



pravahini

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of Current Affairs by **SUCCESS MANTRA** (GTB Nagar)

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

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NATIONAL AFFAIRS

#INDIA'S LARGEST FLOATING SOLAR POWER PROJECT

- Recently, the final 20 MW of the 100 MW Ramagundam **floating solar PV** project's commercial operation date was recently announced.
- With this, the **100 MW Ramagundam floating solar PV project in Telangana** is declared operational from 1st July 2022.
- It is the **largest project of its kind in India**.



What are Floating Solar Panels?

- These are Photovoltaic (PV) modules mounted on platforms that float on water reservoirs, lakes, and where conditions are right seas and oceans.
- **These platforms are typically moored on calmer bodies of water, such as ponds, lakes or reservoirs.**
- These installations are relatively quick to construct, silent to run and require no land levelling or removal of vegetation.

What are its Key Highlights of Ramagundam Project?

- It is endowed with advanced technology and Environment-friendly features.
- The project spreads over **500 acres of the reservoir**. Divided into 40 blocks, each having 2.5 MW.
- Each block consists of **one floating platform and an array of 11,200 solar modules**.
- **The solar modules are placed on floaters manufactured with HDPE (High-Density Polyethylene) material.**
- The entire floating system is anchored through special **HMPE (High Modulus Polyethylene)** rope to the dead weights placed in the balancing reservoir bed.
- This project is unique in the sense that **all the electrical equipment** including inverter, transformer, HT panel, and SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) **are also on floating Ferro cement platforms**.

What are the other Solar Energy Initiatives?

- **Solar Park Scheme:** Plan to build a number of solar parks, each with a capacity of nearly 500 MW, across several states.
- **Rooftop Solar Scheme:** To harness solar power by installing **solar panels** on the roof of the houses.
- **Atal Jyoti Yojana (AJAY):** The AJAY scheme was launched in September 2016 for the installation of **solar street lighting (SSL)** systems in states with less than **50%** households covered with **grid power** (as per **Census 2011**).

#AMARNATH FLASH FLOODS

- Recently, **flash floods** caused landslips near the Baltal base camp in central Kashmir's Ganderbal area.
- At least 13 people, mainly Amarnath pilgrims, have died and dozens went missing after flash floods.

What do we Need to know about Amarnath?

- Amarnath Temple is a **Hindu shrine located in Jammu and Kashmir, India**.
- The cave is situated at an altitude of 3,888 m, about 100 km from **Srinagar**, the summer capital of **Jammu and Kashmir**, reached through Pahalgam town.
- The shrine represents an important part of **Hinduism**.
- The Amarnath yatra resumed after three years this year.
- The annual yatra has twin routes of **Pahalgam in south** and **Sonamarg in central Kashmir** to reach the cave shrine:

What do we know about the Amarnath Flash Flood?

- **Flash Flood:** These are **sudden surges** in water levels generally during or following an intense spell of rain.
- These are **highly localised events of short duration** with a very high peak and usually have **less than six hours between the occurrence of the rainfall and peak flood**.
- The flood situation worsens in the presence of **choked drainage lines or encroachments obstructing the natural flow of water**.

What do we know about Cloudburst?

- **About:** Cloudbursts are **short-duration, intense rainfall** events over a small area.
- It is a weather phenomenon with unexpected precipitation **exceeding 100mm/h** over a geographical region of approximately 20-30 square km.
- In the Indian Subcontinent, it generally occurs when a **monsoon** cloud drifts northwards, from the **Bay of Bengal** or the **Arabian Sea** across the plains then on to the Himalaya that sometimes brings 75 millimetres of rain per hour.



- **Occurrence:** The **relative humidity and cloud cover is at the maximum level** with **low temperature and slow winds** because of which a high amount of clouds may get condensed at a very rapid rate and result in a cloudburst.
- As **temperatures increase**, the atmosphere can hold more and more moisture and this **moisture comes down as a short very intense rainfall** for a short duration probably half an hour or one hour resulting in **flash floods** in the mountainous areas and urban floods in the cities.

#MEGHALAYA TRIBAL COUNCIL TO REVISIT IoA

- A tribal council in Meghalaya has **called for a meeting of traditional heads to revisit the Instrument of Accession** that made the Khasi domain a part of the Indian Union more than seven decades ago.

Why does Meghalaya tribal council want to revisit IoA?

- The need to **revisit the Instrument of Accession and Annexed Agreement** was stressed by leaders in the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC). According to them, it is important to understand the paragraphs of the agreement, since many provisions are missing from the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.
- Under Article 371A, Nagas also enjoys **ownership and transfer of land and its resources**.
- Recently, introduced the '**Khasi Inheritance of Property Bill, 2021** might have infuriated few leaders of KHADC, as interference to social and customary practices of Khasi people. The bill called for "equitable distribution" of parental property among siblings in the Khasi community.
- The KHADC said **the provisions can be added to the Sixth Schedule, which "can be amended by Parliament"**.

What is IoA?

- The **Instrument of Accession** was a **legal document** first introduced by the Government of India Act 1935 and used in 1947 to enable each of the rulers of the princely states under British paramountcy to join one of the new dominions of India or Pakistan created by the Partition of British India.
- The **instruments of accession executed by the rulers**, provided for the accession of states to the Dominion of India (or Pakistan) on three subjects, namely, defence, external affairs and communications.
- IoA and Meghalaya:** IoA with the **Khasi hills state was signed with the Dominion of India** between 15th December, 1947, and 19th March, 1948.
- Meghalaya is **divided into three regions dominated** by as many matrilineal communities – the Khasis, Garos and Jaintias.
- The **Khasi hills straddle 25 Himas or States** that formed the Federation of Khasi States.
- The **conditional treaty with these States was signed** by Governor General of India, Chakravarty Rajagopalachari on 17th August, 1948.

What is Sixth Schedule?

- The **Sixth Schedule** under **Article 244** provides for the **formation** of autonomous administrative divisions — **Autonomous District Councils (ADCs)** — that have some **legislative, judicial, and administrative autonomy** within a state.
- The **Sixth Schedule** contains **special provisions** for the administration of tribal areas in the **four north-eastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram**.
- The tribal areas in **these four states** have been **constituted as autonomous districts**. The **governor** is empowered to **organise** and re-organise the **autonomous districts**.
- The **acts of Parliament** or the **state legislature** do **not apply to autonomous districts** or apply with specified modifications and exceptions.
- The power of direction, in this regard, lies either with the President or Governor.
- Each autonomous district has a district council** consisting of **30 members**, of whom **four are nominated** by the Governor and the remaining **26 are elected** on the basis of adult franchise.
- The **elected members** hold office for a term of **five years** (unless the council is dissolved earlier) and **nominated members** hold office **at pleasure of the governor**.
- Each autonomous region also has a separate regional council.
- The **district and regional councils** administer the areas under their jurisdiction.
- They **can make laws** on certain specified **matters** like land, forests, canal water, shifting cultivation, village administration, the inheritance of property, marriage and divorce, social customs and so on. **But all**

such laws require the assent of the Governor.

- They can constitute **village** councils or **courts** for trial of suits and cases between the tribes. They hear appeals from them. The jurisdiction of the high court over these suits and cases is specified by the governor.
- The district council can establish, construct or manage primary schools, dispensaries, markets, ferries, fisheries, roads and so on in the district.
- They are empowered to assess and collect land revenue and to impose certain specified taxes.

#COALITION FOR DISASTER RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE (CDRI)

- The Cabinet approves categorizing the **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)** as an "**International Organization**".
- It also approved the signing of the **Headquarters Agreement** further granting it the exemptions, immunities, and privileges contemplated by the United Nations (Privileges and Immunities) Act, 1947, which means that member's property and assets wherever located and by whomsoever held, shall **enjoy immunity from every form of legal process** except in any particular case it has expressly waived its immunity.



Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)?

- CDRI is a global partnership of national governments, **United Nations** agencies and programmes, multilateral development banks and financing mechanisms, the private sector, and academic and research institutions.
- It aims to **increase the resilience of infrastructure systems to climate and disaster risks**, thereby ensuring **sustainable development**.
- It was launched in 2019, at the **United Nations Climate Action Summit** in New York.
- It is the Government of India's **second major global initiative** after the **International Solar Alliance**, and it demonstrates India's leadership in climate change and disaster resilience issues.

Members:

- Since its inception, **31 countries, 6 international organisations and 2 private sector organisations** have joined CDRI as members.
- **6 International Organisations:** Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank Group, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), European Union, European Investment Bank.
- **2 Private Sector Organisations:** **The Private Sector Alliance for Disaster Resilient Societies and Coalition for Climate Resilient Investment.**
- CDRI has steadily increased its membership by attracting a diverse range of economically advanced, developing, and vulnerable countries to climate change and disasters.

#NITI AAYOG REPORT 'TAKE HOME RATION'

- Recently, a report titled-Take Home Ration-Good Practices throughout the State/Union Territories was released by **NITI Aayog** and the **World Food Program**.

What is World Food Program?

- It is the largest humanitarian organisation in the world, saving lives in times of need and utilising food aid to help people recover from war, **natural disasters**, and the effects of **climate change** create a road to peace, stability, and prosperity.
- The WFP was given the **Nobel Peace Prize** in 2020.
- It was founded in 1961 by the **Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)** and **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** with its **headquarters in Rome, Italy**.
- It is also a **member of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG)**, a coalition of UN agencies and organisations aimed at fulfilling the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.



What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- The report presents a set of **good and innovative practices** adopted in the implementation of the **Take Home Ration value chain** by the States and UTs.
- The government adopted innovative models to reach remote areas.
- It appreciated the **production, formulation, delivery, labelling, packaging, supervision, quality control, and changes in social and behavioural norms** adopted by the Government by **JAN BHAGIDARI**, and sourcing local networks of Anganwadi's, etc.

What is Take Home Ration?

- The government of India provides Take Home Ration under the **Supplementary Nutrition component of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)** to fill the gap in nutrition among children as well as **Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLW)**.
- It offers **fortified rations** for use at home, provided in **two ways**:
- Take-Home Rations** and **Hot-Cooked Meals at Anganwadi Centers**.
- It's given as **raw ingredients** or in **packets that have already been cooked**.

What are the Other Similar Government Schemes?

- **National Health Mission (NHM):** Launched in 2013, it subsumed the National Rural Health Mission and the National Urban Health Mission.
- It is being implemented by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- **PM-POSHAN:** In September 2021, the Union Cabinet approved the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman or PM-POSHAN for providing one **hot cooked meal in Government and Government-aided schools** with the financial outlay of Rs 1.31 trillion.
- The scheme replaced the national programme for mid-day meal in schools or Mid-day Meal Scheme.
- **National Nutrition Strategy:** The Strategy aims to reduce all forms of undernutrition by 2030, with a focus on the most vulnerable and critical age groups.

#PM ADDRESSED NATURAL FARMING CONCLAVE

- Recently, Prime Minister Addressed a Natural Farming Conclave, where he urged farmers to take up **Natural Farming**.

What is Natural Farming?

- It is defined as a “**chemical- free farming and livestock based**”.
- Soundly grounded in agro-ecology, it is a **diversified farming system that integrates crops, trees and livestock, allowing the optimum use of functional biodiversity**.
- It holds the **promise of enhancing farmers’ income while delivering many other benefits**, such as restoration of soil fertility and environmental health, and mitigating and/or reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- This farming approach was **introduced by Masanobu Fukuoka, a Japanese farmer and philosopher**, in his 1975 book The One-Straw Revolution.
- Internationally, Natural Farming is considered a form of regenerative agriculture—a prominent strategy to save the planet. In India, Natural farming is promoted as **Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati Programme (BPKP)** under **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)**.
- BPKP is aimed at promoting traditional indigenous practices which reduce externally purchased inputs.



What are the Related Initiatives?

- **Rainfed Area Development**
- **Sub-mission on Agro Forestry**
- **National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture**
- **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)**
- **Green India Mission**

#'INDIA STACK KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE' PROGRAMME

- As a part of the **Digital India** week, a three day dedicated event titled '**India Stack Knowledge Exchange**' programme was organised.
- India Stack refers to ambitious project of **creating a unified software platform to bring India's population into the digital age.**



What is the India Stack Knowledge Exchange Programme (ISKE)?

- The **idea behind ISKE 2022** was to get the real practitioners - **the IT champions** - to speak of the **implementation of ground-breaking projects, the challenges faced and the road ahead for these projects.**
- ISKE 2022 was also visualised to present to the global community, **India Stack solutions and goods**, and welcomed **any nation to adopt and customize them for their own use.**

Areas covered under ISKE 2022

Smart Cities Mission:

- SCM** is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**, launched in June 2015 to **transform 100 cities to provide the necessary core infrastructure** and clean and **sustainable environment** to enable a decent quality of life to their citizens through the application of "**Smart Solutions**".
- The mission aims to meet the aspirations of India's population living in cities through various urban development projects.
- Digital Infrastructure for Governance, Impact and Transformation (DIGIT):** DIGIT is a platform which is open source and open **API (Application Programming Interface)** powered for developers, enterprises and citizens to build new applications and solutions.
- The ready to use platform helps achieve quicker implementation timeframes and helps local governments achieve process improvements, accountability and transparency at various levels of administration.
- It is a manifestation of **Societal Platform** thinking, a systemic method to resolve complex societal challenges with speed, at scale, sustainably.
- Societal Platforms** are manifestations of **Societal Thinking**, a systemic approach, a set of **values** and specific **design** principles, to reimagine **social problems, redesign core interactions** between key actors of society and induce exponential social change.
- India urban data exchange: IUDE** has been developed in partnership between the Smart Cities Mission and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru.
- It is an open-source software platform which facilitates the secure, authenticated, and managed exchange of data amongst various data platforms, 3rd party authenticated and authorised applications, and other sources.

Open Network for Digital Commerce:

- ONDC** is a **freely accessible government-backed platform** that aims to democratise **e-commerce** by moving it from a **platform-centric model to an open network** for buying and selling of goods and services.
- It is a **not-for-profit organisation** that will offer a network to **enable local digital commerce stores** across industries to be discovered and engaged by any network-enabled applications.
- Under ONDC, it is envisaged that a **buyer registered on one participating e-commerce site** (for example, Amazon) may **purchase goods from a seller on another participating e-commerce site** (for example, Flipkart).

NavIC:

- **Navigation in Indian Constellation (NavIC)** is an Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), developed by the **Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)**.
- The main objective is to provide reliable position, navigation and timing services over India and its neighbourhood.
- It has been certified by the 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP), a global body for coordinating mobile telephony standards.

Visualisation of Earth Observation Data and Archival System (VEDAS):

- **VEDAS provides a platform** to motivate young researchers and academia to showcase their spatiotemporal analytical skill using **Indian Earth Observation data and build geo-spatial applications**.
- It is a step toward **expanding the societal benefits** of the nation's investments in ISRO's Earth science research.
- It is expected that with a handshake between data generators and potential analysts, **newer and innovative processing tools and geo-spatial applications will emerge**.

Meteorological & Oceanographic Satellite Data Archival Centre (MOSDAC):

- **Space Applications Centre (SAC)** is an **ISRO Centre** located at Ahmedabad, dealing with a wide variety of themes from **satellite payload development, operational data reception and processing to societal applications**.
- **Meteorological and Oceanographic Satellite Data Archival Centre (MOSDAC)** is a Data Centre of Space Applications Centre (SAC) and has facilities for satellite data reception, processing, analysis and dissemination.
- MOSDAC is operationally supplying earth observation data from Indian meteorology and oceanography satellites, to cater to national and international research requirements.

Bhuvan, Bhoonidhi & Yuktdhara:

- **Bhuvan:** **Bhuvan** is a type of **web portal** used to find and access geographic information (geospatial information) and associated geographic services (display, editing, analysis, etc.) via the Internet.
- **Bhoonidhi:** It enables access to an extensive archive of **Remote Sensing data** from 44 satellites, including Indian and Foreign Remote Sensing sensors acquired over 31 years.
- **Yuktdhara:** It is a geospatial planning portal meant for facilitating Gram Panchayat level planning of **MGNREGA** activities across India. It integrates a wide variety of spatial information contents to enable a holistic approach toward planning using open source **GIS** tools.

#ELEVENTH AGRICULTURE CENSUS 2021-22

Recently, the **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare** launched "**The Eleventh Agricultural Census (2021-22)**."

This computation will bring **huge benefits in a vast and agricultural country like India**.

Eleventh Census:

The field work of the agricultural census **will start in August 2022**. This is the **first time that data collection** for agricultural census will be conducted on **smartphones and tablets**, so that data is available in time.

It includes:

- Use of **digital land records** like land title records and survey reports & Collection of data through **app/software using smartphone/tablet**.
- Complete **enumeration of all villages** in states with non-land records during Phase-I as done in states having land records.
- **Real time monitoring** of progress and processing.
- Most of the States have **digitized their land records and surveys**, which will further accelerate the collection of agricultural census data.
- The use of **digitized land records** and the **use of mobile apps for data collection** will enable the **creation of a database of operational holdings in the country**.

What do we mean by Digital Agriculture?

Digital Agriculture is ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) and data

ecosystems to support the development and delivery of timely, targeted information and services to make farming profitable and sustainable while delivering safe, nutritious and affordable food for all.

Examples: Agricultural biotechnology is a range of tools, including traditional breeding techniques, that alter living organisms, or parts of organisms, to make or modify products, improve plants or animals, or develop microorganisms for specific agricultural uses.

What do we need to know about the Agriculture Census?

- **Agriculture Census** is conducted **every 5 years**, which is being undertaken now after delay due to the **Covid - 19 Pandemic**.
- Entire Census operation is conducted in **three phases** and **operational holding** is taken as a statistical unit at micro level for data collection.
- Based on the agriculture census data collected in three phases, the Department **brings out three detailed reports** analyzing trends on various parameters at **All India and States/UTs level**.
- District/Tehsil level reports are prepared by the respective States/UTs. **Agricultural Census** is the **main source of information** on a variety of agricultural parameters at a relatively minute level, such as the **number and area of operational holdings, their size, class-wise distribution, land use, tenancy and cropping pattern, etc.**

What Initiatives has the Government taken for Digital Agriculture?

- **AgriStack:** The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has planned creating 'AgriStack' - a **collection of technology-based interventions in agriculture**. It will create a **unified platform for farmers** to provide them end to end services across the agriculture food value chain.
- **Digital Agriculture Mission:** This has been initiated for 2021 -2025 by the government for projects based on new technologies like **artificial intelligence, block chain and GIS technology, use of drones and robots etc.**
- **Unified Farmer Service Platform (UFSP):** UFSP is a combination of **Core Infrastructure, Data, Applications and Tools** that enable **seamless interoperability** of various public and private IT systems in the agriculture ecosystem across the country.
- **National e-Governance Plan in Agriculture (NeGP-A):** A Centrally Sponsored Scheme, it was initially launched in 2010-11 in 7 pilot States, which **aims to achieve rapid development in India** through use of ICT for timely access to agriculture related information to the farmers. In 2014-15, the scheme was further extended for all the remaining States and 2 UTs.

#TARGETS TO CURB MALNUTRITION IN INDIA

Recently, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has released targets to curb **Malnutrition in India**.

What are the Targets released to Curb Malnutrition?

- **Aims at reducing stunting and under-nutrition (underweight prevalence) among children** below 6 years by 2% each year.
- **Aims to Reduce**, low birth weight by 2% per annum, **Anaemia among children between six and 59 months**, as well as women and adolescent girls (15 to 49 years), by 3% per annum.
- Anaemia is a medical condition in which the blood doesn't have enough healthy red blood cells.
- **Highlighted the NFHS-5 Report**, which comprises of **detailed information on key domains of population, such as:** health and family welfare, **fertility**, family planning, infant and child mortality, maternal and child health, nutrition and anaemia, morbidity and healthcare, **women's empowerment** etc.



What are the Findings of the NFHS-5?

Data on Stunted Children: Meghalaya has the **highest number of stunted children (46.5%)**, followed by Bihar (42.9%). Maharashtra has **25.6% wasted children (weight for height)** — the highest — followed by Gujarat (25.1%).

Jharkhand has the highest percentage of women (26%), between 15 and 49 years, who have a below-normal **Body Mass Index (BMI)**.

What are Malnutrition and Related Initiatives?

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

Initiatives:

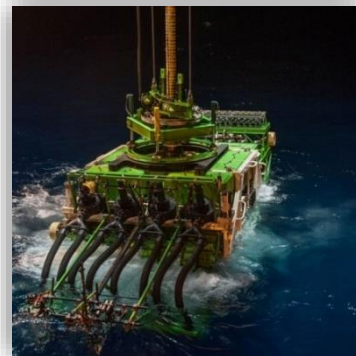
- **POSHAN Abhiyaan:** The government of India has launched the National Nutrition Mission (NNM) or POSHAN Abhiyaan to ensure a "Malnutrition Free India" by 2022.
- **Anemia Mukh Bharat Abhiyan:** Launched in 2018, the mission aims at accelerating the annual rate of decline of anaemia from one to three percentage points.
- **Mid-day Meal (MDM) scheme:** It aims to improve nutritional levels among school children which also has a direct and positive impact on enrolment, retention and attendance in schools.
- **The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013:** It aims to ensure food and nutrition security for the most vulnerables through its associated schemes and programmes, making access to food a legal right.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):** Rs.6,000 is transferred directly to the bank accounts of pregnant women for availing better facilities for their delivery.
- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme:** It was launched in 1975 and the scheme aims at providing food, preschool education, primary healthcare, immunization, health check-up and referral services to children under 6 years of age and their mothers.

#WHAT IS DEEP SEA MINING?

Recently, the Minister of State of Science & Technology presented a national science award to Indian scientists who conducted the **world's first locomotive trials of a deep-sea mining system in the central Indian Ocean.**

The Minister presented the award at the **16th Foundation Day of the Ministry of Earth Sciences.**

Also, inaugurated a **first-of-its-kind and state-of-art fully automated buoy-based coastal observation and water quality nowcasting system** for the Indian Ocean which was developed by **Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)** and It's the part of **India's Deep Ocean Mission.**



What is the Nowcasting System?

- In this method, **radar and satellite observations of local atmospheric conditions are processed** and displayed rapidly by computers to project weather several hours in advance.
- Nowcasting system to benefit various stakeholders, including coastal dwellers, fisherfolk, maritime industry, researchers, and agencies dealing with pollution, tourism, fisheries, and the coastal environment.

What is Deep Sea Mining?

The part of the ocean that lies **below a depth of 200 meters** is defined as the deep sea, and the process of extracting minerals from this area is known as deep-sea mining. According to **International Seabed Authority**, an agency under the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** for monitoring all activities related to mineral resources in the deep sea, the international seabed is the area that lies beyond the limits of national jurisdiction and represents around 50% of the total area of the world's oceans.

What is India's Deep Ocean Mission?

- **Deep Ocean Mission** seeks to **develop the technologies required for exploring and, then, extracting minerals in the deep seabed,**
- It would develop a **manned submersible** that can carry **three people to a depth of 6,000 meters** in the ocean with a suite of scientific sensors and tools.
- It includes an integrated mining system that will be developed to bring up mineral ores from the deep sea.
- It will pursue **technological innovations for exploration and conservation of deep-sea biodiversity through "bio-prospecting of deep-sea flora and fauna** and studies on **sustainable utilization of deep-sea bio-resources.** The mission will seek to explore the prospects of **deriving energy and freshwater from the ocean** through "studies and detailed engineering design for **offshore ocean thermal energy conversion (OTEC)-powered desalination plants.**

What are other Blue Economy Initiatives?

- **India-Norway Task Force on Blue Economy for Sustainable Development:**
- **Sagarmala project**
- **O-SMART**
- **Integrated Coastal Zone Management**
- **National Fisheries policy**

#ROLLOUT OF 5G SERVICES

India is preparing to auction off airwaves to rollout **5G** services in the country. The infrastructure needed for such a rollout requires existing radio towers to be connected via **optical-fibre cables**.

What do we know about Optical Fibre?

Optical fibre is the **backbone of the digital infrastructure** — the data is transmitted by **light pulses travelling through long strands of thin fibre**.



- **Metal wires** are preferred for transmission in optical fibre communication as **signals travel with fewer damages**.
- The optical fibre works on the principle of **total internal reflection (TIR)**.
- **Light rays** can be used to transmit a huge amount of data (In case of long straight wire **without any bend**).
- In case of a bend, the optical cables are designed such that **they bend all the light rays inwards (using TIR)**.
- Fiber provides **more bandwidth** and has standardized performance up to 10 Gbps and beyond, something that it is **impossible to achieve when using copper**.
- More bandwidth means that fiber can **carry more information with far greater efficiency** than copper wire.

What do we mean by Fiberisation?

- The process of **connecting radio towers with each other via optical fibre cables** is called fiberisation.
- The backhaul is a component of the **larger transport that is responsible for carrying data across the network**.
- It represents the part of the network that **connects the core of the network to the edge**.
- It is necessary to **increase the density of mobile towers** to provide better coverage to consumers and businesses.

Right to Way (RoW) Rules:

- **The Indian Telegraph RoW Rules 2016** were notified by the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)**, Govt. of India in 2016.
- The rules aim to incorporate nominal **one-time compensation and uniform procedure** for establishment of **Overground Telegraph Line (OTL)** anywhere in the country.
- While all States/UTs are required to implement these rules, **they are not in complete alignment** and still require certain amendments to align.
- Several districts and local bodies **have not agreed to the RoW policies** as notified in those respective States and are following **their own bylaws** overriding the State RoW policies aligned with the RoW rules, 2016.

What is India's Status in Fiberisation?

- To transition into 5G, India needs at least **16 times more fibre**, according to estimates by STL, a technology company specialised in optical fibers and cables.
- India at present connects **only 30% of India's telecom towers**.
- India **exported optical fibre worth USD138 million to over 132 countries** between April 2020 and November 2021.
- Indian optical fibre cable consumption is **predicted to increase to 33 million fibre km by 2026 from 17 million fibre km in 2021**.
- A little more than 30% of mobile towers have fibre connectivity; **this needs to be scaled up to at least**

80%.

#MINORITY STATUS IN INDIA

- Recently, while hearing a petition, the **Supreme Court** has said that the Minority status of religious and linguistic communities is **"State-dependent"**.

What was the Petition about?

- Petition complains that **followers of Judaism, Bahaism, and Hinduism are the real minorities** in Ladakh, Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Kashmir, Punjab and the North-East States.
- However, they **cannot establish and administer educational institutions** of their choice because of the **non-identification of 'minority' at the State level**.
- Religious communities such as **Hindus here are socially, economically, politically non-dominant and numerically inferior** in several States.

Who are the minorities notified by the Government of India?

- Currently, only those communities notified under section 2(c) of the **NCM (National Commission for Minorities) Act, 1992**, by the central government are regarded as minority.
- Despite the **Supreme Court's 11-judge bench judgment in T.M.A Pai case**, which clearly determined that linguistic and religious minorities must be identified at the state level rather than at the national level, section 2(c) of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) Act 1992 gave the Centre "unbridled power" to inform minorities.
- In 1992**, with the enactment of the NCM Act, 1992, the MC became a statutory body and **was renamed as the NCM**.

What are the Constitutional Provisions for Minority?

- Article 29:**
- It provides that any section of the citizens residing in any part of India having a distinct language, script or culture of its own, **shall have the right to conserve the same**.
- It grants **protection to both religious minorities as well as linguistic minorities**.
- However, the SC held that the scope of this article is not necessarily restricted to minorities only, as use of the word **'section of citizens' in the Article includes minorities as well as the majority**.
- Article 30:**
- All minorities shall have the **right to establish and administer educational institutions** of their choice.
- The protection **under Article 30 is confined only to minorities** (religious or linguistic) and does not extend to any section of citizens (as under Article 29).
- Article 350-B:**
- The **7th Constitutional (Amendment) Act 1956** inserted this article which provides for a Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities appointed by the President of India.
- It would be the duty of the **Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities** under the Constitution.

#NEW FLAG CODE OF INDIA

- Recently, the **GOI** has announced that the **national flag can now remain hoisted through the night**, if it is in the open and hoisted by a member of the public.
- Earlier, the tricolour could be hoisted **only between sunrise and sunset**.
- The government had earlier amended the flag code to allow for machine-made and polyester flags to be used.
- As government launched a **Har Ghar Tiranga campaign**, the Ministry of Home Affairs amended the **Flag Code of India 2002** to allow for the **national flag to be flown even at night**.



What do we know about the Flag Code of India?

- It allowed the **unrestricted display of the Tricolour** as long as the **honour and dignity** of the flag were being respected.
- The flag code **did not replace the pre-existing rules** governing the correct display of the flag.
- It was, however, an **effort to bring together all the previous laws**, conventions and practices.

What is the Har Ghar Tiranga Campaign?

- ‘**Har Ghar Tiranga**’ is a campaign under the aegis of **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav** to encourage people to **bring the Tiranga home and to hoist it to mark the 75th year of India’s independence**.
- Our relationship with the flag has always been more formal and institutional than personal.
- Bringing the flag home collectively as a nation in the 75th year of independence thus becomes **symbolic of not only an act of personal connection to the Tiranga but also an embodiment of our commitment to nation-building**.
- The idea behind the initiative is to **invoke the feeling of patriotism** in the hearts of the people and to promote awareness about the Indian National Flag.

What do we know about India’s National Flag?

History:

1906: The first national flag, which consisted of **three horizontal stripes of red, yellow and green**, is said to have been hoisted on 7th August, 1906, at the **Parsee Bagan Square, near Lower Circular Road, in Calcutta (now Kolkata)**.

1921: Later, in 1921, freedom fighter **Pingali Venkayya met Mahatma Gandhi** and proposed a **basic design of the flag**, consisting of **two red and green bands**.

1931: After undergoing several changes, the Tricolour was **adopted as our national flag at a Congress Committee meeting in Karachi in 1931**.

1947: The Indian flag was adopted in its present form during a meeting of the **Constituent Assembly held on 22nd July 1947**.

Rules Governing the Tricolor:

- **The Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950:** It restricts the use of the national flag, the coat-of-arms used by a **government department**, the **official seal of the President or Governor**, the pictorial representation of Mahatma Gandhi and the Prime Minister, and the Ashoka Chakra.
- **The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971:** It prohibits the **desecration of or insult to the country’s national symbols**, including the **national flag, the Constitution, the national anthem and the Indian map**.
- **Part IV-A of the Constitution: The Part IV-A of the Constitution** (which consists of only one Article 51-A) specifies the eleven Fundamental Duties. According to Article 51A (a), it shall be the **duty of every citizen of India to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem**.

#SWADESH DARSHAN SCHEME

Recently, the Ministry of Tourism has revamped its **Swadesh Darshan scheme** as **Swadesh Darshan 2.0 (SD2.0)** with an aim to develop sustainable and responsible infrastructure at destinations.

What is Swadesh Darshan Scheme?

It was launched in 2014-15 for integrated development of **theme-based tourist circuits** — Buddhist Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Desert Circuit, Eco Circuit, Heritage Circuit, Northeast Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Sufi Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Tirthankar Circuit, Wildlife Circuit and Tribal Circuit.

- It is **100% centrally funded** and efforts are made to achieve convergence with other schemes of Central and State Governments and also to **leverage the voluntary funding available for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives** of Central Public Sector Undertakings and Corporate Sector.



Objectives:

- To position tourism as a major engine of economic growth and job creation;
- Develop circuits having tourist potential in a planned and prioritized manner;
- Promote cultural and heritage value of the country to generate livelihoods in the identified regions;
- Enhancing the tourist attractiveness in a sustainable manner** by developing world class infrastructure in the circuit/destinations;

What is Swadesh Darshan Scheme 2.0?

- Swadesh Darshan 2.0 is not an incremental change but a generational shift to evolve **Swadesh Darshan Scheme as a holistic mission to develop sustainable and responsible tourism destinations.**
- It will encourage the development of benchmarks and standards for **generic and theme-specific development of tourism destinations** and the States will follow the benchmarks and standards while planning and developing the projects.

Following major themes have been identified for tourism under the Scheme.

- Culture and Heritage
- Adventure Tourism
- Eco-Tourism
- Wellness Tourism
- MICE Tourism**
- Rural Tourism**
- Beach Tourism
- Cruises – Ocean & Inland.

#WHAT IS CLIMATE FINANCE?

- Recently, the **UNFCCC COP26** President, Alok Sharma, visited India to discuss India's implementation of its COP 26 commitments.
- He also stated that a mechanism is being put in place to achieve the **target of climate financing USD 100 billion by 2023**.

What is Climate Finance?

- It refers to **local, national, or transnational financing—drawn from public, private and alternative sources** of financing—that seeks to **support mitigation and adaptation actions that will address climate change**.
- The UNFCCC, **Kyoto Protocol**, and the **Paris Agreement** call for financial assistance from Parties with **more financial resources (Developed Countries)** to those that are less endowed and **more vulnerable (Developing Countries)**.
- This is in accordance with the principle of “**Common but Differentiated Responsibility and Respective Capabilities**” (CBDR).
- In COP26, new financial pledges to support developing countries in achieving the global goal for adapting to the effects of climate change were made.
- **New rules for the international carbon trading mechanisms agreed at COP26 will support adaptation funding.**



What is the USD 100 Billion Target and why does it matter?

In 2009, at the UNFCCC **COP15** (held in Copenhagen),

The developed country parties, to achieve **meaningful mitigation actions** and transparency on implementation, jointly set a target of **USD 100 billion a year by 2020** to address the needs of developing countries.

The climate finance goal was then **formally recognized by the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties at COP16 in Cancun**.

- At COP21 in Paris, Parties extended the \$100 billion goals through 2025.
- After COP26 there was a consensus that developed **nations will double their collective provision of adaptation finance from 2019 levels by 2025**, in order to achieve this balance between adaptation and mitigation.

What is Green Financing?

- To assist the provision of climate financing, UNFCCC established a **financial framework** to give financial resources to developing nation Parties.
- The **finance structure** also supports the **Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement**.
- It specifies that the financial mechanism's operation can be **entrusted to one or more existing international entities**, since the Convention's entrance into force in 1994, the **Global Environment Facility (GEF) has acted as the financial mechanism's operating institution**.
- Parties established the **Green Climate Fund (GCF) at COP 16 in 2010** and designated it as an operating entity of the financial mechanism in 2011.
- The financial mechanism **reports to the COP, which determines its policies, programme priorities, and financing eligibility criteria**.

What are India's Initiatives regarding Climate Finance?

- **National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC)**: It was established in 2015 to **meet the cost of adaptation to climate change for the State and Union Territories** of India that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

- **National Clean Energy Fund:** The Fund was created to **promote clean energy**, and funded through an initial **carbon tax** on the use of coal by industries.
- It is governed by an Inter-Ministerial Group with the Finance Secretary as the Chairman. Its mandate is to fund research and development of innovative **clean energy technology** in the fossil and non-fossil fuel-based sectors.
- **National Adaptation Fund:** The fund was established in 2014 with a corpus of Rs. 100 crores with the aim of bridging the gap between the need and the available funds.
- The fund is operated under the **Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)**.

#NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STREET VENDORS OF INDIA (NASVI)

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

Who do we need to know about Street Vendors?

- Street Vendor is a person who **offers goods for sale to the public** at large without having a **permanent built-up structure from which to sell**.
- Street vendors **may be stationary** in the sense that they occupy space on the pavements or other public/private spaces or, they **may be mobile** in the sense that move from place to place by carrying their wares on push carts or in baskets on their heads.



Constitutional Provisions:

Right to Trade: Article 19 (1) (g) gives the Indian citizen a **fundamental right to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business**.

Equality before Law: Article 14 of the Constitution states that the **state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or equal protection of the laws** within the territory of India.

Social Justice:

The **preamble of the Indian Constitution** states that India is a **sovereign, socialist, secular democratic republic** and shall secure to its citizens **justice, social, economic and political** and **equality of status and of opportunity**.

Directive Principles: Article 38(1) directs the state to **promote the welfare of the people** by securing a social order in which justice – social, economic and political, shall inform all institutions of national life.

- Article 38(2) directs to ‘**minimize the inequalities in income status, facilities and opportunities**.’
- Article 39(a) directs the state to formulate policy to ensure that citizens, men and women equally, have the **right to an adequate means of livelihood**.
- Article 41 specifically provides for ‘**right to work**’ within the limits of the economic capacity of the state.

What are Government's Initiatives for Street Vendors?

- **SVANidhi Scheme:** SVANidhi Scheme was launched to benefit over **50 lakh street vendors** who had been **vending in urban areas** including those from **surrounding peri-urban/rural areas**.

- **National Association of Street Vendors of India: NASVI** is an organization working for the **protection of the livelihood rights of thousands of street vendors across the country.**
- The main objective was to **bring together the street vendor organizations in India** so as to collectively **struggle for macro-level changes.**
- **The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014:** It was enacted to **regulate street vendors in public areas and protect their rights.**
- The Act defines a “**street vendor**” as a person engaged in vending of articles of everyday use or offering services to the general public, **in any public place or private area, from a temporary built-up structure or by moving from place to place.**

#STRENGTHENING PHARMACEUTICALS INDUSTRY

- The Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilisers has launched Schemes for '**Strengthening Pharmaceuticals Industry**' (SPI) keeping in view the **strategic role of MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises).**

What are the Key Points?

- The Scheme provides for **credit linked capital and interest subsidy for Technology Upgradation of MSME units in pharmaceutical sector**, as well as support of up to Rs 20 crore each for common facilities including Research centre, testing labs and **ETPs (Effluent Treatment Plant)** in Pharma Clusters.
- The MSME unit will have the **option to choose from either Capital subsidy or Interest subvention.**
- **SIDBI (Small Industries Development Bank of India)** is the **Project management Consultant** for implementing the scheme.

Components:

- **Pharmaceutical Technology Upgradation Assistance Scheme (PTUAS):**
- It will facilitate **pharmaceutical MSMEs with proven track records** to upgrade their technology.
- It has provisions for a **capital subsidy of 10 % on loans up to a maximum limit of Rs 10 crore** with a minimum repayment period of three years or interest subvention of up to 5 % (6 % in case of units owned by SC/ST) on reducing balance basis.

What are the Schemes Related to the Pharma Sector?

- **Promotion of Bulk Drug Parks Scheme:** The government **aims to develop 3 mega Bulk Drug parks** in India in partnership with States to reduce manufacturing cost of bulk drugs in the country and dependency on other countries for bulk drugs.
- The scheme will also help in providing continuous supply of drugs and ensure delivery of affordable healthcare to the citizens.
- **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme:** The PLI scheme **aims to promote domestic manufacturing** of critical Key Starting Materials (KSMs)/Drug Intermediates and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) in the country.

#NATIONAL ANTI-DOPING BILL

Recently, the **Lok Sabha** passed the National Anti-Doping Bill 2021 Bill that seeks to create a **statutory framework for the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)**.

Piloted by the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, it was first introduced in Lok Sabha in December 2021.

The bill will **protect the interest of sportspersons** as it will provide ample space for them to put forth their versions especially when they face anti-doping charges.



What are the Key Features of the Bill?

- **Prohibition of Doping:** The Bill prohibits athletes, athlete support personnel and other persons from engaging in doping in sport.
- **Consequences of Violations:** Anti-doping rule violation may result in **disqualification of results including forfeiture of medals, points, and prizes**, ineligibility to participate in a competition or event for a prescribed period, financial sanctions etc.
- **Statutory Backing for National Anti-Doping Agency:** The Bill provides for constituting this National Anti-Doping Agency as a statutory body.
- It will be headed by a **Director General appointed by the central government**. Functions of the Agency include,
 - Planning, implementing, and monitoring anti-doping activities,
 - Investigating anti-doping rule violations,
 - Promoting anti-doping research.

What is Doping and Related Agencies?

Consumption of **certain prohibited substances** by athletes to enhance performance.

- **NADA:** National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) was set up as a registered society **under the Societies Registration Act of 1860** on 24th November, 2005 with a mandate for Dope free sports in India. The primary objectives are **to implement anti-doping rules as per WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency) code**, regulate dope control programme, to promote education and research and creating awareness about doping and its ill effects.

The NADA has the **necessary authority and responsibility for:**

- Planning, coordinating, implementing, monitoring and advocating improvements in Doping Control,
- Cooperating with other relevant national organisations, agencies and other Anti-Doping Organisations etc.

WADA: In November, 1999 the **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)** was set up under the International Olympic Committee. WADA is recognised by the **UNESCO International Convention against Doping in Sport (2005)**. WADA's primary role is to develop, harmonise, and coordinate anti-doping regulations across all sports and countries. It does so by ensuring proper implementation of the World Anti-Doping Code (WADA Code) and its standards, conducting investigations into doping incidents, conducting research on doping, and educating sportspersons and related personnel on anti-doping regulations.

#TRADE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR EXPORT SCHEME (TIES)

- Recently, the central government has released Rs 206 crore to states for the promotion of exports under the **Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES)** initiative.
- Under the TIES, financial assistance for 27 export infrastructure projects have been approved during FY 2019-20 to 2022-23.

What is Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES)?

- **Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry** launched the Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES) in 2017.
- After delinking the **Assistance to States for Development of Export Infrastructure and Allied Activities (ASIDE) Scheme** in 2015, the State Governments had been consistently requesting the support of the Centre in creation of export infrastructure.
- **Objective:** To assist Central and State Government agencies in the creation of appropriate infrastructure for the growth of exports.
- **Scope:** The scheme can be availed by States through their implementing agencies, for infrastructure projects with significant export linkages like **Border Haats, Land customs stations, quality testing and certification labs, cold chains, trade promotion centres, export warehousing and packaging, SEZs and ports/airports cargo terminuses.**
- **Extent of Financial Assistance:** The Central Government assistance for infrastructure creation will be in the form of **grant-in-aid**, normally not more than the equity being put in by the implementing agency or **50% of the total equity in the project**. In the case of projects located in **North Eastern States, Himalayan States** including UT of J&K, Ladakh this grant can be up to **80% of total equity**.

#SOCIAL SECURITY FOR UNORGANIZED WORKERS

- The **Ministry of Labour & Employment** has informed **Rajya Sabha** those **more than 28 crore unorganised workers** have been registered on **e-Shram Portal** and the government is formulating Social Security Schemes for unorganised Workers.
- It is also reported that, **India is negotiating Social Security Agreements (SSAs)** with the United States and United Kingdom to avoid duplication of Social Security Schemes.

What is a Social Security?

- According to the **International Labour Organisation (ILO)**, Social Security is a comprehensive approach designed to prevent deprivation, give assurance to the individual of a basic minimum income and to protect the individual from any uncertainties.

What is Current State of Informal workers in India?

- **Over 94% of 27.69 crore informal sector workers registered on the e-Shram portal** have a monthly income of Rs 10,000 or below and over 74% of the enrolled workforce belongs to **Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC)**. The proportion of the General Category workers is 25.56%.
- The data showed that **94.11% of the registered informal workers have a monthly income of Rs 10,000 or below**, while 4.36% have a monthly income between Rs 10,001 and Rs 15,000.

What are the Related Initiatives for Unorganised Workers?

- **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY):** It is a one-year life insurance scheme renewable

from year to year offering coverage for death due to any reason.

- **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY):** It is a one-year accidental insurance scheme renewable from year to year offering coverage for death or disability due to accident.
- **Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY):** It is the **world's largest health insurance/ assurance** scheme fully financed by the government.
- **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan (PM-SYM):** It is a **Central Sector Scheme** administered by the Ministry of Labour and Employment and implemented through Life Insurance Corporation of India and Community Service Centers (CSCs).
- **Atal Pension Yojana:** The scheme was launched in May, 2015, with the objective of creating a universal social security system for all Indians, especially the poor, the under-privileged and the workers in the unorganised sector.
- **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP):** The Ministry of Rural Development has proposed that the monthly pensions of the elderly poor, disabled and widows should be increased from the current Rs 200 to Rs800 under NSAP.

#NITI AAYOG REPORT ON DIGITAL BANKS

- Recently, NITI Aayog has released a Report titled- '**Digital Banks: A Proposal for Licensing & Regulatory Regime for India**'.
- It suggested setting up Digital Banks and a licensing and regulatory framework for such Banks.

What are the Findings of the Report?

- In recent years, India has made rapid strides in furthering **Financial Inclusion (FI)**, catalysed by the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)** and **India Stack**.
- However, **credit penetration remains a policy challenge**, especially for the nation's 63-million-odd MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises).
- The FI has been furthered by the **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)**, which has witnessed extraordinary adoption.
- UPI recorded over 4.2 billion transactions worth Rs 7.7 trillion in October 2021. The FI also **resulted in Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** through apps such as **PM-KISAN** and extending microcredit facilities to street vendors through **PM-SVANIDHI**.
- India is at the **cusp of operationalizing its own open banking framework**.
- Creating a blueprint for digital banking regulatory framework and policy **offers India the opportunity to cement her position as the global leader** in Fintech at the same time as solving the several public policy challenges she faces.



What is Digital Bank and what is its Need?

- **Digital Bank:** It will be defined in the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949**, and shall have its own balance sheet and legal existence.
- It will be **different from the 75 Digital Banking Units (DBUs)** -- announced by Finance Minister in **Union Budget 2022-23** -- which are being set up to push digital payments, banking and fintech innovations in underserved areas.
- A DBU is a **specialised fixed point business unit** or hub housing certain minimum digital infrastructure for delivering digital banking products and services as well as servicing existing financial products and services digitally in self-service mode at any time.
- Digital banks will be **subject to prudential and liquidity norms on a par with existing commercial**

banks.

#WHAT IS FOREST FIRE?

- In recent weeks, **Forest Fires** have ravaged Europe, especially in southwest Europe.
- There was blazing heatwave destroying thousands of acres of land, forcing people to leave their homes and killing several emergency personnel.

What is forest Fire?

- **About:** Also called **bush or vegetation fire** or wildfire, it can be described as any **uncontrolled and non-prescribed combustion or burning of plants in a natural setting** such as a forest, grassland, brush land or tundra, which consumes the natural fuels and spreads based on environmental conditions (e.g., wind, topography).
- There are **three conditions** that need to be present in order for a wildfire to burn: **Fuel, Oxygen, and a Heat source.**

What about Forest Fire Incidents in India?

- **About:** There has been a **ten-fold increase in forest fires in the past two decades**, and more than 62% of Indian states are prone to high-intensity forest fires.
- Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra **are the most prone to high-intensity forest fire events** caused by rapid **change in climate**.
- **Mizoram has had the highest number of forest fire incidences** in the last two decades, with more than 95% of its districts being forest fire hotspots.
- **Districts that were earlier flood prone have now become drought prone** due to a “swapping trend” as a result of climatic changes.
- **More than 75 % of Indian districts are extreme climate event hotspots**, and more than 30 % of districts are extreme forest fire hotspots.

Initiatives Taken:

- **National Action Plan for Forest Fires (NAPFF)**, was started in 2018 with the goal of **reducing forest fires by informing, enabling, and empowering forest fringe communities** and incentivizing them to collaborate with state forest departments.
- **The Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme (FPM)** is the only government-sponsored programme dedicated to assisting states in dealing with forest fires.

#PM MODI UNVEILED NATIONAL EMBLEM

- The Prime Minister of India unveiled the 6.5 metre-tall **National Emblem** on top of the under-construction **new Parliament building** recently.
- The **State Emblem of India is the national emblem of the Republic of India** and is used by the union government, many state governments, and other government agencies.

History:

- The State emblem is an adaptation from the **Sarnath Lion Capital of Ashoka (Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh)**.
- In the original, there are **four lions**, standing back to back, mounted on an abacus with a frieze carrying sculptures in high relief of an **elephant**, a **galloping horse**, a **bull** and a **lion** separated by **intervening wheels over a bell-shaped lotus**.
- **Carved out of a single block** of polished sandstone, the capital is crowned by the **Wheel of the Law (Dharma Chakra)**.
- **Emblem Adopted:** In the State emblem, adopted by the Government of India on **26th January 1950**, **only three lions are visible**, the fourth being hidden from view.
- The **wheel appears in relief in the centre** of the abacus with a **bull on right** and a **horse on left** and the outlines of other wheels on extreme right and left.
- **The bell-shaped lotus has been omitted.**

What are the salient features of the National Emblem of India?

- The State emblem of India is the **official seal of the Government of India**.
- Four animals are shown **representing four directions**:
- **A Galloping Horse:** West
- The Horse represents the horse **Kanthaka**, which **Buddha is said to have used** for leaving his princely life.
- **An Elephant:** East
- The Elephant depicts the **dream of Queen Maya**, where a white elephant enters her womb.
- **A Bull:** South
- The Bull depicts the **Zodiac sign of Taurus**, the month in which **Buddha was born**.
- **A Lion:** North
- The Lion shows the **attainment of enlightenment**.
- The animals seem to follow each other turning the wheel of existence till eternity.
- The words **Satyameva Jayate from Mundaka Upanishad**, meaning 'Truth Alone Triumphs', are inscribed below the abacus in **Devanagari Script**.
- The Capital is crowned by the **Wheel of the Law (Dharma Chakra)**
- The four **Lions** symbolise **Buddha spreading Dharma in all directions**.
- It was built in the commemoration of the **first sermon by Buddha known as Dharmachakrapravartna**.

Legal Provisions:

- **State Emblem of India (Prohibition of Improper Use) Act 2005** and the **State Emblem of India (Regulation of Use) Rules 2007**:
- According to these rules, the National Emblem of India **can only be used as per provisions of the State Emblem of India (Prohibition of Improper Use) Act 2005** and any unauthorized use is punishable under law.
- There is a **punishment for imprisonment** of up to 2 years or a fine up to Rs 5000 if someone violates the law.

#VARANASI AS 1ST CULTURE & TOURISM CAPITAL OF SCO

- Ahead of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** Summit to be held in September 2022, Varanasi has been selected as the **SCO region's first "Tourism and Cultural Capital for 2022-23"**.
- The SCO summit will be held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan where **Iran and Belarus are likely to be the two newest additions to the SCO**. Earlier, the Cabinet was apprised of the Agreement signed among the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, SCO, member states on cooperation in the field of youth work among the authorized bodies of the member states of SCO.
- India will host the SCO summit next year 2023.

What is the Initiative?

- Varanasi' **"Cultural and Tourism Capital"** has been decided under a **new rotating initiative** to promote people-to-people contacts and tourism among the member states.
- Each year a city of the cultural heritage of a member country that will take over the rotating Presidency of the organisation will get the title to highlight its prominence.
- The new initiative will come into force after the Samarkand summit following which India will take over the Presidency and host the next Heads of the State summit.

What is the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation?

- It is permanent intergovernmental **international organization**. It's a Eurasian political, economic and military organization aiming to maintain peace, security and stability in the region. It was **created in 2001**.
- The SCO **Charter was signed in 2002**, and entered into force in 2003.
- **Genesis:** Prior to the creation of SCO in 2001, **Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan were members of the Shanghai Five**.
- Shanghai Five (1996) emerged from a series of border demarcation and demilitarization talks which the four former Soviet republics held with China to ensure stability along the borders.
- Following the accession of Uzbekistan to the organization in 2001, the Shanghai Five was renamed the SCO.
- **India and Pakistan became members in 2017**.
- **Membership:** Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan.

What is the Relevance of the Grouping for India?

- Through the years, the **SCO hosts have encouraged members to use the platform to discuss differences with other members** on the sidelines.
- It was on such an occasion that current Indian Prime Minister held a bilateral meeting with former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in 2015 and Foreign Minister **negotiated a five-point agreement with his Chinese counterpart on the side-lines of the Moscow conference in 2020**.
- India is also a part of the **'Quadrilateral' grouping with the U.S., Japan and Australia**.

#KERALA'S PROTEST AGAINST ESZs

- Farmers in Kerala are protesting against **Supreme Court's** order to establish **Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs)**.
- The SC has directed to have a **mandatory ESZ of minimum one kilometre measured from the demarcated boundary of every protected forest**, including the **national parks and wildlife sanctuaries**.
- The Kerala State Assembly demands the Centre to notify the zones by considering the State government's proposals that marked the **ESZ as zero around 10 protected areas of the State**.

What are Eco-Sensitive Zones?

- The **National Wildlife Action Plan (2002-2016)** of the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** stipulated that state governments should declare land falling within 10 km of the boundaries of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries as Eco Sensitive Zones (ESZs) under the **Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986**.
- While the 10-km rule is implemented as a general principle, the extent of its application can vary.
- Areas **beyond 10-km can also be notified by the Union government as ESZs**, if they hold larger ecologically important **"sensitive corridors."**

What is the Background?

- The order comes a decade after the **Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) report** (Gadgil report) that had **radically influenced the socio-political, economic and ecological narratives in the State**.
- Though not to the level of the high-pitched public unrest and protests that the State witnessed during the days preceding the WGEEP report, the **ESZ notification too has triggered state-wide protests**.
- Earlier, the State Government had **taken care to exclude the areas with high population density, government and quasi-government institutions, and public institutions from the ambit of its Draft ESZ notification**.
- The marking of the ESZ for the protected areas that shared the forest boundary with the **neighbouring States was a peaceful affair as there were no human habitations in between**.
- However, the **apex court's recent order has changed the picture and forced the State government to re-look the ESZs of at least 10 protected areas** which were earlier marked as zero.

#BETI BACHAO BETI PADHAO SCHEME

- According to recent guidelines issued by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme** will be extended to all Districts.

What are the Guidelines?

- The ministry has now **targeted improvement in the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) by 2 points every year**, improvement in the percentage of **institutional deliveries** at 95% or above.
- **Increasing girls' participation in sports** by identifying talent and linking them with appropriate authorities under **'Khelo India'**.
- In 2021 parliamentary committee on empowerment of women in **its report**, stated that nearly 80 % funds for the BBBP scheme **has been used for advertising, and not on sectoral interventions such as women's health and education**.
- Strengthen **One-Stop Centres (OSCs)**, set up to help women facing violence, including domestic violence and trafficking, by adding 300 OSCs in districts which either have a high rate of crimes against women or are geographically large, preferably in **aspirational districts**.

What is BBBP?

- **About:** It was launched in January 2015 with the aim to **address sex selective abortion and the declining child sex ratio which was at 918 girls for every 1,000 boys in 2011.**
- This is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- The programme is being implemented across 405 districts in the country.

REFERENCE LINK:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/education/beti-bachao-beti-padhao-to-be-extended-to-all-districts-8030010/>

<https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/58-funds-beti-bachao-beti-padhao-allocated-7-yrs-went-towards-ads-160569>

#WHAT IS 'MISSION SHAKTI' SCHEME?

- Recently, the **MoWCD** has issued detailed guidelines for the '**Mission Shakti**' scheme.
- The norms of '**Mission Shakti**' **will be applicable with effect from 1st April 2022.**

What do we need to know about Mission Shakti?

- '**Mission Shakti**' was launched during the **15th Finance Commission period 2021-22 to 2025-26.**
- **Mission Shakti** is an **integrated women empowerment programme** is launched as an umbrella scheme for the **safety, security and empowerment of women** for implementation.

Components:

- **Sambal:** It is for **Safety and Security of Women.**
- It consists of schemes of **One Stop Centre (OSC), Women Helpline (WHL), Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)**, with a new component of **Nari Adalats** - women's collectives to promote and facilitate alternative dispute resolution and gender justice in society and within families.
- **Samarthya:** It is for **Empowerment of Women.**
- It consists of erstwhile schemes of **Ujjwala, Swadhar Greh** and **Working Women Hostel** have been included with modifications.
- In addition, the existing schemes of **National Creche Scheme for children of working mothers** and **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** under umbrella **Integrated Child Development Services ICDS** have now been included in Samarthya.
- A new component of **Gap Funding for Economic Empowerment** has also been added in the Samarthya Scheme.

What are the Objectives of Mission Shakti?

- Provide **immediate and comprehensive** continuum of care, support and assistance to women **affected by violence and for those in distress.**
- To put in place **quality mechanisms** for rescue, protection and rehabilitation of women in need of assistance and **victims of crime and violence.**
- To improve **accessibility to various government services** available for women at various levels.
- **Making people aware** about **Government schemes and programmes** as well as **legal provisions** to fight social evils like **dowry, domestic violence, Sexual Harassment at Workplace** and to promote **gender equality** etc.

#RPF LAUNCHED OPERATION NARCOS

- Recently, the RPF recovered narcotics products valued over Rs. 7.40 Crore under Operation NARCOS.

What are the Key Highlights related to Operation NARCOS?

- In order to bring attention to the menace of **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances**, a month-long **pan India drive against smuggling of narcotics through rail** was launched under code name **Operation "NARCOS"** in the month of June-2022.
- RPF intensified its checks in trains and in **identified black spots across the country** in coordination with **Narcotics Control Bureau** and other **Law Enforcement Agencies** to target drug peddlers involved in this illegal trade.

What is the Railway Protection Force?

- The **contingent of RPF is an Armed Force of the Union of India**. It is a **security force** under the **ownership of Indian Railways, Ministry of Railways**.
- The history of the RPF dates back to 1882 when various railway companies appointed their own guards for protection of railway property.
- The **force was declared a statutory force in 1957 by an enactment of Parliament**, subsequently declared as an **Armed Force of the Union of India in 1985**.
- RPF has been entrusted with **responsibility for the safety of Railway property**.

What are the other Initiatives of RPF?

- Operation AAHT:** Special teams will be deployed on all long-distance trains/routes with focus on rescuing victims, particularly women and children, from the clutches of traffickers.
- Meri Saheli Initiative:** The initiative will focus on the safety of women passengers. It was launched as a pilot project in South Eastern Railway in September 2020. It was then extended to all zones.
- Operation Yatri Surakhsha-** Under "Operation Yatri Surakhsha", RPF also supports state police in the fighting against passenger crime.
- Operation Nanhe Farishte:** It saved 1,045 children who were found alone or were abandoned at the railway stations.

#LARGE HADRON COLLIDER RUN 3

- The **European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN)** has reignited the **Large Hadron Collider** for the third time in July 2022 — 10 years after it enabled scientists to find the 'God particle' or Higgs Boson.

What Do We Need to Know About LHC?

- The Large Hadron Collider is a giant, complex machine built to study particles that are the smallest known building blocks of all things.
- In its **operational state, it fires two beams of protons almost** at the speed of light in opposite directions inside a ring of superconducting electromagnets.
- The magnetic field created by the superconducting electromagnets keeps the protons in a tight beam and guides them along the way as they travel through beam pipes and finally collide.
- LHC's powerful electromagnets** carry almost as much current as a bolt of lightning; they must be kept chilled.
- The LHC uses a distribution system of liquid helium to keep its critical components ultracold at minus 271.3 degrees Celsius, which is colder than interstellar space.

What Do We Know About God Particle?

- In 2012, the Nobel-winning discovery of the Higgs boson (also known as 'God particle') validated the **Standard Model of physics**, which also predicts that about 60% of the time a Higgs boson will decay to a pair of bottom quarks.
- In 1960s Peter Higgs was the first person to suggest that this particle might exist.
- The Higgs field was proposed in 1964 as a new kind of field that fills the entire Universe and gives mass to all elementary particles. The Higgs boson is a wave in that field. Its discovery confirms the existence of the Higgs field.

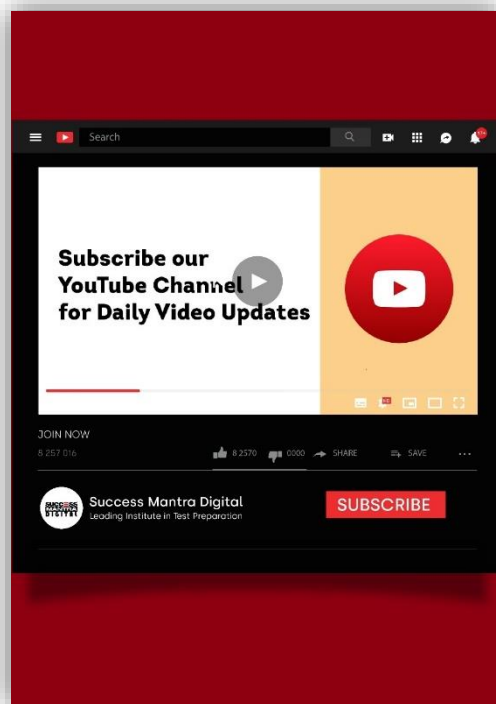
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