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# CURRENT AFFAIRS

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

**1. Pak. law on Kulbhushan Jadhav**

Recently, Pakistan's Parliament passed the International Court of Justice (Review and Reconsideration) Bill, 2021, granting the right of appeal to Kulbhushan Jadhav.

**Background:**

- The International Court of Justice (Review and Reconsideration) Bill, 2021, granted the right of appeal to Kulbhushan Jadhav, former Indian Navy officer on death row on espionage and other charges.
- India expressed misgivings about the law, saying it still does not fulfil the terms laid down by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) which included the provision that India be allowed consular access to Jadhav.

**Kulbhushan Jadhav Case**

**1. When was he Arrested?**

- Kulbhushan Jadhav was arrested in March 2016 and charged with espionage and sabotage against Pakistan's security installations.
- The case received attention as it came soon after the January 2016 Pathankot terror strike that India blamed on Pakistan-based terrorists.

**2. India's arguments at the ICJ**

- In 2017 Jadhav was sentenced to death by a military court in Pakistan for alleged acts of sabotage. India moved the ICJ and pointed out that Pakistan had failed to provide consular access to Jadhav.
- India had argued at the ICJ in 2017 that Jadhav had been denied his rights under the Vienna Convention and Pakistan had "failed to inform" New Delhi about his arrest.
- The law passed by Pakistan's parliament is being presented as proof of Islamabad complying with the ICJ ruling.

**3. What did the ICJ rule?**

- In its observations of 2017, the ICJ asked Pakistan to take "all measures at its disposal" to ensure that Jadhav is not executed pending its final decision.

- It observed that Pakistan had violated Article 36 of the Vienna Convention by not allowing India consular access to Jadhav and by denying his right to a proper legal representation.

### **Arguments Against the Recent Law**

- The law will end up as mere paperwork if Pakistan fails to provide verifiable legal access to Jadhav. India has already expressed its misgivings.
- The law is a repeat of the International Court of Justice (Review and Reconsideration) Ordinance, 2020, that Delhi had rejected as inadequate for meeting the goals stated in the ICJ's observations of 2019.
- India said the ordinance did not "create the machinery of an effective review and reconsideration" as mandated by the ICJ.

### **Conclusion**

- Pakistan predicted that India would return to the ICJ to bring a contempt notice against Pakistan, and that this law would preempt such a move.
- Pakistan is expected to claim that it has not only complied with the ICJ's decision, but has also made it law.
- The bill is also an attempt to resolve a domestic political spat in Pakistan.

## **2. Why no special status to A.P., HC asks Centre**

Recently, the Andhra Pradesh High Court has ordered the Centre to explain why it has not granted Andhra Pradesh Special Category Status (SCS).

### **Special Category Status**

#### **What is Special Category Status to states?**

- A Special Category Status (SCS) is a categorization provided by the Centre to states that confront physical and socioeconomic obstacles such as steep terrains, critical international boundaries, economic and infrastructure backwardness, and non-viable state finances.
- The Indian Constitution has no provision for designating any state as a Special Category Status (SCS) state.

### **Background**

- The concept of special category status was initially proposed in 1969, when the fifth Finance Commission tried to grant preferential treatment to some impoverished states in the form of government support and tax cuts.
- Initially, three states were accorded special status: Assam, Nagaland, and Jammu and Kashmir.
- From 1974-1979, five additional states were added to the special category. Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, and Tripura are among them.
- With the inclusion of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram in 1990, the number of states expanded to ten. Uttarakhand was granted special category status in 2001.

#### **Criteria for special category status:**

- Hilly and difficult terrain
- Low population density or sizeable share of tribal population
- Strategic location along borders with neighbouring countries
- Economic and infrastructural backwardness
- Non-viable nature of state finances

#### **Benefits states confer with special category status:**

- The central government bears 90% of the state spending on all centrally sponsored initiatives and foreign help, while the remaining 10% is handed to the state as a loan at 0% interest.
- Preferential treatment when it comes to receiving central funds.
- Excise duty reduction to encourage industries to the state.
- These states can take advantage of debt-swapping and debt-relief programmes.
- If a special category state has unspent money at the end of a fiscal year, it does not lapse and is carried forward to the next fiscal year.

#### **What does The 14th Finance Commission say about the Special Category status?**

- The recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission were implemented following the dissolution of the Planning Commission and the founding of NITI Aayog.
- After its proposals were implemented in 2015, the 14th Finance Commission effectively removed the idea of special category status.

### **3. India's coal usage under scrutiny**

On the final day of the UN Climate Change Conference held in Glasgow, India promised to “phase down” rather than “phase out” the use of coal.

### **Background:**

- PM presents India’s climate action plan at COP26 in Glasgow
- India promises to cut its emissions to net zero by 2070.
- India is responsible for only 5 percent of global emissions.
- A five-point agenda, naming them ‘Amrit Tatva’ was presented.

### **Coal and Carbon Emissions**

#### **1. Why must dependence on coal be reduced?**

- Carbon emissions are often regarded as the primary cause of global warming.
- Countries have committed to being carbon neutral by various dates.
- Carbon neutrality is attained when countries pay for their carbon emissions by removing an equivalent quantity of carbon from the atmosphere.
- As a result, it is critical to lessen reliance on coal. Coal is the most polluting of the fossil fuels, thus its usage in particular has been scrutinised.

#### **2. Coal Use in India**

- Most of this coal comes from domestic mines which are used to meet over 70% of India’s electricity needs.
- Since FY 2018-19, domestic production has stagnated and has been unable to meet the rising domestic demand, leading to a rise in imports.
- Most of the country’s coal production is limited to Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh with a total production of over 550 million tonnes, contributing to over 75% of the country’s total coal production.

### **Critical Evaluation of Indian Commitment At Glasgow Conference**

#### **1. What is the Promise?**

- The Prime Minister promised to increase non-fossil fuel energy capacity to 500 GW by 2030, meet 50% energy needs from renewable sources and reduce carbon emissions by 1 billion tonnes in a decade.

#### **2. Facts on Indian Carbon Emissions**

- According to World Bank data of 2018, India produces 1.8 metric tonnes of carbon emissions per capita against 15.2 metric tonnes produced by the U.S.

- According to an estimate by the Centre for Science and Environment, the promise to reduce emissions by 1 billion tonnes means that India would need to reduce its carbon output by 22% by 2030.
- India now meets about 12% of its electricity needs from renewable sources, and increasing it to 50% by 2030 will be difficult.

### 3. What are the Concerns in fulfilling the Promise?

- While some renewable energy sources like solar are cheap, they are unreliable because of the intermittency problem. They thus require the use of storage batteries, which adds to the cost.
- It should be noted that many low-income countries with low savings may not even possess the capital required to invest in renewable energy.
- Further, the damage that coal causes to commonly owned resources like the environment is not factored into its cost.

### 4. What are the Concerns for India in phasing out coal?

- India has fought attempts by developed countries to impose a cap on its emissions.
- It has argued that adopting stringent steps to reduce carbon emissions can drag down growth and affect efforts to reduce poverty.
- Per capita carbon emissions of countries such as India and China are still lower than those of many developed countries.
- Critics have pointed out that the focus on ending the use of coal deflects attention from other fossil fuels such as oil and natural gas that are heavily used by developed countries. They also say developed countries have not made good on their promise made at COP15 in Copenhagen to offer \$100 billion every year to developing countries to achieve net zero emissions.

### Challenges in Phasing out Coal

- Coal is the most cost-effective and dependable solution for them to satisfy their expanding energy demands.
- It is quite doubtful that emerging countries such as India and China would limit or even halt their coal usage.
- As an alternative, some leaders have advocated a carbon tax to ensure that the price of coal reflects the cost of the environmental harm it does.
- High carbon prices can cause a significant drop in coal output and have a negative impact on living standards unless alternative energy sources come in to fill the void.
- India also faces structural issues in the power sector that will make the move to sustainable energy more difficult.

## Conclusion:

- India is still rapidly industrialising. As a result, despite good intentions, greenhouse gas emissions from the production of steel, cement, chemicals, and other carbon-intensive commodities will certainly grow.
- India would need to implement more energy-efficient measures, convert to cleaner fuels, and innovate and invest in carbon-capture technology in these sectors.

## 4. Flaws in the system

Recently, there is a controversy over the transfer of judges from Madras High Court.

- The transfer of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee from the Madras High Court to the Meghalaya High Court has given rise to a controversy over the question of judicial transfers.
- Judicial transfers are criticised for being made only for administrative reasons or to have any element of ‘punishment’ behind them.

## Constitution safeguard on the transfer of judges: -

- **Article 222** of the Constitution provides for the transfer of High Court judges, including the Chief Justice.
- It says the President, after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, may transfer a judge from one High Court to any other High Court.
- It also provides for a compensatory allowance to the transferred judge.
- This means that the executive could transfer a judge, but only after consulting the Chief Justice of India.

## What is the Supreme Court’s view on the issue?

### 1. In **Union of India vs. Sankalchand Himatlal Sheth (1977)**

- a. The Supreme Court rejected the idea that High Court judges can be transferred only with their consent.
- b. It reasoned that the transfer of power can be exercised only in public interest.
- c. The President is under an obligation to consult the Chief Justice of India
- d. The Chief Justice of India had the right and duty to elicit and ascertain further facts from the judge concerned or others.

### 2. In **S.P. Gupta vs. President of India (1981) – ‘Judges’ Transfer Case’**

- a. The **First Judges Case** considered the validity of the transfer of two Chief Justices as well as a circular from the Law Minister proposing that additional judges in all High Courts may be asked for their consent to be appointed as permanent judges in any other High Court, and to name three preferences.
- b. This position was overruled in the '**Second Judges Case**' (1993). The opinion of the Chief Justice of India was to have primacy. Since then, appointments have been made by the Collegium.

### What is the current procedure for transfers?

- The 'Second Judges Case' made the opinion of the Chief Justice of India ought to mean the views of a plurality of judges; the concept of a 'Collegium of Judges' came into being.
- In the college era, the proposal for transferring a High Court judge, including a Chief Justice, should be initiated by the Chief Justice of India.
- For transferring a judge other than the Chief Justice, the Chief Justice of India should take the views of the Chief Justice of the court concerned, as well as the Chief Justice of the court to which the transfer is taking place.
- The Chief Justice of India should also take into account the views of one or more Supreme Court judges who are in a position to offer their views in the process of deciding whether a proposed transfer should take place.
- In the case of transfer of a Chief Justice, only the views of one or more knowledgeable Supreme Court judges need to be taken into account.
- The recommendation is sent to the Union Law Minister who should submit the relevant papers to the Prime Minister.
- The Prime Minister then advises the President on approving the transfer.

### Controversies in Judicial Transfers: -

- Transfer orders become controversial when the Bar or sections of the public feel that there is a punitive element behind the decision to move a judge from one High Court to another.
- As a matter of practice, the Supreme Court and the government do not disclose the reason for a transfer.
- Some adverse opinions on a judge's functioning disclosure would impinge on the judge's performance and independence in the court to which he is transferred.
- On the other hand, the absence of a reason sometimes gives rise to speculation whether it was affected because of complaints against the judge.



## 5. Assam to be language lab for country

Assam is seen as the laboratory of the country's language-based education.

### Languages in Assam

- Assamese and Bodo are the official languages of Assam. Besides, Bengali is also the official language of several districts in the Barak Valley.
- Assamese is spoken by the vast majority of the people of Assam.
- Other languages spoken in Assam include Dimaca, Mishing, Karbi, Rabha, Tiwa, and others.
- Small ethnic groups in Assam speak languages such as Tai-Phake, Tai-Aiton, Tai-Khamti, and others.
- Manipuri, Khasi, Garo, Hmar, Kuki, and other languages are spoken in various regions of Assam.

## 6. What are the ramifications of the Biden-Xi summit?

Recently, U.S. President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping held a virtual summit earlier this week touching upon a range of policy concerns in the bilateral space.

### Background:

- The tensions between the United States and China have risen across a range of global and regional issues, including trade, Taiwan, and the South China Sea, as well as technology, particularly 5G.
- The recent summit exchange saw the two Presidents express their positions on each of these issues, but there was no major announcement.
- This implies that the job ahead for both countries will be to manage tensions so that they do not spill over and harm the global economy.

### Core Areas of Tension between US and China:-

#### 1. Trade Disputes: -

- Trade and tariffs are at the top of the agenda of policy matters causing bilateral friction.
- After the globally damaging trade war with China through 2019 and 2020, a dispute that was exacerbated on a vast swathe of Chinese exports, a temporary reprieve came with the Phase One Trade Agreement.

## 2. Taiwan Issue: -

- A second key area of tension is Taiwan's independence.
- The U.S. is holding firm to its long-standing policy on this complex subject, which it acknowledges but does not recognise China's claim to Taiwan under the One China policy.
- In contrast, China will likely respond aggressively to any moves by Western powers seen as strengthening Taiwanese independence, including direct arms sales to Taipei and visits by Western lawmakers to the island territory.

## 3. Technology: -

- A third major bilateral subject that has proved to be contentious is technology.
- On the one hand, the US used the trade war with China to bluntly accuse China of "unfair trade practices for technology and intellectual property", and U.S. policymakers relied on a matrix of export restrictions to target China's semiconductor supply chain in a bid to safeguard critical infrastructure in the telecommunications sector.
- On the other hand, Chinese nationals in the U.S. on allegations of industrial espionage, hint at the deep chasm between the U.S. and Chinese governments on the broad question of technology and surveillance.

## Conclusion:

Although the 2021 U.S.-China virtual summit meeting China reiterates its claim on Taiwan independence," China would have gone some way towards uplifting its prospects. But no quick victory has come out of the latest dialogue.

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

### **7. Nihangs share in the joy of 'farmer brothers'**

Recently, Nihang Sikhs rejoiced when the PM announced the scrapping of the three farm laws.

#### **Details:**

### **Nihang Sikhs:**

- Nihang Sikhs are also known as Sikh warriors.
- The Nihangs are descended from the Khalsa Panth, which was created in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs' ninth guru.
- Many people believe the cult is the "guru di ladli fauj" (the guru's preferred army).
- The Akaal Sena, a band of soldiers commanded by Guru Hargobind, the sixth guru, is said to have given birth to the armed sect.
- The Akaal Sena then became the 10th guru's 'Khalsa Fauj.'
- During the numerous attacks of Afghan invader Ahmed Shah Abdali in the mid-18th century, Nihangs were vital in safeguarding the Sikhs.
- They were also important members of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army.

### **8. Study Reveals Pollution In Water Bodies Around Thermal Power Plant**

Recently, a new study titled "Polluted Power: How Koradi And Khaperkheda Thermal Power Stations Are Impacting The Environment" has been released.

#### **Details:**

- The study discovered severe and widespread contamination in the areas surrounding the Maharashtra State Power Generation Company Koradi and Khaparkheda thermal power facilities.
- The research discovered harmful elements such as mercury, arsenic, aluminium, and lithium in surface and groundwater, as well as extensive pollution of air, water, and soil owing to fly ash.

#### **Additional Information:**

##### **How are Thermal Power Plants Polluting the Water Bodies?**

- Thermal pollution is one of the most serious problems in the local environment.
- When the water in a power plant becomes unusable, it is frequently dumped into a nearby canal.
- Because this effluent is often hotter than the surrounding natural water, it can raise the temperature of the water, which can have a harmful influence on the local ecology.
- Furthermore, this effluent frequently contains dissolved metals and metalloids, which might disrupt the surrounding ecosystem's equilibrium.

## Two-Way Problem Of Water Stress And Power Shortages

- Water is used in thermal power plants in India for cooling and the disposal of fly ash, a byproduct of combustion operations.
- This high water consumption causes two interconnected issues: Thermal power plants have an impact on water security and are, in turn, impacted by water scarcity.

### 9. 'Paxlovid may be huge advancement for all Coronaviruses'

Recently, Pfizer announced encouraging results of an interim analysis of a phase-2/3 trial of the antiviral drug paxlovid.

#### What is Paxlovid?

- Paxlovid is an antiviral medication that is taken orally and inhibits the capacity of SARS-CoV-2 to proliferate in the body.
- Ritonavir is believed to enable Paxlovid to stay in the human body for longer periods of time, allowing the medicine to retain larger concentrations to aid in the fight against the virus.
- The medicine is predicted to lessen the requirement for hospitalisation in COVID-19 patients.
- Paxlovid is being developed to treat non-hospitalized, symptomatic people with COVID-19 who are at high risk of developing severe disease that might lead to hospitalisation or death.
- These drugs will especially matter for those people in whom
  - (i) an immune response to infection or vaccination is not mounted because of immunocompromise and
  - (ii) for infection in the unvaccinated or breakthrough infection in the vaccinated.

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### Conclusion:

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- India would need to implement more energy-efficient measures, convert to cleaner fuels, and innovate and invest in carbon-capture technology in these sectors.

## THE INDIAN EXPRESS

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

#### 1. CCI Market Study on Pharma Sector

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) in a recent report has recommended the creation of a National Digital Drugs Databank and strict enforcement of drug quality standards to boost price competition among generic drugs in India.

#### Key takeaways of the report

- The market for generic drugs is driven by brand competition instead of price competition despite such drugs being functionally and chemically identical.
- Pharmaceuticals including generic drugs account for about 43.2% of out of pocket healthcare expenditure in India and about 62.7% of the total health spending in India.
- The share of online pharmacies stood at 2.8% in 2018, the online pharmacy sector's reach has expanded during the pandemic to 8.8 million households from 3.5 million households prior to the pandemic.

#### About Competition Commission of India (CCI)

- It is a statutory body established in 2003 and became fully functional in 2009.
- It is responsible for enforcing The Competition Act, 2002 throughout India.
  - The Act prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises.
  - The Act regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and Merger and acquisition), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.
- CCI consists of a Chairperson and 6 Members appointed by the Central Government.
  - **Eligibility:** Person should be qualified to be a judge of a High Court, or, has special knowledge of, and professional experience of not less

than fifteen years in international trade, economics, commerce, law, finance.

- It is the duty of the Commission to:
  - eliminate practices having adverse effect on competition
  - promote and sustain competition.
  - protect the interests of consumers.
  - ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.

## 2. The process for repealing a law:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address to the nation on November 19 announced the **repeal of three contentious farm laws**.

He assured farmer groups protesting against these laws that the legislative process for the repeal would be completed in the upcoming Winter Session of the Parliament.

### What were the farm laws that have been repealed?

They are:

1. **The Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020**, which is aimed at allowing trade in agricultural produce outside the existing APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) mandis;
2. **The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020**, which seeks to provide a framework for contract farming;
3. **The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020**, which is aimed at removing commodities such as cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potato from the list of essential commodities.

### What does it mean for a law to be repealed?

- Repealing a law is one of the ways to **nullify a law**. A law is reversed when **Parliament thinks there is no longer a need for the law** to exist.
- Legislation can **also have a “sunset” clause**, a particular date after which they cease to exist.

### How can the government repeal a law?



The government can **repeal the laws in two ways** – it can either **bring a Bill to repeal the three laws** or **promulgate an ordinance** that will have to be subsequently replaced with a Bill within six months.

- For repeal, the **power of Parliament is the same as enacting a law** under the Constitution.
- **Article 245 of the Constitution** which gives Parliament the power to make laws also gives the legislative body the power to repeal them through the Repealing and Amending Act.
- The Act was first passed in 1950 when 72 Acts were repealed.
- A law can be repealed **either in its entirety, in part, or even just to the extent** that it is in contravention of other laws.

**What is the process for repealing a law?**

**Laws can be repealed in two ways** – either through an ordinance, or through legislation.

- **In case an ordinance is used**, it would need to be replaced by a law passed by Parliament within six months.
- If the ordinance lapses because it is not approved by Parliament, the repealed law can be revived.

The government can also **bring legislation to repeal the farm laws**.

- It will have to be **passed by both Houses of Parliament**, and **receive the President's assent** before it comes into effect.
- All three farm laws can be repealed through a single legislation.
- Usually, Bills titled Repealing and Amendment are introduced for this purpose.

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

### **3. The 'Organic' Growth**

Organic Farming is poised to become 75000 cr rupee market by 2025. The Indian organic market is expected to grow at an annual rate of more than 20%. However India's share in the global organic market is just 1%.

In organic food production synthetic inputs (such as fertilizers, pesticides, hormones, feed additives etc.) are avoided and it relies upon crop rotation, crop residues, animal manures, off-farm organic waste, mineral grade rock additives and biological system of nutrient mobilization and plant protection.

Organic food sector primarily aims at cultivating the land and raising crops in such a way that it keeps the soil alive and in good health by use of organic wastes (crop, animal and farm wastes, aquatic wastes) and other biological materials along with beneficial microbes (bio fertilizers) to release nutrients to crops for increased sustainable production in an eco-friendly and pollution-free environment.

### **Strength & Potential of Organic food sector:**

- It relies on traditional techniques such as crop rotation, green manure, compost and biological. It is accomplished by using farm agronomic, biological and mechanical methods in exclusion of all synthetic off farm inputs.
- It protects the long term fertility of soils by maintaining organic Matter levels and encouraging soil biological activity. It often involves vermiculture and vermi-composting too.
- The biological processes, driven by mycorrhiza, allow the natural production of nutrients in soil throughout growing season.
- Crop Rotation supports a wider range of beneficial insects, soil micro-organisms, and hence, protects species from going extinct.
- It improves soil health and fertility. It requires careful use of water resources hence lead to conservation of water.
- Sustainable and environmentally friendly production method, which has particular advantages for small-scale farmers.
- It helps in conserving bio-diversity and nature resources on the farm and in the surrounding area.
- Farmers in India's poorest region are recording record rice yields, organic banana yields, etc.
- India has the 9th largest World's Organic Agricultural Land and the largest number of producers Sikkim has become India's first fully organic state by converting around 75,000 hectares of agricultural land into sustainable cultivation.

However, the emerging threats such as climate change induced global warming; flooding, relative market demand etc. pose serious challenge for the growth & development of organic food sector.

- The cost of cultivation increases as it takes more time and energy to produce than its synthetic input intensive counterpart.

- Specialised farmer training costs, higher processing and inventory holding costs, and increased packaging, logistics and distribution costs add to the price of end products.
- There is low awareness at the producer level on the difference between conventional farming and organic farming.
- At the consumer side there is confusion between natural and organic products and limited understanding of the health benefits of organic food products.
- Growing demand and low supply has further created an inflationary pressure on organic food products; it leads to customer opting for non-organic cheap products.

Hence, it becomes imperative to incentivise farmers for input procurement, value addition including post-harvest infrastructure creation, packaging, branding, publicity, transportation, organic fairs, etc.

Some government initiatives and local level innovations can help achieve these objective in following ways:

- Organic farming schemes such as the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) that promotes “location specific” farming systems, it helps make agriculture sustainable.
- Also, Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) that promotes various organic farming models through adoption of organic village by cluster approach and PGS certification.
- It is critical for companies involved in the organic food business to increase awareness among consumers in non-metro cities.
- Creating community-supported agricultural farms or with “grow your own food” programmes.
- Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North East Region (MOVCD-NER) is a Central Sector Scheme, a sub-mission under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), aims for development of certified organic production in a value chain mode to link growers with consumers and to support the development of entire value chain starting from inputs, seeds, certification, to the creation of facilities for collection, aggregation, processing, marketing and brand building initiative.
- Ministry of Food Processing and Ministry of Women and Child Development jointly initiated the National Organic Food Festival aimed at strengthening organic food produce in the country. It also aimed at encouraging women entrepreneurs in manufacturing organic produce

## **Conclusion:**

Organic food production because of its innovative nature, less harm to environment, and cost effectiveness holds immense potential in the time of rising environmental and global market chain challenges. Hence, organic food sector can be promoted as brand for “local to global” programme besides it will also help to give boost to rural economy and increase farmers income.

#### 4. NCRA astronomers discover rare radio stars

A team of astronomers from the Pune-based National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA-TIFR) have used the upgraded Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (uGMRT) to discover eight stars belonging to a rare category called ‘Main-sequence Radio Pulse’ emitters or MRPs.

##### Implications

- The discovery will aid in the understanding of “exotic” radio stars and stellar magnetospheres.
- The current notion of MRPs as rare objects may not be correct. Rather, they are probably more common but are difficult to detect.
  - The reason for the difficult detection of MRPs was that the radio pulses are visible only at certain times and the phenomenon is mostly observable at low radio frequencies.

##### What are MRPs?

- The MRPs are stars hotter than the Sun with unusually strong magnetic fields, and are much stronger than stellar winds (a continuous flow of gas from a star’s upper atmosphere).

#### 5. Sustainable Urban Services Program for Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA)

##### India and AIIB

- India is the largest beneficiary of AIIB and the bank has so far approved 29 projects for India worth 6.8 billion USD.
- The energy and transport sectors have received the highest amount of AIIB’s financing.

##### About Chennai Metropolitan Area project

- The Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA) is home to around 11 million people and one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in Asia with its growing economic significance in India.
- **Aim:** Strengthening institutions and financing for improving the quality and sustainability of selected urban services in the CMA.
- **Services being covered:** Core urban services, including water resource management, water supply and sewerage, solid waste management.
- **Funds:** The total project cost is 701 million USD out of which AIIB and World Bank each will provide 150 million USD each. Rest of the cost will be borne by the Govt. of Tamil Nadu.

## 6. Indian Ocean Naval Symposium Conclave of Chiefs concluded

The 7<sup>th</sup> edition of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Conclave of Chiefs is being hosted by French Navy at Paris.

### Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)

- It is a voluntary series of **biennial meetings** between the littoral states of the Indian Ocean region.
- **Launched in:** 2008 with India as host.
- **Aim:** to increase maritime security cooperation.
  - To discuss regional maritime issues.
  - To promote friendly relationships among the member states.
- **The chairmanship and location of the Symposium rotates** between the various member states.

### IONS Conclave of Chiefs:

- It is the **decision-making body** at the level of Chiefs of Navies.
- **Aim:** to facilitate a greater degree of maritime cooperation and understanding between the IONS nations.
- **Objective:**
  - **To enable a common understanding of regional maritime issues.**
  - **To facilitate generation of mutually-beneficial maritime security outcomes.**
- **Members:** The countries that touches or lie within Indian Ocean Regions.
  - **South Asian Littorals:** Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and United Kingdom (British Indian Ocean Territory)
  - **West Asian Littorals:** Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates

- **East African Littorals:** France (Reunion), Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, and Tanzania.
- **South East Asian and Australian Littorals:** Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Timor-Leste.
- **Observers:**
  - China, Germany, Italy, Japan, Madagascar, the Netherlands, Russia and Spain.

## 7. Russia Successfully Test Hypersonic Missile

Russia successfully tests ship-based Zircon hypersonic cruise missile in Moscow.

### Zircon Hypersonic missile

- It is a manoeuvring **anti-ship hypersonic cruise** missile developed in Russia.
- It's a two-stage missile that uses solid fuel and a scramjet motor.
- **Strategic Implications:**
  - Unmatchable speed- Zircon had reached a speed of Mach 8 during a test. This makes the Zircon world's fastest missile.
  - Plasma cloud- Rays of radio frequencies get absorbed and makes the missile invisible to radars.

### What is a hypersonic missile?

- It is a missile that are fast, low-flying, and highly manoeuvrable.
- It travels at speeds of Mach 5 i.e., five times faster than the speed of sound.

### Types of hypersonic missiles:

#### Hypersonic cruise missile-

- It reaches the target with the help of a high-speed jet engine.
- It is non-ballistic missile.
  - Ballistic Missiles uses gravitational forces to reach its target.

#### Hypersonic glide missile-

- It is a missile that is launched from a rocket before gliding to a target.
- It surfs on the atmosphere between 40-100km in altitude and reaches its destination by leveraging aerodynamic forces.

### Prelims Practice Questions

**1. The National Generic Document Registration System (NGDRS) portal is launched by which of the following:**

- A Ministry of Rural Development
- B Ministry of Road Transport and Highways
- C Ministry of Labour & Employment
- D Ministry of New & Renewable Energy

Answer : A

Explanation

- Recently, the **Ministry of Rural Development** inaugurated '**Bhumi Samvaad**' - National Workshop on Digital India Land Record Modernisation Programme (DILRMP).
  - The Ministry **also launched the National Generic Document Registration System (NGDRS) portal** and Dashboard.
- The DILRMP was approved by the Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> August, 2008 for modernization of land records system in the country, a modified programme, viz., the National Land Records Modernization Programme (NLRMP), now renamed as Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP), has been formulated.
- **Hence, option A is correct.**

**2. A law enacted by the Parliament can be repealed in which of the following ways?**

1. By passing an ordinance
2. By enacting another legislation to repeal the law
3. Through a resolution adopted by the Lok Sabha

**Options:**

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

Answer: c

### Explanation

- A law can be repealed either in its entirety, in part, or even just to the extent that it is in contravention of other laws.
- The government can bring legislation to repeal the laws. It will have to be passed by both Houses of Parliament, and receive the President's assent before it comes into effect.
- In case an ordinance is used, it would need to be replaced by a law passed by Parliament. If the ordinance lapses because it is not approved by Parliament, the repealed law can be revived. **Hence only statements 1 and 2 are correct.**
- Laws cannot be repealed through a resolution adopted by the Lok Sabha. **Hence statement 3 is incorrect.**

3. Consider the following statements:

1. Indus River Dolphin is the national aquatic animal of India.
2. It is found only in the Indus 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 : D

### Explanation

- Recently, Punjab's wildlife preservation wing has batted for conservation of Indus river dolphins and also their natural habitat.
  - The Indus river dolphin was declared the **State aquatic animal of Punjab** in 2019. **Hence statement 1 is not correct.**
  - The **Ganges river dolphin** is the national aquatic animal of India.
- They can only be found in the lower parts of the Indus River in Pakistan and in River Beas, a tributary of the Indus River in Punjab, India. **Hence statement 2 is not correct.**
- **Conservation Status:**
  - International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN): Endangered.



- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species(CITES): Appendix
- Indian Wildlife (Protection), Act 1972: Schedule I

#### 4. India has funded which of the following projects in Sri Lanka?

1. Northern housing project
2. Jaffna cultural centre
3. Kankesanthurai port revival
4. Mattala airport
5. Palaly civilian airport

#### Options:

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

#### Answer: d

#### Explanation

- India has funded the Northern housing project, Jaffna cultural centre, Palaly civilian airport and Kankesanthurai port revival project in Sri Lanka. **Hence statements 1, 2, 3, 5 are correct.**
- The Mattala airport was funded through high interest **Chinese** commercial loans. **Hence statement 4 is incorrect.**

#### 5. With reference to the Swadeshi Science Movement, consider the following statements:

1. It was started during the Swadeshi movement in 1905.
2. It was started by Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 only

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

Answer : D

Explanation

### Swadeshi Science Movement

- In **1991**, it was decided to launch the Swadeshi Science Movement at all India Level and **named it Vijnana Bharati. Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
  - One of the objectives is to motivate young scientists towards greater creativity and originality.
  - It is **headquartered in New Delhi.**
- The **Swadeshi Science Movement** was **started in the Indian Institute of Science- Bengaluru** by a few eminent scientists under the guidance of **Prof. K I Vasu.**
  - This movement gradually gained momentum and emerged as an organization with national presence. **Hence statement 2 is not correct.**

### 6. Hamas is an extremist group operating in -

- a. Syria
- b. Yemen
- c. Gaza Strip
- d. Iraq

Answer: c

Explanation

- HAMAS was formed in late 1987 at the beginning of the first Palestinian intifada (uprising).
- Its roots are in the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, and it is supported by a robust sociopolitical structure inside the Palestinian territories.
- HAMAS' strength is concentrated in the **Gaza Strip and areas of the West Bank.**
- **Hence option C is correct.**

### **Mains Practice Questions**

**1. Globalisation has been widely debated as a matter of boon or bane for the world. In this context, discuss the ethical challenges posed by the process of globalization.**

#### **Approach**

- Start the answer by briefly discussing the process of globalization.
- Discuss the ethical challenges associated with globalization.
- Conclude Suitably.

**2. Hydrogen is being dubbed as the alternative fuel. However, there are many problems associated with the leveraging of hydrogen technology. Discuss.**

#### **Approach**

- Start the answer by briefly discussing the context of using hydrogen as an alternate fuel.
- Discuss the pros and cons of hydrogen as a source of energy.
- Conclude suitably.