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## Polity and Governance

### NCRB Crime in India Report, 2019

#### Why in News?

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has released the **annual Crime in India 2019 report**.

- It reports an **increase in crimes against Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs)** in the year 2019 as compared to the year 2018.

#### Key takeaways from NCRB Report:

##### Crimes against SCs

- **Cases for committing crime against SCs**, showing an increase of 7.3% over 2018.
- **Uttar Pradesh** recorded the highest number of crimes against SCs in 2019, followed by 6,794 cases in Rajasthan and 6,544 cases in Bihar, the report said.
- **Rape of women belonging to SCs:** Rajasthan topped the list with 554 cases, followed by Uttar Pradesh at 537 and Madhya Pradesh at 510 cases.

##### Crimes against STs

- **Crime against STs:** A total of 8,257 cases were registered for committing crime against STs, an increase of 26.5% over 2018.
- **Madhya Pradesh** recorded the highest number of cases against STs, followed by Rajasthan, and Odisha.
- **Rape of tribal women:** Madhya Pradesh topped, followed by Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra.
- **Simple hurt cases against STs** -These cases formed the highest number of cases of crimes and atrocities against STs, accounting for 20.3% of the total crimes committed in 2019.
- It was followed by rape of tribal women, which accounted for 13.4%
- Assault on women with the intent to outrage the modesty that accounted for 10.7% of the total cases.

#### Crimes against SCs and STs include the following categories-

- Atrocities committed by non-SC/ST members under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities Act), 1989
- the Indian Penal Code and
- the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955.

**Cognizable crimes** comprising Indian Penal Code (IPC) ones and Special and Local Laws (SLL) crimes showed an increase of 1.6% in registration of cases over 2018.

**Crime against women** showed an increase of 7.3% from 2018.

- The country recording an average 87 rape cases every day in 2019.

- Majority of these cases under the Indian Penal Code were registered under 'cruelty by husband or his relatives' (30.9%) followed by 'Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty' (21.8%), 'kidnapping and abduction of women' (17.9%),
- Assam reported the highest rate of crimes against women at 117.8 per lakh population.
- The rape vulnerability of a girl or woman has increased up to 44 per cent in the last 10 years.

**Cybercrimes** increased by 63.5% in 2019.

- 60.4% of cybercrime cases registered were for the **motive of fraud** (26,891 out of 44,546 cases), followed by sexual exploitation, with 5.1% (2,266 cases), and causing disrepute with 4.2% (1,874 cases).

**Crimes against children:** From 2018, crimes against children have gone up by 4.5% in 2019.

- About 46.6% of the total number of cases were of kidnapping and 35.3% were related to sexual offences.
- Uttar Pradesh had the highest number of crimes against girl children under the **POCSO Act** with 7,444 cases, followed by Maharashtra (6,402) and Madhya Pradesh (6,053).

**Murder cases** across India in 2019 reported a slight dip of 0.3% from 2018.

- The country recorded an average of 79 murder cases daily in 2019.

**Kidnapping cases** also reported a decline of 0.7% in 2019. Among the kidnapping victims, 23,104 were male and 84,921 were female in 2019.

- During 2019, a total of 96,295 kidnapped people (22,794 male and 73,501 female) were found and 95,551 of them were rescued alive.

**Deaths due to 'negligence by civic bodies':** Bihar recorded 66 deaths followed by Karnataka (50) and Telangana and Chandigarh.

**In rioting cases,** Bihar remained on top.

- Bihar also remained on top with 29 cases of sectarian violence.
- 940 cases of agrarian violence were reported in Bihar.
- Bihar ranked third in rioting by students with 50 incidents and 169 victims.

**Dowry deaths:** Uttar Pradesh topped the chart with 2424 dowry deaths followed by Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.

**'Offences Against the State',** which includes charges under the UAPA and Official Secrets Act (OSA), sedition— saw a steep fall of 11.3 per cent from the year before.

- This decline is due to the drop in cases registered under the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act.
- Cases of sedition and under the stringent UAPA showed a rise in 2019, but only 3 per cent of the sedition cases resulted in convictions.
- Karnataka saw the maximum sedition cases last year (22), followed by Assam (17) and Jammu and Kashmir (11).
- The maximum UAPA cases were seen in Manipur (306), followed by 270 in Tamil Nadu, and 255 in J&K.
- Court disposal of 'Offences Against the State', 35.7 per cent of the cases in which trial was over, saw convictions.

- The UAPA charges had among the highest conviction rates in 2019 (29.2 per cent), while sedition the lowest (3.3 per cent).

#### Concerns:

**The rise in the crime graph** is due to weak political will and loose grip on administration.

- Another reason is that people approach police freely which reflects in the increased number of criminal cases.

**Lower registration of crime against SCs:** The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), a police reforms advocacy group, said the low percentage of cases registered just under the POA Act alone indicates that very few cases alleging specific discriminatory actions on the basis of caste and tribal identity that are defined as atrocities under Section 3 of the Act are being registered on their own.

- Such actions are registered mainly when accompanied by any of the IPC offences.
- There is no data on total complaints received on crimes against the Scheduled Castes.

**Women of Dalit communities** are more vulnerable because of their cast. They hesitate to report rape cases.

**Poor medical infrastructure in states like Bihar** might be a reason behind deaths due to civic negligence.

- Most of the districts in these states don't have ventilator support.
- Posts of doctors are lying vacant.
- ASHAs and auxiliary nurses are underpaid and do not visit vulnerable areas.

#### National Crime Record Bureau

- NCRB, headquartered in New Delhi, was set-up in 1986 under the Ministry of Home Affairs to function as a repository of information on crime and criminals so as to assist the investigators in linking crime to the perpetrators.
- It was set up based on the recommendations of the National Police Commission (1977-1981) and the MHA's Task Force (1985).
- NCRB brings out the annual comprehensive statistics of crime across the country ('Crime in India' report).
  - Being published since 1953, the report serves as a crucial tool in understanding the law and order situation across the country.

#### Ambedkar Social Innovation & Incubation Mission

##### Why in News?

The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has launched the 'Ambedkar Social Innovation and Incubation Mission (ASIIM)' under Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Castes (SCs) with a view to promoting innovation and enterprise among SC students studying in higher educational institutions.

##### Key Highlights:

- The Ministry of Social Justice had launched the Venture Capital Fund for SCs (VCF-SC) in **2014-15** with a view to **developing entrepreneurship amongst the SC/Divyang youth** and to enable them to become '**job-givers**'.
- The objective of this fund is to **provide concessional finance** to the entities of the **SC entrepreneurs**. Under this fund, 117 companies promoted by SC entrepreneurs have been sanctioned financial assistance to set up business ventures.

#### **Ambedkar Social Innovation Incubation Mission:**

- Ministry launched Ambedkar Social Innovation and Incubation Mission" **to create start-up companies headed by Dalit techies.**
- Under it, **1,000 SC youth will be identified in the next four years** with start-up ideas through the Technology Business Incubators in various higher educational institutions.
- They will be funded **30 lakh rupees in three years** as equity funding to translate their start-up ideas into commercial ventures.
- Successful ventures would further qualify for venture funding of up to **five Crore rupees from the Venture Capital Fund for SCs.**

#### **Eligibility:**

The following SC/Divyang youth would be eligible for support under ASIIM:

- Students who have been **awarded under the Smart India Hackathon or Smart India Hardware Hackathon** being conducted by the Ministry of Education.
- **Innovative ideas focusing on the socio-economic development** of the society identified in the TBIs.
- Start-ups nominated and supported by corporates through CSR funds.

#### **Objectives:**

- **To promote entrepreneurship among the SC Youth with special preference to Divyangs**
- To support, promote, hand-hold the start-up ideas until they reach commercial stage by **providing liberal equity support**
- To incentivise students with innovative mind-set to take to entrepreneurship with confidence.

#### **Significance:**

It will **promote innovation in the SC youth** and would help them to **become job-givers from job-seekers**. It would further give a fillip to the '**Stand Up India**' initiative of the Prime Minister.

### **Data Governance Quality Index: NITI Aayog**

#### **Why in News?**

The Department of Fertilizers (Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers) has been ranked **3rd** out of the 65 Ministries/Departments with a score **4.11** on a scale of **5** on Data Governance Quality Index (DGQI).

- It has been **ranked 2nd amongst the 16 Economic Ministries/Departments**

#### **Key Points**

- Data Governance Quality Index (DGQI) survey was conducted by **Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO), Niti Aayog** to assess different Ministries/Departments' performance on the implementation of Central Sector Schemes (CS) and Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS).
- **Objective:** To drive healthy competition among them and promote cooperative peer learning from best practices.
- **Benefits:** Improve the implementation framework of government policies, schemes and programmes to achieve the desired goals.
- **Six major themes of DGQI:** Data Generation; Data Quality; Use of Technology; Data Analysis, Use and Dissemination; Data Security and HR Capacity and Case Studies.
- **Ministries/Departments were classified in six categories:** Administrative, Strategic, Infrastructure, Social, Economic and Scientific.

## Good conduct is key to early release: SC

### Why in News?

Recently, the **Supreme Court** has held that **the length of a prison sentence or the gravity of the crime cannot be the sole basis for denying a convict premature release from jail.**

### Key Points

- A three-judge Bench said that **an assessment of the tendency to commit a crime upon release must be based on antecedents as well as the conduct of the prisoner while in jail**, and not merely on his age or apprehensions of the victims and witnesses.
- **First-time offenders should especially be given a second chance at life**, the court observed.
- The punishment must lay **greater stress on reformation, correction and rehabilitation of criminals.**
- The court said **reformative justice should not merely focus on public harmony but should foster brotherhood and mutual acceptability.**

### Way Forward

- Society has a **right to lead a peaceful and fearless life, without free-roaming criminals creating havoc in the lives of ordinary peace-loving citizens.**
- However, equally **strong is the foundation of reformative theory**, which propounds that a civilised society cannot be achieved only through punitive attitudes and vindictiveness.

### Criminal Justice System in India

- The Criminal Justice System refers to the **agencies of government charged with enforcing the law, adjudicating crime, and correcting criminal conduct.**
- The criminal justice system is essentially an instrument of social control:
  - Society considers some behaviours so dangerous and destructive that it either strictly controls their occurrence or outlaws them outright.
  - It is the job of the agencies of justice to prevent these behaviours by apprehending and punishing transgressors or deterring their future occurrence.

### Retributive Justice:

- It is a system of criminal justice based on the **punishment of offenders rather than on rehabilitation.**
- It holds that when an offender breaks the law, justice requires that they must suffer in return. It also requires

that the response to a crime must be proportional to the committed offence.

#### Reformative or Restorative Justice:

- It is generally the **most appreciated theory of punishment as it believes in the concept that the object is to extinct crime and not the criminal.**
- It believes that nobody is born as a criminal and it is only the consequences of those circumstances which were around the offender/criminal.

#### Objective of Criminal Justice System:

- To prevent the occurrence of crime.
- To punish the transgressors and the criminals.
- To rehabilitate the transgressors and the criminals.
- To compensate the victims as far as possible.
- To maintain law and order in society.
- To deter offenders from committing any criminal act in the future.

#### Challenges:

- **Ineffectiveness:** The system had to protect the rights of the innocents and punish the guilty, but nowadays it has become a tool of harassment for common people.
- **Pendency of Cases:** According to Economic Survey 2018-19, there are about 3.5 crore cases pending in the judicial system, especially in the district and subordinate courts, which leads to the actualisation of the maxim "Justice delayed is justice denied".
- **Huge Undertrials:** India has one of the world's largest number of undertrial prisoners.
- **Inefficiency of Police:** Police being the front liner in the criminal judiciary system, plays a vital role in the administration of justice. However, corruption, huge workload and accountability of police is a major hurdle in speedy and transparent delivery of justice.

#### Remedies:

- **The reason for victimisation should be given a major thrust** in reforming laws to identify the rights of crime victims.
- The construction of new offences and reworking of the existing classification of offences must be guided by the principles of criminal jurisprudence which have substantially altered in the past four decades.
- **The classification of offences must be done in a manner conducive to the management of crimes in the future.**
- Guiding principles need to be developed after sufficient debate before criminalising an act as a crime.
- The discretion of judges in deciding the quantum and nature of sentence differently for crimes of the same nature should be based on principles of judicial precedent.

## Defence Offset Dilution

### Why in news?

The government has **diluted the offset policy in defence procurement.**

### Why was it diluted?

- Reportedly, it was diluted **in response to the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India's report.**
- Many contend that the **move is a setback for augmenting domestic capabilities or for realising the goal of Atmanirbhar Bharat.**



### Why defence trading is done?

- Most countries restrict trade in defence equipment and advanced technologies in order to safeguard national interest.
- Yet, for commercial gains and for global technological recognition, governments and firms do like to expand the trade.
- Negotiated bilateral sales between countries are a way out of the dilemma.

### What are the factors?

- **Soft credit often sweetens the deals** with restrictions imposed on use, modification and resale of such equipment and technologies.
- In such trade negotiations, the price of the product is one of the many other factors.
- **Geopolitics and the technical knowhow involved in the equipment weigh-in considerably** as the contracts are for the long term, with technological fixities.
- The product and technology compel buyers to stick to them for:
  - The advantages of bulk purchase, and
  - Dependence on the supplier for spares and upgrades.
- In other words, there is considerable “path dependency” in such choices, rendering the decisions difficult to reverse.
- Developing country buyers often lack an industrial base and research and development (R&D) facilities (which take a long time to mature).

### How will offset clause help?

- The price and the terms of the contract reflect the government’s relative bargaining strength, and political and economic considerations.
- Large buyers such as India seek to exercise their “buying power” to secure not just the lowest price.
- They also try to acquire the technology to upgrade domestic production and build R&D capabilities.
- The offset clause is the instrument for securing these goals.

### What was the initial offset clause?

- Initiated in **2005**, the offset clause has a requirement of sourcing 30% of the value of the contract domestically.
- Indigenisation of production in a strict time frame, and training Indian professionals in high-tech skills, required for promoting domestic R&D.
- However, the policy has been tweaked many times since.

### What are the changes made?

- As of November 2019, the **Defence Ministry had signed 52 offset contracts worth \$12 billion** via Indian offset partners, or domestic firms.
- The duration of these contracts extends up to 2022.
- **According to the CAG report, between 2007 and 2018, the government signed 46 offset contracts worth ₹66,427 crore of investments.**
- But, the **realised investments were merely 8%**, or worth ₹5,457 crore.



- Reportedly, **technology transfer agreements in the offsets were not implemented**, failing to accomplish the stated policy objective.
- Recently, the government has diluted this policy further.
- Henceforth, the offset clause will not be applicable to bilateral deals and deals with a single seller (monopoly), to begin with.

#### Why is it a setback for defence?

- Most defence deals are bilateral, or a single supplier deal (due to the monopoly over the technology).
- The dilution means practically giving up the offset clause.
- This may mean an end to India's prospects for boosting defence production and technological self-reliance.
- But, the government defended the decision by claiming a cost advantage.
- Price is but one of many factors in such deals, as explained above.
- The higher (upfront) cost of the agreement due to the offset clause would pay for itself by,
  - Reducing costs in the long term by indigenisation of production,
  - The potential technology spill-overs for domestic industry.
- Hence, giving up the offset clause is undoubtedly a severe setback.

#### What should be learnt from the aerospace industry episode?

- Despite the heft of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, India is a lightweight in global civilian aircraft manufacturing.
- This is due to the fact that the public sector giant mostly devotes itself to defence production.
- With the introduction of the offset policy in 2005, things changed dramatically.
- For contracts valued at ₹300 crore or more, 30% of it will result in offsets, implemented through Indian offset partners.
- As aerospace imports rose rapidly, so did the exports via the offsets by 544% in 2007, compared to the previous year.
- **By 2014, exports increased to \$6.7 billion from \$62.5 million in 2005.**
- The offset clause enabled India to join the league of the world's top 10 aerospace exporters.
- The success was short-lived, however. The policy dilution undid success.
- Exports plummeted after the offset clause was relaxed.

#### What could be done?

- Because of the CAG's critical remarks in its latest report, the government has virtually scrapped the defence offset policy.
- Thus, India has voluntarily given up a powerful instrument of bargaining to acquire scarce advanced technology.
- But, there are successful examples to draw lessons from, as the aerospace industry episode demonstrates.
- India needs to re-conceive or re-imagine the offset clause in defence contracts with stricter enforcement of the deals.
- This should be based in national interest, and in order to aim for 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan', or a self-reliant India.

### Why in News?

Recently, the **Ministry of Culture** has issued guidelines for holding cultural events/activities in virtual/online mode under various scheme components of **Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojana (KSVY)**.

### About Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojana

- Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojana (KSVY) is an umbrella scheme under Ministry of Culture for the promotion of art and culture in the country.
- KSVY has the following sub-schemes through which financial assistance is provided to cultural organizations:
  1. Scheme of Financial Assistance for Promotion of Art and Culture.
  2. Scheme of Financial Assistance for Creation of Cultural Infrastructure.
  3. Scheme for Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Scheme of Financial Assistance for Promotion of Art and Culture: **The scheme consists of five components.**

#### (i) REPERTORY GRANT

- The objective of Repertory Grant Scheme Component is to provide financial support for all genres of performing arts activities like dramatic groups, theatre groups, music ensembles, children theatre etc.
- Amount of Assistance – **Guru Rs.10000/- & Shishya – Rs.1000-6000/-**

#### (ii) FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS WITH NATIONAL PRESENCE

- The objective of this scheme component of National Presence is to provide support for cultural activities at Large scale on National / International level.
- Amount of Assistance – Maximum **Grant Rs. 2.0 crores (Rs. 5.0 crores** under exceptional/ deserving cases).

#### (iii) CULTURAL FUNCTION & PRODUCTION GRANT (CFPG)

- The objective of this scheme component is to provide financial support to **NGOs/ Societies/ Trusts/ Universities etc. for Seminars, Conference, Research, Workshops, Festivals, Exhibitions, Symposia, Production of Dance, Drama-Theatre, Music etc.**
- The maximum grants provided under CFPG is **Rs. 5.00 Lakh (Rs. 20 Lakh** under exceptional circumstances)

#### (iv) FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE PRESERVATION & DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE HIMALAYAS

- The objective of this scheme component is to promote and preserve the cultural heritage of the Himalayas through research, training and dissemination through audio visual programmes.

#### (v) FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE PRESERVATION & DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHIST/TIBETAN ORGANIZATION

- Under this scheme component financial assistance is provided to the **voluntary Buddhist/Tibetan organizations including Monasteries engaged in the propagation and scientific development of Buddhist/Tibetan Cultural** and tradition and research in related fields.

## SCHEME OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR CREATION OF CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- Financial Assistance for Building Grants including Studio Theatres
- Financial Assistance for Allied Cultural Activities
- Financial Assistance for Tagore Cultural Complexes(TCC)

### Scheme for Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage:

- This scheme was launched by the Ministry of Culture in 2013 for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage and diverse cultural traditions of the country with the objective of reinvigorating and revitalizing various institutions, groups, NGOs, etc.

## Economics

### Monetary Policy Review

#### Why in news?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reviewed its monetary policy lately.

#### What does the review indicate?

- This review indicates that the RBI will prioritise the revival of economic growth over inflation through the end of the current financial year.
- The RBI has reconstituted the **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)**, with three new external members.
- The MPC unanimously voted to keep policy interest rates unchanged.
- This was said even as it categorically stated that the RBI would continue with the accommodative stance to revive growth on a durable basis and mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the economy.

#### What did the RBI find?

- The MPC tilted away from its inflation targeting mandate by downplaying the risks on the price pressures front.
- This is because the RBI has found that **supply shocks** were responsible for keeping inflation above the tolerance band for months.
- These shocks should dissipate as the economy unlocks, supply chains are restored, and activity normalises.
- As part of the shift in priority, it projected that it would stick with the accommodative stance during the current and the next financial year.
- This forward looking guidance prompted one of the new members to dissent and vote against the wording.
- The MPC's majority view of ensuring a 'dovish' position on interest rates for at least six months has left it little near-term leeway to tame price pressures.

#### What did the RBI Governor emphasise on?

- The RBI Governor emphasised that the current 'inflation hump' was a brief phenomenon that needs to be looked through when taking measures to help the economy return to its feet.
- The RBI has taken a series of liquidity enhancing and credit flow supportive steps.
- With these steps, the RBI reiterated its commitment to maintain stability in the financial markets.
- This comes at a time when the resources-strapped Central and State governments are expected to resort to substantially higher levels of borrowing to meet their spending needs.
- There can be no argument that the economy needs all the support it can get to recover from its 23.9% estimated contraction of the first quarter.

#### What is the forecast?

- The RBI sees a gradual recovery.
- It has forecasted a marginal growth of **0.5% in the fourth quarter** that would narrow the full-year contraction to 9.5%.
- It is the inflation assumptions, however, that cause disquiet.
- From a projection of **6.8% for Q2, CPI inflation is posited to sharply ease: 5.4% in Q3 and 4.5% in Q4.**
- There are risks like persistence of supply bottlenecks, cost-push pressures from higher taxes on transport fuels and the possibility of food-price inflation.
- In overlooking these risks that becoming entrenched pose to the outlook on prices, the RBI has clearly sought to talk up confidence.

#### Monetary Policy Committee

- The Monetary Policy Committee is a **statutory and institutionalized framework** under the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**, for maintaining price stability, while keeping in mind the objective of growth.
- **The Governor of RBI is ex-officio Chairman** of the committee.
- The committee comprises six members (including the Chairman) - three officials of the RBI and three external members nominated by the Government of India.
- **Decisions are taken by majority** with the Governor having the casting vote in case of a tie.
- The MPC determines the policy interest rate (repo rate) required to achieve the inflation target (4%).
- An RBI-appointed committee led by the then deputy governor Urjit Patel in 2014 recommended the establishment of the Monetary Policy Committee.

#### Repo Rate and Reverse Repo Rate

- It is the rate at which the **central bank of a country (Reserve Bank of India in case of India) lends money to commercial banks** in the event of any shortfall of funds.
- It is used by monetary authorities to **control inflation**.
  - In the event of inflation, central banks increase the repo rate as this acts as a disincentive for banks to borrow from the central bank. This ultimately reduces the money supply in the economy and thus helps in arresting inflation.
  - The central bank takes the contrary position in the event of a fall in inflationary pressures.
- Ideally, a **low repo rate should translate into low-cost loans for the general masses**. When the **RBI slashes its repo rate, it expects the banks to lower their interest rates charged on loans**.
- **Reverse repo rate** is the **rate at which the RBI borrows money from commercial banks within the country**.

## Interest Waiver

### Why in news?

The Supreme Court (SC) has directed the government to implement the **waiver of “interest on interest” for borrowers with an exposure of up to Rs 2 crore.**

### What does the SC decision mean?

- The SC wants the government to waive it by **November 2, 2020.**
- The hearings will continue and a final verdict is some time away.
- The SC seems to be comfortable with the idea of the government picking up the tab for the loss banks would incur by not charging the compound interest on exposures that were allowed a moratorium.
- The decision would come as a huge relief for both banks and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

### Who would be eligible for waiver?

- The SC is not going to recommend a waiver of compound interest for bigger exposures—of more than Rs 2 crore.
- In other words, the government will reimburse banks for compound interest due only from smaller borrowers.

### Is it a good practice?

- Waiving interest on loans can never be a good practice since it creates a moral hazard and vitiates the borrowing environment.
- Given the unprecedented pain caused by the pandemic, the SC's view is understandable.

### What is important?

- It is important that the SC has allowed the government to pay the bill, sparing the banks.
- Also, the waiver is restricted to just the smaller borrowers.

### What did the government say?

- In its affidavit to the court, the government had pointed out that waiving the interest on all loans and advances, across all categories of borrowers, for a period of six months would **cost Rs 6 lakh crore.**
- Clearly, banks are not financially strong enough to bear this burden.
- It would wipe out a substantial part of their net worth and make many of them unviable.
- As the government observed, lending institutions need to survive the current crisis, and promises made to depositors need to be honoured.
- If customers are to be paid interest on their deposits, borrowers need to pay interest on the loans.

### What could be done?

- **Sub-limits** - Not all categories of borrowers are equal.
- It would only be fair if the government specifies different sub-limits for each segment of borrowers because taxpayers should not be subsidising those who can afford to pay the interest.

- **Declaring NPAs** - The RBI has been concerned, with the SC directive regarding non-performing assets (NPAs).
- The SC had directed the banks not to classify any loans as NPAs if they had not been declared as such on August 31.
- Hopefully, banks will soon be permitted to classify loans as per the rules because it is important that they provide for them immediately.
- **Setting aside capital** - Given how a big chunk of loans is expected to go bad, it is important banks set aside enough capital for these losses.

## AT-1 Bonds

### Why in news?

The **Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** has **restricted the small investors their access to AT-1 bonds**.

### What are AT-1 bonds?

- AT-1 bonds, short for Additional Tier-1 bonds, are innovative debt instruments.
- AT-1 includes perpetual non-cumulative preference shares and perpetual bonds.
- It is a type of unsecured, perpetual bonds that banks issue to shore up their core capital base to meet the Basel-III norms.

### What are the new requirements?

- The SEBI has said that offers of such instruments should take the electronic book provider route, with participation restricted to QIBs.
- **[QIBs - Qualified Institutional Buyers]**
- The minimum ticket size for initial offers and secondary market trading in these bonds has been raised to ₹1 crore.
- Explicit disclosures will now be required on the perpetual character of these bonds.
- The Point-of-Non-Viability (PONV) clause that allows the RBI to direct a troubled bank to completely write-off the principal value.

### Why these requirements are welcomed?

- These new requirements are a welcome attempt by the SEBI to ward off YES Bank-like situations.
- In YES Bank, the write-off of AT-1 bonds as a part of the bank's restructuring plan came as a shock to the hundreds of retail investors.
- This case brought into focus the widespread mis-selling of AT-1 bonds to retirees and low-risk investors by banks and intermediaries.

### What are the loose ends?

- While SEBI's new rules will keep retail investors off these instruments, there are loose ends that need tying up.
- **Blocked out** - Now, a key category of investors called high net worth individuals are blocked out.
- So, the banks should compete with fewer buyers for their future AT-1 offerings at a time when sentiment towards these bonds has been soured by the YES Bank write-off.

- The RBI opened AT-1 bonds to retail investors a couple of years ago.
- It was done to broad-base demand and give public sector bank (PSB) bond offers a leg-up.
- **Impact on liquidity** - The increase in the minimum trading lot can impact secondary market liquidity.
- This will render these bonds less appealing to institutions.
- **Shooting up capital needs** - A shallow market for AT-1 bonds can hurt when Tier 1 capital requirements for PSBs may shoot up on the back of Covid-related provisioning.
- Fitch estimates banks' capital requirement at \$15-58 billion in the coming year.

#### What should the regulators do?

- In this context, the SEBI and the RBI can evaluate if AT-1 bond participation can be opened up to informed non-QIB investors.
- [Non-QIB investors - Corporate treasuries and family offices with appropriate caveats.]
- The regulators also need to work out an exit window.
- This can be done through buybacks, for retail investors stuck in older AT-1 bonds with a current outstanding value of over ₹84,000 crore.
- The SEBI needs to initiate specific penal actions against intermediaries guilty of mis-selling.
- The RBI should tighten its lax oversight of banks acting as intermediaries for third-party products.
- SEBI's actions should serve as a wake-up call for the RBI to pay more serious attention to investor protection.

#### World Economic Outlook

##### Why in news?

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has released its latest World Economic Outlook.

##### What are the projections?

- The report titled '**A long and difficult ascent**' sums up the economic challenges ahead.
- The IMF's economists have sought to make forecasts for world output through 2020, 2021 and into the medium term.
- **The global economy is projected to shrink 4.4% this year**, reflecting a less severe contraction than the 5.2% drop estimated in June.
- The output is seen rebounding at a marginally slower **5.2% pace in 2021**.
- The IMF has based its revision on better-than-anticipated second-quarter GDP out-turns, mostly in advanced economies.
- It is also based on the signs of a stronger recovery in the July-September quarter.

##### What are the concerns?

- The IMF pointed out that even as the world economy ascends out of the depths it plunged into (due to the pandemic-led lockdown), there remains the danger of resurgence in infections.
- This danger is prompting European countries to reimpose at least partial closures.
- There are certain factors which magnify the uncertainty.
- The factors include the risks associated with predicting the pandemic's progression, the unevenness of public health responses, and the extent to which domestic activity can be disrupted.



### What will be the impact of the pandemic?

The IMF's Chief Economist pointed out that the pandemic is set to leave scars well into the medium term as the,

- Labour markets take time to heal,
- Investment is held back by uncertainty and balance sheet problems, and
- Lost schooling impairs human capital.
- The global growth will gradually slow to about **3.5%** in the medium term.
- The cumulative loss in output relative to the pre-pandemic projected path estimated to more than double to **\$28 trillion over 2020–25**.
- So, the efforts to improve average living standards are certain to be severely set back.

### What is needed?

- The IMF observed that the **pandemic is set to widen inequality between economies and within nations**.
- So, the IMF has **urged greater international cooperation**.
- It is imperative for all countries to work closely to ensure that new treatments and vaccines are made available to all.
- This is because wider and faster availability of medical solutions could boost global income by almost \$9 trillion by end-2025.

### What could be done for now?

- With no visibility yet on vaccine availability, the IMF has also stressed the need for policymakers to persist with,
  - Direct income support for the most vulnerable and
  - Regulatory forbearance for stressed but viable firms.
- In a world as interconnected as it is today, the cost of economic insularity would only be more protracted pain for all.

## Fertiliser Subsidy

### Why in news?

The Centre is planning to **restrict the number of fertiliser bags that individual farmers can buy** during any cropping season.

### About fertiliser subsidy?

- Farmers buy fertilisers at Maximum Retail Price (MRP) below their normal supply-and-demand-based market rates or what it costs to produce or import them.
- The difference, which varies according to plant-wise production cost and import price, is footed by the Centre as subsidy.
- MRPs of non-urea fertilisers are decontrolled or fixed by the companies.
- However, the Centre pays a flat per-tonne subsidy on these nutrients to ensure they are priced at "reasonable levels".
- Thus, decontrolled fertilisers retail way above urea, while they also attract lower subsidy.

### How is the subsidy paid and who gets it?

- The subsidy goes to fertiliser companies, although its ultimate beneficiary is the farmer who pays MRPs less than the market rates.
- Companies, until now, were paid after their bagged material had been dispatched and received at a district's railhead point or approved godown.
- From March 2018, direct benefit transfer (DBT) system was introduced.
- In this, subsidy payment to the companies would happen only after actual sales to farmers by retailers.
- Each retailer now has a point-of-sale (PoS) machine linked to the **e-Urvarak DBT portal** of the Department of Fertilisers.

### What is the purpose of this portal?

- **Anybody buying subsidised fertilisers should furnish his/her Aadhaar unique identity or Kisan Credit Card number.**
- The quantities of the individual fertilisers purchased, the buyer's name and biometric authentication have to be captured on the PoS device.
- Only upon the sale getting registered on the e-Urvarak platform can a company claim subsidy.
- These are processed **on a weekly basis** and payments are remitted **electronically to its bank account.**

### What was the new payment system's purpose?

- The main motive is to **curb diversion.**
- This is natural with any under-priced product.
- Being super-subsidised, urea is prone to diversion for non-agricultural use apart from being smuggled to Nepal and Bangladesh.
- The scope for leakage was more in the earlier system, right from the point of dispatch till the retailer end.
- With DBT, pilferage happens only at the retailer level, as there is no subsidy payment till sales are made through POS machines.

### What is the next step being proposed?

- At present, the Centre is following a **no denial policy.**
- Anybody, non-farmers included, can purchase any quantity of fertilisers through the PoS machines.
- That obviously allows for bulk buying by unintended beneficiaries, who are not genuine or deserving farmers.
- There is a limit of 100 bags that an individual can purchase at one time.
- But, it does not stop anyone from buying any number of times.
- One plan under discussion is to cap the total number of subsidised bags that any person can buy during an entire kharif or rabi cropping season.
- This, it is expected, would end retail-level diversion and purchases by large buyers masquerading as farmers.

### What is the fertiliser requirement of a typical farmer?

- It depends on the crop.
- A farmer growing irrigated wheat or paddy may use about three 45-kg bags of urea, one 50-kg bag of DAP and 25 kg of MOP per acre.

- A total of 100 bags would easily cover the seasonal requirement of a 20-acre farmer.
- This could possibly be a reasonable cap to impose.
- Those wanting more can well afford to pay the unsubsidised rates for the extra bags.

#### How much subsidy does a farmer really get per acre?

- **Fertilisers** - For three bags urea, one bag DAP and half-a-bag MOP per acre, the farmer would spend a total of Rs 2,437 at existing MRPs.
- The corresponding subsidy value will add up to Rs 2,418.3 per acre.
- But then, farmers are also taxed on other inputs.
- **Other inputs** - Take diesel, where the incidence of excise and value added tax is Rs 42.19 on a litre retailing at Rs 70.46 in Delhi.
- On 30 litres of average per-acre consumption for paddy or wheat, that will be nearly Rs 1,266.
- So, for every Re 1 spent on fertiliser subsidy, more than half is recovered as diesel tax.
- **GST** - In addition, farmers pay goods and service tax (GST) on inputs, ranging from 12% to 18%.
- Fertiliser itself is taxed at 5%.
- Since there is no GST on farm produce, they cannot claim any input tax credit on their sales, unlike other businessmen.

#### What is next?

- The time has come to seriously consider paying farmers a flat per-acre cash subsidy that they can use to purchase any fertiliser.
- The amount could vary, depending on the number of crops grown and whether the land is irrigated or not.
- This is the only sustainable solution to prevent diversion.
- This also encourages judicious application of fertilisers, with the right nutrient combination based on proper soil testing and crop-specific requirements.

### Round the Clock RTGS Facility

#### Why in News?

Taking a series of steps to **boost the adoption of digital payments** The Reserve Bank of India today announced that the **National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT)** facility will be available round-the-clock for the customers.

- As of now, the transfer of funds via NEFT can only be during banks' **working hours**. NEFT payment system operated by the Reserve Bank as a retail payment system is available for customers from **8 AM to 7 PM** on all working days of the week **except the 2nd and 4th Saturdays** of the month.

#### Other Imp initiatives by RBI:

- RBI has also decided to create a **central payment fraud information registry system** to deal with banking fraud.
- As per RBI in order to leverage the advantages of the **Bharat Bill Payment System** and harness its full potential, **RBI has decided to permit all categories of billers** (except prepaid recharges) who provide for recurring bill payments to **participate in BBPS** on a voluntary basis.

- **The BBPS, an interoperable platform for repetitive bill payments**, currently covers five segments that are direct-to-home, electricity, gas telecom and water bills

#### **Benefits of this move:**

The move (by RBI) is a step towards **reducing the number of cheques** while making payments. **Reducing cheque-based payments also increases a business' efficiency.** Earlier, RBI removed NEFT and RTGS (Real Time Gross Settlement System) charges, making such transactions cheaper. This will promote digital payments for business users.

### **Corporatization of Ordnance Factory Board**

#### **Why in News?**

**The Centre's move to corporatize the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)** has been **strongly opposed** by the **trade unions**.

#### **About Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)**

- **The OFB is an umbrella body for the ordnance factories** and related institutions and is currently a **subordinate office of the Ministry of Defence**.
- The organisation dates back over **200 years** and is headquartered in **Kolkata**.
- It is a conglomerate of **41 factories**, nine training Institutes, three regional marketing centres and five regional controllers of safety.
- It provides a **major chunk of the weapon, ammunition and supplies for Indian armed forces, paramilitary forces and police forces**.
- The products of OFB include civilian and military-grade arms and ammunition, explosives, propellants and chemicals for missiles systems, military vehicles, armoured vehicles, optical devices, parachutes, support equipment, troop clothing and general store items.

#### **Need for Corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)**

- The committees on Defence reforms set by the governments between **2000 and 2015** have **recommended the corporatisation of OFB**.
  - **T.K.A. Nair Committee, Dr. Vijay Kelkar Committee, Raman Puri Committee and the Shekatkar Committee** have recommended corporatisation of the OFB.
- The **lack of addressing the quality issues** with serious delays of OFB affects the preparedness or forcing the Army to look elsewhere.
- The present structure showcase several issues such as **monopoly supply, quality issues, high cost of incidentals and overheads, lack of innovation and low productivity**.

#### **Significance of Corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)**

- The corporatisation will result in the conversion of the OFB into one or more 100 per cent government-owned entities under the Companies Act, 2013 like other public sector undertakings.
- The proposed transformation of OFB from a government department to a public sector corporate entity will have such as:
  - **improvement of efficiency,**
  - **reducing import dependency for arms and ammunition,**

- enhanced combat efficiency of the armed forces,
  - ensuring customer satisfaction and
  - greater penetration in defence export market
- The **corporatised ordnance factories can form strategic alliances with Indian and overseas companies** to develop new products and carve out a niche in the international armament industry.

#### Argument against Corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)

- **Corporatisation leading to privatisation:** The main apprehension of the employees is that corporatisation would eventually lead to privatisation.
- **Unable to survive market environment for defence:** The corporate entities would not be able to survive the unique market environment of defence products that has very unstable demand and supply dynamics.
- **It poses a risk to national security** in case of the growth of private players in the event of possible failure of the proposed OFB corporatisation, resulting in disinvestment and even closure.
- **The ordnance factories cannot be run on a commercial basis** since a 'war reserve' has to be kept at par with the armed forces to maintain capacity to take care of surge in demands in a war-like situation.

#### Viewpoint of the Union government on Corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)

- The notion of corporatisation was listed as one of the 167 'transformative ideas' to be implemented in the first 100 days of the Narendra Modi government's second term.
- **The Union Finance has announced the decision of Corporatisation of OFB for 'improving autonomy, accountability and efficiency in ordnance suppliers'.**
- The government has constituted an Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) for Corporatisation, under the chairmanship of Defence Minister to oversee and guide the transition support and redeployment plan of employees while safeguarding their wages and retirement benefits.

#### Way Forward

- The corporatisation of OFB is likely to transform ordnance factories into a **modernised, state of the art facility with flexible and better decision making in its functioning.**
- Currently the MoD has deferred the ongoing process till the talks with the unions protesting, reach to a meaningful conclusion. This is a welcome step.
- **The broader consultation, on all the major concerns, is essential for sensitive issues like corporatization.** Here, the need is to have a reflective road-map for the plan. This can help to ease the apprehensions regarding the corporatization.

### DAY-NRLM Special Package for J&K and Ladakh

#### Why in News?

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved a special package worth **Rs. 520 crore** in the Union Territories (UTs) of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Ladakh for a period of five years under the **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM)**.

#### Key Points

- The decision is in line with **Centre's aim to universalise all centrally sponsored beneficiary-oriented schemes in J&K and Ladakh** in a time-bound manner.
- The package has been approved for a **period of five years till the financial year 2023-24** and it has been decided to ensure funding on a demand-driven basis without linking allocation with poverty ratio during the extended period.
  - Around two-third rural women from the UTs will be covered and **10.58 lakh women will get the benefit from the special package.**
- **The step was based on the outcomes of an evaluation pointing to the potential of the Mission to improve the quality of life of rural households and women empowerment** under the changed circumstances in the UTs of J&K and Ladakh.

#### About Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission

- **Aajeevika** - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India in June 2011.
- **It is a centrally sponsored programme** that aims at **eliminating rural poverty through promotion of multiple livelihoods** for the rural poor households across the country.
- In **November 2015, the program was renamed Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY-NRLM)**
- It aims to **reduce poverty through promotion of diversified and gainful self-employment while creating skilled wage employment opportunities.**
- It **supports building social capital and ensuring financial linkages** to alleviate poverty and enhance the quality of the life of rural poor women.
- It has ambitious plans on innovations for **alternate channels of financial inclusion like digital finance, creating value chains around rural products and improving market access.**
- DAY-NRLM has been implemented in the erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir by the J&K State Rural Livelihoods Mission (JKSRLM) as "**Umeed**" programme.

#### GST Compensation: Centre to Borrow on Behalf of States

##### Why in News?

Recently, the **41st GST council meeting** was held.

The Centre has decided to borrow an estimated revenue shortfall of **Rs. 1.5 lakh crore as loans to States to meet the Goods and Services Tax (GST) shortfall.**

- GST compensation payments to states have been pending since April, with the pending amount for April-July estimated at Rs 1.5 lakh crore
- The GST compensation requirement is estimated to be around Rs 3 lakh crore this year, while the cess collection is expected to be around Rs 65,000 crore an estimated compensation shortfall of Rs 2.35 lakh crore.

##### Outcomes of the meeting:

**The legal opinion on borrowing was discussed.**



- The opinion of the Attorney General of India was cited to buttress the argument that GST compensation has to be paid for the transition period from July 2017 to June 2022, but the compensation gap cannot be bridged using the Consolidated Fund of India.
- The AG has suggested the compensation cess levy can be extended beyond five years to meet the shortfall.
- State Finance Ministers, barring a few including those of Assam and Goa, pressed for borrowing by the Centre to bridge the revenue gap.

#### At the end of the meeting, the Centre offered two options

- A special window to states, in consultation with the RBI, to borrow the projected GST shortfall of Rs 97,000 crore, and an amount that can be repaid after five years of GST, ending June 2022, from the compensation cess fund. 0.5% relaxation in the borrowing limit under The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act would be provided under this option.
- To borrow the entire projected shortfall of Rs 2.35 lakh crore – both on account of faltering GST collections and the expected shortfall due to the pandemic – facilitated by the RBI. No FRBM relaxation has been mentioned for this option so far.

Five states and Union Territories – **Kerala, Punjab, West Bengal, Puducherry and Delhi** have voiced their concerns over the proposals.

#### The issue of compensation to states; how it evolved?

- Shortfall issues surfaced almost a year ago when payments due for **August-September 2019** were delayed. Since then, all subsequent payouts have seen cascading delays.
- The economic slowdown, which has been on for almost three years now, began to impact GST revenue collections in August 2019
- The Centre first admitted to problems on compensation payment in the **37th GST Council meeting in Goa** last September – it said the amount of cess available in the compensation fund at the end of February “shall fall short for payment of compensation for loss of revenue till the bi-monthly period of December-January”.
- **In November 2019**, the GST Council wrote to states that the GST and compensation cess collections in the previous few months had become a “matter of concern”, and that compensation requirement were “unlikely to be met”.
- GST compensation payments had started getting delayed by then and many state FMs had begun to express concerns over having to repeatedly ask for their share of revenues.
- **In June 2020**, Rs 36,400 crore was released as GST compensation for December-February, and the balance Rs 13,806 crore for March was released in July, taking the total compensation payout for FY20 to Rs 1.65 lakh crore.

#### What is GST Compensation?

- **GST Compensation Cess or GST Cess** was introduced by the government to compensate for the possible revenue losses suffered by such manufacturing states.
- Compensation cess is levied on five products considered to be ‘**sin**’ or **luxury** as mentioned in the GST (Compensation to States) Act, 2017 and includes items such as- Pan Masala, Tobacco, and Automobiles etc.
- The compensation cess payable to states is calculated based on the methodology specified in the GST (Compensation to States) Act, 2017.
- The compensation fund so collected is released to the states every 2 months.



- The GST (Compensation to States) Act, 2017, states are guaranteed compensation for loss of revenue on account of implementation of GST for a transition period of five years (2017-22).
- The compensation is calculated based on the difference between the states' current GST revenue and the protected revenue after estimating an annualised 14% growth rate from the base year of 2015-16.
- The high rate of 14%, which has compounded since 2015-16, has been seen as delinked from economic realities.
- However, under existing rules, this compensation cess will be levied only for the first 5 years of the GST regime – from July 1st, 2017 to July 1st, 2022.

### What is Goods and Service Tax (GST)?

- It is a value-added tax levied on most goods and services sold for domestic consumption.
- It was launched in India on **1 July 2017** as a comprehensive indirect tax for the entire country.
- It is a destination-based Taxation and applicable on the supply side.
- It is paid by the consumers and is remitted to the government by the businesses selling the goods and services.
- It is of three types i.e. CGST to be levied by the Centre, SGST to be levied by the States and IGST a tax levied on all Inter-State supplies of goods and/or services. All these taxes are levied at rates mutually agreed upon by the Centre and the States.
- GST Council Headed by the Union Finance Minister is the governing and key decision making body for GST.



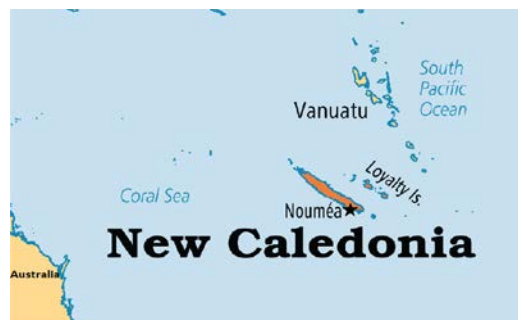
### Referendum in New Caledonia

#### Why in News?

Recently, the voters in the **South Pacific territory of New Caledonia** narrowly rejected independence in a referendum.

#### Key Highlights

- The **referendum was part of the Noumea Accord**.
  - The **Noumea Accord** is a decolonization plan set in motion in 1998 to end a deadly conflict between descendants of European settlers and the mostly pro-independence indigenous Kanak population.
- New Caledonia **lies between Australia and Fiji**.
- New Caledonia became a **French colony in 1853 under Napoleon's nephew, Emperor Napoleon III**.
- The island was used as a prison for decades, before becoming an overseas territory after World War II.



## India- Japan Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue

### Why in News?

India and Japan recently held **13th India-Japan Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue on 7 October 2020 in Tokyo**. In which inter-alia both countries agreed to **sign a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) in the field of cybersecurity** that **will promote cooperation in key areas such as 5G network Critical Information Infrastructure, Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence**.

### Highlights of the Strategic Dialogue:

- **MoU in the field of Cyber Security-Both countries agreed** to sign a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) in the field of cybersecurity that will promote cooperation in key areas such as 5G network, Critical Information Infrastructure, Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence.
- **It will enhance cooperation in areas of mutual interest**, which include capacity building in the area of cyber space, protection of critical infrastructure, sharing information on cybersecurity, developing joint mechanisms for practical cooperation to mitigate cyber threats etc.
- It will attract stakeholders in the Indian 5G sector as it gets ready to open up for international operators.
- It emphasized a **strong partnership between the two countries in overcoming challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic**.
  - With Covid-19 and trade tensions between China and the United States are threatening supply chains, **Japan has mooted the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI)** as a trilateral approach to trade, with India and Australia as the key-partners.
- **Importance of the Indo-Pacific region was discussed**- Japan and India both have similarities in their respective Indo-Pacific visions, that are based on rule of law and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and both countries need to counter the increasing Chinese aggression in the region.
  - Both Japan and India need to counter the increasing Chinese aggression in the region.
  - India launched the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) at the East Asia Summit in November 2019.
  - It focuses on seven central pillars conceived around Maritime Security, Maritime Ecology, Maritime Resources, Capacity Building and Resource Sharing, Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation, and Trade Connectivity and Maritime Transport.

### India and Japan Relations:

#### Bilateral Relations-

- **India and Japan share cultural relations primarily as a result of Buddhism**, which spread indirectly from India to Japan, via China and Korea.
- After the restoration of Japan's sovereignty, Japan and India signed a peace treaty, establishing official diplomatic relations on 28 April 1952, in which India waived all reparation claims against Japan.
- India and Japan share robust ties with cooperation in areas of defence, science and cooperation and trade. In 2014, India and Japan upgraded their relationship to 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership'.
- **The India-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** that came into force in August 2011 covers trade in goods, services, movement of natural persons, investments, Intellectual Property Rights, custom procedures and other trade-related issues.

### Financial Relations-

- **Japan is the third-largest source of FDI (\$28.160 billion** between 2000 and June 2018) investment into India after Mauritius and Singapore.
- **Japan has invested in the \$90 billion Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor** (1,483 km high-speed rail and road line) which will see the setting up of new cities, industrial parks, ports and airports.
- **Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Railway (MAHSR)** is a very important area of cooperation between India and Japan in Railway Sector and Japan has already released the first tranche of 5,500 crore rupees.
- **India's primary exports to Japan have been petroleum products, chemicals, elements, etc.**
- **India's primary imports** from Japan are machinery, transport equipment, iron and steel, electronic goods, etc.

### Civil nuclear cooperation-

- Japan will supply nuclear reactors, fuel, and technology to India. India is not a signatory to the non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and is the only non-signatory to receive an exemption from Japan.

### Recent Developments:

- Recently, India and Japan signed a **logistics agreement** that will allow armed forces of both sides to coordinate closely in services and supplies. The agreement is known as the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA).
- An **"India-Japan Digital Partnership"** (I-JDP) was launched during the visit of the Prime Minister of India to Japan in October 2018, furthering existing areas of cooperation as well as new initiatives within the scope of cooperation in S&T/ICT, focusing more on "Digital ICT Technologies".
- **In 2019, India and Japan held the first-ever ministerial-level 2+2 dialogue.** This dialogue involves the Defence and Foreign Ministers on both sides and is seen as an endorsement of the special strategic partnership between India and Japan.
- **Both countries are also part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD).**
- India and Japan defence forces organize a series of bilateral exercises namely, **JIMEX, SHINYUU Maitri, and Dharma Guardian.** Both countries also participate in the **Malabar exercise with the USA.**

### Quad Meeting

#### Why in news?

The second meeting of the Quadrilateral Strategic Dialogue of Foreign Ministers was held in **Tokyo**.

#### About Quad?

- The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or the 'Quad' is an informal setup of Australia-India-Japan-United States.
- It aims to strengthen the defence and security cooperation amongst the four countries.
- The idea was originally conceived in 2007 by the former Japan's Prime Minister, Shinzō Abe.
- It was proposed to check China's growing influence and assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region.

#### What is the departure?

- The meeting was planned when the Foreign Ministers (FMs) had met at the UN General Assembly.

- In a departure from the earlier secrecy, the FMs made public a large part of their deliberations.
- The deliberations include the decision to make the FM meeting an annual event, to cooperate on combating the pandemic, and on building infrastructure, connectivity and a supply chain initiative in the region.

#### Who were the attendees?

- As the host, Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga dispelled any notion that he might not be as proactive as his predecessor, Shinzō Abe.
- Australia's FM Marise Payne, India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo attended the meeting.

#### What did the US say?

- In the meeting, Pompeo said that his mission was to direct the Quad towards building a coalition to counter Beijing's aggression in the region.
- This pointed out to the LAC standoff, as well as Chinese aggression in the South and East China Seas.
- His proposal did not only seem to be just a coalition of democracies committed to a free and open Indo-Pacific.
- But also seems like the US is keen on turning the Quad into a full-fledged military alliance of countries facing tensions with China.

#### What should be done?

- **Strategic autonomy** - The government should not downplay the import of such openly stated intentions.
- While Japan and Australia are bound by alliance treaties to the U.S., New Delhi has thus far charted its course on strategic autonomy.
- Mr. Pompeo's words point to an interest in bringing India into bilateral tensions in the Indo-Pacific.
- He also invited the Quad to take a role in India-China tensions as well.
- The Modi government has rejected such suggestions, and any shift would be unwise now.
- **Impression** - India has much to gain strategically and in terms of capacity building from the Quadrilateral dialogue.
- But little should be gained from the impression that it is being led by the US on an important initiative for the region in which India is an important stake-holder.

### Caucasus Crisis

#### Why in news?

There is an ongoing fight between **Armenian rebels and the Azerbaijani Army in Nagorno-Karabakh**, a self-declared republic within Azerbaijan.

#### What is the problem?

- This fight risks becoming a wider regional conflict.
- Recently, Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to a Russia-mediated ceasefire after days of fighting.
- But, the ceasefire crumbled immediately amid a blame game.
- Azerbaijan, backed by Turkey, seems determined to press ahead with its offensive.

### What is the story behind?

- The conflict over **Nagorno-Karabakh** is decades old.
- The region is largely populated by **ethnic Armenians**.
- It is located within the international boundaries of Azerbaijan.
- Under the Soviet Union, it was an autonomous province that was part of the Azerbaijan republic.
- **In 1988, when the Soviet power was receding, the regional assembly in Nagorno-Karabakh voted to join Armenia**, triggering ethnic clashes.
- After the Soviet disintegration in **1991, Armenia and Azerbaijan went to war over this largely mountainous, forested enclave**.
- **By the time a ceasefire was reached in 1994, the rebels had established their de facto rule, with support from Armenia and Russia**.
- The rebels extended their influence to the Armenian border.
- Ever since, the border has remained tense.

### What makes the clashes now far more dangerous?

- **External intervention** makes the clashes now far more dangerous.
- Turkey has called Armenia a threat to peace in the region.
- The Azeris and Turks share ethnic and linguistic bonds.
- Also, the pre-Soviet Azerbaijan was a local ally of the Ottomans when they invaded Transcaucasia in the last leg of World War I.
- For Turkey, which is trying to expand its geopolitical reach to the former Ottoman regions, the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is an opportunity to enter the South Caucasus.

### What is the problem for Turkey?

- Turkey also has a particularly bad relationship with Armenia.
- But its problem is that Armenia is a member of the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

### What is the privilege for Armenia?

- Russia enjoys good economic and defence ties with both Armenia and Azerbaijan.
- But Armenia, as a CSTO member and host to a Russian military base, has more weight.
- In a wider conflict, Armenia could trigger **Article 4 of the CSTO treaty** and ask for Russian help.
- And if Moscow responds favourably, that would pit Russia against Turkey, a NATO member.

### What is Russia trying to do?

- Russia, already involved in military conflicts in Syria, Ukraine and Libya, may not like opening another front.
- That is why it has re-emphasised its neutrality and hosted talks for a truce.
- But it will be forced to take sides if the conflict spills into Armenia.

### What is needed?

- Both sides should understand the situation and call off the hostilities.

- Nagorno-Karabakh has in the past witnessed large-scale ethnic violence.
- Instead of risking a regional war, Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Karabakh rebels should go back to the ceasefire and open up diplomatic channels.

## Solidarity Trial

### Why in news?

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** made **available interim results from the Solidarity Therapeutics Trial**.

### What is the Solidarity Trial?

- **Initiated by WHO and its partners**, the Solidarity Trial is the **world's largest multinational human trials on Covid-19 therapeutics**.
- The trial covers four repurposed drugs or drug combinations.
- This includes **remdesivir, hydroxychloroquine, lopinavir/ritonavir** and interferon (in combination with rotinavir and lopinavir).

### What is the aim?

- The study spans over more than **30 countries involving 11,300 participants** in the trial.
- It included 26 trials in parts of India with a high burden of cases.
- The study looks into the effects of these treatments on various indicators, including their ability to prevent deaths and shorten hospital stays.
- **The aim was to** help determine whether any of these drugs could at least moderately affect in-hospital mortality, and whether any effects differed between moderate and severe disease.

### What have the trials found?

- **None of the drugs was able to prove benefits across the parameters studied**, especially in reducing mortality among hospitalised patients.
- The interim results said these drugs had little or no effect on hospitalised Covid-19 patients as indicated by overall mortality, initiation of ventilation and duration of hospital stay.
- **Drugs like hydroxychloroquine and lopinavir had already been dropped over the course of the last six months for not showing much promise.**

### What are the other findings?

- The mortality findings contain most of the randomized evidence on Remdesivir and Interferon.
- The findings are consistent with meta-analyses of mortality in all major trials.
- Interferon was also dropped from the trial.
- The findings struck a nerve with American biopharmaceutical firm Gilead Sciences, which developed and patented remdesivir.

### To what extent have these drugs been used in India?

- **India stopped use of combinations like lopinavir/ritonavir** early into the pandemic.



- But, **remdesivir, hydroxychloroquine and interferon combinations are still used** as part of the Covid-19 treatment regimen.
- Remdesivir, especially, has been heavily sought after.
- The size of India's remdesivir market was pegged at around Rs 121.29 crore in the 12 months ended September.
- These calculations were based on data available for only four of the several remdesivir brands. This means the market may be even larger.

#### How much of a blow are these findings to those prescribing these drugs?

- **The governments** will take a call on whether the evidence is convincing enough to remove these therapies from their clinical management protocols.
- **Doctors** who feel the drugs should be part of treatment may also take a call on how they will be used on a case-by-case basis.

#### What about remdesivir?

- The data on remdesivir is disappointing, and it will be under pressure to perform.
- Remdesivir's indiscriminate use will stop, but it still might have a place in individualised care.

#### What now for Covid-19 therapeutics, pending a vaccine?

- The findings don't impact the use of other drugs and assisted therapies that have been proven to improve clinical outcomes.
- Newer therapies like antibody cocktails may also be in focus as part of the Solidarity Trial going forward.
- The WHO will continue with the Solidarity Trial and look at immuno modulators.

### Indo-US 2+2 Meeting

#### Why in news?

India and the US are preparing for the third 2+2 ministerial meeting.

#### What is the agenda?

- The meeting will be between External Affairs Minister and Defence Minister of India, and US Secretary of State and Defense Secretary.
- The meeting will happen in **New Delhi**.
- One of the items on the agenda will be the **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)**.
- BECA is a pact that would lay the foundation for deeper military cooperation.
- In the last two meetings, agreements known as **LEMOA and COMCASA** were signed.

#### What is BECA?

- **The BECA largely pertains to geospatial intelligence, and sharing information on maps and satellite images for defence.**
- Signing BECA will allow India to use the US's advanced geospatial intelligence.
- This will enhance the accuracy of automated systems and weapons like missiles and armed drones.



- It will give access to topographical and aeronautical data and products that will aid navigation and targeting.
- This could be a key for Air Force-to-Air Force cooperation.

#### What is LEMOA?

- **The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) was signed between India and the US in August 2016.**
- It allows the military of each country to replenish from the other's bases: access supplies, spare parts and services from the other's land facilities, air bases, and ports.
- This can then be reimbursed.
- This is extremely useful for Navy-to-Navy cooperation, since the US and India are cooperating closely in the Indo-Pacific.
- If signing LEMOA needed trust, its application enhances the trust.

#### What is COMCASA?

- **The Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) was signed in September 2018**, after the first 2+2 dialogue.
- It allows the US to provide India with its encrypted communications equipment and systems.
- Because of this, Indian and US military commanders, aircraft and ships can communicate through secure networks in peace and war.
- It paved the way for transfer of communication security equipment from the US to India to facilitate "interoperability" between their forces.

#### What do these three pacts put together mean?

- **LEMOA** means one partner trusts the other enough to expose its valuable assets.
- **COMCASA** means one is confident that it can rely on encrypted systems to connect the two militaries.
- **BECA** means it can share highly classified information in real time without fear of being compromised.
- All this signals the level of trust that has developed between the two countries and their militaries, faced with an aggressive China.

#### What does this mean in the context of the ongoing border standoff?

- Amidst the longest India-China border in three decades, India and the US have intensified under-the-radar intelligence and military cooperation at an unprecedented level.
- This cooperation has facilitated information-sharing between security, military and intelligence branches of the two countries.
- It includes sharing of high-end satellite images, telephone intercepts, and data sharing of Chinese troops and weapons deployment along the **3,488 km Line of Actual Control (LAC)**.
- The Indian defence establishment also has enhanced capability with some American equipment.
- The armed forces have used at least five American platforms at the LAC.
- Now, with these key defence pacts in place, cooperation can happen in a more structured and efficient way, rather than episodic.

#### Is there a catch in all this?

- The US wants India to move away from Russian equipment and platforms.
- It is because the US feels that this may expose its technology and information to Moscow.
- **India is wary of Pakistan's ties with Pentagon, and US's dependence on Rawalpindi for access to Afghanistan as well as its exit strategy.**
- But, because of Chinese belligerence being the clear and present danger, New Delhi's strategic embrace of Washington is the obvious outcome.

## US Antitrust Suit

### Why in news?

The US Department of Justice has filed an **antitrust lawsuit against Google**.

### What does filing this suit mean?

- This marks a significant step towards curbing the growing monopolistic power of the Internet behemoth.
- The lawsuit focuses only on specific deals done by Google with phone makers and telecom operators to capture significant market share for its search engine business.
- But, the outcome of this case could open investigations into other practices related to its Android app store and other software platforms.

### How monopolistic is Google?

- With a 90% market share in the search business, Google is one of the largest companies the world has ever seen.
- The nature of its online products and services allows Google to wield power over five billion people with Internet access around the world.
- It influences consumer shopping behaviour and also determines the political destiny of countries around the world.
- Google arguably exercises more influence over how we live than any government today.
- This dominance enables Google to do a lot of things that are not just anti-competitive, but also anti-consumer.

### What are the anti-consumer actions?

- Google announced that it would make app developers on the Google Play Store platform use its in-app payment system instead of other systems.
- This meant that the developers would have to use Google's billing system, which takes a 30% fee for every transaction.
- This decision has been withheld after protests from developers.
- But, it reveals Google's inclination to misuse its market dominance.

### What is the issue specific to India?

- Google tracks users' shopping habits, video-watching preferences, the content of e-mails, places travelled among other things.

- This could be a major problem in countries like India, where personal data protection and privacy laws are virtually non-existent.

#### How policing could be done?

- Twitter, Facebook and Google exert immense influence on the social, economic and political landscape of a country.
- Facebook recently set up an oversight board in a bid to showcase that it can self-regulate.
- However, a big drawback of this board is that it is not designed to take quick decisions.
- These platforms cannot be trusted to do its own policing.
- Neither can this task be left to governments, as it could be misused by ruling regime to change the course of elections or target political rivals.

#### What is needed?

- It is time to set up **an independent regulatory oversight** of Internet platforms.
- Proceedings initiated against Google in the US should pave the way for similar scrutiny in India, too.

## FATF and Pakistan

#### Why in news?

The Financial Action Task Force has **decided to retain Pakistan on its greylist**.

#### What is FATF?

- **Headquartered in Paris**, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was set up in 1989 by the G7 countries.
- **Objective** - FATF acts as an international watchdog on issues of money laundering and financing of terrorism.
- It is empowered to curtail financing of UN-designated terrorist groups.
- It is to limit the concerned countries from sourcing financial flows internationally and thereby constraining them economically.
- **Members** - FATF has 39 members, which comprise 37 member jurisdictions and 2 regional organisations.
- **India became a full member in 2010.**

#### What does the FATF's decision mean?

- The decision of the FATF has disappointed the Imran Khan government.
- His cabinet had projected confidence that the country would be taken off the greylist.
- For this, Pakistan government had monitored jurisdictions on terror financing and money laundering activities.
- **It had cleared on 21 of the 27 mandated action points.**

#### What will be the implications of this decision?

- **Pakistan will face international strictures on its markets and on its ability to procure loans until the next FATF plenary in February 2021..**
- By this time, **Pakistan is expected to complete the six pending issues.**

- A bigger problem for Pakistan was that **Turkey** was the only other country in the FATF to push for Pakistan to be let off.
- It suggested that the last six points be cleared by an **“on-site” visit by an FATF team.**
- The proposal was dropped when even other traditional backers of Pakistan such as China, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia did not support it.

#### What options does Pakistan have?

- It has little option but to complete its tasks in the next four months.
- The tasks that it needs to complete include:
  - More action against UNSC-banned terrorists and terror groups,
  - Action against charitable organisations (Non-Profits) linked to these banned entities,
  - Tracing fugitive terrorists and pursuing convictions against them,
  - Revising the list of banned entities under the Anti-Terrorism Act to reflect all those banned by the UNSC, and
  - Cracking down on other channels of terror financing through narcotics and smuggling.

#### What is there for India in this?

- For those in India watching the outcome of the FATF decision, there are some broader dividends to consider from this process.
- To begin with, Pakistan’s deadline for action ended in September 2019.
- But, **the FATF has retained Pakistan on the greylist for the third time this year and was not automatically downgraded it to the blacklist.**
- This has ensured that the pressure has continued to make Pakistan accountable on terror.
- The Khan government has been forced to make a real legislative push to bring Pakistani anti-terror laws in line with international standards.
- At least for now, it will ensure sufficient pressure on groups such as the LeT that target India, to refrain from publicly raising funds.

#### What is crucial?

- **Pakistan’s support to the U.S.-led Afghan process and talks with the Taliban are crucial to the peace process.**
- FATF process has made Pakistan **more amenable to help Afghanistan.**
- It remains to be seen if the actions it takes will permanently change Pakistan’s course in supporting cross-border terror groups.

#### What does India want?

- **India’s goal is for Pakistan to fully dismantle the infrastructure of terror** in the understanding that it is in Pakistan’s own interests to do so.
- It is hoped that the prolonged FATF process will enable this realisation in Islamabad.

#### Chile Referendum

##### Why in news?

Chile voted in favour of replacing its Constitution with a new document.

### **What is the story behind?**

- In 2019, Chile was shaken by mass protests.
- So, the conservative President, Sebastián Piñera, agreed to hold a referendum on rewriting the country's Constitution.
- This Constitution was introduced during the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.
- It was approved in a fraudulent plebiscite in 1980.
- It was the main hurdle in introducing social and economic reforms.
- Now, 78% of Chileans voted in favour of replacing the charter with a new document.

### **Was any attempt made previously to replace it?**

- Since its transition to democracy in 1990, Chile has amended the Constitution to take away many of its anti-democratic features.
- But the document, which has enshrined the conservative free-market philosophies of the Milton Friedman School, stayed on.
- It allowed the private sector to thrive and helped the economy expand.
- But it also led to the concentration of wealth in a minuscule minority, triggering social tensions.

### **Why did 2019 protests happen?**

- Protests erupted last year over a small rise in metro fares.
- But it soon snowballed into a public agitation demanding reforms,
  - An abolition of the private pension fund system, implemented by Gen. Pinochet,
  - An increase in investments in education and health care, and
  - Strengthening of the rights of the indigenous communities.
- The protesters also demanded an overhaul of the Constitution as it was impossible to introduce far-reaching reforms with the current charter.
- With the recent plebiscite results, they have won the first stage.

### **What will happen?**

- Replacing the Constitution is going to be a two-year process.
- In 2021, Chileans will elect a 155-member Assembly to draft the new document, which will then be put to a plebiscite in 2022.
- Half the delegates will be women.
- The new Constitution is also expected to be a heated political issue, with the general elections next year.
- But despite the political and procedural challenges, it offers a fresh opportunity for Chile to say goodbye to a dark era.

### **What will a new charter mean?**

- Now, through a democratic process, Chileans can bury the document and introduce a modern democratic charter.

- It offers them an opportunity to right the systemic wrongs of the past.
- It will also chart out a more inclusive economic and social system that works well for all Chileans.

## Libya Ceasefire Agreement

### Why in news?

Rival parties in Libya announced a historic ceasefire.

### What happened?

- This was followed by the **5+5 Libyan Joint Military Commission (JMC) talks in Geneva**.
- This will give way to the possibility that the long-drawn conflict might be coming to an end.
- This is the first, crucial, brave step towards a comprehensive settlement of the long Libyan crisis.

### What is going on in Libya?

- **Libya has been embroiled in a tussle for power** between rival militias ever since Muammar Gaddafi was ousted from power by NATO-backed forces in October 2011.
- Gaddafi's death marked the end of 42-year rule by the former Army officer which was in power since 1969.
- In the wake of Gaddafi's ouster, dozens of militias led by multiple warlords scrambled to occupy the power vacuum.
- As a result, Libya turned into a war zone with different militant leaders claiming control of the North African nation.
- **Some of the issues of dispute** among the warring factions include **control of the oil infrastructure, governance, national finances and the military**.

### Are other countries involved?

- The UN-backed internationally recognised government called the Government of National Accord (GNA) is led by **Fayez al-Sarraj**.
- The GNA took power in 2015 under the UN-brokered Libyan Political Agreement.
- This Tripoli-based government is **supported by allies Qatar and Turkey**.
- Turkey has sent troops to Libya, which includes Syrian rebel fighters who are aligned with Turkey.
- Turkey maintains that it has sent these troops to help the UN-backed government in the west.
- The GNA's authority is challenged by the factions controlling the east.
- The eastern part is controlled by rebel forces under the Libyan National Army (LNA) which is supported by Russian military contractors.
- Between 2014 and 2019, the LNA has conducted military operations against the Islamic State in the east.
- The spread of the Islamic State has further complicated the situation and is also one reason the US is one of the foreign states that has intervened.

### What has been the impact of the civil war in Libya?

- As per the **Council on Foreign Relations' Global Conflict Tracker**, the civil war in Libya has created **over 50,000 refugees and asylum seekers, while more than 268,000 people have been displaced**.

- As per the Congressional Research Service report, since April 2019, over 2,600 Libyans including hundreds of civilians have been killed.

#### What is the new ceasefire agreement about?

- As per this new agreement facilitated by the UN, all foreign mercenaries and armed forces will have to **withdraw within the next 90 days**.
- The parties also agreed that **any violations in the ceasefire will be dealt by a joint military force**, which will be under a unified command.
- But, the ceasefire **does not apply to UN-designated terrorist groups**.
- The agreement has established a Joint Police Operations room.
- This operations room will implement and propose special arrangements to secure the areas that are cleared of military units and armed groups.
- Further, **the 5+5 have also agreed to open the land and air routes that connect the regions and cities of Libya**.

#### What will be the impact on oil reserves?

- Significantly, **Libya has Africa's largest oil and gas reserves**.
- With regards to oil production, the different parties have agreed that the commanders of the east and west petroleum facilities will work directly with a representative appointed by the National Oil Corporation.
- This representative will recommend a plan for restructuring the Petroleum Facilities Guards to ensure that the flow of oil continues.
- This is a significant development since control of the oil infrastructure is one the elements of competition between the GNA and LNA.

### Environment

## Proposal for Legal Status of Elephant Reserves

#### Why in News?

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has proposed an **amendment to the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972** to accord **legal status to elephant reserves** and corridors on the lines of tiger reserves.

#### Reasons

- **Reduce conflict through mitigation measures** in elephant corridors.
- Address the problem of **rising human-elephant conflict**.

#### Project Elephant

Project Elephant (PE) was launched by the Government of India in the year **1992 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme** with the following objectives:



- To **protect elephants, their habitat & corridors**
- To address issues of **man-animal conflict**
- The **welfare of captive elephants**.

## Xoo Infection: Rice

### Why in News?

Recently, scientists from the **Centre for Plant Molecular Biology (CPMB)** have uncovered the mechanism by which a bacterium called Xoo interacts with rice plants and causes disease.

### About Xanthomonas Oryzae

- It is commonly known as **Xoo infection** which **causes huge yield losses to rice cultivation throughout the world**.
- **The treatment of rice with cellulase**, a cell wall degrading enzyme secreted by Xoo induces rice immune responses and protects rice from subsequent infections by Xoo.
- **It is a bacterial pathovar which causes a serious blight of rice, other grasses and sedges**.
- The bacterial blight of rice has high epidemic potential and is destructive to high-yielding cultivars in both temperate and tropical regions.

## Temporary Shelters for Migratory Birds: Sambhar Lake

### Why in News?

Recently, the **Rajasthan government has decided to build temporary shelters for migratory birds near the Sambhar Lake** (near Jaipur) before 2020's winter season.

### Key Points

- Every year, a large number of **birds from the cold northern regions of Central Asia come to Sambhar Lake**.
- In 2019, more than **20,000 migratory birds died due to avian botulism** in the lake.
- Rajasthan High Court took suo motu cognisance of the mass death and asked the expert committee to carry out an investigation and make recommendations.
- The Court has constituted a seven-member expert committee to study the impact of salt-forming and identify any illegal salt mining in the lake.
- It has suggested the state government seek the centre's support for more funds for creating an infrastructure for the safety and security of birds.

## Kastoori Cotton

### Why in News?

Union Minister for Textiles **unveiled a brand and a logo for Indian cotton** recently on the occasion of **2nd World Cotton Day on 7th October 2020**.

- The branding, **Kasturi Cotton**, would initially be applicable to long-staple cotton that is grown in India and meets prescribed standards.

#### About Kasturi Cotton

- It is the first-ever Brand and Logo for Indian Cotton on Second World Cotton Day.
- The Kasturi Cotton brand will represent **Whiteness, Brightness, Softness, Purity, Luster, Uniqueness and Indianness**.

#### Cotton in India

- Cotton is an important **fibre and cash crop** which plays a dominant role in the industrial and agricultural economy of India.
- India is the largest producer of cotton in the world and the **third largest exporter**. It is also the largest consumer of cotton in the world.
- The pest-resistant **Genetically Modified (GM) Bt cotton hybrids** have captured the Indian market (covering over 95% of the area under cotton) since their introduction in 2002.
- India produces about **6 million tons of cotton every year which is about 23% of the world cotton**.
- India produces about **51% of the total organic cotton production of the world**.

#### Cotton Corporation of India

- CCI was established in **1970** under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Textiles** as a Public Sector Undertaking under the **Companies Act 1956**.
- **Headquarters:** CBD Belapur, Navi Mumbai (Maharashtra)
- **Role:** To undertake price support operations, whenever the market prices of cotton fall below the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) announced by Govt. of India, without any quantitative limit.

#### Cotton Research

- The Central Institute for Cotton Research has campuses in **Nagpur in Maharashtra state and Sirsa in Haryana state**.
  - It is a central research institute established by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) .
- The **ICAR-Central Institute for Research on Cotton Technology is situated in Mumbai**.

## Human Cost of Disasters 2000-2019: UNDRR

#### Why in News?

In a new report “**The Human Cost of Disasters 2000-2019**”, the United Nations pointed out that climate change is largely to blame for a near doubling of natural disasters in the past 20 years.

- The report is published by the **United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)**. The report did **not touch on biological hazards and disease-related disasters** like the coronavirus pandemic.
- International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction is observed on **13th October every year**.

#### Highlights of the report

- **7,348 major disaster events** had occurred between **2000 and 2019**, claiming **1.23 lives**, affecting **4.2 billion people** and costing the global economy some **\$2.97 trillion**.
- Of this, **China (577 events)** and the **US (467 events)** reported the highest number of disaster events followed by **India (321 events)**.
- **Climate change is to be blamed for the doubling of natural disasters** in the past 20 years says the report.
- There had also been an **increase in geophysical events like earthquakes and tsunamis** that are not related to climate but are particularly deadly.

#### UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction:

- The UNDRR was established in **1999** as a dedicated secretariat to facilitate the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR).
- It is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- It is mandated to serve as the focal point in the UN system for the coordination of disaster reduction and to ensure synergies among the disaster reduction activities.
- It has a vision to substantially reduce disaster risk and losses for a sustainable future with the mandate to act as the custodian of the Sendai Framework to which India is a signatory.

#### Skinks of India

##### Why in News?

A recent publication by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) reveals that **India is home to 62 species of skinks** and says about 57% of all the skinks found in India (33 species) are endemic.

##### About Skinks

- **With long bodies, relatively small or no legs, no pronounced neck and glossy scales, skinks are common reptiles around homes, garages, and open spaces such as parks and school playgrounds, and around lakes.**
- Although they are common reptiles and have a **prominent role in maintaining ecosystems**, not much is known about their breeding habits, and ecology because identification of the species can be confusing.
- **Skinks are highly alert, agile and fast moving** and actively forage for a variety of insects and small invertebrates.
- Certain skinks have **green blood**. Unique color of the blood is result of accumulation of the green, bile pigment called
- The reduced limbs of certain skink species or the complete lack of them make their slithering movements resemble those of snakes, leading people to have incorrect notion that they are venomous.
  - This results in several of these harmless creatures being killed.

##### Key-highlights of the Publication

- The publication is a result of four years of work and study of over 4,000 specimens in all 16 regional centres of **ZSI** and also at the **Bombay Natural History Society, Indian Institute of Science, Wildlife Institute of India, and the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology & Natural History**.
- It also makes an attempt to 're-describe' **all the 62 species** with their **taxonomic identification keys, distributional maps, habits, habitat and breeding biology**.

- The book also gives a **phylogenetic and bio-geographical analysis of distribution of these species in all the 11 bio-geographic zones of India** and a detailed account on the historical studies on this group of lizards from the British era to the present.

#### Distribution of Skinks

- With 1,602 species of skinks across the world, making it the largest family of lizards, their occurrence in India is less than 4 % of the global diversity.
- **Western Ghats:** The Western Ghats are home to 24 species of which 18 are endemic to the region.
- **Deccan Peninsular region:** The Deccan Peninsular region is home to 19 species of which 13 are endemic.
- **Northeast:** There are records of 14 skink species from the northeast of which two species are endemic.

## Science and Technology

### Shaurya Missile

#### Why in News?

India has successfully test-fired **indigenously developed hypersonic nuclear-capable Shaurya missile**, an **advanced version of Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) K-15 (B-05)**.

#### Shaurya Missile:

- **Shaurya is a land variant** of short-range Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) K-15 Sagarika, which has a range of at least **750 kilometers**.
- It is capable of carrying payloads of 200 kg to 1000 kg.
- It is a **surface-to-surface tactical missile**.
- These ballistic missiles belong to the **K missile family - codenamed after late Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam - which are launched from Arihant class of nuclear submarines**.
- Shaurya, like many of the modern missiles, is a **canister-based system**, which means that it is stored and operated from specially designed compartments.
- The missile is **less vulnerable to anti-ballistic missile defence systems due to its high maneuverability**.

#### The K Family of missiles

- The K family of missiles are primarily Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs), which have been indigenously developed by DRDO and are named after Dr Kalam.
- The development of these naval platform launched missiles began in the late **1990s** as a step towards completing India's nuclear triad — the capability of launching nuclear weapons from land, sea and air based assets.

- Because these missiles are to be launched from submarines, they are lighter, smaller and stealthier than their land-based counterparts, the Agni series of missiles which are medium and intercontinental range nuclear capable ballistic missiles.
- **While K family are primarily submarine-fired missiles to be fired from India's Arihant class nuclear powered platforms**, the land and air variants of some of its members have also been developed by the DRDO.

### Significance

- The new version of the missile will be inducted in the strategic forces to complement one of the existing missiles in the same class. **The missile would be lighter and easier to operate in comparison with the existing missile.**
- The successful flight-test of Shaurya missile extended range version of surface-to-surface supersonic cruise missile BrahMos is seen by defence experts as major steps in enhancing the country's indigenous contents.
- The development of these capabilities is important in light of India's relations with the two neighbours China and Pakistan.

### Ballistic Missile

- It is a **rocket-propelled self-guided strategic-weapons system** that follows a **parabolic trajectory** to deliver a payload from its launch site to a predetermined fixed target.
- Ballistic missiles can carry conventional high explosives as well as chemical, biological, or nuclear munitions.

### Ballistic Missile Defence System in India

- A Ballistic Missile Defence system (BMD) is a missile defence system that acts as a shield against ballistic missile attacks.
- India's BMD development began in **1999**, after the Kargil war.
- The primary aim was to augment India's defence against possible nuclear attack from Pakistan.
- India seeks to deploy a functional **'iron dome' ballistic missile defence (BMD)**, incorporating both low-altitude and high-altitude interceptor missiles.
- India's BMD is primarily developed by DRDO with help of many public and private firms like BEL, Astra Microwave, L&T, etc.

**Ballistic missiles of India:** Agni, K-4 (SLBM), Prahaar, Dhanush, Prithvi and Trishul.

## SMART test of DRDO

### Why in News?

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted a successful flight test of the **Supersonic Missile Assisted Release of Torpedo (SMART)** from **Wheeler Island off the coast of Odisha**.

- This follows the successful test firing of indigenously developed nuclear capable hypersonic missile 'Shaurya'.
- **In 2017, the Odisha government formally named the Outer Wheeler island in Bhadrak district as APJ Abdul Kalam Island** as a tribute to the former President on his second death anniversary.

### What is SMART system?

- Torpedoes, self-propelled weapons that travel underwater to hit a target, are limited by their range. **In the mid-2010s, DRDO undertook a project to build capacity to launch torpedoes assisted by missiles;** Monday's was the first known flight test of the system.
- This SMART system comprises a mechanism by which the **torpedo is launched from a supersonic missile system with modifications that would take the torpedo to a far longer range than its own.** For example, a torpedo with a range of a few kilometers can be sent a distance to the tune of 1000 km by the missile system from where the torpedo is launched.
- The system also gives **flexibility in terms of the missile system's launch platform.**

#### What happened at the test?

- It was conducted from Wheeler Island off the coast of Odisha around noon. DRDO has said all mission objectives including the missile's flight up to the designated range and altitude, separation of its nose cone, release of the torpedo and deployment of Velocity Reduction Mechanism (VRM) were met perfectly. An anti-submarine torpedo of the lightweight category was used.
- The test follows another crucial test two days ago of the nuclear-capable Shaurya missile. Shaurya is a land-based parallel of the submarine-launched K-15 missile.

#### Why is it significant?

- DRDO Chairman Dr G Satheesh Reddy said **SMART is a game-changing technology demonstration in anti-submarine warfare.** India's anti-submarine warfare capacity building is crucial in light of China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean region.
- Assets of such warfare consist of deployment of submarines, specialised anti-submarine ships, air assets and state-of-the-art reconnaissance and detection mechanisms. **The Navy's anti-submarine warfare capability got a boost in June after the conclusion of a contract for Advanced Torpedo Decoy System Maareech, capable of being fired from all frontline warships.** India has been indigenously developing and building several anti-submarine systems and vessels in the recent past.
- In January, DRDO conducted two successful tests of the K Family's K-4 missiles. The capability of launching nuclear weapons from submarine platforms has great strategic importance in light of the "no first use" policy of India. These submarines can not only survive a first strike by an adversary but also can launch a strike in retaliation. The nuclear-powered Arihant submarine and its class members in the pipeline are assets capable of launching missiles with nuclear warheads.

### Anti-Radiation Missile: Rudram-1

#### Why in News?

The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** has successfully flight tested indigenously developed Anti-Radiation Missile (Rudram-1).

#### What is an anti-radiation missile?

- Anti-radiation missiles are **designed to detect, track and neutralise the adversary's radar, communication assets and other radio frequency sources,** which are generally part of their air defence systems.



- It comprises an **inertial navigation system** which is a computerised mechanism that uses changes in the object's position coupled with GPS.
- For guidance, it has a "**passive homing head**" which is a system that can detect, classify and engage targets (radio frequency sources in this case) over a wide band of frequencies as programmed.

#### About Rudram:

- Rudram is an **air-to-surface missile**, designed and developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) for neutralizing surveillance and guidance radars, communication towers, command and control centres, and other radiation-emitting targets.
- DRDO initiated the development of anti-radiation missiles of this type around **eight years ago**.
- **Its integration with fighter jets** has been a **collaborative effort of various DRDO facilities** and formations of the **IAF and Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd.**
- The system has been tested from a **Sukhoi-30 MKI** and it can be adapted for launch from other fighter jets too.
- The **Sanskrit name Rudram** was given in keeping with tradition because it includes the letters ARM (the acronym for anti-radiation missile) and the word in Sanskrit describes a "**remover of sorrows**" (one of its meanings).

#### Features:

- The missile, **powered by two-pulse solid rocket motors** for enhanced range and it can be launched by using Sukhois from different altitudes, ranging from **500-meters to 15-km**
- It has both '**lock-on before launch (LOBL)**' and '**lock-on after launch (LOAL)**' modes
- It has **INS-GPS navigation with a passive homing head** for the final attack which can detect, classify and engage targets over a wide band of frequencies as programmed.
- It has a strike range from **100 to 200-km** depending on the altitude from which it is fired.
- The missile, with a launch speed from (twice the speed of sound),

#### Significance in aerial warfare:

- Rudram has been developed for the IAF's requirement to enhance its **Suppression of Enemy Air Defence (SEAD) capability**.
- **Modern-day warfare** is more and more **network-centric**, which means it comprises elaborate detection, surveillance and communication systems that are integrated with the weapons systems.
- This will ensure IAF strike aircraft can carry out their missions without hindrance.

## Himachal Pradesh Current Affairs

### Calibration Lab

#### In News:

Union Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh has laid the foundation stone of Calibration Lab Building at Snow and Avalanche Study Establishment (SASE) under **Project Anshankan'** in district Kullu.

#### Key Highlights:

- The Calibration Lab would be constructed at a cost of **Rs. 736.18 lakh**.
- It would go a long way in efficient and time bound calibration of variety of sensors to be deployed in Field Locations in snow bound regions.

#### About Snow and Avalanche Study Establishment (SASE)

- SASE is working in **avalanche forecasting, artificial triggering and structural control in snowbound mountainous areas**.
- SASE also participated in the **Indian Antarctic Programme** with research activities on the areas of Antarctic snow cover/ ice sheet surface energy balance and melt estimation.

### Heeng Cultivation in Indian Himalayan Region

#### Why in News?

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research Institute of Himalayan bioresource Technology (CSIR-IHBT) has planted the Heeng in the **Lahaul valley of Himachal Pradesh**. The institute plans to cover **750 hectares** under the Heeng cultivation.

#### Highlights

- The **IHBT had partnered with Department of Agriculture of Himachal Pradesh** in order to boost heeng production in the region.
- The **National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources** carried six categories of Heeng from Iran.
- The institute also standardized the **protocol to produce the heeng as per Indian conditions**.

#### Heeng consumption in India

- India consumes **40 per cent of the world's heeng**. India imports nearly **1,200 tonnes** of ferula heeng that costs to nearly **US \$130 million** every year.

#### Heeng Cultivation

- **Heeng is not cultivated in India**. So far, it was imported from countries like **Afghanistan, Iran and Uzbekistan**. Historically, heeng has been cultivated in **cold desert regions of Afghanistan and Iran**.

#### Challenges in exporting heeng

- There have been instances of war and strife which has prevented Iran and Afghanistan to exporting heeng.

## Heeng

- It is also known as **asafoetida** and is the **dried latex**. Heeng is **native to Iran and Afghanistan**. The resin like gum which comes out from the dried sap of roots and stem is used as heeng spice. The spice is greyish white in colour when fresh while turns to dark amber when it is dried up.

## Medicinal use of Heeng

- Heeng is believed to cure ranging from **kidney stones to bronchitis** in India.
- In Afghanistan, heeng is used to **cure whooping cough and ulcers**.
- In Egypt, heeng is considered a diuretic.

## Mandi district bags top position for implementing PMGSY.

### Why in News?

**Mandi district** of Himachal Pradesh has bagged the **first position among 30 districts of the country** for successfully implementing the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).

### Highlights

- Union Ministry of Rural Development declared the list of top performing 30 districts in the country.
- Mandi district has received top position for **constructing roads of maximum length in 2020-21**.
- Along with Mandi, 6 more districts of Himachal Pradesh have found place among top 30 best performing districts. 6 districts include – **Una, Chamba, Kangra, Shimla, Sirmour, Hamirpur and Solan**.
- Among the states, Himachal Pradesh has secured second position** for construction of roads under PMGSY.
- Himachal Pradesh have improved its performance under the scheme by **constructing 1104 Kilometres roads** this year.

### The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

- It is a nationwide scheme that aims to provide **all-weather road connectivity to the unconnected villages**.
- The scheme was launched in **2000** by Late Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- The PMGSY is being implemented under the **Ministry of Rural Development**.
- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme. In November 2015, it was decided that the project will be funded by both the **central government (60%)** and **states (40%)** on the recommendations of **14th Finance Commission**.
- PMGSY connect habitations having population of more than 250 in the hilly states and above 500 in the plains**.

## Atal Tunnel - Word's Longest Highway Tunnel: Strategic Importance

### Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Atal Tunnel on **3rd oct.** in Himachal Pradesh's Rohtang. It will **connect Solang Valley near Manali to Sissu in Lahaul and Spiti district**. It is named after the former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

### About Atal Tunnel

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation the **World's longest Highway tunnel**, Atal Tunnel at its south portal in Manali.
- It is a **9.02 Km** long tunnel. It connects **Manali to Lahaul-Spiti valley throughout the year**. Before that, the valley was cut off for around **6 months** every year because of heavy snowfall.
- It is built with ultra-modern specifications in the Pir Panjal range of Himalayas at an altitude of 3000 Mtrs (10,000 Feet) from the Mean Sea Level (MSL).
- The tunnel cuts through a mountain west of the Rohtang pass and will shorten the distance between **Solang Valley and Sissu**.

### Atal Tunnel: Significance

- **The tunnel reduces the road distance by 46 Kms between Manali and Leh** and the **time by about 4 to 5 hours**. A journey from Manali to Lahaul and Spiti Valley would now be covered in a little over 15 minutes.
- It has state of the art electromechanical systems including semi transverse ventilation, SCADA controlled firefighting, illumination and monitoring systems.
- **It provides connectivity all year**: Atal Tunnel is the first step towards providing all year connectivity to Ladakh. It has the potential to link Ladakh to Manali and Chandigarh throughout the year because it would bypass Rohtang Pass, which is covered with snow in the months of winter.

### Strategic importance:

The Atal Tunnel will also provide a strategic benefit to the country's **armed forces**. As it provides **year-long connectivity to the border areas**. Not only this it will also save the whole day for troops and supplies as they move towards forwarding posts.

- **Essential commodities** like petrol and vegetable supplies would also likely be available throughout the year.
- According to PM Narendra Modi, **farmers, horticulturalists, and youth will now also have easy access to the capital of Delhi and other markets**. It benefits farmers as now their precious crops like peas and potatoes will no longer rot in trucks before reaching the market.
- **Enhance Tourism**: The tunnel will enhance tourism as livelihoods in the tourism sector of the residents in Lahaul Valley and Ladakh would increase.
- **Other features of the Tunnel**: Various safety features are there in the tunnel including telephone connections at every 150 metres for emergency communication, fire hydrant mechanisms at every 60 Metres, auto incident detection system with CCTV cameras at every 250 metres, emergency exit every 500 m, air quality monitoring at every 1 Km, evacuation lighting/exit signs and broadcasting system throughout the tunnel among others.
- In the Atal tunnel, **BSNL has installed three 4G base transceiver stations (BTSs) for full 4G connectivity**.

### About Rohtang Pass

- Rohtang Pass has an elevation of 3,978 m which is located in the state of Himachal Pradesh.
- It is situated on the **Pir Panjal Range** of Himalayas.

### CM appreciates efforts of Devika

**In news:**

Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur has appreciated the feat of **Devika, a young school girl hailing from Kerala**, who shot into fame when her video of singing **Himachali song 'Chamba kitne ke dur'** under the '**Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat**' campaign went viral on social media.

## **Himachal officers lauded in Vande Bharat Mission**

**Why in News?**

Ministry of External Affairs has appreciated the efforts of Himachal Pradesh government in the **Vande Bharat Mission**.

**Key Highlights**

- Joint Secretary MEA **Robert Shetkintong** who was also the **Chief Coordinator for HP for Vande Bharat Mission** has sent a letter of appreciation to Chief Secretary Anil Khachi appreciating the work of state government.
- **Himachal is the only state of the country to receive this appreciation so far.**

## **Darcha Barsi and Palchan bridge in Himachal**

**Why in News?**

Union Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh dedicated **44 permanent major bridges** to the nation and also laid foundation stone of Nechipu tunnel through video conferencing from New Delhi.

- Out of these total 44 bridges inaugurated, two bridges were in Himachal Pradesh which includes **Darcha Barsi Bridge on the Manali-Sarchu-Leh highway and Palchan bridge constructed over Beas river on Manali-Solang-Leh highway.**

**About Darcha Barsi Bridge:**

- The bridge, spanning **360 meter** runs over **Bhaga river** at Darcha and is the **second longest bridge in the country.**
- This bridge has been constructed by spending Rs. **27.25 crore.**
- Besides improving the flow of traffic, the new bridge, would prove helpful in increased load carrying ability.
- Darcha is located in Lahaul region, about 33 kms ahead of Keylong, at a height of 11020 ft, which is the last permanent settlement on this route in the state.
- The project has been accomplished by **70 Road Construction Company of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).**

**About Palchan Bridge:**

- Palchan Bridge is **110 meter** long over Beas River.
- Palchan Bridge constructed over Beas River on Manali-Solang-Leh highway.
- This bridge has been constructed by spending an amount of Rs. **12.83 crore.**

## **Dr. Gaurav Sharma**

**In news:**

Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur has **congratulated Dr. Gaurav Sharma** for being elected as **MP in New Zealand**. He belongs from **Galod in Hamirpur district**.

## **Udgaar**

**In news:**

Chief Secretary Anil Khachi has released **poetry collection 'Udgaar'** written by **Manmohan Sharma**. There are **74 poems** relating to various aspects of life in the collection of poems.

## **'Portraits of Power: Half a Century of Being at Ringside'**

**In news:**

Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur has joined the webinar from Shimla regarding virtual release of book **'Portraits of Power: Half a Century of Being at Ringside'** authored by Chairman 15th Finance Commission N.K. Singh at Mumbai.

- This Book is an autobiography of N.K. Singh.

## **PM KUSUM**

### **Why in News?**

A Spokesperson of the Agriculture Department informed that **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Surksha evam Utthan Mahaabhiyan Yojana (PM KUSUM)** has been implemented in the state to **provide irrigation facility to the farmers**. The scheme has been implemented in the state to provide irrigation facility the farmers could grow more cash crops and increase their income.

### **About PM KUSUM:**

#### **It consists of three components:**

#### **10,000 MW of Decentralized Ground Mounted Grid Connected Renewable Power Plants.**

- Under Component A, Renewable power plants of capacity 500 KW to 2 MW will be setup by individual farmers/cooperatives/panchayats /farmer producer organisations (FPO) on their barren or cultivable lands.
- The power generated will be purchased by the DISCOMs at Feed in tariffs determined by respective SERC.
- The scheme will open a stable and continuous source of income to the rural land owners.
- Performance Based Incentives @ Rs. 0.40 per unit for five years to be provided to DISCOMs.

#### **Installation of 17.50 lakh standalone Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps**

- Under Component B, individual farmers will be supported to install standalone solar pumps of capacity up to 7.5 HP.
- Solar PV capacity in kW equal to the pump capacity in HP is allowed under the scheme.

#### **Solarisation of 10 Lakh Grid-connected Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps**



- Under Component C of the scheme, individual farmers will be supported to solarise pumps of capacity up to 7.5 HP.
- Solar PV capacity up to two times of pump capacity in kW is allowed under the scheme.
- The farmer will be able to use the generated energy to meet the irrigation needs and the excess available energy will be sold to DISCOM.
- This will help to create an avenue for extra income to the farmers, and for the States to meet their RPO targets.
- Aim

All three components combined, **the scheme aims to add a solar capacity of 25,750 MW by 2022.** The **total central financial support provided under the scheme would be Rs. 34,422 crore.**

### Implementation

- The Component-A and Component-C will be implemented on pilot mode for 1000 MW capacity and one lakh grid connected agriculture pumps respectively and thereafter, will be scale-up on success of pilot run.
- Component-B will be implemented in full-fledged manner.

### Finance:

- For both Component-B and Component-C, central financial assistance (CFA) of 30% of the benchmark cost or the tender cost, whichever is lower, will be provided.
- The State Government will give a subsidy of 30%; and the remaining 40% will be provided by the farmer.
- Bank finance may be made available for meeting 30% of the cost.
- The remaining 10% will be provided by the farmer.
- Higher CFA of 50% will be provided for North Eastern States, Sikkim, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Lakshadweep and A&N Islands.

### Significance

- The Scheme will have substantial environmental impact in terms of savings of CO2 emissions.
- All three components of the Scheme combined together are likely to result in saving of about 27 million tonnes of CO2 emission per annum.
- Further, Component-B of the Scheme on standalone solar pumps may result in saving of 1.2 billion liters of diesel per annum and associated savings in the foreign exchange due to reduction of import of crude oil.
- The scheme has direct employment potential. Besides increasing self-employment the proposal is likely to generate employment opportunity equivalent to 6.31 lakh job years for skilled and unskilled workers.

### Bulk Drug Park

#### In News:

Himachal Pradesh Government has sent a proposal for setting up of a 'Bulk Drug Park' in **Una district** under three 'Bulk Drug Park' in the country proposed Under Atmanirbhar Bharat' abhiyan.

## Defence

- The Defence Research and Development (DRDO) successfully test-fired BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, with several indigenous features, from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Balasore in Odisha.
- The Indian Coast Guard Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV) ICGS 'Kanaklata Barua' was commissioned at the Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Ltd in Kolkata on 30 September 2020.
- ISRO is scheduled to launch its Venus mission in 2025 and France will participate in it.
- The indigenously developed Laser Guided Anti Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) was successfully test fired by DRDO on 1st Oct 2020.
- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully flight tested the Supersonic Missile Assisted Release of Torpedo (SMART) from Wheeler Island off the coast of Odisha.
- Offshore Patrol vessel 'Vigraha', designed and built by the Larsen and Toubro (L&T) Shipbuilding under the 'Make in India' initiative is launched by the Indian Coast Guard at a private shipyard in Kattupalli, north of Chennai on 6th October 2020.
- The Indian Navy conducted a two-day coastal security exercise called "Sagar Kavach".
- The new generation anti-radiation missile named Rudram 1 which has been generated to kill enemy radar is successfully tested in the Balasore test range located off the coast of Odisha in Bay of Bengal.
- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has test-fired indigenously developed Drone RUSTOM II in Karnataka.
- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has test-fired Nirbhay Cruise Missile from Odisha.

## Sports

- The Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports, Shri Kiren Rijiju launched the new logo of Sports Authority of India's (SAI) at Delhi's Major Dhyan Chand Stadium.
- In Shooting, India's Visnu Shivaraj Pandian has won the 10m air rifle event at the fifth edition of the International Online Shooting Championship held on 3rd October 2020.
- The Indian women's cricket team has overtaken New Zealand to rise to the third spot in the T20 International standings and retained the second position in the ODI chart of the latest ICC rankings.
- Lewis Hamilton has won the 2020 Eifel Grand Prix, held on 11 October 2020.
- The India's first-ever homegrown professional badminton brand "Transform" appointed Commonwealth Games medallist in Badminton, Chetan Anand as the brand ambassador.
- This is Nadal's 20th Grand Slam and 13th French Open title.
- Young Indian Chess player Nihal Sarin has been declared as a winner in the 2020 Junior Speed Online Chess Championship of Chess.com in Chennai.
- The National Basketball Association (NBA) Championship 2020 held on 12 October 2020.
- All India Football Federation, the apex body for the sport of football in the country, announced the launch of their new motto 'Indian Football. Forward Together', defining the new brand direction.
- Robert Lewandowski who is a Polish professional footballer who plays as a striker for Bundesliga club Bayern Munich won the UEFA Men's Player of the Year Award 2020.

## Books & Authors

- The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), Dr Jitendra Singh released a **Coffee Table Book on “Discovering the Heritage of Assam”**, written by **Padampani Bora** and having foreword by **Amitabh Bachchan**.
- The Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi, **Manish Sisodia** released the book named **“Bapu-The Unforgettable”**.
- **Anand Neelakantan** has authored his first kid’s book titled **“The Very, Extremely, Most Naughty Asura Tales for Kids”**.
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** released the **autobiography** of former Union Minister **Dr Balasaheb Vikhe Patil** through video conferencing on 13 October 2020.
- A former intelligence officer with the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), **GBS Sidhu** has written the book titled **“The Khalistan Conspiracy”**.

## Summits and Conferences

- Dr. MahendraNath Pandey, Union Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Ministry and Mr. Barry O’Farrell, Australian High Commissioner to India engaged conference through video conferencing.
- Union Minister for Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar addressed the United Nations Biodiversity Summit.
- The Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the Vaishvik Bhartiya Vaigyanik (VAIBHAV) Summit, a global virtual summit of overseas and resident Indian Researchers and Academicians.
- The 19th round of Foreign Office Consultation was held between India and Myanmar. Due to COVID19 the discussion was conducted through online mode.
- RAISE 2020- ‘Responsible AI for Social Empowerment 2020’ will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi .
- United Nations General Assembly held Fourth World Conference on Women 2020.
- Webinar held between India & Russia on the use of natural gas as motor fuel was organized under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India and the Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation.
- Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs organized Swachhata ke 6 saal, Bemisaal on the occasion 6th Anniversary Swachh Bharat Mission.
- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated RAISE 2020, a Mega Virtual Summit on Artificial Intelligence (AI) on 5th October 2020.
- NITI Aayog, The New and Renewable Energy Ministry, and Invest India which is a non-profit venture under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade has organised India PV-Edge 2020 summit.
- Finance Minister Smt Nirmala Sitaraman chaired the 42nd GST Council Meet.
- On 6th October, the Foreign ministers of four Quad countries (the United States, Japan, India and Australia) held in Tokyo, Japan.
- Russia will host 12th BRICS Summit virtually on 17 November.
- Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment is organizing an International Conference on ‘Mental Health – Looking beyond COVID 19’ virtually through Video Conferencing.
- Prime Minister of India to address Invest India Conference in Canada.
- BRICS Ministerial Summit 2020 held through online mode via Video Conferencing.

- Seventh Meeting of Ministers of Justice of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) will be held on October 16.
- The fifth meeting of India Mexico bilateral high-level group on trade, investment and cooperation was held virtually.
- The Sixth Session of India-Norway Joint Commission was held. India was represented by the External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.
- The Annual Meeting 2021 of the World Economic Forum (WEF) will be scheduled to be held on from May 18 to 21, 2021 instead of the usual January-end each year in in Lucerne-Burgenstock, Switzerland.

### **Ranks & Indices**

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), which is the apex body in India for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research, released the Second Sero Survey Report.
- National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) which is an Indian government agency responsible for collecting and analyzing crime data released the Crimes in India Report for the year of 2019.
- Department of Fertilizers under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers secured the 2nd position among the 16 Economic Ministries and also the department secured the 3rd spot out of the 65 Ministries or Departments.
- The Colombia-born American actress Sofia Vergara, who came to fame with an American TV Show 'Modern Family' is the highest paid actresses in the annual list of Forbes' Highest-Paid Actresses 2020.
- Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation conducted survey titled Time Use Survey.
- ICMR (The Indian Council of Medical Research) released the What India Eats Report.
- Ravi Santhanam, Chief Marketing Officer (CMO), HDFC Bank has been recognised in the Forbes list of 'The World's Most Influential CMOs'.
- The World Water Development Report 2020 and PCRWR Groundwater Investigation and Mapping report released by the United Nations.
- NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau) has released the report 'safest city for women' in India report.
- The Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) Chairman Mukesh Ambani, has topped the Forbes India Rich list for 2020, released on 8th October 2020.
- The international charitable organisation 'Oxfam International' released a report on 2020 Commitment to Reducing Inequality (CRI) Index.
- According to the Lancet Report, India is expected to be the third largest economy by 2050 and it overtakes China. India will retain the same position in 2100.
- The IIFL Wealth Hurun India 40 & under Self-Made Rich List 2020 announced.
- The State of Climate Services Report 2020 is released by the United Nations World Meteorological Organization (UN WMO).
- As per the latest Arton Capital's World's Most Powerful Passport Index for the year 2020, Indian passport ranked at 58th and the US passport ranked 21st.

### **Agreements and MoUs Signed:**

- NITI Aayog and the Embassy of the Netherlands, New Delhi, has signed a Statement of Intent (Sol) to support the 'decarbonization and energy transition agenda' for accommodating cleaner and more energy.

## JOKTA ACADEMY OCTOBER CURRENT AFFAIR

- India's leading stock exchange BSE has signed a pact with private sector lender Yes Bank to empower the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) listed on the platform.
- The United States Agency for International Development in India has been selected for funding from the White House-led Women's Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) Initiative and it will collaborate with SEWA Bharat to support women entrepreneurs using the funding amount.
- Considering the importance of Carbon Capture, Utilisation & Storage (CCUS) in India's fight against Climate Change and Global Warming, meeting the growing energy demands and building a strong ecosystem to meet commitments under Paris Agreement, Tata Steel and Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) sign MoU to collaborate in the area of Carbon Capture, Utilisation & Storage (CCUS).
- SBI and FMCG major HUL announced a partnership to enable easy access to credit to small retailers and also help them join the digitization bandwagon in order to "survive in the new world".
- India and the United States have entered into a defence deal worth \$90-million, wherein US would provide equipment, spare parts and logistical support for India's fleet of C-130J Super Hercules cargo aircraft.
- India and France have collaborated to jointly launch the constellation of maritime surveillance satellites for the Indian Ocean Region, to trace illegal spillage of oil by ships.
- To take street food vendors' businesses online, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) signed MoU with Swiggy under PM SVANIDHI Scheme.
- To make textbooks and other study material easily accessible for deaf children through sign language, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) signed an MoU with the Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC).
- With an aim to showcase and promote new agriculture technology and innovations, Prasar Bharati sign an MoU with IFFCO.
- The Union Cabinet approved the Memorandum of Understanding signed between India and Japan on cyber security.
- India has signed agreements of cooperation in Artificial Intelligence, 5G technology with Japan.
- The Union Territory of Ladakh signed an MoU with the National Dairy Development Board to conduct survey in the rural livelihood of Ladakh.
- India and France will jointly launch the constellation of maritime surveillance satellites that will be able to trace illegal spillage of oil by ships in the Indian Ocean Region.
- All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) which is a public Ayurveda medicine and research institution located in New Delhi signed agreement with Amity University (Private Research University) to Promote research in Ayurveda.
- Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited has signed MoUs with the corporate companies to develop upcoming metro stations.
- The Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath and Zurich Airport International, Switzerland has signed a concessionaire agreement for the development of Jewar Airport in Gautam Budh Nagar, Noida.
- The Meghalaya government has partnered with Israel for setting up a Centre of Excellence (CoE) on high value vegetables in the state in a bid to improve and promote the livelihoods of farmers.
- The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has inked three Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with the State Bank of India (SBI) to extend credit support for various projects in Gujarat.
- Amazon India had partnered with Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) to provide their customers with the facility to book reserved train tickets on its platform.
- Infosys signed an agreement with Blue Acorn iCi to acquire a digital customer experience, commerce and analytics services provider for up to USD 125 million (about Rs 915 crore).

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- HDFC Bank and Apollo Hospitals have joined hands to launch The HealthyLife Programme, a holistic healthcare solution which makes healthy living accessible and affordable on Apollo's digital platform, Apollo 24|7.
- The Department of Science & Technology (DST) partnered with IBM India for promoting STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) learning among students and to inspire them towards STEM careers.
- IIT Kanpur and CDAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing) signed an MoU to establish a 1.3 peta FLOP supercomputing facility at Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur under the National Supercomputing Mission (NSM).
- The Government of India's All India Council For Technical Education (AICTE) has partnered with Microsoft to empower learners and educators with future-ready skills.
- Uber tied-up with Amazon Pay that will allow users in India to pay for their rides on the ride-hailing platform using Amazon Pay.
- Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved
- USD 300 million loan for India to finance the Rajasthan Secondary Towns Development Sector Project.
- Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed loan agreement worth 270 million dollars with India with an aim to improve water supply and integrated storm water and sewage management infrastructure in 64 cities of Madhya Pradesh.
- Intel India and the State Government of Telangana partnered with each other with an aim to launch of an applied artificial intelligence (AI) research (INAI) center in Hyderabad.
- India and Maldives on October 12, 2020 concluded the Line of Credit (LOC) Agreement of USD 400 million for the implementation of the Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP).
- With an aim to foster cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region the National Maritime foundation of India and Taiwan Asia Exchange Foundation recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU).
- The Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) has extended a Line of Credit (LoC) of USD 400 million (about Rs 2,932 crore) to Maldives.
- With an aim to create a successful and innovative workforce from the Atal Tinkering Lab, ATL schools, Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) partnered with CGI India.

## Nobel Prizes and Laureates 2020

Nobel Laureates	Field	Contribution
Harvey J. Alter, Michael Houghton and Charles M. Rice	Medicine	Discovered Hepatitis C virus
Roger Penrose	Physics	Discovered that black hole formation is a robust prediction of the general theory of relativity



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Reinhard Genzel and Andrea Ghez		Discovered supermassive compact object at the centre of our galaxy
Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer A. Doudna	Chemistry	Discovered the method for genome editing
Louise Glück	Literature	For her unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal
World Food Programme (WFP)	Peace	For its efforts to combat hunger, for its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict.
Paul R. Milgrom, Robert B. Wilson	Economic Sciences	For improvements to auction theory and inventions of new auction formats.

### Web Portals & Apps

- DISHTAVO (Digital Integrated System for Holistic Teaching and Virtual Orientations), an online learning platform involving YouTube channel is launched by Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant.
- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has launched an online discovery platform for startups called "Startup India Showcase".
- Kisan Rath Mobile App launched by Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal to help farmers.

### Appointments

Name	Appointed as	Other Info
Anil Kumar Chaudhary	Head of CII's public sector enterprises council	
Rahul Parikh	Bandhan Bank Digital Head	
Dr Bushra Ateeq, Dr Surajit Ghosh and Dr Ravi Manjithaya	CSIR-Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI) Award 2020	These scientists have made outstanding contribution in unfolding the knot of Cancer. Director, CDRI, Prof. Tapas

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		Kundu and Ex Director, CDRI, Dr VP Kamboj congratulated the winners.
Sourav Ganguly	Brand ambassador for Bengal Peerless Housing	The former national cricket team captain and current president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, Ganguly will primarily lead the campaign of the company's residential project Avidipta II on EM Bypass
Apurva Chandra	Secretary of Union Ministry of Labour & Employment.	Earlier he was serving as Special Director General, Defence Acquisition, Ministry of Defence.
Mohit Kapoor	Executive Vice-President and Group Chief Technology Officer of Mahindra Group	
BS Dhanoa	Independent director of Hero Motocorp	Dhanoa served as the Chief of the Indian Air Force from January 1, 2017 to September 30, 2019
Charanjit Singh Attra	Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of SBI	The post was lying vacant after the former Deputy MD & CFO Prashant Kumar, was appointed as the CEO of Yes Bank in March 2020
Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah	Ruling emir	Sheikh Nawaf, 83, had served as the crown prince since 2006, jumping a traditional order of alternating rule between the Al Jaber and the Al Salim branches of the country's ruling family.
Rinki Sethi	New Information Security Head Of Twitter	Sethi had previously worked as the vice president of information security at cyber-security firm Palo Alto Networks Inc.
Bhaskar Ghosh	Chief Strategy Officer of Accenture	Ghosh succeeds Simon Eaves
Dinesh Kumar Khara	Chairman of State Bank of India	Succeeds Khara

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M Rajeshwar Rao	Deputy governor of RBI	He replaced NS Vishwanathan
M A Ganapathy	Director General of Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS)	He will hold the position till his superannuation on February 29, 2024.
Arvind Hali	Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of Motilal Oswal Home Finance Limited (MOHFL).	
J Venkatramu	Managing director (MD) and chief executive officer (CEO) of India Post Payments Bank	Venkatramu will take over the post of Suresh Sethi
Pradeep Kumar Rawat	Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Netherlands.	
Manoj Kumar	Chairman and managing director of Western Coalfields Ltd.	
Bhuvan Bam	first digital brand ambassador of Fashion e-commerce platform Myntra.	
Chaitanya Venkateswaran	British high commissioner to India for a day.	

## Awards & Honours

Name	Awarded as
Kerala Tourism	PATA Grand Award 2020 in Marketing
Sanjay Singh	'Gandhi' Award instituted by the Mahatma Gandhi National Foundation
Nasrin Sotoudeh of Iran, Bryan Stevenson of the United States (US), Lottie Cunningham Wren of Nicaragua and Ales Bialiatski of Belarus	Right Livelihood Award 2020.
Ratan Tata	Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC) lifetime achievement award.

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Mumbai Municipal Commissioner I.S. Chahal	Global 'Covid Crusader Award-2020'
Nityanand Nayak	Sarala Puraskar for his poetry work 'Setebelaku Nathiba', published in 2017.
Sarah Hall	BBC national short story award
Indian Navy Ships Sahyadri and Kora	Best Ships in FAF 2020.
Bank of Ghana	Central bank of the year award 2020

### Important Days & Themes

Day	Celebrated as	Theme
October 1	International Day of Older Persons	This year is also marked as "Year of the Nurse and Midwife"
October 1	World Vegetarian Day	The full week between October 1–7 is observed as the International Vegetarian Week (IVW).
October 1	International Coffee Day	The theme 2020 of the day is "Coffee's Next Generation".
October 1	World Postcard Day	The goal for the World Postcard Day is to bring that joy to as many people as possible.
October 2	World Day for Farmed Animals (WDFA)	The day is dedicated to exposing the needless suffering and death of farmed animals who are raised and slaughtered for food.
October 2	International Day of Non-Violence	The day aims to "spread the message of non-violence, including through education and public awareness.

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October month	breast cancer awareness month	WHO promotes comprehensive breast cancer control programmes as part of national cancer control plans.
October 4	World Animal Day	The day aims to raise the status of animals in order to improve welfare standards around the globe.
October 4-10	World Space Week (WSW)	The 2020 theme is “Satellites Improve Life.”
October 5	World Teachers’ Day, also known as International Teachers Day	The Theme for 2020 International Teachers Day is “Teachers: Leading In crisis, reimagining the future”.
October 5 (1st Monday of October )	World Habitat Day	The theme for 2020 World Habitat Day is ‘Housing For All — A Better Urban Future’
October 1-8	Wildlife week	
October 5	‘Ganga River Dolphin Day’	
October 7	World Cotton Day	This day was initiated by the Group of Cotton-4 countries namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali to the reflect the importance of cotton as a global commodity.
October 8	Air Force day	
October 9	World Post Day	To create awareness of the role of posts in everyday lives of the people.
second Thursday of October- October 8	World Sight Day	World Sight Day 2020 Theme: Hope In Sight
second Friday of October- October 9	World Egg Day	The theme for 2020 World Egg Day is “Eat your egg today and every day”

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October 10	World Mental Health day	The theme for World Mental Health Day 2020 is 'Mental Health for All'.
October 10	World Migratory day	The theme for World Migratory Bird Day 2020: Birds Connect Our World
October 10	National Post Day	
October 9-15	National Postal week	To generate awareness of the role and activities of the postal services among the public and media on a national scale.
October 5-11	World Investors week	
October 9	Indian Foreign Service (IFS) Day	
October 10	World Day Against the Death Penalty	The theme for 2020 is "Access to counsel – A matter of life or death."
October 11	International Day of the Girl Child	The theme for 2020 International Day of the Girl Child is "My voice, our equal future".
October 12	World Arthritis Day	The World Arthritis Day theme 2020 is Time2Work.
October 13	International Day for Disaster Reduction	
October 14	World Standards Day (WSD)	World Standards Day 2020 theme is "Protecting the planet with standards".
October 15	International Day of Rural Women	2020 Theme: "Rural women and girls building resilience"
October 16	World Food Day	'Grow, Nourish, Sustain Together'
October 17	International Day of Eradication of Poverty	'Acting together to achieve social and environmental justice for all'
October 20	World Statistics Day	'Connecting the World with data we can trust'
October 20	World Osteoporosis Day	'That's Osteoporosis'

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October 20	International Chef's Day	'Healthy food for the future'
October 21	National Police Commemoration Day	
October 22	International Stuttering Awareness Day	'Journey of Words- Resilience and Bouncing Back'
October 23	World Snow Leopard Day	
October 24	World Polio Day	'A win against polio is a win for global health'
October 24	World Development Information Day	
October 24	United Nations Day	
October 27	World Day for Audiovisual Heritage	Your window to the World
October 27 – 2nd Nov.	Vigilance Awareness Week	
October 29	International internet Day	
October 31	World Cities Day	

### Obituary

Name	Profession	Place
Helen Reddy	Singer	Melbourne, Australia
Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad-al Sabah	Ruler of Kuwait	Kuwait
KC Sivasankar	Chandamama Artist	Tamil Nadu
Haji Hussain Ansari	Jharkhand Minister	Jharkhand
Pradeep Maharathy	Former Odisha Minister and senior BJD MLA	Odisha
Mishti Mukherjee	Bollywood actress	West Bengal
Pushpa Bhawe	Veteran social activist	Maharashtra
Anant kumar Surendraray Dave	Former Acting Chief Justice of the Gujarat High Court Justice	Gujarat



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Mulayam Singh Yadav	Politician	Uttar Pradesh
Vishal Anand	Bollywood actor	Maharashtra
Najeeb Tarakai	Batsman	Afghanistan
M. Gopalakrishnan	Former chairman-cum-managing director of Indian Bank	Tamil Nadu
Prasanth Rajesh	Tamil Nadu Premier League Spinner	Tamil Nadu
Naseeb Pathan	Uttar Pradesh Congress leader	Uttar Pradesh
Ashwani Kumar	Former Governor of Manipur and Nagaland	
Eddie Van Halen	Guitar virtuoso	Amsterdam, Netherlands
Ram Vilas Paswan	Former Union minister of consumer affairs, food and public distribution	Bihar
Mario Molina	Mexican scientist and a Nobel Prize receipt	Mexico
K K Usha	former Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court	Kerala
Avinash Kharshikar	Marathi actor	Maharashtra
Priscilla Jana	Indian-origin South African human rights lawyer	South Africa
CM Chang	Senior Nagaland Minister	Nagaland
Vinod Kumar Singh	Minister for Backward and Extremely Backward Classes in Bihar	Bihar
B. Vijaya Reddy	Kannada film-maker	Andhra Pradesh
Carlton Chapman	Former India football captain	Karnataka
Sarat Kumar Kar	Former speaker of Odisha Assembly and renowned writer	Odisha
Savithri Vaithi	Renowned philanthropist and social worker	Tamil Nadu
Shobha Naidu	Kuchipudi dancer	Andhra Pradesh

Charlie Moore	Olympic champion	United States
John Richard Reid	Former New Zealand cricketer	New Zealand

### States miscellaneous

- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy launched the YSR Jala Kala Scheme under which free borewells will be drilled for the needy farmers in the state.
- The Maharashtra government has banned the sale of loose cigarettes and beedis, making it the first Indian state to do so.
- Former Maharashtra Chief Minister and BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis has been appointed as the party's Bihar Assembly Elections in-charge.
- Gujarat Government has announced 25 percent cut in school fees for the current academic year.
- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy along with Union Ministers launched the door delivery of fertilisers to farmers, PoS (Point of sale) version, and SMS gateway from Rythu Bharosa Kendras.
- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launched a slum upgradation programme to make the state slum free in three years.
- Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal launched a web portal named 'Kritagyata' on 1st October 2020.
- West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has launched a new scheme called the Pathashree Abhijan on 01 October 2020.
- Sabarmati Central Jail in Ahmedabad has launched 'Radio Prison' on the occasion of the 151st Birth Anniversary of the Father of the Nation.
- On the occasion of World Postcard Day, the Chief Postmaster General, Odisha Circle, has released a picture postcard named "Jau Kandhei" on the theme of 'Traditional Toys of India'.
- A 20-bed tribal unit of the National Institute of Naturopathy was inaugurated in Pune's Ambegaon tehsil by Union AYUSH minister Shripad Naik.
- Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar digitally launched 'Gram Darshan', which will allow accessibility to data of development projects of 6,197 gram panchayats of the state.
- Chhattisgarh State Government has organised Corona Intensive Community Survey Campaign.
- Union Minister for Railways Shri, Piyush Goyal inaugurated Phoolbagan Metro station of East-West Metro.
- the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal launched a Mega Anti-Pollution Campaign, called "Yudh Prasudushan ke Virudh".
- The Union department of Industry promotion and internal trade has given the GI Tag recently to the "Dalle Khursani" the famous chilli of Sikkim.
- The Goa government released an action plan to support agriculture and animal husbandry under its "Aatmanirbhar" programme.
- Digital Seva Setu Programme for rural areas has been initiated by Gujarat government under the Bharat Net Project.
- Railway Minister Piyush Goyal renamed Naugarh railway station to Siddharthnagar railway station which is situated at Siddharthnagar district in Uttar Pradesh.

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- Uttar Pradesh government will launch a special campaign on the safety of women and girls during the Navratri festival.
- Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani e-dedicated online e-Sanjeevani OPDs scheme across Gujarat through videoconferencing.
- The Gyan Circle Ventures, a MeitY funded Technology Business Incubator (TBI) of Indian Institute of Information Technology, Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh is inaugurated by the Union Minister for Education Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'.
- The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy has launched Jagan Anna Vidya Kanuka scheme.
- Mukhyamantri Saur Swarojgar Yojana recently launched by the Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat which will promote self-employment of the youth. It also promotes production of green energy.
- Goa has become the first state in India to provide 100% tap water connections in rural areas under "Har Ghar Jal State".
- Delhi government announced that the city restaurants will now be allowed to open round the clock and the requirement of tourism licenses will also be removed.
- With an aim to preserve trees for clean and green city, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has passed a first-of-its-kind in India "Tree Transplantation Policy".
- "Swa-nirbhar Naari: Atmanirbhar Asom" scheme is launched by Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.
- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated 44 bridges and laid the foundation stone of Nechiphu tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Forest Department of Madhya Pradesh will invite private investors to work on the establishment of forest-based domestic industries.
- Manoj Sinha the Lieutenant Governor of J&K, inaugurated sports infrastructure worth Rs. 49.78 crore and laid foundation of various projects costing Rs. 10.5 Crore across the Union Territory in a function held at Pologround in Srinagar.
- The chief Justice of Madras High court Shri. A.P Sahi inaugurated the Integrated court complex in Karaikal.
- The State of Kerala is the first state in the country to make public education completely digital.
- A nation-wide campaign started by the Rashtriya Kamadhenu Aayog (RKA) named "Kamadhenu Deepawali Abhiyan".
- A toll-free government helpline for mental health "Mann Samvad" was launched by Health Minister Raghu Sharma in Rajasthan.
- The Goa Agriculture department has collaborated with the Postal Department to enroll 11,000 farmers, eligible to avail the benefit of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN), under which small and marginal farmers get up to Rs 6,000 per year as minimum income support.
- To determine the quality of potable water a state-of-the-art-Mobile-Water Testing Laboratory Van of Rs 99- lakh is launched by Haryana Chief Minister (CM) Manohar Lal Khattar.
- The newly formed Trichy Circle of the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) will soon launch a cultural campaign to make youth aware of the country's national heritage.
- The Uttar Pradesh government has launched "Mission Shakti" program which will be dedicated to the coming Navratri festival for women's safety, dignity and empowerment.
- Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Edappadi K. Palaniswami signed 14 Agreements worth Rs. 10, 055 crore with potential to generate employment in the State.
- PepsiCo, which is an American multinational food, snack and beverage corporation has planned to establish potato chips in Uttar Pradesh with Rs 814 crore investment.
- On 13th October, "Sujal"- 'Drink from Tap Mission' scheme is launched by Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik.

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- The Tribal Affairs Ministry has launched an initiative named 'Tech for Tribals' with an aim to focus on imparting entrepreneurship and business skills to tribals in Chhattisgarh.
- Kerala Karshaka Kshemanidhi Board has been launched by Kerala State Government for Welfare of Farmers in the State.
- The Memorandum of Understanding for this project was signed with Vedanta Group this evening.
- In J&K, the Union Minister of Women and Child Development, Dr. Jupaka Madhavi and Additional Superintendent of Police, Ramban, Rajni Sharma inaugurated a "SAKHI" One-Stop Service Centre for women in Ramban district.

