



CURRENT AFFAIRS

APRIL 2021

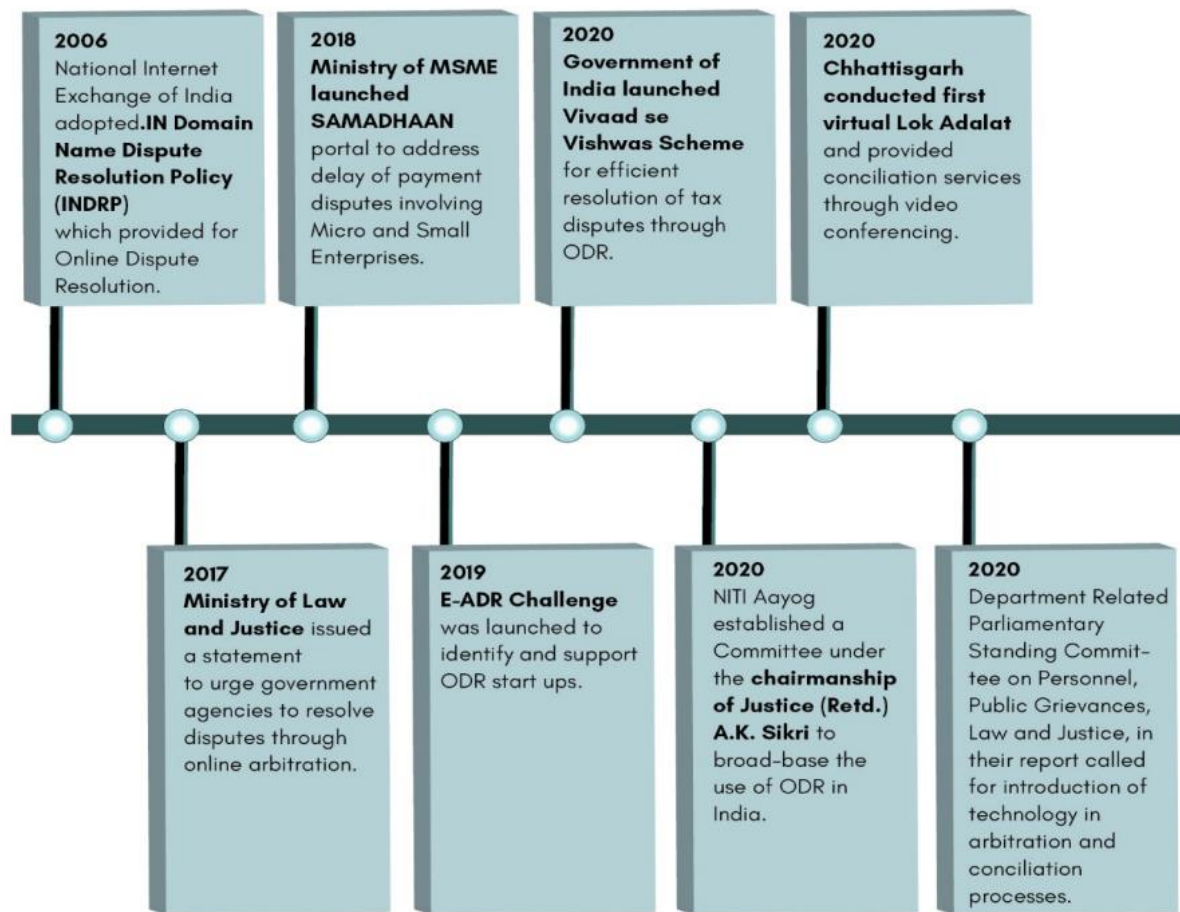
ONLINE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Recently, NITI Aayog has planned to launch a new first-of-its-kind Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) handbook in India.

What is Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)?

- ODR is the resolution of disputes outside courts, particularly of small and medium-value cases, using digital technology and techniques of alternate dispute resolution (ADR), such as negotiation, mediation, and arbitration.
- ODR realizes the notion that 'courts should be a service not a place'.
- The developments in information and communication technology (ICT) and increased access to internet has played a key role in ODR.
- ODR play a key role in achieving the ideal enshrined in Indian constitution of 'access to justice' for all.

Evolution of ODR in India



Present status of ODR in India

- **e-Courts Mission Mode Project**: Under the leadership of the E-Committee for monitoring the use of Technology and Administrative Reforms in the Indian Judiciary, the project continues to advocate and work towards greater reliance on ICT tools in the justice delivery process.
- **Conducting e-Lok Adalats**: The COVID-19 pandemic has provided an impetus to the authorities to use online mechanisms in their daily functioning. As a consequence, India saw the organisation of various e-Lok Adalats across States. The first e-Lok Adalat was organised by the Chhattisgarh.
- **Virtual Courts**: The Supreme Court has observed that some cases could partly or entirely be concluded 'online' and recommended the resolution of simple cases like those concerning traffic challans and cheque bouncing through online mechanisms.

- **RBI's ODR Policy on Digital Payments:** In 2019, the Nandan Nilekani led High level Committee on Deepening Digital Payments, established by Reserve Bank of India recommended the setting up of a two-tiered ODR system to handle complaints arising out of digital payments.
- **Draft National E-Commerce Policy:** The policy suggests the use of an electronic grievance redressal system including dissemination of compensation electronically for disputes arising from e-commerce

US EXIT FROM AFGHANISTAN

- US has announced that all American troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by September 11, 2021, the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, thus bringing to end the country's longest war.
- The US and the Taliban signed a landmark deal in Doha in February 2020 to bring lasting peace in war-torn Afghanistan and allow US troops to return home.
- Peace in Afghanistan now hinges upon the success of intra-Afghan negotiations which makes the future of Afghanistan very uncertain post US withdrawal.

This uncertainty could also lead to a set of broader geopolitical implications for the entire region including India.

WHOLESALE PRICE INDEX

The annual rate of Wholesale Price Index (WPI) stood at 7.39% for the month of March, 2021 over March, 2020 which is the highest wholesale inflation rate since October 2012.

About WPI

- The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) reflects changes in the average prices of goods at the wholesale level — that is, commodities sold in bulk and traded between business or entities rather than goods bought by consumers.
- It does not consider the price of services and does not reflect the consumer price situation in the country.
- Released by: Economic Advisor in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry

- Base year: Its base year is 2011-12 (revised in 2017 from 2004-05)
- Components of WPI: The index is based on the wholesale prices of a basket of 697 commodities categorised under three groups — Primary articles, Fuel and power and Manufactured products.

Wholesale Price Index (WPI) vs. Consumer Price Index (CPI)		
	WPI	CPI
Indicates	Change in average prices for bulk sale of commodities at the first stage of transaction	Average change in prices at retail level paid by the consumer
Covers	Goods only	Both Goods and Services
Base Year	2011-12	2011-12
Published by	Office of Economic Advisor (Ministry of Commerce and Industries)	National Statistical Office (Ministry of Statistics and Programme implementation)


SWAMITVA SCHEME

Recently, Prime Minister of India launched the distribution of e²property cards under the SWAMITVA scheme on National Panchayati Raj Day.

About SWAMITVA Scheme

- It is a Central Sector Scheme that aims to provide an integrated property validation solution for rural India, engaging the latest Drone Surveying technology, for demarcating the inhabitant (Aabadi) land in rural areas.
 - o It aims to update the 'record-of-rights' in the revenue/property registers and issue property cards to the property owners in rural areas.
- It is a collaborative effort of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) (Nodal Ministry for implementation of the scheme), State Panchayati Raj Departments, State Revenue / Land Records Departments and Survey of India.

Benefits of SVAMITVA

 ISSUANCE OF PROPERTY CARD	 MINIMISE PROPERTY DISPUTES	 BETTER QUALITY GPDP	 OTHER BENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Villagers can easily avail Home / Property loans. • Coverage of Properties by property tax. • Automatic creation of Property Tax Determination Sheet. • Automated Tax collection. • Increase in liquidity of land parcels in the market. • Increase in the financial credit availability to the village. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of civil rights of villagers. • Prevention of the encroachment by identifying public land. • Exact area of revenue will be known. • Records and map for taxation of the village, construction permits etc. will be available at Gram Panchayat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the maps created under survey for preparing GPDP. • Maps provide decision support system and helps in development and execution of planning activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease in implementation of agriculture schemes such as PM-KISAN, Fasal Bima Yojana etc. • Aid relief and compensation work in disaster affected areas.

COPYRIGHT (AMENDMENT) RULES, 2021

Recently, the Ministry of Commerce & Industry has notified Copyright (Amendment) Rules, 2021.

What is a copyright?

- A Copyright is a form of intellectual property protection granted under the Indian law to the creators of original works of authorship such as—o Literary works including computer programs, tables and compilations including computer databases which may be expressed in words, codes, schemes or in any other form, including a machine readable medium.

- o Dramatic, musical and artistic works.

- o Cinematographic films and sound recordings.

- These rights include the right of adaptation, right of reproduction, right of publication, right to make translations, communication to public etc.

Copyright regime in India

- In India, the copyright regime is governed by the Copyright Act, 1957 and the Copyright Rules, 2013.

Provisions of new amendment

- **Publication in official gazette:** It included a new provision that eliminates the mandatory requirement of publication in the Official Gazette.
- **Royalty management:** It aims to encourage accountability and transparency by introducing new provisions to deal with the undistributed royalty amounts and use of electronic and traceable payment methods for collection and distribution of royalties.
- **Registration of software works:** The compliance requirements for registration of software works have been reduced and the applicant can file the first 10 and last 10 pages of source code, or the entire source code if less than 20 pages, with no blocked out or redacted portions.
- **Annual Transparency Report:** The copyright societies will be required to draw up and make public an Annual Transparency Report for each financial year. It is aimed to reinforce transparency in working of copyright societies.
- **Institutional mechanism:** The amendments have harmonised the Copyright Rules with the provisions of Finance Act, 2017 whereby the Copyright Board has been merged with Appellate Board.

NAXAL VIOLENCE

In an encounter between central paramilitary forces and Maoists in Chhattisgarh's Sukma, 22 personnel died.

Naxalism in India

- Naxalism is a form of armed insurgency against the State motivated by leftist/maoist ideologies and thus is also known as Left Wing extremism (LWE) or Maoism.
- The Naxal insurgency in India originated in a 1967 uprising in Naxalbari, West Bengal by the Communist Party of India (Marxist). They are the group of people who believe in the political theory derived from the teachings of the Chinese political leader Mao Zedong.
- The conflict is concentrated in the Eastern part of the country, particularly an area known as the Red Corridor spread across the states of Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh.
- Counterinsurgency operation by the Centre and affected states have helped to bring down Maoist sponsored violence. Covid-19 pandemic and the national lockdown also proved a massive blow for Maoists, as it cut critical supplies for many months.

- As a result, LWE related incidents were down by 47 per cent between 2015 and 2020 as compared to incidents in the preceding six years from 2009 to 2014.
- Presently, 90 districts in 11 states in the country are considered LWE affected.
- Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand continue to account for 69.10% incidents of naxal violence across the country.



THE NAGOYA PROTOCOL ON ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING (ABS)

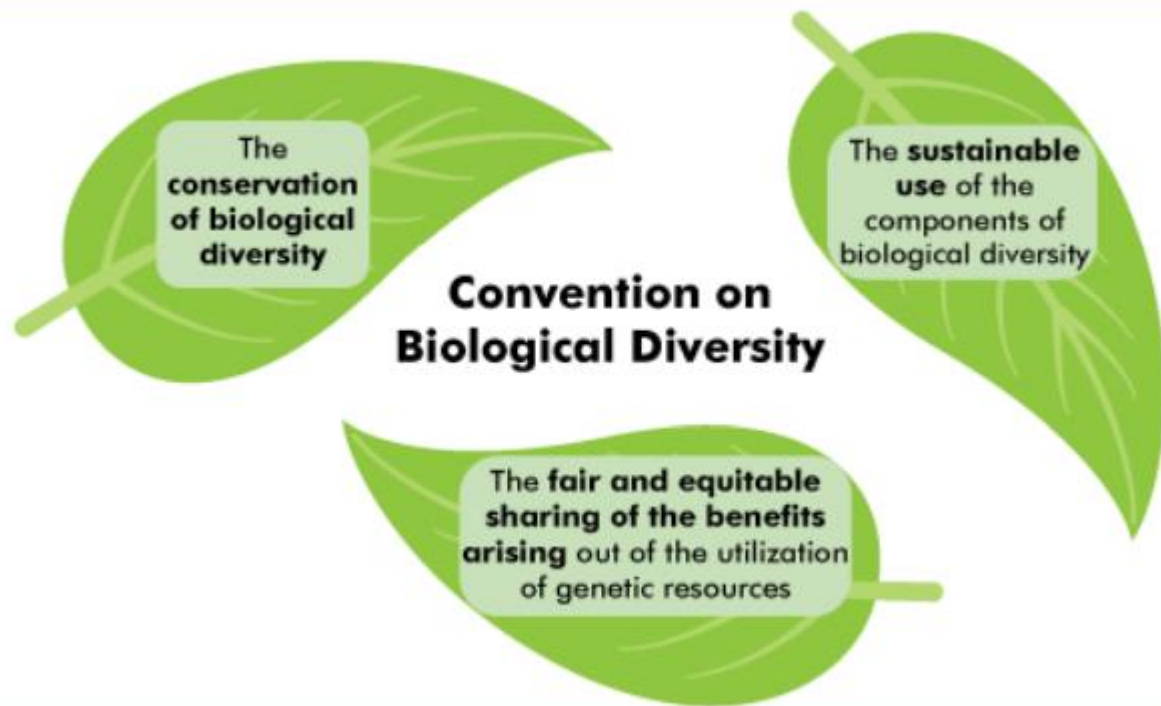
Recently, Brazil became the 130th country to ratify the Nagoya Protocol.

Nagoya Protocol on ABS

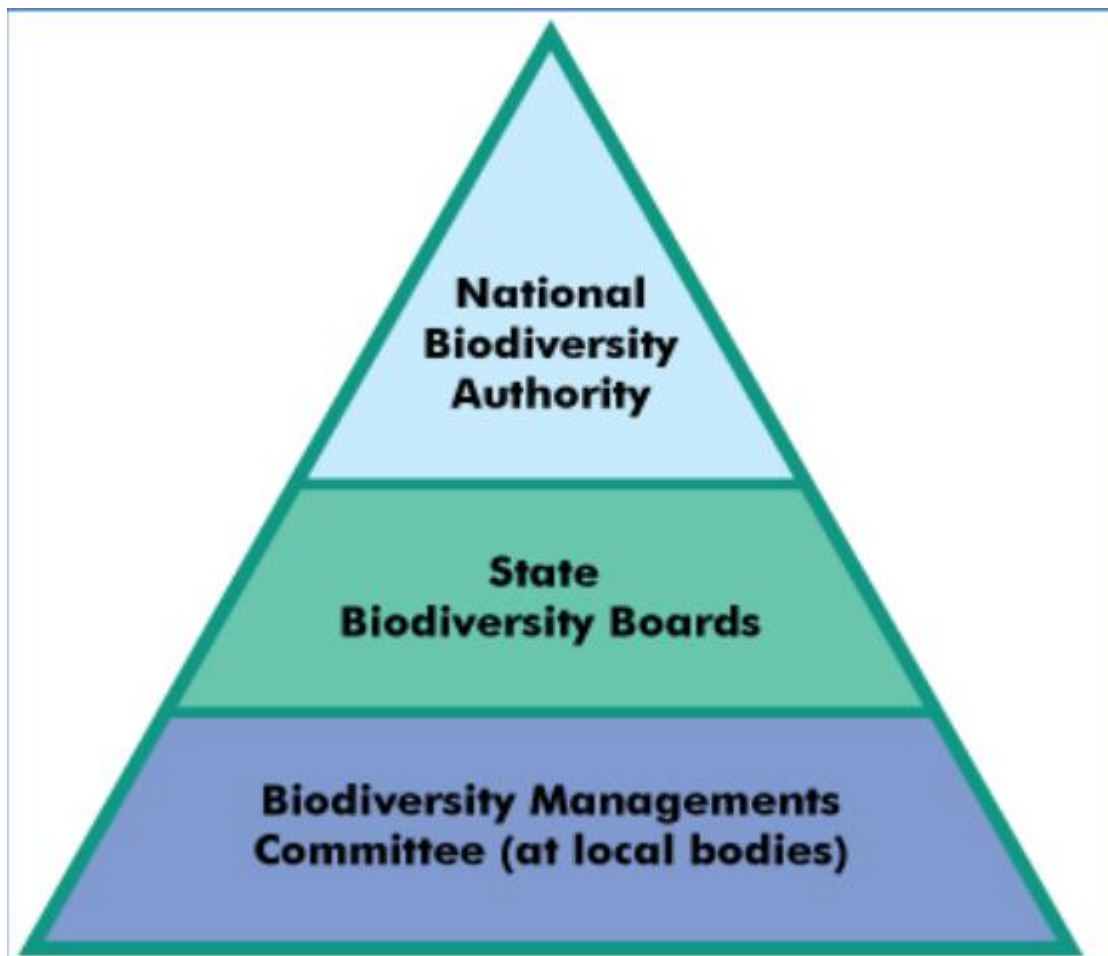
- It was adopted on 29 October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan as a supplementary agreement to the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- Objective: Fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources, thereby contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.
 - o Utilization includes research and development on the genetic or biochemical composition of genetic resources, as well as subsequent applications and commercialization.
- The Nagoya Protocol applies to genetic resources as well as **traditional knowledge** (TK) associated with genetic resources that are covered by the CBD and the benefits arising from its utilization.

About the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

- The CBD provides a global legal framework for action on biodiversity. The CBD entered into force on 29 December 1993.



- It's a near universal convention with a participation of 196 member countries.
- Conference of the Parties (COP) is the governing body of the CBD. It meets every two years, or as needed, to review progress in the implementation of the Convention, to adopt programmes of work, to achieve its objectives, and provide policy guidance.
- o India being a signatory to CBD, enacted the Biodiversity Act in 2002. It has same objectives as that of CBD
- o The Act has a 3 tier institutional Structure.



EARTHQUAKES

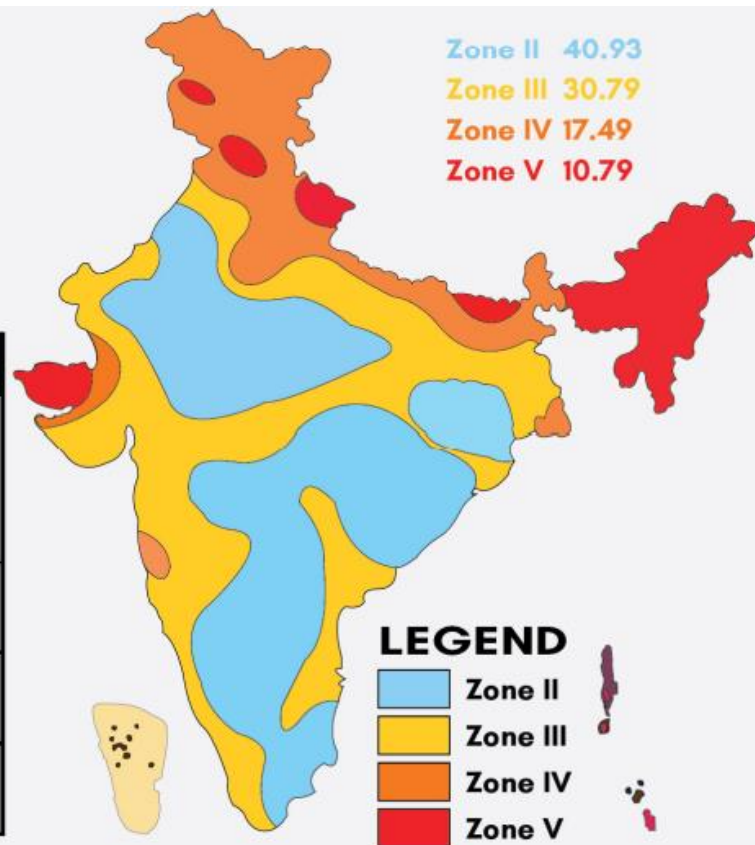
A massive earthquake of 6.4 magnitude on the Richter scale hit Assam recently.

- An earthquake is a series of vibrations on the earth's surface caused by the generation of elastic (seismic) waves due to sudden rupture within the earth crust during release of accumulated strain energy.
- India has seen some very damaging earthquakes like Koyna (1967), Assam (1988) Latur (1993) and Bhuj (2001) earthquakes.
- As per Earthquake Disaster Risk index (EDRI) report (2019), in the last 25 years, India has witnessed several moderate earthquakes that caused around 40,000 deaths, largely due to collapse of buildings.

Seismic Zone Map of India: -2002

About **59 percent** of the land area of India is liable to seismic hazard damage

Zone	Intensity
Zone V	Very High Risk Zone Area liable to shaking Intensity IX (and above)
Zone IV	High Risk Zone Intensity VIII
Zone III	Moderate Risk Zone Intensity VII
Zone II	Low Risk Zone VI (and lower)



Earthquake Measurements: Magnitude vs Intensity

- Magnitude measures the **energy released** at the source of the earthquake. It is measured using **Richter scale**.

Classification of earthquakes	
Category	Magnitude on Richter Scale
Slight	Upto 4.9
Moderate	5.0 to 6.9
Great	7.0 to 7.9
Very Great	8.0 and more

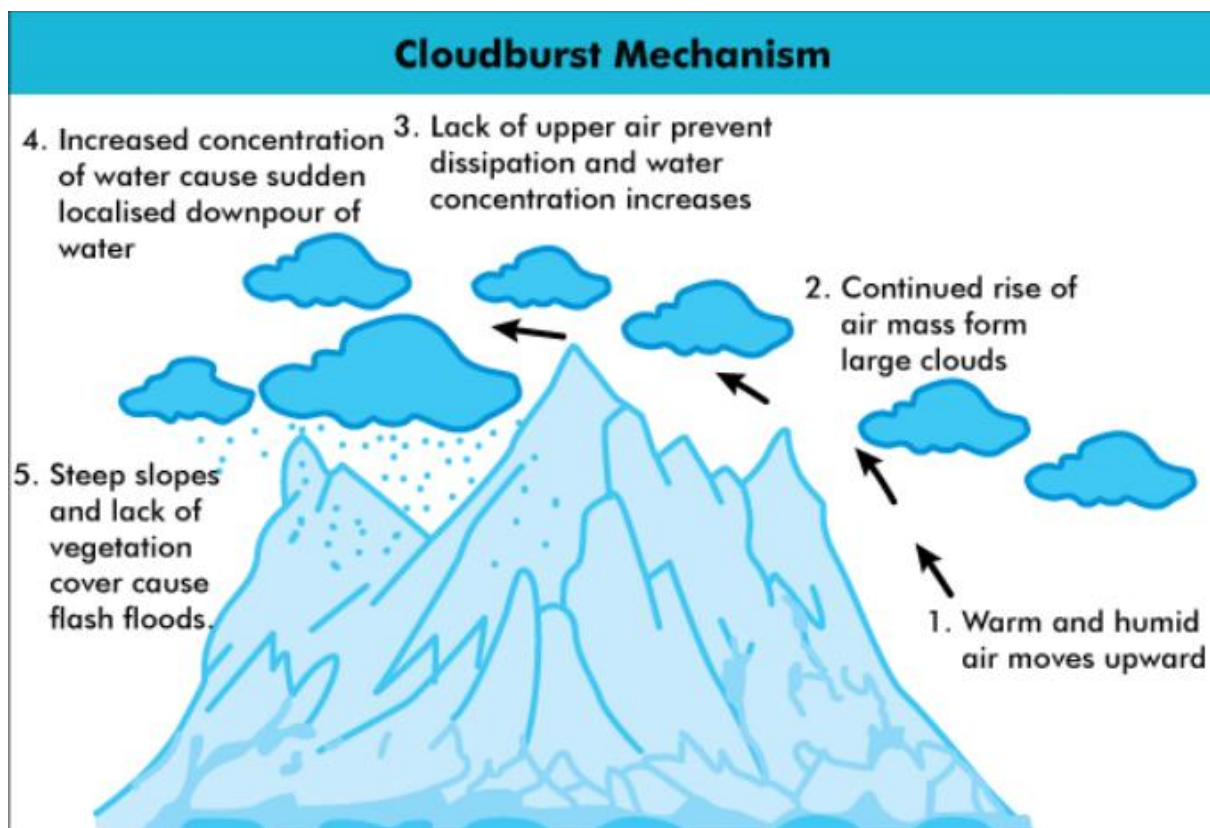
- **Intensity** measures the **strength of shaking produced** by the earthquake at a certain location.
 - It is measured using **Mercalli Scale** which is composed of increasing levels of intensity that **range from observable quake impacts from light shaking to catastrophic destruction**.
 - Intensity is reported by **Roman numerals from I to X** with a **progressive increase in shaking and damage**, highest being at X.

CLOUDBURSTS

Recently 'cloudbursts' were observed in Uttarakhand's Chamoli, Tehri and Rudraprayag districts.

What is Cloudburst?

- Cloudbursts are sudden and extreme rainfall events over a limited area in a short span of time.
- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) defines a cloudburst as any event where 100 millimetres of rainfall have fallen in a span of an hour over a region that is 20-30 square kilometres in area.
- It is very difficult to predict the cloud bursts due to its very small scale in space and time.
- It is generally more common in India during the south west monsoon season that begins in June.



GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT

Recently, World Economic Forum (WEF) released Global Gender Gap Report 2021.

Global Gender Gap Report

- Global Gender Gap Index was first introduced by the WEF in 2006 as a framework to benchmark progress on disparities between women and men across countries, and over time.
- Global Gender Gap Index measures scores on a 0 to 100 scale and scores can be interpreted as the distance to parity (i.e., the percentage of the gender gap that has been closed).



Key highlights of report

- The overall global gender gap is projected to close in 135.6 years (which is a significant increase from 99.5 years in previous report).
- Global top 10 continues to be dominated by Nordic countries, with —Iceland, Norway, Finland and Sweden—in the top five.
- South Asia is the second-lowest performer after the Middle East and North Africa combined, bridging 62.3% of its gender gap.

Performance of India

- India has slipped 28 places (as compared last year) to rank 140th among 156 countries.
- India is the third-worst performer among South Asian countries, with Pakistan and Afghanistan trailing and Bangladesh being at the top.

- India has closed 62.5% of its gender gap to date.

Political empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a significant decline in the number of women ministers (from 23.1 per cent in 2019 to 9.1 per cent in 2021). • Share of women in parliament remains stagnant at 14.4%.
Health and survival dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India is among the five worst performers. • Wide sex ratio at birth gaps is due to high incidence of gender-based sex-selective practices. • More than one in four women has faced intimate violence in her lifetime.
Educational Attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On this subindex, 96.2% of the gender gap has been closed, with parity achieved in primary, secondary and tertiary education. • Yet, gender gaps persist in terms of literacy: one third of women are illiterate (34.2%) compared to 17.6% of men.
Economic participation and opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's labour force participation rate saw a decline from 24.8 percent to 22.3 percent. • In addition, the share of women in professional and technical roles declined further to 29.2 percent. • Women's estimated earned income is only one-fifth of men's.

NON-FUNGIBLE TOKEN

Indian cryptocurrency exchange, WazirX has launched a non-fungible tokens (NFT) marketplace for Indian artists.

What are NFTs?

- An NFT, or a non-fungible token, is a digital object that can be a drawing, animation, piece of music, photo, or video with a certificate of authenticity created by blockchain technology.
- o In simple terms, NFT is a unique proof of ownership over something you can't usually hold in your hand — a piece of digital art, a digital coupon, maybe a video clip.
- o For e.g. Twitter founder Jack Dorsey can auction off an NFT for his first-ever tweet for \$2.9 million.
- The virtual object, which is actually a computer file, can be exchanged or sold with its certificate.
- "Tokenizing" these assets allows them to be bought, sold, and traded more efficiently while reducing the probability of fraud.
- NFTs can also be used to represent people's identities, property rights, and more.

Fungibility

Fungibility refers to an asset's ability to be exchanged with a similar asset without sacrificing its value.

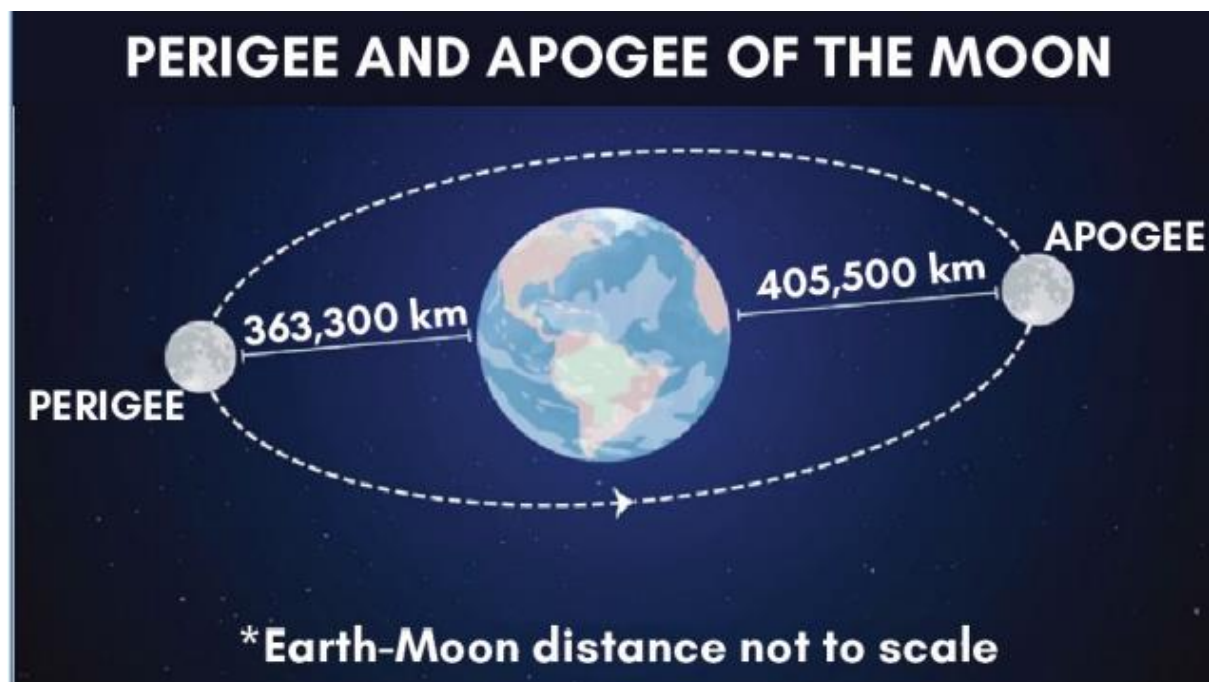
- For example, a Rs. 100 note is fungible, because if one person has a Rs.100 bill and another person also has a Rs. 100 note, they could interchange the bill and the value does not change. A bitcoin is a fungible asset as well.
- NFTs are not fungible as they cannot be traded directly with each other because they are unique.

PINK MOON

The first super moon of 2021 has been named 'Pink Moon' as per a naming convention established in USA.

About Supermoon

- The Moon orbits Earth in an ellipse which brings it closer to and farther from Earth as it goes around.
 - The farthest point in this ellipse is called the apogee and the closest point is the perigee.
 - Supermoon refers to either a new or full Moon that coincides with moon being at the perigee (the point where moon is closest in its elliptical orbit around the Earth).
- o New Moon is when Sun and Earth are on opposite sides of the Moon. A new moon is not visible due to following reasons:
- o The alignment is such that it leaves the side of the Moon that faces Earth in darkness.
 - o New Moon rises and sets around the same time as the Sun, bringing it closer to the Sun's glare to be seen with the naked eye.
 - o Full Moon is when the Sun and the Moon are aligned on opposite sides of Earth, and 100% of the Moon's face is illuminated by the Sun.



THE UNICORN – CLOSEST BLACK HOLE TO EARTH EVER DISCOVERED

Scientists have discovered the smallest-known black hole which is dubbed as 'the Unicorn' in the Milky Way galaxy and closest to the solar system.

Evolution of a star

- **Red star:** Fusion reaction stops in the core of a star when its Hydrogen gets exhausted.

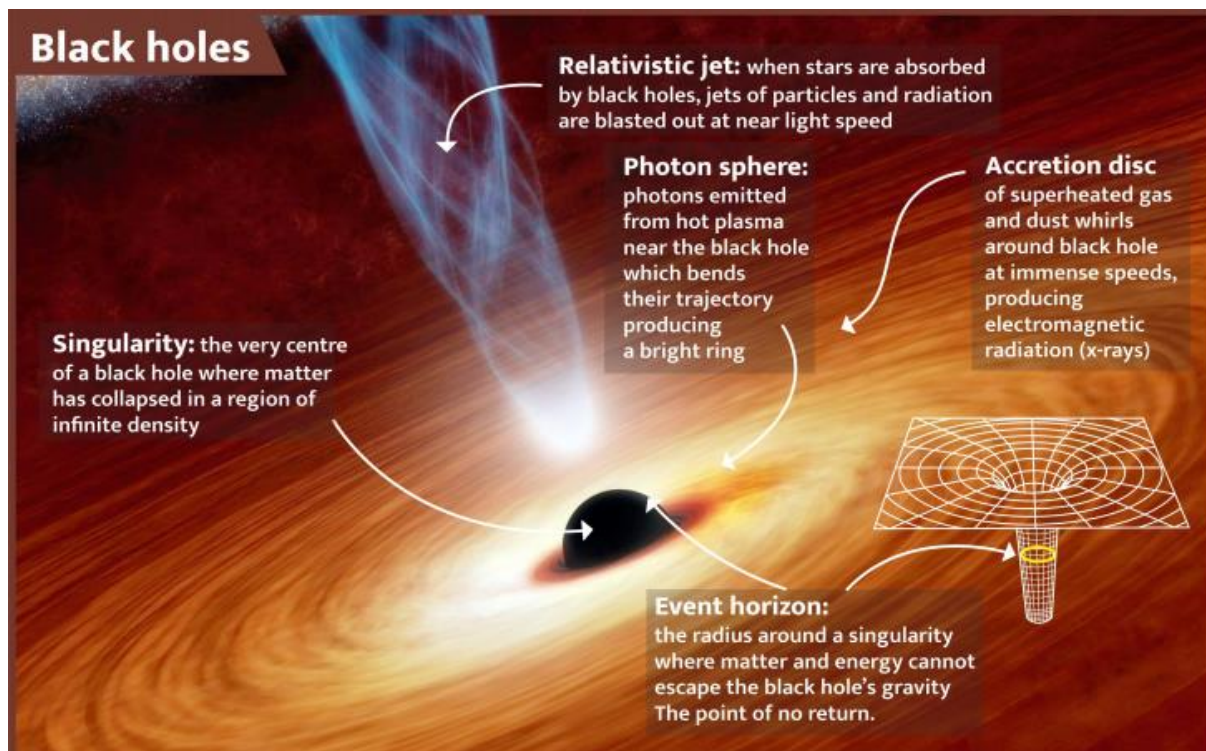
Pressure of the core diminishes and core starts shrinking. Fusion takes place as some Hydrogen remains in the envelope/outer shell. It makes the star unstable. The star Expands and turns Red.

- **Dwarf star:** When mass of star < 1.44 times the mass of Sun (Chandra Shekhar limit), it ends up as a white dwarf.

o The Red Giant Star loses its outer envelope and core shrinks into an extremely dense ball of matter due to gravitation. This leads to another set of fusion reaction where Helium fuses to form carbon. The fuel gets completely exhausted and the core shrinks under its own weight and becomes a white dwarf.

- **Supernova:** When mass of star > 1.44 times that of Sun, there remains enough Helium in the core for fusion reaction. The outer envelope explodes causing Supernova Explosion.

- **Neutron Star:** When mass of the star is between 1.44 to 3 times that of Sun, it becomes a Neutron Star.
- **Black hole:** When mass of the star is bigger than 3 times that of Sun, it becomes a Black hole.



AD-HOC JUDGES

- Central Government told the Supreme Court that the appointment of additional judges on ad-hoc basis in High Courts under Article 224A of the Constitution can be done only after the filling up of regular vacancies of judges.
- Court also said that it intends to lay guidelines for appointment of ad hoc judges by considering criteria like pendency figure and the vacancy situation.
 - o More than 40 lakh cases are pending before the high courts, according to the National Judicial Data Grid.
 - o As on April 1, the High Courts have a total vacancy of 411 regular judges against the sanctioned judicial strength of 1,080.

About Ad-hoc Judges

- o Article 127 and 224 and 224A provides for appointment of Ad-hoc judges to SC and HC.
- o Under Article 127, to address lack of quorum of judges, the Chief Justice of India, with the previous consent of the President and after consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court concerned can appoint a judge as an ad hoc Judge.
- o Under Article 224 and 224A, additional or acting judges can be appointed for a period not exceeding 2 years or 62 years of age whichever is earlier to address a temporary rise in the business of the HC.

PROJECT DANTAK

- It is commemorating its Diamond Jubilee in Bhutan.
- o It was established on April 24, 1961 by Border Road Organisation (BRO).
- o It was tasked to construct the pioneering motorable roads in Bhutan.
- Some notable projects executed by the project include the construction of Paro Airport, Thimphu – Trashigang Highway, Telecommunication & Hydro Power Infrastructure etc.

E-SANTA

- Union Minister of Commerce & Industry (MoCI) virtually inaugurated e-SANTA (Electronic Solution for Augmenting NaCSA farmers' Trade in Aquaculture).
- e-SANTA is an electronic marketplace providing a platform to connect aqua farmers and exporters.
- It will raise income, lifestyle, self-reliance, quality levels, and traceability for aqua farmers.
- National Centre for Sustainable Aquaculture (NaCSA) is an extension arm of Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

CHENAB ARCH BRIDGE

- Chenab Bridge is 1,315m-long bridge is being built at a height of 359m. Once completed, it will be the tallest rail bridge in the world.

- It forms the crucial link in the 111-km stretch between Katra and Banihal which is part of the Udhampur- Srinagar-Baramulla section of the Kashmir Railway project.
- It'll be able to withstand earthquakes with a magnitude of up to eight and high-intensity blasts.
- It'll provide the much-needed all-weather connectivity between Kashmir and the rest of the county.

PYTHON-5

- India's indigenous Light Combat Aircraft, Tejas, has added the fifth generation Python-5 Air-to-Air Missile (AAM) to its weapons capability.
- o The Python-5 is the second AAM of Israeli origin to be integrated on the Tejas fighter.
- o It is an infra-red guided missile with a range of at least 20km.
- o The first missile was the Beyond Visual Range (BVR) AAM Derby which is a radar-guided weapon with a range of over 50km.

NASA'S INGENUITY MARS HELICOPTER SUCCEEDS IN HISTORIC FIRST FLIGHT

- Solar-powered helicopter became the first aircraft to make a powered, controlled flight on another planet.
- o Flight was difficult because of Mars' significantly lower gravity (one-third that of Earth's) and an extremely thin atmosphere.
- Ingenuity was carried by NASA's Perseverance rover and will help collect samples from locations where the rover cannot reach