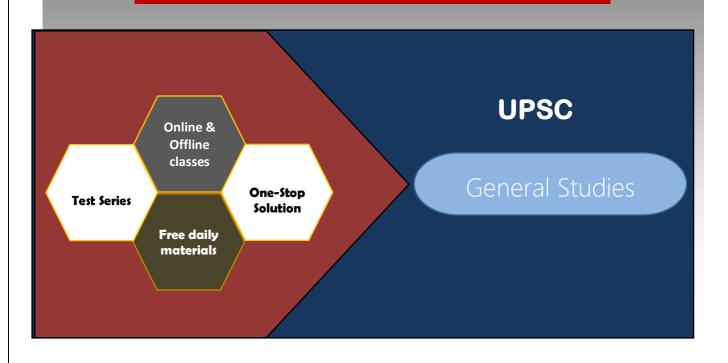# VISHNU
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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. New Delhi's tactical half-measure on Kashmir

Background:

In the **first outreach meeting between the Union government and mainstream political leaders of Jammu and Kashmir**, the Prime Minister met 14 leaders of eight mainstream political parties in the Union Territory.

- The meeting has put the focus on the **scope of restoration of its statehood.**

Bilateral implications:

- **Pakistan** had maintained ever since the abrogation of Article 370 that it **would not engage in a dialogue process with India until it retracts its decision of withdrawing the special status.**
- Pakistan tried to **internationalise the issue**. However, it **could not garner much support**.
- **Increased heat on the LoC and inside Kashmir** also proved to be **ineffective**.
- Pakistan's stated position has **changed** with the **February 2021 ceasefire agreement** on the LoC and the backchannel talks preceding it.
- There is an emergent and strong opinion within Pakistan that **if India restored Statehood in J&K, it might open doors for a dialogue process.**
  - This has the potential to **bring the two sides to the negotiating table** on various **outstanding bilateral issues.**
- New Delhi's current advantage in Kashmir over Pakistan could also be seen in the backdrop of the lessons from the Balakot stand-off in early 2019.
  - New Delhi had clearly signalled to Pakistan how far it will go on the Kashmir question and how far it will tolerate the menace of terrorism.

2. Another shade of grey

Context:

Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has **retained Pakistan on the grey list** or the **list of countries under increased monitoring.**

- Besides, the FATF handed down **another six-point list of tasks for Pakistan to comply with**, mainly on **money laundering actions.**

- FATF has made it clear that Pakistan must **complete the prosecution of all proscribed leaders of groups including the LeT, JeM, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban.**

Details:

- The FATF evaluates countries on their efforts in anti-money laundering/countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT).
  - Therefore, it closely works with the UN Security Council's listings of terror groups.
- Owing to its failure to convict JeM chief Masood Azhar and others, Pakistan has been retained in the FATF Grey List.

Pakistan's response:

- The Pakistani government **publicly protested the decision**, pointing out that many countries that had largely completed the action plans have been delisted in the past.
  - Pakistan, which was on the FATF's increased monitoring lists from 2009-2015, was taken off the grey list in 2015 in a similar manner (before it was relisted in 2018).
- Pakistani leaders have **lashed out at India of attempting to politicise the process at** the FATF.
- It believes that the decision stems from a **refusal to allow the U.S. the use of its bases after America's pull-out from Afghanistan.**
- Pakistan also highlighted that it has **introduced and amended terror financing laws**, which have enabled the **prosecution of more than 30 UN-proscribed leaders and their associates**, for terror financing.

Impact on India:

- For India, the recent decision has **brought some comfort,** even as **it awaits the conviction of leaders of groups** such as the LeT and JeM for attacks, including Mumbai 26/11, Parliament (2001), Pathankot and Pulwama.
- As India faces its **Mutual Evaluation Report**, the **processes of FATF must be checked for overreach.**
  - India must be prepared as it is expected that **Pakistan would push for a critical investigation of India's AML/CFT regime.**
- Besides, it is clear that **there will be more political aspects to the technical scrutiny of countries** in the future as **FATF has announced** a new **focus on extreme right-wing terrorism (ERW).**

3. The power of an apology

The article discusses how **apologies by countries for past mistakes** can **improve bilateral ties** and help people reconcile with the past.

Context:

- In May 2021, **Germany officially apologised to Namibia for the massacre of the Herero and Nama people** in 1904-1908 and called it a genocide for the first time.
- **French President** Emmanuel Macron said in **Rwanda that he recognised his country's role in the Rwandan genocide and hoped for forgiveness.**

- In 2016, **Canadian Prime Minister** Justin Trudeau apologised before the descendants of passengers of the **Komagata Maru ship.**
  - In 1914, the Canadian government had decided to turn away the ship carrying South Asian migrants, mostly Sikhs. The ship was forced to return to India. Back home, the British suspected the passengers to be revolutionaries and many passengers were shot dead.

Significance of such gestures:

- While it is **difficult to find a mutually acceptable compromise and tangible compensation,** such gestures generate **multiple positive effects.**
- Such apologies require **courage, goodwill, compassion, and humility.**
- They help in **strengthening the relations between the countries involved.**
- Apologies by leaders help countries take **lessons from history and avoid similar tragedies.**
- They provide **solace to the victims' descendants**, giving them a **sense of justice and rectitude.**

Conclusion:

- In contemporary geopolitics, a sense of humility is a rare phenomenon. Political leaders, from Nicaragua to Myanmar, are ready to resort to any means in order to remain in power.
  - In this environment, apologetic voices add a **moral dimension to international relations.**
- To be a pillar of the multipolar world is not to be a military power, manufacturing and financial hub. Countries that strive for **global leadership** should be able to provide **moral leadership** as well.
  - This includes critical self-reflection, humility, compassion, and care not only towards their people, but also towards the most vulnerable communities around the world.

4. On the margins with full equality still out of reach

The article throws light upon the **discrimination faced by the sexual minorities in India** in **employment, health issues and personal rights**, despite judicial verdicts upholding their rights.

Issue:

- The last two decades have witnessed **tremendous progress in establishing civil rights for the LGBTQIA+ community.**
  - In India, this community is still a stigmatised and invisible minority, despite the country's liberal and inclusive Constitution.
- The Union of India has recently **opposed any move to accord legal sanction to same-sex marriages** in India.
  - It was stated that the decriminalisation of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code does not automatically translate into a fundamental right for same-sex couples to marry.

Role of Judiciary:

- In the tug of war between the demands of the traditional conception of society and the rights of individuals to their identity and dignity, the Supreme Court has come down firmly in favour of the individual.
- The **meagre gains that the queer community** won have been **granted by the judiciary** and **not by legislatures.**

Navtej Singh Johar & Ors. vs Union of India (2018):

- This Supreme Court judgement held that the **application of IPC Section 377** to consensual homosexual behaviour between adults was **unconstitutional** and irrational.
- It provided a **launchpad for the LGBTQ+ jurisprudence** and **queer liberation movement** in India.

Naz Foundation vs Government of NCT of Delhi (2009):

- Delhi High Court held that **Section 377 offended the guarantee of equality enshrined in Article 14** of the Constitution because it creates an unreasonable classification and targets homosexuals as a class.

Despite these and many other judgments, there is still a lot of discrimination against sexual minorities. It is only when these problems are adequately addressed that the LGBTQ+ community will be able to enjoy full autonomy and agency.

Way Forward:

Legalising same-sex marriage:

- Understanding the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community, the **law must expand the institution of marriage to include all gender and sexual identities.**
    - At least **29 countries** in the world have **legalised same-sex marriage.**
    - It is time for India to **review its existing legal architecture** in order to legalise marriages irrespective of gender identity and sexual orientation.

Securing citizens from being discriminated against by the state on the grounds of 'sexual orientation':

- **Article 15 secures the citizens from every sort of discrimination by the state**, on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth or any of them.
- In 1996, South Africa became the first country to constitutionally prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation.
- India can also take the South Africa example and **include 'sexual orientation' in addition to religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth in Article 15.**

Providing justice to prisoners of sexual conscience:

- In 2017, the UK passed the "**Alan Turing law".** It granted **amnesty and pardon** to the men who were cautioned or **convicted under historical legislation** that **outlawed homosexual acts.**
- India should also enact a law on these lines to make up for the **excesses the LGBTQ+ community has been subject to in the past and present.**

Sensitising the general public:

- The Government should put in efforts to **sensitise the general public** and **officials** (including police) to reduce and finally **eliminate the stigma associated with the LGBTQ+ community**.
- School and university students should be sensitised about the diversity of sexuality to dispel homophobia.

Globally, the recognition of the unequal laws discriminating against the LGBTQIA+ community has acted as a trigger to reform and modernise legal architecture to

become more inclusive and equal. The onus to make India a
socially inclusive society remains with the civil society, the citizens, the government and the LGBTQ+ community itself.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology,Environment

5. Govt. faces a tough choice on interest rates

Context:

Quarterly reset of interest rates on small savings schemes is due on June 30, 2021.

Small Saving Instruments:

- The small savings schemes basket comprises 12 instruments including the **Savings Deposit, National Saving Certificate (NSC), Public Provident Fund (PPF), Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP) and Sukanya Samriddhi Scheme.**
- The government **resets the interest rate** at the **beginning of every quarter.**
- Theoretically, since 2016, interest rate resetting has been done based on **yields of government securities of the corresponding maturity** with **some spread on the scheme for senior citizens.**
- However, in practice, the interest rate changes are made considering **several other factors.**

Government's dilemma:

- The RBI has often blamed the **high administered interest rates on small savings for poor transmission of its rate cuts in the economy.**
- According to the economists, **amid a surge in inflation, a cut in small savings rates** would **further hurt households**.
  - Inflation is expected to stay elevated around **5%-6% through 2021-22**.
- In March 2021, sharp cuts in the rates on small savings schemes were rolled back within hours.
- As per recent RBI data on savings rates for the 3rd quarter of 2020-21, **household savings have been shrinking significantly for two quarters** in a row even before the second COVID-19 wave.

Way Forward:

- If the formula set for small savings rates is followed, there may be a need to cut rates to some extent. However, it could turn out to be very unpopular with **rising inflation and declining savings rates.**
- Recent auctions of 10-year G-secs has struggled to find takers at the interest rates being offered by the RBI suggesting that **borrowing from the market at low rates may not be sustainable.**
- The government will also have to weigh the **costs of leaving the rates unchanged** on its borrowing plans.

6. Drones are now a favoured terror tool

Context:

In the first such instance in India, **explosive devices were dropped from drones** in the technical area of the Air Force Station in **Jammu, triggering blasts**.

- This represents the start of a new dimension to the terror cycles that the Kashmir Valley has experienced.
- There have been warnings that Pakistan-based terrorist groups could attempt to target military bases with drones.

Concerns:

- **Pakistan based outfits have been deploying drones** over the past two years, to **smuggle arms, ammunition and drugs into Indian territory,** besides conducting **aerial surveillance.**
- According to government figures, 167 drone sightings in 2019 and 77 in 2020 were recorded along the border with Pakistan.
- In early 2021, the **Border Security Forces (BSF) foiled a few attempts to drop weapons and drugs by using drones** on this side of the International Border in Jammu's Samba and Kathua belt.
- **Quadcopters** are also being deployed by Pakistani agencies for **spying activities in the border areas.**
- Another emerging challenge for the security forces is the increasing use of **improvised explosive devices.**

Issue:

- Drones have **developed significantly** and **acquired massive leaps in capability.**
- Weaponised drones were first used by the Islamic State in northern Iraq in 2016 and then in Syria.

- They have wreaked havoc on Al Qaeda and other terrorist organisations in Afghanistan and other hotspots, **used for targeted and precise eliminations by both Israelis and Americans.**
- In the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan drones swooped down on their targets such as the formidable Russian S300 Air defence system, before such systems had the time to react.
- What makes drones particularly dangerous is the fact that **they fly very low making them undetectable to radar and leaving little by way of reaction time once detected.**

Way Forward:

- With the increasing use of drones for **cross-border smuggling**, the Indian security agencies must look for various **ways to put in place reliable systems as part of a smart border management mechanism for deterrence.**
- In terms of border security, **drone jammers may not prove to be more effective**. Drones fly low and therefore cannot be detected by any radar system.
- Anti-drone jammers cannot be very effective in the border areas, but they can be **deployed at security-sensitive installations** to prevent attacks.
- India can sign **Geo fencing agreements with commercial drone manufacturers.**
    - o Such an agreement would ensure that manufacturers **pre-programme codes into their products that prevent them from flying over or around certain areas** — especially around **critical infrastructure.**
    - o It involves sharing the coordinates of sensitive locations with foreign manufacturers.
- There is a need to **reinvent border management through other viable options for surveillance, detection and use of anti-drone techniques.**

Note:

- The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed an anti-drone technology for short ranges** which was deployed for Prime Minister's security during the Independence Day address in August 2020.
- Navy is procuring **Smash-2000 rifles to counter drones.**
- In January 2020, the **Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) made it mandatory for operators to register their drones.**
- Provisions exist for the online issuance of unique identification numbers for drones through the **Ministry's Digital Sky platform.**

7. Dead fish floating in Guwahati tank raises concern

Context:

At least 400 dead fish were found floating in a Guwahati tank.

Details:

- The fish mortality was due to a **sudden dip in oxygen level.**
- The death of fish was not due to poisoning but **due to environmental degradation.**
- Non-penetration of sunlight due to a layer of algae has also been a factor behind the fish death.
- **Water was showered over the tank as a short-term measure** with pumps to increase the oxygen level.
- Paddle boating, spanking the water with bamboo, creating wave action through mechanised boats can increase the dissolved oxygen (DO) in the tank.

Effects of organic pollution in freshwaters:

- Organic pollution occurs with **large quantities of organic compounds in water bodies**.
- During the **decomposition process, the dissolved oxygen in the water body would be used up** at a greater rate than it can be replenished, causing **oxygen depletion.**
- It contains large quantities of suspended solids which by **increasing the turbidity of the water**, does not allow the sunlight to pass through the water surface. This **reduces the light available to photosynthetic organisms.**
- Organic wastes also settle out on the **bottom of the stream**. This could **alter the characteristics of the substratum.**

Dissolved Oxygen:

- Dissolved Oxygen is one of the most important factors for the **maintenance of biodiversity in a pond.**
- The atmosphere has about 20% oxygen or 2,00,000 parts per million (ppm) but only about 1,00,000 ppm gets dissolved in water.
- DO concentration below 3ppm can kill the water animals (here, fish).

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Cyber Capabilities and National Power Report: IISS

Why in News

According to a report by **International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS),** an influential think tank, **India's offensive cyber capability** is **"Pakistan-focused"** and **"regionally effective",** and not tuned towards China.

Key Points

- **Countries Under Observation:**
  - The report has done a qualitative assessment of cyber power in **15 countries.**
  - **Four members** of the **Five Eyes intelligence alliance –** the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.
  - Three cyber-capable **allies of the Five Eyes states –** France, Israel and Japan.
  - **Four countries** viewed by the Five Eyes and their allies as **cyber threats –** China, Russia, Iran and North Korea.
  - Four states at **earlier stages in their cyber power** development – India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam.
- **Assessment Criteria:**
  - The methodology analyses the cyber ecosystem of each state and how it intersects with international security, economic competition and military affairs. The countries are assessed in **seven categories:**
    - Strategy and doctrine
    - Governance, command and control
    - Core cyber-intelligence capability
    - Cyber empowerment and dependence
    - Cyber security and resilience
    - Global leadership in cyberspace affairs
    - Offensive cyber capability
- **Key Observations:**
  - The report has **divided the 15 states into three tiers of cyber power:**

- **First Tier:** States with **world-leading strengths across all the categories** in the methodology. The **United States of America** is the only country in this tier.
- **Second Tier:** States that have **world-leading strengths in some of the categories.** Australia, Canada, China, France, Israel, Russia and the United Kingdom are in this tier.
- **Third Tier:** States that have strengths or **potential strengths in some of the categories but significant weaknesses in others. India,** Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, North Korea and Vietnam are in this tier.

- This report provides confirmation of the **likely durability of US digital-industrial superiority** for at least the next ten years. There can be **two reasons** for this.
  - In advanced cyber technologies and their exploitation for economic and military power, the **US is still ahead of China.**
  - Since 2018, the US and several of its leading allies have agreed to **restrict China's access to some Western technologies.**
    - By doing so, these countries have endorsed a partial decoupling of the West and China that could potentially impede the latter's ability to develop its own advanced technology.

- **India Specific Observations:**
  - Despite the **geo-strategic instability of its region** and a keen awareness of the cyber threat it faces, India has made only **"modest progress" in developing its policy and doctrine** for cyberspace security.
  - India has **some cyber-intelligence and offensive cyber capabilities** but they are **regionally focused, principally on Pakistan.**
    - However, the **military confrontation with China** in the disputed Ladakh border area in June 2020, followed by a sharp increase in Chinese activity against Indian networks, has heightened Indian concerns about cyber security, not least in systems supplied by China.
  - India is currently aiming to compensate for its weaknesses by building **new capability with the help of key international partners –** including the US, the UK and France – and by looking to concerted international action to develop norms of restraint.
  - India's approach towards **institutional reform of cyber governance** has been **"slow and incremental",** with key coordinating authorities for cyber security in the civil and military domains established only as late as 2018 and 2019 respectively.
    - The key authorities work closely with the main cyber-intelligence agency, the **National Technical Research Organisation.**

- The strengths of the Indian digital economy include a **vibrant start-up culture and a very large talent pool.**
  - The private sector has moved more quickly than the government in promoting national cyber security.
- The country is **active and visible in cyber diplomacy** but **has not been among the leaders on global norms,** preferring instead to make productive practical arrangements with key states.

National Technical Research Organisation

- National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO), established in 2004, is under the **National Security Advisor** in the Prime Minister's Office and focuses on intelligence gathering.
- The agency specializes in **multiple disciplines,** which include remote sensing, data gathering and processing, cyber security, geospatial information gathering, cryptology, strategic hardware and software development and strategic monitoring.
- The **National Critical information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC),** an agency under the control of **National Technical Research Organisation,** aims to monitor, intercept and assess threats to critical infrastructure and other vital installations from intelligence gathered using sensors and platforms which include satellites, underwater buoys, drones, VSAT-terminal locators and fiber-optic cable nodal tap points.
- NTRO has the same **"norms of conduct" as the Intelligence Bureau (IB)** and the **Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW).**

Way Forward

- According to the report, India is a third-tier cyber power whose best chance of progressing to the second tier is by **harnessing its great digital-industrial potential** and **adopting a whole-of-society approach** to improving its cyber security.
- Also, the key is **"political will" and "how India organises its intelligence agencies."** One of the **"leapfrog opportunities"** for governments to be more effective in cyberpower is "how they align themselves with other governments".

2. International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

Why in News

Recently, the Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment launched the website for the **Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA)** on the occasion of **International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (26th June)**.

- The **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment** is the **nodal ministry for Drug Demand Reduction,** implements various programmes for drug abuse prevention across the country.

Key Points

- **About:**
  - In order to strengthen action and cooperation in achieving the goal of a world free of drug abuse, the **United Nations (UN) General Assembly**, in **December 1987**, decided to mark **26th June as the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.**
- **2021 Theme:**
  - Share Drug Facts to Save Lives.
- **Related Initiatives:**
  - **Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs**, 1961.
  - The **Convention on Psychotropic Substances**, 1971.
  - The **UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances,** 1988.
    - India is a signatory to all three and has enacted the **Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985**.
  - Every year, the UN publishes a **World Drug Report.**

Indian Initiatives

- **Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan/Drugs-Free India Campaign:**
  - It was flagged off on **15th August 2020 (Independence Day)** across 272 districts of the country found to be most vulnerable based on the data available from various sources.
  - Its focal points are **preventive, mass education and sensitization, capacity building** of service providers, **positive partnership** with educational institutions, and **augmentation of treatment, rehabilitation and counselling facilities.**
- **National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction:**

- o This Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has **begun implementation of a National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR) for 2018-2025.**
- o It aims at **reduction of adverse consequences of drug abuse** through a multi-pronged strategy involving **education, de-addiction and rehabilitation** of affected individuals and their families.
- o It focuses on preventive education, awareness generation, identification, counselling, treatment and rehabilitation of drug-dependent persons and training and capacity building of the service providers through **collaborative efforts of the Central and State Governments and Non-Governmental Organizations.**
  - There are more than **500 voluntary organizations across the country, which are assisted financially** under the NAPDDR scheme.

3. US Digital Millennium Copyright Act

Why in News

Recently, the Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology was locked out of his Twitter account for an hour allegedly over a notice received for **violation of the US' Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) 1998.**

Key Points

- ▪ **Digital Millennium Copyright Act:**
  - o It is a law passed in the US and is among the **world's first laws recognising Intellectual Property (IP) on the internet.**
  - o The DMCA oversees the implementation of two **1996** treaties signed by **World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)** member nations.
- ▪ **Complaint and Compliance:**
  - o Any **content creator of any form,** who believes that their original content has been copied by a user or a website without authorisation **can file an application citing their intellectual property has been stolen or violated.**
  - o In the **case of social media intermediaries like Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, content creators can directly approach the platform** with a proof of them being original creators.
    - Since these companies operate in nations which are signatories to the WIPO treaty, they are **obligated to remove the said content if they receive a valid and legal DMCA takedown notice.**
- ▪ **WIPO Treaties:**

o WIPO members had agreed upon two treaties, namely the **WIPO Copyright Treaty** and the **WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty.**
- **India** is a member of both the treaties.
o Both the treaties require member nations and signatories **to provide in their respective jurisdictions, protection to IP** that may have been created by citizens of different nations who are also co-signatories to the treaty.
- Protection **must not be any less** in any way than the one being given to a domestic copyright holder.
- It also **obligates that signatories to the treaty ensure ways to prevent circumvention of the technical measures used to protect copyrighted work.** It also provides the necessary international **legal protection to digital content.**

Intellectual Property

- It is a category of property that **includes intangible creations of the human intellect, and primarily encompasses copyrights, patents and trademarks.**
- It also includes other types of rights, such as **trade secrets, publicity rights, moral rights, and rights against unfair competition.**
- Every year **World Intellectual Property Day** is celebrated on **26th April.**
- Other than WIPO treaties, it is also covered under the **World Trade Organisation's (WTO)** Agreement on **Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS Agreement).**
  o **India** is a member of WTO and hence **committed to TRIPS.**

World Intellectual Property Organisation

- **About:**
  o It is one of the oldest specialised agencies of the **United Nations.**
  o It was **created in 1967** to encourage creative activity, to promote the protection of IP throughout the world.
  o It currently administers **26 international treaties.** Some of the major treaties are:
    - **Budapest Treaty** on the International Recognition of the Deposit of Microorganisms for the Purposes of Patent Procedure.
    - **Paris Convention** for the Protection of Industrial Property.
    - **Berne Convention** for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works.
    - Protocol Relating to the **Madrid Agreement** Concerning the International Registration of Marks- Madrid Protocol.
    - **Washington Treaty** on IP in respect of Integrated Circuits.

- **Nairobi Treaty** on the Protection of the Olympic Symbol.
- **Marrakesh Treaty** to facilitate Access to Published Works by Visually Impaired Persons and Persons with Print Disabilities.

- **Headquarter:**
  - Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Members:**
  - As of date, **193 nations across the world, including India,** are members of WIPO.
- **Major Functions:**
  - Policy forum **to shape balanced international IP rules** for a changing world.
  - Global services **to protect IP across borders and to resolve disputes.**
  - Technical infrastructure **to connect IP systems** and share knowledge.
  - Cooperation and capacity-building programs **to enable all countries to use IP for economic, social and cultural development.**
  - A world reference **source for IP information.**

Indian Laws which Cover Intellectual Property

- Trade Marks Act, 1999.
- **Patents Act, 1970** (as amended in 2005).
- **Copyright Act, 1957.**
- Designs Act, 2000.
- **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**.
- Semiconductor Integrated Circuits Layout Design Act, 2000.
- **Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Right Act, 2001.**
- **Information Technology Act, 2000.**

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology,Environment

4. International MSMEs Day

Why in News

Every year, **Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) Day** is celebrated on **27th June** to recognise the **contribution of these industries** in the implementation of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

Key Points

- **History:**
  - The **United Nations (UN)** designated **27th June** as **Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day** through a **resolution** passed in the **UN General Assembly** in April 2017.
  - In May 2017, a program titled **'Enhancing National Capacities for Unleashing Full Potentials of MSMEs in Achieving the SDGs in Developing Countries'** was launched.
  - It has been funded by the 2030 Agenda for **Sustainable Development Sub-Fund of the United Nations Peace and Development Fund.**
- **Significance:**
  - The **UN** wants **countries to recognise sustainable development goals** and **create awareness** about them.
    - An **International Trade Centre survey** on **Covid-19 impact** among businesses in 136 countries has shown that **nearly 62% of women-led small businesses** have been strongly affected by the crisis, compared to just over half of firms led by men, and **women-owned are 27%** more likely **not to survive** the pandemic.
  - **Formal and informal MSMEs** make up over **90% of all firms and account,** on average, for **70% of total employment** and **50% of GDP.** As such, they are key actors in achieving a green recovery.
- **2021 Theme:**
  - **MSME 2021: Key to an inclusive and sustainable recovery.**
- **Role of MSMEs in Indian Economy:**
  - They are the growth accelerators of the Indian economy, contributing about **30% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).**
  - In terms of **exports,** they are an integral part of the **supply chain and contribute about 48% of the overall exports.**
  - MSMEs also play an **important role in employment generation,** as they employ about **110 million people across the country.**
    - Interestingly, MSMEs are intertwined with the rural economy as well, as more than half of the MSMEs operate in rural India.

Initiatives to Promote MSME Sector

- The Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (M/o MSME) envisions a vibrant MSME sector by promoting growth and development of the MSME Sector, including Khadi, Village and Coir Industries.
- The **Micro; Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act was notified in 2006** to address policy issues affecting MSMEs as well as the coverage and investment ceiling of the sector.

- **Prime Minister's Employment Generation programme (PMEGP):** It is a **credit linked subsidy scheme,** for setting up of **new micro-enterprises** and to **generate employment** opportunities in **rural as well as urban areas of the country.**

- **Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI):** It aims to properly organize the **artisans and the traditional industries** into clusters and thus provide **financial assistance** to make them competitive in today's market scenario.

- **A Scheme for Promoting Innovation, Rural Industry & Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE)**: The scheme promotes innovation & rural entrepreneurship through rural Livelihood Business Incubator (LBI), Technology Business Incubator (TBI) and Fund of Funds for start-up creation in the agro-based industry.

- **Interest Subvention Scheme for Incremental Credit to MSMEs:** It was introduced by the **Reserve Bank of India** wherein **relief is provided** upto **2% of interest** to all the **legal MSMEs on their outstanding fresh/incremental term loan/working capital** during the period of its validity.

- **Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises:** Launched to facilitate easy flow of credit, guarantee cover is provided for collateral free credit extended to MSMEs.

- **Micro and Small Enterprises Cluster Development Programme (MSE-CDP):** It aims to enhance the productivity and competitiveness as well as capacity building of MSEs.

- **Credit Linked Capital Subsidy and Technology Upgradation Scheme (CLCS-TUS):** CLCSS aims at **facilitating technology upgradation of Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs)** by providing **15% capital subsidy for purchase of plant & machinery.**

- **CHAMPIONS portal:** It aims to assist **Indian MSMEs** march into the big league as **National and Global CHAMPIONS** by solving their grievances and encouraging, supporting, helping and hand holding them.

- **MSME Samadhan:** It enables them to directly register their cases about delayed payments by Central Ministries/Departments/CPSEs/State Governments.

- **Udyam Registrations Portal:** This new portal assists the government in **aggregating the data on the number of MSMEs in the country.**

- **MSME SAMBANDH:** It is a **Public Procurement Portal.** It was launched to monitor the implementation of the Public Procurement from MSEs by Central Public Sector Enterprises.

5. Indian Initiatives Shaping Energy Transition

Why in News

Recently, the **Minister of State for New & Renewable Energy** launched **'The India Story' booklet**, a compilation of I**ndian initiatives that are shaping India's energy transition.**

- The booklet was launched at the event on **Accelerating Citizen Centric Energy Transition** organized by the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).**
  - o It was organized in collaboration with the **Permanent Mission of India (PMI)** to the **United Nations** and the **Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW).**
- The Minister also **launched a website** which will act as a **repository of energy transition related knowledge resources from around the world.**

Key Points

- **Growth of Renewable Sector:**
  - o In the last 6 years, **India's installed Renewable Energy (RE)** capacity has **increased by over two and a half times** and stands at more than **141 Giga Watts** (including large Hydro).
    - It is about **37% of the country's total capacity.**
  - o The installed **solar energy capacity has increased by over 15 times**, and stands at **41.09 GW.**
  - o India's RE capacity is the **4th largest in the world.** Its **annual RE addition has been exceeding that of coal based thermal power since 2017.**
- **Ease of Investment in Renewables:**
  - o During the last 7 years, over **USD 70 billion investment has been made in RE in India.**
  - o India has a very **liberal foreign investment policy for renewables allowing 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) through the automatic route** in the sector.
    - **Ease of doing business** is India's utmost priority.
  - o Established dedicated **Project Development Cells (PDC)** and **FDI** cells in all Ministries for handholding and facilitating domestic and foreign investors.

- PDCs have been established for the development of investible projects in coordination between the Central Government and State Governments and thereby grow the pipeline of investible projects in India and in turn increase FDI inflows.
    - o **Renewable Energy Investment Promotion and Facilitation Board (REIPFB) Portal:**
        - It has been developed to provide **one-stop assistance and facilitation to the Industry and Investors** for development of projects and bringing new investment to the RE sector in India.
- **Industry's Commitment:**
    - o Several members from the Industry have voluntarily declared RE goals and committed to the **Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP)**, Renewable 100% (RE100) and **Science based targets (SBTs).**
        - **CDP** is a **global disclosure system** that enables companies, cities, states and regions to measure and manage their environmental impacts.
        - **SBTs** are **greenhouse gas** reduction goals set by businesses.
- **Green Tariff:**
    - o Rules are being framed for a **'green tariff' policy** that will help electricity **Distribution Companies (Discoms)** supply electricity generated from clean energy projects at a cheaper rate as compared to power from conventional fuel sources.
        - Government is also promoting **Green Hydrogen** with obligations for Fertilizers and Refining industries (Green Hydrogen Purchase obligations).
- **Initiatives to Increase Investment in Renewables:**
    - o **Viability Gap Funding** options for Offshore **Wind Energy.**
    - o **Green Term Ahead Market** and **Green Day Ahead Market.**
    - o Rules for facilitating RE through **Open Access.**
    - o **RE procurement through exchanges** will also be notified to promote non - conventional resources of energy.

6. Euphlyctis Kerala

A new species of skittering frog has been identified from the surroundings of the Thattekkad bird sanctuary.

Euphlyctis Kerala

- The new species is named Euphlyctis Kerala in honor of the remarkable biodiversity of the State, which is also known for many endemic species of frogs.
- The new species is known to be found in the freshwater bodies of the foothills of the Western Ghats, south of the Palakkad Gap.
- Although multiple skittering frogs have been described from India for almost two centuries (since 1799), the taxonomic mess within this group created a lot of confusion due to "morphological character crypticity".
- Members of the genus Euphlyctis (skittering frogs) have their distribution range from Arabian Peninsula, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand.
- As of now, Kerala is known to have 180 species of frogs and there could be many more new species awaiting formal descriptions.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Consider the following statements:

1. The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is working for the people of the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region.
2. The ICIMOD is located in Dehradun, India.

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 **International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)** is an intergovernmental knowledge and learning centre working for the people of the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH). **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It is **based in Kathmandu, Nepal** and works in and for eight regional member countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
  - The Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) mountain ranges span Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

2. Which of these UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India have been on the "List of World Heritage in Danger"?

1. Group of Monuments at Hampi
2. Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram
3. Manas Wildlife Sanctuary
4. Ellora Caves
5. Sundarbans National Park

Options:

a. 2, 3 and 5 only
b. 1 and 5 only
c. 2 and 4 only
d. 1 and 3 only

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The List of World Heritage in Danger is compiled by UNESCO.
- The list is intended to increase international awareness of the threats and to encourage counteractive measures.
- Previous delisted India sites include:
  o Group of Monuments at Hampi
  o Manas Wildlife sanctuary

3. *Keeling Curve*, **sometimes seen in the news recently, is associated with?**

- a. Concentration of Carbon dioxide (CO2)
- b. Impact of Education in Societal Wellbeing
- c. Economic inequality against Income per capita
- d. A chain of volcanoes formed above a subducting plate

Answer : a

- Despite a massive reduction in commuting and in many commercial activities during the early months of the pandemic, the amount of carbon in Earth's atmosphere in May reached its highest level in modern history.
- Scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California San Diego, said the findings, based on the amount of carbon dioxide in the air at NOAA's weather station on Mauna Loa in Hawaii, was the highest since measurements began 63 years ago.

- The measurement, called the *Keeling Curve* after Charles David Keeling, the scientist who began tracking carbon dioxide there in 1958, is a global benchmark for atmospheric carbon levels.
- The Keeling Curve is a graph of the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere based on continuous measurements taken at the Mauna Loa Observatory on the Island of Hawaii from 1958 to the present day.
- Instruments perched on NOAA's mountaintop observatory recorded carbon dioxide at about 419 parts per million last month, more than the 417 parts per million in May 2020.

4. Which of the following statements with respect to Ethanol Blending of Petrol is/are correct?

1. It ensures thorough combustion of fuel as Ethanol is high in oxygen content.
2. It will solve the problem of agricultural waste.
3. India has set a target of 20 per cent ethanol blending in petrol by 2030.

Options:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Ethanol burns well because it is an oxygenate, meaning that ethanol molecules contain oxygen. Oxygen atoms inside ethanol join forces with oxygen molecules in the air to help ethanol burn more completely. This extra amount of oxygen also helps gasoline burn better when it is blended with ethanol. Hence, carbon monoxide production from ethanol fuel is significantly lower than that of petrol engines.
- Given that ethanol can be produced from a variety of feed stocks such as sugar cane, bagasse, switch grass and also other cellulose biomass waste, it can be a potential solution to agricultural waste
- The government has advanced the country's target of 20 per cent ethanol blending in petrol by five years to 2025, from the earlier 2030.

5. Which of the following countries are members of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)?

1. Brunei
2. Cambodia
3. Laos
4. Vietnam

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer : D

Explanation

- **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** is a regional grouping that promotes economic, political, and security cooperation.
    - It was established in August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the founding fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
- Its chairmanship rotates annually, based on the alphabetical order of the English names of Member States.
- Members: **Brunei, Cambodia**, Indonesia, **Laos**, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and **Vietnam.**
- **Hence, option D is correct.**

6. The term 'Domestic Content Requirement' is sometimes seen in the news with reference to

a. Developing solar power production in our country
b. Granting licenses to foreign T.V. channels in our country
c. Exporting our food products to other countries
d. Permitting foreign educational institutions to set up their campuses in our country

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The domestic content requirement (DCR) category was instituted in the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission from the beginning of 2010 in an effort to create a healthy and robust indigenous manufacturing base and to elevate India's status as a solar hub.

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. "Next to war, famine and pandemic the worst thing that can happen to agriculture is absentee-landlordism". Analyse this statement with reference to the land revenue system of Britishers in India. (250 words)

Approach

- In the introduction briefly explain the meaning of absentee landlordism.
- Establish the relationship of absentee landlordism with the land revenue system of Britishers.
- Highlight the implications of absentee landlordism on the agriculture sector.
- In the body, starting with the cause, analyse the effects of absentee landlordism under various headings in such a way that their implications are elaborated.
- Conclude by summarising the effects of absentee landlordism and with the future changes brought about by it.

2Q. Discuss the importance of public services reforms in ensuring good governance in India. (250 words)

Approach

- Briefly define public services reforms in the introduction and establish its relationship with Good Governance.
- Elaborate some of the important public services reforms initiated in India. Also, highlight their importance in achieving some of the components of good governance.
- Mention the challenges that impede these reforms.
- Conclude with some valid suggestions about what more efforts are needed to make public services reform ensure Good Governance.