



**MANIDHANAHEYAM FREE IAS ACADEMY**

**The Best Academy for Competitive Exam**

**PRELIMS 2022**

**G. S. PAPER - 1**

**CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**COURSE MATERIAL**

**(NOVEMBER 2021)**



## FROM THE DESK OF CHAIRMAN

*Dear Students,*

*“I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by conscious endeavour”.*

*- Henry David Thoreau.*

*New Year greetings to you all. Let this New Year bring loads of energy, enthusiasm and brightness in all our lives to achieve our heart felt ambition.*

*In this column every month we intend to share with you some of the ideas that would help to shape you as a great individual.*

*‘KAIZEN’ in Japanese means ‘constant and never ending improvement’. One must strive consistently and constantly to improve oneself in all areas, that are essential to reach one's fullest potential. As great acts are performed not through strength but by perseverance.*

*The trademark of every successful person is dedication to daily improvement in both their personal and professional lives. Effective people do things daily to advance confidently in the direction of their goals. Therefore friends let us work hard consistently to improve ourselves to achieve our goals and aspirations.*

*Wishing you the very best.*

*With Regards,*

*S d /-*

*(Saidai S.Duraisamy)*

*Chairman, Manidhanaeyam Trust*

## TESTIMONIALS

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# MANIDHANAHEYAM FREE IAS ACADEMY

The Best Academy for Competitive Exam

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The wife and mother of Colonel BS Babu receive the **Maha Vir Chakra**, awarded posthumously, from President Kovind.

**The Maha Vir Chakra (MVC)** is the **second highest** military decoration in India, after the **Param Vir Chakra**, and is awarded for acts of conspicuous gallantry in the presence of the enemy, **whether on land, at sea or in the air**. It replaced the British Distinguished Service Order (DSO). **The medal may be awarded posthumously.**

More than 218 acts of bravery and selfless courage have been recognized since the inception of the medal. The most MVCs awarded in a single conflict was in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, when eleven were given to the Indian Air Force. Provision was made for the award of a **bar for a second award of the Maha Vir Chakra**, the first two being awarded in 1965. To date, there are six known awards of a first bar.

#### GALLANTRY AWARDS:

Post-independence, first three gallantry awards namely Param Vir Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra and Vir Chakra were **instituted by the Government of India** on 26th January, 1950 which were deemed to have effect from the 15th August, 1947.

Thereafter, other three gallantry awards i.e. Ashoka Chakra Class-I, Ashoka Chakra Class-II and

Ashoka Chakra Class-III were instituted by the Government of India on 4th January, 1952, which were deemed to have effect from the 15th August, 1947. These awards were renamed as **Ashoka Chakra, Kirti Chakra and Shaurya Chakra** respectively in **January, 1967**.

These gallantry awards are announced twice in a year - first on the occasion of **the Republic Day** and then on the occasion of **the Independence Day**.

**Order of precedence** of these awards is the Param Vir Chakra, the Ashoka Chakra, the Mahavir Chakra, the Kirti Chakra, the Vir Chakra and the Shaurya Chakra.

Gallantry awards along with some other Defence Distinguished Service awards are **conferred to the awardees/Next-of-Kins (NoKs)** by the President at the Defence Investiture Ceremony held every year at the Rashtrapati Bhawan. However, **the Param Vir Chakra and the Ashoka Chakra** are conferred by the President to the awardees/NoKs on the occasion of **the Republic Day Parade at the Rajpath**.

Col Babu of 16 Bihar regiment led from the front against the Chinese attack in **Galwan Valley** in June 2020. Four others received Vir Chakra posthumously while one was the only living recipient.

#### GALWAN RIVER VALLEY

The **Galwan River** flows from the disputed Aksai **Chin region** administered by China to the Ladakh region of India. It originates near the caravan campsite **Samzungling** on the eastern side of **the Karakoram range** and flows west to join **the Shyok River**. The point of confluence is 102 km south of Daulat Beg Oldi. **Shyok River itself is a tributary of the Indus River**, making Galwan a part of the Indus River system.

The narrow valley of the Galwan River as it flows through the Karakoram mountains has been a flashpoint between China and India in their border dispute. In 1962, a forward post set up by India in the upper reaches of the Galwan Valley caused an "apogee of tension" between the two countries. China attacked and eliminated the post in the 1962 war, reaching its 1960 claim line. In 2020, China attempted to advance further in the Galwan Valley, leading to a severe on 16 June 2020

### Exchange of 'naval nuclear propulsion info' formalised as part of AUKUS pact

- Australia formally embarked on a hotly contested programme to equip its Navy with nuclear-powered submarines in a new defence alliance with Britain and the United States.
- Defence Minister Peter Dutton joined U.S. and British diplomats in signing an agreement allowing the exchange of sensitive “**Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information**” between their nations.
- It is the first agreement on the technology to be publicly signed since the three countries announced in the formation of a defence alliance, **AUKUS**, to confront strategic tensions in the Pacific where China-US rivalry is growing.
- “The deal will help Australia to complete an 18-month study into the submarine procurement,” Mr. Dutton said after **signing it in Canberra** with U.S. Charge d’Affaires Michael Goldman and British High Commissioner (ambassador) Victoria Treadell.
- Details of the procurement have yet to be decided, including whether Australia will opt for a vessel based on U.S. or British nuclear-powered attack submarines.

AUKUS is a **trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States**, announced on 15 September 2021 for the Indo-Pacific region. Under the pact, the US and the UK will help Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines.

The pact also includes cooperation on “**cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum**

**technologies and additional undersea capabilities**”. Under the pact, Australia will acquire new long-range strike capabilities for its air force, navy and army. The pact will focus on military capability, separating it from the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing alliance that also includes New Zealand and Canada

- “With access to the information this agreement delivers, coupled with the decades of naval nuclear-powered experience our U.K. and U.S. partners have, Australia will also be positioned to be responsible and reliable stewards of this technology,” Mr. Dutton said in a statement.
- Under the AUKUS deal, Australia would obtain eight state-of-the-art, nuclear-powered but conventionally armed submarines capable of stealthy, long-range missions.

- The government of Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro won a landslide victory in regional ballot, according to election officials.
- Candidates aligned with Mr. Maduro have won 20 of the 23 Governor posts and the Mayorship of Caracas.



## 4 REFORMING THE FERTILIZER SECTOR

In order to address the multiple goals of fertilizer policy, India needs to work on four key areas

- Since 1991, when economic reforms began in India, several attempts have been made to reform the fertilizer sector to keep a check on the rising fertilizer subsidy bill, promote the efficient use of fertilizers, achieve balanced use of **N, P And K (Nitrogen, Phosphorus And Potassium)**, and reduce water and air pollution caused by fertilizers like urea.

### INCREASE IN SUBSIDY

- There is a growing demand to provide subsidies and other incentives for organic fertilizers and biofertilizers to match those provided for chemical fertilizers.
- Fertilizer subsidy has doubled in a short period of three years. For 2021-22, the Union Budget has estimated fertilizer subsidy at Rs. 79,530 crore (from Rs. 66,468 crore in 2017-18).
- The composition of total plant nutrients in terms of the **N,P,K ratio** deviated considerably from the recommended or optimal NPK mix. **It was 33.7:8.0:1 in Punjab and 1.3:0.7:1 in Kerala.**
- The government introduced the **Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) in 2010** to address the growing imbalance in fertilizer use in many States, which is skewed towards urea (N). However, only **non-nitrogenous fertilizers (P and K) moved to NBS; urea was left out.**
- The **Total Demand** for urea in the country is **about 34-35 million tonnes** (mln t) whereas the domestic production is about 25 mln t. The requirement of **Diammonium Phosphate (DAP)** is about 12 mln and domestic production is just 5 mln t. This leaves the gap of nearly 9-10 mln t for urea and 7 mln t for DAP, which is met through imports. The use of **Muriate of Potash** is about 3 mln t. This is entirely imported. In addition, consumption of complex fertilizers (NPK) is about 12-13 mln t, which is largely produced within the country and so the import requirement is only 1 mln t.
- The recently developed **Nano urea by IFFCO** shows promising results in reducing the usage of urea. Such products need to be promoted expeditiously after testing.

## 5 CENTRE ALLOWS EXPORTERS ON ORIGIN E-CERTIFICATE

- The Centre has suspended till January 31, 2022 a mandatory obligation imposed on exporters from November 1 to obtain online Certificates of Origin (CoO) for every outbound consignment.
- The online CoO system, put in place in late 2019 for exports to countries with whom India had a preferential trade pact, was expanded to cover all merchandise exports from November through a trade notice issued on October 18.
- Several exporters had reported difficulties in registering on the e-CoO platform on the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) portal with the stipulated high-quality digital signature certificates and obtaining the certificates for their shipments.

**Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)** Organization is an attached office of the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** and is headed by Director General of Foreign Trade. Right from its **inception till 1991**, when liberalization in the economic policies of the Government took place, this organization has been essentially involved in the regulation and promotion of foreign trade through regulation.

DGFT has since been assigned the role of “facilitator”. The shift was from prohibition and control of imports/exports to promotion and

facilitation of exports/imports, keeping in view the interests of the country.

**Organisational Set-up:** This Directorate, with headquarters at New Delhi, is headed by the Director General of Foreign Trade. It is responsible for implementing the Foreign Trade Policy with the **main objective of promoting India’s exports**. The DGFT also issues licenses to exporters and monitors their corresponding obligations through a network of 25 Regional Offices and an extension counter at Indore.

## 6 ARUNACHAL TALKS WITH ASSAM ON BORDER ISSUE: MINISTER

- Arunachal Pradesh Home Minister Bamang Felix said the State government has started holding discussions with its Assam counterpart to resolve the long-pending boundary dispute between the two North-eastern neighbours.
- The discussions began after the **Assam forest department** last week served an **eviction notice to residents** of three villages on the disputed border.
- The Range Forest Officer (RFO) of Harmutty in Assam’s **North Lakhimpur district** issued a notice asking people of three villages under Kimin Circle to vacate the place within 15 days, evoking resentment among various organisations in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Arunachal, which was carved out of Assam, was initially a Union territory. It became a **full-fledged State in 1987**.

### Arunachal’s grievance

- The State’s grievance is that during re-organisation of Northeastern States, several forested tracts in the plains that had traditionally belonged to hill tribal chiefs and communities were unilaterally transferred to Assam.
- After Arunachal Pradesh achieved Statehood, a tripartite committee was appointed which recommended that **certain territories be transferred from Assam to Arunachal**. Assam contested this and the matter is now pending in the Supreme Court.

## 7 MAKHIJA’S TWO FESTIVAL SHORTS

Devashish Makhija’s short films Cheepatakadumpa (Hindi) and Cycle (multilingual) can’t be more different. The former, which was screened recently at the **Dharamshala International Film Fest** and won the Gender Sensitivity Award, is about three girls in a small town speaking about physical desire using a tomato as a demonstration tool.

Cycle, which premieres at the upcoming International Documentary and Short Film Festival of Kerala, is about systemic violence by the state against people of the forest. If Cheepatakadumpa leaves you chuckling at the irreverent conclusion, **Cycle forces you to acknowledge tribal people’s right** to determine their lives.

In Cycle the camera zooms in, focussing on the pain of the young tribal girl, and the perpetrators are mostly voices in the background.

The film was born of conversations with Bhumika Dube [Teja in the film] and Ipshita Chakraborty Singh, from **National School of Drama**, and hailing from small-towns. Gender was one of the things we spoke about, and I asked them to throw all their experiences at me and see if we could structure a story. It was a very organic process,” he says.

#### NATIONAL SCHOOL OF DRAMA

National School of Drama (NSD) is a theatre training institute situated at New Delhi, India. It is an autonomous organization under **Ministry of Culture**, Government of India. It was set up in 1959 by the Sangeet Natak Akademi and **became an independent school in 1975**. In 2005, it was granted deemed university status, but in 2011 it was revoked. **Paresh Rawal** is the current Chairperson of National School of Drama (NSD)

#### Former Chairpersons

1. \*Dr. KV. Rajamannar (1959 - 61)
2. \*Maharaja Shri Chamaraja Wadiyar Bahadur (1961 - 65)
3. \*Smt. Indira Gandhi (1965 - 72)

## 8 HARVESTED MAIZE GOING WASTE DUE TO INCESSANT RAIN

- A large quantity of harvested Maize In Ballari District is getting destroyed owing to incessant rainfall and the excessive moisture in the weather.
- In the Ballari APMC market yard alone, over 1,200 bags of maize were found to be going waste.
- As per information provided by farmers, rainfall has hit not only maize harvesting but also destroyed the crop that was harvested and kept in heaps across the district.
- “If maize grain has more than 20% moisture, it develops fungus and turns poisonous. It cannot be used as feed in poultry farms. That is why traders are not coming forward to purchase the produce,” Mr. Maharudragouda said.

#### MAIZE

Maize (**Zea mays L.**) is one of the most versatile emerging crop shaving wider adaptability under varied agro-climatic conditions. Globally, maize is known as **queen of cereals** because it has the **highest genetic yield potential** among the cereals. It is cultivated on nearly 150 m ha in about **160 countries** having wider **diversity of soil, climate, biodiversity** and management practices that contributes 36 % (782 m t) in the global grain production

**In India**, maize is the **third most important food crops** after **rice and wheat**. According to advance estimate it is cultivated in 8.7m ha (2010-11) mainly **during Kharif season** which covers 80%

area. Maize in India, **contributes nearly 9 % in the national food basket** and more than Rs. 100 billion to the agricultural GDP at current prices apart from the generating employment to over 100 million man-days at the farm and downstream agricultural and industrial sectors.

In addition to staple food for human being and quality feed for animals, maize serves as a basic raw material as an ingredient to thousands of industrial products that includes **Starch, Oil, Protein, Alcoholic Beverages, Food Sweeteners, Pharmaceutical, Cosmetic, Film, Textile, Gum, Package And Paper Industries etc**

Maize does well on a wide range of climatic conditions, and it is grown in the tropical as well as temperate regions, from **Sea-Levels Up To Altitudes Of 2500 m**. It is however **susceptible to frost** at all stages of its growth. Maize can be grown successfully in **variety of soils** ranging from **loamy sand to clay loam**. However, soils with good organic matter content having **high water holding capacity** with neutral pH are considered good for higher productivity.

The **United States of America (USA)** is the **largest producer of maize** contributes nearly 35% of the total production in the world and maize is the driver of the US economy. The USA has the highest **productivity** (> 9.6 t ha<sup>-1</sup>) which is double than the global average (4.92 t ha<sup>-1</sup>). Whereas, the average productivity in India is 2.43 t ha<sup>-1</sup>. **largest maize producing state in India is Andhra Pradesh.**

## 9 CENTRAL NOD FOR SIX-LANING OF NH-66

- The Central Government has sanctioned six-laning of the arterial **NH-66** stretch linking **Kodungalloor in Thrissur to Edappally in Kochi**.
- The project outlay is estimated at Rs. 3,465 crore. It would decongest the NH-66, trigger development and bring Kerala a step closer to the ambition of **six-laning the 600 km NH-66 from Thalapady in Kasaragod to Karode in Thiruvananthapuram**.
- Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan tweeted "thank you, @nitin\_gadkari Ji, Hon'ble Minister of Road Transport & Highways, Govt of India for sanctioning the **6-Laning work from Kodungalloor to Edappally section of NH-66** (Old 17) with a budget of Rs. 3465.82 cr. on HAM under **Bharatmala Pariyojana**".
- The six-laning is the **Centre's HYBRID ANNUITY MODEL (HAM)**, part of the Union Government's ambitious **BHARATHMALA PARIYOJANA INITIATIVE**.
- **Agreement signed**
- Earlier, the **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** had signed an agreement with the State Government to six-lane 16 out of the 20 critical segments on the NH-66.

The **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** is an autonomous agency of the Government of India, set up in 1995 (Act 1988) and is responsible for **management of a network of over 50,000 km of National Highways** out of 1,32,499 km in India. It is a **nodal agency of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways**. NHAI has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Indian Space Research Organisation for satellite mapping of highways. **Shri. Giridhar Armane (IAS), is the president chairman of NHAI**

The Authority consists of a **full time Chairman**, and not more than **five full time Members** and **four part time Members** who are appointed by the

Central Government. NHAI has technical, Finance, Administrative and Vigilance Wings at its Headquarters.

**FUNCTIONS:** The NHAI was created through the promulgation of the National Highways Authority of India Act, 1988. Section 16(1) of the Act states that the function of NHAI is to **develop, maintain and manage the national highways and any other highways vested in, or entrusted to,** it by the Government of India. On 10 February 1995, NHAI came into operations and was formally made an autonomous body. **Yogendra Narain was the first Chairman of NHAI** in 1988.

NHA is mandated to implement **National Highways Development Project (NHDP)** which is India's largest ever Highways Project in a phased manner. The National Highways have a total length of 1,32,499 (approx) km to serve as the arterial network of the country. Although **National**

**Highways constitute only about 2 per cent of the road network**, it carries **40 per cent of the total road traffic**. Rapid expansion of passenger and freight traffic makes it imperative to improve the road network in the country.

Once the project is completed, people from northern districts as well as neighbouring States **such as Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka** would have easy access to Kochi. It would become a **major coastal corridor in the country**.

## 10 RIVERS FROM NANDI HILLS RANGE BACK TO LIFE

Heavy rains in October and November have brought rivers to life in the historically arid regions of **Kolar, Chickballapur** and surrounding areas. Six rivers that originate in the **Nandi Hills Range** on Bengaluru's outskirts are flowing bountifully.

**Nandi Hills**, also known as **Nandidurg or Nandi Betta** is an ancient hill fortress situated in a district called **Chikkabalapur in Karnataka**. Situated near the town of Nandi, the ancient belief is that they are the origin of the **Arkavathy River**.

**The first ever SAARC summit hosted by India was held at Nandi Hills in 1986.**

The **climate** at the top of the hill made it of interest to **horticulturists**. **Several species of plant were introduced into an experimental garden.**

## 11 LIFE EXPECTANCY LOWER FOR URBAN POOR, SAYS STUDY

**Life Expectancy** among the **poorest is lower by 9.1 years among men and 6.2 years among women** from the corresponding figures for the richest in urban areas, noted a report released recently by **Azim Premji University** in collaboration with **17 regional NGOs across India**.

### LIFE EXPECTANCY

- The term **'life expectancy'** refers to the **number of years a person can expect to live**. By definition, life expectancy is based on an estimate of the average age that members of a particular population group will be when they die.
- The **Cohort Life Expectancy** is the average life length of a particular cohort - a group of individuals born in a given year. When we can track a group of people born in a particular year, many decades ago, and observe the exact date in which each one of them died then we can calculate this cohort's life expectancy by simply calculating the average of the ages of all members when they died.
- **Period Life Expectancy** is the definition used by most international organizations, including the **UN and the World Bank**, when reporting 'life expectancy' figures.
- Period life expectancy estimates do not take into account how mortality rates are changing over time and instead only reflects the mortality pattern at one point in time. Because of this, period life expectancy figures are usually different to cohort life expectancy figures.

#### Method of estimation:

- Final estimates of age-sex-specific mortality rates for years 1990-2019 were used to compute abridged life tables for **183 WHO Member States with population of 90,000 or greater in 2019**. Life expectancies at birth are reported in **World Health Statistics 2019** and full life tables are available in the **WHO Global Health Observatory**.
- The life expectancy at **birth in 2019** was 69.5 years for men and 72 years for women, which came down to 67.5 years and 69.8 years, respectively, in 2020

- The report, **“Healthcare Equity In Urban India”**, explores health vulnerabilities and inequalities in cities in India.
- It notes that a third of India’s population lives in urban areas, with this segment seeing a rapid growth from about 18% (1960) to 28.53% (2001) and 34% (in 2019). Close to 30% of people living in urban areas are poor.

## 12 PRATHAM GETS INDIRA GANDHI PEACE PRIZE

Pratham, a civil society organisation dedicated to improving the quality of education among **underprivileged children in India** and across the world, has been selected for the **Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2021**.

Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development, is the prestigious award accorded annually by Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust to **individuals or organisations** in recognition of creative efforts toward promoting **international peace, development and a new international economic order**; ensuring that scientific discoveries are used for the larger good of humanity, and enlarging the scope of freedom.

The prize carries a cash award of **2.5 million Indian rupees** and a citation. A written work, in order to

be eligible for consideration, should have been published. The panel constituted by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust consists of prominent national and international personalities including previous recipients. The recipients are chosen from a pool of national and international nominees.

The awardee was picked by an international jury chaired by former Chief Justice of India T S Thakur, the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust.

- The international jury of the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development, **chaired by the former Chief Justice of India, Justice T.S. Thakur**, announced the award of the prize to the organisation.
- “The 2021 Prize is awarded to Pratham for its pioneering work over more than a quarter century in seeking to ensure that every child has access to quality education, **for its innovative use of digital technology to deliver education**, for its programmes to provide skills to young adults, for its regular evaluation of the quality of education, and for its timely response in enabling children to learn during the COVID-19 related school closures,” said the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust in a statement.

### Mumbai slums

- Set up in 1995 in Mumbai by Dr. Madhav Chavan and Ms. Farida Lambay, Pratham started work in Mumbai slums, setting up community based **“Balwadis” or pre-schools** and offering remedial education for students lagging behind their grade level curriculum.

- “Its Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), based on **surveying 6,00,000 rural Indian children**, is now used as a model to assess education outcomes and learning deficiencies in 14 countries over three continents,” said the Trust.
- In basic education, Pratham develops low-cost and replicable innovations, working with the Government and community to improve learning outcomes. Its programmes now cover children and young adults in 21 States.

## 13 CALL TO RESTORE SNOB’S ALLEY INSIDE FORT ST. GEORGE

- Historians and heritage enthusiasts have called for urgent steps to restore the Last House on **Snob’s Alley or St. Thomas’s Street**, a heritage structure, inside Fort St. George. The building is said to have the same vintage as the Old Port House that dates back to **1690**.
- The building, according to historian V. Sriram, is located on the street where the affluent lived. “It **even survived the bombing in the 1740s**, but lack of maintenance and necessary repairs has led to it being reduced to a rubble now. “
- Heritage enthusiast **Padmapriya Baskaran** said that when one talks of heritage structures, especially for a building that is so old, what is needed is preventive maintenance.
- “The King’s Barracks is also in a poor condition and several portions of the ceiling have fallen. **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** and the Army have had issues over ownership of buildings and due to this, the heritage structures are affected.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA (ASI)

ASI was founded in **1861 by Alexander Cunningham** who also became its **first Director-General**. The first systematic research into the subcontinent's history was conducted by **the Asiatic Society**, which was founded by the **British Indologist William Jones** on 15 January 1784. Based in Calcutta, the society promoted the study of ancient Sanskrit and Persian texts and published an **annual journal titled Asiatic Researches**. Notable among its early members was Charles Wilkins who published the first English translation of the Bhagavad Gita in 1785 with the patronage of the then **Governor-General of Bengal, Warren Hastings**. However, the most important of the society's achievements was the decipherment of the Brahmi script by James Prinsep in 1837. This

successful decipherment inaugurated the asset.

The Archaeological Survey of India is an attached office of **the Ministry of Culture**. Under the provisions of the AMASR Act of 1958, the ASI administers more than **3650 ancient monuments, archaeological sites** and remains of national importance. These can include everything from **Temples, Mosques, Churches, Tombs, And Cemeteries To Palaces, Forts, Step-Wells, And Rock-Cut Caves**. The Survey also maintains ancient mounds and other similar sites which represent the remains of ancient habitation.

The ASI is headed by a **Director General** who is assisted by an Additional Director General, two Joint Directors General, and 17 Directors.

## 14 ONLY TITAGARH WAGONS BIDS FOR LEASING METRO TRAINS

- **TITAGARH WAGONS** is the only firm that has evinced interest in leasing trains for **Chennai Metro Rail’s phase II project**.
- For the phase II project, the Chennai Metro Rail Ltd. (CMRL) will both procure trains and lease them as well. The plan to lease them was mooted only because they had to cut down capital expenditure as the project cost was phenomenally high initially.

- The **Arkavathi river** flows above the **Hunasanahalli bridge**, just after Ramanagarm town, 27 km downstream of Manchanabele dam.
- **Kolar reportedly suffers most crop damage in the State.**
- Over the past few days, all the tanks in Kolar and Chickballapur districts are overflowing and rivers are in spate, inundating several areas.
- Kolar has reportedly suffered the **most crop damage in the State** - around 35,000 hectares of food grains, **mainly ragi**, and 7,000 hectares of **Horticultural Crops**, as per estimates of the State Government. The situation in Chickballapur is no different.

#### HORTICULTURE:

Horticultural crops include **Fruits, Vegetables, Medicinal, Aromatic, And Ornamental Plants**. These crops are important dietary nutritional components and sources of medicines and aroma along with significant esthetic values for human beings.

**Horticulture is practised across cool temperate to tropical latitudes and over a wide range of elevations and climatic conditions.** However, it differs from agronomy in a number of significant ways - although it must be recognized that some crops can be classed as both horticultural or agronomic depending on use.

Horticultural crops need more attention in cultivation due to their organoleptic and nutritional properties. Abiotic stresses such as

**Drought, Flood, Heat, Cold, Salinity, Nutrient Deficiency, And Heavy Metal stress strongly impair the growth and productivity of horticultural crops.**

**Horticulture FRUITS** - Apple, Guava, Blueberry, Mango, Cherry, Fig, Grape .

**Horticulture VEGETABLES** - Brinjal, Beetroot, Capsicum, Green Chilli.

**FLOWERS** - Marigold, Jasmine, Rose, Calla Lilly, Tulip.

**PLANTATION CROPS** - Tea Coffee Cashewnut.

**SPICES** - Fenugreek, Cardamom, Ajwain.

**AROMATIC PLANTS** - Indian Basil/Tulsi, Jamarosa, Lemon Grass .

**MEDICINAL PLANTS** - Butch, Alovera, Glory Lilly Etc.

- Environmentalist and water management expert S. Vishwanath said this showed the impact of climate change on rainfall pattern.
- It is years since THE SIX RIVERS — Arkavathi, Chitravathi, Papagni, Uttara Pinakini, Dakshina Pinakini and Palar — have been in spate like this.

- As many as 4.96 lakh children aged between one and 19 will receive **De-Worming Tablets** in Dakshina Kannada.
- Anganwadi workers and Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) will visit houses and give tablets to children not attending angwandis and to those who have discontinued attending schools.
- The de-worming tablets are given to **remove worms that develop in intestine**. These worms develop because of **lack of hand hygiene** and also due to children's exposure to **contaminated soil**.
- Dr. Kumar said that these **worms cause anaemia and arrests the growth of children**.



The 'abhisheka' to Nandi at **Chamundi Hills** was performed in the presence of a limited number of devotees. Organised by Bettada Balaga, the tradition of 'abhisheka' to the Nandi began in 2006 and is held every year.

#### CHAMUNDI HILLS

The Chamundi Hills are located **13 km east of Mysore, Karnataka, India**. The name comes from the **Chamundeshwari Temple at the peak**. The average elevation is **1,060 metres (3,480 ft)**

Named after the Goddess Chamundi, the Chamundeshwari Temple sits atop the main hill. The main hill itself features an ancient stone stairway of 1,008 steps leading to its summit. Approximately halfway to the summit is statue of bull Nandi, the vahana, or "vehicle" of Lord Shiva, which is 4.9 m tall and 7.6 m long and carved out of a single piece of black granite. Around this point, the steps become significantly less steep and eventually the climber is rewarded with a panoramic view of the city.

The **Temple has a quadrangular structure**. A key feature is the statue of Mahishasura bearing a sword in his right hand and a cobra in the left. Within the temple's sanctum stands a sculpted depiction of Chamundeshwari. She is seated with her right heel pressed against the lowest of the seven chakras. This cross-legged yogic posture echoes the posture of Lord Shiva. Worshipers believe that this powerful yogic posture, if mastered, provides an added dimensional view of the universe.

During the **rule of Wadiyars of Mysore**, the Maharaja was seated in the golden howdah atop the elephant during **Vijayadashami (tenth day of Dasara) procession**. Post-independence, the Maharaja was replaced by an idol of Chamundeshwari, while the Dasara into a State festival.

- The seers of Hosamutt and Mysuru branch of Adi Chunchanagiri Mutt supervised the proceedings and the priests performed the anointment by pouring various ingredients in liquid form.
- Though the locals, including members of the Bettada Balaga, believe that the 'abhisheka to Nandi used to be held **during the period of the maharajas**, it is reckoned to be anecdotal in the absence of evidence or reference.

- The recent spell of incessant rains that lashed the region has raised concern over the fate of some of the heritage structures that lacks maintenance and are crying for attention.
- While the heavy downpour brought to fore the extent of damage caused to the **Jayalakshmi Vilas Mansion**, there are at least **30 to 40 other heritage buildings** that require urgent intervention in the absence of which the damage to these structure could aggravate, according to N.S. Rangaraju of **Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)**, Mysuru.
- He said the **Silver Jubilee Clock Tower or the Dodda Gadiyara** is in imminent danger .
- The clock tower **was built in 1927** to mark the silver jubilee of the rule of **Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar** and is now 94 years old.

### HERITAGE PLACES IN MYSORE

1912	Mysore Palace	1915	Crawford Hall
1861	Jaganmohana Palace	1887	Oriental Research Institute Mysore
1916	Chittaranjan Palace	1840	Hardwick High School
1921	Lalithamahal Palace	1851	Maharaja's College
1905	Jayalakshmi Vilas Palace	1917	Maharani's College
1918	Cheluvamba Vilas Palace	1924	Mysore Medical College
1924	Rajendra Vilas Palace	1884	Town Hall
		1918	Krishnarajendra Hospital

- Mysuru has at least 500 heritage structures of which nearly 200 have been notified as heritage structure.
- Pointing to the collapse of the Lansdowne Building and the Devaraja Market due to lack of maintenance over the years the heritage activists warned that Mysuru could lose a few more of its iconic buildings that dot the city scape in the days ahead, if they are unattended.

## 19 WATERMAN' SET TO VISIT THUSHARAGIRI, CHALIPPUZHA

- Water activist **Rajendra Singh**, known as the '**Waterman of India**', visited Thusharagiri and Chalippuzha in Kozhikode district .
- Mr. Singh, winner of the **Magsaysay Award** in 2001 and the **Stockholm Water Prize in 2015**, will assess the environmental damage caused to the Chalippuzha after it was cleared of boulders by the District Disaster Management Authority in a move intended to avert floods.

### RAMAN MAGASAYSAY AWARDS

Established in **1957**, the Ramon Magsaysay Award was founded to preserve **former Philippine President** Ramon Magsaysay's example of integrity in governance and idealism in a democratic society. It was **funded by the Rockefeller Brothers** trustees with Philippine government's agreement.

Ramon Magsaysay was the **third president of the Philippines** after World War II. The foundation gives the prize to Asians achieving excellence in their field. It has **six categories, five of which were discontinued in 2009:**

Government Service (Until 2008)  
Public Service (Until 2008)  
Community Leadership (Until 2008)  
Journalism, Literature, and Creative Communication Arts (Until 2008)  
Peace and International Understanding (Until 2008)

Emergent Leadership (2001–)

Uncategorized (2009–)

The Award recognises and honours Individuals And Organisations In Asia, regardless of race, creed, gender, or nationality, who have achieved distinction and have helped others generously without aiming for public recognition.

The award has been given to over three hundred personalities and organisations in the past five decades. The trustees of the foundation annually select the awardees who are then presented with a certificate and a medal with an image of Ramon Magsaysay. The award is presented in a formal ceremony in Manila, the capital of the Philippines on August 31 each year.

The first Ramon Magsaysay Awards were given to five individuals working in India, Indonesia, the Philippines, China (Taiwan) and Sri Lanka, and a Philippine-based organisation.

Environmentalists have raised concerns about the State Government handing over the disputed land there to its original owners, following a Supreme Court order.

### THE STOCKHOLM WATER PRIZE

It is an **International Water Award** presented **annually since 1991**. It started as part of the Stockholm Water Festival, which celebrated that the Swedish capital had managed to reach its goal of having some of the cleanest water in the world. When preparing the festivities, the idea was floated to also create a **Nobel Prize for water**. Over the years, the Stockholm Water Prize has been presented to **women, men and organizations** who have made exceptional contributions to **the understanding and protection of water**. We can thank the laureates for groundbreaking scientific discoveries but also for developing solutions that really have changed the world.

The Stockholm Water Prize Laureate is **announced each 22 March at the UN World Day for Water** and **honoured each August during the World Water**

**Week in Stockholm** at a Royal Prize Ceremony and Banquet in the Stockholm City Hall. At the ceremony, the Laureate receives the **prize from H.M. King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden**, who is the patron of the Stockholm Water Prize.

The prize, created and **financed by the Stockholm Water Foundation** and **administered by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI)**, includes a US\$150,000 award and an **Orrefors crystal sculpture**.

The Stockholm Junior Water Prize is also administered by SIWI and awarded during the World Water Week in Stockholm each August.

**BINDESHWAR PATHAK & RAJENDRA SINGH** were the 2 Indians to receive the award so far.

## 20 CHINA DOWNGRADES DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH LITHUANIA OVER TAIWAN

- China has officially **downgraded diplomatic ties with Lithuania**, the Foreign Ministry in Beijing said after **Taiwan established a de facto Embassy in Vilnius**.
- China baulks at any official use of the word 'Taiwan' in case it gives international legitimacy to the island, which Beijing considers part of its territory to be taken one day.
- "The Chinese government had to lower diplomatic relations between the two countries... to safeguard its sovereignty and the basic norms of international relations," the Ministry said in a statement announcing the downgrade to the **charge d'affaires level**.
- "The Lithuanian government must bear all consequences that arise from this." It was a reference to the **"ONE CHINA" POLICY**, under which countries officially recognise Beijing over Taipei.

### ONE CHINA POLICY

The **"One-China policy"** is a policy asserting that there is only one sovereign state under the name China and Taiwan is part of China, as opposed to the idea that there are two states, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC), whose official names incorporate "China".

- Lithuania's Foreign Ministry on Sunday said it regretted China's decision. "Lithuania reaffirms its adherence to the 'One China' policy, but at the same time has the right to expand cooperation with Taiwan," the Ministry said in a statement. **Lithuanian Prime Minister Ingrida Simonyte** stressed that Taiwan's office in Vilnius **does not have** diplomatic status.

- The real substantive outcome of virtual summit between Presidents **Joe Biden and Xi Jinping** has been some unconfirmed reports of the two sides, the United States and China, agreeing to hold strategic nuclear talks sometime in the near future.
- This development comes against the backdrop of **the China Military Power Report (CMPR)** recently released by the Pentagon that categorically underscores the growing challenge posed by the increasing capabilities of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and its ambitions across various dimensions of military power.
- The PRC's nuclear capabilities, in particular, are undergoing a fundamental transformation and a **shift seems to be evident in both the quantity and the quality of the PRC's atomic arsenal**. Even before the release of the CMPR, there was significant concern globally about the trajectory of China's strategic capabilities. Confirmation provided by the CMPR reveals four specific areas where change is underway - **Quantitative Strength, Atomic Yield, Delivery Capabilities And Posture**.
- By 2027, the CMPR estimates that this number is likely to increase to 700 weapons consisting of varying yields which is three and half times the current Chinese warhead strength.

#### LOW-YIELD WEAPONS - CONCERNS

- Second, the PRC is likely to privilege expansion in the direction of low-yield weapons. Low-yield weapons have been an area of interest and development for the PRC. They are weapons meant for battlefield use during conventional military operations and against conventional targets such as concentrations of armoured, artillery and infantry forces. Lower yield warheads help the PRC avoid causing collateral damage. Prior to the release of the CMPR, evidence that the PRC was testing low-yield devices has periodically surfaced in years past.
- In April 2020, the U.S. State Department's Findings on Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments drew attention to the PRC's deliberate opacity in the use of explosive containment chambers and excavations at **its Lop Nur Nuclear Facility** to test low yield weapons and Beijing's refusal to grant permission to access data from its **International Monitoring System (IMS)** stations to the Data Centre under the operational authority of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO). Actions of this kind have evoked strategic concern and increasingly confirm that China's atomic arsenal consists of a large number of low-yield weapons ideal for battlefield use.

#### THE PREPARATORY COMMISSION FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR TEST-BAN TREATY ORGANIZATION (CTBTO)

It is an international organization established by the States Signatories to the Treaty on **19 November 1996 and has its headquarters in Vienna, Austria**.

##### The Objective of the organization:

Is to achieve the object and purpose of the Treaty, to ensure the implementation of its provisions, including those for international verification of compliance with the Treaty, and to provide a forum for consultation and cooperation among Member States. To this end, the Commission prepares for

the entry-into-force of the Treaty and carries out the necessary preparations for the effective implementation of the Treaty, including the establishment of a global verification regime.

##### Composition:

The Preparatory Commission consists of a **plenary body** composed of all States signatories to the Treaty and a Provisional Technical Secretariat.

The **relationship agreement between the United Nations and the CTBTO** was adopted in 2000 by the General Assembly.

The low-yield nuclear warheads are also likely to find their way into a key delivery capability - the PRC's **Dong-Feng-26 (DF-26) ballistic missile**. This missile has already undergone deployment at Korla in the Xinjiang region in Western China. It is an **Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM)** which is launched from a Transporter Erector Launcher (TEL). Indeed, the DF-26 has featured in extensive training exercises west of **Jilantai in inner Mongolia**.

An intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) is a ballistic missile with a range of 3,000 - 5,500 km (1,864–3,418 miles), between a **MEDIUM-RANGE BALLISTIC MISSILE (MRBM)** and an **Inter-continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM)**. Classifying ballistic missiles by range is done mostly for convenience; in principle there is very little difference between a low-performance ICBM and a high-performance IRBM, because decreasing payload mass can increase range over ICBM threshold. The range definition used here is used within the U.S. Missile Defense Agency.

IRBMs				
Year	Model	Range km	Maximum km	Country
1959	PGM-17 Thor	1,900	2,400	United States, United Kingdom
Cancelled	Blue Streak	3,700		United Kingdom
2006	Agni-III	3,500	5,000	India
2006	Agni-III	3,500	5,000	India
2011	Agni-IV	4,000		India

- In addition to the DF-26, China has also developed the **JL-2 Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs)** with a range of **7,200 kilometres** capable of striking targets across continental Asia.
- China's move towards a **Launch on Warning (LoW)** nuclear posture marks an important shift in the PRC's commitment to ensuring that no adversary doubts its response in the event of a nuclear first strike.
- India must pay close attention to the **Sub-Surface Leg** of the PRC's nuclear arsenal **Type 094 (Jin class)** SSBNs/nuclear-powered ballistic-missile submarines to their existing fleet.
- The Chinese Navy has carried out **Bathymetric** and ocean mapping surveys in the Indian Ocean crucial to the execution of sub-surface military operations. The Bay of Bengal whose sea depth is very conducive for nuclear submarine missions will leave India exposed to a Chinese atomic pincer from the maritime domain in addition to the continental domain.

## 22 THE ANNUAL 'SWACHH SURVEKSHAN' AWARDS

- The annual '**Swachh Survekshan**' awards, **Indore** was ranked the **cleanest city** for the fifth year, followed by **Surat and Vijayawada**.
- Chhattisgarh was the cleanest State, for the third time, in the category of 'States with more than 100 urban local bodies'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's constituency, **Varanasi, won for the cleanest 'Ganga city'**.
- The organiser, the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs**, surveyed 4,320 cities for nearly a month and solicited feedback from 4.2 crore people. The **metrics** (cities) were **Garbage Disposal, Open Defecation-Free Ratings, Functionality and Maintenance of Community Toilets and Safe Management of Faecal Sludge**.

- The 'Survekshan' awards have a wide range of categories that segregates cities based on their population.
- Along with a category such as 'States with over 100 urban local bodies (ULB),' where **Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh were ranked second and third**, respectively, there was also a top ranker for 'State with less than 100 ULBs' where **Jharkhand was judged the cleanest**.
- This year there was a novel '**Prerak Daaur Samman**' that saw Indore, Surat, Navi Mumbai, New Delhi Municipal Council and Tirupati categorised as 'divya' (platinum). They were assessed for **solid waste management**. Unsurprisingly, these were entities that had already topped ranks in other categories.

## 23 VALENTIN VACHEROT RIDES PHILIP SEKULIC'S SURGE

**Valentin Vacherot** of France rode on the power of his better serve, as he survived three match points to beat a **top-25 junior in the world, Philip Sekulic of Australia**, in the final of ITF men's tennis.

## 24 VIJAYVEER SIDHU CLINCHES GOLD

**Vijayveer Sidhu** beat his twin brother **Udhayveer Sidhu** by one point to clinch the gold in the **junior men 25-metre sports pistol** event in the **64th National shooting championship**.

## 25 KADAM CORNERS GLORY

- India's **Sukant Kadam** claimed a gold at the **Uganda para badminton international**, while compatriot and **World No. 1 and Tokyo Paralympics** gold medallist **Pramod Bhagat** bagged three silvers .
- **World No. 5 Kadam** defeated compatriot Nilesh Balu Gaikwad 21-16, 17-21, 21-10 in the SL4 category.

## 26 CROPS ON OVER 1.05 LAKH HECTARES LOST IN DHARWAD

- Crops damaged by floodwaters of the Benne Halla at Yarinarayanapura in Kundgol taluk of Dharwad district.
- Heavy rainfall during November has come as a shock to **farmers of Dharwad district** where **agricultural crops in 96,583 hectares of land** have been damaged and horticultural crops in 8,759 hectares of land affected.
- According to an assessment made by the officials of departments of Agriculture and Horticulture, untimely rain has damaged **Chilli, Cotton, Bengal Gram, Maize And Paddy Crops, Apart From Horticultural Crops. Cotton And Chilli Crops** have suffered heavy damage, followed by **Bengal Gram, Maize, Paddy And Jowar**. Farmers are apprehensive of continuous rainfall increasing the chances of pest attack.
- **Red Chilli** grown in Kundgol and Hubballi taluks has been damaged in nearly 7,000 hectares. **Chilli** was grown in 22,000 hectares and almost 40% of the crop has been damaged. **Horticultural Crops, Including Onion, Flowers And Tomato**, and various other vegetables in 8,759 hectares have been damaged.
- As per the initial assessment report, **Cotton** in 11,616 hectares, **Maize** in 4,213 hectares, **Paddy** in 2,138 hectares, **Jowar** in 755 hectares and **Wheat** in 535 hectares have been damaged due to heavy downpour and incessant rainfall.
- According to the report, **Floriculturists** have suffered the maximum loss. **Marigold flowers** which used to fetch Rs. 250 per kg have been totally damaged.

The Forest Department has introduced stringent curbs to regulate a temple festival in the core area of **Bandipur Tiger Reserve**.

#### BANDIPUR TIGER RESERVE

This National Park was formed by including most of the forest areas of the **then Venugopala Wildlife Park** established under Govt. Notification dated **19th February 1941** and the area was **enlarged in 1985** extending over an area of 874.20 Sq.Km and **named as Bandipur National Park**.

This reserve was brought **under Project Tiger in 1973**. Subsequently some adjacent reserve forest areas were added to the reserve and extending to 880.02 Sq. Km. The present area under the control of Bandipur Tiger Reserve is 912.04 Sq. Km. An area of 39.80 Sq. Km of KFDC plantation area was handed over to this division during 2007-08. During 2010-11 the **Nugu Wildlife Sanctuary** was handed over to Wildlife Division, Mysore. Bandipur National Park is located where **the Deccan Plateau meets the Western Ghats**, and the altitude of the park ranges from 680 meters (2,230 ft) to 1,454 meters (4,770 ft).

As a result, the park has a variety of biomes including **dry deciduous forests, moist deciduous forests and shrublands**. The wide range of habitats **help support a diverse range of organisms**. The park is flanked by The **Kabini River** in the north and The **Moyar River** in the south. The **Nugu River** runs through the park.

The highest point in the park is on a hill called **Himavad Gopalaswamy Betta**, where there is a Hindu temple at the summit. Bandipur has typical tropical climate with distinct wet and dry seasons. The dry and hot period usually begins in early March and can last till the arrival of the monsoon rains in June.

Bandipur supports a wide range of **TIMBER TREES** including: **Teak** (*Tectona Grandis*), **Rosewood** (*Dalbergia Latifolia*), **Sandalwood** (*Santalum Album V*), **Indian-Laurel** (*Terminalia Tomentosa*), **Indian Kino Tree** (*Pterocarpus Marsupium*), **Giant Clumping Bamboo** (*Dendrocalamus Strictus*), **Clumping Bamboo** (*Bambusa Arundinacea*) and **Grewia Tiliaefolia**.

There are also several notable **FLOWERING AND FRUITING TREES** and shrubs including: **Kadam Tree, Indian Gooseberry, Crape-Myrtle, Axlewood, Black Myrobalan**, etc..

Bandipur National Park harbours **Indian Elephant, Gaur, Bengal Tiger, Sloth Bear, Muggler Crocodile, Indian Rock Python, Four-Horned Antelope, Golden Jackal and Dhole**. The commonly seen mammals along the public access roads in the park include **Chital, Gray Langur, Indian Giant Squirrel and Indian Elephant**.

The authorities have said that the curbs for the **Beladakuppe jatra mahotsava** in the **Hediyala range of Bandipur** is a precautionary measure in view of the pandemic and the imperatives of ensuring COVID-19 guidelines besides implementation of the **Wildlife Protection Act (WPA)**.

#### WILDLIFE PROTECTION ACT (WPA)

The **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972** is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted for protection of plants and animal species. **Before 1972, India had only five designated national parks**. Among other reforms, the Act established schedules of protected plant and animal species; hunting or harvesting these species was largely outlawed.

The Act provides for the protection of **Wild Animals, Birds and Plants**; and for matters connected therewith or ancillary or incidental thereto. It extends to the whole of India.

It has **six schedules** which give varying degrees of protection.

**Schedule I and part II of Schedule II** provide absolute protection - offences under these are prescribed the highest penalties.

Species listed in **Schedule III and Schedule IV** are also protected, but the penalties are much lower. **Animals under Schedule V**, e.g. **Common Crows, Fruit Bats, Rats and Mice**, are legally considered vermin and may be hunted freely.

The specified endemic plants in **Schedule VI** are **prohibited from cultivation and planting**. The

hunting to the Enforcement authorities have the power to compound offences under this Schedule (i.e. they impose fines on the offenders). The first such law was passed by the **British Indian Government in 1887** called the **Wild Birds Protection Act**.

There are **Five Types of Protected Areas** as provided under the Act. They are **Sanctuaries, National Parks, Tiger Reserves, Conservation Reserves, Community Reserves**.

The **Beladakuppe Jatra Mahotsava** has become a delicate issue with the Forest Department striving to strike a balance between implementation of the WPA 1972 and also ensuring that the religious sentiments of the local community is respected.

## 28 PRESIDENT GIVES AWAY GALLANTRY AWARDS

- Group Captain **Abhinandan Varthaman**, who was held captive for three days by Pakistan after he chased and downed a Pakistani fighter jet in 2019, was awarded **Vir Chakra**, the **third highest wartime gallantry award**, by President Ram Nath Kovind.
- Group Captain Varthaman (a **Wing Commander** then) downed a Pakistani jet on February 27, 2019, before his **MiG 21 Bison** was hit and he had to eject in Pakistani territory. A day after the **Balakot airstrike**, Pakistan launched a retaliatory strike against India.
- The award citation read out at the ceremony said several Pakistan Air Force fighter aircraft, consisting of advanced fourth-generation F-16 and JF-17, were detected heading toward the Line of Control (LoC) around 9:55 a.m. that day.
- The citation pointed out that Wing Commander Varthaman, displaying exceptional air combat acumen and knowledge of the enemy's tactics, scanned the low-altitude airspace with his Airborne Intercept (AI) radar and picked up an enemy aircraft that was flying low to ambush the Indian fighter-interceptor aircraft.
- "However, in the melee, one of the enemy aircraft fired multiple advanced **BVR (Beyond Visual Range)** missiles, one of which hit his aircraft forcing him to eject in enemy territory," it stated.
- Major **Vibhuti Shankar Dhoundiyal** was posthumously given **Shaurya Chakra** for his role in a **counter-insurgency operation**, where five terrorists were eliminated and 200 kg of explosive material was recovered.
- The **second highest peacetime gallantry award, Kirti Chakra**, was posthumously awarded to **Sapper Prakash Jadhav** for neutralising terrorists in an operation in Jammu and Kashmir.
- President Kovind also presented Shaurya Chakra posthumously to **Naib Subedar Sombir** for killing a dreaded terrorist in an operation in Jammu and Kashmir.



## 29 'ENSURE JUSTICE TO IRULA WOMEN'

PMK founder S. Ramadoss urged DGP Sylendra Babu to ensure justice to four **Irula Tribe** women who were sexually assaulted allegedly by personnel of Tirukoilur police station 10 years ago. He charged that the case had not been investigated and a "corrected chargesheet" had not been filed.

### IRULA

Is also known as **Iruliga**, are a Dravidian ethnic group inhabiting the Indian states of **Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka**.

Most Irula live in the northern districts of Tamil Nadu, where the **majority** are found in the Changalpattu, North Arcot, and **South Arcot districts not far from Madras City**. While the Irula in general merit additional fieldwork, it is only the Nilgiri Irula who are considered here. They live in the Nilgiri District in extreme northwestern Tamil Nadu, in the adjacent Coimbatore District, and in parts of Karnataka and Kerala states. Depending on the criteria used, the Irula have been identified as speakers of a distinct Irula language or speakers of a dialect of Tamil. In addition, Malayalam has

influenced Irula speech in Kerala, and **Kannada has influenced the speech of a subgroup of Irula, called Kasaba**, in Karnataka.

Traditionally, the **main occupation** of the Irulas has been **Snake, Rat Catching and Honey Collection**. They also work as labourers (coolies) in the fields of the landlords during **the sowing and harvesting seasons** or in the rice mills. **Fishing and Cattle Farm** is also a major occupation.

**Rats destroy** a quarter of the grain grown on Tamil Nadu-area **farms** annually. To combat this pest, Irula men use a traditional **earthen pot fumigation method**. Smoke is blown through their mouths, which leads to severe **respiratory and heart problems**.

## 30 TWO ROHINGYA FAMILIES HAVE NO LINKS TO IS

The Kerala Government has informed the Supreme Court that the two **Rohingya** refugee families from Myanmar, which include two newborns, have no links to the Islamic State (IS) or ISI.

Kerala clarified that in the last five years, no case under **the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956** was reported against illegal Bangladesh immigrants or Rohingya in the State.

### THE ROHINGYA PEOPLE

They are a stateless **Indo-Aryan ethnic group** who predominantly follow **Islam** and reside in **Rakhine State, Myanmar** (previously known as Burma). Before the **displacement crisis in 2017**, when over **740,000 fled to Bangladesh**, an estimated 1.4 million Rohingya lived in Myanmar. Described by journalists and news outlets as one of the most persecuted minorities in the world, **the Rohingya**

**are denied citizenship under the 1982 Myanmar nationality law**. There are also restrictions on their freedom of movement, access to state education and civil service jobs.

A total of 362 villages have been destroyed either completely or partially since Myanmar's military began a campaign against the Rohingya in August 2020.

## 31 CGWB GIVES CLEARANCE TO SINK BOREWELLS NEAR RIVER BEDS

The **Central Ground Water Board (CGWB)** has given clearance to sink new borewells near the river beds of **Uruvaiyar, Thennennai and Malattar in Puducherry** to address the growing demand for potable water.

### CENTRAL GROUND WATER BOARD (CGWB)

A subordinate office of the **Ministry of Water Resources**, Government of India, is the **National Apex Agency** entrusted with the responsibilities of providing **scientific inputs** for **Management, Exploration, Monitoring, Assessment, Augmentation** and regulation of ground water resources of the country. Central Ground Water Board was **established in 1970** by **renaming the Exploratory Tube wells Organization** under the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India. It was **merged with the Ground Water Wing of the Geological Survey of India during 1972**.

The Board has **18 Regional offices**. The Rajiv Gandhi National Ground Water Training & Research Institute (RGNGT&RI), which coordinates the capacity building activities of the Board functions from the CGWB, Raipur.

Various activities related to regulation of ground water development in the country are being looked after by the Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA), **constituted under the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986**.

**Major activities** being taken up by Central Ground Water Board include

- I. Macro/Micro-Level Ground Water Management Studies,
- II. Exploratory Drilling Programme,
- III. Monitoring Of Ground Water Levels
- IV. Water Quality Through A Network Of Ground Water Observation Wells Comprising Both Large Diameter Open Wells And Purpose-Built Bore/Tube Wells (Piezometers),
- V. Implementation Of Demonstrative Schemes For Artificial Recharge And Rainwater Harvesting For Recharge Augmentation.

Periodic assessment of replenishable ground water resources of the country is carried out by the Board jointly with the concerned State Government agencies. The Board also **takes up special studies** on various aspects of ground water sector such as ground water depletion, **Sea Water Ingress**, ground water contamination, **Conjunctive Use Of Surface & Ground Water**, water balance etc.

- The wells would be sunk using funds sanctioned by the French Development Agency for augmentation of urban drinking water supply in the Union Territory.
- Asked about the objections raised by environmentalists to the sinking of new borewells, he said the government was open to suggestions but was left with no other option. The Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) level of water drawn from 90% of the existing borewells was in the **range of 1000-2000**. The government has a responsibility to provide potable water to households, he added.

## 32 NILGIRI TAHR POPULATION EXPANDS BEYOND MUKURTHI NATIONAL PARK

- A Nilgiri Tahr, spotted near **Mukurthi National Park** in the **Nilgiris Forest Division** recently.
- The population of the iconic **NILGIRI TAHR** could be expanding into habitats from which they were previously decimated due to poaching and habitat loss.

### THE NILGIRI TAHR

It is the **only mountain ungulate** in southern India amongst the 12 species present in India. It is also the state animal of Tamil Nadu. The Nilgiri tahr, which used to be found along the **entire stretch of Western Ghats**, is presently found only in small

fragmented pockets. A large part of its population has been wiped out from its historical range. The existing populations are under severe stress due to habitat loss and hunting.

This **endemic species** of the Western Ghats is listed as **Endangered in the IUCN Red List** of Threatened Species and is protected **under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972**. The **population** of Nilgiri Tahr has been **estimated at 3,122 individuals** in the wild as per a report released by **WWF India in 2015**. The **Eravikulam National Park in Anamalai hills, Kerala**, is home to **The Largest Population Of The Nilgiri Tahr**, with more than 700 individuals.

**The Nilgiri tahr faces a multitude of threats such as:**

- Habitat loss due to rampant deforestation, competition with domestic livestock, hydro-electric projects in Nilgiri tahr habitat, and monoculture plantations
  - Occasional hunting for its meat and skin
- Plantation activities affect the Nilgiri tahr habitat, which includes grasslands and sholas threats faced, habitat, and population size was culation and its habitat in the hills of Tamil Nadu and Kerala in 2015. It was the first time such a comprehensive report was made.

- M.A. Predit, coordinator for the Nilgiri tahr conservation programme for the **World Wide Fund for Nature India**, said a small herd of tahr had colonised the Kinnakorai area between 2010 and 2013. Eventually, in one of the more recent population estimation exercises, it was noted that the number of tahr seen in the area had increased to between 10 and 15 comprising a single herd.
- “However, seeing lone **Saddle back males** (mature adult male Nilgiri tahr identifiable by a patch on their hides on their backs) are common because, mature males are mostly observed with the herd during the rutting season between June and August.”
- A saddleback male was spotted in **Frog Hill of Gudalur** in a recent survey. These records allow us to speculate that the species is trying to re-colonise habitats from which it was previously displaced,” said Mr. Predit.

### **33 THREE SCIENTISTS TO BE HONOURED AT ‘INTROMET 2021’**

- **R. Ananthakrishnan, Anna Modayil Mani, and P.R. Pisharoty** contributed significantly to **Meteorological Research In India**.
- The International Symposium on Tropical Meteorology (‘Intromet 2021’), being organised under the aegis of the Cochin University of Science and Technology (Cusat) in collaboration with the Cochin Chapter of the Indian Meteorological Society, will honour three eminent scientists from Kerala — R. Ananthakrishnan, Anna Modayil Mani, and P.R. Pisharoty, who contributed significantly to meteorological research in the country.
- The **Indian Postal Department** would release special postal covers on to honour the scientists during the symposium, said K. Mohankumar, Founder Director of the **Advanced Centre for Atmospheric Radar Research**. There will also be memorial lectures in their honour.
- R. Ananthakrishnan, former director and honorary fellow of the **Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune**, was born in Palakkad and started his career as a research scholar in the field of light scattering under the **guidance of Nobel laureate Sir C.V. Raman**. He was awarded D.Sc. in 1937 from the University of Madras. His contributions earned him **the Padma Shri in 1969** and the C.V. Raman Centenary Medal in 1988.
- The research contributions of Ananthakrishnan include understanding of **light scattering and the Raman Effect, solar physics and meteor astronomy and meteorology**.

- Scientist **Anna Modayil Mani** was born in Peermade and obtained her B.Sc. (Hon.) in 1939 from the Madras Presidency College. She began her scientific career with **C.V. Raman at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru**, where she studied **the fluorescence and absorption patterns and spectra of diamonds**. In 1945, she went to the Imperial College, London, and later to the British Meteorological Office, studying the evolution of weather instruments. She visited several field observatories and manufacturers of meteorological instruments in England and Scotland and later joined **the India Meteorological Department (IMD)**.
- She made significant contributions to meteorological instrumentation, conducted research, and published papers on **solar radiation, atmospheric ozone and wind energy measurements**. She retired as the Deputy Director-General of the IMD in 1976. She passed away in 2001.
- **P.R. PISHAROTY** is among the **most distinguished** Indian meteorologists of international repute and is considered the **'Father Of Indian Remote Sensing'**. He was instrumental in heralding remote sensing in the country through pioneering experiments to **detect coconut wilt disease in Kerala** in the late 1960s. Pisharoty was a member of **the World Meteorological Organisation** (1963-1968) and later its **chairman**; a member of Joint Organising Committee for **Global Atmospheric Research Programme** (1969-77); and vice president of the International Association for Meteorology and Atmospheric Physics (1972-79).
- He served as director of **Remote Sensing and Satellite Meteorology, at ISRO Space Application Centre, Ahmedabad**, during 1972-75. He was conferred the **Padma Shri in 1970**, and received the prestigious **International Meteorological Prize 1989 of the World Meteorological Organisation**. He passed away in 2002.

### 34 CHOLERA-CAUSING BACTERIA FOUND IN THREE PANCHAYATS

- The presence of **Vibrio Cholerae Bacteria** that causes cholera has been found in Kozhikode again.
- Cholera is an **acute diarrhoeal infection caused by ingestion of FOOD OR WATER contaminated** with the bacteria. The presence of vibrio cholerae was **found in wells** in Narikkuni, Kakkur and Thamarassery grama panchayats. They were found to have coliform bacteria as well.

### 35 TANIKELLA BHARANI - LOK NAYAK FOUNDATION AWARD

Noted **Writer And Actor TANIKELLA BHARANI** has been selected for the **18th Lok Nayak Foundation award**, according to foundation chairman and AP Official Language Commission chairman Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad. The award will be presented on January 18 on the occasion of the **death anniversary of N.T. Rama Rao**, said Dr. Lakshmi Prasad.

### 36 TIGER PUG MARKS FOUND IN YERRAIGUDEM FOREST

The pug marks of the elusive tiger were found around 3 km from Danda Gundala village located on the forest fringes of Yellandu mandal, Five teams of Forest department were deployed in **Yerraigudem Forest** beat to keep a constant watch on the movement of the tiger through the camera traps and also conduct patrolling in the habitations situated in close proximity to the reserve forest, sources said.

### 37 FOUR JUMBOS UNCONSCIOUS, FOOD POISONING SUSPECTED

- Four elephants, including a calf, were found unconscious near a village in **Chhattisgarh's Surajpur district**, with forest officials suspecting that they might have fallen sick due to food poisoning.

- “Residents informed about some elephants lying unconscious on the ground near Kachhiya village under **Biharpur Forest Range**, located around 100 kilometres from Surajpur district headquarters,” said BS Bhagat, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Surajpur.

## 38 UIDAI WORKING TO MAKE SMARTPHONES AS ‘UNIVERSAL AUTHENTICATOR’: CEO

- UIDAI is looking at using smartphones as ‘**Universal Authenticator**’ to establish a resident's identity.
- At present, **Finger Prints, Iris And One-Time Password (OTP)** are used for authentication.
- The **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)** is looking at using smartphones as ‘universal authenticator’ to establish a resident's identity.
- At present, finger prints, iris and one-time password (OTP) are used for authentication and efforts are on to increase the scope of the same, its chief executive Saurabh Garg said, addressing the '**ETBFSI Converge**' summit.
- "We are looking at how the smartphone can develop as a universal authenticator. That is an area of work that is ongoing and we hope we will be able to proceed rapidly in that direction. It will help people to do authentication right from where they are living, staying etc," Garg said.
- Aadhar and the direct benefit transfers done using the number have helped the government save ₹2 lakh crore by plugging leakages and duplication, he said.
- The banking and the telecom industry have rapidly adopted the Aadhar number for fulfilling the know-your-customer norms, he said, adding that 70 crore or half of the overall bank accounts are seeded with Aadhar.
- However, the number of **pension accounts** (3 crore) and **mutual fund holders** (around 10 crore) is very less and those industries should make use of the facilities offered by Aadhar to rapidly expand coverage, Garg said.
- At present, there are **130 crore Aadhar cards, covering 99.5% of the country's population**, he said, adding that efforts are on to get the remaining 0.5% of the residents into the fold.

## 39 U.S. BANKS SEEK REGULATORY PERMISSION BEFORE ENGAGING IN CERTAIN CRYPTO ACTIVITIES: REGULATOR

The **Office of the Comptroller of the Currency** said banks must be able to demonstrate they have appropriate risk management tools before taking on activities like providing custody services for customers’ crypto holdings.

U.S. banks must seek and obtain written permission from their bank supervisors before engaging in certain activities involving **Cryptocurrency**.

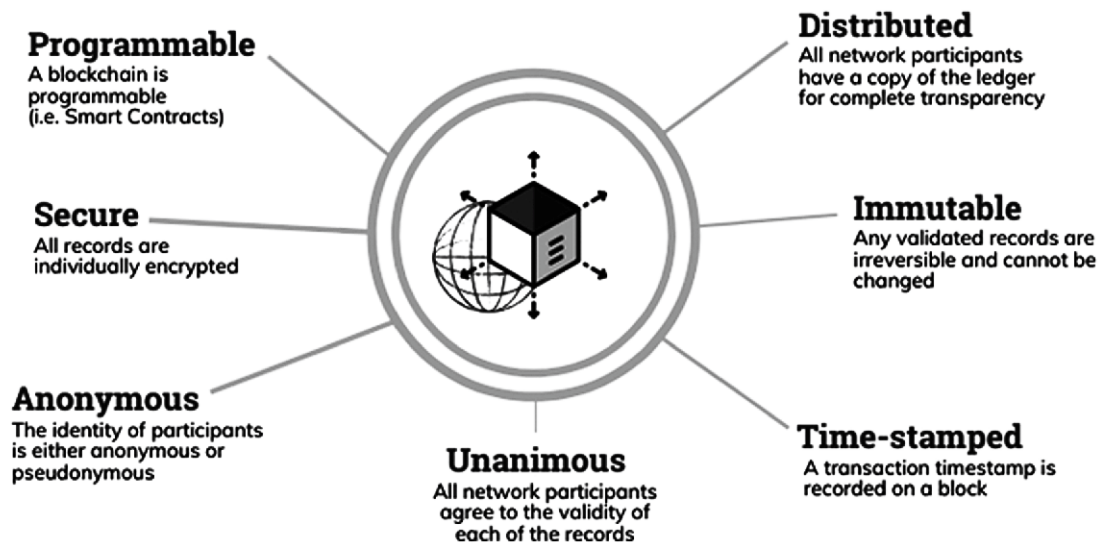
### WHAT IS BLOCKCHAIN?

Blockchain is a system of recording information in a way that makes it difficult or impossible to change, hack, or cheat the system. A blockchain is essentially a **digital ledger** of transactions that is duplicated and distributed across the entire network of computer systems on the blockchain. Each block in the chain contains a number of transactions, and every time a new

transaction occurs on the blockchain, a record of that transaction is added to every participant's ledger. The decentralised database managed by multiple participants is known as **Distributed**

**Ledger Technology (DLT)**. Blockchain is a type of DLT in which transactions are recorded with an immutable cryptographic signature called a **hash**.

## The Properties of Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT)



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### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BLOCKCHAIN AND BITCOIN?

Blockchain is the technology that underpins the cryptocurrency Bitcoin, but **Bitcoin is not the only version of a blockchain** distributed ledger system in the market. There are several other cryptocurrencies with their own blockchain and distributed ledger architectures.

Meanwhile, the decentralisation of the technology has also led to several schisms or forks within the Bitcoin network, creating offshoots of the ledger

where some miners use a blockchain with one set of rules, and others use a blockchain with another set of rules.

Alongside the original Bitcoin, Bitcoin Cash, Bitcoin Gold and Bitcoin SV exist as their own cryptocurrency. With smaller networks, these cryptocurrency blockchains are more vulnerable to hacking attacks, one of which befell Bitcoin Gold in 2018.

### Current Stands

- The new stance from the regulator places a higher bar on banks considering some crypto activities, after the agency under former President Donald Trump cleared the way for banks to engage in some crypto work.
- Under the new interpretive letter, banks are not allowed to engage in several crypto-related activities, such as providing custody for crypto assets and using dollar deposits and reserves to back "stablecoins," without first notifying their bank supervisors of their intention to engage in that activity.
- Supervisors will then review the bank's risk management tools and systems, and allow the activity only if banks demonstrate they can do so in a safe and sound manner.

Turkish President **Recep Tayyip Erdogan** hosted Abu Dhabi's powerful Crown Prince, **Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan**, as Turkey and the United Arab Emirates seek to repair their tense relations and increase economic cooperation.

The visit by the Crown Prince, seen as the de facto leader and the force behind the **UAE's Foreign Policy** posture, is his first official trip to Turkey since 2012, and the highest-level visit by an Emirati official since relations hit a low. The Crown Prince's brother who is the UAE National Security Adviser, Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan, visited Turkey as the first major step toward mending strained ties.

#### ABOUT TURKEY

- I. **Turkey** officially the **Republic of Turkey**, It shares borders with **Greece and Bulgaria** to the northwest; the **Black Sea** to the north; **Georgia** to the northeast; **Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Iran** to the east; **Iraq** to the southeast; **Syria and the Mediterranean Sea** to the south; and the **Aegean Sea** to the west. Kurds are the largest minority. Turkey's capital is Ankara, while its largest city and financial centre is Istanbul.
- II. Turkey's extraordinary **ECOSYSTEM AND HABITAT** diversity has produced considerable species diversity. Several **Wild Species Of Tulip** are native to Anatolia, and the flower was first introduced to Western Europe with species taken from the **Ottoman Empire in the 16th century**.
- III. Turkish **ECONOMY** are **Banking, Construction, Home Appliances, Electronics, Textiles, Oil Refining, Petrochemical Products, Food, Mining, Iron And Steel, And Machine Industry**.
- IV. Turkey is a **secular state** with no official state religion; the Turkish Constitution provides for **freedom of religion and conscience**.
- V. Ottoman miniature is linked to the Persian miniature tradition, as well as strong Chinese artistic influences. The words **tasvir or nakış** were used to define the art of miniature painting in Ottoman Turkish. The studios the artists worked in were **called nakkaşhane**.
- VI. The Byzantine era is usually dated from 330 AD, when Constantine the Great moved the Roman capital to Byzantium, which became Constantinople, until the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453.

- **Israel and Morocco** signed a landmark agreement that lays the foundation for **Security Cooperation, Intelligence Sharing** and **future Arms Sales**.
- The memorandum of understanding is the centrepiece of a visit by Israeli Defence Minister **Benny Gantz** to Morocco, which established formal relations with Israel in 2020 as part of the U.S.-brokered **Abraham Accords**.

#### ABRAHAM ACCORDS

##### Background:

The Abraham Accords are a series of treaties normalizing diplomatic relations between **Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco**, facilitated by the **U.S. Administra-**

**tion between August and December, 2020**. In the span of five short months, these four Arab states joined Egypt and Jordan in making peace with Israel. The agreements were called "The Abraham Accords" in honor of Abraham - the patriarch of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam[2].

## ISRAEL-UAE AGREEMENT IN AUGUST, 2020.

The Abraham Accords began with the groundbreaking Israel-UAE agreement in August, 2020.

- The UAE and Israel have never fought militarily, but the UAE did participate in the Arab League boycott against Israel, which had been in place since Israel's establishment in 1948.
- The agreement was the result of shared interests regarding threats posed by Iran's regime and years of quiet/secret cooperation.
- Israel opened an international diplomatic office in UAE in 2015, Mossad chief Yossi Cohen made several secret trips there, and the two governments cooperated to fight the coronavirus pandemic.
- Both countries are interested in diversifying their economies and engaging with each other to achieve that goal.
- Israel agreed to freeze its plans for annexation/application of sovereignty in the West Bank as part of the deal.
- The agreement has led not only to diplomatic ties, but also cultural exchanges and grassroots cooperation between people in both countries. Since the accords were signed in September, 130,000 Israelis have visited Dubai and trade between Israel and the UAE has reached 1 billion AED.
- In a move widely seen as tied to the Abraham Accords, the U.S. agreed to sell advanced F35 warplanes to the UAE. This raised concerns among Israeli security officials that these planes could be used to threaten Israel in the future. U.S. and Israeli officials have discussed the issue and seem to have reached an understanding about ensuring Israel can effectively defend itself.

## INDIA & ABRAHAM ACCORDS:

The recent visit by **the Indian Air Force chief, Air Chief Marshal R.K. Bhadauria**, to Israel offers a window to study how New Delhi is taking advantage of the Abraham Accords deal signed between Israel and a consortium of Arab States led by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 2020. According to reports, an Indian contingent of the Indian Air Force (IAF) will now visit Israel in October to take part in multilateral military exercises.

### Deepening cooperation

In the same time as ACM Bhadauria's visit, India also conducted the '**Zayed Talwar**' naval exercises with the UAE off the coast of Abu Dhabi, further deepening the fast-developing strategic cooperation between the two countries. In December 2020, Indian Army chief, **General M.M. Naravane**, visited the UAE and Saudi Arabia, becoming **the first chief of the Indian Army to do so**.

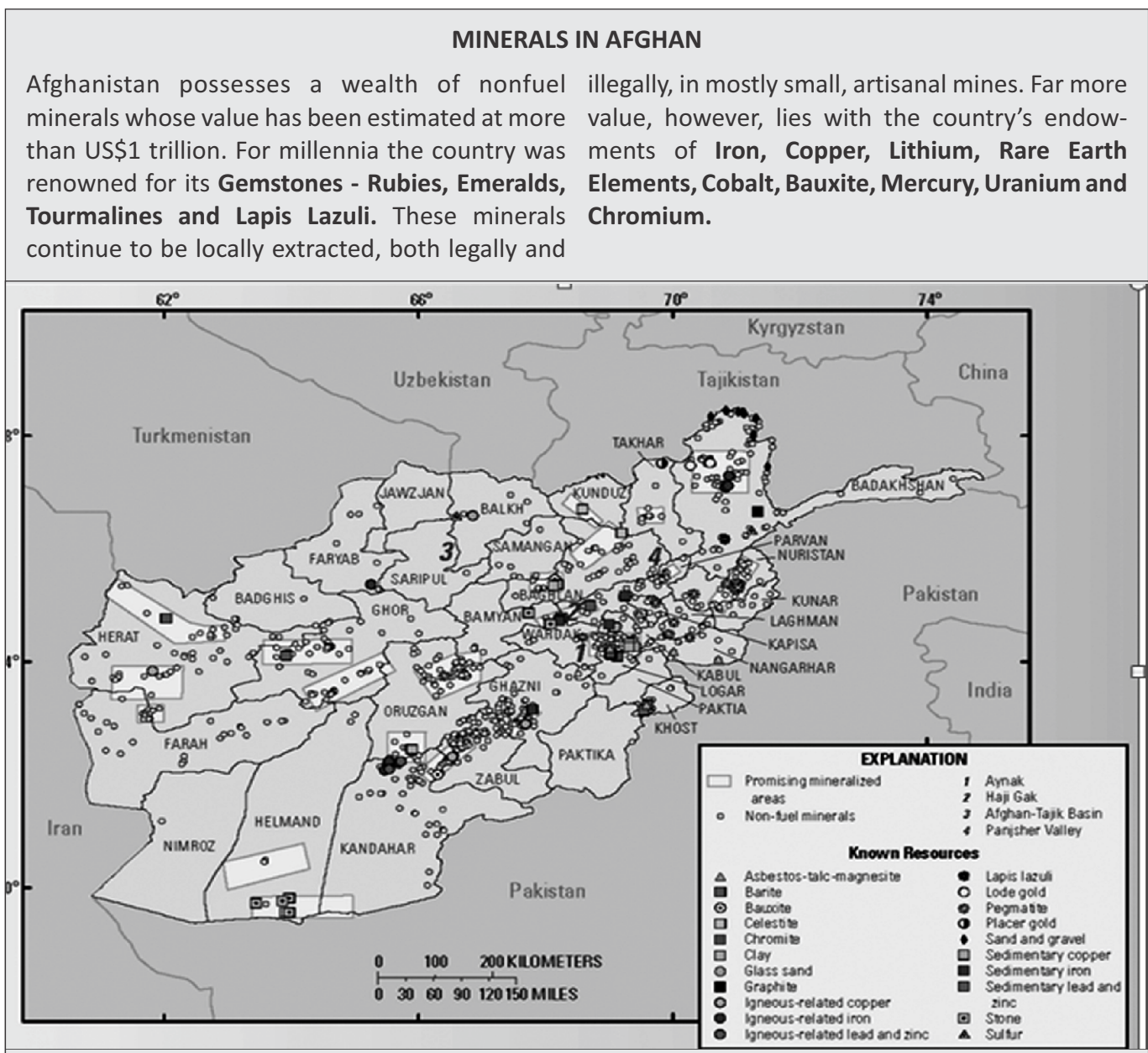
The foundation for these visits was set by the (now former) chief of the Indian Navy, **Admiral Sunil Lanba**, in 2017, who visited the UAE and Oman, the latter being home to **Duqm Port** where New Delhi signed a deal with Muscat for access to the facility, including dry dock use by the Indian Navy. The above examples show the pacy developments on the defence front between India and the West Asian region. The signing of the Accords has removed a significant strategic obstacle for New Delhi — that of a trapeze wire delicate balancing act India has had to play out between the Arab Gulf and Israel over the decades. This status quo is now witnessing a change, with Israel inaugurating its first diplomatic mission in Abu Dhabi and direct flights, business and tourism picking up between the two countries over the past few months. New Delhi had welcomed the Accords, highlighting its support for mechanisms that offer peace and stability in the region.



- Mr. Gantz’s trip is the first official visit by an Israeli Defence Minister to one of the Arab states that normalised ties under the accords. Mr. Gantz said the agreement “will allow us to exchange ideas, enter joint projects and enable Israeli military exports here”.
- The agreement was signed during a meeting between Mr. Gantz and his Moroccan counterpart, Abdellatif Loudiyi, in Rabat.

## 42 CHINESE FIRMS EYE AFGHANISTAN’S LITHIUM

- A number of Chinese companies have already begun “on-site inspections” of possible projects to tap **LITHIUM DEPOSITS IN AFGHANISTAN**, having received the green light to do so from the Taliban regime, according to a report in the Chinese state media.
- **Lithium** is one of **many resources** in Afghanistan present in **large deposits** but as yet untapped, largely because of years of political instability and the lack of infrastructure. A Chinese company secured the rights to mine one of **The World’s Biggest Copper Reserves In Afghanistan At Aynak** in 2011, but has not yet begun work on extraction.



- While Chinese firms are aware of the risks and pitfalls, they have not wasted time scouting out potential deposits of lithium, a valuable resource for a range of industries **From Electric Cars To Energy Storage Systems**.
- The visas were obtained from Afghan authorities “after coordination between the **China Arab Economic and Trade Promotion Committee in Kabul** and Afghanistan’s Mining Ministry” with “representatives of five Chinese companies” arrived “to conduct on-site inspections”, Yu Minghui, who heads the trade promotion committee, told the newspaper.
- Besides the five companies present in Afghanistan, another “at least 20” state-owned and private firms had made inquiries about lithium projects, the committee said.
- Mr. Yu said company representatives were “most concerned about basic guarantees of security and social order in Afghanistan”, but also “praised the Afghan Taliban’s friendliness toward Chinese investors”.
- The Taliban Government has said it would welcome Chinese investment and support President Xi Jinping’s **BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE**, and was also open to extending **THE CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC)** to Afghanistan.

### BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

#### China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

The BRI is an ambitious plan to develop two new trade routes connecting China with the rest of the world. But the initiative is about far more than infrastructure.

The **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, or B&R)**, formerly known as **One Belt One Road** or **OBOR** for short, is a global infrastructure development strategy adopted by the Chinese government in 2013 to invest in nearly 70 countries and international organizations. It is considered a centerpiece of the Chinese leader Xi Jinping’s foreign policy. It is an effort to develop an expanded, interdependent market for China, grow China’s economic and political power, and create the right conditions for China to build a high technology economy.

#### Why create the Belt and Road?

There are three main motivations for the BRI. **The first**, and most discussed internationally, is China’s rivalry with the US. The vast majority of Chinese international trade passes by sea through the Malacca strait off the coast of Singapore which is a major US ally. The initiative is integral to China’s efforts to create its own more secure trade routes.

There is no doubt that China’s intention is also to make participating nations interdependent with the Chinese economy, and thereby build economic

and political influence for China. In that respect it has similarities with the Marshall Plan that followed the Second World War – but with the essential difference that China dispenses funding to other nations based purely on shared economic interests.

**The second** key reason for the initiative is the legacy of the 2008 financial crisis. China’s government responded to the emergency with a ¥4tn stimulus package, issuing contracts to build railways, bridges, and airports, but saturated the Chinese market in the process. The Belt and Road framework provides an alternative market for China’s vast state-owned companies beyond the borders of China.

**Finally**, the Belt and Road is seen as a crucial element in the Chinese government’s efforts to stimulate economies of the country’s central provinces, which historically lag behind richer coastal areas. The government uses the Belt and Road to encourage and support businesses in these central regions, allocating budget generously, and encouraging businesses to compete for Belt and Road contracts.

#### Why is it called the ‘Belt and Road’ initiative?

The Belt and Road Initiative is a relatively new name. Initially it was referred to as two separate projects, then as the **‘One Belt, One Road’**

initiative, then finally as the Belt and Road Initiative.

### The Belt

The Silk Road Economic 'Belt' element refers to plans for a revitalized series of **ancient overland trading routes connecting Europe and Asia to be built largely with Chinese expertise**. The idea was first proposed by Chinese president **Xi Jinping during a visit to Kazakhstan in 2013**, and central Asia is seen as the most vital region for the 'Belt' element.

### The Road

In 2014 Xi Jinping outlined plans to additionally establish new sea trade infrastructure along the **old Marco Polo route – a maritime silk road connecting China, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Europe**. This would be a longer route avoiding the Malacca Strait, incorporating fuelling stations, ports, bridges, industry, and infrastructure through Southeast Asia and into the Indian Ocean. Pakistan is seen as perhaps the most crucial partner country in this effort through the China Pakistan Economic Corridor project.

## 43 AUSTRALIA'S GREAT BARRIER REEF ERUPTS IN COLOUR AS CORALS SPAWN

- Scientists recorded the corals fertilizing billions of offspring by casting sperm and eggs into the Pacific Ocean off the **Queensland State** coastal city of **Cairns**.
- Australia's **Great Barrier Reef** is spawning in an explosion of colour as the **World Heritage-listed** natural wonder recovers from life-threatening coral bleaching episodes.

### GREAT BARRIER REEF

The Great Barrier Reef is a site of remarkable variety and beauty on the north-east coast of Australia. It contains **the world's largest collection of coral reefs, with 400 types of coral**, 1,500 species of fish and **4,000 types of mollusc**. It also holds great scientific interest as the habitat of species such as the dugong ('sea cow') and the large green turtle, which are threatened with extinction.

As the world's most extensive coral reef ecosystem, the Great Barrier Reef is a globally outstanding and significant entity. Practically the entire ecosystem was inscribed as **World Heritage in 1981**, covering an area of **348,000 square kilometres and extending across a contiguous latitudinal range of 14o (10oS to 24oS)**. The Great Barrier Reef (hereafter referred to as GBR) includes extensive cross-shelf diversity, stretching from the low water mark along the mainland coast up to 250 kilometres offshore. This wide depth range includes vast shallow inshore areas, mid-shelf and outer reefs, and beyond the continental shelf to oceanic waters over 2,000 metres deep.

One-third of the GBR lies beyond the seaward edge of the shallower reefs; this area comprises continental slope and deep oceanic waters and abyssal plains.

**Six of the world's seven species of marine turtle occur in the GBR**. As well as the **world's largest green turtle breeding site at Raine Island**, the GBR also includes many regionally important marine turtle rookeries.

**Queensland is responsible for management of the Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park**, established under the Marine Parks Act 2004 (Qld). This is contiguous with the GBR Marine Park and covers the area between low and high water marks and many of the waters within the jurisdictional limits of Queensland. Queensland is also responsible for management of most of the islands.

Many **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island** peoples undertake traditional use of marine resource activities to provide traditional food, practice their living maritime culture, and to educate younger generations about traditional and cultural rules and protocols.

- Scientists recorded the corals fertilising billions of offspring by casting sperm and eggs into the Pacific Ocean off the Queensland state coastal city of Cairns.
- The network of **2,500 reefs covering 3,48,000 sqkm** (1,34,000 square miles) suffered significantly from **Coral Bleaching** caused by unusually **Warm Ocean Temperatures** in 2016, 2017 and last year. The bleaching damaged two-thirds of the coral.

## 44 EXPLAINED | WHAT IS STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVE?

- **America’s Strategic Petroleum Reserve** holds about 605 million barrels of oil in underground salt caverns in **Texas and Louisiana**.
- When **President Joe Biden ordered the release of 50 million barrels of oil from America’s strategic reserve** to help reduce energy costs, he was taking aim at a growing burden for millions of Americans embarking on Thanksgiving travel.
- The step announced, done in a rare coordination with several other nations, is among the few things a Presidential administration can do to try to lessen the squeeze – and the political threat – of rising inflation. The likelihood of providing meaningful relief in the near future, however, is probably low. Still, any help in easing fuel prices, even modestly, would be welcomed by many Americans.

### WHAT IS THE PETROLEUM RESERVE?

- America’s Strategic Petroleum Reserve holds about 605 million barrels of oil in underground salt caverns in Texas and Louisiana. It was created following the 1970s Arab oil embargo to store oil that could be tapped in an emergency. But the dynamics of the global oil industry changed dramatically in recent years: Now the U.S exports more oil than it imports.
- There’s a limit to how much can be released at once. In the past, the government has released about one million barrels per day. At that rate, the promised influx of 50 million barrels of crude could last about two months.

### Why did Joe Biden tap the reserve?

- The idea is that by putting more oil on the market, prices will fall. That hasn’t happened yet. But depending on what happens in the rest of the world, there’s still a chance it could work.
- Oil prices rose slightly after the announcement. Traders were anticipating the news, and may have been underwhelmed by the details, said Claudio Galimberti, senior vice-president for oil markets at Rystad Energy.
- “The immediate price reaction is not the final judgment on the effectiveness of this effort,” said Jim Burkhard, vice-president at IHS Markit. “It will really be in the months ahead.”

### WHAT ABOUT OPEC?

The **OPEC** oil cartel and its allies will meet to decide whether to increase production or to hold back, a strategy the group often employs to boost prices. Earlier this month, Mr. Biden had hoped **OPEC nations, led by Saudi Arabia**, would agree to significantly boost production. But they only made modest increases.

#### OPEC

The **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries** is an **intergovernmental organization or cartel of 13 countries**. Founded on **14 September 1960** in Baghdad by the **first five members (Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela)**, it has since 1965 been **headquartered in Vienna, Austria**, although Austria is not an OPEC member state. As of September 2018, the 13 member countries accounted for an estimated 44 percent of global oil production and 81.5 percent

of the world's "proven" oil reserves, giving OPEC a major influence on global oil prices that were previously determined by the so-called "**Seven Sisters**" grouping of multinational oil companies.

The stated mission of the organization is to "**coordinate and unify the petroleum policies of its member countries** and ensure the stabilization of oil markets, in order to secure an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consumers, a steady income to producers, and a

fair return on capital for those investing in the petroleum industry."

The **current OPEC members** are the following: Algeria, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, the Republic of the Congo, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Venezuela. Former OPEC members are Ecuador, Indonesia and Qatar. **A larger group called OPEC+ was formed in late 2016** to have more control on the global crude oil market.

- The coalition Mr. Biden assembled - bringing together **India, China, Japan, South Korea and the U.K.** to tap their strategic oil reserves - is unprecedented. Altogether, the group could be adding 70 million to 80 million barrels of oil onto the market, he estimates.
- "It's kind of a coalition of oil importers," he added. "But can they really supplant, or can they really represent a rival to OPEC-plus? The answer is absolutely not." That's because the group of importers are using their strategic petroleum reserves, which are limited. On the other hand, OPEC and its **allies have oil reserves that can last for decades.** "So there is no comparison between the two," Mr. Galimberti said.

#### **Will gasoline get cheaper?**

What many consumers want to know is what's going to happen to gasoline prices at the pump. Many factors go into the price of gasoline. Refineries buy crude oil in advance, so they're still working with more expensive oil, and states have differing tax rates that impact the price. Nevertheless, if OPEC doesn't respond by curtailing production, the influx of oil could lead to a gasoline price decrease of 10 cents to 15 cents per gallon, said Kevin Book, managing director at Clearview Energy Partners. Even if the price drop doesn't happen, Mr. Biden can make the case that he tried.

#### **Why does oil matter?**

The future of oil and gas in the U.S. is a political flashpoint and source of tension, especially as companies and government agencies grapple with climate change and the transition to cleaner sources of energy.

On the one hand, the U.S. oil and gas industry has been praised by some political leaders for creating **Energy Independence**. Where the U.S. once relied heavily on imports, other nations now rely on the U.S. for oil. It's also a job supplier: The oil and gas industry employs more than 10 million people in the U.S. and **Contributes About 8% Of The Nation's Gross Domestic Product**, according to the American Petroleum Institute. Any impact resulting from Mr. Biden's release of oil from the strategic reserves "is likely to be short-lived unless it is paired with policy measures that encourage the production of American energy resources," the API said in a statement.

## **45 US HAS NOT MADE DETERMINATION YET ON POTENTIAL CAATSA WAIVER TO INDIA ON S400 PURCHASE FROM RUSSIA.**

- The US has not made a determination yet on any potential **CAATSA waiver** to India for its purchase of the **S-400 missile defence system from Russia**, the Biden administration has said, pointing out that the law does not have a country-specific waiver provision attached to it and bilateral conversations regarding the subject will continue.

- The State Department's comments come a week after India started receiving the supplies of **the Triumph S-400 missile defence system from Russia** and amidst calls from top Republican and Democratic lawmakers not to **IMPOSE COUNTERING AMERICA'S ADVERSARIES THROUGH SANCTIONS ACT (CAATSA) sanctions on India**.
- The CAATSA, enacted by the **US Congress in 2017**, provides for **punitive actions** against any country engaged in transactions with Russian defence and intelligence sectors.
- Asserting that the US values its “strategic partnership” with India, State Department Spokesperson Ned Price maintained the Biden Administration’s suspense over the issue that the CAATSA does not have a blanket or country-specific waiver provision attached to it.
- “We would need to refer you to the Indian government for any comments on potential deliveries of the S-400 system. But we have been clear when it comes to the system, not only in the Indian context but more broadly as well, that we've urged all of our allies, all of our partners to forego transactions with Russia that may risk triggering sanctions under so-called CAATSA, the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act. We have not made a determination on a potential waiver with respect to Indian arms transactions with Russia,” Price said on Tuesday.
- “CAATSA, however, does not have a blanket or country-specific waiver provision attached to it.
- We also know that our defence relationship with India has expanded and deepened significantly in recent years. It's deep and commensurate with the broad and deep relationship that we have with India and its status as a major defence partner,” he said.
- CAATSA is a tough US law which authorises the administration to impose sanctions on countries that purchase major defence hardware from Russia in response to **Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014** and its alleged meddling in the 2016 US presidential elections.
- In October 2018, **India had signed a USD 5 billion deal with Russia** to buy **five units of the S-400 air defence missile systems**, despite a warning from the then Trump administration that going ahead with the contract may invite US sanctions.
- The **US** has already **imposed sanctions on Turkey under the CAATSA** for the purchase of a batch of S-400 missile defence systems from Russia.
- Following the US sanctions on Turkey over the procurement of S-400 missile systems, there were apprehensions that Washington may impose similar punitive measures on India.
- Russia has been one of India's key major suppliers of arms and ammunition.
- In 2018, India formally agreed to purchase Russian S-400 Triumph air-defence systems after having signed an initial agreement with Russia two years prior,” they said.
- “We are concerned that the upcoming transfer of these systems will trigger sanctions under the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), which was enacted to hold Russia accountable for its malign behaviour,” .

## **46 CHINA DEMANDS TENCENT SUBMIT NEW APPS AND UPDATES TO INSPECTION**

- China has required Tencent Holdings submit any new apps or updates for inspections before they can be uploaded after a number of its apps were found to have committed violations, Chinese financial media outlet **Yicai**.
- Yicai, citing unnamed sources, said the Chinese social media and gaming giant had been required to do so by China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) after some of its apps were found to have infringed users' rights and interests.

- It also said that MIIT had recently issued a notice to say that between Nov. 24 to Dec. 31, all mobile apps and their updates will need to undergo a roughly seven-day-long review before they can be uploaded to app stores.
- Tencent said its apps remained functional and available for download in response to Yicai's and other local media reports.
- Chinese regulators have in over the past year mounted a wide-ranging crackdown on its tech giants, seeking to dismantle some of the industry's long-held practices after accusing them of monopolistic behaviour and infringing user rights.

## 47 MORE HOSPITAL BIRTHS, BUT LIMITED GAINS IN CHILDHOOD NUTRITION: NATIONAL FAMILY HEALTH SURVEY-5

- Births in institutional facilities, such as a hospital, improved by nearly eight percentage points but children who were either stunted or displayed signs of wasting only dropped by a maximum of three percentage points, shows a comparison of **NATIONAL FAMILY HEALTH SURVEY-5 (NFHS-5) AND NFHS-4**.
- The complete results of the NFHS-5 were made public. The NFHS-4 was released in 2014-15 and the latest, which captured population health indicators in 2017-19, was delayed due to the pandemic.

### Growth under check

India has also officially hit a **Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 2.0** that indicates a decrease from the 2.2 in the NFHS-4. According to the United Nations Population Division, a TFR of about **2.1 Children Per Woman Is Called Replacement-Level Fertility**. If replacement level fertility is sustained over a sufficiently long period, each generation will exactly replace itself. The urban TFR is 1.6 and the rural TFR is 2.1

### Hunger watch

The nutritional status of children in India barely improved in 2019-20 from the levels in 2015-16, the National Family Health Survey-5 data show (IN %)



Indicator	2019-20	2015-16	2005-06
<b>Children aged six to 59 months who are anaemic</b>	67.1	58.6	69.4
<b>Children under five who are stunted</b>	35.5	38.4	48
<b>Children under five who are wasted</b>	19.3	21	19.8
<b>Children under five who are severely wasted</b>	7.7	7.5	6.4
<b>Children under five who are underweight</b>	32.1	35.8	42.5
<b>Children aged six to 23 months receiving an adequate diet</b>	11.3	9.6	-
<b>Institutional births</b>	88.6	78.9	38.7

## Total Fertility Rate (TFR)

The total fertility rate (TFR) is the **average number of children a woman would give birth to during her lifetime if she were to pass through her childbearing years (15-49 years)** experiencing the present day age-specific fertility rates.

- “This is a significant feat for the country’s Family-Planning Programme, which does not include coercive policies. These findings bust the population-explosion myth and show that India must steer away from coercive measures of population control. While the increase in the use of modern contraceptive methods is heartening, an increase in female sterilisation coupled with continued stagnation in male sterilisation uptake shows that the onus of family planning still lies with women,” the Population Foundation of India, a nongovernmental organisation, said in a statement.
- An overall survey of the major differences between the NFHS-5 and NFHS-4 suggests that **the use of contraceptives has improved from 53.5% to 66.7%** in the latest NFHS-5 and **Institutional Births Increased From 78.9% To 88.6%**.
- The proportion of children (12-23 months) who were **fully vaccinated** improved from 62%-76% and children under 6 months who were exclusively breastfed also showed a sharp improvement from 54.9 to 63.7%.

## Nutrition concerns

- There were, however, mixed signals in nutrition. Though the gains in childhood nutrition were minimal, **Women And Men (15-49)** who had a below **Normal Body Mass Index (BMI)** each dropped roughly four percentage points. Those overweight (or had a higher BMI than ideal) increased by around 4 percentage points. Abnormal BMIs are linked to an increase in obesity and other non-communicable diseases (NCD).
- India's battle with anaemia also appears to have faltered. The proportion of **Anaemic Children (5-59 months) increased from 58% to 67%**. **Women** aged 15-49 who were anaemic **increased from 53% to 57%** and men of the same age increased from 29% to 31% between both editions of the NFHS.
- “What is gobsmacking is the increase in those overweight, the very large burden of NCD and the very challenging findings **on waist-hip ratio**. 56.7% women and 47.7% men have high-risk **Waist-To-Hip Ratio**. What we are going to see is that many of these are diet-related diseases, especially the quality of people's diets and what people can afford to eat,” said Purnima Menon, Senior Research Fellow, **International Food Policy Research Institute**.

### INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The **International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)** is an international agricultural research center founded in the early 1970s to improve the understanding of national agricultural and food policies to promote the adoption of innovations in agricultural technology. Additionally, IFPRI was meant to shed more light on the role of agricultural and rural development in the broader development pathway of a country. The mission of IFPRI is to provide research-based policy solutions that sustainably reduce poverty and end hunger and malnutrition.

IFPRI carries out food policy research and disseminates it through hundreds of publications, bulletins, conferences, and other initiatives. **IFPRI was organized as a District of Columbia non-profit, non-stock corporation on March 5, 1975**, and its first research bulletin was produced in February 1976. IFPRI has offices in several developing countries, including China, Ethiopia, and India, and has research staff working in many more countries around the world. Most of the research takes place in developing countries in Central America, South America, Africa, and Asia.



- “Slow and steady progress on stunting, which seems to be coming from change happening in big States such as Uttar Pradesh and others. These are outcomes that depend on multiple interventions and take longer to achieve,” she said.
- The findings of **NFHS-5** from **22 States & UTs** covered in **Phase-I** were released in December, 2020 and the remaining comprising Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, NCT of Delhi, Odisha, Puducherry, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand were made public on Nov 2021.
- The **NFHS-5** survey work has been conducted in around 6.1 lakh sample households **from 707 districts** (as on March, 2017) of the country; covering 7,24,115 women and 1,01,839 men to provide disaggregated estimates up to district level.
- NFHS-5 includes some **New Focal Areas**, such as **Death Registration, Pre-School Education, Expanded Domains Of Child Immunisation, Components Of Micro-Nutrients To Children, Menstrual Hygiene, Frequency Of Alcohol And Tobacco Use**, additional components of **Non-Communicable Diseases (Ncds)**, expanded age ranges for measuring **Hypertension And Diabetes Among All Aged 15 Years And Above**, which will give requisite input for strengthening existing programmes and evolving new strategies for policy intervention.
- The percentage of **Anaemic Women** increased to 57% from 53.1% and anaemic teenage girls (between 15-19 years) from 59.1% from 54.1%. The number of **Anaemic Men** also rose to 25% from 22.7%.
- The number of **Nonbreastfeeding Children** between 6 and 23 months old receiving an adequate diet fell to 12.7% from 14.3%, the data showed. Children-under-five years of age who are severely wasted dropped to 3.7 % from 7.5%. Wasting is an indicator of acute malnutrition. The percentage of **Malnourished Children** jumped to 3.4% from 2.1% in the last survey.
- Some of the child nutrition indicators showed a slight improvement at all-India level. This includes stunting which declined from 38% to 36%, wasting from 21% to 19% and underweight from 36% to 32%. **Full Immunisation Drive Among Kids** aged 12-23 months has recorded substantial improvement from 62% to 76% at all-India level.

## 48 INDIA FIRST RESPONDER IN INDIAN OCEAN REGION

- Time and again India has proved itself to be “first responder” in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said while stating that the pandemic has reaffirmed the “centrality of multilateralism” in our interconnected world not only for matters of international security but also disaster management.

### THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION (IOR)

- “India’s unique position in the IOR, complemented by a capability of our armed forces, enables us to contribute significantly in **Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR)** situations,” said Mr. Singh while virtually inaugurating the **5th World Congress on Disaster Management between November 24-27**.

### AGENDA

- “India has been regularly conducting exercises to deepen the HADR co-operation and co-ordination among our neighbours and friendly countries with a focus on sharing expertise and building capabilities.”

### HADR MISSIONS

- In this context, he referred to some of the HADR missions in the IOR undertaken by India in recent years, including **OPERATION RAHAT** in Yemen in 2015, cyclone in Sri Lanka in 2016; quake in Indonesia in 2019; **Cyclone Idai in Mozambique and flooding and landslips in Madagascar in January 2020**.

## CHALLENGING GEO-POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

- Stating that we live in a challenging geo-political landscape where countries have to face, traditional and **non-traditional threats including natural calamities** which include pandemics like COVID-19, which has wreaked havoc in the last two years, Mr. Singh said, “We must therefore look at cooperating more closely to strengthen international architecture for building structures to prevent and manage future disasters.”
- On the pandemic, Mr. Singh said its impact on the 2030 **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)** agenda must be assessed comprehensively and the lessons learnt should be incorporated in global and national strategies for the implementation of the SDGs.

### 2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

Mr. Singh said benefits of cutting-edge technologies emerging in the fields of **Space, Communication, Bio-Engineering, Bio-Medics And Artificial Intelligence** should be shared with all, along with funding initiatives for capacity development for better application and use of these technologies in the local contexts.

## 49 CONSTRUCTION OF 3.61 LAKH HOUSES UNDER PMAY(U)

The Centre has approved the construction of **3.61 lakh houses in 17 States and Union Territories** under the **PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJANA (Urban)**, taking the total number of houses sanctioned under the scheme to 1.14 crore, a statement said on November 24.

### PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJANA

**Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)** is an initiative by the Government of India in which affordable housing will be provided to the urban poor with a target of building 2 crore (20 million) affordable houses by 31 March 2022. It has two components: **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) (PMAY-U)** for the urban poor and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin) (**PMAY-G** and also

**PMAY-R**) for the rural poor.

This scheme is converged with other schemes to ensure houses have a toilet, Saubhagya Yojana electricity connection, Ujjwala Yojana LPG connection, access to drinking water and Jan Dhan banking facilities, etc. Total 1 crore homes are approved against total demand of 1.12 crore as of 28 December 2019.

## ;HOUSING FOR ALL' BY 2022

- The approval was given by the **Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee (CSMC)** chaired by **Union Housing and Urban Affairs Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra** on November 2021.
- In the statement, the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry said that out of **the 1.14 crore sanctioned houses**, over 89 lakh have been grounded for construction and **52.5 lakh completed and delivered** to the beneficiaries.
- It stated that the Secretary has asked States and Union Territories to resolve the issues without delay so that construction of houses can be expedited.

- The total investment under the Mission is **₹7.52 lakh crore**, with a central assistance of ₹1.85 lakh crore, the Ministry said, adding that so far, ₹1.13 lakh crore has already been released.
- In the meeting, Mr. Mishra also laid renewed emphasis to accelerate housing construction and completion across the country within stipulated time under PMAY-U so that the goal of **'Housing for All' by 2022** can be achieved, statement stated.
- At the CSMC meeting, an e-Finance module was also launched by the HUA secretary. The e-Finance module has been integrated with all modules of the PMAY-U MIS system and designed, developed within PMAY-U MIS System with the objective to provide unique platform to all stakeholders for **disbursement of funds** through **direct benefit transfer mode** and to validate beneficiaries, it also stated.

## 50 NATIONAL STEEL POLICY WILL STEER THE INDUSTRY

India is the **world's second-largest producer of steel** with 140 million tonnes of capacity. The **National Steel Policy** is a road map to steer the industry to achieve its full potential to enhance steel production with focus on high-end and value-added steel while being globally competitive.

### NATIONAL STEEL POLICY

Consumption of steel in the country reflects the prosperity of its economy. In order to increase the domestic steel production, the Government has come out with **National Steel Policy 2017 on 8th May, 2017**, to facilitate faster growth and development of steel industry in the country.

#### AIM:

The policy envisages to domestically meet the

entire demand of steel and high grade automotive steel, electrical steel, special steel and alloys for strategic applications. The policy projects crude steel capacity of 300 million tonnes (MT), production of 255 MT and a robust finished steel per capita consumption of 158 Kgs by 2030-31, as against the current consumption of 61 Kgs.

- The second edition of Conference on Sustainability in Steel Sector 2021, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).
- The theme of the conference was 'Sustainable Business Strategies-Impact of Raw Materials and Logistics through Hybrid mode.'
- He said that India has got the potential to increase the capacity of steel by the next 10 years and become globally competitive with the advantage of the presence of large number of MSMEs, young workforce, and less labour cost. Government initiatives like **Atamanirbhar Bharat, Sagar Mala Project** and the **National Steel Policy** would create demand for steel industry, he pointed out.

### SAGAR MALA PROJECT

The **Sagarmala Programme** (transl. garland of the sea) is an initiative by the government of India to enhance the **performance of the country's logistics sector**. The programme envisages unlocking the potential of waterways and the coastline to minimize infrastructural investments required to meet these targets.

It entails investing Rs. 8.5 trillion (2018) **to set up new mega ports**, modernizing India's existing ports, developing of 14 Coastal Economic Zones (CEZs) and Coastal Economic Units, enhancing port connectivity via road, rail, multi-modal logistics parks, pipelines & waterways and promoting coastal community development, with the aim of

boosting merchandise exports by US\$110 billion and generating around 10,000,000 direct and indirect jobs.

The Sagarmala Programme is the flagship programme of the **Ministry of Shipping** to promote port-led development in the country by exploiting India's 7,517 km long coastline, 14,500 km of potentially navigable waterways and its strategic location on key international maritime trade routes.

**AIM:**

To modernize India's Ports, so that port-led development can be augmented and coastlines can be developed to contribute to India's growth.

It also aims at "transforming the existing Ports into modern world-class Ports and integrate the development of the Ports, the Industrial clusters and hinterland and efficient evacuation systems through road, rail, inland and coastal waterways resulting in Ports becoming the drivers of economic activity in coastal areas

**GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE**

Global steel demand is increasing rapidly and India has the capacity to fulfil the global as well as domestic steel demand. Indian steel sector is having huge opportunities to grow with the growth of infrastructure and construction sectors, he said.