

PRAYAS4IAS

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Prelims

NATIONAL

Raman Thermometry

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: Researchers at IIT Madras have demonstrated that by using Raman thermometry on fibre optic cables, they can achieve monitoring of power transmission cables. Interestingly, they achieve this by using the optical fibres that are already embedded in the power cables for establishing optical communication. The work is part of a larger ongoing project on distributed fibre sensors and has been published recently in IEEE Sensors Journal.

Background

- The seeds of the idea were sown about ten years back when Balaji Srinivasan of the Department of Electrical Engineering at IIT Madras was approached by a company that planned to implement overhead power lines across the country.
- The company wanted Prof. Srinivasan to certify that the glass fibre they were planning to include for communication purposes along with their power cables was indeed an optical fibre. Such optical fibres are traditionally incorporated in cables and buried underground.
- This could cost up to 80% of the total expense in setting up the communication system. The company had figured that they would save this cost by incorporating the optical fibres in a hollow tube intertwined with power lines and thereby save the cost of digging tunnels to accommodate them.
- It was during this certification process that Prof. Srinivasan got the idea that one or two of the unused fibres could be used to keep tabs on the health of the power cables. This is based on the principle that any current flowing through a conductor would cause a temperature rise due to the Joule heating effect.

Raman effect

- In the Raman effect, when light is scattered off an object, say a molecule, two bands are observed, with higher and lower frequency than the original light, called the Stokes and anti-Stokes bands, respectively. By studying the relative intensity of the two bands, it is possible to estimate the temperature of the object.
- “The anti-Stokes component of Raman scattering is strongly dependent on the temperature that the material is subjected to. Thus, by measuring the intensity of the anti-Stokes scattered light we can estimate the temperature. This is Raman thermometry,” says Prof. Srinivasan.
- He explains that the temperature measurement is performed in a distributed manner using an optical fibre. To achieve this, a pulse of light is launched into the optical fibre and the backscattered radiation is observed. “The time of flight of the backscattered radiation provides an estimate of the distance from which the light is backscattered,” he says. This can go up to tens of kilometre. This technique is married to Raman thermometry to get the results for actual measurements over tens of kilometres.

Cost-effective solution

- Alternative methods of measuring the temperature of power cables include using a thermal camera to manually monitor their length, which is cumbersome. The present method devised by the team is both economical and provides real-time information.



- Optical fibre-embedded power cables are already available across the country, but none of them are presently used for power monitoring. “We are presently working with a leading Indian power transmission and distribution company for implementing this technology,” says Prof. Srinivasan.

Role of State Election Commissioners

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *Directing the Goa government to redo the exercise of delimitation and reservation of municipal wards for women and SC/ST candidates in five municipal councils that were set to go to polls next week, the Supreme Court said that State Election Commissioners (SECs) across the country should be independent and not those holding office with the Central government or a state government.*

What did the Supreme Court say about the role of State Election Commissioner (SEC)?

- The fact that the SEC in Goa was none other than its law secretary, the SC said, was the “most disturbing feature of the case”.
- “The SEC has to be a person who is independent of the State Government as he is an important constitutional functionary who is to oversee the entire election process in the state qua panchayats and municipalities,” a bench of Justices Rohinton Nariman, B R Gavai and Hrishikesh Roy observed. They said that the SEC had been equated with a high court judge.
- “Giving an additional charge of such an important and independent constitutional office to an officer who is directly under the control of the State Government is, in our view, a mockery of the constitutional mandate,” the judges wrote in their 96-page judgment. They directed the Goa government to appoint an independent person as SEC at the earliest.
- The court noted that the law secretary, an IAS officer, was appointed SEC by the Goa Governor on November 3, 2020, handing him an additional duty.
- Two days later, administrators were appointed to municipal councils that had completed term and in January, the SEC postponed elections to these councils until April.
- On February 4, the Director of Municipal Administration reserved the wards, a notification that was contested in the High Court in petitions filed between February 9 and 12.
- Even while the petitions were pending before the court, the SEC announced the election schedule to 11 municipal councils on February 22.

Orunudo — A woman-centric scheme

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *Out of the slew of beneficiary schemes the BJP government announced ahead of the Assam Assembly elections, the Orunudo scheme, with women as its primary target group, is perhaps its most popular.*

What is the scheme?

- Through Orunudo — announced in the 2020-21 Budget — a monthly assistance of Rs 830 is transferred to women members of marginalised families of Assam.
- On account of being a DBT, or a Direct Benefit Transfer scheme, the money is credited directly to the bank account of the woman head of a family because they are “primary caretakers of the household”.

According to a Finance Department handout, the scheme gives “a choice to the poor and needy households on how they want to spend their money”.

Who is eligible?

- The applicant, a woman, has to be a permanent resident of Assam, whose composite household income should be less than Rs 2 lakh per annum.
- Families with specially-abled members and divorced/widowed/separated /unmarried women are prioritised. Poorer families, those without National Food Security Act (NFSA) or ration cards, are also given priority.
- Families without any women members, MPs, MLAs (former and current), members of Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local bodies, government officials and employees of cooperative societies are excluded from the scheme. Families owning four-wheelers, mechanised boats, tractors or refrigerators, ACs and washing machines, or more than 15 bighas of agricultural land, are not eligible either.
- When the scheme was launched, the government said that 18 lakh families had been identified to be eligible. After the Bodoland Territorial Council elections, the number is said to have risen to 22 lakh.

National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The Centre on Monday introduced the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021 in Lok Sabha, reviving the dispute on the distribution of powers between the elected government and the Lieutenant Governor (L-G).*

What does the Bill say?

- In the “statement of objects and reasons” section, the Centre claims that the amendment Bill seeks to give effect to the Supreme Court’s interpretation and that it “further defines” the responsibilities of the elected government and the Lt Governor in line with the Constitutional scheme.
- Among the major proposed amendments, one makes it explicitly clear that the term “government” in any law made by the Legislative Assembly shall mean the L-G.
- This, essentially, gives effect to former L-G Najeeb Jung’s 2015 assertion that “Government means the Lieutenant Governor of the NCT of Delhi appointed by the President under Article 239 and designated as such under Article 239 AA of the Constitution”.
- The Bill adds that the L-G’s opinion shall be obtained before the government takes any executive action based on decisions taken by the Cabinet or any individual minister.

What purpose does the 1991 Act serve?

- Delhi’s current status as a Union Territory with a Legislative Assembly is an outcome of the 69th Amendment Act through which Articles 239AA and 239BB were introduced in the Constitution. The GNCTD Act was passed simultaneously to supplement the constitutional provisions relating to the Assembly and the Council of Ministers in the national capital.
- For all practical purposes, the GNCTD Act outlines the powers of the Assembly, the discretionary powers enjoyed by the L-G, and the duties of the Chief Minister with respect to the need to furnish information to the L-G.

What did the Constitution Bench say?

- In its 2018 verdict, the five-judge Bench had held that the L-G’s concurrence is not required on issues other than police, public order and land.
- It had added that decisions of the Council of Ministers will, however, have to be communicated to the L-G. “It has to be clearly stated that requiring prior concurrence of the Lieutenant Governor would absolutely negate the ideals of representative governance and democracy conceived for the NCT of

Delhi by Article 239AA of the Constitution,” the court had ruled. The L-G was bound by the aid and advice if the council of ministers, it had said.

- The Bench of then Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra and Justices A K Sikri, A M Khanwilkar, D Y Chandrachud and Ashok Bhushan, in three separate yet concurring orders, had said: “The status of the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi is not that of a Governor of a State, rather he remains an Administrator, in a limited sense, working with the designation of Lieutenant Governor”.
- It had also pointed out that the elected government must keep in mind that Delhi is not a state.

What will change if the amendments are cleared by Parliament?

- Encouraged by the Supreme Court verdict, the elected government had stopped sending files on executive matters to the L-G before the implementation of any decision.
- It has been keeping the L-G abreast of all administrative developments, but not necessarily before implementing or executing any decision. But the amendment, if cleared, will force the elected government to take the L-G’s advice before taking any action on any cabinet decision.
- The Bill seeks to add a provision in the original GNCTD Act, 1991, barring the Assembly or its committees from making rules to take up matters concerning day-to-day administration, or to conduct inquiries in relation to administrative decisions.
- This assumes significance as the 70-member Assembly, where the AAP has as many as 62 MLAs, has multiple committees examining matters ranging from riots to environment.

Delhi remains most polluted capital: report improvements

Context: *Delhi remained the most polluted capital city in the world but India, on the whole, had improved its average annual PM2.5 (particulate matter) levels in 2020 than in 2019, according to a report from IQ Air, a Swiss air quality technology company specialising in protection against airborne pollutants, and developing air quality monitoring and air cleaning products.*

Details:

- Delhi’s PM2.5 concentration level, based primarily on data from the Central Pollution Control Board, was 84.1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 2020, a 15% improvement from the 98.6 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ recorded in 2019 when the city was ranked the world’s most polluted capital for the second straight year.
- Average pollution levels were 51.9 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 2020 compared with 58.1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 2019, making India the third most polluted country in 2020, unlike in 2019, when its air was the fifth most noxious.
- Bangladesh and Pakistan were the countries in 2020 with worse average PM2.5 levels than India, said the report. China ranked 11th in the latest report, a deterioration from the 14th in the previous edition of the report.
- In the 2020 report, 106 countries were evaluated. The pollution levels are weighted averages, meaning that the population of a country influences the pollution values reported.
- In 2020, 84% of all monitored countries observed air quality improvements. Other improvements in major cities over 2019 included a 11% drop in Beijing, a 13% drop in Chicago, a 17% drop in Paris and a 16% drop in London and Seoul.
- However, of the 106 monitored countries, only 24 met the World Health Organization annual guidelines for PM 2.5, the report underlined.

THE HINDU

CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Of the 15 most polluted cities, 13 were in India

Rank	City	2020 AVG PM2.5
1	Hotan, China	110.2*
2	Ghaziabad	106.6
3	Bulandshahr	98.4
4	Bisrakh Jalalpur	96
5	Bhiwadi	95.5
6	Noida	94.3
7	Greater Noida	89.5
8	Kanpur	89.1
9	Lucknow	86.2
10	Delhi	84.1
11	Faridabad	83.3
12	Meerut	82.3
13	Jind	81.6
14	Hisar	81.1
15	Kashgar, China	81

*Unit: $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$

SOURCE: 2020 WORLD AIR QUALITY REPORT



- When ranked by cities, Hotan in China was the most polluted, with an average concentration of 110.2 µg/m³, followed by Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh at 106. Of the 15 most polluted cities, 13 were in India.
- In spite of being a pandemic year, 2020 was a particularly severe for agricultural burning. Farm fires in Punjab increased 46.5% over 2019.

Great Indian Bustard

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *The Supreme Court intervened on behalf of the critically endangered Great Indian Bustards over the birds falling dead after colliding with power lines running through their dwindling natural habitats in Gujarat and Rajasthan.*

About the Bird

- GIB, a bird native to India and Pakistan, is the State Bird of Rajasthan.
- The largest population is found in Rajasthan.
- The sanctuaries that shelter or conserve GIB are
 - Desert National Park, Rajasthan
 - Kutch Bustard Sanctuary, Gujarat
 - Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary or Jawaharlal Nehru Bustard Sanctuary, Maharashtra
- Protection status of GIB:
 - IUCN Status is Critically Endangered
 - Appendix I of CITES
 - Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
- Threats include agriculture; energy production & mining; transportation; human intrusions, and invasive and other problematic species.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The Supreme Court has ruled that promoters of insolvent companies, which are barred from bidding for their own companies under Section 29A of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) cannot use any scheme or arrangement to gain control of their company even if it goes into liquidation.*

What does the ruling by the Supreme Court say?

- In a case involving the liquidation of Gujarat NRE Coke Limited, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) had in 2019 held that any person who was ineligible, under Section 29A of IBC, to bid for his company, was also barred from proposing a scheme of compromise and arrangement under Section 230 of the Companies Act.
- Section 230 of the Companies Act allows promoters or creditors of the company to propose a scheme of arrangement or compromise under which the debt of the company can be restructured.
- In its judgment upholding the NCLAT decision, the apex court said that while Section 230 would be applicable for promoters and creditors in normal course of the workings of the company, it would not be applicable if the company is facing liquidation under IBC.
- “The company has to be protected from its management and a corporate death. It would lead to a manifest absurdity if the very persons who are ineligible for submitting a resolution plan, participating in the sale of assets of the company in liquidation or participating in the sale of the corporate debtor as a

‘going concern’, are somehow permitted to propose a compromise or arrangement under Section 230 of the Act of 2013,” a two-judge Bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah said.

How does it impact promoters of companies?

- The clarification by the Supreme Court with respect to participation of promoters in liquidation process of an insolvent company will speed up the resolution process.
- Since the objective of the IBC is to find a suitable buyer for the company and liquidation is ordered only in cases where there are no viable plans submitted, experts believe that a quick liquidation is of utmost importance to maximise the value of assets of the company.
- Apart from this, it also settles down the conflicting judgments given by different benches of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), wherein these forums had, in order to follow the IBC’s principle of value of asset maximisation, allowed some of the promoters to re-bid for the company or propose some arrangement when it was sent to liquidation.

Anti-defection law

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: Recently, nominated MP Swapan Dasgupta resigned from Rajya Sabha, a year before completion of his term. Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra had raised the issue of his disqualification from Rajya Sabha under the anti-defection law, after the BJP had fielded Dasgupta as its candidate for Tarakeswar constituency in the West Bengal Assembly elections.

Nominated members

- During the making of the Constitution, members of the Constituent Assembly felt that Rajya Sabha should have members who might not win elections but will bring knowledge and expertise to discussions in the Upper House.
- N Gopalswami Ayyangar said that nominating members to Rajya Sabha gives “an opportunity, perhaps, to seasoned people who may not be in the thickest of the political fray, but who might be willing to participate in the debate with an amount of learning and importance which we do not ordinarily associate with the House of the People”.
- It led to Rajya Sabha having 12 nominated members from different walks of life. The broad criterion for their nomination is that they should have distinguished themselves in fields like literature, science, art, and social service.
- The President nominates such individuals as recommended by the Centre. Nominated members have the same rights and privileges as elected members, with one notable difference — they cannot vote in the election of the President.

Anti-defection law

- In 1985 the Tenth Schedule, popularly known as the anti-defection law, was added to the Constitution.
- But its enactment was catalysed by the political instability after the general elections of 1967. This was the time when multiple state governments were toppled after MLAs changed their political loyalties.
- The purpose of the 1985 Constitution Amendment was to bring stability to governments by deterring MPs and MLAs from changing their political parties on whose ticket they were elected. The penalty for shifting political loyalties is the loss of parliamentary membership and a bar on becoming a minister.
- The law specifies the circumstances under which changing of political parties by MPs invite action under the law. The law covers three types of scenarios with respect to an MP switching parties.
 - The first is when a member elected on the ticket of a political party “voluntarily gives up” membership of such a party or votes in the House contrary to the wishes of the party.



- The second possibility is when an MP who has won his or her seat as an independent candidate after the election joins a political party. In both these instances, the MP lose the seat in the House on changing (or joining) a party.
- The third scenario relates to nominated MPs. In their case, the law specifies that within six months of being nominated to the House, they can choose to join a political party. The time is given so that if a nominated MP is not a member of a political party, they can decide to join one if they want. But if they don't join a political party during the first six months of their tenure, and join a party thereafter, then they lose their seat in Parliament.
 - That is what has happened in Dasgupta's case. After his nomination to Rajya Sabha in 2016, he did not join a political party within the mandatory period of six months, and his membership was open to challenge under the anti-defection law.

Changing/joining a party

- Over the years, courts have decided that changing a party or joining another does not have to be a formal act. It can also be interpreted through an MP's actions, on a case-by-case basis.
- In the past, actions like campaigning for another political party, joining a delegation of elected representatives from another political party to give a representation to the Governor, appearing in political rallies or fighting an election on the symbol of a political party have been held to constitute defection.
- When the 1985 law was made, its statement of objects and reasons stated: "The evil of political defections has been a matter of national concern. If it is not combated, it is likely to undermine the very foundations of our democracy and the principles which sustain it."
- Now the continuity and stability of an elected government are decided in Lok Sabha, where a no-confidence motion can be moved against the government. But the anti-defection law applies equally to both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha MPs, even though the Upper House has no role in deciding the government's fate. Earlier versions of the law did not contain the provision for the disqualification of nominated MPs.

The Jharkhand bill that reserves 75% jobs in private sector for locals

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: Recently, the Jharkhand government announced 75% reservation in private sector jobs with a salary of up to Rs 30,000 for locals. Here's a look at the applicability, exemption, penalties and other provisions in The Jharkhand State Employment of Local Candidates Bill, 2021.

How does the bill define private sector jobs?

- The bill will treat shops, establishments, mines, enterprises, industries, companies, societies, trusts, Limited Liability Partnership firms and any person employing ten or more persons as the private sector and an entity. Moreover, the same may be notified by the government from time to time.
- Every employer needs to register employees on a designated portal who are receiving gross monthly salary or wages not more than Rs 30, 000 — or as notified by the government from time to time — within three months of this bill (after turning into an Act) coming into force.
- The bill further says that no person should be engaged or employed unless the registration process is complete on the designated portal.
- The bill also says that no local candidate will be eligible to avail 75 per cent benefit without registering herself in the designated portal.

Who is a local given that Jharkhand has faced controversies over its definition since the state's formation?

- The bill defines a local candidate as a person who belongs to Jharkhand and is registered on the designated portal. However, an operational problem in implementing the proposed local reservations policy could lie in identifying its beneficiaries.
- Questions around the definition of a 'Jharkhandi' had led to the resignation of Chief Minister Babulal Marandi in 2002 and successive governments thereafter had refrained from touching the issue.
- The BJP-led Raghubar Das government, which came to power in 2014, notified a "relaxed domicile policy" in 2016, listing six ways in which one could be treated as a domicile of the state.
- Das's policy was, however, criticised for not giving priority to tribals, for whom the state was created. Even the Hemant Soren-led government had formed a sub-committee to look into the domicile issue, however, as of now the government may continue with Das' domicile policy.

Is there any exemption for employers?

- Yes, the employer may claim exemption where an adequate number of local candidates of the desired skill qualification or proficiency are not available.
- The company has to apply to the Designated Officer (DO), the Deputy Commissioner of the concerned district, who will enquire into the attempts made by the employer to recruit local candidates of desired skill, qualification or proficiency.
- The officer may either accept or reject the proposal as well as direct the local employer to train the local candidates as per need.

What are the checks and balances provided in the bill?

- The employer will have to furnish a quarterly return about vacancies and employment on the portal which will be examined by an Authorised Officer (AO), who is a District Employment Officer, who can call any records for the purpose of verification.
- The AO may pass an order seeing the compliance of the policy. In addition, if the employer fails to assist the officer, he will be guilty of not co-operating which will be an offence as provisioned by the bill.
- The aggrieved employer may also file an appeal within 60 days of an order passed by the AO or DO in front of an Appellate Authority — the Director, Employment and Training, Government of Jharkhand.
- However, it is not clear how any employee or a local may raise a red flag and in front of whom if any rules are being in contravention of the said objective.

What are the penalties in case of contravention?

- There is a general penalty starting from Rs 10,000 to Rs 50, 000. The penalty for not registering themselves on the designated portal is Rs 50, 000 and may extend up to Rs 1 lakh and if the contravention continues even after being penalised then the penalty will be Rs 5, 000 per day.
- In contravention of recruiting local candidates, the penalty will fall in the bracket of Rs 50, 000 to Rs 2 lakh and Rs 5000 per day in case the contravention continues and the same is applicable in case the company flouts the exemption rules.
- In case of falsification of records, the penalty will be up to Rs 50, 000 per offence and if the offence is committed again, the penalty will fall under the bracket of Rs two to five lakh.
- The Bill also says that an order cannot be passed unless an opportunity has been given to hear the employer and no penalty can be imposed unless a written notice is given to the employer informing the grounds of penalty and subsequently providing an opportunity to be heard.

Project RE-HAB

(Source: [PIB](#))

Context: *KVIC rolls out Project RE-HAB to prevent elephant-human conflict using honey bees.*

About Project RE-HAB:

- Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) launched a unique project of creating “bee-fences” to mitigate human – elephant conflicts.
- The pilot project RE-HAB was launched at four locations around village Chelur in Kodagu district of Karnataka.
- These spots are located on the periphery of Nagarhole National Park and Tiger Reserve and prone to human-elephant conflicts.
- The total cost of the RE-HAB project is just Rs. 15 lakh.

Objective:

- To thwart elephant attacks in human habitations using honey bees and thus reducing loss of lives of both, humans as well as elephants.
- RE-HAB is an acronym for Reducing Elephant – Human Attacks using Bees.
- Project RE-HAB is a sub-mission under KVIC’s National Honey Mission.
 - While the Honey Mission is a programme to increase the bee population, honey production and beekeepers’ income by setting up apiaries, Project RE-HAB uses bee boxes as a fence to prevent the attack of elephants.

Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2021

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *Coal and Mines Minister Prahlaad Joshi has introduced the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2021 in Lok Sabha to streamline the renewal of the auction process for minerals and coal mining rights.*

What are the key changes?

- The amendment proposes to allow captive miners of both coal and other minerals to sell up to 50 per cent of their production after meeting the requirements of the end-use plant and on paying additional royalty to the state government.
- Operators are currently only allowed to use coal and minerals extracted from captive mines for their own industrial use. Experts note that this increased flexibility would allow miners to maximise output from captive mines as they would be able to sell output in excess of their own requirements.
- The amendment also proposes to fix additional royalty payments to states for the extension of mining leases for central public sector enterprises.
- Disagreements over the additional royalty to be paid by state-owned NMDC to the Karnataka government for the extension of mining rights at the Donimalai mine had led to NMDC suspending operations at the mine for over two years. NMDC recently resumed operations after an interim agreement on the additional royalty to be paid to the Karnataka government.
- Experts noted that state governments may object to the fixing of an additional royalty to be paid by CPSEs for such extensions as this may lead to lower revenues compared to a transparent auction process.



- Another key change the Bill proposes is to empower the central government to conduct auctions or re-auction processes for the grant of a mining lease if a state government fails to complete the auction process in a specified period, decided after consultations between the Centre and state.
- Experts noted that industry players may welcome the move as it would likely lead to greater transparency in the auction process as there is a perception that state governments may in some cases prefer some bidders, and try to delay or cancel mining rights if their preferred bidders do not win mining rights.

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2021

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *The Lok Sabha passed The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2021 that seeks to put seven castes under one nomenclature of “Devendrakula Vellalars” with some exceptions for some of the castes in certain districts of Tamil Nadu. The castes include Devendrakulathan, Kadaiyan, Kalladi, Kudumban, Pallan, Pannadi and Vathiriyar.*

Key amendments

- The Bill amends the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950.
- **Constitutional backing:** The Indian Constitution empowers the President to specify the Scheduled Castes (SCs) in various states and union territories. Further, it permits Parliament to modify this list of notified SCs.
- Replaces the entry for Devendrakulathan community with Devendrakula Vellalar that includes: The communities that are currently listed separately within the Act. These are: (i) Devendrakulathan, (ii) Kalladi, (iii) Kudumban, (iv) Pallan, (v) Pannadi, and (vi) Vathiriyar.
- The 1950 Order also includes the Kadaiyan community within the list of notified SCs in the state.
- The Bill creates a distinction for the Kadaiyan community based on residence. The separate entry for the Kadaiyan community is replaced with the Kadaiyan community from the districts of:
 - (i) Tirunelveli, (ii) Thoothukudi, (iii) Ramanathapuram, (iv) Pudukottai, (v) Thanjavur, (vi) Tiruvarur and (vii) Nagapattinam.
- Members of the Kadaiyan community living in other districts are included in the Devendrakula Vellalar grouping.

Jaapi, xorai and gamosa

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *As the polling date draws closer, decorative jaapis (field hats), hand-woven gamosas and bell-metal xorais are making frequent appearances in Assam. Primarily used to felicitate important people and guests, these important symbols of Assamese identity and culture are abundantly seen in political campaigns across the state.*

Jaapi

- The jaapi is a conical hat made of bamboo and covered with dried tokou (a palm tree found in rainforests of Upper Assam) leaves.
- While it is most often used in official functions to felicitate guests, the landscape of rural Assam features a more utilitarian version, which farmers wear to protect themselves from the harsh weather, both sun and rain, while working in the fields.

- The first possible recorded use of jaapi dates back to the Ahom-era buranjis, or chronicles. “Kings and ministers would wear them then,”.
- Later, the jaapi was also seen and popularised in the first Assamese film, Joymati (1935) made by cultural icon Jyotiprasad Agarwala.
- Today, the bulk of Assam’s jaapis are made by artisans based in a cluster of villages in Nalbari district.

Gamosa

- The Gamosa, which literally translates to a cloth to wipe one’s body, is omnipresent in Assam, with wide-ranging uses. It can be used at home as a towel (uka gamosa) or in public functions (phulam/floral gamosa) to felicitate dignitaries or celebrities.
- The popularity of the gamosa has now traveled beyond Assam and is often used by a number of public figures including Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The gamosa is a “symbol of the Assamese nation” and its use in that context can be traced back to 1916 and 1917, when the Asom Chatra Sanmilla (first student organisation) and Asom Sahitya Sabha (premier literary organisation) were founded.
- However, it was only during the anti-foreigner Assam Agitation of the early 1980s, when Assamese nationalism reached its crescendo, that the gamosa assumed a new role. It developed alongside the Agitation. We had a jatiyo sangeet (national anthem), we needed a jatiyo pataka (national flag) too. So, that is what the gamosa became.
- Today, no public function can commence without the guest first being felicitated with the gamosa.

Xorai

- Made of bell-metal, the xorai — essentially a tray with a stand at the bottom, with or without a cover — can be found in every Assamese household.
- While it is primarily used as an offering tray during prayers, or to serve tamale-paan (betel-nut) to guests, a xorai is also presented along with the jaapi and gamosa while felicitating someone.
- The bulk of xorais in Assam are made in the state’s bell metal hub Sarthebari in Bajali district.

Jharkhand’s SAAMAR campaign

(Source: [Indian express](#))

Context: *The Jharkhand government announced the launch of SAAMAR (Strategic Action for Alleviation of Malnutrition and Anemia Reduction) campaign to tackle malnutrition in the state. The campaign aims to identify anemic women and malnourished children and converge various departments to effectively deal with the problem in a state where malnutrition has been a major problem.*

Details:

- The recent Economic Survey quoted The Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey conducted in the state during March 2017 to July 2017 stating that based on the sample data, 36% of under five years of age are stunted—height for age, 29% are affected from Wasting—weight for height, and 45% are underweight—weight for age, indicating the status of undernutrition.

What are the existing schemes to tackle malnutrition in Jharkhand?

- Every second child in the state is stunted and underweight and every third child is affected by stunting and every 10th child is affected from severe wasting and around 70% children are anemic, as per National Family Health Survey-4 data.



- The state government runs various schemes under Child Development Schemes, National Nutrition Mission among others to deal with the situation, but it is not enough.
- Dealing with malnutrition in the state monitoring has been an important concern due to lack of doctors or health care workers.

How does SAMAAR propose to tackle acute malnutrition in children and anemic women?

- To tackle severe acute malnutrition children, every Anganwadi Centres will be engaged to identify these children and subsequently will be treated at the Malnutrition Treatment Centres. In the same process the anemic women will also be listed and will be referred to health centers in serious cases.
- All of these will be done through measuring Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) of women and children through MUAC tapes and Edema levels, swelling in a small area or the entire body—malnutrition is one of the reasons attributed to this disease.
- Angawadi's Sahayia and Sevika will take them to the nearest Health Centre where they will be checked again and then registered on the portal of State Nutrition Mission.

What is the program on adolescent girls and women?

- The stages from pregnant women to child birth to two years later are important in saving a child from malnutrition. However, adolescent age also needs to be given priority as all measures taken once the woman is pregnant will prove useful only if adolescent women are educated and made aware of their health.
- SAMAAR says it will capitalize on the Tejaswini Project functioning in the 17 districts of the state where 12, 800 youth communities—of women and adolescent girls have been formed—are being trained in various skills, entrepreneurship and for jobs.
- All these adolescent girls and women will be educated on nutritional behaviour too, and all will be given a health and nutrition card where they will be informed on their weight, height, Body Mass Index and Hemoglobin.
- They will also be asked to consume Iron-Folic Acid and deworming tablets under supervision. The government is also planning to work in seven districts where Tajaswini Yojna has not started.

Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has been strongly demanding national project status for the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP). Announced during the previous BJP regime in the state, Gehlot's predecessor Vasundhara Raje had also asked for the same.*

What is the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP)?

- The Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project aims to harvest surplus water available during the rainy season in rivers in southern Rajasthan such as Chambal and its tributaries including Kunnu, Parvati, Kalisindh and use this water in south-eastern districts of the state where there is a scarcity of water for drinking and irrigation.
- According to the state Water Resources Department, Rajasthan, the largest state of India with a geographical area of 342.52 lakh hectares which amount to 10.4 per cent of the entire country, holds only 1.16 per cent of India's surface water and 1.72 per cent of groundwater.
- Among the state's water bodies, only the Chambal river basin has surplus water but this water cannot be tapped directly because the area around the Kota barrage is designated as a crocodile sanctuary.
- Through the help of diversion structures, intra-basin water transfers, linking channels and construction of pumping main feeder channels, the ERCP aims to create a network of water channels which will cover 23.67 per cent area of Rajasthan along with 41.13 per cent population of the state.



What is the present status of the project?

- According to officials from the state water resources department, the work on a project under the ERCP in Kota district has started, the value of which is just a small fraction of the total cost of the project.
- Work on ERCP has been started in Kota district. This bit of the project is worth around Rs 600-650 crore. At present, the state is bearing all the costs. The state wants the Centre to declare this as a national project so that the cost-sharing ratio between the Centre and the state becomes 90:10, with the central government bearing 90 per cent of the cost.
- Water from Chambal and its tributaries will be used under the project.
- The project will use canals, tunnels and pipes to meet the water requirement of the 13 districts. Once the ERCP is completed, water from the Chambal river and its tributaries can be harvested and stored in dams for 100 days every year. This water can be used throughout the year. The project is estimated to utilise 3,500 million cubic meter (MCM), which is the overall requirement of these 13 districts.
- The project estimated the duration of the project completion in 10 years.

Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Padhati (BPKP)

(Source: [PIB](#))

Context: *Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Padhati (BPKP), is introduced as a sub scheme of Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) since 2020-21 for the promotion of traditional indigenous practices including natural farming.*

The Scheme:

- It is a sub scheme of Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY).
- It was introduced in 2020-21 for the promotion of traditional indigenous practices including natural farming.
- The scheme mainly emphasises the exclusion of all synthetic chemical inputs and promotes:
 - On-farm biomass recycling with major stress on biomass mulching
 - The use of cow dung-urine formulations
 - Plant based preparations
 - Time to time working of soil for aeration
- Under BPKP, financial assistance of Rs 12200/ha for 3 years is provided for cluster formation, capacity building and continuous handholding by trained personnel, certification and residue analysis.
- BPKP is aimed at promoting traditional indigenous practices which reduces externally purchased inputs.
- Natural farming will reduce dependency on purchased inputs and will help to ease smallholder farmers from credits burden.

Indian Naval Landing Craft Utility (LCU) L58

(Source: [PIB](#))

Context: *Indigenously built Indian Naval Landing Craft Utility L58 commissioned at Port Blair.*

About L58:

- LCU L58 is the eighth and last ship of the Landing Craft Utility (LCU) Mark IV Class.
- The ship was indigenously designed and built by GRSE, Kolkata.
- The LCU 58 is an amphibious ship which can carry 160 troops, in addition to its crew.



- With a displacement of 900 tons, the ship is capable of carrying various types of combat vehicles such as Main Battle Tanks (MBTs), BMPs, Armoured Vehicles, trucks, etc.
- The ship measures 63 meters in length and is fitted with two MTA 4,000 series engines, which are capable of propelling the ship at speeds of up to 15 knots (28 kmph).
- The ship is also fitted with an advanced Electronic Support Measure (ESM) suite to intercept enemy radar transmissions, an advanced Integrated Bridge System (IBS) and a sophisticated Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS), which allow single station monitoring of the ship's navigational and machinery equipment respectively.
- The main armament of the ship includes two indigenously manufactured 30 mm CRN 91 guns which are controlled by a Stabilised Optronic Pedestal (SOP), an electronic day-night director sight manufactured by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).
- In addition, the ship is fitted with six Machine Gun Posts to neutralise air, surface and sub-conventional threats.
- The LCU 58 would be based at Port Blair and will be deployed in a variety of roles such as Beaching, Search and Rescue, Disaster Relief, Coastal Patrol and Surveillance operations along the Andaman and Nicobar Group of Islands, Bay of Bengal and in the Indian Ocean.

Water Quality Information Management System (WQMIS)

(Source: [PIB](#))

Context: *The Ministry of Jal Shakti launched the Water Quality Information Management System (WQMIS).*

Details:

- The Ministry (as part of the Jal Jeevan Mission), along with launching a framework and guidelines for testing, monitoring and surveillance of drinking water quality, had also launched the WQMIS.
- WQMIS is an online portal that provides detailed information on laboratories for this purpose. It also gives people access to data on water quality.
- The guidelines specify work to be done in terms of surveillance and monitoring at the state, district, block/tehsil and village levels.
- The guidelines have been prepared in consultation with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).
- The basic water quality parameters prescribed under the guidelines are pH value, total dissolved solids, turbidity, chloride, total alkalinity, total hardness, sulphate, iron, total arsenic, fluoride, nitrate, total coliform bacteria, *e. coli* or thermo-tolerant coliform bacteria.

Production Linked Incentive Scheme

(Source: [The Hindu BusinessLine](#))

Context:. *The government has been using Production-Linked Incentives or PLIs as the centrepiece to make Bharat Atmanirbhar. The Prime Minister recently expressed the hope that PLIs would unleash over \$520 billion of additional output over the next few years.*

What is it?

- PLIs are provided by the Central government to identified sectors, in order to encourage manufacturing in India. Companies registered in India and having one or more manufacturing locations in the country are eligible for the scheme.



- These companies receive an incentive in the form of a cash subsidy on the new sales of goods manufactured in India for about five years from the base year. The incentive is tied to incremental investments made during the period.
- For mobile phone and large-scale electronics for instance, the PLI will be 4-6 per cent of incremental sales and will require a minimum investment of ₹100 crore/₹200 crore/₹1,000 crore by the entities.
- Beginning with mobile phones and large-scale electronics, PLI is eventually planned to be extended to 13 sectors including automobiles, pharma, telecom, food products, ACC battery, solar PV modules, textiles, other electronic/technology products, speciality steel and white goods.
- The total outlay for all the PLI schemes is ₹1.97 lakh crore over a five-year period. Various ministries have been hammering out the contours of the scheme for each sector over the last few months, with telecom being the latest.

Why is it important?

- India is aiming at becoming a \$5 trillion economy by 2025. To achieve this, robust growth in manufacturing is required.
- As per the second advance estimates for 2020-21, manufacturing constitutes only 16.75 per cent of the GVA (gross value added at constant prices) in the economy, while services garner a 64.5 per cent share. The recent Covid disruptions to the global supply chain have also shown that for many products, India is heavily dependent on imports, particularly from China, and is unable to make a mark as a global exporter.
- PLIs are intended to correct this by incentivising manufacturers to try their luck in sectors that enable import substitution or export growth.
- PLI is a continuation of other moves by the government to encourage local manufacturing, such as the 15 per cent tax rate for new manufacturing companies announced in 2019 and the increase in import duties on various goods in the last few Budgets. However, the PLI is superior as it links incentive for local manufacturing to output obligations and isn't a free giveaway.
- The PLI scheme also provides an opportunity for India to take on China in the global supply chain, showcasing it as a world class manufacturing destination and inviting foreign investments. The Covid pandemic has taught global manufacturers to de-risk from China, and India is looking to benefit from this shift.

INTERNATIONAL

Every fifth child faces water scarcity globally: Unicef report

(Source: [Down to Earth](#))

Context: *More than 450 million, or one in five children, worldwide resided in areas of high or extremely high water vulnerability, according to a new report released by the Unicef March 18, 2021.*

Details:

- Eastern and southern Africa had the highest proportion of children living in such areas. More than half of children (58 per cent) here face difficulty accessing sufficient water every day, the report said.
- Other affected regions were West and Central Africa (31 per cent), South Asia (25 per cent) and West Asia (23 per cent).
- More than 155 million children in South Asia lived in areas with high or even extremely high water vulnerability, according to the report.
- The document identified 37 hot-spot countries where children faced especially dire circumstances in terms of absolute numbers, the proportions of children affected and where global resources, support and urgent action had to be mobilised.
- Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Haiti, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sudan, Tanzania and Yemen were especially vulnerable.
- The new report is part of Unicef's 'Water security for all' initiative that identifies areas where physical water scarcity risks overlap with poor water service levels.
- The initiative aims to mobilise resources, partnerships, innovation and global response to identified hot spots.
- Decades of misuse, poor management, over-extraction of groundwater and contamination of freshwater supplies had exacerbated water stress, the report said.
- Rapid population growth, urbanisation, climate change and extreme weather events were compounding water stress and reducing available quantities of safe water, it added.
- Nearly 600 million children — or 1 in 4 children worldwide — will be living in areas with extremely limited water resources by 2040, according to a 2017 Unicef report.
- Unicef had set an ambitious goal to ensure every child had access to climate-resilient water services by 2025 and by 2030, for all children to have access to a safe and affordable water supply and to live in water secure communities.

India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA)

(Source: [PIB](#))

Context: *Sixth India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) women's forum meeting held*

About IBSA:

- Established in June 2003, IBSA is a coordinating mechanism amongst three emerging countries, three multi-ethnic and multicultural democracies, which are determined to:
 - contribute to the construction of a new international architecture
 - bring their voice together on global issues
 - deepen their ties in various areas

- The establishment of IBSA was formalised by the Brasilia Declaration of 2003, which mentions India, Brazil and South Africa's democratic credentials, their condition as developing nations and their capacity of acting on a global scale as the main reasons for the three countries to come together.
- The principles, norms and values underpinning the IBSA Dialogue Forum are participatory democracy, respect for human rights and the Rule of Law.
- IBSA does not have a headquarters or a permanent executive secretariat to maintain an open and flexible structure.
- At the highest level, it conducts Summits of the Heads of State or Government.
- IBSA's activities are divided into four tracks:
 - Political coordination
 - Sector cooperation through 14 Working Groups
 - IBSA Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (IBSA Fund)
 - People-to-People fora

Digital Green Certificates

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The European Commission proposed to create a Digital Green Certificate to facilitate the safe and free movement of citizens within the European Union (EU) amid the COVID-19 pandemic.*

What is the Digital Green Certificate?

- A Digital Green Certificate is proof that a person has either been vaccinated against COVID-19, has received a negative test result or has recovered from COVID-19. The key features of the certificate are that it will be in digital or paper format complete with a QR code and will be free of charge.
- The certificate can be issued by authorities, including hospitals, testing centres and health authorities.
- Once the proposal for digital certificates is finalised, it will be accepted in all EU countries and will help to ensure that the restrictions imposed in different areas within the EU can be lifted in a coordinated manner.
- All EU citizens or third-country nationals who are legally staying in the EU will be able to use these digital certificates and thereby will be exempted from free movement restrictions. In case an EU member country requires a person to quarantine or undergo a test, it will have to notify the Commission and all other member states justifying its decision.
- Significantly, the brand or kind of anti-COVID vaccine received does not matter for the certificate to be issued. "When it comes to waiving free movement restrictions, Member States will have to accept vaccination certificates for vaccines which received EU marketing authorisation," the Commission has said.
- The certificates are expected to be rolled out by the summer, after countries have had the time to set up the required digital infrastructure.

What is the need for such a document?

- In the EU and across the world, the tourism industry has been severely impacted due to the spread of the disease. Many countries have, therefore, been contemplating digital certificates or passports that will be proof that a person has been vaccinated or has recovered from COVID-19.
- In February, Israel became the first country to issue certificates called "vaccine passports" that will allow vaccinated individuals to use some facilities and attend events. Last month, Denmark also said that it was in the process of rolling out digital passports that would act as proof for those individuals who have been vaccinated.



- Even so, as early as May 2020, countries such as Chile had proposed “release certificates” meant for those who had recovered from COVID-19. But the World Health Organisation (WHO) had advised against using such certificates because of lack of evidence that a person infected with Covid-19 could not get the infection again.
- However, it is now known that re-infection in case of COVID-19 is rare. Research published in the journal Lancet recently points out that most people who have had COVID-19 are protected from re-infection for at least a period of six months. However, the study says that elderly patients are more prone to reinfections. This study found that only about 0.65 percent of the people in the study returned a positive RT-PCR test twice.

Vaccine passports

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The European Union announced its plans to roll out a joint vaccination passport for more than 440 million of its citizens in an attempt to kickstart cross-border travel and revive Europe’s struggling tourism sector. The aim of the document, which would act as a sort of certificate, would be to give people who have received the Covid-19 vaccine access to certain facilities and events.*

What is a vaccine passport and how does it work?

- A vaccine passport is essentially a certificate given to an individual who has been vaccinated against a virus — in this case, Covid-19.
- These certificates could be made available in the form of a stamped certificate, or simply a digital document that can be stored on a smartphone. The aim of the document or ‘passport’ is to act as proof that the person has been vaccinated against the illness, and is hence, ‘safe’.
- But, despite what its name suggests, the vaccine passport is not only used by travellers. The document could become a requirement for a range of other activities and facilities as well.
- From watching a movie, to eating a meal at a restaurant — citizens may be required to present their ‘vaccine passports’ before they are permitted to enter some public spaces.

UK’s Turing Scheme

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *Having left the European Union’s flagship Erasmus scholarship programme after Brexit, the UK on Friday launched its own replacement called the Turing scheme to enable UK students to study abroad.*

What is the UK’s Turing Scheme for students?

- The scheme, for which the British government has allocated 110 million pounds for the first year, starts in 2021/22, and would enable up to 35,000 students from across the country to study or work across the world from September this year.
- Under the programme, after schools and universities successfully apply for funding for exchanges, university study and work placements, they can invite their students to apply for individual fundings, as per the BBC.
- In what is described as a major post-Brexit move, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said that the scheme would be a global programme in which every country in the world will be able to partner with



UK institutions. This is in contrast with the Erasmus+ programme, which only included European countries.

- The British government has said that the scheme is aimed towards ensuring social mobility, and targets students from disadvantaged backgrounds and areas from where not many could benefit under the previous Erasmus+ scheme.
- Beneficiaries of the scheme from disadvantaged backgrounds can receive up to 490 pounds per month towards living costs, as well as travel funding and money to offset the cost of passports, visas and insurance.

How will the scheme impact India?

- The UK's Department for Education (DfE) has confirmed that India, already a top source of international students to the UK, could be among the leading list of countries with which UK universities seek to strike student exchange projects, a PTI report said.
- As per the report, the scheme is part of the UK's drive to increase the amount generated from education exports, including fees and income from overseas students and English language teaching abroad. The government aims to generate 35 billion pounds per year, and bring 6 lakh international students to the country by 2030.

Mains

GS II

Relooking the Mandal verdict and quota cap

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: The Supreme Court, while considering the validity of the reservation for the Maratha community in Maharashtra on Monday, decided that it will hear all the States on the 50% limit on total reservation imposed by the court in the Indra Sawhney case (1992). This is because the 16% quota for Marathas would take the total reservation in Maharashtra beyond the limit of 50%. Over the years, several other States, including Tamil Nadu, have passed laws that allow reservation going beyond 60%. The court is also keen on hearing the views of the States on the 102nd Amendment of the Constitution, by which the National Commission for Backward Classes was given constitutional status.

What are the quota-related issues on which the SC wants States' views?

- The five-member Constitution Bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan wants to decide whether the judgment in Indra Sawhney vs Union of India, known as the Mandal verdict, needs to be referred to a larger Bench or “requires a relook in the light of subsequent Constitutional amendments, judgments and changed social dynamics of society, etc.”
- This is because the earlier judgment had declared that reservation cannot exceed 50% in total. As Indra Sawhney was a decision by a nine-member Bench, a Bench of at least 11 judges will be needed to reconsider the question.
- Also, the court wants to consider whether the reservation for Marathas effected through a 2018 Act (the Socially Economically Backward Class Act), and amended in 2019, is covered by the “exceptional circumstances” mentioned in the Indra Sawhney judgment, which had said the 50% limit can be exceeded in “certain extraordinary situations” as a special case.
- This relaxation, it said, was meant for people inhabiting remote and far-flung areas who are away from the mainstream of national life and who may have “conditions peculiar to and characteristic to them”.
- The Bench will also examine whether the State government had made out a case warranting such an exception for Marathas based on the report of the Maharashtra State Backward Classes Commission headed by former Justice M.G. Gaikwad.
- Last September, the Supreme Court stayed the implementation of the 2018 Maharashtra law granting reservation to Marathas in education and jobs.

Is there any other issue on the rights of States?

- One of the issues that cropped up in the debate over the Maratha reservation is the effect of the 102nd Constitution Amendment introduced in 2018. This amendment grants constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes and says the President would notify the lists of backward classes for all States in consultation with the Governors.
- This has raised apprehensions about whether the power of State governments to make inclusions and exclusions from the list of backward classes has been taken away.
- Therefore, the court has framed important questions: whether the 102nd Amendment deprives States of the power to make laws for socially and educationally backward classes and confer benefits on them, whether the newly introduced Article 342A of the Constitution abridges the State legislatures' power to enact laws under Articles 15(4) and 16(4), which respectively deal with special provisions for other backward classes and reservation in employment, and whether all this affects the federal structure of the Constitution.



- Any judgment on the Maratha reservation issue would inevitably have to deal with three issues — the 50% ceiling on total reservation, the power of States to determine who its backward classes are and confer benefits on them, and the legislative competence of State legislatures regarding backward classes after the introduction of the 102nd Amendment.
- The court has decided that all States have a stake in the outcome, and therefore, it wants to hear their views.

What do past judgments say on a ceiling for quotas?

- It was in *M.R. Balaji vs State of Mysore* (1962) that the Supreme Court first ruled that reservation, being a special provision for backward classes, should not normally exceed 50%. It held that the order earmarking 68% of seats in engineering, medical and other technical courses was a “fraud” on the Constitution.
- However, it added that it would not attempt to lay down in an inflexible manner what the proper percentage of reservation should be. “Speaking generally and in a broad way, a special provision should be less than 50%. The actual percentage must depend upon the relevant prevailing circumstances in each case,” it said.
- The presumption behind the 50% rule was that equality of opportunity was the norm, and any special provision for socially and educationally backward classes or reservation for backward classes in public employment was an exception.
- However, in *State of Kerala vs. N.M. Thomas* (1975), the majority of the Bench disagreed with the proposition. It said the special measures in favour of backward classes in Articles 15 and 16 were not exceptions to the rule. On the contrary, these were an emphatic way of ensuring equality of opportunity — to the point of even making reservations. Justice S.M. Fazal Ali wrote that in his opinion, the 50% norm in *Balaji* was only a rule of caution and does not exhaust all categories.
- In *Indra Sawhney*, even though most judges agreed that reservation was not an exception to the equality norm, the court ultimately laid down the 50% limit. “Just as every power must be exercised reasonably and fairly, the power conferred by Clause (4) of Article 16 should also be exercised in a fair manner and within reasonable limit — and what is more reasonable than to say that reservation ... shall not exceed 50% of the appointments or posts...” Citing Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s opinion in the Constituent Assembly that reservation should be “confined to a minority of seats”, the Bench fixed the maximum permissible quota at 50%.
- At the same time, it said the strict rule could be relaxed in extraordinary situations given the country’s great diversity.

How will a judgment in this case impact reservation?

- If the court, through a larger Bench, comes to the conclusion that the 50% ceiling is not a hard-and-fast rule and that it may be breached if a State’s backward class population is considered high, it would be a big boost for the affirmative action policies of various State governments.
- Not only would it enable the Maharashtra government to implement its quotas for Marathas to the extent of 16% reservation in education and jobs, but other States, such as Tamil Nadu, would also be able to preserve their present levels of reservations. For instance, Tamil Nadu has enacted a law to protect its 69% total reservation.
- As the Tamil Nadu law, which was subsequently included in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution (by which the Act would be beyond judicial review on the ground of violation of anyone’s fundamental rights) has been separately challenged before the Supreme Court, the removal of the ceiling would be a major victory for the State.
- The decisions would also have relevance to the legal challenge to the introduction of the 10% quota for the economically weaker sections among those who do not fall under any reservation category. By this move, the Centre has already exceeded the 50% limit, and at present, only 41% of seats or posts are meant for open competition in central employment and educational institutions.
- Further, the Bench is also likely to decide on the question of whether backward classes should also be classified and determined only by the Centre, just as the list of Scheduled Castes is made by the Union



government. As of now, only the President, or the Central government, can make modifications in the list of Scheduled Castes in respect of any State or Union Territory in the country. And this can be done only through a Parliamentary law.

- Article 342A, introduced through the 102nd Amendment, is similarly worded — it says that the President notifies the Backward Classes for each State or Union Territory in consultation with the Governor in the case of a State.
- It also says State governments must consult the National Commission for Backward Classes on all matters of policy concerning socially and educationally backward classes.

Retrospective laws and the Cairn tax dispute

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *In December last year, a three-member tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Netherlands ruled against India in its long-running tax dispute with the U.K.-based oil and gas company Cairn Energy Plc and a subsidiary, Cairn UK Holdings Ltd. The tribunal ordered India to pay about \$1.4 billion to the company. Following this, Cairn Energy has successfully moved courts in five countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom, to recognise its claim as per the arbitration award, according to PTI. The Netherlands, France, and Canada are the other three countries. Such a recognition by courts opens the door for Cairn Energy to seize assets of the Indian government in these jurisdictions by way of enforcing its claim, in case the latter doesn't pay its dues.*

What is the dispute about?

- The dispute started in early 2014 when Indian tax authorities started questioning Cairn Energy requesting information on the group's reorganisation in the financial year 2006-07. This escalated, and by 2015, the authorities had sent the company a draft assessment order, assessing in the process that there was a principal tax amount of \$1.6 billion that was due.
- The year in reference, 2006-07, was one in which big corporate changes and developments took place in Cairn Energy.
- It was the year in which it not only undertook a corporate reorganisation, but also floated an Indian subsidiary, Cairn India, which in early 2007 got listed on the Indian bourses. Through the corporate reorganisation process, Cairn Energy had transferred all of its India assets, which were until then held by nine subsidiaries in various countries, to the newly-formed Cairn India.
- But the tax authorities claimed that in the process of this reorganisation, Cairn Energy had made capital gains worth ₹24,500 crore. This, the department asserted, was the basis of the tax demand.
- In 2011, the U.K.-based Vedanta Resources bought a nearly 60% stake in Cairn India. In fact, four years after this, Cairn India received a tax notice for not withholding tax for the gains ascribed to its former parent company.

Is this case similar to Vodafone's battle with the government of India?

- The Vodafone case in 2007 was triggered by Hong Kong's Hutchinson Telecommunications' sale of its stake in India's Hutchinson Essar to Vodafone International Holdings, based out of the Netherlands. The Hong Kong firm made a capital gain on this, which the Indian tax authorities deemed fit to tax.
- They held that Vodafone should have withheld the tax, and therefore imposed a liability on it. The Supreme Court quashed the taxman's demand, concluding that it did not agree that the sale of shares in this case "would amount to transfer of a capital asset within the meaning of Section 2(14) of the Indian Income Tax Act".
- In the Union Budget of 2012, the Income Tax Act, 1961 was amended to make sure that even if a transfer of shares takes place outside India, such a transfer can be taxed if the value of those shares is based on assets in India. And this was applied retrospectively. The action against Cairn Energy was

based on this move. India lost its arbitration case against Vodafone as well, with the government being asked to fork out around ₹80 crore.

What happened after the tax claims in the Cairn Energy dispute?

- After receiving a draft assessment order from the tax authorities, Cairn UK Holdings Ltd. appealed before the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal. The tribunal, while providing the company relief from back-dated interest demands, however, upheld the main tax demand.
- The company had initiated proceedings of arbitration under the U.K.-India bilateral investment treaty. But during this time, according to a PTI report, “the government sold Cairn’s almost 5% holding in Vedanta Ltd” (the residual stake the firm owned after selling Cairn India), “seized dividends totalling ₹1,140 crore due to it from those shareholdings”, and “set off a ₹1,590-crore tax refund against the demand”.

What was the main argument of Cairn Energy during the arbitration?

- The claimants, Cairn Energy and Cairn UK Holdings, argued that till the amendment was made to tax retrospectively in 2012, there was no tax on indirect transfers (transfer by a non-resident of shares in non-Indian companies which indirectly held assets in India).
- They also said the government had approved the 2006 reorganisation. The application of the 2012 amendments, they alleged, constituted “manifest breaches” of the U.K.-India bilateral investment treaty.

What was India’s defence during the arbitration?

- India’s counter to the main charge of Cairn Energy was that its 2006 transactions were taxable irrespective of the 2012 amendments.
- It argued that “Indian law has long permitted taxation where a transaction has a strong economic nexus with India”. It said even if it is retrospective, it is “valid and binding applying the longstanding constitutional, legislative and legal framework in which the claimants have invested”.

What did the arbitration tribunal rule?

- The tribunal said the tax demand violated the U.K.-India bilateral investment treaty. The tribunal said India “failed to accord Cairn Energy’s investments fair and equitable treatment” under the bilateral protection pact it had with the United Kingdom.
- It also ordered India to compensate Cairn Energy and its subsidiary for “the total harm suffered” as a result of the breaches of the treaty.
- It has been reported in the media that India will appeal against the tribunal’s decision.

The electoral overhaul in Hong Kong

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *The National People’s Congress (NPC) of China, the ceremonial legislature in Beijing, on March 11 approved what it called “a decision on improving Hong Kong’s electoral system”. This paves the way for sweeping changes in how Hong Kong, the Special Administrative Region (SAR) that has been ruled under the “one country, two systems” model since its return to China in 1997, chooses its leaders.*

How does the new NPC amendment change Hong Kong’s political system?

- The NPC amendment essentially gives Beijing-appointed politicians greater power in running the HKSAR’s politics. Currently, 35 of the 70 members of Hong Kong’s Legislative Council are directly elected through “geographical constituencies”, while 35 are nominated from “functional constituencies” (referring to a range of special interest groups that are broadly pro-establishment).



- Now, the size of the Legislative Council will be expanded to 90, with the additional 20 members joining the 35 others who are nominated, thus reducing the share of directly elected representatives. The amendment also bestows greater power on a newly expanded Election Committee of 1,500 nominated members, up from 1,200 previously.
- The 300 new members will include Hong Kong's representatives to the NPC (the legislature) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (the upper house), who are chosen by Beijing. The committee, which has in the past been responsible for choosing Hong Kong's Chief Executive, will now also choose the additional Legislative Council members.
- Perhaps the most controversial change is the setting up of a new "candidate qualification review committee", which, the NPC said, "shall be responsible for reviewing and confirming" the qualifications of candidates for Election Committee members, the Chief Executive, and Legislative Council members.
- This committee can vet any candidate and disqualify them if it deems they are not "patriots", as part of a new push by Beijing to ensure "the administration of Hong Kong by Hong Kong people with patriots as the main body", an evolution of the post-1997 "administration of Hong Kong by Hong Kong people" idea.

How will the "one country, two systems" model be impacted?

- Under the Basic Law — the Constitution that has governed Hong Kong since 1997 — the SAR is a part of China but enjoys "a high degree of autonomy" and "executive, legislative and independent judicial power", except in foreign policy and defence. It also says "the socialist system and policies shall not be practised" in Hong Kong for 50 years.
- The amendment is the second major recent legislative change that has been seen by the opposition in Hong Kong as undermining this autonomy. In 2020, as a response to the 2019 protests, China passed a new national security law that lists penalties for "subversion".
- Earlier this year, as many as 47 pro-democracy leaders were arrested under the new law after organising an informal primary election among pro-democracy parties. If Hong Kong's pro-democracy parties are concerned about the "two systems" part of the formula, Beijing is now emphasising the importance of "one country".
- Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, said on March 11 that ensuring political offices were filled by "patriots" was required to safeguard "national security and sovereignty" and to "solve the problem of the LegCo [Legislative Council] making everything political in recent years" and "internal rifts that have torn Hong Kong apart".

What lies ahead?

- With the national security law and the new electoral changes, the space for the pro-democracy opposition in Hong Kong has been drastically reduced. Hong Kong without a noisy opposition will mean a very different Hong Kong from what the past 24 years have seen.
- The city became a key gateway for foreign companies particularly because of its independent judicial system that distinguished it from the mainland. It still remains a key gateway for investment, even though in 2018 its GDP was surpassed by Shenzhen.
- Beijing's bet is that China's market may remain a big enough draw to allay broader concerns about the changes sweeping through the SAR. If the direction of its politics seems clear, its economic future appears less so.

The job crunch and the growing fires of nativism

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *The Haryana government has recently passed legislation that mandates companies in Haryana to provide jobs to local Haryanvis first, before hiring people from outside the State.*

Details:

- The unemployment rate in Haryana is the highest of all States in India, as per data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, or CMIE (<https://bit.ly/3tnokOx>).
- A whopping 80% of women in Haryana who want to work cannot find a job. More than half of all graduates in Haryana are jobless. The jobs situation in Haryana is staggeringly dismal.

Many factors control jobs

- Politically, 11 out of the 18 million voters of Haryana do not have a regular job. World history warns us that when such a vast majority of adults are jobless, it inevitably leads to social revolutions and political upheavals. So, it is entirely understandable that the democratically elected Haryana government panicked and chose to reserve the few available jobs for its own voters.
- Haryana is not alone in this quandary. The cabinet of the government of Jharkhand approved similar legislation to reserve jobs for Jharkhand residents.
- The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu announced a similar proposal to reserve jobs for Tamils in its manifesto for the upcoming Assembly elections. Many States in India have embarked on this nativism adventure to protect the interests of the vast number of their jobless locals.
- Predictably, this has attracted criticism from economists and commentators, as it militates against their liberal idea of a free economy.
- ‘Focus on creating more jobs, not on reserving the few available ones’ is the popular refrain. But, it is a false binary. Creation of new jobs is not entirely in the control of State governments. It is a complex interplay of multitude of factors.

States and key parameters

- Job creation is obviously an outcome of the performance of the larger economy. If say, the American giant retailer, Amazon, believes that the Indian economy is poised to grow robustly, it may choose to expand its operations in India.
- The Chief Minister of a State in India has limited control over the management of the larger economy and thereby, attract new investors and businesses who can create jobs. When Amazon, enticed by a buoyant Indian economy, decides to expand its Indian operations, then presumably, the State governments can compete to lure Amazon to their State and help create new jobs.
- Ostensibly, Amazon needs abundant high quality skilled and unskilled labour, land at affordable prices, uninterrupted supply of electricity, water and other such ‘ease of business’ facilities for its expansion. State governments in India can theoretically compete with each other on these parameters to attract Amazon to set up operations in their State.
- Further, any tax advantages that a particular State can provide vis-à-vis others will increase its attractiveness for Amazon. In fact, this is exactly what happened in America in 2018 when Amazon decided to build its second headquarters and various States, towns and cities publicly competed with each other to woo Amazon and its jobs to their area.
- But, realistically in India, in very few of these parameters can a poorer State compete against a richer State to attract Amazon.

Critical factors



- An elected State government can certainly, during its five-year tenure, attempt to provide high quality local infrastructure to attract new businesses. State governments also have the ability to provide land at affordable prices or for free to attract investments.
- However, the availability of skilled local labour is a function of many decades of social progress of the State and cannot be retooled immediately. After the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), State governments in India have lost their fiscal autonomy and have no powers to provide any tax concessions to businesses.
- So, while State governments have the ability to use land and local infrastructure as tools to attract businesses, they do not have control over immediate availability of skilled manpower or to use taxes as a tool to lure. In America, States compete against each other vigorously using tax concessions and land offers to bring new jobs to their States.
- But, beyond all these, the most critical factor in the choice of a location for a large business is what economists term as the ‘agglomeration effect’ — the ecosystem of supply chain, talent, good living conditions and so on.
- A State with an already well-established network of suppliers, people, schools, etc. are at a greater advantage to attract even more businesses than the States that are left behind.
- Put simply, if Amazon’s competitor Walmart is already established in Karnataka, then there is a greater incentive for Amazon to also locate itself in Karnataka to take advantage of the established ecosystem. This leads to a cycle of the more prosperous States growing even faster at the expense of the lagging States.

The ‘3-3-3’ danger

- This phenomenon is already evident in India’s increasing economic divergence among its States.
- In previous published joint research, I have called this the ‘3-3-3’ effect — the three richest large States (Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka) are three times richer than the three poorest large States (Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh), in per-capita income, compared to 1.4 times in 1970.
- This gap between the richer and poorer States in India is only widening rapidly and not narrowing, due to the agglomeration impact of modern economic development paradigms.

Subnationalism

- In the absence of a level playing field and with no fiscal autonomy, it is enormously difficult for developing States in India to attract new investments and create new jobs.
- In this context, an elected government that operates on a five-year electoral cycle, confronted with a powder keg of millions of jobless voters will understandably resort to seemingly ‘paise wise, rupees foolish’ appeasement policies to salvage whatever it can of an ominous employment situation.
- After all, how is the Haryana government’s policy to restrict labour movement into its borders and protect jobs for locals any different from the Prime Minister’s ‘self-reliant India’ initiative to restrict goods movement into India’s borders and protect local jobs?
- The potent combination of widening inter-State inequality, a ‘rich States get richer’ economic development model, an impending demographic disaster and shrinking fiscal autonomy for elected State governments in a politically and culturally diverse democracy will inevitably propagate nativistic sub-nationalism among the various States of India.
- Until the economic playing fields for the various States are levelled and much greater fiscal freedom provided to the States, “don’t protect but create jobs” will only remain a topic of a hollow lecture and moral sermons.



The limits of POCSO

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: A single bench of the Madras High Court recently allowed a petition seeking to quash a case of kidnap, aggravated penetrative sexual assault and aggravated sexual assault of a minor. Aggravated penetrative sexual assault under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 is the equivalent provision for aggravated rape.

Details:

- A person can be charged with this offence in certain aggravating circumstances, such as if the rape occurs within a relationship of trust or authority, or if it leads to pregnancy, among others.
- Under POCSO, the consent of a person under the age of 18 is irrelevant, regardless of the nature and circumstance of the sexual interaction, or the particulars of the person with whom it takes place. This means that any sex with a minor is rape.

Sexual tendencies of adolescents

- The judgment echoes the arguments that child rights activists have been making for years: by ignoring the natural sexual tendencies of adolescents, POCSO can and does become a tool for the persecution of young people in consenting sexual relations.
- The court reasoned that adolescence and young adulthood form a continuum because of the physical, biological, neurological, and social changes that occur during this time.
- The implication is that people within this age group may be clubbed together notwithstanding the legal line drawn at 18. This informed the court's view of the relationship of the minor 'victim' with the accused respondent as being a loving, rather than an abusive, one.
- The judgment concluded that the case could be quashed because it was purely individual in nature and doing so would not affect any overriding public interest. However, in doing this, it ignored the established precedent against quashing cases of rape, a heinous and serious offence, held by the Supreme Court to be a public concern, and not a private matter.
- Perhaps the court was persuaded in taking this course because of its observation that POCSO could not have been intended to bring such cases within its scope. In making this observation, the court relied on the Statement of Objects and Reasons of POCSO, which states that the law was enacted pursuant to Article 15 of the Constitution, which allows the state to make special provisions for women and children, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to protect children from sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography.
- However, neither the founding documents nor the listed categories of offences give a sense of what the limits of POCSO were meant to be. The Parliamentary Committee (Rajya Sabha) which considered the POCSO Bill, 2011 had, in fact, criticised the clause providing for the possibility of consent in cases of sexual intercourse with minors between the ages of 16 and 18.
- It believed that a uniform age of 18 would ensure that trials of child rape would focus on the conduct of the accused and the circumstances of the offence, instead of putting victims on trial as is often the case when the consent of the victim is in question. This would indicate that adolescent sexuality was not meant to be an exception to POCSO's bright-line approach.
- The five State studies on the functioning of Special Courts under the POCSO Act, conducted by the Centre for Child and the Law, National Law School of India University, Bengaluru, have demonstrated that these de facto consensual cases are complicated. While adolescents can and do choose to have sex, it is a fact that they are still children, and their nascent sexual autonomy is susceptible to abuse. This contradiction created by the very nature of adolescence has led to inconsistent and unprincipled adjudication.
- The absolute age line of POCSO has not prevented the insensitive assessment of minors' consent. At the same time, it has forced courts to choose between applying the law and doing justice, especially in cases

where the minor victim has willingly eloped with or married the accused or is carrying his child, for imprisoning him would only do her harm.

A just verdict

- Therefore, the judgment was intuitively just, even though it was not in line with precedent. It highlighted the urgent need for a reconsideration of the absolutist approach of POCSO when it comes to the sexual interactions of adolescents with other young people.
- Courts need to be able to strike a balance between the limited but developing capacity of adolescents to consent to sexual interaction and their vulnerability to being groomed, abused, and exploited.
- For this to be possible, the legislature must provide clarity on the core wrongs that POCSO is meant to address, so that valid conclusions may be drawn about what is the intent of the law, and what is clearly outside its purpose.

Investment in public health

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *The worst pandemic in a hundred years has demonstrated the importance of healthcare and public health in times of a health crisis. It is time we invest a lot in our public health care system.*

Healthcare and public health

- While the health-care capability in India ranks among the world's best, it is a different story when it comes to public health. We need to distinguish between the two. Healthcare refers to the transaction between one caregiver and one sick person at a time – hence the client is the sick person and therapy is the mainstay.
- For public health, the client is the community at large and the goal is disease prevention and control. Disease control is the deliberate, intervention-based and quantified reduction of disease burden. It has to be data-driven.
- Data are required on baseline disease burden and real-time monitoring to track the control trajectory of all the highly prevalent infectious diseases. Reliable data must be collected from all sources including every healthcare provider, for monitoring disease burden by diagnosis and outcomes; for this exercise, the total population is the denominator.
- Data collection for HIV control is sample-based, under the unique Indian design of sentinel surveillance, established in 1986 and still continuing.
- It shows only the time trend of declining infection prevalence. Counting of acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) and laboratory tests for polioviruses (including molecular methods distinguishing wild from vaccine viruses) were crucial for polio elimination in India.
- The commonality between HIV/AIDS and polio programmes is the availability of denominator-based data. The denominator for polio elimination is the national total under-five population. So, we knew the total disease burden. And when it reached zero, we knew polio was eliminated.
- Our health management does not have a way of prospectively collecting data on all diseases and deaths by diagnosis. That is precisely the task of public health. In its absence, we have only the numerator data on various diseases, including COVID-19, but not the denominator — in short we do not have a comprehensive and quantified profile of any disease in the entire population, including those under vertical programmes — tuberculosis, malaria, leprosy, AIDS.
- For COVID-19, computerised medical records informed us about how many were tested for SARS-CoV-2 infection — and among them, how many were positive, hospitalised, survived or died. All statistics are available in the public domain. Everyone knows that the numbers cover only a fraction of the total, but what proportion of the total, will remain unknown forever.

Social vaccination

- To get an insight into the totality of infections in the whole population, we rely on the shape of the COVID-19 epidemic curve that peaked in September and steadily declined to the present — with less than 20,000 daily new infections since January 7 until recently.
- That informs the proportion already infected — most probably 50%-60%, for 700 million to 800 million people. But the detected numbers are over 11 million.
- Where does the truth lie: nearer to 11 million or to 700 million? We will not know without a public health surveillance system. The sero-surveys on random samples, an attempt to derive the totality of infections, reported widely disparate figures and failed to give us a reasonably reliable picture.
- For COVID-19, there are non-pharmacological preventive interventions — face masks, hand hygiene, physical distancing — and pharmacological prevention by vaccination.
- Where we fell short is timely and comprehensive public education with authoritative and authentic information communicated effectively to the public for self-motivated behaviour modification. In other words, a ‘social vaccine’. Social vaccination is another function of public health.
- In the absence of public health infrastructure, India’s AIDS Task Force designed and successfully applied ‘social vaccine’ during the HIV/AIDS epidemic and this was continued by the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO).
- Sadly, there was no crosstalk between the COVID-19 programme and NACO; hence principles of social vaccine, so effectively deployed in AIDS prevention, were not adopted for COVID-19 prevention.
- Now, during the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out, authentic health education regarding vaccination is conspicuously lacking, leading to considerable vaccine hesitancy among even healthcare staff. Post-vaccination surveillance, vital for assessing vaccine efficacy and safety, is not being conducted, again a lacuna in public health. We sorely miss public health.
- COVID-19 has strong social determinants of infection transmission — overcrowding, lack of cough/sneeze etiquette, and urban-rural divide in health awareness and education. These factors are common for influenza and TB too.
- Typhoid, cholera, leptospirosis, scrub typhus, malaria, rabies, etc. have environmental determinants. In countries where public health is given equal status with healthcare, public health addresses both social and environmental determinants and controls these diseases.
- Public health personnel have jurisdiction over people in their homes and workplaces, food and water distribution chains, and over ecosystems — ranging from densities of arthropod vectors, rodent and canine populations, to flight ranges of fruit-eating bats.
- Our government errs when it thinks that healthcare for people’s felt need alone will suffice, without mitigating disease determinants through public health. India’s style of mounting ad hoc responses only when there is a pandemic is no longer tenable.
- Currently our healthcare institutions are cluttered with too many infectious diseases that are amenable to control if only we had public health. Imagine how much wealth is going down the drain for want of public health. Investment in public health will result in health, wealth and prosperity.

Gaps in COVID-19 vaccination in India

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *More than a third of all vaccinations done in the world each day are in India. With over 40,000 sites, it is heartening to see how India is shaping the COVID-19 vaccination programme. Yet, these are baby steps, and there is a long way ahead in covering the vulnerable. Here is why.*

Steps to scale up



- India has identified a target of 300 million vulnerable population (<https://bit.ly/3eVtIK5>), but there is neither a definitive time frame attached to it nor any specifics on the process. With COVID-19 cases on the rise again in different parts of the country, time is running out.
- If India can vaccinate 10 million people per day, the vulnerable can be protected over the next two to three months. However, this requires speeding up the pace by five times. Given that India has 300,000 trained vaccinators (217780 auxiliary nurse midwives and over one lakh nurses; <https://bit.ly/3s77q6C> and <https://bit.ly/30UR19k>), nearly three million people can be covered each day by the public health workforce.
- They are trained in vaccinating millions of children routinely through outreach sessions. Thus, they can easily cover two million doses per day routinely. By expanding participation by private health facilities, it would be possible to cover more than seven to 10 million doses per day.

India-Russia template

- To have a sustained campaign of 10 million doses per day, India will need to have a reasonable stockpile and production line of vaccines. Several other vaccines are available internationally with established efficacy and safety, and can be approved under emergency use authorisation (EUA).
- The bridging study can be done while vaccines are rolled out under the EUA before access to the market. The government may proactively seek supplies from other manufacturers while rapid studies can assess safety and immunogenicity in the Indian context.
- The ongoing arrangement with Russia for the local production of Sputnik while the vaccine is already undergoing clinical trials in India is an excellent template of using Indian companies to roll out other vaccines.
- India has to balance compassion to supply vaccines to other countries with the compulsion to save the lives of millions of Indians, who are at risk of death due to serial waves hitting different parts of the country. Regulated sales in the private market should be used as a careful option to accelerate the vaccination campaign.
- The government should act as the assurer of quality and regulate the prices of all the vaccines in the country. Any person who is 18 years should be permitted to get any vaccine approved by India, at any designated place, and at a fixed price regulated by the government.
- This will scale up vaccination in the workplace settings across the country and for all others who can afford them. While this happens, the inequities in the health system, which systematically neglect the poor and the marginalised, should be looked into on priority.
- This can be done with the government as the sole provider of free vaccines and care for all Indians below the poverty line or who cannot afford to buy vaccines. Vaccinating people in impoverished communities is a mandatory social responsibility.

Make it simple

- Public health programmes should be as simple as possible to ensure scalability. Simple age-based criteria should be used to expand vaccination without restrictive criteria such as insisting on a medical certification of comorbidities.
- The preregistration and over-reliance on the CoWIN app through the entire process needs immediate remedy. Simple, offline, walk-in vaccination should be done with paper-based collection of details. This can be followed by uploading the details onto CoWIN. In addition to this, the authorities should use the opportunity to identify people with comorbidities. More than half the people in India with comorbidities are unaware of their condition.
- By opportunistic screening using simple digital measuring devices for blood pressure and blood glucose, the otherwise 'missed persons' from routine health-care provision can receive treatment for their non-communicable diseases, or NCDs. This is a non-negotiable service element that no government can afford to neglect.

A '3M' road map



- Microplanning is a process that is followed in India's vaccination programmes, that captures the population details by identifying and mapping them. It has details for workforce and logistic arrangement, and tags for people to clearly identify vaccination sites.
- The micro plans are the blueprints of the vaccination programme, which connect houses, migrant population and institutions such as old age homes and dementia care centres with vaccination teams.
- This is not just the fixed sites; the micro plans also provide details of mobile teams and outreach sessions to cover a population. The central government can work with the States in strengthening micro plans so that the vaccination pace picks up and is sustained.
- Mobilising identified persons can be done by the accredited social health activists (ASHAs) in rural areas and other volunteers in urban areas. There is one ASHA for 1,000 population in rural areas (<https://bit.ly/2ONOpk>). Based on the micro planning done, people should be mobilised to designated vaccination sites on a designated day. The strategy for mobilisation in urban areas can include innovative technological solutions. Role models can influence many peers to get vaccinated as well.
- Monitoring and mentoring of each step of the process are essential. The activities that need structured support include preparing micro plans, ensuring that all the necessary inter-sectoral coordination is done, and that the necessary logistical and transport supplies are provided. Task forces can coordinate these at the district and sub-district levels.
- By coordinating with the World Health Organization, India has an irrefutable track record of designing and updating micro plans, which have been used as templates in the global polio eradication programme. India's reputation as a world leader in vaccination programmes needs to be strengthened further by addressing these issues swiftly.
- We are making good progress in COVID-19 vaccination efforts, but it is not sufficient to achieve what is necessary. Doing the best that we are capable of is the only option. And, we can do it.

GS III

Water Conservation

(Source: [The Hindu Businessline](#))

Context: *World Water Day is celebrated every year on March 22. This year's theme is aptly titled 'Valuing water', as it has enormous and complex value for households, the economy and the environment. But the news coming from different parts of the country on the water front is not encouraging — roads are blocked by women holding empty buckets demanding drinking water; city dwellers are not getting regular water supply; conflicts between States over water sharing are on the rise; and farmers are protesting for water.*

Details:

- The NITI Aayog report on 'Composite Water Management Index (2018)' underlines that over 600 million Indians face high to extreme water stress and about two lakh people die every year due to inadequate access to safe water.
- According to a report of the World Bank, the amount of water currently available to an individual will fall below half of the 1,588 cubic meters per year by 2030. This will create unimaginable disaster for the majority people in India.
- Another World Bank report, 'High and Dry: Climate Change, Water and the Economy', warns that the countries facing severe water scarcity are likely to face a 6 per cent fall in their GDP by 2050s. In such circumstances, can we talk about water shortage only when it occurs?

Fast developments



- The average water levels in dams in June, just before the onset of monsoon, has been declining year after year.
- This is evident from the report of the Central Water Commission on the storage level of 91 major dams. There have been shocking reports that perennial rivers like the Ganga, Godavari and Krishna have dried up in many places in recent years.
- The Central Groundwater Board's estimates show that the groundwater table in most part of the country has been declining every year because of over-exploitation. If the groundwater continues to decline unabated, meeting the country's agricultural and drinking water requirements will become a big challenge; 85 per cent of rural water supply, 45 per cent of urban water supply and over 64 per cent of irrigation now rely on groundwater.
- Due to accumulation of sediments in the water storage area of major and medium irrigation dams that are currently in use, the total storage capacity has fallen significantly. This is clearly underlined in the report 'Compendium of Silting of Reservoirs in India', released by the Central Water Commission in 2020. Many unprecedented changes are continuously reducing the total water available for future use.
- Who can forget the year of 2016, when nearly 25 per cent of India's population living in 254 districts across 10 States suffered severe water shortages due to drought. Maharashtra and Gujarat in particular were badly hit.
- The government had to take unprecedented measures to save people from the grip of drought. From about 300 km, five lakh litres of drinking water was brought to Latur district of Maharashtra by trains to distribute to the people. But few remember those traumatic days. The demand for water is increasing at a faster rate due to changes in economic growth and the ever-increasing population.
- According to an estimate released by the Water Resources Ministry, a big demand-supply gap for water is going to happen by 2050. There is a compelling need to save water and increase its storage capacity. But without considering all this, farmers are increasingly allocating more area for cultivating water-intensive crops.
- For instance, despite facing severe water scarcity, sugarcane area in Maharashtra has increased from 4.44 lakh hectares to 11.62 lakh hectares between 1990-91 and 2018-19, an increase of 162 percent. Isn't the wrong pricing policy announced for different crops by the successive governments the major reason for this?
- As India's economy relies heavily on agriculture, we need to set right the issue of water scarcity before it inflicts irreparable damage.

Towards the future

- Water has become a costly commodity today because of the careless attitude of all the stakeholders. It is time every drop of rainwater is saved for the benefit of society at large. As predicted, climate change is already causing major changes in rainfall levels, with the quantum received in a day rising substantially in recent years.
- Such a pattern is responsible for the unprecedented floods in Mumbai in 2005, Chennai in 2015, and Hyderabad in 2020. This being the case, the dams that can store more water needs to be constructed.
- The Minor Irrigation Census of India reports that there are a total of about 6.42 lakh tanks, lakes and ponds in India. Due to the lack of proper maintenance, the water storage capacity of these small water bodies has fallen steeply.
- The Standing Committee on Water Resources (2012-13), in its 16th report, underlined that these waterbodies have been heavily encroached upon and even destroyed in many places. Immediate action must be take to remove such encroachments.
- Also, steps should be taken to remove silt deposited in the water storage areas of the dams. We cannot fight the monster of poverty with looming water scarcity. Water is increasingly becoming scarcer and if we overlook its value, irreparable damage will be caused to both humans and the environment.

Looking beyond privatisation

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *In the recent Budget session, the Union government announced its intent to privatise Public Sector Banks (PSBs). While improving efficiency has been cited as the reason for this move, it is not clear whether privatisation brings efficiency or reduces associated risks. Around the world, innumerable private banks have failed, thus challenging the notion that only private banks are efficient. Similarly, if private enterprises are the epitome of efficiency, why do private corporate entities have such large volumes of NPAs?*

Background

- Bank nationalisation ushered in a revolution for India's banking sector. Before nationalisation, barring the State Bank of India, most banks were privately owned and they largely benefited the rich and the powerful.
- The nationalisation of 14 private banks in 1969, followed by six more in 1980, transformed the banking sector, created jobs, extended credit to the agriculture sector and benefited the poor.
- Areas that had so far been neglected, including agriculture, employment-generating productive activities, poverty alleviation plans, rural development, health, education, exports, infrastructure, women's empowerment, small scale and medium industry, and small and micro industries, became priority sectors for these banks.

Equitable growth

- The move also helped in promoting more equitable regional growth, and this is evident from RBI data. There were only 1,833 bank branches in rural areas in the country in 1969, which increased to 33,004 by 1995 and continued to grow over the next decades.
- Banking services also reduced the dependence on moneylenders in rural regions. Nationalised banking improved the working conditions of employees in the banking sector, as the state ensured higher wages, security of services, and other fringe benefits.
- As an institution, PSBs are vehicles of the Indian economy's growth and development, and they have become the trustees of people's savings and confidence. The PSBs played a huge role in making the country self-sufficient by supporting the green, blue, and dairy revolutions. They have also contributed significantly to infrastructural development.
- Public sector banks in India are currently earning considerable operating profits, to the tune of ₹1,74,390 crore in 2019-20 and ₹1,49,603 crore in 2018-19. Why is the government then, instead of strengthening PSBs, starving them of the required capital and human resources through disinvestment and the proposed privatisation?
- Placing such a huge network of bank branches and the infrastructure and assets in the hands of private enterprises or corporates may turn out to be an irrational move. It could lead to denial of convenient and economical banking services to the common man; the risks of monopoly and cartelisation may only complicate the issue.

Stringent laws

- Furthermore, in the context of privatisation and efficiency, it is unfair to blame PSBs alone for the alarming rise of NPAs. On the contrary, stringent measures are required to recover large corporate stressed assets, which is a key concern for the entire banking sector. This must include strong recovery laws and taking criminal action against wilful defaulters.
- So far, the government has not exhibited a firm willingness to implement these measures. Wilful default by large corporate borrowers and subsequent recovery haircuts, imposed through the ill-conceived Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, has resulted in a heap of write-offs, putting a big dent on the balance sheets of PSBs. This has not only affected the profitability of the banks, but has also become an excuse to allege inefficiency.



- There is an urgent and imperative need to bring in a suitable statutory framework to consider wilful defaults on bank loans a “criminal offence”. A system to examine top executives of PSBs across the country will also help in improving accountability. But privatisation of PSBs is not a definitive panacea for the problems of the banking sector in India.

GS IV

Responsible AI — the need for ethical guard rails

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *Surrounded as we are by the vestiges of our analogue world, to many of us, these wonderings may seem decades from fruition. But artificial intelligence (AI), the engine of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, is already very much with us.*

AI’s exponential growth

- It is embedded in the recommendations we get on our favourite streaming or shopping site; in GPS mapping technology; in the predictive text that completes our sentences when we try to send an email or complete a web search.
- It promises to be even more transformative than the harnessing of electricity. And the more we use AI, the more data we generate, the smarter it gets. In just the last decade, AI has evolved with unprecedented velocity — from beating human champions at Jeopardy! in 2011, to vanquishing the world’s number one player of Go, to decoding proteins last year.
- Automation, big data and algorithms will continue to sweep into new corners of our lives until we no longer remember how things were “before”.
- Just as electricity allowed us to tame time, enabling us to radically alter virtually every aspect of existence, AI can leapfrog us toward eradicating hunger, poverty and disease — opening up new and hitherto unimaginable pathways for climate change mitigation, education and scientific discovery.

For better or for worse

- Already, AI has helped increase crop yields, raised business productivity, improved access to credit and made cancer detection faster and more precise. It could contribute more than \$15 trillion to the world economy by 2030, adding 14% to global GDP. Google has identified over 2,600 use cases of “AI for good” worldwide.
- A study published in Nature reviewing the impact of AI on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) finds that AI may act as an enabler on 134 — or 79% — of all SDG targets. We are on the cusp of unprecedented technological breakthroughs that promise to positively transform our world in ways deeper and more profound than anything that has come before.
- Yet, the study in Nature also finds that AI can actively hinder 59 — or 35% — of SDG targets. For starters, AI requires massive computational capacity, which means more power-hungry data centres — and a big carbon footprint .
- Then, AI could compound digital exclusion. Robotics and AI companies are building intelligent machines that perform tasks typically carried out by low-income workers: self-service kiosks to replace cashiers, fruit-picking robots to replace field workers, etc.; but the day is not far when many desk jobs will also be edged out by AI, such as accountants, financial traders and middle managers.



- Without clear policies on reskilling workers, the promise of new opportunities will in fact create serious new inequalities.
- Investment is likely to shift to countries where AI-related work is already established, widening gaps among and within countries. Together, Big Tech's big four — Alphabet/Google, Amazon, Apple and Facebook — are worth a staggering \$5 trillion, more than the GDPs of just about every nation on earth. In 2020, when the world was reeling from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, they added more than \$2 trillion to their value.
- The fact is, just as AI has the potential to improve billions of lives, it can also replicate and exacerbate existing problems, and create new ones.
- Consider, for instance, the documented examples of AI facial recognition and surveillance technology discriminating against people of colour and minorities.
- Or how an AI-enhanced recruitment engine, based on existing workforce profiles, taught itself that male candidates were preferable to female.

Privacy worries

- AI also presents serious data privacy concerns. The algorithm's never-ending quest for data has led to our digital footprints being harvested and sold without our knowledge or informed consent.
- We are constantly being profiled in service of customisation, putting us into echo chambers of like-mindedness, diminishing exposure to varied viewpoints and eroding common ground. Today, it is no exaggeration to say that with all the discrete bytes of information floating about us online, the algorithms know us better than we know ourselves.
- They can nudge our behaviour without our noticing. Our level of addiction to our devices, the inability to resist looking at our phones, and the chilling case of Cambridge Analytica — in which such algorithms and big data were used to alter voting decisions — should serve as a potent warning of the individual and societal concerns resulting from current AI business models.
- In a world where the algorithm is king, it behoves us to remember that it is still humans — with all our biases and prejudices, conscious and unconscious — who are responsible for it.
- We shape the algorithms and it is our data they operate on. Remember that in 2016, it took less than a day for Microsoft's Twitter chatbot, christened "Tay", to start spewing egregious racist content, based on the material it encountered.

Ensuring our humane future

- How then do we ensure that AI applications are as unbiased, equitable, transparent, civil and inclusive as possible? How do we ensure that potential harm is mitigated, particularly for the most vulnerable, including for children? Without ethical guard rails, AI will widen social and economic schisms, amplifying any innate biases at an irreversible scale and rate and lead to discriminatory outcomes.
- It is neither enough nor is it fair to expect AI tech companies to solve all these challenges through self-regulation. First, they are not alone in developing and deploying AI; governments also do so.
- Second, only a "whole of society" approach to AI governance will enable us to develop broad-based ethical principles, cultures and codes of conduct, to ensure the needed harm-mitigating measures, reviews and audits during design, development and deployment phases, and to inculcate the transparency, accountability, inclusion and societal trust for AI to flourish and bring about the extraordinary breakthroughs it promises.
- Given the global reach of AI, such a "whole of society" approach must rest on a "whole of world" approach. The UN Secretary-General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation is a good starting point: it lays out the need for multi-stakeholder efforts on global cooperation so AI is used in a manner that is "trustworthy, human rights-based, safe and sustainable, and promotes peace".
- And UNESCO has developed a global, comprehensive standard-setting draft Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence to Member States for deliberation and adoption.
- Many countries, including India, are cognisant of the opportunities and the risks, and are striving to strike the right balance between AI promotion and AI governance — both for the greater public good. NITI Aayog's Responsible AI for All strategy, the culmination of a year-long consultative process, is a

case in point. It recognises that our digital future cannot be optimised for good without multi-stakeholder governance structures that ensure the dividends are fair, inclusive, and just.

- Agreeing on common guiding principles is an important first step, but it is not the most challenging part. It is in the application of the principles that the rubber hits the road. It is where principles meet reality that the ethical issues and conundrums arise in practice, and for which we must be prepared for deep, difficult, multi-stakeholder ethical reflection, analyses and resolve.
- Only then will AI provide humanity its full promise. Until then, AI (and the humans who created it) will embody the myth of Prometheus: the Titan who shared the fire of the gods with mortals, and the trickster whose defiance of Zeus led to Pandora opening her box.



Current Affairs Quiz

1. Which of the following statements is/are correct with reference to Lingaraja Temple?

1. It is a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.
2. It is built in limestone and is a classic example of the Kalinga style of architecture.

Select the correct answer code:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans. a)

The Lingaraja Temple is in the Kalinga style but made of red stone, not limestone.

2. Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to the National Social Assistance Programme?

1. The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) is a centrally sponsored scheme that provides financial assistance to the elderly, widows and persons with disabilities in the form of social pensions.
2. It represents a significant step towards the fulfillment of the DPSP under Article 41 of the Constitution.
3. It is administered by the Ministry of Rural Development.

Select the correct answer code:

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer : d

All statements are correct

3. Consider the following statements:

1. The Election Commission of India (ECI) conducts elections to both the State Legislative Assemblies and Legislative Councils.
2. The appointment and removal of the Chief Election Commissioner shall be made by the President.
3. The right to vote is a constitutional right.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. All of the above

Answer : c

The removal of the CEC is not by the President.

4. Which of the following is/are correct about the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute?

- 1. It is a tropical marine fisheries research institute headquartered in Chennai.
- 2. It is part of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) family.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : b

The Central Marine Fisheries Research is headquartered in Kochi, Kerala.

5. The Polavaram Project is in which state?

- a. Telangana
- b. Andhra Pradesh
- c. Odisha
- d. None of the above

Answer : b

6. Which of the following is/are correct about the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act?

- 1. The Act assigns absolute power to the central government, by way of which if the Centre deems an activity as unlawful then it may, by way of an Official Gazette, declare it so.
- 2. Under UAPA, both Indian and foreign nationals can be charged.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : c

- Both statements are correct

7. Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PM-JAY)?

1. PM-JAY is being used significantly for high frequency, low cost care such as dialysis and continued to be utilised without disruption even during the Covid pandemic and the lockdown.
2. General medicine – the overwhelmingly major clinical specialty accounted for over half the claims – exhibited a V-shaped recovery after falling during the lockdown and reached pre-Covid-19 levels in December 2020.

Select the correct answer code:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans. c

Both statements are correct

8. Consider the following statements with respect to Additional Tier-1 (AT1) Bonds:

1. It is a government secured bond with short term tenure with a fixed maturity date.
2. These bonds are typically used by banks to bolster their core or tier-1 capital.

Which of above statements is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : b

. AT1 Bonds stand for additional tier-1 bonds, these are unsecured bonds which have perpetual tenure, and these bonds have no maturity date.

9. Maitri Setu recently seen in news will help in enhancing trade and people to people movement between India and-

- a) Nepal
- b) Bangladesh
- c) Sri lanka
- d) Bhutan

Answer : b

10. Consider the following pairs:

1. Kurd: Bangladesh

2. Madhesi: Nepal
3. Rohingya: Myanmar

Which of the pairs of community and country given above is/are correctly matched?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans. b)

Kurds are associated with West Asia and not Bangladesh.

11. Consider the following pairs with respect to the 7 Zonal Cultural Centres, recently set up by Government of India:

Cultural Zone – **Headquarters**

1. North Zone Cultural Centre – Patiala
2. South Zone Cultural Centre – Chennai
3. Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre – Kolkata
4. North East Zone Cultural Centre – Dispur

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- a. 1 and 3 only
- b. 1 and 4 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 2, 3 and 4 only

Answer : a

1. Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre - Kolkata
2. North Central Zone Cultural Centre - Allahabad
3. North east Zone Cultural centre - Dimapur
4. North Zone Cultural centre - Patiala
5. South Central Zone Cultural Centre - Nagpur
6. South Zone Cultural Centre - Thanjavur
7. West Zone Cultural Centre - Udaipur

12. Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to Raman thermometry?

1. It uses Raman scattering phenomena to determine the local temperature in microelectronics systems.
2. Power transmission cable can be monitored by using this method on the fibre optic cable.

Select the correct answer code:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : c

13. Consider the following statements with respect to Project RE-HAB:

1. It aims to thwart elephant attacks in human habitations using honey bees.
2. It is launched by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : a

It is launched by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)

14. Which of the following services generally use encryption to secure data transmission?

1. Payment gateways
2. Messaging services
3. Wireless microphones and Bluetooth devices

Select the correct answer code:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) All of the above

Ans. d)

All of the above options are correct.

15. Consider the following statements with respect to Delhi:

1. Delhi's current status as a Union Territory with a Legislative Assembly was included in the original Constitution.
2. The status, powers and functions of the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi is similar to that of a Governor of a State.
3. The Lieutenant Governor of Delhi have the power to refer any matter, over which there is a disagreement with the elected government, to the President.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. All of the above

Answer : b

Delhi's current status as a Union Territory with a Legislative Assembly is an outcome of the 69th Amendment Act through which Articles 239AA and 239BB were introduced in the Constitution.

The status of the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi is not that of a Governor of a State, rather he remains an Administrator, in a limited sense, working with the designation of Lieutenant Governor.

16. Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020?

1. The Bill seeks to amend the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 197
2. According to the bill, abortion requires the opinion of one doctor if it is done within 12 weeks of conception, and two doctors if it is done between 12 and 20 weeks.
3. Under the bill, Pregnancy cannot be terminated at any circumstances after 24 weeks.

Select the correct answer code:

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 2 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer : a

The Bill allows abortion to be done on the advice of one doctor up to 20 weeks, and two doctors in the case of certain categories of women between 20 and 24 weeks.

For a pregnancy to be terminated after 24 weeks in case of substantial foetal abnormalities, the opinion of the State-level medical board is essential.

17. Consider the following statements with respect to the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021:

1. The Bill provides that the term government referred to in any law made by the Legislative Assembly will imply Lieutenant Governor (LG).
2. The Bill prohibits the Legislative Assembly from making any rule to enable itself to consider the matters of day-to-day administration of the NCT of Delhi.
3. The bill states that the Lieutenant Governor's opinion must be obtained on every matters, before taking any executive action on the decisions of the Minister/ Council of Ministers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 3 only
- b. 1 and 2 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer : b

The Bill adds that on certain matters, as specified by the LG, his opinion must be obtained before taking any executive action on the decisions of the Minister/ Council of Ministers.

18. Consider the following statements with respect to Special Purpose Acquisition Companies (SPACs):

1. It raise money with the intention to acquire an existing company from the funds raised in the public offer.
2. The investors of SPACs contribute capital without any prior knowledge of how the funds will be used.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : c

Both the statements are correct

19. Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to Framework for Water quality Testing & Monitoring?

1. It mandates to setup network of Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) in every State, district and block.
2. Under this framework water quality will be tested only based on two parameters namely pH value and total dissolved solids.

Select the correct answer code:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : a

The basic water quality parameters prescribed under the guidelines are pH value, Total Dissolved Solids, Turbidity, Chloride, fluoride, nitrate, total alkalinity, total hardness, sulphate, iron, total arsenic, total coliform bacteria, e.coli or thermo-tolerant coliform bacteria.

20. Which of the following statements regarding AT1 bonds (additional tier-1 bonds) is/are correct?

1. These are unsecured bonds which have a fixed tenure.
2. These bonds are typically used by banks to bolster their core or tier-1 capital.
3. Mutual funds (MFs) are among the largest investors in these bonds.

Select the correct answer code:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 1 and 3 only
- c) 2 and 3 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans. c)

These are **unsecured bonds which have perpetual tenure.**

