

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

- ❖ **Why Odisha has decided to pay its pensioners in cash**
- **CONTEXT:** The Odisha government has decided to disburse pensions under the **Madhu Babu Pension Yojana (MBPY)**, its monthly social security pension scheme for vulnerable sections of society, in cash from June onwards, discontinuing the **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** mode. This shift comes in light of various difficulties faced by pensioners to access their money from bank accounts as well as technical challenges for the MBPY portal.
- MBPY is the only scheme in which the state will shift to cash payments.
- However, criticising Odisha government's decision, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan cited the adoption of DBT as the reason for massive savings to the exchequer by removal of fake/ghost beneficiaries. He also stated that the DBT scheme had reduced the need for intervention of middlemen, thus reducing scope for corruption. It (DBT) promotes transparency by cutting down discretionary decision making and opacity in processes. He termed the decision a step backwards in the collective pursuit of corruption-free governance.
- **Odisha's social security pension schemes**
 - At present, there are two social security pension schemes currently active in Odisha. The **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)** is run by the Centre and covers 20.95 lakh old age, widowed and differently-abled beneficiaries. Under NSAP, the Centre provides Rs 200 to individuals between the ages of 60 and 79, and Rs 500 to those above 80 years.
 - On the other hand, the Naveen Patnaik-led BJD government had launched MBPY on January 1, 2008 in an effort to bring more people from vulnerable sections of society under the social security net. Named after Madhusudan Das, a key figure in fight for separate Odia province, currently, over 28.5 lakh beneficiaries are served by MBPY.
 - MBPY primarily serves people belonging to the below the poverty line (BPL) category who are above the age of 60 years. Additionally, widows, disabled persons and trans people are beneficiaries under the MBPY, irrespective of their age. Under the scheme, those aged between 60-79 years are provided Rs 500 per month, while those above 80 years get Rs 700 per month.
 - In Odisha, the state government tops up the Centre's contribution to NSAP with Rs 300 and Rs 200 respectively to bring the assistance at par with MBPY.
- **Discontinuation of DBT:**
 - The Naveen Patnaik government had introduced DBT in the MBPY in September, 2022. Currently, 15 of the total 28.5 lakh beneficiaries are receiving pension amounts directly in their bank accounts, while the remaining are still handed cash.
 - However, the state government has now decided to do away with DBT completely and instead provide all beneficiaries assistance in cash. The cash transfers will be made on the 15th of each month by organising camps at the panchayat level.
 - The state cited DBT beneficiaries facing multiple difficulties while withdrawing their money as the primary reasons for shifting to cash payments. It also said that the MBPY portal faced a technical glitch as a result of which beneficiaries did not receive their pension amount.
 - While DBT has been discontinued for MBPY beneficiaries, those under NSAP will continue to receive their pensions directly in their accounts.
- **Lack of banking infrastructure a problem**
 - Odisha is a state with poor banking penetration in rural pockets. **More than half of Odisha's 6,798 gram panchayats do not have bank branches.** Consequently, MBPY beneficiaries have had to cover long distances to obtain their pension amounts.
 - In a video which recently went viral, a 70-year-old woman from Jharigaon village in Nabarangpur district was seen walking barefoot for several kilometres, with help from a broken chair, to collect her pension from bank. Similar stories have been seen across the state.
 - Shifting to cash payments will allow such people to receive their invaluable pensions in their panchayat itself.
- **About Madhu Babu Pension Yojana(MBPY):**
 - The Madhu Babu Pension Yojana(MBPY) is a pension scheme introduced by the Government of Odisha with the objective of providing financial assistance to destitute, elderly, and disabled individuals in the state.
 - The Madhu Babu Pension Yojana (MBPY) is a beneficial scheme initiated under the **Department of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities** for the disabled, old age persons in the state of Odisha, India. The Madhu Babu Pension Yojana was launched by Chief Minister of Odisha, in 2008 by merging the two pension schemes i.e. namely, **Revised Old Age Pension Rules, 1989** and **Disability Pension Rules, 1985**.
- **About National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)**
 - The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) is a centrally sponsored welfare program implemented by the Government of India. It aims to provide financial assistance and support to individuals living below the poverty line, particularly senior citizens, widows, and persons with disabilities. The program was launched in 1995 and operates across the country.
 - The NSAP consists of multiple schemes that target different vulnerable groups. Here are the key features of each scheme under NSAP:
 - ✓ Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS): This scheme provides a monthly pension to senior citizens aged 60 years and above, belonging to below-poverty-line households. The pension amount varies between states and is shared by the central and state governments.

- ✓ Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS): The IGNWPS offers financial assistance to destitute widows in the age group of 40-59 years who belong to below-poverty-line households. The pension amount varies across states and is shared by the central and state governments.
- ✓ Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS): The IGNDPS provides a monthly pension to individuals with severe disabilities who fall within the age group of 18-59 years and belong to below-poverty-line households. The pension amount varies by state and is shared by the central and state governments.
- ✓ National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS): The NFBS aims to provide financial assistance to families below the poverty line in case of the primary breadwinner's death. A lump-sum amount is provided to the bereaved family to support them during their period of crisis.
- The implementation of the NSAP is primarily carried out by the respective state governments. The central government provides financial assistance by sharing a percentage of the pension amount, and the remaining share is borne by the state governments. The program is designed to alleviate poverty and improve the quality of life for vulnerable sections of society.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

❖ **Launch of New NavIC satellite today: why a regional navigation system matters to India**

➤ **CONTEXT:** The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is all set to launch the first of the second-generation satellites for its navigation constellation on the morning of 29th May. The 2,232 kg satellite, the heaviest in the constellation, will be launched **by a GSLV rocket** that will lift off from Sriharikota at 10.42 am on the mission that will last for a little over 18 minutes.

➤ Each of the seven satellites currently in the **Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS)** constellation, operationally named NavIC, weighed much less — around 1,425 kg — at liftoff. They all rode the lighter PSLV, ISRO's workhorse launch rocket.

➤ The last IRNSS satellite, IRNSS-1I was launched in April 2018 to replace an older, partially defunct satellite in the constellation. IRNSS-1I was ISRO's ninth satellite for the NavIC constellation, but is considered to be the eighth because the IRNSS-1H — launched eight months earlier in August 2017 and originally intended to replace the older satellite — was lost after the heat shield of the payload failed to open on time.

➤ **What's new in the second-generation NavIC satellite?**

As stated above, the second-generation satellite — christened NVS-01, the first of ISRO's NVS series of payloads — is heavier. Other than that:

- **ATOMIC CLOCK:** The satellite will have a Rubidium atomic clock onboard, a significant technology developed by India. The space-qualified Rubidium atomic clock indigenously developed by Space Application Centre-Ahmedabad is an important technology which only a handful of countries possess.

- **L1 SIGNALS FOR BETTER USE IN WEARABLE DEVICES:** The second generation satellites will send signals in a third frequency, L1, besides the L5 and S frequency signals that the existing satellites provide, increasing interoperability with other satellite-based navigation systems.

- ✓ The L1 frequency is among the most commonly used in the Global Positioning System (GPS), and will increase the use of the regional navigation system in wearable devices and personal trackers that use low-power, single-frequency chips.

- **LONGER MISSION LIFE:** The second-generation satellites will also have a longer mission life of more than 12 years. The existing satellites have a mission life of 10 years.

➤ **What is the significance of the atomic clock on board the NVS-01 payload?**

- Several of the existing satellites stopped providing location data after their onboard atomic clocks failed — this was the main reason for the launch of the replacement satellite in 2018. Since a satellite-based positioning system determines the location of objects by accurately measuring the time it takes for a signal to travel to and back from it using the atomic clocks on board, failure of clocks means the satellites are no longer able to provide accurate locations.

- Currently, only four IRNSS satellites are able to provide location services, according to ISRO officials. The other satellites can only be used for messaging services such as providing disaster warnings or potential fishing zone messages for fishermen.

➤ **What about the age of the satellites?**

- This is the second major concern, besides the failing atomic clocks. IRNSS-1A was launched into orbit on July 1, 2013, and the 1B and 1C satellites were launched in the following year. 1A is almost defunct — the failed 1H mission of 2018 was intended to replace this satellite — and all the three oldest satellites in the constellation are close to the end of their 10-year mission lives. At least three new satellites must be put into orbit to keep the seven-satellite constellation fully functional.

➤ **What practical purpose does the NavIC constellation serve for users?**

- ISRO has been criticised by experts for not focussing on the development of the user segment until very late in the life of some of the satellites in the constellation, because of this lack of interest, no receivers were developed for the NavIC system, even though the satellites were sending signals.

- A 2018 report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India said that even though the Cabinet cleared funding of Rs 200 crore to develop user receivers in 2006, work on the project started only in March 2017, by which time seven launches had already taken place.

- The receivers have now been developed, and NavIC is in use for projects like public vehicle safety, power grid synchronisation, real-time train information systems, and fishermen's safety. Other upcoming initiatives such as

common alert protocol based emergency warning, time dissemination, geodetic network, unmanned aerial vehicles are in the process of adopting NavIC system.

- Some cell phone chipsets such as the ones built by Qualcomm and MediaTek integrated NavIC receivers in 2019. The Ministry of Electronics and IT is in talks with smartphone companies to urge them to make their handsets NavIC compatible.

➤ **What is the advantage of having a regional navigation system?**

- India is the only country that has a regional satellite-based navigation system. There are four global satellite-based navigation systems —
 - ✓ **the American GPS.**
 - ✓ **the Russian GLONASS (GLObalnaya NAVigatsionnaya Sputnikovaya Sistema).**
 - ✓ **the European Galileo, and**
 - ✓ **the Chinese Beidou.**
 - ✓ Japan has a four-satellite system that can augment GPS signals over the country, similar to **India's GAGAN (GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation)**.
- Once fully operational — with ground stations outside India for better triangulation of signals — NavIC open signals will be accurate up to 5 metres and restricted signals will be even more accurate. GPS signals by contrast are accurate up to around 20 metres. Work is underway to set up ground stations in Japan, France, and Russia, ISRO officials said.
- **NavIC provides coverage over the Indian landmass and up to a radius of 1,500 km around it.** In this region, NavIC signals will likely be available in even hard-to-reach areas. Unlike GPS, NavIC uses satellites in high geostationary orbit — the satellites move at a constant speed relative to Earth, so they are always looking over the same region on Earth.
- NavIC signals come to India at a 90-degree angle, making it easier for them to reach devices located even in congested areas, dense forests, or mountains. GPS signals are received over India at an angle.

With the use of NavIC picking up, the government has been looking at the possibility of increasing the coverage area of the system. “Detailed studies are in progress on technical parameters and feasibility.

CLIMATE

❖ **Why is the 1.5 degree Celsius target critical?**

- **CONTEXT:** The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) released two reports titled “Global Annual to Decadal Climate Update 2023-2027” and “State of Global Climate 2022.” The decadal predictions of the WMO said that the annual mean global surface temperature between 2023 and 2027 will be 1.1-1.8 degree Celsius higher than the baseline temperature of 1850-1900 or pre-industrial levels. In 2022, it was 1.15 degrees above the baseline, and by 2027, the average will exceed 1.5 degrees, a critical point beyond which there may be no return.

➤ **What is the 1.5 degree Celsius target?**

- The 1.5 degree Celsius target is the global climate target that aims to limit warming to said level by 2100, in order to prevent the planet from slipping into further climate crises. For decades, 2 degree was an acceptable level of warming. The idea of 1.5 degree was perceived as unrealistic and unachievable. However, the 2 degree target was unacceptable to small island countries as it implied that their survival was compromised.
- In 2010, at the Cancun COP 16, countries agreed to limit the global average warming to below 2 degree Celsius. In 2015, the parties to the Paris Agreement pledged to limit the average temperature rise to below 2 degree, while actively aiming for 1.5 degree above pre-industrial levels. This was endorsed as a global target by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2018 and since then has been pursued in all climate dialogues.

➤ **Why is the 1.5 degree target critical?**

- In 2018, the IPCC released a special report on the impact of global warming when temperature reaches 1.5 degree Celsius above baseline. It also drew a comparison with the effects of 2 degree Celsius warming. It was estimated that anthropogenic activities would have already caused 1 degree of warming, likely to reach 1.5 degree between 2030 and 2052 at the current rate. Frequent and intense heat waves, droughts, heavy precipitation, an additional 10-centimetre rise in sea level, destruction of ecosystems and mostly irreversible changes can be witnessed at the 2 degree level.
- However, discussions on the average temperature rise do not imply that the current warming is uniform across the planet. For example, warming greater than the global average is being experienced in the Arctic, with the term ‘polar amplification’ gaining more traction. The regional differences and the vulnerability factors spell more urgency for climate action which must limit the average planetary warming to 1.5 degree.

➤ **Why are we missing the target?**

- Historically, developed countries are responsible for a major chunk of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Therefore, they are expected to assume more responsibility and implement climate action.
- However, the Climate Performance Index over the years has shown otherwise. Countries like Australia, the U.S., Japan, Russia and Canada have made little progress in meeting their pledges. Additionally, polluters like China, Iran and Saudi Arabia rank low in climate performance.
- The pandemic pushed the world into a socio-economic crisis. On the road to recovery, countries pledged measures to build-back. However, in most cases there is little to no consideration for building-back in a sustainable manner. The Ukraine conflict has further added to woes and sparked an energy crisis threatening climate goals.

➤ **Are extreme weather events linked to the global rise in temperature?**

- The predictions of the recently released reports point to precipitation anomalies and an increase in marine heat waves as compared to marine cold spells. The El Niño, which is currently brewing, will further strengthen this year, resulting in a 98% possibility of witnessing temperatures higher than 2016 at least in one of the years in the 2023-27 period.
- The cryosphere is shrinking, and there is a mass loss of glaciers in High-mountain Asia, Western North America, and South America. Due to the alarming rate of warming of the Arctic Ocean, the Greenlandic ice sheet is melting at a faster pace, contributing to the increase in sea level.
- Climate risks and hazards impact human population and the ecosystem depending on exposure, vulnerability, and adaptive capacity. It has exacerbated food insecurity, displacement, and deaths. Climate change has been affecting crop yield negatively and the risks posed by agricultural pests and diseases have also increased in the past few years.
- Countries like Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and Afghanistan are facing acute food shortages resulting in malnutrition and hunger, demanding urgent humanitarian assistance. However, food insecurity in these countries is due to the complex interaction of climate conditions with other factors such as droughts, cyclones, and political and economic instability.
- The heatwaves in Pakistan and India in 2022 also resulted in a decline in crop yields. The floods in Pakistan affected croplands in southern and central parts of the country and displaced eight million people within the country.
- The Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya) has been witnessing extreme drought conditions since 2020, while at the same time, western African countries are seeing floods and heavy rainfall which has pushed millions into acute food insecurity. Such shortage of food has also led to mass displacement within and across borders. In Syria and Yemen, thousands have been displaced owing to the floods, storms, and heavy snowfall.
- Aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems have also not been immune to such changes in climate patterns. Phenological shifts and mismatches have been recorded due to climate change. The population of migratory species has declined in Sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, the warming above 1.5 degree Celsius can prove lethal for coral reefs which are already prone to bleaching.
- According to the WMO, **extreme weather anomalies have caused the deaths of two million people and incurred \$4.3 trillion in economic damages over the past fifty years. In 2020-2021, 22,608 disaster deaths were recorded globally.**

➤ **How is India impacted?**

- India has been increasingly facing the brunt of climate change. February 2023 was recorded as the hottest month since record-keeping began in 1901.
- In 2022, India witnessed extreme weather events for 80% of the days. Indian monsoons were wetter than usual last year after recording extreme heat during the pre-monsoon period, resulting in wildfires in Uttarakhand and acute food shortages.
- According to the **Climate Change Performance Index 2023**, **India ranked eighth** with a high-performance after Denmark, Sweden, Chile, and Morocco. Being an emerging economy with development needs, it is attempting to balance its development needs with ongoing climate action both at the domestic and international levels.
- With domestic measures like the **Green Hydrogen Mission** and the introduction of green bonds, India is performing fairly well despite contributing only a minuscule to cumulative GHG emissions. At the international level, through the **International Solar Alliance and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure**, India can prove to be a responsible climate player keeping in mind that it has a long way to go in very little time.

PRELIMS

1. **Rs 75 coin: Features**

❖ **CONTEXT: To mark the inauguration of the new Parliament building, Prime Minister Narendra Modi released a commemorative coin of Rs 75 denomination on May 28.**

- The coin of Seventy-Five Rupees denomination shall be coined at the Mint for issue under the authority of the Central Government on the occasion of the inauguration of the New Parliament Building.
- India has been issuing commemorative coins since the 1960s for several reasons such as paying homage to notable personalities, spreading awareness about government schemes, or remembering key historic events.

➤ **What are the features of the new commemorative coin?**

- The latest Rs 75 coin is circular in shape with a diameter of 44mm. The composition of the coin is of a quaternary alloy — 50 per cent silver, 40 per cent copper, 5 per cent nickel and 5 per cent zinc.
- The face of the coin shall bear the Lion Capitol of Ashoka Pillar in the centre, with the legend “सत्यमेि जयते” (Satyameva Jayate) inscribed below, flanked on the left periphery with the word “भारत” (Bharat) in Devnagri script and on the right periphery the word “INDIA” in English.”
- The other side of the coin displays an image of the new parliament building. The inscription “Sansad Sankul” is written in Devanagari script on the upper periphery while the words “Parliament Complex” in English on the lower periphery of the coin.

➤ **How to get commemorative coins and can you spend them?**

- If someone wants to acquire commemorative coins, they can do so by visiting the website of the Securities of Printing and Minting Corporation of India Limited (SPMCIL). Most often, such coins are meant to be just collectables as their worth may not necessarily be the same as their face value — they are partially made of precious metals such as silver or gold, the latest commemorative coin is 50 per cent silver.

- For instance, in 2018, the government issued a commemorative coin of Rs 100 denomination to honour former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee but it's currently available on SPMCIL's website for ₹5,717. This coin is 50 per cent silver, and has other metals.

➤ **Who has the power to design and mint coins?**

- The Coinage Act, 2011 gives the central government the power to design and mint coins in various denominations. In the case of coins, the role of the RBI is limited to the distribution of coins that are supplied by the central government.
- Speaking about commemorative coins, the central government regularly releases them according to its choice, but it also mints such coins at the request of third parties.
- In 2017, the government issued commemorative coins to pay homage to Indian actor and politician Late MG Ramachandran and Carnatic singer MS Subbalakshmi. The decision was taken after "the request was placed by Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts & Sangeetha Sabha for the MS Subbalakshmi commemorative coins and by the Tamil Nadu government for the MG Ramachandran commemorative coins.
- All coins are minted in the four mints owned by the Government of India in Mumbai, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Noida.

➤ **When was the first time India issued a commemorative coin?**

- The country released its first commemorative coin in 1964 in honour of Jawaharlal Nehru, who had passed away that year.

2. Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)

❖ **CONTEXT: The second Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) Ministerial Meeting was held in Detroit recently hosted by the US.**

- Union Minister for Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, and Textiles, Shri Piyush Goyal virtually participated in the Ministerial meeting.

➤ **About**

- IPEF was launched jointly by the USA and other partner countries of the Indo-Pacific region on May 23, 2022 at Tokyo.
- IPEF has 14 partner countries including Australia, Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam & USA.
- It seeks to strengthen economic engagement among partner countries with the goal of advancing growth, peace and prosperity in the region.
- The framework is structured around four pillars relating to
 - ✓ Trade (Pillar I)
 - ✓ Supply Chains (Pillar II)
 - ✓ Clean Economy (Pillar III)
 - ✓ Fair Economy (Pillar IV)
- India had joined Pillars II to IV of IPEF while it has an observer status in Pillar-I.

➤ **Meeting outcome**

- At this Ministerial Meeting, negotiations under the Supply Chains (Pillar-II) were substantially concluded; while good progress was reported under the other IPEF Pillars.
- Pillar-wise Press Statement was issued at the end of the Ministerial meeting to provide an update on the developments related to text-based negotiations under each of the respective IPEF Pillars.
- Under the Supply Chains (Pillar-II), IPEF partner countries are seeking to:
 - ✓ Make supply chains more resilient, robust, and well-integrated through crisis response measures;
 - ✓ Cooperation for mitigation of disruptions to better ensure business continuity,
 - ✓ Improve logistics and connectivity
 - ✓ Promoting investments particularly in critical sectors and production of key goods
 - ✓ Worker role enhancement through requisite upskilling and reskilling, and increasing comparability of skills credentials frameworks across IPEF.
- Under the Clean Economy (Pillar-III), IPEF partners are aiming to advance cooperation on research, development, commercialization, availability, accessibility, and deployment of clean energy and climate friendly technologies, and facilitate investment towards climate-related projects in the region.
- ✓ Interested IPEF partners are introducing a regional hydrogen initiative to encourage widespread deployment of renewable and low-carbon hydrogen and its derivatives in the region.
- ✓ During his intervention under this Pillar, Shri Goyal highlighted that India would like the Pillar focus to be centered on action-oriented elements, such as mobilization of low cost long tenure climate finance and enhanced access to clean energy technologies.
- Under the Fair Economy (Pillar-IV), IPEF partners are working toward development of the text of an agreement that will strengthen implementation of effective anti-corruption and tax measures to boost commerce, trade, and investment among IPEF economies.
- ✓ During his intervention under this Pillar, the Minister highlighted the strong steps taken by India to improve India's legislative and administrative framework to provide a corruption free administration and reaffirmed India's commitment to implement UNCAC and the FATF standards.

3. Sagar Parikarma Yatra

❖ **CONTEXT: Shri Parshottam Rupala launches VI Phase of Sagar Parikarma Yatra in Anadaman**

- Department of Fisheries, Govt of India, National Fisheries Development Board, RGCA and MPEDA, Indian Coast Guard, Fishery Survey of India and fishermen representatives will take part in the Sagar Parikrama event in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands on 29th - 30th May, 2023.

- During the event, certificates/sanctions related to Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada scheme (PMMSY), Kisan Credit Card (KCC) shall be awarded to the progressive fishermen, fishers and fish farmers, young fishery entrepreneurs etc.
- Literature on PMMSY scheme, UT schemes, e-shram, FIDF, KCC, etc. shall be popularised through print media, electronic media, videos, and digital campaigns through jingles among fishers for wide publicity of schemes.

➤ **About the Initiative**

- Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Shri Parshottam Rupala, has taken this unique initiative of “Sagar Parikrama” to visit coastal areas of entire country through a pre-decided sea route to meet fishermen, fish farmers and beneficiaries of various Government Schemes, and to interact with them in order to hear directly from them about their issues and suggestions to further uplift the fisheries sector in the country for the benefits of the fishers and other stakeholders.
- The journey of First Phase of “Sagar Parikrama” has started from Mandvi, Gujarat on 5th March 2022 and so far in the Five Phases of Sagar Parikrama the coastal areas of Gujarat, Daman & Diu, Maharashtra and Karnataka have been covered in the west coast. Sagar Parikrama Phase-VI, journey will cover the areas in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, covering locations like Kodyyaghat, Port Blair, Panighat Fish landing center, VK Pur Fish Lending Center, Hutbay, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Island etc.

➤ **About the Fisheries sector**

- Fisheries sector provides livelihood, employment, and entrepreneurship to more than 2.8 crore fishers and fish farmers at the primary level and several lakhs along the value chain.
- This sector has gradually evolved over the years to become an important pillar of socio-economic growth of the nation.
- Over the past 75 years the sector has transformed with a 22- fold increase in fish production. From a mere 7.5 lakh tons in 1950-51, India’s total fish production has reached a record 162.48 lakh tons per annum in 2021-22, with a 10.34% growth in fish production in 2021- 22 in comparison to 2020-21.
- Today, India is the 3rd largest fish producing country with about 8% share in global fish production. India stands 2nd in aquaculture production and one of the top cultured shrimps producing nation in the world.

➤ **Andaman & Nicobar Islands potential in this sector**

- The Andaman & Nicobar Islands have vast potential for fisheries development in view of its Coastal length of about 1,962 km and Continental shelf area of 35,000 Sq Km.
- The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) around this island is about 6,00,000 Sq Km with huge Fishery potential.
- For augmentation of fish production by harvesting the untapped fishery resources without effecting the fragile ecosystem and towards welfare and upliftment of fishermen, the Department of Fisheries, Andaman & Nicobar Administration is implementing Various schemes/programmes.

4. **Shrinking snow cover continues to haunt Himachal Pradesh**

❖ **CONTEXT: The trend of gradual reduction in snow cover in ecologically fragile Himachal Pradesh continues to haunt the hill State. Also, the mean maximum and minimum average temperature is on the rise in the Himalayan region.**

- In the past decade, Himachal Pradesh has been witnessing an erratic, inconsistent and decreasing trend of snowfall, besides a shift in its pattern and precipitation, triggered by climate change.
- In the 2022-23 winter period (October-April), there was an overall reduction of about 14.05% in the total area under snow cover in Himachal Pradesh in comparison to 2021-22.

✓ This has been revealed in the latest scientific report conducted jointly by the Himachal Pradesh’s State Centre on Climate Change (HIMCOSTE) and the Geo-Sciences, Hydrology, Cryosphere Sciences Applications Group (GHCAG) and the Space Applications Centre (SAC-ISRO).

➤ **Dependability**

- Himachal Pradesh receives winter precipitation in the form of snow in the higher altitudes. About one-third of the total geographical area of the State remains under thick snow cover during the winter season.
- Most of the major rivers like the Chenab, Beas, Parvati, Baspa, Spiti, Ravi, Satluj and their perennial tributaries originating from the Himalayas, depend on the seasonal snow cover for their discharge dependability.
- Given the importance of seasonal snow cover as a major input in controlling the hydrology of the river basins, seasonal snow cover assessment in terms of its spatial distribution was carried out in different river basins during the winter season of 2022-23 from October to April. The total area under snow cover was estimated using Advanced Wide Field Sensor (AWIFS) satellite data during 2022-23.
- The study under the title — ‘Seasonal Snow Cover Variations in Himachal during 2022-23 and its comparative analysis with reference to 2021-22’ — showed that during 2022-23, there was early snowfall in October and November, resulting in positive trends in some basins.
- However, during the peak winter months (December-February), all four basins — Chenab, Beas, Ravi and Satluj had negative trends in comparison to the last winter period.
- The total area under snow during 2022-23 (October-April) slightly increased in the early half (October-November) in some basins, whereas in peak winter (December–February), there was a drastic reduction in the area under snow.
- The late snowfall, which extended to April 2023, resulted in an increase in the area under snow, but the snowfall during this period may not be of much use as the rising temperature from April onwards may enhance the melting rate thereby affecting the discharge dependability of the major rivers that relied on the seasonal snow cover besides the glacier melt during the peak summer time.
- The temperature trend analysis was also carried out from 2018-23, mean maximum and minimum average temperature showed an increasing trend in almost all the river basins.

- It is a cause of concern over the reducing precipitation trend in the ecologically fragile hill State.
- ✓ Glaciers in the Himalayas have been reported to be retreating, and these retreating glaciers, depleting snow cover and Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) are of immediate concern in the mountain environment. Decreases in snow accumulation and glacial retreat might lead to acute water shortages in the future.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. Sexual harassment at the workplace remains a persistent challenge in India's quest for gender equality and inclusive workplaces. In light of this, explain how the provisions of the PoSH Act 2013 ensure a safer workplace. Also, highlight the associated challenges.

Sexual harassment in the workplace is considered a grave violation of fundamental rights, basic human rights, antithetical to gender equality and an inclusive workplace. According to an anti-sexual harassment advisory, the total number of sexual harassment complaints at workplaces climbed by 27 per cent in 2021-22 compared to 2020-21 reflecting its seriousness.

The Prevention of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013 (PoSH Act 2013) lays down a comprehensive legal framework for addressing and preventing sexual harassment in workplaces to ensure a safer workplace -

- Defines an Employee: All women employees, whether employed regularly, temporarily, contractually, on an ad hoc or daily wage basis, as apprentices or interns or even employed without the knowledge of the principal employer, can seek redressal to sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Expands the definition of Workplace: The law expands the definition of 'workplace' beyond traditional offices to include all kinds of organisations across sectors, even non-traditional workplaces and places visited by employees for work. It applies to all public and private sector organisations throughout India.
- Defines sexual harassment: To include unwelcome acts such as physical contact and sexual advances, a demand or request for sexual favours, making sexually coloured remarks, showing pornography, and any other unwelcome physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature.
- Detail elaboration on the circumstances that would constitute sexual harassment if they are connected to the above-mentioned acts-
 - ✓ Implied or explicit promise of preferential treatment in employment.
 - ✓ The implied or explicit threat of detrimental treatment in employment.
 - ✓ The implied or explicit threat about present or future employment status.
 - ✓ Interference with work or creating an intimidating or offensive or hostile work environment and
 - ✓ Humiliating treatment likely to affect health or safety.
- Internal Complaints Committee (ICC): This act mandates that all workplaces in the country, including government and private sector organisations, must set up an ICC to receive complaints of sexual harassment and ensure timely resolution.
- The Act also mandates Local Committees (LC) in every district in the country to receive complaints from women working in Firms with less than 10 employees and from the informal sector.

Challenges in the implementation of the law:

- The law is largely inaccessible to women workers in the informal sector: As more than 80% of India's women workers are employed in the informal sector.
- Huge underreporting: Due to the power dynamics of organisations, fear of professional repercussions (loss of employment), concrete evidence is often lacking, etc.
- Lacunae in the constitution of ICCs: 16 out of the 30 national sports federations in the country had not constituted an ICC to date.
- Improper composition of ICCs: ICCs either had an inadequate number of members or lacked a mandatory external member.
- Lack of clarity in the law: About how to conduct such inquiries, lack of awareness in women employees about who to approach in case of facing harassment, etc.

Concrete ways to address the challenges of sexual harassment at the workplace include comprehensive awareness campaigns, mandatory training programs for employees and employers, stricter enforcement of the POSH Act, simplification of complaint procedures, and extending the Act's coverage to informal sectors.

MCQs

1. Consider the following statements regarding Sudarshan Shakti Exercise:
 1. It aimed at starting the transformation of the forces into a modern, lean, and agile fighting combination capable of leveraging new-age technologies.
 2. It was designed to validate operational plans in a network-centric environment with elements of combat power, combat support and logistic support.
 3. Recent edition of the exercise conducted by Indian Army along the western borders in Rajasthan and Punjab.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only
 - c) 1 and 3 only
 - d) 1, 2 and 3
2. The Eighth meeting of the NITI Aayog Governing Council concluded at the new Convention Centre in Pragati Maidan in New Delhi. With reference to the NITI Aayog Governing Council, consider the following statements:
 1. The Governing Council, which embodies NITI Aayog's objectives of cooperative federalism, presents a platform to discuss inter-sectoral and federal issues to accelerate the implementation of the national development agenda.
 2. The First Meeting was held in February 2015.
 3. The Governing Council of NITI Aayog comprises the – Prime Minister of India, Chief Ministers of all the States and UTs with Legislatures and Lt. Governor of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, four Union

Ministers as ex-officio members and three Union Ministers as Special Invitees.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

3. The Indian Space Research Organisation is collaborating with the Raman Research Institute (RRI), Bengaluru to build the X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat) that is scheduled to be launched later this year. Which of the following statements are correct with reference to XPoSat mission?

- 1. It is India's first polarimetry mission.
- 2. It will study various dynamics of bright astronomical X-ray sources in extreme conditions.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

4. Which of the following statements are correct with reference to Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar?

- 1. It is given to children for their exceptional acts of Bravery, Sports, Social Service, Science & Technology, Environment and others.
- 2. It is given by the Ministry of Women & Child Development

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

5. Consider the following statements regarding features of India's New Parliament Building:

- 1. The Lok Sabha, based on the theme of the national bird 'peacock', will have a capacity of 888 seats.
- 2. The Rajya Sabha hall, based on the theme of our national flower 'lotus', will have a capacity to seat 384 people.
- 3. The new building has a Constitution Hall for the purpose of showcasing India's democratic heritage.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

6. With reference to Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) consider the following

- 1. IPEF was launched jointly by the USA and Japan.
- 2. The framework is structured around four pillars relating to Trade (Pillar I), Supply Chains (Pillar II), Clean Economy (Pillar III), Fair Economy (Pillar IV)
- 3. India had joined all the pillars of IPEF.

How many above statement/s is/are correct?

- a) Only one**
- b) Only two
- c) All the three

- d) None

7. Consider the following statements:

Statement I

India is the 3rd largest fish producing country with about 8% share in global fish production.

Statement II

Continental shelf of Indian subcontinent is wider and has more organic deposits than other continents.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- a) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II is the correct explanation for Statement I
- b) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II is not the correct explanation for Statement I
- c) Statement I is correct and Statement II is incorrect**
- d) Statement I is Incorrect and Statement II is correct

8. What is snow line?

- a) Low altitude and where it never snows
- b) High altitude and where snowfall occurs, but melts completely during summer
- c) High altitude and where the snow is permanent everywhere and the entire snow does not melt**
- d) None of the above

9. How many of the following island nations are part of the Pacific Island Countries (PICs)?

- 1. Fiji
- 2. Solomon Island
- 3. Vanuatu
- 4. Tuvalu
- 5. Seychelles
- 6. Falkland Island

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- a) Only three
- b) Only four**
- c) Only five
- d) All the six

10. Consider the following statements:

Statement I

The global incidence of dengue has grown over recent decades, with half of the world population now at risk.

Statement II

Dengue is endemic in more than 100 countries, has been propelled by several factors, including climate change, increased urbanisation and increased travel.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- a) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II is the correct explanation for Statement I**
- b) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II is not the correct explanation for Statement I
- c) Statement I is correct and Statement II is incorrect
- d) Statement I is Incorrect and Statement II is correct