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GENERAL STUDIES PAPER - II

UDISE+ 2019-20

Why in News

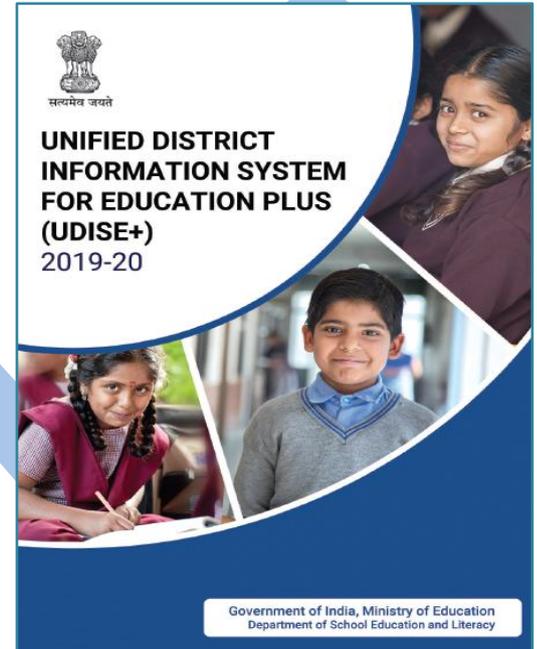
- Union Education Minister, Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' has recently released the Report on United Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) 2019-20 for School Education in India.

Background

- The UDISE+ system of online data collection from the schools was developed in the year 2018-19 to overcome the issues related to manual data filling in paper format and subsequent feeding at the block or district level, which was in practice in the UDISE data collection system from 2012-13.
 - The present publication relates to UDISE+ data for the reference year 2019-20.

Highlights

- As per the UDISE+ report 2019-20, Gross Enrolment Ratio at all levels of school education has improved in 2019-20 compared to 2018-19.
- **Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR)** has improved at all levels of school education.
- Enrolment of girls from primary to higher secondary is more than 12.08 crore.
 - This is a substantial increase by 14.08 lakh compared to 2018-19.
- Between 2012-13 and 2019-20, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) at both Secondary and Higher Secondary levels have improved.
- The UDISE+ report shows a remarkable improvement in the number of schools with functional electricity, with functional computers, internet facility in 2019-20 over the previous year.
 - More than 80% schools in India in 2019-20 had functional electricity. This is an improvement by more than 6% over the previous year 2018-19.
 - Number of schools having functional computers increased to 5.2 lakh in 2019-20 from 4.7 lakh in 2018-19.
 - Number of schools having internet facility increased to 3.36 lakh in 2019-20 from 2.9 lakh in 2018-19.
 - More than 82% schools conducted medical check-up of students in 2019-20, an increase by more than 4% compared to previous year 2018-19.
 - More than 84% schools in India had a library/reading room/ reading corner in 2019-20, an improvement of nearly 4% compared to the previous year.
- Another major improvement is seen in the number of schools with *hand wash facility*.
 - In year 2019-20, more than 90% schools in India had hand wash facility as compared to only 36.3% in 2012-13.



Gender Parity Index (GPI) of GER shows whether the representation of females in school education is in line with corresponding age group.

- GPI value 1 or more shows that the GPI is favorable to the girls, while GPI of less than 1 shows relative under representation of girls in that specific level of school education.

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) compares the enrolment in a specific level of education to the population of the age group which is age-appropriate for that level of education.

- For example, the GER of primary is student enrolment in class 1 to 5 expressed as a percentage of population in age group 6-10 years. Similarly, GER of upper primary is enrolment in class 6-8 expressed as a percentage of population in age group 11-13 years, and so on.

Stock Limits and Movement Restrictions on Specified Foodstuffs (Amendment) Order, 2021

Why in NEWS

- In a consistent effort to *crackdown on prices of essential commodities* like pulses, Government of India has issued a landmark order where it has imposed stock limits on pulses applicable to wholesales, retailers, millers and importers.
- The Removal of Licensing Requirements, Stock Limits and Movement Restrictions on Specified Foodstuffs (Amendment) Order, 2021 has been issued with immediate effect from today i.e. 2nd July 2021.

Brief Description

- Under this order, stock limits have been prescribed for all pulses except Moong until 31st October 2021 for all States/UTs.
 - Stock limit will be 200 MT (provided there should not be more than 100 MT of one variety) for wholesalers, 5 MT for retailers and it will be the last 3 months of production or 25% of annual installed capacity, whichever is higher, for the millers.
 - For importers, the stock limit will be the same as that of wholesaler for stocks held/imported prior to 15th May 2021 and for stocks imported after 15th May 2021, stock limit applicable on wholesalers will apply after 45 days from date of customs clearance.
- It has also been stated that if the stocks of entities exceed the prescribed limits, they have to be declared on the online portal (fcainfoweb.nic.in) of Department of Consumer Affairs and have to be brought within the prescribed limit within 30 days of the notification of this order.

Background

- As a result of a series of consistent actions taken by the Government of India, a declining trend in the prices of pulses and edible oils is being witnessed.
 - Additionally, in the past 6 years, the highest ever total production of major pulses amounting to 255.8 LMT took place in 2020-21 with Gram (126.1 LMT) and Moong Dal (26.4 LMT) particularly breaking all of their past records of production.
- Since the entire country has been reeling under the impact of the pandemic, the Government has been committed to adopting timely measures and has substantially alleviated the concerns and anguish of the common man.
- In March-April, there was a sustained increase in the price of pulses. The need for an urgent policy decision was felt to send the right signal to the market.
 - For the first time ever, a mechanism has been adopted to declare the real time stock of pulses all over the country, for keeping a check on the undesirable practice of hoarding, which leads in turn to artificial scarcity and price escalation.
 - States/UTs were requested by the government on 14th May 2021 to register and declare the pulses stocks of Millers, importers, dealers and stockists under the EC Act, 1955.

Government Initiative

- A mechanism for retail intervention was introduced in 2020-21 to enhance the immediate impact of released pulses from the buffer to cool down retail prices.
 - Moong, Urad and Tur Dal were offered to the States/UTs for supply through retail outlets such as FPS, Consumer Cooperative Society outlets etc.
 - Costs related to milling/processing, transportation, packaging & service charge of NAFED were borne by the Department itself.
 - Additionally, during October, 2020 and January, 2021, 2 LMT of Tur Dal was disposed of through Open Market Sales to control the prices.
 - Furthermore, pulses have also been supplied for welfare and nutrition programmes at MSP for Tur and at 5% discount on MSP in case of Chana.
- The Government of India has formulated a multi-pronged strategy to ensure that the prices of essential commodities like pulses remain controlled. As a part of the Price Monitoring Scheme under which the central government assists the state/UT governments in setting up price monitoring centres, there has been a 50% increase (57 centres in 2014 to 114 centres in 2020) in the number of such price monitoring centres. Incidentally,

within the first three months of 2021 itself, 22 more centres have been added. This step will ensure that the reporting of data on prices from all across the country becomes more representative.

- As a part of a large-scale digitisation effort, with a commitment to improve the quality of price data, a mobile app was launched by the government on 1st January 2021 to report on prices on a daily basis from the price monitoring centres while showing an actual market location and a dashboard has been developed to generate analysis of price trends and projections.
 - Also, the services of a marketing agency are being utilised to assess the ground level situation.
- A revised import policy for *Refined Bleached Deodorized (RBD) Palm Oil* and *RBD Palmolein* has been put in place from 30th June 2021 under which they have been removed from restricted to free category.
 - To further support streamlined and smooth processes at the ports, particularly to speed up clearances delayed due to COVID-19, Standard Operating Procedure for faster clearance of consignments of imports of pulses and edible oils have been prepared.

Conclusion

- Despite the disruption of the supply chain and other economic consequences due to the pandemic, the government has proactively taken all possible steps to ensure easy access and uninterrupted supply of essential commodities to all of its citizens across the nation. It will continue to work in mission-mode to cater to the needs of its people and take its vision of 'Self-reliant India' forward by not only focusing on building its domestic capability but by aligning its policies like the National Oilseeds Mission with foreign trade.

NIPUN Bharat Programme

Why in News

- Union Minister for Education, Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' has recently launched a *National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat)*, for ensuring that every child in the country necessarily attains foundational literacy and numeracy by the end of Grade 3, by 2026-27.
- On this occasion, a short video, anthem and NIPUN Bharat Guidelines were also launched.

About NIPUN Bharat Programme

- This Mission, which has been launched under the aegis of the centrally sponsored scheme of *Samagra Shiksha*, will focus on:
 - a. Providing access and retaining children in foundational years of schooling.
 - b. Teacher capacity building
 - c. Development of high quality and diversified Student and Teacher Resources/Learning Materials.
 - d. Tracking the progress of each child in achieving learning outcomes.
- It covers key technical aspects of foundational literacy and numeracy as well as the administrative aspects for effectively setting up an implementation mechanism at the National, State, District, Block and School level.
- **An approval of Rs 2688.18 crore has already been given under Samagra Shiksha scheme to the States and UTs for implementation of the various interventions for Foundational Stage in 2021-22.**

Background

- National Education Policy 2020 has laid down that attaining foundational literacy and numeracy for all children must become an immediate national mission.
- In keeping with this, the Department has developed a comprehensive guideline under NIPUN Bharat, through a series of intensive consultations with implementing partners, experts to make it flexible and collaborative.
- The unique feature is that the goals of the Mission are set in the form of Lakshya Soochi or Targets for Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.
 - Although, the overall aim is to achieve the desired learning outcomes by the end of grade 3, however, in order to generate greater awareness among the parents, community, volunteers etc. the Lakshyashas been developed from Balvatika to Grade 3.
 - The Laskhyas are based on the learning outcomes developed by the NCERT and international research and ORF studies.
 - For example, a child should be able to read 45to 60 words per minute and atleast 60 words per minute correctly by the end of Grade II and III respectively from an age appropriate unknown text with comprehension and clarity.

- The success of NIPUN Bharat will primarily depend on teachers, so, there will be a special emphasis on capacity building of teachers.
 - A special package for foundational literacy and Numeracy under NISHTHA is being developed by NCERT and around 25 lakh teachers teaching at pre-primary to primary grade will be trained this year on FLN.

Conclusion

- NIPUN Bharat is envisaged to support and encourage students, along with their schools, teachers, parents, and communities, in every way possible, to help realise the true potential of our children and propel the country to new heights.
- Quality education is the bedrock of strong Nation building and, foundational education in literacy and numeracy skills is its core component.
- NIPUN Bharat will not only help our students to take a big leap in their higher classes, but it will also have a major impact in making our students globally competitive.

Post Devolution Revenue Deficit (PDRD) Grant

Why in News

- The Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, has recently released the 4th monthly installment of *Post Devolution Revenue Deficit (PDRD) Grant* of Rs. 9,871.00 crore to the States.
- With the release of this installment, a total amount of Rs. 39,484.00 crore has been released to eligible States as Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant in the current financial year.

Background

- The Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant is provided to the States under *Article 275 of the Constitution*.
- The grants are released as per the recommendations of the **Fifteenth Finance Commission** in monthly installments to meet the gap in Revenue Accounts of the States post devolution.
 - The Commission has recommended PDRD grants to 17 States during 2021-22.

Recommendation of 15th Finance Commission

- The eligibility of States to receive this grant and the quantum of grant was decided by the Commission based on the gap between assessment of revenue and expenditure of the State after taking into account the assessed devolution for the financial year 2021-22.
- The Fifteenth Finance Commission has recommended a total Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant of **Rs. 1,18,452 crore** to 17 States in the financial year 2021-22.
 - Out of this, an amount of Rs. 39,484 crore (33.33%) has been released so far in 4 installments.
- The States recommended for PDRD Grant by the Fifteenth Finance Commission are: Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

Article 275

- a. Such sums shall be charged on the Consolidated Fund of India in each year as grants in aid.



Agriculture Infrastructure Fund

Why in News

- The Union Cabinet gave its approval to the following modifications in Central Sector Scheme of Financing Facility under Agriculture Infrastructure Fund'

Details

- Eligibility has now been extended to State Agencies/APMCs, National & State Federations of Cooperatives, Federations of *Farmers Producers Organizations (FPOs)* and *Federations of Self Help Groups (SHGs)*.
- At present Interest subvention for a loan upto Rs. 2 crore in one location is eligible under the scheme.
 - In case, one eligible entity puts up projects in different locations then all such projects will be now be eligible for interest subvention for loan upto Rs. 2 crore.
 - However, for a private sector entity there will be a limit of a maximum of 25 such projects.
 - This limitation of 25 projects will not be applicable to state agencies, national and state federations of cooperatives, federations of FPOs and federation of SHGs.
- Location will mean physical boundary of a village or town having a distinct *LGD (Local Government Directory)* code. Each of such projects should be in a location having a separate LGD code.
- For APMCs, interest subvention for a loan upto Rs. 2 crore will be provided for each project of different infrastructure types e.g. cold storage, sorting, grading and assaying units, silos, et within the same market yard.
- The power has been delegated to Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare to make necessary changes with regard to addition or deletion of beneficiary in such a manner so that basic spirit of the scheme is not altere
- The period of financial facility has been extended from 4 to 6 years upto 2025-26 and overall period of the scheme has been extended from 10 to 13 upto 2032-33.

Conclusion

- The modifications in the Scheme will help to achieve a multiplier effect in generating investments while ensuring that the benefits reach small and marginal farmers.
- APMC markets are setup to provide market linkages and create an ecosystem of post-harvest public infrastructure open to all farmers.

Sub-categorization within Other Backward Classes

Why in News

- The Union Cabinet has approved the Eleventh Extension of the term of the Commission constituted under *Article 340* of the Constitution to examine the issue of Sub-categorization within Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the Central List by 6 months beyond 31st July 2021 and upto 31st January 2022.

Background

- The Commission was constituted under article 340 of the Constitution with the approval of President on 2nd October, 2017.
- The Commission, headed by Justice (Retd.) Smt. G. Rohini commenced functioning on 11th October, 2017 and has since interacted with all the States/UTs which have subcategorized OBCs, and the State Backward Classes Commissions.
- The Commission has come to the view that it would require some more time to submit its report since the repetitions, ambiguities, inconsistencies and errors of spelling or transcription etc. appearing in the existing Central List of OBCs need to be cleared.
 - Hence the Commission had sought extension of its term, up to 31st July 2020.
 - However, due to the nationwide lockdown and restrictions on travel imposed on account of COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission was not able to go perform the task assigned to it.
 - Therefore, the term of the Commission is being extended for a period of 6 more months i.e. up to 31.1.2021.

Implementation schedule

- Orders for extension of the term of the Commission and addition in its Terms of Reference will be notified in the Gazette in the form of an Order made by the President, after receipt of the approval of the Hon'ble President to the same.

Expenditure

- The expenditure involved are related to the establishment and administration costs of the Commission, which would continue to be borne by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Benefits

- All persons belonging to the castes/communities which are included in the Central List of SEBCs but which have not been able to get any major benefit of the existing scheme of reservation for OBCs in Central Government posts & for admission in Central Government Educational Institutions would be benefitted.

Development of Infrastructure Facilities for Judiciary

Why in News

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved continuation of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for Development of Infrastructure Facilities for Judiciary for further five years from 01.04.2021 to 31.03.2026 at a total cost of Rs.9000 crore, out of which Central share will be Rs.5357 crore including Rs.50 crore for the *Gram Nyayalayas Scheme* and their implementation in a Mission Mode through *National Mission for Justice Delivery and Legal Reforms*.
- The Cabinet also approved the decision to support the Gram Nyayalayas by providing recurring and non-recurring grants for a period of 5 years with a total outlay of Rs 50 crores.
 - However, funds will be released to the states only after the notified Gram Nyayalayas are operationalised and Nyayadhikaris have been appointed and reported on the Gram Nyayalaya portal of Department of Justice.
- A review will be undertaken after one year to assess whether Gram Nyayalaya Scheme has successfully achieved its objective of providing speedy and affordable justice to the rural marginalized.

Background

- Several courts are still functioning in rented premises with insufficient space and some in a dilapidated condition without basic amenities.
- Lack of residential accommodation to all the judicial officers also adversely affects their working and performance.
- The present Government has remained sensitive to the needs of providing well equipped judicial infrastructure to subordinate judiciary to facilitate administration of justice in a manner that allows easy access and timely delivery of justice to all.
- Adequacy of judicial infrastructure is critical for reduction of pendency and backlog of cases in Courts.

The major activities of the Scheme

- A Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for Development of Infrastructure Facilities for Judiciary has been in operation since 1993-94.
 - Adequacy of judicial infrastructure is critical for reduction of pendency and backlog of cases in Courts.
 - Though the primary responsibility of infrastructure development for the subordinate judiciary rests with the State Governments, the Central Government through this CSS augments the resources of the State Governments for construction of court buildings and residential quarters for Judicial Officers (JO) in all the States / UTs.
 - The present proposal provides for additional activities like construction of lawyer halls, toilets complexes and digital computer rooms. This will add to the convenience of lawyers and litigants besides reducing digital divide.
- Since the inception of the scheme till 2014, the Central Government over 20 years provided only Rs. 3444 crore to the State Governments/Union Territories. In sharp contrast, the present Government during last seven years has sanctioned Rs 5200 crore till date accounting for nearly 60% of the sanction made so far.
- **The Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008** that came into force from 2 October 2009 was enacted for establishment of Gram Nyayalayas for speedy and easy access to justice system in the rural areas of India.
 - A scheme of central assistance was formulated simultaneously to fund the initial cost in terms of non-recurring expenses for setting up of these courts with the assistance limited to Rs. 18.00 lakhs per Gram Nyayalaya as a one-time measure.
 - Central Government also decided to bear 50% of the recurring expenses of these courts subject to a ceiling of Rs. 3.2 lakhs per court per annum during the first three (3) years of their operations.

- 13 states have implemented this scheme by notifying 455 Gram Nyayalayas out of which 226 are functional.

Monitoring

- An on-line monitoring system has been set up by the Department of Justice enabling data collection on progress, completion of court halls and residential units under construction as well as better asset management.
- Department of Justice has developed an online monitoring system with technical assistance from ISRO. The upgraded "Nyaya Vikas-2.0" web portal and mobile application is used for monitoring physical and financial progress of CSS judicial infrastructure projects by geo-tagging completed and ongoing projects.
- Regular State level meetings of the Monitoring Committee are held by various High Courts, States with State Chief Secretaries and PWD officials to enable speedy and good construction.
- The Gram Nyayalaya Portal helps online monitoring of working of the Gram Nyayalayas by the implementing states.

Expected Outcome

- This proposal will help in construction of 3800 court halls and 4000 residential units (both new and ongoing projects) for judicial officers of District and Subordinate Courts, 1450 lawyer halls, 1450 toilets complexes and 3800 digital computer rooms.
- This will help in improving the functioning and performance of the Judiciary in the country and will be a new step towards building better courts for a new India.
- The CSS Scheme will increase the availability of well-equipped Court Halls and Residential Accommodations for Judges / Judicial Officers of District and Subordinate Courts all over the country.
- The courts are also being provided with better amenities enabling win-win situation for both the judiciary and the lawyers and also to ease of living of common man.
- Setting up of digital computer rooms will also improve digital capabilities and give impetus to the digitization initiation being pursued as a part of India's Digital India vision.

Conclusion

- This will help in improving the overall functioning and performance of the Judiciary.
- Continued assistance to the Gram Nyayalayas will also give impetus to providing speedy, substantial and affordable justice to the common man at his door step.

North Eastern Institute of Folk Medicine (NEIFM) as North Eastern Institute of Ayurveda & Folk Medicine Research (NEIAFMR)

Why in News

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi today has given its approval for changing the nomenclature & mandate of North Eastern Institute of Folk Medicine (NEIFM) as North Eastern Institute of Ayurveda & Folk Medicine Research (NEIAFMR).

Details

- Keeping in view the need, the proposal to change the nomenclature and mandate of North Eastern Institute of Folk Medicine (NEIFM) to North Eastern Institute of Ayurveda & Folk Medicine Research (NEIARMR) for imparting quality Education and Research in Ayurveda & Folk Medicine at Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh.
- The consequential changes will also be carried out in the Memorandum of Association & Rules and Regulations.

Impact

- The inclusion of Ayurveda within the mandate of the Institute will be highly beneficial for the people of North East region for imparting quality education and research in Ayurveda and Folk medicine.
- The institute will also provide opportunities for students of Ayurveda and Folk medicine not only in India but also the neighboring countries such as Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia, Nepal, China and other Central Asian countries.

Background

- The NEIFM, Pasighat was established for systemic research, documentation and validation of traditional folk medicine and health practices of the region.

- The objectives for which the Institute was established include to function as an apex research centre for all aspect of Folk Medicine, to create an interface between traditional healers and scientific research, survey, documentation and validation of folk medicine practices, remedies and therapies for possible usage in public health care and future research etc.

Rebate of State and Central taxes and Levies (RoSCTL)

Why in News

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi ji has given its approval for continuation of *Rebate of State and Central taxes and Levies (RoSCTL)* with the same rates as notified by Ministry of Textiles vide Notification dated 8th march 2019, on exports of Apparel/Garments (Chapters-61 & 62) and Made-ups (Chapter-63) in exclusion from Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme for these chapters. The scheme will continue till 31st March 2024.

Background

- Realizing the importance of refund of embedded taxes, cesses and duties, the Ministry of Textiles first launched a scheme by the name of *Rebate of State Levies (ROSL) in 2016*.
 - In this scheme the exporters of apparel, garment and made-ups were refunded embedded taxes and levies through the budget of the Ministry of Textiles.
- In 2019, the Ministry of Textiles notified a new scheme by the name *Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies (RoSCTL)*.
 - Under this scheme, the exporters are issued a Duty Credit Scrip for the value of embedded taxes and levies contained in the exported product.
 - Exporters can use this scrip to pay basic Customs duty for the import of equipment, machinery or any other input.

Issues

- In the textiles industry, buyer places long term orders and exporters have to chalk out their activities well in advance, it is important that the policy regime regarding export for these products should be stable.
- Keeping in view the same, the Ministry of Textiles has decided to continue the scheme of RoSCTL upto 31st March, 2024 independently as a separate scheme.

Details

- Continuation of RoSCTL for Apparel/Garments and Made-ups is expected to make these products globally competitive by rebating all embedded taxes/levies which are currently not being rebated under any other mechanism.
- It will ensure a stable and predictable policy regime and provide a level playing field to Indian textiles exporters.
 - Further, it will promote startups and entrepreneurs to export and ensure creation of lakhs of jobs.

Tax Refund for Exported Products

- It is a globally accepted principle that taxes and duties should not be exported, to enable a level playing field in the international market for the exporters.
- In addition, to import duties and GST which are generally refunded, there are various other taxes/duties that are levied by Central, State and Local Government which are not refunded to the exporters.
- These taxes and levies get embedded in the price of the ultimate product being exported.
 - Such embedded taxes and levies increase the price of Indian Apparel and Made-ups and make it difficult for them to compete in the international market.
- Some of the cess, duties for which taxes and levies are not refunded and are part of embedded taxes directly and indirectly, are as follows:-
 - a. Central & state taxes, duties & cesses on fuel used for transportation of goods, generation of power and for the farm sector.
 - b. Mandi Tax.
 - c. Duty on electricity charges at all levels of the production chain.
 - d. Stamp duty.
 - e. GST paid on input such as pesticides, fertilizers, etc.
 - f. GST paid on purchases from unregistered dealers, etc.
 - g. Cess on coal or any other product.

Conclusion

- Continuation of RoSCTL scheme will help generate additional investment and give direct and indirect employment to lakhs especially women.

Flagging of Merchant Ships in India

Why in News

- In order to achieve the objective of Atmanirbhar Bharat, the Union Cabinet has approved a scheme to provide Rs.1624 crore over five years as subsidy to Indian Shipping companies in global tenders floated by Ministries and CPSEs for import of government cargo.

Background

- a. Despite having a 7,500 km long coastline, a significant national EXIM trade that is steadily growing on an annual basis, a policy of 100% FDI in shipping since 1997 and Indian shipping industry and India's national fleet is proportionately small when compared with its global counterparts.
- b. **Currently the Indian fleet comprises of a meagre 1.2% of the world fleet in terms of capacity.**
 - The share of Indian ships in the carriage of India's EXIM trade has drastically declined from 40.7% in 1987-88 to about 7.8% in 2018-19.
 - This has led to an increase in foreign exchange outgo on account of freight bill payments to foreign shipping companies, to the tune of around USD 53 billion in 2018-19 and approximately USD 637 billion during the last 13 years.
- c. **Indian flagged ships mandatorily engage Indian crew and comply with Indian taxation and corporate laws.**
 - The operating costs of Indian ships are thus much higher as compared to those of foreign ships.
 - The foreign voyage the cost of operation of an Indian vessel is higher by around 20%.
 - This difference in operating costs arises on account of higher costs of debt funds, shorter tenure of loans, taxation on wages of Indian seafarers engaged on Indian ships, IGST on import of ships, blocked GST tax credits, discriminatory GST on Indian ships providing services between two Indian ports; all of which are not applicable to foreign ships providing similar services.
 - On the other hand, importing a shipping service by an Indian charterer is cheaper than contracting the services of a local shipping company.
- d. **Though the Government supports a policy of imports on FOB, in reality a major portion of the dry bulk imports such as Fertilizers and Coal is allowed to be imported on GIF basis.**
 - Almost 35% of the crude oil imports are also taking place on GIF basis. All of this leads to a loss of opportunity to participate in the market to transport Indian cargo.
- e. Since Indian ships are less competitive while compared to their foreignpeers, therefore, the **Right of First Refusal (ROFR)** policy has not been able to fuel growth of Indian tonnage.
 - Data collected from the Indian National Ship owners Association (INSA) reflects that it issued NOCs in 95% of the cases processed under the ROFR mechanism.
 - Moreover, ROFR does not ensure bankable long-term contracts and it is only an opportunity to match the rate provided by a foreign shipping companies which enjoy a competitive advantage due to lower operating costs.
 - The policy of Right of First Refusal for Indian ships will only be beneficial provided Indian ships are made competitive.
- f. **A policy to promote the growth of the Indian shipping industry is also necessary because having a bigger national fleet would provide economic, commercial, and strategic advantages to India.**
 - A strong and diverse indigenous shipping fleet will not only lead to foreign exchange savings on account of freight bill payments made to foreign shipping companies but would also reduce excessive dependence on foreign ships for transporting India's critical cargoes.
- g. **The subsidy support proposed to be provided to Indian shipping companies would enable more Government imports to be carried on Indian flag ships.**

- Further, it would also make it more attractive to flag merchant ships in India as their current relatively higher operating costs would be offset to a large extent through the subsidy support.
- This would lead to an increase in flagging and would link access to Indian cargo to investment in Indian ships.

Details

- a. In order to address the cost disadvantage suffered by Indian flag ships, the Hon. Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, has in her Union Budget Financial Year 2021-22 speech on 1st February 2021, announced a scheme providing an amount of Rs.1,624 crore over five years to promote flagging of merchant ships in India by providing subsidy support to Indian shipping companies in global tenders floated by Ministries and CPSEs.
- b. The maximum amount of subsidy outgo for five years would be in the range of an estimated Rs. 1624 crore.
- c. Registration shall be done online within 72 hours like the world's best ships registries.
 - This will make it easy and attractive to register ships in India and thereby aid in boosting the Indian tonnage.
- d. In addition to this, it is intended to provide 30 days to any in-flagging vessel to replace the crew on board with Indian crew.
 - Similarly, steps are also being taken to rationalize the manning requirements on the ships by aligning them with international standards.
- e. The Scheme has laid out a monitoring framework which is detailed at also provides for effective monitoring and review of the Scheme. For this, a 2-layer of monitoring system is envisaged as mentioned below:-(i) Apex Review Committee (ARC) (ii) Scheme Review Committee (SRC).

Benefits

- a. All Indian seafarers.
- b. Indian cadets aspiring to be seafarers
- c. All existing Indian shipping companies.
- d. All Indian as well as foreign citizens, companies, and legal entities who are interested in setting up Indian companies and flagging ships in India.
- e. Indian economy as a whole due to massive savings in outflow of foreign exchange on foreign flag ships.

Impact, including employment generation potential

- a. The scheme has immense potential to generate employment.
 - Increase in Indian fleet will provide direct employment to Indian seafarers since Indian ships are required to employ only Indian seafarers.
- b. Cadets wish to become seafarers are required to obtain on-board training on ships. Indian ships will therefore provide training slots for young Indian cadet boys and girls.
- c. Both of these will enhance the share of Indian seafarers in global shipping, and thus Indian supply of Seafarers to the world will increase manifold.
- d. Further, increase in Indian fleet will also generate indirect employment in development of ancillary industries such as shipbuilding, ship repair, recruitment, banking, etc. and contribute to the Indian GDP.

FREE

TESTS

BharatNet Project

Why in News

- **Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL)**, on behalf of Department of Telecommunication, (the “Authority”) has invited global tender for the Development (Creation, Upgradation, Operation & Maintenance and Utilisation) of BharatNet through Public Private Partnership model in 9 separate packages across 16 states for a concession period of 30 years.
 - Under this project, the government will provide a maximum Grant of Rs. 19041 Crore as Viability Gap Funding.
- The Project shall cover an estimated 3.61 lakh Villages (including Gram Panchayats) across Kerala, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.

Background

- The existing BharatNet was connecting all the Gram Panchayats (GPs) of the country by laying of OFC (primarily) between Block and GPs.
- The scope of BharatNet has now been enhanced to connect all the Inhabited Villages of the country, approx. 6.43 lakhs (inclusive of GPs).

About BharatNet

- The BharatNet infrastructure is a middle mile network that is presently leased to service providers for providing affordable high-speed broadband to rural population – individuals, households and institutions. BharatNet is Govt. of India’s flagship project and is considered to be the backbone of ‘Digital India’ aiming to reduce the digital divide between urban and rural India.

The scope of work under BharatNet PPP Project includes

- Connecting the remaining unconnected GPs under BharatNet project (Phase 1 & Phase 2) and all the inhabited Villages beyond the GPs.
- Upgradation of the existing BharatNet Network from Linear to Ring topology.
- Operation and Maintenance (O&M) and Utilisation of the existing as well as the newly deployed network.

Implementation

- The project will be executed through a Design, Build, Finance, Operate & Transfer (DBFOT) concession on PPP framework.
- The idea is to harness private sector’s capability, capacity, and efficiency for O&M, utilization and revenue generation to make BharatNet more effective and accessible.
- This would also serve the objective of BharatNet to have social inclusion, through effective delivery of Govt. schemes and citizen centric services using broadband, and also to strengthen e- Governance, e -Education, Tele medicine, e- Banking etc.
- BBNL is carrying out an open, competitive bidding process with single stage, two-part bidding (‘Qualification bid’ and ‘Financial Bid’) for the selection of the Bidder for awarding the Project.
 - The bids for each of the package need to be submitted separately.

Integrated Multi-purpose Corporation for the Union Territory of Ladakh

Why in News

- The Union Cabinet has approved the establishment of an Integrated Multi-purpose infrastructure Development Corporation for the Union Territory of Ladakh.

Background

- Consequent upon re-organisation of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir as per the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, the Union Territory of Ladakh (without Legislature) came into existence on 31.10.2019.

- An Advisory Committee was constituted under *section 85 of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, 2019* for making recommendations regarding the apportionment of the assets and liabilities of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir between the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, and the Union Territory of Ladakh.
 - The said Committee inter-alia recommended for the establishment of an Integrated Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited on the lines of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation Limited (ANIIDCO), with an appropriate mandate to take up various developmental activities as per the specific needs of Ladakh.
- Accordingly, the Union Territory of Ladakh sent a proposal to this Ministry for the establishment of the corporation in the Union Territory of Ladakh, which was recommended by the *Committee on Establishment Expenditure (CEE)*, Ministry of Finance in April, 2021.

About the Corporation

- The authorized share capital of the Corporation will be Rs.25 crore and recurring expenditure will be around Rs. 2.42 crore per year. It is a new establishment.
- Presently, there is no such similar organization within the newly formed UT of Ladakh.
- The approval has an inherent potential for employment generation as the corporation will be undertaking various kinds of developmental activities.
- Corporation will work for industry, tourism, transport and marketing of local products and handicraft. Corporation will also work as main construction agency for infrastructure development in Ladakh.

Conclusion

- The establishment of corporation will result in inclusive and integrated development of the Union Territory of Ladakh. This will, in turn, ensure socio-economic development of the entire region and population of the Union Territory.
- The impact of development will be multi-dimensional. It will help in further development of human resources and better utilization thereof.
- It increases domestic production of goods and services and will facilitate their smooth supply.

GENERAL STUDIES PAPER -III

Project BOLD

Why in News

- A unique scientific exercise serving the combined national objectives of reducing desertification and providing livelihood and multi-disciplinary rural industry support has been initiated by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC).
- The project named "*Bamboo Oasis on Lands in Drought*" (**BOLD**) is the first of its kind exercise in India which was launched from the tribal village NichlaMandwa in Udaipur, Rajasthan.

About the Project

- Project BOLD, which seeks to create bamboo-based green patches in arid and semi-arid land zones, is aligned with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's call for reducing land degradation and preventing desertification in the country.
 - The initiative has been launched as part of KVIC's "Khadi Bamboo Festival" to celebrate 75 years of independence "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav".
 - KVIC is set to replicate the Project at Village Dholera in Ahmedabad district in Gujarat and Leh-Ladakh region by August this year.
 - Total 15,000 bamboo saplings will be planted before August 21.

Expected Outcome

- Green patches of bamboo on these 3 places will help in reducing the land degradation percentage of the country.
- They will be havens of sustainable development and food security.

- Bamboo plantation program in Udaipur will boost self-employment in the region.

Conclusion

- KVIC has judiciously chosen bamboo for developing green patches. Bamboos grow very fast and in about three years' time, they could be harvested.
- Bamboos are also known for conserving water and reducing evaporation of water from the land surface, which is an important feature in arid and drought-prone regions.

India - EU Cooperation in Agriculture

Why in News

- A Virtual meeting between Shri Narendra Singh Tomar, Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare and Mr. Janusz Wojciechowski, Member of the European Commission, Agriculture was recently held on 7th July, 2021.
 - The strong momentum of the India-EU relations especially since the last India-EU Summit in July, 2020 was acknowledged.
 - Both dignitaries expressed their condolences for the loss of lives due to COVID-19 pandemic.

What was discussed

- **Scenario of Indian Agriculture Sector:** The scenario of agriculture in India and the dominance of small farmers and the commitment of the Government of India towards welfare of farmers in India.
- **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund:** It is launched *with a corpus of Rs One Lakh Crore for development of farm gate* for upgradation of agriculture marketing infrastructure in rural areas.
 - The aim is formation of 10000 FPOs to help small and marginal farmers in marketing of agricultural produce.
- **Organic Farming:** Encouragement of application nano-urea and *Organic Farming under the Pramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana*.
- Initiative of encouraging organic farming on either sides of Ganga river up to 5 Km through formation of clusters wherein 11 lakh farmers have already enrolled.
- *Fixing the Maximum Residual Limit (MRL) of Tricyclazole* used in rice crop which has been a concern for India and is affecting India's Basmati Rice Exports to the EU.

dbGENVOC

Why in News

- **DBT-National Institute of Biomedical Genomics (NIBMG), Kalyani** an Autonomous Institute funded by the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India has created a database of genomic variations in oral cancer; the first of its kind in the world.
 - NIBMG has made this database publicly-accessible.

Background of Oral Cancer

- Oral cancer is the most prevalent form of cancer among men in India, largely fuelled by tobacco-chewing. Tobacco-chewing causes changes in the genetic material of cells in the oral cavity.
- These changes (mutations) precipitate oral cancer.
 - Research to identify those genetic mutations that drive oral cancer are ongoing.
 - Such driver mutations may be variable across populations.

Details about the Database

- dbGENVOC is a browsable online database of GENomic Variants of Oral Cancer and is a free resource.
- First release of dbGENVOC contains :
 - a. 24 million somatic and germline variants derived from whole exome sequences of 100 Indian oral cancer patients and whole genome sequences of 5 oral cancer patients from India.
 - b. Somatic variation data from 220 patient samples drawn from the USA and analyzed by TCGA-HNSCC project
 - c. Manually curated variation data of 118 patients from recently published peer-reviewed publications.

- Variants were identified by the community approved best practice protocol and annotated using multiple analytic pipeline.
- dbGENVOC is not just a catalogue of genomic variants, it has a built-in powerful search engine.
 - It also allows a reasonable extent of statistical and bioinformatic analysis to be carried out online, including identifying variants in associated altered pathways in oral cancer.

About NIBMG

- The National Institute of Biomedical Genomics (NIBMG) has been established as an autonomous institution by the Government of India, under the aegis of the Department of Biotechnology.
- This is the first institution in India explicitly devoted to research, training, translation & service and capacity-building in Biomedical Genomics.
- It is located in Kalyani, West Bengal, India, near Kolkata.

Conclusion

- The repository, which will be updated annually with variation data from new oral cancer patients from different regions of India and southeast Asia, has the potential to support advances in oral cancer research and will be a major step in moving forward from simply cataloguing variants to gain insight into their significance.

GIS Enabled Land Bank

Why in News

- The *India Industrial Land Bank (IILB)* is a GIS-based portal - a one-stop repository of all industrial infrastructure-related information – connectivity, infra, natural resources & terrain, plot-level information on vacant plots, line of activity, and contact details.
- Currently, the IILB has approximately 4000 industrial parks mapped across an area of 5.5 lakh hectare of land, serving as a decision support system for investors scouting for land remotely.
- The system has been integrated with industry-based GIS systems of 17 states to have details on the portal updated on a real-time basis and will achieve pan-India integration by December 2021.

About The News

- A mobile application (wherein login is not required) was launched on Android and iOS stores. Additional features are to be introduced soon.
- In parallel, the portal has been made more user friendly by allowing users to explore the portal without any login.
- The design and UI of the portal are being constantly improved for a better user experience

STI-led BRICS Innovation Cooperation Action Plan (2021-24)

Why in News

- All BRICS countries have agreed to the STI-led BRICS Innovation Cooperation Action Plan (2021-24) proposed by India during 12th Meeting of BRICS S&T Steering Committee.
- Indian had proposed the plan to facilitate sharing of experiences of each other's innovation ecosystem and networking of innovators and entrepreneurs.

What was discussed

- The BRICS officials discussed in detail about the thematic areas for this year's call for proposals at the meeting and unanimously agreed for collaboration in ten thematic areas.
- The thematic areas included Transient Astronomical Events and Deep Survey Science, Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR): Technologies for Diagnosis and Treatment, Simulation and Big Data Analytics for Advanced Precision Medicine and Public Healthcare, HPC and Big Data for Sustainable Development.
- Solving Large Scale Ecological, Climate and Pollution Problems, Innovation and Entrepreneurship on Photonic, Nanophotonics, and Metamaterials for Addressing Bio-medicine, Agriculture, Food Industry and Energy Harvesting Issues, Materials Science and Nanotechnology for Addressing Environmental, Climate Change, Agricultural, Food, and Energy Issues, Renewable Energy including Smart Grid Integration, Ocean and Polar Science and Technology Water Treatment Technology Research in Aeronautics and Aerospace. These areas have been recommended by different thematic Working Groups.

- Further, all countries agreed to thematic areas proposed by India for 6th edition of BRICS Young Scientist Conclave, which will be held in Bangalore during 13-16 September 2021. The three themes to be discussed at the conclave include Healthcare; Energy Solutions, Cyber-Physical System (CPS), and their applications.

Salt-secreting Mangrove Species

Why in News

- Scientists at the DBT-Institute of Life Sciences, Bhubaneswar and SRM-DBT Partnership Platform for Advanced Life Sciences Technologies, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Tamil Nadu have reported for the first time a reference-grade whole genome sequence of a highly *salt-tolerant and salt-secreting true-mangrove species, Avicennia marina*.

About Mangrove

- Mangroves are a unique group of species found in marshy intertidal estuarine regions and survive a high degree of salinity through several adaptive mechanisms.
- Mangroves are important resources for the coastal region and are of great ecological and economic value.
 - They form a link between marine and terrestrial ecosystems, protect shorelines, provide habitat for a diverse array of terrestrial organisms.

About Avicennia marina

- Avicennia marina is one of the most prominent mangroves species found in all mangrove formations in India.
- It is a salt-secreting and extraordinarily salt-tolerant mangrove species that grows optimally in 75% seawater and tolerates >250% seawater.
 - It is among the rare plant species, which can excrete 40% of the salt through the salt glands in the leaves, besides its extraordinary capacity to exclude salt entry to the roots.
- This study employed the latest genome sequencing and assembling technologies and identified 31,477 protein-coding genes and a “salinome” consisting of 3246 salinity-responsive genes and homologs of 614 experimentally validated salinity tolerance genes.
- The study reported identification of 614 genes, including 159 transcription factors, which are homologous to the genes that were functionally validated for salinity tolerance in transgenic systems.

Benefit

- This study assumes significance as agriculture productivity globally is affected due to abiotic stress factors such as limited water availability and salinization of soil and water.
- Availability of water is a significant challenge to crop production in dryland areas, accounting for ~40 percent of the world’s total land area.
- Salinity, is prevalent in ~900 million hectares globally (with an estimated 6.73 million ha in India), and it is estimated to cause an annual loss of 27 billion USD.

Conclusion

- The genomic resources generated in the study will pave the way for researchers to study the potential of the identified genes for developing drought and salinity tolerant varieties of important crop species of the coastal region that is significant for India with 7,500m of coastline and two major island systems.

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UV-C air duct disinfection system

Why in News

- Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; Minister of State (Independent Charge) Earth Sciences; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh has recently discussed with scientific experts, the modalities of installing the latest UV-C Disinfection Technology in the Parliament House, on the eve of the upcoming session on the 19th of this month.
- The technology has been developed by the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), affiliated to the Union Ministry of Science & Technology.
- The technology meant for mitigation of airborne transmission of SARS-COV-2 will be installed in the Central Hall, Lok Sabha Chamber and Committee Rooms 62 and 63.

About the System

- CSIR-CSIO has developed an UV-C air duct disinfection system.
 - It can be used in auditoriums, large conference rooms, class-rooms, malls etc. which provides a relatively safer environment for indoor activities in the current pandemic.
 - It can also be used in buildings, transport vehicles, etc.
- The technology has been developed according to the requirements for deactivation of SARS COV-2 virus contained in an aerosol with necessary ventilation measures, necessary safety and user guidelines and tested Bio-safety standards etc.
- UV-C deactivates viruses, bacteria, fungus and other bio - aerosols etc. with appropriate dosages using 254nm UV light.
- Use of UV-C may also help in ameliorating the fungal infections being witnessed during the current wave of the pandemic.

Registration Process for Vintage Motor Vehicles

Why in News

- Minister of Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari has said with an aim to preserve and promote the heritage of vintage vehicles, the registration process of Vintage Motor Vehicles has been formalized.
- With no existing rules for regulating the process of registration across different states, the new rules shall provide a hassle-free process along with salient features such as retention of old number for already registered vehicles and a **"VA" series (Unique Registration Mark)** for fresh registrations.
- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has amended **CMVR 1989**, formalising the registration process of vintage motor vehicles.
 - This is aimed at preserving and promoting the heritage of old vehicles in India.

Salient Features

- All 2/4 wheelers, 50+ years old, maintained in their original form and which have not undergone any substantial overhaul, shall be defined as Vintage Motor Vehicles.
- Application for registration/re-registration shall be made as per Form 20 and shall be accompanied by an insurance policy, fee, bill of Entry in case of imported vehicles, and old RC in case of an already registered vehicle in India.
- The State Registering Authority shall issue a certificate of registration as per Form 23A, within 60 days.
- Vehicles already registered can retain their original Registration Mark. However, for fresh registration, registration mark will be assigned as "XX VA YY*", where VA stands for vintage, XX stands for State Code, YY will be a two-letter series and "8" is a number from 0001 to 9999 allotted by the State Registering Authority.
- Fees for a new registration - Rs. 20,000 and subsequent re-registration - Rs. 5,000.
- Vintage motor vehicles shall not be driven on roads for regular/commercial purposes.

National Logistics Excellence Awards

Why in News

- With a view to turn the spotlight on the logistics sector, the Government today announced the launch of National Logistics Excellence Awards.

- The framework of awards has been finalised in consultation with the logistics associations and forum user industry partners.
- The awards are in two categories, the first group includes logistics infrastructure/service providers and second one is for various user industries.
- There was wide scale appreciation from user industries for giving the due recognition to various players involved in the logistics supply chain.

Background

- While the Indian logistics sector has been growing at a CAGR of 10.5%, reaching approximately USD 215 billion in value in 2020, there are systemic, interconnected problems that must be addressed to enhance its efficiency.
 - Comprehensive logistics costs amount to almost 14% of India's GDP.
- Closing India's competitiveness gap vis-à-vis the global average of 8 percent, would make the Indian logistics sector advanced, organised and efficient, on par with global peers with the ambition of being amongst the top 25 countries in the global *Logistics Performance Index (LPI)*.

Procedure

- Organisations will be invited to submit entries via the ministry of commerce and industry website. Shortlisted entrants will present their case to a National Jury panel, which will decide the winners.
- The panel will be chaired by the Special Secretary, Logistics Division, and will comprise senior representatives from line Ministries, Logistics and Supply chain experts from leading academic and research institutions, and CXO-level professionals from user-industries and service providers.
- The winners will be announced on 31 October 2021. All case studies by finalists in the National Jury round will be showcased in the Logistics Excellence Gallery.

Conclusion

- The awards will highlight best practices including consolidation, process standardisation, technological upgrade, digital transformations, and sustainable practices.
- The awards will also be an opportunity to laud the extraordinary measures organisations have taken to address the deficiencies exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic including last-mile delivery start-ups, development of cold storage facilities, effective transportation of oxygen, and uninterrupted supply of essential goods and services to the needy.

Contact Group on Economic and Trade issues (CGETI)

Why in News

- For the year 2021, India is the Chair of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China & South Africa). Of the various groups of BRICS, the Contact Group on Economic and Trade Issues (CGETI) is responsible for economic and trade matters.
- The Department of Commerce is the national coordinator for the BRICS CGETI.

Details

- During the three day meeting, the BRICS Members deliberated on the following proposals circulated by India, for strengthening and increasing the Intra-BRICS cooperation and trade:
 - a. BRICS Cooperation on Multilateral Trading System.
 - b. BRICS Framework for ensuring Consumer Protection in E-Commerce.
 - c. Non-Tariff Measures (NTM) Resolution Mechanism for SPS/TBT Measures.
 - d. Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Working Mechanism.
 - e. Cooperation framework for protection of Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expressions.
 - f. BRICS Framework on Cooperation in Professional Services.
- **BRICS Members agreed to take forward India's proposals to finalise them before the BRICS Trade Minister's meeting to be held on 3 September 2021, to be chaired by Shri Piyush Goyal, the Commerce and Industry Minister.**
- **To deepen and strengthen the trade and economy, following events proposed by India were also agreed by the BRICS Members:**

- A BRICS Trade Fair to showcase and to have buyer and sellers virtual meet from 16-18 August 2021, to be organised by the Department of Commerce.
- A roundtable of BRICS MSMEs on 22 July 2021 to be organised by the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises.
- Two workshops on Services Trade Statistics to be held on 16 July 2021 and 13 August 2021, to be organised by the Reserve Bank of India.

WHO-GMP/COPP Certification

Why in News

- The Indian Medicines Pharmaceutical Corporation Ltd. (IMPCL) (Central Public Sector Enterprise) Mohan, Dist. Almora, Uttarakhand under the administrative control of Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India has applied for “*WHO-GMP/COPP certification for 18 Ayurvedic products.*”
- The application has been examined in the office of Drug Controller General (India).

Background

- Many countries have provided official recognition to AYUSH but WHO-GMP and CoPP are mandatory for registration.
- *The National Drugs Regulatory Authority, Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO regulates the import and export of the drugs in the country.*
- WHO has time and again expressed concerns on the implementation of the WHO certification scheme on the quality of pharmaceutical products moving in international commerce
 - It is due to this reason that many Indian companies despite having good number of products are not able to export ayurvedic healthcare products outside India.
- Issuance of WHO GMP is a recognition and global testimony of the superior quality, safety and efficacy of a brand.
- *It is valid for 3 years from the date of issue and companies can apply for renewal after that.*

About WHO-GMP/COPP

- GMP/COPP stands for Certificates of Pharmaceutical Products (CoPP) and Certificates of Good Manufacturing Practice. This certification is required for export of medicinal products.
- The CoPP is mandatory in many countries that require World Health Organisation (WHO) accreditation for pharmaceutical products being imported.
 - As laid down by the WHO, the GMP certification is also necessary for the same.
- In India, WHO-GMP and CoPP for individual products is granted by Drugs Controller General of India after joint inspection of the unit, evaluation of manufacturing facility and quality of raw material and product by representatives from Central Drug Standards Control Organization.

Amendment to Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) Regulations, 2016

Why in News

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) notified the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) (Second Amendment) Regulations, 2016 on 14th July, 2021.
- The amendment regulations enhance the discipline, transparency, and accountability in corporate insolvency proceedings.

About the Amendments

- A corporate debtor (CD) may have changed its name or registered office address prior to commencement of insolvency.
 - The stakeholders may find it difficult to relate to the new name or registered office address and consequently fail to participate in the CIRP.
 - The amendment requires an insolvency professional (IP) conducting CIRP to disclose all former names and registered office address(es) so changed in the two years preceding the commencement of insolvency along with the current name and registered office address of the CD, in all its communications and records.

- The interim resolution professional (IRP) or resolution professional (RP) may appoint any professional, including registered valuers, to assist him in discharge of his duties in conduct of the CIRP.
 - The amendment provides that the IRP/RP may appoint a professional, other than registered valuers, if he is of the opinion that the services of such professional are required and such services are not available with the CD.
 - Such appointments shall be made on an arm's length basis following an objective and transparent process.
 - The invoice for fee shall be raised in the name of the professional and be paid into his bank account.
- The RP is duty bound to find out if a CD has been subject to avoidance transactions, namely, preferential transactions, undervalued transactions, extortionate credit transactions, fraudulent trading and wrongful trading, and file applications with the Adjudicating Authority seeking appropriate relief.
 - This not only claws back the value lost in such transactions increasing the possibility of reorganisation of the CD through a resolution plan, but also disincentivises such transactions preventing stress to the CD.
 - For effective monitoring, the amendment requires the RP to file Form CIRP 8 on the electronic platform of the Board, intimating details of his opinion and determination in respect of avoidance transactions.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Sl.	Country involved	Details
01	EXERCISES WITH ITALIAN NAVY	a. As part of the ongoing deployment to the Mediterranean, INS Tabar entered the Port of Naples, Italy. b. The ship also undertook a Maritime Partnership Exercise with ITS Antonio Marcegaglia, a frontline frigate of the Italian Navy, on 04 and 05 July 2021 in the <i>Tyrrhenian Sea</i> .
02	India and Singapore	During the meeting, both sides shared experiences on Good Governance Practices in a Pandemic, Transforming Leaderships and Ethics, Capacity Building and Training of Leaders and Public Officers, Citizen Centric Governance and identified Citizen-centric service delivery and E-governance as potential areas for future collaboration.
03	India and Gambia	India and Gambia sign an MoU for strengthening and promoting bilateral cooperation between the two countries in Personnel Administration and Governance Reforms
04	India-UK	a. India and the United Kingdom (UK) held the inaugural meeting of the India-UK Financial Markets Dialogue ('the Dialogue') virtually. b. The Dialogue was established at the 10th Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD) in October 2020 to deepen bilateral ties in the financial sector. c. Discussions during the Dialogue were focused on four themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ GIFT (Gujarat International Finance Tec-City) City, India's flagship international financial centre, ➤ Banking and payments, ➤ Insurance, and ➤ Capital markets
05	India-Italy	a. 21st Session of India-Italy Joint Commission for Economic Cooperation (JCEC) was held recently. b. Both sides held extensive discussions on bilateral trade and Investment and economic cooperation in the areas of Food Processing, Textiles, Leather, Railways, Start-ups and promotion of SMEs which play crucial role in economic growth and employment generation.
06	India and Kingdom of Denmark	a. The bilateral Memorandum of Understanding will encourage cooperation between the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Health of the

		Kingdom of Denmark through joint initiatives and technology development in the health sector. b. It will strengthen bilateral ties between India and Denmark.
07	India and Russian Federation	a. The MoU shall benefit the entire steel sector by reducing their input cost. b. This may lead to reduction in cost of steel in the country and promote equity and inclusiveness.
08	Top Anti-Narcotics & Maritime Search and Rescue exercise (Exercise Shield)	a. A Tri Nation Table Top Anti-Narcotics & Maritime Search and Rescue exercise (Exercise Shield) between Maldives National Defence Force, Sri Lanka Navy and Indian Navy was conducted in virtual mode for the first time on 14 and 15 Jul 21 with Indian Navy as the lead agency. b. The exercise was coordinated by Maritime Warfare Centre (MWC), Mumbai.

CABINET RESHUFFLE

S1	Ministry	New Minister
01	Youth Affairs & Sports	Anurag Thakur
02	Information and Broadcasting	
03	Tourism	G Kishan Reddy
04	Culture	
05	Development of North-Eastern Region	
06	Textiles	Piyush Goyal
07	Women and Child Development	Smriti Zubin Irani
08	Steel	Ramchandra Prasad Singh
09	Social Justice and Empowerment	Dr. Virendra Kumar
10	Skill Development and Entrepreneurship	Dharmendra Pradhan
11	Rural Development and Panchayati Raj	Giriraj Singh
12	Power and New & Renewable Energy	Raj Kumar Singh
13	Petroleum and Natural Gas	Hardeep Singh Puri
14	Law & Justice	Kiren Rijiju
15	Health & Family Welfare	Mansukh Mandaviya
16	Ministry of Earth Sciences	Dr. Jitendra Singh
17	Railways, Communication, Electronics & Information Technology	Ashwini Vaishnaw
18	Environment, Forest and Climate Change	Bhupender Yadav
19	Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying	Parshottam Rupala
20	Food Processing Industries	Pashu Pati Kumar Paras
21	Housing & Urban Affairs	Hardeep S Puri
22	Petroleum and Natural Gas	
23	Civil Aviation	Jyotiraditya Scindia
24	Heavy Industries	Mahendra Nath Pandey

SHORT LINERS

- Pushkar Singh Dhama** : Pushkar Singh Dhama took oath as the eleventh chief minister of Uttarakhand. He was administered oath of office by governor Baby Rani Maurya at the Raj Bhavan in Dehradun.
 - At 45, Dhama has become the youngest chief minister of Uttarakhand, which came into existence in November 2000 after being carved out of Uttar Pradesh.

- Dhama, who had never held any ministerial position before being elevated as the chief minister, succeeds **Tirath Singh Rawat**, who resigned recently.
 - Rawat himself succeeded Trivendra Singh Rawat, and was in office for only around four months.
 - Earlier, Tirath Singh Rawat's resignation came amid uncertainty over the bypolls he was required to win to continue as the chief minister.
 - According to rules, he had six months from his swearing in, which took place on March 10, to be elected as a member of the legislative assembly to continue in the post.
 - However, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has the option to not conduct bypolls if the term of the assembly is expiring in less than a year.
2. **IFCPC 2021 World Congress** : It was recently hosted by the **Indian Society of Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology**.
- A special edition of '*Indian Journal of Gynaecological Oncology*' was launched during the event.
 - Cervical cancer is ranked as the second most common cancer in Indian women. However, it is both preventable and curable.
 - Early diagnosis through routine screening of apparently healthy women has led to a phenomenal reduction in the global burden of the disease.
 - *Anti-HPV vaccine* administered to young girls has been seen as a proven tool in the prevention of cervical cancer.
 - **According to WHO, in 2020 alone, nearly 10 million people died of cancer worldwide. The cancer burden is growing across the world, leading to a total global economic cost of 1.16 trillion USD per annum.**
 - With around 70 percent of cancer deaths occurring in low-to-middle income countries, the burden of cancer-related morbidity and mortality is higher for them and has grave implications to the economy of these nations.
 - *World Health Organization's aim is to reduce the incidence and mortality due to cervical cancer by 2030.*
3. **Non-Communicable Diseases** : Cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes are some of the major types of NCDs that have impacted the health and well-being of people across the world.
- According to WHO, 41 million people succumb to NCDs every year – a staggering figure adding up to nearly 71% of all deaths globally.
 - The rise in NCDs is mainly due to sedentary lifestyles, unhealthy diets, lack of physical activity, tobacco use, and harmful consumption of alcohol.
 - Data suggests that high levels of pollution are also contributing to the rise in NCDs and this is yet another cause for concern.
 - There is a need for concerted action to prevent NCDs and reduce premature deaths caused by them.
4. **Disability-adjusted life year**: The disability-adjusted life year (DALY) is a measure of overall disease burden, expressed as the number of years lost due to ill-health, disability or early death. It was developed in the 1990s as a way of comparing the overall health and life expectancy of different countries.
- It includes :
 - a. **The potential years of life lost due to premature death**
 - b. **Equivalent years of 'healthy' life lost by virtue of being in states of poor health or disability.**
 - In doing so, mortality and morbidity are combined into a single, common metric.
5. **Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)**
- The 7th edition of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), a biennial event, was hosted by the French Navy at La Réunion from 28 June to 01 July 2021.
 - IONS, conceived by the Indian Navy in 2008, seeks to enhance maritime cooperation among Navies of the littoral states of the IOR by providing an open and inclusive forum for discussion of regionally relevant maritime issues that would lead to common understanding on the way ahead.
 - The chairmanship of IONS has been held by
 - India (2008-10)
 - UAE (2010-12)
 - South Africa (2012-14)
 - Australia (2014-16)
 - Bangladesh (2016-18)
 - Islamic Republic of Iran (2018-21).
 - France has assumed the Chairmanship on 29 Jun 21 for a two-year tenure.

6. **Indian Navy's Hydrographic Survey Ship Sarvekshak** successfully completed survey action around the site of ill-fated MV X-Press Pearl on 02 July and handed over the survey data to the Sri Lankan authorities.
 - The survey operations in three search areas around the wreck was progressed in coordination with Sri Lanka Navy and Sri Lanka's *National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA)*.
7. **DRDO's Short Span Bridging System-10 m** : The first production lot of 12 Short Span Bridging System (SSBS)-10 m, designed and developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), has been inducted into Indian Army by Chief of the Army Staff General MM Naravane.
 - This bridging system is compatible with *Sarvatra Bridging System (75 m)*, where the last span requires covering gaps less than 9.5 m.
 - The deployed bridge is of the load classification of MLC 70.
 - The system will help in quick movement of troops and enhance the mobilization of resources.
8. **Majority of the members OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting(including India) has adopted a high-level statement containing an outline of a consensus solution to address the tax challenges arising from the digitalisation of the economy.**
 - The proposed solution consists of two components-
 - Pillar One which is about reallocation of additional share of profit to the market jurisdictions.
 - Pillar Two consisting of minimum tax and subject to tax rules.
 - India is in favour of a consensus solution which is simple to implement and simple to comply. At the same time, the solution should result in allocation of meaningful and sustainable revenue to market jurisdictions, particularly for developing and emerging economies.
 - The principles underlying the solution vindicates India's stand for a *greater share of profits for the markets, consideration of demand side factors in profit allocation*, the need to seriously address the issue of *cross border profit shifting* and need for subject to tax rule to stop treaty shopping.
9. **The Ministry of Youth affairs & Sports has decided to grant recognition to WAKO India Kickboxing Federation as National Sports Federation (NSF) for promotion and development of the Kickboxing sport in India.**
 - WAKO India Kickboxing Federation is affiliated to *World Association of Kickboxing Organizations (WAKO)*, which is the International Federation for the sport of Kickboxing.
 - *International Olympic Committee (IOC)* Executive Board has approved the recommendation for WAKO to become fully recognized member of the Olympic family of sport.
10. **The Second Gender Samvaad was organised by the Ministry of Rural Development's Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) and the Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IWWAGE) at LEAD.**
 - Gender Samvaad is an attempt to create a common platform for generating greater awareness on NRLM's interventions, and the impact of its gender operational strategy, across the country.
 - The Samvaad focuses on highlighting best practices and the lessons learnt in implementing gender responsive interventions, with a focus on hearing voices from the states and the field.
11. **Radio Vishwas, a Community Radio Station (CRS) in Nashik, Maharashtra has bagged two awards at the 8th edition of the National Community Radio Awards instituted by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.**
 - Radio Vishwas 90.8 won the first prize in the "Sustainability Model Awards" category and the Second prize in the "Thematic Awards" category for its radio program 'Education for All' in the times of COVID-19.
 - Radio Vishwas is run by the Vishwas Dhyan Prabodhini & Research Institute, Nashik, Maharashtra and has been broadcasting since its launch. The station broadcasts 14 hours daily.
 - 'Shikshan Sarvansathi' (Education for All) is a The CRS' initiative, 'Shikshan Sarvansathi' (Education for all) that won award under the Thematic Category was started in June 2020 to provide free education for students from 3rd to 10th grade, during the difficult time of COVID-19.
12. **Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) :** Team India 2021 won 9 Grand Awards and 8 Special Awards at Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) for innovations ranging from identification of genes responsible that resist abiotic stress in species to augmented reality smart stethoscope that allows non-medicals to perform accurate pulmonary screening.

- These innovations were by young students who received the awards and brought accolades home.
 - **'IRIS National Fair'** is a program of **EXSTEMPLAR Education Linkers Foundation**; funded by Broadcom and supported by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India. School students based in India in the age group 10 to 17 with innovative projects can participate in it responding to invitations for applications.
 - IRIS aligns with 5 national level mega-fairs - National Children Science Congress (NCSC); Science Fair by National Council of Science Museums (NCSM); Jawaharlal Nehru Science Fair by National Council of Educational Research & Training (NCERT); Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Science Exhibition; Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE) awards program.
13. **NIPUN Bharat** : The Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education will launch National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat).
- The vision of NIPUN Bharat Mission is to create an enabling environment to ensure universal acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy, so that every child achieves the desired learning competencies in reading, writing and numeracy by the end of Grade 3, by 2026-27.
 - NIPUN Bharat will be implemented by the Department of School Education and Literacy and a five-tier implementation mechanism will be set up at the National- State- District- Block- School level in all States and UTs, under the aegis of the centrally sponsored scheme of Samagra Shiksha.
14. **Ministry of Women and Child Development has invited comments/suggestions from all the stakeholders on the draft 'Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021'**.
- The objective of the bill is to prevent and counter trafficking in persons, especially women and children, to provide for care, protection, and rehabilitation to the victims, while respecting their rights, and creating a supportive legal, economic and social environment for them and also to ensure prosecution of offenders, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
15. **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006**
- The Act recognizes and vests the forest rights and occupation in forest land in **Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDSTs)** and **Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs)** who have been residing in such forests for generations but whose rights could not be recorded and provides a framework for recording the forest rights so vested and the nature of evidence required for such recognition and vesting in respect of forest land.
16. **Hon'ble Minister of Information and Broadcasting Shri Prakash Javadekar has recently released the regulations and poster for the 52nd edition of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI).**
- The festival will be held in Goa from 20th -28th November 2021.
 - On the occasion of the birth centenary of the maestro of Indian cinema Shri Satyajit Ray, this time the Directorate of Films Festivals, Ministry of I&B, will pay a tribute through a Special Retrospective at the IFFI.
 - Also, in recognition of the auteur's legacy, the "Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Cinema" has been instituted from this year to be given at the IFFI every year starting from this year.
17. **Ministry of Tourism, Government of India to strengthen the Hospitality & Tourism Industry signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Yatra on 02nd July 2021.**
- The event was organized under the arrangement between Ministry of Tourism and Quality Council of India (QCI) for implementing measures for strengthening the Indian Hospitality & Tourism Industry.
 - The primary objective of this MoU is to provide extensive visibility to accommodation units, which have self-certified themselves on SAATHI (System for Assessment, Awareness & Training for the Hospitality Industry) on the OTA platform.
18. **Five Important Portals on Ayush sector**
- a. **Ayurveda Dataset on Clinical Trial Registry of India-** CTRI is a primary Register of Clinical Trials under the world health Organization's International Clinical Trials Registry Platform. Creation of Ayurveda Data Set in CTRI facilitates the usage of Ayurveda Terminologies to record clinical study based on Ayurveda interventions. This is a great step towards a worldwide visibility for Ayurveda based Clinical Trials.
 - b. **CCRAS-Research Management Information System-** A collaborative effort of ICMR and CCRAS, this portal will be a one stop solution for Research and Development in Ayurveda based studies. Free of cost research guidance

- by experienced Scientists, Clinicians of Ayurveda can be availed through this portal. Research tools, reference material are also in place in this portal.
- c. **E-Medha (electronic Medical Heritage Accession) Portal-** Online public access catalog for more than 12000 Indian medical heritage books through NIC's e-granthalaya platform.
- d. **AMAR (Ayush Manuscripts Advanced Repository) Portal-** This Portal is of immense value and it has digitized information on rare and hard to find Manuscripts and catalogues of Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa in libraries or in individual collections across India or in other parts of the world.
- e. **SHAI (Showcase of Ayurveda Historical Imprints) Portals-** This portal showcases inscriptions, Archeo-botanical Information, Sculptures, Philological sources and advanced Archeo Genetic studies. This portal will be of tremendous use in understanding of Indian Knowledge system with a focus on indigenous health care practices.
19. **A separate 'Ministry of Co-operation' has been created by the Modi Government for realizing the vision of 'Sahkar se Samriddhi'.**
- This ministry will provide a separate administrative, legal and policy framework for strengthening the cooperative movement in the country.
 - It will help deepen Co-operatives as a true people based movement reaching upto the grassroots.
20. **A first commercial shipment of Mishri variety of luscious cherries from Kashmir valley has been exported to Dubai from Srinagar.**
- APEDA assisted the shipment of cherries to Dubai by MS Desai Agri-Food Private Limited, a venture company of MS Innoterra, Dubai.
 - The union territory of Jammu and Kashmir produces more than 95% of the total country's production of commercial varieties of cherries in the country.
 - It produces four varieties of cherry – Double, Makhmali, Mishri and Italy.
 - For ensuring exports of quality agricultural produce which adhere to global standards, APEDA has also initiated awareness programme on *National Programme on Organic Production and ISO-17065 requirements* for the officials of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
21. Education Ministers from the five BRICS countries virtually signed a joint declaration, with the resolve to further strengthen their academic and research collaboration in higher education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).
22. **National Film Archive of India (NFAI) has announced a significant addition of the original camera negative of Rajkumar Hirani's film PK (2014) in its collection.**
- Hirani is one of the major contemporary Indian filmmakers who has carved a niche for himself through his distinct filmography over the years.
23. **Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Shri Giriraj Singh, today launched the Online Course Mobile App "Matsya Setu".**
- The app was developed by the *ICAR-Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (ICAR-CIFA)*, Bhubaneswar, with the funding support of the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), Hyderabad.
 - The online course app aims to disseminate the latest freshwater aquaculture technologies to the aqua farmers of the country.
 - Matsya Setu app has species-wise/ subject-wise self-learning online course modules, where renowned aquaculture experts explain the basic concepts and practical demonstrations on breeding, seed production and grow-out culture of commercially important fishes like carp, catfish, scampi, murrel, ornamental fish, pearl farming etc.
24. **Tele-Law : Tele Law has mainstreamed legal aid to the marginalized by connecting them with a dedicated pool of Panel Lawyers either free of cost if so entitled or at nominal fees.**
- Tele-Law programme is presently operational in 633 districts (including 115 Aspirational Districts) across 34 States/UTs through a network of 50,000 CSCs.
 - The programme connects the disadvantaged and needy seeking legal advice from Panel Lawyers through e-interface platform available in Common Service Centres(CSC).

25. **Minister for Road Transport and Highways & MSME Shri Nitin Gadkari declared himself the "Brand Ambassador" of Khadi Prakritk Paint and said he would promote it across the country so as to encourage young entrepreneurs to take up the manufacturing of cow dung paint.**
26. **Bhalia wheat :** In a major boost to wheat exports, the first shipment of Geographical Indication (GI) certified Bhalia variety of wheat was exported today to Kenya and Sri Lanka from Gujarat.
- The GI certified wheat has high protein content and is sweet in taste.
 - The crop is grown mostly across Bhal region of Gujarat which includes Ahmadabad, Anand, Kheda, Bhavanagar, Surendranagar, Bharuch districts.
 - The unique characteristic of the wheat variety is that grown in the rainfed condition without irrigation and cultivated in around two lakh hectares of agricultural land in Gujarat.
 - The Bhalia variety of wheat received GI certification in July, 2011.
 - The registered proprietor of GI certification is Anand Agricultural University, Gujarat.
27. **Madurai Malli :** Consignments of Geographical Indications (GI) certified Madurai malli and other traditional flowers such as button rose, lily, chamanthi and marigold were exported today to USA and Dubai from Tamil Nadu.
28. **The world's first solo motorcycle expedition undertaken by Miss Kanchan Ugusandi, covering 18 treacherous passes in Northern Himalayan ranges culminated on Wednesday (July 07, 2021) at Seema Sadak Bhawan in New Delhi.**
- Miss Ugusandi has become the first solo woman biker to scale the Umlingla Pass, the first woman to cover the 18 passes and also the first woman to traverse a distance of 3,187 kilometre from New Delhi-Manali-Leh - Umlingla-Delhi in one go.
 - The solo motorcycle expedition also played a pivotal role in promoting road and COVID safety awareness in border areas.
29. **In the latest Rankings of top countries in the world (excluding India) where All India Radio Live-streams on NewsOnAir App are most popular, Fiji has jumped from 5th position to 2nd, while Saudi Arabia has made a comeback in top 10.**
- Kuwait and Germany are new entrants, while France and New Zealand are no more in top 10.
 - United States continues to be number 1.

Top 10 Streams

Rank	Top Streams
1	VividhBharati National
2	FM Gold Delhi
3	FM Rainbow Delhi

Top 10 Countries

Rank	Country
1	United States
2	Fiji
3	Australia

30. **The Cabinet has approved a Memorandum on Cooperation (MoC) between Competition Commission of India (CCI) and Japan Fair Trade Commission (JFTC).**
- It will envisage to promote and strengthen cooperation in the matter of Competition Law and policy through exchange of information as well as through various capacity building initiatives in the areas of technical cooperation, experience sharing and enforcement cooperation.
 - **Section 18 of the Competition Act, 2002** permits CCI to enter into any memorandum or arrangement with any agency of any foreign country for the purpose of discharging its duties or performing its functions under the Act.
31. **The Cabinet has approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICoAI) and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), United Kingdom (UK).**
- This MoU will provide a pathway to enable members of one Institute to seek full membership status of other Institute by successfully passing the minimum number of subjects of professional level and to facilitate the movement of professionals in both jurisdictions.

- The Institute of Cost Accountants of India was first established in 1944 as a registered company under the Companies Act with the objectives of promoting, regulating and developing the profession of cost accountancy.
32. **SPARSH [System for Pension Administration (Raksha)]** : Ministry of Defence has implemented SPARSH [System for Pension Administration (Raksha)], an integrated system for automation of sanction and disbursement of defence pension.
- This web-based system processes pension claims and credits pension directly into the bank accounts of defence pensioners without relying on any external intermediary.
 - State Bank of India (SBI) and Punjab National Bank (PNB) – have been co-opted as Service Centres.
33. **DBT-BIRAC supported startup Blackfrog Technologies has developed *Emvolio*, a portable, battery-powered medical-grade refrigeration device that improves the efficiency of the immunization by strictly maintaining preset temperature for up to 12 hours, thus enabling the safe and efficient transportation of vaccines to the last mile.**
34. *President of Haiti, Jovenel Moïse has recently been assassinated.*
35. **National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA)** : Established in 1976, NIUA has been supporting the Government of India in policy formulation, research, and capacity building for the successful implementation of urban development projects such as the Smart Cities Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission, Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY), Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT).
36. **Rail Services Agreement (RSA)** : This is an agreement which guides movement between India and Nepal by rail.
- The rationale for this Agreement is that there was no rail movement prior to this between the two countries and hence a framework was required for operational and commercial aspects and procedure for customs clearances for rail bound cargo.
 - The Agreement shall be reviewed every five years and may be modified by the Contracting Parties by mutual consent.
37. In a major initiative which would boost mango export potential from the eastern region especially to middle east countries, a consignment of Geographical Identification (GI) certified Fazil mango variety sourced from Malda district of West Bengal was exported recently to Bahrain.
- The nine varieties which were exported includes GI certified Khirsapati (Malda, West Bengal), Lakkhanbhog (Malda, West Bengal), Fazli (Malda, West Bengal), Dusshheri (Malihabad, Uttar Pradesh) and Amrapali and Chausa (Malda, West Bengal) and Langda (Nadiya, West Bengal).
38. *National Fisheries Development Board celebrated the National Fish Farmers Day on 10th July. The National Fish Farmers day is observed every year to demonstrate solidarity with all fisher folk, fish farmers and concerned stakeholders throughout the Country.*
39. Shri Nitin Gadkari inaugurates country's First Private LNG Facility plant at Nagpur. The country's first Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facility plant has been set up by Baidyanath Ayurvedic Group (private sector) on Kamptee Road near Nagpur Jabalpur Highway.
- LNG is a clear, colourless and non-toxic liquid that forms when natural gas is cooled to -162°C (-260°F).
 - It is now also emerging as a cost-competitive and cleaner transport fuel, especially for shipping and heavy-duty road transport.
40. *Recently, Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Paulos II, the Supreme Head of Indian Orthodox Church had passed away.*
41. Indian stem cell and developmental biologist **Prof. Maneesha S Inamdar** has been part of the WHO Expert Advisory Committee on Developing Global Standards for Governance and Oversight of Human Genome Editing,

which released two new companion reports providing the first global recommendations to help ensure that human genome editing is used for public health, with an emphasis on safety, effectiveness, and ethics.

42. **International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA):** The International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) has been set up vide IFSCA Act, 2019 to develop and regulate the financial products, financial services and financial institutions in the International Financial Services Centres (IFSCs).
- Towards this end, IFSCA has issued a framework for Setting up and operating International Trade Finance Services Platform ('ITFS') for providing Trade Finance Services at International Financial Services Centres ('IFSCs').
 - The framework will enable Exporters and Importers to avail various types of trade finance facilities at competitive terms, for their international trade transactions through a dedicated electronic platform viz, ITFS.
 - This will help in their ability to convert their trade receivables into liquid funds and to obtain short term funding.
 - This framework will provide an opportunity to the participants to avail trade finance facilities for trade transactions such as Export Invoice Trade Financing, Reverse Trade Financing, Bill discounting under Letter of Credit, Supply Chain Finance for Exporters, Export Credit (Packing Credit), Insurance/ Credit Guarantee, Factoring and any other eligible product, on the ITFS platform.
43. **Union Minister of Finance & Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, along with her counterpart, the Hon'ble Finance Minister of Bhutan, Mr Lyonpo Namgay Tshering, jointly launched BHIM-UPI in Bhutan recently in a virtual ceremony.**
- With the launch of BHIM-UPI in Bhutan, the payment infrastructures of the two countries are seamlessly connected and will benefit a large number of tourists and businessmen from India who travel to Bhutan each year.
 - This will enhance the ease of living and ease of travelling through cashless transactions at the touch of a button.
44. **NTPC Renewable Energy Ltd , a 100% subsidiary of NTPC, has received the go-ahead from Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) to set up 4750 MW renewable energy park at Rann of Kutch in Khavada, Gujarat.**
- This will be India's largest solar park to be built by the largest power producer of the country.
 - Recently, NTPC has also commissioned India's largest Floating Solar of 10 MW (ac) on the reservoir of Simhadri Thermal Power Plant, Andhra Pradesh.
 - Further, a 100 MW Floating Solar Project on the reservoir of Ramagundam Thermal Power Plant, Telangana is in the advanced stage of implementation.
 - Additionally, NTPC RE Ltd. has recently signed an MoU with UT, Ladakh and Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) for the generation of green hydrogen and deployment on FCEV buses. The signing of the MoU was also marked with the inauguration of NTPC's first solar installations in Leh in form of solar trees and a solar car port.
45. **REL, a 100% subsidiary of NTPC, signed a MoU with Union Territory of Ladakh, today, to set up the country's first green Hydrogen Mobility project in the region.**
- The MoU will enable NTPC to help Ladakh develop a carbon free economy based on renewable sources and green hydrogen.
46. **Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh launched an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered grievance management application in New Delhi on July 15, 2021, developed by Ministry of Defence with the help of IIT-Kanpur.**
- This is the first AI based system developed to improve grievance redressal in the Government.
 - The AI tool developed as part of the initiative has capability to understand the content of the complaint based on the contents therein.
 - As a result, it can identify repeat complaints or spam automatically. Based on the meaning of the complaint, it can categorise complaints of different categories even when key words normally used for such search are not present in the complaint.

- A tripartite MoU for the project was signed among Department of Defence, MoD, DARPG and IIT, Kanpur on August 04, 2020.
47. **Minister for MSME Shri Narayan Rane today launched Khadi's two new exclusive product range – Khadi cotton babywear and unique Khadi handmade paper slippers – at Khadi India's flagship showroom in Connaught Place, New Delhi.**
48. Indian Railways has made a giant leap in Station Redevelopment program as Gandhinagar Capital Railway station is set to offer modern services to the Nation.
- This is a unique project taken up in partnership with Govt of Gujarat and Ministry of Railways through IRSDC (Indian Railway Stations Development Corporation) forming a joint venture company named GARUD (Gandhinagar Railway and Urban Development Corporation).
49. **Shri Arjun Munda, Minister of Tribal Affairs, has recently launched the nationwide campaign “COVID Teeka Sang Surakshit Van, Dhan aur Uddyam” to accelerate the pace of COVID vaccination among tribals, in India.**
50. **An MoU was signed between Jamnagar based Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda (ITRA) under Ministry of Ayush and the Government of Gujarat in the presence of the Deputy Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Nitinbhai Patel and Secretary, Ministry of Ayush Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha on 15th July 2021.**
- Through this MoU all the institutions functioning in the Ayurveda campus in Jamnagar have been brought under the umbrella of ITRA, the only institution under the Ministry of Ayush that has been accorded the status of Institute of National Importance (INI).
51. **Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) has taken various initiatives in the recent past to ease the lives of citizens by facilitating online delivery of Government services.**
- To further enhance the initiatives of Digital India Programme, and keeping in view the theme of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', MeitY has enabled map services in “UMANG App ” through an MOU with MapmyIndia.
52. **UMANG:**
- The UMANG mobile app (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance) is a Government of India single, unified, secure, multi-channel, multi-platform, multi-lingual, multi-service mobile app, providing access to high impact services of various organizations (Central and State).
 - Citizens can also access their Digilocker Accounts from UMANG and give their feedback after availing any service through Rapid Assessment System (RAS) which has been integrated with UMANG.
53. **MapMyIndia**
- MapmyIndia, is a product of an indigenous, company founded and headquartered in New Delhi, India, in 1995, which has digitally mapped the entire country.
 - It helps users find relevant places nearby and see them on detailed building level maps.
 - MapmyIndia's APIs enable app and technology developers to easily integrate India's own, indigenous, Aatmanirbhar maps into their apps.
54. **In order to facilitate farmers to get 'right information at right time' in their desired language, a digital platform namely 'KisanSarathi' was launched jointly by Shri Narendra Singh Tomar, Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare with Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, Minister for Electronics and Information Technology, through video conference on 16th July 2021 on the occasion of 93rd ICAR Foundation Day.**
55. **Automated Train Toilet Sewerage Disposal System :** An automated technology for collection of toilet waste which is easy to maintain and seven times cheaper alternative to the bio-toilets, developed by an Indian scientist, can be used to maintain the toilet system of the Indian Railways.
- Existing Bio toilets use anaerobic bacteria for converting human waste to gas, but that bacteria can't decompose plastic and cloth materials dumped into toilets by passengers.
 - Hence maintenance and removing of such non decomposed materials inside the tank is difficult.

56. *The National Commission for Women (NCW) has signed an MoU with Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) for gender sensitization of police personnel across the country.*
- The objective of the programme is to ensure gender sensitization of police personnel with respect to legislation and policies concerning women and bringing attitudinal and behavioural changes in police officers while dealing with crimes against women.
57. **An international collaboration of astronomers has identified a curious occurrence of nine stars like objects that appeared and vanished in a small region within half an hour in an old photographic plate.**
- Astronomers collaborating across counties track vanishing and appearing celestial objects by comparing old images of the night sky with new modern one, register unnatural phenomena, and probe deep into such phenomena to record changes in the Universe.
58. *Indian Navy accepted the first two of its MH-60R Multi Role Helicopters (MRH) from US Navy in a ceremony held at Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego.*
59. *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban (PMAY-U), one of the world's largest affordable housing Missions, has launched two unique initiatives, Khushiyon Ka Aashiyana- Short Film contest 2021 and Awas Par Samvaad - series of 75 seminars and workshops, to take ahead the Prime Minister's vision of 'Housing for All'.*
- 'Awas Par Samvaad' aims to create awareness and promote discussion, deliberation and dissemination on 'Housing for All' among multiple stakeholders belonging to varied streams of learning and practices, e.g. engineering, urban community development, planning, finance, etc.
60. *For boosting exports, the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)' arm Basmati Export Development Foundation (BEDF) has taken an innovative step to sensitize farmers involved in the cultivation of Basmati rice.*
- As a part of the initiative, BEDF in association with Rice Exporters Association of Uttar Pradesh has launched an awareness campaign to encourage farmers for growing high-quality Basmati rice at Jahangirpur under Gautam Budh Nagar district in Uttar Pradesh.
61. **The government has decided to set up the 'Indian Institute of Heritage' at Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar.**
- This will impact higher education and research in the field related to rich Indian heritage and its conservation leading to Masters and Ph.D courses in History of Arts, Conservation, Museology, Archival Studies, Archaeology, Preventive Conservation, Epigraphy and Numismatics, Manuscriptology etc. as well as conservation training facilities to in-service employees and the students of the Indian Institute of Heritage.
 - Indian Institute of Heritage will be a world-class university that would focus on the conservation and research in India's rich tangible heritage, while offering research, development and dissemination of knowledge, excellence in the education of its students and activities associated with heritage that contribute to the cultural, scientific and economic life of India. This would be a standalone Institution of its type in the country.
62. **Bad Bank:** The high level of provisioning by public sector banks of their stressed assets calls for measures to clean up the bank books.
- An Asset Reconstruction Company Limited and Asset Management Company would be set up to consolidate and take over the existing stressed debt and then manage and dispose of the assets to Alternate Investment Funds and other potential investors for eventual value realization.
 - The Minister stated that Indian Banks' Association (IBA) has apprised with regard to incorporation of the National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (NARCL) that NARCL has been registered with the Registrar of Companies on 7.7.2021.
 - The Reserve Bank of India, being the regulator of Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs), has already prescribed a regulatory framework for the functioning of ARCs and there are well-laid norms for transfer of stressed assets by banks and non-banking finance companies to ARCs.

63. Ministry of MSME has launched Credit Guarantee Scheme for Subordinate Debt (CGSSD) to extend financial assistance to stressed MSMEs including NPA accounts.
- The credit needs of the first time borrowers belonging to the Micro and Small Enterprises are catered to by the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises.
64. Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited (MECL) a premier notified mineral exploration agency under the aegis of Ministry of Mines, Govt. of India signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Directorate of Mines & Geology (DMG), Government of Goa, offering integrated mineral exploration and consultancy services today at New Delhi.
65. The Government had signed loan agreement with the World Bank to develop Green National Highway Corridors (GNHCP).
- The project includes Upgradation of about 781 km length of various National Highways passing through the states of Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.
66. The Government has decided to provide income tax exemption to the amount received by a taxpayer for medical treatment from an employer or from any person for treatment of COVID-19 during the financial year 2019-20 and subsequent years.
67. Three monuments of Andhra Pradesh namely
- a. Monuments at Nagarjunakonda, District Guntur.
 - b. Buddhist Remains at Salihundam, District Srikakulam.
 - c. Veerabhadra Temple at Lepakshi in District Anantapuram have been identified as Adarsh Smarak for providing additional facilities like Wi-Fi, Cafeteria, Interpretation centre, Brail signages, Illumination, etc. Further, Fort at Gandikota has been included in the Adopt-a-Heritage scheme of Ministry of Tourism, which is PPP mode.
68. Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has indigenously developed a High Strength Metastable Beta Titanium Alloy containing Vanadium, Iron and Aluminium, Ti-10V-2Fe-3Al on industrial scale for applications in aerospace structural forgings.
- It has been developed by Defence Metallurgical Research Laboratory (DMRL), a premier Hyderabad based laboratory of DRDO.
 - These alloys are already being used by many developed nations in recent times as beneficial substitute for the relatively heavier traditional Ni-Cr-Mo structural steels to achieve weight savings.
69. To increase the life of medical oxygen cylinders three fold, the Indian Institute of Technology, Ropar has developed a first-of-its-kind Oxygen Rationing Device – AMLEX that supplies a required volume of oxygen to the patient during inhalation and trips when the patient exhales CO₂.
- This process saves oxygen which otherwise unnecessarily get wasted.
70. Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully flight-tested the New Generation Akash Missile (Akash-NG), a surface-to-air Missile from Integrated Test Range (ITR) off the coast of Odisha on July 21, 2021.
- The missile system has been developed by Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL), Hyderabad in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories.
71. **Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Padhati (BPKP):** Government is implementing Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Padhati (BPKP) as a sub scheme of Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) since 2020-21 for the promotion of traditional indigenous practices.
- The scheme mainly emphasizes on exclusion of all synthetic chemical inputs and promotes on-farm biomass recycling with major stress on biomass mulching; use of cow dung-urine formulations; plant-based preparations and time to time working of soil for aeration.
 - Under BPKP, financial assistance of Rs 12200/ha for 3 years is provided for cluster formation, capacity building and continuous handholding by trained personnel, certification and residue analysis.

72. *Indian Navy participated in a two-day bilateral Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with Royal Navy Carrier Strike Group (CSG)-21 led by HMS Queen Elizabeth in the Bay of Bengal from 21 to 22 Jul 21.*
- The bilateral Maritime Exercise was designed to hone the ability of the two navies to operate together in the maritime domain.
73. *Clean Ganga Fund (CGF):* Government of India has set-up Clean Ganga Fund (CGF), as a trust under the Indian Trust Act, 1882, to allow resident Indians, Non Resident Indians (NRIs) and Persons of Indian Origins (PIOs), Corporates (Public as well as private sector) to contribute towards the conservation of the river Ganga.
- The contributions to Clean Ganga Fund falls within the purview of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activity as defined in Schedule VII to the Companies Act, 2013.
 - The Corporate Sector Contribution to the Clean Ganga Fund till 30th June, 2021 amounts to Rs.365.38 crore.
 - The amounts accrued to the CGF can be used for different projects & activities as approved by the trust.
74. *Government, through National Institute of Wind Energy, has issued 'Guidelines for Offshore Wind Power Assessment Studies and Surveys' to enable private investors to carryout offshore wind resource assessment.*
- Further, Government is carrying out offshore wind resource assessments and related studies through National Institute of Wind Energy to validate the offshore wind resource potential in identified locations off the coast of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.
75. Ministry of Jal Shakti launched a campaign "*Catch the Rain*" with the tag line "*Catch the rain, where it falls, when it falls*" to nudge the states and all stakeholders to create Rain Water Harvesting Structures (RWHS) suitable to the climatic conditions and sub-soil strata, with people's active participation.

YOJANA

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APTI PLUS

Governance in NER

Introduction

- The North East India, comprising of eight States is populated by a number of different communities, with diverse cultures, languages and customs.
 - It is also marked by difficult terrain, backward areas, and limited connectivity.
- The region is connected to mainland India only through a narrow stretch of land (about 22 km wide) in West Bengal called the '*Siliguri Corridor*', sometimes known as the "**Chicken's Neck**".
- The strategic position of the land entails a numbers of advantages as well as challenges.
 - It is against this backdrop that governance must be delivered, for the overall development of the region.

Background

- The Department of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) was established in the year 2001.
 - It became a full-fledge Ministry of the Government of India in 2004.
- The Ministry of DoNER functions as the nodal Department of the Central Government to deal with matters related to the socio economic development of the eight States of Northeast India.
 - It handled the Non Lapsable Central Pool of Resource.
 - (**NLCPR**) *Scheme*, which has been followed by the North-East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS).
- The North Eastern Council (NEC) is a statutory regional planning body for North East India constituted under the North Eastern Council Act 1971.
 - All the Governors and the Chief Ministers of the eight State; in the North East are Members of the NEC.
 - The Union Home Minister is the Chairman, and the DoNER Ministry r acts as the Vice Chairman.

Study of Mizoram

- Mizoram literally translates as Land of the Mizo people". The word Mizo' is an umbrella term for a number of tribes and clans, such as Lusei (for nearly Lushai), Lai, Mara, Hmar; Paite, etc.
 - Prior to the British rule, the different Mizo tribes lived under a number of sovereign chiefdoms.
 - The area was known to the British as the Lushai Hills, and formally became a part of British India in 1895.

Culture & Religion

- Before the British period, the tribes were primarily animistic. They practised primitive farming, hunted wild animals and frequently fought with each other.
- Portraying the lifestyle of the times, the folk songs revolved around the three major themes of '*love*', '*hunting*' and '*warriors*'.
- There was no written script. There were a few tribal dances, such as Cheraw (bamboo dance), Sarlamka Chheihlam, Khuallam, etc.
 - *They observed three festivals called Pawl Kut, ChapcharKut and MimKut.*
- The British annexation was followed by the arrival of Christian Missionaries, who invented a script and an alphabet for the Mizo language.
- *At present, Around 87% of the total population of the State practices Christianity and 8% of the population of Mizoram are Buddhists, primarily from the Chakma tribe along the Indo-Bangladesh border.*

Mizo Insurgency

- In 1959, the Mizo Hills, which was then a District under the State of Assam, was hit by a famine known locally as '**Mautam**'.
 - Angered and disillusioned by the alleged apathy and negligence of both the Union Government and the Assam Government, the **Mizo National Famine Front** was formed, spearheaded by Laldenga.
- In 1961, the Mizo National Famine Front became a political party called the Mizo National Front (MNF), with Laldenga as its President.
 - On 28 February 1966, the MNF launched an armed uprising against the Union or India, followed by a declaration of independence on 1 March 1966.
 - The Mizo Insurgency dragged on for two decades, with allegations and counter allegations of atrocities committed by both sides.

- Finally, the Mizoram Peace Accord was signed by MNF leader Laldenga, Union Home Secretary R.D. Pradhan and Mizoram Chief Secretary Lalkhama on 30 June 1986, within the framework of the Indian Constitution.
- *Subsequently, Mizoram became the 23rd State or the Union of India in 1987. The MNF won the election and Laldenga became the first Chief Minister of the State of Mizoram.*

International Borders

- Mizoram shares a 318 km - long hard border with Bangladesh on its western side, which is guarded by the **Border Security Force (BSF)**.
- Along the eastern side of the State, the 404 km border with Myanmar is being manned by the Assam Rifles.
- India agrees to a **Free Movement Regime (FMR)** with Myanmar, allowing residents within 16 km on either side of the border to travel freely without visa restrictions for 72 hours.
 - Being sandwiched on either side by Myanmar and Bangladesh, Mizoram has the strategic advantage of acting as a 'land-bridge' between the two countries.
 - It has a real potential to become India's 'Gateway to South East Asia' under our **Act East Policy**.

Minorities and Backward Areas

- Under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, there are three Autonomous District Councils (ADC) in Mizoram called the Lai ADC, Mara ADC and Chakma ADC.
 - Lai, Mara and Chakma are the names of the tribes found in majority in each corresponding ADC.
- *Governor of Mizoram is entrusted with special roles and responsibilities in these areas by the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, which includes certain discretionary powers.*

Economy

- Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the **Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP)** of Mizoram was continuously growing, The GSDP at current prices was estimated at Rs.26502 crores in 2019-20, registering an increase of 18.91 % over the previous year.
- The **Gross State Value Added (GSVA)** at constant (2011-12) prices averaged 12.63% annual growth rate between financial years 2011-12 to 2019-20.
- *While more than half of the population derive the greater part of their income from agriculture, the contribution of agriculture & allied sector to GSVA is only 26.08%.*
- Mizoram is primarily an agrarian State with a large section of the population- especially in the rural parts, engaged in agriculture and allied activities.
 - **Mission Organic Value Chain Development (MOVCD-NER)** has been implemented since 2017 in Mizoram for the promotion of organic farming.
 - The **Sub Mission on Seeds and Planting Material (SMSP)** aims to ensure production of high yielding seeds of all crops.
 - Horticulture is one sustainable land-based activity in Mizoram due to the favourable agro-climatic conditions.
 - *The Bird's Eye Chilli from Mizoram has a Geographical Indication (GI) tag.*

Socio-Economic Development Policy (SEDP)

- The Socio-Economic Development Policy (SEDP) is the flagship policy of the current Ministry in Mizoram.
- The SEDP is envisaged to bring about sustainable development with both short-term and long-term implications. The Policy has been divided into various components, including political, administrative, economic and social development.
- The core focus points of the Economic policy include self-sufficiency in Agriculture- horticulture, Bamboo Cultivation, Rubber Plantation, Infrastructure Development & Management, Creation of Trade & Investment Environment etc.
- The Social Development policy lays emphasis on Manpower Development, Education, Social Security, etc.

Strength of Mizoram

- Mizoram is the best State in India in terms of forest cover.
- It has the third highest literacy rate in the country at 91.58%, behind only Kerala and Lakshadweep (2011 Census).
- It has a high sex ratio of 975 (2011 Census).

- Potential oil and natural gas reserve has been found in southern Mizoram close to Arakan in Myanmar.
- Mizoram has potential of 4500 MW if all the rivers were harnessed.
- The estimated solar potential of Mizoram, as calculated by the National Institute of Solar Energy (NIES), is approximately 9.09 GWp.
- It also contributes 14% to the country's bamboo stock.
- **Vibrant Community: There is the presence of a classless society in Mizoram with a strong sense of community.** To illustrate the discipline of the residents, the capital city of Aizawl has often been called a 'honk-free city', with drivers avoiding unnecessary honking of vehicles.

Issues and Challenges

- Being a landlocked State, connectivity in all its dimensions remains a challenge for Mizoram. The State of Mizoram has only one airport, named *Lengpui Airport*.
- *It has only one railhead at Bairabi*, situated along the border with Assam. Works are currently underway to extend the Bairabi railway line up to Sairang, situated around 20 km from Aizawl.
- Mizoram has two National Highways (NH) connecting to Assam, and one NH running into Tripura, The NH connecting to Assam is the lifeline of the State.
- **Mizoram is also plagued by high incidences of cancer and HIV. Among many reasons, unhealthy lifestyle is a contributing factor.**
 - About 67% of the people in Mizoram use tobacco, against the national average of 37%.

Way Forward and Opportunities

- The State has immense potential in terms of agriculture, horticulture and allied activities.
 - An overwhelming majority of the farmers still practice the ecologically unsustainable shifting cultivation, also called '*Jhumming*' or '*slash and burn*' farming.
 - The agriculture sector is also plagued by problems such as the small size of average land holdings, aged and uneducated farmers, difficult topography, depicting soil health, less farm mechanisation, etc. Modern and scientific farming is the urgent need of the hour.
- *Tourism*, specifically eco-tourism and rural tourism, is another sector with massive potential.
- *Profit can be further maximised* by value addition through food processing. In all these, infrastructure such as cold storage, agricultural link roads, and easily accessible markets should be priorities.
- *Handloom & Handicrafts* is another industry with potential in Mizoram, due to the indigenous textiles culture of the State.
- The *Kaladan multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMMTTP)* is a massive connectivity project being undertaken by the Government of India to connect Haldia in West Bengal to Sitwe Port in Myanmar, which will then enter India through the southern part of Mizoram.
- In the midst of these expectations and optimism, all the stakeholders have to play their part to convert the underlying challenges into future opportunities.

India's Asset, Threat and Growth Driver

Introduction

- Almost 8 per cent of that of Northeast India is a bridge to South East Asia and is a bridgehead between India and the vibrant economies of Southeast Asia, including southern China.
- There is a huge economic significance to this area as well as it is endowed with great natural resources (oil, gas, coal, hydro, fertile land, etc.) which can be harnessed for national development.

Background

- There are innumerable pieces of evidence to show that the Northeast India was assimilated in the mainland India from 10th to 8th century BCE, when Vedas were compiled, till 21st century.

Cultural and Religious Connection

a. KIRATA

- Those whom our recent western and westernised intellectuals termed as Mongoloids were known as Kiratas since then.

- Yajurveda and Atharva Veda both mention Kiratas.
 - Mahabharata describes Shiva and Uma disguising as Kirata couple to test Arjuna's penance.
- b. A school of Tantra is attributed to Minanatha and belongs to Kamrupa.**
- c. Sankaradeva (1449 to 1669 AD)** who relentlessly pursued mission of spreading Vaishnavabhakti. Like many of the other saints of India, he used the language of common people to express most abstract truths and introduced many concepts like Namghar, kirtana, drama, translation of Bhagavata, etc.

Latest Initiatives

- The latest initiative is a **North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS)** entirely funded by the central government for infrastructure projects like water supply, power and connectivity.
- **North-eastern Development Finance Corporation Opportunity Scheme for Small Enterprise (NoSSE)** is specially formed to help first generation entrepreneurs.
- The **Act East Policy** emphasised the development of the infrastructure of the region by building roads and Highways, expansion of air connectivity, an extension of railway networks, the opening of trade routes, as well as creation of infrastructural conditions for border trade.
- Nine cities from across the Northeast region are declared as '**Smart Cities**'- Agartala, Guwahati, Imphal, Kohima, Namchi, Gangtok, Pasighat, Itanagar and Aizawl.

Conclusion

- Development problem has to be seen in the light of Indian culture and her inseparable links with local cultures, indigenous faiths, ethnic diversity, biodiversity and such unique but eco-friendly things of this vast and unique Area.
- Cultural and developmental renaissance of the Northeast area will give us an elevation to be once again a dominant soft power in Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia.

Agriculture and Sustainable Development

Introduction

- The North-Eastern Region (NER) has several unique and unparalleled features; fertile and, abundant water resources, evergreen dense forests, high and dependable rainfall, mega biodiversity, flora and fauna and a mixture of socio-economic, political, ethnic and cultural diversity.
- The congenial temperate climate is favourable to agriculture, which is the major occupation of the people of the region.

Background

- **Rural population in the region is around 80%**. In the absence of major industries except in the state of Assam, the society is agrarian and depends on agriculture and allied sector for livelihood and other support.
- About 35% area in the region is plain except Assam where plains account for 84.44% of its total geographical area. Net sown area is highest in Assam (34.12%), followed by Tripura (23.48%). Arunachal Pradesh has lowest net sown area in the region.
- **Cropping intensity is highest in Tripura (156.5%)**, followed by Manipur (152.1%), Mizoram (136.36%), and Assam (123.59%).
- About 1.6 million hectare area is under shifting cultivation in North East region.
 - Out of 4.0 million hectare net sown area of the region, roughly 1.3 million hectare suffers from serious soil erosion problem.
 - The region receives an annual rainfall of 2000 mm accounting for around 10% of the country's total precipitation.
 - The soil of the region is acidic to strongly acidic in reaction. The soils are however rich in organic matter.

Issues

- The system is characterised by low cropping intensity (114%) subsistence level and mono-cropping.
- Average landholding is 1.69 ha compared to national average of 1.15 ha.

- Although the landholding appears to be higher, the entire holding cannot be used for agricultural purposes due to topographical disadvantages. The smaller size of total cultivable area prohibits horizontal expansion or agricultural production practices
- Land use pattern is relatively faulty for which annual loss of top soil is much higher than all India average of 16 tonnes/ha.
- Similarly, due to lack of proper water harvesting measures, only 0.88 mhm out of 42.5 mhm water is used.
- Record gathered from different sources indicates that around 20.74% area is irrigated.
- Fertilizer consumption in the region is also very low.
- Farming is predominantly rice based with little exception in the state of Sikkim where Maize is a dominating crop.
- Mixed farming system is the order as most of the formers want to produce their household food and nutritional need without having to depend on outside sources.
- Similarly, in spite of a desired aptitude towards animal husbandry practices, per capita availability of milk, meat, egg and fish per annum is low.

Transformation of the Region

- In recent years, the central and state governments have undertaken several initiatives to stimulate regional economy and promote agricultural growth.
- Milk production has increased.
- **High value crops** (such as Kala joha, Pachauli, Passion-fruits, etc.), numerous aromatic and medicinal plants can be practiced with low-cost and resource conserving practices (Zero-tillage, System or Rice Intensification, etc.), to meet the growing domestic as well as international demand.
 - The existing low input agriculture should be converted to opportunity as it is environmentally benign.
- **Agro-processing sector** hitherto is a neglected area but it has high potential to add value and reduce post-harvest losses.
 - By encouraging fresh initiatives in agro-processing, packaging and exploring of newer marketing avenues, the region can take advantages of high potential cross- border trade with surrounding countries.
- **Capacity building** through wide scale knowledge initiatives, contract farming, reviving/revitalising the village institutions such as Field Management Committees and traditional village panchayats/councils is important.
- **Research and Development strategies:** Continuous R&D support system for generating small and marginal farmer's friendly new agricultural technology should be given.
- **Database** is a serious constraint to effective policy analysis in the agricultural economy in the region.
 - Therefore, agricultural database must be streamlined properly on a priority basis by taking the help of electronic revolution.
 - This is relevant for financial institutions such as NABARD, NEDFT, SIDBI, IDBI, etc., may use community-based institutional collaterals for effective credit delivery.

Way Forward

- The ongoing economic reform process has thrown up several opportunities as well as challenges. But, in order to capture the advantage of the untapped potential, the state need to reorient their development strategy within the overall macro-economic framework.
- This is essential to achieve the broader developmental goals because the stronger states make a stronger region.

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10
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Opportunities and Challenges for Youth

Introduction

- North East India is abundant in resources but in terms of livelihood and employment opportunities, it is massively unexplored.
- Outmigration of the youth from the Northeast to different parts of the country is one of the prime challenges that need to be addressed seriously.
 - This happens with most of the uneducated unemployed youth.
 - It is due to the lack of knowledge of opportunities and support from the communities in the region that they decide to join the labour forces in other states.
 - In that case, importance must be given to developing short-term skill improvement training or courses on technical and other jobs like electricians, plumbers, home interiors, dress designers, etc.

Transformations

- Apart from the agricultural sector, animal husbandry in NER also has the potential to create opportunities for the youth.
 - More and more infrastructure of dairy forms and processing units can be developed. Northeast still has the lowest contribution of milk production among all the states despite India stands as the largest milk producer in the world.
 - NER must employ its Youth resources in the local production of milk by setting up more dairy forms.
- Meat is in high demand in the NER. Already some youths have started to engage themselves in the piggery venture, especially those from Assam, Nagaland, and Meghalaya.
- NER is also popular for its traditional fish farming. Few traditional fish growers have already become entrepreneurs in fish farming.
- As the geography of NER is full of lush greeneries and natural sceneries, the entire region has several tourist attractions.
 - More effort must be put into the development of NER as the Center of tourist attraction leading to the establishment of various tourist industries - both historical and natural sites.
- Association for Livelihood Promotion and Entrepreneurship Development (ALPED) started to train disadvantaged youth and women to source out a variety of products from hyacinths.

Issues

- When it comes to youth opportunities, especially in Northeast India, the pressing need is youth's participation in politics.
 - This participation should be in addition to the 'Youths' only as 'Voters' and as performers in politics.
 - There is still an under-representation of youths in the Parliament.

Way Forward

- Utilising youth energy into politics can infuse thoughts of an immediate solution to various existing problems as an outcome of the accumulated repressions faced by the same categories of the population.
- The youths can indulge themselves in various agro-based and processing enterprises to the packaging of fresh farm products like vegetables and fruits, pickles, jams and jellies, bamboo-cane-jute products, aromatic and medicinal plants, and high-end products like strawberries.

Long Term Peace and Development

Introduction

- To be socially and economically sustainable, India's growth has to be inclusive. However, the country's North-East has been experiencing a comparatively slower pace of industrialisation and socio-economic growth.
 - Though the region is blessed with abundant natural resources for industrial and social development, they haven't been utilised to their full potential.
- The region has certain distinct disadvantages.
 - It is topographically located with access to the traditional domestic market or eastern India along with proximity to the major states in the East and adjacent countries such as Bangladesh and Myanmar.
- The region is also a vantage entry point to south-eastern Asian markets.

SWOT Analysis of the Region

<p style="text-align: center;">Strength</p> <p>a. Presence of an ethnic, tribal culture each with unique customs and traditions.</p> <p>b. Very well-performing <i>Gender Development Index</i>.</p> <p>c. Abundance of natural resources (Limestone, Topography conducive for Hydro-Electric Power generation, Bamboo, Tea).</p> <p>d. Ideal Climatic condition for Tourism.</p> <p>e. Safe, Clean and Pollution free environment.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <p>a. Lack of proper Connectivity.</p> <p>b. Limited tourism infrastructure facilities.</p> <p>c. Scarcity of skilled and unskilled labour.</p> <p>d. Floods and landslides in monsoon.</p> <p>e. Laws in the state in areas like land acquisition and transfer is very conservative.</p> <p>f. Landlocked states.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <p>a. Development of Handicraft Industry.</p> <p>b. Flood management system.</p> <p>c. Linkages to existing tourism circuits.</p> <p>d. International Trade with South East Asian Countries.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Threat</p> <p>a. Overuse and Commercialisation of Eco-Sensitive Zones.</p> <p>b. Regional connectivity Concerns.</p> <p>c. Migration of local people to urban areas for employment.</p>

Co-operative Federalism

- The basic idea behind the turn of cooperative federalism is the sharing of powers and responsibilities between the three levels of government which involves participative policymaking.
 - This involves empowering the interested council created under *Article 263* and mandated to deal with coordination between states and initialising the structural changes in the same light.
- With the implementation of the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission, states are now entitled to a 10 per cent increase in the overall devolution of funds-an enhanced fiscal autonomy.
 - This marks the beginning of the structural change in the distribution of resources and responsibilities between centre and states.
 - States are now entrusted with the responsibility of designing and implementing development schemes as per their priorities and needs.

Initiatives taken

- a. Under the "*Special Accelerated Road Development Programme in North-East(SARDP-NE)*, the Trans- Arunachal highway is being developed.
- b. Under the *BBIN initiative*, a sub-regional Motor Vehicle Agreement that allows buses and private vehicles with a Bhutan,Bangladesh, India and Nepal (BBIN) permit to travel unobstructed through borders between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal.
 - *Similarly, bus services with Bangladesh have improved.*
- c. *The two single biggest fast-moving projects is the 1500 kilometre long Trans-Arunachal Highway from Sessa north to Tezpur to Naharkatiya near Nagaland through Arunachal Pradesh.*
 - *The project is worth US Dollar 1.4 Billion.*
 - *The other one is the Jirbam-Imphal railway line, opening up Manipur to the railway network or India. Government of India has a budget of Rs. 13,809 crores for this project.*
- d. Five major bridges over Brahmaputra, along with the **world's longest bridge at Dhubri-Phulbari**, are in the various stages of construction which are going to unlock the North East India completely.
- e. *NagaEd*: It is an education technology start-up from Nagaland and was selected to join the incubation programme at AlsisarImpact,a Mumbai-based social impact incubator, Founded by KevisatoSanyu and ShiroiShaiza during Covid-induced school shutdown, NagaEd is providing learning and teaching solutions for students, teachers and institutions seeking a digitally-enabled educational experience.
- f. *Wander Nagaland*: It is the first travel social enterprise in Nagaland, which was launched on November 4, 2019, and is continuing in its endeavour to create livelihood opportunities for everyday Nagas through tourism.

- g. *Vantage Circle of Assam*: It is a cloud-based comprehensive employee benefit and engagement platform, providing benefit package to corporate employee through corporate offers, reward and engagement programs.

Issue

- Despite concentrated policy making, the progress of this region is not at par with the expectation.
 - This may be achieved by setting up a *North-East Regional Project Implementing Authority*, which will not only handle the funding of the projects but also put together a team for hands-on monitoring of each project, co-ordinating with state governments and all other relevant agencies, which will implement and monitor each vertical with selected private sector partners.

Way Forward

- There are sporadic incidents, slow pace in achieving a Naga solution, but the peace has taken an irreversible stand and today in front of the mighty desire of peace for all the people of the region has forced even the toughest in the militant camp to think otherwise.
- The emerging challenge is to invent new ways of ensuring the participation of states in the formulation of national policies and motivating them for effective implementation in key development areas.
 - The young, educated and confident entrepreneurs are coming up slowly changing the landscape of the whole Northeast Region.
- However, there is need to leverage cooperative and competitive federalism to achieve all-round growth and move away from "one size fits all" approach towards respecting the heterogeneity of different states and addressing their local requirements.
- To harness the full potential of these sectors, significant investments will be required in upgrading the region's infrastructure, education and skill development. All this has to be done, keeping in mind the need for preserving the rich biodiversity of the region. In the end, development comes down to implementation.

Educational Policy Interventions for the Region

Introduction

- Education policies worldwide should realign to the economic prosperity, vertical mobility and social citizenship of the people.
- There is need for investment in building productive human capital in any organisation or a society. Our educational policies, developed at the national level, are often driven by some overarching goals.
 - Such a top-down approach in implementing those policies on the ground, especially in a specific region like North East India, needs a bottom-up restructuring.
- There is an urgent need to re-examine our education policies at the regional level to provide an environment where individuals can utilise their education and training to gain employment, improve their living standards, and contribute to the social development of the area.

Background

- *North-East India has minimum presence of Industries.* As a result, students were dependent on 'Permanent-Government jobs for a long time. However, these are now minuscule compared to a large number of 'educated' persons.
- *The education systems, however, are still focused around traditional subject areas and virtually no connection to the industry or competitive job market.*
- There is an urgent necessity to develop a subject area that will also have a connection with the need of the job market.

What is need to be done

- a. We need to focus on new skills in demand, invest in rural area and disadvantaged communities, and include high-order cognitive and socio-behavioural component in our programmes.
- b. Specific courses should be introduced with motivational sessions mainstreaming across the programmes and faculty-mentors should be assigned to guide them.
 - Our universities and colleges need to launch '**Leadership Development**' as a core component of all courses.
- c. Feature of our education policies in the region should include 'integration' skills in our education system.

- The region is in the periphery and away from mainland India.
- Its distinct and diverse set of cultures often adds to isolation in our learners' mental processes and worldviews.

Initiatives taken

- NEP 2020 shows us the way as it recommends interdisciplinary structure of programmes.
- The educational institutions in this region can cultivate the civilizational connections between 'North East India and Southeast Asian nations and incorporate relevant educational components based on the shared cultural histories and trade routes.

Way Forward

- More than two decades ago, UNESCO published a ground-breaking report Learning: The Treasure Within for the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by Jacques Delors.
- It argued for an integrated vision for education and learning worldwide which influenced our educational policies for many years, With the free-market economic reforms and socio-economic transformation of the societies post-1990s, it is relevant to revisit the report and revisit the educational policies we adopted.
- Integrative thinking is the need of the hour, and our education policymakers may very well start with themselves in this journey.
- While looking into a region's education systems, it will not be out of place to leverage the locational advantage of the region, particularly with respect to the look east or act east policies of the government.
- While keeping high-end fundamental research avenues open for a very select few, most students must be given an option to join a workforce, career or profession with a clear roadmap to achieve the required skillsets while studying within a mainstream programme.
- Therefore, we need to identify champions within our educators and administrators, reorient them towards the changing nature of works and convert them into mentors.

Translation Window to the World

- 1. Terrace forming / Step Cultivation:** These are Life-sustaining fields where people grow rice, maize, pulses, vegetables, flowers etcetera. In Nepali, there is a name for each step.
 - The outer lip of the step is called *kanlaa* and the inner end of the step is the **bhitta**, the wall which forms the base of the kanlaa of the next step.
- 2. Rice cultivation:** It requires a lot of flowing water and every few years the inner end of the step has to be cut deeper into the hillside.
 - The process is called *bhittachhilnu*, quite literally shaving away the hillside to compensate for erosion and make more room for planting.
 - The irrigation channels which run down the hillsides, bringing water from rivulets to the roots of plants, are called *kulo*.
- 3. Rural families in the hills are mostly large.** Lack of literacy is a reason. So in simple economic logic, more children mean more hands to till the land.
 - Though now, as focus shifts from agriculture to more lucrative means of livelihoods, that is changing.
 - Usually, a generic calling name is used in households for each child. So, in the order of birth, Jetha, Mai/a, Sain/a, Katula, and Kauchcha for sons.
 - And for daughters, Jethi, Maili, Sainli, Kainli, and Kanchchi. There are also names for those with more than five sons and five daughters.
 - As people grow up, these generic names stick, and they are known in their communities after the family or clan name and the order of their birth.
 - Indeed, it isn't uncommon for someone's first name to never be known till the day of her death.

Seven Sister's Musicscape

Sl No	State	Music
01	ASSAM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Being the most populous state of the region, Assam dominates the music scenario in the region because of its rich history. The origin of modern music in Assam dates back to 1883 when Satyanath Bora published Geetabali, the first book on Assamese songs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the early part of the Twentieth century <i>Ambikagiri Rai Choudhury</i> (born in 1885), ushered in a revolutionary trend in modern music in the state with his compositions seeped in strong national fervour. The most glorious chapter of the music industry in Assam started with the entry of quintessential Dr Bhupen Hazarika (in 1939) who dominated the scene till the 1980s and his songs continue to reverberate across the hills and valleys of Assam winning hearts across all communities. The influence of western music on Assamese tunes, the inclusion of western instruments like guitar, mandolin, triple, African drums, were significant in the music of Assam during this era.
01	ASSAM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> In the meantime, a few rock bands have come of age in the state. Lucid Recess is an alternative metal rockband from Guwahati.
02	MEGHALAYA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> For its majority Christian community, gospel singing has been pan of life. Lou Majaw is a living legend in music of Meghalaya. Shillong is known as the Rock Capital of India.
03	NAGALAND MIZORAM ARUNACHAL PRADESH TRIPURA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Gospel, Folk and rock music, all can be found in these states. Rock Band Culture is very popular in these states. Death Metal is very famous in Arunachal Pradesh.
04	MANIPUR	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Rock Band Culture is very popular in Manipur. <i>Mangka Maynglambam</i>, a Manipuri Folk, classical and contemporary song performer and a pena player has become very famous. <i>Yumlembam Gambhini Devi</i> is an eminent dancer and singer of Manipur. She is the first female artist in the state to get the "Top" grade artist of All India Radio, Imphal in Nat Shankirtana Music in 2008. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2005, GoI has awarded her with Padma Shri. She is also recipient of Sangeet Natak Academy Award in 1988.

Cinema in North East India

Introduction

- The North Eastern Region is unique with their varied lifestyles, linguistic origins, art and culture.
- A number of films made in the region have over the years fetched several National and International awards.
- However, the limited numbers of these films are not sufficient to foster the growth of a vibrant film industry as we understand in the context of the other successful film industries growing up in the rest of the country and outside.

Background

- The North Eastern Region of India with its pristine and verdant nature, mind boggling bio-diversity and its colourful mosaic of many races and culture, presents myriad opportunities to the discerning filmmakers to make cinema that can truly reflect the many hues and characters of man and nature.
 - The region boasts of people who still live in primitive conditions and at the same time people who have adopted to the most modern ways of life and living.
 - The climate here is mild with heavy rainfall in the summer and some areas in the north experience mild snowfall during the winter.

- People here are friendly and hospitable.

Challenges

- Communication and movement in the region, especially to its nooks and corners, is still very difficult. Roads are sub-standard and rail communication is tardy.
- The road journeys are costly due to excessive taxation on petroleum products and poor road conditions.
- The markets in the region are not well developed and hence, many items of everyday living are not easily available, including essential and quality cinematic equipment.
- The region doesn't have many theatres and audience development has not taken place resulting in the lack of audience for quality cinema.
- The region is a hot-bed of ethnic, linguistic and communal tensions.

Important Cinemas

Movies	Details
ASSAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Father of Assamese cinema JyutiprasadAgarwala made the first Assamese film, "Joymati", only five years after ArdeshirIrani made the first Indian Talkie "AlamAra" in 1930.</i> • The most remarkable film of the 1950s in this region was "PiyaliPhukan" directed by PhaniSarma where the music was composed by young BhupenHazarika. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ "PiyaliPhukan" is the first Assamese film to receive the National Film Award. BhupenHazarika with his first Film "Era Bator Sur" where Dr Hazarika made LataMangeshkar sing the famous number "JonakoreRatiAsomireMatijilikijilikiuthe..".
SIKKIM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In the recently-concluded 67th National Film Awards Sikkim was adjudged the 'Most Film Friendly State in the country.</i> ➤ The small Himalayan state was recognised for its emergence as a new film shooting landscape in India. ➤ The Government of Sikkim has in the beginning of this year decided to set up a Film City Complex in the vicinity of the capital city of Gangtok in an area measuring over 10 acres. ➤ The Film City Complex envisages an Acting School.
Tripura	In spite of having a very rich Cultural background, Tripura is yet to start its journey in the field of film making.

Conclusion

- Except Assam and Manipur, not even five films are made in a year in the other states.
- In such a scenario, we can only hope that if the Government and some willing corporate houses and studios come up to help the filmmakers here and slowly a film industry will grow in course of time.

Textiles and Designs

Introduction

- The textiles and crafts of the Northeast are made with a deep understanding of the earth and are sustainably produced as weaving is a way of life here.
- To reserve this culture of textiles and to link them to the outside world, a sensitive collaboration with the Governments in the form of a Guild or Collective could be the need of the day of designers, artisans, and weavers as a collective working in tandem to the needs of the markets both locally and globally to find ways to evolve and develop prevalent crafts and make them re-relevant through research and development especially for home textiles and furnishing as well as for fashion markets.
- Weaving as a craft is practiced chiefly by women and needs support to thrive and can only be possible by schemes from the Government or state authorities.
 - Weavers in the region also need support as they are mainly handloom which is slowly disappearing.
- The weaving community is also fragile as the topography of the North East.

- For sustainability, markets need to be developed for their products as an urgent need especially in situations as we are facing.

NECTAR Strengthening S&T in the NE Region

Introduction

- **NECTAR- North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach**, an autonomous organisation, set up under the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India is the 'one-stop shop' for technological support to the North East people.
 - NECTAR is providing technological applications and scientific support to the farmers, entrepreneurs, or any organisation associated with rural corporation, construction, or any other industry in North East, where technological intervention and technical support are needed.

About NECTAR

- NECTAR was formed in the year 2012, with the merger of erstwhile National Mission on Bamboo Applications (NMBA) and Mission on Geospatial Applications (NMGA).
 - **It is headquartered at Shillong, Meghalaya.**
- NECTAR is connecting people or North East to the benefits of technology.
- NECTAR is an outcome of one of the recommendations at the 96th Indian Science Congress 2009 held at Shillong that proposed to establish a liaison office in the North East to use modern science and technology to convert natural endowments into economic benefits of the region.
- NECTAR has the mandate of equitable and inclusive social and economic development of the NER.

Background

- Few years back the bamboo board industry in the North East Region were not able to penetrate the market due to lack of scientific approach, lack of linkages, visibility, and associated high cost.
- NECTAR took twin initiatives to support these units,
 - Creating their linkages with the raw material (bamboo mat)
 - Connecting them with the markets of major metro cities of India.
 - To ensure ready availability of raw material at a reasonable price, NECTAR financially encouraged various tribal groups to make bamboo mat and linked them with manufacturing units supported by the National Mission on Bamboo Application.
 - This completely eliminated middlemen's commission and assured best rates for the actual mat weaver with quality supply to the units. NECTAR 's merchandise support to bamboo board industry is well appreciated with development of 16 bamboo board manufacturing units, out of which 9 are in NE states.

Government Initiatives

- Many technologies have been developed and commercialised in the segments of wood substitutes, conversion plywood units to bamboo ply, composites of jute and plastics, bamboo-based gasification for power generation and thermal applications, bamboo-based charcoal making to utilise waste and meet rural fuel requirement.
- In the Agro and Food Processing sector, the Centre has supported setting up of bamboo shoot and pineapple processing units and king chilli pie making units.
- NECTAR is working on renewable energy sources in association with other institutes, and it intends to scout and demonstrate technologies based on renewable energy resources, especially sectors like solar, wind, biomass, and hybrid processes.
- NECTAR has developed a flute technology known as culm cutting or stem setting technique which enables fast regeneration of bamboo.
- Skill upgradation trainings are also provided in the areas of mat weaving, use of natural dyes, processing of bamboo shoots, agarbati stick rolling and incensing.
- The Centre is offering two major schemes to NER: TOSS - Technology Outreach and Service Scheme and BAANS - Bamboo Applications and Support Scheme. Both the schemes are targeted for building and expanding partnerships with people, communities, local bodies, NGOs, SHGs, and research and technology institutions.

- *TOSS is an umbrella scheme of NECTAR* to establish linkages with individuals and institutions to deliver technology solutions to the NER which have clear potential to generate social or economic growth in the region.
- *BAANS is a scheme to undertake support measures* under public-private partnership mode (PPP) in various areas or bamboo applications to generate employment, create sustainable livelihoods and incomes, especially among the poor and disadvantaged groups, including women.
- NECTAR has conducted neighbourhood Mapping and GIS analysis of different categories of schools (Primary Upper Primary, Secondary, and Senior secondary) using JD Digital Terrain Model.

Conclusion

- NECTAR is playing an important role in the development of NER.
- It is very important to connect the technologies with common people, various organisations, entrepreneurs, and farmers so that the mandate or that technology can be proved.
- People from the NER should take advantage of the technologies developed and supported by NECTAR.

Waste and Climate Change

Introduction

- Climate change is one of the biggest challenges being faced by the present world.
 - A number of factors including clean energy, forest protection, adaptive habitat and natural resources are attributed to climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- With high pace urbanisation, solid waste is a ferociously growing concern especially for the developing countries like India.
- Amount and complexity of wastes is growing rapidly but the equivalent demands of technology and resources are still inadequate.
- Wastes and climate change are closely interrelated and are severely impacting each other.

Background Issues

- The rate by which global surface temperature is rising has almost been doubled.**
- Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions** (carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide) majorly emitted by the anthropogenic activities are accumulating in the atmosphere and absorbing solar radiations and thereby, changing atmosphere's chemical composition.
 - This is further leading to the rise in extreme weather events all around the globe. e.g., severe droughts, devastating floods, scorching heat-waves, heavier and persistent rain fall, ferocious forest fires, etc.
 - The resulting loss in snow cover, rise in sea-level and increasing temperature is endangering human settlements, animal lives and forest cover.
- The solid waste** generated by various human activities is another major contributor to climate change.
 - 70% waste globally ends up in open dumps and landfills which renders huge land-surfaces useless, decreasing the green cover and, hence reducing the natural carbon sinks.
 - Globally, around 2 billion tonnes of municipal waste are generated annually, more than one third (34%) of which is only contributed by high-income countries.
 - Globally, solid waste is composed significantly of food and green waste followed by plastic and cardboard waste. A serious concern comes from a significant proportion or waste ending up in open dumping
 - All these wastes generate GHGs during various stages of their life cycle.



Waste Management Hierarchy

Climate Change and Waste Management

- A series of extreme weather events, viz., temperature fluctuations and extremes, disturbance in rainfall pattern, wind storms, etc. are known results of climate change which are affecting the waste management processes to a significant level.
- a. Changes in Precipitation Patterns**
 - Climate change has led to significant alterations in the precipitation patterns. Increased average global surface temperature may lead to extreme weather events like drought, hurricanes and cyclones.
 - These events cause severe damage to property, infrastructure and human lives, affecting water availability and, hence, complicating the solid waste management procedure even more.
 - Waste management structures are protected by capping layers and bunds, which can be at higher risk of erosion and can become unstable because of the heavy rainfall.
 - The entire hydrology of the waste management system can be altered because of the fluctuations in seasonal rainfall patterns.
- b. Rise in Global Temperatures**
 - With the increase in global mean temperature, the snow covers are melting and, thereby, increasing the mean sea-levels.
 - This is leading to high risks of inundation, flooding, seawater intrusion of the dumpsites and waste management sites in coastal areas leading to coastal water pollution.
- c. Effect of Solid Waste on Climate Change**
 - Municipal solid waste can be broadly classified into organic (biodegradable) and inorganic (non-- biodegradable) waste. When organic waste is decomposed anaerobically it produces *landfill gas (LFG)*, which is a mixture of 45-60% methane (CH₄), 40-60% carbon dioxide and 2-9% other gases.
 - GHGs can be emitted from municipal solid waste management either directly or indirectly.
 - *Direct emissions* take place when anaerobic decomposition of organic waste takes place or when the biological treatment of wastes (incineration/composting) is carried out.
 - *Indirect emissions* are caused due to the fuel consumption in vehicles used for waste collection and transportation.

Initiatives Taken by Indian Government

- In 2008, India came up with a comprehensive *National Action Plan for Climate Change (NAPCC)*. Out of the eight exclusive missions encompassing and addressing various issues related to climate change.
 - National Mission on Sustainable Inhabitant was made accountable for the management of Municipal Solid Waste of the country.
 - This part of the mission is focused on enhancing resource recovery and recycling, reducing waste to be disposed in landfills or open dumpsites and reuse/recycling of sewage, as much as possible.
- **In 2015, four additional missions were added 10 NAPCC**, out of which one entire mission was dedicated to the theme of Waste-to-Energy conversion.
- *The focus of this recent mission is to harness energy from maximum possible waste.*
- *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*: The primary aim of the mission was to make the country open-defecation free and improving the status of solid waste management.
 - This mission has definitely ignited the awareness regarding the basic cleanliness regimes and sown a seed of a hygienic, clean and safe behaviour among the people.

Way Forward

- Effective waste management pathway consists of a systematic approach with collection of maximum amounts of waste generated, segregation of waste in different categories, treatment of wastes in each category, transfer to the market or the disposal site, and finally disposal of the remnants.
- There is an urgent need for a robust policy formulation which is inclusive of all major factors associated with climate change and solid waste management.
- Also, a thorough plan of action in an affordable budget is required to be prepared that takes into account the future projection of the outcomes.

Rooting for Resilient Bamboo

Introduction

- Bamboo is one of the quickest growing plants in the world. It can survive and thrive in a range of climate conditions.
 - It is used in both the agricultural and the industrial sectors.
- Bamboo's adaptability, resilience, cost-effectiveness and easy handling makes it an ideal material for resource-efficient livelihoods. The use of bamboo cuts across several spheres of life.
 - Its soft shoots are used as a delicacy in some regions, while many use bamboos for construction of dwellings and houses.
 - Bamboo can be used to create handicrafts such as mats, furniture and baskets, toys, decorative items and even tools and implements.

Background

- According to Global Industry Report 2019-2025, the global bamboo market size was valued at USD 68.8 billion in 2018 and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 5.0 per cent from 2019 to 2025.
 - Modern technologies allow use of bamboo as a durable and high-quality wood substitute.
- In India, bamboo is an important plant in terms of forest coverage and diversity.
 - It is grown in over 13.96 million hectares across the country thriving majorly in Madhya Pradesh and the North Eastern states.
 - The Northeast region alone comprises 60 per cent of India's Bamboo reserve and India is reportedly home to about 125 indigenous and 11 exotic species of Bamboo, making the country a significant player in international bamboo export.

Demand Drivers

- a. Population and income growth, increasing exports and favourable demographics.
- b. Hybrid and genetically modified seeds, Favourable climate agriculture and wide variety of crops, Mechanisation Irrigational facilities and Green revolution in Eastern India.
- c. A strong demographic dividend and extensive labour force available in India.
- d. Growing institutional credit and Government Schemes.
- e. Initiatives like KisanRath (mobile app for farmers, FPOs and traders), 200+ Kisan Rails and KrishiUdaan Scheme for produce transportation.

Issues

- However, despite India being the second largest producer of Bamboo, the sector's growth has left a lot to be desired.
 - Over the past several years, more bamboo products have been imported in India rather than exported.
- According to estimates, the market share of bamboo cultivation in India is only 6 per cent.
- The domestic Bamboo industry has been held back owing to
 - A wide variety of issues and legislative barriers to cultivation and harvesting of Bamboo.
 - Challenges in its procurement.
 - Lack of technical know-how among the primary users of Bamboo.
 - Lack of market linkages an insufficient market demand.

Government Initiatives

- At the national level, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Ministry of Development of North East Region (MoDoNER) and Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) drive strategic initiatives to this end.
- *To support this demand, the Government of India has launched the restructured 'National Bamboo Mission', under the Ministry of Agriculture.*
 - The aim is to foster growth in the sector, create jobs and help increase farmers' income.
- The *Cane and Bamboo Technology Centre (CBTC)* has designed a project for the sustainable development of the bamboo industries to create a livelihood for people in the North Eastern India.
- *Ministry of Tribal Affairs initiated the '4P 1000' Initiative*
- NITI Aayog in July 2020 urged the state governments to carry bamboo and sandalwood tree plantation drives in a first-of-its-kind initiative of **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)** towards monetisation of available vacant land resources and financial sustainability for farmers.

Conclusion

- The Government of India is committed to enhance rural livelihoods and infrastructure development opportunities through the bamboo sector, using a holistic approach. The development of the bamboo sector in India involve collective multi-stakeholder efforts.

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KURUKSHETRA

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Rural Transformation through Bolstered Infrastructure

Introduction

- Infrastructure is one of the five inherent pillars of AatmaNirbhar Bharat, the other four being economy, technology- driven system, vibrant demography and demand.
- The word 'infrastructure' has wide connotations. It spills over a large number of sectors and subject domains.
- Consequently, desired programmes for the development of infrastructure are implemented by several subject Ministries and Departments of Government of India (GoI) and also State Governments.
- The development of rural infrastructure has been taken up as a multi-pronged strategy ranging from focused interventions in particular fields like construction and maintenance of roads (e.g. *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana*) to cluster development by provisioning for infrastructure facilities (*Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Rurban Mission*).
- Infrastructure being a public good, a crucial role is played by the Government in creating and maintaining infrastructure assets.

Background

- Budget 2021-22 underscored the need to focus on infrastructure, in the backdrop of the pandemic, by making a large number of announcements for this sector.
- Triggered by the pandemic and the consequent closure of economic activities, various initiatives had to be taken in the infrastructure sector, specifically with reference to rural areas.
- These have a two-fold impact in terms of boosting demand of goods and services in rural areas and also to facilitate marketing of rural produce.

Infrastructure Development in India

a. Transportation

- *India has a huge road network of almost 59 lakh kilometres, second largest in the world after USA.*
 - 71 percent is constitute by rural roads, which provide connectivity within rural areas.
 - Around 2 percent of the network is accounted for by National Highways, which are the arteries of the transport system, running across States/UTs and rural/urban areas.
- *National Highway Authority of India's decision to deploy Network Survey Vehicle is aimed at ensuring the quality of the National Highways.*
 - As per statistics released by Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) 36 percent of all road accidents in the country during 2019 took place on the National Highways.
 - The break-up by rural or urban area, indicates that as much as **60.34 percent of all road accidents took place in rural areas.**
 - In a move towards the direction of corrective action and to ensure timely assistance to the victims of such accidents during the Golden Hour, in April, 2021 *MoRTH flagged off 90 Basic Care Ambulances with life-saving support system for various States/UTs.*
- *Inland water transport has the least freight cost of Rs.1.06/Tonne-Kilometre, as compared to Railways (Rs.1.36/Tonne-Kilometre) and Highways (Rs.250/Tonne-Kilometre).*
 - Freight transport through inland waterways can, therefore, create an enabling logistic environment for smooth, timely and cost effective transportation of farm and non-farm products from the rural areas to various domestic markets.
 - This can herald low cost inland water transport operations.

b. Marketing and Storage

- National Agriculture Market, also referred to as e-NAM, has created a virtual platform which integrates wholesale mandis across the country.
 - The objective is to ensure remunerative prices for farmers by facilitating online trading of agriculture and horticulture commodities.
- In 2018-19, an Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund with a corpus of Rs. 2,000 crore had been announced. The Fund would be instrumental in upgrading agriculture marketing infrastructure.
- Construction or renovation of godowns and warehouses in rural areas are vital for enhancing storage capacity for agriculture produce.

c. Water Supply and Electricity

- Water supply is a vital component of infrastructure. The Jal Jeevan Mission has the objective of enabling rural households to have assured potable water through household tap connections.
 - As on 15th March, 2021, 79 percent of rural habitations had 40 litre per capita per day (lpcd) of potable drinking water.
 - In October, 2017, Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana - Saubhagya was launched for electrification of poor households, including rural households.

d. Telecommunication

- The role of telecom in bridging the physical distances has become further accentuated in the backdrop of COVID-19 induced lockdown .
 - India has the second largest telecom network in the world.
- The Bharat Net project is being implemented to provide broadband connectivity to 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats.
- As on 8th March, 2021, Wi-Fi hotspots had been installed in 1,03,400 Gram Panchayats (GPs). Besides, an initiative has been taken to provide mobile connectivity to 354 uncovered villages in the strategic, remote and border areas.
- The role of Digital Connectivity in providing essential supplies to the remotest of areas was further heightened by Indian Posts tying up with Indian Council of Medical Research and including in their supplies the delivery of COVID-19 testing kits to laboratories across the country.

Recent Initiatives

- a. *An important loan agreement, in this context, was signed between Government of India and the New Development Bank in December, 2020, to create durable rural infrastructure assets through natural resource management works and to generate employment to stimulate rural demand.*
 - This was done keeping in mind the fact that Infrastructure projects typically have a long gestation period and invariably require high investments.
- b. Government of India had set up the **Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF)** within National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) way back in 1995-96 with an initial corpus of Rs. 2,000 crore.
 - The cumulative allocation of RIDF in 2020-21 was Rs. 3,78,348 crore.
 - Various activities are eligible under RIDF, ranging from activities related to agriculture sector to social sector to rural connectivity.
- c. **Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan was launched in June, 2020 to deal with the issues arising out of the pandemic.**
 - The Abhiyaan was launched for a period of 125 days to provide immediate employment and to create livelihood opportunities for reverse migrants; and strength rural infrastructure.
- d. The **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)** serves the two-fold objectives of providing livelihood security and creation of durable rural assets.
 - The MNREGS wage rate was revised upwards over the wage rate of 2019-20.

Way Forward

- Better rural infrastructure is capable of facilitating better avenues for rural growth and of appropriately remunerating the activities of the farmers, manufacturers and service providers in a rural set up.
- Innovation and technology have successfully surmounted physical distance, as evident since the beginning of the on-going pandemic.
 - A bolstered rural infrastructure contributes to rural transformation through its multiplier effect.
 - Thus, there is a dire need to ensure building and strengthening rural infrastructure to ensure income and livelihoods to millions of rural inhabitants including the reverse migrants.
 - The main challenges lie, however, in attracting investment, maintaining quality and ensuring convergence of programmes and schemes of multiple stakeholder ministries/ departments of Government of India.
 - A slew of measures have been taken by the Government of India to bolster the infrastructure.

Rural Irrigation Infrastructure under PMKSY

Introduction

- **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)** aims at enhancing agricultural water productivity by providing and expanding not only irrigation, but also ensuring water use efficiency in both irrigated and rainfed agricultural activities.

- While the initiatives of the Government through its flagship irrigation scheme - PMKSY, public works programmes, and public water conservation works are praiseworthy, it is desirable that the irrigation potential so created over the years should be utilised fully and the gap between the potential created and the actual utilisation be narrowed.

Background

- Around 69 percent of India's population (8 crore) are rural and reside in more than 6.45 Lakh villages.
 - A vast magnitude of the rural populace, their prevalent socio-economic conditions and the need for ensuring better quality of life demand an all-round Development in rural infrastructure.
- Keeping in view the importance of rural infrastructure in the inclusive development process facilitation, Government of India had, earlier, launched a specific rural infrastructure programme called 'Bharat Nirman' as a time-bound business plan for implementation in four years (2005-2009).
 - The six prioritised components included under the programme were irrigation, drinking water, electrification, roads, housing, and rural telephony.
- A lot of infrastructure facilities are yet to be provided in rural areas for the sustenance of rural economic growth.
 - Hence, the present government continued laying focus on the creation of rural infrastructure through subject specific schematic and programmatic interventions.

Government Initiatives

- As per a recent government estimate, the average annual water potential in the country is 1,869 Billion Cubic Meters (BCM) whereas the utilisable water availability is only 1,137 BCM per annum that comprises 690 BCM of surface water and 447 BCM of replenishable ground water.
 - The per capita water availability in India is reducing progressively due to the increase in its population and injudicious use of water.
 - This calls for an integrated water conservation and user-interface irrigation scheme for ensuring maximum water use efficiency.
 - The Government's budgetary and policy interventions or PMKSY- Har Khet Ko Pani are directed towards identification, review, revival and expeditions execution of the ground water irrigation interventions by taking up potential cases in deprived irrigation districts.
- **Per Drop More Crop (POMP)** initiative, implemented by Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, has laid enormous focus on enhancing water use efficiency at farm level through Micro Irrigation (MI) technological interventions viz. Drip, Sprinkler Irrigation, Pivots and Rain-guns, etc.
- **Watershed Development** component of PMKSY targets to develop rain-fed portions of the cultivated area and culturable wastelands through ridge-area treatment, drainage like repair and renovation, soil and moisture conservation, rain water harvesting, nursery raising, plantation and afforestation, etc. with an objective to ensure drought proofing and prevention of soil erosion, vegetation, rain water harvest and recharge the ground aquifer.

Way Forward

- Water - the lifeline of agriculture is a basic necessity for all living beings and is essential for food production, food security, alleviation of poverty and ensuring sustainable development.
- Frequent rv-spells, reduced availability of ground water for irrigation and the resultant droughts and drought-like situations impacts Indian agricultural production and productivity.
- This calls for registering higher degrees of water use efficiency by installing modern and innovative irrigation infrastructure network in the country.

Potential in Food Processing Industry

Introduction

- Food processing industry is the link industry between agriculture and manufacturing. The Food Processing sector holds the potential to empower women by creating avenues for entrepreneurship and employment.
- The impact of the food processing sector on the economy is wide ranging.
- The sector can contribute immensely to the empowerment of farmers, especially females, by providing improved borrowing power to them, leading to reduction in distress sales and ensuring steady supply to the processors.

- However, relative to its potential, India is under-performing in terms of growth in the food processing industry and exports. Policy interventions will be crucial in unlocking these bottlenecks.

Background

- Consume demand is increasingly shifting towards processed products. Increasing consumption, with rising incomes, is seeing demand for branded products rise as well demand for healthier products.
- Growth of organised retail, are other drivers of consumer demand in this industry. Globally, the demand in developed markets is skewed towards value added, processed products.
- Whilst India's primary processing capabilities are well-developed (e.g: turning wheat to flour), the secondary processing market, where higher value addition takes place (eg: tomatoes to ketchup) lacks scale and penetration.

Issues and Challenges

- Despite India being one of the largest producers of agricultural commodities in the world, agricultural exports as a share of total exports are low in India.
 - At present, India's agricultural exports predominantly consist of raw materials, which are then processed in other countries, again indicating the space to move up the value chain.
- Interventions are required cross the value chain to tap this latent performance. At the farm level, due to lack of awareness among the producers, the output lacks quality and safety standards.
- There is also a lack of processable varieties which is another bottleneck. Aggregation centers close to the farmgate are also lacking.
- Private investments were lacking. As a result, huge gaps exist in the cold chain. While India has developed many cold storages, there is a lack of intermediate infrastructure.

Initiatives

- Recognising the importance of the food processing industry, several initiatives have been undertaken to boost growth and employment.
- The agriculture reforms announced in 2020 have the potential to unlock bottlenecks in procurement by processors and exporters.
 - Direct selling by farmers and contract farming can help create more backward linkages between the food processing and exports sector.
 - These steps taken to liberalise agriculture markets must be seen in conjunction with a host of other steps, indicating a holistic approach towards development of the agriculture and food processing sector.
- Dedicated funds have been launched to develop infrastructure at all levels.
 - The *Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), with a corpus of Rs.1 lakh crore, aims at developing infrastructure at the farmgate level and aggregation points, boosting pre-processing and primary processing capabilities.*
 - In the Budget Speech, the AIF was extended to APMC market yards as well, boosting infrastructure in the mandi system as well. Similarly, a dedicated *Animal Husbandry Development Fund* and the *Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana* have been launched as part of the AatmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan.
- Formation of 10,000 Farmer producer organisations (FPOs) offers the benefit of aggregating farmers, with a modern corporate structure.
 - Aggregating farmers in through FPOs enhances their bargaining power, both in terms of purchasing inputs and also selling their produce.
- In terms of developing large scale capabilities, *the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana* was launched a few years back.
- *PM - Formalisation of Micro Food Enterprises (PM-FME)* scheme was launched. The One District One Product (ODOP) is being effectively leveraged as well. The Operation Green was extended from tomatoes, onions and potatoes to 22 perishable commodities.
- *Depleting soil health and water tables* have the potential to impact production and hence food security going ahead. Interventions are required to shift towards more sustainable forms of production, such as substituting flood irrigation with micro-irrigation, promoting balanced use of fertilisers and judicious use of pesticides.
- *High yielding varieties of seeds*, expansion of irrigation, use of fertilisers and pesticides were encouraged to boost productivity and production. The outcome was food security for a previously food scarce nation.
- *Agriculture incomes have grown at a slower pace than non-agriculture in comes, widening the income gap.*

- With 85 percent of India's farmers falling into the small and marginal category, the ideas of the Green Revolution were best applicable to larger farms than smaller ones, as mechanisation became a viable prospect.
- There is also mounting evidence of environmental damage being caused by prevalent agriculture practices.

Way Forward

- The changing demands of a growing population necessitate an increase in productivity and diversification of farm produce. The effects of climate change are going to be substantial as well.
- Tech based innovative solutions go a long way in ensuring the progress of any sector.
 - There are start-ups providing solutions cross the entire value chain - from Crop Advisor to *Farming as a Service (Faas)* and from Agri-logistics to Financial services.
- To ensure robust development of the sector, the demand side requires a sharp focus. Right now, the food processing industry is largely domestic oriented, with exports accounting for only 12 percent of its total output.
 - There is a huge potential abroad which till needs to be tapped.
- Lack of consumer awareness is one of the major bottlenecks faced by the industry. While some of the food items like Oats etc. are widely regarded as nutrient dense foods, their alternatives are known only by a few.
 - In this regard, Indian 'Super Foods' can be promoted as alternatives to the prominent healthy food products.
- As high export potential will be tapped, the domestic industry will also see growth, leading to an overall economic growth. Yet, at the same time in pursuit of increased production and productivity, sustainability will have to play an equally important role to ensure our food and nutritional security going ahead.

PMGSY Road to Prosperity

Introduction

- Rural roads have multiplier impact on poverty reduction and raising living standard of rural people. To address lack of adequate connecting roads in rural areas, *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)* was introduced in 2000.
 - In last twenty years this has emerged as instrumental in connecting villages, enhancing availability and accessibility of basic services, played role in reducing poverty, as well, shift in livelihood opportunity and enhanced the standard of living of the rural India.

Background

- The rural roads are not only key to raise living standards in poor rural areas, they are also instrumental in reducing isolation, vulnerability and income variability.
- The rural roads also enhance scope of employment in non-farm sector. This increased non-farm employment and higher rural wages also enhance incomes of the rural poor.
- *Government of India launched the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) in December, 2000 as a key programme of Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) to provide road connectivity in rural India.*
 - The basic objective of the PMGS was to connect all habitation with population of more than 1000 with all-weather roads by 2003.

Issues and Challenges

Initiatives taken

- Special attention has been given to North-Eastern states due to their strategic location and climatic position.
- To ensure local people ownership of roads through local institutions, the provision for transferring the roads to local Panchayati Raj Institution has been created after five years of completion of works.
- A unique initiative has been taken to involve local self-help groups to ensure community participation in monitoring. This initiative is expected to not only ensure community ownership at also to empower local women.
- To ensure citizen participation in quality implementation, the provision for complaint by citizen has been created. A citizen can make any complaint regarding implementation and quality through offline or online mode.
 - For effective and time bound monitoring through citizen, a *Centralized Public Grievance Redressal and Monitoring System (CPGRAM)* has been developed.
 - At central level, *National Rural Infrastructure Development Agency (NRIDA)* reviews the grievances and forwards to the concerned state for necessary action.
 - '*Meri Sadak*' app also has been introduced in 2015 to boost up monitoring from citizen.

- **Online Monitoring and Management System (OMMS)** has been introduced and being used for effective management and monitoring under the programme.
- In 2019, the Ministry has launched **Electronic Maintenance of Rural Roads under PMGSY (eMARG)** in all States.
 - e-MARG is an initiative of smart application of information technology which integrate data across the department and monitor maintenance status of rural roads and suggest necessary action.
- To promote **green technology**, PMGSY has issued guidelines to use new material/waste material/locally available materials to build roads.
- In May 2013, the Central Government launched **PMGS -II** to consolidate the existing rural road network and to improve its overall efficiency as a provider of transportation services to people, goods and services.
 - In December 2019, the Government of India launched PMGSY-III

Funding

- The PMGSY programme was started in the year 2000 as 100 percent Central Sponsored Scheme. Though rural road is a state subject, but it was realised that finances of state government will not be adequate to fund a programme of this magnitude.
- However, in 2015-16 the funding pattern has been modified to 60:40 between the Centre and the State, except 8 North Eastern and 3 Himalayan states for which the ratio was fixed at 90:10.
- The sources of fund for PMGSY as indicated are
 - i. Cess on High Speed Diesel.
 - ii. Budgetary Support.
 - iii. Asian Development Bank Loan.
 - iv. World Bank Loan (Government of India, 2021)

Impact

- The implementation of PMGSY has brought significant impact in the lives of the poor in Indian villages. It is found that over the period of 2005 to 2009 the program has caused 0.1 to 1.4 percentage point *reduction in the rural poverty rate*.
- It has also been found that with new roads in rural areas new/ additional employment and business opportunities has been generated.
- It has been found that, due to implementation of rural roads there is a shift in distribution of primary source of income from cultivation and self-employment to unskilled wage labour.
- PMGSY has connected villages which has increased rural accessibility.
- The construction of PMGSY roads has certainly eased the approachability to medical facilities.

Way Forward

- Arrangement for public transport in connected villages is required to reap better benefit of the rural roads.
- Maintenance of existing roads is a challenge, along with connecting villages, attention also should be given to quality of roads for sustainable use as well timely maintenance of roads undertaken by using the current arrangement efficiently.
- Active participation of the administration and stakeholders need to be ensured for long lasting benefits of the program to the people in general.

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Digital India towards a Connected Nation

Introduction

- Rural India's contribution to our national income is estimated to be more than 45 percent and according to various reports, by the year 2050 more than half of our population will still be living in rural areas.
- Therefore centre and state government have over all estimated a total capital expenditure of 773915 crore rupees between fiscals 2020 and 2025 on Rural Infrastructure Development.

Background

- Indian government's Digital India programme, which was launched in July 2015, is playing a revolutionary role in connecting India by bridging the rural and urban India divide.
- Its vision is to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy by providing broadband highways, universal access to mobile connectivity, public internet access programme, e-governance, e-Kranti, information for all, electronics manufacturing, IT for jobs and early harvest programmes.
- Digital India also aims to ensure that government services are available to citizens electronically and public accountability is ensured through mandated delivery of government's services electronically.
- In 1990s, the government introduced major Information and Communications Technology or ICT initiatives which included railway computerisation, land record computerisation etc.
 - These initiatives mainly focused on the development of information systems.
 - Later on, many states started ambitious individual e-governance projects aimed at providing electronic services to citizens.

Issues and Challenges

- Though these e-governance projects were citizen-centric, they could make less than the desired impact due to their limited features.
- The isolated and less interactive systems revealed major gaps that were thwarting the successful adoption of e-governance along the entire spectrum of governance.

Initiatives

- The launch of Digital India opened a wide spectrum for societal transformation. According to the government, Digital India efforts are laid down to achieve results in two key focus areas:
 - a. Governance and Services on Demand.
 - b. Digital Empowerment of Citizens.
- **Aadhaar Enable Payment System (AEPS)** : Developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NCPI), AEPS is a payment service based on an individual's Aadhaar card (one can use Aadhaar card instead of debit or credit cards) which enables the owner of the card to make financial transactions such as transfer funds, make payments, deposit cash, make withdrawals, etc.
- **MyGov** : MyGov platform promotes participatory governance by providing citizens an opportunity to voice their opinions in policy making and recommendation.
 - The platform provides a thriving space for discussions, tasks, talks, interactive polls.
- **National Mission in Education through ICT (NMEICT)** : The NMEICT is a centrally-sponsored scheme which aims to leverage the potential of ICT in education through teaching and learning processes in institutions for higher education.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)**: The PMJDY is a scheme under the National Mission on Financial Inclusion for the impoverished citizens of India.
 - It provides access to services of financial nature at affordable rates to boost financial inclusivity and encourage savings.
- **SMART Cities** : The Smart Cities Mission under the Digital India umbrella promotes conceptualisation and realisation of cities that have a strong basic infrastructure and promote sustainable, safe and inclusive development for its residents.
- **E-Pathshala** : NCERT's e-Pathshala is a platform to disseminate educational resources through mobile app and website.
- **E-Prison** : This project envisions digitisation and integration of all activities that are related to prison and prisoner management.

- **Farmer Portal** : The portal is designed to be a one-stop destination to gain relevant information related to agriculture, risk management, animal husbandry, aquaculture, weather etc.
- **Khoya Paya** : Khoya Paya is an initiative under Digital India to engage citizens to inform and exchange information on children who are missing and found.
 - The platform is developed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development along with the Department of Electronics and Information technology.
- **Kisan Suvidha** : The mobile application disseminates relevant information to farmers regarding weather, market prices, plant protection, inputs etc.
- **National Knowledge Network (NKN)** : The NKN is a pan-India network with an aim to help in connecting India's universities, libraries, labs, research institutes across the country to improve inter-communication, stimulate research and create next-gen apps and services.
- **Project Monitoring Website for E-courts**: E-court's project monitoring website has been created to aid courts with automated decision-making and decision-support system.
- **Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance (UMANG)** : It was developed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and National e-Governance Division (NeGD) to promote e-governance in India.
- **AADHAR**: It is world's largest biometric-based identification system. Aadhar is one of the core pillars of the Digital India mission.
- **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)**: GeM is an e-marketplace initiative by the National Public Procurement Portal that enables government departments and public sector entities to procure common use goods and services.
- **Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS)** : CCTNS is a project under National e-Governance Plan of the Government of India.
 - It aims at creating a system that is comprehensively integrated to enhance the efficiency of policing through a creation of a nation-wide networking infrastructure for the evolution of IT-enabled highly efficient tracking system around the investigation and detection of crimes and criminals.
- **Revolution in Digital Payment**: Digital India has been instrumental in the growth of digital payments ecosystem and inset to transform the economy for good.
 - India's unique payment systems such as BHIM-UPI and BHIM-Aadhaar are getting recognised globally.
 - In 2020, India ranked 1st in digital payment transaction worldwide.

Way Forward

- The launch of 'Digital India' has opened a wide spectrum for societal transformation.
- Digital India aims to ensure that government services are available to citizens electronically and public accountability is ensured through mandated delivery of governments services electronically. Digital India is playing a revolutionary role in connecting India by bridging the rural and urban India divide.
- Its vision is to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.

Developing Sustainable Rural Enterprise

Introduction

- The COVID 19 pandemic and the subsequent intense and prolonged lockdown have accentuated the livelihood crisis in rural areas, which was already reeling with agrarian distress.
- These adversaries have reiterated the role of family and the local economy.
- It is time to build the local economy through he tools of micro and small enterprise and making Indian villages and small town thrive with entrepreneurial possibilities so that people can earn their livelihoods closer to their families and their communities.

Background Initiatives

- The recently announced **PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme (PM FME Scheme)** by the Ministry of Food Processing Industry aims to providing financial, technical and business support for upgradation of existing micro food processing enterprises.
 - It provides support for capital investment for upgradation and formalisation with registration for GST, FSSAI hygiene standards and Udyog Aadhar.

- Under this scheme, skill training and hand holding support is also provided to prepare bankable business plan.
- **Digital Saksham initiative by CII-Mastercard- NIMSME** aims to educate and train micro and small business owners and entrepreneurs enabling them to integrate into the digital economy and access credit, expand their market access, diversify their customer base, digitise their financial operations and solidify their supply chain.
- A preponderant majority of rural entrepreneurs also do not have the required skill to get benefited from the digital services, which are meant for them.
- Regular and continuous mentoring and handholding is an important ingredient of an entrepreneurial ecosystem.
 - Recently, a mentorship-led entrepreneurship development programme has been initiated by Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA).
- **An expert committee set up by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has recommended focussed attention to the financial and operational needs through handholding by both banks and the government.
 - The committee recommended to increase the number of MSE Facilitation Council (MSEFC) particularly in larger states.
- **Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP)** project under DAY-NRLM is focussing on the development of Community resource Persons (CRPs) for Entrepreneurship promotion (CRP-EP) as local level mentors for supporting rural women to start their small businesses.
- **Special Gram Sabhas** may be conducted to flag up and discuss issues of local entrepreneurs and artisans.
 - The panchayat secretariat can play a role of 'hyper local platform' or a 'point of contact' by connecting these entrepreneurs with various Govt. schemes and programmes and also help them to get access to support measures available on IT enabled portals or websites.

Way Forward

- There is a need to sensitise the Rural Entrepreneurs about formal institutions and the whole range of programmes and schemes, which are meant for them.
- It is also equally important to simplify regulatory compliance formalities for rural start up.
- Entrepreneurship development can ensure sustainable livelihoods and create employment opportunities for local people in the midst of pandemic.

Augmenting Rural Healthcare Infrastructure

Introduction

- Accessibility, affordability and accountability of the healthcare system of India are essential for better health and well-being of its people.
 - The current global pandemic of COVID-19 necessitates a public health strategy with more emphasis on epidemiology, especially with regards to understanding the causes as well as identifying appropriate population-based behavioral and educational programmes.

Background

- The health care infrastructure in rural areas has been developed as a three tier system. *The healthcare market is expected to increase about three-fold by 2022.*
 - However, the rural healthcare sector still faces challenges and needs focussed policy-level interventions.
 - There is a need for having quality healthcare services at the state-run hospitals.

Centre	Population Norms*	
	Plain Area	Hilly/Tribal/ Difficult Area
Sub Centre	5000	3000
Primary Health Centre	30000	20000
Community Health Centre	120000	80000

*Number of persons covered under the services of a particular Facility (SC, PHC & CHC)

Issues and Initiatives

- India's public health expenditure has increased from 0.9 percent of GDP in 2015-16 to 1.1 percent of GDP in 2020-21.
- *The Economic Survey 2020-21 observed that India ranks 179th among 189 countries in prioritising healthcare in the government budget.*

- Notably, the National Health Policy, 2017 aims to increase public health expenditure to 2.5 percent of the GDP by 2025.
- The government plans to transform 1.5 lakh sub healthcare centres, primary health centres and urban primary health centres into Health Wellness Centres (HWCs) by 2022.
 - HWCs will provide various range of services beyond maternal and child healthcare services.
- a. care for non-communicable diseases.
- b. rehabilitative care.
- c. Mental health services.
- d. First level care for emergencies and trauma.
- e. Free essential drugs and diagnostic services.

Rural Infrastructure

- Broadly, based on the population served and the type of services provided, primary health infrastructure in rural areas consists of a three-tier system.
 - This includes Sub-Centres (SCs), Primary Health Centres (PHCs), and Community Health Centres (CHCs).
 - The High-Level Group on Health Sector (2019) and the report of 15th Finance Commission on Ayushman Bharat have observed that focus on prevention and early management of health problems can reduce the need for complicated specialist care provided at the tertiary level.

Human Resources in Health

- The Economic Survey 2020-21 observed that the aggregate density of health workers is 23 per 10000 Population, which is significantly lower.
 - The major areas where enhanced deployment of human resources is required are surveillance activities at grass root level, supervisory management of containment operations, laboratory testing, collection, collation and dissemination of data, risk communication and clinical management.
- The *Ayushman Bharat programme - PMJAY* was launched in September 2018-19. It aims to provide an insurance cover of Rs Five lakh per family per year to 10.7 crore poor families.
 - The scheme provides insurance coverage for secondary and tertiary healthcare.
 - Out-of-pocket expenditure is the payment made directly by individuals at the point of service where the entire cost of the health service is not covered under any financial protection scheme.
- Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) was introduced in 2003 with objective of:
 - a. correcting regional imbalances in the availability of affordable and reliable tertiary healthcare services.
 - b. augmenting facilities for quality medical education in the country.

What needs to be done

- Effective handling of common cable disease by building adequately trained health emergency response teams and setting up dedicated control rooms at district level.
- Controlling rising non-communicable diseases prevalent in India, partially through awareness campaigns on healthy lifestyle.
- Strengthening the primary healthcare facilities with adequate human resource and equipment.
- Providing universal health coverage and extensive promotion and utilisation of Ayushman Bharat's PMJAY and health and wellness centres.
- A standardised system for Quality reporting on healthcare for hospitals physicians and insurance companies is a must to benchmark such services.

Way Forward

- The health care services and systems in India continue to develop and there is a scope for improvement required in terms of workforce shortages, infrastructure and quality of care.
- Both the supply and demand side factors of healthcare needs urgent attention. The supply side of the health sector in terms of physical infrastructure and human resource needs to be scaled up significantly.

Developing Rural India

Introduction

- India's Rural potential is huge and mostly untapped. However, the Government have accorded high priority to India's rural economy and followed a multi-pronged approach to enhancing its role as an agro-dependent geography to one centered around sustainability, inclusivity and prosperity for all.
- The essential elements of this approach involved providing continued access of basic amenities such as toilets, drinking water and natural gas, to the rural populace thereby, ensuring a minimum living quality of life to the most vulnerable sections of society.

Latest Initiatives

- a. *Swachh Bharat Mission'* in 2014 was one of the first successful nationwide rural-centric schemes by the Government.
- b. *"Ujjwala Yojana"* was another rural centric scheme, primarily targeted at providing energy security and a dignified life with better health for rural women by providing them over eight crore (80 million) free gas cylinders since 2016.
- c. *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G)* was launched to provide all-weather homes to the poorest strata of society.
- d. *Ayushman Bharat Yojana* is a Complementary efforts for uplifting rural India. It is one of the world's largest health assurance scheme implemented by the Indian government.
- e. *"Ujala Yojana"* was implemented, under which over 36 crore (360 million) LED bulbs) have been distributed in a bid to take India's villages out of the bane of darkness

Conclusion

- The government has time and again, shown that no meaningful economic or social progress can take place in India without its villages and thus, it is high time, rural India becomes an active participant, even the driver, of India's rise in the years to come.

