

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY

WEEK: 3

AUGUST

2021

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— Disclaimer —

The current affairs articles are segregated from prelims and mains perspective, such separation is maintained in terms of structure of articles. Mains articles have more focus on analysis and prelims articles have more focus on facts.

However, this doesn't mean that Mains articles don't cover facts and PT articles can't have analysis. You are suggested to read all of them for all stages of examination.

CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYST

WEEK- 3 (AUGUST, 2021)

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SECTION: A

(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS OF MADRAS LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

CONTEXT

President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the centenary celebrations of the Madras Legislative Council, now known as the Tamil Nadu legislature.

◎ BACKGROUND

- The first elected legislature in the State, originally called the Madras Legislative Council, was established in 1921 under the **Government of India Act, 1919**.
- The Madras Legislative Council came into existence with the Justice Party, a precursor to the state's ruling DMK, forming the first government of the Madras Presidency under British rule.

- **Legislative Council or Vidhan Parishad** is the Upper House in some states in India that have a bicameral legislature.
- Such Councils are formed or abolished by the use of **Article 169** of the Constitution of India.

- B. Ramachandra Reddy - 1930-37
- U. Rama Rao - 1937-46
- R.B. Ramakrishna Raju - 1946-52
- P.V. Cherian - 1952-64
- M.A. Manickavelu - 1964-70
- C.P. Chitrarasu - 1970-76
- M.P. Sivagnanam - 1978-86

How was it the largest gathering?

- The Madras Legislative Council was the largest gathering of its kind in India, constituted with 127 members in 1921, which included a total of 98 elected representatives, who were given a fixed term of three years to work for the people.
 - ▶ The elected body would meet at **Fort St. George** regularly to carry out their public duties.

Fort St. George

- Fort St. George was historically known as White Town and was the first British fortress constructed in India.
- It was founded in 1639 in Madras before its change in nomenclature to Chennai.
- The fort currently houses the Tamil Nadu legislative assembly, a church, a museum and other official buildings.

ANALYSIS

Establishment of MLC

- The MLC was established in 1921 continued to function as the legislative assembly of the then **Madras state** after independence and thereafter Tamil Nadu from 1969.
 - ▶ After the first council elections in 1920, the Justice Party formed the government – the government – the DMK's precursor ruled the council in the first, second, and fourth elections.
 - ▶ The last and the fifth council saw the Justice Party running a minority government.
- It was inaugurated by Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, and uncle of George V, Emperor of England, on January 12, 1921.

Presidents or Chairpersons of Legislative Council:

- P. Rajagopalachari - 1920-23
- Lewis Dominic Swamikannu Pillai - 1923-25
- M. Ruthnaswamy - 1925-26
- C.V.S. Narasimha Raju - 1926-30

MLC's achieved Key milestone in its history

The House had passed several landmark legislations like the-

- **April 1921:** The Legislative Council adopted the removal of sex disqualification on women for the franchise, which removed the gender restriction on voting as well as enabling the possibility of women becoming elected members.

In 1927, Muthulakshmi Reddy, the well-known medical practitioner and social activist, became the first woman member of the Council and, in no time, became the Deputy President of the Council.

- **Hindu Religious Endowment Act (1926):** It took over the management and administration of Hindu temples in the province. It established "boards" appointed by the government.
- **Abolition of the Devadasi system (1947):** It gave devadasis the legal right to marry and made it illegal to dedicate girls to Hindu temples.
- **July 1947:** The National Flag of India which was

designed by Pingali Venkayya was first adopted in its present form during a meeting of the Constituent Assembly held on July 22, 1947, barely one month before India's independence from the British on August 15, 1947. The first-ever flag flown after the independence is also stored in the third floor of a museum premises inside the Fort complex.

Wrapping Up

For the State that boasts a **Chola inscription** of around 920 CE (Uthiramerur, about 90 km south of Chennai), dealing with a written Constitution, the celebration carries a special meaning beyond the fact that the legislature has completed 100 years of existence.

NCPCR RELEASES REPORT ON EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

CONTEXT

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has released a report — **The “Impact of Exemption under Article 15 (5) with regards to Article 21A of the Constitution of India on Education of Children in Minority Communities”**. The Report assessed minority schools in the country.

◎ BACKGROUND

What are the key-findings of the report?

- Many children who are enrolled in these institutions or schools were not able to enjoy the entitlements that other children are enjoying because the institution they are studying in is **exempted** and is enjoying the rights of minority institutions.
- Only 4.18% of total students received benefits such as freeships, free uniforms and books, scholarships, etc. from school.
- The Commission has also found surges in the number of schools applying for minority status certificates after the **93rd amendment** was brought in, with more than 85% schools of the total schools securing the certificate in the years 2005-2009 and later.

Detrimental effects of the exemption

- Cocoons populated by elites:** On the one hand there are schools (mostly Christian Missionary schools), which are admitting only a certain class of students and leaving underprivileged children out of the system.
- Backwardness:** Other types of minority schools (in particular madarasas), have become “ghettos of underprivileged students languishing in backwardness”. The Commission has said that students in madarasas which do not offer a secular course along with religious studies – such as the sciences – have fallen behind and feel a sense of alienation and “inferiority” when they leave school.

Madarasas

According to the report, there are three kinds of madarasas in the country-

- recognised madarasas** which are registered and impart both religious as well as secular education.

- unrecognised madarasas** which have been found deficient for registration by state governments as secular education is not imparted or other factors like lack of infrastructure.
- unmapped madarasas** which have never applied for registration.

Major recommendations of the Report:

- Under the purview of RTE and SA:** Minority schools are exempt from implementing **The Right to Education policy** and do not fall under the government's **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**. NCPCR has recommended that these schools be brought under both RTE and SA.

RTE Act, 2009

- For ensuring free and compulsory quality education to children, the **RTE Act, 2009** provides for norms pertaining to basic minimum infrastructure, number of teachers, books, uniform, **Mid-day Meal** etc, benefits that students in minority schools have not been receiving.
- In 2014, the **Pramati judgement** made the entire RTE Act non-applicable on minority schools.
- The state governments need to introduce strict guidelines on the minimum percentage of minority students that these schools need to admit, as well as look at the proportion of schools run by a particular minority community in relation to the size of the population living in the state, before the school is awarded recognition.

What are minority institutions?

- Section 2(g) of the National Commission for Minority Education Institution Act-** A minority institution means a college or institution (other than a university) established or maintained by a person or group of person from amongst the minority.

According to the report-

- **Christians** comprise 11.54 percent of the minority population but run 71.96 percent schools
- **Muslims** comprise 69.18 percent of the minority population but run 22.75 percent of schools
- **Sikhs** comprise 9.78 percent minority population and run 1.54 percent schools
- **Buddhist** comprise 3.83 percent minority population and run 0.48 percent schools
- **Jains** comprise 1.9 percent of the minority population and run 1.56 percent of schools

How a minority is determined?

- Here, a minority is to be determined only by reference to the demography of the state and not by taking into consideration the population of the country as a whole (**TMA Pai Foundation v. State of Karnataka**).

Landmark judgments regarding minority institutions

- TMA Pai Foundation v. State of Karnataka
- Re Kerala Education Bill
- The case of Ahmedabad St. Xaviers College

- **Article 30** provides two rights i.e., to establish and to administer educational institutions to the Linguistic or religious minorities.
- The expression 'establish and administer' are to be read conjunctively.
- It means that to claim the benefit of Article 30(1), the community must show that it is a linguistic or religious minority and that the institution was established by it to claim the right to administer it.

Constitutional provisions

- The Constitution of India provides for the cultural and educational rights of the minorities under Articles 29 and 30.
- **Article 29:** General protection to the minorities to conserve their language etc. It protects the rights only of the Indian citizens.
- **Article 30:** It deals explicitly with the rights of the minorities to establish institutions of their choice.

◎ CONCLUSION

Despite the large presence of minority students in school-going age groups, minority schools are catering to less than 8% of the minority children population. This is worrisome. Thus, there is need to lay down specific guidelines regarding the code of conduct of such minority institutions.

PARLIAMENT PASSES GENERAL INSURANCE AMENDMENT BILL

CONTEXT

The Parliament passed the **General Insurance Business (Nationalization) Amendment Bill 2021** which removes the condition that the Central Government should hold **51% shareholding** in state-owned general insurance companies.

◎ BACKGROUND

- The General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, 2021 was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 30, 2021.
- The Bill seeks to amend the General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Act, 1972.
- The Act was subsequently amended in 2002 to transfer the control of these four subsidiary companies from GIC to the central government, thereby making them independent companies.
- Since 2000, GIC exclusively undertakes reinsurance business.

The General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Act, 1972

- The 1972 Act set up the General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC).
- The businesses of the companies nationalised under the Act were restructured in four subsidiary companies of GIC:
 - National Insurance
 - New India Assurance
 - Oriental Insurance
 - United India Insurance

How will this bill help to privatise the insurance sector?

- The 1972 Act was enacted to nationalise all private companies undertaking general insurance business in India.
- The present Bill seeks to provide for a greater private sector participation in the public sector insurance companies regulated under the Act.

Key-features of the Bill

- **Government shareholding threshold:**
 - **Previous provision:** The Act requires that shareholding of the central government in the specified insurers (the above five companies) must be at least 51%.

➤ **Bill:** The Bill removes this provision.

- Change in definition of general insurance business:

➤ **Previous Provision:** The Act defines general insurance business as fire, marine or miscellaneous insurance business. It excludes capital redemption and annuity from certain businesses from the definition. Capital redemption insurance involves payment of a sum of money on a specific date by the insurer after the beneficiary pays premiums periodically. Under annuity certain insurance, the insurer pays the beneficiary over a period of time.

➤ **Bill:** The Bill removes this definition and instead, refers to the definition provided by the Insurance Act, 1938. Under the Insurance Act capital redemption and annuity certain are included within general insurance business.

- **Transfer of Control from the Government:** The Bill provides that the Act will not apply to the specified insurers from the date on which the central government relinquishes control of the insurer.

Control means: (i) the power to appoint a majority of directors of a specified insurer, or (ii) to have power over its management or policy decisions.

- **Liabilities of directors:** The Bill specifies that a director of a specified insurer, who is not a whole-time director, will be held liable only for certain acts.
- These include acts which have been committed:
 - with his knowledge, attributable through board processes
 - with his consent or connivance or where he had not acted diligently

Who will get empowered in this Bill?

- The Act empowers the central government to notify the terms and conditions of service of employees of the specified insurers.

- The Bill provides that schemes formulated by the central government in this regard will be deemed to have been adopted by the insurer.
- The board of directors of the insurer may change these schemes or frame new policies.
- Further, powers of the central government under such schemes (framed under the Act) will be transferred to the board of directors of the insurer.

Impact of coronavirus on insurance sector in india

- The on-going coronavirus pandemic changed the landscape of the Indian insurance industry in a big way.
- The changes are expected to not only increase the insurance penetration rate in the country but also bring a conscious shift in the insurance product-mix.

Government scheme promoting insurance sector :

- AB PM-JAY is an entitlement-based scheme under Ayushman Bharat and is fully funded by the Government.

- It is the largest health assurance scheme in the world and aims at providing a health cover of INR 500,000 (\$6,900) per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization to over 107 million vulnerable families (approximately 500 million beneficiaries).

How significant is this bill?

- **Significant boost to privatization:** The General Insurance Amendment Bill aims to promote a greater deal of private sector participation in the insurance companies present in the public sector.
- **Increase Public participation:** Bill is going to increase public participation which is only going to help by bringing more resources.
- **Increase foreign investment:** the passing of the Insurance Amendment Bill 2021, the foreign investment limit in the insurance sector will be raised to 74%.

◎ CONCLUSION

This Act was put into play to nationalize all the private companies that were undertaking general insurance in India. The next step forward for this Bill and the public sector lies in the Bill becoming an Act after it is gazetted. After that, all the above-mentioned changes will be set into place and privatization can be taken for public sector insurers once more.

IN A WORLD-FIRST, SOUTH AFRICA GRANTS PATENT TO AN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM

CONTEXT

South Africa's patent office, the **Companies and Intellectual Property Commission**, granted the patent to a food container based on fractal geometry invented by **DABUS**.

◎ BACKGROUND

- The patent application for listing DABUS as the inventor was filed in patent offices of different countries (including Australia, United States, Europe, and South Africa).
- The application was rejected by the **United States Patent and Trademark Office** and the **European Patent Office** in the formal examination phase. They gave three reasons:
 - ▶ **Only human inventors:** Their respective patent laws only provide for **human inventors** and NOT for Artificial Intelligence.
 - ▶ **Lack of mental conception:** Ideas, for the purposes of patents, require the element of "mental conception". Such conception is only present in a human mind and not in AI.
 - ▶ **Rights issue:** Furthermore, inventorship comes with 'rights', which AI is not legally capable of possessing.
- At last, only South Africa granted the patent to DABUS as inventor for "a food container based on fractal geometry".

- This process is called **machine learning**.
- After the occurrence of the machine learning phase, the machine is able to "autonomously" create without human intervention.

Why South Africa's decision received backlash?

- South Africa's decision to grant patent has received widespread backlash from intellectual property experts which argued that-
 - ▶ **Unlawful:** As per the law, the decision was incorrect, as AI lacks the necessary legal standing to qualify as an inventor.
- **Less reliable commission:** This approval was simply an oversight on the part of the commission, which has been known in the past to be less than reliable.
- **No formal examination in the process:** Moreover, this is clearly an indictment of the country's patent procedures, which currently only consist of a formal examination step.

◎ ANALYSIS

What is DABUS?

- Device for the Autonomous Bootstrapping of Unified Sentence or DABUS is an Artificial Intelligence (AI) system.
- **Created by:** Stephen Thaler
- It simulates human brainstorming and creates new inventions.
- DABUS is a particular type of AI, often referred to as **creativity machines** because they are capable of independent and complex functioning.
- The system differs from everyday AI like **Siri** (the voice of Apple's iPhones).

What are creativity machines?

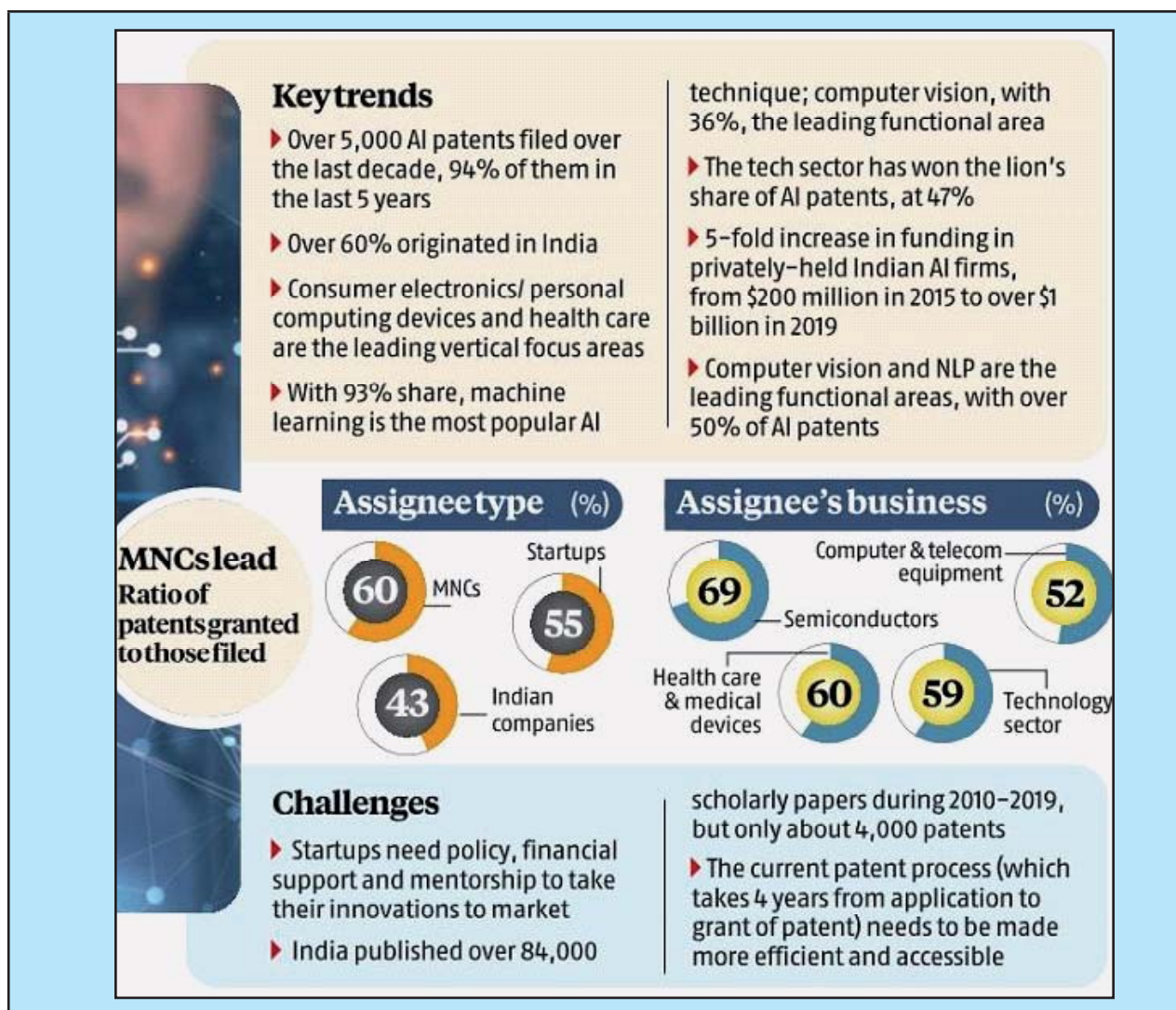
- Creativity machines have the capability to process and critically analyze data, learning from it.

What is Artificial Intelligence?

- AI is simply the science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programs.
- It is related to the similar task of using computers to understand human intelligence..

AI in India

- The last half decade have witnessed **significant uptake of AI-focused innovation** in India, with over **4,000 AI patents** being filed during the period.
 - ▶ This is six times higher than the figure for 2011-2015.
- On a global front, India was ranked **eighth in the top 10 countries by AI patent families**.
- Prior to 2002, the country had no AI-related patent filing.



Key-AI initiatives of Indian Government

- **US-India AI Initiative:** The Indo-US Science and Technology Forum (IUSSTF) launched the US-India Artificial Intelligence Initiative in March 2021.
 - ▶ **Aim:** To foster AI innovation by sharing ideas and experiences, identifying new opportunities in research and development and bilateral collaboration.
- **Responsible AI for Youth:** It is a national programme for government schools to empower the young generation to become AI-ready and reduce the skill gap in India.
 - ▶ **Established by:** the National e-Governance Division of MeitY
 - ▶ **Aim:** To help the students develop a new-age tech mindset and relevant skill-sets.
- **MCA 3.0 portal:** The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) recently launched a new version of its portal, **version 3.0, MCA 21**, which will leverage data analytics, AI, and ML, to simplify regulatory

filings for companies.

- **AI portal:** A dedicated artificial intelligence (AI) portal, India AI is slated as a central hub for everything. The portal will act as a one-stop-shop for all AI-related developments and initiatives in India.
 - ▶ **Jointly developed by:** MeitY and NASSCOM in June 2020
- **Promoting AI in schools:** NCERT is preparing a new **National Curriculum Framework for School Education** in pursuance of the **National Education Policy 2020**. This will also aim at introducing a basic course on AI at the secondary level.

◎ CONCLUSION

- With the patent approval, South Africa wants to increase innovation to solve its socio-economic issues
- Given the policy environment and the vast potential of AI, the granting of the patent makes sense.

BOMBAY HC STAYS ENFORCEMENT OF CODE OF ETHICS PROVISIONS UNDER NEW IT RULES

CONTEXT

The Bombay High Court stayed the implementation of Rule 9 (1) and (3) of the recently-notified **Information Technology (Guidelines for intermediaries and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**.

The provisions deal with the **code of ethics** under the new **IT rules**.

◎ BACKGROUND

- The Centre had notified the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**, under the **Information Technology Act, 2000**, in February this year.
- The rules, which were enforced from May, regulate social media companies, streaming and digital news content, virtually bringing them, for the first time, under the ambit of government supervision.
- For these rules, pleas were filed before the High Court (filed by digital news website *The Leaflet*). They sought an interim stay on the new IT rules.
- The petitioners had challenged the following sections of the new IT rules:
 - ▶ 9 (Observance and Adherence to Code of Ethics)
 - ▶ 14 (Constitution of Inter-Departmental Committee)
 - ▶ 16 (Blocking of Information in Case of Emergency)
- The petitioners argued that new IT rules were in contradiction to the fundamental rights under
 - ▶ Article 14 (equality before law)
 - ▶ Article 19 (freedom of speech and expression)
 - ▶ Article 21 (protection of life and personal liberty)
- The petition argued that the new rules were unconstitutionally restricting the freedom of the press. The rules were "seeking to effectively monitor and censor speech in the internet by a different Ministry, the most draconian law on free speech of recent times".

and expression and beyond the substantive law of **Information Technology Act** that is in effect since 2009.

- **Rule 9 (1)** says that digital media content publishers must observe and adhere to the **code of ethics** in the IT guidelines.
- **Rule 9 (3)** provides a three-tier structure to address the grievances made in relation to publishers to ensure that the code of ethics is followed.
- The High Court, however, did not stay the implementation of Rule 9 (2) that deals with action against publishers when they are in contravention of the law.
- The bench also refused to stay the Rules 14 and 16 of the IT guidelines.
 - ▶ **Rule 14** deals with the formation of an inter-departmental committee as an oversight mechanism for digital media. The committee can recommend the Ministry of Information and Technology to initiate action against publishers based on grievances.
 - ▶ **Rule 16** deals with the powers of the government to block content "in case of an emergency".

"Dissent in democracy is vital.... For proper administration of the State, it is healthy to invite criticism of all those who are in public service for the nation to have a structured growth, but with the 2021 Rules in place, one would have to think twice before criticizing any such personality, even if the writer/editor/publisher may have good reasons to do so".

◎ ANALYSIS

Reasons behind the court's decision

- A bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice GS Kulkarni observed that the provisions were an intrusion on the **right to freedom of speech**
- The **India IT Rules 2021** include an appendix on '**Code of Ethics**' that a publishing body, journalist, an intermediary or any other person posting content online must adhere to.
- These norms include an **advisory code of conduct** prescribed by the **Press Council of India (PCI)** and the **Cable TV network (CTVN) Rules**.

Ethics in India IT Rules 2021

- The Bombay High Court pointed out that the IT Act itself did not have a provision for bringing in such censure on online content.
- The PCI and CTVN norms were formulated under separate statutory legislation but the Union government tried “illegally” to grant an “exalted status” of mandatory compliance to such norms.

Court's views on the provision (Code of Ethics)

- People would be starved of the **liberty of thought** and feel suffocated to exercise their **right of freedom of speech and expression**, if they are made to live in present times of content regulation on the internet with the **Code of Ethics** hanging over their head as the Sword of Damocles.

Major ethical issues faced by IT

- IT professionals, by nature, have access to a boatload of sensitive information.
- Since they are employed in various workplaces — including healthcare, business, and banking

— the information that they are able to view and manipulate can raise security issues.

- Major ethical issues faced by Information Technology (IT) are:
 - ▶ Personal Privacy
 - ▶ Access Right
 - ▶ Harmful Actions
 - ▶ Patents
 - ▶ Copyright
 - ▶ Trade Secrets
 - ▶ Liability
 - ▶ Piracy

© CONCLUSION

Despite the very real breaches of privacy that can occur in IT work, there is currently no standard policy of IT ethics. Applying codes of ethics in IT can help minimize harm and prevent the misuse of sensitive information.

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SECTION: B

(PRELIMS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

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MAIDEN AL-MOHED AL-HINDI EXERCISE

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** Recently, the 'AL - Mohed AL - Hindi' two countries' training between India and Saudi Arabia began on August 12 on the coast of Al Jubail.

About the Exercise

- This is the first-ever naval exercise between both nations.
- India's guided-missile destroyer INS Kochi will participate in the exercise.
- The joint naval exercise will show the growing defense and military cooperation between India and Saudi Arabia.
- The exercise is taking place due to rising tension in the Gulf region after the drone attack on a merchant tanker off Oman.
- It will showcase the reflection of growing cooperation between Saudi Arabia and India.

The Importance of Indian Participation in Bilateral Exercises

- It is an indication of the high level of trust and confidence among the member nations.
- It is an important means of building confidence (CBM) and an indication of the faith placed by India in another nation or group of member states.
- It is a tool for projection of a nation's soft power i.e. culture, language, customs, beliefs, food habits and lifestyle.

Other Military Exercise of India

- | Other Military Exercise of India | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indian Army <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hand in Hand- China ➤ Surya Kiran- Nepal ➤ Sampriti- Bangladesh ➤ Mitra Shakti- Sri Lanka ➤ IMBAX- Myanmar ➤ Garuda Shakti- Indonesia ➤ INDRA- Russia ➤ Ajeya Warrior- UK ➤ Nomadic Elephant- Mongolia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indian Navy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ SIMBEX- Singapore ➤ NASEEM-AL-BAHAR – Oman ➤ Indian Air Force ➤ GARUDA- France ➤ INDRADHANUSH- UK |

36th MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** Union Home Minister has recently chaired the 36th meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on Official Language.

About the Parliamentary Committee for Official Language:

The Parliamentary Committee on Official Languages was established in 1976 under section 4 of the Official Languages Act, 1963.

- **Mandate:** The Committee will review the progress made in the use of Hindi for the official

purposes of the Union and submit a report to the President making recommendations. The President will then submit the report to each House of Parliament and forward it to all State Governments.

- **Composition:** The Committee consists of 30 Members of Parliament, 20 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha.
- **Chairperson:** The chairperson of the Committee is elected by the members of the Committee. As a meeting, the Minister of Internal Unions was elected as the Chairperson of the Committee from time to time.

Official Language of India

- Hindi in Devanagari script is declared as the Official Language of the Union under Article 343(1).
- While adopting and framing of Constitution, it was envisaged that English will continue to be used for executive, judicial and legal purposes for an initial period of 15 years i.e. till 1965.
- Later, the Official Languages Act, 1963, a constitutional amendment allowed for the continuation of English with Hindi for indefinitely until legislation decides to change it.
- Besides, it was also provided that President may authorize the use of Hindi language for some specific purposes.

Parliamentary Committees

- These committees are appointed or elected by the House or nominated by the Speaker.
- They work under the direction of the Speaker and presents its report to the House or to the Speaker and the Secretariat for which is provided by the Lok Sabha Secretariat.
- Parliamentary Committees are of two kinds:

Standing Committees

- ▶ Standing Committees are permanent and regular committees constituted from time to time in pursuance of the provisions of an Act of Parliament or Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.
- ▶ The work of these Committees is of continuous nature.
- ▶ The Financial Committees, DRSCs and some other Committees come under the category of Standing Committees.

Ad hoc Committees

- ▶ Ad hoc Committees are appointed for a specific purpose and they cease to exist when they finish the task assigned to them and submit a report.
- ▶ The principal Ad hoc Committees are the Select and Joint Committees on Bills.
- ▶ Railway Convention Committee, Joint Committee on Food Management in Parliament House Complex etc. also come under the category of ad hoc Committees.

REVISING ARUNACHAL PRADESH ST

◎ **CONTEXT:** Recently, Rajya Sabha passed the Constitutional Amendment Bill (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

◎ **ABOUT:**

- The Bill seeks to amend the nomenclature of certain tribes from Arunachal Pradesh mentioned in the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950.

What does the Bill amend?

| NAMING THE TRIBES CORRECTLY | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Name in 1950 Order | What's being changed | Districts inhabited by tribe |
| Abor | Being deleted because adi also listed in the order is the same as Abor | East Siang Siang Upper Siang Shi yomi Lower Dibang Valley |
| Khampti | Being corrected to Tai-Khamti | Namsai |
| Mishmi [Idu, Taroon] | Mishmi-Kaman (Miju Mishmi), Idu (Mishmi) and Taraon (Digaru Mishmi) being named as separate tribes | Anjaw Lohit Dibang valley lower Dibang valley and parts of east siang and upper siang |
| Momba | Being replaced with names of four tribes; Monpa, Memba, Sartang, Sajolang (Miji) | Monpa: Tawang, W Kameng Memba: Upper Siang and west siang Sartang: West Kameng Sajolang: E & W Kameng |
| Any Naga tribe | Being replaced with names of four Naga tribes (Nocte, Tangsa, Tutsa and wancho) that live in arunachal | Nocte: central part of tirap Wancho: longding Tusta: Changlang Tangsa: Changlang |

- The Bill seeks to modify Part-XVIII of the Schedule to the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950. Part-XVIII lists 16 tribes of Arunachal, in order: Abor, Aka, Apatani, Nyishi, Galong, Khampti, Khowa, Mishmi [Idu, Taroon], Momba, Any Naga tribes, Sherdukpen, Singpho, Hrusso, Tagin, Khamba and Adi.
- The Bill corrects the names of tribes spelt incorrectly, and adds names of a few tribes that were either named ambiguously or had their parent group named only.
- It makes five changes
 - deleting 'Abor' (tribe) at serial No. 1
 - changing 'Khampti' at serial No. 6 to 'Tai Khamti'
 - including 'Mishmi-Kaman (Miju Mishmi)', 'Idu (Mishmi)' and 'Taraon (Digaru Mishmi)' at serial No. 8 in lieu of Mishmi [Idu, Taroon]
 - including 'Monpa', 'Memba', 'Sartang', 'Sajolang (Miji)' at serial No. 9 in place of 'Momba'
 - Replacing 'Any Naga Tribes' at serial No. 10 with names of four tribes: 'Nocte', 'Tangsa', 'Tutsa', and 'Wancho'.

Why is it significant?

- Indigenous nomenclature of tribes has been a long-standing demand in Arunachal Pradesh for two reasons:
 - For the recognition of individual identity and to do away with the ambiguity as a result of errors in their names.

- Most of the names for tribes in the Schedule were “colonial interpretations”. “The move is historic because now communities will be known by the name they identify with and not something that is imposed on them

Related Information

Scheduled Tribe

- **Article 366 (25)** of the Constitution refers to Scheduled Tribes as those communities, who are scheduled in accordance with **Article 342** of the Constitution.
- **Article 342** says that only those communities who have been declared as such by the President through an initial public notification or through a subsequent amending Act of Parliament will be considered to be Scheduled Tribes.
- The Constitution is silent about the criteria for specification of a community as a Scheduled Tribe.
- There are certain Scheduled Tribes, 75 in number known as **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**, who are characterized by:-
 - ▶ pre-agriculture level of technology
 - ▶ stagnant or declining population
 - ▶ extremely low literacy
 - ▶ subsistence level of economy

INLAND VESSELS BILL, 2021

◎ **CONTEXT:**

Recently, The Union Cabinet has unveiled the Inland Vessels Bill, 2021, which will replace the Inland Vessels Act, 1917.

Key features of the bill

- This will be the unifying law of the whole world and will replace the different laws made by the Nations
- The registration certificate issued under the proposed law will be deemed to be valid for all countries in the United States and the Union Territories, and there will be no need to seek special permits in the States
- A total of 4000 kilometers of waterways used
- According to the bill, a central database will be maintained that will record the details of each vessel such as its registration and personnel, all on an electronic site
- Vessel vessels will be required to register legally, and non-mechanized vessels will also be required to register by region, taluk or pan or valley
- Extends the definition of ‘inland water’, by including seawater and national waterways declared by Central Government

Objectives of Inland Vessels Bill, 2021

- This Bill will promote economic and safe transportation and trade of inland waterways and bring uniformity in the application of the law
- It will also help in reducing the water pollution caused by these inland vessels as this bill directs the Central Government to designate a list of chemicals, substances, etc. as pollutants

Criticism of the bill

- Bill takes away a lot of rights of the states and vests them in the hands of the Centre.

Inland Waterway in India

- India has around 15,000 km of inland waterways network that comprise rivers, channels, backwaters, creeks, etc.
- In 2016, 111 inland waterways were notified as National Waterways of India under the National Waterways Act, 2016.
- Of these, 13 National Waterways are operational for shipping and navigation and cargo/passenger vessels are moving on them, according to the government.
- The Inland Waterways Authority of India which comes under the Ministry of Shipping is developing the National Waterways for commercial navigation, with assistance from World Bank.

OPEN NETWORK FOR DIGITAL COMMERCE (ONDC) INITIATIVE

◎ CONTEXT:

The Department of Industrial Development and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has appointed an advisory committee for its Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) project aimed at curbing "digital sovereignty".



◎ ABOUT

ONDC

Aim: This is aimed at making e-commerce processes open source, thus creating a platform that can be used by all online retailers.

- **Initiative:** Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) is globally first-of-its-kind initiative that aims to democratize Digital Commerce, moving it from a platform-centric model to an open-network.
- **Platform:** As UPI is to the digital payment domain, ONDC is to e-commerce in India.

Conduct of ONDC

- **Data sharing:** ONDC shall not mandate sharing of any transaction-level data by participants with ONDC.
- **Privacy:** ONDC will work with its participants to publish aggregate metrics on network performance without compromising on confidentiality and privacy
- **Data protection bill:** ONDC will be compliant with the **Information Technology Act, 2000** and designed for compliance with the emerging **Personal Data Protection Bill**.

Significance

- **Meaning:** ONDC will enable, buyers and sellers to be digitally visible and transact through an open network.
- **Digitization:** ONDC is expected to digitize the entire value chain, standardize operations, promote inclusion of suppliers, derive efficiency in logistics and enhance value for consumers.
- **Empowering consumers:** It will empower merchants and consumers by breaking silos to form a single network to drive innovation and scale, transforming all businesses from retail goods, food to mobility.

Examples

- For example, while the operating system of Apple's iPhones (iOS) is closed source, meaning it cannot be legally modified or reverse engineered,
- Google's Android operating system is open-source, and therefore it is possible by smartphone manufacturers such as Samsung, Xiaomi, One Plus, etc. to modify it for their hardware.

QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ELDERLY INDEX

◎ CONTEXT:

Recently, the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) released the Quality of Life for Elderly Index.

About the Quality of Life for Elderly Index

- The Index was created by the Institute for Competitiveness at the request of EAC-PM. Index sheds light on issues which often not mentioned- problems faced by the elderly.

United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies

- ITU is the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies – ICTs.

The **EAC-PM** is an unconstitutional, illegal, independent body set up to provide advice on economic and governmental matters in the Indian Government, especially to the Prime Minister.

- The Index framework has four pillars:
 - Financial Well-being
 - Social Well-being
 - Health System
 - Income Security
- Index also includes sub-pillars namely: Economic Empowerment, Educational Attainment & Employment, Social Status, Physical Security, Basic Health, Psychological Wellbeing, Social Security and Enabling Environment.
- This index broadens the way to understand the needs and opportunities of elderly population in India.
- It goes far beyond the income support that often narrows policy thinking and debate about the needs of this age group.
- The index highlights to investing in health, education and employment for young people today.

Key Highlights from the Report:

- The share of elders, as a percentage of the total population in the country, is expected to increase from around 7.5% in 2001 to almost 12.5% by 2026, and surpass 19.5% by 2050.
- **State-wise ranking:** Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh are the top-scoring regions in Aged and Relatively Aged States, respectively. The Aged States refer to States with an elderly population of more than 5 million, whereas Relatively Aged States refer to States with an Elderly population of less than 5 million.
 - Chandigarh and Mizoram are the top-scoring regions in UTs and North-East States category.
- **Smart work with pillars:** The Health System pillar ranks the highest in the country, 66.97 in the whole of India, followed by 62.34 in Social Well-being.
 - Financial well-being looks at 44.7 points, which is reduced by the low performance of 21 countries across the Education Attainment & Employment pillar, reflecting the scope of improvement.
 - Countries have done very poorly in the Income Security column because more than half of countries have points below the national average in Income Security, which is the lowest base of all pillars.

Global Ways:

- **Ten Years of Healthy Aging (2020-2030):** Ten years of healthy aging have been approved by the 73rd World Health Assembly (2020 World Health Organization) decision-making body.
- **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** wants no one left behind and ensure that the goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are met at all levels of society, at all ages, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable - including the elderly.

COMMISSION FOR AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN THE NCR AND ADJOINING AREAS BILL, 2021

◎ CONTEXT:

The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Bill, 2021 is set to be tabled in parliament to replace earlier promulgated ordinance with some changes.

◎ **ABOUT:**

- The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Bill, 2021 aims to replace earlier promulgated ordinance with same changes.
- The changes have been devised following several rounds of negotiations with farmers of the region.
- The farmers had raised concerns of stiff penalties and possible jail terms for stubble burning.
- **Decriminalized Stubble Burning:** The bill has decriminalized the act of stubble burning and withdrawn the clause for possible jail time.
- **Environment Compensation fees:** The bill has provided for an environment compensation fee to be levied by on those who are found to be engaged in stubble burning, including farmers.
- **New commission for environment regulation:** The bill will replace the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority or EPCA with a commission having more powers.

Functions of the newly proposed commission:

The bill has defined functions of commission as:

- **Coordination with state governments:** The commission will coordinate with concerned state governments of Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh as per provisions of the bill for taking actions taken by them.
- **Pollution control:** It includes planning and executing plans to prevent and control air pollution in the NCR.
 - It will also provide a framework for identification of air pollutants.
- **Collecting Environment Compensation fees:** The collection of such fees will be exclusively done by the commission.
- **Identification of Violators:** The commission will be in charge of identifying violators, monitoring factories and industries and any other polluting unit in the region.
 - Further, it will have the powers to shut down such units.
- **Overruling directives of state government:** The Commission will also have the powers to overrule directives issued by the state governments in the region that may be in violation of pollution norms.
- **R&D on air pollution in NCR:** The commission is mandated with conducting research and development through networking with technical institution.
- **Preventive Measures:** The commission has been mandated to take preventive measures such as increasing plantation and addressing stubble burning.
- It will have authority to issue directions on matters including inspections, or regulation which will be binding on the concerned person or authority.

Significance of the Bill

- **Eases penalties norms:** In contrast with penalties and jail terms as proposed in original ordinance, the bill has decriminalizes the act of stubble burning but kept alive the penalties in form of Environment Compensation fees.
- **Ensuring uniform regulations across NCR:** The power of the commission to overrule directives issued by the state governments in the region that may be in violation of pollution norms will ensure uniform application of law throughout National Capital Region across five states.

Way Forward

- During winters every year National Capital Region is encompassed from all sides by

thick smog caused due to amalgamation of climatic factors, smoke due to stubble burning, Vehicular and industrial pollution.

- The government's Graded Response Action Plan to combat this menace has been effective to some extent but there was a need for a strong executive authority to regulate pollution norms across NCR.
- The bill will help to combat the menace of air pollution effectively.

Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)

- The plan was approved by the Supreme Court in 2016 after consultation with the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA).
- EPCA coordinates with 13 different agencies in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan (NCR areas) to implement GRAP.
- **Only Emergency Measure:** It works only as an emergency measures during winters when pollution level in the country soars very high.
 - It aims to tackle industrial, vehicular and combustion emissions when the air quality moves from 'Poor' to 'Very Poor' as per National Air Quality Index.
 - If air quality reaches the 'Severe+' stage, the response under GRAP includes extreme measures such as shutting down schools and implementing the odd-even road-space rationing scheme.

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED ANIMALAI FLYING FROG REHABILITATION EFFORTS

◎ CONTEXT:

Recently, Frog enthusiast in Kerala has constructed two ponds at Windermere Estate to restore the habitat for the Anaimalai flying frog.

About the Anaimalai flying frog (*Racophorus pseudomalabaricus*)

- It is also known as the False Malabar Gliding Frog.
- **Endemic to:** Southern part of the Western Ghats.
- **Size:** This species is usually larger than the bush frogs: the female can grow up to three inches.
- **Mating period:** Between June and October, during the rainy season.
 - The female creates foam nests on leaves, to lay eggs and the male fertilizes them.
 - The outer layer of foam protects the eggs from bacteria, predators, and weather changes.
 - When the eggs hatch, the nest disintegrates and tadpoles drop into the water body below.
- **Threats:** Population declined rapidly due to the loss of habitat due to clearing the undergrowth during cardamom plantations.
- **Conservation Status:** IUCN Status is Critically Endangered

Wildlife Trust of India (WTI)

- WTI is a leading Indian nature conservation organization that is committed to the service of nature established in 1998.

- Its mission is to conserve wildlife and its habitat.
- Works for the welfare of individual wild animals, in partnership with communities and governments.
- WTI works in six priority landscapes, driven by nine key strategies or Big Ideas.
- **Vision:** A secure natural heritage of India.
- **Mission:** To conserve wildlife and its habitat and to work for the welfare of individual wild animals, in partnership with communities and governments.
- **Motto:** In Service of Nature

IPCC ASSESSMENT REPORT RELEASED

◎ **CONTEXT:**

Recently, The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released the first part of the sixth assessment report (AR6). The two remaining parts are expected to be released next year.

About the IPCC reports

- The IPCC reports are created by 3 working groups of scientists.
 - Working Group-I, deals with the scientific basis for climate change.
 - Working Group-II looks at the expected impacts, vulnerabilities, and adaptation issues.
 - Working Group-III deals with the actions that can be taken for combating climate change.
- Title of the report is Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis.
- The assessment reports are the most widely accepted scientific opinion about the climate change.
- They form the basis for government to form policies to tackle climate change.
- It also provides scientific foundation for international climate change negotiations.

Key findings of the Sixth report

- **Impact on global warming:** Global warming of 1.5°C and 2°C will be increased unless deep reductions in CO₂ and other GHGs during the 21st century.
- **Net zero emission:** It noted that global net-zero by 2050 was the minimum required to keep the temperature rise to 1.5 degree Celsius.
- **Effect on monsoon:** The South West Monsoon has declined over the past few decades because of the increase of aerosols, but once this reduces, we will experience heavy monsoon rainfall.
- **Sea Temperature:** The Indian Ocean, which includes the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal, has warmed faster than the global average.
- **Surface Temperature:** The sea surface temperature over Indian Ocean is likely to increase by 1 to 2 °C when there is 1.5°C to 2°C global warming.
- Earth's global surface temperature has gone up by around 1.1 °C in comparison to the average in 1850–1900.
 - Such a level hasn't been witnessed in 125,000 years.
- **Rise in sea-level:** Sea levels to rise by 2–3 meters over the next 2,000 years.

- **Precipitation & Drought:** Increased frequency and intensity of the hot extremes, marine heat waves, and the heavy precipitation along with the agricultural and ecological droughts.
- **Melting Glaciers:** Intensification and variability of the global water cycle.
- **Carbon dioxide (CO₂) Concentrations:** The ocean and land carbon sinks are expected to be less effective.
 - The world has already depleted 86% of its available carbon budget.

IPCC

- It was set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).
- The IPCC is an organization of governments of the members of the United Nations or WMO.
- The IPCC currently has 195 members.
- The main objective of the IPCC is to provide scientific information to governments at all levels so that they can use it to develop climate policies.
- IPCC does not engage in scientific research itself. Instead, asks scientists from around the world to go for all the relevant scientific literature that is related to climate change and draw up the logical conclusions.

ANNUAL PERSEID METEOR SHOWER

◎ CONTEXT:

The Perseid meteor shower, which is an annual celestial event, is expected to reach its peak.

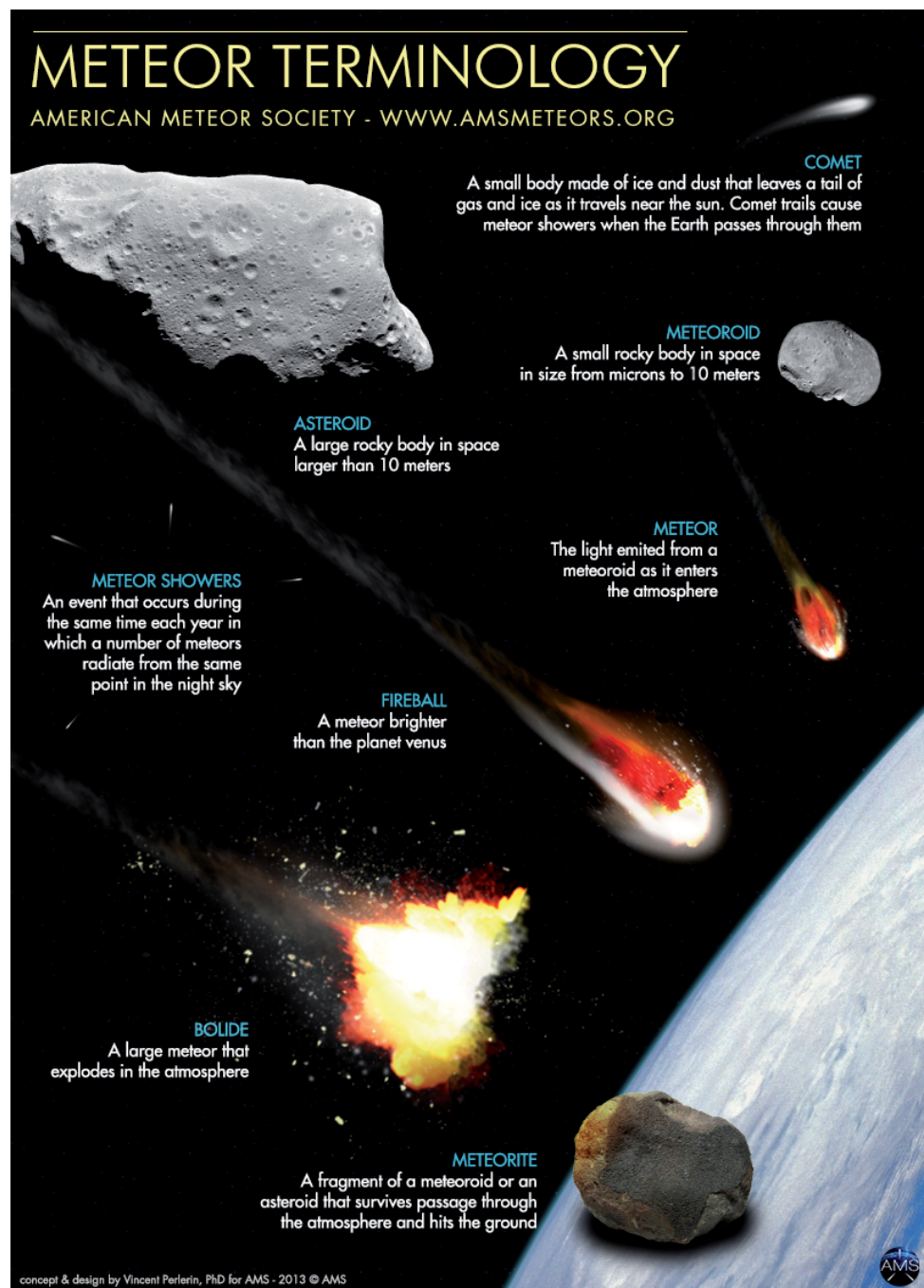
What are Meteor Showers?

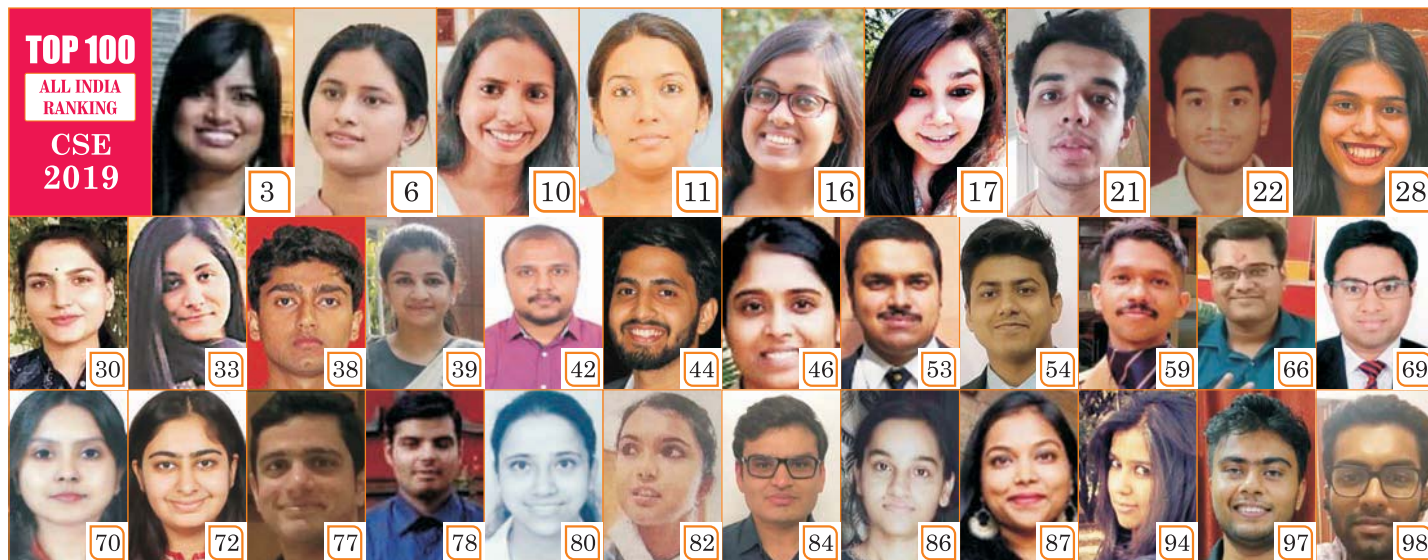
- Meteors are pieces of rock and ice released by comets as they orbit their orbits around the sun.
- When meteors fall toward Earth, the resistance causes the space to vibrate and, as meteorites pass through space, leave behind gases of bright gas visible to observers and not to the rock itself.
- Meteor showers, on the other hand, are proven when the Earth passes through the debris left by a comet or asteroid.
- When a meteor arrives on Earth, it is called a meteorite and a series of meteorites, when they come together at the same time, is called a meteor shower.
- According to NASA, there are more than 30 rainstorms that occur each year and are visible on Earth.

About Perseid meteor shower

- The Perseids are prolific types of meteor shower which are associated with the comet Swift-Tuttle.
- The meteors are called Perseids as the point from which they appear to hail lies in the constellation Perseus.
- The Perseid meteor shower will be visible in the northern hemisphere and down to mid-southern latitudes.
- These Meteors are caused due to the tiny, sand grain- to pea-size bits of dusty debris that strikes the top of Earth's atmosphere roughly 130 km up.

- The debris has deposited the tail of the comet Swift-Tuttle.
- Every year, Earth passes through this region of the "river of rubble" around July 17 and continues till August 24.
- Faint Perseids appear as tiny, quick streaks.
- They sail across the sky for several seconds and leave a brief train of glowing smoke.
- Perseids deliver more bright meteors than any other annual meteor shower.
- The stream of debris is called the Perseid cloud that stretches along the orbit of the comet.
- The cloud consists of particles ejected by the comet as it travels on its 133-year orbit.





SUCCESS IS A PRACTICE WE DO!

