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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. India does not shine when only some gleam

The article talks about the need for a new architecture of economic growth which begins from the ground, to create better lives for the majority of the population in India.

What are the issues?

Widening Inequalities:

- The pandemic has revealed structural flaws in countries' economies.
- According to a report released by the World Bank, while India's stock markets rose during the pandemic and the very rich became even richer, the number of people who are poor in India (with incomes of \$2 or less a day) is estimated to have increased by 75 million.
 - This accounts for nearly 60% of the global increase in poverty, the report says.
- When only some shine, India does not shine.

Global indices:

- The Global Hunger Index which places India 94 amongst 107 countries put India under serious category with a score of 27.2.
 - India ranks lower than her neighbours such as Bangladesh (75) and Pakistan (88).
- According to the WHR20 Happiness Report released in March 2021, Indian citizens are amongst the least happy in the world.
 - The report released by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network compares citizens' own perceptions of their well-being in 153 countries.
 - India ranks a very low 144th.
- According to global assessments, India ranks 120 out of 122 countries in water quality, and 179 out of 180 in air quality.

Lapsing to the old ways:

- Instead of the new normal post-pandemic, sadly, the old ways are returning with the government back to chasing its \$5 trillion GDP target.

- Wealth creators (large companies and wealthy individuals) are being touted as the solution for growth.
- Power is being centralised.

Way Forward:

- New ways must be adopted to create a new post-pandemic normal.
- India urgently needs a new strategy for growth, founded on new pillars.
 - One is broader progress measures as GDP does not account for vital environmental and social conditions that contribute to human well-being and the sustainability of the planet.
- The universal solution for improving well-being is for local communities to work together to find their own solutions within their countries, and in their villages and towns as they know which factors in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals matter the most to them.
- Communities must be allowed to, and assisted to, find their own solutions to complex problems.
- The old global economy was very good for migrant capital. However, due to the restrictions on mobility of varying degrees, and nationwide lockdowns, the pandemic has revealed that the old economy was not good for migrant workers.
 - Their “ease of living” was often sacrificed for capital’s “ease of doing business”.
- The Indian economy must grow to create more incomes for its billion-plus citizens.
- Until the incomes of all rise, India will be a poor country from the perspective of the majority of its citizens, no matter how large its GDP.
- Moreover, economic growth must no longer be at the cost of the environment.

2. China cuts Hong Kong’s elected seats

Context:

China’s legislature formally approved sweeping changes to Hong Kong’s electoral system that will see a sharply reduced share of directly elected representatives and a tightening of Beijing’s control in the Special Administrative Region (SAR).

Details:

- The changes were passed by the 167 members of the National People’s Congress (NPC) Standing Committee.

- China's President signed orders to promulgate the amended annexes to Hong Kong's Basic Law, the constitution that has governed the SAR under the "one country, two systems" model since its return to China in 1997.

What has changed?

- The amendments mark the biggest changes to Hong Kong's political system since the handover, and reduce the share of directly elected representatives in its Legislative Council (LegCo).
- While previously, 35 of its 70 members were directly elected, that number has been reduced by 15.
- Now, Hongkongers will only be able to directly vote for 20 representatives while the size of LegCo has been expanded to 90, thereby drastically reducing the share of elected representatives.
- The 70 others will be broadly chosen from pro-establishment bodies.
- The other big change is the setting up of a Candidate Eligibility Review Committee "for reviewing and confirming the eligibility of candidates".
- Also, a Committee for Safeguarding National Security will be set up that will make findings as to whether a candidate for Election Committee member or for the office of Chief Executive meets the legal requirements.
- There will be no scope for legally challenging the findings.
- District Councillors, who are directly elected, will no longer have a place either in the Election Committee or in LegCo.

Concerns-Erosion of autonomy:

- Pro-democracy figures in Hong Kong have seen the political changes, as well as national security law that punishes subversion as the most significant changes in the "one country, two systems" model and as dramatically eroding the autonomy enjoyed by the SAR previously.
- The National Security Law allows Beijing to draft national security laws for Hong Kong and also operate its national security organs in the Special Administrative Region (SAR).

"One country, two systems":

- Since the return to China in 1997, Hong Kong, a former British colony, has been governed by the Basic Law, which allows the territory "to enjoy executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication", barring matters of defence and foreign affairs.
- Article 23 of the Basic Law requires Hong Kong to pass national security legislation, but past attempts to do so were shelved amid protests.

3. Good neighbours

Context:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently visited Bangladesh to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the war of liberation and the centenary year of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Tracing the journey of the relationship

- The relationship between India and Bangladesh has vacillated through highs and lows depending on the regimes in power.
- It had remained cordial until the assassination of Bangladesh's founding President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, followed by a period of military rule and the rise of General Ziaur Rahman who became President and also assassinated in 1981.
- It thawed during the period of 1982-1991 when a military-led government by General H.M. Ershad ruled the country.
- Since Bangladesh's return to parliamentary democracy in 1991, we have seen drastic developments. In the last decade, India-Bangladesh relations have warmed up, entering a new era of cooperation, and moving beyond historical and cultural ties to become more assimilated in the areas of trade, connectivity, energy, and defence.

Achievements and Progress

- Both the countries have solved the border issues amicably by ratifying the historic Land Boundary Agreement in 2015, where enclaves were exchanged allowing inhabitants to choose their country of residence and become citizens of either India or Bangladesh.
- The Bangladesh government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has uprooted anti-India insurgency elements from its borders, making the India-Bangladesh border one of the region's most peaceful.
- This has allowed India to make a massive redeployment of resources to its more contentious borders elsewhere along India's borders and tension prone areas.

Bilateral trade between India and Bangladesh

- Bangladesh today is India's biggest trading partner in South Asia with exports to Bangladesh in FY 2018-19 at \$9.21 billion and imports at \$1.04 billion.

- India has offered duty-free access to multiple Bangladeshi products.
- India has extended three lines of credit to Bangladesh in recent years amounting to \$8 billion for the construction of roads, railways, bridges, and ports.

Issues

- In the last eight years until 2019, only 51% of the first \$800 million line of credit has been utilised whilst barely any amount from the next two lines of credit worth \$6.5 billion has been mobilised.
- This delay and progress is due to red-tapism from India's end and from Bangladesh's side, it may be due to the slow implementation of the project.

The connectivity boost

Connectivity between the two countries has greatly improved.

- A direct bus service between Kolkata and Agartala runs a route distance of 500 km, as compared to the 1,650 km it would have run through the Chicken's Neck, to remain within India.
- There are three passenger and freight railway services running between the two countries, with two more routes on their way to be restored.
- Recently, a 1.9-kilometre long bridge, the Maitri Setu, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, connecting Sabroom in India with Ramgarh in Bangladesh.

Enhanced cooperation in shipping and inland water trade.

- Bangladesh allows the shipment of goods from its Mongla and Chattogram (Chittagong) seaports carried by road, rail, and waterways to Agartala (Tripura) via Akhura; Dawki (Meghalaya) via Tamabil; Sutarkandi (Assam) via Sheola, and Srimantpur (Tripura) via Bibirbazar.
- This allows landlocked Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura to access open water routes through the Chattogram and Mongla ports.

Bones of contention

- Despite the remarkable progress, the unresolved Teesta water sharing issue looms large.
- Border killings are yet to stop. The year 2020 saw the highest number of border shootings by the Border Security Force. The shots are fired at civilians, usually cattle traders, who are usually unarmed, trying to illegally cross the border.

- The government's proposal to implement the National Register of Citizens across the whole of India may result in a bleak atmosphere between the countries.
- It remains to be seen how India addresses the deportation of illegal Muslim immigrants, some of whom claim to have come from Bangladesh.

China's influence in the region

- In spite of its 'Neighborhood First Policy', India has been losing its influence in the region to China.
- Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives, once considered traditional Indian allies, are increasingly tilting towards China due to the Asian giant's massive trade, infrastructural and defence investments in these countries.
- Bhutan also does not abide by Indian influence as evinced by its withdrawal from the BBIN (Bhutan-Bangladesh-India-Nepal) motor vehicles agreement.
- China, in lieu of its cheque-book diplomacy, is well-entrenched in South Asia, including Bangladesh, with which it enjoys significant economic and defence relations.

Way forward

- India-Bangladesh relations have been gaining positive momentum over the last decade.
- Going forward India has to be generous enough to let the water flow (the Teesta issue has to be settled) and the issues concerning illegal migration has to be addressed by well-established protocols of both countries.
- Trade could be more balanced if non-tariff barriers from the Indian side could be removed.
- These small but important steps can remove long-standing snags in a relationship that otherwise is gradually coming of age in 50 years.

Conclusion

- To make the recent gains irreversible, both countries need to continue working on the three Cs – cooperation, collaboration, and consolidation.

4. Work with India on funding infra, Sitharaman urges NDB

Context:

Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister has urged the New Development Bank (NDB) to consider working closely with India's new development financing institution for funding infrastructure.

New Development Bank (NDB):

- NDB was set up by the BRICS nations in 2014 at the 6th BRICS Summit at Fortaleza, Brazil.
 - In the Fortaleza Declaration, the leaders stressed that the NDB will strengthen cooperation among BRICS and will supplement the efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global development.
- It is a multilateral development bank headquartered in Shanghai, China.
- The bank is set up to foster greater financial and development cooperation among the five emerging markets.
- It mobilises resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries, to supplement existing efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global growth and development.
- The NDB has so far approved 18 projects in India, including emergency loans of \$2 billion to support health spending and economic recovery in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- *Voting:* In the New Development Bank each participant country will be assigned one vote, and none of the countries will have veto power.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

5. A road to progress

The article discusses how cooperatives and unions are a pathway to financial stability for women dairy farmers.

White Revolution:

- Women dairy farmers have contributed immensely to India's 'White Revolution'.
- Their success despite a majority of dairy farmers owning only small landholdings (typically households own two to five cows) is also a testament to the success of the dairy cooperatives models that were at the heart of Operation Flood.
- The approach made it possible to enhance backward and forward linkages in the dairy value chain, paving the way for freeing small farmers from the clutches of middlemen, and guaranteed minimum procurement price for milk.

Challenges facing Small Dairy Farmers:

- A major challenge in this sector is information asymmetry among farmers.
- Statistics indicate that small and marginal farmers have access to only 50-70% of the resources that large and medium farmers have.
- The majority of the dairy farmers own small landholdings.
- Many of the dairy farmers have not had a formal education and lack financial literacy.

Training the dairy farmers:

- A study by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) indicates that 93% of women farmers who receive training alongside financial support succeed in their ventures, compared to the 57% success rate of those who receive financial aid alone.
- The National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) organises farmer orientation programmes across the country, under which women farmers are trained in scientific best practices on animal health, fodder quality, clean milk production, and accounts management.

Enhanced incomes:

- There are more than 1,90,000 dairy cooperative societies across the country, with approximately 6 million women members.
- A study conducted on Women Dairy Cooperative Society (WDCS) members across Rajasthan showed that with the income generated through dairying, 31% of the women had converted their mud houses to cement structures, while 39% had constructed concrete sheds for their cattle.

Enhancing Bargaining Power of Women:

- The presence of collectives in the form of cooperatives and milk unions plays a significant role in enhancing the knowledge and bargaining power of women.
- Women-led cooperatives also provide fertile ground for grooming women from rural areas for leadership positions.
- In many instances, this becomes the first step for women in breaking free from traditional practices.

Conclusions:

Many individual women dairy farmers have not had a formal education, but through the process of dairying and working with larger collectives, such as milk

unions and cooperatives, they have mastered the nuances of finance and marketing. These unions and cooperatives provide a pathway to success and financial stability.

6. Manipur retracts letter on refugees

Context:

The Manipur government has withdrawn a letter directing officials to not set up any camps for Myanmar nationals crossing the border into India and to politely turn away those seeking refuge.

- While the Union Home Ministry asserted that the refugees should be identified and deported, the Mizoram government is planning to provide them employment under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Concerns:

History of influx:

- Extremism, counter-insurgency and sectarian violence have driven people out of Myanmar into India in the past as well.
- More than **1,200 Buddhists and Christians from Myanmar's Arakan State had taken refuge in Mizoram's Lawngtlai district in 2017**. They fled their homes after the Myanmar Army clashed with the extremist Arakan Army. Thousands of Chins are said to be living in Mizoram for more than 40 years now.
- **Manipur**, too, has been dealing with the influx issue, for a long time. The villages of the Kuki-Zomi have often had people crossing over from Myanmar.

Porous border:

- Much of the border with Myanmar is without any fence. **The tough terrain along the border comes in the way of maintaining airtight vigil along the border.**
 - Despite the potential of fences in stemming influx of refugees, some are against the idea of fencing the border, insisting that a fence would make "free movement" of border residents into each other's country difficult. There are more than 250 villages with about 3,00,000 people living within 10 km of the India-Myanmar border.

- India and Myanmar had in 2018 agreed to streamline the movement of people within 16 km of the border on either side.

Differences between State government and central government:

- The Centre's directive is at complete odds with the State government's stand.
- The Mizoram government favours providing refuge to the Chins, who are ethnically related to the majority Mizos in the State, but the Ministry of Home Affairs has made it clear that "India is not a signatory to the **1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol theron**". The Ministry has pointed out that State governments have no powers to grant "refugee status to any foreigner".
- Mizoram is caught between a humanitarian urge and India's policy on refugees.

7. Researchers find new butterfly species

What's in News?

A new species has been added to the expanding list of butterflies in India.

- "Nacaduba sinhala ramaswamii" found in the Agasthyamala in the Western Ghats a decade ago has been added to the Journal of Threatened Taxa.
- The new taxon of Lycaenid butterflies belongs to the Nacaduba genus.
- Line Blues are small butterflies belonging to the subfamily Lycaenidae and their distribution ranges from India and Sri Lanka to the whole of southeastern Asia, Australia and Samoa.
- It is the first time that a butterfly species was discovered by an all-Indian research team from the Western Ghats.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. CJI's remarks on Uniform Civil Code

The Chief Justice of India (CJI) has lauded Goa's Uniform Civil Code and encouraged "intellectuals" indulging in "academic talk" to visit the state to learn more about it.

What is a Uniform Civil Code?

- A Uniform Civil Code is one that would provide for one law for the entire country, applicable to all religious communities in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc.
- Article 44, one of the directive principles of the Constitution lays down that the state shall endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for the citizens throughout the territory of India.
- These, as defined in Article 37, are not justiciable (not enforceable by any court) but the principles laid down therein are fundamental in governance.

Greater role for State

- Fundamental rights are enforceable in a court of law.
- While Article 44 uses the words "the state shall endeavour", other Articles in the 'Directive Principles' chapter use words such as "in particular strive"; "shall, in particular, direct its policy"; "shall be the obligation of the state" etc.
- Article 43 mentions "state shall endeavour by suitable legislation" while the phrase "by suitable legislation" is absent in Article 44.
- All this implies that the duty of the state is greater in other directive principles than in Article 44.

What are more important – fundamental rights or directive principles?

- There is no doubt that fundamental rights are more important.
- The Supreme Court held in *Minerva Mills* (1980): Indian Constitution is founded on the bedrock of the balance between Parts III (Fundamental Rights) and IV (Directive Principles).

- To give absolute primacy to one over the other is to disturb the harmony of the Constitution.
- Article 31C inserted by the 42nd Amendment in 1976, however, lays down that if a law is made to implement any directive principle, it cannot be challenged on the ground of being violative of the FRs under Articles 14 and 19.

Does India not already have a uniform code in civil matters?

- Indian laws do follow a uniform code in most civil matters – Indian Contract Act, Civil Procedure Code, Sale of Goods Act, Transfer of Property Act, Partnership Act, Evidence Act etc.
- States, however, have made hundreds of amendments and therefore in certain matters, there is diversity even under these secular civil laws.
- Recently, several states refused to be governed by the uniform Motor Vehicles Act, 2019.

What about personal laws?

- If the framers of the Constitution had intended to have a Uniform Civil Code, they would have given exclusive jurisdiction to Parliament in respect of personal laws, by including this subject in the Union List.
- But “personal laws” are mentioned in the Concurrent List.
- Last year, the Law Commission concluded that a Uniform Civil Code is neither feasible nor desirable.

Is there one common personal law for any religious community governing all its members?

- All Hindus of the country are not governed by one law, nor are all Muslims or all Christians.
- Not only British legal traditions, even those of the Portuguese and the French remain operative in some parts.
- In Jammu and Kashmir until August 5, 2019, local Hindu law statutes differed from central enactments.
- The Shariat Act of 1937 was extended to J&K a few years ago but has now been repealed.

Various customary laws

- Muslims of Kashmir were governed by a customary law, which in many ways was at variance with Muslim Personal Law in the rest of the country and was, in fact, closer to Hindu law.

- Even on the registration of marriage among Muslims, laws differ from place to place. It was compulsory in J&K (1981 Act), and is optional in Bengal, Bihar (both under 1876 Act), Assam (1935 Act) and Odisha (1949 Act).
- In the Northeast, there are more than 200 tribes with their own varied customary laws.
- The Constitution itself protects local customs in Nagaland. Similar protections are enjoyed by Meghalaya and Mizoram.
- Even reformed Hindu law, in spite of codification, protects customary practices.

How does the idea of a Uniform Civil Code relate to the fundamental right to religion?

- Article 25 lays down an individual's fundamental right to religion;
- Article 26(b) upholds the right of each religious denomination or any section thereof to "manage its own affairs in matters of religion";
- Article 29 defines the right to conserve distinctive culture.
- An individual's freedom of religion under Article 25 is subject to "public order, health, morality" and other provisions relating to FRs, but a group's freedom under Article 26 has not been subjected to other fundamental rights
- In the Constituent Assembly, there was division on the issue of putting UCC in the fundamental rights chapter. The matter was settled by a vote.
- By a 5:4 majority, the fundamental rights sub-committee headed by Sardar Patel held that the provision was outside the scope of FRs and therefore the UCC was made less important than freedom of religion.

Minority opinion in the Constituent Assembly

- Some members sought to immunize Muslim Personal Law from state regulation.
- Mohammed Ismail, who thrice tried unsuccessfully to get Muslim Personal Law exempted from Article 44, said a secular state should not interfere with the personal law of people.
- B Pocker Saheb said he had received representations against a common civil code from various organisations, including Hindu organisations.
- Hussain Imam questioned whether there could ever be uniformity of personal laws in a diverse country like India.
- B R Ambedkar said, "no government can use its provisions in a way that would force the Muslims to revolt".
- Alladi Krishnaswami, who was in favour of a UCC, conceded that it would be unwise to enact UCC ignoring strong opposition from any community.
- *Gender justice was never discussed in these debates.*

How did the debate on a common code for Hindus play out?

- In June 1948, Rajendra Prasad, President of the Constituent Assembly, warned Nehru that to introduce “basic changes” in personal law was to impose “progressive ideas” of a “microscopic minority” on the Hindu community as a whole.
- Others opposed to reforms in Hindu law included Sardar Patel, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, M A Ayyangar, M M Malaviya and Kailash Nath Katju.
- When the debate on the Hindu Code Bill took place in December 1949, 23 of 28 speakers opposed it.
- On September 15, 1951, President Prasad threatened to use his powers of returning the Bill to Parliament or vetoing it. Ambedkar eventually had to resign.
- Nehru agreed to trifurcation of the Code into separate Acts and diluted several provisions.

2. Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process (HoA-IP)

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has attended the Heart of Asia Conference in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process

- The Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process (HoA-IP) is an initiative of Afghanistan and Turkey, which was officially launched at a conference hosted by Turkey in Istanbul on 2 November 2011.
- Since then, Afghanistan supported by fourteen participating countries and supporting countries beyond the region as well as 12 Regional and International Organizations is leading and coordinating this Process.

Goals of the Process

- The HoA-IP aims at promoting and strengthening peace, security, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan and in the region.
- The HoA-IP has become one of the most interactive voluntary state-groupings in the HoA Region.
- It brings Afghanistan’s immediate and extended neighbours as well as international supporters together through the following focus areas:

1. Political Consultations
2. Implementation of the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)
3. Cooperation with Regional Organizations

GS 3 :Economy, Science and Technology,Environment

3. Revival of Millet Cultivation

Why in News

An **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)** supported initiative to **revive Kodo and Kutki Millets cultivation**, started in the year 2013-14 in Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh, has given new life to the forgotten crops.

- IFAD is a specialized agency of the **United Nations** and was one of the major outcomes of the **1974 World Food Conference**.
- Founded in 1977, IFAD **focuses on rural poverty reduction**, working with poor rural populations in developing countries to **eliminate poverty, hunger, and malnutrition**.

Key Points

- **About the Project:**
 - **Beginning:**
 - The project was started with **1,497 women-farmers from 40 villages** - mostly from the **Gonda and Baiga tribes** - growing these two minor millets (Kodo and Kutki) on 749 acres.
 - **Seed and Training:**
 - The identified farmers were **supplied good-quality seeds and trained by scientists from the Jawaharlal Nehru Agricultural University** in Jabalpur and the local Krishi Vigyan Kendra - on field preparation, line-sowing (as opposed to conventional broadcasting by hand) and application of compost, zinc, bavistin fungicide and other specific plant protection chemicals.
 - **Self Help Groups:**
 - A federation of the **farmers' self-help groups** undertook procurement of the produce and also its mechanical de-hulling (the traditional manual pounding process to remove husk from the grain was time-consuming).
- **Impact:**
 - Helped in increasing the **number of farmers growing kodo-kutki** in the project area **to 14,301 in 2019-20**.
 - Helped in increasing the acreage to 14,876 acres.

- Helped in **meeting nutritional goals** (fighting malnourishment among children).
- Helped in **reviving millet cultivation** (crop yields are 1.5-2 times higher than before).

Millets

- **About:**
 - Millets are often referred to as **Superfood** and its production can be seen as an approach for **sustainable agriculture** and a healthy world.
- **Millets in India:**
 - The three major millet crops currently grown in India are **jowar (sorghum), bajra (pearl millet) and ragi (finger millet)**.
 - Along with that, India grows a rich array of bio-genetically diverse and **indigenous varieties of “small millets” like kodo, kutki, chenna and sanwa.**
 - **Major producers** include Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Haryana.
- **Need for Reviving Millet Cultivation:**
 - **Nutritional Security:**
 - Millets are **less expensive and nutritionally superior** to wheat & rice owing to their high protein, fibre, vitamins and minerals like iron content.
 - Millets are also **rich in calcium and magnesium**.
 - **For example**, Ragi is known to have the highest calcium content among all the food grains.
 - Its **high iron content can fight high prevalence of anaemia** in Indian women of reproductive age and infants.
 - **Climate Resilient:**
 - They are also harder and **drought-resistant crops**, which has to do with their **short growing season** (70-100 days, as against 120-150 days for paddy/wheat) and **lower water requirement** (350-500 mm versus 600-1,200 mm).
 - **Economic Security:**
 - As low investment is needed for production of millets, these can prove to be a sustainable income source for farmers.
 - **Can Tackle Health Issues:**
 - Millets can help **tackle lifestyle problems and health challenges such as obesity and diabetes** as they are **gluten-free and have a low glycemic index** (a relative ranking of carbohydrates in foods according to how they affect blood glucose levels).
 - Millets are rich in **antioxidants**.
- **Challenges:**

- **Preference for Wheat:**
 - Wheat has gluten proteins that swell and form networks on adding water to the flour, making the dough more cohesive and elastic.
 - The resultant chapattis come out soft, which isn't possible with millets that are gluten-free.
- **Increased Demand for Processed Food:**
 - India has seen a jump in consumer demand for **ultra-processed and ready-to-eat products**, which are high in sodium, sugar, trans-fats and even some carcinogens.
 - With the **intense marketing of processed foods**, even the rural population started perceiving mill-processed rice and wheat as more aspirational.
- **National Food Security Act Promoting Other Grains:**
 - In rural India, the **National Food Security Act of 2013** entitles three-fourths of all households to **5 kg of wheat or rice** per person per month at Rs 2 and Rs 3 per kg, respectively, thus **reducing the demand for millets**.
- **Indian Initiatives:**
 - **Promoting Millets:**
 - The Union Agriculture Ministry, in April 2018, **declared millets as "Nutri-Cereals"**, considering their "high nutritive value" and also "anti-diabetic properties".
 - 2018 was also observed as '**National Year of Millets**'.
 - **Increase in MSP:**
 - The government has hiked the **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** of Millets, which came as a big price incentive for farmers.
 - Further, to provide a steady market for the produce, the government has included millets in the public distribution system.
 - **Input Support:**
 - The government has introduced provision of seed kits and inputs to farmers, building value chains through **Farmer Producer Organisations** and supporting the marketability of millets.
 - **International Initiative:**
 - The **United Nation General Assembly** adopted an India-sponsored resolution to mark 2023 as the **International Year of Millets**.

Way Forward

- Farming of millets **deserves encouragement** especially in view of their climate resilience, short cropping duration and ability to grow on poor soils, hilly terrains and with little rain.
- Because of their accessibility to the poor, they **can play an essential role in providing nourishment to people across all income categories** and supporting climate adaptation of rainfed farming systems.

4. Asteroid Apophis

Why in News

Recently, the **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)** has ruled out the possibility of the dreaded **asteroid Apophis** causing any damage to the Earth for the next 100 years.

Key Points

- **Size:**
 - Apophis is a **near-Earth asteroid** with a relatively **large size** (about 335 meters wide).
- **Name & Discovery:**
 - Named after the ancient **Egyptian god of chaos and darkness**, it was **discovered in 2004**, after which NASA had said that it was one of the asteroids that posed the greatest threat to Earth.
 - Apophis was predicted to come threateningly close to us in the years 2029 and 2036, but NASA later ruled these events out.
 - However, there were still **fears about a possible collision in 2068**.
- **Near Earth Flight:**
 - Recently, the asteroid flew past Earth on **5th March 2021**, coming **within 17 million km of our planet**. During this approach, scientists used radar observations to study in detail the asteroid's orbit around the sun.
- **Impact if it Hits Earth:**

Asteroids

- **About:**
 - Asteroids are **rocky objects that orbit the Sun**, much smaller than planets.
 - They are also called minor planets.
 - According to NASA, **9,94,383 is the count of known asteroids**, the remnants from the formation of the solar system over 4.6 billion years ago.

- **Categorization:** Asteroids are divided into **three classes**:
 - **First Group:**
 - Those found in the **main asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter**, which is estimated to contain somewhere between 1.1-1.9 million asteroids.
 - **Second Group:**
 - It is that of trojans, which are **asteroids that share an orbit with a larger planet**. NASA reports the presence of Jupiter, Neptune and Mars trojans. In 2011, they reported an **Earth trojan** as well.
 - **Third Group:**
 - It is **Near-Earth Asteroids (NEA)**, which have orbits that pass close by the Earth. Those that cross the Earth's orbit are called Earth-crossers. More than 10,000 such asteroids are known, out of which over 1,400 are classified as **Potentially Hazardous Asteroids (PHAs)**.
 - NASA's Center for Near-Earth Object Study (CNEOS) determines the times and distances of these objects, when their approach to the Earth is close, through the Asteroid Watch Widget.

Potentially Hazardous Asteroids

- It means that an **asteroid has the potential to make threatening close approaches to the Earth**.
- Specifically, all asteroids with a **Minimum Orbit Intersection Distance (MOID)** of 0.05 AU (which is about 7,480,000 Km) or less and an Absolute Magnitude (H) of 22.0 (about 150 mt in diameter) or less are considered PHAs.
 - **Minimum Orbit Intersection Distance** is a method for calculating the minimum distance between two almost overlapping elliptical orbits.
 - The **Astronomical Unit (AU)** is the distance between the Earth and the Sun and is roughly 150 million km.
 - The **absolute magnitude** is a measure of the star's luminosity i.e. the total amount of energy radiated by the star every second.

5. PRISM Scheme

The Ministry of Science & Technology has inaugurated an Alignment and Awareness Event for the publicity of the DSIR-PRISM Scheme.

PRISM Scheme

- PRISM stands for Promoting Innovations in Individuals, Start-ups and MSMEs.
- It is an initiative of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR).
- It is aimed at transforming an individual innovator into a successful technopreneur by promoting, supporting, and funding implementable and commercially viable innovations created for society.
- Under the initiative, an Indian innovator- student, professional and common citizen – is provided technical, strategic, and financial assistance by DSIR for idea development, prototype development and pilot scaling, and patenting.
- The programme is implemented across various sectors from energy to healthcare to waste management and others.

Grants under the scheme

The grant is given in two phases:

1. Phase I and Phase II, catering to both the initial innovation stage and the advanced enterprise setup phase through DSIR outreach-cum-cluster innovation centres available throughout India.
2. The grant amount in Phase I is around Rs. 2.0 lakhs to Rs. 20.00 lakhs and in Phase II maximum of Rs. 50.00 lakhs.

Success of the scheme

- The scheme has been instrumental in supporting individual innovators enabling inclusive development of India.
- It has extended its support to any citizen through direct benefit transfer in the core technology areas such as-

Affordable Healthcare, Water, Sewage Management, Green Technology, Clean Energy, Industrially Utilizable Smart Materials, Waste to Wealth aligned with our national objectives

6. Tata - Mistry Judgement

Why in News

Recently, the **Supreme Court** overturned the **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) decision** and upheld **Tata Group's decision to remove Cyrus Pallonji Mistry as the Executive Chairman and Director of Tata Sons.**

Key Points

- **Supreme Court Observations:**
 - **Minority shareholders** or their representatives are **not automatically entitled to a seat** on the private company's board like a small shareholder's representative.
 - The provisions contained in the **Companies Act 2013** only protects the **rights of small shareholders** of listed companies by asking such companies to have on their board at least one director elected by such small shareholders.
 - Since the **Mistry family and the Shapoorji Pallonji (SP) Group** are not small shareholders, but minority shareholders, there is no statutory provision which gives them the "**right to claim proportionate representation,**" on the board of Tata Sons.
 - **Private companies**, which have **minority shareholders**, are **free to make an enabling provision** but are **under no statutory obligation** to give minority shareholder seats on the board.

Minority Shareholders

- They are the equity holders of a firm **who do not enjoy the voting power of the firm by virtue of his or her below 50% ownership** of the firm's equity capital.

Small Shareholders

- According to the Companies Act, small shareholders is a shareholder or group of shareholders who hold shares of nominal value of not more than Rs. 20,000.

The Companies Act 2013

- It is an Indian company law which regulates incorporation of a company, responsibilities of a company, directors, dissolution of a company.
- **Significance of the Judgement:**
 - Though the judgment does not directly impact the right of minority shareholders, such shareholders will have to ensure that they have a contract with the majority shareholders or the promoters of the company to ensure they have adequate representation on the board.

National Company Law Appellate Tribunal

- It was **constituted under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013** for hearing appeals against the orders of **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)**.

- NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by NCLT(s) under the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC)**.
 - NCLAT also hears appeals against the orders passed by **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India**.
- NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal to hear and dispose of appeals against any direction issued or decision made or order passed by the **Competition Commission of India (CCI)**.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Consider the following statements about NISAR:

1. It is a collaborative effort of ISRO and JAXA.
2. NISAR will be launched in the geosynchronous orbit.
3. The ISRO has provided the S-band radar and launch vehicle in this mission.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A 1 and 2 only
- B 2 only
- C 3 only
- D 1, 2 and 3

Answer : C

Explanation

- **NASA and ISRO** are collaborating on developing an **SUV-sized satellite called NISAR**, which will detect movements of the planet's surface as small as 0.4 inches over areas about half the size of a tennis court. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- The name 'NISAR' is short for NASA-ISRO-SAR.
 - SAR here refers to the Synthetic Aperture Radar that NASA will use to measure changes in the surface of the Earth.
 - It refers to a technique for producing high-resolution images. Because of the precision, the radar can penetrate clouds and darkness, which means that it can collect data day and night in any weather.
- The satellite will be launched in 2022 from the Satish Dhawan Space Center in Sriharikota (Andhra Pradesh) into a **near-polar orbit**. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**

- In this mission, NASA will provide one of the radars for the satellite, a high-rate communication subsystem for science data, GPS receivers and a payload data subsystem.
 - NISAR will be equipped with the largest reflector antenna ever launched by NASA.
- **ISRO will provide** the spacecraft bus, the second type of radar (called the **S-band radar**), the **launch vehicle** and associated launch services. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

2. Consider the following statements:

1. The Khajuraho temples belong to the Vesara style of architecture.
2. Khajuraho temples were built by the Chalukyas of Badami.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A 1 only
- B 2 only
- C Both 1 and 2
- D Neither 1 nor 2

Answer :D

Explanation

- The **Khajuraho temples** are famous for their **nagara-style architectural symbolism** and their erotic sculptures. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
 - They are one of the nineteen identified **iconic destinations** in the country.
- The Khajuraho Group of Monuments is listed as a UNESCO world heritage site.
- Most Khajuraho temples were built between 885 AD and 1050 AD **by the Chandela dynasty. Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**

3. Which of the following are a bilateral exercise between the defence forces of India and Japan?

1. JIMEX

2. SHINYUU
3. Dharma Guardian
4. Malabar Exercise

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A 1 and 4 only
B 2 and 4 only
C 1 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer : D

Explanation

- India and Japan defence forces organize a series of bilateral exercises namely, **JIMEX** (naval), **SHINYUU Maitri** (Air Force), and **Dharma Guardian** (Army).
- Both countries also participate in **Malabar exercise** (Naval Exercise) with the USA (Malabar is **not a bilateral exercise**).
- **Hence, option D is correct.**

4. Consider the following statements:

1. The Cape Agulhas is the southern tip of Africa.
2. The Agulhas current is the cold-water current of Indian ocean.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A 1 only
B 2 only
C Both 1 and 2
D Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : A

Explanation

- The Cape of Good Hope is a rocky headland on the Atlantic coast of the Cape Peninsula in South Africa.

- A headland is a narrow piece of land which sticks out from the coast into the sea.
- The Cape of Good Hope route joins Eastern Asia and Europe to southern parts of Africa.
 - The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 provided a much shorter route from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean, making the long trip around Africa inefficient.
 - The Cape of Good Hope route is 8900 km longer than the Suez canal route and can take additional two weeks.
- A common misconception is that the Cape of Good Hope is the southern tip of Africa.
- Contemporary geographic knowledge instead states the **southernmost point of Africa is Cape Agulhas** about 150 km to the east-southeast. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The **warm-water Agulhas current** (Indian Ocean) meets the cold-water Benguela current (Atlantic ocean) between Cape Agulhas and Cape Point (about 1.2 km east of the Cape of Good Hope). **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**

5. Consider the following statements with respect to anaemia:

1. It is the condition of having a higher than normal number of red blood cells.
2. Deficiency of vitamin B12 is a common cause of anaemia.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Solution (b)

Anaemia is the condition of having a lower-than-normal number of red blood cells or quantity of haemoglobin.

It can make one feel tired, cold, dizzy, irritable and short of breath, among other symptoms.

A diet which does not contain enough iron, folic acid or vitamin B12 is a common cause of anaemia.

Some other conditions that may lead to anaemia include pregnancy, heavy periods, blood disorders or cancer, inherited disorders and infectious diseases.

Anaemia in our country:

- In 15 of these 22 states and UTs, more than half the children are anaemic. Similarly, more than 50 per cent women are anaemic in 14 of these states and UTs.
- The proportion of anaemic children and women is comparatively lower in Lakshadweep, Kerala, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland, and higher in Ladakh, Gujarat, J&K, and West Bengal, among others.

- o Trends in malaria case incidence between 2000 and 2014
- o Declared malaria objectives of affected countries
- o Informed opinions of WHO experts in the field

6. E-2020 initiative is a strategy to achieve which of the following goal of World Health Organization (WHO)?

- a) Global nutrition targets (2025)
- b) WHO global TB strategy (2016-35)
- c) Strategy for Non-communicable diseases (2020)
- d) Malaria (2016-2030)

Answer: D

Solution & Enrich Your Learning:

E-2020 initiative

It is a new Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016-2030, endorsed by World Health Assembly. Malaria 2016-2030 has set ambitious goals aimed at dramatically lowering the global malaria burden over this 15-year period. A key milestone for 2020 is the elimination of malaria in at least 10 countries that had the disease in 2015. To meet this target, countries must report zero indigenous cases in 2020. 21

countries have the potential to eliminate malaria by 2020. They were selected based on an analysis that looked at the likelihood of elimination across **3 key criteria**:

Mains Practice Questions

1. “When there is citizen participation in budgeting and closer engagement of citizens in the monitoring of civic works, there are better outcomes and fewer leakages.” In the light of the given statement discuss the utility of the Participatory Budgeting.

Approach

- Introduce by writing what is meant by the Participatory Budgeting.
- Write the benefits of the Participatory Budgeting in the governance.
- Mention some of the issues with the participatory budgeting.
- Conclude suitably.

2. Including more women in science and applied technologies is critical for the advancement of society. Discuss.

Approach

- Start the answer by mentioning the status of gender equality in India.
- Discuss the status of women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) fields.
- Suggest some measures to improve women’s participation in STEM fields.
- Conclude Suitably.