

www.vishnuias.com



AUGUST

23.08.2021

CURRENT AFFAIRS

A MAGAZINE FOR CIVIL SERVICES PREPARATION

JOIN OUR TELEGRAM: <https://t.me/vishnuiasmentor>

**Articles of the day
THE HINDU & INDIAN EXPRESS**

UPSC

General Studies

Test Series

**Online &
Offline
classes**

**One-Stop
Solution**

**Free daily
materials**

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Supreme Court Collegium shows the way in judicial appointments

Context

For the first time ever, the Supreme Court Collegium led by the Chief Justice of India (CJI) recommended/selected as many as nine persons at one go to be appointed to the apex court.

Significance of the move

- It is a happy augury that the present CJI, Justice N.V. Ramana, could, along with his colleagues in the Collegium, select the judges within a short period of his assumption of office.
- It is a tough task to build a consensus around one person or a few persons, the CJI being the head of the Collegium, has an unenviable task in building that consensus.
- Therefore, it can be said without any fear of contradiction that the job of selecting as many as nine judges for appointment to the Supreme Court was done admirably well.
- The latest resolution of the Collegium gave effect to the multiple judicial pronouncements of the top court on the subject.
- The selection of three women judges, with one of them having a chance to head the top court, a judge belonging to the Scheduled Caste and one from a backward community and the nine selected persons belonging to nine different States, all point towards an enlightened and unbiased approach of the members of the Collegium.
- A needless controversy is sought to be raised by a section of the media about this round of selection citing the non-existing 'Rule of Seniority'.

Various norms to be followed in judicial appointment

1) Consideration of merit

- **Article 142 (1)** contains the concept of 'complete justice' in any cause or matter which the Supreme Court is enjoined to deliver upon.
- So, while selecting a judge to adorn the Bench, the fundamental consideration should be his/her ability to do complete justice.

- In the **Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association and Another vs Union of India (1993)**, the Court spelt out the parameters within which to accomplish the task of selecting candidates for appointment to the higher judiciary.
- The most crucial consideration is the merit of the candidates.
- The merit is the ability of the judge to deliver complete justice.

2) Plurality

- The nine judges who decided the above case were quite aware of these compelling realities.
- So, they said, “In the context of the plurastic [pluralistic] society of India where there are several distinct and differing interests of the people with multiplicity of religions, race, caste and community and with the plurality of culture, it is inevitable that all people should be given equal opportunity in all walks of life and brought into the mainstream.”

3) Transparency

- India is perhaps the only country **where the judges select judges to the higher judiciary.**
- It is, therefore, necessary **to make the norms of selection transparent and open.**
- In 2019, a five judge Bench of the Supreme Court, of which the present CJI was also a member, laid emphasis on this point.
- The Bench observed: “There can be no denial that there is a vital element of public interest in knowing about the norms which are taken into consideration in selecting candidates for higher judicial office and making judicial appointments”.

Conclusion

The Collegium has started doing its job. Now, it is time for the Government to match the pace and take the process of appointments to its logical conclusion at the earliest.

2. Gujarat Anti-Conversion Law

The Gujarat High Court this week stayed key provisions of The Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act, 2021 pertaining to marriages involving religious conversion of either of the two parties.

What is the Anti-Conversion Law?

- The legislation has amended the 2003 Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act.
- The amendment was brought in line with several similar laws enacted last year by right-wing-ruled states, starting with Uttar Pradesh.
- The laws seek to end conversion through unlawful means, specifically prohibit any conversion for marriage, even if it is with the consent of the individual except when a prior sanction is obtained from the state.
- Apart from UP and Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh too, have also enacted similar laws.

Controversial provisions

- **Vagueness:** It gives powers to the state to conduct a police inquiry to verify the intentions of the parties to convert for the purposes of marriage.
- **Burden of proof:** Section 6A reverses the burden of proof on the partner of the converted spouse to prove that he/she did not coerce the other spouse.
- **Intent of marriage:** Section 4 allows the aggrieved person, their parents, brother, sister, or any other person related by blood or marriage or adoption to file an FIR challenging the conversion and subsequent marriage.
- **Conversion as Allurement:** The law considers lawful conversions as “allurement” in vague.
- **Discrimination:** It defines over-broad terms; prescribes different jail terms based on gender; and legitimizes the intrusion of family and the society at large to oppose inter-faith marriages.

Issues with such laws

- **Stereotyping of lawful conversion:** The new anti-conversion laws shift the burden of proof of a lawful religious conversion from the converted to his/her partner.
- **Curb on individual freedom:** Legal experts have pointed out that the laws interfere in an individual’s agency to marry a partner from different faith and to choose to convert from one’s religion for that purpose.
- **Interference of state:** Apart from being vague and sweeping, the laws also test the limits to which the state can interfere in the personal affairs of individuals.
- **Violative of FRs:** The freedom to propagate one’s religion (A25) and the right to choose a partner are fundamental rights (A21) that the new anti-conversion laws impinge upon.

What has the Gujarat High Court held?

- A Division Bench of the Gujarat High Court has granted an interim stay on certain provisions of the amendment that interfere with inter-faith marriages.
- It has held that the bill interferes with the intricacies of marriage including the right to the choice of an individual, thereby infringing Article 21.
- The interim stay on certain provisions will have to be confirmed when the larger challenge is decided.

What was the government's defence?

- The state government had argued that the law did not prohibit all inter-faith marriages, but only the ones based on fraud and coercion.
- To buttress its submission, Advocate General had argued that the Act must be read as a whole to interpret the provision, and the provision alone could not be read by itself.
- However, the court said that the wider interpretation would happen at a later stage, and stayed the provisions for the time being. A larger challenge would determine the fate of the law eventually.

Significance of the ruling

- The HC ruling, although preliminary, comes as a relief to interfaith couples from being harassed.
- The reading could have a bearing on challenges pending in other HCs (namely in MP, UP, Himachal etc).
- However, its real impact on the ground could be limited, as larger constitutional nuances are often difficult to permeate, especially when it is not a final and binding verdict.

3. Places in news: Panjshir Valley

The Taliban has sent hundreds of its fighters to the Panjshir Valley, one of the few parts of Afghanistan not yet controlled by the group.

Panjshir Valley

- Located 150 km north of Kabul, the Valley is near the Hindu Kush Mountain range.
- It's divided by the Panjshir river and ringed by the Panjshir mountains in the north and the Kuhestan mountains in the south.

- The mountain tops are covered by snow throughout the year.
- This difficult terrain makes the Valley a nightmare for invaders.

Why is it significant?

- The Valley has repeatedly played a decisive role in Afghanistan's military history, as its geographical position almost completely closes it off from the rest of the country.
- The only access point to the region is through a narrow passage created by the Panjshir River, which can be easily defended militarily.
- Famed for its natural defenses, the region tucked into the Hindu Kush mountains never fell to the Taliban during the civil war of the 1990s, nor was it conquered by the Soviets a decade earlier.
- Panjshir Valley was among the safest regions in the country during the time of the NATO-backed government from 2001 to 2021.
- The valley is also known for its emeralds, which were used in the past to finance the resistance movements against those in power.

4. Focusing on diseases sidelined by COVID-19

Background:

Non-Communicable Diseases:

- **Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are medical conditions or diseases that are not caused by infectious agents.** These are chronic diseases of **long duration**, and generally with **slow progression** and are the **result of a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioural factors.**
- NCDs are the **silent killers of our generation.**
 - **Nearly 71% of all deaths worldwide occur due to non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** such as hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases, and cancer.
 - One out of every four deaths occurs due to cardiovascular diseases, especially among younger patients. **In the Indian subcontinent, there is early onset and rapid progression of such diseases, and a high mortality rate.** Those with NCDs find that productive years of life are lost and there is high-out-of-pocket expenditure on treatment.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on NCDs:

Increased vulnerability:

- Available evidence points to the increased vulnerability of people with pre-existing NCDs to COVID-19 infection.
- **The outcomes in COVID-19 patients with pre-existing cardiovascular disease risk factors or disease and diabetes can be worse than others.**

Disruption of NCD services:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the disruption of NCD services.
 - The staff working in the area of NCDs have been reassigned to COVID-19 work. This has led to a **lack of staff for NCDs treatment.**
 - There is a **severe shortage of medicines and diagnostics services** available for NCDs.
 - The decreased availability of public transport has led to cancellations of planned treatments.
- The pandemic has severely **disrupted primary healthcare systems which form a critical part of the screening and management of NCDs.** As per a World Health Organization (WHO) survey conducted in May 2020, low-income countries were the most affected by this disruption.

Psychological impact:

- Lockdowns and reduced physical interactions led to loneliness, especially in the geriatric population. This resulted in **mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression.**
- The subsequent increase in **consumption of alcohol and tobacco and adoption of an unhealthy diet** increases the exposure to NCD risk factors.
 - Tobacco consumption has been linked to hypertension, cardiovascular diseases and stroke.

Recommendations:

- A paradigm shift is the need of the hour to **tackle the silent epidemic transition to NCDs.**

Attention to NCDs:

- The national and state health policymakers need to give requisite attention to the NCDs.
- **The National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke** needs to be expanded and adequately funded.
 - To address the challenge posed by NCDs, the National Health Mission launched the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke, in 2010, focusing

on strengthening infrastructure, promoting good health, human resource development, early diagnosis, management and referral.

Prevention strategy:

- There have to be campaigns for **promoting a healthy lifestyle**.
- The importance of **physical activity and mental health** needs to be emphasized.

Strengthening primary health care system:

- The primary health system needs to be strengthened to **prevent, diagnose and provide care for NCDs**.
 - PHC system can tackle up to 80% of health needs and can reduce the need for specialized health care services. Thus strengthening the primary health infrastructure will help lessen the burden on hospitals.
- Primary healthcare systems must be **adequately resourced and trained** to ensure that persons at risk of NCDs receive appropriate screening, counselling and treatment. The administrations should **ensure essential NCD medicines and basic health technologies in all primary healthcare facilities**.
- **Screening for NCDs at the grassroots level** and the delivery of locally relevant and contextual messages for health promotion and prevention of NCDs will be critical interventions in the fight against NCDs. The **ASHA workers** can be appropriately trained and equipped to play this role.
 - As part of Ayushman Bharat, the Government is supporting the States for **strengthening Sub Centres and Primary Health Centres as Health and Wellness Centres** for the provision of comprehensive primary care that includes preventive and health promotion at the community level with a continuum of care approach.

Use of telemedicine:

- There is the need to ensure that those at the highest risk continue receiving treatment for NCDs in spite of any future lockdowns or travel regulations.
- Telemedicine can help maintain a degree of continuum in healthcare services disrupted by the pandemic. Also, it can help reduce travel expenses, thus lowering patients' expenditure burden.

Curtail tobacco and alcohol consumption:

- India's response plan to address the growing burden of NCDs must include tobacco and alcohol cessation activities.

Additional information:

- In 2013, the WHO Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs 2013–2020 (Global NCD Action Plan) was adopted by the World Health Assembly to strengthen global and national responses to prevent and control NCDs.
- The Global NCD Action Plan includes a global monitoring framework and nine voluntary global targets to be attained by 2025.
- The World Health Organization has set a **target of 25% relative reduction in overall mortality from cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory diseases by 2025.**

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

5. Changes in AERA Act to help smaller airports

In the recent monsoon session, Parliament passed the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

Key features of the AERA Bill, 2021

- It seeks to amend the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India Act, 2008.
- The 2008 Act established the Airport Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA).
- AERA regulates tariffs and other charges (such as airport development fees) for aeronautical services rendered at major airports in India.
- The 2008 Act designates an airport as a major airport if it has an annual passenger traffic of at least 35 lakh.
- The central government may also designate any airport as a major airport by a notification.
- The Bill adds that the central government may group airports and notify the group as a major airport.

Why has the definition of a major airport been amended?

- The Amendment has changed the definition of a major airport to include “a group of airports” after the words “any other airport”.
- The government hopes the move will encourage the development of smaller airports and make bidding for airports with less passenger traffic attractive.

- It plans to club profitable airports with non-profitable ones and offer them as a package for development in public-private partnership mode to expand connectivity.

Was there a need to amend the AERA Act?

- The Airports Authority of India (AAI) awarded six airports – Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Mangaluru, Thiruvananthapuram and Guwahati – for operations, management and development in public-private partnership mode in February 2019.
- In 2020 too, the AAI has approved leasing of another six airports – Bhubaneswar, Varanasi, Amritsar, Raipur, Indore and Tiruchi.
- The Ministry of Civil Aviation plans to club each of these airports with nearby smaller airports for joint development.
- The move follows FM's Budget Speech this year, in which she said the government planned to monetize airports in tier-2 and tier-3 cities.

6. Colourful molecules of turmeric

Researchers have come forward with some interesting findings on Turmeric.

Turmeric

- Turmeric has about 3% of the active component molecule called curcumin, a polyphenol diketone (and not a steroid).
- Researchers point out that there is another molecule in turmeric called piperine, which is an alkaloid, responsible for the pungency of pepper that we use every day in our cooking, along with turmeric.
- Piperine enhances curcumin absorption in the body. It gives turmeric its multivariate healing and protective power.

Benefits of turmeric consumption

- Turmeric has been known for over 4,000 years in the Indian subcontinent, West Asia, Burma, Indonesia and China, and is used as an essential part of our daily food – what the colonials called curry powder.
- It has also been known as a medicine for ages, and to have anti-bacterial, anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.
- Herbal medicine experts have used turmeric to treat painful symptoms of arthritis, joint stiffness, and joint pain.

- They have also claimed that turmeric helps cure acute kidney injuries. Some of these claims need to be checked using controlled trials.

Against COVID-19

- Most recently, an exciting study has recently been published by a group in Mumbai which shows that turmeric aids in the treatment of COVID-19 patients.
- The researchers did a trial of about 40 COVID-19 patients and found that turmeric could substantially reduce morbidity and mortality.

7. Hurriyat may face wrath of UAPA

Context:

A ban under the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)** may be imposed on both factions of the Hurriyat Conference, which has been spearheading the **separatist movement in Jammu and Kashmir for over two decades**.

What is the Hurriyat Conference?

- The Hurriyat Conference came into existence in 1993 with 26 groups, including some pro-Pakistan and banned outfits such as the Jamaat-e-Islami, the JKLF and the Dukhtaran-e-Millat.
- It also included the People's Conference and the Awami Action Committee.
- It broke into two factions in 2005, into a moderate group and a hardline one.

Details:

- A probe into the funding of terror groups indicated the **alleged involvement of secessionist and separatist leaders**, including members and cadres of the **Hurriyat Conference**.
- Both factions of the Hurriyat are likely to be banned under **Section 3(1) of the UAPA**, under which "if the Central Government is of opinion that **any association is, or has become, an unlawful association**, it may, by notification in the Official Gazette, **declare such association to be unlawful**".
- The proposal has been mooted in accordance with the Union government's policy of **zero tolerance against terrorism**.

Unlawful activities prevention Act (UAPA)

- The UAPA assigns **absolute power to the central government**, by way of which if the Centre deems an activity as **unlawful** then it may, **by way of an Official Gazette, declare it so.**
- Under UAPA, both **Indian and foreign nationals can be charged.**
- **The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act was amended in 2019. Following the amendments,**
 - The Act empowers the **Director-General of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to grant approval of seizure or attachment of property.**
 - The Act **empowers the officers of the NIA, of the rank of Inspector or above, to investigate cases of terrorism** in addition to those conducted by the DSP or ACP or above rank officer in the state.
 - It allows **designating an individual as a terrorist.**

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. It is time to end judicial feudalism in India

Context

The August 11 order of the Himachal Pradesh High Court directed that “hereinafter, all the courts in the state other than the high court shall be referred to as district judiciary”. Furthermore, “these courts shall not be referred to as subordinate court” but as trial courts.

Issues with the judicial hierarchy Vs. hierarchy of judges

- The expression “subordinate courts” used by Part VI, Chapter 6, of the Constitution of India **cannot signify that judges are subordinate.**
- The term subordinate has implications for the independence of the judiciary, entrenched with and since Kesavananda Bharati (1973) as the essential feature of the basic structure of the Indian Constitution.
- No judge is “subordinate” to any other, constitutionally judges are limited in the jurisdiction but also **supreme within their own jurisdiction.**
- However, **Article 235** speaks of “control over subordinate courts”.
- This Article created the notion of subordination by describing these entities and agents as persons “holding a post inferior to the post of a district judge”.

Constitutional provision

- The Constitution no doubt **contemplates a hierarchy of jurisdictions**, but no judge, acting within her jurisdiction, is “inferior” or “subordinate”.
- On appeal, or review, a court with ample jurisdiction may overturn and even pass judicial strictures but this **does not make the concerned courts “lower” or “inferior” courts**.
- **Supervisory powers:** High courts always have considerable powers of **superintendence on the administrative side** but this “supervisory” power has been recognised by the apex court as a “constitutional power” and subject to the right of appeal as granted by **Article 235**.
- While the Constitution allows “supervision”, it does not sanction judicial despotism.
- Despite this, arbitrary practices in writing confidential reports of district justices seem to continue.

Way forward

- **Constitutional amendment:** A complete recasting of Article 235 is needed, which does away with the omnibus expression of “control” powers in the high courts.
- The amendment should specifically require the high courts to satisfy the criteria flowing from the principles of natural and constitutional justice and all judicial officers who fulfil due qualification thresholds should be treated with constitutional dignity and respect.
- **Collegiate system at high court’s level:** For most matters (save elevation), senior-most district judges and judges of the high courts should constitute a collegiate system to facilitate judicial administration, infrastructure, access, monitoring of disposal rates, minimisation of undue delays in administration of justice, alongside matters concerning transfers, and leave.
- If an ACR is to be adversely changed in the face of a consistent award for a decade or more, it should be **a collegiate act of the five senior-most justices**, including the Chief Justice of the High Court.
- CJI Ramana has recently agreed in principle, following the request of the Supreme Court Bar Association, that chief justices of the high courts should consider lawyers practising in the Supreme Court for elevation to the high courts.

Conclusion

The changes suggested here needs to be implemented to ensure the independence of the judiciary at all levels.

2. Polio

Why in News

Recently, India has decided to vaccinate Afghanistan returnees against **Polio** for free as a preventive measure against the **Wild Polio Virus**.

- **Afghanistan** and **Pakistan** are the only two countries in the world where polio is still **Endemic**.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - Polio is a crippling and potentially **deadly viral infectious disease** that affects the nervous system.
 - There are three individual and immunologically **distinct wild poliovirus strains**:
 - **Wild Poliovirus type 1 (WPV1)**
 - **Wild Poliovirus type 2 (WPV2)**
 - **Wild Poliovirus type 3 (WPV3)**
 - Symptomatically, all three strains are identical, in that **they cause irreversible paralysis or even death**. However, there are **genetic and virological differences, which make these three strains separate viruses** which must each be eradicated individually.
- **Spread:**
 - The virus is transmitted by **person-to-person mainly through the faecal-oral route** or, less frequently, by a common vehicle (for example, through contaminated water or food).
 - It largely **affects children under 5 years of age**. The virus **multiplies in the intestine, from where it can invade the nervous system and can cause paralysis**.
- **Symptoms:**
 - Most people with polio do not feel sick. Some people have only minor symptoms, such as fever, tiredness, nausea, headache, pain in the arms and legs, etc.
 - In rare cases, polio infection **causes permanent loss of muscle function (paralysis)**.
 - Polio can be fatal **if the muscles used for breathing are paralysed or if there is an infection of the brain**.
- **Prevention and Cure:**
 - There is no cure, but it can be prevented through **Immunisation**.
- **Vaccines:**

- **Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV):** It is given orally as a birth dose for institutional deliveries, then primary three doses at 6, 10 and 14 weeks and one booster dose at 16-24 months of age.
- **Injectable Polio Vaccine (IPV):** It is introduced as an additional dose along with the 3rd dose of DPT (**Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus**) under the **Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP)**.
- **Recent Outbreaks:**
 - In 2019, polio outbreaks were recorded in the **Philippines, Malaysia, Ghana, Myanmar, China, Cameroon, Indonesia and Iran**, which were mostly vaccine-derived in which a rare strain of the virus genetically mutated from the strain in the vaccine.
 - According to the **WHO (World Health Organisation)**, if the **oral vaccine-virus** is excreted and allowed to circulate in an unimmunised or under-immunised population for at least 12 months, it can **mutate to cause infections**.
- **India & Polio:**
 - India received **polio-free certification by the WHO in 2014**, after three years of zero cases.
 - This achievement has been spurred by the successful **Pulse Polio Campaign in which all children were administered polio drops**.
 - The last case due to wild poliovirus in the country was detected on 13th January 2011.

Polio Eradication Measures

- **Global:**
 - **Global Polio Eradication Initiative:**
 - It was launched in 1988 by the **Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI)**, by national governments and WHO. Presently, 80% of the world's population is now living in certified polio-free regions.
 - An estimated 1.5 million childhood deaths have been prevented, through the systemic administration of vitamin A during polio immunization activities.
 - **World Polio Day:**
 - It is observed every year on **24th October** in order to call on countries to stay vigilant in their fight against the disease.
- **Indian:**
 - **Pulse Polio Programme:**
 - It was started with an objective of achieving hundred percent coverage under Oral Polio Vaccine.
 - **Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0:**

- It was a nationwide immunisation drive to mark the 25 years of **Pulse polio programme** (2019-20).
- **Universal Immunization Programme (UIP):**
 - It was launched in 1985 with the modification to '**Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI)**.
 - The **objectives of the Programme include:** Rapidly increasing immunization coverage, Improving the quality of services, Establishing a reliable cold chain system to the health facility level, Introducing a district-wise system for monitoring of performance, Achieving self-sufficiency in vaccine production.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

3. National Monetization Pipeline

The Union Finance Minister has launched the National Monetization Pipeline for the brownfield infrastructure assets.

National Monetization Pipeline (NMP)

- The NMP comprises a four-year pipeline of the Central Government's brownfield infrastructure assets.
- It will serve as a medium-term roadmap for the Asset Monetization initiative of the government, apart from providing visibility for the investors.
- Incidentally, the 2021-22 Union Budget, laid a lot of emphasis on Asset Monetization as a means to raise innovative and alternative financing for infrastructure.
- It has to be noted that the government views asset monetization as a strategy for the augmentation and maintenance of infrastructure, and not just a funding mechanism.

(More details are awaited)

What is Asset Monetization?

- Asset Monetization involves the creation of new sources of revenue by unlocking of the value of hitherto unutilized or underutilized public assets.
- Internationally, it is recognized that public assets are a significant resource for all economies.

- Many public sector assets are sub-optimally utilized and could be appropriately monetized to create greater financial leverage and value for the companies and of the equity that the government has invested in them.
- This helps in the accurate estimation of public assets which would help in the better financial management of government/public resources over time.

4. Simhadri PV Project: Largest floating Solar Project in the country

The National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) has commissioned the largest floating solar PV project of 25MW on the reservoir of its Simhadri thermal station in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.

Simhadri PV Project

- The 2000MW coal-based Simhadri Station is the first power project to implement an open sea intake from the Bay of Bengal which has been functional for more than 20 years.
- This is the first solar project to be set up under the flexibilization scheme of coal-powered plant, notified in 2018.
- The floating solar installation which has a unique anchoring design is spread over 75 acres in an RW reservoir.
- This floating solar project has the potential to generate electricity from more than 1 lakh solar PV modules.
- This would not only help to light around 7,000 households but also ensure at least 46,000 tons of CO₂e are kept at arm's length every year during the lifespan of this project.
- The project is also expected to save 1,364 million litres of water per annum. This would be adequate to meet the yearly water requirements of 6,700 households.

Other important facts you must know

- As of May 2021, India has 95.7 GW of renewable energy capacity, and represents ~ 25% of the overall installed power capacity.
- The government plans to establish renewable energy capacity of 523 GW (including 73 GW from Hydro) by 2030.
- India was the world's 3rd largest renewable energy producer with 38% (136 GW out of 373 GW) of total installed energy capacity in 2020 from renewable sources.
- Tamil Nadu has the highest installed solar power capacity in India. Kamuthi Solar Power Project near Madurai is the world's second-largest solar park.

5. Exercise Malabar

Indian Naval Ships Shivalik and Kadmatt have arrived at Guam, an Island Territory of the USA to participate in the annual Exercise MALABAR-21.

Ex Malabar

- MALABAR series of maritime exercises commenced in 1992 as a bilateral IN-USN exercise and has grown in stature over the years to include four prominent navies in the Pacific and Indian Ocean Region.
- It is carried out between navies of Australia, India, Japan, and the USA
- The exercise provides an opportunity for common-minded navies to enhance inter-operability, gain from best practices and develop a common understanding of procedures for Maritime Security Operations.

Significance

- The exercise will see the participation of all four Quad countries.
- Indian Navy also conducted a number of Passage Exercises (PASSEX) with navies from Japan, Australia and the US.

Another Exercise in news: Ex Konkan 2021

- Exercise Konkan 2021 was held between INS Tabar and HMS Westminster on 16 Aug 21 in the English Channel.

6. HUID System in Jewelry Industry

Hallmarking scheme is turning out to be a grand success with more than 1 crore pieces of Jewelry hallmarked in a quick time” with more than 90000 Jewelers registered in a same time period.

What is Hallmark Gold?

1. The process of certifying the purity and fineness of gold is called hallmarking.
2. Bureau of Indian Standards, the National Standards Body of India, is responsible for hallmarking gold as well as silver jewellery under the BIS Act.

3. If you see the BIS hallmark on the gold jewellery/gold coin, it means it conforms to a set of standards laid by the BIS. Hallmarking gives consumers assurance regarding the purity of the gold they bought.
4. That is, if you are buying hallmarked 18K gold jewellery, it will actually mean that 18/24 parts are gold and the rest is alloy.
5. At present, only 30% of Indian Gold Jewellery is hallmarked.

Here are the four components one must look at the time of buying gold (they are mentioned in the laser engraving of a hallmark seal):

1. BIS Hallmark: Indicates that its purity is verified in one of its licensed laboratories
2. Purity in carat and fineness (corresponding to given caratage KT)
 - 22K916 (91.6% Purity)
 - 18K750 (75% Purity)
 - 14K585 (58.5% Purity)

What is HUID?

- HUID is a unique code that will be given to every piece of jewellery at the time of hallmarking.
- It will be helpful in identifying the jeweller or the Assaying and Hallmarking Centres (AHCs) which had hallmarked the jewellery.
- It will be a six-digit alphanumeric code, with which every piece of jewellery will be tagged.
- At the hallmarking centre, the jewellery is stamped with the unique number manually.

What are the new hallmarking rules?

- The government has made it mandatory for jewellers to hallmark gold jewellery, but with some relaxation.
- Jewellers with an annual turnover of up to Rs 40 lakh will be exempted from mandatory hallmarking.
- Similarly, jewellery for international exhibitions and government-approved business-to-business domestic exhibitions will also be exempted.
- It will also allow hallmarking of additional carats – 20, 23, and 24.

Issues with HUID

- Jewellers say the HUID process has increased the time required to get the hallmarking on jewels and this has created huge backlogs at AHCs.

- Since the process is being done manually, there are also chances of a mismatch of the code, he adds.
- The inventory pile-up at the centres is also raising concerns about the security of the jewellery.
- Several industry stakeholders point out the limited number of AHCs, which will not be enough to hallmark the large number of pieces that are sold in India every year.

7. Hindustan-228 Civil Aircraft

Why in News

Recently, **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** carried out a successful ground run and low speed taxi trials of a commercial aircraft “**Hindustan-228**” (Do-228).

- HAL is building civil aircrafts **to promote the UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) Scheme**. The central government aims to set up 1,000 new air routes and establish 100 new airports, under the UDAN scheme.
- HAL is a **public sector aircraft manufacturing company**. It has also produced the **Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)** for the Indian Air Force (IAF).

Key Points

- **About Hindustan-228 (Do-228):**
 - The 19-seater Do-228 is the **first major attempt in India to develop a small civil transport aircraft** after the 14-seater Saras Aircraft development program at the National Aeronautics Laboratory (NAL) was shelved in 2009 on account of multiple problems in its development.
 - However, the NAL has been pitching **SARAS Mk-2** (19-seater aircraft) for the government’s UDAN, since it has the capacity to operate in “ill-equipped”, “semi-prepared” and “unpaved airstrips”.
 - It is **built on the existing frame of the German Dornier 228 defence transport aircraft** used by the defence forces.
 - Two civil Do-228 produced by HAL for launch under UDAN scheme have a maximum take off weight of 6200 kgs.
 - It is **equipped with a digital cockpit** which will ensure more accurate readings, precise information and required data displays with feedback loops and capability for self-check to alert pilots in emergencies.
 - It is conceived to be a **multirole utility aircraft** capable of being used for **VIP transport, passenger transport, air ambulance, flight**

- inspection roles, cloud seeding, recreational activities like para jumping, aerial surveillance, photography, remote sensing and cargo transport.
- With a maximum cruise speed of 428 kmph and a range of 700 kmph the aircraft is capable of night flying.
 - HAL is looking forward to **exporting the aircraft** as well to countries like Nepal.
 - **UDAN Scheme:**
 - Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) was launched as a **regional connectivity scheme under the Ministry of Civil Aviation** in 2016. It is an innovative scheme to develop the regional Aviation market.
 - **Small civilian aircrafts** are considered to be an **essential element** of the UDAN.
 - The objective of the scheme is **to create affordable yet economically viable and profitable flights on regional routes** so that flying becomes affordable to the common man even in small towns.
 - The scheme envisages **providing connectivity to un-served and underserved airports of the country** through the revival of existing air-strips and airports. The scheme is **operational for a period of 10 years**.
 - Under-served airports are those which do not have more than one flight a day, while unserved airports are those where there are no operations.
 - **Financial incentives** from the Centre, state governments and airport operators are extended **to selected airlines** to encourage operations from unserved and under-served airports, and keep airfares affordable.
 - About 325 routes and 56 airports including 5 heliports and 2 water aerodromes have been operationalised under the scheme.
 - On the commencement of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (India@75)', the Ministry of Civil Aviation proposed **about 392 routes under UDAN 4.1 bidding process**.
 - The **UDAN 4.1** focuses on connecting smaller airports, along with special helicopter and seaplane routes. Some new routes have been proposed under the **Sagarmala Seaplane services**.
 - Sagarmala Seaplane Services is **an ambitious project under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways** with potential airline operators.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. With reference to the Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), consider the following statements:

1. It was started to impart quality education to Schedule Tribes children in remote areas.
2. The EMRS was set up by grants provided under Article 275(1) of the Constitution.

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 : C

Explanation

- The **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)** started in the year 1997-98 to impart quality education to Schedule Tribes children in remote areas. Hence, statement 1 is correct.
- The schools focus not only on academic education but on the all-round development of the students.
- The objective of EMRS is to provide quality middle and high level education to ST students in remote areas, not only to enable them to avail of reservation in high and professional educational courses and as jobs in government and public and private sectors but also to have access to the best opportunities in education at par with the non ST population.
- Each school has a capacity of 480 students, catering to students from Class VI to XII.
- These are being set up by grants **provided under Article 275(1) of the Constitution. Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
 - These are funded by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
 - In order to give further impetus to EMRS, it has been decided that by the year 2022, every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons, will have an EMRS.
- Eklavya schools are on par with Navodaya Vidyalaya and have special facilities for preserving local art and culture besides providing training in sports and skill development.

2. Which of the following is/are Erosional landforms due to Glaciers?

1. Cirque
2. Esker
3. Moraine

Options:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Cirque is an erosional landform formed by the action of glaciers. Cirques are bowl-shaped depressions that glaciers carve into mountains and valley sidewalls at high elevations.
- Eskers and moraines are depositional landforms created by glacial action.
 - Eskers are ridges made of sands and gravels, deposited by glacial meltwater flowing through tunnels within and underneath glaciers, or through meltwater channels on top of glaciers.
 - Moraines are accumulations of dirt and rocks that have fallen onto the glacier surface or have been pushed along by the glacier as it moves. The dirt and rocks composing moraines can range in size from powdery silt to large rocks and boulders

3. The 'Farzad-B Gas Field' recently seen in the news is located in?

- A Arabian Sea
- B Black Sea
- C Caspian Sea
- D Persian Gulf

Answer : D

Explanation

- Recently, Iran gave the **Farzad-B Gas Field** to a domestic gas producer.
- Farzad-B Gas Field is located in **Persian Gulf (Iran)**. Hence, option D is correct.

- The contract for exploration of the field was signed in 2002 by Indian consortium comprising ONGC Videsh, Indian Oil Corporation and Oil India.
- The contract expired in 2009 after declaration of commerciality of the field, based on the gas discovery.
- In January 2020, India was informed that in the immediate future, Iran would develop the field on its own and would like to involve India appropriately at a later stage.

4. With reference to Madurkathi mats, which of the following statements is/are incorrect?

1. They are woven in Bihar
2. Women of the households are involved in weaving

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both
- d. None

Answer: a

Explanation:

Madur mats:

- Madur mats are unique to West Bengal.
- 'Masland' a fine quality madur mat.
- Madur mats are made of natural fibres. Madurkathi is a rhizome-based plant (*Cyperus tegetum* or *Cyperus pangorei*) found abundantly in the alluvial tracts of Purba and Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal.
- Madurkathi was awarded the geographical indication (GI) tag by the Geographical Indication Registry in April 2018.
- About 80% to 90% of the entire workforce engaged in this traditional craft comprise of women.

Context:

- Two women from Sabang in West Bengal have been given the National Handicraft Award in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the development of crafts.

5. Consider the following statements:

1. Both India and Mongolia are the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).
2. India participates actively in the Khaan Quest joint training exercise hosted by Mongolia.

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

- **India is a member** whereas **Mongolia is an observer state** at the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)**. Hence, **statement 1 is not correct**.
 - Other Forums of which both the countries are members: Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), World Trade Organisation (WTO).
- **Defence Cooperation between India and Mongolia:**
 - Joint defence exercises code-named Nomadic Elephant.
 - India is also an active participant in an annual week-long joint training exercise called the **Khaan Quest**, hosted by Mongolia. Hence, **statement 2 is correct**.

6. With reference to Alternative Investment Fund (AIF), consider the following statements:

1. AIF is a privately pooled investment vehicle which collects funds from sophisticated investors.
2. The definition of AIF is laid down by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

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

- **Alternative Investment Fund (AIF)** means any fund established or incorporated in India which is a **privately pooled investment vehicle which collects funds from sophisticated investors**, whether Indian or foreign, for investing it in accordance with a defined investment policy for the benefit of its investors. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Regulation 2(1)(b) of **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Regulations (AIFs), 2012** lays down the definition of AIFs. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
 - Through a company, or a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP), an Alternative Investment Fund can be established.

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. National Education Policy 2020 is in conformity with the Sustainable Development Goal-4 (2030). It intends to restructure and reorient education system in India. Critically examine the statement. (UPSC GS-2 Mains 2020).

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing the envisaged goal of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- Discuss the significance of NEP.
- Discuss the associated issues with NEP
- Conclude suitably.

2Q. Examine the reasons for underrepresentation of women in Indian political system. Also suggest some remedial measures to close this gender gap in politics. (250 words)

Approach

- Give brief account of women participation in politics in India
- Give reasons for their underrepresentation and also highlight the socio-economic and cultural forces behind these factors.
- Suggest remedial measures
- Give Conclusion.