CURRENT AFFAIRS

AUGUST 2020

INDEX

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Paper II: This section is relevant to Polity and Governance Section of GS Paper II

1.1 CONTEMPT OF COURT

Why in News: A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court found civil rights lawyer Prashant Bhushan guilty of criminal contempt for his false or malicious tweets against the Supreme Court and the CJI.

Contempt of Court

- Contempt refers to the offence of showing disrespect to the dignity or authority of a court.
- The concept seeks to protect judicial institutions from motivated attacks and unwarranted criticism, and as a legal mechanism to punish those who lower its authority.

Origin of the Concept

- The concept of contempt of court is several centuries old and owes its origin to England.
- In England, it is a common law principle that seeks to protect the judicial power of the king, initially exercised by him, and later by a panel of judges who acted in his name.
- Violation of the judges' orders was considered an affront to the king himself.
- Over time, any kind of disobedience to judges, or obstruction of the implementation of their directives, or comments and actions that showed disrespect towards them came to be punishable.

Legal Basis for Contempt of Court in India

- There were pre-Independence laws of contempt in India.
- Besides the early High Courts, the courts of some princely states also had such laws.

Constitutional Provisions

- When the Constitution was adopted, contempt of court was made one of the restrictions on freedom of speech and expression.
- **As per the Article 129, the Supreme Court has powers to initiate suo motu contempt and has the power to punish for contempt of itself, as a court of record.**
- Article 215 conferred a corresponding power on the High Courts.

Statutory Basis

- The Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, gives statutory backing to the idea.
- However, the Act only outlines the procedure in relation to investigation and punishment for contempt.

- Even if the offence is deleted from the Act, it will not impact the inherent constitutional powers of the superior courts to punish anyone for its contempt.
- These powers will continue to remain, independent of the 1971 Act.

Types of Contempt of Court as per the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971: The law codifying contempt classifies it as civil and criminal.

Civil Contempt

Civil contempt is committed when someone willfully disobeys a court order, or willfully breaches an undertaking given to court.

Criminal Contempt

Criminal contempt is more complex. It consists of three forms:

- Words, written or spoken, signs and actions that "scandalise" or "tend to scandalise" or "lower" or "tends to lower" the authority of any court.
- Prejudices or interferes with any judicial proceeding and
- Interferes with or obstructs the administration of justice

Making allegations against the judiciary or individual judges, attributing motives to judgments and judicial functioning and any scurrilous attack on the conduct of judges are normally considered matters that scandalise the judiciary.

Need for this Provision

The rationale for this provision is that courts must be protected from tendentious attacks that lower its authority, defame its public image and make the public lose faith in its impartiality.

What is not a Contempt of Court

- It is to be noted that fair and accurate reporting of judicial proceedings will not amount to contempt of court.
- Nor is any fair criticism on the merits of a judicial order after a case is heard and disposed of.

Truth as a Defence against a Contempt Charge

The Act was amended in 2006 to introduce truth as a valid defence, if it was in public interest and was invoked in a bona fide.

Latest Development

- The Supreme Court has found civil rights lawyer Prashant Bhushan guilty of criminal contempt for his false or malicious tweets against the Supreme Court and the CJI.
- SC did not resort to the Contempt of Court Act, 1971 in convicting Mr Bhushan.
- The Contempt of Court Act of 1971 punishes with imprisonment that may extend to six months or fine of Rs 2,000 or both.
- The apex court used its inherent powers under Article 129 of the Constitution to punish for contempt of itself.
- While the Contempt of Court Act provides a maximum sentence of six months for criminal contempt, Article 129 does not provide an outer limit.
- A three-judge Bench held that the suo motu contempt powers of the top court is drawn from Article 129 of the Constitution, which says the Supreme Court, as a court of record, has the power to punish for contempt of itself.

1.2 SC JUDGEMENT: PROPERTY RIGHT FOR DAUGHTER

Why in News: The Supreme Court has expanded on a Hindu woman's right to be a joint legal heir and inherit ancestral property on terms equal to male heirs.

The Supreme Court Judgement 2020

- The Supreme Court through its judgement ensured "right of equality" of a daughter in a Hindu Undivided Family.
- The Supreme Court held that a daughter will have equal right to family property by birth, irrespective of whether her father was alive or not as on September 9, 2005.
- The Bench of Justices ruled that the provisions contained in substituted Section 6 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 confer status of coparcener on the daughter born before or after amendment in the same manner as son with same rights and liabilities.
- The Bench further added that since the right in coparcenary is by birth, it is not necessary that father coparcener should be living as on 9.9.2005.

Hindu Succession Act, 1956

- The Mitakshara school of Hindu law codified as the Hindu Succession Act 1956 which governs succession and inheritance of property of legal heirs.
- The law initially only recognised males or sons as legal heirs and not the daughters.
- The law applies to ancestral property and to intestate succession in personal property, where succession happens as per law and not through a will.

About Hindu Undivided Family

- In a Hindu Undivided Family, several legal heirs through generations can exist jointly.
- Traditionally, only male descendants of a common ancestor along with their mothers, wives and unmarried daughters are considered a joint Hindu family.
- The legal heirs hold the family property jointly.

Applicability of the Law

- The law applied to everyone who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion.
- Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and followers of Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj are also considered Hindus for the purposes of this law.

2005 Amendment

- The amendment recognised women as coparceners or joint legal heirs for partition arising from 2005.
- Section 6 of the Act was amended that year to make a daughter of a coparcener also a coparcener by birth "in her own right in the same manner as the son".
- The law also gave the daughter the same rights and liabilities in the coparcenary property as she would have had if she had been a son.

Questions from the September 2005 Amendment & Views Taken

- The first question was if the law applied retrospectively.
- The second question was if the rights of women depended on the living status of the father through whom they would inherit.

Views Taken by the Courts

- Different benches of the Supreme Court had taken conflicting views on the issue. Different High Courts had also followed different views of the top court as binding precedents.
- In **Prakash v Phulwati (2015),** a two-judge Bench headed by Justice A K Goel held that the benefit of the 2005 amendment could be granted only to "living daughters of living coparceners" as on September 9, 2005 (the date when the amendment came into force).
- This implies that the 2005 Amendment had recognised the coparcenary rights of living daughters who had living coparceners as on 9th Sept 2005.
- In February 2018, a two-judge Bench headed by Justice A K Sikri held that the share of a father who died in 2001 will also pass to his daughters as coparceners during the partition of the property as per the 2005 law. This was contrary to the 2015 ruling.
- Then in April that year, another two-judge bench, headed by Justice R K Agrawal, reiterated the position taken in 2015.

- These conflicting views by Benches of equal strength led to a reference to a three-judge Bench in the current case.
- The ruling now overrules the verdicts from 2015 and April 2018.

Impact of Recent Judgement on the September 2005 Amendment

- Now the Supreme Court says that a Hindu woman's right to be a joint heir to the ancestral property is by birth and does not depend on whether her father was alive or not when the law was enacted in 2005.
- It settles the law and expands on the intention of the 2005 legislation "to remove the discrimination as contained in section 6 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 by giving equal rights to daughters in the Hindu Mitakshara coparcenary property as the sons have".
- This implies that the three judge bench of the Supreme Court has effectively granting retrospective status to the amendment of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956.

Significance of the Judgement

- The decision by the three-judge Bench is significant since three separate two-judge Benches of the apex court had previously given contrasting decisions on the issue in different cases following the amendment.

- The ruling is a huge advancement towards rendering gender justice in furtherance of Article 15 of the Constitution of India as any discrimination between a male coparcener and a female coparcener has been set right by the Supreme Court in accordance with the principles enshrined in Indian Constitution.
- The judgement will also ensure speedy disposal of such cases which have long been pending before other courts of the country as the Supreme Court also directed High Courts to dispose of cases involving this issue within six months since they would have been pending for years.

Other Similar Views

- The 174th Law Commission Report had also recommended this reform in Hindu succession law.
- Even before the 2005 amendment, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu had made this change in the law, and Kerala had abolished the Hindu Joint Family System in 1975.
- Solicitor General Tushar Mehta also argued in favour of an expansive reading of the law to allow equal rights for women.

1.3 ASSAM ACCORD

Why in News: The 14-member high-level committee on implementation of Clause 6 of Assam Accord has stated in its report that its recommendations should be implemented within two years from when it was submitted in February this year.

- In February 2020, a government-appointed committee had submitted its recommendations for implementation of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord which is a key provision that has been contentious for decades.
- Since then, the Central government has not made the report public. The report was recently leaked to the media by some members of the panel.

Assam Accord: The state's history has been shaped by people of multiple cultures over the centuries.

Indigenous Communities of Assam

- The idea of "indigenous" is taken to mean communities who trace their histories in Assam before 1826.
- 1826 was the year when the erstwhile kingdom of Assam (Ahom kingdom) was annexed to British India.
- **Large-scale migration from East Bengal took place during British rule, followed by further waves after Independence and partition.**

Reason for Assam Agitation

- The Assam Movement was triggered by fears that Bengali Muslim and Bengali Hindu migrants would one day overrun the indigenous population, and dominate the resources and politics of the state.
- The locals of Assam were concerned about the effect of migration between 1951 and 1971 on Assam's demography and the state's culture.
- The main demand of the Assam agitation was detection and deportation of migrants who had illegally entered Assam after 1951.

End of Assam Agitation and Assam Accord

- The Assam accord signed in 1985 ended the six year long Assam agitation.
- It is a memorandum of settlement inked between the representatives of the All Assam Students Union, the Assam state government and the government of India.
- For recognition as citizens, the Accord sets the cut-off date as March 24, 1971 (and not 1951).

- This implies that any immigrant who arrived in Assam before that cut-off would be considered a citizen of India and will get all rights as Indian citizens.
- **The National Register of Citizens (NRC) was updated based on this cut-off.**

Clause 6 of Assam Accord: The Assam Accord legalised additional migrants (1951-71) against the original demand of 1951, Clause 6 was incorporated as a safeguard for the indigenous people.

Provisions of Clause 6

As per Clause 6 of Assam Accord, "Constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards, as may be appropriate, shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people."

Objective of Clause 6

- It is meant to safeguard the socio-political rights and culture of the "indigenous people of Assam" which would not be available to migrants.
- Thus, it is important to define who is "Assamese".

Issues in Implementation of Clause 6

- The foremost issue in implementation of Clause 6 is that it is important to define who is "Assamese".
- Next, it is also important to determine what constitutes the "Constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards" to be provided to the Assamese people.
- Several committees have been set up over the years to make recommendations on implementation of Clause 6 and none of them made headway on the provision's contentious issues.

2019 Committee by Home Ministry

- Following widespread protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act last year, the government gave an urgent push to Clause 6 to pacify the Assamese community.
- The latest committee was set up by the Home Ministry in 2019 which sought to determine a definition before recommending reservations.
- The committee is headed by retired High Court judge Biplab Kumar and includes members of the legal fraternity, retired civil servants, scholars, journalists and AASU office-bearers.
- It was asked to fast-track its report and submitted its report in February but the government did not make its contents public.

Recommendations of the Committee

The Committee's brief was to define the "Assamese people" and suggest measures for the safeguard of their rights.

Committee defines "Assamese People"

The committee has proposed that the following be considered Assamese people for the purpose of Clause 6-

- All citizens of India who are part of:
    - Assamese community, residing in the Territory of Assam on or before January 1, 1951; or
    - Any indigenous tribal community of Assam residing in the territory of Assam on or before January 1, 1951; or
    - Any other indigenous community of Assam residing in the territory of Assam on or before January 1, 1951; or
    - All other citizens of India residing in the territory of Assam on or before January 1, 1951;
    - Descendants of the above categories

Implications of the Recommendations

- It implies that the committee has recommended that 'Assamese people' should be determined by taking 1951 as a cut-off year.
- This means that is the recommendation of the committee is accepted, those who migrated between 1951 and 1971 would be Indian citizens under the Assam Accord and NRC, but they would not be eligible for safeguards meant for "Assamese people".
- Migrants who entered Assam after 1951 but before March 24, 1971 are not Assamese but are Indian citizens. Thus, they would not be eligible to contest an election in 80-100% of Assam's seats (if that recommendation is accepted). But they can vote.
- Also, not just indigenous groups, but East Bengal migrants who entered Assam before 1951, too, would be considered Assamese.

Safeguards to "Assamese People"

The committee has made various recommendations on range of issues like reservations of seats in Parliament, Assembly and local bodies; reservation in jobs; land rights and socio-cultural aspects.
The major recommendations of the panel are:

- On Reservations of seats in Parliament, Assembly and local bodies; reservation in jobs; land rights- Assamese people be given-
- 80 to 100% reservation in the parliamentary seats of Assam, Assembly seats and local body seats be reserved for the "Assamese people".

- 80 to 100% of Group C and D level posts (in Assam) in central government/semi-central government/central PSUs/private sector.
- 80 to 100% of jobs under Government of Assam and state government undertakings; and 70 to 100% of vacancies arising in private partnerships
- Land rights, with restrictions imposed on transferring land by any means to persons other than "Assamese people".

On language, and cultural and social rights

- Assamese language shall continue to be official language throughout the state with provisions for use of local languages in Barak Valley, Hill Districts and the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts.
- Mandatory provision of an Assamese language paper for recruitment in state government services with alternatives for Barak Valley districts, BTAD and Hills Districts.
- To set up Academies for all-round development of each of the indigenous tribal languages including, Bodo, Mishing, Karbi, Dimasa, Koch-Rajbongshi, Rabha, Deuri, Tiwa, Tai and other indigenous languages.

Way Forward

- For the implementation of the recommendations, one of the issues is whether it will stand the test of judicial scrutiny and constitutional validity as it is bound to be challenged in the courts.
- Some groups are finding the recommendations as too inclusive while others are finding it too exclusive and the debate goes on.

1.4   DRAFT ON HEALTH DATA MANAGEMENT POLICY

Why in News: The National Health Authority (NHA) has released the draft 'Health Data Management Policy' to seek suggestions from the public.

- The draft policy aims to develop a framework for "secure processing of personal and sensitive personal data of individuals" who are a part of the National Digital Health Mission.
- The draft includes various aspects related to health data such as data privacy, consent management, data sharing and protection
- **Note:** This is a draft, and not yet finalized. But nonetheless helps understand the major aspects from the government side, as well as the policymaking process.

National Digital Health Mission

- The National Digital Health Mission (NDHM), was recently launched by the Prime Minister in his independence day speech. It will initially be implemented in a pilot mode (test mode) in six union territories.
- The vision of the mission is to create a national digital health ecosystem which enables timely and efficient access to inclusive, affordable, and safe healthcare to all citizens.
- It will bring all the stakeholders together and connect them in an integrated digital health infrastructure, which will significantly improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency of health services in India.
- **The NDHM includes six key building blocks (components) or digital systems - HealthID, DigiDoctor, Health Facility Registry, Personal Health Records, e-Pharmacy and Telemedicine.**
- The national health ID will store all health-related information of a person. It will contain information about medical data, prescriptions and diagnostic reports and summaries of previous discharge from hospitals for ailments.
- The National Health Authority (NHA) will design, build, roll-out and implement the NDHM in the country.

Highlights of the draft 'Health Data Management Policy'

Applicability of the policy:

- The provisions of this policy shall apply to the entities involved in the NDHM, that includes individuals who have been issued an ID under this policy.
- The policy will apply to various entities like healthcare professionals, governing bodies of the health ministry, the NHA and relevant professional bodies and regulators.
- It would also apply to any healthcare provider who collects, stores and transmits health data in electronic form, insurers, charitable institutions and pharmaceutical companies.

Sensitive personal information

- According to the policy, "sensitive personal information" that can be collected include, financial information such as bank account or credit card or debit card details; physical and mental health data; biometric data and genetic data.
- Other forms of sensitive personal information that can be collected are sexual orientation; caste or tribe details; and religious or political belief or affiliation.

Rights of the users

- The draft states that people (known as data principals) who opt for the health ID will be given complete control and decision making power over the manner in which their personal data and any sensitive data is collected and processed.
- The data will only be accessible to medical professionals or institutions that also have IDs under the NDHM, provided the person gives consent (permission) for his or her data to be viewed.
- The patients will also have the right to cancel their Health ID, and ask for the removal of any personal data linked with such ID.
- If data is shared for clinical research or statistical analysis, it will have to be anonymised (hide the identity of the individual).

Data management

- The data, will be stored at three levels — central, state or union territory, and, lastly, at the health facility level. At each level, only that much data will be stored, which is necessary for functionality at that level.
- According to the policy, entities who will have access to NDHM data will have a designated data protection officer who can be approached with inquiries or questions by holders of health IDs.
- Those processing the data, including health information providers and health information users are expected to formulate and implement a "personal data breach (violation) management mechanism".
- This is to ensure that any violation, unauthorised or accidental disclosure, sharing, alteration or use of the personal data, is immediately reported to the NHA and other relevant entities.
- Further, the NHA will formulate and implement procedures to identify, track, review and investigate, such incidents and will maintain a record of these instances along with the action taken.
- Any data violation, can result in the removal of the employee who is responsible for the violation or the cancellation of contracts where service providers are involved.

National Health Authority (NHA)

- National Health Authority (NHA) is an attached office of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, with full functional autonomy.
- It is governed by a Governing Board chaired by the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare.
- It is headed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who is an officer of the rank of Secretary to the Government of India.

- NHA is also the apex body responsible for implementing India's flagship public health insurance scheme - Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.

1.5 COMMON VOTERS LIST

Why in News: Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has discussed the possibility of preparing a common voters' list for elections to all local bodies, state assemblies and Lok Sabha. This is a move that ties in with the idea of simultaneous elections in the country to the Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local bodies.

Constitutional Provisions for Conducting Elections

Role of Election Commission

Article 324(1) of the Constitution empowers the EC to supervise, direct, and control the preparation and revision of electoral rolls for all the elections to Parliament and state legislatures.

Role of State Election Commission

- Articles 243K and 243ZA deal with elections to panchayats and municipalities in the states.
- These give the power of superintendence, direction and control of preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of these elections to the State Election Commission (SEC).

Types of Voters Lists in India

- As the SECs are free to prepare their own electoral rolls for local body elections, the voters' list for the panchayat and municipality elections is different from the one used for Parliament and Assembly elections in many states in the country.
- Therefore, there are some states which have the same voters' list as that of the Election Commission; whereas, some other states have a different voters' list.

States with same voters' list as that of EC

- Each SEC is governed by a separate state Act.
- Some state laws allow the SEC to borrow and use the EC's voter's rolls for the local body elections.
- Currently, a majority of the states use the EC's voters list, instead of their own, to elect their municipalities and panchayats.

States with different voters' list from EC

- But in some states, the state commission uses the EC's voters list as the basis for the preparation and revision of rolls for municipality and panchayat elections.
- Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Odisha, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir have their own electoral rolls for local body polls.

Idea of Common Electoral Roll

- The common electoral roll is among the promises made by the BJP in its manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections last year.
- The incumbent government has pitched a common electoral roll and simultaneous elections as a way to save an enormous amount of effort and expenditure.
- However, the pitch for a single voters list is not new.
- **The Law Commission recommended it in its 255th report in 2015.**

Election Commission of India

- The EC too adopted a similar stance in 1999 and 2004.
- It had noted that the non-conformity of preparation of electoral rolls by the EC and the SECs causes duplication of the same task between two different agencies.
- Further, the EC pointed out that it adds to the confusion among voters, since they may find their names present in one roll, but absent in another.

Viability of a Common Electoral Roll

Benefits

- A common electoral roll would save the exchequer an enormous amount of expenditure.
- Preparation of a separate voters list causes duplication of essentially the same task between two different agencies, thereby duplicating the effort, besides the expenditure.

Challenges

- However, this change would require a massive consensus-building exercise, which may not be easy given the suspicion between the states and the centre.
- Apart from the political challenges, there exist administrative challenges too.
- The boundaries of the EC's polling station may not necessarily match that of the wards. So the EC's voters list has to be fashioned in a way to fit the SEC's wards.

Implementation of the Idea

There are two options available to implement the idea of a common electoral roll:

- A constitutional amendment to Articles 243K and 243ZA that give the power of superintendence, direction and control of preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of local body elections to the SECs.
- The amendment would make it mandatory to have a single electoral roll for all elections in the country.
- Second option is to persuade the state governments to tweak their respective laws and adopt the Election Commission's (EC) voters list for municipal and panchayat polls.

1.6 PVTG – GREAT ANDAMANESE TRIBE

Why in News: Five members of the Great Andamanese tribe, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), have tested positive for COVID-19. This is one of the first cases of COVID-19 infections among the endangered PVTGs of the region.

The Great Andamanese

- The Great Andamaneseare an indigenous people of the Great Andaman archipelago in the Andaman Islands.
- Historically, the Great Andamanese lived throughout the archipelago, and were divided into ten major tribes.
- Great Andamanese are one of five PVTGs that reside in Andamans archipelago.

Origin

- The Great Andamanese are classified by anthropologists as one of the Negrito peoples.
- The Andaman Negritos are thought to be the first inhabitants of the islands, having emigrated from the mainland tens of thousands of years ago

Population Status

- Their number stands at 51 (some sources say 57-60) as per the last study carried out by Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti in 2012.
- As per an anthropologist at the Anthropological Survey of India, in the 1850s, the Great Andamanese numbered between 5,000 and 8,000.
- Then a penal colony was set up and diseases like syphilis, gonorrhoea, flu and others spread.
- By 1901, their population had dropped to 625, and by the 1931 Census, only 90 Great Andamanese were left.
- By the 1960s, they were down to a mere 19, and were settled on Strait Island of the Andaman islands.

- This persistent decline in their population is because of their vulnerability to illnesses. Other reasons for population decline include- alcohol, colonial warfare and loss of hunting territory.

Language Spoken: The Great Andamanese speak Jeru dialect among themselves.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

- In India, tribal population makes up for 8.6% of the total population.
- Tribal groups are at different stages of social, economic and educational development.
- While some tribal communities have adopted a mainstream way of life at one end of the spectrum, there are 75 Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) called as PVTGs.
- PVTGs are more vulnerable among the tribal groups.

Criteria for Recognition

The criteria for identifying Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups are-

- Pre-agricultural level of technology
- Low level of literacy
- Economic backwardness
- A declining or stagnant population

75 tribal groups have been categorized categorized by Ministry of Home Affairs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)s.

Geographical Distribution

- PVTGs reside in 18 States and UT of A&N Islands.
- The highest number of PVTGs are found in Odisha (13), followed by Andhra Pradesh (12), Bihar including Jharkhand (9) Madhya Pradesh including Chhattisgarh (7) Tamil Nadu (6) Kerala and Gujarat having five groups each.
- The remaining PVTGs live in West Bengal (3) Maharashtra (3), two each in Karnataka and Uttarakhand and one each in Rajasthan, Tripura and Manipur.
- All the four tribal groups in Andamans, and one in Nicobar Islands, are recognised as PVTGs.

Developmental Initiatives

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs implements the Scheme of "Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)" exclusively for them.

- Activities for development of PVTGs are undertaken in sectors of education, health, livelihood and skill development, agricultural development, housing & habitat, conservation of culture etc.

PVTGs in Andaman & Nicobar Islands

- The five PVTGS residing in Andamans are:
  - Great Andamanese- They have a dwindling population.
  - Jarawas
  - Onges- They have a dwindling population as well. There population numbers was around 107 in 2012 as per Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti.
  - Shompens
  - Sentinelese
- This is besides the Nicobarese, who are Scheduled Tribes.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

❖ **Paper II (GS): All the Articles of this section are relevant to the following topics:**

- **India and its Neighbourhood – Relations**
- **Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and / or affecting India's Interests**

❖ **Prelims Oriented Questions and Places in News for Maps/ Matching**

2.1 ASEAN

Why in News: India is looking at the option of exiting its Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with ASEAN, if the terms are not in India's favour. India has been demanding renegotiation of certain provisions under a review mechanism, however, ASEAN has so far refused to accept India's demands.

- The proposed scope of the review includes issues like customs procedures, further liberalisation of trade in goods and exchange of trade data.
- ASEAN has told India that the review can only take place after it concludes the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) with China, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Korea.

Free Trade Agreement

- Free Trade Agreements (FTA) are negotiated agreements between two or more countries in which the countries cooperate and agree on certain conditions that affect trade in goods and services.
- FTAs generally promote policies that involve the trade of goods without taxes, tariffs, and other trade barriers. Generally, these agreements are designed to reduce barriers to trade between the signatories.
- Countries participate in FTAs in order to boost their industries' access to new markets and customers.
- In addition, FTAs are designed to benefit consumers through an increase in competition in the market which increases supply and, ultimately, reduces prices.

ASEAN

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is a regional intergovernmental organization comprising ten countries in Southeast Asia.
- The 10 countries under ASEAN are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- India places great importance on developing its relationship with ASEAN due to the organization's economic, political, and strategic significance in the larger Asia-Pacific region.
- Further, strong ties with ASEAN can help to expand India's market access, and to build greater connectivity between India's northeastern states that border the Southeast Asian region.
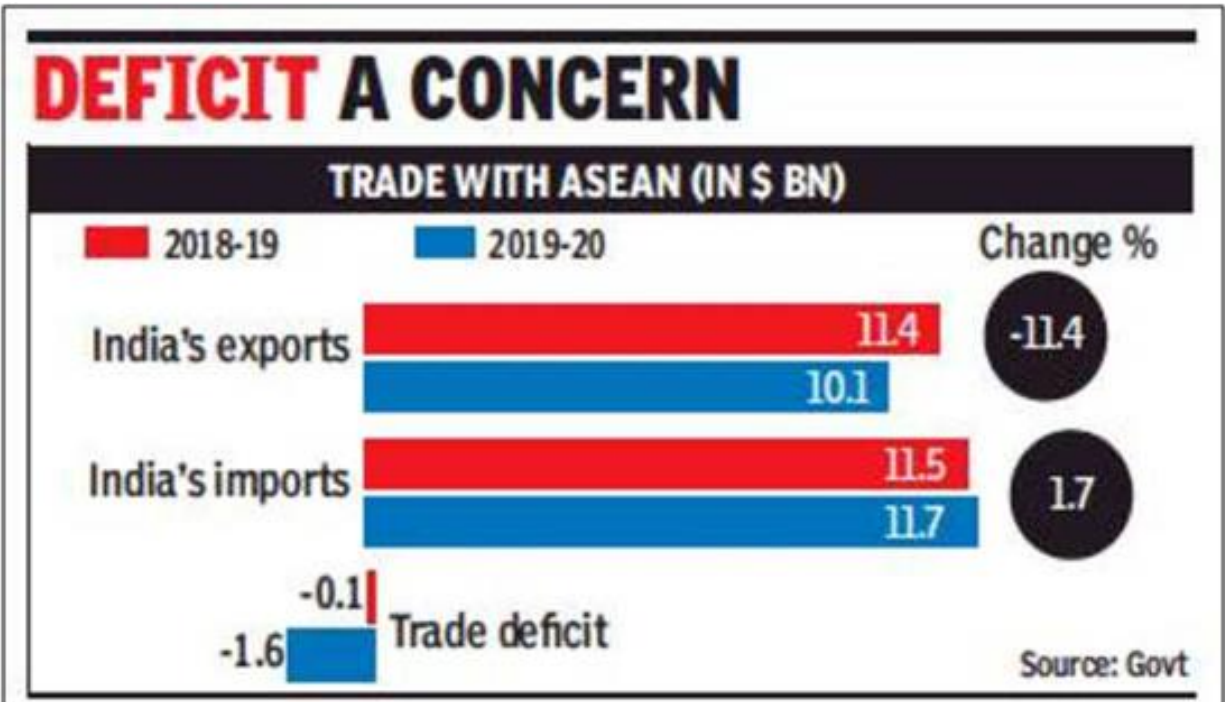
ASEAN–India Free Trade Area (AIFTA)

- The ASEAN–India Free Trade Area (AIFTA) is a free trade area among the ten-member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and India.
- The agreement was signed in 2009, and the free trade area came into effect in 2010.
- Under the Agreement, ASEAN Member States and India have agreed to open their respective markets by progressively reducing and eliminating duties on 76.4% coverage of goods.
- The ASEAN-India Trade in Services Agreement was signed in November 2014.
- It contains provisions on transparency, domestic regulations, recognition, market access, national treatment and dispute settlement.
- The ASEAN-India Investment Agreement was also signed in November 2014.
- The Investment Agreement stipulates protection of investment to ensure fair and equitable treatment for investors, non-discriminatory treatment in expropriation or nationalization as well as fair compensation.

Issues with AIFTA

Increasing trade deficit:

- According to a report by the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, India's imports from ASEAN countries has increased significantly in comparison to its exports to ASEAN after signing these agreements.
- India's exports to ASEAN countries were $23 billion in 2010, which increased only to $36 billion in 2018. At the same time, India's imports from these countries increased from $30 billion in 2010 to $57 billion in 2018.
- A NITI Aayog study reveals that India's trade deficit with ASEAN doubled to $10 billion in 2017 from $5 billion in 2011.
- A trade deficit is an amount by which the cost of a country's imports exceeds its exports
- Apart from the increase in total trade deficit, a sector wise analysis shows that the quality of trade has also worsened under India ASEAN FTA. Sectors where trade deficit has worsened for India account for approximately 75% of India's exports to ASEAN.
- One of the reasons for the growing deficit is the low utilisation of the FTA route by Indian exporters to ASEAN countries because of difficulties faced in negotiating the rules.
- Thus, a review of the India-ASEAN FTA could help improve utilisation in India by making the pact simpler and more user-friendly.

DEFICIT A CONCERN

TRADE WITH ASEAN (IN $ BN)

2018-19 ■ 2019-20 ■ Change %

India's exports: 11.4 / 10.1 — -11.4

India's imports: 11.5 / 11.7 — 1.7

Trade deficit: -0.1 / -1.6

Source: Govt

Export of Chinese goods to India

- Further, the presence of Chinese companies in ASEAN countries has complicated issues, as these Chinese companies use the benefit of lower tariffs to export goods into India.
- Further, India suspects that some Chinese goods are merely repackaged in a few of the FTA countries and shipped to India without any value addition.

Reduced benefits on the services front

- At the same time, India was expected to benefit more on the services front, with software professionals and nurses getting easy access to Asean markets.
- However, this did not become reality. For example, the number of fresh visas issued to Indians from Singapore has reduced over a period of time.

2.2.1 INDUS WATER TREATY

Why in News: The World Bank has expressed its inability on appointment of a neutral expert or court of arbitration for settlement of a water dispute between India and Pakistan.

Pakistan is constructing the hydroelectric project Diamer Basha on Indus river in Gilgit-Baltistan disputed territory of PoK.

India has expressed its objection over its location as it is not World Bank's policy to finance any disputed project, after which World Bank declined funding of the dam. Now, this dam is being funded by China.

Indus Water Treaty

- It is the treaty between the Government of India and the Government of Pakistan with twin objectives:
- Water sharing of river Indus and its tributaries between the upper riparian India and lower riparian Pakistan.
- Optimum utilisation of the waters of the Indus system of rivers.
- It was signed under the arbitration of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (which is now World Bank) in Pakistan in 1960.
- The Indus Waters Treaty is one of the most liberal water distribution agreements between the two countries as it gives India 20% of the water from the Indus River System and the rest 80% to Pakistan.

Rivers Covered under the Treaty

The treaty covers the water distribution and sharing rights of:

- **Three Eastern Rivers of Ravi, Beas and Sutlej and their tributaries**
- **Three Western Rivers of Indus, Jhelum and Chenab and their tributaries**

Major Provisions of the Treaty

Water Sharing

- Under this treaty, India got control exclusive over all the waters of the eastern rivers of Beas, Ravi and Sutlej.
- Pakistan got control over the waters of the western rivers of Indus, Chenab and Jhelum except for except for specified domestic, non-consumptive and agricultural use permitted to India.
- All the waters of the three eastern rivers, averaging around 33 million acre-feet (MAF), were allocated to India for exclusive use.
- The waters of the western rivers averaging to around 135 MAF were allocated to Pakistan except for 'specified domestic, non-consumptive and agricultural use permitted to India,' according to the treaty.
- India has also been given the right to generate hydroelectricity through the run of the river (RoR) projects on the western rivers which, subject to specific criteria for design and operation, is unrestricted.

Permanent Indus Commission

- A Permanent Indus Commission was set up by the United Nations for resolving any disputes that may arise in water sharing, with a mechanism for arbitration to resolve conflicts amicably.
- As per the Treaty, both India and Pakistan have created a permanent post of Commissioner for Indus Waters which together constitutes the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC).
- It is also entrusted with the implementation of the Treaty.
- The water commissioners of Pakistan and India are required to meet twice a year and arrange technical visits to projects' sites and critical river head works.

Information Exchange

- Both sides are required to exchange information related to river flows observed by them, not later than three months of their observation.
- They also exchange specified information on agricultural use every year and the quantum of water being used under the treaty.
- India is also under obligation to supply information of its storage and hydroelectric projects as specified.

Major Issues of IWT

- In 2016, Pakistan had approached the World Bank raising concerns of India's Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric power projects being constructed in Jammu & Kashmir region. India then requested for neutral experts to inspect the plants. The World Bank permitted India to proceed with the projects.
- India also expresses its objection to Pakistan's Left Bank Outfall Drain (LBOD) project which passes through the Rann of Kutch in India's Gujarat. The lower riparian state is in India and hence it needs to be given all details. There is also the danger of flooding in the state of Gujarat.
- The Indian government has decided some years back to review the suspension of Tulbul project. The project got suspended in 1987 after Pakistan's objection.
- Post Uri attacks on India, Indian Prime Minister Modi remarked that blood and water cannot flow simultaneously which was an indication that India can rethink the provision of the IWT.
- India does not use its entire share of water it is entitled to as per the provisions of the IWT. About 2 million acre feet (MAF) of water from the River Ravi flows into Pakistan unutilised by India. However, GOI is taking slew of measures for that.
- After Pulwama attacks in 2019, the Indian government decided that all water flowing into Pakistan from the three eastern rivers, will be diverted to Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan for different uses.

India's Utilization of Eastern Rivers

To utilise the waters of the Eastern rivers which have been allocated to India for exclusive use, India has constructed-

- Bhakra Dam on Satluj
- Pong and Pandoh Dam on Beas
- Ranjitsagar on Ravi
- These storage works, together with other works like Beas-Sutlej Link, Madhopur-Beas Link, and Indira Gandhi Nahar Project have helped India utilise nearly the entire share (95 per cent) of the eastern river waters.
- However, about two MAF of water annually from Ravi is reported to be still flowing unutilised to Pakistan.
- To stop the flow of these waters, the Centre is currently taking steps like-
    - Resumption of construction of Shahpurkandi project
    - Construction of Ujh multipurpose project

2.3 INDIA-MALDIVES

Why in News: With focus on greater connectivity, India has announced its commitment to several developmental projects in Maldives.

Background

- Since 2019, Maldives has focussed strongly on its 'India First' policy.
- Similarly, India has worked pro-actively to deepen its ties with the Maldives, under its 'Neighbourhood First' policy.
- Now, India announced its commitment to several developmental projects in Maldives, as well as other steps towards closer relations. These include:
    - $500 million Greater Malé Connectivity Project
    - Direct cargo ferry service
    - Creation of an air travel bubble
    - Uninterrupted supply of essential commodities
    - Additional financial aid

Greater Malé Connectivity Project

- India has decided to support the implementation of Greater Malé Connectivity Project (GMCP) through a financial package consisting of a grant of $100 million and a new line of credit of $400 million.
- This will be the largest civilian infrastructure project in Maldives, connecting Malé (the capital) with three neighbouring islands — **Villingili, Gulhifalhu (where a port is being built) and Thilafushi (new industrial zone).**
- Once completed, this project will improve connectivity between the four islands, boost economic activity, generate employment and promote holistic urban development in the Malé region.
- **Note:** A line of credit is a credit (borrowing) facility given by a bank or other financial institution to a government, business or individual customer. It is effectively a source of funds that a borrower can rely on, when it needs money.

Direct cargo ferry service

- India also announced that a direct cargo ferry service between India and the Maldives will begin soon.
- The service is expected to enhance sea connectivity and provide predictability in supplies for importers in Maldives and exporters in India.

Air travel bubble

- India also announced the creation of an air travel bubble with the Maldives.
- An air travel bubble is a bilateral arrangement between two countries under which airlines from both countries can operate international flights with a set of regulations and restrictions.
- The bubble will facilitate movement of people from both sides for employment, tourism and medical emergencies. However, health protocols in both countries will be strictly followed.
- Maldives is the first neighbouring country with which an air bubble is being operationalised by India. The first flight under the Air Bubble is expected to begin on August 18.

Supply of commodities

- India also announced its decision to renew quotas for supply of essential commodities to Maldives for 2020-21.
- The quotas assure food security, and supply of essential construction items, which will provide certainty and price stability for such essential items in the Maldives.

Financial aid

India has also announced an urgent financial assistance worth $250 million, to help Maldives to deal with the financial challenges due to the Covid-19 situation.

India-Maldives relations

- India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial links since a long time.
- India was among the first to recognize Maldives after its independence in 1965 and to establish diplomatic relations with the country.
- Except for a brief period between 2012 to 2018 (when there was a change in approach towards India), relations between the two countries have been close and multi-dimensional.
- Maldives recognizes the importance of India's strategic role in Maldives and looks at India as a net security provider.
- Since 1988, defence and security has been a major area of cooperation between India and Maldives.
- A comprehensive Action Plan for Defence has been signed between the two countries in 2016 to consolidate the defence partnership.
- India provides the largest number of training opportunities for Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF), which meets around 70% of their defence training requirements.

2.4 UAE-ISRAEL PACT

Why in News: In a joint statement released by the US, Israel and the UAE, the leaders of the three countries agreed to the full normalization of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates. **The agreement that will be called the 'Abraham Accord'**

Details of the Agreement

- The UAE will establish diplomatic relations with Israel in return for Israel's President committing to give up a stated plan to annex the West Bank which is the main territory of a state that the Palestinians want.
- In the next few weeks, Israel and the UAE will sit to finalise bilateral ties and cover areas of investment, tourism, the establishment of direct flights, security, telecommunications, technology, energy, healthcare, cultural exchange, environmental issues, and the establishment of embassies, in addition to other areas of cooperation.
- Israel and the UAE would also be forging closer people-to-people relations.
- After this, Israel will focus its efforts on expanding ties with other countries in the Arab and Muslim world, with assistance from the US and the UAE.

Israel and the Gulf Region

- It's a landmark agreement given that the UAE is only the third Arab country and the first in the Gulf region to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.
- With the exception of Jordan and Egypt, Israel does not have diplomatic relations with Gulf Arab states owing to its long-standing conflict with Palestinians.
- Israel had signed peace agreements with Egypt in 1979 and with Jordan in 1994.
- However, despite the absence of official diplomatic relations, Israel has been engaging with its neighbours with regard to issues like trade.

History of Arab-Israeli Relations

Arab-Israeli ties have historically been conflict-ridden.

1948 War

- Arab countries, including Egypt, Transjordan, Syria and Iraq, fought their first war with Israel in 1948 after the formation of the state of Israel was announced.
- The war ended with Israel capturing more territories (including West Jerusalem) than what the UN Partition Plan originally proposed for a Jewish state.

More Wars

- After that, Israel and Arab states fought three more major wars — the 1956 Suez conflict, the 1967 Six-Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War.
- After the 1967 war, Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt, East Jerusalem and the West Bank from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria.
- This lead Arab countries to declare their famous three 'NOs' — no peace with Israel, no talks with Israel and no recognition of Israel".

Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt in 1979

- After the death of Egypt President Gamal Abdel Nasser, his successor Anwar Sadat started making plans to get Sinai back from Israel.
- His efforts, coupled with American pressure on Israel, led to the Camp David Accords of 1978.
- In 1979, Israel and Egypt concluded their peace treaty, as part of which Israel withdrew from Sinai in return for Egyptian recognition.

Peace Treaty between Israel and Jordan in 1994

- In 1988, after an initial agreement reached between the two countries collapsed, Jordan abandoned its claims to the West Bank and said it would accept a deal between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel.
- The Oslo Accords, under which the PLO recognised Israel and was allowed to form the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza, created the based for an Israel-Jordan deal.
- The enmity between the two countries came to an end in July 1994 with the Washington Declaration by Jordan's King Hussein and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin under the watch of U.S. President Bill Clinton.
- Thus, in 1994, Jordan became the second Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel.

The Road to Israel-UAE Agreement

- The old enmity between Arab countries and Israel has dissipated over the years.
- The Sunni Arab kingdoms in the Gulf region such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE had developed backroom contacts with Israel over the past several years.

Convergence of Interests

- One of the major factors that brought them closer has been their shared antipathy towards Iran.
- Both these blocs were wary of U.S. President Barack Obama's Iran outreach.

- Further, this is an election year in the U.S. and if a Democratic President comes to power and restores the Iran deal, both the Israeli and the Arab blocs in West Asia would come under pressure to live with an empowered Iran in what President Obama called "cold peace".
- A formal agreement and enhanced security and economic ties make the Arab and Israeli sides better prepared to face such a situation.
- So there is a convergence of interests for the UAE, Israel and the U.S. to come together in the region.

Political Scenario in the USA

- With the US presidential elections around the corner, Trump may consider this agreement to be a foreign policy success.
- Even if the UAE-Israel agreement does not bring Israel-Palestine peace, the new equations that it will give rise to and the isolation of Iran, are already being heralded in the US as an achievement.
- With all these dynamics playing out, the two blocs of West Asia, Israel and UAE, which are both American allies have been brought together under Trump's Presidency.
- US has arranged backroom conferences and secret talks between Israel, Saudi Arabia, UAE and several other countries in 2019.
- These meetings laid the foundations for the agreement.

News Summary

Israel and the UAE have agreed to the full normalization of relations between their two countries.

Significance of the Agreement

Implications for Geo-Politics of West Asia

- The peace agreement is significant as it has the potential to change the geopolitics of West Asia and beyond.
- It is strongly expected that other Arab states will follow the suit and establish their diplomatic ties with Israel which would open a new chapter in Arab-Israel ties.
- If this happens, it would bring all Sunni nations in the region in an anti-Iran alliance with Israel that they have secretly wished for all these years.
- The Saudi bloc, consisting of Egypt, the UAE, Bahrain and others, see their interests being aligned with that of the U.S. and Israel.

Implications for Palestine's Cause

- Arab countries have signaled that they are ready to live with Israel's occupation of Palestine.

- Now, Turkey and Iran emerge as the strongest supporters of the Palestinians in the Muslim world.

Implications for South Asia

- In South Asia, it will put Pakistan in a bind.
- Despite thinking about establishing diplomatic ties with Israel for nearly two decades, Pakistan never did it plunge for fear of a domestic backlash.
- Pakistan is unlikely to be seen as joining an Arab alliance that has effectively abandoned another "Islamic" cause dear to Pakistan, that of Palestine.

Global Reactions

Many countries including the European powers and India have welcomed it.

India's Reaction

- India has welcomed the normalisation of ties between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), calling them both "key strategic partners".
- For India, it will also mean continuing to walk a balance on West Asian politics and watch its ties with Iran more closely.
- New Delhi would also continue to push for a two-state solution as part of a negotiated settlement between Israel and Palestine and it reaffirmed its "traditional support" for the Palestinian cause.

Palestine's Reaction

- President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority which seeks a two-state solution, lashed out against the deal as a "betrayal" by the UAE.
- For the Palestinians, the Israeli commitment that it will not pursue its plan to annex the West Bank, is an empty concession – the deal does not address the Palestinian demand for statehood.
- Along with Palestine's leaders, Turkey and Iran have also lashed out at the UAE.

2.5 REMOTE LEARNING REACHABILITY

Why in News: The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has released the Remote Learning Reachability report.

- The report measured remote learning capacities among pre-primary, primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary schoolchildren.
- The report is based on data gathered from 100 countries, measuring public access to the internet, television and radio.

Highlights of the Remote Learning Reachability report

- The corona virus pandemic has caused the largest disruption to education in history, with schools closed in some 160 countries in mid-July, affecting an estimated 1.5 billion students.
- The current situation is a global education emergency and the impact of this can be felt in economies and societies for decades in the future.
- To prevent the spread of the virus, many countries switched to online learning. However, at least 463 million – or 31 per cent – of schoolchildren worldwide have been unable to access remote learning.
- Even children with adequate access (to remote learning) face other obstacles. These include lack of a good workspace at home, pressure to do other work for the family, or a lack of technical support when computer problems arise.

Impact on rural and poor communities

- Irrespective of the country's level of economic development, students in rural areas represent the vast majority of those who cannot be reached by any of the three remote learning modes.
- In addition, students from the poorest 40 per cent of families account for a disproportionately high percentage of those who cannot be reached.
- Globally, 3 out of 4 students who cannot be reached by remote learning opportunities come from rural areas and/or poor households.
- Thus, the switch to online learning modes has only widened the learning gap between children from rich and poor families.

Geographical gap

- Further, the report highlights wide geographical differences in children's access to remote learning.
- The number of children affected in Europe are far less than the number of children affected in Africa and Asia.

Highlights from India

- In India, over 15 lakh schools have been closed due to the pandemic affecting 28.6 crore children from pre-primary to secondary levels. This adds to the 60 lakh children who were already out of school prior to the COVID-19.
- As per the report, only a quarter of households (24 per cent) in India have access to the internet and there is a large rural-urban and gender divide.
- Students, especially girls, from most marginalised communities do not have easy access to smart phones, and even if they do, internet connectivity is poor.
- The learning gap is likely to widen across high, middle and low-income families, as children from economically disadvantaged families cannot access remote learning.

Way Ahead

- Blended (mixed) approaches are needed, involving communities, parents, volunteers to reach children and support their learning in these times.
- The UNICEF urged governments to prioritise the safe re-opening of schools when they begin easing lockdown restrictions.
- School opening policies and practices must include expanding access to education, including remote learning, especially for marginalised groups.
- Education systems must also be adapted and built to deal with future crises.

UNICEF

- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), originally known as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund is a United Nations agency responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide.
- It was created by the United Nations General Assembly in 1946, to provide emergency food and healthcare to children and mothers in countries that had been devastated by World War II.
- In 1950, UNICEF's mandate was extended to address the long-term needs of children and women in developing countries everywhere. In 1953 it became a permanent part of the United Nations System.
- Headquartered in New York City, it is among the most widespread and recognizable social welfare organizations in the world, with a presence in 192 countries and territories.
- It is governed by a 36-member executive board that establishes policies, approves programs, and oversees administrative and financial plans.

SECURITY AND DEFENCE

❖ **Paper III: This section is relevant to the following topics:**

• **Linkages between development and spread of extremism.**
• **Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.**
• **Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention**
• **Security challenges and their management in border areas; linkages of organized crime with terrorism**
• **Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate**

❖ **Prelims Oriented Questions**

3.1 DRAFT POLICY FOR DEFENCE PRODUCTION and EXPORT

Why in News: The Ministry of Defence has released the draft defence production and export promotion policy (DPEPP 2020).

- The policy comes after the government had said in May 2020, that the armed forces will have to reduce their reliance on foreign weapon systems.
- With an annual defence budget of about $70 billion, India is behind only the US ($732 billion) and China ($261 billion) in terms of military expenditure around the globe.
- India is also the second-largest buyer of foreign weapons after Saudi Arabia in the world.
- The estimated size of the existing Indian defence industry is around Rs 80,000 crore, with the public sector's contribution of around 80%. Thus, it is important for India to improve its defence industrial base by increasing private sector participation in the defence sector.

Goals and objectives of the policy

- Achieve a turnover of Rs 1,75,000 Crores (US$ 25Bn) including export of Rs 35,000 Crore (US$ 5 Billion) in Aerospace and Defence goods and services by 2025.
- Develop a strong and competitive Defence industry, (including Aerospace and Naval Ship building industry) to serve the needs of armed forces with quality products.
- Reduce dependence on imports and encourage local design and development under the Make in India initiatives.
- Promote export of defence products and become part of the global defence value chains.
- To create an environment that encourages R&D, creates Indian Intellectual Property ownership and promotes a strong and self-reliant defence industry.

Strategies under various focus areas

To achieve the above goals and objectives, the policy shares various strategies for multiple focus areas like, procurement reforms, export promotion, optimising resource allocation etc.

Procurement Reforms

- Imports of certain weapons would be banned through a negative list of weapons. This list would be updated periodically, without affecting the operational requirements of the Services.
- A Project Management Unit (PMU), with members from the Services, would be set up to support the acquisition process and facilitate management of the contracts. The unit will help by bringing in professional expertise in the process of acquisition.

- Efforts would be made to adopt a 'family of weapons approach' to standardize and optimize inventory and supply chain management.

Indigenization (development in India) and support to MSMEs/Start-ups

- An indigenization portal will be developed for Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs)/Ordnance Factory Board (OFBs)/Services to provide development support to MSMEs/Startups.
- The current provisions to enable Startups and MSMEs to participate in the procurement process would be reviewed and strengthened regularly.
- Defence Investor Cell in Department of Defence Production will support MSMEs, investors and vendors, for resolving issues with Central, State and other authorities

Optimize resource allocation

- Various studies have highlighted the need to increase cost effectiveness and improve efficiency in the use of Ministry of Defence resources.
- Thus, efforts would be made to evaluate and optimize various items of expenditure in the Defence budget.
- It will be compulsory for OFB and DPSUs to increase productivity, enhance quality, reduce costs and ensure timely execution of orders. This would be done by optimizing inventory management, improving skill levels and overall project management.

Investment Promotion and Ease of Doing Business

- Investments would be encouraged to provide specific focus on certain identified segments and technological areas.
- Investments in aviation sector that help to strengthen defence ecosystem would be facilitated in association with the Ministry of Civil Aviation.
- Incentives will be given to global Original Equipment Manufacturers and domestic industry to set up design and manufacturing facilities in India.
- Licensing process for defence industries would be eased by obtaining regular feedback from the industry and the applications for licenses will be handled in a time bound manner.

Promoting Innovation

- Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) framework, was launched (in 2018) to encourage innovation and technology development by providing necessary support to the start- ups in the defence sector.

- Under it, more than 50 startups are currently developing new technologies/ products.

- Over the next five years, iDEX would be further expanded to support additional 300 startups and develop new technologies.
- Mission RakshaGyan Shakti was launched in 2018, to promote greater culture of innovation and technology development and file greater number of patents in Defence PSUs and OFB.
- The Mission would be scaled up (expanded) for promoting creation of Intellectual Property in the sector and its commercial utilization.

Reforming the DPSUs and Ordnance factories

- Ordnance factories will be corporatized to make them competitive and to improve their productivity.
- DPSUs would be encouraged to use innovative strategies and tools like block-chain technology, Artificial Intelligence
- Disinvestment options will be explored in defence public sector undertakings (DPSUs).

Export Promotion

- Domestically manufactured defence products will be promoted through government to government agreements (with other countries).
- Export Promotion Cell, set up to support the industry to promote defence exports would be further strengthened and professionalized.
- It will be compulsory for DPSUs and OFB to have at least 25% of their revenue from exports by 2025.
- Defence Expo and Aero India will be positioned as major global events to showcase India's capabilities in defence manufacturing, and also to encourage exports.

Ordnance Factory Board

- Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) is a department functioning under the Department of Defence Production of Ministry of Defence.
- It is engaged in research, development, production, testing, marketing of products in the defence sector.
- Ordnance factories work towards indigenous production of defence equipment, with the primary objective of self-reliance.

ECONOMY

❖ **Paper III: The articles in this section are relevant to the following topics:**

- **Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.**
- **Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.**
- **Government Budgeting.**
- **Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.**
- **Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.**
- **Investment models.**

4.1 SUB MISSION ON AGRICULTURAL MECHANISATION

Why in News: The Centre has released Rs 553 crore to States under a scheme to promote mechanisation in the agriculture sector. This is part of the total budgetary outlay in the year 2020-21 for the Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) of Rs 1,033 crore.

Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanization

- The Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation (SMAM) was introduced in April 2014 with an aim to have inclusive growth of farm mechanisation to boost productivity.
- The scheme is implemented in all the states, to promote the usage of farm mechanization and increase the ratio of farm power to cultivable unit area up to 2.5 kW/ha.

Significance of Agricultural Mechanisation

It helps in increasing production through timely farm operations and cut in operations by ensuring better management of inputs.

Mission Objectives

The objectives of the Scheme are:

- Increasing the reach of farm mechanization to small and marginal farmers and to the regions where availability of farm power is low.
- Promoting 'Custom Hiring Centers' to offset the adverse economies of scale arising due to small landholding and high cost of individual ownership.
- Creating hubs for hi-tech & high value farm equipments.
- Creating awareness among stakeholders through demonstration and capacity building activities.
- Ensuring performance testing and certification at designated testing centers located all over the country.

Mission Strategy

To achieve the above objectives, the Mission will adopt the following strategies

- Conduct performance testing for various farm machineries and equipments at the four Farm Machinery Training and Testing Institutes (FMTTIs), designated State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) and ICAR institutions.

- Promote farm mechanization among stakeholders by way of on field and off-field training and demonstrations.
- Provide financial assistance to farmers for procurement of farm machinery and implements.
- Establish custom hiring centres of location and crop specific farm machinery and implements.
- Provide financial assistance to small and marginal farmers for hiring machinery and implements in low mechanized regions.

Mission Components

- **Promotion and Strengthening of Agricultural Mechanization through Training, Testing and Demonstration:** Aims to ensure performance testing of agricultural machinery and equipment, capacity building of farmers and end users and promoting farm mechanization through demonstrations.
- **Demonstration, Training and Distribution of Post Harvest Technology and Management (PHTM):** Aims at popularizing technology for primary processing, value addition, low cost scientific storage/transport and the crop by-product management through demonstrations, capacity building of farmers and end users. Provides financial assistance for establishing PHT units.
- Financial Assistance for Procurement of Agriculture Machinery and Equipment: Promotes ownership of various agricultural machinery & equipments as per norms of assistance.
- Establish Farm Machinery Banks for Custom Hiring: Provides suitable financial assistance to establish Farm Machinery Banks for Custom Hiring for appropriate locations and crops.
- Establish Hi-Tech, High Productive Equipment Hub for Custom Hiring: Provides financial assistance to set up hi-tech machinery hubs for high value crops like sugarcane, cotton etc.
- Promotion of Farm Mechanization in Selected Villages: Provides financial assistance to promote appropriate technologies and to set up Farm Machinery Banks in identified villages in the states.
- Financial Assistance for Promotion of Mechanized Operations/hectare Carried out Through Custom Hiring Centers: Provides financial assistance on per hectare basis to the beneficiaries hiring machinery/equipments from custom hiring centers in low mechanized areas.
- Promotion of Farm Machinery and Equipment in North-Eastern Region: Extends financial assistance to beneficiaries in high-potential but low mechanised states of north-east.

Funding Provisions: SMAM will have Central Sector Schemes under component No.1 & 2 (given above) in which Government of India contributes 100%.

It will be a Centrally Sponsored Schemes are covered under component No. 3 to 8 (given above) including Administrative and Flexi funds in which Government of India contributes 60% and states

contribute 40% except North eastern states and Himalayan regions states where it is 90 %(Central Share) and 10% (State Share). For Union Territories, it is 100% centre share.

4.2 FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVE

Why in News: India's foreign exchange reserves hit a fresh high of $534.5 billion in the week ended July 31.

Foreign Exchange Reserves

- Foreign exchange reserves are the foreign currencies held by a country's central bank. The reserves in India are managed by the Reserve Bank of India for the Indian government and the main component is foreign currency assets.
- Reserve Bank of India accumulates foreign currency reserves by purchasing from authorized dealers in open market operations.
- Reserve Bank of India Act and the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 set the legal provisions for governing the foreign exchange reserves.
- The demands on forex reserves are determined by the size of the external sector to GDP ratio, the degree of openness of the economy, and liquidity requirements.

Components of India's Foreign exchange reserves

(1) Foreign Currency Assets (FCA)

- FCA is maintained as a multi-currency portfolio comprising major currencies such as the dollar, euro, pound sterling, Japanese yen, etc, and is valued in terms of dollars.
- Additionally, it also comprises investments in US Treasury bonds, bonds of other selected governments, deposits with foreign central and commercial banks.
- This is the largest component of the Forex Reserves.
- The variations in the FCA occur mainly on account of purchase and sale of foreign exchange by RBI, income arising out of the deployment of forex reserves, external aid receipts of the central government and changes on account of revaluation of assets.

(2) Gold

Gold reserve is the gold held by the Reserve Bank of India with the intention to serve as a guarantee to redeem promises to pay depositors, note holders (e.g. paper money), or trading peers, or to secure a currency.

(3) Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)

- Special drawing rights (SDR) refer to an international type of monetary reserve currency created by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1969 that operates as a supplement to the existing money reserves of member countries.
- Created in response to concerns about the limitations of gold and dollars as the sole means of settling international accounts, SDRs augment international liquidity by supplementing the standard reserve currencies.
- SDRs are allocated by the IMF to its member countries and are backed by the full faith and credit of the member countries' governments.

Value of SDR

- The value of the SDR is calculated from a weighted basket of major currencies, including the U.S. dollar, the euro, Japanese yen, Chinese yuan, and British pound.
- The SDR basket is reviewed every five years, and sometimes earlier if warranted. Reviews take place to ensure that the SDR reflects the relative importance of currencies in the world's trading and financial systems.

Weightage of various currencies in SDR as determined in the 2015 review:

- S. Dollar: 41.73
- Euro: 30.93
- Chinese Yuan: 10.92
- Japanese Yen: 8.33
- Pound Sterling: 8.09

(4) Reserve Tranche Position (RTP)

- The primary means of financing the International Monetary Fund is through members' quotas. Each member of the IMF is assigned a quota, part of which is payable in SDRs or specified usable currencies ("reserve assets"), and part in the member's own currency.
- The difference between a member's quota and the IMF's holdings of its currency is a country's Reserve Tranche Position (RTP).
- It is basically an emergency account that IMF members can access at any time without agreeing to conditions or paying a service fee. In other words, a portion of a member country's quota can be withdrawn free of charge at its own discretion.
- The reserve tranches that countries hold with the IMF are considered their facilities of first resort, meaning they will tap into them before seeking a formal credit tranche that charges interest.

Weightage of various components:

- As on December 20, 2019, the proportion of various components in India's forex reserves is:
- FCA - 93% of total forex
- Gold - 6%
- SDR - 0.32%
- RTP in the IMF - 0.8%

Reasons for rise in forex reserves

Healthy inflow of funds in the form of foreign portfolio (FPI) and foreign direct investments (FDI)

- **FPI inflows:** The sharp rise in FPI inflows started after the government's decision in September to cut corporate tax rate. Between April and December 2019, FPIs pumped in a net $15 billion.
- **FDI inflows:** Since September 2019, FDI has been about $30 billion. A lot of FDI has also come in June and July too, especially the Rs 1 lakh crore plus investment by global tech giants in Jio. Decline in import bill on account of decline in crude oil prices Usually, crude accounts for almost 20 per cent of India's total import bill. The global spread of corona virus since February 2020 led to a crash in the Brent crude oil prices.
- Brent crude oil prices fell to levels of $20 per barrel towards March end, and dropped further and traded between $9 and $20 in April.
- **Dip in gold imports:** Gold, which was a big import component for India, witnessed a sharp decline of 95 per cent (in terms of weight) in the quarter ended June 2020 following the high prices and the lockdown induced by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Import savings:** Covid-19 related lockdowns impacted global trade, with India seeing in a sharp dip in import expenditure in various items, including electronics, gold, crude oil etc.

Impact on economy:

- The rising foreign exchange reserves provide the economy more strength in terms of covering the import expenditure.
- The rising reserves have also helped the Indian rupee to remain broadly stable since mid-March 2020, despite deterioration in some of the other macro parameters such as retail inflation, fiscal deficits and negative GDP growth.

4.3 PRADHAN MANTRI FASAL BIMA YOJANA

Why in News: Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) has seen a sharp drop in the number of farmers covered and sums insured in the current kharif cropping season.

Many states including Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Jharkhand, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh have exited or not signed up for the government's flagship crop insurance scheme, with more than half of the season gone by.

COVERAGE UNDER PMFBY & WBCIS DURING KHARIF

	2018	2019	2020#
Total Farmers*	217.80	202.53	114.05
Total Applications*	319.87	404.06	278.26
Sum Insured**	123484.42	132959.50	67926.12
Total Premium**	17201.07	19549.28	12131.75
Area Insured***	2.93	3.09	1.75

*In lakh; **Rs crore; ***Crore hectares; #As on Aug 10.

Reasons for Less Coverage

High Cost Incurred by the States on Premium Subsidy

- Under both PMFBY and another insurance scheme called Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (WBCIS), farmers pay premium rates amounting to just 2% of the sum insured on kharif crops, while 1.5% in rabi and 5% for annual horticultural crops.
- The gap between these and the actual premiums, payable to insurance companies, is to be met by government subsidy on a 50:50 Centre-State sharing formula.
- In 2019-20, gross premiums (kharif plus rabi) totaled more than Rs 27,000 crore. Out of this, farmers paid nearly Rs 4,000 crore, while the rest came from the Centre and state governments.

Voluntary Nature of Scheme

- Crop insurance was made optional with effect from the kharif season for 2020.

- Till 2019-20 rabi crop season, all farmers taking seasonal agricultural operations/Kisan Credit Card loans from banks were covered compulsorily under PMFBY/WBCIS, with their premium contributions automatically deducted and remitted to insurance companies.
- As the schemes have become voluntary, many farmers chose not to avail their benefits.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) was launched from Kharif 2016.

Its aim to support production in agriculture by providing an affordable crop insurance product to ensure comprehensive risk cover for crops of farmers against all non-preventable natural risks from pre-sowing to post-harvest stage.

Features of the Scheme

Small Premium Paid by Farmers:

- There is a uniform premium of only 2% to be paid by farmers for all Kharif crops and 1.5% for all Rabi crops.
- In case of annual commercial and horticultural crops, the premium to be paid by farmers will be only 5%.
- The balance premium will be paid by the Government to provide full insured amount to the farmers against crop loss on account of natural calamities.
- Until Rabi 2019-2020, there was no upper limit on Central Government subsidy which implies that even if balance premium is 90%, it will be borne by the Government.
- However, in February 2020, the Cabinet decided to cap the Centre's premium subsidy under these schemes for premium rates up to 30% for un-irrigated areas/crops and 25% for irrigated areas/crops.

Food Products Covered:

PMFBY is applicable to:

- Annual commercial or annual horticultural crops;
- Oilseeds
- Food crops (Cereals, Millets and Pulses)

Risks Covered and Exclusions: The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana will cover the following risks

- Local natural calamities like landslides, hailstorms, etc.

- Calamities leading to loss of yield like natural fire and lightning, floods, dry spells, droughts, cyclones, pests and diseases.
- Post harvest losses of crops can also be covered under this scheme. Coverage is available for those crops which are kept in "cut & spread" condition to dry in the field after harvesting, against specific perils of cyclone / cyclonic rains, unseasonal rains throughout the country.
- Localised losses are also covered under PMFBY. Loss and damage resulting from occurrence of identified localized risks i.e. hailstorm, landslide, and Inundation affecting isolated farms in the notified area.

Exclusions under PMFBY

War & kindred perils, nuclear risks, riots, malicious damage, theft, act of enmity, grazed and/or destroyed by domestic and/or wild animals.

Farmers Covered and Exclusions

- Compulsory Coverage for Loaned Farmers till 2019-20 Rabi
- All farmers taking seasonal agricultural operations/Kisan Credit Card loans from banks were covered compulsorily under PMFBY/WBCIS, with their premium contributions automatically deducted and remitted to insurance companies.
- Voluntary coverage may be obtained by all farmers not covered above, including Crop KCC/Crop Loan Account holders whose credit limit is not renewed.
- Presently Voluntary Coverage for both Loaned & Non-Loaned Farmers
- However, now the scheme has been made voluntary in nature for all the farmers, irrespective of if they are availing seasonal agricultural loans from banks.

Unit of Insurance

- The Scheme shall be implemented on an 'Area Approach basis' i.e., 'defined areas' for each notified crop for widespread calamities.
- The assumption is that all the insured farmers in 'Notified Area' for a crop, face similar risk exposures, incur to a large extent, identical cost of production per hectare, earn comparable farm income per hectare, and experience similar extent of crop loss due to the operation of an insured peril, in the notified area.

Weather based Crop Insurance Scheme (WBCIS)

- WBCIS is a unique Weather based Insurance Product designed to provide insurance protection against losses in crop yield resulting from adverse weather incidences.

- It provides payout against adverse rainfall incidence (both deficit & excess) during Kharif and adverse incidence in weather parameters like frost, heat, relative humidity, un-seasonal rainfall etc. during Rabi.
- It is not yield guarantee insurance.

Differences between Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme.

- The PMFBY is based on yield and the RWBCIS is based on proxies and farmers are provided insurance protection against adverse weather conditions such as excess rainfall, wind and temperature.
- The number of insured farmers under RWBCIS is relatively low.

4.4 GOODS AND SERVICES TAX (GST)

Why in News: The delay in the release of GST compensation cess and other dues has led to a dispute between the Centre and various States.

- Recently in July, the Centre completed the payments to States, for the Financial Year (FY) 2020. However, compensation remains pending for the four months of this financial year (April to July).
- The issue was raised in the previous GST Council meeting held in June 2020, where it was decided that a Council meeting will soon be held in July to discuss only the compensation issue. However, the meeting is yet to be held.
- A fiscal year (or a financial year) is a one-year period that companies and governments use for financial reporting and budgeting. In India, this 1 year period starts from 1st April and ends on 31st March.

Goods and Services Tax

- Goods and Services Tax (GST) is an indirect tax (or consumption tax) imposed in India on the supply of goods and services. It is a comprehensive multistage, destination based tax.
- Comprehensive because it has subsumed (included) almost all the indirect taxes except a few.
- Multi-staged as it is imposed at every step in the production process, but is meant to be refunded to all parties in the various stages of production other than the final consumer.
- A destination based tax, as it is collected from point of consumption and not point of origin like previous taxes.

- Under GST, States gave up some of their taxation rights for which the Centre is supposed to share the tax revenue with the States.

Components of GST

CGST and SGST

- GST includes a tax imposed by the Centre on the intra-state supply of goods and services called Central GST (CGST).
- Further it also includes a tax imposed by states/UTs called the State GST (SGST/UTGST) on these goods and services.
- CGST and SGST are imposed simultaneously on every purchase of goods and services, except the goods and services that are exempt from it.
- The consumer pays an overall rate under one of the major tax slabs — 5%, 12%, 18% and 28% — out of which half goes to the Centre and half to the state where consumption of the goods or services takes place.

IGST

- Integrated GST (IGST) is the GST levied on inter-state transactions and exports/imports of goods and services.
- IGST is a combination of SGST and CGST and is imposed and administered by the Centre. The Centre then distributes it between the consuming state and itself.

Compensation Cess

- In addition, a compensation cess — ranging from 1-200% — is imposed on sin and luxury goods like cigarettes, pan masala and certain categories of automobiles, over and above the topmost slab of 28%.
- For example, SUV vehicles (more than 4 metres) are charged 50 per cent GST, of which the GST tax rate is 28 per cent and the compensation cess is 22 per cent.
- Sin goods are goods which consider harmful to society.

What is Compensation Cess?

- Compensation cess was introduced to compensate States for the loss in their revenue due to the implementation of GST.
- Thus, as per the GST (Compensation to States) Act, 2017, states are guaranteed compensation for a transition period of five years.
- Under this, States are guaranteed a 14 per cent tax revenue growth from FY 2017 to FY 2022. FY 2016 was taken as the base year for the calculation of this 14 percent growth.

- The collected compensation cess goes to the Consolidated Fund of India, and is then transferred to the Public Account of India, where a GST compensation cess account has been created.
- States are compensated bi-monthly from the accumulated funds in this account.

GST Council

- GST Council is the governing body of GST. It is headed by the Union finance minister, who is assisted by the finance ministers of all the states of India.
- It is an apex member committee to modify, reconcile or to procure any law or regulation based on the context of goods and services tax in India.
- It is also responsible for revision of rates of the goods and services in India.

News Summary

The Compensation issue

- Compensation payments to states started getting delayed since October 2019, as overall GST collection started to decrease.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has increased this gap, with GST collections declining 41% in the April-June quarter.
- While the 14% growth rate in tax revenue has compounded (increased) over the base year 2015-16, collections have remained around the same level for two years.
- The Centre cleared compensation dues for FY20 of Rs 1.65 lakh crore, when the collection under compensation cess was only Rs 95,444 crore. This implies that the payments were over 70% higher than the collection.
- Due to this, the Finance Ministry has recently said that the Centre is unable to compensate the States.

Options for meeting the compensation gap

- It is being said, that the 14% growth rate for compensation is not linked to the current economic realities and should be revised.
- Borrowing from the market has been discussed in the GST Council as one of the possible solutions, although the legality of the option will have to be explored.
- Another option is increasing the GST rates or restructuring the GST slabs. The states, however, agree that changing the rate structure needs to be done only after the effects of the slowdown due to the pandemic reduce.

4.5 ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

Why in News: Election Commissioner Ashok Lavasa has resigned to join Asian Development Bank (ADB) as vice president.

Asian Development Bank

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is a regional development bank established in 1966.
- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is headquartered in Manila, Philippines.
- The ADB was modeled closely on the World Bank, and has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed in proportion with members' capital subscriptions.

As of 31 December 2018, ADB's five largest shareholders are:

- Japan and the United States (each with 15.6% of total shares)
- China (6.4%)
- India (6.3%)
- Australia (5.8%)

Organization

- The highest policy-making body of the bank is the Board of Governors, composed of one representative from each member state.
- The Board of Governors also elects the bank's president, who is the chairperson of the Board of Directors and manages ADB. The president has a term of office lasting five years, and may be reelected.
- Traditionally, and because Japan is one of the largest shareholders of the bank, the president has always been Japanese.

Mission

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) envisions a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty in the region.
- Its primary mission is to foster growth and cooperation among countries in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Funding

- The ADB raises capital through the international bond markets.

- It also relies on member contributions, retained earnings from lending, and the repayment of loans for funding of the organization.

Member Nations

- Although the majority of the Bank's members are from the Asia-Pacific region, the industrialized nations are also well-represented.
- From 31 members at its establishment in 1966, ADB has grown to encompass 68 members—of which 49 are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside.
- The founding members include Japan, US, India and UK.

Assistance

- ADB assists its members, and partners, by providing loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments to promote social and economic development.
- A major landmark was the establishment in 1974 of the Asian Development Fund (ADF) to provide low-interest loans to ADB's poorest members.

The two main lending operations of ADB are:

- Ordinary Capital Resources (OCR)
- Asian Development Fund (ADF)

4.6 RBI ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

Why in News: The Reserve Bank of India has released its Annual Report for 2019-20.

Highlights of the report

Decrease in consumption:

- The report has indicated that the economy will take some time to recover, as the shock to consumption is severe.
- Private consumption has lost the component of discretionary (optional) spending, like transport services, hospitality, recreation and cultural activities.
- The impact on urban consumption demand has been the worst. Among various indicators, passenger vehicle sales and supply of consumer durables in the first quarter of 2020-21 have dropped to a fifth and a third, respectively. Further, air passenger traffic has also decreased significantly.

- The total e-way bills generated, which acts an indicator of domestic trading activity, increased by 70.3 per cent in June 2020 on a month-on-month basis. In July, however, it increased by only 11.4 per cent and remained 7.3 per cent lower than a year ago.
- However, various indicators show that rural demand has performed better. Tractor sales picked up by 38.5% in July, due to high kharif sowing, and the contraction (reduction) in motorcycle sales improved in July.
- However, a complete recovery in rural demand is not taking place due to slow wage growth.

Consumer confidence

- RBI's survey for July has indicated that consumer confidence fell down to an all-time low.

- A majority of respondents reported a negative outlook related to the general economic situation, employment, inflation and income. However, respondents indicated expectations of recovery for the year ahead.

Increase in Inequities

- The pandemic has also exposed new inequities — white collar employees can work from home, while essential workers have to work on site, exposing themselves to the risk of getting infected.
- A white collar worker is a person who performs professional, desk, managerial, or administrative work.
- In some areas of work such as hospitality, hotels and restaurants, airlines and tourism, employment losses are more severe than in other areas, and the poorest have suffered the worst in the pandemic.

Currency notes in circulation

- The value and volume of banknotes in circulation increased by 14.7 per cent and 6.6 per cent, respectively, during 2019-20.
- Currency notes of Rs 2,000 denomination were not printed in 2019-20 and the circulation of these notes have declined over the years.
- The number of pieces of Rs 2,000 denomination notes constituted 2.4 per cent of the total volume of notes at end-March 2020, down from 3 per cent at end-March 2019 and 3.3 per cent at end-March 2018.
- In value terms also, the share of Rs 2,000 denomination notes has come down to 22.6 per cent at end-March 2020, from 31.2 per cent at end-March 2019 and 37.3 per cent at end-March 2018.

- On the other hand, the circulation of currency notes of denomination of Rs 500 and Rs 200 has gone up substantially, both in terms of volume and value over the three years beginning 2018.

Fake notes in circulation

- There was an increase in counterfeit (fake) notes detected in the denominations of Rs 10, Rs 50, Rs 200 and Rs 500 respectively.
- However, counterfeit notes detected in the denominations of Rs 20, Rs 100 and Rs 2000 declined.
- Banks detected 95.4 per cent of fake notes in 2019-20, while the rest 4.6 per cent fake notes were detected by the Reserve Bank.
- Although, the total number of fake notes in the system has fallen, the overall number of fake notes in circulation still remains significant.

Bank frauds

- Bank frauds, in value terms involving an amount of Rs 1 lakh and above, have increased by 159 per cent in 2019-20, from 2018-19.
- In volume terms, however, the total fraud cases have increased 28 per cent in 2019-20, from 2018-19.
- Frauds have been predominantly occurring in the loan portfolio (advances category), both in terms of number and value. 98 per cent of the total amount of frauds belong to the advances category.
- Further, the top fifty loan-related frauds constitute 76 per cent of the total amount reported as frauds during 2019-20.
- Public sector banks constituted almost 80 per cent of the total fraud amount reported in 2019-20, followed by private banks with 18.4 per cent.
- Weak implementation of Early Warning Signals (EWS) by banks, non-detection of EWS during internal audits, inconclusive audit reports and lack of decision making in joint lenders' meetings are the reasons for the delay in detection of frauds.

Future Outlook

- The central bank has warned that high frequency indicators point to a reduction in economic activity that has never taken place in history.
- RBI expects the economic contraction due to COVID-19, will extend into the second quarter of 2020-21. Further, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) expects real GDP growth for the year 2020-21 to be negative.

- The MPC also expects inflation to remain high in the second quarter of the current fiscal (2020-21), but it is likely to reduce after that.
- Private consumption is expected to lead the recovery when it takes place. Till that happens, government consumption is expected to provide the much needed support to the economy.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

❖ **Paper III: The articles in this section are relevant to the following topics:**

- **Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life**
- **Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.**
- **Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, Nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.**
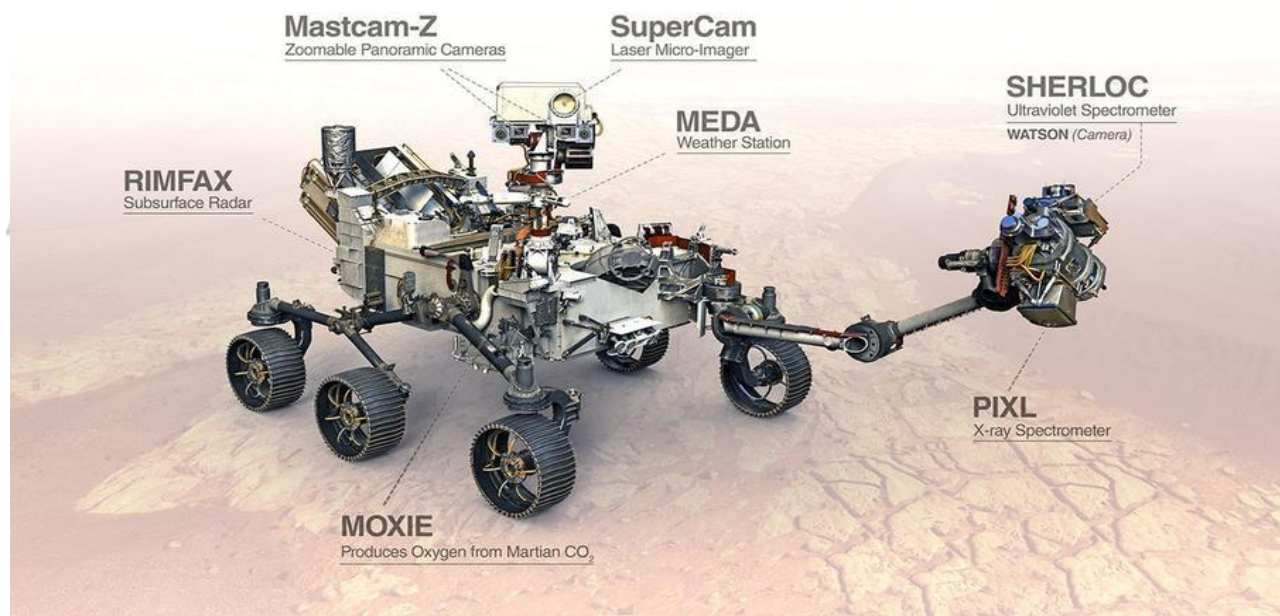
5.1 PERSEVERANCE

Why in News: NASA has launched its latest Mars rover, **named Perseverance.**

News Update

- NASA latest Mars rover, Perseverance, is the first step in the space agency's newest effort to hunt for signs of ancient microbial life and collect samples that will eventually be returned to Earth.
- Two future missions currently under consideration by NASA will try to get the samples to an orbiter for return to Earth.
- It will be a 6 ½ month trip to the red planet Mars in February, 2021.
- The mission will seek out signs of ancient microbial life on Jezero Crater, home to what was once a river delta three-and-a-half billion years ago.

Part of NASA's Moon to Mars exploration approach

- The Mars 2020 Perseverance mission is part of America's larger Moon to Mars exploration approach that includes missions to the Moon as a way to prepare for human exploration of the Red Planet.
- NASA is planning to send the first woman and next man to the Moon by 2024. Thereafter, NASA will establish a sustained human presence on and around the Moon by 2028 through NASA's Artemis program.

NASA's Mars Mission with Perseverance rover

By February 2021, the Perseverance rover is expected on land on Mars in Jezero Crater. The 2,260-pound, 10-feet long rover is the biggest and heaviest robotic Mars rover NASA has ever built.

Mission

The Perseverance rover's astrobiology mission is to:

- Explore the diverse geology of its landing site, Jezero Crater
- Seek out signs of past microscopic life on Mars
- Jezero Crater is the perfect place to search for signs of ancient life.
- Demonstrate key technologies that will help us prepare for future robotic and human exploration.

Helicopter Ingenuity

- Perseverance is also carrying a small helicopter named Ingenuity. If successful, Ingenuity will be the first aircraft to fly in a controlled way on another planet.
- A technology demonstrator, Ingenuity's goal is a pure flight test – it carries no science instruments.
- Over 30 sols (31 Earth days), the helicopter will attempt up to five powered, controlled flights.
- The data acquired during these flight tests will help the next generation of Mars helicopters provide an aerial dimension to Mars explorations – potentially scouting for rovers and human crews, transporting small payloads, or investigating difficult-to-reach destinations.

MOXIE instrument to make Oxygen

- The MOXIE (Mars Oxygen In-Situ Resource Utilization Experiment) instrument will attempt to demonstrate a technology that converts carbon dioxide in the Martian atmosphere into oxygen.
- It could lead to future versions of MOXIE technology that become staples on Mars missions, generating oxygen that could be used by astronauts as rocket propellant and for breathing.
- The ability to do so will be a critical consideration in planning human landings and bases on Mars.

5.2 BEIDOU

Why in News: China has officially commissioned its BeiDou satellite navigation system (BDS), which will compete with the Global Positioning System (GPS) of the United States. BeiDou means "Big Dipper" in Chinese.

The official commissioning comes after the successful launch of the last satellite of the BeiDou system in June, 2020.The last satellite is a part of the third generation of the BeiDou system called BDS-3.

Evolution of BeiDou navigation system

- China initiated BeiDou in 1994 with aim to integrate its application in different sectors, including fishery, agriculture, special care, mass-market applications, forestry and public security.
- The first pair of satellites was launched in 2000, after which the system has been through three generations of development.
- BeiDou started providing various services to domestic users in China and users in the Asia-Pacific region in 2012.
- It started providing global services at the end of 2018, when construction of the BDS-3 primary system had been completed.
- The latest satellite launched in June 2020 completes the entire BDS-3 system and will improve the quality of services of the system for global users, by providing stronger signals.

Features of BeiDou

- BeiDou provides accurate position information, navigation and timing services. It can provide positional accuracy of less than ten meters (GPS provides positioning accuracy of less than 2.2 meters).
- It will provide positioning services to transportation, emergency medical rescue, city planning and management areas.
- It also offers a text messaging service and the ability to transmit images, which enables communication between users.

Significance

- By completing BeiDou, China now has its own navigation system, which will compete with systems developed by other countries.
- As relations between US and China have been deteriorating, it became important for China to have its own navigation system that is not controlled by the US.
- The People's Liberation Army (PLA), (China's military) used to rely on GPS for positioning and communication purposes, but switched to BeiDou once it became operational.

- It will also raise China's economic and political influence over nations that choose to use BeiDou, along with strengthening its image as a major space power.

Other navigation systems

- The Global Positioning System (GPS) is owned by the US government and operated by the US Air Force.
- Russia has its navigation system called GLONASS and the European Union (EU) has a navigation system called Galileo.
- India is also building its navigational system called the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), with an operational name of NAVIC.
- NAVIC is designed to provide accurate position information service to users in India as well as the region extending up to 1500 km from its boundary, which is its primary service area.
- NAVIC will provide two levels of service, the standard positioning service, which will be open for civilian use, and a restricted service for authorised users (including the military).

5.3 SUBMARINE CABLE PROJECT

Why in News: The Indian Prime Minister has inaugurated a submarine optical fiber cable (OFC) between Chennai and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

News Update

- Inaugurating the submarine optical fiber cable (OFC), the PM also has said that Andaman and Nicobar islands region, owing to its strategic importance, was going to be developed as a **"maritime and startup hub."**
- 12 islands of the archipelago have been selected for high-impact projects with an emphasis on boosting trade of sea-based, organic and coconut-based products of the region.
- The proposed transshipment hub in the Andaman will help the group of islands become an important centre of blue economy and a maritime and startup hub.
- Over 300 km of national highway is expected to be completed in record time over the islands.
- The government is working to improve air connectivity within these islands and between them and the rest of the country.

The Submarine Cable Project

- Optical fiber cable (OFC) project that will connect Chennai and Andaman and Nicobar Islands and boost 4G services on the islands.
- The project entails 2,313 kilometer undersea cable.

- It will connect seven islands of Andaman other than the capital city Port Blair.
- The project costs more than ₹1,200 crore and has been funded by the department of telecommunications.
- It was executed by state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) in less than 24 months.
- The cable will be used to provide internet speeds of up to 400 gbps, or gigabits per second, till Port Blair, while in other islands, customers will receive speeds of up to 200 gbps.

Significance of the Project

- It is underwater project which will help in enhancing national security for the country amid concerns over national security following the India-China geopolitical tensions.
- The project will improve internet connectivity in the islands, enabling its citizens to use net banking, e-commerce, and online education and telemedicine facilities.
- Higher data speeds will also enhance tourism and attract tourist, thus creating jobs.

Andaman & Nicobar Islands

- The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a Union territory of India comprising 572 islands of which more than 35 are inhabited. The islands extend from 6° to 14° North latitudes and from 92° to 94° East longitudes and form India's southeast border.
- These are a group of islands at the juncture of the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. The two islands are separated by the Ten Degree Channel (on the 10°N parallel), which is about 150 km wide.

Strategic Significance

Geopolitically, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands connect South Asia with South-East Asia. The A&N islands dominate the Bay of Bengal, the Six Degree and the Ten Degree Channels that more than 60,000 commercial vessels traverse each year and straddle some of the busiest trade routes in the world. The islands are adjacent to the western entrance to the Malacca Strait, which is a major Indian Ocean chokepoint. All vessels that pass through the Malacca Strait must traverse the Six Degree Channel.

(NOTE: KINDLY REFER APRIL-JULY MAGAZINE FOR OVERALL COVID-19 CONCEPTS)

ECOLOGY and ENVIRONMENT

❖ **Paper III: The articles in this section are relevant to the following topics:**

• **Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment**
• **Disaster and disaster management.**

❖ **Prelims Oriented Questions**

6.1 ECO SENSITIVE ZONE IN WESTERN GHATS

Why in News: Demarcation of eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) within Western Ghats may happen very soon, in a few months.

Protection of ecologically fragile Western Ghats

- Western Ghats are ecologically fragile and biodiversity rich regions.
- They are spread over a distance of more than 1500 kms along the western coast across Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Madhav Gadgil Panel

In order to address the environmental concerns of the region, the Environment Ministry had constituted Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel in 2010, which submitted its report in 2011.

Kasthurirangan Panel

- After submission of its report, a High Level Working Group (HLWG) under the Chairmanship of K Kasthurirangan was constituted in August 2012 to examine panel's report.
- The HLWG had recommended the ESZ measuring about 59,940 square km covering the six states.

Draft Notifications by MoEF&CC

- The Environment Ministry had issued first draft notification to declare ESZ in 2014.
- The area demarcated as Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) was about to 56,825 square km.
- Subsequently, second, third and fourth drafts were issued in 2015, 2017 and 2018 respectively.
- One of the reasons for the delay in demarcation of ESZ of Western Ghats is the vastness of the region comprising 6 different states and inability amongst all stakeholders to reach a consensus.
- There have been objections from Kerela, Karnataka and Maharshtra which needed to be addressed before any final draft could be released.

Ecologically Sensitive Zones or Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) or Ecologically Fragile Areas or Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs)

They are the transition zones from areas of high environmental protection to areas involving lesser environmental protection.

Objectives of ESZs or ESAs

- The basic objective of ESZ is to regulate certain activities around national parks and wildlife sanctuaries to minimise negative impact on the fragile ecosystem around.
- Thus, these are formed to serve as 'shock absorber' for protected areas.
- The purpose of ESAs is to minimise negative impact of human activities on the fragile ecosystem encompassing the protected area.

Legislative Basis

- The term 'Ecologically Sensitive/Fragile Area' was not used in the initial Environment Protection Act, 1986.
- However, the EPA 1986 empowers the Central Government, that is the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests to take all measures that it feels are necessary for protecting the environment.
- It allows for the restrictions of areas in which certain developmental activities can be prohibited.
- Section 5(1) of the Environment (Protection) Rules (EPR), 1986, specifies certain criteria like biological diversity of the area, environmentally compatible land use, proximity to the protected areas, etc., that can be considered while prohibiting or restricting certain operations in different areas.
- Thus, the Eco-Sensitive Zones are notified and regulated accordingly as per the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

2006 SC Judgement

- The Supreme Court of India passed a judgment in December 2006, directing all the states to demarcate ESAs.
- As the states failed to respond to the SC directions, the apex court ordered the creation of ESZs, extending up to 10 km from the protected areas.

Union Environment Ministry's 2019 Notification

- Over 30% of India's protected area has been covered under the final Ecologically Sensitive Zone (ESZ) notification.
- Out of the 651 Protected Areas (PAs) in India, 316 are covered under the final ESZ notification which provides for prohibition of mining, stone quarrying and crushing units located within one kilometer of such protected areas.
- In the absence of the notification, an area of 10 kilometer around the PAs is considered 'default ESZ' according to the directions of the Supreme Court.

Degree of Prohibition in ESZs

- There aren't any explicit rules or guidelines by the Union Ministry specifying in detail which all activities will be permitted or prohibited in ESZs.
- Generally the activities which are detrimental to the ecological health and biodiversity of a region are prohibited.

Prohibited activities in an ESZ include examples like:

- Commercial mining, industries causing pollution (air, water, soil, noise etc), establishment of major hydroelectric projects (HEP), discharge of effluents or any solid waste or production of hazardous substances.
- Activities which are allowed to a limited extent mainly include establishment of hotels and resorts.
- Activities which are permitted include on going agricultural or horticultural practices, use of renewable energy sources, etc.

6.2 AFRICAN CHEETAH

Why in News: The Mysuru zoo has become the second Indian zoo to house the African cheetah. It managed to get a male and two females from a cheetah conservation centre in South Africa under an animal exchange program.

Cheetah

- The cheetah is a large cat native to Africa and central Iran.
- It is the fastest land animal, capable of running at 80 to 128 km/h.

Sub- Species of Cheetah

In 2017, the Cat Classification Task Force of the IUCN Cat Specialist Group recognised four subspecies

- Southeast African Cheetah
- Asiatic Cheetah
- Northeast African Cheetah
- Northwest African Cheetah

Habitat & Distribution

Ecological Niche

- Cheetahs occupy the niche of a top predator mainly in tropical grasslands, arid mountain ranges and deserts.
- They inhabit areas with greater availability of prey, good visibility and minimal chances of encountering larger predators.
- Cheetahs have been reported at elevations as high as 4,000 m.
- An open area with some cover, such as diffused bushes, is seen as ideal for the cheetah because it needs to stalk and pursue its prey over a distance.
- This also minimises the risk of encountering larger carnivores.

Present Distribution

- Earlier ranging throughout most of Sub-Saharan Africa and extending eastward into the Middle East up to the Indian subcontinent, the cheetah is now distributed mainly in small, fragmented populations in central Iran and southern, eastern and north-western Africa.
- The cheetah occurs in a variety of habitats such as savannahs in the Serengeti, arid mountain ranges in the Sahara and hilly desert terrain in Iran.

Threats Faced

The cheetah is threatened by several factors such as habitat loss, conflict with humans, poaching and high susceptibility to diseases. In the past, cheetahs used to be tamed and trained for hunting ungulates.

IUCN Status

It is listed as **Vulnerable** on the IUCN Red List.

Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS)

It is listed under **Appendix I**

CITES

It is listed under **Appendix I of CITES.**

Cheetah in India

- The Asiatic Cheetah was declared extinct in India in 1952.
- According to reports, the last Indian cheetah died around 1948.
- In India, over the years, cheetahs brought in from abroad have been kept in zoos.
- Cheetahs became extinct due to various reasons like hunting, destruction of habitat and human intervention.

Cheetah Re-introduction

The Supreme Court early this year, has permitted the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) to introduce African cheetahs into the Indian habitats. A three-member committee will guide the NTCA in this experimental project to revive the cheetah population in the country. As per the wildlife experts, for cheetahs to survive, a large area of grassland and a prey base are required.

6.3 OIL SPILLS

Why in News: Mauritius has declared a national emergency over an oil spill near its coast.

Mauritius Oil Spill

Cause

- In July, a Japanese ship ran aground and got stuck on a coral reef off Maurtius coast.
- The ship was carrying about 3,800 tons of Very Low Sulphur Fuel Oil and 200 tons of diesel oil. Most of the oil from the vessel has been pumped out.
- But, in August, the ship began leaking oil resulting in an oil spill of over 1,000 tones into the Indian Ocean lagoon.
- So far, about 460 tons of oil has been manually recovered from the sea and coast.
- In the middle of August, the ship also broke apart.

Concerns

- Rather than the size of the oil spill, it was the area where it happened which was a cause for concern.
- The accident had taken place near two environmentally protected marine ecosystems and the Blue Bay Marine Park Reserve which is a wetland of international importance.

Oil Spills

Contamination of seawater due to an oil pour, as a result of an accident or human error, is termed an oil spill.

Major causes of oil spills include

- Offshore drilling and production operations

- Oil spills or leaks from ships or tankers- Over time, the production of petroleum products rose significantly which has resulted in massive transportation and associated oil spills. Oil accounts for over half the tonnage of all sea cargo.
- Routine maintenance of ships
- Land drainage and waste disposal- For example, from the improper disposal of used motor oil.
- Natural seepage from the seafloor

The number of oil spills has been increasing with the increasing rate of oil transportation, ageing of oil tankers, as well as an increase in the size of oil tankers.

While massive and catastrophic spills receive most of the attention, smaller and chronic ones occur on a regular basis as the number of sea vessels getting commuting has increased phenomenally with increase in global trade.

Examples of Oil Spills

Some of the world's largest oil spills include-

- **The Persian Gulf War oil spill of 1991:** The Iraqi forces quit their invasion of Kuwait. After that, for blocking the forces from the United States, the Iraqi forces left the oil pipelines and wells of oil open and set it to fire. In this more than 380 million gallons of oil was poured into the northern Persian Gulf by Iraq's forces. The fire was so massive that it continued unabated for four months.
- **The 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico:** It is also considered to be among the largest known accidental oil spills in history. Starting April 20, 2010, over 4 million barrels of oil flowed over a period of 87 days into the Gulf of Mexico.

Impact of Oil Spills

Impact on Marine Life

- Oil spills affect marine life by exposing them to harsh elements and destroying their sources of food and habitat.
- Further, both birds and mammals can die from hypothermia as a result oil spills. For instance, oil destroys the insulating ability of fur-bearing mammals, such as sea otters.
- It also decreases the water repellency of birds' feathers, without which they lose their ability to repel cold water. Without the ability to repel water and insulate from the cold water, birds and mammals will die from hypothermia.
- Juvenile sea turtles can also become trapped in oil and mistake it for food.

- Dolphins and whales can inhale oil, which can affect lungs, immune function and reproduction.
- Many birds and animals also ingest oil when they try to clean themselves, which can poison them.
- When exposed to oil, adult fish may experience reduced growth, enlarged livers, changes in heart and respiration rates, fin erosion, and reproduction impairment.

Impact on Public Health

- Public health impacts include illnesses caused by toxic fumes or by eating contaminated fish or shellfish.
- There are also other less obvious public health impacts including losses and disruptions of commercial and recreational fisheries, seaweed harvesting and loss of revenues due to forgone tourism.

Prevention of Oil Spills

- To prevent oil spills the responsibility lies with the industries for abiding by the regulations and governments for putting in place adequate rules to prevent their occurrence.
- Integration of preventive measures in an industrial process, operation, or product should be a part of the cost of daily operations.
- To prevent oil spill on ships, they should be equipped with all required precautionary measures and the crew on the ship should be accustomed to oil spill safety drill prior to the voyage. These safety measures will help in catering accidents which break-in during the voyage without any prior warning.

Clean-Up of Oil Spills

Oil Containment Booms

- Oil Booms are the most common and popular equipment used in oil cleans-up. These are also called "Containment Booms" which encloses the oil to a smaller area and not let it spread further.
- This method is employed when the area of spill is comparatively smaller and where wave velocity is constant because fluctuating tides make it difficult for an oil boom to perform clean-up properly.

Skimming

- Skimming involves removing oil from the sea surface before it is able to reach the sensitive areas along the coastline.

- Once the oil is bounded by oil booms it can be extracted or skimmed easily with the help of skimmers or oil scoops.
- These are the mechanical equipment which works on the same principle as a vacuum cleaner.
- It sucks all the oil which is spread over the confined surface of the water in oil booms.

Sorbents

- The materials which can absorb or absorb the liquid are termed as sorbents.
- It is an easy process of oil cleanup.
- Most common sort of sorbents are peat moss, vermiculite (straw) and hay. These are highly useful for the small spills with the highest efficiency.

In-Situ Burning

- In this method, the floating oil is set to fire by igniting it safely.
- It is the most proficient method of oil clean-up as it can efficiently remove 98% of total spilt oil.
- However, this method is not eco-friendly as it releases toxic gases from the burning of oils to the environment.

Release of Chemical Dispersants

When oil cannot be confined with booms then chemical disintegration of oil is done using dispersants. After disintegration, the surface area of oil molecules increases and it becomes easier for them to form a bond with water. This will take the bonded molecules deeper in water and make them available for microbes which degrade them later on. Releasing chemical dispersants helps break down oil into smaller droplets, making it easier for microbes to consume, and further break it down into less harmful compounds.

6.4 NGT & NOISE POLLUTION

Why in News: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Delhi government to ensure enforcement of noise pollution norms.

News Summary

- The tribunal was hearing a group of pleas which alleged that bars and restaurants in the city were using loudspeakers, beyond permissible time frames, which was leading to noise pollution.

- It observed that no "effective centralised monitoring mechanism" was in place for noise pollution.
- The tribunal also asked the Delhi Pollution Control Committee to prepare appropriate apps for receiving and addressing complaints.
- NGT constituted a committee to be headed by a former High Court judge to ascertain the status of compliance and to suggest measures in the context of the national capital.

Noise Pollution

Noise pollution is defined as regular exposure to elevated sound levels that may lead to adverse effects in humans or other living organisms.

Measuring Noise Pollution

- Sound is measured in decibels.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) defines noise above 65 decibels (dB) as noise pollution.
- To be precise, noise becomes harmful when it exceeds 75 decibels (dB) and is painful above 120 dB.

Major Sources of Noise Pollution

Noise pollution is so omnipresent in urban areas that we may even fail to notice the sources of noise pollution.

The major sources of noise pollution are:

- Street traffic sounds from cars, buses, ambulances etc.
- Construction sounds like drilling or other heavy machinery in operation
- Airports, with constant elevated sounds from air traffic, i.e. planes taking off or landing
- Constant loud music in or near commercial venues
- Industrial sounds like fans, generators, compressor, mills
- Train stations traffic
- Household sounds, from the television set to music playing on the stereo or computer, vacuum cleaners, fans and coolers, washing machines, dishwashers, lawnmowers etc.
- Events involving fireworks, firecrackers, loudspeakers etc.

Impact of Noise Pollution:

Impact on Human Health

Noise pollution can be hazardous to our health in various ways by causing-

- Psychological dysfunctions and Noise Annoyance- Noise annoyance is a recognized name for an emotional reaction that can have an immediate impact.
- Hypertension and stress
- Various cardiovascular dysfunctions- Elevated blood pressure caused by noise pollution can lead to various cardiovascular diseases.
- Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL): Hearing loss can be directly caused by noise pollution, whether listening to loud music in headphones or being exposed to loud drilling noises at work, heavy air or land traffic, or separate incidents in which noise levels reach dangerous intervals, such as around 140 dB for adult or 120 dB for children.
- Sleep disturbances are usually caused by constant air or land traffic at night and they can be serious condition in that they can affect everyday performance and lead to serious diseases.
- Poor Child development- Children appear to be more sensitive to noise pollution. A number of noise-pollution-related diseases and dysfunctions are known to affect children from hearing impairment to psychological and physical effects.

Impact on Wildlife and Marine Life

- Thousands of oil drills, sonars, seismic survey devices, coastal recreational watercraft and shipping vessels are now populating oceanic waters and that is a serious cause of noise pollution for marine life.
- Whales are among the most affected as their hearing helps them orient themselves, feed and communicate. These marine mammals rely on echolocation to communicate, navigate, feed, and find mates, and excess noise interferes with their ability to effectively echolocate.
- Noise pollution also interferes with cetaceans' (whales and dolphins) feeding habits, reproductive patterns and migration routes and can even cause hemorrhage and death.
- Other than marine life, land animals are also affected by noise pollution in the form of traffic, firecrackers etc., and birds are especially affected by the increased air traffic.

Steps to Mitigate Noise Pollution

- As per WHO, awareness of noise pollution is essential to beat this invisible enemy. Thus, there should be a central monitoring mechanism for ascertaining the levels and sources of noise pollution in cities of country.
- Fines can be imposed for exceeding noise limits by parties or events.
- Insulation of homes and buildings with noise-absorbing materials is also an effective measure.
- Mandatory separation between residential zones and sources of noise like airports should be ensured during regional planning.

SOCIAL ISSUES

❖ **Paper I: The articles in this section are relevant to the following topics:**

• **Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.**
• **Role of women and women's organization, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies.**
• **Effects of globalization on Indian society**
• **Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism.**

7.1   BRU COMMUNITY

Why in News: Three organisations representing the Bru community displaced from Mizoram have rejected the sites proposed for their resettlement in Tripura.

Bru/ Riang Tribe

- Bru is one among the 21 scheduled tribes of the Indian state of Tripura.
- The Bru, also known as the Reangs due to their dialect, are the second most populous tribe of Tripura, after the Tripuris.
- The Bru may also be found in Mizoram, Assam, Manipur and Bangladesh.

Language

They speak the Reang dialect of Kokborok language which is of Tibeto-Burmese origin and is locally referred to as Kau Bru.

Culture and religion

- The marriage system is similar to other Tripuri tribes of Tripura. There is no dowry system.
- Dance - Hojagiri folk dance
- Popular festival - Buisu

The majority of the Reang belong to the Vaishnav school of Hinduism and claim Kshatriya status.

Background to their struggle

- A good population of Brus was also living in Mizoram.
- In mid 1990s, Mizo nationalists demanded the Brus be left out of the Mizoram state's electoral rolls, contending that the tribe was not indigenous to Mizoram.
- Reangs demanded creation of an autonomous council that was vehemently opposed by Mizo groups.
- In a reactionary movement against Mizo nationalist groups, the Bru militancy took birth.
- In 1997, the murder of a Mizo forest guard at the Dampa Tiger Reserve in Mizoram allegedly by Bru militants led to a violent backlash against the community.
- It forced several thousand people belonging to Bru community to flee to neighbouring Tripura.
- The displaced Bru people from Mizoram have been living in various camps in Tripura since 1997.
- About 33,000 people belonging to nearly 5,500 families have been living in the refugee camps in the Jampui Hills of Tripura.

Agreement between Bru group and Governments for repatriation to Mizoram

- In a major breakthrough on repatriation of displaced Bru persons from Mizoram, an agreement was signed by Government of India, Governments of Mizoram and Tripura and Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum (MBDPF) in July 2018.
- The agreement assured each refugee family a plot of land in Mizoram, Rs 1.6 lakh as assistance for constructing a house, Rs 5,000 per month for sustenance and free ration for two years, and Rs 4 lakh to be deposited in the bank until maturity on completion of three years of uninterrupted stay in Mizoram.
- The nearly 5,500-6,500 families in temporary camps in Tripura were to repatriate to Mizoram by September, 2018.
- Government of India assured financial assistance for rehabilitation of Brus in Mizoram and address their issues of security, education, livelihood etc. in consultation with Governments of Mizoram and Tripura.
- A Committee under Special Secretary (Internal Security) was to coordinate the implementation of this agreement.

Development on Agreement

- However, there has not been much movement in repatriation of Bru migrants from Mizoram back to the state with only about 100 families moving.
- This is because most of the Brus in Tripura camps rejected the final repatriation process.
- Only about 328 families moved back.
- The MBDPF said the refugees wanted to be settled in Mamit district of Mizoram, but they were being scattered close to non-Bru settlements in Mizoram and were thus vulnerable to violence (like in 1997).
- They also say the repatriation so far has not gone according to what the government had promised, with the Mizoram government not issuing ration cards to the families who returned.
- The Bru leaders have also alleged that those who accepted the rehabilitation package had not been allotted land to construct houses and had been kept in huts, where they were sharing community kitchens and toilets.

2020 agreement to settle Brus in Tripura

- In January 2020, a quadripartite pact was signed by Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) with the State governments of Tripura, Mizoram and leaders of Bru community to permanently settle around 34,000 internally displaced people in Tripura.

- However, the Brus who settled in Mizoram would not have an option to come back.

- The Brus would get a one-time assistance of Rs 4 lakh as fixed deposit.
- The community members are also expected to get voting rights in Tripura and "tribal status."

News Summary

Sites proposed in Tripura for settlement

- The Joint Movement Committee (JMC), an umbrella group of non-Brus in Tripura, has proposed certain sites in the state for the resettlement of Brus who fled ethnic violence in Mizoram since 1997.
- The JMC comprising the Bengali, Mizo, Buddhist Barua and other communities had on July 21 submitted a memorandum to the Tripura government in this regard.
- They specified six places in Kanchanpur and Panisagar subdivisions of North Tripura district for the resettlement of the Brus.
- The JMC also proposed settling 500 families at most in these places.
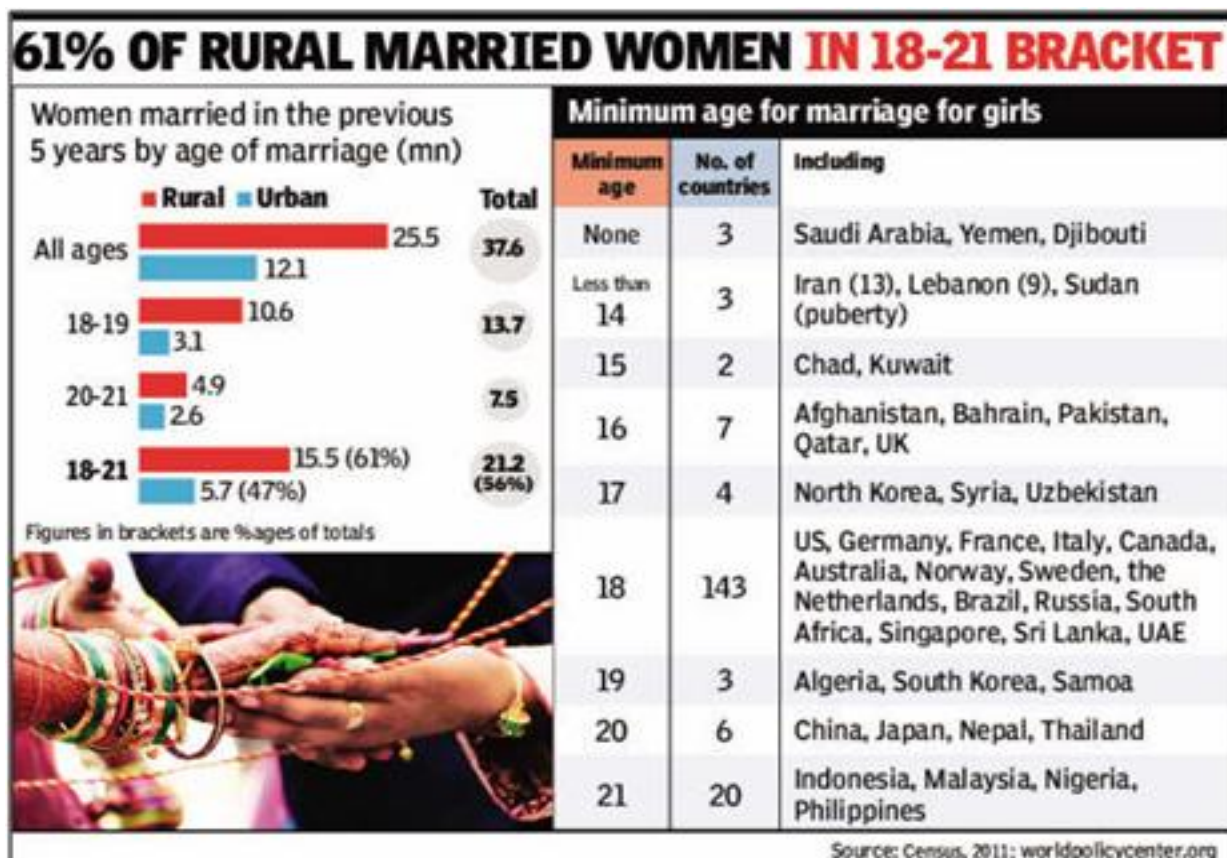
7.2 CHILD MARRIAGE

Why in News: In his address to the nation on the 74th Independence Day, the Prime Minister said that the central government has set up a task force to reconsider the minimum age of marriage for women.

- As per the current law, the minimum age of marriage is 21 years for men and 18 years for women.
- However, the minimum age of marriage is different from the age of majority (the age at which a person is no more a minor) which is same for all genders. Both males and females attain the age of majority (become majors) at 18 as per the Indian Majority Act, 1875.

Prevalence of child marriages

At the world level:

- A report published by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) this year, said that though child marriages were almost universally banned, they happen 33,000 times a day, every day, all around the world.
- An estimated 650 million girls and women alive today were married as children, and by 2030, another 150 million girls under the age of 18 will be married.

61% OF RURAL MARRIED WOMEN IN 18-21 BRACKET

Women married in the previous 5 years by age of marriage (mn)

■ Rural ■ Urban

Age	Rural/Urban	Total
All ages	25.5 (Rural) / 12.1 (Urban)	37.6
18-19	10.6 (Rural) / 3.1 (Urban)	13.7
20-21	4.9 (Rural) / 2.6 (Urban)	7.5
18-21	15.5 (61%) (Rural) / 5.7 (47%) (Urban)	21.2 (56%)

Figures in brackets are %ages of totals

Minimum age for marriage for girls

Minimum age	No. of countries	Including
None	3	Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Djibouti
Less than 14	3	Iran (13), Lebanon (9), Sudan (puberty)
15	2	Chad, Kuwait
16	7	Afghanistan, Bahrain, Pakistan, Qatar, UK
17	4	North Korea, Syria, Uzbekistan
18	143	US, Germany, France, Italy, Canada, Australia, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Brazil, Russia, South Africa, Singapore, Sri Lanka, UAE
19	3	Algeria, South Korea, Samoa
20	6	China, Japan, Nepal, Thailand
21	20	Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Philippines

Source: Census, 2011; worldpolicycenter.org

Although improvements in India have contributed to a 50 per cent decline in child marriage in South Asia, the region still accounts for the largest number of child marriages each year, estimated at 4.1 million in 2017.

Prevalence of child marriages in India

- In India, an analysis of child marriage data show that among girls married by age 18, 46 per cent were also in the lowest income bracket.
- UNICEF estimates suggest that each year, at least 1.5 million girls under the age of 18 are married in India. Thus, India contributes to the largest number of child brides in the world and accounts for a third of the global total.
- According to an analysis by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, overall prevalence of child marriage among 15 -19-year-old girls has declined significantly from 26.5% in 2005-06 to 11.9% in 2015-16.
- However, poverty and status of education are key factors in the circumstances that lead to child marriage.

- The study also reveals that amongst the married girls aged 15 to 19 years, 5% girls were found to have babies. Almost a quarter of the married girls in the age group of 15 to 16 years had at least one baby.

56% OF WOMEN MARRY BETWEEN 18 & 21

Age Group	Rural	Urban	Total
All ages	25.5	12.1	37.6
18-19 years	10.6	3.1	7.5
20-21	4.9	2.6	21.2
18-21	15.5 (61%)	5.7(47%)	21.2 (56%)

Figures in million (in brackets are % of totals)
Source: Figures for 5 years preceding Census, 2011

MINIMUM AGE FOR MARRIAGE IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

None	Less than 14 years	18 years	21 years
Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Djibouti	Sudan (puberty), Lebanon (9), Iran (13)	143 countries, including India	20 countries, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria

Debate on the need to uniform marriage age for men and women in India

Minimum age for marriage in India

- Personal laws of various religions in India that deal with marriage have their own standards.
- For Hindus, Section 5(iii) of The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, sets 18 years as the minimum age for the bride and 21 years as the minimum age for the groom.
- In Islam, the marriage of a minor who has attained puberty is considered valid. A person attains puberty when he/she reaches sexual maturity and is capable of reproduction.
- The Special Marriage Act, 1954 and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 also prescribe 18 and 21 years as the minimum age of consent for marriage for women and men respectively.
- Additionally, sexual intercourse with a minor is rape, and the 'consent' (permission) of a minor is considered invalid since she is considered to be incapable of giving consent at that age.

Opposition to different legal age of marriage for men and women

- The National Human Rights Commission has raised the need for uniform age for marriage for both   men   and   women.

- According to the Law Commission, having different legal age of marriage for men and women leads to the stereotype that wife must be younger than their husband.
- As per women's rights activists the law also strengthens the stereotype that women are more mature than men of the same age and, therefore, can be allowed to marry sooner.
- The international treaty Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), also proposes the abolition of laws that assume women have a different physical or intellectual rate of growth than men.

PIL for uniform age of marriage for men and women

- Public interest litigation has also been filed in the Delhi High Court, to make the legal age of marriage uniform for both men and women.
- The petition has challenged the law on the grounds of discrimination, as the Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution; guarantee the right to equality and the right to live with dignity.
- Thus, the law violates these two fundamental rights, by having different legal age of marriage for men and women.

News Summary

In his Independence Day speech, the Prime Minister said that the central government has set up a task force to reconsider the minimum age of marriage for women.

Mandate of the task force

- The task force has the mandate to examine matters related to the age of motherhood, and measures to lower the maternal and child mortality rate.
- The task force will examine the correlation of age of marriage & motherhood with health, medical well-being, and nutritional status of the mother and the child, during pregnancy, birth and after the birth.
- It will examine the possibility of increasing the age of marriage for women from the present 18 years to 21 years.
- It has to suggest suitable legislations or amendments in existing laws and a detailed plan with timelines to implement these recommendations.

Reasons why task force will look at increasing age of marriage for women

- Early pregnancy is associated with increased child mortality rates and affects the health of the mother.
- Underage mothers are generally malnourished and have been found to have anaemia (deficiency of red blood cells).
- As India progresses further, opportunities open up for women to pursue higher education and careers.
- However, early marriage and motherhood reduce women's access to these increasing opportunities. Thus it is important to increase the legal age of marriage for women.

7.3 SWACCH SURVECHAN SURVEY

Why in News: Swachh Survekshan 2020 report has been released by the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry.

Swachh Survekshan

- On October 2, 2014, the Indian Prime Minister repackaged the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, an existing sanitation program launched in 2012, into Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM).
- The aim of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan was to eradicate open defecation and provide 100 per cent access to toilets by 2019.
- To achieve this stiff goal in a short span of five years, the SBM was introduced as two sub-missions – Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) and Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban).
- In an effort to encourage cities to improve the level of cleanliness, sanitation and hygiene and at the same time generate large scale citizen participation in Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban), in 2016, the Ministry of Urban Development commissioned an extensive survey called Swachh Survekshan.
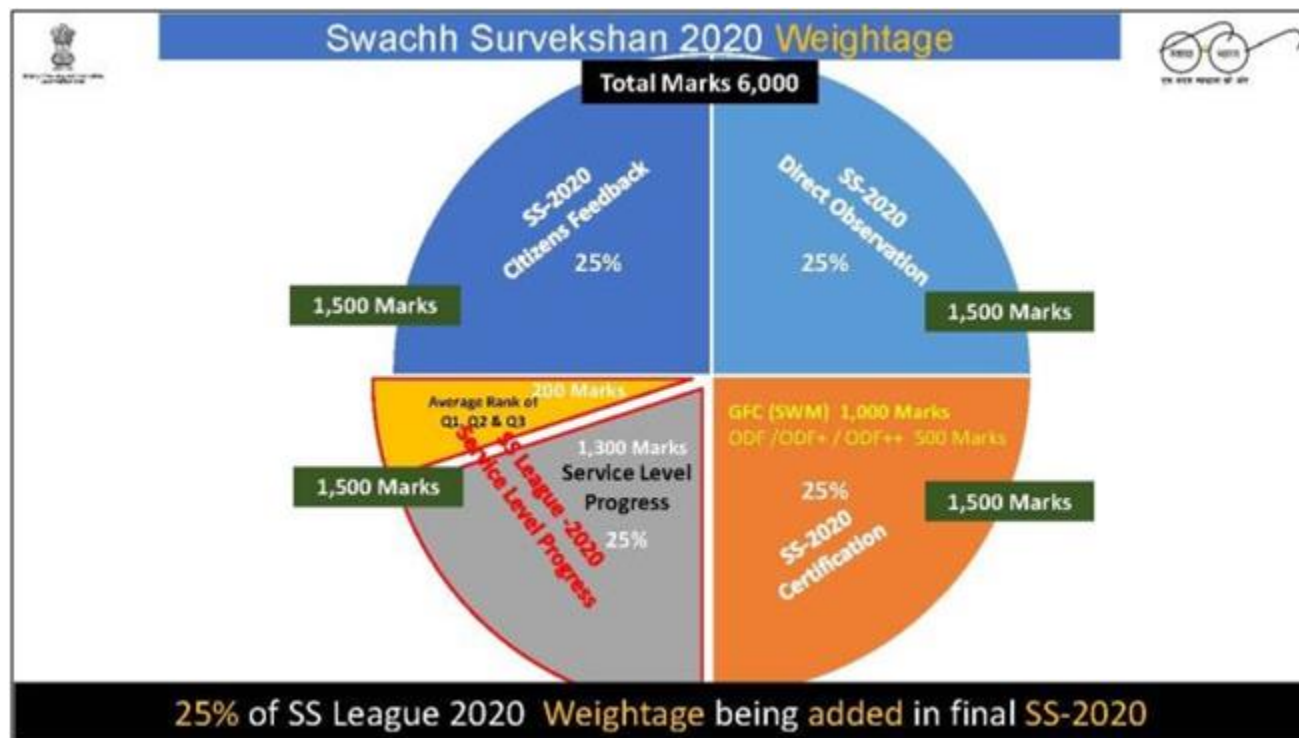
Swachh Survekshan 2020

- This was the fifth edition of the Swachh Survekshan Survey.
- It has now become the world's largest sanitation survey, with 1.8 crore citizens giving their feedback.
- The Survekshan covered 4,242 cities, 62 cantonment boards and 97 "Ganga towns" in 2020.
- Survey teams visited 58,000 residential and 20,000 commercial areas in 28 days, while 1.87 crore citizens' feedbacks were received.

The assessment is done on 2 major grounds:

- Swachh Survekshan League which carries 200 marks

- Apart from Swachh Survekshan League, overall survey carries 6000 marks for multiple parameters.

o

Swachh Survekshan League

- Government introduced Swachh Survekshan League (SSL) which is a quarterly cleanliness assessment of cities and towns conducted across three quarters, with 25 per cent weightage integrated into the final Swachh Survekshan results for the year.
- The initial assessment will be conducted in three quarters – April to June, July to September and October to December.
- Each quarter carries equal weightage in assessment.
- Average score of SSL will be calculated out of 200 marks in overall assessment.

Swachh Survekshan 2020 Findings

Ranking of cities with over 1 lakh population

Indore – Indore has been ranked 1st for 4th time in a row

Cleanest State in category of those with over 100 ULBs or cities

Chhattisgarh

SWACHHTA SCORECARD

Ranking	More than 1-lakh population	Less than 1-lakh population
1	Indore (MP)	Karad (MH)
2	Surat (Guj)	Sasvad (MH)
3	Navi Mumbai (MH)	Lonavala (MH)
4	Ambikapur (Chhattisgarh)	Nawanshahr (Punjab)
5	Mysuru (Karnataka)	Panhala (MH)
6	Vijayawada (AP)	Jejuri (MH)
7	Ahmedabad (Guj)	Shirdi (MH)
8	NDMC (Delhi)	Mauda CT (MH)
9	Chandrapur (MH)	Kagal (MH)
10	Khargone (MP)	Ratnagiri (MH)

Source: Swachhta Survekshan, 2020

Cleanest States in category of those with less than 100 ULBs or cities

- Jharkhand
- Maharashtra
- Madhya Pradesh
- Jharkhand
- Gujarat

Cleanest Towns in category of "Ganga towns"

- Varanasi
- Kanpur
- Munger
- Prayagraj
- Haridwar

MISCELLANEOUS and SCHEMES

❖ **SATLEJ –YAMUNA CANAL** (Source: The Hindu)

- The Sutlej Yamuna Link Canal (SYL), is an under-construction canal to connect the Sutlej and Yamuna rivers.
- The decades-old dispute over the canal, which is supposed to carry water from Punjab to Haryana, has its origin in a disagreement over sharing of Ravi-Beas water. The river Beas joins river Sutlej in Punjab.
- The dispute regarding sharing of river water emerged after Punjab was reorganised in 1966, and the state of Haryana was created (out of Punjab). After this, Punjab refused to share waters of Ravi and Beas with Haryana.
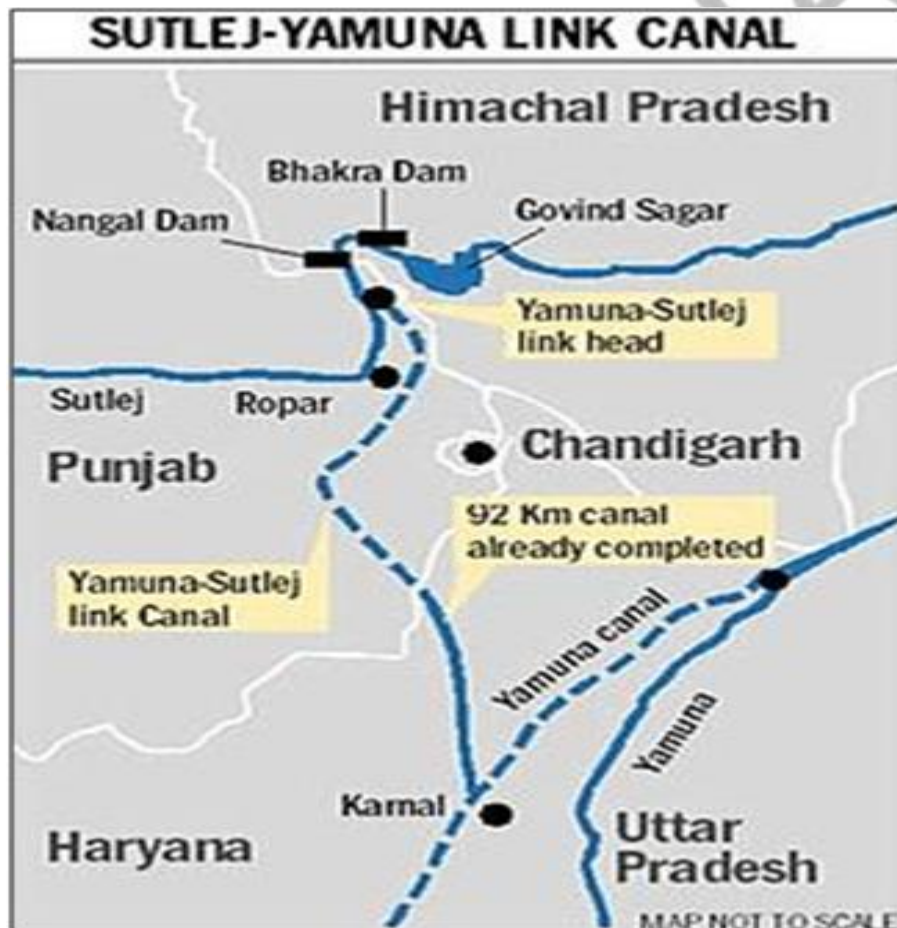
❖ **EXPORT PREPAREDNESS INDEX** (Source: PIB)

- The Export Preparedness Index (EPI) aims to assess the readiness of the states, in terms of their export potential and their performance. It also provides strategic recommendations for improving export competitiveness.
- **It classifies states based on their geography, placing them under few major categories – coastal, landlocked, Himalayan, and union territories/city states.**
- **The index ranked states on four key pillars – policy, business ecosystem, export ecosystem and export performance.**
- The index also took into consideration 11 sub-pillars -- export promotion policy; institutional framework; business environment; infrastructure; transport connectivity; access to finance; export infrastructure; trade support; R&D infrastructure; export diversification; and growth and orientation.

Highlights of Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2020

- **70 per cent of India's export is dominated by five states – Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.**
- **Gujarat has emerged on top of the index of export preparedness, followed by Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu in the second and third place respectively.**
- Six coastal states -- Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Karnataka and Kerala -- feature in the top ten rankings, indicating the presence of strong enabling factors to promote exports.
- Among the landlocked states, Rajasthan has performed the best, followed by Telangana and Haryana.
- Among the Himalayan states, Uttarakhand topped the chart, followed by Tripura and Himachal Pradesh
- Across Union Territories, Delhi has performed the best, followed by Goa and Chandigarh.
- The five States/UTs ranked at the bottom are Manipur (rank 32), Andaman and Nicobar (33), Daman and Diu (34), Lakshadweep (35) and J&K (36).

❖ ASEEM PORTAL   (Source: The Hindu)

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) in July launched 'Aatmanirbhar Skilled Employee Employer Mapping' (ASEEM) which is a skill management information system.

Vision

The portal has been envisioned to bridge the demand-supply gap for skilled workforce across sectors, bringing limitless and infinite opportunities for the nation's youth.

Objective

- It is an integrated platform to enable opportunities for growth & development for country's skilled candidates, employers, training providers and government.
- Portal's objective is to assist people trained in various skills by finding sustainable livelihood opportunities over a period of time.
- The initiative aims to accelerate India's journey towards post COVID recovery by mapping skilled workforce and connecting them with relevant livelihood opportunities in their local communities
- Put simply, ASEEM's aim is to bridge the demand supply gap in the skilled workforce market.

Working

ASEEM is based on Artificial Intelligence and refers to all the data, trends and analytics which describe the workforce market and will map demand of skilled workforce to supply.

Demand- supply patterns which are revealed by ASEEM

- Industry requirements
- Skill-gap analysis
- Demand per district/ state/ cluster
- Key workforce suppliers
- Key consumers
- Migration patterns
- Potential career prospects for consumers
- This way, it will provide employers a platform to assess the availability of skilled workforce and formulate their hiring plans.
- It will provide real-time granular information by identifying relevant skilling requirements and employment practices.
- It will identify major skills gap in the sectors and provide review of global best practices.
- This will further help to re-engineer the vocational training landscape in the country by skilling, up-skilling and re-skilling in a more organised set-up.

Developed By

- It is developed and managed by NSDC in collaboration with Bangalore-based company Betterplace specialising in blue collar employee management.
- ASEEM also available as an APP.