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TARGET 2020

POLITY & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS III

UPTO AUGUST 2020



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POLITY & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS III

(UPTO AUGUST 2020)

1. JUDICIARY

1.1 Article 254

- Article 254 of the Indian Constitution deals with the *doctrine of repugnancy*.
- Repugnancy is a legal term that means inconsistency between two or more parts of a legal instrument.
- Article 254(1) has been summarized by the Supreme Court in *M. Karunanidhi versus Union of India* as, “where the provisions of a Central Act and a State Act in the Concurrent list are fully inconsistent and absolutely irreconcilable, the Central Act will prevail and the State Act will become void in view of the repugnancy.
- The doctrine of repugnancy most often means that federal law trumps state law.
- However, the magic of Article 254(2) is that it allows state law to prevail under certain circumstances.
- In simple terms this means assent by the President after a state legislature passes a bill.
- If the central government agrees, then the process is quite seamless. If it doesn't, then states still have recourse to the Supreme Court.

1.2 SC verdict on NEET

SC recently held that the NEET is mandatory for admission to medical colleges run by religious and linguistic minority communities. It would apply for both aided and unaided medical colleges administered by minorities.

- The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test-Under Graduate (NEET (UG)), succeeded from All India Pre-Medical Test (AIPMT) is an entrance examination in India for students who wish to study undergraduate medical courses (MBBS) and dental courses (BDS) in government or private medical colleges and dental colleges in India.
- NEET is conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA), which provides the results to the Directorate General of Health Services at the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- Prior to 2019, the test was administered by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in partnership with Prometric Testing Pvt Ltd headquartered in the USA.
- NEET-UG replaced the All India Pre Medical Test (AIPMT) and all individual MBBS exams conducted by states or colleges themselves in 2013.
- However, many colleges and institutes had taken a stay order and conducted private examinations for admission to their MBBS and BDS courses.
- Undergraduate courses at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi and Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education & Research (JIPMER) are outside the NEET's purview, as these institutes were set up by separate laws.
- Earlier Religious minority educational institutions reached SC, and argued that imposing NEET would violate their fundamental rights of religious freedom, to manage their religious affairs, to administer their institutions.
- They said the State was reneging its obligation to act in the best interest of minorities.
- Uniform entrance exams would ensure improvement in future public health by encouraging merit in furtherance of the Directive Principles enshrined in the Constitution.



1.3 SC's Power for Complete Justice

- In 2019, a five-judge Bench led by then Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi did not complete its assigned task of reviewing the apex court's original Sabarimala judgment of 2018, which allowed women of every age to enter and worship at the temple.
- Instead, it had framed "larger issues" concerning essential religious practices of various religions and clubbed other pending cases on subjects as varied as female genital mutilation among DawoodiBohras to entry of Parsi women who married inter-faith into the fire temple and Muslim women into mosques and referred them all to a larger Bench.
- Chief Justice Bobde, who succeeded Justice Gogoi as top judge, set up a nine-judge Bench to hear the reference.
- In February 2020, it decided to go ahead and examine "larger issues" of religious freedom across multiple faiths in connection with the Sabarimala review.
- Recently the judgement has been published, it says 'Sabarimala case review Bench had the power to frame questions on religious freedom'
- A nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court declared that superior courts enjoy untrammelled power to take up any cause to do complete justice.
- The court clarified that there is no fetter on the exercise of discretion of this court in referring questions of law to a larger Bench in review petitions.
- Being a superior court of record, it is for this court to consider whether any matter falls within its jurisdiction or not.
- Unlike a court of limited jurisdiction, the superior court of record is entitled to determine for itself questions about its own jurisdiction.
- The nine member bench also invoked **Article 142 of the Constitution** "which enables this court to make any order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it."

1.4 Contempt of Court

- Contempt of court is a concept that seeks to protect judicial institutions from motivated attacks and unwarranted criticism, and as a legal mechanism to punish those who lower its authority.
- Article 129 of the Constitution conferred on the Supreme Court the power to punish contempt of itself.
- Article 215 conferred a corresponding power on the High Courts.
- It is one of the restrictions on freedom of speech and expression under Indian Constitution
- The punishment for contempt of court is simple imprisonment for a term up to six months and/or a fine of up to Rs. 2,000.
- **Civil contempt** is committed when someone willfully disobeys a court order, or willfully breaches an undertaking given to court.
- **Criminal contempt** consists of three forms:
 1. Words, signs and actions that "scandalize" or "lower" the authority of any court.
 2. Prejudices or interferes with any judicial proceeding.
 3. Interferes with or obstructs the administration of justice.
- Fair and accurate reporting of judicial proceedings and fair criticism on the merits of a judicial order after a case is heard and disposed of will not amount to contempt of court.
- The Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 was amended in 2006 to introduce truth as a valid defence against a charge of contempt, if it was in public interest and was invoked in a bona fide manner.

1.5 Right of Daughters

- Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 amended Section 6 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956.
- It removed the discrimination clause in inheritance of ancestral properties by giving equal rights to daughters.



- It came into effect on September 9, 2005.
- However, the amendment threw up two questions such as
 1. whether it would apply only to daughters born after September 9, 2005
 2. whether, if they were born before that, it would be limited to those whose father (the coparcener) was also alive on that day
- Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) has expanded the Hindu women's right to be the coparcener (joint legal heir) and inherit ancestral property on terms equal to male heirs.
- It ruled that a Hindu woman's right to be a joint heir to the ancestral property is by birth and does not depend on whether her father is alive or not.
- Daughters will now be treated at par with sons of coparceners, and will be granted equal coparcenary rights in their father's property upon birth itself and their marital status would not affect it.
- This judgement only applies to HUF property, and does not affect personal or self-acquired assets held individually.
- The law applies to ancestral property and to intestate succession in personal property, where succession happens as per law and not through a will.

Hindu Succession Act, 1956

- The Mitakshara school of Hindu law codified as the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 governed succession and inheritance of property but only recognised males as legal heirs.
- It applied to everyone who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion.
- Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and followers of Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, are also considered Hindus for this law.
- Traditionally, only male descendants of a common ancestor along with their mothers, wives and unmarried daughters are considered a joint Hindu family.
- The legal heirs hold the family property jointly.

2. LEGISLATURE

2.1 Kerala Ordinance for Salary Deferment

- Kerala Government has approved the draft Ordinances for deferring six days' salary of government teachers and employees for six months and also on shelving the delimitation of local body wards in the wake of the crisis triggered by COVID-19.
- The Ordinance was necessitated following a stay order issued by the High Court on the government decision to defer the salary. The stay for two months was issued on the premise that it lacked legal sanction.
- The impediment for deducting the salary had been cleared with the Governor signing the ordinance and disbursement would commence on May 4.
- The deferred salary would be retained in a separate account and used for virus containment efforts.
- **Ordinance-making power of the governor** under Article 213 is similar to that of the president under Article 123.
- The governor can issue ordinance only when two conditions are fulfilled
 1. when the legislative assembly of a state both houses in session or where there are two houses in a state both houses are not in session.
 2. The governor must be satisfied that circumstance exist which render it necessary for him to take immediate action.
- The court cannot question the validity or the ordinance on the ground that there was no necessity or sufficient ground for issuing the ordinance by the governor.

- The existence of such necessity is not a justiciable discretionary and the exercise of ordinance-making power is not discretionary.
- The governor exercises this power on the advice of the cabinet.

2.2 Discretionary Powers of Governor

A Constitution Bench judgment of the SC has held that a Governor is bound to convene a meeting of the Assembly for a floor test on the recommendation of the Cabinet.

- In *Nabam Rebia Vs Deputy Speaker 2016* case, SC held that a Governor cannot employ his 'discretion', and should strictly abide by the "aid and advice" of the Cabinet to summon the House.
- **Highlights of the judgement**
 - a) The Governor can summon, prorogue and dissolve the House only on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers with the Chief Minister as the head. And not at his own.
 - b) Governor's discretionary powers are limited to specified areas like giving assent or withholding/referring a Bill to the President or appointment of a Chief Minister or dismissal of a government which has lost of confidence but refuses to quit, etc.
 - c) The area for the exercise of his discretion is limited, even in this limited area, Governor's choice of action should not be arbitrary or fanciful.
 - d) It must be a choice dictated by reason, actuated by good faith and tempered by caution.
- **Article 163 of the Constitution – Deals with Discretionary powers of Governor**
 - i. If any question arises, the decision of the Governor in his discretion shall be final, and the validity of anything done by the Governor shall not be called in question on the ground that he ought or ought not to have acted in his discretion.
 - ii. The question whether any, and if so what, advice was tendered by Ministers to the Governor shall not be inquired into in any court.
 - iii. Thus Article 163 of the Constitution does not give the Governor a "general discretionary power to act against or without the advice of his Council of Ministers".

2.3 Darbar Move of J&K

Recently, Jammu and Kashmir High Court has also asked the Centre and the Union Territory (UT) administration to take a final call on the continuation of Darbar move.

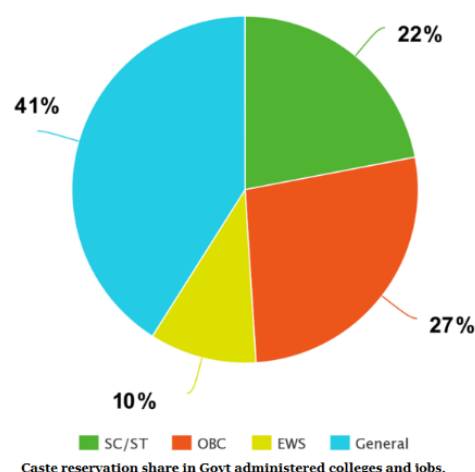
- First time in 144 years, the Jammu and Kashmir administration has decided to halt the annual shifting of capital, called 'Darbar Move', from Jammu to Srinagar due to Covid-19 Pandemic.
- Darbar Move is a century-old practice in which the government functions for six months each in the two capitals of the State, Srinagar and Jammu.
- The practice was reportedly started in the late 19th century by Ranbir Singh, the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, who used to shift his capital between Srinagar in the summer and Jammu in the winter to escape extreme weather conditions in these places.
- The government will function in Srinagar, the summer capital of the State, till late October and then move to Jammu, the winter capital, in the first week of November.
- Regional parties in Jammu and Kashmir advocated the continuation of the practice "to help in the emotional integration between two diverse linguistic and cultural regions of Jammu and Kashmir."
- However in reality the 'Darbar Move' results in wastage of tremendous amount of time, efforts and energy on inefficient and unnecessary activity.
- It is taxing for security forces too. It nurtures inefficiency and leads to lack of governance. The same negatively impacts justice dispensation and impedes judicial administration.
- It also causes delay in justice dispensation as government records are not available to the pleaders in one region for six months at a time.

2.4 Domicile Regulations in J&K

- Domicile - The country that a person treats as their permanent home, or lives in and has a substantial connection with.
- In colloquial sense it is a place where one make their permanent home and where one is considered to be a permanent resident. An example of one's domicile is the home state where one live.
- In March 2020, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization (Adaptation of State Laws) Order.
- Through the order, the MHA amended 109 laws and repealed 29 laws of the erstwhile State of J&K.
- The MHA amended a 2010 legislation, the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services (Decentralization and Recruitment Act), by substituting the term "permanent residents" with "domiciles of UT of J&K."
- The 2010 Act pertained to employment in the Civil Services comprising "district, divisional and State" cadre posts.
- Earlier, only permanent residents of J&K were eligible to apply for gazetted and non-gazetted posts.
- The domicile rules as defined under the amended order will determine recruitment to all government posts in J&K from now on.
- The order defines domiciles as anyone "*who has resided for a period of 15 years in the UT of J&K or has studied for a period of 7 years and appeared in Class 10th/12th examination in an educational institution located in the UT of J&K or who is registered as a migrant by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner*".
- It said that children of central government officials including the all India services, public sector units, autonomous body of Centre, Public Sector Banks, officials of statutory bodies, central universities and recognized research institutes of the Centre who have served in J&K for a "total period of 10 years" will be domiciles.
- The domicile status also applies to "children of such residents of J&K who reside outside J&K in connection with their employment or business or other professional or vocational reasons but their parents should fulfil any of the conditions provided".
- It will allow West Pakistan refugees and children of women who married non-locals to apply for jobs in J&K.
- The power to issue domicile certificates has been vested in the *Tehsildar (revenue officer)*.
- J&K administration notified the J&K grant of domicile certificate procedure rules, 2020 to issue the certificates within 15 days, saying the officer not able to do so will be penalised ₹50,000 of his or her salary.
- Residents of J&K who live outside the erstwhile State can get domicile certificates by simply producing their Permanent Residence Certificate (PRC), ration card copy, voter card or any other valid document.
- Those migrants not registered with the Relief and Rehabilitation department can do so by providing documents such as electoral rolls of 1988, proof of registration as a migrant in any State in the country or any other valid document. There is a provision to get the certificate online too.

2.5 Constitutional Provisions on Reservations

- **Article 15 (4)** empowers the State to make special provision for the advancement of the SCs and the STs.
- E.g. providing fee concession in admission to any educational institution, building hostels for SCs/STs.
- **Article 15 (5)** empowers the State to reserve seats for SCs and the STs in admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the State.
- However, it excludes minority educational institutions referred to in Article 30 (1).
- **Article 16 (4)** empowers the State to make provisions for the reservation of appointments or posts in favor of SCs/STs.
- **Article 46** - Empower the state to promote educational and



economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular SC & ST and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

2.6 Anti Defection Law

- Through the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1985, the 10th Schedule of the Constitution, which contains the anti-defection law, was added to the Constitution.
- Under this “If any question arises as to whether a member of a House has become subject to disqualification under this Schedule, the question shall be referred for the decision of the Chairman or, as the case may be, the Speaker of such House and his decision shall be final.”
- **Grounds for disqualification** - If the member voluntarily gives up the membership of the party. Voluntarily giving up the membership is not the same as resigning from a party.
- Even without resigning, a legislator can be disqualified if by his conduct the Speaker/Chairman of the concerned House draws a reasonable inference that the member has voluntarily given up the membership of his party.
- If a legislator votes in the House against the direction of his party and his action is not condoned by his party, he can be disqualified.

KihotoHollohan Judgment

- The petitioners in Hollohan Case, 1992) argued whether it was fair that the Speaker should have such broad powers provided by the 10th schedule and 52nd Amendment, given that there is always a reasonable likelihood of bias.
- The majority judgment said the Speakers/Chairmen hold a pivotal position in the scheme of Parliamentary democracy and are guardians of the rights and privileges of the House.
- They are expected to and do take far reaching decisions in Parliamentary democracy.
- Thus, Constitutional courts cannot judicially review disqualification proceedings under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution until the Speaker or Chairman makes a final decision on merits.

2.7 Postal Ballot System

- Under Postal Ballot system, ballot papers are distributed electronically to electors and are returned to the election officers via post.
- Recently, Union Law Ministry has reduced the age limit for senior citizens who opt for postal ballot in the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.
- By this voters aged above 65 years or a Covid-19 suspect can opt for postal ballot.
- Recently, Election Commission said that option of postal ballots for electors above the age of 65 in the Bihar Assembly elections cannot be implemented due to logistic issues.
- Earlier, in 2019, the Law Ministry had amended the Conduct of Election Rules to allow persons with disabilities and those who are 80 years of age or above to opt for postal ballot during Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.
- Currently, only the following voters are allowed to cast their votes through postal ballot:
 1. Service voters (armed forces, the armed police force of a state and government servants posted abroad),
 2. Voters on election duty,
 3. Voters above 80 years of age or Persons with Disabilities (PwD),
 4. Voters under preventive detention.
- The exception to the above-mentioned category of voters is provided under Section 60 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.



2.8 Rajya Sabha Polls

- Rajya Sabha is a permanent House and is not subject to dissolution. However, one-third Members of Rajya Sabha retire after every second year (biennial).
- A member who is elected for a full term serves for a period of six years.
- The election held to fill a vacancy arising otherwise than by retirement of a member on the expiration of his term of office is called 'Bye-election'.
- A member elected in a bye-election remains a member for the remainder of the term of the member who has resigned or died or disqualified to be member of the House under the Tenth Schedule.

Methods of Voting in RS Polls

- **Single Transferable vote** - In this method, a voter instead of voting for a single candidate, ranks all candidates according to his preference.
- Voting only takes place when there are more candidates than the vacant seats.
- The method would lead to the election of candidates opposed to the majority party in a state.
- **Cross voting** - During late nineties, MLAs were regularly convinced to vote against their party's candidate (cross-vote).
- The Supreme Court in 2006 held that the practice of cross-voting would not attract the penalty under the anti-defection law, which further promoted the practice of cross-voting.
- **Open Ballot** - To stem the Cross voting rot, a Rajya Sabha committee headed by S B Chavan(1999) mooted the idea of voting by open ballots in the elections to the upper house.
- Parliament passed a law in 2003 requiring MLAs to show their votes to their party before voting in a Rajya Sabha election.
- But neither did the law stop the MLAs from cross-voting, nor could it prevent the influence of big money.
- The open ballot provides legal and technical grounds for invalidating votes.
- **Postal Ballot** - In rare circumstances RS polling can be done by postal ballots subject to the condition that a notification under Rule 68 of 1961 rules (Conduct of Election Rules 1961) is made before the last date of withdrawal of nominations.

2.9 Punjab Civil Service Board

- Punjab government has constituted a three-member civil services board to decide on IAS transfers and postings in the state.
- The civil services board is headed by Chief Secretary of a state.
- It has senior most additional chief secretary or chairman, Board of Revenue, Financial Commissioner or an officer of equivalent rank and status as member.
- In addition, it will have Principal Secretary or Secretary, Department of Personnel in the state government as member secretary.
- The board is mandated to decide on the transfer of a civil servant before completion of his or her fixed tenure.
- The rules mandate the civil services board to submit an annual report on January 1 to the central government about the date of the meetings held by them.
- In 2013, SC directed the Centre and the States to set up a civil services board to consider transfers and posting of bureaucrats among others.
- This is mainly to insulate the bureaucracy from political interference and to put an end to frequent transfers of civil servants by political bosses.
- As per rules, all states should have a civil services board to decide on transfers and postings of the bureaucrats.



2.10 Arunachal Pradesh Demand for 6th Schedule

Recently few Autonomous Councils in Arunachal Pradesh has led to the call for bringing the entire Arunachal Pradesh under the ambit of the 6th Schedule or Article 371 (A) of the Constitution.

- The 6th Schedule of the Constitution provides for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram to safeguard the rights of the tribal population in these states.
- This special provision is provided under Article 244(2) and Article 275(1) of the Constitution.
- According to Bordoloi Committee formed by the Constituent Assembly, the 6th Schedule was formulated to provide limited autonomy to the tribal regions of North-East.
- The report also called for the protection of these tribal areas from exploitation by the people in the plains and preserving their distinct social customs.
- Currently Arunachal Pradesh is neither under 5th Schedule nor under 6th Schedule.
- It is under the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system.
- The 6th Schedule is applied in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura.
- The 5th Schedule areas are declared in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan.
- On the other hand, **Article 371 A** is applied in Nagaland which provides special status to **Nagaland**.
- **Article 371 A** - The Acts of Parliament relating to the following matters would not apply to Nagaland unless decided by the State Legislative Assembly:
 1. Religious or social practices of the Nagas.
 2. Naga customary law and procedure.
 3. Administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law.
 4. Ownership and transfer of land and its resources.

2.11 Special Powers to Armed Forces

Ministry of Defence has recently granted special powers in relation to its individual procurement programme.

- Defence Acquisition Council has decided to grant the power to the three services for individual capital procurement programme worth Rs 300 crore to meet emergent operational requirements.
- There is no cap on the number of procurement programmes and that each acquisition under the emergency requirement category should not cost more than Rs 300 crore.
- Defence Acquisition Council is headed by Defence Minister.

2.12 Commission on Sub-Categorization of OBCs

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved a six-month extension to the commission appointed to examine sub-categorization of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) headed by Retd. Justice Rohini, up to 31st January 2021.

- It was constituted under **Article 340** of the Constitution with the approval of the President on 2nd October 2017.
- It had been constituted to complete the task of sub-categorising 5000-odd castes in the central OBC list so as to ensure more equitable distribution of opportunities in central government jobs and educational institutions.
- Article 340 deals with the appointment of a commission to investigate the conditions of backward classes.
- It shall investigate the matters referred them and present a report to the President.
- The President shall cause a copy of the report so presented together with a memorandum explaining the action taken thereon to be laid before each House of Parliament.



2.13 Kris Gopala Krishnan Committee

- Government setup a committee on Data protection headed by Inforsys co-founder Kris Gopala Krishnan.
- The committee has suggested that non-personal data generated in the country be allowed to be harnessed by various domestic companies and entities
- Non-personal data is any set of data which does not contain personally identifiable information.
- This in essence means that no individual or living person can be identified by looking at such data.
- Unlike personal data, which contains explicit information about a person's name, age, gender, sexual orientation, biometrics and other genetic details, non-personal data is more likely to be in an anonymized form.
- The committee has also suggested setting up of a new authority which would be empowered to monitor the use and mining of such non-personal data.

3. ACTS & BILLS

3.1 Inter-State Migrant Act, 1979

- The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979, seeks to regulate the employment of inter-State migrants and their conditions of service.
- It is applicable to every establishment that employs five or more migrant workmen from other States; or if it had employed five or more such workmen on any day in the preceding 12 months.
- It is also applicable to contractors who employed a similar number of inter-State workmen.
- The Act would apply regardless of whether the five or more workmen were in addition to others employed in the establishment or by the contractors.
- The principal employer is prohibited from employing inter-State workmen without a certificate of registration from the relevant authority.
- The law also lays down that every contractor who recruits workmen from one State for deployment in another State should obtain a license to do so.
- The provision for registration of establishments employing inter-State workers creates a system of accountability and acts as the first layer of formalizing the utilization of their labour.
- It helps the government keep track of the number of workers employed and provides a legal basis for regulating their conditions of service.
- The wage rates, holidays, hours of work and other conditions of service of an inter-State migrant workman shall be the same as those extended to other workmen in the same establishment, if the nature of their work is similar.
- In other cases, it would be as prescribed by the appropriate government.
- In no case, shall the wages be lower than what is prescribed under the Minimum Wages Act.

3.2 Uniformity in Stamp Duties

- The amendments to the Stamp Act, 1899 was introduced in the Finance Bill, 2019.
- It has introduced the centralized system of stamp duty with a unified rate for all financial securities transactions with effective from July 1.
- Union government has created the legal and institutional mechanism to enable states to collect stamp duty on securities market instruments at one place by one agency, through the stock exchange or clearing corporation authorized by it or by the depository on one instrument.
- At present, market participants collect stamp duty at rates fixed by the state where the trade takes place and deposit it with the local government.

- This created a complex system with multiple tax rates and differing regulations in different states, posing a challenge to settle deals.
- The amendment was brought for ease of doing business and bringing in uniformity of the stamp duty on securities across states thereby building a pan-India securities market.

3.3 Aids to Navigation Bill

- A navigational aid is any kind of marker which aids the traveler in navigation, usually nautical or aviation travel.
- Common types of such aids include lighthouses, buoys, fog signals, and day beacons.
- Recently, the Ministry of Shipping has issued the draft of the Aids to Navigation Bill, 2020.
- It is proposed to replace the nine decades old colonial Lighthouse Act, 1927.
- It aims to regulate state-of-the-art technologies of marine navigation.
- It also provides for identification and development of heritage lighthouses.
- The draft also proposes cess for every ship arriving at or departing from any port in India, at rates notified by the Central government.

Light House Act, 1927

- The Lighthouse Act is an act relating to the provision, maintenance and control of lighthouses.
- It was enacted under the British rule in 1927.
- Currently, the Central government, as per the provisions of the Lighthouse Act, levies light dues on all the foreign going ships arriving at or departing from any port in India.
- Light dues are the charges levied on ships for the maintenance of lighthouses and other aids to navigation.

3.4 Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act

- Union government has released draft rules framed under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.
- In the draft it has done away with the requirement of a medical examination for Trans persons applying for a certificate of identity.
- By which Magistrate would issue a transgender identity certificate and card based on an affidavit by the applicant, “but without any medical examination”.
- Trans- persons would be required to fill out a form and submit an affidavit saying they perceive themselves to be “a transgender person whose gender does not match with the gender assigned at birth” and that they “declare” themselves to be transgender.
- In case of change of gender, the application for new identification certificate would require a certificate from the medical superintendent or chief medical officer of the medical institution where the applicant underwent the intervention.

3.5 Unlawful Activities Prevention Act

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) recently designated nine individuals associated with Khalistani extremist organizations as terrorists under the provisions of the UAPA.

- Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, extends to the whole of India.
- Any person, who commits an offence beyond India, which is punishable under this Act, shall be dealt with according to the provisions of this Act in the same manner as if such act had been committed in India.
- The provisions of this Act apply also to
 - Citizens of India outside India;
 - Persons in the service of the Government, wherever they may be; and
 - Persons on ships and aircrafts, registered in India, wherever they may be.
- In August 2019, the Central government had amended the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 to include the provision of designating an individual as a terrorist.



- Prior to this amendment, only organizations could be designated as terrorist organizations.

3.6 DNA Technology Regulation Act

- DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2019 tries to check use of DNA technology to establish the identity of a person.
- The bill proposes DNA sampling and profiling of citizens accused of crime or reported missing and storing their unique genetic information for administrative purposes.
- The bill has been flagged with some alarming provisions that could be misused for caste or community-based profiling.
- **Sensitive Info** - DNA profiles can reveal extremely sensitive information of an individual such as pedigree, skin color, behavior, illness, health status and susceptibility to diseases.
- This is particularly worrying as it could even be used to incorrectly link a particular caste/community to criminal activities.
- **Misuse of DNA Database** - The Bill proposes to store DNA profiles of suspects, under trials, victims and their relatives for future investigations.
- There is no legal or moral justification for a database with DNA of the other categories, given the high potential for misuse.
- **Authoritative** - In the Bill, if a person is arrested for an offence that carries punishment up to seven years, investigation authorities must take the person's written consent before taking the DNA sample.
- The Bill refers to consent in several provisions, but in each of those, a magistrate can easily override consent, thereby in effect, making consent perfunctory.
- There is also no guidance in the Bill on the grounds and reasons of when the magistrate can override consent, which could become a fatal flaw.
- **Issues in Data banks** - The Bill also provides that DNA profiles for civil matters will also be stored in the data banks, but without a clear and separate index.
- Storage of DNA profiles violates the fundamental right to privacy and does not serve any public purpose.

3.7 Code on Social Security Bill 2019

- Code on Social Security Bill 2019, seeks to consolidate the laws relating to social security of workers and subsume eight central laws.
- The Social Security Code will subsume 8 Central Labour Acts namely
 1. Employees Compensation Act, 1923,
 2. Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948,
 3. Employees Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952,
 4. Maternity Benefit Act, 1961,
 5. Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972,
 6. Cine Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1981,
 7. Building and Other Construction Workers Cess Act, 1996,
 8. Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008.
- **Social Security Schemes** - Under the Code, the central government may notify various social security schemes for the benefit of workers.
- In addition, the central or state government may notify specific schemes for gig workers, platform workers, and unorganized workers to provide various benefits, such as life and disability cover.
- Gig workers refer to workers outside of the traditional employer-employee relationship (e.g., freelancers). Platform workers are workers who access other organizations or individuals using online platforms and earn money by providing them with specific services.



- **Coverage and registration** - The Code specifies different applicability thresholds for the schemes.
- These thresholds may be amended by the central government.
- All eligible establishments are required to register under the Code, unless they are already registered under any other labour law.
- **Contributions** - The EPF, EPS, EDLI, and ESI Schemes will be financed through a combination of contributions from the employer and employee.
- All contributions towards payment of gratuity, maternity benefit, cess for building workers, and employee compensation will be borne by the employer.
- Schemes for gig workers, platform workers, and unorganized workers may be financed through a combination of contributions from the employer, employee, and the appropriate government.
- **Social security organizations** - The Code provides for the establishment of several bodies to administer the social security schemes.
 - a. **A Central Board of Trustees**, headed by the Central Provident Fund Commissioner, to administer the EPF, EPS and EDLI Schemes,
 - b. **An Employees State Insurance Corporation**, headed by a Chairperson appointed by the central government, to administer the ESI Scheme,
 - c. **National and state-level Social Security Boards**, headed by the central and state Ministers for Labour and Employment, respectively, to administer schemes for unorganized workers,
 - d. **State-level Building Workers' Welfare Boards**, headed by a Chairperson nominated by the state government, to administer schemes for building workers.
- **Inspections and appeals** - The Code also specifies judicial bodies which may hear appeals from the orders of the administrative authorities.
- For example, industrial tribunals (constituted under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947) will hear disputes under the EPF Scheme.
- **Offences and penalties** - The Code specifies penalties for various offences, such as
 - a. Failure by an employer to pay contributions under the Code after deducting the employee's share, punishable with imprisonment between one and three years, and fine of one lakh rupees,
 - b. Falsification of reports, punishable with imprisonment of up to six months.

4. GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

4.1 Swamitva Scheme

- SVAMITVA - Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas scheme.
- It is a collaborative effort of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, State Panchayati Raj Departments, State Revenue Departments and Survey of India.
- The scheme is launched in pilot mode in 6 states.
- It aims to ensure planning, revenue collection and provide clarity over property rights in rural areas.
- It envisages property card for every property in the village which is recognized by the land revenue records department.
- The card will be prepared by states using accurate measurements delivered by drone-mapping.
- Disputes related to property would also be settled through the title deeds allotted through this scheme.
- This will open up avenues for applying for loans from financial institutions by the owners.



4.2 PM's Research Fellowship Scheme

- Prime Minister's Research Fellows (PMRF) Scheme has been designed for improving the quality of research in various higher educational institutions in the country.
- With attractive fellowships, the scheme seeks to attract the best talent into research thereby realizing the vision of development through innovation. The scheme was announced in the Budget 2018-19.
- The institutes which can offer PMRF include all the IITs, all the IISERs, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru and some of the top Central Universities/NITs that offer science and/or technology degrees.
- Starting Academic Year 2020-21, candidates can apply for PMRF through either direct entry channel or lateral entry channel.
- Recently Union Human Resource Development Ministry has amended PMRF Scheme to boost research in the country.
- After the amendments, students from any recognised institute/ university (other than IISc/ IITs/NITs/IISERs/IIEST/CF IITs), the requirement of GATE Score is reduced to 650 from 750 apart from minimum CGPA of 8 or equivalent.
- The Minister also informed that now there will be two channels of entries, one direct entry and lateral entry.
- In lateral entry, the students, who are pursuing PhD in PMRF granting institutions (completed 12 months or 24 months as per certain requirements) can also apply to become fellow under the scheme as per new guidelines.
- NITs, which appear in top 25 institutions as per NIRF Ranking (overall) can also become PMRF Granting institution.
- To boost research a dedicated Division is being created in the ministry with the name of "Research and Innovation Division".
- This division will be headed by a director who will be coordinating research work of various institutions coming under MHRD.

4.3 PM- Matsya Sampada Yojana

- It is a scheme to bring about Blue Revolution through sustainable and responsible development of fisheries sector in India under two components namely, Central Sector Scheme and Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
- It aims to address the critical gaps in the fisheries sector and realize its potential by improving availability of certified quality fish seed and feed, traceability in fish and including effective aquatic health management.
- The Scheme will be implemented during a period of 5 years from FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25.
- Central Sector Scheme (CS) - The entire project/unit cost will be borne by the Central government (i.e. 100% central funding).
- Wherever direct beneficiary oriented i.e. individual/group activities are undertaken by the entities of central government including National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), the central assistance will be up to 40% of the unit/project cost for General category and 60% for SC/ST/Women category.
- Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) - For the Non-beneficiary orientated sub-components/activities under CSS component to be implemented by the States/UTs, the entire project/unit cost will be shared between Centre and State.
 - i. North Eastern & Himalayan States - 90% Central share and 10% State share.
 - ii. Other States - 60% Central share and 40% State share.
 - iii. Union Territories (with legislature and without legislature) - 100% Central share.
- It also promises to create direct gainful employment opportunities to about 15 lakh fishers, fish farmers, fish workers, fish vendors and other rural/urban populations in fishing and allied activities and about thrice this number as indirect employment opportunities including enhancement of their incomes.



4.4 Agri-Entrepreneurship Component of RKVY

- Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) is an ongoing centrally sponsored scheme started from XI Five Year Plan period.
- The scheme will incentivize States in enhancing more allocation to Agriculture to achieve 4% growth rate.
- Ministry of Agriculture is funding start-ups under the innovation and agri-preneurship component of RKVY in 2020-21.
- These start-ups are in various categories such as agro-processing, artificial intelligence, digital agriculture, farm mechanisation, waste to wealth, dairy, fisheries etc.
- The following are the components of this scheme:
 1. **Agripreneurship Orientation** - 2 months duration with a monthly stipend of Rs. 10,000/- per month. Mentorship is provided on financial, technical, IP issues etc.
 2. **Seed Stage Funding of R-ABI Incubatees** – Funding up to Rs. 25 lakhs (85% grant & 15% contribution from the incubatee).
 3. **Idea/Pre-Seed Stage Funding of Agripreneurs** – Funding up to Rs. 5 lakhs (90% grant and 10% contribution from the incubatee).

4.5 PM- Vaya Vandana Yojana

Union government recently extended the scheme up to 31st March, 2023 for a further period of three years beyond 31st March, 2020.

- Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY) is a Pension Scheme exclusively for the senior citizens aged 60 years and above.
- It provides initially an assured rate of return of 7.40 % per annum for the year 2020-21 per annum and thereafter to be reset every year.
- Pension is payable at the end of each period, during the policy term of 10 years, as per the frequency of monthly/ quarterly/ half-yearly/ yearly as chosen by the pensioner at the time of purchase.
- The scheme is exempted from GST.
- On survival of the pensioner to the end of the policy term of 10 years, Purchase price along with final pension instalment shall be payable.

4.6 Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana

- It is launched by Chhattisgarh government to encourage farmers to produce more crops and help them get the right price.
- Under the scheme, based on registered area and area under cultivation during Kharif crop season 2019, Rs. 10,000 per acre will be deposited in the bank accounts of farmers as agriculture assistance grant for sowing crops such as paddy, maize and sugarcane.
- It covers cover rice, maize and sugarcane farmers to begin with, and would expand to other crops later.
- Rice and maize farmers would get ₹10,000 an acre while sugarcane farmers would get ₹13,000. The money would be distributed in four instalments.

4.7 Kumbhar Sashaktikaran Yojana

- It is an initiative of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) for empowerment of potter community in the remotest of locations in the country.
- The program reaches out to the potters in - U.P., M.P., Maharashtra, J&K, Haryana, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Assam, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Telangana and Bihar.
- It provides the following support -
 - Training for advanced pottery products.
 - Latest, new technology pottery equipment like the electric Chaak.



- Market linkages and visibility through KVIC exhibitions.

4.8 Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan

- Under the scheme, government plans to provide employment to migrant workers and create rural infrastructure.
- It will empower and provide livelihood opportunities to the returnee migrant workers and rural citizens who have returned to their home states due to the Covid-19 induced lockdown.
- This campaign will work in mission mode for 125 days with an outlay of Rs. 50,000 crore.
- A total of 116 districts across six states, namely Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Odisha (where maximum migrant workers have returned) have been chosen for the campaign.
- Those districts where 25,000 migrants have returned have been chosen for this programme.
- It will involve intensified and focused implementation of 25 different types of works.
- Apart from these the workers will help build gram panchayat bhawans and anganwadicentres, national highway works, railway works and water conservation projects, among others across six states.
- 12 different Ministries/Departments, namely, Rural Development, Panchayati Raj, Road Transport and Highways, Mines, Drinking Water and Sanitation, Environment, Railways, etc. will be coordinating for the implementation of the scheme.
- The villages will join this programme through the Common Service Centres (CSCs) and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) maintaining the norms of social distancing in the wake of the pandemic.

4.9 Rozgar Setu Scheme

- It is launched by the Madhya Pradesh Government to help secure employment for skilled workers who have returned back to their homes and were employed at industries elsewhere.
- Madhya Pradesh is the first state to devise such a work plan for the workers.
- The State government will act as a setu (bridge) between workers and employers so that both are benefited.
- This would fulfil the manpower requirement of industries as well as provide employment to workers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.10 PM SVANidhi

- PM SVANidhi was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- Its objective is to provide affordable Working Capital loan to street vendors to resume their livelihoods that have been adversely affected due to Covid-19 lockdown.
- Under the Scheme, the vendors can avail a working capital loan of up to Rs. 10,000, which is repayable in monthly instalments in the tenure of one year.
- On timely/ early repayment of the loan, an interest subsidy @ 7% per annum will be credited to the bank accounts of beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer on quarterly basis.
- There will be no penalty on early repayment of loan.
- SIDBI – Implementing agency.
- It will also manage the credit guarantee to the lending institutions through Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE).
- **PM-SAVNidhi Portal** – To provide an integrated end to end IT interface to street vendors to avail benefits under the scheme.
- It will accept loan applications from Street Vendors, who can apply directly or with the help of Common Service Centers/ Urban Local Bodies/ Self Help Groups.
- The portal will enable the implementation of the scheme during next 21 months.

4.11 National Digital Health Mission

Union government has launched the National Digital Health Mission, on pilot mode in 6 Union Territories.

- It is a flagship initiative of the government like Ayushman Bharat.
- The mission seeks to provide an efficient and affordable health coverage through a wide-range of data and infrastructure services.
- It comprises six key building blocks or digital systems namely HealthID, DigiDoctor, Health Facility Registry, Personal Health Records, e-Pharmacy and Telemedicine.
- The National Health Authority (NHA), the attached office of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare which will design, build, roll-out and implement the NDHM.
- It will be a voluntary healthcare programme that would reduce the gap among stakeholders such as doctors, hospitals and other healthcare providers, etc.
- It will be a major stride towards the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3.8 of Universal Health Coverage, including financial risk protection.
- The scheme would first be tested on a pilot basis in the UTs except Delhi.

4.12 Naya Savera Scheme

- It is being implemented under the Ministry of Minority Affairs.
- It aims to empower the students belonging to minority communities and prepare them for competitive examinations.
- It emphasis to increase the participation minority communities in government and private jobs improves.
- The scheme provides financial support for free coaching to notified minority students in selected coaching institutions.

4.13 National Overseas Scholarship Scheme

- National Overseas Scholarship is a Central Sector Scheme under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- It aims to facilitate the low income students obtain Master degree or Ph.D courses by studying abroad to improve their social and economic status.
- Beneficiaries are selected from the following social groups –
 1. Scheduled Castes,
 2. Denotified Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes,
 3. Landless Agricultural Labourers
 4. Traditional Artisans category
- In each Selection Year, 100 fresh awards, subject to availability of funds, will be given under the Scheme.
- 30% of the awards for each year shall be earmarked for women candidates.
- However, in case, adequate women candidates are not available as per the stipulations of the scheme, then the unutilized slots will be utilized by selecting suitable male candidates.
- Recently following changes has been made to the Scheme
 1. Annual Family Income limit for National Overseas Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Castes students w.e.f. selection year 2020-21 has been increased from Rs 6 lakh to Rs 8 lakh per annum.
 2. Students securing admission in higher ranking institutions internationally will be given preference.
 3. The minimum qualifying marks have been increased from 55% to 60%.
 4. Maintenance Allowance has been linked with progress of the awardee.
 5. Police verification has been done away and self-declaration has been introduced.



- Bachelors Level courses in any discipline are not covered under the Scheme.

4.14 PMGKY-Ujjwala

- Union government had announced a relief package "Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana" aimed at providing a safety net to the poor and vulnerable who had been hit the hardest by the pandemic.
- The package also included relief for poor families who had availed of an LPG connection under PMUY.
- Under the PMGKY-Ujjwala, it was decided to provide free of cost refills for PMUY consumers for a period of 3 months w.e.f. 01.04.2020.
- This will benefit those PMUY beneficiaries who have been credited with the advance for buying the cylinder, but have not been able to purchase the refill.
- Thus, the beneficiaries who already have the advance transferred to their account can now take the free refill delivery till 30th September.
- **Himachal Pradesh** has become the first state in the country where 100% households have LPG connections.

4.15 PM-Rozgar Protsahan Yojana

- It is being implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Employment and is operational since, 2016.
- It was launched for incentivizing employers for generation of new employment.
- The Government of India will pay the entire employer's contribution (12% or admissible contribution) towards the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) and the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS) for all eligible new employees for all sectors for 3 years.
- All new eligible employees will be covered under the PMRPY Scheme till 2019-20.

4.16 Kumhar Sashaktikaran Yojana

- It is an initiative of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC).
- It aims for empowerment of potter community in the remotest of locations in the country.
- The program reaches out to the potters in U.P., M.P., Maharashtra, J&K, Haryana, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Assam, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Telangana and Bihar.
- The average income of potters under the scheme has gone up from nearly Rs 3,000 per month to nearly Rs 12,000 per month.
- This program provides the following support to potters.
 1. Training for advanced pottery products
 2. Latest, new technology pottery equipment's like the electric Chaak
 3. Market linkages and visibility through KVIC exhibitions

4.17 Affordable Rental Housing Complexes

- AHRC is a sub-scheme under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) for urban migrants and poor.
- Target Beneficiaries - A large part of workforce in manufacturing industries, service providers in hospitality, and construction or other sectors, laborers, students etc. who come from rural areas or small towns.
- The existing vacant government funded housing complexes will be converted in ARHCs through Concession Agreements for 25 years.
- The States/UTs will select concessionaire through transparent bidding.
- It will make the complexes livable by repair/retrofit and maintenance of rooms and filling up infrastructure gaps like water, sewer/ septage, sanitation, road etc.

- The special incentives like use permission, concessional loan at priority sector lending rate, tax reliefs at par with affordable housing etc. will be offered to private/public entities to develop ARHCs on their own available vacant land for 25 years.

4.18 Gramodyog Vikas Yojana

- Gramodyog Vikas Yojana aims to promote and develop the village industries through common facilities, technological modernization, training etc.
- The scheme is under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
- Under the scheme, R&D support would be given to the institutions that intend to carry product development, new innovations, design development, product diversification processes etc.
- The village institutions will be provided market support by way of preparation of product catalogue, Industry directory, market research, new marketing techniques, buyer seller meet, arranging exhibitions etc.
- Recently, a new programme has been approved under the scheme for the benefit of artisans involved in manufacturing of Agarbatti.
- Under this mission, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), will provide training, and assist artisans with agarbatti manufacturing machines.

4.19 Micro Food Processing Enterprises

Union government has approved a scheme PM- Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises as a part of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.

- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) with fund sharing between Centre and the States/UT with legislature in the ratio 60:40, 90:10 in North Eastern states and 100% for other UTs.
- It will be implemented over a 5 year period from 2020-2021 to 2024-25.
- It envisages increased access to credit by existing micro food processing entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs in the Aspirational Districts.
- It will majorly focus on perishables and helps to integrate micro food processing enterprises with the original markets.
- The Scheme adopts One District One Product (ODOP) approach to reap benefit of scale in terms of procurement of inputs, availing common services and marketing of products.
- The States would identify food product for a district keeping in view the existing clusters and availability of raw material.
- It would be monitored at Centre by an Inter-Ministerial Empowered Committee (IMEC) under the Chairmanship of Food Processing Industries Minister.
- A State/UT Level Committee (SLC) chaired by the Chief Secretary will monitor and sanction/recommend proposals for expansion of micro units and setting up of new units by the Self Help Groups (SHGs)/Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)/ Cooperatives.
- The Scheme also envisages the third party evaluation and mid-term review mechanism in the programme.
- The project is likely to generate 9 lakh skilled and semi-skilled jobs and targets 2,00,000 micro-enterprises.

4.20 Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization

- The Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) was launched in April 2014 with an aim to have inclusive growth of farm mechanization to boost productivity.
- Recently union government has released Rs. 553 crore to states under the scheme to promote mechanization in the agriculture sector.
- In the year 2020-21, budget of Rs.1,033 crore has been provided for the scheme, out of which Rs.553 crore has been released to state governments.
- Under the scheme Individual farmers are also provided subsidy for procurement of machinery.



- Agricultural mechanization helps in increasing production through timely farm operations and cut in operations by ensuring better management of inputs.
- Mechanization also enhances the productivity of natural resources and reduces drudgery associated with various farm operations.

4.21 Sahakar Mitra

- It is a scheme on Internship Programme (SIP) by National Cooperative Development Corporation.
- It is launched by Ministry of Agriculture.
- The interns will be given training to gain work related learning experience in the NCDC functioning.
- Under the scheme, professional graduates in disciplines such as Agriculture and allied areas, IT etc. will be eligible for internship.
- Professionals who are pursuing or have completed their MBA degrees in Agri-business, Cooperation, Finance, International Trade, Forestry, Rural Development, Project Management etc. will also be eligible.
- NCDC has earmarked funds for Sahakar Mitra paid internship program under which each intern will get financial support over a 4 months internship period.

4.22 PM's Employment Generation Programme

- It is a **central sector scheme** administered by the **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises** (MoMSME).
- To generate continuous and sustainable employment opportunities in **Rural and Urban** areas of the country
- At the national level, the Scheme is being implemented by **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)**, a statutory organization under the administrative control of the Ministry of MSME as the single nodal agency.
- At the State level, the Scheme will be implemented through State KVIC Directorates, State Khadi and Village Industries Boards (KVIBs) and District Industries Centres (DICs) and banks.
- The Government subsidy under the Scheme will be routed by KVIC through the identified Banks for eventual distribution to the beneficiaries / entrepreneurs in their Bank accounts.
- As of now, the proposals were scrutinized by the District Level Task Force Committee (DLTFC), headed by the District Collectors that often led to inordinate delays in sanctioning of the projects.
- As per the recent amended guidelines, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), after due diligence, will directly clear the proposals/applications of the prospective entrepreneurs and will forward it to the Banks for taking credit decisions.

4.23 Sankalp Scheme

- Madhya Pradesh police launches 'Sankalp Scheme' to provide 24-hour help to elderly in the locality.
- Under the Sankalp Scheme, Umair district Superintendent of Police has instructed all police officers to identify and help one or two elderly families who are living alone and are worried about their everyday needs during the lockdown.

4.24 Namath Basai Scheme

- Kerala State government is carrying out a unique programme called "Namath Basai" of teaching tribal children in their mother tongue.
- The programme is being implemented by the Samagra Shiksha Kerala (SSK).
- SSK is an overarching programme for the school education sector extending from pre-school to class 12.
- It aims at improving school effectiveness measured in terms of equal opportunities for schooling and equitable learning outcomes.



- It has succeeded in retaining hundreds of tribal children in their online classes using their mother tongue as language of instruction.
- It offers pre-recorded classes through a YouTube channel in three tribal languages in Attappady valley in Palakkad District Kerala.
- These languages belong to the Irula, Muduka and Kurumba tribes.
- It is being introduced in the tribal belts of Wayanad and Idukki as well.
- Classes are offered in the Oorali, Muthuvan and Paniya languages in Idukki.

5. NATIONAL INSTITUTES

5.1 National Recruitment Agency

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for creation of National Recruitment Agency (NRA).

- It aims to bring reform in the recruitment process for central government jobs.
- National Recruitment Agency (NRA) will be a multi-agency body and it will be a Society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- It would conduct a Common Eligibility Test (CET) for recruitment to non-gazetted posts in government and public sector banks.
- CET will screen/shortlist candidates for the Group B and C (non-technical) posts.
- The present recruitment agencies such as Staff Selection Commission (SSC), Railway Recruitment Board (RRB) and the Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS) will remain in place.
- It will be headed by a Chairman of the rank of the Secretary to the Government of India
- It will have representatives of Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Finance/Department of Financial Services, the SSC, RRB & IBPS.
- NRA shall conduct a separate CET each for the three levels of graduate, higher secondary (12th pass) and the matriculate (10th pass) candidates for those non-technical posts.

5.2 Solar Energy Corporation of India

- Solar Energy Corporation of India Ltd. (SECI) is a company of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.
- It is established to facilitate the implementation of the National Solar Mission (NSM).
- It is the only Central Public Sector Undertaking dedicated to the solar energy sector.
- The company's mandate has been broadened to cover the entire renewable energy domain and the company will be renamed to Renewable Energy Corporation of India (RECI).

5.3 IN-SPACe

- Union Government has given approval to Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe)
- It will be the nodal national entity under the Department of Space to drive building of satellites, rockets, or launch services through Indian industry.
- It will provide a level playing field for private companies to use Indian space infrastructure.
- It will also hand-hold, promote and guide the private industries in space activities through encouraging policies and a friendly regulatory environment.

5.4 NSIL

- New Space India Limited (NSIL) is a Central Public Sector Enterprise of Government of India.
- It is Head Quartered in Bangalore.

- It was established on March 2019 under the administrative control of Department of Space (DOS), India.
- The main objective is to scale up industry participation in Indian space programs.
- NSIL will endeavor to re-orient space activities from a 'supply driven' model to a 'demand driven' model, thereby ensuring optimum utilization of our space assets.

5.5 National Innovation Foundation

- It is an autonomous body of the Department of Science and Technology (DST).
- It was set up in February 2000 at Ahmedabad, Gujarat to provide institutional support for scouting, spawning, sustaining and scaling up the grassroots innovations across the country.
- NIF conducts a biennial national competition for grassroots green technologies, developed by farmers, mechanics, artisans and others, through their own genius, without any recourse to professional help.
- To determine the feasibility of the commercializing of technology, NIF conducts market research and test marketing.
- NIF is mandated to build a national register of ideas, innovations and traditional knowledge (TK) practices related to agriculture, plants, animal health and human health.

5.6 Indian Council for Cultural Relations

- It is an autonomous organization under the administrative control of Ministry of External Affairs.
- It is involved in India's external cultural relations (cultural diplomacy), through cultural exchange with other countries and their peoples.
- It runs 36 cultural centers across the globe and its emphasis is on making India a hub of higher education.
- It was founded in 1950 by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, independent India's first Education Minister.
- It has been assigned the responsibility of facilitating the celebration of the International Day of Yoga by Indian Missions/Posts abroad since 2015.
- It has instituted several awards, which are conferred upon the foreign nationals for their contributions in different fields, under its mandate of promoting India's cultural relations, Such awards include
- Distinguished Indologist Award - The annual "ICCR Distinguished Indologist Award" was instituted in 2015 during the First World Indology Conference hosted in India.
- Award is conferred upon a foreign scholar for his contribution in study, teaching and research in any of the fields of Indian Studies.
- World Sanskrit Award- The institution of annual "World Sanskrit Award" was announced during the 16th World Sanskrit Conference held in Bangkok in June 2015 recognizing the contribution of foreign scholars in promoting Sanskrit studies.
- Distinguished Alumni Award - Citation and Plaque: Recognizing the achievements of foreign students who studied in India. It was instituted in 2015.
- Gisela Bonn Award - Annual Gisela Bonn Award was instituted by ICCR in 1996 in the name of famous German journalist, writer, environmental activist and Indologist, Giesela Bonn, to honour her services to bolster Indo-German relations.

5.7 National Informatics Centre

- National Informatics Centre (NIC) was established in 1976, under the aegis of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- NIC is credited with helping the Indian Government embrace IT in the 1990s, and has also helped disseminate E-Governance to the masses.
- It provides infrastructure to help support delivery of Government IT services and delivery of some of the initiatives of Digital India.



- From May 2019 the Government of India has set up the "Centre for Smart Governance" (CSG) and state governments have been suggested to go through CSG for IT projects they would previously have used NIC and private firms for.

5.8 Software Technology Parks of India

- STPI is an autonomous society and it has 60 centers across the country.
- It is established in 1991 by the Indian Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology with the objective of encouraging, promoting and boosting the export of software from India.
- In view of COVID19 outbreak and consequent lockdown, union government decided to provide relief from payment of four month rental to the small IT units operating out of the Software Technology Parks of India.
- Most of these units are either Tech MSMEs or startups. Electronics and Information Technology Ministry will provide rental waiver to these units from 1st March till 30th June 2020.

5.9 Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve (ISPRL)

- Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL) is an Indian company responsible for maintaining the country's strategic petroleum reserves.
- ISPRL is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB), which functions under the administrative control of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- ISPRL maintains an emergency fuel store of strategic crude oil enough to provide 10 days of consumption. Strategic crude oil storages are at three underground locations in Mangalore, Visakhapatnam and Padur (Udupi, Karnataka).
- All these are located on the east and west coasts of India which are readily accessible to the refineries.
- These strategic storages are in addition to the existing storages of crude oil and petroleum products with the oil companies and serve in response to external supply disruptions.
- Indian refiners maintain 65 days of crude storage, so India has overall reserve oil storage of 87 days.
- ISPRL have been filling ISPRL's caverns at Mangaluru and Udupi with crude oil to make the best use of the low international crude prices.

5.10 Indian Patent Office

- The Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks (CGPDTM) generally known as the Indian Patent Office.
- It is an agency under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade which administers the Indian law of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks.
- The CGPDTM reports to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and has six main administrative sections namely - Patent Office, Designs Registry, Trademarks Registry, Geographical indications Registry, Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Intellectual Property Management (NIIPM) and Patent Information System

5.11 National Institute of Virology

- The National Institute of Virology, Pune is an Indian virology research institute, and one of the translational science cells part of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).
- It was previously known as 'Virus Research Center', came into existence in 1952 under the joint auspices of the ICMR and the Rockefeller Foundation. It was later re-designated as the National Institute of Virology in 1978.
- It has been designated as a WHO H5 reference laboratory for South East Asia region.
- It is identified as the WHO Collaborating Center for arboviruses reference and hemorrhagic fever reference and research.
- It is also the National Monitoring Centre for Influenza, Japanese Encephalitis, Rota, Measles, Hepatitis and Coronavirus.

- The NIV's competent scientific team successfully isolated the SARS-CoV-2 virus from laboratory confirmed patients in India.
- This in turn has paved the way for development of indigenous diagnostics for SARS-CoV-2.

5.12 National Institute of Public Finance and Policy

- NIPFP is India's premier economic think tank - a centre for research in public economics and policies, located in Delhi.
- It is an autonomous body set up jointly by the Ministry of Finance, the erstwhile Planning Commission, and several state governments.
- It was founded in 1976 and registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- It undertakes research, policy advocacy and capacity building in areas related to public economics.
- One of the major mandates of the institute is to assist the Central, State and Local governments in formulating and reforming public policies by providing an analytical base.
- It receives an annual grant from the Ministry of Finance and various State governments, however it maintains an independent non-government character.
- It includes the Revenue Secretary, Economic Affairs Secretary and the Chief Economic Advisor from the Union Finance Ministry and representatives from NITI Aayog, RBI and 3 state governments.
- The usual tenure of a chairman is four years, which can be extended.

5.13 TIFAC

- Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council was formed as a registered Society in February, 1988.
- It is an autonomous body under the Department of Science and Technology.
- It is mandated to assess the state-of-art of technology and set directions for future technological development in India in important socio-economic sectors.
- It embarked upon the major task of formulating a Technology Vision for the country in various emerging technology areas.
- Under the leadership of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, the then Chairman of TIFAC, Technology Vision 2020 exercise led to set of 17 documents, including sixteen technology areas and one on services.
- Recently TIFAC has flagged the lack of infrastructure in the chemical industry in the country as a barrier to competing with China.
- It is also highlighted that India is almost entirely dependent on China for chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine (HCQ).

5.14 NCPOR

- The National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, (NCPOR) formerly known as the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR) is an Indian research and development institution, situated in Vasco da Gama, Goa.
- It is an autonomous Institution of the Department of Ocean Development (DOD), Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India which is responsible for administering the Indian Antarctic Programme and maintains the Indian government's Antarctic research stations, Bharati and Maitri.
- NCPOR complex is a home to a special low-temperature laboratory and is setting up a National Antarctic Data Centre and a Polar Museum.
- Apart from this the NCPOR operates in different fields or tasks:
 1. Operating the Himadri and IndARC Arctic research stations in Svalbard, Norway.
 2. Managing the oceanic research vessel ORV Sagar Kanya, the flagship of India's fleet of oceanographic study vessels.

5.15 CSIR-NIO

- The National Institute of Oceanography, founded in 1966 as one of 37 constituent laboratories of the CSIR.
- It is an autonomous research organization in India to undertake scientific research and studies of special oceanographic features of the Northern Indian Ocean.
- Headquartered in Goa, it has regional centers in Kochi, Mumbai and Vizag.

6. BILATERAL ISSUES

6.1 WISTEMM

- The Indo-U.S. Fellowship for “Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (WISTEMM)” program of Department of Science and Technology (DST) in association with Indo-U.S. Science & Technology Forum (IUSSTF) have provided international exposure to several women scientists.
- It aims to provide opportunities to Indian Women Scientists, Engineers & Technologists to undertake international collaborative research in premier institutions in U.S.A, to enhance their research capacities and capabilities.
- The programme is run for two categories of women scientists---
 1. Women Overseas Student Internship (Module I) for women students pursuing PhD,
 2. Women Overseas Fellowship (Module II) for women with PhD degree and holding regular position at any recognized institution/laboratory in India.
- The fellowship is for bright Indian women Citizen within the age bracket of 21 to 45 years.
- The funding support extended under the program includes stipend, airfare, health insurance, contingency and conference allowances.

6.2 PAHAL Project

- Partnerships for Affordable Healthcare Access and Longevity (PAHAL) is USAID flagship innovative financing platform to promote health financing models and provide catalytic support to social enterprises (IBMs) for improving access to affordable and quality healthcare solutions for the urban poor communities, with a focus on Tuberculosis, Maternal and Child Health and WASH.
- PAHAL has built a platform that provides unparalleled access to social enterprises for reducing cost and improving access to quality healthcare services.
- US announced that it will provide an additional \$3 million to India, through its aid agency USAID, for mitigating the spread of Covid-19.
- In coordination with the Indian government, USAID is providing these funds to the Partnerships for Affordable Healthcare Access and Longevity (PAHAL) project.
- Till now, USAID has provided \$5.9 million to assist India in responding to the pandemic.
- This assistance will help India slow the spread of Covid-19, provide care for the affected, disseminate essential public health messages to communities and strengthen case finding and surveillance.
- Through the PAHAL project, USAID will support the National Health Authority in establishing a financing facility that can mobilize resources from the private sector to assist over 20,000 health facilities enrolled under the health scheme Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.

USAID

- The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent agency of the United States federal government.
- It is primarily responsible for administering civilian foreign aid and development assistance.

6.3 South Asia Group for Energy

- US Agency for International Development (USAID) and India's ministry of new and renewable energy (MNRE) have announced the launch of a new partnership - SAGE



- Under the partnership, USAID will provide advanced technical knowledge on clean energy development from America's national laboratories to India's technical institutions.
- It will act as a powerhouse of science, engineering and technology for India and the entire South Asia region.
- It will contribute towards achieving the goals of the US government's Asia Enhancing Growth and Development through Energy (Asia EDGE) initiative,
- EDGE is a primary pillar of the US administration's Indo-Pacific vision in South Asia, and the US-India Strategic Energy Partnership.
- **MAITREE** - The Market Integration and Transformation Program for Energy Efficiency (MAITREE), is a part of the US-India bilateral Partnership between the Ministry of Power and USAID
- It is aimed at accelerating the adoption of cost-effective energy

6.4 Vaccine Action Programme

- In the context of the current pandemic, partners under the Vaccine Action Programme (VAP) are planning to collaborate on the development and testing of vaccine candidates and diagnostics for Covid-19.
- The Indo-U.S. Vaccine Action Program, is a 33-year collaboration between the U.S. National Institutes of Health, the Indian Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) along with other partners.
- The focus is on safe, cost-effective vaccines against a range of infectious diseases.

6.5 U.S - India Strategic Energy Partnership (SEP)

- It was established in 2018, recognizing the strategic importance of energy to the U.S.-India bilateral relationship.
- The SEP organizes inter-agency engagement on both sides across four primary pillars of cooperation
 1. Power and Energy Efficiency
 2. Oil and Gas
 3. Renewable Energy
 4. Sustainable Growth
- The two countries are also leading joint R&D through the ***U.S.-India Partnership to Advance Clean Energy-Research (PACE-R)*** on smart grids and energy storage.

Recent Initiatives of SEP

1. Strategic Petroleum Reserves - Recently a MOU has been signed which paves way for India storing oil in the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve to increase their nation strategic oil stockpiles.
2. A public-private Hydrogen Task Force to help scale up technologies to produce hydrogen from renewable energy and fossil fuel sources.
3. An MoU has been signed to collaborate on India's first-ever Solar Decathlon India in 2021 to prepare the next generation of professionals to design and build high efficiency buildings powered by renewables.
4. USAID announced partnership with Power System Operation Corporation (POSOCO) to develop India's National Open Access Registry (NOAR).
5. New areas of research on transformational power generation based on supercritical CO₂ (sCO₂) power cycles and advanced coal technologies for power generation and hydrogen production, including carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS).

6.6 US-India Business Council

- USIBC was formed in 1975 as a business advocacy organization to enlighten and encourage the private sectors of both India and United States to enhance investment flows.
- The organization serves as a direct link between business and Government leaders, resulting in increased trade and investment to strengthen ties between the two nations.

- USIBC partners with the major trade associations in India, including CII, FICCI, American Chamber of Commerce in India (AmCham India, NASSCOM, The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE), The Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC).
- In 2017, U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) announced a collaborative initiative titled Women for Women Innovators, Social Leaders, & Entrepreneurs (WISE).

6.7 India-EU S&T Cooperation

- India and European Union (EU) have renewed its Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation for the next five years (2020-2025).
- The Agreement was initially signed in 2001 and renewed two times in 2007 and 2015.
- The cooperation has been focused on water, green transport, e-mobility, clean energy, bio-economy, health, and ICT.
- The new agreement will expand the cooperation in scientific and technological research for economic and social benefit.
- In the last 5 years India-EU Research Technology Development Projects has addressed societal challenges such as affordable healthcare, water, energy, food & nutrition has been stepped up.

6.8 IC-IMPACTS

- **India-Canada** Centre for Innovative Multidisciplinary Partnership to Accelerate Community Transformation and Sustainability (IC-IMPACTS) has organized a conference.
- The annual research conference discussed ways of taking the cooperation between the countries to the next level by Strengthening existing international connects, Sharing best practices in multiple areas and Initiating new collaborations in government and institutions.
- The major focus areas of research cooperation under the IC-IMPACT are
 1. Green buildings and smart cities.
 2. Occupant's survivability in buildings during fires.
 3. Integrated water management & safe and sustainable infrastructure.
 4. Health problems arising from water-borne and infectious diseases.

6.9 Open Sky Agreements

- Open Sky Agreements are bilateral agreements that the two countries negotiate to provide rights for airlines to offer international passenger and cargo services.
- It expands international passenger and cargo flights.
- The National Civil Aviation Policy (2016) allows the government to enter into an 'open sky' air services agreement on a reciprocal basis with SAARC nations as well as countries beyond a 5,000 kilometre radius from New Delhi.
- It implies that nations within 5,000 kilometer of distance need to enter into a bilateral agreement and mutually determine the number of flights that their airlines can operate between the two countries.
- India has Air Service Agreements (ASA) with 109 countries including UAE covering aspects relating to the number of flights, seats, landing points and code-share.
- But does not allow unlimited number of flights between two countries.
- Recently, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has expressed interest to have an Open Sky Agreement with India.

Fifth and Sixth Freedom of Air

- The freedoms of the air are a set of commercial aviation rights granting a country's airlines the privilege to enter and land in another country's airspace.
- The Freedom of air was formulated in the Convention on International Civil Aviation of 1944, known as the Chicago Convention.
- The fifth freedom of air includes the right to fly between two foreign countries on a flight originating or ending in one's own country.
- The sixth freedom of air includes the right to fly from a foreign country to another while stopping in one's own country for non-technical reasons.

- Open skies between India and UAE will allow unlimited number of flights to the selected cities of each other's countries.

6.10 Protocol for Indo-Bangladesh Inland Waterways

- People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Republic of India have a long standing and time-tested Protocol on Transit and Trade through inland waterways of both countries.
- This Protocol, which was first signed in 1972 (immediately after independence of Bangladesh), is a reflection of shared history and friendship between the two countries.
- It was last renewed in 2015 for five years with a provision for its automatic renewal for a further period of five years giving long term assurance to various stakeholders.
- Recently 2nd Addendum to the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade was signed on protocol for inland water ways between the two nations.
- Under which the number of Indo Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) routes are being increased from 8 to 10 and new locations are also added to the existing routes.

6.11 Kholongchhu Hydroelectric Project

- **India and Bhutan** have signed a concession agreement on the 600 MW Kholongchhu Hydroelectric Project (KHEL) for work to start on it.
- The hydroelectric project will be the first-ever Joint Venture project to be implemented in Bhutan under an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) signed in 2014.
- The joint venture partners of the project are India's Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited (SJVN) and Druk Green Power Corporation Limited (DGPC).
- Other hydroelectric power projects in Bhutan build with India's involvement are
 1. 720 MW Mangdechhu
 2. 1200MW Punatsangchhu-1 and 1020MW Punatsangchhu-2.

6.12 High Impact Community Development

HICDPs constitute an important dimension of the dynamic development partnership between India and the Maldives.

- Under HICDP, India and Maldives have committed to execute projects under a total grant of USD 5.5 million.
- These projects are driven by the needs of communities on the islands. They will be implemented by City and Local Councils.
- It will enhance the capacities of locally-elected representatives and support the decentralization efforts of the Government of Maldives.
- Recently, India and Maldives signed a contract for setting up Neighborhood Fish Processing Plants at two of the islands in the neighboring country.
- These fish-processing plants are the first in a series of High Impact Community Development projects.

6.13 Border Work Group

- The BWG is a joint agency constituted by the governments of India and Nepal in 2014.
- It aims to carry out works in the fields of construction, restoration and repair of boundary pillars including clearance of 'no-man's land' and other technical tasks.
- It is led by the Surveyor General of India, the BWG is different from the foreign secretaries meeting that is being sought to discuss the Kalapani border dispute, but it is an important mechanism to review the boundary work.
- Survey of India is the National Mapping Agency under the Department of Science & Technology.
- The group so far has held six meetings, the last meeting was on 28th August 2019 in Dehradun.



- Recently Nepal has proposed a meeting of the Boundary Working Group (BWG) in August end or early September 2020.

6.14 Israel-UAE Deal

- Israel-UAE have arrived at an important peace agreement that has the potential to change the geopolitics of West Asia and beyond.
- Under the deal the UAE will establish diplomatic relations with Israel in return for President Binyamin Netanyahu committing to give up a stated plan to annex the West Bank.
- West bank is the main territory of a state that the Palestinians want.
- The UAE becomes the first Gulf Arab country and third Arab nation to recognize Israel after Egypt (in 1979) and Jordan (1994).
- This deal would dramatically bring all Sunni Nations in the region in an anti-Iran alliance with Israel.



6.15 Loya Jirga

- A Loya Jirga, or "grand council", is a mass national gathering that brings together representatives from the various ethnic, religious, and tribal communities in Afghanistan.
- The gathering involves participation of Afghan tribal elders, religious figures, and political leaders.
- The Loya Jirga is a centuries-old institution that has been convened at times of national crisis or to settle national issues.
- Historically, it has been used to approve a new constitution, declare war, choose a new king, or to make sweeping social or political reforms.
- It is considered the "highest expression" of the Afghan people, but it is not an official decision-making body.
- Its decisions are not legally binding and any verdict it hands out must be approved by the two houses of the Afghan parliament and the president in order for it to be made official.
- Recently Loya Jirga, opened in Afghanistan to determine whether a last set of 400 hard-core prisoners from the Taliban insurgency should be freed to clear the way for long-awaited direct peace talks between Afghanistan's warring sides.

7. INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

7.1 Funding Pattern of WHO

- There are four kinds of contributions that make up funding for the WHO.
- **Assessed contributions** -The dues countries pay in order to be a member of the Organization. It is calculated relative to the country's wealth and population.
- In recent years, assessed contributions to the WHO have declined, and now account for less than one-fourth of its funding.
- These funds are important for the WHO, because they provide a level of predictability and minimize dependence on a narrow donor base.
- **Specified voluntary contributions** - Voluntary contributions come from Member States (in addition to their assessed contribution) or from other partners.They can range from flexible to highly earmark.
- **Core voluntary contributions** - Core voluntary contributions allow less well-funded activities to benefit from a better flow of resources and ease implementation bottlenecks that arise when immediate financing is lacking.
- Voluntary contributions make up for most of the remaining funding.



- **PIP contributions** - Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Contributions were started in 2011 to improve and strengthen the sharing of influenza viruses with human pandemic potential, and to increase the access of developing countries to vaccines and other pandemic related supplies.
- The United States is currently the WHO's biggest contributor, making up 14% of total funding by providing USD 553.1 million.
- The US is followed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation forming 9.76 per cent or USD 367.7 million.
- The biggest programme area where the money is allocated is polio eradication, followed by increasing access to essential health and nutrition services and preventable diseases vaccines.
- **Recent developments** - USA administration has formally notified the United Nations of its withdrawal from the World Health Organization.
- Although the pullout won't take effect until next year, meaning it could be rescinded under a new administration if circumstances change.
- Under the terms of the withdrawal, the U.S. must meet its financial obligations to the WHO before it can be finalized.
- The U.S., which is the agency's largest donor and provides it with more than \$400 million per year, currently owes the WHO some \$200 million in current and past dues.

7.2 International Council on Monuments & Sites

- ICOMOS was founded in 1965 in Warsaw as a result of the Venice Charter of 1964, and offers advice to UNESCO on World Heritage Sites.
- HQ – Paris.
- It is a professional association that works for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places around the world.
- The idea behind ICOMOS dates to the Athens Conference on the restoration of historic buildings in 1931, organized by the International Museums Office.
- The Athens Charter of 1931 introduced the concept of international heritage.
- In 1964, the Second Congress of Architects and Specialists of Historic Buildings, meeting in Venice, adopted 13 resolutions.
- The first created the International Charter on the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, better known as Venice Charter; the second, put forward by UNESCO, created ICOMOS to carry out this charter.
- It currently has over 10,100 individual members in 153 countries, 110 national committees and 28 international scientific committees.
- It is a partner and founding member of the Blue Shield, which works to protect the world's cultural heritage threatened by wars and natural disasters.
- India is a member of ICOMOS.

7.3 Migration Policy Institute

- It is a non-partisan think tank established in 2001.
- It has been described as supportive of liberal immigration policies.
- It publishes an online journal, the Migration Information Source, which provides information, thoughts, and analyses of international migration and refugee trends.
- It organizes an annual Immigration Law and Policy Conference in New York.
- It has found that remittance flows between 2008 and 2009 declined by 5.5 % globally.

7.4 Singapore Convention on Mediation

- The Singapore Convention on Mediation is a United Nations (UN) treaty, will come into force on Sept 12, 2020.
- It is also known as the United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation.
- As of now 52 countries has signed the convention, including United States and China.
- Qatar has ratified the international treaty, it is the third country to do so, following Singapore and Fiji.
- According to the convention's provisions, the treaty comes into force when at least three countries have ratified it.
- The convention makes it easier for commercial parties in a dispute to seek enforcement of international mediated settlement agreements by applying directly to the courts of countries that have ratified the treaty.
- Presently, because a settlement agreement made in one country has no legal force in another, a party seeking to enforce a mediated settlement agreement in another country or multiple countries will have to commence legal proceedings in each country.
- This can potentially be costly and time-consuming, especially for international settlement agreements.
- Under the convention, a party seeking enforcement of a mediated settlement agreement can apply directly to the courts of countries that have signed and ratified the treaty.
- This allows businesses to easily enforce such settlement agreements across borders.
- In recent years, Singapore plans to establish as an international dispute resolution center, including setting up the Singapore International Arbitration Centre and the Singapore International Commercial Court.

7.5 Unicode Consortium

- Unicode Standard assigns code to characters from different languages in the world so that they can be understood and displayed across software platforms.
- Recently Unicode consortium has recently accepted the proposal to add Tamil two characters to Telugu characters for transcribing religious Tamil Texts.
- This initiative will help preserving Tamil texts written in Telugu.
- The Unicode Consortium (Unicode Inc.) is a non-profit organization based in California, USA.
- Its primary purpose is to maintain and publish the Unicode Standard which was developed with the intention of replacing existing character encoding schemes which are limited in size and scope, and are incompatible with multilingual environments.
- Unicode's success at unifying character sets has led to its widespread adoption in the internationalization and localization of software.
- The standard has been implemented in many recent technologies, including XML, the Java programming language, Swift, and modern operating systems.

7.6 Marine Stewardship Council

- The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is an independent non-profit organization which sets a standard for sustainable fishing.
- Fisheries that wish to demonstrate they are well-managed and sustainable compared to the science-based MSC standard are assessed by a team of experts who are independent of both the fishery and the MSC.
- Seafood products can display the blue MSC ecolabel only if that seafood can be traced back through the supply chain to a fishery that has been certified against the MSC standard.
- Another organization, the Aquaculture Stewardship Council, promotes and certifies sustainable aquaculture.

7.7 Indian Ocean Commission

- The Indian Ocean Commission is an intergovernmental organization that links African Indian Ocean nations - Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion (an overseas region of France), and Seychelles.
- There are also six observers: China, India, Japan, Sovereign Order of Malta the European Union and the Organization internationale de la Francophonie. India has recently become an observer to the Commission.
- The commission was created in 1982 in Port-Louis, Mauritius.

7.8 United Nations Mission in South Sudan

- The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is the newest United Nations peacekeeping mission for the recently independent South Sudan, which became independent on 9 July 2011.
- UNMISS was established in 2011 under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1996.
- It is headquartered in the South Sudanese capital of Juba.

7.9 United Nations Convention against Torture

- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (known as UNCAT) is an international human rights treaty, under the review of the United Nations.
- It aims to prevent torture and other acts of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment around the world.
- The Convention requires states to take effective measures to prevent torture in any territory under their jurisdiction, and forbids states to transport people to any country where there is reason to believe they will be tortured.
- The Convention was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1984 and came into force on 26 June 1987.
- 26 June is now recognized as the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, in honor of the Convention.
- India has signed the convention and yet to ratify it.

7.10 Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)

- It is an independent, non-partisan & non-profit international non-governmental organization which works towards the practical realization of human rights in the countries of the Commonwealth.
- CHRI's objectives are
 1. To promote awareness and adherence to the Commonwealth's Harare Declaration (which set out the Commonwealth's core principles and values)
 2. To the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 3. To other internationally recognized human rights instruments,
 4. To advocate for the domestic institutions supporting human rights in the Commonwealth member states.
- The organization specializes in transparency and accountability issues, with a focus on access to justice and access to information.

7.11 UN Arms Trade Treaty

- The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is a multilateral treaty that regulates the international trade in conventional weapons.
- The treaty was negotiated in New York City in 2012 and adopted by UN General Assembly in 2013. It entered into force on 4th December 2014.
- 105 states have ratified the treaty, and a further 32 states have signed but not ratified it. [India is not a member to this treaty]



- It requires member countries to keep records of international transfers of weapons and to prohibit cross-border shipments that could be used in human rights violations or attacks on civilians.
- Recently China's efforts to join the treaty has been rejected by the United States. The US Senate never ratified the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty, even after former president Barack Obama endorsed it.

7.12 Election to Non-Permanent members of UNSC

- Recently India, Norway, Ireland, Mexico and Kenya were elected as the non-permanent members of the UNSC for a two-year term beginning January 1, 2021.
- The presidency of the Council is held by each of the members in turn for one month, following the English alphabetical order of the member states' names.
- India will assume the rotating presidency of the Council for the month of August in 2021.
- India will preside over the Council again for a month in 2022.
- Previously, India was elected for the years 1950-1951, 1967-1968, 1972-1973, 1977-1978, 1984-1985, 1991-1992 and most recently in 2011-2012.

7.13 Cuba's Election to UNHRC

- The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has 47 members elected for staggered 3-year terms on a regional group basis from 5 groups.
- To become a member, a country must receive the votes of at least 96 of the 191 states of the UN General Assembly (an absolute majority).
- The members are elected for a period of 3 years, with a maximum of two consecutive terms.
- In electing Council members, the resolution provides that General Assembly members "shall take into account the candidates' contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights and their voluntary pledges and commitments made thereto.
- The US withdrew from the council in 2018 because the council adopted resolutions condemning Israel.
- U.S. Secretary of State has recently urged UN members not to support Cuba's bid to join the organization's Human Rights Council.
- Cuba, previously in the UNHRC in 2014-2016 and 2017-2019, has applied to fill one of the regional vacancies for 2021-2023.
- U.S. Secretary of State has described Cuba's sale of medical services, Havana's main source of foreign exchange, as a form of human trafficking.

7.14 Protesting a Fundamental Human Right

- UN Human Rights Committee has declared protesting to be a fundamental human right under the "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights".
- According to International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 1. People have the right to demonstrate peacefully and the same should be respected by governments of 173 countries who have ratified the convention.
 2. They have a right to wear masks, right to gather to celebrate or to air grievances, "in public and in private spaces, outdoors, indoors and online.
 3. The right is available for everyone including women, migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers.
 4. The Governments are forbidden from collecting personal data to harass the participants or from suppressing the protest using generalized references to public order or public safety, or an unspecified risk of potential violence".
 5. The governments are also not allowed to block internet networks or close down any website because of their roles in organizing or soliciting a peaceful assembly.
- India is a party to this convention.



7.15 Seabed 2030 Project

- This global initiative, launched in 2017, is a collaboration between Japan's non-profit Nippon Foundation and the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO).
- The mandate of GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project is to map the entire ocean floor.
- It helps in gaining the knowledge of bathymetry, the measurement of the shape and depth of the ocean floor.
- It helps in understanding natural phenomena, including ocean circulation, tides and biological hotspots.
- It also provides key inputs for navigation, forecasting tsunamis, exploration for oil and gas projects, building offshore wind turbines, fishing resources, and for laying cables and pipelines.
- It would also help further achieve the UN SDG to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources.
- It has announced that it had finished mapping nearly one-fifth of the world's ocean floor, by this it had added 1.45 crore square kilometers of new bathymetric data to its latest grid.

GEBCO

- GEBCO is the only intergovernmental organization with a mandate to map the entire ocean floor.
- Its origins is traced back to the GEBCO chart series initiated in 1903 by Prince Albert I of Monaco.

7.16 EAG Meeting

- Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism (EAG) is a regional body comprising nine countries.
- Members - India, Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Belarus.
- It is an associate member of the FATF (intergovernmental body to promote effective measures combating money laundering, terrorist financing).
- Recently India has participated plenary virtual meeting of EAG, under the aegis of the Financial Action Task Force.
- In the meeting India plans to share more evidence with the key FATF members on the narco-terror cases linked to Pakistan-based syndicates, through which funds are allegedly being supplied to the terrorists operating in Jammu and Kashmir.

7.17 International Comparison Program

- It is the largest worldwide data-collection initiative, under the guidance of UN Statistical Commission (UNSC).
- It's goal is to produce Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs) which are vital for converting measures of economic activities to be comparable across economies.
- Along with the PPPs, the ICP also produces Price Level Indices (PLI) and other regionally comparable aggregates of GDP expenditure.
- The World Bank has released new Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs) for reference year 2017, under International Comparison Program (ICP).
- Highlights of recent report
 1. The Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs) of Indian Rupee per US\$ at Gross Domestic Product (GDP) level is now 20.65 in 2017 from 15.55 in 2011.
 2. India is *second largest economy in terms of its PPP-based share* in regional Actual Individual Consumption and regional Gross Capital Formation.
 3. The Price Level Index (PLI)—the ratio of a PPP to its corresponding market exchange rate—is used to compare the price levels of economies, of India is 47.55 in 2017 from 42.99 in 2011.
- India has participated in almost all ICP rounds since its inception in 1970.
- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is National Implementing Agency (NIA) for India.
- It has the responsibility of planning, coordinating and implementing national ICP activities.

7.18 Global Vaccine Summit

- Recently, the Prime Minister of India addressed the virtual Global Vaccine Summit.
- The Summit was hosted by the United Kingdom (UK).
- Almost 50 countries including the business leaders, UN agencies, civil society, government ministers, Heads of State and country leaders participated in the Summit.
- The Summit was intended to urge nations around the world to pledge funding for vaccinations to protect the world from future outbreaks of infectious diseases.
- It aimed at raising USD 7.4 million to immunize a further 300 million children in the world's poorest countries by 2025.
- India has pledged USD 15-million as India's contribution to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI).

Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations

- GAVI is a public-private global health partnership with the goal of increasing access to immunization in poor countries.
- GAVI has observer status at the World Health Assembly.
- GAVI's approach to public health has been described as business-oriented and technology-focused, using market-oriented measures, and seeking quantifiable results.

7.19 ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee

- It was initially established in 1999, pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1267.
- The Committee comprises *all 15 members of the Security Council* and makes its decision by consensus.
- It oversees the sanctions measures imposed by the Security Council.
- It is one of three Security Council committees dealing with counter-terrorism.
- The other two committees are
 1. The Counter-Terrorism Committee established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001),
 2. The Security Council Committee established pursuant to Resolution 1540 (2004).

7.20 YuWaah

- UNICEF had launched Generation Unlimited India (YuWaah) in 2019.
- It is a multi-stakeholder alliance which aims to facilitate youth to gain relevant skills for productive lives and the future of work.
- The target age group includes adolescent girls and boys.
- Its key mission is to promote among youth foundational skills, life skills and flexible learning and identifying and scaling impactful delivery models.
- Union Ministry of Youth Affairs has recently signed a Statement of Intent with YuWaah.
- The partnership aims to promote volunteerism among the youth of India as well as to help them transition from education and learning to productive work, skilling and being active citizens.
- Group on Traditional Medicine under the existing Institutional Meetings of the SCO Health Ministers.