

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE for



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Success is born of action...

Topic 1: Pest Challenge

Importance for Prelims: Science and tech/ Economy

Importance for Mains: Science and tech/ Economy



Farmers all over India are severely affected by pests.

- The **continuous onslaught of desert locusts** swarms has **ravaged his early-stage bajra crop**. The pesky invaders from Iran and Pakistan have also **seriously damaged moong and guar fields**.
- As if the locust's menace, which is **the worst since 1993**, is not bad enough, an **infestation of fall army worm (FAW)** is now **wrecking the kharif crop in Rajasthan**.
- While the locusts pose a threat to crops such as moong bean,

pearl millet and cotton during their early stages, **FAW is being mainly seen on maize.**

- **FAW, which first surfaced in kharif 2018 in Karnataka,** is a threat in other maize-growing States like Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh as well.
- Although the **government machinery has swung into action with drones and helicopters** to combat the locust attack, agriculture experts want to declare it a disaster.
- The government **should declare the locust attack as a natural disaster** so that farmers get some **compensation under the Pradhan MantriFasalBimaYojana (PMFBY)**

Topic 2: Non-Personal Data

Importance for Prelims: Governance



A government **committee headed by Kris Gopalakrishnan** has suggested that non-personal data generated in the country be **allowed to be harnessed by various domestic companies and entities**.

- Non-personal data is any **set of data which does not contain personally identifiable information**, means that no individual or living person can be identified by looking at such data.
- The government committee, which submitted its report **has classified nonpersonal data into three main categories**.
- **All data collected by government and its agencies** or any information collected during execution of all publicly funded works has been kept under umbrella of public non-personal data.
- Any data identifiers about a set of people who have either the same geographic location, religion, job, or other common social interests will form the community non-personal data.
- Private non-personal data can be defined as those which are produced by individuals which can be derived from application of proprietary software or knowledge.

Topic 3: Election Commission

Importance for Prelims: Polity

Importance for Mains: Polity



Election Commissioner Mr. Ashok Lavasa has been appointed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as vice-president

- The Election Commission is a **permanent and an independent body established by the Constitution of India** directly to ensure free and fair elections in the country.
- **Article 324** of the Constitution provides that the power of superintendence, direction and control of elections to parliament, state legislatures, the office of president of India and the office of vice-president of India shall be vested in the election commission.
- Since its inception in 1950 and till 15 October 1989, the election commission functioned as a single member body consisting of the Chief Election Commissioner.
- On 16 October 1989, the president appointed two more election commissioners to cope with the increased work of the election commission on account of lowering of the voting age from 21 to

18 years.

- Thereafter, the Election Commission functioned as a multi member body consisting of three election commissioners. However, the two posts of election commissioners were abolished in January 1990 and the Election Commission was reverted to the earlier position.
- Again in October 1993, the president appointed two more election commissioners. Since then and till today, **the Election Commission has been functioning as a multi-member body consisting of three election commissioners.**

Composition

Article 324 of the Constitution has made the following provisions with regard to the composition of election commission:

- The Election Commission shall consist of the **chief election commissioner and such number of other election commissioners**, if any, as president may from time to time fix.
- The **appointment** of the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners shall be **made by the president**.
- The conditions of service and tenure of office of the election commissioners and the regional commissioners shall be determined by the president.
- The **chief election commissioner and the two other election commissioners have equal powers and receive equal salary, allowances and other perquisites, which are similar to those of a**

judge of the Supreme Court.

- **In case of difference of opinion** amongst the Chief Election Commissioner and/or two other election commissioners, the matter is **decided by the Commission by majority**.
- They **hold office for a term of six years or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier**.
- They can resign at any time or can also be removed before the expiry of their term.

Independence

Article 324 of the Constitution has made the following provisions to safeguard and ensure the independent and impartial functioning of the Election Commission:

- The **chief election commissioner is provided with the security of tenure**. He cannot be removed from his office except in same manner and on the **same grounds as a judge of the Supreme Court**.
- The service conditions of the chief election commissioner cannot be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment.
- Any other election commissioner or a regional commissioner cannot be removed from office except on the recommendation of the chief election commissioner.
- Though the constitution has sought to safeguard and ensure the independence and impartiality of the Election Commission, some flaws can be noted, viz., The Constitution has **not**

prescribed the qualifications (legal, educational, administrative or judicial) of the members of the Election Commission.

- The Constitution has not specified the term of the members of the Election Commission.
- The Constitution has not debarred the retiring election commissioners from any further appointment by the government.

Topic 4: Chabahar Port

Importance for Prelims: IR

Importance for Mains: GS II-IR



Iran has dropped India from Chabahar port project.

- Chabahar is **located strategically off Makran coast in the Gulf of Oman** at the southern end of Persian Gulf and Iran's closest and best access point to the Indian Ocean.
- It is far away from Iran's other major port of Bandar Abbas that currently handles the bulk of its transshipments but is

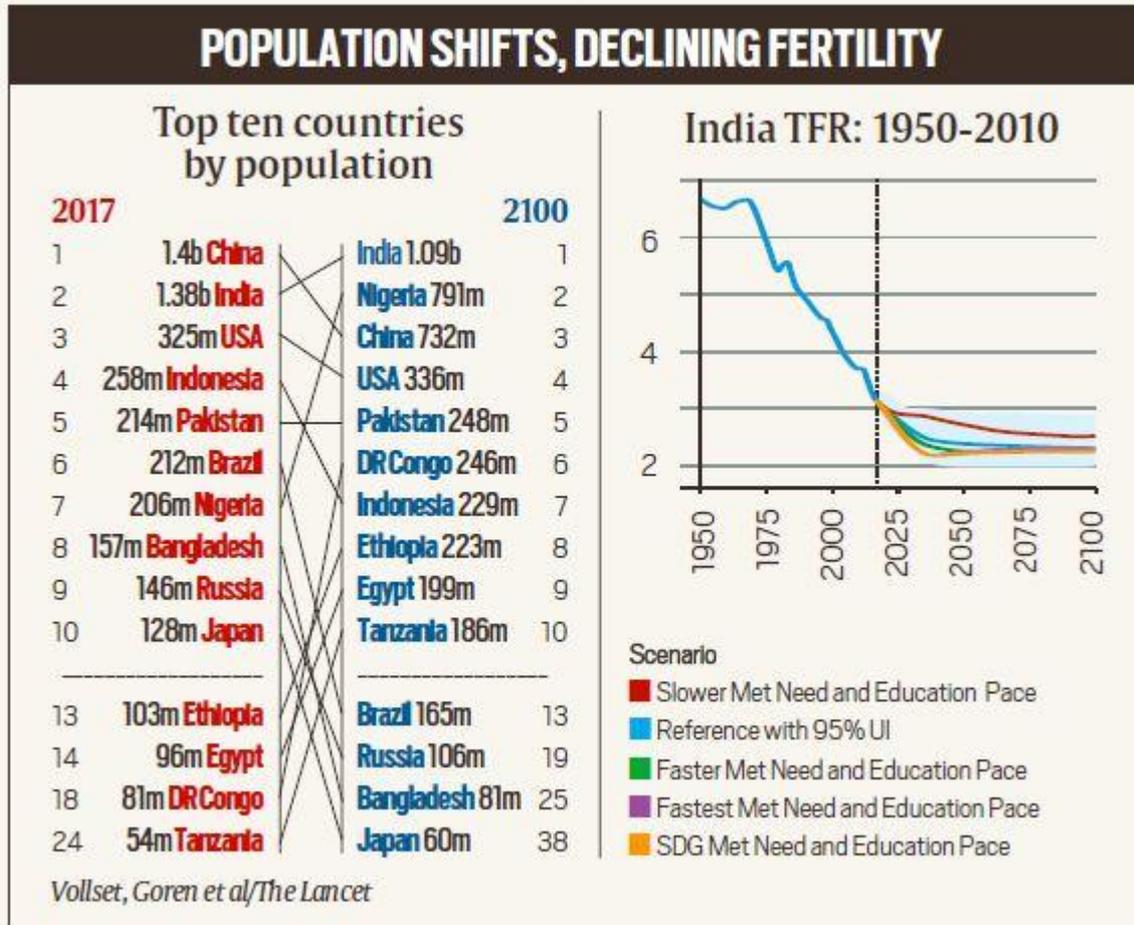
constrained due to capacity and inability to berth large ships.

- In contrast, **Chabahar is an oceanic port and capable of handling much larger vessels.** Developing it and utilising its true potential is in Iranian interest as that will reduce the distance. When linked with the Iranian railway network, it will connect the port with the rest of Iran.
- The **development of Chabahar-Zahedan railway line** and its development has provided an opportunity to Iran to initiate developmental projects in the region since it enjoys exemptions from the new round of the US. sanctions that were obtained due to Indian pressure and leverage with the USA, due it being the **preferred port of transit for goods destined for Afghanistan for providing relief and humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan.**
- The impetus to the development of the port came in May 2016 when India, Iran and Afghanistan signed a key trilateral deal, known as the **Chabahar Agreement, to establish a strategic India-Iran-Afghanistan Trilateral Agreement on Transport and Transit Corridors** to facilitate trade with Afghanistan, Central Asia, Russia and Europe for utilizing **Chabahar port as a hub, giving a boost to Indian access to Afghanistan and creating the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).**

Topic 5: World and Indian population trends and implications

Importance for Prelims: Geography/Economy

Importance for Mains: Geography/Economy



A new analysis published in The Lancet has projected about world population and its trends.

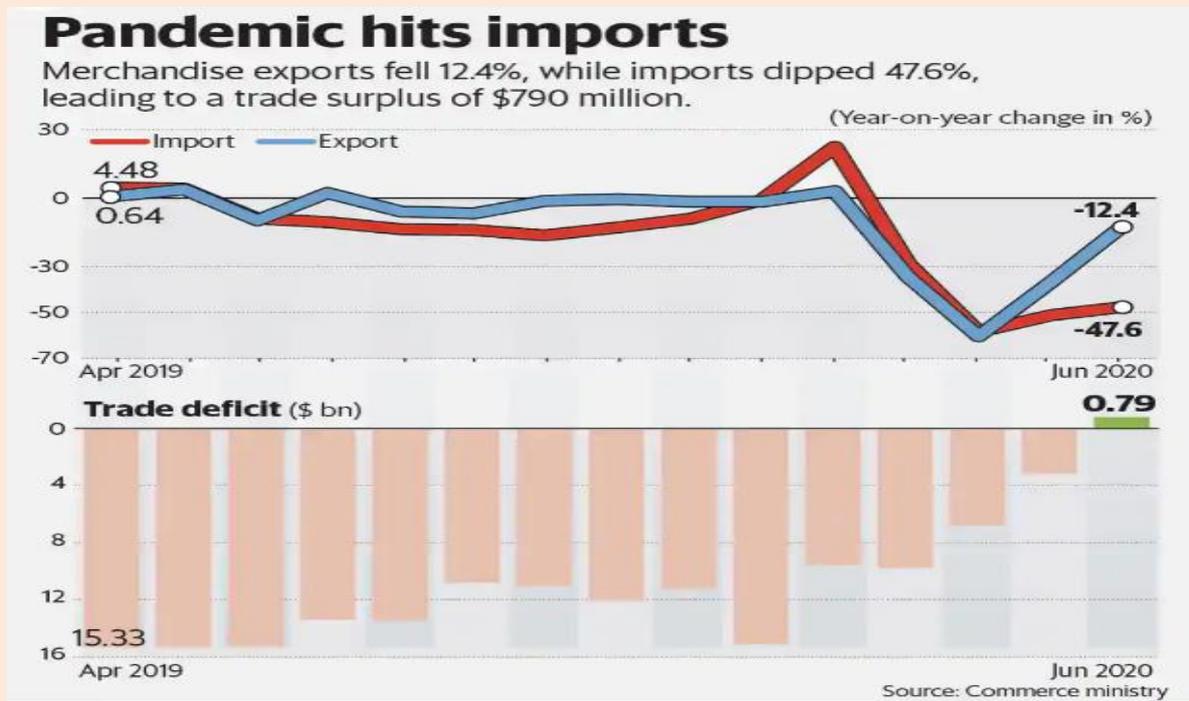
Findings

- World population **will peak much earlier than previously estimated**. It projects the peak at 9.73 billion in 2064, which is 36 years earlier than the 11 billion peak projected for 2100 by last year’s UN report World Population Prospects.

- **For India**, the report projects a **peak population of 1.6 billion in 2048**, up from 1.38 billion in 2017. By 2100, the population is projected to decline by 32% to 1.09 billion.
- The paper suggests that **continued trends in female educational attainment and access to contraception** will hasten **declines in fertility and slow population growth**.
- For a generation to exactly replace itself, **the replacement-level total fertility rate (TFR) is taken to be 2.1**, representing the average number of children a woman would need to have.
- In the study, the **global TFR is predicted to steadily decline from 2.37 in 2017 to 1.66 in 2100**.

Topic 6: Trade surplus

Importance for Prelims: Economy



For the first time since 2002, India's **merchandise trade balance** turned surplus of **\$790 million** in June

Reasons:

- This is a rare occurrence because since 1976-77, there has not been a single year when India did not incur a substantial merchandise trade deficit.
- Improvement in trade balance has been driven **mainly by a sharper decline in imports**. This is a **warning sign for the economy** as the decline in imports, especially in merchandise goods, points towards a **contraction of demand in the real economy**.

Topic 7: Employees' Provident Fund Organization

Importance for Prelims: Organisation

FILE PIC.



कर्मचारी भविष्य निधि संगठन (श्रम एवं रोजगार मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार)
Employees' Provident Fund Organisation
(Ministry of Labour & Employment, Govt. of India)

Several board members have flagged concerns about the inadequate sharing of information about the Fund's investments and delays in approval for the interest rate for 2019-20

- EPFO is one of the **World's largest Social Security Organisations** in terms of clientele and the volume of financial transactions undertaken.
- The Employees' Provident Fund came into existence with the promulgation of the Employees' Provident Funds Ordinance on the 15th November, 1951. It was replaced by the Employees' Provident Funds Act, 1952.
- The Act and Schemes framed there under **are administered by a tri-partite Board** known as the **Central Board of Trustees, Employees' Provident Fund**, consisting of representatives of

Government (Both Central and State), Employers, and Employees.

- The Central Board of Trustees **administers a contributory provident fund, pension scheme and an insurance scheme for the workforce engaged in the organized sector in India.**
- The EPFO is under the administrative control of Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India The Board operates three schemes – **EPF Scheme 1952, Pension Scheme 1995S) and Insurance Scheme 1976 (EDLI).**
- Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation has a vision to reposition itself as a world class Social Security Organisation providing futuristic services meeting the growing requirements of all categories of its stakeholders.

EPFO Vision 2030 envisages:

- Universal Social Security Coverage on mandatory basis by way of Provident Fund, Pension and Life Insurance for all workers of the country Online Services for all EPFO benefits with State-of-the-Art Technology Implementation of policies for a benefit structure with adequate support level of social security

Topic 8: BEPS and Equalization levy

Importance for Prelims: Economy



India recently decided to impose digital services taxes on non-resident e-commerce companies.

BEPS

- Base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) refers to **tax planning strategies used by multinational enterprises that exploit gaps and mismatches in tax rules to avoid paying tax**. Developing countries' higher reliance on corporate income tax means they suffer from BEPS disproportionately.

Equalization levy

- Equalization Levy was introduced in India in 2016-2017, with the **intention of taxing the digital transactions i.e. the income accruing to foreign e-commerce companies** from India.
- Equalization Levy is a **direct tax**, which is withheld at the time

of payment by the service recipient.

- The two conditions to be met to be liable to equalization levy:

The payment should be made **to a non-resident service provider**; The annual payment made to one service provider **exceeds Rs. 1, 00,000 in one financial year.**

- The following services covered:

Online advertisement Any provision for digital advertising space or facilities/ service for the purpose of online advertisement; Currently the **applicable rate of tax is 6% of the gross consideration to be paid.**

Topic 9: Country of origin

Importance for Prelims: Economy

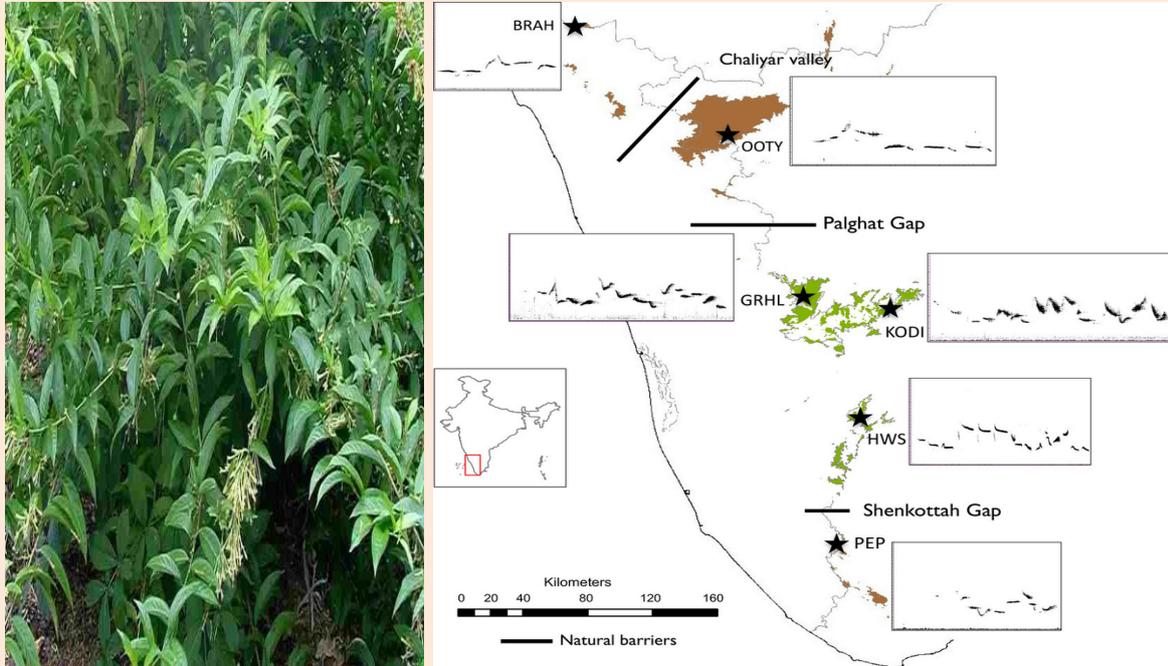


Amazon India has made it **mandatory for sellers on its platform to disclose the ‘country of origin’** of new and existing product listings by August 10.

- The development comes at a time when the government is negotiating with ecommerce companies to ensure that all products listed on their apps and websites carry the country of origin tag.
- The move is being **viewed as part of India’s strategy to curb foreign imports.**
- Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) had asked ecommerce companies to display the country of origin of all new listings on their platform by August 1 and for all legacy listings by October 1.

Topic 10: Cestrum nocturnum

Importance for Prelims: Environment



Eco-Development Committees in Nilgiris biosphere reserve are restoring native Shola habitats in places overrun with invasive species.

- Cestrum nocturnum plants have **encroached on native Shola habitats and do not allow any native flora to thrive.**
- The Cestrum plants, unless completely removed with their roots, will keep sprouting and keep taking over Shola and native grasslands.
- The Toda tribes are also growing their own saplings and have set up a nursery which will have more than 7,000 saplings of native Shola trees ready to be planted in the landscape in the

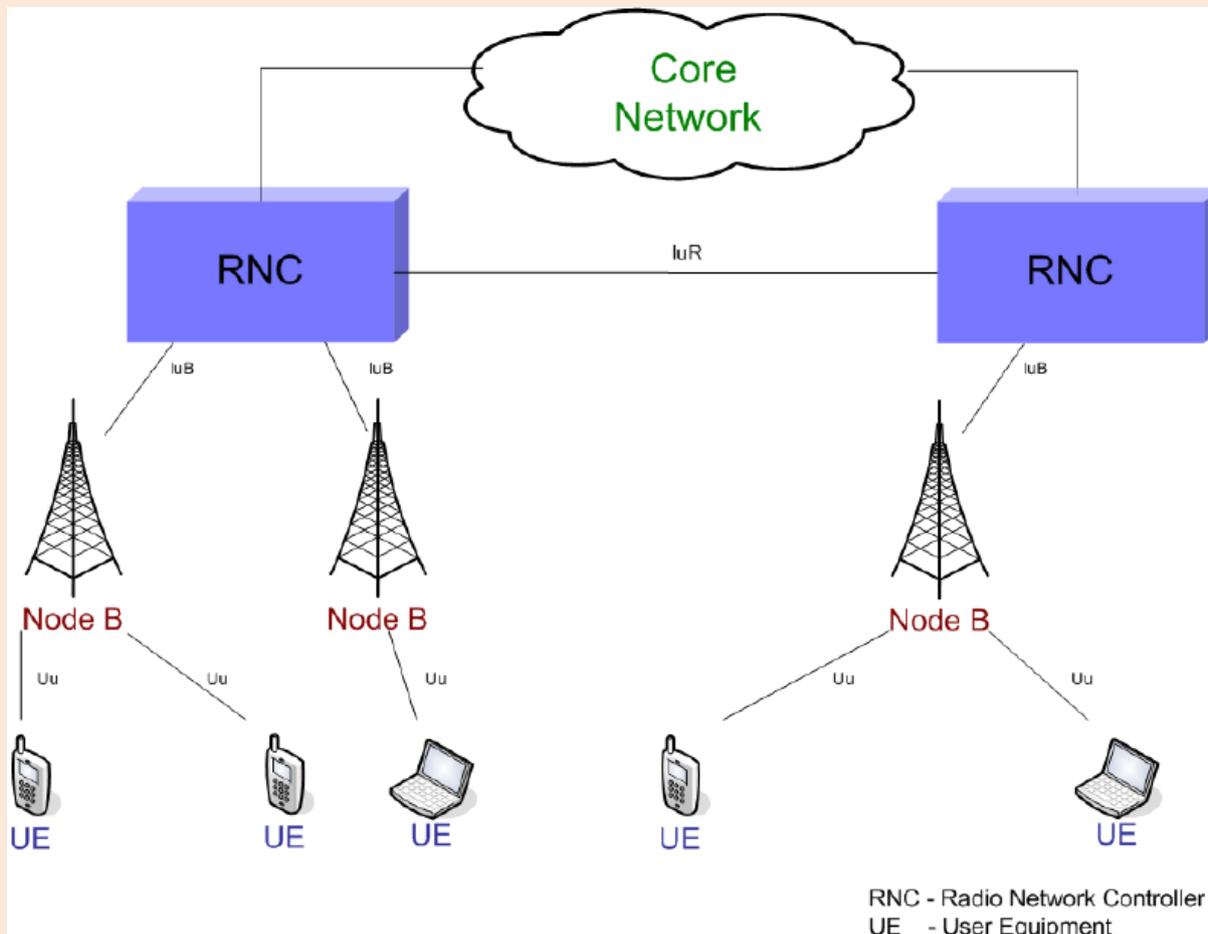
coming years.

Shola forest

- The **Shola forests of South India derive their name from the Tamil word solai**, which means a ‘tropical rain forest’.
- Classified as ‘**Southern Montane Wet Temperate Forest**’ by experts Harry George Champion and SK Seth, the Sholas are found in the **upper reaches of the Nilgiris, Anamalais, Palni hills, Kalakadu, Mundanthurai and Kanyakumari in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala.**
- These forests are found sheltered in valleys with sufficient moisture and proper drainage, at an altitude of more than 1,500 metres. The upper reaches are covered with grasslands, known as Shola grasslands.
- The **vegetation that grows in Shola forests is evergreen.** The trees are stunted and have many branches. Their rounded and dense canopies appear in different colours.
- Generally, the leaves are small in size and leathery.
- Red-coloured young leaves turning into different colours on maturity is a prominent characteristic of the Shola forests.
- Epiphytes like lichens, ferns and bryophytes usually grow on the trees.
- Sholas play a **major role in conserving water supply of the Nilgiris’streams.** Sholas thus act as ‘overhead water tanks’.

Topic 11: Radio Access Network

Importance for Prelims: Science and tech



Reliance plans to build home-grown 5G network solution based on an open source telecom platform called Open RAN.

- A radio access network (RAN) is the **part of a telecommunications system that connects individual devices to other parts of a network through radio connections.**
- A RAN resides between user equipment, such as a mobile phone, a computer or any remotely controlled machine, and provides the connection with its core network.
- The RAN is a major component of wireless telecommunications

and has evolved through the generations of mobile networking leading up to 5G.

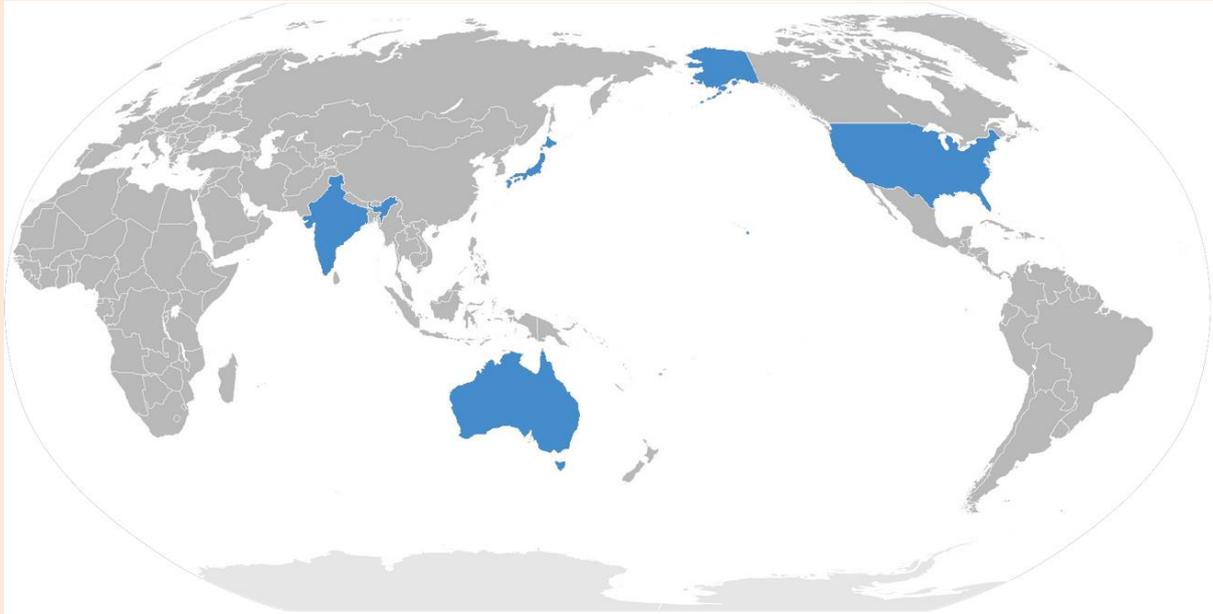
Need

- This network platform, similar to how open source software became a game changer in the 1990s, **attempts to build telecom radio and base stations using non-proprietary technology.**
- It will **help bring down costs drastically** compared to buying proprietary gear.

Topic 12: QUAD

Importance for Prelims: IR

Importance for Mains: IR



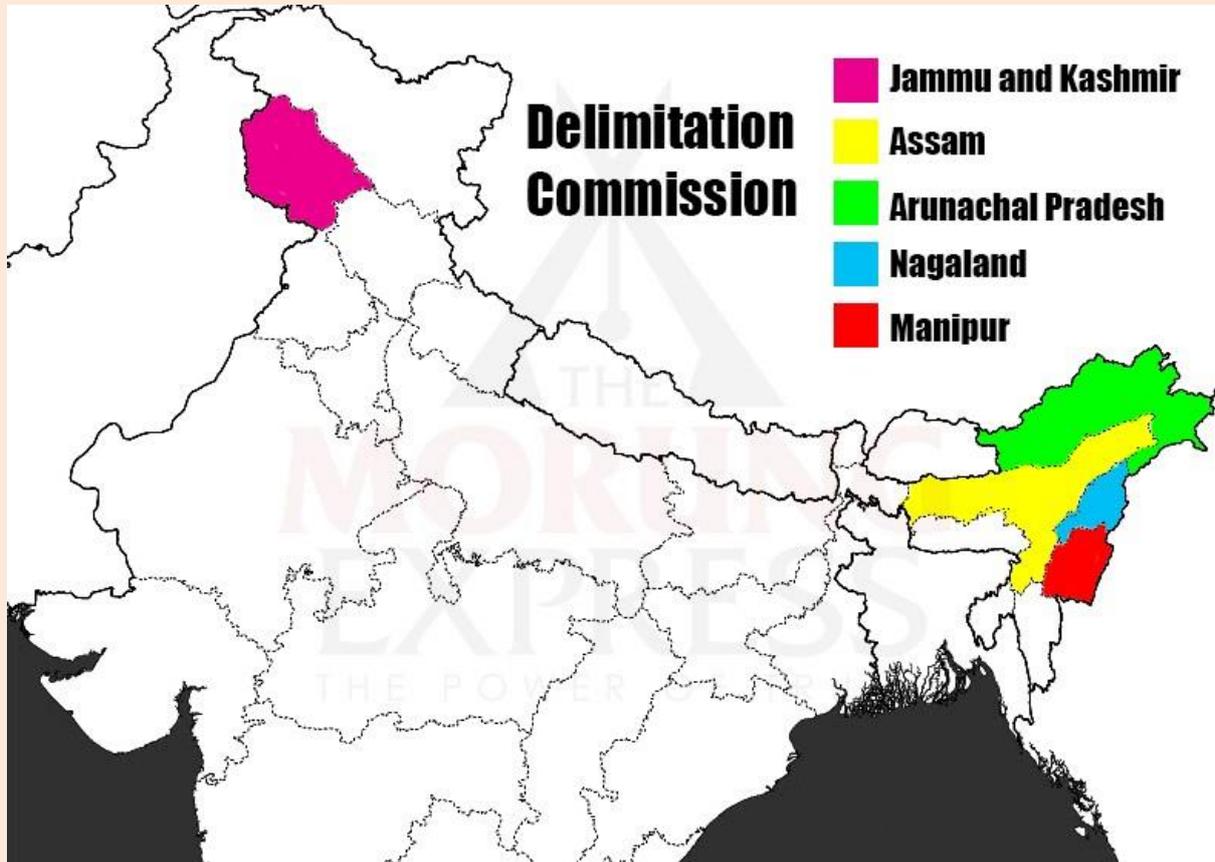
QUAD grouping is gaining attention in view of growing assertiveness of China in south China sea.

- The grouping consists of Japan, India, United States and Australia.
- All four nations find a **common ground of being the democratic nations and common interests of unhindered maritime trade and security.**
- The idea was first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007.
- However, the idea couldn't move ahead with Australia pulling out of it.

Topic 13: Delimitation

Importance for Prelims: Polity

Importance for Mains: Polity



A former legal advisor to the Election Commission (EC) has red-flagged the Centre's order to set up a Delimitation Commission for Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Assam and Nagaland and called it “unconstitutional” and “illegal”.

- In the last delimitation exercise, completed in 2008, **Arunachal, Manipur, Assam, Nagaland** were kept out due to **apprehensions over use of the 2001 Census.**
- The **tribal communities in the four states** feared that the

delimitation exercise would change the composition of seats reserved for them, **hurting their electoral interests**. As violence erupted, the Delimitation Act of 2002 was amended to empower the President to postpone the exercise in these states.

- Subsequently, **Parliament had decided that instead of creating another Delimitation Commission** for the limited purpose of redrawing seat boundaries in the four northeastern states, the **exercise there would be carried out by the EC**.
- Section 8A of the RP Act 1950, introduced by Parliament in 2008, **states that delimitation in the four northeastern states, when held, would fall within the EC's remit**. Hence, any delimitation exercise in Arunachal, Manipur, Assam and Nagaland by the new Delimitation Commission would be declared void by the courts.

Concept:

- Under **Article 82 of the Constitution**, the **Parliament by law enacts a Delimitation Act** after every census.
- The Delimitation Commission is **appointed by the President of India** and works in collaboration with the Election Commission of India

Composition:

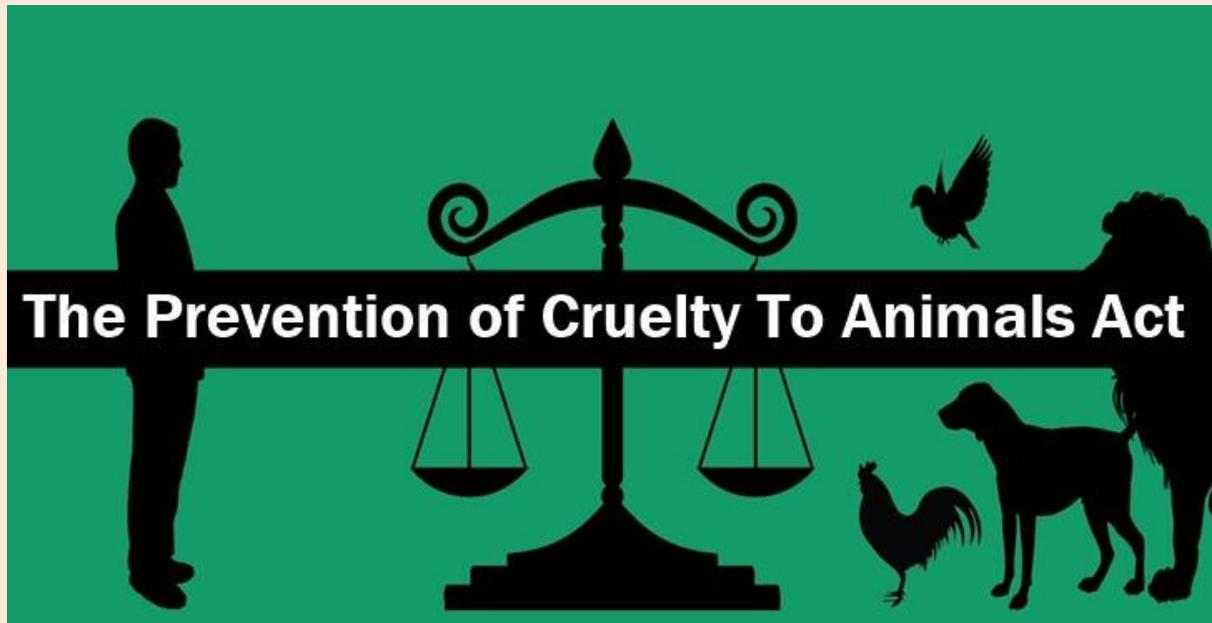
- Retired Supreme Court judge
- Chief Election Commissioner
- Respective State Election Commissioners

Functions:

- To determine the **number and boundaries of constituencies** to make population of all constituencies nearly equal.
- To **identify seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes**, wherever their population is relatively large.
- In case of difference of opinion among members of the Commission, the opinion of the majority prevails.
- The Delimitation Commission in India is a high power body whose **orders have the force of law and cannot be called in question before any court.**
- Delimitation Commissions have been set **up four times — 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002** under the Acts of 1952, 1962, 1972 and 2002.
- The present delimitation of constituencies has been done on the basis of 2001 census figures under **the provisions of Delimitation Act, 2002.**
- Notwithstanding the above, the Constitution of India was specifically amended in 2002 **not to have delimitation of constituencies till the first census after 2026.**

Topic 14: Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act

Importance for Prelims: Acts



Supreme Court is looking for validity of a Kerala law that prohibits animal sacrifice for appeasement of deity in temples.

- The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 **prohibits any person from inflicting, causing, or if it is the owner, permitting, unnecessary pain or suffering to be inflicted on any animal.**
- The Act makes it a **crime to beat, kick, torture, mutilate, administer an injurious substance, or cruelly kill an animal.**
- It is also illegal to over-ride, over-drive, over-load, or work an unfit animal.
- It is an offense to cruelly transport, confine, chain or tether an animal. It is a violation to engage in animal fighting or shooting competitions in which animals are released from captivity to be

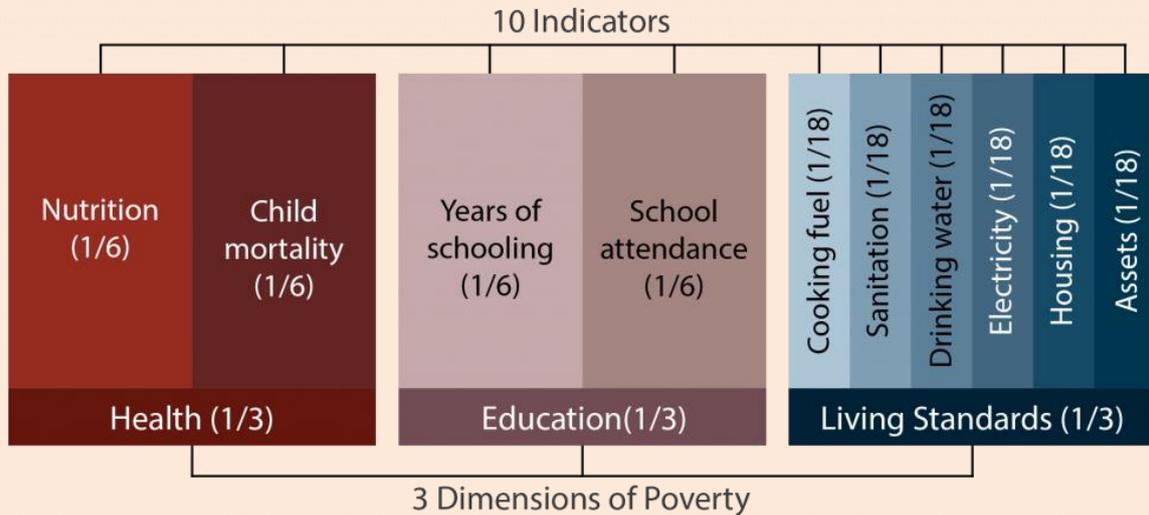
shot. An owner commits an offense if he or she fails to provide sufficient food, drink or shelter, unreasonably abandons any animal, or permits any diseased or disabled animal to roam or die in any street.

- According to Section 4 of this Act, **an animal welfare board shall be established by the Central Government** purporting to provide for animal welfare and extending protection against animals from unnecessary pain or suffering.
- According to Section 14 of this Act; **nothing in this Act shall affect the experimentation (including operations) on animals for the purpose of:**

Advancement through the new discovery of physiological knowledge; or Knowledge which will be useful for decreasing the mortality rate; or Suffering alleviation; or for combating any disease.

Topic 15: Multidimensional Poverty Index

Importance for Prelims: Economy



© Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)

A report “**Charting pathways out of multidimensional poverty: Achieving the SDGs**“ is released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI).

Findings:

- The Multidimensional poverty Index was observed in 75 countries from the East, Central and South Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa as well as the Pacific.
- The report was meant to **provide a comprehensive picture of global trends in multidimensional poverty** covering five billion people.
- The study has found that four countries India Armenia,

Nicaragua and North Macedonia have reduced their MPI by half or more in 5.5 to 10.5 years.

- **More than 270 million people in India were lifted out of poverty from 2005 to 2016-the largest by any country in that period** According to the study, **55.1 per cent of the population in India lived under multidimensional poverty in 2005-06**. In 2015-16, it came down to **27.9 per cent**.
- As of 2015-16, the intensity of deprivation was 43.9 per cent, while the population under severe multidimensional poverty was 8.8 per cent.
- According to the study, **37.7 crore people in India lived under multidimensional poverty as of 2018**.

Concept:

- Multidimensional poverty **encompasses the various deprivations experienced by poor people in their daily lives** such as poor health, lack of education, inadequate living standards, poor quality of work, the threat of violence, and living in areas that are environmentally hazardous, among others.
- Poverty can be defined as **a condition in which an individual or household lacks the financial resources to afford a basic minimum standard of living**.

Poverty Measurement

- Economists and policymakers estimate “**absolute**” poverty as

the shortfall in consumption expenditure from a threshold called the “poverty line”.

- The **official poverty line** is the expenditure incurred to obtain the goods in a “poverty line basket” (PLB).
- Poverty can be measured in terms of the **number of people living below this line** (with the incidence of poverty expressed as the head count ratio).
- Six official committees have so far **estimated the number of people living in poverty in India** :

The working group of 1962,

V N Dandekar and N Rath in 1971,

Y K Alagh in 1979,

D T Lakdawala in 1993,

Suresh Tendulkar in 2009,

C Rangarajan in 2014.

- The government did not take a call on the report of the Rangarajan Committee; therefore, **poverty is measured using the Tendulkar poverty line**. As per this, 21.9% of people in India live below the poverty line.

Tendulkar committee

The committee was constituted by the Planning Commission to address the following shortcomings of the previous methods:

- Changes in the consumption patterns of the poor since that time, which were not reflected in the poverty estimates.

- There were issues with the adjustment of prices for inflation, both spatially (across regions) and temporally (across time).

It recommended four major changes:

- A shift away from **calorie consumption-based poverty estimation** to Nutritional outcomes.
- A **uniform poverty line baskets (PLB)** across rural and urban India;
- A change in the price adjustment procedure to correct spatial and temporal issues with price adjustment; and
- **Incorporation of private expenditure** on health and education while estimating poverty.

It based its calculations on the consumption of the following items: cereal, pulses, milk, edible oil, non-vegetarian items, vegetables, fresh fruits, dry fruits, sugar, salt & spices, other food, intoxicants, fuel, clothing, footwear, education, medical(non-institutional and institutional), entertainment, personal & toilet goods, other goods, other services and durables.

The Committee computed new poverty lines for rural and urban areas of each state.

Topic 16: National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)

Importance for Prelims: Government Organisation



Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has decided to cut down its 2020-21 syllabuses by 30% for students from Classes 9-12 in view of difficulty to have classes.

- The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is **an autonomous organisation set up in 1961** by the Government of India to **assist and advise the Central and State Governments** on policies and programmes for **qualitative improvement in school education.**

The major objectives of NCERT and its constituent units are to:

- **undertake, promote and coordinate research** in areas related to school education **prepare and publish model textbooks**, supplementary material, newsletters, journals and develops educational kits, multimedia digital materials, etc.
- organise pre-service and in-service training of teachers
- **develop and disseminate innovative educational techniques** and practices collaborate and network with state educational departments, universities, NGOs and other educational institutions act as a clearing house for ideas and information in

matters related to school education; and

- act as a **nodal agency for achieving the goals of Universalization of Elementary Education.**
- In addition, NCERT is an **implementation agency for bilateral cultural exchange programmes** with other countries in the field of school education.

National Curriculum Framework

- NCF provides the **framework for creation of the school syllabi** and the writing of textbooks, while giving guidelines on teaching practices in India.
- It addresses four issues:
 - ✓ Educational purpose
 - ✓ Educational experience
 - ✓ Organization of experience
 - ✓ Assessing learner

Topic 17: Vitamin D

Importance for Prelims: Science and tech



There have been considerable discussions in scientific circles on the importance of vitamin D in these days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Vitamins are organic compounds that are essential in very small amounts for supporting normal physiologic function. **Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin.**
- Fat-soluble vitamins are stored in the body's fatty tissue.
- Vitamin D **helps the body absorb calcium.** Calcium and phosphate are two minerals that must be there to have normal bone formation.

- Vitamin D deficiency can lead to **osteoporosis in adults or rickets in children.**
- It has the potential to modulate the cytokine storm seen in serious COVID19 patients, and it can improve innate immunity by increasing the production of cathelicidins and defensins in our body.
- **Defensins** are small cysteine-rich cationic proteins across cellular life, including vertebrate and invertebrate animals, plants, and fungi. They are host defense peptides, with members displaying either direct antimicrobial activity, immune signalling activities, or both.

Topic 18: IMD alerts

Importance for Prelims: Geography/Disaster management

Region	07 June	08 June	09 June	10 June	11 June
Coastal Karnataka	Scattered heavy to very heavy with isolated extremely heavy	Scattered heavy to very heavy with isolated extremely heavy	Isolated heavy to very heavy	Isolated heavy	Isolated heavy
Goa	Scattered heavy to very heavy	Scattered heavy to very heavy with isolated extremely heavy	Scattered heavy to very heavy	Isolated heavy to very heavy	Isolated heavy.
South Konkan	Scattered heavy to very heavy	Scattered heavy to very heavy with isolated extremely heavy	Scattered heavy to very heavy	Scattered heavy to very heavy	Isolated heavy
North Konkan	Isolated heavy	Scattered heavy to very heavy	Scattered heavy to very heavy with isolated extremely heavy	Scattered heavy to very heavy	Isolated heavy
South interior Maharashtra	Isolated heavy	Isolated heavy to very heavy	Isolated heavy to very heavy	Nil	Nil
North interior Maharashtra	nil	nil	Isolated heavy	Isolated heavy	Nil

Legends:
Yellow- Be updated; Orange- Be prepared; Red- Take action

IMD's colour codes 'Yellow, Orange, Red' explain 'weather alert' Source: IMD

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a 'Red' alert for Mumbai for the next 24 hours owing to active weather systems leading to continuous downpour across the city and suburbs.

- Alerts by the IMD are colour-coded from Green to Red.
- Green stands for No warning: no action needs to be taken by the authorities, and the forecast is of light to moderate rain.
- A **Yellow alert signifies "Watch"**, and authorities are advised to "Be updated" on the situation.
- An **Orange warning stands for "Alert"**, and authorities are expected to "Be prepared". - **heavy to very heavy rainfall.**
- A **Red alert stands for "Warning"**, - "Take action". - **extremely heavy rainfall.**

Topic 19: China's National Sword Policy

Importance for Prelims: IR

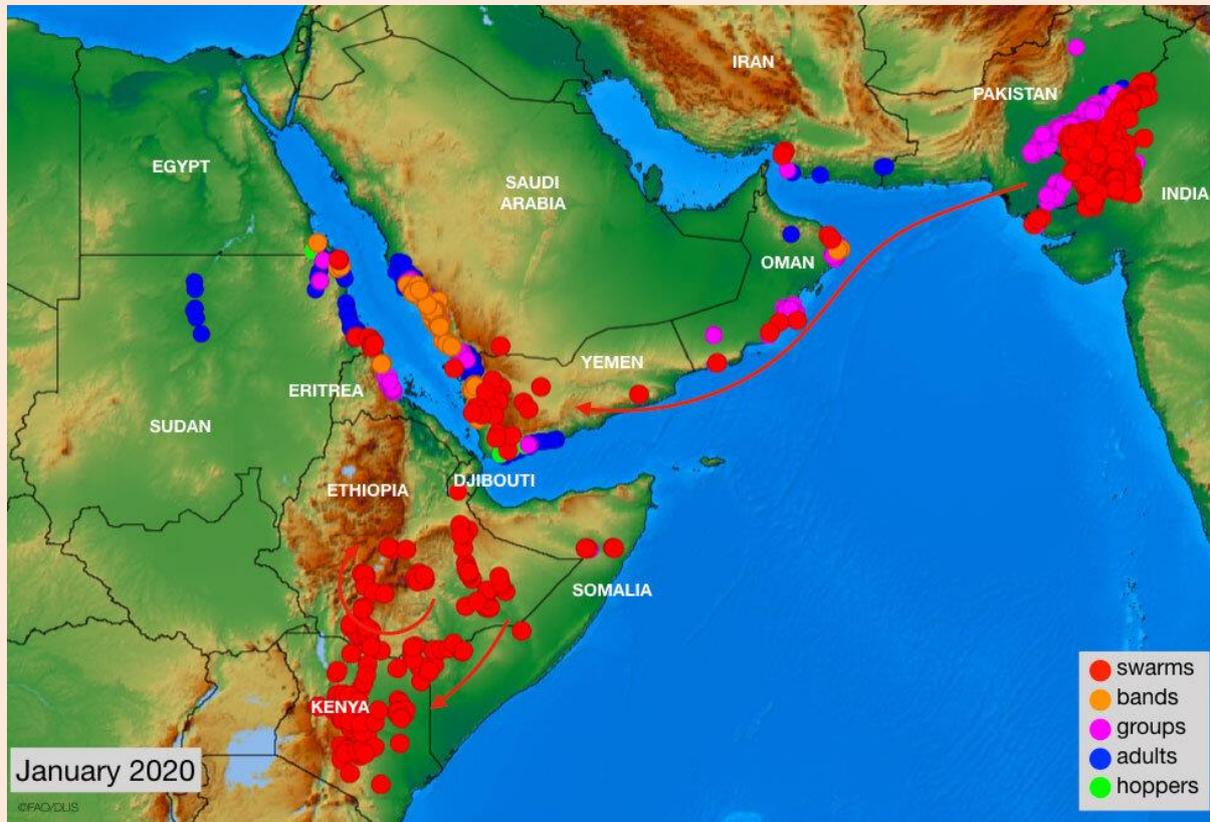


China's "National Sword" policy, enacted in January 2018, **banned the import of most plastics and other materials** headed for that nation's recycling processors, which had handled nearly half of the world's recyclable waste for the past quarter century.

- The move was an **effort to halt a deluge of soiled and contaminated materials** that was overwhelming Chinese processing facilities and leaving the country with yet **another environmental problem**.
- In the year since, **China's plastics imports have plummeted by 99 percent**, leading to a major global shift in where and how materials tossed in the recycling bin are being processed.

Topic 20: Swarm , upsurge and plague

Importance for Prelims: Environment



Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has warned India to remain on high alert against locust attack for the next four weeks.

- The FAO has three categories of Desert Locust situations:
 - ✓ Outbreak: It is common occurrence
 - ✓ Upsurge: **current locust attack (2019-2020) has been categorised as an upsurge.**
 - ✓ Plague
- **Upsurges and plagues do not occur overnight; instead, they take many months to develop.**
- The last major plague was in 1987-89 and the last major upsurge

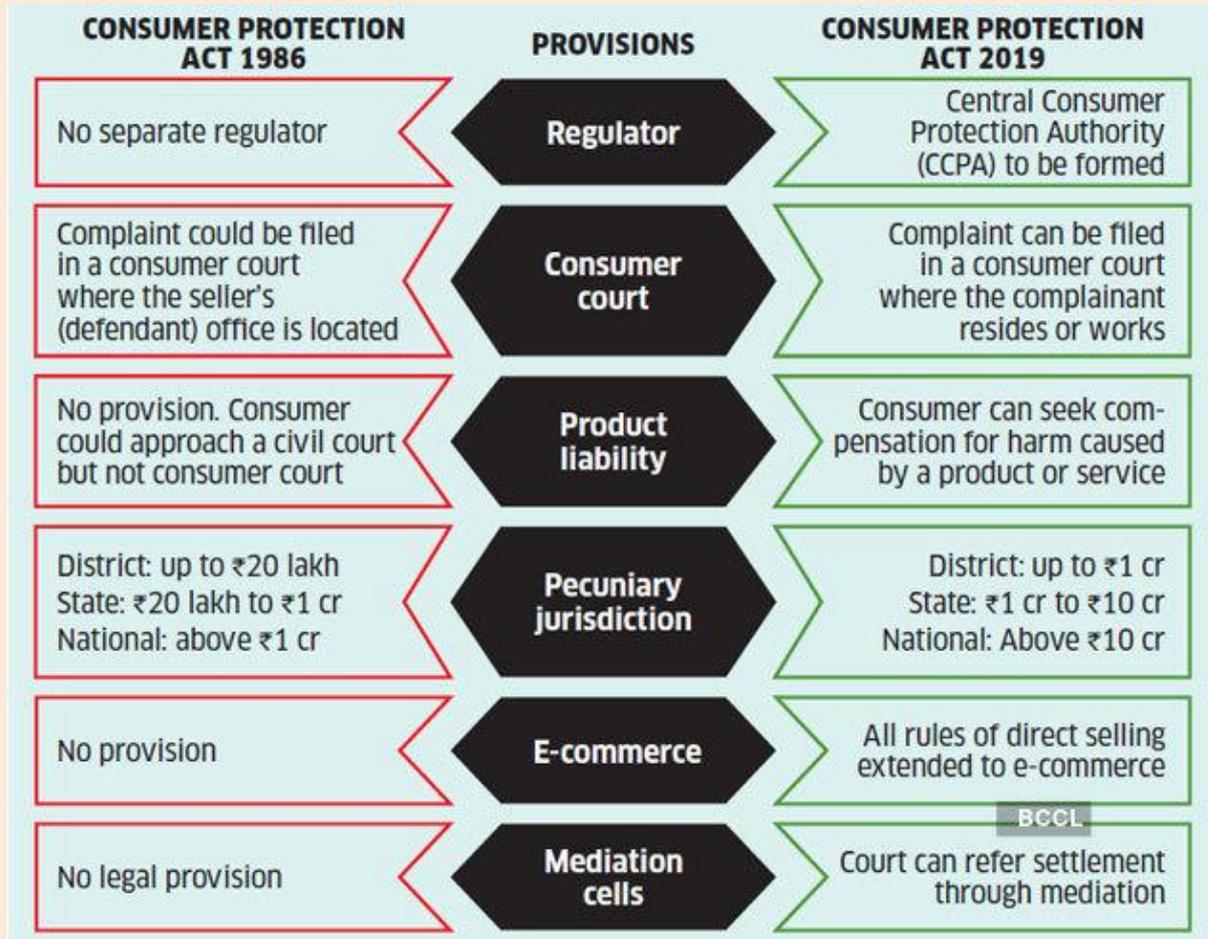
was in 2003-05.

Locust attacks and developments:

- **Before the outbreak stage**, the FAO first issues ‘**Desert Locust threats**’ that are determined from an analysis of national survey and control data combined with **remote sensing imagery and historical records**. Such threats have been issued in 2012, 2013, and 2015. Not all threats develop into an outbreak.
- When there are **good rains and green vegetation develops**, desert Locusts which are always present somewhere in the **deserts between Mauritania and India** can rapidly increase in number and within a month or two, start to concentrate.

Topic 21: Consumer protection act

Importance for Prelims: Polity



New consumer protection act comes into force today.

- The newly enacted Consumer Protection Act **replacing more than three decades old Consumer Protection Act, 1986.**
- The new Consumer Protection Act 2019 seeks to **revamp the process of administration and settlement of consumer disputes, with strict penalties,** including jail term for adulteration and misleading ads by firms.
- It defined 6 rights of the consumers which include:

- ✓ Right to be protected against the marketing of goods, products or services which can be hazardous to life and property
- ✓ Right to be informed about the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods, products and services
- ✓ Right to be assured of access to goods, products and services at competitive prices.
- ✓ Right to be heard at appropriate forums
- ✓ Right to seek redressal against unfair trade practices that are involved in exploitation of customers
- ✓ Right to consumer awareness
- It proposes to **set up Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** to **promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers**. The CCPA would make interventions to prevent consumer detriment arising from unfair trade practices. The agency can also **initiate class action, including enforcing recall, refund and return of products**.
- It also **simplified dispute resolution process**, has **provision for Mediation and e-filing of cases**. The Consumer will be able to file cases in the nearest commission under the jurisdiction of which he resides.
- **Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions (CDRCs)** would be setup at various levels. The CDRCs would be set up at multiple levels – district, state and national. Consumers can file complaints with the CDRCs regarding any of the following.

- ✓ Defective goods or services
 - ✓ Overcharging or deceptive charging on goods and services
 - ✓ Any unfair or restrictive trade practices
 - ✓ Offering services or sale of goods which can be hazardous to life or not safe
- As per the new act, all the laws that apply for direct selling would also be **applicable for E-Commerce.**
 - Consumers can file complaints from anywhere and they do not need to hire lawyer to represent their cases. For mediation, there will be strict timeline fixed in the rules.
 - **On misleading advertisements there is provision for jail term and fine for manufacturers.**
 - For the first time there will be an exclusive law dealing with **Product Liability.**
 - A manufacturer or product service provider or product seller will now be **responsible to compensate for injury or damage caused by defective product or deficiency in services.**

Topic 22: PASSEX

Importance for Prelims: IR



USS Nimitz, US Navy's nuclear-powered aircraft carrier exercised with the Indian Navy near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

- Usually, PASSEX drills happen whenever there is an opportunity. This means that such exercises happen spontaneously and there is **nothing pre-planned**.
- Very recently, the **Indian Navy had similar drills with the Japanese Navy as well as the French Navy**.
- It is opportunity to **improve interoperability on the high seas and promote** free and open Indo- Pacific, and an international rules-based order wherein each country can reach its potential without sacrificing national sovereignty

Topic 23: Cyberattacks

Importance for Prelims: Science and tech

Importance for Mains: GS paper III- Science and tech/Internal security



Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has written to all web portals and websites within its ambit to **conduct a security audit and submit a compliance certificate.**

- Most of these attacks are in the nature of DDOS (distributed denial of service), phishing, data exfiltration, remote access tool malware and keylogging.

Phishing

- It is the **practice of sending fraudulent communications** that appear to come **from a reputable source**, usually through email.
- The goal is to **steal sensitive data** like credit card and login information or to install malware on the victim's machine.

DDOS (distributed denial of service)

- A denial-of-service attack **floods systems, servers, or networks with traffic to exhaust resources and bandwidth.**

- As a result, the system is **unable to fulfill legitimate requests**.
Attackers can also use multiple compromised devices to launch this attack.

Data exfiltration

- Data exfiltration is the **unauthorized transfer of data from a computer**.
- The transfer of data can be manual by someone with physical access to the computer or automated, carried out through malware over a network.

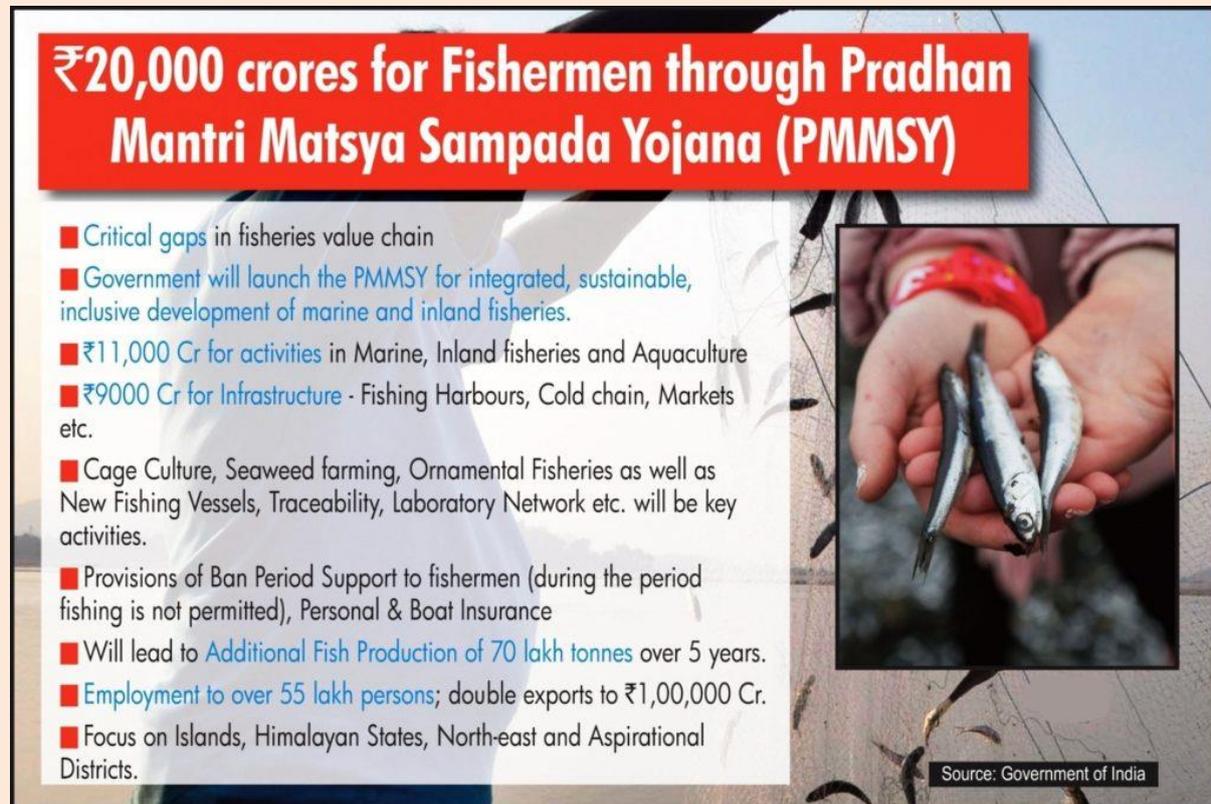
Key logging

- Keyloggers are a **type of monitoring software designed to record keystrokes** made by a user.
- One of the oldest forms of cyber threat, these keystroke loggers record the information type into a website or application and send to back to a third party.

Topic 24: PM Matsya Sampada Yojana

Importance for Prelims: Schemes

Importance for Mains: GS III- Indian Economy



₹20,000 crores for Fishermen through Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)

- Critical gaps in fisheries value chain
- Government will launch the PMMSY for integrated, sustainable, inclusive development of marine and inland fisheries.
- ₹11,000 Cr for activities in Marine, Inland fisheries and Aquaculture
- ₹9000 Cr for Infrastructure - Fishing Harbours, Cold chain, Markets etc.
- Cage Culture, Seaweed farming, Ornamental Fisheries as well as New Fishing Vessels, Traceability, Laboratory Network etc. will be key activities.
- Provisions of Ban Period Support to fishermen (during the period fishing is not permitted), Personal & Boat Insurance
- Will lead to Additional Fish Production of 70 lakh tonnes over 5 years.
- Employment to over 55 lakh persons; double exports to ₹1,00,000 Cr.
- Focus on Islands, Himalayan States, North-east and Aspirational Districts.



Source: Government of India

- Fisheries and aquaculture are an important source of food, nutrition, employment and income in India.
- The sector provides **livelihood to more than 20 million fishers and fish farmers at the primary level and twice the number along the value chain.**
- The Gross Value Added (GVA) of fisheries sector in the national economy is **1.24% of the total National GVA and 7.28% share of Agricultural GVA.**
- Fisheries sector in India has shown **impressive growth with an**

average annual growth rate of 10.88% during the year from 2014-15 to 2018-19.

- The fish production in India has registered an **average annual growth of 7.53% during last 5 years** and stood at an all-time high of 137.58 lakh metric tons during 2018-19.

Features:

- The PMMSY will be implemented as an umbrella scheme with **two separate Components namely Central Sector Scheme (CS) and Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS).**
- Under the Central Sector Scheme Component an amount of Rs. 1720 crores has been earmarked. Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) Component, an investment of Rs. 18330 crores has been envisaged, which in turn is segregated into Non-beneficiary oriented and Beneficiary orientated subcomponents/ activities under the following three broad heads:
 - ✓ Enhancement of **Production and Productivity**
 - ✓ Infrastructure and **Post-harvest Management**
 - ✓ Fisheries **Management and Regulatory Framework**
- Cluster or area-based approach would be followed with requisite forward and backward linkages and end to end solutions.
- Thrust will be given for infusing **new and emerging technologies like Recirculatory Aquaculture Systems, Biofloc, Aquaponics, Cage Cultivation** to enhance production and productivity, quality, productive utilization of waste lands

and water for Aquaculture.

- Special focus on Coldwater fisheries development and expansion of Aquaculture in Brackish Water and Saline Areas.
- Activities like **Mariculture, Seaweed cultivation and Ornamental Fisheries** having potential to generate huge employment will be promoted.
- **Focused attention** would be given for fisheries development in **Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Islands, Northeast, and Aspirational Districts** through area specific development plans.
- PMMSY envisages promotion of high value species, establishing a national network of **Brood Banks** for all commercially important species, Genetic improvement and establishing Nucleus Breeding Center for self-reliance in Shrimp Brood stock, organic aquaculture promotion and certification, good aquaculture practices, end to end traceability from 'catch to consumer', **use of Block Chain Technology**, Global Standards and Certification, Accreditation of Brood banks, Hatcheries, Farms, residues issues and aquatic health management supported by a modern laboratory network.
- Collectivization of fishers and fish farmers through **Fish Farmer Producer Organizations (FFPOs)** to increase **bargaining power of fishers** and fish farmers is a key feature of PMMSY.
- **Aquaparks as hub of fisheries and aquaculture activities**

with assured, affordable, quality inputs under one roof, post-harvest infrastructure facilities, business enterprise zones, logistic support, business incubation centers, marketing facilities etc.

- Youth would be engaged in fisheries extension by creation of 3347 **SagarMitras in coastal fisher villages.**
- Major investments in construction and modernization of Fishing Harbours and Landing centers for hygienic handling of fish, urban marketing infrastructure to deliver quality and affordable fish, **development of state of the art whole sale fish markets, retail markets, E-marketing and E-trading of Fish etc.**

Topic 25: Bharatanatyam and musical instruments

Importance for Prelims: Arts and culture



The Madras High Court directed Tamil Nadu government to safeguard the interests of traditional musicians such as those who play Thavil and lamented that the art and artistes were on the verge of extinction.

- Bharatnatyam Dance is considered to be **over 2000 years old**. Several texts beginning with **Bharata Muni's NatyaShastra** (200 B.C.E. to 200C.E.) provide information on this dance form.

- The **AbhinayaDarpana** by **Nandikesvara** is one of the main sources of textual material, for the study of the technique and grammar of body movement in Bharatnatyam Dance.
- Bharatnatyam dance is known to be **ekaharya**, where **one dancer takes on many roles in a single performance**.
- In the early 19th century, the famous Tanjore Quartette, **under the patronage of Raja Serfoji** are said to have been responsible for the repertoire of Bharatnatyam dance as we see it today.
- The accompanying orchestra consists of a **vocalist, amridangam player, violinist or veena player, a flautist** and a cymbal player. The person who conducts the dance recitation is the Nattuvanar.

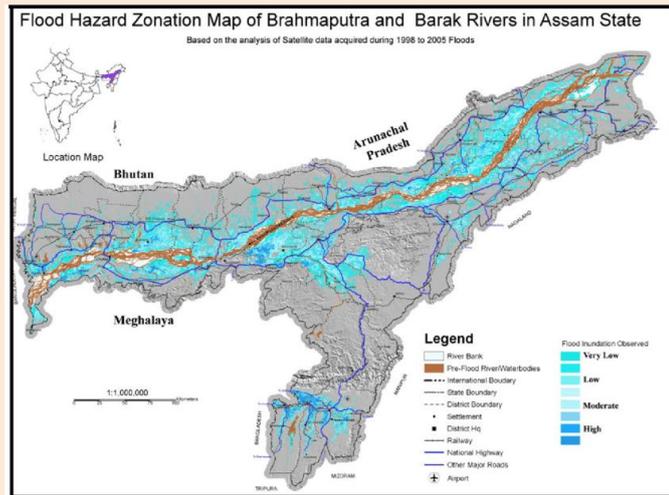
Musical instruments

- In the NatyaShastra, compiled by Bharat Muni dated 200 B.C.- 200 A.D., musical instruments have been divided into four main categories on the basis of how sound is produced.
 - (i) The **Tata Vadya** or Chordophones- Stringed instruments
 - (ii) The **SushiraVadya** or Aerophones- Wind instruments
 - (iii) The **AvanaddhaVadya** or Membranophones- Percussion instruments
 - (iv) The **Ghana Vadya** or Idiophones- Solid instruments which do not require tuning.

Topic 26: Assam's Flood and Kaziranga's Ecosystem

Importance for Prelims: Geography/Environment

Importance for Mains: Geography and Disaster Management



The recent flood in Assam has led to heavy casualties, displacement of peoples and animals and destruction of property and environment. It has also led to inundation of 80% of the area of Kaziranga National Park.

Reason behind Floods:

- **Ill-maintained or poorly constructed river embankments** are the main reason behind the flooding.
- One major feature of flood management in Assam is **total dependence on embankments**.
- Assam began constructing embankments in the 1960s and most of them have outlived their utility. Many of these started breaching or collapsing from the 1990s, more seriously from the

2000s.

- **Massive deforestation in catchment areas** of rivers or release of waters by dams upstream.
- **Climate change** is also a factor behind floods.

Floods in Kaziranga's Ecosystem:

- Experts believe that **floods are necessary for Kaziranga** by virtue of its **riverine ecosystem**. The system won't survive without water.
- **Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR)** is sandwiched between the Brahmaputra river and the Karbi Anglong Hills.
- The entire area is formed by alluvial deposits from the Brahmaputra and its tributaries.
- The regenerative nature of floods **helps replenish Kaziranga's water bodies and maintain its landscape**, which is a mix of **wetlands, grasslands and semi-evergreen deciduous forests**.
- The floodwaters **function as a breeding ground for fish**, which are carried away by the receding waters into the Brahmaputra. i.e the Kaziranga's floods replenishes the Brahmaputra's stock of fish.
- The waters also help **get rid of unwanted plants such as water hyacinth** which collect in huge masses in the landscape.

Issues Involved:

- **Frequent Floods:** Earlier, a big flood would come once in ten

years, now they come every other year.

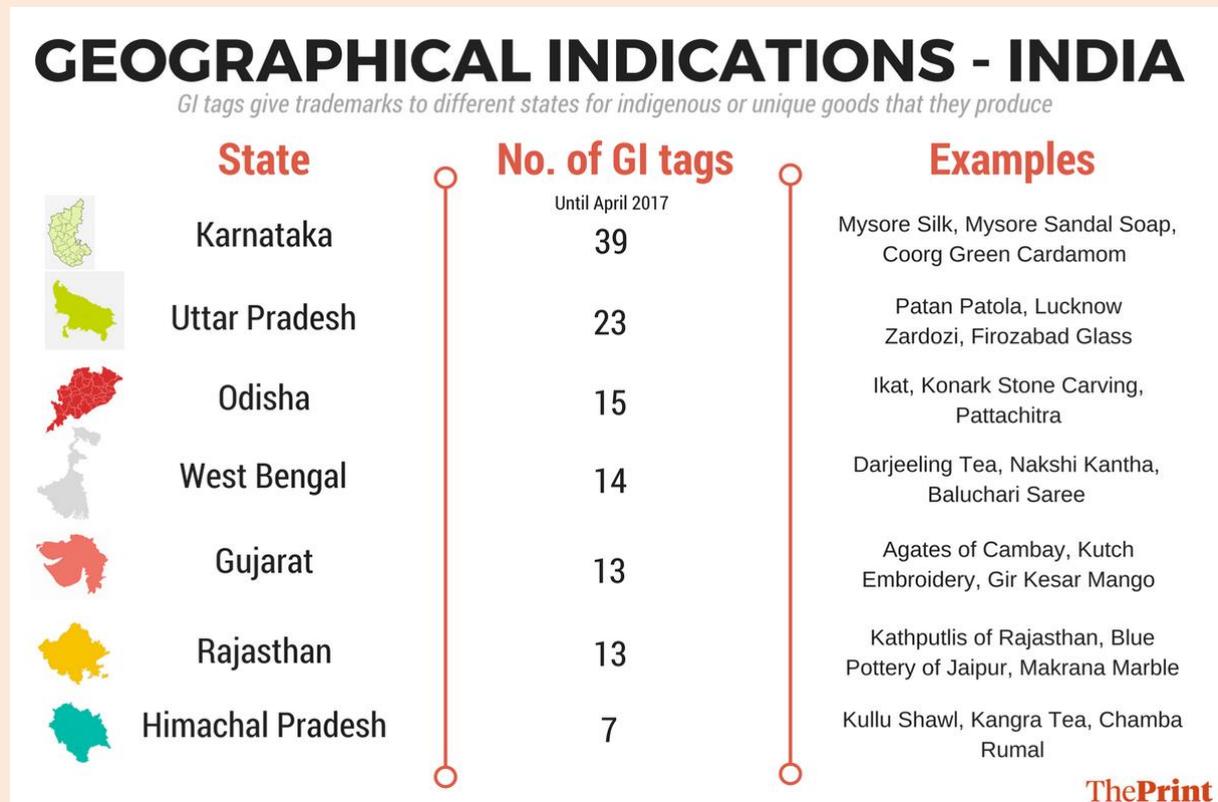
- **NH-37:** When the flood water hits a certain level, the animal moves towards safer, higher ground in the Karbi Anglong hills. However, they have to cross NH-37 which cuts across the park, which leads to the killing of animals in road accidents. Animals are also killed by poachers who take advantage of their vulnerability.
- **Human-animal Conflict:** Animals also move towards villages in floods, this leads to **human-animal conflict**.

Steps taken during Floods:

- The authorities keep a track of updates from the **Central Water Commission**, and **monitor water levels** of the Brahmaputra tributaries upstream in Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Camps are organised to create awareness** against poaching and harming wild animals that are rendered vulnerable during the floods.”
- When the floods hit, **Section 144 of CrPC** is imposed along NH-37, speed limits are enforced and fines levied. Barricades are also placed to help animals cross over to Karbi Anglong.

Topic 27: MP's Claims for Basmati GI Tag

Importance for Prelims: Economy/ Intellectual Property



Recently, the **All India Rice Exporters' Association (AIREA)** has appealed to the government to preserve and protect the integrity of **Basmati rice**, following Madhya Pradesh (MP) government's pressure on the central government for seeking **Geographical Indication (GI) tag** for Basmati produced in 13 districts of MP.

- AIREA argues that if MP is included in the GI list of Basmati crop then it will harm the reputation of Indian Basmati as well as the national interest.

Key Points

- **Geographical Indication Tag:**

According to the **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)**, it is given to an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product, originating from a specific geographical area due to which it possesses unique characteristics and qualities.

GI tag is kind of a **trademark in the international market** and an assurance that the product is coming from that specific area.

- **Basmati and GI tag:**

India is the only producer of premium Basmati and it has been grown from time immemorial in the **Indo-Gangetic Plains (IGP)** area of India and 18 districts of Pakistan's Punjab. It had been a tough battle for the country to protect Basmati name from the encroachment of various nations which all came out with their own versions of Basmati.

APEDA got GI tag for the region located in IGP below the foothills of the Himalayas, spread across **seven states (Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Western Uttar Pradesh (26 districts) and Delhi)** in May 2010.

- **Reasons Given:**

The **origin and reputation** of Basmati rice as a 'longgrain, aromatic rice' from the IGP is **found in tradition, folklore, scientific and culinary literature and political-historical records.**

Dehraduni Basmati, Amritsar Basmati and Tarawari Basmati are few varieties which have become famous over the period of hundreds of

years.

- **Claims and Efforts Made by Madhya Pradesh:**

MP claims that **its rice possesses the same characteristics and qualities** as that of the rice grown in the IGP.

It also claims that **nearly 80,000 farmers** of the state are growing Basmati in **13 districts** and **exporting worth Rs. 3,000 crore annually.**

MP appealed in Madras High Court where its plea was rejected in February 2020.

In 2016, **Intellectual Properties Appellate Board (IPBA)** in **Chennai** had given the decision in favour of the APEDA.

Despite these orders, MP has been repeatedly agitating and raising banter through political and bureaucratic channels.

- **Basis of Rejection:**

Under the **World Trade Organisation's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (WTO TRIPs) agreement**, physical attributes are not enough for a product to earn a GI tag.

As per the **Goods (Registration and Protection) Act in 2003**, 'reputation' to a geographical area is central to the recognition of a GI product and only seven states have that reputation.

MP falls in the **Madhya Bharat Pathar (plateau)** and started cultivation of varieties of Basmati rice only around the middle of the first decade of this century.

Even if the rice grown in MP has all the required characteristics it

would not still entitle such rice to qualify as Basmati.

- **Possible Effects of Inclusion of MP in GI list:**

It will **nullify APEDA's efforts to secure and protect Indian Basmati** since 1995 by taking up over 1,000 legal actions in nearly 50 countries.

APEDA has spent around Rs. 250 crores in promoting Basmati rice, defending its GI status and shaping it into a global brand.

If MP gets permission, **Pakistan and China will grab the opportunity** to start sowing Basmati. **All those 50 and more nations who had been restricted** from calling any of their aromatic rice with even 'Basmati-like' names will also **start growing it and contend for its status.**

It will **deprive over 20 lakh farmers of seven states from the economic premium** of growing this unique product.