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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Russian Diplomats fires by NATO

NATO has withdrew the accreditation of eight Russian officials to the military alliance in response to a rise in malign activities by Moscow.

NATO

- NATO is a military alliance established by the North Atlantic Treaty (also called the Washington Treaty) of April 4, 1949.
- It sought to create a counterweight to Soviet armies stationed in Central and Eastern Europe after World War II.
- Its original members were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- NATO has spread a web of partners, namely Egypt, Israel, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland and Finland.
- After World War II in 1945, Western Europe was economically exhausted and militarily weak, and newly powerful communist parties had arisen in France and Italy.
- By contrast, the Soviet Union had emerged from the war with its armies dominating all the states of central and Eastern Europe.
- By 1948 communists under Moscow's sponsorship had consolidated their control of the governments of those countries and suppressed all non-communist political activity.
- What became known as the Iron Curtain, a term popularized by Winston Churchill, had descended over central and Eastern Europe.

Ideology of NATO

- The NATO ensures that the security of its European member countries is inseparably linked to that of its North American member countries.
- It commits the Allies to democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law, as well as to peaceful resolution of disputes.
- It also provides a unique forum for dialogue and cooperation across the Atlantic.

The Article 5

- The heart of NATO is expressed in Article 5, in which the signatory members agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.

Why in news now?

- The relationship between NATO and Russia is at its lowest point since the end of the Cold War.
- The NATO (rather US) sees their aggressive actions, not least against Ukraine, but also the significant military buildup and violations of important arms control agreements.
- NATO suspended practical cooperation with Russia in 2014 after it annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

2. Intolerance and vandalism in Afghanistan of concern: India

In News:

Recently, there were reports of vandalism in a Sikh place of worship in Kabul. Such reports of intolerance and vandalism in Afghanistan have raised concerns across the world and in India.

UN Security Council Resolution 2593:

- The international community continues to insist that the Taliban should fulfil the goals outlined in the UN Security Council Resolution 2593.
 - It articulates and guides the collective approach of the global community towards Afghanistan.
 - The resolution talks of ensuring that the Afghan territory is not used for terrorist acts, it talks of safe passage of Afghans and foreign nationals.
 - It expects the Taliban to form an inclusive government and foster freedom and diversity.
 - UNSC Resolution 2593 has asked Afghanistan to be shaped like a country that respects minorities and women.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

3. Coal Crisis in India

More than half of the country's 135 coal-fired power plants are running on fumes – as coal stocks run critically low. They have fuel stocks of less than four days, government data shows.

Coal shortage in India

- In a country where 70% of the electricity is generated using coal, this is a major cause for concern as it threatens to derail India's post-pandemic economic recovery.
- Utilities are scrambling to secure coal supplies as inventories hit critical lows after a surge in power demand from industries and sluggish imports due to record global prices push power plants to the brink.

How did the crisis escalate?

- As India's economy picked up after a deadly second wave of Covid-19, demand for power rose sharply.
- Power consumption in the last two months alone jumped by almost 17%, compared to the same period in 2019.
- At the same time global coal prices increased by 40% and India's imports fell to a two-year low.
- India is the world's second largest importer of coal despite also being home to the fourth largest coal reserves in the world.
- Power plants that usually rely on imports are now heavily dependent on Indian coal, adding further pressure to already stretched domestic supplies.

What is the likely impact?

- Experts say importing more coal to make up for domestic shortages is not an option at present.
- India has seen shortages in the past, but what's unprecedented this time is coal is really expensive now.
- Businesses at the end of the day pass on these costs to consumers, so there is an inflationary impact – both direct and indirect that could potentially come from this.
- If the crisis continues, a surge in the cost of electricity will be felt by consumers.

- Retail inflation is already high as everything from oil to food has become more expensive.

Other reasons for this crisis

- In recent years, India's production has lagged as the country tried to reduce its dependence on coal to meet climate targets.
- Prices of power-generation fuels are surging globally as electricity demand rebounds with industrial growth, tightening supplies of coal and liquefied natural gas.
- India is competing against buyers such as China, the world's largest coal consumer, which is under pressure to ramp up imports amid a severe power crunch.
- Rising oil, gas, coal and power prices are feeding inflationary pressures worldwide and slowing the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Challenges posed

- The desire to cut its reliance on heavily polluting coal burning power plants has been a major challenge for the government in recent years.
- The question of how India can achieve a balance between meeting demand for electricity from its almost 1.4bn people has to be answered.

What can the government do?

- Experts advocate a mix of coal and clean sources of energy as a possible long-term solution.
- It's not completely possible to transition and it's never a good strategy to transition 100% to renewables without a backup.
- Long term investment in multiple power sources aside a crisis like the current one can be averted with better planning.
- There is need for closer coordination between Coal India Limited – the largest supplier of coal in the country and other stakeholders.
- For now, the government is working with state-run enterprises to ramp up production and mining to reduce the gap between supply and demand.

Way forward

- This is a global phenomenon, one not specifically restricted to India.
- It is unclear how long the current situation will last.
- With the monsoon on its way out and winter approaching, the demand for power usually falls.
- So, the mismatch between demand and supply may iron out to some extent.

4. Seeding a data revolution in Indian Agriculture

In June this year, two significant documents relating to the Indian agriculture sector were released.

What are the reports about?

- The first is a consultation paper on the India Digital Ecosystem of Agriculture (IDEA) and the second on Indian Agriculture: Ripe for Disruption from a private organisation, Bain and Company.
- Through their work, these reports have depicted the agriculture reforms announced by the union government as a game-changer in the agriculture sector.

Challenges highlighted

The major challenges of the agriculture sector are:

1. Food Sufficiency but Nutrition Deficiency
2. High import of edible oil and oilseeds
3. Yield plateaus
4. Degrading soil, Water stress
5. Inadequate market infra/linkages
6. Unpredictable, volatile prices
7. Post-harvest losses, wastages
8. Lack of crop planning due to information asymmetry

Key takeaway: Way for doubling farmers income

- These reports in short argues that benefiting from the huge investments into the agri-ecosystem, doubling farmers' income targets can be achieved in near future.
- The Indian agriculture sector in future will encompass farm to fork and pave the way for a single national market with a national platform with better connection between producer and consumers.

The forecast

- The Bain report is a data-based prediction on agri-business scenarios, anchored to the agricultural set-up at present and predicting its future trajectories in another 20 years.

- It includes targeting the production of alternative proteins, and food cell-based food/ingredients and initiating ocean farming, etc.
- The report has a 'today forward– future back approach' and predicts a drastic investment opportunity development by 2025.
- The agriculture sector (currently worth \$370 billion), is estimated to receive an additional \$35 billion investment.

The two enabling conditions for such investment opportunities are:

1. Changes in the regulatory framework, especially recent changes in the Farm Acts and
2. Digital disruption

The IDEA of integration

- **Digital disruption:** The blueprint of “digital agriculture” is similar to the digital disruption mentioned in the Bain report.
- **Integration:** Eventually, the farmer and the improvement of farmers' livelihood is the aim of the IDEA concept and it is proposed to happen through tight integration of agri-tech innovation and the agriculture industry.
- **Enabling conditions:** To be precise, the IDEA concept profounds the creation of second enabling conditions (which is described in the Bain report).
- **Openness of data:** The IDEA principles explicitly talk about openness of data, which means open to businesses and farmers, indicating the kind of integration it aims at.
- **Value-added innovative services:** by agri-tech industries and start-ups are an integral part of the IDEA architecture.
- **Data architecture:** The services listed in the document (to be available on the platform) are equally important data for farmers and businesses.

A thread of digital disruption

- The IT industry has opposition to IDEA mainly due to the ethics of creating a Unique Farmer ID based on one's Aadhaar number and also the potential for data misuse.
- Beyond the news coverage about the prospects of achieving the goal of Doubling Farmers Income on which the present government has almost lost its hope.

Issues with these reports

- The Bain report has not been widely discussed – at least in the public domain.

- The assumptions used by authors especially for its 'future back approach', need more or less focusing on widespread food production in controlled environments.
- The emission, energy, and other resource footprints and sustainability issues around these techniques are not adequately studied.

Yet these reports are important

- The report has convincingly demonstrated the business opportunity available in supply chains between farm to APMC mandi and mandi to the customer.
- This can be realised with the support of digital disruption and the latest agriculture reforms.
- Both these reports heavily rely on digital disruption to improve farmers' livelihoods, without discussing how much farmers will be prepared to benefit from the emerging business.

An unconvincing 'how'

- **Digital divide:** The fact is that a majority of small and marginal farmers are not technology-savvy.
- **No capacity building:** That most of them are under-educated for capacity building is ignored amidst these ambitious developments.
- **Unrealistic assumptions:** The Bain report relies on the general assumption that more investments into the agriculture sector will benefit farmers; 'but how' has not been convincingly answered.
- **Overemphasis on technology:** Similarly, how the technology fix will help resolve all the issues of Indian agriculture listed at the beginning of the report is unclear in the IDEA concept.
- **Reluctance by farmers:** These reports ignore the protest of farmers against the reforms without considering it as a barrier or risk factor resulting in a repealing of these new farm laws.

Way ahead: Focus on the farmer

- A data revolution is inevitable in the agriculture sector, given its socio-political complexities.
- However, we cannot just count on technology fixes and agri-business investments for improving farmers' livelihoods.
- There need to be immense efforts to improve the capacities of the farmers in India - at least until the educated young farmers replace the existing under-educated small and medium farmers.

- This capacity building can be done through a mixed approach through FPOs and other farmers' associations where technical support is available for farmers.

Conclusion

- Considering the size of the agriculture sector of the country this is not going to be an easy task but would need a separate program across the country with considerable investment.

5. Government releases GST dues of 40,000 crore to States

In News:

The Centre released 40,000 crore to States and Union Territories.

Details:

- The centre has released the GST dues under the back-to-back loan facility to meet the shortfall in GST compensation cess collections.
- Earlier in July 2021 an amount of ₹75,000 crore was released to the States & UTs with legislature.
- With the current release, the total amount released in the current financial year as back-to-back loan in-lieu of GST compensation has reached ₹1,15,000 crore.
- This release is in addition to normal GST compensation being released every 2 months out of actual cess collection.
- In the 43rd GST Council Meeting held it has been decided by the Central Government that it would borrow 1.59 lakh crore in 2021-22 and release it to States and UTs with Legislature on a back-to-back basis to meet the resource gap due to the short release of compensation on account of the inadequate amount collected in the Compensation Fund.
- The release of 40,000 crore made is funded from borrowings of GoI in 5-year securities.
- It is expected that this release will help the States/UTs in planning their public expenditure among other things, for improving, health infrastructure and taking up infrastructure projects.

6. Industrial Park Ratings System (IPRS) Report:

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has released the Industrial Park Ratings System Report.

- The IPRS pilot exercise was launched in 2018 with an objective of enhancing industrial infrastructure competitiveness and supporting policy development for enabling industrialization across the country.
- The IPRS report is an extension of the India Industrial Land Bank which features more than 4,400 industrial parks in a GIS-enabled database.
- It seeks to help investors identify their preferred location for investment.
- These ratings are assigned on the basis of key existing parameters and infrastructure facilities etc.

Highlights of the report:

- 41 Industrial Parks have been assessed as “Leaders” in the Industrial Park Ratings System Report released by DPIIT.
- 90 Industrial Parks have been rated as under the Challenger category while 185 have been rated as under “Aspirers”.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Data Revolution in Indian agriculture

Context: Recently, a document on “Indian Agriculture: Ripe for Disruption” was released by a private organisation Bain and Company.

Key Takeaways of the report

- The Bain report is a data-based prediction on agri-business scenarios
- It includes targeting the production of alternative proteins, and food cell-based food/ingredients and initiating ocean farming, etc.
- The agriculture sector (currently worth \$370 billion), is estimated to receive an additional \$35 billion investment.
- The two enabling conditions for such investment opportunities are

- Changes in the regulatory framework, especially recent changes in the Farm Acts
- Digital disruption through government initiative of **IDEA - 'India Digital Ecosystem for Agriculture'**.
- The Indian agriculture sector in future will encompass farm to fork and pave the way for a **single national market with a national platform** with better connection between producer and consumers.
 - The report has convincingly demonstrated the **business opportunity available in supply chains** between farm to Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) mandi and mandi to the customer, which can be realised with the support of digital disruption and the latest agriculture reforms.
- The report argues that benefiting from the huge investments into the agri-ecosystem, doubling farmers' income targets can be achieved in near future.

Concerns or Challenges

- The IT industry has opposition to IDEA mainly due to the ethics of creating a Unique Farmer ID based on one's Aadhaar number and also the **potential for data misuse**.
- There is a general assumption that more investments into the agriculture sector will benefit farmers; 'but how' has not been convincingly answered in the report.
- Majority of small and marginal farmers are under-educated and not technology-savvy. However, **capacity building of farmers** is ignored amidst these ambitious developments.
- **Protest of farmers** against the reforms can act as a barrier or risk factor resulting in a repealing of these new farm laws.

Way Forward

- While agreeing on the fact that a **data revolution is inevitable** in the agriculture sector, given its socio-political complexities, we cannot just count on technology fixes and agri-business investments for improving farmers' livelihoods.
- There need to be immense efforts to **improve the capacities of the farmers**, by establishing support systems, through FPOs and other farmers associations.
- Considering the size of the agriculture sector of the country this is not going to be an easy task but would need a **separate programme across the country** with considerable investment.

2. PRIs and Disaster Management

Context: The Panchayati Raj, first adopted by Nagaur in Rajasthan on October 2, 1959, has expanded vastly. There are now 2,60,512 Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) represented by about 31 lakh elected members across India.

The People's Plan Campaign and Vibrant Gram Sabha Dashboard, rolled out this year, aspire to strengthen the Panchayati Raj system by making gram sabhas more vibrant.

- People Plan campaign or “**Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas**” aims to draw up Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) in the country and place them on a website where anyone can see the status of the various government's flagship schemes.
- Vibrant Gram Sabha Dashboard will help in increasing maximum participation from Panchayats through the meeting of Gram Sabha, the Standing Committee meeting of Gram Panchayat, meeting of elected Panchayat public representatives throughout the year.

Crucial Panchayat Raj Institutions(PRI) during Pandemic

- When the traditional **top-down disaster response system was compromised** during the bad months of the pandemic, it was PRIs that played a remarkable role.
- They helped **reduce risks**, responded swiftly and thus helped people recover quickly. The PRIs provided essential leadership at the local level.
- They **performed both regulatory and welfare functions**.
- For instance, during the nationwide lockdown, PRIs set up containment zones, arranged transport, identified buildings for quarantining people and provisioned food for the incoming migrants.
- Moreover, effective implementation of welfare schemes like MGNREGA quickened the pace of recovery while ensuring support to the vulnerable population.
- Regular engagement with frontline workers like ASHA workers and Anganwadi workers through committees **bridged the trust gap** between the community and the officials.
- More recently, PRI's role in mobilising citizens for COVID-19 vaccination is exemplary helping India move towards universal vaccination by end of the year.

What measures can be taken to further improve PRIs role during disasters (like Pandemic)?

The Yokohama strategy, 1994 emphasised that it is important to focus on disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness rather than disaster response alone, to reduce vulnerability. In this respect, certain initiatives can be taken to build the capacity of PRIs.

- **Legal Recognition:** It is crucial to include disaster management chapters in Panchayat Raj Acts and make disaster planning and spending part of Panchayati Raj development plans and local-level committees. This will ensure citizen-centric mapping and planning of resources.
- **Strengthening Capacities:** Conducting regular location-specific training programmes for the community will strengthen individual and institutional capacities. Sharing of best practices, assigning roles to individual members and providing them with the necessary skills can make such programmes more meaningful.
- **Disaster Management Plans:** Since the community is usually the first responder in case of a disaster, community-based disaster management plans would help.
 - These would provide a strategy for resource utilisation and maintenance during a disaster.
 - Such plans should tap the traditional wisdom of local communities which will complement modern practices.
- **Mobilising Funds:** Financial contributions from the community should be encouraged through the establishment of community disaster funds in all gram panchayats.

Conclusion

It is imperative to make disaster resilience an inherent part of the community culture now more than ever.

3. Cooperative and Competitive Federalism

Context: Federalism is a system of government in which states or provinces share power with a national government. The quasi-federal structure of the Indian nation was settled in after the country became free of colonialism and gained independence from the British. This style of federalism is responsible for the introduction of its cooperative as well as competitive variants in the country.

The Constitution of India has created a strong Central government, but at the same time, it has not made the state governments weak and has not reduced them to the level of administrative agencies for the execution of policies of the Central government. Rather, the states have an independent constitutional existence.

Cooperative federalism

The concept of cooperative federalism professes a **horizontal relationship** between the Central as well as the State governments. This essentially means that the legislature at the Union as well as the State levels cooperate to serve the larger public interest.

Such an arrangement, if executed successfully, would be a significant leap in enabling the participation of States in determining national policies.

Usually cooperative federalism is seen in socialist economies where most of the resources are controlled by the government. It is being promoted in India through steps like the formation of NITI aayog, passing of GST etc.

- The essence of co-operative federalism is that the Centre and the State Governments should be guided by the broader national concerns of using the available resources for the benefit of the people.
- Co-operative federalism encourages the Government at different levels to take advantage of a large national market, diverse and rich natural resources and the potential of human capabilities in all parts of the country and from all sections of the society for building a prosperous nation.
- Co-operative federalism makes it possible to raise all the available resources by the Government at different levels in a co-ordinated way and channel them for use for the common good of the people. This requires a harmonious relationship and co-operative spirit between the Centre and the States and among the States themselves.
- Co-operative federalism is intended to ensure a minimum bundle of basic services and a nationally acceptable level of living for all the people of the country.

Competitive federalism

In competitive federalism, the States share a **vertical relationship** with the Central government while competing amongst themselves. Essentially, States individually work towards attracting funds and investment to aid their developmental activities. This leads to the formation of a free market scenario amongst the States wherein they play the role of the sellers and the investors become the buyers.

A type of Competitive federalism is seen in India where states want more funds and perks from the state government for growth. Also states can be involved in International treaties and business deals. They are also trying to woo MNCs to get more FDI.

- Competitive federalism follows the concept bottom-up approach as it will bring the change from the states. It ensures inclusive development in the country.
- It instill a spirit of positive competition and help utilization of successful models of development across many states. Thus, it helps in reducing inter-states and intra-states inequalities through development.
- It ensures that every limb of the whole country is developing. E.g. there are many disparities between various cities in terms of development, competitive sub-federalism reduces such disparities. It helps in instilling sense of responsibility in city administrations, ensuring no one have been left out.
- The policy of one-size-fit-all is replaced with different policies of various states based on the own priorities with in the state. Each state will design their own policies for development of the cities with self-fund. The concept also promotes discipline among the states.

Conclusion:

- Cooperation as well as Competition on a national level is not a small feat to achieve and thus it requires a mutual understanding between the Central and State governments.
- While prosperous States may be able to execute both policies effectively but economically backward States would require the Centre's support to achieve their goals.
- Hence, there is a need for **more cooperative federalism** than competitive federalism in present times where states come together to help each other develop.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

4. River Ranching Programme

The Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, is set to launch the River Ranching Programme in Uttar Pradesh under the Namami Gange Programme.

What is River Ranching?

- River Ranching is a form of aquaculture in which a population of a fish species (such as salmon) is held in captivity for the first stage of their lives.
- They are then released, and later harvested as adults when they return from the sea to their freshwater birthplace to spawn.

Objective

The key objectives of the program are:

- To sustain and conserve the biodiversity in the river.
- Facilitate regular stocking of fingerlings of cultivable carps to enhance productivity
- Increase fish production
- Enhance income and livelihood opportunities to communities' dependent on these resources

Why need such a program?

- River ranching helps in achieving sustainable fisheries, reducing habitat degradation, conserving biodiversity, maximising social-economic benefits and would also remove factors causing pollution.
- In this activity, different species of fish are released in the river, which destroy factors that increase the level of nitrogen.
- These fishes will also aid in maintaining the cleanliness of the river as they feed on organic remnants.

Where is the scheme being launched?

- In Uttar Pradesh, about 15 lakh fish fingerlings of native carp species shall be simultaneously released into the river in 12 districts by the department.
- These districts include Bulandshahr/Hapur, Hardoi, Bijnor, Amroha, Fatehpur, Kanpur, Badayun, Kaushambi, Prayagraj, Mirzapur, Varanasi and Ghazipur.
- Four other states namely Uttarakhand, Orissa, Tripura and Chhattisgarh will also witness the launching of nationwide River Ranching program.

5. National Digital Livestock Mission

The Union Minister of State Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying unveiled the National Digital Livestock Mission Blueprint.

National Digital Livestock Mission

- The NDLM would be a digital platform developed by Dept. of Dairy and Animal Husbandry on the foundation of the existing Information Network for Animal Productivity and Health (INAPH).
- It aims to create a farmer-centric, technology-enabled ecosystem where the farmers are able to realize better income through livestock activities with the right information.
- The bedrock of NDLM will be the unique identification of all livestock, which will be the foundation for all the state and national level programmes including domestic and international trade.
- The farmers will be able to effortlessly access the markets, irrespective of their location or holdings through this digital platform as a wide-range of stakeholders will be connected in this ecosystem.
- This system will also include robust animal breeding systems, nutrition, disease surveillance, disease control programmes and a traceability mechanism for animals and animal products.

Why need such mission?

- The livestock sector has a unique combination of being the backbone of rural livelihood.
- The growth would have been a lot better if there were concerted efforts to harmonise programmes across the country in order to create an ecosystem that is conducive for growth of the sector.
- This has been the main idea behind the deployment of NDLM, keeping the welfare of the farmer at the core.

6. IIT-M study finds contaminants in Cauvery

Context A study done by researchers of the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras(IIT-M) has found that contaminants, including pharmaceutically active

compounds, personal care products, plastics, flame retardants, heavy metals and pesticides, pollute the Cauvery.

Key takeaways

- This highlights the need to regularly monitor the river and its tributaries for pharmaceutical contamination.
- The contamination is particularly serious because India is the second largest pharmaceutical manufacturer.
- **Harmful effects:** Drug compounds, when released into water bodies even in minuscule amounts, can harm human beings and the ecosystem in the long term.
- The study also highlighted the need to assess the long-term impact of such contamination on human health and the ecosystem.

About Cauvery River

- The Cauvery River (Kaveri) is designated as the 'Dakshin Bharat ki Ganga' or 'the Ganga of the South'.
- The Cauvery River rises at Talakaveri on the Brahmagiri range near Cherangala village, Kodagu (Coorg), Karnataka.
- It flows through the states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and descends the Eastern Ghats in a series of great falls.
- Before emptying into the Bay of Bengal south of Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu the river breaks into a large number of distributaries forming a wide delta called the "garden of southern India"
- It is bounded by the Western Ghats on the west, by the Eastern Ghats on the east and the south, and by the ridges separating it from the Krishna basin and Pennar basin on the north.

7. High Ambition Coalition (HAC) for Nature and People

In News:

At a ceremony held between the French and Indian governments, **India officially joined** the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People.

Key points:

- India is the **first of the BRICS bloc** of major emerging economies (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) to join the HAC.

- India's announcement comes in the lead up to a high-level biodiversity meeting, **hosted by China.**

High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, was **initiated at the "One Planet Summit" in Paris** in January 2021.

- **It is co-chaired by Costa Rica and France** and by the **United Kingdom as Ocean co-chair.**

High Ambition Coalition (HAC) is a **group of more than 70 countries** encouraging the adoption of the **global goal to protect 30×30.**

- **HAC champions** a global deal for nature and people with the **central goal of protecting at least 30 percent of world's land and ocean by 2030.**
- **The 30×30 target** is a global target which aims to halt the accelerating loss of species, and protect vital ecosystems that are the source of our economic security.
- HAC members **currently include a mix of countries in the global north and south;** European, Latin American, Africa and Asia countries are among the members.

Why 30×30?

In order to address both the biodiversity crisis and the climate crisis, there is growing scientific research that half of the planet must be kept in a natural state.

- Despite this, experts agree that a scientifically credible and necessary interim goal is **to achieve a minimum of 30% protection by 2030.**
- The scientific data help justify the 30×30 target for biodiversity conservation both at a global level and a regional level.

Significance:

Currently, an estimated **15% of the world's land and 7% of the ocean** are protected.

- In order to achieve the goal of protecting **at least 30% by 2030,** we'll need to double the current land protections and more than quadruple current ocean protections.

- This coalition aims to promote an international agreement to protect at least 30 % of the world's land and ocean by 2030.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. India is facing a severe coal shortage recently. Which of the following is/are the reason for coal shortage?

1. Decreased buying from Coal India
2. Sharp rise in imports of high priced coal
3. Continuous rainfall in coal bearing areas

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Answer : a

- A sharp uptick in power demand as the economy recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic coupled with supply issues have led to the current coal shortage.
- India consumed 124 billion units of power in August 2021 compared to 106 billion units of power in August 2019 which was not impacted by the pandemic.
- Coal fired thermal power plants have also supplied a higher proportion of the increase in demand leading the share of thermal power in India's power mix increasing to 66.4% from 61.9% in 2019.

The key reasons for the supply crunch include:

1. Lower than normal stock accumulation by thermal power plants in the April-June period
2. Continuous rainfall in coal bearing areas in August and September which led to lower production
3. Lower imports coupled with high international prices of coal

2. Consider the following:

1. Sitabhog
2. Mihidana
3. Jaynagarer Moa

These are GI tagged products of which of the following states?

- a. Odisha
- b. Mizoram
- c. West Bengal
- d. Madhya Pradesh

Answer : c

- Odisha Rasagola is a GI tagged product belongs to the state of Odisha.

3. Which of the following is not a Harappan site?

- a. Chanhudaro
- b. Kot Diji
- c. Sohgaurya
- d. Desalpur

Answer: c

Explanation:

Sohgaurya is not a Harappan Site. Sohgaurya copper-plate is a Mauryan record that mentions famine relief efforts. The Sohgaurya copper plate inscription is an Indian copper plate inscription written in Prakrit in the Brahmi script. It was discovered in Sohgaurya, a village on the banks of the Rapti River, in the Gorakhpur District, Uttar Pradesh.

4. In a landmark announcement, the World Health Organization (WHO) has recently endorsed the Mosquirix Vaccine. It is the World's first vaccine for?

- a. Malaria
- b. Dengue
- c. Zika Virus
- d. West Nile virus

Answer : a

Mosquirix

- In a historic move, the World Health Organization (WHO) has recently endorsed the use of the first-ever malaria vaccine RTS, S/AS01 malaria or Mosquirix.
- It recommends the widespread application of the vaccine among children in sub-Saharan Africa and other regions with moderate to high malaria transmission.
- The vaccine was developed by the British drugmaker GlaxoSmithKline (GSK).
- Many vaccines exist against viruses and bacteria but this was the first time that the WHO recommended broad use of a vaccine against a human parasite.

Newer vaccines

- In May this year, a malaria vaccine candidate undergoing phase two trials reported an efficacy of 77 per cent.
- This vaccine, R21/Matrix M, is a modified version of Mosquirix, and has been developed by researchers at the University of Oxford.
- Lead researchers had believed this vaccine was the first to reach WHO's goal of at least 75 per cent efficacy.

5. IN - EUNAVFOR is a Joint Naval Exercise being conducted between India and?

- a. Ecuador
- b. El Salvador
- c. European Union
- d. None of the above

Answer : c

- For the first time, the **Indian Navy** is participating in joint drills, **IN - EUNAVFOR**, with the **European Union Naval Force**.

- The exercise comprising warships from the French, Spanish and Italian navies, being held in the Gulf of Aden.
- EUNAVFOR and the Indian Navy converge on multiple issues including counter piracy operations and protection of vessels deployed under the charter of World Food Programme (UN WFP).
- The two also hold regular interactions through SHADE (Shared Awareness and De-confliction) meetings annually in Bahrain.

It also underscores the shared values as partner navies, in ensuring freedom of seas and commitment to an open, inclusive and rules-based international order.

6. Consider the following statements:

1. Periyar River originates from Sivagiri hills of Western Ghats.
2. Cheruthoni and Perinjankutti are the tributaries of Periyar River.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer :C

Explanation

- The **Periyar River** is the longest river in the state of Kerala with a length of 244 km.
- It is also known as ‘Lifeline of Kerala’ as it is one of the few perennial rivers in the state.
 - A perennial river is a channel that has continuous flow in parts of its stream bed all year round.
- Periyar River originates from **Sivagiri hills of Western Ghats** and flows through the Periyar National Park. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The **main tributaries of Periyar** are Muthirapuzha, Mullayar, **Cheruthoni and Perinjankutti. Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss different types of cybercrimes and measures required to be taken to fight the menace.

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing what do you mean by cybercrimes.
- Discuss various types of Cybercrimes and measures required to tackle them.
- Conclude suitably.

2. How far do you think cooperation, competition and confrontation have shaped the nature of federation in India? Cite some recent examples to validate your answer.

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing the idea of federalism.
- Discuss some recent examples that showcase the features of cooperative, competitive, and confrontational federalism in India.
- Conclude suitably.