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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. SC tells Centre to fill tribunal vacancies by Sept. 13

In News

- The Supreme Court (SC) criticized the Central government for its inaction in filling vacancies in tribunals.

Details

- The SC said it did not want any confrontation with the government and asked the Centre to make some appointments to the tribunals.
- The court said it had three options.
 - One, close the tribunals.
 - Two, to make the appointments itself.
 - Three, to initiate contempt.

Tribunal Reforms Bill, 2021:

- The Bill replaced the **Tribunals Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance, 2021**.

Major provisions:

- The Bill seeks to **dissolve certain existing appellate bodies and transfer their functions (such as adjudication of appeals) to other existing judicial bodies.**
- Provisions regarding the **composition of search-cum-selection committees:**
 - The Chairperson and Members of the Tribunals will be appointed by the central government on the recommendation of a Search-cum-Selection Committee. The Committee will consist of: (i) the Chief Justice of India, or a Supreme Court Judge nominated by him, as the Chairperson (with casting vote), (ii) two Secretaries nominated by the central government, (iii) the sitting or outgoing Chairperson, or a retired Supreme Court Judge, or a retired Chief Justice of a High Court, and (iv) the Secretary of the Ministry under which the Tribunal is constituted (with no voting right).
 - State administrative tribunals will have separate search-cum-selection committees.
 - The central government must decide on the recommendations of selection committees preferably within three months from the date of the recommendation.

Provisions regarding **qualification and terms and conditions of service of tribunal members:**

- The Bill provides for a four-year term of office (subject to the upper age limit of 70 years for the Chairperson, and 67 years for members).
- It also specifies a minimum age requirement of 50 years for the appointment of a chairperson or a member.

Concerns:

- Notably, the Tribunal Reforms Act of 2021 revives provisions of tenure and service of members of tribunals which were earlier struck down by the Supreme Court in a judgment. This gives rise to concerns of the **government overlooking the judiciary's observations in its previous judgments**. This could lead to the triggering of further litigation and causing inconvenience to citizens, courts and other stakeholders.
- The fact that this was done without debate in the parliament, raises **concerns over the falling standards of lawmaking in the country**.
- The bill has been criticised for **undermining the independence of the judiciary** by giving the government wide powers regarding appointments, service conditions, salaries, etc. of members of key tribunals.

2. Workers have right to sit, T.N. makes it official

In News :

- The Tamil Nadu government tabled a bill in the assembly, which makes it mandatory for business establishments to provide seating arrangements for their employees, who stand for long hours.
- The bill once it gets the assent from the Governor would legalise the 'right to sit' at the workplace.

Why was the bill introduced?

- The persons employed in shops and establishments in the State "are made to stand throughout their duty time" which results in varied health issues.
 - This includes kidney-related issues, varicose veins, swollen feet, and back pain because of the 'no sitting while at work' rule.

There have been examples where the owners have cut the pay because the employee was leaning against the wall for a breather.

Features

The bill seeks to amend the Tamil Nadu Shops and Establishments Act, 1947 by adding a subsection to mandatorily provide seating facilities for the staff.

- “The premises of every establishment shall have suitable seating arrangements for all employees so that they may take advantage of any opportunity to sit which may occur in the course of their work and thereby avoid ‘on their toes’ situation throughout the working hours.”

Challenges

- The bill does not detail the implementation and if shop owners would be penalised for not providing seating arrangements.

Significance

- It would benefit thousands of employees of large and small establishments, particularly those working in textile and jewellery showrooms.
- Providing seating facilities for the employees will pave the way for efficient working of the employees, as they will not be exhausted.

3. Food emergency in Sri Lanka

In News

- Sri Lanka has declared a state of emergency over food shortages.
- The President declared an emergency under the public security ordinance to maintain the supply of food items such as sugar and rice at fair prices.

Details

- It empowers the authorities to seize stocks of staple foods and set their prices, to contain soaring inflation after a steep devaluation of its currency due to a foreign exchange crisis.

Why is Sri Lanka witnessing such a crisis?

- Sri Lanka, a net importer of food and other commodities, is witnessing a surge in COVID-19 cases and deaths which has hit its tourism sector. It is one of the main foreign currency earners.
 - Major sources of foreign exchange earnings – exports and worker remittances.

Production shortages and logistical bottlenecks.

Concerns

- Emergency regulations are not sustainable.
 - Sri Lanka does not have a universal public distribution system or ration cards that can ensure essential goods reach all consumers.
 - The current regulations may not address the economic problem, and instead, pose the risk of creating black markets.

Budget-2021 banned the import of food items, including turmeric and chemical fertilisers, purportedly to encourage local farmers and organic farming, but it created more problems than solving any.

- The real idea was to save that much on forex-outflow, but the urgent, unplanned import ban caused multiple crises at different levels, from the farm to the food table.

Way forward

- The government has announced massive penalties for hoarders but that may not be enough to end food-panic and long queues at retail stores. The situation can ease only if the government pumps in more forex into the system.

4. Spirit of federalism lies in consultation

In News : The article talks about the need for consultation with the states while passing legislations, as unilateral legislations, more often than not, end up in protests.

Issue:

- Of late, various State governments have raised concerns about the Centre unilaterally enacting critical laws on subjects in the Concurrent List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.
- The States and the Legislative Assemblies are standing up for their rights.
 - The Kerala Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a resolution against the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2020.
 - The Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly passed a resolution against the controversial farm laws.

This assumes significance in the wake of the Union government introducing a number of laws without taking the States into confidence, thereby undermining the federal principles.

7th Schedule of the Indian Constitution:

The Seventh Schedule contains a three-fold distribution of legislative subjects between the Centre and the states, viz., List-I (the Union List), List-II (the State List) and List-III (the Concurrent List).

Impact:

Protests by the states:

- The enactment of farm laws without consultation with the States is an example.
 - The farm laws were passed by Parliament even as it does not have legislative competence to deal with agriculture. The lack of consultation in a matter that intrinsically deals with millions of farmers led to massive protests.
 - The laws, essentially related to Entry 14 (agriculture clause) belonging to the State List, were purportedly passed by Parliament citing Entry 33 (trade and commerce clause) in the Concurrent List.
- According to various decisions of the Supreme Court, beginning from the State of Bombay vs F.N. Balsara case, if an enactment falls within one of the matters assigned to the State List and reconciliation is not possible with any entry in the Concurrent or Union List after employing the doctrine of “pith and substance”, the legislative domain of the State Legislature must prevail.

Redundancy of local laws:

- When the Major Ports Authorities Act, 2021, was passed by Parliament, State governments objected to the law, stating that it would lead to the redundancy of the local laws.
 - When it comes to non-major ports, the field for legislation is located in Entry 31 of the Concurrent List.
 - According to the Indian Ports Act, 1908, which currently governs the field related to non-major ports, the power to regulate and control the minor ports remained with the State governments.
 - However, the draft Indian Ports Bill, 2021, proposes to change the status quo by transferring the powers related to planning, developing and regulating the non-major ports to the Maritime State Development Council (MSDC), which is overwhelmingly controlled by the Union government.

Coastal States like Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have objected to the Bill that proposes to seize the power of the State government with respect to non-major ports.

Even the BJP-ruled State government in Goa objected to the law stating that it would make its local laws redundant.

Various States like West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have also come forward against the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

- The field related to electricity is traceable to Entry 38 of the Concurrent List.

- The power to regulate the sector was vested with the State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs), which were manned by individuals appointed by the State government.
- However, the proposed amendment seeks to change the regulatory regime with the establishment of a National Selection Committee, dominated by members nominated by the Union government that will make appointments to the SERCs.
- It proposes the establishment of a Centrally-appointed Electricity Contract Enforcement Authority (ECEA) as the sole authority having jurisdiction over matters regarding the performance of obligations under a contract related to the sale, purchase or transmission of electricity.
- In effect, the power to regulate the electricity sector would be taken away from the State government.

Distribution of power between the Centre and the States:

- The model envisioned in the Government of India Act, 1935, was adopted by the framers of the Constitution and certain subjects were put in the Concurrent List by giving the Union and the State Legislatures concurrent powers regarding them.
 - The fields in the Concurrent List were to be of common interest to the Union and the States, and the power to legislate on these subjects to be shared with the Union so that there would be uniformity in law across the country.

However, one of the worst fears of Constituent Assembly member K.T.M. Ahmad Ibrahim Sahib Bahadur was that the subjects in the Concurrent List might end up being transferred to the Union List over a period of time due to the Union government's high-handedness.

- This fear seems to be coming true with the latest developments.

The Sarkaria Commission Report had specifically recommended that there should be a coordination of policy and action in all areas of concurrent or overlapping jurisdiction through a process of mutual consultation and cooperation is, therefore, a prerequisite of smooth and harmonious working of the dual system.

- It was further recommended that the Union government, while exercising powers under the Concurrent List, limit itself to the purpose of ensuring uniformity in basic issues of national policy and not more.

The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC), or the Venkatachaliah Commission, had recommended that individual and collective consultation with the States should be undertaken through the Inter-State Council established under Article 263 of the Constitution.

Conclusion:

As the Supreme Court held in the S.R. Bommai vs Union of India case, the States are not mere appendages of the Union. The Centre should not meddle with the power of the States. The intention of the framers of the Constitution is to ensure that public welfare is subserved and the key to that lies in listening to stakeholders. The essence of cooperative federalism lies in consultation and dialogue, and unilateral legislation without taking the States into confidence will lead to more protests on the streets.

5. Taliban claim total control as Panjshir resistance folds

Background

- Panjshir was the last pocket of armed resistance against the Taliban. It has a history of being difficult for enemies to take.
- The Panjshir fighting has been the most prominent example of resistance to the Taliban.

In News :

- Taliban have taken complete control of Panjshir province.

Details

- The Taliban assured the people of Panjshir, who are ethnically distinct from the Pashtun-dominated Taliban that there would be no “discriminatory act against them”.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

6. National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP)

The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs launched the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) for Central ministries and public sector entities.

About:

- 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.

Prescriptions made by NITI Aayog:

- Appropriate **policy and regulatory changes to scale up InvITs and REITs** need to be focussed upon. This would provide an impetus to expand the investor base of InvITs and REITs.

- **Tax-efficient and user-friendly mechanisms** like allowing tax benefits in InvITs will help attract investors to these instruments.
- The government should give **Income Tax breaks on capital gains to attract retail investors into InvITs And REITs**. Though this will entail a cost in the form of loss of revenue for the exchequer, the long-term benefits of infrastructure development and economic growth may outweigh the cost.
- **Investment instruments like InvITs should be included under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code**. This will give added comfort to investors planning to invest in InvITs as extending IBC provisions to InvITs would help lenders access a faster and more effective debt restructuring and resolution option.
 - Currently, InvIT structures are not considered a 'legal person' and cannot be brought under IBC proceedings.

Provisions for a **robust resolution process** would be crucial to ensure retail investor safety in NMP.

7. Taliban-led Afghanistan and the Chinese conundrum

The article talks about the impact of the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan on China's Belt and Road initiative.

Background:

- With the exit of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, the country has seen a number of unsettling events.
- A devastating bomb blast took place outside Kabul airport.
- Besides the umpteen number of bomb blasts, there was one at the Gwadar East Bay Expressway project, targeting Chinese nationals.
- For the Afghan economy that is driven by the opium trade and ruled by tribal leaders, the new normal is bound to be governed by instability, fighting groups, and thereafter, boom, gloom, and doom.
- The return of the Taliban is seen as a victory of Chinese diplomacy and a defeat for the United States; comparable to the U.S.'s symbolic evacuation of Saigon, in 1975, at the end of the Vietnam war.

China's gains:

- China (and Russia) have kept their embassies running in Kabul while the western embassies have disappeared.
- China is engaging with the Taliban, with an eye to complete the new Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) investment. And a Chinese presence in Afghanistan with an all-weather ally Pakistan may sound unfavourable for India.

- Afghanistan has a few resources that are valuable: rare-earth metals and huge deposits of copper.
- The Chinese have the technology to excavate them.

Crucial link in the BRI:

- Afghanistan is indeed vital for the BRI.
- Without counting on Afghanistan, the bulk of Chinese investment in the China-Pakistan corridor will be at risk.
- Considering the heavy infrastructure investment in the BRI, only many years of successful operation could repay it. The amount of trade that should flow through the new Silk Road should be massive and long term. Otherwise, it will cost money and effort.

China's Investment Strategy:

- The Chinese successfully implemented this investment strategy, and it worked well in the context of Southeast Asia and Africa.
 - With the cost of production being lower in Southeast Asia, Chinese firms could gain by shifting their production bases outside China.
 - Investing in these regions meant access to bigger markets for Chinese firms and more uniform regional development.

Success in these two countries would imply that China will be able to bring together a large part of the Indian Ocean littoral and Eurasia through high speed rail lines, pipelines, and maritime linkages. The idea of connecting to the rest of the world stems from China's aspiration to get out of manufacturing, go up the global value chains, and start focusing on product designing and innovation. According to the government of China, the development of the BRI would impact 4.4 billion people and generate trade worth \$2.5 trillion within a decade.

China's Concerns:

- Afghanistan and Pakistan are not comparable to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
- The recent suicide attacks indicate the resurgence of terrorist groups such as al Qaeda, Daesh, and the Islamic State.
- No businesses can flourish in the presence of terrorism, especially when the Taliban are known to have a soft corner for the East Turkestan Islamic Movement – a militant group active in the Uighur province of China.
- Even in Pakistan, a country relatively better off than Afghanistan, the Chinese are facing problems.
 - Pakistan is unable to repay a China-funded energy project, built under the BRI.

- The economy of Pakistan faltered because of dynastic politics and corruption.
- There is an excessive dependence of the political class on the military.
- Business decisions are not economically driven but are motivated by the vested interests of the army.

Conclusion:

- The Taliban ruling groups are far from united, making it impossible to make any reliable domestic and international policy predictions.
- There are good reasons to believe that the return of the Taliban in Kabul will spell gloom and doom for the Chinese.
- The dependence on opium export makes Afghanistan vulnerable to world mafias and corruption.
- Embargoes, rebellions, factional wars, will be the likely events in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. These issues will spread to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Turkey, and other essential rings in the BRI chain.
- While the Taliban are among the world's least acceptable ruling elite for the western countries, enormous markets controlled by the western powers are the most lucrative for China.
- Hence, the next decade will likely show a sequence of BRI trade flow following likely European and American decisions to block or sanction trade from Afghanistan.
- The U.S. decision of vacating Afghanistan may prove costly for China.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Karnataka's ASER report

Context The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), which was drawn up in March 2021 in only Karnataka this year, found a huge drop in learning levels in both reading and numeracy, especially for primary classes.

- For the current report, Pratham surveyed 18,385 children between the age of five and 16 from 13,365 households across 24 districts. This was done earlier this year, the first since the COVID-19 pandemic set in.

Major findings of the report

- The report stated that there was a slight shift in enrolment from private to government schools across all age groups.
- The survey reported nearly a year of 'learning loss' among students across the State.
- The decline in foundational skills is visible throughout the elementary grades, among students enrolled in government and as well as private schools.
- It found that 56.8% of class I students surveyed **could not read letters**.
 - In comparison, the 2018 report stated that 40% of class I students were unable to read letters. This is a drop of over 16 percentage points.
- 66% of the class VIII students were able to read a **standard II text**, compared to 70% in 2018.
- The study noted that only 9.8% of the class III students were able to read a standard II level text. In 2018, however, 19.2% of the students in the same category were able to read a class II level text.
 - There is a similar drop in learning level in reading skills in class V as well as class VIII.
- The decline in learning levels is **steeper in the arithmetic skills** of the students.

- Nearly half, 42.6% of students in class I, were unable to recognise numbers one to nine.

What is ASER?

- ASER stands for Annual Status of Education Report.
- It is the largest citizen-led survey in India facilitated by **Pratham NGO**.
- This is an annual survey, conducted every year since 2005, that aims to provide reliable estimates of children's enrolment and basic learning levels for each district and state in India.
- It is also the only annual source of information on children's learning outcomes available in India today
- ASER is a **household-based** rather than school-based survey.
- This design enables all children to be included – those who have never been to school or have dropped out, as well as those who are in government schools, private schools, religious schools or anywhere else.

2. POCSO Act - Protection Of Children From Sexual Offences Act

Legal provisions

- The **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act** was enacted in **2012** especially to protect children (**aged less than 18**) from sexual assault.
- **Section 7 of the POCSO Act**, inter alia, says that **whoever with sexual intent touches the breast of the child** is said to **commit sexual assault**.
- Whereas **Section 8** of the Act provides **minimum imprisonment of three years for sexual assault**
- **Section 354** of the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)** lays down a minimum of **one year imprisonment for outraging the modesty of a woman**.

The POCSO Act, 2012

- **Definitions:**
 1. The Act defines a child as any person below eighteen years of age.
 2. It defines different forms of sexual abuse, including penetrative and non-penetrative assault, as well as sexual harassment and pornography.
 3. It deems a sexual assault to be "aggravated" under certain circumstances, such as when the abused child is mentally ill or when the abuse is committed by a person in a position of trust or authority like a family member, police officer, teacher, or doctor.

- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) 2012 was formulated in order to effectively address sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children.
- **Role of police:**
 1. The Act casts the police in the role of child protectors during the investigative process.
 2. Thus, the police personnel receiving a report of sexual abuse of a child are given the responsibility of making urgent arrangements for the care and protection of the child, such as obtaining emergency medical treatment for the child and placing the child in a shelter home, and bringing the matter in front of the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), should the need arise.
- **Safeguards:**
 1. The Act further makes provisions for avoiding the re-victimisation of the child at the hands of the judicial system.
 2. It provides for special courts that conduct the trial in-camera and without revealing the identity of the child, in a manner that is as child-friendly as possible.
 3. Hence, the child may have a parent or other trusted person present at the time of testifying and can call for assistance from an interpreter, special educator, or other professional while giving evidence.

The POCSO (Amendment) Act, 2019

- The act aims at making offences against children **gender-neutral**.
- The **definition of 'Sexual Assault'** has been **extended to incorporate administration of hormones** or chemical substances to children to attain **early sexual maturity** for the **purpose of penetrative sexual assault**.
- The Act defines child pornography as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a child including photograph, video, digital or computer generated image indistinguishable from an actual child.
- The amendments also penalize the transmitting of pornographic material to children and propose to synchronise it with the Information Technology Act.
- The Act seeks to enhance punishment for sexual offences against children, with a provision of death penalty.
- According to the amendment act, those **committing penetrative sexual assaults on a child below 16 years of age would be punished with imprisonment up to 20 years, which might extend to life imprisonment** as well as fine.

- In case of **aggravated penetrative sexual assault**, the act increases the **minimum punishment from ten years to 20 years**, and the **maximum punishment to death penalty**.
- To **curb child pornography**, the Act provides that those who use a child for pornographic purposes should be punished with imprisonment up to five years and fine.
- However, in the event of a second or subsequent conviction, the punishment would be up to seven years and fine.
- The government has also sanctioned over one thousand **fast track courts** for speedy disposal of pending cases under POCSO.

Child Pornography

- The new act defines child pornography as: “any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a child which includes a photograph, video, digital or computer-generated image (that is) indistinguishable from an actual child.”
- Additionally, “an image created, adapted, modified” to depict a child would also be treated as child pornography. This would also include cartoons, animated pictures, etc.
- The Cabinet has also enhanced the fine for possessing child porn but not deleting or reporting it to 5,000 from the earlier proposal of Rs. 1,000. If a person stores such content for distributing it further, except for when presenting it in court as evidence, he could face a punishment of upto three years.
- Henceforth, there will be zero tolerance for child pornography.
- Some of these provisions were also contained in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Amendment Act, 2019, but lapsed.

Way Forward

- Problems related to implementation of POCSO Act such as lack of adequate special courts, lack of sensitization for investigators and prosecutors in dealing with child victims, poor rate of convictions etc. need to be resolved urgently.
- The Supreme Court direction to set up special courts within 60 days of the order in each district having more than 100 pending cases under the act must be complied with urgently.
- The provision of death penalty should be widely discussed and debated and should be used only for the rarest of the rare cases.
- Awareness and sensitization of people is equally important to prevent the crime itself.

- Massive awareness should be created among the masses about child's dignity and about the law in place.
- POSCO Act needs to be part of school syllabus.
- Along with fast track courts, proper infrastructure and judges capacity should be looked upon.
- Need of ground level work.
- Speedy delivery of justice.
- Proper police training and a dedicated children cell at stations as that of a women cell.
- Need of accountability at each and every level.
- Many Indians men and women refuse to believe that sexual violence is a serious problem eating away at India's vitals. It is essential to recognise that the crisis lies in the precise manner in which the existing criminal justice system unfolds.
- Instant medical relief and compensations should be provided to the victim.
- Children should be given a platform and proper environment to speak against such abuse.

3. Poshan Jagrukta Abhiyan organised under POSHAN Maah

Context Poshan Jagrukta Abhiyaan (nutrition awareness campaign) programmes were recently organised by the Union Ministry for Women and Child Development and Union Ministry for Minority Affairs for women from minority communities.

- During the day-long programme, the ministers interacted with Women belonging to Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Parsi, Jain and Sikh communities and from poor and backward areas
- These programmes were organised under "Poshan Maah".

POSHAN Abhiyaan

- POSHAN (Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition) Abhiyaan is Government of India's flagship programme to improve nutritional outcomes for children, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers.
- Launched by the Indian Prime Minister on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March, 2018.
- The Abhiyaan seeks to address the issue of malnutrition in mission-mode.
- **Mission Poshan 2.0** (Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0) has been announced in the Budget 2021-2022 as an integrated nutrition support programme.

- **Objectives:** To strengthen nutritional content, delivery, outreach and outcomes, with a focus on developing practices that nurture health, wellness and immunity to disease and malnutrition.

POSHAN Maah 2021

- As India celebrates the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav in 2021,
- POSHAN Maah 2021 is being observed in a thematic fashion.
- **Objective:** To ensure speedy and intensive outreach
- The entire month of September 2021 has been subdivided into weekly themes, for focused and assimilated approach towards improving holistic nutrition.
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development has planned a series of activities throughout the month in tandem with states and union territories

4. Administrative Tribunals In India

- Tribunal is a **quasi-judicial institution** that is set up to deal with problems such as resolving administrative or tax-related disputes.
- It performs a number of functions like adjudicating disputes, determining rights between contesting parties, making an administrative decision, reviewing an existing administrative decision and so forth.
- The **original Constitution did not contain provisions** with respect to tribunals. The **42nd Amendment Act of 1976** added a **new Part XIV-A** to the Constitution. This part is entitled as 'Tribunals' and consists of **only two Articles:**

1. **Article 323 A** dealing with administrative tribunals, and
2. **Article 323 B** dealing with tribunals for other matters.

Art 323-A deals with Administrative Tribunals

- Article 323 A empowers the **Parliament** to provide for the establishment of administrative tribunals for the adjudication of disputes relating to **recruitment and conditions of service** of persons appointed to public services of the **Centre, the states, local bodies, public corporations and other public authorities.**
- In other words, Article 323 A enables the Parliament to take out the adjudication of disputes relating to service matters from the civil courts and the high courts and place it before the administrative tribunals.

- In pursuance of Article 323 A, the Parliament has passed the **Administrative Tribunals Act in 1985**.
- **The act** authorises the Central government to establish one Central administrative tribunal and the state administrative tribunals.
- This act opened a new chapter in the sphere of providing speedy and inexpensive justice to the aggrieved public servants.
- It provides for tribunals **for public services matters only**.
- Tribunals can be established **only by Parliament**.
- Only 1 tribunal for Center and 1 for each or 2 or more states may be established. There is **no Question of hierarchy of tribunals**.

Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) -- For Union services including All India Services

- It is a Statutory Body set up in 1985.
- CAT exercises **original jurisdiction** wrt recruitment and all service matters of **public servants**.
- It includes **Central service employees, civil employees of defense services, officers and servants of SC** and secretarial staff of Parliament.
- **Composition:** 1 Chairman and 66 members. Drawn from **both judicial and administrative sources**. Members are given status of **Judge of HCs**.
- **Appointment by President:** on the basis of Selection Committee: **Sitting Judge of Supreme Court as the Chairman** who is **nominated by CJI**. After the concurrence of CJI, appointments are made by the approval of Appointments Committee of Cabinet (ACC). **No reappointment**.
- **Tenure:** 5 years / 65 years for Chairperson and Vice Chairperson and 62 for members.
- The CAT is **not bound by the Civil Procedure Code, 1908**. It is guided by the **principles of Natural Justice**. Appeals against the orders of CAT can be **made to High Courts or directly to Supreme Court**.
- The CAT **exercises jurisdiction** over all service matters concerning the following:
 1. a member of any All-India Service
 2. a person appointed to any civil service of the Union or any civil post under the union
 3. a civilian appointed to any defence services or a post connected with defence
 4. However, the members of the defence forces, officers, staff of the Supreme Court and the secretarial staff of the Parliament are not covered under the jurisdiction of CAT.

- **Benches:** There are 17 Benches and 21 Circuit Benches in the Central Administrative Tribunal all over India. In addition, the Central Administrative Tribunal, Principal Bench is dealing with the matters of Govt. of National Capital Territory of Delhi.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

5. e-ILP platform launched in Manipur

Context Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh recently launched electronic Inner Line Permit (ILP) counters

Key takeaways

- Imphal, Jiribam and Mao Centers have been inaugurated.
- Under the portal, a person from outside the state can apply online for ILP and get the permit from issuing centres after onsite verification.
- The **e-ILP tracking system** has been developed to mend the loopholes in the procedures adopted to issue the permit and its tracking system.
- It has a **comprehensive dashboard system** that would actively show information such as number of people entering the state on a particular date and time and graphical break-up based presentation of people visiting through different entry gates.
- The system is also enabled with automated generation of a defaulted list of people who have overstayed beyond the permitted number of days as per the permit.
- The ILP system came into effect in Manipur on January 1, 2020.

What is Inner Line Permit system?

- ILP is an official travel document issued to allow inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected area for a limited period.
- It is obligatory for Indian citizens from outside those states to obtain a permit for entering into the protected state.
- Currently, Protected Areas are located in the following States:
 - Whole of Arunachal Pradesh
 - Parts of Himachal Pradesh
 - Parts of Jammu & Kashmir
 - Whole of Manipur

- Whole of Mizoram
- Whole of Nagaland
- Parts of Rajasthan
- Whole of Sikkim (partly in Protected Area and partly in Restricted Area)
- Parts of Uttarakhand
- Any person is entitled to renew his permit every six months if he is not a native in these states despite the fact that he/she is a long-term resident.
- It also regulates the movement to certain areas located near the international borders of India.
- It is issued by the concerned states coming under the protection of ILP.

6. New Code for Creditors (CoC) under IBC

The insolvency regulator has called for public comments on a proposal to introduce a code of conduct for Committees of Creditors (CoC), of companies undergoing insolvency proceedings under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

About IBC

- The IBC, 2016 is the bankruptcy law of India which seeks to consolidate the existing framework by creating a single law for insolvency and bankruptcy.
- It is a one-stop solution for resolving insolvencies which previously was a long process that did not offer an economically viable arrangement.
- The code aims to protect the interests of small investors and make the process of doing business less cumbersome.

Key features

Insolvency Resolution: The Code outlines separate insolvency resolution processes for individuals, companies, and partnership firms. The process may be initiated by either the debtor or the creditors. A maximum time limit, for completion of the insolvency resolution process, has been set for corporates and individuals.

1. For companies, the process will have to be completed in 180 days, which may be extended by 90 days, if a majority of the creditors agree.
2. For startups (other than partnership firms), small companies, and other companies (with assets less than Rs. 1 crore), the resolution process would be completed within 90 days of initiation of request which may be extended by 45 days.

Insolvency regulator: The Code establishes the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India, to oversee the insolvency proceedings in the country and regulate the

entities registered under it. The Board will have 10 members, including representatives from the Ministries of Finance and Law, and the RBI.

Insolvency professionals: The insolvency process will be managed by licensed professionals. These professionals will also control the assets of the debtor during the insolvency process.

Bankruptcy and Insolvency Adjudicator: The Code proposes two separate tribunals to oversee the process of insolvency resolution, for individuals and companies:

1. **National Company Law Tribunal:** for Companies and Limited Liability Partnership firms; and
2. **Debt Recovery Tribunal:** for individuals and partnerships

What is the recent development?

Ans. Code of conduct for Committees of Creditors (CoC)

- A CoC is to be composed of financial creditors to the Corporate Debtor (CD) – or operational creditors in the absence of unrelated financial creditors.
- Under the IBC, CoC is empowered to take key decisions, including decisions on haircuts for creditors, that are binding on all stakeholders, including those dissenting.
- The CoC is also empowered to seek and choose the best resolution plan for a corporate debtor from the market, and its role is vital for a timely and successful resolution for a CD.
- The IBBI noted that a code of conduct for CoCs would promote transparent and fair working on the part of CoCs.

What are the issues that the code of conduct is seeking to address?

- Several cases in which certain lenders have withdrawn funds from a CD undergoing insolvency proceeding and contributed to delays in the insolvency process.
- Delays in resolution are seen as contributing to the loss of value in corporate debtors and have become a key criticism of the IBC, with over 75 percent of proceedings having crossed the 270-day timeline.
- The IBBI highlighted cases in which representatives of lenders have had to seek approval from seniors for decisions such as an appointment of resolution professionals.
- IBBI has recommended that a code of conduct require that members of the CoC nominate representatives with sufficient authorization to participate in meetings and make decisions during the process.

- The regulator also highlighted cases where lenders have withdrawn funds from a corporate debtor during insolvency or liquidation proceedings.

7. Special Livestock Sector Package

Why in news?

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved implementation of a special livestock sector package. [Click here to read about Livestock sector.](#)

About the Package

- It aims to boost growth in the livestock sector and thereby making animal husbandry more remunerative to 10 crore farmers engaged in Animal Husbandry Sector.
- The Central government will spend **Rs. 9,800 crore** on livestock development over the next five years
- All the schemes of the Department will be merged into **three broad categories** as:
 - **Development Programmes:** It includes Rashtriya Gokul Mission, National Programme for Dairy Development (NPDD), National Livestock Mission (NLM) and Livestock Census and Integrated Sample Survey (LC & ISS) as sub-schemes.
 - **Disease Control Programme:** It is renamed as Livestock Health and Disease Control (LH & DC) which includes the present Livestock Health and Disease Control (LH & DC) scheme and National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP).
 - **Infrastructure Development Fund:** it includes the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development fund (AHIDF), the Dairy Infrastructure Development Fund (DIDF), scheme for support to Dairy Cooperatives and Farmer Producer Organizations engaged in Dairy activities

Prelims Practice Questions

1) Which of the following places is/are closely associated with Mahatma Gandhiji?

1. Mhow
2. Pietermaritzburg
3. Aga Khan Palace
4. Chaitya Bhoomi

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Answer : b

Mahatma Gandhiji

- **Porbandar, Gujarat** – Birth Place of Mahatma Gandhi
- **Pietermaritzburg station, South Africa** – It is the place where Gandhi was thrown out from the train compartment.
- The incident changed his life, and he stood up against racial discrimination and made active non-violence as his mission.
- **Yerawda Jail, Pune** – It is the place where historic Poona Act was signed when Gandhiji fasted to protest against Communal award.
- He was housed three times in this jail, including in 1932 and in 1942 along with many other freedom fighters, during Quit India Movement.
- **Aga Khan Palace, Pune** – This is the place where Gandhiji lived for 21 months after he gave the call for Quit India on 8th August, 1942.
- During this period, the Mahatma lost his wife Kasturba and his secretary Narayan Desai.
- The Samadhis of both of them are located in this grand palace of Pune.
- **Rajghat, Delhi** – It is where the Samadhi of Mahatma Gandhi is located.

- **Mhow** - Ambedkar was born in 1891 in the town and military cantonment of Mhow (now officially known as Dr Ambedkar Nagar) in the Central Provinces (now in Madhya Pradesh).
- **Chaitya Bhoomi** - It is a Buddhist chaitya and the cremation place of B. R. Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Indian Constitution.

2. Which of the following is/are the function/functions of the Cabinet Secretariat?

1. Preparation of agenda for Cabinet Meetings
2. Secretarial assistance to Cabinet Committees
3. Allocation of financial resources to the Ministries

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The Cabinet Secretariat functions directly under the Prime Minister. The administrative head of the Secretariat is the Cabinet Secretary who is also the ex-officio Chairman of the Civil Services Board.
- The business allocated to Cabinet Secretariat under Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961 includes Secretarial assistance to the Cabinet and Cabinet Committees.
- The Cabinet Secretariat is responsible for the administration of the Government of India (Transaction of Business) Rules, 1961 and Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961 facilitating smooth transaction of business in Ministries/Departments.
- The Secretariat assists in decision-making in Government by ensuring Inter-Ministerial coordination, ironing out differences amongst Ministries/Departments and evolving consensus through the instrumentality of the standing/ad hoc Committees of Secretaries.
- Management of major crisis situations in the country and coordinating activities of various ministries in such a situation is also one of the functions of the Cabinet Secretariat.
- Allocation of financial resources to the Ministries is not a function of the Cabinet Secretariat.

3. Consider the following statements with respect to Solar Storms

1. It is a directional ejection of a large mass of highly magnetised particles from the sun
2. Undersea cables have a higher risk of failure from solar storms compared to land cables.

Which of the statement(s) given below is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : c

Solar Storm

- It is a directional ejection of a large mass of highly magnetised particles from the sun.
- When the earth is in the direct path of such solar storms, these magnetised and charged solar particles will interact with the earth's magnetic field and induce strong electric currents on the earth's surface.
- Hence, power grids, oil and gas pipelines, and networking cables are the most vulnerable.
- Powerful solar superstorms can destroy long-distance undersea cables leading to massive Internet disruption lasting for several months.
- Undersea cables have a higher risk of failure compared to land cables due to their large lengths as current is proportional to the area of the loop formed by the two grounds and the cable.
- Communication satellites could also be among the severely affected systems due to direct exposure to highly charged particles in the storms.
- The scale of impact is different for different regions.
- Chinese cities are more prone to lose connectivity than Indian cities because the former connects to longer cables.
- The U.S. is one of the most vulnerable locations with a high risk of disconnection from Europe during extreme solar events.
- Europe is at a lower risk due to the presence of shorter land and undersea cables interconnecting the continent.

4. Consider the following statements about Nipah Virus

1. It has an incubation period of 5-14 days.
2. It was first identified in Malaysia and first reported in West Bengal in India.
3. It can be transmitted through contaminated food.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : d

Nipah in Kerala

A new case of Nipah has been detected in the Kozhikode district.

- The natural host of the Nipah virus are fruit bats of the Pteropodidae family and Pteropous genus, widely found in South and South East Asia.
- However, the actual source of the current infection is not yet known.
- It can be transmitted to humans from animals (such as bats or pigs), or contaminated foods and can also be transmitted directly from human-to-human.
- There is no treatment or vaccine available for either people or animals. The primary treatment for humans is supportive care.
- It was first recognized in 1999 during an outbreak among pig farmers in, Malaysia.
- Till date, India has experienced four episodes of NiV outbreaks with CFR ranging from 65% to 100%. The evidence of NiV infection are reported in,
 1. Siliguri district, West Bengal (2001),
 2. Nadia district in West Bengal (2007),
 3. Kozhikode district of Kerala (2018), followed by another outbreak in the same state in 2019.

5. Irrawaddy Dolphin can be found in which of the following regions?

1. Mekong River
2. Chambal River
3. Mahakam River
4. Chilika Lake
5. Loktak Lake

Choose the correct option

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

Answer : c

Irrawaddy Dolphin

- Irrawaddy dolphins are found in coastal areas in South and Southeast Asia.
- It is found in 3 rivers - The Ayeyarwady (Myanmar), the Mahakam (Indonesian Borneo) and the Mekong.
- In India, it is found in Chilika Lake and coastal areas.

6. Which of the following is/are the applications of Doppler radar?

1. Radiology and healthcare
2. Weather Forecasting
3. Submarines
4. Aviation

Options:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Doppler weather radars are remote sensing instruments and are capable of detecting particle type (rain, snow, hail, insects, etc), intensity, and motion. Radar data can be used to determine the structure of storms and to help with predicting the severity of storms.
- Doppler radars also find usage in the radiology and healthcare sector as well as the aviation sector.
- Submarines use Sonar radars (based on sound waves).

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. There is an increase in frequency and intensity of cyclones in India. Discuss the National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project in this context. (150 words)

Approach

- Explain the given statement by giving data/facts about hazards of cyclones in India.
- Briefly highlight the reasons for the increase in frequency and intensity of cyclones in India.
- Discuss the role of the National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project in management of hazards of cyclones.
- Write a coherent conclusion.

2Q. What are the targets and priority areas under the Sendai Declaration by the year 2030? Discuss the efforts made by the Government of India in this direction. (250 words)

Approach

- In the introduction give a brief about the Sendai Framework.
- Enumerate the targets and the primary areas covered under the Sendai Declaration to be achieved by the year 2030.
- Discuss the steps taken by the government in meeting the said targets.
- Give a suitable conclusion