

UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

Recently, the Supreme Court sought a reply from the Centre on a PIL (Public Interest Litigation) seeking gender and religion-neutral uniform grounds of succession and inheritance for citizens in the country.

About the PIL

- This is the fourth PIL in the last three months on issues that constitute together the spectrum to be covered under the Uniform Civil Code (UCC).
- o The earlier three PILs deal with issues of uniform adoption laws, uniform divorce, maintenance and alimony law, and a uniform, gender neutral, minimum age for marriage.

About Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

- A UCC refers to a single law, applicable to all citizens of India in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, custody, adoption and inheritance.
- A UCC is intended to replace the system of fragmented personal laws, which currently govern interpersonal relationships and related matters within different religious communities.
- Article 44 of the Constitution lays down that the 'State shall endeavor to secure a Uniform Civil Code for the citizens throughout the territory of India.'
- o Article 44 is one of the Directive Principles of State Policy. These, as defined in Article 37, are not justiciable (not enforceable by any court) but the principles laid down therein are fundamental in governance.

Governance of personal laws in India

- At present different religious communities in India are currently governed by a system of personal laws. These laws largely focus on the following areas:
 - o Marriage and divorce
 - o Custody and Guardianship
 - o Adoption and Maintenance
 - o Succession and Inheritance

- Hindu personal law is codified in four Acts: the Hindu Marriage Act, Hindu Succession Act, Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, and Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act.

- o The term 'Hindu' also includes Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists for the purpose of these laws.

- Muslim personal law is not codified per se and is based on their religious texts.

- In the Northeast, there are more than 200 tribes with their own varied customary laws. The Constitution protects local customs in Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram. Even reformed Hindu law, in spite of codification, protects customary practices.

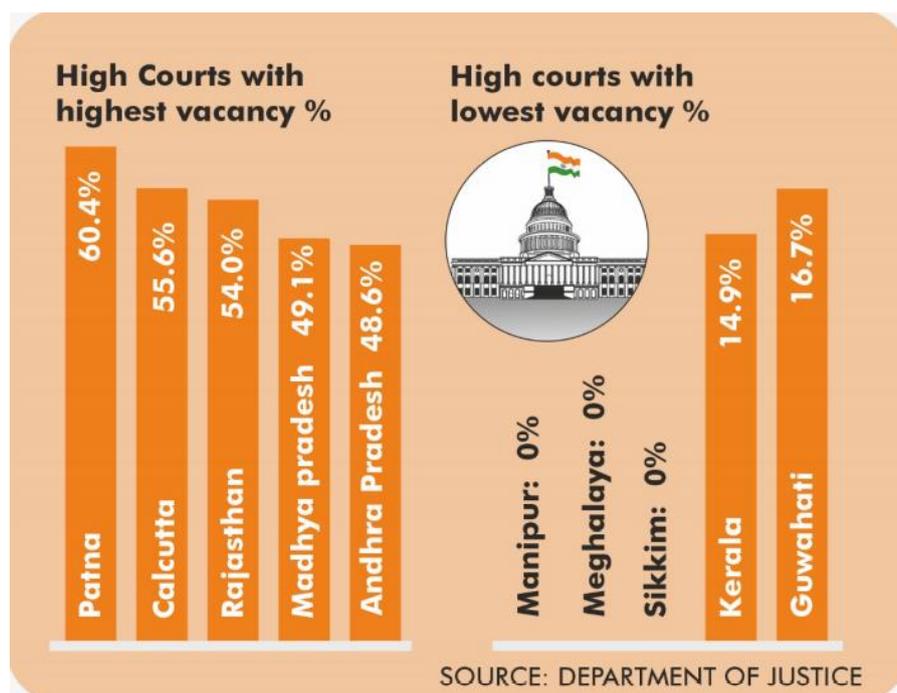
- Goa is, at present, the only state in India with a uniform civil code.

- o The Portuguese Civil Code of 1867 which continues to be implemented after India annexed Goa in 1961, applies to all Goans, irrespective of their religious or ethnic community.

- o However, the Portuguese Code is not a completely uniform civil code. It makes certain provisions on religious bases. The most notable example is Hindu men being allowed bigamy if the wife fails to deliver a child by the age of 25, or a male child by the age of 30.

COLLEGIUM SYSTEM

Recently, the Supreme Court asked the government to clarify on the status of 55 recommendations made by the Collegium for judicial appointments to various High Courts.



System of Judges appointment in India:

- Constitutional mandate:

Constitution under Article 124 states that, the President shall make SC Judges appointments after consulting with the Chief Justice of India (CJI) and other SC and HC judges as he considers necessary.

o While for HC judges appointment President (under Article 217) should consult the CJI, Governor, and Chief Justice of the High Court concerned.

- Collegium system: It is a system where a committee of the Chief Justice of India, four senior judges of the Supreme Court and three members of a high court (in case of appointments in the said high courts) take decisions related to appointments and transfer of judges in the Supreme Court and High Courts.

o The three judge cases have come from 1981 to 1998 which sets the collegium system for appointing judges.

Three Judges Cases	
First Judges Case, 1981 or S P Gupta Case	SC ruled that the recommendation made by the CJI to the President can be refused for "cogent reasons", thereby giving greater say to executive.
Second Judges Case, 1993	Also known as Supreme Court Advocates on Record Association (SCARA) vs Union of India. CJI only needs to consult 2 senior-most judges over judicial appointments and transfers. However, on objection raised by executive on appointment, Collegium may or may not change their recommendation, which is binding on executive.
Third Judges Case, 1998	CJIs should consult with 4 senior-most Supreme Court judges to form his opinion on judicial appointments and transfers.

National Judicial Appointment Commission (NJAC):

99th Constitutional Amendment Act created NJAC as proposed constitutional body to replace the Collegium system of appointing judges.

o However, SC struck down the Act as it violates the independence of judiciary and Principle of Separation of Powers between the executive and judiciary, which is a basic feature of the Constitution. Thus, restoring the Collegium System of appointment of Judges.

GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF DELHI (AMENDMENT) ACT (GNCTD) 2021

Recently, Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act (GNCTD) 2021 was passed.

Need of the Law

- 2021 Act amends GNCTD Act, 1991 and gives certain powers and responsibilities of the Legislative Assembly and the Lieutenant Governor (LG), in line with the constitutional scheme of governance of NCT.

- o It promotes harmonious relations between the legislature and the executive.

- The Centre stated that there was no structural mechanism within the 1991 Act to ensure time-bound implementation of the rules.

- o Also, the law gives no clarity about what proposal or matters need to be taken up with the LG before issuing any order.

- o The Centre has also stated that this amendment has been brought to give effect to the "interpretation made by Hon'ble Supreme Court in Government of NCT of Delhi v. Union of India (UoI) 2018."

ARTICLE 239AA

- **69th Amendment 1991** inserted the Article 239AA in the Constitution. It granted special status to Delhi among Union Territories (UTs) by providing Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers responsible to such Assembly.
- **Public order, Police and Land** in NCT of Delhi fall within the domain of Union Government.
- For remaining matters of State List or Concurrent List, in so far as **any such matter** is applicable to UTs, the Legislative Assembly shall have power to make laws for NCT of Delhi.

About the 2021 Act

Specification	GNCTD (Amendment) Act, 2021	Govt of NCT of Delhi Vs Uoi, 2018
Meaning of "government"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The term "government" in any law made by the Legislative Assembly shall mean the L-G. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The L-G would be bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers (CoM) in matters that were not directly under the control of the L-G.
L-G's concurrence on executive orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The L-G's opinion shall be obtained before the government takes any executive action based on decisions taken by the Cabinet or any individual minister. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barring police, public order and land the L-G's concurrence is not required on other issues. However, the decisions of the CoM will have to be communicated to the L-G. Requiring prior concurrence of the Lieutenant Governor would absolutely negate the ideals of representative governance and democracy conceived for the NCT of Delhi by Article 239AA of the Constitution.
Elected government's rulemaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislative Assembly shall not make any rule to enable itself or its Committees to consider the matters of day-to-day administration of the Capital or conduct inquiries in relation to the administrative decisions. Any of the rule made in contravention of this provision, before the commencement of the GNCTD Act, 2021, shall be 'void'. 	
LG's assent to Bills passed by the Legislative Assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The L-G will not assent to and pass on to the President for consideration any Bill which "incidentally covers any of the matters which falls outside the purview of the powers conferred on the Legislative Assembly". <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The L-G has the power to refer any matter, over which there is a disagreement with the elected government, to the President under Article 239AA (4). 	

LOCAL RESERVATION IN PRIVATE SECTOR

Recently, Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act, 2020 was passed reserving 75% of private sector jobs for people of the state.

- The Act requires private companies to set aside 75% of jobs with salary up to Rs.50000 a month for locals i.e. those domiciled in Haryana.

- It is applicable to all companies, societies, trusts, firms or any person employing 10 or more persons for a period of 10 years.

- Further 10% of recruitment should be from the district where the company is located.

- Haryana will become 2nd State after Andhra Pradesh to have 75% reservation for locals based on Domicile (under the Andhra Pradesh Employment of Local Candidates in the Industries / Factories Act, 2019).

o Many other states like Karnataka (100%), Maharashtra (80%) and Madhya Pradesh (70%) have also proposed such reservations for locals in the last few years.

Indra Sawhney Case 1992 judgment	Nagaraj Case (2006) Judgement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upheld the 27% quota for the OBCs. • Reservation should not cross the 50% limit. • Creamy layer must be eliminated from the Backward Classes. • No reservation in the promotions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upheld the constitutional validity of reservations for SCs and STs to include promotions with 3 conditions given below <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quantifiable data on the backwardness of SC & ST 2. The facts about their inadequate representation 3. The overall administrative efficiency

INDUS WATER TREATY

After a gap of more than two and half years Indian and Pakistani delegations began the 116th Meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission.

About the Indus Water Treaty (IWT)

- IWT was signed in 1960, between India and Pakistan and brokered by the World Bank.
- The treaty fixed and delimited the rights and obligations of both countries concerning the use of the waters of the Indus River system.
- It provided for the funding and building of dams, link canals, barrages, and tube wells— notably the Tarbela Dam on the Indus River and the Mangla Dam on the Jhelum River.
- The treaty required the creation of a **Permanent Indus Commission**, with a commissioner from each country, in order to maintain a channel for communication and to try to resolve questions about implementation of the treaty. In addition, a mechanism for resolving disputes was provided.

- All the water of the eastern rivers – Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi which amounts to around 33 million acre-feet (MAF) annually — is allocated to India and is for unrestricted use. And the water of western rivers – Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab which is around 135 MAF annually has been assigned mostly to Pakistan



What are the prevalent issues within the treaty?

The primary issue that the treaty faces is Pakistan’s opposition to the

Indian projects on the Western Rivers. The opposition is majorly on the issue that whether projects on Jhelum and Chenab conform to the technological specifications specified in the agreement.

The issue has seen its manifestation in several projects-

- Kishanganga Hydroelectric Project (KHEP), Jhelum: Pakistan has opposed the construction of the project since its inception and also approached World Bank for the same.
- Ratle Hydroelectric Project, Chenab: The project has been under negotiations with the World Bank whether the designs of those projects violated the terms of the treaty.
- Other projects: Pakal Dul Hydroelectric Project, Marusudar (a tributary of Chenab), Miyar Dam, Miyar Nallah (a tributary of Chenab) and Lower Kalnai, Chenab have also been objected.

QUAD

Recently, leaders of India, US, Australia and Japan took part in the first-ever summit level talks of “Quad” nations, which was held virtually.

What is Quad?

Quad or Quadrilateral Security Dialogue has often been stated as a grouping which brings together ‘four like-minded countries’ i.e., India, US, Australia and Japan. The reference to like-minded here indicates towards convergence on geopolitical issues, especially the Indo-Pacific Region.



NATIONAL BANK FOR FINANCING INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT (NABFID)

Recently, the Parliament passed National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) Bill, 2021.

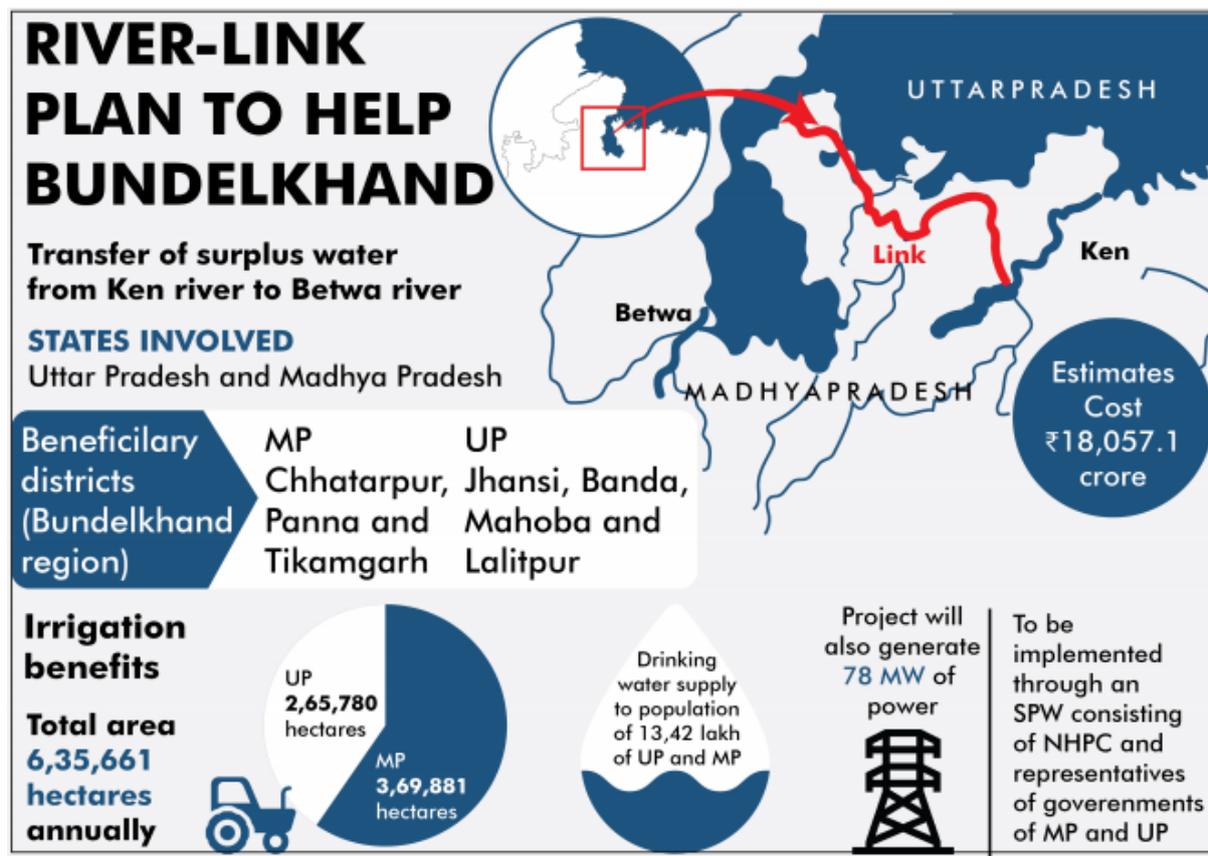
About NaBFID Bill, 2021

- Bill seeks to set up NaBFID, a Development Financial Institution (DFI) to support the development of long-term non-recourse infrastructure financing.
- Shareholding of NaBFID: NaBFID will be set up as a corporate body with authorised share capital of 1 lakh crore rupees held by central government, multilateral institutions, sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, insurers, financial institutions, etc.
- o Initially, central government will own 100% shares of the institution which may subsequently be reduced up to 26% once the institution has achieved stability and scale.

NATIONAL RIVER LINKING PROJECT (NRLP)

On the occasion of World Water Day (22 March), a memorandum of agreement was signed between Union Minister of Jal Shakti and the chief ministers of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh to implement the Ken-Betwa Link Project (KBLP).

- The KBLP is the first project under the National River Linking Project (NRLP). Under this project water from the Ken River will be transferred to the Betwa River. Both these rivers are tributaries of River Yamuna



WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT 2021

Recently, World Happiness Report, 2021 was released by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

About the World Happiness Report, 2021

- Theme of 2021 report focusses on the effects of COVID19 on happiness and how countries have differed in their success in maintaining connected and healthy societies.
- This year, the report provided two rankings:

- o The usual one based on average of three years of surveys taken in 2018-2020 by Gallup (American analytics and advisory company).
- o Another focused on 2020 alone to help understand the outbreak's effect on subjective well-being and how factors contributing to well-being affected pandemic outcomes.
- Respondents are asked to rate their own current lives on 0 to 10 scale, (10: best possible & 0: worst possible).

Findings of the Report

- Top 5 countries were – Finland (topped the list for fourth straight year), Iceland, Denmark, Switzerland, The Netherlands and Sweden.
- India ranked 139th out of the 149 countries in the list, a slight improvement since last year (ranked 140th).
- India's neighbours: Pakistan (105th), Bangladesh (101st) and China (84th).
- Afghanistan was ranked the least happy country.

KUMBH MELA

Recently Kumbh Mela started at Haridwar, Uttarakhand.

About Kumbh Mela

- After more than 100 years the Kumbh Mela is being held earlier because of specific auspicious dates.

o Generally, it is celebrated once in 12 years and the previous Kumbh in Haridwar was held in 2010, while next one was to be held in 2022.

- Kumbh Mela is a mass congregation of pilgrims who gather to take a bath/dip (Shahi Snan) in a sacred river.

- The geographical location for the Kumbh Mela spans across four cities within India.

o Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh)- confluence of Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati

o Haridwar (Uttarakhand)- Ganga river

o Ujjain (Madhya Pradesh)- Shipra river

o Nasik (Maharashtra)- Godavari river

- Types of Kumbh Mela and its occurrence
 - o Kumbha Mela: held at all four places every 3 years
 - o Ardha Kumbha Mela: held at Haridwar and Prayagraj every 6 years
 - o Purna Kumbha Mela: held only at Prayagraj every 12 years
 - o Maha Kumbha Mela: held only at Prayagraj every 144 years or after 12 Purna Kumbh Mela
- Kumbh Mela comes under the UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

S.N.	Intangible Cultural Heritage	Year of Inscription
1.	Tradition of Vedic chanting	2008
2.	Ramlila, the traditional performance of the Ramayana	2008
3.	Kutiyattam, Sanskrit theatre of Kerala	2008
4.	Ramman, religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal region	2009
5.	Mudiyettu, ritual theatre and dance drama of Kerala	2010
6.	Kalbelia folk songs and dances of Rajasthan	2010
7.	Chhau dance, tribal martial art dance in Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal.	2010
8.	Buddhist chanting of Ladakh	2012
9.	Sankirtana, ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur	2013
10.	Traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab	2014
11.	Yoga	2016
12.	Nuvroz, beginning of the New Year for the Parsis	2016
13.	Kumbh Mela	2017

STATE ELECTION COMMISSIONER (SECS)

- Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) held that independent persons, and not serving bureaucrats, should be appointed as State Election Commissioners.

About SC ruling

- o SC held that a government officer serving a state government, or the Central Government cannot be appointed as SEC under Article 243K.
- o Court passed this significant direction to ensure the independence of the State Election Commission.
- o SC directed States to comply with the constitutional scheme of independent and fair functioning of election commissions.

About SECs (Article 243K)

- The superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for, and the conduct of all elections to the Panchayat bodies in the State shall be vested in a SEC.
- SEC is to be appointed by the Governor.
- Subject to the provisions of any law made by the Legislature of a State, the conditions of services and tenure of office of the SEC shall be such as the Governor may by rule determine.
- SEC shall not be removed from his/her office except in like manner and on the like grounds as a Judge of a High Court.
- According to Article 243ZA, Elections to the Municipalities is also vested in SEC.

ECONOMIC FREEDOM INDEX, 2021

- It was published by US conservative think-tank, The Heritage Foundation.
- The index ranks 12 indicators from property rights to financial freedom under four categories: rule of law, size of government, regulatory efficiency and open markets.
- India was ranked at 26th out of 40 countries among Asia-Pacific countries and 121st globally.

MILITARY EXERCISES

DUSTLIK II

- It is a joint military exercise between India and Uzbekistan.

VAJRA PRAHAR

- Recently, the 11th edition of IndoUS Joint Special Forces Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2021 was conducted.
- It is conducted alternatively between India and the United States.

EARTH HOUR 2021

- Earth hour 2021 was celebrated on March 27th, 2021 under the theme, "Climate change to Save Earth."

- This year's event highlighted the link between destruction of nature and increasing outbreaks of diseases like Covid-19.
- According to data, Delhi saved 334 MW electricity during Earth Hour.

About Earth hour:

- o Organized by World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the one-hour lights out event (8:30 - 9:30 pm) is held worldwide toward end of March.
- o It encourages individuals, households, communities and businesses to turn off their non-essential lights for one hour as a symbol for their commitment to the planet.
- o It started as a light out event in Sydney, Australia in 2007 and since then has garnered support in 185 countries.

FUGAKU: WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL SUPERCOMPUTER

- Japan's Fugaku with a speed of 415.53 petaflop has become world's fastest supercomputers (surpassing China's Sunway TaihuLight).
- A supercomputer is a computer with a high level of performance as compared to a general-purpose computer. Its performance is commonly measured in FLOPS.

Supercomputers in India

- o First Indian supercomputer was PARAM 8000.
- o PARAM Siddhi (210 petaflop) is India's fastest supercomputer.
- o In 2015, National Supercomputing Mission (NSM) was launched.
- o It aims at establishing supercomputer facilities across 70 national R&D institutions and connecting them onto a National Knowledge Network.
- o Other supercomputers installed under NSM are PARAM- Shivay, PARAM Shakti and PARAM Brahma.

GANDHI PEACE PRIZE FOR YEAR2019 AND 2020 ANNOUNCED

- 2019 award is conferred to Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said of Oman and 2020 award to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of Bangladesh.

- It is an annual award since 1995, the 125th Birth Anniversary commemoration year of Mahatma Gandhi. The award is open to all persons regardless of nationality, race, language, caste, creed or sex.

- It carries an amount of Rs. 1 crore, a citation, a plaque and an exquisite traditional handicraft item.

- Recent awardees include Ekal Abhiyan Trust, India (2017) and Shri Yohei Sasakawa, Japan(2018).

EASE OF LIVING INDEX 2020

Recently, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) released the Ease of Living Index (EoLI) 2020.

About EoLI

- It is an assessment tool by the MoHUA that evaluates the quality of life and the impact of various initiatives for urban development in the city.

- EoLI 2020 report aims to measure the well-being of Indian citizens in 111 cities, across the pillars of Quality of Life, Economic-ability, Sustainability and Citizen Perception Survey (refer infographic).

- o Citizen Perception Survey is the residents' view on the services provided by city administration.

- 2020 rankings were announced for cities with a population of more than a million, and cities with less than a million people with total of 32.2 lakh citizens from 111 cities.

- EoLI 2020 ranks Bengaluru at top and Srinagar at bottom (49th) among Million plus population cities, while Shimla at top and Muzaffarpur at bottom (62nd) among Less than million population cities.

DIGITAL CURRENCY

Recently, China has floated its own Central Bank backed digital currency, namely eCNY in selected cities on a trial basis.

What is a Digital currency?

In the broadest sense, a digital currency is a form of currency that is available only in digital or electronic form, and not in physical form. It is also called digital money, electronic money, electronic currency, or cyber cash.

VEHICLE SCRAPPING POLICY

Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) announced Vehicle Scrapping Policy (VSP).

Key proposals in VSP

- De-registrations of vehicles
 - o Commercial vehicles to be de-registered after 15 years in case of failure to get the fitness certificate.
 - o Private Vehicles be de-registered after 20 years if found unfit or in case of a failure to renew registration certificate.
 - o All government vehicles may be de-registered and scrapped after 15 years from the date of registration.
- Incentives to scrap old and unfit vehicles through registered scrapping centres (RSC).
 - o State governments to offer road tax rebate of up to 25% for personal vehicles and 15% for commercial vehicle.
 - o Manufacturers to provide 5% discount on purchase of a new vehicle against the scrapping certificate.
 - o Registration fees may also be waived for purchase of new vehicle against the scrapping certificate.
- Setting up of highly specialised Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities (RVSFs) across India by encouraging public and private participation.
 - o MoRTH also announced draft rules to promote setting up of Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facility across India.

UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES [PREVENTION] ACT

Ministry of home affairs has stated that there was over 72% rise in number of UAPA (Unlawful Activities [Prevention] Act) cases in 2019 compared to 2015.

About UAPA

- The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (Act) was enacted to provide for more effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of individuals and associations, and for dealing with terrorist activities, and related matters.
- Act defines “Unlawful activity” as “any action taken by individual or association that leads to cession of a part of the territory of India, questions the sovereignty of India or disrupt the integrity of India etc.
- Under the Act, Central government can declare a person or an organization as a terrorist/terrorist organisation, if it/ he:
 - o commits or participates in acts of terrorism,
 - o prepares for terrorism,
 - o promotes terrorism, or
 - o is otherwise involved in terrorism