

Current Affairs Update (March 1-7)

National

Operation Ganga

The Government of India has launched a 'multi-pronged' initiative named 'Operation Ganga'. It is an evacuation mission to bring back all the Indian nationals who are currently stranded in Ukraine. There were around 20,000 Indians including students stuck in Ukraine.

SC enforces a landmark ruling on death penalty

More than four decades after a landmark ruling on death sentence cases, a bench in **the Supreme Court has made psychological evaluation of the condemned prisoner mandatory**. It has also sought a report on the inmate's conduct at the time of examining whether the gallows remains the only fitting punishment.

Supreme Court's verdict in Bachan Singh vs State of Punjab (1980):

This verdict established **the doctrine of "rarest of rare" crime** in handing down capital punishment while mandating a comparative analysis of aggravating and mitigating circumstances in connection to the accused.

The judgment laid down that **a court must scrutinise both the crime as well as the criminal**, and then decide whether death penalty is the only suitable punishment in the facts of the case.

Emphasis is to be also laid on the aggravating and mitigating factors which are dependent upon the facts and circumstances of the case.

Machi Singh vs State of Punjab (1983):

In this case, the Supreme Court elucidated **the doctrine of "rarest of rare"** and set down some guiding principles in the death sentences cases.

Lachit Borphukan

- President Ram Nath Kovind recently inaugurated the year-long celebration of **the 400th birth anniversary of Lachit Borphukan**, commander of the Ahom forces and an icon of Assamese nationalism.
- He was **a commander in the Ahom kingdom**. Known for his leadership in **the 1671 Battle of Saraighat** that thwarted a drawn-out attempt by Mughal forces under the command of Ramsingh I to take over Ahom kingdom.

- The **battle of Saraighat** was fought on the banks of the Brahmaputra in Guwahati.
- The **National Defence Academy (NDA)**, ever since 1999 has been conferring the best passing out cadet with **the Lachit Borphukan gold medal**.

International

Council of Europe

- Russia's membership in **the Council of Europe** has been suspended after its invasion of Ukraine.
- The Council of Europe is an international organization founded in the wake of World War II to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe.
- Founded in 1949 (**Treaty of London (1949)**), it has 46 member states (including all 27 EU members), with a population of approximately 820 million, and operates with an annual budget of approximately 500 million euros.
- **Headquarters:** Palace of Europe, Strasbourg, France.

Snake Island

Snake Island, or Zmiinyi Island, also known as Serpent Island is an island belonging to Ukraine and is located in the Black Sea, near the Danube Delta. It plays an important role in delimiting the territorial waters of Ukraine.

During the Ottoman Empire, this island was renamed as Fidonisi by the Greeks and from it, the naval battle of Fidonisi was named. The island became part of the Russian Empire in 1829, following the Russo-Turkish War of 1828–1829, and remained so until 1856. After the 1877–1878 Russo-Turkish War, the Ottoman Empire transferred this island along with the Northern Dobruja region to Romania as compensation for Russia's takeover of Romania's Southern Bessarabia province.

World War I

A radio station was operated on this island by the Russians as part of the Romanian-Russian alliance, which was destroyed in 1917 when it was bombarded by the Turkish ship Medilli.

World War II

During the Second World War, the island was under Romanian control and an Axis radio station was located on it, making it a target for the Soviet Black Sea Fleet.

In 1944, the Romanian marines stationed on this island were evacuated and the Soviet troops occupied it.

2022 Russian Invasion

On the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine's first day, two Russian naval warships, Moskva and Vasily Bykov attacked this Island. On the same day, a second attack followed and the Russian force's invaded and captured the island. Thirteen Ukrainian border guards who were stationed on this island were killed during the battle after they refused to surrender.

Montreux Convention

Turkey is set to implement **the Montreux Convention, an international convention** on naval passage through two of its strategic straits, which would allow them to limit the movement of Russian warships between **the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea.**

On what grounds can such limitations be announced?

- In the event of a war, the pact gives Ankara the right to regulate the transit of naval warships and to block the straits to warships belonging to the countries involved in the conflict.
- Turkey's foreign minister said that **the situation in Ukraine had become a war.** This declaration authorises Ankara to activate the Montreux Convention and ban Russian war vessels from entering the Black Sea through **the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits.**

The Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, also known as the Turkish Straits or the Black Sea Straits, connect the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea via the Sea of Marmara. It is the only passage through which the Black Sea ports can access the Mediterranean and beyond. Over three million barrels of oil, about three per cent of the daily global supply, mostly produced in Russia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan, pass through this waterway every day.

Cyclone Emnati

It has wreaked havoc on Madagascar. Emnati will be the fifth extreme weather event this year, and fourth tropical storm to make landfall in Madagascar in one month, following Tropical Storm Ana, Tropical **Cyclone** Batsirai, Tropical Storm Dumako.

What is a Bomb Cyclone?

- **"Bombogenesis** is the technical term. **'Bomb cyclone'** is a shortened version of it."
- It is a **mid-latitude cyclone** that intensifies rapidly.
- It has **low pressure at its center, weather fronts and an array of associated weather,** from blizzards to severe thunderstorms to heavy precipitation.
- Generally, a bomb cyclone happens when **atmospheric pressure in the middle of the storm drops at least 24 millibars over 24 hours,** quickly increasing in intensity. The lower the pressure, the stronger the storm.

Why in news? A violent **bomb cyclone** is grazing north just west of Ireland and UK with violent, hurricane winds and major waves.

WHO's pandemic treaty

Members of the World Health Organisation (WHO) held the first round of negotiations towards the pandemic treaty on February 24, 2022. The meeting was aimed at **agreeing on ways of working and timelines for a “convention, agreement or other international instrument”** to prevent further pandemics and to improve the preparedness and response in case of its occurrence.

What is the pandemic treaty?

In December 2021, **the Health Assembly** adopted a decision titled **“The World Together”** at its second special session since it was founded in 1948.

Under the decision, the health organisation established **an intergovernmental negotiating body (INB)** to draft and negotiate the contents of **the pandemic treaty** in compliance with **Article 19 of the WHO Constitution**.

The pandemic treaty is expected to cover aspects like data sharing and genome sequencing of emerging viruses and equitable distribution of vaccines and drugs and related research throughout the world.

Science-Tech & Environment

Global Plastics Treaty

In a biggest multilateral environmental deal, 175 countries have agreed to a legally binding global treaty called **“Global Plastics Treaty”**, to end the plastic pollution crisis by tackling the entire supply chain of material.

The resolution on first treaty was passed at meeting of UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) in Nairobi in Kenya. First treaty directly seeks to tackle 9 billion tonnes of plastic produced since plastic age ramped up in 1950s. Now, they have started working on how to implement the treaty by 2024.

Ideas that were put forward

During the meeting, two competing ideas were put forward:

1. One idea is led by Peru and Rwanda. It encompassed all stages of life cycle of plastics, starting from production, consumption and disposal.
2. Second idea was a far more limited deal. It focused on plastics in oceans. It was spearheaded by Japan.

Plastic Waste in India: As per Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), India generates around 26,000 tonnes of plastic per day. More than 10,000 tonnes of plastic waste remain uncollected per day. India's per capita plastic consumption is nearly a tenth of United States of America.

Bloatware apps

Also known as **Potentially Unwanted Programs (PUP)**, bloatware apps are needless programs that take a toll on your device's performance. Bloatware apps are being criticized for taking up the storage of the device unnecessarily and affecting the system's battery life and overall performance.

Generally, these apps that run in the background are hidden and locating them becomes a tough job for the users. It could be any software on your computer, phone or tablet that consumes a lot of resources like — memory, storage and battery life.

There are three most common types of bloatwares that can be found on any device.

Utilities: These types of bloatwares come from manufacturers and third-party developers and are usually pre-loaded on your device. These offer added functionality to your device.

Trialware: Users can experience the app as most of them offer free trial modes in new devices. However, these programs keep on consuming your device's resources, even after the trial period is over.

Adware: These types of bloatware typically gets downloaded while downloading softwares from the internet.

Palk Bay Dugong Reserve

Tamil Nadu government has begun work to set up the first Dugong Conservation Reserve of India in the Palk Bay region. Dugongs are **endangered species** and are protected under the Wildlife Protection Act's, 1972 Schedule 1. Dugongs are also known as **Sea Cows**. They graze, on **seagrass**, in shallow coastal waters of the Indian and western Pacific Oceans. The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) states that only 200-250 dugongs are left, of which 150 are found in the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay. The dugong is on the verge of becoming extinct.

Dharma Guardian Exercise

Dharma Guardian is the name of an Indo-Japan Joint Military Exercise that began in 2018. This exercise takes place between both countries' armies. The latest edition of this exercise will begin from 27 February to 10 March 2022 and will be conducted at Foreign Training Node, Belagavi, Karnataka.

National Science Day (NSD)

28th February is celebrated as National Science Day (NSD) in India. NSD is celebrated to commemorate discovery of **the 'Raman Effect'**, which led to **Sir C.V. Raman winning the Nobel Prize**. The first National Science Day was celebrated on February 28, 1987.

Theme: 'Integrated Approach in Science and Technology for a Sustainable Future'.

State of India's Environment Report, 2022

The State of India's Environment Report, 2022 of the Centre for Science and Environment was released by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav. According to this report, India's ranking has slipped due to substantial challenges in 11 SDGs such as zero hunger, good health and wellbeing, gender equality, and sustainable cities and communities.

On the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted as part of the 2030 Agenda by 192 United Nations member states in 2015, India has dropped three places from last year's ranking of 117 to 120. The overall Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) score of India was 66 out of 100.

IPCC Report

The second part of **the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report** was released recently. **This second part of the report** is about climate change impacts, risks and vulnerabilities, and adaptation options.

The **Sixth Assessment Report (AR6)** of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the sixth in a series of reports intended to assess scientific, technical, and socio-economic information concerning climate change.

- This report evaluates the physical science of climate change – looking at the past, present, and future climate.

Highlights of the report:

- The latest report has, **for the first time, made an assessment of regional and sectoral impacts of climate change.**
- **It has included risks to, and vulnerabilities of, mega-cities around the world.** For example, it has said Mumbai is at high risk of sea-level rise and flooding, while Ahmedabad faces serious danger of heat-waves.

Impact on health:

For the first time, the IPCC report has looked at the health impacts of climate change.

- It has found that climate change is increasing vector-borne and water-borne diseases such as malaria or dengue, particularly in sub-tropical regions of Asia.
- It has also said deaths related to circulatory, respiratory, diabetic and infectious diseases, as well as infant mortality, are likely to increase with a rise in temperature.

- Increasing frequency of extreme weather events like heat waves, flooding and drought, and even air pollution was contributing to under-nutrition, allergic diseases and even mental disorders.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):

- It is an **intergovernmental body of the United Nations** responsible for advancing knowledge on human-induced climate change.
- It was **established in 1988** by **the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** and **the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**.
- **Headquarter:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Function:** To provide policymakers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.

Thermobaric weapons

These are called **vacuum bombs** as they **suck in oxygen from surrounding areas to generate high-voltage explosions.**

- The blast wave is of a greater intensity and duration than conventional bombs and can vapourise humans.
- While they cannot be used in taking down tanks and other such military vehicles, they can dismantle civilian spaces, like residential or commercial complexes.

Cluster bombs:

Cluster munitions are non-precision weapons that are designed to injure or kill human beings indiscriminately over a large area, and to destroy vehicles and infrastructure such as runways, railway or power transmission lines.

- They can be dropped from an aircraft or launched in a projectile that spins in flight, scattering many bomblets as it travels.
- Many of these bomblets end up not exploding, but continue to lie on the ground, often partially or fully hidden and difficult to locate and remove, posing a threat to the civilian population for long after the fighting has ceased.

Convention on Cluster Munitions:

It is an **international treaty** that prohibits all use, transfer, production, and stockpiling of cluster bombs, a type of explosive weapon which scatters submunitions (“bomblets”) over an area.

Additionally, the Convention establishes a framework to support victim assistance, clearance of contaminated sites, risk reduction education, and stockpile destruction. The convention was adopted on 30 May 2008 in Dublin. As of date, there are 110 state parties to the convention, and 13 other countries have signed up but are yet to ratify it.

Why in news? Human rights groups Amnesty International and Ukraine's ambassador to the United States Oksana Markarova accused Russia of using vacuum bombs and cluster bombs in the ongoing war.

INS Visakhapatnam

- India's indigenous INS Visakhapatnam was dedicated to the City of Destiny, formally.
- It has been designed, developed and built indigenously in India.
- It has been named after the City of Destiny.
- INS Visakhapatnam is India's first among four stealth guided missile destroyers under Project 15B. It has 75 percent indigenous content. It has been constructed by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, Mumbai.

SIMBA to give distinct identity to each Asiatic lion

- The **Gujarat forest department** has developed an **Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based photo-identification software**, specially designed to distinguish patterns/marks to identify Asiatic lions individually.
- The software is named **SIMBA (Software with Intelligence Marking Based identification of Asiatic lions.)**
- The SIMBA works with a **deep machine learning technique that matches a point-pattern for pairwise comparisons** and that automates the individual identification, based on the variability in the individual's whisker spot pattern, the presence of scars on the face, notches on the ears and other metadata of the photograph.
- The software also extracts the uniqueness from the photograph and can cluster similar patterns.
- Listed as '**Endangered**' under the **IUCN Red List**.

Economics

Issues wrt digital lending apps

1. They attract borrowers with promise of loans in a quick and hassle-free manner.
2. But, Excessive rates of interest and additional hidden charges are demanded from borrowers.
3. Such platforms adopt unacceptable and high-handed recovery methods.
4. They misuse agreements to access data on the mobile phones of the borrowers.

Benefits of digital lending:

- Digital lending has the potential to make access to financial products and services more fair, efficient and inclusive.
- From a peripheral supporting role a few years ago, FinTech-led innovation is now at the core of the design, pricing and delivery of financial products and services.

RBI panel recommendations:

A Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Working Group (WG) on digital lending, including lending through online platforms and mobile apps submitted its recommendations in 2021.

Key recommendations:

1. A separate legislation should be enacted to oversee such lending.
2. Setup a nodal agency to vet the Digital Lending Apps.
3. A Self-Regulatory Organisation should be set up for participants in the digital lending ecosystem.
4. Develop certain baseline technology standards and compliance with those standards as a pre-condition for offering digital lending solutions.
5. Disbursement of loans should be made directly into the bank accounts of borrowers and servicing of loans should be done only through the bank accounts of the digital lenders.
6. All data collection must require the prior consent of borrowers and come 'with verifiable audit trails' and the data itself ought to be stored locally.

SEBI's first woman Chairperson

The government appointed Madhabi Puri Buch as the new chairperson of SEBI. Madhabi Puri Buch is the first woman chairperson of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). She was the former head of ICICI Securities.

Current Affairs Update (March 8-13)

National

What is 'general consent' for the CBI, now withdrawn by Meghalaya?

Meghalaya has withdrawn consent to the CBI to investigate cases in the state, becoming **the ninth state to have taken this step.**

Eight other states which had withdrawn consent to the CBI: Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, and Mizoram.

The CBI is governed by **the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act** that makes **consent of a state government mandatory for conducting investigation in that state.**

There are two kinds of consent:

Case-specific and general— Given that the CBI has jurisdiction only over central government departments and employees, it **can investigate a case involving state government employees or a violent crime in a given state only after that state government gives its consent.**

"General consent" is normally given to help the CBI seamlessly conduct its investigation into cases of corruption against central government employees in the concerned state.

What are Karewas?

In the Kashmiri dialect, **the term Karewa means "elevated table land"**. Firstly, this term was **used by Godwin Austin in 1859 and later on by Lydekker in 1878 for unconsolidated to semi-consolidated sand clay conglomerate sequence.** **"Vudr"** is the local name for Karewas in Kashmiri language.

Karewas are the **thick deposits of glacial clay and other materials embedded with moraines.** These are unconsolidated **lacustrine deposits.** Lacustrine means "associated with lakes".

Economic significance of Karewas:

- Karewa deposits have different soil and sediments such as sand, clay, silt, shale, mud, lignite and losses. Hence, these are very useful for agricultural and horticulture activities.
- Karewa formations are useful for the cultivation of Zafran is a local variety of Saffron in Kashmir valley. These are also important for the cultivation of almond, walnut, apple, and orchards.



Vivek Career Academy SCO 385, Sector 8, Panchkula

Women's day 2022

Women's Day is celebrated every year around the world on March 8. Theme for International Women's Day, 2022 (IWD 2022) is 'Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow'.

IWD 2022 campaign theme is '#BreakTheBias'. It intends to promote a "gender equal world", which is "free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination". "A world that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive", and where "difference is valued and celebrated".

History and significance: IWD has been celebrated for over a century now, but many people think of it purely as a feminist cause. **Its roots, however, are found in the labour movement**, wherein it was **first organised in 1911 by the early 20th century Marxist from Germany Clara Zetkin**.

'Kanya Shiksha Pravesh Utsav' scheme

On the eve of International Women's Day, **the Ministry of Women and Child Development** has launched '**Kanya Shiksha Pravesh Utsav**' scheme to bring back the out-of-school girls back to the education system.

Launched by the Women and Child Development Ministry in partnership with the Education Ministry. This scheme will fulfil the target of **Right To Education act** that says to bring out-of-school girls back to the education system.

Various government efforts towards women education in India:

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme: It aims to generate awareness and also improve the efficiency of welfare services for the girl child. The initial aim of the campaign was to address the declining child sex ratio but it also include propagating education, survival and protection of the girl child.

Digital Gender Atlas: Ministry of Human Resource Development has prepared a digital gender atlas for advancing girls' education in India.

National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE): The objective of the scheme is to establish an enabling environment to reduce the drop outs and to promote the enrolment of girl children in secondary schools.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: In order to ensure greater participation of girls in elementary education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has targeted interventions for girls which include opening of schools, appointment of additional women teachers, separate toilets for girls, teachers' sensitisation programmes etc. In addition, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas has been opened in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs).

Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA): It envisages enhancing the quality of education by providing a secondary school within a reasonable distance of every habitation, improving quality of education imparted at secondary level, removal of gender, socio-economic and disability barriers.

Udaan: CBSE has launched 'Udaan' to provide free online resources to girl students of Class XI and Class XII for preparation. The special focus of the scheme is to address the low enrolment ratio of girl students in prestigious institutions.

STEM education: To increase the participation of women in STEM education, supernumerary seats have been created in the IITs and NITs

What is Pal – Dadhvav massacre?

Took place on March 7, 1922, in the Pal-Chitariya and Dadhvaav villages of Sabarkantha district, then part of Idar state (**present-day Gujarat**).

Villagers from Pal, Dadhvav, and Chitariya had gathered on the banks of river Heir as part of the '**Eki movement**', led by one **Motilal Tejawat**.

The movement was **to protest against the land revenue tax (lagaan) imposed on the peasants by the British and feudal lords**.

British Paramilitary force was on hunt for Tehawat. It heard of this gathering and reached the spot.

Nearly 200 bhils under the leadership of Tehawat lifted their bows and arrows. But, the Britishers opened fire on them. Nearly 1,000 tribals (Bhils) fell to bullets.

Tejwat, however, escaped and later "returned to the spot to christen it 'Veerbhumi'."

Why in news? On **March 7**, the Gujarat government marked **100 years of the Pal-Dadhvav killings**, calling it a massacre "bigger than **the Jallianwala Bagh**".

The code of ethics and procedure, and safeguards in relation to the digital media

The **Information & Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry** has approached the Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) of all the State and Union Territory governments to initiate an awareness drive for sensitising their officials to **the code of ethics and procedure, and safeguards in relation to the digital media**.

The **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**, which was notified by the Central government on February 25, 2021, relates to the digital news publishers. It is administered by **the Information & Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry**.

Overview of the rules:

The Rules provide for:

1. A code of ethics to be followed by digital news publishers and OTT platforms.

2. A three-tier grievance redress mechanism, which includes self-regulation by publishers at the first level, self-regulation by self-regulating bodies of the publishers and an oversight mechanism by the Central government.
3. Procedures for them to furnish the required information.
4. Significant social media firms have to appoint a **chief compliance officer and have a nodal contact person** who can be in touch with law enforcement agencies 24/7.
5. **A grievance officer:** Social media platforms will also have to name a grievance officer who shall register the grievance within 24 hours and dispose of it in 15 days.

What are the Concerns being raised?

1. Various industry bodies have written to the government **for up to a one-year compliance window, particularly in view of the pandemic.**
2. Concerns have also been expressed over potential **unavailability of 'safe harbour' protection** given to intermediaries under **Section 79 of the IT Act**, under the new rules.
3. They have requested a re-think over a clause in the new rules which can lead to **imposition of criminal liability upon the employees for non-compliance by intermediaries**, asking for it to be dropped in the interest of ease of doing business.
4. **Originator traceability mandate in end-to-end encrypted platforms** could end up weakening the security architecture of the platform. This could render the entire citizenry susceptible to cyberattacks by hostile actors.
5. Additionally, the extant data retention mandate entailed **risking privacy of users in India and abroad** in addition to security risks and technical complexities which requires a lot of time for development and testing before integration with the existing ecosystem.

Eighth schedule to the Constitution

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has said his government would revive its long-pending demand for inclusion of **Bhojpuri in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution**, so that it can be accorded the status of an official language. The state cabinet had sent a proposal to the Centre in this regard in 2017.

Part XVII of the Indian constitution deals with **the official languages in Articles 343 to 351.**

Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri are **the 22 languages presently in the eighth schedule to the Constitution.**

Sushma Swaraj Award

Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar of Haryana while presenting the state budget has announced a 'Sushma Swaraj Award' for women for their significant achievements or contribution in different walks of life in the international and national spheres.

The Sushma Swaraj Award will carry an award money of Rs 5 lakh along with a commendation.

Sushma Swaraj was a lawyer of the Supreme Court as well as an Indian politician. She was a senior member of the Bharatiya Janata Party, served as India's Minister of External Affairs during the first Narendra Modi government (2014–2019). After Indira Gandhi, she was the second woman to occupy this position. She was elected seven times as a Member of Parliament and three times as a Member of Legislative Assembly. In 1977, at the age of 25, she became the youngest cabinet minister in the state of Haryana. She also served as Delhi's 5th Chief Minister for a brief period in 1998, and also became the city's first female Chief Minister.

India's Largest Reclining Statue of Lord Buddha

The largest reclining statue of Lord Buddha in India is being built in Bodh Gaya, Bihar. India's Buddhist pilgrimage circuit is being proactively revived and Bodh Gaya is an integral part of it. Hence, the site of Gautam Buddha's enlightenment will soon be home to his largest reclining statue.

The statue will be 30 feet high and 100 feet long. In the statue, Lord Buddha is in the sleeping posture.

International

Democracy Report 2022

The latest edition of **Democracy Report** was released recently by the **V-Dem Institute at Sweden's University of Gothenburg**. The study was titled '**Democracy Report 2022: Autocratisation Changing Nature?**'

The report classifies countries into **four regime types based on their score in the Liberal Democratic Index (LDI)**: Liberal Democracy, Electoral Democracy, Electoral Autocracy, and Closed Autocracy.

India's performance:

- It classifies India as **an electoral autocracy** ranking it 93rd on the LDI, out of 179 countries.
- India is one of **the top ten 'autocratisers' in the world says the report.**
- India is part of a broader global trend of an anti-plural political party driving a country's Autocratisation.

- Ranked 93rd in the LDI, India figures in the “bottom 50%” of countries.

Temporary Protection Directive (TPD)

Over 1.5 million people fled Ukraine in the first 10 days of fighting, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which has described the displacement as **the “fastest growing refugee crisis since the Second World War”**.

Responding to the crisis, EU Member States on March 3 made the unprecedented decision to activate the European Union’s Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001, known as **the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD)**.

The war in Ukraine is **the first time that the EU has invoked the TPD**. It is being seen as another sign of European unity against Russia.

What is TPD?

The European Commission describes “temporary protection” under the TPD as an **“exceptional measure** to provide immediate and temporary protection to displaced persons from non-EU countries and those unable to return to their country of origin”.

The directive applies when “there is a risk that the standard asylum system is struggling to cope with demand stemming from a mass influx risking a negative impact on the processing of claims”.

Motor Vehicles Agreement of BBIN grouping

A meeting was recently held between three countries – Bangladesh, India and Nepal, to discuss the next steps in operationalising **the Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA)** of the sub-regional Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) grouping for the free flow of good and people between them. Bhutan has already announced that it is unwilling to sign this agreement.

About MVA:

The original BBIN MVA was signed by all four countries in June 2015, but after objections in Bhutan over sustainability and environmental concerns, the Bhutanese parliament decided not to endorse the plan.

As per the agreement, member countries would allow vehicles registered in the other countries to enter their territory under certain terms and conditions. Customs and tariffs will be decided by the respective countries and these would be finalised at bilateral and trilateral forums.

Asian Development Bank has supported the project as part of its **South Asian Subregional Economic Cooperation programme**.

Why Bhutan has remained out?

Tiven Bhutan’s “current infrastructure” and top priority to remaining a “carbon-negative” country, it said it would not be possible to consider joining the MVA.

UAE in FATF Grey List

Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has included United Arab Emirates (UAE) in its grey list. FATF is an inter-governmental body established by the G7 countries in 1989. It is mainly a policy-making body and its mandate is to promote reforms in a country’s financial system to combat money-laundering and terror financing.

When a country is placed in the grey list, it faces the following issues:

- Rating agencies like Moody’s, Standard & Poor’s, and Fitch will give poor ratings.
- Its reputation will be damaged and thereby foreign investments will be reduced.
- The competitive advantage of the country will be lost.

Reasons for inclusion of UAE in the grey list

- Lack of adequate financial intelligence capabilities to check illicit flows of money.
- Inability to proactively identify and report suspicious financial transactions.
- Inadequate investigation & prosecution of terror financing and money laundering cases.
- Inability to manage risks and vulnerabilities in industries like jewelry, real estate, etc.

Houthis

Houthis are an armed rebel group belonging to the Zaidi Shia sect fighting against the government of Yemen. Traditionally, the Houthis have been concentrated in the northwestern Saada Province of Yemen.

Science-Tech & Environment

Advanced version of BrahMos missile

- The **Indian Navy** successfully test-fired a **naval variant long-range version of the BrahMos cruise missile recently**.
- **Jointly developed by India and Russia.**
- **Extended range:** 350 to 400-km.
- **Speed:** Flies almost three times the speed of sound at Mach 2.8.
- **Types:** Can be launched from submarine, ships, aircraft or land.
- **Nomenclature:** The name BrahMos is a blend formed from **the names of two rivers, the Brahmaputra of India and the Moskva of Russia.**
- **Significance:** It is **the world’s fastest Anti-Ship Cruise Missile currently in operation.**

Northern River Terrapin

It is a species of riverine turtle native to Southeast Asia.

IUCN Status: Critically endangered.

Habitat: Currently found in Bangladesh and India(in the Sunderbans), Cambodia, Indonesia and Malaysia. It is regionally extinct in Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Context: Experts and forest officials had installed GPS transmitters on Northern River Terrapin in Indian Sundarbans.

Kavach

It is an indigenously developed technology that can **prevent two trains from colliding**. It is also called the **Train Collision Avoidance System (TCAS)**, which got rechristened to **Kavach or “armour”**.

How it works?

It is a set of electronic devices and Radio Frequency Identification devices installed in locomotives, in the signalling system as well the tracks, that talk to each other using ultra high radio frequencies to control the brakes of trains and also alert drivers, all based on the logic programmed into them.

PARAM Ganga

The **National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)** has deployed “**PARAM Ganga**”, a **supercomputer** at IIT Roorkee, with a supercomputing capacity of 1.66 Petaflops. The system is designed and commissioned by C-DAC under Phase 2 of the build approach of the NSM.

The National Supercomputing Mission (NSM): It is being steered jointly by the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeiTY) and the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and implemented by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) and Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore.

HANSA-NG

- HANSA-New Generation (HANSA-NG) is India’s **first indigenous aircraft trainer**.
- HANSA-NG is indigenously designed and developed by Council of Scientific and Industrial Research -National Aerospace Laboratories (**CSIR-NAL**). It is a two-seater aircraft and a revamped version of the HANSA, which was developed 30 years ago.
- Its advantages include **low cost and low consumption of fuel**. Thus it is most suitable for Commercial Pilot Licensing (CPL) purposes and meets the needs of Indian flying clubs.

TRAPPIST-1 system

- TRAPPIST-1 is a red dwarf star in the **Aquarius constellation**. **James Webb Telescope** will be directed towards the TRAPPIST-1 system. It will look for signs of atmosphere on the planets of TRAPPIST-1.
- Its mass is about 9% of the Sun and its radius is slightly larger than the Jupiter. It has a surface temperature of about 2,290 °C and is about 39 light years from the Sun.
- In 2016, scientists found three planets orbiting this star using the **Transiting Planets and Planetesimals Small Telescope (TRAPPIST)** in La Silla Observatory, Chile. Scientists named this star TRAPPIST-1 in honor of this telescope.

Camel Protection and Development Policy

- The state government of Rajasthan in its budget 2022-23 has announced a Camel Protection and Development Policy.
- According to the state government figures, in Rajasthan there are less than two lakh camels left. Since 2012, the number of camels has reduced by 1.5 lakh in India. Around 2.5 lakh camels were left when in 2019 it was last counted.
- The **state animal of Rajasthan** is the Camel and their number is decreasing continuously. In 2014, the government of Rajasthan had declared the camel as the state animal.
- Nearly 85 per cent of India's camels are found in Rajasthan which is followed by Haryana, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.
- According to the 2019 animal census, the number of camels in Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, and Nagaland dropped to zero, although these states had 45, 03, 07, and 92 camels, respectively, in 2012.

SLINEX

- The **Ninth Edition of India – Sri Lanka Bilateral Maritime Exercise SLINEX (Sri Lanka–India Naval Exercise)** is being conducted at Visakhapatnam.
- It aims to enhance interoperability, improve mutual understanding and exchange best practices and procedures for multi-faceted maritime operations between both navies.
- Exercise MITRA SHAKTI (Military Exercise).
- Dosti Trilateral Exercise (Coast guard India, Maldives and Sri Lanka).

CERN- European Organization for Nuclear Research

- CERN is the European Organization for Nuclear Research where scientists probe the fundamental structure of the universe.
- CERN was established in 1954. It has 23 member states. 22 members are European countries. Israel is the only non-European nation that has full membership in CERN.
- India is the associate member of CERN and USA has observer status at CERN.
- CERN is located in Geneva and it is an official Observer to the United Nations (UN).

- Its most important function is to provide the particle accelerators and other related infrastructure required for high-energy physics research.
- Condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine, CERN announced that it will not engage in new collaborations with Russia until further notice. Russia has observer status at CERN and about 8% of CERN's staff are Russian scientists.

Economics

National Land Monetization Corporation (NLMC)

The Union Cabinet has approved the setting up **National Land Monetization Corporation (NLMC)**. The NLMC will be a wholly **owned Government of India company** with an initial authorized share capital of Rs 5000 crore and paid-up share capital of Rs 150 crore.

NLMC will **undertake monetization of surplus land and building assets** of 'Central Public Sector Enterprises' (CPSEs) and other Government agencies. The proposal is in pursuance of the Budget Announcement for 2021-22.

Key functions of NLMC:

- NLMC is expected **to own, hold, manage and monetize surplus land and building assets of CPSEs** under closure and the surplus non-core land assets of Government owned CPSEs under strategic disinvestment.
- This will **speed up the closure process of CPSEs** and smoothen the strategic disinvestment process of Government owned CPSEs.
- **These assets may be transferred to NLMC** to hold, manage and monetize these assets.
- NLMC will also **advise and support other Government entities (including CPSEs)** in identifying their surplus non-core assets and monetizing them in a professional and efficient manner to generate maximum value realization.
- In these cases, NLMC will undertake surplus land asset monetization as an agency function.
- It is expected that **NLMC will act as a repository of best practices in land monetization**, assist and provide technical advice to Government in implementation of asset monetization programme.

Composition: NLMC will have **necessary technical expertise** to professionally manage and monetize land assets on behalf of CPSEs and other Government agencies.

The Board of Directors of NLMC: will comprise senior Central Government officers and eminent experts to enable professional operations and management of the company.

The Chairman, and non-Government Directors of the NLMC will be appointed through a merit-based selection process.

UPI123Pay

The Reserve Bank of India has launched a **new Unified Payments Interface (UPI) payments solution for feature phone users** dubbed '**UPI123Pay**'.

UPI '123PAY' is a **three-step method** to initiate and execute services for users which will work on simple phones. It will allow customers to use feature phones for almost all transactions except scan and pay.

It doesn't need an internet connection for transactions. Customers have to link their bank account with feature phones to use this facility.

Significance: Users will be able to make payments to their friends and family, pay their utility bills, recharge FASTags, pay mobile bills and also check their account balances, the central bank said, adding customers will also be able to link bank accounts, set or change UPI PINs.

Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is an instant real-time payment system, allowing users to transfer money on a real-time basis, across multiple bank accounts without revealing details of one's bank account to the other party. UPI is currently the biggest among the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) operated systems including National Automated Clearing House (NACH), Immediate Payment Service (IMPS), Aadhaar enabled Payment System (AePS), Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS), RuPay etc.

Current Affairs Update (March 14-20)

National

What is manual scavenging?

Manual scavenging is the practice of removing human excreta by hand from sewers or septic tanks.

- India banned the practice under **the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (PEMSR)**.
- The Act recognizes manual scavenging as a **“dehumanizing practice,”** and cites a need to **“correct the historical injustice and indignity suffered by the manual scavengers.”**
- In 2014, a Supreme Court order made it mandatory for the government to identify all those who died in sewage work since 1993 and provide Rs. 10 lakh each as compensation to their families.

Why is manual scavenging still prevalent in India?

- The **lack of enforcement of the Act.**
- **Exploitation** of unskilled labourers.
- The practice is driven by caste, class and income divides.

International Arbitration Centre in Hyderabad

CJI lays foundation for International Arbitration Centre in Hyderabad.

Proposed by **the International Arbitration and Mediation Centre Trust**. IAMC-Hyderabad is India's first arbitration centre for alternate dispute resolution.

What is Arbitration?

Arbitration is an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) procedure in which a dispute is submitted, by agreement of the parties, to one or more arbitrators who make a binding decision on the dispute. In choosing arbitration, the parties opt for a private dispute resolution procedure instead of going to court.

What is Conciliation?

Conciliation is also an alternative dispute resolution instrument where parties seek to reach an amicable dispute settlement with the assistance of the conciliator, who acts as a neutral third party. is a voluntary proceeding, where the parties involved are free to agree and attempt to resolve their dispute by conciliation.

Lokpal fails to give prosecution sanction to anyone in nearly three years

The **Lokpal** has failed to provide prosecution sanction to public servants charged with corruption since its constitution nearly three years ago, according to an RTI reply by the anti-graft ombudsman.

Other issues: The appointments of **directors of inquiry and prosecution**, the two top personnel for looking into complaints of corruption and processing prosecution of accused public servants, are yet to be made.

Who is a director of inquiry?

According to **the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013**: There shall be a director of inquiry, not below the rank of Joint Secretary to the Government of India. He/she shall be appointed by the Central government for conducting preliminary inquiries referred to **the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)** by the Lokpal.

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

The **government of Madhya Pradesh** in partnership with **the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)** proposed two inexpensive and ingenious ideas to encourage women to cook balanced meals. These are:

The '7 days 7 plots' programme: Here, women from the village are taught how to grow different vegetables in their own gardens, seven to be exact, one for each day of the week.

- By the end of the week, the first plot is ready to be harvested again. This way, families get to eat fresh, affordable vegetables that they can consume for longer and in greater quantity, as against buying from the market, and so reduce sickness.
- This scheme is an adjunct to **the Tejaswini Rural Women Empowerment Programme** implemented by the UN-affiliated IFAD in MP.

Tiranga Thali: To encourage a more balanced meal, the project introduced the concept of the "Tiranga Thali", where **each plate contains ingredients of the three colours from the Indian flag**. **Saffron** — all pulses like yellow split peas, pigeon peas, and split red lentils representing proteins; white — rice, milk and roti representing carbohydrates; and green — leafy vegetables representing vitamins and minerals.

About IFAD:

1. It is a specialized United Nations agency created in 1977 engaged in providing grants and loans with low interest for allied projects.
2. The IFAD works with rural people allowing them to enhance their food security, improve nutrition and raise their incomes.

3. It also helps people to expand their businesses.
4. The organization is an outcome of the World Food Conference of 1974.
5. It is headquartered in Rome and headed by a President.
6. It has 177 member countries.
7. IFAD brings out **the Rural Development Report** every year.

Rashtriya Raksha University

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently dedicated to the nation the building of **Rashtriya Raksha University** near Gandhinagar in Gujarat.

Rashtriya Raksha University- an institution of National Importance is established by the Indian Parliament Act. The University aims to become an academic-research-training ecosystem for national security and police.

What is AgriStack?

The AgriStack is a collection of technologies and digital databases proposed by the Central Government focusing on India's farmers and the agricultural sector. The central government has claimed that these new databases are being built to primarily tackle issues such as poor access to credit and wastage in the agricultural supply chain.

Features and significance:

- Under AgriStack', the government aims to provide 'required data sets' of farmers' personal information to Microsoft to develop a farmer interface for 'smart and well-organized agriculture'.
- The digital repository will aid precise targeting of subsidies, services and policies, the officials added.
- Under the programme, each farmer of the country will get what is being called an FID, or a farmers' ID, linked to land records to uniquely identify them. India has 140 million operational farm-land holdings.

Issues with the move:

- Agriculture has become the latest sector getting a boost of 'techno solutionism' by the government. But it has, since then, also become the latest sector to enter the whole debate about **data privacy and surveillance**.
- Since the signing of the MoUs, several concerns related to sharing farmers' data with private companies are raised.

- The development has raised serious concerns about information asymmetry, data privacy and consent, profiling of farmers, mismanaged land records and corporatization of agriculture.
- The formation of 'Agristack' also implies commercialization of agriculture extension activities as they will shift into a digital and private sphere.

Why such concerns?

- The project was being implemented in the absence of a data protection legislation.
- It might end up being an exercise where private data processing entities may know more about a farmer's land than the farmer himself.
- Without safeguards, private entities would be able to exploit farmers' data to whatever extent they wish to.
- This information asymmetry, tilted towards the technology companies, might further exploit farmers, especially small and marginal ones.

International

What is the 'Act East Policy'?

- India's 'Act East' policy is a diplomatic initiative to promote economic, strategic and cultural relations with the vast Asia-Pacific region at different levels.
- It is considered as the **modern version of the 'Look East Policy'** which was **launched in 1991** by then Prime Minister **V. Narasimha Rao**.
- The main focus of 'Look East Policy' was **to shift the country's trading focus from the west and neighbors to the booming South East Asian countries**.
- The **"Act East Policy" was launched at the East Asia Summit in Myanmar** in November 2014.
- Under the "Act East Policy" the government is relying on the **3 C's (Culture, Connectivity, and Commerce) to develop better relations with ASEAN nations**.

International Maths Day 2022

14th March, every year is observed as the International Day of Mathematics.

- The International Day of Mathematics is a **project led by the International Mathematical Union with the support of numerous international and regional organizations**.
- The **first International Day of Mathematics was marked in March 2020**.
- **March 14** is already celebrated in many countries as **Pi Day** because that date is written as 3/14 in some countries and the mathematical constant Pi is approximately 3.14.

The theme for the 2022 International Day of Mathematics is Mathematics Unites.

National Mathematics Day: Celebrated every year on **December 22**. It is **observed to honor the birth anniversary of the famous mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan** who greatly contributed towards mathematical analysis, number theory, infinite series and continued fractions.

Geneva Conventions Guidelines

Geneva Conventions are a set of principles that outline norms for combatant behavior during a war. The Geneva Conventions codify the ethical and legal international standards for humanitarian treatment of persons impacted by war. Geneva Conventions are a set of four treaties and three additional protocols, which focus on the treatment of civilians and prisoners of war (POW).

Signatories

The Geneva Conventions are ratified by 196 countries, including all member states on United Nations. However, three additional Protocols are not ratified by all countries. For example, the third protocol is only ratified by 79 countries. Further, in 2019, Russia withdrew its declaration under Article 90 of Protocol 1.

First Geneva Convention

Wounded and sick soldiers on land during the war are protected under this Convention. It also extends to medical & religious personnel. There is a draft agreement relating to hospital zones.

Second Geneva Convention

Wounded, sick, and shipwrecked military personnel at sea during the war are protected under this Convention. Hospital ships and medical transports by sea are also covered.

Third Geneva Convention

It applies to prisoners of war (POW). This convention mentions various general protections such as humane treatment, equality across prisoners, conditions of captivity, evacuation of prisoners, food, clothing, hygiene, etc. The right to religious, intellectual, and physical activities of prisoners is also covered under this convention.

Fourth Geneva Convention

It protects civilians, including those in occupied territory. The other three Geneva Conventions were concerned mainly with combatants. But World War II demonstrated the importance of protecting civilians during wartime.

The 2022 Russia-Ukraine war has once again put the spotlight on the Geneva conventions, especially the fourth Convention.

Hungary's First Female President

Katalin Novák, a close ally of Prime Minister Viktor Orban, has been elected as Hungary's first female president by the Hungarian parliament.

Science-Tech & Environment

SIPRI '2021 Trends in International Arms Transfers' Report

- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) published the "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2021" report.
- In 2017-21, India, Saudi Arabia (11 per cent), Egypt (5.7 per cent), Australia (5.4 per cent), & China (4.1 per cent) were the five largest arms importers.
- U.S. (39 per cent), Russia (19 per cent), France (11 per cent), China (4.6 per cent), & Germany (4.5 per cent) were the five biggest arms exporters.
- India accounted for 11% of global arms imports. Both 2012-16 and 2017-21 Russia was the largest supplier of arms to India.

Tiger Density

Preliminary findings of a study by **the Wildlife Institute of India (WII)** suggest that **the density of tigers in the Sunderbans may have reached the carrying capacity of the mangrove forests**, leading to frequent dispersals and a surge in human-wildlife conflict.

This high density will force tigers to move out of forests in search for new areas. Recently, around eight tigers have entered into villages in Sunderbans and all of them were captured and released into the wild.

Capacity:

- In Terai and Shivalik hills habitat — Corbett tiger reserve, for example — 10-16 tigers can survive in 100 sq km.
- This comes down to 7-11 tigers per 100 sq km in the reserves of north-central Western Ghats such as Bandipur.
- According to the 2018 All-India Tiger report, the carrying capacity in the Sunderbans is at around 4 tigers per 100 sq km.

Factors that determine tiger density:

- Availability of food and space.
- Tolerance levels exhibited by the locals who live around them to policymakers who decide management strategies.

Causes for human wildlife conflict:

Physical (space) and biological (forest productivity) factors have an obvious influence on a reserve's carrying capacity of tigers. More so when different land uses overlap and a good number of people depend on forest resources for livelihood.

What is the way ahead to avoid conflict in tiger density areas?

- **Artificially boosting the prey base** in a reserve.
- **Tiger corridors:** Create safe connectivity among forests and allow tigers to disperse safely to new areas.

Dharma Guardian

- Exercise Dharma Guardian is an annual exercise between **Indian Army and Japanese Ground Self Defence Force**.
- The latest edition was concluded at **Belgaum**, Karnataka recently.
- To promote military cooperation between India and Japan, the first edition of the Dharma Guardian was held at Counter Insurgency Warfare School of the Indian Army at Vairengte in November 2018.

What are White Phosphorus bombs?

Allegations of **white phosphorus munitions** being used by Russia and Ukraine are emerging.

What is white phosphorus?

It is a **colourless, white or yellow, waxy solid**.

Occurrence: It does not occur naturally. It is **manufactured using phosphate rocks**.

- It is a **highly combustible substance** that reacts with oxygen in the air.
- It can catch fire at temperatures as low as 10 to 15 degrees above room temperature.
- Due to its combustible nature, every country has strict regulations regarding its manufacturing and handling.

Applications:

It is used mainly in the military, and other applications may include as a component in fertilisers, food additives and cleaning compounds. Initially, it was also used in pesticides and fireworks, but many countries have banned its use in several sectors.

WP has **not been categorised as an incendiary or chemical weapon by international agencies.**

The **Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons**, which is an intergovernmental organisation and the implementing body for **the Chemical Weapons Convention**, has **not listed WP in any of the three Schedules of Chemical Weapons.**

The main reason behind WP being considered incendiary is its effect on humans.

Harmful effects: When WP comes in contact with the human skin, it can cause both thermal and chemical burns. It can produce several chemicals when it comes in contact with the skin, such as phosphorus pentoxide that reacts with water in the skin and produces phosphoric acid that is highly corrosive.

Why is Yamuna so polluted?

1. **The sewage treatment plants** of Delhi are major contributors of the Pollutants being discharged in the river.
2. **Pollutants discharge** from different types of industry is also a major issue.
3. **Agriculture activities** along the banks of the river in Delhi contributes to river pollution.
4. **Agricultural waste and pesticide discharge** from the Haryana field also contributes to the pollution.
5. **The low volume of water flow** in the river causes the pollutants to accumulate and raise the pollution level.

EU Carbon border tariff

- The European Union (EU) countries decided to impose the world's first carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions tariff on imports of polluting goods.
- Starting from 2020, the European Union (EU) wants to introduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions costs on imports of steel, cement, fertilizers, aluminum, and electricity.
- The aim of imposing this tariff is to protect the European industry, as the European market is flooded by cheaper goods made in countries with weak environmental rules.
- According to the EU, this carbon border tariff is an attempt to create a level playing field by imposing the same carbon dioxide (CO₂) costs on EU companies and those abroad.
- This carbon tariff proposal is part of EU climate change policies aimed at reducing EU's carbon emissions by 55% by 2030 from the 1990 levels.

Economics

What is MFN Status?

Most Favoured Nation is a treatment accorded to a trade partner to ensure non-discriminatory trade between two countries vis-a-vis other trade partners.

- Under WTO rules, a member country cannot discriminate between its trade partners. If a special status is granted to a trade partner, it must be extended to all members of the WTO.

The United States, the European Union, Britain, Canada and Japan are planning to move jointly to revoke **Russia's "most favoured nation" (MFN) status** over its invasion of Ukraine.

What are the pros of MFN?

MFN status is extremely **gainful to developing countries**.

- Provides access to a wider market for trade goods.
- Reduced cost of export items owing to highly reduced tariffs and trade barriers.
- Lead to more competitive trade.
- Cuts down bureaucratic hurdles and various kinds of tariffs are set at par for all imports.
- Increases demands for the goods and giving a boost to the economy and export sector.
- Heals the negative impact caused to the economy due to trade protectionism.

What are the disadvantages of MFN?

- The main disadvantage is that the country has to give the same treatment to all other trade partners who are members of the WTO.
- This translates into a price war and vulnerability of the domestic industry as a result.
- The country is not able to protect domestic industry from the cheaper imports and in this price war, some domestic players have to face heavy losses or growth restrictions.

Difference between CECA & CEPA

CECA – Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement.

CEPA – Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

The major “technical” difference between a CECA and CEPA is that CECA involve only “tariff reduction/elimination in a phased manner on listed/all items except the negative list and tariff rate quota (TRQ) items.

- CEPA also covers the trade in services and investment and other areas of economic partnership”.
- So CEPA is a wider term than CECA and has the widest coverage.
- Usually, CECA is signed first with a country and after that, negotiations may start for a CEPA.
- It is a kind of free trade pact which covers negotiation on the trade in services and investment, and other areas of economic partnership.
- It may even consider negotiation on areas such as trade facilitation and customs cooperation, competition, and Intellectual Property Rights.
- Partnership agreements or cooperation agreements are more comprehensive than Free Trade Agreements.
- CEPA also looks into the regulatory aspect of trade and encompasses an agreement covering the regulatory issues.

What is a Dollar–Rupee Swap auction?

It’s a **forex tool** whereby the central bank uses its currency to buy another currency or vice versa. In a Dollar–Rupee buy/sell swap, the central bank buys dollars (US dollars or USD) from banks in exchange for Indian Rupees (INR) and immediately gets into an opposite deal with banks promising to sell dollars at a later date.

Why do Central Banks engage in it?

- Forex swaps help in **liquidity management**.
- It also, in a limited way, helps in keeping the currency rates in check.
- A dollar–rupee buy/sell swap injects INR into the banking system while sucking out the dollars, and the reverse happens in a sell/buy swap.

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has conducted a **\$ 5 billion dollar-rupee swap auction** as part of its **liquidity management initiative**, leading to infusion of dollars and sucking out of the rupee from the financial system.

Microfinance Regulations

RBI has released new microfinance lending norms. As per these norms:

1. All entities, banks, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), and microfinance institutions (MFIs) are subject to the same regulations.
2. A microfinance loan is defined by the RBI as a 'collateral-free' loan granted to a household with an annual household income of up to Rs 3 lakh.
3. All collateral-free loans offered to low-income households, regardless of the end-use and mode of application/processing/disbursal, are considered microfinance loans.
4. The financial entities should have a board-approved policy to provide the flexibility of repayment periodicity on microfinance loans as per borrowers' requirements. They should also have a board-approved policy for the assessment of household income.

What is Microfinance?

Microfinance is a form of financial service which provides small loans and other financial services to poor and low-income households.

MFIs are financial companies that provide small loans to people who do not have any access to banking facilities.

The definition of "small loans" varies between countries. In India, all loans that are below Rs. 1 lakh can be considered as microloans.

Microcredit is delivered through a variety of institutional channels viz:

1. Scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) (including small finance banks (SFBs) and regional rural banks (RRBs)).
2. Cooperative banks.
3. Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).
4. Microfinance institutions (MFIs) registered as NBFCs as well as in other forms.

Current Affairs Update (March 21-27)

National

India's draft medical devices policy

The Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers released an Approach Paper for **the Draft National Policy for the Medical Devices, 2022**

Highlights of the Draft:

1. **Building Competitiveness** through fiscal and financial support for stimulating the development of the local manufacturing ecosystem with private sector investments.
2. **Incentivise** core technology projects and exports through tax refunds and rebates.
3. **Adopt Public-private partnerships** to reduce the cost of healthcare and drive efficiency.
4. Create a **single-window clearance** system for licensing medical devices.
5. Identify critical suppliers and **promote local sourcing**.
6. Encourage **cross-industry collaboration**.
7. Increase the share of medical technology companies in **research and development to around 50%**.
8. **A dedicated fund** for encouraging joint research involving existing industry players, reputed academic institutions and startups.
9. Incorporate a **framework for a coherent pricing regulation** to make available quality and effective medical devices to all citizens at affordable prices.

This Policy envisions that by 2047:

1. India Will be having few National Institutes of Medical Devices Education and Research (NIMERS) on the lines of National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education & Research (NIPERs).
2. It will be home & originator to 25 high-end futuristic technologies in MedTech (Medical Technology).
3. It will have a MedTech Industry of USD100-300 Bn size with 10-12% of Global Market Share.

'Meri Policy Mere Haath' campaign

'Meri Policy Mere Haath' campaign was launched recently in Hassan, Karnataka.

About the Campaign:

- The campaign is **part of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana.**
- It is aimed at **motivating all farmers in the country to insure their crops.**
- Under this program, every farmer who has taken insurance under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) will get the policy documents at their doorstep.

Significance:

- The campaign empowers the farmers through crop insurance awareness and by bringing the insurance policy to their doorsteps.
- The campaign will also help in increasing the direct communication between the farmers and insurance companies.

About PMFBY:

The **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)** has successfully entered its seventh year of implementation with the upcoming Kharif 2022 season, completing six years of its implementation since its announcement on 18 February 2016.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana

Launched in **May 2016.**

Aim: To provide **LPG (liquefied petroleum gas)** connections to poor households and reduce health risk associated with burning biomass.

Key features: A deposit-free **LPG connection** is given to eligible with **financial assistance of Rs 1,600 per connection by the Centre.**

Achievement: Government data shows that by January 2022, **9 crore new LPG** connections had been rolled out under this scheme, and that **99.8 per cent** of the over **28 crore households** in India now have access to LPG, up from **61.9 per cent in 2015.**

MGNREGA

The **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj** has submitted its report on the functioning of the MGNREGA to the Lok Sabha.

Challenges/concerns highlighted:

- There has always been a hike in the revised estimate over the budget estimate in the past.

- Delay in the release of funds.
- Wide disparity in the wage rate between one state to another.
- Fake job cards, widespread corruption and late uploading of muster rolls.

Recommendations made:

1. Increasing the number of guaranteed working days from 100 to at least 150.
2. Increase the permissible work taking into account the local geographical terrain and local requirements.
3. The government should relook at its calculation and suitably approach the ministry of finance for higher allocation of funds in order to speed up the pace of rural development schemes for dearth of budget.

First cyclone of 2022 named Asani

- A low pressure area that formed over the **southwest Indian Ocean** is expected to intensify into a cyclone this week.
- The Cyclone has been named The **name was suggested by India's southern neighbour Sri Lanka**.
- It is expected to travel along and off the coast of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands before it intensifies into a depression.

What is a heatwave?

The IMD says heatwave is considered when the maximum temperature of a station touches at least 40 degrees Celsius or more for plains, 37 degrees Celsius or more for coastal regions and at least 30 degrees Celsius or more for hilly regions.

What are the criteria?

Heatwave is declared when the departure from normal temperature is by 4.5 to 6.4 degrees Celsius and a severe heatwave is when the departure from normal is more than 6.4 degrees Celsius.

- **For plains, based on actual maximum temperature**, IMD considers heatwaves when actual maximum temperature is more than 45 degrees Celsius and severe heat wave when it is more than 47 degrees Celsius.
- This apart, if the locality records over 45 degrees and 47 degrees on any given day, then the IMD declares heatwave and severe heatwave.

Reasons why India is experiencing more heat waves are:

1. Magnified effect of paved and concrete surfaces in urban areas and a lack of tree cover.

2. Urban heat island effects can make ambient temperatures feel 3 to 4 degrees more than what they are.
3. More heat waves were expected as globally temperatures had risen by an average 0.8 degrees in the past 100 years. Night-time temperatures are rising too.
4. Higher daily peak temperatures and longer, more intense heat waves are becoming increasingly frequent globally due to climate change.
5. High intensity of UV rays in medium-high heat wave zones.
6. Combination of exceptional heat stress and a predominantly rural population makes India vulnerable to heat waves.

Maternal Mortality Rate

Kerala tops in maternal and child health, recording the lowest Maternal Mortality Ratio in the country.

It has 30 per one lakh live births in the country. Kerala is way ahead of the national MMR of 103.

Overall, **the MMR of India has declined by 10 points. It has declined from 113 in 2016-18 to 103 in 2017-19 (8.8 % decline).**The country had been witnessing a progressive reduction in the MMR from 130 in 2014-2016, 122 in 2015-17, 113 in 2016-18, and to 103 in 2017-19.

Maternal mortality is the maternal death of a woman during pregnancy or after pregnancy, including post-abortion or post-birth periods.

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)

The **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes** has been dysfunctional for the last four years and has not delivered a single report to Parliament, a parliamentary committee has said in a recent report.

The pending reports include:

- A study by the Commission of the impact of the Indira Sagar Polavaram Project in Andhra Pradesh on the tribal population.
- A special report on rehabilitation and resettlement of displaced tribals because of the Rourkela Steel Plant.

Challenges/issues associated with the functioning of NCST:

- Manpower and budgetary shortage.
- Less number of applicants as the eligibility bar is set too high.

- Its rate of pendency of resolution of complaints and cases that it receives is also close to 50 per cent.

About NCST:

NCST was established by amending **Article 338** and inserting a new **Article 338A** in the Constitution through the **Constitution (89th Amendment) Act, 2003**. By this amendment, the erstwhile **National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes** was replaced by two separate Commissions namely- (i) the **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)**, and (ii) the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)**.

Criminal justice reforms

Aiming to make comprehensive changes in criminal laws, the government has initiated the process of amendment to laws such as Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act in consultation with all stakeholders.

Current concerns/challenges:

1. The delay in disposal of cases was leading to human rights violations of the under-trials and convicts.
2. Despite the Supreme Court's directions on police reforms, there had been hardly any changes on the ground.
3. Court orders convicting a person are also taking years to implement.

Suggested Reforms:

- Special laws and fast-track courts could replace certain offences under **the Indian Penal Code** in order to reduce the piling up of cases at every police station.
- Digitisation of documents would help in speeding up investigations and trials.
- The construction of new offences and reworking of the existing classification of offences must be guided by the principles of criminal jurisprudence which have substantially altered in the past four decades.
- The classification of offences must be done in a manner conducive to management of crimes in the future.
- The discretion of judges in deciding the quantum and nature of sentence differently for crimes of the same nature should be based on principles of judicial precedent.

Ol Chiki script

- India's Constitution has been translated into Ol Chiki script for the first time.
- The Ol Chiki script, also known as **Ol Chemet', Ol Ciki, Ol, and sometimes as the Santali alphabet**, is the official writing system for **Santhali**, an Austroasiatic language recognized as an official regional language in India.
- In 2003, **the 92nd Constitutional Amendment Act added Santhali to Schedule VIII to the Constitution of India**, which lists the official languages of India, along with the Bodo, Dogri and Maithili languages.
- **Santhals** are the largest scheduled tribe in the Jharkhand state of India in terms of population and are also found in the states of Assam, Tripura, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and West Bengal.

Surajkund Crafts Mela

- The annual Surajkund International Crafts Mela is being held in Surajkund, Haryana for celebrating Indian cultural heritage and folk traditions.
- The partner nation of this year's Mela is Uzbekistan.
- **The theme state of the Surajkund Mela 2022: Jammu & Kashmir**, is presenting its rich legacy and distinct culture via handicrafts and art forms and is the theme state of the Surajkund Mela 2022.

Par Tapi Narmada river-linking project

Envisioned under **the 1980 National Perspective Plan**. It proposes **to link three rivers**:

1. **Par**, originating from Nashik in Maharashtra and flowing through Valsad.
2. **Tapi** from Saputara that flows through Maharashtra and Surat in Gujarat.
3. **Narmada** originating in Madhya Pradesh and flowing through Maharashtra and Bharuch and Narmada districts in Gujarat.

The project proposes **to transfer river water from the surplus regions of the Western Ghats to the deficit regions of Saurashtra and Kutch**.

Benefits of interlinking:

1. Enhances water and food security.
2. Proper utilisation of water.
3. Boost to agriculture.
4. Disaster mitigation.

5. Boost to transportation.

Why is this project being opposed?

According to a report by the NWDA, about 6065 ha of land area will be submerged due to the proposed reservoirs.

- A total of 61 villages will be affected, of which one will be fully submerged and the remaining 60 partly.
- The total number of affected families would be 2,509 of which 98 families would be affected due to the creation of the Jheri reservoir, the only one in Maharashtra, spread over six villages.
- In Gujarat, around 2000 families will be affected by the project. The districts where the project will be implemented are largely dominated, by tribals who fear displacement.

International

World Happiness Report

The World Happiness Report is a **publication of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network powered** by the Gallup World Poll data. The rankings are based on average data of a three-year period of 2019-2021. World Happiness Report **evaluates levels of happiness** by taking into account factors such as GDP, social support, personal freedom, and levels of corruption in each nation.

Highlights of the report:

1. **Finland topped the list for the fifth time in a row**, according to the 10th edition of the World Happiness Report.
2. Finland was followed by **Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, and the Netherlands**.
3. Among other western countries, while the **United States managed to bag the 16th position, Britain was ranked 17th and France 20th**.
4. India continued to fare poorly in the world happiness index, with its position marginally improving to 136 as against last year's 139.
5. Among the South Asian nations, **only Taliban-ruled Afghanistan fared worse than India**.
6. **Afghanistan was named the most unhappy country** in the world, ranking last on the **index of 146 countries**.

Mahatma Gandhi Green Triangle

A “Green Triangle” named after Mahatma Gandhi was inaugurated in **Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar**. The Green Triangle was inaugurated as a part of the ‘Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav’ to commemorate the 75th year of India’s independence. The green triangle highlights Gandhi’s vision regarding reducing consumerism and aiming for sustainable development.

Abel Prize 2022

It has been awarded to Professor **Dennis Parnell Sullivan**. He was awarded the prize “For his groundbreaking contributions to topology in its broadest sense, and in particular its algebraic, geometric and dynamical aspects.”

The Abel Prize is awarded annually to outstanding mathematicians. It was established by the Norwegian Government in 2002, and is managed by The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters.

The only person of Indian origin to have won this prize is **Srinivasa S.R. Varadhan**. He is at the Courant Institute, New York University, and won it in 2007.

BIMSTEC

At the 5th BIMSTEC Summit which will be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 30th March, six documents which also include the BIMSTEC Charter, is likely to be adopted and signed.

Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation or BIMSTEC aims to create an environment so that rapid economic development is achieved along with accelerated social progress, and promoting collaboration in this region. Its headquarters is located in **Dhaka, Bangladesh** and the current chairmanship is with Sri Lanka.

It consists of **seven-member states** which are India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Thailand.

“**BIMSTEC-Towards a Resilient Region, Prosperous Economies and Healthy Peoples**” is the theme for the 5th BIMSTEC Summit.

Treaty of the High Seas

The fourth meeting of the **Intergovernmental Conference (IGC-4)** was held in New York to conclude a draft of the instrument on **the conservation and sustainable use of marine Biological diversity in areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ)**. The IGC-4 is convened under the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.

- The “**BBNJ Treaty**”, also known as the “**Treaty of the High Seas**”, is an international agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, currently under negotiation at the United Nations.

- **This new instrument is being developed within the framework of the UNCLOS**, the main international agreement governing human activities at sea.
- It will achieve a more holistic management of high seas activities, which should better balance the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources.
- BBNJ encompasses the high seas, beyond the exclusive economic zones or national waters of countries.

Significance:

- According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), these areas account for “almost half of the Earth’s surface”.
- These areas are hardly regulated and also least understood or explored for its biodiversity – only 1% of these areas are under protection.

World Water Day

- **Observed on** 22 March every year.
- **Coordinated by** UN-Water – the UN’s inter-agency collaboration mechanism for all freshwater related issues – in collaboration with governments and partners.
- **The World Water Development Report** is also released by the UN every year around World Water Day.
- **Theme of World Water Day 2022:** “Groundwater, making the invisible visible” is the theme for this year’s World Water Day.

Science-Tech & Environment

India unveils its Arctic policy

The Centre released India’s Arctic Policy, with the aim of enhancing the country’s cooperation with the resource-rich and rapidly transforming region.

The relevance of Arctic for India can be broadly explained under following categories:

(A)Scientific Research, Climate Change and Environment

- **Monsoons**
 - The changes occurring in the Arctic are yet to be understood fully, but it is clear that they have been impacting global weather, climate and ecosystems including the monsoons in India.

- During the monsoons, India receives over 70 per cent of its annual precipitation. India's agriculture, which is the primary source of livelihood for about 58 per cent of India's population and contributes around 20 per cent to the GDP, is directly dependent on monsoons
- **Rising Sea Level**
 - The ice loss in the Arctic is a major contributor to global sea-level rise and it can have a significant impact on India, especially over its 1,300 island territories and maritime features
- **Himalayas**
 - The Arctic and the Himalayas, though geographically distant, are interconnected and share similar concerns. The Arctic meltdown is helping the scientific community to better understand the glacial melt in the Himalayas, which has often been referred to as the 'third pole' and has the largest freshwater reserves after the North and South poles
 - The study of Arctic is therefore critical to Indian scientists.

(B) Economic and Human Resources

- **Mineral Resources and Hydrocarbons**
 - Arctic region has rich deposits of coal, gypsum and diamonds and also substantial reserves of zinc, lead, placer gold and quartz. Greenland alone possesses about a quarter of world's rare earth reserves.
 - India is the third-largest energy-consuming country in the world, the third-largest oil importer (83 per cent) and the fourth-largest importer of gas which caters to almost half of the total gas consumption.
 - Arctic can therefore potentially address India's energy security needs and deficiency of strategic and rare earth minerals.

What is the Extinction Rebellion, also referred to as 'XR'?

- Initially, launched in the United Kingdom on October 31, 2018, as a response to a report by **the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**.
- Now, it is a global movement which seeks to "rebel", and asks groups to "self-organise", without the need for anyone's permission, to come up with collective action plans as long as they adhere to the group's core principles and values.

- It is a decentralised, international and politically non-partisan movement using non-violent direct action and civil disobedience to persuade governments to act justly on the Climate and Ecological Emergency.

The group has “**three core demands**” of governments around the world.

- It wants governments to “Tell the Truth”, to “Act Now”, and to “Go Beyond Politics” in order to confront the climate and ecological emergency that the world is faced with.

Kamikaze drones

- Also called **Switchblade drones**, these are small unmanned aircraft that are packed with explosives that can be flown directly at a tank or a group of troops that are destroyed when it hits the target and explodes.
- Weighing just five-and-a-half pounds, including its small warhead, the Switchblade can be taken into battle in a backpack and fly up to 7 miles to hit a target. They are called Switchblade because their bladelike wings spring out on launch.
- The Switchblade also has cameras that show a target seconds before impact.
- Although the Kamikaze might be the most advanced form of this genre of drones, Russia, China, Israel, Iran and Turkey all have some version of it.

Kinzhal Missile

The Kh-47M2 Kinzhal is a Russian hypersonic aero-ballistic air-to-surface missile with nuclear capability. It has a range of more than 2,000 kilometres, a top speed of Mach 10, and the ability to undertake evasive manoeuvres at all stages of flight. During the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Russian military said to have used Kinzhal missiles to destroy a Ukrainian armed forces underground weapons facility in Deliatyn.

Manda buffalo

- It is found in the Eastern Ghats and plateau of Koraput region of Odisha.
- The Manda are resistant to parasitic infections, less prone to diseases and can thrive on modest resources.
- The National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR) had, in 2021, recognised the Manda buffalo as the 19th unique breed of buffaloes found in India.

Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary

- Located in **Tamil Nadu**.
- The sanctuary was notified as **RF (Reserve Forest)** in 1963 under **the Madras Act 1882**.
- Finally in 1998, the sanctuary was notified under section 26(i) of **the Wildlife Protection Act 1972**.
- There are about **28,000 land and water birds visiting this prestigious wetland sanctuary**.

- It is home to migratory birds such as **pintail, garganey, grey wagtail, blue-winged teal, common sandpiper and the like.**
- It is **the oldest water bird sanctuary in the country.**
- **Vedanthangal** in Tamil language means ‘**hamlet of the hunter**’.

Why in the News?

Keeping in mind “ecological security and habitat ecology” of the Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary, the Tamil Nadu Forest Department has decided to withdraw a controversial proposal that sought to reduce the core area of the sanctuary.

Boma technique

Africa’s Boma technique was undertaken at **Keoladeo National Park** in Rajasthan’s Bharatpur district recently for capturing and translocating spotted deer. The aim is to improve the prey base in Mukundara Hills Tiger Reserve, situated 450 km away. The move will lead to herbivores populating the forests ahead of the proposed shifting of two tigers to Mukundara.

What is Boma Technique?

- The Boma capturing technique, which is popular in Africa, involves luring of animals into an enclosure by chasing them through a funnel-like fencing.
- The funnel tapers into an animal selection-cum-loading chute, supported with grass mats and green net to make it opaque for animals, which are herded into a large vehicle for their transport to another location.

LAMITIYE-2022

The Indian Army and the Seychelles Defence Forces (SDF) are holding the 9th Joint Military Exercise LAMITIYE-2022 at the Seychelles Defence Academy (SDA) in Seychelles.

2021 World Air Quality Report

- This report has been based on the data of PM2.5 air quality taken from 6,475 cities in 117 regions, countries, and territories from across the globe.
- 35 Indian cities have been listed by the index under the worst air quality tag for 2021.
- **Bhiwadi, Rajasthan** topped this list and was followed Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh.
- From Uttar Pradesh, 14 other cities have also been included in this list and they are Ghaziabad, Lucknow, Meerut, Kanpur, Amroha, Agra, Varanasi, Jaunpur, Greater Noida, and Noida. These cities exceeded the PM2.5 limit of 0-5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ by more than 10 to 15 times.
- According to this report, not a single country from around the globe managed to meet the air quality standard of WHO in 2021.

- WHO's September 2021 guidelines state that acceptable air quality with PM2.5 concentration levels should range between 0-5 g/m³. But, all the cities in this report have PM2.5 levels that are at least 10 times higher than the approved limits.

Economics

GI Tag for Narasingapettai Nagaswaram

Geographical Indication tag has been awarded to the Narasingapettai Nagaswaram under the category of musical instruments. Narasinghapettai nagaswaram is a classical wind music instrument that is traditionally made in a village near Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu.

On behalf of Thanjavur Musical Instruments Workers Co-operative Cottage Industrial Society Limited, the application for receiving the GI tag was filed by Tamil Nadu's Nodal Officer for GI Registration of Products.



Countdown To Prelims

CURRENT AFFAIRS

MOCK TEST 2022

APRIL
2

FEES: ₹300

10:30 AM to 12:30 PM

TEST DISCUSSION BY:
DR. VIVEK RANA
(12:30-1:30 PM)

 **VIVEK IAS**
CAREER ACADEMY

SCO 385, SECTOR 8
PANCHKULA

To Register **WHATSAPP** your **NAME** before **March 30 @ 9872210232**

Current Affairs Update (March 28-April 8)

National

AFSPA

AFSPA, which gives sweeping powers to the armed forces, has been **fully or partially withdrawn** from parts of three Northeast states — Assam, Nagaland and Manipur. Still, AFSPA remains in force in parts of these three states as well as in parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.

What does the AFSPA mean?

In simple terms, AFSPA gives **armed forces the power to maintain public order in “disturbed areas”**.

What is a “disturbed area” and who has the power to declare it?

A disturbed area is one which is declared by notification under **Section 3 of the AFSPA**. An area can be disturbed due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.

The Central Government, or the Governor of the State or administrator of the Union Territory can declare the whole or part of the State or Union Territory as a disturbed area.

Powers under AFSPA: AFSPA, which has been called draconian, gives sweeping powers to the armed forces. For example, it allows them to open fire, even causing death, against any person in contravention to the law or carrying arms and ammunition, and gives them powers to arrest individuals without warrants, on the basis of “**reasonable suspicion**”, and also search premises without warrants.

Why decision to withdraw AFSPA from parts of Northeast is significant

- **Will reduce alienation:** The Northeast has lived under the shadow of AFSPA for nearly 60 years, creating a feeling of alienation from the rest of the country.
- **Demilitarise the region:** The move is expected to help demilitarise the region; it will lift restrictions of movements through check points and frisking of residents.
- **Calm the resentment due to the recent killings in Nagaland:** The move covers some districts of Nagaland and Manipur that armed forces have red-flagged earlier. It will also help the Centre calm the anger over the Mon killings in Nagaland.

What has made AFSPA unpopular among the people?

- **Human rights violations by Army:** In Nagaland, 60 years of living under the AFSPA regime has had psychological consequences, trauma and alienation of the people. The use of force and AFSPA furthered the feeling of alienation of the Naga people, solidifying Naga nationalism.
- **Issue of Fake encounters:** In a writ petition filed in the Supreme Court in 2012, the families of victims of extra-judicial killings alleged 1,528 fake encounters had taken place in the state from May 1979 to May 2012. The Supreme Court set up a commission to **scrutinise six of these cases, and the commission found all six to be fake encounters.**
- **Poor checks and balances:** While the Act gives powers to security forces to open fire, this cannot be done without prior warning given to the suspect. It says the armed forces must act in cooperation with the district administration and not as an independent body. However, such procedure has rarely been followed.
- **Poor investigation:** Cases in Nagaland have not been investigated. In Manipur, with the Supreme Court has taken up the extra-judicial killings, the CBI has investigated 39 cases (94 killings) only.

Battle of Rezang La and the Ahir Regiment demand

Members of the **Ahir community** have been demanding an **Ahir Regiment in the Indian Army.**

The **Ahirwal region** includes the southern Haryana districts of Rewari, Mahendragarh, and Gurgaon, and is associated with Rao Tula Ram, the Ahir hero of the revolt of 1857. The community was brought into national limelight after the story of the bravery of the Ahir troops of Haryana in the **Battle of Rezang La** in 1962 was widely known. The region has traditionally contributed soldiers to the Indian Army in large numbers.

What's the demand?

Members of the community have long argued that the Ahirs deserve a full-fledged Infantry Regiment named after them, not just two battalions in the Kumaon Regiment and a fixed percentage in other regiments.

About Rezang La: Rezang La is a **mountain pass on the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh.** It is located between village of **Chushul and the Spanggur Lake** that stretches across both Indian and Chinese territories. It had also been the site of a heroic battle on 18 November 1962.

About the battle: Troops from the 13 Kumaon Regiment defeated several waves of the Chinese People's Liberation Army in 1962. Despite being heavily outnumbered, soldiers of the regiment fought to the last man standing, under freezing temperatures, and with limited ammunition.

The Army has rejected the demand for any new class or caste based regiment. It has said that while the older regiments based on castes and regions like the Dogra Regiment, Sikh Regiment, Rajput Regiment, and Punjab Regiment will continue, no new demands on the lines of an Ahir Regiment, Himachal Regiment, Kalinga Regiment, Gujarat Regiment or any tribal regiment would be entertained.

INS Valsura

- President Ram Nath Kovind recently presented the President's Colour to INS Valsura, the Navy's premier technological training establishment.
- The President's Colour is bestowed on a military unit in recognition of the exceptional service rendered to the nation, both in peace and in war.
- INS Valsura, is a premier technological training institution, of the Indian Navy based in Jamnagar, Gujarat.

What is CUET?

- The **University Grants Commission (UGC)** has announced that **admission into undergraduate courses in all centrally-funded universities** will henceforth be solely on the basis of a **Common University Entrance Test (CUET)**.
- The CUET will be a **computerised test to be conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA)**.
- Following the exam, the NTA will prepare a merit list on the basis of which these universities will admit students.
- This entrance test is compulsory for all the central universities and may also be adopted by the state/private/deemed to be universities.
- The entrance exam will be offered in 13 languages.
- International students are exempted from CUET; their admissions will be carried out on the existing supernumerary basis.
- All 45 central universities will have to admit students on the basis of their scores on the test.
- Class 12 Board Exam marks will no longer be considered.

Mangaluru Kambala

The annual Mangaluru Kambala's fifth edition will be held on the grounds of Goldfinch City in Bangra Kulur on 26th and 27th March 2022. Kambala is a buffalo race held annually in Karnataka. This event is sponsored by the local Tuluva landlords in the Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts. Kambala samithis organize these events. Annually, more than 45 races are held in the coastal region of coastal Karnataka.

Hindus can get minority status in some states: Centre to Supreme Court

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking **minority status for Hindus** in Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Punjab, Lakshadweep, Ladakh, Kashmir etc.

What the plea seeks?

1. **Minority status for Hindus:** Hindus were a minority in 10 states as per the 2011 Census. Therefore, they are not able to avail the benefits of schemes meant for minorities.
2. **Scrap the National Commission for Minority Education Institution Act, 2004:** Section 2(f) of NCMEI Act confers power to the Centre to identify and notify minority communities in India. Therefore, it gives unbridled power to the Centre and is “manifestly arbitrary, irrational, and offending”.
3. **Violation of Fundamental Rights:** Denial of benefits to the “real” minorities and the “arbitrary and unreasonable” disbursements under schemes meant for them to the absolute majority infringe upon their fundamental rights (Articles 14 and 21).
4. **Citing Article 30 of the Constitution,** the plea said that minorities whether based on religion or language shall have the right to establish-administer educational institutions of their choice.

Special rights enjoyed by religious minority institutions are:

Under Art 30(1)(a), such institutions enjoy right to education as a Fundamental Right. In case the property is taken over by state, due compensation to be provided to establish institutions elsewhere.

Under Article 15(5), they are not considered for reservation.

Under Right to Education Act, they are not required to provide admission to children in the age group of 6-14 years upto 25% of enrolment reserved for economically backward section of society.

In St Stephens vs Delhi University case, 1992, SC ruled that these institutions can have 50% seats reserved for minorities.

The enforcement of Fundamental Duties debate

Benefits:

- Enforcement of Fundamental Duties upholds and protects sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.
- It also prepares citizens to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so.
- It seeks to disseminate a sense of nationalism and to promote the spirit of patriotism to uphold the unity of India after the emergence of China as a superpower.

Criticism of FD:

- They are made non-justiciable in nature.

- Important duties such as tax-paying, family planning etc are not covered.
- Vague and ambiguous provisions which are difficult to be understood by a common man.
- Superfluous provisions since they would generally be followed even if they were not included.
- Inclusion as an appendage to the constitution reduces the value and intent behind FD.

Supreme Court's judgment in the Ranganath Mishra case – 2003:

The Court observed that fundamental duties should not only be enforced by legal sanctions but also by social sanctions. After all, **rights and duties were co-relative**.

Directions were issued to the Centre to consider and take appropriate steps expeditiously for the implementation of the recommendations of **Justice J. S. Verma Committee's report on the operationalisation of fundamental duties**.

Steps taken by the Government to spread awareness about cyber crimes

1. **Online cybercrime reporting portal** has been launched to enable complainants to report complaints pertaining to Child Pornography/Child Sexual Abuse Material, rape/gang rape imageries or sexually explicit content.
2. A scheme for establishment of **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)** has been established to handle issues related to cybercrime in the country in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.
3. Establishment of **National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC)** for protection of critical information infrastructure in the country.
4. All organizations providing digital services have been mandated to report cyber security incidents to **CERT-In** expeditiously.
5. **Cyber Swachhta Kendra** (Botnet Cleaning and Malware Analysis Centre) has been launched for providing detection of malicious programmes and free tools to remove such programmes.
6. **Formulation of Crisis Management Plan** for countering cyber attacks and cyber terrorism.

Hindu New Year festival

Ugadi festival marks the beginning of the **traditional New Year in India**. It is known by different names across the country:

- **Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana:** Ugadi or Yugadi.
- **Maharashtra:** Gudi Padwa

- **Sindh:** Cheti Chand
- **Kashmir:** Navreh

The first day of the Hindu lunisolar calendar's month of **Chaitra** is celebrated as Ugadi. According to Hindu mythology, it is believed that **Lord Brahma** started the creation of the universe on **Ugadi**.

Vanniyars

- Vanniyars are **among the largest backward communities in Tamil Nadu**, with significant political influence.
- They have long campaigned for quota and because of their clout, they became the only community to be given a 10.5% quota within the MBC (Most Backward Class) quota that was cancelled by the Supreme Court, which called it "unconstitutional" and a violation of the right to equality.

FASTER (Fast and Secured Transmission of Electronic Records)

- **CJI N.V. Ramana** launches digital platform 'Fast and Secured Transmission of Electronic Records'
- The platform would be used by the court officials to **instantly to send e-copies of the orders** through a secured electronic communication channel to intended parties thus ensuring that judicial orders can be communicated quickly.
- Through the use of this software orders that were passed by the high courts (HC) and the Supreme Court (SC) will be **transmitted safely without any third-party interference**.
- Bail orders will be communicated via FASTER and for authentication purposes, it will have the digital signatures of the notified nodal officers of the SC as well as the Institutional digital signatures.
- In this manner, without much loss of time, bail orders would be received by all the concerned parties and quick necessary actions will be taken at their end.

International

What is Bucharest Nine?

The "Bucharest Nine" is **a group of nine NATO countries in Eastern Europe** that became part of the US-led military alliance after the end of the Cold War.

The B9 was founded on November 4, 2015, and takes its name from **Bucharest, the capital of Romania**. The group was created on the initiative of **Klaus Iohannis**, who has been President of Romania since 2014, and **Andrzej Duda**, who became President of Poland in August 2015.

Members: Romania, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and the three Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.



Vivek Career Academy SCO 385, Sector 8, Panchkula

All members of the B9 are part of the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). All nine countries were once closely associated with the now dissolved Soviet Union, but later chose the path of democracy.

UAE golden visa

In 2019, **the United Arab Emirates (UAE)** implemented a **new system for long-term residence visas, thereby enabling foreigners to live, work and study in the UAE without the need of a national sponsor and with 100 per cent ownership of their business.**

The Golden Visa system essentially **offers long-term residency (5 and 10 years) to people belonging to the following groups:** investors, entrepreneurs, individuals with outstanding talents the likes of researchers, medical professionals and those within the scientific and knowledge fields, and remarkable students.

Indian Winners at the Grammy Awards 2022

At the 64th Annual Grammy Awards, two Indian musicians were among the winners. **Falu**, an Indian-American singer-songwriter won her maiden Grammy in the category of Best Children's Music Album. Composer **Ricky Kej** also won his second Grammy as he and Stewart Copeland won the award in the category of Best New Age Album.

Mes Aynak Site

Mes Aynak is a site that is located 40 km southeast of **Kabul, Afghanistan**. It is located in the Logar Province's barren region. This region contains the **largest copper deposit in Afghanistan**. Also, in this region, there are remains to be found of an ancient settlement that has 400 Buddha stupas, statues, and a monastery complex of 100 acres.

In 2007, the China Metallurgical Group (MCC) was granted a 30-year lease for the amount of USD 3 billion. This mine has been estimated by the afghan mining ministry to hold around six million tons of copper. The value of this mine is expected to be billions of dollars, and it will also generate economic activity for the country. But this mine threatens the archaeological remains of this site. In 2001, the Taliban had demolished Buddhist statues that were present on this site, but at present, they have had a change of heart and are willing to preserve this site as it contains copper, and are willing to strike a deal with China for economic benefits.

AUKUS: Collaboration on Hypersonic Weapons

Australia, Britain, and the United States will begin collaborating on increasing defence capacity and hypersonic missile strikes keeping in mind that their rivals China and Russia are advancing rapidly in cutting-edge defence technology.

Russia is currently the most advanced in the field of hypersonic missiles with China also increasing its capabilities. To counter this, the AUKUS has got together to increase its capabilities in this field.

A hypersonic missile is a type of weapon system that flies at the speed of Mach 5 and can be manoeuvred. The manoeuvrability capability of this missile is what separates it from a ballistic missile. A ballistic missile follows a set trajectory while hypersonic missiles can be manoeuvred to hit an intended target. This manoeuvrability capability of this missile makes it difficult to intercept and they can carry nuclear as well as conventional warheads.

Monster Missile Hwasong-17

- North Korea has test-fired an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) named Hwasong-17. This missile is the biggest ICBM ever developed. This missile can potentially deliver a nuclear warhead to any United States location.
- This missile is being named a 'monster missile' by analysts.
- This missile is the world's largest liquid-fuelled ICBM. When fully fuelled, it has a total mass of around 80,000 to 1,10,000 kg.

Science-Tech & Environment

Lead poisoning

Recently, high levels of lead were found in the blood of thousands of children living around the Kabwe mine in Zambia.

How lead affects children?

1. Lead is a **potent neurotoxin** that causes **irreparable harm to children's brains**.
2. It is particularly **destructive to babies and children under the age of 5** as it damages their brain before they have had the opportunity to fully develop, causing them lifelong neurological, cognitive and physical impairment.
3. Childhood lead exposure has also been linked to **mental health and behavioural problems and an increase in crime and violence**.
4. Older children suffer severe consequences, including increased risk of kidney damage and cardiovascular diseases in later life.

GSAT 7 Satellite series

- They are advanced satellites **developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** to meet the communication needs of the defence services.

- The **GSAT 7** satellite has a footprint of nearly 2,000 nautical miles in the Indian Ocean region.
- The **GSAT 7 (Rukmini)** is India's first military satellite. It provides a gamut of services for military communication needs, which includes low bit voice rate to high bit rate data facilities, including multi-band communications.
- The **GSAT 7A**, launched in 2018, helps in boosting the connectivity between the ground radar stations, airbases and the airborne early warning and control aircraft (AEW&C) of the IAF.
- **GSAT-7B satellite**, which recently got the acceptance of necessity from the Defence Ministry, will be a dedicated **satellite for the Indian Army**. The satellite would help the Indian Army enhance its surveillance in border areas.

Indian Antarctic Bill 2022

- The Ministry of Earth Sciences has piloted the Indian Antarctica Bill.
- This bill is expected to help fulfill the nation's obligations under the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources of 1982, the Antarctic Treaty of 1959, and 1998s Treaty of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic.
- India's Antarctic program began in the year 1981 and since then 40 scientific expeditions have been completed.
- India has also built three bases on the continent.

India's base stations in Antarctica

As of now, India has two fully functioning base stations in Antarctica named **Maitri** which was established in 1988, and **Bharati** which was established in 2012. Another one named **Dakshin Gangotri** was established in 1983 but it is not functional currently.

Polar Science and Cryosphere (PACER) scheme

The **Polar Science and Cryosphere (PACER) scheme** has been approved for continuation during 2021-2026. Polar Science and Cryosphere Research (PACER) scheme **comprises the Antarctic program, Indian Arctic program, Southern Ocean program and Cryosphere and Climate program**. It is being implemented successfully through **National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)**, an autonomous institute under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

What is the cryosphere?

The cryosphere is the frozen water part of the Earth system. These are places on Earth that are so cold that water is frozen solid. These areas of snow or ice, which are subject to temperatures below 0°C 32°F for at least part of the year, **compose the cryosphere**. The term "cryosphere" comes from the Greek word, "krios," which means cold.

Ice and snow on land are one part of the cryosphere.

- This includes the largest parts of the cryosphere, the **continental ice sheets found in Greenland and Antarctica**, as well as ice caps, glaciers, and areas of snow and permafrost.
- When continental ice flows out from land and to the sea surface, we get shelf ice.

The other part of the cryosphere is ice that is found in water. This includes frozen parts of the ocean, such as waters surrounding Antarctica and the Arctic. It also includes frozen rivers and lakes, which mainly occur in polar areas.

Wildlife Conservation Bond

- The world's first wildlife bond has been issued by the World Bank, raising USD 150 million that will partly be used for the conservation of **South Africa's black rhinos**.
- The Wildlife Conservation Bond is the world's first-of-its-kind financial instrument that is outcome-based and will be channelling investments to conserve black rhino populations.
- International Bank for Reconstruction and Development of the World Bank has announced that the returns paid by the five-year bond will be determined by the rate of population growth of animals in two reserves of South Africa, the Great Fish River Nature Reserve and the Addo Elephant National Park.
- If this program is successful it could be expanded for the protection of black rhinos in Kenya along with other wildlife species like tigers, lions, orangutans, and gorillas.

COP-4 Minamata Convention on Mercury

In the Conference of Parties (COP-4) Minamata Convention on Mercury, the participating parties have agreed to expand the mercury-added products list that has been planned to be phased out. The COP-4 Minamata Convention on Mercury, took place in Bali, Indonesia from 21st to 25th March 2022.

Nine decisions were adopted at this convention. The implementation of national reporting, international cooperation, artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM), technical assistance, capacity building, mercury waste thresholds, and releases of mercury are also on schedule.

The **"Bali Declaration on Combatting Global Illegal Trade of Mercury"** was also presented by the host nation. This political declaration of non-binding nature aims to develop practical tools and enhance international cooperation to share and monitor information, practices, and experiences to combat the illegal mercury trade.

In this convention, the phasing out of eight mercury-added products like cold cathode fluorescent lamps, compact fluorescent lamps, paper, photograph film, and propellant for satellites was listed. The dental amalgam phase-down has also benefitted substantially after two additional measures were added to protect the vulnerable populations against mercury use by dental practitioners in bulk form.

The 'Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Rights Act)'

The Act passed in 2006 grants legal recognition to the rights of traditional forest dwelling communities.

Rights under the Act:

Title rights – i.e. ownership – to land that is being farmed by tribals or forest dwellers as on 13 December 2005, subject to a maximum of 4 hectares; ownership is only for land that is actually being cultivated by the concerned family as on that date, meaning that no new lands are granted.

Use rights – to minor forest produce (also including ownership), to grazing areas, to pastoralist routes, etc.

Relief and development rights – to rehabilitation in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement; and to basic amenities, subject to restrictions for forest protection.

Forest management rights – to protect forests and wildlife.

Eligibility criteria:

According to Section 2(c) of Forest Rights Act (FRA), to qualify as **Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribe (FDST)** and be **eligible for recognition of rights under FRA**, three conditions must be satisfied by the applicant/s, who could be “members or community”:

1. Must be a Scheduled Tribe in the area where the right is claimed; and
2. Primarily resided in forest or forests land prior to 13-12-2005; and
3. Depend on the forest or forests land for bonafide livelihood needs.

And to qualify as **Other Traditional Forest Dweller (OTFD)** and be eligible for recognition of rights under FRA, two conditions need to be fulfilled:

1. Primarily resided in forest or forests land for three generations (75 years) prior to 13-12-2005.
2. Depend on the forest or forests land for bonafide livelihood needs.

Process of recognition of rights:

1. The gram sabha, or village assembly, will initially pass a resolution recommending whose rights to which resources should be recognised.
2. This resolution is then screened and approved at the level of the sub-division (or taluka) and subsequently at the district level.

The screening committees consist of three government officials (Forest, Revenue and Tribal Welfare departments) and three elected members of the local body at that level. These committees also hear appeals

MoEFCC Order on Genome-edited Plants

- The Indian government has issued an order for the first time exempting certain types of crops that are genome-edited from the stringent regulations that are applicable in the country on genetically modified or GM crops. This order will give a boost to their development and research.
- The SDN1 and SDN2 genome-edited plants have been exempted by the ministry of environment and forest from Rules 7-11 of the Environment Protection Act (EPA) for the purpose of manufacturing, importing, or usage or exporting and storage of microorganisms that are hazardous or organisms or cells that are genetically engineered rules-1989.
- This order would help the government to notify and approve the guidelines related to genome-edited plants that are pending since 2020.
- The order will also incentivize the researchers and breeders to utilize the power of genome editing so that the farming community is developed further.
- Many countries have developed or approved the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, cereals, and oilseeds that have been developed through genome editing like GABA tomato or Gamma-aminobutyric acid, soybean, high oleic canola, etc.

Ecuador grants Legal Rights to Wild Animals

Ecuador, a South American country has become **the first country in the world to give legal rights to wild animals.**

'Varuna' Naval Exercise

The 20th edition of the bilateral naval exercise that is named 'Varuna' is being conducted by India and France in the Arabian Sea

Alopecia areata

Alopecia areata is a condition that causes sudden hair loss in patches. **The condition is developed after the immune system attacks the hair follicles**, resulting in hair loss, which cannot be observed easily. It mostly occurs in people who have a family history of auto-immune conditions, such as diabetes and thyroid.

Extra neutral alcohol (ENA)

- It is a byproduct of the sugar industry. Formed from molasses that are a residue of sugarcane processing.
- It is the primary raw material for making alcoholic beverages.
- It is colourless food-grade alcohol that does not have any impurities.

- It has a neutral smell and taste and typically contains over 95 per cent alcohol by volume.
- An essential ingredient in the manufacture of cosmetics and personal care products such as perfumes, toiletries, hair spray, etc.
- Utilized in the production of some lacquers, paints and ink for the printing industry, as well as in pharmaceutical products such as antiseptics, drugs, syrups, medicated sprays.

Economics

Export Preparedness Index 2021

NITI Aayog, in collaboration with the Institute of Competitiveness, has released the second edition of the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2021. The first Index was launched in August 2020.

The index ranked states on **four key parameters** – policy; business ecosystem; export ecosystem; export performance.

The index also took into consideration 11 sub-pillars — export promotion policy; institutional framework; business environment; infrastructure; transport connectivity; access to finance; export infrastructure; trade support; R&D infrastructure; export diversification; and growth orientation.

Performance of various states: Gujarat has topped NITI Aayog's Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2021 for the second consecutive time. Maharashtra has been ranked second and Karnataka has been ranked third.

Shrinkflation

- Shrinkflation is the practice of reducing the size of a product while maintaining its sticker price.
- It is a **form of hidden inflation**.
- Raising the price per given amount is a strategy employed by companies, mainly in the food and beverage industries, to stealthily boost profit margins or maintain them in the face of rising input costs.
- Shrinkflation is also referred to as package downsizing in business and academic research.

Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP)

The Union Cabinet approved a USD 808 million or Rs 6,062.45 crore, **World Bank assisted programme on "Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance" (RAMP)**. RAMP is a new scheme and would commence in FY 2022-23.

What is RAMP?

- "Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance" (RAMP) is a **World Bank assisted Central Sector Scheme**.

- **It has been launched to support various Resilience and Recovery Interventions of the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME).**
- **In addition to building the MoMSME's capacity** at the national level, the RAMP program will seek to scale up implementation capacity and MSME coverage in States.

Objective:

The programme aims at improving access to market and credit, strengthening institutions and governance at the Centre and State, improving Centre-State linkages and partnerships, addressing issues of delayed payments and greening of MSMEs.

RAMP will function as a:

1. **"Policy Provider"** through the enhanced capacity for evidence-based policy and program design, to enable the delivery of more effective and cost-efficient MSME interventions to improve competitiveness and business sustainability.
2. **"Knowledge Provider"** through bench-marking, sharing and demonstrating best practices/success stories by leveraging international experiences.
3. **"Technology Provider"** by providing access to high-end technology resulting in the digital and technological transformation of MSMEs through state of art Artificial Intelligence, Data Analytics, Internet of things (IoT), Machine Learning etc.

Credit default swap

- It is an example of a **credit derivative transaction** where **credit protection is bought and sold.**
- In a Credit Default Swap (CDS), **one party agrees to pay another party periodic fixed payments in exchange for receiving 'credit event protection',** in the form of a payment, **in the event that a third party or its obligations are subject to one or more pre-agreed adverse credit events over a pre-agreed time period.**
- **Typical credit events include** bankruptcy, failure to pay, obligation acceleration, restructuring, and repudiation/moratorium.

Mission Integrated Bio-refineries

- The mission has been launched keeping in mind India's commitment to a low-carbon future that can be achieved through "Mission Innovation" and centred on technological advancement.
- Also, through the usage of zero waste bio-refinery for the cost-effective production of biofuels that are sustainable and bio-based materials and chemicals, using interventions that are biotechnological low-carbon future can be achieved.



Vivek Career Academy SCO 385, Sector 8, Panchkula

- This mission will be uniting a result-oriented and dynamic partnership of international organizations, countries, academic institutions, the corporate sector, and civil society so that the innovation for chemicals, renewable fuels, and materials for achieving a low-carbon future can be accelerated. This mission will be looking to facilitate green energy in the country.