EXCEL
CIVILS ACADEMY
EMPOWERING FUTURE LEADERS

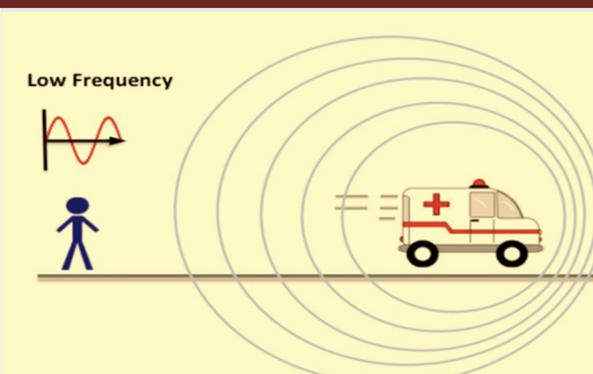**GLOBAL NATURAL DISASTER ASSESSMENT**

VAIKOM SATYAGRAHA

77TH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

NATIONAL TERRORISM DATA FUSION AND ANALYSIS CENTRE

IMPACT ON BIODIVERSITY

ENHANCING ROAD SAFETY: THE ROLE OF DOPPLER RADAR SPEED GUNS

INDIA'S DEFENCE EXPORTS

PULSES IMPORTS SURGE TO SEVEN-YEAR HIGH: IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA'S AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Dear Aspirants,

With effect from July 1, 2024, the three recently enacted Criminal Laws- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) are set to replace the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), and Indian Evidence Act, that date back to the colonial era. They are introduced to update and modernize India's antiquated criminal justice system and to handle modern issues that have arisen since the colonial era in terms of society, technology, and law. A committee of legislators and legal professionals carefully crafted this new legislative framework to make sure it satisfies the changing demands of Indian society. The BNS adds additional offenses while keeping most of the IPC's structure. It raises the punishment for several crimes while leaving out decriminalized offenses.

The cornerstone of India's criminal justice system for more than a century has been the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which was enacted in 1860. Drafted during the British colonial era, it established extensive legal classifications and associated penalties for a range of actions. However, in order to keep up with the rapidly changing social, economic, and technical context, the IPC has undergone numerous revisions throughout the years. Law Commission findings and

decisions by the Supreme Court have led to important developments. Along with state-specific modifications, this also entails the decriminalization of consenting same-sex partnerships, adultery, and suicidal attempts.

In spite of these attempts, the IPC has had difficulty keeping up with modern problems like organized crime, cybercrime, and terrorism. A more contemporary and effective legal framework was required, and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) 2023 was introduced to address this requirement. Effectively, it brings India's criminal code to align with the crimes of modern times.

The Indian Penal Code (IPC) is replaced by Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which adds 21 new offenses, including hate crimes and mob lynching, and reduces the number of sections from 511 to 358. In addition, it redefines sedition as actions that jeopardize national integrity (treason), and it introduces crimes like organized crime, terrorism, and hate speech. Moreover, it broadens the definition of theft to encompass intangibles and data.

The Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) is replaced by Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), which emphasizes a victim-centric approach. It adds electronic summonses, a Witness Protection Program, Zero FIR (enabling FIRs at any police station), trials in absentia, and an extension of police imprisonment from 15 to 90 days. In a major departure from conventional judicial practices, it also

permits computerized trials and requires forensic investigations for serious crimes.

The Indian Evidence Act is replaced by Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA), which modernizes the processing of evidence by accepting digital and electronic documents as evidence. The audio-video recording of rape victim testimonies is also required by law. Simply put, it permits the electronic presentation of spoken evidence and qualifies electronic records as primary evidence.

Some of the key highlights of the new laws include the removal of section 377 and decriminalising certain sexual acts. Organized crime now carries a particular criminal charge. Mob lynching has now been recognised as an offence that can be punishable with the death penalty. Acts of terrorism are now explicitly included as offences and new provisions cover being part of a terrorist organization, harbouring terrorists, training for terrorism, and handling money as terrorist activities. For minor offences like petty theft, community service can be awarded as a punishment instead of jail time. New provisions include increased punishment for causing death in hit-and-run cases from a maximum of 2 years to 5 years. The offense of sedition has been substituted with treason, targeting acts that endanger national sovereignty, unity and integrity.

Although stiffer punishments and broader definitions might increase deterrence, there is a chance that they will be abused or

violate civil liberties, especially when it comes to the use of digital evidence and broadened definitions of sedition.

Despite what the critics say, the BNS offers lucidity and more severe sanctions for transgressions, which could improve public safety and more successfully combat hate crimes. The BNSS guarantees improved victim protection, expedited justice delivery, and simpler access to legal remedies. The BSA makes it possible to acquire evidence more quickly and accurately, ensures that court proceedings are transparent, and improves the protection of vulnerable victims and witnesses.

The successful implementation of the BNS will require careful attention to detail and a commitment to ensuring that the new legal framework is applied fairly and consistently across the country. Law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, and legal practitioners will need to be thoroughly trained in the new provisions of the BNS to ensure that they are effectively enforced. Additionally, ongoing monitoring and evaluation will be essential to identify any issues that may arise and to make necessary adjustments to the legal framework.

Despite these challenges, the introduction of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita represents a significant step forward for India's criminal justice system. By modernizing the legal code and addressing the changing nature of crime, the BNS has the potential to enhance public safety, protect individual rights, and ensure that justice is

delivered more effectively. As India moves forward with these reforms, it is crucial that the focus remains on ensuring that the criminal justice system is fair, transparent, and responsive to the needs of all citizens.

In conclusion, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita marks a new era in India's criminal justice system. By replacing the colonial-era Indian Penal Code with a modern, streamlined legal framework, the BNS promises to better address the challenges of the 21st century while upholding the principles of justice and fairness. The road ahead will undoubtedly be challenging, but with careful implementation and ongoing evaluation, the BNS has the potential to transform India's criminal justice system for the better.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

K Rajendra Kumar IPS (Retd)

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1. Geography

1.1 GLOBAL NATURAL DISASTER ASSESSMENT

Why in news:

- Recently a Global Natural Disaster Assessment report was published showing that the overall economic losses from natural disasters were relatively large, but the number of deaths and affected people remained low.

About the News:

- Global natural disasters, like drought, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and wildfires, are on the rise. The 2022 Global Assessment Report on Disaster reveals an 83% increase in climate-related events, exemplified by the Amazon Rainforest Fires and Hurricane Katrina in 2005. These disasters underscore escalating environmental and socio-economic risks, emphasizing the urgency for comprehensive mitigation and adaptation strategies.

The Places Most Prone to Disaster

Countries most at risk when facing natural disasters per region by World Risk Index*

Albania 8.2

Europe 3.3

Asia 5.8

Americas 7.9

Dominica 27.4

Cape Verde 17.7

Africa 8.9

Oceania 15.6

Brunei Darussalam 22.8

Vanuatu 47.7

* World Risk Index calculated via exposure, susceptibility, coping and adaptation, 0 = lowest, 100 = highest

Category	Type	Example	Fact/Evidence
Climatic Disasters	Hurricanes and Typhoons	Hurricane Katrina (2005)	Increasing intensity linked to warming sea surface temps.
	Floods	2022 Pakistan Floods	Floods affect more people globally than any other disaster.
	Droughts	California Drought (2012-2017)	Linked to climate change, causing water scarcity.
Geological Disasters	Earthquakes	Haiti Earthquake (2010)	Seismic activity along tectonic plate boundaries.
	Tsunamis	Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004)	Triggered by underwater earthquakes, causing coastal damage.
Wildfires	Forest Fires	Australian Bushfires (2019-2020)	Longer, more intense fire seasons due to climate change.
Environmental & Technological Disasters	Nuclear Accidents	Fukushima Daiichi (2011)	Environmental impact extends beyond immediate vicinity.
	Industrial Accidents	Bhopal Gas Tragedy (1984)	Human and environmental consequences of chemical disasters.

> UN Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (GAR)
>
> - It is the flagship report of the United Nations on worldwide efforts to reduce disaster risk.
> - The GAR is published by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

1.2 ENVIRONMENT AND GEOGRAPHICAL VULNERABILITY TO NATURAL DISASTERS

- **Rising Sea Levels:** The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports a global sea level rise of 3.3 mm per year. Eg. Small island nations like **Tuvalu** face heightened risks of flooding and salinity intrusion.
- **Deforestation and Landslides:** The World Bank estimates that 17% of the Amazon Rainforest has been lost in the last 50 years. Eg. The 2022 **landslide in Joshimath** was exacerbated by deforestation, resulting in tragic consequences.
- **Tectonic Activity and Earthquakes:** Areas located along tectonic plate boundaries are at higher risk of earthquakes. The "Ring of Fire" around the Pacific Ocean is a seismic hotspot with frequent earthquake activity. Eg. The 2011 earthquake in **Japan**, situated on the Pacific Ring of Fire, caused a devastating tsunami and nuclear disaster.
- **Climate Change and Extreme Weather Events:** The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) notes an increase in the number of extreme weather events globally.
  - Eg: The **2019-2020 Australian bushfires**, exacerbated by prolonged heatwaves, showcased the link between climate change and extreme events

1.3 IMPACT ON BIODIVERSITY

Direct Impact

- **Loss of Habitats :** **Amazon rainforest fires have devastated the habitats , resulting in loss of numerous plants and animal species , especially endemic flora and fauna in regions.**
- **Coral bleaching :** **Rising sea temperatures, linked to climate change, cause coral bleaching in the Great Barrier Reef.**

- **Threat to ecosystem resilience : Soil liquefaction and coastal subsidence disrupted habitats, leading to the loss of biodiversity and threatening ecosystem resilience.**
- **Mangrove Systems :   2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami highlighted the extensive damage to mangrove forests, seagrass beds, and coral reefs.**

Indirect Impact

- **Nuclear Disaster :** Radioactive contamination from the Fukushima nuclear meltdown affected soil, water sources, and marine sediments, influencing the health of terrestrial and aquatic organisms.
- **Glacier Lake Outburst floods :** Melting glaciers contribute to the formation of glacial lakes, can lead to sedimentation, altering river courses and affecting aquatic habitats downstream.

SOCIO ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF NATURAL DISASTERS ON VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

- **Disproportionate Economic Loss: The World Bank notes that low-income countries suffer a disproportionate economic burden, with losses reaching up to several percentage points of their GDP.**
  - ➢ Example: The 2010 **Haiti earthquake** resulted in economic losses equivalent to 120% of the country's GDP, severely impacting an already impoverished population.
- **Housing Vulnerability and Displacement: The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports that natural disasters displace an average of 26 million people annually, with vulnerable populations being the most affected.**
  - ➢ Eg: The 2013 **Typhoon Haiyan** in the Philippines led to the displacement of over four million people, predominantly from low-income coastal communities
- **Impact on Livelihoods and Agriculture: The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that 22% of the total economic impact of natural disasters is absorbed by the agricultural sector.**
- ➢ Eg: The 2015 earthquake in Nepal severely impacted rural communities, causing extensive damage to crops and livestock and jeopardizing food security.
- **Health and Education Challenges: UNICEF reports that natural disasters often result in the breakdown of essential services, leading to increased mortality rates and hindering access to education.**

- ➢ Eg: The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami disrupted health services and education in affected regions, exacerbating vulnerabilities in already marginalized communities.

- **Long-term Poverty Traps: The socio-economic impacts of natural disasters can create long-term poverty traps for vulnerable communities.**

- ➢ Eg. Research published in the World Development journal suggests that the economic recovery of vulnerable communities can take years or even decades.

CASE STUDY :

JOSHIMATH LAND SUBSIDENCE IN UTTARAKHAND

- **Joshimath, located in Seismic Zone V is prone to earthquakes, gradual weathering, and water percolation. However, subsidence might have been triggered by the reactivation of a geographic fault where the Indian Plate has pushed under the Eurasian Plate along the Himalayas. Anthropogenic factors like Tapovan Vishnugad Hydropower, widening of the Char Dham Project, rampant tourism, unplanned urbanization, water withdrawals, and absence of proper drainage have contributed to the disaster in 2022.**

CHALLENGES IN REBUILDING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POST NATURAL DISASTERS IN INDIA

- **Infrastructure Deficiencies: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) reports that inadequate infrastructure hampers rapid response and recovery efforts.Eg :** Cyclone Fani **in 2019 exposed vulnerabilities in the infrastructure of coastal areas in Odisha, hindering swift recovery.**

- **Urban Planning and Informal Settlements: Rapid urbanization and informal settlements in India contribute to challenges in post-disaster rebuilding.Eg.The** 2023 Nepal earthquake **highlighted issues in urban planning, with informal settlements facing severe damage and slow reconstruction.**

- **Population Density and Resettlement: High population density complicates resettlement efforts post-disaster. Eg : The** 2013 Uttarakhand **floods led to challenges in relocating affected populations due to limited available land and resources.**

- **Environmental Degradation and Climate Change: The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) recognizes the impact of climate change on the frequency of extreme weather events. Example: The recurring floods in** Assam **showcase the compounding challenges of rebuilding in the face of changing climate patterns.**

- **Coordination and Governance: Poor coordination between the state government, military, and disaster response agencies led to delays in reaching affected areas and providing essential aid. Eg.** Bengaluru floods

2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2.1 77th World Health Assembly

Why is it in the news?

- The Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly (WHA 77) has approved a four-year, US$ 11.1 billion strategy for global health to promote, provide, and protect health and well-being for all people. The emphasis is on climate change, aging, migration, pandemic threats, and equity. It will give special attention to fast-moving geopolitics, science and technology.

What's the importance?

- The 14th General Program of Work treats 2025–2028 provides a timely opportunity to build resilient, fit-for-future health systems. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, its goals can help to get back on track to reach the health-related Sustainable Development Goals.

WHA 77 has approved 14 strategic objectives to be fulfilled in the 4-year period:

- Respond to the escalating threat to health posed by climate change
- Address health determinants and root causes of ill health in key policies across sectors
- Advance primary health care and essential health system capacities for universal health coverage
- Improve health service coverage and financial protection to address inequity and gender inequalities
- Prevent, mitigate, and prepare for health risks from all hazards
- Rapidly detect and sustain the response to health emergencies.
- Director-General's Award for Global Health has been awarded to Professor Katalin Karikó and Professor Drew Weissman of the University of Pennsylvania for their outstanding contributions to the development of mRNA vaccines for COVID-19 .
- **Tuberculosis:** WHO convened its Second High-Level Meeting of the TB Vaccine Accelerator Council. It was attended by ministers and representatives of Indonesia, Brazil, France, Kenya, Pakistan, Philippines, South Africa, Viet Nam and United States of America, as well as participants from civil society and partner organizations such as the European Investment Bank, the Gates Foundation, GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, the Global Fund, Stop TB Partnership, Unit aid, Well come Trust and the World Bank.

- The event concluded with agreement on 3 key acceleration tracks to drive work over the next two years, with the aim to expedite the development, approval, access, and deployment of new TB vaccines. The agreements include:

- **Accelerate diversification of the TB vaccine portfolio** by fast-tracking the translation of promising discoveries into vaccines that can be deployed worldwide, through effective funding strategies and enhanced collaboration;

- **Accelerate identification of market solutions** by incentivizing late-stage development of new TB vaccines by launching a pull incentive mechanism, taking into consideration relevant issues such as national commitments, technology transfer, trade, and intellectual property; and

- **Accelerate rapid implementation and uptake of new TB vaccines** by promoting and funding a comprehensive learning agenda to support preparedness, streamline regulatory processes, and facilitate global access.

- The Council also agreed to convene a **TB vaccine financing conference** in 2025 to launch options for procurement and financing of late-stage products towards timely and equitable access. Council members agreed to leverage political and technical dialogues through existing and new collaborations, such as working groups, country workshops, and scheduled TB events to pave the way to the conference.

2.2 Israel's Attack on Rafah: Regional Tensions and International Reactions

- The Israel-Gaza conflict is a long-standing and complex dispute between Israel and the Palestinian territories, particularly the Gaza Strip, governed by Hamas. It involves issues of territory, security, and the rights of Palestinians.

Why it is in the news

- Israeli forces began an operation targeting Rafah, the town on the Egyptian border which had been earlier declared as a safe zone. Israel's campaign in Rafah had been in the news for several months, as there was widespread apprehension that an attack of Rafah could substantially worsen the humanitarian situation and displace very high numbers of people who have taken refuge there after escaping from northern and central regions of Gaza.

- An all-out diplomatic campaign has been carried out, led by regional states and the UN, to prevent Israel from attacking Rafah. In particular, Egypt had been totally opposed to the idea as

displacement of Palestinians implied a refugee rush on Egypt's border. However, Israel has gone ahead with the attack, justifying it as a crucial step to meet its stated objective of destroying the military capability of Hamas.

- Meanwhile, mediated negotiations between Israel and Hamas have failed to reach consensus on hostages and prisoners' exchanges.

- **ICJ Involvement**: The International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. The ICJ examines issues related to international law, including treaties, conventions, and customary international law, to adjudicate disputes between states. The ICJ also examines humanitarian issues arising from the conflict, including the impact on civilians, allegations of human rights violations, and compliance with international humanitarian law

- ICJ has a long history of examining legal aspects of the Israel-Palestine conflict, including the situation in Gaza.

- In 2004, the ICJ issued an advisory opinion on the "Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory," ruling that Israel's construction of the barrier in the West Bank was illegal under international law.

- Algeria introduced a draft resolution for the UN Security Council on behalf of the Arab states. The draft resolution demanded that Israel "immediately halt its military offensive, and any other action in Rafah", condemning Tel Aviv's "indiscriminate targeting of civilians, including women and children, and civilian infrastructure"

- Algeria's proposal came particularly after Israel's deadly airstrikes that struck Rafah on Sunday night and caused a fire in a camp for displaced Palestinians, killing 45 people and injuring over 100 others. The US has opposed the resolution. Therefore, it cannot be passed as the UNSC requires unanimity for a resolution to be passed.

2.3 Violence in New Caledonia

Why in the news

- Starting on May 13, protests erupted, predominantly led by young individuals, in reaction to a vote taking place approximately 10,000 miles (17,000 kilometers) away in the French parliament. The proposed changes to New Caledonia's constitution aimed to grant extended voting rights to

French residents residing on the islands. On the next day, legislators overwhelmingly approved the proposed changes, further fueling tensions on the ground.

- New Caledonia has been in a state of emergency and special forces have been flown in from France to control the outbreak of violence. Following days of escalating violence, the French government has declared a state of emergency in New Caledonia, a South Pacific island territory. The unrest, characterized by armed clashes between protesters, militias, and police, along with arson attacks on buildings and vehicles in the capital, has resulted in at least four fatalities. This turmoil represents the most severe violence witnessed in the region since the 1980s.

- In response to the crisis, authorities in Noumea, the capital, have implemented strict measures, including a curfew and the closure of the main airport, typically a bustling tourist destination, to commercial flights. Public gatherings, the carrying of weapons, and the sale of alcohol have also been prohibited.

- The current violence underscores longstanding political tensions on the island, which have simmered for years. These tensions primarily pit the predominantly pro-independence indigenous Kanak communities against French residents who oppose severing ties with France, the colonial ruler.

- The French territory in the Pacific has experienced spradic instances of violence stemming from disputes over land, political representation, and economic issues between the indigenous Kanak population and people of European descent.

- The archipelago nation of New Caledonia lies between Australia and Fiji.

History

- New Caledonia, discovered by Captain James Cook in 1794, became a French possession, envisioned initially as an alternative to Guyana for a penal colony.

- The Brazzaville Conference of 1944, convened in the capital of former French Equatorial Africa, sought to redefine France's post-World War II colonial policy. General Charles de Gaulle, leading the Free French forces, chaired the conference and pledged to reform France's relationship with its colonies, although full independence was not on the table. Notably, mainland France was then occupied by Vichy, collaborating with Nazi Germany.

- The Fourth Republic (1946–58) in France marked the formal end of colonialism as state policy. However, this shift didn't equate to immediate decolonization. Instead, the colonial empire

transitioned into the "French Union" under the 1946 Constitution, granting overseas territories representation in the French Parliament. France currently oversees approximately 13 overseas territories, with a combined population of roughly 2.8 million. Relinquishing these territories posed challenges for France, given the significant French population residing in them.

- In 1956, France introduced the loi-cadre, establishing a legal framework for governance within its overseas territories. In New Caledonia, this legislation resulted in the expansion of the territorial assembly to 30 members and the implementation of an electoral system based on universal adult suffrage. This marked a significant milestone as it granted the Kanak people the opportunity to participate fully in the political process for the first time. Additionally, the territorial assembly gained the authority to discuss and ratify the territorial budget, enhancing its role in local governance.

- During the 1970s, there was a surge in calls for independence from the Kanak people in New Caledonia. In response, France implemented the Strin statute, introducing additional political reforms. Under this statute, the High Commissioner replaced the Governor but still retained overarching executive authority. Furthermore, the Minister for Overseas Territories gained the power to dissolve both the Council and the Territorial Assembly. Despite these reforms, the push for autonomy continued to gather momentum.

- The signing of the Noumea Accord on May 5, 1998, marked a significant moment in New Caledonia's political history, bringing together both pro-France and pro-independence factions under the leadership of Prime Minister Lionel Jospin. This accord, which was later ratified into law by the French National Assembly on March 19, 1999, remains a crucial milestone for the territory.

- However, the implementation of the accord revealed complexities. One notable aspect was the establishment of distinct electorates for different elections, such as local and French elections, based on residency duration. This innovative approach, as noted by Denise Fisher in 2013, addressed Kanak concerns within the framework of a constitutional system that emphasized unity and indivisibility.

2.4 Iranian President and Foreign Minister Die in Helicopter Crash

Why in the news

- Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, viewed as a potential successor to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, tragically lost his life in a helicopter crash amidst adverse weather conditions near the Azerbaijan border. The wreckage, discovered after a challenging overnight search in blizzard conditions, revealed the U.S.-made Bell 212 helicopter had collided with a mountain peak. While the cause of the crash remains officially undetermined, it claimed the lives of Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, and six others, including the governor of East Azerbaijan Province and a senior imam from Tabriz city. The incident occurred as Raisi was returning from an official visit to inaugurate the Qiz-Qalasi Dam, a joint project near the Azerbaijan border.

What's the importance?

- Since assuming office, 63-year-old Raisi had implemented stricter morality laws, orchestrated a brutal crackdown on anti-government protests, and played a significant role in nuclear negotiations with global powers. However, ultimate decision-making authority in Iran's dual political structure lies with Raisi's 85-year-old mentor, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

- Raisi's victory in the 2021 election consolidated power among hardliners, following eight years of a presidency held by pragmatist Hassan Rouhani, during which a nuclear deal was negotiated with countries including the United States. Nevertheless, Raisi's leadership faced challenges, including widespread protests against clerical rule sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman who died in custody of the morality police. Additionally, Iran's economy struggled under Western sanctions during Raisi's tenure.

- Despite being a prominent figure in Iran's political landscape, Raisi's standing may have been diminished by these issues. His potential succession to Khamenei was far from certain in Iran's opaque political environment. Ali Bagheri Kani, the Deputy Foreign Minister, has been appointed as acting foreign minister following Raisi's tragic death.

- Questions continue to be raised regarding the concrete circumstances of the crash. Iranian authorities have yet to provide an explanation as to why Ebrahim Raisi's helicopter was the only one to crash despite all three helicopters flying officials back to Iran from a visit to the Azerbaijani border amidst dense cloud cover.

- Another puzzling aspect is the apparent survival of one passenger from the ill-fated helicopter crash on May 19 in Iran's East Azerbaijan province. Iranian state media reported that the individual managed to survive for several hours after the crash, even answering multiple phone calls, before rescue teams reached the site and discovered his lifeless body.

2.5 India: Foreign Minister Criticises Western Media for Interference in Indian Elections

What is it about?

- Jaishankar, India's External Affairs Minister, has strongly criticized the Western media for its "biased" depiction of Indian elections. He pointed out the irony of receiving advice from countries that "often resort to legal battles to determine election outcomes." Speaking at the launch of the Bangla edition of his book "Why Bharat Matters" in Kolkata, Jaishankar voiced his disdain for the unsolicited guidance, or "gyan," on electoral procedures provided by these nations.

- Reflecting on the historical backdrop, he remarked, "Western nations aspire to exert influence as they believe they have shaped global affairs for the past 70-80 years... In fact, they harbor a sentiment that their influence spans back 200 years. It's challenging for entities entrenched in such longstanding dominance to readily relinquish those entrenched behaviors."

- Jaishankar also highlighted the Western media's preference for specific classes and ideologies in governance, contrasting with the choices of the Indian electorate. "Why is there such negativity from these newspapers towards India? It's because they perceive an India that doesn't conform to their preconceived notions of how it should be. They desire a certain people, ideology, or ruling class... When the Indian populace chooses differently, it disturbs their narrative," he elaborated.

- Accusing the Western press of biased practices, Jaishankar stated, "In some instances, Western media openly endorse candidates and political parties, without concealing their preferences. They are astute; after all, they've been playing this dominance game for 300 years. They are experienced and shrewd individuals."

- Characterizing the situation as a "mind game," Jaishankar emphasized the irony of countries that resort to courts to resolve electoral disputes lecturing India on election conduct. "Countries that rely on courts to determine their election outcomes are offering advice on how elections should be conducted to us. This reflects the intricacies of global politics," he said.

Why is it important?

- The intrusion of Western media into foreign elections has emerged as a contentious topic in global politics, igniting discussions surrounding national sovereignty and the sanctity of democratic processes. A significant facet of this interference lies in the portrayal of overseas elections through a prism of bias, often reflecting the preferences and objectives of Western powers. Whether through selective reporting, skewed narratives, or outright endorsements of political figures and parties, the involvement of Western media can wield considerable influence over public sentiment in other nations.

- Western media entities occasionally go beyond mere reporting, actively seeking to mold the outcomes of elections in foreign lands. This interference manifests in various guises, from financial backing for specific candidates or movements to the dissemination of misleading or false information. Sometimes, it even extends to direct involvement in grassroots initiatives or demonstrations aimed at swaying electoral results. Such interventions not only cast doubt on the fairness and transparency of democratic processes within the affected countries but also pose broader implications for global relations and the principle of national self-determination.

- The meddling of Western media often exacerbates pre-existing divisions and conflicts within foreign societies, fanning the flames of discord and impeding efforts towards peace and stability. By amplifying certain voices while silencing others, these interventions deepen societal fault lines and hinder genuine democratic engagement. Additionally, they erode trust in both local and international institutions, complicating endeavors to nurture democracy and effective governance worldwide. Consequently, addressing the issue of Western media interference in foreign elections necessitates a nuanced approach that considers ethical, legal, and diplomatic dimensions in equal measure.

2.6 India and Iran Sign Historic Chabahar Port Agreement

Why is it in the news?

- India inked a decade-long deal with Iran to oversee Chabahar Port, marking its inaugural venture into overseas port management. Against the backdrop of a lively election season, this move is seen as a notable geopolitical gesture towards Iran, carrying potential regional implications. The agreement highlights India's strategic stake in Chabahar, recognized as a crucial gateway to

Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the broader Eurasian expanse. It also presents an alternative to Pakistan's Gwadar port and China's Belt and Road Initiative, emphasizing India's strategic diversification in the region.

- According to several officials familiar with the proceedings, the agreement, inked for a duration of ten years, holds the potential for extension through mutual agreement, thereby representing a medium-term objective for India as it progresses into operational phases.

- According to the revenue sharing arrangement, concerning exports from the Shahid Behesti Terminal, both IPGL and Iran will equally split the revenue share, each retaining 50 percent. Conversely, for imports, Iran's maritime organization will receive 60 percent of the revenue share

Why is it important?

- India's anticipated decade-long bilateral agreement with Iran concerning the administration of Chabahar Port is poised to attract investments totaling around $370 million. This encompasses a direct investment of $120 million from India allocated towards infrastructure enhancement, alongside a $250 million line of credit extended to Iran.

- The $120 million earmarked for port development will enable India to acquire cutting-edge equipment, including rail-mounted quay cranes, rubber-tyred gantry cranes (commonly referred to as transtainers), reach stackers, and forklifts. Additionally, these funds will support the enhancement of associated infrastructure.

- Key concerns, such as the absence of agreement on an arbitral framework, have been resolved. This matter stemmed from a previous deadlock in negotiations, during which Iran resisted adopting an international arbitration framework, citing the necessity for a constitutional amendment. Conversely, India maintained its stance on including the arbitration clause to ensure transparency in resolving disputes.

- India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) is anticipated to introduce 30,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) or containers' worth of traffic in the first year. This figure is forecasted to rise to 140,000 containers by the fifth year and reach 300,000 TEUs by the tenth year of the bilateral agreement.

- In the later stages of negotiations, concerns arose regarding cargo movement. Sources revealed that Iran insisted on implementing a Minimum Guaranteed Traffic (MGT) provision, a standard element in concession-based port agreements. Under this provision, failure to meet the minimum cargo requirement could incur penalties for the concessionaire.

- The signed Chabahar agreement does include a clause outlining cargo targets; however, there will be no penalties imposed if these traffic levels are not achieved, as stated by an official. The incorporation of non-binding cargo targets is aimed at safeguarding commercial interests and reducing the likelihood of future disputes, he further added.

Will the US sanction India for the Chabahar deal?

- Soon after the announcement of the agreement, a US administration spokesperson indicated India Ports Global Limited (IPGL), the company developing Chabahar port, can come under sanctions.
- India in its dealings with Iran has evaded sanctions by the US on the pursuance of Three Principal Activities doctrine. The exemptions are:
- Development and maintenance of Chabahar port and its railway link with Afghanistan
- Delivery to Afghanistan of refined petroleum products
- Transit of non-sanctioned goods
- India can negotiate to keep maintain status quo and evade sanctions.
- The second significant angle is strategic. US policy should take cognizance of the fact that if India is compelled to stop doing business with Iran, China would take India's place and move into the position of strategic partner in the Chabahar port and allied development projects.

2.7 India and Global Counter-Terrorism: An Overview

Introduction

- **The United Nations Counter-**Terrorism Trust Fund (UNCTTF), established in 2009 under the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), plays a pivotal role in enhancing global efforts to combat terrorism. It focuses particularly on bolstering the capacities of member states in Eastern and Southern Africa to tackle challenges like terrorism financing and the movement of terrorists.
- **India's Financial Commitment to UNCTTF:** India recently made a substantial financial contribution of $2.55 million to the UN Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund (UNCTTF). This contribution underscores India's unwavering dedication to global counter-terrorism efforts and its support for multilateral initiatives led by UNOCT.
- **Significance of India's Contribution:** India's funding significantly supports critical UNOCT initiatives, including the Countering Financing of Terrorism (CFT) and the Countering Terrorist

Travel Programme (CTTP). These initiatives are instrumental in fortifying regulatory frameworks, strengthening border security measures, and fostering international cooperation to combat terrorism effectively.

Strategic Approach to Counter-Terrorism

- **Bilateral and Multilateral Engagements:** India actively engages in bilateral and multilateral platforms on counter-terrorism, collaborating closely with key partners such as the United Kingdom, France, and the United States. Within forums like BRICS, India advocates for coordinated efforts against terrorism, facilitating the establishment of specialized sub-working groups focused on various facets of counter-terrorism.

- **Leadership in UN Forums:** In 2022, India hosted a significant meeting of the UN Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), emphasizing emerging challenges like cryptocurrency-based terror financing and the use of drones in terrorism. India's proactive involvement in UNCTTF and other global platforms underscores its role in shaping comprehensive international strategies against terrorism.

- **Support for African Nations:** India's contribution to UNCTTF is tailored to address the specific needs of African countries, aiming to enhance their capacities in combating terrorism and promoting regional stability. This support aligns with India's leadership role from the Global South and its commitment to fostering global peace and security.

Challenges and the Path Forward

- **Enhancing Global Cooperation:** Addressing terrorism necessitates overcoming political divergences to establish a unified global definition and a robust sanctions framework against terrorism and its sponsors.

- **Strengthening Security Measures:** Enhancing military capabilities, intelligence sharing mechanisms, and implementing resilient cyber defence strategies are crucial in effectively countering cross-border terrorist threats.

- **Combating Terror Financing:** Efforts to combat terrorism financing require stringent international cooperation, adherence to global standards such as those set by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and vigilant monitoring of cross-border financial transactions to disrupt illicit funding networks.

India's Counter-Terrorism Strategy

- India's approach to counter-terrorism is robust and continuously evolving to address the complex and dynamic nature of terrorist threats. Here are key facets of India's counter-terrorism strategy:

  1. **Legislative Framework:** India has enacted stringent laws such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) to investigate and prosecute terrorism-related activities effectively.

  2. **Security and Intelligence Infrastructure:** Specialized agencies like the National Investigation Agency (NIA), Intelligence Bureau (IB), and state police Special Task Forces (STFs) are pivotal in conducting coordinated counter-terrorism operations, both domestically and in collaboration with international partners.

  3. **Border Security:** Recognizing its extensive and porous borders, India places significant emphasis on border security through agencies like the Border Security Force (BSF) to prevent terrorist infiltration.

  4. **International Cooperation:** India actively engages in intelligence-sharing, joint exercises, and capacity-building with other nations and international bodies to combat transnational terrorism effectively.

  5. **Technological Advancements:** Leveraging advanced technologies for surveillance, intelligence gathering, and communication interception plays a crucial role in preempting and responding to terrorist threats promptly.

  6. **Community Outreach:** Initiatives aimed at building trust and cooperation with vulnerable communities include outreach programs, educational campaigns, and efforts to address socio-economic grievances that can contribute to radicalization.

  7. **Capacity Development:** Regular training programs enhance the capabilities of law enforcement agencies and first responders in managing and mitigating terrorist threats efficiently.

  8. **Legal Reforms:** Periodic updates and amendments to laws ensure that India's legal framework remains adaptive to evolving terrorist tactics and challenges.

  9. **Financial Vigilance:** Stringent measures are in place to monitor and disrupt the financial networks of terrorist organizations, including freezing assets and prosecuting those who fund terrorism.

  10. **Emergency Response:** India has established crisis response mechanisms, including rapid deployment forces and coordinated protocols among various agencies, to swiftly respond to terrorist incidents.

- Despite these efforts, challenges such as cross-border terrorism and the influence of state-sponsored terrorism persist. India remains committed to refining and strengthening its counter-terrorism strategy to safeguard its citizens and national security against emerging threats.

Conclusion

- India's proactive engagement in the UN Counter- Terrorism Trust Fund underscores its steadfast commitment to global security and its leadership in fostering international cooperation against terrorism. Through its support for vital UNOCT initiatives, India plays a pivotal role in building resilient frameworks to counter terrorism and advance global peace and stability.

2.8 Indian Wins Dag Hammarskjold Medal

Why in the news?

- Naik Dhananjay Kumar Singh, an Indian peacekeeper who served with the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), will receive the Dag Hammarskjold Medal posthumously in recognition of his dedicated service and ultimate sacrifice.

- Naik Dhananjay Kumar Singh served bravely under the United Nations (UN) flag as part of MONUSCO. He tragically lost his life in the line of duty, highlighting his steadfast dedication to peacekeeping efforts.

- MONUSCO succeeded a prior UN peacekeeping mission in the African nation in 2010. Its primary objectives include safeguarding civilians, humanitarian personnel, and human rights defenders from immediate physical threats. Additionally, MONUSCO supports the government of the country in its efforts to stabilize and consolidate peace.

What is the Dag Hammarskjold Medal?

- The Dag Hammarskjöld Medal, established in December 2000, is a posthumous honor conferred upon individuals who have lost their lives while serving in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations under UN operational authority. Named after former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, who perished in a plane crash during a peacekeeping mission in 1961, the medal is awarded annually on Peacekeeper's Day, observed on May 29th. This solemn ceremony takes place at UN headquarters and pays tribute to Member States that have suffered casualties among their military or police peacekeepers.

- The UN Peacekeeping mission, administered jointly by the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Operational Support, endeavours to aid host countries in transitioning from conflict to peace. Originating during the Cold War era, when Security Council divisions often stymied action, the concept was initially embodied by the deployment of the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in 1948 to monitor the Israel-Arab Armistice Agreement, followed by the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) in 1949.

- Since its inception, over two million peacekeepers from 125 countries have participated in 71 operations worldwide. Presently, approximately 76,000 personnel, including both women and men, serve in 11 conflict zones spanning Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. The core tenets guiding UN peacekeeping operations are consent of the involved parties, impartiality, and the restriction on the use of force except in cases of self-defence or defence of the mandate.

- The International Day of UN Peacekeepers, established by the UN General Assembly in 2002, commemorates the service of all peacekeepers and honours those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the pursuit of peace. The theme for 2024, 'Fit for the future, building better together,' underscores the evolution and adaptability of UN Peacekeeping to confront emerging challenges in conflict resolution.

India in UN Peacekeeping Missions

- India plays a significant role in UN Peacekeeping operations, contributing over 200,000 personnel to 49 missions since 1948, making it the second-largest provider of uniformed personnel globally. Currently, the Indian Armed Forces are engaged in peacekeeping efforts across nine countries, with 160 soldiers from the Indian Army having made the ultimate sacrifice in pursuit of global peace.

- To bolster its commitment, India established the Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK) in New Delhi, where more than 12,000 troops undergo specialized training annually for peacekeeping operations. Recognizing the importance of gender equality, the UN has set targets to increase the participation of women peacekeepers. India has responded by deploying Female Engagement Teams (FETs) in missions like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Abyei, representing the second-largest Indian contingent after Liberia. The recognition of Major Radhika Sen as the "Military Gender Advocate of the Year 2023" by the UN Headquarters underscores the positive impact of Indian women in these roles.

- In a pioneering move in 2007, India deployed an all-female Formed Police Unit (FPU) to the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), marking a historic first in UN Peacekeeping. However, India has voiced dissatisfaction with the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), headquartered in Srinagar and Islamabad. Established in 1949 to oversee the ceasefire between India and Pakistan, UNMOGIP monitors hostilities along the Line of Control (LoC). India asserts that the mission has become obsolete following the signing of the Simla Agreement in July 1972 and the establishment of the LoC.

3. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

3.1 Nurturing Innovation: India's Approach to AI Regulation through Regulatory Sandboxes

- **Introduction:** The advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has brought forth a wave of innovation, promising transformative solutions across various sectors. However, this technological advancement also raises pressing concerns regarding ethics, accountability, and regulatory oversight. In response, regulatory sandboxes have emerged as a dynamic tool to foster innovation while ensuring responsible development. This article delves into India's evolving approach to AI regulation through the lens of regulatory sandboxes.

About Regulatory Sandbox

- A regulatory sandbox is a tool allowing businesses to explore and experiment with new and innovative products, services or businesses under a regulator's supervision.

- Regulatory sandboxes serve as controlled environments where businesses can experiment with new products or services under the guidance and supervision of regulators. By providing a space for innovation within a regulatory framework, sandboxes facilitate collaboration, mitigate risks, and enhance regulatory compliance.

- **Applications in AI:** In the context of AI, regulatory sandboxes offer a unique platform for testing and refining AI technologies. These sandboxes enable participants to conduct risk assessments, evaluate ethical implications, and address societal concerns regarding AI applications. By mandating transparency and accountability, sandboxes promote responsible innovation while fostering public trust in emerging technologies.

- **Global Progress and India's Initiatives:** Globally, regulatory sandboxes have gained traction as governments and regulatory bodies seek to balance innovation with regulatory oversight. In India, major financial sector regulators have launched their respective sandboxes, signalling a proactive approach to fostering innovation in regulated industries. The recent passage of the Telecommunications Act 2023 further underscores India's commitment to promoting innovation in the telecommunications sector through regulatory sandboxes.

- **India's Multifaceted Approach to AI Regulation:** India's interest in regulating AI extends beyond economic considerations to encompass ethical considerations, societal welfare goals, and national security imperatives. As a global technology hub, India aspires to foster innovation while upholding its cultural and ethical values. Regulatory sandboxes serve as a preparatory measure, guiding AI development towards sustainable growth and aligning regulatory actions with the country's evolving needs.

- **Challenges and Opportunities:** While regulatory sandboxes offer numerous benefits, they also present challenges such as ensuring data privacy, safeguarding against biases, and addressing ethical concerns. Moreover, the effectiveness of regulatory sandboxes depends on robust governance structures, stakeholder engagement, and continuous monitoring and evaluation.

- **Conclusion and Future Outlook:** In conclusion, regulatory sandboxes represent a proactive and forward-thinking approach to AI regulation in India. By providing a conducive environment for experimentation and innovation, sandboxes enable India to harness the transformative potential of AI while mitigating risks and safeguarding societal interests. Moving forward, India must continue to refine its regulatory framework, foster collaboration between stakeholders, and uphold ethical standards to ensure responsible AI development and deployment.

3.2 The Oxytocin Menace: Balancing Dairy Yield and Animal Welfare

- **Introduction:** The recent scrutiny by the Delhi High Court regarding the continued use of oxytocin in dairies across the national capital has brought to light a pressing issue at the intersection of animal welfare, public health, and agricultural practices. This article explores the implications of oxytocin misuse in dairy farming and the challenges in enforcing its ban.

- **Understanding Oxytocin:** Oxytocin, a hormone naturally secreted by the pituitary glands of mammals, plays a vital role in processes such as sex, childbirth, lactation, and social bonding. However, its synthetic form has been misused in dairy farming to induce milk let-down and increase milk production in cattle.

- **Misuse in Dairy Farming:** Despite being banned by the Union government in 2018 due to its adverse effects on animal health and the quality of milk, oxytocin continues to be illegally administered in dairies across Delhi. This practice not only poses risks to the welfare of cattle but also jeopardizes the health of consumers who consume milk tainted with oxytocin residues.

- **Impact on Animal Welfare:** The forced administration of oxytocin disrupts the natural physiological processes of cattle, leading to increased stress, discomfort, and potential long-term health issues. Furthermore, the practice undermines the principles of ethical and humane treatment of animals, constituting a form of animal cruelty that warrants urgent intervention.

- **Public Health Concerns:** Consumption of milk contaminated with oxytocin residues poses significant risks to human health, including hormonal imbalances, reproductive disorders, and allergic reactions. Moreover, the presence of oxytocin in milk compromises its nutritional value and raises concerns about food safety standards.

- **Challenges in Enforcement:** Despite the ban, the widespread availability and clandestine use of oxytocin in dairy farming highlight challenges in enforcing regulatory measures. Limited resources, inadequate monitoring mechanisms, and lack of awareness among stakeholders contribute to the persistence of this illegal practice.

- **Way Forward:** Addressing the oxytocin menace requires a multi-faceted approach that involves stringent enforcement of regulations, raising awareness among dairy farmers and consumers, and promoting sustainable and ethical farming practices. Additionally, investment in research and development of alternative methods for enhancing milk yield without resorting to hormonal manipulation is imperative.

- **Conclusion:** The continued use of oxytocin in dairy farming represents a critical challenge that necessitates immediate action to safeguard animal welfare, public health, and ethical standards in agriculture. By collaborating with stakeholders, implementing robust regulatory frameworks, and promoting responsible dairy practices, we can mitigate the adverse effects of oxytocin misuse and uphold the integrity of the dairy industry.

3.3 Enhancing Road Safety: The Role of Doppler Radar Speed Guns

- **Introduction:** The recent announcement by the Consumer Affairs Ministry regarding proposed regulations for microwave Doppler radar equipment used to measure vehicle speeds on roads underscores the importance of accuracy and reliability in enforcing traffic regulations. This article delves into the significance of Doppler radar speed guns in ensuring road safety and the implications of the proposed regulations.

- **Understanding Doppler Radar:** Doppler radar is a sophisticated radar system that utilizes the Doppler effect to measure the velocity of moving objects, such as vehicles on roads or aircraft in the sky. By emitting radio waves and analyzing the frequency shift of the reflected waves, Doppler radar can accurately determine the speed of the target relative to the radar.
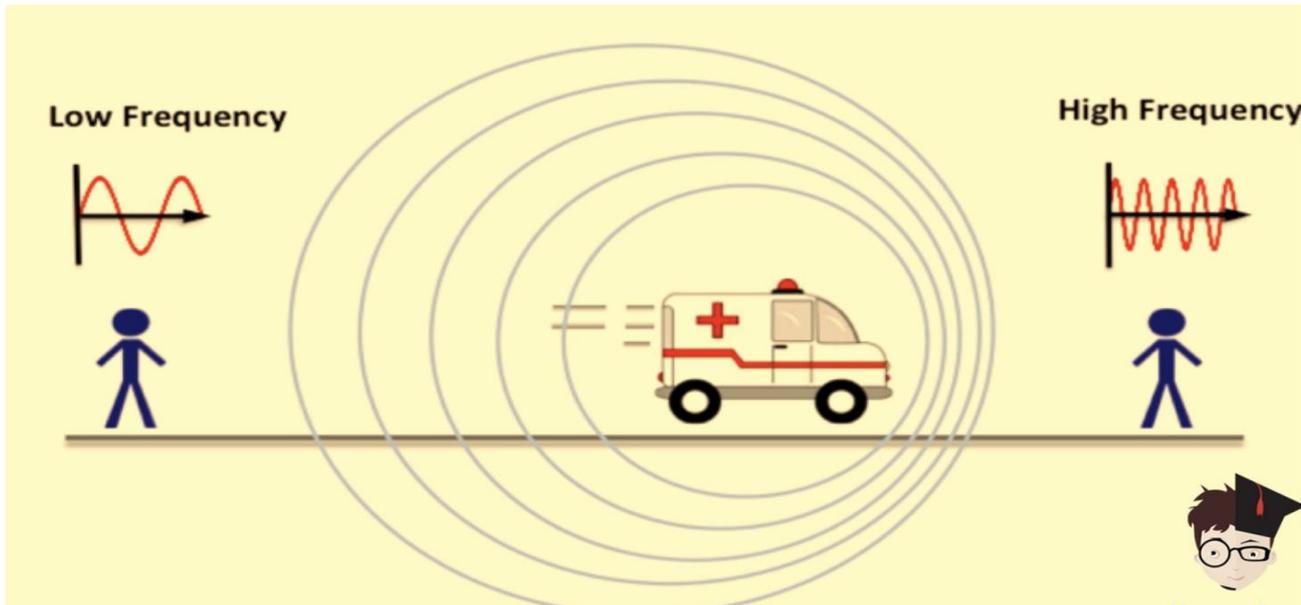
- **Importance in Road Safety:** Doppler radar speed guns play a crucial role in enforcing speed limits and maintaining road safety. By accurately measuring vehicle speeds, law enforcement agencies can deter speeding behavior, reduce the risk of accidents, and ensure compliance with traffic regulations. Moreover, Doppler radar technology provides real-time data that enables authorities to identify high-risk areas and implement targeted interventions to improve road safety.

- **Challenges in Speed Measurement:** Despite the effectiveness of Doppler radar speed guns, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of speed measurements remains a challenge. Factors such as calibration errors, environmental conditions, and equipment malfunctions can impact the precision of speed readings, potentially leading to inaccuracies in legal proceedings related to traffic violations.

- **Proposed Regulations for Verification:** The draft regulations proposed by the Consumer Affairs Ministry aim to address these challenges by mandating verification and official stamping of radar speed equipment within one year of installation. This measure seeks to enhance the accuracy and reliability of speed measurements, thereby bolstering the credibility of radar-based evidence in legal proceedings.

- **Implications for Road Safety Enforcement:** The proposed regulations mark a significant step towards improving road safety enforcement by ensuring the integrity of Doppler radar speed guns. By establishing standardized procedures for verification and calibration, authorities can instill confidence in the accuracy of speed measurements and strengthen the deterrence effect of traffic regulations.

- **Public Participation and Feedback:** The call for public comments on the draft regulations provides an opportunity for stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies, road safety advocates, and technology experts, to contribute their insights and suggestions. Public participation is essential in refining the regulations to address practical concerns and ensure their effectiveness in enhancing road safety.

- **Conclusion:** In conclusion, Doppler radar speed guns play a pivotal role in promoting road safety by accurately measuring vehicle speeds and deterring speeding behavior. The proposed regulations for verification and calibration aim to enhance the accuracy and reliability of speed measurements, thereby strengthening the enforcement of traffic regulations. By fostering public participation and feedback, authorities can ensure that the regulations are practical, effective, and conducive to achieving the overarching goal of improving road safety for all.

3.4 Resurgence of Global Nuclear Anxieties and Implications for India

- The world is experiencing a revival of nuclear anxieties due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict and China's assertive stance, prompting a reassessment of nuclear deterrence strategies. In Europe, there is growing discourse on bolstering NATO's nuclear capabilities and enhancing Franco-British collaboration. Similarly, concerns about Iran's nuclear ambitions are leading Arab nations to consider developing their own atomic capabilities. The advent of artificial intelligence and robotic weapons also raises alarms about the automation of nuclear decision-making.

- For India, while Pakistan's nuclear arsenal remains a significant concern, the more pressing threat comes from China's rapidly expanding nuclear program. India must prioritize the modernization of its nuclear arsenal and civilian nuclear energy infrastructure to address these emerging challenges.

Evolution of the Global Nuclear Landscape

- **Russia-Ukraine Conflict:** Russia's implicit threats to use nuclear weapons during the Ukraine conflict have shattered Europe's sense of security, prompting NATO to discuss strengthening its nuclear forces and potential Franco-British nuclear collaboration. Russia's withdrawal from ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty further complicates the landscape.

- **China's Nuclear Expansion:** China is significantly increasing its nuclear arsenal, with projections indicating a potential tenfold growth by 2035. This expansion, along with China's aggressive territorial claims, is causing neighboring countries like Japan and South Korea to reconsider their reliance on the US nuclear umbrella and explore their own nuclear options.

- **Iran's Nuclear Program:** Despite international efforts to curb it, Iran's nuclear program remains a major concern for the Middle East, heightening fears of a regional nuclear arms race as countries like Saudi Arabia explore nuclear capabilities to counterbalance Iran.

- **North Korea's Nuclear Activity:** North Korea's continued development and testing of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons pose a significant security threat in East Asia, exacerbating tensions with South Korea and increasing regional anxieties.

- **Modernization of Nuclear Arsenals:** Established nuclear powers, including the US and Russia, are modernizing their nuclear arsenals, raising concerns about a new arms race and lowering the threshold for nuclear use.

- **Erosion of Arms Control Treaties:** The breakdown of key arms control treaties, such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty between the US and Russia, has weakened the international framework for managing nuclear stockpiles and promoting disarmament.

India's Historic Stance on Nuclear Energy and Weapons

- ➢ 1948: Establishment of the Atomic Energy Commission with Homi J. Bhabha as chairman.
- ➢ 1956: Commissioning of Apsara, India's first nuclear reactor, marking the beginning of nuclear research in Asia.
- ➢ 1968: Refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.
- ➢ 1969: Launch of the Tarapur Atomic Power Station, India's first commercial nuclear power plant.
- ➢ 1974: Conduct of the first underground nuclear test, "Smiling Buddha," at Pokhran.

- 1995-1996: Opposition to the indefinite extension of the NPT and refusal to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.
- 1998: Series of nuclear tests at Pokhran under Operation Shakti, declaring India a nuclear-armed state with a No First Use policy.
- 2003: Ceasefire agreement with Pakistan along the Line of Control in Kashmir.
- 2005: Landmark civil nuclear agreement with the United States.
- 2008: Waiver from the Nuclear Suppliers Group, allowing nuclear trade.
- 2016: Entry into the Missile Technology Control Regime.
- 2019: Successful test of anti-satellite missile capability.
- 2024: Initiation of core loading for the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor at Kalpakkam.

Current Nuclear Threats to India

- **Neighbourhood Nuclear Threats:** Pakistan's significant nuclear arsenal and ongoing tensions over Kashmir and terrorism raise the risk of nuclear conflict. China's construction of missile silos and deployment of road-mobile ICBMs also shift the regional nuclear balance.

- **Command and Control Vulnerabilities:** Ensuring the safety and security of nuclear command systems is critical. Cyber security breaches, such as the alleged 2019 cyber attack on the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant, underscore the need for robust protections.

- **Environmental and Health Risks:** Nuclear accidents pose significant risks, as highlighted by the 2011 Fukushima disaster, necessitating stringent safety protocols and emergency preparedness.

- **Emerging Technologies and Regional Arms Race:** The development of hypersonic missiles, autonomous weapons, and AI presents new challenges for nuclear deterrence and could fuel a regional arms race.

Strategies for Strengthening India's Nuclear Program

- **Responsible Nuclear Modernization:** Focus on advanced delivery systems, improving the survivability and reliability of nuclear forces, and exploring new technologies like directed energy systems while maintaining credible minimum deterrence.

- **Nuclear Risk Reduction Measures:** Engage in confidence-building and crisis communication mechanisms with neighbouring nuclear states to prevent inadvertent escalation.

- **<u>Investment in Advanced Nuclear Technologies:</u>** Continue developing thorium-based reactors, small modular reactors, and next-generation nuclear plants to meet energy needs with minimized environmental risks.

- **<u>Enhanced Civilian Nuclear Cooperation:</u>** Expand collaborations with like-minded countries in areas such as nuclear waste management, medicine, and peaceful applications of nuclear technology.

- **<u>Participation in Global Nuclear Governance:</u>** Actively engage in initiatives like the Nuclear Security Summits and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism to demonstrate commitment to non-proliferation and peaceful nuclear use.

4. POLITY

4.1 Supreme Court Reaffirms Promotion is Not a Fundamental Right:

- The recent reaffirmation by the Supreme Court of India underscores that promotion is not an inherent right for government servants. It clarified that the criteria for filling promotional posts are left to the discretion of the legislature and executive, as the Constitution does not provide specific guidelines for this.

Constitutional Provisions on Reservation:

- **Article 16(4)** allows the state to enact provisions for reservations in appointments or posts for any backward class that is inadequately represented in state services.
- **Article 16(4A),** introduced by the 77th Amendment Act, permits reservations in promotions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes if they are deemed underrepresented.

Reservation not a Fundamental Right:

- The Supreme Court has consistently held that neither reservation nor promotion is a fundamental right under Article 16(4) or Article 16(4A). These provisions serve as enabling mechanisms for reservation in appropriate circumstances (Mukesh Kumar and Another vs State of Uttarakhand & Ors. 2020).
- However, this does not diminish the constitutional mandate under Article 46, which directs the state to promote the educational and economic interests of SCs, STs, and other weaker sections.

Arguments for applying reservation in promotions:

- Given the entrenched caste hierarchy in India, SCs and STs remain significantly underrepresented in higher posts, justifying the need for promotion reservations.
- Exclusion of reservation in promotions confines SCs and STs to lower cadre positions, impeding their upward mobility.
- The recent judgment challenges the foundational principles of reservation, particularly in the absence of direct recruitment to higher posts.

Pros and Cons of Reservation in Promotion:

Advantages:

- Enhances representation of historically disadvantaged groups in senior positions.

- Fosters diversity and inclusive leadership, enhancing organizational perspectives.

- Provides avenues for marginalized communities to compete and excel in higher roles.

- Addresses deep-seated discrimination by supporting social and economic upliftment.

Disadvantages:

- Raises concerns about compromising meritocracy in promotions.

- Potential for demotivation among non-reserved category candidates.

- Risk of benefiting only the affluent segments within reserved categories.

- Disruption of seniority-based systems could affect overall organizational efficiency.

4.2 Reservation Related Developments in India:

Mandal storm:

- Expanded reservations to include OBCs based on recommendations by the Mandal Commission.

Indra Sawhney case, 1992:

- Limited reservation under Article 16(4) to initial appointments, excluding promotions.

M. Nagaraj case, 2006:

- Upheld the constitutionality of Article 16(4A) with conditions on states to substantiate backwardness and underrepresentation.

Jarnail Singh vs Lachhmi Narain Gupta case, 2018:

- Relaxed criteria for states to prove backwardness for promotion reservations.

Dr. Jaishri Laxmanrao Patil vs Chief Minister (2021):

- Challenges to reservation expansions continue, such as the Maharashtra Maratha reservation law.

Constitutional Amendments:

77th Amendment (1995):

- Introduced Article 16(4A) to enable promotion reservations for SCs and STs.

103rd Amendment (2019):

- Introduced reservations for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), currently under judicial review.

Way Forward:

- Evaluate current representation of SC/ST/OBCs across various levels to establish realistic reservation goals.
- Advocate for a merit-based system with adjusted qualifying standards for underrepresented groups in promotions.
- Address concerns regarding the promotion of unqualified candidates through reservation policies.
- Implement robust training and mentorship programs to enhance skills and capabilities of promoted SC/ST/OBC employees.
- Emphasize that reservations are temporary measures aimed at achieving long-term social justice and equal opportunities in promotions.

4.3 Personality Rights and Their Legal Protections

- Recently, the Hollywood actress Scarlett Johansson raised allegations against OpenAI for utilizing a voice in their latest AI model, GPT-4o, that bears resemblance to hers, despite her explicit denial of licensing permission to CEO Sam Altman. This incident underscores the intricate realm of personality rights and its profound legal ramifications.

Definition and Scope of Personality Rights

- Personality rights encompass the legal safeguards granted to individuals over distinctive facets of their persona, including their name, voice, likeness, and other identifiable traits recognizable to the public. These rights are pivotal in preventing unauthorized commercial exploitation.

Legal Framework and International Context

- In various jurisdictions worldwide, including India, personality rights are generally not expressly delineated in statutory law but are inferred from broader legal doctrines such as the right to privacy and property rights. The landmark case of Justice K. S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) v. Union of India (2017) solidified the right to privacy as a fundamental constitutional prerogative under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, establishing a foundational basis for the protection of personality rights.

Judicial Precedents and Legal Precepts

- Indian courts have affirmed personality rights through significant legal precedents. For instance, in Shivaji Rao Gaikwad (Rajinikanth) v. Varsha Production, courts upheld the entitlement of celebrities to regulate the commercial utilization of their persona. Similarly, ICC Development (International) Ltd. v. Arvee Enterprises underscored the evolution of publicity rights derived from the right to privacy, reinforcing its constitutional moorings under Articles 19 and 21.

Contemporary Challenges and Recent Developments

- Recent litigation involving Indian celebrities such as Anil Kapoor and Jackie Shroff highlights ongoing legal battles to shield their personality rights from unauthorized exploitation by entities, including AI technologies and e-commerce platforms. These cases exemplify the intricate balance required between technological progress and the imperative to safeguard individual control over their public image and commercial use.

Living Wills and Advanced Medical Directives

- Separately, the emergence of living wills has gained prominence in legal discourse, particularly concerning medical treatment decisions for incapacitated individuals. Pioneered by guidelines established in Common Cause v. Union of India (2018), living wills enable individuals to stipulate their medical preferences in advance, notably in scenarios of terminal illness or incapacity. This legal framework underscores the preservation of individual autonomy in end-of-life decisions, consonant with the constitutional right to die with dignity enshrined in Article 21.

Conclusion

- The evolving landscape of personality rights and advanced medical directives reflects broader legal trends aimed at fortifying individual autonomy and shielding against unauthorized commercial exploitation. As legal frameworks continue to evolve in response to technological advancements, the enduring principles of privacy, dignity, and autonomy remain pivotal in upholding these protections.

4.4 Arrest of Newsclick Founder Reversed by SC

- The arrest of Prabir Purkayastha, founder of NewsClick, by the Special Cell of Delhi Police last year, alleging his involvement in activities to "disrupt the sovereignty of India" through his news portal allegedly funded by China, was recently invalidated by the Supreme Court. The Court ordered his release, deeming his arrest and detention under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) by Delhi Police as unlawful.

- Key reasons for the Supreme Court's decision include the failure of law enforcement to provide written grounds for his arrest, as mandated by Article 22(1) of the Constitution of India. This fundamental right ensures that individuals are informed promptly and comprehensively about the basis of their arrest. The Court emphasized that withholding this information not only violates due process but also undermines the accused's ability to defend themselves effectively, particularly in cases involving stringent laws like the UAPA where the burden of proof rests on the accused.

- Furthermore, the Court criticized the clandestine manner in which the arrest and subsequent legal proceedings were conducted, highlighting that essential documents such as the FIR were withheld from Purkayastha until after the remand order was issued. This lack of transparency and procedural fairness was deemed unacceptable by the Court, emphasizing that such actions subvert the principles of justice and the rights of the accused.

Legal Questions Surrounding UAPA

- The Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) of 1967 has raised significant concerns regarding the due process of law, primarily due to several distinct provisions and practices:

1. **Differences from Regular Criminal Law:**

- The UAPA allows for longer remand periods (up to 30 days instead of 15) and extends the maximum judicial custody before filing a chargesheet from 90 days to 180 days. These extended periods can delay access to justice and increase the time individuals are held without formal charges.

2. **Controversial Bail Provisions:**

- Under Section 43D(5) of the UAPA, bail can be denied if the court believes there are reasonable grounds to think the charges are prima facie true. This provision places the burden on the accused to prove the case is false, without the opportunity to challenge evidence directly. Human rights advocates argue this provision is draconian and effectively denies bail until the completion of the trial.

3. **Expanded Scope:**

- Amendments in 2004 and 2013 broadened the UAPA to cover a wide range of activities, including the declaration of associations as unlawful, punishments for terrorist acts, and threats to national security, including economic aspects like fiscal, monetary, and environmental security. The period of proscription for organizations was also extended from two to five years.

4. **Pendency and Conviction Rates:**

- Despite a high number of detentions under UAPA, the conviction rate is low (only 18% of cases), leading to a significant backlog (89% pendency). This backlog contributes to prolonged pre-trial detentions and uncertainties for those accused under the Act.
- To balance state security concerns with the principles of due process and human rights protection, several measures can be considered:

  - **Clear Legal Framework:**

- Establish precise laws that clearly define the limits and procedures for state actions in the name of security to prevent misuse and ensure accountability.

- **Judicial Oversight:**

- Strengthen judicial oversight mechanisms to review and curb arbitrary actions by state authorities. Establish judicial review committees specifically tasked with assessing cases under laws like UAPA.

- **Independent Monitoring Bodies:**

- Create independent bodies empowered to monitor the implementation of security laws, investigate abuses, and hold state actors accountable. Enhance the role of existing bodies like the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in overseeing security operations.

- **Human Rights Training:**

- Provide comprehensive training on human rights standards to law enforcement and security personnel, emphasizing the importance of upholding individual liberties while ensuring national security.

- **Public Participation:**

- Foster public engagement in discussions about security policies to ensure policies are balanced and enjoy broad public support. Utilize platforms for public consultations and forums to gather feedback on security policies.

- **International Cooperation:**

- Collaborate with international organizations and groups focused on human rights and press freedom to adopt best practices and promote a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers.

4.5 Supreme Court Refuses to Admit Plea Against Collegium System

Why in the news?

- Recently, two senior district judges have approached the Supreme Court, alleging that the Himachal Pradesh High Court collegium disregarded their merit and seniority in the selection of

judges. This move underscores concerns regarding the adherence to the process devised by the Supreme Court for selecting judges in High Courts.

- Earlier in April, the Supreme Court registry declined to accept a petition seeking to abolish the Collegium system of judicial appointments and reintroduce the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC).

What is the Collegium System?

- The Collegium system is a method of appointing and transferring judges in India, developed through judgments of the Supreme Court rather than through an Act of Parliament or a Constitutional provision. Articles 124(2) and 217 of the Indian Constitution govern the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and High Courts respectively.

- The Collegium system assigns the judiciary a predominant role in judicial appointments, where a panel of senior judges makes recommendations for appointments and transfers of judges. This system replaced the earlier practice where the government had a more significant role in such appointments.

- The Supreme Court has upheld the Collegium system in several rulings and invalidated the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC), which sought to involve the government in judicial appointments on par with the judiciary. In 2015, a Constitution Bench ruled against the NJAC, affirming the Collegium system's supremacy. Subsequent review petitions challenging this decision were also dismissed in 2018.

- Thus, the Collegium system remains the prevailing mechanism for judicial appointments in India, emphasizing the judiciary's independence in selecting judges for the higher judiciary.

Issues Related to the Collegium System

Exclusion of Executive from Judicial Appointments:

- The complete exclusion of the executive from the judicial appointment process has resulted in a system where a handful of judges appoint others in complete secrecy. This lack of accountability to any administrative body can lead to overlooking deserving candidates and choosing candidates based on favoritism or nepotism.

Concerns of Nepotism and Favoritism:

- Under the collegium system, there are no specific criteria for evaluating candidates, particularly for the position of Chief Justice of India (CJI). This ambiguity opens avenues for nepotism and favouritism in judicial appointments. For example, senior district judges in Himachal Pradesh alleged that the High Court collegium bypassed their merit, seniority, and exemplary judicial track record in favour of junior candidates.

Transparency Issues:

- Critics argue that the collegium system lacks transparency in judicial appointments, which is detrimental to maintaining law and order in the country. The process is viewed as a closed-door affair without an official secretariat or public disclosure of collegium meetings and decisions. Official minutes of collegium proceedings are also absent, further raising transparency concerns.

Impact on Checks and Balances:

- The collegium system has been criticized for concentrating immense power within the judiciary, diminishing the checks and balances principle. Unlike the executive and legislative branches, which have mechanisms to check each other's powers, the judiciary's autonomous appointment authority under the collegium system limits external oversight and accountability.

Under representation and Unequal Representation:

- Another issue is the underrepresentation of women and minorities in the higher judiciary. The composition of the judiciary does not adequately reflect the diversity of Indian society, highlighting the need for affirmative action measures to promote inclusivity.

Path Forward

1. **Ensuring Transparency and Objectivity:** Develop clear and objective selection criteria based on merit, seniority, and diversity. Implement mechanisms to record and publish collegium decisions while safeguarding privacy concerns.

2. **Balancing Independence and Accountability:** Explore ways to involve the government in the appointment process without compromising judicial independence. Consider a consultative mechanism or a time-bound confirmation process as recommended by the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC).

3. **Promoting Diversity:** Implement affirmative action measures to increase the representation of women, minorities, and disadvantaged groups in the judiciary. Address issues like nepotism in judicial appointments by adopting recommendations such as those proposed by the Law Commission of India.

Conclusion

- In conclusion, reforming the judicial appointment process is crucial to enhance transparency, uphold judicial independence, and ensure a judiciary that is more representative and accountable to the diverse population of India.

4.6 Muslim Reservation in Andhra Pradesh

Why in the news?

- Recently, the controversy surrounding the 5% reservation allocated to Muslims in Andhra Pradesh in 2004 has reignited discussions on religion-based reservations.

Background of Reservation for Muslims in Andhra Pradesh:

- **Historical Context:** Muslims make up about 9.5% of Andhra Pradesh's population. Currently, certain Muslim communities are included in the state's Other Backward Classes (OBC) lists, benefiting from quotas ranging from 7% to 10%. There has been ongoing advocacy to extend OBC status to encompass all Muslims in the state, similar to practices in Karnataka and Kerala.

- **Reservation in 2004:** In June 2004, following an assessment of the socio-economic and educational status of Muslims in Andhra Pradesh, the state government introduced a 5% reservation under Articles 15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitution. However, this reservation was invalidated by the Andhra Pradesh High Court due to procedural lapses. The court stressed that Muslims cannot be treated as a homogeneous group and criticized the absence of criteria to exclude affluent sections (creamy layer) from benefiting.

- **Reservation in 2005:** Subsequently, based on recommendations from the Backward Classes Commission affirming the social, educational, and economic backwardness of Muslims in Andhra Pradesh, the state legislature passed legislation to implement a 5% quota for Muslims. However, this move faced renewed legal challenges questioning the lack of objective criteria to substantiate Muslims' collective backwardness.

- **Legal Challenges and Current Status:** The issue escalated to the Supreme Court, which in 2010 directed the state to maintain the status quo pending further hearings. Although the final hearing was slated for 2022, it was postponed pending the resolution of the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) quota matter. Despite the clearance of the EWS quota in November 2022, the legal fate of the Andhra Pradesh Muslim reservation remains unresolved.

- **Issues with Andhra Model of Reservation:** Critics contend that treating Muslims as a monolithic group violates the constitutional principle of equality. Furthermore, reservation solely based on religion contradicts Articles 15(1) and 16(2) of the Constitution, which prohibit discrimination on religious grounds. Moreover, concerns have been raised about the cumulative effect of adding a 5% Muslim quota to the existing reservation in Andhra Pradesh, which already stands at 46%, potentially surpassing the 50% cap without compelling justification.

- In summary, the debate over the 5% reservation for Muslims in Andhra Pradesh underscores significant legal and constitutional complexities, awaiting resolution by the Supreme Court to address fundamental questions of equity and constitutional validity in affirmative action policies.

Arguments in Favour of Religion-Based Reservations in India:

- **Socio-Economic Backwardness:** The Sachar Committee Report highlights that Muslims in India face significant socio-economic disparities compared to other communities, warranting affirmative action to bridge this gap.

- **Constitutional Mandate:** The Indian Constitution mandates affirmative action for socially and educationally backward classes, regardless of religious affiliation, to promote inclusive development.

- **Ensuring Adequate Representation:** Reservations based on religion can ensure representation of underrepresented religious groups in employment, education, and other sectors, fostering diversity and inclusivity.

Arguments Against Religion-Based Reservations in India:

- **Secularism:** Critics argue that religion-based reservations contradict the secular principle of the Indian Constitution, which advocates equal treatment of all religions by the state.

- **Undermining National Unity:** Such reservations might potentially undermine national unity by fostering divisions and resentment among different religious communities.

- **Economic Criteria:** Reservations should prioritize economic criteria over religious identity to ensure that benefits reach those who are genuinely economically disadvantaged, irrespective of their religious background.
- **Administrative Challenges:** Implementing reservations based on religion poses administrative challenges, including defining eligibility criteria, preventing misuse, and ensuring transparency in the selection process.

Legal Provisions Related to Reservation in India:

Constitutional Provisions:

Article 16(4):

- Allows for reservation of appointments or posts in favor of any backward class of citizens not adequately represented in state services.

Article 15:

- Permits the State to make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes or for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).

Key Supreme Court Judgments:

State of Madras v. Smt. Champakam Dorairajan Case, 1951:

- Struck down caste-based reservations in educational institutions.
- Resulted in the First Amendment to the Constitution.

Indra Sawhney v. Union of India Case, 1992:

- Introduced limitations on reservations:
- Established the creamy layer concept to exclude affluent members of OBCs from reservation benefits.
- Imposed a cap of 50% on reservations.
- Generally disallowed reservations in promotions, except for SCs and STs.

M. Nagaraj v. Union Of India Case, 2006:

- Upheld Article 16(4A), allowing reservations in promotions for SCs and STs.

Conditions set:

- Social and educational backwardness.

- Inadequate representation in government employment.

- Need to maintain administrative efficiency.

Jarnail Singh vs Lachhmi Narain Gupta Case, 2018:

- Extended creamy layer exclusion to SCs and STs in promotions.

- Clarified that quantifiable data on backwardness isn't mandatory for SCs and STs promotions.

Janhit Abhiyan vs. Union of India, 2022:

- Upheld the validity of the 103rd Constitutional Amendment.

- Provides 10% reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) among forward castes in government jobs and educational institutions nationwide.

- These legal provisions and Supreme Court judgments provide the framework for reservations in India, aiming to achieve social justice while upholding principles of equality and administrative efficiency in public services.

4.7 Derecognition of Political Parties

Why in the news?

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) recently issued a statement highlighting the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC). The statement stressed the need for star campaigners to uphold exemplary conduct and avoid actions that could disturb societal harmony.

- This statement has triggered debates regarding the ECI's authority to address violations of the MCC, including its power to deregister political parties.

What does derecognition mean?

- Derecognition by the Election Commission of India (ECI) entails withdrawing recognition from a political party. Once derecognized, such parties are categorized as Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs). Despite this status, these parties remain eligible to contest elections but lose the privileges associated with recognized parties.

- **Recognition Criteria for Political Parties:** Political parties are recognized as either 'national' or 'State' parties under the provisions of The Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968 (Symbols Order) by the ECI. The criteria for such recognition involve winning a requisite number of seats or obtaining a required percentage of votes in general elections to the Lok Sabha (LS) or State Assembly (SA).

- **Current Status of Recognized Parties:** As of now, there are six 'national' parties and sixty-one 'State' parties that hold recognition. These recognized parties benefit from advantages such as a reserved symbol during elections and the designation of forty 'star campaigners'. They also enjoy the privilege of using state-owned television and radio for campaigning, a provision instituted since the 1998 Lok Sabha elections.

- **Grounds for Derecognition of a Political Party as a National Party:** The ECI may derecognize a political party classified as 'national' under specific circumstances:

- Failure to secure at least 6% of the total votes polled in a general election to the Lok Sabha (LS) or the concerned state legislative assembly, coupled with not having won at least 4 seats in the last LS elections from the same state.

- Failure to secure a minimum of 2% of the total seats in the Lok Sabha from at least three states.

- Failure to secure at least 8% of the total valid votes polled in the state during a General Election to the Lok Sabha (LS) or the State Legislative Assembly (LA).

- Non-submission of audited accounts to the ECI within the stipulated time frame.

- Failure to conduct organizational elections (Inner party elections) within the prescribed timelines.

What are registered parties?

Registered Parties:

- **Legal Requirements:** Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act) mandates that a political party seeking registration must submit its constitution. This document must declare allegiance to the Constitution of India, principles of socialism, secularism, and democracy, and uphold India's sovereignty, unity, and integrity.

- **Benefits:** Registered political parties enjoy several legal benefits, including tax exemption under Section 13A of the Income Tax Act, a common symbol for elections to Lok Sabha/State Assemblies, and permission to appoint twenty 'star campaigners' during election campaigns.

- **Number of Parties:** Currently, there are 2,790 active registered political parties in India according to the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Power of ECI:

- The RP Act does not grant the ECI the authority to deregister a political party for reasons such as not contesting elections, failing to conduct internal party elections, or not submitting required returns.
- The Supreme Court in the case of Indian National Congress vs Institute of Social Welfare, 2002, affirmed that the ECI lacks the power to deregister any political party under the RP Act.

Grounds for Deregistration:

- ➢ A political party can only be deregistered if:
- ➢ Its registration was obtained through fraud.
- ➢ It is declared illegal by the Central Government.
- ➢ The party revises its internal constitution and refuses to comply with the Constitution of India.

5. INTERNAL SECURITY

5.1 National Terrorism Data Fusion and Analysis Centre

Why in the news?

- Recently, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has established the National Terrorism Data Fusion & Analysis Centre (NTDFAC). This initiative aims to centralize the collection and compilation of information on terrorists and their associates from diverse sources.

Key Points:

- **Purpose:** The NTDFAC is designed to enhance the government's capability to gather and analyse data related to terrorists operating within India. It consolidates information from various sources to provide comprehensive insights into terrorist activities.

- **Inclusivity:** For the first time, the NTDFAC has gathered details on terrorists affiliated with groups such as Indian Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and Khalistani militant outfits. This comprehensive approach ensures that a wide spectrum of terrorist entities and their networks are monitored and analysed.

- **Role in Security:** By integrating data from multiple agencies and sources, the NTDFAC strengthens national security measures. It enables proactive identification of threats, facilitates timely interventions, and supports strategic decision-making to counter terrorism effectively.

Overview

- The National Terrorism Data Fusion & Analysis Centre (NTDFAC) has been established by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) of India. Modeled after the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) managed by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland, USA, NTDFAC serves as a centralized database and analysis centre for terrorism-related information within India.

Key Features:

- **Comprehensive Database:** NTDFAC consolidates data including case histories, fingerprints, videos, pictures, and social media profiles related to individuals involved in terrorist activities. This comprehensive overview aids in effective analysis and tracking of terrorist networks.

- **Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS):** Integrated with the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS), NTDFAC facilitates quick and accurate identification of suspects through fingerprint data. NAFIS holds over 92 lakh fingerprint records, enhancing the efficiency of criminal identification processes.

- **Face Recognition System:** NTDFAC is equipped with a face recognition system that scans CCTV footage to identify and track suspects involved in terrorist activities. This technology supports law enforcement agencies in surveillance and apprehension efforts.

- **Support for State Police Forces:** Besides assisting NIA officers, NTDFAC provides support to state police forces by enabling access to centralized terrorism-related information. State police can utilize this data to identify and monitor terrorists operating within their jurisdictions.

National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS)

- **Overview:** Managed by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS) is a web-based application designed to centralize fingerprint data related to crime and criminals across India.

Key Features:

- **Web-Based Application:** NAFIS operates as a web-based platform accessible to law enforcement agencies 24x7. It serves as a central repository for fingerprint data, enabling real-time data management and retrieval.

- **Unique Identifier:** Each individual arrested for a crime is assigned a unique 10-digit National Fingerprint Number (NFN) under NAFIS. This identifier remains consistent across different criminal cases linked to the same individual throughout their lifetime.

- **Integration with CCTNS:** NAFIS is integrated with the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS) database, facilitating seamless data exchange and ensuring a unified approach to criminal identification and tracking.

- **Real-Time Data Management:** The system supports real-time upload, trace, and retrieval of fingerprint data, enhancing the operational efficiency of law enforcement agencies in criminal investigations.

- **Replacement of Previous Systems:** NAFIS replaces the earlier FACTS 5.0 system, providing upgraded capabilities and technological advancements in fingerprint identification and management.

National Investigation Agency (NIA)

- **Overview:** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is India's primary counter-terrorism law enforcement agency. Established under the NIA Act, 2008, it is tasked with investigating offenses related to terrorism, counterfeit currency, smuggling of arms and explosives, and other offenses affecting India's sovereignty and integrity.

Mandate and Jurisdiction:

- The NIA operates across India without requiring special permissions from state governments, underwritten by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- It has jurisdiction over Indian citizens abroad, persons in government service, and those committing scheduled offenses affecting Indian citizens or interests globally.

Origin and Headquarters:

- Founded in response to the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, the NIA is headquartered in New Delhi and plays a crucial role in safeguarding national security through rigorous investigation and prosecution of terrorism-related crimes.

Scheduled Offences under the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act include:

- Explosive Substances Act
- Atomic Energy Act
- Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act
- Anti-Hijacking Act
- Suppression of Unlawful Acts against Safety of Civil Aviation Act
- SAARC Convention (Suppression of Terrorism) Act
- Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against Safety of Maritime Navigation and Fixed Platforms on Continental Shelf Act
- Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act
- Any other relevant offences under the Indian Penal Code, Arms Act, and the Information Technology Act
- Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act

5.2 Internal Services Organisation Act

Why in the news?

- Recently, the Government has enacted the Inter-Services Organisations (ISOs) (Command, Control, and Discipline) Act, granting authority to the Commander-in-Chief or Officer-in-Command of Inter-Services Organisations (ISOs) to oversee personnel from all military branches. This initiative aims to streamline operations and promote collaboration across the armed forces.

Key Features of the Inter-Services Organisations (ISOs) Act:

Background:

- Currently, the Armed Forces operate under separate Service Acts such as the Army Act of 1950, Navy Act of 1957, and Air Force Act of 1950.
- Variations among these acts have at times hindered uniform discipline, coordination, and efficient functioning across inter-service establishments.
- The ISO Act does not propose changes to existing service acts, rules, or regulations.

Empowering ISO Leadership:

- Commanders-in-Chief and Officers-in-Command of ISOs are empowered to exercise disciplinary and administrative control over personnel from all military branches (Army, Navy, Air Force) under their command.
- This simplifies command structures, enhances coordination, and facilitates prompt decision-making within ISOs.

Constitution and Classification of ISOs:

- Existing ISOs like the Andaman and Nicobar Command, Defence Space Agency, and the National Defence Academy will be formally recognized under the Act.
- The central government has the authority to establish new ISOs comprising personnel from at least two of the three services (Army, Navy, Air Force).
- ISOs will be headed by Officers-in-Command, and a Joint Services Command (tri-service) can also be constituted, led by a Commander-in-Chief.

Applicability and Qualifications:

- The Act can potentially extend to centrally controlled forces beyond the Army, Navy, and Air Force.
- It specifies eligibility criteria for Commanders-in-Chief and Officers-in-Command, requiring senior officers from each service to qualify for these positions.

Control and Command Structure:

- Ultimate authority over ISOs remains with the central government, which can issue directives related to national security, administration, and public interest.
- The Act establishes the role of Commanding Officers within ISOs, responsible for specific units, ships, or establishments.
- Commanding Officers have the authority to initiate disciplinary and administrative actions concerning personnel under their command, as delegated by higher authorities.

Significance of Integration of Armed Forces

Enhanced Operational Effectiveness:

- Joint planning and training enhance coordination and synergy between different military services, essential for effective modern warfare.
- The Inter-Services Organisations (ISOs) Act, 2024 empowers ISO leadership to implement unified command structures, facilitating seamless integration.

Faster Decision-Making:

- Integrated command structures enable quicker decision-making processes during critical military operations.
- The establishment of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) in 2019 as the single-point military advisor enhances coordination in defence planning and procurement.

Optimum Resource Utilisation:

- Integration reduces redundancy and optimises the allocation of resources across all branches of the armed forces.
- Initiatives like integrated theatre commands streamline planning, logistics, and operational capabilities.

Government Initiatives Towards Integration:

- Inter-Services Organisations (ISOs) Act, 2024: Empowers commanders of ISOs to exercise unified control over personnel from different military branches.

- Chief of Defence Staff (CDS): Acts as the principal military advisor to the government, facilitating cohesive defence planning and coordination.

- Integrated Theatre Commands: Conceptualised to enhance synergy among various military services, improving overall operational efficiency and readiness.

- Integration of the armed forces through these initiatives is pivotal for ensuring cohesive military operations, enhancing national security preparedness, and optimizing defence capabilities in a dynamic geopolitical landscape.

5.3 India World's Largest Arms Importer

Why in the news?

- India has emerged as the world's largest arms importer according to the latest data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), covering the period from 2019 to 2023. In this timeframe, India's imports saw a 4.7% increase compared to the period from 2014 to 2018.

Key Highlights of Recent SIPRI Data:

Arms Importers:

- Nine out of the top 10 largest arms importers during 2019–23 were located in Asia and Oceania or the Middle East. India, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar topped the list.

- Ukraine emerged as the fourth-largest arms importer globally during this period.

Arms Exporters:

- The United States, the world's largest arms supplier, experienced a 17% growth in arms exports between 2014–18 and 2019–23.

- France became the second-largest arms exporter globally.

- Europe collectively accounted for one-third of global arms exports, reflecting its robust military-industrial capacity.

- Russia witnessed a significant decline of -53% in arms exports during the same period.

India's Arms Import Dynamics:

- Russia remained India's primary arms supplier, though its share decreased to 36% of India's total arms imports during 2019–23.

- This marked the first five-year period since 1960-64 where Russian deliveries constituted less than half of India's total arms imports.

- India is increasingly diversifying its arms imports, turning to Western countries like France and the USA, and also focusing on bolstering its domestic arms production capabilities to meet its expanding defence requirements.

Recent Indian Government Initiatives to Reduce Arms Imports:

Budget Allocation:

- In the Interim Budget 2024-25, the Defence Ministry received a total allocation of ₹6.2 lakh crore, with ₹1.72 lakh crore earmarked for capital expenditure, marking a 5.78% increase from the previous year's Budget Estimates.

Positive Indigenisation Lists:

- The government periodically releases Positive Indigenisation Lists to identify specific defence components and subsystems that must be manufactured domestically.

- Recently, the Department of Military Affairs unveiled the 5th Positive Indigenisation List, comprising 98 items, aimed at boosting indigenous manufacturing in the defence sector.

Increased FDI Limits:

- The Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) limit in the defence sector was raised to 74% through the Automatic Route and up to 100% via the Government Route in 2020, aiming to attract more foreign investment into indigenous defence production.

Defence Industrial Corridors:

- Two dedicated Defence Industrial Corridors have been established in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh to enhance defence manufacturing capabilities.

- The Uttar Pradesh corridor covers nodes in Agra, Aligarh, Chitrakoot, Jhansi, Kanpur, and Lucknow, while the Tamil Nadu corridor includes Chennai, Coimbatore, Hosur, Salem, and Tiruchirappalli.

Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX):

- iDEX fosters an ecosystem for innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace by engaging industries, MSMEs, startups, R&D institutes, and academia.
- Managed by the Defence Innovation Organization (DIO), iDEX provides grants, funding, and support for R&D aligned with Indian defence and aerospace requirements.

SRIJAN Portal:

- The SRIJAN Portal serves as a platform for defence vendors to identify opportunities for manufacturing previously imported defence equipment.
- Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) and other government agencies post details on SRIJAN, inviting Indian companies to express interest and collaborate on domestic production.

Going Ahead:

- **Defence Innovation Zones:** Designating specific geographical areas as defence innovation zones with infrastructure support and regulatory flexibility to attract defence startups and high-tech firms.
- **Streamlined Procurement Process:** Simplifying and expediting the procurement of indigenous defence products to promote domestic production.
- **Incentivising Indigenous Production:** Offering financial incentives, tax benefits, and subsidies to encourage companies engaged in indigenous defence manufacturing.
- **Boosting Exports:** Developing a robust defence export industry to generate revenue for further R&D and reduce dependency on domestic budgets, akin to successful models like Israel's.

5.4 INDIA'S DEFENCE EXPORTS

Why in the news?

- India delivered the first batch of BrahMos to the Philippines.

About Brahmos:

- BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited (BAPL) signed a contract in 2022 for supply of Shore Based Anti-Ship Missile System to the Philippines.

- Recent years have witnessed a steady increase in India's defence exports to countries such as Seychelles, the Maldives, Mauritius and Ecuador.

Strike range
290 km

Speed
Mach 2.8
2.8 times the speed of sound

Weight
2.5 tonnes
Air Force variant

Can be launched from
Air
A missile is carried at the belly of the aircraft

Land

Sea/water

3 TONNES: Weight of Navy and Army variants

"Such a capability can be a game changer for any air force in the world"
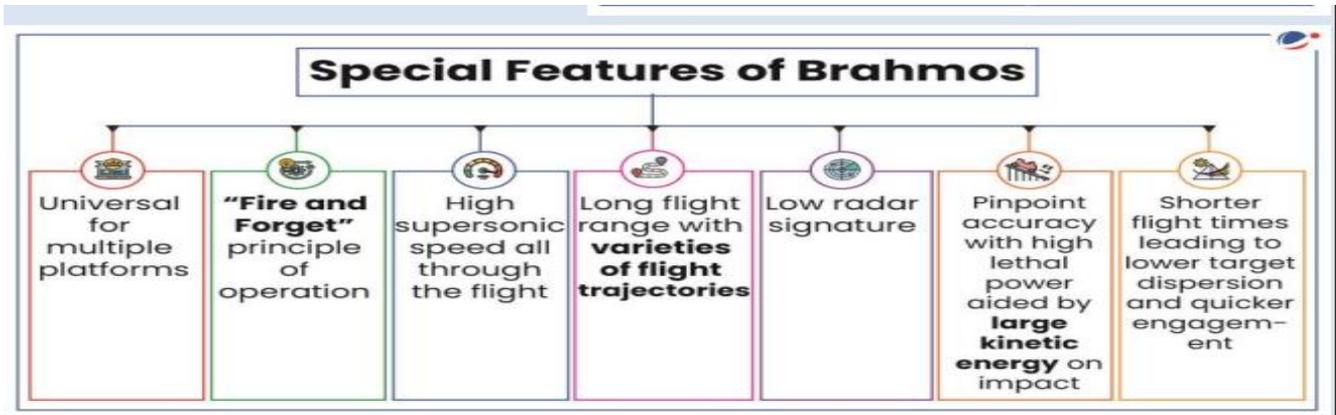
The missile launch
Boosting India's aerial prowess
- It is the world's fastest supersonic cruise missile, from land, sea and air, completing the country's tactical cruise missile triad
- It is the heaviest weapon to be deployed on India's Su-30
- The reach of Sukhoi-30 jets and Brahmos' accuracy gives India a dominant position

About BRAHMOS:

- The BrahMos missile constitutes a notable achievement in contemporary military technology, distinguished by its advanced attributes:

- **Speed and Range:** Achieving velocities up to Mach 2.8, it is the world's fastest cruise missile, complemented by an operational range extending up to 290 km.

- **Joint Development:** This weapon system emerged from a collaborative effort between India and Russia, pooling their respective technological prowess.

- **Two-Stage Propulsion:** The missile employs a dual-stage propulsion mechanism, leveraging a solid propellant engine in its initial stage followed by a liquid ramjet engine, optimizing operational efficiency and performance.

- **Multiplatform Capability:** Its operational flexibility is underscored by its ability to be deployed across land, air, and sea platforms, showcasing its versatility and strategic value.

- **Advanced Features:** Incorporating stealth technology to diminish detection by adversary defenses, it integrates a sophisticated guidance system that ensures precise target acquisition. Employing a "Fire and Forget" operational principle enables autonomous function post-launch.

- **Combat Effectiveness:** Renowned for its exceptional precision and lethal capability, it guarantees decisive strikes against designated targets, operable under diverse environmental conditions including diurnal and nocturnal scenarios.

- **Defensive Capabilities:** With rapid engagement capabilities, it facilitates swift responses to emergent threats, while its design mitigates interception attempts by current defensive systems, augmenting survivability during combat operations.

Special Features of Brahmos

| Universal for multiple platforms | "Fire and Forget" principle of operation | High supersonic speed all through the flight | Long flight range with varieties of flight trajectories | Low radar signature | Pinpoint accuracy with high lethal power aided by large kinetic energy on impact | Shorter flight times leading to lower target dispersion and quicker engagem-ent |

BrahMos Cruise Missile
Air-launched variant tested

BrahMos, the world's fastest supersonic cruise missile, successfully flight-tested for the first time from a Sukhoi-30MKI fighter of the Indian Air Force against a sea based target in Bay of Bengal

The missile is now capable of being launched from land, sea and air, completing the tactical cruise missile triad for India

Technical Specifications

Maximum range	400+ km	Warhead mass	200-300 kg
Velocity	Mach 2.8	Altitude	
Weight	2.5 tonnes	▪ Cruise: 15 km ▪ Terminal: 10-15 metre	

Special Features

- ▪ Universal for multiple platforms
- ▪ "Fire and Forget" principle of operation
- ▪ High supersonic speed all through the flight
- ▪ Long flight range with varieties of flight trajectories
- ▪ Low radar signature
- ▪ Shorter flight times leading to lower target dispersion and quicker engagement
- ▪ Pin point accuracy with high lethal power aided by large kinetic energy on impact

Compared to existing state-of-the-art subsonic cruise missiles, BrahMos has
- ▪ 3 times more velocity ▪ 2.5 to 3 times more flight range
- ▪ 3 to 4 times more seeker range ▪ 9 times more kinetic energy

Source: BrahMos Aerospace   **KBK Info**graphics

<u>Reasons for the rise in India's Defence exports can be attributed to several strategic initiatives and policy changes:</u>

<u>Financial Push:</u>

- **<u>Enhanced FDI Limits:</u>** The government has increased the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) limit up to 74% through the Automatic Route for companies seeking new defence industrial licenses. It can go up to 100% through the government route, particularly where it facilitates access to modern technology.
- **<u>Venture Capital Funds:</u>** Agreements have been made to facilitate Venture Capital infusion into the defence ecosystem through initiatives like the iDEX Innovators Hub (iIH).
- **<u>Financing Support:</u>** Institutions such as the Exim Bank provide financing specifically tailored for defence exports.

<u>Encouraging Private Sector Participation:</u>

- The government has allocated 25% of the defence research budget for the private sector in the fiscal year 2022-23. This initiative aims to boost innovation and technological advancements within the sector.

<u>Initiatives to Promote Indigenous Innovation:</u>

- **<u>Innovation for Defence Excellence (iDEX):</u>** Launched to promote self-reliance, foster innovation, and drive technology development in the defence sector.
- **<u>Mission Raksha Gyan Shakti:</u>** A program aimed at integrating and strengthening Intellectual Properties (IPs) within defence manufacturing processes.

<u>Reduced Dependence on Foreign Equipment:</u>

- India has taken steps to reduce dependency on foreign suppliers by announcing the 5th Positive Indigenisation List in October 2023. This list specifies defence items that must be procured from indigenous sources, thereby boosting domestic production capabilities.

<u>Defence Diplomacy:</u>

- This encompasses strategic measures aimed at enhancing international cooperation, fostering alliances, and promoting defence exports through diplomatic channels.

- These proactive measures and policy reforms underscore India's commitment to enhancing its defence manufacturing capabilities, promoting innovation, reducing import dependency, and positioning itself as a significant player in the global defence exports market.

5.5 Benefits of Rising Defence Exports:

Defence Export as a Strategic Tool:

- Enhances diplomatic leverage and strengthens strategic partnerships with allied nations.
- Reduces technological dependencies by ensuring access to maintenance, repair, spares, components, and future upgrades, thereby influencing geopolitical dynamics.
- Promotes military interoperability through joint exercises and operations, bolstering defence cooperation.
- Integrates the exporting country into the global defence value chain, reducing vulnerability to supply disruptions during international conflicts.

High Value Nature of Defence Exports:

- Contributes significantly to economic strength by bolstering foreign exchange reserves.
- Creates high-skilled job opportunities and opens new markets for domestic defence manufacturing.

Other Benefits:

- Boosts research and development capabilities in defence through increased involvement of private sector players.
- Strengthens national security by enhancing indigenous defence capabilities.
- Promotes self-reliance through the indigenization of defence production processes.
- The rise in defence exports not only enhances economic prosperity but also plays a crucial role in advancing strategic interests, fostering innovation, and fortifying national security. These benefits underscore the importance of leveraging defence exports as a multifaceted tool in international relations and domestic economic development.

Challenges Faced in India's Defence Exports:

Inadequate R&D Spending:

- India allocates less than 1% of its total defence budget expenditure to Research and Development (R&D), significantly lower compared to countries like China (20%) and the USA (12%).

Limited Budget:

- The defence allocation for FY 24-25 stands at approximately 1.9% of the GDP, constraining overall investment in defence capabilities.

Credibility Issues:

- Indian defence products face credibility challenges in comparison to counterparts from countries like the USA, France, and Russia, primarily due to reliance on imports for advanced weapons. Reports from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute highlight India as the world's largest arms importer from 2019 to 2023.

Inadequate Capacity:

- There exists a substantial disparity between India's manufacturing and export capacity in comparison to dominant global players.
- Despite exporting military hardware to 85 countries, India holds a minimal share in the world export market and is not among the top 25 arms exporters globally.

Over-reliance on DPSUs:

- Dependency on Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) leads to supply monopolies and poses challenges in integrating the private sector into defence innovation and industrial ecosystems.

Other Issues:

- Diplomatic challenges and competitive pressures from other nations.
- Non-timely delivery of services due to inadequate infrastructure.
- Lack of cohesion and coordination among the Indian Armed Forces, DPSUs, private manufacturers, and the Ministry of Defence.

- Addressing these challenges is crucial for India to enhance its defence export capabilities, foster innovation, and bolster its position in the global defence market.

5.6 VIRTUAL ASSETS AND TERROR FINANCING

Why in the news?

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has recognized deficiencies in enforcing its standards regarding virtual assets (VAs) and virtual asset service providers (VASPs)

More about the news

- FATF closely monitors developments in the cryptosphere and has issued global, binding standards to prevent the misuse of virtual assets for money laundering and terrorist financing.
- FATF had in February 2023 agreed on a road map to strengthen the implementation of its standards on virtual assets and VASPs.

What are Virtual Digital Assets?

- It simply means crypto currencies, DeFi (decentralised finance) and non-fungible tokens (NFTs). Prima facie, excludes digital gold, central bank digital currency (CBDC) or any other traditional digital assets, and hence aimed at specifically taxing crypto currencies.
- How does the government define virtual digital assets?
- A new clause (47A) is proposed to be inserted to section 2 of the Finance Act, in order to define "virtual digital asset".
- According to the Finance Act, "virtual digital asset" means
  any information, code, number or token (not being Indian currency or foreign
  currency), generated through cryptographic means or otherwise and can be called by whatever name.
- They provide a digital representation of value exchanged with or without consideration, with the promise or representation of having inherent value, or functions as a store of value or a unit of account including its use in any financial transaction or investment, but not limited to, investment schemes and can be transferred, stored or traded electronically.
- Non-fungible tokens and; any other token of similar nature are included in the definition.

What is Virtual Digital Assets? –Decoding the definition

1 Any Information, Code, Number, Token, NFT etc. (not Indian or foreign currency)…

2 Generated through cryptographic means or otherwise…

3 Providing a digital representation of value exchanged, with the promise of having inherent value…

4 Functions as a store of value or a unit of account…

5 Can be transferred, stored or traded electronically.

Reasons Virtual Assets Are Used in Terror Financing

- **Anonymity:** Virtual assets are popular with criminals because they allow anonymous and decentralized transactions. This makes it easy to hide the location and origin of transactions using tools like VPNs.

- **Lack of Global Regulations:** Virtual Asset Service Providers (VASPs) in one country can offer their services to people in other countries, which may have different rules for preventing money laundering and terrorism financing. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) points out that the unclear regulatory framework for virtual assets poses significant risks to investors and could affect financial stability

- **Crowd funding with Virtual Assets:** Terrorist groups leverage crowd funding platforms and social media to solicit funds globally, using virtual assets for anonymous and borderless transactions.

How do the FATF Standards apply to virtual assets?

Countries need to:	Virtual Assets service providers need to
• Understand the money laundering and terrorist financing risks the sector faces • Licence or register virtual asset service providers • Supervise the sector, in the same way it supervises other financial institutions	• Implement the same preventive measures as financial institutions, including customer due diligence, record keeping and reporting of suspicious transactions • Obtain, hold and security transmit originator and beneficiary information when making transfers

Regulation of Virtual Assets and VASPs in India

- **PMLA Compliance:** In March 2023, India brought Virtual Digital Assets Service Providers (VDASPs) under the Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML-CFT) regulations outlined in the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) 2002.

- **Registration with Financial Intelligence Unit India (FIU IND):** VDASPs are mandated to register with the FIU IND and adhere to reporting and record-keeping obligations.

- **Permanent Secretariat:** India has proposed establishing a permanent secretariat to enhance coordination efforts in combating terror financing. This initiative underscores the importance of "Beyond-Border Cooperation" in addressing terror funding on a global scale.

- **'Travel Rule' for VASPs:** India has implemented the 'travel rule' for Virtual Asset Service Providers (VASPs), which mandates the secure collection and transmission of information regarding the originators and beneficiaries of transactions.

WEAPONISATION OF SPACE

Why in the News?

- Russia vetoed a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) draft resolution on a weapon-free outer space jointly proposed by the United States and Japan.

About UNSC resolution

- The vetoed resolution aimed to affirm that countries which ratified the 1967 Outer Space Treaty must adhere to their obligations, which include:

- Not placing any objects with weapons of mass destruction in orbit around Earth.

- Not installing such weapons on celestial bodies.

- Not stationing such weapons in outer space.

Russia's Position:

- Russia vetoed the resolution, arguing that it focused only on weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear arms, and did not address other types of weapons in space.

- The weaponization of space refers to the development, deployment, and potential use of weapons in outer space. This concept encompasses various types of weaponry, ranging from weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) to conventional arms and sophisticated defense systems.

- The implications of weaponizing space are profound, impacting international security, strategic stability, and the future of space exploration.
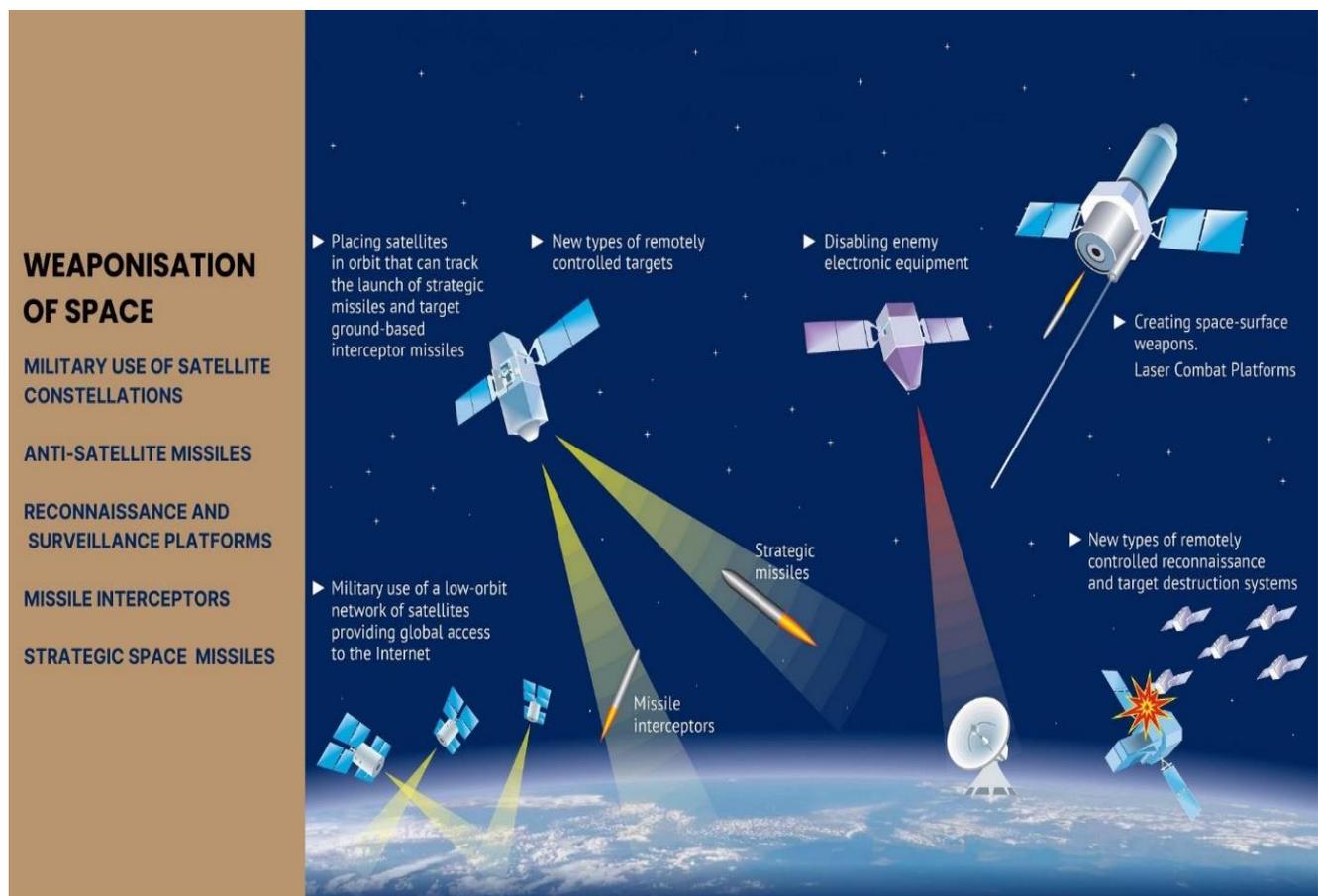
Historical Context:

- The idea of weaponizing space has been contemplated since the dawn of the space age. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty, signed by major space-faring nations, aimed to prevent an arms race in space by prohibiting the placement of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in orbit, on celestial bodies, or in outer space. Despite this, concerns about the potential for space to become a new battleground have persisted.

Types of Space Weapons:

- **Kinetic Energy Weapons:** These weapons destroy targets by impact. Examples include anti-satellite (ASAT) missiles, which are designed to incapacitate or destroy satellites.
- **Directed Energy Weapons:** These include lasers and other energy-based systems that can disable or destroy targets by emitting focused energy.
- **Nuclear Weapons:** Though prohibited by the Outer Space Treaty, the potential deployment of nuclear weapons in space remains a significant concern due to their devastating impact.
- **Cyber Weapons:** These involve hacking or other cyber techniques to disrupt or control satellite operations and other space-based assets.

Strategic and Security Implications:

- **Space Dominance:** Nations with advanced space weapon capabilities could potentially dominate both space and terrestrial battlefields, leading to significant shifts in global power dynamics.
- **Vulnerability of Satellites:** The reliance on satellites for communication, navigation, and surveillance makes them prime targets in any conflict, posing risks to both civilian and military infrastructure.
- **Arms Race:** The development of space weapons could trigger an arms race, with countries seeking to outpace each other in space militarization, thereby increasing the risk of conflict.
- **Debris Generation:** The destruction of satellites and other space assets can create space debris, which poses a long-term threat to the safety and sustainability of space operations.

International Efforts and Challenges:

- While the Outer Space Treaty and subsequent agreements aim to prevent the weaponization of space, enforcement and verification remain challenging. The lack of comprehensive international

regulations governing all types of space weapons further complicates efforts to maintain space as a peaceful domain.

Future Prospects:

- The future of space weaponization will likely depend on international cooperation and the establishment of clear, enforceable norms and regulations. As space becomes increasingly integral to national security and economic interests, the challenge will be to balance the benefits of space exploration and utilization with the imperative to prevent conflict and ensure the long-term sustainability of outer space.

- As the possibility of weaponizing space becomes increasingly real, several emerging challenges need to be addressed to ensure global security and the sustainable use of outer space. These challenges include technological advancements, legal and regulatory gaps, geopolitical tensions, and the potential for unintended consequences.

Technological Advancements:

- **Anti-Satellite (ASAT) Weapons:** Advances in ASAT technology have made it easier for nations to develop systems capable of disabling or destroying satellites. This capability poses significant risks to both military and civilian satellite networks, which are essential for communication, navigation, and surveillance.

- **Directed Energy Weapons:** Lasers and other directed energy weapons can be used to damage or destroy space assets. The development of such technologies increases the potential for conflicts in space, as they can be deployed quickly and covertly.

- **Cyber Warfare:** The increasing reliance on satellites for various functions makes them prime targets for cyberattacks. Cyber warfare capabilities can disrupt, control, or destroy satellite operations, leading to significant consequences for national security and civilian infrastructure.

Legal and Regulatory Gaps:

- **Inadequate Treaties:** While the 1967 Outer Space Treaty prohibits the placement of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in space, it does not address other types of weapons. The lack of comprehensive international regulations creates ambiguity and loopholes that can be exploited.

- **Verification and Enforcement:** Ensuring compliance with existing treaties and potential future agreements is challenging due to the difficulty of verifying activities in space. The vastness of space and the complexity of tracking space assets complicate enforcement efforts.
- **Lack of Consensus:** There is no global consensus on the definition of space weapons or the rules governing their use. This lack of agreement hampers the development of effective international policies to prevent the weaponization of space.

Geopolitical Tensions:

- **Space Arms Race:** The development of space weapons by one nation can trigger an arms race, with other countries seeking to develop similar capabilities to maintain strategic parity. This escalation increases the risk of conflict and reduces the prospects for cooperative space exploration.
- **Dual-Use Technologies:** Many space technologies have both civilian and military applications, making it difficult to distinguish between peaceful and hostile intentions. This dual-use nature complicates international relations and trust among space-faring nations.
- **Strategic Vulnerability:** Nations that heavily rely on space-based assets for military and economic activities are vulnerable to attacks on their space infrastructure. This vulnerability can be exploited, leading to increased geopolitical instability.

Unintended Consequences:

- **Space Debris:** The destruction of satellites and other space assets generates debris that poses a long-term threat to the safety and sustainability of space operations. Space debris can damage or destroy other satellites, creating a cascading effect known as the Kessler Syndrome.
- **Collateral Damage:** Attacks on space assets can have unintended collateral damage, affecting civilian infrastructure and services. Disruptions to GPS, communication networks, and weather forecasting can have widespread and severe consequences.
- **Economic Impact:** The weaponization of space can have significant economic repercussions. The loss of satellites and other space-based assets can disrupt global commerce, financial systems, and essential services, leading to economic instability.

Addressing the Challenges

- To address these emerging challenges, the international community must:

- **Strengthen International Cooperation:** Collaborative efforts are essential to develop comprehensive regulations and norms for space activities. Diplomatic initiatives and confidence-building measures can help reduce tensions and prevent an arms race.

- **Enhance Verification Mechanisms:** Developing robust verification and monitoring systems is crucial to ensure compliance with treaties and agreements. Advances in technology, such as satellite tracking and space situational awareness, can aid these efforts.

- **Promote Transparency and Confidence-Building:** Transparency in space activities and open communication among nations can build trust and reduce the risk of misunderstandings and conflicts.

- **Invest in Space Debris Mitigation:** Efforts to minimize space debris and develop technologies for debris removal are vital to maintaining the long-term sustainability of space operations.

- Addressing the weaponization of space requires a concerted effort by the global community to navigate the complex technological, legal, and geopolitical landscape. Only through cooperation and comprehensive regulation can the peaceful use of space be ensured for future generations.

WEAPONISATION OF SPACE
The weaponization of space refers to the development and deployment of weapons systems in outer space.

REASONS
SPACE SUPREMACY
LACK OF FAITH IN TREATIES
SPONTANEITY IN THE WARFARE
DEGREE OF ADVANTAGE
PROTECT SPACE ASSETS

IMPLICATIONS
INCREASED RISK OF WAR
DESTRUCTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE
INCREASED MILITARISATION
IMPACTS ON SPACE EXPLORATION
ARMS RACE

THE IDEA OF USING SPACE FOR MILITARY PURPOSES HAS BEEN AROUND SINCE THE 1950S, BUT IT BECAME MORE OF A CONCERN DURING THE COLD WAR BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION.

INDIAN EFFORTS
ANTI-SATELLITE WEAPONS
GSAT
NAVIC
DEFENSE SPACE AGENCY

WAY FORWARD
STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL TREATIES AND NORMS
PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY AND COOPERATION
DEVELOPING NON-MILITARY USES OF SPACE
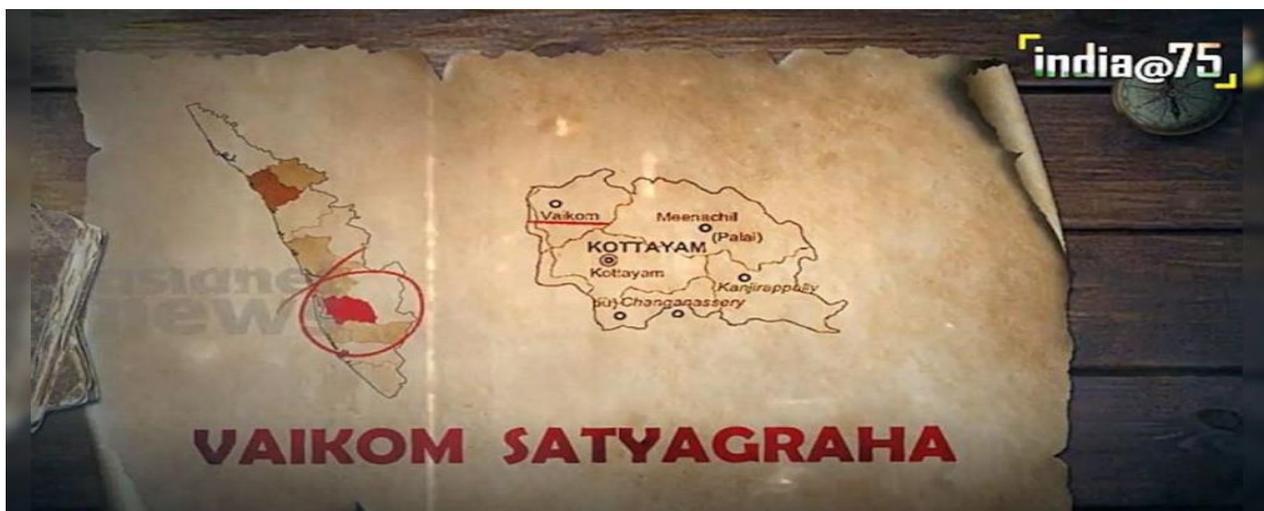**INCREASING AWARENESS**

6. ART AND CULTURE

6.1 VAIKOM SATYAGRAHA

Why in the News?

*   Recently, India celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Vaikom Satyagraha, a significant movement in Indian history that confronted untouchability and caste-based oppression.

About Vaikom Satyagraha

(Vaikom village located in the State of Kerala .)

*   It was a historic non-violent temple entry protest that began in Vaikom, a town in the princely state of Travancore (Kerala region), on March 30, 1924.
*   It was in a response to the discriminatory exclusion of "lower caste" Hindus from accessing the Vaikom Mahadeva temple. o Despite rise in the educational and economic status the lower caste community especially Ezhavas faced the social discrimination which eventually led to the agitation.
*   Satyagrahis went in groups of three to enter the temple but were stopped and arrested by the police. o Dressed in khadi and wearing khadi caps, Govinda Panikkar (Nair), Bahuleyan (Ezhava) and Kunjappu (Pulaya), defied the prohibitionary orders. o The movement gained popularity throughout India and received support from various regions.
*   The Akalis of Punjab provided food to the Satyagrahis.

- Christian and Muslim leaders also supported the movement

- The Vaikom Satyagraha was officially withdrawn on November 30, 1925 after consultations between Gandhi and W.H. Pitt, the then police commissioner of Travancore.

Associated Leaders & support

- Pioneers of the Vaikom Satyagraha movement: T.K. Madhavan, K.P. Kesava Menon and K. Kelappan (also known as Kerala Gandhi)

- Ezhava leader T K Madhavan in a 1917 raised issue of temple entry was first in his paper Deshabhimani.

- E. V. Ramasamy Naicker, known as Periyar, also called Vaikom Veerar, was a key figure in the Vaikom Satyagraha who mobilized volunteers and garnered public support through his speeches. Among the all persons arrested in the movement, only Periyar got rigorous imprisonment.

- In 1921, the Travancore Congress Committee, led by T.K. Madhavan, launched a campaign to have the ban lifted. o In the 1923 session of the INC in Kakinada, a resolution was passed by the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee to take up anti-untouchability as a key issue.

- George Joseph, a well-known independence activist in Kerala, took over the leadership of the Satyagraha in the absence of Kesava Menon.

- Mahatma Gandhi's involvement began in 1921 as he supported a mass agitation led by Madhavan for temple entry.

- Sree Narayana Guru, Mannathu Padmanabhan, E. V. Ramasamy Naicker, etc also supported the agitation.

- Women like Nagammai (wife of Periyar), Kannammal etc. played key roles empowering women and taking on vital responsibilities

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The outcome of Vaikom Satyagraha:

Legal Reforms & initiatives:

- The Satyagraha's pressure led to the Temple Entry Proclamation in 1936, a landmark legal victory granting access to lower-caste individuals into temples.

- It also led to initiatives like the establishment of the Travancore Public Service Commission to ensure fairness in government roles.

Political Awakening:

- It catalysed political awareness and activism among marginalized communities.

National Impact:

- The movement's resonance extended beyond Kerala, inspiring similar protests and campaigns across India against caste-based discrimination.

Rift between Mahatma Gandhi and Periyar:

- The Vaikom Satyagraha brought open the rift between Gandhiji and Periyar.
- While Gandhiji saw it as Hindu reformist movement, Periyar called it a fight against caste-based atrocities.
- Periyar was not happy with the partial success attained (only 3 out 4 roads leading to the temple were open for all the castes), and he eventually quit Congress months later.

Mains Previous Year Question (2021):

- Q. Trace the rise and growth of socio-religious reform movements with special reference to Young Bengal and Brahmo Samaj.

- Students can refer following link:
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S62ude0q4T8&t=9s

Mahavir Jayanti

About News:

- Recently, the Vice-President of India greeted the people on the occasion of 'Mahavir Jayanti' (April 21st, 2024).

Significance in Jainism

- Mahavir Jayanti, also known as Mahavir Janma Kalyanak, is one of the most pivotal festivals in Jainism. It commemorates the birth of Lord Mahavir, the 24th and final Tirthankara, who is a revered figure in Jain spiritual tradition.

Observances and Rituals

- This auspicious day is celebrated globally by adherents of Jainism through various religious activities. The observances typically include processions, devotional prayers, chants, and sermons. The day is dedicated to both celebration and introspection, fostering a renewed dedication to the doctrines and teachings of Lord Mahavir.

Ethical Commitments

- Mahavir Jayanti serves as an occasion for Jains to reaffirm their commitment to the principles of compassion and non-violence (Ahimsa). On this day, individuals pledge to practice kindness towards all living beings, emphasizing tolerance and moral righteousness.

Philanthropic Activities

- In alignment with the festival's ethical underpinnings, donations are often made to support the welfare of animals, particularly those at risk of slaughter. These acts of charity reflect the Jain commitment to preserving life and upholding the values espoused by Lord Mahavir.

Historical Background of Lord Mahavir

Birth and Early Life

- Lord Mahavir, originally named Vardhamana, was born into a royal family to King Siddhartha and Queen Trishala in the early part of the 6th century BCE in Kundagrama, now located in modern-day Bihar, India. His birth occurred on the Trayodashi (13th day) of Shukla Paksha (the bright half) of the Hindu month of Chaitra, corresponding to late March or early April in the Gregorian calendar. The exact year of his birth remains a topic of scholarly debate: the Śvētāmbara sect of Jainism posits that he was born in 599 BCE, while the Digambara sect asserts that his birth occurred in 615 BCE.

Spiritual Awakening

- Renowned as the 'great hero,' Mahavir renounced his royal status and familial ties at the age of 30 to pursue spiritual awakening. Following twelve years of rigorous meditation and ascetic practices, he attained Kevala Jnana (omniscience or supreme knowledge). Subsequently known as Sage Vardhamana, he preached the principles of non-violence (ahimsa) and dedicated the next 30 years to disseminating his philosophical teachings throughout India. His inaugural sermon was delivered at Pava.

Symbolism and Enlightenment

- Each Tirthankara in Jain tradition is associated with a distinct symbol, and Mahavir's symbol is the lion. He earned his name due to his exceptional control over his senses. Pursuing truth and spiritual liberation, he achieved enlightenment (Nirvana) at the age of 72 in 468 BCE at Pavapuri in Bihar.

Contribution:

- Mahavir, is renowned as a teacher who propagated Dharma in Jainism.
- He is known for his teachings of non-violence, compassion, and the importance of leading a simple and austere life.
- His core teachings included Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truth), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (chastity), and Aparigraha (non-attachment), which later became the fundamental principles of Jainism.
- Important Disciple: Indrabhuti Gautama was the main disciple of Mahavira, who wrote his master's teachings for the benefit of the world.

Origin and Emergence

- Jainism emerged prominently in the 6th century BCE under the propagation of Lord Mahavir. The term 'Jain' is derived from 'jina' or 'jaina,' meaning 'Conqueror.' The doctrine of Jainism predates that of Buddhism, establishing it as one of the ancient religions of India.
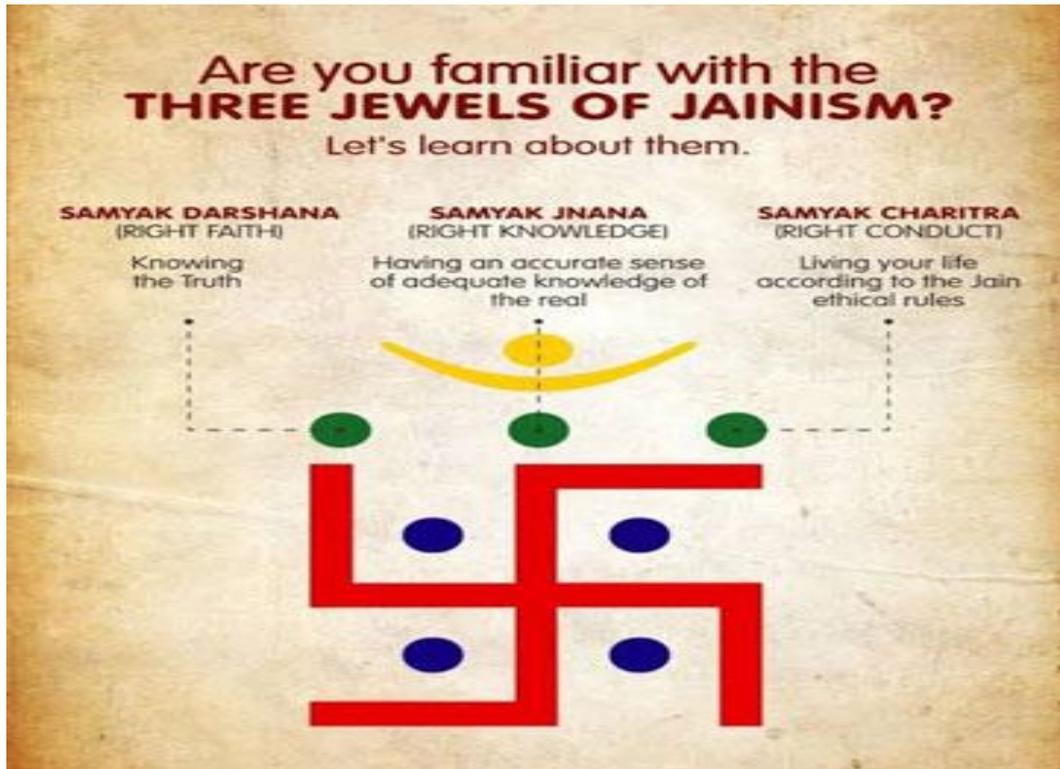
Causes of Emergence

- **Rigidity of Hinduism:** By the 6th century BCE, Hinduism had become rigid and orthodox, characterized by intricate rituals and the dominance of Brahmins. This rigidity prompted the Kshatriya class to react against Brahmanical dominance.

- **Use of Iron:** The spread of a new agricultural economy in northeastern India, facilitated by the use of iron tools, contributed to societal changes that supported the rise of Jainism.

Tirthankaras

- Tirthankaras are individuals who attain complete knowledge (Moksha) while living and subsequently preach this knowledge to others. Jainism recognizes 24 Tirthankaras. The first Tirthankara was Rishabhanatha, and the last was Vardhaman Mahavir.

Beliefs

- Jains uphold that Jainism is an eternal (sanatan) religion (dharma), with Tirthankaras guiding each cycle of Jain cosmology. The motto of Jainism, "Parasparopagraho Jīvānām" (the function of souls is to help one another), encapsulates its ethical foundation.

Concept of God

- Jainism acknowledges the existence of God but does not consider God to be the creator, sustainer, or destroyer of the universe. Instead, Jainism places the status of Jina (Lord Mahavir) above that of God.

Tenets

- The core aim of Jainism is the attainment of liberation, which requires no ritualistic practices but can be achieved through the Three Jewels (Triratna):
  - Right Faith (Samyak Darshan)
  - Right Knowledge (Samyak Jnana)
  - Right Conduct (Samyak Charitra)

Doctrines

- **Ahimsa:** Non-injury to living beings
- **Satya:** Truthfulness
- **Asteya:** Non-stealing
- **Aparigraha:** Non-possession
- **Brahmacharya:** Celibacy

Spread and Patronage

- Jainism spread through its monastic community, the Sangha, which included both men and women. The religion received significant patronage from rulers such as Chandragupta Maurya, Kharavela of Kalinga, and various South Indian dynasties including the Ganges, Kadambas, Chalukyas, and Rashtrakutas.

Contribution of Jainism

- **Language & Literature:** They helped in the growth of the Prakrit and Kannada languages.
- Vardhaman Mahavir preached in the 'Ardha-Magadhi' language, the language of the common man.
- Kalpasutra was written by Bhadrabahu and contains biographies of Tirthankaras.
- Jain literature is mainly written in Prakrit language.
- Teachings of Tirthankara before Mahavira were known as Purva.

- Jain literature is called Jain Agamas (canonical text based on Mahavira's teachings).
- **Philosophy:** They introduced a new philosophy – syadvada.
- **Art & Architecture:** Statue of Gomateshwara (Shramanbdlogola), temples of Khajuraho and Abu and Tiger cave of Udayagiri and Indra Sabha of Ellora are significant contributions of Jainism.
- **Manasthambha:** It is found in the front side of the temple, having religious importance with an ornamental pillar structure carrying the image of Tirthankar on top and on all four cardinal directions.
- **Basadis:** Jain monastic establishment or temples in Karnataka.

Contemporary Relevance of Jainism

Ahimsa (Non-violence)

- Jainism's principle of non-violence is crucial in today's world for achieving lasting peace and countering growing violence and terrorism. Ahimsa emphasizes treating all living beings as equal, which is essential for promoting equality. This principle also extends to protecting plant life, advocating for the preservation of forests as part of sustainable development.
- The philosophy behind UNESCO echoes Jainism, stating that "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." Jainism upholds that all living beings have an equal right to a peaceful existence.

Aparigraha (Non-possession)

- Aparigraha addresses the issues arising from excessive consumerism, such as the depletion of natural resources, climate change, and biodiversity loss. Reducing the consumption of unnecessary goods can directly combat these problems and help mitigate global warming by eliminating luxuries that produce carbon emissions.
- Today's news is rife with reports of murders, rapes, and fraud, often driven by greed. These crimes disrupt social harmony and degrade societal values. Embracing Aparigraha can help reduce these serious issues by curbing the desire for excess.
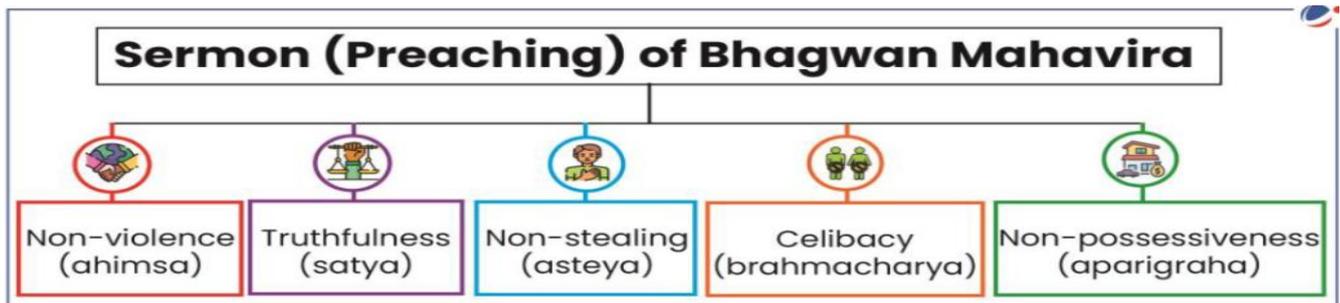
Anekantavada (Multiple Perspectives)

- Anekantavada promotes intellectual and social tolerance, which is especially important in a diverse country like India, where numerous religions and ideas coexist. Understanding and

practicing this doctrine can reduce instances of blasphemy, mob lynching, and religious riots, fostering a more harmonious society.

The Doctrine of Triratna

- The Triratna doctrine is relevant for liberating individuals and promoting liberty and freedom. By adhering to the Three Jewels—Right Faith, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct—people can achieve personal and societal liberation from various forms of subjugation.

Sermon (Preaching) of Bhagwan Mahavira

| Non-violence (ahimsa) | Truthfulness (satya) | Non-stealing (asteya) | Celibacy (brahmacharya) | Non-possessiveness (aparigraha) |

Difference of Jainism from Buddhism:

	Jainism	**Buddhism**
- God Existence:	- Jainism recognised the existence of god	- Buddhism did not recognised the existence of god
- Varna System:	- Jainism does not condemn the varna system	- Buddhism does condemn the varna system
- Belief System:	- Jainism believed in transmigration of soul	- Buddhism does not believed in transmigration of soul
- Path Followed:	- Jainism advocates the extreme path, even completely discarding the clothes i.e. life of austerity.	- Buddha prescribed the middle path

Prelims PYQ (2023):

- "Souls are not only the property of animal and plant life, but also of rocks, running water and many other natural objects not looked on as living by other religious sects."
- The above statement reflects one of the core beliefs of which one of the following religious sects of ancient India?
- (a) Buddhism
- (b) Jainism
- (c) Shaivism
- (d) Vaishnavism

Kesariya Stupa

- Kesariya Stupa is the largest Buddhist Stupa in the world. It is located in Kesariya, Patna, in the East Champaran district of Bihar.

Key Points

- **Early Construction:** The Kesaria Stupa was first built in the 3rd century BCE, likely during the reign of Emperor Ashoka around 250 BCE. This is supported by the discovery of a part of an Ashokan Pillar at the site.

- **Gupta Dynasty:** The current structure of the stupa dates back to the Gupta Dynasty, between 200 CE and 750 CE, and may have connections to the 4th-century ruler Raja Chakravarti.

- **Possible Buddha Era Link:** The stupa mound might have originated during the time of the Buddha, as it matches descriptions of a stupa built by the Licchavis of Vaishali to house an alms bowl given to them by the Buddha.

- **Historical Rule:** Kesaria was once ruled by the Mauryas and the Licchavis.

- **Travelers' Accounts:** The site was visited by two notable ancient travelers, Faxian (Fa-Hien) and Xuanzang (Hsuan Tsang), who wrote interesting and detailed accounts of their visits.

- **Kushan Dynasty Evidence:** The discovery of gold coins with the seal of Emperor Kanishka of the Kushan dynasty (30 CE to 375 CE) further confirms the ancient significance of Kesaria.

- **Exploration and Excavation:** The exploration of Kesaria began in the early 19th century, led by Colonel Mackenzie in 1814. It was later excavated by General Cunningham in 1861-62, and in 1998, a proper excavation was conducted by an Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) team led by archaeologist K.K. Muhammad.

Economy

7.1 Pulses Imports Surge to Seven-Year High: Implications for India's Agricultural Landscape

Why in news:

- India experienced a remarkable surge in pulses imports, reaching a seven-year high. This development carries substantial implications for various stakeholders, offering insight into the intricate dynamics of India's agricultural sector. Examining the factors behind this surge and its consequences is vital for understanding the broader economic and policy landscape of the country.
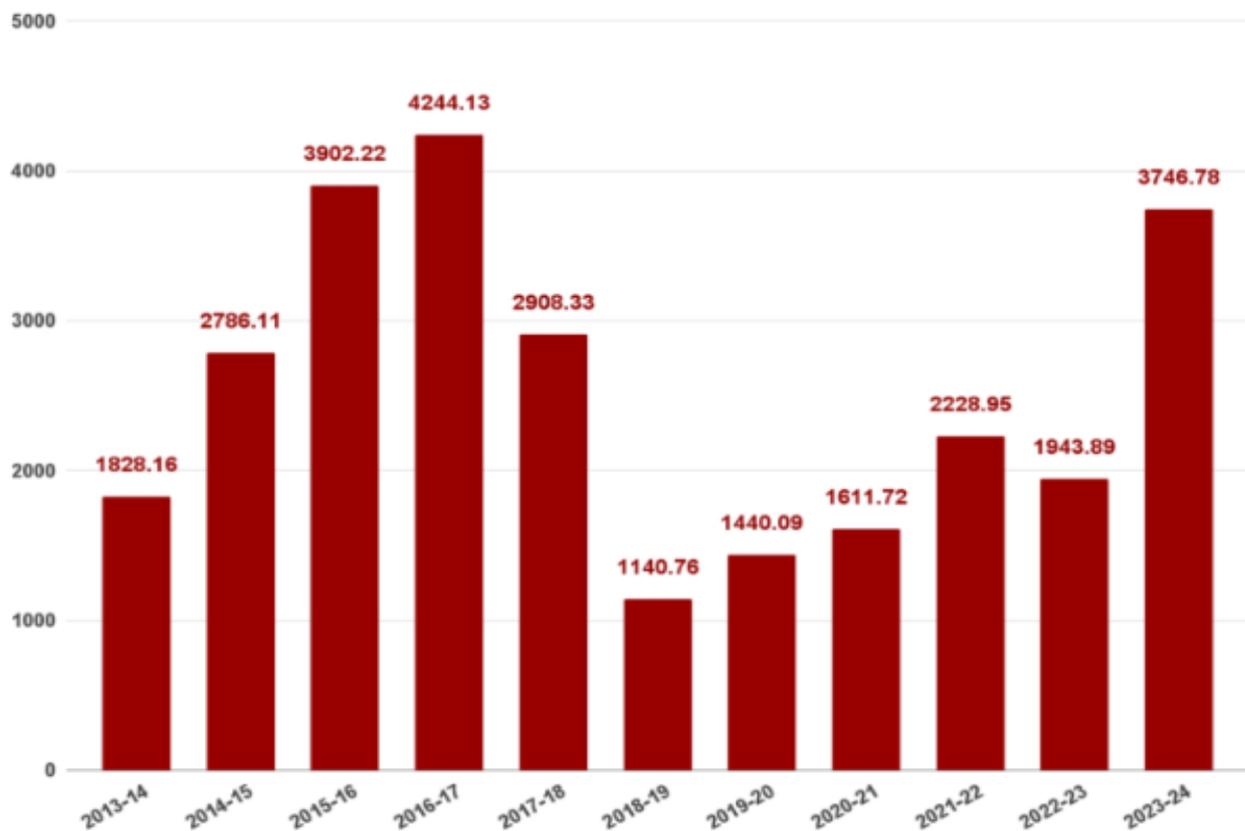
Status of Pulses Production:

- India is the largest producer (25% of global production), consumer (27% of world consumption) and importer (14%) of pulses in the world.
- Pulses account for around 20 percent of the area under food grains and contribute around 7-10 percent of the total foodgrains production in the country.
- Despite efforts to promote pulses cultivation, India faces challenges such as adverse weather conditions, pest infestations, and fluctuating market prices.
- Domestic production levels often fall short of meeting the nation's demand for pulses, necessitating reliance on imports to bridge the gap.
- Enhancing domestic production through sustainable practices and technological interventions is imperative to reduce dependency on imports and ensure food security.

Rise in Imports:

- India's pulses imports were valued at $3.75 billion in 2023-24 (April-March), the highest since the record $3.90 billion and $4.24 billion of 2015-16 and 2016-17.
- The surge in pulses imports is driven by factors including production challenges, changing dietary preferences, and increased demand for protein-rich foods.
- While imports serve as a short-term solution to address supply shortages, they pose long-term challenges to domestic farmers and the economy.

Reasons for Low Production:

- **Adverse Weather Conditions:** Erratic rainfall patterns, droughts, and unseasonal rains often hamper pulses cultivation, leading to yield losses.

- **Pest Infestations:** Insect pests and diseases can cause significant damage to pulses crops, affecting both quality and quantity of produce.

- **Fluctuating Market Prices:** Farmers may hesitate to invest in pulses cultivation due to uncertain market conditions and unpredictable price fluctuations, leading to reduced acreage under cultivation.

- **Preference for Cash Crops:** Farmers may prefer cultivating cash crops such as rice, wheat, and sugarcane over pulses due to assured procurement, higher market prices, and perceived lower production risks.

- **Post Harvest Losses:** There are post-harvest losses during storage, due to excessive moisture and attack by stored grain pests especially the pulse beetle.

Value of Pulses Imports ($ Million)

Year	Value ($ Million)
2013-14	1828.16
2014-15	2786.11
2015-16	3902.22
2016-17	4244.13
2017-18	2908.33
2018-19	1140.76
2019-20	1440.09
2020-21	1611.72
2021-22	2228.95
2022-23	1943.89
2023-24	3746.78

Implications:

- Imports exert downward pressure on domestic prices, reducing the competitiveness of Indian farmers in the market.

- The widening trade deficit resulting from increased imports raises concerns about India's external balance and currency stability.

- Balancing imports with measures to boost domestic production is essential for safeguarding the interests of farmers and ensuring food security for the nation.

Measures taken by government to increase production

- **PM-AASHA:** To ensure remunerative prices to farmers, Government implements an umbrella scheme PM-AASHA comprising Price Support Scheme (PSS), Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS) and Private Procurement Stockist Scheme (PPSS) in order to ensure Minimum Support Price (MSP) to farmers for their produce of notified oilseeds, pulses and copra.

- Integrated scheme of Oilseeds, Pulses, Oil Palm and Maize (ISOPOM) was launched in 14 major pulses growing states.

- **National Food Security Mission:** The Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare is implementing the National Food Security Mission (NFSM)-Pulses with the objectives of increasing production through area expansion and productivity enhancement in all the districts.

- **Research and Development:** Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is undertaking basic and strategic research in collaboration with State Agricultural Universities for developing location-specific high yielding varieties of Pulses.

- **Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna:** It was launched under which states can undertake Pulses Development Programmes.

- In conclusion, the surge in pulses imports underscores the need for comprehensive reforms in India's agricultural sector. Addressing production challenges, promoting sustainable practices, and implementing supportive policies are essential steps towards reducing dependency on imports and fostering a resilient agricultural landscape.

7.2 India's Trade Deficit

Why in news:

- In the fiscal year 2023-24, India recorded a trade deficit with nine out of its top 10 trading partners, including prominent nations like China, Russia, Singapore, and Korea. This development sheds light on the complex dynamics of India's international trade and raises pertinent questions about the underlying causes, implications, and potential strategies to address the trade imbalance.

Causes of the Trade Deficit:

- **Import Dependency:** India's reliance on imports for crucial goods and commodities, such as crude oil, electronics, and machinery, contributes significantly to the trade deficit. Despite efforts to boost domestic production, certain industries still depend heavily on imported inputs and finished products.

- **Export Challenges:** India faces obstacles such as infrastructural constraints, bureaucratic hurdles, and regulatory inefficiencies, which hinder the competitiveness of its exports in the global market. Limited access to technology and capital, coupled with inadequate trade facilitation measures, constrains the expansion of export-oriented industries.

- **Currency Fluctuations:** Volatility in exchange rates can impact the cost of imports and exports, influencing trade balances. Fluctuations in the value of the Indian rupee relative to other currencies may exacerbate the trade deficit by making imports more expensive and exports less competitive.

- **Global Economic Trends:** Shifts in global economic conditions, including changes in demand patterns, geopolitical tensions, and trade policies of major economies, can affect India's trade balance. Economic slowdowns or recessions in key trading partners may reduce demand for Indian exports, further widening the trade deficit.

Implications of the Trade Deficit:

- **Pressure on Foreign Exchange Reserves:** A persistent trade deficit places pressure on India's foreign exchange reserves, as it requires continuous outflows of currency to pay for imports. Depletion of reserves may affect the stability of the Indian rupee and increase vulnerability to external economic shocks.

- **Current Account Imbalance:** The trade deficit contributes to a broader current account imbalance, reflecting the net flow of goods, services, and transfers between India and the rest of the world. A widening current account deficit can signal macroeconomic vulnerabilities and impact investor confidence in the economy.

- **Impact on Economic Growth:** While imports cater to domestic demand and support economic activities, a disproportionately large trade deficit may hinder long-term economic growth. Excessive reliance on imports for essential goods can undermine the development of domestic industries and hinder efforts to achieve self-sufficiency.

- **Policy Challenges:** Addressing the trade deficit requires a multifaceted approach encompassing trade policy reforms, export promotion initiatives, and measures to boost domestic production. Balancing the interests of various stakeholders and navigating complex geopolitical dynamics pose significant policy challenges.

The Road Ahead:

- Addressing India's trade deficit necessitates concerted efforts to promote export competitiveness, reduce import dependency, and enhance the overall resilience of the economy. Key strategies may include:

- **Export Diversification:** Encouraging diversification of exports into high-value-added sectors and exploring new markets to reduce reliance on a few trading partners.

- **Investment in Infrastructure:** Enhancing infrastructural capabilities, including transportation, logistics, and port facilities, to facilitate trade and improve the competitiveness of Indian exports.

- **Trade Policy Reforms:** Streamlining trade procedures, reducing tariff barriers, and negotiating favorable trade agreements to promote exports and attract foreign investment.

- **Promotion of Domestic Manufacturing:** Supporting initiatives such as Make in India to bolster domestic manufacturing capabilities and reduce import dependency in key sectors.

- **Enhanced Economic Diplomacy:** Strengthening bilateral and multilateral engagements with trading partners to address trade imbalances and explore opportunities for collaboration in areas of mutual interest.

- In conclusion, India's trade deficit with its top trading partners underscores the need for a comprehensive strategy to rebalance the country's trade dynamics and foster sustainable economic growth. Addressing the root causes of the trade deficit requires proactive policy

interventions, strategic investments, and robust diplomatic engagement to navigate the evolving global trade landscape.
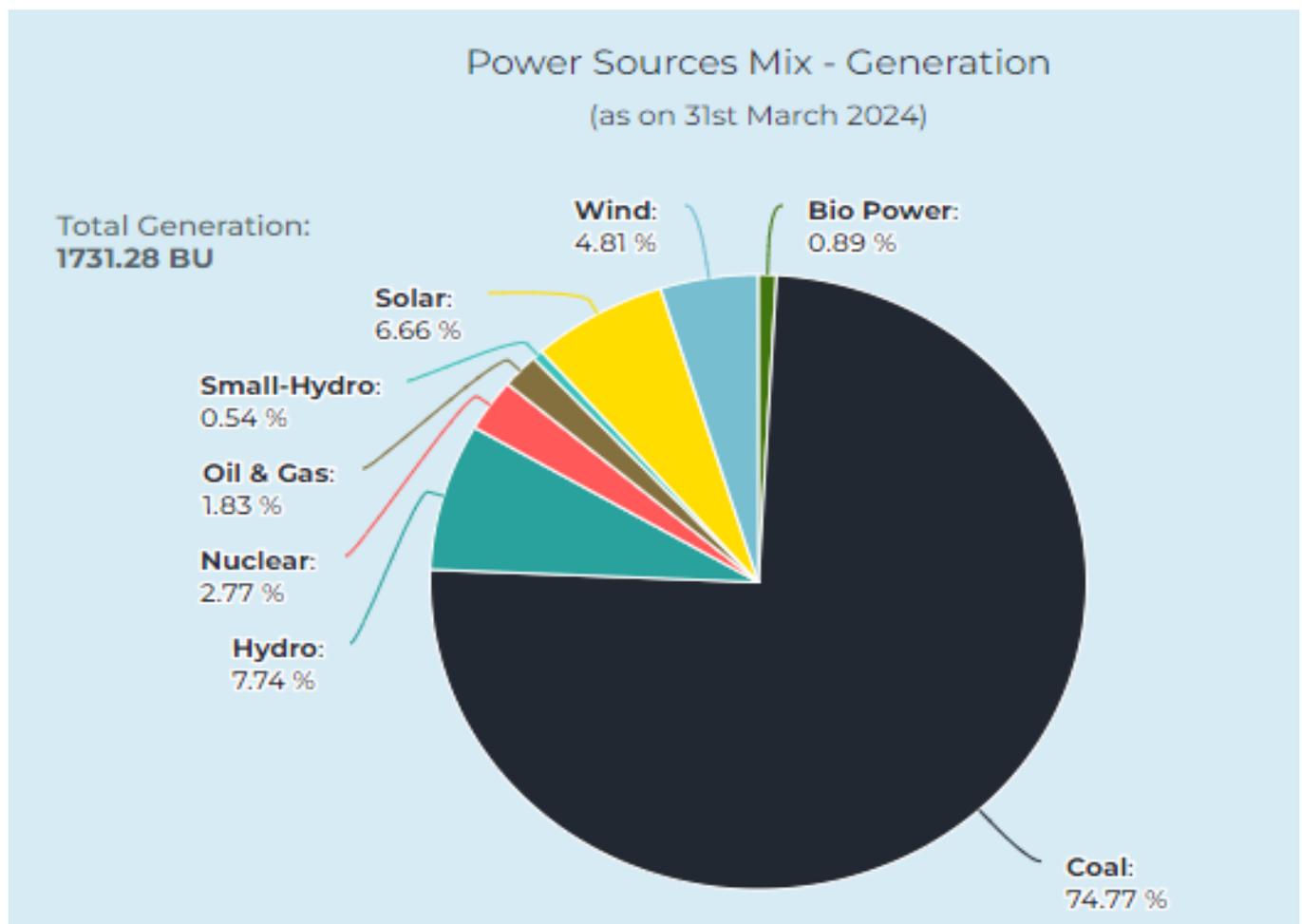
7.3 Harnessing Hydroelectric Potential: India's Strategy for Peak Energy Demand

Introduction:

- India's Ministry of Power is intensifying efforts to optimize hydropower generation as peak demand is expected to soar to 240 GW during summer months.
- Despite India's stature as the world's third-largest producer of renewable energy, challenges persist in meeting peak demand, especially with an increasingly renewable-powered grid.

Energy Generation in India

Power Sources Mix - Generation
(as on 31st March 2024)

Total Generation: 1731.28 BU

Wind: 4.81 %
Bio Power: 0.89 %
Solar: 6.66 %
Small-Hydro: 0.54 %
Oil & Gas: 1.83 %
Nuclear: 2.77 %
Hydro: 7.74 %
Coal: 74.77 %

What is Hydropower?

- Hydropower, or hydroelectric power, is one of the oldest and largest sources of renewable energy, which uses the natural flow of moving water to generate electricity.

- Hydropower currently generates more electricity than all other renewable technologies combined and is expected to remain the world's largest source of renewable electricity generation into the 2030s.

1. India's Renewable Energy Landscape:

- India's renewable energy capacity constitutes around 40% of installed electricity capacity, showcasing significant progress.

- In FY24 alone, the addition of over 18 GW of renewable capacity underscores the nation's commitment to a green transition.

2. Unlocking Hydroelectric Potential:

- India's vast water resources offer ample opportunities for hydroelectric power, both in large-scale and small-scale projects, particularly in hilly and remote regions.

- Storage capacity provided by hydroelectric plants with reservoirs is crucial for managing peak demand and ensuring grid stability.

3. Advantages of Hydroelectric Power:

- Long lifespan of hydro infrastructure, exceeding 50 years with proper maintenance, ensures reliability and longevity.

- Unlike solar and wind energy, hydroelectric power offers consistent and predictable generation, reducing dependency on weather patterns.

4. Challenges Faced in Hydro Power Generation:

- Environmental concerns include ecosystem disruptions, fish habitat alterations, and downstream sedimentation, necessitating careful environmental management.

- Social impacts such as community displacement and livelihood disruptions underscore the need for holistic mitigation strategies.

5. Innovative Solutions and Addressing Challenges:

- Diversification of power sources through integration of various renewables is essential for grid stability.

- Innovations like floating solar panels and pumped-storage hydroelectric plants offer viable solutions to address intermittency and enhance efficiency.

Conclusion:

- India's pursuit of harnessing hydroelectric potential is integral to meeting peak energy demand sustainably.

- By addressing challenges and embracing innovative solutions, India can leverage its abundant hydro resources to ensure energy security, mitigate climate change, and foster sustainable development.

CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQ'S FOR THE MONTH OF JULY 2024

1. With reference to the Comprehensive Environmental Pollution Index (CEPI), consider the following statements:

1) It is prepared and released by the Commission for Air Quality Management.

2) It is a nationwide survey of Industrial clusters based on their pollution level.

   Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 2 only

c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

2. With reference to the PUSA Decomposer, consider the following statements:

1) It is essentially a fungi-based liquid solution that can soften hard stubble and hence prevent the need to burn stubble.

2) It has been developed by NITI AAYOG.

   Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 2 only

c) (Both 1 and 2

d) Neither l nor 2

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1) It is essentially a fungi-based liquid solution that can soften hard stubble and hence prevent the need to burn stubble.

2) It has been developed by NITI AAYOG.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 2 only

c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither l nor 2

5. Consider the following statements:

1) Under Indian federal system, the State governments are subordinate to the Central Government.

2) The term 'Union' for Indian federal system has been taken from the Russian Constitution.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 2only

c) Both l and 2

d) Neither l nor 2

6. With reference to the idea of a federation, which of the statements given below is/are correct?

1) Parliamentary supremacy is a necessary feature of a federal government.

2) A federation essentially means that it is an indestructible union of states.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

a) 1 only

b) 2 only

c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

7. With reference to the types of lavas, consider the following statements:

1) Basic lavas have poor silica content whereas acidic lavas are rich in silica.

2) Acidic lavas are more viscous than basic lavas.

3) Acidic lavas are less explosive in nature compared to basic lava.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

a) Only one

b) Only two

c) All three

d) None

8. With reference to movement of tides, which of the forces is responsible for tidal movement?

a) Winds

b) Gravitational pull of Sun

c) Salinity difference between the surface zones and deep zones of the ocean

d) Temperature difference at surface of the ocean

9. A 'laissez-faire' economy can be identified by which of the following characteristics?

a) Lack of government intervention in the economy

b) Distribution of goods as per the needs of the society

c) Provision of minimum wages for all

d) Community ownership of the means of production.

10. Which one of the following statements best describes the term 'Zombie firm' in the context of Indian economy?

a) It is a firm that does not conduct any managerial and profitable operations in the economy.

b) It is a firm with lower than one interest coverage ratio, and are unable to meet their interest obligations from their income.

c) It is a firm created to be sold to a person who wish to start a company without going through all the procedures of creating a new one.

d) It is a firm engaged in tax planning strategies that exploit gaps and mismatches in tax rules to avoid paying tax.

11. With reference to the economic structure under Guptas, consider the following statements:

1) The emergence of silk growing art in Roman empire led to increase in trade.

2) The rise of priestly landlords helped in bringing many virgin areas under cultivation.
   Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 2 only

c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

12. With reference to coins used 1n Ancient India, which of the following statements is/are incorrect?

1) Punch marked coins were issued for the first time by Shakas.

2) Gold coins were issued first by Guptas.

3) Silver punch marked coins remained confide to Mauryan territory.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

a) 1 only

b) 1 and 2 only

c) 2 and 3 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

13. Parampragat Krishi Vikash yojana', an initiative of the government of India, aims to:

a) Promote Organic Farming.

b) Promote Zero Budget natural Farming.

c) Development of irrigation infrastructure in dryland areas.

d) Create scientific storage capacity with allied facilities in rural areas.

14. Which one of the following statements correctly describes the objective of "SWAYATT" initiative?

a) To generate self-employment opportunities in the non-farm sector by providing credit-linked subsidy.

b) To provide collateral free working capital loans to street vendors in the urban areas.

c) To promotes women and young entrepreneurs through e-transactions on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM).

d) To provide skill-based training to tribal entrepreneurs from Northeastern states of India.

15. Consider the following statements with reference to the Central Administrative Tribunals (CAT):

1) The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) was set up in 1975 with the principal bench at Mumbai.

2) No fees is required to be paid by the applicant in CAT.

3) The applicant may appear either in person or through a lawyer.

How many statements given above are correct?

a) Only one

b) Only two

c) All three

d) None

16. Consider the following statements with reference to the District Judge:

1) The appointment, posting and promotion of district judges in a state are made by the Chief justice of the concerned High Courts.

2) A person to be appointed as district judge should be recommended by the high court for appointment.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 2 only

c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

17. With reference to the difference between Criminal law and Civil law, consider the following statements:

1) Under Civil law, a complaint against an accused can only be filed by the Government and never by an individual.

2) Burden of proving the evidence in Civil and Criminal laws always lie on the complainant.

Which of the above statement is/are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 2 only

c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 and 2

18. Consider the following statements regarding the Consultative Committees of the Parliament:

1) These committees are constituted after the constitution of new Lok Sabha and are dissolved upon the dissolution of the Lok Sabha.

2) The maximum membership of this committee is 30 and the minimum is 10.

Which of the Statements give above is/are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 2 only

c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

19. Which of the following is the most accurate reason for the occurrence of different seasons on Earth?

a) Rotation of the earth and the impact of Coriolis force.

b) Revolution of the earth.

c) Revolution and inclination of earth's axis in a fixed direction.

d) Rotation and gravitational force of the earth.

20. Consider the following statements:

1) Evidence of volcanism has been found in every terrestrial planet of our solar system.

2) Majority of volcanic activity on earth occurs along the mid-ocean ridges.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 2 only

c) Both l and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

KEYS

1. B	2. A	3. B	4. A	5. A
6. B	7. B	8. B	9. A	10. B
11. B	12. D	13. A	14. A	15. C
16. C	17. B	18. C	19. C	20. C

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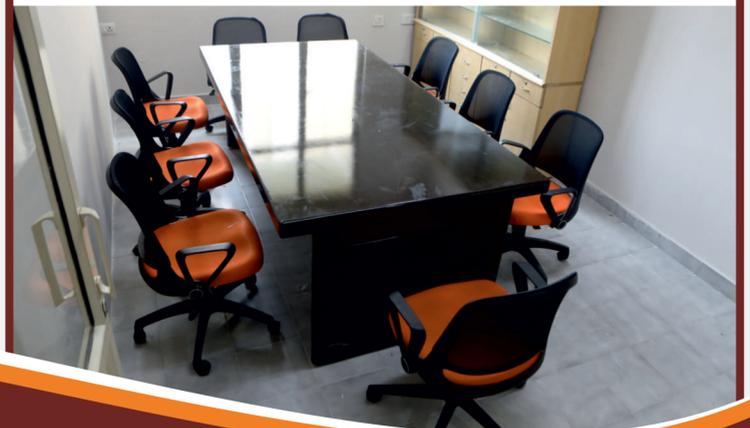Sri Bakery
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