Governance

Draft Mediation Bill, 2021
Syllabus: GS 2, Governance

In News

- The Ministry of Law and Justice has placed the Draft Mediation Bill, 2021 in the public domain to seek feedback and suggestions from all stakeholders.

Need of Mediation Bill

- Strengthening of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR):
  - The Government has been taking various policy initiatives for the promotion and strengthening of ADR mechanisms.
  - It would facilitate quick disposal of disputes, outside of traditional court systems.
  - Bringing a standalone law on Mediation is a continuation of the exercise.

- Unify the different enactments and rules and regulations related to Mediation:
  - The laws on Mediation are contained in several enactments including different Rules and Regulations.
  - It was necessary to ascertain the present statutory framework on mediation.
  - The need was regularly felt for bringing umbrella legislation including amendments in the existing laws.

- Aligning Indian Norms with International practices:
  - The Bill takes into contemplation the international practice of using the terms ‘conciliation’ and ‘mediation’ interchangeably.

- Singapore Convention on Mediation:
  - India is a signatory to the Singapore Convention on Mediation.
  - Hence, it has also become expedient to enact a law in mediation on issues of domestic and international mediation.

Objectives of the Bill

- To promote, encourage and facilitate mediation especially institutional mediation for resolution of disputes commercial and otherwise,
• To enforce domestic and international mediation settlement agreements.
• To provide for a body for the registration of mediators, to encourage community mediation.
• To make online mediation as an acceptable and cost-effective process and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto has been prepared.

Main Features of the Bill
• The draft Bill proposes for pre-litigation mediation.
  ○ At the same time, it also safeguards the interest of the litigants to approach the competent adjudicatory forums/courts in case urgent relief is sought.
• The successful outcome of mediation in the form of a Mediation Settlement Agreement (MSA) has been made enforceable by law.
  ○ Since the MSA is out of the consensual agreement between the parties, the challenge to the same has been permitted on limited grounds.
• The mediation process protects the confidentiality of the mediation undertaken and provides for immunity in certain cases against its disclosure.
• The registration of MSA has also been provided with State, District, Taluk Legal Authorities within 90 days
  ○ To ensure maintenance of authenticated records of the settlement.
• Provides for the establishment of the Mediation Council of India.
• Provides for community mediation.

Conclusion
• The bill, when provided with a proper legislative shape, will enable a faster resolution of disputes.
• It would result in the restoration of faith of the litigants in the judicial and lawmaking arms of the government.

Alternate Dispute Resolution Mechanisms
• Generally, it uses a neutral third party who helps the parties to communicate, discuss the differences and resolve the dispute.
• It offers to resolve all types of matters related to civil disputes, as explicitly provided by the law.
• It is capable of providing a substitute for the conventional methods of resolving disputes.
• Important Provisions Related To ADR
  ○ Section 89 of the Civil Procedure Code, 1908: Provides that opportunity to the people, if it appears to court there exist elements of settlement
outside the court then the court formulate the terms of the possible settlement and refer the same for ADRs.

○ **Acts dealing with ADR**
  - Legal Services Authority Act, 1987 (established Lok Adalat System)
  - Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996

**Various Modes of ADR**

- **Arbitration:**
  - The dispute is submitted to an arbitral tribunal which makes a decision on the dispute that is mostly binding on the parties.
  - It is less formal than a trial and rules of evidence are often relaxed.
  - Generally, there is no right to appeal an arbitrator's decision.
  - Except for some interim measures, there is very little scope for judicial intervention in the arbitration process.

- **Mediation:**
  - An impartial person called a "Mediator" helps the parties try to reach a mutually acceptable resolution of the dispute.
  - He/she does not decide the dispute but helps the parties communicate so they can try to settle the dispute themselves.
  - It leaves control of the outcome with the parties.

- **Conciliation:**
  - It is a non-binding procedure in which an impartial third party, the conciliator, assists the parties in a dispute in reaching a mutually satisfactory agreed settlement of the dispute.
  - It is a less formal form of arbitration.
  - The parties are free to accept or reject the recommendations but if both parties accept the settlement document drawn by the conciliator, it shall be final and binding on both.

**Need and Significance**

- The inefficiency of the judiciary to deal with pending cases and clogging with long unsettled cases.
  - Even after setting up fast track courts, the number of pending cases are still piling up.

- Delays in litigation should be mended by referring disputes to ADR for settlement, which would prove to be an effective counter to reduce pendency.

- These provide scientifically developed techniques to the Indian judiciary which helps in reducing the burden on the courts.
- Its motive is to provide social-economic and political justice and maintain integrity in the society enshrined in the preamble.
- ADR is founded in such Fundamental Rights, Article 14 and 21 which deal with Equality before Law and Right to Life and Personal Liberty respectively.
- It also strives to achieve equal justice and free legal aid provided under Article 39-A relating to the Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP).
- Also, the Malimath Committee Report (1989-90) underlined the need for ADR mechanisms as a viable alternative to conventional court litigation.

Source: PIB

Health

Zika Virus Disease
Syllabus: GS2/ Issues related to Health

In News
- With a rise in the number of Zika virus cases in Uttar Pradesh, doctors have advised that people should avoid all non-essential travel to areas reporting cases.

Matter of Concern
- According to information released by the World Health Organisation (WHO), a majority of those infected with Zika virus disease either remain asymptomatic (up to 80%) or show mild symptoms of fever, rash, conjunctivitis, body ache, joint pains.

Zika Virus
About:
- Mosquito-borne virus transmitted by Aedes aegypti mosquitoes which also transmit 3 other vector-borne diseases – Chikungunya, dengue and yellow fever.
- It also spreads through blood transfusion and sexual contact.
- First identified in 1947 in Zika Forest, Uganda from where it derives its name.

Symptoms:
- They are similar to other viral infections such as dengue.

Threats:
- Pregnant women infected with the Zika virus may give birth to babies with severe brain damage or serious birth defects i.e. neurological disorders and foetal deformation known as Microcephaly in which infants are born with abnormally small heads.
- Besides, there is also a possible link between virus and Guillain-Barré syndrome (a condition in which the body’s immune system attacks part of the nervous system) is also suspected.

Treatment and Prevention:
- There is no specific treatment or vaccine currently available to treat Zika.
- WHO declared the Zika virus and its suspected link to birth defects as an international public health emergency.
Government Initiatives

- **Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP):** To strengthen/maintain decentralized laboratory based and IT enabled disease surveillance systems for epidemic prone diseases to monitor disease trends.

- **National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP):** Scaling up the entomological surveillance for Aedes. The vector surveillance should be round the year to detect the seasonal fluctuation in vector density and pinpoint high-risk areas. The **six vector-borne diseases** i.e. Malaria, Dengue, Lymphatic Filariasis, Kala-azar, Japanese Encephalitis and Chikungunya in India.

- **Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK):** An initiative under National Health Mission has a surveillance system for monitoring birth defects.

Source: TH

**Polity & Governance**

Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules 2011

*Syllabus: GS2/ Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

**In News**

- The Department of Consumer Affairs under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution has omitted Rule 5 of the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities), Rules 2011 to safeguard the interest of consumers.
  - **Rule 5** defines Schedule II prescribing the **pack sizes of various types of commodities**.

**Proposed Amendment**

- The amendments are to **come into effect** from **1st April 2022**.

  - Amendment to ensure that consumers are able to make an **informed choice** and reduce compliance for industries.
    - For reducing the compliance burden and removing the ambiguity of declaration of the date on pre-packaged commodities for consumers, the declaration has now been required to the month and year in which the commodity is manufactured for the pre-packed commodities.

  - Mandatory **declaration of MRP in Indian currency** inclusive of all taxes on pre-packed products.

  - Declaration of **date of manufacture on the pre-packaged commodities** is made mandatory for pre-packaged commodities under the revised rules.

  - Rules for **declaring the commodities sold** in pre-packed commodities in numbers have been eased out to reduce the compliance burden for manufacturer/importer/packer.
Significance

- These amendments will enhance consumer protection.
- Ease of Doing Business will be enabled more.
- It will also ensure that law is at pace with the changing technology.
- Compliance burden reduced on manufacturer and importer.
- Declaring commodities sold in a pre-packed manner will remove the ambiguity of declaration of quantity.

(Image Courtesy: Consumer Affairs)

Consumer Rights

- **Right to Safety:**
  - Means the right to be protected against the marketing of goods and services, which are hazardous to life and property. The purchased goods and services availed of should not only meet their immediate needs but also fulfil long term interests.
  - Before purchasing, consumers should insist on the quality of the products as well as on the guarantee of the products and services. They should preferably purchase quality marked products such as ISI, AGMARK, etc.

- **Right to be Informed:**
  - Means the right to be informed about the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods so as to protect the consumer against unfair trade practices.
Consumers should insist on getting all the information about the product or service before making a choice or a decision. This will enable him to act wisely and responsibly and also enable him to desist from falling prey to high pressure selling techniques.

- **Right to Choose:**
  - Means right to be assured, wherever possible of access to a variety of goods and services at competitive price. In case of monopolies, it means the right to be assured of satisfactory quality and service at a fair price. It also includes the right to basic goods and services. This is because the unrestricted right of the minority to choose can mean a denial for the majority of its fair share. This right can be better exercised in a competitive market where a variety of goods are available at competitive prices.

- **Right to be Heard:**
  - Means that consumer's interests will receive due consideration at appropriate forums. It also includes the right to be represented in various forums formed to consider the consumer's welfare.
  - The Consumers should form non-political and non-commercial consumer organizations which can be given representation in various committees formed by the Government and other bodies in matters relating to consumers.

- **Right to Seek redressal:**
  - Means right to seek redressal against unfair trade practices or unscrupulous exploitation of consumers. It also includes the right to fair settlement of the genuine grievances of the consumer.
  - Consumers must make complaints for their genuine grievances. Many times their complaint may be of small value but its impact on society as a whole may be very large. They can also take the help of consumer organisations in seeking redressal of their grievances.

- **Right to Consumer Education:**
  - Means the right to acquire the knowledge and skill to be an informed consumer throughout life. Ignorance of consumers, particularly of rural consumers, is mainly responsible for their exploitation. They should know their rights and must exercise them. Only then real consumer protection can be achieved with success.

**Way Ahead**

- The consumer affairs department is still tied up with the food and public distribution department. A dedicated consumer affairs ministry is the need of the hour to have a determined focus to safeguard various rights of consumers.
- Further in the age of false and puffed-up advertisements, penal provisions relating to misleading and false advertisements have to be installed at the earliest.
• If we use products and services having less impact on the environment, probably, future generations might be safeguarded from deadly pandemics like Covid-19.

Legal Metrology Act, 2009

• The Department of Consumer Affairs, administers the Legal Metrology Act 2009.
• The act provides for the application of legal requirements to measurements and measuring instruments.
• The objective of Legal Metrology is to ensure public guarantee from the point of view of security and accuracy of the weights and measurements.
• The Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities), Rules 2011 are primarily intended to ensure that the consumers are able to make informed choices by being informed of essential declarations on the pre-packed commodities.

Source: PIB

International Relations

India-France Relations

Syllabus: GS2/ Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

In News

• Recently, France stressed continuing its commitment to the Indo-Pacific region.

About

• France termed its partnership with India as a major pillar of its Indo Pacific strategy.
• France's resolve to expand strategic cooperation with India came nearly two months after the unveiling of a new security alliance (AUKUS) by Australia, the UK and the US that had infuriated the French government.
  ○ France was unhappy with the formation of the new alliance as it resulted in Paris effectively losing a multi-billion dollar deal to build 12 conventional submarines for Australia. France was also upset over its exclusion from the alliance.

Latest Developments in India-France Strategic Dialogue

• France reiterated its commitment to fully support Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and defence industrialisation, joint research and technology development in India across a wide range of advanced capabilities.
• France is one of India’s premier global and Indo Pacific partners.
• Both sides reaffirmed that their strategic partnership has a vital role to play in advancing peace, stability and security in the Indo Pacific region.

• They agreed to strengthen bilateral defence and security partnership through enhanced intelligence and information sharing, operational cooperation, bolstering mutual capabilities, expanding bilateral exercises and pursuing new initiatives in maritime, space and cyber domains.

• Building on the successful India-France initiative on International Solar Alliance, the two sides stressed the need to accelerate cooperation in clean energy, including civil nuclear energy and green hydrogen.

India-France Relations

• Strategic Dialogue:
  ○ France is the first country with which we initiated a Strategic Dialogue after our 1998 nuclear tests when France refused to impose bilateral sanctions on us and displayed a far greater understanding of India’s security compulsions compared to other countries.

• Trade between two countries:
  ○ Bilateral trade with France has witnessed a steady rise in the last decade reaching USD 10.75 billion in 2020. The two sides also recognised the importance of fast tracking the discussions on an India-EU trade and investment agreement.
  ○ Nearly $16 billion worth of agreements at the business summit were signed. There are nearly 1,000 French companies present while over a hundred Indian businesses have established a presence in France.
  ○ Brexit:
    ■ In the past, Indian companies saw the U.K. as the entry point for Europe; now with Brexit approaching, India can also look at France as its entry point for Europe.

• Defence:
  ○ An agreement for building six Scorpène submarines in India with French help was signed in 2005.
  ○ Technology sharing and acquisitions of short-range missiles and radar equipment were concluded.
  ○ Joint exercises between the air forces (Garuda series) and the armies (Shakti) were instituted in 2003 and 2011, respectively.
  ○ The government-to-government agreement for 36 Rafale aircrafts has taken place. The ambitious offset target of 50% (nearly ₹25,000 crore), properly implemented, can help in building up India’s budding aerospace industry.
• **Energy Sector:**
  ○ An agreement was signed about a decade ago for **building six EPR (European Pressurized Reactors) nuclear power reactors** with a total capacity of 9.6 GW for which negotiations have been on-going between the Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCIL) and Areva.
  ○ On **green energy**:
    - The **International Solar Alliance** is set in motion jointly by India and France.
    - France offered an extra $861.5 million by 2022 for **solar projects** in developing countries.

• **Maritime cooperation:**
  ○ **China’s angle:**
    - Like India, France has expressed concern about China’s growing presence in the Indian Ocean Region.
    - French overseas territories in the Indian and the Pacific Oceans provide it with the second-largest exclusive economic zone globally. It has long maintained bases in Reunion Islands and Djibouti and established one in Abu Dhabi in 2009.
  ○ Strengthening cooperation with France, particularly in the **western Indian Ocean Region** makes eminent strategic sense even as India develops its presence in Oman (Duqm) and Seychelles (Assumption Island).
  ○ More synergy between the two navies in the Gulf area where France has a base (in Abu Dhabi) and better mutual understanding of the implications of a Chinese base in Gwadar is important for India.

• **Space:**
  ○ Earlier France assisted India to set up the **Sriharikota launch site**.
  ○ Today, it is a relationship of near equals and the ‘vision statement’ refers to world-class joint missions for space situational awareness, high resolution earth observation missions with applications in meteorology, oceanography and cartography.
  ○ **Inter-planetary exploration and space transportation systems** are cutting edge science and technology areas that have also been identified.
  ○ **Collaboration for Mission Gaganyaan:**
    - Space agencies of India and France inked an agreement for cooperation for the country’s first human space mission Gaganyaan.

• **Education:**
  ○ The most significant agreement was the focus on youth and student exchanges.
○ Currently, about 2,500 Indians go to France annually to pursue higher education, compared to more than 250,000 from China.

○ The agreement on mutual recognition of academic degrees and the follow-on Knowledge Summit, where 14 MoUs between educational and scientific institutions were signed.

- **Tourism:**
  ○ While there are only about 20 flights a week between India and France, there are four times as many to Germany and 10 times as many to the U.K. So the number of flights between India and France have to be increased.

- **Post-COVID Agenda:**
  ○ India and France will advance their shared post-COVID agenda through “close collaboration”.
  ○ There are immense opportunities for greater collaboration in diverse sectors such as trade and investments, defence and security, health, education, research and innovation, energy and climate change.

- **Environment:**
  ○ India and France had launched the Indo-French Year of the Environment in January 2021 to strengthen cooperation on these issues and ensure coordination ahead of these multilateral events.
    
    ■ **Objective:** To strengthen Indo-French cooperation in sustainable development, increase the effectiveness of actions in favour of global environment protection and give them greater visibility.

    ■ The Indo-French Year of the Environment over the period 2021-2022 would be based on **five main themes:**
      - Environmental protection;
      - Climate change;
      - Biodiversity conservation
      - Sustainable urban development;
      - Development of renewable energies and energy efficiency.

    ■ It is also a platform for engaging in discussions on critical areas of collaboration relating to the environment and allied areas.

Source: HT
### In News

- Researchers in Indonesia have found a way to fight disease-bearing mosquitoes by breeding a species of the insect which carries a kind of bacteria that prevents viruses like dengue from growing inside them.

### All about the recent research

- **Breeding a species of mosquito:** Researchers in Indonesia are breeding a species of mosquito which carries a type of bacteria, called **Wolbachia** that prevents viruses like dengue from growing inside them.
- **Reduction in cases:** Results show that deploying mosquitoes with Wolbachia reduced dengue cases by as much as 77% and hospitalizations by up to 86%.
- **Wolbachia:** It is a **common bacteria** that occurs naturally in 60% of insect species, including some mosquitoes, fruit flies, moths, dragonflies and butterflies.
  - It is not, however, found in dengue-carrying **Aedes aegypti mosquitoes**.
- **Mechanism:** The **mosquitoes carrying dengue will mate with mosquitoes carrying Wolbachia**, which will produce Wolbachia mosquitoes - the 'good' mosquitoes. So even if they bite people, it won't affect them.
- **WHO estimates:** According to the World Health Organization (WHO), global dengue infections have risen rapidly in recent decades, with about half of the world's population now at risk. An estimated 100-400 million infections are reported every year.
  - In India itself, over 1 lakh cases of Dengue have been reported. States like Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Delhi, Uttarakhand, etc, have registered the bulk of the country's cases.

### What is Dengue?

- **Break bone fever:** It is commonly known as **break-bone fever** is a flu-like illness caused by the **Dengue virus**.
- **Aedes mosquito:** It is caused when an Aedes mosquito carrying the virus bites a healthy person.
- **Concentration across the globe:** This disease is mainly found in the tropical and subtropical regions of the world.
  - Most cases occur in tropical areas of the world, with the population in the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, Mexico, Africa, parts of Central and South America most susceptible to the disease.
• **No specific treatment:** There is no specific treatment for dengue. Early detection of disease progression associated with severe dengue, and access to proper medical care lowers fatality rates of severe dengue to below 1%.

**Causes of Dengue**

• **Various viruses:** Dengue is caused due to four viruses, namely - DENV-1, DENV-2, DENV-3, and DENV-4.

• **Spread:** The virus enters a mosquito when it bites an already infected person. And the illness is spread when it bites a healthy person, and the virus spreads through the person’s bloodstream.

• **Immunity:** Once a person recovers, he is immune to the specific virus and not the other three types.

• **Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever:** The probability of developing severe Dengue fever, also known as Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever, increases if you're infected a second, third or fourth time.

**Symptoms of Dengue**

• Dengue causes a fever of 104 F degrees along with at least two of these symptoms:
  ○ Headache, Muscle, bone and joint pain, Nausea, Vomiting, Pain behind the eyes, swollen glands, Rash.

**Diagnosis and Treatment**

• Diagnosis of dengue infection is done with a blood test.

• There is no specific medicine to treat dengue infection.

• The dengue vaccine CYD-TDV or Dengvaxia was approved by the US Food & Drug Administration in 2019, the first dengue vaccine to get the regulatory nod in the US.

**Factors that lead to prevention of the spread of the disease**

• Prevention of mosquito breeding by environmental management and modification

• Personal protection from mosquito bites: Using personal household protection measures, such as window screens, repellents, insecticide-treated materials, coils and vaporizers.

• Community engagement: Educating the community.

• Reactive vector control

• Active mosquito and virus surveillance

**Government initiatives for Dengue**

• **Long Term Action Plan:** Developed a Long Term Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Dengue in the country.
• **National guidelines**: for clinical management of Dengue Fever, Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever, and Dengue Shock Syndrome.

• **Established Sentinel Surveillance Hospitals**: with laboratory support for augmentation of diagnostic facilities for Dengue in endemic States.

• **Free of cost diagnosis**: Diagnosis of Dengue and Chikungunya is provided to the community free of cost.

• **National Dengue Day**: is observed in India on May 16 with the recommendation of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to create awareness about dengue; and to intensify preventive measures and preparedness for the control of disease in the country before transmission season starts.

**Way Forward/ Suggestions**

• **Collaborating network of laboratories**: support countries in the confirmation of outbreaks through its collaborating network of laboratories.

• **Technical support and guidance**: Countries should provide technical support and guidance to each other for the effective management of dengue outbreaks.

• **Improve their reporting systems**: countries should improve their reporting systems and capture the true burden of the disease.

• **Training on clinical management**: WHO should provide training on clinical management, diagnosis and vector control at the country and regional level with some of its collaborating centres.

• **Legislation**: Governments should formulate evidence-based strategies and policies.

• **Global Vector Control Response**: WHO should support countries in the development of dengue prevention and control strategies and adopting the Global Vector Control Response.

**Source:** TH

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**Biodiversity & Environment**

**Translocation of Rhinos in Assam**

**Syllabus: GS 3 Environment**

**In News**

- December is the best time to translocate the rhinoceros of Assam as flood waters subside by that time as per a study published in Pachyderm journal.

**Who conducted the study?**

- The study was carried out in two protected areas in the Brahmaputra river Valley
  - Kaziranga National Park (KNP) and
  - Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary (BWS)
- It was recently published in the Pachyderm journal.
About Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary (BWS)

- BWS is contiguous with the Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary (LWS) to the south of Brahmaputra River in Assam.
  - The two areas are known collectively as the Laokhowa and Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuaries (LBWS).
- Following the death after the monsoon floods in 2016 of a lone sub-adult female translocated to BWS from KNP
  - The study compared the behaviour of this individual during high flood periods to that of other adults, sub-adults and calves in KNP in 2017.

Source: Pachyderm

About Pachyderm

- Pachyderm means a very large mammal with thick skin, especially an elephant, rhinoceros, or hippopotamus.
- Pachyderm is also a bi-annual, international, and peer-reviewed journal that deals primarily with matters related to
- It is also a platform for the dissemination of information concerning the activities of
Key highlights of the study

● **Movement across highlands:**
  ○ The study observed a new behavioural category, i.e swimming.
  ○ Despite heavy flood water current, calves and sub-adult rhinos in KNP and especially the lone BWS sub-adult female rhino were observed to swim frequently.
  ○ The motive for these movements may have been to eat the aquatic plants or (in the case of KNP individuals) to avoid other animals.

● **Behaviour towards stress:**
  ○ The study found that during the high flood period, adult rhinos of KNP spent most time resting.
    ■ It may be a behavioural response to overcome stress during this time.
  ○ In contrast, adult rhinos were almost never observed swimming.
  ○ They remained on the highland refuges, appeared sluggish and hardly moved.
    ■ The minimal movement of adult rhinos was not only a tactic to overcome stress, but also previous experience of high floods.
    ■ That it is safer to remain on the raised areas and not to attempt to escape by swimming against the strong current.

● **Adult rhinos are the best choice for translocation:**
  ○ Rather than a sub-adult or a mother with a calf as adult animals have better survival capabilities than others.

● **Best time for translocation:**
  ○ The ideal time for rhino translocation would be early December.
  ○ This allows areas to recover from the effects of floods in June to September
    ■ While allowing newly released rhinos sufficient time to settle in their new habitat before the next monsoon starts.

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**Indian Rhino Vision (IRV) 2020**

● A rhino reintroduction plan was developed under the Indian Rhino Vision (IRV) 2020.

● The goal of IRV2020 was to increase the rhino population in Assam to 3,000 by establishing populations in new areas.

● Rhinos are now found in four protected areas in Assam:
  ○ Pobitora Wildlife Reserve,
○ Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park,
○ Kaziranga National Park and
○ Manas National Park.

- It was collectively implemented by
  ○ The Department of Environment and Forest, Assam in partnership with Bodo Autonomous Council

- Supported by
  ○ WWF India,
  ○ WWF areas (Asian Rhino and Elephant action strategy) program,
  ○ the international rhino Foundation(IRF),
  ○ US fish and wildlife service, and others support the plan.

**Reasons for Indian Rhino Vision plan**

- Assam had at least five rhino-bearing areas till the 1980s.
- Conservation efforts helped maintain the population of the one-horned rhinoceros in Kaziranga, Orange and Pobitora National Parks.
  ○ But the *encroachment and poaching* wiped out the one-horned rhinos from Manas and Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Manas National Park thus lost the World Heritage Site tag it received in 1985 along with Kaziranga from UNESCO.
  ○ However, the translocated rhinos helped Manas National Park get back its World Heritage Site status in 2011.
  ○ Manas is also known for the near-extinction of the pygmy hog.

**Importance of the study and Conclusion**

- The largest population of Indian rhinoceros lives on the Brahmaputra flood plains.
  ○ Here, flooding poses a major threat to their survival.
  ○ This study finding may therefore be incorporated into the design and implementation of Indian rhino conservation programmes.

- Better implementation of Indian Rhinos Conservation Programs
  ○ Additionally, the study will help shape future expansion programmes for Indian rhinos in the same habitat.
Greater One-Horned Rhino

Source: WWF

- There are **three species of rhino** in Asia
  - Greater one-horned (Rhinoceros unicornis),
  - Javan and
  - Sumatran.

- The **two greatest threats** to the survival of Asia's rhinos are
  - poaching for the horns and
  - habitat loss are

- The **five rhino range nations**
  - India, Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia and Malaysia
  - Have signed ‘**The New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019**’ for the conservation and protection of the species.

- **IUCN Red list**
  - Javan and Sumatran Rhino are critically endangered
  - The Greater one-horned (or Indian) rhino is vulnerable

- **CITES**
  - All three listed under Appendix I.

- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**
  - Greater one-horned rhino is listed under the Schedule I of the act.
Habitat of Greater One-Horned Rhino in India
- The species is restricted to small habitats in Indo-Nepal terai and northern West Bengal and Assam.
  - Kaziranga NP, Pobitora WLS, Orang NP, Manas NP in Assam
  - Jaldapara NP and Gorumara NP in West Bengal and
  - Dudhwa TR in Uttar Pradesh.

Source: DTE

Facts In News

Indian Economy

Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) Report, 2021
Syllabus: GS 3/Economy

In News
- The Union Minister for Commerce and Industry has launched the 3rd edition of the Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) report, 2021.

About Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) Index
- It is a composite indicator to assess international trade logistics across states and Union territories.
- LEADS is an attempt to bring Longevity, Efficiency, Accuracy, Durability, and Smartness in the Logistics sector.
- It is a perception-based survey.
  - It is based on a stakeholders’ survey for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- LEADS is influenced by the World Bank’s biannual Logistics Performance Index (LPI).
- LEADS is based on eight parameters
  - Infrastructure,
  - Services,
  - Timeliness,
  - Track and trace,
  - Competitiveness of pricing,
○ Safety of cargo,
○ Operating environment and
○ Regulatory process.

About the rankings
● **Gujarat** has been adjudged as the **Best Performing State**.
● **Haryana** second while Punjab got the third position as per the report.
● **Uttar Pradesh** is the **top improver**.
  ○ This reflects the efforts that have been done in improving the quality of infrastructure.

Need for better logistics infrastructure and Government’s Efforts
● **Ease of Doing Business and Ease of Living:**
  ○ Improved ranking will fetch more investment and a cycle of economic growth will be fueled.
  ○ During the COVID period, the government was able to manage critical requirements due to efficient infrastructure.
● **Bring down costs:**
  ○ We must lead our way to bring down logistics costs by 5 per cent over the next 5 years.
● **PM GatiShakti Master Plan:**
  ○ It would revolutionize the next generation of multimodal infrastructure development in the country.
  ○ Better logistics would help India in its commitment to build modern infrastructure for the 21st century, at a pace never seen before.

Source: AIR

**Science & Technology**

**Star College Mentorship Programme**

**Syllabus: GS 3, Science & Technology**

**In News**
● The **Star College Mentorship Programme** was launched by the Ministry of Science and Technology.
  ○ It will help young scientists and students to innovate and find solutions to future challenges through peer learning & hand-holding.
About the Program:

- It was the first-ever Mentorship Programme for Young Innovators to mark the 75th Year of India’s Independence.
- This is a pan India Scheme that envisages Star College in every district of the country supported by the Department of Biotechnology

Vision, Mission and Goals

- Promote scientific temper:
  - It is in line with the Prime Minister’s Independence Day address wherein he emphasized that the roadmap for the next 25 years will be
    - Determined by the scientific and technological innovations and scientific prowess in all walks of life.
- Hand-holding and peer learning:
  - The plan envisages handhold at colleges particularly in the rural areas or lesser endowed areas.
    - It will also conduct outreach activities with government schools.
  - The Star Status Colleges will help in strengthening UG Science Courses throughout the country by mentoring the newer colleges.
- Organizing workshops, meetings per month:
  - The programme will help towards the concept of networking and outreach.

Success so far

- Outreach:
  - A total of 278 undergraduate colleges across the country are currently being supported under the DBT Star College Scheme.
  - More than 1.5 lakh students were supported in the last five years.
- Level playing field:
  - The categorization of the scheme into urban and rural categories during 2018-19 ensured a level playing field for applicants hailing from rural and urban areas of the country.
  - Presently 55 colleges from rural areas and 15 colleges in Aspirational districts are being supported under the scheme in a short time period of two years.
- Comprehensive support:
  - The support is not limited to the procurement of equipment.
  - The scheme also supports the training of faculty and laboratory staff, lectures by eminent scientists, visits to research institutes and industry etc.
• Holistic Plan:
  ○ This type of holistic support is expected to create an enabling environment for students to get motivated and pursue science education.

Conclusion
• Article 51 A(h) of our constitution states that it shall be the duty of every citizen to develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform.
• Thus, there is a need for focusing on increasing numbers of beneficiaries in human resource-related schemes like
  ○ Star College Scheme,
  ○ Skill Vigyan Programme (Skill Development Programme) in Biotechnology,
  ○ Biotech Industrial Training Programme and
  ○ doctoral & post-doctoral and Re-entry Schemes & Fellowships, and other similar schemes.

Source: PIB

Miscellaneous
Padma Awards 2020
Syllabus: GS2/ Awards
In News
• The President of India has presented the Padma Awards to the recipient for the year 2020.
  ○ 7 Padma Vibhushans, 10 Padma Bhushan and 102 Padma Shri awards.

Padma Awards
• About:
  ○ Padma Awards are one of the highest civilian honours of India.
  ○ Announced annually on the eve of Republic Day (26th January).
  ○ Awardees are presented a Sanad (certificate) signed by the President and a medallion.
  ○ The names of the awardees are published in the Gazette of India
  ○ Does not amount to a title and cannot be used as a suffix or prefix to the awardees’ name. (they are not prohibited by Article 18)

• Objectives:
  ○ To recognize achievements in all fields of activities or disciplines of public service.
● **History:**
  ○ Initially two civilian awards i.e Bharat Ratna & Padma Vibhushan were instituted in 1954.
  ○ Later had three classes namely Pahela Varg, Dusra Varg and Tisra Varg.
  ○ Subsequently renaming was done as Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri in 1955.

● **Categories:**
  ○ The Awards are given in three categories:
    ○ **Padma Vibhushan** (for exceptional and distinguished service)
    ○ **Padma Bhushan** (distinguished service of higher-order)
    ○ **Padma Shri** (distinguished service).

● **Disciplines:**
  ○ Art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service etc.

● **Selection Process:**
  ○ Awards are conferred on the recommendations made by the Padma Awards Committee, which is constituted by the Prime Minister every year.
  ○ Even self-nomination can be made; without any distinction.
  ○ Government servants including those working with PSUs, except doctors and scientists, are not eligible for these awards.

**Bharat Ratna**

● Highest civilian award of the country (**exceptional service of the highest order** in any field).
● It is treated on a different footing from Padma Award.
● **Recommendations:** PM to the President of India.
● **Numbers:** Restricted to a maximum of three in a particular year.
● Later, it was awarded to **Bhupen Hazarika, Pranab Mukherjee, and Nanaji Deshmukh** in 2019.

Source: PIB

**Governance**

Global Drug Policy Index 2021

Syllabus: GS 2/ Governance

In News

● The inaugural Global Drug Policy Index was released by the Harm Reduction Consortium.
About the Index

- **Aim**: It is a unique tool that documents, measures and compares national-level drug policies, providing each country with a score and ranking that shows how much their drug policies and their implementation align with the UN principles of human rights, health and development.

- **Regions covered**: This first iteration evaluates the performance of 30 countries covering all regions of the world.

- **It is composed of 75 indicators running across five broad dimensions of drug policy**: Criminal justice, extreme responses, health and harm reduction, access to internationally controlled medicines, and development.

Key takeaways from the Global Drug Policy Index

- **Top rankings**: It ranks Norway, New Zealand, Portugal, the UK and Australia as the five leading countries on humane and health-driven drug policies.
  - Norway managed a score of 74/100.

- **Lowest-rankings**: The five lowest-ranking countries are Brazil, Uganda, Indonesia, Kenya, and Mexico.

- **India’s scenario**: India’s rank is 18 out of 30 countries.
  - India has an overall score of 46/100. On the criteria of use of extreme sentencing and responses, it has a score of 63/100, on health and harm reduction, 49/100; on proportionality of criminal justice response, 38/100; on availability and access of internationally controlled substances for the relief of pain and suffering, 33 /100.

- **Median score**: The median score across all 30 countries and dimensions is just 48/100.
How was the Index developed?

### Issues/Challenges

- **Variations**: Standards and expectations from civil society experts on drug policy implementation vary from country to country.

- **Inequality is deeply seated in global drug policies**: with the top-ranking 5 countries scoring 3 times as much as the lowest-ranking 5 countries. This is in part due to the colonial legacy of the *‘war on drugs approach’*.

- **Drug policies are inherently complex**: a country’s performance in the Index can only be fully understood by looking across and within each of the dimensions.

- **Drug policies disproportionately affect people marginalised**: on the basis of their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.

- **Wide disparities**: There are wide disparities between state policies and how they are implemented on the ground.

*Source: IE*
UNESCO's Network of Creative Cities

Syllabus: GS1/ Art & Culture/ Miscellaneous

In News

- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has designated Srinagar as a part of UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN).

Highlights of the News

- **295 across the globe:** UNESCO designated 49 other cities too as a part of the creative cities network. With this, the total number of creative cities in the world has reached 295 across 90 countries.
- **Sixth Indian city:** After Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Varanasi and Jaipur, Srinagar is the sixth Indian city to achieve this distinction.
- **Allocation:** The Srinagar city has been designated the creative city in the field of Crafts and Folk Arts only second city in India in this category after Jaipur.
  - While Mumbai has been honoured in the film category, Chennai and Varanasi have been made part of UCCN for their music.
  - Hyderabad is a UCCN city in the gastronomy category.
- **Other 4 cities:** This year four Indian cities Kolkata, Gwalior, Indore and Srinagar had applied to the Ministry of Culture.

UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)

- **Creation:** It was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.
- **UNESCO designates the creative cities in seven fields:** Craft, Folk Art, Media Arts, Film Design, Gastronomy, Literature and Music.
- **Ministry of Culture:** Every year, UNESCO seeks applications for various cities across the globe for putting them under its UCCN project. The applications in India are routed through the Ministry of Culture.

Significance

- **They work together towards a common objective:** They place creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans.
- **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:** The network is a partner of UNESCO and also acts as a breeding ground of action and innovation for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- **Joining the network is a longstanding commitment:** Cities must present a realistic action plan including specific projects, initiatives or policies to be executed in the next four years to implement the objectives of the network.
Sharing their best practices and developing partnerships: By joining the UCCN, cities commit to sharing their best practices and developing partnerships involving the public and private sectors as well as civil societies.

**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**

- UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- UNESCO was founded in 1945 as the successor to the League of Nations' International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation.
- It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, Sciences and Culture.
- It is a specialised agency of the United Nations (UN).
- It has 193 member states and 11 associate members as well as partners in the non-governmental, intergovernmental, and private sector.
- UNESCO's programmes contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals defined in Agenda 2030, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015.
- UNESCO is governed by the General Conference, composed of member states and associate members, which meets biannually to set the agency's programmes and the budget.

Source: IE