

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY

WEEK: 3

MARCH
2022

MAINS

GS-II

- ▣ CALL FOR UNIFIED HUMAN RIGHT COMMISSION
- ▣ AMENDMENT TO CENSUS RULES, 1990
- ▣ ROW AFTER MAHARASHTRA GOVERNOR REFUSES NOD FOR SPEAKER'S ELECTION

GS-III

- ▣ INTEGRATION OF CENTRAL AGENCIES WITH CCTNS
- ▣ THE FUNCTIONING OF THE ISS AFTER SANCTIONS

PRELIMS

- ART & CULTURE ■ SANTHALI SOHRAI MURALS: AN ETCH IN TIME
- INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ■ INDIA AT UNSC BACKS CONVENTION PROHIBITING BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS
 - INDIA'S TAKE ON UN'S 'INTERNATIONAL DAY TO COMBAT ISLAMOPHOBIA' RESOLUTION
- POLITY & GOVERNANCE ■ MATERNAL MORTALITY RATIO OF INDIA DECLINES BY 10 POINTS
 - SMILE-SUPPORT FOR MARGINALISED INDIVIDUALS FOR LIVELIHOOD AND ENTERPRISE
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- ECONOMY ■ CENTRAL ECONOMIC ZONE UNDERSAGARMALA SCHEME
 - LONGEST EVER VESSEL TO SAIL ON BRAHMAPUTRA COMPLETES PILOT RUN

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

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

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SECTION: A

(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

CALL FOR UNIFIED HUMAN RIGHT COMMISSION

CONTEXT:

Comment made by Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, calling for the termination of National Commission for Minority and transferring its powers and functions to National Human Rights Commission.

What is National Commission for Minorities?

- It is a **statutory body** established under the provisions of **National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992**.
- **Composition:** The NCM is supposed to have a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, and 7 members, at least 5 of whom should be from minority communities.
- **Key-functions:** Functions of the Minority Commission are as follows:
 - Evaluate the progress of the development of Minorities under the Union and States.
 - Monitor the working of the safeguards provided in the Constitution and in laws enacted by Parliament and the State Legislatures.
 - Make recommendations for the effective implementation of safeguards for the protection of the interests of Minorities by the Central Government or the State Governments.
 - Look into specific complaints regarding deprivation of rights and safeguards of the Minorities and take up such matters with the appropriate authorities.
 - Cause studies to be undertaken into problems arising out of any discrimination against Minorities and recommend measures for their removal.
 - Conduct studies, research and analysis on the issues relating to socio-economic and educational development of Minorities.
 - Suggest appropriate measures in respect of any Minority to be undertaken by the Central Government or the State Governments.
 - Make periodical or special reports to the Central Government on any matter pertaining to Minorities and in particular the difficulties confronted by them.
 - Any other matter which may be referred to it by the Central Government.

Who is a 'minority' in India?

UN's definition: The definition provided by United Nations is **"Any group or community which is socially, political and economically non-dominant and inferior in population are minorities"**.

- The Constitution of India mentioned the term 'minority' only on two occasions in Article 29 and in Article 30 but it nowhere defines the term.

Article 29 — Protection of interests of minorities

- Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.
- No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them.

Article 30– Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions

- All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
- The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.
- **Section 2(c) of National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992** had granted minority status to five communities based on their national population.
 - Muslims (largest minority group in India forming 14% of the total population.)
 - Christians
 - Sikhs
 - Buddhists
 - Parsis
 - Jains

- Other important minority rights
- **Article 15** prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion race cast sex or place of birth.
- **Article 17** Prohibits untouchability.
- **Articles 25 to 30** preserve the right of minorities on grounds of religion.
- **Article 25** provides the right to practice any religion.
- **Article 26** allows religious institutions to be opened.
- **Article 27** provides that no person shall be forced to pay any taxes which is not mandatory.
- **Article 28** provides that there shall be no religious instruction to be followed in any particular educational institutions.

Why is the call for abolition of minority commission being made?

- **Creating differences:** Presence of such Commission cultivates an idea within **certain groups** that a community or some communities are **different** than the rest and **hence special provisions or bodies** are required for its or their protection.
 - The abovementioned idea has the potential of sowing the **seeds of separatism**.
- **Wastage of resources:** The National Human Rights Commission is adequately empowered to look into the issues relating to infringement of

rights of people in India and hence of any other organisation that focusses on the rights on just minorities leads to **waste of both material and human resources**.

- **Political influence:** National Minority Commission may become and in some instances has become place of where appointment for **political appeasement** are made.

Why existence of separate National Minorities Commission is necessary?

- **Attentive protection of minorities:** The Constitution of India guarantees **Secularism** and hence protection of Minorities has to be paid adequate attention.
- **For effective functioning:** National Human Rights Commission is already overburdened with its existing workload and therefore asking it to perform the duties of Minorities also would lead to compromise of the quality of work done by it and also severe backlog affecting many Indians.
- **Lack of expertise with NHRC:** The National Human Rights Commission may not possess the expertise required to tackle the issues impacting rights of Minorities that are guaranteed by the Indian Constitution and other statutes of the country.

For diversity in unity: Religious minorities add to the diversity of India and their unique characteristics have to be safeguarded if India has to maintain its image of being a plural civilisation. This can be done in better way with the National Commission for Minorities being in existence.

AMENDMENT TO CENSUS RULES, 1990

CONTEXT:

Gazette Notification issued by the Central Government stating Amendment of Census Rules, 1990.

What is Census?

- Population Census is the total process of collecting, compiling, analyzing or otherwise disseminating demographic, economic and social data pertaining, at a specific time, of all persons in a country or a well-defined part of a country.
- As such, the census provides snapshot of the country's population and housing at a given point of time.
- Responsible agency:** The Census is conducted by the **Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India**, under the **Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India**.
- Duration:** It is done every 10 years.
- First and last Census:** The census was first conducted in 1872 during the British rule. The last census was done in 2011.
- First complete census:** It was done in 1881.

The Census Act, 1948

- The Census Act was enacted in 1948 to provide for the scheme of conducting population census with duties and responsibilities of census officers.

Why is census conducted?

- Census is the basis for **reviewing the country's progress in the past decade**, monitoring the ongoing schemes of the government and the impact they have had on the government and plan the future course of action.
- It provides detailed and authentic information** on demography, economic activity, literacy and education, housing and household amenities, urbanisation, fertility and mortality, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, language, religion, migration, disability and many other socio-cultural and demographic data.

When was the last census in India conducted?

- Last census** in India was conducted in the year **2011**.

- The census exercise of the current decade has not been started **and postponed due to the spread of Corona pandemic**.
- The upcoming census will be **India's first digital census**, though data will be collected during this exercise in both digital and paper format.
- Collection of data for **compilation of National Population Registry** will also be part of Census 2021 exercise.

What is National Population Registry?

- The NPR is a register of usual residents of the country.
- It will be mandatory for every usual resident of India to register in the NPR. It includes both Indian citizens as well as a foreign citizen.
- The objective of the NPR is to create a comprehensive identity database of every usual resident in the country.
- The first **National Population Register** was prepared in 2010 and updating this data was done during 2015 by conducting door to door survey.
- The next update of the NPR will take place in April to September of 2023 with the Houselisting phase of the Census 2021.
- National Population Registry is prepared at the local (Village/sub-Town), sub-District, District, State and National level under provisions of the Citizenship Act 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.

What changes have been notified by the Central Government in the Census Rules, 1990?

- Clause C of Rule 2 of Census Rules, 1990 was amended to include terms **"electronic form"** and **"self-enumeration"**.

How are these terms defined in the amended Census Rules?

- Electronic Form:** The amended rules state that it has the same meaning as clause (r) of section 2(1) of Information Technology Act, 2000.

Definition of Electronic Form under Information Technology Act, 2000: "electronic form", with reference to information, means any information generated, sent, received or stored in media, magnetic, optical, computer memory, micro film, computer generated micro fiche or similar device.

- **Self-Enumeration:** filling, completion, and submission of the census schedule by respondents themselves.

What will be the impact of the above changes on the upcoming census exercise?

- It will allow the Central Government to **capture and store census related data in electronic format.**

- Self-enumeration would **facilitate the respondent to answer the questionnaire** scheduled to be asked **on their own.**

Which other amendments have also been done in Census Rules, 2020?

- In Rule 5, the word "**media**" has been replaced with "**electronic or any other media**". This would **enable change regarding how the Census statistics should be published.**
- Change has also been brought to Rule 8 to widen the medium through which publicity for the census exercise could be conducted. Earlier, this list of modes only included radio, audio-visuals, and posters. Now, "**print media, electronic media, and social media**", are also added to the list.

ROW AFTER MAHARASHTRA GOVERNOR REFUSES NOD FOR SPEAKER'S ELECTION

CONTEXT:

The rift between the Maharashtra government and Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari has further escalated as the latter has refused to give nod for holding the state Assembly Speaker's election.

In this article, we propose to deal with the powers of the Speaker and the Governor as envisaged under the Constitution of India.

Understanding the 'legal' position

• State Legislature

- ▶ The Constitution of India enumerates the **formation of legislatures in States** under **Article 168**, comprising of the
 - "Governor"
 - two Houses or one House as in maximum of the States

In this regard it is pertinent to dive into the constitutional provisions guiding the office of the Governor.

• Governor

- ▶ **Article 163** mandates that there shall be a Governor in each State and such person must be a citizen of India and have completed **thirty-five years of age**, who under **Article 154** shall be vested with the executive power of the State to be exercised by him directly or through officers subordinate to him in accordance with the Constitution.
- ▶ The term of the office of the Governor **bridges on the pleasure of the President of India** which shall be for a **maximum period of five years** at a stretch from the date of his entering upon his office.

• Speaker

- ▶ **Article 178** of the Constitution mandates that there shall be a **Speaker and Deputy Speaker** of the **State Legislative Assembly**.
- ▶ The office of the Speaker denotes the values on which parliamentary system of the Government is based.
- ▶ The Speaker is conferred with the powers and privileges of the State Legislature.
- ▶ The Constitution of India lays down the powers and duties of the Speaker under **Articles 96(2), 120(1), 100(4), 189(4), 195(1) and 210(1) of the Constitution of India**.

- ▶ The Speaker derives his power from the rules of procedure of respective houses framed under the powers enshrined under the Constitution upholding the concept of constitutional morality.
- ▶ Accordingly, he is responsible for the conduct of the proceedings of the assembly in the manner of a guardian.
- ▶ The Speaker of the House is in charge and command of the proceedings of the House and such exercise of powers are normally protected under the concept of parliamentary privileges under **Articles 122 and 212 of the Constitution of India**.
- ▶ It will not be wrong to state that he is a link between the House and the executive Government and the Governor, the three pillars of a State Legislature.
- ▶ The fundamental principle is that the House is sovereign in the matter to frame its own rules of procedure and the conduct of business.

How the Governor exercises his functions?

- The manner in which Governor can exercise his functions under the Constitution is enumerated under **Article 163** of the Constitution of India.
- It provides that the Governor shall be advised by the **Council of Minister** with the **Chief Minister** as the head in the exercise of his functions save and except where the Governor is empowered to use his discretionary powers by or under the Constitution or, any law framed thereunder.
- ▶ Thus, where the Governor acts as the **Head of the State**, except in relation to areas which are earmarked under the Constitution as giving discretion to the Governor, the exercise of power by him, must only be upon the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, for the reason that the Governor, being the custodian of all executive and other powers under various provisions of the Constitution, is required to exercise his **formal constitutional powers**, only upon, and in accordance with, the aid and advice of his Council of Ministers.

- He is, therefore, bound to act under the **Rules of Business framed under Article 166(3)** of the Constitution.
- However, **Article 163(2)** empowers the Governor to act in his discretion, “except insofar as he is by or under this Constitution required to exercise his functions or any of them in his discretion.”
- This discretionary power has put the position of Governor at a much higher pedestal, thus sometimes leading to an arbitrary and lenient exercise of this power.

INTEGRATION OF CENTRAL AGENCIES WITH CCTNS

CONTEXT:

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has stated that the data of Central agencies such as CBI, NIA etc., should be integrated with Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS).

What is Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System?

- CCTNS is a programme through which around 16,000 police stations all over India have been connected so that their data could be shared.
- This programme was implemented by **National Crime Records Bureau**.

National Crime Records Bureau:

- It is an Indian government agency **responsible for collecting and analysing crime data** as defined by the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)** and **Special and Local Laws (SLL)**.
- NCRB is headquartered in **New Delhi** and is part of the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**, Government of India.

What will be the benefit of integrating the data of Central agencies with CCTNS?

- **Data collection** of criminals and criminal activities in India would be complete.
- This will make **tracing the criminals and their crime history** easy.

The second phase of ICJS

- The **second phase of the Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS)** will be implemented by the Centre Government by the year 2026.
- ICJS is an initiative of the Ministry of Home Affairs to **enable seamless transfer of data and information among different pillars of the criminal justice system**, like courts, police, jails and forensic science laboratories, from one platform.

What are the features of ICJS?

- The ICJS system would be made available through a **dedicated and secure cloud-based infrastructure with high speed connectivity**.
- Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) is a national platform for **enabling integration of the main IT system used for delivery of Criminal Justice** in the country by five pillars namely:-

- ▶ Police (Crime and Criminal Tracking and Network Systems)
- ▶ e-Forensics for Forensic Labs
- ▶ e-Courts for Courts
- ▶ e-Prosecution for Public Prosecutors
- ▶ e-Prisons for Prisons
- In **Phase-I** of the **ICJS project (2018-2022)**, individual IT systems have been implemented and stabilized; also search of records have been enabled on these systems.
- Under **Phase-II (2022-23 to 2025-26)**, the system is being built on the principle of '**one data one entry**' whereby data is entered only once in one pillar and the same is then available in all other pillars without the need to re-enter the data in each pillar.

Which is the implementing agency of ICJS?

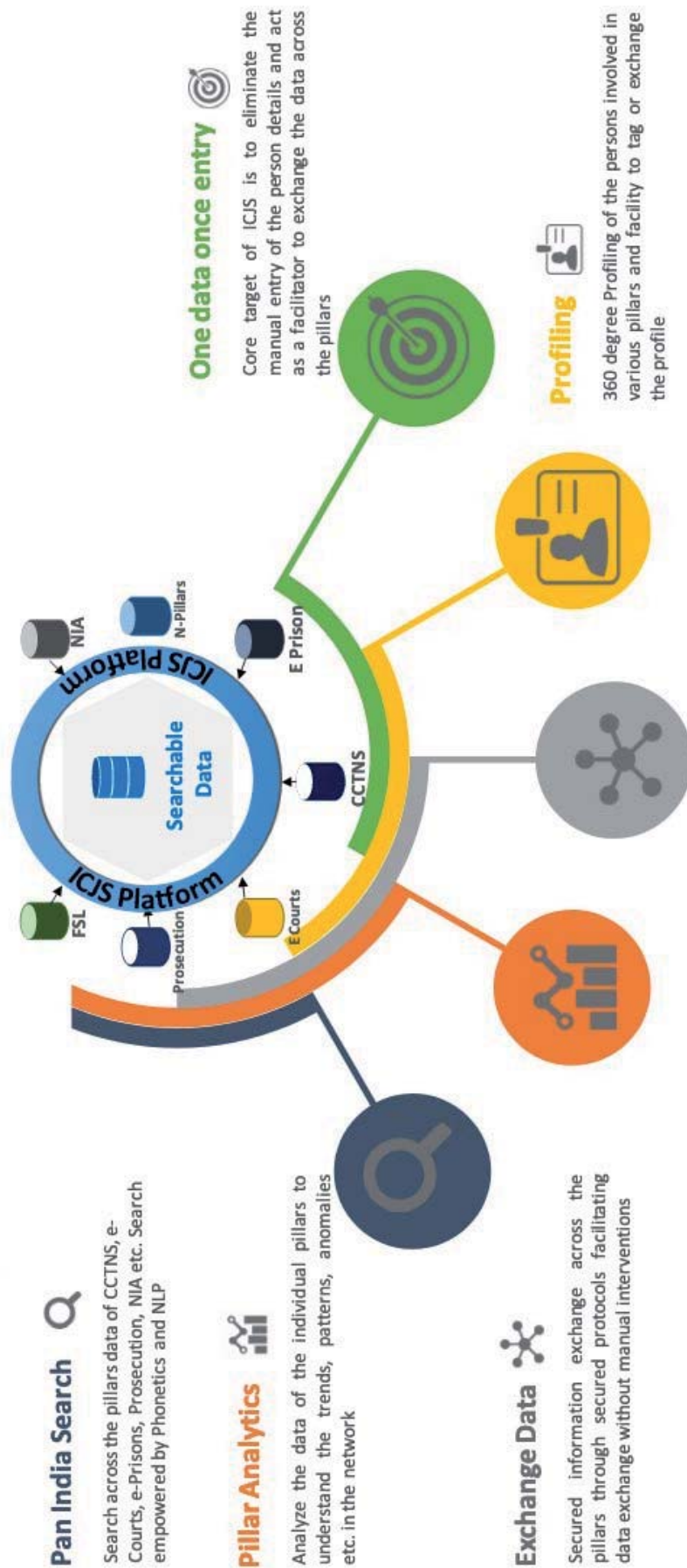
- National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) will be responsible for the implementation of the project in association with National Informatics Center (NIC).
- The project will be implemented in collaboration with the States and Union Territories.

Image on Next Page

What will be the benefits of ICJS?

- With the aid of the ICJS platform, the metadata of FIR and charge sheet can be accessed by all the High Courts and subordinate courts.
- Documents like FIR, case diary and charge sheet are uploaded by police in PDF format for utilization by the courts.
- The ICJS platform is an effective tool for the case and court management, as all the relevant information of a case will be available in real-time for use by the courts.
- Compliance of judicial orders and summons can also be achieved expeditiously, ensuring effective time management.
- The ICJS is going to be a milestone to enhance the productivity of the criminal justice system both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Interoperable Criminal Justice System



. Conceptual diagram of ICJS implementation

THE FUNCTIONING OF THE ISS AFTER SANCTIONS

CONTEXT:

After Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, the U.S. imposed sanctions on Russia including a ban on transfer of technology and on Russian banks.

Following this, the Russian space agency Roscosmos said that The State Corporation will not co-operate with Germany on joint experiments in the Russian segment of the International Space Station.

Roscosmos will conduct them independently. The Russian space programme against the backdrop of sanctions will be adjusted, the priority will be creation of satellites in the interests of defence.

● ANALYSIS:

What is the ISS?

- The ISS (**International Space Station**) was launched in 1998 as part of joint efforts by the U.S., Russia, Japan, Canada and Europe.
- The space station was assembled over many years, and it operates in **low-earth orbit**.
- Since its inception, it has served **as a laboratory suspended in space** and has aided multiple scientific and technological developments.
- The ISS was originally built to operate for **15 years**.

Why was ISS launched?

- A space station permits quantum leaps in **research in science, communications**, and in **metals and lifesaving medicines** which could be manufactured only in space.
- ISS has consistently maintained human presence for the **past 21 years**, providing astronauts with **sophisticated technologies for scientific research**.

What is Russia's role in maintaining the ISS?

- The ISS is built with the co-operation of scientists from five international space agencies —
 - **NASA** of the U.S.
 - **Roscosmos** of Russia
 - **JAXA** of Japan
 - **Canadian Space Agency**
 - **European Space Agency**
- Each agency has a role to play and a share in the **upkeep of the ISS**.
- Both in terms of expense and effort, it is not a feat that a single country can support.

- **Russia's part** in the collaboration is the module responsible for **making course corrections** to the **orbit of the ISS**.
- They also **ferry astronauts** to the ISS from the Earth and back.
- Until **SpaceX's dragon spacecraft** came into the picture the Russian spacecrafts were the **only** way of reaching the ISS and returning.

Why does the orbit of the ISS need to be corrected?

- Due to its **enormous weight** and the **ensuing drag**, the ISS tends to **sink from its orbit** at a height of about 250 miles above the Earth.
- It has to be **pushed up to its original line of motion** every now and then.
- Approximately **once a month** this effort has to be made. It is **not necessarily a regular operation**, and may be missed once and **compensated for later**.
- The other reason for altering the path of the ISS is to **avoid its collision with space debris**, which can damage the station. These **manoeuvres** need to be done as and when the debris is encountered.

What is the future of space stations?

- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (**NASA**) has announced plans to **retire and decommission** the International Space Station (ISS) **by 2031**.
- As the ISS plans to end operations in space, **new players** are already lining up to replace it.
- In January 2022, **China** announced that its space station will be ready for operations this year.
- **Blue Origin**, the aerospace company founded by Jeff Bezos, has also announced its plans to build Orbital Reef, a commercially developed, owned, and operated space station in low-earth orbit.

SECTION: B

(PRELIMS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

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SANTHALI SOHRAI MURALS: AN ETCH IN TIME

◎ CONTEXT:

The Santhali communities of Odisha and Jharkhand are changing their ways of painting Sohrai murals.

Sohrai Khovar Painting:

- It is a **traditional and ritualistic mural art** being practised by local tribal women during local harvest and marriage seasons using local, naturally available soils of different colours in the area of Hazaribagh district of Jharkhand.
- The style features a profusion of **lines, dots, animal figures and plants**, often representing religious iconography.
- **Khovar** refers to the **decoration of the marriage chambers** and **Sohrai** is the **harvest painting on the mud houses**, repairing it after the rains and offering a thanksgiving to the forces of Nature.
- In 2020, Jharkhand received a **Geographical Indication tag** for its Sohrai art particularly for the murals painted by women in Hazaribagh district who do not belong to the Santhal tribe.
- The **murals of Hazaribagh** are more primordial with different motifs, whereas the **Santhali Sohrai art** features only geometric shapes.
- Women of Hazaribagh only **use earth colours — red, black and white —** for their murals.



About Santhals:

- The Santal, or Santhal, are an **ethnic group native to India and Bangladesh** in South Asia.
- Santals are the largest tribe in the **Jharkhand state** of India in terms of population and are also found in the states of **Assam, Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal**.
- The word 'Santal' is derived from two words; **Santa meaning calm** and peaceful and **ala meaning man**.
- In the past, the Santals were leading a nomadic life.
 - Gradually they came to settle down in the Chotanagpur plateau.
- **Ethnic Language of Santal:**
 - Santali language belongs to the sub family of **Austro-Asiatic cluster** and classified under the '**Mundari**' group of languages.
 - They have their own **scripts known as Ol-Chiki** discovered by Pandit Raghunath Murmu in the year 1920s.
 - Initially 'Ol-Chiki' was regarded as copied one and also considered as one which doesn't have any characteristic of language.
 - In the year 2003, the Santali language has been included in the eighth schedule of the Constitution of India.

INDIA AT UNSC BACKS CONVENTION PROHIBITING BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

◎ CONTEXT:

India at the United Nations Security Council meet raised concerns over the use of biological weapons in Ukraine amid reports of Russia's charge against US.

What are Biological Weapons?

- Biological weapons are microorganisms like **virus, bacteria, fungi, or other toxins** that are produced and released deliberately to cause disease and death in humans, animals or plants.
 - Biological agents, like **anthrax, botulinum toxin and plague** can pose a difficult public health challenge causing large numbers of deaths in a short amount of time while being difficult to contain.
- Bioterrorism attacks could also result in an epidemic, for example if **Ebola or Lassa viruses** were used as the biological agents.

Chemical Weapons:

- A Chemical Weapon is a chemical used to cause intentional death or harm through its toxic properties.
- Munitions, devices and other equipment specifically designed to weaponize toxic chemicals also fall under the definition of chemical weapons.

About Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC):

- The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) was the first multilateral treaty categorically banning a class of weapon.
- Came into force in 1975 and the Convention was negotiated by the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Aim:**
 - The treaty prohibits the development, stockpile, production, or transfer of biological agents and toxins of "types and quantities" that have no justification for protective or peaceful use.
 - Furthermore, the treaty bans the development of weapons, equipment, or delivery systems to disseminate such agents or toxins.
- **Signatories:**
 - It has 183 signatories, including the United States, Russia, and Ukraine.
 - India has signed and ratified this convention.
- **Significance:**
 - It was the first multilateral disarmament treaty banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).
 - The BWC is a key element in the international community's efforts to address WMD proliferation and it has established a strong norm against biological weapons.
 - A total of eight Review Conferences have taken place since the first one in 1980.

Recent conflict/allegations:

- Moscow claimed that its invading forces had discovered evidence of an "emergency clean-up" to hide the programme.

- Moscow went on to claim that it had found documents related to the secret US operation in laboratories in the Ukrainian cities of Kharkiv and Poltava.
- The allegations were quickly amplified by China, which supported the claims.
- Both the US and Ukraine have categorically denied that they are developing any biological weapons inside the country.

India's stand:

- During a briefing to the United Nations Security Council, India emphasised the importance of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), which came into force in 1975, as a key global and non-discriminatory disarmament treaty that prohibits an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.
 - India urged that the BTWC be fully implemented in "letter and spirit."
- India believes that any matters relating to obligations under the BTWC should be addressed as per the provision of the Convention and through consultation and cooperation between the parties concerned.
- India reiterated that it remains deeply concerned at the progressively deteriorating situation in Ukraine.
- India focused on need to undertake engagements keeping in mind the need to respect the principles of the UN Charter, international law and sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

INDIA'S TAKE ON UN'S 'INTERNATIONAL DAY TO COMBAT ISLAMOPHOBIA' RESOLUTION

◎ CONTEXT:

Recently, the UN General Assembly has adopted a resolution, introduced by the Pakistan envoy, to proclaim March 15 as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia.

What Is Islamophobia?

- Islamophobia is an extreme fear of and hostility toward Islam and Muslims.
- It often leads to hate speech and hate crimes, social and political discrimination, can be used to rationalize policies such as mass surveillance, incarceration, and disenfranchisement, and can influence domestic and foreign policy.

About the resolution:

- The resolution was **proposed by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**, and it was introduced by **Pakistan's Permanent Representative Munir Akram** and was **adopted unanimously**.
- The resolution was introduced on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries, under the agenda item **Culture of peace**.
- The resolution was **sponsored by 57 member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and eight other countries including China and Russia**.

India's response at UNGA:

- India said at the United Nations General Assembly that the **denouncement of bigotry should apply to all religions**.
- **France and the European Union** took a position **similar to India**; expressing reservations that the resolution's call for tolerance was not inclusive of all believers, and went further to say that it should also include protection for non-believers.

- India **did not oppose the resolution** proposed by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).
- India is concerned about elevating the phobia against one religion to the level of an international day, to the exclusion of all the others.
 - Celebration of a religion is one thing, but to commemorate the combatting of hatred against one religion is quite another.
- India is proud that **pluralism is at the core of our existence** and we firmly believe in equal protection and promotion of all religions and faith.
 - It is, therefore, unfortunate that word 'pluralism' finds no mention in the resolution and the sponsors have not found it fit to take on board our amendments to include the word "pluralism" in the text for reasons best known to them.
- India condemns all acts motivated by **antisemitism, Christianophobia, or Islamophobia**. But it should be recognized that such phobias are not restricted to Abrahamic religions only.
 - There is also **hatred against non-Abrahamic religions**.
 - Several examples were given in this regard, such as the destruction of Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan by the Taliban, massacre of Sikh pilgrims in gurudwara, attack on temples, etc.
 - There are other forms of religiophobia such as anti-Hindu, anti-Buddhist and anti-Sikh phobias.
 - Thus, there is a **need to acknowledge the prevalence of religiophobia in general**, rather than single out phobia against one particular religion.

MATERNAL MORTALITY RATIO OF INDIA DECLINES BY 10 POINTS

© **CONTEXT:**

The Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) of India has declined by 10 points as per a special bulletin released by the Registrar General of India.

About Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) in India:

- With this persistent decline, India was on the verge of achieving the National Health Policy (NHP) target of 100/lakh live births by 2020 and certainly on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of 70/ lakh live births by 2030.

Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) in India	
Year	MMR
2004-2006	254
2007-2009	212
2010-2012	178
2011-2013	167
2014-2016	130
2015-2017	122
2016-2018	113
2017-19	103

- **The States that have achieved the SDG target:**
 - Kerala (30)
 - Maharashtra (38)
 - Telangana (56)
 - Tamil Nadu (58)
 - Andhra Pradesh (58)
 - Jharkhand (61)
 - Gujarat (70)
- There are now nine States that have achieved the MMR target set by the NHP, which include the above seven and Karnataka (83) and Haryana (96).

About Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR):

- Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) is defined as the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births due to pregnancy or termination of pregnancy, regardless of the site or duration of pregnancy.
- The maternal mortality rate is used to represent the risk associated with pregnancy among women.

The Office of the Registrar General:

- It is under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- Apart from conducting the **Population Census and monitoring** the implementation of the Registration of Births and Deaths in the country, it has been giving estimates on fertility and mortality using the **Sample Registration System (SRS)**.
- SRS is the **largest demographic sample survey** in the country that among other indicators provide direct estimates of maternal mortality through a nationally representative sample.
- **Verbal Autopsy (VA)** instruments are administered for the deaths reported under the SRS on a regular basis to yield a cause-specific mortality profile in the country.

SMILE-SUPPORT FOR MARGINALISED INDIVIDUALS FOR LIVELIHOOD AND ENTERPRISE

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** Recently, Rs 265 crore allotted for rehabilitation, welfare of transgender from the financial years 2021-22 to 2025-26.

About SMILE Scheme

- The **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** has formulated a scheme "**SMILE – Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise**".
- SMILE includes two sub-schemes –
 - **Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation for Welfare of Transgender Persons**
 - **Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation of persons engaged in the act of Begging**
- Financial allocation of **Rs 100 crores** for the period **2021-22 to 2025-26** for the scheme.

- This scheme covers several comprehensive measures including welfare measures for persons who are engaged in the act of begging.
- The **focus of the scheme is extensively on rehabilitation, provision of medical facilities, counselling, basic documentation, education, skill development, economic linkages** and so on.
- The scheme would be implemented with the support of State/UT Governments/Local Urban Bodies, Voluntary Organizations, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), institutions and others.
- Scheme provides for the **use of the existing shelter homes available with the State/UT Governments and Urban local bodies for rehabilitation of the persons** engaged in the act of Begging.
- In case of non-availability of existing shelter homes, new dedicated shelter homes are to be set up by the implementing agencies.

Status of Beggars in India:

- According to the Census 2011, total number of beggars in India is 4,13,670 (including 2,21,673 males and 1,91,997 females) and the number has increased from the last census.
- **West Bengal tops the chart followed by Uttar Pradesh and Bihar** at number two and three respectively. Lakshadweep merely has two vagrants according to the 2011 census.
- Among the **union territories, New Delhi had the largest number of beggars** 2,187 followed by 121 in Chandigarh.
- Among the north-eastern states, **Assam** topped the chart with 22,116 beggars, while Mizoram ranked low with 53 beggars.
- Recently, the Supreme Court has agreed to examine a plea for **decriminalising begging** which has been made an offence in various states under Prevention of Begging Act.

WITH DISHAANK APP, LAND SURVEY RECORDS AT CLICK OF A BUTTON

◎ CONTEXT:

One of the most significant initiatives that appear to be doing wonders in this area is digitising state land records including the old land records of Karnataka.

- **Bhoomi** is one such initiative taken by the **Department of Survey and land records** Karnataka that helped make the Karnataka revenue Land Records online to ease access to the common public.

About Dishank App:

- Dishaank, the mobile application is developed for Survey Settlement and Land Records (SSLR) department for the use of general public and departmental users of Karnataka.
- The application is developed under **Karnataka GIS (K-GIS) Program**.
 - K-GIS is being implemented by **Karnataka State Remote Sensing Applications Center (KSRSAC)**.
- The objective of this app is to enable the citizens to avail the information about the land and its ownership as recorded in Bhoomi database.
- This is expected to bring in transparency and enable citizens to identify the actual owner, location of land and the extent as available in RTC in their fingertips thereby reducing the land related disputes.

- In the initial part of the project, KSRSAC digitized 30,854 village maps for Karnataka.
- The agency subsequently geo-referenced all village maps and “created a seamless mosaic on the **Cartosat (2.5 m spatial resolution) satellite image** and subsequently spatially geo-referenced 50 cm satellite data”.
- The geo-referenced village map data was linked to the land records by SSLR so that citizens do not have to approach the revenue department to know the land details.

HIJAB NOT AN ESSENTIAL PRACTICE OF ISLAM, RULES KARNATAKA HIGH COURT

◎ CONTEXT:

The Karnataka High Court recently upheld the ban on wearing hijab in educational institutions in the state, saying wearing hijab is not an essential practice of Islam.

About Religious Freedom Protected under the Constitution:

- **Article 25(1)** of the Constitution guarantees the “freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion”.
- It is a right that **guarantees a negative liberty** — which means that the state shall ensure that there is no interference or obstacle to exercise this freedom.

However, like all **fundamental rights**, the state can restrict the right for grounds of **public order, decency, morality, health and other state interests**.

About Essential Religious Practices Test:

- Over the years, the Supreme Court has evolved a practical test of sorts to determine what religious practices can be constitutionally protected and what can be ignored.
- **Origin of the Essential Practice Doctrine**
 - The ‘essential practice’ doctrine can be traced to a **1954 decision of the Supreme Court ‘Shirur Mutt’ case**.
 - The SC had held in the Shirur Mutt case that, “**In the first place, what constitutes the essential part of a religion is primarily to be ascertained with reference to the doctrines of that religion itself,**”.
- Hence, some acts obtained constitutional protection by being declared “essential” to the practice of that religion and some were denied protection on the ground that they were not essential to it.

The Judgement:

- Wearing of **hijab** (head scarf) by Muslim women **does not form a part of essential religious practices in Islamic faith** and it is not protected under the right to freedom of religion guaranteed under Article 25 of the Constitution of India.
- The court ruled that prescription of school **uniform does not violate either the right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1) (a) or the right to privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution**, and the restriction against wearing of hijab in educational institutions is only a reasonable restriction constitutionally permissible, which the students cannot object to.
- The **court upheld the legality** of the Karnataka **Government’s order prescribing wearing of uniforms in schools and pre-university colleges** under provisions of the Karnataka Education Act, 1983.

PROJECT DOLPHIN: MINISTER PULLS UP OFFICIALS OVER SLOW PACE OF WORK

◎ CONTEXT:

Recently, Union JAL Shakti Minister expressed his displeasure over the slow pace of the approval process for Project Dolphin at a meeting of the Empowered Task Force (ETF) on Ganga.

About Project Dolphin:

- Project Dolphin will be **on the lines of Project Tiger**, which has helped increase the tiger population.
- Project got in-principle approval in December 2019, at the **first meeting of the National Ganga Council (NGC)**, headed by the Prime Minister.
- **Implementing Agency:** Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- Special Conservation program needs to be taken up for **Gangetic Dolphin which is a national aquatic animal and also indicator species** for the river Ganga spread over several states.
- As the Gangetic dolphin is at the top of the food chain, protecting the species and its habitat will ensure conservation of aquatic lives of the river.
- So far, the National **Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)**, which implements the government's flagship scheme Namami Gange, has been taking some initiatives for saving dolphins.

About Gangetic dolphin:

- Gangetic river dolphin is **India's national aquatic animal. Its presence signals a healthy river ecosystem.**
- **Habitat:** It inhabits the **Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems** of Nepal, India, and Bangladesh.
- Gangetic river dolphin is one of the **four freshwater dolphin species** in the world. The other three are found in the Yangtze River, the Indus River in Pakistan and the Amazon River.
- They are usually found in turbulent waters where there is enough fish for them to feed on.
- Gangetic dolphins prefer deep water with adjoining shallow water. They live in a zone where there is little or no current that helps them save energy. If they sense danger, they can go into deep waters.
- The dolphins swim from the no-current zone to the edges to hunt for fish and return. It is almost completely blind. It finds its way and prey using echoes.

Conservation Status

- In the **First Schedule** of the **Indian Wildlife (Protection), Act 1972.**
- **Endangered** by the International **Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).**
- **Appendix I (most endangered)** of the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).**
- **Appendix II** (migratory species that need conservation and management or would significantly benefit from international co-operation) of the **Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).**

Threats to Gangetic river dolphin

- **Pollution:** It faces a number of threats such as dumping of single-use plastics in water bodies, industrial pollution, and fishing.
- **Restrictive Flow of Water:** The increase in the number of barrages and dams is also affecting their growth as such structures impede the flow of water.
- **Poaching:** Dolphins are also poached for their flesh, fat, and oil, which is used as a prey to catch fish, as an ointment and as a supposed aphrodisiac.
- **Shipping & Dredging:** It is also called a blind dolphin because it doesn't have an eye lens and uses echolocation to navigate and hunt.

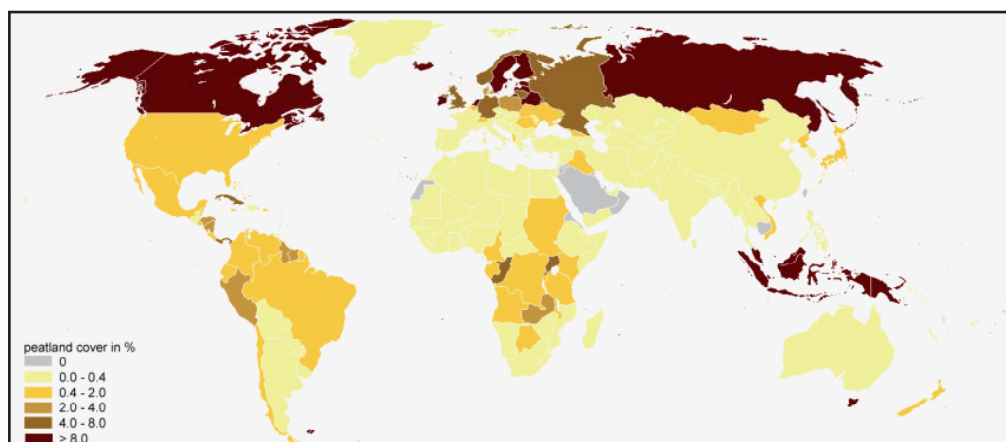
PERMAFROST PEATLANDS IN EUROPE, WESTERN SIBERIA NEARING TIPPING POINT: STUDY

◎ CONTEXT:

Recently, a new study warned that Permafrost peatlands — frozen, carbon-storing expanses of land — in Europe and western Siberia might be approaching their tipping point faster than expected.

About Peatlands:

- Peatlands are a **class of wetlands**, which are ecosystems flooded with water.
- **Waterlogged conditions limit microbial decay of dead plant materials rich in carbon dioxide.**
 - This **prevents the reintroduction of the gas into the atmosphere.**
- According to the United Nations Environment Programme, **Peatlands occupy only 3 per cent of the global land surface**, store twice as much carbon as all the world's forests.
- Some peatlands are buried under frozen ground or permafrost and exist as **permafrost peatlands.**
 - They are **found in the northern parts of Alaska, Canada, Russia and parts of northern Europe.**
- **Frozen wetlands** in Europe and western Siberia store up to **39 billion tonnes of carbon.**
 - This is equivalent to twice that is held by the whole of European forests.



Key findings of the study:

- Permafrost peatlands — frozen, carbon-storing expanses of land — in Europe and western Siberia might be approaching their tipping point faster than expected.

- **By 2040, northern Europe might become too wet and warm to support permafrost peatlands.**
- Huge stocks of peat carbon have been protected for millennia by frozen conditions, but once those conditions become unsuitable, all that stored carbon can be lost very quickly.
- This could release carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere, further accelerating climate change.
- **By 2060, these areas could lose 75 per cent under moderate efforts to mitigate climate change.** The figure could go as high as 81 per cent and 93 per cent if the world does little to address the issue.
- Permafrost peatlands in Sweden, Norway, Finland and parts of European Russia, which are already seeing warmer temperatures, can reach their threshold before western Siberia.

CENTRAL ECONOMIC ZONE UNDER SAGARMALA SCHEME

◎ CONTEXT:

Under the National Perspective Plan of the Sagarmala Programme, fourteen Coastal economic Zones (CEZs) were envisaged including three in the state of Tamil Nadu.

About Sagarmala Programme:

- The Sagarmala Programme is a huge project taken up by the Indian government to improve the country's logistic sector.
- This Pariyojana falls under the governance of the **Ministry of Shipping of India.**
- Covering India's longest coastline of 7,517 km, waterways of 14,500 km, and global maritime trade pathways, the Sagarmala Project aims to promote industrial port-led development in the country.

Port-led Industrialization

- Vision of the Sagarmala Programme is to reduce logistics cost and time for the movement of EXIM and domestic cargo. Development of port-proximate industrial capacities near the coast, in future, is a step in this direction.
- In this regard, the concepts of Coastal Economic Zones (CEZs), Coastal Economic Units (CEUs), Port-Linked Industrial & Maritime Clusters and Smart Industrial Port Cities have been introduced.
 - **Coastal Economic Zones (CEZs):** CEZs could be spatial economic regions comprising of a group of coastal districts or districts with a strong linkage to the ports in that region. CEZs are also envisaged to tap synergies with the planned industrial corridor projects
 - **Coastal Economic Units (CEUs):** CEUs will be specific industrial estate projects with a demarcated boundary similar to the DMIC nodes. The CEUs will house the industrial clusters / projects proposed within the CEZ.
- Each CEZ will consist of multiple CEUs and more than one industrial cluster can be housed within a CEU.
 - Within each industrial cluster there can be several manufacturing units.
 - To accelerate the CEU development process, it is proposed that CEUs be prioritized in locations where land parcels are available in areas close to a deep draught port and with strong potential for manufacturing.

- An Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) was constituted under the aegis of NITI Aayog for development of CEZs in India.
 - As recommended by IMC, the institutional framework for development of CEZs would be similar to the institutional framework adopted by DMICDC for development of industrial corridors and industrial node
- The development of CEZs will be taken up in phases wherein the first phase of development would focus on developing two large CEZs as pilots.

Coastal Economic Zones Planned under Sagarmala:

S. No.	CEZ	State	Districts Covered	Linkage Ports
1	Kachch	Gujarat	Kachchh	Deen Dayal, Mundra
2	Saurashtra	Gujarat	Junagarh, Amreli, Bhavnagar, Ahmedabad	Pipavav, Sikka
3	Suryapur	Gujarat	Bharuch, Surat, Navsari, Valsad	Dahej, Hazira
4	North Konkan	Maharashtra	Nashik, Thane, Mumbai, Pune, Raigarh	JNPT, Mumbai
5	South Konkan	Maharashtra, Goa	Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, North Goa, South Goa	Dighi, Jaigarh, Mormugao
6	Dakshin Kanara	Karnataka	Udupi, Dakshin Kannada, Kodagu, Mysore	New Mangalore
7	Malabar	Kerala	Emakulam, Alappuzha Kollam, Thiruvananthapuram	Cochin
8	Mannar	Tamil Nadu	Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi	VOCPT (Tuticorin)
9	Poompuhar	Tamil Nadu	Cuddalore, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Tiruchirappalli, Thanjavur, Thiruvarur, Nagapattinam	Cuddalore
10	VCIC South	Tamil Nadu	Thiruvallur, Chennai, Kancheepuram	Chennai, Kamarajar, Katupalli
11	VCIC Central	Andhra Pradesh	Chittoor, Nellore	Krishnapatnam
12	VCIC North	Andhra Pradesh	Guntur, Krishna, West Godavari, East Godavari, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, Srilkakulam	Vizag, Kakinada

LONGEST EVER VESSEL TO SAIL ON BRAHMAPUTRA COMPLETES PILOT RUN

© CONTEXT:

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways achieved a landmark when the MV Ram Prasad Bismil became the longest vessel ever to sail on the river Brahmaputra.

About the vessel:

- It is a 90 meters long flotilla that is 26 meters wide.
- The consignment was loaded with 1,793 metric tonnes of steel rods from **Tata Steel** in Jamshedpur, had a requirement of a draft of 2.0 meters.
- It is the **longest vessel ever to sail on River Brahmaputra** anchored at **Pandu Port** after completing the cargo movement from **Haldia in West Bengal via Bangladesh**.
- The vessel along with two barges, **DB Kalpana Chawla** and **DB APJ Abdul Kalam** was flagged off from the Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port in Haldia.

Significance of the pilot run:

- It lays down the path for commencement of barging operation from Kolkata to Guwahati via **Indo Bangladesh Protocol Route (IBRP)**.
- The engineering marvel of this historic consignment remains at maintaining the minimum navigational draft of at least 2.0 meters, especially at critical stretches like the **Sirajganj – Daikowa stretch** of IBPR.
- The Government of India along with the Government of Bangladesh funded the dredging of this stretch with 80:20 ratio respectively for seamless navigation.
- The **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** as well as **Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA)** worked together so that this historic cargo movement can move smoothly.

About Indo Bangladesh Protocol Route (IBRP):

- Indo-Bangladesh Protocol on **Inland Water Transit & Trade** exists between India and Bangladesh under which **inland vessels of one country can transit through the specified routes of the other country**.
- The existing protocol routes are:
 - **Kolkata-Pandu-Kolkata**
 - **Kolkata-Karimganj – Kolkata**
 - **Rajshahi-Dhulian-Rajshahi**
 - **Pandu-Karimganj-Pandu**
- For inter-country trade, certain ports of call have been designated in each country. These **Ports of call generally act as an intermediate stops** for a ship on its scheduled journey for unloading and loading of cargo or taking on supplies or fuel and maintenance and refurbishing is carried out.
- This Protocol, which was **first signed in the year 1972**, was **renewed in the year 2015** for a period of five years with a provision for its automatic renewal for a further duration of five years providing long term assurance to various stakeholders.

Connectivity with mainland India through Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route



SECTION: C

(QUICK FACTS)

INDIAN ARMY ENGINEERS BUILD FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND 3D PRINTED HOUSE FOR JAWANS

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** Indian Army's Military Engineering Services (MES) constructed two houses using 3D Rapid Construction Technology recently.

About the first-of-its-kind 3D printed house:

- The houses were created using 3D Rapid Construction Technology.
- These digitally constructed houses are a **first of its kind structure in India** created by the **South-Western Air Command** in **Gandhinagar**.
- Each house has a built area of **around 700 square feet** and was built in collaboration with the **Chennai-based startup Tvasta**.

3D Printing

- 3D printing or **additive manufacturing** is a process of making three dimensional solid objects from a digital file.
- The creation of a 3D printed object is achieved using **additive processes**.
 - ▶ In an additive process an object is created by laying down successive layers of material until the object is created.
 - ▶ Each of these layers can be seen as a thinly sliced cross-section of the object.
- 3D printing is the opposite of **subtractive manufacturing**.
 - ▶ It refers to cutting out / hollowing out a piece of metal or plastic with for instance a milling machine.

GOVERNMENT PLANS REFORM IN 'CAPITAL GAINS TAX'

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** The government is likely to revamp the capital gains tax structure in the next budget to augment revenue collections and boost spending on welfare schemes.

About Capital Gains Tax:

- Capital Gains Tax is levied on the profits made on investments.
- It covers real estate, gold, stocks, mutual funds and various other financial and non-financial assets.
- It is divided into **long-term capital gains tax (LTCG)** and **short-term capital gains tax (STCG)** depending on how long you have held the investment in question.

Capital Gains Tax vs. Income Tax:

- Unlike income tax, the percentage of Capital Gains Tax does not change on the basis of your overall tax slab.
 - ▶ **For example**, the LTCG tax excluding surcharge on equity is the same for gains of ₹10 lakh or ₹10 crore.
- Moreover, there is also a separate set of deductions that apply to LTCG which do not apply to ordinary income.

TOP 100
ALL INDIA RANKING
CSE 2020

8 9 12 13 14 16 17 19 20
24 26 28 30 31 36 38 41 45 50
51 52 55 56 58 59 67 68 70 71 73
74 76 78 83 84 85 86 89 93 98 100

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TOP 100
ALL INDIA RANKING
CSE 2019

3 6 10 11 16 17 21 22 28
30 33 38 39 42 44 46 53 54 59 66 69
70 72 77 78 80 82 84 86 87 94 97 98

TOP 100
ALL INDIA RANKING
CSE 2018

2 3 5 7 27 36 37 40 44 49
51 52 56 58 62 74 81 89 92 94 98 100

TOP 100
ALL INDIA RANKING
CSE 2017

3 10 19 31 33 35 40 41 44 45 48
54 57 63 64 68 71 75 77 80 83 93 97 100