

IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

❖ **Iran's morality police, 'disbanded' amid street protests**

➤ **CONTEXT: Iran's public prosecutor said recently that the country's dreaded morality police (the same force in whose custody 22-year-old Mahsa Amini died in September) has been disbanded.**

- If the announcement is followed through — there was no confirmation from the Interior Ministry, according to the state media the public prosecutor was not responsible for overseeing the force — it would signal an extraordinary concession from the Iranian regime to the women who have over the past couple of months led the most powerful and sustained street protests since the Islamic Revolution of 1978-79.
- According to Attorney General Mohammad Jafar Montazeri the morality police “was abolished by the same authorities who installed it. “Both parliament and the judiciary are working [on the issue].

➤ **The morality police**

- The Gasht-e Ershad are part of the police force and supervised by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, but the elected government has a say in their activities through the Interior Ministry. Both men and women officials are part of the morality police.
- Mahsa Amini was allegedly beaten by the morality police who had detained her for “incorrectly” wearing the mandatory hijab. The Iranian government has denied that Amini was assaulted, and has accused the United States and Israel of orchestrating the popular protests across the country.
- The protests have expanded from anger over the hijab regulation to a wider dissatisfaction with state representatives seen to be reinforcing these laws.

➤ **The contested hijab**

- Iran has a long history of policing the hijab. During the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1936, the hijab was actually banned in an effort to “modernise” the country. The police would then remove the hijab from the heads of women seen wearing it in public.
- This situation was turned on its head after the Revolution, when conservative forces aligned with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini deposed Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, son of Reza Shah, and proclaimed the Islamic Republic.
- While wearing the hijab was made mandatory, a force was constituted to enforce the rules on morality and the public appearance of women only in the 1990s, after the war broke out with Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and the regime felt the need to centralise its power and underline an Iranian national identity.
- Over the years, the strictness with which the morality rules have been enforced has varied in accordance with the nature of the regime in the country's dual theocratic-democratic political system. Liberal leaders such as former President Hasan Rouhani have made references to personal freedoms and dignity following reported excesses by the force.

➤ **Morality functions**

- Not only the enforcement of hijab, but the implementation of other rules on public appearance and conduct, according to the Iranian authorities' interpretation of the Sharia, are also the responsibility of the police.
- In 2010, Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance issued a template for suitable haircuts for men in order to halt Western influence on culture, and the morality police were tasked with enforcement at salons.
- In September 2022, the United States government said it would be “imposing sanctions on Iran's Morality Police and senior security officials who have engaged in serious human rights abuses”.

➤ **Significant statement**

- Iran's authorities have refused to concede any of the demands in the ongoing protests, and have instead cracked down heavily on the protesters.
- In November 2022, a Revolutionary Court in Tehran sentenced an individual to death for setting fire to a government building and for “waging war against God”. Iran Human Rights reported at least 20 other protesters too were facing charges that are punishable by death.
- What a possible disbandment of the force would mean was not immediately clear. Some protesters expressed scepticism, saying the statement was a sham, and only a precursor to further violence by the state.

❖ **What's the effect of Russian oil price cap, ban?**

➤ **CONTEXT: Western governments have agreed to cap the price of Russia's oil exports in an attempt to limit the fossil fuel earnings that support Russia's budget, its military and the invasion of Ukraine.**

- The cap is set to take effect 5th December 2022, the same day the European Union will impose a boycott on most Russian oil — its crude that is shipped by sea. The EU reached a deal for a \$60-per-barrel threshold Friday, and the Group of Seven nations and Australia signed off on the deal later in the day.
- The twin measures could have an uncertain effect on the price of oil as worries over lost supply through the boycott compete with fears about lower demand from a slowing global economy.

➤ **What is the price cap and how would it work?**

- U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has proposed the cap with other Group of 7 allies as a way to limit Russia's earnings while keeping Russian oil flowing to the global economy. The aim: hurt Moscow's finances while avoiding a sharp oil price spike if Russia's oil is suddenly taken off the global market.
- Insurance companies and other firms needed to ship oil would only be able to deal with Russian crude if the oil is priced at or below the cap. Most insurers are located in the EU or the United Kingdom and could be required to participate in the cap.

- **How would oil keep flowing to the global economy?**
 - Universal enforcement of the insurance ban, imposed by the EU and U.K. in earlier rounds of sanctions, could take so much Russian crude off the market that oil prices would spike, Western economies would suffer, and Russia would see increased earnings from whatever oil it can ship in defiance of the embargo.
 - Russia, the world's No. 2 oil producer, has already rerouted much of its supply to India, China and other Asian countries at discounted prices after Western customers shunned it even before the EU ban.
- **What effect would different cap levels have?**
 - According to some expert a \$60 cap will not have much impact on Russia's finances. That "will almost go unnoticed," because it would be near where Russian oil is already selling.
 - Russian Urals blend sells at a significant discount to international benchmark Brent and fell below \$60 for the first time in months this week on fears of reduced demand from China due to outbreaks of COVID-19.
 - "Up front, the cap is not a satisfying number," but it could prevent the Kremlin from profiting if oil prices suddenly shoot higher and the cap bites.
 - "The cap might be lowered over time if west want to increase the pressure on Russian. "The problem is: west have already spent a lot of months waiting for a measure to dent" Russia's oil profits.
 - If the cap had been as low as \$50, it would cut into Russia's earnings and make it impossible for Russia to balance its state budget, with Russia believed to require around \$60 to \$70 per barrel to do that, its so-called "fiscal break-even."
 - However, a \$50 cap would still have been above Russia's cost of production of between \$30 and \$40 per barrel, giving Russia an incentive to keep selling oil simply to avoid having to cap wells that can be hard to restart.
 - According to a sanctions expert the wrangling over where to set the cap highlighted the disagreement on which goal to pursue: hurting Russia's finances or taming inflation, with the U.S. coming down on the side of controlling price increases.
- **What is Russia and other countries won't go along?**
 - Russia has said it will not observe a cap and will halt deliveries to countries that do. Russia could retaliate by shutting off shipments in hopes of profiting from a sharply higher global oil price on whatever it can sell around the sanctions.
 - Buyers in China and India might not go along with the cap, while Russia or China could try to set up their own insurance providers to replace those barred by U.S., U.K. and Europe.
 - Russia also could sell oil off the books by using "dark fleet" tankers with obscure ownership, as have Venezuela and Iran. Oil could be transferred from one ship to another and mixed with oil of similar quality to disguise its origin.
 - Even under those circumstances, the cap would make it "more costly, time-consuming and cumbersome" for Russia to sell oil around the restrictions.
 - The greater distances involved in shipping oil to Asia means up to four times more tanker capacity is needed — and not everyone will take Russian insurance.
- **What about the EU embargo?**
 - Russian producers likely won't be able to reroute all their oil from Europe, formerly their biggest customer, and some will likely be lost to the global market — at least at first.
 - Analysts say the EU embargo and cap together could result in "a noticeable tightening on the oil market in early 2023" and expect the price of international benchmark Brent to climb back to \$95 per barrel in coming weeks. Recently, Brent slid to \$85.48 a barrel.
 - The biggest impact from the EU embargo may not come immediate but on Feb. 5, when Europe's additional ban on refinery products made from oil — such as diesel fuel — come into effect. Europe still has many cars that run on diesel. The fuel also is used for truck transport to get a huge range of goods to consumers and to run agricultural machinery — so those higher costs will be spread throughout the economy.

INDIAN ECONOMY

- ❖ **Why has the Reserve Bank of India introduced an e-rupee?**
- **CONTEXT: The Reserve Bank of India recently launched the digital rupee on a pilot basis. The digital currency will be offered by a select group of public and private banks in a few major cities initially, which can be used for both person-to-person and person-to-merchant transactions.**
- **What is the digital rupee?**
 - The digital rupee, or the e-rupee, is a central bank digital currency issued by the RBI.
 - It is similar to the physical cash that you hold in your wallet except that the e-rupee is held electronically in a digital wallet overseen by the RBI.
 - The digital rupee is recognised as legal tender by the RBI, and thus has to be accepted by everyone in the country as a medium of exchange.
 - It is, however, different from deposits that people hold in a bank. Unlike deposits which are paid interest, the digital rupees in your wallet are not paid any interest by the central bank.
 - Deposits held in banks can be converted into digital rupees and vice-versa.
- **Is there a need for the digital rupee?**

- The RBI believes that the digital rupee will make the rupee more attractive as a currency to users when compared to cryptocurrencies.
- Cryptocurrencies have been viewed by many investors as alternatives to fiat currencies which progressively lose value over time due to debasement by central banks.
- Since such a trend could threaten their sovereignty, central banks have been trying to come up with their own digital currencies.
- The RBI also believes that the digital rupee will be easier and more economical to produce when compared to physical cash notes.
- More importantly, transactions carried out using digital rupees, in contrast to physical transactions, are more easily traceable by authorities.
- **What are the risks?**
- The introduction of central bank digital currencies internationally has worried many who believe that it could disrupt the banking system.
- When interest rates offered by banks are low, people may be more prone to converting their bank deposits into digital currencies since they would not lose out much in the way of interest income by making the shift. Such an event could cause the cash holdings of banks to drop and hinder banks' capacity to create loans.
- The ability of banks to create loans is influenced by the amount of cash they hold in their vaults. This is because the cash position of a bank determines its ability to expand its loan book while keeping the risk of a bank run under control.
- The digital rupee could also play a crucial role in India's transition towards a cashless society. A rise in the use of the digital rupee could eventually free banks from having to maintain sufficient cash deposits before they expand their loan books. This could happen if digital rupee deposits turn out to be considered equivalent to other forms of virtual money such as deposits created initially as loans by banks. In such case, banks will be freed from the risk of bank runs which have traditionally served as a check on the unrestrained expansion of loan books.
- **What do the critics say?**
- Critics are not so enthused by the idea of a digital rupee. They point to the power that digital currencies give central banks to supervise economic activity, and believe that this could act as a deterrent to economic growth if legitimate economic activities are deemed illegal by governments.
- The future of central bank digital currencies as an alternative to private cryptocurrencies may also be overblown.
- Private cryptocurrencies have found demand among certain investors not simply because they are digital. Rather, they are thought to be better stores of value, exhibiting more stable purchasing power than fiat currencies.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

- ❖ **Are rhino and elephant conservation efforts a success?**
- **CONTEXT: Greens worldwide called the Kaziranga National Park the greatest conservation success story in 2005 when it completed a century. Much of it is attributed to a rhino protection force that shoots alleged poachers at sight; more than 55 armed men have been killed within the boundary of the 1,300 sq. km tiger reserve for unauthorised entry since 2012-13.**
- **What is the one-horned rhino population?**
- The population of the one-horned rhino was about a dozen when Kaziranga became a protected area in 1905. According to the State of Rhino Report 2022, the poor-sighted herbivore's number in Kaziranga is an estimated 2,613, more than 65% of its total population of 4,014 across 11 habitats in India and Nepal.
- A decade ago, the rhino's population in these domains was 2,454. According to a section of conservationists the focus is too much on the rhino but this has made other animals in its domains a beneficiary.
- The number of tigers, for instance, has increased in Assam at a rate higher than elsewhere in India. A 2010 count said Kaziranga has the highest density of tigers — 32.64 per 100 sq. km — in the world.
- **How have anti-poaching measures helped?**
- According to Assam-based rhino expert, the strengthening of the anti-poaching mechanism in India and Nepal with more manpower, capacity-building of frontline staff and equipping forest guards with better fighting gears have helped protect the rhino.
- The sentiments of local people attached to the rhino have also been a factor in the sharp drop in the number of rhinos killed, from 54 in 2013 and 2014 to one each in 2021 and 2022.
- The threat from poachers cannot be wished away because of the illegal wildlife trade in next-door Myanmar and beyond in Southeast Asia. While poaching remains a major threat to rhinos, alien invasive plant species grabbing key grassland habitats in rhino-bearing areas in the past decade has emerged as a bigger threat to the animal in India and Nepal.
- **Are Asian elephants endangered?**
- India is home to nearly 60% Asian elephants and the last count of the species in 2017 had put the number at 29,964.

- While the number of elephants in India has increased in the past few years, the species is listed as 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List of threatened species and Schedule I of The Wildlife Protection Act.
- **What are the challenges?**
- The largest land-dwelling mammal is under continuous threat of poaching and conflict with humans. While incidents of poaching for ivory have come down, the human-elephant conflict has been increasing.
- On average, about 500 humans and 100 elephants are killed every year across the country in such confrontations.
- The elephant population is not evenly distributed in the country. The south Indian States of Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu is home to nearly 44% of India's elephant population. The fragmentation of elephant habitats and the construction of linear (railways and roads) and power infrastructure have led to many elephant deaths.
- The change in land use, particularly bringing erstwhile forested areas under agriculture, has aggravated the conflict.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change launched Project Elephant in 1992 to ensure the long-term survival of elephants in their natural habitats.
- The number of elephant reserves in India is 32 with the latest addition being the Agasthyamalai Elephant Reserve in 2022.
- Elephant corridors and linear narrow habitat linkages which allow elephants to move between secure habitats are crucial for conservation.
- So far, about 101 elephant corridors have been identified in the country which needs to be secured for conservation of elephants.

PRELIMS

1. Baguette makes it to UNESCO intangible cultural heritage list

- ❖ **CONTEXT:** Baguette (the staple French bread) was inscribed into the UN's list of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) recently. UNESCO, the international body which aims at promoting peace and cooperation among nations through education, arts, sciences and culture, recognized the "Artisanal know-how and culture of baguette bread" as a world cultural heritage.

- **What is a baguette?**

- The baguette is a long and thin loaf made of flour, water, salt and yeast, and is consumed as a staple in France. Some believe that it was invented by August Zang, a baker and an entrepreneur from Vienna in 1839, who introduced the world to the taste of crusty bread with softer insides, using a steam oven. It gained its official name in 1920.
- The history of the bread is uncertain, some also believe that Napoleon Bonaparte, the French military leader, ordered thin sticks of bread for consumption by his soldiers as they could be carried from one place to another more conveniently.

- **Why did France nominate it for the UN list?**

- In March 2021, France nominated the baguette as its candidate for consideration within the UNESCO ICH list. It drew attention to the steady decline in the number of bakeries in the country as around 20,000 of them have closed down since 1970. The nomination by the French Culture Ministry stated, "In 1970, there were 55,000 artisanal bakeries (one for every 790 residents) compared with 35,000 today (one for every 2,000), often in favour of baguettes produced industrially."
- About 10 billion baguettes are consumed every year in France by a population of 67 million, according to the data website Planetoscope. One loaf is priced at around 1 Euro. However, people are increasingly becoming inclined towards purchasing products from supermarkets, rather than the traditional way. This method interferes with the quality of the bread.
- French officials were seen raising the loaf in celebration, as soon as the decision to include it within the UNESCO list was pronounced in Morocco recently.
- The French government, upon baguette being granted the status, added that it plans to introduce an artisanal baguette day called the "Open Bakehouse Day," to enhance people's connection with the heritage.

- **What is intangible cultural heritage according to UNESCO?**

- UNESCO defines "intangible" as "expressions that have been passed from one generation to another, have evolved in response to their environments and contribute to giving us a sense of identity and continuity".
- According to an official document by UNESCO, 'intangible cultural heritage' includes "oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts."
- It ascribes importance to "the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next," which necessitates their preservation. The document states that the safeguarding of an ICH means ensuring that it "remains an active part of life for today's generations that they can hand on to tomorrow."
- The adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the ICH by the General Conference of UNESCO in 2003 was a crucial step towards preserving intangible heritage from across the globe. UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity was established in the year 2008.

➤ **What are the criteria for the selection?**

- There are three criteria for an intangible cultural heritage to be inscribed in the United Nations list and The entity must
 - ✓ be recognized by communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals as part of their cultural heritage,
 - ✓ be transmitted from generation to generation and be constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history
 - ✓ Provide them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.”.

➤ **What are India’s intangible cultural symbols on the UNESCO list?**

- In 2022, India nominated Garba, a traditional dance form that originated in the state of Gujarat, for inscription on UNESCO’s ICH list.
- The elements which have been on the representative list of intangible cultural heritage from India in the past decade include Kolkata’s Durga Puja (2021), Kumbh Mela (2017), Navroz (2016), Yoga (2016), traditional brass and copper craft of utensil-making among coppersmiths of Punjab (2014), Sankirtana, a ritual musical performance of Manipur (2013), and the Buddhist chanting of Ladakh (2012).
- Before 2011, the list included Chhau dance, Kalbelia folk songs and dance of Rajasthan, and Mudiyyettu, a dance drama from Kerala (2010), Ramman, a religious festival and theatre performance of Garhwal in the Himalayas (2009), and Kutiyattam or Sanskrit theatre, and Vedic chanting (2008).
- Ramlila, a traditional performance of Ramayana, was also included in 2008.

➤ **Who manages nominations to the UNESCO list in India?**

- Several autonomous bodies within the Ministry of Culture actively function towards promoting and preserving intangible cultural heritage within the country.
- Sangeet Natak Akademi is the nodal organisation which looks after this function, and files nominations of intangible cultural entities from India, for evaluation by the international body.
- The Ministry of Culture also launches regular schemes, in an attempt to preserve, protect and promote intangible cultural heritage in the country. Among them, the “Scheme for Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India” aims to “professionally” enhance “awareness and interest” in the safeguarding, promotion and propagation of ICH.

2. India assumes presidency of two global bodies: UNSC and G20

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

- India has said that while its G20 presidency is driven by the vision of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” (the world is one family), its presidency of the United Nations Security Council seeks to prioritise countering terrorism and reformed multilateralism.
- Both these positions are rotating, that is, they come to all members of the bodies by turn.

➤ **What are the roles and powers of the UNSC and its President Nation?**

- Some of the significant roles of the UNSC broadly include maintaining “international peace in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations,” and “to determine the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression and to recommend what action should be taken.”
- The Council President, according to the UNSC handbook, exercises a vast range of powers such as holding meetings of the Security Council, approving provisional agendas, signing records of the meetings, besides other crucial decisions.
- “On the first working day of the presidency, the Council president holds an informal breakfast to discuss the draft programme,” which is “attended by the permanent representatives of all Council members.” The programme of work (PoW) — which in simpler terms, is a calendar of priorities which the President nation would work towards during its tenure — is adopted soon after the breakfast.

➤ **How is the UNSC President Nation elected?**

- UNSC highlights that each of its 15 member states assume its presidency for duration of one month, following the English alphabetical order.
- India had also been in the presidential position in August 2021.

➤ **What are India’s priorities as the Council President?**

- December 2022, India’s PoW includes briefings, consultations and reports on global developments in Syria, Libya, Middle East, Colombia, South Sudan, and Congo among others.
- An open debate on the “maintenance of international peace and security” through “new orientation for reformed multilateralism” and a briefing on “threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts” which would involve discussions on principles and way forward through a “global counter-terrorism approach” remain key to the Council. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will attend these signature events in December 14 and 15 2022 at New York.
- The country’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ruchira Kamboj will preside over the Council for December 2022.

❖ **G20 and its objectives**

- The G20 or Group of 20 functions as an intergovernmental meeting, where states participate in discussions on different aspects of the global economy.
- It was formed during the 1990s when Southeast Asian economies were witnessing a financial crisis. It had a tremendous impact in the year 2008, when it helped reduce global panic caused by a restrained economy and restore economic growth.
- The meeting includes the European Union, and some of the world's largest economies among other nations. Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, EU, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, UK and USA comprise the G20.
- These countries, at present, "account for more than 80% of world GDP, 75% of global trade, and 60% of the global population," according to a document by MEA India.
- The main objectives of G20, according to the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), includes policy discussion and coordination on economic and financial issues around the globe. However, over the years, the meeting has extended its aims to cover global terrorism, health and sustainable development.
- The leadership of G20 rotates annually among nations, where the President nation determines the agenda of the summit held every year. Non-members, namely, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the United Nations (UN), World Trade Organization (WTO), among others participate regularly in the G20 proceedings.
- The planning is done by the Troika, which comprises the past, present, and future presidents (this year, Indonesia, India, and Brazil).

➤ **What is India's agenda as the G20 President?**

- Indonesian President Joko Widodo officially handed over the G20 presidency to India on November 16 this year at the summit in Bali. The year-long presidency assumed by India comes at a time when the world is struck with uncertainties about recovery from a pandemic-hit economy.
- Prime Minister, highlighted the country's commitment towards resolving challenges of "climate change, terrorism and pandemic" through international cooperation.
- External Affairs Minister said that India will work to "depoliticise" the global supply of food, fertilisers and medical products. Hailing its position as the "voice of the Global South," External minister added that the country will "take the lead in pushing for collective action" on climate change, climate justice and sustainable development, which are often "side-tracked due to more dominant issues."
- India has also invited guest nations, namely, UAE, Bangladesh, Mauritius, Egypt, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, the Netherlands and Spain.
- Over 2023, India will organise more than 200 meetings across 50 cities which would involve officials, the civil society, culminating in a marquee meeting in New Delhi in September 2023. Thirty heads of states and government from the G20 nations, and those invited, are expected to participate in the summit.

3. **India top index on social hostilities relating to religion**

❖ **CONTEXT: A study by Washington-based think tank Pew Research Centre, puts India at the top of its index of 'social hostilities involving religion in 2020' assessing Covid restrictions.**

- It focuses entirely on 'How Covid-19 restrictions affected religious groups around the world in 2020'.
- It takes into account increased violence around protests of the Citizenship Amendment Act.
- It also notes the controversy around the Tablighi Jamaat meeting in Delhi and the subsequent use of Islamophobic hashtags, seeking to blame Muslims for the virus.

➤ **Concerns highlighted:**

- The study makes mention of targeting minorities in India during the pandemic.
- Pandemic-related social hostilities against religious groups that involved physical violence were reported in just four countries- India, Argentina, Italy, and the United States.
- Of the 198 countries listed in the Social Hostilities Index (SHI), 11 have been clubbed together as "very high" with scores of 7.2 or higher.
- At 9.4 out of a maximum possible score of 10, India's Social Hostilities Index (SHI) in 2020 was worse than neighboring Pakistan and Afghanistan.

➤ **Implications of hate Crime against religious minorities:**

- Psychological Distress: People victimized by violent hate crimes are more likely to experience more psychological distress than victims of other violent crimes.
- Sends Wrong Signal to the Society: Hate crimes send messages to members of the victim's group that they are unwelcome and unsafe in the community, victimizing the entire group and decreasing feelings of safety and security.

➤ **Indian Laws Against Hate Crimes:**

- Though the term is nowhere mentioned in any statute, its different forms are identified across the laws.
- The IPC under Sections 153A, 153B, 295A, 298, 505(1), and 505(2) declares that word, spoken or written, that promotes disharmony, hatred, or insults on basis of religion, ethnicity, culture, language, region, caste, community, race, etc., is punishable under law.
- 53A: It penalizes the promotion of enmity between different groups.

- 153B: It punishes imputations, and assertions prejudicial to national integration.
- 505: It punishes rumors and news intended to promote communal enmity.
- 295A: It criminalizes insults to the religious beliefs of a class by words with deliberate or malicious intention, contributing to combating hate speeches.
- Some other laws which contain provisions concerning hate speech and its prevention are:
- It classifies hate speech as an offense committed during elections into two categories: corrupt practices and electoral offenses. The relevant provisions regarding hate speech in the RPA are Sections 8, 8A, 123(3), 123(3A), and 125.
- **Social Hostilities Index (SHI):**
- The Social Hostilities Index is used by the Pew Forum to gauge hostilities both between and within religious groups, including mob or sectarian violence, crimes motivated by religious bias, physical conflict over conversions, harassment over attire for religious reason, and other religion-related intimidation and violence, including terrorism and war.

ANSWER WRITING

Q: Discuss the features of small satellite launch vehicle (SSLV). Explain how it will benefit the space sector in India?

The Indian space research organization (ISRO) has designed small satellite launch vehicle (SSLV) to meet “launch on demand” requirements in a cost-effective manner. It has recently carried Earth observation satellite EOS-02 into the low earth orbit which offers advanced optical remote sensing operating in infra-red band with high spatial resolution.

Features:

- Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) is a three stage Launch Vehicle configured with three Solid Propulsion Stages and a liquid propulsion-based Velocity Trimming Module (VTM) as a terminal stage.
- SSLV is 2m in diameter and 34m in length with a lift-off weight of around 120 tonnes.
- SSLV is capable of launching 500kg satellites in 500km planar orbit from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC).
- Other features include launch demand feasibility, minimal launch infrastructure requirements, low turn-around time, flexibility in accommodating multiple satellites etc.

Significance in space sector

- Increasing era of small satellites: earlier, big satellites with heavy payload were given importance but with increase in participation of many groups such as business groups, government agencies, universities etc. the demand for small satellites that are cost-effective has risen in past few years.
- Huge scope: due to ever growing need for space-based data, communication, surveillance and commerce the demand for small satellites will increase manifold in the next few years.
- Cost saving: the estimated cost of SSLV is estimated to be around Rs.30 crore only which is more than 6 times lower than PSLV.
- Increase in global share: India accounts for approximately 2% of the global space economy which is only around \$7.5 billion. India has envisaged to reach \$50 billion in next five years. Development in SSLV can help many countries to launch their satellites and can increase India’s share in global space economy.

The development of SSLV has far ranging benefits that can improve India’s position globally in the field of Space, technological development, socio-economic conditions etc. moreover, a high pace in the growth of space technology can enable India to send its astronauts into the space and to develop its own space station in the coming few years.

MCQs

1. With reference to recently released Social Hostilities Index (SHI) consider the following
 1. SHI measures acts of religious hostility by private individuals, organisations or groups in society.
 2. The SHI measures acts of religious hostility by private individuals, organizations or groups.
 3. India’s SHI in 2020 was worse than neighboring Pakistan and Afghanistan

Which of the above statement/s is/are not correct?

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) 1,2 and 3**

2. With reference to the G20 Sherpa, consider the following statements:

1. The Sherpa engages in planning, negotiation and implementation tasks through the Summit.
2. There is only one Sherpa per Summit for each member country; he/she is assisted by several sous Sherpas.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2**
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

3. Recently, India assumed the presidency of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the month of December 2022, with reference to this consider the following

1. This is India’s first presidency during its 2022-23 tenure as a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

2. Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi is the first Indian PM to preside over a meeting of the UNSC.
Which of the above statement/s is/are not correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2**
4. Recently the term 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbhakam' which means the "World is One" often mentioned in news mostly in the context of India's presidency over G20, the term is taken from which of the following?
- Maha Upanishad**
 - Mundaka Upanishad
 - Taittiriya Upanishad
 - Mandukya Upanishad
5. Consider the following statements with respect to National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India
- It aims to raise awareness about the various intangible cultural heritage elements from different states of India at national and international level and ensure their protection.
 - This initiative is a part of the Vision 2024 of the Ministry of Culture.
- Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2**
 - Neither 1 nor 2
6. Consider the following statements about Project Elephant
- To Protect Elephant, their habitat and corridor.
 - To address issue of man-animal conflict.
 - Welfare of domesticated Elephant.
- Objective of project Elephant are
- 1 and 2 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3**
7. With reference to the Indian rhinoceros, consider the following statements:
- It is listed as critically endangered on the IUCN Red List.
 - Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam has the highest density of Indian rhinos in the world.
- Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only**
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
8. Consider the following with reference to natural gas and crude oil in India.
- India is a net importer of crude oil.
 - India is a net exporter of petroleum products.
 - Natural gas pricing in India has been deregulated.
 - No upstream activities are done in these sectors in India presently.
- Which of the above statement/s is are correct?
- 1 and 2**
 - 3 and 4
 - 1, 2 and 3
 - 1 only
9. With reference to recently celebrated Navy Day 2022 consider the following
- The day is celebrated each year to mark the Indian Navy's achievements in 'Operation Trident' during the 1971 Indo-Pak War.
 - For the first time, the Navy Day celebrated out of Delhi
- Which of the above statement/s is are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2**
 - Neither 1 nor 2
10. Semeru Volcano erupted recently, is situated in which of the following Island?
- Java**
 - Sumatra
 - Hawaii
 - Nicober