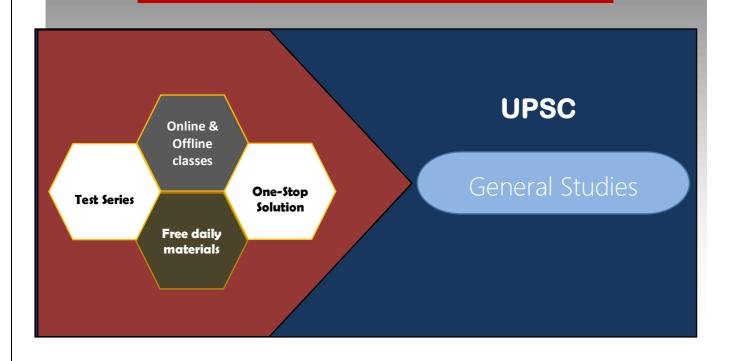**VISHNU IAS**
★ I A S ★

SEPTEMBER

20.09.2021

CURRENT AFFAIRS

A MAGAZINEFOR CIVILSERVICESPREPARATION

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

Articles of the day
THE HINDU & INDIAN EXPRESS

Online & Offline classes

Test Series

One-Stop Solution

Free daily materials

UPSC

General Studies

THE HINDU

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. 'Indianization' of Legal System is the need of the hour : CJI

Chief Justice of India NV Ramana has asserted the need for the "Indianisation of our legal system", pointing out that the colonial system being followed currently may not be best suited to the complexities of India.

Prospects of Indianization

- CJI meant that the need to adapt to the practical realities of our society and localize our justice delivery systems.
- For example, parties from a rural place fighting a family dispute are usually made to feel out of place in the court.
- They do not understand the arguments or pleadings which are mostly in English, a language alien to them.
- These days judgments have become lengthy, which further complicates the position of litigants.
- For the parties to understand the implications of a judgment, they are forced to spend more money.
- For whom do the court's function, the CJI asked. For the litigants, who are the "justice seekers". They are the ultimate beneficiaries.

What did CJI say?

- CJI has said the ordinary Indian feels out of place in our courts where proceedings are lengthy, expensive and in English.
- Besides, judgments are either too long or technical or manage to be both.
- It is time for courts to wake up from their colonial stupor and face the practical realities of Indian society.
- Rules and procedures of justice delivery should be made simple.
- The ordinary, poor and rural Indian should not be scared of judges or the courts.

Reasons for Indianization

- Multiple barriers continue to thwart the citizen's way to the courts.
- The working and the style of courts do not sit well with the complexities of India.
- The systems, practices and rules of courts are foreign and sourced from our colonial days. They do not take care of the practical realities of India.

Major suggestions by CJI:

(A) Simplification

* The simplification of justice delivery should be our pressing concern.
* It is crucial to make justice delivery more transparent, accessible and effective.
* Procedural barriers often undermine access to justice.
* The Chief Justice said both judges and lawyers have to create an environment which is comforting for the litigants and other stakeholders.

(B) Alternate dispute mechanisms

* The CJI said alternate dispute mechanisms like mediation and conciliation would go a long way in reducing pendency, unnecessary litigation and save resources.

2. Facial Recognition Systems (FRS) in India

India has seen a rapid deployment of Facial Recognition Systems (FRS) in recent years, both by the Centre and State governments, without putting in place any law to regulate their use.

Facial Recognition System

* A FRS is a technology capable of matching a human face from a digital image or a video frame against a database of faces.
* It is typically employed to authenticate users through ID verification services, works by pinpointing and measuring facial features from a given image.

In News :

* There is a growing unabated use of this potentially invasive technology without any safeguards.
* This poses a huge threat to the fundamental rights to privacy and freedom of speech and expression of the citizens.

FRS in India

* Currently, 18 FRSs are in active utilisation by the Centre and State governments for the purpose of surveillance, security and authentication of identity.
* 49 more systems are in the process of being installed by different government agencies.
* Delhi Police was the first law enforcement agency in the country to start using the technology in 2018.

- Only Telangana is ahead of Delhi at present with four facial recognition systems in active utilization for surveillance and authentication of identity.

Judicial scrutiny of the move

- States say that they are authorized by the Delhi High Court in terms of the decision in the case of 'Sadhan Haldar vs NCT of Delhi'.
- In that particular case, the High Court had authorized the Delhi police to obtain facial recognition technology for the purpose of tracking and reuniting missing children.
- FRS may be used in the investigation in the interest of safety and security of the general public.

- Activists pointed out that Delhi Police was now using the FRS, which was meant for tracking missing children, for wider security and surveillance and investigation purpose.
- There is a "function creep" happening with Police gradually using the technology beyond its intended purpose.
- For example, the use of FRS to identify accused who took part in the farmers' tractor rally violence in January this year.

- Surveillance of any kind happens in secret and the people generally don't know that they are being watched.
- The idea behind is to bring light to the fact that these technology systems are being used without any laws in place to regulate them.
- Police and state authorities should use such technologies for specific and special purposes with proper authorization.

3. Serotype 2 Dengue?

The Union Health Ministry has flagged the emerging challenge in 11 States across India of serotype 2 dengue, which it said is associated with "more cases and more complications" than other forms of the disease.

Dengue

- Dengue is a mosquito-borne viral infection, found in tropical and sub-tropical climates worldwide, mostly in urban and semi-urban areas.
- It is transmitted by female mosquitoes mainly of the species Aedes aegypti and, to a lesser extent, Ae. albopictus.
- These mosquitoes are also vectors of chikungunya, yellow fever and Zika viruses.
- Dengue is widespread throughout the tropics, with local variations in risk influenced by rainfall, temperature, relative humidity and unplanned rapid urbanization.

Its transmission

- The virus is transmitted to humans through the bites of infected female mosquitoes, primarily the Aedes aegypti
- Other species within the Aedes genus can also act as vectors, but their contribution is secondary to Aedes aegypti.
- Mosquitoes can become infected from people who are viremic with dengue.

Various serotypes

- Dengue is caused by a virus of the Flaviviridae family and there are four distinct, but closely related, serotypes of the virus that cause dengue (DENV-1, DENV-2, DENV-3 and DENV-4).
- Recovery from infection is believed to provide lifelong immunity against that serotype.
- However, cross-immunity to the other serotypes after recovery is only partial and temporary.
- Subsequent infections (secondary infection) by other serotypes increase the risk of developing severe dengue.

4. 'Taliban have responsibility to exercise good governance, to be inclusive'

In News:

- Saudi Foreign Minister's visit to India.

Details:

- In the light of the official visit, the article analyzes some aspects of the **India-Saudi Arabia bilateral relationship.**

Co-operation and collaboration on the Afghanistan issue:

- A major aspect of the visit is based on the Afghanistan issue. India and Saudi Arabia have discussed the way forward in Afghanistan.
- **Peace, security and stability in Afghanistan** would be critical to the region including the countries of Saudi Arabia and India. The increasing probability of Afghanistan becoming a **source of transnational terrorism** poses grave threats to the internal security of both India and Saudi Arabia.
- Unlike in the earlier regime of the Taliban, Saudi Arabia has not maintained a diplomatic engagement with the Taliban regime this time, while its strategic rivals Qatar, Turkey and Iran have established contacts and ties with the new Taliban regime. Saudi Arabia fears that this development could place it in a strategically disadvantageous position in the region and beyond. In this

light, **it is trying to co-operate on the Afghanistan issue with like-minded countries like India.**

- Neither Saudi Arabia nor India actually has a diplomatic presence or any formal engagement with the Taliban government in Afghanistan.

India faces the threat of infiltration attempts by armed militants along India's borders in Jammu and Kashmir. The **anti-India terror organizations** could find a base for their operations in Afghanistan under the new Taliban regime and renew their attacks against India. **Drug trafficking** emanating from Afghanistan also poses another major challenge for India's national security.

India and Saudi Arabia can play a decisive role to make sure that that the commitments made by the new Taliban regime are adhered to in areas of ensuring adequate rights for minorities and women, curbing the use of Afghan soil for terrorism, etc.

Economic co-operation:

- **Bilateral trade and investment** between the two countries have witnessed significant growth in recent years.
  - India remains one of the largest procurers of Saudi's oil outputs. **India is the third-largest trade partner for Saudi Arabia.**
  - Saudi Arabia had made an announcement of a **$100 billion investment plan by the Saudi government and Aramco for India** in 2019.
    - ARAMCO, Saudi Arabia's state-run oil firm is planning a joint venture for an oil refinery in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra and the two countries are also cooperating in setting up strategic oil reserves in India.

Pakistan factor:

- Given that Saudi Arabia enjoys good relations with both India and Pakistan and enjoys some degree of influence over Pakistan, it can play a **decisive role in helping the two countries engage to resolve the outstanding issues between themselves** which can help bring in much-needed peace and security in the South Asian region.

Security aspects:

- India and Saudi Arabia have signed an MoU on cooperation in the **exchange of intelligence related to money laundering and terrorism financing.**

Indian Diaspora in Saudi Arabia:

- The **7 million-strong Indian community** is the largest expatriate group in Saudi Arabia. They send remittances of over US $11 billion annually to India.

Irritants in the relationship:

- Saudi Arabia led OPEC has **overlooked India's repeated calls for rationalizing the oil prices**. This has not gone down well with India.
- Also, India has strongly condemned the **repeated statements by the Saudi Arabia-headquartered Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** on Jammu and Kashmir, the status of Indian Muslims and incidents of communal violence in India as **gross interference in India's domestic affairs.**

Conclusion:

- The **Riyadh Declaration of 2010** had forged a **Strategic Partnership between India and Saudi Arabia.** Since then the two countries have **deepened their relationship in diverse sectors like investment, energy, trade, climate action and security cooperation**.
- Given the mutually beneficial partnership, the relationship is bound to only grow in the coming years.

5. How the 9/11 changed the world

The article throws light upon how the war on terror post the 9/11 attack strengthened Islamist and Islamophobic politics.

Current Scenario:

- After the 9/11 attack in 2001, the U.S. went to Afghanistan to defeat al-Qaeda and topple the Taliban regime.
- Two decades later in 2021 as the U.S. exited Afghanistan, the Taliban (which never fully severed its ties with al-Qaeda) is back in power in Kabul.
- Afghanistan has emerged as the new base of the Islamic State.
  - The bombing by the Islamic State Khorasan Province outside Kabul airport is a testimony to the fact.

The Future of Wars on Terrorism:

- While the U.S. President asserts that the war on terror will continue, the options available to the U.S. are limited.
  - It has lost its base in Afghanistan.
  - Its alliance with Pakistan is over.
  - Afghanistan's neighbouring countries refuse to host an American base, which will impact intelligence operations.

Considering that the U.S. couldn't defeat terrorism after fighting two decades in Afghanistan along with Pakistan, it would be difficult for it to fight a Taliban-controlled Afghanistan from bases in the Gulf.

Earlier Regime change wars:

- While the U.S received global support and sympathy post the 9/11 attacks, the war that the U.S. launched wasn't strategically focused on defeating al-Qaeda. Instead, it was driven by the neoconservative pride of the Bush administration.
  - It launched regime change wars to remake the Muslim world.

In 2001, the U.S. brought down the Taliban regime and destroyed al-Qaeda's base in Afghanistan. But instead of going after al-Qaeda networks, the U.S. initiated the next regime change war in Iraq.

- The invasion of Iraq, based on false intelligence that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, not only diffused the U.S.'s focus in Afghanistan but also created conditions inside Iraq for al-Qaeda to establish a new branch.
- Al-Qaeda in Iraq, led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, rose from the ruins of post-war Iraq to become the deadliest branch of the global terrorist outfit.

In 2011, NATO launched another regime change war in Libya.

The U.S. believed that with its superior military force, it could topple regimes, reorder political systems and remake the world.

It did bring down regimes in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, but it remained clueless about how to tackle the instability that followed.

- If post-war Iraq provided a new base for al-Qaeda, Libya's collapse into anarchy allowed terrorists to spread to other parts of Africa.
- In Syria, the U.S. backed armed rebels against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad. Islamic State rose from the ruins of Syria.

Concerns:

- Terrorists thrive amidst chaos and lawlessness.
- The regime change wars, which helped terrorist outfits proliferate in many countries, also led to the strengthening of both Islamist and Islamophobic politics across the world.
- The repeated attacks on Muslim-majority countries and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of locals, mostly Muslims, in these wars helped strengthen their narrative that the 'Christian West' is launching 'a crusade' against Muslims.
- The Islamic State repeatedly referred to all westerners as crusaders and broadcast videos of American strikes on social media with the aim of recruiting young Muslims.
- Anti-Americanism emerged as a dominant political theme across Muslim-majority countries, which Islamist hardliners sought to cash in on.
- The wars also triggered a massive outflow of refugees from the affected countries to neighbouring nations.

- During the 2011-15 Libyan and Syrian crises, hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers took the perilous boat journey across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe.
- The Islamic State-inspired terrorist attacks in the West during this period further strengthened this narrative.
- In the end, the regime change wars, which failed to defeat terrorists, came back to divide and haunt the West in a different form.

Conclusion:

- The most unexpected setback that the U.S. suffered was in geopolitics. When the U.S. was busy in the Muslim world, China was steadily rising.
- America's withdrawal and the perception of its weakness will embolden its rivals like Iran, Russia and China.
- The U.S., which is seeking to return to realism from neoconservatism, might wait for its rivals, especially China, to commit blunders or it might grab other strategic opportunities.
- While the terrorist outfits continue to operate from the havens they have already found, the author believes that it is now the beginning of the new U.S.-China cold war.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology,Environment

6. Helina Missile

In News : The helicopter-launched Nag Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM), Helina, being developed indigenously, has completed all trials.

About Helina

- Helina is a third-generation, Lock on Before Launch (LOBL) fire and forget class anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) system.
- It has all- weather day and night operational capabilities.
- It can defeat battle tanks with conventional and explosive reactive armour (ERA).
- It can engage targets both in direct hit mode as well as top attack mode.

About Nag Missile

- Nag is a third-generation, fire-and-forget, anti-tank guided missile developed by DRDO to support both mechanized infantry and airborne forces of the Indian Army.

- It is an all-weather condition with day and night capabilities and with a minimum range of 500m and a **maximum range of 4 km.**
- Nag can be **launched from land and air-based platforms.** The land version is currently available for integration on the Nag missile carrier (NAMICA).
- DRDO has developed nag Missiles under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program. The five missiles (P-A-T-N-A) developed under this program are:
  o **Prithvi**: Short-range surface to surface ballistic missile.
  o **Agni**: Ballistic missiles with different ranges, i.e., Agni (I, II, III, IV, V).
  o **Trishul**: Short-range low-level surface to air missile.
  o **Nag**: 3rd generation anti-tank missile.
  o **Akash**: Medium range surface to air missile.

7. IISc finds alternative for single-use plastics

Researchers from the Department of Material Engineering, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru (IISc) have found a way to make a substitute for single-use plastic that can, in principle help mitigate the problem of accumulating plastic waste in the environment.

What is the new material?

- IISc has developed polymers using non-edible oil and cellulose extracted from agricultural stubble.
- These polymers can be moulded into sheets having properties suitable for making bags, cutlery or containers.
- The material so made is bio-degradable, leak-proof and non-toxic.

Key features

- In order to obtain sheets with properties like flexibility suitable for making different articles, the researchers played with the proportions of cellulose to non-edible oil.
- The more cellulose they added, and less non-edible oil, the stiffer was the material, so that it was more suitable to making tumblers and cutlery.
- The greater the proportion of oil, the more flexible was the material and it could be moulded into sheets for making bags.

Why needed?
Ans. Plastic waste menace in India

- According to a report by Central Pollution Control Board of India, for the year 2018-2019, 3.3 million metric tonnes of plastic waste are generated by Indians.

- The bad news is that this may well be an under-estimation of the problem.
- Another alarming statistic is that of all the plastic waste produced in the world, 79% enters the environment.
- Only 9% of all plastic waste is recycled.
- Accumulation of plastic waste is detrimental to the environment and when this waste finds its way into the sea, there can be major harm to aquatic ecosystems, too.

Agricultural stubble

- While plastic waste causes one type of pollution, agricultural stubble burning is responsible for air pollution in several States.
- In Delhi, for example, the air quality index dips to indicate "severe" or "hazardous" level of pollution every winter, and this is due in part to the burning of agricultural stubble in the surrounding regions.

8. Holding transnational corporations accountable

In News
Given the enormous power that transnational corporations (TNCs) wield, questions about their accountability have arisen often. There have been many instances where the misconduct of TNCs has come to light such as the corruption scandal involving Siemens in Germany.

Holding TNCs accountable: Background

- The effort was made at the UN to develop a multilateral code of conduct on TNCs.
- However, due to differences between developed and developing countries, it was abandoned in 1992.
- **Role of BITs:** Aim was to use international law to institutionalise the forces of **economic globalisation, leading to the spread of BITs.**
- **Asymmetry in BITs:** These treaties promised protection to foreign investors under international law by bestowing rights on them and imposing obligations on states.
- This structural asymmetry in BITs, which confer rights on **foreign investors but impose no obligations,** relegated the demand for investor accountability.
- In 2014, the UN Human Rights Council established an open-ended working group with the mandate to elaborate on an international legally binding instrument on TNCs and other businesses concerning human rights.
- Since then, efforts are being made towards developing a treaty and finding ways to make foreign corporations accountable.
- The latest UN report is a step in that direction.

UN report on human rights-compatible international investment agreements

- The UN working group on 'human rights, transnational corporations (TNCs) and other businesses' has published a new report on human rights-compatible international investment agreements.
- It urges states to ensure that their bilateral investment treaties (BITs) are **compatible with international human rights obligations.**
- It emphasises **investor obligations at the international level** i.e., the accountability of TNCs in international law.

Using BITs to hold TNCs accountable

- BITs can be harnessed to hold TNCs accountable under international law.
- The issue of fixing accountability of foreign investors came up in an international law case, Urbaser v. Argentina (2016).
- **Subjecting corporates to international law:** In this case, the tribunal held that corporations can be subjects of international law and are under a duty not to engage in activities that harm or destroy human rights.
- The case played an important role in bringing human rights norms to the fore in BIT disputes.
- It also opened up the **possibility of using BITs to hold TNCs accountable provided** the treaty imposes positive obligations on foreign investors.
- **Recalibrating BITs:** In the last few years, states have started recalibrating their BITs by inserting provisions on investor accountability.
- **Issues with BITs:** However, these employ soft law language and are hortatory.
- They do not impose positive and binding obligations on foreign investors.
- They fall short of creating a framework to hold TNCs accountable under international law.

Takeaways for India

- The recent UN report has important takeaways for India's ongoing reforms in BITs.
- **Best endeavour clauses not enough:** India's new **Model BIT of 2016** contains provisions on investor obligations.
- However, these **exist as best endeavour clauses.** They do not impose a binding obligation on the TNC.
- **Impose positive binding obligations:** India should impose positive and binding obligations on foreign investors, not just for protecting human rights but also for imperative issues such as **promoting public health.**
- The Nigeria-Morocco BIT, which imposes binding obligations on foreign investors such as conducting an environmental impact assessment of their investment, is a good example.

Conclusion

Reforms would help in harnessing BITs to ensure the answerability of foreign investors and creating a binding international legal framework to hold TNCs to account.

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. National Register Of Citizens (NRC), Assam

Background of Assam NRC issue

- Assam is a state in northeastern India, south of the eastern Himalayas along the Brahmaputra and Barak River valleys.

- The state is bordered by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh to the north; Nagaland and Manipur to the east; Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram and Bangladesh to the south; and West Bengal to the west via the Siliguri Corridor, a 22 kilometres wide strip of land that connects the state to the rest of India.

- Assamese is the official and most commonly spoken language of the state, followed by Bengali, which is official in the Barak Valley and Bodo which is official in Bodoland Territorial Region.

- Assam has had unique problems of illegal immigration, and that's why it created a Register of Citizens in 1951 based on 1951 Census data. However it was not maintained afterwards.

- For decades, the presence of migrants, often called "**bahiragat**" or outsiders, has been a loaded issue here. Assam saw waves of migration, first as a colonial province, then as a border state in independent India and then after East Pakistan and Bangladesh in 1971.

National Register of Citizen

- The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is a register of all Indian citizens whose creation is **mandated by the 2003 amendment of the Citizenship Act, 1955**.

- Its purpose is to **document all the legal citizens of India** so that the illegal immigrants can be identified and deported.

- The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is a register containing names of all genuine Indian citizens.

- **At present, only Assam has such a register**. It has been implemented for the state of Assam starting in **2013–2014**. The Government of India plans to implement it for the rest of the country in 2021.

- It was **prepared after the conduct of the Census of 1951** in respect of each village, showing the houses or holdings in a serial order and indicating

against each house or holding the number and names of persons staying therein.

- NRC for Indian citizens in Assam was first created in 1951. The list comprised of those who lived in India on January 26, 1950, or were born in India or had parents who were born in India or had been living in India for at least five years before the January 26, 1950 cut-off.

NRC in other States of India

- Manipur and Tripura were also granted permission to create their own NRCs, but it never materialised. The reason behind the move was to identify Indian citizens in Assam amid "unabated" migration from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).
- The exercise may be extended to other states as well. Nagaland is already creating a similar database known as the **Register of Indigenous Inhabitants (RIIN)**. The Centre is planning to create a **National Population Register (NPR)**, which will contain demographic and biometric details of citizens.
- The issue of its update assumed importance as Assam witnessed large-scale illegal migration from erstwhile East Pakistan and, after 1971, from present-day Bangladesh.
- This led to the **six-year-long Assam movement from 1979 to 1985**, for deporting illegal migrants. The **All-Assam Students' Union (AASU)** led the movement that **demanded the updating of the NRC and the deportation of all illegal migrants** who had entered Assam after 1951.
- The movement culminated in the signing of the **Assam Accord in 1985**. It set **March 25, 1971, as the cut-off date** for the deportation of illegal migrants.

- Since the cut-off date prescribed **under Articles 5 and 6** of the Constitution was July 19, 1949 - to give force to the new date, an amendment was made to the Citizenship Act, 1955, and a new section was introduced. **It was made applicable only to Assam**.
- In 1983, Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act was passed by the Parliament which created a Separate Tribunal process for identifying illegal migrants in Assam. Supreme Court struck it down in 2005 after which Government of India agreed to update the Assam NRC.
- There had been intermittent demands from AASU and other organisations in Assam for updating the NRC, an Assam based NGO filed a petition at the Supreme Court.
- In December 2014, a division bench of the apex court ordered that the NRC be updated in a time-bound manner.
- The **NRC of 1951 and the Electoral Roll of 1971** (up to midnight of 24 March 1971) are together called **Legacy Data**. Persons and their descendants whose names appeared in these documents are certified as Indian citizens.

- The process to update the register began following a Supreme Court order in 2013, with the state's nearly 33 million people having to prove that they were Indian nationals prior to March 24, 1971.
- **The updated final NRC was released on August 31, with over 1.9 million** applicants failing to make it to the list.

Why was NRC updated for Assam?

- In 2013, Assam Public Works and Assam Sanmilita Mahasangha & Ors filed a writ petition before the Supreme Court demanding the deletion of illegal migrants' names from voter lists in Assam.
- **In 2014, the SC ordered the updation of the of NRC**, in accordance with Citizenship Act, 1955 and Citizenship Rules, 2003 in all parts of Assam.
- The process officially started in 2015 and the updated final NRC was released on August 31, with over 1.9 million applicants failing to make it to the NRC list.
- After protests of the exclusion of many Hindus from the list, the home ministry declared that the NRC will be carried out again in Assam.

How does one prove citizenship in Assam?

- In Assam, one of the basic criteria was that the names of applicant's family members should either be in the first NRC prepared in 1951 or in the electoral rolls up to March 24, 1971.
- Other than that, applicants also had the option to present documents such as refugee registration certificate, birth certificate, LIC policy, land and tenancy records, citizenship certificate, passport, government issued licence or certificate, bank/post office accounts, permanent residential certificate, government employment certificate, educational certificate and court records.
- The mammoth counting process went through several phases. First, there was data collection. Most individuals applying for inclusion into the NRC had to prove not only that their ancestors had lived in Assam pre-1971 but also their relationship with the ancestor.
- Then came the verification process. Documents were sent to the original issuing authorities while NRC officials conducted field verification. Once the data was submitted, the applicant's blood relations were plotted on a family tree.

Why is the process so contentious?

- **Bengali Muslims**, the community most often branded as illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, **felt they were put under greater scrutiny** than other groups.

These fears were deepened with the sudden appearance of an "original inhabitants" category in 2017.

- **Prateek Hajela, state coordinator of the National Register of Citizens**, admitted that people internally classified as original inhabitants faced less scrutiny. It was rumoured that no Muslims had been included in this category.
- Then in March 2017, the Gauhati High Court ruled that residency certificates issued by gram panchayats could not be used as a link document connecting people born after 1971 with their ancestors.
- This measure hit married women the hardest. The Supreme Court later overturned this decision and panchayat certificates were allowed, provided they were verified and submitted with additional documentary proof. But only those women categorised as "original inhabitants" and relying on such certificates made it to the first draft of the register, published on December 31, 2017.
- The second draft was published on July 30, 2018. It excluded 2.48 lakh "D" voters and their descendants. D voters or doubtful voters are people who had their voting rights suspended by the Election Commission because their citizenship was suddenly in doubt. The letter "D" was placed next to their names in the electoral rolls. It was reported that even "D" voters who had fought cases and got their names cleared in Foreigners' Tribunals have not been able to shed the tag because the Election Commission's software is not sophisticated enough.

How many people have made it to the NRC so far?

- Of the 3.29 crore people who applied, 2.89 crore people made it to the draft published on July 30, 2018. But over 40.07 lakh were excluded, including army veterans, government employees, families of former presidents and Assam's only woman chief minister. There is no official community-wise or district-wise data. But anecdotal evidence suggests Bengali-origin communities wee overwhelmingly affected. All those left out of the draft were told to make fresh claims to citizenship.
- Over the past year, the NRC officials also accepted objection forms which allowed people to flag the inclusion of "ineligible persons" in the register. On June 26, 1.02 lakh applicants who had made it to the first draft were told they had been included erroneously. They also have prove citizenship all over again.
- The final list will decide the fate of more than 41 lakh people – a population larger than any of the other North Eastern states, nearly as large as Kolkata and roughly half the size of Switzerland.

What happens to the people left out of the final list?

- Those who do not make it to the final list will have to appear before the Foreigners' Tribunals of Assam. These quasi-judicial bodies were originally set up under the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act of 1983.
- The law has since been struck down by the court but the tribunals persist, tasked with determining whether individuals being tried are foreigners and should be deported.

- "Non-inclusion of a person's name in the NRC does not by itself amount to him/her being declared a foreigner," govt has said.
- Such individuals will have the option to present their case before foreigners' tribunals.
- If one loses the case in the tribunal, the person can move the high court and, then, the Supreme Court.
- In the case of Assam, the state government has clarified it will not detain any individual until he/she is declared a foreigner by the foreigners' tribunal.

Foreigners Tribunals in Assam

- Under the provisions of Foreigners Act 1946 and Foreigners (Tribunals) Order 1964, **only Foreigners Tribunals are empowered to declare a person as a foreigner**.
- Tribunals are **quasi-judicial** bodies, to determine if a person staying illegally is a "foreigner" or not.
- Every individual whose name does not figure in NRC can go to appellate authority: Foreigners Tribunals.
- A member can be a retired judicial officer of the Assam Judicial Service, a retired civil servant not below the rank of secretary and additional secretary with judicial experience, or a practicing advocate not below the age of 35 years and with at least seven years of practice.

What is the significance?

- Assam is the only State that had prepared an NRC in 1951. It has also now become the **first State to get the first draft** of its own updated NRC.
- The Register is meant to establish the **credentials of a bona fide citizen as distinguished from a foreigner**.
- This is to **detect Bangladeshi migrants** who may have illegally entered Assam after the midnight of March 24, 1971.
- This cut-off date was originally agreed to in the 1985 Assam Accord.

Is a nationwide NRC different from the Assam one?

- So far, the government has not officially called for the updation of the NRC for all of India, hence how this process will be carried is not clear.
- While in Assam, citizens were asked to submit the proof of citizenship themselves to NRC Seva Kendras set across the state, it is not sure how the same model will be implemented across the entire country.
- Also, the Assam NRC was mandated through a special exception for the state in the Citizenship Act, 2003 and the process was overseen by the Supreme Court. At present, no such guidelines exist for a countrywide updation of the list. If a nationwide NRC is carried out, it will be under the direction of the Union government.
- However, the processes similar to the NRC have begun in many states such as the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants in Nagaland as well as the Centre announced National Population Register (NPR) which will contain demographic as well biometric information of citizens.

Challenges in NRC Assam

- **Flawed Process** - People who found themselves on the first list that was released on January 1, 2018, didn't find their names in the second. Even the family of a former President of India did not mention on the list.
- The parallel processes of NRC, the voters list of the Election Commission, and the Foreigners' Tribunals with the help of the Assam Border Police, have led to utter chaos, as none of these agencies are sharing information with each other.
- Though the draft provides a window for re-verification, due to large number of people being excluded from the list, it will be very difficult to physically verify all of them.
- Since such 'non citizens' can resort to judicial relief to substantiate their citizenship claim, it can lead to overburdening of judiciary which already reels under large number of pending cases.
- There is uncertainty about the future of those left out from the list.
- Expelling them to Bangladesh is not an option since Dhaka has never accepted that they are its citizens or that there is a problem of illegal immigration. In the absence of a formal agreement, India cannot forcibly push the illegal migrants back into Bangladesh.
- Moreover, raising this issue can also jeopardise relations with Dhaka. Such an attempt would not only damage bilateral relations but also sully the country's image internationally.

Way Forward

- India, as a country which follows the ideology of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', should not be hasty in taking decisions that can disenfranchise her citizens – contradicting its centuries-followed values.
- The need of the hour is that Union Government should clearly chart out the course of action regarding the fate of excluded people from final NRC data and political parties should refrain from coloring the entire NRC process through electoral prospects that may snowball in to communal violence.

2. 'Ease of Doing Business' Report stops by World Bank

In News: The World Bank would discontinue the practice of issuing 'Doing Business report' following an investigation reported "data irregularities" in its 2018 and 2020 editions (released in 2017 and 2019, respectively) and possible "ethical matters" involving bank staff.
- It will be working on a new approach to assessing the business and investment climate.

About Ease of Doing Business Report
- The report was introduced in 2003 to provide an assessment of objective measures of business regulations and their enforcement across 190 economies on ten parameters affecting a business through its life cycle.
- Notably, in three reports, released in 2017, 2018 and 2019, India ranked among the top 10 economies showing "the most notable improvement".

About World Bank
- It was created in 1944, as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) along with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
  - The IBRD later became the World Bank.
- It works for sustainable solutions that reduce poverty and build shared prosperity in developing countries.
- Major reports:
  - Ease of Doing Business.
  - Human Capital Index.
  - World Development Report.
- Its **Five development institutions**:
  - **International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)**: provides loans, credits, and grants.
  - **International Development Association (IDA)**: provides low- or no-interest loans to low-income countries.
  - **International Finance Corporation (IFC)**: provides investment, advice, and asset management to companies and governments.
  - **Multilateral Guarantee Agency (MIGA):** insures lenders and investors against political risk such as war.
  - **International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)**: settles investment-disputes between investors and countries.

3. Meeting of G-20 Agriculture Ministers

In News: Agriculture is contributing to the three biggest challenges of the 21st century **– achieving food security, adapting to climate change and mitigating climate change**. Important resources like water, energy and land are depleting rapidly. There is a need for sustainability in agriculture along with increasing production and income simultaneously, adapting to climate change by balancing crop, livestock, fisheries and agroforestry systems, increasing resource efficiency, protecting the environment and maintaining ecosystem services.

Agricultural research
- Has played an important role in tackling the problem of food security, improving the income of farmers and agriculturists and sustainable use of natural resources for the subsistence of the people.
- Research contributes significantly to the three aspects of food security **– availability, access and affordability**.
- Integrated research efforts can develop a package of techniques and methodologies for improving soil productivity, water management for storage, expansion and efficiency.

Efforts by India
- United Nations has accepted the proposal of the Government of India and declared the year 2023 as the International Year of Millets
- Under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, the government is providing income support of Rs.6,000 per year to small farmers. So far, Rs 1.58 lakh crore has been deposited in the bank accounts of more than 11.37 crore farmers under this scheme.
- The 'Per Drop- More Crop' scheme for irrigation and 'Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana' for organic farming is being successfully implemented.
- Implemented the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana to provide insurance cover for the farmers.
- Oilseeds Technology Mission doubled the production of oilseeds in 10 years.
- India has made great progress in pulses production in recent times due to the introduction of new varieties in the seed system.
- Developed and released 17 varieties of different crops which are resistant to biotic and abiotic stresses.
- Developing bio-fortified varieties to meet the nutritional requirement of the people.
- National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture has been launched which promotes integrated farming systems approach in agriculture.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology,Environment

4. Delhi-Mumbai Expressway: World's longest

The Minister for Road Transport and Highways Union Minister Nitin Gadkari concluded the review of the work progress on the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway.

Delhi-Mumbai Expressway

- The ambitious infra project started in the year 2018 is being constructed at a cost of Rs 98,000 crore and is scheduled for completion by March 2023.
- **States:** Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra
- Once ready, the expressway will feature a spur to Noida International Airport and Jawaharlal Nehru Port to Mumbai through a spur in the financial capital.
- It will reduce travel time between certain cities to 12-12.5 hours from 24 hours.
- The project is expected to improve connectivity to economic hubs of India like Jaipur, Ajmer, Kishangarh, Chittorgarh, Kota, Udaipur, Ujjain, Bhopal, Indore, Vadodara, Ahmedabad, and Surat.

Key features of the expressway

- The expressway which is eight-lane access-controlled can be expanded to a 12-lane expressway depending on the traffic volume
- It will boast wayside amenities such as resorts, food courts, restaurants, fuel stations, logistics parks, facilities for truckers
- For accident victims, it will offer a helicopter ambulance service as well as a heliport, which will use drone services for business
- Along the highway, over two million trees and shrubs are planned to be planted
- The highway project is Asia's first and the world's second to include animal overpasses in order to facilitate unrestricted wildlife movement
- Besides, it will also involve two iconic eight-lane tunnels
- The project will result in annual savings of more than 320 million litres of fuel as well as reduce Carbon dioxide emissions by 850 million kg
- Over 12 lakh tonnes of steel will be consumed in the project's construction, which is equivalent to constructing 50 Howrah bridges
- For the project, 80 lakh tonnes of cement will be consumed, which is around 2 percent of the country's annual cement production capacity
- The ambitious Delhi-Mumbai Expressway project has also created job opportunities for thousands of trained civil engineers apart from generating over 50 lakh man-days of work

5. How are Humboldts different from other penguins?

Last week, Mumbai's Byculla Zoo announced the addition of two new Humboldt penguin chicks this year.

Humboldt Penguins

- Humboldt penguins are medium-sized species among at least 17 species.
- The exact number of distinct species is debated, but it is generally agreed that there are between 17 and 19 species.
- The largest, the Emperor penguin, stands at over 4 ft tall while the Little penguin has a maximum height of 1 ft. Humboldt penguins have an average height of just over 2 ft.
- The Humboldt penguin (Spheniscus Humboldt) belongs to a genus that is commonly known as the 'banded' group.'

Relation with the Humboldt Oceanic Current

- Humboldt penguins are endemic to the Pacific coasts of Chile and Peru.
- They are so named because their habitat is located near the Humboldt Current, a large oceanic upwelling characterized by cold waters.

6. Planet Nine

A new study's "treasure map" suggests that a planet several times more massive than Earth could be hiding in our solar system, camouflaged by the bright strip of stars that make up the Milky Way.

Planet 9

- Planet Nine is a hypothetical planet in the outer region of the Solar System.
- Its gravitational effects could explain the unlikely clustering of orbits for a group of extreme trans-Neptunian objects (ETNOs), bodies beyond Neptune that orbit the Sun at distances averaging more than 250 times that of the Earth.
- Based on earlier considerations, this hypothetical super-Earth-sized planet would have had a predicted mass of five to ten times that of the Earth, and an elongated orbit 400 to 800 times as far from the Sun as the Earth.

Curiosity for the ninth Planet

- In August 2006, the International Astronomical Union broke several hearts when it announced that it had reclassified Pluto as a dwarf planet. '

- The decision was based on Pluto's size and the fact that it resides within a zone of other similarly-sized objects.

Is everyone convinced that Planet Nine exists?

- Researchers from across the globe have carried out several studies on Planet Nine and there are several theories about it, including one that stated Planet Nine could in fact be a black hole.
- Another research has argued that the unknown object causing anomalous orbits of the trans-Neptunian objects could be a primordial black hole.
- Yet another study noted that a trans-Neptunian object called 2015 BP519 had an unusual trajectory because it was affected by Planet Nine's strong gravity.

7. EoDB at risk if issue of appointments to tribunals is not resolved

While hearing a challenge to the Tribunal Reforms Act, 2021, the Supreme Court came down heavily on the government of India for vacancies not being filled on time. This could severely impact the ease of doing business in India, said the court.

Background

- The government has lauded the role of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC), for improving India's ranking on the "Ease of Doing Business" index over the last couple of years.
- However, the SC's observation is spot-on as vacancies in the tribunals have slowed down insolvency resolution due to the huge pendency of cases.
- When the SC made its observations, the NCLT had only 30 members against a total strength of 63.

About NCLAT and NCLT

- National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) was constituted under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013 for hearing appeals against the orders of National Company Law Tribunal(s) (NCLT) in 2016.
- NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal to hear and dispose of appeals against any direction issued or decision made or order passed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI).
- It is also the Appellate Tribunal to hear and dispose of appeals against the orders of the National Financial Reporting Authority.

Difference between NCLT AND NCLAT

NCLT	NCLAT

· NCLT is established as per Section 408 of companies act, 2013	· NCLAT is established as per Section 410 of companies act, 2013
· It holds primary jurisdiction on cases of insolvency and bankruptcy	· It holds appellate jurisdictions over the cases judged by NCLT
· NCLT accepts and analyzes the evidence from creditors and debtors	· NCLAT accepts and analyzes the decision made by NCLT
· NCLT collects facts and evidences	· NCLAT analyzes facts and evidences

CJI's reservations over Pendency

- The NCLAT had a sanctioned strength of a chairperson plus 11 members but its functioning strength was of eight members.
- Both the NCLT and NCLAT have been without chairpersons for several months respectively.
- These vacancies are concerning because as of May 31, 13,170 insolvency petitions were pending before benches of the NCLT.
- Of these, 2,785 petitions have been filed by financial creditors and 5,973 by operational creditors.

Basis of these cases

- The financial creditors are facing criticism for taking haircuts as high as 90 per cent against their claims.
- A longer approval period would entail greater value erosion of a corporate debtor which would be an unattractive proposition for any prospective resolution applicant.
- This uncertainty can be cured by a faster approval process by the NCLTs by the creation of more benches and filling up of current vacancies.

Why is the Supreme Court fuming over vacancies?

(a) Covid impact

- The Indian economy is recovering from the adverse effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- During the downturn, financial institutions and banks have suffered higher defaults than usual, impacting the robustness of the system.
- Lending has decreased during this time and can only be encouraged now by shoring up the mechanism under the IBC to inspire confidence in creditors.

(b) Non-compliance by the govt

- The SC had granted time to the government till September 13 to take substantial steps in this regard, which was partially complied with by appointing 18 members.
- The government, however, failed to avoid embarrassment as the CJI expressed his anger at the appointment process which had ignored candidates recommended by the selection committee.

(c) Burden of pendency

- There is a real risk of the court taking matters into its own hands by making appointments itself, or by taking harsher steps like transferring jurisdiction under the IBC to high courts.
- One hopes that the situation is resolved quickly to make strict time-bound insolvency resolutions a reality.

8. NIPUN Bharat

- NIPUN stands for National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat)
- The vision of NIPUN Bharat Mission is to **create an enabling environment** to ensure universal acquisition of **foundational literacy and numeracy**, so that every child achieves the desired learning competencies **in reading, writing and numeracy by the end of Grade 3, by 2026-27**.
- NIPUN Bharat will be implemented by the **Department of School Education and Literacy and a five-tier implementation mechanism** will be set up at the National- State- District- Block- School level in all States and UTs, under the aegis of the centrally sponsored scheme of **Samagra Shiksha**.
- The launch of NIPUN Bharat marks an important step undertaken by the Department of School Education and Literacy, among a series of measures taken for implementation of the National Education Policy 2020.

Samagra Shiksha Abhiyaan (Flagship Scheme), 2019

1. **Ministry of Education**. SDG 4.

2. **Objectives**: Quality education, Learning outcomes, Bridging gaps, Inclusion, Equity, Minimum standards, **Vocationalization**, support Sttes for RTE Act, 2009 and upgrade State CERTs.

3. **Funding**: It is a Centrally **Sponsored** Scheme with 60:40 for States and 90:10 for NE and Himalayan States.

4. **Salient Features**:
   1. Treat school education holistically as a **continuum** from **Pre school to Class 12**.
   2. Inclusion of **senior secondary levels and pre-school levels** in support for School education **for the first time**.
   3. Single and **unified administrative structure** leading to harmonized implementation.
   4. Focus on strengthening **Teacher Education Institutions** like **SCERTs and DIETs**.
   5. **SCERT to be the nodal** institution for in-service and pre-service **teacher training** – will make training dynamic and need-based.
   6. **Library grant** for 1 million schools.
   7. The main emphasis of the Scheme is on **improving quality of school education** by focussing on the **2 T's – Teacher and Technology**.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. With reference to Mega Food Park Scheme, consider the following statements:

1. It is implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
2. The scheme is based on the "Cluster" approach.
3. It envisages a mechanism to link agricultural production to the market.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer : C

Explanation

- **Mega Food Park Scheme** was launched in 2008-09 to give a major boost to the food processing sector by adding value and reducing food wastage at each stage of the supply chain with a particular focus on perishables.
  - The **Ministry of Food Processing Industries** is implementing the Mega Food Park Scheme in the country. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- The Scheme is based on the **"Cluster" approach and envisages creation of state of art support infrastructure** in a well-defined agri/horticultural zone for setting up of modern food processing units in the industrial plots provided in the park with a well-established supply chain. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The **scheme envisages to provide a mechanism to link agricultural production to the market** by bringing together farmers, processors and retailers so as to ensure maximizing value addition, minimizing wastage, increasing farmers income and creating employment opportunities particularly in the rural sector. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

2. Makemake, Eris and Haumea seen in News are:

a. Supermassive black holes
b. Dwarf Planets
c. Asteroids
d. Lunar Craters

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Makemake, Eris and Haumea are dwarf planets along with Pluto and Ceres.
    - Eris, the largest dwarf planet, is only slightly bigger than Pluto.
    - Haumea dwarf planet has an extremely elongated shape. Haumea rotates very rapidly and has the shortest day of all the dwarf planets.
    - Makemake, discovered in 2005, has no known moons
    - Ceres, first spotted by astronomers in 1801, was first called a planet and later an asteroid. In 2006 it was reclassified as a dwarf planet. Ceres is the closest dwarf planet to Earth.

3. State of Finance for Nature is released by which of the following organizations?

- a. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- b. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- c. World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)
- d. The Nature Conservancy

Answer : a

Explanation:

State of Finance for Nature

- The report was jointly produced by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Economic Forum and the Economics of Land Degradation.
- It analyzes the investment flow in nature-based solutions (NbS).
- It also identifies the future investment needed to meet the climate change, biodiversity and land degradation targets (set in three Rio Conventions).
- The NbS refers to sustainable management and use of nature to tackle socio-environmental challenges, which range from disaster risk reduction, climate change and biodiversity loss to food and water security as well as human health.
- NbS creates harmony between people and nature, enables ecological development and represents a holistic, people-centred response to climate change.

4. With reference to India's Desert National Park, which of the following statements are correct?

1. It is spread over two districts.
2. There is no human habitation inside the Park.

3. It is one of the natural habitats of the Great Indian Bustard.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Desert National Park is a national park situated in the Indian state of Rajasthan. This is one of the largest national parks. It is spread over the two districts of Jaisalmer and Barmer.
- The endangered great Indian bustard is found in this national park.
- The given statement that there is no human habitation inside the Desert National Park seems like an extreme statement and hence incorrect.

5. Which of the following is/are the components of National Mission for Sustained Agriculture?

1. Rainfed Area Development (RAD)
2. Sub-Mission on Agroforestry (SMAF)
3. National Bamboo Mission (NBM)
4. Soil Health Management (SHM)
5. Green India Mission (GIM)

Options:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) is one of the major missions of the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).

Components of National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture:

- Soil Health Management (SHM)
- Rainfed Area Development (RAD)
- Sub-Mission on Agroforestry (SMAF)
- National Bamboo Mission (NBM)
- Climate Change and Sustainable Agriculture: Monitoring, Modeling and Networking (CCSAMMN)

Green India Mission:

- The National Mission for a Green India or the commonly called Green India Mission (GIM), is one of the eight Missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).
- It was launched in February, 2014 with the objective to safeguard the biological resources of our nation and associated livelihoods against the peril of adverse climate change and to recognise the vital impact of forestry on ecological sustainability, biodiversity conservation and food-, water- and livelihood-security.
- It aims at protecting, restoring and enhancing India's diminishing forest cover and responding to climate change through adaptation and mitigation measures. It envisages a holistic view of greening that extends beyond tree planting. GIM focusses on multiple ecosystem services such as biodiversity, water, biomass, preserving mangroves, wetlands, critical habitats etc. along with carbon sequestration.

6. Consider the following:

1. Genetically Modified crops
2. Quarantine system
3. Germ warfare

Which of the above methods can be deployed as the Pest Controlling Methods?

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

Answer : D

Explanation

- The most popular methods of containing the pest include the use of **Genetically Modified (GM)** crops and pesticides.

- Natural approaches, including breeding predators such as wasps, to be released into fields when necessary, as well as developing a **"germ warfare"** that isolates diseases to which the caterpillar (armyworm) is prone, are being explored by the scientists.
- A **quarantine system**, under which imports of grains and plants that can host such insects are inspected at shipping ports, airports and land border crossings is the first line of defence taken by the countries across the world. **Hence, option D is correct.**
  - The quarantine system in India is governed by the Plant Quarantine (Regulation of Import into India) Order of 2003, which is notified under the Destructive Insects and Pests Act of 1914.

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. Civil aviation is the fastest growing sector in India, but faces many challenges on different fronts. In this context, discuss the scope of, and challenges faced by civil aviation sector in India. (250 words)

Approach

- In introduction elaborate 1st statement with relevant facts and data.
- In body discuss the challenges faced by civil aviation sector, discuss scope of civil aviation sector in India and suggest ways to improve it.
- In conclusion show its importance while comparing it with other sector.

2Q. What do you understand by ethical governance and examine how is it different from good governance? (150 words)

Approach

- Define good governance and ethical governance with examples.
- Make a comparative analysis of both