 53 clusters.
- Horticulture Sector in India:
 - India is the second-largest producer of horticulture crops globally, accounting for approximately 12% of the world's production of fruits and vegetables.
 - India is a leader in producing fruits like Mango, Banana, Pomegranate, Sapota, Acid Lime and Aonla.
 - In 2018-19, Andhra Pradesh followed by Maharashtra and UP were the top states in fruit production.
 - West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh were the top States in vegetable production.

- The area under horticulture crops increased to 25.5 million hectare in 2018-19, which is 20% of the total area under foodgrain, and produced 314 million tonnes.
- The Ministry has provided an enhanced allocation of Rs. 2250 Crore for the year 2021-22 for 'Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture' (MIDH).
- MIDH is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for the holistic growth of the horticulture sector covering fruits, vegetables, root & tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, cocoa and bamboo.



20. Time to Define Limits of Sedition: SC

- Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) while protecting two Telugu (language) news channels from coercive action by the Andhra Pradesh government noted that it is time to define the limits of sedition.
- Presently, the Committee for Reforms in Criminal Laws constituted by the Union Home Ministry to suggest reforms to the British-era Indian Penal Code (IPC), is attempting for the first time to define Hate speech.

About the Case:

- Channels blamed the state government for suppressing the right to freedom of speech by obstructing the media coverage and reportage of the Covid-19 pandemic in the State.

- Article 19 guarantees freedom of expressing one's own views, opinions, beliefs and convictions freely by word of mouth, writing, printing, picturing or in any other manner.
- Channels urged the SC to initiate contempt proceedings against the senior officials of the State government for violating its previous order.
- The previous order of SC directed the state government to immediately cease any direct and indirect threats of prosecution and arrest to citizens, who air their grievances.
- SC's Ruling:

Indiscriminate Use of Sedition:

- SC flagged indiscriminate use of the sedition law against critics, journalists, social media users, activists and citizens for airing their grievances about the government's Covid-19 management.
- Even for seeking help to gain medical access, equipment, drugs and oxygen cylinders, especially during the second wave of the pandemic.
- **Interpretation of 'Sedition':**
- The ambit and parameters of the provisions of Sections 124A (sedition), 153A and 505 of the IPC would require interpretation.
- IPC Section 153 A: Punishes acts promoting enmity between different groups on ground of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc, and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony.
- IPC Section 505: Makes the publication and circulation of content which may cause ill-will or hatred between different groups an offence.
- Particularly in the context of the right of the electronic and print media to communicate news, information and the rights, even those that may be critical of the prevailing regime in any part of the nation.

Rights of Media:

- Acknowledged the argument that the media was well within its rights to air critical programmes about a prevailing regime without attracting sedition.
- Sedition (Section 124A of IPC)
- Sedition is a crime under Section 124A, IPC.
- Section 124A, IPC defines sedition as an offence committed when "any person by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the government established by law in India".
- Disaffection includes disloyalty and all feelings of enmity. However, comments without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection, will not constitute an offence under this section.
- Punishment for the Offence of Sedition:
- Sedition is a non-bailable offence. Punishment under the Section 124A ranges from imprisonment up to three years to a life term, to which fine may be added.
- A person charged under this law is barred from a government job.
- They have to live without their passport and must produce themselves in the court at all times as and when required.

Way Forward:

- Section 124A of the IPC has its utility in combating anti-national, secessionist and terrorist elements. However, Dissent and criticism of the government are essential ingredients of robust public debate in a vibrant democracy. They should not be constructed as sedition.
- The higher judiciary should use its supervisory powers to sensitize the magistracy and police to the constitutional provisions protecting free speech.

- The definition of sedition should be narrowed down, to include only the issues pertaining to the territorial integrity of India as well as the sovereignty of the country.
- Civil society must take the lead to raise awareness about the arbitrary use of Sedition law.

21. Mega Food Park Scheme:

- Recently, the Union Minister for Food Processing Industries virtually inaugurated the Indus Best Mega Food Park at Raipur, Chhattisgarh.
- It is built under the Mega Food Park Scheme. By this food park, about 5000 people will get employment and about 25000 farmers will be benefited.
- It was launched in 2008-09 to give a major boost to the food processing sector by adding value and reducing food wastage at each stage of the supply chain with a particular focus on perishables.
- The Ministry of Food Processing Industries is implementing the Mega Food Park Scheme in the country.
- Mega Food Parks create modern infrastructure facilities for food processing along the value chain from farm to market with strong forward and backward linkages through a cluster-based approach.

Objectives:

- To provide a mechanism to link agricultural production to the market by bringing together farmers, processors and retailers so as to ensure maximizing value addition, minimizing wastage, increasing farmers income and creating employment opportunities particularly in the rural sector.
- Approach:
- The Scheme is based on the “Cluster” approach and envisages creation of state of art support infrastructure in a well-defined agri/horticultural zone for setting up of modern food processing units in the industrial plots provided in the park with a well-established supply chain.

Components:

- A Mega food Park typically consists of supply chain infrastructure including collection centers (cc), primary processing centers (ppc) central processing centers (cpc), cold chain and around 25-30 fully developed plots for entrepreneurs to set up food processing units.
- Financial Assistance:
- The central government provides financial assistance upto Rs. 50 Crore per Mega Food Park (MFP) project.
- The MFP project is implemented by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) which is a Body Corporate registered under the Companies Act, 2013.
- SPV is a subsidiary company that is formed to undertake a specific business purpose or activity.
- **Present Status:**
- Presently, 22 Mega Food Parks are operational. It is in line with the ‘Make in India’ and ‘Atma Nirbhar Bharat’ vision of the Government of India.

22. Bamboo Market Window on GeM Portal:

- Recently, the government of India has dedicated a window ‘The Green Gold Collection’ on the GeM (Government e-Marketplace) portal for the marketing of Bamboo Goods.
- This window is the collective work of the National Bamboo Mission (NBM) and GeM.

About:

- It showcases a range of exquisitely handcrafted bamboo and bamboo products, handicrafts, disposals and office utility products on the GeM portal.

- It aims to provide bamboo artisans, weavers and entrepreneurs in rural areas with market access to Government buyers.
- It seeks to promote the adoption and use of bamboo products among Government buyers and usher a sustainable rural economy for an Atmanirbhar Bharat.

National Bamboo Mission:

- The restructured NBM was launched in 2018-19 for the holistic development of the complete value chain of the bamboo sector and is being implemented in a hub & spoke model.
- “Hub & Spoke” model wherein the Mentor Institution, called the “Hub” is centralized and will have the responsibility of guiding the Mentee institution through the secondary branches the “Spoke” i.e. through the services provided to the mentee for self-improvement.

Objectives:

- Connecting farmers to markets so as to enable farmer producers to get a ready market for the bamboo grown and to increase the supply of appropriate raw material to the domestic industry.
- It also endeavours to upgrade skills of traditional bamboo craftsmen as per the requirement of contemporary markets with a tie-up with enterprises and premier institutes.
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

Government e-Marketplace:

- GeM is a one-stop National Public Procurement Portal to facilitate online procurement of common use Goods & Services required by various Central and State Government Departments/Organizations /Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).
- The procurement of goods and services by Ministries and the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) is mandatory for goods and services available on GeM.
- It also provides the tools of e-bidding and reverse e-auction to facilitate the government users achieve the best value for their money.
- At present, GeM has more than 30 lakh products, over Rs. 10 lakh crore worth of transactions have happened so far at the portal.
- **Launch:** It was launched in 2016 to bring transparency and efficiency in the government buying process.
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

23. World Bamboo Day:

- 18th September is observed as World Bamboo Day by the World Bamboo Organisation.
- India is the world’s second-largest cultivator of bamboo after China, with 136 species and 23 genera spread over 13.96 million hectares, according to the State of Environment report 2018.
- Green Gold, as bamboo is often known, is found everywhere in India.
- Known as ‘**poor man’s timber**’, bamboo is omnipresent in tribal cultures and community living. Rural communities engage with bamboo handicrafts, textiles, artifacts, and household utilities.
- Examples include Tripura bamboo silks, heritage cuisines with roasted and pickled bamboo shoots, cultural symbols like the Assamese ‘Jaapi’ (made of bamboo, cane, and palm), widely popular bamboo tree houses, machans, besides modern sustainable architectural concepts and musical instruments.
- **Initiatives Taken:** National Bamboo Mission, Bamboo Clusters, Removal of Bamboo from ‘Tree’ Category (Indian Forest Act 1927 was amended in 2017),

24. Council of Scientific and Industrial Research:

- Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is the largest research and development (R&D) organisation in India. CSIR has a pan-India presence and has a dynamic network of 38 national laboratories, 39 outreach centres, 3 Innovation Complexes and 5 units.

- Established: September 1942
- Located: New Delhi
- CSIR is funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology and it operates as an autonomous body through the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- CSIR covers a wide spectrum of streams – from radio and space physics, oceanography, geophysics, chemicals, drugs, genomics, biotechnology and nanotechnology to mining, aeronautics, instrumentation, environmental engineering and information technology.
- It provides significant technological intervention in many areas with regard to societal efforts which include the environment, health, drinking water, food, housing, energy, farm and non-farm sectors.

Organisation Structure:

- President: Prime Minister of India (Ex-officio)
- Vice President: Union Minister of Science and Technology (Ex-officio)
- Governing Body: The Director-General is the head of the governing body.
- The other ex-officio member is the finance secretary (expenditures).
- Other members' terms are of three years.
- CSIR Advisory Board: 15-member body composed of prominent members from respective fields of science and technology.
- Its function is to provide science and technology inputs to the governing body.
- Member terms are of three years.

Objectives:

- The objectives of the Council are scientific and industrial/applied research of national importance.
- The activities include:
 1. Promotion, guidance and coordination of scientific and industrial research in India including the institution and the financing of specific researchers.
 2. Establishment and assistance to special institutions or departments of existing institutions for the scientific study of problems affecting particular industries and trade.
 3. Establishment and award of research studentships and fellowships.
 4. Utilization of the results of the research conducted under the auspices of the Council towards the development of industries in the country.
 5. Payment of a share of royalties arising out of the development of the results of research to those who are considered as having contributed towards the pursuit of such research.
 6. Establishment, maintenance and management of laboratories, workshops, institutes and organisations to further scientific and industrial research.
 7. Collection and dissemination of information in regard not only to research but to industrial matters generally.
 8. Publication of scientific papers and a journal of industrial research and development.
 9. Vision & Strategy 2022
 10. Vision: Pursue science which strives for global impact, the technology that enables innovation-driven industry and nurtures trans-disciplinary leadership thereby catalyzing inclusive economic development for the people of India.

Awards:

- Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (SSB) Prize for Science and Technology is named after the founder Director of the CSIR, the late Dr Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar.
- It was instituted in 1957 as the most coveted and revered prize in the field of science and technology in the country.

Dr Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar:

- He was the Founder Director (and later first Director-General) of CSIR who is credited with establishing twelve national laboratories.
- He played a significant role in the building of post-independent Science and Technology infrastructure and in the formulation of India's S & T policies. He concurrently held a number of important positions in the Government.
- He was the first Chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC).
- He was conferred with Order of British Empire (OBE). He was Knighted in 1941 and elected Fellow of the Royal Society, London in 1943.
- He was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 1954 by the President of India.

Global Recognition:

- Scimago Institutions Rankings: CSIR is recognized to be among the International leader in knowledge creation.
- CSIR has been ranked 17th in the world amongst the government institutions in the world according to the prestigious Scimago Institutions Rankings 2019 Report.
- Intellectual Property: Amongst its peers in publicly funded research organizations in the world, CSIR is a leader in terms of filing and securing patents worldwide.
- CSIR is granted 90% of the US patents granted to any publicly funded Indian R&D organization.
- On an average CSIR files about 200 Indian patents and 250 foreign patents per year. About 13.86% of CSIR patents are licensed - a number which is above the global average.

25. Incredible India Tourist Facilitator Certification Programme:

- Recently, on the occasion of World Environment Day (5th June), the Tourism Minister appreciated the Incredible India Tourist Facilitator Certification Programme (IITFC).
- IITFC Programme is a digital initiative of the Ministry of Tourism (MoT), for the citizens of India to become a part of the booming Tourism Industry.
- It is an online programme where one can learn about tourism at their own time, space, path and pace.
- The successful completion of this programme would enable the learner to become a Certified Tourist Facilitator of the Ministry of Tourism.

Tourism & Hospitality Sector in India:

- In FY20, the tourism sector in India accounted for 39 million jobs, which was 8% of the total employment in the country. By 2029, it is expected to account for about 53 million jobs.
- According to WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council), India ranked 10th among 185 countries in terms of travel & tourism's total contribution to GDP in 2019. During 2019, the contribution of travel & tourism to GDP was 6.8% of the total economy.
- By 2028, international tourist arrivals are expected to reach 30.5 billion and generate revenue over USD 59 billion.

Other Initiatives of the Ministry of Tourism:

DekhoApnaDesh Campaign:

- It is an initiative to encourage the citizens to travel widely within the country and explore the wonders of India thus enabling the development of Domestic Tourism tourist facilities and infrastructure in tourism spots in the country.

Prashad Scheme:

- The Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) was launched in the year 2014-15 with the objective of holistic development of identified pilgrimage destinations.

Swadesh Darshan Scheme:

- Swadesh Darshan, a Central Sector Scheme, was launched in 2014-15 for integrated development of theme based tourist circuits in the country.
- Currently, there are 15 theme based circuits - Buddhist, Coastal, Desert, Eco, Heritage, Himalayan, Krishna, North-east, Ramayana, Rural, Spiritual, Sufi, Tirthankara, Tribal and Wildlife.

Recent Initiatives:

- In January 2021, the Union Tourism Minister announced plans to develop an international-level infrastructure in Kargil (Ladakh) to promote adventure tourism and winter sports.
- As of March 2021, the e-Tourist Visa facility was extended to citizens of 171 countries.
- The Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) runs a series of Bharat Darshan tourist trains aimed at taking people to various pilgrimages across the country.
- All India Tourist Vehicles Authorisation and Permit Rules, 2021: It was introduced by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, in which a tourist vehicle operator can register online for All India Tourist Authorisation/Permit.

Way Forward:

- India's travel and tourism industry has huge growth potential.
- The industry is also looking forward to the expansion of e-Visa scheme, which is expected to double the tourist inflow in India.
- India's travel and tourism industry has the potential to expand by 2.5% on the back of higher budgetary allocation and low-cost healthcare facilities according to a joint study conducted by ASSOCHAM and Yes Bank in 2017.

26. Performance Grading Index (PGI):

- The Union Education Minister has approved the release of Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2019-20 for States and Union Territories.
- The PGI is a tool to provide insights on the status of school education in States and UTs including key levers that drive their performance and critical areas for improvement.

About the Performance Grading Index (PGI):

- The PGI for States and Union Territories was first published in 2019 with reference year 2017-18.
- The PGI: States/UTs for 2019-20 is the third publication in this series.
- The PGI exercise envisages that the index would propel States and UTs towards undertaking multi-pronged interventions that will bring about the much-desired optimal education outcomes.
- The PGI helps the States/UTs to pinpoint the gaps and accordingly prioritise areas for intervention to ensure that the school education system is robust at every level.

Implementing Agency:

- It is initiated by the Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL).
- Source of Information:
 - The information on the indicators are drawn from data available with the DoSEL from the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE), National Achievement Survey (NAS) of NCERT, Mid Day Meal website, Public Financial Management System (PFMS) and the information uploaded by the States and UTs on the Shagun portal of DoSEL.

Methodology:

- The PGI is structured in two categories, namely, Outcomes and Governance & Management and comprises 70 indicators in aggregate with a total weightage of 1000.
- Domains under categories include: Access, Infrastructure & Facilities, Equity, Governance process.
- Important Findings of the PGI 2019-20:

State-wise Performance:

- Shows that 33 States and UTs have improved their PGI scores in 2019-20 compared to the previous year.
- Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Puducherry, Punjab and Tamil Nadu have improved their overall PGI scores by 10%.

Inter-state Differential:

- On a maximum possible of 1000 points, the range between the States and UTs with the highest and the lowest score is more than 380 points in the year 2019-20.

Domain-wise Performance:

- Access: Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep and Punjab have shown improvement of 10% or more in the 'Access' domain.
- Infrastructure and Facilities: Thirteen states and UTs have shown improvement by 10% or more in 'Infrastructure and Facilities' while Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Odisha have improved their scores in the domain by 20% or more.
- **Equity:** In 'Equity', Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Odisha have shown an improvement of more than 10%.
- Governance Process: 19 states have shown improvement by 10% or more.
- Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Punjab, Rajasthan and West Bengal have shown improvement by at least 20%.

Way Forward:

- A reliable, timely and participative information system coupled with a robust and efficient data analytics framework is the key to successful implementation of any Government programme.
- In the arena of School Education & Literacy, guided by the enabling legislative framework of the Right to Education, the National Education Policy 2020 and visionary Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Government Schemes like Samagra Shiksha (SS), Mid-Day Meal (MDM) and similar such schemes by the States would deliver the desired result if they are monitored effectively.
- The framework of a real time data availability system (namely, UDISE+, Shagun, etc.) and an objective and holistic performance evaluation framework provided through the PGI would provide the right combination for effective implementation of policy in the School Education sector.
- A performance-based grant would provide the required incentive to the States and UTs to ensure their continuous and focused attention to this sector, which is crucial for overall growth and development of the country.

27. Model Panchayat Citizens Charter:

- Recently, the Union Minister of Panchayati Raj released a Model Panchayat Citizens Charter.
- It is prepared by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) in collaboration with National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR).
- NIRDPR is an autonomous organisation under the Union Ministry of Rural Development.
- It has been developed for the delivery of the services across the 29 sectors, aligning actions with localised Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- It is expected that the Panchayats utilising this framework, and with the due approval of Gram Sabha, would draw up a Citizens Charter, detailing the different categories of services rendered to the citizen by the Panchayat, the conditions for such service and also the time limit for such service.
- It will help in making the citizens aware of their rights on the one hand, and to make the Panchayats and their elected representatives directly accountable to the people, on the other hand.

Significance:

- Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) constitute the third tier of government in the rural areas and represent the first level of Government interaction for over 60% of the Indian population.
- PRIs are responsible for delivery of basic services as enshrined under Article 243G of the Constitution of India, specifically in the areas of Health & Sanitation, Education, Nutrition, Drinking Water.

Other Initiatives for PRIs:

eGramSwaraj:

- It is a user-friendly web-based portal which unifies the planning, accounting and monitoring functions of Gram Panchayats.
- Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA):
- Launched in 2018, this centrally sponsored scheme is an effort in the direction of achieving “Sabka Sath, Sabka Gaon, Sabka Vikas”.
- People’s Plan Campaign (PPC)- Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas:
- It aims to draw up Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GDPs) in the country and place them on a website where anyone can see the status of the various government’s flagship schemes.

Citizen’s Charter:

- It is a voluntary and written document that spells out the service provider’s efforts taken to focus on their commitment towards fulfilling the needs of the citizens/customers.
- It preserves the trust between the service provider and the citizens/users.
- It includes what the citizens can expect out of the service provider.
- It also includes how citizens can redress any grievances.
- The concept was first articulated and implemented in the United Kingdom by the Conservative Government of John Major in 1991 as a national Programme.
- Citizen’s charters are not legally enforceable documents. They are just guidelines to enhance service delivery to citizens.

Originally Framed Principles:

- Quality – Improving service quality.
- Choice – Wherever possible.
- Standards – Specifically mention what to expect and how to go about if standards are not met.
- Value – For taxpayers’ money.
- Accountability – At the level of the individual and the organization.
- Transparency – Transparency in rules/schemes/procedures/grievances.

Indian Initiative:

- In India, the concept of citizen’s charter was first adopted at a ‘Conference of Chief Ministers of various States and Union Territories’ held in May 1997.
- A major outcome of the conference was a decision to formulate Citizen’s Charters by the central and state governments, beginning with sectors with a large public interface such as the railways, telecom, posts, Public Distribution System, etc
- The task of coordination, formulation, and operationalization of citizen’s charters was done by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG).
- The Right of Citizens for Time Bound Delivery of Goods and Services and Redressal of their Grievances Bill, 2011 (Citizens Charter) was introduced in the Lok Sabha in December 2011.
- It lapsed due to the dissolution of the Lok Sabha in 2014.

Need:

1. To make administration accountable and citizen friendly.
2. To ensure transparency.
3. To take measures to improve customer service.

4. To adopt a stakeholder approach.
5. To save time for both Administration and the citizens.

Challenges in India:

- In a majority of cases, not formulated through a consultative process with cutting edge staff who will finally implement it.
- Lack of meaningful and succinct Citizen's Charter, absence of critical information that end-users need to hold agencies accountable.
- Only a small percentage of end-users are aware of the commitments made in the Citizen's Charter.
- Measurable standards of delivery are rarely defined making it difficult to assess whether the desired level of service has been achieved or not.
- Little interest shown by the organizations in adhering to their Citizen's Charter since there is no citizen friendly mechanism to compensate the citizen if the organization defaults.
- Citizen's Charter has still not been adopted by all Ministries/Departments. This overlooks local issues.

Way Forward:

- A Citizens' Charter cannot be an end in itself, it is rather a means to an end - a tool to ensure that the citizen is always at the heart of any service delivery mechanism.
- Drawing from best practice models such as the Sevottam Model (a Service Delivery Excellence Model) can help Citizen's Charter in becoming more citizen centric.

28. World Food Safety Day:

- The Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare virtually attended the World Food Safety Day (7th June) celebrations organized by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).
- The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) jointly facilitate the observance of World Food Safety Day, in collaboration with Member States and other relevant organizations.
- It was first celebrated in 2019, to strengthen the commitment to scale up food safety made by the Addis Ababa Conference and the Geneva Forum in 2019 under the umbrella of "The Future of Food Safety".

Aim:

- To draw attention and inspire action to help prevent, detect and manage foodborne risks, contributing to food security, human health, economic prosperity, agriculture, market access, tourism and sustainable development.
- **2021 Theme:**
- Safe Food for a Healthy Tomorrow.

Importance of Food Safety:

- Access to sufficient amounts of safe food is key to sustaining life and promoting good health.
- Foodborne illnesses are usually infectious or toxic in nature and often invisible to the plain eye, caused by bacteria, viruses, parasites or chemical substances entering the body through contaminated food or water.
- An estimated 4,20,000 people around the world die every year after eating contaminated food and children under 5 years of age carry 40% of the foodborne disease burden, with 1,25,000 deaths every year.
- Food safety has a critical role in assuring that food stays safe at every stage of the food chain - from production to harvest, processing, storage, distribution, all the way to preparation and consumption.

- Food production is responsible for up to 30% of global greenhouse-gas emissions contributing to global warming.
- Global food waste accounts for 6.7% of global greenhouse gas emissions, directly leading to climate change.

Related Global Initiative:

- The Codex Alimentarius, or "Food Code" is a collection of standards, guidelines and codes of practice adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
- The Codex Alimentarius Commission is a joint intergovernmental body of the Food and Agriculture Organization and World Health Organization.
- Currently, it has 189 members and India is a member.

Indian Initiatives for Food Safety:

State Food Safety Index:

- FSSAI has developed the State Food Safety Index (SFSI) to measure the performance of States on five parameters of food safety.
- The parameters include Human Resources and Institutional Arrangements, Compliance, Food Testing- Infrastructure and Surveillance, Training and Capacity Building and Consumer Empowerment.

Eat Right India Movement:

- It is an initiative of the Government of India and FSSAI to transform the country's food system in order to ensure safe, healthy and sustainable food for all Indians.
- Eat Right India is aligned to the National Health Policy 2017 with its focus on preventive and promotive healthcare and flagship programmes like Ayushman Bharat, POSHAN Abhiyaan, Anemia Mukh Bharat and Swachh Bharat Mission.

Eat Right Awards:

- FSSAI has instituted the 'Eat Right Awards' to recognize the contribution of food companies and individuals to empower citizens to choose safe and healthy food options, which would help improve their health and well-being.

Eat Right Mela:

- Organised by FSSAI, it is an outreach activity for citizens to nudge them towards eating right. It is organised to make citizens aware of the health and nutrition benefits of different types of food.
- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)
- FSSAI is an autonomous statutory body established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (FSS Act).
- It has its headquarter in Delhi and its administrative Ministry is Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

Functions:

- Framing of regulations to lay down the standards and guidelines of food safety.
- Granting FSSAI food safety license and certification for food businesses.
- Laying down procedure and guidelines for laboratories in food businesses.
- To provide suggestions to the government in framing the policies.
- To collect data regarding contaminants in foods products, identification of emerging risks and introduction of a rapid alert system.
- Creating an information network across the country about food safety.

29. Draft Rules for Live- Streaming Court Proceedings:

- Recently, the Supreme Court has released the Draft Model Rules for Live-Streaming and Recording of Court Proceedings.

- The Rules are part of the National Policy and Action Plan for implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the judiciary.
- The Rules would cover live-streaming and recording of proceedings in High Courts, lower courts and tribunals.
- Earlier, the Chief Justice of India (CJI) launched an Artificial Intelligence (AI) based portal 'SUPACE' in the judicial system aimed at assisting judges with legal research.
- Key Points

Background:

- The Supreme Court in *Swapnil Tripathi v Supreme Court of India* (2018) had ruled in favour of opening up the apex court through live-streaming.
- It held that the live streaming proceedings are part of the right to access justice under Article 21 (Protection of Life and Personal Liberty) of the Constitution
- Gujarat High Court was the first high court to livestream court proceedings followed by Karnataka high court.

Draft Rules:

- **Telecast of Proceedings:** All proceedings in high courts can be telecast except for cases relating to matrimonial disputes, gender-based violence, those involving minors and "cases, which in the opinion of the Bench, may provoke enmity amongst communities likely to result in a breach of law and order".
- **Deciding Authority:** The final decision as to whether or not to allow the Live-streaming of the Proceedings or any portion thereof will be of the Bench, however, the decision of the Bench will be guided by the principle of an open and transparent judicial process.
- The decision of the Bench shall not be justiciable.
- **Allow Objections:** The rules allow for objections to be filed against live streaming in specific cases at the stage of filing of the case or at a later stage.
- **Record of Proceedings:** The draft rules allow for archiving of court proceedings for six months.
- The use of authorised recordings in their original form may be permitted by the court, inter-alia to disseminate news and for training, academic and educational purposes.

Restrictions:

- Discussion amongst judges, notes made by judges during hearings or communication between the advocate and her client will neither be telecast live nor archived.
- The rules also prohibit recording or sharing the telecast on media platforms, including social media and messaging platforms, unless authorised by the court.
- Recordings will not be used for commercial, promotional purposes or advertising in any form.

Possible Benefits:

- It can make the justice delivery system affordable, transparent, speedy and accountable by limiting the paper filings.
- It can be time saving and hence can reduce the backlog of pending cases and reduce the number of unscrupulous activities.

Concerns:

- Lack of technical manpower in courts and awareness amongst litigants, advocates and their acceptance to the system change.
- A huge concern will be the cyber security threat.
- The live streaming of the Courts are susceptible to abuses. Thus, issues of privacy may arise.
- Infrastructure, especially the internet connectivity is also a big challenge in implementing the live proceedings of Courts.

30. e-Courts Project:

- The e-Courts project was conceptualized on the basis of the “National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary – 2005” submitted by e-Committee, Supreme Court of India with a vision to transform the Indian Judiciary by ICT enablement of Courts.
- The e-Courts Mission Mode Project, is a Pan-India Project, monitored and funded by the Ministry of Law and Justice for the District Courts across the country.

The project envisages:

- To provide efficient & time-bound citizen-centric services delivery as detailed in e-Court Project Litigant's Charter.
- To develop, install & implement decision support systems in courts.
- To automate the processes to provide transparency in the accessibility of information to its stakeholders.
- To enhance judicial productivity, both qualitatively & quantitatively, to make the justice delivery system affordable, accessible, cost-effective, predictable, reliable and transparent.

Way Forward:

- There is a need for the deployment of a robust security system that provides secure access to case information for appropriate parties.
- Further, the government needs to identify and develop the infrastructure that would be required to support the e-court project.
- Solutions that will address the challenges such as inordinate delays in disposal of cases in courts, facilitating access to speedy resolution of commercial disputes by economic operators, making the justice system user friendly and affordable to all and improving the quality of legal aid services in the country would be imperative to drive the functioning of e-courts.

31. YUVA Scheme for Young Writers:

- Recently, the Indian Prime Minister announced the ‘Young, Upcoming and Versatile Authors’ (YUVA) scheme - a mentorship programme to train young authors.
- The scheme is aimed at training 75 aspiring writers below 30 years, who are ready to express themselves and project India and its culture and literature globally.
- A total of 75 authors will be selected through an All India Contest at MyGov (Government of India’s Citizen Engagement Platform).
- A consolidated scholarship of Rs. 50,000 per month for a period of six months per author will be paid under the mentorship scheme.

Aim:

- To bring reading and authorship as a preferred profession at par with other job options.
- To impart a positive psychological push to the young minds amidst the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health of children.
- **Implementation & Execution:**
- Implementing Agency: The National Book Trust (under Ministry of Education) will ensure phase-wise execution of the Scheme.

Phase-I (Training):

- NBT will organise training for three months for the selected candidates.

Phase-II (Promotion):

- The selected candidates will get to expand their understanding and hone their skills through interaction at various international events such as literary festivals, book fairs, virtual book fairs, cultural exchange programmes, etc.

- A book or a series of books written by these young authors will be published by NBT and a royalty of 10% will be paid to the authors.
- Their published books will also be translated into other Indian languages to ensure the exchange of culture and literature between different states, thereby promoting Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.

32. Surakshit Hum Surakshit Tum Abhiyan: Aspirational Districts:

- Recently, NITI Aayog and Piramal Foundation launched 'Surakshit Hum Surakshit Tum Abhiyan' in 112 aspirational districts.
- This drive was launched to assist the administration in providing home care support to Covid-19 patients, who are either asymptomatic or have mild symptoms.
- Most of these districts are in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra.
- The campaign is under a special initiative – Aspirational Districts Collaborative – in which local leaders, civil societies and volunteers will work with the district administrations to address emerging issues across key focus areas of the Aspirational Districts Programme.
- It will be led by district magistrates in partnership with over 1000 local NGOs, which will enlist and train over 1 lakh volunteers to connect with patients through inbound/outbound calls.
- Volunteers will be trained to support 20 affected families each by educating caretakers to follow protocols, provide psycho-social support and timely updates about patients to the administration.

Objectives:

- It is aimed to reach every affected person in these 112 districts.
- The campaign is expected to play a key role in district preparedness for managing nearly 70% of Covid-19 cases at home, reducing pressure on the health system, and stemming the spread of fear amongst the people.
- It will provide long-term support to India's poorest communities in the Aspirational Districts by addressing the lasting impact of Covid-19.

About Aspirational Districts Programme:

- It was launched in January 2018, the 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' Programme (TADP).
- Aspirational Districts are those districts in India that are affected by poor socio-economic indicators.
- These are aspirational in the context, that improvement in these districts can lead to the overall improvement in human development in India.
- Ministry: At the Government of India level, the programme is anchored by NITI Aayog. In addition, individual Ministries have assumed responsibility to drive the progress of districts.

Objectives:

- To monitor the real-time progress of aspirational districts.
- Focus Areas:
 - ADP is based on 49 indicators from the 5 identified thematic areas, which focuses closely on improving people's Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure.
 - With States as the main drivers, ADP seeks to focus on the strength of each district, identify low-hanging fruits for immediate improvement, measure progress, and rank districts.

Broad Contours of the Programme (Triple-C):

- Convergence (of Central & State Schemes) which brings together the horizontal and vertical tiers of the government.

- Collaboration (of Central, State level 'Prabhari' Officers & District Collectors) which enables impactful partnerships between government, market and civil society.
- Competition among districts driven by a spirit of the mass movement fosters accountability on district governments.

33. Railways Gets 5 MHz Spectrum:

- Recently, the Union Cabinet approved the allotment of 5 MHz spectrum in the 700 MHz frequency band to the Indian Railways for improving its communication and signalling systems.
- Railways has also approved a indigenously developed Train Collision Avoidance System (TCAS).
- The project, targeted to be completed in five years, is estimated to cost over Rs. 25,000 crore.
- The spectrum charges will be levied based on formula as prescribed by Department of Telecommunications for Royalty Charges and License Fee for captive use as recommended by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).
- With this spectrum, the railways will introduce Long-Term Evolution (LTE)-based Mobile Train Radio Communication (MTRC) on its routes.
- The Railways currently relies on optical fibre for its communication network but with the allocation of fresh spectrum, it will be able to use high-speed radio on a real-time basis.
- LTE is a fourth-generation (4G) wireless standard that provides increased network capacity and speed for cellphones and other cellular devices compared with third-generation (3G) technology.

Benefits:

Seamless Connection:

- It will be used for modern signalling and train protection systems and ensure seamless communication between loco pilots and guards.
- The purpose of the LTE for Indian Railways is to provide secure and reliable voice, video and data communication services for operational, safety and security applications.
- Reduced Accidents & Delays:
- It will help prevent train accidents and reduce delays by enabling real-time interaction between the Loco Pilot, Station Master and the Control Centre.

Internet of Things:

- This will also enable the railways to undertake Internet of Things (IoT) based remote asset monitoring, particularly of coaches, wagons and locos, and monitor live video feed of CCTV cameras in the coaches to ensure efficient, safer and faster train operations.
- IoT is a computing concept that describes the idea of everyday physical objects being connected to the internet and being able to identify themselves to other devices.

Train Collision Avoidance System (TCAS):

- It is a microprocessor based control system, which continuously monitors the speed, direction of travel, distance travelled, aspect of the signal passed and alertness of the motorman and thus increases the safety of the railway system.
- It will help in improving the safety and increasing the line capacity to accommodate more trains using the existing infrastructure. The modern rail network will result in reduced transportation cost and higher efficiency.

Radio Spectrum:

- The radio spectrum (also known as Radio Frequency or RF) is a part of the electromagnetic spectrum, electromagnetic waves in this frequency range are called radio frequency bands or simply 'radio waves'.

- Radio waves have the longest wavelengths in the electromagnetic spectrum. These were discovered by Heinrich Hertz in the late 1880s.
- RF bands spread in the range between 30 kHz and 300 GHz (alternative point of view offers coverage 3 KHz – 300 GHz).

34. Fast Tracking Freight in India: NITI Aayog:

- NITI Aayog, Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) and RMI India's new report, Fast Tracking Freight in India: A Roadmap for Clean and Cost-Effective Goods Transport, present key opportunities for India to reduce its logistics costs.
- RMI is an independent nonprofit organization founded in 1982.

NITI Aayog:

- It is a public policy think tank of the Government of India, established with the aim to achieve sustainable development goals with cooperative federalism by fostering the involvement of State Governments of India in the economic policy-making process using a bottom-up approach.
- It was established to replace the Planning Commission. The Prime Minister is its ex-officio chairman.

Growing Freight Transport Demand:

- Due to the rising demand for goods and services, freight transport demand is expected to grow rapidly in the future.
- While freight transport is essential to economic development, it is plagued by high logistics costs and contributes to rising carbon dioxide emissions and air pollution in cities.

India's Potential: It has the potential to:

- Reduce its logistics cost by 4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- Achieve 10 gigatonnes of cumulative carbon dioxide emissions savings between 2020 and 2050.
- Reduce Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) and Particulate Matter (PM) emissions by 35% and 28%, respectively, until 2050.

Accommodating More Urban Citizens:

- As India's freight activity grows five-fold by 2050 and about 400 million citizens move to cities, a whole system transformation can help uplift the freight sector.
- **This transformation will be defined by tapping into opportunities such as:**
 1. Efficient rail-based transport.
 2. Optimisation of logistics and supply chains.
 3. Shift to electric and other clean-fuel vehicles.
- These solutions can help India save Rs. 311 lakh crore cumulatively over the next three decades.
- Need to Make Freight Transportation Cost Effective:
 - Freight transportation is a critical backbone of India's growing economy, and now more than ever, it's important to make this transport system more cost-effective, efficient, and cleaner.
 - Efficient freight transport will also play an essential role in realising the benefits of existing government initiatives such as Make in India, Atma Nirbhar Bharat, and Digital India.

Recommendations:

- Increasing the rail network's capacity, promoting intermodal transport, improving warehousing and trucking practices, policy measures and pilot projects for clean technology adoption, and stricter fuel economy standards.
- When successfully deployed at scale, the proposed solutions can help India establish itself as a leader in logistics innovation and efficiency in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

Recent Initiatives:

Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC):

- It is a high speed and high capacity railway corridor that is exclusively meant for the transportation of freight, or in other words, goods and commodities.

E-Way Bill Integration with FASTag, RFID:

- It will enable tax officers to undertake live vigilance in respect of E-Way Bill compliances by businesses, stop revenue leakage and will facilitate movement of large goods vehicles.

FAME Scheme:

- The Indian government has created momentum through its Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles schemes that encourage, and in some segments mandates the adoption of electric vehicles (EV), with a goal of reaching 30% EV penetration by 2030.

Bharat Stage VI norms:

- It includes a wide list of technology modifications, the most significant being making OBD (On-board diagnostics) mandatory for all vehicles.

Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) Regulations:

- The CAFÉ standards were first notified in 2017 by the Union Ministry of Power (MoP) under Energy Conservation Act, 2001.
- The regulation is in accordance with the fuel consumption standards of 2015 that aim to increase fuel efficiency of vehicles on the road by 35% by 2030.

35. Rengma Nagas Demand Autonomous District Council:

- The Rengma Naga Peoples' Council (RNPC) or Rengma Nagas have demanded an Autonomous District Council (ADC) in Assam.
- The Central and the State governments recently upgraded the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) to territorial councils like the Bodoland Territorial Council.
- The 'status of territorial council' will provide more autonomy and financial grant to them.
- It is alleged that the creation of these tribal councils deprived the Rengma Nagas, the "legitimate owners", of the land. Both the KAAC and the NCHAC share boundaries with Nagaland.

About the Rengma Naga Tribe:

- Rengma is a Naga tribe found in Nagaland, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.
- History:
- The first official recording of the Rengma Nagas staying in Assam's Karbi Hills (then known as Mikir Hills) was made in 1855 by Major John Butler, a British officer posted in the Northeastern region.
- Butler recorded that the Rengmas in Karbi Anglong had migrated there from the Naga Hills in the early part of the 18th century, abandoned many of their tribal customs and married within the local communities.
- Festival: The harvest festival of the Rengmas is called Ngada.

Autonomous District Council (ADC):

- The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution deals with the administration of the tribal areas in the four northeastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- The special provision is provided under Article 244 (2) and Article 275 of the Constitution.
- The tribals have been given freedom to exercise legislative and executive powers through an autonomous regional council and ADCs.

Composition of Autonomous Councils:

- Each autonomous district and regional council consists of not more than 30 members, of which four are nominated by the governor and the rest via elections. All of them remain in power for a term of five years.

- However, the Bodoland Territorial Council is an exception as it can constitute up to 46 members.
- Governor's Control:
- Despite various degrees of autonomy, the 6th Schedule area does not fall outside the executive authority of the state concerned.
- The governor is empowered to organise and re-organise the autonomous districts.

Applicability of Central and State Laws:

- The Acts passed by Parliament and state legislatures may or may not be levied in these regions unless the President and the governor gives her or his approval, with or without modifications in the laws for the autonomous regions.
- Civil and Criminal Judicial Powers: The Councils have also been endowed with wide civil and criminal judicial powers, for example establishing village courts etc.
- However, the jurisdiction of these councils is subject to the jurisdiction of the concerned High Court.
- Existing Autonomous Councils: The sixth schedule to the Constitution includes 10 autonomous district councils in 4 states. These are:
 1. Assam: Bodoland Territorial Council, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and North Cachar Hills/Dima Hasao Autonomous Council.
 2. Meghalaya: Garo Hills Autonomous District Council, Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council and Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council.
 3. Tripura: Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council.
 4. Mizoram: Chakma Autonomous District Council, Lai Autonomous District Council, Mara Autonomous District Council.

Arguments of Rengma Naga Peoples' Council (RNPC):

- Rengmas were the first tribal people in Assam to have encountered the British in 1839.
- But the existing Rengma Hills was eliminated from the political map of the State and replaced with that of Mikir Hills (now Karbi Anglong) in 1951.
- The Rengmas gave shelter to the Ahom refugees during the Burmese invasions of Assam in 1816 and 1819.
- The Ahom are an ethnic group from the Indian states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Rengma Hills and Mikir Hills were two separate entities until 1951. The Rengma Hills was partitioned in 1963 between Assam and Nagaland.
- Karbis have no history in the Rengma Hills.
- At the time of creation of Nagaland State, the Karbis were known as Mikirs till 1976.
- They were the indigeneous tribal people of Mikir Hills.
- The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) population is around 12 lakh and the Karbis constitute only 3 lakh, the remaining are non-Karbhis, including the Rengma Nagas, whose population is around 22,000.

NSCN (I-M) Stand:

- The National Socialist Council of Nagaland or NSCN (Isak-Muivah) has said that the Rengma issue was one of the important agendas of the "Indo-Naga political talks" and no authority should go far enough to override their interests.
- NSCN (IM) had signed a Naga Peace Accord with the Government of India in August 2015, but the final accord is yet to be finalised.
- One of the most contentious demands of the NSCN (IM) was the creation of a unified Naga homeland, called 'Greater Nagalim' by integrating the Naga-inhabited areas of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal with Nagaland.

36. AISHE-2020:

- Recently, the Union Education Minister announced the release of the report of All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2019-20.
- This Report provides key performance indicators on the current status of Higher education in the country.
- It is the 10th in the series of AISHE annually released by the Department of Higher Education.

Total Student Enrolment:

- In the last five years from 2015-16 to 2019-20, there has been a growth of 11.4% in student enrolment.
- Total Enrolment in Higher Education stands at 3.85 crore in 2019-20 as compared to 3.74 crore in 2018-19, registering a growth of 11.36 lakh (3.04 %).
- Uttar Pradesh has highest student enrolment in India, it has 49.1% male and 50.9% female students followed by Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.

Gross Enrolment Ratio:

- The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) increased by a minuscule 0.8% in 2019-20.
- GER is the number of students enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education.
- The percentage of students belonging to the eligible age group enrolled in higher education in 2019-20 is 27.1% against 26.3% in 2018-19 and 24.3% in 2014-2015.

Female Enrolment:

- There has been an overall increase of over 18% in female enrolment in higher education from 2015-16 to 2019-20.
- However, the share of girl students is lowest in institutes of national importance while female participation in professional courses is lower in comparison to academic courses.
- Gender Parity Index:
- Gender Parity Index (GPI) in Higher Education in 2019-20 is 1.01 against 1.00 in 2018-19 indicating an improvement in the relative access to higher education for females of eligible age group compared to males.
- A GPI of 1 indicates parity between the sexes; a GPI that varies between 0 and 1 typically means a disparity in favour of males; whereas a GPI greater than 1 indicates a disparity in favour of females.

Teacher's:

- Total Number of Teachers stands at 15,03,156 comprising 57.5% male and 42.5% female.
- Pupil Teacher Ratio in Higher Education in 2019-20 is 26.

Attractive Disciplines:

- Nearly 85% of the students (2.85 crore) were enrolled in the six major disciplines such as Humanities, Science, Commerce, Engineering & Technology, Medical Science and IT & Computer.

Recent Initiatives:

- National Education Policy (NEP), 2020:
- It aims at increasing the GER in higher education to 50% by 2035.
- Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC):
- It aims at improving the research ecosystem of India's higher educational institutions by facilitating academic and research collaborations between Indian institutions and the best institutions in the world.

Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA):

- It aims at providing strategic funding to higher educational institutions throughout the country.
- Prime Minister's Research Fellowship (PMRF):

- It will attract the talent pool of the country to doctoral (Ph.D) programmes for carrying out research in cutting edge science and technology domains, with focus on national priorities.

37. Online Module for Compiling Out-of-School Children's Data:

- The Ministry of Education has developed an online module for compiling out-of-school (due to Covid-19 pandemic) children's data identified by each State/UT.
- The collected data will be mapped with special training centres on the PRABANDH portal of Samagra Shiksha.
- Through the module, the government will facilitate age-appropriate admissions of children in the age group of 6-14 years and those belonging to socially and economically disadvantaged groups.
- Also, for out of school children in the 16-18 years age group, financial assistance will be provided for the first time in the session 2021-22, to continue their education through open/distance learning mode.

About PRABANDH Portal:

- PRABANDH (PROject Appraisal, Budgeting, Achievements and Data Handling System) is a step towards leveraging technology to increase efficiency and manage the implementation of a centrally sponsored integrated scheme for schooling- Samagra Shiksha.
- It is to have transparency and accuracy in the System w.r.t Approvals, Releases, Financial Status.
- Also streamline the Financial Management System, to enable more accurate assessment of actual requirement of funds for implementation.
- Samagra Shiksha

Key Provisions:

- Samagra Shiksha is an integrated scheme for school education extending from pre-school to class XII to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels of school education.
- It subsumes the three Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).
- The main emphasis of the Scheme is on improving the quality of school education by focussing on the two T's – Teacher and Technology.
- Vision:
- It complements the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for Education , i.e. SDG 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all).
- It aims to support States in the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009.
- Right to Education Act (RTE) is a fundamental right under Article 21-A of the Constitution of India.
- The Act makes education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14 and specifies minimum norms in elementary schools.

Funding Pattern:

- The Scheme is being implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
- The fund sharing pattern for the scheme between Centre and States is at present in the ratio of 90:10 for the North-Eastern States and the Himalayan States and 60:40 for all other States and Union Territories with Legislature.
- It is 100% centrally sponsored for Union Territories without Legislature.

Focus on Digital Education:

- Support 'Operation Digital Board' in all secondary schools over a period of 5 years, which will revolutionize education- easy to understand, technology based learning classrooms will become flipped classrooms.

- Digital initiatives like UDISE+, Shagun, to be strengthened.
- Strengthening of ICT infrastructure in schools from upper primary to higher secondary level.

Other Important Schemes to Improve Online Education System:

PM eVidya Programme:

- A programme for multimode access to digital/ online education.

Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM):

- The objective is to ensure that every student in the country has access to the best quality higher education at the affordable cost.
- Integrated Online junction for School Education 'Shagun'
- It is an overarching initiative to improve the school education system by creating a junction for all online portals and websites relating to various activities of the Department of School Education and Literacy in the Government of India and all States and Union Territories.

Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) and UDISE+:

- UDISE, initiated in 2012-13 for elementary and secondary education, is one of the largest Management Information Systems on School Education covering more than 1.5 million schools, 9.4 million teachers and almost 250 million children.
- UDISE+ is an updated and improved version of UDISE.
- NISHTHA: Teachers' Training Programme
- To improve learning outcomes at the elementary level through an Integrated Teacher Training Programme.

Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP):

- A five-year vision plan aiming at ushering transformation in India's higher education system by implementing strategic interventions in the sector over five years (2019-2024).
- Sets out to deliver further on principles of Access, Inclusion, Quality, Excellence and enhancing employability in Higher Education.

Rashtriya Uchcharitar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA):

- It is a centrally sponsored scheme launched in October 2013 that aims at providing strategic funding to higher education institutions throughout the country.

38. Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization Scheme:

- Recently, the Government of India has released funds for various activities of Farm Mechanization under the Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) scheme.
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare launched SMAM in 2014-15.
- Under it, subsidy is provided for purchase of various types of agricultural equipment and machinery to the extent of 40-50% for States other than NER (North Eastern Region) States and for NER States it is 100% limited to Rs.1.25 lakhs per beneficiary.
- The agriculture ministry has also developed a Multilingual Mobile App, 'CHC (Custom Hiring Centres)- Farm Machinery' which connects farmers with Custom Hiring Service Centres situated in their locality.
- Aim:
- Increasing the reach of farm mechanization to small and marginal farmers and to the regions and difficult areas where farm power availability is low.

Objectives:

1. Promoting 'Custom Hiring Centres' and 'Hi-tech Hubs of High-Value Machines' to offset the adverse economies of scale arising due to small and fragmented landholding and high cost of individual ownership.
2. Creating awareness among stakeholders through demonstration and capacity building activities.

3. Ensuring performance testing and certification of agricultural machines at designated testing centres located all over the country.

Other Related Initiatives:

1. Sub-Mission on Agroforestry Scheme.
2. National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture.
3. National Food Security Mission.
4. Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY).
5. Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture.
6. Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sichayee Yojana (PMKSY).
7. Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana.
8. Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana.
9. Agriculture/Farm Mechanization

About:

- Mechanised agriculture is the process of using agricultural machinery to mechanise the work of agriculture.
- To boost up mechanization in the agriculture sector, improved agricultural implements and machinery are essential inputs.

Level of farm Mechanization:

- India stands at about 40-45% with states such as UP, Haryana and Punjab having very high mechanization levels, but north-eastern states having negligible mechanization.
- This level of farm mechanization is still low as compared to countries such as the US (95 %), Brazil (75%) and China (57%).

Significance:

- It plays a vital role in optimizing the use of land, water energy resources, manpower and other inputs like seeds, fertilizers, pesticides etc to maximize the productivity of the available cultivable area and make agriculture a more profitable and attractive profession for rural youth.
- It is one of the key drivers for the sustainable development of the agriculture sector.
- Negative Impact:
 - Reduce workforce hence decreases farm employment.
 - Use of machinery increases pollution.

39. India Abstains from Latest Resolution Against Israel:

- Recently, Palestine blamed India for suppressing its human rights of all people as India abstained from the latest resolution on the Palestinian issue.
- India abstained from voting on a resolution at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) that came up in the backdrop of the latest round of conflict between Israel and Gaza strip, the coastal part of the Palestinian territories.
- UNHRC is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations (UN) system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the world.

The Resolution:

- It called on the UNHRC to set up a permanent commission to probe human rights violations in Gaza, West Bank and Palestine.
- It was adopted with the vote of 24 members. Nine voted against, and 14, including India, abstained.
- Among the countries that abstained on the vote, along with India, were France, Italy, Japan, Nepal, the Netherlands, Poland, and South Korea.

- China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Russia were among those who voted in favour; Germany, the UK, and Austria voted against the resolution.
- As it was passed, an independent commission of inquiry was formed to investigate violations of international law by Israel.

Palestine's Stand:

- The resolution is not an aberration to the Human Rights Council. It is the by-product of extensive multilateral consultations.
- It is the consolidation of years and thorough investigations into and reporting on Israel's grave violations by States, UN's experts, Human Rights Treaty bodies, and international organisations.
- The Palestinian people were deprived of applicability of international human rights law.
- The root causes of the injustice against the Palestinian people was dispossession, displacement, colonisation by Israel.
- Therefore, India's abstention stifles the important work of Human Rights Council at advancing human rights for all peoples, including those of the Palestinian people.
- India missed an opportunity to join the international community at this turning point, both crucial and long overdue, on the path to accountability, justice and peace.

Till Date India's Position on Israel-Palestine Issue:

- India recognised Israel in 1950 but it is also the first non-Arab country to recognise Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) as the sole representative of the Palestinian.
- India is also one of the first countries to recognise the statehood of Palestine in 1988.
- In 2014, India favored UNHRC's resolution to probe Israel's human rights violations in Gaza. Despite supporting the probe, India abstained from voting against Israel in UNHRC in 2015.
- As a part of Link West Policy, India has de-hyphenated its relationship with Israel and Palestine in 2018 to treat both the countries mutually independent and exclusive.
- In June 2019, India voted in favor of a decision introduced by Israel in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) that objected to granting consultative status to a Palestinian non-governmental organization.
- In March 2021, International Criminal Court (ICC) launched investigations into the war crimes in Palestinian territories occupied by Israel (West Bank and the Gaza Strip).
- Israel wanted India to take a stand against it, however it did not happen.
- So far, India has tried to maintain the image of its historical moral supporter for Palestinian self-determination, and at the same time to engage in the military, economic, and other strategic relations with Israel.

Way Forward:

- India's policy on the longest running conflict in the world has gone from being unequivocally pro-Palestine for the first four decades, to a tense balancing act with its three-decade-old friendly ties with Israel.
- In today's multipolar world, India needs to have a balanced approach.
- The world at large needs to come together for a peaceful solution but the reluctance of the Israeli government and other involved parties have aggravated the issue more. Thus a balanced approach would help to maintain favorable relations with Arab countries as well as Israel.
- The recent normalization agreements between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco, known as the Abraham Accords, are the steps in the right direction. All regional powers should envisage peace between the two countries on line of Abraham Accords.

40. Maldives' UNGA Presidency:

- Recently, the Maldives' Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid was elected the President of the 76th session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly (GA) for 2021-22.
- The win was welcomed by India as Indian diplomats had been helping the Maldives and India expects close cooperation with Maldives at the UN.
- However, the Maldives has made no decision on opening an Indian consulate in its southern Addu Atoll even as the Indian Cabinet cleared a proposal for it.

President of UNGA:

- This is a post held on an annual basis, rotated amongst various regional groupings. The 76th session (2021-22) is the turn of the Asia-Pacific group. This is the first time Maldives will be occupying the office of the President of UNGA.
- Maldives also sees it as a win for the 52-member Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which are battling climate change vulnerability and other developmental challenges.

Addu Atoll:

- Addu Atoll, also known as Seenu Atoll, is the southernmost atoll of the Maldives.
- Apart from its strategic location in the Indian Ocean, Addu is the second largest city in the archipelago, home to over 30,000 people.

India's Stand:

- India approved the opening of a new consulate in the Maldivian city of Addu, in reflection of the importance India attaches to its ties with the strategically located island nation.
- India's decision to expand its diplomatic presence in the Maldives comes amid China's consistent efforts to increase its influence in the island nation.
- Also Indian rationale for the consulate was to help Addu residents with speedy visa services.

Opposition of the Initiative:

- Some Maldivians see a new consulate with suspicion, especially on the heels of a USD 33-million Maldivian police training facility that India is helping build in Addu.
- There is already an Indian Embassy in Male.

Geo-Strategic Importance of Maldives to India:

Maldives is a Toll Gate in Indian Ocean:

- Located at the southern and northern parts of this island chain lies the two important sea lanes of communication (SLOCs).
- These SLOCs are critical for maritime trade flow between the Gulf of Aden and Gulf of Hormuz in West Asia and the Strait of Malacca in Southeast Asia.
- Nearly 50% of India's external trade and 80% of its energy imports transit these SLOCs in the Arabian Sea.

Part of Important Groupings:

- Besides, Maldives is a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC).
- India - Maldives Relations
- Cooperation Between India & Maldives:

Security Cooperation:

- Through the decades, India has rushed emergency assistance to the Maldives, whenever sought.
- In 1988, when armed mercenaries attempted a coup against President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, India sent paratroopers and Navy vessels and restored the legitimate leadership under Operation Cactus.
- India and Maldives conduct the joint military exercise 'Ekuberin'.

Disaster Management:

- The 2004 tsunami and the drinking water crisis in Male a decade later were other occasions when India rushed assistance.

- The Maldives has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the Covid-19 assistance and vaccines delivered by India among India's all neighbouring countries.
- When the world supply chains were blocked because of the pandemic, India continued to provide crucial commodities to the Maldives under Mission SAGAR.

People To People Contact:

- Maldivian students attend educational institutions in India and patients fly here for superspeciality healthcare, aided by a liberal visa-free regime extended by India.

Economic Cooperation:

- Tourism is the mainstay of Maldivian economy. Given the geographical limitations imposed on the Maldives, India has exempted the nation from export curbs on essential commodities.

Irritants in Relations:

Political Instability:

- India's major concern has been the impact of political instability in the neighbourhood on its security and development.
- The February 2015 arrest of Maldives' opposition leader Mohamed Nasheed on terrorism charges and the consequent political crisis have posed a real diplomatic test for India's neighbourhood policy.

Radicalisation:

- In the past decade or so, the number of Maldivians drawn towards terrorist groups like the Islamic State (IS) and Pakistan-based madrassas and jihadist groups has been increasing.
- Political instability and socio-economic uncertainty are the main drivers fuelling the rise of Islamist radicalism in the island nation.

China Angle:

- China's strategic footprint in India's neighbourhood has increased. The Maldives has emerged as an important 'pearl' in China's "String of Pearls" construct in South Asia.
- Also, the Maldives have started using the China card to bargain with India.
- Way Forward
- It is hoped that India in the UN Security Council and the Maldivian President of the General Assembly will work in tandem as India pursues its goals for multilateral reform, and re-energise the dormant process of effecting change in the old power structures in the global body.
- In accordance with the Neighbourhood First Policy of the government, India remains a committed development partner for a stable, prosperous and peaceful Maldives.

41. Atlantic Charter:

- Recently, the US' President and UK's Prime Minister signed a new version of the 80-year old Atlantic Charter.
- The Atlantic Charter was a joint declaration released by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill on 14th August, 1941 (during World War II) following a meeting of the two heads of government in Newfoundland.
- The Atlantic Charter was subsequently incorporated by reference in the Declaration of the United Nations in 1942.
- World War II was a conflict that involved virtually every part of the world during the years 1939–45.

The principal belligerents were:

- Axis powers: Germany, Italy, and Japan.
- Allies: France, Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and, to a lesser extent, China.
- The Atlantic Charter provided a broad statement of US and British war aims such as:

- They desired no territorial changes without the free assent of the peoples concerned.
- They respected every people's right to choose its own form of government and wanted sovereign rights and self-government restored to those forcibly deprived of them.
- They would try to promote equal access for all states to trade and to raw materials.
- They hoped to promote worldwide collaboration so as to improve labour standards, economic progress, and social security.
- The destruction of "Nazi tyranny," (Germany) they would look for a peace under which all nations could live safely within their boundaries, without fear or want.
- Under such a peace the seas should be free.
- Pending a general security through renunciation of force, potential aggressors must be disarmed.

New Atlantic Charter (2021):

- The new charter, a 604-word declaration, is an effort to stake out a grand vision for global relationships in the 21st century, just as the original was a declaration of a Western commitment to democracy and territorial integrity just months before the US entered World War II.
- It is a statement of principles, a promise that the UK and the US would meet the challenges of their age together. It calls for both countries to adhere to the rules-based international order.
- The new charter focuses on climate change and the need to protect biodiversity. With references to emerging technologies, cyberspace and sustainable global development.
- It calls on Western allies to oppose interference through disinformation or other malign influences, including in elections.
- It ranks the threats to democratic nations in a technological era.
- It vows that as long as there are nuclear weapons, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) will remain a nuclear alliance.

Opportunity for India:

- The old Atlantic Charter alienated Indian nationalism from the West but the new Charter and the rebooting of western institutions should facilitate a productive phase of India's cooperation with the US and its allies.
- In 1941, the UK insisted that the principle of self-determination highlighted in the charter did not apply to India.
- However, the presence of India and South Africa along with Australia and South Korea (as guests) at the G-7 summit 2021 is a recognition of the urgent imperative to widen the basis of the West in dealing with global challenges.
- The current Anglo-American effort to institutionalise western consultations with India is a long overdue correction.
- Indian Prime Minister, who is remotely joining the discussions at the G-7 summit (2021), has an opportunity to signal a commitment to both address perceptions about shrinking democratic freedoms within India and offer substantive collaboration with the western democracies on global issues.

42. 47th G7 Summit:

- Recently, the Indian Prime Minister addressed the 47th G7 Summit 2021 through video conferencing.
- Earlier, the Finance Ministers from the G7 nations reached a landmark accord setting a Global Minimum Corporate Tax Rate (GMCTR).

- Apart from India, Australia and South Korea were also invited to participate in the proceedings of the summit as “guest countries”.
- This year’s summit was hosted by the UK. The last G-7 summit was in France in 2019, with last year’s event in the US canceled due to the pandemic.

What is Group of Seven (G7):

- It is an intergovernmental organisation that was formed in 1975.
- The bloc meets annually to discuss issues of common interest like global economic governance, international security and energy policy.
- The G7 countries are the UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the US.
- All the G7 countries and India are a part of G20.
- The G7 does not have a formal constitution or a fixed headquarters. The decisions taken by leaders during annual summits are non-binding.

Build Back Better for the World Project:

- It is aimed squarely at competing with China’s trillion-dollar Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, which has been widely criticised for saddling small countries with unmanageable debt but has included even G7 member Italy since launching in 2013.
- It will collectively catalyse hundreds of billions of infrastructure investment for low- and middle-income countries (in Asia and Africa) and offer a values-driven, high-standard and transparent partnership with G7.

Democracies 11:

- Signed off on a joint statement (Democracies 11) by G-7 and guest countries on “open societies” that reaffirm and encourage the values of freedom of expression, both online and offline, as a freedom that safeguards democracy and helps people live free from fear and oppression.
- The statement also refers to politically motivated internet shutdowns as one of the threats to freedom and democracy.
- While the statement is directed at China and Russia, India has been under scrutiny over Internet curbs in Jammu and Kashmir even as the Government is locked in a face-off over its New IT rules 2021 with tech giants.
- Democracies 11 is facing threats to freedom and democracy from rising authoritarianism, electoral interference, corruption, economic coercion, manipulation of information, including disinformation, online harms and cyber attacks, politically motivated internet shutdowns, human rights violations and abuses, terrorism and violent extremism.

Carbis Bay Declaration:

- The G7 signed the Carbis Bay Declaration. It is aimed at preventing future pandemics.
- The G7 also pledged over 1 billion coronavirus vaccine doses for poorer nations with half of that coming from the United States and 100 million from Britain.
- 11 billion doses are needed to vaccinate at least 70% of the world’s population by mid-2022.
- The doses would come both directly and through the international COVAX program.

Climate Change:

- Renewed a pledge to raise their contributions to meet an overdue spending pledge of USD 100 billion a year to help poorer countries cut carbon emissions.
- Promised to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.
- Pledged to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Against China:

- The G-7 statement which was not signed by India and other outreach countries hit out at China on “human rights and fundamental freedoms” in Xinjiang (Uyghur Muslims) and Hong Kong, and the unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the South China Sea.

- It also called for a transparent and timely World Health Organization's Covid origins study in China.
- India had also called for the same in a statement during the World Health Assembly.

India's Stand:

- India is a natural ally for the G7 countries in defending the shared values from a host of threats stemming from authoritarianism, terrorism and violent extremism, disinformation and economic coercion.
- Expressed concerns that open societies are particularly vulnerable to disinformation and cyber-attacks.
- It sought the support of the grouping to lift patent protections for Covid-19 vaccines.
- Planet's atmosphere, biodiversity and oceans cannot be protected by countries acting in silos, and called for collective action on climate change.
- India is the only G-20 country on track to meet its Paris commitments.
- Developing countries need better access to climate finance, and called for a holistic approach towards climate change that covers mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer, climate financing, equity, climate justice and lifestyle change.
- Highlighted the revolutionary impact of digital technologies on social inclusion and empowerment in India through applications such as Aadhaar, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and JAM (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar- Mobile) trinity.

43. Zen Garden - Kaizen Academy:

- Recently, Indian Prime Minister virtually inaugurated a Japanese 'Zen Garden - Kaizen Academy' at the Ahmedabad Management Association (AMA) in Gujarat.
- It is a joint endeavour of the Japan Information and Study Centre at the AMA and the Indo-Japan Friendship Association (IJFA), Gujarat. It is supported by the Hyogo International Association (HIA) Japan.
- It has traditional Japanese elements such as Red Bridge Guzei, Shoji Interior, Glory of Tori, a 3D art mural, fusion Chabutaro, Taki waterfall, Tsukubai basin and Kimono scroll.
- It will propagate Japan's work culture in India and increase business interactions between Japan and India.
- Zen is a Japanese school of Mahayana Buddhism emphasizing the value of meditation and intuition rather than ritual worship or study of scriptures. Zen in Japan is meditation in India.
- Kaizen translates to 'change for the better' or 'continuous improvement'. Kaizen is a Japanese business philosophy that focuses on gradually improving productivity by involving all employees and by making the work environment more efficient.

Highlights of Recent Telephonic Conversation between the Prime Ministers of India and and Japan:

- To overcome challenges posed by the pandemic, there is a need to work together to create resilient, diversified and trustworthy supply chains, ensure reliable supply of critical materials and technologies, and develop new partnerships in manufacturing and skill development.
- Confirmed the importance of Japan-India bilateral and multilateral cooperation, including Japan-Australia-India-US quadrilateral cooperation, towards realising a free and open Indo-Pacific.
- Possible Cooperation in areas like 5G, submarine cables, strengthening of industrial competitiveness and development projects in the northeastern state.

Other Recent Developments Between India and Japan:

- Recently, India, Japan and Australia have formally launched the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) in a move to counter China's dominance of the supply chain in the Indo-Pacific region.

- Japan has finalised loans and a grant totalling around 233 billion yen for several key infrastructure projects in India, including for a project in the Andaman and Nicobar islands.
- In 2020, India and Japan signed a logistics agreement that will allow armed forces of both sides to coordinate closely in services and supplies. The agreement is known as the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA).
- In 2014, India and Japan upgraded their relationship to 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership'.
- The India-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) that came into force in August 2011 covers trade in goods, services, movement of natural persons, investments, Intellectual Property Rights, custom procedures and other trade related issues.

Defence Exercises:

- India and Japan defence forces organize a series of bilateral exercises namely, JIMEX (naval), SHINYUU Maitri (Air Force), and Dharma Guardian (Army). Both countries also participate in Malabar exercise (Naval Exercise) with the USA.

Way Forward:

- Apart from taking assistance from Japan, India should also think about how Indian components could reach Japan, and how they can be rewarded dividends in Japan: the notion of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat also needs to be promoted.
- India needs to look into the matter of post covid ties too, ensure good relations with the other parts of the world so as to emerge from the losses and also in order to restrain Chinese influence in the areas of maritime.
- With the help of Japan, India can pave its way to the permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

44. FATF Retains Pakistan on Grey List:

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) decided to retain Pakistan on "increased monitoring list".
- The FATF had issued the 27-point action plan after placing Pakistan on the 'Grey List' in June 2018. The action plan pertains to curbing money laundering and terror financing.
- During the October-2020 Plenary, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Pakistan was given an extension for full compliance with the 27-point action plan till February 2021.
- It had then not fully complied with 6 of the 27 directives.
- In February 2021, FATF acknowledged Pakistan's significant progress in combating terrorism, however it was still to fully comply with three of the 27-point action plan.
- The three points pertained to effective steps in terms of financial sanctions and penalties against the terror funding infrastructure and the entities involved.

About FATF:

- The FATF said Pakistan had failed to take appropriate action against UN-designated terrorists such as 26/11 accused Hafiz Saeed and JeM chief Masood Azhar. However, Pakistan has completed 26 of the 27 action items.
- The FATF encourages Pakistan to continue to make progress to address as soon as possible the one remaining Countering Finance of Terrorism (CFT)-related item by demonstrating that Terror Financing investigations and prosecutions target senior leaders and commanders of UN-designated terrorist groups.
- In addition, the FATF has handed down another 6-point list of tasks mainly on money laundering actions to be completed as well.
- Pakistan is expected to amend its Money-Laundering Act, crackdown on Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions (DNFBPs) like real estate agencies and gemstone traders,

confiscate and freeze assets of money laundering entities and monitor businesses for proliferation financing, with sanctions for non-compliance.

Significance:

- In Pakistan's case, the FATF has taken cognisance of the inaction against several banned organisations involved in raising funds for terror activities and those linked to global terrorists like Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar and Lashkar-e-Taiba's Hafiz Saeed and its operations chief Zaki-Ur Rahman Lakhvi.
- On several occasions, India has also raised the involvement of elements within Pakistan in a number of terror cases, including the 26/11 Mumbai and Pulwama attacks.
- Perpetual containment of Pakistan on the grey list of FATF would further pressurise Pakistan to take adequate measures to prevent such terrorist attacks on India from its soil.
- Unlike the next level "blacklist", greylisting carries no legal sanctions, but it attracts economic strictures and restricts a country's access to international loans.
- Pakistan's Foreign Minister had estimated a loss of \$10 billion annually to the Pakistani economy for every year Pakistan has been on the greylist.

Financial Action Task Force:

- It is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 during the G7 Summit in Paris.
- The FATF assesses the strength of a country's anti-money laundering and anti-terror financing frameworks, however it does not go by individual cases.

Objectives:

- To set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.

Headquarters:

- Its Secretariat is located at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) headquarters in Paris.

Member Countries:

- The FATF currently has 39 members including two regional organisations- the European Commission and Gulf Cooperation Council. India is a member of the FATF.

Lists under FATF:

Grey List:

- Countries that are considered safe haven for supporting terror funding and money laundering are put in the FATF grey list.
- This inclusion serves as a warning to the country that it may enter the blacklist.

Black List:

- Countries known as Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs) are put in the blacklist.
- These countries support terror funding and money laundering activities.
- The FATF revises the blacklist regularly, adding or deleting entries.

Sessions: The FATF Plenary is the decision making body of the FATF. It meets three times per year.

45. Global Expansion of Nuclear Arsenal: SIPRI Report:

- According to a recent report published in the SIPRI Yearbook 2021, the number of nuclear warheads which are ready and deployed have increased globally.
- The SIPRI Yearbook is released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) which researches international armament and conflict.
- The SIPRI "Yearbook 2021" assesses the current state of armaments, disarmament and international security.

Nine Nuclear Armed States:

- The nine nuclear armed states are: US, Russia, the U.K., France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea.
- These countries together possessed an estimated 13,080 nuclear weapons at the start of 2021.
- Russia and the US together possessed over 90% of global nuclear weapons and have extensive and expensive modernisation programmes under way.
- Both the US and Russia have approved the extension of the New START treaty.
- The Treaty is the last remaining nuclear Russia-US arms control treaty which expired in February 2021.
- China's nuclear arsenal consisted of 350 warheads up from 320 at the start of 2020.
- China is in the middle of a significant modernisation and expansion of its nuclear weapon inventory.
- India possessed an estimated 156 nuclear warheads at the start of 2021 compared to 150 at the start of last year, while Pakistan had 165 warheads, up from 160 in 2020.
- India and Pakistan are seeking new technologies and capabilities that dangerously undermine each other's defence under the nuclear threshold.
- Low Levels of Transparency: The availability of reliable information on the status of the nuclear arsenals and capabilities of the nuclear-armed states vary considerably.

Largest Military Spenders:

- The growth in total spending in 2020 was largely influenced by expenditure patterns in the United States and China (first and second largest spenders respectively).
- India's spending of USD 72.9 billion, an increase of 2.1% in 2020, ranked it as the third highest spender in the world.

Importers of Major Arms:

- SIPRI identified 164 states as importers of major arms in 2016-20.
- Country Wise: The five largest arms importers were Saudi Arabia, India, Egypt, Australia and China, which together accounted for 36% of total arms imports.
- Region wise: The region that received the largest volume of major arms supplies in 2016-20 was Asia and Oceania, accounting for 42% of the global total, followed by the Middle East, which received 33%.

Suppliers of Major Arms:

- The five largest suppliers in 2016-20 - the United States, Russia, France, Germany and China - accounted for 76% of the total volume of exports of major arms.
- Recent Instances of Armed Conflict:
- The territorial conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. The situation in 2020 largely reverted to the status quo of relatively low levels of armed violence.
- In June 2020, for the first time in over five decades, the border tensions between China and India in the disputed eastern Ladakh region of Kashmir turned deadly.
- A new armed conflict broke out in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia in November 2020 between federal government forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front, which killed thousands and forced more than 46, 000 refugees to flee into eastern Sudan.

Nuclear Weapons:

- Nuclear weapon is a device designed to release energy in an explosive manner as a result of nuclear fission, nuclear fusion, or a combination of the two.
- Fission weapons are commonly referred to as atomic bombs, and fusion weapons are referred to as thermonuclear bombs or, more commonly, hydrogen bombs.
- These have been used in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.
- Treaties Preventing Nuclear Proliferation and Testing

- The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).
- The Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, In Outer Space And Under Water, also known as the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT).
- The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was signed in 1996 but has yet to enter into force.
- The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which will enter into force on 22nd January 2021.

Other Related Initiatives:

- Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, and the Wassenaar Arrangement.

India's Nuclear Weapon Program:

- India tested its first nuclear device in May 1974, and remains outside both the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).
- However, India has a facility-specific safeguards agreement in place with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and a waiver from the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) allowing it to participate in global civilian nuclear technology commerce.
- It was admitted as a member into the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in 2016, Wassenaar Arrangement in 2017 and Australia Group in 2018.
- India maintains its official commitment to no-first-use of nuclear weapons.

46. Tax Inspectors Without Borders Programme:

- Recently, the Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB), a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), launched its programme in Bhutan.
- India was chosen as the Partner Jurisdiction and has provided the Tax Expert for this programme.
- This programme is expected to be of about 24 months' duration.
- It aims to aid Bhutan in strengthening its tax administration by transferring technical know-how and skills to its tax auditors, and through sharing of best audit practices. The focus of the programme will be in the area of International Taxation and Transfer Pricing.
- Transfer price, also known as transfer cost, is the price at which related parties transact with each other, such as during the trade of supplies or labor between departments. Multinational companies can manipulate transfer prices in order to shift profits to low tax regions.
- This programme is another milestone in the continued cooperation between India and Bhutan and India's continued and active support for South-South cooperation.

Tax Inspectors Without Borders:

- TIWB is a capacity-building programme.
- It is a joint OECD/UNDP initiative launched in July 2015 to strengthen developing countries' auditing capacity and multinationals' compliance worldwide.
- It deploys qualified experts in developing countries across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean to help build tax capacity in the areas of audit, criminal tax investigations and the effective use of automatically exchanged information.
- TIWB assistance has led to increased domestic resource mobilisation in some of the least developed countries in the world.

47. 8th ADMM-Plus Meeting:

- Recently, the defence minister addressed the 8th ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Plus.
- The ADMM-Plus is a platform for ASEAN and its eight Dialogue Partners.

Security & Dispute Resolution:

- India called for an open and inclusive order in Indo-Pacific based upon respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations.
- Supports freedom of navigation, overflight, and unimpeded commerce in the international waterways including the South China Sea, India hopes that the Code of Conduct negotiations (for South China Sea) will lead to outcomes that are in keeping with international law, including the the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- Recently, ASEAN and China agreed to expedite the resumption of negotiations on the code, which were halted by the pandemic.
- China and ASEAN started negotiations in 2013 on a supposedly binding code of conduct.
- Stressed on peaceful resolutions of disputes through dialogue and adherence to international rules and laws.
- Need new systems to address the emerging challenges to international peace and security.

Act East Policy:

- The key elements of the Act East Policy aims to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationships with countries in the Indo-Pacific region through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.

Terrorism:

- Called for collective cooperation to fully disrupt terror organisations and their networks.
- Identify the perpetrators and hold them accountable and ensure that strong measures are taken against those who support and finance terrorism and provide sanctuary to terrorists.
- As a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) India remains committed to combat financing of terrorism.
- FATF is the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog.

Cybersecurity:

- Called for a multi-stakeholder approach, guided by democratic values, with a governance structure that is open and inclusive and a secure, open and stable internet with due respect to sovereignty of countries, that would drive the future of cyberspace.
- Covid-19:
- Globally available patent free vaccines, unhindered supply chains and greater global medical capacities are some of the lines of effort that India has suggested for a combined effort.
- South Africa and India have called for the World Trade Organization (WTO) to suspend intellectual property (IP) rights related to Covid-19 to ensure equitable sharing of vaccines and new technology to control the pandemic.

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Operations:

- India remains one of the first to respond in times of distress in the immediate as well as extended neighbourhood.
- As a founding member of the Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting (HACGAM), India seeks to enhance capacity building through collaboration in the areas of Maritime Search & Rescue.
- HACGAM is an apex level forum facilitating the congregation of all the major Coast Guard Agencies of the Asian region, it was established in 2004.

ASEAN Centrality:

- India shares a deep connection with ASEAN and has continued its active engagement in many areas contributing to regional peace and stability, particularly through ASEAN led mechanisms.

ADMM-Plus:

- The 2nd ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) in 2007 at Singapore adopted a resolution to establish the ADMM-Plus.
- The first ADMM-Plus was convened at Hanoi, Vietnam in 2010.
- Brunei is the Chair of the ADMM Plus forum for the year 2021.
- It is an annual meeting of Defence Ministers of 10 ASEAN countries and eight dialogue partner countries.
- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional organization which was established to promote political and social stability amid rising tensions among the Asia-Pacific's post-colonial states.

Membership:

- The ADMM-Plus countries include ten ASEAN Member States and eight Plus countries, namely Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, and the United States.
- Aim:
- It aims to promote mutual trust and confidence between defence establishments through greater dialogue and transparency.

Areas of cooperation:

Maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, peacekeeping operations and military medicine.

48. Antonio Guterres: 2nd Term UN Secretary General:

- The United Nations General Assembly appointed Antonio Guterres as the ninth UN Secretary General (UNSG) for a second term beginning 1st January, 2022 and ending on 31st 2026.
- India had expressed its support for the re-election of Guterres as UN Chief.

About Antonio Guterres:

- Guterres took oath of office on 1st January, 2017 and his first term ends on 31st December 2021.
- Guterres served as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for a decade from June 2005 to December 2015.
- He was the former Prime minister of Portugal.

Appointment:

- Under the UN Charter, the Secretary-General is appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.
- Each Secretary-General has the option of a second term if they can garner enough support from Member states.
- Guterres was elected after a reformed selection process that included a public informal dialogue session in the General Assembly, involving civil society representatives, aimed at ensuring transparency and inclusivity.

UN Charter:

- The Charter of the United Nations is the founding document of the United Nations. It was signed on 26th June 1945, in San Francisco, at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on International Organization, and came into force on 24th October 1945.
- The UN can take action on a wide variety of issues due to its unique international character and the powers vested in its Charter, which is considered an international treaty.

- As such, the UN Charter is an instrument of international law, and UN Member States are bound by it. The UN Charter codifies the major principles of international relations, from sovereign equality of States to the prohibition of the use of force in international relations.

About UNGA:

- The General Assembly occupies a central position as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.
- Composed of all 193 Members of the United Nations, it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter.
- It also plays a significant role in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law.

UN Security Council:

- Established by the UN charter in 1945, the Security Council has the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.
- The Security Council has 15 members.
- There are five permanent members: the United States, the Russian Federation, France, China and the United Kingdom.
- The non-permanent members of the Security Council are elected for a term of two years. Recently, India has been elected.
- Each member of the Security Council has one vote. Decisions of the Security Council on matters are made by an affirmative vote of nine members including the concurring votes of the permanent members. A "No" vote from one of the five permanent members blocks the passage of the resolution.
- Any member of the United Nations which is not a member of the Security Council may participate, without vote, in the discussion of any question brought before the Security Council whenever the latter considers that the interests of that member are specially affected.

Challenges Pertaining to UN:

- UNGA has no control over veto power exercised by UNSC and it cannot take any decisive action against permanent members of UNSC.
- The 15-member Security Council is by far the most powerful arm of the United Nations. However, the veto power is used by five permanent countries to serve the strategic interest of themselves and their allies.
- The UN charter is vague in defining the duties of the secretary general, the United Nations' top official.
- Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) has been criticised by the US on account of mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequently suspended its financial contribution to WHO.
- Also, WHO has been under pressure from the US government to adopt an approach that favours interests of US pharma companies.
- WHO is a specialised agency of the UN.

United Nations:

- Establishment: The United Nations (UN) is an international organization founded in 1945.
- Members: It is currently made up of 193 Member States.
- India is a charter member of the United Nations and participates in all of its specialised agencies and organizations.
- Activities: Its activities include maintaining international peace and security, protecting human rights, delivering humanitarian aid, promoting sustainable development and upholding international law.
- Main Organs:

1. The General Assembly,
2. The Security Council,
3. The Economic and Social Council,
4. The Trusteeship Council,
5. The International Court of Justice,
6. The UN Secretariat.

Funds and Programmes:

1. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)
2. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
3. United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment)
4. United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)
5. World Food Programme (WFP)

49. China as a Security Risk: NATO:

- The recently held North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit for the first time has explicitly described China as a security risk.
- The other two threats identified by the NATO 'declaration' are Russia and terrorism.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO):

- Formation: NATO was established by the North Atlantic Treaty (also called the Washington Treaty) of 4th April, 1949, by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet Union.
- It is headquartered at Brussels, Belgium.
- Political and Military Alliance: NATO's primary goals are the collective defence of its members and the maintenance of a democratic peace in the North Atlantic area.
- The collective defence principle enshrined in NATO's Article V states that "an attack against one ally is considered as an attack against all allies".
- NATO's Forces: NATO has a military and civilian headquarters and an integrated military command structure but very few forces or assets are exclusively its own.
- Most forces remain under full national command and control until member countries agree to undertake NATO-related tasks.
- NATO's Decisions: A "NATO decision" is the expression of the collective will of all 30 member countries since all decisions are taken by consensus.

Analysis of NATO's Performance:

- Cold War Era: NATO was completely successful in its mission of protecting the "Euro-Atlantic area" from Soviet expansion and preventing war between the two superpowers.
- The formation of NATO, and its Soviet counterpart, the Warsaw Pact, in 1955, inaugurated the Cold War era (approximately 1945 until 1991).
- Post-Cold War Era: When Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, NATO witnessed a paradigm shift from collective defence, which implied a known adversary, to collective security, which is open-ended, and might require action against any number of threats, including unknown ones and non-state actors.
- When the Balkans conflict broke out in 1999, NATO got the chance to prove its utility in a post-Cold War Europe.

Mutually Beneficial Arrangement:

- For Europe, it was an attractive bargain where, in exchange for a marginal loss in autonomy, it enjoyed absolute security at a cheap price.

- Not having to spend massively on defence allowed Europe to focus on building powerful economies and invest its surplus in a strong welfare state.
- NATO also offered the added bonus of keeping Germany down, historically a major factor for peace and stability in the region.
- A collective military force organised and managed by the Europeans themselves may offer a way out of American oversight and occasional bullying.
- However, it carried the danger of one or two of the stronger and wealthier states, such as Germany or France, dictating terms to the smaller ones, a danger attractively absent in the NATO arrangement.

NATO and China:

- NATO leaders declared China a constant security challenge and said the Chinese are working to undermine global order.
- This is in sync with US President efforts to get allies to speak out with a more unified voice against China's trade, military and human rights practices.
- The US' growing conviction is that China is a threat to its global supremacy and must be contained.
- However, both France and Germany sought to put some distance between NATO's official position and their own perception of China.
- NATO's European member states may view China as an economic rival and adversary, but they are unconvinced by the American line that it is an outright security threat.
- China's Stand: It has urged NATO to "view China's development rationally, stop exaggerating various forms of 'China threat theory' and not to use China's legitimate interests and legal rights as excuses for manipulating group politics artificially creating confrontations".

NATO and Russia:

- Tensions with Russia are an inevitable outcome of NATO's bid to expand eastward into what Russia considers its sphere of influence.
- Trying to bring countries such as Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova under the NATO umbrella has led to a confrontation with Russia.
- As Russia sought to protect its interests by "annexing" Crimea and stationing troops in Georgia and Moldova, NATO accused it of acting irresponsibly and breaking the "rules-based international order".
- China's own economy is already deeply integrated into Western markets. China, nonetheless, is perceived as posing a 'threat'. It remains to be seen how far an ageing Europe would be willing to commit itself to a strategic path that prefers confrontation to collaboration, given that NATO is essentially a military alliance, and for all the talk of hybrid and cyberwar, there is zero risk of China invading the Euro-Atlantic area.

50. Chemical Weapons Convention:

- Recently, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) informed the United Nations (UN) that in 17 cases chemical weapons were likely or definitely used by Syria.
- OPCW was formed under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) 1997.
- A Chemical Weapon is a chemical used to cause intentional death or harm through its toxic properties.
- Munitions, devices and other equipment specifically designed to weaponize toxic chemicals also fall under the definition of chemical weapons.

Chemical Weapons Convention:

- It is a multilateral treaty banning chemical weapons and requiring their destruction within the stipulated time.

- Negotiations for the CWC began in 1980 at the United Nations Conference on Disarmament.
- The convention was drafted in September 1992 and opened for signature in January 1993. It became effective from April 1997.
- It makes it mandatory to destroy old and abandoned chemical weapons.
- Members should also declare the riot-control agents (sometimes referred to as 'tear gas') in possession of them.

Members:

- It has 192 state parties and 165 signatories.
- India signed the treaty in January 1993.

Convention Prohibits:

- The development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, or retention of chemical weapons.
- Transferring of chemical weapons.
- Using chemical weapons.
- Assisting other States to indulge in activities that are prohibited by the CWC.
- Using riot-control devices as 'warfare methods'.

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons:

- It is an international organization established by the CWC in 1997 to implement and enforce the terms of the CWC.
- By the 2001 Relationship Agreement between the OPCW and the UN, the OPCW reports on its inspections and other activities to the UN through the office of the Secretary General.
- The OPCW was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013.
- **Headquarters:** Hague, Netherlands.

Functions:

- It is authorized to perform inspections to verify that signatory states are complying with the convention.
- This includes a commitment to grant inspectors full access to chemical weapons sites.
- It also performs testing of sites and victims of suspected chemical weapons attacks.
- It also provides for assistance to and protection of States attacked or threatened with chemical weapons, cooperation in the peaceful use of chemicals.

Indian Initiative:

- The Chemical Weapons Convention Act, 2000 was passed to implement the CWC.
- It provided for the establishment of a National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention or NACWC. This institution, formed in 2005, is the chief liaison between the government of India and the OPCW. It is an office in the Cabinet Secretariat of the GoI.
- Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (Hazardous Chemicals and Wastes)
The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions are multilateral environmental agreements, which share the common objective of protecting human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and wastes.

The Basel Convention:

- It came into force in 1992, intended to reduce transboundary movements of hazardous waste from developed to less developed countries (LDCs), and ensure their safe disposal as closely as possible to the source of generation.
- India is a member.

Rotterdam Convention:

- It was adopted in September 1998 by a Conference of Plenipotentiaries in Rotterdam, Netherlands and entered into force in February 2004.
- India is a member.

- It covers pesticides and industrial chemicals that have been banned or severely restricted for health or environmental reasons by Parties and which have been notified by Parties for inclusion in the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure.
- The Convention creates legally binding obligations for the implementation of the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure.

The Stockholm Convention:

- It is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). India is a member. The Convention entered into force in May, 2004.
- POPs are chemicals that remain intact in the environment for long periods, become widely distributed geographically, accumulate in the fatty tissue of living organisms and are toxic to humans and wildlife.

51. Antarctic Treaty:

- Recently, the 60th anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty was celebrated.
- The Antarctic treaty remains the only example of a single treaty that governs a whole continent.
- It is also the foundation of a rules-based international order for a continent without a permanent population.
- The Antarctic Treaty was signed between 12 countries in Washington on 1st December 1959 for making the Antarctic Continent a demilitarized zone to be preserved for scientific research only.
- The twelve original signatories are Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the UK and the US.
- It entered into force in 1961 and has since been acceded by many other nations.
- Antarctica is defined as all of the land and ice shelves south of 60°S latitude.
- Recently, an enormous iceberg 'A-76' has calved from the western side of the Ronne Ice Shelf, lying in the Weddell Sea, in Antarctica.

Members:

- Currently it has 54 parties. India became a member of this treaty in 1983.
- Headquarters: Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Major Provisions:

- Promoting the freedom of scientific research.
- Countries can use the continent only for peaceful purposes.
- Prohibition of military activities, nuclear tests and the disposal of radioactive waste.
- Neutralising territorial sovereignty, this means a limit was placed on making any new claim or enlargement of an existing claim.
- It put a freeze on any disputes between claimants over their territories on the continent.

Dispute & Resolution:

- There have been tensions from time to time. Argentina and the UK, for instance, have overlapping claims to territory on the continent.
- However, a key reason why the treaty has been able to survive has been its ability to evolve through a number of additional conventions and other legal protocols.
- These have dealt with the conservation of marine living resources, prohibitions on mining, and the adoption of comprehensive environmental protection mechanisms.
- As disputes have arisen over the years, many have been addressed through the expansion of the treaty framework with these agreements. This framework is now referred to as the Antarctic Treaty System.

Antarctic Treaty System:

- It is the whole complex of arrangements made for the purpose of regulating relations among states in the Antarctic.

- Its purpose is to ensure in the interests of all mankind that Antarctica shall continue forever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and shall not become the scene or object of international discord.
- It is a global achievement and has been a hallmark of international cooperation for more than 50 years.
- These agreements are legally binding and purpose-built for the unique geographical, environmental and political characteristics of the Antarctic and form a robust international governance framework for the region.

Major International Agreements of the Treaty System:

- The 1959 Antarctic Treaty.
- The 1972 Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals.
- The 1980 Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.
- The 1991 Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.

Indian Antarctic Programme:

- It is a scientific research and exploration program under the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCPOR). It started in 1981 when the first Indian expedition to Antarctica was made.
- NCPOR is the nodal agency for planning, promotion, coordination and execution of the entire gamut of polar and southern ocean scientific research in the country as well as for the associated logistics activities.
- It was established in 1998.

Dakshin Gangotri:

- Dakshin Gangotri was the first Indian scientific research base station established in Antarctica, as a part of the Indian Antarctic Program.
- It has weakened and become just a supply base.

Maitri:

- Maitri is India's second permanent research station in Antarctica. It was built and finished in 1989.
- Maitri is situated on the rocky mountainous region called Schirmacher Oasis. India also built a freshwater lake around Maitri known as Lake Priyadarshini.

Bharti:

- Bharti, India's latest research station operation since 2012. It has been constructed to help researchers work in safety despite the harsh weather.
- It is India's first committed research facility and is located about 3000 km east of Maitri.

Other Research Facilities:

Sagar Nidhi:

- In 2008, India commissioned the Sagar Nidhi, for research.
- An ice-class vessel, it can cut through the thin ice of 40 cm depth and is the first Indian vessel to navigate Antarctic waters.

Way Forward:

- While the Antarctic Treaty has been able to successfully respond to a range of challenges, circumstances are radically different in the 2020s compared to the 1950s. Antarctica is much more accessible, partly due to technology but also climate change.
- More countries now have substantive interests in the continent than the original 12. Some global resources are becoming scarce, especially oil.
- There is considerable speculation as to China's interests in Antarctic resources, especially fisheries and minerals, and whether China may seek to exploit weaknesses in the treaty system to secure access to those resources.

- Therefore, all of the treaty signatories, but especially those with significant stakes in the continent, need to give the future of the treaty more attention.

52. New Chinese Militia Units for High Altitudes:

- Recently, Chinese Military has raised new militia units comprising local Tibetan youth for high-altitude warfare.
- The new units named Mimang Cheton are presently undergoing training, and are to be deployed mostly in upper Himalayan ranges, both in the eastern and western sectors of the India-China border.
- They are being trained for a variety of tasks, including using high-tech equipment such as drones on the one hand, as well as mules and horses to reach regions in the Himalayan range that can't be accessed by modern means.
- They have been raised near Eastern Ladakh, the site of the recent border tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), as well as near its borders with Sikkim and Bhutan.
- The LAC is the demarcation that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory.
- Trained units have already been deployed along various locations in the Chumbi valley and at Rutog in Tibet, near the Pangong Tso (lake) in eastern Ladakh.
- The deployment of the new Mimang Cheton units mirrors India's elite and decades-old Special Frontier Force (SFF).
- Just like the SFF which relies on the knowledge of Tibetans, the Mimang Cheton also relies on the local knowledge of Tibetans as well as locals' resistance to High Altitude Sickness, a problem in alpine warfare.

Objectives:

High Altitude Warfare:

- The new units will be used for high-altitude warfare as well for surveillance.
- Socio Cultural Aspect:
- A new feature of the units is that upon completion of training, they are being blessed by Buddhist monks in Tibet, which is being interpreted as a sign of greater socio-cultural outreach from the PLA to ethnic Tibetans.
- This is possibly a new strategy of the PLA to get some mileage in the Tibet region.

Recent Chinese Developments along the Border:

Railway Line:

- China has started the first bullet train line in Tibet, linking Lhasa to Nyingchi near the border with Arunachal Pradesh.
- It is the second major rail link to Tibet after the Qinghai-Tibet railway that opened in 2006.

Highway:

- In 2021, China completed construction of a strategically significant highway enabling greater access to remote areas along the disputed border with Arunachal Pradesh in India.

New Villages:

- In January 2021, there were reports of Chinese construction of three villages in Arunachal Pradesh 5 kilometres from the Bum La pass.
- In 2020, satellite images emerged showing a new village called Pangda built 2-3 km into what Bhutan sees as its land.
- In 2017, the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) government launched a plan to build moderately well-off villages in border areas.

- Under this plan 628 first line and second line villages—referring to those right on the border and others in remote areas slightly further within—would be developed along China’s borders with India, Bhutan and Nepal.

Concerns for India:

Strategic Location:

- Such development in view of the strategic location of Chumbi Valley creates a concern for India.
- Chumbi Valley is a 100-km protrusion of Chinese territory located between Bhutan in the east and Sikkim in the west.
- The valley’s location has long resulted in concerns that it could be used to launch operations to snap strategic communications links in the Siliguri Corridor.
- Siliguri Corridor is a narrow stretch of land located around the city of Siliguri in West Bengal. It connects northeastern states with the rest of the country, and is also known as chicken's neck.

China’s Strengthening Position:

- These developments have come against the backdrop of the border standoff that began in May 2020 and a rapid build-up of infrastructure on the Chinese side along the LAC, including airports, helipads, missile facilities and air sites.

Steps Taken by India to Strengthen its Border:

- India has its own High Altitude Warfare School (HAWS) in Gulmarg, Jammu and Kashmir.
- India will spend 10% funds of the Border Area Development Programme (BADP) only to improve the infrastructure along the China border.
- The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) constructed the Daporijo bridge over Subansiri river in Arunachal Pradesh.
- It links roads leading upto the LAC between India and China.
- A tunnel at Nechiphu in West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh will shorten travel time for troops till the LAC through Tawang, which China claims to be its territory.
- A tunnel is being constructed under the Se La pass in Arunachal Pradesh which connects Tawang to the rest of Arunachal and Guwahati.
- The state government of Arunachal Pradesh has advocated selection of 10 census towns along the India-China border as pilot projects for infrastructure development in order to stop people living along its international borders, specifically with China, from migrating to faraway urban centres in the State.
- Sisseri River Bridge, located at lower Dibang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh, connects Dibang Valley and Siang.
- In 2019, the Indian Air Force inaugurated resurfaced runway at India’s easternmost Village-Vijaynagar (Changlang district) in Arunachal Pradesh.
- In 2019, the Indian Army conducted exercise ‘HimVijay’ in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam with its newly created Integrated Battle Groups (IBG).
- Bogibeel bridge, which is India’s longest road-rail bridge connecting Dibrugarh in Assam to Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh was inaugurated in 2018.

Special Frontier Force:

- It was established in November 1962 in the immediate aftermath of the 1962 Sino-India war.
- It falls under the purview of the Cabinet Secretariat where it is headed by an Inspector General who is an Army officer of the rank of Major General.
- The units that comprise the SFF are known as Vikas battalions.
- They are highly trained special forces personnel who can undertake a variety of tasks which would normally be performed by any special forces unit.
- The recruits initially consisted of Tibetan refugees hailing from the Khampa community (now it has a mixture of Tibetans and Gorkhas).

- Women soldiers, too, form a part of SFF units and perform specialised tasks.
- SFF units are not part of the Army but they function under operational control of the Army

Major Operations:

- Operation Eagle (1971 war with Pakistan), Operation Bluestar (clearing Amritsar's Golden Temple in 1984), Operation Meghdoot (securing the Siachen glacier in 1984) and Operation Vijay (war with Pakistan at Kargil in 1999) and many counter-insurgency operations in the country.
- Way Forward
- India needs to be vigilant enough for any new development in China near its border to protect its interests efficiently. Further, it needs to build robust Infrastructure in difficult border areas in its territory to ensure movement of personnel and other logistical supplies in an efficient manner.

53. Agristack: The New Digital Push in Agriculture:

- Recently, the Ministry of Agriculture has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Microsoft to run a pilot programme for 100 villages in 6 states.
- The MoU requires Microsoft to create a 'Unified Farmer Service Interface' through its cloud computing services.
- This comprises a major part of the ministry's plan of creating 'AgriStack' (a collection of technology-based interventions in agriculture), on which everything else will be built.

About AgriStack:

- It is a collection of technologies and digital databases that focuses on farmers and the agricultural sector.
- **AgriStack** will create a unified platform for farmers to provide them end to end services across the agriculture food value chain.
- It is in line with the Centre's Digital India programme, aimed at providing a broader push to digitise data in India, from land titles to medical records.
- The government is also implementing the National Land Records Modernisation Programme (**NRLMP**).
- Under the programme, each farmer will have a unique digital identification (farmers' ID) that contains personal details, information about the land they farm, as well as production and financial details.
- Each ID will be linked to the individual's digital national ID Aadhaar.

Why is it required?

- At present, the majority of farmers across India are small and marginal farmers with limited access to advanced technologies or formal credit that can help improve output and fetch better prices.
- Among the new proposed digital farming technologies and services under the programme include sensors to monitor cattle, drones to analyse soil and apply pesticide, may significantly improve the farm yields and boost farmers' incomes.

Potential Benefits:

- Problems such as inadequate access to credit and information, pest infestation, crop wastage, poor price discovery and yield forecasting can be sufficiently addressed by use of digital technology.
- It will also fuel innovation and breed investment towards the agricultural sector and augment research towards more resilient crops.

Major Concerns:

Absence of a Data Protection Legislation:

- In its absence, it might end up being an exercise where private data processing entities may know more about a farmer's land than the farmer himself and they would be able to exploit farmers' data to whatever extent they wish to.
- Commercialisation:
- The formation of 'Agristack' will imply commercialisation of agriculture extension activities as they will shift into a digital and private sphere.

Absence of Dispute Settlement:

- The MoUs provide for physical verification of the land data gathered digitally, but there is nothing on what will be the course of action if disputes arise, especially when historical evidence suggests that land disputes take years to settle.

Privacy and Exclusion Issues:

- Given that the proposed farmer ID will be Aadhaar-seeded, further issues of privacy and exclusion would emerge.
- Several researchers have demonstrated the vulnerability of the Aadhaar database to breaches and leaks, while Aadhaar-based exclusion in welfare delivery has also been well documented in different contexts.
- Also, making land records the basis for farmer databases would mean excluding tenant farmers, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers.
- Data shows that the population of farm labourers has outstripped that of farmers and cultivators.
- Way Forward
- There is no denial that there is potential in data and technology in empowering farmers but only when the flow of information is balanced.
- The private firms working on pilot projects must effectively cooperate with state governments to reconcile the differences over land ownership.
- The government should move ahead with the project based on the results obtained from pilot trails.

54. Gujarat International Maritime Arbitration Centre (GIMAC):

- Recently, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Gujarat Maritime University and International Financial Services Centres Authority in GIFT (Gujarat International Finance Tec-City) City.
- The objective of the MoU is to jointly support the establishment of the Gujarat International Maritime Arbitration Centre (GIMAC).

About GIMAC:

- This will be the first centre of its kind in the country that will manage arbitration and mediation proceedings with disputes related to the maritime and shipping sector.
- The GIMAC will be part of a maritime cluster that the Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB) is setting up in GIFT City at Gandhinagar.
- India's Focus on Arbitration: Recently, the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Act, 2021 was notified, considered as the landmark step towards making India as the hub of International Commercial Arbitration.
- Arbitration is a kind of dispute resolution method where the disputes arising between the parties are resolved by the arbitrators appointed by them instead of state's legal bodies.
- There are over 35 arbitral institutions in India, however, none focus exclusively on the disputes related to the maritime sector.

- With the state continuing to witness a rapid extension in maritime activities and inching closer to becoming a global maritime hub with the implementation of Gujarat Maritime Cluster project, a strong growing and recurring demand is being generated for a specialized facility for maritime arbitration services.
- The idea is to create a world-class arbitration centre focused on maritime and shipping disputes that can help resolve commercial and financial conflicts between entities having operations in India.
- The arbitration involving Indian players is now heard at the Singapore Arbitration Centre.
- Globally, London is the preferred centre for arbitration for the maritime and shipping sector.

Benefits:

- Facilitate faster dispute resolution.
- Enhance the attractiveness of GIFT Special Economic Zone (SEZ) among the International Maritime Community.
- Increase the ease of doing business.
- Reduce burden on courts.

Gujarat Maritime Cluster:

- It is conceived as a dedicated ecosystem of Ports, Maritime Shipping and Logistics services providers.
- It will host an array of maritime, shipping industry players and service providers, along with relevant Government regulatory agencies, in GIFT City, Gandhinagar – India's first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC).
- The International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) is a unified authority for the development and regulation of financial products, financial services and financial institutions in the IFSC in India.
- It will be a one stop solution for all maritime services while attaining economic growth, employment generation and industry – academia confluence in the region.

55. Integrated Power Development Scheme:

- A 50 kWp Solar rooftop in Solan, Himachal Pradesh was inaugurated under Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS) of the Ministry of Power.
- The project further reinforces the 'Go Green' Initiative of the government envisaged in the Urban Distribution scheme.

About IPDS:

- Launch: December 2014.
- Nodal Agency: Power Finance Corporation Ltd. (PFC), a Navratna Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) under the administrative control of the Ministry of Power.
- Components:
 1. Strengthening of sub-transmission and distribution networks in the urban areas.
 2. Metering of distribution transformers / feeders / consumers in the urban areas.
 3. Schemes for Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and IT enablement of the distribution sector.
 4. ERP helps in integrating the important parts of a business.
 5. Underground cabling to include additional demand of States and smart metering solution for performing UDAY States and Solar panels on Govt. buildings with net-metering are also permissible under the scheme.

Objectives:

- 24x7 Power supplies for consumers.
- Reduction of AT&C (aggregate technical and commercial) losses.
- Providing access to power to all households.

- Eligibility:
- All Power Distribution Companies (Discoms) are eligible for financial assistance under the scheme.

Funding Pattern:

- GoI (Government of India) Grant: 60% (85% for special category States).
- Additional Grant: 15% (5% for special category States) - linked to achievement of milestones.
- Power Sector in India:
- India's power sector is one of the most diversified in the world. Sources of power generation range from conventional sources such as coal, lignite, natural gas, oil, hydro and nuclear power to viable non-conventional sources such as wind, solar, and agricultural and domestic waste.
- India is the third-largest producer and second-largest consumer of electricity in the world.
- Electricity is a concurrent subject (Seventh Schedule of the Constitution).
- The Ministry of Power is primarily responsible for the development of electrical energy in the country.
- It administers the Electricity Act, 2003 and the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.
- The Government has released its roadmap to achieve 175 GW capacity in renewable energy by 2022, which includes 100 GW of solar power and 60 GW of wind power.
- The Government is preparing a 'rent a roof' policy for supporting its target of generating 40 gigawatts (GW) of power through solar rooftop projects by 2022.
- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) is the nodal Ministry for all matters relating to new and renewable energy.
- 100% FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) is permitted under automatic route in the power sector.

Related Government Initiatives:

- **Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya):** To ensure electrification of all willing households in the country in rural as well as urban areas.
- **Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY):** The rural electrification scheme provides for (a) separation of agriculture and non-agriculture feeders; (b) strengthening and augmentation of sub-transmission and distribution infrastructure in rural areas including metering at distribution transformers, feeders and consumers end.
- **GARV (Grameen Vidyutikaran) App:** To monitor transparency in implementation of the electrification schemes, Grameen Vidyut Abhiyanta (GVAs) have been appointed by the government to report progress through the GARV app.
- **Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY):** For operational and financial turnaround of Discoms.
- **'4 Es' in the Revised Tariff Policy:** The 4Es include Electricity for all, Efficiency to ensure affordable tariffs, Environment for a sustainable future, Ease of doing business to attract investments and ensure financial viability.

Achievements:

- Solar tariffs in India have reduced from Rs. 7.36/kWh in FY15 to Rs. 2.63/kWh in FY20.
- As of December 2020, over 36.69 crore LED bulbs, 1.14 crore LED tube lights and 23 lakh energy-efficient fans have been distributed across the country, saving 47.65 billion kWh per year.
- In the first half of November 2020, India's power consumption increased 7.8% to 50.15 billion units (BU), indicating an improvement in economic activity.
- Energy generation from thermal sources stood at 472.90 billion units (BU) in April-September 2020.
- India's rank jumped to 22 in 2019 from 137 in 2014 on World Bank's Ease of doing business - "Getting Electricity" ranking.
- As of 28th April, 2018, 100% village electrification was achieved under DDUGJY.

56. Biotech-KISAN Programme:

- The Ministry of Science and Technology has issued a Special Call for the NorthEast Region as a part of its Mission Programme “Biotech-Krishi Innovation Science Application Network (Biotech-KISAN)”.
- It is a scientist-farmer partnership scheme launched in 2017.
- It is a pan-India program, following a hub-and-spoke model and stimulates entrepreneurship and innovation in farmers and empowers women farmers.
- The Biotech-KISAN hubs are expected to fulfil the technology required to generate agriculture and bio-resource related jobs and better livelihood ensuring biotechnological benefits to small and marginal farmers.
- Farmers are also exposed to best global farm management and practices.

Ministry:

- This is a farmer-centric scheme developed by and with farmers under the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology.
- It was launched for agriculture innovation with an objective to connect science laboratories with the farmers to find out innovative solutions and technologies to be applied at farm level.
- 146 Biotech-KISAN Hubs have been established covering all 15 agroclimatic zones and 110 Aspirational Districts in the country.
- The scheme has benefitted over two lakhs farmers so far by increasing their agriculture output and income. Over 200 entrepreneurship have also been developed in rural areas.

About the Present Call:

- The present call specifically focuses on the North East Region (NER) as it is predominantly agrarian with 70% of its workforce engaged in agriculture and allied sector for livelihood.
- The region produces merely 1.5 % of the country's food grain and continues to be a net importer of food grains even for its domestic consumption.
- The NER has untapped potential to enhance the income of the farming population by promotion of location specific crops, horticultural and plantation crops, fisheries and livestock production.
- The Biotech-KISAN Hubs in NER will collaborate with the top scientific institutions across the country as well as State Agricultural Universities (SAUs)/Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs)/existing state agriculture extension services/system in the NER for demonstrations of technologies and training of farmers.
- Biotechnology in Agriculture

Agricultural Biotechnology:

- Agricultural biotechnology is a range of tools, including traditional breeding techniques, that alter living organisms, or parts of organisms, to make or modify products; improve plants or animals; or develop microorganisms for specific agricultural uses.
- Modern biotechnology today includes the tools of genetic engineering.

Examples:

- Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO): These are plants, bacteria, fungi and animals whose genes have been altered by manipulation. GM plants (Bt Cotton) have been useful in many ways.
- Biopesticide: *Bacillus thuringiensis* is a naturally occurring soil bacterium that causes disease on insect pests. It is accepted in organic farming and is considered ideal for pest management due to its low cost, ease of application, high virulence and narrow host specificity.

Benefits:

- GMO leads to a number of advantages in the crops which include -there is less loss after harvest, the crops can be modified to have additional nutrients value for human welfare.

- The use of some of these crops can simplify work and improve safety for farmers. This allows farmers to spend less of their time managing their crops and more time on other profitable activities.

Disadvantages:

- **Antibiotic Resistance:** There is a concern that new antibiotic-resistant bacteria could emerge which would be difficult to tackle with conventional antibiotics.
- **Potential of 'superweeds':** The transgenic plants could pollinate with the unwanted plants (weeds) and thereby relay the gene of herbicide-resistance or pesticide-resistance into them, thereby converting them into 'superweeds'.
- **Loss of Biodiversity in Organisms:** The extensive use of agritech varieties of seeds have made some agriculturists fearful as this may hurt the biodiversity of plant species.
- The extensive use of GMO varieties is because of the fact that they are more profitable and drought resistant which has made farmers abandon their traditional varieties of plants.

57. World Competitiveness Index:

- According to the World Competitiveness Yearbook (WCY), India maintained 43rd rank on the annual World Competitiveness Index.
- The World Competitiveness Index is a comprehensive annual report and worldwide reference point on the competitiveness of countries.
- **Published by:** WCY was first published in 1989 and is compiled by the Institute for Management Development (IMD).
- In 2021, the IMD examined the impact of Covid-19 on economies around the world.
- It provides extensive coverage of 64 economies.
- **Factors:** It measures the prosperity and competitiveness of countries by examining four factors (334 competitiveness criteria):
 1. Economic performance
 2. Government efficiency
 3. Business efficiency
 4. Infrastructure

Top Global Performers:

- **Europe:** The European countries display regional strength in world competitiveness ranking with Switzerland (1st), Sweden (2nd), Denmark (3rd), the Netherlands (4th).
- **Asia:** The top-performing Asian economies are, in order, Singapore (5th), Hong Kong (7th), Taiwan (8th) and China (16th).
- Singapore was 1st in the 2020 World Competitiveness Index.
- **Others:** The UAE and the USA remain in their same spots as last year (9th and 10th, respectively).

India's Performance:

- **In Comparison to BRICS Nations:** Among the BRICS nations, India ranked second (43rd) after China (16th), followed by Russia (45th), Brazil (57th) and South Africa (62nd).
- **Performance on Four Factors:** Among the four indices used, India's ranking in government efficiency increased to 46 from 50 a year ago, while its ranking in other parameters such as economic performance (37th), business efficiency (32th) and infrastructure (49) remained the same.
- **Improvements in Government Efficiency:** Mostly due to relatively stable public finances. Despite difficulties brought by the pandemic, in 2020, the government deficit stayed at 7%. The Government also provided support and subsidies to the private companies.

- **India's Strengths:** India's strengths lie in investments in telecoms (1st), mobile telephone costs (1st), ICT services exports (3rd), remuneration in services professions (4th) and terms of trade index (5th).
- **India's Weaknesses:** India's performance is the worst in sub-indices such as broadband subscribers (64th), exposure to particulate pollution (64th), human development index (64th), GDP per capita (63rd) and foreign currency reserves per capita (62nd) among others.
- **Analysis:**
- **Qualities of Top Performers:** The qualities such as investment in innovation, digitalisation, welfare benefits, diversified economic activities, supportive public policy and leadership, resulting in social cohesion have helped countries better manage the crisis and thus ranking higher in competitiveness.
- **Addressed Unemployment:** Competitive economies succeeded in transitioning to a remote work routine while also allowing remote learning.
- **Public Spending:** The effectiveness of key public spending, such as public finance, tax policy and business legislation, are seen to relieve the pressure on the economies hit by the Covid-19.

Recent Steps Taken by India to Increase its Competitiveness:

- The government has introduced the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme in various sectors for enhancing India's manufacturing capabilities and exports.
- The five pillars of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (or Self-reliant India Mission)' are - Economy, Infrastructure, System, Vibrant Demography and Demand.
- As Michael Porter has stated, a nation that ensures balance between economic and social progress can enhance its productivity, followed by creating competitiveness and thus, prosperity.
- Therefore, it is necessary to create an environment which not only pushes the businesses to compete successfully in local as well as international markets, but ensures that the average citizen's standard of living also improves.
- Governments need to provide an environment characterized by efficient infrastructures, institutions and policies that encourage sustainable value creation by the enterprises.

58. US' Digital Millennium Copyright Act:

- Recently, the Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology was locked out of his Twitter account for an hour allegedly over a notice received for violation of the US' Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) 1998.
- **Key Points**
- The Digital Millennium Copyright Act is a law passed in the US and is among the world's first laws recognising Intellectual Property (IP) on the internet.
- The DMCA oversees the implementation of two 1996 treaties signed by World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) member nations.

Complaint and Compliance:

- Any content creator of any form, who believes that their original content has been copied by a user or a website without authorisation can file an application citing their intellectual property has been stolen or violated.
- In the case of social media intermediaries like Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, content creators can directly approach the platform with a proof of them being original creators.
- Since these companies operate in nations which are signatories to the WIPO treaty, they are obligated to remove the said content if they receive a valid and legal DMCA takedown notice.

WIPO Treaties:

- WIPO members had agreed upon two treaties, namely the WIPO Copyright Treaty and the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty.
- India is a member of both the treaties.
- Both the treaties require member nations and signatories to provide in their respective jurisdictions, protection to IP that may have been created by citizens of different nations who are also co-signatories to the treaty.
- Protection must not be any less in any way than the one being given to a domestic copyright holder.
- It also obligates that signatories to the treaty ensure ways to prevent circumvention of the technical measures used to protect copyrighted work. It also provides the necessary international legal protection to digital content.

Intellectual Property:

- It is a category of property that includes intangible creations of the human intellect, and primarily encompasses copyrights, patents and trademarks.
- It also includes other types of rights, such as trade secrets, publicity rights, moral rights, and rights against unfair competition.
- Every year World Intellectual Property Day is celebrated on 26th April.
- Other than WIPO treaties, it is also covered under the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS Agreement).
- India is a member of WTO and hence committed to TRIPS.

World Intellectual Property Organisation:

- It is one of the oldest specialised agencies of the United Nations.
- It was created in 1967 to encourage creative activity, to promote the protection of IP throughout the world.
- It currently administers 26 international treaties. Some of the major treaties are:
 1. Budapest Treaty on the International Recognition of the Deposit of Microorganisms for the Purposes of Patent Procedure.
 2. Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property.
 3. Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works.
 4. Protocol Relating to the Madrid Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Marks-Madrid Protocol.
 5. Washington Treaty on IP in respect of Integrated Circuits.
 6. Nairobi Treaty on the Protection of the Olympic Symbol.
- Marrakesh Treaty to facilitate Access to Published Works by Visually Impaired Persons and Persons with Print Disabilities.
- **Headquarter:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Members:** As of date, 193 nations across the world, including India, are members of WIPO.
- **Major Functions:**
 1. Policy forum to shape balanced international IP rules for a changing world.
 2. Global services to protect IP across borders and to resolve disputes.
 3. Technical infrastructure to connect IP systems and share knowledge.
 4. Cooperation and capacity-building programs to enable all countries to use IP for economic, social and cultural development.
 5. A world reference source for IP information.

Indian Laws which Cover Intellectual Property:

1. Trade Marks Act, 1999.
2. Patents Act, 1970 (as amended in 2005).
3. Copyright Act, 1957.

4. Designs Act, 2000.
5. Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.
6. Semiconductor Integrated Circuits Layout Design Act, 2000.
7. Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Right Act, 2001.
8. Information Technology Act, 2000.

59. World's First Genetically Modified Rubber: Assam:

- Recently, the world's first Genetically Modified (GM) rubber plant developed by Rubber Research Institute was planted in Assam.
- The rubber plant is the first of its kind developed exclusively for this region, and is expected to grow well under the climatic conditions of the mountainous northeastern region.
- Genetic modification (GM) technology allows the transfer of genes for specific traits between species using laboratory techniques.
- The GM rubber has additional copies of the gene MnSOD, or manganese-containing superoxide dismutase, inserted in the plant, which is expected to tide over the severe cold conditions during winter in the northeast.
- The MnSOD gene has the ability to protect plants from the adverse effects of severe environmental stresses such as cold and drought.

Need:

- Natural rubber is a native of warm humid Amazon forests and is not naturally suited for the colder conditions in the Northeast, which is one of the largest producers of rubber in India.
- Growth of young rubber plants remains suspended during the winter months, which are also characterised by progressive drying of the soil. This is the reason for the long immaturity period of this crop in the region.

Natural Rubber:

- Commercial Plantation Crop: Rubber is made from the latex of a tree called *Hevea Brasiliensis*. Rubber is largely perceived as a strategic industrial raw material and accorded special status globally for defence, national security and industrial development.
- Conditions for Growth: It is an equatorial crop, but under special conditions, it is also grown in tropical and sub-tropical areas.
- Temperature: Above 25°C with moist and humid climate.
- Rainfall: More than 200 cm.
- Soil Type: Rich well drained alluvial soil.
- Cheap and adequate supply of skilled labour is needed for this plantation crop.

Indian Scenario:

- The British established the first rubber plantation in India in 1902 on the banks of the river Periyar in Kerala.
- India is currently the sixth largest producer of NR in the world with one of the highest productivity (694,000 tonnes in 2017-18).
- Top Rubber Producing States: Kerala > Tamil Nadu > Karnataka.
- Government Initiatives: Rubber Plantation Development Scheme and Rubber Group Planting Scheme are examples of government led initiatives for rubber.
- 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in plantations of rubber, coffee, tea, cardamom, palm oil tree and olive oil tree.
- Major Producers Globally: Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, China and India.
- Major Consumers: China, India, USA, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia.

India's National Rubber Policy:

- The Department of Commerce brought out the National Rubber Policy in March 2019.

- The policy includes several provisions to support the Natural Rubber (NR) production sector and the entire rubber industry value chain.
- It covers new planting and replanting of rubber, support for growers, processing and marketing of natural rubber, labour shortage, grower forums, external trade, Centre-State integrated strategies, research, training, rubber product manufacturing and export, climate change concerns and carbon market.
- It is based on the short term and long term strategies identified by the Task Force constituted on the rubber sector for mitigating problems faced by rubber growers in the country.
- Developmental and research activities for supporting the NR sector for the welfare of growers are carried out through Rubber Board by implementing the scheme Sustainable and Inclusive Development of Natural Rubber Sector in the Medium Term Framework (MTF) (2017-18 to 2019-20).
- The developmental activities include financial and technical assistance for planting, supply of quality planting materials, support for grower forums, training and skill development programme.

60. G20 Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting:

- Recently, the Union Minister for Labour and Employment has said that India is making collective efforts to reduce gender gaps in labour force participation.
- He was delivering the Ministerial Address on Declaration and Employment Working Group Priorities at G20 Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting.
- G20 is an informal group of 19 countries and the European Union, with representatives of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.
- The G20 membership comprises a mix of the world's largest advanced and emerging economies, representing about two-thirds of the world's population, 85% of global gross domestic product, 80% of global investment and over 75% of global trade.
- Members: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, and the European Union.

Issues Discussed:

- The Employment Working Group deliberated upon key issues, including women employment, social security and remote working.
- In 2014, G20 Leaders pledged in Brisbane to reduce the gap in labour force participation rates between men and women by 25% by 2025, with the aim of bringing 100 million women into the labour market, increasing global and inclusive growth, and reducing poverty and inequality.

Initiatives Highlighted by India:

- Educational and Skilling Efforts:
- New National Education Policy, 2020:
- It aims for reforms in school and higher education systems.
- India is strengthening its educational and skilling efforts to ensure quality education from preschool to senior secondary stage.

National Skill Development Mission:

- It aims to create convergence across sectors and States in terms of skill training activities.
- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana:
- It enables the youth to take up industry related skill training to assist them in securing better opportunities.

- Digital educational content has been made available on various e-learning platforms like DIKSHA, SWAYAM.

For Employment Generation:

- Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana: The government is paying up to 24% of wages towards EPF contributions for new employees as well as those who lost their jobs in the pandemic and are being re-employed.
- To Ensure Women Participation: New Code on Wages, 2019 will reduce gender-based discrimination in wages, recruitment and conditions of employment.
- Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana: It provides financial support to women entrepreneurs to start small enterprises.
- Collateral free loans worth Rs 9 lakh crore have been disbursed under this scheme. There are around 70% of women in this scheme.

New Code on Social Security:

- It may now include even self-employed and all other classes of workforce into the folds of social security coverage.
- Women can now work even during night hours and the duration of paid maternity leave has been increased from 12 weeks to 26 weeks.
- G20 Roadmap Towards and Beyond the Brisbane Target:
- This has been developed for achieving equal opportunities and outcomes for women and men in the labour markets as well as societies in general.
- The **G20 Roadmap Towards and Beyond the Brisbane Target has been set as:**
 1. Increasing the quantity and quality of women's employment.
 2. Ensuring equal opportunities and achieving better outcomes in the labour market.
 3. Promoting a more even distribution of women and men across sectors and occupations.
 4. Tackling the gender pay gap.
 5. Promoting a more balanced distribution of paid and unpaid work between women and men.
 6. Addressing discrimination and gender stereotypes in the labour market.
 7. Labour Force Participation

61. Drone Survey Mandatory for All National Highways Projects:

- The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has made use of drones mandatory for video recording of the national highway projects during different stages of development, construction, operation and maintenance.
- These videos will be saved on NHAI's portal "Data Lake" to assess the progress made on the projects.
- Key Points

Significance:

- It will enhance transparency, uniformity and leverage the latest technology.
- NHAI officials can use the videos during the physical inspection of the projects to check the discrepancies and rectifications made on the earlier observations.
- Since these videos will be permanently stored on the 'Data Lake', they can also be used as evidence during the dispute resolution process before Arbitral Tribunals and Courts.
- Also the mandatory deployment of Network Survey Vehicle (NSV) to carry out road condition surveys on the National Highways will enhance the overall quality of the highways.
- NSV uses the latest survey techniques such as high-resolution digital camera for 360 degree imagery, Laser Road Profilometer and other latest technology for measurement of distress in road surface.

NHAI's Portal "Data Lake":

- NHAI has gone 'Fully Digital' with the launch of cloud based and Artificial Intelligence powered Big Data Analytics platform – Data Lake and Project Management Software.
- All project documentation, contractual decisions and approvals are now done through the portal only.
- Data Lake software forecasts the delays, likely disputes and gives advance alerts.

Significance:

- The Data Lake will bring revolutionary changes to NHAI with benefits like No delays, Quick decision making, No question of missing records, Work from anywhere/anytime.
- It will enhance transparency, as all officers and stakeholders connected with the project can see what is going on a real time basis.
- It will also help in carrying out audits by the senior officers and other external agencies.

National Highways Authority of India (NHAI):

- NHAI was set up under NHAI Act, 1988.
- It has been entrusted with the National Highways Development Project (NHDP), along with other minor projects for development, maintenance and management.
- NHDP is a project to upgrade, rehabilitate and widen major highways in India to a higher standard. The project was started in 1998.
- NHAI maintains the National Highways network to global standards and in a cost effective manner, thus promoting economic well being and quality of life of the people.

62. Minimum Support Price:

- In a bid to encourage crop diversification, the Central Government has hiked the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Paddy, Pulses and Oilseeds (for all mandated Kharif Crops).
- The MSP is the rate at which the government purchases crops from farmers, and is based on a calculation of at least one-and-a-half times the cost of production incurred by the farmers.
- MSP is a "minimum price" for any crop that the government considers as remunerative for farmers and hence deserving of "support".

Crops under MSP:

- The Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) recommends MSPs for 22 mandated crops and fair and remunerative price (FRP) for sugarcane.
- CACP is an attached office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- The mandated crops include 14 crops of the kharif season, 6 rabi crops and 2 other commercial crops.
- In addition, the MSPs of toria and de-husked coconut are fixed on the basis of the MSPs of rapeseed/mustard and copra, respectively.

Factors for Recommending the MSP:

- The CACP considers various factors while recommending the MSP for a commodity, including cost of cultivation.
- It takes into account the supply and demand situation for the commodity, market price trends (domestic and global) and parity vis-à-vis other crops, and implications for consumers (inflation), environment (soil and water use) and terms of trade between agriculture and non-agriculture sectors.
- Three Kinds of Production Cost:
- The CACP projects three kinds of production cost for every crop, both at state and all-India average levels.

'A2':

- Covers all paid-out costs directly incurred by the farmer in cash and kind on seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, hired labour, leased-in land, fuel, irrigation, etc.

'A2+FL':

- Includes A2 plus an imputed value of unpaid family labour.
- 'C2' It is a more comprehensive cost that factors in rentals and interest forgone on owned land and fixed capital assets, on top of A2+FL.
- CACP considers both A2+FL and C2 costs while recommending MSP.
- CACP reckons only A2+FL cost for return.
- However, C2 costs are used by CACP primarily as benchmark reference costs (opportunity costs) to see if the MSPs recommended by them at least cover these costs in some of the major producing States.
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) of the Union government takes a final decision on the level of MSPs and other recommendations made by CACP.

Significance of MSP Hike:

- The added focus on nutri-rich nutri-cereals is to incentivise its production in the areas where rice-wheat cannot be grown without long term adverse implications for groundwater table.
- Concerted efforts have been made over the last few years to realign the MSPs in favour of oilseeds, pulses and coarse cereals to encourage farmers shift to larger areas under these crops and adopt best technologies and farm practices, to correct demand - supply imbalance.

Issues with Hike:

- This increase seems modest keeping in mind the cultivation costs - particularly on account of diesel used for powering tractors, irrigation pumps and harvester combines - have gone up.
- Some increases, especially for maize, did not even keep pace with inflation.
- Further, absence of assured procurement means farmers have no incentive to cultivate them.
- The announcement comes at a time when farm unions have been demanding legislation to guarantee MSP for all farmers for all crops, and a repeal of three contentious farm reform laws.

Issues with MSP:

- The major problem with the MSP is lack of government machinery for procurement for all crops except wheat and rice, which the Food Corporation of India actively procures under the PDS.
- As state governments procure the last mile grain, the farmers of states where the grain is procured completely by the government benefit more while those in states that procure less are often affected.
- The MSP-based procurement system is also dependent on middlemen, commission agents and APMC officials, which smaller farmers find difficult to get access to.

Way ahead:

- The CACP, in its price policy report for the 2018-19 kharif marketing season, had suggested enactment of a legislation conferring on farmers 'The Right to Sell at MSP'. This, it felt, was necessary "to instil confidence among farmers for procurement of their produce".
- The government should be promoting crop and animal agriculture that also leads to consumption of foods rich in proteins, vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre — as opposed to just calories and sugar — by the people.
- The right way to do it is by freezing the MSPs of paddy and wheat, besides capping their procurement at, say, 10-15 quintal per acre per farmer.

63. Disability Early Intervention Centres:

- Recently, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has launched 14 cross-disability early intervention centres across the country to provide support to infants and young children at risk of or with disabilities.

Disabilities:

- Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions.
- An impairment is a problem in body function or structure;
- An activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action;
- A participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopts a broad categorization of persons with disabilities and reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- India has ratified the Convention and has enacted 'The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016'.
- The services provided at the centres will include screening of children and referral to appropriate rehabilitative care; speech therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy; parental counselling and training and peer counselling.
- These centers will also focus on school readiness.

Need:

Scenario from 2011 Census:

- There are more than 20 lakh children with disabilities in the age group of 0-6 years, who belong to the categories of visually impaired, hearing impaired, locomotor disability etc.
- This means that around 7% of children in this age group suffer from some form of disability.
- Expected Rise in Number:
- The number of such children is expected to increase as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, increases the number of disabilities to 21 from 7.
- 0-6 Years is a Critical Phase:
- Early Childhood (0-6 years) is the most critical phase of brain development. Early intervention can provide specialised support and services for infants and young children at-risk or with disability or developmental delay and their families to help their development, well-being and participation in family and community life.
- This can lead to lesser economic burden by creating a better future and independent/less dependent lives.

Other Initiatives for Disabled:

- Right of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016: Besides increasing the number of disabilities, it increases the quantum of reservation for people suffering from disabilities from 3% to 4% in government jobs and from 3% to 5% in higher education institutes.
- Accessible India Campaign: Creation of Accessible Environment for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).
- **Unique Disability Identification (UDID) Portal:** The project is being implemented with a view of creating a National Database for PwDs, and to issue a Unique Disability Identity Card to each PwD.
- **Deen Dayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme:** Financial assistance is provided to NGOs for providing various services to PwDs, like special schools, vocational training centres, community based rehabilitation, pre-school and early intervention etc.

- Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase / fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP): Aims at helping the disabled persons by bringing suitable, durable, scientifically-manufactured, modern, standard aids and appliances within their reach.
- **National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities:** To increase opportunities for students with disabilities to pursue higher education, 200 Fellowships per year are granted.
- Schemes of the National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities.
- Identification of at-risk cases, especially in rural areas, is an important aspect and it is also important to provide necessary assistance and counselling to their parents in time.
- Research shows that the first 1000 days of a child's life are crucial to ensure healthy development, so it is very important to identify the risk cases at an early age so that the severity of the disability can be reduced through appropriate measures.

Note:

Some topics related to the Science and Technology have been added to the Current Affairs edition -July 2021.

Copyright © by Classic IAS Academy

All rights are reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of Classic IAS Academy.