



CURRENT AFFAIRS – NOVEMBER 2020

POLITY AND CONSTITUTION

RIGHT TO RECALL

Recently, Haryana Assembly passed Haryana Panchayati Raj (Second Amendment) Bill, 2020, which provides the right to recall members of Panchayati Raj institutions.

- Right to Recall is a process whereby the electorate has the power to remove the elected officials before the expiry of their term. It is an example of instrument of direct democracy.
 - Bill allows the recall of village sarpanches and members of the block-level and district-level panchayats if they fail to perform.
- To recall, 50% members of a ward or gram sabha have to give in writing that they want to initiate proceedings.
- This will be followed by a secret ballot, in which their recall will require two-third members voting against them.

SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS

Recently, Prime Minister raised the pitch for Simultaneous Elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.

About Simultaneous Elections (SE)

- It means structuring the Indian election cycle in a manner that elections to Lok Sabha and State Assemblies are synchronized together under which voters in a particular constituency vote for both on the same day.
- SE were the norm until 1967. But following dissolution of some Legislative Assemblies in 1968 and 1969 and that of Lok Sabha in 1970, elections to State Assemblies and Parliament have been held separately.

- Later, SE idea was proposed by Election Commission in 1983. It was also referred by Law Commission and NITI Aayog.
- SE does not mean that voting across the country for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies happen on a single day. It can be conducted in a phase-wise manner and voters in a particular constituency vote for both State Assembly and Lok Sabha the same day.

Constitutional provisions related to simultaneous Elections

- **Article 83** stipulates that Lok Sabha shall have a normal term of 5 years from the date appointed for its first meeting and no longer.
- **Article 85** states that President of India has the power to dissolve the Lok Sabha on the advice of the Union Cabinet.
- **Article 172** lays down the term for the Legislative Assemblies as five years.
- **Article 174** states that Governor has the power to dissolve the state assembly on the advice of the state Cabinet.

REGULATING OVER-THE-TOP (OTT) PLATFORMS

The Union government has recently brought Over the Top (OTT) platforms, such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and others, under the ambit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B ministry).

- The Films and Audio-Visual programmes made available by online content providers have been brought under the jurisdiction of I&B ministry through a notification that amends the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961 using the clause (3) of Article 77 of the Constitution.
- o **Article 77(3)** allows the President to make rules for the more convenient transaction of the business of the Government of India, and for the allocation among Ministers of the said business.
- The notification also brought news and current affairs content on online platforms under the purview.

- Earlier the digital media platforms were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) while other media such as print, television and radio were under the I&B ministry.

About OTT Platforms

- These are online platforms that curate a range of content and present it on a platform.
Examples of these platforms include Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hotstar, AltBalaji amongst others.
 - o They are also known as **Online Content Curated Platforms (OCCPs)**.
- The OCC industry is distinguished from others (such as, intermediaries and user generated content (UGC) providers like Youtube, Facebook, Instagram etc.) inter-alia by the following features:
 - o A fully curated content catalogue which is licensed or owned by the individual provider
 - o A 'pull' model of consumption where consumers choose the content they wish to watch and access it on device(s), time or place of their choice and
 - o Technology-enabled solutions for content filtering and access controls.

Present regulatory framework:

- **Information Technology Act, 2000** has provisions relating to content on websites, and information/ websites / URLs can be blocked under Section 69A of that Act, on matters relating to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states or public order etc.
- **Indian Penal Code, 1860**- prohibits content against national integration.
- **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012** - prevents child pornography.

LEGALISING BETTING IN INDIA

Minister of State for Finance has pitched for legalizing betting in India.

- Betting is defined as the action of gambling money on the outcome of a race, game, or other unpredictable event.
- Public Gambling Act, 1867 is the general law governing gambling in India. However, the state legislatures have been entrusted with significant regulatory leeway to form state specific gambling law.
- There are no specific central laws governing online gambling in India. Most of the Gambling Legislations have been enacted prior to the advent of virtual or online gambling and hence these primarily refer to gaming/gambling activities at the physical premises.
- Countries like Australia, United Kingdom, South Africa, Sri Lanka and New Zealand have taken a step in this direction, legalizing and regulating betting in sports.

About Gambling Legislations in India

- Betting is a term that validates the activity of gambling. Gambling is a generic term, while betting is a structured agreement.
- Gambling and betting are State subjects. However, 'Gambling' is not defined under the Gambling Legislations of states.
- The Indian law distinguishes each game to be a “**game of skill**” and “**game of chance**”. This differentiates fantasy sports from traditional betting.
- The gambling under the Gambling Legislations does not include:
 - o Betting on a horse race (subject to the legal regulations)
 - o Games of skill (excluded under the Gambling Act and by the court's judgments)
 - o Lotteries (regulated by lottery laws of India).
- Thus, fantasy sports betting is legal because it is a game of skill. And, in fantasy sports, your opponents are other human players, rather than bookmakers like in traditional betting.

- Sikkim and Nagaland expressly permit online gambling. However, there are also states such as Telangana which follow a policy of zero-tolerance towards gambling, both online and offline.

3 CAPITALS FOR ANDHRA PRADESH

- As per the Andhra Pradesh Decentralization and Inclusive Development of All Regions Bill, 2020, Andhra Pradesh State will have Visakhapatnam, Amaravati and Kurnool respectively as the executive, legislative and judicial capitals of the State.



Examples of such arrangement

- South Africa has a different capital for its judicial, legislative, and executive branches at the federal level (Pretoria, Cape Town and Bloemfontein).
- In India, several examples exist of states having high courts in a city different from the capital. E.g. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Kerala.
- Some states also move their legislative assemblies to a different city for part of the year. These include Maharashtra (Mumbai and Nagpur), Himachal Pradesh (Shimla and Dharmshala) and Karnataka (Bengaluru and Belgaum).

FOREST RIGHTS ACT

The Jammu and Kashmir administration recently said that it was in the process of implementing the Forest Rights Act, 2006 to grant the rights to forest dwellers in the region.

About Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA)

- The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, or Forest Rights Act, 2006 was enacted to protect the marginal and tribal communities and other forest dwellers and balance environmental conservation with their right to life and livelihood.

Key features of the FRA are:

- Following rights have been granted to Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers:
 - o Title rights- i.e. ownership - to land that is being cultivated by tribals or forest dwellers as on 13 December 2005, subject to a maximum of 4 hectares.
 - o Community rights - to grazing areas, fishing, accessing water bodies in forests, to pastoralist routes, etc. and to intellectual property and traditional knowledge related to biodiversity and cultural diversity
 - o Relief and development rights - to rehabilitation in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement; and to basic amenities, subject to restrictions for forest protection.
 - o Forest management rights- to protect, regenerate or conserve or manage any community forest resource which the communities have been traditionally protecting and conserving for sustainable use.
 - o Right to collect and sell minor forest produce (MFP): These include forest products like tendu leaves, honey and other products that have commercial value.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (RCEP) AND INDIA

- Recently, 15 Asia-Pacific nations have signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), while India chose to opt out of the trade agreement.

About RCEP

- Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that has been signed between 15 countries including the 10 ASEAN members, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.
- It now forms the world's largest trade bloc, covering over 2.2 billion people and accounting for 30 per cent of the world's economy.
- The RCEP was first proposed at the 19th ASEAN meet in 2011 with an aim to create a consolidated market for the ASEAN countries and their trade partners.
- While India was a part of the RCEP's negotiations, it dropped out in November 2019, citing significant outstanding issues that remain unresolved. Although India has been given the option of joining it later.



Why did India pull out of RCEP?

- Trade imbalance with RCEP members: India's trade deficit with RCEP countries has almost doubled in the last five-six years – from \$54 billion in 2013-14 to \$105 billion in 2018-19, of which China alone accounts for \$53 billion.

- Geopolitical considerations: India wanted RCEP to exclude most-favoured nation (MFN) obligations from the investment chapter, as it did not want to hand out, especially to countries with which it has border disputes (China), the benefits it was giving to strategic allies or for geopolitical reasons.
- Security considerations: Closer economic ties under RCEP have the potential to make the countries of the region even more vulnerable to China's economic and political coercion. This could impact India's security interests in Southeast Asia.

17TH ASEAN-INDIA SUMMIT

Recently, 17th ASEAN-India Summit was held virtually.

- India announced a contribution of US\$ 1 million to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund.
- Both India and ASEAN welcomed the adoption of the new ASEAN-India Plan of Action for 2021-2025.
 - o The new Plan of Action (POA) builds upon the achievements made under the previous POAs for 2010-2015 and 2016-2020, and guides the implementation of ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership.
 - o The POA elucidates future strategies and possible engagements across varied fields including- Political Cooperation, Maritime Cooperation, Transnational Crime and Counter-Terrorism, Trade and Investment, Transport, Agriculture and Forestry, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Tourism, Science, Technology and Innovation, Climate Change etc.
- India reiterated its offer of US\$ 1 billion Line of Credit to support ASEAN connectivity for greater physical and digital connectivity between ASEAN and India.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

- It is an intergovernmental organization of ten Southeast Asian countries: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

- It promotes intergovernmental cooperation and facilitates economic, political, security, military, educational, and sociocultural integration among its members and other countries.



BRICS

- The 2020 BRICS Summit was held virtually under the chairmanship of Russia, which adopted the motto for the year as 'BRICS Partnership for Global Stability, Shared Security and Innovative Growth'.

Key Takeaways of the summit

- Moscow Declaration was adopted which reflects the five countries' consolidated approach to the further development of the association. Two pillars of this year's summit are the **economy** and **counterterrorism**.

- Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2020-2025 was signed: It focussed on three priority areas — trade, investment and finance; digital economy; and sustainable development.
- The BRICS counter-terrorism strategy: with the objective of contributing to the global efforts to combat terrorism while also strengthening intra-BRICS ties in the area.

About BRICS

- BRICS started in 2001 as BRIC, an acronym coined by Goldman Sachs for Brazil, Russia, India, and China. South Africa was added in 2010. The notion behind the coinage was that the nations' economies would come to collectively dominate global growth by 2050.
- The BRICS grouping aims to promote peace, security, development and cooperation in the world. It also aims at making a positive impact on the development of humanity and establishing a more equitable and fair world.

Achievements of BRICS

- **New Development Bank (NDB):** It was created in the 6th BRICS summit in Brazil, on the lines of Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.
 - o The Bank has reserved \$10 billion to combat the pandemic, while its overall portfolio of investment projects now exceeds \$20 billion.
 - o 62 large projects are being implemented in the BRICS countries with increasing number of bank's regional offices.
 - o The bank is currently preparing to accept new members – most likely Uruguay, the United Arab Emirates and the Philippines – thus expanding its global footprint.
- Setting up the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA): to provide mutual financial support, and as a contribution to the global financial safety net.

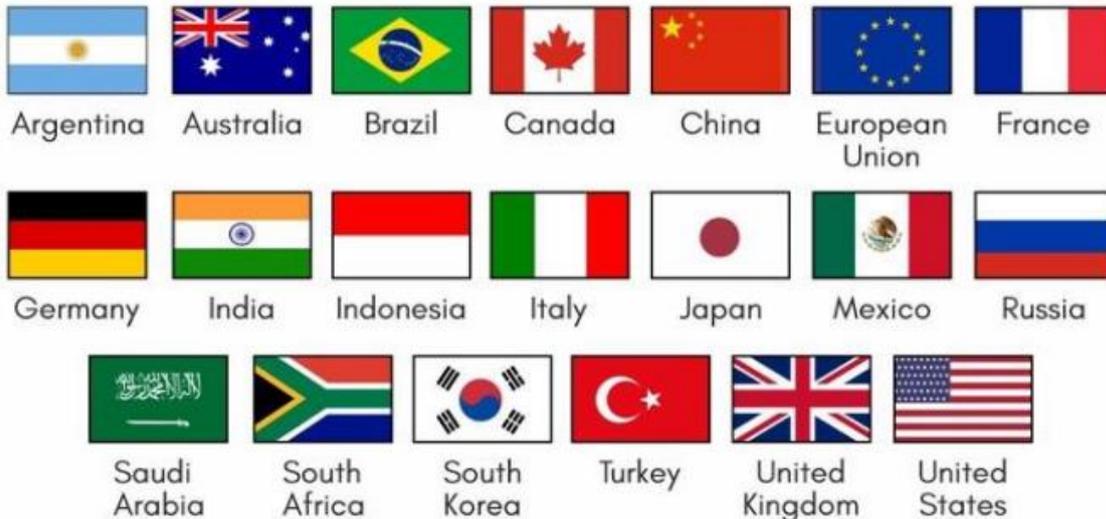
- Medical cooperation: **Ufa Declaration** was adopted in the 7th summit in 2015 and included an agreement to work together to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

G20

Prime Minister participated in the 15th G20 Summit convened by Saudi Arabia in virtual format.

- The G20 is the international forum that brings together the world's major economies. Its members account for more than 80% of world GDP, 75% of global trade and 60% of the population.
- The forum has met every year since 1999 and includes, since 2008, a yearly Summit, with the participation of the respective Heads of State and Government.
- In addition to the Summit, ministerial meetings, Sherpa meetings (in charge of carrying out negotiations and building consensus among Leaders), working groups and special events are organized throughout the year.

G20 COUNTRIES



SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (SCO)

Recently, Russian President chaired the 20th Summit of SCO Council of Heads of State.

- This was the first SCO Summit held in Virtual Format.
- India extended full support to observing the 20th anniversary of SCO in 2021 as the "SCO Year of Culture."
 - o India announced that in 2021, the National Museum of India will hold an exhibition on the Buddhist heritage of the SCO countries.
- India proposed to set up a Special Working Group on Innovation and Startups and a Sub Group on Traditional Medicine within SCO.



About the SCO

- It is a permanent intergovernmental political, economic and military organization founded in Shanghai in 2001.

- o Regional development and security issues(terrorism, ethnic separatism and religious extremism) are its main focus.
- Russian and Mandarin are presently used as official and working languages in the SCO.
- Working of the SCO is underpinned by the “Shanghai Spirit” which is about mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for cultural diversity and pursuit of common development.

INDIA’S DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN

Recently, India announced 100 projects worth \$80 mn in Afghanistan.

India’s developmental projects in Afghanistan

- India has pledged more than US\$2 billion in Afghanistan and invested in diverse areas including healthcare, education, infrastructure, social welfare, and in the training of politicians, diplomats, and police.
 - o India is fifth largest donor to Afghanistan and the largest regional donor.
- India is implementing high-visibility large-scale projects in relatively stable areas and low-visibility small development projects (SDP) in relatively remote and insecure areas in order to increase its sectoral spread and geographic reach.
- Over the years, India has shifted focus from a narrow security-centric approach, to regional confidence building, development, governance, and trade and investment, aiming to use Afghanistan’s resource potential to build its economic viability, sustainability, and independence.

Some development projects by India in neighbouring countries

- **Bhutan:** India is Bhutan’s largest development partner and the Bhutan is highest recipient of India’s overseas aid. Bhutan received from India a total of \$ 4.7 billion in grants between 2000 and 2017. Some projects include, Mangdechhu Hydroelectric Project, Trade route from West Bengal to Ahlay, Pasakha in Bhutan.

- **Bangladesh:** Key projects include rail links between Akhaura-Agartala, and Khulna-Mongla, Maitree Thermal Power Project a 50:50 joint venture inked by Bangladesh Power Development Board and NTPC India, India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline connecting Siliguri in West Bengal and Parbatipur in Bangladesh.
- **Maldives:** India is assisting in USD 500 million Greater Male Connectivity project, the largest civilian infrastructure project in Maldives, reclamation project for the Addu island. Also, India assists through High Impact Community Development Projects in the areas of livelihood and income generation, health, education, gender and child empowerment, etc.
- **Myanmar:** Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, India- Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway Project, Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) on India-Myanmar border etc.
- **Nepal:** India has been supporting construction of various Highways, Roads, Bridges, Airports, etc. as part of its multisectoral and multi-dimensional India-Nepal Economic Cooperation Programme e.g., Terai Roads project (10 roads), housing reconstruction project (50,000 houses) etc., Motihari-Amalekhgunj petroleum pipeline, Pancheshwar multipurpose project, motorable bridges over Mahakali River etc
- **Sri Lanka:** Development projects in Jaffna like funding for Jaffna international airport, cultural centre at Jaffna; The Indian Housing Project, with an initial commitment to build 50,000 houses for the war affected; development of a container terminal at Colombo Port in collaboration with Japan.

HYBRID RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) recently proposed the scheme for “Development of Wind Parks/Wind-Solar Hybrid Park”.

About the proposed scheme

- Sites have been identified across seven states, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.
- The capacity of each park proposed is around 500 MW and more but shall not be less than 50 MW.

- Centre will provide financial assistance for development of parks.
 - o State Government will select park developer and facilitate the park developer in acquisition/leasehold of the identified site, in obtaining all statutory clearances.
- Wind Energy Park will provide a plug and play solution (availability of land, transmission, necessary infrastructure and necessary approvals) to the investors for installing wind/ wind-solar power projects.
 - o Jaisalmer Wind Park, Rajasthan with installed capacity of 1,064 MW is largest wind park in India.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

MANNED SPACE MISSION

Recently NASA launched its first full-fledged human mission (CREW-1) using a privately owned spacecraft.

About CREW-1 Mission

- It is part of NASA's first commercial human spacecraft system with a crew of four astronauts to the International Space Station (ISS), onboard SpaceX's Crew Dragon spacecraft called Resilience.
- It is the first of 6 crewed missions that NASA and SpaceX will operate as part of NASA's Commercial Crew Program (CCP).
- ISS is a multi-nation construction project that is the largest single structure humans ever put into space.
 - o It is a large spacecraft which orbits around Earth and is a platform for long-research for human health.
 - o Main partner countries include NASA (United States), Roscosmos (Russia), the European Space Agency, the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency and the Canadian Space Agency.

- India's Indian Space Research Organisation is also planning to launch its first manned mission Gaganyaan.
 - o Gaganyaan has been designed to carry three Indian astronauts to the low earth orbit (an orbit of 300-400 km) for a period of five to seven days.
 - o It will take off on a GSLV Mk III which is capable of launching four-tonne satellites in the Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).

VENUS ORBITER MISSION: SHUKRAYAAN

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has short-listed 20 space-based experiment proposals, for its proposed Venus orbiter mission 'Shukrayaan'.

- ISRO has been soliciting ideas for scientific instruments/payloads for a Venus-based mission since 2018
- For the mission 20 proposals were received, including collaborative contributions from Russia, France, Sweden and Germany.
- The one already selected is France's VIRAL instrument (Venus Infrared Atmospheric Gas Linker) co-developed with the Russian space agency (Roscosmos) and French space agency (CNES and the LATMOS atmospheres, environments and space observations laboratory attached to the French national scientific research centre.
- In the India's mission to Venus, Swedish Institute of Space Physics is also engaged.
- The possible detection of phosphine in Venus' upper atmosphere shows prospects of life there.

MISCELLANEOUS

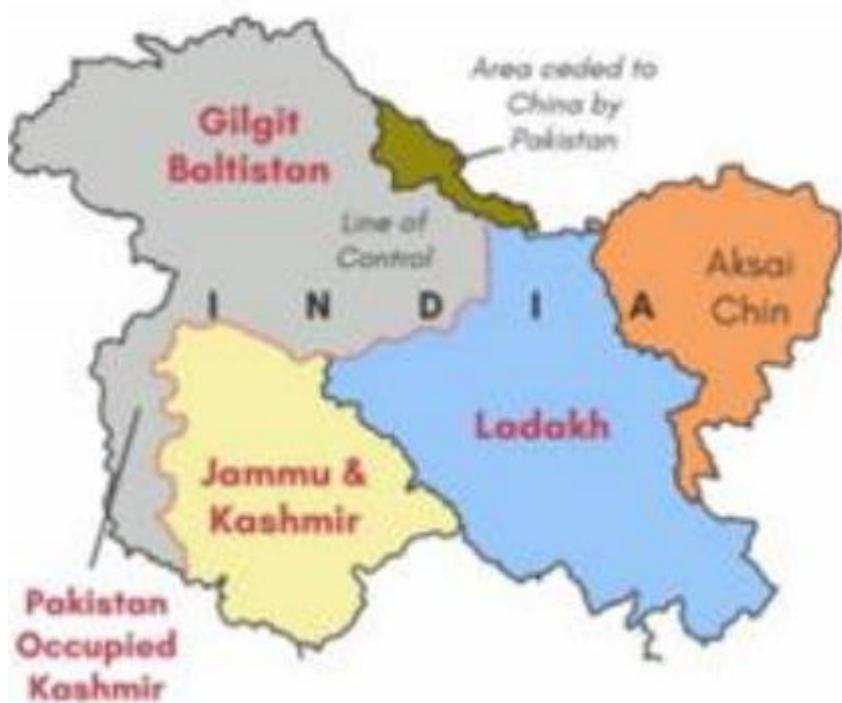
STAR CAMPAIGNERS

- Election Commission of India (ECI) removed Congress leader Kamal Nath from the party's list of star campaigners

- It was revoked for repeatedly violating Model Code of Conduct (MCC) ahead of by-polls in Madhya Pradesh. According to manual to the MCC, ECI can issue instructions to track campaigns of star campaigners.
- Star campaigners are nominated by political parties to campaign in a given set of constituencies.
 - o List of star campaigners must be communicated to Chief Electoral Officer and ECI within a week from the election notification date as required under section 77(1) of Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951.
 - o A recognised political party can have 40 Star campaigners and an unrecognised (but registered) political party can have 20.
- Expenditure incurred on campaigning by such notified star campaigners is exempt from being added to the election expenditure of a candidate.

PAKISTAN GRANTS PROVISIONAL PROVINCIAL STATUS TO GILGIT-BALTISTAN (GB)

- Pakistan announced to elevate GB to the status of a full-fledged province with all constitutional rights.
 - o GB was a part of erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, but has been under Pakistan's control since November 4, 1947, following invasion of Kashmir by tribal militias and Pakistan army.
 - o Since 1949, it has been put under direct control of Pakistan federal government.
 - o Baluchistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh being other four provinces of Pakistan.



VULTURE ACTION PLAN 2020-25

- While MoEFCC has been carrying out a conservation project for vultures since 2006, new plan now extend the project to 2025 to not just halt the decline but to actively increase the vulture numbers.
- Key Highlights of the plan
 - o Additional vulture conservation and breeding centre each at UP, Tripura, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
 - o Establishment of four rescue centres in Pinjore, Bhopal, Guwahati and Hyderabad and at least one Vulture Safe Zone in every State.
 - o Conservation breeding programme for Red Headed vulture and Egyptian vulture.
 - o Regulate the sale of veterinary non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) that lead to death of vultures.

SCOTLAND BECAME THE FIRST COUNTRY TO MAKE SANITARY PRODUCTS FREE

- Recently, Scottish Parliament unanimously passed The Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act which makes it legally mandatory for all public institutions to provide period products, including tampons and pads to all those who need them.
- It is the first law of its kind in the world to make access to menstrual products a right.
- The Bill was introduced in April 2019 with the goal of eliminating “period poverty”.
 - o Period poverty is the lack of access to sanitary products, menstrual hygiene education, toilets, hand washing facilities, and, or, waste management.

NATIONAL PORTAL FOR TRANSGENDER PERSONS

- Recently, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) launched ‘National Portal for Transgender Persons’.
- Portal is for issuing I-cards to transgender without physical Interface and without having to visit any office.
 - o Portal will help community get Transgender Certificate and Identity Cards as per their self-perceived identity which is an important provision of **The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019**.
- MoSJE also e-inaugrated **Garima Greh** which is a shelter home to provide shelter to Transgender persons, with basic amenities like shelter, food, medical care and support capacity-building.

KALA-AZAR OR VISCERAL LEISHMANIASIS (VL)

- It is a tropical disease characterised by irregular fever, weight loss, anaemia and swelling of the spleen and liver.
- It is caused by a protozoan Leishmania parasite and is transmitted to humans by the bite of infected female sandflies.
- According to WHO, globally, about 7 to 10 lakh new cases occur annually.

- o India accounts for about two-thirds of the total global cases, and the disease endemic to Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.
- An initiative was launched by WHO to eliminate VL as a public health problem from the South East Asia region by 2020. The deadline has now been extended to 2023.

STARLINK

- Starlink is a network of satellites being built by SpaceX, an aerospace company.
- It will deliver high speed broadband internet to locations where access has been unreliable, expensive, or completely unavailable.
- The satellite network operates at 550km above the Earth's surface in low Earth orbit (LEO), unlike conventional internet satellites that are positioned much higher, at over 35,000km.

BRAHMOS SUPERSONIC CRUISE MISSILE

- India successfully test-fired land-attack version of BrahMos supersonic cruise missile in the Andaman and Nicobar.
- The range of the new land-attack version has been extended to 400 km from 290 km but and speed has been maintained at 2.8 Mach (three times the speed of sound).
- BrahMos Aerospace, is an India-Russian joint venture to produce lethal weapons that can be launched from submarines, ships, aircraft and land platforms.
- Naval version of the BrahMos missile was successfully test fired from INS Ranvijay, Rajputclass destroyer warship in the Bay of Bengal.
- As well the air-launched version of BrahMos missile successfully test fired from Sukhoi jet in the Bay of Bengal.

ALL INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS

Recently, All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) turned 100.



- AITUC was formed in 1920 by leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Narayan Malhar Joshi etc. to provide labour representation for India at the **International Labor Organization (ILO)**.
- Lala Lajpat Rai was elected as the first president of AITUC and Dewan Chaman Lal as the first general secretary.
- Gaya session of the Congress (1922) welcomed formation of the AITUC and a committee was formed to assist it.
- In the aftermath of Second World War, AITUC played significant role in the foundation of World Federation of Trade Unions (international federation of trade unions).

