

PRAYAS4IAS

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Prelims

NATIONAL

Deshbhakti Curriculum

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *On the eve of the 75th Independence Day, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal gave his nod for the roll-out of the 'Deshbhakti Curriculum', which he said would instil patriotism in young minds.*

Details:

- The focus of the curriculum is to impart values, competencies and behaviours to students so they are equipped to “participate effectively in a culture of democracy”, the government stated.
- The framework has three primary goals: instilling a feeling of pride for the country, building awareness of responsibilities towards the country; and commitment to make a sacrifice for the country.
- The Deshbhakti Curriculum Committee submitted the framework after detailed deliberations and extensive consultation over the last two years.
- The curriculum also “aims to develop a deep sense of respect towards constitutional values and seeks to bridge the gap between values and action”.
- The implementation methodology will be child-centric via a five-stage process: discussion in class initiated by the teacher; classroom discussion among students facilitated by teacher; classroom activities usually as group work; homework to engage with the family; and community and self-reflection.

Tribunal Reforms Bill

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *The Supreme Court recently expressed its discontentment over the functioning of tribunals in the country, given that several of these important quasi-judicial bodies are understaffed. In a hearing on August 6, a Bench led by Chief Justice of India N V Ramana asked the government if it intends to shut down tribunals that have several key vacant posts. This came days after Lok Sabha passed a Bill to dissolve at least eight tribunals.*

What is the Bill about?

- The Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2021 replaces a similar Ordinance promulgated in April 2021 that sought to dissolve eight tribunals that functioned as appellate bodies to hear disputes under various statutes, and transferred their functions to existing judicial forums such as a civil court or a High Court.
- The Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and was passed on August 3 amid protests by the Opposition over the Pegasus issue.
- The Bill states that the Chairpersons and Members of the tribunal being abolished shall cease to hold office, and they will be entitled to claim compensation equivalent to three months' pay and allowances for their premature termination.
- It also proposes changes in the process of appointment of certain other tribunals.



EIGHT TRIBUNALS DISSOLVED VIA BILL

Act under which Tribunal was setup	Abolished tribunal	Where disputes are heard after abolition
The Cinematograph Act, 1952	Film Certification Appellate Tribunal	High Court
The Trade Marks Act, 1999	Intellectual Property Appellate Board	High Court
The Copyright Act, 1957	Intellectual Property Appellate Board	Commercial Division of High Court
The Customs Act, 1962	Customs, Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal	High Court
The Patents Act, 1970	Intellectual Property Appellate Board	High Court
The Airports Authority of India Act, 1994	Airports Appellate Tribunal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Central government (disposal of properties on airport premises left by unauthorised occupants) ■ High Court (appeals against eviction orders)
The Control of National Highways (Land & Traffic) Act, 2002	The National Highways Tribunal	Civil Court
The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999	Intellectual Property Appellate Board	High Court

What are these changes?

- While the Bill provides for uniform pay and rules for the search and selection committees across tribunals, it also provides for removal of tribunal members.
- It states that the central government shall, on the recommendation of the Search-cum-Selection Committee, remove from office any Chairperson or a Member, who—
 - (a) has been adjudged as an insolvent; or
 - (b) has been convicted of an offence which involves moral turpitude; or
 - (c) has become physically or mentally incapable of acting as such Chairperson or Member; or
 - (d) has acquired such financial or other interest as is likely to affect prejudicially his functions as such Chairperson or Member; or
 - (e) has so abused his position as to render his continuance in office prejudicial to the public interest.
- Chairpersons and judicial members of tribunals are former judges of High Courts and the Supreme Court.
- While the move brings greater accountability on the functioning of the tribunals, it also raises questions on the independence of these judicial bodies.



- In the Search-cum-Selection Committee for state tribunals, the Bill brings in the Chief Secretary of the state and the Chairman of the Public Service Commission of the concerned state who will have a vote and Secretary or Principal Secretary of the state's General Administrative Department with no voting right.
- This gives the government a foot in the door in the process. The Chief Justice of the High Court, who would head the committee, will not have a casting vote.

What happens to cases pending before the tribunals dissolved?

- These cases will be transferred to High Courts or commercial civil courts immediately. Legal experts have been divided on the efficacy of the government's move.
- While on the one hand, the cases might get a faster hearing and disposal if taken to High Courts, experts fear that the lack of specialisation in regular courts could be detrimental to the decision-making process.
- For example, the FCAT exclusively heard decisions appealing against decisions of the censor board, which requires expertise in art and cinema.

PM Gati Shakti Master Plan

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: On India's 75th Independence Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the Centre will launch 'PM Gati Shakti Master Plan', a Rs. 100 lakh-crore project for developing 'holistic infrastructure'.

What is Gati Shakti Master Plan?

- In his speech, PM Modi pegged the project as a source of employment opportunities for the youth in future.
- PM Modi said that the Gati Shakti plan will help raise the global profile of local manufacturers and help them compete with their counterparts worldwide.
- It also raises possibilities of new future economic zones.
- The prime minister also said that India needs to increase both manufacturing and exports.
- More details and the launch date of the project are awaited.

Vriksharopan Abhiyan

(Source: [PIB](#))

Context: Vriksharopan Abhiyan 2021 would be launched on 19 August as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations.

About Vriksharopan Abhiyan:

- It is a massive plantation drive organised by NLC India Ltd (NLCIL) – a GOI Navaratna enterprise engaged in lignite production and power generation.
- The drive was conducted in 2020 where 1,15,000 saplings were planted at 14 project locations of NLCIL across the country.



- As per the NLCIL, the plantation drive was aimed at maximising the green cover through ecological reclamation of mined-out areas and overburden dumps, plantation in and around mines and avenue plantation.

India's flag code

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The Indian flag was adopted in its present form during a meeting of the Constituent Assembly held on July 22, 1947.*

Details:

- The first national flag, which consisted of three horizontal stripes of red, yellow and green, is said to have been hoisted on August 7, 1906, at the Parsee Bagan Square, near Lower Circular Road, in Calcutta (now Kolkata).
- Later, in 1921, freedom fighter Pingali Venkayya met Mahatma Gandhi and proposed a basic design of the flag, consisting of two red and green bands.
- After undergoing several changes, the Tricolour was adopted as our national flag at a Congress Committee meeting in Karachi in 1931.

What were the early rules governing the display of the Tricolour?

- The earliest rules for the display of the national flag were originally governed by the provisions of The Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950 and The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.
- The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 prohibits the desecration of or insult to the country's national symbols, including the national flag, the Constitution, the national anthem and the Indian map.
- The Section 2 of the Act says, "Whoever in any public place or in any other place within public view burns, mutilates, defaces, defiles, disfigures, destroys, tramples upon or [otherwise shows disrespect to or brings] into contempt (whether by words, either spoken or written, or by acts) the Indian National Flag or the Constitution of India or any part thereof, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both."
- Among the other acts which are considered to be of disrespect to the national flag are dipping the Tricolour in salute to any person or thing, waving it at half-mast except on specific occasions, or using it as a drapery in any form whatsoever, except in state funerals or for the last rites of armed forces or other paramilitary forces.
- Further, putting any kind of inscription upon the flag, using it to cover a statue, a monument or platform, and embroidering or printing it on cushions, handkerchiefs, napkins or any dress material is also considered disrespect to the Tricolour, according to the Act.
- Moreover, the flag should not be allowed to touch the ground or trail in water, or be put up in an inverted manner.
- In 2002, the Flag Code of India came into effect which allowed the unrestricted display of the Tricolour as long as the honour and dignity of the flag were being respected.
- The flag code did not replace the pre-existing rules governing the correct display of the flag; it was, however, an effort to bring together all the previous laws, conventions and practices.

What are the restrictions on the display of the Tricolour according to the flag code?



- The Flag Code of 2002 is divided into three parts — a general description of the tricolour, rules on display of the flag by public and private bodies and educational institutions, and rules for display of the flag by governments and government bodies.
- It states that there will be no restriction on the display of the flag by public and private bodies and educational institutions except to the extent as laid down in the Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950 and the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.
- It mentions that the tricolour cannot be used for commercial purposes, and cannot be dipped in salute to any person or thing.
- It further states that whenever the flag is displayed, it should be distinctly placed and should “occupy the position of honour”. Among the things which are not allowed is putting up a damaged or dishevelled flag, flying the tricolour from a single masthead simultaneously with other flags, and no other object, including flowers or garlands, or flag should be placed on the same height beside the tricolour or above it.
- Moreover, the flag should not be used as a festoon, or for any kind of decoration purposes. Any tricolour which is damaged should be destroyed in private, “preferably by burning or by any other method consistent with the dignity of the Flag”.
- Also, any paper flags, which are used on occasions of national and cultural occasions or sporting events, should not be casually discarded and must be disposed of in private.
- For official display, only flags that conform to the specifications as laid down by the Bureau of Indian Standards and bearing their mark can be used.

What are the standard dimensions of the flag?

- The flag code states that the tricolour can be of nine standard dimensions — 6300 x 4200, 3600 x 2400, 2700 x 1800, 1800 x 1200, 1350 x 900, 900 x 600, 450 x 300, 225 x 150 and 150 x 100 (all sizes in mm).
- It further adds that flags of 450 x 300 mm size should be used on VVIP flights, 225 x 150 mm on cars and all table flags should be 150 x 100 mm in size.
- Moreover, the tricolour should be rectangular in shape and the length-to-width ratio should always be 3:2.
- The national flag should always be made of hand-spun and hand-woven wool or cotton or silk khadi bunting, it further adds.

What are the current rules for the correct display of the flag?

- The flag code mandates that the tricolour should always be distinctly placed and should “occupy the position of honour”. The flag should always be hoisted briskly and lowered slowly and ceremoniously.
- When a flag is displayed from a staff projecting horizontally from a window sill, balcony or front of a building, the saffron band should be at the farther end of the staff.
- When displayed on a speaker’s platform, the flag should be placed on the speaker’s right as s/he faces the audience or flat against the wall above and behind the speaker. When displayed on a car, the flag should be flown from a staff fixed either in the middle of the bonnet or the front right of the car.
- When carried in a parade, the flag should either be in the front of the centre of the line or towards the right of the file that is marching forward.
- The flag code further states that when the Tricolour is passing by in a parade, or during a ceremony of hoisting or lowering of the flag, the persons present should stand at attention and salute the flag. Dignitaries should remove their headgears before saluting the flag.
- In the event of the death of heads of states, dignitaries or during state funerals, the tricolour can be flown at half-mast during the period of mourning.
- However, if the period of mourning coincides with events of national importance, such as Independence Day, Republic Day, etc., the tricolour should not be flown at half-mast anywhere except over the building in which the body of the deceased is lying.

National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources

(Source: [PIB](#))

Context: Union Agriculture Minister inaugurated the world's second-largest refurbished gene bank at the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources.

Details:

- The NBPGR was established in 1976 as the National Bureau of Plant Introduction and it acquired its present name a year later.
- Its origins, however, can be traced back to the late 1940s as the ICAR Scheme for 'plant introduction'.
- NBPGR is an institute under the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR).
- It is headquartered in New Delhi with 10 Regional Stations located in different phyto-geographical zones of the country.
- Its mandate is to act as the nodal institute at national level for acquisition, management and genomics based profiling of indigenous and exotic plant genetic resources (PGR) for food and agriculture and to carry out related research and human resources development for sustainable growth of agriculture.

Rice Fortification

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: In his Independence Day speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the **fortification of rice** distributed under various government schemes, including the public distribution system (PDS) and midday meals in schools, by 2024.

What is rice fortification?

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) defines fortification as “deliberately increasing the content of essential micronutrients in a food so as to improve the nutritional quality of food and to provide public health benefit with minimal risk to health”.
- In other words, rice fortification is a process of adding micronutrients to regular rice. The micronutrients are added keeping in mind dietary requirements.
- Various technologies are available for rice fortification, such as coating and dusting. For rice fortification in India, 'extrusion' is considered to be the best technology. This involves the production of fortified rice kernels (FRKs) from a mixture using an extruder machine.
- The fortified rice kernels are then blended with regular rice to produce fortified rice.

How does the extrusion technology to produce FRK work?

- In extrusion technology, dry rice flour is mixed with a premix of micronutrients, and water is added to this mixture.
- This mixture then goes into a twin-screw extruder with heating zones, which produces kernels similar in shape and size to rice. These kernels are dried, cooled and packaged for use. FRK has a shelf life of at least 12 months.
- As per guidelines issued by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, the shape and size of the fortified rice kernel should “resemble the normal milled rice as closely as possible”.

- According to the guidelines, the length and breadth of the grain should be 5 mm and 2.2 mm respectively.

Why is rice fortification needed?

- India has very high levels of malnutrition among women and children. According to the Food Ministry, every second woman in the country is anaemic and every third child is stunted.
- India ranks 94 out of 107 countries on the Global Hunger Index (GHI), which puts it in the ‘serious hunger’ category.
- Fortification of food is considered to be one of the most suitable methods to combat malnutrition.
- Rice is one of India’s staple foods, consumed by about two-thirds of the population.
- Per capita rice consumption in India is 6.8 kg per month. Therefore, fortifying rice with micronutrients is an option to supplement the diet of the poor.

What are the standards for fortification?

- Under the Ministry’s guidelines, 10 g of FRK must be blended with 1 kg of regular rice.
- According to FSSAI norms, 1 kg of fortified rice will contain the following: iron (28 mg-42.5 mg), folic acid (75-125 microgram), and vitamin B-12 (0.75-1.25 microgram).
- Rice may also be fortified with zinc (10 mg-15 mg), vitamin A (500-750 microgram RE), vitamin B-1 (1 mg-1.5 mg), vitamin B-2 (1.25 mg-1.75 mg), vitamin B-3 (12.5 mg-20 mg) and vitamin B-6 (1.5 mg-2.5 mg) per kg.
- The cooking of fortified rice does not require any special procedure. The rice needs to be cleaned and washed in the normal way before cooking.
- After cooking, fortified rice retains the same physical properties and micronutrient levels as it had before cooking.

Operation Blue Freedom

(Source: [PIB](#))

Context: Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment flagged off ‘Operation Blue Freedom’ to create a World Record at Siachen Glacier.

Details:

- Operation Blue Freedom is a pioneering expedition under which a team of people with disabilities from across the country undertook an expedition to Siachen Glacier to create a new World Record for the largest team of people with disabilities to reach the world’s highest battlefield.
- The team of people with disabilities, trained by ‘Team CLAW’, a team of Armed Forces veterans, undertook this expedition till Kumar Post (Siachen Glacier) to create the new world record.
 - Kumar post is located at an altitude of about 15,632 feet.
- Operation Blue Freedom was founded by Team CLAW in 2019 as a movement to express the spirit and ability of people with disabilities.
- Objectives of Operation Blue Freedom:
 - To evolve the perception of society towards who they (disabled people) are and what they are capable of.
 - To secure their right to dignity.
 - To exercise their ability to contribute value and inspire freedom.
- Team CLAW is involved in a global mission to shatter the common perception of pity, charity and inability associated with people with disabilities and recreate it to one of dignity, freedom and ability.

- Team C.L.A.W is in the process of setting up centres across the globe where-in Special Forces Veterans and People with Disabilities are merging in action for creating a better life experience, for not only persons with disabilities but the non-disabled as well.
- They teach and train disabled people life skills and also design and implement sustainable large-scale employment solutions.

The Malabar rebellion of 1921

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *Former BJP national general secretary Ram Madhav said the Moplah rebellion of 1921 was one of the first manifestations of the Taliban mindset in India, and claimed the LDF in Kerala was celebrating it as a communist revolution.*

What is the Malabar rebellion of 1921?

- August 20, marks the centenary of the Malabar rebellion, which is also known as the Moplah (Muslim) riots. It had been an uprising of Muslim tenants against British rulers and local Hindu landlords.
- The uprising, which began on August 20, 1921, went on for several months marked by many bouts of bloodstained events. Some historical accounts state the uprising led to the loss of around 10,000 lives, including 2,339 rebels.
- It has often been perceived as one of the first nationalist uprisings in southern India. It has even been described as a peasant revolt. In fact, in 1971, the then Kerala government had included the participants of the rebellion in the category of freedom fighters.
- The incidents of the uprising took place in regions which are currently under the Malappuram district in north Kerala.

Exercise Konkan 2021

(Source: [PIB](#))

Context: *Recently, on 16th August 2021 INS Tabar and HMS Westminster undertook a naval exercise at the English Channel.*

Details:

- The naval exercise between India and United Kingdom marked the presence of Falcon Electronic Warfare Aircraft along with integral helicopters on the two ships.
- It engaged in mock drills such as anti-submarine procedures, firing drill, combat preparedness, combat maneuvering and maritime picture compilation.
- The exercise was in addition to other similar engagements between India-UK at the harbor earlier.
- It was part of the four-day tour of Indian Navy to Portsmouth.
- The exercise is expected to have consolidate interoperability, and strengthen overall naval ties between India-UK.
- The impact of such naval exercises will provide a secure and credible environment in the region along with strengthening the field capabilities of both countries.

Afghanistan's karez system & south India's surangam system

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

Context: *The karez system in Afghanistan, a legacy of its Persian cultural moorings, has suffered extensive damage in 43 years of war and stares at an uncertain future under the Taliban's second regime. But hundreds of miles to the south, a similar system in southern India is thriving.*

What is surangam?

- The *surangam* or *suranga* is usually found in northern Kerala and southern Karnataka.
- Kasargod district of northern Malabar has a special water harvesting structure called *surangam*. This is basically a tunnel dug through a laterite hillock from the periphery of which water and moisture seeps out.
- *Surangams* are similar to *qanats* which once existed in Mesopotamia and Babylon around 700 Before Common Era. By 714 BCE, this technology had spread to Egypt, Persia and India.
- *Surangams* resemble *karez* both in structure and spread. This system has been very effectively used for domestic and agriculture purposes in dry areas of northern Malabar.
- Interestingly, one survey found that more than half of these structures were constructed between 1977 and 1997.
- However, newer research in the last few years has disputed an Afghan / Persian origin of the *surangam*, with the *karez* as its inspiration
- Thus, in conclusion whilst there is no definitive evidence from either natural or human archives for the origin of *suranga* irrigation we believe there is sufficient evidence to reframe the discourse of genesis around much more recent times 1900–1940 CE and divorce the idea that there has been any direct influence from the *qanat* system from either Persia or the Arab peninsula or from the northern interior of India until such evidence can be found.
- There were a number of folk stories as to how the system came about.
 - One was that when the Deccan Sultanates (Bijapur, Golconda, Ahmadnagar, Bidar and Berar) were taken over by the Mughal and Maratha Empires, the artisans and engineers there might have migrated south and may have constructed these *surangams* after being patronised by the Wodeyar kingdom of Mysuru.
 - Northern Kerala and southern Karnataka were under Tipu Sultan for some time, Kutty said. His father, Hyder Ali had deposed the Wodeyar Maharaja and established the Sultanate of Mysuru.
 - During Tipu's reign, there might have been knowledge transfer either through migrants from the Deccan or because of Mangaluru port-based trade relations with Persia.
 - For people in the region, especially the Karhada Brahmin community, the system was a cultural heritage. This was helping it to survive.

Largest Floating Solar PV Project

(Source: [PIB](#))

Context: *The National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Ltd., has commissioned the largest Floating Solar PV Project (25MW) on the reservoir of its Simhadri thermal station in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.*

Details:

- It has been functionalized as part of the Flexibilization Scheme, launched by the Government in 2018.
- The total floating installation is spread over 75 acres in area with energy from one lakh solar PV module.
- Once operational it is expected to minimize 46,000 tons of CO₂ annually. It is also believed to conserve 1,364 million liters of water per annum.
- Along with the solar PV model, NTPC is also planning on setting up a hydrogen-based micro-grid system on a pilot basis, at Simhadri.
- As part of NTPC's target to install 60 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2032; NTPC has powered a total of 71 Power Stations including 29 Renewable energy projects.
- NTPC is India's first energy company to declare its energy compact goals as part of the UN High-Level Dialogue on Energy (HLDE).
- The intent of NTPC is to provide affordable, uninterrupted clean energy from its Power stations.

INTERNATIONAL

Congressional Gold Medal

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: Ahead of India's 75th Independence Day, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney from New York has reintroduced a legislation in the US House of Representatives to posthumously award the Congressional Gold Medal to Mahatma Gandhi for his contributions made through his methods of non-violence. If given the award, Gandhi would become the first Indian to receive the Congressional Gold Medal, which is the highest civilian award in the US and has been awarded to the 1980 US summer Olympics team, Robert F. Kennedy, Nelson Mandela and George Washington among many others.

What is the Congressional Gold Medal?

- The History, Arts and Archives section of the US House of Representatives notes that since the American revolution, Congress has commissioned gold medals as its highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions.
- The first recipients of the medal were participants of the American Revolution, the War of 1812 and the Mexican War, Congress subsequently broadened the scope of the medal to include actors, authors, entertainers, musicians, explorers, athletes, humanitarians and foreign recipients among pioneers in some other fields.
- Most recently, the medal was awarded to the US Capitol Police and those who protected the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, the day of the siege.
- It is necessary that all Congressional Gold Medal legislations be co-sponsored by at least two-thirds of the Members of the House. As of now, there is no statutory limit on the number of such medals that can be awarded during a given year, even though such legislation has been introduced previously.

Shariah law

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: The Taliban have pledged that women in Afghanistan will have rights "within the bounds of Islamic law," or Shariah, under their newly established rule. But it is not clear what that will mean.

What is Shariah?

- Shariah is based on the Quran, stories of the Prophet Muhammad's life and the rulings of religious scholars, forming the moral and legal framework of Islam. The Quran details a path to a moral life, but not a specific set of laws.
- One interpretation of Shariah could afford women extensive rights, while another could leave women with few. Critics have said that some of the Taliban restrictions on women under the guise of Islamic law actually went beyond the bounds of Shariah.
- The interpretations of Shariah are a matter of debate across the Muslim world, and all groups and governments that base their legal systems on Shariah have done so differently.
- When the Taliban say they are instituting Shariah law, that does not mean they are doing so in ways that Islamic scholars or other Islamic authorities would agree with.

What does Shariah prescribe?

- Shariah lists some specific crimes, such as theft and adultery, and punishments if accusations meet a standard of proof. It also offers moral and spiritual guidance, such as when and how to pray, or how to marry and divorce.
- It does not forbid women to leave home without a male escort or bar them from working in most jobs.

How have the Taliban previously interpreted Shariah?

- When the Taliban controlled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, they banned television and most musical instruments. They established a department for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice based on a Saudi model.
- Restrictions on behavior, dress and movement were enforced by morality police officers, who drove around in pickup trucks, publicly humiliating and whipping women who did not adhere to their rules.
- In 1996, a woman in Kabul, Afghanistan, had the end of her thumb cut off for wearing nail polish, according to Amnesty International.
- Women accused of adultery were stoned to death.

Nuclear fusion and the recent breakthrough

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California announced that an experiment carried out in its National Ignition Facility has made a breakthrough in nuclear fusion research. In the experiment, lasers were used to heat a small target or fuel pellets. These pellets containing deuterium and tritium fused and produced more energy. The team noted that they were able to achieve a yield of more than 1.3 megajoules.*

What exactly is nuclear fusion?

- Nuclear fusion is defined as the combining of several small nuclei into one large nucleus with the subsequent release of huge amounts of energy.
- Nuclear fusion powers our sun and harnessing this fusion energy could provide an unlimited amount of renewable energy.
- The 2018 book Comprehensive Energy Systems notes: “Nuclear fusion energy is a good choice as the baseload energy in the future with many advantages, such as inexhaustibility of resources, inherent safety, no long-lived radioactive wastes, and almost no CO₂ emissions.”

How was the new breakthrough achieved?

- The team used new diagnostics, improved laser precision, and even made changes to the design.
- They applied laser energy on fuel pellets to heat and pressurise them at conditions similar to that at the centre of our Sun. This triggered the fusion reactions.
- These reactions released positively charged particles called alpha particles, which in turn heated the surrounding plasma. (At high temperatures, electrons are ripped from atom's nuclei and become a plasma or an ionised state of matter. Plasma is also known as the fourth state of matter)
- The heated plasma also released alpha particles and a self-sustaining reaction called ignition took place. Ignition helps amplify the energy output from the nuclear fusion reaction and this could help provide clean energy for the future.

Kigali Amendment

Context: *Cabinet approves Ratification of Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol.*

Kigali Agreement

- The Kigali Agreement is an amendment to the Montreal Protocol, which is an environmental treaty signed by countries to phase out Ozone Depleting Substances (ODSs) from the earth's atmosphere.
- The Kigali Agreement is significant because it addresses the vital question of HFCs. HFCs are powerful greenhouse gases and to mitigate climate change, countries must strive to reduce and gradually phase out their production and usage.
- Hence, the Kigali Agreement assumes significance. The important features of this agreement are briefly described below.
 - It is a legally binding agreement between the signatories. And, there are non-compliance measures to ensure its implementation.
 - It sets different targets for countries depending upon the states of development, different socio-economic constraints, and varying technological and scientific capacities.
 - The Kigali Agreement upholds the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities.
 - The agreement classifies the signatory parties into three as per the phase-down schedules to freeze and reduce the production of HFCs.
 - The first group consists of developed countries, led by the US and the European Union countries, that would have started the phase-down of HFCs by 2019, and reduce the level to 15% of 2012 level by the year 2036.
 - The second group consists of developing economies such as China, Brazil, and also some African States that will start the phase-down by 2024 and decrease it to 20% of 2021 levels by the year 2045.
 - The third group (in which India is placed) consists of developing economies and also some of the hottest nations, that will start the phase-down by 2028 and reduce the level to 15% of 2024-26 levels by the year 2047. Examples: Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia.

Incel movement

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The 'incel' movement, a dangerous online subculture comprising men who identify as 'involuntary celibates' and regularly express deeply misogynistic views about women, is slowly becoming a threat to law and order, experts have warned.*

Details:

- The movement came into the spotlight yet again in the UK's Plymouth, where a 22-year-old man named Jake Davidson shot dead five people, including a toddler, in what is widely being called the worst incident of its kind in British history since 2010.
- While Davidson, who later fatally shot himself, said he did not categorically see himself as an 'incel', a quick glance at his digital footprint tells a whole different story.
- In several YouTube videos he posted before the brutal Plymouth shooting, Davidson references the movement and expresses disturbing opinions about women and sexually active people.

- He has also subscribed to channels and was an active part of online forums linked to the sexist internet community.
- Over the years, several acts of violence have been linked to the subculture around the world. However, some experts have argued that it would be wrong to call ‘Incels’ a terrorist group.

What is an incel?

- Incels are a largely online community of men who describe themselves as “involuntary celibates.
- Men who are part of this movement harbour a deep resentment towards both women and other men who are sexually active.
- The blame women for their own lack of sexual and social status. While views tend to vary, some believe that sex is their right — something that is owed to them by virtue of them being males.
- An extreme section of Incels even advocate violence against women. However, not all members of the subculture are violent, experts say.

What are the ‘red pill’ and ‘black pill’ mentalities promoted by incels?

- The ‘black pill’ theory, often associated with incels, promotes the defeatist idea that your fate is sealed at birth and no matter what changes you try to make, your sexual capital cannot be altered.
- ‘Red pillers’, on the other hand, believe the world is biased toward women, and see feminism as female supremacy. They believe there is a systemic bias in favour of women.

China’s three-child policy

(Source: [Indian Express](https://www.indianexpress.com))

Context: *In a major policy shift aimed at increasing the country’s declining birth rate, China on Friday relaxed its previous two-child norm and endorsed a three-child policy mooted by the ruling Communist Party. The resolution was passed along with several others during a meeting of the National People’s Congress (NPC).*

Details:

- Earlier this year, after China’s census data showed population growth slipping to its slowest rate since the 1950s, the country announced that it would allow three children per married couple — five years after it first relaxed its controversial one-child policy to two.
- China’s one-child policy, which had been enforced by former leader Deng Xiaoping in 1980, had remained in place until 2016, when fears of a rapidly ageing population undermining economic growth forced the ruling Communist Party to allow two children per married couple.
- While the relaxation did result in some improvement in the proportion of young people in the country, the policy change was deemed insufficient in averting an impending demographic crisis.
- Even as a three-child policy has now been announced, many remain skeptical, wondering how it would be able to address challenges that the 2016 change could not, adue to factors such as higher cost of living and long working hours.

How well did China’s one-child policy work?

- China embarked upon its one-child policy in 1980 when the Communist Party was concerned that the country’s growing population, which at the time was approaching one billion, would impede economic progress.

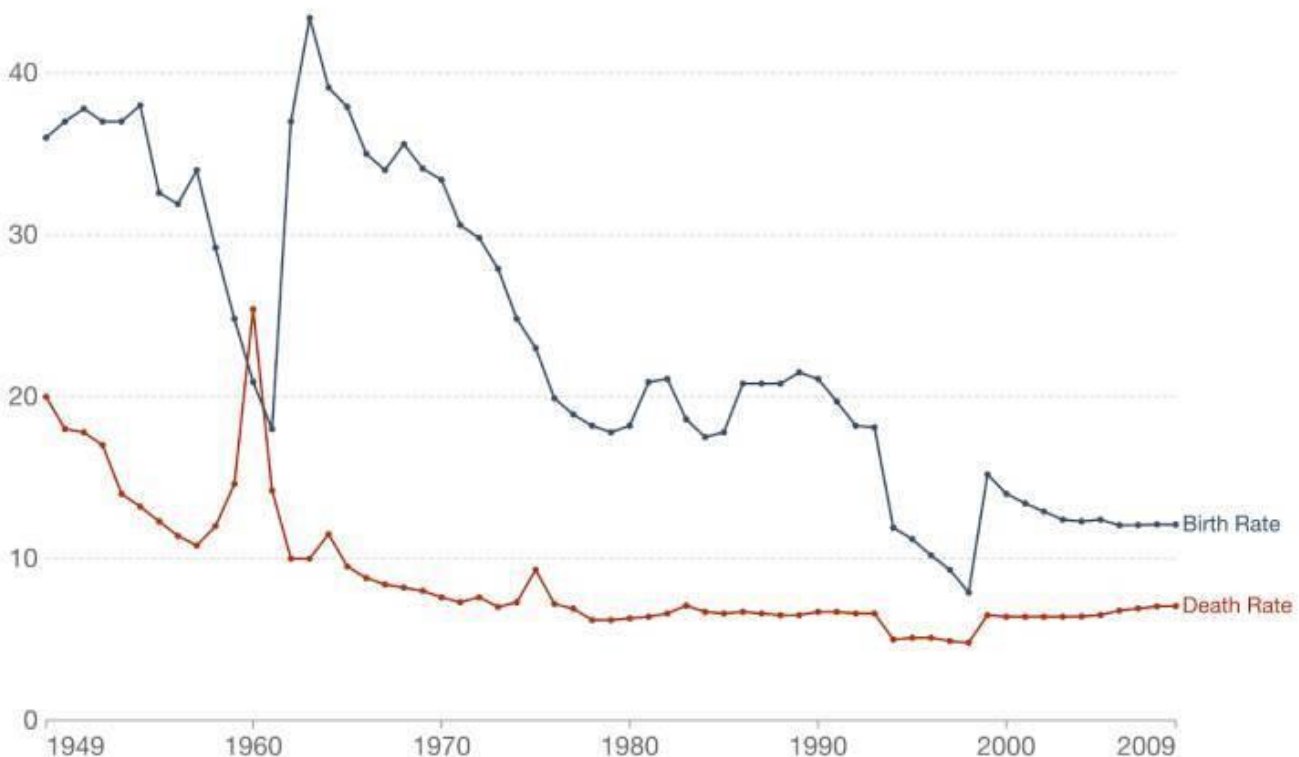


- The policy, which was implemented more effectively in urban areas, was enforced through several means, including incentivising families financially to have one child, making contraceptives widely available, and imposing sanctions against those who violated the policy.
- Chinese authorities have long hailed the policy as a success, claiming that it helped the country avert severe food and water shortages by preventing up to 40 crore people from being born.
- However, the one-child limit was also a source of discontent as the state used brutal tactics such as forced abortions and sterilisations.
- It was also met with criticism and remained controversial for violating human rights, and for being unfair to poorer Chinese since the richer ones could afford to pay economic sanctions if they violated the policy.

Birth and Death Rates in China and how they were affected by the Great Leap Forward Famine (1959-1961), China, 1949 to 2009



Both the birth and death rate are expressed per 1,000 of the population



Source: Brian Mitchell - International Historical Statistics

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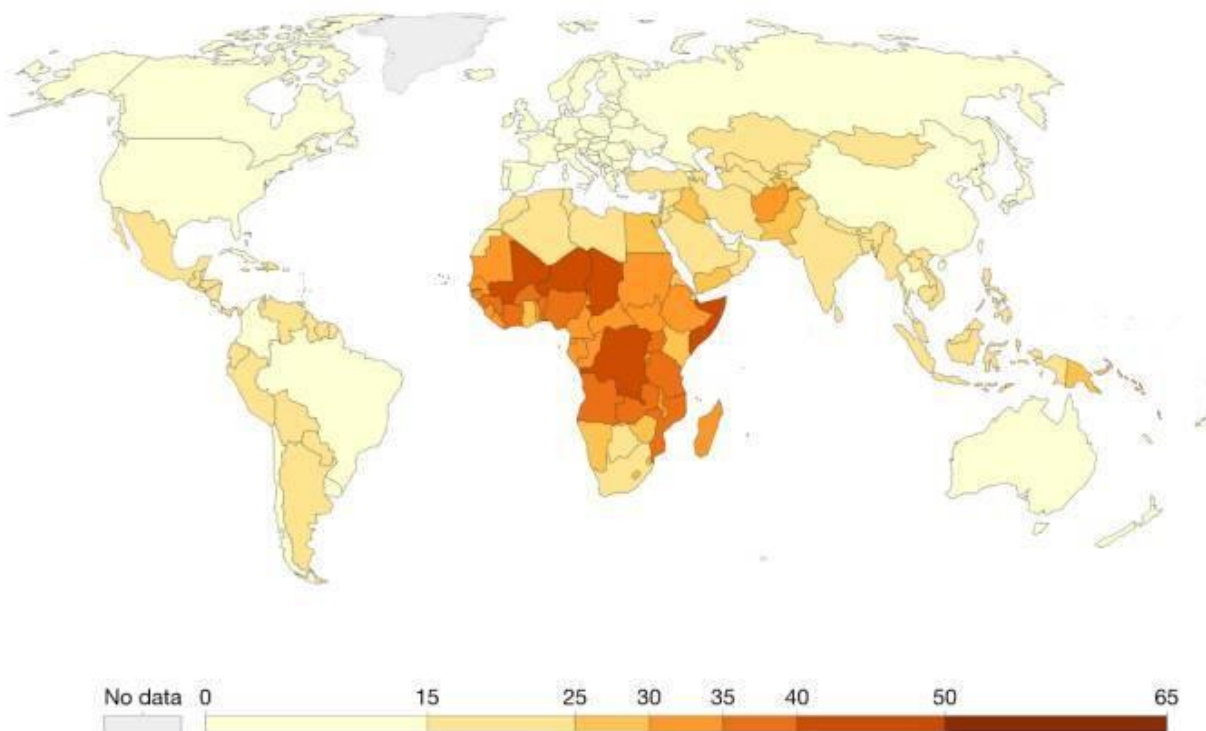
- Additionally, China's rulers have been accused of enforcing reproductive limits as a tool for social control. The Uighur Muslim ethnic minority, for example, has been forced to have fewer children to restrict the growth of their population.
- The supposed benefits of the policy have also been questioned. Due to the policy, while the birth rate fell, the sex ratio became skewed towards males.
- This happened because of a traditional preference for male children in the country. Due to this, abortion of female fetuses rose and so did the number of girls who were placed in orphanages or abandoned.
- Experts have also blamed the policy for making China's population age faster than other countries, impacting the country's growth potential.
- It is also suggested that because of the long-lingering impact of the policy, China would be unable to reap the full benefits of its economic growth and will need other ways to support it — unlike India and other Asian economies such as Indonesia and the Philippines, who have young populations. India's population, for instance, will start ageing from the middle of this century.

Did relaxing the one-child policy help?

- From 2016, the Chinese government finally allowed two children per couple — a policy change that did little to arrest the rapid fall in population growth.
- China's 2020 census data, released earlier this month, shows the country's rate of population growth falling rapidly despite the 2016 relaxation.
- Last year, 1.2 crore babies were born in China, down from 1.465 crore in 2019 — a fall of 18 per cent in one year, as per its National Bureau of Statistics. The country's fertility rate has now dropped to 1.3, far below the replacement level of 2.1 necessary for each generation to be fully replenished.
- The United Nations expects China's population to begin declining after 2030, but some experts say this could happen as early as in the next one or two years.
- By 2025, the country is set to lose its 'most populous' tag to India, which in 2020 had an estimated 138 crore people, 1.5 per cent behind China.

Birth rate

The number of live births occurring during the year, per 1,000 people.



Source: United Nations – Population Division (2019 Revision)

OurWorldInData.org/fertility-rate • CC BY

China's new data privacy laws

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: China passed a data protection law setting out tougher rules on how companies collect and handle their users' information. The rules add to Beijing's tightening of regulation, particularly around data, which could impact the way China's technology giants operate.

What is China's data protection law all about?



- Under the new rules passed by China's top legislative body, state and private entities handling personal information will be required to reduce data collection and obtain user consent.
- The Chinese state security apparatus will maintain access to swathes of personal data, however. Beijing has long been accused of harnessing big tech to accelerate repression in the northwestern Xinjiang province and elsewhere.
- The law also aims to protect those who feel strongly about personal data being used for user profiling and by recommendation algorithms or the use of big data in setting [unfair] prices
- It will also prevent companies from setting different prices for the same service based on clients' shopping history.
- More so, the law stipulates that the personal data of Chinese nationals cannot be transferred to countries with lower standards of data security than China — rules which may present problems for foreign businesses. Companies that fail to comply can face fines to the tune of up to 50 million yuan (around Rs 57 crore) or five per cent of their annual turnover.
- The law says sensitive personal data includes information which if leaked can lead to “discrimination... or seriously threaten the safety of individuals” including race, ethnicity, religion, biometric data or a person's whereabouts.

Mains

GS II

Keeping an eye on China's expanding nuclear stack

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *More evidence emerged recently that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is expanding the size of its nuclear arsenal by building more missile silos.*

Details:

- The debate, though, surrounding China's nuclear build-up is mired in considerable dispute. The source of contention is over the scope and prospective size of the PRC's nuclear capabilities.
- The construction of the nuclear missile silo field in Xinjiang region in western China indicates the PRC is fielding a larger nuclear force based on fixed land-based capabilities. The site is believed to host 110 silos.
- This development comes against the backdrop of evidence that China had built a site with 120 silos in the arid region of Yumen, in the Gansu province.
- The most likely reason behind the current expansion of China's nuclear arsenal is: increase the survivability of its arsenal against a first strike from their nuclear adversaries, most prominently the United States.
- Washington, which possesses a larger arsenal, stands at 3,800 warheads, and paired with its growing missile defence capabilities poses a threat to Chinese retaliatory nuclear forces.
- However, other countries too loom large in China's nuclear expansion such as Russia and India, even if Russia is not an overriding concern presently.

Rate and extent is key

- The key question is not so much why or whether the PRC is expanding its arsenal, but rather the rate and extent of the production.
- Does China want a usable and deployable atomic stockpile running into thousands of warheads, or does Beijing want an arsenal in the middle to high hundreds? Making a precise estimate of the PRC's nuclear strength is not easy.
- However, Chinese nuclear forces stand at roughly anywhere between 250 to 350 nuclear warheads according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) as well as the Federation of American Scientists (FAS).
- Last year, the United States Strategic Command (USTRATCOM) chief Admiral Charles Richard stated that the PRC could double its current operational stockpile which is still in the "low 200s" over the next decade.
- However, the current silo-based missile expansion being undertaken by the PRC can be misleading, because the PRC's quest might be as much to conceal the number of missiles tipped with nuclear warheads in its possession as it is to disassemble and deceive by building a large number of decoy missile silos.

A first strike strategy

- Land-based nuclear capabilities also enable the Chinese to present a nuclear adversary with a larger menu of targets to strike, exhausting a large number of the enemy's missiles in a first strike.

- Indeed, some of the decoy silos are meant to absorb and exhaust a part of the enemy's first strike nuclear forces.
- Thus, the larger the target list for any potential opponent, the greater the chances of China's arsenal surviving a first strike thereby boosting the credibility of China's nuclear deterrent.
- In all probability, the PRC is expanding its nuclear forces if not to match the larger nuclear forces fielded by the Americans and the Russians, but sufficient to withstand a first strike and then execute a retaliatory attack that would defeat U.S. missile defences.
- China's nuclear tipped ballistic missiles forces, whether land-based or sea-based, have certainly improved in quantity and quality.
- The PRC's Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) capabilities and Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) capabilities in the form of the Dongfeng-41 (DF-41) and the DF-26, respectively, are its most potent land-based missile systems. At least 16 launchers of the DF-26 are known to be deployed in the Xinjiang region close to the Sino-Indian border.
- In the case of the first, the silos being built in Xinjiang and Gansu could house DF-41 ICBMs that are capable of carrying multiple warheads much like their road mobile counterparts.
- In addition, the decoy silos can launch conventional armed ballistic missiles, and since they are likely to be interspersed with nuclear-tipped missiles, they create inadvertent escalation risks.

What New Delhi should track

- Consequently, the latest development of silos presents a grim and disturbing set of consequences for the world and India.
- The PRC has refused to enter any tripartite arms control negotiations with Americans and Russians that could forestall the deployment of a more numerically robust nuclear arsenal, and possibly sees its current build-up as a necessity to bridge the nuclear asymmetries it faces vis-à-vis Washington and Moscow.
- The growth in China's nuclear arsenal might not have an immediate impact on India, but its development of land-based nuclear silos in the Xinjiang province should worry decision-makers and strategic elites in New Delhi given the region's proximity to India.
- More importantly, it is likely to have an impact on the ongoing boundary stand-off between the two countries in Eastern Ladakh.
- The issue is not so much actual nuclear use by the PRC against India, but the coercive leverage fixed land-based nuclear capabilities give the Chinese in consolidating their territorial gains in Depsang, Demchok and Gogra-Hotsprings.
- If anything, it is likely to produce a suppressive effect against any conventional military escalation. The more extreme and adverse outcome for India is that New Delhi is left with no choice but to accept China's fait accompli.
- The strategic balance between China and India is unlikely to be altered because of the Chinese nuclear expansion, but New Delhi would be wise to keep a close eye on its neighbour and work on enhancing its own strategic capabilities.
- Amidst an all-round sharpening of great power contestation, the nuclear issue will continue to challenge policymakers.

What Kabul means in Delhi

(Source: [Indian Express](http://www.indianexpress.com))

Context: *With the Taliban entering the outlying districts of Kabul and issuing a formal declaration that they do not intend to conduct a witch-hunt against those with the Islamic Republic Government while it waited for the completion of a 'transition process', and amid parallel reports of efforts to form a transitional or interim government for 6 months, the wheel has come full circle on the post-9/11 US 'war on terror' in*



Afghanistan since 2001 and the country's experiment with an Islamic republic in 2004. India should be a first responder in the current crisis for humanitarian and longer-term political reasons.

Why the capitulation

- First reports from Kabul describe tension and doomsday fears, but no serious outbreaks of violence in the city.
 - The immediate challenge is a massive humanitarian crisis on account of the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced who have left other war zones and taken shelter on pavements and parks in Kabul.
- The second is the panic and rush for passports and visas for those who fear for their lives from the Taliban or their sponsors.
 - India should facilitate emergency visas and evacuation of those close to India who will be under threat.
 - Outbreaks of violence and political persecution should be anticipated.
 - The biggest losers in the transition will be Afghan women and youth who had tasted political, civic, economic and human rights and opportunities, and media freedoms.
- Three questions loom uppermost in the minds of observers in India.
 - First, what accounts for the near-total capitulation of the 300,000-350,000 US and NATO trained and equipped Afghan Army and Police forces, the ANDSF, without much of a fight barring a few honourable exceptions in Lashkargah, Herat and Taloqan, against lightly armed insurgents estimated to be around 60,000?
 - Second, what can explain the US decision to pull out its troops unconditionally without waiting for a negotiated political settlement regardless of consequences that were almost entirely predictable other than the speed with which it occurred?
 - And third, what can explain India's reluctance to engage the Taliban and what can it do?
- It is too early for any firm or complete answers to the first question. There is little doubt that the undermining of the September 2019 elections by the Zalmay Khalilzad-led US peace process while trying to force a 'transitional government' as part of the US-Taliban 'deal'; the contested elections and dysfunctional government that came out of it; and an increasingly discredited Ghani government were part of the problem, as was mismanagement of appointments in key security ministries, especially the Ministry of Defence.
- Equally true is the fact that, despite clear intimations and notices of withdrawal of US support to President Ashraf Ghani and of US troops regardless of what Afghans felt, the Afghan Army was unprepared and caught by surprise by the Taliban offensive.
- Technical dependence on the US for air support, weapon systems, intelligence etc, psychological denial that they would indeed leave as they warned, a lack of military strategy, poor supplies and logistics, indefensible and thinly manned posts, unpaid salaries, phantom rolls, and a sense of betrayal, abandonment and demoralisation, all played a role in this.

Responsibility with US

- More importantly, there were also structural reasons for their failure for which, notwithstanding the sacrifices made by the West in Afghanistan, responsibility must lie with the US and NATO.
- To fit the US definition of the war on terror, and also for reasons of cost of developing such an army to NATO standards, the Afghan National Army was never really trained and equipped with the normal attributes of a national army capable of defending territory with adequate mobility, artillery, armour, engineering, logistics, intelligence, air support etc for rugged terrain; and infantry battalions and doctrines designed for it.
- On the contrary, most of the effort went into grooming Special Forces units meant to recover targets of urban terrorist attacks, at which they acquitted themselves admirably, but not offensive operations.
- In sum, they invested just enough for the war on terror, but not the defence of Afghanistan although it was perfectly aware of the connection between the two in the Pakistani role in nurturing the Taliban.



- Pakistan also leveraged US dependence on ground lines of communication through Pakistan to ensure that the ANA remained stunted. Afghan authorities, aware of this, approached other countries for such equipment, but nothing that was not interoperable and up to NATO standards would have been acceptable.
- Pakistani masterminds exploited this weakness since the Taliban regrouped in Pakistan and used it once the US was clearly on the way out.
- As a result, it was left to the limited number of Afghan Special Forces commando units to fight what was effectively a Pakistani invasion with an Afghan face and foreign fighters, most of all from Pakistan, from one theatre to another without adequate support.
- US motives for literally abandoning a 20-year investment in blood, treasure and associates are more puzzling.
- First, it is arguable that after the end of the Soviet intervention and the fall of the Soviet Union, the US has never really considered Afghanistan of strategic importance. For all its \$1 trillion investment in Afghanistan and its awareness of Afghanistan's mineral wealth, the US never really invested in the Afghan economy or attempt to integrate it to its economic sphere of influence (including India) as it did after its interventions after World War II in Europe, East Asia and later in the oil economies of the Gulf.
- Neither did it invest in Afghan democracy as an antidote to the kind of Taliban religious fundamentalism that is intrinsically linked to religious extremism and terrorism.
- Ironically, despite western attempts to portray the Afghan 'democracy' that came in its wake as a failure, the 20 years since the ouster of the Taliban, for all its flaws, have arguably been one of the most promising periods in Afghanistan's recent history in terms of education and capacity building in which India too played a major part.
- If one were to take just one metric, refugees, this was the one period when there was a net return of refugees and expatriates, not outflow of refugees that has now begun.
- More baffling is why the US should cede strategic space in Afghanistan in the most vulnerable underbelly of its principal strategic rivals, Xinjiang for China, while it is working to contain it in the Indo-Pacific and elsewhere, the Central Asian Republics for Russia, and Iran to the west.
- One of the ironies of the US intervention in Afghanistan is that far from using Afghanistan strategically against its rivals in the region, it ended up effectively extending security against the Taliban for them.
- Is it then possible that the primary motivation behind its decision to withdraw from Afghanistan is not fatigue from an endless war, but a cold-blooded decision to convert what was essentially a counter-terrorist operation against the al-Qaeda, that expanded to a limited counter-insurgency operation learning from the Iraq experience until President Barack Obama's 'surge', into a drawdown and training mission from Obama to Trump, into finally, an intelligence operation using the Taliban whose return it has legitimised and facilitated through the US-Taliban deal and its withdrawal, to destabilise the region to keep China, Russia, Iran, and possibly even Pakistan off balance with Afghanistan, the Central Asian Republics and India as collateral damage?

What next for India

- Finally, what should India do under the circumstances? With the Taliban in Kabul, the old debate in India on whether to talk or not to the Taliban is now academic.
- The Taliban have proclaimed that there will be no witch hunt, that it will respect a transitional process, and that it will work for a "future Islamic system... that is acceptable to all".
- Prudence dictates that we keep an open mind, wait and watch what they actually do during and after the transitional process, assess how inclusive they are in accommodating the gains of the last 20 years and the progressive principles of the Islamic Republic, judge the opposition to Taliban rule, and our security needs before we jump into any hasty recognition of an Islamic 'Emirate' which will have profound consequences for the region, the world and the US in particular.

Regional identity and being part of the mainstream

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *It is unfortunate that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has derived its political ideology from Veer Savarkar's Hindutva instead of the supreme Constitution of India. Its politics focuses on centralisation, with special attention to undermining the interests of non-Hindi States. The BJP government is intruding into the economic, political, cultural and educational autonomy of States. Modern India has evolved to be more than just the Union of States. We should be moving toward cooperative federalism and not coercive federalism. The policies of the BJP government are inconsistent with the vision of the Constitution drafting committee with respect to Centre-State relations.*

Revenue deficit State

- Karnataka is one of the States most harassed by the central government of the day. Karnataka has seen a drain of wealth due to the inconsistent policies of the BJP. From being a revenue surplus State, it is now a revenue deficit State.
- Karnataka's share of tax devolution has been reduced from 4.72% in the Fourteenth Finance Commission to 3.64% in the Fifteenth Finance Commission due to a skewed preference to the 2011 population.
- Unfortunately, States such as Karnataka which gave special attention to population control, were and have been penalised severely. Special grants of ₹5,495 crore which were recommended by the Fifteenth Finance Commission for 2020-21 were denied by the Union Finance Minister.
- In 2019-20, Karnataka got just ₹30,919 crore as its share of central taxes instead of ₹48,768 crore as recommended by the Fourteenth Finance Commission.
- In 2020-21, it got just ₹20,053 crore as share of central taxes instead of ₹31,180 crore as recommended by the Fifteenth Finance Commission. Karnataka contributes more than ₹2.2-lakh crore to central taxes but in return receives less than ₹30,000 crore.
- If the States get 41% share of the central taxes, Karnataka should have ideally got at least ₹70,000 crore - ₹80,000 crore on a pro rata basis for its contribution.
- It is a known fact that the South has been subsidising the north. Six States south of the Vindhyas contribute more taxes and get less. For example, for every one rupee of tax contributed by Uttar Pradesh, that State receives more than ₹1.79.
- For every one rupee of tax contributed by Karnataka, the State receives less than ₹ 0.47. Karnataka has also been hit by a denial of Goods and Services Tax compensation cess as promised by the central government through the Goods and Services Tax (Compensation to States) Act, 2017.
- Having presented 13 Budgets, my heart is saddened to see Karnataka deviating from the provisions of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act — thanks to the step motherly treatment by the Narendra Modi-led BJP government.

Specific issues

- The problems are more than just the finances of State governments. Many issues of federalism are affecting the identity, social structure and political economy of our State.
- Our government had requested the central government to include the Karnataka flag in the schedule of the Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950, based on the recommendations of the committee for the Karnataka flag.
- It is unfortunate that the central government is still procrastinating over the recommendation without granting formal inclusion. Is the desire of the people of Karnataka to have a flag for their State, to give



primacy to the Kannada language and to have greater say in the running of their own lives inconsistent with the objective of building a strong nation?

- It is no more a secret that a conspiracy is being hatched by the leaders of certain regions to systematically prevent the selection of non-Hindi candidates to government posts and professional courses.
- A recent example of this can be seen in the Institute of Banking Personnel Selection notification where the examinations were notified to be conducted only in English and Hindi, thereby depriving lakhs of non-Hindi medium candidates an opportunity to apply.
- About 407 vacant posts in the notification were to be filled in banks located in Karnataka — this means 407 Kannada medium candidates will lose the chance to work in Karnataka.

Centralisation of education

- The National Education Policy is another tool of the BJP to proliferate Hindi in non-Hindi States and to take away the rights of the States by promoting centralisation with respect to education.
- The policy negates the spirit of the Constitution and is inconsistent with Article 246 of Indian Constitution.
- Under the new three-language formula, it is consequential for the students from the south Indian States to choose Hindi as the third language. Schools will not have enough resources to arrange for faculty to teach more subjects for third languages, which means Hindi will be the only choice.
- It is important to recollect that in 1947, India was a young nation and we needed to be cautious of any divisive or secessionist tendencies. India, therefore, became a Union of States with a strong Centre.
- When Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel went about integrating the princely States into the Union, a strong Centre did make sense.

A perspective

- Today, over 70 years down the line, we have done admirably well as a nation. The Constitution of India has stood the test of time.
- We have also learnt useful lessons from turmoil in Tamil Nadu over Hindi language imposition and demands of autonomy from certain States such as Punjab and Assam. From a Union of states, we are evolving into a federation of States.
- Therefore, the demands for greater federal autonomy and recognition of regional identity are inconsistent with our nation. Karnataka prides itself in its Kannada identity. The oldest written document (in stone) in Kannada found at Halimidi, Hassan district, dates back to the Second century AD.
- The oldest Kannada Kingdom under the Kadamabas of Banavasi ruled the State during the Fourth century AD. We have been using a red and yellow flag for decades. Yet, Karnataka, as our Poet Laureate Kuvempu said, is the daughter of Bharata, the Indian nation — Jaya Bharatha Jananiya Tanujathe.

The fall of Kabul & the future of regional geopolitics

(Source: [The Hindu](http://TheHindu))

Context: *The fall of Kabul in the wake of the American withdrawal from Afghanistan will prove to be a defining moment for the region and the future shape of its geopolitics; it would be as defining, if not more, as the Soviet intervention in 1979 and the American one in 2001. While a lot depends on the Taliban's actual conduct both domestically as well as on the southern and western Asian geopolitical chessboard in the months ahead, the Taliban are likely to continue as a 'useful villain' in the unfolding great power competition. For New Delhi, the fall of Kabul is a moment of reckoning and it must rethink its regional strategies and options. Unfortunately, of the latter, it does not have many.*

A vacuum

- What is most disconcerting is the regional power vacuum in the Eurasian heartland created by the haphazard manner in which the United States withdrew from Afghanistan and its potential knock-on effects.
- An axis of regional powers such as China, Pakistan, Russia, and the Taliban, have already started filling this power vacuum, shaping, thereby, the contours of the region's geopolitics based on their individual and common interests.
- Iran might also jump on this opportunistic bandwagon under the Chinese leadership.
- What is abundantly clear is that each of these countries harbour deep anti-American feelings in varying degrees which will further shrink the American influence in the Eurasian heartland.
- While it is too early to determine whether what these countries have on their hands is an opportunity or a ticking bomb, the U.S., as a direct consequence of the formation of this axis, might decide to explore new ways of working with them to stabilise the region, if it desires to do so, and remain relevant there.
- If indeed that happens, could it result in a potential softening of the American rhetoric against China, Pakistan, Russia and perhaps even Iran? More so, what would that mean for India? While a healthy conversation among the great powers — the U.S., China and Russia — on global and regional challenges is a good sign, India is neither a great power nor present at the table.
- New Delhi must ensure that it does not become a casualty on the south-western Asian geopolitical chessboard.

Advantage China; extremism

- The post-American power vacuum in the region will be primarily advantageous to China and its grand strategic plans for the region.
- Beijing will further strengthen its efforts to bring every country in the region, except India, on the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative bandwagon, thereby altering the geopolitical and geoeconomic foundations of the region. More so, the much-feared Chinese encirclement of India will become ever more pronounced.
- Having been further emboldened by the U.S.'s withdrawal and in stamping its writ on the region, Beijing is likely to become less accommodative towards India including on the Line of Actual Control.
- Even in trade, given the sorry state of the post-COVID-19 Indian economy, India needs trade with China more than the other way round. Unless New Delhi can find ways of ensuring a rapprochement with China, it must expect Beijing to challenge India on occasion, and be prepared for it.
- The bigger challenge for India though would be a near-certain increase in terrorism and extremism in the region. The U.S. presence in Afghanistan, international pressure on the Taliban and Financial Action Task Force worries in Pakistan had a relatively moderating effect on the region's terror ecosystem.
- With the Taliban now back in Kabul, things are bound to change. The visuals of the Taliban releasing terrorists from Afghan jails would send a powerful message to their fellow travellers, handlers, and sympathisers in the region.
- While the neighbouring countries are also worried about terrorism emanating from Afghanistan, the reality is that they are busy making their own private deals with the Taliban to not host terror organisations targeting them.
- There is little appetite for a regional approach to curbing terrorism from a Taliban-led Afghanistan. This enables the Taliban to engage in a selective treatment towards terror outfits present there or they have relations with.
- Moreover, given that the international community may have no choice but to recognise the Taliban regime — UN Security Council members such as China and Russia have already indicated their intent to do so — would also mean that the Taliban would hold more power in a bargain on the terror question. Sanctions are unlikely to deter an outfit that does not need to bother about the next election.
- It is unlikely that the Taliban will proactively export terror to other countries unless of course for tactical purposes by, say for instance, Pakistan against India. The real worry, however, is the inspiration that



disgruntled elements in the region will draw from the Taliban's victory against the world's sole superpower.

- To that extent, the triumphalism in Pakistan over the Taliban's victory in Afghanistan could eventually become counterproductive for Pakistan itself.
- Whether Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan refers to them as a force that has 'unshackled the chains of slavery' or the country's deep state considers them as a strategic asset, the reality is that many anti-Pakistan terror organisations would be emboldened as well.

Impact on regional interests

- The return of the Taliban to Kabul has effectively laid India's 'mission Central Asia' to rest. If New Delhi could not find its way to Central Asia with encouraging partners such as Iran and the Hamid Karzai/Ashraf Ghani governments, the possibility of New Delhi doing so now is next to nil.
- India's diplomatic and civilian presence as well as its civilian investments will now be at the mercy of the Taliban, and to some extent Pakistan. If there is a concerted effort by China, Pakistan and the Taliban to erase the Indian presence from Afghanistan, there is little India can do about it.
- Had New Delhi cultivated deeper relations (which by no means would have meant recognising the outfit) with the Taliban, Indian interests would have been more secure in a post-American Afghanistan. New Delhi's lack of strategic foresight will prove to be costly.
- What is perhaps not yet understood is how the rise of the anti-America axis (China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and a Taliban-led Afghanistan) and anti-American sentiments in the region would impact India's regional interests given that it has become closer to the U.S. than ever before in its history.
- We have to wait and see what this mismatch between the region's mood and India's strategic choices would mean for the country. There is little doubt that because of these developments, India's regional ambitions will take a major hit in the months and years ahead.
- The fall of Kabul and the consequent knock-on effects in the region will have several potential implications for India's foreign policy and its strategic choices and behaviour.
 - For one, given the little physical access India has to its north-western landmass, its focus is bound to shift more to the Indo-Pacific even though a maritime grand strategy may not necessarily be an answer to its continental challenges.
 - Second, New Delhi might also seek to shed the arrogance it displayed towards its smaller neighbours during Modi 1.0 and cultivate friendly relations with them. Myanmar is a case in point. India has already indicated that it would not challenge the junta on the coup and its widespread human rights violations.
- This policy is likely to continue even if the Joe Biden administration seeks New Delhi's help in turning up the heat on Myanmar's generals. The last thing New Delhi needs now is an angry neighbour rushing to China.

India-Pakistan ties

- Third, the developments in Afghanistan could nudge New Delhi to seek stability, if not peace, with Pakistan. While there is little desire in New Delhi today to reopen a broad-based dialogue process with Pakistan, even a 'cold peace' would be in India's interest.
- For Pakistan too, such a 'cold peace' will help it to focus its energies on consolidating its interests and gains in Afghanistan. As a result, both sides might refrain from indulging in competitive risk-taking unless something dramatic happens which is always a possibility between the two rivals.
- That said, stability between India and Pakistan depends a great deal on how politics in Kashmir plays out, and whether New Delhi is able to pacify the aggrieved sections in the Valley.
- The lesson for India in the wake of these developments is clear: It will have to fight its own battles. So it must make enemies wisely, choose friends carefully, rekindle flickering friendships, and make peace while it can.

GS III

Ozone pact in climate fight

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *Five years after it fought hard to successfully negotiate favourable terms for itself, India decided to ratify a key amendment to the Montreal Protocol, which turned the 1989 ozone-saving agreement into an extremely potent weapon in the fight against climate change as well.*

Details:

- The Kigali Amendment, negotiated in the Rwandan capital in October 2016, enables the gradual phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons, or HFCs, a family of chemicals used extensively in the air-conditioning, refrigeration and furnishing foam industry.
- HFCs are known to be much worse than carbon dioxide in causing global warming. In fact, according to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the average global warming potential of 22 of the most used HFCs is about 2,500 times that of carbon dioxide.
- India's decision to ratify the amendment was never in doubt and is little more than a formality at this stage. It was widely anticipated after the United States and China, the world's top producers and consumers of HFCs, took similar decisions in the last few months.
- The amendment has already come into force from the start of 2019. But the decision to ratify it does create the right atmospherics ahead of the annual climate change conference in Glasgow this November.

Ozone and climate

- The 1989 Montreal Protocol is meant to protect the ozone layer of the upper atmosphere. It wasn't originally an instrument to fight climate change. A set of chemicals, mainly the chlorofluorocarbons or CFCs, which were being used in the air-conditioning and refrigeration industry earlier, were found to be damaging the ozone layer of the upper atmosphere.
- Their extensive use had led to depletion of the ozone layer, and formation of an "ozone hole" over the Antarctic region. The Montreal Protocol mandated the complete phase-out of CFCs and other ozone-depleting substances (ODS), which it has successfully managed to do in the last three decades.
- CFCs were gradually replaced, first by HCFCs, or hydrochlorofluorocarbons, in some cases, and eventually by HFCs which have minimal impact on the ozone layer. The transition from HCFCs to HFCs is still happening, particularly in the developing world.
- HFCs, though benign to the ozone layer, were powerful greenhouse gases. With global warming emerging as one of the biggest global challenges in the new millennium, the use of HFCs came under the scanner.
- HFCs still form a small part of the total greenhouse gas emissions, but with air-conditioning demand showing a significant increase, especially in countries like India, their use is rising at about 8% every year. If left unabated, their contribution to annual greenhouse gas emissions is expected to reach up to 19% by 2050.
- Because HFCs were not ozone-depleting, they were not controlled substances under the Montreal Protocol. They were part of the problematic greenhouse gases whose emissions are sought to be curtailed through climate change instruments such as the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 and the 2015 Paris Agreement.



- But the Montreal Protocol has been a far more effective and successful agreement than the climate change instruments. It has already resulted in the phase-out of 98.6% of ozone-depleting substances. The remaining 1.4% are the HCFCs that are in the process of being transitioned.
- Accordingly, it was decided to use the Montreal Protocol to phase out HFCs as well, rather than leave them at the mercy of climate change agreements. For that to happen, an amendment to the Montreal Protocol was required.

The Kigali Amendment

- In 2016, countries agreed to include HFCs in the list of controlled substances under Montreal Protocol and decided on a schedule for its phase-down.
- Before the middle of this century, current HFC use has to be curtailed by at least 85 per cent. Countries have different timelines to do this. India has to achieve this target by 2047 while the developed countries have to do it by 2036. China and some other countries have a target of 2045.
- While the reductions for the rich countries have to begin immediately, India, and some other countries, have to begin cutting their HFC use only from 2031.
- If implemented successfully, the Kigali Amendment is expected to prevent about 0.5°C rise in global warming by the end of this century.
- No other single intervention to cut greenhouse gas emissions comes even close to this in terms of returns offered and the ease of implementation. It is thus considered crucial to achieving the Paris Agreement target of restricting temperature rise to within 2°C from pre-industrial times.
- And the Montreal Protocol has a fairly good track record on ensuring climate benefits as well. CFCs, the predecessors to HFCs, were also greenhouse gases, apart from being ozone-depleting. Their phase-out has already avoided an estimated 135 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions between 1990 and 2010.
- This is three times the current annual greenhouse gas emissions. The UNEP estimates that, with Kigali Amendment, the avoided emissions could touch 420 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent by the end of the century.

India's efforts

- India had played a key role in negotiating the Kigali Amendment. It had fought hard to get an extended timeline for itself, and some other countries, for the reduction of HFC use.
- This was considered important for the domestic industry which was still in the process of transitioning from HCFCs to HFCs. The climate-friendly alternatives to HFCs are not yet widely available at low cost. The extended timeline was meant to give the industry some cushion to make the transition.
- Despite being one of the main architects of the Kigali Amendment, India was the last major country to announce its decision to ratify it. There wasn't ever any doubt over its ratification, and it was more like a waiting game to see what China or the United States did. In the meanwhile, however, India had unveiled an ambitious action plan for the cooling industry which accounts for the phase-out of HFCs.
- The 20-year 'India Cooling Action Plan', or ICAP, released in 2019, describes cooling as a "developmental need" and seeks to address the rising demand in cooling, from buildings to transport to cold-chains, through sustainable actions.
- The plan estimates that the national cooling demand would grow eight times in the next 20 years, which would result in a corresponding five to eight-fold rise in the demand for refrigerants that involve the use of HFCs. The ICAP aims to bring down the refrigerant demand by 25 to 30 per cent in the next 20 years.
- As part of the ICAP, the government has also announced targeted R&D efforts aimed at developing low-cost alternatives to HFCs. Such efforts are already underway at the Hyderabad-based Indian Institute of Chemical Technology and IIT Bombay.

The message from the IPCC report

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *The recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Working Group I contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), titled 'Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis', is the first of four that the Panel will issue over the next one and a half years. The reports are eagerly awaited as they provide a summary assessment of all aspects of the challenge of global warming and past reports have heralded significant shifts in climate policy. This particular report has added significance as it is the only one of the four of AR6 to be ready before the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held in Glasgow in November.*

Findings of the report

- A significant section of the report reinforces what is already well known, though, importantly, with updated numbers, higher accuracy and specific regional assessments, including South Asia. Global surface temperature is now higher by 1.07°C since the pre-industrial era.
- The impact of climate change on the atmosphere, oceans and land is unmistakably of human origin and this impact is picking up pace. It is a striking fact that there is no part of the inhabited world that is now untouched by the impact of global warming.
- Carbon dioxide is the dominant source of warming. Aerosols contribute to reducing the impact of warming by other greenhouse gases, by almost a third. Methane reduction, while needed overall, is particularly significant only as part of the endgame as the drastic reduction of aerosols actually leads to an increase in warming.
- A major scientific advance in this report is the use of multiple lines of evidence (through precise technical methods) to pin down the values and trends of key climatic variables more accurately, and narrow their range of uncertainties.
- Climate predictions from models appear to be working better in many specific ways due to improved representation of basic processes and higher resolution, while the use of other evidence enables scientists to ensure that the modelling output is suitably filtered to match more closely the real world.
- Thus, the value of equilibrium climate sensitivity — the measure of how a specified increase in carbon dioxide concentration translates into long-term surface temperature rise — is now pinned down to the range of 2.5°C to 4.0°C, with a best estimate of 3°C, compared to the Fifth Assessment Report range of 1.5°C to 4.5°C. With the inclusion of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology's Earth System Model among the climate models used in AR6, India too has joined the climate modelling fraternity.
- The report expectedly projects an increase in climate extremes due to global warming, with heat waves, extreme rainfall events and occurrence of extreme sea levels all expected to intensify and be more frequent.
- Coincidentally, the IPCC session for the approval and release of the report was held in the background of news of unprecedented disasters from the global North, including massive forest fires, unprecedented rain and flooding, and record heat.

Restrict cumulative emissions

- A major finding of the report is that air pollution reduction and steep climate change mitigation are not complementary goals but require independent efforts over the short and medium term.

- This is particularly important as the claims of such a linkage have been used to argue that India, for instance, must cease the use of coal immediately, despite its continuing importance as the key element of the country's energy security.
- The truly disconcerting news though, for the global North, is the report's clear message that reaching net zero was not the determining factor for the world to limit itself to a 1.5oC , or 2oC, or indeed any specific temperature increase.
- The report is clear that it is the cumulative emissions in reaching net zero that determine the temperature rise. This obvious conclusion from past reports and scientific literature had become something of a casualty in the massive campaign mounted on net zero by the developed countries with the partisan support of the United Nations Secretary General and UN agencies.
- India's Ministry for Environment, Forest and Climate Change was quick to note this point about net zero in a statement, adding that "historical cumulative emissions are the cause of the climate crisis that the world faces today."
- It also noted that the "developed countries had usurped far more than their fair share of the global carbon budget." The limitations of the remaining carbon budget for 1.5oC are so stringent — a mere 500 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide for an even chance of keeping to the limit — that they cannot be met by promises of net zero 30 years from now.
- The report is indeed a "clarion call for developed countries to undertake immediate, deep emission cuts," as the Union Environment Minister, Bhupender Yadav, tweeted, especially if they are not to deprive the rest of the world, barring China, of any hope of future development. Developed countries must, in fact, reach net zero well before 2050.

Little cheer for Global South

- However, the exposure of the misleading character of the net zero campaign can bring little cheer to the global South, for an equally disconcerting finding is that the world is set to cross the 1.5oC limit within 10-15 years.
- If deep emissions cuts by the three big emitters — the U.S., the European Union and China — are not forthcoming, even the prospect of a mild overshoot of the limit followed by a later decline is likely to be foregone.
- After years of procrastination in real action, the constant shifting of goal posts to avoid immediate emissions reduction, and marking time with their obsession with Article 6 negotiations to pass the burden on to developing countries, the developed countries now have nowhere to hide.
- Regrettably, India cannot save the world from the consequences of the neglect of those whose responsibility it was to lead in taking credible action. India has contributed less than 5% of global cumulative emissions to date, with per capita annual emissions a third of the global average.
- India is also the only nation among the G20 with commitments under the Paris Agreement that are even 2oC warming-compatible. India needs its development space urgently to cope with the future, one where global temperature increase may be closer to 2oC.
- With India's annual emissions at 3 billion tonnes in carbon dioxide equivalent terms, even the impossible, such as the total cessation of emissions for the next 30 years, with others' emissions remaining the same, will buy the world less than two years of additional time for meeting the Paris Agreement temperature goals.
- The prospect of keeping almost a sixth of humanity in quasi-permanent deprivation for the rest of the century as a consequence cannot even be contemplated.
- Focusing on definite cumulative emission targets keeping equity and historical responsibility in view, immediate emission reductions by the developed countries with phase-out dates for all fossil fuels, massive investment in new technologies and their deployment, and a serious push to the mobilisation of adequate climate finance is the need of the hour.
- This is the message that the IPCC report has sent to this year's climate summit and the world.

The Abraham Accords as India's West Asia bridge

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *The recent visit by the Indian Air Force chief, Air Chief Marshal R.K. Bhadauria, to Israel offers a window to study how New Delhi is taking advantage of the Abraham Accords deal signed between Israel and a consortium of Arab States led by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 2020 (<https://bit.ly/3yWH0HY>). According to reports, an Indian contingent of the Indian Air Force (IAF) will now visit Israel in October to take part in multilateral military exercises.*

Deepening cooperation

- In the same week as ACM Bhadauria's visit, India also conducted the 'Zayed Talwar' naval exercises with the UAE off the coast of Abu Dhabi, further deepening the fast-developing strategic cooperation between the two countries.
- In December 2020, Indian Army chief, General M.M. Naravane, visited the UAE and Saudi Arabia, becoming the first chief of the Indian Army to do so.
- The foundation for these visits was set by the (now former) chief of the Indian Navy, Admiral Sunil Lanba, in 2017, who visited the UAE and Oman, the latter being home to Duqm Port where New Delhi signed a deal with Muscat for access to the facility, including dry dock use by the Indian Navy.
- The above examples show the pacy developments on the defence front between India and the West Asian region.
- The signing of the Accords has removed a significant strategic obstacle for New Delhi — that of a trapeze wire delicate balancing act India has had to play out between the Arab Gulf and Israel over the decades.
- This status quo is now witnessing a change, with Israel inaugurating its first diplomatic mission in Abu Dhabi and direct flights, business and tourism picking up between the two countries over the past few months. New Delhi had welcomed the Accords, highlighting its support for mechanisms that offer peace and stability in the region.

The thread

- India's trajectory towards an increased strategic footprint in West Asia has been in development for some time now.
- Starting from the relatively low-key staging visit to Saudi Arabia conducted by the IAF in 2015, to hosting visiting Iranian naval warships in 2018, defence of the critical waterways in and around the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea and the extended Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has taken a driving seat in Indian strategic thinking.
- Recently, as tensions between Iran, Israel and the United States flared up in the Persian Gulf, the Indian Navy orchestrated Operation Sankalp, which saw Indian warships escort on an average 16 Indian-flagged vessels a day. This comes as covert attacks on merchant vessels in the region expand, with tensions between Iran and Israel spilling across the region.
- Till a certain extent, the Accords, from the UAE's perspective, were to make sure the emirate along with its international centres of trade such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi do not become targets between Jerusalem and Tehran. However, not all Arab States have been on board with the geopolitical shifts the Accords have pushed through.

- Despite a lot of effort from Israel, under the (now former) Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Saudi Arabia has maintained a distance from this arrangement. More recently, Riyadh has praised the Accords, but said that the resolution of the Palestinian State remains at the forefront of its requirements.
- It is imperative to remember here that despite India's rare but arguable successes in a 'non-alignment' approach in West Asia, it has taken one-sided decisions in the past, such as training Iraqi Air Force cadets on MiG aircraft in Tikrit between 1958 and 1989, while also maintaining good relations with former President Saddam Hussein, seen as a critical part of India's energy security thinking.
- The rationale behind such thinking back then has not changed even in 2021, as India still imports more than 80% of its annual oil requirements, much of which still comes from suppliers such as Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

The Iran link

- Iran, as part of India's 'West Asia' construct, will also play a significant part in India's outreach in the months to come as the crisis in Afghanistan deepens.
- The fact that New Delhi used Iranian airspace and facilities when evacuating its diplomatic staff from Kandahar in July showcases a level of strategic commonality, interest and play on certain issues in the region.
- Keeping this in mind, connectivity projects such as Chabahar Port and Chabahar-Zahedan rail project (project discussions are still on) amongst others remain critical.
- Recent multiple visits by India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh followed by Iranian Defence Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami's visit to India highlight a revitalised strategic cooperation between the two countries despite multiple obstacles in the bilateral relations, led by U.S. sanctions against Tehran and the general tensions between Israel, the Gulf and Iran via proxy battles in theatres such as Yemen, Syria and beyond.
- India's strategic play in West Asia will be reflective of its economic growth, and by association, an increasingly important place in the global order.
- From the UN Security Council to the Indo-Pacific, New Delhi will be expected to be more assertive, diplomatically and militarily, in its posturing and shed the cloaks of its foreign and strategic policies being conducted from a stage balanced on a fence.

GS IV

The police we need

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *Ranjeeta Sharma, an Indian Police Service (IPS) probationer from Haryana, bagged the honour recently of commanding the passing-out parade at the National Police Academy (NPA). She won two awards: the Best All-round IPS Probationer and the Sword of Honour for the Best Outdoor Probationer. Interestingly, the honour of being the Best Probationer went to a woman officer, Kiran Shruthi, last year too.*

The ideal police officer

- The choice of the probationer commanding the passing-out parade is reasonably objective. It takes into account both the outdoor performance and classroom performance of a trainee.



- The probationer cannot be a mere bookworm or a brawny athlete excelling in activities such as ceremonial parade or horse riding; he or she is expected to be an all-rounder. The Best Probationer award recognises good conduct, empathy and a quick reflex.
- These are the ideal qualities of the police who are required to intervene in dangerous situations and also go to the rescue of the poorest when they are harassed by anti-social elements
- The most positive feature today is that many IPS officers are technology savvy. This augurs well for the future of law enforcement in India. Even the lower rungs of the police, who do not belong to the elitist IPS, are avid in the use of technology, especially for regulating public assemblies and solving crimes.
- India stands out for entrusting independent responsibility to IPS officers even in the early years of their induction. This is why an IPS assignment is not only prestigious but is laden with unparalleled trust in an inexperienced youth just out of university. Only a few come in with previous work experience.
- However, it is distressing to note the declining levels of integrity among senior IPS officers who are expected to be role models for their junior colleagues. Recently, a case of alleged extortion was registered against a former Mumbai Police Commissioner.
- A senior IPS officer in Tamil Nadu was recently served a charge sheet in court in connection with a case pertaining to the sexual harassment of a woman officer. Nothing can be more disgraceful for a premier police force.
- Glittering passing-out parades therefore seem mere window dressing. The NPA has the greatest role in building character. This is where its success is only modest.
- What does an average citizen want from the police? Citizens desire a friendly police force which treats the rich and poor alike. They would also like to see less rapacious police stations where they receive service to which they are entitled, without having to pay any bribe. Except in a few places in the country, most citizens don't get all this.
- We are still a country where crime against women is high. Arguing that this is the case in many other countries is no consolation. While many quote data, we would like not to do that since the available data have many issues: there is under-reporting of cases, and the police often refuse to register complaints made.
- We would rather go by perceptions about the police capacity and interest. The popular belief is that India is still not safe for women. The gang rape and murder in 2012 of a young woman in Delhi left an indelible scar not merely on the face of the Delhi Police but on the whole Indian police force. This is just one example — there are many more.

Occupying public positions

- In this context, it is important to mention the management of police personnel. In an ideal world, brilliant and straightforward officials would be chosen to occupy public positions calling for objectivity and skill.
- Unfortunately, this is not the case with IPS appointments. Many officers are given plum posts based on their links and loyalty to the ruling party. A silver lining, however, is the Supreme Court mandate laying down the process for selection of Director General of Police.
- The State government now has to make the appointment from a panel of three names approved by the Union Public Service Commission. This will ensure that no outrageous appointments are made.
- Ultimately it is the honest and hard-working officer at the top who will make the difference between good and tendentious policing. India needs a police force that is responsive and respected and not one that is feared, as is the case now.
- But for that, we need to know why some young men and women officers with a distinguished educational record and who often come from middle and lower sections of the society deviate from the path of virtue after solid training at the NPA.
- Is this because of faulty selection or poor supervision? Or is it due to the fact that new arrivals no longer have role models like the ones we had in the past?

Current Affairs Quiz

1) 'IndiGau' recently seen in news refers to-

- Indigenously developed vaccine for cattles
- Cattle genomic chip for preserving indigenous breeds
- Animal health card issued under the National Mission for Bovine productivity
- A web portal to boost dairy productivity in India by organizing the livestock market

Answer : b

2) Consider the following statements with respect to Socio Economic Caste Census:

- All the personal information collected under SECC is open for use by Government departments.
- It is conducted under the overall coordination of Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner under Ministry of Home Affairs.

Select the INCORRECT answer code:

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : b

SECC 2011 has three census components which were conducted by three separate authorities but under the overall coordination of Department of Rural Development in the Government of India.

3) Which of the following statements is/are incorrect with respect to Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021?

- It aims to ban all types of single use plastics which also includes commodities made of compostable plastic.
- Ban of single use plastics under the rules will be monitored by respective state governments.

Codes:

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : c

- Recently, the Ministry Of Environment Forest And Climate Change has notified the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021.
- These rules prohibit specific single-use plastic items which have "low utility and high littering potential" by 2022.
- The ban will not apply to commodities made of compostable plastic.
- The Central Pollution Control Board, along with state pollution bodies, will monitor the ban, identify violations, and impose penalties already prescribed under the Environmental Protection Act, 1986.

4) Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to India's National Flag?

- After undergoing several changes, the Tricolour was adopted as our national flag at a Congress Committee meeting in Karachi in 1931.
- The flag code of India, 2002 replace all pre-existing rules governing the correct display of the flag.
- Only flags that conform to the specifications of Bureau of Indian Standards can be used for official display.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Answer : b

The flag code did not replace the pre-existing rules governing the correct display of the flag. It was, however, an effort to bring together all the previous laws, conventions and practices.

5) Which of the following statements is/are incorrect with respect to Navroz festival?

1. It is celebrated at the time of the vernal equinox, marking the start of spring in the Northern Hemisphere.
2. In India it is celebrated twice a year based on both Iranian calendar and based on Shahenshahi calendar.

Codes:

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

Answer : d

Both statements are correct

6) Consider the following statements with reference to Ramsar Sites in India:

1. India currently has 46 Ramsar sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance.
2. Uttar Pradesh has the most number of Ramsar Sites in India.
3. Currently, no sites in India are listed under Montreux record, a register of wetland sites where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur.

Select the CORRECT answer code:

- a. 2 only
- b. 1 and 2 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. None of the above

Answer : b

- Four more wetlands from India get recognition from the Ramsar Secretariat as Ramsar sites recently.
- With this, the number of Ramsar sites in India is increased to 46.
- Uttar Pradesh, with 8 Ramsar Sites, has the most number of Ramsar Sites in India.

7) Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to Congressional Gold Medal?

1. It is one of the highest civilian awards in the United States.
2. Mahatma Gandhi was the first Indian to receive this award in 1940.

Codes:

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

Answer : a

- Recently, a resolution has been reintroduced in the US House of Representatives to posthumously award the Congressional Gold Medal to Mahatma Gandhi for his contributions made through his methods of non-violence.
- If given the award, Mahatma Gandhi would become the first Indian to receive the Congressional Gold Medal, which is the highest civilian award in the US.



8) Which of the following statements are correct with respect to Parole and Furlough under the Prisons Act of 1894?

1. Parole is not a right, and is given to a prisoner for a specific reason, such as a death in the family or a wedding of a blood relative.
2. The period of furlough granted to a prisoner is treated as remission of his sentence.

Codes:

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

Answer : c

9) Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to EEHV-1 Herpesvirus?

1. It highly affects the African elephant population and causes very less fatality on Asian elephants.
2. It causes respiratory disease among elephants, so far there is no effective cure or treatment for the disease.

Codes:

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

Answer : d

(EHV-1) is a type of herpesvirus, which can cause a highly fatal haemorrhagic disease when transmitted to young Asian elephants.

It has a very high mortality rate in Asian elephants, which kills up to 80% of severely affected individuals.

Unlike the common herpes-simplex viruses, which attacks the skin and lies latent in nerve cells, the elephant virus attacks endothelial cells the cells that line blood vessels, the heart and other organs.

10) Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to National Automobile Scrappage Policy?

1. All official vehicles more than 25 years' old will be scrapped, irrespective of their working conditions.
2. The state governments may offer a road-tax rebate of up to 25% for personal vehicles to owners to scrap old and unfit vehicles.

Codes:

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

Answer : b

Old vehicles will have to pass a fitness test before re-registration and as per the policy government commercial vehicles more than 15 years old and private vehicles which are over 20 years old will be scrapped.

11) Consider the following statements about Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol:

1. It is legally binding and came into force in 2019.
2. Under the amendment, India's reduction of Hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) will begin from 2028 and target is to reduce it by 80% by the year 2047.

Select the CORRECT answer code:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : c

12) Consider the following statements with respect to Nuclear Fusion:

1. It is defined as the combining of two lighter nuclei into a heavier one by releasing positively charged alpha particles.
2. Currently all commercial nuclear reactors are based on nuclear fusion technology.

Select the CORRECT answer code:

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

Answer : a

13) Consider the following statements with respect to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):

1. It is an intergovernmental body of the United Nation (UN) that publishes Assessment Reports once in every five years.
2. It was established by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1988.
3. Participation in the IPCC is open to all member countries of the WMO and UN.

Select the CORRECT answer code:

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

Answer : a

- It is an intergovernmental body of the United Nations (UN) for assessing the science related to climate change.
- It was created in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- The objective of the IPCC is to provide governments at all levels with scientific information that they can use to develop climate policies.
- IPCC reports are also a key input into international climate change negotiations.
- The IPCC is an organization of governments that are members of the United Nations or WMO.
- The IPCC currently has 195 members.
- The IPCC published its First AR in 1990, second in 1995, third in 2001, fourth in 2007 and the Fifth Assessment Report in 2014.

14) Consider the following statements with respect to Net Zero Emissions:

1. It is a condition in which a country would bring down its emissions to zero, taking pre-industrial levels as base range.
2. India has not yet committed to a net zero timeline.

Select the CORRECT answer code:

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

Answer : b

It does not mean that a country would bring down its emissions to zero.

Rather, net-zero is a state in which a country's emissions are compensated by absorption and removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

Absorption of the emissions can be increased by creating more carbon sinks such as forests, while removal of gases from the atmosphere requires futuristic technologies such as carbon capture and storage. This way, it is even possible for a country to have negative emissions, if the absorption and removal exceed the actual emissions.

15) Consider the following statements with respect to Permafrost:

1. It is any ground that remains completely frozen or colder for at least two years straight.
2. It can be found in cold places like Tibetan Plateau, high-altitude regions like Rocky Mountains, and on the floor of the Arctic Ocean.
3. Although the ground is frozen in permafrost regions, they are not always covered in snow.

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

16) The Advanced Chaff Technology developed by DRDO is associated with-

- a. Search and Rescue
- b. Intelligence gathering
- c. Underwater Detection Capabilities
- d. Protection from hostile radar threats

Answer : d

17) Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) Amendment Bill, 2021?

1. DICGC cannot increase the flat rate premium of 0.15% for a bank from its total outstanding deposits.
2. The maximum limit of insurance cover for bank deposits is Rs. 5 lakh per depositor.

Codes:

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

Answer : b

At present, it charges a flat premium rate of 0.15% from the bank out of its total outstanding deposits to meet its liability to pay the insured amount to the depositor.

As per the amendment bill, with the approval of RBI, DICGC can increase the deposit insurance premium for a bank based on its risk profile.

18) Consider the following statements with respect to Rice Fortification?

1. It is a process of deliberately adding essential macronutrients such as iron, folic acid, vitamin B-12 to regular rice to improve its nutritional quality.
2. In India, fortified rice kernels are produced to extruder technology.
3. The cooking of fortified rice requires special procedure and shelf life usually lasts for 3 months.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

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

Answer : b

- Rice fortification is a process of adding **micronutrients** to regular rice.



- For rice fortification in India, ‘extrusion’ is considered to be the best technology, which involves the production of fortified rice kernels (FRKs) from a mixture using an extruder machine.
- These kernels have a shelf life of at least 12 months.
- The cooking of fortified rice does not require any special procedure.
- The rice needs to be cleaned and washed in the normal way before cooking. After cooking, fortified rice retains the same physical properties and micronutrient levels as it had before cooking.
- Fortified rice will be packed in jute bags with the logo (‘+F’) and the line “Fortified with Iron, Folic Acid, and Vitamin B12” mandatorily printed on the pack.

19) Binance, sometimes seen in news refers to which of the following?

- a. A Cryptocurrency Exchange
- b. A notice issued to a fugitive economic offender
- c. A microprocessor to carry out cryptographic operations
- d. A stage of a market cycle where asset prices rise to irrationally high levels

Answer : a

20) Consider the following statements with reference to Greenland:

1. It is the world’s largest island between the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans.
2. It has three-quarters of its surface covered with a permanent ice sheets.
3. Recently, for the 1st time on record, the summit of Greenland received rainfall and not snow.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : d