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Polity and Governance

Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban)

Why in News?

In the Budget 2021-22, Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban) has been announced under the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry to provide universal coverage of water supply to all households through functional taps in all statutory towns in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal- 6.

About Jal Jeevan Mission(Urban):

Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs

Objective: To provide universal coverage of water supply to all households in all 4,378 statutory towns, through functional taps.

Duration: The duration of the mission is over five years.

Features of the Jal Jeevan Mission

- It will rejuvenate the water bodies to facilitate **sustainable fresh water supply** and the creation of green spaces.
- It will promote a circular economy of water through the **development of city water balance plan in each city.** The plan will focus on recycling/reuse of treated sewage water and water conservation. 20% of water demand is to be met by reused water.
- **Awareness Campaign:** Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaign is proposed. It will spread awareness among the masses about the conservation of water.
- Pey Jal Survekshan will be conducted in cities. It will ascertain the equitable distribution of water, reuse of wastewater, and mapping of water bodies
- Technology Submission For water: It is proposed to leverage the latest global technologies in the field of water.
- **PPP Model:** The mission has mandated that cities having a million-plus population will take up PPP projects. These projects shall constitute a minimum of 10% of their total project fund allocation.

Funding:

- **For Union Territories**, there will be **100% central funding.**
- **For North Eastern and Hill States**, central funding for projects will be **90%.**
- **Central funding will be 50% for cities with less than 1 lakh population**, **one-third for cities with 1 lakh to 10 lakh population, and 25% for cities with the million plus population..**

Maharashtra-Karnataka Border Dispute

Why in news?

Maharashtra CM **Uddhav Thackeray and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Sharad Pawar released a book** published by the state government. It is titled '**Maharashtra-Karnataka Seemavad: Sangharsh Aani Sankalp' (Maharashtra-Karnataka Boundary Dispute: Struggle and Pledge).**

About the Book:

- The book is a collection of **articles, news, and other material on the demand that Marathi-speaking areas in Karnataka should be integrated into Maharashtra.**
- The matter has been in the **Supreme Court since 2004.**
- Thackeray said that until the Supreme Court gives its verdict on the dispute, **the areas should be declared a Union Territory.**
- On the other hand, Pawar said that the government must make all legal efforts to ensure a **favourable verdict in the apex court.**

The Dispute:

- Maharashtra has staked claim to over **7,000 sq km area along its border with Karnataka**.
- This comprises of **814 villages in the districts of Belagavi (Belgaum), Uttara Kannada, Bidar, and Gulbarga, and the towns of Belagavi, Karwar, and Nippani.**
- All these areas are **predominantly Marathi-speaking**.
- Maharashtra wants them to be merged with the state.

How did this originate?

- The genesis of the dispute lies in the **reorganisation of states along linguistic and administrative lines in 1956**.
- The erstwhile Bombay Presidency was a multilingual province. It included the present-day Karnataka districts of Vijayapura, Belagavi, Dharwad, and Uttara Kannada.
- In 1948, the **Belgaum municipality requested that the district, having a predominantly Marathi-speaking population, be incorporated into the proposed Maharashtra state.** However, **The States Reorganisation Act of 1956 made Belgaum and 10 talukas of Bombay State a part of the then Mysore State** (which was renamed Karnataka in 1973).
- While demarcating borders, the Reorganisation of States Commission sought to include talukas with a Kannada-speaking population of more than 50% in Mysore. But the opponents of the region's inclusion in Mysore have maintained that in 1956, Marathi-speakers outnumbered Kannada-speakers in those areas.

How significant is the issue?

- Political parties in Maharashtra are united on the merger of the border areas with the state.
- The dispute features in every election manifesto of the Congress, NCP, Shiv Sena, and BJP.
- Over the last six decades, every Governor's address to the joint session of the Maharashtra Assembly and Council has mentioned the border dispute.

Recent incidents

- Maharashtra CM Thackeray recently referred to the contentious areas as **"Karnataka-occupied Maharashtra"** in the Assembly. He also named two senior ministers to a co-ordination committee to oversee the expeditious resolution of the case in favour of Maharashtra in the Supreme Court.
- Following this, **tensions flared on both sides of the border.**
- This is not the first time that this matter has arisen in the last 13 months of the **Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA)** coalition government. But bus services between Kolhapur (Maharashtra) and Belgaum (Karnataka) had to be suspended for a few days after the recent tensions.

Karnataka's response:

- The BJP government in Karnataka has **accused Maharashtra of seeking to incite violence on the border dispute**.
- Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa has vowed he would **"not part with an inch of land".**
- Yediyurappa said that the **Mahajan Commission** had "long ago settled the dispute."

About Mahajan Commission:

- The Mahajan Commission was **set up by the Government of India in October 1966** to look into the border dispute.
- The Commission, led by former Chief Justice of India Mehr Chand Mahajan, submitted its report in August 1967.
- **It recommended that 264 villages should be transferred to Maharashtra, and that Belgaum and 247 villages should remain with Karnataka.**
- However, **Maharashtra rejected the report**, calling it biased and illogical, while Karnataka welcomed it.
- Despite demands from **Karnataka, the Centre never implemented the recommendations of the report.**
- And irrespective of the party in power, both states have from the beginning struck to their positions.

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act

Why in news?

Recently, judgement in the **Satish Ragde v. State of Maharashtra** case was criticised as the accused was acquitted under POCSO Act.

About POCSO act

- The act was enacted **in 2012** especially to protect children **aged less than 18** from sexual assault.
- It admitted that a number of sexual offences against children were neither specifically provided for in existing laws nor adequately penalised.
- Therefore an offence against children needs to be explicitly defined and countered through proportionate penalties so that it acts as an effective deterrence.
- The **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** which was ratified by India in 1992 requires sexual exploitation and sexual abuse to be addressed as heinous crimes.

How does POCSO and IPC deal with sexual assault?

- One, **In IPC the definition of assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty is very generic.**
- **In POCSO, the acts of sexual assault are explicitly mentioned** such as touching various private parts or doing any other act which involves physical contact without penetration.
- However **it excludes rape which requires penetration; otherwise the scope of 'sexual assault' under POCSO and 'outraging modesty of a woman' under the IPC is the same.**
- Two, IPC provides punishment for the offence irrespective of any age of the victim but **POCSO is specific as it is for the protection of children.**
- **Section 7 of the POCSO Act says** that whoever with sexual intent touches the breast of the child is said to commit sexual assault & the Section 8 of Act provides minimum imprisonment of 3 years.

- Whereas **Section 354 of the IPC lays down a minimum of one year imprisonment** for outraging the modesty of a woman.

About this case:

- **The Bench acquitted a man** found guilty of assault on the grounds that he **touched the victim's limbs and breasts only over her clothes and there was no skin-to-skin contact** between them.
- This judgment is likely to set a **dangerous precedent** & finally the apex court stayed the acquittal.
- **In Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997),** the Supreme Court held that the offence relating to modesty of woman cannot be treated insignificant.
- **In Pappu v. State of Chhattisgarh (2015),** though the High Court, acquitted the accused under Section 354 of the IPC as the offence was found lacking in use of criminal force or assault.
- But it convicted him for sexual harassment under Section 354A which requires physical contact and advances as a necessary element.

Inference of the Judgment:

- The essence of a woman's modesty is her sex and the culpable intention of the accused is the crux of the matter in the above cases of sexual assault.
- In UK, Sexual Offences Act 2003 says that touching (with sexual intent) includes touching with any part of the body, with anything else or through anything.
- But the POCSO Act is silent on these matters & it requires skin-to-skin touch as a mandatory element of an offence for the conviction.
- This dilutes the protection given to children & must be declared ultra vires to protect the bodily integrity.

Sedition Law

Why in News?

Recently, the Supreme Court protected a political leader and six senior journalists from arrest in multiple sedition FIRs registered against them.

About Sedition Law:

- **Section 124A** in The Indian Penal Code deals with Sedition.
- The law makes **"words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the government"** punishable by law, a fine and a maximum punishment of life imprisonment.
- **Drafted by Thomas Macaulay**, it was introduced in the **1870s, originally to deal with "increasing Wahabi activities between 1863 and 1870** that posed a challenge to the colonial government".
- In the 19th and early 20th Centuries, the law was mainly **used against Indian political leaders seeking independence from British rule.**
- **Mahatma Gandhi**, who was charged with sedition, famously said the law was "**designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen".**
- **Punishment under 124A:** Sedition is a cognisable, non-compoundable, and non-bailable offence, under which sentencing can be between three years to imprisonment for life. A person charged under this law can't apply for a government job. They have to live without their passport and must present themselves in the court as and when required.

- The most famous victim of Sec 124A, tried in 1897, was **Lokmanya Tilak** for his writings in his newspaper Kesari. He was sentenced to prison, as was **Mahatma Gandhi for his writings in Young India**. Such cases reinforced the perception that this law was for muzzling freedom of speech and expression, and browbeating government's critics and activists.
- In 1962, the **Supreme Court imposed limits on the use of the law**, making incitement to violence a necessary condition.

Major Supreme Court Decisions on Sedition Law:

- The SC highlighted debates over sedition in 1950 in its decisions in Brij Bhushan vs the State of Delhi and Romesh Thappar vs the State of Madras.

  - In these cases, the court held that a **law which restricted speech on the ground that it would disturb public order was unconstitutional.**
  - It also held that **disturbing the public order will mean nothing less than endangering the foundations of the State or threatening its overthrow.**
  - Thus, these decisions prompted the First Constitution Amendment, where **Article 19 (2)** was rewritten to replace "undermining the security of the State" with "in the interest of public order"

- In 1962, the SC decided on the constitutionality of Section 124A in **Kedar Nath Singh vs State of Bihar**.

  - **It upheld the constitutionality of sedition, but limited its application to** "acts involving intention or tendency to create disorder, or disturbance of law and order, or incitement to violence".
  - It distinguished these from **"very strong speech" or the use of "vigorous words"** strongly critical of the government.
- In 1995, the SC, in **Balwant Singh vs State of Punjab**, held that **mere sloganeering which evoked no public response did not amount to sedition.**

Arguments in support of Section 124A:

- Section 124A of the IPC has its utility in **combating anti-national, secessionist and terrorist elements**
- It **protects the elected government from attempts to overthrow the government with violence and illegal means.** The continued existence of the government established by law is an essential condition of the stability of the State
- **If contempt of court invites penal action, contempt of government should also attract punishment**
- Many districts in different states face a **Maoist insurgency and rebel groups virtually run a parallel administration**. These groups openly advocate the overthrow of the state government by revolution
- Against this backdrop, **the abolition of Section 124A would be ill-advised merely because it has been wrongly invoked in some highly publicized cases**

Arguments against Section 124A:

- Section 124A is a **relic of colonial legacy and unsuited in a democracy**. It is a constraint on the legitimate exercise of constitutionally guaranteed freedom of speech and expression.
- **Dissent and criticism of the government are essential ingredients of robust public debate in a vibrant democracy.** They should not be constructed as sedition. Right to question, criticize and change rulers is very fundamental to the idea of democracy.

- The British, who introduced **sedition to oppress Indians**, have themselves abolished the law in their country. There is no reason, why should not India abolish this section.
- The terms used under Section 124A like **'disaffection' are vague and subject to different interpretation** to the whims and fancies of the investigating officers.
- IPC and Unlawful Activities Prevention Act have provisions that penalize **"disrupting the public order" or "overthrowing the government with violence and illegal means". These are sufficient for protecting the national integrity. There is no need for Section 124A.**
- The sedition law is being misused as **a tool to persecute political dissent**. A wide and concentrated executive discretion is inbuilt into it which permits the blatant abuse.
- In 1979, India ratified the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),** which sets forth internationally recognized standards for the protection of freedom of expression. However, misuse of sedition and arbitrary slapping of charges are inconsistent with India's international commitments.

Different viewpoints:

- Jawaharlal Nehru said, **"The sooner we get rid of it the better".**
- **Law Commission of India:**
  - ➢ In August 2018, the Law Commission of India published a consultation paper recommending that it is time to **re-think or repeal the Section 124A** of the Indian Penal Code that deals with sedition.
  - ➢ In its 39th Report (1968), the Law Commission had rejected the idea of repealing the section.
  - ➢ In its 42nd Report (1971), the panel wanted the scope of the section to be expanded to cover the Constitution, the legislature and the judiciary, in addition to the government to be established by law, as institutions against which 'disaffection' should not be tolerated.
  - ➢ In the recent consultation paper on the sedition, the Law Commission has suggested invoking 124A to only criminalize acts committed with the intention to disrupt public order or to overthrow the Government with violence and illegal means.

Way Forward

- India is the largest democracy of the world and the **right to free speech and expression is an essential ingredient of democracy.** The expression or thought that is not in consonance with the policy of the government of the day should not be considered as sedition.
- **Section 124A should not be misused as a tool to curb free speech**. The SC caveat, given in Kedar Nath case, on prosecution under the law can check its misuse. It needs to be examined under the changed facts and circumstances and also on the anvil of ever-evolving tests of necessity, proportionality and arbitrariness.
- **The higher judiciary should use its supervisory powers to sensitize the magistracy and police** to the constitutional provisions protecting free speech.
- **The definition of sedition should be narrowed down**, to include only the issues pertaining to the territorial integrity of India as well as the sovereignty of the country.
- **The word 'sedition' is extremely nuanced and needs to be applied with caution**. It is like a cannon that ought not to be used to shoot a mouse; but the arsenal also demands possession of cannons, mostly as a deterrent, and on occasion for shooting.

Andhra-Odisha Dispute

Why in news?

Andhra Pradesh recently held panchayat elections in three villages in the **Kotia cluster**, which is at the centre of a dispute between Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

Disputed villages

- **The 21 villages**, with a population of nearly 5,000, are located on a remote **hilltop on the inter-state border**.
- These are inhabited by the **Kondh tribals.**
- The region was once a Maoist hotbed and still reports sporadic incidents of violence.
- It is also rich in mineral resources like gold, platinum, manganese, bauxite, graphite and limestone.

Origin of the dispute

- **Prior to April 1, 1936,** villages under **Kotia panchayat were part of Jeypore Estate.**
- In the Constitution of Orissa Order, 1936, the Government of India demarcated Odisha from the erstwhile Madras Presidency.
- The Presidency included the **present-day Andhra Pradesh**.
- In 1942, the Madras government contested the boundary and ordered re-demarcation of the two states.
- In a joint survey of Odisha, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, seven villages of Kotia gram panchayat were recorded as revenue villages.
- **Revenue was collected by the Odisha government.**
- But, the exercise left out the 21 villages now under dispute.
- When the state of **Andhra Pradesh was created in 1955, the villages were not surveyed by the Andhra Pradesh government either.**

Administrative position

- This is the **first time Andhra** has held **panchayat polls in any of these 21 villages.**
- But the **villages participate in Assembly and Lok Sabha elections for both states.**
- They are registered as voters for -
  - ➢ Salur Assembly and Araku Lok Sabha seats of Andhra
  - ➢ Pottangi Assembly and Koraput Lok Sabha seats of Odisha
- The villagers enjoy benefits from both states under various schemes.
- For instance, Odisha constructed a gram panchayat office, a village agricultural centre, the office of an agricultural overseer, a boarding school, and a 380-bed hostel.
- It has also implemented MGNREGA, and distributed BPL cards to over 800 families and job cards to 1800 families.
- The Andhra Pradesh government has built roads, supplied electricity and provided rations to BPL families.

Current status

- **In the early 1980s, Odisha filed a case in the Supreme Court** demanding right and possession of jurisdiction over the 21 villages.
- In 2006 however, the **court said that disputes belonging to the state boundaries** are not within the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.

- So, it ruled that the **matter can only be resolved by the Parliament**.
- The Court thus passed a permanent injunction on the disputed area.
- In Andhra, Vizianagaram District collector said the three villages are separate gram panchayats and fall under Salur Mandal, hence elections were held.
- A day after Andhra notified the panchayat elections here, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated projects worth Rs 18 crore.
- The Odisha government has also moved the Supreme Court now.

Khond Tribes
- Khond are people of the hills and jungles of Odisha state.
- They speak Kui and its southern dialect, Kuwi, of the Dravidian language family.
- Most Khond are now rice cultivators, but there are still groups, such as the Kuttia Khond, who practice slash-and-burn agriculture.
- Niyamgiri hills in Odisha are inhabited by the Dongria Khond, a **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group.**

Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill 2021

Why in news?

The Government of India tabled the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill 2021. It groups **7 SC sub-sects under one name (Devendrakula Velalar).**

About the Bill

- The Tamil Nadu government proposed **certain modifications to the list of the Scheduled Castes.**
- **It groups seven Scheduled Caste sub-sects in Tamil Nadu under the heritage name 'Devendrakula Velalar' (DKV).**
  - ➢ These castes existed as separate entries.
- Any change in the lists of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes requires a constitutional amendment.

  - ➢ The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill 2021 would give effect to the change.
- The grouping of the castes is **a long-standing political demand** in Tamil Nadu.
- However, the **Bill does not address the other demand of some community leaders** - removal of their castes from the Scheduled Caste list.

How influential are these sub-sects?

- These sub-sects have a predominant presence in south Tamil Nadu, which is a communally sensitive region.
- **As per Census 2011**, the **seven subsects constitute about 17.07% of the Scheduled Castes.**
- In the southern districts, the concentration of their population in many constituencies would be far greater.

Rational behind grouping

- **Caste-based political parties and organisations feel that shedding individual Dalit caste** tags would **help in the social advancement of the community.**

- Their argument is that existing caste names were being used more in a derogatory sense to belittle the community.
- It is said that the **DKVs were prosperous wetland owners, and not oppressed sections, socially or economically**.
- Besides, these seven Scheduled Caste subsects share similarities, culturally.

Historical Background:

- The demand for such grouping has its **genesis in latter day British India.**

  - ➢ Back then these subsects were included under the Scheduled Castes on the basis of their economic conditions.
- However, the voices remained feeble for long, only gaining traction in the 1990s with the emergence of influential community leaders.
- There were caste clashes between the Mukkulathors, an Other Backward Classes (OBC) community, and the Pallars, in the latter half of 1990s.

  - ➢ This was over the naming of districts and transport corporations after community leaders.
  - ➢ The clash led to a community consolidation of the subsects.
- In the 2000s**, the community leaders placed an unusual additional demand.**

  - ➢ This was the delisting of the seven subsects from the Scheduled Castes category.
  - ➢ They argued that being in the Schedule, instead of being a facilitator, served as a detriment to social advancement.
- Notably, this was at a time when some OBC communities were vociferous in wanting to be socially devalued and included among the Most Backward Classes.

Response to the Bill:

- Community leaders welcome the Bill. However, they **still insist on the fulfilment of the second demand of exclusion from the Scheduled Castes.** Besides, there has been opposition from within.
- A section of Pallars and other castes is apprehensive of losing the benefit of Scheduled Castes reservation.

Concerns and challenges with the move

- Delisting and shuffling of castes from one reserved social class to another is fraught with political and administrative risks.
- It could disturb the internal sharing of the communal reservation quota pool by existing castes.
- Also, it could invite objections from other communities or spur political demands for similar reclassification.
- **Vathiriyans** - There is resistance from one of the subsects, the Vathiriyans, for the grouping.
- They even moved the court challenging the demand for grouping.
- **Vellalar** - There is an undercurrent of resentment from within the Vellalar community, an influential OBC segment, to the assignment of the DKV title.
- The traditional Vellalars are spread across Tamil Nadu under sub-groups such as Kongu Vellalar, Thuluva Vellalar, Saiva Vellalar, Choliya Vellalar, Chera Vellalar and Pandya Vellalar.
- Vellalars claim entitlement for the exclusive use of the 'Vellalar' title.
- They see the demand for use of the same title by the Dalit subsects as "identity theft" and "cultural misappropriation".

- They claim that the use of the 'Vellalar' title by the subsects was a modern day inclusion by community leaders and not a historic practice.
- They have no objection to the social advancement of the seven subsects including their demand to be delisted from the Scheduled Castes.
- The Vellalars suggest that the subsects could be grouped under the title 'Devendrakulathars' or 'Devendrakulars', but not 'Vellalar.'
- **Dalit concerns -** Among the Dalits too, opinion is divided on the grouping of subsects under a common title.
- There are apprehensions that over time, this could trigger arguments as to which of the larger groups is numerically stronger.
- This, in turn, **might cloud the larger Dalit cause.**
- They argue that Dalits as such cannot be treated as a homogeneous group.
- There are differences within the entities in terms of social status and geographical identity.

Lateral Entry into the Administrative Services

Why in News?

Recently, the **Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)** has issued an advertisement to recruit 30 persons at the Joint Secretary and Director level in the Central administration through **Lateral Entry.**

About Lateral Entry:

- The term lateral entry relates to the **appointment of specialists, mainly those from the private sector**, in government organisations.
- **Government is looking for outstanding individuals,** with expertise in revenue, financial services, economic affairs, agriculture, cooperation and farmers' welfare, road transport and highway, shipping, environment, forests and climate change, and new and renewable energy, civil aviation and commerce.

Advantages of Lateral Entry:

- **People with expertise and specialist domain knowledge** are required to navigate the complex needs of present day administrative challenges.
- Lateral entry will help in addressing **the problem of shortage of IAS officers** at the Centre.
- It will help in bringing the **values of economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the Government sector.**
- It will help in building a **culture of performance within the Government sector.**
- In the present times, governance is becoming more participatory and a multi actor endeavour, thus lateral entry provides stakeholders such as the **private sector and non-profits an opportunity to participate in the governance process.**

Issues Involved:

The key to the success of this scheme would lie in **selecting the right people in a manner which is manifestly transparent.**

- The **value systems between the government and the private sector are quite different**.
- It is important to ensure that the people who come in are **able to have the skills to adjust to a totally different system of functioning.** This is because the government imposes its own limitations.
- **Private sector approach is profit oriented**. On the other hand, the motive of Government is public service. This is also a fundamental transition that a private sector person has to make while working in government.

- Lateral entry is likely to **face strong resistance from in service Civil Servants and their associations.** It may also demotivate existing officials.
- The movement from the **private sector raises issues of potential conflict of interest**. Thus, a stringent code of conduct for entrants is required.
- **Lateral entry at only top level policy making positions may have little impact on field level implementation, given the multiple links in the chain of command from the Union Government to a rural village.**

Way Forward

- Lateral entry is **not a panacea for** the **ills of governance**. However, it opens a small window to get the best from the American and British system and puts pressure on the system to reform and perform.
- **For lateral entry to deliver and more importantly win the confidence of the most oppressed sections of** society, **it must be fair, transparent, and egalitarian**. Agencies such as UPSC can play a role based on a selection process approved by Parliament.

Economics

Vaghai-Bilimora Heritage Line

Why in News?

The Western Railway has decided to not stop the services of three trains, including the 107-year-old narrow gauge heritage train between Vaghai and Bilimora, in Gujarat permanently.

Key Highlights:

- It is a **63-km narrow gauge train connecting Bilimora in Navsari district with Waghai in Dang district in Gujarat**.
- It was started by **rulers of the Gaekwad dynasty** of the princely state of Baroda in **1913.**
  - ➢ The Gaekwad jurisdiction was spread across parts of Saurashtra, Mehsana in north Gujarat, and Bilimora in South Gujarat.
- **The British laid railway tracks and it was operated by Gaekwad Baroda State Railway (GBSR) owned by Sayajirao Gaekwad III.**
- After Independence the Western Railway took charge of the train from GBSR.
- In 1994, the original steam engine was put on display at Churchgate Heritage Gallery in Mumbai.
- The Indian Railways had proposed to preserve its route as **"industrial heritage" in 2018.**

Usage

- Transportation of sag timber from deep forest areas.
- Used by the tribals for going to study, work & to sell their agriculture produce as interior villages had no road connectivity to towns.

15th Finance Commission Recommendations: Resource Allocation

Why in News?

Recently, the government accepted the 15th Finance Commission's recommendation to maintain the States' share in the divisible pool of taxes to **41%** for the five-year period starting 2021-22.

- ➢ The 15th Finance Commission, chaired by **NK Singh**

Recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission

- The 15th Finance Commission proposed recommendations for both vertical and horizontal devolution.

Vertical Devolution

- 14th Finance commission which had recommended 42% had a view that tax devolution should be the primary route of transfer of resources to States as they are a more objective form of transfer of resources as compared to other forms.
- 15th Finance Commission also agrees with this view but reduced the States' share to 41% **because of the re-organization of the State of Jammu & Kashmir into UTs of Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir through the Jammu & Kashmir Re-organization Act, 2019.**

> - **UTs are the responsibilities of the Union** and their demands have to be met from the Union Government's resources.

Horizontal Devolution

- Horizontal devolution is done primarily to **enable the States to provide basic public goods and services with equivalent tax effort.** The various criteria to be considered for horizontal devolution are classified into three broad groups as follows.
- **Need-based criteria:** Population, area and forest & ecology form the need-based criteria. This is needed to address the fiscal gap of States existing due to the structural mismatch between the States' resources and their expenditure liabilities.
- **Equity-based criterion:** Income distance forms the equity-based criterion to ensure fiscal equalization given the large differences in the resource base available and status of development within the country.
- **Performance-based criteria:** Demographic performance and tax effort are part of the performance-based criteria that is framed to reward and incentivize States to perform better, in terms of utilization of resources available to them.

Table 1 Horizontal Devolution Criteria

Criteria	14th FC	15th FC
Income Distance	50.0	45.0
Population of 1971	17.5	–
Population of 2011	10.0	15.0
Area	15.0	15.0
Forest Cover	7.5	–
Forest & Ecology	–	10.0
Demographic Performance	–	12.5
Tax Effort	–	2.5
Total	100	100

- **Population:** Only 2011 Census numbers are used as per the ToR. Population criterion is assigned a weight of only 15 per cent as some of the other criteria will also be scaled by it.
- **Area:** A moderate weight of 15 per cent for the area criterion is assigned larger area incurs some additional administrative costs but it may not lead to a proportional increase in the cost of providing services.

- **Forest and Ecology:** This criterion is for the ecological services being provided by a State's forest cover to the country as a whole and is arrived at by calculating the share of the dense forest of each State in the aggregate dense forest of all the States. A weight of 10 per cent is assigned for the forest and ecology criterion.
- **Income Distance:** Distance of per capita income is the criteria used to make the devolution formula more equalizing and progressive, and provides higher devolution to States with lower per capita income and lower own tax capacity. The XV-FC retained the income distance criterion with a weight of 45 per cent.
- **Demographic Performance:** An abrupt change from 1971 Census data to 2011 Census data should not unfairly penalize some States which have performed well on population control. Hence, the commission recommended introducing a new performance-based criterion to reward States who have performed well on the demography front. This criterion of demographic performance is computed by using the reciprocal of TFR of each State, scaled by the population data of Census 1971. States which have achieved lower TFR will be scored higher and vice versa. This criterion is assigned a weight of 12.5 per cent.
- **Tax Effort:** The inclusion of tax effort as a performance-based criterion will reward the States with higher tax collection efficiency and encourage all States to be more tax efficient. It is computed by taking the ratio of the average of per capita own tax revenue of a State over three years and its per capita GSDP and scaling this ratio by the population of the State. Total weight of 2.5 per cent has been assigned to this criterion.

> - **Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have received the largest devolutions for 2020-21 while Karnataka and Kerala saw the largest decreases** in the share of the **divisible pool.**

Grants in Aid

- **Revenue Deficit Grants:** 14 states are estimated to face a revenue deficit post-devolution. The Commission has recommended revenue deficit grants worth Rs 74,341 crore to these 14 states. Furthermore, the three states of Karnataka, Mizoram, and Telangana received special grants to make up the shortfall between untied transfers received by these States in the form of tax devolution plus revenue deficit grant in 2020-21 vis-a-vis the corresponding amount in 2019-20.
- **Sectoral Grants:** The XV-FC is considering recommending sectoral grants for nutrition, health, pre-primary education, judiciary, rural connectivity, railways, statistics and police training, and housing during its tenure. Of these, grants for nutrition, to augment the efforts of the States towards reducing and ultimately eliminating malnutrition, is specifically recommended even in 2020-21.
- **Performance-based Incentives:** Six broad areas are identified to provide performance-based incentives to States.
> - Implementation of Agriculture Reforms
> - Development of Aspirational Districts and Aspirational Blocks
> - Power Sector Reforms
> - Enhancing Trade including Exports
> - Incentives for Education
> - Promotion of Domestic and International Tourism

Empowering Local Bodies

Some significant changes made by XV-FC compared to previous Finance Commissions:

- To recommend grants to all tiers of the **Panchayati Raj** to enable pooling of resources to create durable community assets and improve their functional viability.
- To give grants to the **Fifth and Sixth Schedule** areas and Cantonment Boards.

- To provide for tied grants in the critical sectors of sanitation and drinking water to ensure additional funds to the local bodies over and above the funds allocated for these purposes under the centrally sponsored schemes (CSS), Swachh Bharat and Jal Jeevan Missions.
- **To account for increasing urbanization the share of urban local bodies in Finance Commission grants to local bodies should be gradually increased to 40 per cent over the medium term.**
- Since larger cities will tend to grow faster with the agglomeration effect, the fifty Million-Plus cities in the country need differentiated treatment, with special emphasis on meeting the challenges of bad ambient air quality, groundwater depletion and sanitation.

Grants to Local Bodies:

➤ The Commission has recommended a total of **Rs 90,000 crore for grants to the local bodies in 2020-21.**
➤ This amounts to **4.31% of the divisible pool.**
➤ These grants will be made available to all three tiers of **Panchayat- village, block, and district.**
➤ The inter-se distribution of grants for local bodies among the States may be based on population and area in the **ratio of 90:10.**
➤ For 2020-21, the proportion of grants between rural and urban local bodies recommended by the XV-FC is in the ratio of 67.5:32.5.
➤ For all urban bodies, the distribution of grants for 2020-21 is based on population.

Disaster Risk Management

- To promote local-level mitigation activities, mitigation funds shall be set up at both national and state levels in the form of NDMF and State Disaster Mitigation Funds (SDMF), following the **Disaster Management Act.**
- The Commission recommended the creation of funds for disaster mitigation along with disaster response, which will now together be called as National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) and State Disaster Risk Management Funds (SDRMF).
- **Recommended grants for the State Disaster Risk Management Fund is Rs 28,983 crore**. Out of this, the share of SDRF shall be 80 per cent and the share of SDMF 20 per cent. The allocation for the National Disaster Risk Management Fund is Rs 12,390 crore.

Allocations for NDRF / SDRF will be further sub-divided into

➤ Response and Relief – 40 per cent
➤ Recovery and Reconstruction – 30 per cent
➤ Capacity Building – 10 per cent

Criticism

- **Performance based incentives disincentivizes independent decision-making**. Any conditions on the state's ability to borrow will have an adverse effect on the spending by the state; particularly on development thus, undermines cooperative fiscal federalism.
- **It does not hold the Union government accountable for its own fiscal prudence** and dilutes the joint responsibility that the Union and States have.

Key Highlights of Union Budget 2020-21

Presenting the first Union Budget of the third decade of 21st century, Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, unveiled a series of far-reaching reforms, aimed at energizing the Indian economy through a combination of short-term, medium-term, and long-term measures.

Union Budget
- Union Budget is the most comprehensive report of the Government's finances in which revenues from all sources and outlays for all activities are consolidated. The Budget also contains estimates of the Government's accounts for the next fiscal year called Budgeted Estimates.

Finance Bill
- The Bill produced immediately after the presentation of the Union Budget detailing the Imposition, abolition, alteration or regulation of taxes proposed in the Budget.

Vote on Account
- The Vote on Account is a grant made in advance by the parliament, in respect of the estimated expenditure for a part of new financial year, pending the completion of procedure relating to the voting on the Demand for Grants and the passing of the Appropriation Act.

Excess Grants
- If the total expenditure under a Grant exceeds the provision allowed through its original Grant and Supplementary Grant, then, the excess requires regularization by obtaining the Excess Grant from the Parliament under Article 115 of the Constitution of India. It will have to go though the whole process as in the case of the Annual Budget, i.e. through presentation of Demands for Grants and passing of Appropriation Bills.

Budget Estimates
- Amount of money allocated in the Budget to any ministry or scheme for the coming financial year.

Revised Estimates
- Revised Estimates are mid-year review of possible expenditure, taking into account the rest of expenditure, New Services and New instrument of Services etc. Revised Estimates are not voted by the Parliament, and hence by itself do not provide any authority for expenditure. Any additional projections made in the Revised Estimates need to be authorized for expenditure through the Parliament's approval or by Re appropriation order.

Re-appropriations
- Re-appropriations allow the Government to re-appropriate provisions from one sub-head to another within the same Grant. Re-appropriation provisions may be sanctioned by a competent authority at any time before the close of the financial year to which such grant or appropriation relates. The Comptroller & Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee reviews these re- appropriations and comments on them for taking corrective actions.

Outcome Budget
- From the fiscal year 2006-07, every Ministry presents a preliminary Outcome Budget to the Ministry of Finance, which is responsible for compiling them. The Outcome Budget is a progress card on what various Ministries and Departments have done with the outlays in the previous annual budget. It measures the development outcomes of all Government programs and whether the money has been spent for the purpose it was sanctioned including the outcome of the fund usage.

Guillotine
- Parliament, unfortunately, has very limited time for scrutinising the expenditure demands of all the Ministries. So, once the prescribed period for the discussion on Demands for Grants is over, the Speaker of Lok Sabha puts all the outstanding Demands for Grants, Whether discussed or not, to the vote of the House. This process is popularly known as 'Guillotine'.

Cut Motions
- Motions for reduction to various Demands for Grants are made in the Form of Cut. Motions seeking to reduce the sums sought by Government on grounds of economy or difference of opinion on matters of policy or just in order to voice a grievance.

Three prominent themes of the Budget 2020-21

- **Aspirational India** - better standards of living with access to health, education and better jobs for all sections of the society
- **Economic Development for all** - "Sabka Saath , Sabka Vikas , Sabka Vishwas".
- **Caring Society** - both humane and compassionate; Antyodaya as an article of faith.
- Three broad themes are held together by:
  - ➢ Corruption free, policy-driven Good Governance.
  - ➢ Clean and sound financial sector.
- **Ease of Living underlined by the three themes of Union Budget 2020-21.**

Components of Aspirational India

  - ➢ Agriculture, Irrigation, and Rural Development
  - ➢ Wellness, Water, and Sanitation
  - ➢ Education and Skills

Agriculture, Irrigation and Rural Development

- **Total Allocation: 2.83 lakh crore. Out of which, Rs. 1.60 lakh crore** has been allocated for Agriculture, Irrigation & allied activities and Rs. 1.23 lakh crore for Rural development & Panchayati Raj.
- **Agriculture credit**, which means a type of financing in the form of credit or loans for agricultural producers, includes:
  - ➢ The target for the year 2020-21 has been set at 15 lakh crore.
  - ➢ PM-KISAN beneficiaries to be covered under the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme.
  - ➢ NABARD Re-finance Scheme to be further expanded.
  - ➢ Comprehensive measures for 100 water-stressed districts proposed.

Blue Economy:

- 1 lakh crore fisheries' exports to be achieved by 2024-25.
- 200 lakh tonnes fish production targeted by 2022-23.
- 3477 Sagar Mitras and 500 Fish Farmer Producer Organisations to involve youth in fisheries extension.
- Growing of algae, sea-weed and cage culture to be promoted.
- Framework for development, management and conservation of marine fishery resources.
- **Kisan Rail** to be setup by Indian Railways through Public Private Partnership (PPP) to build a seamless national cold supply chain for perishables (milk, meat, fish, etc.) and it will comprise refrigerated coaches in Express and Freight trains.
- **Krishi Udaan** to be launched by the Ministry of Civil Aviation on international and national routes to transport perishable goods to less accessible areas such as the north-east and tribal districts.
- **One-Product One-District** for better marketing and export in the Horticulture sector.
- **Fertilizers:** Balanced use of all kinds of fertilizers - traditional organic and innovative fertilizers.

Measures for organic, natural, and integrated farming:

- **Jaivik Kheti Portal** – online national organic products market to be strengthened.

- **Zero-Budget Natural Farming**, which was mentioned in 2019 Budget, is a farming practice that believes in natural growth of crops without adding any fertilizers and pesticides or any other foreign elements, to be included.
- **Integrated Farming Systems** in rain-fed areas to be expanded.
- Multi-tier cropping, bee-keeping, solar pumps, solar energy production in non-cropping season to be added.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM)** to be expanded under which 20 lakh farmers to be provided for setting up stand-alone solar pumps. Another 15 lakh farmers to be helped to solarize their grid-connected pump sets. The scheme enables farmers to set up solar power generation capacity on their fallow/barren lands and to sell it to the grid.
- **Village Storage Scheme** to be run by the Self Help Groups (SHGs) to provide farmers a good holding capacity and reduce their logistics cost. Women, SHGs can regain their position as **Dhaanya Lakshmi.**
- NABARD to map and geo-tag agro-warehouses, cold storages, reefer van facilities, etc.
- Warehousing in line with Warehouse Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) norms:
- Viability Gap Funding for setting up such efficient warehouses at the block/taluk level.
- Food Corporation of India (FCI) and Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC) to undertake such warehouse building.
- Financing on Negotiable Warehousing Receipts (e-NWR) to be integrated with e-NAM.
- State governments who undertake implementation of model laws (issued by the Central government) to be encouraged.

Livestock:

- Doubling of milk processing capacity to 108 million MT from 53.5 million MT by 2025.
- Artificial insemination to be increased to 70% from the present 30%.
- MNREGS to be dovetailed to develop fodder farms.
- Foot and Mouth Disease, Brucellosis in cattle and Peste Des Petits ruminants (PPR) in sheep and goat to be eliminated by 2025.
- **Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana** – 0.5 crore households mobilized with 58 lakh SHGs for poverty alleviation.

WELLNESS, WATER AND SANITATION

- Rs. 69,000 crore allocated for overall Healthcare sector.
- **PM Jan Arogya Yojana**: Rs. 6400 crore (out of Rs. 69,000 crore) has been allocated for PMJAY.
- More than 20,000 hospitals already empanelled under PMJAY.
- Viability Gap Funding (VGF) window proposed for setting up hospitals in the Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode.
- Aspirational Districts with no Ayushman empanelled hospitals to be covered in Phase 1.
- Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence will be used to target diseases.
- **Jan Aushadhi Kendra Scheme** to offer 2000 medicines and 300 surgical in all districts by 2024.
- **TB Harega Desh Jeetega campaign** launched in order to end Tuberculosis by 2025.
- **Jal Jeevan Mission** (which was aimed to provide piped water supply to all households)
- 3.60 lakh crore to be approved (out of which Rs. 11,500 crore for FY 2020-21).
- Augmenting local water sources, recharging existing sources, and promoting water harvesting and de-salination.
- Cities with million-plus population to be encouraged to achieve the objective during the current year itself.

Swachh Bharat Mission:

- **Rs. 12,300 crore** to be allocated for this scheme in 2020-21.

- Commitment to Open Defecation Free (ODF)-Plus in order to sustain ODF behavior.
- Emphasis on liquid and greywater management.
- Focus on Solid-waste collection, source segregation, and processing.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

- Rs. 99,300 crore for education sector and Rs. 3000 crore for skill development in 2020-21.
- **New Education Policy** to be announced soon.
- **National Police University and National Forensic Science University** proposed for policing science, forensic science, and cyber-forensics.
- Degree level full-fledged online education program to be provided by top-100 institutions in the **National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF).**
- Up to 1-year internship to fresh engineers to be provided by Urban Local Bodies.
- This budget proposes to attach a medical college to an existing district hospital in PPP mode.
- Special bridge courses to be designed by the Ministries of Health, and Skill Development in order to fulfill the demand for teachers, nurses, para-medical staff and care-givers abroad and to bring in equivalence in the skill sets of the workforce and employers' standards.
- Apprenticeship embedded degree/diploma courses to be provided by 150 higher educational institutions by March 2021.
- External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to be enabled for education sector.
- Ind-SAT Exam is proposed for Asian and African countries as a part of **Study in India**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Industry, Commerce and Investment

- 27,300 crore allocated for FY21 for development and promotion of Industry and Commerce.
- In order to provide "end to end" facilitation and support to investors and to work through a portal, **Investment Clearance Cell** is proposed to be set up.
- **Five new smart cities** proposed to be developed on the pattern of Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT) of Gandhinagar with dedicated metro corridors, energy-conserving buildings, walkability elements, state-of-the-art design elements and automated garbage collection.
- Scheme to encourage manufacture of mobile phones, electronic equipment and semi-conductor packaging is also proposed.
- **National Technical Textiles Mission** to be set up with four-year implementation period from 2020-21 to 2023-24 at an estimated outlay of Rs 1480 crore to position India as a global leader in Technical Textiles.
- The new export credit insurance scheme, **NIRVIK (Niryat Rin Vikas Yojana),** offering lower premiums for small exporters, higher insurance cover and faster claim settlement, will be implemented in FY2020-21.
- Turnover of Government **e-Marketplace (GeM)** is proposed to be increased upto Rs 3 lakh crore.
- Scheme for Revision of duties and taxes on exported products to be launched. Exporters to be digitally refunded duties and taxes levied at the Central, State and local levels, which are otherwise not exempted or refunded.
- All Ministries to issue quality standard orders as per Prime Minister's vision of **"Zero Defect-Zero Effect" manufacturing.**

Infrastructure

- 100 lakh crore to be invested on infrastructure over the next 5 years.
- **National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)** will enable a forward outlook on infrastructure projects which will create jobs, improve ease of living, and provide equitable access to infrastructure for all, thereby making growth more inclusive. NIP includes economic and social infrastructure projects. More than 6500 projects across sectors to be classified as per their size and stage of development.
- **A National Logistics Policy**, aimed at promoting seamless movement of goods across the country and reducing high transaction cost of traders, to be released soon to clarify roles of the Union Government, State Governments and key regulators.
- **A single window e-logistics market** is proposed to be created.
- Focus to be on generation of employment, skills and making MSMEs competitive.
- **National Skill Development Agency** to give special thrust to infrastructure-focused skill development opportunities.
- Project preparation facility for infrastructure projects proposed to actively involve young engineers, management graduates and economists from Universities.
- Infrastructure agencies of the government to involve youth-power in start-ups.
- 1.7 lakh crore proposed for transport infrastructure in 2020-21.

Highways:

- Accelerated development of highways to be undertaken, including 2500 Km access control highways, 9000 Km of economic corridors, 2000 Km of coastal and land port roads, 2000 Km of strategic highways.
- **Delhi-Mumbai Expressway** and two other packages to be completed by 2023. **Chennai-Bengaluru Expressway to be started.**
- **Proposed to monetize at least 12 lots of highways** spanning over 6000 Km before 2024 in a bid to encourage the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to pursue commercialization of roads to raise funds.

Indian Railways:

- Large solar power capacity to be set up alongside rail tracks, on land owned by railways.
- Four station re-development projects and operation of 150 passenger trains through PPP.
- **More Tejas-type trains** to connect iconic tourist destinations.
- High speed train between Mumbai and Ahmedabad to be actively pursued.
- **Bengaluru Suburban transport project**, 148-km long, at a cost of Rs 18600 crore, to have fares on metro model. Central Government to provide 20% of equity and facilitate external assistance up to 60% of the project cost.

Ports & Water-ways:

- Corporatizing at least one major port and its listing on stock exchanges to be considered.
- Governance framework keeping with global benchmarks needed for more efficient sea-ports.
- Economic activity along river banks to be energized as per Prime Minister's **Arth Ganga** Special focus on developing inland waterways under Arth-Ganga project will boost economic development and inclusive growth for farmers, small traders and villagers. Also, cargo volume on Ganga will be increased by 4 times.

Airports:

- 100 more airports to be developed by 2024 to support **UDAN scheme**, which is a regional airport development and Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) of Government of India aimed at making air travel affordable and to

boost inclusive national economic development, job growth and air transport infrastructure of all regions and states of India.

- Air fleet number expected to go up from present 600 to 1200 during this year.

Electricity:

- **"Smart" metering** to be promoted. Smart metering is a way for businesses to keep track of how much energy they're using so they can adjust their usage, if necessary.
- More measures to reform DISCOMs to be taken. This new reform is aimed at addressing the requirements that power distribution companies have for ensuring 24x7 supply. The scheme will have assistance for reduction of losses. This assistance will be in terms of technology, modern equipment to help address the losses.

Power:

- 22, 000 crore proposed for power and renewable energy sector in 2020-21.
- **National gas grid** to be expanded from the present 16200 km to 27000 km.
- Further reforms to facilitate transparent price discovery and ease of transactions.

New Economy

- To take advantage of new technologies:
- Policy to enable private sector to build **Data Centre parks** throughout the country to be unveiled soon.
- **Fibre to the Home (FTTH) connections** through Bharatnet to link 100,000 Gram Panchayats this year. Rs.6000 crore proposed for Bharatnet programme in 2020-21.
- 8000 crore proposed over five years for **National Mission on Quantum Technologies and Applications**.

Financial Sector

- As part of reforms accomplished in Public Sector Banks (PSBs), 10 banks are consolidated into 4 and Rs. 3, 50,000 crore capital infused. More governance reforms to be carried out to bring in transparency and greater professionalism in PSBs.
- Few PSBs to be encouraged to **approach the capital market to raise additional capital.**
- **Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC)** permitted to increase Deposit Insurance Coverage to Rs. 5 lakh from Rs.1 lakh per depositor.
- Scheduled Commercial Bank's health will be monitored through a robust mechanism, keeping depositors' money safe.
- Cooperative Banks to be strengthen by **amending Banking Regulation Act** for increasing professionalism, enabling access to capital and improving governance and oversight for sound banking through the RBI.
- NBFCs eligibility limit for debt recovery reduced from Rs. 500 crore to Rs 100 crore asset size and Rs 1 crore to Rs 50 lakh loan size.
- **Private capital in Banking system:** Government to sell its balance holding in IDBI Bank to private, retail and institutional investors through the stock exchange.
- Easier mobility in jobs by auto-enrolment in Universal Pension coverage. Inter-operability mechanism to safeguard the accumulated corpus.
- **Amendment in Pension Fund Regulatory Development Authority of India Act** is proposed to strengthen regulating role of PFRDAI, to facilitate separation of National Pension System trust for government employees from PFRDAI and to enable establishment of a Pension Trust by the employees other than Government.

- Amendment in **Factory Regulation Act 2011** is proposed to enable NBFCs to extend invoice financing to the MSMEs through TReDS. An app-based invoice financing loans platform for MSMEs to be launched to prevent the problem of delayed payments and consequential cash flows mismatches.
- Window for **MSME's debt restructuring by RBI** to be extended by one year till March 31, 2021.
- **Export promotion of MSMEs** for selected sector such as pharmaceuticals, auto components and others. Rs 1000 crore scheme anchored by EXIM Bank together with SIDBI. Hand holding support will be provided for technology up gradations, R&D, business strategy etc.

Financial Market

- **Deepening Bond Market** by opening fully certain specified categories of Government securities for non-resident investors also. Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPI) limit in corporate bonds increased to 15% from 9%.
- **Debt Based Exchange Traded Fund** to be expanded by a new Debt-ETF, consisting primarily of Government Securities to give attractive access to retail investors, pension funds and long-term investors.
- **A Partial Credit Guarantee scheme for the NBFCs** formulated post-Union budget 2019-20 to allow state-run banks to buy lower-rated assets from non-bank lenders. Its liquidity constraints will be addressed.

Disinvestment: Government to sell a part of its holding in Life Insurance Corporation by way of Initial Public Offer (IPO).

Fiscal Management

- **XV Finance Commission (FC) has given its first report for FY2020-21.** Recommendations are accepted in substantial measure. Its final report for five years beginning 2021-22 to be submitted during the latter part of the year.
- **GST Compensation Fund**: Balances due out of collection of the years 2016-17 and 2017-18 to be transferred to the Fund, in two instalments. Transfers to the fund to be limited only to collection by way of GST compensation cess.
- **Overhaul of Centrally Sponsored Schemes** and Central Sector Schemes necessary to align them with emerging social and economic needs of tomorrow and to ensure that scarce public resources are spent optimally.
- **Fiscal deficit of 3.8% estimated for FY20 (2019-20) and 3.5% for FY21 (2020-21).**
- A good part of the borrowings for the financial year 2020-21 to go towards Capital expenditure.

Direct Tax: Efforts are being made to stimulate growth, simplify tax structure, bring ease of compliance, and reduce litigations.

Personal Income Tax:

- New and simplified personal income tax regime proposed to provide **significant relief to middle class taxpayers.**
- **Around 70 of the existing exemptions and deductions (more than 100) to be removed** in the new simplified regime. Remaining exemptions and deductions to be reviewed and rationalized.
- **New tax regime to be optional** - an individual may continue to pay tax as per the old regime and avail deductions and exemptions.
- Measures to pre-fill the income tax return initiated so that an individual who opts for the new regime gets pre-filled income tax returns and would need no assistance from an expert to pay income tax.

Taxable Income Slab (Rs.)	Existing tax rates	New tax rates
0-2.5 Lakh	Exempt	Exempt
2.5-5 Lakh	5%	5%
5-7.5 Lakh	20%	10%
7.5-10 Lakh	20%	15%
10-12.5 Lakh	30%	20%
12.5-15 Lakh	30%	25%
Above 15 Lakh	30%	30%

Corporate Tax: Tax rate of **15% extended** to new electricity generation companies.

Dividend Distribution Tax (DDT):

- DDT removed making India a more attractive investment destination.
- **Deduction to be allowed for dividend** received by holding company from its subsidiary.
- **Start-ups:** Start-ups with turnover up to Rs. 100 crore to enjoy 100% deduction for 3 consecutive assessment years out of 10 years.
- **MSMEs to boost less-cash economy:** Turnover threshold for audit increased to Rs. 5 crore from Rs. 1 crore for businesses carrying out less than 5% business transactions in cash.

Cooperatives:

- Parity brought between cooperatives and corporate sector.
- Option to cooperative societies to be taxed at 22% + 10% surcharge and 4% Cess with no exemption/deductions.
- Cooperative societies exempted from Alternate Minimum Tax (AMT) just like Companies are exempted from the Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT).
- **Tax concession for foreign investments:** 100% tax exemption to the interest, dividend and capital gains income on investment made in infrastructure and priority sectors before 31st March, 2024 with a minimum lock-in period of 3 years by the Sovereign Wealth Fund of foreign governments.
- **Affordable housing:** Additional deduction up to Rs. 1.5 lakhs for interest paid on loans taken for an affordable house extended till 31st March, 2021.

Tax Facilitation Measures

- **Instant PAN to be allotted** online through Aadhaar.
- **'Vivad Se Vishwas' scheme,** with a deadline of 30th June, 2020, to reduce litigations in direct taxes:
- **Waiver of interest and penalty** - only disputed taxes to be paid for payments till 31st March, 2020. Additional amount to be paid if availed after 31st March, 2020.

- Benefits to taxpayers in whose cases appeals are pending at any level.
- **Faceless appeals to be enabled** by amending the Income Tax Act.

For charity institutions:

- Pre-filling in return through information of donations furnished by the done.
- Process of registration to be made completely electronic.
- Unique registration number (URN) to be issued to all new and existing charity institutions.
- Provisional registration to be allowed for new charity institutions for three years.
- CBDT to adopt a Taxpayers' Charter.
- **Losses of merged banks:** Amendments proposed to the Income-tax Act to ensure that entities benefit from unabsorbed losses and depreciation of the amalgamating entities.

Indirect Tax

Good and Services Tax:

- Cash reward system envisaged to incentivize customers to seek invoice.
- Simplified return with features like SMS based filing for nil return and improved input tax credit flow to be implemented from 1st April, 2020 as a pilot run.
- Electronic invoice to capture critical information in a centralized system to be implemented in a phased manner.
- Aadhaar based verification of taxpayers being introduced to weed out dummy or non-existent units.
- GST rate structure being deliberated to address inverted duty structure.

Customs Duties:

- Customs duty raised on footwear to 35% from 25% and on furniture goods to 25% from 20%. Basic customs duty on imports of news print and light-weight coated paper reduced from 10% to 5%.
- Customs duty rates revised on electric vehicles and parts of mobiles.
- **5% health Cess** to be imposed on the imports of medical devices, except those exempt from Basic Custom Duty (BCD).
- Lower customs duty on certain inputs and raw materials like fuse, chemicals, and plastics.
- Higher customs duty on certain goods like auto-parts, chemicals, etc. which are also being made domestically.

Trade Policy Measures

- Customs Act being amended to enable proper checks of imports under FTAs.
- Rules of Origin requirements to be reviewed for certain sensitive items.
- Provisions relating to **safeguard duties** to be strengthened to enable regulating such surge in imports in a systematic way.
- Provisions for checking dumping of goods and imports of subsidized goods being strengthened.
- Suggestions for reviews of exemptions from customs duty to be crowd-sourced.
- **Excise duty proposed to be raised on Cigarettes** and other tobacco products, no change made in the duty rates of bidis.
- **Anti-dumping duty on PTA abolished** to benefit the textile sector.

CARING SOCIETY

- Allocation of **Rs. 35,600 crore for nutrition-related programmes** proposed for the FY21.

- 28, 600 crore proposed for women specific programs.
- 85,000 crore proposed for welfare of Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes in FY21.
- 53, 700 crore provided to further development and welfare of Scheduled Tribes.
- Enhanced allocation of **Rs. 9,500 crore provided for Senior citizens and Divyang in FY21.**
- Appointment of a task force is proposed to present its recommendations regarding the Issue about age of a girl entering motherhood in six months' time.
- Financial support for wider acceptance of technologies, identified by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to ensure no manual cleaning of sewer systems or septic tanks, to be provided.

Culture & Tourism

- Rs. 3150 crore proposed for Ministry of Culture in FY 2020-21, while Rs. 2500 crore are allocated for tourism promotion.
- **An Indian Institute of Heritage and Conservation** under Ministry of Culture is proposed with the status of a deemed University.
- **5 archaeological sites to be developed as iconic sites with on-site Museums:** Rakhigarhi (Haryana), Hastinapur (Uttar Pradesh), Shivsagar (Assam), Dholavira (Gujarat), Adichanallur (Tamil Nadu).
- **Re-curation of the Indian Museum in Kolkata**, announced by Prime Minister in January 2020.
- Museum on Numismatics and Trade to be located in the historic Old Mint building in Kolkata.
- Support for setting up of a **Tribal Museum in Ranchi (Jharkhand).**
- **Maritime museum to be set up at Lothal**- the Harappan age maritime site near Ahmedabad, by Ministry of Shipping.
- State governments expected to develop a roadmap for certain identified destinations and formulate financial plans during 2021 against which specified grants to be made available to the States in 2020-21.

Environment & Climate Change

- Allocation for Environment & Climate Change is Rs.4400 crore for FY21.
- Proposal to close the running old thermal power plants with carbon emission above the pre-set norms.
- States that are formulating and implementing plans for ensuring cleaner air in cities above one million to be encouraged.
- PM launched Coalition for **Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)** with Secretariat in Delhi. This is second such international initiative after International Solar Alliance (ISA).

Governance

- Taxpayer Charter to be enshrined in the Statute will bring fairness and efficiency in tax administration.
- **Companies Act to be amended to build into statues;** criminal liability for certain acts that are civil in nature.
- **Major reforms in recruitment to Non-Gazetted posts in Government and Public sector banks:**
- An independent, professional and specialist **National Recruitment Agency (NRA)** for conducting a computer-based online Common Eligibility Test for recruitment.
- **A test-centre in every district**, particularly in the Aspirational Districts.
- A robust mechanism to be evolved for appointment, including direct recruitment, to various Tribunals and specialised bodies to attract best talents and professional experts.
- **Contract Act to be strengthened.**
- **New National Policy on Official Statistics** to promote use of latest technologies including AI and to lay down a road-map towards modernised data collection, integrated information portal and timely dissemination of information.

- **A sum of Rs. 100 crore allocated to begin the preparations for G20 presidency to be hosted in India** in the year 2022.
- **Development of North East region by improving the flow of funds** using online portal by the Government. Greater access to financial assistance of Multilateral and Bilateral funding agencies.
- An amount of Rs. 30,757 crore and Rs 5958 provided for the development of Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh respectively in FY 2020-21.

Key Highlights of Economic Survey 2020-21

Saving Lives and Livelihoods amidst a Once-in-a-Century Crisis

India's approach to COVID 19 Pandemic stemmed from the humane principle that:

- **Human lives lost cannot be brought back**
    - ➢ GDP growth will recover from the temporary shock caused by the pandemic.

- COVID-19 Strategy also motivated by the Nobel-Prize winning research by **Hansen & Sargent (2001): a policy focused on minimizing losses in a worst-case scenario when uncertainty is very high**
    - ➢ An early, intense lockdown provided a win-win strategy to save lives, and preserve livelihoods via economic recovery in the medium to long-term
- **COVID pandemic affected both demand and supply:**
    - ➢ India was the only country to announce **structural reforms to expand supply in the medium-long term and avoid long-term damage to productive capacities**
    - ➢ **Calibrated demand side policies** to ensure that the accelerator is slowly pushed down only when the brakes on economic activities are being removed
    - ➢ **A public investment programme centered around the National Infrastructure Pipeline** to accelerate the demand push and further the recovery

State of the Economy in 2020-21: A Macro View

- COVID-19 pandemic ensued **global economic downturn**, the most severe one since the **Global Financial Crisis**
- **The lockdowns and social distancing norms** brought the already slowing global economy to a standstill
- Global economic output estimated to **fall by 3.5% in 2020** (IMF January 2021 estimates)
- **Governments and central banks across the globe deployed various policy tools to support their economies** such as lowering policy rates, quantitative easing measures, etc.

India adopted a four-pillar strategy of containment, fiscal, financial, and long-term structural reforms:

- **Calibrated fiscal and monetary support was provided**, cushioning the vulnerable during the lockdown and boosting consumption and investment while unlocking
- **A favourable monetary policy ensured abundant liquidity** and immediate relief to debtors while unclogging monetary policy transmission

As per the advance estimates by NSO, India's GDP is estimated to grow by (-) 7.7% in FY21

- India's real GDP to record a **11.0% growth in FY2021-22** and **nominal GDP to grow by 15.4%** – the highest since independence:

- ➢ Rebound to be led by low base and continued **normalization in economic activities as the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines gathers traction**
- Government consumption and net exports cushioned the growth from diving further down, whereas investment and private consumption pulled it down
- The recovery in second half of FY2020-21 is expected to be powered by government consumption, estimated to grow at 17% YoY
    - ➢ Exports expected to decline by **5.8% and imports by 11.3%** in the second half of FY21
    - ➢ India expected to have a Current Account Surplus of **2% of GDP in FY21, a historic high after 17 years**
    - ➢ On supply side, **Gross Value Added (GVA) growth pegged at -7.2% in FY21 as against 3.9% in FY20:**
- Agriculture set to cushion the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Indian economy in FY21 with a growth of **3.4%**
- Industry and services estimated to contract by 9.6% and 8.8% respectively during FY21
- **Agriculture remained the silver lining while contact-based services**, manufacturing, construction were hit hardest, and recovering steadily
- **India remained a preferred investment destination in FY 2020-21** with FDI pouring in amidst global asset shifts towards equities and prospects of quicker recovery in emerging economies:
    - ➢ **Net FPI inflows recorded an all-time monthly high of US$ 9.8 billion in November 2020**, as investors' risk appetite returned
    - ➢ India was the only country **among emerging markets to receive equity FII inflows in 2020**
- **Buoyant SENSEX and NIFTY** resulted in India's market-cap to GDP ratio crossing 100% for the first time since October 2010
- Softening of CPI inflation recently reflects easing of supply side constraints that affected food inflation
- Mild contraction of 0.8% in investment (as measured by Gross Fixed Capital Formation) in 2nd half of FY21, as against 29% drop in 1st half of FY21
- **Reignited inter and intra state movement and record-high monthly GST collections** have marked the unlocking of industrial and commercial activity
- The external sector provided an effective cushion to growth with India recording a **Current Account Surplus of 3.1% of GDP** in the first half of FY21:
    - ➢ **Strong services exports** and weak demand leading to a sharper contraction in imports (merchandise imports contracted by 39.7%) than exports (merchandise exports contracted by 21.2%)
    - ➢ **Forex reserves increased** to a level so as to cover 18 months worth of imports in December 2020
    - ➢ **External debt** as a ratio to GDP increased to 21.6% at end-September 2020 from 20.6% at end-March 2020
    - ➢ **Ratio of forex reserves** to total and short-term debt improved because of the sizable accretion in reserves
- **V-shaped recovery** is underway, as demonstrated by a sustained resurgence in high frequency indicators such as power demand, e-way bills, GST collection, steel consumption, etc.
- **India became the fastest country to roll-out 10 lakh vaccines in 6 days** and also emerged as a leading supplier of the vaccine to neighbouring countries and Brazil
- **Economy's homecoming to normalcy** brought closer by the initiation of a mega vaccination drive:
    - ➢ **Hopes of a robust recovery in services sector, consumption, and investment** have been rekindled
    - ➢ **Reforms must go on to enable India realize its potential growth** and **erase the adverse impact of the pandemic**
- **India's mature policy response to the 'once-in-a-century' crisis provides important lessons for democracies** to **avoid myopic policy-making** and **demonstrates benefits of focusing** on long-term gains

Does Growth lead to Debt Sustainability? Yes, But Not Vice- Versa!

Growth leads to debt sustainability in the **Indian context but not necessarily vice-versa:**

- Debt sustainability depends on the 'Interest Rate Growth Rate Differential' (IRGD), i.e., the difference between the interest rate and the growth rate
  - In India, **interest rate on debt is less than growth rate** - by norm, not by exception
- **Negative IRGD in India** – not due to lower interest rates but much higher growth rates – prompts a debate on fiscal policy, especially during growth slowdowns and economic crises
- **Growth causes debt to become sustainable in countries with higher growth rates**; such clarity about the causal direction is not witnessed in countries with lower growth rates
- Fiscal multipliers are disproportionately higher during economic crises than during economic booms
- **Active fiscal policy** can ensure that the full benefit of reforms is reaped by limiting potential damage to productive capacity
- **Fiscal policy that provides an impetus to growth** will lead to **lower debt-to-GDP ratio**
- **Given India's growth potential, debt sustainability is unlikely to be a problem** even in the worst scenarios
- Desirable to use **counter-cyclical fiscal policy** to enable growth during economic downturns
- Active, counter-cyclical fiscal policy - not a call for fiscal irresponsibility, but to break the intellectual anchoring that has created an asymmetric bias against fiscal policy

Does India's Sovereign Credit Rating Reflect Its Fundamentals? No!

- **The fifth largest economy in the world** has never been rated as the lowest rung of the investment grade (BBB-/Baa3) in sovereign credit ratings:
  - Reflecting the economic size and thereby the ability to repay debt, the fifth largest economy has been predominantly rated AAA
  - China and India are the only exceptions to this rule – China was rated A-/A2 in 2005 and now India is rated BBB-/Baa3
- India's sovereign credit ratings do not reflect its fundamentals:
  - A clear outlier amongst countries rated between A+/A1 and BBB-/Baa3 for S&P/ Moody's, on several parameters
  - Rated significantly lower than mandated by the effect on the sovereign rating of the parameter

- **Credit ratings map the probability of default** and therefore reflect the willingness and ability of borrower to meet its obligations:
- **India's willingness to pay is unquestionably demonstrated through its zero sovereign default history**
  - **India's ability to pay** can be gauged by **low foreign currency denominated debt and forex reserves**

- **Sovereign credit rating changes for India** have no or **weak correlation with macroeconomic indicators**
- India's fiscal policy should reflect **Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's sentiment of 'a mind without fear'**
- Sovereign credit ratings methodology should be made more transparent, less subjective and better attuned to reflect economies' fundamentals

Inequality and Growth: Conflict or Convergence?

- The relationship between inequality and socio-economic outcomes vis-à-vis economic growth and socio-economic outcomes, is different in India from that in advanced economies.
- Both inequality and per-capita income (growth) have similar relationships with socio-economic indicators in India, unlike in advanced economies
  - ➢ **Economic growth has** a greater impact on **poverty alleviation than inequality**
  - ➢ India must continue to **focus on economic growth to lift the poor out of poverty**
  - ➢ **Expanding the overall pie** - redistribution in a developing economy is feasible only if the size of the economic pie grows

Healthcare takes centre stage, finally!

- COVID-19 pandemic **emphasized the importance of healthcare sector and its inter-linkages with other sectors** - showcased how a health crisis transformed into an economic and social crisis
- **India's health infrastructure must be agile so as to respond to pandemics** - healthcare policy must not become beholden to 'saliency bias'
- **National Health Mission (NHM)** played a critical role in mitigating inequity as the access of the poorest to pre-natal/post-natal care and institutional deliveries increased significantly
- **Emphasis on NHM in conjunction with Ayushman Bharat** should continue
- **An increase in public healthcare spending from 1% to 2.5-3% of GDP** can decrease the out-of-pocket expenditure from 65% to 35% of overall healthcare spending
- A regulator for the healthcare sector must be considered given the market failures stemming from information asymmetry
  - ➢ **Mitigation of information asymmetry will help lower insurance premiums**, enable the offering of better products and increase insurance penetration
  - ➢ **Information utilities that help mitigate the information asymmetry in healthcare sector** will be useful in enhancing overall welfare
- **Telemedicine needs to be harnessed** to the fullest by **investing in internet connectivity** and **health infrastructur**

Process Reforms

- India over-regulates the economy resulting in regulations being ineffective even with relatively good compliance with process
- The root cause of the problem of overregulation is an approach that attempts to account for every possible outcome
- Increase in complexity of regulations, intended to reduce discretion, results in even more non-transparent discretion
- The solution is to **simplify regulations** and **invest in greater supervision** which, by definition, implies greater discretion
- **Discretion, however, needs to be balanced with transparency**, systems of ex-ante accountability and ex-post resolution mechanisms
- The above intellectual framework has already informed reforms ranging from labour codes to removal of onerous regulations on the BPO sector

Regulatory Forbearance an emergency medicine, not staple diet!

- During the Global Financial Crisis, regulatory forbearance helped borrowers tide over temporary hardship
- Forbearance continued long after the economic recovery, resulting in unintended consequences for the economy
- Banks exploited the forbearance window for window-dressing their books and misallocated credit, thereby damaging the quality of investment in the economy
- Forbearance represents emergency medicine that should be discontinued at the first opportunity when the economy exhibits recovery, not a staple diet that gets continued for years
- **To promote judgement amidst uncertainty,** ex-post inquests must recognize the role of hindsight bias and not equate unfavourable outcomes to bad judgement or malafide intent
- **An Asset Quality Review exercise must be conducted** immediately after the forbearance is withdrawn
- The **legal infrastructure for the recovery of loans** needs to be strengthened de facto

Innovation: Trending Up but Needs Thrust, Especially from the Private Sector

- **India entered the top-50 innovating countries for the first time in 2020** since the inception of the Global Innovation Index in 2007, ranking first in Central and South Asia, and third amongst lower middle-income group economies
- **India's gross domestic expenditure on R&D (GERD) is lowest** amongst top ten economies
- **India's aspiration must be to compete on innovation** with the top ten economies
- The **government sector contributes a disproportionately large share in total GERD** at three times the average of top ten economies
- **The business sector's contribution to GERD, total R&D personnel and researchers is amongst the lowest** when compared to top ten economies
- This situation has prevailed **despite higher tax incentives for innovation and access to equity capital**
- India's business sector needs to **significantly ramp up investments in R&D**
- Indian resident's share in total patents filed in the country must rise from the current 36% which is much below the average of 62% in top ten economies
- For achieving higher improvement in innovation output, **India must focus on improving its performance on institutions and business sophistication innovation inputs**

JAY Ho! PM'JAY' Adoption and Health outcomes

- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)** – the ambitious program launched by Government of India in 2018 **to provide healthcare access to the most vulnerable sections** demonstrates strong positive effects on healthcare outcomes in a short time
- PM-JAY is being used significantly for high frequency, low cost care such as dialysis and continued during the Covid pandemic and the lockdown.
- Causal impact of PM-JAY on health outcomes by undertaking a Difference-in-Difference analysis based on National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-4 (2015-16) and NFHS-5 (2019-20) is following:

  - ➤ **Enhanced health insurance coverage**: The proportion of households that had health insurance increased in Bihar, Assam and Sikkim from 2015-16 to 2019-20 by 89% while it decreased by 12% over the same period in West Bengal

- ➢ **Decline in Infant Mortality rate**: from 2015-16 to 2019-20, infant mortality rates declined by 20% for West Bengal and by 28% for the three neighbouring states
- ➢ **Decline in under-5 mortality rate**: Bengal saw a fall of 20% while, the neighbours witnessed a 27% reduction
- ➢ **Modern methods of contraception, female sterilization and pill usage** went up by 36%, 22% and 28% respectively in the three neighbouring states while the respective changes for West Bengal were negligible
- ➢ While **West Bengal did not witness any significant decline in unmet need for spacing between consecutive kids**, the neighbouring three states recorded a 37% fall
- ➢ Various metrics for mother and child care improved more in the three neighbouring states than in West Bengal.
- Each of these health effects manifested similarly when we compare all states that implemented PM-JAY versus the states that did not
- Overall, the comparison reflects **significant improvements in several health outcomes in states that implemented PM-JAY versus those that did not.**

Bare Necessities

- **Access to the 'bare necessities' has improved across all States in the country in 2018 as compared to 2012**

- ➢ **It is highest in States such as Kerala, Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat while lowest in Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Tripura**
- ➢ **Improvement in each of the five dimensions** viz., access to water, housing, sanitation, micro-environment and other facilities
- ➢ Inter-State disparities declined across rural and urban areas as the laggard states have gained relatively more between 2012 and 2018
- ➢ Improved disproportionately more for the poorest households when compared to the richest households across rural and urban areas
- **Improved access to the 'bare necessities' has led to improvements in health indicators** such as infant mortality and under-5 mortality rate and also correlates with future improvements in education indicators
- Thrust should be given to reduce variation in the access to bare necessities across states, between rural and urban and between income groups
- The schemes such as **Jal Jeevan Mission, SBM-G, PMAY-G,** etc. may design appropriate strategy to reduce these gaps
- **A Bare Necessities Index (BNI)** based on the large annual household survey data can be constructed using suitable indicators and methodology at district level for all/targeted districts to assess the progress on access to bare necessities.

Fiscal Developments

- India adopted **a calibrated approach best suited for a resilient recovery of its economy from COVID-19 pandemic** impact, **in contrast with a front-loaded large stimulus package adopted by many countries**
- **Expenditure policy in 2020-21 initially aimed at supporting the vulnerable sections** but was re-oriented to boost overall demand and capital spending, once the lockdown was unwound
- **Monthly GST collections have crossed the Rs. 1 lakh crore mark** consecutively for the last 3 months, reaching its **highest levels in December 2020** ever since the introduction of GST

- **Reforms in tax administration have begun** a process of transparency and accountability and have incentivized tax compliance by enhancing honest tax-payers' experience
- Central Government has also taken consistent steps to impart **support to the States in the challenging times** of the pandemic

External Sector

- COVID-19 pandemic led to a **sharp decline in global trade, lower commodity prices and tighter external financing conditions** with implications for current account balances and currencies of different countries
- India's forex reserves at an **all-time high of US$ 586.1 billion as on January 08, 2021**, covering about 18 months worth of imports
- India experiencing a **Current Account Surplus** along with **robust capital inflows leading to a BoP surplus since Q4 of FY2019-20**
- **Balance on the capital account is buttressed** by robust FDI and FPI inflows:

  - ➢ Net FDI inflows of US$ 27.5 billion during April-October, 2020: 14.8% higher as compared to first seven months of FY2019-20
  - ➢ Net FPI inflows of US$ 28.5 billion during April-December, 2020 as against US$ 12.3 billion in corresponding period of last year

- In H1**: FY21, steep contraction in merchandise imports and lower outgo for travel services led to:**

  - ➢ **Sharper fall in current payments** (by 30.8%) than current receipts (15.1%)
  - ➢ **Current Account Surplus of US$ 34.7 billion** (3.1% of GDP)

- India to end with an **Annual Current Account Surplus after a period of 17 years**
- **India's merchandise trade deficit was lower at US$ 57.5 billion** in April-December, 2020 as compared to US$ 125.9 billion in the corresponding period last year
- In April-December, 2020, **merchandise exports contracted by 15.7% to US$ 200.8 billion from US$ 238.3 billion in April-December, 2019:**

  - ➢ Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants (POL) exports have contributed negatively to export performance during the period under review
  - ➢ Non-POL exports turned positive and helped in improving export performance in Q3 of 2020-21
  - ➢ Within Non-POL exports, agriculture & allied products, drugs & pharmaceutical and ores & minerals recorded expansion

- **Total merchandise imports declined by (-) 29.1% to US$ 258.**3 billion during April-December, 2020 from US$ 364.2 billion during the same period last year:

  - ➢ **Sharp decline in POL imports** pulled down the overall import growth
  - ➢ **Imports contracted sharply in Q1 of 2020-21**; the pace of contraction eased in subsequent quarters, due to the accelerated positive growth in Gold and Silver imports and narrowing contraction in non-POL, non-Gold & non-Silver imports
  - ➢ **Fertilizers, vegetable oil, drugs & pharmaceuticals and computer hardware & peripherals have contributed positively to the growth** of non-POL, non-Gold & non-Silver imports

- **Trade balance with China and the US improved** as imports slowed

- **Net services receipts amounting to US$ 41.7 billion** remained stable in April-September 2020 as compared with US$ 40.5 billion in corresponding period a year ago.
- **Resilience of the services sector was primarily driven by software services,** which accounted for 49% of total services exports
- Net private transfer receipts, mainly representing remittances by Indians employed overseas, totaling US$ 35.8 billion in H1: FY21 declined by 6.7% over the corresponding period of previous year
- At end-September 2020, **India's external debt placed at US$ 556.2 billion - a decrease of US$ 2.0 billion** (0.4%) as compared to end-March 2020.

Improvement in debt vulnerability indicators:

➤ Ratio of forex reserves to total and short-term debt (original and residual)
➤ Ratio of short-term debt (original maturity) to the total stock of external debt.
➤ Debt service ratio (principal repayment plus interest payment) increased to 9.7% as at end-September 2020, compared to 6.5% as at end-March 2020

Rupee appreciation/depreciation:

➤ In terms of 6-currency nominal effective exchange rate (NEER) (trade-based weights), Rupee depreciated by 4.1% in December 2020 over March 2020; appreciated by 2.9% in terms of real effective exchange rate (REER)
➤ In terms of 36-currency NEER (trade-based weights), Rupee depreciated by 2.9% in December 2020 over March 2020; appreciated by 2.2% in terms of REER
- **RBI's interventions in forex markets ensured financial stability and orderly conditions**, controlling the volatility and one-sided appreciation of the Rupee

Initiatives undertaken to promote exports:

➤ Production Linked Incentive (**PLI) Scheme**
➤ Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products **(RoDTEP)**
➤ Improvement in logistics infrastructure and digital initiatives

Money Management and Financial Intermediation

- **Accommodative monetary policy** during 2020: repo rate cut by 115 bps since March 2020
- **Systemic liquidity in FY2020-21** has remained in surplus so far. RBI undertook various conventional and unconventional measures like:
  ➤ Open Market Operations
  ➤ Long Term Repo Operations
  ➤ Targeted Long Term Repo Operations
- **Gross Non-Performing Assets ratio of Scheduled Commercial Banks decreased from 8.21%** at end-March, 2020 to 7.49% at end-September, 2020
- The monetary transmission of lower policy rates to deposit and lending rates improved during FY2020-21
- NIFTY-50 and BSE SENSEX reached record high closing of 14,644.7 and 49,792.12 respectively on January 20, 2021
- The **recovery rate for the Scheduled Commercial Banks through IBC (since its inception) has been over 45%**

Prices and Inflation

Headline CPI inflation:

- **Averaged 6.6% during April-December**, 2020 and stood at 4.6% in December, 2020, mainly driven by rise in food inflation (from 6.7% in 2019-20 to 9.1% during April-December, 2020, owing to build up in vegetable prices)
- CPI headline and its sub groups witnessed inflation during April-October 2020, driven by substantial increase in price momentum - due to the **initial disruptions caused by COVID-19 lockdown**
- Moderated price momentum by November 2020 for most sub groups, coupled with positive base effect helped ease inflation

Rural-urban difference in CPI inflation saw a decline in 2020:

- Since November 2019, CPI-Urban inflation has closed the gap with CPI-Rural inflation
- Food inflation has almost converged now
- Divergence in rural-urban inflation observed in other components of CPI like fuel and light, clothing and footwear, miscellaneous etc.
- During April-December, 2019 as well as April-December, 2020-21, the major driver of CPI-C inflation was the **food and beverages group:**
- Contribution increased to 59% during April-December, 2020, compared to 53.7% during April-December, 2019
- **Thali cost increased** between June 2020 and November 2020, however a sharp fall in the month of December reflecting the fall in the prices of many essential food commodities

State-wise trend:

- CPI-C inflation increased in most of the states in the current year
- Regional variation persists
- Inflation ranged from 3.2% to 11% across States/UTs during June-December 2020 compared to (-) 0.3% to 7.6% during the same period last year.
- Food inflation driving overall CPI-C inflation due to the relatively more weight of food items in the index.

Steps taken to stabilize prices of food items:

- Banning of export of onions
- Imposition of stock limit on onions
- Easing of restriction on imports of pulses

Gold prices:

- **Sharp spike as investors turned to gold as a safe haven investment amid COVID-19** induced economic uncertainties
- Compared to other assets, gold had considerably higher returns during FY2020-21

Consistency in import policy warrants attention:

- Increased dependence on imports of edible oils poses risk of fluctuations in import prices

➤ Imports impacting production and prices of domestic edible oil market, coupled with frequent changes in import policy of pulses and edible oils, add to confusion among farmers/producers and delay imports

Sustainable Development and Climate Change

- India has taken **several proactive steps to mainstream the SDGs into the policies, schemes and programmes**
- **Voluntary National Review (VNR)** presented to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development
- **Localisation of SDGs is crucial to any strategy** aimed at achieving the goals under the 2030 Agenda

  ➤ Several States/UTs have created institutional structures for implementation of SDGs and also nodal mechanisms within every department and at the district levels for better coordination and convergence
- Sustainable development remains core to the development strategy despite the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic crisis
- **Eight National Missions** under National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) focussed on the objectives of adaptation, mitigation and preparedness on climate risks
- **India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)** states that finance is a critical enabler of climate change action
- The financing considerations will therefore remain critical especially as the country steps up the targets substantially
- The goal of jointly mobilizing US$ 100 billion a year by 2020 for climate financing by the developed countries has remained elusive
- The postponement of COP26 to 2021 also gives less time for negotiations and other evidence-based work to inform the post-2025 goal
- Despite overall growth in the global bond markets, **green bond issuance in the first half of 2020 slowed down from 2019,** possibly as a result of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic
- **International Solar Alliance (ISA) launched two new initiatives** – '**World Solar Bank'** and **'One Sun One World One Grid Initiative'** - poised to bring about solar energy revolution globally

Agriculture and Food Management

- **India's Agricultural (and Allied Activities) sector** has **shown its resilience** amid the adversities of COVID-19 induced lockdowns with a growth of 3.4% at constant prices during 2020-21 (first advance estimate)
- **The share of Agriculture and Allied Sectors in Gross Value Added (GVA) of the country at current prices is 17.8% for the year 2019-20** (CSO-Provisional Estimates of National Income, 29th May, 2020)
- **Gross Capital Formation (GCF) relative to GVA showing a fluctuating trend from 17.7 % in 2013-14 to 16.4 % in 2018-19, with a dip to 14.7 % in 2015-16**
- Total food grain production in the country in the agriculture year 2019-20 (as per Fourth Advance Estimates), is **11.44 million tonnes** more than than during 2018-19
- The actual agricultural credit flow was ₹13,92,469.81 crores against the target of ₹13,50,000 crores in 2019-20. The target for 2020-21 was ₹15,00,000 crores and a sum of ₹ 9,73,517.80 crores was disbursed till 30th November, 2020:

- ➢ **1.5 crore dairy farmers of milk cooperatives and milk producer companies' were targeted** to provide **Kisan Credit Cards (KCC)** as part of Prime Minister's AatmaNirbhar Bharat Package after the budget announcement of February 2020
- ➢ As of mid January 2021, a total of **44,673 Kisan Credit Cards (KCCs) have been issued to fishers and fish farmers and an additional 4.04 lakh applications from fishers and fish farmers** are with the banks at various stages of issuance
- The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana covers over 5.5 crore farmer applications year on year

  - ➢ Claims worth Rs. **90,000 crore paid**, as on 12th January, 2021
  - ➢ Speedy claim settlement directly into the farmer accounts through Aadhar linkage
  - ➢ **70 lakh farmers benefitted and claims worth Rs. 8741.30 crores** were transferred during COVID-19 lock down period

- An amount of Rs. 18000 crore have been deposited directly in the bank accounts of 9 crore farmer families of the country in December, 2020 in the 7th installment of financial benefit under the PM-KISAN scheme
- **Fish production reached an all-time high of 14.16 million metric tons** during 2019-20:

  - ➢ GVA by the Fisheries sector to the national economy stood at ₹2,12,915 crores constituting 1.24% of the total national GVA and 7.28 % of the agricultural GVA

- **Food Processing Industries (FPI) sector** growing at an Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR) of around 9.99 % as compared to around 3.12 % in Agriculture and 8.25 % in Manufacturing at 2011-12 prices during the last 5 years ending 2018-19

  Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana:

  - ➢ 80.96 crore beneficiaries were provided foodgrains above NFSA mandated requirement free of cost till November, 2020.
  - ➢ Over 200 LMT of foodgrains were provided amounting to a fiscal outgo of over Rs. 75000 Crores

- **AatmaNirbhar Bharat Package: 5 kg per person per month for four months (May to August)** to approximately 8 crores migrants (excluded under NFSA or state ration card) entailing subsidy of **Rs. 3109 crores approximately**

Industry and Infrastructure

- A strong **V-shaped recovery of economic activity** further confirmed by IIP data
- The **IIP & eight-core index further inched up to pre-COVID levels**
- The broad-based recovery in the IIP resulted in a growth of (-) 1.9 % in Nov-2020 as compared to a growth of 2.1 % in Nov-2019 and a nadir of (-) 57.3 % in Apr-2020
- Further improvement and firming up in industrial activities are foreseen with the Government enhancing capital expenditure, the vaccination drive and the resolute push forward on long pending reform measures
- **AatmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyan with a stimulus package worth 15 % of India's GDP** announced

- India's rank in the **Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) Index for 2019 has moved upwards to the 63rd position** in 2020 from 77th in 2018 as per the Doing Business Report (DBR):

  - ➢ India has improved its position in 7 out of 10 indicators
  - ➢ Acknowledges India as one of the top 10 improvers, the third time in a row, with an improvement of 67 ranks in three years
  - ➢ It is also the highest jump by any large country since 2011

- **FDI equity inflows were US$49.98 billion in FY20** as compared to US$44.37 billion during FY19

  - ➢ It is US$30.0 billion for FY21 (up to September-2020)
  - ➢ The bulk of FDI equity flow is in the non-manufacturing sector
  - ➢ Within the manufacturing sector, industries like automobile, telecommunication, metallurgical, non-conventional energy, chemical (other than fertilizers), food processing, petroleum & natural gas got the bulk of FDI

- Government has announced a **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme** in the 10 key sectors under the aegis of **AatmaNirbhar Bharat** for enhancing India's manufacturing capabilities and exports:

  - ➢ To be implemented by the concerned ministries with an overall expenditure estimated at Rs.1.46 lakh crores and with sector specific financial limits

Services Sector

- India's services sector **contracted by nearly 16 % during H1: FY2020-21**, during the COVID-19 pandemic mandated lockdown, owing to its contact-intensive nature
- Key indicators such as **Services Purchasing Managers' Index, rail freight traffic, and port traffic, are all displaying a V-shaped recovery** after a sharp decline during the lockdown
- Despite the disruptions being witnessed globally, **FDI inflows into India's services sector grew robustly by 34%** Y-o-Y during April-September 2020 to reach US$ 23.6 billion
- The services sector accounts for over 54 % of India's GVA and nearly four-fifths of total FDI inflow into India
- The sector's share in GVA exceeds 50% in 15 out of 33 States and UTs, and is particularly more pronounced (greater than 85%) in Delhi and Chandigarh
- Services sector accounts for **48% of total exports**, outperforming goods exports in the recent years
- The shipping turnaround time at ports has almost halved from 4.67 days in 2010-11 to 2.62 days in 2019-20
- The Indian start-up ecosystem has been progressing well amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, being home to 38 unicorns - adding a record number of 12 start-ups to the unicorn list last year
- India's space sector has grown exponentially in the past six decades:

  - ➢ Spent about US$ 1.8 billion on space programmes in 2019-20
  - ➢ Space ecosystem is undergoing several policy reforms to engage private players and attract innovation and investment
  - ➢

<u>Social Infrastructure, Employment and Human Development</u>

- The combined (Centre and States) **social sector expenditure as % of GDP has increased in 2020-21** compared to last year.
- **India's rank in HDI 2019 was recorded at 131**, out of a total 189 countries:

  > India's **GNI per capita (2017 PPP $) has increased from US$ 6,427 in 2018 to US$ 6,681 in 2019**

Life expectancy at birth improved from 69.4 years in 2018 to 69.7 years in 2019

- The access to data network, electronic devices such as computer, laptop, smart phone etc. gained importance due to online learning and remote working during the pandemic
- Major proportion of workforce engaged as regular wage/salaried in the urban sector during the period of January 2019-March 2020 (quarterly survey of PLFS)
- Government's incentive to boost employment through **AatmaNirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana and rationalization and simplification of existing labour codes into 4 codes**

 Low level of female LFPR in India:

  > Females spending disproportionately more time on **unpaid domestic and care giving services to household members as compared to their male counterparts** (Time Use Survey, 2019)
  > Need to **promote non-discriminatory practices at the workplace like pay and career progression, improve work incentives, including other medical and social security benefits** for female workers

- **Under PMGKP announced in March, 2020, cash transfers of upto Rs.1000 to existing old aged, widowed and disabled beneficiaries** under the **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)**
- An amount of **Rs. 500 each was transferred for three months digitally into bank accounts of the women beneficiaries under PM Jan Dhan Yojana,** totalling about Rs. 20.64 crores
- Free distribution of **gas cylinders to about 8 crore families for three months**
- Limit of collateral free lending increased from Rs. 10 lakhs to Rs. 20 lakhs for 63 lakh women SHGs which would support 6.85 crore households
- **Wages under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA increased by Rs.20 from Rs.182 to Rs.202 w.e.f.** 1st April, 2020

India's fight against COVID-19:

- Initial measures of **lockdown, social distancing, travel advisories, practicing hand wash, wearing masks reduced the spread of the disease**
- Country also acquired **self-reliance in essential medicines, hand sanitizers, protective equipment including masks, PPE Kits, ventilators,** COVID-19 testing and treatment facilities
- **World's largest COVID-19 vaccination drive commenced on 16th January, 2021** using two indigenously manufactured vaccines.

One-person Company

Why in news?

In the Budget speech, Finance Minister announced measures to ease norms for setting up one-person companies.

About one-person company (OPCs)

- It is a company that is **formed by just one person as a shareholder in contrast to private companies which require minimum of two members to get going.**
- This is helpful to the person wants to get into business through his sole proprietorship mode but they are considered as private companies only.

Difference between single-person Company and sole proprietorship

- In the eyes of law, single-person Company and sole proprietorship differ significantly.
- **In single-person Company**, **the person and the company are considered separate legal entities whereas in sole proprietorship, the owner and the business are considered the same.**
- This has an important implication when it comes to the **liability of the individual member or owner**.
- **In a one-person company**, the sole owner's liability is limited to that person's investment but **in sole proprietorship set-up,** the owner has unlimited liability.
- This announcement will encourage corporatisation of small businesses & will be useful for entrepreneurs to have this option when they decide to start a business.

Does this concept exist earlier?

- In India, this concept was introduced in the Companies Act of 2013 based on the recommendations of **J.J. Irani Committee** Report on Company Law in 2005.
- It said that small companies can contribute significantly to the Indian economy but should not be burdened with high level of compliance as large public-listed companies.
- Hence such entity can be provided with a simpler regime like providing exemptions from procedural requirements, not requiring to conduct an annual general meeting.
- Also they do not require signatures of both its company secretary and director on its annual returns.
- This helps the single entrepreneur not to waste his time, energy and resources on procedural matters.

New norms for these companies

- The 2014 rule states that OPCs would cease to have that status if its paid-up share capital exceeds **Rs 50 lakh or its average turnover for the preceding three years exceeds Rs 2 crore.**
- **This condition is lifted** in this budget.
- Earlier only an Indian citizen and an Indian resident could start a single-person company.
- Now it is proposed that residency limit for an Indian citizen to set up an OPC will be reduced **from 182 days to 120 days** & NRIs are now allowed to incorporate OPCs in India.
- These changes come along with the proposal to increase the threshold of capital base from **Rs 50 lakh to Rs 2 crore & turnover from Rs 2 crore to Rs 20 crore for small companies.**
- This means that these companies can have easy compliance requirements for longer time & will address the existing criticism that erstwhile rules governing OPCs are restrictive in nature.

Rising Unemployment and its Challenges

Why in News?

One of the top **Twitter trends recently was "#modi_rojgar_do",** that essentially asks PM Modi to provide more employment.

> ➢ In this backdrop, here is a look at the extent of the unemployment problem in India.

Unemployment scenario

- Just before the Covid crisis at the end of 2019-20 financial year, India had around 403.5 million employed people.
- There were around **35 million (or 3.5 crore) openly unemployed people** in the country.
- To this existing pool, **each year India adds roughly 10 million (or 1 crore) new job seekers**.
- But over the past year, several million have lost their jobs.
- As a result, as of **January 2021, India had only about 400 million employed.**
- But many seem to have regained employment as the economy has started recovering.

Concern:

- At another level, the 400 million numbers also underscores the **stagnancy in India's employment levels**.
- Data also show that the **total number of employed people in India had been steadily coming down.**
- It was **407.3 million in 2016-17** and then fell to **405.9 million in 2017-18**, and to **400.9 million at the end of 2018-19.**
- In other words, even with India's economy growing before the Covid crisis, the employment situation was getting worse.
- That is why the total number of **openly unemployed people became 35 million.**
- Given that over the past 12 months, the total number of employed people has fallen, the total number of unemployed people will be anywhere between 40 to 45 million today.

> ➢ Even this **45 million estimate only captures the openly unemployed people** i.e. those who are seeking work and not finding it.
> ➢ The actual problem of unemployment is even bigger.

Why is unemployment a more serious issue?

- **LFPR** - Given India's population growth, each year there are close to 20 million (or 2 crore) people who enter the working-age population of 15 to 59 years.
- But not everyone seeks a job.
- If more and more of India's youth decides not to seek job, India's labour force participation rate (LFPR) falls.
- India has an LFPR of just about 40%.
- In other words, in India just 40% of the 20 million joining the working-age group each year actually come forward looking for a job.
  > ➢ Among women, this participation ratio is even lower.
- In most developed countries, it is around 60%.
- If 60% of all joining the working-age group looked for a job then India would have added almost 15 million each year to the pool of openly unemployed people.
- **Growth and employment** - Typically, fast economic growth takes care of unemployment worries.
- However, in India, one cannot assume this to be the case.
- In other words, just fast economic growth will not automatically resolve India's unemployment problem.
- This is because, even when India's GDP has grown rapidly in the past, it produced only a very small number of well-paying jobs.
  > ➢ In the ten years from 1999-2000 to 2009-10, India's total workforce increased by 63 million.

- Of these 44 million joined the unorganised sector, 22 million became informal workers in the organised sector.
- Also, the number of formal workers in the organised sector fell by 3 million.

Economic Recovery post Covid-19 and Hope for Employment:

- In the coming financial year, **India's GDP growth will show a sharp rebound, given a massive base effect.**
- This offers some hope.
- However, that **does not change the lop-sided manner in which India grows.**
  - The GDP can continue to go up as more and more companies become more productive by replacing labour with capital (machinery).
  - But this will only deepen India's unemployment problem.
- There is another reason that may aggravate the problem at least in the short to medium term.
- The Union Budget for 2021-22 suggests that the government would not be the prime mover in the economy.
- The principle of "minimum government" essentially undercuts the government's role in directly creating new jobs.
- While on paper this makes sense, the timing is questionable. **That's because –**
  - The Indian economy is quite weak
  - The private sector has already shown its preference by choosing to cut jobs and boost its profits
- The private sector is likely to hold back from recruiting in big numbers in the next couple of years, waiting for Indians to regain their purchasing power.
- But, in the meantime, the unemployed will continue to swell up by the millions each passing month.
- All this remind that it is the rising unemployment, and not GDP growth, that is the biggest challenge before India now.

India and World

UK Visa Scheme for Hong Kong Residents

Why in News?

Recently, the UK is opening a special visa scheme that will **allow lakhs of Hong Kong residents a chance to migrate and eventually apply for British citizenship.**

➢ The move came months after China imposed a national security law over Hong Kong enabling it to curb the 2019 pro-democracy like protests in future and also to override the powers of the government in Hong Kong.
➢ The move is considered the UK's most generous welcoming of foreign workers since the entry of new European Union (EU) citizens in 2004 - when 10 countries were added to the bloc - at a time when the UK was also a member. The UK officially left the EU on 31st January 2020.

About special visa scheme for Hong Kong residents:

- The visas will be issued to **those in Hong Kong who hold a British National (Overseas) passport** and their immediate dependents, and will offer a fast track to UK citizenship.
- Applicants who get the visa **can live and work in the UK for 5 years**, **after which they apply for settlement. Twelve months after this, they can apply for citizenship.**
- The scheme potentially covers over two-thirds of the city's population of around 70 lakh.
- To avoid applying for the visa in person, the BNO holders would be able to **apply through a smartphone app from February 23.**
- **There is no minimum salary requirement** for those wanting to move, and is it necessary to first secure a job in the UK before migrating.

Reason behind U.K. Special Visa Scheme:

- China implemented its far-reaching **new national security law for Hong Kong**, greatly expanding Beijing's power in the city.
- Under the law, four widely defined offences can invite life imprisonment as the maximum punishment, followed by lesser penalties. Britain called its implementation a "grave step".
- U.K. called the imposition of the security law **"a serious and clear breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration", referring to a 1984 treaty between the two countries** under which China promised to honour Hong Kong's liberal policies, system of governance, independent judiciary, and individual freedoms for a period of 50 years from 1997.

China's Stand:

- China criticised the UK move. The British side disregarded the fact that Hong Kong returned to China 24 years ago.
- China also said that it would no longer be recognising BNO passports, saying that the citizenship offer "seriously infringed" on China's sovereignty.

Way Forward

- The present **Visa regime will enable the people of Hong Kong to evade the secretive, authoritarian and coercive actions of China under national security act,** however long term solutions can be attained by arbitration and conciliation with all the stakeholders to secure the interests of people of Hong Kong.
- **National security law endangers Hong Kong's position as an East Asian trading hub**, and along with the UK's action it should invite global criticism for Beijing, which is already being accused of withholding key information related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Handover of Hong Kong from Britain to China
- Hong Kong was formerly a British colony and was handed over to mainland China in 1997, becoming one of its Special Administrative Regions (SAR).
- It is governed by a mini-constitution called the Basic Law, which affirms the principle of "one country, two systems".
- The constitutional document is a product of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, under which China promised to honour Hong Kong's liberal policies, system of governance, independent judiciary, and individual freedoms for a period of 50 years from 1997.

Military Coup in Myanmar

Why in News?

Recently, the Myanmar military has grabbed power in a coup - the third time in the nation's history since its independence from British rule in 1948.

➤ Coup' is generally described as a sudden, violent, and illegal seizure of power from a government.

Background

- Myanmar is a **partially democratic country**. The democratic government led by Aung San Suu Kyi shared half of its power with Myanmar's Military.
- **On February 1, the Myanmar army captured power by declaring an emergency.**
- The military justified its action by citing the reason that there was **"terrible fraud in the voter list"** in the recently held Parliamentary election. Since the Election Commission failed to settle the matter, the army declared an emergency.
- Similar incidents of overtaking the democratic government by forcing military rule has taken place in 1962, 1988 and 1990.

Is it a military coup or an Emergency?

The following arguments prove that the incident that took place on Feb 1 is a military coup and not an emergency.

- First, electoral issues needed to be addressed and resolved by relevant authorities, not the military leadership.
- Second, Myanmar Constitution empowers the President to proclaim an emergency, in consultation with the National Defence and Security Council. However, neither the Council met nor the presidential consent was obtained.

What were the reasons behind this Coup?

Many unresolved differences between the democratic government and Myanmar's army, led to this coup.

First, Ideological differences:

- **The army feels that its power should not be undermined**. As it is the one that secured independence, defended the country against secession, and ensured stability and development.
- Whereas the government has been a strong supporter of democracy. In this system, the army should be completely apolitical.
- **Second,** differences over different socio-politico- economic issues. For example, differences over ethnic reconciliation, constitutional reform, the Rohingya issue, and the China policy.
- **Third, Fight for power:**
  - Senior General Min Aung Hlaing's was willing to become Myanmar's President. He was also about to retire in July.
  - However, Ms. Suu Kyi was opposed to it, and she doesn't want to extend his tenure. Presumably, the coup guarantees an indefinite extension of tenure. It will also help him to retain the Power in his hands.
- **Fourth, Role of China:** The Chinese Communist Party shares a very close association with the Myanmar army for decades. The Increasing Popularity of the Democratic government over Myanmar army would have been detrimental to Chinese interest in Myanmar.

Impact of Coup on Rohingya's:

- Rohingya's are Predominantly Muslim population who are facing Ethnic violence in Myanmar.
- Currently, a million of them are living in Bangladesh as refugees due to persecution in Myanmar, and are waiting to be repatriated.
- Though the Myanmar army was against repatriation, recently the democratic government of Myanmar and Bangladesh held talks for repatriation. These efforts, will definitely be impacted by the current coup.

Impact on Democracy:

- With great efforts the Suu Kyi's administration has nurtured the growth of democracy even in the deeper roots of Myanmar. Now the coup is a step back for Myanmar's democracy.

Global Reaction:

- **China:** 'All parties in Myanmar will properly handle their differences under the constitution and legal framework to maintain political and social stability'.
- **USA:** The USA President threatened to reimpose sanctions on Myanmar following a coup by the country's military leaders and called for a concerted international response to press them to relinquish power.
- **ASEAN Countries:** ASEAN's current chair, Brunei, called for 'dialogue among parties, reconciliation and the return to normalcy'.

  - Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia expressed concern, while Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines noted that this was Myanmar's 'internal affair'.

India's Reaction:

- India supports the **process of democratic transition in Myanmar**.

- Though India has expressed deep concern over recent developments in Myanmar, cutting off from the Myanmar military is not a viable option as India has significant economic and strategic interests in Myanmar and its neighbourhood.

India's Strategic interests in Myanmar and its relations with Myanmar Military:

India's Relationship with Myanmar Military:

- India's military-diplomatic outreach to Myanmar became a cornerstone of its **Act East policy**.
- On the eve of the recent visit of the Foreign Secretary Chief of the Army Staff to Myanmar in 2020, Myanmar handed over 22 Indian insurgents from across the border and it was decided to ramp up the sale of military hardware to Myanmar, including 105 mm light artillery guns, naval gunboats and more recently, lightweight torpedoes.
- Recent example of cooperation is that Myanmar has begun to vaccinate itself with the 1.5 million doses of **Covid vaccine sent by India,** while putting China's 3,00,000 doses on hold.

India's Interests in Myanmar:

- **Infrastructure and Connectivity**: India has cultivated several infrastructure and development projects with Myanmar, which it sees as the **"gateway to the East" and ASEAN countries:**
- Operationalisation of the crucial Sittwe port in Myanmar's Rakhine state by 2021 is committed.
- India assists infrastructure projects such as the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project.
- **The Kaladan project will link Kolkata to Sittwe in Myanmar and then from Myanmar's Kaladan river to India's north-east.**
- **The two countries signed the Land Border Crossing Agreement in 2018**, which allowed bona fide travellers with valid documents to cross the border at two international points of entry/exit- Moreh-Tamu and Zokhawthar-Rih.

Security: India has been concerned over some militant groups like the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) from the North-East region taking shelter in Myanmar.

- Indian needs perpetual support and coordination from Myanmar for the maintenance of security and stability along its North East border areas.
- **Rohingya Issues:** India is committed to ensuring safe, sustainable and speedy return of Rohingya refugees from refugee camps of India and Bangladesh.

  - Building on the progress made under the **Rakhine State Development Programme (RSDP),** India has recently proposed to finalise projects under phase-III of the programme, including setting up of a skills training centre and upgrading of agricultural mechanisation.
- **Investment:** With Indian investments of over USD 1.2 billion, Myanmar holds considerable importance than any other country in South Asia.
- **Energy:** The two countries are also expanding partnership in the area of energy cooperation.

  - Recently, India approved an investment of over USD 120 million in the Shwe Oil and Gas project.

Way forward for India

Though India is a torch-bearer of Democracy, the government is also committed to the policy of non-interference in another state's internal affairs. Therefore, India should cautiously balance its principles, values, interests while dealing with Myanmar based on geopolitical realities and national interest.

Setback for India - East Container Terminal

Why in news?

Sri Lanka has unilaterally pulled out of a 2019 agreement with India and Japan for developing the strategic East Container Terminal (ECT) at the Colombo Port.

Background:

- In 2019, India and Sri Lanka signed a **memorandum of understanding (MoU) for "co-operation on economic projects".**
- The development and operation of the container terminal was one of the projects in the MoU:
    - **A Container Terminal in Colombo Port as a Joint Venture**
    - includes Indian investments considering that majority of transshipment in Colombo Port is related to India
- The MoU did not mention the Eastern Container Terminal.
- Nevertheless, India and Sri Lanka had already been in discussion for its development and operation.

Issues involved

- India and Sri Lanka have seemingly friendly ties and much cultural affinity and people-to-people contact.
- However, the relationship is complex.
    - The majority **Sinhala-Buddhist public opinion is layered with the memory of Indian intervention in the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict.**
- So, unlike Chinese projects, **big projects by India have always faced opposition in Sri Lanka**.

Why was Japan roped in?

- It was for the above reason that India had roped Japan into at least two of the projects:
    - the East Container Terminal (ECT)
    - an LNG Terminal/Floating Storage Regasification Unit (FSRU) in Kerawalapitiya/Colombo with a piped gas distribution system along with retail outlets for CNG etc
- Japan was also the **biggest donor to Sri Lanka** through the years of conflict.
- **The Geoffrey Bawa-built Sri Lankan parliament**, which came up at the height of the conflict, was funded by Japan.
- It continues to give Sri Lanka **substantial financial support even now.**
- However, the old relationship between Sri Lanka and Japan has undergone changes as China's footprint over Colombo has grown.
- Late in 2020, the Rajapaksa government unilaterally cancelled a Japanese project for a commuter rail in Colombo.

What are the terms of the agreement?

- The Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) would have 100% ownership of the ECT.
    - ➢ This is as per a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) signed by the previous Maithripala Sirisena-Ranil Wickremesinghe administration.
- The Terminal Operations Company (TOC) conducting all ECT operations was to be jointly owned:
    - ➢ Sri Lanka retaining a 51% stake
    - ➢ the joint venture partners 49%
- A 40-year loan at an **interest rate of 0.1%** from Japan was expected to fund the development of the ECT.
    - ➢ The envisaged Japanese loan carries one of the best loan terms Sri Lanka has obtained.
    - ➢ The 51% stake is also one of the best in SLPA joint ownership endeavours.
    - ➢ SLPA's majority ownership in the new TOC represents a significant step in prioritising national interests.

Contentious issues involved from the start

- The Sri Lanka port trade unions have been demanding to cancel the ECT agreement.
- As many as 223 Sri Lankan trade unions and civil societies groups were backing this demand.
- Sri Lanka's former President Maithripala Sirisena too was opposed to an Indian stake in the ECT project.
- That was one of the flashpoints in the breakdown between Sirisena and Wickremesinghe, who was pushing for it.
- Just before the 2020 elections, port workers were striking against the agreement.
- They ended their protest only after (now Prime Minister) Mahinda Rajapaksa assured them that there would be no Indian involvement in the port.

Recent Developments:

- Recently, when India's External Affairs Minister visited Colombo, the PM and President in Sri Lanka sent out differing messages on its commitment to implementing the MoC on the ECT.
- However days after the Indian Minister's visit, **President Gotabaya Rajapaksa assured port workers that** –
    - ➢ **the ECT was not going to be sold or leased**
    - ➢ **there would be an "investment" in the ECT by the Indian Adani group**
- Clearly, this did not appease the trade unions resisting the development.

What is Sri Lanka's consolation offer?

- PM Rajapaksa announced the Sri Lankan government decision that the ECT would be developed and operated as a "wholly owned container terminal of the SLPA.
- After this, a cabinet meeting approved a proposal to develop the West Terminal at the Colombo Port as a Public Private Partnership with India and Japan.
- This is seen as a bid to compensate for taking away the ECT.
- India has not yet commented on this offer.
- The Sri Lankan side believes the offer can persuade India and Japan that the West terminal is strategically no different from the East, and commercially even better.
    - ➢ Developers could hold as much as 85% stake in the West terminal as opposed to just 49% in ECT.
    - ➢ It is said that this would be a much better option for Adani.
- The unions are said to be on board the proposal to invite India and Japan to participate in the development and operation of the west terminal.

Significant of ECT for India

- India had been offered the Western Container Terminal earlier, but had refused.
- **The ECT is already operational, while the WCT has to be built from scratch.**
- For India, the ECT deal was important as 60%-70% of transshipment that takes place through it is India-linked.
- The ECT is also considered more strategic than any other in Colombo Port.
- It is located next to the Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT) project, a joint venture between China Merchants Port Holdings Company Ltd. and SLPA.

India and Japan reaction to the withdrawal:

- Japan has called Sri Lanka's decision to pull out from the agreement **"regrettable".**
- India's response was that **Colombo should not be taking a unilateral decision on an existing tripartite agreement.**
- The commitment of the Government of Sri Lanka in this regard has been conveyed several times in the recent past.
- Sri Lanka's Cabinet also took a decision to implement the project with foreign investors.
- Given these, all sides should continue to abide by the existing understandings and commitment.

Disengagement Agreement

Why in news?

Chinese and Indian troops on the southern and northern shores of Pangong Tso began **"synchronized and organized disengagement."**

> - The move comes as the **first major breakthrough in talks to resolve the nine-month military standoff along the Line of Actual Control** (LAC) in Ladakh.
> - The disengagement began in line with the **consensus reached at the 9th round of China-India Corps Commander Level Meeting.**
> - The agreement is a promising start towards **restoring peace in the border areas.**

Disengagement plan in eastern Ladakh

- Troops from both sides have started disengaging from the **Pangong Tso area** in eastern Ladakh.
- As of now, the disengagement process seems **restricted to the north and south banks of Pangong Tso.**
- The process has started with the **pulling back of certain columns of tanks from the south bank region by both sides.**
- At the moment, there is no pullback of troops from the friction points and the heights they are positioned on.

> - That will happen in a phased and verified manner.
- The ground commanders have started meeting, to figure out the nitty-gritty of the process.

What does this disengagement process entail?

- Both sides will remove the forward deployment in a phased, coordinated and verified manner.
- China will pull its troops on the north bank towards the east of **Finger 8.**
- Similarly, India will also position its forces at its permanent base at the **Dhan Singh Thapa post near Finger 3.**
- Similar action will be taken by both the parties in the south bank area as well.

- Both sides have also agreed that the **area between Finger 3 and Finger 8 will become a no-patrolling zone temporarily.**
  - ➢ This will be till both sides reach an agreement through military and diplomatic discussions to restore patrolling.
- Further, all the **construction done by both sides on the north and south banks of the lake since April 2020 will be removed.**
- It is expected that this will restore the situation to before the standoff of 2020.
- The process, as announced, will send Indian and Chinese troops back to their traditional bases on the north bank.
- While India has its traditional base at the Dhan Singh Thapa Post, just west of Finger 3, China has had its base east of Finger 8.

Strategic Importance of Eastern Ladakh:

- **The north and south banks of Pangong Tso are two of the most significant and sensitive regions** when it comes to the current standoff in the Ladakh.
- The clashes here marked the beginning of the standoff, which makes the areas around the shores of the lake so sensitive and important.
- It is one of the areas where the **Chinese troops had come around 8 km deep west of India's perception** of the LAC.
- China had positioned its troops on the ridgeline connecting **Fingers 3 and 4**, while according to India the LAC passes through Finger 8.
- Further, **in the south bank of the lake, Indian forces in an action in late August 2020 had gained strategic advantage by occupying certain peaks, outwitting the Chinese.**
- Indian troops had positioned themselves on heights of **Magar Hill, Mukhpari, Gurung Hill, Rezang La and Rechin La, which were unoccupied by either side earlier.**

  - ➢ Since then, the Chinese side had been particularly sensitive.
  - ➢ This is because these positions allowed India to **dominate Spanggur Gap.**
  - ➢ **The Spanggur Gap is a two-km wide valley that can be used to launch an offensive**, as China had done in 1962.
  - ➢ The positions also allow India a direct view of **China's Moldo Garrison.**
- After this action India had also re-positioned its troops on the north bank to occupy heights overlooking Chinese positions on the north bank as well.

Why has an agreement taken so long?

- Since September 2020, **China has insisted that India first pull its troops back from the south bank of Pangong Tso, and the Chushul sub-sector.**
- However, India has been demanding that any disengagement process should include the entire region.
- It also insisted that the troops should go back to their April 2020 positions.
- However, it seems that for now both sides have agreed to first disengage from the Pangong Tso area only.
- In the earlier military and diplomatic discussions with China, India had told that it wanted a solution to the issue on the basis of three principles:

➢ LAC should be accepted and respected by both the parties.
➢ Neither party should attempt to change the status quo unilaterally.
➢ All agreements should be fully adhered to by both parties.

Outstanding Issues at LAC

- The Pangong Tso region is just one of the friction areas.
- There are other friction points, all north of the Pangong Tso, where the troops have been face-to-face since last year (2020).
- So, there are still **some outstanding issues that remain regarding deployment and patrolling on LAC.**
- Reportedly, India's attention will be on these issues in further discussions.
- Both sides agree that complete disengagement under bilateral agreements and protocols should be done as soon as possible.
- Both sides have agreed that within 48 hours of complete disengagement from Pangong Lake, senior commanders-level talks should be held.
  ➢ And the remaining issues should be resolved.

What hinders a permanent resolution?

- Two of the main hurdles in finding a permanent resolution are **lack of trust and lack of clarity on intent.**
- The events of 2020 have notably left enormous distrust.
- Any permanent resolution will include –

  ➢ disengagement of troops from the frontlines from all friction points
  ➢ de-escalation that will entail sending the troops from the depth areas to their original bases
- Both sides have **around 50,000 troops in the region, along with additional tanks, artillery and air defence assets.**
- As the standoff progressed in the months of May, June and July of 2020, there was a mirrored military build-up from both sides.
- So, a resolution has to include sending these troops and military equipment where they came from on both sides.
- But neither side had been willing to take the first step to reduce their troop or military strength, as it does not trust the other side.
- Moreover, China's intent for diverting its troops in May 2020 from their traditional exercise in the region to the LAC, which led to the standoff, is not known.
- Also, the **situation in Depsang Plains continues to be a concern.**

Way forward:

- The success of the new disengagement plan will finally depend on whether it is **implemented on the ground in letter and in spirit.**
- Both sides should keep in mind what is at stake for the **broader relationship between the two most populous countries,** which ultimately hinges on peace on the border

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Environment

Ageing Dams of India: UN Report

Why in News?

According to a United Nations (UN) report "Ageing water infrastructure: An emerging global risk", over 1,000 large dams in India will be roughly 50 years old in 2025 and such ageing embankments across the world pose a growing threat.

Findings of the report

- The report highlights that; **some thousand large dams in India will be around 50 years old in 2025.**
- It warns that such aging structures across the world **pose a growing threat**.
- The report also notes that, **by 2050 most people on Earth will live downstream of the thousands of dams that were built in the 20th century.**
- As per the report, 58700 large dams worldwide were constructed in between 1930 and 1970. Those dams have the design life of 50 to 100 years.
- Report also highlights that, the **world will witness another large dam-building revolution** like it was in mid-20th century. But these dams will then be showing their age.
- It highlights, **32,716 large dams which accounts for 55 percent of the world's total are found in four Asian countries namely China, India, Japan, and South Korea**.
- Approximately **3.5 million people are at risk if India's Mullaperiyar dam in Kerala will fail**. The dam was built **over 100 years ago**. It is constructed with concrete '**surkhi**' which is a combination of limestone and burnt brick powder.

What are the ageing signs?

1. Increase in the cases of dam failures,
2. Increasing costs of dam repair and maintenance,
3. Increase in the reservoir sedimentation, and
4. Loss of functionality and effectiveness of the dams "strongly interconnected" manifestations.

Problems faced due to ageing of Dams:

Decreasing Storage Capacity:

- As dams age, soil replaces the water in the reservoirs. Therefore, the storage capacity cannot be claimed to be the same as it was in the 1900s and 1950s.
- The storage space in Indian reservoirs is receding at a rate faster than anticipated.

Flawed Design:

- Studies show that the design of many of India's reservoirs is flawed.
- Indian reservoirs are designed with a poor understanding of sedimentation science.
- The designs underestimate the rate of siltation and overestimate live storage capacity created.

High Siltation Rates:

- It refers both to the increased concentration of suspended sediments and to the increased accumulation (temporary or permanent) of fine sediments on bottoms where they are undesirable.

Negative impact of Dam ageing:

Less Water:

- When soil replaces the water in reservoirs, supply gets choked. The cropped area begins receiving less and less water as time progresses.

Impact on Groundwater:

- The net sown water area either shrinks in size or depends on rains or groundwater, which is overexploited.

Affecting Farmers' Income:

- The farmer's income may get reduced as water is one of the crucial factors for crop yield along with credit, crop insurance and investment.
- It is important to note that no plan on climate change adaptation will succeed with sediment packed dams.

Frequent Flood:

- The designed flood cushions within several reservoirs across many river basins may have already depleted substantially due to which floods have become more frequent downstream of dams.
- The flooding of Bharuch in 2020, Kerala in 2018 and Chennai in 2015 are a few examples attributed to downstream releases from reservoirs.

Step Taken:

- Recently, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the **Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP)** Phase II and Phase III.

  ➢ It envisages comprehensive rehabilitation of 736 existing dams located across the country and complements **the Dam Safety Bill, 2019.**

Type of Dams:

There are many dams in India, and hence there is a need to know about them as there are questions based on the dams of India.

1. **Arch Dam:** An arch dam is a concrete dam that is curved upstream in the plan. It is designed so that the hydrostatic pressure (force of the water against it) presses against the arch, causing the arch to straighten slightly and strengthening the structure as it pushes into its foundation or abutments. An arch dam is most suitable for narrow canyons or gorges with steep walls of stable rock to support the structure and stresses.
2. **Gravity Dam:** Dams constructed from concrete or stone masonry are Gravity dams. They are designed to hold back water by using only the weight of the material and its resistance against the foundation to oppose the horizontal pressure of water pushing against it. These are designed in such a way that each section of the dam is stable and independent of other section.
3. **Arch-Gravity Dam:** This dam has the characteristics of both an arch dam and a gravity dam. It is a dam that curves upstream in a narrowing curve that directs most of the water pressure against the canyon rock walls. The inward compression of the dam by the water reduces the lateral (horizontal) force acting on the dam.
4. **Barrages:** A barrage is a type of low-head, diversion dam which consists of a number of large gates that can be opened or closed to control the amount of water passing through. This allows the structure to regulate and

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stabilize river water elevation upstream for use in irrigation and other systems.

5. **Embankment Dams:** An embankment dam is a large artificial dam. It is typically created by the placement and compaction of a complex semi-plastic mound of various compositions of soil, sand, clay, or rock. It has a semi-pervious waterproof natural covering for its surface and a dense, impervious core.

6. **Rock-Fills Dams:** Rock-fill dams are embankments of compacted free-draining granular earth with an impervious zone. The earth utilized often contains a high percentage of large particles, hence the term "rock-fill".

7. **Concrete-face rock-fill dams:** A concrete-face rock-fill dam (CFRD) is a rock-fill dam with concrete slabs on its upstream face. This design provides the concrete slab as an impervious wall to prevent leakage and also a structure without concern for uplift pressure.

8. **Earth-fill dams:** Earth-fill dams, also called earthen dams, rolled-earth dams or simply earth dams, are constructed as a simple embankment of well-compacted earth. A homogeneous rolled-earth dam is entirely constructed of one type of material but may contain a drain layer to collect seep water.

Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management

Why in News?

Recently, on the occasion of the World Wetland Day, the Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change announced the establishment of a Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM), as a part of the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM)

About Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM):

The Centre has been established as a part of the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management(NCSCM). This centre comes under the Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change.

➢ **Aim:** To address specific research needs and knowledge gaps in the conservation and management of wetlands.

Key Functions of the centre:

- It will help in building partnerships and networks with relevant national and international agencies.
- Center will serve as a knowledge hub. It enables exchange between State/ UT Wetland Authorities, wetland users, managers, researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners.
- Moreover, it will assist the national and State/ UT Governments in the design and implementation of policy and regulatory frameworks for conservation.

About World Wetland Day:

- **World Wetlands Day:** It is celebrated every year on 2 February. This day marks the date of the adoption of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1971.
- **Aim:** To raise global awareness about the vital role played by wetlands for people and our planet.
- **The theme for 2021:** 'Wetlands and Water'. This year's theme is most significant as the UN Decades of Ocean Science and Ecosystem Restoration begins in 2021.
- **Wetlands in India:** Nearly 4.6% of India's land is designated as wetlands. They cover an area of 15.26 million hectares.
- Moreover, **India has 42 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites), with a surface area of 1.08 million hectares.**

Uttarakhand Flash Flood

Why in News?

Recently, a **glacial break** in the **Tapovan-Reni area of Chamoli District of Uttarakhand** led to massive **Flash Flood in Dhauli Ganga and Alaknanda Rivers,** damaging houses and the nearby **Rishiganga power project.**

Key Highlights:

- It washed away at least **two hydroelectric power projects**, the 13.2 MW Rishiganga hydroelectric power project and 520 MW NTPC Tapovan-Vishnugad project (also known as Rishi Ganga Project) on the Dhauliganga river, a tributary of the Alakananda.

Possible Causes of flash flood:

- A part of the **Nanda Devi glacier, which broke off and collapsed in the lake**, which surprisingly occurred at the edge of the winter season.
- **Satellite and Google Earth images** do not show a glacial lake near the region, but there is a possibility that there may be a **water pocket** in the region.

  - ➤ **Water pockets are** lakes inside the glaciers, which may have erupted leading to this event.
- **Environmental experts** have attributed the glacial melt to **global warming and climate change.**
  - ➤ Climate change has driven erratic weather patterns like increased snowfall and rainfall, warmer winters have led to the melting of a lot of snow.
  - ➤ The thermal profile of ice has been increasing. Earlier, the temperature of ice ranged from -6°C to -20°C and now it is -2°C, making it more susceptible to melting.
- **The average temperature in the northwestern Himalaya has risen by 0.66°C since 1991** (an increase much higher than the global average).
  - ➤ The higher Himalaya became even warmer on average in the same period.

Concerns:

- According to the **UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC),** glacier retreat and permafrost thaw are projected to decrease the stability of mountain slopes and increase the number and area of glacier lakes.
- Also, the **number and area of glacier lakes will continue to increase in most regions** in the coming decades.

  - ➤ **Climate change occurring in most parts of the Hindu Kush Himalaya** has given rise to the formation of numerous new glacial lakes, which are the major cause of GLOFs.
  - ➤ Since **glaciers in the Himalayas are in a retreating phase, glacial lakes are growing** and pose a potentially large risk to downstream infrastructure and life.
- Environmentalists have always warned against the **construction of dams** as there is always a chance of flooding in the eco-sensitive Himalayan region.
- **Unlike earthen dams, the weak structure of the moraine dam leads to the abrupt failure of the dam on top of the glacial lake,** which holds a large volume of water.

  - ➤ **A moraine is materials, mainly soil and rock, left behind by a moving glacier**. Glaciers transport all sorts of dirt and boulders that build up to form moraines.

Glacial Burst:

- These are also known as the **Glacial Lake Outburst Flood** (GLOF).
- When glaciers retreat, they leave a space which becomes a **glacial lake being filled with water**. When such a lake breaches, it is known as GLOF.
- It can occur for a number of reasons like **erosion, a build-up of water pressure, an avalanche of snow or rocks, and also an earthquake under the ice.** It can also be triggered by the massive displacement of water in a glacial lake when a large portion of an adjacent glacier collapses into it.

GLOFs have three main features:

- Involve sudden (and sometimes cyclic) releases of water.
- Tend to be rapid events, lasting hours to days.
- Result in large downstream river discharges (which often increase by an order of magnitude).

Risk Reduction Measures:

- **The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** has issued detailed guidelines on how to reduce and deal with GLOFs.
- **Identification of potentially dangerous lakes based on field observations, records of past events, geomorphologic and geotechnical characteristics of the lake/dam, etc.**
- Use of **Synthetic-Aperture Radar** imagery to automatically detect changes in water bodies, including new lake formations, during the monsoon months.
- Development of methods and protocols to allow **remote monitoring of lake bodies from space.**
- **Reduction of the volume of water with methods such as controlled breathing, pumping or siphoning out water, and making a tunnel through the moraine barrier** or under an ice dam.
- **Prohibition of construction of any habitation in the high hazard zone** and relocation of existing buildings are to be relocated to a safer nearby region. New infrastructures in the medium hazard zone have to be accompanied by specific protection measures.

India's Preparedness:

- Some work on the **identification of such lakes** has been done by the **Central Water Commission (CWC).**
- **Work in progress**: A robust early warning system, a broad framework for infrastructure development, construction and excavation in vulnerable zones.
- In contrast to other countries, there are **no uniform codes for excavation, construction and grading codes in India.**
- **For land-use planning in the GLOF/LLOF prone areas, there are no widely accepted procedures** or regulation in India.
- The number of implemented and operational **GLOF Early Warning Systems (EWS) is still very small**, even at the global scale.

Rescue Guidelines Suggestions:

- Apart from specialised forces such as the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and the Army, there is a need for trained local manpower.
  - Over 80 per cent of search and rescue is carried out by the local community before the intervention of the state machinery and specialised search and rescue teams.

- Local teams will also assist in planning and setting up emergency shelters, distributing relief packages, identifying missing people, and addressing the needs for food, healthcare, water supply, etc.
- **There is a need for comprehensive alarm systems.**
    - Besides **classical alarming infrastructure consisting of acoustic alarms by sirens, modern communication technology including cell and smartphone**s can help or replace the existing structure.
- NDMA has asked for provision of heavy earthmoving and search and rescue equipment, as well as motor launches, country boats, inflatable rubber boats, life jackets, etc.
    - **NDMA recommends innovative methods using locally available natural resources**, which are more suitable to be carried in the mountains in a disassembled form.
- For emergency medical response, Quick Reaction Medical Teams, mobile field hospitals, Accident Relief Medical Vans, and heli-ambulances in areas inaccessible by roads, can be deployed.
    - **The guidelines also call for psychological counselling of victims, apart from the dissemination of accurate information through press conferences and mass media.**

Dhauliganga
It originates from **Vasudhara Tal**, perhaps the **largest glacial lake in Uttarakhand**.
About:
- Dhauliganga is one of the **important tributaries of Alaknanda**, the other being the **Nandakini, Pindar, Mandakini and Bhagirathi.**
- Dhauliganga is joined by the **Rishiganga River at Raini**.
- It **merges with** the **Alaknanda at Vishnuprayag.**

    - There it loses its identity and the Alaknanda flows southwest through **Chamoli, Maithana**, **Nandaprayag, Karnaprayag until it meets the Mandakini river, coming from the north at Rudraprayag**.
    - After **subsuming Mandakini, the Alaknanda carries on past Srinagar, before joining the Ganga at Devprayag.**
- **Alaknanda then disappears** and the mighty **Ganga** carries on its journey, first flowing south then west through important pilgrimage centres such as **Rishikesh** and finally descending into the **Indo-Gangetic plains at Haridwar**.

Brookeisa nana

Why in News?

The smallest species of Reptiles have been discovered by the scientists in **Madagascar**. It is a **species of a chameleon**.

About Brookesia Nana:

- **Two tiny lizards** were discovered by a team of **German Madagascar expedition team**
- It was a **male Brookesia nana or a nano chameleon with the body of just 13.5mm**
- It is the smallest species among the 11,500 known species of reptiles. This has been stated by the Bavarian State Collection of Zoology in Munich
- The length of the **chameleon is 22 mm that is 0.86 inches in all**
- The size of the **female is way bigger at around 29 mm**.
- The chameleon is tiny enough to perch comfortably on a fingertip
- Brookesia Micra lives on less than two square kilometres
- It, however, has the same world-weary expression as its larger cousins around the world.

"The new chameleon is only known from a degraded **montane rainforest in northern Madagascar** and might be **threatened by extinction**," as per the Scientific Reports journal.

"This tiny new chameleon violates the pattern of the smallest species being found on small islands. That suggests that something else is allowing/causing these chameleons to miniaturise," said Dr Mark Scherz.

Threats to the survival of Brookesia Nana:

- The sustained destruction of forests in northern Madagascar threatens its survival.
- As per **Glaw, "Habitat destruction is the biggest threat to the amphibians and reptiles of Madagascar."**
- Climate change may be a reason in the future but for now, **it is deforestation**.
- Since the mid-20th century, Madagascar has lost about **45 per cent of its forest cover**.
- B. nana and another mini-chameleon discovered on a small island of Madagascar are especially vulnerable because their range is very small.

World Sustainable Development Summit 2021

Why in News?

The Prime Minister has inaugurate the World Sustainable Development Summit 2021.

About World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS):

- It is an **annual event organized by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) since 2001**. The summit was earlier known as Delhi Sustainable Development Summit.
- **Purpose:** The Summit brings together a wide number of participants in the fight against climate change. Participants include governments, business leaders, academicians, climate scientists, youth, and civil society.
- **Key Partners**: The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change(MoEFCC), Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, and the Ministry of Earth Sciences are key partners of the Summit.
- **Theme for 2021:** "Redefining our common future: Safe and secure environment for all".

The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)
- It is a **non-profit research institute**. It was established in **1974** as Tata Energy Research Institute and renamed to The Energy Resources Institute in 2003.
- **Purpose:** It conducts research work in the fields of energy, environment, and sustainable development for India and the Global South.
- **Location:** New Delhi.

Other Initiatives by TERI:
- **Lighting a Billion Lives(LaBL):** It is an initiative of TERI to provide clean lighting access to the bottom of the pyramid communities.
- **Green Olympiad:** It is conducted by TERI in association with MoEFCC. It is an international environment examination that is annually organized for middle and high-school students.
- **Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA):** It was conceived by TERI and developed with the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. It is a national rating system for green buildings in India.

Science and Technology

India's first geothermal power project

Why in News?

India's first geothermal power project to tap the potential of natural geysers dotting the **Puga area**, 170 km east of Leh and not far from the China border, in **Changthang plain.**

- ➢ **The first phase**, ONGC will drill upto 500 metres to tap the steam and hot sulphur water spewing out of the geysers for running a power plant with a capacity of one MW (megawatt).
- ➢ In the **second phase**, deeper drilling will be done to explore the potential of the thermal reservoir.
- ➢ A **commercial scale power plant** will be set up in the **third phase.**

Key Highlights:

- The project will be completed in four phases.
- A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish and implement the first phase was signed on 6th February, 2021 between **ONGC Energy; LAHDC, Leh and the Power Department of UT Ladakh**
- This geothermal project is known as Geothermal Field Development Project.
- It will be commission by the end **of 2022.**
- It has also been requested to ONGC to speed up the project and scale up to 200 MW capacities for appreciable gain.
- This project will provide continuous power supply and also the hot water from springs can be used for building hot swimming pools for the tourist and can be used for space-heating.

Puga Village of Ladakh :

- In the Puga Village, scientists have discovered a **potential of more than 100 mw of geothermal energies**.
- It lies in the **south-eastern part of Ladakh**.
- The village is a part of the **Himalayan geothermal belt**.
- The region has **shown the evidence of geothermal activity in various form including the mud pools, hot springs, sulphur deposits and borax deposits.**
- The talk of the potential geothermal project in the Puja Village has been into news since 2008.
- The region has the potential to produce about **40% of the energy requirements.**

Benefits of the project:

- It would be providing round the clock power supply in the territory
- Hot water from the spring would come handy for space heating
- Establishing hot swimming pools would be good as a tourist attraction
- Ladakh would be self-sustaining economy and it would emphasize the Government's Vocal for Local calls.
- Establishment of this kind of plant would open new work avenues for locals.
- The renewed focus is on the perpetual form of energy as it is considered to be extremely environment friendly and would lead to a carbon-neutral Ladakh.

What is Geothermal Energy?
- Thermal Energy is the energy that determines the temperature of the matter.
- Geothermal energy is present in the rocks and fluids beneath the earth.
- It is also found in the shallow ground to several miles below the surface of the Earth reaching upto Magma.

How is geothermal energy produced?
- To produce the geothermally generated electricity, wells, 1.6 kilometres deep or more holes are drilled into underground reservoirs.
- These wells tap steam and hot water to drive the turbines. The turbines are in turn linked to electricity generators.
- The geothermal electricity production was done in Larderello Italy in 1904.

Types of Geothermal Power Plants:
- **Dry Steam Plants**: It takes the steam out of fractures in the ground and uses it to directly drive a turbine.
- **Flash Plants**: In this, they pull deep, high-pressure hot water into cooler low-pressure water. The steam then resulting from this process is used to drive the turbine.
- **Binary Plants:** The hot water is passed by a secondary fluid with a lower boiling point than actual which makes it turn into vapour. This then drives the turbine.

Potential Geothermal Reservoirs in India:
- Puga- Ladakh
- Tatapani- Chhattisgarh
- Godavari
- Manikaran- Himachal Pradesh
- Bakreshwar- West Bengal
- Tuwa- Gujarat
- Unai- Maharashtra
- Jalgaon- Maharashtra
- Rajgor and Munger- Bihar

Big tech vs State

Why in News?

Union Information and Technology minister Ravi Shankar Prasad recently accused Twitter of "double standards". The ongoing exchange between the government and Twitter highlights the need for responsible roles by both the big techs and government.

What was the Minister's charge?

- He was referring to the alleged difference in approach taken by Twitter with respect to the events at **Capitol Hill** in the US and the **Red Fort** in India on Republic Day.
- This comes after the government issued notices seeking the blocking of some social media accounts.

  - This was for **allegedly spreading misinformation and provocative content in the aftermath** of the **violence witnessed during** the **tractor march by farmers on January 26.**

Twitter's response

Twitter did block some accounts. However, it said that the accounts it had not blocked, either on January 31 or after the February 4 notice, were consistent with their policies on free speech. It reiterated that the platform believed that "the notices sent to it were not consistent with laws in the country".

Concerns:

- The seeming arbitrariness of decision-making of social media platforms is not an **India-specific concern**.
- A few days ago, French President Emmanuel Macron expressed his displeasure of social media platforms.
- He expressed concerns at the way the platforms which had **"helped President Trump to be so efficient" "suddenly cut the mic"** the moment **"they were sure he was out of power".**
- Such lack of consistency and the absence of clearly defined rules on part of social media platforms are worrying.
- These platforms wield immense power as they contribute to shaping online public discourse.
- Considering this, how these issues are resolved will have far-reaching effects.
- **The decision of when to "cut the mic" cannot arguably be left in the hands of a private player alone.**

  ➢ This is because they are made by **unelected executives with questionable incentive structures and opaque systems of accountability.**
- In all, social media platforms must be neutral, transparent and consistent in their decision-making process.

Way Forward:

- The government needs to be **more transparent in its decision-making.**
- When it asks a **social media platform to block hundreds of accounts that must be guided by a pre-defined and publicly disclosed set of rules.**
- Failing to do so would mean that the **blacklist could be used to silence critical voices.**

  ➢ This would work against all the government's talk of freedom of expression and open democratic systems.

Tech Giants vs Regulators

Why in News?

Parliament in Australia is debating legislation that would **require Google and Facebook to enter into payment negotiations with media companies for using their content,** with an arbiter mandated to adjudicate in the event an agreement cannot be reached.

  ➢ Australia's proposed law, **News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code Bill 2020**, mandates a bargaining code that aims to force Google and Facebook to compensate media companies for using their content.
  ➢ The Bill is expected to set a **precedent in regulating social media across geographies**.

Response from Tech giants

- **Counter arguments:** Facebook & Google argued that the media industry was already benefiting from traffic routed to them by the digital platforms, and that the proposed rules would expose them to "unmanageable levels of financial and operational risk".

- **Threats of withdrawal**: Google threatened to remove its search engine from Australia. Facebook said it could block Australian users from posting or sharing news links if the proposed norms on royalty payments were put into operation.

Background:

- **The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), in its 2019 report**, Digital Platforms Inquiry, noted that there was a **fundamental imbalance in the power between news media and internet platforms.**
- Specifically mentioning Google and Facebook, the report said these platforms had **"substantial bargaining power in relation to many news media businesses."**
- **It highlighted that media regulation hardly applied to platforms, though they have been increasingly playing much the same role as the media.** The last two decades have also seen the tremendous rise of the platforms and sharp decline of the traditional news media.
- The Australian government, reportedly sensing how important it was to have a **strong and independent media environment in a democracy,** asked the ACCC to come up with a draft code, which it did in July 2020.
- After some changes, the Treasury Laws Amendment (News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code) Bill was introduced in December 2020.

Australia's Media Platform Bill:

- **Payment to News Outlets**: Big tech and social media giants like Facebook and Google will have to pay local news outlets for using their content.

    - **Big Tech firms will have to negotiate** how much they pay local publishers and broadcasters for content that appears on their platforms.
- **Provision of Arbitration and Fine:** An arbiter is mandated to adjudicate if no agreement is reached and there are also provisions of heavy fines if agreements are not done.

The Issue Involved:

- The media industry is **already benefiting from traffic routed** to them by the digital platforms, and that the proposed rules would expose the Internet companies to **"unmanageable levels of financial and operational risk".**
- **Journalism is a public good and a pillar of democracy**. Digital platforms **piggyback on its content without sharing the associated costs**. The subsequent diversion of advertising revenue has undermined traditional media, particularly regional newspapers.
- Paying for news feed in itself appears to be less of an issue for the tech giants, given that **Google agreed to pay news publications in France.**

    - **Google signed a deal** with a group of **French publishers to make digital copyright payments** for online news content.
- The fight in Australia is in fact, **centred on how much control these companies would be able to retain on their payout process -** operational aspects such as deciding the quantum of payments for news feed sources, and having to reveal changes in their algorithms.

- ➢ **France has specifically linked payments to copyright**, without putting a forcing device into the agreements.
- ➢ **Australia's code, on the other hand, is almost entirely focused on the bargaining power of news outlets vis-à-vis the tech majors**, and has some coercive features as well.

The Case of India:

- Policymakers have so far **focused on the dominance of intermediaries such as Google and Facebook**, which are positioned in a way that service providers cannot reach customers except through these platforms.
- A substantial discussion on the **impact of intermediary platforms on the health of news media outlets is yet to begin in any meaningful way.**
- According to a **FICCI-EY report for 2020, there are 300 million users of online news sites, portals and aggregators** in the country.

  - ➢ It makes up **approximately 46% of Internet users and 77% of smartphone users** in India at the end of 2019.
  - ➢ With 282 million unique visitors, **India is the second largest online news consuming nation after China.**
- In India, **digital advertising spends in 2019 grew 24% year-on-year to Rs. 27,900 crore, according to EY estimates, and are expected to grow to Rs. 51,340 crore by 2022.**
- In India, the news aggregators are not mandated to make payments to publishers.

- ➢ **News aggregator is an online platform or a software device that** collects news stories and other information as that information is published and organizes the information in a specific manner.

Way Forward

- India presents **a unique media market which reflects the country's diversity**. For example, media platforms span multiple languages. Therefore, while the Australian development is of special importance to India, it need not provide an ideal template for the way forward.
- **Digital platforms have brought about huge social gains by democratising access**. However**, their growing size and revenue models have also had adverse effects, such as spread of fake news.** It is this fallout that governments should try to mitigate, to safeguard democracy.

Himachal Pradesh Current affairs

Webinar on changing landscape of Indian Pharma Sector

Why in News?

Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur presided over the webinar on 'Changing Landscape of Indian Pharma Sector' organised by **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** from Shimla on **3rd February 2021..**

What makes HP pharma hub of the Country?

- The State has having the **Asia's biggest Pharma Hub at Baddi.**
- The State offers several **incentives to the entrepreneurs** such as **adequate availability of land, surplus power supply, and investors' friendly policies** which the investors cannot find elsewhere.
- Pharma industries was flourishing in Himachal Pradesh due to **solid foundation of industrial package provided to the State in 2003 by the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.**
- Now Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been converting challenge of Covid-19 pandemic as an opportunity towards making India a self reliant country.

Key highlights of the Webinar:

- Chief Minister has Highlight that State Government has actively bid under the under the **Bulk Druk Park Scheme of the Government of India** and have sent a project proposal of Rs. 1190 crore for setting up of this park on 1405 acres of land **in Una district**.
- Chief Minister has Highlight the **production of active pharmaceutical ingredients in the State itself, the country's dependence on foreign countries has reduced.**
- The State Government has already sent a proposal for setting up of **Medical Devices Park** to be built at a cost of Rs. 261 crore on 265 acres of land in **Nalagarh area of Solan district**.

E-cabinet

Why in News?

Himachal becomes first State in the country to make end to end working of cabinet paperless.

Key Highlights:

- Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur inaugurated first e-cabinet at Shimla on **4th Feb.**, with this Himachal Pradesh becomes **first State in the country to make the end to end processing of the cabinet paperless by implementing e-cabinet application.**
- The entire process from initiation of a cabinet memo, approval of the cabinet memo through concerned Secretary, Chief Secretary, concerned Minister and finally by Chief Minister to place in the cabinet has been made online.
- **The date of cabinet meeting will also be notified through this** system after the approval of Chief Minister.
- The cabinet proceedings and recording of the cabinet decisions on respective agenda items and further issuance of advice to the concerned departments will also be done through the e-cabinet application.

- The IT application for e-cabinet has been developed in-house by the Department of Information Technology and is one of the first such electronic platforms in the entire country.

Benefits of e cabinet

- The e-cabinet provides for **generation of automatic alerts through SMS on real time basis for various stages involved in processing cabinet issues like receipt of cabinet memo, finalization of cabinet meeting, advice received on cabinet memo etc. for various level like Secretaries, Ministers etc.**
- The application helps in **removing information asymmetries** by providing more efficient process handling in the form of a dashboard to the concerned Secretaries.
- The e-cabinet application is also available as a **Mobile App on android devices** and will be made available on iOS devices soon.
- The new system will bring **greater efficiency in the overall process of conducting a cabinet** meeting by removing dependencies which arise due to the physical movement of cabinet memos.
- It will also bring an added layer of **security and confidentiality to cabinet proceedings**.
- Through this application the cabinet memorandums will have a **standard template for the ease of decision makers.**
- The system will create **institutional memory by safety storing the cabinet memos/proceeding** for future references. It will also be possible to monitor the status of implementation of cabinet decision more effectively through this application.

Safety measures:

- The security of the application has been kept at **highest priority** and features like giving access to specific users on specific computers, automatic generation of alerts on attempt of unauthorized access and maintenance of logs if the user tries to take screenshots of the cabinet notes, not allowing cabinet memo to be downloaded or printed and a secure loging using OTP, etc.
- All the cabinet memos generated through this application will have **special QR code** with date & time stamp.

State Government committed towards welfare of Gaddi community

Why in News?

While addressing the **Sheep Breeders Conference organized by H.P. Wool Federation at Banuri in Palampur** area of Kangra district Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur emphasized on the commitment of the government for the welfare of the Gaddi community and would ensure initiating of new schemes for making sheep rearing more profitable avocation.

About Gaddi Tribes:

- The Gaddis are a tribe living mainly in the Indian states of **Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir and in central India states uttarpradesh and Madhya Pradesh gaddi knowns as gadaria, paal.**
- Gaddis are associated with the ancient Bharmour kingdom at Chamba, although they played no major role in its governance, the origins of the Gaddi people are lost in time.
- There are at least **four theories for their arrival in that place**, often relying on the intertwining of oral history and myth, and in one case on the dubious ethnohistories of the British Raj era.
- They are primarily the **worshippers of Lord Shiva**. A locally made beverage is used for devotion to the Lord.

- It may be said with due certainty that the present-day **Gaddis are the descendants of one of those casteless nomadic shepherds of the Indian plains who once lived around the Barmer area of Rajasthan"** and infers this from the similarities of various costumes and accessories.
- **According to the 2011 Census** of India, the **Gaddi population was 1,78,130** in Himachal Pradesh.
- The Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh had an adult **sex ratio of 1014** and **literacy rate of 73.3.**
- They are classified as a **Scheduled Tribe** under India's reservation system.

Major Tribes in India (State-wise)

State	Major Tribes
Arunachal Pradesh	Aptani, Mishmi, Daffla, Miri, Aka, Sinpho, Khamti etc.
Assam	Chakma, Mikir, Kachari, Bora etc
Meghalaya	Garo, Khasi, Jaintia, Hamar etc
Nagaland	Angami, Konyak, Lotha etc
Manipur	Kuki, Lepcha, Mugh etc
Tripura	Bhutia, Chakma, Garo, Kuki etc
Mizoram	Mizo, Lakher etc
West Bengal	Asur, Bhumij, Birhor, Lodha, Lepcha, Magh, Mahali, Malpaharia, Polia etc
Jharkhand	Santhal, Paharia, Munda, Ho, Birhor, Oraon, Kharia, Tamaria etc
Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand	Tharu, Bhatia, Jaunsari, Bhoksha, Raji, Khasa, Bhuia, Kharwar, Manjhi, Kol etc
Odisha	Zuang, Sawara, Karia, Khond, Kandh etc
Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh	Hill Maria, Muria, Dandami, Gond, Baiga. Parja, Bhattra, Agaria, Bhil, Saharia. Korwa, Halba etc
Himachal Pradesh	**Gaddi, Gujjar, Kinnar Lahulas, Pangwals**
Jammu & Kashmir	Gaddi, Bakarwal etc

Rajasthan	Bhil, Meena. Kathoria, Garasia etc
Andhra Pradesh and Telangana	Chenchu, Yandai, Kurumba, Khond, Bagdaz, Koya, Bagata, Gadaba etc
Kerala	Irula, Kurumba, Kadar, Puliyan etc
Tamil Nadu	Toda, Kota, Kurumba, Badaga etc
Andaman & Nicobar	Great Andamanese, Nicobarese, Onge, Jarawa, Shompen, Sentenalese etc.

Golden Jubilee Nutrition Garden

In news:

On 7th Feb. Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur inaugurated the 'Golden Jubilee Nutrition Garden' at **Chaudhary Sarwan Kumar Himachal Pradesh Agriculture University Palampur** under **Rs.19 crore environment sustainability plan** concept of **CAAST-NAHEP project entitled 'Protected Agriculture and Natural Farming'** to motivate the people to adopt gardening in a systematic manner in small piece of land.

State Development Budget 2021-22

Why in News?

The State Government has decided to **do away with the old system of Plan and Non Plan categorization for the Budget and have decided to start new system of Annual Development Budget** instead of Annual Plan from the year 2021-22.

Key Highlights:

- Under the new mechanism **all the four sub plans** viz. General Plan, Scheduled Caste Sub Plan, Tribal Sub Plan and Backward Area Sub Plan would now be **renamed General Development Programme**, Scheduled Caste Development Programme, Scheduled Tribe Development Programme and Backward Area Development Programme respectively.
- The State Government has made a provision of Rs. 9405.41 crore for the State Development Budget for the year 2021-22. Out of this **Rs. 6096.70 crore i.e 64.82 percent has been allocated for General Development Programme**, **Rs. 2369.22 crore i.e 25.19 percent for Scheduled Caste Development Programme, Rs. 846.49 crore i.e. 9 percent for Scheduled Tribe Development Programme and Rs. 93 crore i.e. 0.99 percent of total allocation for Backward Area Development Programme.**

Central assistance during Covid-19:

- The Central Government provided a financial assistance of **Rs. 7161 crore** to the State Government during the pandemic in form of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, Atamnirbhar Bharat, during Lockdown and DISCOM.

Sujan Singh Pathania

In news:

- Sujan Singh Pathania, passed away at his native place in **Fatehpur tehsil of Kangra district** on 12th Feb.. He was 78.
- He was former MLA and minister.

Jukaru fair

In news:

- Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur felicitate people of the State specially people of Pangi on the occasion of Jukaru fair in **Pangi valley of district Chamba**.
- Jukaru fair and festival are a symbol of cultural heritage and it provide an opportunity to carry forward the rich tribal culture with mutual brotherhood.

96,855 quintal wheat seed

In news:

- Agriculture Department has prepared an action plan for the year 2021-22 for producing the seeds in the State to fulfill the requirement of the farmers.
- Keeping in view the demand of **1,08,000 quintal seeds by the farmers**, a **target of producing 96,855 quintal seeds in the State has been fixed for the year 2021-22.**
- **Nine registered farmer groups** would produce about 95 thousands quintal seeds, which would be purchased by the Department and later distributed to other farmers of the State.
- Agriculture Department would purchase the seeds of wheat at **26 percent higher rate**, which would also boost the income of the farmer groups. Besides this, 1855 quintal seeds would be produced in the farms of farmers.

Nathpa Jhakri Hydroelectric Project

Why in News?

Governor Bandaru Dattatraya while on his way to Kinnaur halted at Rampur and visited the Nathpa Jhakri Hydroelectric Project.

➢ On this occasion, the Governor said that Himachal Pradesh was one of the leading states in the field of power generation, where surplus energy was being generated.

About Nathpa Jhakri Hydroelectric Project

- Nathpa Jhakri Hydroelectric Station of **1500 MW capacity was the country's largest hydropower plant** which was providing electricity to around nine states of the Country.
- The project boasts of the **largest and longest headrace tunnel, largest desilting chambers, deepest and largest surge shaft and the largest underground power complex.**
- The project added **1,500MW capacity to the Indian Northern Grid since the first unit was commissioned in October 2003.**

Independent India's first voter

In news:

- Governor Bandaru Dattatraya during his visit to Kinnaur met first voter of Independent India, **103 years old Shayam Saran Negi at Circuit House Kalpa.**
- Shayam Saran Negi even at this age is **physically quite active and spread awareness amongst voters** and his contribution in strengthening the democracy.

Water Sports Activities at Tattapani

Why in News?

The State Government was planning to open **a floating restaurant at Tattapani in Mandi district** to make it a **favourite tourist destination.** Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur said this **while virtually inaugurating Water Sports Activities at Tattapani from Shimla on 23rd Feb..**

Key Highlights

- The State Government was committed to develop lesser known tourist places under the **'Nai Raahein Nai Manzilein' programme.**
- This would not only lessen the burden on **already crowded tourist places** but would also provide an opportunity to tourists to **explore virgin destinations**.
- Such devlopment would also go a long way in **providing employment and self employment activities to the local youth.**
- The State Government had also notified **H.P. Miscellaneous Adventure Activities 'Amendment' Rules**, to make **sports activities safe and secure for sports lovers.**

Nai Raahein Nai Manzilein
- It is an initiative to explore the **untapped places of Himachal**.
- "Nai raahein Nayi Manzlilein scheme launched in the financial budget **2018-19.**
- **Many areas of Himachal Pradesh, which are full of nature's beauty, needs to be developed in terms of tourism**. Because of this, the Himachal Government has launched a scheme called " Nai raahein Nayi Manzilein''Under this scheme, work is being done to beautify untapped areas of the state in terms of tourism.
- The Himachal government has made a provision of **Rs 50 crore for this scheme**.
- Under the "Nai raahein Nai Manizlein scheme in the **first phase, Bir Billing in, District Kangra, Chanshal in district Shimla and Janjehli area of District Mandi are being developed** from tourism point of view.

HP bags four awards under PM-KISAN Scheme

Why in News?

- Himachal Pradesh was honoured with four awards, One State Award and Three District Awards for good performance under Pradhan Mantri Kissan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme in different categories by the Department of Agriculture Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Government of India on the Second Anniversary of the launching of the Scheme.

Key Highlights:

- Himachal Pradesh **bagged State Award for good performance in physical verification and grievances redressal under the category of North-East States and hilly terrain areas**. The State has completed **75 percent** of physical verification of beneficiaries and **56 percent grievances** have been redressed under PM-KISAN scheme already.
- Three districts of the State were honoured with the award under the category of North-East States and hilly terrain areas. **Lahaul Spiti received the award on the parameters of Aadhar authenticated beneficiaries** whereas **Sirmaur district was awarded for grievances redressal** and **Kangra district for physical verification of beneficiaries.**

Rajinder Garg

In news:

Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister Rajinder Garg presided over **State Level Fortification Summit organized under Golden Jubilee programme.**

Why Food Fortification important?

- Food fortification or enrichment is the process of adding micronutrients (essential trace elements and vitamins) to food. It can be carried out by food manufacturers, or by governments as a public health policy which aims to reduce the number of people with **dietary deficiencies within a population**.
- Fortification of food items could address the **nutrition deficiencies**.

Shiv Dham

In news:

- Shiv Dham to be constructed at Mandi by spending an amount of over **Rs. 150 crore** which would be an added attraction for the tourists visiting Mandi district and would provide a unique place for the people of Mandi as well as the country.
- **Shiv Dham Phase-I at Mandi** to be developed at Kangnidhar near Mand.
- The Shiv Dham would be developed in an area of **9.5 hectare at Kangnidhar** and would be a major attraction for the tourists visiting Chhoti Kashi Mandi.

Indoor stadium

In News:

- Chief Minister Shri Jai Ram Thakur inaugurating the indoor stadium at baddi on 28th feb.2021.

DEFENCE

- The **I**ndia-US **joint military exercise "Yudh Abhyas 20"** commenced in **Mahajan Field Firing Range of Bikaner district in Rajasthan.**
- **India's Ministry of Defence (MoD**) and **Defence Public Sector Undertaking (DPSU) Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)** have signed a contract for procurement of **Software Defined Radio Tactical (SDR-Tac) worth over ₹1,000 crore.**
- **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)** inducted **women commandos** in its **anti-Naxal Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) unit** which will undergo training and then will be sent to Naxal-hit areas.
- The **Indian Army** has laid the foundation stone of the tallest **'Iconic National Flag'** at the famous **ski-resort of Gulmarg in Jammu and Kashmir**.
- **India** successfully test fired indigenously-developed anti-tank guided missile systems **'Helina' and 'Dhruvastra',** paving their induction into the **Army and the Indian Air Force** respectively.
- The **Indian and Indonesian navies** carried out a **military exercise in the Arabian sea to enhance operational interoperability and overall cooperation.**

Sports:

- The **BCCI** will not be conducting its premier **first-class domestic tournament Ranji Trophy** for the first time in **87 years as the parent body opted for the Vijay Hazare Trophy** .
- **BCCI secretary Jay Shah** was unanimously elected as the **president of the Asian CricketCouncil (ACC) at its Annual General Meeting (AGM).**
- **India's 24-member shooting contingent topped the medals tally in the first Asian Online Shooting Championship.**
- **Dinesh Karthik-led Tamil Nadu clinched their second national T20 championship** as they beat **Baroda by seven wickets** in the final of **Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy in Ahmedabad**.
- Former pacer **Merv Hughes** has been inducted into **the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame**, the country's board (CA) announced.
- Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports **Kiren Rijiju launched** a breakthrough **ReferenceMaterial** for use in chemical testing.
- **Fast bowler Ashoke Dinda, 36,** has retired from all forms of the game after 1**5 years in Bengal cricket.**
- **India's wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant** has been nominated for the **ICC Men's Player** of the Month award along with England skipper Joe Root and Ireland's Paul Stirling.
- **Joe Root**, the England captain, sent India on a leather hunt, becoming the **first player in history to score a double century in his 100th Test match.**
- In **Kargil Ladakh**, **Drass Red** has won the **13th CEC Cup Ice Hockey Championship** beating Hockey Club Chiktan team in the Final match.
- Former captain **Steve Smith** claimed his **third Allan Border Medal** while **Beth Mooney** bagged her **maiden Belinda Clarke Award**, the top two honours of the Australian Cricket Awards.
- The **International Cricket Council (ICC)** announced the winners of the **inaugural ICC Player of the Month Awards** which recognise and celebrate the best performances from **both male and female cricketers** across all forms of international cricket throughout the year.

- The **International Cricket Council (ICC)** has announced **Indian edu-tech company BYJU'S as its global partner from 2021 to 2023.**
- Veteran fast bowler **Ishant Sharma** became the **sixth Indian and the third pacer from the country to take 300 wickets in Test cricket**
- Indian captain **Virat Kohli** has slipped to **No. 5 in the latest ICC Men's Test Player Rankings**.
- Former India wicketkeeper-batsman **Naman Ojha** announced his **retirement from all forms of cricket.**
- The **Mohali-based IPL franchise** formally known as **Kings XI Punjab** were **renamed as Punjab Kings,** ahead of the **2021 auctions due to be held in Chennai on February 18.**
- **India's Ankita Raina** On February 19 won her maiden **WTA title** as she and her **Russian partner Kamilla Rakhimova** clinched the doubles event in the **Phillip Island Trophy in Melbourne**.
- **Star paddler Manika Batra** clinched her **second title** by **defeating Reeth Rishya 4-2** in the **women's singles final of the Senior National Table Tennis Championship**
- **Japan's Naomi Osaka** Has won the **Women's single title in the Australian open 2021.**
- **Indian Premier League Governing Council chairman Brijesh Patel** revealed at the **IPL 2021 Auction that VIVO is back as the title sponsor of the league.**
- **Sri Lanka fast bowler Dhammika Prasad** has announced his **retirement from international cricket.**
- **South-African all-rounder Chris Morris** became the **costliest player** in the history of **Indian Premier League (IPL) auction** when Rajasthan Royals snapped him up for **Rs 16.25 crore in the 2021 auction in Chennai.**
- The **International Olympic Committee (IOC) has named Brisbane, Australia** as the preferred bidder **to host the 2032 Olympic Games.**
- **PM Modi** will virtually inaugurate and deliver the inaugural address at the **2nd Khelo India National Winter Games on February 26, 2021.**

Books & Authors:

- Tibetan spiritual leader the **Dalai Lama** has come out with his new book titled **'The Little Book of Encouragement',** in which he has shared quotes and words of wisdom to promote human happiness.
- **Hunter Biden, son of President Joe Biden** and an ongoing target for conservatives, has a memoir coming out **April 6, 2021**.
- Former **vice president Hamid Ansari** released a book titled as **By Many a Happy Accident**.
- Entrepreneur-author **Sangeet Paul Choudary** explains the importance of platform business models, the forces that power their rapid scale and the factors that will cement their dominance in a post-pandemic world in his new book.
- A book titled **Turn Around India: 2020- Surmounting Past Legacy'** – **creating economic awareness among masses authored by R.P. Gupta** was launched by **Mr Jual Oram, Hon'ble M.P. & Chairperson Standing Committee on Defence, Government of India**.
- **Peter Mukerjea** has come out with his memoir **'Starstruck**: **Confessions of a TV executive**'
- Former **Miss World and actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas** created ripples when she announced her memoir titled **Unfinished**.
- Director **Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari (Bareilly Ki Barfi, Panga**) has turned novelist with her debut

fiction novel, **'Mapping Love'.**

➤ Vice-President **M Venkaiah Naidu** released a book **'Maverick Messiah'** on February 18, 2021.

➤ Veteran actor **Kabir Bedi** will tell the **story of his life "with raw emotional honesty" in his memoir which will be published this April.**

Agreements and MoUs:

➤ **Ford Motor Co** will tap into software, artificial intelligence and **cloud computing** offered by **Alphabet Inc's Google** to develop new consumer services and modernize internal operations.

➤ The **National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC)** has signed an MoU with Apollo Medskills Private Ltd for providing COVID Vaccination Administration training to Nurses, Medical and Nursing students and Pharmacists.

➤ **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** and **Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited (MIDHANI)** have signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** for **development and production of composite** raw materials during the **Aero India 2021 in Bengaluru on February 04, 2021**

➤ **Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries** Ltd has sourced the **world's first consignment of 'carbon-neutral oil'** from the US as it looks to become a **net zero-carbon company by 2035.**

➤ The **1st meeting of the Joint Working Group** in the field of **Renewable Energy** between **India and the Kingdom of Bahrain held On Feb 04, 2021** in virtual format.

➤ A total of **201 MoUs**, product launches, and technology transfers were concluded at the **Bandhan ceremony** held on the last day of **Aero India 2021** at **Yehalanka, Bengaluru** on February 05, 2021.

➤ **Karnataka** has benefitted from the **Aero India** show that concluded in **Bengaluru**.

➤ Indian Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** called for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire in **Afghanistan** to end a spike in violence, as the **two countries signed an agreement for building a dam to supply water to Kabul city.**

➤ **New Development Bank (NDB),** the multilateral development bank established by the **BRICS states**, has announced a commitment of **$100 million into the NIIF Fund of Funds (FoF)**.

➤ **HCL Technologies** announced it has **signed** a **memorandum of understanding** (**MoU**) with Indian Institute of Technology, **Kanpur** (**IITK**) to collaborate in the area of **cybersecurity**.

➤ **India and Nepal signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the reconstruction of six secondary schools in the Himalayan nation.**

➤ Global IT leader **TCS** will **invest** an estimated **Rs.**1,200 - **Rs.1,500 crore** to expand operations **in Kerala** and has signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** with Technopark here for leasing 97 acres of land at its Technocity campus to set **up** a **digital hub** for engineering, product development and IT services across manufacturing sectors, Kerala Chief Minister's office informed.

➤ **Flipkart**, Tamil Nadu MSME inks MoU to support small, **local products**.

➤ **India and Ethiopia** signed two agreements related to visa facilitation and leather technology.

➤ A **national hydrogen mission to accelerate plans to generate the carbon-free fuel** from renewables, state-owned **Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) signed** a pact with **Greenstat Norway for setting up a Centre of Excellence on Hydrogen.**

➤ Indian government, Government of **Nagaland and the World Bank signed** a **$68 million** project to enhance the governance of schools across Nagaland as well as to improve teaching practices and learning environments in select schools.

- Development of a multi-modal logistics park (MMLP) and feasibility to run a ferry service between **Chennai** and Karaikal in Puducherry are some of the projects for which **MoUs** will be **signed** with various agencies by the **Chennai Port Trust** (ChPT) at **the Maritime India Summit 2021** to be held online from March 2 to 4.
- **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** and **the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)** have signed a **memorandum of understanding to support the development, conduct and promotion of health research in the country.**
- In the **next three to five years**, students in Telangana will get a one-of-its-kind innovation centre.
- The **Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA)** and the **National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC)** have inked a memorandum of understanding to synergies their various programmes in the interest of export-oriented capture and culture of fisheries and allied sectors for bringing better value to the stakeholders.
- **India and Mauritius** have signed Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA).
- **The Ministry of Corporate Affairs and Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs** have signed an **MoU** for exchange of data for enhancing ease of doing business in India and improving overall regulatory enforcement.
- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the **Inland Waterways Authority of India and the MOL (Asia Oceania) Limited for transportation of Liquefied Natural Gas through barges on National Waterways-1 and National Waterways-2.**
- **The Ministry of Corporate Affairs and Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs signed a Memorandum of Understanding in New Delhi** for data exchange between the two organisations.

Ranks & Indices:

- **India ranked 10th out of 11 Asia Pacific countries** in a newly-launched health index to measure the progress towards **personalised healthcare**.
- The **second edition** of the India Justice Report, **India's only ranking** of states on delivery of Justice to people, announced.
- **Germany ranks first** in the **PHDCCI International Economic Resilience (IER) Rank** followed by **India and South Korea at second and third positions**, respectively, according to the report released by industry body PHDCCI.
- **India slipped two places to 53rd position** in the **2020 Democracy Index's global ranking**, according to The **Economist Intelligence Unit.**

Summits & Conferences:

- The **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** has started organising **KRITAGYA**- a National level hackathon in the month of August, 2020 to promote innovation in agriculture and allied sectors in the country.

- The **Indian Air Force** will host a **Chiefs of Air Staff (CAS)** Conclave on 3rd and 4th Feb 21 at **Air Force Station Yelahanka.**

- The first-ever **ASEAN-India Hackathon** concluded on **February 4 with more than 400 students,** mentors, and officials from **10 ASEAN countries** and India participating.

- The **45th Kolkata International Book Fair** will be held in **July** this year at the **Central Park Ground of Salt Lake.**
- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** will inaugurate the **World Sustainable Development Summit 2021** on **10th of February** via video conferencing.
- The **first High-Level Dialogue (HLD), co-chaired by the Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal** and the European Union Executive Vice-President and Trade Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis, was held on Feb 05, 2021.
- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** will inaugurate the **Maritime India Summit-2021** on 2nd March.
- The slogan of **'Dekho Apna Desh'** by the Prime Minister has given **boost to domestic tourism stated Union Minister of State (IC) for Tourism & Culture, Shri Prahlad Singh Pate**l, while inaugurating via video conferencing **Kevadia, Gujarat.**
- **AIM and Australia's national science agency (CSIRO)** kick started the **India-Australia Circular Economy (I-ACE) Hackathon, 2021.**
- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** addressed the **29th edition of Nasscom Technology and Leadership Forum (NTLF)** which is being **organized from 17th - 19th Feb** through video conferencing.
- **Dr.Harsh Vardhan**, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare today participated and expressed his views in **WION and Zee Media's 'Population versus Planet' Conference**
- The **Asia Economic Dialogue 2021 (AED 2021)** jointly convened **by the Ministry of External Affairs and Pune International Centre (PIC)**
- The **11th India-EU Macroeconomic dialogue** was held through video conferencing.
- A **trilateral dialogue** was held among **India, France, and Australia** on February 24, 2021 at the senior officials' level, with **focus on further enhancing cooperation in the Indo-Pacific**.
- The **International Commission on Large Dams (ICOLD) Symposium** on Sustainable Development of Dams & River Basins was inaugurated by **Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat,** Minister for Jal Shakti as Chief Guest and Shri R.K. Singh, Minister of State (IC) for Power and New & Renewable Energy, Govt. of India presided over the Opening Ceremony.

Appointments:

Name of the Person	Appointed as	Key Points
R S Sharma	CEO of Ayushman Bharat Scheme	Replacing Indu Bhusan
Ram Mohan Rao Amara	MD & CEO of SBI Card	
Bhavya Lal	chief of staff of NASA	
Andy Jassy	Next CEO of Amazon	He will replace Jeff Bezos
Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala	next director general of the World Trade Organization	
Michael Bloomberg	United Nations Climate Envoy	

Bikram Singh Bedi	MD of Google Cloud	
Praveen Sinha	Acting Chief of CBI	
Jiten Chopra	CFO of Indigo	Succeeds Aditya Pande
VP Joy	Kerala's Chief Secretary	Suceeds Viswas Mehta
Hima Das	Deputy Superintendent of Police in Assam	
Aditya Mittal	Arcelor Mittal CEO	
Satishwar Balakrishnan	Managing director and chief executive officer of Aegon Life Insurance	
Marc Llistosella	chief executive officer and managing director of Tata Motors	Suceeds Guenter Butschek
Mario Draghi	PM of Italy	Suceeds Giuseppe Conte
Puligoru Venkata Sanjay Kumar	Chief Justice of Manipur High Court	
Dr. Ajay Mathur	Director General of International Solar Alliance (ISA)	
Om Prakash Dadhich and Sandeep Kumar	Members in the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).	Dadhich replaces Dr John Joseph Sandeep Kumar replaces Ashok Kumar Pandey
Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala	Head of the World Trade Organization.	
Mahender Singh Kanyal	Indian Ambassador to Syria	presently Ambassador of India to Suriname
Mahesh Palashikar	GE T&D India Ltd (GETDIL) Chairman	succeeding Vishal K Wanchoo
Umakant Dash	Institute of Rural Management- Anand (IRMA) Director	
Nihar N Jambusaria	ICAI President	

Toshihiro Mibe	Honda CEO	
Amrit Singh	Max Life Insurance Chief Financial Officer	
Japan's Seiko Hashimoto	next Tokyo 2020 president	
Yanira Ramirez	H&M Country Sales Manager for India	
V S Ganesh	Executive Director & CEO of Page Industries	Suceeds Vedji Ticku
Shantanu Mitra	MD & CEO of Fullerton India	
Timothy Prentice	Vice President of TVS Motor Company	
Dr Mangu Hanumantha Rao	Executive Director for Madurai AIIMS	
Gautam Thakar	Global CEO of OLX Autos	
K P Krishnan	Shriram Capital Chairman of the board	
Sachin Tendulkar	Brand Ambassador of Unacademy	
Dushyant Chautala	president of the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI)	
Natalia Vodianova	UN Goodwill Ambassador	
Deepika Padukone	Global Brand Ambassador of Levis	
Manu Sharma	Vice President and Genral Manager of Nothing India	

Awards & Honours:

Name of the Person	Awarded as
Robert Irwin	Wildlife Photographer of the Year People's Choice Award
Tamil film Koozhangal	Tiger Award in the competition section of the International Film Festival of Rotterdam.
Manasa Varanasi	winner of VLCC Femina Miss India World 2020.
Muthalankurichi Kamarasu	Tamil Semmal award winner
S Hareesha's novel Meesha	Best novel for the year 2019 by Kerala Sahitya Akademi.
ITC Grand Chola Hotel, Guindy	Swachh Hotel' award
UST Company	'Top Employer'
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy	Skoch Chief Minister of the Year Award.
Bharat Biotech	Genome Valley Excellence Award for 2021
Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)	Asia Environmental Enforcement Award-2020
'Amar Ekushey'	International Mother Language Award in Bangladesh
Uttar Pradesh	Award for fastest implementation of Pradhan mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana.
Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC)	Digital Technology Sabha Award
Telangana State Southern Power Distribution Company Limited (TSSPDCL)	'ICC - 8th Innovation with Impact Awards 2020',

Days & Themes:

Days	Celebrated as
February 1	Indian Coast Guard Day
February 2	World Wetlands Day
February 4	International Day of Human Fratern
February 6	International Day of Zero Tolerance
February 8	International Epilepsy Day
February 9	Safer Internet Day
February 10	World Pulses Day
February 10	National Deworming Day
Second Monday of February	International Epilepsy Day
February 11	International Day of Women and Gi
February 11	World Unani Day
February 12	National Productivity Day
February 13	World Radio Day
February 13	National Women's Day
February 14	Black Day for India
February 17	World Human Spirit Day
February 18 to February 27	Taj Mahotsav
February 20	World Day of Social Justice
February 21	International Mother Language Day
February 22	World Thinking Day
Third Saturday of February" every year.	World Pangolin Day
February 24	Central Excise Day

Obituary:

Name of the Person	Field	Birth Place
Paul Crutzen	Nobel Laurette- Chemistry	Netherlands
Hilton Valentine	Animals Guitarist	United Kingdom
Cicely Tyson	Hollywood Actress	United States
Christopher Plummer	Music Star	Canada
Bansi Kaul	Founder of Rang Vidushak and theatre director	Srinagar
Akhtar Ali	Tennis Legend	
George Shultz	Former US Secretary	United States
Bruce Taylor	All Rounder	NewZealand
Rajiv Kapoor	Actor	Mumbai
Ezra Moseley	Fast Bowler	West Indies
Carlos Menem	President of Argentina	Argentina
M Rama Jois	Former Bihar-Jharkhand governor and noted jurist Justice (Retd.)	Shimoga, Karnataka
B K Mahapatra	Major General (retired)	Odisha
Capt Satish Sharma	Congress leader and former union minister	Secundrabad, Andhra Pradesh
Rahul Khullar	Former TRAI Chief	

Nation and States Miscellaneous:

- **The High-Level Committee under the Chairmanship of Home Minister Amit Shah** approved Additional Central Assistance of over **one thousand seven hundred 51 crore rupees** under the National Disaster Response Fund, NDRF to five states, which were affected by floods, landslides during **South-West Monsoon-2020** and **hailstorm during Rabi 2019-20**.
- **External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar** has had a telephonic conversation with US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken.
- The government has said that the country is witnessing a **V-Shaped Economic Recovery** which is a testimony to the resilience and intrinsic strength of its economy.
- An arboretum showcasing the floral diversity of the **Shivalik hills** was inaugurated at **Jeolikot in Nainital district.**
- **Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu will inaugurate Aadi Mahotsav,** a National Tribal Festival at Dilli Haat in INA in the National Capital.
- **Textiles Minister Smriti Irani inaugurated the 8th India International Silk Fair** on Virtual Portal.
- The **Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi** approved the **Budget for the fiscal year 2021-22.**
- In the Union Budget, Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** proposed to amend Insurance Act, **1938 to increase FDI limit from 49% to 74% in insurance companies**, and allow foreign ownership and control with safeguards.
- Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Animal Husbandry Minister Giriraj Singh, Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Minister of State for Jal Shakti Rattan Lal Kataria jointly launched a **unified web portal** for monitoring the progress of **GOBARDHAN** activities across the nation.
- **Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman,** while presenting the **Union Budget FY 2021-22** in Parliament announced that the government has approved a policy of strategic disinvestment of public sector enterprises
- To help **India's startups** amid the COVID-19 pandemic, **tax holidays for these businesses have been extended by one year till March 31, 2022**, said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman while presenting the **Union Budget 2021-22**
- **Sh. Babul Supriyo** announced the establishment of a **Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM),** as a part of the **National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management(NCSCM), Chennai, an institution under the Ministry.**
- An **'amputee clinic',** the first of its kind in India, with the aim of improving amputation patient care by providing a collection of services under one roof with significant coordination was launched in **Chandigarh**.
- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** pushed for **'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India)** an Oxford panel has now chosen **'Atmanirbharta' in Hindi word of 2020.**
- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** will inaugurate the **Chauri Chaura centenary celebrations at Chauri Chaura in Uttar Pradesh** on February 4 via video conferencing.
- **Union Budget for Financial Year 2021-22** has proposed to set up **100 new Sainik Schools** in the country, in partnership with NGOs, private schools and State-owned schools.
- **Ayesha Aziz,** the 25-year-old from **Kashmir** who is the youngest female pilot in the country, **acts as a source of inspiration and a beacon of empowerment for numerous Kashmiri women.**
- The **Ministry of corporate affairs (MCA)** amended the **Companies Rules to revise** the definition of a small company and **to allow non-resident Indians (NRIs)** to incorporate **one person companies**

- **(OPCs) in India.**
- **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited NSE 3.79 % (HAL)** unveiled a leap in technology of teaming up **unmanned aircraft and vehicles** with manned jets similar to the US project of skyborg.
- Minister of State for Home Affairs **G Kishan Reddy** introduced the **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2021 in the Rajya Sabha.**
- On Feb 06, 2021, President **Ram Nath Kovind** inaugurated **a museum**, dedicated to the **life of former Army Chief General Kodandera Subayya Thimayya, in Karnataka.**
- **GMR Group** has signed a **memorandum of understanding** with **Airbus** (a leading manufacturer of commercial aircrafts) to explore collaboration opportunities across aviation services, technologies and innovation.
- **Odisha's Balasore** will get the country's **first thunderstorm** research testbed, the **India Meteorological Department (IMD).**
- The **Uttar Pradesh** government has introduced a system of issuing a **unique 16-digit Unicode** to **mark all kinds of landholdings in the state**.
- **Skyroot Aerospace and Bellatrix Aerospace** have signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** (MoU) to use the **Orbital Transfer Vehicle** being developed by **Bellatrix Aerospace** in the upper stage of Vikram series of launch vehicles being developed by Skyroot.
- With the Centre's approval, **Tamil Nadu government** passed an order for creating the **fifth tiger reserve** in the state and the **51st in the country**.
- **Packaged food companies** said the **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI)** move to **reduce trans-fat in food items** which use edible oil as an ingredient to **2% from 2022**.
- The **five-day National Horticulture Fair 2021** has started in **Bengaluru on 8 February**.
- The government introduced a bill in the **Rajya Sabha**, which seeks to replace the **National Capital Territory of Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Second (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020**.
- The government will launch the website of the **India Toy Fair- 2021.**
- The Ministry of Agriculture has said that the government has launched a new Central Sector Scheme titled **'Formation and Promotion of 10,000 Farmer Produce Organizations (FPOs)'** and it has committed resources in this regard with a budgetary provision of **Rs 6,865 crore.**
- Prime Minister **Shri Narendra Modi** inaugurated the **World Sustainable Development Summit 2021** via video conferencing.
- Rajya Sabha passed the **Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020**.
- **Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai** said, there are **60 kilometres** area in India Bangladesh border which cannot be fenced, **making it prone to infiltration**.
- Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways **Nitin Gadkari** will formally launch **India's first-ever diesel tractor converted into a CNG tractor** on February 12.
- **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Ministry** has informed that more than one crore two lakh MSMEs were registered in the country within **five years**.
- **Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** virtually inaugurated more than **57,000 water structures constructed in Madhya Pradesh under the 'Jala Abhishekam' campaign** fromNew Delhi.
- Indian Army National Seminar-cum-Webinar, named as **Divya-Drishti 2021** on **Multi-Domain Operations: Future of Conflicts was organised by Centre for Land Warfare Studies, CLAWS.**
- The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT),** added **four more states** have completed the reforms in the **'Ease of Doing Business'**, as stipulated by the **Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance as per recent data.**
- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** dedicated to the nation **four projects** related to **oil, gas and road sector worth rupees four thousand and seven hundred crores at Haldia in WestBengal**.

- A major accident occurred in **Chamoli in Uttarakhand** due to the **breaking of the glacier**
- With the **aim of doubling farmers' income by 2022**, Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** announced that the **agricultural credit target** was set at **Rs.16.5 lakh crore for FY22,** during Union Budget 2021
- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** is addressing the party MPs on the occasion of **'Samarpan Diwas' to commemorate the contributions of his party's founder leader Deen Dayal Upadhyay** on his death anniversary.
- To **strengthen skills training at district level,** the skills development ministry launched the **Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship (MGNF)** programme nationwide in partnership with nine Indian Institutes of Management across India.

- In Madhya Pradesh, the three-day **Mandu Festival began at Mandu** in the historic town of **Dhar district**.
- The first time in its history, the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** has opened its **UR Rao Satellite Centre in Bengaluru for testing satellites developed by the private sector**
- The **Finance Ministry** will infuse **Rs 3,000 crore** capital into state-owned general insurance companies during the current quarter in a bid to **improve their financial health.**
- The **Lok Sabha passed the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2021** by voice vote.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone of **Maharaja Suheldev** Memorial and development work of **Chittaura Lake in Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh** through video conferencing.
- Minority Affairs Ministry is organising **26th Hunar Haat of indigenous artisans and craftsmen** from across the country at **Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi**.
- **India** will provide **Nepalese Rupees(NR) 142 million to Nepal** for the **restoration and conservation of three cultural heritage sites in the Kathmandu Valley.**
- **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and MapmyIndia,** the navigation solutions provider, have joined hands to offer an **indigenous mapping solution to take on Google Maps.**
- **IIT Bombay** launched its **first-ever annual fundraising campaign in India, Cherish IIT Bombay 2021.**
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the **NASSCOM Technology and Leadership Forum (NTLF)** via video conferencing.
- **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** has said that unity in diversity is the beauty of Indian democracy and this unique feature is only visible in India.
- The **World Bank** has released a comprehensive report titled **'Traffic Crash Injuries and Disabilities: The Burden on Indian Society'** in association with the SaveLife Foundation.
- Government has made **FASTag** mandatory on the **National Highways**. All lanes in the fee plazas on National Highways were declared as FASTag lanes.
- The **Union Government** has increased the budget of **Department of Science and Technology and Ministry of Earth Sciences by 30 per cent as** compared to the revised **estimate of 2020- 21**.

- Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said that Tamil Nadu has become a pioneer in reducing road accidents by fifty per cent.
- **President Ram Nath Kovind** inaugurated the **Rashtrapati Bhavan Krida Sthal** in the President's Estate which includes renovated **Football Ground and Basketball Court**.
- **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** has launched a **Pilot Pey Jal Survekshan** under **Jal Jeevan Mission- Urban, JJM-U**.

- **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** launched **e-Chhawani portal.**
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the Mahabahu-Brahmaputra** initiative, lay the

foundation stone of **Dhubri-Phulbari Bridge** and perform Bhoomi Poojan for construction of Majuli Bridge Assam through video conferencing.

- ➢ E-commerce giant **Amazon** has announced its plans to begin **manufacturing devices in India**.
- ➢ **IIT Madras-incubated startup Pi Beam** has launched an **electric two-wheeler, PiMo, for Rs 30,000.**
- ➢ **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of key projects of power and urban sector in **Kerala through video conferencing**.

- ➢ The **Union Cabinet** approved a production-linked **incentive scheme for the telecom sector.**
- ➢ Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment **Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot** will virtually release the **3rd edition of the Indian Sign Language (ISL)** Dictionary with 10,000 terms (including 6,000 earlier terms) on **17th February 2021** in a virtual programme.
- ➢ **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** has launched a **Pilot Pey Jal Survekshan** under **Jal Jeevan Mission- Urban.**
- ➢ Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** would launch the **Mahabahu-Brahmaputra initiative** and lay the **foundation stones of one bridge** and perform a ground-breaking ceremony (bhumi pujan) of another in **Assam** via video conferencing.
- ➢ The **National Informatics Centre (NIC)** of India has launched an **instant messaging app** just like **WhatsApp for government employees called Sandes**.
- ➢ The importance of accurate data for policy making, **Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar** launched **software applications for five pan-India surveys,** including on migrant and domestic workers.
- ➢ Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** laid the foundation stone for key **oil and gas sector projects in Tamil Nadu** via video conferencing.
- ➢ **India has joined Iran and Russia** in a **two-day navy exercise** dubbed **"Iran-Russia Maritime Security Belt 2021"** in the northern part of the Indian Ocean.
- ➢ **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** paid rich tributes to **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj** on the occasion of his Birth Anniversary.
- ➢ **The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and the Arbor Day Foundation** have recognized **Hyderabad as a 2020 Tree City of World**, for its commitment to growing and maintaining urban forests.
- ➢ Foreign Ministers of Quad countries - **India, Australia, Japan and US** - discussed the necessity to promote freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region.
- ➢ **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** has said that India is working towards a **healthy and COVID- 19 free neighbourhood.**
- ➢ **Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank** has announced that the **fourth edition of Prime Minister's Interaction Programme** with school students, teachers and parents - Pariksha Pe Charcha will be held next month.
- ➢ **Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan** launched **Intensified Mission Indradhanush 3.0, (IMI 3.0) to expand immunization coverage across the country.**
- ➢ The Union government launched the **'Go Electric' campaign to spread awareness** about the **benefits of e-mobility and electric vehicle (EV)** charging infrastructure in India.

States:

- ➢ In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Adviser to Lieutenant Governor Farooq Khan reviewed the functioning of **One-Stop-Centres for women** in the UT during a meeting at Civil Secretariat, Jammu.
- ➢ In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, **over 22 lakh people** have so far applied for the **golden card under** newly launched **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (ABPMJAY)**
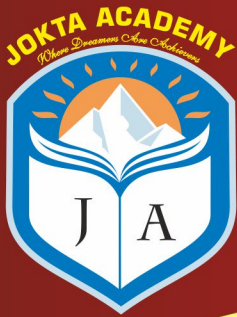
- **SEHAT scheme i**n various districts across the Union Territory.
- The **Kerala government's Gender Park in Kozhikode** will become **functional from next month**, coinciding with the second edition of the **International Conference on Gender Equality (ICGE-II).**
- **Andaman and Nicobar Islands** has become the **first state or Union territory** in the country to become **Covid-19 free** with active cases falling to zero in the islands.
- Punjab Chief Minister Captain **Amarinder Singh** virtually launched the **'Har Ghar Pani, Har Ghar Safai' mission** as part of the government's campaign to accomplish the goal of **100 per cent potable piped water supply in all rural households by March next year.**
- State Election Commissioner **N. Ramesh Kumar** launched a software application called 'eWatch' to keep tabs on poll-related irregularities.
- Delhi Chief Minister **Arvind Kejriwal** launched the **'Switch Delhi'** campaign **to promote electric vehicles** and appealed to people to buy such vehicles **to combat pollution in the city.**
- The southern state of **Kerala** will get its **first human milk bank**. The state-of-the-art facility will be inaugurated by health minister **K K Shailaja** at state-owned **Ernakulam general hospital in Kochi**.
- **Assam** Chief Minister **Sarbananda Sonowal** inaugurated the **first heliport** of the state in **Majuli** district.
- **Manipur** chief minister **N Biren Singh** launched **a new range of packaged organic products** and **Loumi Connect App** apart from distributing Bolero Camper vehicles and nurseries to seven **Farmers Producer Companies (FPCs).**
- Union Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** on February 6, initiated the ceremonial distribution ceremony of **Chah Bagicha Dhan Puraskar Mela in Guwahati**.
- The **Karnataka government** issued an official notification announcing **Vijayanagara** as the **state's 31st district,** which was carved out of the **ore-rich Ballari district**.
- In **Assam, the Kaziranga national park** has recorded a total of **93 thousand 491 birds** as per the latest census.
- The **health department** in **Madhya Pradesh** has launched the **Social Awareness and Action to Neutralise Pneumonia Successfully ('SAANS') campaign** with the aim of **reducing infant mortality due to pneumonia.**
- The **high speed mobile data services** have been **restored in Jammu and Kashmir**, bringing respite to people affected by the ban, especially students, working professionals and business community.
- In **Jharkhand**, the **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, MSME** wing of the Government of India will cooperate in setting up industries up to **20 crore rupees in Dhanbad**.
- **India's first geothermal power project** will be established at **Puga village of eastern Ladakh**. **Puga** has been identified as the hotspot of geothermal energy in the country by the scientists.
- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** will lay the **foundation stone of various development projects** at **Dhekiajuli in Sonitpur district in Assam**.
- **Himachal Pradesh** has become the **first State in** the country **to make the end to end processing of the cabinet paperless by implementing e-cabinet application**.
- In **Gujarat**, the State Government has asked the **Tata group** to start the work on **setting up Indian Institute of Skills- IIS.**
- The state government has launched **Kerala Knowledge Mission** which aims **to transform the state to a knowledge economy.**
- In Gujarat, the Coast Guard District Headquarters **Number-1** conducted the district-level **Pollution Response Workshop and Mock Drill - 2021 at Porbandar.**
- Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader **Amit Shah** will be visiting West Bengal.

- Odisha launched various **citizen-centric on-line services** of the State Transport department.
- To promote **wooden toys, local artifacts, handicrafts Maharashtra Small Industries Development Corporation** and **Maharashtra State Khadi & Village Industries Board** have signed a **Memorandum of Understanding with Flipkart.**
- In the **Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha** inaugurated the state of the art **General Bus Stand cum Shopping complex Cum Multi Level Parking** constructed at the **cost of Rs. 213 Crore in Jammu**.
- The **Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike** has launched Swach Sarvekshan Abhiyan in Bengaluru to educate citizens about solid waste management.
- **Goa has become the 6th State in the country** to successfully undertake **Urban Local Bodies reform**s stipulated by the **Department of Expenditure**.
- In **Puducherry**, a campaign has been launched titled **"Zero Covid by Feb28"** to ensure that there are no COVID-19 cases by the end of February 2021.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled several key development projects worth **6,100 crore rupees at INS Garuda Naval Air Station at Kochi in Kerala**.
- The Prime Minister inaugurated and laid the **foundation stone** of several developmental projects worth over **8000 crore rupees** at **Chennai in Tamil Nadu**.
- The Annual Convention of **Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) concluded at Kevadia in Gujarat.**
- The **11th Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav** is being held between **14th to 28th February at Cooch Behar, Darjeeling and Murshidabad in West Bengal.**
- **Waltair Division**, in its efforts to enhance the passenger amenities at Railway stations, has commissioned another innovative facility called **Robotic Spa under Non-fare revenue here at Visakhapatnam railway station.**
- **Punjab has become the 13th State in the country** to successfully undertake **"One Nation One Ration Card system"** reform.
- **Uttar Pradesh** Chief Minister **Yogi Adityanath** will inaugurate the **Mukhyamantri Abhyudaya Yojana**, a free coaching program meant for students preparing for competitive exams, **on Feb 15, 2021**
- **The tribal painter Bhuri Bai of Madhya Pradesh** was invited as the **Chief Guest** at **the Foundation Day celebrations of Bharat Bhavan**.
- IIT Bombay launched its first-ever annual fundraising campaign in India, **Cherish IIT Bombay 2021.**
- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** laid the foundation stone of **Maharaja Suheldev Memorial and Maharaja Suheldev Development project** and dedicated it to the public **Maharaja Suheldev State Medical College (Baharaich) via video conferencing.**
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** will dedicate to the nation and lay the foundation of key projects of the oil and gas sector in **Tamil Nadu through video conferencing**.

- **Dr. Kiran Bedi** has been removed from the post of **Puducherry Lieutenant Governor**.
- The number of **states successfully completing** the **Ease of Doing Business reforms** has **increased to 15.**
- **Patnaik** announced a **Rs 200-crore package** for the development of the **16th-century shrine of Maa Samaleswari, the presiding deity of western Odisha.**
- **Sikkim Chief Minister P. S. Tamang launched the 'Free Gift Milk to Girl Students of Sikkim'** initiative at Gangtok.
- **Civil Aviation Ministry and Directorate General of Civil Aviation have granted permission** for usage of drones to Kochi Metro Rail Limited, Kerala.

- **Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan** has urged the Centre to set up a Centre of Excellence on Maritime Biotechnology in **Bhubaneswar in Odisha**.
- **Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister Dr. C. N. Ashwath Narayana**, who holds the Higher Education portfolio, has informed that **2,500 classrooms** at the higher education level will be converted into smart classrooms in the **next two months**.
- **Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio** announced **two new grants, namely, the Chief Minister's Grant for Journalism and the Chief Minister's Research Grant**.
- All the government hospitals in the country will have **Janaushadhi Kendras** that sell affordable generic medicines to the common man.
- **Recykal**, a digital **'waste commerce' solutions provider,** has been **selected as the first member from India for the World Economic Forum's Circulars Accelerator programme 2021**.
- **Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan** inaugurated the **Kerala Fibre Optic Network (KFON)** project intended to **provide free internet connections to Below Poverty Line (BPL) families** in the state.
- A team of scientists, nature lovers and doctors have come up with a **mobile application 'Snakepedia'** on snakes in Kerala to help the public as well as doctors to treat snake bites.
- In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, a seven day long exhibition of **National Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Hub (NSSH) scheme concluded at ITI, Ground in Rajouri**.
- The **Kerala government** has sanctioned **Rs.9 crore** to convert the **conventional anganwadis into "smart" structures with better amenities.**
- Union Sports Minister **Kiren Rijiju** has announced that the second **Khelo India University Games will be hosted by Karnataka.**
- The **first paperless budget will be presented in Uttar Pradesh Assembly**.
- Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government plans to develop **Jewar Airport as Asia's biggest airport with six runways.**
- **Former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Mehbooba Mufti** has been re-elected as **President of Peoples' Democratic Party**.
- **Chandigarh** became the **first state or Union Territory** in India to **launch Carbon Watch,** a mobile **application to assess the carbon footprint of an individual.**
- The **Assam cabinet, chaired by Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal**, approved a proposal **to increase the daily wage of tea garden workers to Rs 217, a hike from Rs 167.**
- **Uttar Pradesh** Government presented the biggest ever budget to the tune of around **Rs 5,50,270 crores** to make **Atma Nirbhar or self-reliant Uttar Pradesh**.
- **Jammu and Kashmi**r formally rolled out **e-Kuber payments system of Reserve Bank of India.**
- The **Punjab Cabinet approved implementation of mission 'Lal Lakir'**
- **Union Minister of State for Sports and Youth Affairs Kiren Rijiju** inaugurated gym complex and modern change room and laid the foundation stone for **330-bedded hostel**, upgradation of kitchen and dining hall and synthetic athletics track in the Bengaluru campus of Sports Authority of India.
- The **week-long 47th Khajuraho Dance Festival** began in **Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh** which is based on the **Indian classical dance tradition**.
- **Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh** has inaugurated **Skill Development Centre (SDC)** for **Fire Safety Training of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) at Pilkhuwa in Uttar Pradesh** through virtual mode on February 22, 2021
- **Ramky Enviro Engineers Ltd (REEL)**, a leading waste management company, announced that it has entered into a seven-year contract with the **Greater Chennai Corporation** to design and implement an IOT-enabled solid waste collection programme.
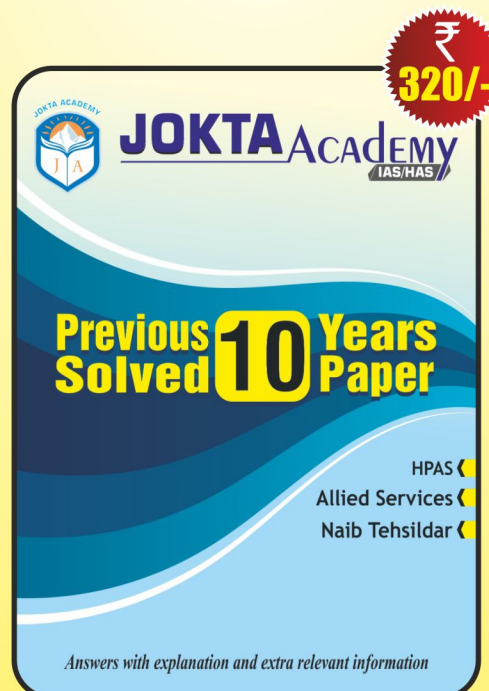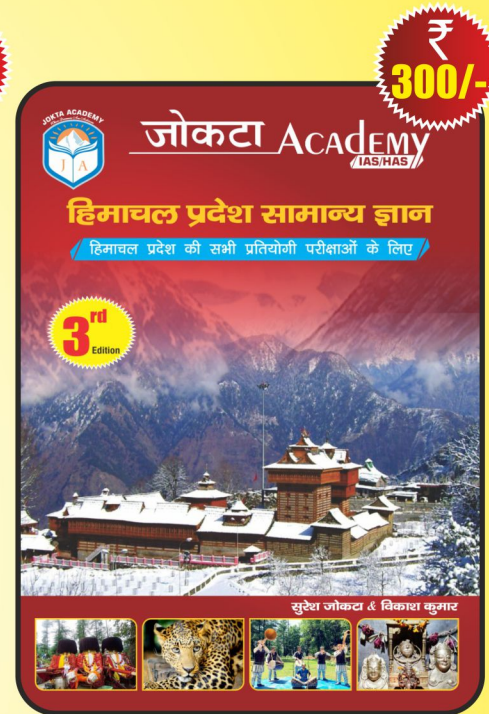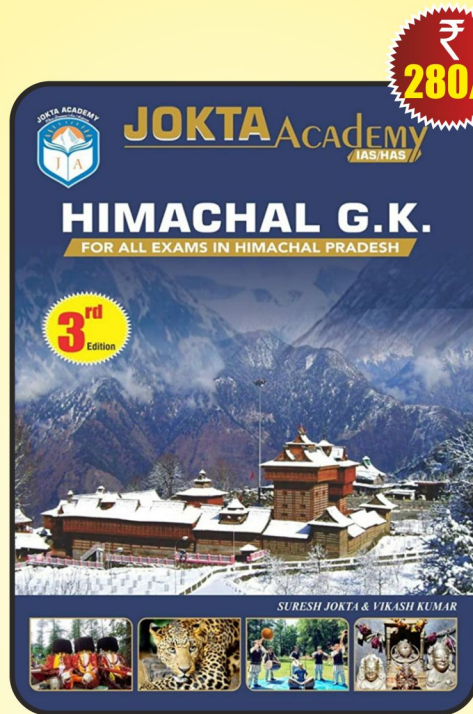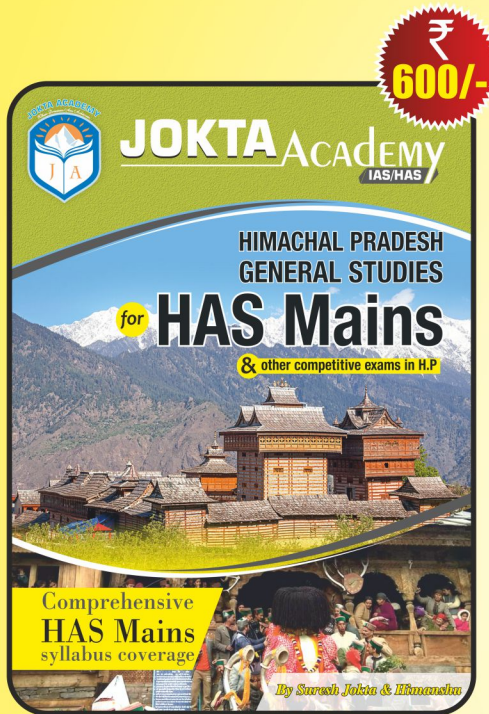
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi harped** on the importance of infrastructure projects as a development index for **West Bengal.**
- **DigiBoxx**, **India's first digital asset management platform** has launched its services in the Tamil Nadu market.
- **Madhya Pradesh** Chief Minister **Shivraj Singh Chouhan** has announced that **Hoshangabad** city in the state would be **renamed as Narmadapuram.**
- In Manipur, the **State Chief Minister N. Biren Singh** launched the Prime Minister Formalization of **Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PM FME) Scheme**.
- BJP national president **JP Nadda** will participate in a series of programmes in **Kolkata and North 24 Parganas** in West Bengal.
- **Digital University** has been set up in **Kerala's Technocity, Mangalapuram. The Governor of Kerala Arif Mohammed Khan has inaugurated the country's first Digital University in the state.**
- In Maharashtra, the **State Government's New Agriculture Pump Power Connection scheme** has been receiving a good response.
- **Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur** launched **'e-Parivahan Vyavstha'** of the State Transport Department to provide faceless services to the people of the State regarding **Driving Licence/Registration Certificates/Permits etc**.
- In **Tamil Nadu, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palananiswami** announced that the retirement age of State Government employees has been increased from **59 to 60 years.**
- In Tripura, the **39th Agartala International Book Fair** with the **theme "Ek Tripura, Shrestha Tripura"** has begun at Agartala.

OUR ACHIEVERS

DISTRICT MANAGER

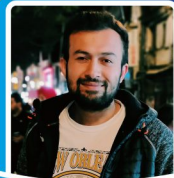## EXECUTIVE OFFICERS/SECRETARY

Vipan Kumar
District Manager

I always with utmost humility that Jokta looks personal guidance and motivation have helped me alot in clearing District manager exam. my engagement with academy as well as with suresh Jokta sir benefited me immensely to clear this exam.

VIPAN KUMAR
DISTRICT MANAGER
(2021)

Anubhav sharma
Executive Officer

Piyush Chauhan
Secretary

Piyush Chauhan — Feb 3, 2021, 8:07 PM (3 days ago)
to me

Dear Sir, I feel pleased to inform you that I have secured Rank-7 in EXECUTIVE STATE MUNICIPAL SERVICES (H.P). I take this opportunity to give you my heartfelt gratitude for your invaluable guidance during the course of this journey. Your Valuable Preparation Inputs, Study Material and Your Constant Motivation were Instrumental in my SUCCESS.

Piyush Chauhan
Secretary

Rajneesh Chauhan
Secretary

It was my immense luck and fortune to be the part of jokta academy where I can grow. The entire team leaves no stone unturned to shape one's future and wonderful experience of learning with prolific.

Rajneesh Chauhan
Secretary

ALLIED SERVICES Achievers

Priyanka
Ex Inspector

The crisp and concise content provided by Jokta academy faculty alongwith Jokta's H.P. G.k. book and compiled economic survey helped me a lot right before the exam. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jokta academy and Jokta Sir in particular for helping me to crack the exam.

Priyanka
PRIYANKA
H.P. Subordinate
Allied Services
(ETI) 2019

Sunil Kumar
Ex Inspector

Every Success story is an outcome of so many factors, efforts of n no. of people and various institutions And, I feel blessed to have JOKTA ACADEMY for civil services as my mentor in this entire journey. Quality material, aspirant friendly environment and above all JOKTA Sir as guide are some of the prominent features of this Academy that helped me to clear H.P Allied Services 2nd time in a row.

Poonam Verma
Election Kanungo
(Deptt. of Election)

I am grateful to the whole team of Jokta Academy for being good, in fact excellent in your teaching style and content. I have been part of Academy since first day of my preparation and the team leave no stone unturned in building foundation of my preparation. The test series and constant guidance, motivation and support provided by Jokta Sir is redefining the way of preparation.

Poonam Verma
Election Kanungo
(Deptt. of Election)

Shubham Bhardwaj
Inspector Audit

I would like to extend my gratitude towards Jokta sir for his valuable guidance and constant support throughout the journey. Jokta academy's study material, test series in particular has great role in my success. However, whatever, I got, you had a big role played in it, so accept my humble gratitude and felicitation.

Shubham Bhardwaj
Election Kanungo
(Deptt. of Election)

Aman Dhiman
Inspector Audit

The pedagogical efficacy and quality of relevant material provided by Jokta Academy has guided me throughout the journey as a HPAS aspirant. Suresh Jokta sir has motivated me in every step of the way which has made the process considerably less cumbersome and more optimistic. This makes me extremely grateful and proud to be a part of this institute.

Aman Dhiman
HPSAS-2019