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Polity & Governance

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Budget session of Parliament

In context-The **budget session of Parliament** is expected to be held under similar COVID-19 safety measures and restrictions that were in place for the **monsoon session.**

- For the first time ever, the Members of Parliament are likely to be seated in three different places:
    - The **Rajya Sabha chamber, the Lok Sabha chamber** and the **central hall**

<u>What are the Parliamentary sessions?</u>

- A session of the Indian Parliament is the **time period during which a House meets** almost **every day continuously to transact business**.
- **Article 85**- The President can summon a **session of Parliament** "at such time and **place as he thinks fit".**
    - Thus, a session can be called on the recommendation of the government, which decides its date and duration.
    - The maximum gap between two sessions of Parliament cannot be **more than six months** which means the **Parliament should meet at least twice a year.**
- There are usually **three sessions in a year**.
    - They are
        - The **Budget Session (February to May)**
        - The **Monsoon Session (July to September)**
        - The **Winter Session (November to December)**.
- A session consists of **many meetings.**
    - Each meeting has two sittings – morning sitting from 11 am to 1 pm and post-lunch sitting from 2 pm to 6 pm.
- **Importance of sessions- Lawmaking and enacting Ordinances**, **scrutiny of the government's functioning (Question Hours), enforcing accountability.**

<u>Termination of sessions:</u>

- A sitting of Parliament can be terminated by **adjournment, adjournment sine die, prorogation or dissolution.**
- The period between the **prorogation of a House** and its **reassembly in a new session** is **called 'recesses'.**

Term	Definition
Summon	An official communication issued under the orders of the President to the Members of Parliament informing them of the place, date and time of the commencement of a new session.
Adjournment	An adjournment terminates the sitting of the House which meets again at the time appointed for the next sitting. An adjournment also signifies brief break of the sitting of the House which re-assembles at the appointed time on the same day.
Adjournment sine die	Termination of a sitting of the House without any definite date being fixed for the next sitting
Prorogation	The termination of a session of Parliament by an order made by the

Have there been any such instances in the past?

- As per parliamentary records, there have only been **three instances** in the past of the winter session not being held — in **1975, 1979 and 19**

NHRC recommends special Act against manual scavenging

In News -Recently, the **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** has made a series of recommendations to the Centre to eradicate manual scavenging.

Key Highlights of the NHRC recommendations:

- The Centre should provide Rs10 lakh loan to manual scavengers' family members so that they can start some business activity.
    - The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) should monitor the sewer deaths in its reports.
- The NHRC recommended **expanding the definition of manual scavenging** in order to **cover another hazardous cleaning** or **enacting a new law for hazardous cleaning.**
- It also recommended that there **should be a penalty to prevent harassment of women** manual scavengers and **children** of manual scavengers.
- NHRC has recommended that manual scavengers may be linked to schemes under which they can immediately start earning like **MGNREGA**.
- It has further asked that the amount of compensation paid as one-time cash assistance for rehabilitation of manual scavengers may be enhanced from Rs40,000 to Rs1 lakh.

What is Manual Scavenging?

- It is defined as **"the removal of human excrement from public streets and dry latrines, cleaning septic tanks, gutters and sewers.**
    - In the past, this referred to the practice of **removing excreta from dry latrines.**
        - However, **new modern sanitation** technologies brought new forms of manual scavenging work, which include **manual and unsafe cleaning of drains**, sewer lines, septic tanks and latrine pits.

Reasons and Concerns:

- Scavenging is mostly carried out by a subgroup of the Dalits, an outcast community also known as "untouchables" within India's ancient system of caste hierarchies.
    - "Untouchables" are often impoverished, shunned by society and forbidden from touching Indians of other castes, or even their food.
- It continues in parts of India largely due to **governmental indifference and social prejudice.**

- There is a **complete absence** of planning for **maintenance of sewerage, septic tanks,** and **waste disposal systems** in the urban policies made for the city by the state and private companies.
- The number of **people killed** while **cleaning sewers and septic tank**s has increased over the last few years.
    - 2019 saw the highest number of manual scavenging deaths in the past five years.

Government Measures to tackle Manual Scavenging :

- **Legislative :**

    - **The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act 1993** -
        - It set imprisonment of up to one year and a fine of Rs 2,000 for **pushing a person to manual scavenging**.

    - **Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers(SRMS) 2017 -**
        - It is a successor scheme to NSLRS **(National Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers and their Dependents)** with the objective to **rehabilitate remaining manual scavengers** and their dependents in alternative occupations, in a time bound manner.

    - **Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013-**
        - The Act put an end to the **practice of any form of manual cleaning,** carrying, disposing or handling of human waste.
        - The act says the **National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK)** would monitor implementation of the Act and enquire into complaints regarding contravention of the provisions of the Act
            - **Amendment Bill 2020** :
            - The Bill proposes to **completely mechanise sewer cleaning,** introduce ways for **'on-site' protection** and provide compensation to **manual scavengers** in case of sewer deaths.
            - It will also ban employing people as manual scavengers without protective gear.

- **The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK)**-
  - It was constituted on 12th August 1994 as a statutory body by an Act of Parliament viz. 'National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993', for a period of three years i.e. up to 31st March 1997.
  - However, the validity of the Act was extended up to March 2002, and then up to February 2004 vide Amendment Acts passed in 1997 and 2001 respectively.

- **Supreme Court Directions:**

  - The Supreme Court issued directions in 2014 to **prevent and control** the practice and also to prosecute the offenders.
  - It also directed the government to **pay a compensation of 10 lakh rupees** to the family members of those killed in acts of **manual scavenging since 1993.**

- **Constitutional Safeguards :**

  - The right to live with dignity is implicit in the **Fundamental Rights** guaranteed in **Part III of the Constitution.**
  - **Article 46** of the Constitution, on the other hand, provides that the State shall protect the **weaker sections particularly,** the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Way Forward:

- The **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan** should make an expansion of the sewer network a top priority and come up with a scheme for **scientific maintenanc**e that will end manual cleaning of septic tanks.
- The laws **should be enforced vigorously** to **eliminate manual scavenging** in its entirety.
- There should be **trials and testing of protective gears** and provisions for better **healthcare facilities**, **insurance cover, pension plans** and regulations on preventive and social **medicine education** for the **manual scavengers.**

About the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) :

- It is an **independent statutory body** established on 12 October 1993 as per provisions of **Protection of Human Rights Act(**PHRA)**, 1993,** later amended in 2006
- It has been established in conformity with the **Paris Principles** endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations by its Regulations 48/134 in 1993.
- It plays four key roles namely protector, advisor, monitor and educator of human rights.
- **Composition** :
    - **The chairperson** should be retired **Chief Justice of India.**
    - **One Member** who is, or has been, **a Judge of the Supreme Court of India**
    - **One Member** who is, or has been, t**he Chief Justice of a High Court.**
    - **Two Members** to be appointed from among persons having knowledge of, or **practical experience in, matters relating to human rights.**

Functions-

- The functions of the Commission as stated in Section 12 of the Act and apart from an enquiry into complaints of violation of human rights or negligence in the prevention of such violation by a public servant.
    - The Commission also **studies treaties and international instruments** on human rights and makes recommendations for their effective implementation to the Government.
    - The Commission is responsible for **spreading human rights awareness** amongst the **masses and encouraging** the efforts of all stakeholders in the field of human rights literacy not only at the national level but at international level too.

16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention

In News- The Indian Prime Minister virtually inaugurated the **16th Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas** (PBD) **Convention on 9th January 2021**. It is also known as the **Non-Resident Indian Day**.

About PBD:

- PBD convention is the **flagship event of the Ministry of External Affairs** (MEA) and provides an **important platform to engage and connect with overseas Indians**.
    - India has **one of the largest diaspora populations** of nearly 30 million, residing in every corner of the world today.
- **Theme for 2021:** "Contributing to Aatmanirbhar Bharat."
    - The seeds of an Aatmanirbhar Bharat were sown by Mahatma Gandhi's call for ***Swadeshi*** and ***Self-reliance***.
    - India's vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat has **five key pillars** of the **economy, infrastructure, demography, democracy and supply chains**.
- **History:**
    - The day marks **Mahatma Gandhi's return from South Africa on 9th January 1915**.
    - Pravasi conventions have been **held since 2003**. **Since 2015**, the format has been changed and now it is **held once every two years**.
- The **inaugural session** was followed by the **two plenary sessions:**
    - The first plenary on the **Role of Diaspora in Aatmanirbhar Bharat** was addressed by External Affairs Minister and Commerce and Industry Minister.
    - The second plenary on **Facing Post Covid Challenges-Scenario in Health, Economy, Social and International Relations** was addressed by the Minister of Health and Minister of State for External Affairs.
- The **names of the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awardees for 2020-21 were also announced**.
    - These awards are conferred **to select Indian diaspora members to recognize their achievements and honour their contributions** to various fields, both in India and abroad.
    - These are the **highest honour** conferred on a **Non-resident Indian** (NRI), **Persons of Indian Origin** (PIO), or **an organisation or institution** established or run by NRIs or PIOs.
- **Significance:**
    - It is an **occasion to recall Gandhi's ideals for individual and collective life**.
        - Gandhi's emphasis on **Indianness, nonviolence, ethics, simplicity and sustainable development** remain India's guiding principles.

National Youth Parliament Festival 2021

Context -The Prime Minister will address the valedictory function of the second **National Youth Parliament Festival** on 12th January 2021

About:

- The National Youth Parliament Festival 2021 will see participants from across the country who have qualified for the state and district level competition.

About National Youth Parliament Festival :

- NYPF is based on the idea given by the Prime Minister in his Mann Ki Baat Address on 31st December 2017.
- The first NYPF was organised in 2019 with the theme "**Be the Voice of New India and Find solutions and Contribute to Policy''.**
    - The second NYPF was launched in December 2020.
- Its aim is to encourage the y**outh** between **18 and 25 years** of age **to engage with public issues**, **understand the common man's point of view,** and **form their opinions** and **express** it in an articulate manner.

About National Youth Festival :

- It is celebrated every year from 12th to 16th January to commemorate the birth anniversary of youth icon **Swami Vivekananda.**
- It is an **annual gathering** of **youth** with various activities including competitive ones.
- It is organized by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports** in collaboration with one of the **State Governments**.
- It aims to propagate the concept of **national integration, spirit of communal harmony**, **brotherhood, courage** and **adventure amongst** the youth by exhibiting their cultural prowess in a common platform.
    - This is done by organizing gatherings of youth across the country and encouraging them to take part in different activities.
    - **This year the theme for the festival is YUVAAH – Utsah Naye Bharat Ka!**

UGC paves way for IoEs to set up campuses abroad

In News- Recently, the University Grants Commission (UGC) amended its regulations, allowing **Institutions of Eminence (IoEs)** to **set up campuses abroad**.

About:

Amendments made:

- Institutions of Eminence (IoEs) can set up campuses abroad with a **maximum of three in five years** after receiving no-objection certificates from the Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs.
    - The move is in line with the government's **new National Education Policy**, which says that high performing universities should be encouraged to set up campuses abroad.
    - The functioning of the offshore campuses shall be reviewed by an **Empowered Experts Committee** "independently and/or along with the IOE".

About Institutions of Eminence (IoEs) scheme:

- The Ministry of Education launched the **IoE scheme in 2018** as per which 20 institutions were to be selected (**10 public and 10 private ones)** that would enjoy complete **academic and administrative autonomy**
- It has been launched to empower the **Higher Educational Institutions** and to help them in becoming **world-class teaching** and **research institutions.**
    - This will enhance **affordable access** to **high-quality education** for ordinary Indians.
- **Objectives-** To develop the **capacity of the students and researchers** to **compete** in the **global tertiary education marketplace** through the **acquisition** and creation of advanced knowledge in those areas.

About National Education Policy 2020:

- It replaced a **34 years old National Policy on Education** which was framed in 1986.
- The aim of the policy is to create an education system that contributes directly to transforming the country, providing high-quality education to all, and making India a global knowledge superpower.

- It aims for an inclusive & equitable **Education System by 2030** and to achieve 100 per cent youth and adult literacy in India.
- It aims to increase the public investment in the Education sector to reach **6% of GDP at the earliest.**

Evolution of Education Policy:

- University Education Commission (1948-49)
- Secondary Education Commission (1952-53)
- Education Commission (1964-66) under Dr D. S. Kothari
- National Policy on Education, 1968
- 42nd Constitutional Amendment, 1976- Education in Concurrent List
- National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986

Constitutional Provisions:

- **Article 45 and Article 39 (f)** of **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)**, has a provision for state-funded as well as equitable and accessible education. Education is in the concurrent list.
- The **86th Amendment in 2002** made education an enforceable right under Article **21-A.**
- **Right To Education (RTE) Act, 2009** aims to **provide primary education** to all children **aged 6 to 14 years** and enforces education as a Fundamental Right.
    - It mandates 25% reservation for disadvantaged sections of the society where disadvantaged groups.

Central Sector Scheme for Industrial Development of Jammu & Kashmir

In News- Recently, the **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs** (CCEA) has approved a **new industrial development scheme for Jammu and Kashmir** (J&K) with a total **outlay of Rs. 28,400 crore** for the **promotion of industry**, especially in far-flung areas.

About the Scheme:

- The **Central Sector scheme** will remain in **force from the date of its notification till 2037**.

- **Aim:**
    - To take industrial development in J&K to the block level.
    - To encourage new investment, substantial expansion and also nurture the existing industries in the Union Territory.
    - To generate employment leading to the socio-economic development of the area.
- **Incentives and Areas Covered:**
    - **Capital Intensive Incentives:**
        - It will provide for **capital investment incentive at the rate of 30% in Zone-A** and **50% in Zone-B** on the investment made in **plant and machinery** (in manufacturing), or construction of a building and other **durable physical assets** (in the service sector).
            - **Zone-B** includes **far-off areas** and will receive higher incentives so as to **ensure equal opportunities for growth**.
        - The smaller units with an **investment up to Rs. 50 crore** will be eligible for the incentive and the maximum incentive available in **Zone-A areas is Rs. 5 crore** and in **Zone-B areas Rs. 7.5 crore**.
    - **Capital Interest Subvention:**
        - The scheme provides for **6% capital interest subvention** for a maximum of **seven years on loans up to Rs. 500 crore** for investment in plant and machinery (in manufacturing), or construction in building and all other durable physical assets (in the service sector) for 10 years.
    - **Working Capital Incentive:**
        - All existing units will be able to avail working capital interest incentive at the annual rate of 5 per cent for five years and the maximum limit of incentive has been set at ₹1 crore.
    - **GST-linked Incentives:**
        - Financial incentive will be based on **Gross GST to ensure less compliance burden without compromising on transparency**.
            - This will **incentivise output up to 300%** of the eligible value of actual investment made in the plant and machinery (in manufacturing), or construction in building and all other durable physical assets (in the service sector).

- **Significance:**
    - It will **provide employment** to 4.5 lakh people besides leading to the **equitable, balanced and sustainable socio-economic development** of the region.
    - It will give a **fresh thrust to industry and service-led development** with an emphasis on **job creation and skill development** by attracting new investment and nurturing the existing ones.

Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)

In News- Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) celebrates its **foundation day on 6th January 2021.**

About the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS):

- It is the National Standard Body of India working under the **aegis of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution**, Government of India.
- It was established by the **Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 1986** which came into effect on 23 December 1986.
- The Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016 made the **BIS a National Standards Body**. The BIS Act has been implemented since 12 October 2017.
- BIS is responsible for the **harmonious development of the activities of standardization**, marking and quality certification of goods and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

India Approves Two COVID-19 Vaccines

In News: Recently, the **Drugs Controller General of India** (DCGI) has approved **Covishield and Covaxin vaccines for restricted use against Covid-19** in the country.

Key Points:

- **Background:**
    - The **Serum Institute of India** (SII) and **Bharat Biotech** had filed applications for marketing authorisation.
        - The SII had **submitted safety, immunogenicity and efficacy data** from its **ongoing Phase 2/3 clinical trials**.

        - Bharat Biotech submitted safety and immunogenicity data from **preclinical studies on animals** as well as **results from Phase 1/2 human trials**.
            - The **immunogenicity** of a vaccine is its ability to prompt an immune response, while the **efficacy**, in this case, is a measure of its ability to bring down the number of symptomatic Covid-19 cases.
    - A **Subject Expert Committee** (SEC) looking into the applications, recommended that the SII should be granted restricted **emergency use authorisation** (EUA), subject to multiple regulatory conditionalities.
        - Vaccines and medicines, and even diagnostic tests and medical devices, **require the approval of a regulatory authority** before they can be administered.
        - In India, the regulatory authority is the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation** (CDSCO).
    - After adequate examination, the **CDSCO accepted the recommendations and approved** the restricted use.
- **Recommendations by DCGI:**
    - In the case of **Covaxin, informed consent** would have to be sought from those receiving the vaccine, which will be administered according to a protocol, yet to be finalised.
    - **Clinical trials** regarding both the drugs **would have to continue** and the firms are required to **submit safety data every 15 days** for the first two months and monthly thereafter.
    - The emergency use approval for Covaxin was "**differently conditional**" from Covishield as it is still in clinical trial mode.
    - All **Covaxin recipients are to be tracked and monitored** as if they're in trial.
- **Significance:**
    - Both vaccines have been **Made in India** and are a giant leap for innovation and novel product development in India.
    - This shows the eagerness of the Indian scientific community to fulfil the dream of an **Aatmanirbhar Bharat**.
- **Concerns:**
    - Few experts have raised concerns over the grant of approval to Covaxin, **without its efficacy trials being over**.

Covishield:

- Covishield is a version of the vaccine developed by the **University of Oxford** in collaboration with **Swedish-British drugmaker AstraZeneca** which is being **manufactured in India by the SII**.

- It belongs to a category called **adenovirus vector** (**non-replicating viral vector**) **vaccines** which tries to build the body's immunity against this spike protein of the Covid-19 virus.
- The **aim is to create antibodies to fight this spiked surface** so that the virus does not even have the chance to penetrate the cells.

Covaxin:

- It is being developed by Hyderabad-based biotechnology firm **Bharat Biotech** in collaboration with the **Indian Council of Medical Research** (ICMR) and the **National Institute of Virology** (NIV), Pune.
- It is the **first indigenous Covid-19 vaccine** to receive approval.
- It is based on **an inactivated virus platform**, one of the **oldest known methods to develop an inoculation**.
    - This technique has been used historically for several other diseases including **Hepatitis A, Influenza, Polio and Rabies**.
- It is more likely to **work against newer variants of the virus**, including the UK variant as it **contains immunogens** (epitopes) **from other genes in addition to those from Spike protein**.
- **No seroconversion** has been observed in those who were given Covaxin.
    - Seroconversion is the time period during which a **specific antibody develops and becomes detectable** in the blood. After seroconversion has occurred, the antibodies can be detected in blood tests for the disease.

Emergency Use Authorisation:

- For vaccines and medicines, **approval is granted after an assessment of their safety and effectiveness**, based on data from trials and **approval** from the regulator is **required at every stage** of these trials.
- This is a long process, **designed to ensure that medicine or vaccine is absolutely safe and effective**.
    - The **fastest approval** for any vaccine until now, the **mumps vaccine** in the **1960s**, took about four-and-a-half years after it was developed.
- In **emergency situations**, like the current one, regulatory authorities around the world have **developed mechanisms to grant interim approvals if there is sufficient evidence** to suggest a medical product is safe and effective.
- Final approval is **granted only after completion of the trials and analysis of full data** and until then, **EUA allows the medicine or the vaccine to be used on the public**.

School Bag Policy 2020

In News- Recently, the Directorate of Education issued a circular asking school to follow the new **'School Bag Policy, 2020'**

Directions mentioned in the circular :

- Schoolteachers should **inform the students** in **advance** about the books and notebooks to be **brought to schoo**l on a **particular day and frequently** check their bags to ensure that they are not carrying unnecessary material.
- It is the duty and the responsibility of the school management to **provide quality potable water in sufficient quantities** to all the students in the school so that they do not need to carry water bottles from their homes.

About School Bag Policy 2020 :

- It was released by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).
- It lays down the guidelines on **homework and weight of school bags for classes I to XII.**
    - **Provisions:**
        - As per the new policy, school bags should not be more than **10% of the bodyweight of students** across **classes I to X** and there should be no bags in **pre-primary students.**
        - It recommends no homework up to class II and a maximum of two hours per week for classes III to V, one hour a day for classes VI to VIII and two hours a day for classes IX and above.
        - The policy will also require schools to i**ntroduce infrastructural changes** as students will not be able to carry many books daily.
            - The schools need to provide lockers right from preschool to senior secondary to enable children to leave books in school and carry home only what is required.

Table 2: Class wise range of average body weight of children

S.No.	Class	Average Body Weight Range (in Kg)	Bag Weight Range (Recommended)
1.	Pre-primary	10-16	No bag
2.	Class I	16-22	1.6-2.2
3.	Class II	16-22	1.6-2.2
4.	Class III	17-25	1-7-2.5
5.	Class IV	17-25	1-7-2.5
6.	Class V	17-25	1-7-2.5
7.	Class VI	20-30	2-3
8.	Class VII	20-30	2-3
9.	Class VIII	25-40	2.5-4
10.	Class IX	25-45	2.5-4.5
11.	Class X	25-45	2.5-4.5

Concerns associated with Heavy school bags :

- Heavy school bags are a **serious threat to the health** and **well-being of students.**
- It has severe/adverse **physical effects** on **growing children** which can cause damage to their **vertebral column** and knees

About NCERT :

- The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is an autonomous organisation **under the Ministry of Education (MoE) .**
- It was set up in 1961 to assist and **advise the Central** and **State Governments** on policies and programmes for qualitative improvement in school education.
- It is an implementation agency for **bilateral cultural exchange programmes with other countries** in the field of school education.
- The major objectives
    - To undertake, p**romote and coordinate research** in areas related to **school education**
    - To prepare and publish **model textbooks**, **supplementary material, newsletters, journals** and **develop educational kits**, multimedia digital materials, etc.
    - To collaborate and network with **state educational departments, universities**, **NGOs and other educational institutions**.

Change rules on confiscation of animals: SC to Centre

In News- Recently, The Supreme Court asked the Centre to either withdraw or amend rules notified in 2017.

About:

- The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Care and Maintenance of Case Property Animals) Rules, 2017 framed under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
    - The 2017 rules allow a magistrate to **forfeit the cattle of an owner facing** trial under the Act and the animals are later sent to i**nfirmaries, gaushalas' and pinjrapole'** and offered for adoption

Supreme Court Ruling in this context :

- The Supreme Court observed while hearing a plea by the **Buffalo Traders Welfare Association challenging** the constitutional validity of the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Care and Maintenance of Case Property Animals) Rules, 2017 and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Markets) Rules, 2017.**
- 2017 Rules contrary to Section 29 of the Act which allows such confiscation only in case of conviction.
    - **Section 29** of the Act says that a **person tried** for an offence under the Act can be deprived of the ownership of the animal only upon conviction.

About the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960:

- It prohibits any person from **inflicting, causing, unnecessary** cruelty and suffering to animals.
- Provides the guidelines relating to **experimentation** on animals for **scientific purposes**.
- The Act **enshrines** the provisions relating to the **exhibition** of the **performing animals**, and **offences committed** against the performing animals.
- The **Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI)** was established in 1962 under **Section 4 of the Act.**

Supreme Court approves Central Vista Project

In News- Recently, the **Supreme Court** (SC), in a majority judgment has given go-ahead to the **Central Vista Redevelopment Project**.

Central Vista Redevelopment Project:

- The project aims for an **integrated administration block and synergised functioning** of ministries presently spread across 47 buildings in the region, and in particular, Central Secretariat block.
- It seeks to build **a new parliament** and **other central government offices** covering a 3 km. stretch from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate in **Lutyens' Delhi**.
    - The **Parliament House**, the **Rashtrapati Bhavan** and the **secretariat** that includes both north and south block were designed by **Edwin Lutyens** and **Herbert Baker**.
    - The Centre proposed to redevelop the region by constructing a new Parliament house, a new residential complex, which would house the Prime Minister and the Vice President besides several new office buildings including the North and South Block buildings. It will cover a 3-km stretch from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate in Lutyens' Delhi.
- **New Parliament:**
    - It will be **three times bigger than the existing 93-year-old heritage building.**
    - It is likely to have a **triangular shape** with a built-up area of 65,000 sq.m. and is **scheduled to be completed in 2022**, in time for the **75th Independence Day celebrations** and the **Global G-20 summit.**

Toycathon 2021

In News -Recently, the Union Education Minister and the Union Minister for Textiles and Women & Child Development jointly launched the Toycathon 2021.

About Toycathon 2021:

- It is a special kind of **hackathon** where **students and teachers** from **schools** and **colleges, design experts, toy experts** and **start-ups** will **crowdsource** ideas for **developing toys and games**
    - It will be based on **Indian culture, ethos, folklores, heroes and value systems.**
- It is an **inter-ministerial initiative** organized by:
    - The Ministry of Education's Innovation Cell with support from All India Council for Technical Education.
    - The Ministry of Women and Child Development.
    - The Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
    - The Ministry of MSME.
    - The Ministry of Textiles and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- **Area of Focus-** It will majorly focus on conceptualizing **new and innovative toys** using local material which is **economical, affordable, safe** and **environment friendly.**

Why is it needed?

- Currently, India's toy market stands at around **1.5 Billion USD,** which primarily is dominated by **imported toys, mainly 70-80% from China.**
    - The majority of these toys do not represent **Indian heritage, civilization and value systems.**
- The launch of Toycathon, is an effort to **create an ecosystem** for the **domestic toy industry** and the l**ocal manufacturers**.
    - It will promote indigenous toy industry and reduce imports.

SC on Vertical and Horizontal Reservations

In News- Recently, the **Supreme Court** (SC) has clarified the **position of law on the interplay of vertical and horizontal reservations**, after the case of **Saurav Yadav versus State of Uttar Pradesh 2020**.

Types of Reservations:

- **Vertical Reservation:**
    - Reservation for **Scheduled Castes** (SCs), **Scheduled Tribes** (STs), and **Other Backward Classes** (OBCs) is referred to as vertical reservation.
    - It **applies separately** for each of the groups specified under the law.
- **Horizontal Reservation:**
    - It refers to the **equal opportunity provided to other categories of beneficiaries** such as women, veterans, the transgender community, and individuals with disabilities, **cutting through the vertical categories**.
- **Application:**
    - The **horizontal quota is applied separately to each vertical category**, and not across the board.
        - For example, if women have 50% horizontal quota, then half of the selected candidates will have to necessarily be women in each vertical quota category, which means half of all selected SC candidates will have to be women, half of the unreserved or general category will have to be women, and so on.

Saurav Yadav versus State of Uttar Pradesh 2020:

- The case **highlighted the issues arising from the way different classes of reservation are applied in various selection processes**.
- The question before the court was that if the **underlying criterion for making selections** is "**merit**".
- The interlocking of the types of reservation **raises questions on how certain groups are to be identified**.
    - For example, would an SC woman be put in the category of women or SC? Since quotas are fixed in percentages, what percentage of quota would be attributed to each?
- The **state government's policy** was to **restrict and contain reserved category candidates to their categories**, even when they had secured higher grades.

SC's Decision:

- The **court ruled against the Uttar Pradesh government**, holding that if a person belonging to an intersection of the vertical-horizontal reserved category had secured scores high enough to qualify without the vertical reservation, the person would be counted as qualifying without the vertical

reservation, and **cannot be excluded from the horizontal quota in the general category**.

- A similar question had **arisen in the case of vertical reservations** in the past, and the law had been settled similarly.
    - If a person in the SC category secures a higher score than the cut-off for the general category, the person would be **counted as having qualified under the general category instead of the SC quota**.
- **Court's Logic:**
    - **If both vertical and horizontal quotas are applied together**, a high-scoring candidate who would otherwise qualify without one of the two reservations is knocked off the list and the **overall selection would have candidates with lower scores**.
    - On the other hand, **if a high-scoring candidate is allowed to drop one category**, the overall selection would reflect more high-scoring candidates. In other words, the "**meritorious**" **candidates would be selected**.
    - The ruling becomes important with respect to the **debate on** "**merit versus reservation**", where **reservation is sometimes projected as being anti-merit**.
- On the state **government's view of** restricting reserved category candidates, it held that this approach is as good as ensuring that the general category was 'reserved' for upper castes.

Constitutional Provisions Related to Reservation:

- The **Preamble** of the Indian Constitution **aims at securing social, economic and political reservation** for weaker sections of the society as an instrument of social justice.
- **Article 14** incorporates within itself '**equal protection** of the laws' besides 'equality before law'. This means that a state must treat all individuals equally in similar conditions and circumstances.
- **Article 15(4)** enunciates that the State can **make any special provisions for the advancement of any** Socially or Educationally Backward Classes of citizens (SEBCs) or for SCs/STs.
- **Article 15(5)** empowers the state to make any special provision, by law, in relation to the **admission to educational institutions** for the advancement of any SEBCs or for any SCs/STs.
- **Article 16(4**) empowers the State to make special provision for the **reservation of appointments or posts** in favour of any backward class of citizens which in the opinion of the State are not adequately represented in the services under the State.
- **Article 46** directs the State **to promote with special care** the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the SCs/STs.

Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog to conduct an exam on Cow Science

In News- The **Rashtriya Kamadhenu Aayog** recently announced that it is to conduct a National-level **"Gau-Vigyan" (Cow Science) online exam.**

- The **Rashtriya Kamadhenu Aayog** was constituted to organize animal husbandry in lines of modern and scientific approaches.

About:

- The exam has been initiated for **raising mass awareness about Indigenous cows** among young students and all citizens.
- It will also help make study materials about **cow science available**.
- It will be conducted in **four categories, primary, secondary, college and general public levels**.
- The exam will be in **Hindi, English and 12 regional languages.**
- There will be no fee for taking the exam.
- It functions as an integral part of the **Rashtriya Gokul Mission.**

Rashtriya Gokul Mission:

- It was initiated in 2014 under the National Programme for Bovine Breeding and Dairy Development to conserve and develop indigenous breeds to increase milk productivity.

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