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WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS DECEMBER 2022 SECOND WEEK

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COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES ACT

1. Context

The Bill to amend the Multi-State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) Act, 2002, was introduced in the Lok Sabha on December 7.

Opposition parliamentarians alleged that Bill's provisions encroached upon the rights of state governments, demanding that it be referred to a Standing Committee.

2. Multi-State Cooperatives

- According to the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), cooperatives are people-centred enterprises jointly owned and democratically controlled by and for their members to realise common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations.
- Multi-state cooperatives are societies with operations in more than one state, for instance, a farmer-producers organisation procures grains from farmers from multiple states.
- The board of directors are from all the States in these collectives and operates in and controls all the finances and administration.
- There are close to 1, 500 MSCSs registered in India with the highest number being in Maharashtra.

3. Concerns

- The independent and autonomous character of cooperative societies was to be crucial in their functioning.
- The inclusion of cooperatives in the planning process as development instruments made the sector an avenue for dispensing patronage to the supporters of ruling political parties.
- Moreover, the state government's policy to contribute to the share capital of the cooperatives enabled governments, **"in the name of public interest"** to directly intervene in the working of legally autonomous cooperatives.

Notably, the potency of cooperatives as an apparatus of political control can be seen in States such as Maharashtra, Kerala, Gujarat, parts of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal.

- Besides, MSCSs were formed to ease the operation of collectives throughout the country.
- MSCSs are facing issues regarding trust, which is the very basis of cooperation.
- This has brought MSCSs under multiple controls from the Centre.
- Monitoring is one of the important institutional functions in a collective organisation but if monitored from much above, it takes a top-down approach as opposed to a grassroots one.

In 1991, the Choudhary Brahm Perkash Committee of the planning commission made far-reaching recommendations to reorganise multi-state cooperatives but researchers point out how the Act has not been modified as per the report.

4. The Bill seeks to change

- To plug the "**loopholes**" in the MSCS Act, the Centre introduced a Bill seeking to amend the 2002 law for more "**transparency**" and "**ease of doing business**".
- The amendments have been introduced to improve governance, reform the electoral process, strengthen monitoring mechanisms and enhance transparency and accountability.
- The Bill also seeks to improve the composition of the board and ensure financial discipline, besides enabling the raising of funds in multi-State cooperative societies.

5. Central Co-operative Election Authority

- The Bill creates a Central Co-operative Election Authority to supervise the electrical functions of the MSCSs.
- The Authority will have a chairperson, vice-chairperson and up to three members appointed by the Centre.
- Notably, the constitutional domain of States in regulating cooperative societies was upheld by the Supreme Court last year when it struck down a part of the 97th Constitution Amendment.

It also envisages the creation of a Co-operative Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Development Fund for the revival of sick multi-State co-operative societies.

This fund shall be financed by existing profitable multi-State co-operative societies which will have to deposit either ₹1 crore or 1 per cent of the net profit into the Fund.

- To make the governance of multi-State cooperative societies more democratic, the Bill has provisions for appointing a Cooperative Information Officer and a Cooperative Ombudsmen.

- To promote equity and facilitate inclusiveness, provisions relating to the representation of women and Scheduled Caste/Tribe members on the boards of the multi-State cooperative societies have also been included

GS II: Governance

PM KUSUM

1. About

PM-KUSUM Scheme was launched in 2019, PM-KUSUM aims to help farmers access reliable daytime solar power for irrigation, reduce power subsidies, and decarbonize agriculture.

PM-KUSUM provides farmers with incentives to install solar power pumps and plants in their fields.

2. Aim

- PM-KUSUM Scheme is targeted to achieve 10000 MW capacity through the installation of grid-connected solar power plants each of capacity up to 2 MW under Component A and solarisation of 35 lakh agriculture pumps under Component-B and Component-C.
- PM-KUSUM is a demand-driven scheme and capacities are allocated based on demand received from the states.

Scheme aim to increase the country's solar water pumps manufacturing capacity:

1. The target of installation or solarisation of 35 lakh pumps through central financial support under the Scheme provides visibility of demand in the coming years.
2. Condition of the domestic content requirement for participation in Component-B and Component-C.
3. Direct participation of manufacturers of solar pumps/ solar photovoltaic modules/ solar pump controllers either as sole bidder or member of a Joint Venture, in bidding under Component-B and Component-C.

3. Implementing Agency

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is the implementing Agency.

Two major schemes for decentralized solar power production.

1. PM-KUSUM scheme targeted to achieve 10000 MW capacity through the installation of grid-connected solar power plants each of capacity up to 2 MW under Component A and solarisation of 35 lakh agriculture pumps under Component- B and Component- C; and
2. Rooftop Solar Programme Phase II is targeted to achieve 40 GW rooftop solar capacity in the country. The timeline of both the schemes has been extended till 31.3.2026

4. Features

- The implementation agencies in the States/ UTs have to provide priority to the small and marginal farmers while selecting the beneficiaries.
- Separate budgetary allocations are made under the Scheme for the beneficiaries belonging to Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes and also those living in the North-Eastern States.
- Therefore, benefits under the Scheme are already available to the economically backward groups/areas of the country.
- The barren lands of the farmers will be used to install about 10000 MW of solar pumps.
- Additional electricity generated from these pumps can be sold to the state electricity distribution companies called DISCOMs.
- The DISCOMs will be able to get subsidies to buy this electricity.
- The farmers will be able to get a subsidy of 60% for buying solar pumps. This amount will be transferred as a direct benefit transfer to their respective bank accounts.
- The subsidy amount will be shared by the central and state governments.
- 30 % of the remaining amount will be given as a loan to the farmers.
- Thus, only 10% of the amount will have to be borne by the farmers.

5. Challenges

The effective and efficient roll-out of the PM-KUSUM Scheme was hindered by the following factors

1. Pandemic-induced disruptions,
2. Limited buy-in from States, and
3. Implementation challenges

Unmet targets- Off-grid pumps have been the most popular, but the nearly 2, 80,000 systems deployed fall far short of the scheme's target of two million by 2022.

6. Barriers

Barriers to adoption include limited awareness about solar pumps and farmers' inability to pay their upfront contribution.

1. Availability of low-cost financing for farmers and
2. The state share of funds
3. Their economic viability in the presence of high farm subsidies and
4. Farmers' potential unwillingness to feed in surplus power when selling water or irrigating extra land is a more attractive prospect.

7. Significance

- The scheme will open a stable and continuous source of income to rural landowners for 25 years by utilization of their dry or uncultivable land.
- It would also help increase the production of green energy and generate employment in rural areas and would later provide for the solarisation of tube wells and lift irrigation projects of the government sector.
- The scheme would ensure that sufficient local solar or other renewable energy-based power is available for feeding rural load centres and agriculture pump-set loads, which require power mostly during the daytime.
- As these power plants will be located closer to the agriculture loads or electrical substations in a decentralized manner, it will result in reduced Transmission losses for STUs and DISCOMs.
- Moreover, the scheme will also help the DISCOMs to achieve the RPO target.
- The solar pumps will save the expenditure incurred on diesel for running diesel pumps and provide the farmers with a reliable source of irrigation solar pumps.
- The scheme will help in preventing harmful pollution formed from running diesel pumps.

GS I: Indian Society

MAHUA

1. Introduction

- Many Adivasi communities like Munda, Gond, Oraon, Baiga, Ho & Santhal depend on Mahua even before they are born.
- These people live by the tropical deciduous forests of India, spreading from the drier parts of Gujarat in the west to the Chotanagpur Plateau in the east.

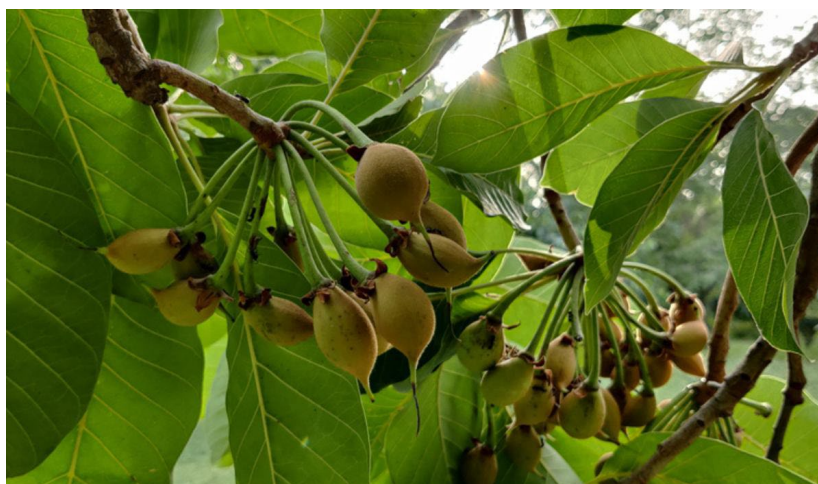
2. Mahua-Omnipresent

- From birth, through marriage, till funeral, mahua is intertwined with cultural life.
- In daily life, mahua is omnipresent from food to fodder, medicine to alcohol.
- Would-be mothers of the tribal people are fed a simple chutney made of mahua flowers which are believed to be healthy.
- Mahua is a part of wedding rituals & mahua liquor is served at the ceremony.

Mahua (*Madhuca Indica*), the seed does not spread its roots in the soil but also blooms within the Adivasi. For them, **"Mahua is not a tree, it's our way of life"**.

3. Uses

- Like Mahua flowers, mahua seeds are non-timber forest products.
- A major portion of the seeds collected by the tribals is solid in the one or two oil presses of nearby towns & the rest is for household consumption.
- The oil from the seed is used to light lamps or in cooking.
- It is used for treating skin disease, rheumatism, bilious fever, and constipation among other things.
- Seeds & flowers are galactagogues which boost breast milk production & are good for new mothers.
- After oil extraction, the leftover seed cake is utilised as an insecticide, cattle feed or manure.



4. Backed by Science

- The seeds yield 34-37% of oil.
- Locals use the oil as an adulterant of 'Ghee' after some rudimentary processing.
- World Health Organization (WHO) don't consider this as edible in its raw form, as it contains aflatoxin, a toxic component.

- The processing of the oil can get rid of the aflatoxin & makes it edible as per safety standards.
- More than oil, the cocoa butter extender prepared from mahua seed oil is a prized product, which is used to make chocolate / other confectionaries.
- This oil is a potent biodiesel. The researchers have developed & tested the Mahua Oil Biodiesel (MOB) with promising results.
- These products offer a wonderful scope that can alter the socio-economic conditions of the tribal communities.
- The fuel properties adhere to international quality standards.
- MOB or blends of MOB with diesel is a good competitor for diesel, with reliable performance & lower emissions.
- The flour prepared with the leftovers is suitable for making bakery products.
- Due to the presence of foaming agents, it is used for preparing laundry soaps.
- A few studies have identified the chemical components of the seeds & developed bio-insecticides & bio-pesticides.

5. Boon / Ban

- India has a huge opportunity to materialise the potential of mahua seeds, but there remain some serious caveats.

The price of MOB and its blends could vary between Rs. 48 - Rs.60 per litre, whereas the price of conventional diesel was around Rs.65 per litre in 2017. It's unclear what price for mahua seeds was considered and how that could have impacted the calculation. Five years later, when diesel price is now hovering around Rs.100 per litre and India is mulling over alternatives, the importance of mahua biodiesel becomes more relevant.

- For mahua oil or butter, research hasn't shown us any direction, but the existing market for them has. There exists a non-tribal market for mahua oil and butter.
- Anyone can buy it from leading E-Commerce sites, where mahua oil price varies from Rs.65 - Rs.1700 per litre, presumably depending on its usefulness and quality, and mahua butter is available at Rs.125 per 100 grams.
- If this non-tribal market base can be expanded and popularised, then it can provide better economic opportunities to the Adivasis. Considering they will receive a fair share of the profit, it can strengthen and sustain their traditional livelihoods.

6. Excess

- Mahua is a slow-growing tree and its population is declining in multiple pockets throughout its range.

- It's been speculated that seed harvesting practices by Adivasi communities may be the reason for this decline.
- The ripe mahua fruits fall from the trees and tribals collect these seeds from the ground below the canopy where the chances of seed germination and seedling survival are negligible.

Due to the high concentration of seeds here, there are susceptible to fungal attack, grazing and other threats, and face high mortality. This phenomenon is called the seed shadow effect.

- If not collected, the seeds are going to rot & not add to the population.
- Since the oil content of mature seeds is higher, fruits were not plucked.
- The seed harvesting practice is very much non-invasive for the trees & highly sustainable.

7. Epilogue

- The composite picture is bright & not gloomy. It can be concluded that at least seed harvest is not detrimental to the mahua population.
- Many seeds are left untouched & not grazed.
- There lies an opportunity to encash the non-tribal market for mahua seed-derived products, without exerting any impact on trees.
- Eliminating the exploitation & realising the outside market presents a win-win opportunity for the tribals & trees will go a long way.
- Mahua is an immensely important tree species for the functioning of the dry forest ecosystem & for the Adivasis.
- Since mahua trees are maintained as an agroforestry practice, it helps to maintain the local biodiversity.

GS II: Governance

NATIONAL PARTY

1. Context

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was leading in 5 seats in Gujarat after more than seven hours of counting votes on December 8, but its vote share was close to 13%, which meant it is on track to be recognized as a national party by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

2. National Party

- The name suggests that a national party would have a presence 'nationally', as opposed to a regional party whose presence is restricted to only a particular state or region.
- National parties are usually India's bigger parties, such as the Congress and BJP. However, some smaller parties, like the communist parties, are also recognized as national parties. A certain stature is sometimes associated with being a national party, but this does not necessarily translate into having a lot of national political clout.
- Some parties, despite being dominant in a major state-such as the DMK in Tamil Nadu, BJD in Odisha, YSRCP in Andhra Pradesh, RJD in Bihar, and TRS in Telengana-and having a major say in national affairs, remain regional parties.

3. How is a national Party Defined?

The ECI has laid down the technical criterion for a party to be recognized as a national party. A party may gain or lose national party status from time to time, depending on the fulfillment of these laid-down conditions.

As per the ECI's Political Parties and Election symbols, 2019 handbook, a political party would be considered a national party if:

- It is recognized in four or more states: or
- If its candidates polled at least 6% of total valid votes in any four or more states in the last Lok Sabha or Assembly elections and have at least four MPs in the last Lok Sabha polls: or
- If it has won at least 2% of the total seats in the Lok Sabha from not less than three states.

3.1 To be recognized as a state party, a party needs:

- At least 6% vote-share in the last Assembly election and have at least 2 MLA's; or have 6% vote-share in the last Lok sabha elections from that state and at least one MP from that state; or
- at least 3% of the total number of seats or three seats, whichever is more, in the last assembly elections; or
- at least one MP for every 25 members or any fraction allotted to the state in the Lok Sabha; or
- Have at least 8 % of the total valid votes in the last Assembly election or Lok Sabha election from the state.

4. Other National Parties

The ECI has recognized eight parties as national parties- the BJP, Congress, Trinamool Congress, CPI(M), CPI, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Bahujan samaj party (BSP), and Conrad Sangma's National People's Party (NPP), which was recognized in 2019. Once the official results of the Gujarat elections are announced, AAP will become the ninth party to be recognized as a national party.

5. When can a party lose its tag?

- Once recognized as a national or state party, a political party retains that status irrespective of its performance in the next elections.
- It loses the given status only if it fails to fulfill any of the conditions for two successive Assembly and two successive Lok Sabha elections.

GS II: International relations

GLOBAL SOUTH

1. Context

India assumed the presidency of the G20 group of countries for 2022 to 2023 External affairs minister said that the country would be the voice of the Global South. That is otherwise underrepresented in such forums. The term Global South since been used multiple times

2. Classification of the countries-

Global North

It refers loosely to countries like the US, Canada, Russia, and Australia.

Global South

While the “Global South “includes countries in Asia, Africa, and South America.

Western world

West stands for countries with greater levels of economic development and prosperity.

First world

The bloc of democratic-industrialized countries within the American sphere of influence, the "First World," also known as The West.

Second world

The Eastern bloc of the communist-socialist states, where the political and economic power should come from the up-to-now oppressed peasants and workers.

Third world

The remaining three-quarters of the world population, countries that did not belong to either bloc, were considered "Third World."

- However, with the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, the First World, Third world classification was no longer accurate. The East, West binary was considered too broad, lumping together diverse countries.
- Global North and Global South apart are that they are arguably more accurate in grouping measuring similarly in terms of wealth, indicators of education, healthcare, etc.
- South countries are that most have a history of colonization, largely at the hands of European powers.
- Global south also refers to the regions historically excluded from prominent international organizations, such as from permanent membership of the United Nations

3. Defining Global South

- The Global South as a critical concept has three primary definitions. First, it has traditionally been used within intergovernmental development organizations — primarily those that originated in the Non-Aligned Movement — to refer to economically disadvantaged nation-states and as a post-cold war alternative to "Third World." However, in recent years and within a variety of fields, the Global South is employed in a post-national sense to address spaces and people negatively impacted by contemporary capitalist globalization.
- In this second definition, the Global South captures a deterritorialized geography of capitalism's externalities and means to account for subjugated peoples within the borders of wealthier countries, such that there are economic Souths in the geographic North and Norths in the geographic South. While this usage relies on a long tradition of analysis of the North's geographic Souths — wherein the South represents an internal periphery and subaltern relational position — the epithet “global” is used to unhinge the South from a one-to-one relation to geography.
- It is through this deterritorial conceptualization that a third meaning is attributed to the Global South which refers to the resistant imaginary of a transnational political subject

that results from a shared experience of subjugation under contemporary global capitalism.

4. Criticism, Concerns

- There is also the question of whether the South, when acting as a group, simply aims to replace the North and the positions it occupies, continuing a cycle in which a few countries accumulate crucial resources.
- Also in the rise of Asia in terms of economic growth and global importance, the continued neglect of Africa, part of the “south” has been questioned.

GS II: International relations

OIL PRICE CAP

1. Context

Oil prices surged after a group of seven G7, European Union, and Australian proposals imposing a price cap on Russian seaborne oil came into effect.

2. How Is Price Cap Intended To Work

The cap is aimed at preventing firms in signatory nations from extending shipping, insurance, brokering, and other services to Russian crude shipments sold for more than 60 \$ per barrel. The cap applies to shipments that are loaded onto vessels, not to shipments in transit.

3. Problem

- It took six months for the EU and US to agree underlies the complexity of the proposal and disagreement within the western alliance.
- If Russian oil does not make its way into the global market, the crude price could potentially spike, impacting consumers in the EU, the US, and the rest of the world.

4. Cap Effect

- Russian oil is already trading at a discounted price of about \$68 per barrel compared to \$ 85 for Brent. Also, \$60 is way more than the cost of production of Russia's main crude variants, which is \$20-44per barrel .with this monetary cushion even with a \$60 cap, Moscow will continue to have a commercial reason that is willing to buy.EU leaders have been saying that the cap may be lowered over time.

- The fact remains it took nearly six months for the west to agree on \$60 and in the end, it barely makes a dent in the oil profit that Russia is using to sustain the war with Ukraine.
- Even at \$ 45, Moscow would have the incentive to keep selling crude simply to avoid having to cap wells that can be tough to restart from the point of view of economic viability.

5. Logistics Issues

- The shipping industry can misrepresent or obscure the origin of its cargo
- Exemptions for certain pieces of the Russian production complex –including the Sakhalin -2 project that was heavily funded by Japan-suggest there will be "uncapped" Russian barrels still floating into the market.
- The price cap does not fully address blends that include Russian crudes –so there may be additional opportunities to divert Russian barrels “through refined or partially refined products.
- In practice, the price cap will work only if service providers ask their clients for proof that they have bought Russia –linked crude at a complaint price.

6. Russia Energy Revenue Position

- Russia's export revenues have fallen since the second quarter of 2022, due to an easing of global oil prices and lower gas sales after it decided to cut flows to Europe through the sabotaged Nord Stream pipeline.
- Even then, Moscow’s current account surplus this year is projected to be more than \$250 billion, second only to China’s.
- At current crude prices, the \$ 60 price cap does not impact Russia's earnings for now.

7. India’s Position

- India has decided to not just continue but double its trade with Russia in the near foreseeable future.
- For now, New Delhi has been non-committal on any pricing cap arrangement.

GS II: International relations

UNSC

1. Why in news?

December of 2022 began with India assuming the presidency of two global bodies — **G20 on the first day of the month** and **UNSC on the second**.

2. What is UNSC

- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was established by the UN Charter in 1945. It is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations.
- The other 5 organs of the United Nations are the General Assembly (UNGA), the Trusteeship Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat. The council is headquartered at New York.
- The council has 15 members: the five permanent members and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms. The five permanent members are the United States, the Russian Federation, France, China and the United Kingdom.
- Every year, the General Assembly elects five non-permanent members (out of ten in total) for a two-year term. The ten non-permanent seats are distributed on a regional basis. The council's presidency is a capacity that rotates every month among its 15 members.
- Each member of the Security Council has one vote. Decisions of the Security Council on matters are made by an affirmative vote of nine members including the concurring votes of the permanent members.
- A "No" vote from one of the five permanent members blocks the passage of the resolution
- It should be noted that any member of the United Nations which is not a member of the Security Council may participate, without vote, in the discussion of any question brought before the Security Council whenever the latter considers that the interests of that member are specially affected

3. Roles and powers of UNSC

- Some of the significant roles of the UNSC broadly include maintaining "international peace in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations," and "to determine the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression and to recommend what action should be taken."

- The Council President, according to the UNSC handbook, exercises a vast range of powers such as holding meetings of the Security Council, approving provisional agendas, signing records of the meetings, besides other crucial decisions.
- On the first working day of the presidency, the Council president holds an informal breakfast to discuss the draft programme, which is “attended by the permanent representatives of all Council members.”
- The programme of work (PoW) — which in simpler terms, is a calendar of priorities which the President nation would work towards during its tenure
- Each of its 15 member states assume its presidency for a duration of one month, following the English alphabetical order.
- India had also been in the presidential position in August 2021
- India’s PoW includes briefings, consultations and reports on global developments in Syria, Libya, Middle East, Colombia, South Sudan, and Congo among others.

GS II: International organisations

BIMSTEC

1. Context

December 8 is commemorated as SAARC Charter Day. On this day, 37 years ago, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), an intergovernmental organization, was established by Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka to promote economic growth in South Asia.

2. The strategic shift from SAARC to BIMSTEC

- SAARC has failed abjectly in accomplishing most of its objectives. South Asia continues to be an extremely poor and least integrated region in the world. The intraregional trade and investment in South Asia are low very low when compared to other regions such as the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Sub-Saharan Africa.
- The Prime Minister of India invited SAARC countries for his swearing-in ceremony in 2014, including Pakistan on the lines of his Neighbourhood first policy.
- The Prime Minister also participated in the 18th SAARC summit at Kathmandu in November 2014.

- But after the Uri attack, (on an Indian military base) in October 2016, India gave a renewed push for the BIMSTEC that had existed for almost two decades but had been largely ignored.
- Alongside the BRICS summit in Goa, PM hosted an outreach summit with BIMSTEC leaders.
- BIMSTEC countries had supported New Delhi's call for a boycott of the SAARC summit scheduled in Islamabad in November 2016.
- As a result, the SAARC summit was postponed for an indefinite period, India has claimed victory in isolating Pakistan, having accused that country of carrying out the Uri Attack.
- Since 2016 there has been no movement forward on resuming the SAARC summit.
- BIMSTEC had emerged as an alternative regional platform where five SAARC (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) countries could gather and discuss sub-regional cooperation.
- The search for an alternative had been evident at the 2014 SAARC summit in Kathmandu, where the Prime Minister of India had made a statement that "opportunities must be realized through SAARC or Outside it" and "among us all some of us". That was an important signal to Pakistan, as well as to fellow SAARC members.
- The new narrative is that India can successfully use the instrument of bilateralism over regionalism to pursue its interests in South Asia. While bilateralism is undoubtedly important, it can at best complement, not substitute, regional or multilateral efforts.
- Regionalism has brought immense success in other parts such as East Asia and Africa.

3. About BIMSTEC

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organization comprising seven Member states five deriving from South Asia, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, and two from Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand.
- BIMSTEC connects South and Southeast Asia and the ecologies of the Great Himalayas and the Bay of Bengal.
- It mainly aims to create an enabling environment for rapid economic development; accelerate social progress; and promote collaboration on matters of common interest in the region.
- Fourteen priority sectors of cooperation have been identified and several BIMSTEC centers have been established to focus on those sectors.
- A BIMSTEC free trade agreement is also being negotiated among the member states, also referred to as mini SAARC.

- The BIMSTEC Charter is significantly better than the SAARC charter. For instance, unlike the SAARC Charter, Article 6 of the BIMSTEC Charter talks about the 'Admission of new members to the group. This paves the way for the admission of countries such as the Maldives.

4. Objectives of BIMSTEC

- Creating an enabling environment for the rapid economic development of the sub-region.
- Encouraging the spirit of equality and partnership.
- Promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, educational, technical, and scientific fields of common interest,
- Provide help to increase the socio-economic growth of the member countries.

5. Measures to be taken

- BIMSTEC should not end up as another SAARC. For this, its member countries should raise the stakes.
- A high-quality FTA offering deep economic integration-something that Prime Minister Narendra Modi also advocated at the last BIMSTEC ministerial meeting-would be an ideal step.
- India should explore legal ways to move successful SAARC institutions such as SAU to BIMSTEC. These steps will give stronger roots to BIMSTEC and enable erecting of a new South Asian regional order based on incrementalism and flexibility, ushering in prosperity and peace in the region.

GS II: International organisations

NJAC

1. Context

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar commented on the debate between the Central government and the Supreme Court over the matter of judicial appointments.

2. Key points

- Referring to the 2015 verdict of the SC which struck down the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) and the 99th Amendment.

- Mr Dhankar asked how the judiciary could have run down a unanimously-passed constitutional provision which reflected **"the will of People"**.

3. NJAC

- In August 2014, Parliament passed the Constitution (99th Amendment) Act, along with the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, which together provided for the creation of an independent commission to appoint judges to the Supreme Court (SC) and High Courts (HC).
- This commission was to replace the collegium system.
- The two Bills were ratified by the required number of State Legislature and got the President's assent on December 31, 2014.

4. Articles 124 and 217

- Articles 124 and 217 of the Constitution deal with the appointment of judges to the SC and HC s of the Country.
- Article 124 (2) states **"every Judge of the Supreme Court shall be appointed by the President"** after **"consultation"** with the judges of the SC and the HCs.
- So while the collegium system does not figure in the Constitution, its legal basis is found in three SC judgments usually called the **"Judges Cases"**.
- To replace this system which received criticism over the years for its lack of transparency, among other provisions, the Constitution (99th Amendment) Act, introduced three primary Articles.

Article 124A created the NJAC, a constitutional body to replace the collegium system, Article 124B conferred the NJAC with the power to make appointments to Courts and Article 124C accorded express authority to Parliament to make laws regulating the manner of the NJAC's functioning.

5. Recommendations

- Under the NJAC Act, the Chief Justice of India and Chief Justices of the HCs were recommended by the NJAC on seniority while SC and HC judges were recommended based on ability, merit and **"other criteria specified in the regulations"**.
- Notably, the Act empowered any two members of the NJAC to veto a recommendation if they did not agree with it.
- In the collegium system, senior-most judges make appointments to the higher judiciary.

6. NJAC challenged

- In early 2015, the Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association (SCAORA) filed a plea challenging the provisions which had by then become laws.
- The SCAORA Contended in its petition that both the Acts were "**Unconstitutional**" and "**invalid**".

It argued that the 99th Amendment which provided for the creation of the NJAC took away the "Primacy of the collective opinion of the Chief Justice of India and the two Senior-most Judges of the Supreme Court of India" as their collective recommendation could be vetoed or "suspended by a majority of three non-Judge members".

- It invoked the Second Judges Case to say that CJI primacy had to be protected.
- It also stated that the amendment "**severely**" damaged the basic structure of the Constitution, of which the independence of the judiciary in appointing judges was an integral part.

6. Second Judges Case

- The Second Judges Case of 1993 emphasised the role of the CJI in appointing judges to SC and HCs.
- The role of the CJI is primal because this is a topic within the judicial family, the Executive cannot have an equal say in the matter, the verdict reasoned.
- The "**basic structure**" doctrine refers to the idea that the Constitution could not be amended or read in a manner that destroyed the document's basic structure.

7. Arguments between the Centre and the SC

- Former Attorney-General Mukul Rohatgi for the Union government had argued in court that the Second Judges case, invoked by the petitioners was not Valid in the case of the NJAC as the "**very basis**" of the ruling was now gone.
- The Centre also argued that the Act in no way took away the primacy of the judiciary but diluted the executive's power as only one member, the Law Minister was in the NJAC as opposed to three SC judges.
- It also said that the amendment was "**perfectly consonant**" with the basic structure as it strengthened the "**independence of the judiciary, checks and balances and democracy**".
- Solicitor-General Ranjit Kumar further argued that the collegium was a "**failure**" and worked on a system of "**intra-dependence**", where there was "**no transparency**".

In October 2015, the five-judge bench of the top court hearing SCAORA's plea gave its ruling, with a 4:1 majority, that the NJAC was "**unconstitutional**" and violated the "**basic**

structure of the constitution".

- Significantly, the Bench admitted that all was not well even with the Collegium system of "**judges appointing judges**" and that the time was ripe to improve the system of judicial appointments.

INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

1. Context

Baguette the staple French bread was inscribed into the UN's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) on November 30.

2. Key Points

- India has been elected to the Intergovernmental Committee of UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage for the 2022-26 cycle.
- India has served as a member of the ICH Committee twice from 2006 to 2010 and from 2014 to 2018.
- Earlier Durga Puja in Kolkata was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the ICH of Humanity

3. Intangible Cultural Heritage

UNESCO, the international body which aims at promoting peace and cooperation among nations through education, arts, sciences and culture, recognized the "**Artisanal know-how and culture of baguette bread**" as a world cultural heritage.

- It is the practices, expressions, knowledge and skills that communities, groups and sometimes individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage also called living cultural heritage.

It is usually expressed in one of the following forms:

1. Oral Traditions
2. Performing Arts

3. Social Practices
4. Rituals and Festive events
5. Knowledge and Practices concerning nature and the universe
6. Traditional Craftsmanship

4. Selection Criteria

There are three criteria for an intangible cultural heritage to be inscribed in the United Nations list.

1. Be recognized by communities, groups and in some cases, individuals as part of their cultural heritage.
2. Be transmitted from generation to generation and be constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history and
3. Provide them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity

5. India's cultural symbols

- India nominated Garba, a traditional dance form that originated in the state of Gujarat, for inscription on UNESCO's ICH list.

The elements which have been on the representative list of intangible cultural heritage from India in the past decade include

1. Kolkata's Durga Puja (2021),
2. Kumbh Mela (2017),
3. Navroz (2016),
4. Yoga (2016),
5. Traditional brass and copper craft of utensil-making among coppersmiths of Punjab (2014)
6. Sankirtana, a ritual musical performance of Manipur (2013)
7. The Buddhist chanting of Ladakh (2012).
8. Before 2011, the list included Chhau dance,
9. Kalbelia folk songs and dance of Rajasthan and
10. Mudi yettu, a dance drama from Kerala (2010),
11. Ramman, a religious festival and theatre performance of Garhwal in the Himalayas (2009) and
12. Kutiyattam or Sanskrit theatre (2008)
13. Vedic Chanting (2008).

14. Ramlila, a traditional performance of Ramayana, was also included in 2008.

GS III: Economy

MONETARY POLICY

1. Context

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) unveiled its latest review of the monetary policy.

2. Key Points

- The RBI cut India's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth forecast for the current financial year, maintained the inflation forecast and raised the repo rate by 35 basis points.
- Even though the raising of the repo rate by 35 basis points is in line with market expectations, most observers saw the latest policy statement as "**hawkish**".

3. Need for monetary policy

- In India, the RBI is entrusted with the responsibility of devising monetary policy **"with the primary objective of maintaining price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth"**.
- The central bank is supposed to target a 4 per cent retail inflation level, although the RBI has the leeway of inflation going up to 6 per cent or falling to 2 per cent in any particular month.

Retail inflation is the inflation (or rise in the general price level) that everyday consumers face. Typically when an economy experiences fast economic growth that is there is a lot of demand in the economy price rise. Some degree of inflation is desirable as it promotes economic activity.

- **Think of the reverse:** if everyone thought things will be cheaper tomorrow or next month, they would defer their purchases and the economic activity would contract.
- When inflation runs high, RBI raises the repo rate the interest rate it charges banks when it lends them money.
- Doing this incentivises savings and disincentives expenditure thus curtailing overall demand and GDP. That in turn, reduces the inflation rate.

- In times of weak economic activity, RBI cuts the repo rate and by the reverse logic, boosts demand and economic output.
- All these decisions are taken by the MPC, which meets once every two months to assess inflation and growth outlook.

4. Significance of the latest policy review

- Indian policymakers are facing an odd quandary.
- Over the past couple of years, India has had to deal with a scenario where inflation has been high even as economic output struggles to grow.
- This has happened for a variety of reasons.
- In particular, India was already experiencing a severe growth slowdown before the Covid pandemic.
- This was made worse by the lockdowns during Covid, while inflation shot up on account of supply disruptions, first due to the pandemic and then due to Russia's war in Ukraine.
- For a while, the RBI has prioritised economic recovery but that has meant high inflation, which hurts the poor the most, since the start of 2022, inflation has been above the 6 per cent mark.
- The RBI has to explain to the government why it let this happen.

5. Latest outlook on inflation and interest rates

- The MPC has maintained the forecast for headline inflation (the total inflation in an economy) in the current financial year at 6.7 per cent.
- In the October to December (Q3) quarter, RBI expects it to be 6.6 per cent and in the January to March 2023 (Q4) quarter at 5.9 per cent.
- The RBI has also projected that overall inflation will be 5 per cent in April to June 2023 quarter (Q1 of the financial year 2023-24) and 5.4 per cent in the July to September quarter (Q2 of the financial year 2023-24).
- In other words, as things stand, even RBI expects headline inflation to stay above the 6 per cent mark for 15 straight months.
- Even after that, hitting the 4 per cent level will likely take time.
- This implies that even though RBI may not raise the repo rate by much from here on most expect another 25 basis point increase in February it is likely to stay at that level for a year, before considering a cut.

6. RBI's stance (Hawkish)

The term Hawkish refers to central banks that have a very low threshold for tolerating variation from the targeted inflation level.

6.1 Core Inflation

- Consumer Price inflation moderated to 6.8 per cent (y-o-y) in October as expected, but it remains above the upper tolerance band of the target.
- Core inflation is exhibiting stickiness on balance, the MPC was of the view that further calibrated monetary policy action is warranted to keep inflation expectations anchored, breakcore inflation persistence and contain second-round effects.
- Core inflation is arrived at by removing the inflation in food and fuel from headline inflation. By removing food and fuel inflation (Since these prices fluctuate more wildly), core inflation provides a more robust measure of inflation in the economy.
- The trouble is: If core inflation is high, it takes a while to come down because it implies that inflation has become broad-based (i.e. higher prices have seeped through all parts of the economy).
- RBI traditionally targets the headline rate, which is moderating.
- Core inflation, on the other hand, is going up and thus, it may push the RBI to take a more hawkish stance from here on.

7. GDP growth

- The RBI has cut the GDP forecast marginally for the second MPC in a row.
- It now expects the GDP to grow by 6.8 per cent in the current financial year.
- As the data shows, in September it cut the GDP forecast for the full year but raised the quarterly GDP forecast.
- This time it has cut both full years as well as the quarterly forecast.
- However, even now, the quarterly forecasts for GDP growth in Q3 and Q4 are higher than what the RBI pencilled in April.
- This is significant because, since April, repo rates have now gone up by 225 basis points.
- Higher interest rates progressively drag down the economy.

As such, either the latest GDP forecast suggests a more robust economic recovery than envisaged at the start of the year in which case the RBI might have to stay hawkish for longer or one can expect the GDP forecast to be revised down yet again in the next MPC meet of February 2023.

POST-PANDEMIC CRISIS

1. Context

ILO released two reports indicating the global employment scenario post-pandemic.

2. Reports

2.1 The Global Wage Report 2022 -2023

- The International Labour Organisation (ILO) recently released two reports that indicated the global employment scenario post-pandemic.

The Impact of inflation and COVID19 on wages and purchasing power 'discuss the twin crises, inflation, and economic slowdown, which created a "**striking fall**" in real monthly wages around the globe.

- The report blames the war in Ukraine and the global energy crisis for this situation.

2.2 The Asia Pacific Employment and Social Outlook 2022

- Rethinking sectoral strategies for a human-centred future of work- stated that the Asia-Pacific region lost about 22 million jobs in 2022.
- The decrease in wages is placing millions of workers in a dire situation.
- Income inequality and poverty will rise if the purchasing power of the lowest paid is not maintained.

3. Wages

Wage was defined as the total gross remuneration including regular bonuses received by employees during a specified period for time (monthly for the report) worked as well as for time not worked, such as paid annual leave and paid sick leave.

1. **Nominal wages:** The nominal wage data shows the adjusted figures after accounting for consumer price inflation
2. **Real wages:** It refers to the year on year change in real average monthly wages of all employees.

4. The objective of the Global Wage Report

To collect wage data from as many countries and territories (about 190) which are then grouped into five separate regions.

5. Data Analysis

- In India, the nominal wages rose to ₹17,017 per month in 2021 from ₹4,398 in 2006.
- The data was taken from the Government of India's Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- But when inflation is factored in, the real wage growth in India plunged to 0.2% in 2021 from 9.3% in 2006.
- In China, the growth decreased from 5.6% in 2019 to 2% in 2022. In Pakistan, the growth is 3.8%.
- Figures for Sri Lanka were not available. The negative growth in India started after the pandemic.

6. Impact of the Pandemic

The report said the increasing cost of living has the most significant impact on lower-income earners and their households as they have to spend most of their disposable income on essential goods and services, which generally experience greater price increases than non-essential items.

7. Rising Inequalities

- At the Asia Pacific level, only the jobs in high-skill occupations saw a recovery from the COVID19 crisis, which is true across all sub-regions.
- The ILO said it is raising concerns about increased inequality.
- While there is an employment gain of 1.6% among high-skill workers between 2019 and 2021, there is no such substantial gain among low to medium skill workers.
- Among the G20 countries, the report noted a significant gap in the average level of real wages between advanced G20 countries and emerging G20 countries such as India.
- It is on the level of about \$4,000 per month in advanced economies and about \$1,800 per month in emerging economies.

8. ILO's Remedies

- The report suggests a set of policy options and responses to the cost of living crisis.
- The report said that 75 to 95 million people were pushed into extreme poverty during COVID19.

- It said the bargaining process for future nominal wage adjustments should embrace a sufficiently large but prudent price expectation.
- This could contribute to safeguarding the standard of living of households, particularly low-income households, against unexpected future inflation hikes while avoiding an undesirable wage inflation spiral.
- The report said that there is a need to strengthen labour market institutions and wage policies.
- The ILO states that the creation of decent formal wage employment is a prerequisite for a more equitable distribution of wages and income, and is a key contributor to equitable and sustainable wage growth.
- It wants governments to focus on the gender pay gap as when women leave the labour market; they are less likely to return than men.

A multilateral approach is a key to solving the crises around us.

1. There is an urgent need to address the negative effects of climate change;
2. Increasing inequalities;
3. Poverty, discrimination, violence, and exclusion endured by millions of people, including the discrimination that women and girls continue to suffer in many parts of the world;
4. The lack of vaccines and access to adequate sanitation and essential health care for all; and
5. The growing digital divide between poor and wealthier countries.

GS III: Economy

REMITTANCES TO INDIA

1. Context

India is expected to receive a record \$100 billion in remittances in 2022, the top recipient this year. India is expected to receive a record \$100 billion in remittance in 2022, the top recipient this year, the World Bank has said. In its Migration and Development Brief, the World Bank has said India's remittance will grow 12 per cent from 7.5 per cent last year, resulting in a \$100 billion flow as compared to \$89.4 billion in 2021. It attributed the feat to the large share of Indian migrants earning relatively high salaries in the United States, United Kingdom, and East Asia.

2. What is Remittance?

The World Bank defines it as "the sum of worker's remittances, compensation of employees, and migrants' transfers as recorded in the IMF Balance of payments. Worker Remittances are current transfers by migrants who are considered residents in the source".

Remittances are a vital source of household income for low-and middle-income countries.

3. Types of Remittances

The RBI has segregated remittances into two main types:

3.1 Inward Remittances

- Inward remittances are funds transferred from abroad to India.
- These transfers are typical of a personal nature and are sent to support a family.
- For example, if you are an NRI in the United States and send money to your parents in India, this is considered an inward remittance.
- In most cases, remittances are sent through a bank, money transfer agents, or more recently, online money transfer specialists.
- Sending money to India is simple, quick, and painless if you do it online through a reputable money transfer service provider.

3.2 Outward Remittances

- Outward remittances are funds transferred from India to countries outside of India.
- Sending money from India to your Children Studying in the United States is an example of outward remittances.
- Indian individuals can transfer up to USD 2,50,000 per fiscal year under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS).
- The industry of outward remittances is not as competitive as the industry of inward remittances.
- However, there are now a few online money transfer companies that offer money transfer services from India to the United States at a faster and cheaper rate than traditional methods of sending money.

4. Why are Remittances in India so high this year?

- According to World Bank, there's been a "gradual shift in destinations" for Indian migrants aided by a "structural shift in qualifications" that helped them move into the "highest-income-earner-category", especially in services.
"Higher education mapped onto high-income levels with direct implications for remittance flows," the World Bank says. Migrants moved "from largely low-skipped,

informally employment in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to the dominant share of high-skilled jobs in high-income countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and East Asia (Singapore, Japan, Australia, New Zealand).”

- During the Covid-19 pandemic, Indian migrants in high-income countries benefited from work-from-home and large fiscal stimulus packages, the report said. As the pandemic eased, the wage hikes and “record-high employment conditions” helped migrants send money home despite high global inflation, the report added. Despite Indian migrants in the Gulf Cooperation Council returning to India during the pandemic, “price support policies kept inflation at bay and demand for labour increased with higher oil prices, which in turn increased remittances to Indian labourers.”
- Depreciation of the Indian rupee to the US dollar - it fell 10 per cent between January and September 2022 - may have also proven to be advantageous for Indian migrants and increased remittance flow, according to the brief. In 2022, vaccinations and the resumption of travel helped migrants resume work, increasing remittance to the country.

5. Global Remittances: What's predicted in 2023?

The growth of remittance flows into South Asia in 2023 is expected to slow to 0.7 per cent. This year will stand as a test of the resilience of remittances from white-collar South Asian migrants in high-income countries.

GS III: Science & Technology

DRONE TECHNOLOGY

1. Context

The Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Shri. Anurag Singh Thakur flagged off the Drone Yatra 2.0 in Chennai.

2. Key points

- Technology is truly transforming the world at a rapid rate and it has never been more relevant than now as its applications are solving some of the most pressing problems on the planet.
- India is increasingly leveraging technology to stay ahead of the curve.

3. Drone Technology in India

- Detailing the advancement in drone technology in India, during the Beating Retreat, the entire nation was mesmerised by the spectacular display of 1000 Made in India drones by Indian start-up Botlab Dynamics' led by the IIT alumni.

As a part of the SWAMITVA scheme (Survey of villages and mapping with improvised technology in village areas), the survey of the land houses is being prepared through drones in the villages areas), and the survey of the land and houses being prepared through drones in the villages.

- Drones are increasingly being used to sprinkle pesticides and nano fertilizers in the fields in rural villages.
- The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Directorate General of Civil Aviation had granted a conditional exemption to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) for the deployment of drones for live aerial cinematography of the India Cricket Season in 2021.

4. Kisan Drone Yatra

- 100 Kisan Drones were sent to villages across the country to spray pesticides under the efforts of Garuda Aerospace, India's Largest Drone Manufacturing Facility.
- The government's commitment to promoting the use of technology in the agriculture sector to increase farm production
- It is envisaged that these drones will help in streamlining the use of pesticides on farms, which will further improve the profitability of our farmers.

5. Bharat Drone Mahotsav

- PM Modi inaugurated India's biggest Drone Festival-Bharat Drone Mahotsav 2022 in May.
- Drone technology is essential for various fields from defence to agriculture and health to entertainment.
- India is also moving towards creating a strong drone manufacturing ecosystem in the country through schemes like Production Linked Incentive (PLI)
- Government is to boost the demand for cutting-edge drone technology and services in a three-pronged approach An effective policy is the New Drone Rules 2021 to provide incentives in the form of PLI for Drones and Drone Components.

Stating that India will require at least 1 lakh pilots in 2023, he said that each pilot will earn at least 50-80 thousand a month. If you take the Conservative Average even Rs 50,000 × 1 lakh

youth $\times$ 12 months = Rs. 6000 crores a year of employment could be created in the Drone sector.

- Apart from this, Industries and Government agencies which use Drones will also be impacted.

6. Drone Skilling & Training Conference

- Garuda's Drone Skilling & Training Conference which is to be conducted in 775 districts across the country hopes to reach 10 lakh Youth to train 1 lakh Youth to significantly impact not just the Drone ecosystem or generate employment for Youth but hopes to create a massive impact in Agriculture, Mining, Government departments & Other industries.
- While noting that currently, over 200 drone start-ups are operating in the country, which will increase to generate lakhs of new job opportunities for the youth.
- Effective policies, incentives to industry and "**ease of doing business**" are providing the much-needed impetus to the Drone Sector which shows its huge potential in India.
- 'Atmanirbhar Bharat,' is the growing innovation and cutting-edge drone technology ecosystem that will ensure a self-reliant and self-sustainable New India in the Amrit Kaal”.

GS III: Science & Technology

SPAMMERS

1. Context

On November 29, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) floated a consultation paper seeking comments about the potential introduction of a Calling Name Presentation (CNAP) feature.

2. CNAP feature

- It would provide an individual with information about the calling party (similar to Truecaller and "Bharat Caller ID and AntiSpam").

- The idea is to ensure that telephone subscribers can make an informed choice about incoming calls and curb harassment by unknown or spam callers.

3. Purpose

- Existing technologies present the number of the calling entity on the potential receiver's handset.
- Since subscribers are not given the name and identity of the caller, they sometimes choose not to answer them believing it could be unsolicited commercial communication from unregistered telemarketers.
- This could lead to even genuine calls being unanswered.
- Additionally, there have been rising concerns about robocalls (calls made automatically using IT-enabled systems with a prerecorded voice), spam calls and fraudulent calls.

Truecaller's 2021 Global Spam and Scam Report revealed that the average number of spam calls per user each month in India, stood at 16.8 while total spam volumes received by its users were more than 3.8 billion calls in October alone.

- Smartphone users, at present, rely on inbuilt features or third-party apps to mark and tackle spam calls.
- However, as per the regulator, their reliance on crowdsourced data may not be reliable.

4. Privacy concerns

- It is not particularly clear how the CNAP mechanism would balance the caller's right to remain anonymous, an essential component of the right to privacy.
- To put it into perspective, an individual may opt to remain anonymous for multiple reasons, for example, whistleblowers or employees being harassed.
- Because customers accord consent only to their operators when completing the prerequisite KYC formalities for a connection, it would be ideal that a framework for the feature is developed along those lines rather than asking a centralised database operated by a third party to host and share data (one of the proposed models).
- In parallel with The Digital Personal Data Protection Bill (2022) which has a clause on deemed consent lacking adequate safeguards including sharing of data with third parties.

5. Would the provisions be enough?

- Previously, telemarketers were required to be registered as promotional numbers, making it easier to identify and block them.
- The Marketers have started deploying people who are not necessarily part of the entity's setup, but rather "**at-home workers**" to whom work is being outsourced.
- They are given SIM cards not registered to a particular company but rather to the individual themselves.
- Just showing the identity would not mean much, once the system (to identify and mark spammers) gets built and hundreds of people can utilise the system, only then would the system have a meaningful impact.
- The government must also invest in digital literacy, skilling citizens to navigate and use the tech better, ensuring they do not share their data indiscriminately and are informed about dangers such as financial fraud and spoofing.

Mains Corner

1. What are the various changes in the Multi-State Cooperative Societies (Amendment) Bill, 2022? Will it undermine the authority of the States? Discuss the concerns regarding the functioning of cooperatives in the country. (250 Words)
2. What is Mahua and discuss its importance in the livelihood of Indian Tribes. (250 Words)
3. How the Global South can represent a strong voice of the so far unrepresented nations on international forums? (250 Words)
4. Will the price cap will hurt the Russian oil revenue earnings and thereby fructify the purpose of sanctions on Russia? (250 Words)
5. BIMSTEC as a key to new South Asian regional order. Comment? (250 Words)

For Prelims:

1. Consider the following statements

1. Ransomware is a kind of malware that damages functions or gains unauthorized access to a computer system
2. It is used to encrypt important documents or files within a system (Crypto ransomware) or simply lock the original user out of the system (Locker ransomware)

Which of the above given statement is/ are correct

A.1 Only B.2 Only C. Both 1 and 2 D. Neither 1 Nor 2

Answer (C)

Both statements are correct

2. Consider the following statements

1. Meghalaya, carved out of Assam as an autonomous State in 1970, became a full-fledged State in 1972
2. The creation of the new State was based on the Assam Reorganisation Act of 1971

Which of the above given statement is/ are correct

A.1 Only B.2 Only C. Both 1 and 2 D. Neither 1 Nor 2

Answer (A)

Meghalaya, carved out of Assam as an autonomous State in 1970, became a full-fledged State in 1972. The creation of the new State was based on the Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act of 1969

3. Consider the following statements

1. Space Systems Command (SSC) is the oldest military space organisation in the United States Armed Forces
2. It is responsible for developing, acquiring, equipping, fielding and sustaining lethal and resilient space capabilities
3. SSC mission capability areas include launch acquisition and operations, communications and positioning, navigation and timing, space sensing, battle management command, control, and communications, and space domain awareness and combat power.

Which of the above given statement is/ are correct

A.1 and 2 B.2 and 3 C. 1 and 3 D. 1, 2, 3

Answer (D)

All the statements are correct

4. What is the term given to the form of hacking that lets attackers access a device through its discoverable Bluetooth connection?

A. Bluetapping B. Bluebugging C. Bluetracking D. Bluehacking

Answer (B)

Once a device or phone is bluebugged, a hacker can listen to the calls, read and send messages and steal and modify contacts

5. Name the bilateral training exercise between the Indian and Australian armies that got underway in Rajasthan

A. Austra Hind 22 B. Aus-Ind 22 C. Indian Pacific drill 22 D. Malabar 22

Answer (A)

‘Austra Hind 22’ is scheduled to take place at Mahajan Field Firing Ranges from November 28 to December 1



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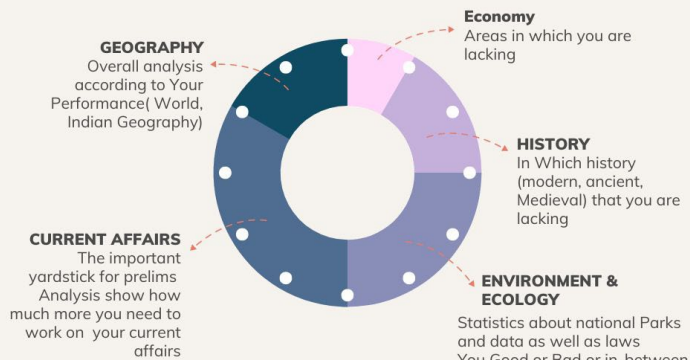
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