Week : 21st to 27th June
Nesher Ramla Homo Type: An international group of archaeologists working in Israel have recently identified a previously unknown type of ancient human that lived alongside our species more than 100,000 years ago.

Key Details:

❖ The researchers said that they had discovered a new kind of early human after studying pieces of fossilised bone dug up at a site used by a cement plant in central Israel.
❖ They have recovered pieces of skull, including a right parietal (towards the back/side of the skull) and also a mandible (jaw) which dates back to 140,000–120,000 years old.
❖ The researchers have noticed resemblances between the new finds and ancient "pre-Neanderthal" groups in Europe.
❖ They believe the remains uncovered near the city of Ramla represent one of the "last survivors" of a very ancient human group.
❖ The scientists have named the newly discovered lineage the "Nesher Ramla Homo type" after the site where the bones were found.

❖ The fossils found at Nesher Ramla put the new species between Neanderthals and Homo Sapiens, a unique population never recognised before.
❖ Details have been published in the journal Science.

Analysis:

❖ According to an analysis by Dr Yossi Zaidner, this jaw belonged to a person who were neither fully Homo sapiens nor were Neanderthal.
❖ They found a parietal bone featuring "archaic" traits that are different from both early and recent Homo sapiens.
❖ Bone is considerably thicker than those found in Neanderthals and other Homo sapiens.
❖ Jaw and bones together display archaic features as well as Neanderthal features, which are distinct from early Homo sapiens and later Neanderthals.

What more did they find at the Israel site?

❖ Along with the human remains, burnt bones of animals that were butchered and eaten were found.
❖ It indicates Nesher Ramla Homo hunted species like gazelle, tortoise, aurochs, boar and ostrich.
❖ The dig uncovered a collection of some 6,000 stone tools.
❖ Excavators also found campfire sites matching the age of the bones and concluded that the residents were using fire effectively.

Lady of Tabun:
The “Lady of Tabun” (known to archaeologists as Tabun C1) was discovered in 1932 by pioneering archaeologist Yusra and her field director, Dorothy Garrod.

Fossils found at other Israeli sites, including the famous Lady of Tabun, might also be part of this new human population, in contrast to their previous Neanderthal or H. sapiens identification.

Juneteenth: US President Joe Biden recently signed a legislation establishing Juneteenth, the date marking the end of slavery in the United States after the American Civil War (1861-65), as a federal holiday.

Highlights:

- Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris delivered remarks in the East Room of the White House.
- Juneteenth National Independence Day is the first new federal holiday created in almost four decades, and will now enjoy the same status as the 10 existing annual holidays, which include Memorial Day, Veterans Day and Thanksgiving.
- Juneteenth celebration started in 1866 from state of Texas, with community-centric events like cookouts, parades, prayer gatherings, historical & cultural readings and musical performances.
- While, era of “Modern Juneteenth Movement” started in 1994 from New Orleans in Louisiana with objective of greater recognition of Juneteenth.

History:

- On January 1, 1863, then-president Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which declared that “all persons held as
slaves” within the states in rebellion “are, and henceforward shall be free.”

- Even so, over 2.5 years after Lincoln's proclamation, many slave owners continued to hold their slaves captive by hiding this information from them and holding them slaves for one more harvest season.
- On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas and announced the end of both the Civil War and slavery.
- Since then, Juneteenth has become a largely symbolic date representing freedom for African Americans.

World Music Day: World Music Day is observed globally on 21st June every year.

- The day is also popularly referred to as Fete de la Musique, French for Make Music Day or World Music Day.
- The aim of celebrating World Music Day is to provide free music to everyone, and also to encourage amateur musicians to showcase their work to the world.

Theme of 2021:

- The World Music Day theme for 2021 is “Music at the intersections”.

Key Facts:

- More than 120 countries and 700 cities across the world celebrate world music day on 21st June with great enthusiasm and fun.
- The concept of world music day was originated in France in 1976.
- An American musician named Joel Cohen first proposed the idea of celebrating the day all-night.
- Most music day events in the world are organized in France every year.
- The day is celebrated to mark the starting of the summer solstice.

History:

- World Music Day was founded by France’s Minister of Culture, Jack Lang and also Maurice Fleuret, a French composer, music journalist, radio producer, arts administrator, and festival organiser, on the day of the summer solstice in Paris in 1982.

Fun Fact:

- Benefits of Listening to Music:
  - Music makes you happier
  - Music reduces depression
  - Music enhances running performance
  - Music lowers stress and improves health
  - Music helps you sleep better
  - Music strengthens learning and memory

Books and Authors:
Defence

My Joys and Sorrows – as a Mother of a Special Child: Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan recently unveiled Krishna Saksena’s book “My Joys and Sorrows – as a Mother of a Special Child”.

It is the epitome of the bravery and endurance of a mother, in the best tradition of Indian motherhood.

The book is full of beautiful photographs, including some black and white ones which have historical significance, not only because some of them feature public personalities but also because it chronicles the domestic as well as the professional context of the times.

Key Points:

- Defence Minister described this achievement as India’s pride and a shining example of Atmanirbhar Bharat or a self-reliant Bharat.
- He said that commissioning of IAC will be befitting tribute to India’s 75th year of India’s independence.

About Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC):

- IAC is the most complex warship to have been designed and built in India, Indian Navy.
- The carrier will be named INS Vikrant, after India’s first aircraft carrier which was decommissioned in 1997.
- The IAC is 262 meters long and 62 meters wide and has a STOBAR (short takeoff but arrested recovery)
configuration with a ski jump capability.

- Once commissioned, INS Vikrant would be the most potent sea-based asset of the Indian Navy.
- The carrier would have on board about 35-40 aircraft — a mix of naval fighters, anti-submarine helicopters, and naval UAVs.
- The aircraft component includes the MiG-29K fighters, Kamov-31 Air Early Warning Helicopters, the soon-to-be-inducted MH-60R multi-role helicopter, and the indigenous advanced light helicopters.
- It would offer an incomparable military instrument with its ability to project air power over long distances, including offensive and defensive counter-air, air interdiction, anti-surface warfare, airborne early warning and airborne anti-submarine warfare.
- Besides having four AK-630 close-in weapon systems, INS Vikrant is also equipped with four OTO Melara 76mm dual-purpose cannons.
- It also has two 32 cell VLS (Vertical Launch System), capable of firing 64 missiles in total.
- It is equipped with the Israeli Barak 1 surface-to-air missile for short-range and the Barak 8 for long-range defence against aerial targets including helicopters, fighters, drones, and missiles.
- It has been designed by the Indian Navy’s Directorate of Naval Design (DND) and is being built at Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL).
- Navy sources said the IAC is the most complex warship building project to have been indigenously designed and built.

Motto of the IAC is Jayema Sam Yudhi Sprdhah. It is taken from Rigveda 1.8.3.

Background:

- The plans for the ship were floated in 1989, but the design work began in 1999 after then defence minister
George Fernandes greenlighted the project.

- The keel was laid in February 2009.
- It was floated out of its dry dock in December 2011 and was launched on 12 August 2013.
- The basin trials of the ships were completed in December 2020.
- It will undergo sea trials by end of 2022 and is expected to enter into service by end of 2022.

**Why has the project taken a long time to execute?**

The ambitious project of the Indian Navy, which was expected to be completed by 2018, has suffered a number of delays due to a number of reasons, including financial resources and the latest reason being the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Why does India need aircraft carriers?**

- The IAC project comes at a time India needs aircraft carriers on the eastern and western seaboards and another in dock.

- While INS Viraat was decommissioned in 2017, INS Vikramaditya remains the only aircraft carrier in the navy’s fleet.

**Mawya Sudan:** Mawya Sudan, a Jammu and Kashmir resident, has become the first woman fighter pilot in the Indian Air Force (IAF) from Rajouri district.

**Highlights:**

- She has been commissioned into the IAF as Flying Officer.
- She has become the 12th woman officer and first from Rajouri to be inducted as a fighter pilot.
- She hails from Lamberi village in Rajouri.
- The combined graduation passing out parade was held on June 19, 2021 at the Air Force Academy in Dundigal, Hyderabad.

www.civilserviceindia.com
Air Chief Marshal Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhadauria reviewed the parade.

Airborne high-power Laser: Israeli military recently tested an airborne high-power laser successfully. It has the capability to shoot down drones.

Key points:
- Israel already has a large and sophisticated air defense system.
- This system had 90% interception rate against thousands of rockets which were fired from Gaza during 11-day war of May 2021.
- The Laser was mounted on a civilian plane and successfully shot down drones in recent test conducted over Mediterranean Sea.

Note: Laser is a prototype developed with Elbit Systems.

What is a laser weapon?
- A Laser weapon is a directed-energy weapon which is based on lasers.
- As of January 2020, directed-energy weapons including lasers are currently at experimental stage despite several R&D.
- It is yet to be seen if or when laser weapons will be deployed as practical, high-performance military weapons.
- Laser generates a beam of light which needs clear air or a vacuum to work without thermal blooming.

Challenges faced with laser weapon:
- Atmospheric thermal blooming is a major problem.
- This problem can worsen if fog, smoke, rain, dust, snow, smog, foam like obscurant chemicals is present.
Nirbhay: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully test-fired the subsonic cruise missile ‘Nirbhay’.

Key Points:

❖ Nirbhay was test fired on June 24, 2021, from an Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur in Odisha’s Balasore.
❖ This was the eighth test flight of the missile.
❖ The first test flight of Nirbhay was held on 12 March 2013.

About the Missile:

❖ Nirbhay is a long-range, all-weather, subsonic cruise missile.
❖ The missile has been indigenously designed and developed by DRDO.

❖ The missile can be launched from multiple platforms and is capable of carrying conventional and nuclear warheads.
❖ Nirbhay is a two-stage missile and can engage several targets in a single flight.
❖ The missile has a length of 6 metres, a width of 0.52 metres, a wingspan of 2.7 metres and weighs about 1500 kg.
❖ It has a strike range of about 1500 km.

India-USA Navy Passage

Exercise: The Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force (IAF) participated in a two-day passage exercise with U.S. Navy Carrier Strike Group (CSG) Ronald Reagan during its transit through the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Highlights:
The exercise was carried out south of Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala on the western seaboard under the responsibility of the Southern Air Command.

The US and Indian naval forces conducted high-end exercises designed to maximize training and interoperability, including air defence.

The exercise aims to strengthen the bilateral relationship and cooperation by demonstrating the ability to integrate and coordinate comprehensively in maritime operations.

Background:

- Militaries of India and the U.S. have been holding regular exercises in all domains and even during the COVID-19 pandemic, have held passage exercises.
- Passex is part of regular exercises between Indian and US navies.

India Participation:

- India was represented by The Navy’s INS Kochi and Teg, along with P-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft and MiG 29K fighters.
- The IAF forces also operated from bases under four operational commands and included Jaguar and Su-30 MKI fighters, Phalcon and Netra early warning aircraft and IL-78 air to air refueller aircraft.

US Participation:

- The U.S.’ CSG comprised Nimitz class aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan, Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Halsey and Ticonderoga class guided-missile cruiser USS Shiloh.
- It also has fielded F-18 fighters and E-2C Hawkeye early warning aircraft in the exercise.

Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group (CSG):

The CSG Ronald Reagan was in the Indian Ocean on its way to the Middle East to provide support for the US withdrawal from Afghanistan.
Note: The nuclear-powered USS Nimitz, one of the largest warships on the planet.

Pinaka Rockets: Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully test fired an extended range version of “Pinaka” rocket.

Highlights:
- The test fire was carried on 24th and 25th June 2021 at Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur off the coast of Odisha.
- DRDO test-fired 25 Enhanced Pinaka Rockets in quick succession against targets at different ranges.
- This 122 mm Caliber rockets were launched with the help of Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher (MBRL).
- To check accuracy of rockets hitting the target, all flight articles were tracked by various Range instruments.

About Enhanced Pinaka Rocket System:
- The enhanced range version of Pinaka Rocket System has been developed jointly by Pune based Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE) in association with High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL) with manufacturing support from M/s Economic Explosives Limited, Nagpur.
- The enhanced range version of Pinaka Rocket System can destroy targets kept at distances up to 45 kilometres.
- These systems were developed to achieve longer range performance.

About Pinaka
- It is an indigenous multi-barrel rocket launch system.
- It was developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) for Indian Army.
- Its weapon system, the weapon system, mounted
on a Tatra truck, comprises of state-of-the-art guidance kit which is bolstered by advanced navigation and control system.

❖ Navigation system of this missile is aided by Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS).
❖ It can fire a salvo of 12 rockets in 44 seconds.
❖ Initial version of weapon system was called Mark I, which had the range of 40 km.
❖ This range was increased up to 70 to 80 kms in upgraded missile called Pinaka Mark II.

**Project Seabird:** Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh visited the Karwar Naval Base in Karnataka recently to review the progress of ongoing infrastructure development under ‘Project Seabird’.

**Key Details:**

❖ Project Seabird (christened INS Kadamba in 2005) at Karwar, will be the largest Naval Base of the Indian Navy in future.
❖ INS Kadamba is an Indian Navy base located near Karwar in Karnataka.
❖ It will provide the facilities and infrastructure to support the Navy’s operations in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond.
❖ It will further strengthen the operational readiness of the Armed Forces.
❖ The first phase of construction of the base, code-named Project Seabird, was completed in 2005 and the base was commissioned on 31 May 2005.
❖ The second phase, construction for which began in 2011, is expected to be completed by late 2022 or early 2023.

INS Kadamba is currently the third largest Indian naval base, and is expected to become the largest naval base in the eastern
hemisphere after completion of expansion Phase IIB.

**Economics**

**Takeover Panel:** Security and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has reconstituted its Takeover Panel.

**Highlights:**

- Panel was constituted in accordance with regulation 11(5) of SEBI (Substantial Acquisition of Shares and Takeovers) Regulations, 2011.
- The takeover panel looks into application that seeks exemption from mandatory open offer which the acquirer needs to make to minority shareholders.
- It makes its recommendations to Sebi on applications following which SEBI gives an opportunity to concerned parties before passing any order.

**Members of the Takeover Panel:**

- The regulator has appointed N Venkatram MD and CEO, Deloitte India as the new member of the Takeover Panel.
- Panel is chaired by N K Sodhi, former chief justice of high courts of Karnataka and Kerala. He was also the former presiding officer of Securities Appellate Tribunal.
- The other members of the panel are Darius Khambata (former advocate general, Maharashtra) and Thomas Mathew T (former chairman of Life Insurance Corporation of India).

**Background:**

- SEBI had first constituted a four-member Takeover Panel in November 2007, under chairmanship of
former Bank of Baroda chairman K Kannan.

About SEBI:

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is the regulatory body for securities and commodity market in India under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Finance, Government of India (GoI).
- It was established on 12 April 1988 and given Statutory Powers on 30 January 1992 through the SEBI Act, 1992.
- The Preamble of the Securities and Exchange Board of India describes the basic functions of the Securities and Exchange Board of India.
- The main function of SEBI is to safeguard the rights and interests of the investor, reduce malpractices related to the stock exchange, establishing a code of conduct and promoting the healthy functioning of the stock exchange.
- It is headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- The current Chairman of SEBI is Ajay Tyagi.

Members:

The SEBI is managed by its members, which consists of the following:

I. The chairman is nominated by the Union Government of India.
II. Two members, i.e., Officers from the Union Finance Ministry.
III. One member from the Reserve Bank of India.
IV. The remaining five members are nominated by the Union Government of India; out of them at least three shall be whole-time members.

Note: Controller of Capital Issues was the regulatory authority before SEBI came into existence; it derived authority from the Capital Issues (Control) Act, 1947.

It will take effect from 1st day of July, 2021.

Key Points:

- In order to penalize those who did not file income tax returns (ITRs) despite being liable to, the government notified new Section 206AB and 206CCA under Income Tax Act.

- These sections mandate tax deduction or tax collection at higher rate in case of certain non-filers (specified persons).

- Higher rate is twice the prescribed rate or 5%, whichever is higher.

- With this new functionality, the Government has reiterated its commitment to ease the compliance burden of taxpayers.

What is Income Tax?

Income tax is a direct tax that a government levies on the income of its citizens.

Income does not only mean money earned in the form of salary.

It also includes income from house property, profits from business, gains from profession (such as bonus), capital gains income, and 'income from other sources'.

Taxation rates may vary by type or characteristics of the taxpayer and the type of income.

The tax is calculated on the next taxable income of the entity on the basis of the income slabs which are pre-defined by the IT Department.

These revenue functions are managed by the Ministry of Finance, which has delegated the responsibility to managing direct taxes to the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT).

Why do we pay income tax?
The money collected by this direct tax route is used by the Government for infrastructural developments and also to pay the employees of central and state government bodies.

**Income Tax Act:**

Passed in 1961, the Income Tax Act of India handles all income tax provisions as well as any tax deductions that may be applicable.

Since its introduction, there have been many changes to the law because of economic situations and inflation.

**Income Tax Rules in India:**

The legislature enacts the Income Tax Act, 1961, to administer and govern income tax in the country, but the Income Tax Rules, 1962, were created in order to help in the application and enforcement of the law constituted in the Act.

Moreover, the Income Tax Rules can only be read in conjunction with the Income Tax Act.

The Income Tax Rules are within the framework of the Income Tax Act are not allowed to override its provisions.

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**Regulation of Microfinance:**

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently released a Consultative Document on Regulation of Microfinance.

**Details:**

- It has been released for harmonizing the regulatory frameworks for various regulated lenders in the microfinance space.
- The key proposals of the Consultative Document are enumerated below:
  
  I. A common definition of microfinance loans for all regulated entities.
  
  II. Capping the outflow on account of repayment of loan obligations of a household to a percentage of the household income.
III. A Board approved policy for household income assessment.

IV. Introduction of a standard simplified fact sheet on pricing of microfinance loans for better transparency.

V. No pre-payment penalty; no requirement of collateral; and greater flexibility of repayment frequency for all microfinance loans.

VI. Alignment of pricing guidelines for non-banking financial company – microfinance institutions (NBFC-MFIs) with guidelines for NBFCs.

VII. Display of minimum, maximum and average interest rates charged on microfinance loans on the websites of regulated entities.

USISPF: Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman recently addressed the Global Investors Roundtable organized by US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF).

Highlights:

- The USISPF which was held on 24 June 2021 witnessed participation from some of the largest foreign investors, including Mastercard, MetLife, Prudential, Air Products, Dell, SoftBank and Warburg Pincus amongst others.
- The event provided investors with an opportunity to engage with the Union Finance Minister and senior officials of Indian Government to
discuss potential investment opportunities and deliberate on the role of ongoing policy reforms that will enable greater Ease-of-Doing-Business in India.

Details:

- The Finance Minister remarked that macro-economic stability, infrastructure-led economic growth opportunities, financial sector reforms, and positioning as a strong player in global supply chains are just some of the ways India continues to rise as a global economic powerhouse.

- While addressing the investor’s meet she asserted that:
  
  a) The continuous reforms make India a great place to do business.
  b) Covid and its aftermath have shown the Indian economy’s resilience.
  c) The highest ever GST collections shows the bright spot-More formalization of economy and tax compliance
  
  d) Innovation and R&D got great potential.
  e) New opportunities emerging for foreign investors with recent FDI reforms privatization policy and PLI scheme.
  f) The fiscal situation is under control and expects to improve further.
  g) Fifteen new unicorns in the first 5 years of 2021 itself reflecting a growing startup ecosystem to be amongst the best in the world.

- She also invited global investors to take advantage of recent FDI reforms, privatization policy and performance linked incentive (PLI) scheme in India.

US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF):

- USISPF is a non-profit organization.
- It was set up in 2017 with the objective of strengthening USA-India bilateral and strategic partnership.
• It aims to strengthen economic and commercial ties between both the countries by policy advocacy.
• It will lead to boosting economic growth, entrepreneurship, employment-generation, and innovation in order to establish a more inclusive society.

Ajit Mishra Expert Group: The Central Government has recently constituted an Expert Group under the Chairmanship of Professor Ajit Mishra, a renowned economist.
• Its mandate is to provide technical inputs and recommendations on fixation of Minimum Wages and National Floor Wages to the Government.
• The tenure of the Expert Group is three years.

The tenure of the Expert Group has been kept as three years so that even after the fixation of Minimum Wages and National Floor Wages, Government may seek technical inputs/advice from the Expert Group on subjects related to Minimum Wages and National Floor Wages, as and when required.

MICE Industry in India: Ministry of Tourism has recently invited feedback/comments/suggestions on the draft National Strategy and Roadmap for promotion of MICE Industry in India.
The comments may be forwarded to the Ministry of Tourism on or before 30th June, 2021 at e-mail IDs: js.tourism@gov.in, bibhuti.dash72@gov.in, prakash.om50@nic.in.

About MICE:

- MICE is an acronym for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions.
- It is one of the important segments of business tourism, which also overlaps with leisure tourism.
- Despite having huge potential, India’s position is relatively low with just about 1% of global MICE business.
- India doesn’t have large convention centres or single halls with capacities to hold 7,000 to 10,000 people, unlike countries like Thailand that is a major global MICE destination.
- Ministry of Tourism has been actively working on promotion and development of this niche area of tourism and thus had accordingly formulated a Draft National Strategy and Roadmap for Promotion of MICE Industry in India.

International Day of the Celebration of the Solstice:
International Day of the Celebration of the Solstice is observed globally on 21st June every year.

Highlights:

- The day is observed to create awareness about Solstices and equinoxes and to highlight their significance in various religious and ethnic cultures.
- Recently, June 21 was observed as International Yoga Day which coincided
with the summer solstice this year.
- June 21 - this day is referred to as the summer solstice, the longest day of the summer season.
- It occurs when the sun is directly over the Tropic of Cancer.
- The solstices and equinoxes symbolize the fertility of the land, agricultural and food production systems, cultural heritage and their millenary traditions.

**Background:**
- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) acknowledged that the celebration of those events is a mark of the unity of the cultural heritage and centuries-long traditions, and further play a significant role in strengthening the ties among peoples on the basis of mutual respect and the ideals of peace and good-neighbourliness.
- Therefore, UNGA adopted the resolution A/RES/73/300 on 20th June 2019 and proclaimed the 21st June of every year as the International Day of the Celebration of the Solstice in its different manifestations.

**About Solstice:**
- Solstice is that the point at which the Sun is at its greatest distance from the world and equinox is when space is that the lowest.
- Solstice is a word derived from the Latin sol (sun) and sistere (to stand still).
- Solstice is an astronomical event, caused by Earth's tilt on its axis and its motion in orbit around the sun.
- There are 2 solstice that occur in a year. They are Summer solstice and Winter solstice.

**Summer Solstice:**
- Summer Solstice falls on 21 June which marks the longest day of the year.
- The summer solstice occurs when the sun is directly over the Tropic of Cancer which is located at 23.5° latitude north and for every
place north of the Tropic of Cancer, the sun is at its highest point in the sky.

- It occurs at the moment when the earth’s tilt toward the sun is at a maximum, therefore, on the day of the summer solstice, the sun appears at its highest elevation with a noontime position that changes very little for several days before and after the summer solstice.

Winter solstice:

- Winter solstice that falls on 21 December.
- It marks the shortest day and longest night of the year.
- It is also known as the ‘first day of winter’ in the Northern Hemisphere as well as ‘Hiemal solstice or Hibernian solstice’.
- It occurs when the sun is directly over the Tropic of Capricorn, which is located at 23.5° south of the equator.

- An equinox is an event in which a planet’s subsolar point passes through its Equator.
- The Earth’s axis is tilted neither toward nor away from the sun, resulting in a “nearly” equal amount of daylight and darkness at all latitudes.
- The equinoxes are the only time when both the Northern and Southern Hemisphere experience roughly equal amounts of daytime and night time.
- The word Equinox is derived from the Latin aequinoctium, from aequus (equal) and nox (genitive noctis) (night).
- This occurs twice each year.
- Around 20 March known as Spring Equinox marks the beginning of Spring while around 23 September known as Autumn Equinox marks the beginning of Autumn.
World Hydrography Day 2021:
Every year the World Hydrography Day is observed on 21 June every year globally.

The day is observed to make the public aware of hydrography and the essential role that it plays in everyone’s life.

Theme of 2021:
The theme for 2021 WHD is “One hundred years of international cooperation in hydrography”.

Objective:
- The main objective of this day is to attract people’s attention to the work of the IHO at the international level.

- It is also celebrated to urge countries to work together to protect the marine environment and seek safe international navigation around the world.

History:
- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) accepted a resolution to celebrate World Hydrography Day on every June 21 in 2005.
- The day is organized by the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) since 2006 to publicise the work of hydrographers and the importance of hydrography.

What is hydrography?
Hydrography is the branch of applied sciences which deals with the measurement and description of the physical features of oceans, seas, coastal areas, lakes and rivers, as well as with the prediction of their change over time, for the primary purpose of safety of navigation and in support of all other marine activities, including economic development, security and
defense, scientific research, and environmental protection.

- Note: Alexander Dalrymple is the first Hydrographer of the Navy in the United Kingdom. He was appointed in 1795.

**Difference between hydrography and oceanography:**

I. The goal of hydrography is to map underwater topography (water levels and relief). It deals with the entire information chain, from data gathering at sea to map making.

II. Oceanography is concerned with the dynamic mechanisms of the water column: currents, waves and tides.

**About IHO:**

- The International Hydrographic Organization is an intergovernmental organization representing hydrography.
- The present name was adopted in 1970, as part of a new international Convention on the IHO adopted by the then member nations.
- The former name was International Hydrographic Bureau.
- The organization works to ensure all the world’s seas, oceans and navigable waters are surveyed and charted.
- It coordinates the activities of national hydrographic offices and promotes uniformity in nautical charts and documents.
- It was established on 21 June 1921.
- It is headquartered in Monte Carlo, Monaco.
- The current Secretary-General of IHO is Dr. Mathias Jonas.

**Blue Water Operations with a Green Footprint:** Indian Navy has adopted a comprehensive ‘Indian Navy Environment Conservation Roadmap (INECR)’
for synergizing the aim of ‘Blue Water Operations with a Green Footprint’.

**Highlights:**

- As a voluntary and environmentally responsible force, the Navy has always been involved in environmental and environmental protection initiatives.
- As a guardian of the sea, the Navy employs a large number of high-energy ships, submarines and aircraft.
- The Navy’s collaborative efforts to formulate and implement a number of policies aimed at energy efficiency and environmental protection have had clear positive results at all Navy facilities.

**Initiatives for Clean Green Navy:**

Some of the notable initiatives for Clean and green navy are as follows:

- Indian Navy commissioned one of its largest solar plant with a capacity of 3MW at Indian Naval Academy (INA), Ezhimala in July 2020.
- Another 2MW solar power plant was installed at Naval Station Karanja, Mumbai in July 2020.
- With this, the overall installed solar plant capacity at Naval Stations is 11 MW.
- The installation of SPVs are in line with Navy’s objective of fulfilling Govt of India’s ‘Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM)’ mission.
- Further, viability of setting up urban forests concepts such as Miyawaki forests is being emphasised to match the theme of World Environment Day 2021- ‘Ecosystem Restoration’

**About Miyawaki method of forest creation:**

- Miyawaki is a technique pioneered by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki (born 1928), that helps build dense, native forests.
- The approach is supposed to ensure that plant growth
is 10 times faster and the resulting plantation is 30 times denser than usual.

- It involves planting dozens of native species in the same area, and making them maintenance-free after the first three years.

- In July 2020, Union Environment Minister inaugurated a unique urban forest at the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) in New Delhi.

- This would be a dense urban forest with multiple tree layers including 12000 saplings of 59 indigenous species in another year or so.

- The Miyawaki method of forest creation is employed.

**About the INECR:**

- The Indian Navy formulated an environment conservation roadmap The Indian Navy Environment Conservation Roadmap’ (INECR).

- The INECR is aimed at reducing energy consumption and diversifying its supply

- It has been the guiding document and key enabler for progressively achieving this vision of the Indian Navy to add a Green Footprint to its Blue Water operations.

- In efforts to reduce carbon footprint, measures have been brought in force for a steady increase in utilisation of e-vehicles such as e-cycles, e-trolley and e-scooters.

- To promote the same, units observe ‘No Vehicle Days’ regularly and the concept of a ‘Vehicle Free Base’ is also being introduced in some Naval establishments.

- Solar photovoltaic projects have been one of the focus areas of the Navy since the inception of the INECR.

- Similarly, pilot projects utilizing wind or a mix of both solar and wind (hybrid) are also being taken up progressively, which will not only reduce carbon footprint but also
help achieve self-sustenance in energy security.

ICMED 13485 PLUS: Quality Council of India (QCI) and Association of Indian Manufacturers of Medical Devices (AiMeD) have launched “Indian Certification of Medical Devices Plus (ICMED) Scheme”.

ICMED scheme added further features to the ICMED Scheme that was launched in 2016 for Certification of Medical Devices.

About ICMED 13485 PLUS:

- This is the first scheme around the world in which quality management systems along with product certification standards are integrated with regulatory requirements.
- This scheme will be an end-to-end quality assurance scheme for the medical devices sector in India.

Significance of the scheme:

The scheme will not only assist procurement agencies to tackle challenges related to counterfeit products and fake certification but will also eliminate circulation and use of sub-standard medical products or devices of doubtful origin.

About Quality Council of India (QCI):

- Quality Council of India (QCI) was set up in 1997 jointly by the Government of India (GoI) and the Indian Industry represented by the three premier industry associations i.e. ASSOCHAM, CII and FICCI, to establish and operate national accreditation structure.
- It was established under Societies Registration Act in 1997 to provide accreditation services across different sectors for product, services and persons.
- The Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, is the nodal ministry for QCI.
- The Council is independent and works under the directions of its Governing Body (GB) having equal representation of government, industry and industry associations.
It does not get funded by the government and is a self-sustaining non-profit organization with its own Memorandum of Association (MOA) and Rules.

It is headquartered in New Delhi.

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved an agreement between India and Saint Vincent and The Grenadines for the exchange of tax information and assistance in the collection.

Key Details:

- This is for the first time that an Agreement has been approved between the Republic of India and Saint Vincent and The Grenadines.
- The Agreement mainly proposes to facilitate exchange of information between the two countries and to provide assistance to each other in collection of tax claims.
- It also contains tax examination abroad provisions which provide that a country may allow the representatives of the other country to enter its territory (to the extent permitted under its domestic laws) to interview individuals and examine records for tax purposes.

About Saint Vincent and the Grenadines:

- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, often simply referred to as Saint Vincent, is an island nation in the Caribbean.
- It is located in the southeast Windward Islands of the Lesser Antilles, which lie in the West Indies at the southern end of the eastern border of the Caribbean Sea where the latter meets the Atlantic Ocean.
- The capital of Saint Vincent is Kingstown. The currency used here is Eastern Caribbean dollar.
- The current Prime Minister of Saint Vincent is Ralph Gonsalves.

India and Saint Vincent: The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved an agreement between India and Saint Vincent and The Grenadines for the exchange of tax information and assistance in the collection.

Passport Seva Divas: Every Year, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) celebrates Passport Seva Divas (PSD) on June 24 every
year to commemorate the enactment of Passports Act on 24 June, 1967.

It was on this day in 1967 that the Passports Act, 1967 had come into effect.

In India, the first Passport Seva Divas was celebrated in 2013.

**Passport Act:**
- The Passport Act describes the procedures of getting Indian passport.
- The act replaced British Indian Passport and the Passport Act, 1920.
- By Article 9 of the Indian Constitution, the act does not allow dual citizenship. According to the act, if a person acquired foreign citizenship, he has to surrender his passport.

**About Passport:**
There are different types of passports issued under the Passport Act. They are as follows

1. **Official Passport**
2. **Ordinary Passport**
3. **Diplomatic Passport**

Under the act, travel documents are also provided. They are

1. **Certificate of Identity**
2. **Emergency Certificate to authorize a person to enter India**

**Who issues passports in India?**
- An Indian passport is issued by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs to Indian citizens for the purpose of international travel.
- It enables the bearer to travel internationally and serves as proof of Indian citizenship as per the Passports Act (1967).
- The Passport Seva (Passport Service) unit of the Consular, Passport & Visa (CPV) Division of the Ministry of External Affairs functions as the central passport organisation, and is responsible for issuing Indian passports on demand to all eligible Indian citizens.
- Indian passports are issued at 93 passport offices located across India and at 197 Indian diplomatic missions abroad.

**Additional Info:**
- On the occasion of PSD, Passport Seva Puraskars are also announced for the best performing Passport Offices and the personnel of the Service Provider.
- As Police verification is an important component of the process of issue of passport, special mention was made of the Police Departments for their efforts in providing speedy police clearances.

**Background:**
- The Ministry of External Affairs had constituted a working group cum assessment committee on Passport Seva Puraskar to deliberate upon and recommend the methodology of assessment for the award in 2016-17.
- The committee recommended the candidature for the award in
various disciplines that was approved by the ministry.

**MSDC**: Union Minister of State (I/C) for Port, Shipping and Waterways Shri Mansukh Mandaviya recently chaired the 18th meeting of the Maritime State Development Council (MSDC) through a video conference.

The meeting was organized by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

**About Maritime State Development Council (MSDC):**

- MSDC is an apex advisory body for the development of the Maritime sector.
- The council aims to ensure integrated development of Major and non-Major Ports.
- The MSDC was constituted in May 1997.
- It was constituted to assess in consultation with State Governments, the future development of existing and new Minor Ports by the respective Maritime States either directly or through captive users and private participation.

**JaanHaiToJahaanHai**: The Minority Affairs Minister, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi recently launched a nationwide “JaanHaiToJahaanHai” awareness campaign on Corona vaccination for rural and remote areas.

**Highlights:**

- This campaign aims to aware people of the Corona vaccination and to crush rumours and apprehensions related to Corona vaccination.
- It has been launched by the Ministry of Minority Affairs in association with various socio-educational organizations, NGOs, and Women Self Help Groups.
- Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi urged members of Central Waqf Council, Maulana Azad Education Foundation, and other social and educational institutions to take part in this awareness campaign.

**Note**: India is running the world’s largest Corona vaccination drive.

**International Labour Organization (ILO)**: Apurva Chandra, Secretary (Labour and Employment) recently completed his tenure as Chair of Governing Body of ILO.

**Key facts:**
• He held the position for the period October 2020- June 2021.
• India assumed the Chairmanship of the Governing Body of ILO after a gap of 35 years.

About International Labour Organization (ILO):

• About International Labour Organization (ILO):
• It is a United Nations (UN) agency.
• It deals with labour issues, particularly international labour standards, social protection, and work opportunities for all.
• It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
• Its Parent organization is Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.
• It is also a member of the United Nations Development Group (UNDP), a coalition of UN organization aimed at helping meet the Sustainable Development Goals.
• The ILO has 187 member states: 186 out of 193 UN member states plus the Cook Islands.

History:

• It was founded in 1919 as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I.
• In 1946, the ILO became a specialized agency of the newly formed United Nations.
• It is the only U.N. agency tripartite organization that brings together representatives of governments, employers and workers in its executive bodies.

• In 1969, ILO received the Nobel Peace Prize for improving fraternity and peace among nations.
• India is the founding member of ILO.

International Yoga Day 2021:

International Yoga Day is observed every year on June 21. This day is celebrated annually on June 21, since 2015.

The idea behind the day is to create awareness about yoga and its many benefits.

This year is the seventh edition of the International Yoga Day.

Theme of 2021:

The theme this of 2021 is 'Yoga for wellness'. The theme focuses on practising Yoga for physical as well as mental wellbeing.

Highlights:

• On the occasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, “When whole world is combating Covid-19 pandemic, yoga remains a ray of hope.”
• Prime Minister launched “mYoga app” and gave the mantra of “Yog se
Sahyog Tak*and it will be available worldwide.

- This app is a great example of fusion of modern technology & ancient science.
- mYoga app was launched in collaboration with WHO.
- The ministry of culture will organize a special drive named 'Yoga An Indian Heritage' at 75 cultural heritage locations.
- India Post will issue a special cancellation stamp on all mail booked on June 21 to capture the essence of International Yoga Day.
- The special pictorial cancellation stamp will be an inked marking or impression with a graphical design with International Day of Yoga 2021 written in both Hindi and English.

**About mYoga App:**

- mYoga App will provide yoga training videos in different languages for people worldwide. It will also help in achieving the motto of 'One World, One Health'.

**Background:**

- On December 11, 2014, the United Nations General Assembly had declared June 21 as 'International Day of Yoga', months after PM Modi had proposed the idea.
- June 21st was suggested because it is the longest day of year in Northern Hemisphere & having a special significance across the world.

**Hydrogen Task Force:** India and the United States jointly launched a hydrogen task force under their Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (SCEP) to boost India’s energy security efforts.

This was informed by US India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF).

**About US-India Hydrogen Task Force:**

- The US India Hydrogen Task Force is a high-level bi-lateral collaboration between the US Department of Energy (DOE) and the Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
- This Task Force was jointly launched by the DOE, MNRE and the USISPF.
- The Inaugural Session of the launch discusses high-level priorities for the task force.
- It was attended by senior government officials from India and the US and representatives from US India Strategic Partnership Forum, the Secretariat for the Task Force.
- It was constituted with the aim of serving as a forum to achieve affordable hydrogen solutions.
- It seeks to enhance energy security & resilience by boosting up low or zero-carbon hydrogen technologies & deployment.
Key Details:

- The Task Force will represent industry and government stakeholders and will mainly assess technology status, study innovative policy options and make recommendations.
- It will bridge government research with unique industry perspectives which will help in reaching the goals of decarbonizing, high-polluting industrial sectors and achieving a greener & cleaner planet.
- It will strengthen focused public, private cooperation between both the countries and make way for accelerated development & deployment of hydrogen energy technologies.
- It will bring industries and academy together with an aim of integrating private sector inputs to bring latest technology & adopt business models to develop and deploy hydrogen technologies.

Background:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Joseph Biden agreed to launch a high-level India-US Partnership during the Leaders’ Summit on Climate on April 22, 2021.
- The partnership envisages bilateral cooperation on strong actions in the current decade to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Nikol Pashinyan: Armenia’s acting Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan, and his Civil Contract Party won a parliamentary election.

Highlights:

- He won the elections with 53.92 per cent votes.
- Pashinyan had earlier claimed victory in on 20th June 2021 election based on preliminary results, with his party taking an early lead over its closest challenger, the Armenia Alliance, led by former President Robert Kocharyan.
- Former President Robert Kocharyan’s Armenia Alliance trailed on 21.04% votes.
- Pashinyan, a 46-year-old former journalist who came to power after leading large street protests in 2018 that ousted his predecessor, continued to enjoy broad support despite the humiliating defeat, with fewer Armenians willing to vote for those who ran the country before him.

About Armenia:

- Armenia, officially the Republic of Armenia, is a landlocked country located in the Armenian Highlands of Western Asia.
It is a part of the Caucasus region. It is bordered by Turkey to the west, Georgia to the north, the Lachin corridor under a Russian peacekeeping force and Azerbaijan to the east, and Iran and the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchivan to the south.

Armenia is a unitary, multi-party, democratic nation-state with an ancient cultural heritage.

The capital is Yerevan (Erevan).

The currency used here is Armenian dram.

Ebrahim Raisi: Ebrahim Raisi has won the 2021 Iranian presidential election.

Highlights:

He is set to become Iran’s president after winning 62 per cent of the vote with about 90 per cent of ballots counted.

The 60-year-old Raisi will succeed Hassan Rouhani in August 2021, to begin his four-year term.

About Ebrahim Raisi:

Raisi first came to prominence when he became the Prosecutor General of Karaj in 1980, when he was 20 years old.

He then became the Prosecutor of Tehran and the First Deputy to the Head of Judiciary from 2004 to 2014 after which he became the Prosecutor General of Iran from 2014 to 2016.

In 2019, Raisi was appointed the head of Iran’s judiciary, an appointment that sparked concerns because of his involvement in the mass executions of thousands of political prisoners in 1988 after the Iran-Iraq war.

About Iran:

Iran also called Persia, and officially the Islamic Republic of Iran is a country in Western Asia.

It is bordered to the northwest by Armenia and Azerbaijan, to the north by the Caspian Sea, to the northeast by Turkmenistan, to the east by Afghanistan and Pakistan, to the south by the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, and to the west by Turkey and Iraq.

Its central location in Eurasia and Western Asia, and its proximity to the Strait of Hormuz, give it geostrategic importance.

The capital of Iran is Tehran.

The currency used there is Iranian Rial.

The current President of Iran is Ebrahim Raisi.

International Day of the Seafarer: The International Maritime Organization (IMO) celebrates the International Day of the Seafarer on June 25 every year.

Highlights:
The day is celebrated by IMO to recognize the invaluable contribution seafarers make to world trade and the economy by conducting sea transport.

This year is the 11th anniversary of the International Day of the Seafarer.

Theme of 2021 Day of the Seafarer:

The theme of the 2021 campaign is “Seafarers: at the core of shipping’s future”.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) on this day has called seafarers to answer questions on what a fair future for seafarers looks like.

The campaign aims to discuss "issues that will still be relevant to seafarers after the pandemic, such as fair treatment of seafarers, fair working conditions, fair training, fair safety, etc."

Seafarers have been on the COVID-19 frontlines, maintaining the flow of vital goods, such as food, fuel and medical supplies.

Significance of International Day of the Seafarer:

The day celebrates and recognizes the unique contribution made by seafarers globally to international seaborne trade, civil society and the world economy.

The day also encourages governments, shipping organizations, companies, ship owners and all other parties concerned to duly and appropriately promote Day of the Seafarer and take action to celebrate it meaningfully.

The day also aims to recognize the risks and personal costs they bear while on their jobs.

Another purpose is to bring global attention to the issues affecting their work and lives, such as piracy.

About International Maritime Organization (IMO):

IMO is the United Nations specialized agency which is responsible for regulating shipping, safety and security of shipping and prevention of marine pollution by ships.

It was established on 17 March 1948.

It is headquartered in London, United Kingdom (UK).

Its Parent organization is United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
India and Denmark: Denmark has recently signed the International Solar Alliance Framework Agreement (ISA FA) and Instrument of Ratification with India.

- Denmark has become the first country to ratify International Solar Alliance Framework Agreement (ISA FA) after amendments in the ISA FA entered into force on January 8, 2021.

International Solar Alliance (ISA):

- ISA is an alliance of 121 countries.
- It was initiated by India.
- Most of member countries are sunshine countries located completely or partly between Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn.
- It is a treaty-based intergovernmental organization.
- ISA is the largest grouping of states, after United Nations.

Objective of ISA:

- ISA was established with the objective of working for efficient consumption of solar energy in a bid to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

Background:

- ISA initiative was first proposed by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his speech in November 2015 at Wembley Stadium.
- During his speech, he referred the sunshine countries as Suryaputra.

Who can join ISA?

- ISA is primarily an alliance of countries lying between Tropics.
- However, countries which do not fall within the Tropics can join alliance and enjoy all benefits as other members, except the voting rights.

ISA Framework agreement (ISA FA):

- ISA FA was opened for signatures in Marrakech, Morocco in November 2016. It was joined by 200 countries.

About Denmark:

- Denmark officially the Kingdom of Denmark, is a Nordic country in Northern Europe.
- It is a Scandinavian country comprising the Jutland Peninsula and around 406 islands.
- It is bordered to the west by the North Sea, and its islands are located on the sea lane from the Baltic to the main oceans of the world, as well as the trade route from the Nordic countries to Central Europe.
- It is an independent country since the late 10th century and is also one of the oldest states of Europe.
- The capital of Denmark is Copenhagen.
- The currency used here is Danish Krone.
The current prime minister of Denmark is Mette Frederiksen.

The current President of FAO is Director-General QU Dongyu.

Initiatives of FAO:

- World Food Summits are convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- The first food summit, the "World Food Conference", took place in Rome in 1974.
- The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) is a 1951 multilateral treaty overseen by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

About FAO:

- The FAO is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger and improve nutrition and food security.
- Its Latin motto, fiat panis, translates to "let there be bread".
- It was founded in 1945.
- It completed 75 years of service to humanity on 16th Oct 2020.
- The FAO is headquartered in Rome, Italy.
- It is composed of 197 member states.
- It is governed by a biennial conference representing each member country and the European Union, which elects a 49-member executive council.

Economic Advisory Council:
The Tamil Nadu government has decided to constitute an "Economic Advisory Council" to the Chief Minister to chart out a
rapid and inclusive economic growth path for the State.

This was recently announced by Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit in his ceremonial address during the first session of the 16th state legislative assembly in Chennai.

Key Details:

- Advisory council will comprise of leading economic experts from across the world as its members.
- The Economic Advisory Council includes the following-
  - Nobel laureate Esther Duflo of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
  - Former Reserve Bank Governor Raghuram Rajan,
  - Former Chief Economic Advisor to the Centre, Aravind Subramanian
  - Development Economist Jean Dreze
  - Former Union Finance Secretary S. Narayan.

Purpose of the council:

- On the basis of recommendations of this council, government will revitalise economy in the state and ensure that benefits of economic growth reach all segments of society.

About Tamil Nadu:

- It is located in the extreme south of the subcontinent.
- It is bounded by the Indian Ocean to the east and south and by the states of Kerala to the west, Karnataka (formerly Mysore) to the northwest, and Andhra Pradesh to the north.
- It was formerly the Madras Presidency of British India but was renamed Madras (State) after independence in 1947. Madras (State) was again renamed Tamil Nadu in 1968.
- Its Capital is Chennai.
- The Governor and Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu are Banwarilal Purohit and M. K. Stalin respectively.
Language Learning programme: Lok Sabha Speaker Shri Om Birla virtually inaugurated an online Indian and foreign language learning course for Members of Parliament, State / UT Legislatures, Officials and their families, organized by the Lok Sabha Secretariat at the Parliament House Complex on 22 June 2021.

Key Details:
According to an official release, the Parliamentary Research and Training Institute for Democracies (PRIDE), Lok Sabha Secretariat will organize Online Indian and Foreign Language Learning programme.

Along with 22 Indian languages included in 8th Schedule of the Constitution, Online learning classes will also be held for six foreign languages – French, German, Japanese, Russian, Portuguese and Spanish.

Classes of Guajarati, Bengali, Kannada, Malayalam Marathi, Odia, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Sanskrit will commence from July 5 onwards. Classes of Assamese, Kashmiri, Sindhi, Urdu, Santhali, Nepali, Meitei ( Manipuri), Bodo, Dogri, Konkani, Maithili and Punjabi will start from July 12 onwards.

Ambassadors of France, Germany, Japan, Portugal, Russia and Spain virtually joined the inauguration session and appreciated the initiative of the Lok Sabha Speaker.

CWC-CRWC Merger: The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently approved the merger of Central Railside Warehouse Company Limited (CRWC) with Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC)
in order to unify similar functions of both the companies.

The decision of this merger is another step towards implementing the direction of “Minimum Government Maximum Governance” given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, promoting ease of doing business and bringing private sector efficiencies in public sector undertakings (PSUs).

**Aim:**

Companies were merged with the aim of improving efficiency and increase financial savings.

**Significance of the merger:**

- The merger will unify similar functions of both the companies (warehousing, handling, transportation) through a single administration to promote efficiency, optimum capacity utilization, transparency, accountability, ensure financial savings and leverage railway siding for new warehousing capacities.

- It is estimated that management expenditure of Railside Warehouse Complexes (RWCs) will come down by Rs. 5 crore due to savings in the corporate office rent, salary of employees, and other administrative costs.

- It will help in setting up at least 50 more Railside warehouses near goods-shed locations.

- This in turn will generate employment opportunities for 36,500-man days for skilled workers and 9,12,500-man days for unskilled workers.

- The capacity utilization of RWCs will also improve as there will be potential for CWC to store commodities other than commodities of cement, fertiliser, sugar, salt and soda being stored presently.

**About Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC):**

- CWC is a Mini-Ratna Category-I CPSE.

- It is a statutory body which was established under "The
- It is a public warehouse operator established by the Government of India (GoI) in 1957 for the purpose of warehousing of agriculture produce and certain other commodities notified by the Central Government and for matters connected there with.
- It is headquartered in New Delhi.

Central Railside Warehouse Company Limited (CRWC):
- CRWC is a Mini-Ratna Category-II Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSE).
- It was incorporated on 10th July 2007 under the Companies Act, 1956.
- CRWC was formed by CWC as a separate subsidiary company to plan, develop, promote, acquire and operate Railside Warehousing Complexes (RWCs) / Terminals / Multimodal Logistics Hubs on land leased from Railways or acquired otherwise.

Delimitation exercise in Jammu and Kashmir: Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a meeting with various political leaders from Jammu and Kashmir in New Delhi on June 24, 2021 where he backed the delimitation exercise and grassroots democracy in J&K.

This was the first such meeting after the withdrawal of Article 370 and the division of the erstwhile state into two union territories in August 2019.

Key Points:
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated his government’s commitment to fostering grassroots democracy in Jammu and Kashmir during his meeting with 14 leaders of eight mainstream political parties.
At the meet, he sought their cooperation in first completing the delimitation exercise for Assembly seats in the Union Territory, which would eventually lead to elections.

He assured them that his intent was to remove both “Dilli ki doori (distance from Delhi)” and “dil ki doori (distance of the heart)”. It was discussed that elections could only be held after the delimitation process was completed and there was general understanding on the roadmap from delimitation to elections and full statehood.

**How often has delimitation been carried out in J&K?**

- Delimitation exercises in J&K in the past have been slightly different from those in the rest of the country because of the region’s special status — which was scrapped by the Centre in August 2019.
- Until then, delimitation of Lok Sabha seats in J&K was governed by the Constitution of India, but the delimitation of the state’s Assembly seats was governed by the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution and Jammu and Kashmir
Representation of the People Act, 1957.
- The last exercise was conducted by the Justice (retired) K K Gupta Commission when the state was under President’s Rule and was based on the 1981 census, which formed the basis of the state elections in 1996.

Persons in News

Appointment:

Aashish Chandorkar: The Indian Government has appointed a private person Aashish Chandorkar as Counsellor in India’s Permanent Mission in the World Trade Organisation for three years.

Highlights:
- It will be the first time that a private person has been appointed to the mission.
- Aashish Chandorkar is the co-founder of Bengaluru-based think tank Smahi Foundation of Policy and Research.

About WTO:
- It is an acronym of World Trade Organization.
- WTO is largest international economic organization that is concerned with the regulation of international trade between nations.
- It is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations.
- It was founded on 1 January 1995 under the Marrakesh Agreement, signed by 123 nations on 15 April 1994, replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which commenced in 1948.
- It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The WTO has over 164 members representing 98 per cent of world trade.
- India is a member since 1995.

About Marrakesh Agreement:
- The Marrakesh Agreement was signed after the Marrakesh Declaration in April 1994. The agreement was signed in Marrakesh, Morocco.
- The agreement was signed by 123 nations in April 1994.
- The Marrakesh Agreement had replaced the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).
The agreement is supplemented by agreements on issues like sanitary and phytosanitary measures, trade in services, intellectual property rights etc.

**Pratima Murthy:** Senior psychiatrist Dr Pratima Murthy, head of Department of Psychiatry, National Institute of Mental Health & Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru has recently been appointed as Director of the Institute for a period of five years.

**Key Points:**

- She will retire in March 2026.
- She was awarded the WHO Regional Director’s Special Recognition Award on ‘World No Tobacco Day 2021’.
- She has been appointed by NIMHANS on the approval of the central government as the full-term director of the institute of national importance after Prof and Head of Neurology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).
- Dr Padma Srivastava could not assume the top office due to some technical reasons.

**Upasana Kamineni:** WWF India has recently inducted Upasana Kamineni, Director, Apollo Hospitals, as “Ambassador of Forest Frontline Heroes” with the aim to appreciate the efforts of frontline workers in hospitals and in the wildlife protection space.

**Key Points:**

- The focus of this will be on several States across the country covering most eco-regions.
- Frontline forest staffs are often local community members themselves and play an important role in building an interface between communities and conservation.

**About Upasana Kamineni:**

- Upasana Kamineni or Upasana Kamineni Konidela (born on 20th July 1989) is an Indian entrepreneur and Vice-Chairperson of Apollo Life.
- She is the Editor-in-chief of B Positive Magazine as well.
- Her husband is the famous actor Ram Charan.
Awards:

❖ Mahatma Gandhi Award for Leadership in Corporate Social Responsibility in 2019
❖ Dadasaheb Phalke – Philanthropist of the Year Award in 2019
❖ Femina Recognition in Healthcare Awards in 2017

About WWF India:

- WWF India was founded in 1969.
- It is headquartered in New Delhi.

Karim Khan: British lawyer Karim Khan was recently sworn in as the new chief prosecutor for the International Criminal Court, pledging to reach out to nations that are not members of the court and to try to hold trials in countries where crimes are committed.

In the past, he has defended clients at international courts including former Liberian President Charles Taylor & Kenya’s Deputy President William Ruto.

About Karim Khan:

- Karim Khan is a 51-year-old English lawyer.
- He has years of experience in international courts as a prosecutor, investigator and defence attorney.
- He takes over from Fatou Bensouda of the Gambia, whose nine-year term ended.

About International Criminal Court (ICC):

- International Criminal Court (ICC) is a permanent judicial body established by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998) to prosecute and adjudicate individuals accused of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.
- It is an independent international organization, and is not part of the UN system.
- It was created to bring justice to the world's worst war criminals, but debate over the court still rages.
- The ICC was founded on 1st July 2002.
- This court is headquartered in The Hague, the Netherlands.

Member States:

- 123 countries are States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- Out of them 33 are African States, 19 are Asia-Pacific States, 18 are from Eastern Europe, 28 are from Latin American and Caribbean States, and 25 are from Western European and other States.
European Inventor Award: Indian-American chemist Sumita Mitra has recently been honoured with the European Inventor Award 2021 in the ‘Non-European Patent Office countries’ category.

- She was the first to have successfully integrated nanotechnology into dental materials to produce stronger and more aesthetically pleasing fillings.

About the award:

- The award is one of Europe’s most prestigious innovation prizes.
- It is presented annually by the European Patent Office (EPO) to recognise outstanding inventors from Europe and beyond.

CEU Open Society Prize: The former Health Minister of Kerala KK Shailaja, has been awarded The Central European University (CEU) Open Society Prize for 2021.

Highlights:

- The University’s highest honour was given to her at a virtual convocation of the University’s 30th Graduation Ceremony that was held from Vienna.
- The award was presented to her in recognition of “her determined leadership and community-based public health work, saving lives during the pandemic”.
- She demonstrates to the world that determined leadership, community-based public health and effective communication can save lives.

About KK Shailaja:

- KK Shailaja is an Indian politician.
- She is the former Health Minister of Kerala (2016-2021).
- Currently, She is a member of the Legislative Assembly who represented the Mattanur constituency at the 15th Kerala Legislative Assembly elections.
- She is a member of the Central Committee of CPI(M).
- She has been elected from the Kuthuparamba constituency twice in 1996 and 2016, and from the Peravoor constituency in 2006.
- The United Nations (UN) had also honoured her in June 2020 for her efforts and strategies at tackling the COVID-19 pandemic.
• She was invited as a speaker at the UN Public Service Day.

About the award:

• It is the highest civilian award by CEU.
• The CEU’s Open Society Prize is awarded annually to an individual or organisation “whose achievements have contributed substantially to the creation of an open society”.
• The Open Society Prize award was first given in 1994 to philosopher Sir Karl Popper who wrote the book titled Open Society and its Enemies (1945) representing a philosophy of openness, tolerance, and democratic values.
• The previous recipients of this prestigious award includes:
  o Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Prize laureate and economist,
  o Vaclav Havel, Former President of the Czech Republic,
  o Antjie Krog, Poet and journalist,
  o Ricardo Lagos, Former President of Chile,
  o Kofi Annan, Former UN Secretary-General,
  o Martti Ahtisaari, Former President of Finland Nobel Peace Prize Laureate,
  o Joachim Gauk, former President of Germany,
  o Janos Kornai, Hungarian economist,
  o Medicins Sans Frontiers,
  o Svetlana Alexievich, 2015 Nobel Prize Literature, Belarusian investigative journalist, oral historian, and essayist

About Central European University:

• CEU was founded in 1991 by George Soros.
• He was a Hungarian-born political activist and billionaire philanthropist based on his vision of a unique institution that would train future generations of scholars, professionals, politicians, and civil society leaders “to contribute to building open and democratic societies that respect human rights and adhere to the rule of law”.

Orbituaries:

Guruprasad Mohapatra: He was the Secretary in the Department of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

He recently passed away due to COVID-19 related complications.

Before being appointed as DPIIT secretary in August 2019, Mohapatra served as Chairman of the Airports Authority of India (AAI).

He was a Gujarat cadre 1986 batch IAS officer, who had earlier served as joint secretary in the Department of Commerce.
Swamitva Scheme in Assam:
The Assam government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Survey of India for implementing the Swamitva scheme in the state.

Key Points:
- The MoU was signed between Assam, Director of Land, Records and Survey, Shantanu P Gotmare, and Director Assam and Nagaland, Survey of India.
- The scheme aims at providing an integrated property validation solution for rural areas.
- Scheme will be implemented by Assam Government’s Department of Revenue and Disaster Management and the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj with the support of Panchayat and Rural Development.
- Survey of India is the technology partner. It will take steps for survey of inhabited rural land by drone as well as establishment of ground based control stations to enable a detailed spatial database of properties in rural areas.
- This scheme is expected to reduce property related disputes in rural areas and legal cases.

About Swamitva Scheme:
- This scheme was launched on April 24, 2020 on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day.
- It was rolled out across India on April 24, 2021.
- It would provide ‘record of rights’ to village household owners who are possessing houses in inhabited rural areas in villages. This in turn, would enable the villagers to use their property as financial asset to take loans and other
financial benefits from banks.

About Assam:

- Assam is a state in northeastern India known for its wildlife, archeological sites and tea plantations.
- It is situated south of the eastern Himalayas along the Brahmaputra and Barak River valleys.
- Its capital is Dispur.
- The current Governor and the Chief Minister of Assam are Professor Jagdish Mukhi and Himanta Biswas Sarma respectively.

About Survey of India:

- The Survey of India is India's central engineering agency in charge of mapping and surveying.
- It was set up in 1767 to help consolidate the territories of the British East India Company.
- The National Survey and Mapping Organization of the country under the Department of Science & Technology, is the oldest scientific department of the Government of India (GoI).
- Its members are from Survey of India Service cadre of Civil Services of India and Army Officers from the Indian Army Corps of Engineers.
- It is headed by the Surveyor General of India.
- The Survey of India is headquartered at Dehra Dun, Uttarakhand.
- Currently, Survey of India is headed by Sh. Naveen Tomar.

Function:

- In its assigned role as the Nation's principal mapping agency, Survey of India bears a special responsibility to ensure that the country's domain is explored and mapped suitably to provide base maps for expeditious and integrated development and ensure that all resources contribute their full measure to the progress, prosperity and security of our country now and for generations to come.
IPDS: A 50 kWp Solar roof top was inaugurated in Solan, Himachal Pradesh under the IPDS (Integrated power development scheme) of Ministry of Power, Government of India (GoI).

Highlights:

❖ The IPDS was inaugurated as a part of ‘Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav’ celebrations, marking 75 years of India’s independence.
❖ The 50 kWp Solar roof top project is commissioned by Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board Ltd (HPSEBL).
❖ The project further reinforces the ‘Go Green’ Initiative of GoI envisaged in the Urban Distribution scheme.

About IPDS:

❖ Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS) was launched in the year 2014 by Ministry of Power, GoI.

Eligibility:

❖ All Discoms are eligible for financial assistance under the scheme.

Objectives:

The following are the objectives of IPDS.

❖ 24x7 Power supplies for consumers.
❖ Reduction of AT&C (aggregate technical and commercial) losses.
❖ Providing access to power to all households.

It has following components:

❖ Strengthening of sub-transmission and distribution networks in the urban areas.
❖ Metering of distribution transformers/feeder/consumers in the urban areas.
❖ IT enablement of distribution sector and strengthening of distribution network under R-APDRP for 12th and 13th Plans by carrying forward the approved outlay for R-APDRP to IPDS.
❖ Schemes for Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and IT enablement of the distribution sector.

Note: ERP helps in integrating the important parts of a business.

❖ Scope of IT enablement has been extended to all 4041 towns as per Census 2011.
❖ Underground cabling to include additional demand of States and smart metering solution for performing UDAY States and Solar panels on Govt. buildings with net-metering are also permissible under the scheme.

Power Sector in India:

❖ India’s power sector is one of the most diversified in the world. Sources of power generation range from conventional sources such as coal, lignite, natural gas, oil, hydro
and nuclear power to viable non-conventional sources such as wind, solar, and agricultural and domestic waste.

- India is the third-largest producer and second-largest consumer of electricity in the world.
- The Ministry of Power is primarily responsible for the development of electrical energy in the country.
- Electricity is a concurrent subject (Seventh Schedule of the Constitution).

**About Himachal Pradesh:**

- Himachal Pradesh is a northern Indian state in the Himalayas.
- It is situated in the Western Himalayas, it is one of the eleven mountain states of India. Himachal Pradesh shares borders with the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh to the north, and the states of Punjab to the west, Haryana to the southwest, and Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh to the south.
- The state also has a border with the autonomous region of Tibet to the east.
- Its summer capital is Shimla and winter capital is Dharamshala.
- The current Governor and Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh are Bandaru Dattatreya and Jai Ram Thakur respectively.

**Ashirbad:** It is a new scheme named ‘Ashirbad’ recently announced by Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for the education, health and maintenance of Covid orphans.

**Highlights of this scheme:**

- Under the scheme, Rs 2500 per month will be deposited in the bank accounts of family members who have taken the responsibility for the children after the death of their parents.
- The government will continue to give the assistance till the child turns 18.
- Children who lost their parents or the main earning person of the family on April 1, 2020, or thereafter to Covid-19 will be eligible to be covered under the scheme.
- Such children under distress have been divided into the following three categories:
  1. Those who have lost both their parents
  2. Those who have lost either father or mother
  3. Those whose main earning member of the family, either father or mother have died.

**Odisha:**

www.civilserviceindia.com
Odisha also formerly Orissa, is an Indian state located on the eastern coast of India.

It neighbors the states of West Bengal and Jharkhand to the north, Chhattisgarh to the west and Andhra Pradesh to the south.

It is an eastern Indian state on the Bay of Bengal.

The capital of Odisha is Bhubaneswar.

The Governor and the Chief Minister of Odisha are Ganeshi Lal and Naveen Patnaik respectively.

Committee for Safety of Fishers: The Fisheries Department of Kerala has constituted a seven-member committee to study and submit report on methods to resolve issues related to safety at sea.

About the committee:

- The Committee is headed by P. Sahadevan who was former additional director of fisheries.
- The Committee will study and submit report on methods to resolve issues related to safety at sea, coastal security and vessel monitoring systems (VMS).
- It will also look after illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.
- Committee will also analyze the “latest trends and internationally available options” as a part of its study.

Who are the members of committee?

The Committee also comprises of Superintendent of Police (Marine Enforcement); Joint executive director of Agency for Development of Aquaculture (ADAK); Joint director & assistant directors (projects) of Fisheries Department and Registrar of Kerala University of Fisheries & Ocean Studies (KUFOS).

Why committee was constituted?

The committee was constituted by Kerala’s Fisheries department as long-term solution because of increasing instances of fishing-related accidents at sea, especially during monsoons; problems related to coastal security and illegal & unregulated fishing.

What are the concerns?

- Safety has become a matter of overriding concern with overfishing in the territorial waters prompting fishers to venture into the deep-sea regions.
- Currently, only fishing boats owned by entrepreneurs have been equipped with electronic safety aids.
- As a result, fishermen going astray across the ocean are pulled away by strong currents.
- They end up landing in neighbouring coastal countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan.
- Further, porous coastline poses a threat on national security. So, an effective vessel monitoring and surveillance system in Kerala is
need of the hour to resolve these issues.

**About Kerala:**

- It is a state on the southwestern Malabar Coast of India.
- It was formed on 1 November 1956, following the passage of the States Reorganisation Act, by combining Malayalam-speaking regions of the erstwhile states of Travancore-Cochin and Madras.
- It is bordered by Karnataka to the north and northeast, Tamil Nadu to the east and south, and the Lakshadweep Sea to the west.
- Its capital is Thiruvananthapuram.
- The current Governor and Chief Minister of Kerala are Arif Mohammad Khan and Pinarayi Vijayan respectively.

**Mizoram Health Systems Strengthening Project:**

Government of India (GoI), Government of Mizoram and the World Bank have recently signed a loan agreement of worth $32 million for Mizoram Health Systems Strengthening Project.

The project aims to improve management capacity and quality of health services in Mizoram.

**About Mizoram Health Systems Strengthening Project:**

- This project will strengthen governance and management structure of Department of Health & Family Welfare (DoHFW) and its subsidiaries.
- It will also improve quality & coverage of services delivered by state government health systems.
- The project would also invest in comprehensive Quality Assurance program, which would enable quality certification of health facilities.
- The following are the key focus of this project:
  - To strengthen the effectiveness of state health insurance programme
  - To build synergies with Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY);
  - To reduce financial barriers in accessing hospital services
  - To prevent catastrophic out of pocket expenditure for health by poor families
  - To expand coverage.

Mizoram Health Systems Strengthening Project will benefit people across eight districts of the state.

It will also benefit health sector staff at secondary and primary level by strengthening their planning & management capacity and building their clinical skills & competencies.

**Bio-medical waste management:**
Project will also invest in improving overall ecosystem for solid & liquid bio-medical waste management.

It will include segregation, disinfection, and collection besides safeguarding environment.

It will also improve quality of health service and patient safety.

World Bank:

The World Bank is an international financial institution that provides loans and grants to the governments of poorer countries for the purpose of pursuing capital projects.

It comprises two institutions which are the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the International Development Association.

It is headquartered in Washington, D.C., United States.

It was founded on July 1944 by John Maynard Keynes and Harry Dexter White. Its main aim is providing financing, advice, and research to developing nations to aid their economic advancement.

The bank predominantly acts as an organization that attempts to fight poverty by offering developmental assistance to middle- and low-income countries.

The current President of World Bank is David Malpass.

Mizoram:

Mizoram is a mountainous region which became the 23rd state of the Indian Union in February 1987.

It is a state in northeastern India.

Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2021: The Central Government has amended the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994 to provide a statutory mechanism for redressal of grievances and complaints of citizens relating to content broadcast by television channels in accordance with the provisions of the Cable Television Network Act, 1995.

The Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry notified the Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2021 in an official gazette.
Details:

- The Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2021, provides for a three-level grievance redressal mechanism. They are as follows:
  - Self-regulation by broadcasters,
  - Self-regulation by the self-regulating bodies of the broadcasters
  - Oversight by an Inter-Departmental Committee at the level of the Central government.

- A viewer could file a complaint directly to the broadcaster, who would have to respond within 15 days.

- The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) will hear complaints regarding the violation of the advertising code, take a decision within 60 days of the receipt of a complaint and communicate the same to the broadcaster and the complainant.

- If the complainant was not satisfied with the response, the complaint could be escalated to the self-regulating bodies set up by TV channels, which should deal with the case in 60 days.

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the self-regulating body, he may, within 15 days of such decision, prefer an appeal to the Central government for its consideration under the Oversight Mechanism.

- Such appeals would be dealt with by the Inter-Departmental Committee set up under the Oversight Mechanism.

- The Committee would be headed by the Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and have members from the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Home Ministry, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and representatives of other Ministries and organizations, including experts, as the Centre may decide.

- This third tier was not only kept aside to hear the appeals, it could take up complaints that come directly to the Centre.

**Toycathon 2021 Grand Finale:**

Union Minister Women and Child Development and Textiles (MoWCD) Smriti Zubin Irani and Minister of State for Education Sanjay Dhotre virtually inaugurated Toycathon 2021 grand finale on 22 June 2021.

**Highlights:**

- The Toycathon 2021 is being organized jointly by Ministry of Education in coordination with five other Ministries viz: Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Ministry of Commerce &Industry, Ministry of
Small and Medium Enterprises, and Ministry of Textiles.

- This inter-ministerial Toycathon focuses on conceptualizing new and innovative toys using local materials which are economical, affordable, safe, environment friendly, with exceptional high quality for both Indian and global markets.

- About 17749 individual teams submitted the ideas at Toycathon 2021.

The ongoing Toy Hackathon have 3 tracks:

**Track 1** for Junior Level Participants i.e., primarily SCHOOL STUDENTS. They mainly focus on designing toys for kids of age group 0-3 years and 4-10 years.

**Track 2** for Senior Level Participants i.e., students and faculty from Higher education institutions. This group focus on developing concepts for 0-3 years, 4-10 and 11 years and above. This segment primarily focused on Electronics, Sensors, Mechatronics, and toys based on AI and ML approaches, AR-VR-XR and Robotics.

**Track 3** for Startup-Professional Level that incudes overall innovation and development of prototypes. These prototypes are expected to enable toy industry in boosting up the production along with improving the quality of toys in Indian market.

**About the Toycathon Grand Finale:**

- During three-day Toycathon 2021 grand finale, participating teams of all tracks will be mentored through specialized mentoring session in morning half of the day and then they will be evaluated in later half of the day for initial two days and then there will be a power judging round for participating teams to declare winners for Toycathon 2021 Digital Edition.

- For this purpose, Ministry of Education Innovation Cell has engaged 645 mentors and evaluators for 1567 participating teams.

- 85 Nodal centers have been selected to support Ministry of Educations Innovation Cell and All India Council for Technical Education, which are the organizing agencies for this Inter-ministerial Toycathon.

**Background:**

- Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank and Union Minister for WCD and Textiles Smriti Zubin Irani had jointly launched Toycathon-2021 on 7 January 2021.

- The initiative aims to tap India’s one billion dollar toy market, involving innovative prowess of the country’s 33 crore students.

- The ministers also launched the Toycathon portal that conceptualizes innovative toys based on the Indian value system which inculcates the positive behaviour and good values among the children.

- The launch of Toycathon is an endeavor by the government to create an ecosystem for the domestic toy industry and the local manufacturers, tapping the untapped resources and utilizing their potential.
NIOS: Minister of State for Education Shri Sanjay Dhotre recently launched National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) Diploma course in Yogic Science on the occasion of International Day of Yoga.

About NIOS:

- The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) was formerly known as National Open School.
- NIOS is the National board of education under the Government of India (GoI).
- It is an autonomous institute under Ministry of Education.
- It was established on 3 November 1989 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) to provide education to all segments of society under the motive to increase literacy and aimed forward for flexible learning.
- It is headquartered in Noida, Uttar Pradesh (UP).
- It administers examinations for Secondary and Senior Secondary examinations similar to the CBSE and the CISCE.
- It also offers vocational courses after the high school.

How does NIOS Function?

- NIOS operates through a network of five Departments, Regional Centres and Accredited Institutions (Study Centres) in India and abroad.

Enrolment:

It has a current enrolment of about 2.71 million students at Secondary, Senior Secondary & Vocational levels which make it the largest open schooling system in the world.

International collaboration and overseas centres:

- The NIOS collaborates with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and UNESCO.
- It also has study centres for Indian expatriates in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Canada, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Australia, Nepal, United Kingdom (UK), New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore and the United States of America (USA).

NISHTHA Programme: Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) has recently collaborated with National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to provide trainings to 120 Eklavya Model Residential
Schools (EMRSs) teachers and principals from 3 states under NISHTHA initiative.

Key Facts:

To fulfill the long-standing vision of MoTA to achieve academic excellence in Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs), 120 EMRS teachers and principals from 3 states completed a 40 days’ NISHTHA Program, a national flagship program of NCERT on 19th June 2021.

About NISHTHA:

- The full form of NISHTHA is National Initiative for School Heads’ and Teachers’ Holistic Advancement.
- NISHTHA is a national flagship program of NCERT.
- It is a capacity building programme for “Improving Quality of School Education through Integrated Teacher Training”.
- This initiative is the world’s largest teachers’ training programme of its kind in the world.
- It was launched by Union Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister August 2019 to build capacities of 42 lakh government teachers across the country.

Objective:

- The main objective of this programme is to motivate and equip teachers to encourage and foster critical thinking in students.

Features:

- Under it, teachers will develop their skills on various aspects related to Learning Outcomes, School Safety and Security, ICT in teaching-learning including Artificial Intelligence, Environmental Concerns and School Based Assessment in a joyful learning manner.

Aim:

It aims to build the capacities of around 42 lakh participants covering all teachers and Heads of Schools at the elementary level in all Government schools, faculty members of SCERTs, DIETs as well as Block Resource Coordinators and Cluster Resource Coordinators in all States/UTs.

Strategy:

- Training will be conducted directly by 33120 Key Resource Persons (KRPs) and State Resource Persons (SRP) identified by the State and UTs, who will in turn be trained by 120 National Resource Persons identified from NCERT, NIEPA, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS), CBSE and NGO.
- A robust portal/Management Information System (MIS) for delivery of the training, monitoring and support mechanism has been infused with this capacity building initiative.
- Keeping in view the COVID-19 pandemic situation, it is now planned to organise SRG and Teachers training in online mode.

Note: The first online training for the SRGs of state of Andhra Pradesh will be launched on 16 July, 2020.
Parent Participation in Home-Based Learning: The Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education recently released the Guidelines for parent participation in home-based learning during school closure and beyond.

Key points:

- These Guidelines aim to provide information on the ‘why’, ‘what’, and ‘how-to’ of participation and engagement in supporting children during the school closure, irrespective of their literacy levels.
- They are meant not only for parents but also for caregivers, other family members, grandparents, community members, older siblings who all are engaged in promoting the welfare of children.
- The guidelines provide many simple tips for parents and others to facilitate children in Home based learning.
- These suggestive activities are in accordance with the various stages of school education as per NEP 2020.

Details:

Age-appropriate art activities have been categorized on basis of 5+3+3+4 system viz

- Foundation Stage (Age 3-8yrs);
- Preparatory Stage (Age 8-11 yrs);
- Middle Stage (Age 11-14yrs); and
- Secondary Stage: From Adolescent to Adult age (Age 14-18 years).

Significance:

- The Guidelines lay significance on improving children’s learning by monitoring and addressing their learning gaps.
- Collaboration of parents with teachers in documenting and reflecting on the progress that children are making in their learning is important for both teachers and parents.
- The activities are simple and suggestive, which can be adapted and adopted to local needs and contexts.
- The Guidelines appreciate the role of Art as a therapy for children under stress or trauma.
- A separate chapter has been included in the Guidelines for supporting parents with low/no literacy.
- Schools, teachers and volunteers may take the suggestive steps to provide support to low-literacy parents.
CAR-T Cell Therapy: The first Chimeric Antigen Receptor T-cell (CAR-T) was recently done in India.

- It is a type of gene therapy that was done at the Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai.
- The Chimeric Antigen Receptor T-cell (CAR-T) therapy has emerged as a breakthrough in cancer treatment especially in patients suffering from Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia.
- However, till now this technology was not available in India. Each patient’s CAR-T cell therapy costs 3-4 crore (INR).

What are the challenges?

- CAR-T cell therapy costs rupees 3-4 crore for each patient.
- Thus, biggest challenge is to develop this technology in cost-effective manner and make it available patients. Manufacturing of this technology is complex which increases the cost.

Key details:

- The CAR-T cells were designed and manufactured at Bioscience and Bioengineering (BSBE) department of IIT Bombay with support from DBT/BIRAC, through National Biopharma Mission.
- Now, this therapy will undergo Phase I and II trial of their CAR-T product through National Biopharma Mission.

About:

- Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) is a not-for-profit Section 8, Schedule B, Public Sector Enterprise, set up by Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science & Technology.

Background:

- BIRAC and DBT have initiated and launched specialized calls and invitation to promote and support development of CAR-T cell technology against cancer and other diseases.

itat e-dwar: The Union Minister for Law & Justice, Communications and Electronics & IT, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad, recently launched a e-filing portal of Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) called ‘itat e-dwar.’

Key Details:

While launching the portal, Minister highlighted the power of Digital India.
According to him, Digital India means empowering ordinary Indian with power of technology in order to bridge the digital divide between digital haves and digital have nots.

As per the minister, data of more than 18 crore cases are available in National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG). He suggested integrating cases of ITAT with NJDG.

**About itat e-dwar:**

- itat e-dwar is a larger narrative of transformation that India is undergoing through digital medium.
- It will enable innovation & empowerment and open new avenues for growth.
- This e-filing portal will enhance accessibility, accountability and transparency in working of ITAT.
- It will result into economization of use of paper, savings in costs and rationalization of fixation of cases which in turn help in quicker disposal of cases.
- It would help parties to file their Appeals, Miscellaneous Applications, documents, etc electronically.

**Key Points:**

- The scientific name of new variant is T478K.
- Like other strains, this presents a mutation in the spike protein.
- This variant has been increasingly spreading among people in North America, particularly in Mexico.
- Their paper published in the Journal of Medical Virology presented the so-called “Mexican variant,” whose scientific name is T478K.

**CEOS COAST:** The UN body has recently endorsed a multinational project called “Committee on Earth Observation Satellites Coastal Observations, Applications, Services, and Tools (CEOS COAST).”

**About CEOS COAST:**

- The CEOS COAST programme is co-led by Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) from US.
- This programme aims to improve accuracy of coastal data on the basis of satellite and land-based observations.
❖ It also seeks to foster trust and collaboration among scientists.
❖ This pilot projects are uniquely capable of using Earth Observation technologies to meet 17 UN-designated sustainable development goals for Ocean Decade initiative.
❖ Themes of these projects are disaster risk reduction & coastal resilience among continental shorelines & small island nations.
❖ The CEOS COAST has been working in collaboration with stakeholders in industries such as construction, agriculture and commercial/recreational fishing to support all forms of decision-makers from parents deciding which beach to take their kids to, to sailors navigating the coast, to policymakers taking action on climate change and more.

About NOAA:
❖ NOAA (National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration) is an American scientific agency working under the United States Department of Commerce.
❖ It focuses on conditions of oceans, major waterways, and atmosphere.
❖ It warns about the dangerous weather, charts seas and guides on use & protection of ocean & coastal resources.
❖ It also conducts research to provide understanding and improve stewardship of environment.

About ISRO:
❖ It is an abbreviation for the Indian Space Research Organization.
❖ ISRO is the space agency of the Government of India (GoI) and was formed in 15 august 1969.
❖ It superseded the erstwhile “Indian National Committe For Space Research” (INCOSPAR) which was established in 1962 by the efforts of Independent India’s first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and his close aide and scientist Vikram Sarabhai.
❖ In 1972, GoI had set up a Space Commission and the Department of Space (DOS), bringing ISRO under the DOS.
❖ ISRO then embarked on its mission to provide the Nation space based services and to develop the technologies to achieve the same independently.
❖ Its vision is to “harness space technology for natural development while pursuing space science research & planetary exploration”.
❖ ISRO built India’s first Satellite Aryabhata.
❖ It is headquartered in Bangalore, India.
❖ The current Chairman of ISRO is K sivan.
French Grand Prix: Max Verstappen has won the French Grand Prix on to extend his lead over Lewis Hamilton in the Formula One drives’ title race.

**Highlights:**

The Formula One championship leader Verstappen overtook Lewis Hamilton on the penultimate lap to win the French Grand Prix and extend his lead over his title rival to 12 points.

Verstappen used the DRS system to catch Hamilton on Lap 52 and pass him on the inside before zooming off to clinch his third win of the season and 13th of his career.

A bonus point for the fastest lap made it a great day for Red Bull, which had never beaten Mercedes on the Paul Ricard circuit in southern France.

Verstappen has 131 points to Hamilton’s 119 after seven races.

Sergio Perez in the other Red Bull came in third with Valtteri Bottas in the second Mercedes finishing fourth.

Track and Field: Shot putter Tajinderpal Singh Toor (Punjab) has qualified for the Tokyo Olympic Games with a hefty 21.49m effort.

**Other qualifiers:**

Sprinter Dutee Chand, discus thrower Kamalpreet Kaur and the India 4x400m relay team also set new National Records in the Indian Grand Prix 4 athletics meet at the Netaji Subhas National Institute of Sports on 21 June 2021.

**Highlights:**

- 26-year-old Tajinderpal Singh Toor, whose previous best was 20.92m, became the 11th individual Indian track and field athlete to qualify for Tokyo 2020 by going past the qualifying mark of 21.10m with each of his four legal puts.

- Dutee Chand mounted a gallant effort to crack the Olympic qualifying standard of 11.15 seconds in the women’s 100m. While she rewrote her own National Record, she was a heart-breaking two-hundredths of a second away from the magic mark. She also anchored the Indian team to a victory in the 4x100m relay in 43.37 seconds.
• Kamalpreet Kaur also said she wanted to show her gratitude for the opportunity to compete with a good series as the sole competitor in the women’s Discus Throw event. Aiming for a 69m effort on Monday, she started with 63.41m throw before two fouls. She followed those with a 62.33m throw and uncorked her new National Record throw of 66.69m.

**International Olympic Day 2021 theme:**

• The Olympic Day 2021 theme is “Stay healthy, stay strong, stay active with the #OlympicDay workout on 23 June.”

**History of the day:**

• The International Olympic Committee (IOC) approved to observe Olympic Day in January 1948 to commemorate the creation of the International Olympic Committee on 23 June 1894.
• The creation of the modern-day Olympic Games is inspired by the ancient Olympic Games held in Olympia, Greece, from the 8th century BC to the 4th century AD.
• The first Olympic Day was celebrated in the year 1948.
• In 8th century BC Athens, every summer, athletes participated in a festival of games conducted to honor the gods, especially Zeus, the King of Gods.
• This happened once every four years.

**History of International Olympic Committee:**

• Baron Pierre de Coubertin set up the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1894, and hence, the first Olympic Games were held in Athens, Greece, in 1896.
In 1978, the Olympic Charter stated for the first time that the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) should regularly organize the Olympic day to promote the Olympic movement.

About IOC:

- IOC is an acronym for International Olympic Committee.
- It is a non-governmental sports organization.
- It was established on 23 June 1894.
- It was founded by Pierre de Coubertin and Demetrios Vikelas.
- It is headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland.
- It is responsible to organize the modern Summer and Winter Olympic Games.
- The Olympic motto is made up of three Latin words: CITIUS – ALTIUS – FORTIUS (Faster, Higher, Stronger) adopted in 1894.
- The current President of IOC is Thomas Bach.

Tadang Minu: Dr Tadang Minu from Arunachal Pradesh recently became the first in the state and the second Indian woman in the country to be appointed as a member of the Coaches Committee of the International Boxing Association (AIBA).

- She has been appointed by AIBA for her enormous knowledge and experience in the field of boxing.
- Dr Tadang is currently the HOD of Physical Education at Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU).
- She is the chairman of the Boxing Federation of India’s Women’s Commission for two years.

About International Boxing Association (AIBA):

- The International Boxing Association or AIBA, originally the Association Internationale de Boxe Amateur, is a sport organization that sanctions amateur boxing matches and awards world and subordinate championships.
• AIBA was founded in 1946.
• It is headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland. The current President of AIBA is Dr Mohamed Moustahsane.

Laurel Hubbard: She is the first transgender athlete who is set to compete at Tokyo Olympics.

Highlights:
• The New Zealand Olympic Committee (NZOC) confirmed her selection for contesting in weightlifting in women’s +87 kg category.
• Hubbard was among five weightlifters in New Zealand’s team for Tokyo.
• The 43-year-old, who will be the fourth oldest weightlifter at an Olympics, is regarded as a genuine medal contender in the women’s super heavyweight 87kg-plus category in Tokyo.
• She competed in men’s weightlifting competitions before gender transition in the year 2013.

• Laurel Hubbard has been eligible to compete at Olympics since 2015.
• She became eligible to compete at the Olympics when the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 2015 changed its rules allowing transgender athletes to compete as a woman if their testosterone levels are below a certain threshold.

Note: Testosterone is a hormone that increases muscle mass.

Controversy:
• However, while her inclusion has been welcomed by trans groups, it has also been questioned by those who believe she has unfair advantages in strength and power, having gone through male puberty before transitioning in 2012.

About Laurel Hubbard:
• Laurel Hubbard is a New Zealand weightlifter.
• Hubbard transitioned to female and became Laurel Hubbard in the year 2012.
• Before her gender transition, Hubbard had set New Zealand junior records in 1998 in newly established M105+ division with snatch 135 kg, clean & jerk 170 kilogram.
• But, these records were later surpassed by David Liti.
• She has since met all of the requirements of the International Olympic Committee’s regulations for trans athletes and fair competition.
• Hubbard won a silver medal at the 2017 World Championships.
• She won gold in the 2019 Pacific Games in Samoa.
• She competed at the 2018 Commonwealth Games but sustained a serious injury that set back her career.

Lakshya Tera Samne Hai: The Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Kiren Rijiju recently launched the official theme song “Lakshya Tera Samne Hai” of the Indian Olympic Team of Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

Highlights:
• The official theme song of the Indian Olympic Team of Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games was launched in presence of IOA president Narinder Batra and secretary-general Rajeev Mehta.
• This theme song for the Indian contingent has been composed and sung by Mohit Chauhan.
• The Games will open on July 23 and over 100 Indian athletes have qualified for the event so far.
• The event was organized by Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and attended by its President, Secretary-General, Deputy Chef De Mission, Sports Secretary and DG Sports Authority of India (SAI). Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju was the chief guest at the event.

About IOA:
• The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) is the body responsible for selecting athletes to represent India at the Olympic Games, Asian Games and other international athletic meets and for managing the Indian teams at these events.
• The IOA was established 1927 with Sir Dorabji Tata and Dr. A.G. Noehren as the Founding President and Secretary General respectively.
• It also acts as the Indian Commonwealth Games Association, responsible for selecting athletes to represent India at the Commonwealth Games.
• The current President of IOA is Narindra Batra.
SAI:

- SAI is the acronym for sports Authority of India. It is the apex national sports body of India.
- It was founded by Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports of Government of India (GoI) on 25 January 1984 as a Society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- It was set up with a twin objective of broad-basing of sports and to achieve excellence at the national and international level.
- It is headquartered in New Delhi.
- The current Director General of SAI is Sandip Pradhan.

IOC and IOA:

- IOC (International Olympic Committee) is the governing body of the Olympic movement. It is a non-profit, non-governmental organization based in Switzerland.
- Whereas, IOA (Indian Olympic Association) is a governmental organization of India which regulate the activity of India and Indian players in Olympic.

Kaylee McKeown: She is an Australian swimmer who broke the 100-meter backstroke world record at the South Australian Aquatic Centre with a time of 57.45 seconds from the previous mark of 57.57 seconds.

- The previous record was set by American Regan Smith in 2019.
- Emily Seebohm finished second in 58.59 to qualify for her fourth Olympics.

ICC World Test Championship 2021:
New Zealand defeated India to win the first ICC World Test Championship at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton, England on June 23, 2021.

The next Test Championship will be held between 2021-2023.

Highlights:
The last day of the match was played on June 23, 2021.
The final match was played at Ageas Bowl Stadium (Rose Bowl Stadium) in Southampton, England.
The triumph gave New Zealand their 2nd ICC title after the Champions Trophy win in 2000 under Stephen Fleming, which also came against India in Nairobi.
New Zealand chased down the target of 139 to win the first-ever World Test Championship final with eight wickets in hand.
The match saw 6 days play in place of the regular 5 days due to the rain factor.
Kyle Jamieson (NZ) has been adjudged as the “Player of the match”, while Kane Williamson (NZ) is the “Player of the series”.

Background:

New Zealand finally managed to get over the line in an ICC tournament final after losing the 2015 and 2019 World Cup finals against Australia and England respectively, with the last one hurting the most as they went down on boundary count after the match ended in a tie in normal time and the Super Over.

Note:

The first test championship began in 2019 with the finals being played in 2021. The top three teams, as a result, are:
First: New Zealand; Second-India; Third- Australia.