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In-House Inquiry for Judicial Misconduct

Prelims – *Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.*

Mains (GS-II) – *Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance)*

Why in news?

The Chief Justice of India (CJI) has recently constituted an in-house committee to conduct an inquiry into allegations of misconduct against High Court Judge following the recovery of huge piles of cash at his residence.

In-house Inquiry

- A procedure of inquiry to probe into complaints of alleged misbehaviour against judges of the higher judiciary.
- **Developed by** – the Supreme Court.
- The resolution for in-house procedures for action against judges was *adopted in 1999* and *made public in 2014*.

Inquiry procedure for High Court Judge

- When a complaint is made against a High Court judge, the *Chief Justice of India (CJI) decides if it needs investigating*.
- If an inquiry is deemed necessary, the judge's initial response along with comments of the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court are taken on record.
- **Three member committee** – Formed by the CJI, *consisting of two Chief Justices from other High Courts* and one High Court judge.

In case of a complaint against a Supreme Court judge, the committee would consist of three Supreme Court Judges.

- If the misconduct isn't deemed serious enough for removal, the judge is just informed.
- **Proven misconduct by the judge** – The judge will be asked to resign.
- In the *event of the judge unwilling to resign*, the President and the Prime Minister will be informed of the findings for Parliament to *initiate action for removal as per provisions of the Constitution*.

Reforms needed

- The key findings of the inquiry can be disclosed to instil transparency and confidence in the whole process.
- Ensuring criminal punishment when judges are found guilty.
- Establishing an autonomous investigation office similar to the UK's system.
- Reconsidering the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) to make the selection process more transparent and inclusive.

Reference

The Hindu | In-House Inquiry for Judicial Misconduct

BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation)

Prelims – *Current events of International Importance.*

Mains (GS II) – *Regional Groupings.*

Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Thailand to attend the 6th BIMSTEC Summit.

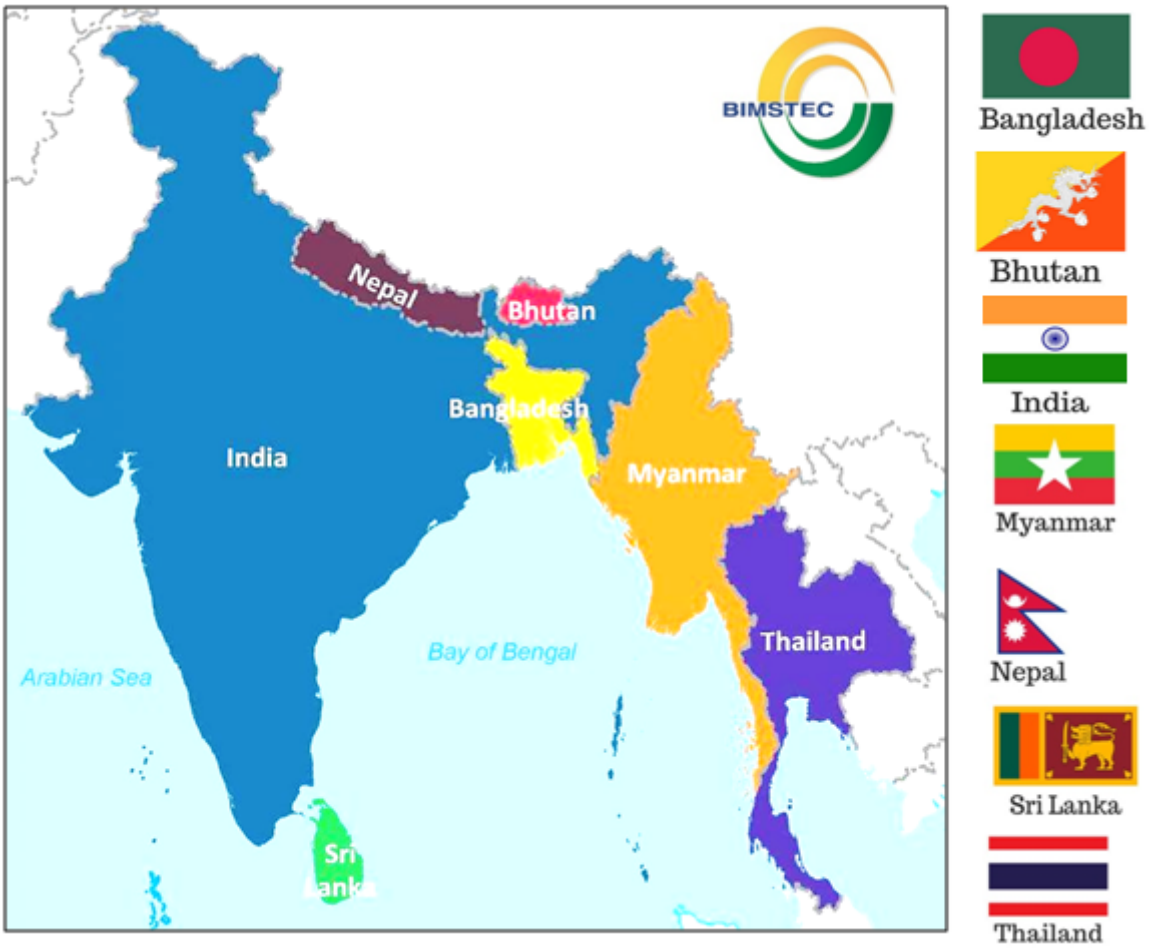
- It is a regional organization comprising Member States lying in the littoral and adjacent areas of the ***Bay of Bengal*** constituting a contiguous regional unity.
- **Established in -** June 1997, with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration.
- **Founding members -** BIST-EC (Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation).
- After Myanmar joined in December 1997, the group was renamed BIMSTEC.
- **Current Members –** Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan and Nepal.

The region is home to around 1.8 billion people, nearly 22% of the global population, and has a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of US$3.6 trillion.

- **Secretariat -** Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- **Aim -** Promotion of economic cooperation between the member countries.
- **Priority areas**

Fisheries	Tourism	Transnational crime
Trade and investment	Agriculture	Environment
Technology	Public health	Natural disaster management
Energy	Poverty alleviation	People-to-people contact
Transport and communication	Counter-terrorism	

- **Objectives -** To create an enabling environment for rapid economic development.
- To accelerate the economic growth and social progress in the Bay of Bengal region.
- To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in the economic, social, technical and scientific fields.
- To provide assistance to each other in the form of training and research facilities in the educational, professional and technical spheres.
- **Principles -** Sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in internal affairs, non-aggression, peaceful co-existence, mutual respect and mutual benefit.
- **Significance of BIMSTEC for India -** BIMSTEC is seen as the extension of India's Neighbourhood First Policy.
- BIMSTEC facilitates India's "Act East" policy by enhancing connectivity between South Asia and Southeast Asia, particularly benefiting India's Northeast region, which serves as a gateway to Southeast Asia.
- BIMSTEC overcomes challenges posed by Pakistan in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) by focusing on like-minded nations.
- BIMSTEC strengthens India's strategic depth and regional influence in the Indo-Pacific, countering potential challenges from other regional powers.



References

1. BIMSTEC | About
2. The Hindu | BIMSTEC

Coastal Shipping Bill, 2024

Prelims – *Indian polity and Governance.*

Mains (GS II) – *Government Policies & Interventions.*

Why in News?

Lok Sabha recently passed the Coastal Shipping Bill, 2024.

- **Aim** - It seeks to regulate vessels engaged in trade within Indian coastal waters.
- **Definition of coastal waters -** Under the Bill, coastal waters mean ***territorial waters of India, along with adjoining maritime zones.***
    - Territorial waters extend up to 12 nautical miles from the coast (about 22 km).
    - Adjoining maritime zones extend up to 200 nautical miles (about 370 km).
- The Bill seeks to repeal *Part XIV of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958*, which regulates ships other than sailing vessels engaged in trade within coastal waters.
- The Bill seeks to regulate ***all types of vessels***, including ships, boats, sailing vessels, and mobile offshore drilling units, regardless of them being self-propelled or not.

Key features

- **Services to be also covered under coasting trade** - Under the Act, coasting trade refers to the carriage of goods and passengers from one place or port in India to another.
- The Bill expands this definition to include provision of services. Services include exploration, research, and any other commercial activity, except fishing.
- **Licence for coasting trade and certain other purposes -** The Act requires licence for all vessels engaging in coasting trade.
- The Bill states that vessels wholly owned by Indian persons *will not need a licence.*
- For purposes other than coasting trade, the Bill requires licence for vessels that are not wholly owned by Indian persons.
- These are vessels that are
    - Hired by Indian persons, non-resident Indians (NRIs) or overseas citizens of India (OCIs), and
    - Operating between Indian and International ports, or between International ports.
- *OCIs hiring vessels* for operating exclusively outside India will not require a licence.
- The licences will be issued by the ***Director General of Shipping***, who is appointed by the central government.
- The Director General may permit a vessel registered under the Inland Vessels Act, 2021 (operating in inland waterways) to engage in coasting trade.
- **Revocation of licences** - The Act empowers the Director General to modify or revoke licences.
- The Bill specifies the grounds for modification, suspension, or revocation of licences.

These include
    - Violation of terms of licence or an existing law, or
    - Failure to comply with directions of the director general.
- **Revision of penalties –** The bill revised the penalties and punishments for the offences related to coastal trade.
- **Compounding of offences -** The Act allows all first offences to be compounded.
- Under the Bill, only following offences will be compoundable
    - Undertaking coasting trade without licence or with an expired licence,
    - Taking vessel into sea without licence,
    - Failure to furnish information, and
    - Violating a detention order.
- **Coastal and Inland Shipping Strategy Plan -** The Bill requires the central government to prepare a National Coastal and Inland Shipping Strategic Plan ***within 2 years*** of the commencement of the Act.
- **Powers to exempt -** The *central government* may exempt any class of vessels from the application of the Bill.

References

1. PIB | Coastal Shipping Bill, 2024
2. PRS India | The Coastal Shipping Bill, 2024

Fram2 Polar-Orbiting Mission

Prelims – *General Science.*

Mains (GS III) – *Science and Technology Developments.*

Why in News?

Elon Musk's SpaceX recently launched a crew of four private astronauts, led by a crypto entrepreneur, on a polar-orbiting mission.

- It is a mission to ***orbit Earth from pole to pole***, a novel trajectory in which no humans have travelled before.
- **Nomenclature -** Fram2, a reference to the Norwegian "Fram" ship that pioneered Arctic exploration at the turn of the 20th century.
- **Agency –** SpaceX, American Private Space Technology Company.
- **Carried by -** Falcon rocket and Crew Dragon capsule.
- It is the first instance of astronauts orbiting Earth on a true polar trajectory, at a 90-degree inclination passing directly over ***both the North and South Poles*** rather than following the conventional west-to-east path.
- **Key research objectives**
- Over the orbital mission, the team plans to conduct 22 scientific experiments focused on *studying the polar regions* from space.

- **X-ray in space -** The crew will perform the first-ever x-ray in space, providing insights into how microgravity affects bone and muscle density.
- **Exercise studies -** The astronauts will undergo exercise studies designed to help maintain muscle and skeletal mass during extended periods in space.
- **Growing mushrooms in microgravity -** Another experiment will focus on cultivating mushrooms in space, which could offer valuable insights into sustainable food production for future space missions.
- Also, after safely returning to Earth, the crew plans to exit the Dragon spacecraft unassisted, helping researchers understand astronauts' ability to perform functional tasks without medical or operational assistance after spending time in space.

References

1. The Hindu | Fram2 polar-orbiting mission
2. Business Standard | Fram2 mission

Jacaranda Mimosifolia

Prelims – *Environmental Ecology & Climate Change.*

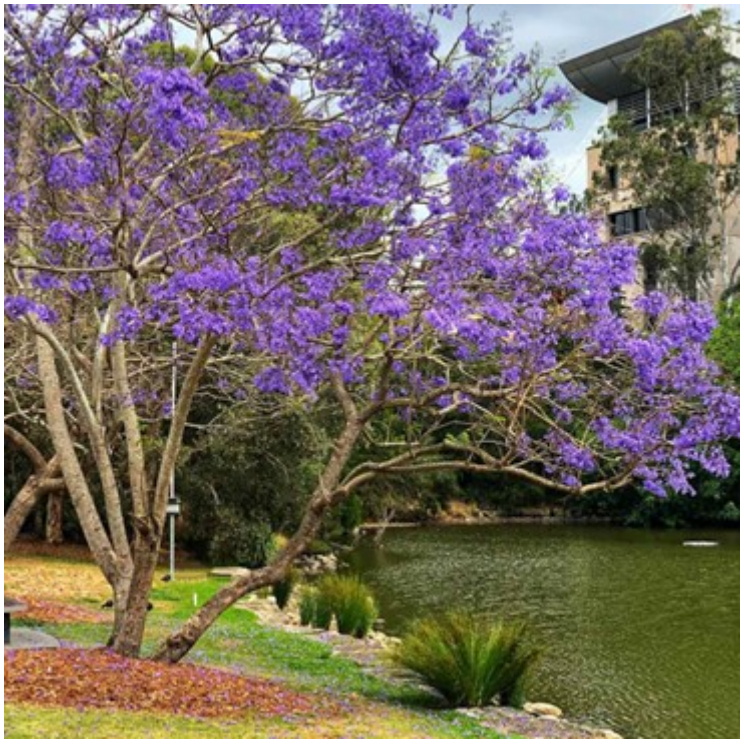
Mains (GS III) – *Biodiversity, Environment and conservation.*

Why in the News?

Jacaranda trees in Munnar, Kerala, are currently in full bloom, attracting tourists and nature enthusiasts.

- It blooms between February and April, enhancing tourism in hill stations.
- **Local Name** –*Neelavaka* in Kerala.
- **Family** – Bignoniaceae.
- **Type** – Deciduous tree.
- **Native to -** Central and South America, Cuba, Jamaica, and the Bahamas.
- Introduced to India and other tropical regions by British for ornamental purposes
- **Locations Found** – Munnar (Kerala), Bengaluru, Delhi, and other urban areas as an ornamental tree.
- **Climatic Conditions -** Present in Sub-tropical climates, Need well-drained soil, Cultivated in warm regions and greenhouses.
- **Features** - It has striking lavender-hued blossoms, Vibrant blue or violet flowers, Distinct and oppositely arranged compound leaves.
- The flower emits ***UV to attract insects***, especially butterflies or birds, ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the bluish violet colours of the flower disappears when the pollination is completed.
- **Importance** - It attracts hummingbirds and bees, wood is used in guitar-making, the Bark and roots have medicinal properties.

- **Concerns**
  - **Climate Change** – Some trees have started early blooming and this can be due to climate change.
  - **Non – native species** – It has potential to be an invasive species affecting our local ecosystems.
- **Conservation Status – IUCN** - "Vulnerable".



Reference

The Hindu | Jacaranda Trees

F-16 Fighting Falcon

Prelims - *Current events of international importance.*

Mains (GS II) – *International Relations | Bilateral agreements and their implications on regional security dynamics.*

Why in News?

The United States has approved a potential sale of 20 F-16 fighter aircraft to the Philippines, worth $5.58 billion.

- The F-16 Fighting Falcon is a *compact, multi-role fighter aircraft designed for both air-to-air combat and air-to-surface attacks.*
- **Developed by -** General Dynamics (now Lockheed Martin) for the United States Air Force (USAF) in the 1970s.

- **High Manoeuvrability -** Designed with a frameless bubble canopy for improved visibility, side-stick control for precise handling, and a fly-by-wire system for better responsiveness.
- **Speed & Performance -** Capable of speeds over Mach 2 and a combat radius of 550 km, making it ideal for quick-response missions.

Mach 1 represents the speed of sound, approximately 761 miles per hour (or 1,225 kilometres per hour) at sea level on a standard day.

- **Weapon Systems -** Can carry missiles (AIM-9 Sidewinder, AIM-120 AMRAAM), bombs (JDAM, Paveway laser-guided bombs), and a M61 Vulcan 20mm cannon for close combat.
- **Multirole Capabilities -** Adaptable for air superiority, ground attack, reconnaissance, and electronic warfare missions.
- **Advanced Avionics -** Equipped with APG-83 AESA radar, digital flight controls, and upgraded targeting systems for precise strikes.
- **Extended Range -** Can be fitted with external fuel tanks and aerial refuelling capability to extend operational range.
- **Global Usage & India's Status**
    - **Countries Operating F-16 -** USA, Israel, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, UAE, South Korea, and others.
    - **India's Status -** India does not operate F-16 jets.
    - **Indian Alternative -** India operates aircraft like Tejas, Mirage 2000, Su-30MKI, Rafale, and MiG-29 for similar roles.

Reference

The Hindu | Britannica F-16

One Liners 06-04-2025

History, Art and Culture

Hamari Parampara Hamari Virasat
(Our Tradition, Our Heritage)

Recently, a day long national level program in New Delhi in dedication to the 150th Birth Anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda.

• **Launched by** – Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR), in collaboration with the Government of Jharkhand.

• **Objcetives** – To *integrate tribal heritage into the nation's cultural and governance framework* and to document the vibrant history and cultural practices of villages across Jharkhand.

• To preserve, enhance, and *transmit to future generations* the cultural heritage, folk songs, festivals, and worship practices integral of various ST communities in Scheduled Areas.

• **Events** – Traditional *Mundari dance of the Santhali community* and Munda tribal storytelling, etc.,

• **Significance** – It *aligns with the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996* (PESA Act), which empowers Gram Sabhas in Scheduled Areas to safeguard tribal customs, traditions, and self-governance.

Polity & Governance

Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II)

Recently, Union Cabinet approved the Vibrant Villages Programme -II (VVP-II).

• It is a *central sector scheme* (100% Centre funding).

• **Objectives** – For comprehensive development of the villages located in the blocks abutting international land borders (ILBs), other than the Northern border already covered under VVP-I.

• To *control trans-border crime* and assimilate the border population with the nation and inculcate them *'as eyes and ears of the border guarding forces*.

• **Implementation –** In select strategic villages of States/UTs
- Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, J&K, Ladakh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

• **Duration** – For financial years 2024-25 to 2028-29.

• **Significance** – VVP-II along with VVP-I is a transformative initiative to make the *border villages self-reliant and vibrant*.

Related News- Vibrant Village Programme I (VVP-I)

Economy

Multitracking Projects

Recently, Union Cabinet approves 4 multitracking projects across Indian Railways.

• It refers to the addition of more than one railway track to an existing single or double-track line.

• **Aim –** To ensure seamless and faster transportation of both passengers and goods.

• **Umbrella scheme –** PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan.

• **Coverage** – 4 projects cover *15 Districts in 3 States* (Maharashtra, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh).

• **Significance** – It will enhance connectivity to about 3350 villages and about 47.25 lakh population.

Agriculture

Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization' (SMAM)

Recently, Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare informed about the role of SMAM in promotion of agriculture in Parliament.

• **Objective** – To provide *financial assistance to farmers* for Purchase of various agricultural machines and equipments including the post-harvest & processing technologies on individual ownership basis.
• **Umbrella scheme** – Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) under Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
• **Implementation** – It will be implemented in all the Indian states.
• **Features –** It has both *centrally sponsored and central sector scheme components.*
• Custom Hiring Centres (CHCs) & Village Level Farm Machinery Banks (FMBs) to Provide machines and equipments to the farmers on rental basis as per their requirements.

Security

INDRA-2025

Recently, 14th edition of INDRA exercise was concluded in India.

• It is a ***bilateral naval*** exercise between *Indian and Russia*.
• **Started in** – 2003.
• **Objectives** – To *enhance jointmanship* and reinforce the shared commitment to uphold the principles of maritime order, promote global peace and stability.
• **Operations** – It involved complex coordinated manoeuvres and simulated engagements showcasing the combined combat power of the participating navies.

Science

HANSA-3 Next Generation (NG)

Recently, the Ministry of Science & Technology launched HANSA-3 (NG).

• It is an *indigenous trainer aircraft technology* for pilot licensing.
• **Developed by** – Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR).
• **Features** – It is 2-seater trainer aircraft with a digital display (glass cockpit) system and powered by an advanced *fuel-efficient sports engine*.
• **Significance** – It will fulfill the requirements of flying clubs in providing PPL (Private Pilot License) and CPL (Commercial Pilot License) training to the young generation.

Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) Tests

Recently, 4 flight-tests of the Army version of Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha was successfully completed.

• **Tests** – The missiles intercepted the aerial targets and destroyed them, registering direct hits.
• **Carried out by** – Indian Army from Eastern and Southern Commands under DRDO guidance.
• **MRSAM developed by** – DRDO and Israel Aerospace Industries.
• **MRSAM Army weapon system –** It comprises multi-function radar, command post, mobile launcher system and other vehicles.

Asteroid 2024 YR4

According to the latest reports, the asteroid named 2024 YR4 has a near chance of 4% to impact the Moon.

• **Discovered in** – 2024, by NASA's James Webb Space Telescope.
• The asteroid *dubbed as a City killer*, which was initially reported *3.1% chance of impact Earth in 2032*.
• **Impact** – The collision of this asteroid will be *500 times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb*.

***YR4** measures between 53-67 metres in diameter, making it as big as a 15-storey building.*



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