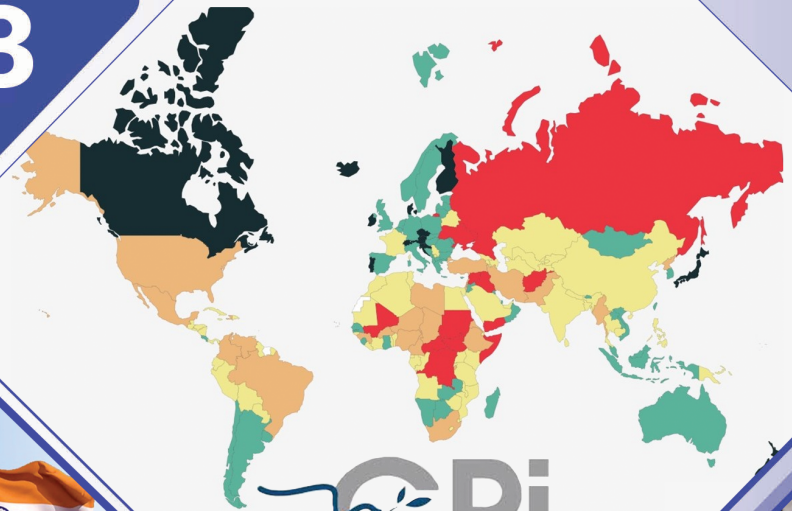


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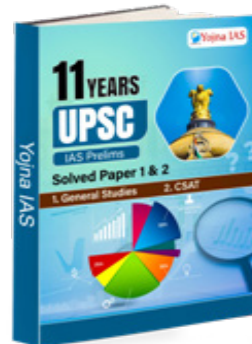
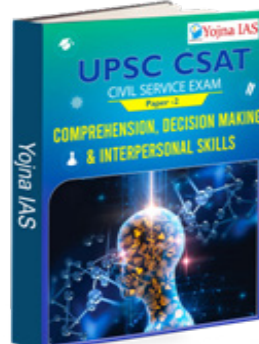
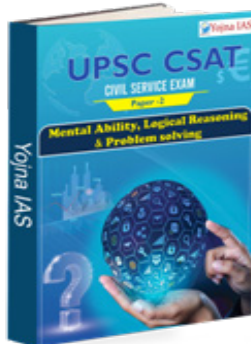
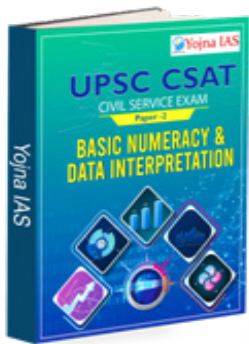
HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ NATO AND NATO PLUS
- ▶ SIACHEN GLACIER
- ▶ TRIBAL EMPOWERMENT
- ▶ CLUSTER MUNITIONS
- ▶ GLOBAL PEACE INDEX (GPI)

Inside the Pages ...

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- National Affairs
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Sources:

The Hindu | The Indian Express | The Economic Times | Press Information Bureau PIB News | PRS (Recent Bills and their analysis) | CPCB | NDMA | IDSA: Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis (For in-depth IR and Internal Security articles) unesco World Heritage Convention | BBC | NCERTs All standard reference books.

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FOREWORD

Dear Aspirants,

Every one of you dreams and desires something to accomplish. Nobody can stop you from dreaming. Dreams are the only objective we all have and don't work until we do. Every new day, you dream of motivating yourself for a new purpose of improving your life. Preparing and nourishing the mind. Vanishing the failed person within us. Discard the obstacles, doubts and justifications. And that's how victory will arrive at you. One should realize the most achieving regions in the preliminary and main IAS examination. One should know which editions must be read and which books must be prevented. To achieve an IAS position with the least effort, candidates must be discreet.

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We Wish you Good Luck, Keep Believing in Yourself, and if you are well prepared, you will Succeed.

**Team of
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MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS CONTENTS

General Studies -1

(Indian Heritage and Culture, History and Geography of the World and Society)

1. DHARMA CHAKRA PRAVARTANA DIVAS 2 - 4

General Studies -2

(Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice & International Relations)

1. NATO AND NATO PLUS 6 - 8
2. DELIMITATION COMMISSION 8 - 11
3. WASH (WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE) 11 - 14
4. GLOBAL PEACE INDEX (GPI) 14 - 17
5. STATE MINISTER'S DISMISSAL 17 - 19
6. PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES 19 - 23
7. SCHEMES FOR ELDERLY CARE 23 - 27
8. WTO DISPUTE SETTLEMENT SYSTEM 27 - 31
9. INDUS WATERS TREATY 31 - 34
10. PREVENTION OF MONEY LAUNDERING ACT (PMLA) 34 - 36
11. INDIA-FRANCE RELATIONSHIP 37 - 40
12. DATA GOVERNANCE 40 - 42
13. ANTI DEFECTION LAW 42 - 46
14. SIACHEN GLACIER 46 - 48
15. CLUSTER MUNITIONS 48 - 51
16. MISSION VATSALYA 51 - 55
17. DEFAMATION 56 - 58
18. RAJASTHAN MINIMUM GUARANTEED INCOME ACT, 2023 58 - 60
19. NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN 61 - 64
20. TRIBAL EMPOWERMENT 64 - 66
21. INDIA SRI LANKA RELATIONS 67 - 70
22. NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS (NCPCR). 70 - 74
23. NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION 74 - 76
24. MANUAL SCAVENGING IN INDIA 76 - 80

25.	INDIA-AUSTRALIA DEFENCE POLICY TALKS	80 - 83
-----	--	---------

General Studies -3

(Technology, Economic Development, Biodiversity, Security & Disaster Management)

1.	GREEN HYDROGEN	85 - 87
2.	GREEDFLATION	87 - 89
3.	OPEN MARKET SALE SCHEME (OMSS)	89 - 91
4.	DEEP SEA MINING	91 - 93
5.	NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION	94 - 97
6.	LEPTOSPIROSIS	97 - 99
7.	PAU'S NEW WHEAT VARIETY PBW RS1	99 - 102
8.	GRAMODYOG VIKAS YOJANA (GVY)	102 - 104
9.	ELECTRIC VEHICLE TECHNOLOGIES	105 - 109
10.	E20 AND GLOBAL BIOFUEL ALLIANCE	109 - 112
11.	CONSUMER PRICE INDEX - CPI	112 - 115
12.	EXPORT PREPAREDNESS INDEX (EPI)	115 - 118
13.	DTP IMMUNIZATION	118 - 121
14.	GM CROPS	121 - 124
15.	LIGHTNING FATALITIES IN INDIA	124 - 127
16.	KATCHATHEEVU ISLAND	128 - 131
17.	ROADMAP FOR PROMOTING SOLAR ENERGY FOR UNIVERSAL ENERGY ACCESS	131 - 134
18.	GLOBAL REPORT ON FOOD CRISES 2023	134 - 136
19.	PM-KUSUM (PRADHAN MANTRI KISAN URJA SURAKSHA EVAM UTTHAAN MAHABHIYAN)	137 - 139
20.	HIMACHAL FLASH FLOODS	140 - 143
21.	BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2021	144 - 146

General Studies -1

(Indian Heritage and Culture, History and Geography of the World and Society)

DHARMA CHAKRA PRAVARTANA DIVAS

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Dharma Chakra Pravartana Divas”. The topic “Dharma Chakra Pravartana Divas” has relevance in the Art and Culture section of the UPSC CSE exam.



FOR PRELIMS:

What is Dharma Chakra Pravartana?

FOR MAINS:

GS 1&4 : Art and Culture, Ethics

Lord Buddha: Teachings and Life Events?

Inspiration for Youth to Navigate Life's Challenges

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, called upon the youth to draw inspiration from the teachings of Buddha, empowering themselves to make significant contributions toward building a peaceful society, nation, and world

WHAT IS DHARMA CHAKRA PRAVARTANA?

- Dharma Chakra Pravartana, also known as “Turning the Wheel of Dharma,” refers to a significant event in the life of Lord Buddha. It took place in the village of Sarnath, near Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, where Buddha gave his first sermon after attaining enlightenment.
- During the Dharma Chakra Pravartana, Buddha shared his teachings on the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, marking the beginning of his public teaching mission. He expounded on the nature of suffering, its causes, and the path to its cessation.
- The term “Dharma Chakra” refers to the “Wheel of Dharma,” symbolizing the turning or propagation of the teachings of Buddhism. It represents the continuous cycle of teaching and learning, as well as the dissemination of wisdom and enlightenment.
- The Dharma Chakra Pravartana is an essential event in Buddhist history, signifying the establishment of the Buddhist community (sangha) and the spread of Buddha’s teachings throughout the world. It holds great significance for Buddhists and is often commemorated as an important milestone in the Buddhist calendar.

LORD BUDDHA: TEACHINGS AND LIFE EVENTS

Early Life and Renunciation:

- Born into the royal family of the Sakya clan in Kapilvastu, Nepal.
- At age 29, Siddhartha Gautam renounced his life of luxury.
- Embraced asceticism and extreme self-discipline.
- Attainment of Enlightenment:
- After 49 days of meditation, Gautam achieved Bodhi (enlightenment).
- Under a pipal tree in Bodhgaya, Bihar, he gained profound insight.
- First Sermon and Dharma Chakra Pravartana:
- Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon in Sarnath, near Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.
- Known as Dharma Chakra Pravartana, it marked the turning of the wheel of law.
- Occurred on Asadha Purnima, a day also observed as Guru Purnima.

MAJOR TEACHINGS OF LORD BUDDHA:

- The Three Marks of Existence:
- Impermanence (anicca): All phenomena are subject to change and transience.
- Unsatisfactoriness (dukkha): The inherent dissatisfaction or suffering in life.
- Non-self (anatta): The absence of a permanent, unchanging self.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS:

- Truth of suffering: Acknowledging the existence of suffering.
- Truth of the cause of suffering: Identifying ignorance, attachment, and aversion.
- Truth of the cessation of suffering: Realizing the possibility of ending suffering.
- Truth of the path to the cessation of suffering: Following the Noble Eightfold Path.

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH:

The Noble Eightfold Path consists of right view, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration. It is a transformative path that leads to the cessation of suffering and the realization of enlightenment

THE FOUR SUBLIME STATES:

Loving-kindness (metta), compassion (karuna), sympathetic joy (mudita), and equanimity (upekkha).

THE FIVE PRECEPTS:

Ethical principles for lay followers: abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxication.

Foster respect for life, property, honesty, and clarity of mind.

INSPIRATION FOR YOUTH TO NAVIGATE LIFE'S CHALLENGES:

- Mindfulness as a Foundation: Cultivating awareness of the present moment for improved focus, stress management, and self-awareness.

- Embracing Impermanence and Non-Attachment: Recognizing the transient nature of all things and letting go of attachments for resilience and adaptability.
- Cultivating Compassion and Empathy: Fostering loving-kindness and compassion towards others, promoting unity and understanding.
- Self-Discovery and Inner Transformation: Engaging in introspection and self-reflection to discover true nature, passions, and purpose.
- Social and Environmental Responsibility: Embracing interconnectedness and taking responsible action for equality, justice, and sustainability.

SOURCE:

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1937114>

Q.1 What is the significance of Dharma Chakra Pravartana in Buddhism?

- (a) It represents the establishment of the Buddhist community.
- (b) It symbolizes the propagation of Buddha's teachings.
- (c) It marks the first sermon delivered by Lord Buddha.
- (d) All of the above.

Answer: (d)

Q.2 Which of the following is not one of the Four Noble Truths taught by Lord Buddha?

- (a) Truth of suffering
- (b) Truth of the cause of suffering
- (c) Truth of the cessation of suffering
- (d) Truth of eternal happiness

Answer: (d)

Q.3 Explain the fundamental teachings of Lord Buddha. Discuss the practical implications of incorporating these teachings into one's life and their potential impact on personal well-being and societal harmony.

General Studies -2

(Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice
& International Relations)

NATO AND NATO PLUS

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "NATO and NATO Plus". The topic "NATO and NATO Plus" has relevance in the "International Relations and Current events of international importance" sections of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is NATO and who are its recent members?

What is NATO Plus and whether India is a part of it?

FOR MAINS:

GS 2: International Relations

Potential benefits and risks of India joining NATO Plus for Indian geopolitical interests

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Recently in March 2023, NATO and the U.S. House Select Committee expressed interest in engaging India more closely.

WHAT IS THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO)?

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a **military alliance between 31 North Atlantic countries –29 European and two North American**. The headquarters of NATO is located in **Brussels, Belgium**.

- NATO was formed in 1949 to defend its members against attack. It was created in the aftermath of World War II, and its members agree to defend each other if one is attacked.
- NATO's fundamental purpose is to guarantee the freedom and security of its members through political and military means.

MEMBER COUNTRIES OF NATO:

- **12 Founding Members**– Belgium (1949), Canada (1949), Denmark (1949), France (1949), Iceland (1949), Italy (1949), Luxembourg (1949), Netherlands (1949), Norway (1949), Portugal (1949), United Kingdom (1949), United States (1949),
- **Later Joinees**- Greece (1952), Türkiye (1952), Germany (1955), Spain (1982), Czechia (1999), Hungary (1999), Poland (1999), Bulgaria (2004), Estonia (2004), Latvia (2004), Lithuania (2004), Romania (2004), Slovakia (2004), Slovenia (2004), Albania (2009), Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2017), **North Macedonia (2020), Finland (2023)**.
 - **Presently, four partner countries have declared their intent to join NATO: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Sweden, and Ukraine.**

WHAT IS NATO PLUS?

NATO Plus is an alliance between **NATO and five US allies, namely Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, and the United Kingdom**.

- The alliance was formed to **enhance global defense cooperation and counter China**.
- The alliance will focus on sharing intelligence, conducting joint exercises, and developing new technologies.

- NATO Plus is seen as a way to strengthen NATO's presence in the Indo-Pacific region and to counter China's growing military power.
- Although the term "NATO Plus" is not an officially recognized or established concept within NATO itself, it has been used in discussions and debates about the potential expansion of the alliance.

BENEFITS FOR INDIA OF JOINING SUCH GROUPING:

- India will have the opportunity to **engage in joint exercises and training alongside NATO forces.**
- **Access to NATO's intelligence and surveillance capabilities** will be available to India.
- **Collaborative efforts with NATO on research and development** projects will be possible for India.
- India's ties with other countries in the Asia-Pacific region will be further enhanced through this collaboration.

GEOPOLITICAL IMPLICATIONS:

Impact on Relations with Russia and China:

- Joining any NATO framework would create discontent among Russia and China.
- India's solid strategic partnership with Russia, which has been instrumental in addressing regional security challenges and moderating China's stance, would be at risk.
- Despite Russia's increasing reliance on China, Moscow remains a valuable partner for India.

Concerns about aligning with the U.S.:

- While it may be tempting to align with a U.S.-led alliance due to China's threats, there could be adverse consequences.
- Joining a military framework would limit India's freedom of action and hinder its ability to pursue an independent policy towards China.

Challenges to India's strategic autonomy:

- India has traditionally maintained a policy of strategic autonomy, allowing it to engage with nations and blocs based on its own interests.
- Joining NATO would necessitate aligning defense and security policies with the alliance's objectives, which may undermine India's autonomy.
- This decision could strain relationships with neighboring countries, regional organizations, and restrict India's flexibility in engaging with other regional powers.

WHAT IS INDIA'S STAND?

- India's **External Affairs Minister has firmly rejected the notion of India adopting the NATO template.**
- India's primary **focus should be on addressing its specific regional dynamics**, which encompass various security challenges such as border disputes, terrorism, and regional conflicts.
- While NATO possesses capabilities to address some of these issues, its broader geopolitical agenda spanning from Eurasia to the Indo-Pacific may divert resources and attention away from India's immediate concerns, rendering it less beneficial for India.
- **Currently, India's engagement through the Quad** (comprising India, Japan, Australia, and the

U.S.) appears **more promising than the lure of NATO Plus.**

Source:

India should refuse America's 'NATO Plus' bait

Q1. Consider the following:

1. United Kingdom
2. Mexico
3. Finland
4. North Macedonia
5. Sweden
6. Ukraine

How many of the above-mentioned countries are members of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as of July 2023?

- (a) Only two
- (b) Only three
- (c) Only four
- (d) Only five

Answer: (b)

Q2. Consider of the following statements with reference to NATO Plus:

1. The NATO Plus alliance has not been officially recognised or established within NATO.
2. The alliance was established to strengthen global defense cooperation and address the challenge posed by China.
3. Recently, India has become a member of NATO Plus alliance.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 3 only

Answer: (a)

Q3. What are the potential benefits and risks of India joining NATO Plus for Indian geopolitical interests?

DELIMITATION COMMISSION

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Delimitation Commission”. The topic “Delimitation Commission” has relevance in the “Polity and Governance” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is Delimitation? Delimitation Act? Composition of Delimitation Commission? Function?

FOR MAINS:

GS2: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.

Why in the news?

In the recent months, delimitation was carried out in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir as well as the State of Assam.

DELIMITATION

- **Delimitation, in its literal sense, entails establishing the limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies within a country or province that possesses a legislative body.**
- Delimitation involves the redrawing of boundaries for Lok Sabha and state Assembly seats, **aiming to accurately reflect population changes.**
- The primary goal of delimitation is to **ensure fair and equal representation** for different segments of the population.
- The task of delimitation is designated to a body with significant authority, commonly referred to as either the Delimitation Commission or the Boundary Commission.

DELIMITATION COMMISSION

- Following each census, a Delimitation Act is legislated by the Parliament in accordance with Article 82 of the Constitution.
- After the commencement of the Act, the **Central Government constitutes a Delimitation Commission.**
- The Delimitation Commission is responsible for delineating the boundaries of Parliamentary Constituencies in accordance with the provisions of the Delimitation Act.
- Its primary objective is to ensure that the population of each constituency, to the extent feasible, is approximately equal.
- **Additionally, the Commission is entrusted with the task of designating constituencies reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.**
- To promote **transparency and public participation**, the Delimitation Commission releases draft proposals for public scrutiny and feedback.
- It also conducts public hearings where individuals can express their objections and suggestions. Based on the input received, the Commission reviews the draft proposal and incorporates any necessary changes.
- Upon finalization, the **Commission publishes the final order in the Gazette of India as well as the relevant State Gazette.** The implementation of the order is determined by a date specified by the President.

COMPOSITION

- **The President of India appoints** the Delimitation Commission.
- It works in collaboration with the Election Commission of India.
- It is composed of the following:
 - **A retired Supreme Court judge**, who shall be the Chairperson of the Commission
 - **Chief Election Commissioner of India**

- the **State Election Commissioner** of concerned State,

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

- The Commission can associate with individuals to assist in its duties.
- Ten persons from each state are associated with the Commission.
- Five of them are members of the House of the People representing that state.
- Five are members of the Legislative Assembly of that state.
- If a state has five or fewer members in the House of the People, all of them become associate members for that state.
- The nomination of associated members is done by the respective Speakers.
- Associate members do not have the right to vote or sign decisions of the Commission.
- **The Secretary to the Election Commission serves as the *ex officio* Secretary of the Commission.**

POWERS OF DELIMITATION COMMISSION

- The Commission has the **authority to establish its own procedure.**
- It possesses **powers similar to a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908**, for certain matters, including summoning witnesses, requesting document production, and obtaining public records.
- The Commission is **considered a civil court for specific purposes under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.**
- **Decisions of the majority** prevail in case of differing opinions among the members.
- **The Delimitation Commission in India is a high power body whose orders have the force of law and cannot be called in question before any court.**

PREVIOUS DELIMITATION EXERCISES

- **Delimitation Commissions have been constituted in India on four occasions:**
 - In **1952** under the Delimitation Commission Act, 1952.
 - In **1963** under the Delimitation Commission Act, 1962.
 - In **1973** under the Delimitation Act, 1972.
 - In **2002** under the Delimitation Act, 2002.
- The current delimitation of constituencies in India is based on the 2001 census figures, as per the provisions of the Delimitation Act, 2002.
- **The Constitution of India was amended in 2002 to suspend delimitation of constituencies until after the first census following 2026.** Therefore, the present constituencies established using the 2001 census data will remain in operation until the first census after 2026.
- However, the 2002 Act did not alter the total number of Lok Sabha seats or their distribution among states. Certain states, such as Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Manipur, were excluded from the delimitation exercise due to “security risks.”
- On 6 March 2020, the central government reconstituted the Delimitation Commission for Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sources:

The fallout of delimitation in the States needs no political forecasting

Q1. With reference to the Delimitation Commission recently seen in news, consider the following statements:

1. The Delimitation Commission is appointed by the Election Commission of India.
2. The Delimitation Commission has powers of a civil court for matters such as summoning witnesses.
3. The orders of the Delimitation Commission can only be appealed in the apex court i.e. Supreme Court of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are **incorrect**?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) None

Answer: (c)

Q2. Consider the following bodies/ institutions:

1. Election Commission of India
2. Delimitation Commission
3. National Human Rights Commission
4. State Election Commission
5. National Commission for Women

How many of the bodies given above can be called Constitutional Bodies?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All of them

Answer: (b)

Q3. What is the role and significance of the Delimitation Commission in the context of the Indian political system, and how does it impact the electoral process and representation in the country?

WASH (WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE)

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “WASH”. The topic “WASH” has relevance in the Public Health section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is WASH?

FOR MAINS:

GS 2 : Public Health

Unsafe WASH Practices?

Impacts of Unsafe WASH Practices?

Importance of Safe WASH?

WHO WASH Strategy?

Link to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

WHY IN THE NEWS:

According to a new report by the World Health Organization (WHO) titled “Burden of Disease Attributable to Unsafe Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: 2019 Update,” unsafe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices have led to severe consequences, resulting in a significant loss of lives and widespread disease burden.

WHAT IS WASH:

Definition:

- WASH is an acronym that represents the interrelated areas of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene.
- It encompasses initiatives and practices aimed at improving access to clean water, proper sanitation facilities, and promoting good hygiene behaviors.

Components of WASH:

- **Water:** Focuses on ensuring access to safe and clean drinking water for all individuals and communities.
- **Sanitation:** Involves providing proper sanitation facilities and systems for the safe disposal of human waste.
- **Hygiene:** Promotes good hygiene practices such as handwashing, proper food handling, and awareness about basic hygiene.

Goals and Objectives:

- Improve health outcomes by reducing waterborne diseases and improving sanitation practices.
- Enhance access to clean water and proper sanitation facilities, especially in marginalized and underserved communities.
- Promote hygiene behaviors to prevent the spread of diseases and improve overall well-being.

UNSAFE WASH PRACTICES:

- **Drinking Contaminated Water:** Using polluted rivers or stagnant ponds as drinking water sources.
- **Inadequate Sanitation:** Absence or poor maintenance of toilets, latrines, or sewage systems leading to improper waste disposal.
- **Poor Hygiene Practices:** Insufficient handwashing with soap, improper food handling, and lack of hygiene awareness.
- **Open Defecation:** Defecating in the open without proper toilet or latrine facilities, causing environmental and water contamination.

- **Improper Waste Disposal:**Inadequate disposal of solid waste and mishandling of hazardous waste, leading to pollution and disease transmission.

IMPACTS OF UNSAFE WASH PRACTICES:

Mortality Toll:

- Unsafe WASH practices caused 395,000 deaths among children under five in 2019.
- Diarrhoea accounted for 273,000 deaths, while acute respiratory infections caused 112,000 deaths.
- Inadequate access to WASH services resulted in at least 1.4 million deaths globally.

Widespread Disease Impact:

- Diarrhoeal diseases caused over a million deaths and 55 million Disability-adjusted life years (DALY).
- Soil-transmitted helminthiases (STH) affect an estimated 1.5 billion people worldwide due to poor sanitation practices.
- Inadequate WASH contributes to 10% of the disease burden associated with malnutrition.

Global Disparities in WASH Access:

- 771 million people lack access to safe water globally.
- Approximately 1.7 billion people do not have access to proper sanitation facilities.
- Consequences for Low and High-Income Countries:
- Poor hand hygiene practices led to around 384,000 diarrhoea-related deaths in Africa and South-East Asia.
- Even high-income countries like the United States experienced risks, with thousands of deaths from diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections.

IMPORTANCE OF SAFE WASH:

- **Health and Well-being:** Safe WASH practices reduce the risk of illness, malnutrition, and mortality.
- **Gender Equality:** Gender-responsive WASH services empower women and girls, promoting equality and dignity.
- **Environmental Sustainability:**Sustainable WASH practices protect water resources, conserve the environment, and mitigate climate change impacts.

WHO WASH STRATEGY:

- Developed in response to Member State Resolution (WHA 64.4) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Part of WHO's 13th General Programme of Work 2019–2023, focusing on health, emergency preparedness, and Universal Health Coverage (UHC).
- Emphasizes the progressive realization of the human rights to safe drinking-water and

LINK TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs):

- **Goal 3:** Good Health and Well-being – WASH is essential for preventing the spread of diseases and promoting good health.
- **Goal 6:** Clean Water and Sanitation – Focuses on ensuring access to clean drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities.

- **Goal 12:** Responsible Consumption and Production – WASH is crucial for responsible use and management of water resources.
- **Goal 13:** Climate Action – WASH plays a role in adapting to climate change impacts on water availability and quality.

Source:

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/water/unsafe-wash-behind-395-000-deaths-of-children-under-5-in-2019-who-report-90345>

Q.1 Which of the following is a major impact of unsafe WASH practices?

- (a) Increased agricultural productivity
- (b) Improved access to education
- (c) Higher mortality rates
- (d) Enhanced economic growth

ANSWER: C

Q.2 Which of the following statements about unsafe WASH practices are true?

1. Unsafe WASH practices can result in the contamination of water sources
2. Inadequate access to WASH services has no significant impact on global mortality rates.
3. Open defecation is an example of an unsafe WASH practice.

Select all that apply:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

ANSWER: C

Q.3 Discuss the impacts of unsafe WASH practices on public health and the environment. How can these impacts be mitigated through effective WASH interventions?

GLOBAL PEACE INDEX (GPI)

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Global Peace Index (GPI)". The topic "Global Peace Index (GPI)" has relevance in the "Current events of International importance, International Relations" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is Global Peace Index? Who publishes it?

FOR MAINS:

GS2: International Relations

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Global Peace Index (GPI) has published its annual list of the most peaceful countries in the world.

WHAT IS THE GLOBAL PEACE INDEX (GPI)?

- **The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)** has released the 17th edition of the Global Peace Index (GPI), which assesses and ranks 163 independent states and territories based on their levels of peacefulness.
- This report offers the most extensive analysis based on data to date regarding trends in peace, the economic significance it holds, and strategies for fostering peaceful societies.
- The Global Peace Index (GPI) encompasses 163 countries, representing 99.7 percent of the global population. It relies on 23 indicators of both qualitative and quantitative nature from reputable sources.
- The index evaluates the level of peace within three distinct domains.
 - Societal safety and security
 - Ongoing domestic and international conflict
 - Militarisation

GLOBAL PEACE INDEX (GPI) 2023

The world has become less peaceful, according to the 2023 Global Peace Index. The average global peacefulness score decreased by 0.42 percent, the thirteenth deterioration in fifteen years. In 2022, 84 countries improved in peacefulness, while 79 deteriorated.

RANKING OF VARIOUS STATES

- According to the 2023 Global Peace Index (GPI), **Iceland retains its position as the most peaceful country globally**, a title it has held since 2008.
- Joining Iceland at the top of the rankings are **Denmark, Ireland, New Zealand, and Austria.**
- On the other end of the spectrum, **Afghanistan maintains its position as the least peaceful country for the eighth consecutive year.**
- Afghanistan is followed by **Yemen, Syria, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.**

INDIA'S RANKING

In the rankings, **India has moved up two spots to reach 126th place compared to its previous position.** The report highlights that India has witnessed a 3.5 percent improvement in overall peacefulness in the past year.

- This improvement can be attributed to advancements in curbing violent crime, enhancing relations with neighboring countries, and reducing political instability.
- According to the Global Peace Index (GPI), the indicator measuring relations with neighboring countries improved due to a decrease in cross-border violence and ceasefire violations with Pakistan and China in 2022.
- Additionally, the easing of geopolitical tensions with China, resulting from a reduction in border incidents, and a decrease in social unrest have contributed to an improvement in the political instability indicator in India.

South Asia's Regional Rankings

Overall Rank	Regional Rank	Country
17	1	Bhutan
79	2	Nepal
88	3	Bangladesh
107	4	Sri Lanka
126	5	India
146	6	Pakistan
163	7	Afghanistan

Major indices put out by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP):

- Global Peace Index
- Global Terrorism Index
- Safety Perceptions Index
- Ecological Threat Report
- Positive Peace Report
- UNESCO Framework for Enabling Intercultural Dialogue

Sources:
GPI-2023
Indian Express

Q1. With reference Global Peace Index, consider the following statements:

1. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) publishes this annual report which assesses and ranks states based on their levels of peacefulness.
 2. India's ranking has drastically moved down in the index in this year's report.
 3. Overall, India ranks at the bottom in the South Asian region,
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 3 only
(d) None

Answer: (d)

Q2. Consider the following Indices/ Reports:

1. Global Terrorism Index
2. Safety Perceptions Index
3. Rule of Law Index
4. Quality-of-Life Index

How many of the Indices/ Reports given above are published by Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)?

- (a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three

(d) All Four

Answer: (b)

Q3. Discuss the implications of India's neighborhood on India's peace and prosperity, and analyze the strategies India can adopt to ensure regional stability.

STATE MINISTER'S DISMISSAL

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "State Minister's Dismissal". The topic "State Minister's Dismissal" has relevance in the Governance section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

Constitutional Provisions?

Historical Context?

FOR MAINS:

GS 2 : Governance

Judicial Clarifications?

Concerns Related to Dismissal of Ministers?

Way Forward?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Tamil Nadu Governor R. N. Ravi had, based on the advice of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, hurriedly backtracked on his decision to "dismiss" arrested Minister V. Senthil Balaji.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS:

- **Article 164:** According to Article 164 of the Indian Constitution, the Chief Minister is appointed by the Governor without any advice. However, the appointment of individual Ministers is made only on the advice of the Chief Minister. The Governor cannot exercise discretion in appointing Ministers but can dismiss them based on the Chief Minister's advice.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

- **Reference to the Government of India Act, 1935:** Under the Government of India Act, 1935, which governed the colonial rule, the Governor had absolute discretion to choose and dismiss Ministers. After India gained independence, the Governor's role transformed into that of a constitutional head, acting on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers headed by the Chief Minister.

JUDICIAL CLARIFICATIONS:

- **Shamsher Singh and Anr vs State Of Punjab (1974):** The Supreme Court declared that the President and Governor, who hold executive powers under the Constitution, should exercise their formal constitutional powers only with the advice of their Ministers, except in exceptional situations.
- **Nabam Rebia vs Deputy Speaker (2015):** The Supreme Court ruled that Governors cannot cause

the downfall of elected governments. It reaffirmed the previous ruling in Shamsher Singh and emphasized that the Governor's discretionary powers are limited to the provisions of Article 163(1), which states the Governor's need for aid and advice from the Council of Ministers, led by the Chief Minister.

CONCERNS RELATED TO DISMISSAL OF MINISTERS:

- **Constitutional Misadventure:** Dismissing a Minister without the Chief Minister's recommendation is seen as a constitutional misadventure, as it goes against the principle that the Governor acts on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.
- **Setting Wrong Precedent:** The dismissal of a Minister without the Chief Minister's recommendation may set a precedent and potentially destabilize State governments, jeopardizing the federal system of governance.
- **Collapse of Constitutional System:** Allowing Governors to dismiss Ministers without the knowledge and recommendation of the Chief Minister could lead to the collapse of the constitutional system, undermining the authority of the democratically elected State Legislature.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Uphold Constitutional Principles:** It is essential to adhere to the constitutional provisions that require the Governor to act on the aid and advice of the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers.
- **Judicial Clarity:** The judiciary should continue to provide clarifications and reinforce the limited discretionary powers of the Governor, as highlighted in previous landmark judgments.
- **Legislative Action:** The legislature should consider enacting clear guidelines and regulations that govern the exercise of the Governor's powers to dismiss Ministers, ensuring accountability and transparency.
- **Preserving Federal Structure:** Protecting the federal system of governance is crucial, and any action that has the potential to destabilize State governments should be avoided.
- **Respect for Democracy:** The democratic process and the authority of the elected State Legislature should be respected, allowing for the smooth functioning of the parliamentary democracy in India.

Source:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/amit-shah-advised-tn-governor-to-see-ags-opinion-on-senthilbalajis-dismissal/article67026020.ece>

Q.1 According to the Indian Constitution, which of the following statements accurately describes the powers of the Governor regarding the dismissal of Ministers?

1. The Governor can dismiss a Minister only on the advice of the Chief Minister.
2. The Governor can dismiss a Minister without any recommendations
3. The Governor's powers to dismiss Ministers are governed by the President's advice.

Options:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) None of the above

Answer: (a)

Q.2 Which of the following judicial rulings clarified the limitations on the Governor's powers to dismiss Ministers in India?

- (a) Kesavananda Bharati vs. State of Kerala
- (b) Indira Gandhi vs. Raj Narain
- (c) Shamsher Singh vs. State of Punjab
- (d) S.R. Bommai vs. Union of India

Answer: (c)

Q.3 Discuss the significance of the Governor's powers in the dismissal of Ministers in the Indian political system, highlighting the constitutional provisions

PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Parliamentary privileges". The topic "Parliamentary privileges" has relevance in the "Indian Polity" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What are Parliamentary Privileges?

FOR MAINS:

GS2: Parliament and State Legislatures, Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges, Issues Arising out of these

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha raised objections when his microphone was turned off during the session, considering it a breach of his Parliamentary privilege.

PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES

Parliament and its members have certain rights and immunities, collectively known as parliamentary privilege, that allow them to perform their duties efficiently and effectively without any hindrance.

It is defined as follows in Erskine May's Treatise on The Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament: "*Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions, and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals. Thus privilege, though part of the law of the land, is to a certain extent an exemption from the general law.*"

These powers, privileges, and immunities are addressed in the Constitution through Articles 105 and 194.

Powers and Privileges	Description
Freedom of Speech	Members of Parliament have the right to freely express their opinions and ideas during parliamentary proceedings, subject to constitutional provisions.
Immunity from Legal Proceedings	MPs are protected from legal action for anything said or voted in Parliament or its committees. The same immunity applies to the publication of authorized reports, papers, votes, or proceedings.
Defined by Parliament	The specific powers, privileges, and immunities of each House, its members, and committees are determined by Parliament through legislation. Existing powers and privileges continue until such laws are enacted.
Applicable to Individuals	The aforementioned powers and privileges also extend to individuals who have the right to speak or participate in House proceedings or committees as per the constitution.
No Breach of Privilege	If a member or minister makes a statement in the House that another member believes to be untrue or incorrect, it does not constitute a breach of privilege. However, Rule 353 of the Lok Sabha requires an MP to give advance notice of an allegation for an inquiry by the respective minister.
State Legislature Privileges	Article 194 outlines the powers, privileges, and immunities of State legislatures and their members and committees.
Restriction on Discussing Judges' Conduct	Article 121 restricts members from discussing the conduct of judges of the Supreme Court and High Court.
Validity of Parliamentary Proceedings	Article 122 stipulates that the validity of any parliamentary proceeding cannot be questioned in court based on alleged irregularities of procedure.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN PRIVILEGES?

Freedom of Speech

- Under **Article 105**, the Houses of Parliament, along with their members and committees, enjoy certain powers and privileges. These include:
 - **Freedom of speech in Parliament**, subject to constitutional provisions and procedural regulations.
 - **Members of Parliament are immune from legal proceedings** for anything said or voted in Parliament or its committees. The same immunity applies to the publication of authorised reports, papers, votes, or proceedings.
 - The specific powers, privileges, and immunities of each House, its members, and committees are defined by Parliament through legislation. Until such laws are enacted, the existing powers and privileges continue as before the Constitution (Forty-Fourth Amendment) Act, 1978.

- The provisions mentioned above **also apply to individuals who have the right to speak or participate in the proceedings of a House** of Parliament or its committees as per the constitution.
- If a member or minister makes a statement in the House that another member believes to be untrue or incorrect, it does not constitute a breach of privilege. But Rule 353 of the Lok Sabha mandates that an MP provide advance notice of an allegation before the relevant minister can investigate it.
- Similarly, **Article 194** outlines the powers, privileges, and immunities of State legislatures and their members and committees.
- **Article 121** of the Constitution restricts members from discussing the conduct of judges of the Supreme Court and High Court.
- According to **Article 122**, the validity of any parliamentary proceeding cannot be questioned in court based on alleged irregularities of procedure.

PROTECTION FROM ARRESTS

- MPs are protected from arrest in civil cases 40 days before and after a session or committee meeting under Section 135A of the Civil Procedure Code, 1908.
- This privilege applies only to civil cases, and MPs do not have immunity in criminal cases, whether during the session or otherwise.
- However, Parliament must be promptly informed about the arrest, detention, conviction, imprisonment, and release of a member.
- Furthermore, members have immunity from arrest and legal process within the precincts of the House without prior permission from the Chairman or Speaker.

CODIFICATION OF PRIVILEGES

As of now, there is **no specific legislation** passed by either Parliament or State legislatures defining the powers, privileges, and immunities of the Houses, their members, and committees. Instead, these immunities are currently governed by precedents based on British parliamentary conventions.

BREACH OF PRIVILEGE

- A “breach of privilege” occurs when an individual or authority disregards or undermines the parliamentary privilege of a member or the House.
- This offence is punishable. Actions such as disobeying legitimate orders, making libellous statements about the House, its members, committees, or officers also qualify as breaches of privilege, according to the Rajya Sabha booklet on privileges.

CONTEMPT OF THE HOUSE

- “Breach of privilege” should not be confused with “contempt of the House,” which is defined as any act or omission that obstructs or hinders the functioning of either House of Parliament or obstructs any member or officer in carrying out their duties.
- Examples of contempt include speeches or writings that criticize the House or its members,

question the impartiality of the Chair, or publish expunged proceedings.

PROCESS TO RAISE A QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

- Parliament is the sole authority to determine if there has been a breach of privilege or contempt of the House; no court has this power.
- A member of the House can raise a question about a breach of privilege with the consent of the Chairman or Speaker. If consent is given, the matter can be considered by the House, or it may be referred to the Committee of Privileges.
- The Chairman also has the authority to refer, on his own, any question of privilege to the Committee for examination, investigation, and report.
- Alternatively, the Chairman can personally investigate a breach of privilege matter without involving the Committee and inform the House of the findings, thereby closing the matter, as per the Rajya Sabha rulebook.
- Only one question about a breach of privilege can be raised during a sitting, and the question must be limited to a specific recent occurrence.

COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES

The committee's role is semi-judicial, and it deals with cases of breach of privileges of the House and its members. It recommends suitable actions in response to such breaches. The Lok Sabha committee comprises 15 members, and the Rajya Sabha committee has 10 members.

PUNISHMENT FOR A BREACH OF PRIVILEGE

- The House has the authority to decide punishments for those found guilty of breach of privileges or contempt. Punishments can range from reprimand, warning, to imprisonment.
- However, the period of imprisonment for contempt is limited to the duration of the House session. If a Member of Parliament (MP) is found guilty, they can either be suspended from the House or expelled.

Sources:

Parliamentary privilege breached, says Congress chief Kharge - The Hindu

Explained | Understanding parliamentary privilege and what amounts of its breach - The Hindu

Q1. With reference to Parliamentary privilege, consider the following statements:

1. Article 105 of the Constitution deals with the powers, privileges, and immunities of State legislatures and their members and committees.
2. Members of Parliament are immune from legal proceedings for anything said or voted in Parlia-

ment or its committees.

3. According to Article 121 of the Constitution, members of Parliament are allowed to discuss the conduct of judges of the Supreme Court and High Court.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 2 only
- (d) None

Answer: (c)

Q2. Consider the following:

1. MPs have immunity from arrest in both civil and criminal cases during the session and otherwise.
2. Only the Supreme Court can question the validity of any parliamentary proceeding based on alleged irregularities of procedure.
3. Members have immunity from arrest and legal process within the precincts of the House without prior permission from the Chairman or Speaker.

How many of the abovementioned statement/s is/are **NOT** correct ?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: (a)

Q3. What are parliamentary privileges? Discuss the need for codification of such privileges.

SCHEMES FOR ELDERLY CARE

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “SCHEMES FOR ELDERLY CARE”. The topic “SCHEMES FOR ELDERLY CARE” has relevance in the Social Justice section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

About SAGE Portal?

About the Silver Economy?

Objectives of Sacred Portal?

FOR MAINS:

GS 2: Social Justice

About Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY)?

Outcomes of AVYAY?

Other Initiatives Related to Elderly in India?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Minister of State for the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment highlighted the achievements of SAGE Portal and SACRED Portal.

SAGE PORTAL

Purpose of SAGE Portal:

- Encouraging entrepreneurs and start-ups to invest in the burgeoning “silver economy” segment.
- Fostering innovation in elderly care solutions.

Stakeholders Served by SAGE Portal:

- Entrepreneurs and start-ups interested in elderly care solutions.
- Senior citizens and their families seeking products and services catering to their needs.

Government’s Role:

- Facilitator in enabling the elderly to access products and services offered by identified start-ups through the SAGE Portal.
- Providing equity support of up to Rs. 1 crore per project for selected start-ups through the Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI).
- Government’s equity in the start-up does not exceed 49%.

Silver Economy:

- The term “silver economy” refers to the system of producing, distributing, and consuming goods and services that specifically cater to the needs of older and aging individuals.
- This economic framework aims to utilize the purchasing potential of senior citizens and address their consumption, living, and health-related requirements.
- Gerontechnology plays a vital role in this paradigm, as it involves developing and implementing technologies that are beneficial and relevant to the elderly.

SACRED Portal: Empowering Senior Citizens for Re-employment

- Empowers senior citizens by providing opportunities for re-employment.
- **Matching System:**Utilizes a virtual matching system to align preferences and skills of senior citizens with private enterprises seeking experienced individuals.
- **Benefits for Senior Citizens:**Helps them find suitable job options matching their preferences and skills. Thus, Enables them to attain financial security and reduces dependence on external support.

ATAL VAYO ABHYUDAY YOJANA (AVYAY): HOLISTIC SUPPORT FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Components of AVYAY:

- **a. Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSrC):**Supports Senior Citizens Homes providing shelter, food, medical care, and entertainment for indigent senior citizens.
- **b. State Action Plan for Senior Citizens (SAPSrC):**Provides grant-in-aid to States and Union Territories for activities like creating a pool of trained geriatric caregivers and conducting special cataract drives.
- **c. Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY):**Offers assisted living devices to eligible senior citizens with age-related disabilities to enhance their bodily functions.
- **d. Elderline – National Helpline for Senior Citizens (NHSC):**Toll-free helpline (14567) offering information, guidance, emotional support, and field intervention in cases of abuse.
- **e. Senior-care Ageing Growth Engine (SAGE):**Encourages youth to come up with innovative ideas for elderly care and promotes them into start-ups by providing equity support.

Outcomes of AVYAY:

- Approximately 1.5 lakh beneficiaries residing in Senior Citizen homes.
- Total grants in aid worth Rs. 288.08 crore released in the last three financial years, benefiting 3,63,570 individuals.
- Improved quality of life and social integration for indigent elderly individuals.
- Promotion of an inclusive society valuing and respecting senior citizens.
- Promotes “silver economy” and generates employment, fostering economic growth in elderly care innovation.

Other Initiatives Related to Elderly in India

- **National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP):**A policy framework to address the welfare and concerns of senior citizens.
- **National Social Assistance Programme:**Provides financial assistance to elderly individuals, among others, living below the poverty line.
- **Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY):**A pension scheme exclusively for senior citizens, providing them with a regular income.

- **SAMPANN Project:** No information available in the previous response. Please provide more context or check for the latest information on this project.



Source:

<https://www.thehindu.com/specials/text-and-context/do-sons-contribute-more-toward-elderly-care/article66882186.ece>

Q.1 Which of the following are the components of Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY)?

1. Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSrC)
2. Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)
3. Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY)

Select the correct answer from the options given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

Q.2 Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the initiatives related to elderly care and empowerment in India?

1. The SAGE Portal provides equity support of up to Rs. 1 crore per project to selected start-ups.
2. SACRED Portal empowers senior citizens by offering them suitable job opportunities through a virtual matching system
3. The Silver Economy is a system of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services targeting older and aging people.

Select the correct answer from the options given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d)

Q.3 Discuss the initiatives taken by the Indian government to support senior citizens and promote the silver economy. Highlight the role of the SAGE Portal, SACRED Portal in addressing the needs and challenges of the elderly population.

WTO DISPUTE SETTLEMENT SYSTEM

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “WTO Dispute Settlement System”. The topic “WTO Dispute Settlement System” has relevance in the “International Relations” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is WTO? What is the WTO Dispute Settlement Body?

FOR MAINS:

GS2: International Organizations- their structure and mandate

WHY IN THE NEWS?

In June 2022, the member-states of the World Trade Organization (WTO) were able to reach a face-saving agreement at the Geneva ministerial conference, which included reviving the WTO's dispute settlement system (DSS) by 2024.

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO):

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the singular global organisation dedicated to managing international trade regulations among nations.

- It establishes guidelines for the worldwide trading system and resolves disputes between its member countries.
- The foundation of the WTO lies in the negotiated and ratified agreements, endorsed by the majority of trading nations and approved by their respective parliaments. Its primary objective is to facilitate the smooth, predictable, and unhindered flow of trade.
- Additionally, the WTO encompasses various aspects of trade, including services such as telecommunications and banking, as well as intellectual property rights.

EVOLUTION OF WTO:

- In **1948**, several countries formed the **General Agreement for Tariffs and Trade (GATT)** with the aim of reducing high customs tariffs and other trade restrictions worldwide.
- Subsequently, in **1994**, member countries decided to establish a permanent institution to promote free and fair trade among nations, leading to the **transformation of GATT into the World Trade Organization on January 1, 1995**.
- While GATT mainly focused on tariffs and trade barriers, the WTO expanded its scope to encompass a broader range of trade-related issues. The negotiation process among GATT members aimed to eliminate trade barriers, resulting in seven rounds of extended negotiations. **The final round, known as the Uruguay Round, commenced in September 1986 and concluded in December 1993.**
- These negotiations covered not only the traditional subjects such as tariffs and non-tariff restrictions, but also extended to cover seven broad areas, viz.,
 - market access
 - agriculture
 - textiles
 - trade related intellectual property rights (TRIPS)
 - trade related investment measures and services (TRIMS)
 - trade in services
 - institutional matters

HQ LOCATION: GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Membership: It includes 164 members amounting to 98 percent of world trade

Functions of WTO:

- Administering WTO trade agreements
- Forum for trade negotiations
- Handling trade disputes

- Monitoring national trade policies
- Technical assistance and training for developing countries
- Cooperation with other international organizations

STRUCTURE OF WTO:

- The Ministerial Conference is the supreme decision-making body of the WTO and usually meets every two years.
- Directly beneath it is the General Council, composed of ambassadors and delegation heads stationed in Geneva, and occasionally officials dispatched from members' capitals. The General Council holds multiple sessions annually at the WTO headquarters in Geneva.
- Moreover, the General Council assumes the roles of the Trade Policy Review Body and the Dispute Settlement Body.
- Operating at the subsequent tier, the Goods Council, Services Council, and Intellectual Property (TRIPS) Council function under the authority of the General Council.
- All WTO members have the right to participate in all councils and committees, except for the Appellate Body, Dispute Settlement panels, and plurilateral committees, which are limited to certain members.

WTO DISPUTE SETTLEMENT SYSTEM:

The dispute settlement system (DSS) of the WTO comprises two key components: the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) and the Appellate Body.

DISPUTE SETTLEMENT BODY (DSB)

- To address conflicts among WTO members, the General Council convenes as the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB).
- Such disputes may arise regarding any agreement outlined in the Final Act of the Uruguay Round that falls under the Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes (DSU).
- The DSB settles trade disputes by establishing panels, referring matters to arbitration, adopting reports, overseeing implementation, and authorizing suspension of concessions.
- The DSB refers the disputes to the Appellate Body.

APPELLATE BODY

- The Appellate Body serves as a standing body consisting of seven individuals.
- Its purpose is to hear appeals arising from reports issued by panels in disputes initiated by WTO Members.
- The Appellate Body holds the authority to uphold, modify, or reverse the legal findings and conclusions of a panel.
- Appellate Body Reports are adopted by the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) unless all members decide against doing so.

REASONS FOR ITS NON-FUNCTIONALITY:

- **Lack of Members:** The WTO's Appellate Body is currently unable to hear appeals due to a lack of members. The last sitting Appellate Body member's term expired on November 30, 2020.
- **US' Blockade:** The United States has blocked the appointment of new judges to the WTO's

Appellate Body for nearly two years due to concerns about judicial activism at the WTO and sovereignty.

US' STANCE:

- The US reproaches the appellate body for exceeding its mandate and engaging in judicial overreach.
- The US argues that the appellate body has been creating binding precedents, which goes against the WTO's dispute settlement understanding (DSU) that states there is no rule of precedent in international law.
- The US argues that until the appellate body's role is defined, it should not be resurrected.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WTO'S DISPUTE SETTLEMENT SYSTEM:

- The DSS is considered to be the foundation of the multilateral trading system and the organization's "unique contribution to the stability of the global economy."
- It provides a forum for member countries to resolve trade disputes pertaining to a "covered agreement" and encourages disputes to be resolved through negotiations .
- The priority is to settle disputes, through consultations if possible.
- The DSS is vital to the functionality of the WTO as it provides an amenable platform for member states to settle their disputes. In its absence, disputes will persist and the relevance of the WTO as a multilateral organization will be lost.
- It underscores the rule of law and makes the trading system more secure and predictable

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Reports Published by WTO:

- World Trade Statistical Review
- World Trade Report
- Global Trade Outlook
- Goods Trade Barometer (Earlier known as World Trade Outlook Indicator)

Sources:

[Restoring the World Trade Organization's crown jewel – The Hindu](#)

Q1. With reference World Trade Organization, consider the following statements:

1. The World Trade Organisation came into existence from 1st January 1948.
2. The highest-ranking decision-making body of the WTO is the Ministerial Conference, which meets every two years.
3. The WTO also oversees trade in services such as telecommunications and banking, as well as other issues such as intellectual property rights.

Which of the statements given above is/are NOT correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

Q2. Consider the following:

1. Trade & Development Report
2. Goods Trade Barometer
3. World Trade Report
4. Global Trade Outlook
5. World Economic Situation and Prospects

How many of the above mentioned reports are published by the World Trade Organization?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only three
- (c) Only four
- (d) All Five

Answer: (b)

Q3. Discuss the structure and significance of the WTO dispute settlement system and analyse the reasons for its non-functionality.

INDUS WATERS TREATY

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Indus Waters Treaty”. The topic “Indus Waters Treaty” has relevance in the International Relations section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

About the Indus Waters Treaty ?

FOR MAINS:

GS 2: International Relations

Dispute Resolution Mechanisms?

Hydroelectric Project Dispute Between India and Pakistan?

About Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA)?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Pakistan has expressed the hope that India would implement the Indus Waters Treaty in “good faith” after New Delhi said it cannot be compelled to participate in “illegal” proceedings at the Permanent Court of Arbitration over the Kishenganga and Ratle hydropower projects in Kashmir.

ABOUT IWT

The Indus Waters Treaty is a bilateral agreement between India and Pakistan, facilitated by the World Bank, signed on September 19, 1960. It governs the utilization and sharing of water resources from the Indus River system, encompassing six rivers: Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej. The primary objective of the treaty is to foster collaboration and peaceful management of transboundary water resources between the two countries. It provides a framework for the allocation and use of these rivers, promoting equitable distribution and preventing disputes over water. The treaty plays a

crucial role in ensuring water security and fostering cooperation between India and Pakistan.

ALLOCATION OF RIVERS:

- Three rivers (Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej) in the eastern part were allocated to India for unrestricted use.
- Three rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab) in the western part were allocated to Pakistan for unrestricted use.
- India allowed the use of the western rivers for domestic, non-consumptive, and agricultural purposes.

CONSTRUCTION OF PROJECTS:

The agreement allows India to build run-of-the-river hydroelectric projects on the western rivers, but this is contingent upon specific conditions.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISMS:

Communication via Permanent Indus Commission (PIC):

- The PIC consists of a commissioner from each country.
- Parties inform each other about planned projects on the Indus River.
- PIC facilitates the exchange of necessary information.
- Aimed at resolving differences and avoiding escalation.

Neutral Expert:

- If the PIC fails to resolve the issue, it advances to the next level.
- The World Bank appoints a neutral expert.
- The expert attempts to resolve the differences between the parties.

Court of Arbitration (CoA):

- If a neutral expert fails to resolve the dispute, it goes to the CoA.
- The CoA resolves the dispute through arbitration.
- The IWT states that the Neutral Expert and CoA steps are mutually exclusive, meaning that only one of them can be used at a time for a given dispute.
- Note: The following information does not fit under the headings as requested.

Hydroelectric Project Dispute Between India and Pakistan:

- The dispute involves the Kishanganga hydroelectric project on the Kishanganga River and the Ratle hydroelectric project on the Chenab River in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Pakistan objects to these projects, claiming violations of the Indus Waters Treaty, concerns about reduced water flow, environmental impact, and differing treaty interpretations.
- In 2016, Pakistan withdrew its request for a Neutral Expert and proposed a Court of Arbitration instead.
- India opposes the constitution of the CoA, arguing that it contravenes the provisions of the IWT.

World Bank Intervention:

- The World Bank, which brokered the IWT, intervened in the dispute.
- The bank paused the process after receiving separate requests from India and Pakistan, urging resolution through the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC), the communication mechanism established by the treaty.
- Pakistan refused to discuss the issue during PIC meetings, prompting the World Bank to initiate actions on the appointment of a Neutral Expert and the establishment of a CoA.

INDIA'S OPPOSITION:

- India opposed the constitution of the CoA, arguing that it contravened the provisions of the IWT.
- India raised concerns about the jurisdiction and competence of the Court of Arbitration (CoA), asserting that it was not appropriately constituted in accordance with the provisions of the treaty.
- India did not appoint arbitrators or attend the court's proceedings, emphasizing the need for a single dispute resolution process.

RULING OF THE PERMANENT COURT OF ARBITRATION:

- The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) has issued a ruling stating that the Court of Arbitration (CoA) has the jurisdiction to address Pakistan's objections regarding India's hydroelectric projects.
- The ruling was unanimous, binding on both parties, and not subject to appeal.
- The PCA rejected India's objections to the competence of the CoA, as raised through its communications with the World Bank.

INDIA'S RESPONSE:

India has maintained that it will not participate in the proceedings at the PCA, arguing that the dispute is already being examined by a Neutral Expert under the framework of the IWT.

ABOUT PERMANENT COURT OF ARBITRATION (PCA)

- The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) is an intergovernmental organization established in 1899 and based in The Hague, Netherlands.
- Its purpose is to serve the international community in the field of dispute resolution and facilitate arbitration and other forms of dispute settlement between states.
- The PCA has a three-part organizational structure:
 1. Administrative Council: Responsible for overseeing policies and budgets.
 2. Members of the Court: A panel of independent potential arbitrators.
 3. International Bureau: The Secretariat of the PCA, headed by the Secretary-General.
- The PCA operates a Financial Assistance Fund aimed at helping developing countries cover some of the costs involved in international arbitration or other dispute settlement procedures offered by the PCA.

SOURCE:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pakistan-hopes-india-would-implement-indus-waters-treaty-in-good-faith/article67051033.ece>

Q.1 Which of the following rivers are allocated to Pakistan under the Indus Waters Treaty?

- (A) Ravi and Beas
- (B) Indus and Jehlum
- (C) Chenab and Sutlej
- (D) Ravi and Chenab

Answer: (B)

Q.2 Which organization facilitated the negotiation and signing of the Indus Waters Treaty?

- (A) United Nations
- (B) World Trade Organization
- (C) World Bank
- (D) International Monetary Fund

Answer: (C)

Q.3 Explain the key provisions and significance of the Indus Waters Treaty in promoting cooperation and managing transboundary water resources between India and Pakistan.

PREVENTION OF MONEY LAUNDERING ACT (PMLA)

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "PMLA". The topic "PMLA" has relevance in the Governance section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

About the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)?

FOR MAINS:

GS 2: Governance

Why has GSTN been brought under the PMLA?

What is the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN)?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Centre's move to bring the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) under the purview of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) was to empower the relevant investigating agencies to deal with tax fraud and money laundering matters, and not giving outright access to data to any party

WHAT IS THE PREVENTION OF MONEY LAUNDERING ACT (PMLA), 2002?

- The Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 was enacted with the objective of preventing money laundering and enabling the confiscation of property that is derived from or involved in money laundering activities. It serves as a crucial component of India's legal framework in the fight against money laundering and associated offenses.
- Definition of Money Laundering: The act defines money laundering as any process by which proceeds of crime are involved in any transaction, directly or indirectly, to conceal the illicit origin of the property.
- Criminal Offense: Money laundering is considered a criminal offense under the PMLA, and individuals involved in money laundering activities can face legal action and penalties.

- **Confiscation of Property:** The PMLA enables authorities to confiscate property derived from money laundering or involved in money laundering activities.
- **Attachment of Property:** The act provides for the attachment of properties involved in money laundering offenses during the investigation and trial process.
- **Prohibition on Dealing with Attached Property:** Once a property is attached under the PMLA, any transaction or dealing with that property is prohibited without prior permission from the authorities.

WHY HAS GSTN BEEN BROUGHT UNDER THE PMLA?

Enhancing the Fight Against Money Laundering and GST Fraud:

- The move aims to strengthen efforts in combating money laundering and combating Goods and Services Tax (GST) fraud.
- It is believed that bringing GSTN under the ambit of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) will help enhance the fight against financial crimes.

Improved Information Sharing:

- The recent notification amends a previous 2006 notification, allowing for improved information sharing between GSTN, Enforcement Directorate (ED), and Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) under the provisions of the PMLA Act, 2002.
- This amendment facilitates better coordination and collaboration among these entities in identifying and tackling money laundering activities and GST fraud.

Identification of Suspected GST Identification Numbers:

- In a recent drive against fake registrations, field tax officials identified over 69,600 suspected GST identification numbers for physical verification.
- Out of these, more than 59,000 were verified, and it was found that 25% of them were non-existent.
- This highlights the need for robust measures to prevent GST fraud and money laundering through the GST system.

WHAT IS THE GOODS AND SERVICES TAX NETWORK (GSTN)?

- GSTN is an organization that has developed an indirect taxation platform for the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India.
- It provides IT infrastructure and services to taxpayers, Central and State Governments, and other stakeholders.
- GSTN helps taxpayers in preparing and filing returns, making payments, and complying with indirect tax regulations.
- It is a government-owned company incorporated in 2013, and the Board of GSTN has approved its conversion into a government company.

REGULATING AUTHORITIES:

- The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) is responsible for enforcing the provisions of the PMLA and investigating money laundering cases.
- The Financial Intelligence Unit – India (FIU-IND) is a unit of the Indian government’s Department of Revenue and gathers financial intelligence on money laundering offenses.
- FIU-IND operates under the PMLA and collaborates with enforcement agencies and foreign Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs).

- By bringing GSTN under the PMLA ambit, the authorities aim to leverage the provisions of the act to tackle money laundering activities and strengthen efforts against GST fraud. This step emphasizes the importance of combating financial crimes and ensuring the integrity of the GST system.

SOURCE:

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/brought-gst-under-pmla-pur-view-to-empower-investigators-in-fighting-financial-fraud-centre/articleshow/101699287.cms>

Q.1 Which of the following statements regarding the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 is/are correct?

1. The PMLA was enacted to prevent money laundering and provide for the confiscation of property derived from or involved in money laundering.
2. The PMLA forms the core of India's legal framework to combat money laundering and related crimes.
3. The Financial Intelligence Unit – India (FIU-IND) is responsible for enforcing the provisions of the PMLA and investigating money laundering cases.
4. Money laundering is defined as the process by which illicit funds are converted into legal assets to conceal their illicit origin.

Choose the correct option:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1, 3, and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, and 4 only

ANSWER: D

Q.2 What is/are the most likely advantages of implementing 'Goods and Services Tax (GST)'?

1. It will replace multiple taxes collected by multiple authorities and will thus create a single market in India.
2. It will drastically reduce the 'Current Account Deficit' of India and will enable it to increase its foreign exchange reserves.
3. It will enormously increase the growth and size of the economy of India and will enable it to overtake China in the near future.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

ANSWER: A

Q.3 "Discuss the significance of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 in combating financial crimes in India. Analyze the key provisions of the PMLA and its impact on money laundering prevention and asset confiscation. Also, evaluate the challenges and potential areas of improvement in the implementation and enforcement of the act."

INDIA-FRANCE RELATIONSHIP

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “India-France Relationship”. The topic “India-France Relationship” has relevance in the “International Relations” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

India- France Initiatives

FOR MAINS:

GS2: Agreements Involving India and its interests, Bilateral Relations of India, Indian Diaspora

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Prime Minister Modi will be attending the Bastille Day Parade as Guest of Honour on invitation by Emmanuel Macron, President of France. This visit also marks the 25th anniversary of India-France Strategic Partnership.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

- The relationship between India and France dates back to the 17th century, when the French East India Company established a trading post in Surat, Gujarat. The French were interested in trading for spices and other goods from India, and they also sought to establish political and military influence in the region.
- The establishment of diplomatic relations in 1947 laid the foundation for the modern-day partnership.
- After the Nuclear Tests in 1998, India and France signed a strategic partnership agreement. This agreement formalised the close relationship between the two countries and committed them to cooperation in a number of areas, including defence, trade, and technology



ECONOMIC COLLABORATION:

- India and France are important trading partners, and the two countries have a bilateral trade agreement that was signed in 1998. In 2021, the trade between India and France was worth €12.7 billion.
- India and France are also cooperating in the field of technology, and the two countries have signed a number of agreements to promote cooperation in areas such as space, nuclear energy, and information technology.

- In 2003, India and France signed a bilateral agreement on space cooperation. The agreement covers a wide range of areas, including satellite launch, satellite communication, and remote sensing.
- India and France are also working together on the development of the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), a project to demonstrate the feasibility of fusion power.
- French companies have made significant investments in India, contributing to job creation and technology transfer. Some of the most notable French companies with a presence in India include Airbus, Renault, Capgemini, and Danone.
- NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) and Lyra signed an MoU to enable UPI and RuPay payments in Europe. This would allow Europeans to use these Indian payment methods online and in stores.

DEFENCE AND SECURITY COOPERATION:

- India and France have a strong defence relationship, and the two countries have collaborated on a number of major defence projects, such as the Rafale fighter aircraft and the Scorpène-class submarines.
- In 2016, India signed a deal to purchase 36 Rafale fighter jets from France for €7.8 billion. The first batch of Rafale jets was delivered to India in September 2020.
- India and France are also working together on the development of the next generation of fighter jets, the Future Medium Combat Aircraft (FMCA).

CULTURAL EXCHANGES AND PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACTS:

- In 2006, India and France signed a bilateral agreement on cultural cooperation. The agreement covers a wide range of areas, including the exchange of artists, scholars, and students.
- There is a large Indian diaspora in France, estimated to be around 500,000 people. The Indian diaspora in France is made up of people from all over India, and they have made significant contributions to French society.
- Thousands of Indians visit France every year, and there are also a large number of French people who live in India. These contacts help to promote understanding and friendship between the two countries.

CLIMATE PARTNERSHIPS:

- The two countries have worked together on a number of initiatives to mitigate climate change, including the International Solar Alliance and the Paris Agreement.
- The **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** is an international organisation that was founded by India and France in 2015. The ISA's mission is to promote the use of solar energy in developing countries. The ISA has 121 member countries, and it is headquartered in Gurugram, India.
- In October 2022, France and India signed a **roadmap on green hydrogen** to establish a reliable and sustainable value chain for decarbonised hydrogen. In February 2022, they signed a **roadmap on the blue economy and ocean governance**.
- In 2021, India and France launched the **Climate Action and Finance Partnership**, a joint initiative to promote climate action and finance in developing countries.

CHALLENGES IN THE BILATERAL TIES:

- **Regional Security Concerns:** Both India and France share concerns about regional security threats, especially in the Indian Ocean region. They cooperate on maritime security and counterterrorism, but need to enhance their cooperation to address emerging challenges.
- **Defense Procurement:** India experiences delays and cost overruns in several defense deals with France due to issues such as cost escalation, delivery delays, and disagreements over technology transfer.
- **Technology Transfer:** India faces challenges in obtaining advanced military technology and equipment from France due to intellectual property rights and proliferation risks.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** France worries about India's growing defense ties with other countries, especially the United States. France would want India to maintain a balanced approach and not become overly dependent on any one country.

India and France have a strong foundation on which to build, and they are committed to working together to address the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. The two countries could collaborate in a number of areas, including trade, defense, technology, climate change, space, education, culture, and tourism. By working together, India and France can help to promote peace, stability, and prosperity in the world.

Sources:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-france-ties-strong-look-forward-to-roadmap-for-next-25-years-pm-modi-8834937/>

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. France was among the last European maritime powers to enter the East India trade in the 17th century.
2. France is a member of the G-7, OECD, G-20 and Quad.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both
- (d) None

Answer: (a)

Q2. Consider the following:

1. International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER)
2. Climate Action and Finance Partnership
3. Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)
4. International Solar Alliance (ISA)

How many of the abovementioned initiatives/ organisations have India and France Partnership?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Answer: (c)

Q3. Discuss the evolution of India-France strategic partnership over the last 25 years and its

relevance in the current geopolitical context.

DATA GOVERNANCE

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Data Governance”. The topic “Data Governance” has relevance in the Governance section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

Core Data Governance Framework?

FOR MAINS:

GS 2: Governance

Global Regulations?

Data Governance in India?

Way Forward?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the Draft Digital Personal Data Protection Bill (DPDP), 2022, to be introduced in the Monsoon session of Parliament with some significant changes.

CORE DATA GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK:

- If passed, the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill (DPDP) will become India’s core data governance framework.
- It was introduced six years after the Supreme Court declared privacy as a fundamental right.
- Proposed Legislation in the IT and Telecom Sectors:
- The Digital India Bill aims to replace the existing Information Technology Act, 2000.
- It is designed to provide a comprehensive framework for the digital ecosystem.

INDIAN TELECOMMUNICATION BILL, 2022:

- The Indian Telecommunication Bill, 2022, focuses on the telecommunications sector.
- It aims to establish a new regulatory framework for the rapidly evolving telecom industry.

NON-PERSONAL DATA GOVERNANCE POLICY:

- The Non-Personal Data Governance Policy is a policy that specifically governs non-personal data.
- It aims to provide guidelines and regulations for the handling and usage of non-personal data.

WHAT ARE THE EXPECTED CHANGES?

Lowering Age of Consent:

- The draft bill proposes a graded approach to determine the age of consent for data processing.
- This change addresses concerns raised by social media companies and aligns with data protection regulations in the European Union and the United States.

DEFINITION OF A CHILD AND EXEMPTIONS:

- The definition of a child may include individuals below 18 or a lower age as determined by the Central Government.
- Certain entities dealing with children's data may be exempted from obtaining parental consent if they demonstrate safe data processing practices.

RELAXATIONS ON CROSS-BORDER DATA FLOWS:

- The upcoming bill introduces relaxations on cross-border data flows, moving from a whitelisting approach to a blacklisting mechanism.
- The bill allows global data to flow by default to jurisdictions other than a specified negative list of countries.

GLOBAL REGULATIONS:

- The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) in the European Union provides comprehensive data protection laws for personal data processing.
- The United States has limited sector-specific regulations, and there is no comprehensive set of privacy rights or principles like the GDPR.
- China has enacted the Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL) and the Data Security Law (DSL) to protect personal data.

CHALLENGES WITH DATA GOVERNANCE IN INDIA:

- Insufficient Awareness.
- Weak Enforcement Mechanisms.
- Lack of Standardization.
- Inadequate Safeguards for Sensitive Data.

DATA GOVERNANCE IN INDIA:

- IT Amendment Act, 2008.
- Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.
- Proposal of the Digital India Act, 2023 to replace the IT Act, 2000.
- Judgements like Justice K. S. Puttaswamy (Retd) vs Union of India, 2017 and recommendations by the B.N. Srikrishna Committee, 2017.

WAY FORWARD:

- The government should prioritize data protection and establish an independent and empowered data protection board.
- Balancing stringent regulations with fostering innovation is crucial.
- Finding the right balance will ensure effective governance and enforcement of data protection regulations.

SOURCE:

<https://www.financialexpress.com/tech-trends/data-protection-bill-new-version-eases-norms-on-info-transfer/3164067/>

Q.1 'Right to Privacy' is protected under which Article of the Constitution of India?

- (a) Article 15
- (b) Article 19
- (c) Article 21
- (d) Article 29

Answer: (c)

Q2. Right to Privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of Right to Life and Personal Liberty. Which of the following in the Constitution of India correctly and appropriately imply the above statement?

- (a) Article 14 and the provisions under the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution.
- (b) Article 17 and the Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV.
- (c) Article 21 and the freedoms guaranteed in Part III.
- (d) Article 24 and the provisions under the 44th Amendment to the Constitution.

Answer: (c)

Q.3 Examine the scope of Fundamental Rights in the light of the latest judgement of the Supreme Court on Right to Privacy.

ANTI DEFECTION LAW

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Anti Defection Law". The topic "Anti Defection Law" has relevance in the "Indian Polity" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is Anti Defection Law

FOR MAINS:

GS2: Indian Constitution and Issues related to it

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Supreme Court recently issued a notice to a Legislative Assembly Speaker over inactions in a disqualification proceedings.

ANTI DEFECTION LAW:

Defection is the act of voluntarily quitting one's allegiance to a person, cause, or party and giving one's support to another. It is often used to describe a politician who switched political parties.

- The original text of the Constitution of India did not include any provisions to prevent or protect against the act of defection.
- The **52nd Amendment Act of 1985 was introduced to establish rules regarding the disqualification of members of Parliament and state legislatures** if they switch their political party affiliation. It brought about modifications in four Articles of the Constitution and introduced a new section called the Tenth Schedule. This legislation is commonly known as the

'anti-defection law'.

- Subsequently, the **91st Amendment Act of 2003 made a revision to the provisions outlined in the Tenth Schedule**. It eliminated an exception clause, specifically the exemption from disqualification in the event of a split within a political party.

PROVISIONS OF THE ACT:

Disqualification of Political Party Members

- A member of a House belonging to a political party loses their membership if they:
 - Voluntarily give up their party membership.
 - **Vote or abstain from voting against their party's directive** in the House without prior permission, and the party does not condone the act within 15 days.

Disqualification of Independent Members

- An independent member of a House, elected without the support of any political party, loses their membership **if they join a political party after the election**.

Disqualification of Nominated Members

- A nominated member of a House loses their membership **if they join a political party after six months from the date they took their seat in the House**.
- However, within the first six months of taking their seat, a nominated member can join a political party without facing disqualification.

EXCEPTIONS TO DISQUALIFICATION ON GROUNDS OF DEFECTION

The disqualification for defection does not apply in the following cases:

- If a member leaves their party due to a **merger** of the party with another party, provided that two-thirds of the members of the original party agree to the merger.
- If a member, after being **elected as the presiding officer** of the House, voluntarily gives up their party membership or rejoins it after ceasing to hold that office.

The provision in the Tenth Schedule that allowed exemption from disqualification in case of a split by one-third of the members of the legislature party has been removed by the 91st Amendment Act of 2003.

DECISION OF THE PRESIDING OFFICER

- The **presiding officer of the House** is responsible for deciding any question related to disqualification arising from defection.
- Initially, the decision of the presiding officer was considered final and not subject to judicial review.
- Kihoto Hollohan case (1993)
 - The Supreme Court declared this provision unconstitutional.
 - The Supreme Court ruled that the presiding officer, while deciding a question under the Tenth Schedule, functions as a tribunal. Therefore, the decision of the presiding officer, like any other tribunal, can be subject to judicial review based on factors such as mala fides and perversity.

CASES WHERE ANTI DEFECTION LAW CANNOT BE USED:

- **Rajya Sabha and Presidential Elections:** No political party can issue a whip to its MPs and MLAs for a particular candidate in these cases. However, they can take disciplinary action in case of cross- voting in Rajya Sabha Elections.

EVALUATION OF THE ANTI-DEFECTION LAW:

The law was enacted to curb political defections and promote stability in the political system. This law aimed to deter elected representatives from switching parties after their election, thereby preventing the collapse of governments and ensuring the people's mandate is respected.

ADVANTAGES OF ANTI-DEFECTION LAW:

- **Stabilised the political system:** The law has helped to prevent the frequent instances of legislators switching parties, which often led to the collapse of governments.
- **Strengthened party discipline:** The law has made it more difficult for legislators to vote against the wishes of their party, which has helped to strengthen party discipline.

DISADVANTAGES OF ANTI-DEFECTION LAW:

- **Curbing Individual Freedom and Expression**
 - Critics argue that the law curtails the freedom of elected representatives to vote according to their conscience or in the best interest of their constituents.
 - It limits dissent within political parties and stifles individual opinions, potentially leading to a lack of diverse perspectives and healthy debates.
- **Concentration of Power with Party Leadership**
 - This concentration of power in the hands of a few individuals may undermine intra-party democracy and discourage dissent, hindering the growth and evolution of political parties.
- **Controversial Role of Speaker**
 - One of the contentious aspects of the Anti-Defection Law is the lack of clarity regarding the timeframe within which the House Chairperson or Speaker must act in anti-defection cases.
 - Some cases have taken as long as six months or even three years to be resolved.
 - In some instances, cases are disposed of only after the term of the elected representative is over, raising concerns about delayed justice and potential manipulation of the law's provisions.
- **Issue of Wholesale Defection:**
 - The Anti-Defection Law allows for wholesale defection. This means that if a large group of legislators defect to another party, they will not be disqualified from membership of the House. However, if a single legislator defects to another party, they will be disqualified.
 - This distinction has been criticised by some, who argue that it allows for political parties to buy out legislators and that it stifles dissent within political parties.

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Most advanced democracies do not disqualify legislators for defecting against their parties.
- Such members may be subject to internal party discipline, including expulsion from the party. The seating arrangement of the person changing their party allegiance may be modified in the House

POTENTIAL REFORMS AND IMPROVEMENTS

- Targeting Key Votes
 - The anti-defection law could be made more effective by limiting its applicability to crucial votes that directly impact the stability of the government.
 - For example, the law could be invoked for votes on significant matters like the passage of the annual budget or no-confidence motions.
- Involvement of Election Commission
 - The decision to disqualify a member should not rest solely with the Presiding Officer but should involve the Election Commission.
 - The President (in the case of MPs) or the Governor (in the case of MLAs) could make the disqualification decision based on the Election Commission's advice.
- Establishment of an Independent Authority
 - An independent authority should be established to handle cases of defection.
 - This would ensure fair and impartial adjudication, enhancing the credibility of the process.
- Promoting Intra-Party Democracy
 - Political parties should foster a democratic environment internally, allowing for discussions and respecting the opinions of their members.
 - Encouraging healthy debates and providing freedom of speech and expression within parties would promote a more inclusive decision-making process and strengthen inner-party democracy.

Conclusion: Striking a balance between party discipline and individual freedom, strengthening intra-party democracy, and conducting regular assessments can contribute to the law's improvement. By addressing the concerns associated with its implementation, the Anti-Defection Law can continue to play a vital role in preserving the integrity and stability of democratic systems.

Sources:

Yojna Daily Current Affairs Eng Med 17th July 2023

Q1. With reference to Defection Laws in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Original Constitution did not provide provisions for Anti- Defections.
2. An independent member can be disqualified if they join a political party before six months of taking oath in the house.
3. A nominated member can be disqualified if they join a political party after six months of taking oath in the house

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: (c)

Q2. Consider the following cases:

1. A member leaves their party as it merges with another party, with the approval of two-thirds of the original party's members.

2. A member of the house stays absent for 6 months.
3. A member leaves due to a case of a split with one-third of the members of the legislature party.
4. A member resigns from their party voluntarily.

In how many of the cases above, the member of the house can be disqualified under the Tenth Schedule ?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Answer: (b)

Q3. Analyse the Anti-Defection Law in India and discuss the reforms needed to ensure its effective implementation and safeguard democratic principles.

SIACHEN GLACIER

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Siachen Glacier”. The topic “Siachen Glacier” has relevance in the Geography section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

About Siachen Glacier?

FOR MAINS:

GS 2: Geography

Survey of Siachen Glacier?

Significance for India?

Pakistan's Claims and Actions?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

June-August 2023 marks the sapphire jubilee of a very important event in the history of the exploration of the Siachen glacier. V. K. Raina, a top Indian geologist, led the first Geological Survey of India expedition to the Siachen glacier. This event is of historical and geostrategic significance as it puts to rest all myths to the effect that Pakistan was in control of the glacier since the beginning

SIACHEN GLACIER:

- The Siachen Glacier is located in the Eastern Karakoram range in the Himalayas, just northeast of Point NJ9842 where the Line of Control (LOC) between India and Pakistan ends.
- It stretches from northwest to southeast and originates at the base of the Indira Col West, descending to an altitude of 3,570 meters.
- The entire Siachen Glacier, including major passes, has been under the administration of India since 1984 (Operation Meghdoot).
- It is the second-longest glacier in the world's non-polar areas after the Fedchenko Glacier in Tajikistan.

- The Siachen Glacier lies immediately south of the great drainage divide that separates the Eurasian Plate from the Indian subcontinent.
- The Nubra River originates from the Siachen Glacier.
- It is known as the world's highest battlefield due to the military presence and conflicts between India and Pakistan in the region.

SURVEY OF SIACHEN GLACIER:

- The first GSI survey of the Siachen Glacier was conducted in June 1958 by Assistant Geologist V. K. Raina from the Geological Survey of India (GSI).
- The survey was part of the International Geophysical Year activities and aimed to study the Himalayan glacier systems.
- The GSI team spent nearly three months at the base of the glacier, conducting various studies and establishing survey points.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR INDIA:

- The survey holds significance for India as it marks the official Indian exploration of the Siachen Glacier, which later became a disputed area between India and Pakistan.
- The GSI survey provides historical evidence of India's early knowledge and scientific engagement with the glacier, countering any claims of Pakistani control since the beginning.
- It highlights India's presence and understanding of the area before the conflict arose.

PAKISTAN'S CLAIMS AND ACTIONS:

- During the GSI survey in 1958, Pakistan did not raise any objections to the presence of Indian forces on the Siachen Glacier.
- In 1983, Pakistan unilaterally extended the Line of Control (LOC) from NJ 9842 to the Karakoram Pass, challenging the existing status quo.
- This extension of the LOC by Pakistan raised concerns in India regarding the region's security. In response, Indian forces proactively occupied the strategically important Salto Heights in April 1984.
- The occupation of Salto Heights aimed to secure India's position and prevent potential threats to its territory.
- Pakistan's claims and actions related to the Siachen Glacier are based on differing interpretations of historical agreements, such as the Karachi ceasefire agreement of 1949 and the Simla Agreement of 1972.

Source:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/the-first-gsi-survey-of-the-siachen/article67077315.ece>

Q.1 Which of the following statements about the Siachen Glacier is correct?

- (a) The Siachen Glacier is located in the Western Himalayas.
- (b) The Siachen Glacier is the longest glacier in the world.
- (c) The Siachen Glacier has been under the administration of Pakistan since 1984.
- (d) The Siachen Glacier is known as the "Third Pole" due to its extensive glaciation.

ANSWER: D

Q.2 Which of the following statements about the Siachen Glacier is NOT correct?

- (a) The Siachen Glacier is located in the Karakoram range of the Himalayas.
- (b) The Siachen Glacier is the highest battlefield in the world.
- (c) The Siachen Glacier has been under the administration of India since 1984.
- (d) The Siachen Glacier is primarily known for its wildlife diversity.

ANSWER: D

Q.3 Discuss the geopolitical significance and challenges associated with the Siachen Glacier for India?



CLUSTER MUNITIONS

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Cluster Munitions”. The topic “Cluster Munitions” has relevance in the “Defence and International Relations” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What are cluster munitions?

FOR MAINS:

GS2: International Treaties and Agreements, Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

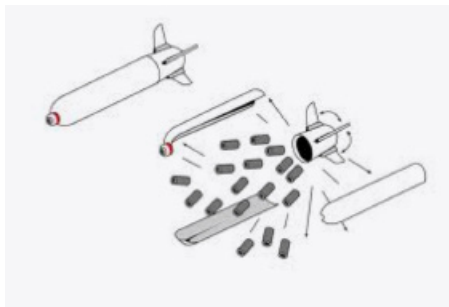
Recent headlines have highlighted the continued use of cluster munitions. In regards to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Russia emphasized that Russia possesses an ample supply of these munitions and maintains the right to employ them if they are deployed against Russian forces. This was in response to Ukraine’s announcement that it had obtained cluster bombs from the US.

DEFINITION OF CLUSTER MUNITIONS:

- According to the Convention on Cluster Muniton, Cluster munitions are conventional explosive

devices specifically created to disperse smaller explosive submunitions weighing under 20 kilograms.

- The ban on cluster munitions applies to both the container and the explosive submunitions it contains.
- Dispensers fixed to aircraft that release or disperse explosive submunitions, known as explosive bomblets, are included under the ban.
- The convention excludes munitions designed for flares, smoke, pyrotechnics, or chaff, as well as those designed for electrical or electronic effects.
- Various delivery systems like warships, aircraft, artillery, or rocket launchers have the ability to launch different types of munitions, including both banned cluster munitions and non-banned unitary munitions.
- The Convention on Cluster Munitions does not prohibit any specific delivery system, meaning States Parties are not obligated to remove or destroy them.



FUNCTION OF CLUSTER MUNITIONS:

- These weapons are intended to cause widespread harm, targeting both humans and infrastructure indiscriminately over a large area.
- They can be deployed by aircraft or launched through projectiles that scatter multiple bomblets during flight.
- Unfortunately, many of these submunitions do not detonate upon impact and remain on the ground, often concealed and difficult to detect, posing a long-lasting threat to civilians even after conflicts have ended.

CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH CLUSTER MUNITIONS:

- Cluster munitions pose significant challenges, including the violation of international humanitarian law through their indiscriminate harm to civilians and civilian objects.
- They have a high failure rate, leaving behind unexploded ordnance that continues to endanger lives and safety.
- Moreover, these weapons contaminate vast areas for extended periods, rendering them unfit for human use and placing burdens on healthcare systems and economies in affected nations.

USE OF CLUSTER MUNITIONS IN UKRAINE

- Russian forces have been reported to use cluster bombs in Ukraine, as confirmed by Ukrainian government leaders, observers, and humanitarian groups.
- Human rights groups have also accused Ukraine of using cluster bombs during the conflict.

- Instances of Russian cluster bomb attacks were documented in various locations, including near a preschool in Okhityrka and multiple cluster attacks in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city.
- During March, urban areas were subjected to a Russian missile and drone assault, which included a continuous bombardment in Bakhmut located in the eastern Donetsk region.
- Shelling and missile strikes hit the Ukrainian-held city of Kostiantynivka, resulting in injuries and hospitalizations of at least four individuals.

HISTORICAL USAGE OF CLUSTER MUNITIONS:

- During the Afghanistan War in 2001, cluster bombs played a significant role for the United States.
- The US last employed cluster bombs during the conflict with Iraq in 2003.
- In the Syrian civil war, Russian-supplied Syrian government troops frequently utilized cluster munitions.
- Israel also deployed cluster bombs in civilian areas during the 2006 war with Hezbollah in south Lebanon.
- The Saudi-led coalition in Yemen faced criticism for their use of cluster bombs in their conflict against the Houthi rebels.

CONVENTION ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS:

- The Cluster Munitions Convention is a legally binding international agreement adopted by the UN that outlawed the use, production, transfer, and stockpiling of cluster munitions.
- It establishes a framework for cooperation and assistance to ensure proper support for survivors and affected communities, clearance of contaminated areas, risk reduction education, and destruction of stockpiles.
- The convention was adopted in Dublin, Ireland, in 2008, and was open for signature in Oslo, Norway. It entered into force in 2010 after receiving the required 30 ratifications. To date, 110 countries have ratified the convention, and 13 others have signed it.
- Ratifying countries commit to never using cluster munitions, as well as refraining from developing, producing, acquiring, retaining, stockpiling, or transferring these weapons.
- Notably, India, the United States, Russia, China, Pakistan, and Israel, among others, have not signed or ratified the convention.

ROLE OF THE CLUSTER MUNITION COALITION:

- The Cluster Muniton Coalition is an international civil society initiative committed to eliminating cluster munitions, reducing casualties, and putting an end to the suffering caused by these weapons.
- The Cluster Muniton Monitor is a collaborative project of the Cluster Muniton Coalition, Human Rights Watch, and Landmine Action. It publishes an annual report that provides comprehensive information on the status of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, as well as on the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions.

Sources:

[Vladimir Putin says Russia has stockpiled cluster bombs and reserves right to use them in Ukraine – The Hindu](#)

Q1. With reference cluster munitions, consider the following statements:

1. The Convention on Cluster Munitions does not prohibit any specific delivery system.
2. The cluster munitions have a minimal failure rate.
3. The ban on cluster munitions applies to both the container and the explosive submunitions it contains.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (c)

Q2. Consider the following countries:

1. India
2. Afghanistan
3. Russia
4. Ukraine
5. Canada
6. United Kingdom

How many of the abovementioned countries have signed and ratified the Convention on Cluster Munition?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) Only Four

Answer: (c)

Q3. Explain the impact of cluster munitions used in the Ukraine war. Discuss the consequences for civilians and the environment, as well as the Convention on Cluster Munitions

MISSION VATSALYA

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Mission Vatsalya". The topic "Mission Vatsalya" has relevance in the Social Justice section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

About Mission Vatsalya?

FOR MAINS:

GS 2: Social Justice

Components of mission Vatsalya?

Support for Abandoned Minor Girls?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Representatives of various child rights organisations have appealed to the government to extend the last date for applying for Mission Vatsalya Scheme, under which Centre will give ₹4,000, to each orphan child.

MISSION VATSALYA: OVERVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION

LAUNCH AND FOCUS:

- Mission Vatsalya was launched in 2021 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- It focuses on the protection and welfare of children in India.

ENSURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN:

- The scheme aims to provide children with opportunities to reach their full potential and flourish in all aspects of life.
- It seeks to create an enabling environment for their holistic development.
- Foster a Supportive Ecosystem:
- Mission Vatsalya aims to establish a sensitive, supportive, and synchronized ecosystem for child development.
- It strives to promote a comprehensive and collaborative approach among various stakeholders.



COMPONENTS OF MISSION VATSALYA

IMPROVING STATUTORY BODIES:

- The scheme focuses on enhancing the functioning of statutory bodies involved in child protection.
- This includes strengthening Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) at the district level.
- Strengthening Service Delivery Structures:
- Mission Vatsalya aims to strengthen the service delivery structures for effective child protection.
- It focuses on improving infrastructure, human resources, and capacity building of stakeholders involved in child protection services.

UPSCALING INSTITUTIONAL CARE AND SERVICES:

- The scheme emphasizes upscaling institutional care facilities and services for children in need of care and protection.
- This involves ensuring proper care, shelter, nutrition, education, and healthcare for children residing in institutions.

ENCOURAGING NON-INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNITY-BASED CARE:

- Mission Vatsalya promotes community-based care options such as sponsorship, foster care, and adoption.
- It aims to facilitate the placement of children in supportive families and provide necessary financial assistance.

PROVIDING EMERGENCY OUTREACH SERVICES:

- The scheme includes provisions for emergency outreach services to promptly address situations requiring immediate intervention.
- This ensures swift support for children in crisis, such as rescue, medical assistance, and temporary shelter.

TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING:

- Mission Vatsalya focuses on training and capacity building programs for various stakeholders involved in child protection.
- This includes training for CWC members, child protection officers, and frontline workers to enhance their skills and knowledge.

IMPLEMENTATION OF JUVENILE JUSTICE ACT:

- The scheme assists states and union territories in effectively implementing the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015.
- It seeks to strengthen the child protection framework in line with the Act's objectives and mandates.
- Achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):
- Mission Vatsalya aligns with the SDGs, particularly Goal 16, which focuses on promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions.
- It contributes to building a robust child protection system and ensuring the well-being of children.
- Modes of Non-Institutional Care for Children

SPONSORSHIP:

- Government Aided Sponsorship: Financial assistance provided through government funds.
- Private Aided Sponsorship: Financial assistance provided through private sources or individuals.

FOSTER CARE:

- Children are placed under the care and rehabilitation of an unrelated family.
- Foster parents receive financial support for nurturing the child.

- Adoption:
- Suitable families are identified for children who are legally free for adoption.
- The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) facilitates the adoption process.

AFTERCARE:

- Financial support is provided to children leaving a Child Care Institution upon turning 18 years old.
- This assistance aids their reintegration into society and self-dependency.
- Support may extend from 18 to 21 years, with the possibility of further extension up to 23 years.

POCSO FAST-TRACK COURTS:

- As part of Mission Vatsalya, the government has established 415 POSCO fast-track courts across the country.
- These courts aim to provide speedy justice and assistance to minor victims of rape.

CHILD CARE, ADVOCACY, AND AWARENESS:

- Mission Vatsalya emphasizes child care, advocacy, and awareness.
- It seeks to create a supportive environment for children and ensure their care, protection, and overall development.
- The motto of the mission is “Leave No Child Behind.”

LEGAL FRAMEWORK:

- The implementation of Mission Vatsalya is based on the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.
- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO Act) is also a key basis for the mission’s implementation.

COLLABORATION WITH STATE GOVERNMENTS AND UT ADMINISTRATIONS:

- Mission Vatsalya is a centrally sponsored scheme that works in collaboration with state governments and union territory administrations.
- The objective is to provide assistance and support to child victims of abuse, exploitation, and neglect.

MISSION VATSALYA: SUPPORT FOR ABANDONED MINOR GIRLS

- The scheme aims to provide comprehensive support and assistance to minor girls who have been abandoned by their families.
- It focuses on addressing the needs of girls who have experienced forced pregnancy and lack other means of support.

SHELTER AND BASIC NECESSITIES:

- Mission Vatsalya aims to provide shelter, food, and daily necessities to the abandoned minor girls.
- The scheme focuses on creating safe and secure living spaces for the victims.

TRANSPORTATION AND LEGAL AID:

- The scheme includes provisions for safe transportation of the girls to court hearings and other legal proceedings.
- Legal aid services will be provided to ensure that the rights and interests of the girls are protected.

SETTING UP SHELTERS:

- The fund allocated under Mission Vatsalya will be utilized to set up shelters specifically designed for the victims.
- These shelters will provide a conducive environment for the girls' well-being and development.

INTEGRATED SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE:

- The new scheme aims to provide integrated support and assistance to the victimized girls.
- This includes access to education, ensuring their right to education is fulfilled.
- Police support will be provided to address any security concerns and protect the girls from harm.
- Healthcare facilities, including maternity care, neo-natal care, and infant care, will be made available to meet their medical needs.
- Psychological and legal aid services will be provided to help them cope with emotional trauma and seek justice.

SOURCE:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/child-rights-panel-urges-govt-to-ex-tend-time-for-mission-vatsalya-scheme-till-april-30/article66740829.ece>

Q.1 Which ministry launched the Mission Vatsalya scheme.

- (a) Ministry of Home Affairs
- (b) Ministry of Women and Child Development
- (c) Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
- (d) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

ANSWER: B

Q.2 Under the Mission Vatsalya scheme, the government of India established 415 POSCO fast-track courts across the country. What is the primary objective of these courts?

- (a) To provide speedy justice and assistance to minor victims of rape
- (b) To address cases related to child trafficking and exploitation
- (c) To ensure access to education and healthcare for underprivileged children
- (d) To facilitate the adoption process for children in need of care and protection

ANSWER: A

Q.3 Discuss the key features and objectives of the Mission Vatsalya scheme launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in India.

DEFAMATION

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Defamation”. The topic “Defamation” has relevance in the “Indian Polity” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

Fundamental Rights, Criminal Defamation

FOR MAINS:

GS2: Indian Constitution and Issues related to it.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Gujarat High Court’s recent ruling on Rahul Gandhi’s criminal revision petition has generated significant inquiries regarding the domains of defamation, disqualification, and electoral representation legislation.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND DEFAMATION :

- Under Article 19(2) of the Indian Constitution, defamation is recognized as an exception to free speech, as validated by Sections 499 and 500 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- There are two types of defamation in India: civil defamation and criminal defamation.
 - Civil defamation is a tort, which means that it is a wrong that can be remedied by a civil lawsuit.
 - Criminal defamation is a crime, which means that it can be punished by the government. Maximum punishment for criminal defamation is two years.
- Criminal defamation is committed when a person makes an imputation with the intention of harming the reputation of another person, or with reason to believe that it will harm their reputation. The actual harm inflicted or suffering caused is not a condition for criminal defamation, as intention or knowledge is sufficient.
- Mr. Gandhi’s comment was deemed defamatory under Section 499, which includes imputations regarding “a company or an association or collection of persons as such.”
- The Magistrate Court held individuals with the surname Modi as an identifiable class, resulting in the accused being pronounced guilty with the maximum possible sentence.

PRECEDENTS ON DEFAMATION:

- Previous judgments have established criteria for determining a “collection of persons.”

Year	Case	Summary
1965	Sahib Singh Mehra v. State of Uttar Pradesh	The Supreme Court established identifiability and definitiveness as criteria for a “collection of persons.” It ruled that public prosecutors and assistant public prosecutors at Aligarh constitute a definite and identifiable category.
1967	Tek Chand Gupta v. R. K. Karanjia	The Allahabad High Court stated that the Rashtriya Swyam Sevak Sangh (RSS), with its own constitution, is an association or collection of persons that is not indefinite and unidentifiable.

1972	G. Narasimhan v. T. V. Chokkappa	The Supreme Court quashed complaints against office bearers of certain newspapers, including The Hindu, regarding defamatory newspaper reports on a conference organized by the Dravida Kazhagam in 1971. The court ruled that the conference was not a determinate and identifiable body.
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RELATED CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS:

- **Article 19(a)** states that all citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression
- Reasonable restrictions on the exercise of this right can be enforced to safeguard the sovereignty and integrity of India, ensure state security, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offense.
- **Article 102** specifies the disqualifications for individuals aspiring to become members of either House of Parliament. These disqualifications include:
 - Holding any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State.
 - Being declared of unsound mind by a competent court.
 - Being an undischarged insolvent.
 - Not being a citizen of India or voluntarily acquiring the citizenship of a foreign State, or having any acknowledgment of allegiance or adherence to a foreign State.
 - Being disqualified by any law enacted by Parliament.

Considering these precedents, the apex court will determine whether individuals with the surname Modi can be classified as an identifiable or definite class, constituting a “group of persons.” It remains to be seen if the Supreme Court, employing its powers under Article 136, will grant indulgence to stay the conviction in this specific case to ensure substantive justice.

Sources:

On Rahul Gandhi’s conviction – The Hindu

Q1. With reference to defamation laws in India, consider the following statements:

1. Under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, defamation is recognized as an exception to free speech.
2. Civil defamation is a tort, which means that it is a wrong that can be remedied by a civil lawsuit.
3. Maximum punishment for criminal defamation is six years.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 2 only
- (d) None

Answer: (c)

Q2. Consider the following:

1. Interest of general public
2. Sovereignty and integrity of India
3. Protection of scheduled tribes
4. Incitement to an offense
5. Morality

6. Public health

How many of the abovementioned are exceptions to the freedom of speech and expression in the Constitution of India?

- (a) Only two
- (b) Only three
- (c) Only five
- (d) All Six

Answer: (b)

Q3. Discuss the constitutional provisions related to freedom of speech, defamation, and disqualification for electoral representation in India.

RAJASTHAN MINIMUM GUARANTEED INCOME ACT, 2023

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill, 2023”. The topic “Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill, 2023” has relevance in the “Governance” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Act, 2023?

FOR MAINS:

GS2: Governance and Social Justice

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Recently, the Rajasthan state government has passed the Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Act, 2023, aiming to provide guaranteed wages or pensions to all adults in the state.

RAJASTHAN MINIMUM GUARANTEED INCOME ACT, 2023:

- The bill intends to provide all families in the state with guaranteed employment for 125 days every year.
- Additionally, the aged, disabled, widows, and single women will receive a minimum pension of Rs 1,000 per month. Importantly, the pension will be increased at the rate of 15 percent each year.
- The Bill comprises three broad categories: the right to minimum guaranteed income, the right to guaranteed employment, and the right to guaranteed social security pension.

MAJOR PROVISIONS:

- **Minimum guaranteed income:**
 1. The Indira Gandhi Shahri Rozgar Guarantee Yojana for urban areas and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) for rural areas, implemented by the Rajasthan government, guarantee a minimum income for 125 days per year to every adult citizen of the state.
 2. In an effort to enhance the employment guarantee, the Rajasthan Government has raised the num-

ber of guaranteed employment days for each family from 100 days to 125 days in its urban employment scheme.

3. In addition, the state will provide 25 more days of employment in rural areas, further supplementing the MGNREGA's 100 days of employment.
 4. Furthermore, the government will provide a minimum pension of Rs 1,000 to eligible individuals falling within specified categories.
- **Guaranteed employment:**
 1. The right to employment dictates that after completing work in urban or rural employment schemes, the minimum wages should be paid either “weekly or, in any case, no later than a fortnight.”
 2. To implement the Act, the state will assign a program officer, who must hold a position not below that of a Block Development Officer in rural areas and an Executive Officer of the local body in urban areas.
 3. One of the responsibilities of the Program Officer is to ensure that the work site is located within a five-kilometer radius of where the job card is registered, whether in rural or urban areas.
 4. If the Program Officer fails to provide employment within 15 days of receiving the application, the applicant shall be entitled to receive an unemployment allowance on a weekly basis, and at the latest, within a fortnight.
 - **Guaranteed social security pension:**
 1. Every individual who belongs to the categories of old age, specially-abled, widow, or single woman and meets the specified eligibility criteria will be eligible for a pension.
 2. This pension will be increased in two instalments each financial year, beginning in 2024-2025, with a 5 percent increment in July and a further 10 percent increment in January.

SIGNIFICANCE:

- The Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Act, 2023, holds significant importance as it aims to provide comprehensive financial security to the entire adult population of the state.
- By guaranteeing employment for 125 days annually, offering a minimum pension to vulnerable groups, and increasing it annually, the bill seeks to uplift and support marginalised individuals, including the aged, disabled, widows, and single women.
- Additionally, the bill establishes a robust social security system, empowering citizens with a safety net to combat poverty and enhance their overall socio-economic well-being.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES:

- The financial burden of providing guaranteed income and pensions to the entire adult population.
- Challenges in accurately targeting and identifying eligible beneficiaries.
- Managing administrative capacity and distribution logistics effectively.
- Ensuring transparency and minimizing corruption and leakages.
- Addressing geographic disparities and equitable resource allocation.
- Monitoring and evaluating the scheme's impact on an ongoing basis.
- Adapting to changing economic conditions and unforeseen events.
- Raising public awareness and encouraging active participation.
- Securing consistent political support for the scheme's success.

INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES:

- Brazil's Bolsa Família represents the current social welfare initiative implemented by the Government of Brazil, operating within the Fome Zero network of federal assistance programs. It aims to offer financial aid to impoverished Brazilian families.

- On the other hand, Mexico's Oportunidades was the pioneering national conditional cash transfer program designed to assist impoverished and extremely poor households, integrating three fundamental social rights: healthcare, education, and nutrition.

WAY FORWARD:

- The Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Act, 2023, aims to provide financial security to the adult population, though challenges in funding, administration, targeting, and public awareness must be addressed for its success, benefiting the marginalised and establishing a robust social security system in Rajasthan.

Sources:

Rajasthan minimum income Bill: provisions, what makes it unique | The Indian Express
Rajasthan Assembly passes Bills on minimum income, higher punishment for paper leaks – The Hindu

Q1. With reference to the Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Act, 2023, consider the following statements:

1. The bill aims to provide guaranteed employment for 125 days every year to all families in the state.
2. The aged, disabled, widows, and single women will receive a minimum monthly pension of Rs 1,000, which increases by 15 percent annually.
3. The Bill encompasses the right to minimum guaranteed income, guaranteed employment, and guaranteed social security pension.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: (c)

Q2. Which one of the following is NOT a core objective of the Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Act, 2023?

- (a) Uplift and support marginalised individuals
- (b) Creation of productive assets
- (c) Enhancing livelihood security
- (d) Ensuring empowerment to women

Answer: (b)

Q3. Discuss the key provisions of the Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Act, 2023, and analyse its potential impact on poverty alleviation and socio-economic development in the state.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “National Commission for Women”. The topic “National Commission for Women” has relevance in the “Indian Polity and Governance” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is the National Commission for Women? Composition? Functions?

FOR MAINS:

GS2: Statutory, regulatory and quasi judicial bodies

WHY IN THE NEWS?

National Commission for Women (NCW) has condemned incidents in Manipur and Rajasthan, takes suo-motu cognizance, and directs respective state’s DGP to act promptly.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN (NCW)

Established in 1992 through the National Commission for Women Act, 1990, it functions as a statutory body with the following objectives:

1. To assess the Constitutional and Legal protections for women.
2. To propose necessary legislative actions for improvement.
3. To assist in resolving women’s grievances.
4. To provide guidance to the Government on policies impacting women.

SIGNIFICANCE OF NCW

- **Providing legal aid to women:** The NCW offers legal aid to women who have been victims of violence or discrimination. This includes providing them with free legal advice and representation in court.
- **Monitoring the implementation of laws and policies:** The NCW monitors the implementation of laws and policies that affect women, ensuring they are being applied in a gender-sensitive manner.
- **Advocating for women’s rights:** The NCW advocates for women’s rights at both the national and international levels. This includes raising awareness about women’s issues and advocating for changes to laws and policies.
- **Conducting research:** The NCW conducts research on issues affecting women, which informs their advocacy work and provides valuable insights into the challenges facing women in India.
- **Providing training and capacity-building:** The NCW offers training and capacity-building programs to organizations and individuals working on women’s issues, thereby enhancing the skills and knowledge of those promoting women’s rights.

NCW AT A GLANCE

Constitution of NCW	The Union Government shall establish the under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990 Act.
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Composition of the Commission	Chairperson
	Five Members nominated by the Union Government
	Inclusive of individuals with expertise in various fields such as law, trade unionism, management, women's organizations, administration, etc.
	At least one Member each from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
Term of Office	Chairperson and Members' tenure not exceeding three years , as specified by the Union Government.
	Members can resign by notifying the Union Government in writing.
Conditions of Service	The terms and conditions of service for the Chairperson and Members shall be determined by the Union Government.
Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and examine women's safeguards under laws and the Constitution. • Present regular reports to the Central Government on safeguard functioning. • Recommend legislative measures to improve women's conditions. • Review and suggest amendments to laws affecting women. • Take up cases of women's rights violations with appropriate authorities. • Address women's complaints and non-implementation of laws. • Conduct special studies on discrimination and propose strategies. • Research to promote women's representation and identify barriers. • Advice on socio-economic development planning for women. • Evaluate women's progress under the Union and States. • Inspect jails, remand homes, women's institutions for remedial actions. • Fund litigation on issues affecting many women. • Submit periodic reports to the Government on women-related matters. • Address other matters referred by the Central Government. • Reports presented to Parliament with actions on recommendations. • NCW has civil court powers for investigations.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF HOW THE NCW HAS TACKLED PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN:

- In 2005, the NCW played a key role in the passage of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act. This law has provided much-needed protection to women who are victims of domestic violence.
- The NCW has also been involved in the fight against human trafficking. In 2012, the NCW launched a national campaign to raise awareness about human trafficking and to provide support to victims.
- The NCW has also been working to improve the representation of women in decision-making positions. In 2015, the NCW launched a campaign to encourage women to run for office.

CHALLENGES FACED BY THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN (NCW) IN INDIA:

- **Silence on Sexual Violence in Militarized Areas:**The Commission's limited action regarding the use of sexual violence against women by police and army personnel in Jammu and Kashmir, north-east, and Chhattisgarh has raised concerns and criticism.
- **Ineffectiveness in Tackling Women's Issues:**Criticism has been directed at the NCW for its perceived inability to strategize and effectively address problems faced by women in both public and private spheres.
- **Controversy over Reports:**NCW faced controversy over its handling of the report on the Mangalore pub attacks, leading to the removal of a member on disciplinary grounds.
- **Criticism of Recommendations:**Recommendations concerning section 497 of the Indian Penal

Code, which deemed women as victims rather than offenders in adulterous cases, came under fire.

- **Influence of Patriarchy on Members:** Instances of bias and prejudice within the Commission have been attributed to the prevailing patriarchy in society.
- **Limited Enforcement Power:** Critics describe the NCW as toothless and spineless since it lacks the authority to enforce its decisions. Its role is largely recommendatory.
- **Lack of Control over Internal Complaint Committees:** NCW is unable to take legal actions against Internal Complaint Committees with lax attitudes towards addressing women's workplace harassment grievances.
- **Financial Constraints:** The Commission's functions are reliant on grants from the central government, which have been insufficient to meet its needs adequately.
- **Political Interference in Member Selection:** NCW's inability to choose its own members exposes it to politicisation due to the nature of India's volatile political scenario.
- **Absence of Constitutional Status:** NCW's lack of constitutional status restricts its legal powers, preventing it from summoning police officers or witnesses when required.

To empower the National Commission for Women (NCW) in India, essential steps include granting constitutional status, ensuring financial independence, unbiased member selection, collaboration with civil society, prompt implementation of recommendations, and increased outreach. These reforms can strengthen the NCW's advocacy for women's rights and foster a more inclusive society.

Sources:

National Commission for Women had been apprised of Manipur video incident on June 12 – The Hindu

Q1. With reference to National Commission for Women (NCW) , consider the following statements:

1. The National Commission for Women (NCW) was established in 1992 through the National Commission for Women Act, 1990. (Correct)
2. The Chairperson and Members of the NCW serve a tenure of five years, as specified by the Union Government, and they cannot resign before completing their term. (Wrong)
3. One of the functions of the NCW is to inspect jails, remand homes, and women's institutions for remedial actions to ensure the well-being of women in such establishments. (Correct)

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) None

Answer: (c)

Q2. Consider the following bodies:

1. National Commission for Women (NCW)
2. National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)
3. National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)
4. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)

How many of the above mentioned bodies are statutory bodies ?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Answer: (b)

Q3. Examine the constitutional and legal framework governing the National Commission for Women (NCW) in India.

TRIBAL EMPOWERMENT

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Tribal Empowerment”. The topic “Tribal Empowerment” has relevance in the Social Justice section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

*Recent Steps for Empowerment of Tribes in India?
Constitutional Provisions Related to Scheduled Tribes?*

FOR MAINS:

*GS 2: Social Justice
Issues Faced by the Tribes in India?
Way Forward?*

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Government has enlisted retired officials to monitor tribal welfare schemes

RECENT STEPS FOR EMPOWERMENT OF TRIBES IN INDIA:

Zonal Cultural Centres (ZCCs):

- Establishment of seven ZCCs to organize cultural activities and programs across the nation.
- ZCCs focus on conserving tribal languages and culture.

Regional Festivals:

- The Ministry of Culture organizes Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsavas and regional festivals through ZCCs.
- These festivals promote and showcase tribal culture.

Promotion of Tribal Languages:

- Grants provided to State Tribal Research Institutes for promoting tribal languages.
- Development of bilingual primers and tribal literature.

Eklavya Model & Museums:

- Establishment of 750 Eklavya Model Residential Schools for tribal students' education.

- Creation of ten tribal freedom fighter museums to honor tribal heroes.

Adivasi Grants Management System (ADIGRAMS): Monitoring and tracking the utilization of grants provided by the Ministry to States.

OTHER RELATED GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES:

- **TRIFED:** Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India supports tribal livelihoods by promoting tribal products.
- **Digital Transformation of Tribal Schools:** Initiatives to introduce technology and improve education in tribal schools.
- **Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups:** Schemes and programs focused on upliftment and development of particularly vulnerable tribal groups.
- **Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana:** Scheme aimed at improving tribal livelihoods by value addition and marketing of minor forest produce.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS RELATED TO SCHEDULED TRIBES:

Constitutional Provisions	Description
Fifth Schedule	Setting up Tribes' Advisory Council in States having Scheduled Areas.
Article 15(4)	Special provisions for the advancement of other backward classes (includes STs).
Article 29	Protection of the Interests of Minorities (includes STs).
Article 46	State shall promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of SCs and STs, and protect them from social injustice and exploitation.
Article 350	Right to conserve a distinct Language, Script, or Culture.
Political Safeguards	
Article 330	Reservation of seats for STs in the Lok Sabha.
Article 332	Reservation of seats for STs in State Legislatures.
Article 243	Reservation of seats for STs in Panchayats.
Article 275	Provides for the grant of special funds by the Union Government to the State Government for promoting the welfare of Scheduled Tribes and providing them with better administration.

ISSUES FACED BY THE TRIBES IN INDIA:

- **Land Rights:** Lack of secure land rights leading to displacement and land alienation.
- **Socio-economic Marginalisation:** Poverty, lack of access to education, healthcare, and basic amenities.
- **Education Gap:** Lower educational levels due to limited access and cultural barriers.
- **Exploitation and Bonded Labor:** Vulnerability to exploitation, bonded labor, and human trafficking.
- **Cultural Erosion:** Threat to tribal cultures, languages, and traditional practices.
- **Lack of Representation:** Inadequate political representation and limited participation in decision-making.

WAY FORWARD:

- Secure Land and Resource Rights.
- Improve Education and Skill Development.
- Enhance Healthcare and Sanitation Facilities.
- Empower Women in Tribal Communities.
- Preserve and Promote Indigenous Culture.
- Encourage Participation and Inclusion in Governance.



SOURCE:

<https://theprint.in/india/governance/mp-govt-enlists-retired-officials-to-monitor-tribal-welfare-schemes-as-bjp-works-to-regain-votebank/1637221/>

Q.1 Which Article of the Indian Constitution provides for the reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the Lok Sabha?

- (A) Article 330
- (B) Article 243
- (C) Article 46
- (D) Article 275

ANSWER: A

Q.2 Which of the following statements about TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India) is/are correct?

1. TRIFED is an apex organization under the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.
2. The primary objective of TRIFED is to provide financial assistance to tribal communities for setting up small-scale industries.

Select the correct answer from the options below:

- (A) 1 only
- (B) 2 only
- (C) Both 1 and 2
- (D) None of the above

ANSWER: D

Q.3 Discuss the challenges faced by tribal communities in India and suggest measures to empower them for inclusive development.

INDIA SRI LANKA RELATIONS

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “India Sri Lanka Relations”. The topic “India Sri Lanka Relations” has relevance in the “International Relations” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

Map of Sri Lanka, New initiatives in Sri Lanka

FOR MAINS:

GS2: India and its neighbourhood

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Ranil Wickremesinghe, the President of Sri Lanka, arrived in India on July 20 for a formal visit.

Bilateral Talks Highlights

MoUs EXCHANGED AND DOCUMENTS HANDED OVER:

Sr. No.	MoUs/Agreement exchanged
1.	Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) in the field of Animal Husbandry and Dairying
2.	MoU on cooperation in the field of renewable energy
3.	Memorandum of Cooperation for economic development projects in Trincomalee district of Sri Lanka
4.	Network to Network Agreement between NIPL and Lanka Pay for UPI application acceptance in Sri Lanka
5.	Energy Permit for Sampur Solar Power Project

- The aim of the MoU on Trincomalee is to transform the port and its surrounding regions into a prominent “regional hub” for industry, energy, and renewable energy.
- An important agreement on digital transactions was signed between Lanka Pay and ECI International, facilitating the acceptance of India’s Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in Sri Lanka.

MAJOR POINTS: INDIA-SRI LANKA ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP VISION

- **Opportunity for Bilateral Economic Partnership:** The rapid economic growth and technological advancement in India, along with Sri Lanka’s current phase of stabilisation and economic recovery, create an opportunity for a deeper economic partnership between the two countries.
- **Strengthening Connectivity:** The leaders recognized connectivity as a key enabler and agreed to promote and strengthen it in various dimensions:

- **Maritime Connectivity:** India and Sri Lanka will cooperate in developing ports and logistics infrastructure at Colombo, Trincomalee, and Kankesanthurai to improve regional logistics and shipping. Passenger ferry services between India and Sri Lanka are also planned to be resumed.
- **Land Connectivity:** A feasibility study will be conducted to establish land connectivity between Sri Lanka and India, providing access to the ports of Trincomalee and Colombo, fostering economic growth and strengthening the relationship between the two countries.
- **Air Connectivity:** Efforts to expand flights between Jaffna and Chennai to Colombo and explore connectivity to other destinations in Sri Lanka. Focus on investment and cooperation in civil aviation.
- **Energy and Power Connectivity:** Cooperation in developing renewable energy to achieve Sri Lanka's target of 70% power generation from renewable sources by 2030. Establishment of a high capacity power grid interconnection between India and Sri Lanka for bidirectional electricity trade. Joint exploration and production of hydrocarbons in Sri Lanka's offshore basins.
- **Trade, Economic, and Financial Connectivity:** Facilitating mutual investments, enhancing bilateral trade and investments through agreements, and promoting digital payments for trade transactions.
- **People-to-People Connectivity:** Promotion of India's Buddhist circuit, Ramayana trail, and religious places in Sri Lanka for tourism. Cooperation in education, research, and academic institutes in various fields.

13TH AMENDMENT ISSUE

- Indian PM urges Sri Lanka to implement 13th Amendment, announce development assistance for Tamils of Indian origin, and hopes for provincial council elections.
- The Indian Prime Minister urged Sri Lanka to implement the 13th Amendment, which grants greater autonomy to provinces, in order to ensure a "life of respect and dignity" for the Tamil population in the country. The PM also announced a development assistance package for the Tamils of Indian origin who are commemorating the 200th anniversary of their arrival in Sri Lanka.
- Finally, the PM expressed hope that Sri Lanka will hold provincial council elections in the country.

ABOUT 13TH AMENDMENT:

- The 13th Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka was passed in 1987 as part of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord. It created a system of provincial councils with substantial powers over land, police, education, health, agriculture, housing, and finances. The amendment also made Tamil an official language of Sri Lanka, along with Sinhala.
- However, the 13th Amendment has never been fully implemented. The Sri Lankan government has resisted devolving power to the provinces, particularly in the areas of land and police. This has led to resentment among the Tamil community, who feel that they have been denied their rightful share of power and resources.



INDIA -SRI LANKA RELATIONSHIP AT A GLANCE

About	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India and Sri Lanka share a 2500-year-old relationship with cultural, religious, and linguistic interactions. • Trade, investment, and cooperation in development, education, culture, and defence have strengthened their friendship. • India supported Sri Lanka during the conflict with the LTTE, and developmental assistance projects have further solidified their bonds.
Commercial Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both countries have a vibrant economic partnership with bilateral merchandise trade reaching around USD 3.6 billion in 2020. • India is a significant contributor to Sri Lanka's Foreign Direct Investment.
Projects under LOCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Export-Import Bank of India has extended 11 Lines of Credit to Sri Lanka in various sectors like railway, transport, connectivity, defense, and solar. • A USD 100 million LoC for solar projects was signed in June 2021.
People-to-people ties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddhism is a strong connection between the two nations, dating back to Emperor Ashoka's era. • India offers numerous scholarships and training programs to Sri Lankan students and government officials to enhance human resource development.
Defence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India and Sri Lanka conduct joint military exercises named 'Mitra Shakti' and a naval exercise named SLINEX.
Support during crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India provided a \$2.4 billion financial assistance package, appointed experts to aid economic recovery, and extended currency swap and credit line for fuel purchases during the recent Sri Lankan crisis. • Additionally, several bilateral agreements were signed, including joint development projects and maritime security pacts.

India and Sri Lanka share a close and stable partnership, and India's role in addressing Sri Lanka's current economic challenges has been significant. Through various forms of support, cooperation,

and connectivity initiatives, India continues to play a vital role in promoting sustainable and inclusive growth in Sri Lanka.

Sources:

Focus on joint projects during Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe's India visit – The Hindu

Q1. With reference to major international ports, consider the following pairs:

1. Hambantota – Sri Lanka
2. Chabahar – Iran
3. Trincomalee – Myanmar
4. Bandar Abbas – Pakistan

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Answer: (b)

Q2. Which of the following countries is frequently in news due to the “13th Amendment”?

- (a) South Korea
- (b) Sri Lanka
- (c) United States
- (d) France

Answer: (b)

Q3. Analyse India's support, cooperation, and connectivity initiatives in fostering sustainable and inclusive growth in Sri Lanka.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS (NCPCR)

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “National Commission for Protection of Child Rights”. The topic “National Commission for Protection of Child Rights” has relevance in the “Indian Polity” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

*What is the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights?
Its Composition and Functions?*

FOR MAINS:

GS2: Statutory, Regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has sent a letter to the Manipur DGP, instructing them to acknowledge and lodge a FIR against three individuals.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS (NCPCR)

The Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, passed in December 2005, led to the establishment of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) in March 2007.

- The Commission works under the aegis of the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- The primary objective of the commission is to ensure that all laws, policies, programs, and administrative systems align with the principles outlined in the Constitution of India and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- According to their definition, a child is considered to be an individual between the ages of 0 and 18 years.

Regulation/Act	Definition of a Child
Indian Census	Under the age of 14
Universal Declaration of Child Rights	Under the age of 18, unless majority is attained earlier according to applicable legislation
Indian Penal Code (IPC) 1860	Minors under the age of 7; Children with mental disabilities under the age of 12 (Section 83 IPC)
Indian Constitution (Article 21A)	Ages 6 to 14
Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986	14 years
Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000	18 years

COMPOSITION

- The Central Government appoints a **chairperson**, who is a distinguished individual with a notable track record in promoting children's welfare.
- **Six members are appointed from various fields, including at least two women**, based on their eminence, ability, integrity, standing, and experience. –
 - Education;
 - Child health, care, welfare or child development;
 - Juvenile justice or care of neglected or marginalised children or children with disabilities;
 - Elimination of child labour or children in distress;
 - Child psychology or sociology; and
 - Laws relating to children.

FUNCTIONS OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS (NCPCR)

- **Review and Recommend Safeguards:**
 - Examine and review the safeguards provided by existing laws for child rights protection.
 - Recommend effective measures for implementing these safeguards.
 - Present periodic reports to the central government on the working of these safeguards.

- **Inquire and Initiate Proceedings:**
 - Investigate violations of child rights.
 - Recommend the initiation of legal proceedings in such cases.
- **Remedial Measures for Specific Situations:**
 - Examine factors hindering the rights of children affected by various situations, such as terrorism, violence, disasters, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, trafficking, etc.
 - Recommend appropriate remedial measures.
- **Special Care and Protection for Vulnerable Children:**
 - Address matters concerning children in need of special care and protection, including distressed, marginalized, disadvantaged children, those in conflict with the law, juveniles, children without families, and children of prisoners.
 - Recommend appropriate remedial measures.
- **Review Policies and Treaties:**
 - Study international treaties and instruments related to child rights.
 - Periodically review existing policies and programs on child rights.
 - Make recommendations for their effective implementation in the best interest of children.
- **Promote Research and Child Rights Literacy**
- **Inspection and Remedial Action:**
 - Inspect or cause inspections of custodial homes, residences, or institutions meant for children under government or authority control.
 - Advocate for remedial action when necessary.
- **Handling Complaints and Issues:**
 - Inquire into complaints related to child rights violations and take suo motu notice of relevant matters.
 - Address issues arising from non-compliance with laws and policies for child protection.
- **Incidental Functions:**
 - Perform other functions necessary for the promotion of child rights.
 - Not interfere in matters already under consideration by other duly constituted commissions.
- **Compliance with Convention on the Rights of the Child:**
 - Analyse existing laws, policies, and practices for compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
 - Undertake inquiries and produce reports on policy or practice affecting children.

RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER OTHER ACTS

- **The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012**
 - Monitoring of Special Courts Designation by State Governments
 - Monitoring of Public Prosecutors Appointment by State Governments
 - Guidelines Formulation for the involvement of NGOs, professionals, experts and Application Monitoring of these guidelines by State Governments.
 - Training Module Design and Implementation
 - Dissemination of Information and Awareness
 - Reporting and Collecting Data on specific cases of child sexual abuse under the jurisdiction of Child Welfare Committees (CWC).
 - Assess the implementation of the Act's provisions and include a separate chapter in the Annual Report to Parliament covering the findings.
- **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009**
 - Evaluate and assess the safeguards for rights provided by or under the act, and propose measures

for their efficient implementation.

- Inquire complaints concerning the child's right to free and compulsory education.

The NCPCR plays a crucial role in safeguarding, promoting, and advocating for children's rights in the country. Its primary objective is to ensure that all laws, policies, programs, and administrative processes align with the perspective of Child Rights, as outlined in the Indian Constitution and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Commission aims to adopt a rights-based approach in national policies and programs, while also tailoring responses at the state, district, and block levels to consider each region's unique characteristics and capabilities. It seeks to integrate better with communities and households to reach every child, and it anticipates that the on-ground experiences will influence the support it receives from all levels of government.

Sources:

NCPCR writes to Manipur DGP, seeks FIR against CPM leader; 2 others | India News – The Indian Express

Q1. With reference National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), consider the following statements:

1. NCPCR is required to analyze existing laws, policies, and practices for compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
2. One of the functions of NCPCR is to review and recommend safeguards for child rights protection provided by existing laws.
3. The NCPCR is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, and recommending measures for its effective implementation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Answer: (a)

Q2. Consider the following:

Regulation/Act	Definition of a Child
1. Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005	6 to 18 years
1. Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986	14 years
1. Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000	18 years

How many of the abovementioned pairs are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: (b)

Q3. Discuss the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights's structure and functions. Highlight its significance in protecting and promoting children's rights in India.

NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "No-Confidence Motion". The topic "No-Confidence Motion" has relevance in the Polity section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

About No-Confidence Motion?

FOR MAINS:

GS 2: Polity

Types of Motions in Parliament?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

A No Confidence Motion was moved against the PM Modi government marking the first such motion in 20 years.

NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION:

- A No-Confidence Motion is a parliamentary motion in which members express a lack of confidence in the ruling government.
- Under Rule 198 of the Lok Sabha Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business, a No-Confidence Motion can be introduced by any member.
- For the motion to be admitted, it must be supported by at least 50 members in writing.
- Once admitted, the motion is debated, and a vote is held.
- The motion is deemed passed if a majority of the members present and voting support it.
- If the motion is passed, the Council of Ministers must resign, including the Prime Minister, as per convention.

NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION

➤ First-ever no-confidence motion was moved in 1963	Three in last 25 years
➤ Total 26 so far (the one on July 20 will be 27th)	July 1993 Against the Narasimha Rao govt after Babri Masjid demolition (Govt won confidence vote)
➤ Indira Gandhi govt had faced maximum number of no-confidence motion 15	April 1999 Against the Vajpayee govt (Govt lost by one vote)
	August 2003 Against the Vajpayee govt (Govt won confidence vote)
	July 2008 It was a trust vote after CPM-led Left Front withdrew support from the Manmohan Singh govt over the Indo-US nuclear deal. Govt proved its majority

In the Indian Parliament, various types of motions are used to discuss and debate matters of public importance. Some of the key types of motions used in Parliament are:

ADJOURNMENT MOTION:

- Raised to discuss a matter of urgent public importance with the Speaker's consent.
- Requires the support of 50 members to be admitted.
- Available in the Lok Sabha but not in the Rajya Sabha.
- Passage does not require the government to resign, but it is a strong censure of the government.

CLOSURE MOTION:

- When a member proposes to curtail the debate on a particular matter in the House, the intention is to seek approval for its prompt conclusion and an immediate vote. Should this proposal be accepted, the ongoing discussion will be halted, and the House will proceed to vote on the matter in question.
- Motion with a Vote (Rule 184 in Lok Sabha):
- Allows for a debate with a vote on a specific question, and the outcome determines Parliament's position on the issue.
- If passed, the government is obliged to follow Parliament's decision on the matter.

MOTION WITH A VOTE:

- A Motion with a Vote is brought under Rule 184 in the Lok Sabha.
- It allows for a debate on a specific question followed by a voting process.
- The outcome of the vote determines Parliament's position on the issue.
- If the motion is passed, the government is obligated to follow Parliament's decision on the matter.
- Motions with a vote are relatively rare and are usually reserved for matters of significant national importance.

SHORT DURATION DISCUSSION (RULE 193 IN LOK SABHA, RULE 176 IN RAJYA SABHA):

- Allows MPs to discuss a specific issue of public importance without voting.
- The typical format of a debate involves adhering to a predetermined timeframe, which generally spans a maximum of two hours.

Confidence Motion:

- Passed to prove the majority of the government when its majority is in doubt.

Privilege Motion:

- Initiated when a member believes a minister has violated the privileges of the House or its members.
- Aims to express disapproval and criticize the minister's actions.

Motion of Thanks:

- A parliamentary protocol designed to convey appreciation for the President's Address during the initiation of the Lok Sabha session.
- Its passage within the House holds significant importance, as its failure would be perceived as a defeat for the government.

Cut Motion:

- Cut motions are proposed by members of the Parliament to reduce the allocation of funds for a specific demand in the budget. These motions aim to express the discontent or disagreement with the proposed budgetary allocation and provide a way for MPs to voice their concerns about government spending on particular items.
- Passage by the Lok Sabha indicates a lack of parliamentary confidence in the government and may lead to its resignation.
- These motions provide mechanisms for discussions, debates, and expressions of confidence or

no-confidence in the government, contributing to the functioning of a parliamentary democracy.

SOURCE:

<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/no-confidence-motion-in-lok-sabha-live-i-n-d-i-a-parliament-monsoon-session-pm-modi-manipur-congress-bjp-11690423265970.html>

Image credit: Economic Times

Q.1 What is a “Cut Motion” in the context of parliamentary proceedings, and what is its purpose?

- (a) A motion moved by the opposition to reduce the budgetary allocation for a specific government expenditure.
- (b) A motion moved by the ruling party to expedite the passage of a crucial bill.
- (c) A motion moved to censure a member of parliament for misconduct.
- (d) A motion moved to adjourn the House for an immediate discussion on an urgent matter.

Answer: (a)

Q.2 Which of the following statements regarding a No-Confidence Motion in a parliamentary setting is/are correct?

- 1. It requires support from a minimum of 25% of the total members of the legislative body to be admitted.
- 2. If the No-Confidence Motion is passed, the ruling government must resign, including the Prime Minister.

Choose the correct option(s) from the following:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) None of the above

Answer: (b)

Q.3 Discuss the significance and implications of a No-Confidence Motion in a parliamentary democracy. How does this motion serve as a vital instrument of accountability and parliamentary oversight?

MANUAL SCAVENGING IN INDIA

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Manual Scavenging in India”. The topic “Manual Scavenging in India” has relevance in the “Social Justice” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is Manual Scavenging?

FOR MAINS:

GS2: Government policies and interventions.

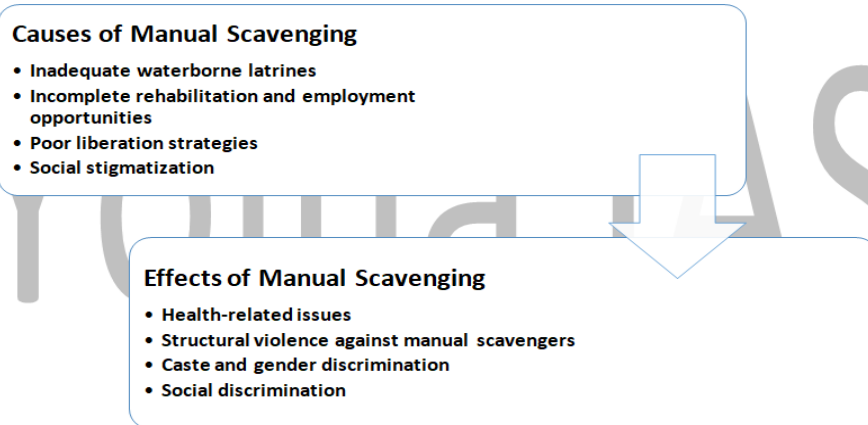
GS2: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Ministry of Social Justice recently announced in Parliament that 530 districts across India have reported being free of manual scavenging.

ABOUT MANUAL SCAVENGING

- Manual scavenging refers to the unsafe and manual removal of raw human excreta from unhygienic latrines or open drains.
- The official definition of a manual scavenger in Indian law is someone who is engaged or employed by an individual, local authority, agency, or contractor to manually clean, carry, dispose of, or handle human excreta from insanitary latrines, open drains, pits, railway tracks, or other designated spaces, as notified by the Central or State Government.



CAUSES OF MANUAL SCAVENGING:

- **Inadequate waterborne latrines:** In urban areas, dry latrines are widely used, contributing significantly to manual scavenging. According to the latest census data, India has approximately 26 million insanitary latrines.
- **Incomplete rehabilitation and employment opportunities:** The absence of adequate employment opportunities and support for families whose breadwinners engage in manual scavenging further perpetuates this problem.
- **Poor liberation strategies:** Manual scavengers are not provided with proper strategies to liberate themselves psychologically. This lack of support can trap them deeper into the practice of manual scavenging.
- **Social stigmatisation:** Manual scavengers face societal stigma, being considered untouchable due to their work. This exclusion prevents them from participating in community activities, finding employment, or renting houses.

EFFECTS OF MANUAL SCAVENGING:

- **Health-related issues:**
 - Exposure to harmful gases such as hydrogen disulfide, carbon dioxide, ammonia, and methane puts manual scavengers at risk of developing severe health issues.

- Prolonged exposure to hydrogen disulfide can result in asphyxia and even death. Musculoskeletal disorders, such as osteoarthritis, are common among scavengers.
- Additionally, exposure to sewer infections, including diseases like Leptospirosis, poses a significant occupational health risk.
- **Structural violence against manual scavengers:**
- Manual scavengers face two types of violence—social violence and violence based on caste discrimination.
- In India, the caste system is often used to justify violence against them, perpetuating their plight. Discrimination and prejudice towards manual scavengers are systemic and form a type of structural violence.
- **Caste and gender discrimination:**
- Manual scavengers, mostly women and members of marginalized castes, are trapped in this occupation due to caste-based discrimination.
- They are excluded from accessing better job opportunities, making manual scavenging appear as their only option for work.
- **Social discrimination:**
- They are considered untouchable, and this discriminatory attitude forces them to accept their circumstances.
- The problem extends to their children, who also face discrimination and are compelled to follow in their parents' footsteps, continuing the cycle of manual scavenging.

MAJOR LEGISLATIVE AND PROGRAMMATIC INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS MANUAL SCAVENGING:

Legislative Measures:

- **The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013**
- Enacted by Parliament to prohibit manual scavenging and provide rehabilitation to those engaged in this practice.
- **National Commission for Safai Karamcharis**
- It was constituted on 12th August 1994 as a statutory body through The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993.

Programmatic Interventions:

- **National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem” (NAMASTE):** “NAMASTE” is a nationwide program aimed at promoting mechanized sanitation in all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) across the country. The primary components of this initiative encompass:
 - **Identification:** The scheme aims to identify Sewer/Septic Tank Workers (SSWs).
 - **Occupational Training and PPE Distribution:** It provides training to SSWs and supplies them with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits.
 - **Safety Devices for Sanitation Response Units (SRUs):** Assistance is given to Sanitation Response Units in acquiring safety devices.
 - **Health Insurance:** The scheme provides health insurance to identified SSWs and their families under the Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY). This means that they will be able to access free or low-cost healthcare services at any of the empanelled hospitals across the country.
 - **Livelihood Assistance:** NAMASTE supports mechanization and enterprise development by offering financial aid and subsidies to sanitation workers for procuring sanitation-related equipment.
 - **IEC Campaign:** Joint campaigns by ULBs and NSKFDC will be carried out to raise awareness

about the interventions of NAMASTE.

- Namaste is a **central sector scheme** of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission:**
- Construction of over 10.88 crore sanitary toilets in rural areas and 62.64 lakh in urban areas.
- Conversion of insanitary toilets into sanitary toilets.
- Contributed significantly towards eliminating manual scavenging.
- **Swachhata Abhiyaan Mobile App:**
- Launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on 24th December 2020.
- Aimed to capture data on insanitary latrines and associated manual scavengers.
- Over 6000 cases have been uploaded on the app, but no confirmed insanitary latrine has been reported so far.
- **Survey and Identification:** Surveys Conducted by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment:
- Two surveys in 2013 and 2018 for identifying manual scavengers.
- Identified 58,098 eligible manual scavengers who received one-time cash assistance.

CHALLENGES:

- **Underreporting of Cases:** The majority of cases related to hazardous occupations like manual scavenging are not properly recorded. The existence of social media has shed light on some incidents that might have remained hidden otherwise. In certain instances, private companies offer monetary settlements to victims to deter them from filing complaints.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Most cases come to public attention only when a person dies while cleaning septic tanks. This indicates a lack of awareness and proper monitoring of such dangerous practices.
- **Poverty and Involvement of Oppressed Communities:** Many individuals from marginalized communities are forced into manual scavenging due to poverty, particularly in urban areas. They find themselves handling human and animal waste as a means of survival.
- **Inadequate Safety Measures:** Workers are often subjected to hazardous conditions with insufficient protective gear and technological support. Despite the risks, they continue to perform the tasks manually.
- **Poor Conviction Rate:** A Parliamentary Panel highlighted the dismal conviction rate in such cases. Out of 616 FIRs registered against contractors for unsafe sewer cleaning, only one conviction was recorded, indicating a lack of effective enforcement and justice for victims.

MEASURES NEEDED:

- **Acquisition of Machinery for Sewer and Septic Tank Cleaning**
- **Robust Monitoring by Local Government**
- **Implementation of Bio Toilets**
- **Increased Funding for Rehabilitation**

The elimination of manual scavenging requires a multi-faceted approach and collective effort from the government, civil society, and the public. It is not only a matter of sanitation but also of social justice and human rights. By prioritising this issue and implementing comprehensive measures, progress can be made towards a society free from this dehumanising practice.

Sources:

530 districts reported as free of manual scavenging: Centre – The Hindu
Infographic- Deccan Herald

Q1. With reference Manual scavenging, consider the following statements:

1. Manual scavenging refers to the safe and automated removal of raw human excreta from hygienic latrines or closed drains.
2. Public Health and sanitation is included in the Concurrent list of the Seventh Schedule.
3. The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 is enacted by the parliament to prohibit manual scavenging and rehabilitation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Answer: (d)

Q2. Consider the following:

1. Swachhata Abhiyaan Mobile App was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
2. NAMASTE is a centrally sponsored scheme of the Union of India.
3. National Commission for Safai Karamcharis a statutory body created under Act of the Parliament.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct ?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: (a)

- Q3. What are the reasons behind the continued prevalence of manual scavenging in India? Discuss the measures can be proposed to effectively address and eradicate this issue.**

INDIA-AUSTRALIA DEFENCE POLICY TALKS

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “India-Australia Defence Policy Talks”. The topic “India-Australia Defence Policy Talks” has relevance in the International Relations section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

Highlights of the Talks?

FOR MAINS:

GS 2: International Relations

Multiple Aspects of India-Australia Relations?

Way Forward?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

During the recently held India-Australia Defence Policy Talks in Canberra, both countries reiterated

their commitment to the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TALKS:

- **Bilateral Defence Cooperation:** India and Australia reviewed and explored new initiatives to strengthen their defence engagements.
- **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership:** Both parties reiterated their dedication to the complete implementation of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, emphasizing the importance of mutual trust, shared interests, and common values as the foundation of their cooperation.
- **Indian Defence Industry Cooperation:** During the discussions, India emphasized the possibilities of collaboration between its defense industry and the Australian Armed forces concerning shipbuilding and maintenance plans.
- **Hydrography Agreement:** Both sides agreed to finalize the hydrography agreement at an early stage.

MULTIPLE ASPECTS OF INDIA-AUSTRALIA RELATIONS:

Historical Perspective:

- **Diplomatic Relations:** Diplomatic relations between Australia and India were established in 1941, with the opening of the Consulate General of India in Sydney, during the pre-Independence era.
- **Uranium Supply Deal:** In 2014, Australia signed a uranium supply deal with India, the first of its kind with a non-signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, recognizing India's non-proliferation record.

Strategic Ties:

- **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership:** In 2020, the bilateral relationship was elevated from Strategic Partnership to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during the India-Australia Leaders' Virtual Summit.
- **High-Level Engagements:** Several high-level engagements and ministerial visits occurred in 2022 and 2023, including the India-Australia virtual summit and Foreign Ministers meet.
- **Defence Cooperation:** The first India-Australia 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue took place in 2021. The Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) was signed in 2020 to enhance defence cooperation.
- **Joint Military Exercises:** Both countries conducted bilateral and multilateral military exercises, including Malabar with India, Japan, and the US.

China Factor:

- **Strained Australia-China Ties:** Australia's actions, such as banning Huawei and criticizing China's human rights violations, led to strained relations and trade barriers from China.
- **India-China Border Tensions:** India has faced aggression along its border with China, highlighting shared concerns between India and Australia.
- **Convergence of Interests:** Both countries support a rules-based international order and are part of the Quad, seeking regional institutions in the Indo-Pacific that promote economic integration.

Multilateral Cooperation:

- **Membership in Various Forums:** Both countries are members of Quad, Commonwealth, IORA, ASEAN Regional Forum, Indo-Pacific Economic Forum, East Asia Summits, etc.
- **Economic Cooperation:** India and Australia signed the Economic Cooperation Trade Agreement, and they are partners in the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative.

Cooperation in Education and Clean Energy

- **Educational Qualifications Recognition:** A mechanism for mutual recognition of educational qualifications was signed to facilitate student mobility.
- **Clean Energy:** Both countries signed a Letter of Intent on New and Renewable Energy and committed funds to the India-Australia Critical Minerals Investment Partnership.



WAY FORWARD:

- **Strengthening Ties:** India and Australia aim to further strengthen their ties and play an active role in ensuring a rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Shared Objectives:** Both countries envision a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific region, resolving conflicts through dialogue and avoiding coercive actions.
- **Bilateral Summits:** Regular bilateral summits provide an opportunity to enhance cooperation and strategic alignment between India and Australia.
- **Active Indo-Pacific Role:** India and Australia seek to actively contribute to regional stability and economic integration in the Indo-Pacific region.

Facts about Australia Relevant for India	Description
Geography	
Location	Australia is a continent and a country located in the Southern Hemisphere.
Neighboring Countries	Australia shares maritime borders with Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and Papua New Guinea.
Trade Partnership	Australia is a significant trade partner for India, ranking as one of India's major trading partners.
Major Exports to India	Key Australian exports to India include coal, gold, and education-related services.
Major Imports from India	Major imports from India include precious metals, pearls, and machinery.

Strategic Importance	
Indo-Pacific Region	Australia is a key player in the Indo-Pacific region and supports India's Act East Policy.
Membership in Quad	Both India and Australia are members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad).
Climate and Environment	
Biodiversity and Conservation	Both countries share an interest in biodiversity conservation and environmental issues.
Climate Change Cooperation	India and Australia cooperate in addressing climate change challenges.
Defence Cooperation	
Military Exercises	India and Australia conduct joint military exercises to enhance defence cooperation.
Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA)	Signed in 2020 to strengthen military ties and support each other's operations.

SOURCE:

<https://www.aninews.in/news/world/others/india-australia-defence-policy-talks-held-in-canberra-both-sides-reaffirm-commitment-for-comprehensive-strategic-partnership20230726182731/>

Q.1 Which of the following forums have common membership of both India and Australia?

1. Quad
2. ASEAN Regional Forum
3. Commonwealth
4. Malabar Exercises

Select the correct option:

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1, 2, and 3 only
- (c) 1, 2, and 4 only
- (d) All of the above

Answer: (c)

Q.2 Consider the following statements regarding the location of Australia:

1. Australia is located in the Southern Hemisphere.
2. It is the largest country in Oceania.
3. The country is situated between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

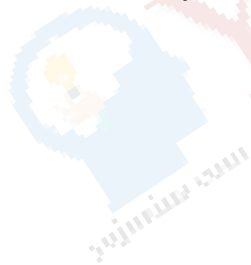
- (a) Only 1 and 2
- (b) Only 2 and 3
- (c) Only 1 and 3
- (d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: (d)

Q.3 "Discuss the significance of India-Australia strategic cooperation in promoting regional stability and addressing common challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. Examine the key areas of cooperation and the potential for further enhancing the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two countries."

General Studies -3

(Technology, Economic Development, Biodiversity,
Security & Disaster Management)



GREEN HYDROGEN

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Green Hydrogen”. The topic “Green Hydrogen” has relevance in the Science and Technology section of the UPSC CSE exam.

RELEVANCE:

FOR PRELIMS:

What is Green hydrogen?

National Mission for Green Hydrogen?

FOR MAINS:

GS 3: Science and Technology

Significance of Green hydrogen?

Challenges in adopting Green hydrogen?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The government has planned over Rs 17,000 crore in incentives to promote the manufacturing of electrolyzers and green hydrogen in the country, said MNRE Secretary Bhupinder Singh Bhalla.

WHAT IS GREEN HYDROGEN?

- **Definition:** Green hydrogen refers to hydrogen gas produced through electrolysis, using renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, or hydroelectric power.
- **Renewable Energy:** The production of green hydrogen requires electricity generated from renewable sources, ensuring minimal or no greenhouse gas emissions during the process.
- **Electrolysis Process:** Water molecules (H₂O) are split into hydrogen (H₂) and oxygen (O₂) through electrolysis, which involves passing an electric current through the water.
- **Applications:** Green hydrogen can be used as a fuel in fuel cells for electric vehicles, as well as in industrial processes where it acts as a clean alternative to fossil fuels.
- **Energy Storage:** Green hydrogen can store excess renewable energy and provide a means to balance the intermittent nature of renewable energy sources.
- **Cost Considerations:** Currently, green hydrogen production is more expensive compared to conventional methods that rely on fossil fuels. However, as renewable energy costs decrease and economies of scale are achieved, the cost of green hydrogen is expected to become more competitive.

NATIONAL MISSION FOR GREEN HYDROGEN?

The National Green Hydrogen Mission is an initiative launched in 2022 by the Government of India as part of its decarbonization strategy. The mission aims to promote the production and use of green hydrogen in the country and leverage it as a key driver for sustainable development.

- **Strategic Hydrogen Innovation Partnership (SHIP):** Promotes Public-Private Partnership framework for Research & Development.
- **Production Target:** Aim to produce 5 million tonnes of green hydrogen by 2030.
- **Goal:** Make India a leading producer and supplier of Green Hydrogen in the world.

SIGNIFICANCE OF GREEN HYDROGEN?

- **Decarbonization:** Green hydrogen plays a crucial role in decarbonizing various sectors, including

transportation and industry by replacing fossil fuels

- **Energy Transition:** Green hydrogen offers a means to integrate and store renewable energy. It can help overcome the intermittent nature of wind and solar power by converting excess energy into hydrogen.
- **Energy Storage:** Green hydrogen serves as a versatile energy storage medium. It can store energy for long periods and be converted back into electricity when demand is high.
- **Energy Independence:** By producing hydrogen from renewable sources domestically, countries can reduce their reliance on imported fossil fuels. .
- **Economic Opportunities:** Investments in green hydrogen technologies can drive innovation, create jobs, and stimulate economic growth in sectors such as renewable energy, manufacturing, and infrastructure development.

CHALLENGES IN ADOPTING GREEN HYDROGEN?

- **Cost:** Currently, the production of green hydrogen is more expensive compared to conventional hydrogen production methods reliant on fossil fuels.
- **Infrastructure:** The infrastructure for green hydrogen production, storage, and distribution is not yet well-developed.
- **Scalability:** Scaling up green hydrogen production requires a substantial increase in renewable energy capacity and the deployment of large-scale electrolysis systems.
- **Efficiency:** The efficiency of electrolysis processes needs improvement. Currently, the conversion of electrical energy into hydrogen is relatively low, resulting in energy losses.

Source:

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/renewables/govt-plans-rs-17000-cr-incentive-scheme-for-electrolyzers-green-hydrogen-production-mnre-secy-bhupinder-bhalla/article-show/101340541.cms?from=mdr>

Q.1 Which of the following statements regarding the National Green Hydrogen Mission in India is/are correct?

1. The National Green Hydrogen Mission was launched in 2012 as part of India's decarbonization strategy.
2. The mission aims to make India a leading producer and supplier of green hydrogen in the world.
3. It targets a production goal of 10 million tonnes of green hydrogen by 2025.

Select the correct option(s):

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2, and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1 and 3 only

Answer: (a)

Q.2 Which of the following statements about green hydrogen is/are correct?

1. Green hydrogen can be used as a clean alternative to fossil fuels in industrial processes.
2. The production of green hydrogen involves the splitting of water molecules using nuclear fission.

Select the correct option(s):

- (a) Both 1 and 2
- (b) 1 only
- (c) 2 only

(d) None of the above

Answer: (b)

Q.3 Discuss the potential of green hydrogen in driving India's energy transition and achieving its climate goals. Analyze the challenges and opportunities associated with the widespread adoption of green hydrogen in the country

GREEDFLATION

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Greedflation". The topic "Greedflation" has relevance in the Economy section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is Greedflation?

Facts about Greedflation in India?

FOR MAINS:

GS 3: Economy

Impact of Greedflation?

Preventive Measures to be taken?

Challenges in preventing Greedflation?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

There is a growing consensus across the world that corporate greed is the new villain in town, spiking inflation even as workers get doubly penalised by low wage increases and higher interest rates.

WHAT IS GREEDFLATION?

Greedflation refers to a situation where inflation is driven by corporate greed rather than by the traditional wage-price spiral. It occurs when companies excessively raise prices to maximize profit margins beyond covering increased costs. This behavior leads to an inflationary pressure that is not solely driven by wage increases but by businesses taking advantage of market conditions to generate excessive profits.

FACTS ABOUT GREEDFLATION IN INDIA?

- In India, there are indications of greedflation based on the surge in net profits of listed companies.
- The net profits of Indian listed companies reached a record high of Rs. 2.9 trillion in March 2023, over 3.5 times the pre-pandemic average.
- Approximately 60% of the growth in net profit can be attributed to an increase in profit margins, indicating companies' utilization of excessive profit margins to drive net profits.
- The remaining percentage of growth is contributed by increased sales, suggesting a combination of factors driving the overall profit growth.

IMPACT OF GREEDFLATION?

- **Reduced Purchasing Power:** Greedflation erodes the purchasing power of consumers as prices rise excessively. This can lead to a decline in living standards, particularly for low-income individuals
- **Income Inequality:** Greedflation exacerbates income inequality by benefiting businesses and shareholders who profit from increased profit margins and asset values, thus widening the wealth gap.
- **Financial Market Instability:** Excessive price increases and speculative behaviors driven by greed can create bubbles and unsustainable market conditions.
- **Negative Impact on Productivity:** When prices rise excessively without a corresponding increase in wages or productivity, it can lead to a decline in real wages and labor productivity.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES TO BE TAKEN?

- **Regulatory Oversight:** Governments can strengthen regulatory oversight to prevent excessive price increases driven by corporate greed.
- **Anti-Trust Policies:** Effective implementation and enforcement of anti-trust and competition laws can discourage anti-competitive behaviors and foster a level playing field.
- **Consumer Protection Measures:** implementation of consumer protection measures to safeguard consumers from unfair pricing practices. This may involve ensuring transparency in pricing and empowering consumers to make informed decisions.
- **Strengthening Market Competition:** Encouraging market competition through policies that promote new entrants, innovation, and fair market access

CHALLENGES IN PREVENTING GREEDFLATION?

- **Identification and Measurement:** Determining the extent of greedflation and differentiating it from regular inflation can be challenging. It requires careful analysis of pricing trends, profit margins, and market dynamics to identify instances where excessive price increases are driven by corporate greed.
- **Balancing Profit Motives and Fairness:** Balancing the need for businesses to generate profits with ensuring fairness and preventing excessive price increases can be a delicate task.
- **Enforcement and Compliance:** It requires strong regulatory bodies with adequate resources, expertise, and authority to monitor and investigate pricing practices. Ensuring compliance from businesses, especially in highly competitive and globalized markets, can also be difficult.
- **Global Nature of Markets:** In an interconnected global economy, preventing greedflation may require international cooperation and coordination. Addressing issues such as cross-border price manipulation and global supply chain dynamics adds complexity to the challenge.

Source:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-economics/explainspeaking-greedflation-inflation-india-explained-8687194/>

Q.1 What is the term “greedflation”?

- (a) An economic phenomenon where inflation is driven by excessive consumer demand
- (b) A situation where inflation is caused by rising input costs for businesses
- (c) A term used to describe a period of deflation in the economy

(d) A situation where inflation is driven by excessive price increases by corporates

Answer: (d)

Q.2 Which of the following statements regarding greedflation is/are correct?

1. Greedflation refers to a situation where inflation is driven by excessive demand in the economy.
2. Greedflation can lead to widening income inequality and exacerbate the wealth gap.
3. Preventing greedflation requires balancing business profitability with consumer interests.
4. Greedflation is a term used to describe deflationary trends in an economy

Select the correct option:

- (a) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (c)

Q.3 Discuss the concept of greedflation and its implications on the economy and society. Also, analyze the challenges faced in preventing and mitigating the effects of greedflation.

OPEN MARKET SALE SCHEME (OMSS)

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Open Market Sale Scheme”. The topic “Open Market Sale Scheme” has relevance in the Food Security section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is OMSS?

FOR MAINS:

*GS 3: Food Security
Implementation and Process
Recent Revisions in OMSS?
About FCI?*

WHY IN THE NEWS?

States have been looking at alternative ways of procuring wheat and rice in the aftermath of the Food Corporation of India’s (FCI) quantity restrictions followed by the refusal to allow states to procure the two food grains through its Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS).

WHAT IS OMSS?

It is a scheme implemented by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to facilitate the sale of surplus food grains, generally wheat and rice from the central pool in the open market. The OMSS serves several purposes and objectives, including:

- **Enhancing food grain supply during lean seasons:** The OMSS ensures that there is an adequate supply of food grains in the market, particularly during periods of scarcity or low production.

- **Moderating open market prices and controlling inflation:** By releasing surplus food grains into the open market, the OMSS helps stabilize prices and prevent excessive inflation in the food grain market.
- **Ensuring food security and availability in deficit regions:** The sale of surplus food grains through the OMSS helps meet the food requirements of regions that may have a deficit in production or availability of grains.
- **Facilitating the sale of surplus food grains from the central pool:** The FCI maintains a central pool of food grains, and the OMSS provides a mechanism to sell the surplus grains from this pool to various buyers in the open market.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS:

- The FCI conducts e-auctions for traders, bulk consumers, and retail chains to purchase specified quantities of food grains at pre-determined prices.
- States can procure additional food grains through OMSS for distribution under the National Food Security Act, 2013.
- Auctions are conducted weekly on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX) platform.

RECENT REVISIONS IN OMSS?

- Maximum allowed quantity per bid has been reduced from 3,000 metric tonnes to a range of 10-100 metric tonnes.
- Aim is to promote wider participation and encourage small and marginal buyers, curbing retail prices and ensuring a level playing field.
- The Centre has decided to discontinue the sale of rice and wheat from the central pool to the states under OMSS.
- Private bidders are also prohibited from selling their OMSS supplies to states.
- Purpose is to control inflation, maintain adequate stock levels, and streamline distribution and allocation of food grains.

STATE REACTIONS:

- Karnataka and Tamil Nadu criticized the Centre's decision.
- Karnataka temporarily replaced its free grain distribution scheme for below-poverty-line families with cash transfers due to difficulties in procuring sufficient rice at a reasonable cost in the market.

THE FOOD CORPORATION OF INDIA (FCI):

- Established in 1965 under the Food Corporations Act of 1964 to manage the food security system in India.
- Maintains buffer stocks of food grains for ensuring food security during scarcity or crisis.
- distributes food grains in the country for the public distribution system.
- Conducts e-auctions as one of the methods to dispose of surplus food grains.

Source:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/explainer-open-market-sale-scheme-supply-to-states-discontinued/article67023932.ece>

Q.1 With reference to the provisions made under the National Food Security Act, 2013, consid-

er the following statements: (2018)

1. The families coming under the category of 'below poverty line (BPL)' only are eligible to receive subsidised food grains.
2. The eldest woman in a household, of age 18 years or above, shall be the head of the household for the purpose of issuance of a ration card.
3. Pregnant women and lactating mothers are entitled to a 'take-home ration' of 1600 calories per day during pregnancy and for six months thereafter.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 3 only

Answer: (b)

Q.2 Which of the following is responsible for the implementation of the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) for surplus food grains in India?

- (a) Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)
- (b) Food Corporation of India (FCI)
- (c) Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare
- (d) National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED)

Answer: (b)

Q.3 Discuss the role and significance of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) in ensuring food security in India. Analyze its functions, challenges faced, and the measures taken to address those challenges.

DEEP SEA MINING

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Deep Sea Mining". The topic "Deep Sea Mining" has relevance in the Environment section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is Deep Sea Mining?

FOR MAINS:

GS 3: Environment

Concerns regarding Deep Sea Mining?

Regulation of Deep Sea Mining?

Way forward?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The International Seabed Authority — the United Nations body that regulates the world's ocean floor — is preparing to resume negotiations that could open the international seabed for mining, including

for materials critical for the green energy transition.

WHAT IS DEEP SEA MINING?

Deep Sea Mining is a type of mining activity that involves extracting mineral deposits and metals from the seabed at great depths in the ocean. The process of deep sea mining targets specific areas of the ocean floor that contain valuable mineral resources, such as polymetallic nodules, seafloor sulfide deposits, and cobalt crusts. These resources are rich in materials like nickel, rare earth elements, cobalt, and other metals that are essential for various industries, including the production of batteries, renewable energy technologies, smartphones, and computers.

THE THREE MAIN TYPES OF DEEP SEA MINING ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- **Mining Deposit-Rich Polymetallic Nodules:**
- Polymetallic nodules are small, rounded accretions found on the seabed in certain regions. They contain a variety of valuable metals like manganese, nickel, copper, and cobalt.
- To mine these nodules, specialized equipment is used to collect and lift them from the ocean floor.
- **Mining Massive Seafloor Sulfide Deposits:**
- Seafloor sulfide deposits are formed through hydrothermal vents and are rich in valuable metals such as copper, gold, zinc, and silver.
- The mining process involves cutting and lifting the seafloor to extract the mineral-rich materials.
- **Stripping Cobalt Crusts from Rock:**
- Cobalt crusts are mineral formations that accumulate on top of volcanic rock and contain valuable minerals like cobalt, nickel, and platinum.
- Mining cobalt crusts involves scraping and removing the crusts from the rocky substrate.

CONCERNS REGARDING DEEP SEA MINING:

- **Marine Ecosystem Damage:**
- Mining operations can cause noise, vibration, and light pollution, disrupting marine habitats and species.
- Possible leaks and spills of fuels and chemicals used in the mining process can harm marine life.
- **Sediment Plumes:**
- Mining processes may generate sediment plumes that are pumped back into the sea, harming filter-feeding species like corals and sponges.
- The sediment can smother or interfere with other marine creatures.
- **Impact on Deep-Sea Ecosystems:**
- Deep-sea mining can have a wider impact on fish populations, marine mammals, and the essential function of deep-sea ecosystems in regulating the climate.

REGULATION OF DEEP SEA MINING:

- **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS):**
- UNCLOS governs the high seas and international ocean floor, designating the seabed and its mineral resources as the “common heritage of mankind.”
- It aims to manage these resources to protect humanity’s interests, promote economic benefits sharing, support marine scientific research, and protect marine environments.

- **International Seabed Authority (ISA):**

- ISA is an autonomous organization within the United Nations common system, headquartered in Kingston, Jamaica.
- Its primary function is to regulate exploration and exploitation of deep seabed minerals in the “Area,” beyond national jurisdiction.
- The Area covers over 50% of the entire Earth’s seabed.

Source:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-sci-tech/what-deep-sea-mining-permits-implications-8698411/>

Q.1 Consider the following statements: (2021)

1. The Global Ocean Commission grants licences for seabed exploration and mining in international waters.
2. India has received licences for seabed mineral exploration in international waters
3. ‘Rare earth minerals’ are present on the seafloor in international waters.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b)

Q.2 Which of the following statements about the International Seabed Authority (ISA) is correct?

1. ISA is an autonomous organization under the United Nations, responsible for regulating mining activities in international waters.
2. ISA is a global non-governmental organization working towards marine conservation and protecting endangered species.
3. ISA is an intergovernmental body that facilitates maritime border negotiations between coastal countries.

Please select the correct option from the choices given.

- (a) 1
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 3 only

Answer: (a)

Q.3 Critically evaluate the various resources of the oceans which can be harnessed to meet the resource crisis in the world.

NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “National Research Foundation”. The topic “National Research Foundation” has relevance in the “Governance and Science and Technology” sections of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is the National Research Foundation, what are its governing bodies, objectives and functions?

FOR MAINS:

GS3: National Research Foundation (NRF) aiding in Research and Development in India

WHY IN THE NEWS?

In a recent development, the **National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill, 2023** was granted approval by the **Union Cabinet**, with the Prime Minister presiding over the meeting. Plans are underway to present the bill for introduction in the Parliament.

NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION:

The National Research Foundation is a proposed organization that will **oversee and guide scientific research in India according to the National Education Policy(2020)**. It is expected to receive a **funding of Rs. 50,000 crore over five years (2023-2028)**.

- The proposed Bill aims to establish the National Research Foundation (NRF) which will play a crucial role in nurturing, expanding, and advancing Research and Development (R&D) activities. It seeks to cultivate a climate of research and innovation across universities, colleges, research institutions, and R&D laboratories throughout India.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK:

- Governing Board:
- Prime Minister as ex-officio President of the Board
 - Union Minister of Science & Technology as ex-officio Vice-President.
 - Union Minister of Education as ex-officio Vice-President.
 - Eminent researchers and professionals across disciplines as members
- **Executive Council: Chairperson will be Principal Scientific Adviser** to the Union Government
- **The Department of Science and Technology (DST) is designated as the administrative body for the National Research Foundation.**

REPEALING SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING RESEARCH BOARD (SERB):

- Within the bill, provisions have been made for the **repeal of the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), an entity established through an act of Parliament in 2008**. Instead, SERB will be incorporated into the National Research Foundation (NRF).
- The **chairmanship of the SERB is held by the Secretary in the Department of Science and Technology**, with the membership consisting of other distinguished government officials and

eminent scientists.

- The SERB was set up for promoting basic research in science and engineering and to provide financial assistance to scientists, academic institutions, R&D laboratories, industrial concerns and other agencies for such research.

AIMS OF NRF:

- The NRF's objective is to **foster research across a wide range of disciplines**, including **natural sciences, engineering, social sciences, arts, and humanities**.
- It aims to **address significant challenges confronting Indian society** and seeks solutions through research endeavors.
- The NRF aims to **foster partnerships and alliances among academia, industry, government departments, and research institutions**.
- NRF will build an **interface mechanism** to facilitate the active involvement and contributions of industries, state governments, scientific, and line ministries.
- The NRF will prioritize the **establishment of a policy framework and the implementation of regulatory procedures** that promote collaboration and encourage higher investment by industries in research and development (R&D) activities.

FUNDING PATTERN:

- Out of the total estimated funding of Rs 50,000 crore for the next five years, Rs 36,000 crore will be contributed by the industry.
- Funding for scientific research projects under the NRF will be **shared equally between the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the industry**, following a 50:50 funding model.

INDIA'S RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (R&D) SCENARIO:

Country	Percentage of GDP Spent on R&D
India	0.70%
South Africa	0.80%
Brazil	>1%
Russia	>1%
China	>2%
USA	2.80%
Global Average	1.80%

It has been observed that **approximately 60% of the total expenditure on R&D is covered by public funding**, with the remaining 40% contributed by the private sector. However, there has been a decline in the proportion of public expenditure over the past decade.

ISSUES WITH R&D ECOSYSTEM IN INDIA:

- **Data Insufficiency:** Lack of a centralized, credible, and official data source with disaggregated information hampers policy formulation as data from different sources such as DST, MoSPI, and DPE do not align.
- **Absence of R&D Plan:** Absence of a central planning body like the erstwhile Planning Commission leads to a lack of coordination and connectivity among R&D projects undertaken by different

government departments.

- **Low percentage of GDP allocated to R&D:** Despite a current Gross Expenditure on R&D (GERD) of around USD 1 lakh crore, the percentage of GDP allocated to R&D in India is significantly lower compared to competing countries. Furthermore, there is no dedicated provision to address cross-sectoral national issues.
- **Low Private Sector Participation:**
 - Although there is a large number of private players in R&D, the private sector's contribution to the Indian R&D ecosystem remains secondary. Creating a more favorable environment for R&D business could encourage their significant participation.
- **Limited Collaboration in Public Sector:** Among 184 profit-making/operating PSUs, only 65 actively contribute to R&D. Lack of connection between PSUs and limited collaboration between PSU investments in R&D and academia hinder the overall R&D ecosystem.
- **Overdependence on government funds for University Research:** Universities heavily rely on government funds for R&D. Multiple submissions of the same proposal to different government agencies and the lack of independent monitoring and evaluation units lead to inefficiencies in resource allocation and evaluation of research projects.
- **R&D by State Governments:** State governments primarily allocate their R&D budgets to agriculture, lacking a separate funding category for research. Insufficient funds at the state level further limit research opportunities.

WAY FORWARD:

NRF's comprehensive approach to funding, collaboration, priority areas, policy support, infrastructure development, and coordination is expected to significantly improve India's low R&D spending and foster a culture of research and innovation in the country.

Q1. With reference to National Research Foundation (NRF), consider the following statements:

1. NRF is proposed to be a statutory body to promote the culture of research and development in India.
2. The Union Minister of Science and Technology will act as ex-officio President of the governing board of NRF.
3. NRF aims to fund the scientific research on equal sharing patterns between the Government and the Industry.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (c)

Q2. Consider the following statements in context of India's Research and Development (R&D) Ecosystem:

1. India spends more than 2% of GDP on Research and Development, which is above the global average.
2. Private Sector Participation forms a majority share in R&D funding.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

1. 1 only
2. 2 only
3. Both 1 and 2
4. Neither 1 and 2

Answer: (d)

Q3. Discuss the objectives and significance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) in promoting research and development in India.

LEPTOSPIROSIS

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Leptospirosis”. The topic “Leptospirosis” has relevance in the “Science and Technology” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is Leptospirosis? Causes, Symptoms and Treatment?

FOR MAINS:

GS3: One Health Approach in Prevention of diseases

WHY IN THE NEWS?

In India, thousands of individuals are affected by leptospirosis every year, especially during monsoons and floods.

LEPTOSPIROSIS:

Leptospirosis, a bacterial infection caused by various species within the genus *Leptospira*, is a zoonotic disease that manifests in both humans and animals.

WHO ARE THE RESERVOIRS OF THIS BACTERIA?

- Although commonly referred to as “rat fever,” leptospirosis can be transmitted by various animals including cattle, buffaloes, horses, sheep, goats, pigs, dogs, and rodents.
- All mammalian species can harbor leptospire in their kidneys and act as a source of infection for humans and other animals.
- **Rodents, particularly, are the primary carriers** of leptospirosis and can shed leptospira throughout their lifespan without showing clinical symptoms.
- **Pigs and cattle**, in a carrier state, can excrete significant amounts of leptospire and pose a risk for human infection.

HOW IS THE BACTERIA LEPTOSPIRA TRANSMITTED?

- Leptospire can enter the bodies of humans and animals through **cuts and abrasions in the skin, intact mucous membranes** (nose, mouth, eyes), and possibly **waterlogged skin**.
- **Inhalation of urine droplets or consumption of contaminated drinking water** may also

occasionally allow leptospire to enter the human body.

WHO IS AT RISK?

- The ailment is recognized as a potential **occupational risk for individuals employed in agricultural environments**, those handling animals, or working in sanitary services that involve exposure to polluted water.
- **Recreational activities in contaminated lakes and rivers** are also reported to increase the risk of leptospirosis.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- **The severity of leptospirosis infection can vary from a mild flu-like illness to a life-threatening condition.**
- Leptospirosis is a systemic disease, affecting multiple organs, which often leads to the misdiagnosis of the signs and symptoms.
- In mild cases, patients may experience sudden onset fever, chills, and headache, or they may be asymptomatic.
- Severe cases of leptospirosis are characterized by organ dysfunction, including the liver, kidneys, lungs, and brain.
- Animals, such as cattle and pigs, may exhibit clinical symptoms such as reproductive failure, stillbirths, and weak offspring.
- Dogs can experience various symptoms, including fever, jaundice, vomiting, diarrhea, renal failure, and in some cases, death.

HOW CAN THE DISEASE BE PREVENTED?

The outbreaks of leptospirosis have been reported from coastal districts of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Andamans & Nicobar, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu & Puducherry from time to time.

- **‘One Health’ approach:** Leptospirosis prevention can be enhanced through a ‘One Health’ approach that considers the interconnectedness of human, animal, plant, and environmental health.
- **Personal Protective Measures:** Individuals who frequently come into contact with animals or their urine should take precautions, such as wearing personal protective equipment like gloves and boots.
- **Prevention in Animals:** Preventing infection in animals is crucial to reduce the spread of leptospirosis and minimize economic losses for farmers, especially when the disease leads to reproductive failures in pigs and cattle. Ensuring sanitary animal-keeping conditions not only reduces the risk of leptospirosis but also promotes overall animal health and prevents the spread of other diseases.
- **Precautions in Monsoon:** During the monsoon season, when cases of leptospirosis tend to increase, it is advisable to take additional precautions such as washing arms and legs with an antiseptic liquid after handling animal waste or working in water.

Public health professionals should collaborate closely with the animal husbandry department to raise awareness about the dangers of leptospirosis and develop effective strategies that prioritize the health of both humans and animals within the framework of ‘One Health.’

Q1. With reference to Leptospirosis, consider the following statements:

1. Leptospirosis is a viral disease that affects humans and animals.
2. Leptospire can enter the bodies of humans and animals through cuts and abrasions in the skin.
3. Participating in leisure activities in polluted lakes and rivers has been linked to an increased risk of leptospirosis.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (c)

Q2. Consider the following statements :

Statement- I: Leptospirosis is commonly referred to as “rat-fever”.

Statement- II: Rodents are the only carriers of leptospirosis and they can shed leptospira throughout their lifespan without showing clinical symptoms.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (a) Both Statement- I and Statement- II are correct and Statement- II is the correct explanation for Statement- I.
- (b) Both Statement- I and Statement- II are correct and Statement- II is not the correct explanation for Statement- I.
- (c) Statement- I is correct but Statement- II is incorrect.
- (d) Statement- I is incorrect but Statement- II is correct.

Answer: (c)

Q3. Discuss the significance of the ‘One Health’ approach in addressing the challenges posed by diseases such as leptospirosis, and analyze its implications for public health and animal welfare.

PAU’S NEW WHEAT VARIETY PBW RS1

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “PAU’s New Wheat Variety PBW RS1”. The topic “PAU’s New Wheat Variety PBW RS1” has relevance in the “Science and Technology” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is PAU’s New Wheat Variety PBW RS1? What are its features, challenges? What is the Glycemic Index?

FOR MAINS:

GS3: Role of Biotechnology in improving food security

WHY IN THE NEWS?

According to a report in The Indian Express, The Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) has developed a new wheat variety to keep blood sugar, obesity in check.

PAU'S NEW WHEAT VARIETY PBW RS1

- **The Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) has developed a new wheat variety called PBW RS1, which is aimed at addressing health concerns related to blood sugar levels and obesity.**
- This variety contains **high levels of amylose starch and resistant starch**, known for their ability to slow down the release of glucose into the bloodstream. By releasing glucose slowly, **PBW RS1 helps in maintaining stable blood sugar levels and increasing satiety.**

BENEFITS OF PBW RS1

PBW RS1 offers several benefits in terms of health and nutrition. Here are some of its advantages:

REDUCED GLYCEMIC INDEX

- Chapatis and biscuits made from PBW RS1 have a lower glycemic index compared to those made from regular wheat varieties.
- The decreased digestibility of the starch in PBW RS1 contributes to this lower glycemic index.
- A lower glycemic index is associated with a decreased risk of diet-related diseases, including obesity and type 2 diabetes.

FEELING OF FULLNESS AND WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

- Consuming PBW RS1-based chapatis provides a greater feeling of fullness compared to regular wheat chapatis.
- This increased satiety can contribute to weight management and portion control.

NUTRITIONAL CONTENT

- PBW RS1 has a comparable total starch content to other wheat varieties, ranging from 66-70 percent.
- However, its significant advantage lies in its **higher resistant starch content of 30.3 percent**, compared to 7.5-10 percent in other varieties.
- The **non-resistant starch content in PBW RS1 is also lower**, at 37.1 percent compared to 56-62 percent in other varieties.
- Additionally, **PBW RS1 contains 56.63 percent amylose, which is significantly higher** than the 21-22 percent found in other varieties.
- These nutritional properties make PBW RS1 a **healthier choice for individuals concerned about their carbohydrate intake.**

DISEASE RESISTANCE

- Apart from its nutritional attributes, PBW RS1 exhibits resistance to fungal diseases. It is completely resistant to yellow rust and moderately resistant to brown rust.
- This disease resistance can contribute to improved crop yield and reduce the need for chemical treatments.

CHALLENGE OF LOWER PRODUCTIVITY IN CULTIVATING PBW RS1

- The average grain yield of PBW RS1, recorded at PAU's field trials, is 43.18 quintals per hectare.
- This is slightly below the average yield of 48 quintals per hectare in Punjab, which can reach up to 52 quintals or more in certain years..

WHAT IS THE GLYCEMIC INDEX?

- **The glycemic index (GI) is a metric that indicates the speed at which a particular food increases blood sugar levels.**
- Foods with a high GI are swiftly digested and absorbed, leading to a rapid surge in blood sugar.
 - On the other hand, foods with a low GI are processed and absorbed more gradually, resulting in a gradual elevation of blood sugar levels.
- The GI of a food is measured on a scale of 0 to 100, with pure glucose having a GI of 100.
 - Foods with a GI of 55 or less are considered to have a low GI.
 - Foods with a GI of 70 or more are considered to have a high GI.
- The GI of a food can be affected by a number of factors, including the type of carbohydrate, the amount of fibre, and the way the food is cooked.
- People with diabetes or other conditions that affect blood sugar levels may benefit from eating foods with a low GI.

Some examples of foods with a low GI:

- Beans
- Lentils
- Whole grains
- Fruits
- Vegetables

Some examples of foods with a high GI:

- White bread
- White rice
- Potatoes
- Pasta
- Soda

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the development of PBW RS1 by the Punjab Agricultural University represents a significant breakthrough in wheat breeding. Its high amylose starch and resistant starch content offer various health benefits, including stable blood sugar levels and increased satiety. Although PBW RS1 presents challenges in terms of productivity, efforts are being made to promote its cultivation and position it as a special quality wheat variety. The availability of PBW RS1 seeds to farmers and its potential impact on improving nutritional security are eagerly awaited.

Sources:

Punjab Agricultural University develops new wheat variety to keep blood sugar, obesity in check – The Indian Express

Q1. With reference the New Wheat Variety PBW RS1 recently seen in news, consider the following statements:

1. The Wheat Variety PBW RS1 is developed by the Indian Council of Agriculture Research along with Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth.
2. It boasts low glyceemic index along with reduced starch content.
3. This is particularly helpful for individuals concerned about their protein intake.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b)

Q2. Consider the following statements with reference to the Glycemic Index?

1. The Glycemic Index is a measure of how much insulin is released in response to eating a food.
2. Diabetic persons or people with other conditions that affect blood sugar levels may benefit from eating low GI foods.
3. Potatoes, Pasta, Bread are examples of high GI foods.

How many of the abovementioned statement/s is/are correct ?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) None

Answer: (b)

Q3. Discuss the role of biotechnology in ensuring food security in India, highlighting its potential benefits, challenges, and ethical considerations along with examples.

GRAMODYOG VIKAS YOJANA (GVY)

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Gramodyog Vikas Yojana (GVY)”. The topic “Gramodyog Vikas Yojana (GVY)” has relevance in the Rural Development section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

About Gramodyog Vikas Yojana (GVY)?

FOR MAINS:

GS 3: Rural Development

Components of GVV?

Significance of Village Industries in the Indian Economy?

Challenges for Village Industries in the Indian Economy?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena, distributed Honey Bee-Boxes and Toolkits to beneficiaries. The program was organized under the 'Gramodyog Vikas Yojna' of Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, State Office Delhi, Government of India.

ABOUT GRAMODYOG VIKAS YOJANA (GVY):

Gramodyog Vikas Yojana (GVY) is a component of the Khadi Gramodyog Vikas Yojana, which is a Central Sector Scheme launched in March 2020. GVY aims to promote and develop village industries through various means, including common facilities, technological modernization, and training. It is implemented by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) under the Ministry of MSMEs.

OBJECTIVES OF GVY:

- Promote and develop village industries through common facilities and technological modernization.
- Provide training and capacity building to artisans and staff.
- Support research and development for product innovation.
- Enhance marketing and publicity of village industry products.

INCLUDED ACTIVITIES:

- GVY covers various industries under its ambit, including:
- Agro-Based & Food Processing Industry (ABFPI)
- Mineral-Based Industry (MBI)
- Wellness & Cosmetics Industry (WCI)
- Handmade Paper, Leather & Plastic Industry (HPLPI)
- Rural Engineering & New Technology Industry (RENTI)
- Service Industry

COMPONENTS OF GVY:

- R&D and Product Innovation: Support for research and development activities, product diversification, and design development.
- Capacity Building: Training and skill development of staff and artisans through Master Development Training Centers (MDTCs) and institutions of excellence.
- Marketing & Publicity: Assistance in marketing village industry products through the preparation of catalogs, industry directories, market research, and organizing exhibitions and buyer-seller meetings.

SIGNIFICANCE OF VILLAGE INDUSTRIES IN THE INDIAN ECONOMY:

- **Employment Generation:** Village industries are labor-intensive and provide employment opportunities, reducing unemployment and underemployment in rural areas.
- **Rural Development:** Village industries contribute to the overall development of rural areas by creating local economic activities, reducing migration, and preventing population concentration in urban areas.
- **Poverty Alleviation:** These industries generate income for rural communities, providing livelihood options and empowering individuals to improve their socio-economic conditions.
- **Utilization of Local Resources:** Village industries utilize local resources and raw materials,

promoting sustainable development and preserving local heritage and culture.

- **Export Potential:** Many village industries produce traditional crafts and products with high demand in domestic and international markets, contributing to foreign exchange earnings and global trade competitiveness

CHALLENGES:

- **Lack of Infrastructure:** Many rural areas lack adequate infrastructure, including transportation, power supply, and access to markets. Insufficient infrastructure hinders the growth and competitiveness of village industries.
- **Limited Access to Finance:** Limited access to credit and financial resources restricts their ability to invest in modern technology, machinery, and raw materials.
- **Skill Gap:** Limited access to training and skill development opportunities hampers the growth of these industries.
- **Marketing and Market Linkages:** They face difficulties in reaching domestic and international markets, understanding market trends, and competing with larger-scale industries.
- **Technological Upgradation:** The lack of awareness, limited resources, and technical expertise hinder the adoption of modern technologies.

OTHER INITIATIVES FOR VILLAGE INDUSTRIES DEVELOPMENT:

- Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana
- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana
- National Rural Livelihood Mission

SOURCE:

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1937485>

Q.1 Which of the following is a component of the Khadi Gramodyog Vikas Yojana?

- (a) Rural Engineering & New Technology Industry (RENTI)
- (b) National Rural Livelihood Mission
- (c) Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana
- (d) Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana

Answer: (a)

Q.2 Which ministry is responsible for the implementation of the Gramodyog Vikas Yojana (GVY) to promote and develop village industries?

- (a) Ministry of Rural Development
- (b) Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare
- (c) Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
- (d) Ministry of Commerce and Industry

Answer: (c)

Q.3 Discuss the significance of village industries in the socio-economic development of rural areas in India. Examine their role in employment generation, poverty alleviation, and sustainable utilization of local resources.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE TECHNOLOGIES

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Electric Vehicle Technologies”. The topic “Electric Vehicle Technologies” has relevance in the “Science and Technology” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is EV? What are different EV Technologies?

FOR MAINS:

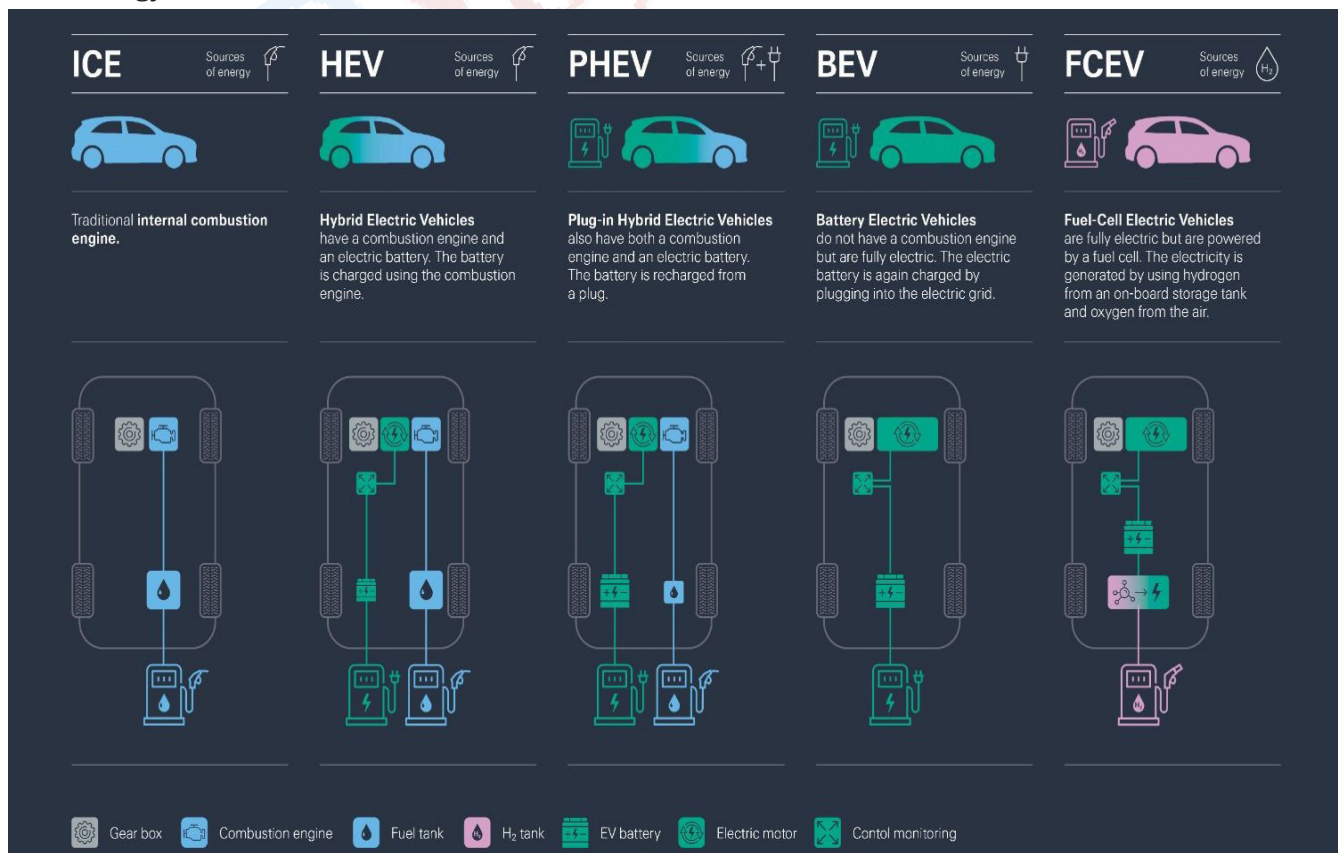
GS3: Science and Technology- Indigenization and developing new technology

WHY IN THE NEWS?

As central and state governments chart the path to a net zero emissions future, the Electric Vehicle Push has been at the heart of the strategy.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE:

- An electric vehicle (EV) is a type of vehicle that uses electricity as its primary source of power instead of relying on internal combustion engines that run on fossil fuels. EVs are propelled by electric motors, which are powered by rechargeable batteries.
- By eliminating the need for gasoline or diesel, electric vehicles offer a cleaner and more sustainable mode of transportation, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and dependence on non-renewable energy sources.



BATTERY ELECTRIC VEHICLES (BEV):

A battery electric vehicle (BEV) is a type of electric vehicle (EV) that is powered solely by a battery pack. BEVs do not have a gasoline engine or any other form of internal combustion engine. Instead, they use the energy stored in the battery pack to power an electric motor, which turns the wheels.

ADVANTAGES OF BATTERY ELECTRIC VEHICLES:

- **Zero tailpipe emissions:** BEVs produce zero tailpipe emissions, which can help to improve air quality.
- **Reduced noise pollution:** BEVs are much quieter than gasoline-powered vehicles, which can make them more pleasant to drive and live near.
- **Lower operating costs:** The cost of electricity is typically much lower than the cost of gasoline, which can save BEV owners money on fuel costs.
- **Increased efficiency:** BEVs are more efficient than gasoline-powered vehicles, which means they can travel further on a single charge.

ISSUES WITH BATTERY ELECTRIC VEHICLES:

- **Charging time:** It can take several hours to fully charge a BEV, which can be inconvenient if one needs to charge the car quickly.
- **Cost:** BEVs are still more expensive than gasoline-powered vehicles. However, the cost of BEVs is expected to come down as the technology improves.
- **Charging infrastructure:** The availability of public charging stations is still limited in some areas. This can be a problem for people who do not have access to a home charger.
- **Environmental impact of battery production:** The production of BEV batteries requires the mining of raw materials, such as lithium and cobalt, which can have environmental impacts.
- **Disposal of battery waste:** BEV batteries contain hazardous materials, so they must be disposed of properly.

INDIA'S ELECTRIC MOBILITY PLAN:

- **India's electric mobility plan is primarily focused on battery electric vehicles (BEVs) replacing internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles, with lithium-ion being the most viable battery option for the time being.**
- The main government subsidy for EVs in India is the **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME) India scheme**.
 - The FAME India scheme provides **subsidies for the purchase of electric vehicles, as well as for the installation of charging infrastructure.**
- In addition to the FAME India scheme, some states in India also offer their own subsidies for EVs.

ISSUES WITH BEV PUSH:

- **Upfront subsidy:**
 - State subsidies are crucial for promoting electric vehicle adoption, as seen in markets like Norway, the US, and China.
 - These subsidies include tax breaks, access to bus lanes, toll road exemptions, and free parking with charging facilities.
 - However, there is a concern that **these subsidies primarily benefit the middle and upper middle classes and not the economically weaker sections.**

- **Charging network:**
 - Investing in charging infrastructure has proven to be more effective in driving electric vehicle adoption than upfront purchase subsidies.
 - Countries like Norway and China have seen rapid adoption by expanding public charging infrastructure.
 - The number of electric vehicles (EVs) in India is increasing, but there is a shortage of public charging stations.
 - This is especially concerning given the dominance of two- and three-wheelers in the market, with **only about 2,000 public charging stations currently operational across the country.**
- **Electricity source:**
 - In countries with successful EV adoption, a significant portion of electricity comes from renewable sources.
 - However, **in India, the grid is largely powered by coal-fired thermal plants**, raising concerns about the environmental impact of EVs. While EVs can reduce tailpipe emissions, the pollution from thermal plants remains.
- **Value chain:**
 - India faces challenges in diversifying its dependency on lithium-ion batteries for EVs.
 - The demand for such batteries is projected to increase, but **over 90% of global lithium production is concentrated in a few countries-** such as Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, China, Australia
 - This makes **India heavily reliant on imports, which may limit its control over the supply chain and raise concerns about resource availability and viability.**

NEW TECHNOLOGIES:

Hybrids

- A hybrid vehicle is a type of vehicle that uses two or more distinct types of power, such as an electric motor and an internal combustion engine.
- Hybrids offer improved fuel efficiency through the electrification of the powertrain.
- They do not require a charging infrastructure base like battery electric vehicles (BEVs).
- Hybrid vehicles facilitate the manufacture of the battery ecosystem, which can be leveraged for a BEV push.
- Hybrid vehicles still rely on Li-ion batteries, which pose environmental concerns.

PHEV

- A plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) is a type of hybrid vehicle that has a battery that can be plugged into an external power source to charge.
- The battery can power the vehicle for a limited distance, after which the gasoline engine kicks in.
- PHEVs offer the best of both worlds, as they can provide the benefits of an electric vehicle for short trips, while also having the range of a gasoline-powered vehicle for longer trips.

Ethanol & Flex Fuel

- Flex fuel vehicles have internal combustion engines that can run on multiple types of fuel, such as petrol and ethanol.
- A nationwide pilot is underway to deploy this technology in other markets like Brazil, Canada, and the US.

FCEVs

- A fuel cell electric vehicle (FCEV) is a type of electric vehicle that uses a hydrogen fuel cell to generate electricity. The fuel cell combines hydrogen and oxygen to produce electricity, which powers an electric motor.

- FCEVs are practically zero-emission vehicles.
- The lack of fueling station infrastructure has hindered their widespread adoption.
- FCEVs require dedicated hydrogen refuelling stations, which differ from conventional gasoline stations.
- Safety concerns arise due to the pressurised and cryogenically stored hydrogen, which is then used to generate electricity through an electro-chemical reaction.

HYDROGEN INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINE VEHICLES (HYDROGEN ICE):

- Hydrogen ICE vehicles resemble conventional internal combustion engine vehicles with modifications to run on hydrogen.
- Certain engine components, such as the fuel delivery system and spark plugs, are modified to enable compatibility with hydrogen.
- Hydrogen ICE vehicles are not zero-emission like FCEVs.

SYNTHETIC FUELS SUCH AS PORSCHE'S eFUELS:

- Porsche is developing synthetic fuels that can make internal combustion engines as clean as electric vehicles.
- eFuels are produced from carbon dioxide and hydrogen using renewable energy.
- Porsche's eFuels are currently being tested in Chile.
- The goal is to make eFuels usable in all petrol-engine cars, making their use virtually CO₂-neutral.
- Synthetic fuel will be used in Formula One starting from 2026.

CONCLUSION

India's push towards electric vehicles is a crucial step in achieving a net-zero emissions future. While there are challenges such as upfront subsidies, charging infrastructure, electricity sources, and diversifying the value chain, exploring alternative technologies like hybrids, flex fuels, FCEVs, and synthetic fuels can complement the transition to electric mobility and address specific concerns.

A comprehensive strategy that addresses these challenges will be essential for India's successful transition to a sustainable and cleaner transportation system.

Sources:

[The problem with battery electric vehicles | Explained News, The Indian Express](#)

Q1. With reference to Electric Vehicle (EV) Technology, consider the following statements:

1. Increased efficiency
2. Higher Capital costs
3. Reduce Noise Pollution
4. Reduced maintenance costs

Which of the statements given above is/are advantages of EVs?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (c)

Q2. Consider the following statements in context of Electric Vehicle (EV) Technology,

1. Fuel cell electric vehicle (FCEV) uses can run on multiple types of fuel, such as petrol and ethanol

along with Battery pack.

2. Hydrogen internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles are similar to conventional ICE vehicles, modified to run on hydrogen instead of gasoline or diesel.
3. Hybrid vehicles typically do not need a charging infrastructure like battery electric vehicles (BEVs).

How many of the statements stated above are correct ?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) None

Answer: (a)

Q3. Discuss the challenges and prospects of India's electric vehicle push in achieving a net-zero emissions future.

E20 AND GLOBAL BIOFUEL ALLIANCE

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "E20 and Global Biofuel Alliance". The topic "E20 and Global Biofuel Alliance" has relevance in the "Science and Technology and Environment" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is E20? What is the Global Biofuel Alliance?

FOR MAINS:

GS3: Development of new technology and Environmental Pollution

WHY IN THE NEWS?

During an industry event, the Petroleum Minister announced that E20 petrol, which contains 20 percent ethanol, is currently accessible at 1,350 fuel retail outlets. Furthermore, he stated that the availability of E20 petrol will expand nationwide by 2025.

WHAT IS E20?

- **E20 is a fuel blend of 20% ethanol + 80% gasoline.** It is a cleaner-burning fuel than gasoline, and it can help to reduce emissions of pollutants such as carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, and nitrogen oxides.
- **Ethanol**, a dehydrated form of ethyl alcohol (C₂H₅OH), can be derived from high-starch crops such as sugarcane, maize, and wheat. In India, the primary source of ethanol production is sugarcane molasses through fermentation.
- Blending ethanol with gasoline yields various fuel mixtures. **Due to the oxygen content in ethanol molecules, they facilitate more thorough combustion of the fuel in engines, leading to reduced emissions and a decrease in environmental pollution.**
- Furthermore, since ethanol is derived from plants that utilise solar energy, it is recognized as a renewable fuel.

- Ethanol and ethanol-gasoline blends offer cleaner burning characteristics and boast higher octane levels compared to non-ethanol gasoline.

ETHANOL BLENDED PETROL (EBP)

- The Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) program was initiated in January 2003 with the **aim of encouraging the adoption of eco-friendly and alternative fuels while reducing the reliance on imports for energy needs.**
- The objective of the Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP) is **to promote the blending of Ethanol with motor spirit**, aiming to reduce pollution, save foreign exchange, and enhance the value generated within the sugar industry.
- This initiative empowers the industry to address outstanding cane price payments to farmers while simultaneously benefiting the environment and the economy.

BENEFITS OF ETHANOL BLENDING

- **Saving Rs 30,000 crore of foreign exchange per year:** By blending 20% ethanol with petrol, the country can reduce imports, saving a significant amount of foreign currency.
- **Energy security:** Ethanol blending promotes reliance on domestic renewable resources, reducing dependence on fossil fuels.
- **Lower carbon emissions:** Ethanol's cleaner combustion leads to reduced greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to mitigating climate change.
- **Better air quality:** Ethanol blending results in fewer pollutants, leading to improved air quality and reduced health risks.
- **Self-reliance:** Increased ethanol production enhances the country's independence in meeting its fuel demands.
- **Use of damaged foodgrains:** Ethanol production can utilize damaged or surplus foodgrains, reducing waste and supporting food security.
- **Increasing farmers' incomes:** Ethanol production provides an additional market for farmers' crops, enhancing their income and livelihoods.
- **Employment generation:** Expanding the ethanol sector creates job opportunities in agriculture, manufacturing, and related industries.
- **Greater investment opportunities:** Ethanol blending encourages investments in ethanol production, fostering economic growth and development.

CHALLENGES TO ETHANOL BLENDING:

- **Availability of sufficient feedstock** on a sustainable basis viz., sugarcane, food grains
- **Inter-state movement of ethanol**
- **Weather related issues affecting the crop**
- **Prices of feed-stock and ethanol**
- **Need for additional storage tanks** for ethanol at marketing terminals / depots
- **Need for ethanol compliant dispensing units**
- **Handhold vendors to develop ethanol compatible parts**
- **Optimization of engine for higher ethanol blends**
- **Conduct of durability studies on engines and field trials before introducing E20 compliant vehicles**

Timeline

Year	Event
January 2003	5% Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme launched in 9 states and 4 Union Territories.
November 2006	Sale of 5% Ethanol Blended Petrol begins in additional 10 states.
April 2019	The EBP Program extended to all of India except Andaman Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands, with OMCs selling petrol blended with ethanol up to 10% .
By 2022	Government target of 10% blending of ethanol with petrol.
By 2025 (Earlier 2030)	Government target of 20% blending of ethanol with petrol.

WHAT IS THE GLOBAL BIOFUEL ALLIANCE?

The Global Biofuel Alliance is an initiative by **India, Brazil, and the United States**, as **leading biofuel producers and consumers**, to work together towards the development of a Global Biofuels Alliance along with other interested countries.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

- The primary focus is to promote collaboration and enhance the adoption of sustainable biofuels, particularly in the transportation sector.
- This includes placing importance on bolstering markets, facilitating international trade of biofuels, sharing concrete policy lessons, and providing technical assistance for biofuels programs at a global scale.
- Furthermore, there is an emphasis on highlighting the best practices and successful instances that have already been implemented.

The Alliance will cooperate with the Clean Energy Ministerial Biofuture Platform, the Mission Innovation Bioenergy initiatives, and the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP).

The Global Biofuel Alliance is **one of the key initiatives under India's G20 Presidency**. It was **announced by the Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas during India Energy Week 2023**.

India Energy Week 2023 was held from February 27 to March 1, 2023 at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi, India.

Source:

E20 petrol already available at 1,350 fuel outlets, on track for pan-India rollout by 2025: Puri | Business News, The Indian Express
Global Biofuel Alliance: One of the priorities under India's G20 Presidency (pib.gov.in)

Q1. With reference to Ethanol, consider the following statements:

1. Ethanol can be derived from crops such as sugarcane, maize, and wheat.
2. Blending of ethanol in the gasoline leads to reduced emissions due to cleaner combustion.
3. Ethanol blended petrol has lower octane number than non-blended petrol.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b)

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Increasing farmers' incomes
 2. Highly enhanced engine performance
 3. Lower carbon emissions
 4. Use of damaged foodgrains
- How many of the above-mentioned statements are benefits of ethanol blending?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Answer: (d)

Q3. Discuss the significance and challenges of the ethanol blending program in India.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX – CPI

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Consumer Price Index”. The topic “Consumer Price Index” has relevance in the “Indian Economy” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is CPI? What is its basket? What are different versions?

FOR MAINS:

GS3: Indian Economy and Issues related to it

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Recent reports show that Retail Inflation denoted by Consumer Price Index has risen to a three-month high of 4.81 per cent.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

A consumer price index (CPI) measures changes in the prices of a basket of consumer goods and services purchased by households. It measures changes in the price level for the specified consumers in the particular region.

There are different versions of CPI in India such as-

CPI	Base Year	Publishing Agency
CPI (Combined)	2012	Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)
CPI (Rural)	2012	Central Statistics Office, MoSPI
CPI (Urban)	2012	Central Statistics Office, MoSPI
CPI (AL/RL) (Agricultural Labour /Rural Labour)	2012	Labour Bureau
CPI (UNME) (Urban Non-Manual Employees)	2004-05	Central Statistics Office, MoSPI
CPI (IW) (Industrial Workers)	2001	Labour Bureau

ALL-INDIA COMBINED CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (CPI-COMBINED)

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) uses the All-India Combined Consumer Price Index (AICPI) as its primary measure of consumer price changes.
- The index is now being calculated with a base year of 2012 = 100, and several improvements have been made in accordance with international standards.
- The basket of items and weighting diagrams for the revised series were created using the Modified Mixed Reference Period (MMRP) data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES) of the 68th Round of the National Sample Survey (NSS) in 2011-12.

The weights in CPI-C are as follows:

Major Groups	Weight (%)
Food and beverages	45.86
Misc. group	28.32
Housing	10.07
Fuel & light	6.84
Clothing & footwear	6.53
Pan, tobacco and intoxicants	2.38
General	100.00

CORE INFLATION

- Core inflation is a measure of inflation that excludes the prices of food and energy.
- It is calculated by subtracting the prices of food and energy from the overall inflation rate. This is done to get a better understanding of the underlying trend in inflation, as the prices of food and energy can be volatile.
- While in CPI-C, major fuel items such as 'petrol for vehicle' and 'diesel for vehicle', which have relatively large weights, are not included in 'fuel and light'. These fuel items are classified under "transport and communication", a subcategory of the "miscellaneous" group.

Core Inflation = Overall Inflation – (Weight of Food and Beverages + Weight of Fuel and Light)

REFINED CORE INFLATION

- The Economic Survey 2021-22 constructed a “refined” core inflation rate by excluding main fuel items such as petrol, diesel, and lubricants and other fuels for vehicles, as well as food and beverages and fuel and light, from the headline retail inflation rate.
Refined Core Inflation = Overall Inflation – (Weight of Food and Beverages + Weight of Fuel and Light + Weight of Transport Fuel Items)

NEED FOR CHANGES IN CPI BASKET:

Reflecting evolving consumption patterns:

- As societies progress and economic conditions evolve, people’s consumption patterns shift. New products and services emerge, and the relative importance of different expenditure categories changes.

Improving accuracy:

- The CPI is used as a measure of inflation, which has significant implications for economic policy and decision-making.
- To make informed policy decisions, it is crucial to have an accurate measure of inflation that aligns with the current consumption patterns.

Addressing changing relative prices:

- The relative prices of goods and services can fluctuate over time. Some items may become relatively more expensive, while others may become relatively cheaper.
- If the CPI basket does not account for these changes in relative prices, it may not accurately reflect the cost of living for consumers.

Accounting for technological advancements:

- Technological advancements introduce new products and services into the market, which can significantly impact consumer behavior and spending patterns.
- For example, the rise of digital services, internet usage, and other technology-related expenses may not be adequately captured in the current CPI basket.

Addressing biases and flaws:

- The current CPI basket may have biases or flaws that need to be addressed. For example, the weightage assigned to certain items may be disproportionate or not reflective of their actual importance in household budgets.

Ultimately, an accurate and up-to-date CPI basket is essential for policymakers, economists, and society as a whole to have a clear understanding of inflation, consumer spending patterns, and the economic well-being of the population. Only through adapting and evolving the CPI can we accurately measure the true cost of living and make informed decisions that align with the dynamics of the modern economy.

Sources:

[How the CPI basket conceals the inflation picture – The Hindu](#)

Q1. With reference Consumer Price Index (CPI), consider the following statements:

1. Food and beverages has the highest weight in the CPI Basket while Fuel & light has the lowest

weight.

2. The Labour Bureau of India publishes the CPI for Urban Non- Manual Employees.
3. Core inflation is a measure of inflation that excludes volatile prices of food and energy.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (c)

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Refined core inflation is a measure of inflation that excludes the prices of volatile items like fuel and light, but includes food and beverages.
2. The Reserve Bank of India uses the Combined Consumer Price Index as its main indicator of consumer price changes.
3. CPI (IW) is used for calculating dearness allowance for Central Government Employees.

How many of the abovementioned statement/s is/are correct ?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) None

Answer: (b)

Q3. Explain the need for a revised CPI basket, challenges faced, and implications for accurate inflation measurement.

EXPORT PREPAREDNESS INDEX (EPI)

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Export Preparedness Index”. The topic “Export Preparedness Index” has relevance in the Economy section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

About Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2022?

FOR MAINS:

GS 3: Economy

Key Learnings from EPI?

Recommendations?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Tamil Nadu has been ranked the No. 1 State in Export Preparedness Index (EPI) for 2022. It is followed by Maharashtra and Karnataka. Gujarat has been pushed to the fourth slot this time. Tamil Nadu has been in the top 5 list among Large/Coastal States’ categories in the past two years.

EXPORT PREPAREDNESS INDEX (EPI) 2022

- The Export Preparedness Index (EPI), released by NITI Aayog, is a comprehensive tool that measures the export preparedness of Indian states and Union Territories (UTs).
- It analyzes export-related parameters to identify the strengths and weaknesses of different regions to stimulate economic growth and development through exports.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF EPI 2022:

Performance of States:

- Tamil Nadu secured the top spot in EPI 2022, followed by Maharashtra and Karnataka.
- Gujarat, which held the top position in EPI 2021, slipped to the fourth slot in EPI 2022.
- Tamil Nadu's strong export performance indicators contributed to its leadership, especially in automotive, leather, textiles, and electronic goods sectors.

Hilly/Himalayan States:

Uttarakhand topped among hilly/Himalayan states, followed by Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, and others.

Landlocked Regions:

Haryana emerged as the top performer among landlocked regions, showcasing its preparedness for exports.

Union Territories/Small States:

Goa ranked first among Union Territories and small states, with Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Ladakh following.

GLOBAL ECONOMY:

- Global trade in 2021 showed signs of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, driven by increased demand for goods, fiscal policies, vaccine distribution, and eased restrictions.
- The Russo-Ukrainian war in February 2022 impacted sectors like grain, oil, and natural gas, temporarily slowing down recovery.

INDIA'S EXPORT TRENDS:

- Despite global slowdown, India's exports in 2021-22 crossed an unprecedented USD 675 billion, with goods accounting for USD 420 billion.
- The increase in commodity prices and demand from developed countries boosted India's merchandise exports.

KEY LEARNINGS FROM EPI:

- **Coastal States Dominance:** Coastal states performed the best across all indicators, with Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Gujarat leading the pack.

- **Policy Ecosystem:** States have shown positive progress in adopting necessary policy measures to drive exports.
- **Transport Connectivity:** The absence of air connectivity affects goods movement, particularly in landlocked or geographically disadvantaged states.
- **Research and Development:** R&D investments are crucial for driving product innovation, quality improvement, and efficiency enhancement in exports.
- **Leveraging Geographical Indication (GI) Products:** States should promote and improve the manufacturing and quality of unique GI products to establish a presence in the global market.
- **Export Market Diversification:** States should identify high-growth sectors and focus on information technology, pharmaceuticals, automotive, textiles, and renewable energy.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Adoption of Good Practices:** States should learn from successful peers and adopt relevant practices to improve export performance.
- **Investment in Research and Development (R&D):** States should invest in R&D for product innovation and market-specific creation to boost exports.
- **Leveraging Geographical Indication (GI) Products:** States should capitalize on their unique GI products and enhance their manufacturing and quality for improved exports.
- **Export Market Diversification:** Identifying and promoting high-growth sectors can enhance India's export potential.

CONCLUSION:

The Export Preparedness Index serves as a vital tool to identify strengths and weaknesses, empowering states and UTs to enhance their export potential and contribute to India's economic growth and development. The recommended strategies can further support states in their export endeavors, contributing to India's global competitiveness.

SOURCE:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/tamil-nadu-tops-niti-aayog-export-preparedness-index-2022-gujarat-skids-to-4th-slot/article67091437.ece>

Q.1 What is the Export Preparedness Index (EPI)?

- (a) A comprehensive tool to measure the export performance of countries globally.
- (b) An index that evaluates the export readiness of Indian states and Union Territories.
- (c) A report published by the World Trade Organization (WTO) on global trade trends.
- (d) A measure of a country's trade balance and current account surplus.

Answer: (b)

Q.2 Which state topped the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2022?

- (a) Maharashtra
- (b) Gujarat
- (c) Tamil Nadu
- (d) Karnataka

Answer: (c)

Q.3 Discuss the key findings and recommendations of the Export Preparedness Index (EPI)

2022 in enhancing India's export potential. How can states leverage their strengths and address the identified weaknesses to drive economic growth through exports?

DTP IMMUNIZATION

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "DTP3 Immunization". The topic "DTP3 Immunization" has relevance in the "Science and Technology" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is DTP Vaccine? What diseases does it protect from?

FOR MAINS:

GS3: Science and Technology

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The WHO and UNICEF estimates for national immunisation coverage for 2022, were recently released showcasing India's record coverage of 93% in DTP3 Immunization.

WHAT IS DTP VACCINE?

The DPT vaccine is a trivalent combination of immunizations safeguarding against three distinct diseases: diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (whooping cough).

Diphtheria:

- Diphtheria is an infectious disease resulting from the bacterium *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*. Transmission typically occurs through direct person-to-person contact, respiratory droplets, or exposure to contaminated surfaces.
- The toxin produced by the bacterium can damage the heart, nerves, and other organs, making diphtheria potentially fatal, especially in young children.
- Diphtheria vaccine is available in various formulations and is effective for prevention.

Tetanus (lockjaw):

- Tetanus is an infection caused by the bacterium *Clostridium tetani* that lives in soil and dust.
- When these bacteria enter the body, they produce a toxin that leads to painful muscle contractions. It can also cause muscle spasms in the chest, back, and abdomen, making it difficult to breathe. .

Pertussis:

- Pertussis, commonly referred to as whooping cough, is a respiratory tract infection resulting from the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*. It manifests with a persistent and severe cough lasting for several weeks.
- Pertussis can be particularly dangerous for infants and young children, who may develop pneumonia or other complications as a result of the infection.

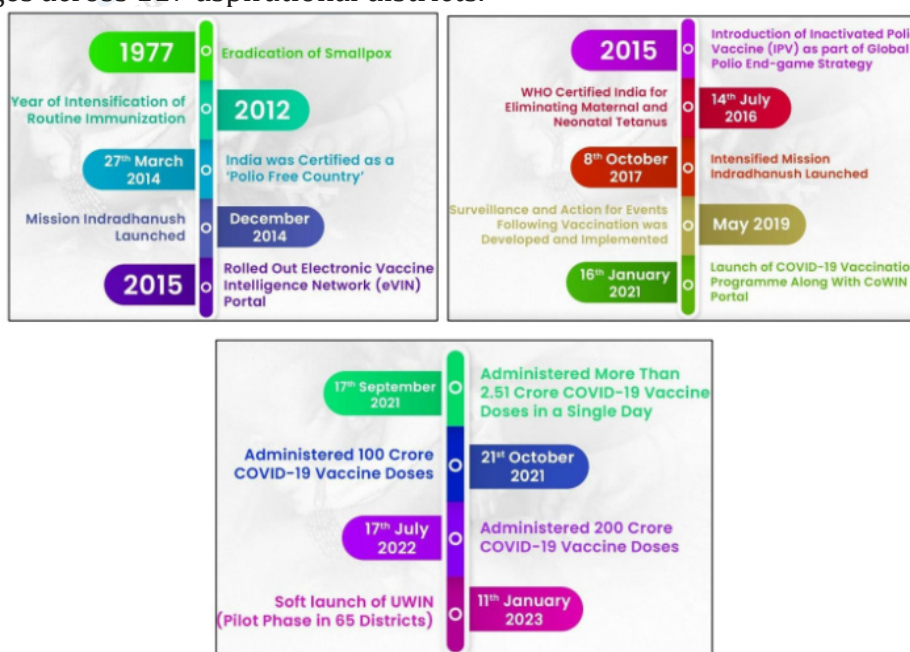
DPT is one of the 12 vaccine-preventable diseases that are covered by India's Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP), which provides free vaccinations.

INDIA'S UNIVERSAL IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM:

- India's Universal Immunization Programme stands as the largest in the world, catering to approximately 26.5 million infants and 29 million pregnant women each year.
- At the national level, it provides immunisation against 9 diseases,
 1. Diphtheria,
 2. Pertussis,
 3. Tetanus,
 4. Polio,
 5. Measles,
 6. Rubella,
 7. severe forms of Childhood Tuberculosis,
 8. Hepatitis B,
 9. Meningitis & Pneumonia caused by Haemophilus Influenzae type B.
- On a sub-national scale, the program also addresses 3 diseases:
 1. Rotavirus diarrhoea,
 2. Pneumococcal Pneumonia, and
 3. Japanese Encephalitis.
- Among these, the Rotavirus vaccine and Pneumococcal Conjugate vaccine are currently undergoing expansion efforts, whereas the JE vaccine is solely provided in districts endemic to the disease.

MISSION INDRADHANUSH:

- In December 2014, Mission Indradhanush (MI) was initiated with the goal of achieving a 90% full immunisation coverage for children.
- The primary focus of this initiative is on areas with low immunisation rates and in hard-to-reach regions where the number of unvaccinated and partially vaccinated children is highest.
- Throughout its implementation, Mission Indradhanush has successfully completed six phases, effectively covering 554 districts nationwide.
- Additionally, it has been recognized as a prominent program under both Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, encompassing 16,850 villages across 541 districts, and Extended Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, reaching 48,929 villages across 117 aspirational districts.



INTENSIFIED MISSION INDRADHANUSH:

Version	Time	Objective
IMI 1.0	October 2017 – January 2018	To achieve 90% full immunisation coverage with focus on districts and urban areas with persistently low levels.
IMI 2.0	December 2019 – March 2020	To ensure the vaccination of all available vaccines reaches those who have not been reached yet and to expedite coverage among children and pregnant women in the designated districts and blocks.
IMI 3.0	February 2021 – March 2021	To focus on the children and pregnant women who have missed their vaccine doses during the COVID-19 pandemic.
IMI 4.0	February 2022 – May 2022	To catch up on gaps that might have emerged due to the pandemic and cover 416 districts across 33 states/UTs in the country.

BENEFITS TO IMMUNISATION:

- **Preventing disease:** Vaccines can prevent people from getting sick. This is especially important for children, who are more vulnerable to certain diseases.
- **Reducing the severity of disease.** Even if someone does get sick after being vaccinated, the disease is often less severe than it would be if they were not vaccinated.
- **Community Protection:** When a large number of people are vaccinated, it creates what is known as herd immunity. This implies that individuals who have not received vaccination are also at a reduced risk of falling ill, as the disease finds it more challenging to spread.

Sources:

India recorded all-time high of 93% DPT3 immunisation coverage in 2022: WHO – The Hindu

Q1. With reference to DTP Vaccine, consider the following statements:

1. DTP vaccine is a combination of three vaccines that helps to protect against Diphtheria, Tetanus and Polio.
2. Diphtheria is an infection caused by the bacteria while Polio is caused by a virus.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 and 2

Answer: (b)

Q2. Consider the following:

1. Polio
2. Measles- Rubella
3. Childhood Tuberculosis
4. Hepatitis C
5. Covid-19
6. Pneumonia

How many of the above mentioned diseases are part of India's Immunization Program ?

- (a) Only three
- (b) Only four
- (c) Only five
- (d) All six

Answer: (b)

Q3. Discuss the achievements, challenges, and future strategies of India's immunization program in the context of ensuring universal and equitable vaccine coverage for its diverse population.

GM CROPS

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "GM Crops". The topic "GM Crops" has relevance in the "Science and Technology" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What are GM Crops? Their Legal Status

FOR MAINS:

GS3: Science and Technology- Biotechnology

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Activists recently petitioned the Supreme Court to ban GM food crops, specifically Dhara Mustard Hybrid-11 (DMH-11), due to a number of concerns.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED (GM) CROPS

- According to WHO, Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) are organisms (plants, animals, or microorganisms) whose genetic material (DNA) has been altered in a way that does not occur naturally through mating or natural recombination.
- This technology is known as "modern biotechnology," "gene technology," "recombinant DNA technology," or "genetic engineering."
- It enables the transfer of selected genes between organisms, even from unrelated species.
- Genetic engineering aims to cross the genus barrier by introducing an alien gene into seeds to achieve specific outcomes.
- The alien gene could come from a plant, an animal, or even a soil bacterium.
- Foods produced from or using GM organisms are commonly referred to as GM foods. GM variants of maize, canola, and soybean are widely available worldwide.

GM CROPS IN INDIA

Bt Cotton

- Bt cotton is a genetically modified crop that contains two genes from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt). These genes produce a protein that is toxic to the common insect pink bollworm.
- The only GM crop that is allowed in India is Bt cotton .

HTBt cotton

- HTBt cotton is a genetically modified (GM) cotton variety that is resistant to the herbicide glyphosate. This means that farmers can use glyphosate to kill weeds without harming the cotton plants.
- HTBt cotton has been shown to increase yields and reduce pesticide use.
- But, there are concerns about the environmental impact of HTBt cotton, and it is not yet approved for commercial cultivation in India.
- However, there is some illegal cultivation of HTBt cotton in India.

Bt Brinjal

- The Bt brinjal plant has a gene that allows it to resist fruit and shoot borer infestations.
- The government has previously delayed the commercialization of genetically modified (GM) mustard due to strong opposition from NGOs and anti-GM campaigners.

GM Mustard

- The Delhi University Center for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants created DMH (Dhara Mustard Hybrid)-11, a genetically modified mustard variety.
- To develop a GM crop, biotechnologists insert specific genes at a random location in the DNA of a plant.
- The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) approved the environmental release of Mustard DMH-11.
- Mustard is India's top crop for edible oil production.

ADVANTAGES OF GM CROPS

- It increases crop yields and farmer profits.
- It reduces the use of pesticides and insecticides, which can help to improve food security.
- It can help to feed a growing population due to its high yields.
- It can increase the productivity of small farms.

DISADVANTAGES OF GM CROPS

- The production of genetically modified (GM) crops poses a high risk of disrupting ecosystems and biodiversity because the "better" traits produced from engineered genes can result in the favoring of one organism over others. This can lead to the extinction of other species and the disruption of the food chain.
- GM crops can increase the cost of farming and make farming more susceptible to marketization, which can lead to unethical profits.
- GM crops can endanger farmers, the environment, and trade.
- The current safety evaluations of GM crops do not capture all of the potential negative consequences of these crops.
- The production of GM crops poses a number of risks that need to be carefully considered before these crops are widely adopted.

ISSUES REGARDING GM MUSTARD

- GM mustard is a genetically modified crop that is resistant to herbicides. Farmers and campaigners argue that spraying hazardous chemicals on this crop will have a negative impact on the health of those who consume it. They also argue that it is not suitable for the agricultural conditions in India and is not environmentally sustainable.
- Some environmentalists, scientists, lawmakers, farmers, consumers, and members of the higher court have questioned the necessity of GM food, as well as its safety and effectiveness.
- The committees associated with GM mustard have highlighted major weaknesses in the regulatory

ry system and have called for utmost caution. The members of the committee have also pointed out the deficiencies in the safety assessment of GM crops.

- The government has not placed the full biosafety dossier of GM mustard in the public domain. The government has also claimed that it should not be considered as a herbicide-tolerant crop.

INDIAN LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS

- The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) in India is the top body that authorizes the commercial release of GM crops.
- In 2002, the GEAC authorized the commercial release of Bt cotton.
- Using an unapproved GM variant can result in a five-year prison sentence and a one-lakh-rupee fine under the Environmental Protection Act of 1989.
- The central government has for the first time exempted certain types of genome-edited crops from the stringent regulations applicable to genetically modified or GM crops, paving the way for further research and development on them.
- On February 8, 2021, FSSAI issued an order setting the permissible limit for genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in imported food crops at 1%.

Mandate of Ministries/Departments	
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily responsible for conservation and protection of environment, ensuring environmental and human health safety before release of GMOs / LMOs. • Nodal agency for implementing Rules, 1989 and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety
Department of Biotechnology (Ministry of Science & Technology)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nodal department for promoting biotechnology programs • Provides scientific support in implementation of biosafety regulations • Provide services in areas of research, infrastructure, generation of human resource
Ministry of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies aimed at agriculture growth. • Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) responsible for monitoring agronomic benefits of GM technology. • Monitoring post-release performance of GM crops.
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies aimed at protecting and monitoring human health. • Food Safety and Standards Authority of India responsible for regulating genetically engineered foods.
Ministry of Commerce and Industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance trade with other countries through export/import policies. • Nodal agency for implementing DGFT notification on GMOs
Central Board of Excise and Customs, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement of regulation pertaining to transboundary movement of GMOs/LMOs at point of entry

WAY FORWARD

To move forward responsibly with GM crops like GM mustard, we need transparent evaluation of health, environmental, and biodiversity impacts. Balancing innovation and safety through dialogue, strict safety assessments, and regulatory adherence is vital for India.

Sources:

[A push for GM mustard disregarding science, the law – The Hindu](#)
 Infographic Credits: The Hindu

Q1. With reference to Genetically Modified (GM) Crops, consider the following statements:

1. Genetically Modified Crops are produced by naturally crossing different plant species to achieve desired traits.
 2. GM Crops involve altering the genetic material of organisms through genetic engineering techniques.
 3. GM crops are known for their ability to increase biodiversity and promote ecological balance.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 2 only
(d) 1 and 3 only

Answer: (c)

Q2. Consider the following:

1. Bt brinjal
2. HtBt Cotton
3. DMH- 11
4. Golden rice

How many of the abovementioned GM crops are permitted for commercial cultivation in India?

- (a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) None

Answer: (d)

Q3. Discuss the implications of genetically modified crops in India, with a specific focus on the recent controversies surrounding Dhara Mustard Hybrid-11 (DMH-11).

LIGHTNING FATALITIES IN INDIA

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Lightning fatalities in India”. The topic “Lightning fatalities in India” has relevance in the Environment section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

*About Atmospheric Lightning ?
Current Scenario of Lightning in India?*

FOR MAINS:

*GS 3: Environment
Causes?
Way Forward?*

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Union government is not in favour of declaring lightning a natural disaster as deaths caused by it can be avoided through education and awareness. India is among the only five countries in the world with an early warning system for lightning and the forecast is available from five days to up to 3 hours. There have been demands by States such as Bihar and West Bengal that deaths due to lightning be covered as a natural disaster. The victims will be entitled to compensation from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) once this is notified. As much as 75% of funds to SDRF are contributed by the Centre.

About Atmospheric Lightning:

Atmospheric lightning, also known simply as lightning, is a natural electrical discharge that occurs between clouds or between a cloud and the Earth's surface. It is a powerful and visible phenomenon that results from the buildup and release of electrical charges within the Earth's atmosphere.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF ATMOSPHERIC LIGHTNING:

- **Formation:** Lightning occurs due to the separation of positive and negative electrical charges within a cloud or between clouds and the ground. The exact mechanism of charge separation is complex and not fully understood, but it involves various processes such as collision, freezing, and convection within the cloud.
- **Electrical Discharge:** When the electrical potential difference between the charged regions becomes large enough, it leads to a rapid flow of electrons, creating a discharge known as lightning. This discharge is characterized by a brilliant flash of light and a rapid expansion of air, which generates the sound we hear as thunder.
- **Types of Lightning:** There are different types of lightning, including cloud-to-ground (CG) lightning, cloud-to-cloud (CC) lightning, intra-cloud (IC) lightning, and cloud-to-air (CA) lightning. CG lightning is the most well-known and dangerous type, as it can directly affect people and objects on the ground.
- **Frequency and Distribution:** Lightning occurs worldwide and is more common in regions with frequent thunderstorms, such as the tropics and subtropics. The geographical distribution of lightning activity varies depending on atmospheric conditions, including humidity, temperature, and atmospheric instability.
- **Dangers of Lightning:** Atmospheric lightning is hazardous due to its high electric voltage and current. It can cause injuries and fatalities if individuals or objects provide a more accessible path for the electrical discharge to flow, such as tall structures, trees, or open fields.



CURRENT SCENARIO OF LIGHTNING IN INDIA:

Lightning Fatalities:

- In 2021, lightning accounted for 2,880 deaths, comprising 40% of all accidental deaths caused by “forces of nature,” according to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data.
- There has been an increase in lightning-related fatalities compared to other natural events.

Geographical Distribution:

- Lightning frequency is highest in northeastern states and West Bengal, Sikkim, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Bihar.
- However, the number of lightning-related deaths is higher in central Indian states like Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha.
- Bihar is one of the most vulnerable states to lightning strikes, with a significant number of deaths reported annually. In 2023, till July 6, Bihar recorded 107 deaths due to lightning.

Union Government’s View About Lightning:

The Union government opposes declaring lightning a natural disaster and believes that education and awareness can help prevent lightning-related deaths effectively.

CAUSES:

Climate Change:

- Global warming and climate change could potentially influence atmospheric conditions, leading to an increase in thunderstorms and lightning activity.
- Changes in the distribution of moisture, instability, and convective processes may favor more frequent lightning occurrences.

Urbanization:

- The expansion of urban areas can create the “urban heat island effect,” making cities warmer than surrounding rural areas.
- These localized heat islands may lead to the formation of more thunderstorms and an increase in lightning strikes.

Land Use Changes:

Deforestation, changes in agricultural practices, and alterations of natural landscapes may disrupt local atmospheric conditions, contributing to the development of thunderstorms and more lightning.

Pollution and Aerosols:

- Air pollution, including aerosols and particulate matter, can affect cloud formation and electrical activity within storms.
- Anthropogenic emissions might influence the frequency and intensity of thunderstorms, potentially leading to more lightning strikes.

WAY FORWARD:

Educational Campaigns:

Launch extensive educational campaigns to raise awareness about lightning safety, especially in rural areas, to inform people about the dangers of lightning and precautions to stay safe.

Lightning Prediction and Warning Systems:

Develop and implement lightning prediction and warning systems to provide advanced notice of light-

ning storms, helping people take necessary precautions and seek shelter in time.

Lightning-Resistant Infrastructure:

Encourage the construction of lightning-resistant infrastructure, including lightning rods on tall structures and surge protectors for electrical equipment, to reduce the risk of damage from lightning strikes.

Training for First Responders:

Train local emergency services and first responders on how to deal with lightning-related incidents and provide them with necessary equipment to handle such situations effectively.

SOURCE:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/can-deaths-due-to-lightning-be-considered-a-natural-disaster/article67087105.ece>

Q.1 Which of the following atmospheric factors plays a significant role in the formation of lightning and thunderstorms?

- (A) Wind Speed
- (B) Humidity
- (C) Temperature Inversion
- (D) Air Pressure

Select the correct option from the choices given above:

- (a) A and B only
- (b) B and C only
- (c) A, B, and C only
- (d) B, C, and D only

Answer: b

Q.2 During a thunderstorm, the thunder in the skies is produced by the:

1. meeting of cumulonimbus clouds in the sky
2. lightning that separates the nimbus clouds
3. violent upward movement of air and water particles

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3
- (c) 1 and 3
- (d) None of the above produces the thunder

Answer: d

Q.3 Discuss the challenges and measures to mitigate the impact of lightning-related fatalities in India.

KATCHATHEEVU ISLAND

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Katchatheevu Island”. The topic “Katchatheevu Island” has relevance in the “International Relations” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

Where is Katchatheevu Island?

FOR MAINS:

GS3: India and its neighbourhood relations

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister called upon the Union government to launch diplomatic initiatives to reexamine the agreement that transferred the Katchatheevu islet to Sri Lanka.

Katchatheevu Island

Katchatheevu is a tiny, uninhabited island in the Palk Strait, which connects the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. It is a contested territory between Sri Lanka and India, with India claiming it until 1976 and Sri Lanka currently administering it.



ISLAND'S TIMELINE

Year	Event
14th century	Katchatheevu island is formed due to volcanic eruptions.
17th century	The Raja of Ramnad (present-day Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu) owns Katchatheevu island.
18th century	Katchatheevu island became a part of the Madras Presidency.
1921	Sri Lanka and India claim Katchatheevu island for fishing.

1974	Indira Gandhi signs the Indo-Sri Lankan Maritime Agreement, ceding Katchatheevu island to Sri Lanka.
1991	Tamil Nadu Assembly adopts a resolution demanding the retrieval of Katchatheevu island.

WHAT IS THE KATCHATHEEVU ISLAND ISSUE?

- Fishermen from both countries fished in each other's waters peacefully until India-Sri Lanka signed maritime boundary agreements. These agreements established the international maritime boundary between the two countries.
- The aim of the agreements was to manage resources and enforce laws in the Palk Strait. Indian fishermen were only allowed to use an island for certain purposes, not for fishing. However, they continued crossing the Sri Lankan water boundary to find better catches.
- The situation worsened over the decades when fish and aquatic life in the Indian continental shelf decreased, leading to more Indian fishermen entering the region. They also used harmful modern fishing trolleys, impacting marine life and the ecosystem.

LTTE ERA AND RESTRICTIONS ON MOVEMENT

- During the LTTE era, the Sri Lankan government restricted Sri Lankan fishermen's movement in waters due to military concerns.
- In 2009, Sri Lanka increased security along its maritime boundary in the Palk Strait to prevent the return of Tamil insurgents.
- Indian fishermen saw this as an opportunity, but after the war ended in 2010, Sri Lankan fishermen resumed their movement in the Palk Bay and reclaimed their lost territory.

THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND TAMIL NADU AT ODDS

- In 1974, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi signed four Maritime Boundary Agreements with Sri Lankan President Srimavo Bandaranaike, which included giving Katchatheevu Island to Sri Lanka.
- In response, in 1991, the Tamil Nadu Assembly adopted a resolution demanding the retrieval of Katchatheevu island.
- In 2008, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa took the matter to the Supreme Court, seeking to nullify the Katchatheevu agreements. She argued that the treaties giving Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka were unconstitutional.

HUMANITARIAN AND LIVELIHOOD CONCERNS

- The island, located about 10 miles northeast of Rameshwaram, is used by Indian fishermen to dry their nets, catch fish, and rest.
- Frequent arrests on the border have increased, and Sri Lankan authorities have said that they are protecting their maritime boundaries against poaching and securing the livelihood of Sri Lankan fishermen.
- Both sides have pledged not to use force under any circumstances. However, the situation remains tense.

SUGGESTIONS TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE:

- Both India and Sri Lanka should engage in diplomatic dialogue to address maritime boundary concerns and fishing rights.
- They should consider joint management of resources in the Palk Strait, implement sustainable fishing practices, and establish a mechanism to handle border disputes.
- Promoting cooperation and understanding is crucial for a peaceful resolution.



Sources:

Stalin writes to Modi: Raise issues of Katchatheevu island, fishermen's detention with Sri Lanka President | The Indian Express

Q1. With reference to Katchatheevu Island recently seen in news, consider the following statements:

1. Katchatheevu Island is an uninhabited island located in the Arabian Sea.
2. The Sri Lankan government ceded Katchatheevu Island to India through a maritime boundary agreement in 1974.
3. Katchatheevu Island plays a significant role in the cultural and religious history of both India and Sri Lanka.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (c)

Q2. Arrange the following locations from North to South:

1. Katchatheevu Island
2. Rameshwaram
3. Jaffna
4. Palk Strait

Select the correct code from the options given below:

- (a) 4,3,1,2
- (b) 2,4,3,1

(c) 3,4,2,1

(d) 4,3,2,1

Answer: (a)

ROADMAP FOR PROMOTING SOLAR ENERGY FOR UNIVERSAL ENERGY ACCESS

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Roadmap for Promoting Solar Energy for Universal Energy Access”. The topic “Roadmap for Promoting Solar Energy for Universal Energy Access” has relevance in the Energy security section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

Target Range?

Current Scenario of Indian Export?

FOR MAINS:

GS 3: Energy security

Solar Mini-grids?

Key Highlights of the Report?

Challenges in Deployment of Solar Energy for Universal Energy Access?

Way Forward?

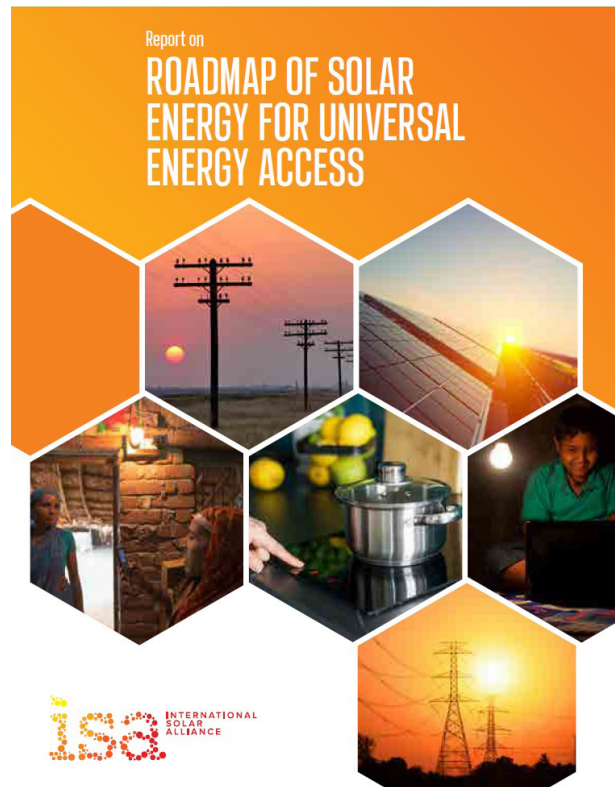
WHY IN THE NEWS?

At an event of the 4th Energy Transition Working Group in Goa today, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India, in association with the International Solar Alliance, released a Roadmap of Solar Energy for Universal Energy Access.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT:

- 1. Emphasis on Solar Energy:** The report highlights solar energy as a key solution to achieve Universal Energy Access by 2030.
- 2. Electrification Methods:** It identifies different methods for electrifying the unelectrified population:
 - Solar-based mini-grids for 59% (396 million people).
 - Grid extensions for 30% (203 million people).
 1. Decentralized Renewable Energy solutions for 11% (77 million people).
- 2. Investment Requirement:** The report estimates a total investment of around USD 192 billion for accomplishing the electrification goals through various solar energy solutions.
- 3. Viability Gap Funding:** The deployment of mini-grids requires viability gap funding of around 50% (USD 48.5 billion).
- 4. Challenges and Solutions:** The report emphasizes addressing challenges related to policies, regulations, financial risks, and technical expertise to scale up solar energy solutions successfully.
- 5. Increased Investments:** The roadmap advocates for increased investments, ecosystem development, and optimal resource utilization to accelerate universal energy access.

6. Integration of Solar PV-based Cooking Solutions: The report emphasizes integrating solar PV-based cooking solutions with electrification initiatives to enhance energy access in remote and underdeveloped areas.



SOLAR MINI-GRIDS:

- Solar mini-grids are small-scale electricity generation and distribution systems that utilize solar PV technology to generate electricity and store it in batteries.
- They provide reliable and affordable electricity to communities or areas lacking access to the main power grid or experiencing frequent power outages.
- Solar mini-grids can also power electric stoves or other cooking appliances, offering clean cooking solutions.

CHALLENGES IN DEPLOYMENT OF SOLAR ENERGY FOR UNIVERSAL ENERGY ACCESS:

- Lack of enabling policies and regulations supporting solar energy deployment.
- Challenges in equipment manufacturing, execution, and maintenance.
- Accumulation of dust on solar panels affects their efficiency.
- High financial risks in underdeveloped regions increasing project costs.
- Need for technical and financial expertise for successful implementation and maintenance.

INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE (ISA):

- ISA is a collaborative platform co-founded by India and France in 2015 to increase the deployment of solar energy technologies.

- Its primary goal is to facilitate energy access, ensure energy security, and drive energy transition in member countries.
- The Alliance is the nodal agency for implementing One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG) that aims to transfer solar power generated in one region to meet electricity demands in others.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES TO ENHANCE SOLAR ENERGY PRODUCTION IN INDIA:

- International Solar Alliance
- National Solar Mission
- Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM)
- One Sun, One World, One Grid (OSOWOG)
- Solar Park Scheme
- Rooftop Solar Scheme

WAY FORWARD:

- Assisting access-deficit countries in developing enabling policy and regulatory frameworks.
- Facilitating private-sector participation in energy access projects.
- Exploring innovative financing models like green bonds.
- Hybridization with wind or biomass energy to enhance mini-grid reliability and lower power equipment costs.

SOURCE:

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1941211>

Q.1 Consider the following statements:

1. The International Solar Alliance was launched at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2015.
2. The Alliance includes all the member countries of the United Nations.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a)

Q.2 Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the National Solar Mission?

1. The National Solar Mission was launched in 2010 by the Government of India with the objective of promoting the use of solar energy in the country.
2. The mission aims to achieve 100 GW (Gigawatt) of solar power capacity by 2022.
3. The National Solar Mission is a part of India's commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to combat climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
4. The mission focuses on the deployment of solar energy technologies for both grid-connected and off-grid applications.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2, and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, and 4

Answer: (d)

Q.3 India has immense potential for solar energy though there are regional variations in its developments. Elaborate.

GLOBAL REPORT ON FOOD CRISES 2023

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Global Report on Food Crises 2023”. The topic “Global Report on Food Crises 2023” has relevance in the “Social Justice” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What is the Global Report on Food Crises 2023? Who are its publishers?

FOR MAINS:

GS2: Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

GS3: Food Security

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The 2023 Global Report on Food Crises was published recently.

GLOBAL REPORT ON FOOD CRISES

- The GRFC 2023 is published by Food Security Information Network (FSIN) in support of the Global Network against Food Crises (GNAFC).
- It helps understand acute food insecurity in 2022 globally, regionally, and at the country level.
- This report is the outcome of a collaborative effort involving 16 partners to reach a consensus-based evaluation of acute food insecurity in crisis-affected nations.
- Its purpose is to provide reliable and evidence-based analysis to guide humanitarian and development actions.

GRFC 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

- The GRFC 2023 shows a concerning trend of increasing acute food insecurity and urgent assistance needs.
- It reports that more than 250 million people are currently experiencing acute hunger due to factors like economic shocks and the Ukraine war.
- In 2022, around 258 million people across 58 countries faced acute food insecurity, up from 193

million people in 2021, spanning 53 countries and territories at crisis or worse levels.

GRFC 2023 KEY FINDINGS

- The Global Report indicates that hunger, while not rising alarmingly at a global level, remains well above pre-COVID levels, and **progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) is off track**. Urbanization's impact on food security is highlighted.
- New estimates show **no improvement in global food insecurity for 2022 compared to the previous year**. Approximately 2.4 billion people lacked adequate food access, 391 million more than in 2019. The prevalence of undernourishment also remained high, affecting around 9.2% of the global population in 2022, up from 7.9% in 2019.
- **Positive aspects include a decline in stunting and child wasting** among children under five years old, but there was a non-significant increase in overweight or obese children.
- The report reveals that **nearly 3.2 billion people worldwide couldn't afford a healthy diet in 2020**, with a slight improvement in 2021. The cost of a healthy diet rose globally by 6.7% between 2019 and 2021.
- Additionally, it predicts that around **600 million people will suffer from chronic undernourishment by 2030**.

KEY DRIVERS OF FOOD INSECURITY

The report attributes the rise in food insecurity to various factors, such as –

- the lockdowns and economic downturns in 2020, leading to job losses and reduced incomes
- Ukraine war
- less favourable government policies
- increasing urbanisation's impact on agrifood systems

Interestingly, the report finds that food insecurity is lower in urban areas when compared to rural and peri-urban populations.

WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS AHEAD?

- **Identifying Vulnerable Groups for Targeted Policies and Programs:** The report helps identify vulnerable population groups and provides evidence for decision-making and effective action through targeted policies and programs.
- **Sound nutrition:** Sound nutrition is crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and the report emphasises the need for government policy, civil society, and private sector support.
- **Promoting Healthier Food Outlets and Addressing Street Food Challenges:** Some recommendations include promoting healthier food outlets to improve access to healthy diets. Policy incentives should encourage shops to sell more fresh and minimally processed foods. The report also highlights the significance of street foods, consumed by around 2.5 billion people daily, and calls for addressing infrastructure and regulatory gaps to enhance their nutritional safety and quality.
- **Enhancing Rural Infrastructure for Agricultural Development:** Building rural infrastructure, like quality roads and linkages between farms and enterprises, is another important suggestion. Public investments in warehousing, cold storage, electrification, digital tools, and water supply can support small farms and medium enterprises.
- **Local Governments' Vital Role in Ensuring Access to Healthy Diets:** The report stresses the vital role of local governments in implementing essential policies to make healthy diets available

and affordable for all through multilevel and multi-stakeholder mechanisms.

Sources:

Explained | What has to be done to get to Zero Hunger? – The Hindu

Q1. With reference Global Report on Food Crises 2023, consider the following statements:

1. The Global Report highlights the impact of urbanization on food security, indicating that food insecurity is generally lower in urban areas compared to rural and peri-urban populations.
2. According to the report, the Ukraine war is one of the key drivers of food insecurity globally.
3. The Global Report suggests that there is positive progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Answer: (a)

Q2. Consider the following reports/indices:

1. Global Report on Food Crises
2. Food Price Index
3. State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World
4. Global Hunger Index (GHI)

How many of the abovementioned reports/indices are published by Food and Agriculture Organization?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Answer: (b)

Q3. In 2023, global food insecurity is influenced by climate change, population growth, and geopolitical conflicts. Policy measures are needed to tackle these challenges effectively. Analyse.

PM-KUSUM (PRADHAN MANTRI KISAN URJA SURAKSHA EVAM UTTHAAN MAHABHIYAN)

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “PM-KUSUM”. The topic “PM-KUSUM” has relevance in the Energy Security section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

About PM-KUSUM?

Objectives of PM-KUSUM?

FOR MAINS:

GS 3: Energy Security

Components of PM-KUSUM?

Major Challenges?

Way Forward?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Union Minister of New Renewable Energy provided an update on the current status of the PM KUSUM scheme in a written response to the Lok Sabha.

ABOUT PM-KUSUM (PRADHAN MANTRI KISAN URJA SURAKSHA EVAM UTTHAAN MAHABHIYAN):

- PM-KUSUM is a flagship scheme launched by the Indian government in 2019 to promote the adoption of solar energy solutions in the agricultural sector.
- It operates on a demand-driven approach, allocating capacities based on demands from states and union territories (UTs).
- The scheme aims to add 30.8 GW of solar power capacity by March 31, 2026.

OBJECTIVES OF PM-KUSUM:

De-dieselisation of the Farm Sector:

- Encourage the use of solar-powered pumps and renewable energy sources to reduce the dependence on diesel for irrigation.
- Help farmers increase their income by lowering irrigation costs through solar pumps and enabling them to sell surplus solar power to the grid.

Water and Energy Security for Farmers:

- Provide access to solar pumps and promote solar-based community irrigation projects to enhance water and energy security for farmers.

Curbing Environmental Pollution:

- Mitigate environmental pollution caused by conventional energy sources by adopting clean and renewable solar energy.

Components of PM-KUSUM:

- **Component-A:** establishment of 10,000 MW of Decentralized Ground/Stilt Mounted Solar Power Plants on various types of land, including barren, fallow, pasture, marshy, and cultivable land owned by farmers.
- **Component-B:** Installation of 20 lakh stand-alone solar pumps in areas without access to the electricity grid.
- **Component-C:** Solarisation of 15 Lakh Grid Connected Agriculture Pumps through individual pump solarisation and feeder level solarisation.

Recent Significant Developments:

- **Extension of Scheme Duration:** PM-KUSUM, the flagship scheme initiated by the Indian government to promote the adoption of solar energy solutions in the agricultural sector, has been extended until March 31, 2026.
- **State-Level Tendering:** State level tendering is allowed for the procurement of standalone solar pumps, making the process more streamlined and efficient.
- **Inclusion in AIF and PSL Guidelines:** The solarization of pumps under PM-KUSUM has been included in the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) and Priority Sector Lending (PSL) Guidelines of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), making it more accessible for farmers to access finance.

MAJOR CHALLENGES:

- **Geographical Variability:** Varying solar radiation levels in different regions can impact the efficiency of solar installations and the performance of solar pumps.
- **Inadequate Grid Infrastructure:** Weak or unreliable grid infrastructure can hinder the integration of solar power into the grid and limit the benefits for farmers.
- **Lack of Water Regulation:** The surge in irrigation demand with solar pumps can strain groundwater resources without proper water management practices.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Mobile Solar Pumping:** Implement mobile solar pump stations that can be moved to different locations based on irrigation needs to enhance water access in remote areas.
- **Water Regulation and Monitoring:** Establish effective water regulation policies and monitoring mechanisms to control groundwater extraction and ensure sustainability.
- **Linking with MGNREGA:** Link PM-KUSUM with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to support the installation of micro-irrigation systems for improved water-use efficiency and crop productivity.
- **Technology and Training:** Promote the use of advanced technology and provide training to farmers for efficient utilization of solar pumps and solar energy solutions.
- **Awareness and Outreach:** Conduct awareness campaigns to educate farmers about the benefits of solar energy and encourage wider adoption of the scheme.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Foster partnerships with private sector entities to accelerate the implementation of solar projects and address challenges effectively.



SOURCE:

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1941116>

Q.1 Which of the following statements regarding the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM) is/are correct?

1. PM-KUSUM aims to promote the adoption of conventional energy sources in the agricultural sector.
2. Component-C of PM-KUSUM focuses on solarisation of grid-connected agriculture pumps through individual pump solarisation and feeder level solarisation.
3. The scheme operates on a supply-driven approach
4. PM-KUSUM has been extended until 2026, to facilitate wider adoption of solar energy solutions among farmers.

Select the correct option(s):

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 4 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (d) All of the above

ANSWER: B

Q.2 Which of the following statements about the National Solar Mission is/are true?

1. The National Solar Mission was launched in 2010 with the goal of promoting solar power generation in India.
2. The mission aims to achieve 100 GW of solar power capacity by 2030, making India a global leader in solar energy.
3. The National Solar Mission focuses solely on grid-connected solar power projects and does not include off-grid solar installations.
4. The mission has various components, including solar park development, solar rooftop installations, and solar water pumps.

Select the correct option(s):

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 4 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (d) All of the above

ANSWER: C

Q.3 India has immense potential for solar energy though there are regional variations in its developments. Elaborate.

HIMACHAL FLASH FLOODS

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Flash Floods”. The topic “Flash Floods” has relevance in the “Disaster Management” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

What are flash floods? Their Reasons?

FOR MAINS:

GS3: Disaster and Disaster Management

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Flash floods during this year’s monsoon season have caused unprecedented damage to both lives and assets in Himachal Pradesh.

FLASH FLOODS:

Flash floods are events that occur in a small and specific area for a brief period, characterised by a rapid rise in water levels, reaching their peak within a few hours after the rainfall, typically within six hours.

Feature	Flash Floods	Floods in General
Definition	Sudden and intense flooding events that occur within a short span of time, typically within a few hours or even minutes.	An overflow of water that submerges land that is usually dry.
Cause	Heavy rainfall over a localized area, often associated with cloudbursts or intense thunderstorms. Can also result from factors other than rainfall, such as the release of water from a dam or the overflow of glacial lakes.	Prolonged and excessive rainfall over a wide area, usually lasting for days or weeks. Can also result from the melting of snow and ice, storm surges, tidal actions, or the failure of dams.
Onset	Rapid onset, catching people by surprise, and they can escalate quickly with little warning.	Slower onset compared to flash floods, as they take time to build up over a larger region and gradually inundate the surrounding areas.
Duration	Usually of short duration, but the impact can be severe due to the high intensity of the water flow.	Can last for an extended period, depending on the amount of rainfall and the water's source.
Scope	Highly localized and affect specific areas, such as narrow river valleys or urban regions with poor drainage systems.	Cover larger geographical areas, affecting extensive river basins or entire regions.
Characteristics	Often result in a swift and powerful surge of water, causing significant damage to infrastructure, posing dangers to human lives, and leading to landslides in mountainous terrains.	While floods may not have the same rapid intensity as flash floods, they can still cause significant damage to properties, disrupt transportation and communication, and result in the displacement of communities.

CAUSES:

Natural Causes of Flash Floods:

- **Cloudbursts:** Intense rainfall occurring suddenly over a specific area during a thunderstorm can lead to a massive amount of rainwater being dumped, causing flash floods.
- **Rivers and Streams Overflowing:** Prolonged heavy rains can cause rivers and streams to swell and overflow their banks, resulting in flash floods.
- **Blocked or Inefficient Drainage Systems:** When heavy rains exceed the capacity of drainage systems, they become blocked or inefficient, leading to flash flooding.
- **Volcanic Eruptions Melting Glaciers:** Volcanic eruptions on glacial mountains can melt ice, triggering flash floods.
- **Slow Moving Thunderstorms or “Trapped Thunderstorms”:** Thunderstorms that move slowly over an area or become trapped between mountains can dump significant rainfall, causing flash floods.
- **Upstream Thunderstorms:** Thunderstorms occurring upstream in mountainous areas can contribute to flash floods as the runoff joins downstream rivers.
- **Hurricanes and Tropical Storms:** Hurricanes and tropical storms bring heavy rainfall that can result in flash floods.
- **Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF Events):** Glacial lake outburst floods can cause flash floods downstream, impacting mountainous areas.

ANTHROPOGENIC CAUSES OF FLASH FLOODS:

- **Dam Failures:** Human-induced dam failures can lead to flash flooding in an area, posing significant risks.
- **Climate Change:** Human activities causing climate change contribute to extreme weather events like hurricanes, leading to flash floods.
- **Destruction of Mangroves and Wetlands:** The destruction of mangroves and wetlands, which act as natural buffers against flooding, can exacerbate flash flood events.
- **Deforestation:** Deforestation removes the natural buffer provided by forests, allowing floodwaters to reach areas with greater force and intensity, leading to flash floods.

PROBABLE CAUSES OF HIMACHAL FLASH FLOODS

- **Climate Change:**
 - Increased precipitation occurring in shorter periods of time in the Himalayas due to climate change.
 - The impact of the south-west monsoon combined with western disturbances leading to heavy rainfall.
- **Anthropogenic Factors:**
 - **Uncontrolled construction of hydropower projects**, which divert water through tunnels and contribute to the transformation of mountain rivers into streams.
 - **Road-widening projects for tourism promotion**, carried out without proper geological studies, leading to landslides and damage to existing roads.
 - **Establishment of massive cement plants** and extensive cutting of mountains altering the natural landscape and reducing the land's capacity to absorb water.
 - **Changes in crop patterns**, with more farmers embracing cash crop economies over traditional cereal farming, leading to hastily constructed roads and improper dumping of muck that affects

river ecosystems.

IMPACTS:

- **Loss of life:** Flash floods can be extremely deadly, as they often occur with little or no warning. In 2023, for example, flash floods in Himachal Pradesh and Punjab killed at least 41 people.
- **Damage to property:** Flash floods can cause extensive damage to homes, businesses, and infrastructure. In 2022, flash floods in Assam damaged or destroyed over 100,000 homes.
- **Disruption of transportation:** Flash floods can wash away roads, bridges, and railways, making it difficult or impossible to travel. This can have a major impact on the economy, as it can disrupt the movement of goods and people.
- **Contamination of water supplies:** Flash floods can contaminate water supplies with mud, debris, and bacteria. This can lead to outbreaks of waterborne diseases, such as cholera and typhoid.
- **Damage to crops:** Flash floods can damage or destroy crops, which can lead to food shortages. In 2021, flash floods in Uttar Pradesh damaged or destroyed over 1 million hectares of crops.
- **Environmental damage:** Flash floods can cause erosion, landslides, and other environmental damage. This can have a lasting impact on the ecosystem.

MEASURES TO MITIGATE AND ADAPT TO FLASH FLOODS:

- **Early Warning Systems:** Implementing efficient early warning systems that utilize weather forecasting and monitoring technologies can provide timely alerts to vulnerable communities, allowing them to take necessary precautions and evacuate if needed.
- **Flood Mapping and Risk Assessment:** Conducting flood mapping and risk assessments helps identify flood-prone areas, enabling better land use planning and the development of flood-resistant infrastructure in high-risk regions.
- **Improved Drainage Infrastructure:** Investing in well-designed and properly maintained drainage systems can enhance water flow and reduce the risk of flash floods caused by blocked or inefficient drainage.
- **Afforestation and Reforestation:** Promoting afforestation and reforestation in catchment areas and vulnerable regions can help reduce soil erosion, improve water retention, and mitigate the intensity of flash floods.
- **Land Use Planning:** Proper land use planning is essential to avoid construction in flood-prone areas. Implementing regulations that prohibit building in high-risk zones can prevent human settlements from being exposed to flash flood hazards.
- **Sustainable Agriculture Practices:** Encouraging farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural practices, such as contour farming and terrace cultivation, can help reduce soil erosion and prevent sedimentation in rivers, thereby minimizing the risk of flash floods.
- **Flood Insurance and Relief Measures:** Providing access to affordable flood insurance for vulnerable communities and implementing efficient relief measures can help people recover from the impact of flash floods more effectively.
- **Public Awareness and Education:** Conducting awareness campaigns and educational programs to inform communities about flash flood risks, safety measures, and evacuation procedures is crucial in building community resilience.
- **Urban Planning and Green Spaces:** Integrating green spaces and rainwater harvesting systems in urban planning can improve water management and reduce the intensity of flash floods in cities.

- **River Restoration and Floodplain Management:** Restoring rivers to their natural state and managing floodplains can help absorb excess water during heavy rainfall and reduce the risk of flash floods downstream.
- **Climate Change Adaptation:** Implementing climate change adaptation strategies, such as building climate-resilient infrastructure and developing drought and flood management plans, can enhance the country's ability to cope with changing weather patterns.

Sources:

[Explained | Himachal floods: a man-made disaster? – The Hindu](#)

Q1. With reference to Flash Floods, consider the following statements:

1. Flash floods usually last for an extended period, depending on the amount of rainfall and the water's source. (Wrong)
2. Flash floods are sudden and intense flooding events that occur over a wide geographical area, typically within a few hours or even minutes.
3. The cause of flash floods in Himachal Pradesh during the monsoon season is totally due to climate change-induced extreme weather events.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Answer: (d)

Q2. Consider the following:

1. Early warning systems are only useful for coastal regions and not for inland areas prone to flash floods.
2. Contour farming is a practice that increases the risk of flash floods.
3. Planting more trees in flood-prone areas can help reduce the intensity of flash floods.
4. Public awareness and education have no impact on flash floods as they are natural disasters that cannot be controlled through community knowledge.

How many of the abovementioned statement/s is/are correct ?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Answer: (a)

Q3. Discuss the causes, impacts, and measures to mitigate and adapt to flash floods and floods in general, with a specific focus on the recent flash floods in Himachal Pradesh.

BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2021

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021”. The topic “Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021” has relevance in the Environment section of the UPSC CSE exam.

FOR PRELIMS:

Key Features of the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021?

FOR MAINS:

GS 3: Environment

Concerns about the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021?

Way Forward?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Recently, Lok Sabha has passed the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021

KEY FEATURES OF THE BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2021:

Access to Biological Resources:

- Currently, anyone seeking to access biological resources or associated knowledge in India needs prior approval or must inform the regulatory authority.
- The Bill modifies the classification of entities and activities that require intimation, introducing exemptions to certain cases.

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR):

- The Act requires NBA approval before applying for IPR related to biological resources from India.
- The Bill suggests that approval will be required before the actual grant of the IPR, not during the application process.

Exempting AYUSH Practitioners:

- The Bill proposes to grant exemptions to registered AYUSH medical practitioners and individuals accessing codified traditional knowledge, among others. These exemptions would relieve them from the requirement of giving prior intimation to State biodiversity boards when accessing biological resources for specific purposes.

Benefit Sharing:

- The Act mandates benefit sharing, involving both monetary and non-monetary benefits with those conserving biodiversity or holding traditional knowledge.
- The Bill removes the applicability of benefit sharing requirements from research, bio-survey, and bio-utilisation.

Criminal Penalties:

- The Act stipulates criminal penalties, which may include imprisonment, for offenses such as failing to obtain approval or provide intimation for specific activities.
- It proposes to replace criminal penalties with fines ranging from one lakh to fifty lakh rupees



CONCERNS ABOUT THE BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2021:

Favoring Industry over Conservation:

- Critics argue that the amendments prioritize industry interests over biodiversity conservation, contrary to the CBD's spirit.
- Benefit-sharing and community involvement frameworks may be weakened.

Decriminalization of Violations:

- The Bill proposes to decriminalize violations, reducing the NBA's power to file FIRs against non-compliant parties.
- Enforcement of biodiversity protection laws may be weakened.

Exemption for Domestic Companies:

- The Bill introduces a provision that requires only "foreign-controlled companies" to seek permission for using biodiversity resources. This exemption may create potential loopholes for domestic companies with foreign shareholding to avoid the approval process
- This may lead to unchecked exploitation of biodiversity.

Limited Benefit Sharing:

- Inclusion of "codified traditional knowledge" exempts certain users, such as Indian systems of medicine practitioners, from the need to share benefits.

Domestic companies may avoid sharing profits with communities holding traditional knowledge.

Ignoring Conservation Issues:

- Critics contend that the amendments fall short in effectively addressing the challenges related to biodiversity conservation in India.
- The focus on reducing regulations and facilitating business interests may negatively impact biodiversity and traditional knowledge holders.

WAY FORWARD:

Striking a Balance: Strive for a balance between economic development and sustainable biodiversity conservation.

Inclusive Consultations: Engage in transparent and inclusive consultations with stakeholders, including local communities, indigenous people, conservationists, scientists, and industry representatives.

Consider All Perspectives: Ensure that all perspectives are considered in the decision-making process.

Alignment with Conservation Principles: Ensure that the amendments align with biodiversity conservation principles.

SOURCE:

Q.1 Consider the following statements:

1. In India, the Biodiversity Management Committees are key to the realization of the objectives of the Nagoya Protocol.
2. The Biodiversity Management Committees have important functions in determining access and benefit sharing, including the power to levy collection fees on the access of biological resources within its jurisdiction.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c)

Q.2 Which of the following amendments were proposed by the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021 to the Biological Diversity Act, 2002?

1. Introducing criminal penalties for violations related to biodiversity resources.
2. Granting exemptions to registered AYUSH medical practitioners from prior intimation to State biodiversity boards.

Select the correct answer using the codes below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)

Q.3 How is the Government of India protecting traditional knowledge of medicine from patenting by pharmaceutical companies?



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