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**MONTHLY
COMPILATION
DEC. 2020**

For UPSC Prelims & Mains Examination

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GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic— *India and its neighborhood- relations.*

LAUNCH OF RUPAY CARD PHASE TWO IN BHUTAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with his Bhutanese counterpart Lotay Tshering on launched RuPay card Phase-II.

Highlights

- The prime ministers of the two countries had jointly launched **Phase-I of the project during Mr. Modi's state visit to Bhutan in August last year.**
- The **implementation of Phase-I of RuPay cards in Bhutan** has enabled visitors from India to access ATMs and Point of Sale (PoS) terminals across Bhutan.
- The RuPay card Phase-II will **allow Bhutanese card holders to access the RuPay network in India.**

What is the RuPay card?

The RuPay card is an Indian debit and credit card payment network, with acceptance at ATMs, POS devices and e-commerce websites.

Cooperation between India-Bhutan

India and Bhutan share a special partnership, anchored in mutual understanding and respect, reinforced by a shared cultural heritage and strong people to people links.

Trade and Economic assistance:

- The trade between the two countries is governed by the **India Bhutan Trade and Transit Agreement 1972 which was last renewed in November 2016.**
- The agreement establishes a free-trade regime between the two countries and also provides for duty-free transit of Bhutanese exports to third countries.
- India is Bhutan's leading development partner. Since the launch of **First Five Year Plan of Bhutan in 1961**, India has been extending financial support to Bhutan's FYPs.

Water Resources:

India is providing electricity to Bhutan for its domestic use and revenue from surplus electricity exported to India.

- This **hydropower cooperation comes under 2006 Agreement on Cooperation in Hydropower.**
- Under this agreement, India has agreed to assist Bhutan in the development of minimum of 10,000 MW of hydropower and import of surplus electricity from same by year 2020.
- So far, Government of **India has constructed three Hydroelectric Projects (HEPs) in Bhutan.** Currently, India is helping Bhutan in the development of **power plant on Mangdechhu River.**

Border Management:

There is a **Border District Coordination Meeting (BDCM)** Mechanism between the bordering States and the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) to facilitate coordination on border management and other related matters.

Educational and Cultural Cooperation:

- About 60,000 Indian nationals live in Bhutan, employed mostly in the hydro-electric power construction and road industry.
- In addition, around 8000-10,000 daily workers enter and exit Bhutan every day in border towns.
- A large number of college going Bhutanese students study in India and Indian **Government provides number of scholarships to Bhutanese students.**

Significance of India- Bhutan Relationship

- Bhutan is a neighboring country and **shares border with four Indian States: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Sikkim.**
- It also serves as a **buffer between India and China.**
- Bhutan provides a **market for Indian commodities and is a destination for Indian investment.** Bhutan is also a rich source of hydropower for India.

Mains Question:

Peace, stability and security of Bhutan's Borders are crucial for India. Discuss.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW (VNR) 2020

Context

NITI Aayog presented India's second Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the **United Nations High-level Political Forum (HLPF)** on Sustainable Development, 2020.

What is the HLPF?

The United Nations High-level Political Forum (HLPF) is the **foremost international platform for follow-up and review of progress on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

The HLPF **meets annually in July for eight days** under the auspices of the **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** of the UN.

Voluntary National Review (VNR)

The VNRs presented by Member States at the HLPF **are a critical component of the review of progress and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.**

- The **reviews are voluntary** and state-led and are aimed at facilitating the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned.
- The process of preparation of a country's VNR provides a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of various relevant stakeholders.
- NITI Aayog prepared and presented India's first VNR in 2017.

India VNR 2020

- India presented its VNR along with other second time presenters like Bangladesh, Georgia, Kenya, Morocco, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria and Uganda.
- **India's VNR this year has undertaken a paradigm shift in terms of** embodying a "whole-of-society" approach in letter and spirit.
- **NITI Aayog engaged with** sub-national and local governments, civil society organizations, local communities, people in vulnerable situations and the private sector.
- As part of this process, NITI Aayog partnered with UN in India and Civil Society Organisations to curate a consultative process.

India has been playing in promoting global engagement platforms such as:

- the International Solar Alliance (ISA),
- the Coalition for Disaster Resilience Infrastructure (CDRI), and
- the active participation in implementing the Sendai Framework, UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Decade of Action: Taking SDGs from Global to Local

- The India VNR 2020 report was also unveiled during this event.
- The report is a comprehensive account of the adoption and implementation of the 2030 Agenda in India.
- Apart from presenting a review of progress on the 17 SDGs, the report discusses at length the policy and enabling environment, India's approach to localising SDGs, and strengthening means of implementation.

Conclusion

In line with the theme of **Taking SDGs from Global to Local**, the goal-wise account of progress on the SDGs has been appended with examples of a range of diverse good practices and success stories of interventions from the States, especially Aspirational Districts.

The India VNR 2020 represents NITI Aayog's efforts in embodying the whole-of-society approach and its commitment towards localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic— Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

AIDS TO NAVIGATION BILL, 2020

Context

Shipping Ministry issues draft "Aids to Navigation Bill 2020" for public consultation.

About the Draft Bill

The 'Aids to Navigation Bill, 2020' is aimed *to regulate state-of-the-art technologies of marine navigation that were earlier used to tangle in statutory provisions of Lighthouse Act, 1927.*

- The draft bill is proposed *to replace the almost nine-decade old Lighthouse Act, 1927.*
- It seeks *to incorporate the global best practices*, technological developments and India's International obligations in the field of Aids to Marine Navigation.
- This initiative is part of the proactive approach adopted by the Ministry of Shipping by *repealing archaic colonial laws and replacing it with modern and contemporary needs of the maritime industry.*

Key Highlights

- *The legislation aims to regulate* state-of-the-art technologies of marine navigation that were earlier used to tangle in statutory provisions of Lighthouse Act, 1927.
- The draft bill aims *to empower the Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships (DGLL)* with additional power and functions such as Vessel Traffic Service, Wreck flagging, training and certification.
- DGLL, under this Act, will empower *to implement other obligations under International Conventions, where India is a signatory.*
- It also provides for *identification and development of heritage lighthouses.*
- *It comprises a new schedule of offences* along with commensurate penalties for obstructing and damaging the aids to navigation and non-compliance with directives issued by the Central Government and other bodies under the draft bill.

Significance

With the advent of modern technologically improved aids to maritime navigation, the role of authorities regulating and operating maritime navigation has changed drastically.

Therefore the new law encompasses a major shift from lighthouses to modern aids of navigation.

FOR PRELIMS

INDO-THAI COORDINATED PATROL (CORPAT)

The 30th edition of India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol (Indo-Thai CORPAT) between the Indian Navy and the Royal Thai Navy is being conducted from 18 – 20 November 2020.

- To reinforce maritime links, the two navies have been carrying out CORPAT along their International Maritime Boundary Line **twice a year since 2005.**
- **The aim of this initiative is** keeping this vital part of the Indian Ocean safe and secure for commercial shipping and international trade.

- **CORPAT builds up** the understanding and interoperability between navies and facilitates institution of measures to prevent and suppress Illegal Unreported Unregulated (IUU) fishing, drug trafficking, maritime terrorism, armed robbery and piracy.
- It further **enhances the operational synergy** by exchange of information for prevention of smuggling, illegal immigration and for conduct of **SAR operations at sea**.

World Fisheries Day

World Fisheries Day is celebrated on 21st November every **year to demonstrate solidarity with all fisherfolk, fish farmers and concerned stakeholders throughout the world.**

- **On 21st November 1997**, the working fishermen and women representing World Forum of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers from 18 countries met at New Delhi and established the **World Fisheries Forum (WFF)** advocating for a global mandate of sustainable fishing practices and policies.
- **The event aims to draw attention to** overfishing, habitat destruction and other serious threats to the sustainability of our marine and inland resources.
- The celebrations serve to focus on **changing the way the world manages global fisheries to ensure sustainable stocks and healthy ecosystems.**

Awas Diwas and Awas Week

Awaas Diwas is celebrated on **20th November 2020** while Awaas Week will be observed on (16th November 2020 to 22nd November 2020).

It is an initiative of **Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Health and Family welfare.**

Activities to be taken up during the celebration of Awaas Diwas/ Awaas Week include:

- Sensitization of beneficiaries about PMAY-G
- Organizing visits of the beneficiaries to the sites with demonstration houses.
- Organizing interaction of PMAY-G beneficiaries with local bankers to facilitate a loan to beneficiaries of PMAY-G.
- Organizing Bhoomi Pujan, Grih Pravesha, etc.
- Any other activities as it deems appropriate during the Awaas Diwas/ Awaas week celebrations.

PIB-DECEMBER 2nd, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - I

Topic– Important Geophysical phenomena.

CYCLONIC STORM 'BUREVI'

Context

Cyclonic Storm 'Burevi' over southwest Bay of Bengal.

Highlights

- According to the Cyclone Warning Division of the India Meteorological Department (IMD):
- The **Deep Depression over southwest Bay of Bengal** moved west-northwestwards with a speed of 09 kmph during past six hours, **intensified into Cyclonic Storm 'Burevi'**.
- Cyclone Alert for South Tamilnadu and South Kerala coasts: **Yellow Message**

Stage of Warning	Color Code
Cyclone Alert	Yellow
Cyclone Warning	Orange
Post landfall out look	Red

What is the Depressions?

- Depressions, sometimes called mid-latitude cyclones, are areas of low pressure located between 300 and 600. (in the Northern Hemisphere).
- Depressions develop when warm air from the sub-tropics meets cold air from the Polar Regions.
- There is a favourite meeting place in the mid-Atlantic for cold polar air and warm sub-tropical air.

Formation

- Depressions usually have well defined warm and cold fronts, as the warm air is forced to rise above the cold air.
- Fronts and depressions have a birth, lifetime and death; and according to the stage at which they are encountered, so does the weather intensity vary.
- Depressions vary from between 200 and 2,000 miles in diameter; they may be deep when pressure at their centre is very low and the isobars are tightly packed.

Life cycle of a Depression

A depression develops like the propagation of a wave in water.

- Initially, a **uniform boundary or front exists between cold air pushing southwards and warm air pushing northwards** (in the Northern Hemisphere).
- A wave-shaped distortion may appear on the **front, and a small low-pressure centre develops at the crest of the wave.**
- In the immediately surrounding area the pressure begins to fall. **A disturbance of this kind is called a wave depression.**
- As the "wave" develops, a warm sector of air forms bounded by the warm and cold fronts, which begins to tie over the engulfing cold air. Both the warm and cold fronts originate from the centre of the depression.
- On the ground, sudden changes in the wind direction may be experienced when fronts pass by.

- Wave depressions can grow off the tail ends of primary cold fronts. The depression so formed is then called a **secondary depression**.
- New centres may also develop from occluded fronts within the primary depression. The secondary system can then become the main system, and the primary occluded front becomes caught up in the developing circulation, effectively becoming a third front.



Warnings:

Heavy rainfall warning

Light to moderate rainfall at many places with heavy falls at isolated places very likely over north coastal Tamil Nadu.

Wind warning

Squally winds with speed reaching up to 45 km/hr and gusting to 110 km/hr likely over East Equatorial Indian Ocean and adjoining South-East Bay of Bengal on Thursday.

Sea condition

The sea condition likely to be rough to very rough over East Equatorial Indian Ocean & adjoining central parts of south Bay of Bengal.

Fishermen Warning

- The fishermen are advised not to venture into deep sea areas of East Equatorial Indian Ocean & adjoining central parts of south Bay of Bengal.
- Those, who are out in deep sea areas are advised return to the coast.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

BORDER SECURITY FORCE (BSF)

Context

56th Raising Day of Border Security Force (BSF) celebrated.

About BSF

- The Border Security Force (BSF) is India's Primary border guarding organisation on its border with Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- It was raised **in the wake of the 1965 War on 1 December 1965**, "for ensuring the security of the borders of India and for matters connected there with".

Formation

- Till 1965 India's borders with Pakistan were manned by the State Armed Police Battalion. Pakistan attacked Sardar Post, Chhar Bet and Beria Bet on 9 April, 1965 in Kutch.
- This exposed the **inadequacy of the State Armed Police to cope with armed aggression** due to which the Government of India felt the need for a specialized centrally controlled Border Security Force, which would be armed and trained to man the International Border with Pakistan.
- As a result of the **recommendations of the Committee of Secretaries, the Border Security Force came into existence on 01 Dec 1965.**

TASKS OF THE BSF:

The major tasks of the BSF are divided as follows:

1. Peace time:

- Promote a sense of security among the people living in the border areas.
- Prevent trans-border crimes, unauthorized entry into or exit from the territory of India.
- Prevent smuggling and any other illegal activity.

2. War Time:

- Holding ground in less threatened sectors so long as the **main attack does not develop in a particular sector** and it is felt that the local situation is within the capability of BSF to deal with.
- Providing extension to the flanks of main defense line by the **holding of strong points in conjunction with other units.**
- Performing **special tasks connected with intelligence including raids.**
- **Acting as guides in an area of responsibility** where routes are known.
- Maintenance of law and order in enemy territory administered under the control of Army.
- Guarding of prisoners of war cages.
- Assistance in control of refugees.
- Anti – infiltration duties in specified area.

Facts needs to know:

- BSF is **"INDIA'S FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE"**.
- Defending LC shoulder to shoulder with Army on the toughest peaks in Jammu & Kashmir including neutralizing infiltration of ANEs into Indian soil.
- BSF has been **defending Sir Creek in Arabian Sea and Sundarban delta in the Bay of Bengal** with its state of art fleet of Water Crafts.
- The **BSF contributes every year a number of personnel for services for UN Mission.**

- BSF personnel have been **performing Internal Security Duty in Manipur** for the last two years and have been successfully fighting insurgency in those areas.

FOR PRELIMS

STATEHOOD DAY: NAGALAND

Nagaland became the **16th state of India on 1 December 1963**.

- Nagaland is a state in north-eastern India.
- It is **bordered by the state of Arunachal Pradesh to the north, Assam to the west, Manipur to the south and the Sagaing Region of Myanmar to the east**.
- Nagaland's **capital city is Kohima and its largest city is Dimapur**.
- It has an area of 16,579 square kilometres (6,401 sq mi) with a **population of 1,980,602 per the 2011 Census** of India, making it **one of the smallest states of India**.
- The state has experienced insurgency, **as well as an inter-ethnic conflict, since the 1950s**. The violence and insecurity have limited Nagaland's economic development.

SRI LANKA ECONOMIC SUMMIT 2020

Context

Indian Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs delivered a Keynote Address at the inauguration of the 20th Edition of Sri Lanka Economic Summit (SLES) 2020.

About SLES

- Sri Lanka Economic Summit (SLES) is the premier forum in Sri Lanka for discussion on economic and business issues.
- It is **annually organized by the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC)**.
- **The theme for this year's event is "Roadmap for Take-off: Driving a People –Centric Economic Revival"**.
- President of Sri Lanka H.E. Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa was the Chief Guest at the Inaugural Session.

World-class premium grade Petrol (Octane 100)

IndianOil has launched world-class premium grade Petrol (Octane 100) in the country.

Highlights

Branded as XP100, the premium grade petrol was launched across ten cities.

- The availability of XP100 puts India in an elite group of countries, having access to such high quality oil.
- It will provide high quality and power to the engine.
- IndianOil plans to **roll-out XP100 premium grade petrol in 15 identified cities** across the country in two phases.

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- **High-end premium vehicles equipped with the latest technology** are fully geared to reap the full-throttle benefits of 100 Octane petrol.
- Worldwide, **100 Octane petrol has a niche market for luxury vehicles** that demand high performance, and is **available only in six countries like Germany, USA, etc.**

Green Charcoal Hackathon

NVVN (NTPC VidyutVyapar Nigam), a wholly-owned subsidiary company of NTPC Ltd, launched the Green Charcoal Hackathon.

Highlights

- To fast-track the technology development, NVVN, in partnership with EESL organises technology challenge named as **Green Charcoal Hackathon**.
- The purpose of the event is **to leverage the innovative Indian mind to bridge the technology gap**.
- Its prime objective is **to clean the air by eliminating farm fire**, producing renewable energy out of the agro residue, to promote local entrepreneurship, and to increase the income of the farmers.
- This Hackathon is **also innovation in the pursuit of reducing our carbon footprint**.

PIB-DECEMBER 3rd, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

AYUSH DAY CARE THERAPY CENTRES

Context

A proposal of **Day Care Therapy Center facility under Ayurveda, Yoga, and Naturopathy systems for central government employees and pensioners** has been approved by the Ministry of Health and Family welfare.

Highlights

- Private Day Care Therapy centers of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy will be empaneled under **Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS)** shortly.
- It will work in a manner **similar to empanelment of Day Care Therapy Centers of conventional (Allopathy) medicine** already provided by CGHS.
- Initial empanelment of Day Care Therapy Centres **will be undertaken on pilot basis for Delhi and NCR for a period of one year** and subsequently would be considered for other places.

- All CGHS beneficiaries, serving as well as pensioners will be able to avail the benefit of these centres.

Objective of this scheme

The aim of the scheme is to improve the health and wellbeing, reduce health care expenditure and provide excellence in service delivery, efficiency, and comfort to the patients.

Treatment procedure

The treatment procedure **requiring a short duration of stay in the Day Care Therapy Centre**, ranging from a few hours to less than a Day will be made available to CGHS beneficiaries under this scheme.

- At **present treatment of approved procedures like Panchkarma and Abhyanga etc.** is given only after hospitalization in CGHS empanelment Hospital.
- This involves additional cost to CGHS as indoor room charges, which are separately paid by CGHS apart from the procedure cost.
- The day care centers will not only reduce the cost of hospitalisation but will also add to patient's convenience.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.*

ARMED FORCES FLAG DAY 2020

Armed Forces Flag Day will be observed all over the country on 07th December 2020.

History of Armed Forces Flag Day

Since 1949, the day is observed to honour the martyrs as well as men and women in uniform, who valiantly fight on our borders to safeguard the country's honour.

- Immediately after India achieved independence, a need arose for the government to **manage the welfare of its defence personnel.**
- On August 28, 1949, a committee set up under the defence minister decided to observe a Flag Day annually on December 7.
- The idea behind observing a Flag Day was **to distribute small flags to the general population and in return collect donations.**
- Flag Day gains more significance as **it considers that it is the responsibility of the civilian population of India to take care of the families and dependents of the armed forces personnel** who fight for the country.

Significance and purpose

The Flag Day is mainly observed to serve three basic purposes

- Rehabilitation of battle casualties
- Welfare of serving personnel and their families
- Resettlement and welfare of ex-servicemen and their families.

Armed forces Flag Day Fund (AFFDF)

AFFDF has been constituted by the Government of India for the welfare and rehabilitation of the Ex-Servicemen (ESM) community.

- AFFD fund is used for the rehabilitation and welfare of next of kin of those soldiers who laid their lives in the line of duty, or were rendered disabled, old, non-pensioners, widows and orphaned children.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– *Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.*

APEX COMMITTEE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PARIS AGREEMENT (AIPA)

Context

To re-affirms India's seriousness to 'walk the talk' on climate change, **the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** has constituted a high-level inter-ministerial Apex Committee for Implementation of Paris Agreement (AIPA).

Objective of AIPA

The purpose of AIPA is **to generate a coordinated response on climate change matters** that ensures India is on track towards meeting its obligations under the Paris Agreement including its **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)**.

Composition

- The AIPA will work under the **chairmanship of Secretary, MoEFCC**.
- Senior officials from **fourteen ministries will serve as Members to AIPA**.

Functions

AIPA will **oversee the progress in implementation of India's NDC** and receive periodic information updates to monitor, review and revisit climate goals to fulfil the requirements of the Paris Agreement.

- **to operate as a National Authority** to regulate carbon markets in India under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement,
- **Formulate guidelines** for consideration of projects or activities under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement,

- **Issue guidelines on carbon pricing**, market mechanism, and other similar instruments that have a bearing on climate change and NDCs.

Significance

- The year **2021 would mark the beginning of implementation of the Paris Agreement** and constitution of AIPA is central to strengthening the national systems and institutional arrangements for implementation and monitoring of climate actions.
- It will also ensure that India maintains its climate leadership as one the few countries in the world whose climate actions are consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

What is the Paris Agreement?

2015 was a historic year in which **196 Parties** came together under the Paris Agreement to transform their development trajectories so that they set the world on a course towards sustainable development.

The Paris Agreement is an agreement within the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**, dealing with greenhouse-gas-emissions mitigation, adaptation, and finance, **signed in 2016**.

Objective of the agreement

The Paris Agreement central aim is:

- To strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by **keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels**;
- To pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

What is the 'Nationally determined contributions' (NDC)?

Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are at the heart of the Paris Agreement and the achievement of these long-term goals.

- NDCs embody efforts by each country **to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change**.
- **The Paris Agreement (Article 4, paragraph 2)** requires each Party to prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions (NDCs) that it intends to achieve.
- Parties shall pursue domestic mitigation measures, with the aim of achieving the objectives of such contributions.

What does this mean?

The Paris Agreement requests each country to outline and **communicate their post-2020 climate actions, known as their NDCs**.

- Together, these climate actions determine whether the world achieves the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement and to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as soon as possible.

- Each climate plan reflects the country's ambition for reducing emissions, taking into account its domestic circumstances and capabilities.

Status of ratification

The Paris Agreement **entered into force on 4 November 2016**, thirty days after the date on which at least 55 Parties to the Convention accounting in total for at least an estimated 55 % of the total global greenhouse gas emissions have deposited their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession with the Depositary.

At present, 189 Parties out of 197 Parties to the Convention are Parties to the Paris Agreement.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.*

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INSURANCE SUPERVISORS (IAIS)

The International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) obtained membership of International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS).

About IAIS

- Established in 1994, the **IAIS headquartered in Switzerland** is a voluntary membership organization of insurance supervisors and regulators.
- It includes more than 200 jurisdictions, **constituting 97% of the world's insurance premiums.**
- It is the **international standard-setting body** responsible for developing and assisting in the implementation of principles, standards and other supporting material for the supervision of the insurance sector.

Function

- It is the **international standard-setting body responsible for** developing and assisting in the implementation of principles, standards and other supporting material for the supervision of the insurance sector.
- The IAIS **provides a forum** for Members to share their experiences and understanding of insurance supervision and insurance markets.
- IAIS is **routinely called upon by the G20 leaders** and other international standard setting bodies.

Members of IAIS

Some of the leading members of IAIS are:

- United Kingdom- Financial Conduct Authority (FCA),
- USA- National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC),
- USA- Federal Insurance Office of the Insurance of the United States Department of Treasury (FIO),
- Singapore- Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS),
- India- Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).

Significance of IAIS' membership

With this membership **IFSCA would have access to IAIS's global network** and would be able to exchange ideas and information with other global regulators.

- This would help in developing a vibrant global Insurance hub in IFSC at GIFT City.
- Currently, 17 leading Insurance entities are operating from GIFT IFSC undertaking offshore Insurance and Reinsurance business.
- This membership would go a long way in connecting IFSC with global insurance institutions and would facilitate IFSCA in joint development of global insurance business with other global centres.

PIB-DECEMBER 4th, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

NISARG GRAM

Context

Ministry of AYUSH to develop **Nisarg Gram campus at Pune as the 21st Century abode of Naturopathy.**

Highlights

- Invoking recollections of Mahatma Gandhi's famous Nature Cure campaign of 1946 at the "**Nisarg Upchar**" Ashram in Pune, the upcoming new campus of **National Institute of Naturopathy (NIN)**, Pune will be called "**Nisarg Gram**".
- The new Institution will be **future-ready, with many novelties and innovations incorporated in the project** per se and the curriculum of the Naturopathy courses.

Key features of Nisarg Gream

- The institution will place emphasis on the **sybiotic relationship between research and teaching** and the need to foster this **relationship with respect to Naturopathy**.
- The **research activities at Nisarg Gram** will provide scope for clinical, basic and literary researches.

- **Collaborations:** Research institutions and other Gandhian institutes will be roped in as partners for training, internship and mentoring. This **will save on infrastructure and staffing for Nisarg Gram.**
- Collaborations with disciplines like public health, rural development and other social sciences will take Gandhian concepts of public health, to a different terrain and foster its growth to global significance.
- **Courses offered at Nisarg Gram will have a unique feel,** due to institute's future-orientation, science-based approach, Gandhian spirit and social relevance.

National Institute of Naturopathy (NIN)

NIN, Pune, an **Autonomous Body under the Ministry of AYUSH** is the inheritor of a unique Gandhian heritage.

- The institution was called **All India Nature Cure Foundation and was set up under Gandhi Ji's leadership in 1945.**
- It was subsequently taken over by the Central Government and structured into the present National Institute of Naturopathy.

Programmes at NIN

The new institute's curricula will be prepared in the light of **National Education Policy, 2020.**

- **Bachelors and Masters courses in Naturopathy** and allied disciplines will be the focal programmes at Nisarg Gram.
- The **proposed Bachelors and Masters courses will involve multi-faceted exposure to different streams of knowledge** with an array of Generic Electives, Skill Enhancement Courses and Ability Enhancement Courses to choose from.
- These courses will be **in consonance with the current healthcare demands** and will conform to modern scientific standards.
- The proposed **Doctoral programs in Naturopathy at Nisarg Gram** will be the first of its kind and will further strengthen the Naturopathy and Yoga education in the country.

Significance

Nisarg Gram will provide ample opportunity for foreign students to take up short-term courses to enhance their medical skills, in various streams.

- There will be opportunity to join social-work based activities also.
- Since **Naturopathy is recognized in many countries**, the Indian orientation of the training at Nisarg Gram may attract foreign nationals to take up short term courses.
- Thus, the Indian idiom in Naturopathy can emerge as the USP of such short term courses.

Mains Question:

Explain the key features of 'Naturopathy' and its significance during the prevalence of Allopathy.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY COOPERATION

Context

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between **India and USA** on Intellectual Property cooperation.

Highlights

The Union Cabinet gave the approval for signing the MoU with **United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)** in the field of IP Cooperation.

The MoU aims at increasing IP co-operation between the two countries by way of:

- Facilitating exchange and dissemination of best practices, experiences and knowledge on IP among the public, and **between and among the industry, universities, and research and development (R & D) organizations**, through participation in programs and events organized singly or jointly by the Participants;
- **Exchange of information and best practices** on applications for patents, trademarks, copyrights, geographical indications, and industrial designs, as well as the protection, enforcement and use of IP rights;
- **Cooperation to understand various issues** related to traditional knowledge; and
- **Other cooperation activities** as may be mutually decided by the Participants.
- The two side will draw up **Biennial Work Plan to implement the MoU** which will include the detailed planning for carrying out of the co-operation activities including the scope of action.

Significance

- The MoU will go a long way in **fostering the cooperation between India and USA**, and provide opportunities to both countries to learn from the experience of each other, especially in terms of best practices followed in the other country.
- It will be a **landmark step forward in India's journey towards becoming a major player in global innovation** and will further the objectives of **National IPR Policy, 2016**.

What is Intellectual Property?

Intellectual property (IP) refers to creations of the mind, such as inventions; literary and artistic works; designs; and symbols, names and images used in commerce.

- **IP is protected in law by, for example, patents, copyright and trademarks, which enable people to earn recognition or financial benefit from what they invent or create.**
- By striking the right balance between the interests of innovators and the wider public interest, the IP system aims to foster an environment in which creativity and innovation can flourish.

Significance of IP

Intellectual Property (IP), especially in the innovation economy of today, is vital to a large number of SEPC's stakeholders. Creation, protection and expansion of IP products alone will bring huge benefits to the sector.

Mains Question:

What do you understand by Intellectual Property rights? Describe the legislative provisions in India related to the protection of Intellectual Property.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic— *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

STIP 2020

Context

Experts discuss how STIP 2020 can help country become future-ready & face situations like COVID 19.

What is the STIP 2020?

The **Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, 2020 (STIP2020)** formulation process will be facilitated jointly by the Office of the **Principal Scientific Adviser** to GOI and the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

- It will be the **5th STIP of India**.
- STIP 2020 by way of **its decentralized, bottom-up, and inclusive design process aims to** re-strategize priorities, sectoral focus, and methods of research and technology development for larger socio-economic welfare.

Four interconnected tracks of STIP

A participative model with four interconnected tracks that has been envisioned to formulate the STIP 2020.

1. **Track I:** aims to create a repository of public voices that will act as a guiding force for the drafting process.
2. **Track II:** consultations comprises 21 expert-driven thematic collectives to feed evidence based recommendations into the policy drafting process.
3. **Track III:** brings together Ministries and States in extensive engagement through nominated nodal officers
4. **Track IV:** is the binding force that draws upon apex level multi-stakeholder engagement at the national and global levels. Inputs from these wide-ranging deliberations will finally lead to STIP 2020.

IIT 2020 GLOBAL SUMMIT

*IIT-2020 Global Summit is organised by **PanIIT USA**, on 4th December 2020.*

Highlights

- **The theme** of this year's summit is '**The Future is Now**'.
- **The Summit will focus on** issues like global economy, technology, innovation, health, habitat conservation and universal education.
- **PanIIT USA is an organization** that is more than 20 years old and **is run by an all-volunteer team of IIT alumni**.
- Since 2003 PanIIT USA has organised this conference and invited speakers from different sectors including industry, academia and government.

India's Top 10 Police Stations for 2020

The Government of India selects best performing Police Stations across the country every year, to incentivize more effective functioning of police stations and bring healthy competition among them.

The Top 10 Police Station's district in the country for 2020 are:

1. Manipur: Thoubal
2. Tamil Nadu: Salem City
3. Arunachal Pradesh: Changlang
4. Chhattisgarh: Surajpur
5. Goa: South Goa
6. Andaman & Nicobar Islands: North & Middle Andaman
7. Sikkim: East District
8. Uttar Pradesh: Moradabad (Kanth)
9. Dadra & Nagar Haveli: Dadra & Nagar Haveli
10. Telangana: Karimnagar

The ranking parameters are:

- Property offence
- Crime against women
- Crime against weaker sections
- Missing persons, unidentified found person and unidentified dead bodies

PIB-DECEMBER 5th, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

FOURTH SOUTH ASIA FORUM ON SDGS

In the backdrop of the 4th South Asian Forum of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), UNESCAP South Asia and Pacific virtually organised a special dialogue on disaster and climate resilience in South Asia.

Highlights

- The “**Fourth South Asia Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals**” was **jointly organized by** the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**UNESCAP**) and the **Government of Maldives**.
- The Forum took place on 2-3 December 2020 in virtual meeting format.
- It was a part of the **preparatory process for the 8th APFSD** to be held in March 2021, which in turn contributes towards the HLPF 2021.

Focus of 4th SASF

- The “Fourth South Asia SDG Forum” further focused on strategies and responses to build back better after the COVID-19 pandemic, in line with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.
- It identify priorities to accelerate movement towards sustainable and inclusive development pathways.

About ‘South Asia Forum on the SDGs’

- The South Asia Forum on the SDGs (**SASF**), conceived as the sub-regional preparatory for the **Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)**.
- the **High-Level Policy Forum (HLPF)** have been **organized by** the South and South-West Asia office of **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)** in collaboration with South Asian member States, stakeholders and partners **since 2017**.
- It will **bring together experts from government agencies responsible for national coordination on the SDGs**, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector, and regional and sub-regional organizations, as well as other stakeholders involved in SDG implementation at national, regional and global levels.

Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)

- Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) is the main forum **to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.
- It an **inter-governmental forum** for follow up and review at the regional level.
- The **APFSD provides a platform for in-depth discussion** on ‘Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.’

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

PM-KUSUM SCHEME

Context

Ministry of New and Renewable (MNRE), has decided to issue Guidelines for Implementation of Feeder Level Solarisation under Component-C of PM-KUSUM Scheme.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan / (PM KUSUM) Scheme

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has launched the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan (PM KUSUM) Scheme.

- It is a scheme for farmers for installation of solar pumps and grid connected solar and other renewable power plants in the country.
- The scheme aims to add solar and other renewable capacity of 25,750 MW by 2022 with total central financial support of Rs. 34,422 Crore including service charges to the implementing agencies.

Key features

- As per provisions of the PM-KUSUM Scheme, the grid connected agriculture pumps can be solarised with central and state subsidy of 30% each and farmer's contribution of 40%.
- Based on discussions held with states it has been decided to also include feeder level solarisation under Component-C of PM-KUSUM Scheme.

The PM-KUSUM scheme consists of three components.

1. **The Component-A** includes installation of Decentralized Ground Mounted Grid Connected Renewable Power Plants.
2. **Component-B** includes installation of standalone Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps, and
3. **Component-C** includes Solarisation of Grid-connected Agriculture Pumps.

Scheme implementation

State Nodal Agencies (SNAs) of MNRE will coordinate with States/UTs, Discoms and farmers for implementation of the scheme.

Scheme benefits

- The scheme will open a stable and continuous source of income to the rural land owners for a period of 25 years by utilisation of their dry/uncultivable land.
- Further, in case cultivated fields are chosen for setting up solar power project, the farmers could continue to grow crops as the solar panels are to be set up above a minimum height.
- The solar pumps will save the expenditure incurred on diesel for running diesel pump and provide the farmers a reliable source of irrigation through solar pump apart from preventing harmful pollution from running diesel pump.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

SCHEME FOR FORMALISATION OF MICRO FOOD PROCESSING ENTERPRISES (FME)

Context

The Union Cabinet has given its approval to “Scheme for Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises (FME)”.

Highlights

- Centrally Sponsored Scheme. Expenditure to be shared by Government of India and States at 60:40.
- It aims for the Unorganized Sector on All India basis with an outlay of Rs.10,000 crore.
- Scheme will be implemented over a 5 year period from 2020-21 to 2024-25.
- Cluster approach.
- Focus on perishables.

Objectives

- Increase in access to finance by micro food processing units.
- Transition from the unorganized sector to the formal sector.
- Special focus on women entrepreneurs and Aspirational districts.
- Encourage Waste to Wealth activities.
- Focus on minor forest produce in Tribal Districts.

Support to Individual micro units:

- Micro enterprises will get credit linked subsidy @ 35% of the eligible project cost with ceiling of Rs.10 lakh.
- Beneficiary contribution will be minimum 10% and balance from loan.
- On-site skill training & Handholding for DPR and technical upgradation.

Support to FPOs/SHGs/Cooperatives:

- Seed capital to SHGs for loan to members for working capital and small tools.
- Grant for backward/ forward linkages, common infrastructure, packaging, marketing & branding.
- Skill training & Handholding support.
- Credit linked capital subsidy.

Implementation Mechanisms

- The Scheme would be monitored at Centre by an Inter-Ministerial Empowered Committee (IMEC) under the Chairmanship of Minister, FPI.
- The State/ UT Government will notify a Nodal Department and Agency for implementation of the Scheme.
- A National level portal would be set-up wherein the applicants/ individual enterprise could apply to participate in the Scheme.

Significance

Nearly eight lakh micro- enterprises will benefit through access to information, better exposure and formalization.

- Credit linked subsidy support and hand-holding will be extended to 2,00,000 micro enterprises for expansion and upgradation.

- It will enable them to formalize, grow and become competitive.
- Scheme envisages increased access to credit by existing micro food processing entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs in the Aspirational Districts.

FOR PRELIMS

INDIAN NAVY DAY

Navy day in India is observed every year **on December 4** to celebrate the achievements and role of the naval force to the country.

Highlights

Navy day is observed to commemorate the launch of **Operation Trident** against **Pakistan** during the **71' Indo-Pak War**.

- On the night of December 4-5, 1971, the **Indian Navy planned the attack at night as Pakistan did not have aircraft's that could carry out bombings at night.**
- It was a **devastating attack on Pakistan Naval Headquarters of Karachi.**
- Therefore to celebrate the success and achievements of the Indian navy force every year Navy day is celebrated.

Indian Navy Day 2020: Theme: "Indian Navy Combat Ready, Credible & Cohesive".

Date: Navy Day in India is celebrated on **December 4**. However, **the day is celebrated all over the world on different dates.**

Passage Exercise (PASSEX)

The Indian Navy (IN) is undertaking a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with Russian Federation Navy (RuFN) in the Eastern Indian Ocean Region (IOR) from 4 to 5 December 2020.

Highlights

PASSEXs are conducted regularly by IN with units of friendly foreign navies, whilst visiting each other's ports or during a rendezvous at sea.

This exercise, **being conducted in the Eastern Indian Ocean Region**, reflects the strong long-term strategic relationship between the two countries in the maritime domain.

- **The exercise is aimed** at enhancing interoperability, improving understanding and imbibing best practices between both the friendly navies.
- It would involve advanced surface and anti-submarine warfare exercises, weapon firings, seamanship exercises and helicopter operations.
- This exercise is being **conducted on the occasion of 'Navy Day' of the IN on 4th December**, which emphasizes the strong bonds of friendship shared between the two friendly militaries.

GENERAL STUDIES - I

Topic– *The Freedom Struggle – its various stages and important contributors/contributions from different parts of the country.*

MAHAPARINIRVAN DIWAS: DR. BR AMBEDKAR

Context

Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar passed away on **December 6, 1956**, and the day is regarded as Mahaparinirvan Diwas to pay tribute to him.

What is Mahaparinirvan Diwas?

The term ‘**parinirvan**’ has a deep meaning in Buddhist traditions.

- It refers to someone who has **attained nirvana in his lifetime and after death**.
- December 6 is observed to commemorate Dr. BR Ambedkar ‘s unfathomable contribution to society and his achievements.
- Millions of people and followers assemble at the **Chaitya Bhoomi (Dadar Chowpatty Beach in Mumbai)**, on this day.

About Dr. BR Ambedkar

Born in a Dalit Mahar family on April 14, 1891, Dr Ambedkar was the 14th child of Ramji Maloji Sakpal and Bhimabai Ramji Sakpal.

- He faced discrimination while growing up owing to the stratified caste division in the society.
- He was the first person from his community to complete high school education.
- He had done his education at Elphinstone College under **Bombay University, Columbia University and London School Of Economics**.
- A revolutionary freedom fighter, **Ambedkar had led from the front along with Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhi** and played a pivotal role in the upliftment of the poor and backward classes of the society.
- **His relentless effort in shaping the Directive Principles**, the formulation for the upliftment of the backward sections of the society, the voicing of the equal right of the Dalits Buddhist have earned him an irreplaceable position in Indian political history.
- The **historic Poona Pact of 1932** was signed by him which gave the Dalits a place in the general electoral list
- Ambedkar **led the Dalit Buddhist campaign from the front** and worked relentlessly for their equal human rights and betterment.
- In **1956 he published his book Annihilation Of Caste** which vehemently criticised the then practice and laws regarding the untouchables and Dalits.
- Dr BR Ambedkar was awarded the **Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian honour of India, posthumously in 1990**.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic- Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.

THE ADVERTISING STANDARDS COUNCIL OF INDIA (ASCI)

Context

Government asks private television channels to follow ASCI guidelines on online gaming and fantasy sports.

Highlights

The I&B Ministry has issued an advisory asking **all private television broadcasters to follow guidelines issued by the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI)** for advertisements relating to online gaming, fantasy sports etc.

The Ministry has advised that the advertisements should not promote any activity prohibited by statute or law.

Key guidelines

ASCI guidelines require that every such gaming advertisement must carry the **following disclaimer**:

‘This game involves an element of financial risk and may be addictive. Please play responsibly and at your own risk’.

- Such a disclaimer should **occupy at least 20% of the advertisement space**.
- The gaming advertisements **cannot depict users under the age of 18 years as engaged in playing** a game of “online gaming for real money winnings” or suggest that such users can play these games.
- It should neither suggest that online gaming presents an income generating opportunity as an alternative to employment.
- It should not depict a person playing such games is more successful than others.

About ASCI

The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), **established in 1985, is a Mumbai based self-regulatory voluntary organization** of the advertising industry in India.

- It seeks to ensure that advertisements conform to its Code for Self-Regulation.
- Under the **Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995** it is mandatory for television networks to follow the advertising code laid down by ASCI.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic- Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

INDIA INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FESTIVAL 2020 (IISF-2020)

Context

The Science & Technology Minister e-inaugurated the curtain raiser programme of CSIR-IMMT, Bhubaneswar for the **6th India International Science Festival 2020 (IISF-2020)**.

Highlights

- 6th India International Science Festival 2020 is being **organized at CSIR – Institute of Minerals & Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT) Bhubaneswar**.
- The **theme of IISF-2020** is “Science for Self-Reliant India and Global Welfare”.

What is ‘India International Science Festival’ (IISF)?

India International Science Festival (IISF) was launched in 2015.

- It is a **celebration to promote Science and Technology** and demonstrate how science could lead India towards a developed nation within a short span of time.
- The aim** is to engage the public with science and celebrate the joy of science and show the ways how science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) provide us with the solutions to improve our lives.

Organized by:

- IISF is organized by **Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Earth Sciences in association with Vijnana Bharati (VIBHA)**
- It has created a unique platform of India International Science Festival, which intends to inspire curiosity and make learning more rewarding.

Objectives

- The series of India International Science Festival (IISF) is an **integral part of India’s long term vision in developing and widening the spectrum of scientific temper in India and abroad**.
- To display India’s contribution in the field of S&T and to motivate the young scientists to find solutions to the burning issues of our society.**

CSIR – Institute of Minerals & Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT)

CSIR-IMMT was established on 13.04.1964 as **Regional Research Laboratory, Bhubaneswar** in the eastern part of India **under the aegis of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)**.

- It was renamed in 2007** with a renewed research focus and growth strategy to be a leader in the areas of mineral & material resource engineering.
- CSIR-IMMT is constantly striving to understand and address technological solutions in Minerals and Materials for a sustainable economy.
- It is working on resourcing of critical minerals, e.g. tungsten, lithium, cobalt, manganese, rare earth elements, etc., for both primary and secondary resources.

About Vijnana Bharati

Vijnana Bharati or VIBHA, previously known as '**Swadeshi Science Movement**' is a non-profit organization.

- It works for science popularization & implementation of modern technology & ancient sciences in India.
- It was **founded by** the eminent scientists of Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru led by Prof. K.I. Vasu.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic- *Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States.*

PROMOTING BEEKEEPING TO DOUBLE FARMERS' INCOME

Context

Government has allocated Rs.500 crore towards Beekeeping under Atma Nirbhar Abhiyan.

Highlights

- Government is promoting Beekeeping as part of its aim to double farmers' income.
- **India is among the world's top five honey producers.** China is on the top of Honey production.
- Compared to 2005-06 honey production has risen by 242% and exports shot by 265%.

National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM)

NBHM was launched in August 2017 in line with Prime Minister's call for 'Sweet Revolution' (revolution in production of honey to increase its production).

The NBHM is carried out by

- Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)
- National Bee Board (NBB)

Objective of the Mission

- Constructing a wealthy land with feasible natural environment and economy that will help the beekeepers to be independent.
- Improving the cultivation of food products through cross-pollination.
- Conducting programs and regulations to accomplish the economic, social and environmental objectives through Beekeeping and Honey enterprise.
- Studying and developing protocols of best practices on all the features of beekeeping.

NBHM under the KVIC

The unorganised and the traditional methods of beekeeping were suspended with the establishment of the Khadi Village and Industry Committee (KVIC).

*The Committee plays a vital role in the livelihood of the rural areas with its **four features rendering the upliftment of beekeepers' social and economic living standards.***

1. KVIC acts liaison as an income-generating tool for the beekeepers and beekeeping.
2. KVIC ensures better food and medicine with the value of honey production and other hive products.
3. KVIC supports cross-pollination that pays the way for agriculture crops.
4. KVIC works enormously in constructing afforestation.

National Bee Board (NBB)

- **The Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture Cooperation & Farmer's Welfare** established the National Bee Board (NBB) in the year 2000.
- The main motto of the board is to improve pollination and crop productivity through beekeeping.

Key Functions of NBB

- Research and Development of honey processing units
- Production of quality honey
- The innovation of Phyto-Sanitary standards in terms of Bee-Product quality
- Migration of honeybee colonies
- Creating awareness and organising training
- Research and training on the disease-prone and its medication.

Funds under NBHM Mission

- All the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises governed by the national bodies approve fund every year through the KVIC.
- The amount is allocated for the employment and income to rural youth, both men and women for preserving the honeybee environment.

Sweet Revolution (Mithi Kranti)

- Sweet Revolution was envisioned in 2016 as a strategic step to emphasize the increase in honey production in the state, which can be a major contributor to doubling the income of the farmers.
- With the increase in income, the production of crops will also increase by 15%.

Purpose of sweet revolution

- **To make Jharkhand state in the category of developed states by 2022.**
- Providing employment by connecting the farmers of the state with bee keeping.
- To increase agriculture and horticulture yield and income of farmers.
- To make the state the leading state in the field of honey production.
- Children free from malnutrition.

Sweet Revolution in Jharkhand

- Jharkhand is the best state to implement sweet revolution and there is huge potential for honey production.
- Approximately 30% of land is covered by forest which is the most important resource for honey production.

PIB-DECEMBER 8th, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– *Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.*

INVESTMENT PROMOTION AWARD 2020

Context

United Nations Declares 'Invest India' The Winner of the Investment Promotion Award 2020.

Highlights

The **United Nations (UNCTAD)** has declared Invest India- the National Investment Promotion Agency of India- as a winner of the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award.

The **award ceremony took place on 7th December 2020 at UNCTAD Headquarters in Geneva.**

About the Award

This **United Nations Investment Promotion Award** is the most coveted award for Investment Promotion Agencies.

- **UNCTAD is a central agency that monitors performance of IPAs** and identifies global best practices.
- The award **recognizes and celebrates the outstanding achievements** and best practices of Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) across the globe.
- The evaluation was based on **UNCTAD's assessment of work** undertaken by 180 Investment Promotion Agencies.
- **Germany, South Korea and Singapore** have been some of the past winners of the award.

Background

In March 2020, UNCTAD constituted a team to monitor the response of IPAs to the pandemic.

- UNCTAD reported best practices from Investment Promotion Agencies in the IPA Observer publications in April and July 2020.
- The response of IPAs to the pandemic became the basis for the evaluation of the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award.

What is the 'Invest India'?

Invest India is the **National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of India** and acts as the first point of reference for investors in India.

- It is **set up as a nonprofit venture under the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion**, Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Government of India.
- It was **set up in 2010** for prospective overseas investors and to those aspiring Indian investors desiring to invest in foreign locations.
- It **acts as a structured mechanism to attract investment**.

Structure

- Invest India is **set up as a joint venture company** between the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce & Industry (35% equity), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) (51% equity), and State Governments of India (0.5% each).

Mandate

- The core mandate of Invest India is investment promotion and facilitation.
- It provides sector-specific and state-specific information to a foreign investor, assists in expediting regulatory approvals, and offers hand-holding services.
- To assist Indian investors to make informed choices about investment opportunities overseas.

Mains Question:

'Invest India' is an instrument for attracting investment in the infrastructure sector in different ways and that can transmit into numerous effects leading to better growth of the Indian economy. Discuss.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

TWO NEW ZOOS GRANTED RECOGNITION BY CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Context

Two new Zoos **one each in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh** granted recognition by Central government.

Highlights

- At the 37th General Body meeting of Central Zoo Authority, two new zoos the **Rajgir Zoo Safari in Nalanda, Bihar** and **Shaheed Ashfaq Ullah Khan Prani Udyaan in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh** were granted recognition.

- Vision Plan for upgradation of 15 select Zoos to global standards was discussed in the meeting;
- An investor's summit to bring in corporate sector investment towards modernization next year:

Rajgir Zoo Safari, Nalanda, Bihar

Rajgir Zoo Safari, in the eastern state of Bihar was granted recognition during the General Body meeting of the Central Zoo Authority on December 07, 2020.

- The zoo is established exclusively comprising on only safari enclosures which, on contrary to conventional enclosure, offer larger space for captive animals.
- The zoo proposes to house Lion, Bear, Tiger, Leopard and a mixed safari of common herbivore species such as Spotted Deer, Sambar among others.
- The zoo is located close to the historically important Nalanda and is expected to have a high footfall.
- The zoo will display wild animals in naturalistic safari enclosures and promote awareness of towards wildlife conservation.

Shaheed Ashfaq Ullah Khan Prani Udyaan, Gorakhpur, U.P.

Shaheed Ashfaq Ullah Khan Prani Udyaan, Gorakhpur, U.P was granted recognition during the General Body meeting of the Central Zoo Authority on December 07, 2020.

- With this, the state of Uttar Pradesh has a total of 9 zoos.
- The zoo is situated in the spiritual land of Gorakhpur and has a high visitation.
- The zoo features enclosures for a range of birds, herbivores and carnivores.
- The zoo aims to create awareness through naturalistic enclosures and create long-lasting visitor experience through state-of-the-art visitor facilities like 4D Theatre, battery-operated train and accessibility to Divyangjan.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

LIDAR SURVEY TECHNIQUE

Context

NHSRCL adopts aerial LiDAR Survey technique to conduct the ground survey for Delhi-Varanasi High Speed Rail Corridor.

Highlights

National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited will be adopting Light Detection and Ranging Survey (LiDAR) technique for conducting ground survey for the preparation of Detailed Project Report for the proposed Delhi-Varanasi HSR corridor.

- The alignment or ground survey is a crucial activity for any linear infrastructure project as the survey provides accurate details of areas around the alignment.
- This **technique uses a combination** of Laser data, GPS data, flight parameters and actual photographs to give accurate survey data.
- **Based on the findings of the survey**, designing of the vertical & horizontal alignment, structures, location of the stations and depots, Land requirement for the corridor, identification of project affected plots/structures, Right of Way etc are decided.

What is LiDAR?

LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) is a remote sensing method that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure ranges & variable distances.

- These light pulses—**combined with other data recorded by the airborne system**—generate precise, three-dimensional information about the shape of the Earth and its surface characteristics.
- A LiDAR instrument principally consists of a laser, a scanner, and a specialized GPS receiver.
- Airplanes and helicopters are the most commonly used platforms for acquiring LiDAR data over broad areas.

Applications: LiDAR is used for agriculture, hydrology and water management systems and geology-related applications.

Mains Question:

Discuss the key features and application of LiDAR technique.

FOR PRELIMS

INDIA MOBILE CONGRESS 2020

IMC will be held virtually from 8th to 10th December 2020.

Highlights

- IMC 2020 is being **organised by the Department of Telecommunications, GOI, and the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI).**
- **The theme for IMC 2020 is:** “Inclusive Innovation – Smart, Secure, Sustainable”.
- **It aims:** to drive foreign and local investments, encourage R&D in the telecom and emerging technology sectors.

Participants: Various Ministries, the telecom CEOs, global CEOs, and domain experts in 5G, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), Data Analytics, Cloud and Edge computing, Blockchain, Cyber-security, Smart Cities and Automation.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– *India and its neighborhood- relations.*

INDO-NEPAL LINK CANAL

Context

1.2 km long Indo-Nepal Link Canal flagged off.

Highlights

- **NHPC limited (erstwhile National Hydroelectric Power Corporation)** laid the foundation stone of head regulator works of **Indo-Nepal Link Canal at Barrage of 94.2 MW Tanakpur Power Station.**
- Tanakpur Power Station is an entity of NHPC **located in Banbasa, Distt Champawat (Uttarakhand).**
- **The 1.2 km long Indo-Nepal canal** is being constructed under **‘Mahakali Treaty’** signed between India and Nepal.

Mahakali Treaty 1996

Mahakali Treaty is an agreement between the Government of Nepal and India **regarding the development of watershed of Mahakali River.**

- It was **signed in 1996 and have 12 articles agreements** for an integrated development of barrage, dams and hydropower for mutual cooperation of the two countries by managing the water resources.
- The treaty recognizes the **Mahakali River as a boundary river between the two countries.**

Mahakali River

The Mahakali River is also called **Kali River and Sharda River.**

- It **originates at Kalapani in the Himalayas** in the **Pithoragarh district in Uttarakhand, India.**
- It flows **along Nepal’s western border with India** and has a basin area of 14,871 km².
- It joins **Ghaghra River, a tributary of the Ganges.**
- It takes the name **Kali River from the union of the two streams at Gunji** as it flows through the hills.
- **After Brahmadev Mandi near Tanakpur,** it enters the Terai plains, **where it is called Sharda River.**
- The river is proposed as source for one of the many projects in the Himalayan component of the Indian Rivers Inter-link project.

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT POLICY ON CIVIL AVIATION

Context

Cabinet approves the Foreign Direct Investment policy on Civil Aviation

Highlights

- FDI Policy has been amended to permit Foreign Investment (s) in M/s Air India Ltd by **NRIs, who are Indian Nationals, upto to 100% under automatic route.**
- **As per the present FDI Policy,** 100% FDI is permitted in scheduled Air Transport Service/Domestic Scheduled Passenger Airline.
- It was trough automatic up to 49% and Government route beyond 49%.

New changes in FDI Policy

- For **NRIs 100% FDI is permitted under automatic route in Scheduled Air Transport Service/Domestic Scheduled Passenger Airline.**
- Further, **FDI is subject to the condition that Substantial Ownership & Effective Control (SOEC)** shall be vested in Indian Nationals as per aircraft rules, 1937.

Earlier rules

- As per the present policy, foreign investment(s) in M/s Air India Ltd. Including that of foreign Airline(s) **shall not exceed 49%, either directly or indirectly.**
- Therefore, although 100% FDI is permitted under automatic route for NRIs in Scheduled Air Transport Service/Domestic Scheduled Passenger Airline, it is restricted to be only 49% in case of M/s Air India.

Benefits of new FDI Policy

- By this proposed **strategic disinvestment of 100% of M/s Air India Ltd. by the Government of India, M/s Air India Ltd. will have no residual Government ownership.**
- **Air India will be completely privately owned.**
- These amendments to the FDI Policy are meant to liberalise and simplify the FDI policy to provide ease of doing business in the country.
- It will lead to largest FDI inflows and thereby contributing to growth of investment, income and employment.

What is Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)?

FDI is a **major driver of economic growth and a source of non-debt finance** for the economic development of the country.

- A foreign direct investment (FDI) is an **investment made by a firm or individual in one country into business interests located in another country.**
- Generally, FDI takes place when an investor establishes foreign business operations or acquires foreign business assets in a foreign company.
- However, **FDIs are distinguished from portfolio investments** in which an investor merely purchases equities of foreign-based companies.

Key Takeaways

1. Foreign direct investments (FDI) are investments made by one company into another located in another country.
2. FDIs are actively utilized in open markets rather than closed markets for investors.
3. **Horizontal, vertical, and conglomerate are types of FDI's.**
4. Horizontal is establishing the same type of business in another country, while vertical is related but different, and conglomerate is an unrelated business venture.

FDI policy in India

The FDI policy is reviewed on an ongoing basis, with a view to attract larger volumes of foreign investment inflows into the country.

- Government has put in place an investor friendly policy on FDI, under which FDI up to 100% is permitted on the automatic route in most sectors/activities.
- **FDI policy provisions have been progressively liberalized across various sectors in the recent past to make India an attractive investment destination.**
- Some of the sectors include **Defence, Construction Development, Trading, Pharmaceuticals, Power Exchanges, Insurance, Pension, Other Financial Services, Asset Reconstruction Companies, Broadcasting, Single Brand Retail Trading, Coal Mining, Digital Media etc.**

Way forward

- As per UNCTAD's World Investment Report 2019, Global Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows have slid by 13% in 2018 to US \$1.3 trillion in the previous year.
- This is the third consecutive annual decline.
- Despite the dim global picture, India continues to remain a preferred and attractive destination for Global FDI flows.
- However, it is felt that the country has the potential to attract far more Foreign Investment which can be achieved, inter-alia, by further liberalizing and simplifying the FDI policy regime.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic- *Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.*

WHAT IS THE 'BLUE REVOLUTION'?

The concept of rapid increase in the production of fish and marine product through package programme is called as blue revolution.

- It has brought improvement in aquaculture by adopting new techniques of fish breeding, fish rearing, fish marketing, and fish export.
- The Blue Revolution, with its multi-dimensional activities, focuses mainly on increasing fisheries production and productivity from aquaculture and fisheries resources, both inland and marine.

Potential for Blue Revolution in India

Blue Revolution was launched in India during the seventh Five-year plan (1985-1990) when the Central Government sponsored the Fish Farmers Development Agency (FFDA).

- **India uses only about 40% of the available ponds, tanks and other water bodies for freshwater aquaculture and 15% of total potential of brackish water resources.**
- Fisheries are India's single largest agricultural export **with a growth rate of 6-10% in the last five years.**
- Currently, **the USA is the largest market for Indian seafood products** with a share of 26.46% in terms of India's exports of marine products.
- The fisheries and aquaculture production **contribute around 1% to India's GDP and over 5% to the agricultural GDP.**

Blue Revolution 2.0

The focus of the **Blue Revolution 2.0 is on development and management of fisheries.** This covers inland fisheries, aquaculture, and marine fisheries including deep sea fishing, mariculture and all activities undertaken by the National Fisheries Development Board.

Objectives

- **To increase the overall fish production** in a responsible and sustainable manner for economic prosperity
- **Doubling the income of fishers and fish farmers** with special focus on increasing productivity and better post-harvest marketing infrastructure.
- **Tripling export earnings by 2020** with focus on benefits flow to fishers and fish farmers.
- **Enhancing food and nutritional security of the country.**

National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB)

- The NFDB was established in 2006 as an autonomous organization under the administrative control of the Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- It aims to enhance fish production and productivity in the country and to coordinate fishery development in an integrated and holistic manner.
- Now, the Board works under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.

ARMY SERVICE CORPS DAY

Indian Army celebrated the 260th Corps Day of the Army Service Corps (ASC) on 08 December.

Key Facts

- Indian Army Service Corps (ASC) is an arm of the Indian Army which **handles its logistic support function**.
- The **history of supply and transport services** is as old as the history of organized warfare itself.
- **It was in 1760** that the very rudimentary supply and transport organizations of the three presidencies of the East India Company were brought under the council of a single authority.
- In **1935** the corps was granted the 'Royal' prefix and became known as **Royal Indian Army Service Corps (RIASC)**.
- After **India gained independence in 1947**, the corps underwent further expansion, by **1948** Indian Catering Corps and Indian Army Corps of Clerks were amalgamated into the corps.
- On **8 December 1950**, after India became a republic, the corps dropped the use of the 'Royal' prefix and was once again renamed the Indian Army Service Corps.
- Since that day the corps has celebrated its **Raising Day on 8 December**.

PIB-DECEMBER 10th, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

SUBMARINE OPTICAL FIBRE CABLE CONNECTIVITY TO LAKSHADWEEP ISLANDS

Context

Cabinet approves Provision of Submarine Optical Fibre Cable **Connectivity between Mainland (Kochi) and Lakshadweep Islands (KLI Project)**.

Highlights

- The Project envisages provision of a direct communication link through a dedicated submarine Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) **between Kochi and 11 Islands of Lakshadweep** viz. Kavaratti, Kalpeni, Agati, Amini, Androth, Minicoy, Bangaram, Bitra, Chetlat, Kiltan&Kadmat.
- The estimated cost of implementation is about Rs. 1072 crore including operational expenses for 5 years.

- The Project would be **funded by Universal Service Obligation Fund**.

Background:

Union Territory of Lakshadweep comprising a number of Islands is situated **in the Arabian Sea and of immense strategic significance for India**.

- Provision of secure, robust, reliable and affordable Telecom facilities is of utmost importance for the people living in these islands as also from a strategic point of view for the whole country.
- **Presently only medium of providing telecom connectivity to Lakshadweep is through satellites**, but the bandwidth available is limited to 1 Gbps.
- High bandwidth communication facility to the Lakshadweep Islands is also in consonance with realising the national objective of strengthening e-governance services and achieving the vision of Digital India.

Benefits

- **Boosting Tourism:** Enhanced telecom and Broadband connectivity will boost tourism and employment generation in the Islands, give an impetus to the economy and raise standards of living.
- **e-Governance services:** Better connectivity will also facilitate delivery of e-Governance services such as telemedicine and tele-education.
- **e-commerce:** Small enterprises will benefit from opportunities in e-commerce, while educational institutions will utilize the enhanced availability of bandwidth for e-learning and knowledge sharing.
- **Business Process Outsourcing services:** and other medium and large enterprises will also reap the benefits of better connectivity.

Impact and significance

It is evident that the growth of **telecom infrastructure is closely linked with the economic and social development**.

- Telecommunication connectivity plays **vital role in employment generation**.
- The present approval for Provision of Submarine Optical Fibre Cable Connectivity will **vastly improve telecommunication facility in the Lakshadweep Islands** by providing large bandwidth.

Mains Question:

In modern world, the better internet connectivity is playing an important role in a nation's growth and prosperity. Comment.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.*

ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT ROJGARYOJANA (ABRY)

Context

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for **Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY)** under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package 3.0.

Objective

To boost employment in formal sector and incentivize creation of new employment opportunities during the Covid recovery phase.

Highlights

Cabinet has approved an **expenditure of Rs. 1,584 crore for the current financial year and Rs.22,810 crore for the entire Scheme period i.e. 2020-2023.**

The salient features of the Scheme

- Government of India will **provide subsidy for two years** in respect of new employees engaged on or after 1st October, 2020 and upto 30th June, 2021
- **Government of India will pay both 12% employees' contribution and 12% employers' contribution** i.e. 24% of wages towards EPF in respect of new employees in establishments employing upto 1000 employees for two years,
- Government of India **will pay only employees' share of EPF contribution** i.e. 12% of wages in respect of new employees in establishments **employing more than 1000 employee for two years.**
- An employee **drawing monthly wage of less than Rs. 15000/-** who was not working in any establishment registered with the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) before 1st October, 2020 and **did not have a Universal Account Number** or EPF Member account number prior to 1st October 2020 will be eligible for the benefit,
- Any **EPF member possessing Universal Account Number (UAN)** drawing monthly wage of less than Rs. 15000/- who made exit from employment during Covid pandemic and did not join employment in any EPF covered establishment up to 30.09.2020 will also be eligible to avail benefit,
- **EPFO will credit the contribution in Aadhaar seeded account** of members in electronic manner,
- EPFO shall work out modality to ensure that there is **no overlapping of benefits provided under ABRY** with any other scheme implemented by EPFO.

Atmanirbhar Bharat 3.0

The Indian Economy has suffered heavily due to COVID-19 Pandemic.

- The Government had provided stimulus package in form of ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT PACKAGE 1.0 and ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT PACKAGE 2.0 in order to revive the industry.
- The government on **12th November 2020 announced Atmanirbhar Bharat 3.0 packages** to provide further relief to the industry which is distressed due to COVID-19 Pandemic.

Way Forward

The government's announcements focus on job creation, easing credit flow, but actual spending remains limited. More support is needed.

RBI has noted in its 'State of the Economy' report, there are significant risks — relentless pressure of inflation, poor global growth following a second wave of Covid-19, and intensifying stress among households and firms both. Thus, the government needs to take steps accordingly.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic— Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.

DELIMITATION COMMISSION OF INDIA

The Delimitation commission of India is established by the Government of India under the provisions of the Delimitation Commission Act.

- ***It is appointed by the President of India and works in collaboration with the Election Commission of India.***
- ***The Constitution mandates that its orders are final and cannot be questioned before any court as it would hold up an election indefinitely.***

Composition

- Retired Supreme Court judge
- Chief Election Commissioner
- Respective State Election Commissioners

Functions

- To redraw the boundaries of the various assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies based on a recent census.
- **To identify seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes**, wherever their population is relatively large.
- The number of SC and ST seats in a state is changed in accordance with the census.
- The representation from each State is not changed during this exercise.
- The present delimitation of constituencies has been done on the basis of 2001 census under the provisions of Delimitation Act, 2002.

What is Delimitation?

Delimitation is the act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and state Assembly seats to represent changes in population.

Why is delimitation needed?

- To provide *equal representation to equal segments of a population*.
- ***Fair division of geographical areas*** so that one political party doesn't have an advantage over others in an election.
- To follow the principle of '***One Vote One Value***'.

How is delimitation carried out?

- ***Under Article 82***, the Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after every Census.
- Once the Act is in force, the Union government sets up a Delimitation Commission.
- ***Under Article 170***, States also get divided into territorial constituencies as per Delimitation Act after every Census.

How often has delimitation been done in the past?

The first delimitation exercise in 1950-51 was carried out by the President (with the help of the Election Commission).

- 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.**

When is the next delimitation?

- According to the 84th Amendment, delimitation cannot happen until the first Census after 2026 is not published.
- That means, the exercise will only take place once the 2031 census data is published.

Concerns with Delimitation

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.***

- 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 2008, 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.***

FOR PRELIMS

INTERNATIONAL BHARATI FESTIVAL, 2020

Highlights

The festival is being organized to celebrate **the 138th birth anniversary of Mahakavi Subramanya Bharati.**

- It is organized by Vanavil Cultural Centre.
- This year the festival is being organised in virtual mode and will see participation of several national and international poets and artists.

Who was Subramania Bharati?

- Subramania Bharati's full name is Chinnaaswami Subramania Bharati.
- He was a Tamil writer, poet, journalist, Indian independence activist, social reformer and polyglot.
- Popularly known as "Mahakavi Bharathi" and regarded as **the father of the modern Tamil style**.
- Bharati's best-known works include Kaṇṇan pāṭṭu (1917; Songs to Krishna), Panchali sapatham (1912; Panchali's Vow), and Kuyil pāṭṭu (1912; Kuyil's Song).

PIB-DECEMBER 11th, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Context

Human Rights Day is observed by the international community every year on 10 December.

Highlights

- **It commemorates the day in 1948** the United Nations General Assembly adopted the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**.
- The UDHR is a milestone document that **proclaims the inalienable rights which everyone is entitled to as a human being** – regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- Available in more than 500 languages, **it is the most translated document in the world.**

2020 Theme: Recover Better – Stand Up for Human Rights

Human Rights and the SDGs

- Human rights are at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as in the absence of human dignity we cannot hope to drive sustainable development.
- Human Rights are driven by progress on all SDGs, and the SDGs are driven by advancements on human rights.

History of Human Rights day

- The **formal inception of Human Rights Day** dates from 1950, after the Assembly passed a resolution 423(V) inviting all States and interested organizations to adopt **10 December of each year as Human Rights Day**.

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights **sets out a broad range of fundamental rights and freedoms to which all of us are entitled.**
- **It guarantees the rights of every individual everywhere**, without distinction based on nationality, place of residence, gender, national or ethnic origin, religion, language, or any other status.
- **Although the Declaration is not a binding document**, it inspired more than 60 human rights instruments which together constitute an international standard of human rights.
- **The High Commissioner for Human Rights**, as the main United Nations rights official, and the Office of the High Commissioner play a major role in coordinating efforts for the yearly observation of Human Rights Day.

The Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council is an **inter-governmental body created by the United Nations General Assembly resolution on 15 March 2006.**

- It has replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights.
- It is responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them.
- It has the ability to discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that require its attention throughout the year.
- It meets at **the UN Office at Geneva.**
- The Council is **made up of 47 United Nations Member States** which are elected by the UN General Assembly.

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India **was established on 12 October, 1993.**

- The statute under which it is established is the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993 as amended by the **Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Act, 2006.**
- It is **in conformity with the Paris Principles**, adopted at the first international workshop on national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights held in Paris in October 1991,
- It is **endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 December, 1993.**
- The NHRC is an embodiment of India's concern for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Functions of National Human Rights Commission

Comprehensive powers and functions have been given to the Commission under section 12 of the Act.

- To **investigate grievances** regarding the violation of human rights either **suo moto or after receiving a petition.**

- To scrutinize the failure of duties on the part of any public official in preventing the violation of human rights.
- **To interfere in any judicial proceedings involving any allegation of violation of human rights.**
- **To visit any jail or any other institution** under the control of the State Government to see the living conditions of the inmates and to make recommendations thereon.
- **To review the safeguards** provided under the constitution or any law for the protection of the human rights and to recommend appropriate remedial measures.
- To study treaties and other international instruments on human rights and to make recommendations for their effective implementation.
- To undertake and **promote research in the field of human rights.**
- To encourage the efforts of the non-governmental organisations working in the field of human rights.
- To spread **human rights literacy** among various sections of society.
- To review all facts related to the activities of the terrorists which obstruct the way of the protection of human rights and to make recommendations for their effective implementation.

Mains Question:

'Human rights are at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)'. Discuss

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

ASEAN DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING PLUS

Context

Raksha mantri attended the 14th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus organized online **at Hanoi, Vietnam** on 10 December 2020 that marked the **10th anniversary of ADMM Plus**.

Highlights

- This year marks the **10th year of inception of ADMM Plus forum**.
- ADMM-Plus is the only **official framework of Defense Minister's meetings in the Asia-Pacific Region**.
- **In addition to the ten countries of ASEAN, eight countries** such as Japan, the US and China participate in this framework to promote more practical defense cooperation.

About ADMM- Plus:

Consistent with the ADMM guiding principles of open and outward looking, **the 2nd ADMM in Singapore in 2007** adopted the Concept Paper to establish the ADMM-Plus.

- **ADMM-Plus was established in 2010 and meets annually since 2017.**

- The ADMM-Plus is a **platform for ASEAN and its eight Dialogue Partners to strengthen security and defence cooperation** for peace, stability, and development in the region.
- Eight Dialogue Partners are Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the USA (**collectively referred to as the “Plus Countries”**).

Agreed five areas of practical cooperation under this mechanism are:

1. Maritime security,
2. Counter-terrorism,
3. Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief,
4. Peacekeeping operations and
5. Military medicine.

In 2013, a new priority area of **Humanitarian mine action** was agreed.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

SAGARMALA PROGRAMME

What is Sagar Mala Programme?

The Sagarmala programme is the flagship programme of the **Ministry of Shipping**.

- **It aims to promote port-led development in the country through harnessing India’s 7,500 km long coastline**, 14,500 km is of potentially navigable waterways and strategic location on key international maritime trade routes.
- **The Sagarmala project seeks to develop a string of ports around India’s coast.**

Objectives

Vision of the Sagarmala Programme is to reduce logistics cost for EXIM and domestic trade with minimal infrastructure investment.

This includes:

- Reducing cost of transporting domestic cargo through optimizing modal mix
- Lowering logistics cost of bulk commodities by locating future industrial capacities near the coast
- Improving export competitiveness by developing port proximate discrete manufacturing clusters
- Optimizing time/cost of EXIM container movement

Components of Sagarmala Programme

1. **Port Modernization & New Port Development:** De-bottlenecking and capacity expansion of existing ports and development of new greenfield ports
2. **Port Connectivity Enhancement:** Enhancing the connectivity of the ports to the hinterland, optimizing cost and time of cargo movement through multi-modal logistics solutions including domestic waterways (inland water transport and coastal shipping)

3. **Port-linked Industrialization:** Developing port-proximate industrial clusters and Coastal Economic Zones to reduce logistics cost and time of EXIM and domestic cargo
4. **Coastal Community Development:** Promoting sustainable development of coastal communities through skill development & livelihood generation activities, fisheries development, coastal tourism etc.
5. **Coastal Shipping & Inland Waterways Transport:** Impetus to move cargo through the sustainable and environment-friendly coastal and inland waterways mode.

Significance of Sagarmala Programme

India is located along key international trade routes in the Indian Ocean and has a long coastline of over 7,500 km.

- However, capacity constraints and lack of modern facilities at Indian ports tremendously elongates the time taken to ship goods in and out of the country and has held back India's share in world trade.
- Developing rivers as inland waterways can also help save domestic logistics costs too.

FOR PRELIMS

SWAHID DIWAS

Swahid Divas is observed in Assam on 10 December to commemorate the martyrs of the **Assam Anti-Foreigners Movement** in 1979.

The Assam Movement

It also known as Anti-Foreigners Agitation (1979-1985) was a popular uprising in Assam.

- The movement demanded the Government of India to detect illegal immigrants, delete their names from electoral rolls and deport them.
- It was led by **All Assam Students Union** and **All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad**, an umbrella organization of different political groups.
- The movement was purportedly non-violent with civil disobedience as the primary instrument of protest **but during certain periods there were widespread ethnic violence** (Nellie massacre, 1983).
- The movement ended in 1985 with the signing of **Assam Accord**.

Hannukkah festival

PM Greets Isreal and Jewish People on Hannukkah

Key facts

The **eight-day Jewish celebration known as Hanukkah or Chanukah** commemorates the rededication during the second century B.C. of the **Second Temple in Jerusalem**.

- According to legend, at this place, Jews had risen up against their Greek-Syrian oppressors in the Maccabean Revolt.

- Hanukkah, **which means “dedication” in Hebrew**, begins on the 25th of Kislev on the Hebrew calendar and usually falls in November or December.
- Often **called the Festival of Lights**, the holiday is celebrated with the lighting of the menorah, traditional foods, games and gifts.

PIB-DECEMBER 12th, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic—*Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.*

RAMANUJAN PRIZE FOR YOUNG MATHEMATICIANS 2020

Context

Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians 2020 awarded to Dr. Carolina Araujo from Brazil for outstanding work in Algebraic Geometry.

Highlights

- The prize was awarded to Dr. Carolina Araujo, Mathematician from the Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (IMPA), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- **Dr. Araujo is the first non-Indian to receive this prize** and will be a role model for all women.
- The Prize is **given every year to young mathematicians less than 45 years of age** who have conducted outstanding research in a developing country.
- The prize has been instituted by DST in the memory of Srinivasa Ramanujan, a genius in pure mathematics.

About The Ramanujan Prize

The Ramanujan Prize for young mathematicians from developing countries has been awarded annually since 2005.

- It was originally instituted by ‘International Center for Theoretical Physics’ (ICTP), the **Niels Henrik Abel Memorial Fund**, and the **International Mathematical Union (IMU)**.
- The **participation of the Abel Fund ended in 2012**.
- The Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India (DST) has now agreed to fund the Prize for a 5 year period, starting with the 2014 Prize.
- The Prize carries a \$15,000 cash award.

Eligibility

- The Prize is **awarded annually to a researcher from a developing country who is less than 45 years** of age and who has conducted outstanding research in a developing country.
- Researchers working in any branch of the mathematical sciences are eligible.
- The Prize is **usually awarded to one person**, but may be shared equally among recipients who have contributed to the same body of work.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.

UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING

United Nations Peacekeeping **was created in 1948**. The organization **helps countries torn by conflict create conditions for lasting peace**.

- UN peacekeepers **provide security and the political and peace building support** to help countries make the difficult, early transition from conflict to peace.
- Its first mission involved the establishment of the **UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)**, which served to observe and maintain ceasefire during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.
- **Every peacekeeping mission is authorized by the Security Council.**

UN Peacekeeping is guided by three basic principles:

- Consent of the parties;
- Impartiality;
- Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.

Global partnership

- UN peacekeeping brings together the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Secretariat, troop and police contributors and the host governments in a combined effort to maintain international peace and security.
- Its strength lies in the legitimacy of the UN Charter and in the wide range of contributing countries that participate and provide precious resources.

What the UN Peacekeepers do?

- Peacekeepers protect civilians, actively prevent conflict, reduce violence, strengthen security and empower national authorities to assume these responsibilities.
- This requires a coherent security and peace building strategy that supports the political strategy.
- UN peacekeeping helps host countries to become more resilient to conflict, laying the groundwork to sustain long-term peace, including by addressing root causes of conflict.

Financing of UN Peacekeeping operations

- The financial resources of UN Peacekeeping operations are the collective responsibility of UN Member States.
- According to UN Charter every Member State is legally obligated to pay their respective share for peacekeeping.

Composition

UN peacekeepers are often referred to as Blue Berets or Blue Helmets because of their light blue berets or helmets.

They include soldiers, police officers, and civilian personnel.

- Civilian staff of peace operations is international civil servants, recruited and deployed by the UN Secretariat.
- **A peacekeeper volunteer is required to be over the age of 25 with no maximum age limit.**
- **Peacekeeping forces are contributed by member states on a voluntary basis.**
- European nations contribute nearly 6,000 units.
- Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh are among the largest individual contributors with around 8,000 units each. African nations contributed nearly half the total, almost 44,000 units.

UN Peacekeeping and India

India has a long tradition of sending women on UN peacekeeping missions.

- In 2007, India became the first country to deploy an all-women contingent to a UN peacekeeping mission.
- Currently, there are more than 6,700 troops and police from India who have been deployed to UN peacekeeping missions, the fourth highest amongst troop-contributing countries.
- Indian peacekeepers have served in UN peacekeeping missions around the world.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

CHAMPIONS: TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM

Context

Prime Minister recently launched CHAMPIONS: Technology Platform to empower MSMEs.

About it:

‘CHAMPIONS’ stands for **Creation and Harmonious Application of Modern Processes for Increasing the Output and National Strength.**

- The portal is aimed for making the smaller units big by solving their grievances, encouraging, supporting, helping and handholding.
- It is a **real one-stop-shop solution** of MSME Ministry.

Key features

- It is a technology packed control room-cum-management information system.
- The system is enabled by Artificial Intelligence, Data Analytics and Machine Learning.
- It is also fully integrated on real time basis with GOI's main grievances portal CPGRAMS and MSME Ministry's own other web based mechanisms.
- The portal enables the potential MSMEs who are able to withstand the current situation and can become national and international champions.

CHAMPIONS' Hub & Spoke Model

- As part of the system a network of control rooms is created in a Hub & Spoke Model.
- The Hub is situated in New Delhi in the Secretary MSME's office.
- The spokes are in the States in various offices and institutions of MSME Ministry.

FOR PRELIMS

HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (HMIS)

Context

Indian Railways Launches Hospital Management Information System Trial Project over South Central Railway.

About HMIS IN Railways

- The HMIS in Railways has been **developed by Indian Railways in coordination with RailTel Corporation Limited.**
- **The objective of the HMIS** is to provide a single window of clearance of hospital administration activity such as clinical, diagnostics, pharmacy, examinations, industrial health etc.

The primary objectives of envisaged solution are:

1. Effectively manage all the health facilities & its resources
2. Monitor performance of hospitals across the administrative channel
3. Impart quality health care services to its beneficiaries
4. Improve the patient turn-around time
5. Generate and maintain EMR (electronic medical records) of all patients

CBSE SAHODAYA SCHOOL COMPLEXES

Context

Union Minister of Education virtually addresses the 26th National Annual Conference of Sahodaya School Complexes

About CBSE Sahodaya School Complexes

Sahodaya School Complexes (SSCs) are a voluntary association of schools in a given area, who through mutual choices, have agreed to come together for a systematic and system-wide renewal of the total educational process.

In other words as “Sahodaya” signifies rising together, it identified six areas, to begin with, for collaboration amongst schools of its complex:

1. Educative Management
2. Professional Growth of Teachers
3. Evaluation
4. Value-Oriented School Climate
5. Human Resource Mobilization
6. Vocationalisation of Education.

At present, there are 260 such complexes which are active throughout the country, and share and care for each other; particularly those which are in close physical proximity.

PIB-DECEMBER 14th, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.*

CLIMATE AMBITION SUMMIT 2020

Context

The Climate Ambition Summit 2020 was hosted by United Kingdom.

Highlights

- This Summit marks the **fifth anniversary of the Paris Agreement** – the most ambitious step in our fight against Climate Change.
- The **United Nations, United Kingdom and France are co-hosting** the Climate Ambition Summit 2020, **in partnership with Chile and Italy.**
- This is a monumental step on the road to the **UK-hosted COP26 next November in Glasgow.**
- The **Summit is a major step on the road to the next UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26)**, which will be hosted by the UK next November in Glasgow.

Objectives

The Summit will provide leaders with a global platform to showcase commitments to tackle climate change which will be under the **three pillars of the Paris Agreement: mitigation, adaptation and finance commitments.**

- There will be no space for general statements.
- The December event is being held amid signs that the **world is off-track to limit global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels**, and that a carbon-free economy is long overdue.

The Sprint to Glasgow

- The event is being dubbed **“the sprint to Glasgow” by the UN**.
- Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the UK was slated to host this year’s COP in the Scottish City.
- The **Summit is now scheduled to take place a year later**, in November 2021.

India’s targets under the Paris Agreement

India is not only on track to achieve its Paris Agreement targets, but to exceed them beyond expectations.

- India has reduced its emission intensity by 21% over 2005 levels.
- Its **solar capacity** has grown from 2.63 GigaWatts in 2014 to 36 GigaWatts in 2020.
- India’s **renewable energy capacity is the fourth largest in the world**.
- It will reach **175 GigaWatts before 2022**.
- India has set a more ambitious target now – **450 GigaWatts of renewable energy capacity by 2030**.
- It has also succeeded in **expanding its forest cover and safeguarding our biodiversity**.

On the world stage, India has pioneered two major initiatives:

1. The International Solar Alliance, and
2. Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.

Mains Question:

What are the India’s targets under the Paris Agreement? And discuss the steps taken by it to fulfill these.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

HANDICRAFT AND GI TOYS EXEMPTED FROM QUALITY CONTROL ORDER

Context

Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT has issued an order to exempt Handicraft and GI Toys from Quality Control.

Highlights

- DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry has devised a comprehensive action plan with steps being taken **to boost production & sale of indigenous toys across the country.**
- Quality Control order has been **issued by the Department for standardization and quality adherence of Toys.**
- The order will come into effect from 1st January, 2021.

Objectives

This order aims **to bring forward the synergized efforts of the Govt, states and the stakeholders to promote 'Team up for toys' vision** keeping quality standards of the indigenous toys as the priority.

Key points of the Order

- **Toys (Quality Control) Second Amendment Order, 2020** has been issued as a part of the initiatives being taken to provide impetus to the medium, small and micro toy production units in the country.
- It exempts goods manufactured & sold by artisans **registered with Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) and products registered as Geographical Indications.**
- These goods will be exempted from use of Standard Mark under license from Bureau of Indian Standards, as per Scheme-I of Schedule-II of **BIS (Conformity Assessment) Regulations, 2018.**
- **Nothing in this Order shall apply to** goods or articles manufactured and sold by registered proprietor and authorized user of a product registered as Geographical Indication by the Registrar of Geographical Indications, Office of **Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks (CGPDTM).**

Overview of the Toys (Quality Control) Order 2019:

This relates to the regulation of toys and/or materials for use in play by children **under 14 years of age**, or other products as notified by the Central Government.

The Order contains several **important provisions for toy safety, including:**

1. Requirement for toys **to conform to the latest version of a list of Indian Standards.**
2. Requirement for toys **to bear the Standard Mark under a license** from the Bureau as per Scheme-I of Schedule-II of **Bureau of Indian Standards (Conformity Assessment) Regulations, 2018.**
3. Directing the Bureau to be the certifying and enforcement authority.

Need for the Amendments

The toy industry in India has asked the government to suspend a Quality Control Order (QCO) issued in February, for at least a year, failing which the industry would be forced to shut shop.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic— Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

SPECIAL LIQUIDITY SCHEME FOR NBFCS AND HFCS

Context

With a view to improving the liquidity position of NBFCs as well as HFCs, the Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs announced a launch of a Special Liquidity Scheme.

Key features of the Scheme

- **RBI will provide funds for the Scheme** by subscribing to government guaranteed special securities issued by the Trust.
- **The total amount** of such securities issued outstanding shall not exceed Rs. 30,000 crores at any point of time.
- **Government of India will provide an unconditional and irrevocable guarantee** to the special securities issued by the Trust.
- The Scheme is being launched on July 1, 2020 through a Special Purpose Vehicle in the form of **SLS Trust set up by SBI Capital Markets Limited (SBICAP).**

Eligibility

- Any NBFC including Microfinance Institutions registered with RBI under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 (**excluding those registered as Core Investment Companies**).
- Any HFC registered with the National Housing Bank (NHB) under the National Housing Bank Act, 1987.

These must be complying with the following broad conditions:

- **Compliance with RBI regulations on Capital adequacy**
- **Net NPA is less than 6% as on 31.03.2019**
- **Net profit in at least one of the two preceding financial years**
- **Rated as investment grade by a rating agency**

Significance

This facility is a part of the Government of India and RBI's efforts to alleviate the concerns of the market participants on the availability of funds to the sector.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topics – Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE (IMFC)

Context

Union Minister of Finance & Corporate Affairs attended through video-conference the Plenary Meeting of the International Monetary and Financial Committee.

About

Union Minister attended through video-conference the Plenary Meeting of the International Monetary and Financial Committee of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

- The discussions were based on IMF Managing Director's Global Policy Agenda titled, **"Exceptional Times – Exceptional Action"**.
- The members of the IMFC updated the committee on the actions and measures taken by member countries to combat COVID-19.

About IMFC

- The International Monetary and Finance Committee have 24 members, drawn from the pool of 187 governors.
- The IMFC represents all the member countries of the Fund.

What it does?

- The IMFC discusses the management of the international monetary and financial system.
- The IMFC meets twice a year, during the Spring and Annual Meetings.
- It also discusses proposals by the Executive Board to amend the Articles of Agreement.
- The Committee discusses matters of common concern affecting the global economy and also advises the IMF on the direction its work.

FOR PRELIMS

UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE COVERAGE DAY

Universal Health Coverage Day on 12 December is the annual rallying point for the growing movement for health for all.

Highlights

On 12 December 2012, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed a resolution urging countries to accelerate progress toward universal health coverage (UHC).

- On 12 December 2017, **the United Nations proclaimed 12 December as International Universal Health Coverage Day (UHC Day) by resolution 72/138.**
- The United Nations has adopted **17 sustainable development goals for eliminating poverty and building a more resilient planet.**
- One of those goals **includes providing universal health coverage.**

The goal of universal health coverage is to ensure that all people obtain the health services they need without suffering financial hardship when paying for them. This requires:

1. a strong, efficient, well-run health system;
2. a system for financing health services;
3. access to essential medicines and technologies;
4. A sufficient capacity of well-trained, motivated health workers.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

‘VISION 2035: PUBLIC HEALTH SURVEILLANCE IN INDIA’

Context

NITI Aayog released a white paper: *Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India with the vision.*

What is the Vision 2035?

‘Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India’ is a continuation of the work on health systems strengthening.

- It contributes by **suggesting mainstreaming of surveillance by making individual electronic health records** the basis for surveillance.
- **Public health surveillance (PHS)** is an important function that cuts across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of care.
- **Surveillance is ‘Information for Action’.**

Objectives of Vision 2035:

1. To make India’s **public health surveillance system more responsive** and predictive to enhance preparedness for action at all levels.
2. **Citizen-friendly public health surveillance system** will ensure individual privacy and confidentiality, enabled with a client feedback mechanism.
3. **Improved data-sharing mechanism** between Centre and states for better disease detection, prevention, and control.
4. **India aims to provide regional and global leadership** in managing events that constitute a public health emergency of international concern.

Need for:

The **Covid-19 pandemic** has provided an opportunity to revisit (re) emerging diseases due to increased interaction between human-animal-environment.

- **Early identification of this interference** is essential to break the chain of transmissions and create a resilient surveillance system.
- This vision document is a step in that direction, **it articulates the vision and highlights the building blocks.**

- It envisions a citizen-friendly public health system, which will involve stakeholders at all levels, be it individual, community, health care facilities or laboratories, all while protecting the individual's privacy and confidentiality.'

Significance

The white paper lays out India's **vision 2035 for public health surveillance through the integration of the three-tiered public health system** into Ayushman Bharat.

- The **building blocks for this vision are an interdependent federated system of governance between the Centre and states**, a new data-sharing mechanism that involves the use of new analytics, health informatics, and data science including innovative ways of disseminating 'information for action'.
- The paper released is **envisaged to serve as a vision document to propel public health surveillance in India** and establish India as a global leader in the area.

GENERAL STUDIES- II

Topic—Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

PROJECT 17A SHIP 'HIMGIRI'

'Himgiri', the first of the three Project 17A ships being built at M/s Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE), Kolkata was launched.

Highlights

- The ship **has taken its name and crest of the second Frigate of the Leander Class of ships**, which incidentally was launched 50 years ago in 1970.
- In keeping with **Naval traditions the spouse of CDS launched the ship to the chanting of invocations from the Atharva Veda.**

What is the 'Project 17A program'?

The Nilgiri-class frigate or Project 17A is a follow-on of the Project 17 Shivalik-class frigate for the Indian Navy.

- **Under the Project 17A program**, a total of seven ships are to be made for Indian Navy.
- The ships have been named after the first major warships to be built in India, which in turn were named after hill ranges in India.
- Of seven ships, four at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) and three ships at GRSE are being built.
- These ships are equipped with enhanced **stealth features, advanced indigenous weapon and sensor** fit along with several other improvements.
- P17A ships are the **first gas turbine propulsion and largest combat platforms ever built at GRSE.**

Significance

Project 17A ships are sourcing **80% of the material/ equipment required for the project from indigenous vendors** and with employment generation for over 2000 Indian firms and MSMEs within the country.

Modular construction of the ship through outsourcing, and integrated construction methodology are being used to enhance GRSE's productivity for delivery of ship **targeted in August 2023**.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic— *Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.*

ARTIFICIAL NEURAL NETWORKS BASED GLOBAL IONOSPHERIC MODEL (ANNIM)

Context

New model to predict ionospheric electron density can help communication/navigation has been developed by IIG.

About

Researchers from **Indian Institute of Geomagnetism (IIG)**, have developed a global model to **predict the ionospheric electron density with larger data coverage**—a crucial need for communication and navigation.

- Indian Institute of Geomagnetism (IIG), Navi Mumbai, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science & Technology, Govt. of India,
- ANNIM is developed using long-term ionospheric observations to predict the ionospheric electron density and the peak parameters.

What is it?

- **Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs)** replicate the processes in the human brain (or biological neurons) to solve problems such as pattern recognition, classification, clustering, generalization, linear and nonlinear data fitting, and time series prediction, and very few attempts have been made to model the global ionosphere variability using ANNs.
- The target of ANNs is the electron density as a function of altitude for any given location and time.

What are the possible applications of ANNIM?

- The ANNIM successfully reproduced large scale anomalies of the ionosphere.

- The ANNIM also captured the general morphological features of the ionosphere during the disturbed space weather periods, such as geomagnetic storms which occurs when the magnetic cloud originated from Sun (known as Coronal Mass Ejection (CME)) interacts with the Earth's magnetosphere.
- The model may be utilized as a reference model in the ionospheric predictions.
- It has potential applications in calculating the Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) positioning errors.

Importance

- Tracking the variability of the Ionosphere is important for communication and navigation.
- The ionospheric variability is greatly influenced by both solar originated processes and the neutral atmosphere origin.
- Scientists have tried to model the ionosphere using theoretical and empirical techniques; however, the accurate prediction of electron density is still a challenging task.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

AGRICULTURE INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Context

The GOI has given its approval to a new pan India **Central Sector Scheme-Agriculture Infrastructure Fund**.

About the Agri-Infra Fund

The Agri-Infra Fund was **part of the Rs 20 lakh crore stimulus package** announced in response to the COVID-19 disaster. **The duration of the Scheme** shall be from FY2020 to FY2029 (10 years).

Under the scheme, Rs. One Lakh Crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans to:

- *Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS),*
- *Marketing Cooperative Societies, Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs),*
- *Self Help Group (SHG),*
- *Farmers, Joint Liability Groups (JLG),*
- *Multipurpose Cooperative Societies, Agri-entrepreneurs, Startups, Aggregation Infrastructure Providers and*
- *Central/State agency or Local Body sponsored Public Private Partnership Project.*

Objective:

*The scheme shall provide a **medium – long term debt financing facility** for investment in viable projects **for post-harvest management Infrastructure and community farming assets** through interest subvention and financial support.*

Key features of the scheme

- Loans will be disbursed in four years starting with sanction of Rs. 10,000 crore in the current year and Rs. 30,000 crore each in next three financial years.
- **Interest subvention:** All loans under this financing facility will have interest subvention of 3% per annum up to a limit of Rs. 2 crore.
- This subvention will be available for a maximum period of seven years.
- **Credit guarantee:** will be available for eligible borrowers from this financing facility **under Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) scheme** for a loan up to Rs. 2 crore.
- The fee for this coverage will be paid by the Government.
- **In case of FPOs** the credit guarantee may be availed from the facility created under **FPO promotion scheme of Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare (DACFW).**

Implementation

- Agri Infra fund will be managed and monitored through an **online Management Information System (MIS) platform.**
- It will enable all the qualified entities to apply for loan under the fund.
- The **National, State and District level Monitoring Committees** will be set up to ensure real-time monitoring and effective feed-back.

Significance

The Project by way of facilitating formal credit to farm and farm processing-based activities is expected to create numerous job opportunities in rural areas.

FOR PRELIMS

ISCHAEMUM JANARTHANAMII: A NEW SPECIES OF INDIAN MURAINGRASSES

A new species of Indian Muraingrasses **known for their ecological and economic importance**, such as fodder, have been spotted by scientists in Goa in the Western Ghats.

- The species **has adapted to survive harsh conditions, low nutrient availability, and blossoms every monsoon.**
- **Globally 85 species are known from Ischaemum**, of which 61 species are exclusively found in India.
- The Western Ghats have 40 species with the highest concentration of the genus.

- The species was named *Ischaemum janarthanami* in honour of Prof. M. K. Janarthanam, Professor of Botany, Goa University.
- It grows on low altitude lateritic plateaus in the outskirts of **Bhagwan Mahavir National Park**, Goa.

PIB-DECEMBER 16th, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

HYGIENE RATING AUDIT AGENCIES

Context

Quality Council of India (QCI) Launches Recognition Scheme for Hygiene Rating Audit Agencies.

Highlights

- A Scheme for approval of Hygiene Rating Audit Agencies was launched to scale up Hygiene Rating by increasing the number of recognised Hygiene Rating Audit Agencies in the country.
- The recognised Hygiene Rating Audit Agency will verify the compliance with food hygiene and safety procedures laid by FSSAI.

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

FSSAI's initiative of 'Food Hygiene Rating Scheme' is a **certification system for food businesses supplying food directly to consumers, either on or off premise.**

- The **food establishments are rated based on food hygiene and safety conditions** observed at the time of audit.
- The **hygiene rating will be in the form of smileys (1 up to 5)** and the certificate should be displayed prominently in the consumer facing area.
- The **recognised Hygiene Rating Audit Agencies will be responsible** for verifying the compliance with food hygiene and safety procedures laid by FSSAI and get Hygiene Rating.

Objective of the Scheme

- The scheme aims **to allow consumers to make informed choices/decisions** pertaining to the food outlets where they eat by encouraging food businesses to improve their hygiene and safety standards.
- Currently, **this scheme is applicable for Food service establishments** (such as hotels, restaurants, cafeteria, dhabhas, etc), sweet shops, bakeries and meat retail stores.

Significance of the scheme

- Hygiene Rating Scheme can be instrumental in creating awareness amongst the consumers and developing a culture of self-compliance amongst food business operators.
- It will improve quality of food supply and increase demand as well.
- It will help in improving the confidence of the Indian consumer and food service operators in the basic hygiene and quality of the food.

Quality Council of India

Quality Council of India (QCI) was **set up in 1997 by Government of India jointly with Indian Industry as an autonomous body.**

The Indian Industry represented by the three premier industry association i.e.

1. Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM),
2. Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and
3. Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)

It works under the administrative control of the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion, Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

It aims to establish and operate national accreditation structure and promote quality through National Quality Campaign.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population*

DAKPAY

DakPay logo was **launched by India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) of India Post** as part of its ongoing efforts to provide Digital Financial inclusion at the last mile.

What is the DakPay?

DakPay is a **suite of digital financial and assisted banking services provided** by India Post & IPPB through the trusted Postal ('Dak') network across the nation.

- **It aims to** cater to the financial needs ('Pay') of various sections of the society – be it sending money to the loved ones (Domestic Money Transfers – DMT), making payment digitally (Virtual debit card) & UPI, enabling cashless ecosystem through biometrics, providing interoperable banking services to the customers of ANY BANK (AePS).
- **DakPay UPI app** allows users to create UPI ID and link multiple accounts across banks in a single mobile app.
- The app facilitates instant money transfers, QR based payments in merchant stores and online shopping on e-commerce websites.

India Post Payments Bank

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) has been **established under the Department of Posts, Ministry of Communication with 100% equity owned by Government of India.**

IPPB was launched on **September 1, 2018.**

Vision and Mandate

- The bank has been set up with the vision **to build the most accessible, affordable and trusted bank for the common man** in India.
- The fundamental mandate of India Post Payments Bank is **to remove barriers for the unbanked & underbanked** and reach the last mile leveraging the Postal network comprising 155,000 Post Offices (135,000 in rural areas) and 300,000 Postal employees.

Key features of IPPB

- IPPB's reach and its operating model is built on the key pillars of India Stack – **enabling Paperless, Cashless and Presence-less banking in a simple and secure manner at the customers' doorstep**, through a CBS-integrated smartphone and biometric device.
- IPPB **delivers simple and affordable banking solutions** through intuitive interfaces available in 13 languages.

Significance

IPPB is committed **to provide a fillip to a less cash economy** and contribute to the vision of Digital India.

India will prosper when **every citizen will have equal opportunity** to become financially secure and empowered.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT LOCAL AREA DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (MPLADS)

Context

Member of Parliaments from all parties have unanimously asked the government to release funds for the projects sanctioned in 2018 and 2019.

Highlights

- MPs has asked to release the **funds for projects which were under way before the funds were suspended due the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- They had argued that the **funds become more critical during the pandemic.**

- The Union government had suspend the **Member of Parliament local area development (MPLAD) scheme** in April this year exercising its powers under the **Disaster Management Act**.

What is the MPLAD Scheme?

- The Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) is an ongoing **Central Sector Scheme which was launched in 1993-94**.
- **The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation** has been responsible for the policy formulation, release of funds and prescribing monitoring mechanism for implementation of the Scheme.

What it does?

The Scheme enables the Members of Parliament to recommend works for creation of durable community assets based on locally felt needs to be taken up in their constituencies in the area of national priorities namely drinking water, education, public health, sanitation, roads etc.

Key features

- **The MPLADS is a Plan Scheme fully funded by Government of India.**
- The annual MPLADS fund entitlement **per MP constituency is Rs. 5 crore.**
- MPs are to recommend every year, works costing at least 15 per cent of the MPLADS entitlement for the year for areas inhabited by Scheduled Caste population and 7.5 per cent for areas inhabited by ST population.
- **Lok Sabha Members** can recommend works within their Constituencies.
- **Elected Members of Rajya Sabha** can recommend works within the State of Election.
- **Nominated Members** of both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha **can recommend works anywhere in the country.**

Release of Funds

- **The funds released under the scheme are non-lapsable.**
- Funds are released in the form of grants in-aid directly to the district authorities.
- The liability of funds not released in a particular year is carried forward to the subsequent years, subject to eligibility.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic— *Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.*

INTERNET OF THINGS (IOT)

Context

Kerala Start-ties up with SCTIMST to launch IoT (Internet of Things) based used mask disposal smart bin & UV light-based disinfection device to beat COVID 19.

What is the Internet of Things (IoT)?

- The internet of things (IoT) is a **concept that describes the idea of everyday physical objects being connected to the internet.**
- In the Internet of Things, the connected devices should be able to identify themselves to other devices.
- It is a system of interrelated computing devices, mechanical and digital machines, objects, animals or people that are **provided with unique identifiers and the ability to transfer data over a network without requiring human-to-human or human-to-computer interaction.**

Examples of IoT

- IoT has evolved from the convergence of wireless technologies, micro-electromechanical systems (MEMS), micro-services and the internet.
- The convergence has helped tear down the silo walls between operational technologies (OT) and information technology (IT).
- It allow unstructured machine-generated data to be analyzed for insights that will drive improvements.

India and Internet of Things (IoT)

- The Indian government outlined a plan to leverage IoT as part of the Digital India mission.
- In India, the **National Digital Communications Policy (NDCP)** brought alignment from critical stakeholders to advance India's infrastructure and security around digital communications.
- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeiTY's) draft IoT policy seeks to establish committees to govern and drive IoT-specific initiatives.

Government of India's draft IoT Policy document

According to Nasscom, the Indian IoT market is expected to reach \$15 billion by 2020 and constitute 5 % of the global market.

Draft IoT Policy document is focused on following objectives:

- To create an IoT industry in India of USD 15 billion by 2020.
- It has been assumed that India would have a share of 5-6% of global IoT industry.
- To undertake capacity development (Human & Technology) for IoT specific skill-sets for domestic and international markets.
- To undertake Research & development for all the assisting technologies.
- To develop IoT products specific to Indian needs in all possible domains.

Significance

The Internet of Things is made up of devices – from simple sensors to smartphones and wearables – connected together and is increasingly being used to define objects that “talk” to each other.

- IoT is a giant network of connected “things” (which also includes people) and this relationship will be between people-people, people-things, and things-things.
- In the future, intelligence services might use the internet of things for identification, surveillance, monitoring, location tracking, and targeting for recruitment, or to gain access to networks or user credentials.

FOR PRELIMS

MEGHDOOT AWARD

- Postal Department confers Meghdoot awards to Postal Employees for their achievements in 2019-20.
- The Meghdoot award is given every year for excellence in postal service.

‘Nagar Van’- Urban Forest scheme

The Government has announced implementation of the Nagar van scheme to develop 200 Urban Forests.

Highlight

- ‘Nagar Van’- Urban Forest scheme was announced on the World Environment Day.
- Under the Nagar Van scheme, the forest will primarily be on the forest land in the City or any other vacant land offered by local urban local bodies.
- These forests will work as lungs of the cities.

PIB-DECEMBER 17th, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

CII PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT 2020

Context

The CII Partnership Summit – CII’s Annual Flagship Event – is being organised virtually for the first time in December 2020.

Highlights

- Minister of Commerce and Industry, Government of India is the **Chair of the Summit**.
- **The theme of the Partnership Summit:** “PARTNERSHIPS FOR LIVES, LIVELIHOOD AND GROWTH”.
- This edition of the Partnership Summit is very special as **CII marks its 125 years this year**.

Objectives

The Partnership Summit 2020 would capture perspectives of leading experts across major tracks, namely, geopolitical and strategic developments, international trade and multilateralism, economy and finance, investments, technology disruptions, socio-cultural and sustainability aspects, and cooperation in healthcare.

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), based in New Delhi, India, is a **non-government, not-for-profit organisation, founded in 1895.**

- CII is a body registered under **Societies Registration Act, 1860 of India.**
- The highest governing body key strength of CII is the **CII National Council**, composed of leading industry heads and experts.
- It **consist of about 9100 members from the private as well as public sectors**, including SMEs and MNCs, and an indirect **membership of over 300,000 enterprises from 288 national** and regional sectoral industry bodies.

Function

- CII works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, partnering industry, Government and civil society, through advisory and consultative processes.
- CII charts change by working closely with Government on policy issues, interfacing with thought leaders, and enhancing efficiency, competitiveness and business opportunities for industry through a range of specialized services and strategic global linkages.
- It also provides a platform for consensus-building and networking on key issues.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population.

PRIME MINISTER'S SPECIAL SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME (PMSSS)

Context

Maintenance allowance of Rs 20,000 to be released under Prime Minister's Special Scholarship Scheme (PMSSS) by AICTE.

Highlights

Under the PMSSS Scheme, the **youths of J&K and Ladakh** are supported by way of scholarship in two parts namely the academic fee & maintenance allowance.

- AICTE has already released the entire academic fee for the year 2020-21 to all the institutions.
- In order to support & empower students for completing online studies, it has been decided to release the instalment of Rs. 20,000/-.

- The subsequent instalments shall be released once the students shall join physically at their respective institutions based on the verification of continuation certificate issued by the Institution.

About the Prime Minister's Special Scholarship Scheme (PMSSS)

- An **Expert Group** was constituted by the Prime Minister for enhancing employment opportunity among youths of J&K and Ladakh and formulate job opportunities in public and private sectors.
- Subsequently, Prime Minister's Special Scholarship Scheme (PMSSS) is being implemented by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), New Delhi.

Objective:

The Scheme aims to build the capacities of the youths of J&K and Ladakh by Educating, Enabling and Empowering them to compete in the normal course.

Key features of the Scheme

Under the Scheme, the youths of J&K and Ladakh are supported by way of scholarship in two parts namely the **academic fee & maintenance allowance**.

1. **The academic fee** is paid to the institution where the student is provided admission after on-line counselling process conducted by the AICTE.
2. **The academic fee** covers tuition fee and other components as per the ceiling fixed for various professional, medical and other under-graduate courses.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

NATIONAL HYDROLOGY PROJECT

Context

Union Minister of Jal Shakti reviews progress made under National Hydrology Project in its mid-term.

About the National Hydrology Project

- National Hydrology Project (NHP) was started in the year 2016 as a Central Sector Scheme with 100% grant to implementing agencies on pan India basis.
- Rs 3680 Crore budget outlay was allotted under the project to be spent over a period of 8 years.

Objective of the Project

- The project aims at improving the extent, reliability and accessibility of water resources information and to strengthen the capacity of targeted water resource management institutions in India.

- NHP is **facilitating acquisition of reliable information efficiently** which would pave the way for an effective water resource development and management.

Project Highlight

- Central Sector Scheme, with 100% grant to the States
- Budget Outlay: about Rs3,680 Crore, with World Bank Assistance to the tune of 50% of the project cost
- Timeline: 8 years from 2016-17 to 2023-24
- Scale: Pan India
- Lead Agency: DoWR, RD & GR, MoJS
- Implementing Agencies: 49 (including 12 from Central Government and 37 from States)
- Loan agreement with World Bank has been signed on 18-4-2017.

Project Concept

1. Modernizing Monitoring network
2. Transforming Knowledge Access
3. Enhancing Analytical Tools
4. Modernizing Institutions

Project Beneficiaries

The project has two groups of direct beneficiaries:

1. Central and state implementing agencies (IAs) responsible for surface and/or groundwater planning and management, including river basin organizations; and
2. Users of the WRIS across various sectors and around the World.

Status of the NHP

The Project, in its mid-term, has made significant progress in the fields of Water resource monitoring system, **water resource information system (WRIS)**, **water resource operation and planning systems and institutional capacity enhancement**.

Under the NHP, a nationwide repository of **water resources data – NWIC has been established**. NHP is focusing on **establishment of real time data acquisition system (RTDAS)** on pan India basis.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

MULTI-LOCATION CLAIM FACILITY OF EPFO

Context

EPFO has recently launched a multi-location claim settlement facility.

Highlights

- The **multi-location claim settlement facility** will bring a **paradigm shift** by allowing EPFO offices to settle online claims from any of its regional offices, across the country.
- **All types of online claims** i.e. provident fund, pension, partial withdrawal and claims and transfer claims can be processed under this novel initiative.
- **The first batch of multi-location claims** under this path-breaking project was settled for **Gurugram Region** on 10th June 2020.

Why it is launched?

- EPFO has **moved away from the existing system of geographical jurisdiction for claim processing** by rolling out multi-location claim settlement facility.
- This will allow offices with lesser workload to share the burden of offices that have accumulated a higher level of pendency, due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- It enables fast-tracking of settlement process through most appropriate engagement of EPFO's workforce in all its regional offices across the country.

Objective

The initiative aimed at enhancing ease of living experience for its members, has been achieved in record time.

Significance

- The launch of multi-location claim settlement facility is a momentous step towards the larger objectives of ushering faceless claims processing.
- Thereby, it will bring greater levels of transparency, efficiency, reduction of member grievances and expeditious settlement of online claims in line with Prime Minister's vision of Digital India.

Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)

- The EPFO is an organization tasked to assist the Central Board of Trustees.
- **Employees' Provident Fund is a statutory body.**
- It is formed by the **Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.**
- **It is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India.**

FOR PRELIMS

GOLDEN PEACOCK ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT AWARD 2020

Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has been awarded with the prestigious Golden Peacock Environment Management Award for the year 2020 in the Steel Sector.

About the Award

Golden Peacock Environment Management Award is the **coveted and prestigious recognition that your organization could strive to win for environment management.**

The Annual Award was instituted by **World Environment Foundation (WEF)** in 1998, in furtherance of its aims and objectives.

The **award is given to the following sectors:**

1. All sectors of industry and commerce – both Public and Private undertakings
2. Organisations in Voluntary Sector.
3. Government and Semi-Government Departments / NGOs
4. Educational, Service and Research establishments including monitoring laboratories

Athirapally Hydel Electric Project

Kerala government has approved the proposed Athirapally Hydro Electric Project (AHEP) on the Chalakudy river in Thrissur.

Highlights

- Athirapally Hydel Electric Project will have an installed capacity of 163 mw.
- Under the project, **a dam is proposed to be constructed on the Chalakudy River.**
- The Chalakudy River is a **tributary of the Periyar River** and originates in the Anamalai region of Tamil Nadu.
- It is the richest river in fish diversity perhaps in India as it contains 85 species of freshwater fishes out of the 152 species known from Kerala only.

PIB-DECEMBER 18th, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *India and its neighborhood- relations.*

INDIA-BANGLADESH VIRTUAL SUMMIT

Context

Prime Minister of the Republic of India and Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh held a Summit in virtual format on 17 December 2020.

Both sides held **comprehensive discussions on all aspects of bilateral relations, and exchanged views on regional and international issues.**

Key points of the Summit

- In 2021, India and Bangladesh will be celebrating 50 years of the establishment of diplomatic ties, the prime minister tweeted after the summit adding he is looking forward to the visit.

- Next year, India and Bangladesh will jointly commemorate Mujib Borsho and 50 years of establishment of our diplomatic ties.
- Teesta water sharing and other issues related to fisheries were also discussed.
- The newly **restored railway link between Haldibari (India) and Chilahati (Bangladesh) was inaugurated.**
- The two leaders underscored the need for early conclusion of Framework of **Interim Agreement on sharing of waters of six joint rivers, namely, Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla and Dudhkumar.**
- Bangladesh is **supporting India in its election to the United Nations Security Council.**
- Bangladesh thanked to India for proposing creation of the **SAARC Emergency Response Fund to counter effects of the global pandemic in the South Asian region.**
- Bangladesh will assume **chairmanship of the IORA in 2021.**

Seven agreements in the areas of hydrocarbon, culture, agriculture, high impact community development projects and the conservation of wildlife were signed at the summit.

1. Framework of Understanding (FOU) on Cooperation in Hydrocarbon Sector;
2. Protocol on Trans-boundary Elephant Conservation;
3. MOU regarding Indian Grant Assistance for Implementation of High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs) through Local Bodies and other Public Sector Institutions;
4. MOU on Supply of Equipment and Improvement of Garbage / Solid Waste Disposal Ground at Lamchori Area for Barishal City Corporation;
5. Terms of Reference of India-Bangladesh CEOs Forum;
6. MoU between Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Museum, Dhaka, Bangladesh and the National Museum, New Delhi, India; and
7. MoU on Cooperation in the field of Agriculture.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit Bangladesh in person in March 2021 to join the celebrations on the occasion of **50th anniversary of Bangladesh's Independence and 50 years of Bangladesh-India diplomatic relations.**

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

COALITION FOR DISASTER RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE (CDRI)

Context

The Union Minister for Health addressed an event by **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).**

The theme of the event was “Build Back Better: building resilient health infrastructure and supply chains.”

What is the CDRI?

The **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)** is a multi-stakeholder global partnership of national governments, UN agencies and programmes, multilateral development banks and financing mechanisms, the private sector, and academic and knowledge institutions.

- At present, **it is not an intergovernmental organization**, which are **ordinarily treaty-based organizations**.
- **It aims to** address the challenges of building resilience into infrastructure systems and development associated with it.

Objectives

- The CDRI aims **to promote the resilience of infrastructure systems to climate and disaster risks**, thereby ensuring sustainable development.
- It seeks to **rapidly expand the development and retrofit of resilient infrastructure** to respond to the Sustainable Development Goals imperatives of expanding universal access to basic services, enabling prosperity and decent work.

What is the Need for the CDRI?

Infrastructure systems are key drivers of economic growth.

- A large part of this infrastructure will inevitably be exposed to a range of natural hazards.
- With the increasing demands of a growing global population and unpredictable hazard patterns, the existing infrastructure will be put under additional stress and new infrastructure will be built in hazardous areas.

Beneficiaries

The Coalition **provides a forum for countries at all stages of development**, to access knowledge and resources from other members to make their infrastructure resilient and thus, contribute to each other's economic growth.

1. **For countries that are in the early stages of infrastructure development**, the Coalition provides access to good practices to develop appropriate standards as well as regulatory mechanisms to manage infrastructure development in a manner that fosters resilience.
2. **For countries at an advanced stage** of infrastructure development, CDRI provides an opportunity to engage with the development of robust infrastructure systems that are interconnected globally.
3. **As with other nations**, the challenge for them is to transform how infrastructure is designed, constructed, operated and maintained, and develop the financial incentives that are required to facilitate the resilience of infrastructure to extreme events and changes in future hazard patterns, while fulfilling the commitment to leave no one behind.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

SPECIAL LIQUIDITY SCHEME FOR NBFCs AND HFCs

Context

With a view to improving the liquidity position of NBFCs as well as HFCs, the Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs announced a launch of a Special Liquidity Scheme.

Key features of the Scheme

RBI will provide funds for the Scheme by subscribing to government guaranteed special securities issued by the Trust.

- **The total amount** of such securities issued outstanding shall not exceed Rs. 30,000 crores at any point of time.
- **Government of India will provide an unconditional and irrevocable guarantee** to the special securities issued by the Trust.
- The Scheme is being launched on July 1, 2020 through a Special Purpose Vehicle in the form of **SLS Trust set up by SBI Capital Markets Limited (SBICAP)**.

Eligibility

Any NBFC including Microfinance Institutions registered with RBI under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 **(excluding those registered as Core Investment Companies)**.

Any HFC registered with the National Housing Bank (NHB) under the National Housing Bank Act, 1987.

These must be complying with the following broad conditions:

- **Compliance with RBI regulations on Capital adequacy**
- **Net NPA is less than 6% as on 31.03.2019**
- **Net profit in at least one of the two preceding financial years**
- **Rated as investment grade by a rating agency**

Significance

This facility is a part of the Government of India and RBI's efforts to alleviate the concerns of the market participants on the availability of funds to the sector.

FOR PRELIMS

FORMAL RECOGNITION OF YOGASANA AS A COMPETITIVE SPORT

The **Ministry of AYUSH and Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports** announced the formal recognition of Yogasana as a competitive sport.

Highlights

The sports discipline of Yogasana is likely to have 51 medals in 4 events & 7 categories.

The proposed events for both men and women include Traditional Yogasana, Artistic Yogasana (Single), Artistic Yogasana (Pair), Rhythmic Yogasana (Pair), Free Flow/Group Yogasana, Individual All Round – Championship and Team Championship.

The road map and the future development of Yogasana Sport:

1. A pilot Yogasana Competition named as **“National Individual Yogasana Sports Championship (Virtual Mode)”** to be held in early 2021.
2. Development of **Automated Scoring System for the Yogasana Championship.**
3. **Courses** for Coaches, Referees, Judges and Directors of competitions.
4. **Coaching camps** for players.
5. **Launch of a League of Yogasana**, to create Sports Stars among Yogasana athletes.
6. To introduce **Yogasana as a Sport discipline in National Games**, Khelo India and international sports events.
7. Steps to **create job opportunities for Yogasana athletes.**

Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI)

Annual Summit of Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI) was held recently.

About OPPI

The Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI) was **established in 1965** and **represents the research-based pharmaceutical companies in India.**

Vision

OPPI is an organisation of research and innovation driven pharmaceutical companies committed to addressing India's healthcare needs by:

- Facilitating greater access to quality healthcare solutions
- Encouraging research and innovation
- Disseminating knowledge and sharing best practices
- Contributing meaningfully in policy dialogues

Hunar Haat

“Hunar Haat” is being organised at Rampur (UP) from 18th to 27th Dec, 2020.

Theme: “Jaan Bhi, Jahaan Bhi”.

What is it?

Hunar Haat is an exhibition of handicrafts and traditional products made by artisans from the Minority communities.

- It is organised by Ministry of Minority Affairs.
- Hunar Haats are being organized **USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) scheme**.
- The USTTAD scheme aims at preserving & promoting the rich heritage of the traditional arts & crafts of the Minority communities.

PIB-DECEMBER 19th, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

TOPS SCHEME

Context

8 Para athletes in four different sports included in TOPS scheme.

What is the TOPS Scheme?

The **Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)** is a flagship program of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

- The Scheme looks to add a premium to the preparations of these athletes so that they can win Olympic medals in **2020 and 2024 Olympics**.
- Under the Scheme, the **Department of Sports shall identify athletes who are potential medal winners in 2020 / 2024 Olympics**.
- The idea of the Scheme is **to also keep an eye in the future and fund a Developmental Group of Athletes** who are medal prospects for the **Olympic Games in Paris in 2024 and Los Angeles Games in 2028**

Recent Success of TOPS

The TOPS sponsored athletes gained relative success at the 2016 Rio Olympics and the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

- **P V Sindhu and Sakshi Malik** captured silver and bronze in Badminton and Wrestling respectively at the 2016 Rio Olympics.
- **In the 2016 Paralympic Games**, the TOPS Athletes won 2 Gold, 1 Silver and 1 Bronze demonstrating the effectiveness of the Scheme.
- In recent **Commonwealth Games** out of the 70 athletes who won medals at the CWG, **47 of them were supported under the TOP Scheme**.

Mission Olympic Cell (MOC)

The Mission Olympic Cell is a **dedicated body created to assist the athletes who are selected under the TOP Scheme.**

- The MOC is **under the Chairmanship of the Director General, Sports Authority (DG, SAI).**
- The MOC focuses on selection, exclusion and retention of athletes, coaches, training institutes that can receive TOPS assistance.

GENERAL STUDIES- II

Topic– *Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.*

GOOD GOVERNANCE INDEX (GGI)

Context

‘Good Governance Index’ launched by MoS (PP) on ‘Good Governance Day’.

About

- Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions launched the ‘Good Governance Index’ on the occasion of Good Governance Day,
- **The Good Governance Day is observed on the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee.**

What is Good Governance Index?

The Good Governance Index is a uniform tool across States to assess the Status of Governance and impact of various interventions taken up by the State Government and UTs.

Aim

- The objectives of GGI are to provide quantifiable data to compare the state of governance in all states and UTs.
- To enable states and UTs to formulate and implement suitable strategies for improving governance and shift to result oriented approaches and administration.

How GGI is prepared?

The GGI takes into consideration ten sectors-

1. Agriculture and Allied Sectors,
2. Commerce & Industries,
3. Human Resource Development,
4. Public Health,
5. Public Infrastructure & Utilities,
6. Economic Governance,
7. Social Welfare & Development,
8. Judicial & Public Security,

9. Environment and
10. Citizen-Centric Governance.

These ten Governance Sectors are measured on total 50 indicators–

Difference indicators are given different weightage under one Governance Sector to calculate the value.

under Agriculture & Allied Sector, there are 6 indicators with different weightage, namely-

1. Growth rate of agriculture and allied sector (0.4),
2. Growth rate of food grains production (0.1),
3. Growth rate of horticulture produce (0.1),
4. Growth rate of milk production (0.1),
5. Growth rate of meat production (0.1)
6. Crop insurance (0.2).

The states and UTs are divided into three groups–

1. Big States,
2. North-East & Hill States and
3. UTs.

The states and UTs are ranked on all indicators separately, at the same time composite ranking is also calculated for these states and UTs under their respective groups based upon these indicators.

Key Findings of the first GGI Report

- **Top performers among the big states:** Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.
- **The bottom six states** are Odisha, Bihar, Goa, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand.
- **Among the North-East & Hill States:** Top 3 states are Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Tripura. The bottom 3 states are Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Pondicherry leads among the UTs** followed closely by Chandigarh with Delhi bagging the third spot. Lakshadweep is at the bottom among the UTs.

SECTOR-WISE RANKING

Environment sector

- The top three states are West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- The bottom 3 states are Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Goa.

Judicial and public security ranking

- West Bengal is at the bottom two in the judicial and public security ranking. Tamil Nadu tops the chart here.

Economic governance

- Karnataka is at the top under the economic governance category.

Health

- Kerala is at the top in the public health sector.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

WHAT ARE THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS?

- *The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015.*
- *17 SDGs are adopted as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.*

The 17 Self Development Goals are-

Goal 1: No Poverty

Goal 2: Zero Hunger

Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being

Goal 4: Quality Education

Goal 5: Gender Equality

Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Goal 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure

Goal 10: Reduced inequalities

Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities

Goal 12: Responsible production and Consumption

Goal 13: Climate actions

Goal 14: Conserve life below water

Goal 15: Protect the life on land

Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

Goal 17: Partnerships for the goals

SDGs and India

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) is being implemented to provide jobs to unskilled laborers and improve their living standards.

- National Food Security Act is being enforced to provide subsidized food grains.
- **For Clean Fuel** India introduces BS-VI petrol and diesel.
- Delhi will be the first city to leapfrog from BS-IV to BS-VI.

- For clean energy India initiated International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- The government of India aims to make India open defecation free by the year 2019 under its flagship programme Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.
- India has expressed its intent to combat climate change by ratifying the Paris Agreement.
- India has committed to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33 to 35 percent by 2030 from 2005 level.
- India has committed to achieve about 40 percent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel based energy resources by 2030, with the help of transfer of technology and low-cost international finance, including from Green Climate Fund.
- To create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic – Development processes and the development industry —the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.

INVEST INDIA

Context

Commerce and Industry Minister announce 'Invest India' Special Desk for North East States.

What is the 'Invest India' initiative?

'Invest India' is India's official agency dedicated to investment promotion and facilitation.

- It is set up as a nonprofit venture under the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Government of India.
- It was set up in 2010 for prospective overseas investors and to those aspiring Indian investors desiring to invest in foreign locations.
- It acts as a structured mechanism to attract investment. Invest India is essentially an Investment Promotion Agency in India.

Structure

- Operationalized in early 2010, Invest India is set up as a joint venture company between the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce & Industry (35% equity), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) (51% equity), and State Governments of India (0.5% each).
- Invest India, essentially, is a private company, unlike India Brand Equity Foundation – another investment promotion agency in India set up by the same Ministry – Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

Mandate

- The core mandate of Invest India is investment promotion and facilitation.
- It provides sector-specific and state-specific information to a foreign investor, assists in expediting regulatory approvals, and offers hand-holding services.

- To assist Indian investors to make informed choices about investment opportunities overseas.

Functions

- Invest India provides aftercare services that include initiating remedial action on problems faced by investors by involving the Government Departments concerned.
- Invest India regularly partners with similar agencies across the world in an endeavor to enhance bilateral investment and economic engagement.

Significance

Invest India is intended to become the first reference point for the global investment community – both domestic and foreign. ***Make in India campaign / programme is managed by Invest India.***

Mains Question

Discuss the role and need of FDI in India? What are the hindrances for it and how can we overcome from these?

PIB-DECEMBER 21st, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present- significant events, personalities, issues.

SRI GURU TEGH BAHADUR JI

Context

Guru Tegh Bahadur's death anniversary was observed on 19 December this year.

Guru was killed in 1675 on the orders of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in Delhi for himself refusing Mughal rulers and defying them.

About Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur

Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji is revered by the Sikhs as **Srisht-di-Chadar (Protector of humanity)**, was the **ninth of the Ten Gurus of Sikhism**.

- He had **become Guru on 16 April, 1664**, following the **eighth Guru, Guru Har Krishan Ji**.
- A poet, a thinker, and a warrior, Guru Teg Bahadur Ji carried forward the light of sanctity and divinity of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and the subsequent Sikh Gurus.
- To spread the message of Sikhism, the Guru traveled extensively through the Indian subcontinent, setting up several new preaching centers.
- He founded the **town of Chak-Nanki in Punjab**, later enlarged by the tenth Nanak, **Guru Gobind Singh Ji, into the city of Sri Anandpur Sahib**.

- In **May 1675**, **Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji** was approached by **Hindu Pandits** from the **Kashmir region**, seeking the Guru's intercession against the forced conversions of Hindus to Islam by the Mughal rulers of India.
- **For supporting the Hindu Pandits by resisting these forced conversions**, and for **himself refusing to convert to Islam**, **Guru Teg Bahadur Ji** was publicly executed via beheading at the imperial capital of Delhi on the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb.
- Today, **Gurdwara Sis Ganj Sahib** and **Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib** stand at the sites of beheading and cremation of **Guru Ji's** body.
- Along with **Guru Teg Bahadur Ji**, three other Sikhs, **Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Sati Das, and Bhai Dyal Das**, were also executed.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic— *Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country.*

GOA LIBERATION DAY

Context

Goa Liberation Day is **observed on December 19** every year in India.

Highlights

- It marks the day **Indian armed forces** freed Goa in **1961** following **450 years** of **Portuguese rule**.
- **The Portuguese colonised several parts of India in 1510.**
- **By the end of the 19th-century Portuguese colonies in India** were limited to Goa, Daman, Diu, Dadra, Nagar Haveli and Anjediva Island.
- The **Goa liberation movement**, which sought to end Portuguese colonial rule in Goa, started off with small scale revolts.

Events after the Independence

- On August 15, 1947, when India gained its Independence, Goa was still under the Portuguese rule. The **Portuguese refused to give up their hold over Goa and other Indian territories.**
- Following a myriad of unsuccessful negotiations and diplomatic efforts with the Portuguese, the **first prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, decided that military intervention** was the only option.
- The 36-hour military operation, conducted from December 18, 1961, **was code-named 'Operation Vijay'** meaning 'Operation Victory,' and involved attacks **by the Indian Navy, Indian Air Force and Indian Army.**
- According to the Indian Navy website, **Indian troops reclaimed the Goan territory on December 19.**

- With little resistance and the deposed **governor general Manuel António Vassalo e Silva** signed the certificate of surrender thus bringing Portuguese rule in the region to an end.
- This made India completely free from foreign rule.

Goa Liberation Day is marked by an abundance of events and festivities in Goa though this time because of the pandemic the celebrations are expected to be muted.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– *Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.*

INDIA INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FESTIVAL (IISF) 2020

6th India International Science Festival 2020 is being **organized at CSIR – Institute of Minerals & Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT) Bhubaneswar.**

The **theme of IISF-2020** is “**Science for Self-Reliant India and Global Welfare**”.

What is ‘India International Science Festival’ (IISF)?

- **Launched in 2015**, IISF is a celebration to promote science & technology.
- **The aim is:** to engage the public with science, celebrate the joy of science and show how **Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)** can provide solutions to improve lives.
- **The goal of the IISF 2020** is to help youth develop 21st century skills, with a focus on scientific knowledge, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork.
- **A long-term objective** is to encourage students to study and work in scientific fields.

Organized by:

- IISF is organized by **Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Earth Sciences in association with Vijnana Bharati (VIBHA)** jointly.
- It has created a unique platform of India International Science Festival, which intends to inspire curiosity and make learning more rewarding.

CSIR – Institute of Minerals & Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT)

- CSIR-IMMT was established in 1964 as **Regional Research Laboratory, Bhubaneswar** in the eastern part of India **under the aegis of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).**
- **It was renamed in 2007** with a renewed research focus and growth strategy to be a leader in the areas of mineral & material resource engineering.

About Vijnana Bharati

Vijnana Bharati or VIBHA, previously known as 'Swadeshi Science Movement' is a non-profit organization.

- It works for science popularization & implementation of modern technology & ancient sciences in India.
- It was **founded by** the eminent scientists of Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru led by Prof. K.I. Vasu.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– *Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the India.*

SEDIMENTARY BASINS OF INDIA

Context

ONGC begins production in Bengal basin, making it India's eighth functional basin.

Highlights

- Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Limited has **begun crude oil production from the Asokenagar-1 well, Bengal Basin in 24 Paragana district.**
- This has made the **Bengal basin India's eighth producing basin**, joining the ranks of Krishna-Godavari (KG), Mumbai Offshore, Assam Shelf, Rajasthan, Cauvery, Assam-Arakan Fold Belt and Cambay.

Sedimentary Basins of India

- There are **26 sedimentary basins in India**, covering a total area of 3.4 million square kilometer.
- **The area is spread across** onland, shallow water up to 400 meter water depth and deepwater farther up to Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- Of the total sedimentary area, **49% of total area is located onland, 12% in shallow water and 39% in the deepwater area.**
- There are **16 onland basins, 7 located both onland and offshore and 3 completely offshore.**
- Tectonically, **these basins are classified into 3 groups**, based on origin from rifting (intra-cratonic and peri-cratonic), plate collision and crustal sag.

Three categories of sedimentary Basins

These basins are divided into three categories **based on maturity of hydrocarbon resources** as under:

1. **Category-I:** Basins, which have reserves and already producing.
2. **Category-II:** Basins, which have contingent resources pending commercial production.
3. **Category-III** Basins, which have prospective resources awaiting discovery.

The functional basins of India

Based on conventional resource potential, Now 8 basins are grouped under Category-I.

These are:

1. Krishna-Godavari (KG),
2. Mumbai Offshore,
3. Assam Shelf,
4. Rajasthan,
5. Cauvery,
6. Assam-Arakan Fold Belt
7. Cambay, and
8. Bengal.

Mains Question:

Discuss the crude oil production capacity of India. How the production in new basin will help in reducing burden on Indian exchequer.

FOR PRELIMS

6th INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FILM FESTIVAL OF INDIA

6th International Science Film Festival of India (ISFFI) as a part of IISF – India International Science Festival, from December 22nd to 25th, 2020.

IISF 2020

As part of IISF – India International Science Festival, the International Science Film Festival of India (ISFFI) seeks to promote science popularization among citizens.

- **The ISFFI offers an opportunity for students and other participants** to get involved with the process of science film-making and improve their understanding of various feats in science and technology.
- **This year record 632 science documentaries, short films, animation videos have been received** from 60 countries.
- **Internationally acclaimed and awards winning foreign and Indian films on science, health and environment** were screened via online platform.
- These nominated films will be screened from 22nd to 25th December 2020 on Vigyan Prasar's YouTube channel and India Science Festival channel.

PIB-DECEMBER 22nd, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– India and its neighborhood- relations.

INDIA-VIETNAM LEADERS' VIRTUAL SUMMIT

Context

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is hold a virtual summit with his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Xuan Phuc recently.

The meeting comes amid a time when China's assertiveness is peaking in both countries.

Highlights

- India and Vietnam signed **seven agreements for cooperation** cover diverse issues such as defence, nuclear power, petrochemicals, renewable energy and treatment of cancer.
- A **joint vision for peace and prosperity was unveiled against the backdrop of concerns** in both countries about China's aggressive actions across the region.

India-Vietnam relationship: a brief observation

- India's is currently implementing a **\$100-million defence line of credit for 12 high speed patrol boats** for Vietnam.
- The **boats being built for the Vietnam Border Guard** are meant to enhance coastal security and prevent illegal activities.
- Both countries also have **stakes in the Indo-Pacific region and significant maritime interests**. The summit enabled them to look at potential cooperation on India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative and Asean's Indo-Pacific outlook.
- India and Vietnam will also concurrently **serve as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council from 2021**, and this has opened up new opportunities for cooperation and coordination on regional and international issues.

Significance of this summit

The meeting was held at a time when both countries are grappling with China's aggressive actions in the region.

India is locked in a military standoff with China in Ladakh sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) while Vietnam has major differences over Chinese claims within its exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

INDIA-JAPAN SAMVAD CONFERENCE

Context

Indian Prime Minister addressed the **6th India-Japan Samvad conference** on December 21, 2020 through video conferencing.

Highlights

- Creation of a **library of all Buddhist literature and scriptures was proposed by India.**
- The library will be a depository of literature and it will provide a platform for research & dialogue, a true Samvad between human beings, societies and man and nature.
- **It will aim to translate the literature** and make them freely available for all monks and scholars of Buddhism.
- **The library's research mandate** will include examining how Buddha's message can guide our modern world against contemporary challenges such as poverty, racism, extremism, gender discrimination, climate change and many others.

6th India-Japan Samvad Conference

This Samvad Conference **revolves around the need to build the future of Asia on the positive influence of traditions of non-violence and democracy in Asia.**

Key Objectives of the 6th India-Japan Samvad:

1. To encourage dialogue and debate
2. To highlight shared values between India-Japan
3. To carry forward our ancient tradition of spiritual and scholarly exchanges.

About Samvad

Samvad is a dialogue series between India and Japan. It was begun five years ago in 2015. The first conference, Samvad-I, was held in India, at Bodhi Gaya.

During Samvad I, leading scholars, religious leaders, academics, and political personalities had exchanged views on conflict avoidance and environmental consciousness.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– *Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.*

60 PERCENT RISE IN LEOPARD POPULATION ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Context

'Status of Leopards' report was released recently.

Highlights

- **India now has 12,852 leopards** as compared to the previous estimate of 7910 conducted in 2014.
- More than **60% increase in population has been recorded.**
- The States of **Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra** recorded the highest leopard estimates at 3,421, 1,783 and 1,690 respectively.

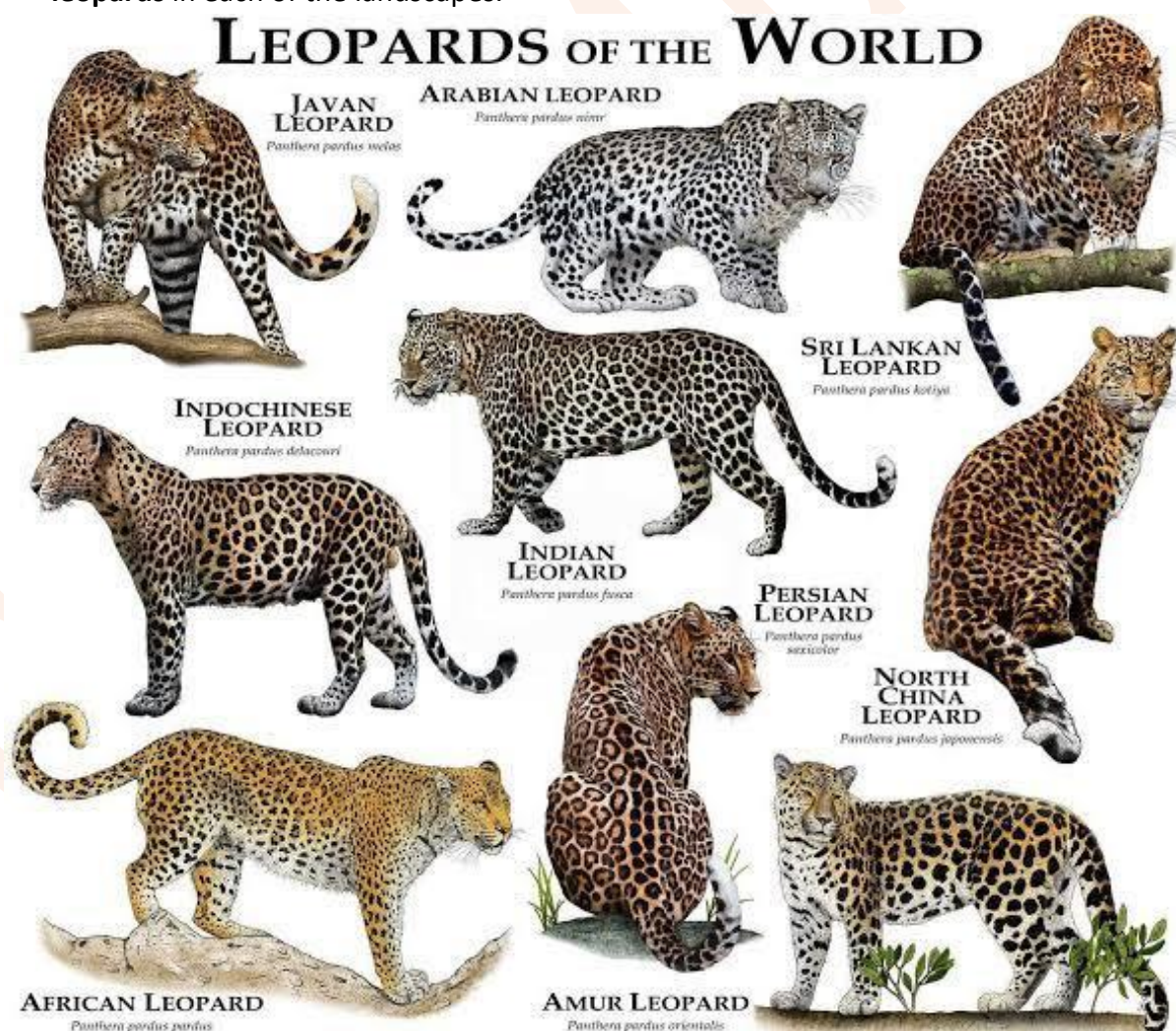
Facts about Leopard:

1. Scientific Name- *Panthera pardus*.
2. Nine subspecies of the leopard have been recognized, and they are distributed across Africa and Asia.
3. Listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
4. Included in Appendix I of CITES.
5. Listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.

Leopard's habitation in India

India's world record tiger survey also estimated the population of leopards and the tiger range was found home to 12,852 (12,172-13,535) leopards.

- They occur in **prey rich protected areas** as well as multi-use forests.
- The leopard was estimated **across forested habitats in tiger range areas of the country**.
- **The other leopard occupied areas such as** non-forested habitats (coffee and tea plantations and other land uses from where leopards are known to occur), higher elevations in the Himalayas, arid landscapes and majority of North East landscape **were not sampled**.
- Therefore, the **population estimation should be considered as minimum number of leopards** in each of the landscapes.



Significance

The monitoring of the tiger in India **has clearly shown its umbrella role in the ecosystem**, which has shed light on other charismatic species like the Leopard.

GENERAL STUDIES III

Topic– Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

ELECTRICITY (RIGHTS OF CONSUMERS) RULES, 2020

Context

Union Government for the first time lays down Rights to the Electricity Consumers through “Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020”.

Highlights

- Beginning of an era of **empowering Power Consumers in a paradigm shift** bringing Consumers to Centre Stage.
- Consumers to have the **option to apply for new electricity connection and pay bills online**.
- Consumers **to get electricity connection in prescribed timeline which is 7 days in Metro cities, 15 days in other cities and 30 days in rural areas**; Violations to result in penalties.
- Rules to benefit about 30 crores existing and prospective consumers in the country.
- These rules are important step towards furthering the ease of doing business across country.

Need for:

Distribution Companies across the country are monopolies – whether government or private – and the consumer has no alternative – therefore it was necessary that the consumers’ rights be laid down in Rules and a system for enforcement of these rights be put in place.

Significance

These rules are an important step towards furthering the ease of doing business across the country.

- Implementation of these Rules shall ensure that new electricity connections, refunds and other services are given in a time bound manner.
- Wilful disregard to consumer rights will result in levying penalties on service providers.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

AGRICULTURE INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Context

The GOI has given its approval to a new pan India **Central Sector Scheme-Agriculture Infrastructure Fund**.

About the Agri-Infra Fund

The Agri-Infra Fund was **part of the Rs 20 lakh crore stimulus package** announced in response to the COVID-19 disaster. **The duration of the Scheme** shall be from FY2020 to FY2029 (10 years).

Under the scheme, Rs. One Lakh Crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans to:

- Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS),
- Marketing Cooperative Societies, Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs),
- Self Help Group (SHG),
- Farmers, Joint Liability Groups (JLG),
- Multipurpose Cooperative Societies, Agri-entrepreneurs, Startups, Aggregation Infrastructure Providers and
- Central/State agency or Local Body sponsored Public Private Partnership Project.

Objective:

The scheme shall provide a **medium – long term debt financing facility** for investment in viable projects **for post-harvest management Infrastructure and community farming assets** through interest subvention and financial support.

Key features of the scheme

- Loans will be disbursed in four years starting with sanction of Rs. 10,000 crore in the current year and Rs. 30,000 crore each in next three financial years.
- **Interest subvention:** All loans under this financing facility will have interest subvention of 3% per annum up to a limit of Rs. 2 crore.
- This subvention will be available for a maximum period of seven years.
- **Credit guarantee:** will be available for eligible borrowers from this financing facility **under Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) scheme** for a loan up to Rs. 2 crore.
- The fee for this coverage will be paid by the Government.
- **In case of FPOs** the credit guarantee may be availed from the facility created under **FPO promotion scheme of Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare (DACFW)**.

Implementation

- Agri Infra fund will be managed and monitored through an **online Management Information System (MIS) platform**.
- It will enable all the qualified entities to apply for loan under the fund.
- The **National, State and District level Monitoring Committees** will be set up to ensure real-time monitoring and effective feed-back.

Significance

The Project by way of facilitating formal credit to farm and farm processing-based activities is expected to create numerous job opportunities in rural areas.

PIB-DECEMBER 23rd, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.*

PIPED NATURAL GAS (PNG)

Context

Air Quality Commission directs for 100 percent switching over of industries in Delhi to PNG.

Highlights

- Air Quality Commission in NCR and Adjoining Areas reviewed the progress of switching over of Industries operating in Delhi to Piped Natural Gas.
- About **1644 of Industrial Units spread across 50 industrial areas in Delhi had been identified to switch over to Piped Natural Gas (PNG).**

What is Natural Gas, PNG, CNG & LNG?

- Natural gas as its name indicates is a **Gaseous fuel, consisting of 87-92% of Methane with a small percentage of other higher hydrocarbons.**
- **PNG, CNG & LNG are different forms of Natural gas under varied temperature & pressure.**

Piped Natural Gas (PNG)

- Piped Natural gas (PNG) is **used for Domestic, Commercial and Industrial Consumption.**
- PNG has several distinctions to **its credit-of being a pollution free fuel, economical and safer fuel being few of them.**
- It is generally under atmospheric temperatures but the pressure limited to less than 24 Kg/cm² in City Gas grids due to risk involved in movement of high pressure gas inside crowded cities/towns.

Compressed Natural Gas (CNG)

- CNG means natural gas used as fuel for vehicles, typically compressed to the pressure ranging from 200 to 250 kg/cm² in the gaseous state.
- It is used pre-dominantly for automotive purpose as the energy requirement for running a car (for 150-200 km).

LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas)

- It is liquid form of Natural gas, generally intended for **transportation of large volumes through ships**, where cross country pipelines are not feasible.
- There will be high degree of economy in transportation logistics due to large scale of operations involved.

What is the difference between PNG and LPG?

- LPG is **Liquefied Petroleum Gas** and PNG is **Piped Natural Gas**.
- LPG is supplied in liquid form just as the name suggests in cylinders whereas PNG is supplied through a pipeline.
- **LPG is used as a fuel in heating appliances and vehicles**, whereas **PNG is used for cooking (gas stoves) and heating water (gas geysers)**.

Safety: Natural Gas is a safe fuel. In case of leakage, NG being lighter than air, disperses in the air.

Eco friendly fuel

- PNG is one of the cleanest burning fuels, and helps improve the quality of air.
- When natural gas burns completely, it gives out carbon dioxide and water vapour.
- These are the very components that we give out while breathing.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.*

ASEEM DIGITAL PLATFORM

It is launched by Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

Highlights

- ASEEM is stand for '**Aatamanirbhar Skilled Employee Employer Mapping**'.
- It is an **Artificial Intelligence based digital platform**.
- It aims to bridge demand-supply gap of skilled workforce across sectors.

What it will do?

- The portal **will map details of workers based on regions and local industry demands Database of labour migrants in Indian states and overseas citizens**, who returned to India under the **Vande Bharat Mission**.
- The filled SWADES Skill Card, has been integrated with the ASEEM portal Candidate data coming to Skill India Portal.
- The **data from various state and central skilling schemes will be integrated** including PMKVY, Fee-based Programs, National Urban Livelihoods Mission, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana and Seekho aur Kamao.

Benefits

- ASEEM will be used as a **match-making engine to map skilled workers with the jobs available**.
- The skilled workforce can register their profiles on the app and can search for employment opportunities in their neighborhood.
- Through ASEEM, employers, agencies and job aggregators looking for skilled workforce in specific sectors will also have the required details at their fingertips.
- It will also enable policymakers take more objective view of various sectors.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR DRUG DEMAND REDUCTION (NAPDDR)

Context

*The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has formulated and is implementing a **National Policy to Tackle Drug Abuse**.*

About

The Government has formulated and is implementing a **National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR) for 2018-2025**.

Aim

- The Plan aims at reduction of adverse consequences of drug abuse through a multi-pronged strategy.
- It will employ a multi-pronged strategy involving education, de-addiction and rehabilitation of affected individuals and their families to address the issue.

Key features of NAPDDR

- It will **focus on preventive education, awareness generation, counselling, treatment and rehabilitation of drug-dependent people**.
- Provide **training and focus on capacity-building of service providers** through the collaborative efforts of the Centre, state and NGOs.
- **Coordination with implementing agencies** for controlling the sale of sedatives, painkillers and muscle relaxant drugs.
- **Holding awareness generation programmes** and checking online sale of drugs by stringent monitoring by the cyber cell are proposed under the Action Plan.
- The Action Plan calls for persuading principals, directors, vice chancellors of educational institutions to ensure that no drugs are sold within/nearby the campus.

How will it work?

The activities under the NAPDDR, inter-alia, include:

- Awareness generation programmes in schools / colleges / Universities, workshops / seminars / with parents.
- Community based peer led interactions intervention programmes for vulnerable adolescent and youth in the community.
- Provisioning of treatment facilities.
- Capacity building of service providers.

Significance and Need

Drug trafficking and abuse also pose serious threat to our societies. India is **located between two largest Opium producing regions of the world**. The most common drugs of abuse are 'ganja', 'hashish', 'opium' and 'heroin'.

- The abuse of pharmaceutical preparations like '**buprenorphine**', **codeine based cough syrups and painkillers like 'proxivon'** has also assumed serious proportions.
- In certain regions of the country, drug abuse has already become a severe social-economic problem affecting the vulnerable age groups. Estimates suggest that there are 40 lakh drug addicts in the country.

FOR PRELIMS

ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY

Centenary Celebrations (1920-2020) of Aligarh Muslim University was observed on 22 December, 2020.

Highlights

- Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) **was established in 1920 and evolved out of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College (MAO College) which was set up in 1877** by the great visionary and social reformer, **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan**.
- From its very inception, **it has kept its door open to the members of all communities** and from all corners of the country and the world.
- It has **three off-campus centres in Malappuram (Kerala), AMU Murshidabad centre (West Bengal), and Kishanganj Centre (Bihar)**.
- The university offers more than 300 courses in traditional and modern branches of education.
- It is an institute of national importance, under the declared under seventh schedule of the Constitution of India at its commencement.

Visva-Bharati University

Centenary celebrations of Visva-Bharati University will be observed on 24 December.

Highlights

- **Founded by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore in 1921, Visva-Bharati is also the oldest Central University in the country.**
- **In May 1951, Visva-Bharati was declared to be a Central University** and “an Institution of National Importance” by an Act of Parliament.
- **The University followed the pedagogy devised by Gurudev Tagore**, though gradually it evolved in the format in which modern Universities developed elsewhere.
- **The Prime Minister is the Chancellor of the University.**

National Startup Awards 2021

*Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) is launching the **second edition of the National Startup Awards (NSA) 2021.***

Highlights

- Acknowledging the efforts, initiatives and resilience demonstrated by the startups over the period of unprecedented challenges during the pandemic, **additional categories have been introduced to NSA 2021.**
- **It also aims to** recognise innovations focussed towards indigenisation of key products essential for realisation of an AatmaNirbhar Bharat.
- The awards for startups **will be given in 49 areas classified into 15 broad sectors.**
- There **are six special awards for startups** from educational institutions, making impact in rural areas, women entrepreneurs, potential for import substitution, innovation for combatting COVID-19 and content delivery in Indic languages.

PIB-DECEMBER 24th, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - I

Topic– Social empowerment, Communalism, Regionalism & Secularism.

KISAN DIWAS

Context

*National Farmers' Day or Kisan Diwas, is celebrated across the country **on December 23.***

Highlights

- It is celebrated **to honour India's farmers.**
- In 2001, **the government decided to recognise Choudhary Charan Singh's contribution** to the agriculture sector and welfare of farmers by celebrating his birth anniversary as Kisan Diwas.

Choudhary Charan Singh

- Chaudhary Charan Singh, was India's fifth prime minister. He briefly served as prime minister between 1979 and 1980.
- He is widely regarded as **one of the country's most famous peasant leaders** and known for his pioneering work to promote the welfare of farmers and the agricultural sector.
- He was born in to a middle-class peasant family in Uttar Pradesh on December 23, 1902.
- Greatly influenced by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, he took an active part in the fight for independence.
- After that, his political career largely focused on socialism in rural India.

Noticeable Reforms

- Charan Singh served twice as chief minister of India's biggest agrarian state, Uttar Pradesh, where he played a major role in shaping land reforms.
- He was behind several major farmer-forward Bills, including the Land Utilisation Bill of 1939 and the Debt Redemption Bill in 1939.
- While serving as agriculture minister in 1952, he led UP in its efforts to abolish the zamindari system.
- In fact, he went on to draft the UP Zamindari and Land Reforms Bill himself.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States.

POST MATRIC SCHOLARSHIP TO STUDENTS BELONGING TO SCHEDULED CASTES (PMS-SC)

Context

Cabinet approves transformatory changes in Post Matric Scholarship for SCs.

Highlights

- The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs** approved major and transformatory changes in the Centrally Sponsored Scheme 'Post Matric Scholarship to students belonging to Scheduled Castes (PMS-SC)'.
- **It is estimated that 1.36 Cr such poorest students**, who are currently not continuing their education beyond 10th standards would be brought into the higher education system in the next 5 years.
- This **replaces the existing 'committed liability' system** and brings greater involvement of the Central Govt in this crucial scheme.

Objective

It aims to **benefit more than 4 Crore SC students in the next 5 years** so that they can successfully complete their higher education.

Funding

The Cabinet has approved a total investment of Rs. 59,048 Cr of which **Central Government would spend 60% and the balance would be spent by the State Govts.**

Key points

- **The focus of the scheme** would be on enrolling the poorest students, timely payments, comprehensive accountability, continuous monitoring and total transparency.
- **A campaign will be launched to enroll the students**, from the poorest households passing the 10th standard, in the higher education courses of their choice.
- **Transfer of financial assistance** to the students under the scheme shall be on DBT mode, and preferably using the Aadhar Enabled Payment System.
- **Starting from 2021-22, the Central share (60%)** in the scheme would be released on DBT mode directly into the bank accounts of the students as per fixed time schedule, **after ensuring that the concerned State Government has released their share.**
- **Monitoring mechanism** will be further strengthened through conduct of social audits, annual third party evaluation, and half-yearly self-audited reports from each institution.

Significance

- The Post Matric Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Castes allows students to pursue any post matric course starting from class 11th and onwards, with the Govt meeting the cost of education.
- The Central Govt is committed to give a big push and further impetus to this effort so that the GER (Higher Education) of SCs would reach up to the National standards within the 5 year period.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW (VNR) 2020

Context

NITI Aayog presented India's second Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the **United Nations High-level Political Forum (HLPF)** on Sustainable Development, 2020.

What is the HLPF?

- The United Nations High-level Political Forum (HLPF) is the **foremost international platform for follow-up and review of progress on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**
- The HLPF **meets annually in July for eight days** under the auspices of the **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** of the UN.

Voluntary National Review (VNR)

The VNRs presented by Member States at the HLPF are a critical component of the review of progress and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

- The reviews are voluntary and state-led and are aimed at facilitating the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned.
- The process of preparation of a country's VNR provides a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of various relevant stakeholders.
- NITI Aayog prepared and presented India's first VNR in 2017.

India VNR 2020

- India presented its VNR along with other second time presenters like Bangladesh, Georgia, Kenya, Morocco, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria and Uganda.
- India's VNR this year has undertaken a paradigm shift in terms of embodying a "whole-of-society" approach in letter and spirit.
- NITI Aayog engaged with sub-national and local governments, civil society organizations, local communities, people in vulnerable situations and the private sector.
- As part of this process, NITI Aayog partnered with UN in India and Civil Society Organisations to curate a consultative process.

India has been playing in promoting global engagement platforms such as:

- the International Solar Alliance (ISA),
- the Coalition for Disaster Resilience Infrastructure (CDRI), and
- The active participation in implementing the Sendai Framework, UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Decade of Action: Taking SDGs from Global to Local

- The India VNR 2020 report was also unveiled during this event.
- The report is a comprehensive account of the adoption and implementation of the 2030 Agenda in India.
- Apart from presenting a review of progress on the 17 SDGs, the report discusses at length the policy and enabling environment, India's approach to localising SDGs, and strengthening means of implementation.

Conclusion

In line with the theme of **Taking SDGs from Global to Local**, the goal-wise account of progress on the SDGs has been appended with examples of a range of diverse good practices and success stories of interventions from the States, especially Aspirational Districts.

NITI Aayog has the mandate of overseeing the adoption and monitoring of SDGs at the national and sub-national level.

FOR PRELIMS

MEDIUM RANGE SURFACE TO AIR MISSILE (MRSAM)

Successful Maiden Launch of MRSAM

Highlights

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) achieved a major milestone with the maiden launch of Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM), Army Version.
- It was launched from **Integrated Test Range, Chandipur, off the Coast of Odisha.**

What is MRSAM?

Army version of MRSAM is a surface to Air Missile **developed jointly by DRDO, India and IAI, Israel for use of the Indian Army.**

MRSAM Army weapon system comprises of **Command post, Multi-Function Radar and Mobile Launcher system.**

PIB-DECEMBER 26th, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

AYUSHMAN BHARAT PM-JAY SEHAT

Context

PM to launch Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY SEHAT to extend coverage to all residents of J&K on 26 December.

Highlights

- Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY SEHAT scheme **will ensure Universal Health Coverage and focus on providing financial risk protection.**
- It will ensure **quality and affordable essential health services** to all individuals and communities.

Key features of the scheme

- The Scheme provides **free of cost insurance cover** to all the residents of the UT of J&K.
- It provides financial cover upto Rs 5 lakh per family on a floater basis to all residents of the UT of J&K.
- It provides for operational extension of PM-JAY to 15 lakh (approx) additional families.
- The scheme **will operate on insurance mode in convergence with PM-JAY.** The **benefits of the scheme will be portable across the country.**
- The hospitals empanelled under PM-JAY scheme shall provide services under this scheme as well.

About PM-JAY Scheme

1. **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)** is the **world's largest health insurance/ assurance scheme** fully financed by the government.
2. It **provides cover of 5 lakhs per family per year**, for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization across public and private empaneled hospitals in India.
3. Over 10.74 crore poor and vulnerable entitled families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) are eligible for these benefits.
4. Provides **cashless access to health care services** for the beneficiary at the point of service.

Achieving Universal Health Coverage

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) includes the full spectrum of essential, quality health services, from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care and enables everyone to access the services.

- It aims to protect people from the financial consequences of paying for health services out of their own pockets and reducing the risk that people will be pushed to poverty.
- The Ayushman Bharat program, **with its two pillars – Health and Wellness Centres and Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna** – is envisaged to achieve UHC.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

NATIONAL CONSUMER DAY, 2020

National Consumer Rights Day is **observed on December 24**, every year in India.

Highlights

- **The theme** of the National Consumer Day, 2020 is '**The Sustainable Consumer**'.
- The **Consumer Protection Act 1986** came into effect on this day.
- **The CPA 1986** was enforced so that consumers can be more aware of their entitled rights.
- This day provides opportunity for every consumer against different kinds of exploitation, such as deficiency in services, and unfair trade practices and defective goods.

Who is a consumer?

- Any single person or group of people, other than the buyer who buys the product or services, consumes the product by seeking his/her permission falls under the category of a consumer.
- In simpler words, the consumer can be defined as the end-user of the goods or services.

Consumer Protection Act 1986

The Consumer Protection Act aims to provide consumers with effective safeguards against different types of exploitation such as defective goods, deficiency in services and unfair trade practices.

Key Objectives

To promote and protect the rights of Consumer such as Right to

- Be protected against the marketing of goods and services which are hazardous to life and property.
- Be informed about the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods or services, as the case may be so as to protect the consumer against unfair trade practices.
- Be assured, wherever possible, access to a variety of goods and services at competitive prices.
- Be heard and to be assured that consumer's interest will receive due consideration at appropriate forums.
- Seek redressal against unfair trade practices or restrictive trade practices or unscrupulous exploitation of consumers.
- Consumer education.

To provide speedy and simple redressal to consumer, a quasi – judicial machinery is sought to be set up at the district, State & Central level.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

TSO KAR WETLAND

Context

Ladakh's Tso Kar Wetland Complex now a Wetland of International Importance.

- India has added Tso Kar Wetland Complex in Ladakh as its 42nd Ramsar site.
- It is a second one in the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh.

About Tso Kar Basin

The Tso Kar Basin is a high-altitude wetland complex.

It is called Tso Kar, meaning white lake, **because of the white salt efflorescence found on the margins due to the evaporation of highly saline water.**

It is consisting of two principal waterbodies,

1. **Startsapuk Tso**, a freshwater lake of about 438 hectares to the south, and
2. **Tso Kar**, a hypersaline lake of 1800 hectares to the north, situated in the Changthang region of Ladakh, India.

Important Bird Area (IBA)

- The **Tso Kar Basin** is an **A1 Category Important Bird Area (IBA)** as per Bird Life International and a key staging site in the Central Asian Flyway.
- The site is also **one of the most important breeding areas of the Black-necked Crane** (*Grus nigricollis*) in India.
- **This IBA is also the major breeding area for** Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*), Bar-headed Geese (*Anser indicus*), Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*), Brown-headed Gull (*Larus brunnicephalus*), Lesser Sand-Plover (*Charadrius mongolus*) and many other species.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

- The Ramsar Convention signed on February 2, 1971.
- It is one of the oldest inter-governmental accord signed by member countries to preserve the ecological character of their wetlands of international importance.
- The signing of the Convention on Wetlands **took place in 1971 at the small Iranian town of Ramsar. Since then, the Convention on Wetlands has been known as the Ramsar Convention**
- The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance holds the unique distinction of being the first modern treaty between nations aimed at conserving natural resources.

What is the Aim of Ramsar Convention?

- The Ramsar Convention's broad aims are **to halt the worldwide loss of wetlands and to conserve, through wise use and management, those that remain.**
- This requires international cooperation, policy making, capacity building and technology transfer.
- Wetlands declared as Ramsar sites are protected under strict guidelines of the convention.

What are Ramsar wetlands?

- Under the Ramsar Convention, a wide variety of natural and human-made habitat types ranging from rivers to coral reefs can be classified as wetlands.
- **Wetlands include swamps, marshes, billabongs, lakes, salt marshes, mudflats, mangroves, coral reefs, fens, peat bogs, or bodies of water – whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary.**
- Water within these areas can be **static or flowing; fresh, brackish or saline; and can include inland rivers and coastal or marine water to a depth of six metres at low tide.**
- **There are even underground wetlands.**

Significance of Wetlands

- Wetlands provide a wide range of important resources and ecosystem services such as food, water, fibre, groundwater recharge, water purification, flood moderation, erosion control and climate regulation.
- They are, in fact a major source of water and our main supply of freshwater comes from an array of wetlands which help soak rainfall and recharge groundwater.

BHUVAN PANCHAYAT V 3.0 WEB PORTAL

Bhuvan Panchayat web portal's version 3.0. Was launched for better planning and monitoring of government projects.

Highlights

- It is launched by the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**.
- For the first time, **a thematic data base on a 1:10,00 scale for the entire country** is available with integrated high resolution satellite data for planning.
- The third version of the portal will provide database visualisation and services for the benefit of panchayat members, among others.
- The project is meant to provide geo-spatial services to aid gram panchayat development planning process of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

'Industry' status to sports

Mizoram has become first state to grant 'Industry' status to sports.

- It aims to further bolster the sports activities, by attracting investment.
- The major sports in Mizoram are football, hockey, wrestling.
- there are a number of indigenous games such as, stick fighting, Insuknawra (rod pushing), Kalchhet kal (relay race using bamboo), Inarpathai (cock fighting).

Katkari Tribe

Katkaris were historically forest dwellers, located primarily in Raigad and in parts of Palghar, Ratnagiri and Thane districts of Maharashtra as well and in some places of Gujarat.

- *Katkari is one of the 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.*
- **The British administration had classified them under the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871.**
- The name Katkari is derived from a forest-based activity – the making and barter or sale of Katechu (kath) from the khair tree (Acacia Katechu).
- It is produced by boiling wood from the Khair tree and evaporating the resulting brew.

PIB-DECEMBER 28th, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– *Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.*

MONPA HANDMADE PAPER

Context

KVIC Brings Alive Monpa Handmade Paper Industry in Tawang to Revive the Heritage Art.

What is the Monpa Handmade Paper?

The Monpa Handmade Paper is a **1000-year old heritage art of Arunachal Pradesh** which was driven to the extinction.

- The art of making Monpa handmade paper originated over 1000 years ago.
- Gradually the **art became an integral part of local custom and culture in Tawang** in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Once produced in every household in Tawang, this **handmade paper was a major source of livelihood for the locals.**
- However, the handmade paper industry almost disappeared in the last 100 years; prompting Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) to plan revival of this ancient art.

Key features and significance

- The **fine-textured handmade paper**, which is called **Mon Shugu in the local dialect**, is integral to the vibrant culture of the local tribes in Tawang.
- The paper has great **historic and religious significance** as it is the paper used for writing **Buddhist scriptures and hymns in monasteries.**
- The Monpa handmade paper, will be **made from the bark of a local tree called Shugu Sheng**, which has medicinal values too.

Trade of Monpas

Back then, such was the scale of production that Monpas used to sell these papers **to countries like Tibet, Bhutan, Thailand and Japan**

- At that time, **no paper making industry existed in these countries.**
- However, the local industry gradually began declining and the **indigenous handmade paper was taken over by inferior Chinese paper.**

KVIC's Efforts

Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is making attempt to revival of this handmade paper industry and commissioned a unit to training the locals.

- KVIC will provide marketing support and explore markets for the locally manufactured handmade paper.
- KVIC plans to set up more such units in different parts of the country.
- KVIC will also begin production of innovative plastic-mixed handmade paper in Tawang that will be crucial for reducing plastic waste in the region.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

MATERNAL MORTALITY RATIO (MMR)

Context

India is on track to achieving the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) targets for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) & National Health Policy (NHP): Union Health Minister

Highlights

- **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) of India has declined by 9 points in one year as per the Special Bulletin on MMR released by the Registrar General of India.**
- All-India MMR in 2016-18 stood at 113.
- India's MMR was 130 and 122 in 2014-16 and 2015-17, respectively.
- The ratio has declined from 122 in 2015-17 to 113 in 2016-18 (**7.4 % decline**).

India's MMR and SDG

According to the latest Sample Registration System (SRS) findings for 2016-18:

- With this persistent decline, India is on track **to achieving the SDG of 70/ lakh live births by 2030.**
- **The National Health Policy (NHP) target** of 100/ live births will be achieved by 2020.
- **India's southern states have achieved the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals target of bringing down Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) below 70.**
- Among states, Kerala has the lowest MMR at 43.
- This value was the highest in Assam at 215.

Indian states which have achieved the SDG target

Five states have achieved the SDG target, these are:

- Kerala (43),
- Maharashtra (46)
- Tamil Nadu (60),
- Telangana (63) and
- Andhra Pradesh (65).
- **There are eleven (11) States that have achieved the target of MMR set by the NHP.**
- These includes the **above 5 and the states of Jharkhand (71), Gujarat (75), Haryana (91), Karnataka (92), West Bengal (98) and Uttarakhand (99).**
- **The 'Empowered Action Group'** (comprising of Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand) and Assam had an MMR of 161.

What is the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)?

MMR is number of maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births.

According to WHO:

*"Maternal death is the **death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy**, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes."*

What is the Live birth?

“Live birth refers to the complete expulsion or extraction from its mother of a product of conception, irrespective of the duration of the pregnancy, which, after such separation, breathes or shows any other evidence of life – e.g. beating of the heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord or definite movement of voluntary muscles – whether or not the umbilical cord has been cut or the placenta is attached. Each product of such a birth is considered live born.”

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

BRICS REMOTE SENSING SATELLITE CONSTELLATION

Context

The space agencies of BRICS nations have been negotiating a Framework Agreement to formalize the cooperation on building a BRICS space agencies.

About

- The five Brics countries – **Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa** – agreed to create a Brics Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation.
- This will be the first substantive Brics cooperation in space research.

How it will be done?

- It is currently proposed that the Brics Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation be implemented in two phases.
- **Phase 1**– would create a remote sensing data sharing system, making the data from each of the member countries’ existing Earth observation (EO) satellites available to all the other members as well.
- **Phase 2**– will be further discussed and defined in the near future, will involve the creation of a new EO satellite constellation.
- The space agencies of the five countries agreed that its implementation would be a concrete move in developing high-technology cooperation within the group.
- It is further expected that this project will re-stimulate the strategic partnership between the five countries.

The space agencies involved

The five space agencies involved are-

- Agência Espacial Brasileira (Brazil),
- The China National Space Administration,
- the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO),
- Roscosmos (Russia)
- The South African National Space Agency (Sansa).

Ongoing Programs

- Brazil and China have a joint (now 50:50) EO satellite programme known as CBERS (China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite), with CBERS-4 being the current operational spacecraft in the series.
- China also operates its own EO satellites (the Gaofen series) as does Russia (the latest series are designated Resurs).
- Brazil has developed its first entirely indigenous EO satellite, Amazonia-1, which should be launched late next year.
- South Africa currently does not have an operational EO satellite larger than a nanosat; its next full-size such spacecraft will be EOSat-1, currently being developed.

FOR PRELIMS

ASPIRE – AUTOMOTIVE SOLUTIONS PORTAL FOR INDUSTRY, RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Context

International Centre of Automotive Technology (ICAT) is developing technology platform for automotive industry called ASPIRE – Automotive Solutions Portal for Industry, Research and Education.

Highlights

- Department of Heavy Industry (DHI), Govt of India, has embarked on a mission to promote innovation, R&D and product development in India for various sectors.
- The objective of the portal is to create an ecosystem which will bring solution seekers and problem solvers together.
- These include, industry, academia, research institutes, start-ups, professionals and experts.
- The key objective of this portal is to facilitate the Indian Automotive Industry to become self-reliant by assisting in innovation and adoption of global technological advancements by bringing together the stakeholders from various associated avenues.
- The e-portal will act as a one stop solution providing a technology platform which will help to bring together the various stakeholders from the Indian auto industry.

PIB-DECEMBER 29th, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

INTERNATIONAL BLUE FLAG

Context

International Blue Flag hoisted at 8 beaches across the Country.

Highlights

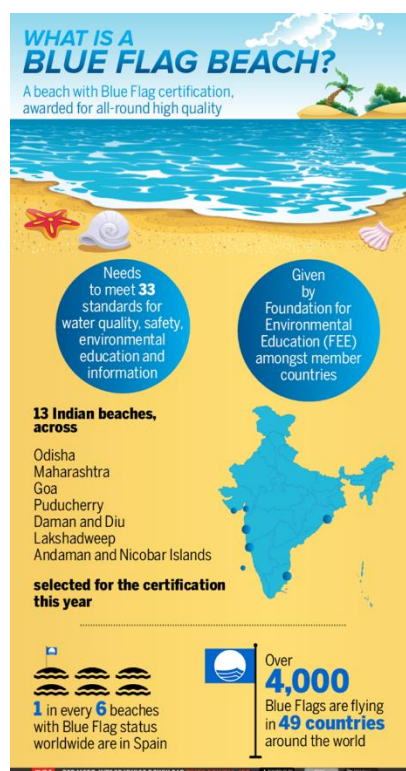
- The beaches where the International Blue Flags were hoisted are: **Kappad (Kerala), Shivrajpur (Gujarat), Ghoghla (Diu), Kasarkod and Padubidri (Karnataka), Rushikonda (Andhra Pradesh), Golden (Odisha) and Radhanagar (Andaman & Nicobar Islands).**
- India secured the International Blue Flag Certification for these beaches on 6th October 2020.
- An International Jury comprising of member organizations UNEP, UNWTO, UNESCO, IUCN, ILS, FEE etc. announced the award at Copenhagen, Denmark.

What is the Blue flag certification?

- **Blue Flag certification** is a globally recognised eco-label accorded by “**Foundation for Environment Education in Denmark**” based on **33 stringent criteria**.
- The **Blue Flag Programme for beaches and marinas** is run by the international, non-governmental, non-profit organisation the ‘Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)’.
- It was started in France in 1985 and has been implemented in Europe since 1987, and in areas outside Europe since 2001, when South Africa joined.
- Neat and clean beaches are an indicator that the coastal environment is in good health and the **Blue Flag certification** is a global recognition of India’s conservation and sustainable development efforts.

What is the ‘Blue Flag Beach’?

- The ‘Blue Flag’ beach is an ‘eco-tourism model’.
- It marks out beaches as providing tourists and beachgoers clean and hygienic bathing water, facilities/amenities, a safe and healthy environment, and sustainable development of the area.



GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

‘BEACH ENVIRONMENT AND AESTHETICS MANAGEMENT SERVICES’ (BEAMS) PROGRAM

Context

India has launched an eco-label **Beach Environment & Aesthetics Management Services (BEAMS)** under **Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)** project under MoEFCC.

Objectives

- Abate pollution in coastal waters.
- Promote sustainable development of beach facilities.
- Protect and conserve coastal ecosystems and natural resources.
- Maintain high standards of cleanliness, hygiene and safety for beachgoers in accordance with coastal environment and regulations.

Significance

- Today, the introduction of **BEAMS program in 10 coastal states** have resulted into **international level of cleanliness at beaches**.
- Over 500 tonnes of solid waste collected, recycled and scientifically disposed at these beaches reducing the menace of marine litter by over 78% and marine plastic by over 83%.
- Approximately 11000 KL of water was saved by recycling & reuse with BEAMS program, which has **resulted into an increase in footfall at these beaches by over 85% cumulative**.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) project

ICZM aims to improve livelihood of coastal communities and conserve the coastal ecosystem.

- It is a **World Bank assisted project**.
- The **National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM)**, Chennai, will provide scientific and technical inputs.
- The concept of ICZM was born in **1992 during the Earth Summit of Rio de Janeiro**.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

“ADOPT A HERITAGE: APNI DHAROHAR, APNI PEHCHAAN” PROJECT

Context

Tourism and Culture Minister reviewed the “Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan” project.

What is ‘Adopt a Heritage’ project?

“Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan” Project is a **collaborative effort** by the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Survey of India and State/ UTs Governments.

- The project aims to encourage companies from public sector, private sector, trusts, NGOs, individuals and other stakeholders to become ‘**Monument Mitras**’ and take up the responsibility of developing and upgrading the basic and advanced tourist amenities.
- They would also look after **the Operation & Maintenance of the same**.
- The project was **launched in 2017 on the occasion of World Tourism Day**.

What are the objectives of the project?

- **Developing basic tourism infrastructure** in and around heritage sites, monuments, natural sites and tourist sites.
- Develop **facilities and amenities to improve the tourist experience** at heritage sites, monuments, natural sites and tourist sites.
- **Promote cultural and heritage value of the country** and develop avenues to create awareness about the heritage/natural/tourist sites in the country
- Develop and **promote sustainable tourism infrastructure** and ensure proper Operations and Maintenance therein.
- Develop **employment opportunities and support livelihoods of local communities** at the heritage, natural and tourist sites.

Present status

Under the project, 27 Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) have been awarded to 12 Monument Mitras for twenty-five (25) sites and two (2) Technological interventions across India.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

ROUTEING SYSTEM IN SOUTH WEST INDIAN WATERS

Context

Routeing system in South West Indian waters separated for Merchant and Fishing Vessels.

Highlights

The Ministry of Shipping has **separated the operation routes of merchant vessels and fishing vessels in South West Indian waters**, considering the safety and efficiency of navigation.

Why the Routes were separated?

- The Arabian Sea around the south-west coast of India is a busy sea route.
- ***The substantial number of merchant ships passing through the area, along with large number of fishing vessels are operating in the area.***
- It sometimes causes accidents between them, resulting in damage of property and environmental pollution, and in several instances has resulted in loss of lives also.

Benefits

- It will ***also ensure improvement in avoidance of collision, ease in flow of traffic along with safety of life*** at sea and enhance ***protection of marine environment.***
- It is a very proactive and positive step ***of Directorate General of Shipping which will efficiently regulate shipping traffic in this region.***

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

WATERWAY USAGE CHARGES WAIVED

Context

Ministry of Shipping has waived waterways usage charges to promote Inland water transport.

Highlights

- The waterway usage charges has been waived initially for three years.
- This decision was taken to promote inland waterways as a supplementary, eco-friendly and cheaper mode of transport.
- Decision of waiving waterway charges will attract the industries to use the national waterways for their logistical needs.

Why this decision was taken?

- Water usage charge was applicable on use of all the national waterways by vessels.
- It was a hindrance in administration of traffic movement and collection of traffic data.
- Presently, ***Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)*** levies the waterway usage charges at a rate of ***Rs 0.02 per gross registered tonnage (GRT) per kilometer for plying of Inland cargo vessels.***
- It levies ***Rs. 0.05 per gross registered tonnage (GRT) per kilometer for plying of Cruise vessels*** on national waterways.

Benefits

- As the mode of transport is eco-friendly and cheaper, it will not only reduce the burden on other transport modes but also promote the ease of doing business.
- The decision is estimated to increase the inland waterway traffic movement to 110MMT in 2022-23 from 72MMT in 2019-20.
- It will benefit the economic activities and development in the region.

ZORAM MEGA FOOD PARK

Zoram Mega Food Park to provide employment to 5000 persons and to benefit about 25000 farmers.

Highlights

- The Zoram Mega Food Park located in Mizoram. This is the first Mega Food Park operationalized in the State.
- It is an integrated project which provides infrastructure and services for food processing across the value chain to maximize value addition and minimize wastage.
- The project is being executed under the Mega Food Park Scheme of the Ministry of Food Processing.
- **The Mega Food Park Scheme:** Government of India provides financial assistance upto Rs. 50.00 Crore per Mega Food Park project.
- Presently, **18 Mega Food Park Projects are under implementation in various states** and 19 Mega Food Parks have already become functional in the States.
- *6 of them are in the North eastern region.*
- **2 MFPs in North eastern Region are operational at Assam and Mizoram.**

PIB-DECEMBER 30th, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

EASTERN DEDICATED FREIGHT CORRIDOR

Context

New Bhaupur- New Khurja Section and the Operation Control Centre of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor was started recently.

Highlights

The Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor will originate at Ludhiana in Punjab and culminate at Dankuni in West Bengal.

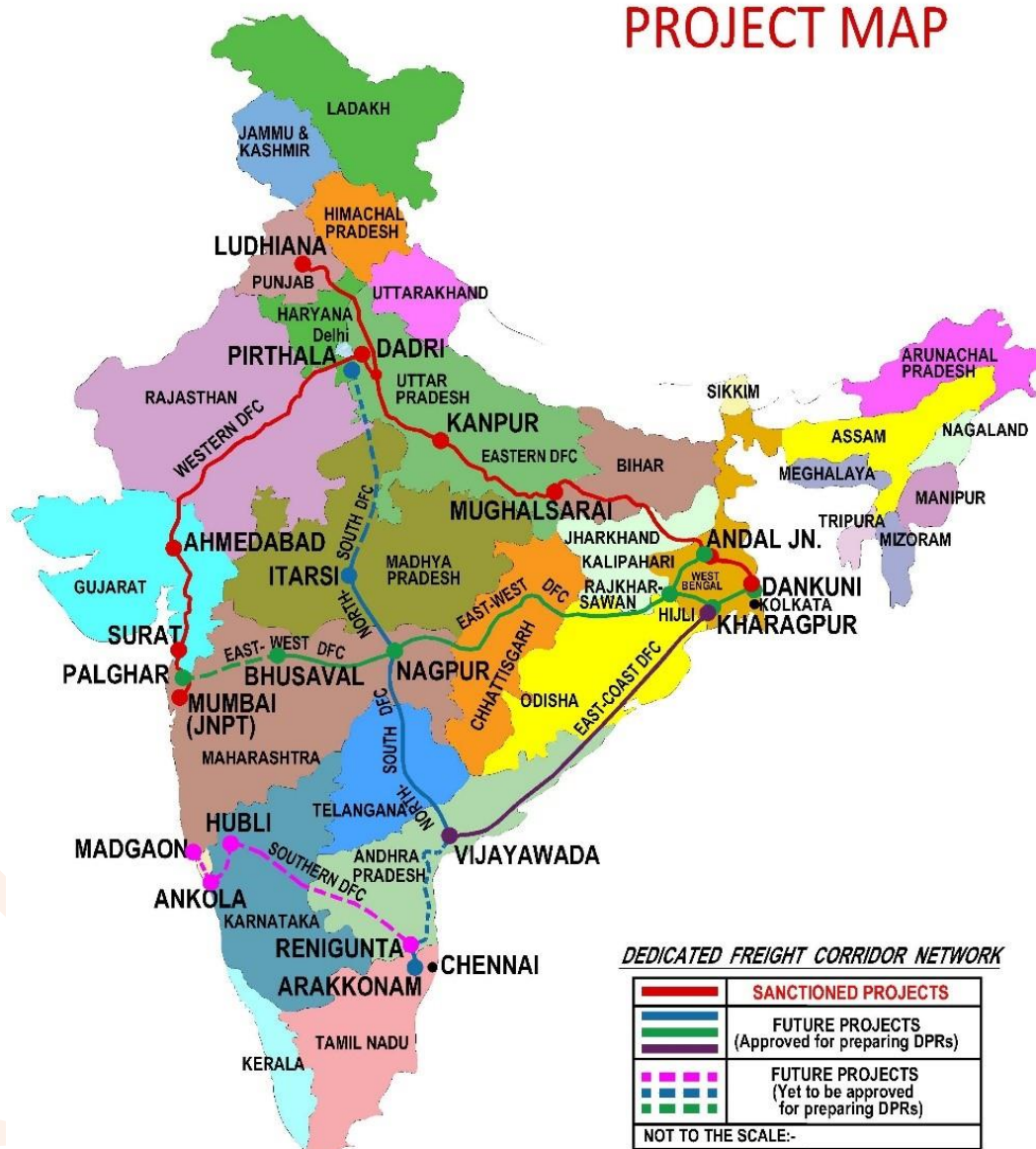
- Of the nearly 1,800-km stretch, about 1,000 km will pass through Uttar Pradesh alone.
- The 1,800-km Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor project will connect north India to the eastern part of the country through a dedicated freight railway tracks.
- The new section is located in Uttar Pradesh and it is dedicated only to freight trains, **which will run at an average speed of 75 km per hour.**
- Usually, freight trains run at an average speed of about 25 km per hour.

Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFC)

The Eastern and Western Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFC) are a mega rail transport projects. These are being undertaken to increase transportation capacity, reduce unit costs of transportation, and improve service quality.

- The Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridors (1839 route kilometres (RKM)) extends from Dankuni near Kolkata to Ludhiana in Punjab.
- The Western Dedicated Freight Corridors (1499 RKM) extends from the Jawahar Lal Nehru Port (JNPT) in Mumbai to Dadri /Rewari near Delhi.

PROJECT MAP



MAP FOR INDICATIVE PURPOSE ONLY

Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCCIL)

The DFCCIL is a corporation run by the Ministry of Railways.

DFCCIL's mission is: To build a corridor with appropriate technology that enables Indian railways to regain its market share of freight transport.

- **It aims to** undertake planning & development, mobilisation of financial resources and construction, maintenance and operation of the Dedicated Freight Corridors.
- DFCC has been **registered as a company under the Companies Act 1956.**

Significance of Dedicated Freight Corridors

The DFC will separate freight and passenger traffic to increase the speed of freight movement. It will be used to transport fertilisers, food grains, salt, coal, iron & steel and cement.

The project will eventually be linked to the Eastern DFC to form four hubs known as India's Golden Quadrilateral including Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata.

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR VACCINES AND IMMUNISATION (GAVI)

Context

Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan nominated to the Board of GAVI, The Vaccine Alliance.

What is GAVI Alliance?

GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, is a United Nations-backed organisation which coordinates vaccinations across the world.

- **GAVI (Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization)** was created in 2000 as a successor to the Children's Vaccine Initiative, which had been launched in 1990.
- **It is a public-private global health partnership with the goal of increasing access to immunisation in poor countries.**
- **GAVI has observer status at the World Health Assembly.**

GAVI Alliance brings together-

- Developing country and donor governments,
- The World Health Organization,
- UNICEF,
- The World Bank,
- The vaccine industry in both industrialised and developing countries,
- Research and technical agencies,
- Civil society,
- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other private philanthropists.

GAVI Board

The Board normally **meets twice a year in June and November/ December** and holds an annual retreat, normally in March or April. All these meetings are normally attended in person.

- Its **membership are drawn from a range of partner organisations**, as well as experts from the private sector.
- The Board provides a forum for balanced strategic decision making, innovation and partner collaboration.
- The GAVI Board is responsible for strategic direction and policy-making, oversees the operations of the Vaccine Alliance and monitors programme implementation.
- **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala presently serves as Chair of the GAVI Alliance Board.**

Significance

GAVI Alliance provides a unique opportunity for a wide-range of partners to build consensus around policies, strategies, and priorities and to recommend responsibility of implementation to the partner with the most experience and insight in the area.

GAVI has developed innovative approaches to international health and development.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– *Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.*

KNOWLEDGE RESOURCE CENTRE NETWORK (KRCNET)

Context

Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) has launched '**Knowledge Resource Centre Network' (KRCNet)** on its Foundation Day.

Key points

- Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) aims to develop a **World-Class Knowledge Resource Centre Network (KRCNet)** under the Digital India initiative.
- The traditional libraries of the MoES system will be upgraded into a **top-notch Knowledge Resource Centres (KRC)**.
- KRCs will be connected with each other and integrated into the KRCNet portal.
- **It will be a single point entry to the intellectual world of Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).**

Salient objectives of the KRCNet:

- **Establish a Total Quality Management (TQM) system** by securing ISO certification for documenting MoES knowledge resources, its maintenance, easy retrieval and dissemination.

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- **Collect, collate, analyze, index, store and disseminate the intellectual resources, products and project outputs available in MoES headquarter and its institutes.**
- **Develop and maintain an up-to-date meta-data of the print & digital resources available in MoES headquarter and MoES institutes, including MoES services.**

FOR PRELIMS

DIGITAL OCEAN

‘Digital Ocean’ is the first of its kind digital platform for Ocean Data Management developed by INCOIS of Minister of Earth Sciences (MoES).

Highlights

- It will play a central role in **sustainable management of oceans and expanding our ‘Blue Economy’** initiatives.
- Further, the Digital Ocean will **be promoted as a platform for capacity building on Ocean Data Management for all Indian Ocean Rim countries.**
- ‘Digital Ocean’ helps to **share this knowledge about the ocean with a wide range of users** including research institutions, operational agencies, strategic users, academic community, maritime industry and policy makers.
- Digital Ocean also provides **free access to information to the general public and the common man.**

TiHAN-IIT Hyderabad

‘TiHAN-IIT Hyderabad’ is **India’s first Test bed for Autonomous Navigation Systems** (Terrestrial and Aerial).

Highlights

- IIT Hyderabad under the **National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS)** is setting up a **Technology Innovation Hub on Autonomous Navigation and Data Acquisition Systems (UAVs, RoVs, etc.).**
- The Technology Innovation Hub on **Autonomous Navigation Systems for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and Remotely Operated Vehicles** at IIT Hyderabad, known as ‘TiHAN Foundation’.
- It has been incorporated as a **Section-8 company by the institute in June 2020.**

PIB-DECEMBER 31st, 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - II

Topic– *Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.*

LIGHT HOUSE PROJECTS

Context

*The Government is setting up Light House Projects (LHPs) under **Global Housing Technology Challenge-India (GHTC-India)** at six sites across six States.*

What is the Light House Projects?

The Light House Projects (LHPs) are **model housing projects** with houses built with **shortlisted alternate technology suitable to the geo-climatic and hazard conditions of the region.**

- This will demonstrate and deliver ready to live houses with speed, economy and with better quality of construction in a sustainable manner.
- The **period of construction is maximum 12 months** from the date of handing over of sites to the construction agency after all statutory approvals.
- Approvals will be accorded through a fast track process by the **concerned State Government.**
- The **minimum size of houses constructed under LHP** shall be in accordance with the prevailing guidelines of the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban).**

Implementing States

- The LHPs are being constructed at Indore (Madhya Pradesh), Rajkot (Gujarat), Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Ranchi (Jharkhand), Agartala (Tripura) and Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh).
- They **comprise about 1000 houses at each location** along with allied infrastructure facilities.

GOVERNMENT'S OTHER HOUSING SCHEMES

ASHA-India

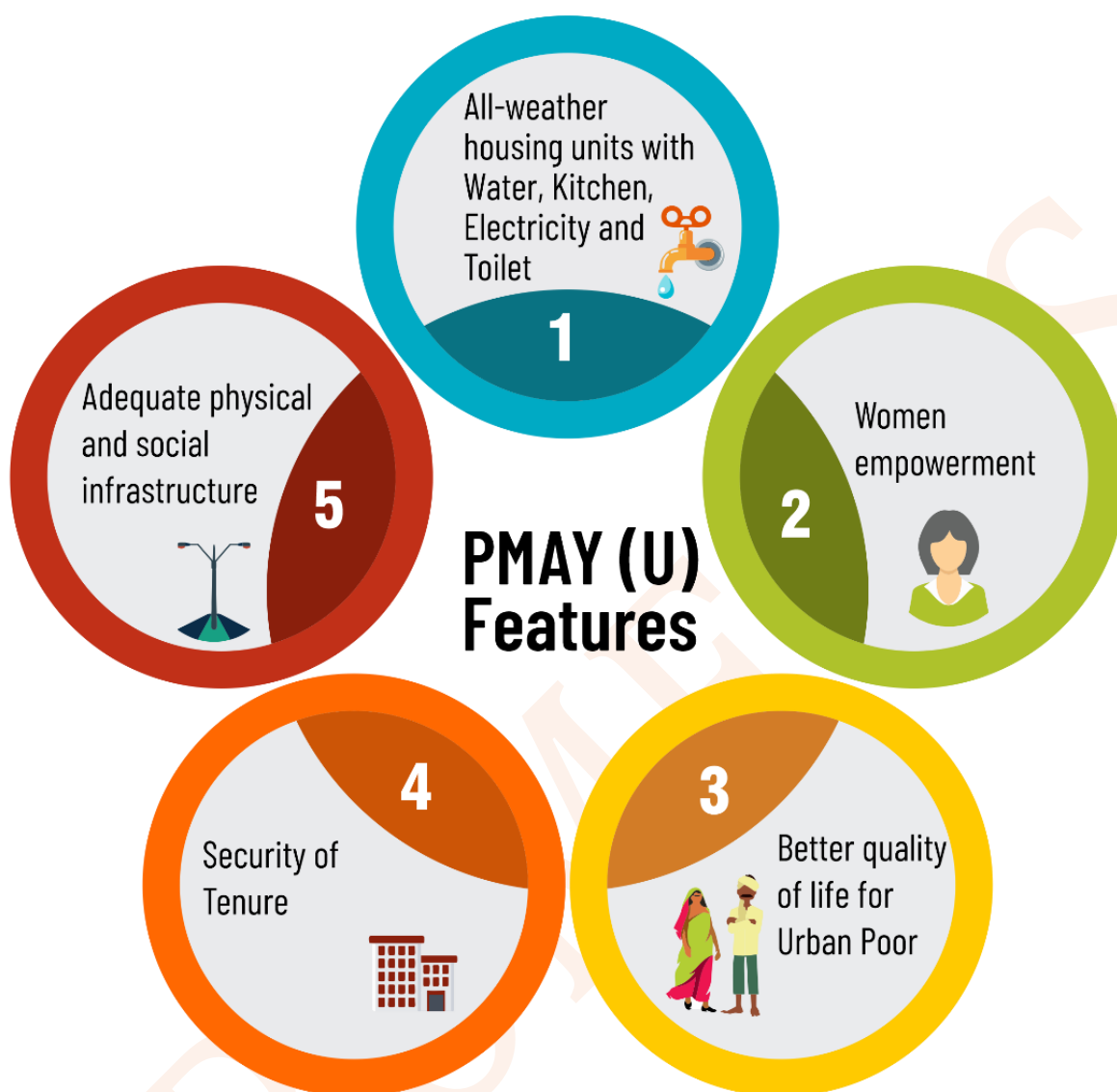
Affordable Sustainable Housing Accelerators – India (ASHA-India) aims to promote domestic research and entrepreneurship by providing incubation and acceleration support to potential future technologies.

- **Under ASHA-India initiative**, five ASHA-India Centers have been set up for providing incubation and acceleration support.
- The ASHA-India Centers will also help in developing design guidelines, construction manuals and other necessary guidelines, relevant for effective use of such technologies in the region.

PMAY-U Mission

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY-U) Mission has been designed to achieve the vision of “Housing For All by 2022”.

It is a flagship Mission of Government of India being implemented **by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)**, was launched on **25th June 2015.**



GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

SCHEME TO ENHANCE ETHANOL DISTILLATION CAPACITY

Context

Cabinet approves modified scheme to enhance ethanol distillation capacity in the country.

Highlights

- This will **increase income of farmers** as other feed stocks such as cereals (rice, wheat, barley, corn & sorghum), sugarcane and sugar beet to be used for production of ethanol.

- For benefiting a large population of farmers, Government is encouraging **distilleries to produce ethanol from maize & rice available with FCI.**
- India is well on the path of achieving a **10% blending target by 2022.** This will help increase the income of our farmers and enhance their livelihoods.
- **Government has fixed a target of 10% blending of fuel grade ethanol with petrol by 2022, 15% blending by 2026 & 20% blending by 2030.**
- Diversion of excess sugarcane and sugar to ethanol will facilitate the clearance of cane price dues of farmers.
- Sugarcane farmers have benefited in the past six years as the capacity of molasses based distilleries has more than doubled and is currently at 426 crore litres.

What is Bioethanol?

Bioethanol fuel is **mainly produced by the sugar fermentation process**, although it can also be manufactured by the chemical process of reacting ethylene with steam.

- Bioethanol is the principle fuel used as a **petrol substitute** for road transport vehicles.
- The main sources of sugar required to produce ethanol come from fuel or energy crops.
- **Ethanol or ethyl alcohol (C₂H₅OH) is a clear colourless liquid, it is biodegradable, low in toxicity and causes little environmental pollution if spilt.**
- By blending ethanol with gasoline we can also oxygenate the fuel mixture so it burns more completely and reduces polluting emissions.

Benefits of Bioethanol

Bioethanol has a number of advantages over conventional fuels.

- It comes from a renewable resource i.e. crops and not from a finite resource and the crops it derives from can grow well in India (like cereals, sugar beet and maize).
- The road transport network accounts majorly for of all greenhouse gas emissions.
- Blending bioethanol with petrol will help extend the life of the India's diminishing oil supplies and ensure greater fuel security, avoiding heavy reliance on oil producing nations.
- By encouraging bioethanol's use, the rural economy would also receive a boost from growing the necessary crops.
- Bioethanol is also biodegradable and far less toxic than fossil fuels.
- Bioethanol is produced using familiar methods, such as fermentation, and it can be distributed using the same petrol forecourts and transportation systems as before.

Mains Question:

The Government's initiative to increase blending percentage in petrol would enable sugar mills to make timely payment of cane dues of farmers. Discuss.

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Topic– Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

KALA AZAR

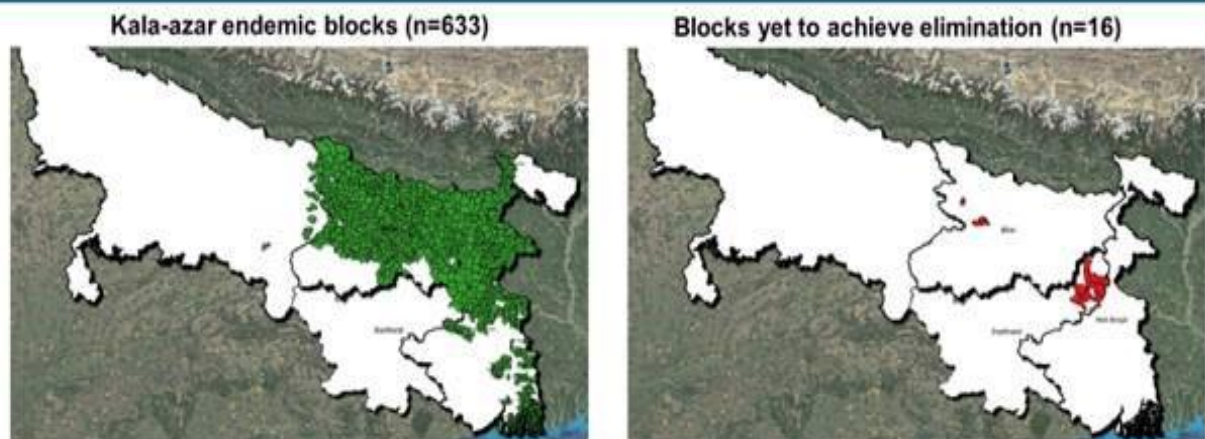
Context

Union Minister of Health reviewed the status of the disease Kala-Azar in the four states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

Highlights

- There are **54 districts in four states** namely **Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal** that are currently affected by Kala-azar.
- The **sporadic cases are reported** in other states like Assam, HP, J&K, Kerala, Sikkim, and Uttarakhand.

Kala-Azar endemic states- INDIA




- Disease is endemic in 54 districts and 633 blocks of four states – Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, UP
- As on 30th Nov 2020, elimination has been achieved in 617 blocks against 596 blocks last year. 60% reduction compared to 2019.

What is Kala Azar?

The term “kala-azar” comes from India where it is the Hindi for black fever.

- The disease is also known as **Indian leishmaniasis, visceral leishmaniasis, leishmania infection, dum dum fever, black sickness, and black fever.**
- It is a chronic and potentially fatal parasitic disease of the viscera (the internal organs, particularly the liver, spleen, bone marrow and lymph nodes) due **to infection by the parasite called Leishmania donovani.**

WHAT IS KALA-AZAR

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A slow progressing indigenous disease 	Signs & Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Caused by protozoan parasite of genus <i>Leishmania</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Recurrent fever
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In India, <i>Leishmania donovani</i> is the only parasite causing the disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Loss of appetite
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The parasite primarily infects reticuloendothelial system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Weakness
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Spleen enlargement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Anaemia
Transmission	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sandfly of genus <i>Phlebotomus argentipes</i> only known vector of kala-azar in India 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indian kala-azar has a unique epidemiological feature of being anthroponotic ▪ Female sandflies pick up parasite while feeding on infected human host
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development and multiplication in the gut of sandflies and move to mouthparts 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parasite undergoes morphological change to become flagellate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Healthy human hosts get infection when an infective sandfly vector bites them

Spread and symptoms

Leishmania donovani, the agent of kala-azar, is transmitted by sandfly bites in parts of Asia (primarily India), Africa (primarily Sudan) and South America (primarily Brazil) where all together there are an estimated half million cases per year.

- There are also several hundred cases yearly in Europe (primarily in the Mediterranean region) and a few in North America.
- **Signs and symptoms** include fever, weight loss, fatigue, anemia, and substantial swelling of the liver and spleen.

Important Facts

- Kala Azar is the **2nd largest parasitic killer in the world after Malaria** and results in a 95% fatality rate if the patients are not treated.
- Additionally, up to 20% of the patients who are correctly treated and cured, **develop a skin condition called Post-Kala-Azar Dermal Leishmaniasis (PKDL)** which surfaces within months to years after treatment.
- These **patients can contain large amounts of parasites in their skin lesions**, making them an important source of transmission.

Mains Question:

How is kala- azar spread in some particular regions? Examine what measures has the government taken to tackle those disease.

FOR PRELIMS

SAHAYAK-NG

Context

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) **conducted the successful maiden test trial of 'SAHAYAK-NG' Air Dropped Container.**

Highlights

- 'SAHAYAK-NG' India's **first indigenously designed and developed Air Dropped Container.**
- The trial was conducted by Indian Navy to enhance its operational logistics capabilities and provide critical engineering stores **to ships which are deployed more than 2000 km from the coast.**
- It **reduces the requirement of ships to come close to the coast to collect spares and stores.**
- The newly developed GPS aided air dropped container is having the capability to carry a payload that weighs upto 50 kg and can be dropped from heavy aircraft.

Digital Ocean

The Minister of Earth Sciences inaugurated the web-based application 'Digital Ocean' recently.

- It is the first of its kind digital platform for Ocean Data Management.
- Developed by Indian National Centre for Oceanic Information Services (INCOIS) of MoES.
- It includes a set of applications developed to organize and present heterogeneous oceanographic data by adopting rapid advancements in geospatial technology.
- It facilitates data visualization, data analysis to assess the evolution of oceanographic features, data fusion.

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