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for

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(19th October - 24th October)

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1. Geography

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1.1.Kozhikode-Wayanad project launched

- The 7-km tunnel, being described as the third longest in the country, is part of an 8-km road cutting through sensitive forests and hills of the Western Ghats.
- Its endpoints are at Maripuzha in Thiruvambady village panchayat (Kozhikode) and Kalladi in Meppadi panchayat (Wayanad).
- At present, Wayanad plateau is linked to the rest of Kerala via four roads, all with hilly sections, the longest being the 13-km Thamarassery Ghat Road along the Kozhikode-Mysuru NH 766.
- The tunnel road is an outcome of a decades-long campaign for an alternative road as the Thamarassery Ghat Road is congested and gets blocked by landslides during heavy monsoon. A proposal for widening the road has been pending clearance from the MoEFCC.
- The Forest Department has identified the proposed route as a highly sensitive patch comprising evergreen and semi-evergreen forests, marsh lands and shola tracts. This region is part of an elephant corridor spread between Wayanad and Nilgiri Hills in Tamil Nadu.
- Chaliyar and Kabani- these two major rivers that flow to the state of Karnataka, originate from these hills in Wayanad.
- The region, known for torrential rain during monsoon, has witnessed several landslides, including in 2019 at Kavalappura near Nilambur and at Puthumala, Meppadi in Wayanad.



- **TORRENTIAL RAIN:** Torrential rain, or a torrential downpour, is any amount of rain that is considered especially heavy. National Weather Service (NWS) defines heavy rainfall as rain that accumulates at a rate of 3 tenths of an inch (0.3 inches), or more, per hour.

The Dangers of Torrential Rain

- Heavy rain can trigger any one or more of the following deadly events:
 - ✓ **Runoff:** If heavy rains arrive more quickly than the ground can absorb water, you get runoff—stormwater that "runs off" the land instead of seeping into the ground. Runoff can carry

pollutants (like pesticides, oil, and yard waste) into nearby creeks, rivers, and lakes.

- ✓ Flooding: If enough rain falls into rivers and other bodies of water it can cause their water levels to rise and overflow onto normally dry land.
- ✓ Mudslides: If rain is record-breaking (typically more rain in a few days than is normal over a month or year) the ground and soil can liquify and carry unsecured objects, people, and even buildings away in debris flows. This is exacerbated along hillsides and slopes since the ground there is more easily eroded away.

1.2. Uttarakhand mulls plantation drive in other states to clear compensatory afforestation backlog

- Compensatory afforestation is done against the transfer of forest land for non-forestry purposes like the development of dams, mining and the construction of industries or roads.
- In compensatory plantation, 1,100 plants are planted over an area of one hectare.
- As per a report presented in at a recent meeting of the Uttarakhand Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) steering committee, the state government has carried out afforestation on 24,908 hectare land, against the total target of 33,944 hectare, which translates into a backlog of 9,035 hectare.
- Against this backlog, the state CAMPA has set a target of afforestation on 3,500 hectare in the current financial year. However, Uttarakhand faces a shortage of suitable land for the remaining 5,535 hectare.
- To this effect, the Uttarakhand CAMPA steering committee discussed a proposal for a plantation drive in other states.
- To clear the backlog for compensatory afforestation over the next two years, the Uttarakhand Forest Department is mulling a plantation drive in Uttar Pradesh's Bundelkhand region and parts of Rajasthan.

Objectives of CAMPA

- Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) are meant to promote afforestation and regeneration activities as a way of compensating for forest land diverted to non-forest uses.
- National CAMPA Advisory Council has been established as per orders of The Hon'ble Supreme Court with the following mandate:
 - ✓ Lay down broad guidelines for State CAMPA.
 - ✓ Facilitate scientific, technological and other assistance that may be required by State CAMPA.
 - ✓ Make recommendations to State CAMPA based on a review of their plans and programmes.
 - ✓ Provide a mechanism to State CAMPA to resolve issues of an inter-state or Centre-State character.

1.3.Artemis Accords

- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced a global set of principles for space exploration for international organizations called the 'Artemis Accords.'
- The founding member nations that have signed the Artemis Accords are: Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America
- The Artemis Accords will describe a shared vision for principles, grounded in the Outer Space Treaty of 1967.
- Under the Artemis Accord principles, signatories agree to:
 - ✓ Conduct all activities for peaceful purposes;
 - ✓ Publicly and transparently describe their policies and plans;
 - ✓ Use open standards and strive for interoperability;
 - ✓ Provide emergency assistance;
 - ✓ Register space objects to help avoid harmful interference;
 - ✓ Release scientific data publicly;
 - ✓ Protect sites and artefacts of historic value;
 - ✓ Extract and use space resources in accordance with the Outer Space Treaty;
 - ✓ Provide public information about the location and nature of operations, and work to DE conflict where necessary; and
 - ✓ Mitigate orbital debris.
- There are five international treaties that deal with issues such as the non appropriation of outer space by any one country, arms control, freedom of exploration, liability for damage caused by space objects, safety and rescue of spacecraft and astronauts, prevention of harmful interference with space activities and the environment, notification and registration of space activities, scientific investigation and the exploitation of natural resources in outer space, and settlement of disputes.
- Outer Space Treaty: The foundation of international space law, it forbids weapons of mass destruction in space and reserves the moon and other bodies for peaceful purposes. It opened for signature in January 1967 and entered into force on Oct. 10, 1967.
- Rescue Agreement: It outlines the obligations for any state party that becomes aware that the personnel of a spacecraft are in danger. The Rescue Agreement went into force in December 1968.
- Liability Convention: Coming into force in 1972, it established liability rules for space. The Soviet Union was penalized under this convention when one of its nuclear-powered satellites crashed in Canada in 1978.
- Registration Convention: In 1976, it created a system to identify and register space objects.
- Moon Agreement: It was opened for signatures in 1979 but did not enter into force until 1984. The agreement reaffirmed and elaborated on the Outer Space Treaty as it relates to the moon and other celestial bodies, which should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes, their environments should

not be disrupted, and the United Nations should be informed about any stations built on those bodies.

1.4.ESO telescopes record last moments of star devoured by a black hole

- Using telescopes from the European Southern Observatory (ESO) astronomers have spotted a rare blast of light from a star being ripped apart by a super massive black hole.
- The phenomenon, known as a tidal disruption event, is the closest such flare recorded to date at just over 215 million light-years from Earth.
- Black holes are points in space that are so dense they create deep gravity sinks. Beyond a certain region, not even light can escape the powerful tug of a black hole's gravity. And anything that ventures too close—be it star, planet, or spacecraft—will be stretched and compressed like putty in a theoretical process aptly known as spaghettification.
- There are four types of black holes: stellar, intermediate, super massive, and miniature. The most commonly known way a black hole forms is by stellar death.
- As stars reach the ends of their lives, most will inflate, lose mass, and then cool to form white dwarfs. But the largest of these fiery bodies, those at least 10 to 20 times as massive as our own sun, are destined to become either super-dense neutron stars or so-called stellar-mass black holes.
- In their final stages, enormous stars go out with a bang in massive explosions known as supernovae. Such a burst flings star matter out into space but leaves behind the stellar core.
- While the star was alive, nuclear fusion created a constant outward push that balanced the inward pull of gravity from the star's own mass.
- In the stellar remnants of a supernova, however, there are no longer forces to oppose that gravity, so the star core begins to collapse in on itself.
- If its mass collapses into an infinitely small point, a black hole is born. Packing all of that bulk—many times the mass of our own sun—into such a tiny point gives black holes their powerful gravitational pull.
- Thousands of these stellar-mass black holes may lurk within our own Milky Way galaxy.
- A white dwarf is what stars like the Sun become after they have exhausted their nuclear fuel.

1.5.Indus water treaty completes 60 years

- Indus Waters Treaty, treaty was signed on September 19, 1960, between India and Pakistan.
- It was brokered by the World Bank
- The treaty fixed and delimited the rights and obligations of both countries concerning the use of the waters of the Indus River system.
- The treaty gave the waters of the western rivers—the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab—to Pakistan and those of the eastern rivers—the Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej—to India.
- It also provided for the funding and building of dams, link canals, barrages, and tube wells—notably the Tarbela Dam on the Indus River and the Mangla Dam on the Jhelum River.

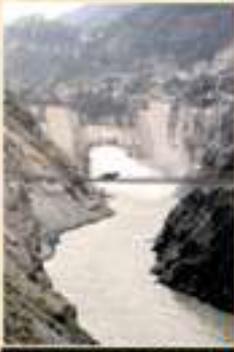
- Much of the financing was contributed by member countries of the World Bank.
- The treaty required the creation of a Permanent Indus Commission, with a commissioner from each country, in order to maintain a channel for communication and to try to resolve questions about implementation of the treaty. In addition, a mechanism for resolving disputes was provided.
- The Indus River rises in the southwestern Tibet and flows through the disputed Kashmir region and then into Pakistan to drain into the Arabian Sea. It is joined by numerous tributaries, notably those of the eastern Punjab Plain—the Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej rivers.

The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)

- The distribution of waters of the Indus and its tributaries between India and Pakistan is governed by the Indus Water Treaty (IWT).
- Was signed on Sept 19, 1960, between India, Pakistan and a representative of World Bank after eight years of negotiations.
- Partition of India cut across the Indus river basin, which has the Indus river, plus five of its main tributaries.

Western rivers Chenab, Jhelum, Indus

India's rights over these rivers: Limited – can set up certain irrigation, run-of-the-river power plants, very limited storage, domestic and non-consumptive use, all subject to conditions



Baglihar dam on Chenab

Eastern rivers Sutlej, Beas, Ravi

India's rights over these rivers: All exclusive rights lie with India.



Indus Waters Commission a success story

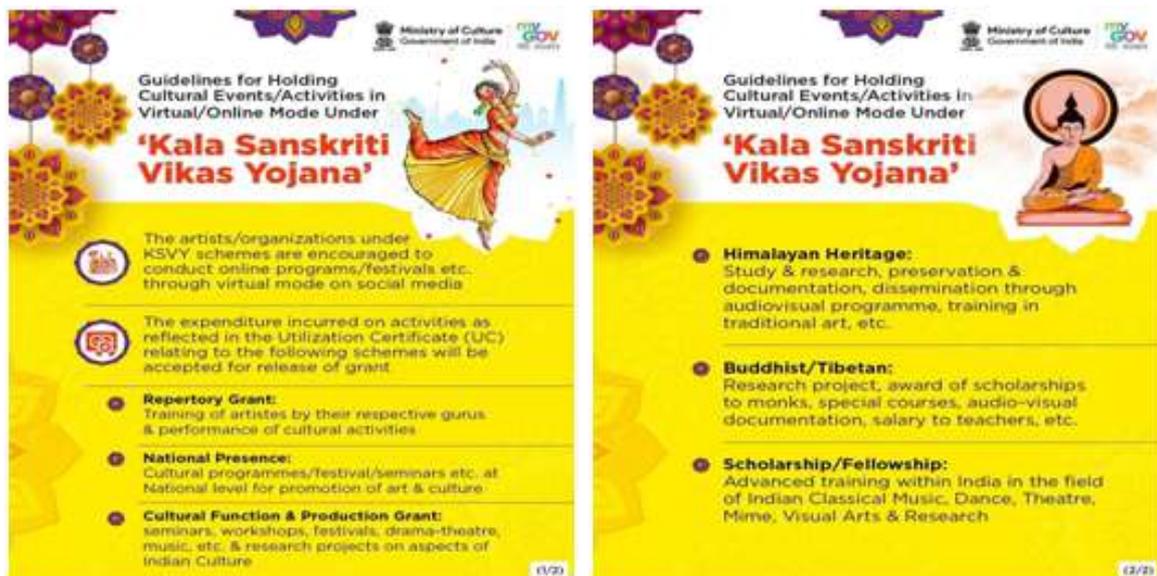
- Once every five years, conducts a general inspection of all rivers in parts. Total inspection tours so far: Over 100
- Regularly meets once a year. Total meetings thus far, including those for taking up Pak objections: Over 100

2. History

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2.1.Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojana (KSVY)

- Culture Ministry issued guidelines for holding cultural events/activities in Virtual/Online mode under various scheme components of Central Sector Scheme 'Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojana' (KSVY)
- Ministry of Culture (Performing Arts Bureau) implements many schemes under its Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojana (KSVY), where the grants are sanctioned/approved for holding programs/activities which involve large audience.
- The Ministry of Culture has formulated & devised the following guidelines to help artists/organizations who have already been sanctioned grant under various scheme components of 'Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojana' (KSVY) to conduct events on virtual mode.
- This will enable them to avail benefits under these schemes even if they are not able to stage programs in the physical format as before and will ensure continued financial assistance to tide over the present Covid crisis.

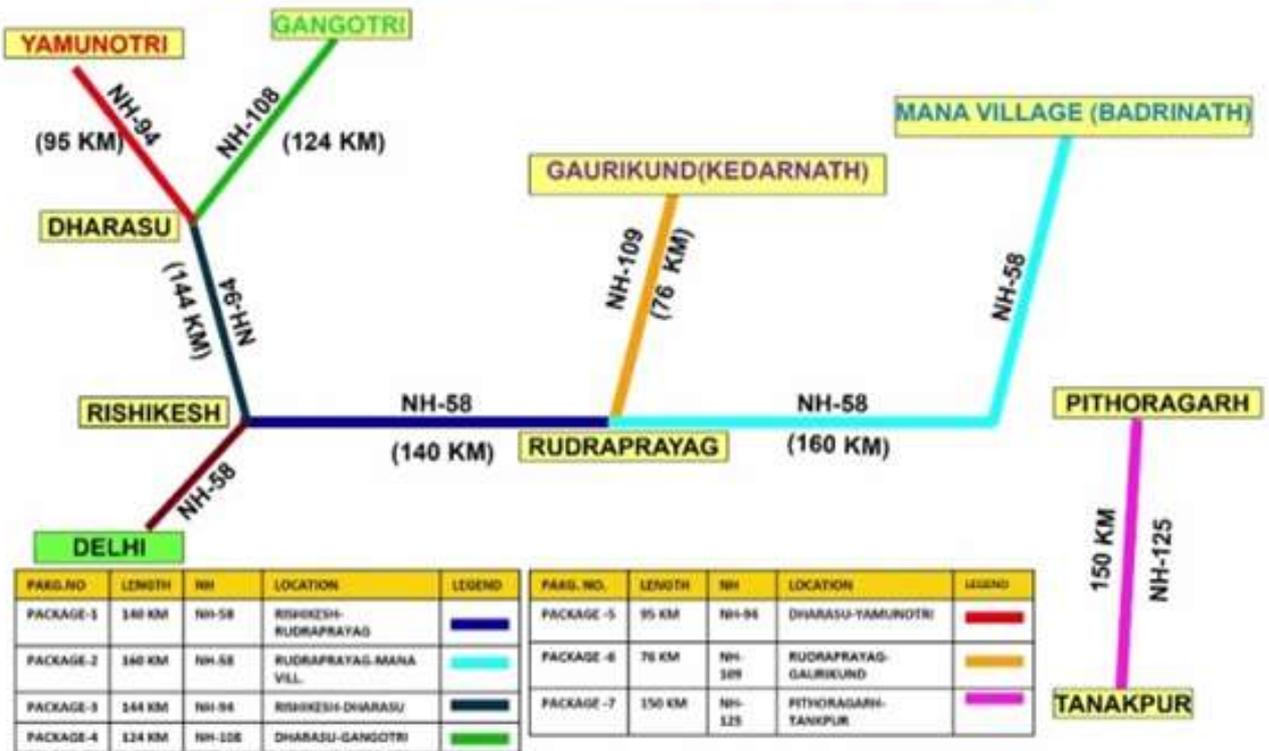


2.2.Chardham Project

- The project will connect Badrinath Dham, Kedarnath Dham, Gangotri, Yamunotri, and part of the route leading to Kailash Mansarovar yatra.
- A controversial aspect was the proposed width of the two-line highways envisaged.
- The SC committee was divided over the width with one set of members saying it only be 5.5-metre-wide and another plumbing for a higher road width.
- The SC ruled last month that a 5.5-metre width be enforced as it was in conformity with a 2018 recommendation by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) for mountain roads.
- The MoRTH is also the key coordinator of the Chardham project. Prior to this, the government had sanctioned a road width of 10-12 metres.

- The works under Char Dham Pariyojna are being implemented on Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) mode of contract.
- These projects are being implemented by 3 executing agencies of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, viz, Uttarakhand State PWD, Border Road Organization (BRO) and National Highway & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL).

Seven Project Roads: Line Diagram



2.3. Tech for Tribals

- TRIFED has designed the training programme 'Tech for Tribals' in collaboration with the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) under the ESDP.
- Tech for Tribals is an initiative aims at the holistic development of tribals with a focus on entrepreneurship development, soft skills, IT, and business development through SHGs operating through Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs).
- It was launched by TRIFED, Ministry of Tribal Affairs in association with Chhattisgarh MFP Federation and IIT Kanpur.
- Under the program trainees will undergo a 30 days training program over six weeks comprising 120 sessions.
- The programme aims to tap the traditional knowledge and skills of tribals and add branding, packaging and marketing skills to optimize their income through a market-led enterprise model by setting up Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs).
- The Van Dhan tribal start-ups, a component of the same scheme are micro tribal enterprises for processing and value addition of forest produce.

- The scheme is being further expanded to more locations under the 'Vocal for Local Go Tribal' initiative of TRIFED during the current financial year.

TRIFED

- TRIFED was established in August 1987 under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 1984 as a National level Cooperative body.
- Under the administrative control of the then Ministry of Welfare of India, TRIFED is mandated to bringing about socio-economic development of tribals of the country by institutionalising the trade of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) & Surplus Agricultural Produce (SAP) collected/ cultivated by them.
- TRIFED plays the dual role of both a market developer and a service provider, empowering them with knowledge and tools to better their operations in a systematic, scientific manner and also assist them in developing their marketing approach.
- TRIFED is involved actively in capacity building of the tribal people through sensitisation and the formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
- The organisation also assists them in exploring and creating opportunities to market the developed products in national and international markets on a sustainable basis.
- TRIBES India is the brand under which the sourced handcrafted products from the tribal people are sold. There are 120 brick-and-mortar TRIBES India outlets across the country, making it a sustainable and reliable brand.

2.4. Rare inscription unearthed in Andhra Pradesh's Kadapa district

- A rare inscription dating back to the Renati Chola era has been unearthed in a remote village of Kadapa district.
- It is found engraved on a dolomite slab and shale, which are part of a fragmentary pillar which was excavated.
- Going by the language and characters, the inscription was written in archaic Telugu which was readable in 25 lines - the first side with eleven lines and the remaining on the other side.
- It was assigned to the 8th Century C.E., when the region was under the rule of Chola Maharaja of Renadu.
- The inscription seems to throw light on the record of a gift of six Marttus (a measuring unit) of land gifted to a person Sidyamayu, one of the Brahmins serving the temple at Pidukula village.

The Renati Cholas

- The Telugu Cholas of Renadu (also called as Renati Cholas) ruled over Renadu region, the present day Cuddapah district. They were originally independent, later forced to the suzerainty of the Eastern Chalukyas.
- They used the Telugu language in their inscriptions belonging to the 6th and 8th centuries.
- The earliest of this family was Nandivarman (500 C.E.) who claimed descent from the family of Karikala and the Kasyapa gotra.



- The family seems to have had its origin in Erigal in the Tumkur district, situated in the border between Pallava and Kadamba regions.
- Dhananjaya is described as Erigal-mutturaju and as ruling Renadu.
- In the first half of the seventh century, we find Panyakumara, a descendant of Nandivarman, ruling over Renadu and Hiranyarashtra. He too bears the title Erikan-mutturaju.

3. Polity

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3.1.NCDC Ayushman Sahakar Fund for creation of healthcare infrastructure by cooperatives

- It is a scheme to assist cooperatives for creation of healthcare infrastructure in the country formulated by the autonomous development finance institution under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC).
- NCDC would extend term loans to prospective cooperatives to the tune of Rs.10, 000 crore to revolutionize the way healthcare delivery takes place in rural areas.
- NCDC's scheme aligns itself with the National Health Policy, 2017, covering the health systems in all their dimensions- investments in health, organization of healthcare services, access to technologies, development of human resources, encouragement of medical pluralism, affordable health care to farmers etc. It has a comprehensive approach-hospital, healthcare, medical education, nursing education, paramedical education, health insurance and holistic health systems such as AYUSH.
- Ayushman Sahakar scheme fund would also assist cooperative hospitals take up medical / Ayush education.
- Any Cooperative Society with suitable provision in its byelaws to undertake healthcare related activities would be able to access the NCDC fund. NCDC assistance will flow either through the State Governments/ UT Administrations or directly to the eligible cooperatives. Subsidy/ grant from other sources can be dovetailed.
- Ayushman Sahakar specifically covers establishment, modernization, expansion, repairs, renovation of hospital and healthcare and education infrastructure encompassing:
 - Hospitals and/ or Medical/ AYUSH/ Dental/ Nursing/ Pharmacy/ Paramedical/ Physiotherapy Colleges for running UG and /or PG programmes,
 - ✓ Yoga Wellness Centre,
 - ✓ Ayurveda, Allopathy, Unani, Siddha, Homeopathy and other traditional medicine healthcare centres,
 - ✓ Health care services for elderly,
 - ✓ Palliative care services,
 - ✓ Health care services for Persons with Disabilities,
 - ✓ Mental healthcare services,
 - ✓ Emergency Medical Services / Trauma Centre,
 - ✓ Physiotherapy centre,
 - ✓ Mobile Clinic Services,
 - ✓ Health Club and Gym,

- ✓ AYUSH pharmaceutical manufacturing,
 - ✓ Drug testing laboratory,
 - ✓ Dental care centre,
 - ✓ Ophthalmic care centre,
 - ✓ Laboratory services,
 - ✓ Diagnostics services,
 - ✓ Blood Bank / transfusion services,
 - ✓ Panchkarma/ Thokkanam/ Kshar sutra therapy centre,
 - ✓ Regimental Therapy of Unani (IlajBilTadbeer) centre,
 - ✓ Maternal health and Childcare services,
 - ✓ Reproductive and Child Health services,
 - ✓ Any other related centre or services as may be deemed fit by NCDC for assistance,
 - ✓ Telemedicine and remote assisted medical procedures,
 - ✓ Logistics health, healthcare and education,
 - ✓ Information and Communication Technology related to digital health,
 - ✓ Health insurance accredited by Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA).
- The scheme also provides working capital and margin money to meet operational requirements.
 - The scheme provides interest subvention of one percent to women majority cooperatives.
 - NCDC was set up under an Act of Parliament in 1963 for promotion and development of cooperatives. Since 1963, it has extended around Rs.1.60 lakh crore as loans to cooperatives.

National Health Mission

- The National Health Mission (NHM) encompasses its two Sub-Missions, The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and The National Urban Health Mission (NUHM).
- The main programmatic components include Health System Strengthening, Reproductive-Maternal-Neonatal-Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A), and Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases.
- The NHM envisages achievement of universal access to equitable, affordable & quality health care services that are accountable and responsive to people's needs.
- six financing components:
 - ✓ NRHM-RCH Flexi pool,
 - ✓ NUHM Flexi pool,
 - ✓ Flexible pool for Communicable disease,
 - ✓ Flexible pool for Non-communicable disease including Injury and Trauma,

- ✓ Infrastructure Maintenance and
- ✓ Family Welfare Central Sector component.

3.2.NHRC Completes 27 Years

- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) was established on 12 October 1993.
- NHRC is an independent statutory body constituted under the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993 as amended by the Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Act, 2006.
- It is the watchdog of human rights in the country, i.e. the rights related to life, liberty, equality, and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the international covenants and enforceable by courts in India. NHRC has its headquarters in New Delhi.
- NHRC is composed of a Chairman and seven other members. Out of the seven members, three are ex-officio members. The Chairman and members of NHRC are appointed by the President of India on the recommendation of a high-powered committee headed by Prime Minister.
- The Chairman and the members of the NHRC are appointed for 5 years or till the age of 70 years, whichever is earlier. They can only be removed on the charges of misbehaviour or incapacity if proved by an inquiry conducted by a Supreme Court Judge.

Functions

- NHRC holds the power to investigate grievances related to the violation of human rights either suo moto or after receiving a petition.
- It has the power to interfere in any judicial proceedings involving any allegation of violation of human rights.
- It can visit any jail or other government-controlled facility to see the prisoners' living conditions and make recommendations on them.
- It can review the protections provided for in the constitution or any human rights protection legislation and can recommend effective remedial steps.
- NHRC also undertakes and promotes research in the field of human rights. It works to spread human rights literacy among various sections of society and promotes awareness of the safeguards available for the protection of these rights through publications, media, seminars, and other means.
- The Commission takes an independent stance while, for the time being, giving advice on the defense of human rights in the constitutional parlance or in the statute.
- NHRC has the powers of a civil court and can grant interim relief.
- It also has the authority to recommend payment of compensation or damages.
- It can recommend to both the central and state governments to take suitable steps to prevent the violation of Human Rights.
- NHRC submits its annual report to the President of India who causes it to be laid before each House of Parliament.

Limitations

- NHRC cannot take any action against violation of Human rights by private parties
- The Recommendations made by the NHRC are not binding.
- NHRC cannot penalize the authorities that don't implement its recommended orders.
- The NHRC has limited jurisdiction over cases related to armed forces
- The NHRC cannot hold jurisdiction in the following cases:
 - ✓ Cases older than one year.
 - ✓ Cases that is anonymous, pseudonymous, or vague.
 - ✓ Frivolous cases.
 - ✓ Cases pertaining to service matters.

3.3.Uttar Pradesh launches Mission Shakti for security of women in the state

- It is a 6-month long women empowerment programme to raise awareness and tackle crime against women in the state.
- Six month campaign has two phases, 'Mission Shakti' and 'Operation Shakti'. 'Mission Shakti' will feature awareness campaigns related to women's safety. The initiatives like gender-based sensitization, training, corporate activity, voice messages, interviews, programmes in Durga Puja and other cultural pandals should be organised to create greater awareness under 'Mission Shakti'.
- A weeklong special campaign will be launched every month during the campaign to create awareness among masses and sensitize people on the subject. These programmes will be organised in all the 521 blocks, 59,000 gram panchayats, 630 urban local bodies and 1,535 police stations in the 75 districts of the state. Women nodal officers appointed by government in all the districts for the execution and monitoring of the campaign will try to create awareness about the help lines - 1090, 181, 1076, 108 and 102.
- 'Operation Shakti' will be the enforcement drive during which the police will prepare a register of persons who have come out of jail after serving time for crimes against women and monitor them.
- THE PINK PATROL: The new women patrolling force called 'Pink-Patrol' is a part of the 'Mission Shakti' campaign launched to mark the beginning of Navratri. Approximately 250 women police personnel have been deployed in the 'Pink Patrol' after going through a rigorous training.
- The 'Pink- Patrol' is designed to take immediate action on the cases of molestation and crime against women.
- The UP govt has also co-opted Green Gang in 'Mission Shakti' for drive against anti-socials.
- The Green Gang, comprising women volunteers, is running de-addiction and anti-gambling campaigns in rural areas of Purvanchal region of Uttar Pradesh.
- They will take responsibility for the security of women in 200 villages in Varanasi, Sonbhadra, Mirzapur, Jaunpur, Chandauli and Ayodhya districts. In the coming months, the Green Gang will be

activated in 50 more villages, he said.

- Volunteers will also celebrate the birth of the girl child in villages. As a mark of happiness, they will put a green impression on the door and wall of houses where girls are born. Members will pursue complaints of harassment and ensure that anti-social elements involved in harassment of women are put behind bars.
- The Green Gang is run by Hope Welfare Trust constituted by students of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in 2015. It will also impart self-defence training to girls. The volunteers will enlighten rural women and girls about the law and organise programmes to boost their self-confidence, he added.
- The Green Gang has launched a self-defence programme in 10 villages where Maoists had been active. Dressed in green sarees, the volunteers of Green Gang move on foot from one village to another, urging people to give up gambling and liquor.

3.4.GovTech- Thon

- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), National Informatics Centre (NIC), IEEE Computer Society and Oracle have come together to announce Gov Tech-Thon 2020, to incubate new ideas, boost innovation and use technology in agriculture and allied sectors.
- It will help increase the use of technology, reduce the digital divide in agriculture, transportation and education and will help in delivering better governance.
- Gov Tech-Thon 2020, a pan India 36 hours virtual Hackathon, to be organised from 30 October to 1st November, 2020. The Hackathon will be facilitated by IEEE.
- The virtual hackathon is open to students, working professionals, startups, freelance technologists, faculty, and other IT service firms in India. During the hackathon, participants will receive mentorship and advice from technical experts from NIC, IEEE and Oracle, as well as senior domain experts from the Ministries of Agriculture, Education and Transport Departments.
- Participating teams will have access to the latest tools from Oracle, Oracle Autonomous Database, built-in and easy-to-use cloud security, and compute – to help them develop prototypes that are practical and scalable. Additionally, they will be able to leverage open source technologies that bring benefits of high performance, reliability and data security.

About National Informatics Centre (NIC)

- National Informatics Centre (NIC) is attached office of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). NIC was established in 1976, and helps providing ICT and e-Governance support. It has emerged as a promoter of digital opportunities for sustainable development. NIC spearheaded “Informatics-Led-Development” by implementing ICT applications in social and public administration and facilitates electronic delivery of services to the government (G2G), business (G2B), citizen (G2C) and government employee (G2E). NIC, through its ICT Network, “NICNET”, has institutional linkages with all the Ministries /Departments of the Central Government, 37 State Governments/ Union Territories, and about 720+ District Administrations of India.
- NIC has been closely associated with the Government in different aspects of Governance besides establishing a Nationwide State-of-the-Art ICT Infrastructure, it has also built a large number of digital solutions to support the government at various levels, making the last-mile delivery of government services to the citizens.

About IEEE Computer Society

- IEEE is the world's largest technical professional organization dedicated to advancing technology for the benefit of humanity. IEEE and its members inspire a global community to innovate for a better tomorrow through its more than 419,000 members in over 160 countries.
- The IEEE Computer Society is the source for information, inspiration, and collaboration in computer science and engineering. Connecting members worldwide, the Computer Society empowers the people who advance technology by delivering tools for individuals at all stages of their professional careers.

About Oracle

- The Oracle Cloud offers a complete suite of integrated applications for Sales, Service, Marketing, Human Resources, Finance, Supply Chain and Manufacturing, plus Highly Automated and Secure Generation 2 Infrastructure featuring the Oracle Autonomous Database.

3.5. Electoral bonds will be up for sale from 19 October

- Electoral bonds are an alternative to cash donations made to political parties as part of efforts to bring transparency in political funding.
- Electoral bonds can be purchased by a person who is a citizen of India or incorporated or established in India
- SBI is the only authorized bank to issue such bonds. They are interest free denominations.
- Only the Political Parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (43 of 1951) and which secured not less than one per cent of the votes polled in the last General Election to the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly of the State, are eligible to receive the Electoral Bonds.
- The electoral bonds shall be encashed by an eligible political party only through a Bank account with the authorised bank.
- An electoral bond will be valid for 15 days from the date of issue.
- No payment will be made to any payee political party if the bond is deposited after expiry of the validity period.
- The bond deposited by any eligible political party into its account will be credited on the same day.
- The Election Commission of India has clearly laid out that No political functionary shall make any reference in this regard during any public speech or communication to the press or public in the constituencies going for poll. (Model code of conduct).

4. Economy

Click [here](#) to watch the following questions on YouTube

4.1. Exim Bank extends line of credit of USD 400 million to the Government of Republic of Maldives.

Exim Bank

- Export-Import Bank of India is a specialized financial institution, wholly owned by Government of India, set up in 1982, for financing, facilitating and promoting foreign trade of India.
- EXIM Bank extends Lines of Credit (LOCs) to overseas financial institutions, regional development banks, sovereign governments and other entities overseas, to enable buyers in those countries to import developmental and infrastructure projects, equipment, goods and services from India, on deferred credit terms.

Line of Credit

- A LOC is an arrangement between a financial institution and a client that establishes the maximum loan amount the customer can borrow.
- The borrower can access funds from the line of credit at any time as long as they do not exceed the maximum amount (or credit limit) set in the agreement and meet any other requirements such as making timely minimum payments. It may be offered as a facility.
- Unlike a closed-end credit account, a line of credit is an open-end credit account, which allows borrowers to spend the money, repay it, and spend it again in a never-ending cycle.
- While a credit line's main advantage is flexibility, potential downsides include high-interest rates, severe penalties for late payments, and the potential to overspend.
- The amount of interest, size of payments, and other rules are set by the lender.
- A line of credit has built-in flexibility, which is its main advantage. Borrowers can request a certain amount, but they do not have to use it all. Rather, they can tailor their spending on the LOC to their needs and owe interest only on the amount they draw, not on the entire credit line.
- The borrowers can adjust their repayment amounts as needed, based on their budget or cash flow. They can repay, for example, the entire outstanding balance all at once or just make the minimum monthly payments.
- Most lines of credit are unsecured loans. This means the borrower does not promise the lender any collateral to back the LOC.
- One notable exception is a home equity line of credit (HELOC), which is secured by the equity in the borrower's home.
- Unsecured lines of credit tend to come with higher interest rates than secured LOCs. They are also more difficult to obtain and often require a higher credit score or credit rating.
- A revocable line of credit is a source of credit provided to an individual or business by a bank or financial institution that can be revoked or annulled at the lender's discretion or under specific circumstances.

- Example: A credit card is implicitly a line of credit you can use to make purchases with funds you do not currently have on hand.

4.2. IFSCA introduces Framework for Regulatory Sandbox to tap into innovative fintech solutions

- IFSCA: Set up by Finance Ministry, headquartered in Gandhinagar (Gujrat) {GIFT CITY}, a unified authority to regulate all financial services in International Financial Services Centers (IFSCs) in the country.
- GIFT CITY: Gujarat International Finance Tec located on the banks of the Sabarmati River is India's first operational smart city and international financial services center. It was promoted by the Government of Gujarat as a Greenfield project. The city is designed for walk to work concept and includes commercial and residential complexes.
- “Regulatory Sandbox”: Under this Sandbox framework, entities operating in the capital market, banking, and insurance and financial services space shall be granted certain facilities and flexibilities to experiment with innovative FinTech solutions in a live environment with a limited set of real customers for a limited time frame.
- These features shall be fortified with necessary safeguards for investor protection and risk mitigation. The Regulatory Sandbox shall operate within the IFSC located at GIFT City.
- IFSCA is proposing an “Innovation Sandbox”, which will be a testing environment where FinTech firms can test their solutions in isolation from the live market, based on market related data made available by the Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs) operating in IFSC.
- All entities (regulated as well as unregulated) operating in the capital market, banking, insurance and pension sectors as well as individuals and startups from India and FATF compliant jurisdictions, shall be eligible for participation in the Regulatory Sandbox.

4.3. India to get USD177 million loan from Asian Development Bank for Maharashtra road improvements

- The loan was sanctioned to upgrade 450 km of state highways and major district roads in the state of Maharashtra.
- The project will upgrade 2 major district roads and 11 state highways, with combined length of 450 km, to 2-lane standard across seven districts of Maharashtra, and improve connectivity to national highways, interstate roads, seaports, airports, rail hubs, district headquarters, industrial areas, enterprise clusters and agricultural areas.
- The project will also focus on training the Maharashtra Public Works Department project staff to build their capacity in climate change adaptation and disaster resilient features in road design, road maintenance planning and road safety

ADB

- Founded in 1966, the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) headquarters are in Manila, Philippines. The Asian Development Bank's primary mission is to foster growth and cooperation among countries in the Asia-Pacific Region.

- It raises capital through the international bond markets. The ADB also relies on member contributions, retained earnings from lending, and the repayment of loans for funding of the organization.
- The two largest shareholders of the Asian Development Bank are the United States and Japan.
- The Asian Development Bank provides assistance to its developing member countries, the private sector, and public-private partnerships through grants, loans, technical assistance, and equity investments to promote development.
- Any Regional development bank usually works in harmony with both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in their activities.
- Asakawa is the President of the Asian Development Bank (ADB).



Strategy 2030: Operational Plans Overview

- Operational plans (OPs) have been prepared for each of the seven operational priorities to set out how and where these priorities will be operationalized.
- The OPs have been prepared by members of sector and thematic groups in collaboration with all operations and knowledge and support departments.
- The OPs are interlinked and complementary.

OPs and New Opportunities



Operational Approaches



Implementation

- "One ADB" approach should be adopted through integrated multisectoral analysis, collaboration between sovereign, nonsovereign, and PPP operations; and synergy between knowledge and financing activities.
- Interdepartmental cooperation will require deeper cross-sector and cross-thematic collaboration.
- Implementation of the OPs will require wider collaboration on knowledge management to better capture tacit knowledge and transform it into lessons for design and implementation of operations.
- Delivering innovation will require deeper emphasis on becoming a knowledge bank, which will be achieved through collaboration with external organizations.
- Meeting the gap for emerging skills
- The OPs highlight areas where concessionality will be instrumental in delivering support to developing member countries.

4.4. Union Finance Minister announces Stimulus to boost Demand in the Economy

- Economic stimulus refers to targeted fiscal and monetary policy intended to elicit and economic response from the private sector. Economic stimulus is a conservative approach to expansionary fiscal and monetary policy that relies on encouraging private sector spending to make up for losses of aggregate demand.
- Fiscal stimulus measures are deficit spending and lowering taxes; monetary stimulus measures are produced by central banks and may include lowering interest rates.

Measures to Stimulate Consumer

- Spending Proposals to stimulate consumer spending has two components:
- **LTC Cash Voucher Scheme**
 - ✓ Under LTC Cash Voucher Scheme, the Government has decided to give cash payment to employees in lieu of one LTC during 2018-21, in which full payment on Leave encashment and tax-free payment of LTC fare in 3 flat-rate slabs depending on class of entitlement will be given.
 - ✓ An employee, opting for this scheme, will be required to buy goods / services worth 3 times the fare and 1 time the leave encashment before 31st March 2021. The items bought should be those attracting GST of 12% or more. Only digital transactions are allowed, GST Invoice to be produced.
 - ✓ The biggest incentive for employees to avail the LTC Cash Voucher Scheme is that in a four-year block ending in 2021, the LTC not availed will lapse, instead, this will encourage employees to avail of this facility to buy goods which can help their families.
 - ✓ Estimated cost of LTC Cash Voucher Scheme: For Central govt.: ₹ 5,675 crore; for PSBs & PSUs: ₹ 1,900 crore.
 - ✓ Tax concessions for LTC tickets available for state govt. & private sector too, if they choose to give such facility, these employees too can benefit.
- **Special Festival Advance Scheme**
 - ✓ Special Festival Advance Scheme which was meant for non-gazetted government employees is being revived as a one-time measure, for gazetted employees too. All central govt. employees can now get interest-free advance of Rs. 10,000, in the form of a prepaid RuPay Card, to be spent by March 31, 2021.
 - ✓ The one-time disbursement of Special Festival Advance Scheme is expected to amount to Rs. 4,000 crore; if given by all state governments, another Rs. 8,000 crore is expected to be disbursed. Employees can spend this on any festival.

Measures to Stimulate Capital Expenditure

- **Capital Expenditure Boost for States**
- A special interest-free 50-year loan to states is being issued, for ₹12,000 crore capital expenditure
 - ✓ ₹ 200 crore each for 8 North East states

- ✓ ₹ 450 crore each Uttarakhand, Himachal
- ✓ ₹ 7,500 crore for remaining states, as per share of Finance Commission's devolution.
- ✓ All the above interest-free loans given to states are to be spent by March 31, 2021; 50% will be given initially, remaining upon utilization of first 50%.
- ✓ Under Part 3 of ₹ 12,000 crore interest-free loans to states, ₹ 2,000 crore will be given to those states which fulfill at least 3 out of 4 reforms spelled out in Aatma Nirbhar Bharat package. This is over and above other borrowing ceilings.

● Capital Expenditure Boost for the Centre

- ✓ Additional budget of ₹ 25,000 crore (in addition to ₹ 4.13 lakh crore given in Budget 2020-'21) is being provided for capital expenditure on roads, defence, water supply, urban development and domestically produced capital equipment.

4.5. TRP Manipulations

- TRP: A television rating point (TRP) is a metric used in marketing and advertising to indicate the percentage of the target audience reached by a campaign or advertisement through a communication medium. In the particular case of television, a device is attached to the TV set in a few thousand viewers' houses to measure impressions.
- These numbers are treated as a sample from the overall TV owners in different geographical and demographic sectors. Using a device, a special code is telecasted during the programme, which records the time and the programme that a viewer watches on a particular day. The average is taken for a 30-day period, which gives the viewership status for the particular channel.
- Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) in 2018 defined its importance as: "On the basis of audience measurement data, ratings are assigned to various programmes on television. Television ratings in turn influence programmes produced for the viewers. Better ratings would promote a programme while poor ratings will discourage a programme. Incorrect ratings will lead to production of programmes which may not be really popular while good programmes may be left out."
- Manipulated TRP ratings results in miscalculated targeted audience for the advertisers, which in turn resulted into losses of hundreds of crores of rupees because of the manipulated statistics of TRP.
- BARC functions under Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) and the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). It is an industry body jointly owned by advertisers, ad agencies, and broadcasting companies, represented by The Indian Society of Advertisers, the Indian Broadcasting Foundation and the Advertising Agencies Association of India. It is set up to design, commission, supervise and own an accurate, reliable, and timely TV audience measurement system.

4.6. THE CENTRE to cap the number of subsidised fertiliser bags

- THE CENTRE is working on a plan to cap the number of subsidised fertiliser bags that individual farmers can buy in any cropping season.
- Currently, the government is following a "no-denial" policy: anybody, non-farmers included, can buy any quantity of fertiliser through POS machines.

- All they have to do is furnish their Aadhaar unique identity number.
- The quantities purchased, along with the person's name and biometric authentication, are then registered on the POS device that is linked to the 'e-Urvarak' online platform of the Department of Fertilisers.
- Only restriction is that nobody can buy more than 100 bags of all fertilisers at one time.
- The subsidy on the total quantity of fertilisers sold to farmers through a retailer's POS machine is transferred to the company concerned on a weekly basis.
- In the event of capping, the machine/platform will stop registering the extra bags that would perforce have to be retailed at the non-subsidised MRPs.

4.7. Assam to have India's first Multi-Modal Logistics park

- Multi-Modal Logistics Parks (MMLPs) are a key policy initiative to improve the country's logistics sector by lowering overall freight costs, reducing vehicular pollution and congestion, and cutting warehousing costs.
- (MoRTH) is developing multi-modal logistics parks at selected locations in the country under its Logistics Efficiency Enhancement Program (LEEP).
- India is burdened with high logistics costs, which account for about 13% of the value of goods sold in the economy compared with 8% in other major economies.
- The average cost to export/import one container in India is about 72% higher than in China.
- LEEP, which is spearheaded by the MoRTH and NHAI, aims to enhance freight transport in India by reducing costs and time, and improving the tracking and traceability of consignments through infrastructural, procedural, and information technology interventions.

What is MMLP

- The government defines an MMLP as a freight-handling facility encompassing a minimum area of 100 acres (40.5 hectares), with various modes of transport access, and comprising mechanized warehouses, specialized storage solutions such as cold storage, facilities for mechanized material handling and inter-modal transfer container terminals, and bulk and break-bulk cargo terminals.

Benefits of MMLP

- Logistics parks will further provide value-added services such as customs clearance with bonded storage yards, quarantine zones, testing facilities, and warehousing management services. Provisions will also be made for late-stage manufacturing activities such as kitting and final assembly, grading, sorting, labelling and packaging activities, reworking, and returns management.
- It will provide direct air, road, rail and waterways connectivity to the people.
- It will be developed under the ambitious Bharatmala Pariyojana.
- Ministry envisages developing 35 Multi-modal Logistic Parks (MMLPs) in the country.
- The first such MMLP is being made by NHIDCL in Jogighopa of Assam, which will be connected to road, rail, air and waterways.
- This is being developed in 317-acre land along the Brahmaputra.

Bharatmala Project

- It was launched in 2017. It aims to improve road traffic can trade through road transportation. The scheme aims to complete the following targets by 2022:
 - ✓ National Highway development project works of Ten Thousand kilometres
 - ✓ Economic corridor of 9000 kilometres
 - ✓ Inter corridor roads of 6000 km
 - ✓ Improve efficiency of national corridors of 5000 km
 - ✓ Border connectivity roads of 2000 kilometre
 - ✓ Expressways of 800 km
 - ✓ Post connectivity roads of 2000 km

5. Environment

Click [here](#) to watch the following questions on YouTube

5.1. Scientists trying to cultivate “Heeng” in the Himalayas for the first time.

- Asafoetida is the dried latex exuded from the rhizome or tap root of several species of Ferula.
- The species are native to the deserts of Iran and mountains of Afghanistan where substantial amounts are grown.
- Heeng thrives in dry and cold desert conditions. The plant of this herb stores the maximum amount of its nutrients inside its deep fleshy roots.
- The agriculture ministry of Himachal Pradesh has identified four locations in the valley and has distributed heeng seeds to seven farmers in the region.
- It is being cultivated by scientists at CSIR-Institute of Himalayan Bioresource, Palampur (IHBT) in the Himalayas.
- India consumes nearly 40 percent of the world's production of heeng and is its largest importer.
- The National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources carried six categories of Heeng from Iran.
- The institute also standardized the protocol to produce the heeng as per Indian conditions.

Geo climatic Conditions

- The plant can withstand a maximum temperature between 35 and 40 degree, whereas during winters, it can survive in temperatures up to minus 4 degree.
- During extreme weather, the plant can get dormant.
- Regions with sandy soil, very little moisture and annual rainfall of not more than 200mm are considered conducive for heeng cultivation in India.

Benefits

- Relief for digestive, spasmodic and stomach disorders, asthma and bronchitis.
- The herb is commonly used to help with painful or excessive bleeding during menstruation and pre-mature labour.
- Being an anti-flatulent, the herb is fed to new mothers.

CSIR

- Council of Scientific and Industrial Research is the largest research and development (R&D) organization in India. CSIR has a pan-India presence and has a dynamic network of 38 national laboratories, 39 outreach centers, 3 Innovation Complexes and 5 units.
- Established: September 1942
- Located: New Delhi

- CSIR is funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology and it operates as an autonomous body through the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- CSIR covers a wide spectrum of streams – from radio and space physics, oceanography, geophysics, chemicals, drugs, genomics, biotechnology and nanotechnology to mining, aeronautics, instrumentation, environmental engineering and information technology.
- It provides significant technological intervention in many areas with regard to societal efforts which include the environment, health, drinking water, food, housing, energy, and farm and non-farm sectors.
- Prime Minister (Ex-officio) is the president.
- Union Minister of Science and Technology (Ex-officio) is the vice president.

5.2. Chinese pink dolphins are making a comeback in the Pearl River estuary

- The unique species was first spotted and documented in English by British traveler and writer Peter Mundy in Hong Kong near the Pearl River in 1637.
- Chinese white dolphins – are white and become pink when they exert energy, somewhat like us when we exercise. The dolphins appear pink due to the ventilation (passing of blood and oxygen) underneath the skin – and even more so when they are swimming and jumping near the surface of the water.
- The Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*) is one of four currently recognized species in the genus *Sousa*. Its total range is in coastal waters from central China southward throughout Southeast Asia and westward to the Bay of Bengal, with highest densities in and around estuaries.
- Pink dolphins have seen a decline in their numbers in the past 15 years by 70-80 per cent.
- IUCN status : Vulnerable
- But dolphin numbers in the waters between Hong Kong and Macau have seen a rebound this year because the novel coronavirus disease pandemic has stopped ferries for the time being.
- Dolphins use echolocation to find their way in water. The estuary is one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world.
- Ships often disturb the dolphins in finding their way and even kill them.
- Echolocation is a technique used by bats, dolphins and other animals to determine the location of objects using reflected sound. This allows the animals to move around in pitch darkness, so they can navigate, hunt, identify friends and enemies, and avoid obstacles.
- Threat factors are agricultural, industrial, and urban pollution, fishing, marine construction (including bridge building and land creation for airport expansion and residential/office development) and transport (including fast ferries).
- The Yangtze River dolphin, or BAIJI, of China has already been declared extinct in 2006.

Some other important dolphins with their IUCN status are:

- Atlantic humpback dolphin (*Sousa teuszii*) – Critically Endangered

- Franciscana (*Pontoporia blainvillei*) –Vulnerable
 - Indian Ocean humpback dolphin (*Sousa plumbea*) – Endangered
 - Inia (*Inia geoffrensis*) – Endangered
 - Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*) – Endangered
 - South Asian river dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*) – Endangered
 - Tucuxi (*Sotalia fluviatilis*) – Data Deficient (but in the process of being reclassified as Endangered)
 - Yangtze finless porpoise (*Neophocaena asiaeorientalis*) – Critically Endangered
- ✓ IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources is an international organization working in the field of nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. It is involved in data gathering and analysis, research, field projects, advocacy, and education.
- ✓ CN) Red List of Threatened Species (also known as the IUCN Red List or Red Data List), founded in 1964, is an inventory of the global conservation status of biological species. It uses a set of criteria to evaluate the extinction risk of thousands of species and subspecies.



- An estuary is a partially enclosed coastal body of brackish water with one or more rivers or streams flowing into it, and with a free connection to the open sea. Estuaries form a transition zone between river environments and maritime environment known as ecotone.

5.3.Rajasthan Health Department to administer deworming tablets in campaign mode from October 5 to 11

National Deworming Day

- It aims at eradicating intestinal worms also known as Soil Transmitted Helminths (STH), among children in the age group of 1-19 years.
- Children and adolescents are administered a single dose of a safe medicine Albendazole across government, government aided schools, anganwadis, private schools and other educational institutions.

- ✓ Deworming through Albendazole is an evidence-based, globally-accepted, effective solution used to control worm infections in all children.
- ✓ It was started in 2015 by the Ministry Of Health And Family Welfare, the NDD is the largest public health program implemented on a single day reaching crores of children and adolescents through two NDD rounds every year.
- ✓ NDD is a key intervention of Anaemia Mukh Bharat.
- ✓ Soil-transmitted helminth (STH) infections are transmitted by eggs present in human faeces which in turn contaminate soil in areas where sanitation is poor.
- ✓ The main species that infect people are the roundworm (*Ascaris lumbricoides*), the whipworm (*Trichuris trichiura*) and the hookworms (*Necator americanus* and *Ancylostoma duodenale*).
- ✓ Intestinal worms produce a wide range of symptoms including intestinal manifestations (diarrhoea, abdominal pain), general malaise and weakness. Hookworms cause chronic intestinal blood loss that result in anaemia.
- ✓ Soil-transmitted helminths are transmitted by eggs that are passed in the faeces of infected people. Adult worms live in the intestine where they produce thousands of eggs each day. In areas that lack adequate sanitation, these eggs contaminate the soil. This can happen in several ways:
 - ✓ Eggs that are attached to vegetables are ingested when the vegetables are not carefully cooked, washed or peeled,
 - ✓ Eggs are ingested from contaminated water sources,
 - ✓ Eggs are ingested by children who play in the contaminated soil and then put their hands in their mouths without washing them.

5.4.NGT red-flags Kaleshwaram project

- The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project is a multi-purpose irrigation project on the Godavari River in Kaleshwaram, Bhoopalpally, Telangana.
- This project is unique because Telangana will harness water at the confluence of two rivers with Godavari by constructing a barrage at Medigadda in Jayashankar Bhupalpally district and reverse pump the water into the main Godavari River and divert it through lifts and pumps into a huge and complex system of reservoirs, water tunnels, pipelines and canals.
- On October 12, the Principal Bench of the National Green Tribunal, New Delhi, ruled that the Environmental Clearance given to the project in December 2017 was void as the Telangana government subsequently changed the design of the project to increase its capacity.
- The NGT also directed the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change to constitute a seven-member Expert Committee within a month to assess the extent of damage caused in going ahead with the project's expansion and identify the restoration measures necessary.
- The Expert Committee will complete its exercise within six months.
- The NGT directed the Telangana Government to stop all work except the drinking water component and obtain a Forest Clearance from the Centre before going ahead with the project.

THE MIGHTINESS OF KALESHWARAM

PROPOSED TO IRRIGATE 36L ACRES, INCLUDING 18L ACRES NEW AYACUT AND 18L ACRES STABILISATION OF EXISTING AYACUT	₹80,000 cr	1,832 km	1,531 km	203 km	98 km
	Project cost	Total length	Total gravity canal	Tunnel length	Pressure pipe line
First pumping at Medigadda likely to start in July	20	19	88	462724 MW	
	Total lifts	Total pump houses	Total pumps	Power requirement	
	20	5	14771 TMC ft	Live storage	
	New reservoirs	Old and existing reservoirs			



OTHER SALIENT FEATURES

- Godavari river will be filled with water due to continuous pumping & through reverse pumping, Godavari water can be utilised
- Land acquisition is limited due to underground pumping stations, tunnels & use of existing reservoirs
- Has world's largest underground pumping station with 81 km tunnel. It carries 2 TMC ft water continuously
- World's biggest package 8 pump house coming up with 139 MW capacity & in all, seven such units are envisaged

5.5.NGT Completes 10 Years

- The NGT was established on October 18, 2010 under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010, passed by the Central Government.
- The stated objective of the Central Government was to provide a specialised forum for effective and speedy disposal of cases pertaining to environment protection, conservation of forests and for seeking compensation for damages caused to people or property due to violation of environmental laws or conditions specified while granting permissions.

Structure

- The Principal Bench of the NGT has been established in the National Capital – New Delhi, with regional benches in Pune (Western Zone Bench), Bhopal (Central Zone Bench), Chennai (Southern Bench) and Kolkata (Eastern Bench).
- Each Bench has a specified geographical jurisdiction covering several States in a region. There is also a mechanism for circuit benches. For example, the Southern Zone bench, which is based in Chennai, can decide to have sittings in other places like Bangalore or Hyderabad.
- The Chairperson of the NGT is a retired Judge of the Supreme Court, Head Quartered in Delhi.
- Other Judicial members are retired Judges of High Courts.
- Each bench of the NGT will comprise of at least one Judicial Member and one Expert Member. Expert members should have a professional qualification and a minimum of 15 years' experience in the field of environment/forest conservation and related subjects.

Powers

- The NGT has the power to hear all civil cases relating to environmental issues and questions that are linked to the implementation of laws listed in Schedule I of the NGT Act. These include the following:
 - ✓ The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974;

- ✓ The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977;
 - ✓ The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980;
 - ✓ The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981;
 - ✓ The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986;
 - ✓ The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991;
 - ✓ The Biological Diversity Act, 2002.
- This means that any violations pertaining only to these laws, or any order / decision taken by the Government under these laws can be challenged before the NGT.
 - The NGT has not been vested with powers to hear any matter relating to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and various laws enacted by States relating to forests, tree preservation etc.

Principles of Justice adopted by NGT

- The NGT is not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.
- Further, NGT is also not bound by the rules of evidence as enshrined in the Indian Evidence Act, 1872. Thus, it will be relatively easier (as opposed to approaching a court) for conservation groups to present facts and issues before the NGT, including pointing out technical flaws in a project, or proposing alternatives that could minimize environmental damage but which have not been considered.
- While passing Orders/decisions/awards, the NGT will apply the principles of sustainable development, the precautionary principle and the polluter pays principles.
- However, it must be noted that if the NGT holds that a claim is false, it can impose costs including lost benefits due to any interim injunction.



5.6. Blue Flag Beaches in Karnataka

- A 'Blue Flag' beach is an eco-tourism model to provide tourists clean and hygienic bathing water, facilities/ amenities, safe and healthy environment and sustainable development of the area.
 - ✓ The two beaches, Kasarkod beach near Honnavar in Uttara Kannada and Padubidri beach near Udupi have bagged the coveted eco-label 'Blue Flag'.

- ✓ The international agency Foundation for Environment Education, awards the certification based on 33 stringent criteria in four major heads that is environmental education and information, bathing water quality, environment management and conservation and safety and services in the beaches.
- ✓ The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had embarked upon a program for 'Blue Flag' certification for select 13 beaches in the country.
- ✓ The Indian beaches are being developed by the Society for Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM), an environment ministry's body working for the management of coastal areas, according to the Blue Flag certification standards.
- ✓ Chandrabhaga beach of Odisha's Konark coast is the first to complete the tag certification process.

What is a Blue Flag Beach?

- The water is clean and unpolluted
- It is accessible and clean
- Highest safety standards are met
- Environment is managed and protected
- Environmental education/information supplied
- Ablution facilities are clean
- Life guards on duty
- Certification is renewed yearly
- 27 Strict criteria must be met



Beaches Proposed for 'Blue Flag' Certification



The map shows the following beaches and their locations:

- Shivrajpur Beach (Gujarat)
- Ghoghala Beach (Diu)
- Bhogave Beach (Maharashtra)
- Miramar Beach (Goa)
- Padubidri and Kasarko Beach (Karnataka)
- Bangaram Beach (Lakshadweep)
- Kappad Beach (Kerala)
- Golden Beach (Odisha)
- Rushikonda Beach (Andhra Pradesh)
- Radhanagar Beach (Andaman & Nicobar Islands)
- Eden Beach (Puducherry)
- Kovalam beach (Tamil Nadu)

Logos of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the Society for Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM) are visible in the top left corner.

6. International Relations

Click [here](#) to watch the following questions on YouTube

6.1. Crisis in Caucasus: On Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh

- The ongoing fighting between Armenian rebels and the Azerbaijani Army in Nagorno-Karabakh, a self-declared republic within Azerbaijan, risks becoming a wider regional conflict.



Issue

- Recently, Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to a Russia-mediated ceasefire after days of fighting.
- But, the ceasefire crumbled immediately amid a blame game.
- Azerbaijan, backed by Turkey, seems determined to press ahead with its offensive.

Background

- The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is decades old. The region is largely populated by ethnic Armenians. It is located within the international boundaries of Azerbaijan.
- Under the Soviet Union, it was an autonomous province that was part of the Azerbaijan republic.
 - ✓ 1988- In 1988, when the Soviet power was receding, the regional assembly in Nagorno-Karabakh voted to join Armenia, triggering ethnic clashes.
 - ✓ 1991- After the Soviet disintegration in 1991, Armenia and Azerbaijan went to war over this largely mountainous, forested enclave.
 - ✓ 1994- By the time a ceasefire was reached in 1994, the rebels had established their de facto rule, with support from Armenia and Russia.

- The rebels extended their influence to the Armenian border. Ever since, the border has remained tense.

Recent Issue

- External intervention makes the clashes now far more dangerous.
- Turkey has called Armenia a threat to peace in the region.
- The Azeris and Turks share ethnic and linguistic bonds.
- Also, the pre-Soviet Azerbaijan was a local ally of the Ottomans when they invaded Transcaucasia in the last leg of World War I.
- For Turkey, which is trying to expand its geopolitical reach to the former Ottoman regions, the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is an opportunity to enter the South Caucasus.

TURKEY	ARMENIA	RUSSIA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Turkey also has a particularly bad relationship with Armenia. ● But its problem is that Armenia is a member of the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Russia enjoys good economic and defense ties with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. ● But Armenia, as a CSTO member and host to a Russian military base, has more weight. ● In a wider conflict, Armenia could trigger Article 4 of the CSTO treaty and ask for Russian help. ● And if Moscow responds favorably, that would pit Russia against Turkey, a NATO member. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Russia, already involved in military conflicts in Syria, Ukraine and Libya, may not like opening another front. ● That is why it has re-emphasized its neutrality and hosted talks for a truce. ● But it will be forced to take sides if the conflict spills into Armenia.

6.2.US imposes new curbs on H-1B visas

- The Trump administration has announced new restrictions on H-1B nonimmigrant visa programme which it said is aimed at protecting American workers, restoring integrity and to better guarantee that H-1B petitions are approved only for qualified beneficiaries and petitioners, a move which is likely to affect thousands of Indian IT professionals.

Update

- The US administration said it was announcing an interim final rule, which will strengthen the non-immigrant work visa programme.
- The new rules will be effective 60 days from their publication in the Federal Register, which is the official journal of the US government.

Interim Final Rule

- Executive policies announced by agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) require them to consult stakeholders.
- They should give them a notice period of 60 days and seek comments before any sweeping changes are brought in.
- This method allows agencies such as DHS to act with urgency and within a specified time after a new rule or law is made.
- In the latest announcement on the proposed policy changes, the DHS said that the USCIS would forgo the usual 60-day comment.

- It also said that notice period to immediately ensure that employing H-1B workers will not worsen the economic crisis caused by COVID-19.
- The impact of the pandemic on the US economy and its domestic workers was an obvious fact which justified the agency issuing this rule.

Proposed Changes

- Detrimental - As per the DHS, the H-1B work visa regime had over the years gone far beyond the mandate, for which it was launched, often to the detriment of US workers.
- Therefore, in order to bring back the integrity to the regime, the DHS has announced some changes.
- These changes would ensure that H-1B petitions are approved only for qualified beneficiaries and petitioners.
- The new rule will narrow down the definition of what constitutes a “specialty occupation”.
- This means that companies and agencies which hire workers on H-1B visas will have a tough time proving to the immigration agencies that such employees are not available from the domestic pool of workers.
- Filling Quota - Another proposed change relates to companies allegedly making fictitious work offers to fictitious employees just to fulfill their quota of H-1B visa applications approved.
- The US administration had alleged that both Indian and the US-based companies have often given fictitious H-1B work visa offers to foreign employees.
- They do so to evade some part of taxes, while also undercutting the jobs for eligible US workers.
- Enforcement - The final proposed rule change talks about better enforcement of the new H-1B norms which will be announced later.
- This will be done through worksite inspections and monitoring compliance, before, during and after the H-1B work visa is approved.

6.3. India provides USD 1 million for Palestinian refugees

- India has contributed one million dollars to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine Refugees in Near East region. This will support the UNRWA's programmes and services including the education, health care, relief and social services.
- India's support to the Palestine is an integral part of the India's foreign policy.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)

- It is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949.
- It supports the relief and human development of Palestinian refugees across its five fields of operation.



- Its services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, protection and microfinance.
- Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.
- It is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions and financial support.
- Palestine refugees are defined as persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.

India-Palestine

- India had recognized the Palestine's statehood for the first time on 18 November 1988. However, the relations between both the countries formally established in 1974.
- After the full diplomatic relation was established in March 1980, India and Israel have increased cooperation in military and intelligence ventures.
- In the line, Narendra Modi became the first Prime Minister of India to visit Palestine in 2018.
- India supported Palestinian self-determination in the aftermath of the partition of British India after India got Independence.
- India have also provided \$10 million relief to Palestine's annual budget once.
- US\$300,000 was provided for the construction of two addition floor in the Al-Azhar University and human resource development programme.
- India had also offered 51 specialized security training slots to Palestinians during 1997-98 with an estimated expenditure of Rs. 55 lakhs.
- India offers 8 scholarships under ICCR Schemes to Palestinian students for higher studies in India and several slots for training courses under the ITEC Programme.
- In 1998-99, 50 training slots were provided to Palestinian personnel for specialized training courses where 58 Palestinian officers completed their training.

6.4. India and France re-elected President and Co-President of International Solar Alliance

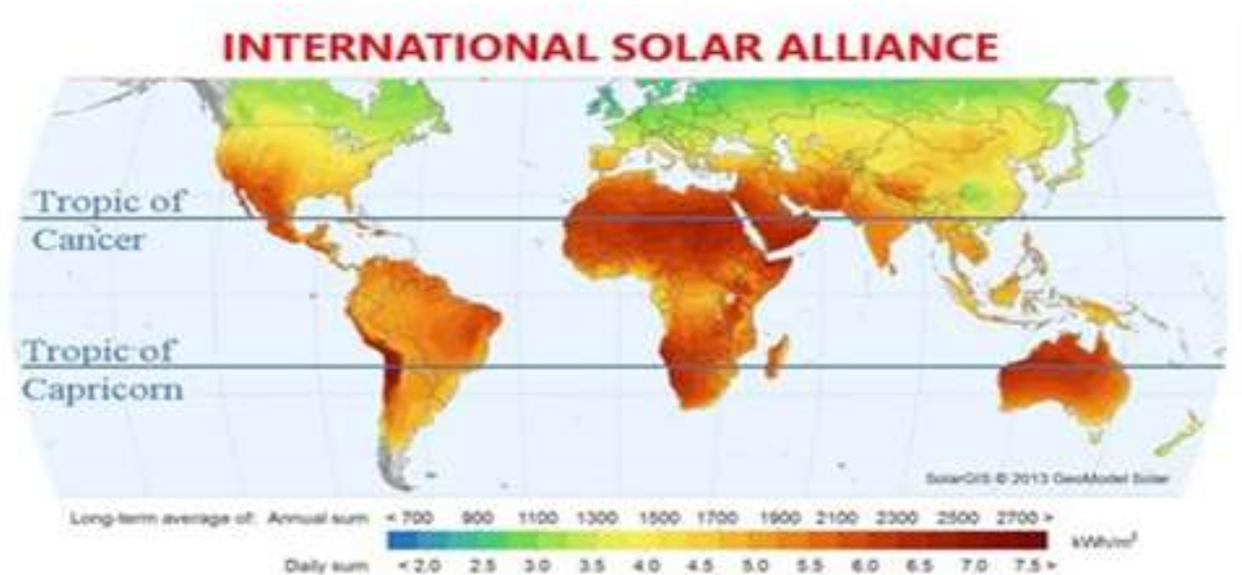
News

- Along with India, France has also been re-elected as the Co-President of the alliance in the ISA's Third Assembly.
- Tenure- 2 years
- The Third Assembly of ISA was attended by 34 ISA Member Ministers, 53 member countries besides the 5 signatory and prospective member countries
- The Third Assembly further approved the initiatives of the ISA Secretariat to institutionalize the International Solar Alliance's engagement with the public and private corporate sector. They will also collaborate for the Sustainable Climate Action (CSCA).

- At the assembly, 10 public sector organizations from India presented cheques of USD 1 million.
- The solar awards were distributed for the first time to the countries where institutions and regions are working for solar power.

International Solar Alliance (ISA)

- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is an alliance of more than 122 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, now extended to all members of UN.
- The Paris Declaration establishes ISA as an alliance dedicated to the promotion of solar energy among its member countries.



Objective

- The ISA's major objectives include global deployment of over 1,000GW of solar generation capacity and mobilization of investment of over US\$ 1000 billion into solar energy by 2030.
- As an action-oriented organization, the ISA brings together countries with rich solar potential to aggregate global demand, thereby reducing prices through bulk purchase, facilitating the deployment of existing solar technologies at scale, and promoting collaborative solar R&D and capacity building.
- When it entered into force? When the ISA Framework Agreement entered into force on December 6th, 2017, ISA formally became a de-jure treaty based International Intergovernmental Organization, headquartered at Gurugram, India.

New Vice-Presidents of ISA

- At the assembly, four new Vice-Presidents were also selected to represent four regions-
 - ✓ Representatives of Fiji and Nauru- chosen for Asia Pacific Region
 - ✓ Representative of Niger and Mauritius – chosen for Africa Region
 - ✓ Representative of The United Kingdom and the Netherlands- chosen for Europe and other regions
 - ✓ Representative of Cuba and Guyana- chosen for Latin America and the Caribbean Region

- The President of ISA Assembly- From India side, RK Singh will represent the ISA.
- The Co-President of ISA Assembly- Barbara Pompili, The Minister for Ecological Transition of France, represented the France at the assembly.
- She said, France's involvement in the solar project by pointing out that France has committed 1.5 billion euros of financing for solar projects in ISA member states until 2022.

6.5. Pakistan re-elected to United Nations Human Rights Council

- Pakistan has been re-elected to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC).
- It was selected on the basis of votes of member countries.
- It secured 169 votes out of 193 votes of the member of UN General Assembly.
- Pakistan has secured the highest number of votes among the five candidates from the Asia-Pacific region. 5 candidates were seeking for four seats in elections in New York.

Background

- Pakistan has served the UNHRC since January 2018.
- Now, the country will continue for another three-year term commencing from January 1, 2021.
- Pakistan has been elected 5th time since 2006.

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

- UNHRC is a United Nations body which was established on 15th March 2006 and replaced the UN Commission on Human Rights.
- Its primary mission is to promote and protect human rights around the world.
- It has 47 members who are elected for three-year terms on a regional group basis.
- The organization is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- It investigates the allegations of breach of human rights in United Nations member states.
- The body also addresses the important human rights issues including the women's rights, LGBT rights, freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of belief and religion, and the rights of racial and ethnic minorities.

6.6. Top US diplomat calls for expansion of Quad group

- The United States at the recent India-US forum has called for the expansion of QUAD grouping.
- US stated that like-minded countries and groupings should come together and join hands to protect and ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific ocean.
- The call was made by US Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun at the India-US forum in New Delhi.
- US side highlighted that the Quad grouping have potential to deepen and strengthen the cooperation with the ASEAN bloc in Southeast Asia.

- This would help to ensure freedom of seas and security of the seas in accordance with the United Nations Conventions on Law of Sea.
- US side further said that Quad nations can also work with ASEAN bloc in areas of governance, environmental protection, health and transparent data sharing.

Expanding QUAD

- Quad is a partnership forum that is driven by the shared interests.
- Any nation seeking free and open Indo-Pacific and who wants to take measures to ensure the openness can join the hands and admitted to the grouping.

QUAD Grouping

- The QUAD grouping comprises of four nations namely US, India, Australia and Japan.
- The grouping was established in 2007 after a dialogue between the then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Australian Prime Minister John Howard, US Vice President Dick Cheney, and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.
- The four members since then try to revive the grouping in the backdrop of tensions in the Indo-Pacific region because of China's expansion policy.

The 'Quad' Counter to China

