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At a Glance &
In Depth.

Polity and Social Issues
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CURRENT AFFAIRS
WEEKLY
THE **PULSE** OF UPSC AT
YOUR FINGER TIPS.

News @ a glance

News in Depth

News @ a glance
POLITY

1) Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana

About the scheme:

- Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY) is a **Pension Scheme exclusively for the senior citizens (aged 60 years and above**).
- It was launched in 2017 by the **Ministry of Finance** to offer a guaranteed payout of pension to senior citizens at a specified rate for 10 years.
- Initially an **assured rate of return of 7.40% per annum for the year 2020-21** will be provided and thereafter to be reset every year in line with the Senior Citizen Savings Scheme (SCSS).
- It also offers a death benefit in the form of return of purchase price to the nominee.
- The Scheme can be purchased offline as well as online through the **Life Insurance Corporation (LIC)** which has been given the sole privilege to operate this Scheme.
- **Aadhar has been made mandatory** to avail the benefit of the scheme.

Eligibility Conditions
- Minimum Entry Age: 60 years (completed)
- Maximum Entry Age: No limit
- Investment limit : Rs 15 lakh per senior citizen
- Minimum Pension: Rs. 1,000/- per month
- Maximum Pension: Rs. 10,000/- per month

Other Features:
- **Mode of pension payment:** Senior citizens will have an option to get the pension in four ways — monthly, quarterly, half-yearly and yearly.
- **Loans:** Any individual can apply for loans after completion of three years. The maximum loan that can be granted shall be 75% of the purchase price.

- **Tax benefits:** The scheme is exempted from Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Why in News?
- The Union Cabinet has extended Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY) for a period of three years. This social security scheme for senior citizens will now be valid till March 2023.

2) Competition Commission of India (CCI)

About CCI:
- Competition Commission of India (CCI) is a statutory body of the Government of India responsible for enforcing the **Competition Act, 2002**.Its main objective is to promote and sustain an enabling competition culture through engagement and enforcement that would inspire businesses to be fair, competitive and innovative; enhance consumer welfare; and support economic growth.
- **Composition:** CCI consists of a Chairperson and 6 Members appointed by the Central Government.

Functions:
- It is the duty of the Commission
- to eliminate practices having adverse effect on competition,
- promote and sustain competition,
- protect the interests of consumers and
- ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.
- to give opinion on competition issues on a reference received from a statutory authority established under any law
- to undertake competition advocacy, create public awareness and impart training on competition issues.

How does it establish the Competition?
- Competition Commission of India aims to establish a robust competitive environment through:
- Proactive engagement with all stakeholders, including consumers,

industry, government and international jurisdictions.

- Being a knowledge intensive organization with a high competence level.
- Professionalism, transparency, resolve and wisdom in enforcement.

What is the need of Competition?

- Competition is the best means of ensuring that the 'Common Man' or 'Aam Aadmi' has access to the broadest range of goods and services at the most competitive prices.
- With increased competition, producers will have maximum incentive to innovate and specialize. This would result in reduced costs and wider choice to consumers.
- A fair competition in the market is essential to achieve this objective.
- Thus the goal of CCI is to create and sustain fair competition in the economy that will provide a 'level playing field' to the producers and make the markets work for the welfare of the consumers.

Why in News?

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has started looking into allegations against Alphabet Inc's Google. According to the allegations, Google is abusing its market position to unfairly promote its mobile payments app (Google Pay) in the country.

3) Forest Rights Act, 2006

Background:

- In the colonial era, the British diverted abundant forest wealth of the nation to meet their economic needs.
- Though the procedure for settlement of rights was provided under statutes such as the Indian Forest Act, 1927, these were hardly followed.
- As a result, tribal and forest-dwelling communities, who had been living within the forests in harmony with the environment and the ecosystem, continued to live inside the forests in tenurial insecurity, a situation which continued even after independence as they were marginalised.
- The symbiotic relationship between forests and forest-dwelling communities found recognition in the National Forest Policy, 1988.

- The policy called for the need to associate tribal people in the protection, regeneration and development of forests.
- Thus the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, was enacted to protect the marginalised socio-economic class of citizens and balance the right to environment with their right to life and livelihood.

Features of Forest Rights Act, 2006:

- The act recognizes and vest the forest rights and occupation in Forest land in forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDST) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFD)who have been residing in such forests for generations.
- The act also establishes the responsibilities and authority for sustainable use, conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological balance of FDST and OTFD.
- It strengthens the conservation regime of the forests while ensuring livelihood and food security of the FDST and OTFD.
- It seeks to rectify colonial injustice to the FDST and OTFD who are integral to the very survival and sustainability of the forest ecosystem.
- The act identifies the following rights:
- **Title rights:** It gives FDST and OTFD the right to ownership to land farmed by Tribals or forest dwellers subject to a maximum of 4 hectares. Ownership is only for land that is actually being cultivated by the concerned family and no new lands will be granted.
- **Use rights:** The rights of the dwellers extend to extracting Minor Forest Produce, 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:** It includes the right to protect, regenerate or conserve or manage any community forest resource which they have been traditionally protecting and conserving for sustainable use.

How are rights recognised?

- Section 6 of the Act provides a transparent three step procedure for deciding on who gets rights.

Gram Sabha:
- First, the **Gram Sabha** makes a recommendation – i.e. who has been cultivating land for how long, which minor forest produce is collected, etc.
- The Gram Sabha plays this role because it is a public body where all people participate, and hence is fully democratic and transparent.
- Gram Sabha is authorised for receiving claims, consolidating and verifying them and preparing a map delineating the area of each recommended claim.
- Then the gram sabha's recommendation goes through two stages of screening committees at the Taluk and district levels.

The Sub-Divisional Level Committee
- It shall examine the resolution passed by the Gram Sabha and prepare the record of forest rights and forward it through the Sub-Divisional Officer to the District Level Committee for a final decision.
- Any aggrieved party with the decision of the Sub-Divisional Level Committee may file a petition to the District Level Committee within sixty days from the date of the decision of the Sub-Divisional Level Committee.
- Any person aggrieved with the decision of Gram Sabha cannot directly file a petition with the District Level Committee.

District Level Committee
- The State Government shall constitute a District Level Committee to consider and finally approve the record of forest rights prepared by the Sub-Divisional Level Committee.
- The decision of the District Level Committee on the record of forest rights shall be final and binding.

Why in News?
- Maharashtra Governor has modified the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, allowing rightful claimants of forest rights to appeal against decisions of the district level committee (DLC).

News in Detail:

- A notification issued says that the Governor has modified Section 6 of the Act, in its application to the Scheduled Area of the State of Maharashtra, in exercise of the powers conferred on him by **Schedule V of the Constitution.**

- Article 244(1) of the Constitution defines ''Fifth Schedule Areas'' as such areas as the President may by order declare to be Scheduled Areas after consultation with the Governor of that State.
- The Governor of each State having Scheduled Areas (SA) shall annually, or whenever so required by the President, make a report to the President regarding the administration of Scheduled Areas in that State.
- The criteria followed for declaring an area as Scheduled Area are -
  o Preponderance of tribal population,
  o Compactness and reasonable size of the area,
  o A viable administrative entity such as a district, block or taluk, and
  o Economic backwardness of the area as compared to the neighbouring areas.
- The President may at any time by order
- direct that the whole or any specified part of a Scheduled Area shall cease to be a Scheduled Area or a part of such an area;
- alter, but only by way of rectification of boundaries, any Scheduled Area; on any alteration of the boundaries of a State or on the admission into the Union or the establishment of a new State, declare any territory not previously included in any State to be, or to form part of, a Scheduled Area;
- rescind, in relation to any State or States, any order or orders made under this paragraph, and in consultation with the Governor of the State concerned, make fresh orders
- redefining the areas which are to be Scheduled Areas;

- The Governor's office said the notification is important to provide justice to Tribals whose 'individual or community forest right' has been rejected by the DLC,

- constituted under the Forest Rights Act (FRA).
- Despite a large number of applications being rejected, there was no provision for appeal.
- The notification applies to areas covered in the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act in the State and allows appeal provision against the DLC's decision

- **Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996**
- The PESA is a law enacted by the Government of India for ensuring self governance through traditional Gram Sabhas for people living in the Scheduled Areas of India.
- Scheduled Areas are areas identified by the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India.
- Scheduled Areas are found in ten states of India which have a predominant population of tribal communities.
- The Scheduled Areas were not covered by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment or Panchayati Raj Act of the Indian Constitution as provided in the Part IX of the Constitution.
- PESA was enacted on 24 December 1996 to extend the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution to Scheduled Areas, with certain exceptions and modifications.
- PESA sought to enable the Panchayats at appropriate levels and Gram Sabhas to implement a system of self-governance with

respect to a number of issues such as
- customary resources, minor forest produce, minor minerals,
- minor water bodies, selection of beneficiaries, sanction of projects, and
- control over local institutions.
- The loss of access to forest, land, and other community resources had increased their vulnerability.
- Rampant land acquisition and displacement due to development projects had led to large scale distress in tribal communities living in Scheduled Areas.

- The notification states that divisional level committees under the chairmanship of divisional commissioners have been constituted to hear the appeals against the DLC's decisions.
- In the case of an order passed by the DLC before commencement of the notification, the appeal needs to be made within six months. However, if an order has been passed after commencement of the notification, the application has to be made within 90 days.
- The Governor has modified Section 6 of the Act, in its application to the Scheduled Area of the State of Maharashtra, in exercise of the powers conferred on him by Schedule V of the Constitution.

ENVIRONMENT

1) 3 new plant species found in Western Ghats

Why in news?

- Botanical Survey of India (BSI) has spotted 3 new plant species in the south os Western Ghats.
- They all are shrubs. The plant species are:
- Eugenia sphaerocarpa of the Myrtaceae or **Rose apple family**;
- Goniothalamus sericeus of the Annonaceae family of **custard apple**
- Memecylon nervosum of the Melastomataceae (Kayamboo or **Kaasavu in local parlance**) family
- While the first in the list was found in **Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary**, the last two have been found in **Kanyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary.**

Eugenia sphaerocarpa

Eugenia sphaerocarpa
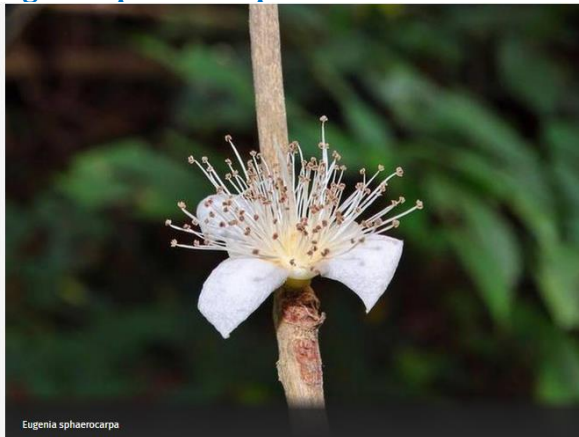
- It is found at an altitude of 800m in Malabar wildlife Sanctuary.
- Its fruits are yellowish in colour.
- They are edible, and are harvested from the wild.

Goniothalamus sericeus

- It is found at an altitude of 1400 m in Kanyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu.
- It bears fragrant greenish-yellow flowers and golden yellow fruits.
- The petals have dense silky hairs on them.

Goniothalamus sericeus.

Memecylon nervosum

Memecylon nervosum.

- They are found at an altitude of 700-900m in Kanyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu.
- They have purplish-blue flowers and purplish-red fruits

About Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary

- The sanctuary is part of the Western Ghats, a biodiversity hotspot.
- The sanctuary is located in Chakkittappara and Koorachundu revenue villages of Quilandy Taluk, of Kerala state.
- It also comes under the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and forms a part of the Wayanad Elephant Reserve.
- The sanctuary is drained by the Kuttiady River and its tributaries.
- Forty one species of mammals are reported in the area, which include 6 Western Ghats endemics. Of the 179 species of birds, 10 are endemics, 6 range restricted and 5 globally threatened species. Many amphibians, insects and

reptiles have been recently discovered which are endemic to this region.

- The forest is ideal place where King cobra snakes are found.
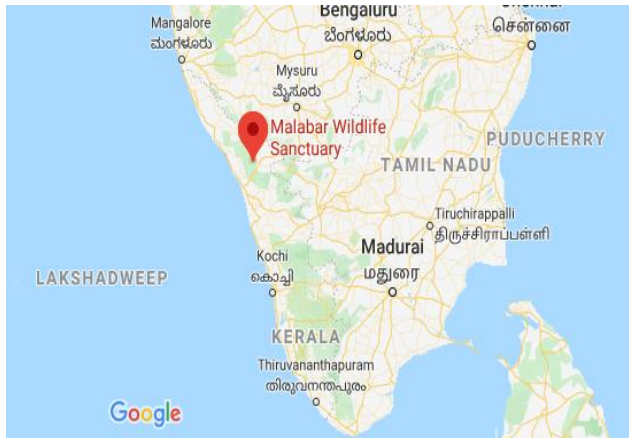
Kanyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary

- Being located in the southernmost hills of Indian subcontinent, it has many biomes.
- It was declared a sanctuary in 2008. It is a tiger habitat.
- The natural vegetation of this region represents biomes ranging from southern thorn forests, dry deciduous, moist deciduous, semi evergreen forests to ever green hill sholas with grassy downs.
- The Kanyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary is a crucial wildlife corridor with exceptionally high biodiversity. Inevitably, it is home to several species that are endangered, such as the Indian rock python, lion-tailed macaque, mouse deer, Nilgiri Tahr, Sambar deer, Indian bison and elephant.

2) Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Indian Botanic Garden

About:

- The Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Indian Botanic Garden was founded by Colonel Robert Kyd in the year 1787.
- It is located on the banks of Hooghly river, near Kolkata.
- It has some of the rarest species of flora of Indian subcontinent as well as from all over the world.
- Apart from being a home to 12,000 perennial plants of 1,400 species, the garden has much more to it. It has conservatories, glass houses, greenhouses and 25 divisions of herbaceous plants. The garden is the major center of horticultural and botanical research in India.
- A 250 year old Banyan Tree is one of the major attractions of this botanical garden. The present crown of the tree has a circumference of 486 m and is spread in almost 2 hectares.

Why in the news?

- Cyclone Amphan has caused severe damage to the above mentioned garden. More than 1000 trees have fallen, including some of the rarest one.
- The Banyan Tree has endured the cyclone with little damage.

3) New Fish species found

Why in the news?

- A new species of freshwater fish of Cyprinidae, has been found in Velankanni in Tamil Nadu.
- The silver hued fish has been named as *Puntius sanctus.*
- Encountered in a small waterbody in Velankanni, Puntius sanctus grows to a length of 7 cm.
- The Puntius species are known locally as 'Paral' in Kerala and 'Kende' in Tamil Nadu .
- It is used both as food and as an aquarium draw.

4) Invasive mussel in Kerala's backwaters

What is an invasive species?

- An invasive species can be any kind of living organism—an amphibian (like the cane toad), plant, insect, fish, fungus, bacteria, or even an organism's seeds or eggs—that is not native to an ecosystem and causes harm.
- They can harm the environment, the economy, or even human health. Species that grow and reproduce quickly, and spread aggressively, with potential to cause harm, are given the label "invasive."

Mussels

- Mussel is the common name used for members of several families of bivalve (2 shell) molluscs, from saltwater and freshwater habitats.

- These groups have in common a shell whose outline is elongated and asymmetrical compared with other edible clams, which are often more or less rounded or oval.

Charru Mussels

- Mytella charruana is commonly known as the Charru Mussel.
- It is native to the tropical Western Atlantic from Colon, Panama to Argentina.
- It is found on oyster beds, shells, wood, and roots, but adult mussels are most common on man-made substrates, such as docks and power plants.
- This mussel can tolerate a wide range of salinities, but its tolerance of low temperatures is limited.

Ashtamudi Lake

- Ashtamudi wetland is an estuary, which lies in the Kollam district. This is the second largest wetland in Kerala with a palm shaped extensive water body and eight prominent arms, adjoining the Kollam town.
- The Kallada river which originates from the western ghats, traverses through virgin forests and finally falls into the Ashtamudi wetland, after traveling a distance of about 120 km.

- The wetland supports 57 species of birds (6 migratory and 51 resident species) and 97 species of fish (42 typically marine, 3 estuarine, 9 estuarine-riverine and 15 marine-estuarine). About 40 species of wetland dependent birds are noted in Ashtamudi Lake, out of which 45% are long distance migrants.
- The lake is the source of livelihood for the people living close to it in fishing, coconut husk retting for coir production and inland navigation services.
- Ashtamudi Wetland was included in the list of wetlands of international importance, as defined by the Ramsar Convention for the conservation and sustainable utilization of wetlands.

Why in the news?

- According to a paper published in the Journal of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, Charru Mussel has spread across the backwaters of Kerala after Cyclone Ockhi.
- Ashtamudi Lake remains the worst hit by this invasive species. With a population as high as 11,384 per sq metre here, the Charru Musssels has replaced the Asian green mussel (Perna viridis) and the edible oysterMagallana bilineata (known locally as muringa)
- In all probability, the mussel reached the Indian shores attached to ship hulls or as larval forms in ballast water discharges

Cyclone Ockhi

- The cyclone ockhi hit India and Sri lanka in 2017.

ECONOMY

1) Financial Stability and Development Council

What is FSDC?

- Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) is an apex-level body constituted in 2010 to strengthen and institutionalize the mechanism for maintaining financial stability.
- It is chaired by the **Union Finance Minister of India.**
- Its members include the heads of financial sector regulators (RBI, SEBI, PFRDA, IRDA), Finance Secretary and/or Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Secretary, Department of Financial Services, and Chief Economic Adviser.
- The Council monitors macro prudential supervision of the economy, including functioning of large financial conglomerates, and addresses inter-regulatory coordination and financial sector development issues. It also focuses on financial literacy and financial inclusion.

Why in News?

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has called the meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the financial sector and the economy.
- This will be the first meeting of the FSDC, which comprises RBI Governor and other financial sector regulators, after the outbreak of the coronavirus.

2) FDI rises 13% to $50 bn

What is Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)?	What is Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI)?
- It is the investment made by a person or a company in one country into businesses located in another country. - Generally, FDI takes place when an investor establishes foreign business operations or acquires foreign business assets.	- It is similar to FDI but here, the investor holds only passive financial assets of a foreign company. - The investor may simply hold equities or securities of foreign-based companies.

Key differences

- FDI involves establishing a **direct business interest** in a foreign country, while FPI refers to **investing in financial assets** such as stocks or bonds in a foreign country.
- FDI usually aims to **take control of the company** in which investment is made whereas FPI aims to reap profits by investing in shares and bonds of the invested entity without taking part in management of the company.
- FPI can enter the stock market easily and also withdraw from it easily. For this reason FPI is also known as **hot money**, as the investors have the liberty to sell it and take it back. But FDI cannot enter and exit that easily. This difference is what makes nations prefer FDIs more than FPIs as **FDIs are more stable.**
- In India, according to the SEBI (FPI) Regulations, 2014, a particular foreign institutional investor is allowed to invest upto 10% of the paid up capital of a company, which implies that **any investment above 10% will be construed as FDI.**

Why in News?

- According to the latest official data, FDI in India grew by 13% to a record of $49.97 billion in the 2019-20 financial years. The country had received an FDI of $44.36 billion during April-March 2018-19.
- The sectors which attracted maximum foreign inflows during 2019-20 include services ($7.85 billion), computer software and hardware ($7.67 billion), telecommunications ($4.44 billion), trading ($4.57 billion), automobile ($2.82 billion), construction ($2 billion), and chemicals ($1 billion).

- **Singapore** emerged as the largest source of FDI in India during the last fiscal with $14.67 billion investments.
- It was followed by Mauritius, the Netherlands, the U.S., Cayman Islands, Japan, and France.

3) GST Council

About GST Council
- It is a **constitutional body** created by Article 279A (1).
- It is a joint forum of the Centre and the States with regards to GST.

Composition of GST
- **Chairperson** – Union Finance Minister
- **Members**: Union Minister of State, in-charge of Revenue or Finance
- **Other Members**: The Minister in-charge of finance or taxation/any other Minister nominated by each State.

Voting
- The state governments have a share of $2/3^{rd}$ of the total votes and the centre has the remaining $1/3^{rd}$.
- Each state has one vote irrespective of their size.
- Decisions of GST council are made by voting **with a $3/4^{th}$ majority**.

Why in News?
- The GST Council is likely to meet in mid-June.

4) Index of Eight Core Industries

About ICI
- The monthly Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) is a **production volume index.**
- The objective of the ICI is to provide an advance indication on production performance of industries of 'core' nature before the release of Index of Industrial Production (IIP) by the Central Statistics Office.
- These industries are likely to impact on general economic activities as well as industrial activities.
- The Eight Core Industries- **Electricity, steel, refinery products, crude oil, coal, cement, natural gas and fertilizers-** comprise **40.27 per cent of the weight** of items included in the IIP.
- **Industry Weight (In percentage)**
  - Petroleum & Refinery production - 28.04
  - Electricity generation - 19.85
  - Steel production - 17.92
  - Coal production - 10.33
  - Crude Oil production - 8.98
  - Natural Gas production - 6.88
  - Cement production - 5.37
  - Fertilizers production - 2.63
- ICI is released by the **Office of Economic Advisor**, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industries. The base year of the ICI is **2011-12.**

Why in News?
- The lockdown imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in Index of Eight Core Industries contracting 38% in April 2020, compared with the same month in the previous year.
- This is the second straight month in negative territory for the index of eight core sector industries, after a 9% fall in March 2020.

5) GDP growth slows to a 11-year low

Gross Domestic Product
- Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is defined as the **value of all final goods and services produced within the country in a particular year.**
- GDP as an economic indicator is used worldwide to show the economic health of a country.
- The **National Statistical Office (NSO),** under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, is responsible for compiling data for calculating GDP.
- In India, GDP is measured as **market prices** and the base year for computation is **2011-12.**
  - *GDP at market prices = GDP at factor cost + Indirect Taxes – Subsidies*
- The factor cost refers to the cost of production that is incurred by a firm when producing goods and services.

Real GDP & Nominal GDP
- The main difference between nominal GDP and real GDP is the **adjustment for inflation.**
- The market value of goods and services taken at current prices is the nominal GDP. The value taken at constant prices — that is prices for all products taken at an unchanged base year — is the real GDP.

- Real GDP growth thus measures how much the production of goods and services in the economy has increased in actual physical terms during a year. Nominal GDP growth, on the other hand, is a measure of the increase in incomes resulting from rise in both production and prices.

Why in News?
- The National Statistical Office has released its latest growth estimates.
- According to the data, economic growth slowed to an 11-year low in 2019-20. Growth rate of Real GDP in the year 2019-20 is now estimated at 4.2 % as compared to 6.1 percent in 2018-19.
- In the final quarter of the year (January-March), the growth rate of GDP fell to 3.1%, reflecting the impact of the first week of the COVID-19 lockdown which began on March 25.

6) Fiscal deficit

FRBM review committee
- In 2017, the **FRBM (Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management) Act review committee** headed by NK Singh recommended the Central government to bring down the fiscal deficit to 3% of the GDP by 2020.
- *Fiscal deficit = Total Expenditure – Total Receipts except borrowings*
- The committee also allowed an **escape clause** under the FRBM Act that provides for a deviation from the estimated fiscal deficit on some exception cases such as:
- Overriding considerations of national security, acts of war, and calamities of national proportion and collapse of agriculture severely affecting farm output and incomes
- Far-reaching structural reforms in the economy with unanticipated fiscal implications
- A sharp decline in real output growth of at least 3 percentage points below the average for the previous four quarters.
- The deviation from the stipulated fiscal deficit target **must not exceed 0.5 percentage points** in a year.
- Escape clauses provide flexibility to governments to overshoot fiscal deficit targets in times of need, enabling them to respond to economic shocks.

- During the Union Budget 2020-21, the Central government pegged the fiscal deficit target as a percentage of the GDP for FY20 and FY21 at 3.8 per cent and 3.5 per cent, respectively, **invoking the escape clause** in the FRBM Act.
- The committee also suggested that India should adopt **debt-to-GDP ratio** as a new anchor of fiscal policy along with the fiscal deficit and gradually bring it down to **60 per cent** — comprising of 40 per cent for the Centre and 20 per cent for the states.

Why in News?
- The **Controller General of Accounts (CGA)** reported that the fiscal deficit for 2019-20 at 4.6 per cent of the GDP as against 3.8 per cent projected in the revised estimate. This was the highest level of deficit for the Centre since FY13, when it had stood at 4.8%.
- Reasons for the higher deficit include fall in nominal GDP growth rate to 7.2 per cent and decline in tax and non-tax revenue. As a result, the fiscal deficit was over Rs 9.35-lakh crore against the revised Budget estimate of Rs 7.66-lakh crore.

About CGA
- A CGA is the **Principal Advisor on accounting matters** to the Union Government.
- He is responsible for preparation and submission of the accounts of the Union Government and also responsible for exchequer control and internal audits. CGA derives his mandate from **Article 150** of the Constitution.

Duties and responsibilities of CGA
- General principles of Government accounting relating to **Union or State Governments** and form of accounts, and framing or revision of rules and manuals relating thereto;
- Consolidation of monthly accounts, preparation of review of trends of revenue realization and significant features of expenditure etc and preparation of annual accounts, the annual receipts and disbursements.
- Cadre management of Group 'A' (Indian Civil Accounts Service) and Group 'B' Officers of the Central Civil Accounts Offices;

- Disbursement of Pension through Public Sector Banks (PSBs) in respect of Central Civil Pensioners, Freedom Fighters, High Court Judges, Ex-M.P.s and Ex-Presidents.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1) India-China Border issues

Background

- The disputed boundary between India and China, also known as the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**, is divided into **three sectors**: viz. Western (Ladakh, Kashmir), middle (Uttarakhand, Himachal) and eastern (Sikkim, Arunachal).
- The countries disagree on the exact location of the LAC in various areas, so much so that India claims that the LAC is 3,488 km long while the Chinese believe it to be around 2,000 km long.

Johnson Line

- The boundary dispute in the Western Sector pertains to the Johnson Line proposed by the British in the 1860s which put **Aksai Chin** in the then princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Independent India used the Johnson Line and claimed Aksai Chin as its own. However, China stated that it had never acceded to the Johnson Line and refused to cede Aksai Chin to India.

Middle Sector

- In the Middle Sector, the dispute is a minor one. It is the only one where India and China have exchanged maps on which they broadly agree.

McMahon Line

- The disputed boundary in the Eastern Sector of the India-China border is over the McMahon Line.
- Representatives of China, India and Tibet in **1913-14 met in Shimla**, where an agreement was proposed to settle the boundary between Tibet and India, and Tibet and China.
- Though the Chinese representatives at the meeting initialled the agreement, they subsequently refused to accept it claiming that Tibet is not a sovereign nation and thus the McMahon Line has no legal standing.
- At the heart of boundary dispute is the issue of Arunachal Pradesh, which China describes as **'Southern Tibet'.**

Mechanism to prevent border flare-ups

- The two countries engaged in **Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)** on the border with bilateral agreements signed in 1993, 1996, 2005, 2012 and 2013.
- During Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to China in 2003, the two sides agreed on the appointment of **special representatives for consultations** aimed at arriving at a framework for a boundary settlement that would provide the basis for the delineation and demarcation of the border.
- In October 2013, the two sides signed the **Boundary Defence Cooperation Agreement** to prevent any flare up along the un-demarcated border. This encompasses both military level and diplomat level dialogue mechanism.

Why in News?

- Indian and Chinese armies rushed in additional troops in areas around Pangong Tso lake in eastern Ladakh, after recent clashes between the soldiers of both sides.

- The LAC mostly passes on the land, but Pangong Tso is a unique case where it passes through the water as well. The points in the water at which the Indian claim ends and Chinese claim begins are not agreed upon mutually.
- Most of the clashes between the two armies occur in the disputed portion of the lake.

Pangong Tso
- Pangong Tso is a long narrow, deep, **endorheic** (landlocked) lake situated at a height of more than 14,000 ft in the Ladakh Himalayas.
- The **brackish water** lake freezes over in winter.

2) World Health Organization
About WHO
- The World Health Organization is a **specialized agency** of the United Nations (UN) established in 1948 to further international cooperation for improved public health conditions.
- It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- Working with 194 Member States (including India), its stated goal is to ensure "**the highest attainable level of health for all people".**

Why in News?
- The World Health Organization has declared that South America is "a new epicentre" of the COVID-19 pandemic with rising new cases.

3) India and Nepal Border dispute
About Kalapani
- The Kalapani territory is an area **disputed between India and Nepal**, but under Indian administration as part of Pithoragarh district in the Uttarakhand state.
- It shares a border on the north with the **Tibet Autonomous Region of China** and **Nepal** in the east and south.
- The valley of Kalapani, with the **Lipulekh Pass** at the top, forms the Indian route to Kailash–Mansarovar, , a revered Hindu pilgrimage site in the Tibetan plateau.
- It is also the traditional trading route to Tibet for the **Bhotiyas** of Uttarakhand.

Treaty of Sugauli
- The Treaty of Sugauli signed by **Nepal and British East India Company** in **1816** defines the **Kali River** as Nepal's western boundary with India.
- According to the treaty, Nepal lost the regions of Kumaon-Garhwal in the west and Sikkim in the east.
- However, what is meant by "Kali River" in the upper reaches is unclear because many mountain streams come to join and form the river.
- From 1879 onwards, the survey maps show the stream that flows down from the Lipulekh Pass as the Kali River.
- This stream has served as the border between India and Nepal until India's independence.

What is the issue?
- However, the discrepancy in locating the source of the river led to boundary disputes between India and Nepal, with each country producing maps supporting their own claims.
- Kalapani has been controlled by India's **Indo-Tibetan Border Police** since the Sino-Indian War with China in 1962.

Why in News?
- Recently, Nepal published a revised official map showing the areas of Lipulekh, Kalapani, and Limpiyadhura as part of its territory.
- However, the move drew sharp criticism from India which said the map includes parts of Indian Territory.

4) International Labour Organisation
About ILO

- ILO was created in 1919, as part of the **Treaty of Versailles** that ended World War I.
- It became the **first specialized agency of the UN** in 1946.
- ILO is the **only tripartite U.N. agency** which brings together governments, employers and workers of 187 member States, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.
- India is a **founder member** of the ILO.
- It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

Background
- Recently, the Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh governments announced an exemption for establishments from the employer's obligations under several labour laws for three years.
- Calling the move retrograde and anti-worker, several trade unions lodged a complaint with the International Labour Organisation against the changes in the labour laws.
- They allege that the changes are in violation with several ILO conventions such as the **Right to Freedom of Association [ILO Convention 87]**, **Rights to Collective Bargaining [ILO Convention 98],** and also the internationally accepted norm of eight hour working day – espoused by core conventions of ILO.
- They also allege that the exemptions undermined the **ILO Convention 144 on tripartism** which requires ILO members to undertake effective consultations on matters pertaining to ILO activities between representatives of the government, employers and workers.
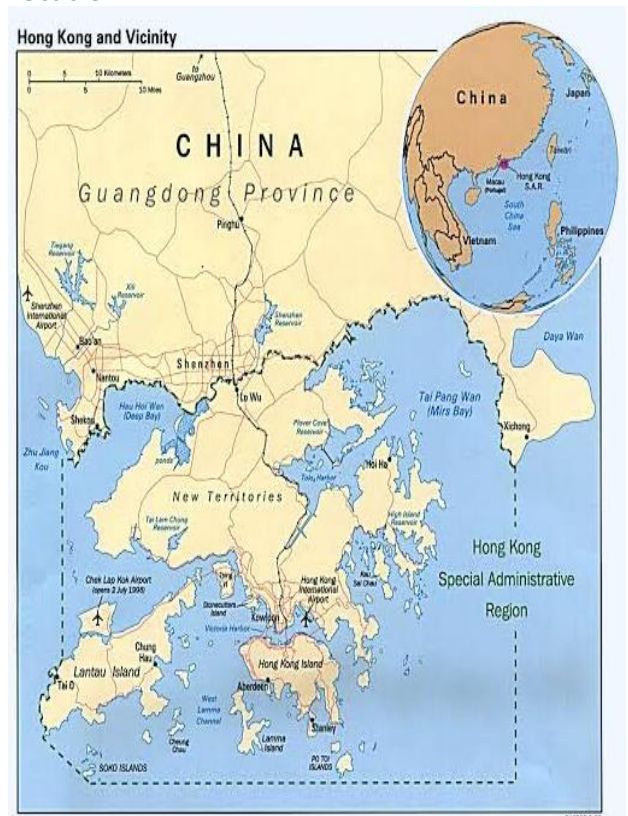
Why in News?
- The ILO has expressed deep concern over the labour law amendments and exemptions initiated by several Indian states, and have appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to intervene and give a clear message to states on international commitments.

5) Hong Kong security law
Hong Kong and China relationship

- Hong Kong, a former British colony, was returned to the People's Republic of China in 1997 under a policy known as **"one country, two systems,"** which promised the territory a high degree of autonomy.
- As a **Special Administrative Region (SAR),** Hong Kong allows freedoms not enjoyed in mainland China, including freedom to protest and an independent judiciary.
- But that autonomy, guaranteed under a mini-constitution known as the **Basic Law**, expires in 2047. The joint signed declaration does not state what will happen in 2047 after that agreement officially ends.

Location

Hong Kong and Vicinity

- Located on the southeast coast of China, Hong Kong's strategic location on the **Pearl River Delta** and **South China Sea** has made it one of the world's most thriving and cosmopolitan cities.

Why in News?
- China's Parliament has passed a new legislation for Hong Kong that will for the first time empower Beijing to draft national security laws for the Special Administrative Region.
- Many sections in Hong Kong are protesting against the law who fear that it

could be the biggest blow to the territory's autonomy and personal freedoms since 1997 when it came under Chinese rule.

- However, China has sought the support and understanding of India and other countries for its new legislation, saying the new legislation is aimed at containing the secessionist forces in Hong Kong.

6) European Union's €750 billion economy rescue plan

About European Union

- The European Union (EU) is a unique **economic and political union** between 27 European countries.
- The **United Kingdom**, which had been a founding member of the EU, left the organization in 2020.
- The EU was created by the **Maastricht Treaty**, which entered into force on November 1, 1993. The treaty was designed to enhance European political and economic integration by creating a single currency (the euro), a unified foreign and security policy, and common citizenship rights and by advancing cooperation in the areas of immigration, asylum, and judicial affairs.
- Additionally, the **Treaty of Lisbon**, enacted in 2009, gave the EU more broad powers that included being authorized to sign international treaties, increase border patrol, and other security and enforcement provisions.
- EU's headquarters is currently located in Brussels, Belgium.
- Currently, the euro is the official currency of 19 out of 27 EU member countries which together constitute the **Eurozone**, officially called the **euro area**.

Why in News?

- The European Union has unveiled a €750 billion plan to boost economies affected by the coronavirus crisis.
- Under the proposal, the EU would borrow the funds from the market and then disburse two-thirds in grants and the rest in loans to cushion the unprecedented slump expected this year due to the coronavirus lockdowns.

- The plan has to be approved by all 27 member states and the European Parliament.
- The borrowing will ultimately have to be repaid, meaning higher national contributions to the EU budget in the future or new taxes assigned to the bloc.
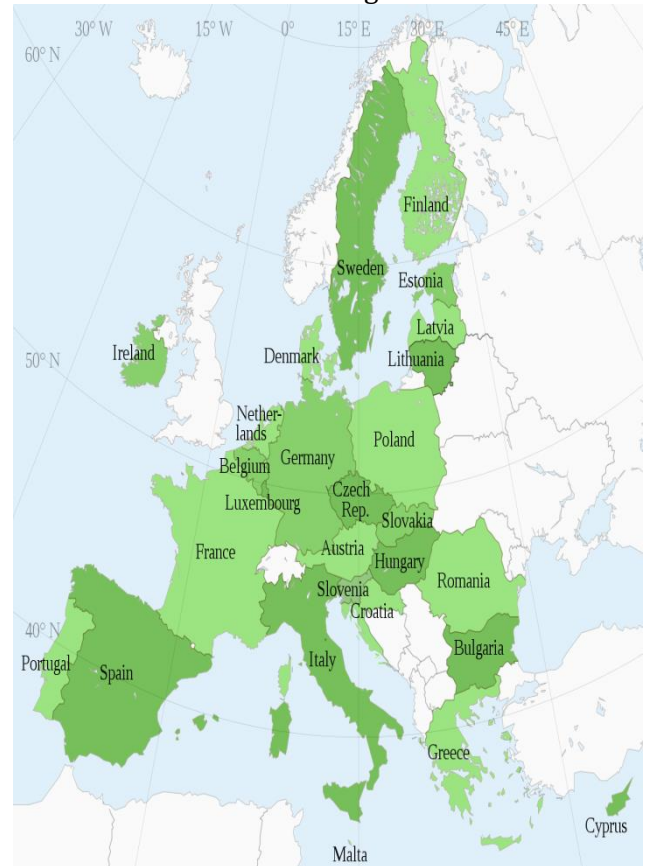
7) United Nations Peacekeeping Forces

About UN Peacekeeping Forces

- The United Nations Peacekeeping Forces are employed by the UN to maintain or re-establish peace in an area of armed conflict.
- The UN may engage in conflicts between states as well as in struggles within states. The UN acts as an impartial third party in order to prepare the ground for a settlement of the issues that have provoked armed conflict.
- The UN Peacekeeping Forces may only be employed when **both parties to a conflict accept their presence**.
- The Peacekeeping Forces are subordinate to the leadership of the United Nations. They are normally deployed as a consequence of a **UN Security Council** decision. However, on occasion, the

initiative has been taken by the **General Assembly**. Operational control belongs to the **Secretary-General and his secretariat.**

- There are two kinds of peacekeeping operations – **unarmed observer groups** and **lightly-armed military forces**. The latter are only allowed to employ their weapons for self-defence. The observer groups are concerned with gathering information for the UN about actual conditions prevailing in an area. The military forces are entrusted with more extended tasks, such as keeping the parties to a conflict apart and maintaining order in an area.
- The first UN peacekeeping mission was a team of observers deployed to the Middle East in 1948, during the 1948 Arab–Israeli War. There are currently 13 UN peacekeeping operations deployed on three continents.
- According to the Ministry of External Affairs, **India** is the **largest contributor of troops** to UN peacekeeping operations. More than 200,000 Indian troops have served in 49 of the 71 UN peacekeeping operations deployed so far.

Why in News?

- Major Suman Gawani of the Indian Army, who served as a peacekeeper with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in 2019, has won the prestigious United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the year Award.
- As a military observer in UNMISS from November 2018 to December 2019, Major Gawani was the principal focal point of contact for gender issues for military observers in the mission.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1) Darknet

What Is the DarkNet?

- The "dark net," also known as the "**dark web**," is a network of **secret websites** built over the internet which is **encrypted**.
- These are networks that are **only available to a select group of people** and not to the general internet public, and only accessible via authorization, specific software and configurations.
- They are **not searchable by traditional means**, such as a search engine, and it's not visible through traditional web browsers.
- It needs special browsers like **TOR** (The Onion Router), **Freenet** or **I2P**.
- Darknet provides **anonymity** to the users.

Concerns about DarkNet

- The dark net is **most often used for illegal activities** such as black markets, illegal file sharing, and the exchanging of illegal goods or services (including stolen financial and private data).
- The anonymity of DarkNet attracted the criminal element to it such as drug-dealers, hackers, arms dealers and child pornography peddlers.
- Here they are free to conduct their business and express themselves without fear of repercussion.
- It is becoming a **huge cyber security nightmare** to governments and businesses all over the world.

DarkNet vs. Deep Web

- The terms "darknet" and "deep web" are occasionally used interchangeably. However, this is not correct.
- The **dark net** is **part of the greater deep web** which are **purposefully hidden** from the surface net by additional means.
- The **deep web encompasses all unindexed sites,** which are **unsearchable** that don't pop up when you do an Internet search.
- Not all activities associated with the deep web are nefarious.
- In most cases, these pages are not searchable through traditional channels because they are **password-protected** and require specific tools or authorization (like a log-in) in order to access them.
- Personal email, online banking, and other similar sites are included under the umbrella of the "deep web."

Why in News?

- Personal details of about 2.90 crore Indian job seekers have been found dumped on the darknet, raising concerns among cyber crime agencies and experts in India over a massive data breach.

More in the News

- It has been suggested that the leak was made to get attention and rapport in the dark web markets.
- This was the strategy recently deployed by **ShinyHunters**, a known cybercriminal responsible for Tokopedia (Indonesia's largest online store), Unacademy (an Indian online learning platform), Wishbone, Mathway, and other leaks.

2) Adenovirus

About

- Adenoviruses are a group of common viruses that infect the lining of eyes, airways and lungs, intestines, urinary tract, and nervous system.
- They're common causes of fever, coughs, sore throats, diarrhea, and pink eyes.
- Infections happen in children more often than in adults. Most kids will have at least one type of adenovirus infection by the time they're 10.
- The infections usually cause only mild symptoms and get better on their own in a few days.
- But they can be more serious in people with weak immune systems, especially children.
- They're **very contagious.** They can spread through droplets from coughs or sneezes of the infected persons.

Why in News?

- A **phase-1** trial using a single dose of a vaccine (**Ad5-nCoV**) was found to be safe, well-tolerated and able to generate immune responses against the virus.
- It uses a **recombinant adenovirus type-5** vector that carries the genetic material

that codes for spike glycoprotein of SARS-CoV-2 virus.

- Please refer to *Pulse No. 42* and *Pulse No. 50* for stages of vaccine development.

3) Vandhe Bharat Express (Train 18)

About

- It is India's **first indigenously built engineless semi-high speed train**.
- The fully air-conditioned semi-high speed train will cut travel time by 15% as compared to the Shatabdi.
- It has been manufactured under the **'Make in India'** initiative by the **Integral Coach Factory (ICF) in Chennai.**
- The features include touch free automatic doors inside the passengers compartment and GPS-enabled passenger information system, showing train speed, location, time to reach destination etc.
- It will also feature an **onboard uninterrupted Wifi** and **infotainment** (broadcast material which is intended both to entertain and to inform) system.

- It has aircraft-like **bio-vacuum toilets** for efficient flushing. Touch-free sensor-based fittings have been used for optimal consumption of water.
- Train18 is being regarded as a successor to the 30-year-old Shatabdi Express.

About Make in India

- The Make in India initiative was launched by the Prime Minister in September **2014** which is devised to transform India into a **global design and manufacturing hub.**
- The scheme is helping drive investment, fostering innovation, developing skills, protecting Intellectual Property (IP) and building best-in-class manufacturing infrastructure.

- The aim of this campaign is to grow the contribution of **manufacturing** to **25% of GDP** as seen with other developing nations of Asia.
- For the Make in India campaign, the government of India has identified **25 priority sectors** that shall be promoted adequately.

Why in News?

- The Integral Coach Factory (ICF) that was tasked with manufacturing 720 coaches for operating 45 Vande Bharat Express trains across the country in December 2019 has said that the projects will be delayed due to the lockdown.

4) Arogya Setu App's source code

About Arogya Setu App

- Aarogya Setu is a mobile app launched by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology** to help citizens identify their risk of contracting Covid-19.
- Aarogya Setu is designed to keep the user informed in case s/he has crossed paths with someone who has tested positive.
- The tracking is done through a **Bluetooth** & location-generated social graph, which can show user's interaction with anyone who has tested positive.
- The app alerts are accompanied by instructions on how to self-isolate and what to do in case you develop symptoms.
- There is also a self-testing tool where the users can assess their health voluntarily by answering a few questions.

Concerns about source code

- Concerns were raised previously about not making the **source code** (software programming code) of the App public.
- The closed source architecture of the app **violates transparency** principles.
- An open source code allows researchers and experts to test the architecture and

suggest measures to correct vulnerabilities.

- For instance, **Singapore's TraceTogether app** was made open source.

- The government announced opening the source code of its coronavirus tracking app, Aarogya Setu.
- The government reiterated that **transparency, privacy and security** have been the core design principle of Aarogya Setu.
- Opening the source code to the software developer community signifies the Government of India continuing principal to these commitments.

What is a source code?

- Source code is the **fundamental component of a computer program** that is created by a programmer.
- It is a set of **step-by-step instructions to the computer** that are in a **human readable format.**
- Source code will be converted into **a machine readable format**- called **object code** - by the process of **compilation**.
- Source codes are written in Computer programming languages such as **Python, Java, C++, Swift, SQL,** etc.

What is an open source code?

- The term open source refers to something people can modify and share because its design is publicly accessible.
- Open source software is software with source code that **anyone can inspect, modify, and enhance.**
- Programmers who have access to a computer program's source code can improve that program by adding features to it or fixing parts that don't always work correctly.
- More importantly an open source code allows researchers and experts to **test the architecture** and **suggest measures to correct cyber security vulnerabilities**.

5) Bug Bounty programme
Why in News?

- The government has launched a Bug Bounty programme wherein financial rewards will be given to security researchers for **finding any**

vulnerability in the Arogya Setu application or **suggesting improvements to the source code** which was made open**.**

About the programme

- The bug bounty programme will be open to Indian and foreign nationals, but only Indians will be eligible for rewards offered under the scheme.
- Anyone who points out a security vulnerability in the app source code will be eligible for a reward of up to ₹3 lakh, and up to ₹1 lakh for pointing out a suggestion or improvement in the source code.
- Aarogya Setu's Bug Bounty Programme has been prepared with the goal **to partner with security researchers** and Indian developer community **to test the security effectiveness of the app and to enhance its security and build user's trust.**

6) 'FAITH' trials for COVID-19: Favipiravir and Umifenovir
Why in News?

- The Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Ltd., is going to conduct a study to examine whether early administration of a combination of **Favipiravir** and **Umifenovir** enhances antiviral efficacy on COVID-19 patients.
- The new combination clinical trial will be called FAITH – (FA vipiravir plus Um I fenovir (efficacy and safety) Trial in Indian Hospital setting).

About Favipiravir

- Favipiravir, an **antiviral** tablet, is a **generic version of Avigan** of a Japanese drug maker.
- Favipiravir has demonstrated activity against influenza viruses and has been approved in Japan for the treatment of novel influenza virus infections.
- The molecule, if commercialised, will be marketed under the brand name **'FabiFlu'** in India.
- **Phase-3 clinical trials** on Favipiravir for COVID-19 patients have been initiated in India recently.

About Umifenovir

- Umifenovir is a **dual-acting direct antiviral/host-targeting agent** i.e.,

attacks viral pathogens and also targets host proteins that interact with the virus.

- It is used for the treatment and prophylaxis (preventive care) of influenza and other respiratory infections.
- Umifenovir's ability to exert antiviral effects through multiple pathways has resulted in considerable investigation into its use for a variety of enveloped and non-enveloped RNA and DNA viruses, including Flavivirus, Zika virus, hepatitis, etc.

6)   Active   pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) of drugs

What are APIs?

- Active pharmaceutical ingredient (API), is the term used to refer to the **biologically active component** of a drug product (e.g. tablet, capsule).
- Drug products are usually composed of several components.
- The API is the **primary ingredient**. Other ingredients are commonly known as "**excipients**."
- The procedure for optimizing and compositing this mixture of components used in the drug is known as "**formulation**".

Why in News?

- The Centre has moved the active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) of paracetamol out of the 'restricted for export' list.
- With this their exports will be resumed which were being restricted for two months.

7) 5G technology

What is 5G?

- 5G is **next generation wireless network technology** that's expected to change the way people live and work.
- 5G enables a new kind of network that is designed to connect virtually everyone and everything together including machines, objects, and devices.

What are the benefits of 5G?

- The three major benefits offered by 5G are **higher speeds, higher bandwidth and lower "latency."**

Speed

- Speed is one of the most highly anticipated elements of the 5G network

which is **expected to be nearly 100 times faster than 4G.**

- Such high speeds are possible because most 5G networks are to be built on **super-high-frequency airwaves**, also known as **high-band spectrum.**
- The **higher frequencies can transmit much more data**, much faster than on 4G.

Capacity

- The 5G network is expected to have significantly more capacity than 4G.
- This is because 5G will have **greater bandwidth**, meaning it **can handle many more connected devices** than previous networks.
- It will bring in an **"internet of things"** era, filled with connected toothbrushes, kitchen appliances, street lamps and more.

Latency

- Latency is the time it takes for devices to communicate with each other or with the server that's sending them information.
- Latency is already low with 4G, but 5G will make it **virtually zero.**
- It will be essential for technologies such as **self-driving cars** which require instant communication of huge data to ensure safety of its passengers.

How is latency different from speed?

- A small but significant difference exists between speed and latency.
- Speed is the amount of time it takes to download the contents of a webpage.
- Latency is the time between when a text is sent to another phone and when that receiver's phone registers that it has received a new message.

Are there drawbacks?

- The **high-band network signals don't travel very far** and struggle to move through hard surfaces.
- In order to compensate for those challenges, wireless carriers building high-band 5G networks are installing tons of small cell sites (about the size of pizza boxes) to light poles, walls or towers, often in relatively small proximity to one another.
- For that reason, most carriers are deploying 5G city by city.
- Significant adoption of 5G is going to take years — industry trade group GSMA estimates that by 2025, around half of

mobile connections will be 5G (the rest will be older tech, like 4G and 3G).

- There are also concerns among regulators and others about the **security** of 5G, especially since crucial technologies such as self-driving cars and healthcare systems will be built on top of the network.

Why in News?

- The United Kingdom is hoping to form a club of 10 nations that could develop its own 5G technology and reduce dependence on Huawei (Chinese company).
- The U.K. is proposing a **"D10"** club of democratic partners that groups the G7 nations with Australia and the Asian technology leaders South Korea and India.

HEALTH

1) Pulmonary thrombosis and COVID-19

- Pulmonary thrombosis is a **condition in which one or more arteries in the lungs become blocked by a blood clot. This impairs blood supply and gas exchange leading to respiratory failure.**
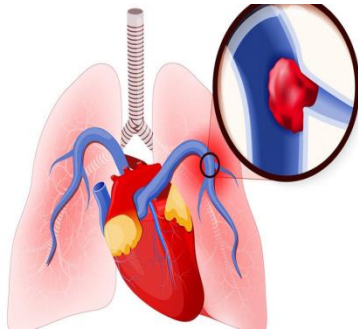
Why in the news?

- Though it is clear that the cause of death in almost all COVID-19 patients is respiratory failure, it is found that pulmonary thrombosis leads to respiratory failure in COVID-19 patients unlike pneumonia being the cause of death in most influenza outbreaks.

Evidences supporting the finding

- **Elevated levels of d-dimer**, a general marker of thrombosis in blood vessels in high proportions of patients with COVID-19 infection
- **Autopsy studies** from different countries have shown extensive blood clots in the small vessels of the lung (micro vascular thrombosis - MVT) with only little evidence of the pneumonia suggesting that it is the blood clots which cause poor oxygenation and respiratory failure.
- Manifestation of **'silent pneumonia' or 'silent hypoxia'** where relatively well-looking people have low blood oxygen and then suddenly collapse, most likely due to extending pulmonary thrombosis.

> ### About hypoxia and silent hypoxia:
> - **Hypoxia** is a condition characterised by an **absence of enough oxygen in the tissues to sustain bodily functions.** Hypoxia can either be generalised, affecting the whole body, or local, affecting a region of the body.

> - **'Silent' or 'happy' hypoxia** is a condition in which patients have **extremely low blood oxygen levels, yet do not show signs of breathlessness.** Despite having oxygen levels below 80 per cent, patients look fairly at ease and alert.

Early recognition:

- **Early recognition and intervention** with blood thinners (anti-coagulants) is needed the most. This can be easily implemented in all hospitals based on some **simple assessments:**
- **Rate of breathing at rest above ~20/minute**
- **Lowered level of oxygen in the finger even when they look relatively well.**
- **d-dimer levels more than 2-3 fold above normal**

Intervention:

- Blood thinners such as **heparin** or low molecular weight heparin (LMWH) in therapeutic doses should be given immediately till the symptoms resolve.
- In those with **higher risks of complications, preventive doses of LMWH** have been advised soon after diagnosis under proper medical supervision.

> - **Blood clots**
> - Blood clots can block blood vessels (an artery or a vein).
> - A blocked artery stops blood and oxygen from getting to a part of your body (for example, to a part of the heart, brain or lungs).
> - The tissue supplied by a blocked artery becomes damaged or dies, and this results in serious problems such as a stroke or heart attack.
> - **Anticoagulants:**
> - Anticoagulants, commonly known as blood thinners, are chemical substances that prevent or reduce coagulation of blood, prolonging the clotting time.
> - Heparin is an example of a widely used anticoagulant.

- **Relevance:**

- Public as well as health care professionals should be aware of this problem of blood clots in the lung whose severity is unique to COVID -9.

- However much **study is needed** to **determine the right doses at the right stages** of the disease for indicated persons.

ART & CULTURE

1) Purandara Dasa, the father of Carnatic Music

About

- Sri Purandara Dasa was a great **devotee of Lord Krishna**, a **poet** and a **musician**.
- He was born in 1494 and was named as **Srinivasa Nayaka**. He was the son of Varadappa Nayaka, a wealthy merchant and Leelavathi.
- After his renunciation, Srinivasa Nayaka became the disciple of the great saint Vyasaraja, who gave him the title **Purandara Vittala**, after the Lord of Pandarpur.
- Purandara Dasa is said to have composed around 475,000 songs, in **Kannada and Sanskrit** of which only about 1000 survived.
- Purandara Dasa is considered to be the **father of Carnatic Music** as he **formalized the music system** which was a blend of various traditions of South India and the musical science as explained in the Vedas.

Why in News?

- Karnataka government. has taken efforts to explore definitive archaeological evidences that may put an end to speculations regarding the birthplace of Purandara Dasa.
- As 'Purandara Vithala' was the pen name of his compositions, it was widely believed that the mystic poet was born in **Purandharagad, Maharashtra.**
- However, many in Malnad, Karnataka claimed that he hailed from this region.

About Carnatic Music

- Carnatic music, also known as **karnataka sangītam** is one of the two styles of Indian classical music; the other is Hindustani music.
- The present form of Carnatic music is based on historical developments that can be traced to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries C.E.
- Carnatic Music, which was based in South India, was substantially influenced by the pan-Indian **bhakti movement** which inspired the use of religious themes.
- In contrast to Hindustani music, the main emphasis in Carnatic music is on **vocal** music; most compositions are written to be sung, and even when played on instruments, they are meant to be performed in gāyaki (singing) style.
- Instruments include veena, rudra veena, violin, tambura, ghata, flute (venu), mridangam, nagaswara, and swarabhat.
- Carnatic songs (**kritis or kirtanas**) are varied in structure and style, but generally consist of three units: Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charana.
- The contemporaries **Tyagaraja** (1759-1847), **Muthuswami Dikshitar**, (1776 - 1827) and **Syama Sastri**, (1762-1827) are regarded as the **Trinity of Carnatic music**.

PIB ANAYSIS

1) Hunar Haat

About:

- Hunar Haat is an exhibition of handicrafts and traditional products made by artisans from the minority communities.
- These are organised by the **Ministry of Minority Affairs under USTTAD** (Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) scheme.
- It aims to provide employment opportunities at national as well international markets for thousands of master artisans, craftsmen and culinary experts.
- It also provides a market and opportunity to master artisans and craftsmen from remote areas of the country, and has become a credible brand of rare exquisite indigenous handmade products.
- USTTAD scheme aims to preserve heritage of traditional arts and crafts of minority communities and build capacity of traditional crafts persons and artisans and establish linkages of traditional skills with the global market

Why in News?

- After a gap of about 5 months due to the Corona pandemic, "Hunar Haat", which has become "Empowerment Exchange" of artisans and craftsmen from across the country, will restart from September 2020 with the theme of "Local to Global" and comparatively larger participation of artisans.

2) Katkari Tribe

Who are Katkari Tribe?

- Katkaris were historically **forest dwellers.**
- The name Katkari is derived from a forest based activity – the making and barter or sale of Katechu (kath) from the khair tree (Acacia Katechu). It is produced by boiling wood from the Khair tree and evaporating the resulting brew.
- They are located primarily in Raigad and in parts of Palghar, Ratnagiri and Thane districts as well and in some places of Gujarat.
- They are bilingual, speaking the Katkari language amongst themselves and Marathi with others. A few of them speak Hindi as well.
- Presently , most Katkaris have migrated from their forest dwellings to the plains while some hamlets are located on the hills.
- They are one of the 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, as per the classification by the **Ministry of Home Affairs.**

About PVTGs

- In India, tribal population makes up for 8.6% of the total population.
- Tribal people live in about 15% of the geographical area of the country.
- Tribal communities are often identified by some specific signs such as primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness to contact with the community at large and backwardness.
- Along with these, some tribal groups have some specific features such as dependency on hunting, gathering for food, having pre-agriculture level of technology, zero or negative growth of population and extremely low level of literacy.
- These groups are called Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

The criteria followed for determination of PVTGs are:

- A pre-agriculture level of technology;
- A stagnant or declining population;

- Extremely low literacy; and
- A subsistence level of economy.

Livelihood:
- PVTGs depend on various livelihoods such as food gathering,Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), hunting, livestock rearing, shifting cultivation and artisan works.Most of their livelihoods depend on the forest. The forest is their life and livelihood. They collect various NTFP items such as honey, gum, amla, bamboo, shrubs, fuel wood,dry leaves, nuts, sprouts, wax, medical plants,roots and tubes.Most of the NTFP items they gather are for consumption and they sell the remaining to middle men.

- **75 tribal groups** have been categorized by the **Ministry of Home Affairs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)s**. PVTGs reside in 18 States and UT of A&N Islands. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs implements the Scheme of "**Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**" exclusively for them . The Scheme seeks to adopt a **holistic approach to the socio-economic development of PVTGs** and gives state governments flexibility in planning initiatives that are geared towards the specific socio-cultural imperatives of the specific groups at hand.

Why in News?
- Many youths from the community are being benefited from Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY) .

- **Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY)**
- Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY) is a **retail marketing led value addition plan for Minor Forest Produce (MFP)**, meant for forest-based tribes to optimize the tribal income, locally. Under the program, MFP-based tribal groups / enterprises of around 300 members are formed for collection, value addition, packaging & marketing of Minor Forest Produces (MFPs).
- These tribal enterprises will be in the form of Van Dhan SHGs which will be a group of 15-20 members and such 15 SHG groups will further be federated into a larger group of Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKS) of around 300 members.
- **TRIFED** will support the VDVKs through providing them with model business plans, processing plans & tentative list of equipment for carrying out the value addition work of MFPs.

3) National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority

About:
- The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority was set up as an attached office of the Department of Pharmaceuticals.

Functions of NPPA:
- To implement and enforce the provisions of the Drugs Price Control Order (DPCO).
- To undertake and/or sponsor relevant studies in respect of pricing of drugs/formulations.
- To monitor the availability of drugs, identify shortages, if any, and to take remedial steps.
- To collect/maintain data on production, exports and imports, market share of individual companies, profitability of companies etc. for bulk drugs and formulations.
- To deal with all legal matters arising out of the decisions of the Authority.
- To render advice to the Central Government on changes/revisions in the drug policy.
- To render assistance to the Central Government in the parliamentary matters relating to the drug pricing.

Why in News?

- Prices of N-95 Masks are being reduced by the Importers/Manufacturers/Suppliers of N-95 Masks after an Advisory issued by NPPA.

News in Detail:
- The Government has notified N-95 Masks as an essential commodity under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.
- Hoarding and black-marketing of the essential commodity is a punishable offence under the Act.
- To keep a check on the hoarding and black-marketing of the essential commodity, the NPPA, in exercise of the powers conferred under National Disaster Management Act, 2005, had directed all States/UT Governments to ensure sufficient availability of surgical and protective Masks, Hand Sanitizers and Gloves at prices not exceeding the Maximum Retail Price printed on the pack size.

- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955.**
- It has been used by the Government to regulate the production, supply and distribution of a whole host of commodities it declares 'essential' in order to make them available to consumers at fair prices.
- The list of items under the Act includes drugs, fertilisers, pulses and edible oils, and petroleum and petroleum products.
- The Centre can include new commodities as and when the need arises, and takes them off the list once the situation improves.

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4) Chardham Pariyojana
What is Chardham?
- Char Dham of Uttarakhand is one of the most important Hindu Pilgrimages in India. It comprises four most holy sites of Uttarakhand, namely - Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri.

About Chardham Project:
- The Chardham project involves developing and widening 900-km of national highways connecting the holy Hindu pilgrimage sites of the chardham sites at an estimated cost of Rs 12,000 crores.

- The highway will be called Chardham Mahamarg(Chardham Highway) and the highway construction project will be called as Chardham Mahamarg Vikas Pariyojana (Chardham Highway Development Project).
- The roads will be widened and the project will involve construction of tunnels, bypasses, bridges, subways and viaducts.
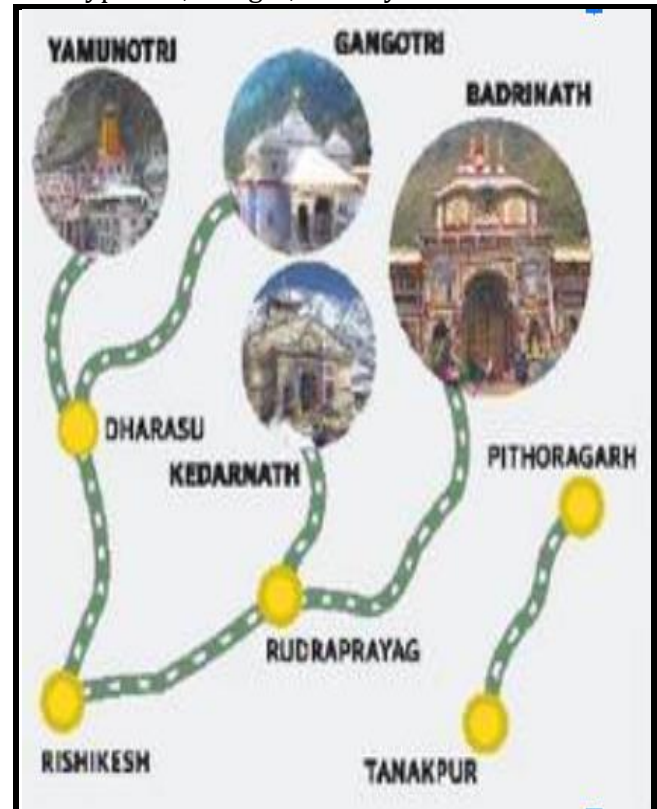
Why in News?
- Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways and MSMEs inaugurated the event of Chamba Tunnel under Chardham Pariyojana through video conference mode.
- The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) was lauded for constructing a 440-metre long tunnel below the busy Chamba town on Rishikesh-Dharasu road and termed it as an 'extraordinary feat' in nation-building during the pandemic.

Significance:
- It will help in facilitating speedy movement of traffic, reducing congestion and distance to Chamba town and easing the movement of yatris on Chardham Yatra and bring economic prosperity.

About BRO
- The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) develops and maintains road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighbouring countries.
- It is staffed by officers and troops drawn from the Indian Army's Corps of Engineers, Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Army Service Corps, Military Police and army personnel on extra regimental employment.The Border Roads Organisation works under the Ministry of Defence.

Role of the BRO
- **In Peace**
- Develop & Maintain the Operational Road Infrastructure of General Staff in the Border Areas.
- Contribute to the Socio-Economic Development of the Border States.
- **In War**
- To Develop & Maintain Roads to Keep Line of Control through in Original Sectors and Re-Deployed Sectors.
- To Execute Addl Tasks as laid down by the Govt Contributing to the War Effort.

5) Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology

About:
- CIPET was established in 1968 by the Government of India with the assistance of the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** at Chennai.
- The main objective of setting up the institute was to develop manpower in different disciplines of Plastics Engineering & Technology.
- The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** served as the executing agency.
- During the initial project period between 1968 and 1973, the institute achieved the targets envisaged and was rated as one of the most successful UNDP projects implemented worldwide.
- Now, CIPET is a premier national institution under the **Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers,** Govt. of India fully devoted to Skill Development, Technology Support Services, Academic and Research (STAR) in all the domains of plastics.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life.UNDP's Strategic Plan (2018-2021) has been designed to be responsive to the wide diversity is reflected in three broad development contexts:
- Eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions
- Accelerate structural transformations
- Build resilience to shocks and crises

International Labour Organization (ILO)
- International Labour Organization (ILO) is a United Nations agency dealing with labour issues, particularly international labour standards, social protection, and work opportunities for all.
- ILO was created in 1919, as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I, to reflect the belief that universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it is based on social justice. It became a specialized agency of the United Nations in 1946.
- It is a tripartite organization, the only one of its kind bringing together representatives of governments, employers and workers in its executive bodies.
- India is a founder member of the International Labour Organization.

Why in News?
- The Central Institute of Plastics Engineering & Technology (CIPET) has been renamed as the Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology (CIPET).

6) Minor Forest Produce (MFP)
What is MFP?
- **'Minor Forest Produce (MFP)'** means all non-timber forest produce of plant origin and will include bamboo, canes, fodder, leaves, gums, waxes, dyes, resins and many forms of food including nuts, wild fruits, Honey, Lac, Tusser etc. The Minor Forest Produces provide both **subsistence and cash income for people who live in or near forests.**

- The Minor Forest Produce has significant economic and social value for the forest dwellers as an estimated 100 Million people derive their source of livelihood from the collection and marketing of Minor Forest Produce (Report of the National Committee on Forest Rights Act, 2011).

Minimum Support Price for Minor Forest Produce
- The scheme "**Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce through Minimum Support Price and development of Value chain for MFP**" Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Minor Forest Produce (MFP) is designed as a social safety net for improvement of 5livelihood of MFP gatherers by providing them fair price for the MFPs they collect.

Why in News?
- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has announced Inclusion of 23 additional Minor Forest Produce (MFP) items under the scheme "Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce through Minimum Support Price and development of Value chain for MFP". This decision makes the coverage from the existing 50 to 73 items in view of currently prevailing in the country on account of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

News in Depth

AIR NEWS

1) UDAN scheme
About the scheme

- In 2017, the **Ministry of Civil Aviation** launched the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) "UDAN" (Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik) which aims at **providing connectivity to un-served and under-served airports** of the country through revival of existing air-strips and airports to make **flying affordable** to the common man who want to travel to and fro the Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities of the country.
- UDAN has a unique market-based model. Airline routes are allocated to operators selected through a competitive bidding mechanism.
- Airlines have to set aside **50% of the total aircraft capacity** for cheaper fares to be offered at the rate of **Rs 2,500 per hour of flight**, in return for which airlines are given a subsidy by the Centre and the State government concerned.
- The airport that will be renovated under this scheme will be chosen after referring to the respective State government. Together with the State government the Central government will revive the dysfunctional and unserved airports of the country.
- The **Airports Authority of India (AAI)** is designated as the Implementing Agency under this Scheme.
- The scheme is now in its **fourth phase** with focus on bringing connectivity to priority areas like North East India, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, hilly states in other parts of the country, and islands.
- Recently, the 250th route was operationalised under the UDAN scheme.

Why in News?
- The Civil Aviation Ministry has decided to restart the regional air connectivity services under the UDAN scheme after nationwide lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic.

2) Khelo India Programme
What is it?
- Under this programme, 2,500 talented players have been selected and are being trained.
- Talented players identified in priority sports disciplines at various levels by the High-Powered Committee will be provided **annual financial assistance of INR 5 lakh per annum for 8 years.**
- The Khelo India programme has been introduced to **revive the sports culture in India at the grass-root level** by building a strong framework for all sports played in our country and establish India as a great sporting nation.
- It is under the **Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports.**

Why in News?
- The Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports recently furnished details on the financial assistance to athletes under the Khelo India programme.

3) Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)
About the scheme:
- **Aim :** To provide assured income support to the small and marginal farmers.
- The income support of Rs. 6000/ was given to the farmers **irrespective of the**

size of their land holdings (Previously it was up to 2 hectares).

- The income will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers, in three equal instalments of Rs 2,000 each.

Eligibility: All landholder farmer's families in the country are eligible for the PM-Kisan Scheme subject to the prevalent exclusion criteria. Farmers who do not own any land are not eligible for this scheme.

Excluded from the scheme

- Institutional land holders,
- o Farmer families holding constitutional posts,
- o Serving or retired officers and employees of state/central government as well as PSUs and government autonomous bodies.
- o Professionals like doctors, engineers and lawyers as well as retired pensioners with a monthly pension of over Rs 10,000 and those who paid income tax in the last assessment year.
- **Identification of beneficiaries:** The responsibility of identifying the eligible beneficiary farmers and uploading their data on PM-KISAN portal lies entirely with the state governments.

Why in News?

- According to the latest official data, a total 9.67 crore farmers have been benefited and an amount of more than 19 thousand crore rupees has been released under the PM-KISAN scheme during the last two months.

4) Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat
About the initiative

- The 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' initiative was announced by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 31st October, 2015 on the occasion of the 140th birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.
- The programme aims to **actively enhance interaction between people of diverse cultures** living in different States and UTs in India, with the objective of promoting greater mutual understanding amongst them.

- As per the programme, each year, every State/UT would be paired with another State/UT in India for reciprocal interaction between the people. It is envisaged through this exchange, that the knowledge of the language, culture, traditions and practices of different states will lead to an enhanced understanding and bonding between one another, thereby strengthening the unity and integrity of India.

Why in News?

- Government has decided to take forward the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat programme using innovative ways during the COVID 19 outbreak such as organizing webinars on Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat themes for their wide dissemination.

5) Food Corporation of India
About FCI

- Food Corporation of India (FCI) is a **statutory Organization** under the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution.**
- It was set up in 1965 under the Food Corporations Act 1964 with the primary duty to purchase, store, move/transport, distribute and sell foodgrains and other foodstuffs.

The main objectives of FCI are

- o Procurement of food grains from farmers at Minimum Support Prices (MSP) announced by the Government;
- o Distribution of food grains to consumers through PDS, particularly the vulnerable sections of society at affordable prices; and
- o Maintenance of buffer stock of food grains for food security and price stability.
- Thus, it is mandated to serve the interests of producers and consumers alike.

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution has directed the FCI to coordinate with the States to expedite the lifting of food grains to meet urgent food requirements due to nationwide lockdown.

THE HINDU EDITORIALS

1) MGNREGA and its necessity

Context:
- To cope up with the **ongoing economic crisis due to COVID-19**, poor households urgently need a chance to earn cash for which **India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) offers an obvious alternative** at least for rural areas. Let us discuss the challenges underlying the act and prompt measures to be taken for the act to be more effective.

About MGNREGA:
- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme is the largest social security scheme in the world guaranteeing **100 days of work** to **any rural household** willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage.
- The **Ministry of Rural Development (MRD)**, is monitoring the entire implementation of this scheme in association with state governments.

Objective:
- The objective of the Act is to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

Features of the act:
- The act makes it obligatory for the State to give rural households work on demand. In case such employment is not provided within 15 days of registration, the applicant becomes eligible for an **unemployment allowance.**
- **One-third** of the stipulated workforce must be women.
- The employment will be provided **within a radius of 5 km:** if it is above 5 km extra wage will be paid.
- The wages are revised according to the **Consumer Price Index-Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL).**
- Work site facilities such as crèche, drinking water, shade have to be provided.

- **Social Audit has to be done by the Gram Sabha**
- **At least 50% of works will be allotted to Gram Panchayats for execution**

Underlying challenges:
- **Inadequate funding**
- Budget allocation to MGNREGA this year though higher than the previous allocations, amounts to **0.47 percent of the GDP** and it continues to be much **lower than the World Bank recommendations of 1.7 per cent** for the optimal functioning of the programme.

Delay in payment of wages
- **Inordinate delays in wage payments** and failing to compensate for the delays workers had begun to lose interest in working under it .

Demand driven to supply based
- Great distress to the states caused due to inadequate funds to pay for wages and to allocate work on demand, made them to implement MGNREGA like a **supply-driven scheme,** instead of running it like a demand-based guarantee backed by law.

Little autonomy impairs implementation
- With very **little autonomy**, gram panchayats find it difficult to implement this act in an effective and efficient manner.

Issues with Job card
- Earlier workers were allowed to turn up at the worksite and enrol on the spot but now, no-one can be employed unless his or her name has been entered in advance in the **e-muster rolls**. Most workers have no idea how to go about this.
- *e-Muster roll, is an IT-enabled technology, which enables the process of enrolment and attendance in the MGNREGA and ensures that the benefits of the scheme reach the actual beneficiaries.*
- Also except workers who are relatively empowered, others find it difficult to initiate the work applications which make them dependent on others.

Measures to be taken:
- **Expanding the list of permissible works**

- Hiring more **gram rozgar sevaks** (employment assistants)
- Simplifying the **implementation** process
- **Mobilising para-teachers** for work application drives
- **Reducing inordinate delays** in wage payment
- **Cash payment of wages** would act as a tremendous incentive for rural workers to demand NREGA work
- Ensuring **adequate autonomy to gram panchayat** for effective implementation.
- These measures which when taken in a prompt manner can better serve the very purpose of the scheme in the current scenario of migrant crisis.

2) Towards liquidity push

What's in the news?
- In its effort to push start the economy using the post-COVID-19 relief and recovery package, the government has **relied heavily on measures aimed at pushing credit to banks, NBFCs and businesses big and small**, which are expected to use borrowed funds to lend to others, make payments falling due, compensate employees even while under lockdown, and otherwise spend even while not earning.
- The thrust is to get the RBI and other public financial institutions to **infuse liquidity and increase lending by the financial system**, by offering the latter capital for longer periods at a repo or policy interest rate that has been cut by more than a percentage point to 4%.

The fourth 'l'
- The Prime Minister in his speech calling for a "self-reliant India" identified, besides land, labour and laws, "liquidity" as among the areas of focus of the package.
- In economic and business parlance, *liquidity refers to ease of access to cash* — a liquid asset is one that can be easily sold for or replaced with cash, and a liquid firm or agent is a holder of cash, a line providing access to cash, or assets that can be easily and quickly converted to cash without significant loss of value.
- In periods of crisis, individuals, small businesses, firms, financial institutions and even governments tend to experience a liquidity crunch. Relaxing that crunch is

a focus of the government's crisis-response package.

Focus on NBFCs
- The main intermediaries being enlisted for the task of transmitting liquidity are the banks, with NBFCs constituting a second tier.
- Among the first steps taken by the RBI was the launch of **special and 'targeted' long term repo operations (TLTROs)**, which allowed banks to access liquidity at the repo rate to lend to specified clients.
- That funding allowed big business to access cheap capital to substitute for past high-cost debt or finance ongoing projects.
- The TLTROs also focus on infusing liquidity among NBFCs, whose balance sheets were under severe stress even before the COVID-19 strike, because they were finding it difficult to roll over the short-term debt they had incurred to finance longer term projects, including lending to small and medium businesses, housing and real estate.
- Banks were wary about lending to these NBFCs, because of fears that their clients could default in amounts that would bring the viability of these institutions into question.

Additional liquidity infusion efforts
- Building on these initial liquidity infusion efforts, the **COVID-19 package identified more intermediaries** (such as the Small Industries Development Bank of India, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, and the National Housing Bank) that could refinance lending by the banks to different sections.
- To persuade the banks and other intermediaries to take up these offers when the clients they must lend to (micro, small and medium enterprises, street vendors, marginal farmers, etc.) are themselves stressed, in some instances the government offered them **partial or full credit guarantees** in case their clients defaulted.

May not be sufficient
- However, these measures, which are only marginally effective even in the best of times, will not work during this crisis.
- Consider a bank or NBFC lending to small business. With economic activity either at

a complete stop or at a fraction of the normal, those who can access credit would **either not borrow or only do so to protect them and not use the funds either to pay their workers or buy and stock inputs**.

- Even after the lockdown is lifted, the compression of demand resulting from the loss of employment and incomes would be considerable. Faced with sluggish demand, firms are unlikely to meet past and current payments commitments and help the revival effort, just because they have access to credit.
- This would mean that credit flow would actually not revive.

On disposable income

- Another component of the "liquidity" push is the measures that temporarily increase the disposable income of different sections.
- Advance access to savings like provident fund contributions, lower tax deduction at source, reduced provident fund contributions and moratoriums on debt service payments for a few months, are expected to provide access to cash inflows and reduce cash outflows, to induce agents to meet overdue payments or just spend to enhance the incomes of others.
- **These are marginal in scope**, if relevant at all. Overall, the "transmission" of the supply side push from these monetary policy initiatives for relief and revival is bound to be weak.

Way Forward

- What is needed now is government support in the form of **new and additional transfers to people in cash and kind**, and **measures such as wage subsidies, equity support and spending on employment programmes**.
- That would require debt financed spending by the government, with borrowing at low interest rates from the central bank or a "monetisation" of the deficit.
- *Monetisation of deficit means printing more money. It happens when RBI buys government securities directly from the primary market to fund government's expenses.*

What are NBFCs?

- An NBFC is a company registered under the **Companies Act, 1956** which provides banking services without meeting the legal definition of a bank.
- They engage in the business of loans and advances, acquisition of shares, bonds, etc. issued by Government or local authority. They also deal in other marketable securities of a like nature, leasing, hire-purchase, insurance business, chit business.
- The working and operations of NBFCs are **regulated by the RBI.**
- NBFCs lend and make investments and hence their activities are similar to that of banks; **however there are a few differences:**
- NBFC cannot accept demand deposits;
- NBFCs cannot issue cheques drawn on itself;
- Deposit insurance facility of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation is not available to depositors of NBFCs, unlike in the case of banks.

3) Self reliant India- challenges and way forward

Self reliance since independence

- **Just after independence**
- In the decades following independence, self-reliance in state-run heavy industries and strategic sectors had placed India ahead of most developing countries.

In 1970s and 80s

- India's industrial ecosystem was characterised by low productivity, poor quality and low technology, and was globally uncompetitive because
- Modernising the industries with technological upgradation didn't happen.
- The private sector backed the state-run core sector approach in its Bombay Plan and stayed content with near-monopoly conditions in non-core sectors in a protected market.
- Efforts made to modernise light industries or develop contemporary consumer products was little.

Bombay Plan:

- In 1944, a group of Indian businessmen issued *A Plan of Economic Development for India*. This came to be known as the

Bombay Plan. The attitude of Indian industrialists to the economic structure of independent India was encapsulated in the Plan.

In 1990s

- When India began liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, the very concept of self-reliance was of no use, since advanced technologies could simply be bought from anywhere at lower costs.

Reasons for declining self reliance

Undermined PSUs

- Public sector undertakings (PSUs) are becoming inefficient since no effort was made to attain either real autonomy or a transition to new technological directions.
- Also PSUs with capability and scale for the task were undermined along with many research and development (R&D) efforts that display signs of future potential (for instance, in photovoltaics, semiconductors and advanced materials).

Disinclination of private sector towards R&D

- The private sector showed little interest in heavy industries and none for technology Upgradation.
- Most Indian private companies ended up in technology imports or collaborations with foreign corporations and hence most of the R&D work is carried by PSUs.

Inviting FDIs obviates need for self reliance

- It was thought that Inviting foreign direct investment and manufacturing by foreign majors would bring new technologies into India's industrial ecosystem, obviating the need for indigenous efforts towards self-reliance but foreign majors guard commercially significant or strategic technologies in off-shore manufacturing bases.

Global precedences:

- Learning from Japan's post-war success, countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong took huge technological and industrial strides in the 1970s and 80s.
- **How was it possible?**
- Planned state investments in R&D including basic research (3-5% of GDP),
- Technology and policy support to private corporations,

- Infrastructure particularly education and skill development (4-6% of GDP).
- Countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam have focused on off-shore manufacturing lower down the value chain and without the thrust on self-reliance. This is useful for job creation but is an unsuitable model for a country of India's size and aspirations.
- China advanced purposefully from low-end mass manufacturing to a dominant role in global supply chains. This shows its determination to become a superpower not just geopolitically but also in self-reliant S&T and industrial capability.
- It has now decided on shifting to advanced manufacturing and has set itself a target of becoming a world leader by 2035 in 5G, supercomputing, Internet of Things, artificial intelligence (AI), autonomous vehicles, biotech/pharma and other technologies of the 'fourth industrial revolution'.

Measures to boost self reliance

- Significant government reinvestment in PSUs and R&D is essential for self-reliance.
- State-funded R&D, including in basic research by PSUs, research institutions and universities need to be scaled-up significantly
- PSUs need to be upgraded and reoriented
- Private sector delivery-oriented R&D could also be supported, linked to meaningful participation in manufacturing at appropriate levels of the supply chain.
- Since no country has achieved self-reliance without mass quality public education, India's meagre public expenditure on education needs to be ramped up including in skill development.

4) Impact of the COVID-19 on Indian Economy

What's in the news?

- Following is an analysis of economic impact due to COVID-19 pandemic by Professor of Economics Santosh K Mehrotra.

Worse than 2008 crisis

- Comparing the present situation with the pre-2008 crisis, he said, the **current situation is a global economic crisis of much worse than the 2008 one.**
- Before 2008, all engines of growth were firing. India's investment-to-GDP ratio was at an all time. GDP growth was 8-9% per annum and because of that the job growth was very rapid. India had five million unskilled workers leaving agriculture for the first time in Indian history because non-agri jobs were growing.
- Until 2012, nearly 7.5 million non-agriculture jobs were being created per year, but thereafter there was a slight economic slowdown, but still the average GDP growth over 2004-14 was 8% per annum.
- There were two years of droughts in 2014-2015. The slowdown also accelerated after 2014 because of some misplaced economic policies. The rate of non-agricultural jobs was reduced to 2.9 million per annum.
- Now, this was happening at a **time when young entrants into the labour force were increasing**. Until 2012 the number of new entrants in the job market was only 2 million per annum (as youth were entering school in much larger numbers than before). Thereafter the number looking for work increased to roughly **5 million per annum**. These young people were getting better educated and no longer wanted to be tied down to agricultural jobs. The result was open unemployment. And that is how India's open unemployment rate reached 45-year high in 2018.
- The state of the economy and joblessness continued to worsen through 2019 because the growth rate slowed. India entered 2020 with **seven quarters of systematic decline in growth rate, investment rate and exports.**
- At present, every engine of growth had stopped firing; government revenue growth slowed, the real fiscal deficit in 2018-19 was 5.68% of GDP for the central government (as revealed by CAG) when the government was claiming it was 3.4%.

By early 2019, the government did not have the fiscal space left any longer to actually jump start the economy if a shock was to happen.

Need for demand side action
- Commenting on the government's recent stimulus package *(refer pulse 50 & 51 edition- Atmanirbharta abhiyan topic),* the professor said that the package focused more on the supply side and neglected the demand side.
- He also said that the stimulus is heavily dependent on banks extending loans. However, the probability for an entrepreneur to borrow from the bank when the demand is already extremely low in the economy, both domestically and internationally is very less.
- Therefore, he called for steps to **put money into the hands of people to see a revival of demand.**

Demographic dividend
- On demographic dividend, the Professor said that realising India's demographic dividend requires **job growth at a rate faster than the number of entrants into the labour force.**
- If new entrants into the labour force, who are better educated, are entering at a rate of more than 5 million per annum, the country has to create at least 5 million non-agricultural jobs.
- Secondly, there is also a need to create enough **jobs to employ the currently unemployed,** which has risen sharply.
- Third, in 2018 the country had 205 million people working in agriculture. From 2004-05 until 2018 the absolute number of workers in agriculture was falling, because non-agri jobs were growing fast. Which means the process of structural transformation of redirecting the workforce from agriculture to construction/industry/services was underway.
- But post-2012 we have been seeing a decline in jobs in manufacturing for the first time in India's history. If we are to realise the demographic dividend we need a **shift of jobs from the agriculture sector to manufacturing.**

INDIAN EXPRESS EXPLAINED

1) Unusual heat waves in North India

About heat waves:
- A Heat Wave is a period of **abnormally high temperatures, more than the normal maximum temperature** that occurs during the summer season in the North-Western parts of India.

When does it occur?
- Heat Waves typically occur **between March and June**, and in some rare cases even extend till July.

Criteria for heat waves:
- The **Indian Meteorological Department (IMD)** has given the following criteria for Heat Waves :
1) Heat Wave need not be considered till maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40*C for Plains and at least 30*C for Hilly regions
2) When normal maximum temperature of a station is less than or equal to 40*C Heat Wave Departure from normal is 5*C to 6*C Severe Heat Wave Departure from normal is 7*C or more.
3) When normal maximum temperature of a station is more than 40*C Heat Wave Departure from normal is 4*C to 5*C Severe Heat Wave Departure from normal is 6*C or more.
4) When actual maximum temperature remains 45*C or more irrespective of normal maximum temperature, heat waves should be declared.

Health Impacts of Heat Waves
- The health impacts of Heat Waves typically involve dehydration, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and/or heat stroke. The signs and symptoms are as follows:
  - **Heat Cramps:** Ederna (swelling) and Syncope (Fainting) generally accompanied by fever below 39*C i.e.102*F.
  - **Heat Exhaustion:** Fatigue, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea, vomiting, muscle cramps and sweating.
  - **Heat Stroke:** Body temperatures of 40*C i.e. 104*F or more along with delirium, seizures or coma. This is a potential fatal condition.

Duration of a heat wave spell:
- A heat wave spell generally lasts for a minimum of four days and on some occasions, it can extend up to seven or ten days.
- The longest recorded heat wave spell, in recent years, was between 18 – 31 May 2015. This spell had severely affected parts of West Bengal along with Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana.

Why in the news?
- The current heat wave spell commenced on May 22 and is likely to continue till May 29.

Does all of India experience heatwave conditions?
- Heat waves are common over the **Core Heatwave Zone (CHZ)** — Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, West Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Vidarbha in Maharashtra, parts of Gangetic West Bengal, Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, as **categorised by India Meteorological Department.**
- Several recent studies indicate that CHZ experience more than **six heatwave days per year** during these four months.
- Many places in the northwest and cities along the southeastern coast report **eight heatwave days per season.**
- However, the regions in the **extreme north, northeast and southwestern India is less prone to heatwaves.**

Reason for unusual heat waves in India: Western disturbances
- **Continuous inflow of Western Disturbances** influenced the weather in the north till as late as April.
- When **Western Disturbances interact with weather systems heading from the two southern seas**, that is, warm winds blowing in from the Bay of Bengal or the Arabian Sea, they cause **snowfall or rainfall over the north.**
- A significant influence of Western Disturbances is experienced during December to February. However, this year, its **influence persisted till early May.**

- The recent Western Disturbances got support from **easterly winds blowing over from the Bay of Bengal.** It resulted in rainfall and thunderstorm activities over parts of Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, north Madhya Pradesh and Delhi until mid-May, **keeping atmospheric conditions cooler than normal for summer standards.**

What are western disturbances?
- Western Disturbances are **low pressure systems, embedded in western winds (westerlies)** that flow from the west to the east.
- **Arrival in India**
- The low pressure typically forms over the **Mediterranean Sea** and travels over Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan before entering India loaded with moisture.
- These **moisture laden western disturbances** eventually come up **against the himalayas and get blocked**, as a consequence, the moisture gets trapped and **precipitation** is shared in the form of snow and rain over Northwest India and sometimes, in other parts of North India.
- They **affect the local weather of a region during its onward journey.**

Cyclone Amphan
- **Cyclone Amphan,** which was a massive **SuperStorm covering 700 kms**, managed to **drag maximum moisture** from over the Bay of Bengal, entire South Peninsula, parts of Central India and to some extent, even from the Arabian Sea.
- All the moisture that was otherwise built during the thunderstorm and rainfall, got **gradually depleted** from over vast areas as the storm advanced towards West Bengal and Bangladesh between May 16 and 20.
- It has now **triggered dry north-westerly winds to blow** over Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra causing severe heat wave.

2) Locust attack

About locust:
- Locusts are the **oldest migratory pest in the world** which is mainly **tropical grasshopper with strong powers of flight.**
- They **differ from ordinary grasshoppers** in their ability to change behaviour (gregarize) and form swarms that can migrate over large distances.
- The **most devastating** of all locust species is the **Desert Locust** (Schistocerca gregaria).

Characteristics of locusts:
- **Locusts have a high capacity to multiply**: If good rains fall and ecological conditions become favourable, rapidly reproduce and increase some 20-fold in three months.
- **It forms groups and migrates** over relatively large distances (they can fly up to 150 km per day).
- **Locust adults can eat their own weight every day**, i.e. about two grams of fresh vegetation per day.
- If infestations are not detected and controlled, devastating plagues can develop that often take several years and hundreds of millions of dollars to bring under control with severe consequences on food security and livelihoods.

Preconditions for its growth:
- Desert locusts (Schistocerca gregaria), which belong to the family of grasshoppers, normally live and breed in semi-arid or desert regions.
- While for **laying eggs, bare ground** is required, **green vegetation is required for hopper development.** (Hopper is the stage between the nymph that is hatched from the eggs, and the winged adult moth.)
- Locusts are **not very dangerous as individuals**, or in small isolated groups, but when they grow into large populations their behaviour changes, they transform from **'solitary phase' into 'gregarious phase'**, and start forming 'swarms'.
- A single swarm can contain 40 to 80 million adults in one square km, and these can travel up to 150 km a day.
- **Large-scale breeding** happens only **when conditions turn very favourable**

in their natural habitat, desert or semi-arid regions.

- **Good rains** can sometimes generate just **enough green vegetation that is conducive to egg-laying as well as hopper development.**

Reason for this year's locust attack:

- **There are two meteorological drivers behind the current locust invasions:**
- **Unseasonal heavy rains in the mainspring-breeding tracts in March-April**
  - Many of the usual breeding grounds of locusts received unusually good rains in March and April, and that resulted in large-scale breeding and hopper development.
  - These locusts started arriving in Rajasthan around April, much ahead of the normal July-October normal.
- **Breeding places:** dry areas around Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea along the eastern coast of Africa, adjoining Asian regions in Yemen, Oman, southern Iran, and in Pakistan's Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces.
- **Strong westerly winds**
  - Locusts are known to be **passive flyers**, and **generally follow the wind**. Their movement has been **aided by westerly winds** that were, this time, further **strengthened by the low pressure area** created by Cyclone Amphan in the Bay of Bengal.

When July- October is the normal time, how did they arrive so early?

- **Unusual cyclonic storms of 2018 in the Arabian Sea**
- Cyclonic storms Mekunu and Luban had struck Oman and Yemen respectively which resulted in **heavy rains that had transformed uninhabited desert tracts into large lake** where the locust swarms breed.

Reason for eastward movement of swarms:

- **Immature locusts in search of food:**
- The current swarms contain **"immature locusts"** which feed largely on vegetation.
- They consume roughly their own weight in fresh food every day, before they become ready for mating.
- With **no crops in the field in Rajasthan,** they have been invading green spaces,

including parks, in Jaipur and orange orchards near Nagpur.

- Once they start breeding, the swarm movement will cease and also, the breeding will happen mainly in Rajasthan.

So, what damage have they caused?

- Since the rabi crop has already been harvested, and farmers are yet to really start kharif sowings it didn't cause much damage.
- The **UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** has, however, predicted **several successive waves of invasions** until July in Rajasthan with eastward surges across northern India right up to **Bihar and Odisha.**
- But **after July, there would be westward movements** of the swarms that will return to Rajasthan on the back of changing winds associated with the southwest monsoon.
- The danger is when they start **breeding** because a **single gregarious female locust can lay 60-80 eggs three times during its average life cycle of 90 days.**
- If their **breeding is coterminous with that of the kharif crop**, we could have a situation similar to what maize, sorghum and wheat farmers of Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia experienced in March-April.

Control measure:

- A proactive exercise of control, through **aerial spraying of ultra-low volume of concentrated insecticides** in all potential breeding sites, is required, along with continuous monitoring of the crops during the ensuing kharif season.

Pesticides used:
- Historically, locust control has involved spraying of **organo-phospate pesticides** on the night resting places of the locusts.
- Recently, the **Indian Institute of Sugarcane Research,** Lucknow, advised farmers to **spray chemicals like lambdacyhalothirn, deltamethrin, fipronil, chlorpyriphos, or malathion** to control the swarms.
- However, the Centre had banned the use of chlorpyriphos,deltamethrin and Malathion but **Malathion** has been subsequently allowed for locust control.

Who warns?

- **The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)** provides information on the general locust situation to the global community and gives timely warnings and forecasts to those countries in danger of invasion.
- **Locust Warning Organisation (LWO)**, Directorate of Plant Protection Quarantine and Storage, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare is responsible for **monitoring, survey and control of Desert Locust in Scheduled Desert Areas mainly in the States of Rajasthan and Gujarat.**

- The LWO **monitors, forewarns and controls locust** in the Scheduled Desert Area, conducts **research** on locusts and grasshoppers, **keeps cooperation and coordination with National and International Organizations** and undertakes HRD through training and demonstration.

About FAO
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is a **specialized agency of the United Nations** that leads international efforts to **defeat hunger and improve nutrition and food security.**

RSTV BIG-PICTURE

1) India-Nepal Map row

Context:
- The Ministry of External Affairs , slammed the Nepal government's approval of a new Nepalese map that shows territories contested with India as a part of Nepal.
- Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli asserted that Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura belong to Nepal and vowed to "reclaim" them from India through political and diplomatic efforts, as his Cabinet endorsed a new political map showing the three areas as Nepalese territory.
- India called the move a unilateral act which is not based on historical facts and evidence.

What is the Background?
- Nepal has historically regarded the 335 sq km triangle (Limpiyadhura-Kalapani-Lipu Lekh) as its territory, defined by the Sugauli Treaty with the East India Company, which has not been superseded.
- A bilateral foreign secretary-level committee exists to resolve Nepal-India frontier disputes, and Nepal has been demanding talks for years.
- Kathmandu had also sought to send a special envoy to Delhi in early December.

What is the response by MEA?
- This unilateral act is not based on historical facts and evidence. It is contrary to the bilateral understanding to resolve the outstanding boundary issues through diplomatic dialogue.
- Such artificial enlargement of territorial claims will not be accepted by India.
- India said Nepal was aware of the understanding on this issue and urged the Nepali Government to return to dialogue.
- India had published a new map on November 2, 2019, representing the political boundaries of the country which showed the status of the newly created Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.
- The same map also showed the region of Kalapani as part of the Indian territory.

What is the claim by Nepal?

- Nepali diplomatic sources maintain thatbthe region of Kalapani and the contiguous areas to the east of the river Kali and Susta on the Uttar Pradesh-Bihar border are the only parts of the nearly 1,800-km India-Nepal boundary that remain unresolved.
- Kathmandu claims that India has encroached upon the area of Susta near Gorakhpur, claiming tracts of land, and wants Delhi to evacuate the population from the location.
- Nepal, however, maintains that not just the Kalapani region, but Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh are parts of its territory as demarcated in the 1816 Treaty of Sugauli.
- All three areas are to the east of the river Kali, according to the Nepali formulation.
- Nepal had also expressed displeasure that the 2015 agreement between India and China for using the Lipulekh pass for trade was reached without consulting it.

Conclusion
- There is no doubt about the location of the river and that the new road is inside Indian territory. It is in Delhi's interests to find an amicable solution with Nepal for the areas where there is no agreement; it could avoid China interfering in bilateral affairs between Delhi and Kathmandu in the future.

2) World Health Assembly Resolution

Context:
- The 73rd session of the World Health Assembly (WHA) took place virtually from May 18-19.
- During the session, countries including India, Japan, Indonesia, New Zealand, UK and Canada accepted a resolution asking for an "impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation" of the World Health Organization's (WHO) response to the pandemic as well as the identification of the "zoonotic" source of the coronavirus.

What is the Background?
- The origin of the virus is currently believed to be a wet market in Wuhan, China.
- 116 of the 194 member states were in favour of the resolution.

What is the World Health Assembly?
- The World Health Assembly (WHA) is the forum through which the World Health Organization (WHO) is governed by its 194 member states.
- It is the world's highest health policy setting body and is composed of health ministers from member states.
- The members of the WHA generally meet every year in May in Geneva at the Palace of Nations, the location of WHO Headquarters.
- Its main functions are to determine the policies of the Organization, supervise financial policies, and review and approve the proposed programme budget.

What is the WHA draft resolution?
- The resolution brought forward by the European Union (EU) and moved by Australia on behalf of more than 100 countries including India, Australia and Japan, was endorsed at the Assembly.
- While it does not mention China, the draft says the Director General of the WHO should continue "to work closely with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and countries, as part of the One-Health Approach to identify the zoonotic source of the virus and the route of introduction to the human population, including the possible role of intermediate hosts, including through efforts such as scientific and collaborative field missions, which will enable targeted interventions and a research agenda to reduce the risk of similar events as well as to provide guidance on how to prevent SARS-COV2 infection in animals and humans and prevent the establishment of new zoonotic reservoirs, as well as to reduce

further risks of emergence and transmission of zoonotic diseases."

- Further, the resolution states, "Initiate, at the earliest appropriate moment, and in consultation with Member States, (1) a stepwise process of impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation, including using existing mechanisms, (2) as appropriate, to review experience gained and lessons learned from the WHO-coordinated international health response to COVID-19."

Why is the resolution important?

- Since the pandemic, there has been increasing pressure on China, which so far has opposed suggestions for inquiry into the origins of the virus.
- Meanwhile, the US has repeatedly blamed the WHO and claims the organisation failed to obtain timely information and share it in a transparent fashion.
- The US has said that the pandemic "had spun out of control" in great part due to a costly "failure" by the WHO.

What does this mean for China?

- While the resolution has been endorsed at the WHA, it remains to be seen how the probe will be carried out and to what degree of independence. Significantly, the timeline of the probe is also not clear.

- So far, China has opposed demands calling for an international investigation into the virus.
- China's premier Xi Jinping announced a $2 billion donation to the United Nations, which is over twice the amount the US contributed before Trump cut off funding.
- It also offered to set up hospitals and health infrastructure in Africa.
- Speaking at the opening ceremony of the WHA, Xi said China "supports" the idea of a comprehensive review of the global response towards Covid-19 after it was brought under control.
- The Trump administration sees China's announcement as a way to escape scrutiny over its alleged role in delaying providing information about the disease outbreak.

Conclusion

- While the resolution has been endorsed at the WHA, it remains to be seen how the probe will be carried out and to what degree of independence. Significantly, the timeline of the probe is also not clear. So far, China has opposed demands calling for an international investigation into the virus.

2) Indian Ocean Islands Diplomacy

GREAT POWER COMPETITION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN
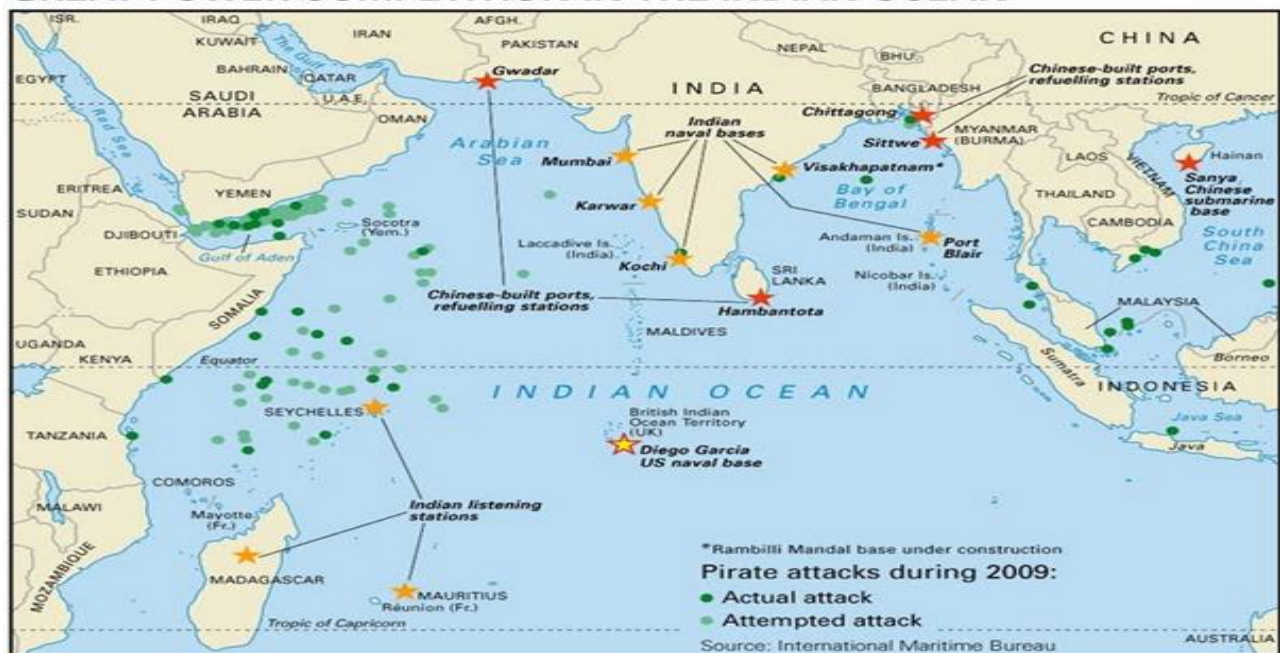
Context:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in a telephonic conversation agreed to accelerate Indian-assisted development projects in Sri Lanka and discussed the

possibility of promoting investments by India's private sector.

What is the Background?

- The move assumes significance against the backdrop of China's concerted push to develop infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka and other countries under its Belt and Road Initiative, which has led to criticism from the US about these countries being exposed to predatory loans.
- PM Modi also had a telephone conversation with his counterpart in Mauritius, and discussed enhancing cooperation in several areas, including measures to support the financial sector of Mauritius.

What are Indian efforts in helping countries in the Indian Ocean region?

- PM's call to both the countries was necessary as both the countries are within the security ambit of India.
- There are deep economic interests too.
- China has also become active in the Indian Ocean region and so India needs to increase its contacts with the Indian Ocean countries.

What are India- China relations in the current scenarios?

- China's aggressive stance increased in the LAC 2.
- India is also planning to pin down China as around 56% of Chinese oil imports come from the Strait of Malacca; from Angola, it is 12% and even 12% from South America.
- Most of these lanes for this pass-through Madagascar and Mauritius.

What are the steps taken by India?

- India wants to be a guarantor of security and growth for the region.
- SAGAR mantra- India has supplied essentials to island nations in times of crisis.
- Though it has been able to deliver on its promises, it still has a laggard approach.
- India follows a consultative approach.
- India should start building regional security mechanisms.
- India should look at the holistic picture.
- India has built upon goodwill with all the countries.
- Though India cannot take on China in terms of economy, it is helping the countries in the times of crisis which has created an environment of goodwill.

What is the way forward?

- India should work on its fund of goodwill.
- India wishes to become a true partner even in times of discomfort.
- Maritime neighbours and for security might depend on India.
- India should focus on its strengths.

Conclusion

- India has charted the path of becoming an "influential" and "responsible" leader in the Indian Ocean region. As New Delhi ambitiously moves toward this end, it must ensure that island nations, owing to their centrality in shaping power dynamics in the Indian Ocean region, gain prominence in India's ocean diplomacy.

3) Privatisation of Public sector enterprises

Impact of **privatisation**
Graph shows net worth, gross revenue of privatised CPSEs and their peers before and after privatisation of the CPSEs
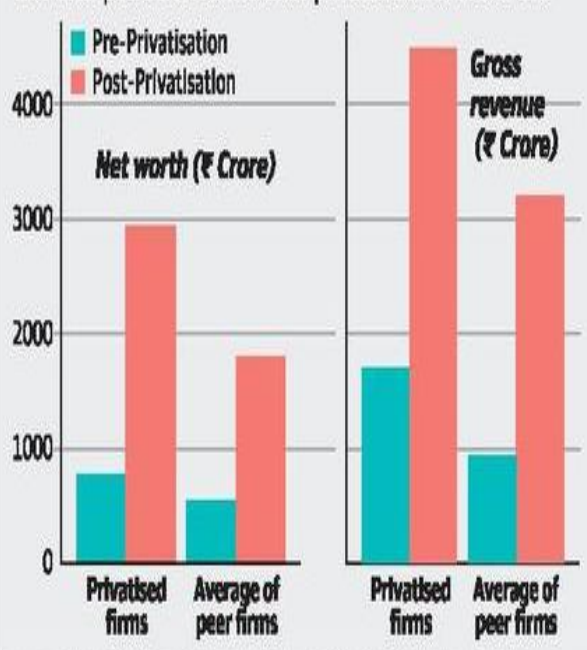
SOURCE: SURVEY CALCULATIONS BASED ON DATA FROM CMIE PROWESS

Context:

- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman recently announced major reforms for Public Sector Undertakings, as a result of which many sectors are likely to see large-scale consolidation and divestment of State-run firms.

What is the Background?

- The government will soon announce a new PSU policy, which will focus on privatising PSUs in non-strategic sectors based on feasibility.
- The policy will, in parallel, specify certain strategic sectors in which the "presence of PSEs in public interest" will be mandatory.

What is the objective?
- In strategic sectors, at least one enterprise will remain in the public sector but private sector will also be allowed.
- To minimize wasteful administrative costs, the number of PSEs in strategic sectors will ordinarily be only one to four.
- Others will be privatised/merged or brought under holding companies.

What is Privatisation?
- As the term suggests, Privatisation means migration from the Public to Private Sector through the transfer of ownership, management and control.
- In India, privatisation is aimed at improving the inflow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) or investment in sectors that require technological advancements, thereby directly providing a boost to Economy.

What is the need for this move?
- The finance minister said there is a need for coherent policy where all sectors are open to the private sector while public sector enterprises will play an important role in defined areas.
- The minister also said no fresh insolvency cases would be initiated for up to a year, in a move to avoid a wave of bankruptcies from companies hit by the coronavirus outbreak.
- Debt incurred by companies due to the coronavirus outbreak would not be considered a default under the country's bankruptcy code.
- Bankruptcies in India are expected to climb as the coronavirus outbreak hits distressed companies harder in Asia's third-largest economy.

Has Privatisation been successful?
- Privatisation or opening up a sector to private participation has not always led to bountiful gains.
- Take the case of telecom and aviation sectors, where the public companies - Air India and BSNL/MTNL - gradually ceded control as multiple private operators entered and prospered over the years.
- Of course, service standards and the bouquet of services on offer improved, country wide penetration of airline and telecom services also improved vastly because of private enterprise.
- And the public sector enterprises in both these sectors went from being profitable market leaders to massive loss makers, operating at the margins of the industry.
- But today, both telecom and civil aviation sectors are in deep financial trouble (even before Covid hit airline operations) due to skewed tariff policies and some historic baggage.
- And the abundance of private operators has done little for the viability of either sector.
- Not just the public sector companies in each, now even some private operators are seeking government concessions.

Conclusion
- The view that the government should exit all except a limited number of sectors considered strategic is fine, as long as the exit strategy also makes economic sense. Besides, the handing over to the private sector has not always led to improvement in parameters. Also, there is the matter of the lakhs employed by PSEs and what to do with such a large workforce, especially after the Covid19 induced unemployment.

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