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**GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations**

**1. Protest should not hinder traffic: SC**

The Supreme Court took a nuanced stand saying farmers have the right to protest but the agitation should not hinder traffic or public movement.

**Right to Protest**

- When a group, community, or even a person goes up to protest, it is usually to showcase their disapproval or demur against any action, policy, statement, etc of state or government or any organization.
- Mostly the flow of protest is driven through political waves that also demonstrate the collective organization of people to make the government or state address their issues and take steps to overcome them.
- In India, the right to protest is the manifestation of the right to freedom of assembly, the right to freedom of association, and the right to freedom of speech.

**Constitutional Backing**

- Article 19(1) states that All citizens shall have the right:

(a) to freedom of speech and expression;

(b) to assemble peaceably and without arms;

(c) to form associations or unions;

(d) to move freely throughout the territory of India;

(e) to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India; and

(f) omitted

(g) to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business

**Reasonable restrictions on Protest**

- **Article 51A** makes it a fundamental duty for every person to safeguard public property and to avoid violence during the protests and resorting to violence

during public protests results in infringement of key fundamental duty of citizens.

- **Article 19(1)(b)** states about the right to assemble peaceably and without arms. Thereby, the right to peaceful protest is bestowed to Indian citizens by our Constitution.
- **Article 19(2)** imposes a restriction on a person to prevent him from making a defamatory statement which defames the reputation of another person.
- **Article 19(3)**: The reasonable restrictions are imposed in the interests of the sovereignty & integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation, or incitement to an offense.

## 2. Places in news: Indira Point

The Swarnim Vijay Varsh Victory Flame was taken to Indira Point, the southernmost tip of the country on August 22, 2021, as part of its voyage to the Nicobar Group of Islands.

### Indira Point

- Indira Point is the southernmost point of Indian Territory.
- It is a village in the Nicobar district at Great Nicobar Island of Andaman and Nicobar Islands in India.
- Rondo Island, Indonesia's northernmost island in Sabang district of Aceh province of Sumatra, lies 163 km south of Little Andaman Island and 145 km or 80 nautical miles from Indira point.
- The point was formerly known as Pygmalion Point and Parsons Point. It was renamed in honour of Indira Gandhi during mid-1980s.
- Galathea National Park and Lighthouse are the major attractions here.

### What is Swarnim Vijay Varsh?

- It marks the 50th anniversary of the 1971 India-Pakistan war.
- Vijay Diwas is celebrated every year on December 16 to mark India's triumph in liberating Bangladesh.
- The journey of the Victory Flame is taken from north to south corners of India.

### 3. New Geospatial Planning Portal: Yuktdhara

#### Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Rural development** has launched a **new geospatial planning portal, 'Yuktdhara'** to help in facilitating the new **MGNREGA** (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) **assets** with the use of remote sensing and **GIS (Geographic Information System)** based information.

- It is a new portal **under 'Bhuvan'**.

#### Key Points

- **About:**
  - It is a culmination of joint efforts of the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** and the **Ministry of Rural development** made towards realising a **G2G (Government-to-Government)** service for rural planning in support of decentralised decision making.
    - Previously launched, **ISRO's Geoportal Bhuvan** is presently a **de-facto geospatial platform** for several developmental planning activities across India.
  - It will serve as a **repository of assets (geotags) created under the various National Rural Development Programmes**, such as **MGNREGA, Per Drop More Crop Programmes, Integrated Watershed Management Programme, and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana**, along with the field photographs.
  - It will integrate a wide variety of thematic layers, **multi-temporal high-resolution earth observation data with the analysis tool**.
  - Planners will be able to analyse previous assets under various schemes and facilitate the identification of new works using online tools. Prepared plans will be then evaluated by appropriate authorities under State Departments.
- **Bhuvan Portal:**
  - It is a type of web portal used to find and access geographic information (geospatial information) and associated geographic services (display, editing, analysis, etc.) via the Internet.
  - It shows the true borders of the country as per the information available from the Government of India.
  - By using **MapmyIndia** maps and applications instead of the foreign map apps, users can better protect their privacy.
  - It is well aligned with the government's Mission of **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.

- **Other Rural Development Programmes:**
  - Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM).
  - Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).
  - Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin.
  - Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana.
  - Gobar Dhan Yojana.

## **GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment**

### **4. Delhi's new Smog Tower**

Ahead of its infamous smog season, Delhi has got a 'smog tower', a technological aid to help combat air pollution.

#### **What are Smog Towers?**

- Smog towers are structures designed to work as large-scale air purifiers. They are fitted with multiple layers of air filters and fans at the base to suck the air.
- After the polluted air enters the smog tower, it is purified by the multiple layers before being re-circulated into the atmosphere.

#### **Structure of the Delhi smog tower**

- The structure is 24 m high, about as much as an 8-storey building – an 18-metre concrete tower, topped by a 6-metre-high canopy. At its base are 40 fans, 10 on each side.
- Each fan can discharge 25 cubic metres per second of air, adding up to 1,000 cubic metres per second for the tower as a whole. Inside the tower in two layers are 5,000 filters.
- The filters and fans have been imported from the United States.

#### **How does it work?**

- The tower uses a 'downdraft air cleaning system' developed by the University of Minnesota.
- Polluted air is sucked in at a height of 24 m, and filtered air is released at the bottom of the tower, at a height of about 10 m from the ground.
- When the fans at the bottom of the tower operate, the negative pressure created sucks in air from the top.

- The 'macro' layer in the filter traps particles of 10 microns and larger, while the 'micro' layer filters smaller particles of around 0.3 microns.
- The downdraft method is different from the system used in China, where a tower uses an 'updraft' system – air is sucked in from near the ground, and is propelled upwards by heating and convection.
- Filtered air is released at the top of the tower.

### Likely impact

- Computational fluid dynamics modelling suggests the tower could have an impact on the air quality up to 1 km from the tower.
- The actual impact will also determine how the tower functions under different weather conditions, and how levels of PM2.5 vary with the flow of air.

## 5. Corbett Tiger Reserve: Uttarakhand

### Why in News

Recently, the Delhi High Court has asked the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** to consider as representation a petition to **stop the alleged illegal construction** of bridges and walls within tiger breeding habitat of the **Corbett Tiger Reserve**.

### National Tiger Conservation Authority

- It is a **statutory body** under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.
- It was **established in 2005** following the **recommendations of the Tiger Task Force**.
- It was **constituted under enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**, as amended in 2006, for strengthening tiger conservation, as per powers and functions assigned to it.

### Key Points

- **About:**
  - It is located in Nainital district of Uttarakhand. The **Project Tiger** was launched in 1973 in **Corbett National Park** (first National Park of India), which is **part of Corbett Tiger Reserve**.
    - The national park was **established in 1936 as Hailey National Park** to protect the endangered Bengal tiger.

- It is named after **Jim Corbett** who played a key role in its establishment.
- The **core area forms the Corbett National Park** while the buffer contains reserve forests as well as the **Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- The entire area of the reserve is mountainous and **falls in the Shivalik and Outer Himalaya geological provinces**.
- **Ramganga, Sonanadi, Mandal, Palain and Kosi** are the major rivers flowing through the Reserve.
- **Flora:**
  - According to the **botanical survey of India**, Corbett has **600 species of plants - trees, shrubs, ferns, grass, climbers, herbs and bamboos**. Sal, Khair and Sissoo are the most visible trees found in Corbett.
- **Fauna:**
  - Apart from tigers, Corbett also has leopards. Other mammals such as **jungle cats, barking deer, spotted deer, sambar deer, sloth** etc. are also found there.
- **Other Major Protected Areas of Uttarakhand:**
  - **Nanda Devi National Park.**
  - **Valley of Flowers National Park.**
    - **Valley of Flowers National Park and Nanda Devi National Park together are a UNESCO World Heritage Site.**
  - **Rajaji National Park.**
  - **Gangotri National Park.**
  - **Govind National Park.**

## 6. FM unveils Rs. 6 lakh-cr. asset monetisation plan

### Context:

- Launch of the **National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) for Central ministries and public sector entities** by the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs.

### Details:

- The pipeline has been **developed by NITI Aayog**, in consultation with infrastructure line ministries, based on the mandate for **'Asset Monetisation' under Union Budget 2021-22**.
  - Union Budget 2021-22 had identified monetisation of operating public infrastructure assets as a key means for sustainable infrastructure financing.



- The NMP is in line with the **government's strategic divestment policy**, under which the state will retain presence in only a few identified sectors with the rest privatized.
- NMP is envisaged to serve as a medium-term roadmap for identifying potential monetisation-ready projects, across various infrastructure sectors including roads, ports, airports, railways, warehousing, gas & product pipeline, power generation and transmission, mining, telecom, stadium, hospitality and housing.
- Under the plan, **private firms can invest in projects for a fixed return using the InvIT route as well as operate and develop the assets for a certain period**. Some assets such as warehouses and stadiums can also be given on a long-term lease for operations. Thus it will involve the **participation of the private firms** in the infrastructure sector.
- The objective of this initiative is to enable '**Infrastructure Creation through Monetisation**'.
- The programme will include **only brownfield assets** that are either languishing or have not been fully monetised. There would be no transfer of ownership of assets or land. The **primary ownership of the assets will continue to be with the Government** with the framework envisaging hand back of assets to the public authority at the end of transaction life.
- NMP estimates aggregate monetisation potential of **Rs 6.0 lakh crores** through core assets of the Central Government, over a **four-year period, between 2021-22 and 2024-25**.
  - The top 5 sectors include roads, railways, power, oil & gas pipelines and telecom.
  - The central government has set a goal of Rs 88,000 crores to be monetised in 2021-22, adding that each ministry has been given an annual target.
- As part of a multi-layer institutional mechanism for overall implementation and monitoring of the Asset Monetization programme, an **empowered Core Group of Secretaries on Asset Monetization (CGAM)** under the chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary has been constituted.
- Additionally, the Finance Minister has stated that the **Centre will incentivise states to undertake disinvestment of PSUs and asset monetisation** and outlined a plan.

The central government has set aside Rs 5,000 crore to incentive state governments to monetise their assets.

**Significance:**

**Streamline monetization:**



- The NMP will help provide a roadmap of the programme for public asset owners; along with visibility on potential assets to the private sector. It will help **boost investors' confidence** by providing sufficient clarity on the number, size and type of assets that would be made available in the market.
- Thus the NMP will help streamline the monetization plans of the government.

#### **Unlock value in idle or under-performing public assets:**

- The programme will help **unlock the value of government investment and public money in infrastructure** by tapping institutional and long-term patient capital.
- The programme will help **generate greater value for the existing assets and unlock resources for the economy.**

#### **Alternate funding mechanism:**

- Asset monetisation will help **tap private sector investment** for new infrastructure creation.
  - The estimated value envisaged under NMP corresponds to about 5.4 per cent of the total infrastructure investment envisaged under the NIP which is Rs 111 lakh crore and 14 per cent of the proposed outlay for the Centre (Rs 43 lakh crore).
- NMP will help **improve liquidity** to increase expenditure in infrastructure by the government.
- The success of the plan could also **enable the recycling of funds** which will be critical for the revival of infrastructure investment in India.
- Along with the privatisation of state-run companies, the monetization route will allow the government to **raise resources even without losing ownership of the assets.**

#### **Accelerate infrastructure development:**

- The money raised through monetization can be leveraged for further public investments in the infrastructure sector and it will thus accelerate infrastructure development in India.
- The asset monetisation pipeline takes the National Infrastructure Pipeline to the next phase by pitching for **higher public-private partnership.**

#### **Benefits of involving the private sector:**

- The programme, apart from being a viable funding mechanism, will also bring in a paradigm **shift in infrastructure operations, augmentation and**

**maintenance** considering the private sector's resource efficiencies and its ability to dynamically adapt to the evolving global and economic reality.

- Thus the Asset Monetisation programme can lead to **improved infrastructure quality and operations and maintenance**.

#### **Spill-over effects of increased public expenditure in infrastructure:**

- The increased infrastructure investment, apart from ensuring access to high-quality and affordable infrastructure to the common citizen of India, will also **create employment opportunities and enable high economic growth**. This becomes all the more significant in the backdrop of the pandemic.
- Thus the NMP if implemented well could provide a much needed **positive trigger for the economic revival**.

#### **Conclusion:**

- Though the NMP is a step in the right direction, meticulous **planning, project packaging, and coordination will be needed** to address the underlying structural and legacy issues to help realize the potential benefits of NMP.

**THE INDIAN EXPRESS**

## **GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations**

### **1. India must bet on patience in Afghanistan**

#### **Context**

Notwithstanding the current triumphalism in Pakistan at “overthrowing” the US-backed order in Kabul and “pushing” India out of Afghanistan, India can afford to step back and signal that it can wait.

#### **Uncertainties about the future**

Two interconnected political negotiations unfolding are likely to determine Afghanistan's immediate future.

## 1) Setting up political order

- One is focused on building a **new political order** within Afghanistan.
- More than a week after President Ghani fled Kabul, there is no government, let alone an inclusive and internationally acceptable one, in sight.
- Before Pakistan can get the Taliban to share power with other groups, it has to facilitate an acceptable accommodation between different factions of the Taliban.
- Then there is the problem of including the non-Taliban formations in the new government.

## 2) Gaining international recognition

- The international community has set some broad conditions for the recognition of the Taliban-led government.
- Besides an **inclusive government** at home, the world wants to see **respect for human rights**, especially women's rights, ending support for **international terrorism**, and **stopping opium production**.
- Pakistan will hope to get some of its traditional friends like China and Turkey or new partners like Russia to break the current international consensus.
- Pakistan and the Taliban, however, know Chinese and Russian support is welcome but not enough.
- They need an understanding of the US and its allies to gain political legitimacy as well as sustained international economic assistance.
- The West, too, needs the Taliban to facilitate the evacuation of its citizens from Kabul and, sooner rather than later, deliver humanitarian assistance.

## How India differs from Pakistan in its approach towards Afghanistan?

- India has **never been in strategic competition** with Pakistan in Afghanistan. India's **lack of direct geographic access** to Afghanistan has ensured that.
- Both their strategies have roots in the 19th-century policies of the Raj.
- **Forward policy:** The Pakistan Army's **quest for strategic depth in Afghanistan** harks back to the "forward policy" school that sought to actively control the territories beyond the Indus.
- The forward policy seeks **political dominance over Afghanistan** in the name of a "friendly government" in Kabul.
- **Masterly inactivity:** India, in contrast, stayed with a rival school in the Raj that called for "masterly inactivity" – a prudent approach to the badlands beyond the Indus.
- India's strategy seeks to strengthen Kabul's **autonomy** vis-à-vis Rawalpindi and facilitate Afghanistan's economic modernisation.

- The Afghan values that India supports – **nationalism, sovereignty, and autonomy** – will endure in Kabul, irrespective of the nature of the regime.

## Conclusion

Strategic patience coupled with political empathy for Afghan people, and an active engagement will continue to keep India relevant in Kabul's internal and external evolution.

## 2. Bhuvan Yuktdhara Portal

A new portal under Bhuvan “Yuktdhara” has been released to facilitate planning of new MGNREGA assets using Remote Sensing and GIS based information.

### Bhuvan Yuktdhara Portal

- Yuktdhara is a geospatial planning portal meant for facilitating Gram Panchayat level planning of MGNREGA activities across India.
- Portal integrates a wide variety of spatial information contents to enable a holistic approach towards planning using open-source GIS tool.
- Subsequent to pan Indian initiative of geo-tagging assets created under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, harnessing the strength of GIS for identifying upcoming activities and their locations was a natural corollary.

### Features of the portal

- The current level of integration under Yuktdhara, as part of Bhuvan, incorporates multi-temporal IRS satellite data of better than 3M detail in natural color, digital terrain, thematic layers as well as locations of MGNREGA works and watershed management assets.
- The interface currently has a Gram Panchayat-specific logo to address planning as well as approval mechanisms intended to ensure the evaluation and acceptance of proposed activities.
- This will be enhanced for other levels of users gradually.
- Access for other Gram Panchayat will be facilitated at the earliest, by addressing the case multiple logins created for geotagging and moderation.

### 3. Person in news: Sree Narayana Guru

The Prime Minister has paid tributes to Sree Narayana Guru on his Jayanti.

#### Sree Narayana Guru (1856-1928)

- Narayana Guru was a philosopher, spiritual leader and social reformer in India.
- He led a reform movement against the injustice in the caste-ridden society of Kerala in order to promote spiritual enlightenment and social equality.

#### His legacy:

##### Temple Entry

- He was in the forefront of the movement for universal temple entry and against the societal ills like the social discrimination of untouchables.
- He gave the famous slogan “One Caste, One Religion, One God for All”.
- In 1888, he built a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva at Aruvippuram which was against the caste-based restrictions of the time.
- In one temple he consecrated at Kalavancode, he kept mirrors instead of idols. This symbolised his message that the divine was within each individual.

##### Untouchability

- The social protest of Vaikom Satyagraha (1924-25) was an agitation by the lower caste against untouchability in Hindu society of Travancore.
- He taught equality but felt the inequalities should not be exploited to carry out conversions and therefore generate strife in society.

##### Philosophy

- Sree Narayana Guru became one of the greatest proponents and re-evaluators of Advaita Vedanta, the principle of non-duality put forward by Adi Shankara.

#### 4. What Indian lawmaking needs: More scrutiny, less speed

##### Context

The recent Monsoon Session of Parliament is proof that the speed of passing laws trumps their rigorous scrutiny in our legislative process.

##### Issues with lawmaking process in India

###### 1) Avoiding pre-legislative scrutiny

- In our parliamentary system, a majority of laws originate from the government.
- Each ministry **decides the path its legislative proposals** will take from ideation to enactment.
- For example, last year, the Shipping Ministry **requested public feedback** on the two bills – Marine Aids and Inland Vessels.
- This mechanism enables the **strengthening of the legal proposal** through **stakeholder inputs** before being brought to Parliament.
- However, ministries expedite their bills by not putting them through a similar **pre-legislative scrutiny process**.

###### 2) Misuse of Ordinance route

- Over the years, successive governments have exploited the spirit of this constitutional provision.
- Governments have promulgated an ordinance a few days before a parliamentary session, cut a session short to issue one, and pushed a law that is not urgent through the ordinance route.
- But the executive sometimes fails to follow through on the legislative urgency.
- Bringing in law through the ordinance route also **bypasses parliamentary scrutiny**.
- But parliamentary committees rarely scrutinise bills to replace ordinances because this may take time and defeat the issuing of the ordinance.
- Over the last few years, bills like GST, Consumer Protection, Insolvency and Bankruptcy, Labour Codes, Surrogacy, and DNA Technology have benefited from parliamentary committees' scrutiny.
- Their closed-door technical deliberations, inputs from ministry officials, subject-matter experts, and ordinary citizens have strengthened government bills.



### 3) Delay in rule framing

- Unnecessary urgency in getting laws passed by Parliament does not result in their **immediate implementation**.
- For the law to work on the ground, the **government is supposed to frame rules**.
- Last year the Cabinet Secretary twice requested the personal intervention of secretaries heading the Union ministries to frame regulations for bringing into force the laws made by Parliament.
- Before the Monsoon Session, he wrote a follow-up letter on similar lines to his colleagues.

### Implication of fast-tracking the law-making

- **Difficulty in achieving desired outcomes:** Hurriedly-made and inadequately-scrutinised laws **hardly ever achieve their desired outcomes**.
- **Wastage of time of legislature:** Enacting statutes without proper scrutiny also wastes the legislature's time when the government approaches Parliament to amend such laws.
- **Loss of opportunity:** But the unmeasurable cost of a poorly-made law is in the loss of opportunity to an entire nation that has to comply with it.

### Way forward

- The government must ensure that it identifies the gaps in our legal system proactively.
- All its bills should go through **pre-legislative scrutiny** before being brought to Parliament.
- The legislature, on its part, should conduct **in-depth scrutiny of government bills**.
- **Mandatory scrutiny of bills by parliamentary committees** should become the rule and not the exception.

### Conclusion

India is in urgent need of course correction in its legislating process. What we need is a robust law-making process.

## 5. India-Philippine Maritime Exercise



## Why in News

Recently, the **Indian Navy** carried out a **Maritime Partnership Exercise** with the **Philippine Navy** in the West Philippine Sea.

- Earlier **Indo-UK Naval Exercise, 'Konkan 2021'** was held in the **English Channel**.

## Key Points

- It will **strengthen bilateral collaboration in the maritime domain** towards a collective aim of **ensuring a stable, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific**.
- This is in a series of exercises that **India is conducting with littoral nations that share their maritime boundaries with China** as part of its deployment.
- **Indian naval ships INS Ranvijay and INS Kora are currently deployed to the Western Pacific** with an aim to strengthen maritime security collaboration with partner nations.
  - The **Quad countries - India, the US, Australia and Japan** - will conduct the **next edition of the Malabar naval exercise off the coast of Guam** in the face of China's growing military muscle-flexing in the Indo-Pacific.
  - China claims sovereignty over all of the **South China Sea** (arm of the Western Pacific Ocean) a huge source of hydrocarbons. However, several **ASEAN Association of Southeast Asian Nations** member countries, including Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei, have counterclaims.

## **GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment**

### **6. National Monetization Pipeline**

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

#### **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.

### **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.

### **What is the plan?**

- NMP is envisaged to serve as a medium-term roadmap for identifying potential monetization-ready projects, across various infrastructure sectors.
- It estimates aggregate monetization potential of Rs 6.0 lakh crores through core assets of the Central Government, over a four-year period, from FY 2022 to FY 2025.

### **Objectives of the program**

- NMP aims for universal access to high-quality and affordable infrastructure to the common citizen of India.
- Asset monetization, based on the philosophy of Creation through Monetization, is aimed at tapping private sector investment for new infrastructure creation.
- This is necessary for creating employment opportunities, thereby enabling high economic growth and seamlessly integrating the rural and semi-urban areas for overall public welfare.
- The strategic objective of the programme is to unlock the value of investments in brownfield public sector assets by tapping institutional and long-term patient capital.

### **Framework**

The framework for core asset monetization has three key imperatives:

- The pipeline has been prepared based on inputs and consultations from respective line ministries and departments, along with the assessment of total asset base available therein.
- Monetization through disinvestment and monetization of non-core assets have not been included in the NMP.
- Further, currently, only assets of central government line ministries and CPSEs in infrastructure sectors have been included.
- Process of coordination and collation of asset pipeline from states is currently ongoing and the same is envisaged to be included in due course.

### **Estimated Potential**

- The aggregate asset pipeline under NMP over the four-year period, FY 2022-2025, is indicatively valued at Rs 6.0 lakh crore.
- The estimated value corresponds to ~14% of the proposed outlay for Centre under NIP (Rs 43 lakh crore). This includes more than 12-line ministries and more than 20 asset classes.
- The sectors included are roads, ports, airports, railways, warehousing, gas & product pipeline, power generation and transmission, mining, telecom, stadium, hospitality and housing.
- The top 5 sectors (by estimated value) capture ~83% of the aggregate pipeline value. These top 5 sectors include: Roads (27%) followed by Railways (25%), Power (15%), oil & gas pipelines (8%) and Telecom (6%).

### **Implementation & Monitoring Mechanism**

- As an overall strategy, significant share of the asset base will remain with the government.
- The programme is envisaged to be supported through necessary policy and regulatory interventions by the Government in order to ensure an efficient and effective process of asset monetisation.
- These will include streamlining operational modalities, encouraging investor participation and facilitating commercial efficiency, among others.
- Real time monitoring will be undertaken through the a separate dashboard.

## **7. Delhi's New Smog Tower**

### **Why in News**

Recently, the Chief Minister of Delhi inaugurated the **country's first 'smog tower' in Connaught Place.**

- It was inaugurated months before the **pollution level spikes in the national capital due to burning of crop waste (stubble burning) by farmers.**

## Key Points

- **Background:**
  - In 2019, the **Supreme Court** directed the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** and the Delhi government to come up with a plan to install smog towers to combat air pollution.
  - **IIT-Bombay then submitted a proposal** for the towers to the CPCB.
  - In January 2020, the **Supreme Court directed that two towers** should be installed by April as a **pilot project.**
  - The **smog tower at Connaught Place (CP) is the first of these towers.** The second tower, being constructed at Anand Vihar in east Delhi with CPCB as the nodal agency, is nearing completion.
- **About:**
  - Smog towers are structures **designed to work as large-scale air purifiers.**
  - They are usually fitted with **multiple layers of air filters,** which clean the air of pollutants as it passes through them.
  - **China has the world's largest smog tower.**
- **Working of the Tower:**
  - It uses a '**downdraft air cleaning system**' where polluted air is sucked in at a height of 24 m, and filtered air is released at the bottom of the tower, at a height of about 10 m from the ground.
    - It is **different from the system used in China,** where a 60-metre smog tower uses an '**updraft**' system – **air is sucked in from near the ground,** and is **propelled upwards by heating and convection.** Filtered air is released at the top of the tower.
- **Developed by:**
  - **Tata Projects Limited (TPL)** built it with technical support from **IIT-Bombay and IIT-Delhi,** which will analyse its data.
  - **National Biofuel Coordination Committee (NBCC) India Ltd** is the project management consultant.
  - **Delhi Pollution Control Committee** was in charge of the Project.
- **Need:**
  - According to a report by CPCB, an increase of **258% to 335%** has been observed in the **concentration of PM10 in Delhi** since 2009.
  - But the **most prominent pollutant in Delhi and neighbouring areas is PM2.5**
    - **PM2.5 refers to fine particles which penetrate deep into the body and fuel inflammation in the lungs and respiratory tract,**

leading to risks of cardiovascular and respiratory problems, including a weak immune system.

- **Delhi was the most polluted capital city** in the world in 2020 for the third consecutive year, according to a report by a **Swiss group (released in March 2021)** that ranked cities based on their air quality measured in terms of the levels of **ultrafine particulate matter (PM 2.5)**.
- **Challenges:**
  - It may **provide immediate relief from air pollution in a small area** but they are a **costly quick-fix measure with no scientific evidence** to back their efficacy in the long term.
  - The tower **could have an impact on the air quality up to 1 km from the tower.**
    - However, the **actual impact will be assessed by IIT-Bombay and IIT-Delhi** in a **two-year pilot study** that will also determine how the tower functions under different weather conditions, and how levels of PM2.5 vary with the flow of air.
- **Other Steps Taken to Tackle the Problem of Pollution in Delhi:**
  - **Subsidy to farmers** for buying **Turbo Happy Seeder (THS)** which is a machine mounted on a tractor that cuts and uproots the stubble, in order to reduce stubble burning.
  - The introduction of **BS-VI vehicles**, push for **electric vehicles (EVs)**, **Odd-Even** as an emergency measure and construction of the Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressways to reduce vehicular pollution.
  - Implementation of the **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)**. It is a set of curbs triggered in phases as the air quality deteriorates, which is typical of the October-November period.
  - Use of **Green Crackers**.
  - Development of the **National Air Quality Index (AQI)** for public information under the aegis of the CPCB.

## Way Forward

- Since there is **no scientific evidence that proves its efficiency**, governments should instead **address root causes and promote renewable energy** to tackle air pollution and **reduce emissions**.
- It will be **really unfortunate if other cities decide to follow suit and set up these expensive, ineffective towers**.

**Prelims Practice Questions**

**1. With reference to Shankaracharya, consider the following statements:**

1. He propounded the Doctrine of Advaita.
2. Brahmasutrabhasya and Bhajagovinda Stotra are the major works of Shankaracharya.
3. He was responsible for reviving Hinduism in India when Buddhism was gaining popularity.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer :D

Explanation

- Shankaracharya was also known as Adi Shankara. Born in Kaladi, Kerala in 788 CE.
  - **Propounded the Doctrine of Advaita (Monism)** and wrote many commentaries on the Vedic canon (Upanishads, Brahma Sutras and Bhagavad Gita) in Sanskrit. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Major Works of Shankaracharya:
  - **Brahmasutrabhasya** (Bhashya or commentary on the Brahma Sutra).
  - **Bhajagovinda Stotra. Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
  - Nirvana Shatakam.
- He was **responsible for reviving Hinduism in India** to a great extent **when Buddhism was gaining popularity. Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
  - Established four Mathas in the four corners of India and the tradition continues to this day.



**2. Consider the following statements regarding Loktak Lake:**

1. It is the largest freshwater lake in the North-east region of India.
2. It is popularly known as Madhuri Lake.

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

**Geo-heritage sites in Northeast:**

- Majuli (Assam): A river “island”, among the world’s largest, in Brahmaputra river.
  - The island is also the hub of spiritualism in Assam.
- **Sangetsar Tso (Arunachal Pradesh): It is popularly known as Madhuri Lake. hence, statement 2 is not correct. Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
  - It is close to the border with Tibet and was formed due to the damming of a river during a major earthquake in 1950.
- **Loktak Lake (Manipur): It is the largest freshwater lake in the Northeast. Hence, statement 1 is correct. Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
  - The attractions of this lake are the ‘phumdis’ or floating biomass and the ‘phumsangs’ or huts of fishermen on them.
  - The Keibul Lamjao National Park, the only floating wildlife habitat on earth, is on the southwestern part of the lake and is the last natural habitat of the sangai or brow-antlered dancing deer.

**3. With reference to the Heat Waves, consider the following statements:**

1. It is a condition of air temperature which becomes fatal to the human body when exposed.
2. It mainly occurs in the pre-monsoon season.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A 1 only



- B2 only  
C Both 1 and 2  
D Neither 1 and 2

Answer :C

Explanation

- A heat wave is a period of abnormally high temperatures, more than the normal maximum temperature that occurs during the summer season in the North-Western and South Central parts of India.
- The India Meteorological Department requires that temperatures should reach at least 40°C in the plains and at least 30°C in the hilly regions, and should reflect an increase of at least 5°C-6°C above the normal temperature to be classified as a heatwave.
- Heat wave is a condition of air temperature which becomes fatal to the human body when exposed. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- In India, heat waves typically occur between March and June, and in some rare cases even extend till July. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

**4. Consider the following statements:**

1. Dravidian languages are spoken in India and Sri Lanka only.
2. Kurukh are the Dravidian-speaking Scheduled Tribes of Andhra Pradesh.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : D

Explanation

- Dravidian languages, a family of some 70 languages spoken primarily in South Asia. They are spoken by more than 215 million people in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- The Dravidian languages with the most speakers are (in descending order of number of speakers) Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam, all of which have long literary traditions.

- Smaller literary languages are Tulu and Kodava.
- There are also a number of Dravidian-speaking Scheduled Tribes, such as the Kurukh in Eastern India and Gondi in Central India. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
  - Kurukh, also spelt Oraon, are a Dravidian ethnic group inhabiting the Indian states of Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and Chhattisgarh.
- Dravidian place names along the Arabian Sea coasts and Dravidian grammatical influence such as clusivity in the Indo-Aryan languages, namely, Marathi, Gujarati, Marwari, and Sindhi, suggest that Dravidian languages were once spoken more widely across the Indian subcontinent.

**5. NTPC Ltd has recently commissioned the India's largest floating Solar Photo Voltaic power project in which of the following regions?**

- a. Rann of Kutch, Gujarat
- b. Banasura Sagar reservoir, Kerala
- c. Basava Sagar Reservoir, Karnataka
- d. Simhadri Reservoir, Andhra Pradesh

Answer : d

- The National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Ltd, has recently commissioned the largest floating solar PV project of 25MW on the reservoir of its Simhadri thermal station in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.
- This is also the first solar project to be set up under the Flexibilisation Scheme, notified by the Government of India in 2018.
- 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.
- NTPC is also planning to set up a hydrogen-based micro-grid system on a pilot basis at Simhadri.
- NTPC is India's first energy company to declare its energy compact goals as part of the UN High-level Dialogue on Energy (HLDE).

**6. Jalakanyaka, sometimes seen in the news recently, is?**

- a. Marine algae species discovered in Andaman & Nicobar Islands
- b. Jain stories related to previous births of Mahavira in both human & animal form
- c. Ancient system of astronomy used during the period of Vijayanagar Empire
- d. A form of water sport played by the Irula tribes of Kerala along the Arabian Coast

Answer : a

### **Jalakanyaka**

- A new marine algae species with an umbrella-like cap, which has been named Jalakanyaka, has been discovered on Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- The new algae species has been named 'Acetabularia jalakanyakae', after the Sanskrit word 'Jalakanyaka' meaning the 'goddess of oceans' or 'mermaid'.
- This species is the 1st of the genus Acetabularia to be discovered in India.
- It is also the first of its kind on the Island.
- Algal diversity is one of the highest in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- The whole plant is made up of just one cell with only one nucleus.
- Threats - Rising seawater temperature decreases oxygen concentration in water, dangerously affecting all organisms that depend on oxygen to live, including this species.

**Mains Practice Questions**

**1. The States People's movement contributed towards the integration of princely states into the Indian Union. Discuss. (250 words)**

**Approach:**

- Highlight conditions and issues that people faced in princely states during British India.
- Related how such issues were absorbed and addressed under the Nationalistic Freedom Struggle, along with Congress's view of the polity of princely states.
- Conclude that integration into the Indian Union was part and parcel of the freedom movement.

**2. Indigenous people are one of the most vulnerable sections facing climate change, however, they can act as change agents, towards mitigating and adapting to climate change. Discuss. (250 words)**

**Approach**

- Briefly defining Indigenous people, highlight their vulnerability/problems face due to Climate Change.
- Highlight how they can act as change agent in mitigation as well as adaptation efforts with example.
- In conclusion, highlight some challenges for becoming a change agent and some measures to overcome them.