



YOJNA IAS

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Basement C32 Noida Sector-2 Uttar Pradesh 201301

Contact No. : +91 8595390705 | website : www.yojnaias.com

CURRENT AFFAIRS

JULY 2022



Rights of indian tribes



Rights of indian tribes – Today Current Affairs

- The election of Draupadi Murmu as the 15th President of India is symbolic of utmost importance. She will be the first person from tribal/tribal background to hold this position.
- The election of Ms. Murmu is a milestone in the journey of tribal empowerment. In colonial India, 101 years after two tribal people were elected to the legislative bodies for the first time, a person of this class has been elected to the highest office of the country. The Hindu Analysis
- Although the founders of the Republic of India were fully aware of the non-profit status of the tribal people and made special provisions like the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the

Constitution, the systematic erosion of the safeguards they enjoyed, There is a growing concern among tribal activists regarding their harassment and repression by the police and a general intolerance towards tribal autonomy by the state.

What are the essential characteristics for a community to be recognized as a Scheduled Tribe? The Hindu Analysis

- According to the Lokur Committee (1965), they should have five essential characteristics:
- Signs of primitive traits
- Distinctive Culture
- Hesitation to get in touch with the community at large
- Geographical isolation
- Backwardness

What are the basic safeguards provided by the Constitution of India for Scheduled Tribes? The Hindu Analysis

- The Constitution of India does not attempt to define the word 'Tribe', although the term 'Scheduled Tribe' was included in the Constitution through Article 342.
- It stipulates that "the President may, by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution."
- The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution provides for the establishment of a Tribes Advisory Council in every State having Scheduled Areas.

Educational and Cultural Safety Measures : The Hindu Analysis

- Article 15(4): Special provision for the advancement of other backward classes (this includes Scheduled Tribes)
- Article 29: Protection of interests of minorities (this includes Scheduled Tribes)
- Article 46: The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, in particular the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
- Article 350: Right to protection of a specific language, script or culture.
- Political Security Measures : The Hindu Analysis
- Article 330: Reservation of seats in Lok Sabha for Scheduled Tribes
- Article 337: Reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in State Legislative Assemblies
- Article 243: Reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in Panchayats.
- Administrative Security Measures : The Hindu Analysis
- Article 275: It provides for the provision of special funds by the Central Government

to the State Government for promoting the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes and for providing them a better administration.

Recent Initiatives taken by the Government for the Scheduled Tribes : The Hindu Analysis

- TRIFED
- Digital Transformation of Tribal Schools
- Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups
- Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana
- Eklavya Model Residential Schools

Problems faced by tribes in India:

Losing control over natural resources : The Hindu Analysis

- As India industrialized and natural resources were discovered in tribal-populated areas, tribal rights were eroded and state control over natural resources replaced tribal control.
- With the advent of the concept of protected forests and national forests, the tribal people felt themselves uprooted from their cultural roots and had no secure means of livelihood.

Lack of education : The Hindu Analysis

- Most of the schools in tribal areas lack basic infrastructure and there are no minimum teaching materials and even minimum sanitation provisions.
- Tribal parents prefer to engage their children in gainful employment as there is no immediate economic benefit from education.
- Most of the tribal education programs have been prepared in official/regional languages, which are unfamiliar and incomprehensible to tribal students.

Displacement and Rehabilitation : The Hindu Analysis

- Acquisition of tribal land by the government for the development process of key areas like large steel plants, power projects and large dams has resulted in large scale displacement of tribal population.
- Tribal areas of Chotanagpur region, Orissa, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh have suffered the most.
- Migration of these tribal people to urban areas causes psychological problems for them as they are not able to adjust well to the urban lifestyle and values.

Health and nutrition problems : The Hindu Analysis

- Due to economic backwardness and insecure livelihood, tribal people face health

problems related to spread of diseases like malaria, cholera, diarrhea and jaundice.

- They are also victims of malnutrition related problems like iron deficiency and anemia, high infant mortality rate etc.

Gender Issues : The Hindu Analysis

- The degradation of the natural environment, especially the destruction of forests and the rapidly shrinking resource base, has had a massive impact on the status of women.
- Opening up of tribal areas for mining, industry and commercialization has brought men and women of the tribal group under the brutal operation of the market economy where consumerism and commoditization of women is on the rise.

Erosion of Identity : The Hindu Analysis

- The traditional institutions and laws of the tribals are coming into conflict with the modern institutions which is giving rise to apprehensions among the tribals about maintaining their identity.
- The extinction of tribal dialects and languages is another cause for concern as it indicates the erosion of tribal identity.

What should be done to empower the tribes in India?

Improvement in health facilities : The Hindu Analysis

- Mobile medical camps can play a major role in improving access to remote tribal population.
- Provision of emergency transport for pregnant tribal women for access to health facilities for maternity care is one of their major needs.
- Health workers of tribal communities become a link between health facilities and tribal communities in guiding patients, explaining doctors' prescriptions, helping patients in availing welfare schemes and counseling them about preventive and promotive health practices.

Improving Food and Nutrition Facility : The Hindu Analysis

- Formation of Mini-Anganwadis on a large scale with easy norms and expansion of Village Grain Banks in Tribal Areas are some of the strategies which have been adopted to reach out to the hitherto 'unreachable' people in tribal areas.

Employment and Income Generation : The Hindu Analysis

- Employment and income generation opportunities should be ensured for the tribal areas. Improving their economic condition by providing them with paid employment or self-employment opportunities and thus freeing them from the shackles of poverty and

indebtedness would be a necessary step.

- Efforts should also be made to extend micro-credit to self-employed undertakings and implement other schemes like MGNREGA on non-availability of work opportunities.
- There is also a need to encourage the collection and marketing of minor forest produce.

Management of Water Resources : The Hindu Analysis

- There is a need for more effective implementation of the National Water Policy in tribal areas to cover expansion of irrigation facilities and provision of drinking water (with special emphasis on watershed management, rainwater harvesting and water saving practices).
- For effective water resource management and to protect water resources from pollution, it is also necessary to spread mass education and public awareness among the rural and tribal population.

Empowerment of Tribal Women : The Hindu Analysis

- Effective measures should be taken to improve the condition of tribal women. For this the following steps can be taken:
- To promote joint forest management and their leadership role in Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- To take legal and administrative measures to stop the practice of victimization of women suspected of witchcraft, along with a massive campaign for social awareness and rehabilitation of the victim women through women's organizations.

Inclusion of Tribal Population:

Cultivation of medicinal plants : The Hindu Analysis

- India holds the top position in the export of generic drugs in the world. Tribal group people should be encouraged to cooperate with the government for self-consumption as well as identification and collection of medicinal plants from the forest for sale as well as cultivation of suitable plant species.
- The Government of India has decided to take advantage of this business and for this a National Medicinal Plant Board has been established.

Infrastructure Development : The Hindu Analysis

- The government can cooperate with tribal groups for the development of infrastructure in their local areas.
- Meghalaya is known for its 'living root bridge'. These bridges are traditionally built by trained Khasi and Jaintia tribesmen, who have mastered the art of building these bridges on the raised banks of streams flowing through the dense forest of Meghalaya.

Social inclusion : The Hindu Analysis

- The social exclusion experienced by tribal people is mainly due to discrimination at the social and institutional level. This has created a situation of their isolation, shame and humiliation and has consequently given opportunity for self-exclusion among the tribes.
- There is a dire need of awareness among the non-tribal population of the country to recognize the potential and dignity of the tribal people so as to ensure the unity and integrity of the country and the spirit of fraternity.

Swadeep Kumar

Hatti Community: Himachal Pradesh



Hatti Community: Himachal Pradesh – Today Current Affairs

- Recently, the central government is considering giving tribal status to Hatti community of Tan-Giri area of Sirmour district of Himachal Pradesh.

Today Current Affairs

Hatti Community:

- The Hatti are a close-knit community, which got its name from the tradition of selling domestic vegetables, crops, meat and wool, etc., in small markets called 'Haats' in towns.
- Men in the Hatti community usually wear a distinctive white cap during ceremonies.
- This community is divided from Sirmour by two rivers named Giri and Tons.

- Tons divide it from Jaunsar Bawar region of Uttarakhand. The Hindu Analysis
- The Hatti living in the Trans-Giri region of Uttarakhand and Jaunsar Bawar were once part of the royal princely state of Sirmaur until the separation of the Jaunsar Bawar region in the year 1815.
- Trans-Giri and Jaunsar Bawar share similar traditions and inter-caste marriages are common.
- There is a rigid caste system among the Hatti communities – Bhat and Khash are upper castes, while Badhoi are lower castes. Interracial marriages are no longer traditionally strict.
- The Hatti community is governed by a traditional council called ‘Khumbali’, which looks after community affairs like the Khap Panchayats of Haryana. The Hindu Analysis
- Despite the establishment of Panchayati Raj system, the power of Khumbali has not been challenged.
- He has a good presence in about nine assembly seats in Sirmaur and Shimla regions.
- According to the 2011 Census of India, the total tribal population of Himachal Pradesh is 3,92,126, which is 5.7% of the total population of the state.

His demands:

Tribal Status : The Hindu Analysis

- They have been demanding Scheduled Tribe status since 1967, when tribal status was given to people living in Jaunsar Bawar in Uttarakhand, which borders Sirmaur district.

Challenges : The Hindu Analysis

- The Hattis living in the Kamrau, Sangra and Shillai regions of Himachal Pradesh have been left behind in both education and employment due to topographical loss.

Status of Scheduled Tribes in India : The Hindu Analysis

- As per the 1931 Census, Scheduled Tribes are called “Backward Tribes” living in “Excluded” and “Partly Excluded” areas. The Government of India Act of 1935 called for the first time representatives of “backward tribes” in the provincial assemblies.
- The Constitution does not define the criteria for recognition of Scheduled Tribes, so the definition contained in the 1931 Census was used in the early years after independence.
- However, Article 366 (25) of the Constitution provides for the procedure for defining Scheduled Tribes only: “Scheduled Tribes” means such tribes or tribal communities or parts or groups of tribes or tribal communities as defined under Article 342 of the Constitution. The Hindu Analysis
- 342(1): The President shall, in relation to any State or Union territory, when, in relation to a State, by public notification after consultation with the Governor, tribes or tribal

communities or parts of tribes or tribal communities in relation to that State or Union territory may designate groups within.

- There are more than 705 tribes which have been notified. The largest number of tribal communities are found in Odisha.
- The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution makes provisions for the administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in states other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- The Sixth Schedule deals with the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

Legal Provisions : The Hindu Analysis

- Protection of Civil Rights against Untouchability Act, 1955
- Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989
- Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996
- The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.

Related Initiatives : The Hindu Analysis

- Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)
- Digital Transformation of Tribal Schools
- Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups
- Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana

Related Committees : The Hindu Analysis

- Shasha Committee (2013)
- Bhuria Commission (2002-2004)
- Lokur Committee (1965).

Swadeep Kumar

Windfall Tax

- Against the backdrop of rising crude oil prices due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there has been a buzz in markets about a one-time windfall tax on oil and gas companies.

What is a windfall tax?

- When a company benefits from something that they are not responsible for, the financial

gain that ensues is called windfall profits.

- Governments, typically, levy a one-time tax over and above the normal rates of tax on such profits and that is called windfall tax.
- Since, energy companies are gaining profit not because of any improvement in their processes but because of the geopolitical situation, many governments are considering imposing such tax.
- This will boost the government's finances, and help fund efforts to protect vulnerable sections from rampant inflation.

Which countries have imposed such taxes?

- Italy and the UK are two key economies that have levied windfall tax.
- Italy's case- Italy announced taxing the profits of energy companies at 25% to help fund a support package for consumers and businesses that have been hard-hit by soaring energy costs.
- UK's case- UK will increase the headline rate of tax on those profits to 65 % from 40% to profits arising on or after May 26, 2022.
- A Bill is being introduced for an 'Energy Profits Levy' and it will also include a sunset clause, which will remove the tax after 2025.

What is the case with India?

- The public expenditure on fuel, food and fertiliser subsidies are ballooning amid skyrocketing inflation.
- The FY23 fertiliser subsidy budget estimate is Rs 1.05 trillion.
- Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL) reported bumper profits in the March quarter and record earnings in 2021-22.

What has to be well thought before imposing windfall tax?

- Compromise on profits- The first consideration by the government to impose windfall tax will be the production sharing contracts (PSCs).
- PSCs are long term contracts where the government is also a party and when the prices go up, the government also stands to profit.
- So, the government has to compromise on dividends and share buybacks, both of which the centre is a beneficiary of.
- Royalties- The second consideration is the royalties and ad valorem duties.
- Investor confidence- If such changes are made to the taxation policy, the government will have to consider what signal this will send out to the foreign investors under the FDI policy.

What are the criticisms against imposing windfall tax?

- The one-off taxes, which by definition are imposed retrospectively, are seen as arbitrary, fueling uncertainty among businesses about future taxes.
- The imposition of windfall tax is branded as anti-investment and anti-business.

Anshum

Why the Rajya Sabha Matters



- The Rajya Sabha, which is constitutionally the Council of States, is the upper house of the bicameral Parliament of India. The origin of the Rajya Sabha can be traced back to the Montagu-Chelmsford Report of 1918 and the subsequent Government of India Act, 1919 (which provided for a Second Federal Chamber of Parliament).
- Emphasizing the federal nature of the Indian polity, the Rajya Sabha ensures a healthy bicameralism not only as a 'House for second thought' but also as a 'House of Reforms' as the custodian of the rights of the state.
- In view of the prevailing political scenario in the country, careful evaluation of the functions of the Rajya Sabha becomes all the more necessary to reinforce the fundamentals of our parliamentary democracy.

How is Rajya Sabha relevant in Indian democracy?

Permanent body:

- Unlike the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha is never dissolved, rather one-third of its members retire after every second year.
- This ensures continuity and also provides an opportunity for fusion of new and old

members in the House.

- This type of arrangement is designed to help secure representation of past as well as present opinions and help maintain consistency in public policy.

Role of Review and Reevaluation:

- Rajya Sabha helps in in-depth review of laws, as it complements the lower house or Lok Sabha in ensuring greater executive accountability.
- It tries to control the hasty and faulty and unresponsive legislations brought in by the Lok Sabha by proposing amendments and reconsideration.
- It also provides a platform for small and regional parties to present their views.

House of 'Check and Balance':

- Since the decisions of the Lok Sabha can be populist and can lead the members to go against the best decision, the Rajya Sabha exercises checks and balances over it.
- Unlike the 'House of Lords' in Britain, Rajya Sabha members do not have hereditary membership rights.

Representation of States:

- The process of indirect elections also has its place in the Indian parliamentary system where the members of the Rajya Sabha are elected by the members of the state legislatures on the basis of proportional representation through the single transferable vote.
- It acts as a conduit between the states, the people and the parliament, whereby giving an independent voice to the states, furthering the principles of decentralization.
- Provisions have been made in the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution for the allocation of seats in the Rajya Sabha to the States and Union Territories.

Promote participatory democracy:

- 12 members of the Rajya Sabha are nominated by the President of India for a term of 6 years for their contribution to the arts, literature, science and social services.
- This feature of the Rajya Sabha makes it even more democratic and participatory as it allows eminent people who make important contributions to the society their way to the highest echelons of Indian politics.

Special Powers of Rajya Sabha

Legislation on the subjects of the State List:

- Article 249 allows Parliament to make laws on subjects listed in the State List, if the Rajya Sabha passes a resolution to this effect by a two-thirds majority.

Creation of All India Services:

- Article 312 allows Parliament to create All India Services for the Union and the States, if the Rajya Sabha passes a resolution to this effect.

President's Rule Declaration:

- Usually such proclamations require the approval of both the Houses of Parliament.
- But if the Lok Sabha is dissolved at the time of proclamation, then the Rajya Sabha alone can approve the imposition of President's rule (Articles 352, 356 and 360).
- Rajya Sabha meeting was specially convened in the year 1977 to extend President's rule in Tamil Nadu and Nagaland and to impose President's rule in Haryana in the year 1991.

Removal of Vice President from office:

- The Rajya Sabha can take the initiative to remove the Vice President from office.
- The implication is that the proposal for the removal of the Vice-President can be presented only in the Rajya Sabha and not in the Lok Sabha (Article 67).
- Concerns related to Rajya Sabha

Destroying the federal character of Rajya Sabha:

- Through the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 2003, Parliament has deleted the word 'Domicile' from section 3 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- This problem was further aggravated by the 'Kuldip Nayyar judgment' which removed the domicile condition.
- After the amendment, a person who is neither a resident nor a domicile of any state can contest the Rajya Sabha election from that state.
- Ruling parties have used Rajya Sabha seats on several occasions to propel their candidates to the Upper House, who were defeated in the Lok Sabha elections.

Limited Powers relating to Money Bills:

- Money Bill can be introduced only in Lok Sabha and not in Rajya Sabha. The Rajya

Sabha also does not have the power to amend or reject a money bill.

- For this it is mandatory to send the bill back to the Lok Sabha with or without its recommendations within 14 days.
- In this regard, the Lok Sabha has the autonomous right to accept or reject any recommendation or all the recommendations of the Rajya Sabha.
- In both the cases, the money bill is deemed to have been passed by both the houses.

To 'Bypass' Rajya Sabha:

- In some cases ordinary bills have been seen as Money Bills bypassing the Rajya Sabha, which calls into question the effectiveness of the Upper House of Parliament.

Problems related to the provision of joint sitting:

- In the event of a deadlock, the President can call a joint sitting of both the Houses. In such a case the sitting is governed by the 'Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business' of the Lok Sabha and not by the rules of the Rajya Sabha.
- Since the number of members of the Lok Sabha is usually more in a joint sitting, the will of the Lok Sabha prevails over the Rajya Sabha.

Other Limitations:

- No-Confidence Motion cannot be initiated in Rajya Sabha.
- Furthermore, it has a limited role in the functioning of the Public Accounts Committee and has no role in the Estimates Committee.

Deadlock situations

- In the event of a deadlock between the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, a joint sitting of the Parliament is called. A deadlock occurs in the following three situations:
- If the bill is rejected by the other house.
- If the Houses ultimately disagree about the amendments to be made to the Bill.
- If more than six months have elapsed from the date of receipt of the Bill without the Bill being passed by the other House.
- The Speaker of the Lok Sabha presides over the joint sitting of the Parliament.
- The provision of joint sitting is applicable only to Ordinary Bills or Financial Bills and not to Money Bills or Constitution Amendment Bills

Swadeep Kumar

Abortion Laws: India



- The Supreme Court of India had allowed unmarried women to have an abortion at 24 weeks, but recently the Delhi High Court refused to allow abortion in such a case, citing the provisions of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act.

Delhi High Court Status

- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act the Act only allowed married women to have an abortion after 20 weeks, so unmarried women would not be allowed to have an abortion.
- It refers to Rule 3B of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Rules, 2003, as it seeks to change the marital status of the woman and excludes live-in relationships and unmarried women.

Supreme Court decision

- The bench said that the Explanation to Section 3 of the provisions of the MTP Act, as amended in 2021, includes the word “partner” instead of “husband”, indicating the intention of Parliament to limit the conditions arising out of marital relations only.
- It also said that the petitioner cannot be denied the benefit of the law on the ground that she was unmarried and to do so would be contrary to the “purpose and spirit” of the law.
- Further, the bench directed the Director of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to set up a medical board of two doctors to examine the woman (as per the provisions of the MTP Act) whose function is to determine whether it is safe. Whether or not and also to ensure that there is no danger to the life of the mother in case of abortion.
- If they are of the opinion that it is safe to do so, AIIMS may allow that process to go ahead.

Abortion Laws in the Indian Context:

Historical perspective:

- Abortion was illegal in India until the 1960s and a woman was subject to three years' imprisonment and/or fine under Section 312 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- In the mid-1960s, the government formed the Shantilal Shah Committee and a group headed by Dr. Shantilal Shah was asked to investigate abortion and decide whether India needed a law for it.
- A Medical Termination Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha based on the report of Shantilal Shah Committee and was passed by Parliament in August 1971.
- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971 came into force on 1st April, 1972 which was applicable to the whole of India except the state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Further, Section 312 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, voluntarily causing an abortion with the consent of the pregnant woman is also an offense to "cause abortion", except when the abortion is performed to save the life of the woman.
- This means that the woman herself or any other person including the doctor can be prosecuted for abortion.

Introduction:

- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (MTP) 1971, the Act allowed termination of pregnancy by a physician in two stages:
- A doctor's opinion was required for abortions up to 12 weeks after conception.
- According to this law, abortion can legally be performed only in special circumstances, such as when there is danger to the life of the woman, there is a danger to the physical and mental health of the woman, pregnancy has been caused by rape, The child has not developed properly in the womb and there is a fear of being disabled. In the context of pregnancies between 12 and 20 weeks, the opinion of two doctors was necessary to determine all these things.

Recent Revisions:

- In the year 2021, Parliament changed the law to allow abortion on the basis of a doctor's advice for pregnancies up to 20 weeks.
- Under the amended law, the opinion of two doctors is required for pregnancy between 20 and 24 weeks.
- Further, for pregnancies between 20 and 24 weeks, the rules specify seven categories of women who would be eligible to seek termination under section 3B of the rules prescribed under the MTP Act.
 - In the event of sexual assault or rape

- Minor
- Widow and divorce circumstances ie pregnancy at the time of change in marital status
- Women physically handicapped (major disability as per norms prescribed under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016)
- Mentally ill women with mental retardation
- fetal malformation that carries a substantial risk of being incompatible with life or, if the child is born, may be seriously handicapped, suffering from physical or mental abnormalities,
- Women with pregnancy on humanitarian grounds or in disasters or emergencies.

Challenges related to MTP Act:

- While the law recognizes changes in the marital status of a pregnant woman to divorce and widowhood with her spouse, it does not address the situation of unmarried women.
- It is a highly regulated process whereby the law transfers the decision-making power of the pregnant woman to the Accredited Medical Practitioner (RMP) and it is at the discretion of the RMP whether an abortion should be performed or not.

Swadeep Kumar

A New Global Standard for AI Ethics

- Artificial intelligence (AI) is more present in our lives than ever but it cannot be said to always be beneficial.

What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

- AI- AI refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to think like humans and mimic their actions.
- The goals of artificial intelligence include learning, reasoning, and perception.
- Machine learning- Machine learning refers to the concept that computer programs can automatically learn from and adapt to new data without being assisted by humans.
- Deep learning- Deep learning techniques enable this automatic learning through the absorption of huge amounts of unstructured data such as text, images, or video.

What about the application of AI?

- India is one of the world's largest markets for AI-related technologies valued at over 7.8 billion dollar in 2021.
- Applications of AI

- Healthcare– AI is utilised for dosing drugs and different treatment in patients, and for surgical procedures.
- Gaming- Artificial intelligence includes computers that play chess.
- Automobiles– Self-driving cars utilize AI technology.
- Finance- AI is used to detect and flag activities such as unusual debit card usage and large account deposits.
- Agriculture– AIs are utilised for real-time insights from their fields, intelligent spraying, disease diagnosis, etc.
- Assistance– Personal assistants such as Amazon’s Alexa and Apple’s Siri are included in the weak AI systems (designed to carry out one particular job).
- The National Strategy on Artificial Intelligence released by NITI Aayog in 2018 highlights the massive potential of AI across areas such as agriculture, health, and education.

What are the issues in AI?

- Biased outcomes– The data used to feed into AI often aren’t representative of the diversity of our societies, producing biased or discriminatory outcomes.
 - For instance, while India and China together constitute around a third of the world’s population, they form just 3% of images used in Image Net.
- Issue with facial recognition tech– The scope for racial discrimination is increasing with increased usage of facial recognition technology.
 - For three programs released by major tech companies, the error rate was 1% for light-skinned men, but 19% for dark-skinned men, and up to 35% for dark-skinned women.
- Biases in facial recognition technologies have led to wrongful arrests.

What is the global standard for AI ethics?

- In 2021, the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence was adopted by UNESCO’s General Conference at its 41st session.
- It aims to fundamentally shift the balance of power between people, and the businesses and governments developing AI.
- UNESCO members have agreed to use affirmative action to make sure that women and minority groups are fairly represented on AI design teams.
- The recommendation also underscores the importance of the proper management of data, privacy and access to information.
- It calls on member states to ensure that appropriate safeguards are devised for the processing of sensitive data and effective accountability and redress mechanisms are provided.

- The Recommendation takes a strong stance that
 - AI systems should not be used for social scoring or mass surveillance purposes
 - Attention must be paid to the psychological and cognitive impact that these systems can have on children
 - Member states should invest and promote not only digital, media and information literacy skills, but also socio-emotional and AI ethics skills.
- UNESCO is also in the process of developing tools to help assess the readiness in the implementation of the recommendations.
- Finland's 2017 AI Strategy demonstrated how governments can effectively promote ethical AI use without compromising the desire to be on the cutting edge of new technologies.

How to ensure the full potential of these technologies?

- The right incentives for ethical AI governance need to be established in national and sub-national policy.
- The recommendations must be put to use to guide governments and companies to develop and deploy AI technologies that conform to the commonly agreed principles.

Anshum

Japan's Sakurajima Volcano



- Recently, the Sakurajima volcano in Japan's main western island of Kyushu saw an eruption.
- In the year 2021, the Fukutoku-Okanoba Submarine Volcano erupted in the Pacific Ocean off Japan.

Sakurajima Volcano

- Sakurajima is one of Japan's most active volcanoes and has had various levels of eruptions on a regular basis.
- This is an active Strato Volcano.
- Historically the largest eruptions at Sakurajima occurred during the years 1471–76 and in 1914.
- Eruptions in it have been recorded from the 8th century.
- Due to its continuous accumulation of ash on Kagoshima and its explosive potential, it is considered one of the most dangerous volcanoes.

Volcano:

- A volcano is an opening or rupture in the Earth's surface that ejects hot liquid and semi-liquid rocks, volcanic ash and gases in the form of magma.
- The remaining material causes a volcanic eruption. This can lead to a rapid explosion, which leads to the release of a large amount of material.
- Exploded material on Earth can be liquids ("lava" when it's on the surface, "magma" when it's underground), ash and/or gas.

Reason for rise in magma:

- Ejection of magma occurs when Earth's tectonic plates undergo convergent motion. Magma rises to fill the void. When this happens, the process of volcanic formation can also take place under water.
- When these tectonic plates move towards each other, magma also rises and parts of the plate go deep into its interior, due to high temperature and pressure, the crust melts and rises up as magma.
- Magma finally rises above the hot-spot. Hot-spots are hot regions inside the Earth. These regions heat the magma. When this magma is less dense it rises up. Although the causes of magma uplift vary, they may each have the potential to form a volcano.

Type:

Shield Volcano:

- This volcano produces low viscosity, flowing lava that extends far from the source and forms a volcano with a mild slope.
- Most shield volcanoes are formed from fluid, basaltic lava flows.
- Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa are shield volcanoes. They are the largest active volcanoes in the world around the Hawaiian Islands.

Strato Volcano:

- Strato volcanoes have relatively steep slopes and are more cone-shaped than shield volcanoes.
- They are formed from viscous, viscous lava that does not flow easily.

Lava dome:

- Soufriere mountain volcano on the Caribbean island of Montserrat, known for its lava dome complex at the summit of the volcano, has gone through phases of growth and collapse. Since viscous lava is not very liquid, it cannot easily move far beyond the exhaust hole when it is expelled. Instead it accumulates in the form of a pile at the top of the vent which forms a dome shaped structure.

Caldera:

- Magma is deposited in the magma chamber under the volcano. When a volcanic eruption occurs, magma is expelled out of the chamber, causing the magma to form a depression or bowl-like structure with vertical walls on the roof surface of the chamber.
- These are calderas and can be tens of miles apart.

Volcanoes in India:

- Barren Island, Andaman Islands (India's only active volcano)
- Narcondam, Andaman Islands
- Baratang, Andaman Islands
- Deccan Traps, Maharashtra
- Dhinodhar Hills, Gujarat
- Dhosi Hills, Haryana.

Swadeep Kumar

Street vendors



- Recently, the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs addressed the 6th meeting of the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) on the topic “From Encroachers to Self-Employed”.

Street Vendors:

- Street vendors are individuals who offer to sell goods to the public on a large scale without a permanent built structure to sell the goods.
- Street vendors permanently occupy pavements or other public/private places to sell goods or temporarily move their goods from one place to another carrying their goods in push carts or head baskets.

Population

- The number of street vendors has increased significantly in major cities around the world, especially in developing countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa.
- Around 49.48 lakh street vendors have been identified in India.
- Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of 8.49 lakhs, followed by Madhya Pradesh with 7.04 lakhs street vendors.
- There are only 72,457 street vendors in Delhi.
- No street vendor has been identified in Sikkim.

Constitutional Provisions:

Right to do business:

- Article 19(1) (g) gives fundamental right to Indian citizens to practice any profession or

to carry on business, trade or commerce.

Equality before the law:

- According to Article 14 of the Constitution, the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.
- Social justice:
- The Preamble of the Indian Constitution states that India is a sovereign, socialist, secular democratic republic and shall ensure social, economic and political justice, equality of status and opportunity for all its citizens.

Directive Principles:

- Under Article 38(1), the state has to direct the promotion of the welfare of the people by ensuring a social order, in which social, economic and political justice will be ensured in the national institutions.
- Article 38(2) directs 'to reduce inequalities in income status, facilities and opportunities'
- Article 39 (A) directs the state to formulate policy to ensure that citizens, men and women alike, have the right to access to adequate means of livelihood.
- Article 41 specifically provides for the 'right to work' within the limits of the economic capacity of the state.

Reasons for increasing the number of street vendors:

- First, poverty in rural areas as well as lack of gainful employment have forced people to move out of their villages in search of a better life in the cities.
- These migrants lack the skills or education to get better wages, secure employment in the organized sector, so they have to settle for work in the unorganized sector.
- Second, there is another section of the population in the country who is forced to go to the unorganized sector for employment.
- These are the workers who were once employed in the organized sector.
- They lost their jobs due to closure, shrinkage or merger of industries and they or their family members had to look for low wages work in the unorganized sector to make a living.

Challenges before Street Vendors:

Space constraints:

- The master plans prepared for our cities do not allocate space to vendors/hawkers, as the planners imitate the western concept of marketing ignoring Indian traditions.

Troubleshooting multiple authorizations:

- Vendors have to deal with many authorities- Municipal Corporation, Police (Station as well as Traffic), Regional Development Authority, District Administration, Local Panchayat etc.

Exploitation and Extortion:

- In many cases the positive steps taken by one authority get nullified because of the actions of others.
- Instead of regulating vendors, municipal corporations regard them as an encroacher and a nuisance, their policies and actions aimed more at removing and harassing them rather than regulating them.

Frequent evictions:

- Regular evictions are carried out by the district or municipal administration.
- They fear the action of the eviction team known locally by different names.

Extortion racket:

- Cases of 'extortion tax' and 'haft collection' are common.
- In many cities sellers have to pay enough money to run their business.

Government Initiatives for Street Vendors:

Svanidhi Scheme:

- SVANidhi scheme was launched to benefit more than 50 lakh street vendors of urban areas, including people from adjoining urban/rural areas.
- It aims to promote digital transactions through cash-back incentives up to an amount of Rs 1,200 per annum.

National Association of Street Vendors of India:

- NASVI is an organization working to protect the livelihood rights of thousands of street vendors across the country.
- The main objective of setting up NASVI was to bring together street vendor organizations in India so that collective efforts can be made for changes at a large scale.

The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihoods and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014:

- This act was enacted to regulate and protect the rights of street vendors in public areas.
- The Act defines a street vendor as a person who sells goods or services of everyday use to

the general public, in any public place or private area, by means of a temporary structure or by moving from place to place.

Swadeep Kumar

AI Ethics

- Artificial intelligence (AI) is more present in our lives than ever but it cannot be said to always be beneficial.

What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

- AI- AI refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to think like humans and mimic their actions.
- The goals of artificial intelligence include learning, reasoning, and perception.
- Machine learning- Machine learning refers to the concept that computer programs can automatically learn from and adapt to new data without being assisted by humans.
- Deep learning- Deep learning techniques enable this automatic learning through the absorption of huge amounts of unstructured data such as text, images, or video.

What about the application of AI?

- India is one of the world's largest markets for AI-related technologies valued at over 7.8 billion dollar in 2021.
- Applications of AI
 - Healthcare- AI is utilised for dosing drugs and different treatment in patients, and for surgical procedures.
 - Gaming- Artificial intelligence includes computers that play chess.
 - Automobiles- Self-driving cars utilize AI technology.
 - Finance- AI is used to detect and flag activities such as unusual debit card usage and large account deposits.
 - Agriculture- AIs are utilised for real-time insights from their fields, intelligent spraying, disease diagnosis, etc.
 - Assistance- Personal assistants such as Amazon's Alexa and Apple's Siri are included in the weak AI systems (designed to carry out one particular job).

- The National Strategy on Artificial Intelligence released by NITI Aayog in 2018 highlights the massive potential of AI across areas such as agriculture, health, and education.

What are the issues in AI?

- Biased outcomes– The data used to feed into AI often aren't representative of the diversity of our societies, producing biased or discriminatory outcomes.
 - For instance, while India and China together constitute around a third of the world's population, they form just 3% of images used in ImageNet.
- Issue with facial recognition tech– The scope for racial discrimination is increasing with increased usage of facial recognition technology.
 - For three programs released by major tech companies, the error rate was 1% for light-skinned men, but 19% for dark-skinned men, and up to 35% for dark-skinned women.
- Biases in facial recognition technologies have led to wrongful arrests.

What is the global standard for AI ethics?

- In 2021, the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence was adopted by UNESCO's General Conference at its 41st session.
- It aims to fundamentally shift the balance of power between people, and the businesses and governments developing AI.
- UNESCO members have agreed to use affirmative action to make sure that women and minority groups are fairly represented on AI design teams.
- The recommendation also underscores the importance of the proper management of data, privacy and access to information.
- It calls on member states to ensure that appropriate safeguards are devised for the processing of sensitive data and effective accountability and redress mechanisms are provided.
- The Recommendation takes a strong stance that
 - AI systems should not be used for social scoring or mass surveillance purposes
 - Attention must be paid to the psychological and cognitive impact that these systems can have on children
 - Member states should invest and promote not only digital, media and information literacy skills, but also socio-emotional and AI ethics skills.
- UNESCO is also in the process of developing tools to help assess the readiness in the implementation of the recommendations.
- Finland's 2017 AI Strategy demonstrated how governments can effectively promote ethical AI use without compromising the desire to be on the cutting edge of new technologies.

How to ensure the full potential of these technologies?

- The right incentives for ethical AI governance need to be established in national and sub-national policy.
- The recommendations must be put to use to guide governments and companies to develop and deploy AI technologies that conform to the commonly agreed principles.

Anshum

India's five wetlands included in Ramsar sites



- Five more wetlands in India have been included in the Ramsar Sites, or Wetlands of International Importance, taking the number of such sites in the country to 54.

New Ramsar Sites:

Karikili Bird Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu):

- The sanctuary is spread over five kilometers in width and is home to cormorants, egrets, gray herons, open-billed storks, darters, spoonbills, white albanese, night herons, grebes, gray pelicans, etc.

Pallikaranai Marsh Reserve Forest (Tamil Nadu):

- The Pallikaranai Marsh is one of the few and last remaining natural wetlands in South India. It covers an area of 250 square kilometers which includes 65 wetlands.

Pichavaram Mangroves (Tamil Nadu):

- One of the last mangrove forests in the country.

- It consists of an island covered with mangrove forests with vast expanses of water.

Sakhya Sagar (Madhya Pradesh):

- Formed by Maniyar River in the year 1918, Sakhya Sagar is situated near Madhav National Park.

Pala Wetlands (Mizoram):

- It is home to a wide range of animals, birds and reptiles.
- Its geographical location comes under the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot, hence it is rich in animal and plant species.
- The lake is a major component of Palak Wildlife Sanctuary and supports major biodiversity of the sanctuary.

Ramsar Recognition:

- The Ramsar site is a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, also known as the 'Convention on Wetlands', an intergovernmental environmental treaty established by UNESCO in 1971 and named after the city of Ramsar in Iran where the convention was signed that year.
- Ramsar recognition is the recognition of wetlands around the world that are of international importance, especially if they provide habitat for waterfowl (about 180 species of birds).
- Conservation of such wetlands and the judicious use of their resources involves international interest and cooperation.
- The Sundarbans in West Bengal is the largest Ramsar site in India.
- India's Ramsar wetlands, 11,000 sq km of the country's total wetland area in 18 states.
- No other South Asian country has as many sites, although this has a lot to do with India's geographical expanse and tropical diversity.

Criteria:

One of nine criteria must be met in order to be a Ramsar site.

- Criterion 1: If it contains a representative, rare or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic area.
- Criterion 2: If it supports vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities.
- Criterion 3: If it supports a population of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region.
- Criterion 4: If it supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycle or provides shelter during adverse conditions.

- Criterion 5: If it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterfowl.
- Criterion 6: If it regularly supports 1% of individuals in a population of a species or subspecies of waterbird.
- Criterion 7: if it supports a significant proportion of indigenous fish subspecies, species or families, life-history stages, species interactions and/or populations that are representative of the benefits and/or values of the wetland and Types contribute to global biological diversity.
- Criterion 8: If it is an important source of food for fish, spawning grounds, nurseries and/or migration routes on which fish stocks depend, either within wetlands or elsewhere.
- Criterion 9: If it regularly supports 1% of the population of species or subspecies of wetland-dependent non-avian animal species.

Importance:

- Ramsar Tag helps develop and maintain an international network of wetlands that are critical to human life through the conservation of global biological diversity and the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits.
- Sites are protected under strict convention guidelines.

Wetlands:

- Wetlands are ecosystems that are seasonally or permanently saturated or filled with water.
- These include mangroves, swamps, rivers, lakes, deltas, floodplains and floodplains, rice fields, coral reefs, marine areas where low tides do not exceed 6 meters deep, as well as man-made wetlands such as treated wastewater.
- Although they cover only 6% of the ground surface. 40% of all plant and animal species are found or breed in wetlands.

Importance:

Helping in the fight against climate change:

- Wetlands produce CO₂ (carbon dioxide), CH₄ (methane), N₂O (nitrous oxide) and greenhouse gas (GHG) by reducing climate and land-use-mediated GHG emissions and increasing their ability to actively collect CO₂ from the atmosphere Helps in stabilizing the concentration.
- Wetlands also help reduce the risk of disasters such as floods by protecting beaches.

Carbon Storage:

- Wetland microbes, plants and wildlife are part of global cycles of water, nitrogen and sulfur.
- Wetlands store carbon within their tree communities and soil instead of releasing it into

the atmosphere as carbon dioxide.

Importance of Peatlands:

- The term 'peatland' refers to peat soils and surface wetlands.
- They cover only 3% of the world's land surface, but store twice as much carbon as forests, thus playing an important role in meeting global commitments on climate crisis, sustainable development and biodiversity.
- Peatlands, one of the world's largest carbon reserves, are scarce in India and require urgent attention.

Paradise for Migratory Birds:

- Millions of migratory birds visit India and wetlands are important for this annual event.
- Ecologically dependent on wetlands, migratory waterfowl connect continents, hemisphere cultures and societies through their seasonal migration.
- The diversity of wetland communities provides essential habitat for birds.

Cultural and Tourism Importance:

- Wetlands are also closely related to Indian culture and traditions.
- Loktak Lake in Manipur is revered by the locals as "Ima" (Mother), while Khechopalri Lake in Sikkim is popularly known as "Lake of Wishes".
- The North Indian festival of Chhath Puja is one of the most unique expressions of the association of people, culture, water and wetlands.
- Dal Lake in Kashmir, Khajjiar Lake in Himachal Pradesh, Nainital Lake in Uttarakhand and Kodaikanal in Tamil Nadu are popular tourist destinations.

Hazard:

Human Activities:

- According to the Global Assessment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Forum on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), wetland ecosystems are most threatened by human activities and global warming.

Urbanization:

- Wetlands located near urban centers are facing developmental pressure due to increase in residential, industrial and commercial facilities.
- In the case of sea level rise in areas surrounded by urban wetlands, the increase in coastal pressure can eventually lead to the loss of wetlands.

Climate change:

- The vulnerability of wetlands to climate change and associated factors and pressures is highly likely to increase.
- Rise in temperature, change in rainfall, increase in frequency of storms, droughts and floods, increase in atmospheric CO₂ concentration and rise in sea level can also affect wetlands.

Adverse effect on adaptability:

- The adaptability of wetlands is also likely to decrease due to the potential for adverse effects on ecosystems.
- Building aquifers to increase the storage of fresh or fresh water, for example in upper reaches of the river, can further increase the risk of salinization in coastal wetlands..

Swadeep Kumar

Ecotani / Despite concerns, the Cheetah project is worth pursuing



- Cheetah is the fastest land animal which was declared extinct in India in the year 1952. Now once again a plan is underway to bring him to India, under which he will be rehabilitated in the Kuno-Palpur National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh. These African cheetahs are being brought under an inter-continental transfer project between India and Africa (mainly from South Africa and Namibia).
- Plans to bring cheetahs to India, initially from Iran and now from the African continent, have been going on for decades and have been controversial enough. Many conservationists

in India are skeptical of the plan's success and fear it will divert attention away from the conservation of other endangered species in need of relocation, such as the Asiatic lion.

India's rationale behind the return of the cheetah and the associated challenges:

Biological Purpose:

- To reestablish its ecosystem function role in representative areas of the cheetah's former habitat and contribute to the global effort towards the conservation of the cheetah as a species.
- After bringing back the cheetah, India will become the only country where all the five members of the 'Big Cat' species – tiger, lion, panther, snow leopard and cheetah will be present.

Increase in livelihood options:

- The reintroduction of cheetahs will enhance livelihoods for local communities in and around those areas through increased revenues from ecotourism and related activities.

Sustaining the food chain:

- Apex predators control all levels in the food chain and are considered the umbrella species for the food chain (Umbrella species).
- Cheetah may prove to be a key and umbrella species for mobilizing resources to restore open forest ecosystem and restore balance in food web.

Climate Change Mitigation:

- It will enhance India's capacity for carbon sequestration through ecosystem restoration activities in cheetah conservation areas and thereby contribute to global climate change mitigation goals.

Reasons for the extinction of cheetahs in India:

- The cheetah in India has been recorded in history since before AD. Records of cheetahs being caught date back to the 1550s.
- A decrease in the level of genetic diversity due to a historical genetic bottleneck, resulting in its high infant mortality rate in the wild and its low ability to breed in captivity were some of the major factors in its extinction.

Hunting Entertainment:

- For centuries, cheetahs (both male and female) were widely and continuously captured from forested areas for hunting purposes.
- Detailed accounts of its contact with humans are available since the 16th century when it

was recorded by the Mughals and other kingdoms of the Deccan.

'Bounty Killing':

- The British increased the species' crisis by announcing a reward for killing it in the year 1871.
- The final phase of its extinction was completed with the end of British colonial rule.
- It is recorded that the last remaining cheetahs were killed in India in 1947 and were officially declared extinct in 1952.
- Challenges associated with relocation of cheetah to India

Transition from enclosure to forest area:

- An important problem is whether a cheetah living in a cage and dependent on humans for food will be able to hunt on its own if released into the wild.
- For example, a tigress named Sundari (who had returned from Satkosia in Odisha after a failed rehabilitation effort) was eventually placed in Bhopal Zoo for life.

Adaptability:

- Re-introduced species are more vulnerable to the effects of drift, selection and gene flow evolutionary processes due to their smaller size and climatic and ecological differences between source and native habitats.
- African cheetahs need a long open space to run. Indian gardens are much smaller than those in Africa; thus providing less opportunity for their free movement.
- Studies in Africa have shown that female cheetahs stay alone and roam long distances, while males defend their small territories and bond with passing females. It causes fertility problems.

Coexistence with large predatory organisms:

- Since there has never been a time anywhere else that the cheetah coexisted with other species of the big cat, there is no real-life experience to suggest the coexistence of cheetahs, lions, tigers and leopards.
- Studies have shown that leopards have also preyed on cheetahs in Africa, and similar fears are being expressed for the Kuno, where about 50 leopards live around the same native area where the cheetahs will be kept.

Rehabilitation concerns:

- Many villages will have to be relocated to adequately protect the cheetah habitat, which will certainly affect the local people and cause unrest and migration.

Swadeep Kumar

Fiscal federalism: A Changing Pattern after the 2014

- Context: Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar, in his first speech in the constitution assembly regarding fiscal federalism stated that we should reduce the possibilities of political and social conflict. Economic inequality is a big challenge for the Indian democracy which should be curtailed and by reducing this economical inequality, social justice could not be established. Organized fiscal federalism is the only tool through which this economical inequality can be reduced

Introduction

- The term fiscal federalism means the dedication of the fiscal power to the lowest political units. In the Indian constitution, the financial right (Sharing and imposing of taxes) are given to various levels. Like state level and the panchayat level also. The basic objective of this decentralization of financial rights is to curtail the inequality

Changing pattern of fiscal federalism

- Recently we observed the changing nature of fiscal federalism. If we observe the latest two latest finance commissions—the Fourteenth and Fifteenth. We can easily conclude that fiscal federalism is moving towards fiscal decentralization. The central government is continuously intervening in the financial rights of the state
- It seems that the government is ignoring the basic principles and the objective of fiscal federalism which is the reduction of economical inequality. In the process of political centralization, fiscal federalism is being ignored. To be sure, India was never truly federal — it was a ‘holding together federalism’ in contrast to the ‘coming together federalism,’ in which smaller independent entities come together to form a federation (as in the United States of America).
- Political India was more centralized in 1950, the federalism has been always the objective of the Indian constitution for the long term always. Through recent policies the central government is weakening the financial power of the state. The central government is hollowing the fiscal capacity of the state. Presently The ability of States to finance current expenditures from their own revenues has declined from 69% in 1955-56 to less than 38% in 2019-20. While the expenditure of the States has been shooting up, their revenues did not. The state government has to still invest and expend in education and the health sector which are the backbone of the country. The reduction of fiscal capacity would hamper the education and health sectors also.
- However, the share of the state is increased by the 14th finance commission from 32% to 42 % but it was subverted by raising non-divisible cess and surcharges that go directly into the Union kitty. This non-divisible pool in the Centre’s gross tax revenues shot up to 15.7% in 2020 from 9.43% in 2012, shrinking the divisible pool of resources for transfers to States. In addition, the recent drastic cut in corporate tax, with its adverse impact on

the divisible pool, and ending GST compensation to States have had huge consequences.

- States had to pay a high-interest rate of 10 % instead of 7 %. It is not just that States are also losing due to gross fiscal mismanagement — increased surplus cash in the balance of States that is money borrowed at higher interest rates — the Reserve Bank of India, when there is a surplus in the treasury, typically invests it in short treasury bills issued by the Union at the lower interest rate

Conclusion

- Finally, it can be concluded that the load of the fiscal deficit is continuously increasing in the state states; the capacity of the fiscal affairs is continuously decreasing. Extreme political centralization would never bring prosperity to the states. In India type diversified culture political and fiscal decentralization is necessary. Therefore, recent Trends, up to a certain extent reduce the financial capacity of the state. The government of India and the financial expert should think in this regard also.

Anshul

Human-wildlife conflict



- Recently, the Minister of State for Forest, Environment and Climate Change informed in the Lok Sabha that the incidents of human-wildlife conflicts have increased.

Human-wildlife conflict

- Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) refers to conflicts when the presence or behavior of wildlife causes actual or direct threats to human interests or needs, resulting in negative

effects on people, animals, resources and habitat.

Cause:

- Habitat loss.
- Increase in the population of wild animals.
- Changing cropping patterns that attract wild animals to the field.
- Movement of wild animals from forest area to human-dominated areas for food and fodder.
- Movement of humans towards forests for illegal collection of forest produce.
- Habitat degradation due to growth of invasive alien species etc.

Influence:

- Losing life.
- Injuries to both animals and humans.
- Damage to crops and agricultural land.
- Increase in violence against animals.

Related data:

- Between 2018-19 and 2020-21, 222 elephants died of electrocution across the country.
- Apart from this, 29 tigers were killed due to poaching between the year 2019 and 2021, while the deaths of 197 tigers are being investigated.
- Elephants killed 1,579 humans in three years during human-to-animal conflicts – 585 in 2019-20, 461 in 2020-21 and 533 in 2021-22.
- Odisha tops with 332 deaths, followed by Jharkhand with 291 and West Bengal with 240.
- Whereas between 2019 and 2021, tigers killed 125 humans in the reserve.
- Nearly half of these deaths have occurred in Maharashtra.

Initiatives taken to deal with the conflict:

Advice for managing human-wildlife conflict (HWC):

- It is issued by the Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife (SC-NBWL).

Empowering Gram Panchayats:

- The advisory envisages empowering village panchayats to deal with problematic wild animals as per the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Providing Insurance:

- Using add-on coverage under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana for compensation for

crop damage due to HWC.

Growing Fodder:

- It is envisaged to increase the fodder and water sources within the forest areas.

Taking proactive measures:

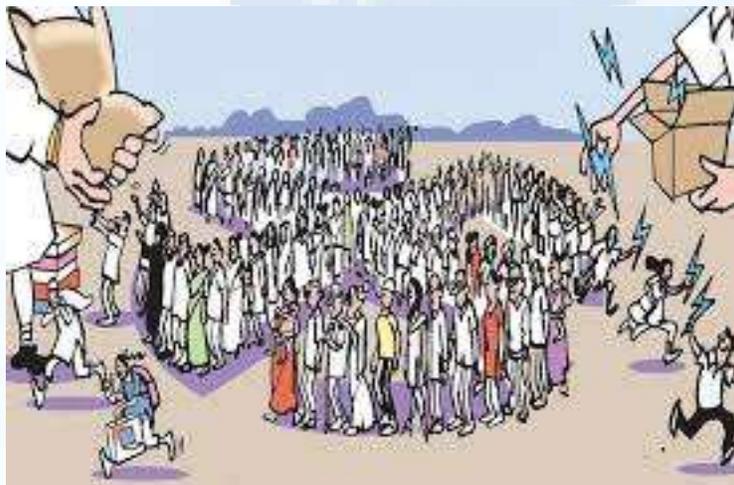
- Prescribing inter-departmental committees at local/state level, adoption of early warning system, creation of barriers, dedicated circle-wise control room with toll-free hotline numbers, identification of hotspots etc.

Providing immediate relief:

- Payment of a part of the ex-gratia amount as interim relief to the victim/family within 24 hours of the incident..

Swadeep Kumar

Freebies



- Recently the Supreme Court asked the central government whether it is economically viable to distribute irrational freebies (free gifts) during election campaigns.
- It also referred to the use of the Finance Commission's expertise in curbing irrational election freebies.
- According to the Election Commission of India, whether such policies are economically viable or have an adverse effect on the economic health of the state is a question for the voters of the state to consider and decide.

Freebies:

- Political parties promise to offer free electricity/water supply, allowance to the unemployed, daily wage workers and women, as well as gadgets like laptops, smartphones etc. to secure the vote of the people.
- States have become in the habit of giving loan waivers or free gifts in the form of free electricity, cycles, laptops, TV sets etc.
- Populist promises or some of these expenditures, certainly in keeping with the elections, can certainly be questioned.
- But given that inequality has been increasing in the country for the last 30 years, providing any kind of relief to the general population in the form of subsidy cannot be considered unreasonable, but in fact it is necessary for the economy to stay on the growth trajectory.

Freebies needed:

Facilitate Development:

- There are some examples which show that some expenditure is in the form of overall benefit of the outlay such as the public distribution system, employment guarantee schemes, and support for education and health facilities especially during the pandemic.

Help to underdeveloped states:

- States having comparatively low level of development with a large section of the poverty-stricken population have such free facilities based on need/demand and in order to uplift them, it becomes inevitable to provide them with subsidies.

Fulfilment of Expectations:

- In a country like India where states have (or do not have) a certain level of development, the expectations of the people are met by populist promises made on the occasion of elections.

Drawbacks of Freebies:

Unstable for the macro economy:

- Freebies undermine the macroeconomy's sustainability infrastructure, the politics of freebies distorts spending priorities, and the outlay focuses on subsidies in some form or the other.

Impact on the financial position of the states:

- The giving of free gifts ultimately adversely affects the exchequer and most of the states in India do not have strong financial systems, often with very limited resources in terms

of revenue.

Against free and fair elections:

- Irrational pre-election promises of free public money influence voters unfairly, hinder the freedom of equal opportunity for all, and destroy the integrity of the election process.

Away from environment:

- When free electricity is provided, it will lead to excessive use of natural resources and also distract attention from renewable energy systems..

Swadeep Kumar

Diminution of the Gandhi Ji: An endanger for the essence of India's future

- Context: In the magazine Antim Jana which is published by the Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti (GSDS), the description of the Savarkar and quoting Savarkar with Gandhi ji is not only questionable on the ground of historical truth but also on the ground of Indian cultural philosophy
- In this article, Savarkar is praised and tried to bring Savarkar to the same stature as Gandhi. Such type of intention is really the thread for Indian history as well as the Indian philosophy

Introduction

- Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti (GSDS) is an institution presided by the prime minister of India. This institution is formed to propagate the ideals of Gandhi Ji in the world. A magazine Anitam Jana is released from this institution. The word Antim Jana means the last people or marginalized people. Gandhi always talked about the lowest call or marginalized people.
- Savarkar was the founder of secret societies during the first decade of the 19th century and also participated in the national movement against the British. He was arrested two times but was left after the apology. The comparison of Savarkar with Gandhi Ji is completely irrational

What is GSDS

- GSDS is an institute that is dedicated the research works on the Gandhian philosophy.

It was constituted in 1984. The Prime minister of India is the Chairman of the GSDS. If any article is published through this institution, it can not free the prime minister from such responsibility. Therefore prime minister's office should keep close eyes on the functioning of this institution. The lionizing of Savarkar and the diminution of Gandhiji has implications in terms of the essence of India's future.

Recent Trend

- It has been observed that some people of rightist ideology not only criticize the ideas of Gandhiji but also they justify the assassination of Gandhi Ji also. The Savarkar was accused of the murder of Gandhi Ji. However he was left in the absence of evidence but still, nobody can forget the role of RSS and Hindu Mahasabha in the assassination of Gandhiji. Through social media, these types of illogical and inappropriate facts are being spread in society which would be dangerous for the integrity and unity of India

The Philosophy of Gandhi ji

- Gandhiji believed in nonviolence but Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) criticized the concept of nonviolence. However, the nonviolence of Gandhi was not cowardness and it was the tool of the powerful person. Gandhiji invoked the epic, the Mahabharata, in ways starkly different from an invocation as a battle cry. He said; "It is said that in the Mahabharata period the Pandavas used to stay in this Purana Qila." Just like the Pandavas, said Gandhiji, the Muslims "are under your protection, and under my protection".
- Gandhi believed in communal harmony / during the Karachi session of the congress in 1931, Gandhiji emphasized religious tolerance and religious neutrality of the state. The religion of the Gandhi ji was the collection of righteous things
- While the RSS and Savarkar propagated extreme Hinduism, in their sights, minorities are a threat to the unity and integrity of India. So minorities should be separated from the country or they should be subjugated. Shrutika Kapila in Violent Fraternity: Indian Political Thought in the Global Age (2021) recounts that Savarkar's idea of the virile and masculine and his desire to claim India's history and space, saw the nation as a battleground which makes violence the only desirable means to meet supremacist goals.
- Gandhi believed in the unity of all communities and believed in peace and nonviolence.

Impact of Such Articles

- The Indian education system has been based on reading books. Our students have trust in written things. If they would be provided wrong information, it would be dangerous for the new generation. Generally, through the education system, the government wants to spread some specific ideas, however, it is not correct for the education system
- These types of articles would hamper the communal harmony and the solidarity of the Muslims towards the nation also. We should not make those people our heroes who always abused a particular community. The communal philosophy and the communal

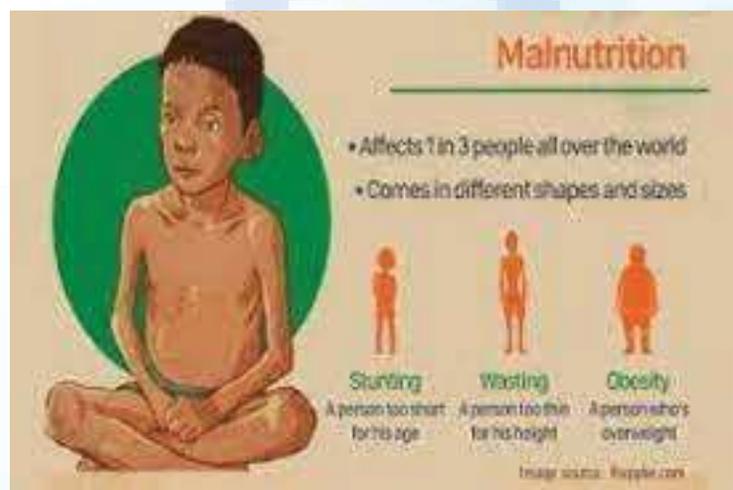
person can never be the Hero of India

Conclusion

- Gandhi worked for the solidity of all people. He worked for social justice. He believed that every citizen of India including the marginalized people and those people who are standing at the last line of the country should also be uplifted. These types of works or articles would devalue the Gandhian philosophy. Therefore we must be aware of this regard. No communal and hateful person should be praised and regarded as the hero of the nation

Anshul

Curbing malnutrition in India



- Recently the Ministry of Women and Child Development has set targets to curb malnutrition in India.

Targets set to curb malnutrition:

- Aim to reduce stunting and undernutrition (prevalence of underweight) by 2% per annum in children under 6 years of age.
- Prevention of undernutrition of children of 0 to 6 years of age and to reduce it at the rate of 6 percent i.e. 2% per annum.
- To reduce the prevalence of anemia in children aged 6 to 59 months at the rate of 9% per annum.
- To reduce the prevalence of anemia among adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating mothers in the age group of 15 to 49 years by 9% or 3% per annum.
- Anemia is a condition in which the number of red blood cells or its oxygen-carrying

capacity is insufficient to meet the body's need for blood.

This is highlighted in the NFHS-5 report which includes detailed information on key segments of the population, such as:

- Health and Family Welfare, Fertility, Family Planning, Infant and Child Mortality, Maternal and Child Health, Nutrition and Anemia, Morbidity and Health Care, Women Empowerment etc.

Findings of NFHS-5:

Data on stunted children:

- Meghalaya has the highest number of stunted children (46.5%), followed by Bihar (42.9%).
- Maharashtra has the highest rate of child wasting/disability among children at 25.6%, followed by Gujarat (25.1%).
- Jharkhand has the highest percentage (26%) of women between the ages of 15 and 49 who have a below normal body mass index (BMI).

Other Conclusions:

- The total fertility rate (TFR), the average number of children per woman, decreased from 2.2 nationally to 2.0 between NFHS -4 and 5.
- The overall Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR) in the country has increased from 54% to 67%.
- Institutional births in India have increased from 79% to 89%.
- As per the report, stunting/dwarfism has come down from 4% to 35.5%, wasting has come down from 21.0% to 19.3% and underweight has come down from 35.8% to 32.1%.
- Women (15-49 years old) with a below normal body mass index (BMI) decreased from 22.9% in NFHS-4 to 18.7% in NFHS-5.

Malnutrition and related initiatives:

- Malnutrition is a condition that develops when the body is deprived of the vitamins, minerals and other nutrients it needs to maintain healthy tissue and organ function.
- Malnutrition occurs in people who are either malnourished or over-nourished.

Initiative:

- POSHAN Abhiyaan: The Government of India has launched the National Nutrition

Mission (NNM) or POSHAN Abhiyaan to ensure “Malnutrition Free India” by the year 2022.

- Anemia Mukht Bharat Abhiyan: Launched in the year 2018, the mission aims to reduce the annual rate of anemia by one to three percentage points.
- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY): Rs 6,000 is directly transferred to the bank accounts of pregnant women to get better facilities for delivery.
- Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme: It was launched in the year 1975 and the objective of this scheme is to provide food, pre-school education, primary health care, immunization, health check-up and other is to provide services.

Swadeep Kumar

Eleventh Agricultural Census (2021-22)



- Recently the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare launched the “Eleventh Agriculture Census (2021-22).”
- This calculation will benefit a huge and agricultural country like India in a big way.

Agricultural Census:

- Agriculture Census is conducted every 5 years, which is being delayed this time due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The entire census is conducted in three phases and the operational ownership for data collection is viewed as a statistical unit at the micro level.
- Based on the Agriculture Census data collected in three phases, the department presents three detailed reports analyzing trends on various parameters at all India and State/UT

level.

- District/Tehsil level reports are prepared by the respective States/UTs.
- Agriculture Census is the main source of information on various agricultural parameters at a relatively small scale, such as the number and area of operational holdings, their size, class-wise distribution, land use, tenancy and cropping patterns etc.

Eleventh Census:

- Agriculture census work will start in August 2022.
- This is the first time that the data collection for the Agriculture Census will be done on smartphones and tablets, so that the data is available in a timely manner.

This includes:

- Access to digital land records such as land title records and survey reports.
- Collection of data through app/software using smartphone/tablet.
- Enumeration of all villages in non-land record states during Phase-I as done in land record states.
- Real time monitoring of progress and processing.
- Most of the states have digitized their land records and surveys, which will further accelerate the collection of agricultural census data.
- A database of operational holdings in the country will be created using a mobile app for data collection and use of digital land records.

Digital Agriculture:

- Digital agriculture is an information and communication technology (ICT) and data ecosystem that supports the development and delivery of timely targeted information and services to make farming profitable, sustainable while providing safe, nutritious and affordable food for all.

Example:

- Biotechnology agriculture is a range of equipment, including traditional breeding techniques that modify living organisms, or parts of organisms, to create or modify products; it involves the improvement of plants or animals or the development of microorganisms for specific agricultural uses.
- Precision farming (PA) is an approach where precise amounts of agricultural outputs are used to achieve increased average yield as compared to traditional farming techniques like agro-forestry, inter-cropping, crop rotation, etc. It is based on using digital agriculture information and communication technology.
- Digital and wireless technologies for data measurement, weather monitoring, robotics/drone technology etc.

The gain:

Agricultural Machinery Automation:

- It allows the inputs to be fixed and reduces the demand for manual labour.

Remote Satellite Data:

- Remote satellite data and in-situ sensors improve accuracy and reduce the cost of monitoring crop growth and land or water quality.
- Freely available and high quality satellite imagery dramatically reduces the cost of monitoring many agricultural activities. This could allow governments to move towards more targeted policies that pay (or penalize) farmers based on environmental consequences.

Traceability Technologies and Digital Logistics:

- These services provide the ability to streamline the agri-food supply chain while providing consumers with reliable information.

Administrative Objectives:

- In addition to monitoring compliance with environmental policies, digital technologies enable the automation of administrative processes for agriculture and the development of extended government services in relation to extension or advisory services.

Maintenance of Land Records:

- Using technology, a large number of holding data can be suitably tagged and digitized.
- This will not only help in better targeting but will also reduce the number of litigation for land disputes in the courts.

Government Initiatives for Digital Agriculture:

AgriStack:

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has planned the creation of 'AgriStack', which is a collection of technology based interventions in agriculture. It will create an integrated platform to provide end to end services to the farmers in the agri-food value chain.

Digital Agriculture Mission:

- This initiative has been started by the government from the year 2021 to 2025 to promote projects based on new technologies like artificial intelligence, block chain, remote sensing and GIS technology, use of drones and robots in the agriculture sector.

Integrated Farmer Service Platform (UFSP):

- It is a combination of core infrastructure, data, applications and tools that enables seamless interoperability of various public and private IT systems in the agriculture ecosystem across the country.

UFSP performs the following roles:

- It acts as a central agency in the agriculture ecosystem (like UPI in e-payments).
- Enables registration of service providers (public and private) and farmer services.
- Enforces various rules and assumptions required during the service delivery process.
- Serves as a repository of all applicable standards, Application Programming Interface (API) and formats.
- To act as a medium of data exchange between various schemes and services to ensure the delivery of services to the farmers at a wider level.

National e-Governance Plan in Agriculture (NeGP-A):

- It is a centrally sponsored scheme, the scheme was launched in the year 2010-11 on a pilot basis in 7 states. Its objective is to promote rapid development in India through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for timely access to agricultural information to farmers.
- In the year 2014-15, the scheme was extended to all remaining states and 2 union territories.
- Other digital initiatives: Kisan Call Centre, Kisan Suvidha App, Krishi Bazaar App, Soil Health Card (SHC) Portal etc.

YOJNA IAS

Swadeep Kumar