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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Tracking fugitives everywhere

Context:

- **An increasing number of accused people are absconding** to avoid being convicted.

Concerns:

Lack of efforts to pursue fugitives:

- Though the police department does initiate proceedings for attachment of property and declaration of the accused as proclaimed offenders, the **efforts being made to pursue fugitives – domestically or internationally – have been few and far between.**
- This goes **against the spirit of the law of the land** where criminals escape being punished merely by shifting out of the country or place of residence.

Lack of a domestic tracking or database system:

- Unlike the Interpol Notices which has allowed for some form of a system for tracking criminals worldwide, there is **no coordinated system or database for tracking criminals or wanted persons domestically.**
- In the absence of such a system, it is relatively easy for criminals to go undetected.

Lack of a coherent law:

- Indian law on extradition is spread across the Indian Penal Code as well as various laws pertaining to narcotic drugs, Information Technology, hijacking, etc.
- **The lack of a coherent law to deal with fugitives has been a major lacuna in extraditing such offenders.**

Recommendations:

National database:

- There is an urgent need for the **creation of a nationwide database of wanted persons, accessible to multiple stakeholders** like police agencies, passport and immigration authorities and the public.

Fugitive tracking system:

- India should consider implementing a **nation-wide system of 'Wanted Persons Notices'**, to help track fugitives domestically. India could draw valuable inputs from the highly successful U.S.'s inter-State extradition and fugitive tracking system.

Better integration among the various stakeholders:

- Though the **Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems and the National Intelligence Grid** are efforts in the right direction, there is the need for more integration to make them more effective.
- There needs to be enhanced integration between immigration agencies, State police agencies, Interpol-New Delhi, the External Affairs Ministry and the Home Ministry and central investigation and intelligence agencies to track and trace fugitives both domestically and internationally.

International collaboration and cooperation:

- India should share its 'wanted' database with other nations on a reciprocal basis or through treaties.
- India should consider signing relevant **bilateral and multilateral conventions on criminal matters** which would help it plug legal infirmities in the extradition process.

Consolidate multiple laws:

- All relevant legal processes and requirements should be incorporated into one consolidated law.

Specialized agency:

- A specialized set-up needs to be put in place to deal with all issues pertaining to fugitives, from investigation to extradition.
- This could involve an **Integrated International Cooperation Division (IICD) at the helm with corresponding linkages with fugitive tracking units at the State level.**

2. Panel report on data Bill hangs fire

Context:

In the recent cabinet expansion, five members of the Joint Committee on Personal Data Protection Bill, including its chairperson have been inducted into the Council of Ministers. This has raised questions over the long-pending report of the panel.

Details:

- The **Personal Data Protection Bill** was introduced in December 2019 in the **Lok Sabha**.
- The bill seeks to provide **protection of the personal data of individuals**.
- It was **referred to the joint parliamentary panel**, in February 2020. It is yet to submit its report.
- Ten of the 30 members of the committee had moved amendments against a provision (Clause 35) in the legislation **giving power to the Central government to exempt any agency of government from the application of the Act**.
 - Invoking “sovereignty and integrity of India”, “public order”, “friendly relations with foreign states” and “security of the state”, the **legislation gives powers to the Central government to suspend all or any of the provisions of this Act for government agencies**.
 - It was argued that this **clause makes the entire Act pointless**.

Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019:

Evolution of the bill:

K.S. Puttaswamy case:

- The need for a more robust data protection legislation came to the fore in 2017 post the **Supreme Court’s landmark judgment in Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd) v. Union of India**, that established the right to privacy as a **fundamental right**.
- In the judgment, the Court called for a data protection law that can effectively protect users’ privacy over their personal data.

B.N. Srikrishna committee:

- Consequently, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology formed a Committee of Experts under the Chairmanship of Justice (Retd) B.N. Srikrishna to suggest a draft data protection law.
- The Bill, in its current form, is a revised version of the draft legislative document proposed by the Committee.

Significance:

- The proposed regime under the Bill would be different from the existing regime in the following ways.

All-encompassing regime:

- The Bill seeks to **apply the data protection regime to both government and private entities across all sectors.**

Equal emphasis on both data security and privacy:

- The Bill seeks to emphasise both data security and data privacy. This will require the entities to not only maintain security safeguards to protect personal data, but will also require them to fulfill a set of data protection obligations and **transparency and accountability measures** that govern how entities can process personal data to uphold users' privacy and interests.

Rights of the users:

- The Bill seeks to **give users a set of rights over their personal data and means to exercise those rights.** The bill will empower the user to obtain information about the different kinds of personal data that an entity has about them and how the entity is processing that data.

Data Protection Authority:

- The Bill seeks to create an **independent and powerful regulator known as the Data Protection Authority (DPA).**
- The DPA will monitor and regulate data processing activities to ensure their compliance with the regime. Also the DPA will give users a channel to seek redress when entities do not comply with their obligations under the regime.

Concerns:

- Some provisions in the Bill create cause for concern about the regime's effectiveness.

Wide exemptions to government agencies:

- The Bill provides wide exemptions to government agencies.
- Under clause 35, the Central government can

3. Cabinet okays ₹23,123 cr. aid package

Context:

The Union Cabinet has approved a **₹23,123 crore package** to boost emergency response and healthcare systems.

- The Centre's share in the package is ₹15,000 crore and the States' share is ₹8,123 crore.

Aim:

- This package aims to **accelerate health system preparedness for immediate responsiveness for early prevention, detection and management**, with the **focus on health infrastructure development** including for **Paediatric Care**.
- It aims at preventing the **problems observed during the second wave**, including **lack of transport facilities for oxygen and shortage of medicines**.

Details:

- The package includes funding for **20,000 additional ICU (intensive care unit) beds** and the setting up of **paediatric units in all districts**.
- The Centre would provide support to its hospitals, the All India Institutes of Medical Sciences, and other institutes of national importance, for **repurposing beds for COVID-19 management**.
- **Genome sequencing machines** would be provided to the National Centre for Disease Control.
- It would also provide for the **expansion of the national telemedicine platform, e-Sanjeevani**, by **increasing daily consultations from 50,000 at present to 5 lakh**.
- All district hospitals would **implement Hospital Management Information System (HMIS)** through NIC developed **E-Hospital** and CDAC developed **E-Shushrut software**.
 - This will be the biggest impetus for the implementation of the **National Digital Health Mission (NDHM)**.
- It also would help states add more ambulances and carry out at least 21.5 lakh tests a day.

Note:

- In March 2020, when the country was faced with the first wave of the COVID 19 pandemic, the PM had announced a **Central Sector Scheme of Rs. 15,000 crore** for the **"India COVID 19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Package"**.

- It provided a **critical impetus to the efforts of MoHFW** and helped in catalysing health systems activities for pandemic management.

4. Should only elected legislators be eligible for chief ministership?

Background:

- **Resignation of Uttarakhand Chief Minister** Tirath Singh Rawat.
- Rawat is a Lok Sabha MP from Uttarakhand and was appointed as the CM in March 2021.
 - As per the Constitution, **a person who is not a member of either house of the state legislature can also be appointed as the Chief Minister**, but such a member must become a member of either of the houses before six months, to continue in the post.
- The resignation of Tirath Singh Rawat is being attributed to a constitutional roadblock to his being elected as a legislator within six months.
 - **The Representation of the People Act, 1951**, mandates that a bypoll for any vacancy should be held within six months of that vacancy arising, provided the remainder of the term is not less than one year or the EC and the Centre do not certify that holding the bypoll in that time frame is difficult.
 - Uttarakhand Assembly's term would expire in March 2022.
- This development has led to speculation about the fate of West Bengal's Mamata Banerjee, another unelected Chief Minister. In this context, the article analyzes various related aspects.

Allowing non-MLAs to become CM/Ministers:

Arguments against:

- **India has a parliamentary democracy**, which essentially means that whoever has the confidence of the majority of the members of the state legislature, will be the Chief Minister. It visualizes the Chief Minister as being elected by the members of the House of their own free will. The Chief Minister is an indirectly elected person by the directly elected members.
- The increasing role of the party high commands in the selection of CM is in **direct contrast to the whole concept of the CM being the popular choice of the elected people**.

Arguments in favour:

- The provision for allowing non-MLAs to become Chief Minister and ministers **will allow for outside talent to be accommodated into the**

administration. Any move to remove this provision would restrict available options.

- However, the article suggests that this provision should be used sparingly.

Holding of dual roles:

- The recent developments have also given rise to a question on whether a Member of Parliament should resign immediately from the House if picked to lead a State. This has led to a debate on **whether a person should be allowed to hold on to two constitutional posts simultaneously.**

Arguments against holding of dual posts:

- The Constitution expects a person not to hold more than one constitutional position at a time. **Article 101** states that if a person is a member of both Houses of Parliament, he or she loses membership of one and if a person is an MP and gets elected as an MLA, or vice versa, he or she has to resign from one post within 14 days.
- Also the holding of dual posts will **limit the ability of the person to fulfill his/her obligations towards the job in an effective manner.**
- In this regard, the article argues that **one should not occupy two constitutional offices concurrently** and suggests suitably amending the Constitution which mandates that if one is going to be the Chief Minister or a Minister of a State, one should resign one's membership of another House before taking up the role.

More flexibility on constitutional and legislative deadlines:

- One line of thought has been that given the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic, there is a need to ensure some degree of flexibility on constitutional and legislative deadlines.
- However, the article argues against such extension and suggests holding the election in a time-bound manner with all necessary safety precautions. **Such an extension could set an unnecessary precedent** and vested interests may figure out ways to create extraordinary situations more and more often, to get the elections deferred and such situations may well become a norm.

Role of the ECI:

- The article calls on the ECI to uphold its mandate and ensure that there is no constitutional crisis by conducting the by-elections.
- Under **Section 151 of the Representation of the People Act**, it is provided that if only one year is left of a House, a by-election will not be held. But it is actually at the **discretion of the ECI to make an exception.**

Institutional status of the ECI:

- The government being allowed to fall because of the reluctance of the ECI to hold an election would be unbecoming of the Commission.
- This could dent the image of the ECI and severely undermine the trust in the ECI's ability to hold free and fair elections. The undermining of the public belief and public trust in the ECI holding free and fair elections could serve as a body blow to the democratic set-up of India.

Autonomy of the ECI:

- The recent developments have given rise to questions over the **susceptibility of the ECI to come under the executive's pressures.**
- Though the Constitution has certain provisions which seek to insulate it from the government, there are many concerns which undermine the ECI's autonomy.
 - The **Commission is appointed by the government** of the day without consulting the Opposition - a rarity among democracies of the world.
 - The **removal procedure of the two Election Commissioners is quite easy.** The lack of protection of their jobs can lead to a scenario where they may be trying to impress the government and be partial to it.
- The article questions that when the appointments to posts such as CBI [Central Bureau of Investigation] Director and statutory bodies like Central Information Commission are made through a collegium system, why should not the appointment to a critical constitutional body like the ECI be brought under a similar procedure.

Recommendations for the ECI:

- There is a need to put in a **more transparent system for appointments to ECI.**
 - Best practices in other nations like scrutiny by parliament, broad basing the consultation process for appointment, setting up of eligibility for the posts and selection based on merit needs to be imbibed in the new system of appointment.
- **Promotions within the ECI should be automatic, on the basis of seniority.**
- There should be **appropriate security of tenure for election commissioners** as this will allow them to serve without fear or favour.

Conclusion:

- The article notes that any move to defer by-elections attributing it to the COVID-19 pandemic would hurt the credibility of the EC. Rather, the ECI should issue appropriate guidelines for the election and go ahead with it to avoid a constitutional crisis.

5. End NSA 'misuse' in U.P.: former top officials

Context:

A group of former civil servants have demanded an end to the misuse of the National Security Act terming it a draconian preventive detention law.

The National Security Act:

- The forerunner to the preventive detention laws in India can be traced to the British colonial period.
- The first such law was 1818's Bengal Regulation III which enabled the government to arrest anyone for defence or for maintaining public order without giving the person any legal remedies.
- Then, in 1919, the Rowlatt Acts were passed which drew widespread condemnation from the political activists of the time.
- Later, after independence, the Nehru government enacted the Preventive Detention Act of 1950 which expired in 1969.
- In 1971, Indira Gandhi enacted the MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act, 1971), which gave unlimited powers to the government and law enforcement bodies. This was repealed in 1977.
- In 1980, the NSA was enacted.
- Article 22 (3) (b) of the Constitution of India allows for preventive detention and restriction on personal liberty for reasons of state security and public order.

National Security Act Provisions

The Act empowers the central and state governments to detain a person as a preventive measure for reasons of security of the state and/or public order.

- The person can be detained so as to prevent him/her from acting in any manner prejudicial to national security. The person needn't be charged during the period of detention.
- The government can also keep a person in preventive detention to prevent him from disrupting public order or for the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community.
- The detainee can be kept for up to a period of 12 months. The period of detention can be extended if the authorities find adequate evidence.
- The detainee need not be informed of the reason for his/her detention for up to five days and in exceptional circumstances, for up to ten days also.
- No suit or legal action shall be filed against the central or state government for anything done in good faith done in pursuance of the NSA.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

6. Tracking fugitives everywhere

Context:

- **An increasing number of accused people are absconding** to avoid being convicted.

Concerns:

Lack of efforts to pursue fugitives:

- Though the police department does initiate proceedings for attachment of property and declaration of the accused as proclaimed offenders, the **efforts being made to pursue fugitives – domestically or internationally – have been few and far between.**
- This goes **against the spirit of the law of the land** where criminals escape being punished merely by shifting out of the country or place of residence.

Lack of a domestic tracking or database system:

- Unlike the Interpol Notices which has allowed for some form of a system for tracking criminals worldwide, there is **no coordinated system or database for tracking criminals or wanted persons domestically.**
- In the absence of such a system, it is relatively easy for criminals to go undetected.

Lack of a coherent law:

- Indian law on extradition is spread across the Indian Penal Code as well as various laws pertaining to narcotic drugs, Information Technology, hijacking, etc.
- **The lack of a coherent law to deal with fugitives has been a major lacuna in extraditing such offenders.**

Recommendations:

National database:

- There is an urgent need for the **creation of a nationwide database of wanted persons, accessible to multiple stakeholders** like police agencies, passport and immigration authorities and the public.

Fugitive tracking system:

- India should consider implementing a **nation-wide system of 'Wanted Persons Notices'**, to help track fugitives domestically. India could draw valuable inputs from the highly successful U.S.'s inter-State extradition and fugitive tracking system.

Better integration among the various stakeholders:

- Though the **Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems and the National Intelligence Grid** are efforts in the right direction, there is the need for more integration to make them more effective.
- There needs to be enhanced integration between immigration agencies, State police agencies, Interpol-New Delhi, the External Affairs Ministry and the Home Ministry and central investigation and intelligence agencies to track and trace fugitives both domestically and internationally.

International collaboration and cooperation:

- India should share its 'wanted' database with other nations on a reciprocal basis or through treaties.
- India should consider signing relevant **bilateral and multilateral conventions on criminal matters** which would help it plug legal infirmities in the extradition process.

Consolidate multiple laws:

- All relevant legal processes and requirements should be incorporated into one consolidated law.

Specialized agency:

- A specialized set-up needs to be put in place to deal with all issues pertaining to fugitives, from investigation to extradition.
- This could involve an **Integrated International Cooperation Division (IICD) at the helm with corresponding linkages with fugitive tracking units at the State level.**

7. Cairn says it has got court nod to attach 20 Indian assets in Paris

Context:

Cairn Energy has said that it has secured a French court order allowing it to **freeze at least 20 Indian properties in central Paris.**

Background:

- Cairn Energy filed a lawsuit in a U.S. court against Air India, seeking to make the national carrier **liable to pay the damages** awarded to it, but which are not yet honoured by the Indian government.
- Earlier, the **Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at The Hague ruled in favour of Cairn Energy PLC** of the U.K and awarded \$1.2 billion in damages against India in the retrospective taxation case.
 - The Indian government has termed the tribunal's December 2020 decision highly flawed.
- It argues that the **award improperly ratifies Cairn's scheme to achieve Double Non-Taxation**, which was **designed to avoid paying taxes anywhere in the world**, a significant **public policy concern** for governments worldwide.

Details:

- Cairn Energy said that the Paris court has allowed it to freeze 20 assets to secure a part of the dues.
- Also, **it has identified Indian assets worth \$70bn across the world** and could take action in 10 jurisdictions including the U.S., the U.K., Netherlands, Canada, France, Singapore, Japan, the UAE and even the Cayman Islands.
- It has **filed a plea in the US court seeking to make Air India liable to pay.**

Note:

- Recently, some foreign investors in **Devas Multimedia** filed a similar plea in the same court, **seeking to declare Air India as the Indian government's "alter ego"** and **recover a \$160 million compensation** awarded to the firm after an **international arbitration over its scrapped deal with ISRO's commercial arm, Antrix Corporation.**
- In a similar arbitration case, **India lost against Vodafone**, the government had filed an appeal in a Singapore court **to defend the retrospective tax demand** on the telecom firm.
- The officials have stressed that the government's sovereign right to levy taxes cannot be questioned under bilateral pacts.

Way Forward:

- India is entangled in **more than a dozen such cases** against companies over retrospective tax claims and cancellation of contracts.

- The exchequer could end up paying billions of dollars in damages if it loses.
- To reduce future arbitration claims, **India has ended such agreements with over 50 countries.**
- India is **working on a new law to protect foreign investors** by offering relief from possible policy changes even as it upholds the right to tax them.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. India's Covid-19 Emergency Response Package: Phase II

Why in News

The Union Cabinet has recently approved a Rs. 23,123 crore package to boost emergency response and healthcare systems.

- It includes funding for 20,000 additional ICU (intensive care unit) beds and the setting up of paediatric units in all districts, ahead of a potential third wave of **Covid-19** in the country.

Key Points

- **Background:**
 - **Phase I of Package:** In March 2020, when the country was faced with the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Central Sector Scheme of Rs. 15,000 crore was announced for the "**India Covid-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Package**".
 - It aimed at providing a critical impetus to the efforts of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and States/UTs, and catalysing health systems activities for pandemic management.
 - Since mid-February 2021, the country is experiencing a **second wave** which has spread into rural, peri-urban and tribal areas.

- **Phase II of Package:**
 - The Phase-II of the Package has **Central Sector (CS)** and **Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS)** components.
 - The Union government fully funds the central sector schemes, whereas centrally sponsored schemes are jointly funded by the Centre and states.
 - It would be **implemented from 1st July 2021 to 31st March 2022.**
- **Purpose:**
 - Includes funding for paediatric units in all 736 districts, and the setting up of 20,000 ICU beds, 20% of which would be “hybrid”, that is, for adults as well as children.
 - There are apprehensions about **a third wave of Covid-19 affecting children more than before.**
 - It is **aimed at preventing the problems observed during the second wave**, including lack of transport facilities for oxygen and shortage of medicines, from happening again.
 - The Centre **would provide support to its hospitals, the All India Institutes of Medical Sciences, and other institutes of national importance**, for repurposing 6,688 beds for Covid-19 management.
 - **Genome sequencing machines** would be provided to the **National Centre for Disease Control.**
 - The package would also provide for the expansion of the national telemedicine platform, **eSanjeevani**, by increasing daily consultations from 50,000 at present to 5 lakh.
 - **States would be supported** to carry out at least 21.5 lakh tests a day and add 8,800 ambulances.

2.SPARSH: System for Pension Administration Raksha

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Defence** has implemented **SPARSH (System for Pension Administration Raksha)**.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - It is an **integrated system for automation of sanction and disbursement** of defence pension.
 - This **web-based system processes pension claims** and credits pension directly into the bank accounts of defence pensioners without relying on any external intermediary.

- A **Pensioner Portal** is available for pensioners to view their pension related information, access services and register complaints, if any.
- SPARSH envisages **establishment of Service Centres to provide last mile connectivity to pensioners** who may be unable to directly access the SPARSH portal.
 - The two largest banks dealing with defence pensioners – State Bank of India (SBI) and Punjab National Bank (PNB) – have been co-opted as Service Centres.
- **Other Initiative Related to Defence Pensions:**
 - **One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme:** It provides the payment of the same pension to military officers for the same rank for the same length of service, irrespective of the date of retirement.

3. Department of Public Enterprises

Why in News

Recently, the government reallocated the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) to the finance ministry from the ministry of heavy industries.

- The Finance Ministry will now have six departments while DPE's parent ministry, the Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises will now be called the Ministry of Heavy Industries.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - It is the **nodal department for all the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs)** and formulates policy pertaining to CPSEs.
 - CPSEs are those companies in which the direct holding of the Central Government or other CPSEs is 51% or more.
 - It lays down, in particular, **policy guidelines on performance improvement and evaluation, autonomy and financial delegation and personnel management in CPSEs.**
 - It furthermore **collects and maintains information in the form of a Public Enterprises Survey on several areas in respect of CPSEs.**
 - It will now be the **sixth department in the finance ministry** besides economic affairs, revenue, expenditure, financial services and **Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM).**

- The shift of DPE to the Finance Ministry will **help in efficient monitoring of the capital expenditure, asset monetisation and financial health of the CPSEs.**
- **Background:**
 - In their report, the **Estimates Committee** of 3rd Lok Sabha (1962-67) stressed the **need for setting up a centralized coordinating unit, which could also make continuous appraisal of the performance of public enterprises.**
 - Which led to the setting up of the **Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) in 1965** in the Ministry of Finance.
 - In 1985, **BPE was made part of the Ministry of Industry.** In May, 1990, **BPE was made a full-fledged Department** known as the **Department of Public Enterprises (DPE).**
- **Major Functions:**
 - Coordination of **matters of general policy affecting all Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs).**
 - **Restructuring or closure of PSEs** including the mechanisms.
 - Rendering advice relating to **revival.**
 - **Counselling, training and rehabilitation of employees** in CPSEs under Voluntary Retirement Scheme.
 - **Categorisation of CPSEs including conferring 'Ratna' status,** among others.
 - CPSEs are classified into 3 categories- **Maharatna, Navratna and Miniratna.** Presently, there are 10 Maharatna, 14 Navratna and 74 Miniratna CPSEs.

Estimates Committee

- **About:**
 - It was first established during British Era in the 1920s but **Independent India's first Estimates Committee was established in 1950.**
 - This committee **examines the estimates included in the budget and suggests 'economies'** in public expenditure.
 - **Other Financial Committees of Parliament** include - Public Accounts Committee and Committee on Public Undertakings.
- **Members:**
 - It has **30 members** and all these members are from **Lok Sabha.**
 - The members are elected by Lok Sabha members from amongst themselves **every year by principles of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote,** so that all parties get due presentation in it.
 - **A minister cannot be elected as member/Chairman of estimates committee.**

- The **chairman is appointed by the Speaker** and the chairman is always **from the ruling party** or coalition.
- **Functions:**
 - This committee tries to **report the economy and efficiency in expenditures.**
 - It **suggests what changes in policy or administrative framework** can be done and what alternative policies can be considered to bring economy and efficiency.
 - The works of this committee continue **throughout the year and it keeps reporting to the house as examination proceeds.**
 - Due to this reason, this committee is also called '**continuous economy committee**'.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

4. Youth and Food System

Why in News

A new **UN report on youth and agriculture** underscores the urgent need to make agri-food systems more appealing to young people to secure the future of global food security and nutrition.

- The report '**Promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems**' is prepared and shared to the UN by the **Committee on World Food Security (CFS)**.
- **CFS** is an inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for all stakeholders to work together on **food security and nutrition for all**. The CFS is hosted by the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** of the **United Nations (UN)**.

Key Points

- **Youth in Numbers:**
 - Youth aged between 15 and 24 years accounted for **16% of the world's population** in 2019.
 - Young people were concentrated in **Asia, Central and Southern Asia** with 361 million youth and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia with 307 million youth, followed by sub-Saharan Africa (211 million youth).

- The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** estimated that 440 million youth from the African continent would enter the labour market between 2015 and 2030.
- **Key Findings:**
 - **Food systems are the largest employer:** Particularly in the developing countries, yet they often do not provide decent and meaningful work or adequate livelihood opportunities, nor maintain a balance between the needs and rights of different generations.
 - **Food systems** are a **complex web of activities** involving production, processing, handling, preparation, storage, distribution, marketing, access, purchase, consumption, food loss and waste, as well as the outputs of these activities, including social, economic and environmental outcomes.
 - **More Employment Opportunities: Covid-19** has affected labour markets around the world, hurting employment prospects for the youth more than those belonging to other age groups. Globally, employment among the youth fell 8.7% in 2020 compared with 3.7% for adults.
 - Agri-food systems, if made more appealing and equitable to youth, are a large, **untapped reservoir of employment opportunities.**
 - **Importance of Focusing on Developing Countries:** As almost 88% of the world's 1.2 billion youth live, particularly in Africa, where over 70% of youth subsist on USD 2 per day or less.
 - **Achieving Sustainable Development Goals:** The youth engagement and employment in sustainable agri-food systems is simultaneously a goal to be realized and a means for the achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goals**, and of economic well-being.
 - Youth are on the **front lines to build the food systems of the future**, while also bearing significant risks from **climate change, social and economic inequities, and political marginalization.**
- **Recommendations:**
 - **Approaches, initiatives and policies** to strengthen youth engagement and employment in food systems need to be based on the **pillars of rights, equity, agency and recognition.**
 - Improving youth-focused **social protection programmes, labour laws and regulations, and young people's access to resources** (land, forests, fisheries etc), finance, markets, digital technologies, knowledge and information.
 - Supporting youth-led **start-up initiatives** is also important, and requires a supportive policy environment.

- The **redistribution of resources, knowledge and opportunities for youth** can contribute to creating jobs for the youth, as well as directly supporting transitions to sustainable agri-food systems.

Indian Scenario

▪ Youth in Numbers:

- The youth (18-29 years) constitute 22% of India's population, which is more than 261 million people.
- According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the median age of Indian population is around 28 years in 2021 and will become 31 years by 2031.
- India is also going through the stage of **demographic dividend**.
- Hardly **5% of the youth are engaged in agriculture** though over 60% of the rural people derive their livelihood fully or partly from farming and its related activities.
 - Clearly, the modern youth are disenchanted with agriculture and are shunning it as a profession.

▪ Related Initiatives:

- **MAYA Roadmap, 2018:** This was formulated in a conference in New Delhi on "**Motivating and Attracting Youth in Agriculture**" (MAYA).
 - The MAYA road map envisages offering the youth a variety of avenues and opportunities for economic growth, social respect and application of modern technologies in farming and allied activities.
- **ARYA (Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture): Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** has initiated this programme. Following are its **Objectives**:
 - To attract and empower the Youth in Rural Areas to take up various Agriculture, allied and service sectors.
 - To enable the **Farm Youth to establish network groups** to take up resource and capital intensive activities like processing, value addition and marketing.
- **National Policy for Farmers, 2007:** To introduce measures which can help attract and retain youths in farming and processing of farm products for higher value addition by making it intellectually stimulating and economically rewarding.

5. Deaths Due to Hazardous Chemical

Why in News

According to latest estimates by the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, **deaths due to exposure to hazardous chemicals worldwide rose 29% in 2019** from what they were in 2016.

- **Two million people died** due to exposure to hazardous chemicals in **2019**, compared to **1.56 million in 2016**. Between **4,270 and 5,400 people died every day** due to unintentional exposure to chemicals.
- The estimates were released by WHO Director-General, during the Ministerial Dialogue held at the Berlin Forum on **Chemicals and Sustainability: Ambition and Action towards 2030**.

Key Points

- **Hazardous Chemical:**
 - A hazardous chemical is a chemical that has **properties with the potential to do harm** to human or animal health, the environment, or capable of damaging property.
 - They are frequently used in the **workplace as raw materials, solvents, cleaning agents, catalysts**, and for a number of other functions.
 - These are normally classified according to the risk they pose to health and property. Hazardous chemicals are categorized as follows:
 - **Flammable or explosive** (e.g. petroleum, TNT, plastic explosives)
 - **Irritating or corrosive to skin, lungs, and eyes** (e.g. acids, alkali, paints, fumes)
 - **Toxic chemicals** (e.g. carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulfide, cyanide, **heavy metals**)
 - These are present in **the air, in consumer products, at the workplace, in water, or in the soil**.
 - They **can cause several diseases** including mental, behavioural and neurological disorders, cataracts, or asthma.
- **Chemicals Causing Most Deaths:**
 - **Lead Poisoning:**
 - It was responsible for **nearly half of the deaths in 2019**.
 - Lead exposure causes **cardiovascular diseases (CVD), chronic kidney diseases and idiopathic intellectual disability**.
 - Lead is **added to paints** for various reasons, including enhancing the colour, reducing corrosion and decreasing the drying time.
 - Just **41% of countries including India**, have legally binding controls on the production, import, sale and use of lead paints.

- In 2020, **UNICEF** too had raised concerns on the impact of lead pollution on the health of children.
 - Approximately 800 million globally have blood lead levels at or above the permissible quantity (5 micrograms per decilitre ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$)).
- **Particulates and Carcinogens:**
 - **Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)** from occupational exposure to **particulates (dust, fumes and gas)** and **cancers** from occupational exposure to **carcinogens (arsenic, asbestos and benzene)**, too accounted for a substantial share of the preventable deaths.
- **Disability-adjusted Life-years Lost**
 - In 2019, **53 million disability-adjusted life-years were lost**. This is an increase by over 19% since 2016.
 - There has been a 56% increase in disability-adjusted life-years lost due to exposure to lead since 2016.
 - **Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs)** is the sum of the number of years of life lost due to premature death and a weighted measure of the years lived with disability due to a disease or injury.
 - The use of DALYs to track disease burden is recommended by India's **National Health Policy of 2017**.

Steps Taken

There are many international chemical conventions restricting or even banning the production, use, and trade of certain hazardous chemicals.

- **Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs):** To protect human health and the environment from the harmful effects of POPs (i.e. toxic chemicals).
 - **India has ratified and acceded** to the convention.
- **Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade.**
 - **India ratified** the Convention in 2005.
- **Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.**
 - **India ratified** the Convention.
- **The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)** is an arms control treaty prohibiting the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer or use of chemical weapons by States Parties.
 - **India is a signatory and party** to the Convention.

- **The Minamata Convention on Mercury** is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury and its compounds.
 - More than 140 countries including India have ratified the Convention.
- **The United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances** provides comprehensive measures against drug trafficking, including provisions against money laundering and the diversion of precursor chemicals.
 - **India** is one among the signatories.
- **The Chemicals Convention concerning Safety in the use of Chemicals at Work** was promulgated by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1990 and entered into force on 4th Nov 1993.
- **The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)** is a policy framework to promote chemical safety around the world.
 - The first Conference and the process to develop the strategic approach were co-convened by the **United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment)** along with other stakeholders.

Way Forward

- **Need For Comprehensive Law:** There is a need for a comprehensive law in the countries to regulate chemical use, production and safety.
- In this context, India must take note as the country's **national chemical policy has been pending** since 2012.
- **Reducing or Removing Chemical Exposure:** Extreme cautions are to be taken when **handling, storing, transporting, and using hazardous chemicals**.
 - The user needs to wear protective clothing and personal protective equipment to protect themselves from hazardous chemicals.

6. Methane in the Moons of Saturn

Why in News

NASA's (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) Cassini spacecraft had detected an unusually high **concentration of methane, along with carbon dioxide and dihydrogen, in the moons (Titan and Enceladus) of Saturn** by flying through their plumes (in 2017).

- It found that **Titan** has methane in its atmosphere and **Enceladus** has a liquid ocean with erupting plumes of gas and water.
- An international research team has used new statistical methods to understand if methanogenesis or methane production by microbes could explain the molecular hydrogen and methane.

Key Points

- **Findings:**
 - Cassini found **ice particles, salts, hydrogen and organic molecules** in the plumes, tentative **hints of an ocean that is similar to Earth's oceans** in composition.
 - There is also evidence for **alkaline hydrothermal vents on Enceladus' seafloor**, similar to those **that support methanogens in Earth's oceans.**
- **About Methanogens:**
 - Most of the methane on Earth has a biological origin. **Microorganisms called methanogens are capable of generating methane** as a metabolic byproduct.
 - They **do not require oxygen to live** and are widely distributed in nature.
 - They are **found in swamps, dead organic matter, and even in the human gut.**
 - They are **known to survive in high temperatures** and simulation studies have shown that they **can live in Martian conditions.**
 - Methanogens have been widely studied to understand **if they can be a contributor to global warming.**
- **Possibility of Methanogens on Enceladus:**
 - Methane **could be formed by the chemical breakdown of organic matter** present in Enceladus' core.
 - **Hydrothermal processes** could help the formation of carbon dioxide and methane.
 - Enceladus' hydrothermal vents **could be habitable to Earth-like microorganisms (Methanogens).**

Saturn

- Saturn is the **sixth planet from the Sun and the second largest planet** in our solar system.
- Adorned with thousands of beautiful ringlets, Saturn is unique among the planets. It is not the only planet to have rings – made of chunks of ice and rock – but none are as spectacular or as complicated as Saturn's.
- Like fellow gas giant Jupiter, Saturn is a massive ball made mostly of hydrogen and helium.
- **Few missions** have visited Saturn: Pioneer 11 and Voyagers 1 and 2 flew by; But Cassini orbited Saturn 294 times from 2004 to 2017.

Titan

- Titan is the **largest moon of Saturn** and the second largest moon in our solar system.
 - **Jupiter's moon Ganymede** is just a little bit larger.
- It has **liquid rivers, lakes, and seas on its surface** (though these contain hydrocarbons like methane and ethane, not water).
- Titan's atmosphere is **made mostly of nitrogen**, like Earth's, **but is four times denser**.
- Unlike Earth, it has **clouds and methane rain**.
- Because it is so far from the **Sun** its **surface temperature is (-179 degree Celsius)**.

Enceladus

- Enceladus is a **small, icy moon which has an abundance of hydrogen molecules** in water plumes. 98% of the gas in the plumes was found to be water and **1% is hydrogen** and the remaining is a mixture of molecules of carbon dioxide, methane, and ammonia.
- **Underwater vents present on Enceladus resemble the vents present on Earth's ocean** floors, where microbes and other sea life congregate.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Pegasus recently seen in news is a

- Theft tactic that allows hackers to create a fake credit card by stealing the information off an individual's actual card
- Malware that can initiate total surveillance on the targeted device
- Virus capable of slowing down internet traffic
- Ransomware attack which has hit hundreds of US companies

Answer: b

Explanation:

Pegasus is a spyware tool from Israeli firm NSO Group. It is a malware that can initiate total surveillance on the targeted device. Once Pegasus is installed, the attacker has complete access to the user's phone.

2. With reference to Integrated Child Development Scheme, consider the following statements:

- The scheme aims to improve only the nutritional and health status of children in the age-group 0-6 years.
- It is a central sector scheme implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : D

Explanation

- The Umbrella Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is a **centrally sponsored scheme (not central sector)** implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. It was launched in 1975. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- **Objectives of ICDS:**
 - To improve the **nutritional and health status of children in the age-group 0-6 years.**
 - To lay the foundation for proper psychological, physical and social development of the child.
 - To reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school dropout.
 - To achieve effective coordination of policy and implementation amongst the various departments to promote child development.
 - To enhance the capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child.
 - To facilitate, educate and empower Adolescent Girls (AGs) so as to enable them to become self-reliant and aware citizens.
- It is clear that the objective of the scheme is not only to improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age-group 0-6 years, **but also other aspects related to child and maternal health. Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**

3. Consider the following statements:

1. This region is surrounded by the Gulf of Aqaba.
2. The Strait of Tiran connects two water bodies.
3. Its coastlines touch the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea.

The country in question is:

- a. Jordan
- b. Egypt
- c. Syria
- d. Israel

Answer: b

Explanation:

The coastline of Egypt touched both the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea that is connected by the Strait of Tiran. Egypt is bordered by the Gulf of Aqaba.

4. Recently in the news, "Authorised Economic Operators Programme" is related to?

- A Cryptocurrency
- B Base Erosion and Profit Shifting
- C Supply Chain and Global Trade
- D Money Laundering

Answer : C

Explanation

- The Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC) has inaugurated the online filing of Authorised Economic Operators (AEO) applications. AEO is a programme (2007) under the aegis of the World Customs Organization (WCO) SAFE Framework of Standards to **secure and facilitate global trade**.
- It aims to enhance **international supply chain security and facilitate the movement of goods**. Under this, an entity engaged in international trade is approved by WCO as compliant with supply chain security standards and granted AEO status. **Hence, C is the correct option.**

5. With reference to aquaculture in India, consider the following statements:

1. Matsya Setu is a certification scheme for aquaculture products.
2. Aquaculture refers to breeding, raising, and harvesting fish, shellfish, and aquatic plants.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : B

Explanation

- Recently, the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying has launched the **Online Course Mobile App "Matsya Setu"** for fish farmers. It aims to disseminate the latest freshwater aquaculture technologies to the aqua farmers of the country, thus increasing productivity and income.

- **Shaphari is a certification scheme for aquaculture** products developed by the Marine Products Exports Development Authority (MPEDA) based on the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization's technical guidelines on aquaculture certification. Shaphari is a Sanskrit word that means superior quality of fishery products suitable for human consumption. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- Aquaculture is breeding, raising, and harvesting fish, shellfish, and aquatic plants. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

6. Navegaon Nagzira Tiger Reserve is located in which of the following states?

- a. Madhya Pradesh
- b. Maharashtra
- c. West Bengal
- d. Bihar

Answer : b

Navegaon Nagzira Tiger Reserve

- It was notified as 46th tiger reserve of India in 2013 and the 5th tiger reserve of Maharashtra.
- It is situated in Gondia and Bhandara districts of Maharashtra.
- The major forest type found in NNTR is Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous Forest.
- It has connectivity with major tiger reserves in central India like
 1. Kanha and Pench Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh
 2. Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra
 3. Indravati Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh.

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. What are the reasons and costs of rising air pollution in Delhi? Enumerate the measures taken by government in this direction and their efficacy. (250 words)

Approach

- Give introduction by citing relevant fact on pollution in Delhi
- Give reasons of rising air pollution In Delhi.
- Give facts about the costs in terms of health and other loss due to pollution.
- Give the measures taken by government.
- Discuss the efficacy of these methods.

2Q. Enactment of Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act has brought the Indian economy on the path of fiscal prudence only in letter but not in spirit. Critically analyse. (250 words)

Approach

- Briefly discuss the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act.
- Enumerate the achievements and failures of the FRBM Act.
- Give suggestions for effective implementation of the Act.