

12th Nov – 18th Nov Weekly Compilation

(The Hindu+ Indian Express + PIB + Other World-Wide News)

Functioning of the Judiciary

(Source: IE)

News: The Supreme Court of India renders ultimate judgment on decisions not only of the High Courts (18 for 28 states + 8 UTs) but also national and state tribunals operating throughout India.

Related Constitutional provisions (Article 141):

- The law declared by the Supreme Court shall be binding on all courts within the territory of India.
- This means, there is hardly any area of legislative or executive activity that escapes the scrutiny of the highest court.

Precautions SC needs to take in the future:

- **Preserve its independence:** It is best protected by the judges themselves through institutions established by statutes or judicial decisions. For example, the Collegium system.
 - However, there is no law to govern judges.
- **Efficient court/case management:**
 - It is important for reducing the backlogs of pending cases (over 4.5 crores across all courts in India).
 - The SC had drawn up a fine blueprint for case management. For example, fast track, normal track and slow track – to be 3 three different tracks.
 - Most of the HCs have not implemented this blueprint, as they are autonomous constitutional bodies not subject to the administrative directions of the SC.

Conclusion:

- As India's highest court, the SC must strive to retain public trust in the established courts.
- This can be accomplished if judges set an example of the highest moral-ethical conduct for all.
- "What a great man does, other men do; the standard he sets up, by which the others move." (Annie Besant translation of the Third Discourse in the Bhagavad Gita)

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad

(Source: HT)

Why in News?

Prime Minister of India paid tributes to India's first education minister Maulana Abul Kalam Azad on his 134th birth anniversary.

- 11th November is observed as National Education Day every year since 2008 to commemorate his birth anniversary.



Who was Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad?

- **Birth:** Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, originally named Muhiyuddin Ahmad, was born in 1888 in Mecca, Saudi-Arabia.
 - Azad was a brilliant debater, as indicated by his name - “Abul Kalam” which literally means “Lord of Dialogues”.
- **Brief Profile:**
 - He donned many hats of being a journalist, freedom fighter, politician, and educationist.
- **Contributions (Pre-Independence):**
 - He was a proponent of Hindu Muslim unity, opposed to Partition.
 - In 1912, he started a weekly journal in Urdu called Al-Hilal which played an important role in forging Hindu-Muslim unity after the bad blood created between the two communities in the aftermath of Morley-Minto reforms (1909).

- Under the 1909 reforms, the provision of separate electorates for Muslims was resented by Hindu.
- The government regarded Al- Hilal as a propagator of secessionist views and banned it in 1914.
- Maulana Abul Kalam Azad then started another weekly called Al-Balagh with the same mission of propagating Indian nationalism and revolutionary ideas based on Hindu-Muslim unity.
 - In 1916, the government banned this paper too and expelled Maulana Abul Kalam Azad from Calcutta and exiled him to Bihar from where he was released after the First World War 1920.
- Azad supported the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22) started by Gandhiji and entered the Indian National Congress in 1920.
 - In 1923, he was elected as the president of Indian National Congress. At an age of 35, he became the youngest person to serve as the President of the Indian National Congress.
- Maulana Azad was arrested in 1930 for violation of the salt laws as part of Gandhiji's Salt Satyagraha. He was put in Meerut jail for a year and a half.
- He again became the president of Congress in 1940 and remained in the post till 1946.
- **An Educationist:**
 - In the field of education, Maulana Azad had been an uncompromising exponent of universalism, a truly liberal and humanitarian educational system.
 - Azad's ideal was a fusion of the Eastern and Western concepts of man, to create a fully integrated personality. Whereas the Eastern concept dwelt on spiritual excellence and individual salvation, the Western concept laid stress on worldly achievements and social progress.
 - He was one of the founding members of the Jamia Millia Islamia University, originally established at Aligarh in the United Provinces in 1920.
- **His Works:** Basic Concept of Quran, Ghubar-eKhatir, Dars-e-Wafa, India Wins Freedom, etc.
- **Contributions (Post-Independence):**
 - In 1947, he became the first education minister of free India and remained at this post till his death in 1958. In his tenure, he did tremendous work for the upliftment of the country.
 - The first IIT, IISc, School of Planning and Architecture and the University Grants Commission were established under his tenure as the education minister.
 - Indian Council for Cultural Relations, for introduction of Indian culture to other nations.
 - **Following three academics were formed:**
 - Sahitya Academy for development of literature;

- Sangeet Natak Academy for the development of Indian music and dance;
- Lalit Kala Academy for the development of painting.
- Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was posthumously awarded India's highest civilian honour, Bharat Ratna in 1992.

Tea Industry of India

(Source:PIB)

Why in News?

Recently, Union Minister addressed the **Indian Tea Association's (ITA's) International Small Tea Grower's Convention**.

- Founded in 1881, the ITA is the premier and the **oldest organization of tea producers in India**. It has played a multi-dimensional role towards formulating policies and initiating action towards the development and growth of the industry.

What is the State of Indian Tea Industry?

- **Production:**
 - India is the **second-largest producer of tea globally**.
 - The **northern part of India is the biggest producer** at about **83% of the country's annual tea production in 2021-22** with the majority of the production coming from **Assam followed by West Bengal**.
 - The **Assam valley and Cachar** are the two tea producing regions in Assam.
 - In **West Bengal, Dooars, Terai and Darjeeling** are the three major tea producer regions.
 - The **southern part of India produces about 17% of the country's total production** with the major producing states being **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka**.
 - **India's total tea production** for the financial year 2020-21 it was **1,283 million kg**.
- **Consumption:**
 - India is also among the **world's top tea consuming countries**, with **80% of the tea produced in the country consumed by the domestic population**.
- **Export:**
 - India is **among the top 5 tea exporters in the world** making about **10% of the total exports**.
 - In the year 2021, the total value of tea exports from India was around **USD 687.9 million**.
 - India exports tea to **more than 25 countries** throughout the world.
 - **Russia, Iran, UAE, USA, the UK, Germany, and China** are some of the **major importers** of tea from India.

- **India's total tea exports** during 2021-22 in quantity was **201 million kg**.
- The majority of the tea exported out of India is **black tea which makes up about 96% of the total exports**.
 - The types of tea exported through India are: **Black tea, Regular tea, Green tea, Herbal tea, Masala tea and Lemon tea**.
 - Out of these, black tea, regular tea and green tea make up approximately 80%, 16% and 3.5% of the total tea exported from India.
 - **Indian Assam, Darjeeling, and Nilgiri tea** are considered one of the **finest in the world**.
 - Indian tea is one of the finest in the world due to strong geographical indications, heavy investment in tea processing units, continuous innovation, augmented product mix, and strategic market expansion.
- **Geographical Indication (GI) Tag:**
 - **Darjeeling Tea also known as "Champagne of teas,"** worldwide because of its flowery scent was the **1st GI tag product**.
 - **Other two variants** of Darjeeling tea i.e., **Green and White tea** also hold GI tags.
- **Regulation of the Industry:**
 - **Tea Board of India** is in charge of developing and promoting the tea industry in India.

What is Tea Board of India?

- **About:**
 - It is a **statutory body under the Ministry of Commerce** that was set up in 1953 for the development of tea industry in India. It started functioning in 1954.
- **Vision:**
 - Its vision and mission is to **make the country a leading producer of tea** across the globe for which it established several programmes and schemes.
- **Members:**
 - **The Board is constituted of 31 members (including Chairman)** drawn from Members of Parliament, tea producers, tea traders, tea brokers, consumers, and representatives of Governments from the principal tea producing states, and trade unions
 - The Board is **reconstituted every three years**.
- **Offices in India:**
 - The board has its **headquarters located in Kolkata and 17 other offices** across India.
- **Foreign Offices:**
 - Currently Tea Board has **two overseas offices located at Dubai, and Moscow**.

What are the Initiatives by Tea Board of India?

- **Promotion for packaged Tea of Indian origin:**
 - The scheme provides assistance in promotional campaigns - up to 25% of the cost reimbursement, display in International Departmental Stores, product literature and website development, and inspection charges reimbursement of up to 25% of the charges.
- **Subsidies for Domestic Exporters:**
 - The Tea Board also provides subsidies to the domestic exporters to participate in International Fairs and Exhibitions.
- **Tea Development and Promotion Scheme:**
 - This scheme was launched in November 2021 by the Tea Board of India for the period of 2021-26.
 - The objective of this scheme is to enhance the productivity and quality of the production in India.
 - There are **seven important components** to this scheme:
 - **Plantation development** of small tea farmers
 - Creation of sector specific **actions plan for North East India**
 - Supporting the tea producers and trader in **market promotion activities**
 - **Worker's welfare**
 - **Research and development** activities
 - **Regulatory reforms**
 - **Establishment expenses**
 - **Online Licensing System** (auto-renewal of 3 types of licenses i.e., exporter license, tea waste license and tea warehouse license).
- **Chai Sahyog Mobile App:**
 - It addresses various issues of small tea growers.

Dynamic Ground Water Resource Assessment 2022 Report

(Source: PIB)

Why in News? An assessment report on groundwater by the Central ground water board and States/UTs was released recently. (Under **Ministry of Jal Shakti**)

Key findings:

- India is the **largest user of Groundwater (GW)** (accounting for 1/4th of total withdrawal)
- **87%** of GW is used for **Irrigation**
- **Status:** GW extraction has declined and the number of **over-exploited units** (extraction > recharge) has **decreased**.

- Currently, 67% of GW units are **safe** (extraction < 70% of recharge), 14% **Overexploited** and 4% at the **Critical**
- Extraction is very high in **Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan etc.**

Reasons for use of ground waters in irrigation;-

- **Erratic monsoon;** – Successive droughts and erratic rainfall have led to excess extraction of groundwater.
- **Subsidy:** Low prices or free electricity offers an incentive for the unchecked lifting of groundwater. The vast majority of groundwater pumps are unmetered, and if charged, are billed at a flat, non-volumetric, and highly subsidized tariff.
- **Green revolution:** Green Revolution caused the overuse of groundwater.
- **Water-intensive crops:** Government encourages farmers to produce water-intensive crops like rice and sugarcane through increased minimum support prices (MSP).

Problems associated with such rampant use: –

- **Lowering of the water table:** The World Bank predicts that by 2032, around 60 per cent of aquifers in the country will be in a critical state.
- **Reduction of water in streams and lakes:** A substantial amount of the water flowing in rivers comes from the seepage of groundwater into the streambed. Depletion of groundwater levels may reduce water flow in such streams.
- **Land subsidence:** A lack of groundwater limits biodiversity and dangerous sinkholes result from depleted aquifers.
- **Increased costs for the user:** As the depleting groundwater levels lower the water table, the user has to delve deep to extract water. This will increase the cost of water extraction.
- **Deterioration of water quality:** Groundwater that is deep within the ground often intermingles with saltwater that we shouldn't drink.
- **Saltwater contamination can occur.** For instance in the western part of the country.
- **Interrupts water cycle:** Groundwater depletion interrupts the 'natural' water cycle putting disproportionately more water into the sea.
- **Impacts food security:** As large aquifers are depleted, the food supply and people will suffer.

Methane Alert and Response System

(Source: Indian Express)

Why in News?

Recently the **United Nations (UN)** has decided to set up a **satellite-based** monitoring system "**MARS: Methane Alert and Response System**" for tracking **methane emissions** and alerting governments and corporations to respond.

- The MARS initiative is intended to **strengthen the efforts to cut methane emissions.**

What is Methane Alert and Response System (MARS)?

▪ About:

- The **MARS** was launched at the **27th Conference of Parties (COP27)** to the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change** in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.
- The data-to-action platform was set up as part of the **UN Environment Programme's (UNEP)** International Methane Emissions Observatory (IMEO) strategy to get **policy-relevant data** into the right hands for emissions mitigation.
- The system will be the **first publicly available global system** to connect methane detection to notification processes transparently.

▪ Objectives:

- MARS will integrate data from a large number of **existing and future satellites** that have the ability to **detect methane emission events** anywhere in the world, and send out notifications to the relevant stakeholders to act on it.
- MARS will **track the large point emission sources**, mainly in the **fossil fuel** industry, but with time, would be able to detect emissions from **coal**, waste, livestock and rice fields as well.

Why do we Need to Cut Methane Emissions?

▪ About Methane:

- Methane is a **colourless** and **odourless** gas that occurs abundantly in nature and as a product of certain human activities.
- Methane is the **simplest member of the paraffin series of hydrocarbons** and is among the most potent of the **greenhouse gases**.

▪ Concerns Regarding Methane:

- Methane is the **second-most common of the six major greenhouse gases**, but is **far more dangerous than carbon dioxide** in its potential to cause global warming.
- **Accounting for about 17%** of the current global greenhouse gas emissions, methane is blamed for having **caused at least 25%- 30% of temperature rise** since the pre-industrial times.
- It accounts for a small portion of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions compared to carbon dioxide. But it is thought to be **80 times more efficient than carbon dioxide at trapping atmospheric heat** in the 20 years following its release.

What are the Initiatives to Cut Methane Emission?

▪ Global:

○ Global Methane Pledge:

- At the Glasgow climate conference (UNFCCC COP 26) in 2021, nearly 100 countries had come together in a voluntary pledge, referred to as the **Global Methane Pledge**, to cut methane emissions by **at least 30% by 2030 from the 2020 levels**.

- More countries have joined in this initiative since then, bringing the total to nearly 130.
- A 30% reduction in methane emissions by 2030 is expected to result in avoiding 0.2 degree rise in temperature by the year 2050, and is considered absolutely essential in the global efforts to keep the temperature increase below the **1.5 degree Celsius target**.
- **Global Methane Initiative (GMI):**
 - It is an **international public-private partnership** focused on **reducing barriers** to the recovery and use of methane as a **clean energy source**.
 - GMI provides **technical support to deploy methane-to-energy projects** around the world that enable Partner Countries to launch methane recovery and use projects.
 - **India is a partner country.**
- **National:**
 - **'Harit Dhara' (HD):**
 - **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** has developed an anti-methanogenic feed supplement **'Harit Dhara'**, which can cut down cattle methane emissions by 17-20% and can also result in higher milk production.
 - **India Greenhouse Gas Program:**
 - The India GHG Program led by **World Resources Institute (WRI) India** (non-profit organization), **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** and **The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)** is an industry-led voluntary framework to measure and manage greenhouse gas emissions.
 - The programme builds **comprehensive measurement and management strategies** to reduce emissions and drive more profitable, competitive and sustainable businesses and organisations in India.
 - **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC):**
 - **NAPCC** was launched in 2008 which aims at **creating awareness** among the representatives of the public, different agencies of the government, scientists, industry and the communities on the threat posed by climate change and the steps to counter it.

Jawaharlal Nehru

(Source: TH)

Why in News?

India is celebrating **Children's Day** on **14th November 2022** to commemorate the **133rd birth anniversary** of the **Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru**.

- **World Children's Day** is celebrated on **20th November** each year.

Who was Jawaharlal Nehru?

- **About:**
 - **Birth:** 14th November 1889 in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh.
 - **Father's Name:** Motilal Nehru (a lawyer who held the office of **Indian National Congress** as President two times.)
 - **Mother's Name:** Swarup Rani
- **Brief Profile:**
 - Author, politician, social activist, and lawyer who rose to prominence as the face of Indian national movement against British rule of India.
- **Education:**
 - **Nehru** received his education at home from **English governesses** and **tutors** until the age of **16**.
 - He attended **Harrow**, a prestigious English school, in **1905**, where he spent two years.
 - He spent **three years** at **Trinity College** in **Cambridge** where he earned a degree in **natural science**.
 - He qualified as a barrister from the **Inner Temple, London**.
- **Return:**
 - In 1912, when he returned to India, he immediately entered in to politics.
- **Contribution in Indian Freedom Movement:**
 - **Nehru** participated in the **Bankipore Congress** as a delegate in **1912**.
 - In 1916, he joined **Annie Besant's Home Rule League**.
 - He became Secretary of the **Home Rule League, Allahabad in 1919**.
 - When the **Non-Cooperation Movement** began in **1920**, he interacted with **Mahatma Gandhi** and joined the **national independence movement**.
 - In **1921**, he was detained on suspicion of engaging in **anti-government activity**.
 - **Nehru** was appointed as **General Secretary** of the **All India Congress Committee** in **September 1923**.
 - Since **1927**, he has twice served as the **general secretary** of the **Congress party**.
 - **Nehru** was **lathi-charged** in **Lucknow** in **1928** while leading a protest against the **Simon Commission**.
 - **Nehru** was elected as **president** of the **Lahore Session** of **Indian National Congress** in **1929**.
 - **Nehru** advocated for India's **complete independence** in this session.
 - In **1929-31**, he drafted a resolution called **Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy**, which outlined the congress's main goals and the nation's future.
 - The resolution was ratified by the Congress party during the Karachi Session in 1931, which was presided over by **Sardar Vallabhai Patel**.
 - He participated in the **Salt Satyagraha** in **1930** and was put in jail.
 - **Nehru** became a more **prominent leader** within the **Congress** and grew close to Mahatma Gandhi.
 - In **1936**, he presided over the **Lucknow session** of the **Indian National Congress**.

- **Nehru** was arrested for attempting to organize an **individual satyagraha** to oppose India's forced participation in the war.
- He took part in the **civil disobedience movement in 1940**, for which he received a four-year jail term.
- **Nehru** introduced the historic '**Quit India**' movement at the **All-India Congress Committee session in Bombay in 1942**.
- **Nehru** along with other leaders was arrested on **August 8, 1942** and taken to **Ahmednagar Fort**.
- He was released in **1945** and went on to arrange legal defence for officers and troops accused with disloyalty in the **Indian National Army (INA)**.
- He was chosen to serve as the **president of Indian National Congress** fourth time in 1946.
- To recommend a strategy for the transfer of power, the **Cabinet Mission** was dispatched to India in **1946**.
 - An **interim government** headed by **Jawaharlal Nehru** as **Prime Minister** was formed.
- On August 15, 1947, India attained independence but also suffered the pain of partition.
- **First Prime Minister of India:**
 - A princely state must join in the constituent assembly, according to Nehru, who also affirms that there would be no princely states in an independent India.
 - He assigned **Vallabhbhai Patel** to oversee the effective integration of the states.
 - India became a **sovereign democratic republic** on **January 26, 1950**, when the new Indian Constitution came into effect.
 - In order to divide up states according to **languages**, **Jawaharlal Nehru** created the **states reorganization committee** in **1953**.
 - In addition to promoting **democratic socialism**, he promoted India's **industrialization** by carrying out the **first five-year plans**.
 - The **Non-alignment movement (NAM)** is regarded as his greatest **geopolitical accomplishment**.
 - **India** decided to not align with any superpower during the **cold war era after World War II**.
 - His final term as prime minister was troubled by the **Sino-Indian War, 1962**.
 - He promoted democratic socialism during his 17 years as prime minister, highlighting the necessity for India to attain both democracy and socialism.
 - His internal policies were founded on the four tenets of democracy, socialism, unification, and secularism. He was able to incorporate these pillars into the construction of new independent India.
- **Books Written:** The Discovery of India, Glimpses of World History, An Autobiography, Letters from a Father to His Daughter.
- **Death:** 27th May 1964.

India-US Economic and Financial Partnership Meet

(Source: PIB)

Why in News?

Recently, the 9th Ministerial meeting of the **India-US Economic and Financial Partnership** was held.

- The Indian delegation was led by the Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs and the USA delegation was led by the Treasury Secretary.

What are the Key Highlights of the Meet?

- **Efforts to Increase Climate Ambition:**
 - Both countries shared the **re-energized global efforts to increase climate ambition** as well as respective domestic efforts to meet publicly expressed **climate goals**.
- **Macroeconomic Challenges:**
 - In the context of the **conflict in Ukraine**, both discussed the **current headwinds to the global macroeconomic outlook** including increased commodity and energy prices as well as supply side disruptions, and reemphasized their commitment to the central role of multilateral cooperation in addressing these global macroeconomic challenges.
- **Multilateral Development Banks:**
 - They acknowledged the importance of working through MDBS to help India access and mobilize available financing to support development objectives, including **climate action**.
 - Both plan to continue engaging on these and other global economic issues multilaterally and bilaterally.
- **Equal Debt Treatment:**
 - Both sides affirmed their **commitment to debt sustainability, transparency in bilateral lending, and coordinating closely on extending fair and equal debt treatment to countries facing debt distress**.
- **G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatment:**
 - Both reiterated commitment to step efforts to implement the **G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatment** in a predictable, timely, orderly and coordinated manner.
- **Collective Quantified Goal:**

- Both agreed to mobilize USD 100 billion every year till 2025 from public and private sources for developing countries, in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation.
- The countries also discussed **mutual collaboration in sharing of information to tackle offshore tax evasion.**
- **Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act:**
 - The two sides will continue to engage in discussions relating to the **Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA)** for sharing of financial account information.

How have been India's Relations with the US?

- **About:**
 - The U.S.-India strategic partnership is founded on shared values including a commitment to democracy and upholding the rules-based international system.
 - The United States and India have shared interests in promoting **global security, stability, and economic prosperity** through trade, investment, and connectivity.
 - The United States supports **India's emergence as a leading global power and a vital partner** in efforts to safeguard the **Indo-Pacific as a region of peace, stability, and growing prosperity.**
- **Economic Relations:**
 - In 2021, overall U.S.-India bilateral trade in goods and services reached a record **USD 157 billion.**
 - The United States is **India's largest trading partner** and most important export market.
 - America is one of the few countries with which India has a **trade surplus.** In 2021-22, India had a trade surplus of USD 32.8 billion with the US.
- **International Cooperations:**
 - India and the United States cooperate closely at multilateral organizations, including the **United Nations, G-20, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** Regional Forum, **International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization.**
 - The United States welcomed **India joining the UN Security Council in 2021** for a two-year term and supports a reformed UN Security Council that includes India as a permanent member.
 - Together with Australia and Japan, the **United States and India convene as the Quad to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific** and provide tangible benefits to the region.
 - India is also one of twelve countries partnering with the United States on the **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF).**
 - India is a member of the **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)**, at which the United States is a dialogue partner.

- In 2021, the United States joined the **International Solar Alliance** headquartered in India, and in 2022 the **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)**.

What are the Associated Challenges of India-US Ties?

- **Tariff Imposition:** In 2018, the **US imposed a 25% tariff** on certain steel products and a 10% tariff on certain aluminum products from India.
 - India retaliated in June 2019, by increasing tariffs on 28 products worth about USD 1.2 billion on US imports.
 - However, after the imposition of the Section 232 tariffs, steel exports to the US declined by 46% year-on-year.
- **Misunderstanding Self-Reliance as Protectionism:** The **Atmanirbhar Bharat Campaign** has exacerbated the view that India is increasingly becoming a protectionist closed market economy.
- **Exemption from US' Generalised System of Preferences:** Effective since June 2019, the USA decided to withdraw duty-free benefits to Indian exporters under the GSP programme.
 - Consequently, special duty treatment on USD 5.6 billion worth of exports to the US was removed, affecting India's export-oriented sectors such as pharmaceuticals, textiles, agricultural products and automotive parts.
- **US' Hostility towards Other Countries:**
 - Some of the differences between India and the US are not direct consequences of India-US relationship but due to US' hostility towards third countries like Iran and Russia – the traditional allies of India.
 - The other issues that are challenging India-US relationship include India's ties with Iran and India's purchase of S-400 from Russia.
 - The US' call for India to distance itself from Russia may have a far-reaching consequence to South Asia's status quo.
- **US' policy in Afghanistan:**
 - India is also concerned over the US' policy in Afghanistan as it is jeopardizing India's security and interest in the region.

Way Forward

- The unparalleled **Demographic Dividend** provides enormous opportunities for the US and Indian firms for technology transfer, manufacturing, trade and investment.
- India is emerging as a leading player in an international system that is undergoing an unprecedented transformation. It shall use its present situation to explore opportunities to further its vital interests.
- India and the US are strategic partners today in the true sense of the term - a partnership among mature major powers that is not seeking a complete convergence but managing differences by ensuring a continuous dialogue and channelling these differences into crafting new opportunities.

- Russia's increased alignment with China as a result of the Ukraine crisis only complicates India's ability to rely on Russia as it balances China. Hence, continuing cooperation in other security areas is in both countries' interests.
- Space governance will become central to the US-India bilateral relationship, driven by mutual concern about the increasing space capabilities of the Chinese Army.

Ninth Schedule

(Source: IE)

Why in News?

The Jharkhand Assembly has cleared two Bills, but these changes will come into force only after the Centre carries out amendments to include these in the **Ninth Schedule of the Constitution**.

What are these Bills?

- **Jharkhand Reservation of Vacancies in Posts and Services (Amendment) Bill, 2022:**
 - It raises reservations to 77%.
 - Within the reserved category, the Scheduled Castes will get a quota of 12 %, up from 10%; 27% for OBCs, up from 14%; 28% for Scheduled Tribes, a 2 % increase; and **10% for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)**.
- **Jharkhand Local Persons Bill, 2022:**
 - It aims at granting **local residents "certain rights, benefits, and preferential treatment"** over their land; in their stake in local development of rivers, lakes, fisheries; in local traditional and cultural and commercial enterprises; in rights over agricultural indebtedness or availing agricultural loans; in maintenance and protection of land records; for their social security; in employment in private and public sector; and, for trade and commerce in the state.

Why is there need to Include in Ninth Schedule?

- The 77 % reservation breaches the 50 % ceiling set by the **Supreme Court** in the 1992 **Indra Sawhney v Union of India verdict**.
- However, placing a legislation in the Ninth Schedule **shields it from judicial scrutiny**.
- Previously, the Tamil Nadu Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (**Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions and of Appointments or Posts in the Services under the State) Act, 1993**, reserved 69 % of the seats in colleges and jobs in the state government.

What is the Ninth Schedule?

- The Schedule contains a list of **central and state laws which cannot be challenged in courts** and was added by the **Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951**.

- The first Amendment added **13 laws to the Schedule**. Subsequent amendments in various years have taken the number of protected laws to 284 currently.
- It was created by the new Article 31B, which along with Article 31A was brought in by the government to protect laws related to **agrarian reform and for abolishing the Zamindari system**.
 - While Article 31A extends protection to ‘classes’ of laws, Article 31B shields **specific laws or enactments**.
 - While most of the laws protected under the Schedule concern agriculture/land issues, the list includes other subjects.
- Article 31B also has a retrospective operation which means that if laws are inserted in the Ninth Schedule after they are declared unconstitutional, they are **considered to have been in the Schedule** since their commencement, and thus valid.
- Although Article 31B excludes judicial review, the apex court has said in the past that even laws under the Ninth Schedule would be **open to scrutiny if they violated Fundamental Rights or the basic structure of the Constitution**.

Are Laws in the Ninth Schedule completely Exempt from Judicial Scrutiny?

- **Keshavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973)**: The court upheld the judgement in Golaknath and introduced a new concept of “**Basic structure of the Indian Constitution**” and stated that, “all provisions of the constitution can be amended but those amendments which will abrogate or take away the essence or basic structure of constitution which included **Fundamental Rights are fit to be struck down by the court**”.
- **Waman Rao v. Union of India (1981)**: In this important judgement, the SC ruled that, “those amendments which were made in the constitution before 24th April 1973 (date on which judgement in Keshavananda Bharati was delivered) are valid and constitutional but those which were made after the stated date are open to being challenged on the ground of constitutionality.
- **I R Coelho v. State of Tamil Nadu (2007)**: It was held that every law must be tested under Article 14, 19 and 21 if it came into force after 24th April 1973.
 - In addition, the court upheld its previous rulings and declared that any act can be challenged and is **open to scrutiny by the judiciary if it is not in consonance with the basic structure of the constitution**.
 - In addition, it was held that if the constitutional validity of any law under the ninth schedule has been upheld before, in future it cannot be challenged again.

Way Forward

- Although reservation is necessary, it should **also be open to judicial scrutiny** in order to ensure any abrupt or irrational policy initiative by the Executive or the Legislature.
- Any loophole or shortcomings in reservation policy **must be addressed by involving various stakeholders**. The need of the hour is not to go to extremes of either scrapping

or shielding reservation policy, rather a rational framework on this **contentious policy must be developed.**

AAINA Portal

(Source: PIB)

Context: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has launched the 'AAINA Dashboard for Cities' portal (www.aaina.gov.in).

What is the 'AAINA Dashboard for Cities'?

It is a portal that enables **Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)** to voluntarily submit key data, including audited accounts and performance metrics, on five thematic areas.

1. Political & Administrative Structure
2. Finance
3. Planning
4. Citizen-Centric Governance
5. Delivery of Basic Services.

Information Collection on Five Thematic Areas



The Ministry, through the **Digital India Corporation (DIC)**, will offer support to ULBs and states during the data submission process.

Aim of the portal:

The portal promotes **healthy competition**, **inspires improvement**, and **facilitates peer learning** among ULBs. The dashboard for cities **does not rank Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)**. Instead, it functions as a tool for **comparing cities in similar positions** and fostering learning among them.

Saturn's rings

(Source: TH)

Context: Saturn's rings will not disappear permanently by 2025. Although they will become almost **invisible from Earth during that time**, it is a regular occurrence due to the thinness of the rings.

What is Saturn's ring and how it was formed?

Saturn's rings are a **vast system of icy particles, rocks, and dust that orbit the planet**. They were formed from the **debris of comets, asteroids, and moonlets** that either collided with each other or were captured by Saturn's gravity.

How will the ring become invisible for some time?

Saturn's rings will become **almost invisible from Earth in 2025** due to the **edge-on perspective from our viewpoint**. This phenomenon occurs because the rings are so thin that, when seen from a distance, they appear to vanish when viewed edge-on. The rings' edge-on appearance happens twice per Saturnian year, making them seem to vanish, but they will gradually reappear.

Which planets have rings and why do earth doesn't have rings?

Saturn, Jupiter, Uranus, and Neptune have rings. Earth does not have rings because any rings it might have formed in the past would have likely been disrupted by **various gravitational forces and atmospheric effects**. Additionally, the relatively **strong gravitational influences of the Moon** and other celestial bodies make it challenging for Earth to maintain stable rings.

Projects to Track Small Fishing Vessels

(Source: TH)

Why in News?

Recently, it has been reported that projects launched to **track small fishing vessels along India's coast** are making progress.

- The third edition of the 'pan-India' coastal defence **Exercise Sea Vigil-22** is also scheduled to be held on 15th-16th November to test **coastal security**.

What are Different Projects to Track Small Fishing Vessels?

- **Automatic Identification System:**
 - An **Automatic Identification System (AIS)** was made **compulsory for all vessels above 20 metres** after the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai.
 - The decision was taken by the National Committee on Strengthening Maritime and Coastal Security, set up to look into issues related to coastal security.
 - However, for vessels under 20 metres, the process has been delayed for several reasons.
- **Vehicle Management System:**
 - **The Vehicle Management System (VMS)** has advanced features and **enables two-way communication**. The technology has been handed over to four companies for commercial production.
 - Trials were conducted in association with the **Indian Space Research Organisation** on one of their communication satellites last year along the coasts of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.
- **ReALCraft:**
 - Verification and monitoring of a large number of fishing vessels in India has been greatly eased by the creation of the online **ReALCraft (Registration and Licensing of Fishing Craft)**.
- **Biometric Identity Cards:**
 - Issuance of **biometric identity cards** to the majority of fishermen and composite card readers to the maritime security agencies has been done to enable biometric verification of the identity of fishing vessel crews at sea.
- **Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA):**
 - As part of overall efforts for **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)** on the high seas, the **Quad** grouping, at the **Tokyo summit 2022** announced an ambitious **Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA)** initiative to track “**dark shipping**” and build a “**faster, wider, and more accurate maritime picture of near-real-time activities in partners’ waters**” integrating three critical regions in the Indo-Pacific - the **Pacific Islands, Southeast Asia, and Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.

What is Exercise Sea Vigil?

- **About:**
 - The **inaugural edition of the exercise** was conducted in January 2019.
 - It is billed as India's **largest coastal defence drill**.
 - The exercise is a build up towards the major **Theatre Level Readiness Operational Exercise (TROPEX)**, which the **Indian Navy** conducts every two years.
- **2022 Edition:**
 - **Exercise Sea Vigil-22** will provide realistic assessment of India’s strengths and weaknesses and thus will help in further strengthening maritime and national security.

- The exercise will see activation of the **coastal security apparatus** across India and is being conducted by the **Indian Navy** in coordination with **Coast Guard and other Ministries** entrusted with the task of maritime activities.
- The exercise will be undertaken along the entire **7,516 km coastline and Exclusive Economic Zone** of India and will involve all the **Coastal States and Union territories along with other maritime stakeholders**, including the fishing and coastal communities.
- **Significance:**
 - Sea Vigil and TROPEX together will cover the **entire spectrum of maritime security challenges**, including transition from peace to conflict.
 - It provides opportunity, at the apex level, to assess the country's preparedness in the domain of maritime security and coastal defence.