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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Sedition Law: Section 124A of the IPC

Law Minister has informed the Parliament that there is no proposal to scrap sedition from the IPC despite severe remarks by the Supreme Court about the chilling effect of the “colonial law” which suppresses the freedoms of ordinary people.

What does Section 124A of the IPC say?

- The section deals with the offence of sedition, a term that covers speech or writing, or any form of visible representation, which brings the government into hatred or contempt, or excites disaffection towards the government, or attempts to do so.
- It is punishable with three years in prison or a life term.
- “Disaffection”, it says, includes disloyalty and feelings of enmity.
- However, it also says expressing disapproval of government measures or actions, with a view to getting them changed by lawful means, without promoting hatred or disaffection or contempt towards the government will not come under this section.

What is its origin?

- **Colonial past:** Sedition was introduced in the penal code in 1870, a decade after the Indian Penal Code came into force.
- It was a colonial law directed against strong criticism of the British administration.
- **Putting curb on Freedom fighters:** Its most famous victims included Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi.
- Gandhiji called it “the prince among the political sections of the IPC designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen”.

Is it constitutionally valid?

- **Violative of FRs:** Two high courts had found it unconstitutional after Independence, as it violated the freedom of speech and expression.
- **Reasonable restrictions:** The Constitution was amended to include ‘public order’ as one of the ‘reasonable restrictions’ on which free speech could be abridged by law.

- **Kedar Nath Case:** Thereafter, the Supreme Court, in Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar (1962) upheld its validity.

Why the controversy now?

- **Frequent use:** In recent times, the resort to this section is seen as disturbingly frequent.
- **Curbing dissent:** Activists, cartoonists and intellectuals have been arrested under this section, drawing criticism from liberals that it is being used to suppress dissent and silence critics.
- **Misuse for propaganda:** Authorities and the police who invoke this section defend the measure as a necessary step to prevent public disorder and anti-national activities.
- **Irrelevance:** Many of them have also been detained under the National Security Act and UAPA.

What is being debated about it?

- Liberals and rights activists have been demanding the scrapping of Section 124A.
- It is argued that the provision is “overbroad”, i.e., it defines the offence in wide terms threatening the liberty of citizens.
- The Law Commission has also called for a reconsideration of the section.
- It has pointed that Britain abolished it more than a decade ago and raised the question of whether a provision introduced by the British to put down the freedom struggle should continue to be law in India.
- Some argue that a presumption of constitutionality does not apply to pre-constitutional laws as those laws have been made by foreign legislature or bodies.

What has the apex court observed?

- Justice D.Y. Chandrachud had flagged the indiscriminate use of the sedition law against people who aired their grievances about the government’s COVID management.
- People have been charged even for seeking help to gain medical access, equipment, drugs and oxygen cylinders, especially during the second wave of the pandemic.
- Justice U.U. Lalit, in his recent judgment, quashed a sedition case against a person for his alleged remarks about the PM and the Union Government.

Way forward

- The time is long past when the mere criticism of governments was sufficient to constitute sedition.
- The right to utter honest and reasonable criticism is a source of strength to a community rather than a weakness, the CJI has recorded.

2. Delimitation Panel

The National Conference (NC) has, in a letter to the **Jammu and Kashmir Delimitation Commission** (headed by retired Supreme Court Judge Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai), sought details of the agenda of the upcoming meeting with parties from the Union Territory.

Background:

The **Jammu and Kashmir Delimitation Commission** has said that it will base its final report on **the 2011 Census** and will also take into account the topography, difficult terrain, means of communication and convenience available for the ongoing delimitation exercise.

- The commission is mandated to carve out seven additional seats for the 83-member Assembly of the Union Territory (UT).

Delimitation exercise in J&K- a timeline:

1. The **first delimitation exercise**, carving out 25 assembly constituencies in the then state, was carried out by a Delimitation Committee in 1951.
2. **The first full-fledged Delimitation Commission** was formed in 1981 and it submitted its recommendations in 1995 on the basis of 1981 Census. Since then, there has been no delimitation.
3. In 2020, the Delimitation Commission was constituted to carry out the exercise on the basis of 2011 Census, with a mandate to add seven more seats to the Union Territory' and grant reservations to SC and ST communities.
4. Now, the total number of seats in Jammu and Kashmir will be raised to 90 from the previous 83. This is apart from 24 seats which have been reserved for areas of PoK and have to be kept vacant in the Assembly.

What is delimitation and why is it needed?

The **Delimitation Commission for Jammu and Kashmir** was constituted by the **Centre** on March 6 last year to redraw Lok Sabha and assembly constituencies of the union territory in accordance with the provisions of **the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019** and Delimitation Act, 2002, passed by the Centre in August 2019 along with other J&K-specific Bills.

What is Delimitation?

Delimitation literally means the process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a state that has a legislative body.

Who carries out the exercise?

- Delimitation is undertaken by a highly powerful commission. They are formally known as **Delimitation Commission or Boundary Commission**.
- These bodies are so powerful that **its orders have the force of law and they cannot be challenged before any court**.

Composition of the Commission:

According to the Delimitation Commission Act, 2002, **the Delimitation Commission will have three members**: a serving or retired judge of the Supreme Court as the chairperson, and the Chief Election Commissioner or Election Commissioner nominated by the CEC and the State Election Commissioner as ex-officio members.

Constitutional Provisions:

1. Under **Article 82**, the Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after every Census.
2. Under **Article 170**, States also get divided into territorial constituencies as per Delimitation Act after every Census.

3. S-400 and CAATSA

The U.S. State Department spokesperson has said that there will be no “blanket” waiver for India, indicating that even if **S-400 Triumph anti-aircraft missile systems deal** is not sanctioned, other “significant” military and nuclear transactions between India and Russia could still trigger sanctions under **the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)**.

What’s the concern?

There has been unease in Washington ever since 2016 when India announced the deal with Russia, which remains New Delhi’s biggest defence partner.

- Now, the S-400 deal could attract sanctions under **US’ CAATSA law**. The US has already sanctioned China and Turkey over similar purchases.

What is the S-400 air defence missile system? Why does India need it?

The **S-400 Triumph** is a mobile, surface-to-air missile system (SAM) designed by Russia.

- It is the most dangerous operationally deployed modern long-range SAM (MLR SAM) in the world, considered much ahead of the US-developed **Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system (THAAD)**.

What is CAATSA, and how did the S-400 deal fall foul of this Act?

- Countering America’s Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)’s core objective is to counter **Iran, Russia and North Korea through punitive measures**.
- Enacted in 2017.
- Includes sanctions against countries that engage in significant transactions with Russia’s defence and intelligence sectors.

What sanctions will be imposed?

1. prohibition on loans to the sanctioned person.
2. prohibition of Export-Import bank assistance for exports to sanctioned persons.
3. prohibition on procurement by United States Government to procure goods or services from the sanctioned person.

4. denial of visas to persons closely associated with the sanctioned person.

Significance of the deal:

The S-400 decision is a very strong example of how advanced our defence and strategic partnership is, and how strong Indian sovereignty is, to choose its international partners, especially when it comes to issues of national interest and national security.

4. Logistics agreements and their benefits

India is all set to conclude **the bilateral logistics agreement with Russia (the Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS))** soon.

About RELOS:

RELOS will be an important step forward in the military sphere as it aims at fostering interoperability and sharing of logistics. The “long overdue” agreement was to have come up for signing in 2019 but that was put off pending finalisation of its terms.

Does India Have Similar Arrangements With Other Countries?

India has logistical exchange agreements with six other countries, including Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad, partners US, Japan and Australia. Singapore, France and South Korea are the other countries with which similar arrangements have been effected.

What are logistics agreements?

The agreements are administrative arrangements facilitating access to military facilities for exchange of fuel and provisions on mutual agreement simplifying logistical support and increasing operational turnaround of the military when operating away from India.

- India has signed several logistics agreements with all Quad countries, France, Singapore and South Korea beginning with **the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)** with the U.S. in 2016.

Benefits of such logistics agreements:

The Navy has been the biggest beneficiary of these administrative arrangements, signed with several countries, improving operational turnaround and increasing inter-operability on the high seas.

What is LEMOA?

It is a tweaked India-specific version of **the Logistics Support Agreement (LSA)**, which the U.S. has with several countries it has close military to military cooperation. It is also **one of the three foundational agreements** – as referred to by the U.S.

- LEMOA gives access, to both countries, to designated military facilities on either side for the purpose of refuelling and replenishment.

5. G7

G7 has sought to present a united front against Russian aggression toward Ukraine.

- This decision was taken at the recent **G7 meeting**, attended in person by the U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his counterparts from France, Italy, Germany, Japan and Canada.
- This decision comes amid international concern that Russia could invade Ukraine. However, Russia denies planning any attack.

What's the issue?

- Ukraine is at the centre of a crisis in East-West relations as it accuses Russia of amassing tens of thousands of troops in preparation for a possible large-scale military offensive.

- Russia accuses Ukraine and the United States of destabilising behaviour, and has said it needs security guarantees for its own protection.

What is G7?

The G7, originally G8, was set up in 1975 as an informal forum bringing together the leaders of the world's leading industrial nations.

Composition: The summit gathers leaders from the European Union (EU) and the following countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The major purpose of the G-7 is to discuss and deliberate on international economic issues. It sometimes acts in concert to help resolve other global problems, with a special focus on economic issues.

How did G7 become G8?

- Russia was formally inducted as a member in the group in 1998, which led G7 to become G8.
- However, Russian President Vladimir Putin's condemnable act of moving Russian troops into eastern Ukraine and conquering Crimea in 2014 drew heavy criticism from the other G8 nations.
- The other nations of the group decided to suspend Russia from the G8 as a consequence of its actions and the group became G7 again in 2014.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

6. 5G Network and Aviation Safety

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has issued directives to create a framework as well as gather more information about the potential effects of 5G on crucial aviation safety equipment.

What is 5G technology?

- 5G or fifth generation is the latest upgrade in the long-term evolution (LTE) mobile broadband networks.
- It mainly works in 3 bands, namely low, mid and high-frequency spectrum – all of which have their own uses as well as limitations.

Three bands of 5G

- The **low band spectrum** has shown great promise in terms of coverage and speed of internet and data exchange, the maximum speed is limited to 100 Mbps (Megabits per second).
- This means that while telcos can use and install it for commercial cellphones users who may not have specific demands for very high-speed internet, the low band spectrum may not be optimal for specialised needs of the industry.
- The **mid-band spectrum**, on the other hand, offers higher speeds compared to the low band but has limitations in terms of coverage area and penetration of signals.
- Telcos and companies, which have taken the lead on 5G, have indicated that this band may be used by industries and specialised factory units for building captive networks that can be moulded into the needs of that particular industry.
- The **high-band spectrum** offers the highest speed of all the three bands, but has extremely limited coverage and signal penetration strength.
- Internet speeds in the high-band spectrum of 5G have been tested to be as high as 20 Gbps (gigabits per second), while, in most cases, the maximum internet data speed in 4G has been recorded at 1 Gbps.

What is the issue?

- There is a threat of potential radar altimeter interference from 5G cellular in the 3700 MHz-3800 MHz frequency or the C-band.
- The 3700-4200 MHz band is close to the 4200 MHz-4400 MHz range used by aircraft radio altimeters.

Potential impacts

- Operations by aircraft including large jets could be limited or prohibited from using certain landing and navigation systems in places where there is scope for potential interference from new 5G cellular networks.
- The restrictions could be severe for smaller aircraft and helicopters.
- Overall, these could result in flight cancellations, delays or diversions in 46 places where these towers are, according to an aviation report.

What is the aircraft equipment that can be affected?

- The radio altimeter measures height (not altitude) of the aircraft above the surface immediately below the plane. It transmits a radio signal directly below.
- There are various other systems that depend on inputs from the radio altimeter – for example, predictive wind shear, ground proximity warning system, traffic collision avoidance system, and auto land.
- These effects are only when the aircraft is close to the ground, i.e. up to 2,500 ft above ground level (depending on the aircraft make).
- Any disturbance to internal radio altimeter readings caused by 5G or other equipment transmitting in frequency bands close to it can result in disastrous effects on crucial systems during approach/landing.

Impact of mobile phones

- 5G devices can interfere with aircraft altitude instruments and recommended that they should be turned off (or put to flight mode) during flight.
- Experts believe that electrical interference from a mobile phone could have been a factor in the crash of a small aircraft.
- The navigation system of the small aircraft could be disrupted by mobile phone signals.
- But up until now, there has been no evidence of a mobile phone having caused a crash.

What about the implications for India?

- Pilots in India are aware of the implications of 5G in the country.
- However, in India, 5G could be rolled out in the 3.2 GHz-3.6 GHz band, which may not have the potential to interfere with aircraft operations.

7. Chaperone Proteins

Chaperones are a functionally related group of proteins assisting protein folding in the cell under physiological and stress conditions.

What are Chaperones?

- DNA is a linear chain of nucleotides, portions of which are faithfully transcribed into linear messenger RNA.

- The message in this RNA is translated into strings of amino acids – proteins.
- Proteins need to take a precise three-dimensional shape to become functional entities.
- This protein folding does not happen all by itself, at least most of the time.
- A special bunch of proteins called molecular chaperones assist in correctly folding the protein.

Functions of chaperone proteins

- In biological systems, Chaperones play crucial roles.
- Many molecular chaperones belong to the class of “heat shock” proteins (or stress-response proteins).
- This is because whenever an organism is subjected to elevated temperatures – a heat shock – proteins in the system begin to lose their native shapes, and chaperones are produced in large quantities to restore order.

General need of chaperones

Chaperones are needed under physiological conditions too, for normal cellular function since misfolding of proteins can cause a number of diseases.

- Alpha-synuclein protein, present in neurons, is wrongly folded in Parkinson’s disease.
- Brains of Alzheimer’s patients have plaques formed from aggregates of amyloid beta-peptide.
- This accumulation of amyloid fibrils is toxic, leading to widespread destruction of neurons – a ‘neurodegenerative’ disorder.
- Aberrant folding of crystallins of the eye lens leads to cataracts.

Types of Chaperones

- Major chaperones in humans include HSP70, HSC70 and HSP90: the numbers express the size of the proteins in kilodaltons.
- In normal cells 1%–2% of all proteins present are heat shock proteins.
- This number rises threefold during stressful conditions.

HSC70: The molecular thermometer

- HSC70 appears to be more like a molecular thermometer, with an ability to sense cold temperatures.
- It is induced by heat, whereas HSP70 is always present at high levels in normal cells.
- This knowledge comes from the study of an intriguing set of disorders, exemplified by Familial Cold Autoinflammatory Syndrome (FCAS).

HSC70 and HSP90: Role in Cancer

- Cancer cells divide at a break-neck pace, and heat shock proteins are very important in maintaining the stressful cancerous state.
- An overabundance of heat shock proteins in cancer cells is an indicator of a poor prognosis. Cancerous cells accumulate mutations in proteins that would normally suppress tumours.
- HSP70 and HSP90 play the roles of villains, as they continue to fold the mutated proteins, thus allowing tumor progression.

8. Buxa Tiger Reserve

In a major success for tiger conservation, a photograph of a tiger was captured in a camera trap in West Bengal's Buxa Tiger Reserve since 1998.

Buxa Tiger Reserve

- Buxa Tiger Reserve is a tiger reserve in northern West Bengal, India, covering an area of 760 km² (290 sq mi).
- In altitude, it ranges from 60 m in the Gangetic Plains to 1,750 m bordering the Himalayas in the north.
- Its northern boundary runs along the international border with Bhutan.
- The Sinchula hill range lies all along the northern side of BTR and the eastern boundary touches that of the Assam state.

Key features of BTR

- It is the easternmost extension of extreme bio-diverse North-East India and represents highly endemic Indo-Malayan region.
- The fragile "Terai Eco-System" constitutes a part of this reserve.
- The Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary of Bhutan is contiguous to the north of BTR.
- It serves as an international corridor for Asian elephant migration between India and Bhutan.

9. Minimum support price (MSP)

BJP MP Varun Gandhi has introduced a **private bill for Minimum Support Price of crops** in Parliament.

Overview of The farmers right to guaranteed minimum support price realization of agri-produce Bill, 2021:

1. It seeks to legally guarantee of MSP with financial outlay of Rs 1 lakh crore.
2. It aims to provide legally guaranteed minimum support price (MSP) for 22 crops that should be set at a profit margin of 50 per cent over the comprehensive cost of production.
3. Any farmer realising a price less than the above declared MSP shall be entitled to a compensation equal to the difference in value between price realised and the guaranteed MSP.
4. It also proposes that payments should be made directly into the accounts of farmers within two days of the transaction.

Significance:

The declaration of guaranteed MSP to farmers shall result in improved farm realization for potentially 93 million agricultural households, leading to a resurgence in the rural economy.

What is MSP?

MSP is the rate at which the government buys grains from farmers. Currently, it fixes MSPs for 23 crops grown in both Kharif and Rabi seasons.

How is it calculated?

The MSP is the rate at which the government purchases crops from farmers, and is **based on a calculation of at least one-and-a-half times the cost of production incurred by the farmers.**

- **The Union Budget for 2018-19** had announced that MSP would be kept at levels of 1.5 the cost of production.

- The MSP is fixed twice a year on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), which is a statutory body and submits separate reports recommending prices for kharif and rabi seasons.

Which production costs are taken in fixing the MSPs?

The CACP considers both 'A2+FL' and 'C2' costs while recommending MSP.

1. **A2** costs cover all paid-out expenses, both in cash and kind, incurred by farmers on seeds, fertilisers, chemicals, hired labour, fuel and irrigation, among others.
2. **A2+FL** covers actual paid-out costs plus an imputed value of unpaid family labour.
3. The **C2** costs account for the rentals and interest forgone on owned land and fixed capital assets respectively, on top of A2+FL.

The limitations of MSP:

1. The major problem with the MSP is lack of government machinery for procurement for all crops except wheat and rice, which the Food Corporation of India actively procures under the PDS.
2. As state governments procure the last mile grain, the farmers of states where the grain is procured completely by the government benefit more while those in states that procure less are often affected.
3. The MSP-based procurement system is also dependent on middlemen, commission agents and APMC officials, which smaller farmers find difficult to get access to.

What is the rationale behind the demand for legalisation of MSP?

Farmers receive less than MSP: In most crops grown across much of India, the prices received by farmers, especially during harvest time, are well below the officially-declared MSPs. And since MSPs have no statutory backing, they cannot demand these as a matter of right.

Limited procurement by the Govt: Also, the actual procurement at MSP by the Govt. is confined to only about a third of wheat and rice crops (of which half is bought in Punjab and Haryana alone), and 10%-20% of select pulses and oilseeds. According to **the Shanta Kumar Committee's 2015 report**, only 6% of the farm households sell wheat and rice to the government at the MSP rates.

What are the challenges with the legalisation of MSP?

1. **Statutory MSP is unsustainable:** A policy paper by NITI Aayog's agricultural economist Ramesh Chand argued against legalising MSP. It reasoned that any fixed pre-determined price will push away private traders whenever production is more than demand, and there is a price slump in the market. This, in turn, will lead to government de-facto becoming the primary buyer of most farm produce for which MSP is declared, which is unsustainable.
2. **Huge scope for corruption and recycling/leakage** of wheat and rice, from godowns, ration shops or in transit.
3. **Disposal problems:** While cereals and pulses can be sold through the public distribution system, disposal becomes complicated in the case of niger seed, sesamum or safflower.
4. **Inflation:** Higher procurement cost would mean increase in prices of foodgrains, leading to inflation, which would eventually affect the poor.
5. **It will also impact India's farm exports**, if the MSP is higher than the prevailing rates in the international market. Farm exports account for 11% of the total exports of commodities.
6. With a legally guaranteed higher MSP, India will face stiff **opposition at the WTO**. The US had successfully won a case against China at the WTO in 2019 which was concerned with China's domestic support to agriculture in the form of Market Price Support (MPS).
7. **It would lead to a huge burden on the exchequer**, since the government would have to procure all marketable surplus in the absence of private participation.
8. **Demands from other sectors:** If the Centre makes a law to guarantee 100% procurement in all the 23 crops where MSP is announced, farmers cultivating fruits and vegetables, spices, and other crops will also demand the same.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Governor's Role in State Universities

A controversy has erupted in Kerala over the reappointment of a person as the Vice-Chancellor of Kannur University, with Governor saying he approved the decision against his "better judgment" as Chancellor.

Role of Governors in State Universities

- In most cases, the Governor of the state is the ex-officio chancellor of the universities in that state.
- Its powers and functions as the Chancellor are laid out in the statutes that govern the universities under a particular state government.
- Their role in appointing the Vice-Chancellors has often triggered disputes with the political executive.

A disputed case

- In Kerala's case, the Governor's official portal asserts that while as Governor he functions with the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.
- While acting as Chancellor he acts independently of the Council of Ministers and takes his own decisions on all University matters.
- In marked contrast, the website of Rajasthan's Raj Bhawan states that the "Governor appoints the Vice-Chancellor on the advice/ in consultation with the State Government".

What about Central Universities?

- Under the Central Universities Act, 2009, and other statutes, the President of India shall be the Visitor of a central university.
- With their role limited to presiding over convocations, Chancellors in central universities are titular heads, who are appointed by the President in his capacity as Visitor.
- The VCs too are appointed by the Visitor from panels of names picked by search and selection committees formed by the Union government.

- The Act adds that the President, as Visitor, shall have the right to authorize inspections of academic and non-academic aspects of the universities and also to institute inquiries.

2. WHO and Omicron

The WHO has said The Omicron coronavirus variant is more transmissible than the Delta strain.

- It also reduces vaccine efficacy but causes less severe symptoms according to early data.
- Faster transmission was noted in South Africa, where Delta is less prevalent, and in Britain, where Delta is the dominant strain.

About Omicron

- It is a variant of Coronavirus detected first in South Africa.
- This variant has been detected at faster rates than previous surges in infection, suggesting that this variant may have a growth advantage.
- WHO also noted current PCR tests continue to successfully detect the variant.
- While medical experts warned against any overreaction before the variant was better understood, nations have raced to halt air travel, markets fell sharply and scientists held emergency meetings to weigh the exact risks

3. United Nations grants observer status to International Solar Alliance

United Nations granted Observer status to International Solar Alliance.

- This is going to give impetus to “ One Sun One world one grid “
- This will help in bringing equitable energy solutions to the world.
- Help towards achieving the goal of net-zero carbon emissions through global co-operations.

What is ISA?

- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is an alliance of 121 countries initiated by India, most of them being sunshine countries, which lie either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.
- The primary objective of the alliance is to work for efficient consumption of solar energy to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

- The alliance is a treaty-based inter-governmental organization. Countries that do not fall within the Tropics can join the alliance and enjoy all benefits as other members, with the exception of voting rights.
- The initiative was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Paris Climate Summit, and a meeting of member countries ahead of the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris in November 2015.
- The framework agreement of the International Solar Alliance opened for signatures in Marrakech, Morocco in November 2016, and 200 countries have joined.
- The ISA is headquartered in Gurugram.
- The focus is on solar power utilization. The launching of such an alliance in Paris also sends a strong signal to the global communities about the sincerity of the developing nations towards their concern about climate change and to switch to a low-carbon growth path.

'One Sun One World One Grid' (OSOWOG) initiative proposed by India

- Proposed by India to set up a framework for facilitating global cooperation which aims at building a global ecosystem of interconnected renewable energy resources that can be easily shared
- Envisions building and scaling inter-regional energy grids to share solar energy across the globe, leveraging the differences of time zones, seasons, resources, and prices between countries and regions
- Help decarbonise energy production, which is today the largest source of global greenhouse gas emissions.
- With India's Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, the World Bank and the ISA signing a tripartite agreement on OSOWOG, the initiative could be the world's most important renewables catalyst. It can unlock unprecedented economies of scale in energy generation and transmission.
- Rigorous assessments and modelling have confirmed the initiative's technical and economic viability, building a strong business case.
- Its commercial feasibility has been further augmented by multilateral development banks such as World Bank, which are helping create markets by driving down costs of solar power.

4. John Rawl's Two Principles of Justice

John Rawls was a highly influential American liberal political philosopher of the last century.

- The Two Principles of Justice in his 1971 classic, A Theory of Justice, forms the singular-most operative facet of Rawls' doctrine of justice, which he termed justice as fairness.
- This theory of Justice has radically redefined the philosophical debates on achieving greater economic redistribution.
- The other concepts elaborated in the book – those of the basic structure of a well-ordered society, the original position, the veil of ignorance and primary goods – are building blocks of the overall edifice of justice

What is John Rawl's Two Principles of Justice?

- **Equality Principle:** The first of Rawls' two principles says that every citizen has the same claim to a scheme of equal basic liberties, which must also be compatible with those of every other citizen.
 - Rawls enumerates an extensive list of basic civil and political rights, including a person's freedom of conscience, expression and association; the right to a basic income; and the right to exercise the franchise
- **Difference Principle:** The second of Rawls' two principles grapples with the underlying inequalities of social and economic institutions. Rawls posits that in order to be morally defensible, these institutions must satisfy two conditions.
 - First, they must guarantee fair equality of opportunities for competition to positions of public office and employment.
 - Second, social and economic inequalities must be arranged in a manner that they work to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society.

What is the significance of Two Principles of Justice?

- The political significance of Rawls' two principles of justice comes from the primacy he assigns to their different components.
- Between them, the first principle is accorded absolute priority over the second. That is to say, the primacy of the **equal basic liberties of citizens is non-negotiable in a democratic society.**
- The entitlement of each to the various liberties is as critical as they are universal and non-discriminatory.
- Within the second principle, the first part takes precedence over the second. In other words, public institutions could not appear legitimate in the eyes of citizens unless everybody could reasonably expect to enjoy the fruits of fair equality of opportunities.
- Rawls reasoned that the two principles of justice would be fair because these are precisely those that would be chosen impartially by rational, free and

equal citizens, had they no knowledge of their own individual or social circumstances in life.

Conclusion

Rawl's Theory of Justice has greater support & acceptance than a conception of justice that prioritised the maximisation of overall well-being or happiness, but overlooked differences in how benefits are distributed and burdens imposed on particular individuals.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

5. Why crypto currency legislations needs careful consideration

The government has decided to introduce a bill that seeks to prohibit all private cryptocurrencies in India.

Background of the bill

- In 2018, the three-judge bench of the Supreme Court **set aside the RBI circular** that prevented crypto exchanges from dealing with the formal financial system **on grounds of proportionality**.
- **Purpose of the bill:** The current bill now attempts to define the rules of the game so that the RBI, tax authorities, SEBI and other agencies have much **better legal guidance** in deciding the course of action with respect to VCs in their respective domains.
- The rules can, therefore, range from a ban to controlled interaction with the formal financial system.

Issues involving cryptos

- Issues involving cryptos can be seen at **three levels**, each of which is equally important.
- The first is its **impact on sovereignty**.
- The second is its **interaction with financial markets**.
- Third is the **value proposition** that the entire concept of crypto brings to the economic debate.

- **Incorporation of price stability mechanism:** Some of the variants of cryptos such as the stable coin clearly indicate that these are attempts to create systems of money that incorporate **features of price stability** that imply a parallel monetary system.
- **Diluting the sovereign function of money creation:** Unrestricted co-opting of VC clearly dilutes the sovereign function of **money creation, clearly impacting the revenues of RBI.**
- Concerns pertaining to money laundering, terrorist threats and narco-trading also come under this category given the high value and anonymity offered by cryptocurrencies.

Challenges in cryptocurrencies interaction with the formal system

- As of now cryptos have been **recognised as assets or commodities** and as a medium of exchange. Their role as units of account or legal tender is rather limited.
- They may offer **a store of value** given their short supply. From a banking point of view, certain issues do arise.
- Since VCs are **not legal tenders**, they cannot be used in the discharge of debt.
- Thus, banks cannot accept VCs to close a loan account.
- Second, can banks lend in fiat by accepting VCs as collateral assuming the VC is an asset?
- **Incompatible with the fractional system of banking:** At a deeper level, the very idea of VCs and the way they are designed are **incompatible with the fractional system of banking.**
- The fluctuations in interbank liquidity require that **money supply adjusts to system requirements.**
- If money supply **undergoes compositional change** in favour of VCs, this ability will be curtailed thus accentuating the crisis.
- In financial markets, crypto such as ICOs bring another set of issues.
- The ICO is a creature that disrupts the very concept of limited liability in corporate finance.
- ICOs are, at times, designed in such a way that the beneficial owner identity is concealed.
- SEBI is yet to convey a position on various issues surrounding this idea.
- **Issues with making VCs medium of exchange:** VCs have emerged as a medium of exchange and many countries have permitted VC ATMs.
- But how does this proposition fare given that considerable advances have been made in the **payment systems domain in India.**
- Is it worthwhile that **additional competition is introduced** in a market that is hyper-competitive?
- It will have impact on existing investments in mobile payment and UPI technology.

- **Impact on poor states:** It is well known that the Indian population exhibits significant **behavioural divergences in their savings and credit behaviour** across regions.
- Such wide behavioural changes have profound implications on bank strategies and product designs.
- In the past, there have been several instances of states having low per capita income being **more prone to chit fund investments** that have negatively impacted the savings of many poor households.
- The **issue of consumer protection needs to be addressed** and the current laws may have to be reviewed considering this innovation.

Conclusion

The bill must meet many important objectives. While there are obvious concerns of money laundering and benami transactions, there are equal concerns with respect to company laws, payment systems and banking, securities and other commercial laws.

6. Bank Deposit Insurance Programme

The PM has addressed depositors during a programme titled 'Depositors First: Guaranteed Time-bound Deposit Insurance Payment up to ₹5 Lakh'.

Deposit Insurance Programme

- The bank savings are insured under the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) Act providing full coverage to around 98 per cent of bank accounts.
- Earlier, account holders had to wait for years till the liquidation or restructuring of a distressed lender to get their deposits that are insured against default.
- Last year, the government raised the insurance amount to Rs 5 lakh from Rs 1 lakh.
- Prior to that, the DICGC had revised the deposit insurance cover to Rs 1 lakh on May 1, 1993 – raising it from Rs 30,000, which had been the cover from 1980 onward.

What are new changes?

- Earlier, out of the amount deposited in the bank, only Rs 50,000 was guaranteed, which was then raised to Rs 1 lakh.
- Understanding the concern of the poor, understanding the concern of the middle class, we increased this amount to Rs 5 lakh.
- If a bank is weak or is even about to go bankrupt, depositors will get their money of up to Rs five lakhs within 90 days.

Significance of the scheme

- Earlier account holders could not access their own money for up to 8-10 years after financial stress at banks.
- The new changes would give confidence to depositors and strengthen the banking and financial system.
- Now, depositors can get insurance money within 90 days, without waiting for the eventual liquidation of the distressed banks.

7. Bank deposit insurance programme

The Central government has highlighted the significance of increase in bank deposit insurance cover, in case of problems occurring such as closure, from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh. PM Modi is to address the nation on Bank Deposit Insurance.

Background:

Earlier, there used to be a bank deposit insurance cover of Rs 1 lakh for the deposit of the same amount or more under the '**Deposit Insurance Credit Guarantee Scheme**'.

What is deposit insurance? How is it regulated in India?

- Deposit insurance is providing insurance protection to the depositor's money by receiving a premium.
- The government has set up Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) under RBI to protect depositors if a bank fails.
- DICGC charges 10 paise per ₹100 of deposits held by a bank. The premium paid by the insured banks to the Corporation is paid by the banks and is not to be passed on to depositors.

- DICGC last revised the deposit insurance cover to ₹5 lakh in Feb, 2020, raising it from ₹ 1 lakh since 1993.

Deposit Insurance- Coverage:

- Deposit insurance covers all deposits such as savings, fixed, current, recurring deposits, etc. in all commercial banks, functioning in India.
- Deposits in State, Central and Primary cooperative banks, functioning in States/Union Territories are also covered.

What is the procedure for depositors to claim the money from a failed bank?

- The DICGC does not deal directly with depositors.
- The RBI (or the Registrar), on directing that a bank be liquidated, appoints an official liquidator to oversee the winding up process.
- Under the DICGC Act, the liquidator is supposed to hand over a list of all the insured depositors (with their dues) to the DICGC within three months of taking charge.
- The DICGC is supposed to pay these dues within two months of receiving this list.

The DICGC does not include the following types of deposits:

1. Deposits of foreign governments.
2. Deposits of central/state governments.
3. Inter-bank deposits.
4. Deposits of the state land development banks with the state co-operative bank.
5. Any amount due on account of any deposit received outside India.
6. Any amount specifically exempted by the DICGC with previous approval of RBI.

8. Urban co-op banks

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor has indicated that the RBI will bring regulatory changes to reform urban cooperative banks (UCBs).

- UCBs have been plagued by a series of failures.
- RBI has also warned people against depositing their savings in banks offering high returns.

What is an Urban co-op bank?

- The term Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) refers to primary cooperative banks located in urban and semi-urban areas.
- These banks were traditionally centred around communities, localities and workplace groups. They essentially lent to small borrowers and businesses. Today, their scope of operations has widened considerably.

Difference between UCBs and Commercial Banks

- **Regulation:** Unlike commercial banks, UCBs are only partly regulated by the RBI.
 - Banking operations of the UCBs are regulated by the RBI, but their management and resolution in the case of distress is regulated by the Registrar of Co-operative Societies either under the State or Central government.
- **Borrower can be a Shareholder:** In a commercial bank, there is a clear distinction between its shareholders and its borrowers whereas in a UCB, borrowers can even double up as shareholders.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Consider the following statements regarding Mahila Shakti Kendra:

1. It is a centrally sponsored scheme that aims to empower rural women through community participation.
2. It is an umbrella scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shashaktikaran Yojana (PMMSY).

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

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

Answer : c

Mahila Shakti Kendra

- The Government of India has approved a new scheme namely Mahila Shakti Kendra to empower rural women through community participation during 2017-18 up to 2019-20.
- The Scheme is implemented through the State Government /UT Administration and is implemented with a cost-sharing ratio of 60:40 between centre and states except for North East and the Special Category States where the ratio is 90:10.
- It is envisaged to work at the national level (domain based knowledge support) and state level (State Resource Centre for Women) by providing technical support to the respective governments on issues related to women.
- District Level Centre for Women (DLCW) has also been envisaged for 640 districts to be covered in a phased manner.
- These centres to serve as a link between the village, block and state level in facilitating women-centric schemes and also give a foothold for Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme at the district level.
- Community engagement through College Student Volunteers is to play an instrumental role in awareness generation regarding various important

government schemes/ programmes as well as social issues as part of Block Level initiatives.

2. Which of the following statements with regards to the Pinaka missile system is not correct:

- a. The DRDO has teamed up with the France Military Industries to develop the Trajectory Correction System on Pinaka.
- b. The Pinaka is a Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher.
- c. It is completely automatic and uses microprocessor-based positioning and fire control
- d. Each battery of Pinaka consists of six launcher vehicles and each launcher vehicle has twelve rockets.

Answer: a

Explanation:-

The Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) is the principal organization of the Government of India's Ministry of Defense. The Defense Science Organization was founded in 1958 by the amalgamation of the Technical Development Establishment and the Directorate of Technical Development and Production of the Indian Ordnance Factories. The DRDO has teamed up with the France Military Industries to develop the Trajectory Correction System on Pinaka.

Hence Option A is correct.

3. Identify the committee which presented the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) policy report to the Union Minister for Commerce:

- a. Abid Hussain Committee

- b. Basel Committee
- c. Hanumanth Rao Committee
- d. Baba Kalyani Committee

Answer : d

Baba Kalyani Committee

- The committee was constituted by the Union Ministry of Commerce & Industry in June 2018 to –
 - Evaluate the SEZ policy and make it WTO compatible,
 - Suggest measures for maximizing utilisation of vacant land in SEZs,
 - Suggest changes in the SEZ policy based on international experience and
 - Merge the SEZ policy with other Government schemes like coastal economic zones, Delhi-Mumbai industrial corridor, national industrial manufacturing zones etc.

Highlights of the report

- The current environment of manufacturing competitiveness and services has to undergo a basic paradigm shift if India is going to become a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025.
- The success seen by services sector like IT and ITES has to be promoted in other services sector like health care, financial services, legal, repair and design services.
- It has recommended continuation of tax incentives, migration of SEZs to employment and economic enclaves, and creation of link infrastructure and maintenance for enclaves.
- Also, incentives should be linked with employment, investment, technology/innovation, and infrastructure status for these zones to improve access to financing.

4. The well-renowned Sri Ranganathaswamy temple in Srirangam is dedicated to

- a. Lord Shiva
- b. Lord Krishna
- c. Lord Vishnu
- d. Goddess Laxmi

Answer: c

Explanation: -

- Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, also known as Thiruvaranga Tirupati, is one of the country's most prominent Vaishnava temples, devoted to Ranganatha, a reclining form of the Hindu god, Bhagwan (God or Lord) Vishnu.
- **Hence Option C is correct.**

5. The Chakma-Hajong community are the usual inhabitants of which of the following states in India?

- Assam
- Meghalaya
- Nagaland
- Arunachal Pradesh

Answer: d

Explanation: -

- Chakmas and Hajongs originated from the Chittagong Hill Tracts in former East Pakistan. They fled their homeland after the Kaptai dam project drowned it in the 1960s. The bulk of them were transferred to the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), which is now Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Hence Option D is correct.**

6. The word 'Denisovan' is sometimes mentioned in media in reference to

- fossils of a kind of dinosaurs
- an early human species
- a cave system found in North-East India
- a geological period in the history of Indian subcontinent

Answer: b

Explanation: -

Scientists sifting through the genomes of people scattered across the islands of south-east Asia have found echoes of ancient pairings with not just one, but three separate populations of the archaic hominins known as Denisovans. First discovered in 2010, the Denisovans are a relatively recent addition to the human family tree.

Mains Practice Questions

1. Domestic abuse is one among many other social challenges posed by the conditions created by the pandemic. Discuss

Approach:

- Define the term violence against women with an emphasis on domestic abuse.
- Establish the link between the recent surge in domestic violence cases and COVID-19.
- Briefly explain the causes behind domestic violence and challenges associated.
- Discuss various steps need to be taken.
- Conclude suitably.

2. “Wherever the art of medicine is loved, there is also a love of humanity.” Analyse this statement in light of India’s pharmaceutical capabilities and responsibilities amid the novel coronavirus pandemic across the world.

Approach:

- Discuss India’s position in the global pharmaceuticals sector.
- Mention the issues involved like rising demand for medicines, the moral obligation of India and challenges.
- Mention India’s response to the global crisis.
- Conclude the answer with advantages associated.

