

**CURRENT EVENTS
AND
ANALYSIS
(September 2020)
PART-2**

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CURRENT EVENTS AND ANALYSIS

CONTENTS

SEPTEMBER 2020 CURRENT AFFAIRS: PART-2

Index	PageNo:
NATIONAL POLITY	
<i>Basic Structure of the Constitution:</i>	
Kesavananda Bharati Case and the Doctrine of 'Basic Structure of the Constitution' of India	1
<i>Mission Karmayogi:</i>	
Cabinet Approves "Mission Karmayogi"- National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building	3
FRCA:	
Foreign Contributions Regulation Amendment (FRCA) Bill Passed in Parliament	5
NGO's:	
Amnesty International Shuts Operations in India	10
UPSC:	
Supreme Court Refuses to Postpone Civil Services Preliminary Exam	13
<i>Security Issues:</i>	
India Bans 118 Mobile Apps	14
SOCIAL SECTOR	
<i>Health:</i>	
Establishment of New AIIMS at Darbhanga, Bihar	16
<i>Nutrition:</i>	
Rashtriya Poshan Maah (National Nutrition Month) Celebrated	18
SOCIAL ISSUES	
<i>Babri Masjid Verdict:</i>	
All the Accused in Babri Masjid Demolition Case Acquitted	19
<i>Empowerment of SCs:</i>	
Ambedkar Social Innovation and Incubation Mission (ASIIM)	20
<i>Empowerment of Disabled:</i>	
Foundation Stone Laid for World Class 'Centre for Disability Sports' at Gwalior	21
<i>Mental Health:</i>	
Mental Health Helpline 'KIRAN' Launched	22
<i>Suicides and Accidental Deaths:</i>	
NCRB Releases Annual Report on Suicides and Accidental Deaths	22
<i>Crime in India Report:</i>	
NCRB Releases 'Crime in India: 2019' Report	24

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Indo-Japan:

India, Japan, and Australia to Launch Supply Chains Resilience Initiative	26
India, and Bangladesh to Benefit from Japan's Subsidy Programme	27
India, and Japan Sign Mutual Military Logistics Agreement	28

Indo-Bangladesh:

New Inland Waterway Route Operationalised between India and Bangladesh	29
--	----

INTERNATIONAL POLITY

Nagorno-Karabakh:

Clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh	30
--	----

Kra Canal Project:

Thailand Changes Stand on Kra Canal Project Proposal by China	33
---	----

Osaka Track:

India Opposes 'Osaka Track' on Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT)	34
---	----

UN Reforms:

G-4 Countries (India, Germany, Japan, Brazil) Call for United Nations Reforms	35
---	----

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

DEFENCE:

Hypersonic Technology:

Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle Successfully Test Fired	36
--	----

Prithvi Missile:

Prithvi II Missile Successfully Test Fired	37
--	----

BrahMos Missile:

BrahMos Supersonic Cruise Missile Successfully Test Fired	37
---	----

SPACE:

Mangalyaan:

India's Mars Mission 'Mangalyaan' Completes Five Years	38
--	----

ENVIRONMENT:

FAME Scheme:

670 New Electric Buses and 241 Charging Stations Sanctioned under FAME Scheme	39
---	----

Rhino Conservation:

World Rhino Day Celebrated	40
----------------------------	----

Blue Flag Label:

Eight Beaches of India Recommended for the "Blue Flag" International eco-label	41
--	----

HEALTH:

Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill, 2020	42
--	----

AGRICULTURE:

White Grub Pest Damages Sugarcane Crop in Maharashtra 43

MISCELLANEOUS

International Persons 44

National Persons 44

Sports Persons 45

Sports 46

NATIONAL POLITY

Basic Structure of the Constitution:

Kesavananda Bharati Case and the Doctrine of 'Basic Structure of the Constitution'

- Kesavananda Bharati, the seer behind landmark 1973 Supreme Court judgment on 'basic structure' of Constitution, passed away on September 6, 2020.

Significance of the Judgement:

- In the Kesavananda Bharati case judgement delivered in 1973, the Supreme Court ruled that
- The power of Parliament to amend the Constitution is not unlimited, and
- The basic structure of the Constitution is inviolable and it cannot be amended by the Parliament.

What is Basic Structure of the Constitution?

- The 1973 Supreme Court Judgement did not elaborate what is Basic Structure of the Constitution. It stated a few aspects like supremacy of the Constitution, federalism, secularism, and separation of powers between legislature, executive and judiciary.
- (Basic structure of the Constitution is also sometimes referred as basic features of the Constitution).

Why Did the Concept of Basic Structure Evolve?

- In the early years of Independence, the Supreme Court conceded absolute power to Parliament in amending the Constitution. (Shankari Prasad (1951) case and Sajjan Singh (1965) case).
- In subsequent years, as the Constitution kept being amended at will to suit the interests of the ruling dispensation, the Supreme Court in Golaknath (1967) held that Parliament's amending power could not touch Fundamental Rights, and this power would be only with a Constituent Assembly.

Clash between Article 13 and Article 368:

- Two Articles in the Constitution were at the centre of this debate in these judgements i.e. **Articles 13 and 368 of the Constitution.**
- Article 13 states that Parliament cannot make any law which violates fundamental rights guaranteed under Part III of the Constitution.
- Article 368 empowers Parliament to make amendments to the Constitution.

Sajjan Singh Case (1964):

- The issue came up before the court as early as 1964 in the case of Sajjan Singh v. State of Rajasthan in which the Supreme Court had to decide whether the word "law" under Article 13 included within its scope a constitutional amendment under Article 368.
- If a constitutional amendment under Article 368 is "law" within the meaning of Article 13, then it would automatically follow that Parliament cannot amend the Constitution to take away any fundamental right.

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- In Sajjan Singh, a **five-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court** ruled that the word "law" in Article 13 does not include a constitutional amendment under Article 368. This meant **Parliament has unfettered power to amend the Constitution.**

Golaknath Case (1967):

- This position (**unfettered power of Parliament to amend the Constitution**) was **overturned in 1967 by an 11-judge bench of the Supreme Court in the landmark case of Golaknath v. State of Punjab.** In this judgment, it was held that **an amendment under Article 368 is "law" within the definition of Article 13.**
- This was **seen as a major erosion of Parliament's rights to implement the people's mandate.** The then Indira Gandhi government saw this stance as a **challenge to the will of the elected majority.**

Constitutional Amendments:

- The three Constitutional amendments (**24th, 25th and 29th amendments**) were passed by the Indira Gandhi government to overcome the Supreme Court's 1967 judgment in the Golak Nath case that ruled Parliament could not amend fundamental rights, including the Right to Property.
- **24th Constitution Amendment** Act expressly provided that the bar under Article 13 will not apply to any amendment made to the Constitution under Article 368. This meant that Parliament could amend any part of the Constitution, including fundamental rights.
- **25th amendment to the Constitution** curtailed the right to property under Article 31, which was a fundamental right back then (Article 31 was later removed from the list of fundamental rights).
- The 29th amendment put the Kerala land reforms law beyond the purview of judicial review.

Kesavananda Bharati Case (1973):

- All the above amendments, as well as the Golaknath judgment, came under challenge in the Kesavananda Bharati case, where relief was sought by the religious figure Swami Kesavananda Bharati against the Kerala government vis-à-vis two state land reform laws.
- Kesavananda Bharati, the seer of Edneer Mutt in Kasargod district of Kerala, filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the Kerala government's takeover of land owned by the mutt under the Kerala Land Reforms Act of 1969.
- Along with the Kerala Land Reforms Act, constitutional amendments - 24th, 25th and 29th - were challenged on the grounds that they violated his fundamental rights: right to practice and propagate religion (Article 25), freedom of religious denomination to manage its religious affairs including managing and administering its property (Article 26) and right to property (Article 31).

Verdict:

- The 13 Judge Bench of the Supreme Court in a 7:6 verdict upheld the validity of all the three constitutional amendments - 24th, 25th and 29th.
- It also overruled the judgment in Golaknath case and held that a constitutional amendment is not "law" within the meaning of Article 13. Thus, it was ruled that Parliament has the power to amend the Constitution.

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- But, the Parliament **should not infringe upon the Basic Structure of the Constitution.**
 - Any law made by Parliament, including constitutional amendments, should not violate the ethos and **basic features of the Constitution** and the **Supreme Court will be the final arbiter** on whether there is any such transgression into the Basic Structure.

Basic Structure Not Clearly Defined:

- The Judgement did not clearly define the 'basic structure', and only listed a few principles - federalism, secularism, democracy - as being its part.
- It has been left open for courts to interpret on a case-by-case basis.
- Since then, the court has been adding new features to this concept.
- It, however, did not specify what would constitute 'basic structure', leaving it open for courts to interpret on a case-by-case basis.

Expansion of the Basic Structure of the Constitution:

- After the Kesavananda Bharati case, the Supreme Court interpreted the 'basic structure' doctrine in various judgements. The Basic Structure now includes
 - rule of law,
 - independence of the judiciary,
 - doctrine of separation of powers,
 - federalism,
 - secularism,
 - sovereign democratic republic,
 - parliamentary system of government,
 - free and fair elections and
 - welfare state.

Analysis of the Judgement:

- Critics of the doctrine have called it undemocratic.
- **Unelected judges** can strike down a constitutional amendment.
- At the same time, its proponents hail the concept of Basic Structure as a **safety valve** against **majoritarianism and authoritarianism.**

Mission Karmayogi:

Cabinet Approves "Mission Karmayogi"- National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building

- In September 2020, the Union Government approved Mission Karmayogi.
- It is a **national capacity building and performance evaluation programme** for civil servants. The term Karmayogi refers to Civil Servant and is meant to highlight his role in national building.
- The programme would cover 46 lakh central government employees.

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- It will be delivered by setting up an **Integrated Government Online Training-iGOT Karmayogi Platform**.

Aims:

- Mission Karmayogi aims at building a future-ready civil service with the **right attitude, skills and knowledge, aligned to the vision of New India**
- It also aims at making civil servants more innovative, proactive, professional, and technology-enabled.
- In this regard, national capacity building programme would focus on the following.

1. Rule Based to Role Based HR Management:

Human resource management in Government would be shifted from **'Rules based' to 'Roles based Human Resource Management**.

2. Defining Roles in Terms of Competencies:

All Civil Service positions would be calibrated to a **Framework of Roles, Activities and Competencies (FRACs) approach**. Every role in Government would be defined in terms of competency requirements.

3. Emphasis on Building Competencies:

All civil servants would be required to **undergo training in chosen areas of interest to build their competencies**. The learning records of the officials will signal their existing competency details.

- 4. Work Allocation Based on Competencies:** Matching the competency for the Role with the Competency of officer will help to identify the right person with the right competencies for the right job. **Work allocation of civil servants will be based on the matching competencies.**

5. Continuous Opportunities for Training:

All civil servants will have an **opportunity to continuously build and strengthen their Behavioural, Functional and Domain Competencies**.

Objectives:

The larger objectives of the Mission Karmayogi are to ensure

- Ease of living (through better public service delivery),
- Ease of Doing Business, and
- Citizen centricity (through attitudinal changes of civil servants)

Institutional Mechanism for Mission Karmayogi:

Mission Karmayogi has following institutional set up:

1. Prime Minister's Public Human Resources (HR) Council,
2. Capacity Building Commission,
3. Special Purpose Vehicle for owning and operating the digital assets and the technological platform for online training, and
4. Coordination Unit headed by the Cabinet Secretary.

PM Public Human Resources Council:

- It is an apex body to provide strategic direction to capacity building reforms.
- It would be headed by Prime Minister.
- Select Union Ministers and State Chief Ministers would be included.
- Eminent national and global academicians, industry leaders would also be part of the PM HR Council.

Capacity Building Commission:

- A Capacity Building Commission would be set up. It would have following functions.
- Assist the PM Public Human Resources Council in approving the Annual Capacity Building Plans,
- set norms for common mid-career training programs across all civil services,
- make recommendations on standardization of training and capacity building, pedagogy and methodology
- exercise functional supervision over all Central Training Institutions dealing with civil services capacity building, and
- coordinate and supervise the implementation of the Capacity Building Plans with the stakeholder Departments.

Special Purpose Vehicle:

- A special purpose vehicle **called Integrated Government Online Training- (iGOT) Karmayogi Platform** would be created.
- Through this platform, **digital e-learning material will be made available to all civil servants.**
- It would partner with the best-in-class content creators including public training institutions, universities, start-tips and individual experts for creation of learning content.

Expenditure:

- An amount of Rs. 510 crore would be spent over 5 years i.e.2020-21 to 2024-25.
- This expenditure would be met through **multilateral assistance** and annual subscription by civil servants.
- While multilateral assistance would be Rs. 366 crore, an annual subscription fee of Rs.431 would be charged on civil servants.

FRCA:

Foreign Contributions Amendment Bill Passed in Parliament

- Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2020 was passed by the Parliament of India in September 2020.

Highlights of the Amendments:

1. Aadhaar Made Mandatory:

Aadhaar has been made a mandatory identification document for all the office bearers, directors and other key functionaries of a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) or an association

seeking foreign donations. (Aadhaar is a verifiable 12-digit identification number issued by Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to the resident of India for free of cost).

The Government stated that this amendment is required to

- a) enhance transparency and accountability in the receipt and utilisation of foreign contributions, and
- b) ensure that only "genuine" non-governmental organisations or associations which are working for the welfare of society get the benefit of foreign contributions.

2. Limiting Administrative Expenditure to 20 Per cent of Total Expenses:

Until now, NGO's can spend up to 50 per cent of the foreign contributions received by them as administrative expenditure i.e. for salaries of employees, maintenance of office, etc. Now, this limit on administrative expenses has been reduced from 50 per cent to 20 per cent.

Criticism on Reduction of Administrative Expenses:

It would become difficult for NGO's to pay salaries to its employees and run offices with such a low limit on administrative expenditure.

However, the Government defended its move to reduce cap on administrative expenditure stating the amount received from foreign contributions is being used for **personal use** such as buying cars, installing air conditioners, etc. and this reduction would ensure that they **spend money on their objectives**.

3. No Sub-granting:

The amendments prohibit collaboration among NGOs through sharing of funds.

An NGO receiving foreign funding should not use the money for sub-granting to other NGOs.

4. Bar on Public Servants:

The FRCA act bars certain categories of individuals and organisations from receiving foreign contributions. These are Political Parties, Journalists, Judges, Broadcasting companies, Members of Legislature, Government servants, Associations of political nature. These are considered as important areas of national life and hence the ban on receiving foreign funding was necessary to prevent extraneous influences in the form of foreign funding which can destabilise the nation.

Through the latest amendment, the term **Public Servant** has been added to the list entities banned from receiving foreign contributions.

Why was Public Servants Added to the List:

In 2016, the Union Home Ministry had cancelled the licence of Lawyers Collective, run by noted lawyers Indira Jaising and Anand Grover for various violations. The Ministry, in its suspension notice, had said that Ms. Jaising - as a government servant - had received foreign funds over Rs. 96 crore when she held the post of Additional Solicitor General (ASG) between the years 2009 and 2014, in violation of FCRA norms.

Ms Jaising refuted the Ministry's allegations and had said she was a "public servant" not "government servant."

5. FRCA Bank Accounts Should be Opened Only in New Delhi:

All non-government organisations and associations should receive foreign funds in a designated bank account at SBI's New Delhi branch only.

A designated FCRA account at the State Bank of India's New Delhi branch should be opened by them by March 31, 2021.

NGOs registered under FCRA shall not receive any foreign donations in any other bank account from April 1, 2021.

Impact of the Amendments:

- The **International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)** observed that the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2020 **was incompatible with international law and would hamper the work of civil society as they put onerous conditions on civil society organisations and other associations.**
- It stated that the legislation fails to comply with India's international legal obligations and constitutional provisions to respect and protect the rights to **freedom of association, expression, and freedom of assembly.**
- The ICJ stressed that the Bill's provisions would impose arbitrary and extraordinary obstacles on the capacity of human rights defenders and other civil society actors to carry out their work.

Voluntary Action Network India (VANI):

- The Voluntary Action Network India (VANI), an apex body of Indian voluntary organisations, demanded that the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2020, be examined by a select or standing committee of Parliament for scrutiny. It expressed the following views on the amendments.
- **Domestic philanthropy is limited in our country.**
- NGOs which are dependent on legal funds obtained internationally may have to shut down due to restrictions on administrative expenditure.
- These amendments endanger livelihoods of those dependent on them.

Background about Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FRCA), 2010:

Significance of NGO's:

- Democracy requires critics and civil society. Debates, deliberations, dissent are part of any democratic society.
- The contribution of NGOs to **human rights, environment, and civil liberties** is significant in India.
- The recognition of the rights of homosexuals and transgender people, for instance, would have been unimaginable without the sustained effort of civil society organisations.
- Especially, the 'Naz Foundation (India) Trust' played a key role in fight for the recognition of the rights of homosexuals and transgender people.
- Thousands of NGOs are also serving the extremely disadvantaged sections in the areas of health, education at times filling gap of the state, at others, supplementing it.

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FRCA):

- The **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FRCA)**, 2010
- regulates the acceptance and use of foreign contributions, and
- prevents their use for activities detrimental to national interest.

Who Can Receive Foreign Contributions?

- According to the 2010 Act, registered NGOs and Associations can receive foreign contribution for **five purposes: social, educational, religious, economic and cultural.**

How are NGO's and Associations Receiving Foreign Contribution Regulated?

- NGOs require the government's permission to receive funding from abroad.
- All NGOs and associations must register themselves under the FCRA to receive funding from abroad.
- For getting FCRA registration, the NGO should have been already registered under an existing statute like Societies Registration Act, 1860, Indian Trusts Act, 1882, or Companies Act 2013. It should have been in existence for at least 3 years and should have undertaken reasonable activity in its chosen field for the benefit of the society.
- An association or NGO in formative stage i.e. less than three years of existence is not eligible for registration. However, it can only apply for prior permission under which permission is granted for receipt of a specific amount from a specific donor for carrying out specific activities or projects. Such request for prior permission should be accompanied by a specific commitment letter by donor indicating the amount of foreign contribution and the purpose for which it is given.
- The FCRA registration is initially valid for five years and it can be renewed subsequently if they comply with all norms.
- Filing of annual returns, on the lines of Income Tax, is compulsory.
- NGOs would have to operate accounts in either nationalised or private banks which have core banking facilities to allow security agencies access on a real time basis.

Prohibition from Receiving Funding:

- Funding to NGO's can be prohibited if their activities affect
- sovereignty and integrity of India;
- public interest; or
- freedom or fairness of election to any Legislature; or
- friendly relations with any foreign State; or
- harmony between religious, racial, social, linguistic or regional groups, castes or communities.

Suspension and Cancellation of FCRA Registration:

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on inspection of accounts and on receiving any adverse input against the functioning of an association can suspend the FCRA registration initially for 180 days.

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- Until a decision is taken, the association cannot receive any fresh donation and cannot utilise more than 25% of the amount available in the designated bank account without permission of the MHA.
 - If the MHA cancel the registration of an organisation for not complying with the provisions of FCRA act, it will not be eligible for registration or grant of 'prior permission' for three years from the date of cancellation.

What is the Criticism on the Government in Implementation of FCRA Act?

1. Vagueness in the term Public Interest:

- The Government invokes '**public interest**' provision in the FCRA Act to prohibit funding to NGOs.
- There is no clear guidance on what constitutes "public interest". The term is too vague and gives excessive discretionary power to Government which applies it in an arbitrary manner.
- Consequently, a government could construe any disagreement with, or criticism of, any of its policies as being against public interest.
- For example, in 2014, several groups including Greenpeace were accused by the Intelligence Bureau of stalling India's economic development and was barred from receiving foreign donations. In the government's narrow view, public interest is interpreted as being equivalent to its priorities.
- Thus, an environmental or human rights organisation criticising the government can be accused of "acting against public interest".
- Prominent international funding agency **Ford Foundation**, and human rights advocacy group **Lawyers Collective** have all been targets of the Government under FCRA.

2. Consequences on Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Association:

- Activists opine that the restrictions of the Government have **serious consequences on both the right to free speech and freedom of association under Articles 19(1)(a) and 19(1)(c) of the Constitution.**
- The freedom of Association is based on the idea that **individuals can form voluntary groups and pursue various interests.** It is a **form of collective expression and thought.** The Supreme Court also has held that this right includes the right to continued sustenance of the association, without unreasonable restraint (Damyanti Naranga v. Union of India, 1971).

3. Violation of Obligations of International Commitments:

- The right to freedom of association is incorporated under the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**, to which India is a party. Access to resources, particularly foreign funding, is part of the right to freedom of association. While this is not an absolute right and is subject to restrictions, those have to be precise, and defined.

FCRA Act amended to Allow Funding of Political Parties:

- While the Government is tightening regulations around NGO's, the FCRA act was amended to allow funding of political parties.
- In 2017, through the Finance Bill route, FCRA Act was amended to pave the way for political parties to **receive funds from the Indian subsidiary of a foreign company or a foreign company in which an Indian holds 50% or more shares.**

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- The amendment, according to legal experts, followed accusations that the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress had been receiving foreign funds for political activities from the U.K.-based Vedanta Group from 2004 to 2012.
 - The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), a public advocacy group, had filed a public interest litigation petition at the Delhi High Court in 2013 against both parties for violating FCRA norms by accepting foreign funds. Both parties challenged a High Court order, which had termed the donations illegal in 2014, and moved the Supreme Court. They withdrew the petitions after the FCRA was amended retrospectively.

Additional Information:

More than 20,000 Registrations Cancelled:

- Since 2011, the registration of 20,664 associations was cancelled for violations such as misutilisation of foreign contribution, non-submission of mandatory annual returns and diversion of foreign funds for other purposes.
- In 2019 alone, more than 1,800 NGOs lost their licence to receive foreign funding.
- These registrations were cancelled for misutilisation of foreign contribution, non-submission of mandatory annual returns and diversion of foreign funds for other purposes.

Total FCRA-registered associations in India:

- As on September 11, 2020, there are 22,434 FCRA-registered associations in India.

NGO's:

Amnesty International Shuts Operations in India

- Amnesty International India, a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) working for the protection of human rights, shut down its offices in India in September 2020.

Reasons:

- The Bank Accounts of Amnesty International were freezed. This means they could not withdraw funds from their accounts.
- As a result, Amnesty International could not pay salaries to its employees.

Why Did the Government Freeze the Accounts of Amnesty International India?

- The Government of India gave following reasons for freezing the accounts of Amnesty International India.

Interference in Domestic Political Debates:

- Through its activities of Amnesty International India is interfering in the **domestic political debates**. Such activities are not allowed under the Indian laws (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 2011) as they are funded by foreign contributions.
- Amnesty international India has been critical of the Government for human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir and recently called for the accountability of Delhi police for grave human rights violations during Delhi riots.

Raising of Funds Illegally:

- The Government stated that Amnesty India was not registered under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 2010 (FCRA), a pre-requisite for civil society groups, associations and NGOs to receive foreign donations.

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- Amnesty India was granted prior permission for receiving donations only in December 2000. **Since then, it had applied for prior permission several times but was refused by the Government.**
 - (Prior permission is given to NGOs which are yet to be registered under Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 2010. Until they are registered under FCRA, organisations which want to receive foreign funds should apply for prior permission. This prior permission is needed every time it wants to receive funds. If an organisation is registered under FCRA, it need not take prior permission for every foreign contribution it receives.)
 - The Government stated that in order to circumvent the FCRA regulations, Amnesty UK remitted large amounts of money to four entities registered in India, by classifying it as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The four entities are Amnesty International Foundation and its three subsidiaries - Amnesty India Private Limited, Indians for Amnesty International Trust and Amnesty International South Asia Foundation
 - The Government stated that this malafide rerouting of money was in contravention of existing legal provisions.
 - The Government stated that Human Rights cannot be an excuse for defying the law of the land.

What is the Response of Amnesty International India?

- The Amnesty International India termed the Government's action as **witch-hunt of human rights activists and a crackdown on dissent.**
- It stated that it has complied with all the international and national laws.
- **It also stated that for its work in India, it raised funds domestically.** Around 1 lakh Indians had contributed financially in the past eight years.

What are the reasons for friction between NGOs and the Government?

- NGOs work in diverse areas like human rights, environment, civil liberties, education, health, empowerment of marginalised. They fill the gap of Government and sometimes compliment the efforts of the government.
- NGOs working on Human Rights, Environment, Civil liberties also document and question the excesses committed by Governments.
- Their work enhances democracy by securing accountability of the Government.
- But, Governments also treat their work as interference in the working of the Government and do not tolerate criticism as it tarnishes the image of the Government.

Conclusion:

- A vibrant democracy should tolerate constructive criticism.
- They should not consider critical activism by groups such as Amnesty as being adversarial, but instead view it as constructive critique of their functioning.
- If the critique is not reasoned, the state can rebut it through communiqués and responses, but should not restrict freedom of expression through intimidation or restraining actions.
- This is more important as India is also party to international treaties like International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Additional information:

Role of Civil Society in India:

- In India, civil society has spearheaded several reforms related to accountability (the Right to Information Act), welfare (the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), privacy rights, gender equality and rights of sexual minorities, environmental activism among others.

What is Civil Society?

- Civil society is a broader term which includes Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs).
- The term civil society includes a wide array of organizations: community groups, non-governmental organizations [NGOs], labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations. They work outside the Government to advance various causes.

About Amnesty International:

- It was founded in 1967 by Peter Benenson, a British lawyer.
- Originally intention was to launch an appeal for obtaining an amnesty for prisoners of conscience all over the world.
- 'Prisoners of Conscience' are those who are imprisoned for holding political or religious views which are not acceptable to the State. Those holding such beliefs/ views which are contrary to that of the State think that they are correct according to their conscience.
- Peter Benenson launched the "Appeal for Amnesty 1961", to collect, publish and distribute information about prisoners of conscience around the world. Amnesty means an official pardon for people who have been convicted for political and religious beliefs.
- Later, Amnesty movement became a global human rights movement.
- Amnesty has taken up human rights causes such as minority rights, ending torture, abolition of the death penalty and refugee rights, globally.
- At present, Amnesty International has presence in more than 150 countries.

Nobel Peace Prize:

- Amnesty International won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977 for its contribution to advancing human rights around the world.

Actions Against NGOs in the Recent Years:

- In the past five years, the government has taken action against several foreign donors including U.S.-based **Compassion International, Ford Foundation, World Movement for Democracy (WMD), Open Society Foundations (OSF) and National Endowment for Democracy (NED)**. The registration of Greenpeace International was also cancelled on the premise that it compromised the "economic security" of the country by allegedly orchestrating protests at coal plants and at other developmental projects.
- Ford Foundation was taken off its watch list after protests from several U.S. Congressmen and the Obama administration.

UPSC:

Supreme Court Refuses to Postpone Civil Services Preliminary Exam

- On September 30, 2020, a three judge bench of Supreme Court refused to postpone civil services preliminary which was scheduled for October 4, 2020.

Background:

- A plea was filed in Supreme Court against conducting the Civil Services Preliminary Examination on October 4, 2020.
- The petitioners sought postponement of the Civil Services Preliminary Examination for three months due to continuing COVID-19 pandemic and floods in various parts of the country.
- The following other arguments were also advanced.

Violation of Article 21:

- Conduct of exam is against Right to Life (Article 21) as there is risk of spread of COVID-19. The lives of lakhs of young people would be at risk due to the conduct of the exam

Not an Academic Exam:

- Civil Services Exam is a recruitment examination. It is altogether different from an academic examination and in the event of its postponement; there would not be any question of delay or loss of any academic session.

Against Article 19 (g):

- Many students may opt to not take the exam for fear of contracting the virus. Thus, the fundamental right of students to fulfil their professional aspiration in the civil services is being curtailed. Thus the conduct of exam by UPSC on October 4, 2020 is against Article 19 (g) of the Indian Constitution

Hardships to Rural Students:

- The exam is conducted in 72 cities around the country. This would lead to hardships for many aspirants from rural areas and small towns. They would have to use public transport and find accommodation in hostels in cities for taking the exam which increases the chances of getting affected by COVID-19.

Arguments of the UPSC:

Timely Supply of Manpower:

- Vacancies in the services have to be filled up in time so that the public services do not suffer due to lack of manpower.
- Over the years, a cycle has evolved involving recruitment, training and final appointment ensuring that the government gets its requisite manpower on time.

Cascading Effect:

- Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) argued that any further delay in the conduct of the exam would have a "cascading effect" on future ones. The exam was scheduled for May 31, 2020 but shifted to October 4, 2020 due to the pandemic lockdown and restrictions.

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- Any disruption at any stage has the potential of upsetting the entire cycle not only for once but is likely to have cascading effects in future as well. The calendar of examination of 2021 had been placed on the website in which the Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination, 2021, is scheduled to be held on July 27, 2021.
 - Due to postponement of Civil Services (Prel.) Examination, 2020, the Main (written) parts of both these examinations have to be shifted to 2021.
 - Any further postponement of the Civil Services (Prel.) Examination, 2020 will not only impact the examinations which are lined up during the remaining part of current year, but will also entail further rescheduling of both the Main examinations as also the 2nd stage examinations of other examinations including their interviews, thereby impacting the examination calendar of the year 2020 as well as 2021.

Career Opportunities to Students:

- UPSC also stated that though there is a pandemic situation, life has to go on and career opportunities to students should not be in peril.
- UPSC stated that it had also spent approximately Rs. 50.39 crore on the preparations for the exam. As of September 28, 2020, 6.87 lakh candidates have already downloaded their admit cards.

Verdict of the Supreme Court:

- It agreed with the UPSC that any further delay in the conduct of the exam would have a "cascading effect" on future ones.
- The Supreme Court refused to defer the civil services preliminary examination but asked the authorities to consider a possible concession for aspirants unable to give their last attempt due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- It also asked the authorities to ensure that candidates with admit cards were able to find suitable accommodations near the exam centres/sub-centres.

Security Issues:

India Bans 118 Mobile Apps

- India banned 118 mobile applications in September 2020. Most of these Apps are owned by Chinese. Banned Apps include
- Gaming apps like PUBG, Ludo world, Game of Sultans,
- Communication Apps like Voov Meeting, WeChat,
- Business and Utility Apps like Baidu, Applock, CamCard,
- Entertainment and Dating Apps like Music player, Amour Video Chat, Malay Social Dating.
- The present ban is in addition to the 59 Apps banned in June 2020 which include TikTok, Shareit, Mi Video Call, Club Factory, Cam Scanner, etc.
- The Government imposed the ban under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act to ban Chinese applications. This section grants the power to the Government to block public access to any information available online.

Reasons for Banning the Apps:

- The Government cited privacy and threat to national sovereignty as reasons for banning the Apps. It also stated that it has received complaints the data of users has been stolen and servers outside India.

Analysis of the Ban:

- The Government states privacy and threat to national sovereignty as reasons. The specific nature of threat has not been explained.
- **Banning Apps without due process may not set a good precedent for the country.** There is a need for **an effective data protection and cyber security regime** under which **such actions are taken after due consideration and investigation into the applications.**
- At present, there is no Data Protection Law in India to punish data theft or unauthorised use of data.

Data is currently protected through indirect safeguards such as the Supreme Court's decision in Justice KS Puttaswami versus Union of India which rules that privacy is a fundamental right (this includes data privacy) and provisions under the Section 69 A Information Technology Act, 2000 which provides for blocking of websites and other internet services if they threaten India's defence and sovereignty.

- **However, due to the absence of data protection law, there is no proper institutional mechanism to ensure compliance on privacy.** Hence, the Government used broad provisions under the Information Technology Act.
- Hence, **more than the privacy and security concerns, the banning of Apps is meant to hurt Chinese companies** (which have significant users in India) due to the **ongoing tensions along the border with China and also promote self reliance.**

Border tensions and COVID pandemic emphasised the necessity of self reliance for India. India wants to reduce dependence on China.

- At present, India remains reliant on Chinese products in several critical and strategically sensitive sectors, from semiconductors and active pharmaceutical ingredients to the telecom sector.
- Most of the Start ups in India like Snapdeal, Ola, Swiggy, Paytm, Flipkart, BigBasket are funded by Chinese investors.

Does the Ban Hurt Chinese App Companies?

- Some of the popular apps like Tiktok, and Shareit have significant user base.
- (TikTok, video-sharing social networking app, has seen about 611 million downloads in India over the app's lifetime. Its estimates of active users vary with the highest pegged at 200 million. File-sharing tool SHAREIt has about 400 million users.)
- These Apps make significant revenues through advertising. So, the ban deprives add revenues for these Apps.

Impact on Jobs in India:

- Numerous jobs are linked with the functioning of these apps in the country and banning them without an alternative in place in the tech ecosystem might lead to loss of jobs as well as future business or employment opportunities in the country.

China's Response:

- China stated that ban will affect the flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) from China to India.
- TikTok was considering investing around US \$ one billion in India and this remains suspended now.
- The ban also leads to loss of employment opportunities and also future expansion of employment opportunities in India.

SOCIAL SECTOR***Health:*****Establishment of New AIIMS at Darbhanga, Bihar**

- In September 2020, the Union Government approves establishment of new All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) in Darbhanga, Bihar under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY).
- AIIMS Darbhanga will
 1. fill the gaps in tertiary health-care infrastructure and
 2. also facilities for quality medical education in the Bihar State and adjoining areas.
- At AIIMS, Darbhanga, Hospital, Teaching Block for medical & nursing courses, residential complex and allied facilities/services, broadly on the pattern of AIIMS, New Delhi will be created.
- Setting up new AIIMS in the Darbhanga will lead to employment generation for nearly 3000 persons in various faculty & non-faculty posts.
- Further, indirect employment generation will take place due to facilities and services like canteens, etc. coming in the vicinity of the new AIIMS
- **Total cost of the project:** Rs. 1264 crores
- Project will be completed in 48 months (4 years)

Facilities to come up at the AIIMS, Darbhanga:

- 750 hospital beds
- A medical college with
- 100 MBBS seats
- 60 B.Sc (Nursing) seats,
- 15 to 20 Super Speciality Departments (like Cardiology, Oncology, Neurology, Nephrology, Urology, Gastroenterology, etc.)

About the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY):

- Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) was launched in 2003 to
 1. correct regional imbalances in the access to tertiary health care, and
 2. to augment facilities for quality medical education in the country.

The Scheme has two new components.

1. Setting up of new All India Institutes of Medical Science (AIIMS), and
2. Upgradation of Government Medical Colleges.

Setting up New AIIMS:

- So far, 22 AIIMS have been approved under the PMSSY including AIIMS Darbhanga.
- Each AIIMS institution is provided with following facilities.
- State of the art Operation Theatres (OTs) and diagnostics facilities.
- 15-20 super specialty departments.
- 750 Beds.
- 100 UG (MBBS) seats.
- 60 B.Sc. (Nursing) seats.
- Focus on Post Graduation (PG) education and Research.
- Upgradation of Government Medical Colleges:
- So far, 75 Government Medical Colleges have been approved for upgradation.
- Government Medical Colleges are being upgraded by providing following additional facilities.
- 8-10 Super Speciality Departments.
- Around 15 new PG seats.
- 150-250 beds

Additional Information:**Status of New AIIMS:**

Out of 22 approved new AIIMS institutions, 6 have been completed and are functional. 16 are at various stages of completion.

6 AIIMS which are functional: One each in the States of

1. Bihar (Patna),
2. Chhattisgarh (Raipur),
3. Madhya Pradesh (Bhopal),
4. Orissa (Bhubaneswar),
5. Rajasthan (Jodhpur) and
6. Uttaranchal (Rishikesh).

16 AIIMS which are under various stages of completion are given below:

1. Raebareli (Uttar Pradesh)	9. Madurai(Tamil Nadu)
2. Mangalagiri, Andhra Pradesh	10. Darbhanga (Bihar)
3. Nagpur (Maharashtra)	11. Samba (Jammu)
4. Kalyani (West Bengal)	12. Awantipora (Kashmir)
5. Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh)	13. Deoghar (Jharkhand)
6. Bathinda (Punjab)	14. Rajkot (Gujarat)
7. Guwahati (Assam)	15. Bibinagar (Telangana)
8. Bilaspur (H.P)	16. Manethi (Haryana)

Nutrition:

Rashtriya Poshan Maah (National Nutrition Month) Celebrated

- Every year September month is celebrated as Poshan Maah (Nutrition Month) by the Government as part of POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission).
- The objective of POSHAN Maah (Nutrition Month) is to encourage peoples participation and spread awareness about the importance of addressing malnutrition among children in the age group of 0-6 years.

What is Done During Poshan Maah (Nutrition Month):

- awareness generation regarding
- importance of early breast feeding,
- need for good nutrition during first 1000 days of life,
- measures for reducing Anaemia in young women and children etc.
- identification of Severely Acute Malnourished (SAM) Children and their management and
- plantation of Poshan Vaatikas- Nutri gardens,

About Poshan Vaatikas- Nutri Gardens:

- To meet the nutrition requirements of malnourished children, the Government is encouraging setting up of **Poshan Vaatikas- Nutri Gardens** outside the homes of malnourished children, Aganwadi Centres' premises and land belonging to Panchayar raj in villages.
- Vegetables and fruits are grown in the gardens.
- **Vegetables:** tomatoes, chilli, pumpkin, peas, radish, carrot, cabbage, fenugreek and coriander, etc.
- **Fruits:** Fruit bearing trees such as papaya, sahadana, lemon, guava and mango are grown.
- Poshan Vatikas were introduced in Jharkhand in 2014 to tackle severe malnutrition amongst women and children there, and was later replicated in schools in Chhattisgarh on an experimental basis.

Significance of Poshan Vaatikas- Nutri Gardens:

- Poverty is the root cause of malnutrition of children as poor people cannot afford nutritious food due to low incomes.
- With Poshan Vatikas (**Nutri Gardens**), the poor can grow fruits and vegetables and meet their nutrition requirements without the need for spending money on them.
- Various Government schemes are converged to set up Poshan Vatikas. Agriculture Ministry provides the seeds. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) funds are used to pay for labour work done in the gardens.

About POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission - NNM):

- POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission - NNM) was launched by Government in 2017 to reduce stunting (low height for age), under nutrition, anemia (lack of enough red blood cells in the body), low birth weight of children and also reduce anemia in Women and Adolescent Girls in the age group of 15-49 years.

S.No	Objective	Target
1.	Prevent and reduce Stunting in children (0- 6 years)	By 6% @ 2% p.a. (per annum)
2.	Prevent and reduce under-nutrition (underweight prevalence) in children (0-6 years)	By 6% @ 2% p.a.
3.	Reduce the prevalence of anemia among young Children(6-59 months)	By 9% @ 3% p.a.
4.	Reduce the prevalence of anemia among Women and Adolescent Girls in the age group of 15-49 years.	By 9% @ 3% p.a.
5.	Reduce Low Birth Weight (LBW).	By 6% @ 2% p.a.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Babri Masjid Verdict:

All the Accused in Babri Masjid Demolition Case Acquitted

- On September 30, 2020, a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) court in Lucknow acquitted all the 32 accused in the demolition of Babri Masjid including prominent Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders like L.K. Advani, Murali Manohar Joshi, Uma Bharti and Kalyan Singh. Kalyan Singh was the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh when the demolition of the Babri Masjid took place
- The Babri Masjid was demolished by kar sevaks on December 6, 1992, the concluding day of Ram Janma Bhumi Rath Yatra by BJP leader L.K Advani. Those who offer their services freely for religious causes are called Kar Sevaks.
- The 16th century Babri Masjid mosque located at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh is a disputed site between Hindus and Muslims. Some section of Hindus believe that Mosque was constructed by demolishing the Ram Temple at his birthplace in Ayodhya.
- In November 2019, the Supreme Court judgement permitted the construction of Ram Temple at the place where Babri Masjid once stood. At the same time it also told the Central government to provide a "prominent and suitable" five-acre plot for Muslims to construct a mosque in Ayodhya.
- It also held that the demolition of Babri Masjid was an egregious (terrible) violation of rule of law. It stated that the Muslims have been wrongly deprived of a mosque which had been constructed well over 450 years ago. It stated that the entire structure of the mosque was brought down in a calculated act of destroying a place of public worship.
- However, the Supreme Court only dealt with the property dispute in its judgment in November 2019. The demolition of Babri Masjid was pending as a separate case.

Why Did the CBI Court Acquit the Accused in the Babri Masjid Demolition Case?

- The CBI filed charges of **criminal conspiracy** to demolish the Babri Masjid mosque on the 32 accused including like L.K. Advani, Murali Manohar Joshi, Uma Bharti and Kalyan Singh.
- The **CBI court rejected the charges of criminal conspiracy levelled by the CBI against the accused.**
- It stated that **chargesheet did not have any evidence to show that they "got together in common intent" with a group of "hooligan kar sevaks" to bring down the mosque.**
- It observed that a group of "arajak" (hooligan) kar sevaks from the main crowd "suddenly got agitated" and indulged in violence even as senior VHP leader Ashok Singhal appealed to them to retreat that fateful day.
- The court also said that the evidence submitted by the CBI in the form of newspaper clippings, video cassettes, tapes, printed material, speeches, and witness testimonies made it "clear that there was no moment when the accused persons gathered in a room to plan the scheme to demolish the structure."
- None of the witnesses have clearly named any of the accused to say they were demolishing the disputed structure.

Reaction of Muslim Community:

- Iqbal Ansari, the main litigant in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute, appealed Muslims to honour the verdict.
- He stated that it is good that all have been acquitted and whatever had to happen happened on November 9, 2019 (The day of Supreme Court Judgement on disputed site). He stated that this case should also have ended the same day.
- He appealed to the Muslims not to take any further action on the judgement of the CBI court. He opined that just as Muslims honoured the November 9 decision, this verdict too needs to be accepted similarly.

Empowerment of SCs:

Ambedkar Social Innovation and Incubation Mission (ASIIM)

- On September 30, 2020, Government of India launched the "Ambedkar Social Innovation and Incubation Mission (ASIIM) under Venture Capital Fund for SCs".

Objective:

- To promote innovation and enterprise among Schedules Caste (SC) students studying in higher educational institutions.

Venture Capital Fund for SCs:

- Venture Capital Fund for SCs (VCF-SC) has been launched by the Union Government in 2014-15 with a view to developing entrepreneurship amongst the SC youth and to enable them to become 'job-givers'.
- The Objective of this fund is to provide concessional finance to the entities of the SC entrepreneurs.
- Under this fund, 118 companies promoted by SC entrepreneurs have been sanctioned financial assistance of Rs. 444 crores to set up business ventures.

Ambedkar Social Innovation Incubation Mission (ASIIM):

- In order to further motivate and encourage Innovative entrepreneurial Startups, the Government launched **Ambedkar Social Innovation Incubation Mission (ASIIM) under the Venture Capital Fund for SCs.**
- It is aimed at providing equity support to entities/companies of young SC entrepreneurs working on innovative and technology-based ideas so that they can translate their start-up ideas into commercial ventures.
- 1,000 SC youth would be identified in the next 4 years with start-up ideas through the Technology Business Incubators (TBIs) in various higher educational institutions.
- They will be funded @ Rs. 30 lakhs in 3 years as equity funding so that they can translate their start-up ideas into commercial ventures.
- Successful ventures would further qualify for venture funding of up to Rs. 5 Crore from the Venture Capital Fund for SCs.
- An amount of Rs. 193 crore has been allocated for Ambedkar Social Innovation Incubation Mission (ASIIM) for the next four years i.e. 2020-21 to 2023-24.

Empowerment of Disabled:

Foundation Stone Laid for World Class 'Centre for Disability Sports' at Gwalior

- The foundation stone of '**Centre for Disability Sports at Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh**' was laid in September 2020 by Narendra Singh Tomar, Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment through video conferencing today.
- At present **no training facilities are available in the country for sports person with disabilities.**
- The proposed Centre will make available the specialized training facilities for Persons with Disabilities.
- The setting up of this Centre will develop a sense of belonging in Divangjan to facilitate their integration in the society.
- Total estimated cost to set up the Centre is Rs.170.99 crore.
- The Centre will provide facilities of **international standards to sportspersons with disabilities to compete at international level.**
- The Centre will have provision for training, selection, sports academics and research, medical support, spectator galleries and suitable for holding national/international events.
- It will have an Outdoor Athletic Stadium, Indoor Sports Complex,; Aquatic Centre having 2 Swimming Pools, one covered Pool and an Outdoor Pool; High Performance Centre with classrooms; medical facilities; Sports Science Centre; hostel facilities for athletes, support facilities including accessible lockers, dining, recreational amenities and Administrative Block.
- **Sports identified for training** are Badminton, Basketball, Table Tennis, Volleyball, Judo, Taekwondo, Fencing and Rugby Boccia, Goalball, Football, Para Dance Sport and Para Power Lifting, Athletics, Archery, Football and Tennis and Swimming.

Mental Health:

Mental Health Helpline 'KIRAN' Launched

- On September 7, 2020, the Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry launched a 24/7 toll-free helpline to provide support to people facing anxiety, stress, depression, suicidal thoughts and other mental health concerns.
- **Need for Helpline:**
- Mental health problems are increasing in the country.
- There was a shortage of qualified mental health professionals.
- 10.6% of adults and 7.3% of adolescents faced mental illness, according to a survey by National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru.

About the Helpline:

- The helpline named KIRAN can be called from landline and mobile phones across the country at the number 1800-599-0019.
- This Helpline is dedicated to serving people experiencing stress, anxiety, depression, panic attacks, adjustment disorders, post-traumatic stress disorders, substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, pandemic induced psychological issues & mental health emergencies.
- It would function as the first step for callers to get advice, counselling and referral to psychologists and psychiatrists.
- Helpline operators had been sensitised not to ask the caller for name or any identification details.
- The helpline will be available in 13 languages (Hindi, Assamese, Tamil, Marathi, Odia, Telugu, Malayalam, Gujarati, Punjabi, Kannada, Bengali, Urdu and English).
- It will be operational 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- The Helpline is being coordinated by the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD), Chennai and National Institute of Mental Health Rehabilitation (NIMHR), Sehore, Madhya Pradesh.
- Professional support for the Helpline is being provided by the Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists (IACP), Indian Psychiatrists Association (IPA) and Indian Psychiatric Social Workers Association (IPSWA).

Suicides and Accidental Deaths:

NCRB Releases Annual Report on Suicides and Accidental Deaths

- In September 2020, National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) released 'Report on Suicides and Accidental Deaths: 2019'. Every year more than 1,00,000 persons commit suicide in our country. Suicide means an individual prematurely ends his life when overwhelmed by problems. These problems could be professional / career problems, family problems, mental disorders, etc.

Major Statistics of 2019 Report:

Suicides:

- 1, 39,123 persons committed suicide in 2019 in India.
- Majority of the Suicides were reported in the following states.

State	Suicides in 2019
Maharashtra	18,916
Tamil Nadu	13,493
West Bengal	12,665
Madhya Pradesh	12,457
Karnataka	11,288

Suicide Rate:

- Rate of suicides i.e. the number of suicides per one lakh population, has been widely accepted as a standard yardstick for comparison.
- All India rate of suicides was 10.4 during the year 2019.

Major Reasons for Suicides in 2019:

- Family problems (32.4 per cent of suicides),
- Illness (17.1 per cent of suicides),
- Drug Abuse/Alcohol addiction
- Love affairs,
- Bankruptcy or indebtedness
- Unemployment,
- Failure in examinations.
- **Other reasons:** Property disputes, death of dear ones, poverty, illicit relations, professional/career problems, etc.

Utility of Suicide Statistics:

- Suicides are personal tragedies. They deeply affect the lives family members of persons committing suicide. But, these can be prevented by seeking medical help.
- Suicide statistics help the Government to understand the underlying reasons, extent of the problem and take corrective policy measures as well as generate awareness about the problems and solutions.
- In September 2020, the Union Government launched a 24/7 mental health helpline named 'KIRAN' to provide counselling, guidance and referral services to people facing mental health issues like anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts.

Statistics on Accidental Deaths 2019:

- 4,21,104 persons died due to accidents in 2019.
- Majority of deaths were due to traffic accidents. 1, 81, 113 persons died in road accidents.

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- Other reasons for accidental deaths are landslides, floods, heat strokes, etc.
 - Maharashtra reported highest number of accidental deaths (70,329), contributing nearly one-sixth (16.7%) of total accidental deaths reported in the country.
 - Uttar Pradesh, the most populous State in the country with population share of 16.9% has accounted for 9.6% of the total accidental deaths in the country.
 - The other States having higher percentage share in total accidental deaths were Madhya Pradesh (10.1%), Rajasthan (6.8%), Karnataka (6.0%), Gujarat (5.7%), Tamil Nadu (5.3%), Chhattisgarh (4.7%), Andhra Pradesh (4.3%), Odisha (3.9%) and West Bengal (3.8%).

Crime in India Report:

NCRB Releases 'Crime in India:2019' Report

- In September 2020, National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) released the annual report on crimes 'Crime in India: 2019'.

Major Statistics on Crimes in Indian in 2019:

Total Crimes:

- A total of 51,56,172 were registered in the country in 2019. It shows an increase of 1.6% in registration of cases over 2018 (50,74,635 cases).

Murders:

- 28,918 cases of murder were registered during 2019, showing a marginal decrease of 0.3% over 2018 (29,017 cases).
- 'Disputes' (9,516 cases) was the motive in highest number of murder cases during 2019 followed by 'Personal vendetta or enmity' (3,833 cases) and 'Gain (2,573 cases).

Kidnapping & Abduction:

- A total of 1,05,037 cases of kidnapping & abduction were registered during 2019, showing a marginal decrease of 0.7% over 2018 (1,05,734 cases).
- A total of 1,08,025 (23,104 male and 84,921 female) victims were kidnapped or abducted during 2019, out of which 71,264 (15,894 male and 55,370 female) were children.

Crime against Women:

- 4,05,861 cases of crime against women were registered during 2019, showing an increase of 7.3% over 2018 (3,78,236 cases).
- Majority of cases under crime against women were registered under 'Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives' (30.9%) followed by 'Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty' (21.8%), 'Kidnapping & Abduction of Women' (17.9%) and 'Rape' (7.9%).
- The crime rate registered per lakh women population is 62.4 in 2019 in comparison with 58.8 in 2018.

Rapes:

- 32,033 rape cases were registered in 2019 as against 33,356 cases in 2018.

Dowry Deaths:

- 7115 dowry death cases were registered in 2019 as against 7167 in 2018.

Acid Attacks:

- 240 acid attack cases were registered in 2019 as against 228 in 2018.

Crime/Atrocities against Scheduled Castes (SCs):

- 45,935 cases were registered for committing crime against Scheduled Castes (SCs), showing an increase of 7.3% over 2018 (42,793 cases).

Crime/Atrocities against Scheduled Tribes (STs):

- 8,257 cases were registered for committing crime against Scheduled Tribes (STs), showing an increase of 26.5% over 2018 (6,528 cases).

Economic Offences:

- 1,65,782 cases were registered under economic offences, showing an increase of 6.1% in registration over 2018 (1,56,268 cases).
- Criminal breach of trust, FCF (Forgery, Cheating & Fraud) and counterfeiting are three specified category of economic offences
- FCF (Forgery, Cheating & Fraud) accounted for maximum of such cases, with 1,43,909 cases, followed by criminal breach of trust (20,833 cases) and counterfeiting (1,040 cases) during 2019.

Prevention of Corruption Act:

- 4,243 cases have been registered in 2019 by State Anti-Corruption Bureaux (ACBs) as compared to 4,129 cases in 2018, showing an increase of 2.8%.
- Out of 4,243 Cases, majority, i.e., 67.7% were Trap Cases (2,873) followed by 14.5 % of Criminal Misconduct (618 Cases). A total of 4,422 persons were arrested, 1,092 persons were convicted and departmental action was taken against 705 persons.

Cyber Crimes:

- A total of 44,546 cases were registered under Cyber Crimes, showing a huge increase of 63.5% in registration over 2018 (27,248 cases).
- During 2019, 60.4% of cyber-crime cases registered were for the motive of fraud (26,891 out of 44,546 cases) followed by sexual exploitation with 5.1% (2,266 cases) and causing disrepute with 4.2% (1,874 cases).

Human Trafficking:

- 2,260 cases of Human Trafficking were registered in 2019 as compared to 2,278 cases in the year 2018, showing a decrease of 0.8%.
- A total of 6,616 victims have been reported to be trafficked in which 2,914 children and 3,702 adults were trafficked.
- Apart from this, 6,571 victims have been rescued from clutches of traffickers. A total of 5,128 persons were arrested in 2,260 cases of trafficking

Offences against Property:

- The cases registered under offences against property have increased by 6.5% from 8,02,372 cases in 2018 to 8,54,618 cases in 2019.
- Maximum cases reported were of theft (6,75,916 cases), followed by burglaries (1,00,897 cases), accounting for 79.1% and 11.8% respectively.

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- During 2019, Properties worth Rs. 4719.2 crores were stolen and Properties worth Rs. 1451.6 Crore were recovered accounting for 30.8% recovery of stolen properties.

Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) Seizure:

- 2,87,404 notes worth Rs. 25,39,09,130 were seized under Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) during 2019 as compared to 2,57,243 notes worth Rs. 17,95,36,992 in the year 2018 showing as increase of 11.7%.
- **Note:** Due to non-receipt of data from State of West Bengal and Kolkata City in time for the year 2019, data furnished for the year 2018 has been used to arrive at national and city-wise figures.

Utility of Crime Statistics:

- The data is a **valuable source for police** to understand the nature of crime and devise better strategies for controlling crime.
- **The data is also used by academicians** (sociologists and criminologists) to analyse the nature of crimes in the country.
- **Cities and municipalities** also use the data for better planning of security measures.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Indo-Japan:

India, Japan, and Australia to Launch Supply Chains Resilience Initiative

- India, Japan and Australia decided to launch a Supply Chains Resilience Initiative in the Indo-pacific Ocean.
- The objective is to counter the dominance of China in the global supply chains by diversifying the supply chain, and building a reliable network of long term supply chains in the indo-pacific region.
- Australia, India and Japan as crucial players in the region.
- In 2019, the cumulative GDP of India, Japan and Australia was \$ 9.3 trillion.
- Cumulative merchandise goods and services trade were \$ 2.7 trillion and \$0.9 trillion respectively.
- The three countries want to use such a strong base to work towards enhancing the share of their trade and investment in the Indo-pacific region.
- The Trade Ministers of the India, Japan and Australia met through virtual conference in this regard in September 2020. They instructed the officials of the three counties to work out the details of the initiative.

What are Supply Chains?

- The term 'chain' refers to various players involved in the production of a product.
- Global supply chains refer to the **fragmentation of production processes in production of final goods based on competitive advantage**. Firms specialise in production of specific parts of a final good. Specialisation leads to higher productivity and profits for the firms.

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- There are two interrelated terms Global Supply Chains (GSCs) and 'Global Value Chains (GVCs)'.
 - While Global Supply Chain (GSC) emphasizes the manufacturing and distribution-related steps, a Global Value chain includes other activities such as design and branding that add value to a product, that do not necessarily reflect a physical transformation.

Significance:

- Global value chains (GVCs) powered the **surge of international trade after 1990**.
- A global value chain (GVC) **breaks the production process across the countries. Firms specialise in a specific task and do not produce the whole product**.
- **Now** Global value chains (GVCs) **account for almost half of all trade**. That means countries are trading in more in parts and components than in final products.
- Examples: Mobile phones, automobiles. Apple phones are designed in USA, hardware is manufactured in China. Electronic components are various firms. Final assembly is done is done other firms. The final product is distributed and sold across the world.
- This shift in production processes enabled an unprecedented economic convergence: poor countries grew rapidly and began to catch up with richer countries. Countries like China, Vietnam benefit from Global Value Chains.
- However, **China dominates the Global Supply Chains** as it encourages firms to specialise in specific production processes and build economies of scale.
- But COVID-19 disrupted the supply chain. As a result countries like India, Japan and Australia are aiming at diversifying supply chains.
- **China's expansionist policies** in its neighbourhood like in the South China sea, and border tensions with India are also the reasons for the three countries looking for diversification and reducing the dependence on China for supply chains.

India, and Bangladesh to Benefit from Japan's Subsidy Programme

- China is Japan's biggest trading partner. The supply chain of Japanese companies heavily relies on China. But imports from China have slumped by almost half in February 2020 due to lockdowns to curb the spread of the COVID virus hitting manufacturing and the supply chain in Japan.
- To reduce its dependence on China and diversify its supply chain sources, Japan, in July 2020, started a subsidy programme for Japanese manufacturing companies to shift their manufacturing sites from China to Japan and ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) countries.
- (ASEAN is a regional group consisting of 10 countries: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam).
- Several Japanese companies in China are also keen to relocate due to the growing economic uncertainty in that country post Covid-19 pandemic and its worsening relations with the US and some other nations.
- There are over 31,000 Japanese business establishments in China.

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- Japan announced a subsidy programme of US \$ 2.23 billion. Out of this, US \$ 2 billion is for companies relocating to Japan from China. Remaining amount of US \$ 230 million (around 1700 crores) is for companies relocating to ASEAN countries from China.
 - The first round of subsidies announced in July 2020, Japanese Government granted more than 10 billion yen to 30 companies relocating manufacturing to Southeast Asia such as Hoya, which is moving production of electronic components to Vietnam and Laos. Another 57 are receiving support for shifting production facilities to Japan.
 - Companies relocating from China would be supported by reimbursing a part of investments in machinery, factory, etc.

Subsidies Programme Expanded to Include India and Bangladesh:

- In September 2020, Japan extended the scope of subsidy programme to include India and Bangladesh in addition to ASEAN countries.
- Japanese manufacturers will now be eligible for subsidies if they shift production out of China to India or Bangladesh.
- By expanding the scope of the subsidy program, Japan aims to reduce its dependence on China and build a system that is able to provide a stable supply of medical materials and electronic components, etc. even in an emergency.

India Japan Trade Relations:

- There around **5,100 Japanese business establishments in India.**
- **Japan is the fourth largest investor in India**, after Mauritius, Singapore and the Netherlands, accounting for cumulative foreign direct investments (FDI) of \$33.5 billion in 2000-20 period accounting for 7.2 per cent of the total flows into India.
- Much of the Japanese investment is in **manufacturing.**
- Japanese Minister for External Trade and Investments Hiroshi Kajiyama, at a virtual investment forum for Japanese investors in India in August 2020, had said that **India was one of the investment destinations that Japanese investors were keen to expand in.** However, for Japanese companies to select India as an investment destination, it was important to provide an attractive business environment.
- He pointed out that **200 investment projects from Japan** were facing delays in India due to various problems including the pandemic.
- India had assured that a focussed group of key officials will resolve Japanese investors' concerns including those on **logistics, customs clearance, export procedures and quality issues.**

India, and Japan Sign Mutual Military Logistics Agreement

- After years of negotiations, India and Japan signed a landmark agreement (Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Pact) in September 2020.
- The agreement
 - a) establishes a framework for closer defence cooperation through interoperability, and

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- b) allows militaries of both the countries to access each other's bases for logistics support. Militaries of the two countries would use each other's bases and facilities for repair and replenishment of supplies

Similar Agreements with other Countries:

- India has been signing Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSAs) with countries primarily eyeing deeper maritime cooperation which is important considering China's rapid military expansionism in the Indo-Pacific, Indian Ocean and South China Sea.
- India signed similar agreements with USA, France, South Korea, Singapore and France.
- The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) signed with USA in 2016 gives India access to refuelling facilities and also access USA bases in Djibouti, Diego Garcia, Guam and Subic Bay.
- The agreement signed with France gives India access to Reunion Islands near Madagascar in Indian Ocean and Djibouti in the Horn of Africa.
- On the other hand, China also has access to Karachi and Gwadar ports in Pakistan for turnaround facilities for its submarines and warships.
- It is also trying for military bases in Cambodia, Vanuatu and other countries to further consolidate its presence in the Indo-Pacific.

Indo-Bangladesh:

New Inland Waterway Route Operationalised between India and Bangladesh

- A new inland waterway route was operationalised between India and Bangladesh in September 2020 with the opening up of the **Daukandi (Bangladesh) - Sonamura (Tripura) Inland Waterway Protocol route**.
- Bangladeshi vessel, MB Premier carrying cement started from Daukandi reached Sonamura on September 05, 2020 traversing 93 kms along the river Gumti.
- This is the first ever export consignment from Bangladesh to Tripura through the inland waterways.

Benefits of the New Route:

The operationalisation of this new route will

- **further facilitating overall bilateral trade** with Bangladesh,
- provide an **economical, faster, safer and environment friendly** mode of transport and
- result in **substantial economic benefits to local communities on both sides**.

Protocol for Inland Water Trade & Transit (PIWTT):

- The Protocol for Inland Water Trade & Transit (PIWTT) was signed between India and Bangladesh in 1972 to provide inland waterways connectivity between the two countries, particularly with the North Eastern Region of India and also to enhance bilateral trade.
- In the last one year, approximately 3.5 MMT (million metric tonnes) of cargo was transported between India and Bangladesh on the protocol routes.
- The scope of PIWTT has been further expanded by the signing of the 2nd Addendum to PIWTT with the inclusion of additional routes and ports of calls.

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- The inclusion of Sonamura - Daudkhandi stretch of Gumti river (93 km) as a new route in the Protocol will **improve the connectivity of Tripura** and the adjoining States with Indian and Bangladesh's economic centers and will **help the hinterland of both the countries**.

INTERNATIONAL POLITY

Nagorno-Karabakh:

Clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh

- Clashes erupted between Azerbaijan and Armenia in last week of September 2020 over the volatile Nagorno-Karabakh region. The region falls in South Caucasus which has corridor for pipelines transporting oil and gas to world markets.
- (Caucasus is a region between Black Sea and Caspian Sea and mainly occupied by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and parts of Southern Russia. Caucasus region got its name because of the Caucasus mountains in that region).
- The fighting erupted on September 27, 2020 and has killed more than 2000, marking the biggest escalation in the decades-old conflict over the region. Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that casualties are around 5000.
- This is the worst violence in the region since a six-year war over the territory ended with a ceasefire in 1994.
- Both Armenia and Azerbaijan have accused each other of expanding the hostilities beyond the conflict zone in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Fears of Humanitarian Crisis

- There are fears of a looming humanitarian crisis as the fighting spreads to cities and towns in Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan, with infrastructure ruined, scores of civilians injured or killed, and thousands displaced.

About Nagorno-Karabakh:

- Nagorno-Karabakh has history of ethnic conflict and political conflict.
- At present Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan but it is controlled and administered by ethnic Armenians who are Christians.

History:

- Modern-day Armenia and Azerbaijan both became part of the Soviet Union when it was formed in the 1920s. Armenia has Christian majority population while Azerbaijan was Muslim majority.
- **While Azerbaijan is a Muslim majority country, Nagorno-Karabakh region has Christian majority population who were Armenians** though there are some Muslim Turks.
- Hence, **Nagorno-Karabakh** was a **designated autonomous region within Azerbaijan as majority**.
- The Christian Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh made several calls to be transferred to Armenian authority control in the following decades. But their demands were not met.
- As the Soviet Union began to collapse in the late 1980s, Nagorno-Karabakh's regional parliament officially voted to become part of Armenia.

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- Azerbaijan sought to suppress the separatist movement, while Armenia backed it. This led to ethnic clashes.
 - After Armenia and Azerbaijan declared independence from Moscow, a full-scale war broke out. The ethnic Armenian rebels of Nagorno-Karabakh were backed by the Armenian government in their fight against Azerbaijan.
 - An estimated 30,000 people were killed in the war and up to a million were displaced. There were reports of ethnic cleansing and massacres committed by both sides.
 - The war ended in ceasefire in 1994.
 - But, by that time, **Armenian forces not only held Nagorno-Karabakh itself but substantial areas outside the territory's formal borders** re-establishing territorial continuity with Armenia.
 - **The Armenian rebels also declared independence in the region (Republic of Artsakh)**, which has not been recognised by any country. United Nations still identifies Nagorno-Karabakh as a part of Azerbaijani territory. Armenia support **Nagorno-Karabakh** financially and militarily.

Present Status:

- After the ceasefire in 1994, Armenia and Azerbaijan failed to reach a peace agreement.
- **Azerbaijan continues to claim sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh.**
- Armenia and Azerbaijan accuse each other of violating humanitarian ceasefires in Nagorno-Karabakh.
- Armenia accuses Azerbaijan forces of attacking ethnic Armenians. In July 2020, violence erupted, which left some 16 people dead. Since then, the border has remained tense. In the current spell of clashes, which broke out on September 27, 2020, dozens have already been killed.
- International mediation has failed to bring about a breakthrough in the region.
- The United States, France, and Russia co-chaired of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which spearheaded efforts to resolve the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh since a 1994 cease-fire.

Role of Turkey in the Conflict:

- Armenia alleged that Turkey is involved in the conflict by supporting Azerbaijan.
- It stated that Turkey is sending fighters from Syria to the region.
- It is also supplying drone to Azerbaijan which are used for dropping bombs.
- Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian said that a cease-fire can be established only if Turkey is stopped from intervention in the conflict.
- Turkey publicly sided with Azerbaijan in the dispute.
- Turkey has vowed to send soldiers and provide military support for Azerbaijan if requested.
- Turkey's military has been **training Azerbaijani officers for decades**. In August 2020, their armed forces conducted large-scale military exercises in Azerbaijan.
- Turkey is also **Azerbaijan's third-largest supplier of military equipment** after Russia and Israel. It also reportedly sold drones and rocket launchers to Azerbaijan

Why is Turkey Supporting Azerbaijan?

- Turkey and Azerbaijan are bound by strong ethnic, cultural and historic ties and refer to their relationship as being one between "two states, one nation."
- Turkey was the first country to recognize Azerbaijan's independence in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the two have forged robust economic ties.
- Turkey is also the main conduit for Azerbaijan's oil and gas exports, and the ex-Soviet republic has become a major investor in Turkey.
- On the other hand, Turkey has no diplomatic relations with Armenia which is a Christian majority country and sealed its border with the Armenia in 1993 to show solidarity with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh.
- Relations between Armenia and Turkey already were strained in the past due to the mass killings and deportations of Armenians by Ottoman Turks a century ago.

Stand of Russia on the Dispute:

- Russia is in a military alliance with Armenia and has a military base in the country.
- The base, with a garrison of about 3,000 soldiers, is in Gyumri, about 200 kilometers (124 miles) west of Nagorno-Karabakh and less than 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) from the Turkish border.
- But Russia also has close ties with Azerbaijan. It sells weapons to both Armenia and Azerbaijan.
- Hence, Russia so far maintained a neutral stand and hosted truce talks.
- Both the sides agreed for a truce. But fighting continued again with each side claiming provocation from other side of breaking the truce by continued shelling missiles. Hundreds have died on both the sides.

Possibility of Russian Involvement in the Conflict:

- Armenia and Russia are members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a military alliance of some former Soviet republics, not including Azerbaijan, raising the possibility that Armenia could call for military help from the alliance.
- However, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian said that he does not see an immediate need for calling on Russian forces to take action.

USA Mediation:

- After Russia mediated ceasefire failed to stop the ongoing conflict, USA began fresh attempts to mediate between Armenia and Azerbaijan.



Kra Canal Project:

Thailand Changes Stand on Kra Canal Project Proposal by China

- In September 2020, Thailand announced that it is not only in talks with China but with India, USA as well as Australia to build the strategically proposed Kra Canal in the Southern part of the country.
- As part of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has proposed the Kra canal project at an estimated cost of around US \$ 30 billion.
- Thailand was actively considering the proposal of China till now.

Significance of Kra Canal:

- The Strait of Malacca is a major bottleneck in China's global ambitions.
- 80 per cent of China's oil supplies pass through the Malacca Strait, apart from forming its trade to the Middle East and Europe.
- Hence, China wants to construct a 120-kilometre mega canal cutting through the Isthmus of Kra in Thailand. (An isthmus is a narrow strip of land that connects two larger landmasses and separates two bodies of water).
- The proposed project would allow ships to bypass the Malacca Strait, world's busiest maritime route.
- An estimated 84,000 ships carrying around 30 per cent of global trade transit each year through Malacca Strait.
- Kra canal would also reduce the travelling distance by around 1200 km when compared with Malacca Straits.

Concerns over Kra Canal Project:

- Thailand remains divided on moving forward on China's proposal.

Threat to Sovereignty:

- Some in Thailand's strategic establishment fear Chinese investment in the project will, inexorably, lead to an erosion of the country's sovereignty - a fear founded on the experience of Egypt and Panama, where the canals led to decades of foreign control. Though Thailand may benefit from the canal by way of user fee levied on ships passing through the Kra canal, it would also lead to the spread of China's influence on the canal as it funds the project.

Exacerbation of Ethnic Divisions:

- The canal would divide Thailand into northern and southern Thailand.
- The southern portion of the country (south of the proposed canal) has seen an increasing divide between Thai Buddhists and Thailand's Malay Muslims.
- The construction of the Kra Canal might further exacerbate the volatile region, creating further divisions within the country.
- However, there is increasing opposition domestically by the political parties and public to Chinese investments.
- Hence, Thailand is moving cautiously on the project.



Osaka Track:

India Opposes 'Osaka Track' on Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT)

- India opposed the Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT) at the virtual G-20 Trade and Investment Minister's held in September 2020.

Background:

- At the 2019 G-20 Summit, Japan proposed the '**Osaka Track**' an overarching framework promoting cross-border data flow with enhanced protections.
- Under the Osaka Track, it floated the concept of Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT).
- It is a proposed **plurilateral agreement** on cross border digital trade.
- It seeks to standardize rules in global movement of data flows with better protection in personal information, intellectual property and cyber security.

Developing Countries' Stand on Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT):

- India, along with South Africa, Indonesia, and majority of other developing countries are opposed to plurilateral agreements on digital trade.
- They have been consistently demanding that negotiations on e-commerce/digital trade must be conducted on the basis of the 1998 work programme of WTO.
- They opine that **plurilateral negotiations on digital trade strike at the very roots of multilateral negotiating process** based on arriving at decisions by consensus.
- Developing countries also repeatedly expressed their fears that they will be denied "policy space" for their digital-industrialization through the proposed plurilateral agreement on digital trade.

India's Stand:

- There is a need for policy space for developing countries which still have to finalize laws around digital trade and data.
- Data is a potent tool for development and equitable access of data is a critical aspect.

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- India, like many other developing countries, is still in the phase of preparing a framework for its data protection and e-commerce laws.
 - Moreover, the existing regulations on which DFFT is sought to be premised, such as uninhibited cross border flow of data, are grossly inadequate to address our concerns on data access. This could further aggravate the digital divide

What are Plurilateral Agreements?

- Under the WTO, most of the trade agreements are reached through consensus and binding on all the members. Hence, these are multilateral agreements.
- Plurilateral agreements are those signed by small group of countries. These can be within the framework of WTO by select member countries when there is no consensus by all the members of WTO.
- Example: Information Technology Agreement signed by 29 countries at the 1996 Singapore Convention.
- Another Example is Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) signed by 48 WTO member countries. Under this agreement, parties to the agreement agreed to mutually open government procurement markets among themselves. Countries which are party to GPA have opened procurement activities worth an estimated US\$ 1.7 trillion annually to international competition among its member countries.
- Plurilateral Agreements are also signed outside WTO. Example: Regional Trade Agreements, Free Trade Agreements and Preferential Trade Agreements between select countries.

UN Reforms:

G-4 Countries (India, Germany, Japan, and Brazil) Call for United Nations Reforms

- India and three other countries (Japan, Germany and Brazil) which aspire to join a reformed UN Security Council expressed disappointment at the lack of any meaningful movement forward in the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) on United Nations Security Council reform.
- at attempts to derail reforms at the UN including an expansion of the Security Council.
- Virtual meeting with the foreign ministers of India, Japan, Germany and Brazil - called G-4 nations - held in September 2020 called for a revamp of the UN Security Council (UNSC) to make it more representative of the current global order than the 1945 system.
- They unanimously called for text based negotiations in a fixed time frame for UN reforms.
- G-4 countries stated that reforming the Security Council, by **expanding the Security Council in both categories (permanent and non permanent) will be indispensable** to make this body **more representative, legitimate and effective**.
- They stated that broader membership of the Security Council, with increased and enhanced representation of countries with the capacity and willingness to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, including from Africa, will allow it to **preserve its credibility and create the political backing needed for the peaceful resolution of today's international crises**.

Efforts of G-4 Countries:

- The G-4 came together in the early 2000s to push for reforms in the UNSC and press their candidature. But even after many years, reforms at the UNSC have not materialized due to a lack of consensus among member states over who should be included and whether the new members should be given the veto power.
- Formulas suggested in the past have included adding permanent members to the current group of five - Britain, China, France, Russia and the US - but without giving the new members the veto power.
- The reforms have also been stymied by opposition against countries within the G-4. For instance, Pakistan opposes India; Japan's candidature is opposed by China while Germany's is opposed by Italy.
- Four permanent members of the UNSC support India i.e. Britain, France, Russia and the US. China is opposed to India due to its ties with Pakistan as well as Beijing's own frictions with New Delhi.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

DEFENCE:

Hypersonic Technology:

Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle Successfully Test Fired

- India successfully test fired the indigenously developed Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HTDV) in September 2020. It is a giant leap in indigenous defence technologies for India.
- The Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HTDV) has been developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- The test was conducted from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Launch Complex at **Wheeler Island**, off the coast of Odisha

Significance of HTDV:

- Hypersonic technology enables India to develop next generation **hypersonic cruise missiles**.
- The HSTDV is capable of powering missiles to **attain a speed of around Mach 6 or six times the speed of sound**.
- The HSTDV operates on an **air breathing scramjet engine**, as against the ramjet engine which is used on most missiles. The ramjet engines operate at supersonic speeds of up to Mach 3.
- With this test, India joined the select club of nations like which mastered this technology.
- Only a very few countries like the US, Russia and China have this capability.

Speeds and Mach Numbers:

- The speed of fast moving objects is measured in Mach numbers i.e. speed of the sound.
- Mach 1 represents the speed of sound i.e. 768 miles per hour or 1236 km per hour at sea level.

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- Missiles and other fast moving vehicles like aircraft are classified as follows based on their speeds:

1. Subsonic Less than Mach 1.

This is the speed travelled by most of the commercial airplanes that carry people and cargo.

2. Transonic At or about Mach 1.

3. Supersonic Greater than Mach 1

4. Hypersonic Greater than Mach 5.

This is more than five times the speed of sound.

It is the speed travelled by rockets and the space shuttle as they go into orbit

Prithvi Missile:

Prithvi II Missile Successfully Test Fired

- In September 2020, India conducted successful night test fire of its indigenously developed nuclear capable surface to surface Prithvi II missile as part of routine user trials by Army.
- The state-of-the-art missile was test fired from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur, Orissa.
- The missile was randomly chosen from the production stock.
- Prithvi-II is capable of carrying 500 to 1,000 kg of warheads.
- It has a strike range of 350 km.
- It is powered by liquid propulsion twin engines.
- It has already inducted into the armoury of the defence forces in 2003.
- It has been developed by DRDO under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP).

BrahMos Missile:

BrahMos Supersonic Cruise Missile Successfully Test Fired

- In September 2020, India successfully test fired BrahMos supersonic cruise missile from Integrated Test Range, Odisha
- The missile test fired has a strike range of 400 km.
- It is a surface to surface Land Attack Cruise Missile (LACM).
- It cruised at a top speed of Mach 2.8.

About BrahMos Missiles:

- BrahMos is a **medium range ramjet supersonic cruise missile**.
- (The name BrahMos is a word formed from the names of two rivers, the **Brahmaputra** of India and the **Moskva** of Russia).

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- These missiles are being produced under a joint venture between India and Russia.
 - BrahMos Aerospace, **an India-Russian joint venture**, produces the missiles.
 - They can be launched from **submarines, ships, aircraft, or from land platforms**.
 - In May 2019, the Indian Air successfully test fired the aerial version of the BrahMos missile from a Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft.
 - The BrahMos missile provides the IAF a much-desired capability to strike from large standoff ranges on any target at sea or on land with pinpoint accuracy by day or night and in all weather conditions.
 - The IAF is also integrating the Brahmos supersonic cruise missile on over 40 Sukhoi fighter jets which is aimed at bolstering overall combat capability of the force.

SPACE:

Mangalyaan:

India's Mars Mission 'Mangalyaan' Completes Five Years

- India's mission to Mars planet Mangalyaan (Mars Orbiter Mission-MOM) completed five years of orbiting the Mars planet on September 22, 2020.
- The mission, launched in 2014, was originally planned for six months.
- Mangalyaan was the **first mission outside the earth's gravity and first interplanetary mission**.
- The mission was cheapest. It cost the Government of India Rs.450 crore.
- In the past five years, the Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) helped India's space agency prepare a Martian Atlas based on the images provided by the Orbiter.
- The Mars Orbiter has sent thousands of pictures totalling two terabytes.
- Phobos and Deimos, the two moons of Mars, were also imaged from close distances by the Mars Colour Camera (MCC).
- An important conclusion of the mission has been the finding that dust storms on the Martian can rise up to hundreds of kilometres.
- The data from MOM has helped produced 23 publications in peer-reviewed journals.

How was the Mission Life of Mangalyaan Extended?

- ISRO stated that the orbiter can go on for another year.
- One life-limiting parameter of a spacecraft, under nominal orbital conditions, is the availability of fuel, necessary to maintain the spacecraft's orbit and orientation.
- The precise location of the satellite by the ground station helped conserve fuel. Plus, effective control management also helped in extending the life of the MOM.
- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is working on Mangalyaan 2.

ENVIRONMENT:

FAME Scheme:

670 New Electric Buses and 241 Charging Stations Sanctioned under FAME Scheme

- In a big push towards electric mobility, the Government of India sanctioned 670 Electric buses in the states of Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat and Chandigarh and 241 Charging Stations in Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Gujarat and Port Blair under Phase-II of FAME India Scheme.
- The decision of the Government contributes to
- reduction of carbon emission, and
- eco-friendly public transportation

About FAME India Scheme:

- The Government of India started Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (FAME India) Scheme in 2015 to
- promote manufacturing of electric and hybrid vehicle technology and
- ensure sustainable growth of the same as it contributes to reduction of carbon emissions.

Phase-I of FAME Scheme:

- The Phase-I the FAME Scheme was initially launched for a period of 2 years, commencing from 1st April 2015.
- It was subsequently extended from time to time and the last extension was allowed up to 31st March 2019.
- The 1st Phase of FAME India Scheme was implemented through four focus areas namely (i) Demand Creation, (ii) Technology Platform, (iii) Pilot Project and (iv) Charging Infrastructure.
- Market creation through demand incentives was aimed at incentivizing all vehicle segments i.e. **2-Wheelers, 3-Wheelers Auto, Passenger 4-Wheeler vehicles, Light Commercial Vehicles and Buses.**
- The demand incentive was available to buyers of xEV (exclusive electric vehicles) in the form of an **upfront reduced purchase price to enable wider adoption.**
- Grants were also sanctioned for **specific projects under Pilot Projects, Research and Development (R&D)/Technology Development and Public Charging Infrastructure components** under the scheme.
- In the 1st phase of scheme, about 2.78 lakh xEVs (exclusive electric vehicles) were supported with total demand incentives of Rs. 343 Crore.
- In addition, 465 buses were sanctioned to various cities/states under this scheme.
- Rs. 43 Crore was sanctioned for setting up of 520 Charging Stations in cities like Bangalore, Chandigarh, Jaipur and NCR of Delhi under Phase-I of FAME-India Scheme.
- In total, the Government of India spent Rs. 529 crore under the Phase 1 of FAME.
- The Department of Heavy Industry is the nodal agency for implementation of the scheme.

FAME India Scheme Phase 2:

- Based on the experience gained during Phase 1 of FAME Scheme and suggestions of various stakeholders including industry associations, the Department of Heavy Industry notified Phase-II of the Scheme in March 2019.

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- **Rs. 10,000 Crore** has been allocated for a period of 3 years commencing from 1st April 2019 (2019-20 to 2021-22).
 - Phase-2 of FAME proposes to give a major push to electric vehicles (EVs) in public transport while encouraging adoption of EVs by way of market creation through setting up charging infrastructure and demand aggregation.

Incentives to Advanced Technologies:

- To encourage advance technologies, the benefits of incentives, will be extended to only those vehicles which are fitted with advance battery like a **Lithium Ion battery** and other new technology batteries.

Charging Infrastructure:

- Charging infrastructure is crucial for the wider adoption of Electric vehicles.
- The Phase 2 FAME scheme also proposes for establishment of charging infrastructure, whereby about **2700 charging stations will be established in metros, other million plus cities, smart cities and cities of Hilly states across the country so that there will be availability of at least one charging station in a grid of 3 km x 3 km.**
- Establishment of Charging stations are also proposed on **major highways connecting major city clusters.**
- **On such highways,** charging stations will be established on both sides of the road at an interval of **about 25 km each.**

Rhino Conservation:

World Rhino Day Celebrated

- The World Rhino Day is celebrated every year on 22nd September to emphasize the importance of conservation of Rhinoceros species and its habitats.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India celebrated the World Rhino Day, 2020 through virtual platforms.
- Currently, there are five extant species of Rhinos of which two are found in Africa (White and Black) three in Southern Asia (Indian, Javan and Sumantran). Javan and Sumantran species are found in Indonesia
- The rhinos, like elephants, are considered as one of the last living megafauna of our planet.
- Rhinos are herbivorous by nature, possess a thick protective skin, a small brain compared to body size, and horns.
- Rhinos are also one of the most threatened animals of the world.

About India Rhinoceros:

- The Indian rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*), also called by various names like Indian rhino, greater one-horned rhinoceros or great Indian **rhinoceros, is a rhinoceros species native to the Indian subcontinent.**
- It is **one of the 21 species identified for Recovery programme for critically endangered species** by the Environment Ministry of India.

Measures Taken by to Conserve India Rhinoceros:

- Greater One-horned Rhinoceros reached the brink of extinction by 1970's due to **hunting (for rhino horn) and habitat loss.**
- Fewer than 200 Greater One-horned Rhinoceros were found in the wild.

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- Timely efforts and stringent protection and management of the Governments of India and the State Governments have revived the population of Rhinos in the country.
 - **Population of Rhinos has rebounded to more than 3,600 today.**
 - Today, approximately **75% of the entire population of Greater One-horned Rhinoceros now occurs in India** in the three States viz, **Assam, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.**
 - Currently, the Government of India is implementing the **Indian Rhino Vision (IRV) 2020 programme, launched in 2005, to protect the existing rhino population and also to increase the distribution of the species**
 - Rhino population has been restocked in the **World Heritage Site Manas National Park, Assam** recently through wild to wild translocations.
 - The Ministry has also launched the "**National Conservation Strategy for the Indian One-Horned Rhinoceros**" with the goal to **repopulate Rhinoceros population in those areas also which used to hold the Rhinoceros** earlier by augmenting the existing conservation efforts and strengthening them through scientific and administrative measures.
 - Initiatives have been undertaken by the State Governments such as **West Bengal and Bihar** are also working for the reintroduction of the Rhinoceros in the areas which used to hold the Rhino populations till a few decades back.

Blue Flag Label:

Eight Beaches of India Recommended for the "Blue Flag" International eco-label

- International Coastal Clean-Up Day is celebrated across 100 countries since 1986 on the third Saturday of every year.
- On the International Coastal Clean-Up Day 2020 celebrated in September 19, 2020, India recommended eight beaches for the coveted International eco-label, the **Blue flag certification.**
- The recommendations are done by an independent National Jury composed of eminent environmentalists & scientists.
- Blue Flag beaches are considered the **cleanest beaches of the world.**
- The iconic Blue Flag is one of the **world's most recognised voluntary awards for beaches, marinas, and sustainable boating tourism operators.** It is given by Foundation for Environmental Education, headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark.
- In order to qualify for the Blue Flag, a series of stringent environmental, educational, safety, and accessibility criteria must be met and maintained
- The eight beaches are given below.
 1. Shivrajpur in Gujarat
 2. Ghoghla in Daman&Diu
 3. Kasarkod in Karnataka
 4. Padubidri in Karnataka
 5. Kappad in Kerala
 6. Rushikonda in Andhra Pradesh
 7. Golden beach of Odisha
 8. Radhanagar beach in Andaman and Nicobar.

HEALTH:

Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill, 2020

- Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill, 2020 was introduced in the Lok Sabha in September 2020.
- The Bill seeks to regulate Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) services in the country.

Significance of Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART):

- **Infertility is a source of social and psychological suffering** for both men and women and can place great pressure on the relationship within the couple.
- Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) services **help couples unable to conceive naturally** to bear children with the aid of state-of-the-art technology.

Need for the Bill:

- Assisted reproductive technology (ART) has grown by leaps and bounds in the last few years in India.
- India has highest growths in the ART centres and the number of ART cycles performed every year.
- India has also become one of the major centres of this global fertility industry.
- Reproductive medical tourism has become a significant activity. Foreign nationals who are childless are preferring India to become parents. Relatively inexpensive medical facilities, know-how in reproductive technology, and the availability of women, largely from poor socio-economic situations and who are willing to take up the task, have aided the growth.
- Clinics in India offer nearly all the ART services-gamete donation, intrauterine insemination, in-vitrofertilisation (IVF), intra cytoplasmic sperm injection, pre-implantation genetic diagnostic and gestational surrogacy.
- However, in spite of so much activity in India, there is yet no standardisation of protocols and reporting is still very inadequate. Furthermore, there is no law to regulate ART and it is regulated through guidelines of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).
- The growth of the industry has also brought a plethora of legal, ethical and social issues. There were instances of exploitation of surrogate women and also abandonment of new born child.
- Hence, the Government felt the need to regulate the Assisted Reproductive Technology Services to protect the affected women and children from exploitation.

Provisions of the Bill:

- The Bill provides for a national Board which will lay down a code of conduct to be observed by ART clinics.
- It will also formulate minimum standards for laboratory and diagnostic equipment and practices to be followed by human resources employed by clinics and banks.
- The States and Union Territories will also have to form State Boards and State authorities.

National Registry:

- The Central Government would establish National Registry of ART clinics.
- It would act as a central database in the country through which the details of all the ART clinics and banks of the country including nature and types of services provided by them, outcome of the services and other relevant information will be obtained on regular basis.

Rights of Child:

- The child born through assisted reproductive technology shall be deemed to be a biological child of the commissioning couple (infertile married couple) and shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges available to a natural child.
- A donor shall relinquish all parental rights over the child or children which may be born from his or her gamete (Gamete refers to reproductive cells i.e. sperm of males or eggs of females).

Rights of Oocyte Donor:

- Oocyte donor (woman who donates immature eggs) is eligible for insurance cover as the process of oocyte extraction involves risk to her health. Sometime the complications in oocyte extraction from the ovaries of the woman donor lead to her death.
- An oocyte donor shall be an ever married woman having at least one live child of her own with a minimum age of three years and to donate oocytes only once in her life. Not more than seven oocyte shall be retrieved from the oocyte donor.

AGRICULTURE:**White Grub Pest Damages Sugarcane Crop in Maharashtra**

- White grub, a voracious agriculture pest, after wreaking havoc in the Vidarbha and Marathwada regions of Maharashtra has also affected about 3,000 acres of sugarcane crop in the Pune district.
- White grub pests eat at the roots of sugarcane and decreasing the moisture and nutrient supply to the plant.
- This leads to the yellowing and wilting of leaves and causes extensive damage to the base of the shoot, leading to the dislodgement of the cane in the field.
- In Pune district - especially around the sugarcane belt of the Daund, Indapur and Baramati talukas - infestation is high.
- Several chemical pesticides are available in the market for controlling the white grub infestation.
- But farmers do not use the right kind of water for pest management. Water with a higher PH value gets added to the pesticide, leading to a rapid deterioration in the quality of the pesticide. In effect, the agrochemical becomes benign.
- In Maharashtra, the water is alkaline with a pH value of 8, but for effective use, the PH value should be 6, for which citric acid needs to be added to the water.
- When water with the wrong pH gets used, the pesticides get wasted and pests flourish.

Other Crops Attacked by White Grub:

- Apart from sugarcane, white grub pests are also damaging groundnut crops, soybean, cotton and turmeric crops.

MISCELLANEOUS (PERSONS, SPORTS)

INTERNATIONAL PERSONS

Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (91), who has ruled the oil-rich Gulf state since 2006, passed away on September 29, 2020. Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (83), the late leader's half-brother, took over as the new Emir of Kuwait. He is the 15th leader in the family that has been ruling Kuwait for the past 250 years.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg (87), U.S. Supreme Court Justice, passed away on September 18, 2020 due to pancreatic cancer.

In 1993, then President Bill Clinton appointed her to the Supreme Court - the second woman in that position. At the time of her death, she would become the oldest Supreme Court justice. In her 27 years on the court, in writing majority opinions and dissents she became a liberal icon through her support for gender equality, women's rights, same sex marriage, strengthening the Voting Rights Act and so forth.

NATIONAL PERSONS

Harivansh Rai was re-elected as Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha by voice vote on September 14, 2020. He is a Member of Parliament of Janata Dal (United) Party. The opposition parties had proposed the name of Manoj Kumar Jha, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) Member of Parliament.

Paresh Rawal, actor and former BJP Member of Parliament (MP), was appointed Chairperson of the National School of Drama on September 10, 2020 for a four year term. Mr. Rawal served as Ahmedabad East MP from 2014 to 2019. He is also a recipient of the Padma Shri.

The National Institute of Drama is a theatre training institute set up by the Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1959. In 1975, it became an independent entity and was registered as an autonomous organization under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, fully financed by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

Shekhar Kapur, internationally acclaimed filmmaker, was appointed, on September 29, 2020, as the new president of the Pune-based Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) Society and Chairman of the FTII governing council which runs the prestigious film school.

Films like 'Masoom', 'Bandit Queen' and 'Mr. India' are his biggest Indian films and 'Elizabeth' and 'The Four Fathers' are two of his most acclaimed international works.

Swami Agnivesh (80), Social activist, scholar, politician and Arya Samaj leader, passed away due to multi organ failure in New Delhi on September 11, 2020.

He was elected to the Haryana Assembly in 1977 and was made Education Minister after two years. He, however, resigned in protest against the Haryana government's inaction against policemen who opened fire at workers protesting bonded labour.

He is known for his work against bonded labour through the Bonded Labour Liberation Front, which he founded in 1981.

He served as the chairperson of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery from 1994 to 2004.

Agnivesh also served as president (2004-2014) of the World Council of Arya Samaj, the highest international body of the Arya Samaj. He was an advocate for dialogue between religions and remained involved in various areas of social activism, including campaigns against female foeticide and for the emancipation of women.

Suresh Channabasappa Angadi (65), Union Minister of State for Railways, passed away due to COVID-19 on September 23, 2020. A lawyer by training, he was first elected to the Lok Sabha in 2004 and won continuously from Belgaum since then.

Raghuvansh Prasad Singh (74), former Union Minister and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader from Bihar, passed away in New Delhi on September 13, 2020 after a prolonged illness due to lung infection.

Mr. Singh, a Ph.D. in mathematics, was one of the few Rajput leaders in the RJD. He entered politics as part of the socialist ideological school and was made Minister of State for Energy in the Karpoori Thakur government in Bihar in 1977. He remained active in the Bihar Assembly till he fought his first Lok Sabha election in 1996, when he was made a Minister of State in the Union government. He served as Member of Parliament from Vaishali, Bihar for five terms.

Kapila Vatsyayan (91), the leading scholar on Indian classical dance, art, architecture, and art history, passed away in Delhi on September 16, 2020. She served as the founding director of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. She was former President of India International Centre (IIC) and an IIC Life Trustee. She is a Padma Vibhushan awardee and served as Member of Rajya Sabha.

S.P. (Sripathi Panditharadhyula) Balasubrahmanyam (74), legendary playback singer, passed away in Chennai on September 25, 2020 due to COVID-19.

Mr. Balasubrahmanyam made his singing debut in 1966 with the Telugu movie Sri Sri Sri Maryada Ramanna. Since then he has sung over 40,000 songs in as many as 16 languages, including Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Hindi. For five decades, his was the voice for generations of actors. He went on to win six national awards and the hearts of several fans across the world.

He was awarded the Padma Shri in 2001 and the Padma Bhushan in 2011. SPB also dabbled in acting and music direction, and more recently, took on the role of a judge in reality singing contests.

Isher Judge Ahluwalia (74), a renowned economist who also worked extensively on issues related to urbanisation and education, passed away due to cancer in New Delhi on September 26, 2020.

She is wife of former deputy chairperson of the erstwhile Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia, had been battling cancer over the past ten months.

She recently stepped down from the chairpersonship of the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), which she is credited with transforming into a research institution to reckon with. She was ICRIER's chairperson for a period of 15 years.

She was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2009 for her services in the field of education and literature.

Jaswant Singh (82), one of the founders of the Baratiya Janata Party and former Union Minister, passed away in New Delhi on September 27, 2020. He held the positions of Finance, Defence and External Affairs Minister in the Union governments headed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

He was elected to the Lok Sabha four times and to Rajya Sabha five times and served as Leader of Opposition in the Upper House.

SPORTS PERSONS

Dean Jones (59), the former Australian batsman, passed away in Mumbai Jones after he suffered a massive heart attack on September 24, 2020. He was staying in Mumbai as part of the Indian Premier League's (IPL) commentary panel.

Dean Jones was part of Australia's 1987 World Cup-winning unit, and his international career spanned from 1984 to 1994.

SPORTS

TENNIS:

US Open (New York, September 2020)

Men's Singles:

Dominic Thiem (Austria) - Winner

Alexander Zverev (Germany) - Runner

Women's Singles:

Japan's Naomi Osaka (Japan) - Winner

Victoria Azarenka (Belarus) - Runner

Men' Doubles:

Mate Pavic and Bruno Soares - Winner

Wesley Koolthof and Nikoia Metic - Runner

Women's Doubles:

Laura Siegemund and Vera zvonareva - Winner

Nicole Melichar and Xu Yifan - Runner

Rome Masters (Rome, September 2020)

Men's Singles:

Novak Djokovic (Serbia) - Winner

Diego Schwartzman (Argentina) - Runner

Women Singles:

Simona Halep (Romania) - Winner

Karolina Pliskova (Czech Republic) - Runner

CHESS:

St. Louis Rapid and Blitz Online Chess Tournament (September 2020)

Magnus Carlesen (Norway) - Winner

Wesley So (USA) - Runner

GOLF:

US Open (New York, 2020 September)

Bryson DeChambeau - Winner

Matthew Wolff - Runner

FORMULA ONE

Russian Grand Prix (Sochi, Russia, September 2020)

Valtteri Bottas - Winner

Verstappen - Runner