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PUNE-THANE-DADAR-ANDHERI

Topic 1: Indian Gas Exchange (IGX)

Importance for Prelims: Economy

Indian Gas Exchange (IGX), a **digital trading platform** -India's first gas exchange was launched

- The IGX is a digital trading platform that will allow buyers and sellers of natural gas to trade in both spot market and in the forward market for imported natural gas.
- It will **facilitate transparent price discovery in natural gas**, and facilitate the growth of the share of natural gas in India's energy basket.
- The **price of domestically produced natural gas is decided by the government**. It will not be sold on the gas exchange.
- The exchange also allows much shorter contracts for delivery on the next day, and up to a month while ordinarily contracts for natural gas supply are as long as six months to a year.

Background:

- Domestically produced natural gas currently accounts for less than half the country's natural gas consumption while imported LNG accounts for the other half.
- LNG imports are set to become a larger proportion of domestic gas consumption as India moves to increase the proportion of natural gas in the energy basket from 6.2% in 2018 to 15% by 2030.

Natural gas:

- Natural gas is a **mixture of gases which are rich in hydrocarbons**. Natural gas reserves are deep inside the earth near other solid & liquid hydrocarbons beds like coal and crude oil.
- Natural gas is mainly **used as fuel for generating electricity and heat**.
- Natural gas in **compressed form is used as fuel for vehicles which is known as CNG**. This is used for making fertilizers also, mainly ammonia.
- **Russia, USA and Canada are major producers & consumers**.
- For transporting, two variants are used - LNG for cross countries exchange and CNG for domestic purpose.

Topic 2: National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP)

Importance for Prelims: Economy

Mr.Urjit Patel was appointed as chairman of India's premier economic think tank National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP)

-The National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) is a **centre for research in public economics and policies**.

-**Founded in 1976**, the institute undertakes research, policy advocacy and capacity building in areas related to public economics.(New Delhi)

-One of the major mandates of the institute is to **assist the Central,**

State and Local governments in formulating and reforming public policies by providing an analytical base.

-The institute was set up as an **autonomous society**, at the joint initiative of the Ministry of Finance, Planning Commission, several State governments and distinguished academicians.

-It is **registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860**.

-Although the institute receives an annual grant from the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, and various State governments, it maintains an independent nongovernment character in its pursuit of research and policy.

-The governing body of NIPFP comprises of Revenue Secretary, Economic Affairs Secretary and the Chief Economic Advisor from the Union Finance Ministry, besides representatives from Niti Aayog, RBI and three state governments

Topic 3: Section 7 of RBI Act

Importance for Prelims: Economy

The RBI and the government differed on a number of policy-related matters including surplus transfer to the exchequer while Mr. Urjit Patel was RBI governor

Concept: According to Section 7(1) of the RBI Act, 1934, the **Central Government** may from time to time **give such directions to the Bank** as it may, after consultation with the Governor of the Bank, consider **necessary in the public interest**.

Topic 4: Section 309 of IPC- Increasing suicides in the country

Importance for Prelims: Polity

- Anyone who **survives an attempted suicide** can be booked under Section 309 IPC, which deals with “Attempt to commit suicide”.
- Contrary to popular perception that it has been repealed, **continues to exist in the statute book**.
- The **Mental Healthcare Act (MHCA), 2017**, which came into force in July 2018, has significantly **reduced the scope for the use of Section 309 IPC** and made the attempt to commit suicide punishable only as an exception.
- Section 115(1) of The MHCA has said person who attempts to commit suicide shall be booked under this, unless proved otherwise, to have severe stress.
- In ‘**Gian Kaur vs State of Punjab**’, 1996, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of Section 309.
- However, in 2008, the Law Commission in its 210th Report, said that an attempt to suicide needed medical and psychiatric care, and not punishment. In March 2011, the Supreme Court too recommended to Parliament that it should consider the feasibility of deleting the section.

Topic 5: Rajya Sabha elections has been concluded for 19 seats

Importance for Prelims: Polity

- A **third of Members of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha** (which is a permanent House and is not subject to dissolution), from each State **retire once in two years** and polls are held to fill up the vacancies.
- **Only elected members of the State Legislative Assemblies** can vote in a Rajya Sabha election.
- In addition, vacancies that arise due to resignation, death or disqualification are filled up through **bypolls** after which those **elected serve out the remainder of their predecessors' term.**
- Voting is by single transferable vote, as the election is held on the principle of proportional representation.
- The Rajya Sabha polls have a **system of open ballot**, but it is a **limited form of openness.**
- As a measure to check rampant crossvoting, which was taken to mean that the vote had been purchased by corrupt means, the system of each party MLA showing his or her marked ballots to the party's authorised agent, before they are put into the ballot box, has been introduced.
- Showing a marked ballot to anyone other than one's own party's authorised agent will render the vote invalid. **Not showing the ballot to the authorised agent will also mean that the vote cannot be counted.**
- **And independent candidates are barred from showing their**

ballots to anyone.

- The Supreme Court, while declining to interfere with the open ballot system, ruled that **not voting for the party candidate will not attract disqualification** under the antidefection law.
- In 2018, the Supreme Court of India **struck down the provision, holding that the ‘none of the above’ option** is only for general elections held on the basis of universal adult suffrage, and cannot be applied to indirect elections based on proportional representation.

Topic 6: Kodumanal excavation

Importance for Prelims: Arts and culture

The Kodumanal excavation in Tamil Nadu of 10 pots and bowls, instead of the usual three or four pots, placed outside three-chambered burial cists and inside the cairn-circle, threw **light on burial rituals and the concept of afterlife in megalithic culture.**

- It was once a **flourishing ancient trade** city known as Kodumanam, as **inscribed in Patittrupathu of Sangam Literature.**
- It is located on the **northern banks of Noyyal River**, a tributary of the Cauvery.
- Megaliths were constructed **either as burial sites or commemorative** (non-sepulchral) memorials.
- **Cairn-circles** are the prehistoric stone row which is a **linear arrangement of parallel megalithic standing stones.**
- Megaliths are spread across the Indian subcontinent, though the **bulk of them are found in peninsular India**, concentrated in the

states of Maharashtra (mainly in Vidarbha), Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Topic 7: Sukapha

Importance for Prelims: History

Assam state government has ordered the arrest of political commentator who had described Chaolung Sukapha as a “Chinese invader”

□ Sukapha was a **13th-century ruler who founded the Ahom kingdom** that ruled Assam for six centuries. Contemporary scholars trace his roots to Burma.

□ The founders of the Ahom kingdom had their own language and followed their own religion. Over the centuries, **the Ahoms accepted the Hindu religion and the Assamese language.**

□ Sukapha’s significance lies in his successful efforts towards assimilation of different communities and tribes. He is widely referred to as the **architect of “Bor Asom” or “greater Assam”**.

□ To commemorate Sukapha and his rule, Assam celebrates “Asom Divas” on December 2 every year.

Ahom Kingdom

□ The **Ahom kingdom was established in 1228** when Sukaphaa entered the Brahmaputra valley. Sukaphaa did not battle any established kingdom and seem to have occupied a depopulated region on the south bank with the Burhidihing river in the north, the Dikhau

river in the south and the Patkai mountains in the east.

- The Ahoms **brought with them the technology of wet rice cultivation** that they shared with other groups.
- The kingdom came under attack from Turkic and Afghan rulers of Bengal, but it withstood them.
- On one occasion, the Ahoms under Tankham Borgohain pursued the invaders and reached the Karatoya river, and the Ahoms began to see themselves as the rightful heir of the erstwhile Kamarupa Kingdom.
- The **kingdom came under repeated Mughal attacks in the 17th century**, and on one occasion in 1662, the Mughals under Mir **Jumla occupied the capital, Garhgaon.**
- The Mughals were unable to keep it, and in at the **end of the Battle of Saraighat, the Ahoms not only fended off a major Mughal invasion, but extended their boundaries west**, up to the Manas river.
- The later phase of the rule was also marked by increasing social conflicts, leading to the **Moamoria rebellion.**
- The rebels were able to capture and maintain power at the capital Rangpur for some years, but were finally removed **with the help of the British under Captain Welsh.**
- A much weakened kingdom fell to repeated Burmese attacks and finally after the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826, the **control of the kingdom passed into British hands.**

Topic 8: Enceladus and Europa

Importance for Prelims: Science and tech

Plumes of water erupt from Europa and Enceladus which indicates that these bodies have subsurface oceans beneath their ice shells.

- **Saturn's moon Enceladus and Jupiter's moon Europa** may support life, because scientists have spotted water plumes bursting from their icy shells.
- A mathematical calculation by NASA scientists guesses that more than a quarter of the several dozen exoplanets they have analysed could be 'water worlds'.
- This includes some members of the Trappist-1 system which is about forty light years away.

Topic 9: Mental Health

Importance for Prelims: Welfare schemes/Policies

COVID pandemic has **increased mental illness** through uncertainties it caused to people's lives and has thrown light on India's mental healthcare.

- Mental health problems were already a **major contributor to the burden of illness in India before the pandemic**, with a third of all female and a quarter of all male suicide deaths in the world occurring in this country
- Poor awareness about symptoms of mental illness, myths & stigma

related to it, lack of knowledge on the treatment availability & potential benefits of seeking treatment are important causes for the high treatment gap

National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) in 1982

- To ensure the availability and accessibility of minimum mental healthcare for all in the foreseeable future, particularly to the most vulnerable and underprivileged sections of the population;
- To encourage the application of mental health knowledge in general healthcare and in social development; and
- To promote community participation in the mental health service development and to stimulate efforts towards self-help in the community.

Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:

The Act seeks to ensure rights of the person with mental illness to receive care and to live a life with dignity. The key features of the Act are:

- Rights of Persons with Mental Illness: Right to Access to Healthcare, Right to live with dignity, Right to Confidentiality
- The Act empowers person with mental illness to make an advance directive that states how he/she wants to be treated for the illness and who his/her nominated representative shall be.
- The Act mandates the government to set up Central Mental Health Authority at national level and State Mental Health Authority in every State.
- A mentally ill person shall not be subjected to electro-convulsive

therapy without the use of muscle relaxants and anaesthesia. Further, electroconvulsive therapy cannot be used on minors

- Decriminalization of Suicide

Topic 10: Anti-defection law

Importance for Prelims: Polity

The BJP-led coalition government in Manipur came apart with three BJP MLAs defected to the Congress, thus reducing its number of legislators from 21 to 18 in the 60-member assembly.

Concept:

- The Tenth Schedule was inserted in the Constitution **in 1985 by 52nd amendment**. It lays down the process by which **legislators may be disqualified on grounds of defection by the Presiding Officer of a legislature** based on a petition by any other member of the House.

- Disqualification:

- o If a member of a house belonging to a political party voluntarily gives up the membership of his political party, or Votes, or does not vote in the legislature, contrary to the directions of his political party.

However, if the member has taken prior permission, or is condoned by the party within 15 days from such voting or abstention, the member shall not be disqualified.

- o If an independent candidate joins a political party after the election.

- o If a nominated member joins a party six months after he becomes a member of the legislature.

91st amendment act of 2003

- o The total number of ministers including the Prime minister in the central council of ministers shall not exceed 15% of the total strength of the Lok sabha/State legislative assembly. (Article 75,164). However in states number of ministers shall not be less than 12.
- o A member disqualified under defection is also disqualified for being a minister in house.
- o The member disqualified on the grounds of defection shall also be disqualified for any remunerative political post, office wholly or partially under the government .
- o The provision regarding one third was also deleted by this amendment.
- Exceptions under the law: Legislators may change their party without the risk of disqualification in certain circumstances. The law allows a **party to merge with or into another party provided that at least two-thirds of its legislators** are in favour of the merger. In such a scenario, neither the members who decide to merge, nor the ones who stay with the original party will face disqualification.
- The law initially stated that the decision of the Presiding Officer is not subject to judicial review. This condition was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1992, thereby **allowing appeals against the Presiding Officer's decision in the High Court and Supreme Court.**

Topic 11: Gig Economy

Importance for Prelims: Economy

Importance for Mains: GS paper IV-Economy

- A Deloitte report from April “Future of work accelerated” notes that **Indian organisations are considering to expand the share of gig workers**, as dependence on full-time workers reduces.
- Current pandemic crisis also induced discussion on the levels of social protection available to gig workers including wage protection, health benefits and safety assurance
- In a gig economy, **temporary, flexible jobs are commonplace** and companies **tend toward hiring independent contractors and freelancers** instead of full-time employees.
- A gig economy **undermines the traditional economy of full-time workers** who rarely change positions and instead focus on a lifetime career.
- The drivers of Uber, the delivery boys of Zomato, the plumbers and electricians of Urban Clap make up the gig world

Advantages:

- The gig economy can benefit workers, businesses, and consumers by making work **more adaptable to the needs of the moment and demand for flexible lifestyles**.
- The result of a gig economy is **cheaper, more efficient services**.

Concerns

- The gig economy is **largely unregulated**, therefore **workers have little job security** and few benefits.
- Unless a person is extremely talented, **his bargaining power will necessarily be limited**.
- While companies routinely invest in training employees, a **gig-economy workers will have to upgrade his skills on his own** at his own cost.
- There are already many more potential online independent workers than jobs, and this demand-supply mismatch will only get worse over time, depressing wages.

Topic 12: Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

Importance for Prelims: IR

Importance for Mains: IR

Government of India and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) here today signed a \$750 million “COVID-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support Programme” to assist India to strengthen its response to the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on poor and vulnerable households.

- The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a **multilateral development bank** with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia.
- **Headquartered in Beijing**, it began operations in January 2016

and have now grown to 102 approved members worldwide.

□ It invests in sustainable infrastructure and other productive sectors in Asia and beyond.

□ Membership in AIIB shall be open to members of the International Bank for

Reconstruction and Development or the Asian Development Bank.

□ **China is the largest contributor to the Bank**, contributing USD 50 billion, half of the initial subscribed capital.

□ **India is the second-largest shareholder, contributing USD 8.4 billion.**

Topic 13: Genetic surveillance

Importance for Prelims: Science and technology

The Chinese Government is building the **world's largest police-run DNA database**.

□ Since 2013, Chinese authorities have collected DNA samples from entire ethnic minority communities and ordinary citizens **outside any criminal investigations** and without proper informed consent.

□ This program of mass DNA data collection **violates Chinese domestic law and global human rights norms**.

□ And, when combined with other surveillance tools, it will **increase the power of the Chinese state and further enable domestic repression** in the name of stability maintenance and social control.

- The forensic use of DNA has the **potential to solve crimes and save lives**; yet it can also be misused and **reinforce discriminatory law enforcement** and authoritarian political control.
- DNA analysis is now considered the **gold standard for police forensics**.
- Recent innovations in DNA sequencing and big-data computing make the process of analysing biometric samples more efficient and cost-effective.
- Yet forensic DNA collection has also been linked to **the abuse of police power** and even can **lead to the loss of genetic privacy**.
- In order to defend against possible abuses, compulsory police collection and storage of biometric data must be strictly limited to those convicted of serious criminal wrongdoing.

Dragnet

It is mass surveillance programme run by USA's national security agency.

Topic 14: Coal mining (Total resources, Production and import)

Importance for Prelims: Economy/Geography

Importance for Mains: Economy/Geography

Government has announced the auction of 41 coal blocks that have a capacity to produce 225 million tonnes of coal per year after removing the end-use restrictions and relaxed prior mining experience as bidding criteria.

- India imports nearly 250 million tonnes of coal from other countries despite having the world's fourth largest coal reserve.
- Commercial mining **allows the private sector to mine coal commercially without placing any end-use restrictions**. The private firms have the option of either gasification of the coal or exporting it.
- Further, with **100 per cent foreign direct investment** allowed in the coal sector, global companies can also participate in the auctions.
- The **complete freedom to decide on sale, pricing, and captive utilisation** is expected to attract many private sector firms to participate in the auction process.
- The government expects these steps will generate employment and reduce India's import bill.
- Private sector participation was permitted until the early 1970s. Then government has announced the **nationalization of the coal blocks in two phases between 1971 and 1973**.
- The government is hoping that the involvement of the private sector will **increase production and make India self-sufficient** in meeting its internal coal requirements.

Topic 15: Dollar as reserve currency:

Importance for Prelims: Economy

Ever since China started pilot project on its Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), there has been speculations of possibility of China's digital currency replacing the US dollar as the reserve

currency of the world.

- A reserve currency is a **currency held in significant quantities** by governments and institutions as a means of **international payment and to support the value of national currencies**.
- A large percentage of **commodities, such as gold and oil, are priced in the reserve currency**, causing other countries to hold this currency to pay for these goods.

Topic 16: Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) Model Village Scheme :

Importance for Prelims: Schemes

A study commissioned by the Ministry of Rural Development has observed that Sansad Adarsh gram yojana scheme has not made “any significant impact” and that “in the current format is not achieving the desired purpose”.

- Prime Minister has launched the Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) on 11th October, 2014 on the **birth anniversary of Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan**.
- The Scheme is unique and transformative as it has a **holistic approach towards development**. It **envisages integrated development of the selected village** across multiple areas such as agriculture, health, education, sanitation, environment, livelihoods, etc.
- Far beyond mere infrastructure development, SAGY aims at

instilling certain values, such as people's participation, Antyodaya, gender equality, dignity of women, social justice, spirit of community service, cleanliness, eco-friendliness, maintaining ecological balance, peace and harmony, mutual cooperation, self-reliance, local self government, transparency and accountability in public life, etc. in the villages and their people so that they get transformed into models for others.

□ **Ministry of Rural Development will be nodal Ministry coordinating and monitoring the Scheme** closely to ensure its efficient implementation. In order to operationalize the strategies the central sector and centrally sponsored schemes along with the state schemes will have to be implemented in a convergent and integrated manner to generate maximum synergy.

Topic 17: New Policy on Electronics

Importance for Prelims: Economy

Importance for Mains: GS paper IV-Economy

To seize the moment and to **become an electronics manufacturing giant** in the post-Covid-19 era, Indian government announced **policies involve spending ₹50,000 crore** and aim to attract everyone from semiconductor manufacturers to mobile phone and component giants

(i) **Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI)** for Large Scale Electronics

Manufacturing shall extend **an incentive of 4% to 6% on incremental sales** (over base year) of goods manufactured in India and covered under the target segments, to eligible companies, for a period of five years subsequent to the base year

(ii) Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electronic Components and

Semiconductors (SPECS) shall provide financial incentive of **25% on capital**

expenditure for the identified list of electronic goods, i.e., electronic components, semiconductor/ display fabrication units, Assembly, Test, Marking and Packaging (ATMP) units, specialized sub-assemblies and capital goods for manufacture of aforesaid goods

(iii) Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC 2.0)

Scheme shall provide support for creation of **world class infrastructure along with common facilities and amenities**, including Ready Built Factory (RBF) sheds / Plug and Play facilities for attracting major global electronics manufacturers, along with their supply chains.

Salient Features of NPE 2019

The Policy envisions positioning **India as a global hub for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing - (ESDM)** by encouraging and driving capabilities in the country for developing core components and creating an enabling environment for the industry to compete globally.

Create eco-system for globally competitive ESDM sector:

Promoting domestic manufacturing and export in the entire value-chain of ESDM.

- Provide **incentives and support for manufacturing** of core electronic components.
- Provide **special package of incentives for mega projects** which are extremely high-tech and entail huge investments, such as semiconductor facilities display fabrication, etc.
- **Promote Industry-led R&D and innovation** in all sub-sectors of electronics, including grass root level innovations and early stage Start-ups in emerging technology areas such as 5G, IoT/ Sensors, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, Virtual Reality (VR), Drones, Robotics, Additive Manufacturing, Photonics, Nano-based devices, etc.
- Provide incentives and support for significantly **enhancing availability of skilled manpower, including re-skilling.**
- Special **thrust on Fabless Chip Design Industry, Medical Electronic Devices Industry, Automotive Electronics Industry and Power Electronics for Mobility** and Strategic Electronics Industry.
- Create **Sovereign Patent Fund (SPF)** to promote the development and **acquisition of IPs in ESDM sector.**
- Promote trusted electronics value chain initiatives to improve national cyber security profile.

Topic 18: Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI or Gee-Pay)

Importance for Prelims: IR

India becomes founding member of global alliance on AI

□ GPAI is an **international and multi-stakeholder initiative to guide the responsible development and use of AI**, grounded in human rights, inclusion, diversity, innovation, and economic growth.

□ This is also a **first initiative of its type for evolving better understanding of the challenges and opportunities around AI** using the experience and diversity of participating countries.

□ In order to achieve this goal, the initiative will look to bridge the gap between theory and practice on AI by supporting cutting-edge research and applied activities on AI-related priorities.

□ In collaboration with partners and international organizations, GPAI will bring together **leading experts from industry, civil society, governments, and academia to collaborate to promote responsible evolution of AI** and will also evolve methodologies to show how AI can be leveraged to better respond to the present global crisis around COVID-19.

□ GPAI will be **supported by a Secretariat, to be hosted by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris**, as well as by two Centers of Expertise- one each in Montreal and Paris.

□ By joining GPAI as a founding member, India will actively participate in the global development of Artificial Intelligence, leveraging upon its experience around use of digital technologies for

inclusive growth.

Topic 19: Golden Langur

Importance for Prelims: Environment

Golden Langurs are facing threat of electrocution from power supply lines.



- It is **endemic to the semi-evergreen and mixed deciduous forests** straddling India and Bhutan.
- The golden langurs in Assam are hemmed in by three rivers Brahmaputra in the south, Manas in east and Sonkosh in west. Their northern limit is the range of hills in Bhutan up to 2,400 metres above sea level.
- IUCN status – **Endangered**
- In Assam, its main population is in the **Manas Biosphere Reserve**, a forested area along the border of Bhutan.

Topic 20: Article 275(I) and Van Dhan Scheme

Importance for Prelims: Polity/Scheme

- Tribal people due to lack of market access have been severely affected by COVID pandemic. As relief Central government announced expanded coverage of PM Van Dhan Yojana current 18,000 SHGS to 50,000 Van Dhan SHGS.
- Coverage to 10 lakh tribal gatherers through the Covid19 relief plan of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs under article 275(I).

Van Dhan Vikas Karyakram

- The programme launched in 2018 aims to **tap into the traditional knowledge and skill sets of tribal people** by adding technology and Information Technology for upgradation of output at each stage and to convert the tribal wisdom into a remunerative economic activity.
- Van Dhan Vikas Karyakram seeks to promote and leverage the collective strength of tribal people to achieve a viable scale
- The proposition is to set-up tribal community owned MFP-centric multi-purpose **Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (the Kendra) in predominantly tribal districts.**
- About 3000 Van Dhan Kendras are proposed to be set up in span of 2 years i.e. 1500 Kendras to be set-up in each year. Each Kendra would act as common facility centres for procurement cum value addition to locally available MFPs and skill based handicraft.
- A typical Van Dhan Vikas Kendra shall constitute of **10 tribal Van Dhan Vikas Self Help Groups (SHG)**, each comprising of upto 30 MFP gatherers or tribal handicraft artisans

Article 275(1)

Under Article 275, the **parliament is authorized to provide grants-in-aid to any state** as parliament may determine to be in need of assistance, and different sums may be fixed for different States.

Topic 21: Nuclear Weapons

Importance for Prelims: IR/Science and technology

China and Pakistan possess more nuclear weapons than India, according to a new yearbook released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

□ The nine nuclear-armed states—the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) together possessed an estimated 13 400 nuclear weapons at the start of 2020, which is reduction from 13,865 nuclear weapons last year.

□ The **decrease in the overall number of nuclear weapons** in the world in 2019 was largely due to the **dismantlement of retired nuclear weapons by Russia and the USA**—which together still possess over 90 per cent of global nuclear weapons.

□ The **reductions in US and Russian strategic nuclear forces required by the 2010 Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START)** were completed in 2018, and in 2019 the forces of both countries remained

below the limits specified by the treaty.

World nuclear forces, January 2020

Country	Deployed warheads*	Other warheads**	Total 2020	Total 2019
USA	1 750	4 050	5 800	6 185
Russia	1 570	4 805	6 375	6 500
UK***	120	95	215	200
France	280	10	290	300
China		320	320	290
India		150	150	130-140
Pakistan		160	160	150-160
Israel		90	90	80-90
North Korea	..	(30-40)	(30-40)	(20-30)
Total	3 720	9 680	13 400	13 865

Source: SIPRI Yearbook 2020 * 'Deployed warheads' refers to warheads placed on missiles or located on bases with operational forces. ** 'Other warheads' refers to stored or reserve warheads and retired warheads awaiting dismantlement. *** The British Government has stated that the process to reduce the stockpile to 180 warheads is under way. Although some sources suggest that the stockpile remains at 215 warheads, it is possible that, under this process, the stockpile may have already been reduced.

- New START will lapse in February 2021 unless both parties agree to prolong it.
- The **deadlock over New START and the collapse of the 1987 Soviet–US Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty)** in 2019 suggest that the era of bilateral nuclear arms control agreements between Russia and the USA might be coming to an end.
- The governments of India and Pakistan make statements about some of their missile tests but provide little information about the status or size of their arsenals

New START

- The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) was signed April 8, 2010, in Prague by the United States and Russia and

entered into force on Feb. 5, 2011.

- New START **replaced the 1991 START I treaty**, which expired December 2009, and superseded the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), which terminated when New START entered into force.
- New START continues the **bipartisan process of verifiably reducing U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals** begun by former Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush.
- New START is the **first verifiable U.S.-Russian nuclear arms control treaty** to take effect since START I in 1994.

INF treaty

- The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty required the **United States and the Soviet Union to eliminate and permanently forswear all of their nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers.**
- The treaty marked the first time the superpowers had **agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals**, eliminate an entire category of nuclear weapons, and employ extensive on-site inspections for verification.
- As a result of the INF Treaty, the United States and the Soviet Union destroyed a total of 2,692 short-, medium-, and intermediate-range missiles by the treaty's implementation deadline of June 1, 1991.
- On Aug. 2, 2019, the **United States formally withdrew from the**

INF Treaty.

Topic 22: Anti –Dumping duty

Importance for Prelims: Economy

Importance for Mains: GS paper IV-Economy

Finance Ministry has extended of existing anti-dumping duty on Nylon Tyre Cord Fabric (NTCF) imports from China by six months

□ An anti-dumping duty is a **protectionist tariff that a domestic government imposes on foreign imports** that it believes are priced **below fair market value**.

□ Dumping is a process where a company exports a product at a price lower than the price it normally charges in its own home market.

□ The duty is aimed at **ensuring fair trading practices and creating a level-playing field for domestic producers** vis-a-vis foreign producers and exporters.

□ The duty is imposed only after a thorough investigation by a quasi-judicial body, such as **Directorate General of Trade Remedies**, in India.

□ The imposition of anti-dumping duty is permissible under the World Trade Organization (WTO) regime.

Topic 23: Horizontal Reservation

Importance for Prelims: Polity

Importance for Mains: GS paper II- Polity

Subject: Polity

The cabinet of Tamil Nadu state has **approved 10 per cent horizontal reservation** in medical admissions to government school students who clear the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET). An Ordinance is likely to be promulgated within a few days to give effect to this from the current academic year.

- The reservations in favour of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes **under Article 16(4) may be called vertical reservations**. The total percentage of Reservation for the above three categories **should not exceed 50%** at any point of time
- The **reservation in favour of Ex-servicemen, Person with Disability, Sportsmen, Minorities etc may be called Horizontal reservation**.
- Horizontal reservations cut across the vertical reservations is called **interlocking reservations**.
- The percentage of reservation allotted to Horizontal reservation categories **should be adjusted against percentage of SC/ST/ OBC and General categories in vertical reservation**.

Topic 24: Force Majeure

Importance for Prelims: Economy

- The term ‘**force majeure**’ has been defined in Black’s Law Dictionary, as ‘**an event or effect that can be neither anticipated nor controlled**’.

- From a **contractual perspective**, a force majeure clause provides temporary **reprieve to a party from performing its obligations** under a contract upon occurrence of a force majeure event.
- While force majeure has **neither been defined nor specifically dealt with**, in Indian statutes, some reference can be found in **Section 32 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872** (the "Contract Act") envisages that if a contract is contingent on the happening of an event which event becomes impossible, then the contract becomes void.
- Force majeure clauses can usually be found in various contracts such as **power purchase agreements, supply contracts, manufacturing contracts, distribution agreements**, project finance agreements, agreements between real estate developers and home buyers, etc.

Topic 25: Khelo India State Centers of Excellence (KISCE)

Importance for Prelims: Schemes

Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs is going to establish Khelo India State Centres of Excellence (KISCE) under its flagship Khelo India Scheme.

- One KISCE will be identified in each state and union territory, with an **effort to create a robust sporting ecosystem** in the entire country.
- In first phase, ministry has identified state-owned sports facilities in eight states which will be upgraded into Khelo India State Centre of

Excellence (KISCE).

- In order to upgrade the existing centre to the KISCE, the **central government will extend a ‘Viability Gap Funding’ in sports science and technology support** for sports disciplines practiced at the centre and also bridge the gaps in requirement of sports equipment, expert coaches and high performance managers.
- The **state and UT will run the centre and build capacity to turn it into the worldclass sporting facility**, and will be responsible for all aspects of management of the centre including, boarding, lodging and maintenance, while funds for critical gaps such as expert coaches, support staff, equipment, infrastructure will be extended through the Khelo India Scheme.

Topic 26: Transfer fund from PM-CARES to NDRF

Importance for Prelims: Schemes

Supreme court has given notice to center on a plea to transfer PM-CARES fund

- The petition urged the court to **direct the government to prepare, notify and implement a national plan under the Disaster Management Act** to deal with the pandemic.
- It claimed that the Centre has been “refraining from divulging information” about the money “contributed to the PM CARES Fund till date”.

NDRF

- The National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF), constituted **under Section 46 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, supplements SDRF of a State**, in case of a disaster of severe nature, provided adequate funds are not available in SDRF.
- It is a fund managed by the Central Government for meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation due to any threatening disaster situation or disaster.
- NDRF amount can be spent only towards meeting the **expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation.**
- It is **financed through the levy of a cess** on certain items, chargeable to excise and customs duty, and approved annually through the Finance Bill.
- The requirement for funds beyond what is available under the NDRF is met through **general budgetary resources.**
- A provision also exists in the DM Act to encourage any person or institution to make a contribution to the NDRF.
- It is kept under **“Public Accounts” of Government of India.**
- Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) audits the accounts of NDRF.
- **Department of Agriculture and Cooperation under Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) monitors** relief activities for calamities associated with drought, hailstorms, pest attacks and cold wave /frost while rest of the natural calamities are **monitored by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).**

PM-CARES

- Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund, or the PM CARES Fund, was set up **to tackle distress situations such as that posed by the COVID19 pandemic.**
- The fund receives **voluntary contributions** from individuals and organisations and **does not get any budgetary support.** Donations have been made **tax exempt**, and can **be counted against a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) obligations.**
- It is also **exempt from the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010**, and accepts foreign contributions, although the Centre has previously refused foreign aid to deal with disasters such as the Kerala floods.
- The **Prime Minister chairs the fund** in his official capacity, and can nominate three eminent persons in relevant fields to the Board of Trustees. The **Ministers of Defense, Home Affairs and Finance are ex officio** Trustees of the Fund.

Concerns

- It is **not clear whether the fund comes under the ambit of the RTI Act or oversight by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India**, although independent auditors will audit the fund
- The PM CARES web page is **opaque regarding the amount of money collected, names of donors**, expenditure of the fund so far, or names of beneficiaries. The PMNRF provides annual donation and expenditure information without any detailed breakup.
- The PM CARES Fund's trust deed is not available for public scrutiny.

- The decision to **allow uncapped corporate donations to the fund to count as CSR expenditure**, a facility **not provided to PMNRF or the CM's Relief Funds** goes against previous guidelines stating that CSR should not be used to fund government schemes.
- A government panel had previously advised against allowing CSR contributions to the PMNRF on the grounds that the **double benefit of tax exemption would be a "regressive incentive"**

Topic 27: 75th UNGA

Importance for Prelims: IR

Importance for Mains: GS paper II-International Institutions

Turkish diplomat Volkan Bozkir was elected president of 75th UN General Assembly.

- The term United Nations was **first coined by the U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt** and was first used as a collective pledge of representatives of 26 nations on the 1st January, 1942, as a commitment to continue to fight against the Axis Powers.
- On October 24th, 1945, **as many as 51 countries signed the United Nations Charter** in South Africa.
- The central role of the United Nations was the **promotion of peace and security, development and human rights.**

Bodies and mandate

- The United Nations consists of **six main organs** - the General

Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice, the Secretariat and the Trusteeship Council.

□ Second, there are a number of **United Nations programmes and funds** such as the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Development Programme (UNDP), and UN Environment Programme (UNEP) etc. These programmes and funds **fall under the Economic and Social Council** of the UN but are also reported to the General Assembly.

□ The third set of actors within the UN is the **specialised agencies and analogous bodies working in diverse areas** such as agriculture, health, labour and meteorology. Well known among these bodies are UNESCO, ILO, FAO and the World Bank set of institutions

Main organs

The General Assembly:

- It is the mainstay of the UN. It is the **only forum where all countries sit down together and discuss their pressing problems.**
- Moreover, all nation states have equal voting rights regardless of their economic status. The vote of the General Assembly represents at one level world opinion.
- The decisions of the General Assembly, however, are **not legally binding on the Member States** and only represent, at best, the moral authority of the community of nations.

Security Council:

- The Security Council is the UN organ which is in charge of security and international peace and deals with crises as they arise.

- Under the UN Charter, the Security Council's decisions are **legally binding and the Member States are obligated to carry them out.**
- At present, the Security Council is made up of 15 members out of whom 5 members are permanent. The 10 non-permanent members are periodically elected for a 2 year term.
- The permanent members have the veto power, i.e. , they can block a proposal by casting a negative vote.

Economic and Social Council:

- The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is the central UN forum with regard to **international economic and social issues.**
- It has **54 members who are elected by the General Assembly** for a three year term.
- ECOSOC plays a central role in strengthening the regional cooperation for development as well as setting priorities in terms of economic and social work.
- Most of the UN programmes and funds and functional commissions including environmental ones such as the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) fall under the purview of ECOSOC.
- It thus coordinates the work of the UN specialized agencies, programmes and funds and undertakes follow-up action in terms of major UN conferences. This role has become all the more important in the context of globalisation and with regard to issues such as sustainable development. Environmental concerns fall under the

jurisdiction of ECOSOC.

Secretariat:

□ The UN Secretariat comprises various UN departments and is thus the backbone of the UN system.

International Court of Justice:

□ The International Court of Justice **arbitrates on disputes between nation-states.**

□ It was established in June 1945 by the Charter of the United Nations and began work in April 1946.

□ The ICJ is the successor of the Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ), which was established by the League of Nations in 1920.

United Nations Trusteeship Council:

□ It is established to **ensure that trust territories were administered in the best interests of their inhabitants and of international peace and security.**

□ The trust territories—most of them former mandates of the League of Nations or territories taken from nations defeated at the end of World War II—have all now attained self-government or independence, either as separate nations or by joining neighbouring independent countries.

□ The last was Palau, formerly part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, which became a member state of the United Nations in December 1994.

G4

- G-4 is a group of four countries i.e. Brazil, Germany, India and Japan which **support each other's bids for permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**
- The G-4 countries have decided to prepare for a fresh push for reforms at the UNGA in 2020 when the UN celebrates its 75th anniversary.

Topic 28: Coal Gasification

Importance for Prelims: Science and technology

Prime minister has announced target to gasify 100 million tonnes (MT) of coal by 2030 which will be a big boost to coal gasification in India and fulfil vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' using clean coal technology.

- Coal gasification is the **process of converting coal into synthesis gas** (also called syngas), which is a mixture of hydrogen (H₂), carbon monoxide (CO) and carbon dioxide (CO₂).
- The syngas can be used in a variety of applications such as in the **production of electricity and making chemical products**, such as fertilisers
- The coal gasification process holds good potential in the future, with coal being the most abundantly available fossil fuel across the world, and that **even low-grade coal can be used in the process.**

Advantages:

- Underground coal gasification eliminates mining needs.

- Compared to traditional coal mining and processing, the underground coal gasification eliminates surface damage and solid waste discharge, and reduces sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and nitrogen oxide (NO_x) emissions.
- Underground combustion produces NO₂ and SO₂ and lowers emissions, including acid rain.

Background

Despite hosting the **world's fourth-largest coal reserves, India imports around 235 million tonnes (mt)** of coal a year which is second-largest in the world

Topic 29: Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan

Importance for Prelims: Schemes

Government launched a massive rural public works scheme 'Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan'.

- The livelihood opportunities will come up in **116 districts spread over six states** namely Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Odisha **who have received substantial numbers of migrants** through the Common Service Centres and Krishi Vigyan Kendras
- This campaign of 125 days, which will work in mission mode, will involve intensified and focused implementation of **25 different types of works to provide employment to the migrant workers** on one hand **and create infrastructure in the rural regions** of the country

on the other hand, with a resource envelope of Rs. 50,000 crore.

□ The Abhiyaan will be a **coordinated effort between 12 different Ministries/Departments**, namely, Rural Development, Panchayati Raj, Road Transport & Highways, Mines, Drinking Water & Sanitation, Environment, Railways, Petroleum & Natural Gas, New & Renewable Energy, Border Roads, Telecom and Agriculture.

Topic 30: UNSC Non-Permanent members and election

Importance for Prelims: IR

Importance for Mains: GS paper II-International institutions

India is elected to the non-permanent seat of the Security Council for the term 2021-22 with overwhelming support. India gets 184 out of the 192 valid votes polled

□ The UNSC is composed of 15 members: five permanent members, and **10 nonpermanent members who are elected by the General Assembly**.

□ The non-permanent members are elected for two-year terms — so every year, the General Assembly elects five non-permanent members out of the total 10.

□ These 10 seats are **distributed among the regions of the world: five seats for African and Asian countries**; one for Eastern European countries; two for Latin American and Caribbean countries; and two for Western European and Other Countries.

□ India has **earlier been a non-permanent member of the Security**

Council in 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92 and 2011-12.

□ Even a country has been endorsed by its group, it still needs to **secure the votes of twothirds of the members present and voting at the General Assembly session** — which is a minimum of 129 votes, if all 193 member states participate.

Topic 31: Rule of Law Index

Importance for Prelims: Governance

The Supreme Court on writ petition refused to direct government to set up expert panels to boost India's prospects in the Rule of Law Index

□ The Rule of Law Index is a **quantitative assessment tool by the World Justice Project (WJP)** designed to offer a detailed and comprehensive picture of the extent to which **countries adhere to the rule of law in practice.**

□ India ranked 69th in 2020 in the Rule of Law Index

□ Index relies on more than 130,000 household and 4,000 expert surveys to measure how the rule of law is experienced and perceived by the general public worldwide. Index findings have been cited by heads of state, chief justices, business leaders, and public officials, including media coverage in more than 190 countries worldwide.

□ It measures countries' rule of law performance across nine factors: Constraints on Government Powers, Absence of Corruption, Open

Government, Fundamental Rights, Order and Security, Regulatory Enforcement, Civil Justice, Criminal Justice and informal justice.

Topic 32: India China Agreement

Importance for Prelims: IR

Importance for Mains: GS paper II-Bilateral relations-India and China

China through its military action at Galwan in Ladakh, which resulted in deaths on both side, has violated three key bilateral agreements -- 1993, 1996 and 2013 that have been central to maintaining peace and tranquility on the disputed Line of Actual Control.

1993 agreement

□ The 1993 agreement clearly states that in case personnel from either side cross the Line of Actual Control, **“upon being cautioned by the other side, they shall immediately pull back to their side of the Line of Actual Control”**.

□ China has not done that either in Galwan or Pangong Tso.

□ The 1993 agreement, in fact, clearly states that both sides will “jointly check” the alignment of LAC where there is a doubt.

1996 agreement

□ Three years later, both sides went into further specifics, making it clear that troops on both sides shall **“exercise self-restraint”** in case of a face-off situation and start **“immediate consultations” through diplomatic channels.**

□ Article VI of the 1996 agreement between India and China on

“**Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in the military field along the Line of Actual Control** in the India China border areas” says, “Neither side shall open fire, cause biodegradation, use hazardous chemicals, conduct blast operations or hunt with guns or explosives **within two kilometres from the line of actual control.** This prohibition shall not apply to routine firing activities in small arms firing ranges.

2013 agreement

□ The two sides agree that they **shall not follow or tail patrols of the other side in areas where there is no common understanding of the Line of Actual Control in the India- China border areas.**”