



CURRENT AFFAIRS : JUNE 2023

NEW PARLIAMENT HOUSE

Recently, new Parliament House was inaugurated.

- Current project is part of Central Vista development/redevelopment plan, an infrastructure investment project, involving multiple projects.

o Inaugurated in 1931, Central Vista included Rashtrapati Bhavan, North and South Blocks, Parliament House, Record Office (later named as The National Archives) along with India Gate monument and civic gardens on either side of Rajpath.

Main Features of New Building

- Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat spirit: Its triangular design, by Padma Shri architect Bimal Patel, is inspired by India's cultural diversity and built to meet the needs of the next 150 years.
- Modern infrastructure: Earthquake-proofing mechanisms for better space management, ensuring the safety, ecofriendly green construction, and power consumption reduction of up to 30%.
 - o New Smart Parliament House is completely paperless.
- Spacious: The new Parliament House has more than 150 percent more seating capacity than the previous one.
 - o The Lok Sabha chamber now has a seating capacity of 888 MPs, the Rajya Sabha chamber has 384 MPs, and the Joint Parliament session has a seating capacity of 1272 MPs.

About Present Building

- India's present Parliament House is a colonial-era building designed by British architects Sir Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker, which took 6 years to construct (1921-1927).
- Building housed the Imperial Legislative Council.
- It is popularly believed that the unique circular shape of the Chausath Yogini temple in Morena, (Madhya Pradesh) had inspired the design of the Council House.
- The Parliament building witnessed the addition of two floors in 1956 to address the demand for more space.
- First elected Parliament came into existence in April 1952.

Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat Spirit

- Lok Sabha Hall is based on the theme of National Bird, Peacock.
- Rajya Sabha Hall is based on the theme of the National Flower, the Lotus.
- National tree, the banyan, has been planted on the premises of the Parliament.
- Inclusion of the symbolic Sengol (sceptre), symbolising the transfer of power, is placed next to the Speaker's chair.
- Ashoka Pillar on the roof of Parliament House.
- Hand-woven carpets from Bhadohi, known as 'Carpet City' due to its beautiful hand-woven carpets, in Uttar Pradesh have been fitted in the new Parliament House.
- Six gates dedicated to water, land, and sky that express its gratitude to the friendly nature of Indian civilization.
- Ashok Chakra is made on the gate of the new Parliament House, and Satyamev Jayate is written.
- Wood from Nagpur, marble of Gujarat, stone work is of Rajasthan and bamboo wood flooring from Tripura is used.

LAW ON SEDITION

Recently, 22nd Law commission in its 279th Report on "Usage of the Law of Sedition" recommended the retention of law on sedition.

What is the law on Sedition?

- **Section 124A** of the Indian Penal Code (1870) defines sedition as: "Whoever, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or

attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the Government established by law”.

Criticism of Sedition law over the years

- **Subjective definition:** In Shreya Singhal case(2015) Supreme Court held that vague and over-broad offences would be unconstitutional and cannot be considered to be a reasonable restriction on free speech.
- **Chilling effect on dissent:** The fear of being charged with sedition can discourage individuals from expressing their opinions and engaging in legitimate criticism, leading to self-censorship.
- **Low conviction rate:** The conviction rate in cases filed under Section 124A, has fluctuated between 3% and 33% over the years, and the pendency of such cases in court reached a high of 95% in 2020. Thus, filing cases under the law itself can become a punishment.
- **Allegations of Misuse:** Once arrested under the sedition law, it is extremely difficult to get bail as the trial process could get stretched for long. This leads to harassment of innocent people.
 - o Supreme Court in **Vinod Dua v Union of India** case quashed FIRs with charges of sedition and cautioned against unlawful application of the provision.
- **Existence of other laws:** There are already laws which allow for preventive detention and imposition of restrictions under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 on those who seek to threaten the unity, integrity and security of India. Thus, separate law under Section 124A may not be needed.
- **Repealed in other jurisdictions:** In the United Kingdom, the sedition law was officially repealed in 2009, citing negative effect on freedom of speech and expression. Also in Australia, Singapore it was repealed.

How Judiciary interpreted Section 124A over the years

- **Romesh Thapar v. State of Madras, 1950:** Supreme Court said criticism of the government **exciting disaffection or bad feelings towards it, is not to be regarded as a justifying ground for restricting the freedom of expression** and of the press, unless it is such as to undermine the security of or tend to overthrow the state.
- **Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar, 1962:** Supreme Court **upheld the validity of Section 124A**. The Court explicitly recognized that the **State needs protection from the forces who seek to jeopardize the safety and stability of the State**.
 - However, it said that only speech that is **likely to incite “public disorder”** would qualify as sedition.
- In **Vinod Dua v. Union of India, 2021:** Supreme Court held citizen has a right to criticize and comment upon the measures undertaken by the Government and its functionaries so long as he does not incite people to violence against the Government established by law.
- **S.G. Vombatkere v. Union of India, 2023:** Supreme Court directed all the State Governments and the Central Government to **keep all pending trials, appeals and proceedings arising out of a charge framed under Section 124A to be kept in abeyance**.
 - It opined that the rigours of Section 124A of IPC were **not in tune with the current social milieu** and were intended for a time when this country was under the colonial regime.

OTT REGULATION IN INDIA

Recently, Digital Publisher Content Grievances Council has recommended punitive action on an OTT platform invoking the Information Technology Rules (2021).

What is OTT?

- OTT or Over The Top Platforms are services that offer viewers access to movies, TV shows and other media directly through the Internet, bypassing cable or satellite systems.
- India's OTT viewership stands at 43 million people and is projected to rise to 50 million by the end of 2023.
 - Also, increasing mobile broadcasting is going to create a big push for new content creation.
- In India's regulatory parlance, OTT platforms are called 'publishers of online curated content'.

Current mechanism for OTT regulation in India

- **Existing Laws:** Certain laws such as Information Technology Act 2000, Indian Penal Code 1861, and Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986 have been made applicable to the content generated on OTT Platforms.
- **New IT Rules 2021:** Government has come up with Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021 under **section 87 (2) of the Information Technology Act, 2000**. Its key provisions include:
 - o Rules gave the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) the task of regulating content on OTT and online platforms.
 - o Code of Ethics for online news, OTT platforms and digital media: This Code of Ethics prescribe the guidelines to be followed by OTT platforms and online news and digital media entities.
 - o Self-Classification of Content: OTT platforms would self-classify the content into five age-based categories.
 - o Parental locks: Platforms would be required to implement parental locks for content classified as U/A 13+ or higher, and reliable age verification mechanisms for content classified as "A".

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

- US Supreme Court limited affirmative action in college admissions.
- In landmark ruling, SC effectively overruled judgements of Grutter v. Bollinger (2003) and Regents of University of California v. Bakke (1978) which validated affirmative action in college admissions based on race.
- Affirmative Action means positive action/discrimination which was introduced in US to counter historical patterns of prejudice against individuals with certain identities.
 - o In context of higher education, it refers to admission practices that seek to increase the representation of Black, Hispanic and other minority students in colleges and universities of US.

o Reservation is a system of affirmative action in India that provides historically disadvantaged groups representation in education, employment, government schemes, scholarships, and politics.

- Affirmative actions in India and USA:

Parameter	India	USA
Purpose	Uplift lower strata of society who were referred as Scheduled Castes and Tribes .	Provide level playing field for groups that have been historically discriminated based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability.
Genesis	Introduced as fundamental right under Article 15(4) and 16(4).	Embedded in Civil Rights Act of 1964 which ban discrimination on various grounds.
Quota	Fixed at 50% (Indra Swahney judgement) for OBC, SC & ST in both employment and education.	Varies across states and institutes and is not fixed.

GOVERNOR'S POWER

- Tamil Nadu Governor rejected Government's request to shift portfolios of Ministers.
- Article 164(1) states that the CM shall be appointed by the Governor and the other Ministers shall be appointed by the Governor on the advice of the CM.
 - o However, the States complain that the actions of the Governor amounts to interference in their administration and is against the concept of Federalism.
- The governor is the chief executive head of the state who acts as an agent of the central government. He possesses various powers like
 - o Executive: Appointing Chief Minister of the state along with the council of ministers.
 - o Judicial: Pardon, remit or commute the sentence under state laws.

- o Legislative: Issue ordinances in times of emergency.
- Various other cases of misuse of Governor's office
 - o Governor's Political affiliations lead to his/her alleged partisan functioning.
 - o Lack of coordination between the elected government and appointed Governor.
 - o Mistrust due to frequent recommendation of bills to the President under Article 200.
 - o Delaying the assent to the resolutions passed by the state assemblies,
 - o Rejecting the recommendation of names to various posts by the states.

GENERAL CONSENT TO CBI

- Tamil Nadu withdrew general consent accorded to CBI to probe cases in state.
- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is governed by the **Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act of 1946**, which requires the investigative agency to obtain the consent of state governments before it can investigate a crime in a particular state.
- The consent of the state government to CBI can be either general or case specific.
 - o General consent is normally given by states to help CBI to conduct a seamless investigation of corruption cases against central government employees in their states.
 - ✓ General consent is consent by default.
 - ✓ Recently multiple States have withdrawn General Consent like West Bengal, Mizoram, Punjab etc.
 - o In case Specific consent, CBI would have to apply to the state government in every case.
- If specific consent is not granted, the CBI officials will not have the power of police personnel when they enter that state.

JUSTICE CLOCKS

- It is an Electronic signage systems which have been installed across the court complexes of High Courts.
- The initiative will inform stakeholders about court related key parameters and bring awareness among public by providing bird eye view of court-related data.

NYAYA VIKAS PORTAL

- Nyaya Vikas Portal has been created by Ministry of Law and Justice for monitoring the implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS).

About Nyaya Vikas

- o Department of Justice has been implementing CSS for Development of Infrastructure Facilities for Districts and Subordinate Judiciary since 1993-94.

75 YEARS OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The year-long Human Rights 75 initiative will culminate in December 2023 marking the 75th anniversary of the UDHR.

Human rights and UNDR

- These universal rights are inherent to us all, regardless of nationality, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status.
- They range from the most fundamental - the right to life - to those that make life worth living, such as the rights to food, education, work, health, and liberty.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, was the first legal document to set out the fundamental human rights to be universally protected.
- It is not legally binding. The Declaration outlines 30 rights and freedoms that belong to all.

- The UDHR, together with the 2 covenants - the **International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights**, and the **International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** - make up the International Bill of Rights.

CRITICAL MINERALS

Recently, the Ministry of Mines released the first-ever report of the country on “Critical Minerals for India”.

What are Critical Minerals?

- Critical minerals are elements that are the building blocks of essential modern-day technologies and are at risk of supply chain disruptions. For example Antimony, Beryllium, Bismuth, Cobalt, Copper etc.
 - o For India, major import sources of Cobalt are China, US, Japan; Lithium (Chile, Russia, China); Nickel (Sweden, China) etc.
- These minerals are now used everywhere from making mobile phones, computers to batteries, electric vehicles and green technologies like solar panels and wind turbines.
- Based on their individual needs and strategic considerations, different countries create their own lists.
- The list prepared by India comprises 30 critical minerals, including 17 **Rare Earth Elements** (REEs) and 6 **Platinum-Group Elements** (PGE), each designated as critical based on their limited availability in India’s geological reserves.
 - o REE include 15 Lanthanides (atomic numbers 57 —which is Lanthanum — to 71 in the periodic table) plus Scandium (atomic number 21) and Yttrium (39). REEs are classified as Light REE (LREE) and Heavy REE (HREE).
 - o The criticality of minerals is judged mainly by two parameters.



DEVELOPING COUNTRY STATUS

- Legislation establishes a US policy against granting China developing country status in future treaties and international organisations.
 - o Earlier, a similar legislation was passed by House of Representatives.
- It has been asserted that China can no longer be considered a developing country, given its significant economy, military power, and extensive investments worldwide.
- World Trade Organization (WTO) has not defined 'developed' and 'developing' countries and therefore member countries are free to announce whether they are 'developed' or 'developing'.
 - o UN also has no formal definition of developing countries, but still uses the term for monitoring purposes.
- Advantages of Developing country status:
 - o Receive preferential treatment in terms of market access, loans, reduction in government support and technical assistance from international organisations.
 - o Longer transition period before they are required to fully implement WTO agreement.

- o Benefit from unilateral preference schemes of some of developed country members such as USA's Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).
- o Favourable treatment concerning issues such as climate change responsibilities.

GREEDFLATION

- Greedflation, in basic terms, is the inflation and hike in prices not driven by economic flow, but by corporate greed.
- It can be understood as a condition where corporate desire for excessive profit (greed) is leading to inflation.
- Companies artificially inflate their prices not just to cover the input cost but to increase their profit margins.

ANTARDRIHSTI

- RBI governor launched a Financial Inclusion Dashboard, named, ANTARDRIHSTI.
- It will provide the required insight to assess and monitor the progress of financial inclusion by capturing relevant parameters.
- It will also enable to gauge the extent of financial exclusion at granular levels across the country so that such areas can be addressed.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION AND INTERNAL SECURITY

Violence between Manipur's Kuki tribe and the majority Meitei community continued in several parts of Manipur.

- Roots of the violence: It is over 10-year-old demand by the non-tribal Meitei community for a Scheduled Tribe tag.
- Trigger point: Manipur High Court ordered the state government to recommend a ST Tag for the community to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

- Instability in Myanmar: After the military coup in Myanmar in 2021, around 4,000 refugees are said to have entered Manipur.
 - o The refugees belonging to the Kuki-Chin-Zo ethnic group comprising the Lai, Tidim-Zomi, Lusei, and Hualngo tribes are closely related to the communities in Mizoram and Manipur.
 - o Such illegal immigration is considered a threat to internal security for India.

Ethnic composition of Manipur

- There are **33 recognized tribes of Manipur** that either fall under the Nagas or the Kukis
- Despite the socio-political and linguistic differences among them, all the **ethnic tribes originate from the same Mongoloid group.**
- The tribals make up **40 % of Manipur's population and live largely in the hills.**
- The Meiteis make up **53 % of the population and live in the Imphal valley.**

The process of inclusion or exclusion from the Scheduled Tribes list

- A **State government recommends** certain communities for addition or subtraction from the list of STs based on its discretion.
- The proposal is sent to the **Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs.**
- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs, through its own deliberations, examines the proposal **and sends it to the Registrar General of India (RGI).**
- Once approved by the RGI, the proposal is sent to **the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.**
- After these institutions concur, the proposal goes forward to the Cabinet to bring in the appropriate amendment to **the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950.**
- The final decision rests with the **President's office issuing a notification specifying the changes under powers vested in it from Articles 341 and 342.**

TAPAS UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLE (UAV)

- Indian Navy and DRDO have successfully carried out control capabilities of TAPAS (Tactical Airborne Platform for Aerial Surveillance) UAV from a distant ground station to onboard INS Subhadra.
- Indigenously developed TAPAS 201 is a Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) UAV.

o It is designed and developed by Bengaluru based Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE).

o It is capable to carry different combinations of payloads like Medium Range Electro Optic, Long Range Electro Optic, Synthetic Aperture Radar etc. to perform missions during day and night.

VARUNA STRA

- Varunastra was successfully test-fired with a live warhead against an undersea target, by the Indian Navy.
- It is indigenously designed and developed ship-launched anti-submarine torpedo.

EXERCISES IN NEWS

- **Exercise Ekatha:** It is an annual exercise conducted between the navies of India and Maldives.
- **EKUVIRIN:** It is joint military exercise between Indian Army and Maldives National Defence Force.
- **Ex Khaan Quest 2023:** Indian Army participated in Ex Khaan Quest (in Mongolia), a multinational peacekeeping joint exercise.

CLOUD SEEDING

Recently, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur has successfully conducted a test flight for cloud seeding.

About Cloud Seeding

- Cloud seeding is a kind of a weather modification technology to create artificial rainfall.
 - o Rain happens when moisture in the air reaches levels at which it can no longer be held.

- o Cloud seeding aims to facilitate and accelerate that process by making available chemical 'nuclei' around which condensation can take place.
- It works only when there is enough pre-existing clouds in the atmosphere.
- Two ways of adding nuclei particles to clouds:
 - o Using large cannons that shoot particles into the sky
 - o Using airplanes that drop the particles from above.
- ✓ IIT Kanpur used this method.
- ✓ Cloud Aerosol Interaction and Precipitation Enhancement Experiment (CAIPEX) – IV was conducted during two consecutive monsoon seasons of 2018 and 2019 over Solapur, Maharashtra.

UN'S HIGH SEAS TREATY

- Adopted by the Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), "high seas" treaty aims at taking stewardship of ocean on behalf of present and future generations.
 - o It has been adopted under the framework of United Nations Convention on Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS).
 - o It is legally binding in nature. It will only enter into force once 60 countries have ratified it.

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY (WED) 2023

- World Environment Day 2023 marks the completion of 50 years of its establishment on 5th June, 2023.
 - o WED is observed on 5th June every year since 1973 as part of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to build awareness to save life on planet Earth.
- Every year World Environment Day has a specific host country and a theme.

o This year host is the West African country of Côte d'Ivoire, in partnership with the Netherlands with theme 'Beat Plastic Pollution.'

o 45th World Environment Day with the same theme was held under the leadership of India.

RIVER SAND MINING

- **National Green Tribunal** (NGT) has made it mandatory to obtain consent from concerned SPCBs for river sand mining.

- o NGT directed MoEFCC to issue guidelines within two months to ensure that it is uniformly applicable.

- o No river sand mining will be allowed to continue in country without obtaining these consents with effect from 1st September 2023.

- Sand mining is extraction of sand, mainly through an open pit but sometimes mined from inland dunes from oceans, riverbeds and beaches.

- o It is classified as a 'minor mineral' under section 3(e) of Mines and Mineral (Development and Regulation) i.e., MMDR Act 1957 and administrative control vests with State Governments.

GROUNDWATER EXTRACTION TILTED EARTH'S SPIN

- A new study found that Groundwater pumping has tilted the planet nearly 80 centimetres east between 1993 and 2010 alone.

- Planet's geographic north and south poles are where its axis intersects the surface; however, they are not fixed.

- o The axis and hence the poles fluctuate due to variations in Earth's mass distribution.

- o Water circulated across the planet determines how mass is distributed.

GENDER GAP REPORT-2023

- World Economic Forum's (WEF) released Gender Gap Report- 2023.
- As per the latest report, India has ranked at 127 out of 146 countries in terms of gender equality.
 - o India has improved 1.4% points and 8 places from its earlier rank of 135 from 2022 index.
- Key Highlights of the report:
 - o At the current rate of progress, it will take 131 years to reach full parity.
 - o Iceland with 91.2% takes the top spot along with Norway (87.9%) and Finland (86.3%)
 - o India has attained better parity in education enrolment
- ✓ However, it has reached only 36.7% parity on Economic Participation and Opportunity and 25.3% parity On Political Empowerment.
 - o Bangladesh (59), China (107), Nepal (116), Sri Lanka (115) and Bhutan (103) fared better than India on Gender parity.

SICKLE CELL ANAEMIA

The Prime Minister of India has launched the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission in Madhya Pradesh.

Sickle Cell Disease

- Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is a type of haemoglobin disorder, inherited blood diseases that affect how oxygen is carried in the body.
- SCD is characterized by a modification in the shape of the red blood cell from a smooth, doughnut shape into a crescent or half-moon shape.
 - o Misshaped cells lack plasticity and can block small blood vessels, impairing blood flow.

- o This condition leads to shortened Red Blood Cell (RBC) survival and subsequent anaemia, often called Sickle-Cell Anaemia (SCA).
- o Common symptoms are jaundice, liver and spleen enlargement.
- Stem cell or bone marrow transplants (Hematopoietic stem cell transplant) are the only cure for this disease, but they involve significant risks.
- India is the second-worst affected country in terms of predicted births with SCA — i.e. chances of being born with the condition.

LAB GROWN DIAMONDS

Recently, the Indian Prime Minister during his state visit to the USA gifted a 7.5 carat ecofriendly lab grown diamond to the first lady of the USA.






- Lab grown diamonds (LGD) are artificially manufactured diamonds through crystallisation of pure carbon with the same physical and chemical properties as natural diamonds.
 - o The first LGD was created in 1954 by scientists at a General Electric research laboratory in New York.
- They are commonly used for industrial applications due to their hardness and strength. They are ideal for use as cutters and in other tools and machines that require these properties.
 - o In electronics, pure synthetic diamonds are used as heat spreaders for high-power laser diodes, laser arrays, and high-power transistors due to their excellent thermal conductivity.
- India produces over 3 million lab-grown diamonds (15 % of global production).

GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION (GI) TAG

Seven new products from Uttar Pradesh get Geographical Indication (GI) Tag.

Geographical Indication (GI)



About GI

-  **Good originating in territory of a member, or a regional locality in that territory,** where a given characteristic of good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin.
-  **Defined in the TRIPS Agreement.**
-  **Registered for a period of 10 years and can be renewed again** for a period of 10 years at a time.
-  **The first product to get a GI tag in India was the Darjeeling tea in 2004.**
-  **Some of the states with maximum number of GIs are Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Kerala.**



Importance

-  **Enables right holders** to use the indication to **prevent its use by a third party.**
-  **Does not enable the holder to prevent** someone from **making a product using some techniques.**

Legislation in India

-  Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999.
-  Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Rules, 2002.

Mechanism

-  **Registrar of Geographical indications:** Controller-General of Patents, Design and Trademarks under Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
-  **Supervises** functioning of **Geographical Indications Registry (GIR).**
-  GIR has **All-India Jurisdiction.**

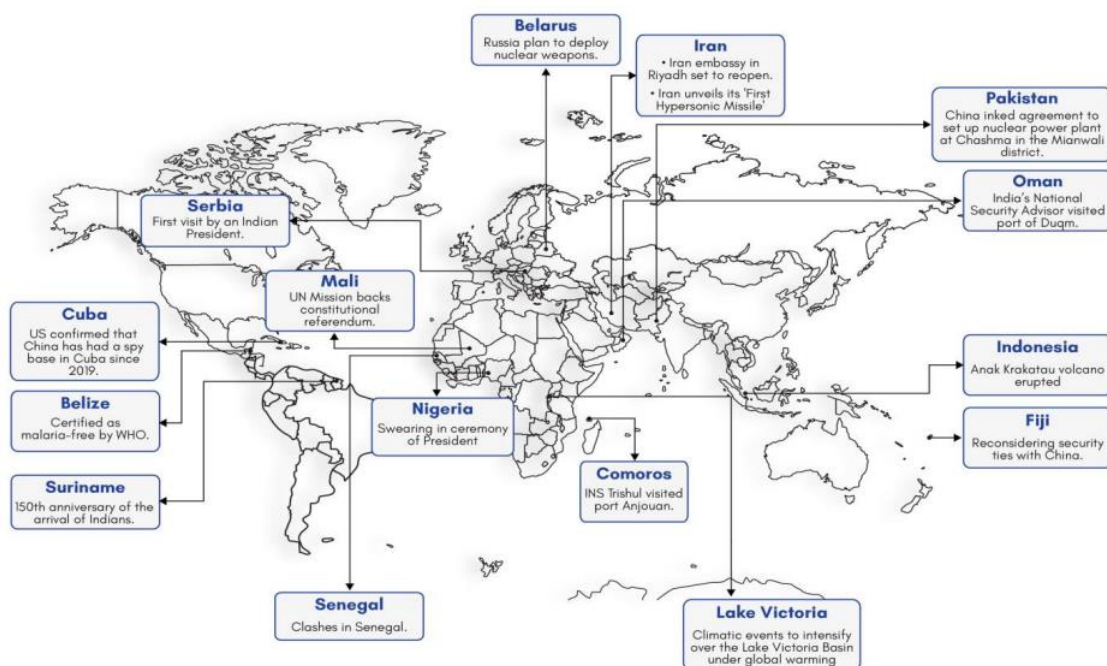
UPANISHADS

- PM gifted first edition print of book 'The Ten Principal Upanishads' written India and Iris scholar in 1937, to president of United State.
 - o Book is translated from Sanskrit and considered to be one of the best translations of Upanishads, some of the most important Hindu religious texts.
- Upanishads, also known as Vedanta (signal the end of total Veda) speculate the ontological connection between humanity and cosmos.
 - o Dated to roughly 800-500 BC, Upanishads discussed about relationship between atman, unchanging self of an individual, and brahman, ultimate reality in universe.
 - o Ten main (or principal) Upanishads: Esha, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chandogya Brihadaranyaka.

SAHITYA AKADEMI AWARD

- Ministry of Culture intends to change nomination process for Sahitya Akademi Award.
- It is a literary honour, conferred annually on writers of most outstanding books of literary merit published in any of the major Indian languages.
 - o Besides 22 languages enumerated in Constitution, English and Rajasthani language are also recognised.
 - o Award includes a casket containing an engraved copper-plaque, a shawl and an amount of Rs. 1,00,000/-.
- Sahitya Akademi functions as an autonomous organisation. It is registered as a society under Societies Registration Act, 1860.

Places in News: World



Places in News: India

