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# Rights Issues

1

## Gujarat govt constitutes a five-member commission to protect the rights of tribal

**Context:** Gujarat government constituted a five-member commission to decide rightful beneficiaries of Rabari, Bharwad, and Charan castes residing in the Ness areas of Gir, Barda, and Aalech forests.

### Background

- The central government had, through a notification dated October 29, 1956, conferred ST status on people from Rabari, Bharwad, and Charan communities living in the nesses of Gir, Barda, and Alech in Gujarat.
- Many tribal community leaders have been protesting for quite some time alleging that several people who do not live in nesses have managed to get ST certificates and are enjoying undue reservation benefits, mainly in government jobs.
- To resolve this issue and decide the legitimate beneficiaries of ST status among the members of the three communities, the commission has been formed.

### Composition:

- The Five-member commission would consist of a retired High Court Judge, two retired District Court Judges, a retired Forest Department official, and a retired Additional Collector.

### Objective:

- To resolve the long-pending issue about the Scheduled Tribes Certificate for the tribal living in the region.
- To protect the Constitutional rights of rightful tribal and to prevent the wrong person from taking benefits of the tribal.

### About the Tribes

#### • Bharwad

- ▶ The term Bharwad is reported to be a modified form of the word 'Badawad' and 'bada' means sheep and 'Wada' in Gujarati refer to compound or enclosure.
- ▶ The person who possesses compounds or pens in this caste of shepherds was known as Badawad which in course of time came to be known as Gadarieas. In Sough Gujarat they are referred to as Ahirs.
- ▶ They communicate in Gujarati. They use the Gujarati script.

- ▶ Clan exogamy is the norm. They practice monogamy. Ghargenu (remarriage) is permitted in case of the death of either spouse.
- ▶ Bharwad women have no right to property inheritance. Bharwad women enjoy low status.
- ▶ The Bharwads are pastorals who are permitted to graze their sheep and cattle in certain demarcated areas of the reserved forest. Some Bharwads possess dry agricultural land under the Satharnal scheme (1968).
- ▶ The Bharwads profess Hinduism. Lord Krishna is considered the supreme God. Each clan has its deity. Their chief deity is Masai Mata.

- **Charan**

- ▶ They are also called Gadhvi. The name Charan is derived from the word char which means grazing.
- ▶ They speak Gujarati and use Gujarati script. The Charan are strictly vegetarian.
- ▶ There are four endogamous groups among the Charans known as Prajia, Seva, Agarvacha, and Tumbel. Hierarchical order does exist between these groups
- ▶ The Charans marry within their community.
- ▶ The Charans are traditionally cattle breeders. They have also adopted agriculture as their secondary occupation.
- ▶ They profess Hinduism. The main deity of the Charan is Pithorai Mata located at Pathrama village in Mendarda taluka of Junagadh. She is their chief as well as a regional deity.

- **Rabari**

- ▶ Bhopa is the short name used for a group of Rabaris who are referred to as Bhopa Rabari.
- ▶ They had migrated from Rajasthan via Kutch to Okhamandal and now most of the Bhopa Rabaris are, distributed in the Okhamandal region of Jamnagar district.
- ▶ They speak a language which is a mixture of Gujarati, Kachchi, and Marwari words and Pharasi; it is popularly known as a language, by the community name, i.e. Bhopa. They use the Gujarati script.
- ▶ Women do not have the right to parental property.
- ▶ The main economic activity of the Bhopas is sheep breeding and selling of milk.
- ▶ The Bhopas profess Hinduism and are Shiva and Shakti, followers.

### **Constitutional Provisions related to Schedule Tribes**

- **Article 366(25)** provides the definition of Scheduled Tribes: Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution;
- **Article 342 (1):** The President may with respect to any State or Union territory, and where it is a State, after consultation with the Governor thereof, by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall for the purposes of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes in relation to that State or Union territory, as the case may be.
- **Article 342 (2):** Parliament may by law include in or exclude from the list of Scheduled Tribes specified in a notification issued under clause (1) any tribe or tribal community or part of or group within any tribe or tribal community, but save as aforesaid a notification issued under the said clause shall not be varied by any subsequent notification Part XVII Official Language Chapter I Language of the Union.

### **Educational, Economic and Public Employment-related Safeguards**

- **Article 15:** Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- **Article 16:** Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment
- **Article 19:** Protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech, etc
- **Article 46:** Promotion of Educational and Economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections
- **Article 335:** Claims of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to services and posts
- Political Safeguards
- **Article 243D** provides reservation of Seats for Scheduled Tribes in Panchayats.
- **Article 330** provides reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People.
- **Article 332** provides reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in Legislative Assemblies of the States.
- **Article 334** provides that reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and the State Vidhan Sabhas the representation of the Ang would continue up to January, 2020.

### **Agency for Monitoring Safeguards**

- **Article 338 A:** National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST).

2

## **Disabled are entitled to the same benefits of SC/ST quota: Supreme Court**

**Context:** Recently, the Supreme Court, in a significant decision, confirmed that persons suffering from disabilities are also socially backward and entitled to the same benefits of relaxation as Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe candidates in public employment and education.

### **Background**

- The decision came on a petition filed by Aryan Raj, a special needs against a Punjab and Haryana High Court order.
- Mr. Raj was denied relaxation in minimum qualifying marks in the Painting and Applied Art course in the Government College of Arts, Chandigarh.
- The college insisted that disabled persons too, need to meet the general qualifying standard of 40% in the aptitude test, whereas SC/ST candidates were given relaxation to 35%.

### **Supreme Court upheld the Delhi High Court Judgment**

- The three-judge bench of the Supreme Court upheld a 2012 judgment of the Delhi High Court in Anamol Bhandari (minor) through his father/Natural Guardian v. Delhi Technological University in a significant decision.
- The High Court held that people suffering from disabilities are also socially backward, and are, therefore, at the very least, entitled to the same benefits as given to the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe candidates.

- Setting aside the college decision, the Supreme Court noted that Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe candidates require 35% to pass in the aptitude test, the same shall apply so far as the disabled are concerned in the future.
- The apex court allowed Mr. Raj to apply afresh for the current year.
- The Supreme Court also highlighted the Delhi High Court's words in the Anmol Bhandari case that new academic courses should be crafted to specifically cater to the needs of intellectually disabled persons.
  - ▶ The court observed that intellectually/mentally challenged persons have certain limitations, which are not there in physically challenged persons.
- Some important Constitutional Provisions related to the SC/ST people
- **Article 15 (4)** empowers the State to make special provision for the advancement of the SCs and the STs.
- **Article 15 (5)** empowers the State to reserve seats for SCs and the STs in admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the State.
- However, it excludes minority educational institutions referred to in Article 30 (1).
- **Article 16 (4A)** - Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for reservation in matters of promotion to any class or classes of posts in the services under the State in favor of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes which, in the opinion of the State, are not adequately represented in the services under the State.
- **Article 46** - The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
- **Article 243D** - This article assures the reservation of seats in Panchayats, both for men and women of Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and also assures the seats of chairpersons in the Panchayats, according to their population in the constituencies.
  - ▶ The actual number of seats is to be provided by the state govt by law, but the percentage should approximate the population of these caste groups in the respective constituencies.
- **Article 243T** - This article makes the similar provision of seats for SC/ST men and women, in the Municipalities.
- **Article 275** - A provision is made for providing grants-in-aid, out of Consolidated Fund of India, each year for promoting the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in the State or raising the level of administration of the Scheduled Areas.
- **Article 330** - It makes provision for Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the House of the people.
- **Article 332** - It makes similar provisions for SC and ST people, in the Legislative Assemblies of the States.
- **Article 338** - It makes provision for National Commission for Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes.
- **Article 339** - Control of the Union over the administration of Scheduled Areas and the welfare of Scheduled Tribes.

**3****EWS quota problem referred to Constitution Bench**

**Context:** The Supreme Court referred to a five-judge Bench the "substantial question of law" whether or not grant of 10% reservation to economically weaker sections of the society is 'unconstitutional' and violates the 50% ceiling cap on quota declared by the courtroom itself.

## About

- It provides for 10% reservation in government jobs and educational institutions for EWS, by amending Articles 15 and 16 that deal with the fundamental right to equality.
- While Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, Article 16 guarantees equal opportunity in matters of public employment.
- An additional clause was added to both provisions, giving Parliament the power to make special laws for EWS like it does for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Castes.
- The states are to notify who constitute EWS to be eligible for reservation.

## What's the need to refer to a larger bench?

- A reference to a larger Bench means that the legal challenge is an important one.
- As per Article 145(3) of the Constitution, "the minimum number of Judges who are to sit for the purpose of deciding any case involving a substantial question of law as to the interpretation of this Constitution" shall be five.
- The Supreme Court rules of 2013 also say that writ petitions that allege a violation of fundamental rights will generally be heard by a bench of two judges unless it raises substantial questions of law. In that case, a five-judge bench would hear the case.
- Laws made by Parliament are presumed to be constitutional until proven otherwise in court. The SC had refused to stay the 103rd Amendment.
- A reference will make no difference to the operation of the EWS quota.

## Why is the quota challenged?

The law was challenged primarily on two grounds.

- ▶ Violating the Basic Structure of the Constitution: This argument stems from the view that the special protections guaranteed to socially disadvantaged groups is part of the Basic Structure and that the 103rd Amendment departs from this by promising special protections on the sole basis of economic status.
- ▶ Violating the fundamental right to practise a trade/profession: Another challenge has been made on behalf of private, unaided educational institutions. They have argued that their fundamental right to practise a trade/profession is violated when the state compels them to implement its reservation policy and admit students on any criteria other than merit.

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# Executive & Legislature

## 1 Meghalaya is demanding Inner Permit Line

**Context:** The tribals of Meghalaya are protesting against the CAA and NRC because they do not want “outsiders” coming in to take their land and businesses or dominating their economy. They also demanding the implementation of something called the Inner Line Permit, which was a system started by the British.

### About Inner Permit Line:

- The Inner Line Permit is a document that allows an Indian citizen to visit or stay in a state that is protected under the ILP system.
- The system is in force today in three northeastern states:
  - ▶ Arunachal Pradesh
  - ▶ Nagaland
  - ▶ Mizoram
- No Indian citizen can visit any of these states unless he/she belongs to that state, nor can he/she overstay beyond the period specified in the ILP.
- An ILP is issued by the state government concerned. It can be obtained after applying either online or physically.
- It states the dates of travel and also specifies the particular areas in the state which the ILP holder can travel to.

### The CAA connection:

- The Citizenship (Amendment) Act aims to make it easier for non-Muslim refugees from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to obtain Indian citizenship.
- It means that beneficiaries under CAB will become Indian citizens but will not be able to settle in these three states.
- As a matter of fact, the same restriction applies to existing Indian citizens.
- Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland are not among those drastically affected by migration from Bangladesh. Mizoram shares a border with Bangladesh.
- The three states that have seen the highest migration, however, are Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya, none of which has an ILP system.

### Knowing the State:

- Meghalaya is a tiny state, with approximately 30 lakh people stretched across 22,000 square kilometres. On the south side, it borders Bangladesh and on the northern side, it borders Assam.

- Meghalaya came into being in 1972 after Assam was reorganised, and has a population of over 90 per cent tribals.
- They are divided into two broad groups:
  - ▶ the Garos (in the western side of the state)
  - ▶ the Khasis (in the east)
- Khasis are about 56 percent and Garos are about 34 percent.
- Meghalaya is the only other tribal-majority state in the region beyond the purview of the inner line – an anomaly tribal groups canvassing for it routinely point out.
- This despite the fact that parts of the state – the Khasi and the Jaintia hills – do fall under the jurisdiction of Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation.

### What does the state want?

- In the wake of the anti-CAA protests, which reintroduced the fear of outsiders, Meghalaya's Assembly unanimously passed a resolution urging the Government of India to implement Inner Line Permit in the state.
- If this happens, it will be a regressive step for the North East, considering over the years, the requirements of the ILP have softened and been diluted.

## 2 Suspension of MP from Lok Sabha

**Context:** Seven Congress members were suspended for unruly behaviour in the Lok Sabha. The motion was passed by a voice vote.

### About

- ▶ The general principle of suspension is that it is the role and duty of the Speaker of Lok Sabha to maintain order so that the House can function smoothly.
- ▶ In order to ensure that proceedings are conducted in the proper manner, the Speaker is empowered to force a Member to withdraw from the House (for the remaining part of the day), or to place him/her under suspension.

### What are the rules under which the Speaker acts?

- Rule Number 373 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business says: "The Speaker, if is of the opinion that the conduct of any Member is grossly disorderly, may direct such Member to withdraw immediately from the House, and any Member so ordered to withdraw shall do so forthwith and shall remain absent during the remainder of the day's sitting."
- To deal with more recalcitrant Members, the Speaker may take recourse to Rules 374 and 374A. Rule 374 says:
  - ▶ The Speaker may, if deems it necessary, name a Member who disregards the authority of the Chair or abuses the rules of the House by persistently and wilfully obstructing the business thereof.
  - ▶ If a Member is so named by the Speaker, the Speaker shall, on a motion being made forthwith put the question that the Member (naming such Member) be suspended from the service of the House for a period not exceeding the remainder of the session: Provided that the House may, at any time, on a motion being made, resolve that such suspension be terminated.
  - ▶ A member suspended under this rule shall forthwith withdraw from the precincts of the House."

### What is the procedure for revocation of a Member's suspension?

- While the Speaker is empowered to place a Member under suspension, the authority for revocation of this order is not vested in her.
- It is for the House, if it so desires, to resolve on a motion to revoke the suspension.

## 2

### Rajya Sabha Elections

**Context:** Elections for more than 70 Rajya Sabha seats will be held this year with 69 members set to retire, including 18 from the BJP and 17 from the Congress. With four seats already lying vacant, the total number of vacancies in the Upper House which has to be filled during the year will be 73, according to Rajya Sabha Secretariat data.

#### About

- The Rajya Sabha (the Upper House of Parliament) is modelled after the House of Lords in the United Kingdom.
- Rajya Sabha is a permanent body and is not subject to dissolution. However, one-third of the members retire every second year and are replaced by newly elected members.
- Each member is elected for a term of six years.
- The Vice President of India is the ex-officio Chairman of Rajya Sabha.

#### Composition:

- Article 80 of the Constitution lays down the maximum strength of Rajya Sabha as 250, out of which 12 members are nominated by the President and 238 are representatives of the States and the two Union Territories.
- The Rajya Sabha currently has 245 members including:
  - ▶ 233 elected members
  - ▶ 12 nominated
    - Nominated members of the Rajya Sabha are picked by the President of India. These MPs are luminaries from the world of economics, sports, literature, art, social service etc.
  - ▶ The Vice-President is the chairperson of the Rajya Sabha, which is the final stop before a bill is sent for presidential assent.

#### Tenure:

- Every Rajya Sabha MP has a tenure of six years and elections to one-third seats are held every two years.
- According to Section 154 of the Representation of the People Act 1951, a member has chosen to fill a casual vacancy will serve for the remainder of his predecessor's term of office.

#### Formula to elect members:

- While Lok Sabha members are elected directly by the voters, Rajya Sabha members are elected indirectly by the people, that is, by the MLAs.
- Members of a state's Legislative Assembly vote in the Rajya Sabha elections in what is called proportional representation with the single transferable vote (STV) system.
- Each MLA's vote is counted only once. In this system, MLAs don't vote for each seat.
- The formula simply is  $[(\text{Number of MLAs} \times 100) / (\text{Vacancies} + 1)] + 1$ .

### Allocation of Seats

- The Fourth Schedule to the Constitution provides for the allocation of seats to the States and Union Territories in Rajya Sabha.
- How many Rajya Sabha members a state can send, depends on its population.
- Hence, the number of elected seats too changes as states are merged, bifurcated or new ones are created.
- Consequent on the reorganization of States and formation of new States, the number of elected seats in the Rajya Sabha allotted to States and Union Territories has changed from time to time since 1952.

### Qualifications

- Article 84 of the Constitution lays down the qualifications for membership of Parliament. A person to be qualified for the membership of the Rajya Sabha should possess the following qualifications:
  - ▶ He must be a citizen of India and make and subscribe before some person authorized in that behalf by the Election Commission an oath or affirmation according to the form set out for the purpose in the Third Schedule to the Constitution;
  - ▶ He must be not less than 30 years of age;
  - ▶ He must possess such other qualifications as may be prescribed in that behalf by or under any law made by Parliament.

### Disqualifications

- Article 102 of the Constitution lays down that a person shall be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being, a member of either House of Parliament
  - ▶ If he holds any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State, other than an office declared by Parliament by law not to disqualify its holder;
  - ▶ If he is of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent court;
  - ▶ If he is an undischarged insolvent;
  - ▶ If he is not a citizen of India, or has voluntarily acquired the citizenship of a foreign State, or is under any acknowledgement of allegiance or adherence to a foreign State;
  - ▶ If he is so disqualified by or under any law made by Parliament.

3

## 'Call to bring Arunachal Pradesh under the ambit of the Sixth Schedule'

**Context:** The revival of the demand for two autonomous councils has made political parties and community-based groups call for bringing the entire Arunachal Pradesh under the ambit of the Sixth Schedule or Article 371 (A) of the Constitution.

### What is the Sixth Schedule?

- According to Article 244 of the Indian Constitution, the Sixth Schedule consists of provisions for the administration of tribal areas in-
  - ▶ Assam
  - ▶ Meghalaya
  - ▶ Tripura

- ▶ Mizoram
- Passed by the Constituent Assembly in 1949, it seeks to safeguard the rights of tribal population through the formation of Autonomous District Councils (ADC).
- ▶ ADCs are bodies representing a district to which the Constitution has given varying degrees of autonomy within the state legislature.
- The governors of these states can-
  - ▶ He/she is empowered to reorganise boundaries of the tribal areas.
  - ▶ He/she can choose to include or exclude any area, increase or decrease the boundaries and unite two or more autonomous districts into one.
  - ▶ He/she can also alter or change the names of autonomous regions without a separate legislation.

### **Autonomous districts and regional councils**

- Along with ADCs, the Sixth Schedule also provides for separate Regional Councils for each area constituted as an autonomous region.
- In all, there are 10 areas in the Northeast that are registered as autonomous districts –
  - ▶ three in Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram
  - ▶ one in Tripura
- These regions are named as district council of (name of district) and regional council of (name of region).
- Each autonomous district and regional council consists of not more than 30 members, of which four are nominated by the governor and the rest via elections. All of them remain in power for a term of five years.

### **Bodoland Territorial Council**

- The Bodoland Territorial Council, however, is an exception as it can constitute up to 46 members out of which 40 are elected.
  - ▶ Of these 40 seats, 35 are reserved for the Scheduled Tribes and non-tribal communities, five are unreserved and the rest six are nominated by the governor from unrepresented communities of the Bodoland Territorial Areas District (BTAD).

### **What are the demands?**

- The demand is to bring entire Arunachal Pradesh under the ambit of the Sixth Schedule or under Article 371(A) or 371(G).
- These articles would provide special rights to all Arunachalees on matters of religious and social practices, customary law, land (ownership, transfer and control) etc under the India Constitution.

### **The current governing structure**

- **Fifth Schedule:** The Frontier State bordering Bhutan, China and Myanmar is under the Fifth Schedule that “does not provide special rights for the indigenous communities” unlike the Sixth Schedule.
- **Sixth Schedule:** The Sixth Schedule currently includes 10 autonomous district councils in four northeastern States — Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura.
- **Article 371 (A):** Nagaland, on the other hand, is governed by Article 371 (A), which says that no Act of Parliament shall apply in the State in several areas unless the Nagaland Assembly so decides by a resolution.

- ▶ These include administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law and ownership and transfer of land and its resources.

### 3 Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC)

**Context:** Assam Governor Professor Jagdish Mukhi has taken over the administration of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) after the expiry of the present Council's term.

#### About:

- The Bodoland Territorial Council was constituted under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India in 2003 after the signing of Memorandum of Settlement on 10th February 2003 between the Government of India, the Government of Assam and Bodo Liberation Tigers, to fulfill economic, educational and linguistic aspiration and the preservation of land-rights, socio-cultural and ethnic identity of the Bodos; and to speed up the infrastructure in BTC area.
- The Council aims at bringing about accelerated progress to one of the most backward region of the state of Assam with special focus on the development of the Bodo people in the field of education, preservation of land rights, linguistic aspiration, culture and its ethnic identity.
- **Area:** The BTC's jurisdiction is over four districts of Assam — Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang and Udalguri — and they are collectively known as Bodoland Territorial Administrative Districts.
- **Communities:** Major communities residing in BTC include Bodos, Assamese , Bengalis, Koch-Rajbongshis, Rabhas, Garos , Adivasis, Muslims and Nepalies, etc.

#### Sixth Schedule of the Constitution:

- The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India (Articles 244(2) and 275(1)) provides for decentralized self-governance and dispute resolution through local customary laws in parts of the North East which are mainly tribal areas.
- It contains provisions as to the Administration of Tribal Areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

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# Judiciary

## 1 SC Struck Down Ban on Crypto-currencies

**Context:** The Supreme Court has struck down a ban on the trading of cryptocurrencies in India, which was imposed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in April 2018.

### SC's take on the issue

- SC held that the ban did not pass the "proportionality" test. The test of proportionality of any action by the government must pass the test of Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution, which states that all citizens of the country will have the right to practise any profession or carry on any occupation or trade and business.
- Till date, the RBI has not come out with a stand that any of the entities regulated by it have suffered any loss or adverse effect directly or indirectly, on account of virtual currency (VC) exchanges.
- Besides, the court found that the RBI did not consider the availability of alternatives before issuing the order i.e. achieving the same objective by imposing a less drastic restraint.
- Inconsistent with the RBI's Stand: The RBI's order was disproportionate" with an otherwise consistent stand taken by the central bank that VCs are not prohibited in the country.
- Referred to the Global Approach: Organisations across the globe have called for caution while dealing with virtual currencies, while also warning that a blanket ban of any sort could push the entire system underground, which in turn would mean no regulation.
- On RBI's Power: The Court held that the RBI has powers to regulate any currencies in the system.

### Virtual Currencies

- There is no globally accepted definition of what exactly is a virtual currency. Virtual currency is the larger umbrella term for all forms of non-fiat currency being traded online.
- Fiat Money is a kind of currency, issued by the government and regulated by a central authority such as a central bank. Such currencies act like legal tender and are not necessarily backed by a physical commodity.
- Virtual currencies are mostly created, distributed and accepted in local virtual networks. Virtual Currencies also includes cryptocurrencies.
- Cryptocurrencies have an extra layer of security, in the form of encryption algorithms.

- Most cryptocurrencies now operate on the blockchain technology, which allows everyone on the network to keep track of the transactions occurring globally.
- Popular forms of cryptocurrencies include Bitcoin, Ethereum, etc.
- Satoshi Nakamoto, widely regarded as the founder of the modern virtual currency bitcoin and the underlying technology called blockchain, defines bitcoins as “a new electronic cash system that’s fully peer-to-peer, with no trusted third party (central regulator)”.

### Implications of the Judgement

- With the order, resumption of operations at cryptocurrency exchanges and backward linkages with the banking sector are expected.
- Even as virtual currency investors and businesses will welcome the Supreme Court’s order on cryptocurrency, the relief for such players may be only temporary given that the Centre, in a draft law, has proposed to ban all private cryptocurrencies.
- The Supreme Court’s judgment could lead to the RBI rethinking its policies surrounding virtual currencies.

## 2 National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)

### Context

As per the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), as many as 11,077 undertrials have been released from prisons nationwide as part of the mission to decongest jails following the COVID-19 pandemic.

### About:

- The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has been constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 to provide free Legal Services to the weaker sections of the society.
- Public awareness, equal opportunity and deliverable justice are the cornerstones on which the edifice of NALSA is based.
- The principal objective of NALSA is:
  - ▶ to provide free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of the society
  - ▶ to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities
  - ▶ to organize Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes
- Apart from the abovementioned, functions of NALSA include spreading legal literacy and awareness, undertaking social justice litigations etc.
- NALSA works in close coordination with the various State Legal Services Authorities, District Legal Services Authorities and other agencies for a regular exchange of relevant information, monitoring and updating on the implementation and progress of the various schemes in vogue and fostering a strategic and coordinated approach to ensure smooth and streamlined functioning of the various agencies and stakeholders.

### How the Constitution of India ensures ‘equality before law’?

- Towards fulfilling the Preambular promise of securing to all the citizens, Justice – social, economic and political, Article 39 A of the Constitution of India provides for free legal aid to the poor and weaker sections of the society, to promote justice on the basis of equal opportunity.

- Articles 14 and 22(1) of the Indian Constitution also make it obligatory for the State to ensure equality before law.
- In 1987, the Legal Services Authorities Act was enacted by the Indian Parliament, which came into force on 9th November, 1995.
- The Act was aimed to establish a nationwide uniform network for providing free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of the society.

#### **Equality before law:**

- "Equality before law" means that among equals the law should be equal and should be equally administered, that like should be treated alike.
- The right to sue and be sued, to prosecute and be prosecuted for the same kind of action should be same for all the citizens of full age and understanding without distinction of race, religion, wealth, social status or political influence.

### **3 NEET does not violate right of minorities: SC**

**Context:** In an important judgment, the Supreme Court held that the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test, a single entrance exam for admission to medical and dental courses, would not violate the rights of minorities to run their own institutions.

#### **About:**

- The National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET), formerly the All India Pre-Medical Test (AIPMT), is the qualifying test for MBBS and BDS programmes in Indian medical and dental colleges.
- It is conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA).
- The NEET exam is conducted online and in 11 languages — English, Hindi, Marathi, Odia, Tamil, Marathi, Urdu Bengali, Telugu, Kannada, and Assamese. The duration of the examination is three hours and a candidate needs to answer 180 questions.
- The exam paper is divided into three sections — Physics, Chemistry and Biology (Botany and Zoology).

#### **What are minority educational institutions?**

- National Commission for Minority Educational Institution Act, 2004 has defined:
  - ▶ 'minority' as a community which is defined as according to the central government
  - ▶ 'Minority institution' as an educational institution which is administered and set up by the minority.

#### **Constitutional rights accorded to minorities:**

- Article 30 of the constitution of India gives minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
  - ▶ Under **Art 30(1)(a)**, minority educational institutions enjoy right to education as a Fundamental Right. In case the property is taken over by state, due compensation to be provided to establish institutions elsewhere.
  - ▶ **Article 30 (1)(b)**: The right to administer educational institutions of their choice.
  - ▶ **Article 30 (2)**: No educational institution has a right to get government aid. But under Article 30(2), the state, in granting aid, cannot discriminate against minority institutions.

## 4 SC refuses to review its judgement which decriminalised adultery

**Context:** In a recent development, the Supreme Court refused to review its 2018 judgment which decriminalised adultery.

### What is 'Review Petition'?

- A judgment of the Supreme Court becomes the law of the land, according to the Constitution. It is final because it provides certainty for deciding future cases.
- However, the Constitution itself gives, under Article 137, the Supreme Court the power to review any of its judgments or orders.
- This departure from the Supreme Court's final authority is entertained under specific, narrow grounds.
- So, when a review takes place, the law is that it is allowed not to take fresh stock of the case but to correct grave errors that have resulted in the miscarriage of justice.
- The court has the power to review its rulings to correct a "patent error" and not "minor mistakes of inconsequential import".
- In a 1975 ruling, Justice Krishna Iyer said a review can be accepted "only where a glaring omission or patent mistake or like grave error has crept in earlier by judicial fallibility".

### Grounds for seeking review of an SC verdict

- In a 2013 ruling, the Supreme Court itself laid down three grounds for seeking a review of a verdict it has delivered —
  - ▶ the discovery of new and important matter or evidence which, after the exercise of due diligence, was not within the knowledge of the petitioner or could not be produced by him
  - ▶ mistake or error apparent on the face of the record
  - ▶ or any other sufficient reason
- In subsequent rulings, the court specified that "any sufficient reason" means a reason that is analogous to the other two grounds.

### SC's 2018 Judgement

- A five-judge Review Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde upheld a September 2018 Constitution Bench which had struck adultery out of the penal statute book.
- The original judgment was by a Constitution Bench led by then chief justice Dipak Misra who found that Section 497 (adultery) of the Indian Penal Code cannot "command" married couples to remain loyal to each other for the fear of penal punishment.
- Two individuals may part if one cheats, but to attach criminality to infidelity is going too far, Justice Misra had observed in his separate opinion.
- The court had reasoned that there was no data whatsoever to support claims that abolition of adultery as a crime would result in "chaos in sexual morality" or an increase of divorce.
- Section 497 treats a married woman as the commodity of her husband, the Bench had held. The provision is a reflection of the social dominance of men prevalent 150 years ago.
- Adultery is not a crime if the cuckolded husband connives or consents to his wife's extra-marital affair.
- The Bench had also held that Section 198 (2) of the CrPC, which gave the cuckolded husband the exclusive right to prosecute his wife's lover, was manifestly arbitrary.
- Adultery can however be a ground for civil remedy like dissolution of marriage

### **What if a review petition fails?**

- As the court of last resort, the Supreme Court's verdict cannot result in a miscarriage of justice.
- In *Roopa Hurra v Ashok Hurra* (2002), the concept of a curative petition was evolved
- Curative petition can be heard after a review is dismissed to prevent abuse of its process.
- A curative petition is also entertained on very narrow grounds like a review petition, and is generally not granted an oral hearing.

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# Constitutional, Regulatory, Quasi-Judicial & Other Bodies

## 1 ECI Not in favour of State Funding of Elections

**Context:** Recently, the Minister of State for Finance has informed Lok Sabha that the Election Commission of India (ECI) is not in favour of state funding of elections.

### About

- The ECI has stated that it would not be able to prohibit or check candidates' expenditure or expenditure by others over and above that which is provided for by the state.
- It has also mentioned that for addressing the real issues with political fundings, there need to be changed in the following elements of the election funding process :
  - ▶ Receipts of funds by political parties.
  - ▶ The manner in which received funds are spent by the political parties.
  - ▶ Complete transparency in the political funding process.
  - ▶ The scrutiny over the above aspects will help to bring better transparency in political funding.

### Background

- The state funding of elections was recommended by the Indrajit Gupta Committee in 1998.
- ECI allows airtime to recognised national and State parties for campaigning on state media.
- It had recommended that funding should be given in the form of free facilities provided to these parties and their candidates.

### Law Commission Report (1999)

- It had stated that a state funding of elections is 'desirable' provided that political parties are prohibited from taking funds from other sources.

### National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2000)

- It did not support state funding of elections but mentioned that the appropriate framework for the regulation of political parties would need to be implemented before state funding is considered.

## Current Scenario of Political Funding

- Political Funding implies the methods that political parties use to raise funds to finance their campaign and routine activities.
- Methods of Political Funding in India:
  - **Individual Persons:** Section 29B of RPA allows political parties to receive donations from individual persons.
  - **Indirect State Funding:** It includes methods except direct funding, like free access to media, free access to public places for rallies, free or subsidized transport facilities. It is allowed in India in a regulated manner.
  - **Corporate Funding:** In India, donations by corporate bodies are governed by the Companies Act, 2013.
  - **Electoral Trusts:** A non-profit company created in India for orderly receipt of voluntary contributions from any person like an individual or a domestic company.

## Issues with Political Funding

- One of the biggest disadvantages of corporate funding is the use of fake companies to route black money.
- Influence of people and companies over political parties to which they provide funds.
- There are various gaps in Indian rules, the benefit of which political parties take to avoid any kind of reporting.
- Hidden sources of funding lead to more spending of funds in election campaigns, thus impacting the economy of the country.

## 2

## Associated members nominated for Delimitation Commission

**Context:** The Lok Sabha Speaker has nominated 15 MPs from Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh as “associate members” of the Delimitation Commission to assist the panel in redrawing parliamentary and assembly constituencies of the northeastern states and the union territory.

### About Delimitation Commission:

- The Delimitation Commission is a commission established by the Government of India under the provisions of the Delimitation Commission Act to redraw the boundaries of the various assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies on a recent census.
- Under Article 82 of the Constitution of India, the Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after every Census.
- Under Article 170, States also get divided into territorial constituencies as per Delimitation Act after every Census.
- The Central Government constitute the Delimitation Commission which consists of three members as follows:—
  - ▶ one member, who shall be a person who is or has been a Judge of the Supreme Court, to be appointed by the Central Government who shall be the Chairperson of the Commission
  - ▶ the Chief Election Commissioner or an Election Commissioner nominated by the Chief Election Commissioner, ex officio:
- Provided that after the nomination of an Election Commissioner as a member under this clause, no further nomination under this clause shall be made except to fill the casual vacancy of such member under section 6
- the State Election Commissioner of concerned State, ex officio.
- In India, such Delimitation Commissions have been constituted four times—
  - ▶ in 1952 under the Delimitation Commission Act, 1952

- ▶ in 1963 under Delimitation Commission Act, 1962
- ▶ in 1973 under Delimitation Act, 1972
- ▶ in 2002 under Delimitation Act, 2002

### Background:

- The government had on March 6 constituted the Delimitation Commission, to be headed by former Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai, to redraw Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the northeastern states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland.
- The commission will delimit the constituencies of Jammu and Kashmir in accordance with the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, and of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland in accordance with the provisions of the Delimitation Act, 2002.

### Associate members:

- Members of Parliament and Legislative Assemblies of states, for which the Delimitation Commission is set up, are drawn in as associate members to help the panel in its task.

### Delimitation in Jammu & Kashmir:

- Delimitation in Jammu and Kashmir will be carried out per the provisions of J&K Reorganisation Act that split the state into two union territories of Jammu and Kashmir with an assembly and Ladakh without an assembly.
- Jammu and Kashmir at present has no Legislative Assembly. It is a Union Territory with a provision of a legislature.
- The delimitation in J&K will be based on the Census of 2011 due to an amendment in the J&K Reorganisation Act.
- The latest delimitation in other parts of India has been done as per the census of 2001. The future delimitation will be based on the census of 2031.
- The number of assembly seats in J&K after delimitation will increase from 107 to 114 that includes 24 seats for Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.
- The J&K Assembly was dissolved in November 2018 after being in suspended animation for six months.
- The last delimitation of J&K was done in 1995 when the former state was under the President's Rule.

## 2 Union Public Service Commission gets a new Chairman

**Context:** Educationist Professor Pradeep Kumar Joshi is appointed as the chairman of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) that conducts the civil services examination to select India's bureaucrats and diplomats among others.

### About

- The Constitution of India provides for four watchdogs to keep a check on different functions of the State.
- The Supreme Court: SC keeps a check on the judicial functions of the state.
- The Election Commission of India: ECI ensures free and fair elections.
- The Comptroller and Auditor General of India: The Comptroller and Auditor General keep in check the finances of the country.
- The Union Public Service Commission: UPSC is a watchdog to ensure fair recruitment on the basis of merit.
- The Constitution visualises the UPSC to be the 'watch-dog of merit system' in India.

## Constitutional Provisions

Article 315 to 323 of Part XIV of the Indian Constitution deals with provisions relating to the Union Public Service Commission as well as the State Public Service Commission.

Constitutional Provisions	
Article-315	Public Service Commissions for the Union and for the States.
Article-316	Appointment and term of office of members
Article-317	Removal and suspension of a member of a Public Service Commission.
Article-318	Power to make regulations as to conditions of service of members and staff of the Commission
Article-319	Prohibition as to the holding of offices by members of Commission on ceasing to be such members
Article-320	Functions of Public Service Commissions
Article-321	Power to extend functions of Public Service Commissions
Article-322	Expenses of Public Service Commissions
Article-323	Reports of Public Service Commissions

## Functions of the Commissions

- Under Article 320 of the Constitution of India, the Commission is, inter-alia, required to be consulted on all matters relating to recruitment to civil services and posts. The functions of the Commission under Article 320 of the Constitution are:
  - ▶ Conduct examinations for appointment to the services of the Union.
  - ▶ Direct recruitment by selection through interviews.
  - ▶ Appointment of officers on promotion / deputation / absorption.
  - ▶ Framing and amendment of Recruitment Rules for various services and posts under the Government.
  - ▶ Disciplinary cases relating to different Civil Services.
  - ▶ Advising the Government on any matter referred to the Commission by the President of India.

### Composition of UPSC

- The Commission consists of a chairman and other members appointed by the President of India.
- Usually, the Commission consists of 9 to 11 members including the chairman.
- Every member holds office for a term of six years or until he attains the age of sixty-five years, whichever is earlier.

**1 How the Centre's planned Sanskrit universities will function?**

**Context:** The Ministry of Human Resource Development introduced 'The Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019' in Rajya Sabha.

**About**

- The Bill is intended to convert India's three deemed-to-be Sanskrit universities:
  - ▶ Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi
  - ▶ Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, New Delhi
  - ▶ Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, Tirupati — into Central Sanskrit Universities.

**What the universities will do?**

The proposed central universities will:

- Disseminate and advance knowledge for the promotion of Sanskrit
- Make special provisions for integrated courses in humanities, social sciences, and science.
- Train manpower for the overall development and preservation of Sanskrit and allied subjects.

**Powers and functions**

- Prescribing courses of study and conducting training programmes
- Granting degrees, diplomas, and certificates
- Providing facilities through a distance education system
- Conferring autonomous status on a college or an institution
- Providing instructions for education in Sanskrit and allied subjects.

**University authorities**

- Some of the authorities that the universities will have:
  - ▶ **A court**, which will review the policies of the university and suggest measures for its development.
  - ▶ **An Executive Council**, which will be the principal executive body. The 15-member council will include the Vice-Chancellor appointed by the Centre, who will be the chairperson; a joint secretary of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, and two eminent academics from the field of Sanskrit or allied subjects. The council will, among other functions, create teaching and academic posts and their appointment, and manage the revenue and property of the university.

- ▶ **An Academic and Activity Council**, which will supervise academic policies.
- ▶ **A Board of Studies**, which will approve the subjects for research and recommend measures to improve standards of teaching.

### Visitor of the universities

- Like at all central universities, the **President of India** will be the Visitor of the central Sanskrit universities.
  - ▶ He may appoint persons to review and inspect the functioning of the University.
- The Executive Council may take action based on the findings of the inspection.

## 2

### Medical Equipment Notified as 'Drugs'

**Context:** From April 1 2020, all medical devices sold in the country are to treated as drugs and would be regulated under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940, the ministry of health and family welfare notified.

#### About

- The Drugs Act was formulated in 1940 in pursuance of recommendations of Chopra Committee constituted in 1930 by the Government of India.
- The Act regulates the import, manufacture and distribution of drugs in India.
- The primary objective of the Act is to ensure that the drugs and cosmetics sold in India are safe, effective and conform to prescribed quality standards.

#### The notification:

- According to the notification, all medical devices would be treated as drugs in India and they would be regulated under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.
- The ministry also released the Medical Devices Amendment Rules, 2020, for mandatory registration of medical devices.
- The aim is to regulate all medical devices so that they meet certain standards of quality.
- Besides, it will also make medical device companies accountable for the quality and safety of their products, a senior official said.
- Notification also read that in pursuance of sub-clause (iv) of clause (b) of Section 3 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, the Central Government, after consultation with the Drugs Technical Advisory Board, hereby specifies the following devices intended for use in human beings or animals as drugs with effect from the April 1, 2020.
- Once notified, the manufacture, import and sale of all medical devices will need to be certified by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).
- Further, once the notification is issued, the CDSCO will also be the nodal authority to investigate complaints related to the quality and safety aspects of medical devices and can suspend the registration or cancel licences of firms.

#### Devices covered:

- All devices, including instruments, apparatus, appliances and implants, whether used alone or in combination for various purposes like diagnosis, prevention, monitoring, treatment, alleviation of any disease, investigation, replacement or modification or support of the anatomy among others, will be regulated under the legislation.
- At present, only 23 categories of medical devices are regulated under the law.

### 3 Govt invokes Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, what is it?

**Context:** In a Cabinet Secretary meeting, it was decided that states and Union Territories should invoke provisions of Section 2 of Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, so that Health Ministry advisories are enforceable.

#### About

- The Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 is a law which was first enacted to tackle bubonic plague in Bombay state in former British India.
- The law is meant for containment of epidemics by providing special powers that are required for the implementation of containment measures to control the spread of the disease.
- The Epidemic Diseases Act is routinely enforced across the country for dealing with outbreaks of diseases such as swine flu, dengue, and cholera.
- At present, at least 60 COVID-19 cases have been confirmed in India. Around the world, more than 119,100 people have been infected and nearly 4,300 have died.

#### Historical Background:

- The colonial government introduced the Act to tackle the epidemic of bubonic plague that had spread in the erstwhile Bombay Presidency in the 1890s.
- Using powers conferred by the Act, colonies authorities would search suspected plague cases in homes and among passengers, with forcible segregations, evacuations, and demolitions of infected places.
- Historians have criticised the Act for its potential for abuse.
- In 1897, the year the law was enforced, freedom fighter Bal Gangadhar Tilak was punished with 18 months' rigorous imprisonment after his newspapers Kesari and Mahratta admonished imperial authorities for their handling of the plague epidemic.

#### Provisions of the Act

- The Act, which consists of four sections, aims to provide "for the better prevention of the spread of Dangerous Epidemic Diseases."
- Section 2 empowers state governments/UTs to take special measures and formulate regulations for containing the outbreak. It is as follows-

"When at any time the State Government is satisfied that the State or any part thereof is visited by, or threatened with, an outbreak of any dangerous epidemic disease, the State Government, if it thinks that the ordinary provisions of the law for the time being in force are insufficient for the purpose, may take, or require or empower any person to take, such measures and, by public notice, prescribe such temporary regulations to be observed by the public or by any person or class of persons as it shall deem necessary to prevent the outbreak of such disease or the spread thereof and may determine in what manner and by whom any expenses incurred (including compensation if any) shall be defrayed."

- In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing provisions, the State Government may take measures and prescribe regulations for:
- The inspection of persons travelling by railway or otherwise, and the segregation, in hospital, temporary accommodation or otherwise, of persons suspected by the inspecting officer of being infected with any such disease.
- Section 3 provides penalties for disobeying any regulation or order made under the Act. These are according to section 188 of the Indian Penal Code (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant).
- Section 4 gives legal protection to the implementing officers acting under the Act.

**Examples where it was been used earlier**

- In 2018, Gujarat's Vadodara issued a notification under the Act declaring the Khedkarmsiya village in Waghodia taluka as cholera-affected after 31 persons complained of symptoms of the disease.
- In 2015, to deal with malaria and dengue in Chandigarh, the Act was implemented.
- In 2009, to tackle the swine flu outbreak in Pune, Section 2 powers were used to open screening centres in civic hospitals across the city, and swine flu was declared a notifiable disease.

**4 'New domicile order and rules'**

**Context:** Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the Centre is moving fast to integrate the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and has passed new domicile order and rules, evoking sharp reaction from stakeholders like unemployed youth, traders and all mainstream political parties.

**Who can be 'domiciled' or 'employed' in J&K?**

- The new rule only reserves non-gazetted class four jobs for Jammu & Kashmir natives.
- It also lists certain conditions one should fulfil to qualify as a domicile applicant — applicants should have resided in J&K for 15 years, or studied in the state for seven years and appeared in either the Class 10 or the Class 12 examination there.
- Children of central government officers (Army, paramilitary forces, IAS, IPS), and employees of public sector undertakings and banks, central universities etc who have served in Jammu & Kashmir for 10 years will also be eligible to apply for gazetted and non-gazetted government jobs. These included those who work outside the state.
- Migrants registered by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner need not fulfil the aforementioned requirements and will automatically be eligible for a domicile certificate.

**Background:**

- On August 5, 2019, Parliament had diluted Article 370 of the Constitution, revoked the special status of J&K and had bifurcated the State into two Union Territories-
  - ▶ J&K
  - ▶ Ladakh
- The two revoked provisions of the Constitution let the J&K Legislature decide the "permanent residents", prohibiting a non-J&K resident from buying property there and ensuring job reservation for its residents.
- In March this year, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Adaptation of State Laws) Order, 2020 by publishing a gazette notification.
- Through the order, the MHA amended 109 laws and repealed 29 laws of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The MHA amended a 2010 legislation, the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services (Decentralisation and Recruitment Act), by substituting the term "permanent residents" with "domiciles of UT of J&K."
  - ▶ The 2010 Act pertained to employment in the Civil Services comprising "district, divisional and State" cadre posts.
  - ▶ Earlier, only permanent residents of J&K were eligible to apply for gazetted and non-gazetted posts.

# Schemes & Policies

## 1 'Integrated Government Online training' (iGOT) portal'

**Context:** The Government of India has launched a training module for management of COVID-19 named 'Integrated Government Online training' (iGOT) portal, which aims to enhance capacity building of front line workers to handle the pandemic efficiently.

### About

- The module, named Integrated Govt. Online Training (iGOT), has been introduced on the Ministry of Human Resource Development's DIKSHA platform.
- The platform aims to train all frontline healthcare and COVID Warriors of India to meet the vision to care for those 'who care for the nation',
- Courses on iGOT have been launched for Doctors, Nurses, Paramedics, Hygiene Workers, Technicians, Auxiliary Nursing Midwives (ANMs), State Government Officers, Civil Defence Officers, Various Police Organisations, National Cadet Corps (NCC), NehruYuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), National Service Scheme, Indian Red Cross Society, Bharat Scouts and Guides and other volunteers at the stage.
- The platform currently hosts nine courses on topics given as below:
  - ▶ Basics of COVID
  - ▶ ICU Care and Ventilation Management
  - ▶ Clinical Management, Infection Prevention through PPE
  - ▶ Infection Control and Prevention
  - ▶ Quarantine and Isolation
  - ▶ Laboratory Sample Collection and Testing
  - ▶ Management of COVID 19 Cases
  - ▶ COVID 19 Training

### What is DIKSHA Platform?

- Digital Infrastructure Knowledge Sharing' (DIKSHA) platform by HRD Ministry is an online initiative for education and training.
- DIKSHA's population scale infrastructure was launched in 2017 and is already being used by more than one crore teachers and students across the country in 30+ states & UTs for curriculum-based education and training.
- DIKSHA already has explanation, practice and assessment content linked to NCERT and state curriculum.

- DIKSHA platform is well equipped to cater to unlimited demands of learning, any time, anywhere.
- Multiple states in the country besides NCERT & CBSE will be using it for online teacher training, conducting quizzes, doing learning activities to promote creative & critical thinking, as well as for ensuring continuity in curriculum linked education for students in these times.

## 2 'Khelo India State Centres of Excellence'

**Context:** The Ministry of Sports is all set to establish Khelo India State Centres of Excellence under the Khelo India Scheme to bring former sporting champions to help budding athletes at grassroot-level and also to ensure a sustained source of income for them in the sports ecosystem.

### About

- The Sports Ministry will establish 1000 Khelo India Centres (KIC) at the district level across the country.
- One such centre will be identified in each State and Union Territory with an aim to create a robust sporting ecosystem in the entire country.
- In the first leg, the Ministry has identified state-owned sports facilities in eight states including Karnataka, Odisha, Kerala, Telengana, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland which will be upgraded into Khelo India State Centre of Excellence.
- The State and Union Territory will run the centre and build capacity to turn it into the world-class sporting facility.
- They will be responsible for all aspects of management of the centre including, boarding, lodging and maintenance, while funds for expert coaches, supporting staff, equipments, infrastructure will be extended through the Khelo India Scheme.

### Khelo India Programme

- Launched in 2018, Khelo India Programme is a national yojana/scheme for the development of sports in India.
- The program strives to promote "Sports for Excellence" as well as "Sports for All".

### Eligibility under the scheme

- The first category of athletes who will be considered are those who have represented India at recognised international competitions under a recognised NSF or association.
- The second category is of medal winners in Senior National Championship conducted by a recognised NSF or a medal winner at the Khelo India Games.
- The third category of past champions include those who have won medals in the National All India University Games.
- The fourth category will include those who have represented the state in a Senior National Championship conducted by recognised NSFs or participated in Khelo India Games.
- An exception has been made in the case of Jammu and Kashmir, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Ladakh, where coaches trained with NIS certification will also be eligible to apply.

### 3 'Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan (GKRA)'

**Context:** The Government launched the 'Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan (GKRA)' to boost employment and livelihood opportunities for migrant workers returning to villages, in the wake of COVID-19 outbreak.

#### About

- The "Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan" is a programme to generate employment opportunities in rural India for migrant workers returning home amid the coronavirus outbreak and lockdown.
- The initiative was flagged off from village Telihar, Block Beldaur, district Khagaria, Bihar.
- This Abhiyaan of 125 days, will work in mission mode, will involve focused implementation of 25 categories of works/ activities in 116 districts, each with a large concentration of returnee migrant workers in following 6 states.

S. No.	State Name	Districts	Aspirational Districts
1	Bihar	32	12
2	Uttar Pradesh	31	5
3	Madhya Pradesh	24	4
4	Rajasthan	22	2
5	Odisha	3	1
6	Jharkhand	116	3
Total Districts			27

- **Nodal agency:** The Ministry of Rural Development is the nodal Ministry for this campaign and the campaign will be implemented in close coordination with the State Governments.
  - ▶ Central Nodal Officers of the rank of Joint Secretary and above will be appointed to oversee the effective and timely implementation of various schemes in the identified districts.
- **Work areas:** The government has identified 25 work areas for employment in villages, for the development of various works.
  - ▶ These 25 works or projects are related to meet the needs of the villages like rural housing for the poor, Plantations, provision of drinking water through Jal Jeevan mission, Panchayat Bhavans, community toilets, rural mandis, rural roads, other infrastructure like Cattle Sheds, Anganwadi Bhavans etc.

### 4 'Secrecy of ballot is the cornerstone of free and fair elections: SC'

**Context:** Secrecy of ballot is the cornerstone of free and fair elections. The choice of a voter should be free and the secret ballot system in a democracy ensures it, the Supreme Court has held in a judgment.

#### About

- In the democracy of India, at the time of every election, may it be President of India or local body, the method of secret ballot system is adopted.

- As per the secret ballot system, the voter is given the ballot paper by the presiding officer of the polling booth.
- The voter goes behind the curtain along with the ballot paper and marks the stamp against the name of the candidate whom he likes to vote.
- With this process, no one comes to know that to whom the voter has given his vote.

### Right to Vote in India

- In India, the right to vote is provided by the Constitution and the Representation of People's Act, 1951, subject to certain disqualifications.
- Article 326 of the Constitution guarantees the right to vote to every citizen above the age of 18.
- Further, Section 62 of the Representation of Peoples Act (RoPA), 1951 states that every person who is in the electoral roll of that constituency will be entitled to vote.

## 5 PRAGYATA - Guidelines on Digital Education

**Context:** Recently the Ministry of Human Resource Development has released PRAGYATA - Guidelines on Digital Education through online medium.

### About

- The guidelines have been prepared by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).
- These are only advisory in nature and state governments can formulate their own rules, based on local needs.
- It will help in mitigating the CoVID -19 pandemic impact that has led to the closure of schools and has impacted the learning of over 240 million children of the country who are enrolled in schools.
- The guidelines have been developed from the perspective of learners, with a focus on online/ blended/digital education for students who are presently at home due to lockdown.
- These guidelines on Digital/ Online Education will provide a roadmap or pointers for carrying forward online education to enhance the quality of education.
- The guidelines stress upon the use of an alternative academic calendar of NCERT, for both, learners having access to digital devices and learners having limited or no access.
- The PRAGYATA guidelines include eight steps of online/ digital learning that is, Plan- Review- Arrange- Guide- Yak(talk)- Assign- Track- Appreciate. These steps guide the planning and implementation of digital education step by step with examples.
- The guidelines outline suggestions for administrators, school heads, teachers, parents, and students in the following areas:
  - ▶ Need assessment
  - ▶ Concerns while planning online and digital education like duration, screen time, inclusiveness, balanced online and offline activities, etc., level-wise
  - ▶ Modalities of intervention including resource curation, level-wise delivery, etc.
  - ▶ Physical, mental health, and wellbeing during digital education
  - ▶ Cyber safety and ethical practices including precautions and measures for maintaining cyber safety
  - ▶ Collaboration and convergence with various initiatives

## 6 Manodarpan

**Context:** Ministry of Human Resource Development launched 'Manodarpan' initiative for mental health and counselling of students.

### About

- It aims to provide psycho- social support and counselling to students for their mental health and well- being.
- Under this initiative, the minister launched a toll-free national helpline number - 8448440632, a website of Manodarpan and a handbook on 21st century life skills for the students of school, college and universities.
- Manodarpan comprises of the following components:
  - ▶ Advisory guidelines
  - ▶ Web page
  - ▶ National level database and directory of counsellors
  - ▶ National Toll-free helpline number
  - ▶ Interactive online chat option
- Manodarpan is an initiative under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.

## 7 Non – Personal Data

**Context:** Recently, a government committee has suggested that non-personal data generated in the country be allowed to be harnessed by various domestic companies and entities.

### About

- The 9 member committee headed by the Infosys co-founder Kris Gopalakrishnan released the draft report, and has kept time till August 13 for the public to send suggestions.
- The committee has also suggested setting up of a new authority which would be empowered to monitor the use and mining of such non-personal data.
- The government committee, in its report has classified non-personal data depending on the source of the data and whether it is anonymised in a way that no individual can be re-identified from the data set, into three categories, namely public non-personal data, community non-personal data and private non-personal data.

### Definition of Non-Personal Data

- In its most basic form, it is any set of data which does not contain personally identifiable information. This in essence means that no individual or living person can be identified by looking at such data.
- Public, Community, and Private Non-Personal Data
- All the data collected by government and its agencies such as census, data collected by municipal corporations on the total tax receipts in a particular period or any information collected during execution of all publicly funded works has been kept under the umbrella of public non-personal data.

- Any data identifiers about a set of people who have either the same geographic location, religion, job, or other common social interests will form the community non-personal data.
  - ▶ For example, the metadata collected by ride-hailing apps, telecom companies, electricity distribution companies etc.
- Private non-personal data can be defined as those which are produced by individuals which can be derived from application of proprietary software or knowledge.
  - ▶ For example, while order details collected by a food delivery service will have the name, age, gender, and other contact information of an individual, it will become non-personal data if the identifiers such as name and contact information are taken out.

### How sensitive can non-personal data is?

- Unlike personal data, which contains explicit information about a person's name, age, gender, sexual orientation, biometrics and other genetic details, non-personal data is more likely to be in an anonymised form.
- However, in certain categories such as data related to national security or strategic interests even if provided in anonymised form can be dangerous. Similarly, even if the data is about the health of a community or a group of communities, though it may be in anonymised form it can be still dangerous.

### Global standards on non-personal data

- In May 2019, the European Union came out with a regulation framework for the free flow of non-personal data in the European Union, in which it suggested that member states of the union would cooperate with each other when it came to data sharing.
- The regulation, however, had not defined what non-personal data constituted of, and had simply said all data which is not personal would be under the non-personal data category.
- In several other countries across the world, there are no nationwide data protection laws, whether for personal or non-personal data.

## 8

### Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission

**Context:** In May this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in his address to the nation an economic package of Rs 20 trillion to tide over the coronavirus crisis under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.

### What is Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission?

- Atmanirbhar means 'self-reliant'. Making the country self-reliant is the only way to make 21st century belong to India.
- According to the government, it is not protectionist in nature. 5 pillar on which Atmanirbhar Bharat is to be based:
- India's self-reliance will be based on five pillars-
  - ▶ Economy
  - ▶ Infrastructure
  - ▶ Technology driven system
  - ▶ Vibrant demography
  - ▶ Demand

## 9 Green-Ag

**Context:** The Government launched the 'Green-Ag', a project funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF), which aims to catalyze sustainable transformation of Indian agriculture without compromising the country's food security and farmers' income.

### What is Green-Ag?

- The Green-Ag project is funded by the **Global Environment Facility (GEF)** through its sixth funding cycle.
- The **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoA&FW)** is the national executing agency and FAO is the designated GEF Implementing Agency.
- The **Ministry of Environment Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)** is the GEF Operational Focal Point and coordinates all GEF projects in the country.
- The project aims to catalyze a transformative change of India's agricultural sector to support the achievement of national and global environmental benefits and conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes.
- The project seeks to mainstream biodiversity, climate change, and sustainable land management objectives and practices into Indian agriculture.

### Where it will be implemented?

- Mizoram is among five Indian states where the project will be implemented.
- The other four states are Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand.
- The project will be implemented in Dampa Tiger Reserve in west Mizoram's Mamit district and Thorangtlang Wildlife Sanctuary in Lunglei district in southern part of the State covering more than 30 villages.

High-conservation-value landscapes of five States	
Mizoram:	Dampa Landscape and Thorangtlang Landscape
Madhya Pradesh:	Chambal Landscape
Odisha:	Similipal Landscape
Rajasthan:	Desert National Park Landscape
<b>Uttarakhand:</b>	Corbett-Rajaji Landscape

## 10

### Madhya Pradesh launches 'Rozgar Setu' scheme for skilled workers

**Context:** Madhya Pradesh launched of the 'Rozgar Setu' scheme to help secure employment for skilled workers who have returned.

### What is 'Rozgar Setu' Scheme?

- The Scheme aims to provide work to the maximum number of returned skilled workers.
- After such workers requiring employment are identified, the government will contact factory and workshop owners and contractors overseeing infrastructure projects such as road and bridge construction.
- This would fulfil the manpower requirement of industries as well as provide employment to workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 11

### Katkari community & Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana

**Context:** A group of tribal youth from the Katkari community in Shahpur has come together to market Giloy, a herb used in treatment of viral fever, malaria as well as diabetes. The herb has a huge demand from pharmaceutical companies.

#### About Katkari community

- The Katkari tribes are located primarily in Raigad and in parts of Palghar, Ratnagiri and Thane districts as well and in some places of Gujarat.
- Katkaris are former criminal tribes under the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871, an inhuman piece of legislation enforced during the British rule.
  - ▶ The act describes certain groups of people as **"habitually criminal"** and puts restrictions on their movements which led to alienation, stereotyping and harassment, to say the least.
  - ▶ After independence, the Act was repealed resulting in more than 20 lakh tribal people across the country being decriminalized.

#### Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

- Presently, the Katkaris are classified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).
- The Government of India came up with this classification to introduce targeted interventions noting that some tribal groups had the least development indices as compared to other tribal groups.
- The criteria used by the state for classifying PVTGs was as follows:
  - ▶ A pre-agricultural system of existence such as hunting, gathering
  - ▶ Zero or negative population growth
  - ▶ Extreme low level of literacy in comparison with other tribal groups
  - ▶ A subsistence level of economy
- Groups that satisfied any one of the above criterion were considered a PVTG. There are more than 700 tribal groups in India and only 75 are classified as PVTG.
- Maharashtra is home to three such groups.

#### What is PMVDY?

- Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana run by TRIFED, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, in association with ST Welfare department, Maharashtra.
- PMVDY is a retail marketing-led value addition plan for Minor Forest Produce (MFP), meant for forest-based tribes to optimise the tribal income.
- Katkari community approached them and soon the demand for Giloy picked up.

## 12 Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

**Context:** The Cabinet approved the “Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana - A scheme to bring about Blue Revolution through sustainable and responsible development of fisheries sector in India” with highest ever investment of Rs. 20050 crores in fisheries sector.

### About the Scheme

- The PMMSY will be implemented as an umbrella scheme with two separate Components namely-
  - ▶ Central Sector Scheme (CS)
  - ▶ Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)
- Majority of the activities under the Scheme would be implemented with active participation of States/UTs.
- A well-structured implementation framework would be established for effective planning and implementation of PMMSY.
- This *inter-alia* includes creation of State Programme Units in all States/UTs & District Programme Units and Sub-District Programme Unit in high fisheries potential districts.

### Aims and objectives of PMMSY

- ▶ Harnessing of fisheries potential in a sustainable, responsible, inclusive and equitable manner
- ▶ Enhancing of fish production and productivity through expansion, intensification, diversification and productive utilization of land and water
- ▶ Modernizing and strengthening of value chain - post-harvest management and quality improvement
- ▶ Doubling fishers and fish farmers incomes and generation of employment
- ▶ Enhancing contribution to Agriculture GVA and exports
- ▶ Social, physical and economic security for fishers and fish farmers
- ▶ Robust fisheries management and regulatory framework

## 13 First-of-its-kind Godhan Nyay Yojana launched in Chhattisgarh

**Context:** The State Government of Chhattisgarh launched ‘Godhan Nyay Yojana’, which aims to put money in the pockets of people living in the rural areas and also solve the problem of stray cattle.

### Key-details of the Scheme

- Under the ‘Godhan Nyay Yojana’ Chhattisgarh government will purchase cow dung at the rate of Rs 2 per kg.
- This scheme will turn cow dung into a profitable commodity.
- The scheme also aims to make cow rearing economically profitable and to prevent open grazing in the state, as well as help with the problem of stray animals on roads and in urban areas.

**Importance of cow dung**

- Cow manure is rich in minerals, especially nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium.
- It can support the growth of beneficial microorganisms when it's mixed with soil.
- Manure can also improve the texture of the soil and help it to maintain moisture

**14 Pan India Central Sector Scheme-Agriculture Infrastructure Fund**

**Context:** Recently, the Union Cabinet approved a new pan India Central Sector Scheme-Agriculture Infrastructure Fund.

**About the Scheme**

- The scheme shall provide a medium - long term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management Infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and financial support.
- Under the scheme, Rs. One Lakh Crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans to-
  - ▶ Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)
  - ▶ Marketing Cooperative Societies, Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs)
  - ▶ Self Help Group (SHG)
  - ▶ Farmers
  - ▶ Joint Liability Groups (JLG)
  - ▶ Multipurpose Cooperative Societies
  - ▶ Agri-entrepreneurs
  - ▶ Startups
  - ▶ Aggregation Infrastructure Providers
  - ▶ Central/State agency or Local Body sponsored Public Private Partnership Project
- Loans will be disbursed in four years starting with sanction of Rs. 10,000 crore in the current year and Rs. 30,000 crore each in next three financial years.
- All loans under this financing facility will have interest subvention of 3% per annum up to a limit of Rs. 2 crore.
- This subvention will be available for a maximum period of seven years.
- Further, credit guarantee coverage will be available for eligible borrowers from this financing facility under Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) scheme for a loan up to Rs. 2 crore.
- The fee for this coverage will be paid by the Government. In case of FPOs the credit guarantee may be availed from the facility created under FPO promotion scheme of Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare (DACFW).

**Management Information System**

- Agri Infra fund will be managed and monitored through an online Management Information System (MIS) platform.
- It will enable all the qualified entities to apply for loan under the fund.

- The online platform will also provide benefits such as transparency of interest rates offered by multiple banks, scheme details including interest subvention and credit guarantee offered, minimum documentation, faster approval process as also integration with other scheme benefits.

## 15 Accelerate Vigyan

**Context:** The Science and Engineering Research Board has launched a new scheme called 'Accelerate Vigyan'

### What is Accelerate Vigyan?

- The scheme would provide a single platform for research internships, capacity building programs and workshops across the country.
- The primary objective of this inter-ministerial scheme is to encourage high-end scientific research and prepare scientific manpower, which can lead towards research careers and knowledge-based economy.
- Accelerate Vigyan will initiate and strengthen mechanisms for identifying research potential, mentoring, training and hands-on workshop on a national scale.

### Major Components of the mission

- **ABHYAAS programme** is an attempt to boost research and development in the country by enabling and grooming potential PG/PhD students by means of developing their research skills in selected areas across different disciplines or fields. It has two components:
  - ▶ High-End Workshops ('KARYASHALA')
  - ▶ Research Internships ('VRITIKA')
- **'SAMMOHAN'** has been sub-divided into 'SAYONJIKA' and 'SANGOSHTI'.
  - ▶ SAYONJIKA is an open-ended program to catalogue the capacity building activities in science and technology supported by all government funding agencies in the country.
  - ▶ SANGOSHTI is a pre-existing program of SERB.

## 16 PM SVANIDHI - Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's Atmanirbhar Nidhi

**Context:** Union Government launched PM SVANIDHI - Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's Atmanirbhar Nidhi - a special micro-credit facility scheme for providing affordable loan to street vendors.

### What is PM SVANIDHI?

- The scheme is aimed at enabling the street vendors to resume their livelihoods that have been adversely affected due to COVID-19 lockdown.
- The scheme targets to benefit over 50 lakh street vendors, who had been vending on or before 24th March this year, in urban areas.
- The duration of the scheme is till March 2022.
- The street vendors belonging to the surrounding peri-urban or rural areas are being included as beneficiaries under the urban livelihoods programme for the first time.

## 17 'One Nation, One Ration Card' System

**Context:** The Ministry of Finance has announced the nationwide rollout of a 'One Nation, One Ration Card (ONORC)' system in all states and UTRs by March 2021.

### What is One Nation Once Ration Card Scheme?

- The One Nation One Ration Card facility is an ambitious plan and endeavour of **Department of Food & Public Distribution**.
- It aims to ensure the delivery of food security entitlements to all beneficiaries covered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, irrespective of their physical location anywhere in the country, by implementing nation-wide portability of ration cards under the ongoing central sector scheme on '**Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS)**' in association with all States/UTs.
- Through this system, the migratory NFSA beneficiaries, who frequently change their place of dwelling in search of temporary employments, etc. are now enabled with an option to lift their entitled quota of foodgrains from any Fair Price Shop (FPS) of their choice anywhere in the country by using their same/existing ration card with biometric/Aadhaar based authentication on an electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) device installed at the FPSs.

## 18 Sahakar Mitra: Scheme on Internship Programme (SIP)

**Context:** In keeping with India's call for AtmaNirbhar Bharat(Self Reliant India) emphasizing the importance of local for vocal, Sahakar Mitra: Scheme on Internship Programme (SIP) was launched by the government.

### About the Scheme

- The "SAHKAR MITRA Scheme on Internship Program" (SIP) is an arrangement where NCDL will provide short term (not exceeding four months) opportunity to young professionals acquire learning experience by applying skills and knowledge in organizational context to facilitate professional development.
- The programme aims at providing an opportunity to professional graduates to get experience in areas of functioning of NCDL and related aspects of cooperatives.

### Objectives

- To provide a deep immersion opportunity to professional graduates on the role, contribution and impact of NCDL and also cooperatives.
- To enable the professional graduates, learn the context and practical working of NCDL and cooperatives.
- To orient professional graduates to the cooperative business model and engage themselves in start-up cooperatives
- To enable professional graduates take up leadership and /or entrepreneur roles in FPO organized under Cooperative Acts.
- To assist needy cooperatives in preparation of business plans and projects.

19

## Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Enterprises (PM FME)

**Context:** The government launched Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Enterprises (PM FME), a Rs 10,000 crore scheme for micro enterprises which offers 50% subsidy for storage and transportation to prevent distress sale by farmers.

### What is PM FME?

- The scheme called Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Enterprises (PM FME), aims to bring in new technology, apart from affordable credit to help small entrepreneurs penetrate new markets.
- The scheme will be implemented for five years until 2024-25.
- Under the PM FME scheme, micro enterprises will get 35% subsidy on project cost, with a ceiling of Rs 10 lakh.
  - ▶ The beneficiaries will have to contribute at least 10% of the project cost while the balance will come from loans.
  - ▶ Nearly 200,000 micro enterprises will get credit-linked subsidy support.

20

## 'Swamitva scheme'

**Context:** PM Narendra Modi launched the Swamitva scheme on Panchayati Raj Divas. The scheme is already being run in pilot mode across 6 states.

### About:

- 'Swamitva Yojana' or Ownership Scheme aims to map residential land ownership in the rural sector using modern technology like the use of drones.
- It will create property ownership record of land in villages and empower rural population with grant of official document confirming their ownership of land titles.
- **Measurement:** The residential land in villages will be measured using drones to create a non-disputable record. It is the latest technology for surveying and measuring of land.
  - ▶ Drones will draw a digital map of every property falling within the geographical limits of a village and demarcate the boundaries of every revenue area.
- The scheme will be carried out in close coordination with the Central Panchayati Raj ministry, Survey of India, Panchayati Raj departments and Revenue departments of various states.
- **Property card:** Property card for every property in the village will be prepared by states using accurate measurements delivered by drone-mapping.
  - ▶ These cards will be given to property owners and will be recognised by the land revenue records department.
- The scheme is piloted by the Panchayati Raj ministry of the Union government.
- The property records for a village will also be maintained at the Panchayat level, allowing for the collection of associated taxes from the owners.
- The money generated from these local taxes will be used to build rural infrastructure and facilities.

## 21 'Accelerate Vigyan'

**Context:** To provide a single platform for research internships, capacity building programs, and workshops across the country, the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) has launched a new scheme called 'Accelerate Vigyan' (AV).

### About

- The primary objective of this inter-ministerial scheme is to give more thrust on encouraging high-end scientific research and preparing scientific manpower, which can lead to research careers and knowledge-based economy.
- The vision is to expand the research base, with three broad goals, namely-
  - ▶ consolidation/aggregation of all scientific programs
  - ▶ initiating high-end orientation workshops
  - ▶ creating opportunities for research internships for those who do not have access to such resources/facilities

### Major Components under the Scheme

#### 'ABHYAAS' programme

- 'ABHYAAS' is a component under the AV Scheme.
- As for the 'ABHYAAS' programme, it is an attempt to boost research and development in the country by enabling and grooming potential PG/PhD students by means of developing their research skills in selected areas across different disciplines or fields.
- It has two components:
  - ▶ High-End Workshops ('KARYASHALA')
  - ▶ Research Internships ('VRITIKA')

#### SAMMOHAN

- Another new component under AV is 'SAMMOHAN' that has been sub-divided into 'SAYONJIKA' and 'SANGOSHTI'.
  - ▶ SAYONJIKA is an open-ended program to catalogue the capacity building activities in science and technology supported by all government funding agencies in the country.
  - ▶ SANGOSHTI is a pre-existing program of SERB.

## 22 'Project STARS'

**Context:** The World Bank has approved a new project worth \$500 million to improve learning outcome and governance of government schools in six Indian states.

### About

- The project, named STARS (Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States Program), will be implemented through the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, the flagship central scheme, in partnership with-
  - ▶ Himachal Pradesh

- ▶ Kerala
  - ▶ Madhya Pradesh
  - ▶ Maharashtra
  - ▶ Odisha
  - ▶ Rajasthan
- The STARS program builds on the long partnership between India and the World Bank, since 1994, for strengthening public school education and to support the country's goal of providing 'Education for All'.
  - Among other things, the World Bank initiative will focus directly on the delivery of education services at the state, district and sub district levels by providing customized local-level solutions towards school improvement.
  - Prior to STARS, the Bank had provided a total assistance of more than \$3 billion towards this goal.

### **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan**

- Samagra Shiksha - an Integrated Scheme for School Education has been launched throughout the country as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with effect from the year 2018-19.
- This programme subsumes the three erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes of
  - ▶ Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
  - ▶ Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)
  - ▶ Teacher Education (TE)
- It is an overarching programme for the school education sector extending from pre-school to class XII and aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels of school education.
- It envisages the 'school' as a continuum from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary to senior secondary levels.

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# Miscellaneous

## 1 'World Freedom Index 2020'

**Context:** India has dropped two places on a global press freedom index to be ranked 142nd out of 180 countries in the annual Reporters Without Borders analysis.

### About

- Published every year since 2002 by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the World Press Freedom Index is an important advocacy tool based on the principle of emulation between states.
- The Index is a point of reference that is quoted by media throughout the world and is used by diplomats and international entities such as the United Nations and the World Bank.

### What does the index measure?

- The Index ranks 180 countries and regions according to the level of freedom available to journalists.
- It is a snapshot of the media freedom situation based on an evaluation of pluralism, independence of the media, quality of legislative framework and safety of journalists in each country and region.
- It does not rank public policies even if governments obviously have a major impact on their country's ranking.
- Nor is it an indicator of the quality of journalism in each country or region.

### Key-highlights of the index:

- Among the nations with the top ranks are Scandinavian countries Norway, Finland and Denmark, while countries like North Korea (180), Vietnam (175) and Syria (174) were some of the lowest ranked.
- India ranked better than its neighbours Pakistan (145) and Bangladesh (151), but worse than Sri Lanka (127) and Nepal (112).
- Pakistan:** Pakistan dropped three places from its 2019 ranks due to the influence of the military establishment under Prime Minister Imran Khan's rule, which the report states "cannot stand independent journalism."
- China:** In this regard, China, ranked at 177, has also been critiqued for how Covid-19's spread was facilitated by censorship and pressure on a whistleblower, yet the country continues to further tighten control over the media.
- United States:** With a rank of 45, the US improved three points since 2019 but arrests, physical assaults, public denigration and the harassment of journalists continued in 2019 under President Donald Trump's administration.
- North Korea:** At the lowest rank of 180, North Korea scored the worst in terms of press freedom due to its leader Kim Jong-un's totalitarian regime that has kept its citizens in a "state of ignorance".

- In the year 2020 so far, across the world, 10 journalists have been killed, 229 imprisoned and 116 citizen journalists imprisoned while one media assistant was killed and 14 media assistants imprisoned across the world.

### Where does India stand?

- Between 2013-14, India's rank remained at 140, while it marginally improved to 133 and 136 in the subsequent years but dropped to 140 in 2019 following Prime Minister Modi's resounding success in the Lok Sabha elections.
- With no murders of journalists in India in 2019, as against six in 2018, the security situation for the country's media might seem, on the face of it, to have improved.
- However, at 142nd position, there have been constant press freedom violations.

## 2 'Rule of Law Index'

**Context:** The Supreme Court refused to entertain a plea seeking a direction to the Centre, states and UTs to set up expert committees to improve India's "pathetic" 69th global ranking on the Rule of Law Index (RLI).

### About

- The World Justice Project Rule of Law Index is the world's leading source for original, independent data on the rule of law.
- Covering 128 countries and jurisdictions, the Index relies on national surveys of more than 130,000 households and 4,000 legal practitioners and experts to measure how the rule of law is experienced and perceived worldwide.
- It is based on a nations' performance on factors such as government openness, fundamental rights, civil and criminal justice and containing corruption.
- The World Justice Project defines the 'rule of law' system as one in which the following **four universal principles** are upheld:
  - ▶ The government and its officials and agents are accountable under the law
  - ▶ The laws are clear, publicized, stable and fair, and protect fundamental rights, including the security of persons and property
  - ▶ The process by which the laws are enacted, administered, and enforced is accessible, efficient, and fair.
  - ▶ Justice is delivered by competent, ethical, and independent representatives and neutrals who are of sufficient number, have adequate resources and reflect the makeup of the communities they serve.

### Rule of law in India

- The concept of Rule of law is of old origin and is an ancient ideal. It was discussed by ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle around 350 BC.
- The phrase 'Rule of Law' is derived from the French phrase 'la principe de legalite' (the principle of legality) which refers to a government based on principles of law and not of men.
- In India, the concept of Rule of law can be traced back to the Upanishads. Even today, the scheme of the Indian Constitution is based upon the concept of rule of law.

- The doctrine of Rule of Law as enunciated by Dicey has been adopted and very succinctly incorporated in the Indian Constitution. The ideals of the Constitution are enshrined in the Preamble itself (which is part of the Constitution)-
  - ▶ Justice
  - ▶ liberty
  - ▶ equality
- The Constitution of India has been made the supreme law of the country and other laws are required to be in conformity with it.
- Any law which is found in violation of any provision of the Constitution, particularly, the fundamental rights, is declared void.
- Rule of law in a plain language can be defined as a situation in which the law of the land is superior than the government ruling the land.

### 3 '46 million girls lost to gender bias'

**Context:** Preference for sons and gender-biased sex selection have led to over 142 million girls missing globally and 46 million girls missing in India, according to a UN flagship report, titled 'Against my will: defying the practices that harm women and girls and undermine equality'.

#### Key-findings of the Report

- In India, around 460,000 'girls went missing' -- which means they were not born due to sex-selection biases -- each year between 2013 and 2017.
  - ▶ The term "missing women" indicates a shortfall in the number of women relative to the expected number of women in a region or country
- The sex ratio at birth in India is 899 girls for every 1,000 boys born during the period 2016 – 18, according to the Sample Registration System Statistical Report 2018, released on Friday.
- Nine states in the country have sex ratio at birth below 900 [Haryana, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab and Bihar].
- China (50%) and India (40%) together account for around 90% of the estimated 1.2 million girls lost annually to female foeticide.
- Globally, one in five girls is married by age 18 and millions of others are subjected to practices that harm them physically, mentally and emotionally, with the knowledge and consent of their families.

#### Prevalent harmful practices

- The three-most prevalent harmful practices are
  - ▶ child marriage
  - ▶ son preference and gender-biased sex selection
  - ▶ female genital mutilation
- The report lists at least 19 harmful human rights violations against women, ranging from dowry related violence to "honour".
- In India, child marriage is directly linked to poverty, poor education and geographic location, rural versus urban.

- On the other hand, gender-based sex selection as emerged as a problem among affluent families has today spread across the board.

### Government Schemes and Policies for Girl Child Empowerment

- **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao:** The scheme aims to address the issue of the declining child sex ratio image (CSR). It is a national initiative run jointly by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- **Sukanya Samridhi Yojna:** Part of the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' campaign, the scheme is targeted at the parents of girl children. The programme encourages them to build a fund for future education and marriage expenses for their female child. Parents can start saving early as the minimum amount of investment required is small, and the account is active for 14 years from the date of opening the account.
- **CBSE Scholarship Scheme/Policy for Girl Education:** This central government scheme is available at Government CBSE schools only. It is applicable for one girl child per family across India and aims to supplement the school tuition fee.
- **National Girl Child Day:** The National Girl Child Day is observed on January 24 every year to raise awareness about discrimination girls face.

## 4 India Report on Digital Education, 2020

**Context:** The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has launched India Report on Digital Education, 2020.

### About

- The report has been prepared by Digital Education Division of MHRD in consultation with Education Departments of States and UTs.
- The report elaborates on the innovative methods adopted by Ministry of HRD, Education Departments of States and Union Territories for ensuring accessible and inclusive education to children at home and reducing learning gaps.
- The report will serve the purpose of cross-learning, adapting and adopting best practices across the country.
- Ministry of Human Resource Development has initiated many projects to assist teachers, scholars and students in their pursuit of learning like DIKSHA platform, Swayam Prabha TV Channel, Online MOOC courses, On Air – Shiksha Vani, DAISY by NIOS for differently-abled, e-PathShala, National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER) to develop e-content and energized books, telecast through TV channels, E-learning portals, webinars, chat groups, distribution of books and other digital initiatives along with State/ UT Governments.
- Some of the major digital initiatives by State Governments are:
  - ▶ SMILE (Social Media Interface for Learning Engagement) in Rajasthan
  - ▶ Project Home Classes in Jammu
  - ▶ Padhai Tunhar duvaar (Education at your doorstep) in Chhattisgarh
  - ▶ Unnayan Initiatives in Bihar through portal and mobile application
  - ▶ Mission Buniyaad in NCT of Delhi
  - ▶ Kerala's own educational TV channel (Hi-Tech school programme)
  - ▶ E-scholar portal as well as free online courses for teachers in Meghalaya.
  - ▶ Telangana has online certificate programs for teachers on 'Management of mental well-being during COVID'.

- Some states have launched innovative mobile apps and portals as means to facilitate remote learning.
  - ▶ Madhya Pradesh has launched Top Parent App, a free mobile app that empowers parents of young children (3-8 years) with knowledge and strategies around child development to help them meaningfully engage with their children.
  - ▶ KHEL (Knowledge Hub for Electronic Learning), a Game Based Application has also been started, that covers class 1-3.
  - ▶ Uttarakhand is making use of Sampark Baithak App through which primary school students can access animated videos, audios, worksheet, puzzles, etc.
  - ▶ Assam has launched the Biswa Vidya Assam Mobile Application for class 6 to 10.
  - ▶ Bihar has launched Vidyavahini App with e-books for class 1 to 12.
  - ▶ Under Unnayan Bihar Initiative, Bihar has also launched Mera Mobile Mera Vidyalaya for students, and Unnayan Bihar Teacher App.
  - ▶ Chandigarh has launched Phoenix Mobile application to assess the learning outcome for the students of class 1 to 8.
  - ▶ Maharashtra has launched the Learning Outcomes Smart Q Mobile App to facilitate learning for students in the state.
  - ▶ Punjab has launched iScuela Learn Mobile Application for class 1 to 10.
  - ▶ Sikkim Edutech App connects all the schools of Sikkim under the State Education Department; Parents also have login access along with students, teachers and administrative units.
  - ▶ Tripura has an application titled 'EmpowerU Shiksha Darpan' in order to facilitate student's appraisal.
  - ▶ Uttar Pradesh launches 'Top Parent' app targeting children from 3-8years age. The application currently houses three high-quality EdTech apps for children - Chimple, Maths Masti and Google Bolo.

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