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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Compulsory Retirement:

What's in News?

The Ministry of Home Affairs has revealed that 13 officers have been retired in public interest.

Compulsory Retirement:

- An order of compulsory retirement is **not a punishment**.
- It **does not imply any stigma** or any suggestion of misbehaviour.
- The order has to be passed by the government on forming the opinion that **it is in the public interest to retire a government servant compulsorily**.
- The Supreme Court issued important principles regarding compulsory retirement **in the Baikunth Nath v Chief Medical Officer (1992) case**.
- The SC said, Principles of natural justice have no place in the context of an order of compulsory retirement.
 - However, this does not mean that judicial scrutiny is excluded altogether.
 - While the High Court or the Court would not examine the matter as an appellate **Court, they may interfere** if they are satisfied that the **order passed is:**
 - mala fide
 - based on no evidence
 - arbitrary – in the sense that no reasonable person would form the requisite opinion on the given material.

2. Sri Lanka's China-backed tax haven clears final hurdle

Context:

The Supreme Court in Colombo ruled that the Chinese-funded **tax-free enclave** – the Colombo Port City project could go ahead with only minor tweaks.

- The largest single foreign investment in Sri Lanka is one of several **massive Asian infrastructure projects funded by China** as Beijing **increases its regional footprint**.
- Under the proposed legislation, the Port City will be **administered by a commission with unprecedented powers to fast track investment approvals**.

- Transactions within the Port City will be **denominated in foreign currency** and all **salaries earned by any worker will be tax-exempt**.

Background:

Opposition parties, civil society groups, and labour unions had **challenged the “Colombo Port City Economic Commission” Bill** in Sri Lanka’s Supreme Court.

Issue:

- The ruling Rajapaksa administration tabled a Bill, titled ‘**Colombo Port City Economic Commission**’, in Parliament, **outlining proposed laws for the \$1.4 billion-Port City** being built on reclaimed land at Colombo’s seafront.
- It is **touted** by the government as an **investment hub for foreign capital**.
- However, opposition argues that it directly **affects Sri Lanka’s sovereignty**.
 - They have **challenged the constitutional validity** of the proposed legislation for the Port City.
 - The clauses **prohibit investment in the Port City in Sri Lankan rupees**, which will keep out Sri Lankans.
- In addition to the legal challenge, the government also faces sharp criticism from some of its backers, including sections of Sri Lanka’s influential Buddhist clergy.
- They fiercely opposed Indian involvement at the East Container Terminal at the Colombo Port.
 - Sri Lanka then **backed out of an agreement with India and Japan** to develop the **East Container Terminal (ECT) at the Colombo Port**.

3. Planning for future waves of the pandemic

Context:

- The **second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in India** and the probability of more such waves in the coming times.
 - The COVID-19 trajectory in other countries shows the possibility of multiple waves of the pandemic. **Japan is experiencing the fourth wave**.

Details:

- The article discusses some of the measures that could be necessary to mitigate the impact of future waves in India.

Surveillance:

- There is a lack of clear data relating to the pandemic. There has been some degree of unreliable testing and under-reporting and manipulation of data relating to cases and deaths. This will impair the modellers and result in faulty projections.
- **Identifying impending waves** is very important in mitigating the impact of the pandemic given that it serves as an early warning for the governments, which could then take appropriate measures such as localized lockdowns and other mitigative measures.
- **A strong surveillance system reporting will provide reliable early markers of an impending wave.** The detection of an outbreak in the initial stages can help contain it before the pandemic spreads to other areas.
- The Central and State government should use real-time data by encouraging reliable reporting.
- Also, **concurrent genomic sequencing in real-time in the fixed proportion of samples** will help identify any new variants causing several outbreaks. In case of such a scenario, the administration could impose local lockdowns in high-burden areas to stop the wide spread of the variant.

Vaccination:

- Vaccination continues to remain the major intervention that could help in the fight against the pandemic. The administration should take all measures to **ensure vaccine production at pace and scale to vaccinate the entire population at the earliest.**
- The Central government should proactively reach out to all the vaccine manufacturing firms in the west and invite them to collaborate with Indian firms under the 'Make in India' programme. This will not only increase its domestic production but also help India emerge as the world's biggest exporter of vaccines and furthermore provide an impetus to the soft power image of India in the global community.
- With newer variants of concern emerging, it is also important to **update the vaccines depending on how the virus changes.**

Public health infrastructure and workforce:

- The pandemic has brought to light the importance of timely and efficient public health responses. The lack of sufficient public health infrastructure to cater to the population and the depleted public health workforce has weakened India's fight against the pandemic. The front-line public health workforce is particularly absent in urban areas, while critical care capacity (oxygenated beds, ICUs) is limited in rural areas.
- The need for robust **public health infrastructure and a trained public health workforce** is a bare minimum necessity in this regard.

- The administration needs to reconfigure the health systems to ensure that adequate public health workers and public health infrastructure are available as per global norms.
- The administration will have to hire front-line workers in public health who can engage in surveillance and contract-tracing, and mobilise people for primary healthcare services, including vaccination.

Robust pandemic preparedness plan:

- India has to have a system that can respond to newer pandemics in the making. Rather than building reactive systems for each wave and each pandemic, India should develop robust pandemic preparedness plans. Such a **proactive approach** will help reduce the impact of such an outbreak.

One Health approach:

- **India needs to adopt the 'One Health' agenda and ensure that environmental health and animal health are given similar priority as human health.**
 - Nearly 60% of known infectious diseases and up to 75% of new or emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic in origin.
- Hence, **preserving the ecosystem in its natural form** is important in order to prevent future pandemics.

4. Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS)

- Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) is a **secure application that links over 97% of police stations in the country.**
- The project was initiated in June 2009.
- CCTNS has been developed by the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) under the Union Home Ministry.**
- It aims to create a **comprehensive and integrated system for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of policing at the Police Station level.** This will be done through:
 - Adoption of principles of e-Governance.
 - Creation of a **nationwide networked infrastructure for the evolution of IT-enabled state-of-the-art tracking system** around the investigation of crime and detection of criminals.
- It not only automates police functions at Police station and higher levels but also creates facilities and mechanism to provide public services like registration of online complaints, ascertaining the status of a case registered at the police station, verification of persons, etc.

Note:

- CCTNS is being used for antecedent **verification for Global Entry**.
- The Global Entry is a **facility run by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)**, an agency that works under the Department of Homeland Security that fast tracks movement of pre-approved, low-risk travellers upon arrival after a rigorous background check through designated kiosks.
- Though the **Global Entry pilot project started in 2008, India became a member** in 2017 only.

5. High Court seeks govt.'s stand on GNCTD Act plea

Context:

The Delhi High Court has asked the Centre to respond to a **plea seeking to strike down** the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) **Amendment Act that increases powers of the Lieutenant-Governor**.

Details:

- The petition has argued that the Act would lead to **confusion among the residents** as to who would be taking decisions for the Capital.
- It argued that vesting of powers in the L-G **would not be in harmony with the republican system of government**.
- It is argued that the **L-G already had overriding powers in the matters of land, police and services** and by the latest amendment to the GNCTD Act, he would **have authority over all legislations passed by the Delhi Assembly**.

Background to the issue

- It was in 1991 that Delhi was given a fully elected legislative assembly and a responsible government through a constitutional amendment.
- The 69th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1991 conferred the Union Territory of Delhi with a special status, and redesignated it as the 'National Capital Territory of Delhi' and designated its administrator as the Lieutenant Governor (LG).
- Though a UT, Delhi was considered as a special case and given a special constitutional status by the Parliament.
- The 1991 act provided for a fully elected assembly and a council of ministers responsible to the assembly.
- It conferred on the assembly the power to legislate on all matters in the state list as well as the concurrent list except land, police and public order. However, the laws of Parliament prevail over those made by the Delhi Assembly.
- It also brought in a provision from the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, namely, that in case of a difference between the LG and the council of

ministers on any matter, it shall be referred to the President by the LG for his/her decision and pending such decision, the LG can take any action on the matter as he/she deems appropriate.

- Although the constitution bench of the Supreme Court has held that the government does not have to seek the concurrence of the LG on its decisions and that any differences between them should be resolved keeping in view the constitutional primacy of representative government and cooperative federalism, the state government is under constant threat from the LG's power to differ with the government on important issues.
 - The verdict said that the LG was bound by the aid and advice of the council of ministers.
 - It also added that the decisions of the council should be communicated to the LG.
 - However, the SC has said that the LG cannot refer a matter mechanically or mindlessly and has to make all attempts to resolve the differences within the framework of the law and the Transaction of Business Rules.
- Encouraged by this verdict, the state government had stopped sending files on executive matters to the LG before implementation. It had been keeping the LG informed of all administrative developments, but not necessarily before implementing or executing any decision.
- This is the backdrop in which the new amendments have been brought about.

6. Manipur scribe, activist booked under NSA

Context:

The police in Imphal have booked journalist Kishorchandra Wangkhem and political activist Erendro Leichombam under the National Security Act (NSA) of 1980 over their Facebook posts.

National Security Act:

The National Security Act is an act **that empowers the government to detain a person** if the authorities are satisfied that **he/she is a threat to national security or to prevent him/her from disrupting public order.**

- The National Security Act of 1980 provides for the provision of **preventive detention in certain cases.**
- The Act empowers the Central Government and State Governments to detain a person to prevent him/her from acting in any manner prejudicial to the **national security of India, the relations of India with foreign countries, the maintenance of law and order, or the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community.**

- The act also gives **power to the governments to detain a foreigner** in a view to regulate his/her presence or **expel from the country**.
- A person can be detained for **up to 12 months without a charge**.
- The detained person is **not entitled to any legal aid**.

7. Stormy start

Context:

- **Cyclone Tauktae** which has made landfall on the western coast of India has caused loss of life and destruction of infrastructure in Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Background:

- Storms are common in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea in May, ahead of the monsoon onset.

Changing trend in cyclone frequency and intensity:

- However, notably in the recent past, an **increase in frequency has been observed in the formation of cyclones in the North Indian Ocean**. The annual average number of cyclones in the region has increased over time.
- Another notable trend has been that as against the historical trend wherein, Bay of Bengal has been the hotbed of cyclones in the region, there has been an **increase in the number of cyclones in the Arabian Sea in recent years**.
 - Cyclone Tauktae continues the trend of strong cyclones developing in the Arabian Sea more frequently than earlier.
 - **Cyclone Tauktae is the fourth cyclone in consecutive years to develop in cyclone shy Arabian Sea in the pre-monsoon months**. Cyclone Nisarga (2020), Cyclone Vayu (2019) and Cyclone Mekanu (2018) are the other cyclones that have originated in the Arabian Sea in the recent past.
- The Arabian Sea is not only seeing more frequent cyclonic activity but the **intensity of these cyclones have also grown over time**.
 - Arabian Sea cyclones since 2018 have been categorized as either 'severe cyclone' or above.
 - The latest **cyclone Tauktae has intensified very rapidly**. As against the previous cyclones which took around 4-5 days to intensify into a **very severe cyclonic storm (VSCS)**, the current cyclone Tauktae has taken just two days to develop into a VSCS.

Linkage between climate change and cyclones:

- The changing trend in frequency and intensity of cyclones in the region is being attributed to a **rise in average sea surface temperatures** driven by global warming.
 - Scientists have observed that Arabian Sea temperature has increased between 1.2-1.4 degree Celsius in the recent four decades.

Details:

- Given the fact that it is very likely that India will see more frequent cyclones every year due to global warming, India should work towards mitigating the damage to life and property from these adverse climatic phenomena. The following measures will help in this direction.

Disaster Response:

- The impact of the storm can be considerably mitigated by **specialized disaster response forces**, who are well trained and equipped and are adequately supported by the defence forces in rescue and relief work.

Forecasting:

- India needs to develop **greater expertise in forecasting** which will help in the issuance of **precise early warnings**.
- Given the rapid intensification of cyclones, there is very little time available to take immediate measures for evacuation at the ground. State-of-the-art cyclone models are unable to pick this rapid intensification because they do not incorporate the ocean dynamics accurately. This is a forecasting challenge that needs to be addressed.
- There is the need to closely monitor at **higher resolution and accuracy using on-site platforms such as buoys and moorings**. Improving the Indian Ocean Observing System and incorporating the global warming signals in the weather models can help us tackle the challenges of intense cyclones in the future.

Risk assessment:

- The available data and updated weather and climate models incorporating the impact of global warming must be used to understand how the cyclones might change in the coming decades and how that might impact the coastline of India. A **risk assessment** based on this can definitely help save lives and property by **ground mapping vulnerabilities**.
- In 2020, the **India Meteorological Department (IMD) launched an impact-based cyclone warning system** from the October-December season designed to reduce economic losses by focusing on districts and specific locations, and

incorporating such factors as population, infrastructure, land use and settlements.

Disaster mitigation and resilience building:

- The government must work towards crafting policies to improve disaster mitigation abilities and to increase resilience among communities.
- **Climate-proofing lives and dwellings** must be a high priority for vulnerable areas. This would warrant a multi-sectoral approach that would involve **building sturdy homes of suitable design, creating adequate storm shelters and ensuring financial protection against calamities** through insurance for property and assets.

8. The czar of brinkmanship must seek peace

Context:

- The recent **stand-off between Russia and Ukraine**
 - Russia has been criticised for its involvement in the **Donetsk and Luhansk regions in eastern Ukraine**, where Russian-backed separatists have been fighting with Ukrainian troops.
 - Russia has allegedly deployed thousands of troops as well as tanks and artillery near Ukraine's eastern border and has also mobilized troops in the annexed Black Sea region of Crimea.
- Ukraine has appealed to the U.S. and NATO for help.

9. Electoral bonds worth ₹695 cr. sold during the recent elections

What's in News?

According to an RTI reply, electoral bonds worth ₹695 cr. sold during the recent elections.

- The **amount sold was the highest-ever for any Assembly elections since the scheme started in 2018**, according to the numbers provided in the reply.

Electoral Bonds Scheme:

- The **scheme allows any Indian citizen or company to purchase the bonds sold by the SBI in denominations of ₹1,000, ₹10,000, ₹1 lakh, ₹10 lakh and ₹1 crore and give them to political parties anonymously.**

The features of electoral bonds and the process involved are:

- These bonds are issued by notified banks.
- The donor may approach these banks and purchase the bonds.
- The donor shall be permitted to buy the bonds through cheque/ digital payment. Hence the identity of the donors is protected (if the donors are identified, they may get caught up in political rivalry-especially if the donor is a businessman).
- The donor donates these bonds to the political party.
- The political party has to encash it into the account which is registered with the Election Commission of India.

Importance of the Electoral Bonds

- They ensure that the funds being collected by the political parties are accounted for money or clean money.

Concerns with respect to Electoral Bonds:

Even though the Electoral Bond Scheme acts as a measure against the old under-the-table donations since bonds are through cheques and digital paper trails of transactions, there are many key provisions of the scheme that are causes of concern.

Anonymity: There is no obligation on the part of the donor (individual or corporate) or the political party to reveal where the donations come from.

Transparency: It will also go against transparency, a fundamental principle in political financing. Companies will no longer have to declare the names of the political parties to which they have donated, so shareholders won't know where their money has gone.

- There are possibilities of making electoral bonds a convenient channel for black money. The following provisions are controversial in that sense:
 - Doing away with the 7.5% cap for corporate donations.
 - No need for companies to reveal their political contributions in their profit and loss statements.
 - The requirement that companies should be in existence for 3 years before making political contributions undermines the scheme's intent. This makes it easy for dying, troubled or shell companies to make an unlimited donation anonymously.
- Since the bonds are bought through the State Bank of India (SBI), the government is always in a position to know who the donor is. This

asymmetry of information threatens to favour whichever political party is ruling at the time.

- The Election Commission of India had asked that the limit for reporting the donations (which is Rs 20000) should be brought down to Rs 2000, but instead, the government has reduced the maximum contribution by cash to Rs 2000.
- It could become a convenient channel for business to **round-trip their cash parked in tax havens to political parties** for a favour or advantage granted in return for something.

10. Justice Gavai will not hear Param Bir Singh's plea

Context:

Supreme Court judge Justice B.R. Gavai, one of the two judges on the Vacation Bench scheduled to hear a plea by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh challenging the internal enquiries instituted against him, **recused himself from hearing the case.**

Recusal:

- Recusal is to **remove oneself as a judge in a particular proceeding**, usually because of **conflict of interest** or **having a prior association with the parties in the case.**

When can the Judge recuse?

- Bias of prejudice
 - It typically means the judge has acted/ taken a stand or publicly spoken in a way that prevents him or her from treating the party in a fair and impartial manner.
- Where a judge has **appeared for one of the litigants at some stage** in the same dispute.
 - A judge's fairness and impartiality may be compromised when he or she has had a business or professional relationship with a party.
 - In cases where the judge was a party's business partner or attorney, as well as in cases **where the judge was a member of a law firm representing a party**, the potential for bias or prejudice is almost always too great to permit the judge to preside over the case.
- In disputes where a **judge has a financial interest in the litigation**, where a judge owns shares in a company which is party to the case, the judge can recuse.

- Judge's family member's economic interest in the case.
 - The judge is related to a party or spouse of either party (usually) within three degrees of kinship.
 - Sometimes a judge or one of his or her immediate family members will have an economic interest in the subject matter of the case, one that could be significantly impacted by the outcome of the proceedings

Judges who excused oneself from hearing a case

- **Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi** disqualified himself, purportedly because he was set to be a part of the selection committee tasked with choosing a new CBI Director. He then assigned a bench presided by Justice A.K. Sikri to hear the case.
- **Justice U.U. Lalit** recused himself from hearing **the dispute over land in Ayodhya** after senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan pointed out that the judge had appeared for former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh in a related contest.

Recusal can harm rule of law

- Refusing to recuse himself from the Constitution Bench hearing a question of law on the **Indore Development Authority v. Manohar Lal** (the issues involved in the case related to a reading of Section 24(2) of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013), Justice Arun Mishra said **acquiescing to the wishes of parties to recuse himself would sound the death-knell for judicial independence.**
 - - The petitioners had objected to Justice Mishra leading the Constitution Bench which was hearing a question of law challenging his own earlier judgment in the case.
- In 2019, in the middle of a hearing of a PIL filed by activist Harsh Mander about the plight of inmates in Assam's detention centres, the then-Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi was asked to recuse himself. In an order, **Justice Gogoi said a litigant cannot seek recusal of the judge.**
 - "Judicial functions, sometimes, involve performance of unpleasant and difficult tasks, which require asking questions and soliciting answers to arrive at a just and fair decision. If the assertions of bias as stated are to be accepted, it would become impossible for a judge to seek clarifications and answers," the court observed.

- In the Judge loya Case, Recusal, the court observed, would mean abdication of duty.
- Judiciary should not allow recusals to be used as a tool to manoeuvre justice, where parties decide the benches **ultimately evading judicial work**.
 - To withdraw from a case merely because a party suggests that a judge do so impairs judicial fairness. It allows parties to cherry-pick a bench of their choice.

Should the reasons be put on record?

- - In his separate opinion in the **National Judicial Appointments Commission judgment in 2015**, Justice Kurian Joseph, who was a member of the Constitution Bench, highlighted the **need for judges to give reasons for recusal as a measure to build transparency**.
 - “It is the constitutional duty, as reflected in one’s oath, to be transparent and accountable, and hence, a judge is required to indicate reasons for his recusal from a particular case,”
- In Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India (2015), Justice Chelameswar said “Where a judge has a pecuniary interest, no further inquiry as to whether there was a ‘real danger’ or ‘reasonable suspicion’ of bias is required to be undertaken, but in other cases, such an inquiry is required, and the relevant test is the ‘real danger’ test.”

Conclusion

- Judicial impartiality is a significant element of justice. Judges should decide legal disputes free of any personal bias or prejudice. As a result of a conflict of interest, a judge may be unable to maintain impartiality in a case and thus should be disqualified.
- Even where a judge is impartial, but appears not to be, recusal is necessary and this should be structured.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

11. SEBI proposes framework for Gold Exchange

The Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has floated a consultation paper on the proposed framework for Gold Exchange in India.

Why such a move?

- According to SEBI, the proposed exchange would bring in more transparency in the gold trading market in terms of spot price discovery, quality of the gold and enable greater integration with the financial markets.

What is a Gold Exchange?

- As the name suggests, this would offer trading facilities in the precious metal.
- Entities like retail investors, banks, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), jewellers and bullion dealers among others would be allowed to trade on the exchange.
- While there are existing commodity exchanges that offer trading in gold contracts, those are derivative instruments while the proposed gold exchange would allow trading akin to the spot market.
- This move assumes significance as India is the second-largest consumer of gold – after China – with an annual demand of around 800-900 tonnes.

What are the ways in which one can invest in gold now?

- For those wanting to buy physical gold, a visit to the neighbourhood jeweller would suffice.
- Meanwhile, there are online platforms such as Paytm, Kuvera and Indiagold among others that allow an individual to buy gold in digital form.
- The advantage of buying gold in digital form is that one can put in a very small amount as well with some platforms allowing a minimum investment of just Rs 100.
- Digital gold products have become quite popular among millennials. Then there are sovereign gold bonds issued by the government.
- One can even look at Gold ETFs or gold funds by mutual funds.
- Even gold derivative contracts traded on the exchanges have the option of physical settlement, which means investors can get physical delivery of gold.

How can one trade on a gold exchange?

- The SEBI has proposed an instrument called 'Electronic Gold Receipt', or EGR.
- The gold exchange, along with intermediaries like the vault manager and the clearing corporation, would facilitate the creation of EGR and its trading.
- So, participants can convert their physical gold into EGR, which can then be bought or sold on the exchange like any normal equity share of a listed company.
- The EGR can even be converted back into physical gold. As part of the draft regulations, SEBI has proposed three denominations of EGR – one kilogram, 100 grams and 50 grams.

- It has, however, added that EGRs of five grams or 10 grams can also be allowed for trading to increase the liquidity of the market and attract more participants.

How can one convert physical gold into EGRs?

- An entity that intends to convert physical gold into EGR will have to go to a 'Vault Manager'.
- According to the proposed framework, any entity registered in India and with a net worth of at least Rs 50 crore can apply to become a vault manager.
- After the receipt of the gold, the vault manager would create an EGR for which the depository will assign an International Securities Identification Number, or ISIN, which is a unique code to identify the specific security.
- Once the ISIN is issued, the EGR can be traded on the gold exchange just like any other tradable security.

Can EGRs be again converted into physical gold?

- To convert an EGR into physical gold, the owner of the EGR will have to surrender the EGR to the vault manager who will deliver the gold and extinguish the electronic receipt.
- Considering the logistics and delivery challenges, it has been proposed that conversion of an EGR into physical gold should be allowed only if a minimum of 50 grams of gold has been accumulated in electronic form.

Issues with gold exchange

- Since the EGRs would be traded on an exchange, Securities Transaction Tax (STT) would be levied. Also, GST would be applicable when EGRs are converted into physical gold for withdrawal.
- If in case the buyer and seller are from different states then levying state GST could be cumbersome. SEBI is mulling if only IGST or Integrated Goods and Services Tax can be levied to resolve this issue.
- As far as transactions are concerned, SEBI working groups have suggested that an entire transaction be divided into three tranches.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. India's Brain Drain in Health Sector

Why in News

India has been a **major exporter of healthcare workers** to developed nations particularly to the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** countries, Europe and other English-speaking countries.

- This **Brain Drain** in the health sector is part of the reason for the **current shortage in nurses and doctors**.

Key Points

- **Brain Drain:**
 - Brain drain is a term **indicating substantial emigration or migration of individuals**.
 - A brain drain can **result from turmoil within a nation**, the existence of **favorable professional opportunities** in other countries, or from a desire to seek a **higher standard of living**.
 - The **majority of migration is from developing to developed countries**. This is of **growing concern worldwide** because of its impact on the health systems in developing countries.
 - As per the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** data, around **69,000 Indian trained doctors worked in the UK, US, Canada and Australia in 2017**. In these four countries, **56,000 Indian-trained nurses** were working in the same year.
 - There is also large-scale **migration of health workers to the GCC countries** but there is a **lack of credible data** on the stock of such workers in these nations.
 - There is no real-time data on high-skilled migration from India as in the case of low-skilled and semi-skilled migration.
- **Reasons:**
 - **Need in the Pandemic:**
 - With the onset of the **pandemic**, there has been a **greater demand for healthcare workers across the world**, especially in developed nations.

- Countries in dire need of retaining their healthcare workers have **adopted migrant-friendly policies.**
 - The **UK has granted free one-year visa extensions to eligible overseas healthcare workers** and their dependents whose visas were due to expire before October 2021.
 - **France has offered citizenship** to frontline immigrant healthcare workers during the pandemic.
- **Higher Pay and Better Opportunities:**
 - There are **strong pull factors** associated with the migration of healthcare workers, in terms of **higher pay and better opportunities in the destination countries.**
- **Low Wages and Lack of Investment in India:**
 - There are **strong push factors** that often drive these workers to migrate abroad.
 - In case of nurses in India the **low wages in private sector outfits along with reduced opportunities in the public sector** plays a big role in them seeking employment opportunities outside the country.
 - The **lack of government investment in healthcare and delayed appointments** to public health institutions act as a catalyst for such migration.
- **Policies of the Indian Government :**
 - The government's policies to check brain drain are restrictive in nature and do not give a real long-term solution to the problem.
 - In 2014, it stopped issuing **No Objection to Return to India (NORI)** certificates to doctors migrating to the US.
 - The **NORI certificate is a US government requirement** for doctors who migrate to America on a J1 visa and seek to extend their stay beyond three years.
 - The government has **included nurses in the Emigration Check Required (ECR) category.** This move was taken to bring about transparency in nursing recruitment and reduce exploitation of nurses in the destination countries.
- **Concerns in India's Health Sector:**
 - **Lack of Human Resource:**
 - India has **1.7 nurses per 1,000 population** and a **doctor to patient ratio of 1:1,404** – this is well **below the World Health Organization (WHO) norm** of three nurses per 1,000 population and a doctor to patient ratio of 1:1,100.
 - **Skewed Distribution:**

- The distribution of **doctors and nurses is heavily skewed against some regions**. Moreover, there is **high concentration in some urban pockets**.
- **Poor Infrastructure:**
 - The **2020 Human Development Report** shows that India has **five hospital beds per 10,000 people – one of the lowest in the world**.

Way Forward

- **Increased investment in healthcare**, especially in the public sector, is thus the **need of the hour**. This would, in turn, increase employment opportunities for health workers.
- India needs **systematic changes to building an overall environment that could prove to be beneficial for them and motivate them to stay in the country**.
- The **government should focus on framing policies that promote circular migration and return migration – policies that incentivise healthcare workers to return home** after the completion of their training or studies.
- India could also work towards framing **bilateral agreements** that could help shape a policy of **“brain-share”** between the **sending and receiving countries**.

2.Rural Development Schemes

Why in News

Despite the **Covid-19** pandemic, the country has witnessed speed and **progress in various schemes under the Ministry of Rural Development**.

Key Points

- **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) 2005:**
 - **About :**
 - The scheme was introduced as a social measure that **guarantees “the right to work”**. The Ministry of Rural Development monitors the entire implementation of this scheme in association with state governments.
 - **Major Objective:**
 - Providing **not less than one hundred days of unskilled manual work** as a guaranteed employment in a financial year to every household in rural areas as per demand, resulting in creation of productive assets of prescribed quality and durability.

- MGNREGA assets include farm, ponds, percolation tanks, check dams, road layer, irrigation channels etc.
- **Other Features:**
 - It is the **Gram Sabha and the Gram Panchayat** which **approves the shelf of works under MGNREGA** and fixes their priority.
 - **Social Audit of MGNREGA works is mandatory**, which leads to accountability and transparency.
- **Achievements:**
 - For the financial year 2021-22, 2.95 crore persons have been offered work, thus, completing 5.98 lakh assets and generating 34.56 crore person-days.
- **Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM):**
 - **About:**
 - It is a **centrally sponsored programme**, launched by the Ministry of Rural Development in June 2011.
 - **Objective:**
 - To **eliminate rural poverty** through the **promotion of multiple livelihoods and improved access to financial services** for the rural poor households across the country.
 - **Functioning:**
 - It involves **working with community institutions** through community professionals in the spirit of self-help which is a unique proposition of DAY-NRLM.
 - It impacts the livelihoods through universal social mobilization by **inter alia organising one-woman member from each rural poor household into Self Help Groups (SHGs)**, their training and capacity building, facilitating their micro-livelihoods plans, and enabling them to implement their livelihoods plans through accessing financial resources from their own institutions and the banks.
 - **Achievements:**
 - **Revolving Fund and Community Investment Fund** amounting to approximately Rs. 56 Crore released to women SHGs in FY 2021 as compared to approximately Rs. 32 Crore in the same corresponding period in FY 2020.
 - Training on farm and non-Farm based livelihoods, on covid management and promotion of Agri-Nutri gardens.
- **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY):**
 - **Launch:** 25th December, 2000.
 - **Objective:**
 - To provide connectivity, by way of an all-weather road to unconnected habitations.

- **Beneficiaries:**
 - Unconnected habitations of designated population size (500+ in plain areas and 250+ in North-Eastern States, Himalayan States, Deserts and Tribal Areas as per 2001 census) in the core network for uplifting the socio-economic condition of the rural population.
- **Achievements:**
 - Highest length of road has been completed under PMGSY in the comparable period over the last 3 years.
- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin:**
 - **Launch:**
 - To achieve the objective of “**Housing for All**” by **2022**, the erstwhile rural housing scheme Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) was restructured to Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) w.e.f 1st April, 2016.
 - **Objective:**
 - To help rural people below the poverty line (BPL) in construction of dwelling units and upgradation of existing unserviceable kutcha houses by providing assistance in the form of a full grant.
 - **Beneficiaries:**
 - People belonging to SCs/STs, freed bonded labourers and non-SC/ST categories, widows or next-of-kin of defence personnel killed in action, ex servicemen and retired members of the paramilitary forces, Disabled persons and Minorities.
 - Beneficiaries are chosen according to data taken from the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) of 2011.
 - **Achievements:**
 - Highest expenditure amounting to Rs. 5854 Cr in FY 2021-22; double than the FY 2020-21 in the comparable period.

3. Initiative for Digital Transformation of Tribal Schools

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MTA)** inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Microsoft** to support the digital transformation of schools such as **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)** and **Ashram Schools**, among others under the Ministry.

- It is aimed at building an inclusive, skills-based economy.

Key Points

- **About the MoU:**

- **Artificial Intelligence** curriculum will be made available to tribal students in both English and Hindi at all EMRS schools to skill educators and students in next-generation technologies.
- In the **first phase, 250 EMRS schools have been adopted by Microsoft**, out of which 50 EMRS schools will be given intensive training and 500 master trainers would be trained in the first phase.
- **Teachers across states in India will be trained in a phased manner** for using productivity technologies like Office 365 and AI applications in teaching.
- The program will also offer opportunities for **teachers to earn professional e-badges and e-certificates** from the Microsoft Education Centre.
- Students from schools under the Ministry will be mentored on projects that involve AI applications for **societal good** and the **UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
- **Expected Benefits:**
 - This program will ensure that tribal students get a chance to **change their future, their environment, their village, and overall community**.
 - The initiative will also enable the **professional development of educators, enabling them to use technology in classrooms**.
 - It will help in the success of **digital India Mission**.
 - It will be able to **bridge the gap between the tribal students and others**.
- **Other Educational Schemes for Tribals:**
 - **Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship Scheme (RGNF):** RGNF was introduced in the year 2005-2006 with the objective to encourage the students belonging to the ST community to pursue higher education.
 - **Vocational Training Center in Tribal Areas:** The aim of this scheme is to develop the skill of ST students depending on their qualification and present market trends.
 - **National Overseas Scholarship Scheme:** It provides financial assistance to 20 students selected for pursuing higher studies abroad for PhD and postdoctoral studies.
 - **Pre and Post Matric Scholarship Schemes.**

Eklavya Model Residential Schools

- **EMRS** started in the **year 1997-98** to impart quality education to **Schedule Tribes** children in remote areas.
- The schools focus not only on academic education but on the all-round development of the students.
- The **objective** of EMRS is to provide quality middle and high level education to ST students in remote areas, not only to enable them to avail of reservation

in high and professional educational courses and as jobs in government and public and private sectors but also to have access to the best opportunities in education at par with the non ST population.

- Each school has a capacity of **480 students, catering to students from Class VI to XII.**
- These are being set up by grants provided **under Article 275(1) of the Constitution.**
- These are **funded by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.**
- In order to give further impetus to EMRS, it has been decided that by **the year 2022, every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons,** will have an EMRS.
- Eklavya schools are on **par with Navodaya Vidyalaya** and have special facilities for preserving local art and culture besides providing training in sports and skill development.
 - **Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) scheme** envisages setting up of one Navodaya Vidyalaya in each district of the country. It is under the **Ministry of Education.**
 - These residential schools impart **good quality modern education to rural talented children** irrespective of their socio-economic background including ST children.

Ashram Schools

- Ashram schools are residential schools, in which **free boarding and lodging along with other facilities and incentives are provided to the students.**
- Apart from formal education, there is emphasis put upon **physical activities, meditation, sight-seeing, play, sports, games, and other.**
- **The Ministry of Tribal Affairs** provides construction costs and the **State Government** is responsible for running and overall maintenance of these Ashram schools including selection of medium of instruction.
- So far, the Ministry has funded **1,205 Ashram Schools** across the country for quality education of ST children.

4. International Museums Day

Why in News

International Museum Day is observed on **18th May** every year to raise awareness among people about the museums.

- **2021 Theme:** The Future of Museums: Recover and Reimagine.

Key Points

- **History:** The Day was instituted in 1977 by the International Council of Museums (ICOM).
- **International Council of Museum (ICOM):**
 - ICOM is a membership association and a non-governmental organisation which establishes professional and ethical standards for museum activities. It is the only global organisation in the museum field.
 - It was created in 1946 and is headquartered in Paris, France.
 - It serves as a network of museum professionals (more than 40,000 members in over 138 countries).
 - The ICOM Red Lists of Cultural Objects at Risk are practical tools to curb the illegal traffic of cultural objects.
 - Red Lists present the categories of cultural objects that can be subjected to theft and traffic.
- **Administration of Museums in India:**
 - Multiple ministries hold charges of various Museums.
 - Not all Museums are administered by the Ministry of Culture.
 - Some are run without government support by a handful of people under a Board of Trustees.
 - **Related Constitutional Provision:**
 - **Article 49:** Protect monuments, places and objects of artistic or historic interest which are declared to be of national importance.
- **Initiatives Related to Museums:**
 - **Museum Grant Scheme:**
 - The Ministry of Culture provides financial assistance under the Scheme to the State Governments and Societies, Autonomous bodies, Local Bodies and Trusts registered under the Societies Act, for setting up new Museums.
 - It also aims to strengthen and modernize the existing museums at the Regional, State and District level.
 - The National Portal and Digital Repository for Indian Museums (under the Ministry of Culture) have been launched for digitisation of the collections of the Museums.

Notable Museums in India

- National Museum, New Delhi (Subordinate Office under the Ministry of Culture).
- National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi
- Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad
- Indian Museum, Kolkata

- Archaeological Survey of India site Museum, Goa
- National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), New Delhi

GS 3 :Economy, Science and Technology,Environment

5. Weathering of oldest rock paintings due to climate change

In news

- Scientists have warned that environmental degradation is killing one of the oldest and most precious pieces of the world's human heritage.

Key takeaways

- Pleistocene-era rock paintings dating back to 45,000-20,000 years ago are weathering at an alarming rate.
- **Location:** Cave sites in Maros-Pangkep region, Southern Sulawesi, Indonesia
- The artwork includes what is believed to be the world's oldest hand stencil created by pressing the hand on a cave wall, and spraying wet red-mulberry pigments over it.
- A nearby cave features the world's oldest depiction of an animal, a warty pig painted on the wall 45,500 years ago.
- The cave art of Sulawesi is much older than the prehistoric cave art of Europe.

6. New Storage Conditions For Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine

In news

- The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has recommended a change to the approved storage conditions of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine

Key takeaways

- With the new recommendations, an unopened thawed vial of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine can be stored between 2-8 degrees Celsius for up to a month, which means that it can be stored in a regular refrigerator once it has been taken out of the deep freeze.
- Before this, an unopened thawed vaccine vial could be kept in a regular refrigerator for a period of only up to five days.

Important value additions

- mRNA vaccines need to be stored at much lower temperatures than some other kind of COVID-19 vaccines because RNA is much less stable than DNA
- RNA is less stable due to: (1) The sugars that their molecules are made up of are different. In DNA, it is deoxyribose and in RNA it is ribose; (2) It has single strand, while DNA is expressed as a double-stranded helix.



Prelims Practice Questions

1. Which of the following are classified under the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)?

1. Toda
2. Kattunayakan
3. Onges
4. Reangs

Choose the correct option:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Particularly vulnerable tribal group is a government of India classification created with the purpose of enabling improvement in the conditions of certain communities with particularly low development indices.
- Kattunayakan is a designated Scheduled Tribe in the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. They are classified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- Todas are classified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in Tamil Nadu.
- Reangs are the only Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group in Tripura.
- Great Andamanese, Jarawas, Onges, Sentinelese and Shom Pens are PVTGs in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

2. Ratle Hydro Electric (HE) Project is located on which of the following rivers?

- a. River Kosi
- b. River Chenab
- c. River Hooghly
- d. River Subansiri

Answer : b

Explanation:

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, has given its approval for the investment of Rs. 5281 Crore for 850 MW Ratle Hydro Electric (HE) Project.

Ratle Hydro Electric Project

- It is located on river Chenab, in Kishtwar district of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The Power generated from the Project will help in providing balancing of Grid and will improve the power supply position.

3. "Sanaa" recently in news is located in:

- a. Yemen
- b. Saudi Arabia
- c. Azerbaijan
- d. Iran

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Sanaa is the largest city in Yemen and the centre of Sanaa Governorate.
- The city is not part of the Governorate, but forms the separate administrative district of "Amanat Al-Asemah".
- Under the Yemeni constitution, Sanaa is the capital of the country, although the seat of the Yemeni government moved to Aden, the former capital of South Yemen in the aftermath of the Houthi occupation.
- Aden was declared as the temporary capital by President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi in March 2015.
- Aden, the temporary capital of Yemen, is near the eastern approach to the Red Sea.

4. Project Sea Bird, often seen in the news recently, refers to?

- a. Oil drilling in Indian Ocean
- b. Naval Infrastructure Project in Karnataka
- c. Conservation of sea gulls in Gulf of Mannar
- d. Translocation of Great Indian Bustard to Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary

Answer : b

Explanation:

- Project Sea bird is the largest naval infrastructure project for India in Karwar, Karnataka.
- It involves creation of a naval base at Karwar on the west coast of India.
- Upon completion, the program will provide Indian Navy with its largest naval base on the west coast and also the largest naval base east of the Suez Canal.

5. Consider the following pairs

1. S-400 Air Defence Missile – Russia
2. Shaheen-III Missile – Iran
3. Rudram Anti-Radiation Missile – India

Which of the pair(s) given above is/are correctly matched?

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

Answer : b

Explanation:

S-400

- A group of Indian military personnel is leaving for Russia to undergo training on key operational aspects of the S-400 air defence systems as Moscow looks at supplying the first batch of the missile to India later this year.

Rudram Anti-Radiation Missile

- Flight Lieutenant Bhawana Kanth, one of the first women fighter pilots in IAF, will be a part of the air force's tableau in the Republic Day Parade that will showcase mock-ups of the light combat aircraft (LCA), light combat helicopter and the Sukhoi-30 fighter plane.
- The LCA model would be equipped with indigenous Rudram Next Generation Anti-Radiation Missile (NGRAM) and LCH model would be equipped with Dhruvastra, indigenous helicopter fired anti-tank guided missile both of which are under development.

- The SU-30MKI would be equipped with the indigenous Astra Beyond Visual Range (BVR) Air to Air missile.
- The recently inducted Rafale fighter jet will also fly over the Rajpath during the Republic Day parade.

Shaheen-III Missile

- Pakistan has successfully test-fired a nuclear-capable surface-to-surface ballistic missile recently.
- The missile can strike targets up to 2,750 km.

6) Which of the following crops require high temperature and high humidity/rainfall to grow?

1. Rice
2. Tobacco
3. Tea
4. Sugarcane

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer : b

Explanation:

- Tea requires a moist frost-free climate with even rainfall throughout the year.
- Tobacco requires temperature greater than 18°C and in India, it grows under rainfed conditions in Alluvial, Black Clayey soil.

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. Tackling air pollution has rarely been a priority in policymaking. Analyse the statement in the light of ongoing health emergency declared in the National Capital Region. (250 words)

Approach

- Introduce by mentioning about the recent public health emergency in Delhi.
- Mention factors which indicate that air pollution has been a low priority.
- Mention the initiatives taken by the government to combat air pollution.
- Suggest remedial measures in the way forward

2Q. Discuss the significance of space power for India. (250 words)

Approach

- Explain the emerging issue of Space power.
- Explain the significance of space power for India.
- List steps taken by India in this direction.
- Conclude suitably.