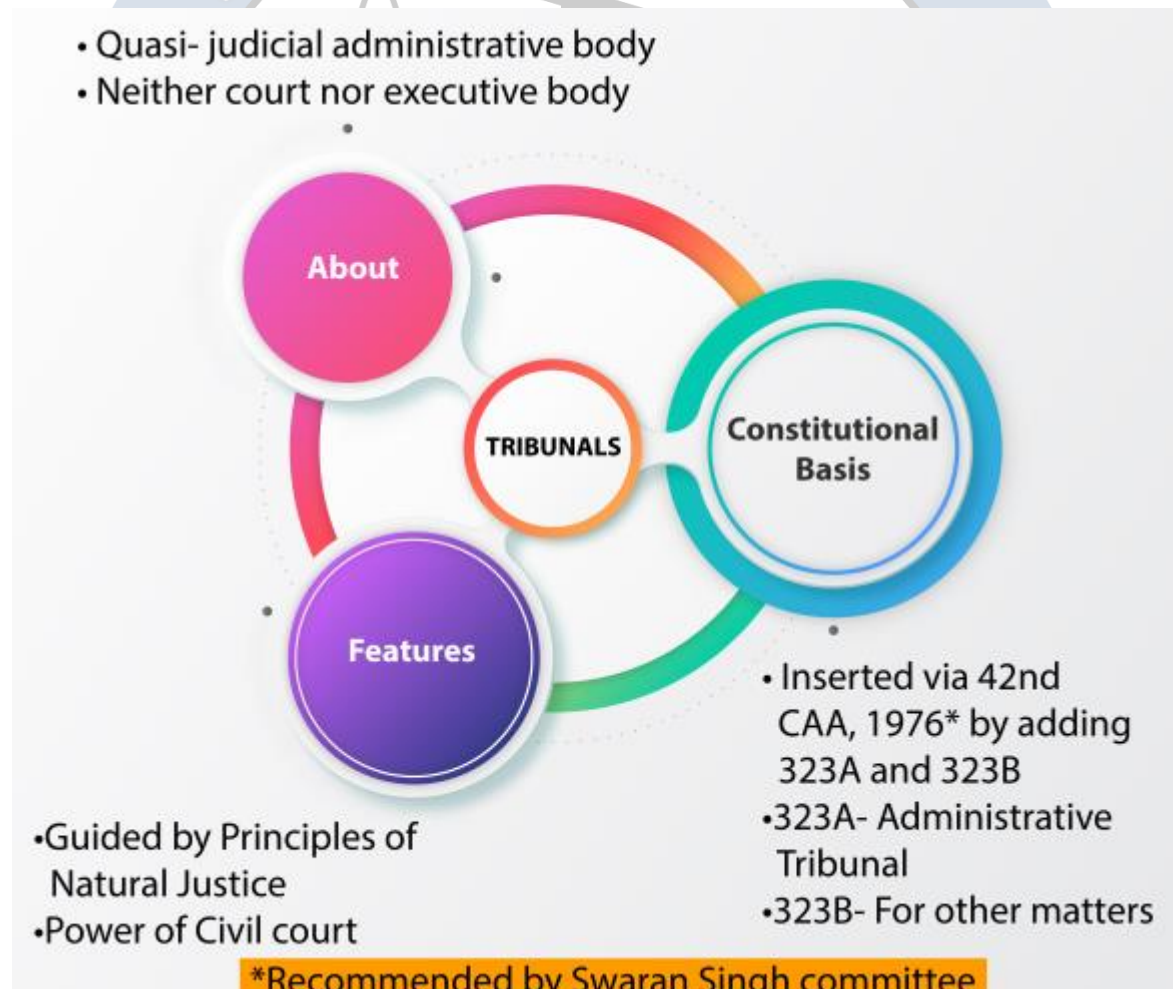**CURRENT AFFAIRS – MAY 2021**

TRIBUNALS

• Recently, Centre promulgated the Tribunals Reforms (Rationalization and Conditions of Service) Ordinance, 2021 which abolished several appellate tribunals and authorities and transferred their jurisdiction to other existing judicial bodies.

• The Ordinance has amended the Finance Act 2017 to include provisions related to the composition of search-cum-selection committees, and term of office of members in the Act itself. This Ordinance has currently been challenged in the Supreme Court.

- Quasi- judicial administrative body
- Neither court nor executive body

TRIBUNALS

About

Constitutional Basis

Features

- Guided by Principles of Natural Justice
- Power of Civil court

- Inserted via 42nd CAA, 1976* by adding 323A and 323B
- 323A- Administrative Tribunal
- 323B- For other matters

*Recommended by Swaran Singh committee

LAKSHADWEEP

• Recently Lakshadweep administration introduced three legislations, which are:

The Lakshadweep Animal Preservation Regulation, 2021

• It prohibits slaughtering or causing any animal to be slaughtered without a certificate issued by the authorities.

• The regulation states that it provides for the preservation of animals suitable for milch, breeding or for agricultural purposes. For this purpose, no certificate will be given to slaughter cows, calves, bull or bullocks in the island.

The Lakshadweep Panchayat Regulation, 2021

• It proposed a new panchayat regulation that makes any person with more than two children ineligible to contest panchayat elections or continue as a member.
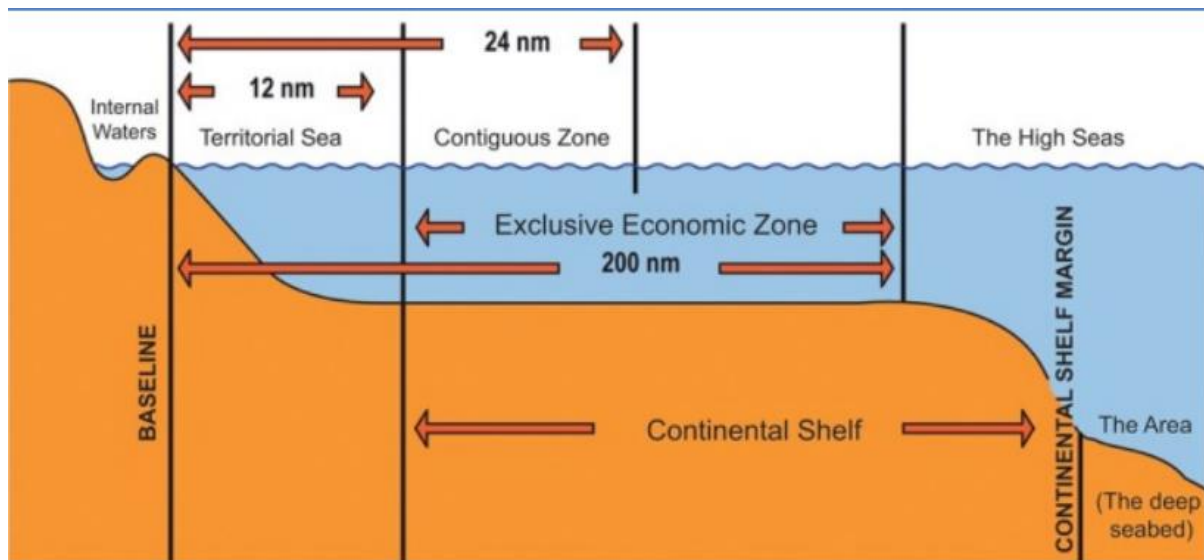
The Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation 2021

• It allows the government to evict, alter and/or occupy any land owned by any common man in the island for development purposes.

The Lakshadweep Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Regulation

• It provides for the administrator to order the detention of a person for a period of up to one year if the offender's actions adversely affect the maintenance of public order.

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ):

• The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) defines an EEZ as generally extending 200 nautical miles from shore, within which the coastal state has the rights over exploration, exploitation, conservation, and management of natural resources and other economic activities, such as the production of wind or tidal power.

DEBT TRAP DIPLOMACY

Montenegro is struggling to pay off Chinese loan for a highway project, which has put the country in a dire financial situation.

• In 2014, Montenegro signed an agreement to take out a $944 million loan from China's Exim Bank for the construction of a motorway that would link the port of Bar to the border with Serbia.

o Presently, Montenegrin debt is around 65.9% of its GDP with China holding 25% of its public debt.

• Several other countries such as Laos, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives etc. are presently facing debt distress owing sizable portion of the debt to China. This has raised concerns regarding use of debt trap diplomacy.

• In 2018, a report by the Center for Global Development highlighted eight Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) recipient countries at a high risk of debt distress due to BRI loans. These countries included Djibouti, Laos, the Maldives, Mongolia, Montenegro, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

o They are highly prone to the mounting debt-to-GDP ratios beyond 50 percent, and around 40 percent of their external debt owed to China.

LAND BANKS

The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management has finalised the structure of the Land Bank Company that will be tasked with selling land parcels owned by government departments and public sector companies.

• Proposal will be placed before the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs for its approval.

• In line with Canadian model, the land special purpose vehicle (SPV) will be set up as a company.

• Company is expected to develop assets of PSUs into revenue generating projects.

• The SPV will also house experts to resolve disputes that have hampered sales of such properties.

What is a Land Bank?

• Land bank is a governmental entity or non-profit corporation that helps manage and dispose of vacant properties, vacant land, or tax-delinquent properties so that vacant property can be redeveloped for a more productive use.

COVID-19 VACCINE AND IP WAIVER

Recently, the United States (US) announced support for waiving intellectual property protection for Covid-19 vaccines.

• The campaign was initiated by India and South Africa, and is being backed by more than 100 countries, along with international organizations including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations AIDS charity, UNAIDS.

o UNAIDS is leading the global effort to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals.

• They had asked the World Trade organization (WTO) to waive certain conditions of the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement that could impede timely access to affordable medical products to combat Covid-19.

• The goal is to reduce the barriers to countries producing their own vaccines particularly for the lowestincome nations.

MUCORMYCOSIS

As cases of Mucormycosis or Black Fungus cases have started rising some states declared it as epidemic under Epidemic Diseases Act 1897.

About Mucormycosis

•   Mucormycosis, as defined by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), is a fungal infection that mainly affects people who are on medication for other health problems that reduces their ability to fight pathogens.

•   It has been commonly called as black fungus because it causes the tissue affected to necrose and turn into black

•   Mucormycosis isn't contagious, so one can't get it from an infected person. It can't spread between people and animals.

•   Symptoms: Symptoms to watch out for in patients of COVID-19, diabetes or those who are immunosuppressed (on chemotherapy or after organ transplant) include:

   o   Sinusitis, nasal blockade, blackish or bloody nasal discharge and localised pain on the cheek bone.

   o   One-sided facial pain, numbness or swelling,

   o   blackish discolouration over bridge of nose or palate,

   o   Thrombosis and necrosis, blurred vision, toothache, chest pain etc.

•   Prevention:

   o   Maintaining personal hygiene (especially oral hygiene and keeping body parts clean and dry in case of diabetics).

   o   Aggressive monitoring of blood sugar is another preventive measure.

RECLINING BUDDHA

India's largest statue of the Reclining Buddha is being installed at the Buddha International Welfare Mission temple in Bodh Gaya.

About reclining Buddha

• A reclining Buddha statue represents The Buddha during his last illness, about to enter Parinirvana - the stage of great salvation after death that can only be attained by enlightened souls

• The Reclining Buddha was first depicted in Gandhara art - which began in between 50 BC and 75 AD, and peaked during the Kushana period from the 1st – 5th centuries AD

• In Sri Lanka and India, the Buddha is mostly shown in sitting postures, while the reclining postures are more prevalent in Thailand and other parts of South East Asia.

NAOMI OSAKA WINS 2021 LAUREUS WORLD SPORTS AWARD

• World number two tennis player Naomi Osaka of Japan has been named "Sportswoman of the Year" at the 2021 Laureus World Sports Awards.

• This is Osaka's second Laureus Sports Awards. In 2019, she won the "Breakthrough of the Year" award

ISRO DEVELOPS 3 COST-EFFECTIVE VENTILATORS, OXYGEN CONCENTRATOR

• The Indian Space Research Organisation's Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), has developed three different types of ventilators and an oxygen concentrator at a time when a shortage of this critical medical equipment resulted in the deaths of many Covid-19 patients across the country.

• Based on designs, features and specifications, we have named them, **Prana, Vayu** and **Svasta**.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN WEST BENGAL

• Once the Council is set up, West Bengal will become the **seventh** Indian state to have a bicameral system of legislature after Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka.

o Under Article 169 of the Constitution, Parliament may by law create or abolish the legislative council in a state if the Legislative Assembly of that state passes a resolution to that effect by a special majority.

Difference between Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly

Basis of Comparison	Legislative Council	Legislative Assembly
Meaning	Upper house of Indian States, whose members are partly elected and partly nominated.	Lower house of the State legislature, whose members are directly elected by the people.
Presiding officer	Chairman	Speaker
Minimum age for Membership	30 Years	25 Years
Strength	Maximum one third of the total members of the assembly and the minimum 40	Maximum 500 and minimum 60
Money Bill	It cannot introduce/amend/reject it	It can introduce/amend/reject it
Budget	Can discuss but cannot vote on the demands for grants.	Vote on demands is the exclusive privilege of the assembly.
Election of President of India	It cannot participate	Elected members of the assembly of the states and Union Territories of Delhi and Puducherry can participate.

SELECTION OF CBI CHIEF

• Recently, a high-powered committee chaired by the Prime Minister met to select the new director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

o The other two members of the panel included the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Chief Justice of India.

• CBI investigates very severe cases from all over the country.

o This organization comes under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.

o It was established under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946.

ANDREA MEZA CROWNED 69TH MISS UNIVERSE 2020

• Miss Mexico Andrea Meza has been crowned as the 69th Miss Universe 2020.

• Brazil's Julia Gama is the first runner-up, Peru's Janick Maceta is the second runner-up while India's Adline Castelino and Dominican Republic's Kimberly Perez are third runner-up and fourth runner-up, respectively.

DISTRICTS EMPOWERED TO GRANT CITIZENSHIP

• Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued a notification under the 2009 rules of the Citizenship Act, 1955 which empowered **non-Muslims** belonging to **Afghanistan, Bangladesh** and **Pakistan** and residing in **13 districts** of **five states** namely Gujarat, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Punjab to apply for Indian citizenship.

o Non-Muslims include **Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Parsi, Christian** and **Buddhists**.

• Citizenship is a Central subject and the MHA periodically delegates powers to States through gazette notification under Section 16 of the Citizenship Act, 1955.

o Citizenship Act, 1955 provides for the acquisition of Indian citizenship viz. birth (section 3), descent (section 4), registration (section 5), and naturalisation (section 6).

o Citizenship Act, 1955 prescribes 3 ways of losing Indian citizenship viz. Renunciation, Termination, and Deprivation.

• This notification is not related to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2020 that is yet to come into effect.

BANNI GRASSLAND RESERVE

• Banni Grassland Reserve is in the Kutch district of Gujarat.

o Banni region emerged from the sea as a result of tectonic activities, received soils from the rivers flown from Bhuj mainland which made the land of Banni richer to generate diverse grass species

• **Maldhari tribe** lives in the Banni Grasslands Reserve area, for the past thousand years.

o Maldhari community is a tribe of herdsmen in Gujarat. They live in settlements called **ness** and make their living by selling milk from their water buffaloes.

VARIANTS AND STRAINS OF SARS-COV-2

• Any change in the genetic sequence of the virus during replication is known as a mutation and viruses with new mutations are called variants.

o Variants can differ by one or multiple mutations.

• When a new variant shows functional properties different from the original virus and becomes established in a population, it is referred to as a new strain of the virus. A strain behaves differently from its parent virus.

o All strains are variants but not all variants are strains.

WHO announced labels of SARS-CoV-2 variants:

• WHO has assigned simple, easy to remember and non-stigmatising labels for key variants of SARS-CoV-2 **using letters of the Greek alphabet**

SARS-CoV-2 Variants	WHO label	Earliest documented samples
B.1.1.7	Alpha	United Kingdom
B.1.351	Beta	South Africa
P.1	Gamma	Brazil
B.1.617.2	Delta	India

CHINA COMPLETES HISTORIC MARS SPACECRAFT LANDING

• An un-crewed Chinese spacecraft, Tianwen-1, successfully landed on the surface of Mars, making China the second space-faring nation after the United States to land on Mars.

•   Zhurong rover (part of the Tianwen-1 mission) landed on a site on a vast plain known as Utopia Planitiaie more than 2,000 km away from Jezero Crater where US rover Perseverance landed.

FARZAD-B GAS FIELD

Iran recently decided to develop Farzad B gas field domestically, cutting off India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Videsh (OVL)'s hopes of landing the lucrative contract.

•   Loss of the Farzad-B gas reserve is concerning as it is the second Indian investment proposal in Iran to come an end in the recent times.

•   In 2020, Iran decided to proceed with the construction of rail line from Chabahar port to Zahedan, along the border with Afghanistan without India

SUN HALO

•   Recently a sun halo was witnessed in different parts of Karnataka.

•   Sun halo is an optical phenomenon that occurs due to refraction of sunlight by hexagonal icecrystals suspended in the atmosphere.

•   It is also called '22-degree halo' because the light is refracted by 22 degrees from its original direction.

•   Circular halos specifically are produced by cirrus clouds, which are formed at a height of over 20000 feet.

•   Sun halos are also indicative of rainfall as cirrus clouds are usually precursor to development of cyclonic warm front.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN INDIA

•   India's unemployment rate rose to 7.11% in the year 2020 (highest in three decades), according to the International Labour Organization (ILO).

•   Even before the Covid-19 crisis, India had been experiencing slower economic growth and rising unemployment – problems that were dramatically worsened by the pandemic and the ensuing lockdown.

CYBER SECURITY IN INDIA

Recently, Air India disclosed that a cyber-attack on its data servers affected about 4.5 million customers around the world.

About Cyber Security

• Cyber security means protecting information, equipment, computer resource, communication device and information stored therein from unauthorised access, use, disclosure, disruption, modification or destruction.

• It is the process of securing information or assets that are contained in cyberspace.

o Cyberspace comprises interaction between people, software and services, supported by worldwide distribution of information and communication technology devices and networks.

EXISTING MECHANISMS FOR CYBER SECURITY

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

o **National Cybersecurity Policy 2013**
  ➤ Key provisions include Set up a 24×7 National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre, Create a task force of 5,00,000 cyber security professionals in next five years etc.

o **Information Technology Act 2000 (As Amended in 2008).**
  ➤ It regulates the use of computer systems and computer networks, and their data.

o **National Digital Communication Policy, 2018** provides for ensuring sovereignty, safety and security of digital communications.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

o **National Cybersecurity Co-ordination Centre (NCCC).**
  ➤ It is India's cyberspace intelligence agency which will conduct security and electronic surveillance.

o **India's Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In).**
  ➤ It is mandated under the IT Amendment Act, 2008 to serve as the national agency in charge of cyber security.

o **National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC).**
  ➤ Designated as the National NodalAgency in respect of Critical Information Infrastructure Protection.

o **Indian Cyber-Crime Coordination Centre and Cyber Warrior Police Force to tackle internet crimes.**

o **Cyber Swachchta Kendra (CSK)** to enhance awareness among citizens.

OTHER MEASURES

o **Digital Army Programme:** A dedicate cloud to digitize and automate processes, procedures and services for the Indian Army,launched as a part of Digital India.

o **Audit of government websites** and applications.

o **Various state government initiatives:** Telangana (established a Cybersecurity Center of Excellence), Kerala (Cyberdome is a Center of Excellence for Kerala Police), Maharashtra (Launched a 'Cyber Safe Women' initiative) etc.

USED COOKING OIL BASED BIODIESEL

Recently, Indian Oil Corporation has kicked-off the supply of diesel that is blended with biodiesel made from used cooking oil.

About Used Cooking Oil (UCO)

•   UCOs are oils and fats that have been used for cooking or frying in the food processing industry, restaurants, fast foods and at consumer level, in households.

o UCO must contain only fats, oils, or greases that were previously used for cooking or frying operations.

•   UCO is an important source of raw material to produce biodiesel.

•   It is also used for making soap, cosmetics, cooking oil, and animal feed, etc.

JAPANESE AWARD

•   The Japanese Government recently awarded the "Order of Rising Sun" to a Bengaluru based Japanese teacher, Shyamala Ganesh. She is a Japanese teacher at the Septuagenarian institution and also at the Ohara School of Ikebana in Bengaluru.

•   Ikebana is the Japanese art of flower arrangement.

VESAK

•   Vesak Day 2021 is observed globally on 26 May.

•   Vesak, the Day of Full Moon is the most sacred day to Buddhists all over the world.

•   On this day, Lord Gautam Buddha attained enlightenment. The Day is commemorated by the United Nations every year.

OPERATION SAMUDRA SETU-II

•   The Indian Navy has launched Operation Samudra Setu-II to help in faster transportation of medical oxygen and other requirements from other countries to India, amid its worsening COVID-19 pandemic.

•   As a part of operation 'Samudra Setu II', seven Indian Naval ships have been deployed for shipment of liquid medical oxygen-filled cryogenic containers and associated medical equipment from various countries.

SUBMARINE CABLES

•   Telecom operator Reliance Jio is constructing the largest international submarine cable system centred on India with global partners and submarine cable supplier Subcom to cater to increased data demand.

•   The two submarine cable systems which the company plans to deploy will connect India with Asia Pacific markets (Singapore, Thailand & Malaysia) and others with Italy & Africa.

Places in News: India

PUNJAB
- Malerkotla created as 23rd district of the State.

UTTAR PRADESH
- Ganga ghats in Varanasi added to UNESCO heritage list sites.

GUJARAT
- NGT upheld rights of pastoralists in Banni grasslands.

MAHARASHTRA
- Maratha military architecture added to UNESCO heritage list sites.

KARNATAKA
- Hire Benkal megalithic site added to UNESCO heritage list sites.
- NGT formed a committee on issue of Mekedatu Dam.

LAKSHADWEEP
- Backlash against administration's policies.

KERALA
- Ban on trawling operations during the monsoon.

TAMIL NADU
- Temples of Kancheepuram added to UNESCO heritage list sites.

ANDHRA PRADESH
- Whiteflies plaguing horticulture crops.

PUDUCHERRY
- Achieved target of 100% piped water connection in rural areas under JalJeevan Mission.

MADHYA PRADESH
- Satpura Tiger Reserve and Bhedaghat-Lametaghat of Narmada Valley added to UNESCO heritage list sites.

TELENGANA
- Eight Asiatic lions tested positive for Covid-19 in Hyderabad Zoo.

ODISHA
- Olive Ridley turtle staying away from Rushikulya rookery.
- Cyclone Yaas fells hundreds of trees in Bhitarkanika.

ASSAM
- Government sets up Bodoland department for faster development of Bodoland Territorial Region.

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR
- Government Proposed several infrastructure projects.

BARREN ISLAND
- Indian Coast Guard apprehended four Myanmarese poachers.