



## CURRENT AFFAIRS : JUNE 2022

### CENTRAL INFORMATION COMMISSION

Recently, Central Information Commission (CIC) achieved a consistent decline in the pendency of RTI (Right to Information) cases with the constant rise in the disposal of the RTI appeals.

### About Central Information Commission

- CIC, a statutory body, has been constituted with effect from 2005 under the RTI Act, 2005. The jurisdiction of the Commission extends over all Central Public Authorities.
  - o It consists of Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and not more than ten Information Commissioners (ICs).
  - o They are appointed by President on the recommendation of a committee consisting of
    - ✓ Prime Minister as Chairperson,
    - ✓ Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and
    - ✓ A Union Cabinet Minister nominated by Prime Minister
  - o CIC is not eligible for reappointment.
- By RTI (Amendment) Act, 2019 and the Rules brought in thereafter, tenure of the commissioners has been cut to three years.
  - o Earlier, 2005 Act gave them a fixed tenure of five years or a retirement age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
  - o This was done to ensure that Information Commissioners can use their powers even with the senior-most officers of the administration without any fear of their jobs

## **RTI Act, 2005**

- Genesis of RTI law started in 1986 through Mr. Kulwal v/s Jaipur Municipal Corporation case, in which SC directed that freedom of speech and expression provided under Article 19 implies RTI, as without information the freedom of speech and expression cannot be fully used by the citizens.
- It replaced the Freedom of Information Act, 2002.
- RTI Act empower the citizens, promote transparency and accountability in the working of the Public Authorities, contain corruption, and make our democracy work for the people in real sense.

## **JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

Recently, the Orissa High Court became the first in the country to publish an annual report that gives insights into the performance of the state's judiciary.

### **About Judicial Accountability**

- Judicial accountability is defined as the set of mechanisms aimed at making judges and courts personally or institutionally responsible for behaviours and decisions contrary to constitutional or legal standards.
- Constitution follows the principle of separation of power where checks and balances exist on every organ's (Legislature, Executive and Judiciary) conduct.
  - o However, being the protector of Fundamental Rights, interpreter of constitution, judiciary is required to be independent and outside influence of political and economic entities.
  - o Under Article 235, Constitution provides for 'control' of High Court over the subordinate judiciary clearly indicating the provision of an effective mechanism to enforce accountability.

## **Issues with Judicial Accountability**

- Collegium System: Judges appointing judges has led to concentration of immense power in hands of judges, promoting nepotism and violate the principle of check and balances.
  - Conduct of judges: Judges have been alleged to have indulged in corruption, post retirement jobs etc.
  - In house functioning: Opacity in the functioning of judiciary such as allocation of cases, judicial appointments, disciplinary actions etc. are informal and inefficient and there is urgent need to bring in transparency which further strengthens accountability.
  - Information asymmetry: Judiciary has virtually kept itself out of the ambit of RTI Act thus restricting access to information, which further hinders process of holding judges accountable for their actions.
  - Judicial overreach: Judicial activism enforces rights of people and society at large, however, there have been instances of judicial overreach violating the key principle of separation of power.
- o Example, Scrapping of National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act.

## **PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION**

Recently, Supreme Court objected to frivolous Public Interest Litigation (PIL) petitions, and imposed penalties on petitioners for filing luxury litigation.

## **About Public Interest Litigation and its significance**

- PIL is the use of the law to advance human rights and equality or raise issues of broad public concern.
- o Expression PIL has been borrowed from American jurisprudence.
- o PIL is based upon Article 39 A which makes sure that state secures and provides justice without any discrimination based on caste, religion, creed etc.
- o PIL is the power given to the public by courts.

- Public interest cases may arise from both public and private law matters.
  - o Some of the matters which are considered under PIL are Bonded Labour, Atrocities on women, Environmental pollution, Food adulteration, Maintenance of heritage and culture etc.
  - o PIL can be filed in any High Court or directly in the Supreme Court.
- PIL can be filed by:
  - o Any citizen of India, the petitioner need not be aggrieved person.
  - o An organization with condition that it should not be filed with a personal agenda but in the interest of the public.
  - o Court can take awareness of a matter if it is for the maximum public importance and can also appoint an advocate to handle the case.

#### SC landmark judgments on PIL

- **SP Gupta v. Union of India, 1981:** Any member of public or NGO acting bonafide, can **invoke writ jurisdiction of HC or SC** under Article 226 or 32 respectively, seeking **redressal against violation of legal or constitutional rights of persons** who due to social or economic or any other disability cannot approach the Court.
- **M.C Mehta v. Union of India, 1987:** PIL brought against Ganga water pollution, SC held that **petitioner although not a riparian owner entitled to move the Court for the enforcement of statutory provisions**, as he is the personal interest in protecting the lives of the people using Ganga water.
- **Vishaka v. the State of Rajasthan, 1997:** SC recognized **sexual harassment as a violation of fundamental rights** of Article 14, 15 and 21.
- **Indian Banks' Association, Bombay & Ors. v. M/s Devkala Consultancy Service and Ors, 2004:** In an appropriate case, where petitioner might have moved a court in her **private interest and for redressal of the personal grievance**.
  - o Court in furtherance of Public Interest may treat it a necessity to enquire into state of affairs of the subject of litigation in the interest of justice.
  - o Thus, a **private interest case can also be treated as public interest case**.

## HATE SPEECH

Recently, National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported about 500% rise in cases under hate speech law in seven years.

### Legislations around Hate speech

- Constitutional Provision: Article 19(2) of the Constitution gives all citizens the right to freedom of speech and expression but subject to 'reasonable restrictions' for preserving inter alia 'public order, decency or morality'.

- Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860: Various Sections like 153A, 153B, 298 etc. of the Indian Penal Code 1860 deal with speech or words that could create mischief, outrage religious beliefs or cause imputations to national integration.

- Representation of The People Act, 1951: Section 8 disqualifies a person from contesting election if he is convicted for indulging in acts amounting to illegitimate use of freedom of speech and expression.

- o Section 123(3A) and section 125 prohibits promotion of enmity on grounds of religion, race, caste, community, or language in connection with election as a corrupt electoral practice and prohibits it.

- Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955: Section 7 penalises incitement to, and encouragement of untouchability through words, either spoken or written, or by signs or by visible representations or otherwise.

#### SC on hate speech

- **Pravasi Bhalai Sangathan v. Union of India** case: The petitioners found the existing laws related to hate speech inadequate and prayed that the State should enact stricter regulation and take peremptory action against people promoting hate speech.
  - o But the **Court observed that the implementation of existing laws would solve the problem of hate speech to a great extent.**
- **Shreya Singhal v. Union of India**: Issues were raised about Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000 relating to the fundamental right of free speech and expression guaranteed by Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution, where the **Court differentiated between discussion, advocacy, and incitement and held that the first two were the essence of Article 19(1).**

## INTER-STATE COUNCIL (ISC) MEETINGS

- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister recently wrote to Prime Minister that Inter-State Council (ISC) meetings should be held thrice a year.

### About ISC

- o Established under Article 263 of the Constitution, which states that the President may constitute such a body if a need is felt for it.

- ✓ In 1988, the Sarkaria Commission suggested the Council should exist as a permanent body, and in 1990 it came into existence through a Presidential Order.

- o The Council consists of:

- ✓ Prime Minister – Chairman

- ✓ Chief Ministers of all States and Union Territories having a Legislative Assembly – Members
- ✓ Administrators of UTs not having a Legislative Assembly – Members
- ✓ Six Ministers of Cabinet rank in the Union Council of Ministers to be nominated by the Prime Minister – Members
- ✓ 10 Union Ministers as permanent invitees

o Function:

- ✓ Inquiring into and advising on disputes between states
- ✓ Investigating and discussing subjects in which two states or states and the Union have a common interest
- ✓ Making recommendations for the better coordination of policy and action.
- The Interstate Council has met only once in the last six years and 11 time since its constitution in 1990.

## **RAJYA SABHA (RS) ELECTIONS HELD FOR SEVERAL STATES**

- RS is a permanent House and cannot be dissolved.
- o Maximum strength of RS is fixed at 250 (presently 245), out of which, 238 (Presently 233) are representatives of states and UTs (elected indirectly) and 12 are nominated by president.
- o Term of a member is 6 years.

## **Rajya Sabha Elections**

- o To ensure continuity, one-third of its members retire after every second year.
- o Representatives of states in RS are elected (under Article 80) by elected members of state legislative assemblies.
- o Seats are allotted to states on the basis of population.



o Election is held in accordance with system of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote.

✓ A single transferable vote means electors can vote for any number of candidates in order of their preference. A candidate requires a specified number of first preference votes to win.

## **REGISTERED UNRECOGNISED POLITICAL PARTIES (RUPPS)**

- Election Commission (EC) deleted 111 'non-existent' parties from the list of registered political outfits.

o These 111 Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs) were found to be non-existent and violating the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

- It is to be noted that EC does not have the power to deregister a political party, a reform still pending approval from the government.

o However, it can take up the issue of financial irregularities and seek mandatory compliance from the parties like sources and manner of donations, disclosures by companies, details of bank account etc.

o EC has initiated action against several registered unrecognized political parties under Sections 29A and 29C of the Representation of People Act, 1951, for claiming tax exemptions without fulfilling mandatory requirements.

## **CONTESTING ELECTIONS FROM MULTIPLE SEATS**

- Recently, Chief Election Commissioner has made a fresh push for amending the Representation of People's Act, 1951 (RPA) to bar people from contesting from more than one seat.

o As an alternative, hefty fine should be imposed on those vacating one of the constituencies and forcing a bypoll.

- Dinesh Goswami Committee report (1990) and the 170th report of the Law Commission on Electoral Reforms (1999) had also included recommendations for restricting one contestant to one seat.

- As per Section 33(7) of the RPA, one candidate can contest from a maximum of two constituencies (more constituencies were allowed until 1996 when the RPA was amended to set the cap at two constituencies).

## **ANTI-DEFECTION LAW**

- Political crisis in Maharashtra has raised discussions over legalities of elected MLAs switching parties.
- Anti-defection law provides for disqualification of MLAs who, after being elected on ticket of a political party, “voluntarily give up their party membership”.
  - o It was included under 10<sup>th</sup> Schedule via 52<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Act, 1985.
  - o Any question regarding disqualification arising out of defection is to be decided by the presiding officer of the House.

## **Grounds of Disqualification**

- o If member votes or abstains from voting in such House contrary to any direction issued by his political party without obtaining prior permission of such party and such act has not been condoned by the party within 15 days.
- o Nominated member, if he joins any political party after expiry of 6 months.
- o An independent member, if he joins any political party.

## **Exception**

- o Law allows a party to merge with or into another party provided that at least two-thirds of its legislators are in favour of merger.
- o If a person is elected as speaker of Lok Sabha or Chairman of Rajya Sabha, then he could resign from his party, and re-join the party once he demits that post.



## WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO)

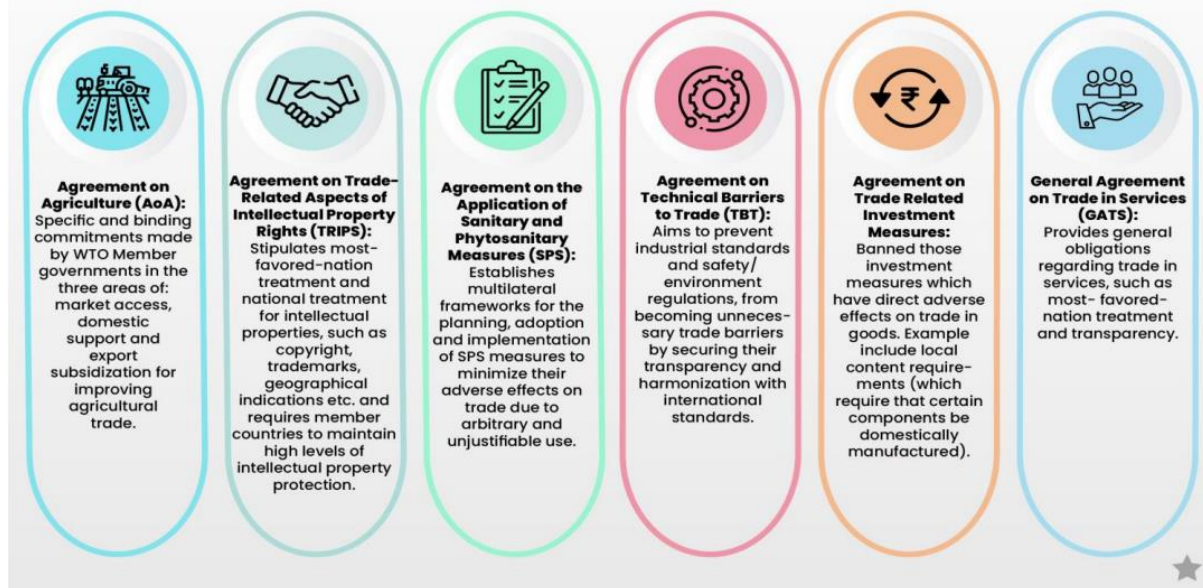
12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of the WTO was held recently.

### About WTO

- The World Trade Organization is the **only international organization that deals with the rules of trade between countries.**
- Founded in 1995, the WTO is run by its 164 members, and all **decisions are taken through consensus and any member can exercise a veto.**
  - It is the **successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)**, a group founded in 1948 whose rules created the modern multilateral trading system.

Particulars	Features
<b>Curtailling harmful fishing subsidies</b> on illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing for the next four years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There would be <b>no limitation on subsidies granted or maintained by developing or least-developed countries</b> for fishing within their exclusive economic zones (EEZ).</li> <li>• Also, technical assistance and capacity building shall be provided to such countries through the <b>WTO Fisheries Funding Mechanism.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Global Food Security</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Binding decision to <b>exempt food purchased by the UN's World Food Programme (WFP)</b> for humanitarian purposes, from any export restrictions <b>to address food shortages.</b></li> </ul>
<b>E-commerce transmissions like music, e-books, films etc.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members agreed <b>to continue the long standing moratorium on custom duties on e-commerce transmissions</b> until the subsequent Ministerial Conference or until March, 2024, whichever is earlier.</li> </ul>
<b>Covid-19 vaccine</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Temporary waiver of certain requirements under the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)</b> concerning the use of compulsory licences to produce covid-19 vaccines for 5 years.</li> </ul>
<b>Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Declaration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Declaration commits WTO members to launching a work programme to identify new challenges in the implementation of the WTO's SPS Agreement.</li> </ul>

## Major Agreements at WTO



## ALTERNATIVES TO BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI)

The United States aims to raise \$200 billion over five years to fund needed infrastructure in developing countries under a G7 initiative aimed at countering China's Belt and Road project.

- The overall investment, including G7 partners and private capital, aims to hit \$600 billion over the next five years.
- The announcement is an official launch and a rebranding of what had been rolled out last year at the G7 in the UK as "Build Back Better World" (B3W).
- The effort is now called the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, or PGII.

## About G7

- The G7 is an **informal forum of leading industrialised nations**, which dominate global trade and the international financial system.
- It meets annually **to discuss issues such as global economic governance, international security and energy policy**, besides a host of other issues topical to the prevailing situation.
- **Members and Partners:** It includes **Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States** as core members.
  - In addition to the core nations, **there are other invitee nations (acting as partners) that are democracies and classified emerging economies.**
    - ✓ In the recent summit for example, **India was invited along with Argentina, Indonesia, Senegal and South Africa as guests.**
  - There are also various organisations such as IMF, World Bank, WHO that are part of the international governance.
- **Russia joined G7 in 1998, creating the G8**, but was excluded in 2014 for its takeover of Crimea.
  - The EU is not a member of the G7 but attends the annual summit.

## About BRI (Belt and Road Initiative)

- It is a transcontinental long-term policy and investment program which aims at infrastructure development and acceleration of the economic integration of countries along the route of the historic Silk Road.
- It was unveiled in 2013 by China and until 2016, was known as OBOR (One Belt One Road).
- According to the Belt and Road Portal, currently 71 countries are taking part in the Initiative, together representing more than a third of the world's GDP and two thirds of the world's population.
- BRI combines two initiatives:
  - The (land based) Silk Road Economic Belt.
  - 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.



## INDUS WATER TREATY

The 118<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC), was held in New Delhi.

Highlights of the meeting

- Pakistan had assured India of all necessary actions to ensure the free flow of Fazilka drain into the Sutlej river.
- The Indian side underscored that all its on-going hydro-electric power (HEP) projects including Pakal Dul, Kiru and Lower Kalnai are fully compliant with the provisions of the Treaty.

## About the Indus Water Treaty (IWT)

- IWT was signed in 1960, between India and Pakistan and brokered by the World Bank.
- Objective: The treaty fixed and delimited the rights and obligations of both countries concerning the use of the waters of the Indus River system.



- Provisions for sharing of river water: 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.

o India has the right under the Treaty to generate hydroelectricity through run-of-the-river projects on the western rivers. These are subject to specific criteria for design and operation. And, under the Treaty, Pakistan has the right to raise objections on design of Indian hydroelectric projects on western rivers.

✓ Run-of-the-river hydroelectricity project is a type of hydroelectric generation plant whereby little or no water storage is provided.

India's current mechanism of cooperation in river water sharing with other countries



Countries	Mechanism for cooperation
India-Nepal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Kosi Treaty of 1954</b>, under which the embankments in Nepal were established and maintained.</li> <li>• <b>The Mahakali Treaty</b> pertains to sharing water of Mahakali river.</li> </ul>
India-China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Memorandum of Understanding</b> upon provision of Hydrological Information of the <b>River Brahmaputra</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Memorandum of Understanding</b> on Hydrological Data Sharing on <b>River Sutlej</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Expert-Level Mechanism</b> to discuss interaction and cooperation on provision of flood season hydrological data and emergency management.</li> </ul>
India-Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Ganges Treaty</b> is an agreement to share surface waters at the Farakka Barrage near their mutual border.</li> <li>• System of <b>Transmission of flood forecasting data</b> on major rivers like <b>Ganga, Teesta, Brahmaputra, and Barak</b> during the monsoon season.</li> </ul>
India-Bhutan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Comprehensive Scheme for Establishment of Hydro-meteorological and Flood Forecasting Network</b> on rivers Common to India and Bhutan.</li> <li>• <b>A Joint Group of Expert (JGE) on Flood Management</b>.</li> </ul>

## INDIA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH TALIBAN

India has reopened its Embassy in Kabul after nearly ten months of Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

- India also sent an official Indian delegation to offer humanitarian assistance and development cooperation, the first such engagement since the Indian Embassy was evacuated, after a devastating earthquake struck Afghanistan.
- The developments acquire significance as India had refused to recognise the Taliban administration in Afghanistan and had urged the international community to go slow in recognising the Taliban.
- The present engagement is therefore seen as change in India's approach with respect to Taliban.
- The government has however clarified that the ongoing visit did not amount to granting diplomatic recognition to the Taliban regime in Kabul.



## Indian investments in Afghanistan



**Assistance in constructing, upgrading, rebuilding or restoring buildings and various type of infrastructure. Examples-**

- Afghanistan's Parliament in Kabul.
- Reconstruction of the Salma dam (Afghan-India Friendship Dam).
- Construction of Zaranj-Delaram road.
- High Impact Community Development Project (HICDP) program



**Transfer of various objects like ambulances, buses, biscuits, medicine military vehicles and helicopters, etc.**



**People-to-people exchanges. Examples-**

- Offering scholarships for Afghan students.
- Organizing training for Afghan soldiers, policemen and public servants.

### WEST SETI POWER PROJECT

- India will be taking over West Seti hydropower project in Nepal nearly four years after China withdrew from it.
- o It is planned on Seti river in Nepal's far west region.
- Nepal is rich in power sources with an estimated potential for 83,000 MW.
- India is viewed as a feasible market for Nepal, but there has been some uncertainty over India's inability to deliver projects on time.

## INTERNATIONAL NORTH-SOUTH TRANSIT CORRIDOR (INSTC)

- Iran started transfer of Russia goods to India by using International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC).
- INSTC is a multi-modal transportation network, first envisaged in 2000 by Russia, India and Iran, to promote transportation cooperation among the Member States.
  - o INSTC connects Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to Caspian Sea via Iran and is then connected to Saint Petersburg and North European via Russia.
  - o Currently, it has 13 members: India, Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Turkey, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Oman, Ukraine and Syria.

### INSTC Significance for India

- o Will cut down the transportation costs of goods (by almost 30%) as well transportation time (almost half compared to Suez Canal) between India and Russia.
- o Will help India to gain smooth access into Central Asia and beyond and will help to expand trade and investment links.



## GDP-GVA GAP

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross Value Added (GVA), two measures of India's economy, yet again grew at widely different paces leading to a gap between them.

### Difference between GDP-GVA and their Utility

Parameter	Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	Gross Value Added (GVA)
<b>Definition</b>	GDP is the market value of all final goods and services produced within the territorial boundaries of a country for a given period.	GVA is the total value of goods and services produced within a country after deducting the cost of inputs and raw materials.
<b>Measurement</b>	It is measured by the <b>output, income, and expenditure approaches</b> .	It is measured by <b>output reach</b> and used as a <b>proxy</b> for GDP.
<b>Technical Relationship (difference) between GDP and GVA:</b> <b><math>GDP = \Sigma GVA + \text{Net taxes on Products} - \text{Net Subsidies on Products}</math></b>		
<b>Purpose</b>	GDP is an internationally accepted measure of overall economic growth in a country.	GVA is used to measure sector-wise details of economic activity from the production side.

## AGNIPATH SCHEME

Union Cabinet approved Agnipath Scheme-a recruitment scheme for Indian youth to serve in the Armed Forces.

### About Agnipath Scheme

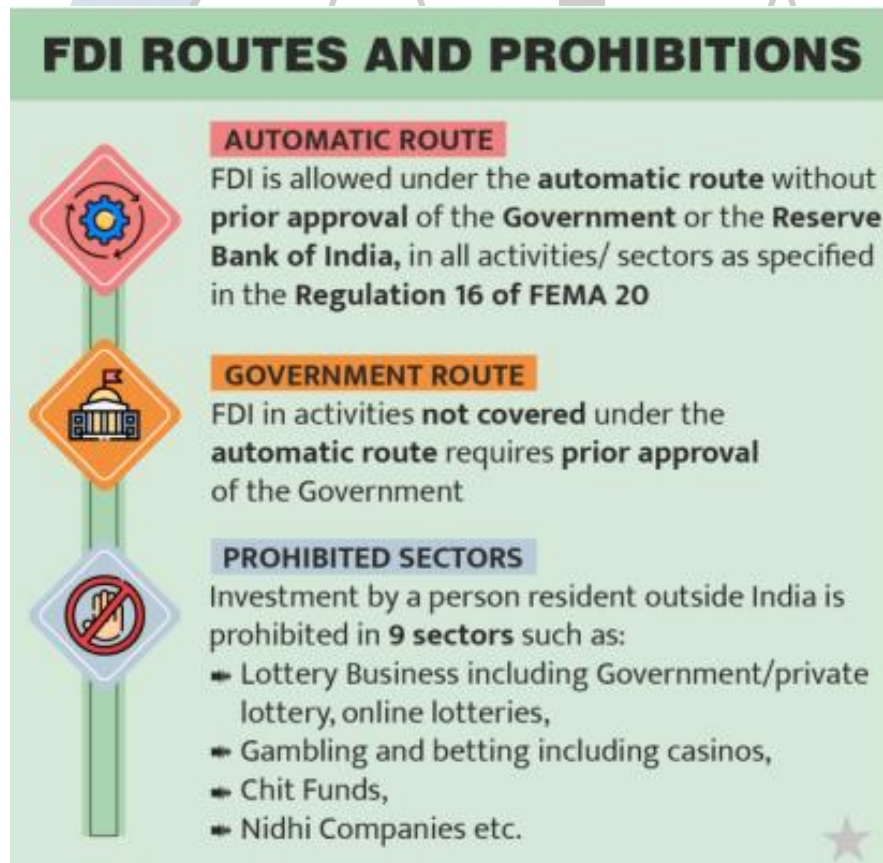
- It is a major defence policy reform to usher in a new era in the Human Resource policy of the three Services.
- o Idea of a short-term recruitment model or 'Tour of Duty' (ToD) was first mooted around two years back for the selection of officers and jawans, for a limited number of vacancies.
- Youth (from 17.5 years to 23 age group) selected under this scheme will be known as Agniveers who will be enrolled for a period of four years. They would form a distinct rank in the Armed Forces, different from any other existing ranks.
- Upon the completion of four years of service, Agniveers will be offered an opportunity to apply for permanent enrolment in the Armed Forces.

## FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS (FDI)

With continued foreign interest in the Indian economy, Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) into India reached an all-time high of \$83.57 billion in 2021-22.

### About Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and FDI inflows in India

- FDI is the investment through equity instruments by a resident outside India:
  - In an unlisted Indian company; or
  - In 10% or more of the post-issue paid-up equity capital on a fully diluted basis of a listed Indian company.



## **GIG WORKERS**

In a report titled 'India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy', NITI Aayog has projected that the Gig workforce in India may hit 23.5 mn by FY30.

### **About Gig workers and significance in present times**

- Gig worker is a person who performs work or participates in a work arrangement and earns from such activities outside of traditional employer-employee relationship, (Code on Social Security, 2020).
- They can be broadly classified into two categories as:
  - Platform Gig Workers: Workers whose work is based on online software apps or digital platforms such as food aggregator platforms Zomato, Ola, Swiggy etc.
  - Non-platform Gig Workers: Casual wage workers and own-account workers in the conventional sectors, working part-time or full time. E.g. Construction.
- With half-a-billion labour force, India has already emerged as one of the world's largest countries of Gig workforce due to pandemic and rising factors like urbanization, access to internet, digital technologies and smartphones in India, start-up culture, freelancing platforms, etc.

### **MILITARY EXERCISES IN NEWS**

- “EX SAMPRITI-X”: It is a joint military training exercise between India and Bangladesh.
- Ex Khaan Quest 2022: It is a multinational Peacekeeping exercise featuring participation from military contingents from 16 countries (including India) that commenced in Mongolia.
- IND-INDO CORPAT: It is a joint Coordinated Patrol between Indian and Indonesian Navy.

### **OPERATION SANKALP**

- It has entered third year of operation.



- In the backdrop of deteriorating security situation in the Gulf region, Indian Navy had commenced Maritime Security Operations, code named Op SANKALP, in the Gulf Region in June 2019.
- Objective is to ensure safe passage of Indian Flag Vessels transiting through the Strait of Hormuz.
- India is dependent for about 85% of its demand for oil on imports. Also, around 60% of India's oil imports come from the Gulf region.

### **HIGH MOBILITY ARTILLERY ROCKET SYSTEM (HIMARS)**

- As part of its support to Ukraine, USA has announced sending its advanced missile systems HIMARS to Ukraine.
- o HIMARS is a long-range, mobile, precision artillery system developed by Lockheed Martin.

### **50 YEARS OF STOCKHOLM CONFERENCE**

Recently, Stockholm+50 meeting was held at Stockholm, Sweden to commemorate the 50 years since the 1972 United

Nations Conference on the Human Environment (also known as the Stockholm Conference), which made the environment a pressing global issue for the first time.

### **About Stockholm conference**

- It was the UN's first major conference on international environmental issues, and marked a turning point in the development of international environmental politics.
- It was organized in 1972 to coordinate global efforts to promote sustainability and safeguard the natural environment with the theme 'Only One Earth'.
- o 122 countries adopted the Stockholm Declaration on to 26 principles and an action plan.



## **BAN ON SINGLE USE PLASTIC**

Several single use plastic (SUP) items identified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) will be banned across India from 1st July, 2022.

### **About the SUP Ban**

- MoEFCC had earlier notified the Plastic Waste Management (PWM) Amendment Rules, 2021, to curb pollution caused by littered and unmanaged plastic and phase out SUP items by 2022.

### **About Loss and Damage (L&D)**

- It refers to impacts of climate change that cannot be adapted to, and where losses are permanent.
- It covers both slow-onset processes like sea-level and temperature rise, and extreme events such as floods, hurricanes and tropical cyclones.
- Financing for L&D is seen as climate reparations, paid by historical emitters, in accordance with the 'polluter pays' principle.
- Loss and damage impacts are felt disproportionately by small island nations who have had negligible emissions with estimated costs of L&D by 2030 ranging from \$290-580 billion.
- Under the new rules, several SUP items which have low utility and high littering potential were identified whose manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use was prohibited with effect from 1st July, 2022.
- o The ban will not apply to commodities made of compostable plastic.
- Those found violating the ban can be penalised under the Environment Protection Act 1986 – which allows for imprisonment up to 5 years, or a penalty up to Rs 1 lakh, or both.

## **ECO-SENSITIVE ZONES (ESZ)**

The Supreme Court has directed that every protected forest, national park and wildlife sanctuary in the country should mandatorily have a minimum 1 km ESZ, from their demarcated boundaries.

### **More about the judgment**

- The directions were passed in reference to applications filed under the TN Godavarman Thirumalpad versus Union of India case.
- The order would apply in all such states/UTs where the minimum ESZ is not prescribed.

### **About Eco-sensitive zones (ESZs)**

- ESZ or Ecologically sensitive areas (ESA) are ecologically important and fragile areas around protected areas designated to be protected from industrial pollution and unregulated development under the Environment Protection Act (EPA), 1986.
- It is notified by Central Government, i.e. Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), under Environment Protection Act, 1986.

## **URANIUM MINING**

Recently, Rajasthan has issued Letter of Intent for Uranium mining

- A Letter of Intent of mining lease has been issued to the Uranium Corporation of India (UCI) for mining of Uranium deposits, which were discovered at Rohil (Khandela Tehsil) in Sikar district.
- Kazakhstan has the world's largest Uranium reserves and also the largest producer (45% of world supply), followed by Namibia and Canada.
- India is one of the few countries in the world which has mastered all the stages of nuclear fuel cycle – starting from uranium exploration, mining, extraction and conversion, through fuel fabrication, to reprocessing and waste management.
- India is both a producer and importer of uranium and given its limited reserves it consumes all the uranium it produces.

## **INDIA ACHIEVED 10% ETHANOL BLENDING TARGET IN PETROL**

- The original target for 10% ethanol blending in petrol was November 2022.
  - o Central government had also set the target of 20% ethanol blending in petrol (also called as E20), by 2025.
- 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.

## **ACCREDITED SOCIAL HEALTH ACTIVIST (ASHAS)**

India's ASHAs are among the six recipients of the WHO Director-General's Global Health Leaders Award.

- The honour recognizes contributions to advancing global health, leadership, and commitment to regional health issues.

## **About Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) Workers**

- ASHA workers are female community health workers instituted as community-based health functionaries under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) launched in 2005.
  - o With launch of National Urban Health Mission in 2013, it was extended to urban settings.
- The core of the ASHA programme has been an intention to build the capacity of community members in taking care of their own health and being partners in health services.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF ASHA WORKERS

### Improved Maternal Care

ASHA program has increased in the utilization of antenatal care services, skilled birth attendance, and facility deliveries across caste, religion, and demographic groups.

### Increased access to Primary health-care services

i.e. maternal and child health including immunisation and treatment for diabetes, tuberculosis, etc., for both rural and urban populations, with special focus on difficult-to-reach habitations

### Improved Health outcomes

ASHAs have played an outstanding role in making India polio free, increasing routine immunisation coverage; reducing maternal mortality; improving new-born survival and in greater access to treatment for common illnesses.

### Better reach

ASHAs are more likely to reach groups that are typically left out of the formal health care system—poorer populations living in rural areas and women belonging to backward caste. ★

## SURROGACY (REGULATION) RULES, 2022

The government has issued Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022 under Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021.

### About Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021

- Act defines surrogacy as a practice whereby one woman bears and gives birth to a child for an intending couple with the intention of handing over such child to the intending couple after the birth.

- It allows altruistic surrogacy which involves no monetary incentives or rewards to the surrogate mother other than the medical expenses incurred and insurance coverage.
- It seeks to prohibit commercial surrogacy, which includes trading human embryos and gametes and buying and selling of the services of a surrogate by a monetary reward except for insurance.

## **SHRESTHA SCHEME**

- Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment recently launched Scheme for Residential Education for Students in High schools in Targeted Areas (SHRESTHA).
- SHRESTHA provides level playing field and high quality free residential education to poor and meritorious scheduled caste (SC) students from class 9<sup>th</sup> to class 12<sup>th</sup>.

## **COUNTRY'S FIRST LIQUID NANO UREA PLANT**

- Prime Minister (PM) recently inaugurated the country's first liquid nano urea plant at Kalol (Gujarat).
- Liquid nano Urea is a patented chemical nitrogen fertiliser developed by IFFCO's Nano Biotechnology Research Centre at Kalol with nano nitrogen particles (from 20-50 nm).
- o It is world's first nano urea (liquid) plant.

## **SANT TUKARAM**

Prime Minister inaugurated the Sant Tukaram Shila (rock) Mandir in the temple town of Dehu in Maharashtra.

## **About Sant Tukaram (1608 – 1650)**

- He was one of the saints of the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra and one of the greatest poets in the Marathi language.
- He was also known as Tukoba, Tukaram Bolhoba Ambile etc.



- Literary works:

o He composed a Marathi genre of literature called Abhanga poetry which fused folk stories with spiritual themes. Abhangs had themes on ecology, equality, brotherhood and love of God.

## **BHARAT GAURAV TRAIN**

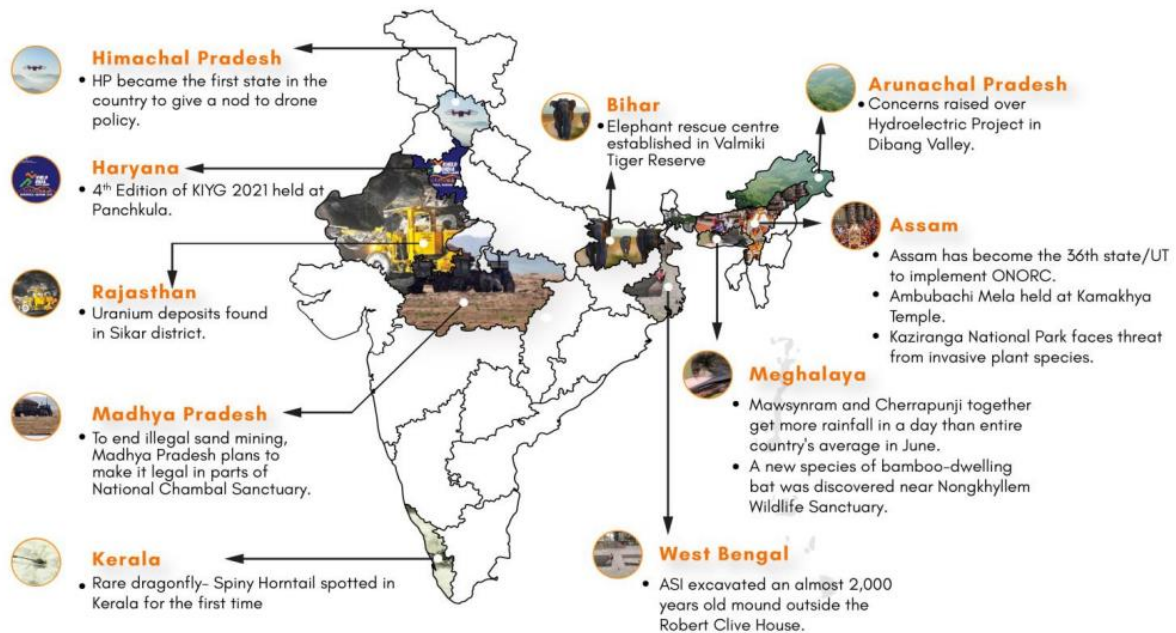
- Maiden Service of Bharat Gaurav Train commenced under Bharat Gaurav Scheme from Coimbatore North to Sainagar Shirdi.
- Bharat Gaurav Trains are theme-based trains launched by Indian Railways in November 2021.
- Objective: To showcase India's rich cultural heritage and magnificent historical places to the people of India and the world.

## **KODAVAS**

- Kodavas, also known as the people of Coorg, is a small community mainly living in Kodagu (Coorg) district in Karnataka.
- They are a warlike tribe with three main groups as Kodva Mophlas or Kodava Mappilas, Kodagu Gowdas and The Bearys.
- They have unique customs and rituals such as no dowry system, no role of priest in marriage etc.
- Language: Kodava Takke, an endangered language (by UNESCO) belonging to Dravidian Group of Language.



## Places in News: India



## Places in News: World

