

# **Educrat IAS Current Affairs Magazine**

**Daily News Analysis (DNA) of the important articles of the Hindu  
& Indian Express.**

# **February 2022**

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**Educrat IAS**  
Eastern India's Premiere Institute for Civil Services

# 1. Educrat IAS Mains DNA from The Hindu & The Indian Express

## 1.1 Livestock Sector

95% Livestock sector concentrated in rural areas

### **Importance:**

- Major source of employment in rural areas
- Ensures diversification in rural income sources and can contribute towards “doubling farmers income”
- Contributes to 25% of agricultural GDP
- Multiple uses through provision of draft, dung, food sources etc

### **Issues:**

- Access to veterinary service difficult in rural areas
- Low testing facilities make it difficult to track zoonotic diseases
- Increasing antimicrobial resistance due to flawed prescriptions by untrained health workers
- Access to credit and insurance facilities is low

### **Solutions:**

- National animal disease control programme to increase immunization against FMD and brucellosis among livestock
- Animal husbandry infra development fund to promote livestock rearing in rural areas through low interest loans.
- Using innovative solutions : mobile veterinary units(MUV) for better tracking and treatment of zoonotic diseases.
- Adopting practice of one health approach to reduce AMR.

## 1.2 Indo-Japan Ties

Year 2022 marks 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of indo japan relations as a special strategic and global partnership.

### **Areas of convergence:**

- **Historical:** bilateral treaty signed in 1952, Japan supported the INA during freedom struggle.
- **Economic:** Japan has been the largest official development assistance(ODA) donor to India. Eg: bullet train between Ahmedabad and Mumbai, Western dedicated freight corridor
- **Trade:** Comprehensive economic partnership agreement signed in 2012
  - RBI signed bilateral currency swap agreement worth \$50bn.
  - Trade between the 2 countries accounts for around \$18bn
  - Japan is 6<sup>th</sup> largest FDI contributor to India
- **Security:** Both are a part of QUAD to counter China's hegemony and towards a free indo-pacific
  - Defence exercise like JIMEX, 2+2 dialogue among foreign and defence ministers.
- **Cultural:** Buddhism in India and Hinduism in japan promote cultural links
  - Annual Namaste India festival conducted in Japan.

### **Issues:**

- Less trade when compared to China Japan trade which is around \$300bn
- Low sharing of defence technology and equipment
- India has to balance between BRICS with China and QUAD with Japan which presents differing interests

### **Way forward:**

- Cooperation should be extended to areas of cyber security, outer space and economic security
- Japan is likely to extend support to make in India initiative to counter china
- Evolving multilateralism as both share common values of rule based international order.

### **Conclusion:**

- 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary is based on the theme “building a future for our centenary” to create a future with enormous possibilities.

### **1.3 What the Survey Says**

The Economic Survey of 2021-22 has analysed aspects such as inflation, global liquidity measures, and rising energy prices to detail the risks for the economy going ahead.

#### **Fiscal space:**

- The Survey notes that buoyant tax revenues and government policies have allowed for additional fiscal policy interventions.
- Government is on course to achieve the fiscal deficit target of 6.8% of GDP for the current year.
- Banking sector is well placed to support the economy, as it is now “well capitalised and NPA seems to have structurally declined”.
- Revenue receipts of the Centre during April-November 2021 have gone up by 67.2%.

#### **Vaccine economics:**

- Private consumption will see stronger recovery with rapid coverage in vaccination and faster normalisation of economic activity.
- While India’s CPI inflation — 5.2% in 2021-22 (April-December) — is within the targeted tolerance band, WPI inflation has been running in double digits. This is partly due to base effects.

#### **Global uncertainty:**

- While foreign exchange reserves — \$633.6bn makes India’s external sector resilient for the withdrawal of liquidity measures, the Survey points out that the overall balance of risks for global trade is tilted to the downside.
- The biggest downside risk comes from the pandemic, along with longer port delays, higher freight rates, and the shortage of shipping containers and inputs such as semiconductors.

#### **Energy risks:**

- It calls for a “diversified mix of sources of energy” of fossil fuels along with focus on building storage for intermittent electricity generation from solar PV and wind farms to ensure on-demand energy supply. Need to encourage R&D.

#### **Supply side reforms:**

- It calls for emphasis on developing a supply-side strategy for long term stability- need for changes in consumer behaviour, technological developments, geopolitics, climate change, and their potentially unpredictable interactions.

#### **Industrial growth:**

- It will reflect a growth of 11.8% in 2021-22 due to measures like PLA, Emergency credit linked growth etc.

#### **Public spending:**

- During April-November 2021, capital expenditure grew by 13.5% (YoY), with focus in infrastructure-intensive sectors like roads and highways, railways, and housing and urban affairs.

The government’s strategy has been to not pre-commit to a “rigid response” while using safety nets for vulnerable sections, and responding iteratively based on Bayesian-updating of information.

#### **Areas ambivalent in survey:**

- The survey claims a growth of 8-8.5% of Indian economy which is conservative in comparison to projections of IMF and WB.
- It does not examine the uneven nature of growth of different sectors.
- The stress in labour market, rise in inequality, financial issues of MSME’s need to be studied exhaustively.
- While focusing on supply side reforms, it has not focused on demand management.

### **1.4 Why UNSC Joint Statement on Nuclear Weapon is Important?**

#### **P5 has agreed to:**

1. work with all states to create a security environment more conducive to progress on disarmament.
2. continue seeking bilateral and multilateral diplomatic approaches to avoid military confrontations.
3. pursue constructive dialogue with mutual respect of each other’s security interests.

It is not a binding resolution and reiterates some of the core obligations of the NPT.

### Why?

- A “nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought” because of its “far-reaching consequences”.
- Nuclear threats can render meaningless bilateral and multilateral non-proliferation, disarmament, and arms control agreements and commitments.
- Growing spectre of loose nukes may be deployed by armed terrorist groups for nefarious purposes.

### Way forward:

- Need to review NPT at the earliest which remains postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Focus on peace education is required at multiple levels, ranging across the planetary, global, supranational, regional, national, and local levels of social cognition and action.

### NPT:

- The NPT is a multilateral treaty aimed at limiting the spread of nuclear weapons including three elements: (1) non-proliferation, (2) disarmament, and (3) peaceful use of nuclear energy. These elements constitute a “grand bargain” between the five nuclear weapon states and the non-nuclear weapon states.
- The treaty was signed in 1968 and entered into force in 1970. Presently, it has 190 member states.

### Provisions:

- The Treaty defines nuclear weapon states (NWS) as those that had manufactured and detonated a nuclear explosive device prior to 1 January 1967. All the other states are therefore considered non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS).
- The five nuclear weapon states are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- The Treaty does not affect the right of state parties to develop, produce, and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

### Implications:

- States without nuclear weapons will not acquire them.
- States with nuclear weapons will pursue disarmament.
- All states can access nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, under safeguards.

## 1.5 Letting Down the Bottom Half

The twin challenges in the budget were offering vital income support to poor and vulnerable households which have suffered greatly during the pandemic, while stimulating broad-based recovery in growth. The two goals are intimately connected.

### Issues:

- The survey claims economic growth of 9.2 per cent in 2021-22. But given the low base effect of the pandemic year, it is better to compare real GDP in 2019-20 (the pre-pandemic year) to that in 2021-22. This comparison reveals modest growth of 1.26 per cent only.
- Consumption, which is the largest part of the GDP, is still short of its pre-pandemic value in real terms by 3 per cent.
- Government spending is up 10 per cent while private investment is up by 2.5 per cent, indicating that public investment has driven the recovery.
- Employment has been back to its pre-Covid levels for several months now, but incomes remain stagnant at around 80 per cent of their pre-pandemic levels.
- Multiple smaller surveys show a large build-up of informal debt and households resorting to pawning jewellery to make ends meet. Food insecurity also persists.

Given this macro and welfare context, the budget ought to have substantially increased total fiscal outlay, in part towards capital expenditure and growth, and in part to an expanded safety net.

### India's Stand on NPT

India is one of the only five countries that either did not sign the NPT or signed but withdrew, thus becoming part of a list that includes Pakistan, Israel, North Korea, and South Sudan.

India always considered the NPT as discriminatory and had refused to sign it.

India has opposed the international treaties aimed at non-proliferation since they were selectively applicable to the non-nuclear powers and legitimised the monopoly of the five nuclear weapons powers.

However, issues arise here:

- During the first pandemic year, the total allocation for MGNREGA was Rs 1,11,170 crore. Field reports and surveys indicated that this was inadequate.
  - In the second pandemic year, the budgeted amount was reduced to the pre-pandemic level which was increased to Rs 98000 crore.
  - Even this is not adequate, given the prior pending wage payments and the current demand.
- The amount budgeted for food grains delivered via PDS has also been reduced.
  - even if households are now earning enough to meet their basic food needs at the pre-pandemic level, provisioning of expanded rations will enable them to devote some resources to other ends, such as paying down debt or increasing consumption on other items.
  - This will improve their living standards as well as contribute to increased aggregate demand.
- Last year's budget allocated Rs 28 crore for the National Programme for Improving Quality of Statistics in India. But the revised estimates show that nothing was spent on this programme and its allocation for the coming year has been reduced to a token Rs 0.01 crore.

### Conclusion:

The Union Budget scores reasonably well on the continued emphasis on alleviating supply-side problems via infrastructure investment and improving ease of doing business. But it scores poorly on spending that will compensate the bottom half of Indian households for the enormous sacrifices made during the past two years.

## 1.6 5 Questions: The Budget Big Picture

### What were the challenges facing the economy?

- India's GDP has been declining since 2017-18 with only 3.7% growth in 2019-20.
- Unemployment was at a 4 decade high.
- K shaped recovery meant unequal growth and problems in many sectors continued.
- Private final consumption expenditure, which accounts for 56% of all GDP, is below pre pandemic levels.
- Weak consumption also led to low investments due to reduced demands.
- Government spending could also not cover all aspects due to fear of huge fiscal deficit.

### What is the budget strategy?

- More focus is on capital expenditure while controlling revenue expenditure- it will give a push to investments.
- Capital expenditure provides better returns (between Rs 2-5 while revenue return is less than Rs1) by creating new jobs and boosting productive assets.
- EG: new roads, ports etc. will lead to new jobs, boost auxiliary industries, increase demand for labourers, engineers etc. This will increase personal income and consumption and lead to more demand. This will further increase private investment to meet demands.
- Tax revenues from new economic activities will also increase.

### How is this strategy different from that of US?

- US adopted a massive fiscal response in form of money.
- In India, it was in form of free food grains, employment schemes etc.
- Although US faced a V shaped recovery, it also had to face massive inflation as demand recovered quickly even during supply chain disruptions.

### Will the capex push succeed?

- Success depends on how the schemes are implemented.
- Capital assets have a long gestation period, hence benefits will take more time to flow to the common people.
- To the extent that these projects are of a local nature (local roads instead of highway), benefits will be more direct and quicker.
- Some form of direct relief is also needed.

### Is there a pattern in the budget?

- Budgets over previous years vary greatly:
- Before 2017 it focused more of loan waivers.

- 2019 budget focused more on DBT
- 2020 budget focused more on disinvestment and privatization which are missing this year.

## 1.7 India Israel Relations

India and Israel marked 30 years of full diplomatic relations. To mark this, India and Israel launched a commemorative logo which features the Star of David and the Ashoka Chakra- the two symbols that adorn the national flags of both countries.

### **Historical ties:**

- Though India officially recognised Israel in 1950, the two countries established full diplomatic ties only on 29th January 1992.
- From 1992, while there were defence deals, and co-operation in science, technology and agriculture, India balanced this with its historical support for the Palestinian cause, its dependence on the Arab world for oil, and the pro-Palestinian sentiments of the country's Muslim citizens.



### **Economic:**

- Bilateral merchandise trade stood at USD 4.14 billion (excluding defence) during the period 2020 –2021 with the balance of trade being in India's favour.
- India is Israel's third-largest trade partner in Asia.
- India is also in dialogue with Israel for concluding a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- Trade in diamonds constitutes about 50% of bilateral trade.

### **Agriculture:**

- 3 year programme on cooperation in agriculture which aims to grow existing Centres of Excellence, establish new centers, increase CoE's value chain etc.
- India can learn irrigation techniques from Israel.

### **R&D:**

- India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F)- cooperation between the two countries to promote, facilitate and support joint industrial R&D projects between companies from India and Israel to address the challenges in the agreed 'Focus Sectors'.

### **Defence:**

- India is the largest buyer of military equipment from Israel.
- Induction of Israeli weapons like Phalcon AWACS (Airborne Warning And Control Systems) and Heron, Searcher-II and Harop drones to Barak anti-missile defence systems etc.
- The acquisitions also include a host of Israeli missiles and precision-guided munitions, from Python and Derby air-to-air missiles to Crystal Maze and Spice-2000 bombs.

### **Others:**

- Israel is also joining the India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- With the 2020 Abrahamic Accords that saw UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco normalising relations with Israel, New Delhi is now more confident about its key relationships in West Asia than at any other time.

### **Issues:**

- The growing relationship is in the spotlight over Pegasus, the surveillance software made by the Israeli company NSO.
- India voted in favour of a resolution in the General Assembly opposing the Trump administration's recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.
- In 2021, India voted against Israel in three resolutions – on the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people; on Israeli settlement policy; and on the human rights situation in the Golan Heights.



- In 2021, the International Criminal Court claimed jurisdiction to investigate human rights abuses in Palestinian territory including West Bank and Gaza and named both Israeli security forces and Hamas as perpetrators- India again did not support Israel here.
- India's support to Palestinian cause is also a cause of discord.

### **India and Palestine cause:**

- India's statement in the UN Security Council on the Israel-Palestine violence virtually held Israel responsible for the violence, and expressed India's "strong" support to the "just Palestinian cause" and "unwavering" support for the two-state solution.
- India backed the Palestinian right to self-determination and rallied behind the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).
- In 1975, India invited PLO to open an office in Delhi, giving it diplomatic status five years later.
- In 1988, when the PLO declared an independent state of Palestine with its capital in East Jerusalem, India granted recognition immediately.
- India voted for Palestine to become a full member of UNESCO in 2011, and a year later, co-sponsored the UN General Assembly resolution that enabled Palestine to become a "non-member" observer state at the UN without voting rights.

India does continue to walk a tightrope, between its historical ties with Palestine and its newfound love for Israel.

## **1.8 India-UK Free Trade Agreement**

India and the UK have launched the formal Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations, that both countries envisage concluding by the end of 2022.

- Aim to double bilateral trade by 2030 which is currently at 23billion.
- The UK is one of the largest investors in India, among the G20 countries.
- India is already a big investor in UK such as fintech, electric vehicles etc.
- India was the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest source of investment in UK.

### **Importance of FTA:**

#### **Export:**

- Trade deals with the UK could boost exports for large job-creating sectors such as textiles, leather goods, and footwear.
- India can expect to register a quantum jump in the export of Marine Products through the recognition of 56 marine units of India.

#### **Services:**

- Great potential for increasing exports in service sectors like IT/ITES, Nursing, education, healthcare, including AYUSH and audio-visual services.

#### **Strategic advantage:**

- Strengthening bonds with the trade would seek UKs support at global issues like standoff with China in the Ladakh sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and claim for permanent seat at UNSC.

#### **Growth:**

- FTA would add around 14.8bn to the GDP of India and UK combined by 2035.
- It will diversify supply chains and make services and goods affordable.
- Lower barriers would incentivize new MSME to export.

### **Issues:**

- Visa restrictions have been a key issue for India to boost services trade.
- Significant delays in achieving comprehensive FTA.
- Interim FTA do not graduate into full FTAs can also face challenges from other countries at the World Trade Organization(WTO)- The WTO rules only permit members to give preferential terms to other countries if they have bilateral agreements.

India is one of the fastest-growing large economies of the world and FTA with the UK has played a significant role in enhancing the trade volume of the country. There is a need for a detailed assessment of FTAs in terms of goods, services and investment flows by all the stakeholders involved.

## 1.9 A Disjointed Response

- Union Budget 2022-23 introduced a taxation regime for virtual digital assets —cryptocurrencies, codes and non-fungible tokens. It has proposed to tax all profits from transactions in such assets at 30% along with the applicable surcharge and cess, and a 1% tax to be deducted by buyers while trading in any virtual digital asset beyond a threshold.
- No deductions will be allowed on account of setting off losses from such trading or from any other capital losses. The only deduction permitted would be the cost of acquiring the asset.
- The government is also introducing a central bank digital currency, or popularly known as CBDCs, powered by blockchain technology in 2022-23.
- The term 'property' under the I-T Act is being expanded to include virtual digital assets so that such assets received as a gift shall be taxable except when received from relatives.
- Further, loss from transfer of virtual digital assets cannot be set off against any other income.

**Digital currency**, in our case called the 'digital rupee', will be issued by the Reserve Bank in digital form and will be fungible with physical currency. It is sovereign currency in an electronic form and it would appear as liability (currency in circulation) on a central bank's balance sheet.

### **Benefits:**

- The Government may still not consider them fully legit, yet the tax regime indicates the hard option of an outright ban.
- 10 crore Indians may already have investments exceeding a total of \$10 million in them- It can substantially increase revenue of government while tackling tax evasion.
- A market is emerging where payment for the transfer of a virtual digital asset can be made through another such asset- The imposition of TDS suggests a policy resolve to track the monetary trail in a sector that has so far been outside the purview of regulatory supervision or tax administration.
- The cost of issuing digital currencies will be far lower than the cost of incurred during printing and distribution of physical cash. The RBI would be able to create and distribute the digital rupee at almost zero cost.
- Digital currency will also reduce instances of corruption and fraud as the digital rupee will be monitored by RBI and hence can be easily tracked.

### **Issues:**

- The delay in arriving at a decision also pre-empts Indian start-ups and innovators from developing products and ideas that can be scaled up globally given the nature of these assets.
- If an investor has mined his crypto, then could the cost of his mining setup be set off against the sale of crypto?
- A lot of small investors seem to think that tax can be avoided by doing peer-to-peer or P2P transactions and going through decentralised exchanges where tracking of transactions will be very difficult or impossible for the government.

## 1.10 Unpacking Growth

2022-23 budget is heralded as growth supportive budget which will primarily be driven by public sector.

### **Issues:**

- The need of the hour is not just to focus on growth but also employment which is not provided adequately by public or private sector.
  - The bulk of employment is created by SME's which have been battered due to demonetization, pandemic and issues of GST implementation.
  - The budget only extends ECLGS for a year without any concrete measures.
  - It is not enough for SME to start investing more.
- Growth via public spending is high cost and not sustainable. EG: government's debt over last 5 years has increased to 90% of GDP.
- The rise in debt increases interest rates and makes the task of servicing government debt further problematic.
- There are also assumptions that it can further lead to crowding out of private investment.
  - If the private sector is to revive it needs to borrow more which will decline due to increased interest rates.

- This means that RBI will be forced to add more liquidity when it should actually be reducing the high amount of capital already in the economy- it can increase inflation to a great extent.

There is a need to balance public and private sector growth, especially MSME, in order to regulate macroeconomic indicators.

### 1.11 Chandrayan-III

- The Chandrayaan-3 is the successor to the Chandrayaan-2 mission and it is an attempt for another soft-landing on the lunar surface.
- It will be almost a repetition of the July 2019 Chandrayaan-2 mission in the configuration of spacecraft, the landing spot on the moon and the experiments to be conducted on the lunar surface.
- So far, no other agency has landed in the southern hemisphere of the moon. ISRO hopes to be the first to do so.
- The mission will be launched in August 2022.
- Chandrayaan 2 was India's second mission to the moon. It aims to explore the Moon's south polar region.
  - There are three components of the mission, an orbiter, a lander and a rover.
  - The rover is named Pragyan.
  - The mission's lander is named Vikram after Dr Vikram A Sarabhai, the Father of the Indian Space Programme.

### 1.12 Unseeing the Real Problem

Budget 2022 has assured a move towards an 'amrit kaal' till 2047. However, the budget does little to meet the needs of farmers and other rural citizens.

#### **Issues:**

- The announcement of statutory guarantee for MSP was one of the key demands made by the farmers which was not dealt with.
- Other demands including abolition of GST on ingredients supplementing agricultural activities like power tiller, insecticides, pesticides, fertilizer, tractor, have also been ignored.
- Some of the measures announced in the budget like linking of rivers and emphasis on millets are futuristic in scope, and offer no immediate benefit to farmers reeling under the impact of COVID-19.
- Even the allocation of ₹2.37 lakh crore towards procurement of wheat and paddy under MSP was less than the ₹2.42 lakh crore announced in 2021.

#### **Government's arguments:**

- The river-linking programme under which Rs 60,000 crore have been allocated for Ken-Betwa project will go a long way in meeting the irrigation needs of farmers.
- Rs 68,000 crore has been provisioned in the Budget for direct assistance to farmers under the Kisan Samman Nidhi.
- Farmers will also be provided with 'Kisan Drones', which will help them efficiently handle their crops.
- All the villages of the country will soon be connected with optical fibre cable which will take high-speed internet to the villages.

### 1.13 Not so Healthy

#### **Budget's contribution to healthcare:**

- In 2022-23, the Budget has a 16% increase compared to 2021-22 Budget estimate in healthcare sector.
- Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission to support wellness centres, setting up of integrated public health labs, and critical care hospital blocks in districts with a population of more than 5 lakh.
- National tele-mental health programme- to deal with mental health issues which rose significantly during Covid.
- Open platform for the national health ecosystem: digital ecosystem will comprise an exhaustive list of digital registries of health providers and health facilities, unique health identity, consent framework and universal access to health facilities.

#### **Issues:**

- Healthcare is currently pegged at 1.8 per cent of the GDP and the push in the budget appears very small.

- During the pandemic the unorganised middle class was caught without adequate (or even any) health insurance- One of the biggest expectations from the budget was that the lower end of the “missing middle” would get some handholding.
- There was an expectation that Ayushman Bharat would be expanded to cover the outpatient costs faced by the poor.
- There is a need to address the crisis of non-communicable diseases — hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases largely caused by unhealthy lifestyles.
- Budget speech did not mention if the mental health strategy will focus on all psychological problems or only those that have arisen in the wake of Covid. Many mental health conditions encompass disorders that are not amenable to teleconsultation.

#### **Way forward:**

While the budget has provided some financial leg up to the National Health Mission and more to the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana but the health sector outlay leaves many expectations unfulfilled.

### **1.14 India’s Return to Central Asia**

The inaugural India-Central Asia Summit, the India-Central Asia Dialogue, and the Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan in New Delhi — all held over the past four months — collectively indicate a renewed enthusiasm in New Delhi to engage the Central Asian region.

#### **Why a renewed interest?**

- The decline of American presence due to the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan has led to a reassertion by China and Russia seeking to fill the power vacuum.
- In the wake of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, New Delhi faces a major dilemma in theatres like the Line of Control and the Line of Actual Control.
- India in the region might get further hemmed in due to the combined efforts by China, Pakistan and Taliban-led Afghanistan.
- Also, Moscow supports India’s engagement in this region to counter influence of the U.S.
- The U.S. recognises the utility of Moscow-New Delhi relations in Central Asia to offset Beijing’s ever-growing influence.
- India’s engagement of Central Asia would also help it to consolidate its post-American Afghan policy.

#### **Challenges:**

- China, which shares a land border with the region, is already a major investor there.
- Iran, is the viable option to reach central Asia via Chahbahar port and by rail, road etc. However, India-Iran relations depend on result of Iran nuclear deal.

#### **Role of Russia:**

- Russia is close to China, CAR and now to Pakistan. India can use this opportunity to reduce its rift with Russia.
- Possibility of joint Indo-Russia collaboration on defence facilities in the CAR region to meet local demands and increase India’s participation.
- Discussions taking place on trilateral exercises between Russia, India and CAR.

### **1.15 Weighing in on a Health Data Retention Plan:**

Recently, the National Health Authority (NHA) has initiated a consultation process on the retention of health data by healthcare providers in India. NHA administers the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM).

#### **Why do we need a privacy centric policy for health data?**

- SC of India has declared that privacy is a fundamental right and any interference into the right must pass a four-part test: legality; legitimate aim; proportionality, and appropriate safeguards. The mandatory retention of health data is a form of interference with the right to privacy.
- While health data provides greater convenience, choice, promotes research and innovation, but sensitive and improper disclosure can cause significant harm.
- According to Indian law, if an individual’s rights are to be curtailed due to anticipated benefits, then those benefits must be clearly defined and identifiable.

- Standards for anonymisation are still developing. We are not yet able to rule out the possibility of anonymised data still being linked back to specific individuals.
- NHA is not a sector-wide regulator. Hence, it has no legal basis for formulating guidelines for healthcare providers in general.

### Challenges related to health data:

- Issues with the informed consent of the individual as in India patients rely on the expertise and advice of doctors.
- If consent is made necessary for accessing state-provided services, then many people will agree because they do not have any other way to access that care.
- A simple classification system exposes individuals to harms arising from over-collection and retention of unnecessary data.
- This kind of one-size-fits-all system can also lead to the under-retention of data that is genuinely required for research or public policy needs.

### Way forward:

- User-based classification process: Health-care service providers — and everyone else — will have to comply with the data protection law, once it is adopted by Parliament.
- A second safeguard would be to anonymise data that is being retained for research purposes — again, unless a specific case is made for keeping personally identifiable information.
- An alternate basis for retaining data can be the express and informed consent of the individual in question.
- Efforts must be made to minimize the extent of data collected, and it should be stored only for the required amount of time so that the likelihood of any breach can be prohibited.

## 1.16 Curbs on Press

The Centre has issued a new policy on the accreditation of journalists, introducing an entire section about reasons that can result in the suspension of the accreditation.

### Conditions laid:

- For the first time, it specifies conditions that can result in the journalist losing accreditation- if a journalist acts in a manner prejudicial to the country's security, sovereignty and integrity, friendly relations with foreign States etc.
- The new policy has ten points that may result in the accreditation being cancelled, including if a journalist is charged with a "serious cognisable offence".
- Accredited media persons have been prohibited from using the words "Accredited to the government of India" on public/social media profile, visiting cards, letter heads or on any other form or any published work.

#### **Central Media Accreditation Guidelines-2022.**

It is prepared by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) and issued by the Press Information Bureau

Applications for accreditation are vetted by a Central Press Accreditation Committee headed by the DG, PIB.

At present, there are 2,457 PIB-accredited journalists in the country.

### Provisions for granting accreditation:

- Accreditation is only available for journalists living in the Delhi NCR region. There are multiple categories.
- But a journalist needs to have a minimum five years' professional experience as a full-time working journalist or a cameraperson in a news organisation, or a minimum of 15 years as a freelancer to become eligible.
- A newspaper or a periodical needs to have a minimum daily circulation of 10,000, and news agencies must have at least 100 subscribers.
- Journalists working with digital news platforms are also eligible, provided the website has a minimum of 10 lakh unique visitors per month.

### How does accreditation help?

- Access to big events: In events with VVIPs or dignitaries only accredited journalists are allowed to report from the premises.
- An accredited journalist does not have to disclose who he or she intends to meet when entering offices of union ministries, as the accreditation card is "valid for entry into buildings under MHA (Ministry of Home Affairs) security zone". Thus, it protects identities.
- Accreditation brings certain benefits for the journalist and his or her family, like being included in the Central Government Health Scheme, and some concessions on railway tickets.

## Issues:

- The guidelines leave it to the discretion of government nominated officials to assess what is defamatory or prejudicial to the sovereignty or integrity of India while deciding on whether a journalist's accreditation should be suspended or withdrawn.
- This could result, at times, in such powers trying to intimidate journalists or to block information from coming out.
- Any investigative story on sensitive issues could be held to be in violation of any of these provisions.
- Prevents constructive criticism: Journalists often report on issues and policy decisions that the government may not like.
- No watchdog: The policy is silent on who will decide if a journalist's conduct violates any of these conditions.

## 1.17 Possibilities Down Under

External affairs minister's visit to Australia signifies a new dawn in India-Australia relationship.

- **Ideology:** Both are vibrant democracies which have respect for international laws and a belief in the equality of all nations.
  - Both believe in a rule-based international order in the Indo-Pacific region, and face challenges from a belligerent China.
- **Trade:** Two-way trade between them was valued at \$24.4 billion in 2020.
  - Trade is rapidly growing and encompasses agribusiness, infrastructure, healthcare, energy and mining, education, artificial intelligence, big data and fintech.
  - The India-Australia Grains Partnership aims to use Australia's expertise in post harvest management to strengthen rural grain storage and supply chains so as to reduce losses and wastage.
  - India is the 5th largest trade partner of Australia.
- **Defence:** Participation of Australia in Exercise Malabar.
  - Various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives like AUSINDEX, Mutual Logistic Support Arrangement (MLSA) etc.
  - Elevation of their '2+2' Foreign and Defence Secretaries' Dialogue to the ministerial level.
- **International:** Beyond bilateralism, both countries are also entering into partnerships with like-minded countries, including Indonesia, Japan and France, in a trilateral framework.
  - The trade Ministers of India, Japan and Australia have formally launched the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI).
  - Both India and Australia are members of the Quad, Commonwealth, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), ASEAN Regional Forum etc.
- A Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement between the two countries was signed in September 2014.
- Both sides are also likely to explore other options such as a closer intelligence relationship, and in other areas such as high technology and outer space.
- An Australia-India Strategic Research Fund (AISRF), which was established in 2006, supports scientists in India and Australia to collaborate on leading-edge research. AISRF consists of India Australia Biotechnology Fund, India-Australia Science & Technology Fund, Grand Challenge Fund and Fellowship Schemes.

Australia's Prime Minister has announced implementation of "An India Economic Strategy to 2035", a vision document that will shape India-Australia bilateral ties.

It is based on three-pillar strategy- Economic ties, Geostrategic Engagement and Rethinking Culture-thrust on soft power diplomacy.

## Issues:

- India faces non-tariff barriers and its skilled professionals in the Australian labour market face discrimination.
- India has a high tariff for agriculture and dairy products which makes it difficult for Australian exporters to export these items to India.
- India and Australia are "too far apart" to conclude the bilateral Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) in the near term.
- There is no coherent Indo pacific strategy as countries do not have one definitive vision for the region. It is largely seen as global construct to arrest China's rise.

## Conclusion:

In coming years, the overall relationship between India and Australia will continue to grow and has the potential to assume greater prominence. The prospects for bilateral relationship are recognised in both countries as strategically useful, economically productive and aligned with each other's new agenda.

## 1.18 Governor's Powers & Friction with States

Last week, West Bengal CM blocked its Governor on Twitter. Days earlier, the Tamil Nadu government had taken exception to Governor's R-Day speech articulating the benefits of NEET.

### **Law on governor state relations:**

- Although envisaged as an apolitical head who must act on the advice of the council of ministers, the Governor enjoys certain powers granted under the Constitution.
- EG: He has monopoly for giving or withholding assent to a Bill passed by the state legislature, or determining the time needed for a party to prove its majority, or which party must be called first do so, generally after a hung verdict in an election.
- However, there are no provisions laid down for the manner in which the Governor and the state must engage publicly when there is a difference of opinion.

### **Friction points:**

- Selection of the party to form a government
- Deadline for proving majority
- Sitting on Bills
- Passing negative remarks on the state administration.
- Nagaland: Governor has criticised affairs of the state and allegedly interfered in administration.
- J&K: In November 2018, then J&K Governor dissolved the Assembly amid indications that various parties were coming together to form the government.
- Maharashtra: In 2019, after a hung verdict in Maharashtra Governor quietly invited a party leader and administered him oath as CM at 6am early morning.

#### **Who is a governor?**

The governor is head of the state.

The governor is directly appointed by the President. Thus, he is considered to be a nominee of the Central government.

The term of the Governor is prescribed as five years. However, the governor is allowed to hold office at the will of the President.

The post of the governor is a constitutional post and not an employment under the Central government.

### **Why does this happen?**

- Governors have become political appointees. Politicians become Governors and then resign to fight elections.
- The Governor is answerable to no one except the Centre. This is a fundamental defect in the Constitution.
- There is no provision for impeaching the Governor, who is appointed by the President on the Centre's advice.
- In the Constitution, there are no guidelines for exercise of the Governor's powers, including for appointing a CM or dissolving the Assembly.
- There is no limit set for how long a Governor can withhold assent to a Bill.
- When the Centre and states don't agree on certain issues, the governor is likely to act on the advice of central government and hence is called 'agent of Centre'.

### **Suggested reforms:**

- The Rajamannar Committee (1971) recommended the deletion of Articles 356 and 357 from the constitution of India and also emphasised that the governor of the state should not consider himself as an agent of the centre.
- Sarkaria Commission (1988) recommended that Article 356 should be used in very rare cases- before taking action under Article 356, a warning should be issued to the state government.
- Administrative Reforms Commission (1968) recommended that the report of the governor regarding the president's rule has to be objective.
- Selection of the Governor through a panel comprising the PM, Home Minister, Lok Sabha Speaker and the CM.
- Provision to impeach the Governor by the Assembly.

## 1.19 Court Ruling on Hijab

Recently, six students were banned from entering a college in Karnataka's Udupi district for wearing a hijab. The issue throws up legal questions on reading the freedom of religion and whether the right to wear a hijab is constitutionally protected or not.

### **Government's arguments:**

- In Fathima Tasneem v State of Kerala (2018)- A single Bench of the Kerala HC held that collective rights of an institution would be given primacy over individual rights of the petitioner on issue of wearing hijab as a part of uniform.
- Fathema Hussain v Bharat education society- Bombay HC ruled that hijab would not be a part of uniform in a girls school as wearing hijab in front of other women was not prescribed in the quran.

### Grounds for challenging the government's decision:

- Wearing a hijab is an expression protected under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution which guarantees the right to freedom of speech and expression. Constitutionally, a right under Article 19(1)(a) can only be limited on the "reasonable restrictions" mentioned in Article 19(2).
- Student silently wearing a hijab/headscarf and attending class cannot in any manner be said to be a practice that disturbs "public order" and is only a profession of their faith.
- Ban on headscarves violates the fundamental right to equality since other religious markers, such as a turban worn by a Sikh, are not explicitly prohibited.
- The rules prescribed wearing of a dupatta for women and the state cannot dictate the manner of wearing that dupatta if a student wishes to cover her head with it.
- People have a right under the Constitution to profess, practise and propagate religion (Article 25). Every person is the final judge of his/her choice of religion.
- In *Amna Bint Basheer v Central Board of Secondary Education* (2016), the Kerala HC examined the issue more closely. The Court held that the practice of wearing a hijab constitutes an essential religious practice.

### 1.20 What RBI Status Quo Means?

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has kept key policy rates – Repo rate, Reverse repo rate and the Bank rate – unchanged for the 10th time in a row, and retained the accommodative policy stance.

#### Reason:

- Status quo on interest rates – was warranted for a durable and broad-based recovery after taking into consideration the outlook for inflation and growth, the uncertainties related to Omicron and global spill-overs.
- The RBI has projected a 5.3 per cent consumer price (retail) inflation for the current financial year 2021-22 (FY22) despite rising crude oil prices. Retail inflation for the next fiscal (FY23) is projected at 4.5 per cent. Since the MPC noted that inflation is likely to moderate in the first half of 2022-23 and move closer to the target rate, thereafter providing room to remain accommodative.
- The large size of the FY23 market borrowings, and with no progress on the inclusion of Indian debt market in the global bond indices, might have prompted the RBI to delay the liquidity normalisation in an effort to keep the cost of large borrowings programme under control.

#### Impacts:

- The policy is in line with the government's push for capital investments as cost of borrowing for government will be lower too.
- It can also support borrowings by corporates as low interest rates works well for consumption demand and investment.
- Borrowers will benefit as lending rates are unlikely to grow in the near future. Eg: benefit through low-cost home loans.
- Savers and depositors will find their interest income unchanged and will make a nominal loss on one-year term deposits.

### 1.21 Breakthrough in Nuclear Fusion Reactor

Scientists in the United Kingdom have managed to produce the largest amount of energy so far from a nuclear fusion reaction, the same process that makes the Sun, and all other stars, shine and emit energy. This result is being seen as a major breakthrough in the ongoing global efforts to produce a fusion nuclear reactor.

#### What is nuclear fusion?

- Nuclear fusion is defined as the combining of several small nuclei into one large nucleus with the subsequent release of huge amounts of energy.
- It is the opposite reaction of fission, where heavy isotopes are split apart.
- Harnessing fusion, the process that powers the Sun, could provide a limitless, clean energy source.

**International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER)** is a collaboration of 35 nations launched in 1985.

It is located in France.

Aim: It aims to build the world's largest tokamak to prove the feasibility of fusion as a large-scale and carbon-free source of energy.

The ITER members include China, the European Union, India, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the United States.

They also share the experimental results and any intellectual property generated by the fabrication, construction and operation phases.



### Location of the project:

- The JET (Joint European Torus facility) site is the largest operational one of its kind in the world.
- The energy was produced in a machine called a tokamak, a doughnut-shaped apparatus.
- The record and scientific data from these crucial experiments are a major boost for ITER (International thermonuclear experimental reactor) the larger and more advanced version of the JET.

	Fission	Fusion
<b>Definition</b>	Fission is the splitting of a large atom into two or more smaller ones.	Fusion is the fusing of two or more lighter atoms into a larger one.
<b>Occurrence</b>	Fission reaction does not normally occur in nature.	Fusion occurs in stars, such as the sun.
<b>Energy Requirement</b>	Takes little energy to split two atoms in a fission reaction.	Extremely high energy is required to bring two or more protons.
<b>Energy Released</b>	The energy released by fission is a million times greater than that released in chemical reactions, but lower than the energy released by nuclear fusion.	The Energy released by fusion is three to four times greater than the energy released by fission.
<b>Energy production</b>	Fission is used in nuclear power plants.	Fusion is an experimental technology for producing power.

### Advantages:

- Abundant energy: Fusing atoms together in a controlled way releases nearly four million times more energy than a chemical reaction.
- Fusion doesn't emit harmful toxins like carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.
- Fusion fuels are widely available and nearly inexhaustible. EG: Deuterium can be distilled from all forms of water.
- Nuclear fusion reactors produce no high activity, long-lived nuclear waste.

### Issues:

- Fusion is possible only at very high temperatures, the kind of temperature that exists at the core of the sun. Reaching such temperatures is very difficult.
- The materials that make up the reactor will also need to be able to withstand such huge amounts of energy.
- At such high temperatures, matter only exists in the state of plasma. Plasma which has a tendency to expand very fast is extremely difficult to handle and work with.

## 1.22 Issues in Uniform Civil Code

UCC is one that would provide for one law for the entire country, applicable to all religious communities in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc.

Article 44 of the Constitution lays down that the state shall endeavour to secure a UCC for the citizens throughout the territory of India.

### Benefits:

- Common Code would enable uniform principles to be applied in respect of aspects such as marriage, divorce, succession etc. so that settled principles, safeguards and procedures can be laid down.
- It would help end gender discrimination on religious grounds.
- if and when the whole population will start following the same laws, chances are there that it would bring more peace in the living and reduce riots leading to harmony.
- A rational common and unified personal law will help eradicate many evil, unjust and irrational customs and traditions prevalent across the communities. For example, Law against Manual scavenging.
- UCC would make it easy to administer the huge population base of India.

### Civil code under art 44:

- Under the constitution, the power to legislate in respect of personal law, lies with both centre and state. Preservation of legal diversity seems to be a reason for inclusion of personal law in concurrent list.
- Had uniformity of personal law been a primary concern, power would have been solely vested in the parliament.
- The constitution makers have used the term "state shall endeavour" and not "endeavour by suitable legislation" which indicates that framers did not intend enactment of UCC by single legislation.
- While a state can attempt to bring UCC for its own state, it cannot do so for the entire country as only parliament has that power. Thus, different states enacting own UCC challenges the very idea of uniformity in the absence of an all India code.

### Issues:

- The demand for a uniform civil code has been framed in the context of communal politics. A large section of society sees it as majoritarianism under the garb of social reform.

- Diversity within religion: Hindus are not governed by a single law of marriage. Lack of uniformity also exists among Muslims and Christians.
- Cultural diversity: the constitution itself protects local customs of Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya.
- Problem of implementation: Goa is governed by UCC but Hindus of Goa are still governed by un-reformed Shastric Hindu law on marriage, divorce etc along with Portuguese family and succession laws. Even progressive acts like special marriage act is not yet applicable.
- Merely passing UCC will not achieve gender equality. EG: The Hindu code bill took 14 years to be passed and that too not as a uniform act, but as 3 different laws.
- Article 25 of Indian constitution, that seeks to preserve the freedom to practise and propagate any religion gets into conflict with the concepts of equality enshrined under Article 14 of Indian Constitution.

#### Way forward:

- The constitution framers have used the term 'uniform' and not 'common' because common means one and the same in all situations while uniform means the same in similar conditions. Different people may have different laws but the laws within a particular community must be same. Such a classification is permissible under art 14.
- Formation of different committees of Muslims, Parsis, tribals etc to ensure a consultation-based reform process.
- A just code is more important than a simply uniform code.

### 1.23 Climate Smart Agriculture

In the backdrop of the 2070 carbon neutrality target set by India at the CoP26 in Glasgow, the Union Budget for 2022-23 has listed "climate action" and "energy transition" as one of the four priorities for the Amrit Kaal.

#### How agriculture contributes to climate change and issues with it:

- It contributes to 73% of the country's methane emissions.
- Subsidies on urea, canal irrigation, MSP etc lead to skewed cropping patterns in favour of rice and wheat which emit methane.
- Paddy fields are anthropogenic sources of atmospheric nitrous oxide which is 270 times more powerful than CO<sub>2</sub> in driving high temperatures.
- Emissions due to stubble burning, energy operations like harvesting etc. lead to huge emissions although unaccounted for in GHG inventory.
- Nitrous oxide emissions are also not reported in GHG inventory - 53% of Nitrous oxide emissions are an indirect product of organic and mineral nitrogen fertilisers.
- According to IMF, the world needs a carbon tax to reduce emissions. However, India does not have any such carbon price.
- Overexploitation of groundwater, especially in north-west, due to water intensive cropping patterns.
- Fertilisers rich in nitrogen pollute water and threaten the aquatic ecosystem.
- Clearing uncultivated land for farming can lead to the destruction of natural ecosystems, which may have a devastating effect on the local wildlife and biodiversity and the micro-climate.

#### The FAO describes the concept as follows:

"Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) is an approach that helps guide actions to transform agri-food systems towards green and climate-resilient practices. It aims to tackle three main objectives: sustainably increasing agricultural productivity and incomes; adapting and building resilience to climate change; and reducing and/or removing greenhouse gas emissions, where possible.

#### Measures:

- Chemical free natural farming along the Ganga river.
- The budget 2022-23 provided post-harvest value addition, thereby enhancing domestic consumption, and branding millet products nationally and internationally.
- Rationalised and comprehensive scheme to increase domestic production of oilseeds will be implemented.
- The states will be encouraged to revise syllabi of agricultural universities so as to meet the needs of natural, zero-budget and organic farming, modern-day agriculture, value addition and management.
- The use of 'Kisan Drones' will be promoted for crop assessment, digitization of land records, spraying of insecticides, and nutrients.
- Micro irrigation technologies like drip irrigation is being promoted to reduce groundwater exploitation.

## 1.24 Zooming in on the Potential of India's Geospatial Sector

Last year Department of Science and Technology (DST) announced liberalised guidelines for geospatial data and mapping in India to lead India to one lakh crore rupees geo-spatial economy.

### **Current Performance of this sector:**

- India has a robust ecosystem in geospatial, with the Survey of India (SoI), the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), remote sensing application centres (RSACs), and the National Informatics Centre (NIC) using geospatial technology.
- Launching of a city mapping programme by Genesys International in India shows growth.
- The over subscription of the initial public offering (IPO) of MapmyIndia was an example too.
- Reports predict growth of 13% CAGR by 2029.

### **Issues:**

- There is no demand for geospatial services and products on a scale linked to India's potential and size due to the lack of awareness among potential users in government and private.
- The unavailability of foundation data, especially at high-resolution.
- The lack of clarity on data sharing and collaboration prevents co-creation and asset maximisation.
- No ready-to-use solutions especially built to solve the problems of India.
- Lack of skilled manpower across the entire pyramid.

### **About Geospatial Technology:**

Geospatial Technology is an emerging field of study that includes

- Geographic Information System (GIS)
- Remote Sensing (RS)
- Global Positioning System (GPS)

Geospatial data is data about objects, events, or phenomena that have a location on the surface of the earth. The location may be:

- Static (location of a road, an earthquake event, malnutrition among children)
- Dynamic (moving vehicle or pedestrian, the spread of an infectious disease)

### **Way forward:**

- Indigenous technology: Local technology and solutions should be promoted, and competition should be encouraged for quality output.
- The entire policy document needs to be published and the government and private users should be made aware of things.
- Open data sharing protocol: The data available with government departments should be unlocked, and data sharing should be encouraged.
- Local cloud: As the new guidelines prevent high-accuracy data being stored in overseas clouds, there is a need to develop a geospatial data cloud locally and facilitate a solution as service.
- Academic programme: India should start a bachelor's programme in geospatial also in the Indian Institutes of Technology and the National Institutes of Technology.
- Establish geo-portal: There is a need to establish a geo-portal to make all public-funded data accessible through data as a service model, with no or nominal charge.
- Generate foundation data across India: It should also include the Indian national digital elevation model (InDEM), data layers for cities, and data of natural resources.

## 1.25 Incorrect Diagnosis, Wrong Remedy

The Union Government proposal to amend Rule 6 (Deputation of cadre officers) of the Indian Administrative Service (Cadre) Rules 1954 has attracted the opposition of many states.

### **What are the causes of the shortage of IAS officers in the centre?**

- There was a drastic reduction in the annual recruitment of IAS officers after 1991 (from 140-160 to just 50-80) due to a misguided notion, that the government will have a reduced role because of the economic liberalisation. Presently, the shortage of IAS officers at the all-India level was 23%.
- There is a need for proper cadre review in all the States to release many IAS officers from non-strategic posts and reduce the shortage.
- Direct recruitment of officers to the Central Secretariat Service Group B has been discontinued since 2000. Also, there are undue delays in the regular promotions of officers due to protracted litigation since 2011.
- Centre is not utilizing the services of officers who are appointed to the IAS by promotion or selection from the State Civil Services.

- Centre has imposed numerous administrative barriers to Central deputation in the form of highly restrictive conditions, annual lapsing of offer lists, long debarment periods, compulsory cooling-off periods, etc.

#### **Solutions:**

- There is a need to make mandatory provisions for the state officers to work for at least two years on Central deputation as Deputy Secretaries/Directors immediately after their appointment to the IAS and their training. Their next promotion in their State cadre should be accordingly to the completion of this mandatory period of Central deputation.
- It should be made mandatory for directly recruited IAS officers to serve at least three years on Central deputation between nine and 25 years of service. Their promotion to Principal Secretary grade in their State cadre (usually after 25 years) should be subject to their completing this mandatory period of Central deputation.

#### **Conclusion:**

The centre can solve the problem by holding constructive dialogue with the respective states in the Inter-State Council constituted under Article 263.

**\*\**(read along with January article 3.18)***

### **1.26 The Importance of Caste Data**

Recently, the Supreme Court upheld the 27% quota for Other Backward Classes (OBC) in the All-India Quota seats for the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test.

#### **Judgement:**


- The judgement reiterated that reservations for backward classes were not an exception but an extension of the principle of equality under Article 15(1) of the Constitution.
- The judgment highlighted how open competitive exams give the illusion of providing equal opportunity in ignorance of the widespread inequalities in educational facilities.
- The SC also pointed out that disparities are not limited to the issue of access to good education or financial constraints alone. It also extends to psychological and social development due to the inherited cultural capital of castes.

#### **Need for a justifiable caste data:**

Many believe that affirmative action's increase caste differences and prevent a "casteless society". But, "castelessness" is a privilege that only castes, which are developed, can afford. Because they have already translated caste-related benefits, into social, political, and economic capital.

- On the other hand, individuals who belong to the lower castes need to retain their caste identity in order to claim the benefits of measures such as reservation.
- Many times, political parties promise reservation for communities to get votes without any credible data collection exercises. For instance, Supreme Court struck down the reservation for the Maratha community.
- The data concerning the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been included in the Census, but there is no similar data on OBCs. Hence, there is a need for credible exercise to retain the faith of citizens.
- The Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) conducted in 2011 has been called "faulty" and "unreliable". The Mandal Commission's recommendations were also criticised as being based merely on the "personal knowledge" of the members of the commission and sample surveys.
- In the Indra Sawhney case, the Supreme Court held that the States must conclude the "backwardness" of a particular class of people only after proper assessment and objective evaluation. Hence, there should be a periodic review by a permanent body of experts.
- National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993, provides that the Central government should revise lists every 10 years to exclude those classes which have ceased to be backward and include new backward classes. Hence there is a need to collect new data.
- Caste data will enable independent research and ensure effectiveness.

**Way forward:** Impartial data and subsequent research might save the bona fide attempts of the uplift of the most backward classes from the shadow of caste and class politics and be informative for people on both sides of the spectrum – for and against reservation.

Specification	Arguments against caste census	Arguments favouring caste census
Availability of data on caste	<b>Estimates of caste is already available:</b> reasonable estimates of the broad social break-up of India's population is already available as various government surveys such as the ones conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) and National Family and Health Survey (NFHS) collect data on broad share of SCs, STs and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the population.	<b>Survey is not census:</b> Data of caste such as those collected by NFHS and NSSO are <b>survey-based estimates unlike the census</b> . The latter is actually an enumeration of every person in the country. It also generates data on the educational level, occupation, household assets and life expectancy for each group that it enumerates at each level that it recognises.
Operational challenges	A full caste census, including a jati-wise break-up of all 'upper castes', would pose some difficulties, since we don't have an official list of all castes in the country. This would mean extensive <b>post-census classification work and may cause some delay in the release of General Caste tables</b> .	It is a <b>common practice that some Census tables are released five or seven years after the Census is completed</b> .  
Identity politics	It is said that in India voters don't cast their votes, they vote their caste. Break up of population in various caste would <b>further strengthen caste-based politics in India</b> . Such politics may lead to marginalization of developmental issues like health, education, etc.	From a purely academic and policy point of view, the collection of such data makes sense. It is not just <b>necessary to understand people's socio-economic status by caste and sub-caste</b> , but can also be valuable in <b>designing policies for affirmative action and redistributive justice</b> . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <b>Indra Sawhney judgment</b> of the Supreme Court had <b>demande d that such evidence be collected every 10 years in order to screen out the privileged castes from the benefits of reservations</b>.</li> </ul>
Rise in demand for reservation	Caste census would lead to a <b>clamour for higher quotas, and removal of the 50% cap on reservations</b> .	The absence of up-to-date caste data has <b>not prevented demands from various social groups for quotas in public employment and admission to central educational institutions</b> . Over the last decade, we have witnessed large mobilizations by Jats, Patels and Marathas <b>seeking reservations</b> , with some protests turning violent. These demands weren't based on <b>scientific evidence</b> on the size of those groups or their relative level of deprivation vis-à-vis OBC, SC or ST groups.

## 1.27 A Case for a More Federal Judiciary

There is a need to examine the Indian judiciary and to strengthen the federal nature of our judiciary.

### The status of judiciary in a federal India:

- **Integrated judiciary-** The federal judicial system comprises the Supreme Court and the High Court in the sense that it is only these two courts which can adjudicate upon the rights of the federal units and the central unit, and between the citizen and these units. There is no dual judiciary.
- **Equality of power-** The Indian Constitution envisaged the equality of power of High Court judges and Supreme Court judges, with a High Court judge not being a subordinate of a Supreme Court judge.
- **Independent judiciary:** Security of tenure has been provided to the judges who cannot be removed from the office except by an order of the President, salaries and allowances of the judges are determined by Parliament by law etc.
- SC has reiterated the position that it is superior to HC only in appellate sense.

### Issues:

- **Collegium-** The Supreme Court (the Collegium) has the power to appoint judges and chief justices to the High Courts and the Supreme Court, transfer judges and chief justices from one High Court to another etc. This violates the equality principle and gives SC more power over HC.
- Creation of parallel judicial systems of courts and tribunals which provide for direct appeals to the Supreme Court, bypassing the High Courts. EG: CCI, Company law tribunals etc.

- The Supreme Court has been liberal in entertaining cases pertaining to trifling matters.
  - In 2018, the Supreme Court entertained a writ petition and issued directions that Deepavali could be celebrated for only one or two hours in the evening. This led to interfering in local matters which have no constitutional ramifications.

### Conclusion:

There is a need for SC to recognise the importance of self-abnegation and restore federal balance by re-empowering HC.

## 1.28 Ukraine: Why Germany Matters?

The Ukraine crisis appears to have turned a corner with Russia declaring it has withdrawn some troops from the border but issues remain with Nord Stream 2 which is perceived by some as a geopolitical weapon.

### Issues with Nord stream 2:

- Ukraine's concerns - Ukraine offered extra transit capacity for Russian gas to Europe but Russia booked only 4.3% of it, citing domestic demand.
  - It believes the pipeline is a Russian geopolitical weapon aimed at depriving Ukraine of crucial revenue.
- It has raised fears that Russia could cut off gas supplies to Ukraine without endangering its own gas exports to Europe- Ukraine whose viability is dependent on Russian fossil fuels through its territory, fears that Russia could reduce energy supplies by cutting those needed for Ukraine's consumption.
- USA's Concerns: It could give Russia complete dominance over gas supplies to Europe, and leverage influence over these countries.
- Also. Increased influence over Europe increases the threat of Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- It has awakened fears about Russia and Germany coming together against rest of the Europe.
- Some EU members have security concerns about Russian presence in their waters in Baltic sea.

### What is Nord Stream 2 (NS2)?

NS 2 is an expansion of Russia's existing Nord Stream gas pipeline to Germany across the Baltic Sea.

The total capacity of two strings of Nord Stream 2 is 55 billion cubic meters of gas per year.

NS2's manufacture began in 2016 and construction in 2018.

The 1,224 km, \$11-billion underwater link is the shortest, most economical and environment-friendly route to double Russia's gas export to Germany.

It will increase Europe's dependence on Russia for Natural Gas, currently EU (European Union) countries already rely on Russia for 40% of their gas needs.

Nord Stream pipelines from Russia



## 1.29 Etching a Trade Line to Bond Beyond Oil

India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) has been signed recently.

### Economic Significance of the UAE:

- The UAE has emerged as an important economic hub not just within the context of the Middle East/West Asia, but also globally.

- Strategic location: The UAE, due to its strategic location, has emerged as an important economic centre in the world.
- In recent years, the UAE, through its 'Vision 2021', has sought to diversify its economy and reduce its dependency on oil.
- Although the UAE has diversified its economy, the hydrocarbon sector remains very important followed by services and manufacturing.
- As part of the GCC, the UAE has strong economic ties with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman, meaning the UAE shares a common market and a customs union with these nations.
- This FTA with the UAE will pave the way for India to enter the UAE's strategic location, and have relatively easy access to the Africa market and its various trade partners which can help India to become a part of that supply chain especially in handlooms, handicrafts, textiles and pharma.

#### Current economic ties with UAE:

- India and the UAE established diplomatic relations in 1972.
- The India-UAE total trade merchandise has been valued at U.S.\$52.76 billion for the first nine months of the fiscal year 2021-22, making the UAE India's third-largest trading partner.
- The aim is to boost bilateral merchandise trade to above U.S.\$100 billion and services trade to U.S.\$15 billion in five years.
- UAE would be an attractive export market for Indian electronics, automobiles, and other engineering products.
- UAE is the ninth biggest investor in India.
- Indian companies have set up manufacturing units either as joint ventures or in Special Economic Zones for cement, building materials, textiles etc.

#### Challenges:

- The UAE tariff structure is bound with the GCC, and the applied average tariff rate is 5%. Therefore, the scope of addressing Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) becomes very important.
- The reflection of NTBs can be seen through Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) which have mostly been covered by Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT).
- Most of the notifications are related to consumer information, labelling, licensing or permit requirements and import monitoring and surveillance requirements. These compliances pose a challenge for Indian exporters.

#### Conclusion:

The FTA agreement must try to bring more transparency and predictability in the use of NTBs so that their compliance becomes less cumbersome.

### 1.30 Accrediting Colleges, Varsities

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has relaxed the eligibility criteria for accreditation of higher educational institutions to "widen the horizon of accreditation".

- Accreditation is a quality check exercise.
- NAAC conducts accreditation of Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) such as colleges, universities, or other recognized institutions to derive an understanding of the 'Quality Status' of the institution.
- The accreditation is done based on parameters such as curriculum, faculty, infrastructure, research, and financial well-being among others.
- Based on these parameters, the NAAC gives institutions grades ranging from A++ to C. If an institution is graded D, it means it is not accredited.

**NAAC:** It was established in the year 1994 as an autonomous institution of the UGC with its Headquarter in Bengaluru.

The mandate of NAAC is to make quality assurance an integral part of the functioning of HEIs.

It makes arrangement for periodic assessment and accreditation of institutions of higher education or units thereof, or specific academic programmes or projects.

#### Benefits of accreditation:

- helps institutions attract capital
- helps an institution know its strengths and weaknesses and
- helps students going for higher education abroad as many global higher education authorities insist on recognition and accreditation of the institution where the student has studied.

## Process:

- Earlier, only those higher education institutions with two batches of graduated students or which had completed six years of existence were eligible to apply for NAAC's assessment and accreditation.
- Under the new manual, colleges and universities that have completed even one academic year will be eligible to apply for a newly created category of 'Provisional Accreditation for Colleges' or PAC.
- The PAC, which will not offer any grading, will be valid for two years, and institutions cannot get it more than two times.
- In 2019, the UGC launched a scheme, Paramarsh.
- Under the scheme, some of the best performing institutes were identified to serve as mentors to at least five institutes aspiring to get accredited.

## 1.31 India Needs a Refugee & Asylum Law

A Private Member's Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha proposing the enactment of a Refugee and Asylum law.

### Why does India need a Refugee and Asylum law?

- The principle of non-refoulement: no country should send a person to a place where he or she may face persecution.
- The principle of non-refoulement is clearly affirmed, with no exceptions, though reasons have been specified for exclusion, expulsion, and revocation of refugee status.
- India is neither a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, nor does it have a domestic asylum framework.
- Hence, their problems are dealt with in an ad hoc manner, and like other foreigners they always face the possibility of being deported.
- In the absence of a uniform and comprehensive law to deal with asylum seekers, we lack a clear vision or policy on refugee management.
- We have a cocktail of laws such as:
  - the Foreigners Act, 1946,
  - the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939,
  - the Passports Act (1967),
  - the Extradition Act, 1962,
  - the Citizenship Act, 1955 and
  - the Foreigners Order, 1948
- Examples: The government expelled two batches of Rohingya refugees back to Myanmar, despite the risk of prosecution in their home country. Similar attempts were made with Chakmas in Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmarese in Mizoram. Afghanistan's students stranded in India by taking over of Taliban have not had their visas renewed.

**Refugee** includes people who have fled their home countries and crossed an international border because of a well-founded fear of persecution in their home countries, on grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.

Who does not qualify as a refugee? This means that people who cross borders in quest of economic betterment, or because they are fleeing poverty, anarchy or environmental disaster, do not qualify as refugees.

Nor do those who flee from one part of their home country to another because of war, conflict or fear of persecution.

**Supreme court:** In 1996, the Supreme Court ruled that the state has to protect all human beings living in India, irrespective of nationality, guided by Articles 14, 20, and 21 of the constitution.

In the NHRC versus the state of Arunachal Pradesh case, the Supreme Court stopped forcible evictions of Chakma refugees in 1995.

### Way forward:

- We need a proper framework to make sure that refugees can access basic public services, be able to legally seek jobs and livelihood opportunities for some source of income.
- The absence of such a framework will make the refugees vulnerable to exploitation, especially human trafficking.

## 1.32 Green Hydrogen Policy

The Centre notified the green hydrogen and green ammonia policy aimed at boosting the domestic production of green hydrogen to 5 million tonnes by 2030 and making India an export hub for the clean fuel.

### Policy:

- The new policy offers 25 years of free power transmission for any new renewable energy plants set up to supply power for green hydrogen production before July 2025.



- Example: This means that a green hydrogen producer will be able to set up a solar power plant in Rajasthan to supply renewable energy to a green hydrogen plant in Assam and would not be required to pay any inter-state transmission charges.
- It makes it more economical for key users of hydrogen and ammonia such as the oil refining, fertiliser and steel sectors to produce green hydrogen for their own use who currently use grey hydrogen or grey ammonia produced using natural gas or naphtha.
- The government is set to provide a single portal for all clearances required for setting up green hydrogen production as well as a facility for producers to bank any surplus renewable energy generated with discoms for upto 30 days and use it as required.
- Power distribution companies may also procure renewable energy to supply green hydrogen producers but will be required to do so at a concessional rate under the new policy. Such procurement would also count towards a state's Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO) under which it is required to procure a certain proportion of its requirements from renewable energy sources.

**Green hydrogen:** It is produced by splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen using an electrolyzer powered by renewable energy sources such as wind and solar.

The fuel can be a game-changer for the energy security of India, which imports 85% of its oil and 53% of gas requirements.

To promote clean fuels, India is considering making it mandatory for fertilizer plants and oil refineries to purchase green hydrogen.

**Green ammonia :** Ammonia is a chemical which is used mainly in the manufacture of nitrogenous fertilizers, like urea and ammonium nitrate, but can be put to other uses too, such as to run engines.

Green ammonia production is where the process of making ammonia is 100% renewable and carbon-free.

One way of making green ammonia is by using hydrogen from water electrolysis and nitrogen separated from the air. These are then fed into the Haber process (also known as Haber-Bosch), all powered by sustainable electricity.

#### Way forward:

- Huge market potential, owing to the young demography and thriving economy, will be a long-term benefit for the government while pushing the application of hydrogen-based technologies.
- Hydrogen needs to be considered as complementary to its alternatives rather than contemplating it as an ultimate and stand-alone solution as it comes with its own constraints.

### 1.33 The Despotic Nature of PMLA

#### Prevention of Money Laundering Act:

- It forms the core of the legal framework put in place by India to combat Money Laundering.
- The provisions of this act are applicable to all financial institutions, banks (Including RBI), mutual funds, insurance companies, and their financial intermediaries.

#### Recent cases:

- Arresting CM of Punjab ahead of Punjab polls
- Raiding residence and offices of activist EG: Harsh Mander

#### Issues:

- PMLA is pulled into the investigation of even "ordinary" crimes and assets of genuine victims have been attached.
- PMLA was a comprehensive penal statute to counter the threat of money laundering, specifically stemming from trade in narcotics. Currently, the offences in the schedule of the Act are extremely overbroad, and in several cases, have absolutely no relation to either narcotics or organised crime.
- Even the Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) - an equivalent of the FIR - is considered an "internal document" and not given to the accused. The ED treats itself as an exception to these principles.
- There is also a lack of clarity about ED's selection of cases to investigate. The initiation of an investigation by the ED has consequences which have the potential of curtailing the liberty of an individual.
- PMLA does not distinguish between an accused and witness while summoning them.

#### **PMLA (Amendment) Act, 2012:**

Adds the concept of 'reporting entity' which would include a banking company, financial institution, intermediary etc.

PMLA, 2002 levied a fine up to Rs 5 lakh, but the amendment act has removed this upper limit.

It has provided for provisional attachment and confiscation of property of any person involved in such activities.

## Conclusion:

While PMLA is important in current situations, it should be guided by rule of law.

### 1.34 What is Endemic Stage of a Pandemic, & How Far is India from Getting There?

#### What does endemic stage mean?

- An infection becomes endemic when the rates become static in a given geographical location, meaning that the pathogen causing the disease — SARS-CoV-2 in this case — is likely to remain in circulation without causing large outbreaks.
- It depends on the number of susceptible people in the population, vaccination rates, and emergence of new variants that are able to evade the immune response.
- Endemic means that the virus will continue circulating in the population and there will be periodic ups and downs when the conditions are favourable to the virus and less favourable to humans.
- If a representative sero-survey shows over 90% positivity, we can assume that it has reached an endemic stage.
- A disease can be endemic and both widespread and deadly. EG: Malaria killed more than 600,000 people in 2020.
- There can still be disruptive waves from endemic infections, as seen with the US measles outbreak in 2019.

#### What's the difference between an endemic, epidemic and pandemic disease?



#### How will control measures change if the disease becomes endemic?

- There is a need to maintain high levels of testing and good genomic surveillance.  
The best way to find new variants are:
  - conduct a general survey; sequence probably 1% or 2% of the positive cases.
  - wherever there are more cases from an area, we should sequence immediately.
  - need to keep a very close eye on hospitalised cases.
- A concern with officially declaring Covid-19 endemic would be fewer resources being made available for measures such as vaccination.

### 1.35 Use International Law, Call out China's Violations

In the recent foreign affairs meeting of Quad, India's External Affairs minister said that the situation at the India-China Line of Actual Control (LAC) has arisen due to the "disregard" by China of written agreements.

#### What is the base of India-China agreements?

- 1993 Agreement: It said that neither side shall use nor threaten to use force against the other by any means. It further enunciates that the India-China boundary question shall be resolved through peaceful and friendly consultations.
- 1936 Agreement: Article I of this agreement talks of confidence-building measures between the two sides and prohibits the use of military capability against the other side.
- 2005 and 2013 agreements: The prohibition on the use of force is also enshrined in Article I and Article VIII of these agreements.
- United Nations (UN) Charter: The cardinal rule of international law codified in Article 2(4) of the United Nations (UN) Charter prohibits states from using force.  
Exceptions to this rule:
  - Self Defence: Article 51 permits the use of force for self Defence.
  - Authorisation of UN Security Council: Chapter VII of the Charter allows the use of force after obtaining the authorisation of the UN Security Council.

#### What are the violations done by China against India?

- There are reports of a huge military build-up by China with heavy weaponry including missiles in the Eastern Ladakh Sector.

- China has backed these transgressions by other developments such as implementing a new border law that renames several places in Arunachal Pradesh and aims to set up boundary markers on all its land borders.
- In 2016, China denounced a decree by an arbitration tribunal under the aegis of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- The tribunal ruled in favour of Philippines, in a maritime dispute between the two sides in the South China Sea.
- Violation of Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty: China secretly violates the treaty by providing nuclear technology to its allies, often through proxies.

#### **The way forward for India:**

- India in the recent Quad meeting, rather than calling Chinese aggression along LAC as a mere “disregard”, it must have highlighted the blatant violation of international law as part of a larger game of Chinese expansionism.
- India should make a strong legal case by highlighting China’s violations of all International Treaties, including the UN Charter and customary international law, at every forum to call out China’s illegal actions.
- India should make an unequivocal proclamation at all international platforms that India reserves the right to act in self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter to counter any Chinese misadventure.
- India’s Lawfare: India can enact a ‘national security law’ that aimed at imposing restrictions or sanctions of various kinds (trade, economic, military) on those countries with whom India shares a land border.

### **1.36 Russia Recognises Rebel Regions of Ukraine as Independent**

Recently, Russia recognized the Ukraine rebel regions in eastern Ukraine - Donetsk and Luhansk – as independent areas despite calls from the west to put an end to the tensions.

#### **The 2 areas:**

- The Donbass region, comprising the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine, has been at the centre of the conflict since March 2014 when Moscow (Russia) invaded and annexed the Crimean Peninsula.
- In April, pro-Russia rebels began seizing territory (with Russia supporting them through hybrid warfare) in Eastern Ukraine and in May 2014, the rebels in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions held a referendum to declare independence from Ukraine.
- Since then, these predominantly Russian speaking regions (more than 70% speak Russian) within Ukraine have been witnessing shelling and skirmishes between the rebels and Ukrainian forces, creating around 1.5 million registered Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and destruction of the local economy.

#### **Reasons for rebellion in Donbass:**

- The Kyiv government ignored demands for devolution of power and recognition of Russian language here.
- The economy of Donbass was badly hit after 1991 breakup. With subsequent economic reforms, a new class of power elites arose who were politically connected and extremely corrupt. A great number of oligarchs rose here.
- After the soviet collapse, Ukraine faced accusations of excessive centralisation. The oligarchs of Donbass with their Russian leanings, became the spearhead of dissidence against Kyiv.
- In 2004, Yanukovich, one of the oligarchs and future president of Ukraine, raised demands of autonomy in southern and eastern Ukraine. However, protests arose against him called the orange revolution, against electoral fraud.
- Yanukovich became advocate of closer economic and military ties with Russia and cancelled the Ukraine-EU association agreement in 2013 to lean closer to Russia. it led to huge protests called the Euromaidan.
- After annexation of Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk too held their own referendum and proclaimed independence. However, Russia didn’t recognise these 2 republics. Since then, violence has been a common scenario.

Donbass has the largest coal reserves in Ukraine and is famous for its metal industry.

Almost 40% of the population in this area are ethnic Russians.

The Russian language is spoken by a majority of the people in this region.

#### **Way Forward:**

- One way to prevent the outbreak of a war would be to implement the Minsk agreements immediately, as Russia has suggested.
- Minsk 1 was written in September 2014 by the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine, i.e. Ukraine, Russia, and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) with mediation by France and Germany in the so-called Normandy Format.

- Under Minsk 1, Ukraine and the Russia-backed rebels agreed on a 12-point ceasefire deal, which included prisoner exchanges, delivery of humanitarian assistance, and the withdrawal of heavy weapons.
- However, due to violations by both sides, the agreement did not last long.
- As the rebels moved further into Ukraine, in February 2015, representatives of Russia, Ukraine, the OSCE and the leaders of Donetsk and Luhansk signed a 13-point agreement, now known as the Minsk 2 accord.
- The new agreement had provisions for an immediate cease-fire, withdrawal of heavy weaponry, OSCE monitoring, dialogue on interim self-government for Donetsk and Luhansk, in accordance with Ukrainian law.
- However, these provisions have not been implemented because of what is popularly known as the 'Minsk Conundrum'. This essentially means that Ukraine and Russia have contradictory interpretations about the agreement.

### 1.37 Untangling Kerala's Lokayukta Controversy

The controversy surrounding the amendment to the Lokayukta Act of Kerala — effected through an ordinance — has raised the political temperature in the State.

#### **Issues with lokayukta:**

- Section 14 of the Lokayukta Act in Kerala which has now been amended said that if the Lokayukta is satisfied on the complaint against the public servant being substantiated that he should not continue to hold the post held by him.
  - In other words, if the public servant is the Chief Minister or a Minister, he shall forthwith resign his office. Such a provision does not exist in any of the State laws or the Lokpal Act of the Centre.
  - An investigative body does not have the legal authority to direct the public servant to resign his post on the basis of its findings.
- The Sarkaria Commission had suggested that the Governor can dismiss a Chief Minister only when he loses his majority in the Assembly and refuses to step down.
  - No agency created by a law made by the Assembly, particularly an investigative body, can declare that its decision be carried out by the Governor. It would amount to a violation of the Constitution.
- State law includes the office bearers of political parties within its definition of 'public servant'.
  - The Lokayukta law was enacted to inquire into cases of corruption of public functionaries such as Ministers, legislators, etc. who are covered by the Prevention of Corruption Act.
  - This Act does not include office-bearers of political parties in its definition clause.
- It further says that if the Lokayukta is satisfied by the action taken by the competent authority, he shall close the case.
  - There is no provision in the central law under which the Lokpal can close the case before it reaches the court.
  - The Lokayukta not being a court does not have the legal capacity to close the corruption case under any circumstances.

**The Lokpal and Lokayukta Act** delegates the power to States to establish by law the Lokayukta to deal with complaints relating to corruption against public functionaries.

The Lokpal has jurisdiction to inquire into allegations of corruption against the Prime Minister, Ministers, Members of Parliament, Group A, B, C and D officers and officials of the central government.

After the conclusion of the investigation, the Lokpal may file a case in the special court in case the findings disclose the commission of offence under the Prevention of Corruption Act by the Prime Minister, Ministers or Members of Parliament.

The Kerala Lokayukta Act should be re-examined by a committee of the Assembly and should be brought on a par with the Lokpal Act. A legislation which seeks to punish corrupt public functionaries should be placed above controversies.

### 1.38 How Big is the Insurgency Threat in Manipur?

Recently, the Centre Government has announced that it is ready to hold dialogue with insurgency groups in Manipur to bring lasting peace to the region.

#### **Reasons for Rise of Insurgency in Manipur:**

- The rise of separatist insurgency in Manipur is mainly attributed to perceived discontent over alleged "forced" merger of Manipur with the Union of India and the subsequent delay in granting it full-fledged statehood.
  - While the erstwhile Kingdom of Manipur was merged with India on 15th October, 1949, it became a state only in 1972.
- Valley-based outfits have been demanding an independent Manipur. EG: People's Liberation Army (PLA), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) etc.
- While the hills account for nine-tenths of Manipur's geographical area, they are sparsely populated, with most of the state's population concentrated in the valley.

- The Meitei community forms a majority in Imphal valley, while the surrounding hill districts are inhabited by Nagas and Kukis.
- In the early 1990s, the ethnic clashes between Nagas and Kukis led to the formation of several Kuki insurgent groups, which have now scaled down their demand from a separate Kuki state to a Territorial Council.
- The Naga movement in neighbouring Nagaland spilled over into Manipur's hill districts is perceived in the valley as a "threat" to Manipur's "territorial integrity".

#### Issues:

- Since, the demands of many of the outfits conflict with each other, any conventional agreement with one group becomes a cause for agitation by other groups.
- Given that peace talks are on with the insurgents groups, there has been a tendency for the groups to continue the armed rebellion by another faction, with merely a change in nomenclature or by forming a new group.
- The nexus between the politicians and insurgents and criminals adds to the woes of the state.
- Besides, most of the security issues are politicised by the political parties to gain mileage for vote banks by enhancing controversies.
- Manipur being a border state, with a porous international border in a hostile jungle environment, the inflow of arms and trans-border movement of insurgent outfits continues.

#### Measures:

- In 1980, the Centre declared the entire Manipur as a "disturbed area" and imposed the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) to suppress the insurgency movement, which remains in force till date.
- The NSCN-IM entered a ceasefire agreement with the Government of India in 1997, even as peace talks between them have still been continuing.
- Assam Rifles and the army had conducted operation "All Clear" in the hill areas, most of the militants' hideouts had been neutralised.

### 1.39 Emerging Axes, New Equations: Pak-Russia Dynamics in a Changing World

- Following Putin's recognition of two breakaway regions of Ukraine as independent republics, Imran Khan will become the first foreign leader to visit Russia since Nawaz Sharif's historic visit to the country in 1999.
- During cold war era, Pakistan was a ready ally and treaty partner of the United States-led anti-Soviet alliance.
- Today, Pakistan's ties with Russia have progressed significantly.

#### Russia-Pakistan-China:

- Russia surprised the world by lifting its four-decade-old arms embargo against Pakistan in 2011. Within four years, Russia would deliver Pakistan its first MiG attack helicopters, much to New Delhi's dismay.
- Russia did a joint military drill with Pakistan in September 2016, over New Delhi's objections. This was in response to the Jaish-e-Mohammed attack in Uri that month.
- In 2017, when tensions between India and Pakistan were at their lowest point, Russia supplied more helicopters to Pakistan.
- Following 2014 invasion of Crimea, Russia found an ally in China, which has been a long-time ally of Pakistan, therefore triangulating the relationship.
- Both Pakistan and Russia are members in China's Belt and Road Initiative.
- Following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, the world has witnessed the three countries adopt similar viewpoints and express tacit recognition of one another's interests in the nation.

#### New Delhi and Moscow:

- As evidenced by its support for the designation of Pakistan-based terrorist groups, including those that target India, such as the Jaish and its leader, and the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Russia has expressed strong opposition to Pakistan's support for terrorists in general and the sponsorship of terrorists in particular.
- Russian officials are also concerned about Islamist radicalism emerging from Afghanistan spreading into Central Asian countries.
- Both countries recognise that it continues to be beneficial for each other. Russia continues to be India's largest arms supplier.
- When India purchased the Russian S 400 missile defence system, it risked the danger of being sanctioned by the United States. However, New Delhi has not yet allowed its tight connections with the United States to destabilise its delicate balance of power in the Ukraine.

## Conclusion:

- Despite worries over expanding Russian-Chinese friendship, Russia has attempted to take a more balanced stance in its foreign policy by participating in non-Western multilateral institutions such as the RIC, the SCO, and the BRICS.
- The improvement of the economic cooperation and the development of a clear future plan of action should be top priorities for India in order to curb Russia's pro-Pakistan inclination.

## 1.40 Road To Natural Farming

Natural farming is a diversified farming system that integrates crops, trees and livestock, allowing the optimum use of functional biodiversity.

Internationally, Natural Farming is considered a form of regenerative agriculture—a prominent strategy to save the planet.

### Initiatives that have been Launched:

- Sub mission on agroforestry aims to encourage farmers to plant multi-purpose trees together with the agriculture crops for climate resilience and an additional source of income.
- National mission on sustainable agriculture to make agriculture resilient to adverse impacts of climate change.
- In the Budget 2022-23, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana has received a 4.2-times (year-on-year) larger allocation of funds for the on-ground implementation of chemical-free farming.

### Issues:

- Sikkim has seen some decline in yields following conversion to organic farming.
- While ZBNF has definitely helped preserve soil fertility, its role in boosting productivity and farmers' income isn't conclusive yet.
- An often-cited barrier by farmers in transitioning to chemical-free agriculture is the lack of readily available natural inputs.
- Although the Budget 2022-23 envisages the promotion of natural or chemical-free farming across the country, no specific allocations have been made to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

### Measures:

- Need to focus on promoting natural farming in rainfed areas beyond the Gangetic basin.
  - Rainfed regions use only a third of the fertilisers per hectare compared to the areas where irrigation is prevalent.
  - The shift to chemical-free farming will be easier in these regions.
- Enabling automatic enrolment of farmers transitioning to chemical-free farming into the government's crop insurance scheme, PM Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY).
  - Covering transition risks could enhance the appetite of the farmers to embark on the transition.
- Microenterprises that produce inputs for chemical-free agriculture shall be provided support from the government to address the challenge of unavailability of readily available natural inputs.
- Learning from peers, especially champion farmers, through on-field demonstrations has proved highly effective in scaling up chemical-free agriculture in Andhra Pradesh.
- Beyond evolving the curriculum in agricultural universities, there is a need to upskill the agriculture extension workers on sustainable agriculture practices.

## 1.41 Reining in the Subsidy Bill

- Between 2015-16 and 2019-20, the aggregate outlay on the two fell, both in absolute terms and as a share of the Centre's total expenditure (from 11.8% to 7.1%).
- This declining trend has been completely reversed since Covid 19.
- While the budget estimates for 2021-22 stood lower, they are still way above the trend till 2019-20, (16.1% of centre's total budget).

### Reasons:

1. In the case of food, the Centre wasn't wholly funding the difference between the FCI's economic cost and its average issue price. To bridge the gap, FCI had to borrow heavily at rate of 7.5-8.8% per annum. Eg: FCI's borrowings from NSSF in 2019-20, at Rs110000 crore, exceeded the food subsidy of Rs108,000 crore provided through the Budget.
  - In case of fertilizer industry, the budgeted subsidy of Rs71000 crore fell short of the requirement of about Rs85,000 crore just for 2020-21.

- o Budget 2021-22 allocated an additional Rs300000 crore towards food and fertiliser subsidy in order to overcome FCI loans which led to increase in subsidies.

- The second source of overshooting has been Covid (in respect of food subsidy) and soaring international prices (vis-à-vis fertilisers). Eg: Urea imports into India are taking place now at \$900-1,000 per tonne (cost plus freight) from earlier 300\$.
- Post-Covid crisis led the Centre to not only distribute, but also procure, unprecedented quantities of grain. The PDS — more so, the 5 kg of free grain per person per month given under PMGKAY apart from the regular 5 kg quota of wheat or rice at Rs2 and Rs3/kg, respectively — became the government's preeminent social safety net programme.

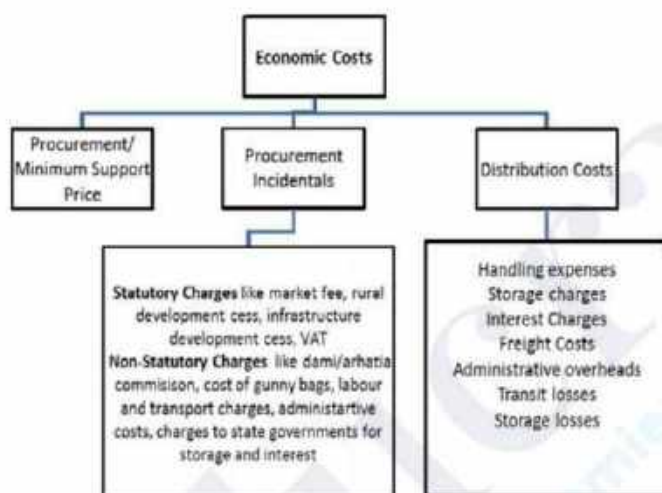
**TABLE 1**  
**CENTRE'S SPENDING ON SUBSIDY (Rs CRORE)**

FISCAL YEAR (APR-MAR)	FOOD SUBSIDY (1)	FERTILISER SUBSIDY (2)	TOTAL (1+2)	CENTRE'S BUDGET* (3)	TOTAL AS% OF (3)
2013-14	92,000	67,339	1,59,339	15,59,447	10.22
2014-15	1,17,671	71,076	1,88,747	16,63,673	11.35
2015-16	1,39,419	72,415	2,11,834	17,90,783	11.83
2016-17	1,10,173	66,313	1,76,486	19,75,194	8.94
2017-18	1,00,282	66,468	1,66,749	21,41,973	7.78
2018-19	1,01,327	70,605	1,71,932	23,15,113	7.43
2019-20	1,08,688	81,124	1,89,813	26,86,330	7.07
2020-21**	1,15,570	71,309	1,86,879	30,42,230	6.14
2020-21***	4,22,618	1,33,947	5,56,565	34,50,305	16.13
2021-22**	2,42,836	79,530	3,22,366	34,83,236	9.25

\*Centre's total expenditure; \*\*Budget Estimates; \*\*\*Revised Estimates.  
Source: Union Budget documents for various years.

### Expected trends:

- The current Omicron wave doesn't seem presenting a threat calling for intense lockdowns like those in 2020-21 and 2021-22. It is realistic, then, to expect a lower food subsidy outgo in 2022-23.
- The same cannot be said for fertiliser subsidy, where there is no certainty with regard to international prices.
- Need for more substantive measures like hiking PDS issue prices, capping grain procurement, decontrolling urea and providing a fixed per-tonne nutrient-based subsidy similar to that for other fertilisers.



Minimum Support Price is the price at which government purchases crops for the farmers, to safeguard the interests of the farmers.

The price at which the procured and buffer stock food grains are provided through the PDS is called an issue price, in other words, the Price at which the FCI sells the food grain for PDS consumption is known as Issue Price.

Food subsidy = economic costs - central issue price.

## 1.42 Unease of Doing Business

Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 principally seeks to regulate the use of our data and to foster a privacy protection framework in the country. However, in many respects, it fails to strike the balance between privacy rights and ease of doing business.

### Key Highlights of PDP Bill:

- Formation of a Data Protection Authority (DPA)**, which would regulate the use of users' personal data by social media companies and other organizations within the country.
- The Bill **trifurcates data** as follows:
  - Personal data:** Data from which an individual can be identified like name, address etc. (stored only in India. It can be processed abroad only under certain conditions)
  - Sensitive personal data (SPD):** Some types of personal data like as financial, health, sexual orientation, biometric, genetic, transgender status, caste, religious belief, and more.
  - Critical personal data:** Anything that the government at any time can deem critical, such as military or national security data. (Stored and processed in India.)

- Data is collected and handled by entities called **data fiduciaries**.
- While the fiduciary controls how and why data is processed, the processing itself may be by a third party, the **data processor**.

- The Bill mandates fiduciaries to provide the government any non-personal data when demanded. Non-personal data refers to anonymised data, such as traffic patterns or demographic data.
- Each company will have a **Data Protection Officer (DPO)** who will liaison with the DPA for auditing, grievance redressal, recording maintenance and more.
- It legislates on the right to be forgotten- this right allows an individual to remove consent for data collection and disclosure.
- The Bill stated the penalties as: Rs5 crore or 2 percent of worldwide turnover for minor violations and Rs15 crore or 4 percent of total worldwide turnover for more serious violations.
- Clause 35/Exemption Clause: The Clause in the name of “public order”, ‘sovereignty’, “friendly relations with foreign states” and “security of the state” allows any agency under the Union Government exemption from all or any provisions of the law.

## Ringfencing data

Concluding its deliberations since 2019, the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Personal Data Protection Bill adopted its report on Monday

### Key recommendations

- Treat as publishers all social media platforms which do not act as intermediaries, and they be held accountable for the content they host
- Allow no social media platform to operate in India unless the parent company handling the technology sets up an office in India



- Develop an alternative indigenous financial system for cross-border payments
- Set up dedicated lab for certification of all digital devices
- In case of cross-border transfer of data, a mirror copy of sensitive and critical personal data be mandatorily brought to India

## Issues in EoDB

- The Bill imposes restrictions on the transfer of sensitive personal data outside India which is likely to splinter our market from the global digital economy.
- A narrower category of personal data that is considered “critical” would be entirely prohibited from transfer outside India- it destroy the basic value of the digital economy — connectivity beyond physical barriers.
- The Bill also requires large players to have data protection officers physically located within India. The outside world is likely to see these measures as less about protection and more about protectionism.
- The JPC has recommended that all hardware must be monitored, tested, and certified by an authorized agency to ensure its “integrity and trustworthiness”-this will impose a testing requirement on hardware as diverse as computers and cars and further increase issues for India’s blossoming electronic sector.
- It will result in delays and disruption in supply chains.
- Extensive compliance requirements have been included, such as the conduct of audits and impact assessments will act as a deterrent to participation in the Indian market of digital businesses that run on lean business structures.
- Technology companies that thrive on acquiring a competitive advantage will be reluctant to share information on their processes and business models. These proposals would give companies a reason to pause as they seek to grow in India.

## Way Forward:

The government must closely consider each of the policy prescriptions in the Bill including the unintended but deleterious consequences of the regulatory regime mooted. The foundation of the framework of data bill should be to facilitate rather than intervene.

## 1.43 Insufficiently Green:

While the budget focuses on ideas like “business environment” and “growth ecosystem”, certain things stand out in the 2022-23 Union budget for anyone interested in the relationship between economy and ecology.

### Positive:

- There is a slight increase in the budget of the Ministry for Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) from 2021-22’s revised estimate of Rs 2,870 crore to Rs 3,030 crore.
- Increased focus on natural and organic farming, and on promoting millets.
- Measures like use of biomass for power stations, boost to batteries, energy-efficiency measures in large commercial buildings, and sovereign green bonds are a welcome step.
- Renewable and “clean” energy has received substantially higher allocations.
- It is encouraging to see the budget proposing a “paradigm shift” towards sustainable urban living. A committee is to be set up to advise on this.

### Issues:

- Total allocation is a meagre 0.08 per cent of the total budgetary outlay.



- The outlay for areas like the National River Conservation Plan, tackling air pollution, which is widely acknowledged as a national emergency has actually declined.
- Completely missing is a focus on rainfed farming that involves 60 per cent of the farming population and is ecologically more sustainable than artificially irrigated agriculture.
- While focus is on “chemical-free farming throughout the country,” but there has been a massive chemical fertiliser subsidy of Rs 1,05,222 crore.
- Focus on mega-parks in solar/wind energy, nuclear power, and large hydro that have serious ecological impacts.
- The National Climate Action Plan gets an abysmally inadequate Rs 30 crore. And there is no focus on a “just transition” that could help workers in fossil fuel sectors, like coal, to transition to jobs in cleaner, greener sectors.
- The proposed 25,000 km increase in highways will further fragment forests, wetlands, mountains, grasslands, agricultural lands and bypass most villages. Eg: For instance, the Ken-Betwa river-linking project, given over Rs 40,000 crore, will submerge valuable tiger habitat.
- The budget misses out on a major shift to “green jobs”. This includes support to decentralised (including handmade) production of textiles, footwear, and other products.
- The Deep Ocean Mission and the Blue Revolution allocations are oriented towards commercial exploitation rather than conservation and sustainable use.

### **Conclusion:**

The budget should have focused on the chance to shift towards decentralised renewable energy with less ecological impacts and greater community access.

### **1.44 VIP Security: Who, How?**

Dera Sacha Sauda chief has been provided Z plus category security by the Haryana government. This decision has generated considerable interest as the person was serving a 20-year sentence and was released on furlough.

The protection given to someone who holds a position of consequence either in the government or in civil society is informally called “VIP security”.

#### **Who decides the level of security protection?**

- The level of security is decided by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in the case of the Center and by the state government in the case of states.
- The assessment is based on inputs received from intelligence agencies, which include the Intelligence Bureau and the Research and Analysis Wing at the level of the Centre and the state intelligence department in the case of the state government.
- However, the intelligence inputs generated by these agencies are not out in the public domain and hence can be used manipulatively by executive.

#### **Who gets the security cover automatically?**

- Certain individuals, by reason of positions they hold in government, are automatically entitled to security cover. They include the Prime Minister and his immediate family, Home Minister, officials such as the National Security Advisor.

#### **What about convicts?**

- Legally there is no bar on the government providing protection to a convict if it is felt that his life may be in danger.
- It is actually the duty of the state to protect the lives of prisoners and convicts.

The SPG was raised in 1985 to provide security cover to the Prime Minister, former Prime Ministers and their immediate family members.

The SPG comprises of the personnel from the CRPF, Border Security Force and other Central and State forces.

#### **Different types of security cover provided:**

- There are largely six types of security cover: X, Y, Y plus, Z, Z plus, and SPG (Special Protection Group).
- The SPG cover is meant only for the PM and his immediate family.
- The number of personnel guarding the protectee differs from category to category. For example, the X category on average entails just one gunman protecting the individual. On the other hand, Z-plus category protectees have 10 security personnel for mobile security and two (plus 8 on rotation) for residence security.

### Which officers provide security cover?

- For VIPs other than the PM, the government has mandated the National Security Guard (NSG), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) to provide security cover. In case a state accords security, the state police provides protection.
- The government bears the cost of the security. However, in certain cases government may choose to bill a private individual.

### 1.45 Stay the Course

Recently, India abstained on a US-sponsored UNSC resolution that “deplores in the strongest terms” Russia’s “aggression” against Ukraine, with New Delhi saying dialogue is the only answer to settling differences and disputes and voicing “regret” that the path of diplomacy was given up.

### How will India be impacted by this Conflict?

- The Russia-Ukraine crisis will send cooking gas, petrol and other fuel bills soaring for Indian households and businesses. Higher oil prices add to freight/transportation costs.
- The surge in crude oil prices will lead to an increase in India’s oil import bills, and gold imports could jump back up, keeping the rupee under pressure.
- India’s imports of petroleum products from Russia are only a fraction of its total oil import bill and, thus, replaceable. However, getting alternative sources for fertilisers and sunflower oil may not be as easy.
- Exports to Russia account for less than 1% of India’s total exports, but exports of pharmaceuticals and tea could face some challenges, as will shipments to CIS countries. Freight rate hikes could make overall exports less competitive, too.

### What is an India-Specific Way Forward?

- Geopolitical Aspect: It will have to balance the pressure from one strategic partner to condemn the violation of international law, with that from another to understand its legitimate concerns. India managed these pressures during the 2014 crisis of Crimea annexation, it shall again manage it effectively.
- Economic Aspect: Government has the room to pre-emptively cut domestic fuel taxes to reduce inflationary expectations, stoke faltering consumption levels and sustain India’s fragile post-Covid-19 recovery through this global churn.
- By abstaining from voting, India could establish its neutrality in a matter involving Russia and the USA.
- India has been on a path of strategic partnership with the USA, in which the Indian government has invested a lot.
- At the same time, Russia is an all-weather friend of India. It is a matter of regret that the path of diplomacy was given up.
- Moreover, India’s vote was in any way inconsequential given Russia has the veto power to block the resolution from getting passed. Therefore, India had the luxury to be seen as neutral on a matter that it supports but not by going against an all-weather and tested ally.
- It must be highlighted that Ukraine has a chequered past with respect to India in international relations. Ukraine has opposed the Indian action of removing the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 in Parliament, and has also sold weapons to Pakistan.

### Conclusion:

- India is sympathetic to the cause of territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine but also shares the Russian security concern vis-à-vis Ukraine joining NATO.
- Though India is in-principle in agreement with the rest of the world that the territorial integrity of Ukraine is non-negotiable, it did not want Russia to be penalized with onerous international sanctions.

### 1.46 Exclusion from SWIFT: What it Entails

The U.S., Europe and several other western nations are moving to exclude Russia from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT).

### What is SWIFT?

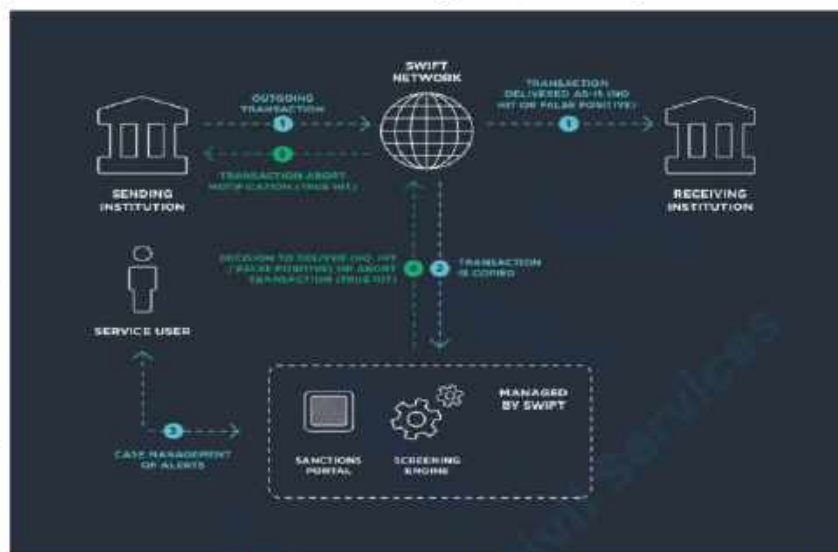
- SWIFT is an international network for banks worldwide to facilitate smooth money transactions globally.
- It is basically a messaging network used by banks and financial institutions globally for quick and faultless exchange of information pertaining to financial transactions.
- SWIFT is merely a platform that sends messages and does not hold any securities or money.

## How does it facilitate banking?

- Each participant on the platform is assigned a unique eight-digit SWIFT code or a bank identification code (BIC).
- If a person, say, in New York with a Citibank account, wants to send money to someone with an HSBC account in London, the payee would have to submit to his bank the London-based beneficiary's account number along with the eight-digit SWIFT code of the latter's bank.
- Citibank would then send a SWIFT message to HSBC. Once that is received and approved, the money would be credited to the required account.

## How is the organization governed?

- SWIFT claims to be neutral. Its shareholders, consisting of 3,500 firms across the globe, elect the 25-member board, which is responsible for oversight and management of the company.
- It is regulated by G-10 central banks of Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, the UK, the US, Switzerland, and Sweden, alongside the European Central Bank.
- Its lead overseer is the National Bank of Belgium.
- The SWIFT oversight forum was established in 2012.
- Europe, Middle East, and Africa are highest contributors to SWIFT.



## What happens if one is excluded from SWIFT?

- If a country is excluded from the most participatory financial facilitating platform, its foreign funding would take a hit, making it entirely reliant on domestic investors.
- This is particularly troublesome when institutional investors are constantly seeking new markets in newer territories.
- An alternative system would be cumbersome to build and even more difficult to integrate with an already expansive system.
- Iranian banks were ousted from the system in 2018 despite resistance from several countries in Europe.

## Impact on Russia:

- The move against Russia is only partly implemented for now, with only some Russian banks being covered.
- Targeting only some Russian banks seems to be aimed at both keeping the option of further escalation open, while ensuring that the sanctions have the maximum possible impact on Moscow, but prevent a major impact on European companies dealing with Russian banks for payments for their gas imports.
- Moscow has been building up a cushion of foreign currency with reserves touching a record high of \$630 billion in January 2022. The new measures will significantly decrease the reserves available to the country's central bank.
- However, Russia, too, has worked on alternatives, including the SPFS (System for Transfer of Financial Messages) — an equivalent of the SWIFT financial transfer system developed by the Central Bank of Russia.

## 2. Prelims Booster

### 01.02.21

**Janardhana Temple:** the Vishnu Temple (Vishnugudi) and the Janardhana Temple (Janardhanagudi) are located at Panchavayal, near Panamaram, in Wayanad district. The style of sculptures and a stone edict on a wall of the Janardhana Temple in old Kannada script show that the temples might have been built during the reign of the Hoysala or Vijayanagara dynasties in the Deccan plateau from the 12th to 14th centuries. Nearly 300 intricate carvings on the huge stone pillars, including the sculpture of a fishing man, a primitive war scene featuring tuskers, a stone edict in old Kannada script, figures of Jain deities, and sculptures of the 'Dashavathara' are the major attractions at the temples.

**Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children:** is a condition where various organs of the body are affected by inflammation. The patient develops heart problems, the severity of which may determine the line of treatment. It is a rare but severe hyperinflammatory condition in children and adolescents that typically occurs 2-6 weeks after a Covid-19 infection. It is a potentially deadly condition where different body parts can become inflamed, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, or gastrointestinal organs. Children with MIS-C may have a fever and various symptoms, including abdominal (gut) pain, vomiting, diarrhea, neck pain, rash, bloodshot eyes, or feeling extra tired.

**World Economic Outlook:** It is a survey by the IMF that is usually published twice a year in the months of April and October. It analyzes and predicts global economic developments during the near and medium term. In response to the growing demand for more frequent forecast updates, the WEO Update is published in January and July between the two main WEO publications released usually in April and October.

**Labour Force Participation Rate & Worker to Population Ratio:** LFPR is defined as the percentage of persons in the labour force (i.e. working or seeking or available for work) in the population. WPR is defined as the percentage of employed persons in the population.

**mRNA vaccine:** The mRNA (messenger RNA) is one such vaccine that injects pieces of mRNA into human cells in order to get them to produce pathogen antigens. The mRNA vaccines function differently from traditional vaccines. Traditional vaccines stimulate an antibody response by injecting a human with antigens. mRNA vaccines inject a fragment of the RNA sequence of a virus directly into the cells, which then stimulate an adaptive immune response. mRNA fragment is a specific piece of the virus that carries instructions to build the antigen of the virus. An advantage of RNA vaccines is that they stimulate cellular immunity. Unlike DNA vaccines, mRNA vaccines are more fragile as the molecules degrade within minutes when exposed to the outside environment, hence they need to be stored at extremely low temperatures.

### 02.02.21

**Special Economic Zones:** An SEZ is a territory within a country that is typically duty-free (Fiscal Concession) and has different business and commercial laws chiefly to encourage investment and create employment. SEZs are created also to better administer these areas, thereby increasing the ease of doing business. Objectives of the SEZ Act: To create additional economic activity. To boost the export of goods and services. To generate employment. To boost domestic and foreign investments. To develop infrastructure facilities.

**Zero budget natural farming:** It is a unique model that relies on Agro-ecology. It aims to bring down the cost of production to nearly zero and return to a pre-green revolution style of farming. It claims that there is no need for expensive inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides and intensive irrigation. ZBNF is based on 4 pillars:

- Jeevamrutha: It is a mixture of fresh cow dung and aged cow urine (both from India's indigenous cow breed), jaggery, pulse flour, water and soil; to be applied on farmland.
- Bijamrita: It is a concoction of neem leaves & pulp, tobacco and green chilies prepared for insect and pest management, that can be used to treat seeds.
- Acchadana (Mulching): It protects topsoil during cultivation and does not destroy it by tilling.
- Whapasa: It is the condition where there are both air molecules and water molecules present in the soil. Thereby helping in reducing irrigation requirement.

**Green Bond:** A green bond is a debt instrument with which capital is being raised to fund 'green' projects, which typically include those relating to renewable energy, clean transportation, sustainable water management etc.

**Blockchain technology:** is a technology that leads to a chain of blocks, containing digital information stored in a public database. It is a distributed database existing on multiple computers at the same time, which constantly grows as new sets of recordings or blocks are added to it.

**Employee stock option:** An employee stock ownership plan (ESOP) is a type of employee benefit plan which is intended to encourage employees to acquire stocks or ownership in the company. Under these plans, the employer gives certain stocks of the company to the employee for negligible or less costs which remain in the ESOP trust fund, until the options vests and the employee exercises them or the employee leaves/retires from the company or institution. These plans are aimed at improving the performance of the company and increasing the value of the shares by involving stock holders, who are also the employees, in the working of the company. The ESOPs help in minimizing problems related to incentives.

**Alternative Minimum Tax:** Minimum Alternate Tax is applied when the taxable income calculated according to the I-T Act provisions is found to be less than 15.5 per cent (plus surcharge and cess as applicable) of the book profit under the Companies Act, 2013.

### 03.02.21

**Sultanpur National Park:** It is situated in Gurgaon district of Haryana. Sultanpur National Park is a bird paradise for bird watchers. It is famous for its migratory as well as resident birds. Migratory birds start arriving in the park in September. Birds use the park as a resting place till the following March-April. Mammals: Blackbuck, Nilgai, Hog deer, Sambar, Leopard etc. Birds: Siberian Cranes, Greater Flamingo, Demoiselle Crane etc.

**Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary:** near Jamnagar in Gujarat and Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh have been listed as Wetlands of International Importance. With this, the total number of Ramsar sites in India goes up to 48. Khijadiya, which is part of the Central Asian Flyway, has become the fourth wetland of Gujarat to get the Ramsar tag. Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary, Thol Wildlife Sanctuary and Wadhvana wetland are the other Ramsar sites in the state.

**Input Tax Credit:** It is the tax that a business pays on a purchase and that it can use to reduce its tax liability when it makes a sale. In simple terms, input credit means at the time of paying tax on output, you can reduce the tax you have already paid on inputs and pay the balance amount. Exceptions: A business under composition scheme cannot avail of input tax credit. ITC cannot be claimed for personal use or for goods that are exempt.

**Capital Expenditure:** is used to create assets or to reduce liabilities. It consists of: (i) the long-term investments by the government on creating assets such as roads and hospitals, and (ii) the money given by the government in the form of loans to states or repayment of its borrowings.

**Project Import Scheme:** Project Import means import of plant and machinery and any other things which are required to establish a new project for manufacturing or producing any approved things in India or substantially expending existing project established in India. In the PIS all the items of project imports are assessed under the single classification under the Customs Tariff Act, 1975 with a single rate of duty instead of merit assessment of imported items.

### 04.02.21

**Statue of equality:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Statue of Equality, a gigantic statue of Ramanujacharya, on February 5 on the outskirts of Hyderabad. Ramanuja was an advocate of social equality among all sections of people centuries ago, and encouraged temples to open their doors to everyone irrespective of caste or position in society at a time when people of many castes were forbidden from entering them. He took education to those who were deprived of it. His greatest contribution is the propagation of the concept of "vasudhaiva kutumbakam", which translates as "all the universe is one family".

**River city alliance:** has been launched with the objective to provide the member cities with a platform to discuss and exchange information on aspects that are vital for sustainable management of urban rivers, sharing best practices and supporting innovation. The Alliance is open to all river cities of India. Any river city can join the Alliance at any time. State Governments are implementing Action Plans for restoration of water quality of the identified polluted river stretches.

**Chandrayaan 3:** Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will make its third venture to the Moon through the Chandrayaan-3 mission in August this year. Chandrayaan-3 is a planned third lunar exploration mission by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). Following Chandrayaan-2, where a last-minute glitch in the soft landing guidance software led to the failure of the lander's soft landing attempt after a successful orbital insertion, another lunar mission for demonstrating soft landing was proposed. Chandrayaan-3 will be a mission repeat of Chandrayaan-2 but will only include a lander and rover similar to that of Chandrayaan-2. It will not have an orbiter. The spacecraft is planned to be launched in August 2022.

**GSLV MkIII:** stands for Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle. GSLV Mk III is a 3 stage heavy lift launch vehicle developed by ISRO. This launch vehicle is designed for carrying heavier satellites. GSLV Mk -III has higher thrust than the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), the most successful launch vehicle of ISRO. The objective of developing GSLV Mk III are listed below. To launch heavier communication satellites, To launch heavier multi-purpose satellites, Future Interplanetary exploration, To launch future crewed missions i.e. to carry humans to space.

**AMR:** Anti-microbial resistance is the resistance acquired by any microorganism (bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasite, etc.) against antimicrobial drugs (such as antibiotics, antifungals, antivirals, antimalarials, and anthelmintics) that are used to treat infections. As a result, standard treatments become ineffective, infections persist and may spread to others. Microorganisms that develop antimicrobial resistance are sometimes referred to as "superbugs". Antimicrobial resistance is now regarded as a major threat to public health across the globe.

### 05.02.21

**Golden Langur:** can be most easily recognized by the color of their fur, after which they are named. It has been noted that their fur changes colors according to the seasons as well as geography (region they live in). The color of the young also differs from adults in that they are almost pure white. They are highly dependent on trees, living in the upper canopy of forests. They are also known as leaf monkeys. Habitat: It is endemic to western Assam, India, and southern Bhutan. IUCN List of Threatened Species: Endangered; Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES): Appendix I; Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule I.

**China Pakistan Economic Corridor:** The CPEC is a bilateral project between Pakistan and China. It is intended to promote connectivity across Pakistan with a network of highways, railways, and pipelines accompanied by energy, industrial, and other infrastructure development projects. It aims to link the Western part of China (Xinjiang province) to the Gwadar Port in Balochistan, Pakistan via Khunjerab Pass in the Northern Parts of Pakistan. It will pave the way for China to access the Middle East and Africa from Gwadar Port, enabling China to access the Indian Ocean.

**NAVIC:** Navigation in Indian Constellation (NavIC) is an Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), developed by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO). IRNSS consists of eight satellites, three satellites in geostationary orbit and five satellites in geosynchronous orbit. The main objective is to provide reliable position, navigation and timing services over India and its neighbourhood.

**Winter Olympics 2022:** Winter Olympics is the premier competition for sports that are played on ice or snow. It is held every four years and features participants from across the world. Ice skating, ice hockey, skiing and figure skating are some of the popular sports that are played at the Winter Games. This year's edition of the Winter Olympic Games will be held in Beijing, China from 4th February to 20th February 2022. India has been participating in the Winter Olympics since 1964.

**NEET-All India Quota:** The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) is the entrance examination for entry to all undergraduate and postgraduate medical and dental courses in the country. Now, the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 stands repealed after it has been replaced by the National Medical Commission Act, 2019 that came into existence on 8th August 2019. It is conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA).

### 07.02.21

**Saubhagya scheme:** The Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana was launched in 2017 to ensure electrification of all households in the country in rural as well as urban areas. Objectives: Achieving Universal Household Electrification in the country, through last mile connectivity. Providing access to electricity to all un-electrified households in rural areas and poor households in urban areas.

**Institutional deficit:** refers to the absence of an effective mechanism to ensure compliance. E.g less officials to conduct field visits, short-staffed tribunals, post-factor clearances etc.

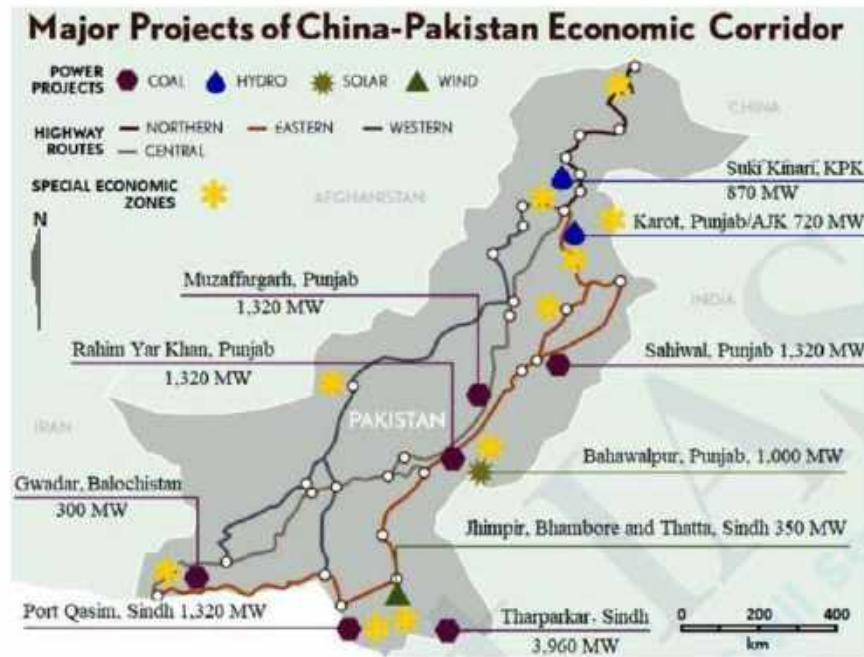
**Environment Performance Index:** EPI is a biennial index prepared by Yale University and Columbia University in collaboration with the World Economic Forum. It offers a scorecard that highlights leaders and laggards in environmental performance and provides practical guidance for countries that aspire to move toward a sustainable future. This index was first published in 2002 designed to supplement the environmental targets set forth in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. India's rank is 168th and while Denmark, Luxemburg and Switzerland have secured the top 3 spot.

**Bru Tribe:** Bru or Reang is a community indigenous to Northeast India, living mostly in Tripura, Mizoram and Assam. In Tripura, they are recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group. In Mizoram, they have been targeted by groups that do not consider them indigenous to the state. The Centre, the governments of Mizoram and Tripura and leaders of Bru organisations signed a quadripartite agreement in January (2020). Under the pact, the Home Ministry has committed to incur the whole expenditure of settlement in Tripura.

**Satkosia Tiger Reserve:** Satkosia Tiger Reserve, Bhubaneswar comprises two adjoining sanctuaries of central Odisha named as Satkosia Gorge Sanctuary and Baisipalli Sanctuary. These two sanctuaries together covering an area of 963.87 sq km were notified as Tiger Reserve in December 2007. The area supports moist deciduous forest, dry deciduous forest and moist peninsular Sal forest.

This area is the home for Tiger, Leopard, Elephant, Gaur, Chousingha, Sloth bear, Wild dog, varieties of resident and migratory birds, reptilian species, etc.

**CPEC Map:**



**08.02.21**

**Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients:** are the active ingredients contained in a medicine. It is that part of the medicine that produces the intended therapeutic effects. For example, in a painkiller, the active ingredient relieves pain. In the OTC drug Crocin, the API is paracetamol.

**Moratorium:** The RBI, has the power to ask the government to have a moratorium placed on a bank's operations for a specified period of time. Under such a moratorium, depositors will not be able to withdraw funds at will, primarily helps prevent what is known as a 'run' on a bank, by clamping down on rapid outflow of funds by wary depositors, who seek to take their money out in fear of the bank's imminent collapse. Temporarily, it does affect depositors who may have placed, for example, their retirement with the bank, or creditors who are owed funds by the bank but are struggling with the collection.

**Crowding out of Funds:** As the government adopts an expansionary fiscal policy stance and increases its spending to boost economic activity. This leads to an increase in interest rates. Increased interest rates affect private investment decisions. A high magnitude of the crowding-out effect may even lead to lesser income in the economy.

**Beti Bachao Beti Padhao:** 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. Main Objectives: Prevention of gender-biased sex-selective elimination, Ensuring survival & protection of the girl child, Ensuring education and participation of the girl child, Protecting rights of Girl children.

**Economic Slowdown:** An economic recession signifies a drop in the gross domestic product (GDP), while a slowdown is merely a decline in the growth rate of the GDP. It's the difference between a salary cut and a smaller increment. While one reduces an individual's actual income, the other is merely a drop in the growth of that income. A slowdown usually precedes recession, but does not necessarily lead to one.

**09.02.21**

**EPFO:** The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation is the statutory body under the Government of India's Ministry of Labour and Employment, which is responsible for regulation and management of provident funds in India. The EPFO administers the mandatory provident fund.

**Agriculture Orientation Index:** AOI for Government Expenditures is defined as the Agriculture share of Government Expenditure, divided by the Agriculture value added share of GDP, where Agriculture refers to the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting

sectors. India's index is one of the lowest, reflecting that the spending towards the agri sector is not commensurate with the sectors contribution to the GDP.

**FRBM Act:** FRBM Act provides a legal institutional framework for fiscal consolidation. The objective of the Act is to ensure inter-generational equity in fiscal management, long-run macroeconomic stability, better coordination between fiscal and monetary policy, and transparency in the fiscal operation of the Government. Act envisages the setting of limits on the Central government's debt and deficits. It limited the fiscal deficit to 3% of the GDP.

**Central Bank Digital Currency:** A CBDC is a digital token representing a country's official fiat currency. A CBDC is no different from the cash that we hold in our wallets, except that it exists in a digital form. The CBDC will be held in a digital wallet that is supervised by the Central bank. It should be noted that the RBI's digital rupee will not directly replace demand deposits held in banks. People can opt to convert their bank deposits into the new digital rupee.

**PM-AASHA:** Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan is an umbrella scheme aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce. It includes the mechanism of ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers and is comprised of: Price Support Scheme (PSS), Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS) and Pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPPS).

### 10.02.21

**INCOIS:** Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services is an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES). It is mandated to provide the best possible ocean information and advisory services to society, industry, government agencies and the scientific community through sustained ocean observations and constant improvement through systematic and focused research.

**Coastal Vulnerability Index:** Under the CVI, INCOIS has brought out an Atlas comprising 156 maps on 1:1,00,000 scales to prepare a CVI. These maps determine the coastal risks due to future sea-level rise based on the physical and geological parameters for the Indian coast. The CVI uses the relative risk that physical changes will occur as sea-level rises are quantified based on parameters like: Tidal range, Wave height, Coastal slope, Coastal elevation, Shoreline change rate, Geomorphology, Historical rate of relative sea-level change.

**eSanjeevani:** It is a doctor-to-doctor telemedicine system, being implemented under the Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centre (AB-HWCs) programme. It seeks to connect all 1,50,000 HWCs using the hub-and-spoke model by December 2022. Under the model, a network will be established comprising an anchor establishment, or hub, which offers a full array of services, and will be complemented by secondary establishments, or spokes, which offer limited services, routing patients needing more intensive services to the hub for treatment.

**Public Affairs Index:** is released by the Bangalore based think tank 'Public Affairs Centre'. In this index, Bihar has been ranked 12th in the list of large states in the equity column, while Gujarat is at the first and Uttar Pradesh is at the last position. In the overall ranking, Kerala has been ranked first and Tamil Nadu is at second place. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are at the last rank for the year 2021.

**PSLV:** Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle is the third generation launch vehicle of India. It is a four-staged launch vehicle with first and third stages using solid rocket motors and second and fourth stages using liquid rocket engines. It is the first Indian launch vehicle to be equipped with liquid stages. It has a history of successful launches of payloads that include Chandrayaan-1, Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) and the space recovery mission, etc. The PSLV has failed only twice in its history — the maiden flight of the PSLV D1 in 1993 and the PSLV C-39 in 2017.

### 11.02.21

**Kyoto Protocol:** It is legally binding, only members of UNFCCC can become parties to the Kyoto Protocol. Kyoto Protocol was adopted at the 3rd session of UNFCCC. To meet the targets of the Kyoto Protocol, member countries cannot include international shipping and international aviation. Countries can use Land Use (LU), land-use change (LUC), and Forestry to meet their Kyoto targets.

**India State of Forest Report:** It is an assessment of India's forest and tree cover, published every two years by the Forest Survey of India. The ISFR is used in planning and formulation of policies in forest management as well as forestry and agroforestry sectors. Three categories of forests are surveyed – very dense forests (canopy density over 70%), moderately dense forests (40-70%) and open forests (10-40%). Scrubs (canopy density less than 10%) are also surveyed but not categorised as forests.

**Monetary policy committee:** is a committee constituted by the Central Government and led by the Governor of RBI. Monetary Policy Committee was formed with the mission of fixing the benchmark policy interest rate (repo rate) to restrain inflation within



the particular target level. The RBI governor controls the monetary policy decisions with the support and advice of the internal team and the technical advisory committee.

**CAATSA:** Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) It is a US federal law enacted in 2017. The Act empowers the US President to impose at least five of the 12 listed sanctions on persons engaged in a "significant transaction" with Russian defence and intelligence sectors. Its "ultimate goal", "is to prevent revenue from flowing to the Russian Government. Besides Russia, CAATSA is aimed at enforcing sanctions against Iran and North Korea.

**Zero Emission Corridor:** specific trade routes between major port hubs where zero-emission solutions are demonstrated and supported – can be conceived, prioritized, and designed to accelerate the speed of shipping's transition. "Green Corridors can help simplify the challenges of zero-emission shipping, bringing solutions to the water faster and at a meaningful scale.

### 12.02.21

**IMR:** The Infant Mortality Rate or IMR is the number of deaths of children (under one year of age) per 1000 live births. The infant mortality rate for India in 2021 was **28.771 deaths per 1000 live births**, a 3.61% decline from 2020. The SDG 3 aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. It includes reduction in Infant Mortality Rate as well.

**MMR:** MMR is defined as the number of maternal deaths during a given time period per 1,00,000 live births during the same time period. The target 3.1 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations aims at reducing the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 1,00,000 live births. MMR has declined to 113 in 2016-18 from 122 in 2015-17 and 130 in 2014-2016.

**Index of Industrial Production:** IIP is an indicator that measures the changes in the volume of production of industrial products during a given period. It is compiled and published monthly by the National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. Base Year for IIP is 2011-2012. These comprise 40.27% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). The eight core sector industries in decreasing order of their weightage: Refinery Products> Electricity> Steel> Coal> Crude Oil> Natural Gas> Cement> Fertilizers.

**Habeas Corpus:** The Indian Constitution empowers the Supreme Court to issue writs for enforcement of any of the fundamental rights conferred by Part III of Indian Constitution under Article 32. Thus the power to issue writs is primarily a provision made to make available the Right to Constitutional Remedies to every citizen. Habeas Corpus literally means "you may have the body." The writ is issued to produce a person who has been detained, whether in prison or in private custody, before a court and to release him if such detention is found illegal.

**CECA:** Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement generally covers negotiation on trade tariff and TRQ (Tariff Rate Quotas) rates only. It is not as comprehensive as CEPA. India has signed CECA with Malaysia.

**Poshan Abhiyan:** POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) was launched by the government on March 8, 2018. The Abhiyaan targets to reduce stunting, undernutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively. The target of the mission is to bring down stunting among children in the age group 0-6 years from 38.4% to 25% by 2022. POSHAN Abhiyaan aims to ensure service delivery and interventions by use of technology, behavioural change through convergence and lays-down specific targets to be achieved across different monitoring parameters.

### 14.02.21

**IPO:** An initial public offering (IPO) refers to the process of offering shares of a private corporation to the public in a new stock issuance. An IPO allows a company to raise capital from public investors. The transition from a private to a public company can be an important time for private investors to fully realize gains from their investment as it typically includes a share premium for current private investors. Meanwhile, it also allows public investors to participate in the offering.

**PM KUSUM:** Prime Minister's Kisan Urja Suraksha Evam Utthan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM) scheme, was launched by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) to support installation of off-grid solar pumps in rural areas and reduce dependence on grid, in grid-connected areas. PM-KUSUM consists of three components and aims to add a solar capacity of 30.8 GW by 2022:

- Component-A: 10,000 MW of decentralised ground-mounted grid-connected renewable power plants.
- Component-B: Installation of two million standalone solar-powered agriculture pumps.
- Component-C: Solarisation of 1.5 million grid-connected solar-powered agriculture pumps.

**LiDAR:** It is a remote sensing method that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure ranges & variable distances. These light pulses—combined with other data recorded by the airborne system— generate precise, three-dimensional information about the shape of the Earth and its surface characteristics. LiDAR follows a simple principle — throw laser light at an object on the earth surface and calculate the time it takes to return to the LiDAR source.

**JAM trinity:** JAM stands for Jan Dhan Yojana, Aadhaar and Mobile number. The government intends to use these three modes of identification to implement one of the biggest reforms in independent India – direct subsidy transfers to the poor. With Aadhaar helping in direct biometric identification of disadvantaged citizens and Jan Dhan bank accounts and mobile phones allowing direct transfers of funds into their accounts, it may be possible to cut out all the intermediaries.

**McMohan Line:**



**15.02.21**

**54<sup>th</sup> flight of PSLV:**

THE HINDU

**First launch of 2022**

On Monday, Earth Observation Satellite EOS-04 and two small satellites – INSPIRESat-1 and INS-2TD – were placed in the orbit by the PSLV-C52 rocket. A detailed look at the payload

**DETAILS OF THE LAUNCH**

- 1 Monday's was the 54th flight of PSLV and 23rd mission using PSLV-XL configuration with six PSOM-XLs (strap-on motors)
- 2 After a flight of about 18 minutes, the vehicle injected the satellites into their intended orbit
- 3 Primary satellite EOS-04 was put into the intended sun synchronous polar orbit of 529 km altitude at 6:17 a.m.

**EOS-04** Weight: 1,710 kg  
Mission life: 10 years

Use: Radar Imaging Satellite is designed to provide high quality images under all weather conditions for applications such as agriculture, forestry and plantations, soil moisture and hydrology and flood mapping

**INSPIRESat-1** Weight: 8.1 kg  
Mission life: 1 year

Use: Two payloads in the satellite are aimed at improving the understanding of ionosphere dynamics and the sun's coronal heating processes

- The satellite is built by Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology in association with Laboratory of Atmospheric and Space Physics at University of Colorado Boulder, NTU, Singapore and NCU, Taiwan

**INS-2TD** Weight: 17.5 kg  
Mission life: 6 months

Use: Having a thermal imaging camera as its payload, the satellite benefits the assessment of land surface temperature, water surface temperature of wetland or lakes, delineation of vegetation (crops and forest) and thermal inertia (day and night)

- This is a technology demonstrator satellite from ISRO, a precursor to the India-Bhutan Joint Satellite (INS-2B)

SOURCE: AP. IMAGES: ISRO

**Flying start:** ISRO's workhorse launch vehicle, PSLV, blasting off from the launchpad at Sriharikota at 5:59 a.m. on Monday

**Inflation Targeting:** It is a central banking policy that revolves around adjusting monetary policy to achieve a specified annual rate of inflation. The principle of inflation targeting is based on the belief that long-term economic growth is best achieved by maintaining price stability, and price stability is achieved by controlling inflation. The Central Government has notified 4 per cent Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation as the target for the period from August 5, 2016, to March 31, 2021, with the upper tolerance limit of 6 per cent and the lower tolerance limit of 2 per cent.

**Guru Ravidas:** was a 14th century saint and reformer of the Bhakti movement in North India. It is believed that he was born in Varanasi in a cobbler's family. He gained prominence due to his belief in one God and his unbiased religious poems. He dedicated his whole life to the abolition of the caste system and openly despised the notion of a Brahminical society. His devotional songs made an instant impact on the Bhakti Movement and around 41 of his poems were included in 'Guru Granth Sahib', the religious text of the Sikhs.

### 16.02.21

**Demand Pull inflation:** is mainly due to increase in Aggregate demand. The increase in Aggregate demand mainly comes from either increase in Government Expenditure (Expansionary Fiscal Policy) or by an increase in expenditure from Households and Firms. The root cause of demand-pull inflations is-  $\text{Aggregate demand} > \text{Aggregate Supply}$ . This simply means that the firms in the economy are not capable of producing the goods and services demanded by the households in the present time period. The shortages of goods and services due to increase in demand fuels inflation.

**INSACOG:** the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics is a consortium of 10 labs and 18 satellite labs across India tasked with scanning COVID samples from patients and finding the variants that has led to spike in transmission. The institutes involved include the laboratories of the Department of Biotechnology, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Indian Council of Medical Research, and the Health Ministry. The Foreign Secretary conveyed that India will take its experience in testing, treating and vaccinating a large population spread out in different geographies and terrains to create customized and tailor-made capacity building and technical training programmes for front-line and healthcare workers in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This will complement the Quad Vaccine Partnership.

**Probiotics:** are foods that are made up of good live bacteria or yeasts that naturally stay in the human body. Human body is a host to good and bad bacteria. Whenever one gets an infection, there is more bacteria that is bad. Probiotic supplements add good bacteria to the human body. Probiotics are part of a larger picture concerning bacteria and your body which is called your microbiome.

**Dear Money Policy:** is a policy when money become more expensive with the rise of interest rate. Due to this, the supply of money also decreases in the economy, therefore it is also referred to as the contractionary monetary policy.

**Modified Elephant:** a hacking group that allegedly planted incriminating evidence on the personal devices of Indian journalists, human rights activists, human rights defenders, academics and lawyers. Modified Elephant operators have been infecting their targets using spear phishing emails with malicious file attachments over the last decade, with their techniques getting more sophisticated over time.

### 17.02.21

**Crimson Rose Butterfly:** belongs to the Swallowtails (Papilionidae) family, a large butterfly with a mix of black, white and crimson colours on its wings and body, is known for crossing the sea to migrate to Sri Lanka. The butterflies have been flying from Dhanushkodi across the Indian Ocean over the last few days, fuel-stopping at the beach for nectar.

**Green Hydrogen:** is produced by electrolysis of water using renewable energy (like Solar, Wind) and has a lower carbon footprint. Electricity splits water into hydrogen and oxygen. By Products : Water, Water Vapor. The government will announce the first part of a green hydrogen policy this week, under which green hydrogen producers will be granted free power transmission for renewable energy projects set up before 2025.

**National Maritime Security Coordinator:** The maritime security coordinator will work under the NSA and will be the principal adviser to the government on the maritime security domain. It aims to create an interface between the civilian and military maritime domains to enhance India's security architecture and energy security. Vice Admiral G Ashok Kumar has been appointed as the country's first NMSC.

**Renewable Purchase Obligation:** is the requirement mandated by Central/State Regulatory Commission and is relevant to Distribution Licensee: power distribution companies (DISCOMs); Open Access Consumer: ones acquiring power from power exchanges (IEX/PXIL), from traders, via bilateral agreements and so on.

**Purchasing Manager's Index:** is an economic indicator derived from the monthly survey of the private sector companies. PMI aims in providing information regarding the current and future conditions of a business to the decision-makers, analysts and investors of the company.

**DefExpo:** is a flagship biennial event of the Ministry of Defence, showcasing the land, naval, air as well as homeland security systems. The aim of the DefExpo 2022 is to build upon the vision to achieve 'Atmanirbharta' in defence and reach the \$5bn defence exports target by 2024.

### 18.02.21

**CEEW:** Council on Energy, Environment and Water is an independent, non-partisan, one of Asia's leading not-for-profit policy research institutions, devoted to research on all matters affecting the use, reuse, and misuse of resources.

**GAFTA:** Under the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) Agreement, the UAE has free trade access to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Palestine, Syria, Libya, and Yemen. This FTA with the UAE will pave the way for India to enter the UAE's strategic location, and have relatively easy access to the Africa market and its various trade partners which can help India to become a part of that supply chain especially in handlooms, handicrafts, textiles and pharma.

**GCC:** Gulf Cooperation Council was established by an agreement concluded in 1981 among Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE in view of their special relations, geographic proximity, similar political systems based on Islamic beliefs, joint destiny and common objectives. It is a political, economic, social, and regional organisation according to its charter.

**Non-Tariff Barriers:** is a way to restrict trade using trade barriers in a form other than a tariff. Nontariff barriers include quotas, embargoes, sanctions, levies and other restrictions. NTB issues are not resolved in most FTAs.

**Ammonia policy:** or the green hydrogen policy, which will help in meeting the target of production of 5 million tonnes of Green hydrogen by 2030 and the related development of renewable energy capacity. Hydrogen and Ammonia are envisaged to be the future fuels to replace fossil fuels. Production of these fuels by using power from renewable energy, termed as green hydrogen and green ammonia, is one of the major requirements towards environmentally sustainable energy security of the nation.

### 19.02.21

**Collegium System:** It is the system of appointment and transfer of judges that has evolved through judgments of the SC, and not by an Act of Parliament or by a provision of the Constitution. The SC collegium is headed by the CJI and comprises four other senior most judges of the court. A HC collegium is led by its Chief Justice and four other senior most judges of that court. Names recommended for appointment by a HC collegium reaches the government only after approval by the CJI and the SC collegium.

**Chakmas and Hajongs:** were originally residents of Chittagong Hill Tracts in the erstwhile East Pakistan. They left their homeland when it was submerged by the Kaptai dam project in the 1960s. The Chakmas, who are Buddhists, and the Hajongs, who are Hindus, also allegedly faced religious persecution and entered India through the then Lushai Hills district of Assam (now Mizoram). The Centre moved the majority of them to the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), which is now Arunachal Pradesh. Their numbers have gone up from about 5,000 in 1964-69 to one lakh. At present, they don't have citizenship and land rights but are provided basic amenities by the state government.

**Asylum law:** Though India has not signed the United Nations Refugee Convention, 1951, Justice Kumar said the refugees and asylum seekers were entitled to the rights in Articles 14, 20 and 21 of the Constitution. The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention or the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951, is a United Nations multilateral treaty that defines who a refugee is, and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum. The Convention also sets out which people do not qualify as refugees, such as war criminals.

**Bent-toed gecko:** A team of herpetologists have recorded a new species of bent-toed gecko from a wooded part of the Umroi Military Station in Meghalaya. Its scientific name is *Cryptodactylus exercitus* and English name is Indian Army's bent-toed gecko. *Exercitus* in Latin means army. The name was given to honour the Army for its services to the country. The military station where the bent-toed gecko was discovered was also a factor behind its name.

**Great Backyard bird count:** The GBBC is a global event entailing backyard bird count and is being held for four days across the world from February 18 to 21 and the data uploaded will be harnessed for conservation. It is being coordinated in India by e-bird India and Birdcount-India. It is being held at Kukkarahalli Lake, Hebbala Lake, Karanji Lake, Muganahundi Lake, Lingambudhi lake and Thippaiyana Kere. The exercise helps to provide a "snap shot" of the bird population and throws light on the ecosystem supporting it.

## 21.02.21

**One Health Approach:** 'One Health' vision derives its blueprint from the agreement between the tripartite-plus alliance comprising the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). The overarching purpose is to encourage collaborations in research and sharing of knowledge at multiple levels across various disciplines like human health, animal health, plants, soil, environmental and ecosystem health in ways that improve, protect and defend the health of all species.

**International Mother Language Day:** It is celebrated on 21 February to spread awareness of linguistic, cultural diversity, and to promote multilingualism. It is celebrated due to the initiative of Bangladesh. This year's theme is "Using technology for multilingual learning: Challenges and opportunities" (by UNESCO).

**Colistin:** is an antibiotic for therapeutic purpose in veterinary. But the drug is highly misused in poultry industry as a growth promoter for prophylactic purpose. Also, colistin is a valuable, last-resort antibiotic that saves lives in critical care units but in recent years, there have been patients who have exhibited resistance to the drug. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has put a ban prohibiting the manufacture, sale and distribution of Colistin and its formulations for food-producing animals, poultry, aqua farming and animal feed supplements.

**National Livestock Mission:** launched in financial year 2014-15 seeks to ensure quantitative and qualitative improvement in livestock production systems and capacity building of all stakeholders. The scheme is being implemented as a sub scheme of White Revolution – Rashtriya Pashudhan Vikas Yojana since April 2019. The mission encompasses all the Indian states.

**Agriculture Infrastructure Fund:** It was launched in 2020 as a part of the Rs. 20 lakh crore stimulus package announced in response to the Covid-19 crisis. Aim: To provide medium-long term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management Infrastructure and community farming assets. The funds will be provided for setting up of cold stores and chains, warehousing, grading and packaging units, e-marketing points linked to e-trading platforms, besides PPP (Public Private Partnership) projects for crop aggregation sponsored by central/state/local bodies.

**Winter bird monitoring programme:** The Winter Bird Monitoring Programme for 2021-22 has recorded the presence of 203 bird species, including 53 non-resident species, in the districts of Mysuru, Mandya, and Chamarajanagar. The teams have collected data from 147 locations spread across Mysuru-Mandya-Chamarajanagar belt between January 14 and February 13.

## 22.02.21

**MINSK I:** Ukraine and the Russian-backed separatists agreed a 12-point ceasefire deal in the Belarusian capital in September 2014. Its provisions included prisoner exchanges, deliveries of humanitarian aid and the withdrawal of heavy weapons, five months into a conflict that had by then killed more than 2,600 people – a toll that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy says has since risen to around 15,000. The agreement quickly broke down, with violations by both sides.

**MINSK II:** Representatives of Russia, Ukraine, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the leaders of two pro-Russian separatist regions signed a 13-point agreement in February 2015. The leaders of France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine, gathered in Minsk at the same time, issued a declaration of support for the deal.

**UNCLOS:** The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982 is an international agreement that establishes the legal framework for marine and maritime activities. It is also known as Law of the Sea. It divides marine areas into five main zones namely- Internal Waters, Territorial Sea, Contiguous Zone, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the High Seas. It is the only international convention which stipulates a framework for state jurisdiction in maritime spaces. It provides a different legal status to different maritime zones. It provides the backbone for offshore governance by coastal states and those navigating the oceans.

**Security Contracts (Regulation) Act:** was passed in 1956 by Parliament and it came into force in February 1957. An act to prevent undesirable transactions in securities by regulating the business of dealing therein, by providing for certain other matters connected therewith. This Act may be called the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956. It extends to the whole of India.

**GOBAR DHAN:** The ministry of Jal Shakti has launched the GOBAR (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources) - DHAN scheme. The scheme is being implemented as part of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin). Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday inaugurated the "Gobar-Dhan (Bio-CNG) Plant" in Madhya Pradesh's Indore. The plant is in line with PM Modi's vision of creating "garbage-free cities" under the Swachh Bharat Mission Urban 2.0, according to the Prime Minister's Office. The Mission is being implemented under the overarching principles of "waste to wealth" and "circular economy" for maximizing resource recovery – both of which are exemplified in the Indore Bio-CNG plant.

**Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope:** located near Pune is an array of thirty fully steerable parabolic radio telescopes of 45-metre diameter, observing at metre wavelengths. It is operated by the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA), a part of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai. NCRA used GMRT to map distribution of atomic hydrogen gas from the galaxy

hosting a fast radio burst (FRB) for the first time. FRBs are extremely bright radio pulses from distant galaxies that last for only a few milliseconds.

### 23.02.21

**National Overseas Scholarship:** In order to facilitate those students who, have low family income, the Government of India has launched a National Overseas scholarship. Through this scholarship scheme students belonging to scheduled caste, denotified Nomadic, and semi-Nomadic tribes, landless agricultural labourers and traditional artisans category will get financial assistance for their higher education. Through this scheme, financial assistance will be provided to the selected candidate for pursuing the masters-level course and Ph.D. abroad in the accredited institution or university. The revised guidelines for the scheme uploaded on its website by the ministry of social justice and empowerment on Thursday has introduced the following clause: "Topics /courses concerning Indian Culture/ Heritage/ History/ Social Studies on India based research topic shall not be covered under NOS. The final decision as to which Topic can be covered under such category will rest with Selection-cum-Screening Committee of NOS."

**e-NAM:** e – National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) is a pan-India electronic trading portal that nets the prevailing Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMC) Mandis for making a united national market for agricultural commodities. The e-NAM project would operate via the online portal that is linked to the states' Mandis (Wholesale markets). All the participating states will be providing the software (Website and Mobile Application) for e-NAM at no cost.

**Lokpal:** is headed by the incumbent Chief Justice of India or a retired judge. It has eight members, four of whom are judicial members. It has an inquiry wing and a prosecution wing to deal with investigation and prosecution, respectively. The director of prosecution files the case in the special court based on the findings of the Lokpal. The Lokpal has jurisdiction to inquire into allegations of corruption against the Prime Minister, Ministers, Members of Parliament, Group A, B, C and D officers and officials of the central government.

**Compulsory Licensing:** allows governments to license third parties (that is, parties other than the patent holders) to produce and market a patented product or process without the consent of patent owners. Any time after three years from date of sealing of a patent, application for compulsory license can be made, provided: Reasonable requirements of public have not been satisfied; Patented invention is not available to public at a reasonably affordable price; Patented inventions are not carried out in India. Compulsory Licensing is regulated under the Indian Patent Act, 1970.

**Consumer Food Price Index:** is a measure of change in retail prices of food items consumed by the population. Under the CSO's CFPI, the index gives food price level changes for rural, urban and all India basis. The base year used in CFPI is 2012 as in the case of CPI.

**TRIPS:** Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Right establishes minimum standards for the availability, scope, and use of seven forms of intellectual property namely, trademarks, copyrights, geographical indications, patents, industrial designs, layout designs for integrated circuits, and undisclosed information or trade secrets. It applies basic international trade principles regarding intellectual property to member states. It is applicable to all WTO members. TRIPS Agreement lays down the permissible exceptions and limitations for balancing the interests of intellectual property with the interests of public health and economic development.

### 24.02.21

**PMLA:** Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2002 was enacted in response to India's global commitment (including the Vienna Convention) to combat the menace of money laundering. Instead, rights have been "cribbed, cabined and confined". PMLA was a comprehensive penal statute to counter the threat of money laundering, specifically stemming from trade in narcotics.

**ECIR:** Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) - an equivalent of the FIR - is considered an "internal document" and not given to the accused. The ED treats itself as an exception to these principles and practises [of criminal procedure law] and chooses to register an ECIR on its own whims and fancies on its own file.

**CBDC:** central bank digital currency is a legal tender issued by a central bank in a digital form. It is similar to a fiat currency issued in paper and is interchangeable with any other fiat currency.

**TAPI pipeline:** TAPI Pipeline, also called Peace pipeline, is a 1,814km natural gas pipeline that originates from Turkmenistan and passes through Afghanistan and Pakistan to reach India. It aims to monetise Turkmenistan's gas reserves and supply them to neighbouring countries to promote the use of natural gas and improve energy security.

**FPO:** Farmers Producer Organisation (FPO) are voluntary organizations controlled by their farmer-members who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. They are open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination. FPOs operatives provide

education and training for their farmer-members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so that they can contribute effectively to the development of their FPOs.

### 25.02.21

**Green jobs:** are decent jobs that contribute to preserve or restore the environment, be they in traditional sectors such as manufacturing and construction, or in new, emerging green sectors such as renewable energy and energy efficiency. At the enterprise level, green jobs can produce goods or provide services that benefit the environment, for example green buildings or clean transportation.

**NATO:** North Atlantic Treaty Organisation It is a military alliance established by the North Atlantic Treaty (also called the Washington Treaty) of April, 1949, by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet Union. A key provision of the treaty, the so-called Article 5, states that if one member of the alliance is attacked in Europe or North America, it is to be considered an attack on all members. That effectively put Western Europe under the "nuclear umbrella" of the US. As of 2019, there are 29 member states, with Montenegro becoming the latest member to join the alliance in 2017.

**Additive manufacturing:** or additive layer manufacturing (ALM) is the industrial production name for 3D printing, a computer controlled process that creates three dimensional objects by depositing materials, usually in layers. Using computer aided design (CAD) or 3D object scanners, additive manufacturing allows for the creation of objects with precise geometric shapes. These are built layer by layer, as with a 3D printing process, which is in contrast to traditional manufacturing that often requires machining or other techniques to remove surplus material.

**Notice to Air Missions:** or Notice to Airmen are notices distributed by means of telecommunication containing information concerning the establishment, condition or change in any aeronautical facility, service, procedure or hazard, the timely knowledge of which is essential to personnel concerned with flight operations.

**The Deep Ocean Mission:** The mission has been laid on similar terms as the ISRO performs space research. However, India's Deep Ocean Mission will solely focus on studying and exploring the deepwater bodies in our country for undiscovered minerals, stones, living or non-living entities. Both, man force and robotic machines will be used for the missionTasks like deep-sea mining, energy exploration, survey of the objects found, and off-shore desalination will be taken up rigorously.

### 26.02.21

**SWIFT network:** is a network used by banks to send secure messages about transfers of money and other transactions. More than 11,000 financial institutions in nearly 200 countries use SWIFT, making it the backbone of the international financial transfer system. SWIFT is a cooperative company under Belgian law. The system is overseen by the G10 central banks, as well as the European Central Bank, with its lead overseer being the National Bank of Belgium.

**CIS countries:** The Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991 leading to the foundation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The founding states of the CIS include Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. The remaining republics of the Soviet Union joined the Commonwealth of Independent States after signing the Alma-Ata Protocol. Now, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) has the following countries as its members: Russia, Belarus & Ukraine, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan.

**Milan exercise 2022:** MILAN is a biennial multilateral naval exercise incepted by Indian Navy. MILAN 22 will witness its largest ever participation, with more than 40 countries sending their warships/ high level delegations. This edition of MILAN would be larger in 'scope and complexity' with focus on exercises at sea including exercises in surface, sub-surface and air domains and weapon firings. Operational Conferences and Seminars are also being conducted, providing participating navies/ delegations an opportunity to express their views on maritime security. The high profile foreign delegates will comprise highest level naval leadership, agency heads, Ambassadors and equivalent.

**Quantum key distribution:** is primarily a mechanism to undertake secure communication, which utilises a cryptographic protocol involving various components of quantum mechanics. The technology enables two communicating sides to come up with random secret keys shared by both of them and known exclusively to them, so only they can use it to encrypt and decrypt messages, thus achieving a very highly-secure communication.

**Vicarious liability:** is a situation in which one party is held partly responsible for the unlawful actions of a third party. The third party also carries their own share of the liability. Vicarious liability can arise in situations where one party is supposed to be responsible for (and have control over) a third party and is negligent in carrying out that responsibility and exercising that control. Such a liability arises usually because of some or the other legal relationship between the two. This often occurs in the context of

civil law—for example, in employment cases. In a criminal context, vicarious liability assigns guilt, or criminal liability, to a person for wrongful acts committed by someone else.

### 28.02.21

**The Uniting for Peace resolution:** was initiated by the United States and submitted by the "Joint Seven-Powers" in October 1950, as a means of circumventing further Soviet vetoes during the course of the Korean War. It was adopted by 52 votes to 5, with 2 abstentions. It has empowered the General Assembly to act in specific situations in matters of peace and security.

**SWIFT:** The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) provides a network that enables financial institutions worldwide to send and receive information about financial transactions in a secure, standardized and reliable environment. SWIFT neither holds funds on its own nor manages external client accounts.

**Dry root rot (DRR):** disease is an emerging biotic stress threat to chickpea cultivation around the world. It is caused by a soil-borne fungal pathogen, *Rhizoctonia bataticola*. DRR occurs mostly in rainfed chickpea cultivation areas, where soil moisture recedes as crop growth advances. Drought stress is known to predispose chickpea plants to DRR disease.

**The 'Sustainable Cities India':** intends to enable cities to decarbonise in a systematic and sustainable way that will reduce emissions and deliver resilient and equitable urban ecosystems. This initiative is in synergy with India's commitment to turn net zero by 2070 as a climate mitigation response at COP26.

**Angadias:** The Angadia system is a century-old parallel banking system in the country where traders send cash generally from one state to another through a person called Angadia that stands for courier.

**UNSC:** The United Nations Security Council was established by the UN Charter in 1945. It is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations. The other 5 organs of the United Nations are—the General Assembly (UNGA), the Trusteeship Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat. Each member of the Security Council has one vote. Decisions of the Security Council on matters are made by an affirmative vote of nine members including the concurring votes of the permanent members. A "No" vote from one of the five permanent members blocks the passage of the resolution. Any member of the United Nations which is not a member of the Security Council may participate, without vote, in the discussion of any question brought before the Security Council whenever the latter considers that the interests of that member are specially affected.