

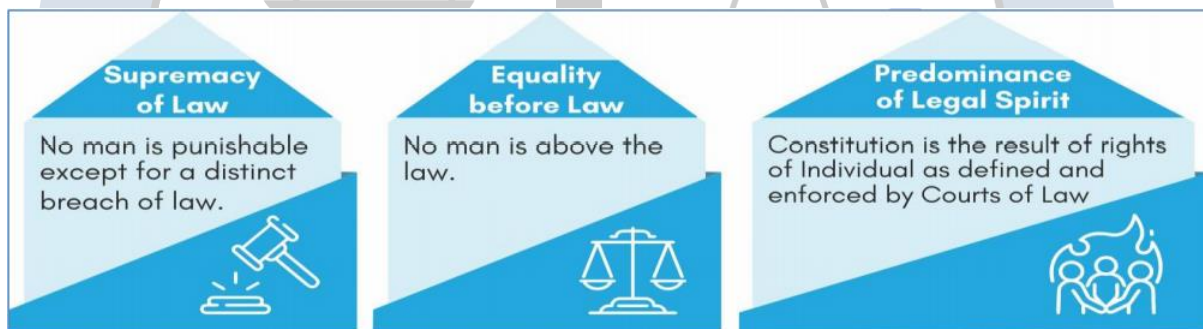
CURRENT AFFAIRS JUNE 2021

RULE OF LAW

Recently, Chief Justice of India delivered a lecture on Rule of Law and he advocated that, “the story of ‘Rule of Law’ is nothing but the story of civilization of humans.”

What is Rule of Law?

- According to A.V. Dicey, the rule of law means the absolute supremacy or predominance of the regular law as opposed to the influence of arbitrary power and excludes the existence of arbitrariness or even of wide discretionary.
- Only a State that is governed by law imbibing ideals of justice and equity can be said to have the ‘Rule of Law’. According to Prof. Dicey, Rule of law contains three principles:



- The origins of the Rule of Law theory can be traced back to the Ancient Romans during the formation of the first republic; it has since been championed by several medieval thinkers in Europe such as Hobbes, John Locke, and Rousseau through the social contract theory.
- Indian philosophers such as Chanakya have also espoused the rule of law theory by maintaining the state is governed, not by the ruler or the nominated representatives of the people but by the law. The expression 'Rule of Law' has been derived from the French phrase 'la principe de legalite', i.e., a government based on the principles of law.

Rule of Law & Indian Constitution

Rule of law is a foundational pillar of Indian Constitution and is embedded in different provisions of the Indian Constitution.



INDIA'S CIVIL NUCLEAR ENERGY COOPERATION

Recently, Russian nuclear major Rosatom began construction of Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) Unit 5 in India in cooperation with Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL), a PSU under the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).

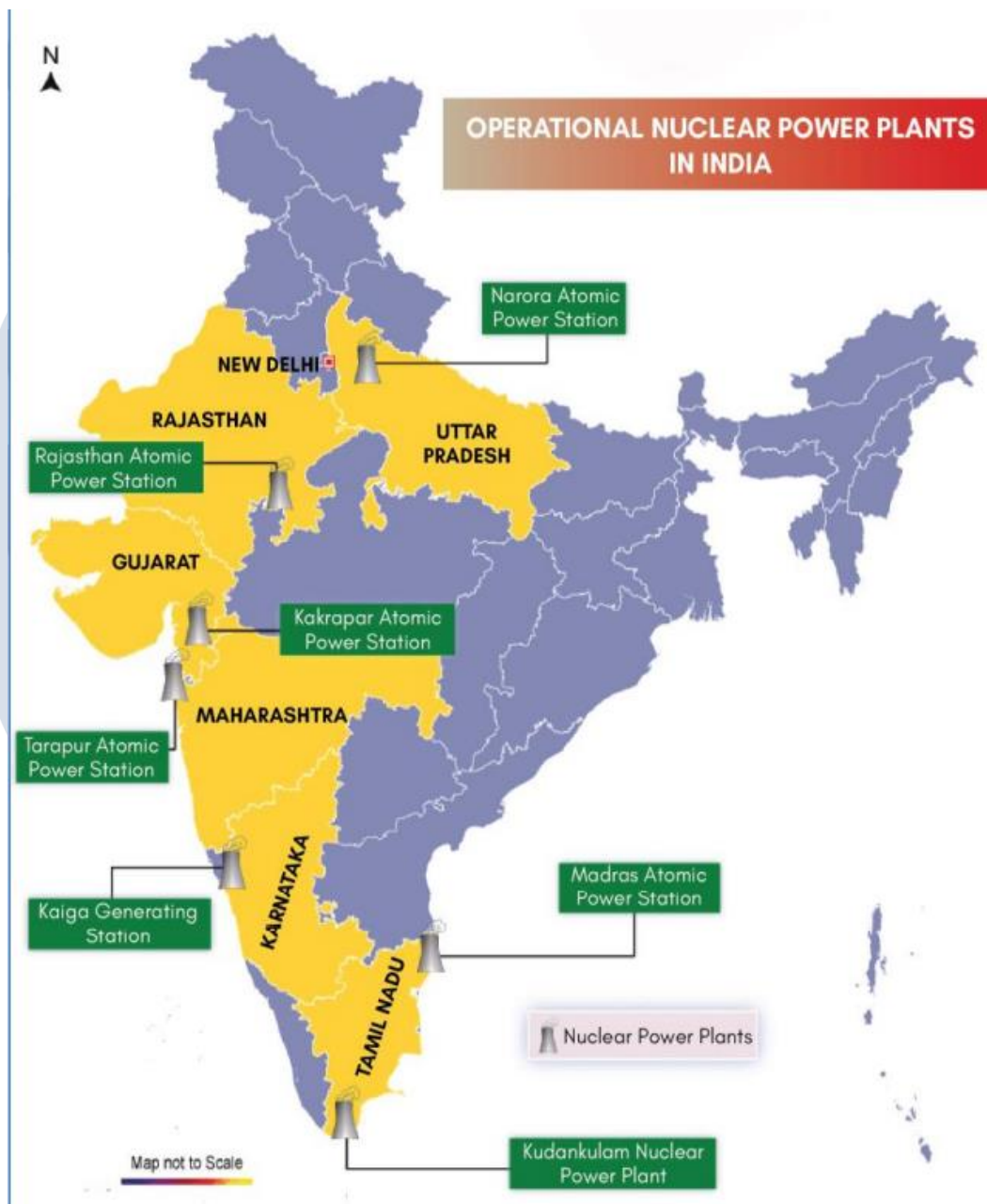
About India's Nuclear Energy Architecture

- At present, India has civil nuclear agreements with 14 countries, namely Argentina, Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Namibia, Russia, South Korea, United Kingdom, US and Vietnam.
- This is despite India not being a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and operating outside the ambit of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)

- It was established in 1974 as a result of successful nuclear test conducted by India (Operation Smiling Buddha or Pokhran-I).

- It is a group of nuclear supplier countries that seeks to contribute to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons through the implementation of guidelines for nuclear exports and nuclear-related exports.
- India is not a member of this group.



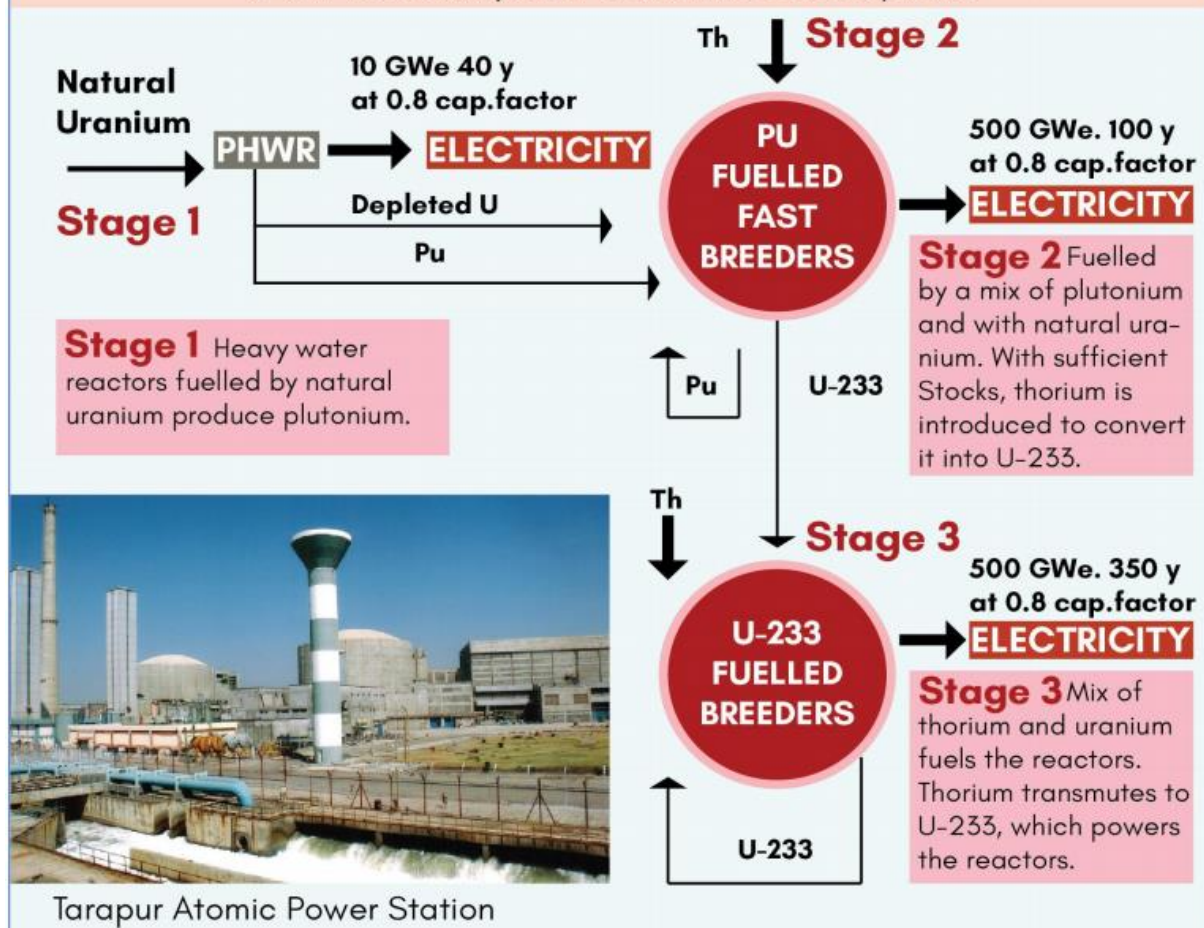
- A central tenet of these agreements is the focus on the peaceful purposes of nuclear power which entails the use of information, nuclear material, equipment, or components in such fields as research, power generation, medicine, agriculture, and industry.
- India has observed a self-moratorium on conducting nuclear tests after the second round of Pokhran in 1998 and has abided by the principles of the NPT far better than even some of its signatories.

India's 3-stage nuclear programme

- India has a 3-stage nuclear energy program which is based on a closed nuclear fuel cycle
 - o Stage-I: Natural uranium fuelled Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs).
 - o Stage-II: Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs) utilising plutonium-based fuel.
 - o Stage-III: Advanced nuclear power systems for utilisation of thorium.

INDIA'S THREE-STAGE NUCLEAR PROGRAMME

Homi Bhabha envisioned India's nuclear power programme in three stages to suit the country's low uranium resources profile



4 YEARS OF GST

Recently, India marked the fourth anniversary of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

About Goods and services Tax

- GST is a single domestic indirect tax law for the entire country levied on the supply of goods and services.

- It is a comprehensive, multi-stage, destination-based tax that is levied on every value addition. Under GST, several indirect taxes like excise duty, VAT, service tax, luxury tax etc. have been subsumed.

- o However, several goods like Property Tax & Stamp Duty, Electricity Duty, Excise Duty on Alcohol, Basic Custom Duty, Petroleum crude, Diesel, Petrol, Aviation Turbine Fuel, Natural Gas, etc are not covered under GST.

- It has multiple slabs- 5%, 12%, 18%, 28% with different products classified in them. Apart from these, GST on gold is 3% and 0.25% on semi-precious and rough stones.

Achievements of GST

- Widening of India's tax base: Tax base has almost doubled from 66.25 lakhs to 1.28 crores in the last four years (2017-2021).

- Increase in GST revenue collection: Revenue collection has been over the Rs 100,000 crore mark for eight consecutive months in a row. The revenue collection in FY 2019-20 soared by 42% as compared to the collections made in FY 2016-17.

- Ease of compliance: It has also brought in efficiencies in indirect tax compliances and reduced the number of indirect tax authorities that business needed to interact with.

- o "E-Invoicing" has also ensured that a trade invoice is identified by a unique identification number which is generated by automated government-backed online portals.

- Increased Logistics efficiency: GST has eliminated all the inter-state barriers by removing check-posts, introducing a nationwide e-way bill, eliminating the entry tax.

GLOBAL MINIMUM CORPORATE TAX RATE

Recently, Finance Ministers from the Group of Seven (G7) nations reached a landmark accord on backing a global minimum corporate tax rate of at least 15%.

- Governments have long grappled with the challenge of taxing global companies (such as Google, Amazon and Facebook) operating across many countries.

o Such companies generate huge revenues but pay very little tax because they set up offices for tax purposes in low-tax jurisdictions (tax havens).

How a global minimum corporate tax works?

- Suppose, a company headquartered in Country A is reporting income in Country B, where the rate is 11%.
- With a global minimum rate of 15% in effect, Country A would “top up” the tax and collect another 4% of the company’s profit from Country B representing the difference between Country B’s rate and the global minimum rate.

PRODUCT STANDARDIZATION

- It refers to the process of maintaining uniformity and consistency among the different iterations of a particular good or service that is available in different markets.
- It ensures that goods or services produced in a specific industry come with consistent quality and are equivalent to other comparable products or services in the same industry.
- Standardization helps in ensuring the safety, interoperability, and compatibility of goods produced.

About One Nation, One Standard (ONOS)

- Aim is to synergize standards adopted by various SDOs in the country. The idea is to develop one template of standard for one given product instead of having multiple agencies set it.
- Currently, BIS is the only national body that frames standards. But different Institutions and PSUs also develop standards in their specific domains.

Some standards applied in India

Mark 	Certifying Agency 	Description 
ISI mark	BIS	It is mandatory for a number of products, especially electronic goods. But in cases of other manufactured products, it is voluntary.
BIS Hallmark	BIS	It verifies that the jewellery conforms to the standards which are set by BIS.
Fruit Products Order (FPO) mark	Ministry of Food Processing Industries	It is a certification mark mandatory on all processed fruit products sold in India following the Food Safety and Standards Act of 2006.
Indian Organic certification	Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).	It is a certification mark for organically farmed food products manufactured in India.
Agricultural Marketing (AGMARK)	Directorate of Marketing and Inspection	It is legally enforced in India by the Agricultural Produce (Grading and Marking) Act of 1937 (and amended in 1986).

GROSS ENVIRONMENT PRODUCT

On World Environment Day (June 5), Uttarakhand became the first state in India to take into account Gross Environment Product (GEP) while calculating its Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

- Four critical natural resources- Air, Water, Forest and Soil- will be assigned monetary values.

What is GEP?

- It is the total value of final ecosystem services supplied to human well-being in a region annually and can be measured in terms of biophysical value and monetary value.
- It indicates the overall health of the environment as GEP measures prime indicators such as forest cover, soil erosion, air quality and dissolved oxygen in river water.
- Unlike Green GDP which is obtained after deducting the damage to the environment from the total production of the state, GEP will assess the improvement in the environment components in a year.

Further it will tell how much work the state has done in reducing the loss of the ecosystem in environmental protection and resource use.

ETHANOL BLENDING IN INDIA

Recently, the central government has advanced the target of 20% ethanol blending in petrol (also called as E20), by five years to 2025, from 2030. Earlier, National Biofuel Policy 2018 had envisaged an indicative target of 20% blending of ethanol in petrol and 5% blending of biodiesel in diesel by 2030.

In 2020, India had set a target of 10% ethanol-blending in petrol by 2022, 20% ethanol-blending in petrol by 2030 and 10% ethanol-blending in diesel by 2030.

What is ethanol blending?

- An ethanol blend is defined as a blended motor fuel containing ethyl alcohol that is at least 99% pure, derived from agricultural products, and blended exclusively with gasoline.
- o Since it is plant-based, it is considered to be a renewable fuel.
- Government has allowed ethanol production/ procurement from sugarcane-based raw materials viz. C & B heavy molasses, sugarcane juice / sugar / sugar syrup, surplus rice with Food Corporation of India (FCI) and Maize.
- The Oil Marketing Companies are to procure ethanol from domestic sources and blends ethanol at its terminals.
- o Government has been notifying administered price of ethanol since 2014.
- Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) is the nodal department for promotion of fuel grade ethanol producing distilleries in the country.

GLACIAL LAKE ATLAS OF GANGA RIVER BASIN

Recently, Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS) released an atlas of glacial lakes that are part of the Ganga River basin.

- Atlas is brought out under National Hydrology Project (NHP).
- In the present study, glacial lakes with water spread area ≥ 0.25 ha have been mapped using Resourcesat-2 satellite data.


About Ganga River Basin

- The Ganga River basin extends over Central Himalayas in India, Nepal, Tibet (China), and Bangladesh.
- It contains 9 of the 14 highest peaks in the world over 8,000 m in height, including Mt. Everest.
- A total of 4,707 glacial lakes have been mapped.

LARGE AREA CERTIFICATION (LAC) SCHEME

- It is a unique quick certification programme to harness the potential areas of Organic farming in India.
- It was launched by the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare under its flagship scheme of Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY).
- Under LAC, each village in the area is considered as one cluster or group and simple documentations are maintained village-wise.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIC FARMING

					
Maintaining organic matter levels and encouraging soil biological activity in soil	Using relatively insoluble nutrient sources made available to the plant by the action of soil micro-organisms.	Effective recycling of organic materials including crop residues and livestock manures.	Weed, disease and pest control relying primarily on crop rotations, natural predators, diversity, etc.	The extensive management of livestock and animal welfare issues with respect to nutrition, housing, health, breeding, and rearing.	Careful attention to the impact of the farming system on the wider environment and the conservation of wildlife and natural habitats.

DIGITAL MEDIA CONTENT REGULATORY COUNCIL (DMCRC)

- DMCRC has been created by the Indian Broadcasting and Digital Foundation (IBDF) as an industry-led Self-Regulatory Body (SRB) for digital OTT platforms (over-the-top).
- It is formed as per the mandate of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.
- It is the second-tier mechanism at the appellate level and is similar to Broadcast Complaint Council (BCCC).

TAX INSPECTORS WITHOUT BORDERS (TIWB)

- Bhutan's TIWB programme was launched in partnership with India.
- It aims to aid Bhutan in strengthening its tax administration and focus of the programme will be in the area of International Taxation and Transfer Pricing.

ITAT-E-DWAR

- It is an e-filing portal of Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) launched by Ministry of Law.

o It is larger narrative of transformation that the country is undergoing through digital medium.

o Enhance the accessibility, accountability and transparency in the day to day working of the ITAT.

DEBT TO GDP RATIO

- It is the ratio of a country's public debt to its gross domestic product (GDP). It indicates a country's ability to pay back its debts.

o Public debt is total liabilities of central government contracted against Consolidated Fund of India.

- Union government's debt soared to 58.8% of the GDP in FY 21 from 51.6% a year ago.

o This is due to economic contraction (caused by COVID-19) which forced the government to borrow a record amount to meet a revenue shortfall.

- Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act mandated debt-to-GDP ratio of the Centre to be brought down to 40% and that of states to 20% by 2024-25.

GLOBAL CYBERSECURITY INDEX (GCI)

- India is ranked 10th (among 194 countries) in the GCI 2020 ahead of China and Pakistan.

- GCI is released by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations (UN) agency for information and communication technologies (ICT).

o The ranking is based on five pillars: legal measures, technical measures, capacity building measures, organisational measures and cooperation.

o In the Asia-Pacific region India secured the 4th spot.

o US is ranked first, followed by UK.

AGNI PRIME

- DRDO will soon test the new missile Agni Prime, advanced version of the 'Agni-1' missile.

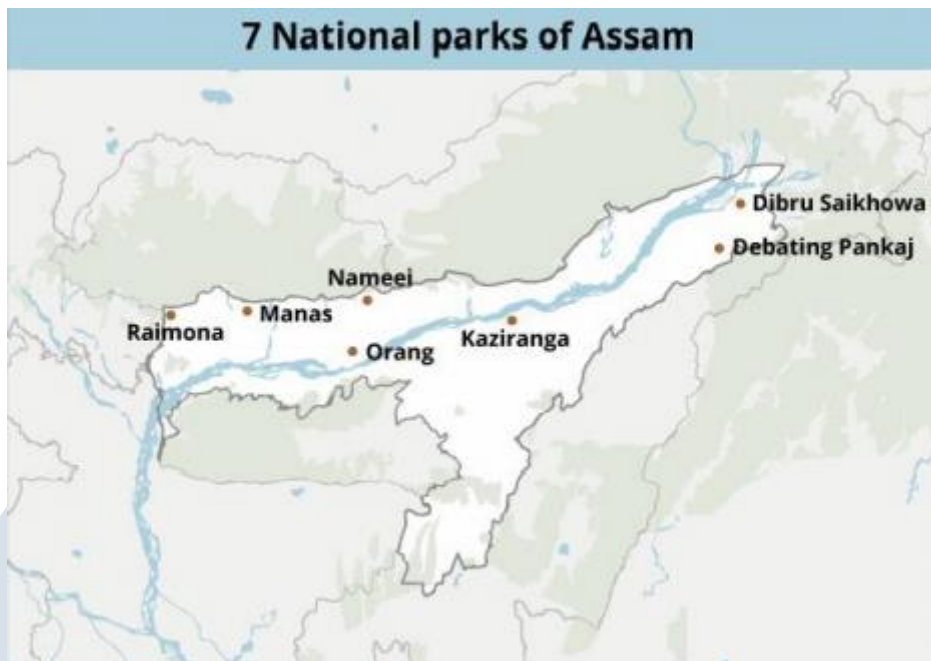
- Agni Prime' is a short-range (surface to a surface) ballistic missile that will have a range of 1000 km to 1500 km and will have advanced features in agility and road mobility.
- o It can carry a payload of around 1,000 Kg or a nuclear warhead.
- The double stage missile will be lighter and much sleeker than its predecessor 'Agni-1'.
- Agni-1 is a short-range (surface to a surface) nuclear capable ballistic missile. It has a strike range of 700 km 1,200 km.

EXERCISES IN NEWS

- **Indo-Thai coordinated Patrol (Indo-Thai CORPAT):** Indian Navy and Royal Thai Navy conducted the 31st edition of India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol (Indo-Thai CORPAT) in the Andaman Sea.
- o It is a bi-annual exercise, carried since 2005, to strengthen maritime links between two nations and to keep the vital part of the Indian Ocean safe and secure for global trade.
- **IN – EUNAVFOR:** Indian Navy (IN) and European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) will participate in the maiden Joint Naval Exercise in the Gulf of Aden.
- o Gulf of Aden also known as the Gulf of Berbera is a deepwater gulf between Yemen to the north, the Arabian Sea to the east, Djibouti to the west, and Somalia to the south.
- **Operation Sagar Aaraksha II:** Coordinated joint operation between India and Sri Lanka undertaken to respond to potential environmental danger due a major fire onboard the Chemical laden container vessel MV X-Press Pearl anchored off Colombo.

DIHING PATKAI NATIONAL PARK

- The Assam government has notified Dihing Patkai as the 7th National Park (NP) of the state.
- o Under the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, both the State (section 35) and Central (section 38) government can declare an area as National Park.
- The Dihing Patkai NP forms the “last remaining stretches” of the Assam Valley tropical wet evergreen forests.



FOREST CARBON CREDIT STAMPS

- China has issued its first batch of forest carbon credit stamps to use market mechanisms to reduce carbon emissions.
- Forest carbon credits stamps are permits for companies to emit a certain amount of carbon dioxide. They are converted from added forest areas and the amount of carbon they can capture.
- These credits can also serve as collateral for bank credit and loans.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED (GM) RUBBER

- Recently, world's first GM rubber plant was planted in Assam.
- GM rubber plant, which is the first of its kind developed specifically for the northeast and is expected to flourish in the region's climatic conditions.
- With additional copies of the gene MnSOD (manganese-containing superoxide dismutase) inserted in it, GM rubber plant is expected to tide over the severe cold conditions during winter which is a major factor affecting the growth of young rubber plants.

MAHSEER

The Blue-Finned Mahseer, which was on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) red list as 'critically endangered', has now moved to the 'least concern' status.

- The Mahseer (roughly translates as mahi – fish and sher – tiger, is also referred as “tiger among fish”). It is important indicator of freshwater ecosystems.

QUACQUARELLI SYMONDS (QS) WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS (WUR)

- IIT-Bombay, IIT-Delhi and Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, were the only Indian institutions that made it to the top 200 of the global rankings.

o Globally, Massachusetts Institute of Technology was ranked number-one, followed by the University of Oxford while Stanford University and the University of Cambridge shared the third spot.

SURAKSHIT HUM SURAKSHIT TUM ABHIYAAN

- The Abhiyaan (by NITI Aayog and Piramal Foundation) aims to assist district administrations in providing home-care support to COVID-19 patients who are asymptomatic or have mild symptoms.

o It is a part of Aspirational Districts Collaborative in which local leaders, civil societies and volunteers work with district administrations to address emerging problems across key focus areas of the Aspirational Districts Programme.

- Transformation of Aspirational Districts Programme (TADP) is a major policy initiative to expeditiously improve the socio-economic status of 112 districts from across 26 states.

EL SALVADOR APPROVES BITCOIN AS LEGAL TENDER

- El Salvador has become the first country in the world to grant legal tender status to bitcoin.

- Bitcoin is a digital or virtual currency created in 2009, allegedly by a Japanese entrepreneur named Satoshi Nakamoto.
- It uses peer-to-peer technology, with no central authority, to facilitate instant payments.
- Bitcoins are created through a complex process known as "mining", and then monitored by a network of computers across the world.
- Bitcoin is the first implementation of crypto-currency concept.

