



# WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

**NOVEMBER, 2021**

**Week-4**

**22-30 Nov, 2021**

★★ Useful for ★★

**CSE, ESE, PSUs, State Services Exams,  
SSC and Banking Exams**

22<sup>nd</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

## Process for Repealing Farmer's Law

- The Central Government decided to repeal three contentious farm laws passed last year.
- The Prime Minister said that the process of repealing the laws which are currently stayed by the Supreme Court will take place in the upcoming Winter Session of Parliament.
- Repealing a law is one of the ways to nullify a law. A law is reversed when Parliament thinks there is no longer a need for the law to exist. Legislation can also have a "sunset" clause, a particular date after which they cease to exist.

### About Law:

1. Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, which is aimed at allowing trade in agricultural produce outside the existing APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) mandis.
2. Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, which seeks to provide a framework for contract farming.
3. Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020, which is aimed at removing commodities such as cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potato from the list of essential commodities.

### NOTE:

Article 245 of the Constitution gives Parliament the power to make laws for the whole or any part of India, and state legislatures the power to make laws for the state. Parliament draws its power to repeal a law from the same provision.

## Special Category Status (SCS) of States

- The Andhra Pradesh High Court questioned the Centre for not granting Special Category Status (SCS) to Andhra Pradesh.

## About Special Category Status (SCS)

- Special Category Status (SCS) is a classification given by the Centre to assist in the development of those states that face geographical and socio-economic disadvantages.
- This classification was done on the recommendations of the Fifth Finance Commission in 1969.
- Parameters are based on the Gadgil formula. The parameters were:
  - Hilly Terrain;
  - Low Population Density And/Or Sizeable Share of Tribal Population;
  - Strategic Location along Borders With Neighbouring Countries;
  - Economic and Infrastructure Backwardness; and
  - Non-viable Nature of State finances.
- As per the information provided by the NITI Aayog, 11 states namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura and Uttarakhand were granted special category status.

## Benefits

- The Centre pays 90% of the funds required in a centrally-sponsored scheme to special category status states as against 60% or 75% in case of other states, while the remaining funds are provided by the state governments.
- Unspent money does not lapse and is carried forward.
- 30 percent of the Centre's gross budget also goes to special category states.

## 5 years of Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin

- Recently, Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin completed 5 years. A sum of Rs 1,47,218.31 crore has been released to the states and UTs since the inception of the revamped rural housing scheme.

- The program is being implemented and monitored through end to end e-governance solutions, AwaasSoft and AwaasApp. AwaasSoft provides functionalities for data entry and monitoring of multiple statistics related to implementation aspects of the scheme.

### Key Points:

- Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) is one of the flagship programmes of the Government of India which is driven by the noble objective of providing “Housing for All” by the year 2022. It was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development.
- It is a social welfare program through which the Government provides financial assistance to houseless beneficiaries identified using SECC 2011 data to help them construct a house of respectable quality for their personal living.
- Under PMAY, the cost of unit assistance is to be shared between Central and State Governments in the ratio 60:40 in plain areas and 90:10 for North Eastern and hilly states.
- The program envisages the completion of 2.95 crore PMAY-G houses with all basic amenities by the year 2022.

### Swachh Survekshan Awards, 2021

- The President of India recently felicitated the awardees of the cleanest cities of India at the ‘Swachh Amrit Mahotsav’ hosted as part of Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0 by Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA).

### Key Findings:

- **India’s cleanest city:** Indore in Madhya Pradesh, for the 5th consecutive time followed by Surat in Gujarat and Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh.
- **Cleanest State:** Chhattisgarh for the third time, in the category of ‘States with more than 100 urban local bodies.

- **Cleanest ‘Ganga city’:** Varanasi.

### NOTE:

Swachh Survekshan is an annual survey of cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation in cities and towns across India. It was launched as part of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. It has been conducted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs since 2016.

23<sup>rd</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

### Special Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme (SCLCSS)

- The Union Ministry for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) launched the Special Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme for Service Sector (SCLCSS) at Guwahati.

### About SCLCSS:

- Special Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme for Service Sector (SCLCSS) aims at promoting entrepreneurship and opportunities for MSMEs in the North-Eastern Region.
- The scheme will help in meeting the technology-related requirements of enterprises in the services sector and has a provision of 25% capital subsidy for procurement of Plant & Machinery and service equipment through institutional credit to the SC-ST MSEs without any sector-specific restrictions on technology upgradation.

### Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)

- Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006 which was notified on October 2, 2006, deals with the definition of MSMEs. The MSMED Act, 2006 defines the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises based on
  - The investment in plant and machinery for those engaged in manufacturing or production, processing or preservation of goods.

- The investment in equipment for enterprises engaged in providing or rendering of services.

According to the recently proposed definition, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) will be classified as:

## Earlier and Revised Definition of MSMEs

### Existing MSME Classification



**Criteria :** Investment in Plant & Machinery or Equipment

| Classification            | Micro                 | Small                | Medium                |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Manufacturing Enterprises | Investment < ₹ 25 lac | Investment < ₹ 5 cr. | Investment < ₹ 10 cr. |
| Services Enterprise       | Investment < ₹ 10 lac | Investment < ₹ 2 cr. | Investment < ₹ 5 cr.  |

### Revised MSME Classification

**Composite Criteria :** Investment and Annual Turnover

| Classification             | Micro                                     | Small                                       | Medium                                       |
|----------------------------|---|---|--|
| Manufacturing and Services | Investment < ₹ 1 cr. & Turnover < ₹ 5 cr. | Investment < ₹ 10 cr. & Turnover < ₹ 50 cr. | Investment < ₹ 20 cr. & Turnover < ₹ 100 cr. |

## O-SMART Scheme

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs gave its approval for the continuation of the umbrella scheme O-SMART for implementation during the period from 2021-26.
- The present decade has been declared as the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development by the United Nations (UN) and continuation of the scheme would strengthen our stand in the global oceanographic research and technology development.

### About O-SMART Scheme

- O-SMART Scheme is a scheme of the Ministry of Earth Sciences launched on August 29, 2018.
- **Objectives:**
  - Promote ocean research and setting early warning

weather systems. It also aims to address ocean development activities like technology, services, science, resources, and observations.

- Generate and regularly update information on Marine Living Resources and their relationship with the physical environment in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- Develop high resolution models for ocean forecast and reanalysis systems.

### NOTE:

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is prescribed by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Every coastal country's EEZ extends to 200 nautical miles (370 km) from its shores and the country has exclusive rights to all resources in the water, including oil, natural gas and fish. Any military activity in the EEZ requires Country's permission.

## Strategic Oil Reserve Programme

- India plans to release crude oil from its emergency stockpile to cool international oil prices.
- The decision has come after the US has urged some of the world's largest oil-consuming nations, including China, India and Japan to release crude oil from their respective reserves in order to bring down global prices of crude oil.
- The request came after the US government was unable to persuade OPEC+ to pump more oil with major producers arguing the world was not short of crude.

### Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) in India

- These are huge stockpiles of crude oil for emergency situations.
- SPRs are strategic in nature and the crude oil stored in these reserves will be used during an oil shortage event, as and when declared so by the Government of India.
- India holds about 26.5 million barrels of oil in its reserves.

### About OPEC:

- The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was founded in Baghdad, Iraq, with the signing of an agreement in September 1960
- Founding members were five countries namely Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.
- **These countries were later joined:** Qatar (1961), Indonesia (1962), Libya (1962), the United Arab Emirates (1967), Algeria (1969), Nigeria (1971), Ecuador (1973), Gabon (1975), Angola (2007), Equatorial Guinea (2017) and Congo (2018).

24<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

### Equalisation Levy 2020

- Recently, India and USA agreed on a translational approach on Equalisation Levy 2020.

#### Key Points:

- India and United States joined 134 other members of the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework (including Austria, France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom) in reaching agreement on the Statement on a Two-Pillar Solution to Address the Tax Challenges Arising from the Digitalization of the Economy.
  - Pillar One, which is about reallocation of an additional share of profit to the market jurisdictions.
  - Pillar Two, consisting of minimum tax and subject to tax rules.
- The United States and Austria, France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom reached an agreement on a translational approach to existing Unilateral Measures while implementing Pillar 1.
- India and the United States have agreed that the same terms that apply under the October 21 Joint Statement shall apply between the United States and India with respect to India's charge of 2% equalisation levy on e-commerce supply of services and the United States' trade action regarding the said Equalisation Levy.

### About the Equalization Levy:

- Equalization Levy was introduced in India in 2016, with the intention of taxing the digital transactions i.e. the income accruing to foreign e-commerce companies from India.
- It is aimed at taxing business to business transactions.
- The following services are currently covered under the EL:
  - Online advertisement.
  - Any provision for digital advertising space or facilities/ service for the purpose of online advertisement.

### Exercise 'Dosti'

- The 15th edition of the biennial trilateral coast guard exercise 'Dosti' involving India, the Maldives and Sri Lanka is underway in the Maldives.

#### Key Points:

- 'Exercise Dosti' was first launched in 1991. 2021 marks 30 years since these exercises were first launched.
- **Trilateral exercise:** These exercises were bilateral, involving the Indian and the Maldives Coast Guards.
  - In 2012, however, Sri Lanka joined these exercises for the first time and since then, it has been a trilateral exercise.
- Indian Coast Guard vessels, the ICGS Vajra and ICGS Apoorva were involved in the exercise and the Sri Lanka Coast Guard, SLCGS Suraksha among others.
- It aims to further fortify the friendship, enhance mutual operational capability, and exercise interoperability and to build cooperation between the Coast Guards of Maldives, India and Sri Lanka.

### India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT)

- The 37th edition of India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) is being conducted in the Indian Ocean region.

**About CORPAT:**

- India-Indonesia CORPAT will witness the participation of Maritime Patrol Aircraft from both Nations. India and Indonesia have been carrying out Coordinated Patrols along the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) twice a year since 2002.
- It aims to keep the Indian Ocean Region safe and secure for commercial shipping, international trade and conduct of legitimate maritime activities.

**25<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021**

**ACROSS Scheme**

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the continuation of the umbrella scheme 'Atmosphere & Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems & Services (ACROSS)' for the next five years at an estimated cost of Rs 2,135 crore.

**About: ACROSS Scheme**

- The scheme pertains to the ministry's atmospheric science programmes and addresses different aspects of weather and climate services.
- Each of these aspects is incorporated as eight sub-schemes under the umbrella scheme "ACROSS" and is implemented in an integrated manner through the four agencies.
- **Eight sub-schemes under ACROSS:**
  - Financial support will be provided to implement eight sub-schemes under ACROSS throughout the next finance cycle from 2021-26.
  - The India Meteorological Department (IMD) will be vastly contributing in five sub-schemes, namely: commissioning of polarimetric doppler weather radars in the country, atmospheric observations network, study of monsoon and clouds, weather and climate services and upgradation of forecasting services in the next five years.

**39th PRAGATI Meeting**

- Recently, the Prime Minister of India chaired the 39th PRAGATI meeting. The Prime Minister also reviewed Poshan Abhiyaan.

**Key highlights:**

- Nine agenda items were taken for review including eight projects and one scheme. Among the eight projects are:
  - Three projects were from the Ministry of Railways.
  - Two projects each were from the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways and Ministry of Power.
  - One project was from the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.
- These eight projects are concerned to seven states viz., Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

**About PRAGATI**

- PRAGATI is an Information and Communications Technology( ICT) based multimodal platform aimed at addressing the common man's grievances and simultaneously monitoring and reviewing important programmes and projects of the Government of India as well as projects flagged by State Governments.
- Launched in 2015: Designed by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) team with the help of the National Informatics Center (NIC).
- This platform will fulfil three objectives: Grievance Redressal, Programme Implementation and Project Monitoring.

**Global Nutrition Report (GNR) 2021**

- India has made no progress on anaemia and childhood wasting according to the 2021 Global Nutrition Report (GNR, 2021).

**Key findings:**

- Globally, most countries are off track to meet five out of six global maternal, infant and young children nutrition (MIYCN) targets, on stunting, wasting, low birth weight, anaemia and childhood obesity.
  - They are also off track for meeting all diet-related non-communicable disease (NCD) targets, on salt intake, raised blood pressure, adult obesity and diabetes.

- The only countries on course to meet both raised blood pressure and diabetes targets are a few high-income Western countries.

### About the Global Nutrition Report

- The Global Nutrition Report was conceived following the first Nutrition for Growth Initiative Summit (N4G) in 2013 as a mechanism for tracking the commitments made by 100 stakeholders spanning governments, aid donors, civil society, the UN and businesses.
- It is the world's leading independent assessment of the state of global nutrition.
- It is data-led and produced each year to cast a light on progress and challenges.

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### Rani Gaidinliu

- Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs laid the foundation stone for the 'Rani Gaidinliu Tribal Freedom Fighters Museum' in Manipur's Tamenglong district.
- It would help in preserving and exhibiting artefacts related to the tribal freedom fighters those involved in different stages of the fight against the British colonial rule.

### About Rani Gaidinliu:

- She was born on January 26, 1915, in the present-day Tamenglong district of Manipur and died in 1993.
- She was the Naga spiritual and political leader who belonged to the Rongmei tribe (also known as Kabui).
- She led an armed uprising against the British in Manipur, Nagaland and Assam
- In 1927, at the age of 13, Gaidinliu, along with her cousin Haipou Jadonang, joined the Heraka movement, which aimed at the revival of the Naga tribal religion and establish self-rule of the Nagas (Naga Raj) ending the British rule.
- She passed away on February 17, 1993, at her native village Luangkao.

### NOTE:

Jawaharlal Nehru called her the "Daughter of the Hills" and gave her the title "Rani" or queen acknowledging her role in the struggle against the British.

### NITI Aayog released SDG Urban Index

- NITI Aayog released the inaugural SDG Urban Index and Dashboard 2021–22.

### Key Points:

- The index and dashboard are a result of the NITI Aayog-Germany's International Cooperation Agency (GIZ) and BMZ collaboration focused on driving SDG localization in our cities, under the umbrella of Indo-German Development Cooperation.
- It ranks 56 urban areas on 77 SDG indicators across 46 targets of the SDG framework.
- **Methodology:**
  - For each SDG, the urban areas are ranked on a scale of 0-100.
  - A score of 100 implies that the urban area has achieved the targets set for 2030; a score of 0 implies that it is the farthest from achieving the targets among the selected urban areas.
  - Urban areas have been classified as below based on their composite score:
    - **Aspirant:** 0–49
    - **Performer:** 50–64
    - **Front-Runner:** 65–99
    - **Achiever:** 100
- **Urban Areas Performance:**
  - Shimla tops the Index followed by Coimbatore and Chandigarh.

### NOTE:

Indo-German development cooperation is a solid pillar of the Indo-German strategic partnership. Both countries are equally committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); further, they want to tackle global challenges in the fields of climate and environment.

## PMC Bank and Unity SFB Merger Scheme

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released a draft scheme of amalgamation of fraud-hit Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative (PMC) Bank and Delhi-based Unity Small Finance Bank.

### Key Highlights:

- Unity SFB is a joint venture between Centrum Group and BharatPe. It commenced operations as a small finance bank (SFB). Unity SFB is being set up with capital of about Rs 1,100 crore as against a regulatory requirement of Rs 200 crore for setting up a small finance bank under the guidelines for on-tap licensing of small finance banks in the private sector.
- According to the draft scheme of amalgamation, following the amalgamation, depositors of PMC Bank will get their money back over a period of 3-10 years. According to the scheme, deposits of up to 5 lakh can be claimed by depositors over a period of three to 10 years.

### About Merger of banks:

- A situation in which two banks pool their assets and liabilities to become one bank.
- Because this can have a significant impact on the financial industry, the Federal Reserve subject's mergers involving bank holding companies to more intensive regulation.

## 'Bharat Gaurav' Scheme

- Recently, Indian Railways announced the introduction of theme-based, tourist circuit trains on the lines of the Ramayana Express named 'Bharat Gaurav' to showcase India's rich cultural heritage and history to the world.

### Key Points:

- Under the scheme, 190 tourist circuit trains are to be operated on lease by private players and state entities such as tourism departments and Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC).

- Private tour operators can now take trains on lease from the railways and run them on any circuit of their choice, with the freedom to decide routes, fares and quality of services.
- The parameters of the scheme:** The operator has to offer sightseeing, food, local transport (taxi etc), hotels at stopover places, onboard entertainment and such things. The arrangement can be for two to 10 years. Operators have to give a security deposit of Rs 1 crore per rake.
- The railways will set up special units in zones to facilitate and handhold the operators. Branding and advertisement are permitted inside and on the exterior of the trains.

27<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

## Gallantry Awards

- The President of India presented Gallantry Awards and Distinguished Service decorations in a defence investiture ceremony for the year 2021.
- Group Captain Abhinandan Varthaman was awarded Vir Chakra which is a wartime gallantry award.

### About Gallantry Award:

- Gallantry Award is presented to honour the acts of bravery and sacrifice of the officers/personnel of the Armed Forces, other lawfully constituted forces and civilians.
- The Ministry of Defence invites recommendations twice a year from the Armed Forces and Union Ministry of Home Affairs for gallantry awards.
- Gallantry Award classified into two Categories: Wartime Gallantry Awards & Peacetime Gallantry Awards:
  - Wartime Gallantry Awards:** Param Vir Chakra (PVC), Mahavir Chakra (MVC), Vir Chakra
  - Peacetime Gallantry Awards:** Ashok Chakra, Kirti Chakra, Shaurya Chakra



## Three Capitals Act

- The Andhra Pradesh government passed a Bill to repeal two laws that were cleared to set up three different state capitals.

### Key Points:

- On July 31 the state government notified the AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Act, 2020, and the AP Capital Region Development Authority (Repeal) Act, 2020.
- The government had earlier hinted A.P. could have three capitals:
  - Executive capital in Visakhapatnam
  - Legislative capital in Amaravati
  - Judiciary capital in Kurnool

### NOTE:

- Maharashtra has two capitals– Mumbai and Nagpur (which holds the winter session of the state assembly).
- Himachal Pradesh has capitals at Shimla and Dharamshala (winter).
- The former state of Jammu & Kashmir had Srinagar and Jammu (winter) as capitals.

## All-India Survey on Domestic Workers

- The first-ever All-India Survey on Domestic Workers was flagged off by the Ministry of Labour & Employment.
- As per the latest data on the e-Shram portal, around 8.8 per cent of registered 8.56 crore informal sector workers fall in the Domestic Workers category.

### Key Points:

- The survey is being carried out by the Labour Bureau.
- It is aimed at estimating the proportion of domestic workers at the national level and in the States, the proportion of domestic workers who live-in/live-out, engaged in informal employment and migrant/non-migrant, wages of such workers, and other socio-economic factors.

- The survey would also include details of the number of households with live-in/live-out domestic workers and the average number of workers engaged by various kinds of households.

### NOTE:

Unorganised sector is characterised by small and scattered units which are largely outside the control of the government. Around 80% of India's labour force is employed in the informal sector and the remaining 20% in the formal sector.

**28<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021**

## El Salvador's Bitcoin City

- El Salvador is planning to build an entire city based on the largest cryptocurrency Bitcoin.
- In September 2021, El Salvador became the first country in the world to adopt bitcoin as legal tender.

### Key Points:

- Bitcoin city will be laid out in a circle (like a coin) and there will be a plaza in the city centre that will be host to a huge Bitcoin symbol. There would be residential areas, malls, restaurants and a port in the Bitcoin city.
- The city would be funded with the issuance of a \$1 billion Bitcoin Bond.

### About Bitcoin Bonds:

- Bitcoin Bonds represent the start of a reformation of capital markets, built on Bitcoin and layer-2 technologies like the Liquid Network.
- Dividends can be distributed to investors instantly, with built-in cryptography to maintain confidentiality.
- Bonds can be traded 24/7 with other assets like stable coins, using protocols that help eliminate the need for trust.
- Dividends will be paid easily to bondholders using tools deployed on top of the Liquid network.

## INS Visakhapatnam

- Recently, INS Visakhapatnam was commissioned at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai.
- INS Visakhapatnam is designed at the Directorate of Naval Design, the Indian Navy's in-house organisation, and built by the state-owned Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, Mumbai.
- It is the first of the stealth guided-missile destroyers being indigenously constructed under Project 15B.
- The warship is equipped to fight under Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) warfare conditions.
- The ship is propelled by a powerful combined gas and gas (COGAG) propulsion plant, consisting of four reversible gas turbines, which enables it to achieve a speed of over 30 knots or approximately 55 km/hr.

### About Project 15B ships

- The Rs.35,000 crore Project 15B envisages the construction of four stealth guided-missile destroyers, with the remaining three to be commissioned between 2023 and 2025.
- These ships have been designed indigenously by the Directorate of Naval Design, New Delhi.
- Project 15B ships "feature cutting-edge advanced technology and are comparable to the best ships of similar class anywhere in the world".

## Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace,2021

- Pratham, a pioneering civil society organisation has been awarded the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize 2021.
- It is awarded for its pioneering work over more than a quarter-century in seeking to ensure that every child has access to quality education, for its innovative use of digital technology to deliver education, for its programmes to provide skills to young adults.

### Key Points:

- Pratham was set up in 1995 by Mrs Farida Lambay and Dr Madhav Chavan in Mumbai.
- Pratham began its work in slum areas by setting up community-based pre-schools and by offering remedial education to students who lagged behind in their classes.

### About Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace:

- The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development was instituted in 1986. It consists of a monetary award of Rs 25 lakh along with a citation.
- The award is given to individuals or organisations who work towards ensuring international peace and development, ensuring that scientific discoveries are used to further the scope of freedom and better humanity, and creating a new international economic order.

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## Neobanks

- With about 58.4% population underbanked in India, Neobanks have immense potential for growth in tier-II and- III rural segments of the countries per the "The Evolution of Neobanks in India" Report.
- Neobanks bridge the gap between the services that traditional banks offer and the evolving expectations of customers in the digital age.

### About Neobanks:

- A neobank is a kind of digital bank without any branches. Rather than being physically present at a specific location, neobanking is entirely online.
- Neobanks are financial institutions that give customers a cheaper alternative to traditional banks.
- They leverage technology and artificial intelligence to offer personalised services to customers while minimising operating costs.
- In India, these firms don't have a bank licence of their own but rely on bank partners to offer licensed services.
  - That's because the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) doesn't allow banks to be 100% digital yet.
  - The RBI remains unwavering in prioritising banks' physical presence, and has spoken about the need for digital banking service providers to have some physical presence as well.

## Deep Dive Training Program

- The National e-Governance Division under the Ministry of Electronics and IT is conducting a six-day Deep Dive Training program for Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) and frontline IT officials.

### Key Points:

- The Deep Dive Training program under the Cyber Surakshit Bharat initiative is aimed to prepare the CISOs and frontline IT officials to face challenges of cyber security and handle the cyber crises.
- This type of training empowers them to secure their organisations from cyber threats and for smooth delivery of e-Gov services and functioning of production units.
- It aims at creating awareness around cyber security and developing an empowered and strong cyber ecosystem in Government organisations in India.

## Project SWADESH

- DBT-National Brain Research Centre (DBT-NBRC) has recently developed the project SWADESH.

### Key Points:

- SWADESH is a unique brain initiative focusing on certified neuroimaging, neurochemical, neuropsychological data and analytics that are made accessible to researchers for managing brain disorders.
- SWADESH is the first large-scale multimodal neuroimaging database designed specifically for the Indian population with big-data architecture and analytics for various disease categories (Fig. 1) under one platform.
- SWADESH proposes a big-data architecture that manages and analyzes six modules, namely neurodegenerative [AD, mild cognitive impairment (MCI), and Parkinson's disease (PD)], neuropsychiatric (schizophrenia and bipolar disorder), neurodevelopmental (autism and epilepsy), COVID-19-related disorders, other disorders, and healthy subjects.

- SWADESH is supported by a JAVA-based workflow environment and Python.

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## Scorpene-class submarine INS Vela

- The fourth Scorpene class conventional submarine, INS Vela, was commissioned into the Navy. The Navy also issued the Request For Proposal for procurement of six advanced submarines under Project-75I.

### Key Points:

- Vela, being named after a type of Indian fish belonging to the stingray family, the crest depicts the fish swimming across the blue seas.
- The submarine's mascot is the Sub-ray which is an amalgamation of the submarine and the stingray which symbolises the metamorphosis of the submarine's character with the qualities of a stingray.

### About P-75I

- Six Scorpene submarines are being built under Project-75 by Mazagon Dock Limited (MDL), Mumbai, under technology transfer from Naval Group of France under a \$3.75 bn deal signed in October 2005.
- P-75I envisages indigenous construction of six modern conventional submarines with contemporary equipment, weapons and sensors including a Fuel-Cell based Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) system, advanced torpedoes, modern missiles and state-of-the-art countermeasure systems.

## National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)

- Recently, Niti Aayog has published the first-ever National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) of India.

## Key Findings

- Bihar has the highest proportion of people who are multidimensionally poor, followed by Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh.
- Kerala, Goa, and Sikkim have the lowest percentage of the population being multidimensionally poor.
- This baseline report of the national MPI measure is based on the reference period of 2015-16 of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS).
- Dadra and Nagar Haveli (27.36 per cent), Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh (12.58), Daman & Diu (6.82 per cent) and Chandigarh (5.97 per cent), have emerged as the poorest UTs in India.
- **Global Rank:** According to Global MPI 2021, India's rank is 66 out of 109 countries.

### NOTE:

- The National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is prepared by the Government think-tank NITI Aayog.
- Its objective is to measure poverty across its multiple dimensions and in effect complements existing poverty statistics based on per capita consumption expenditure.

## River Cities Alliance

- Recently, the Union Minister for Jal Shakti launched the River Cities Alliance.

### Key Points:

- It is a dedicated platform for river cities in India to ideate, discuss and exchange information for the sustainable management of urban rivers.
- This first of its kind of Alliance in the world symbolizes the successful partnership of the two Ministries i.e.
  - Ministry of Jal Shakti and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
  - The Alliance will focus on three broad themes- Networking, Capacity Building and Technical Support.
- **Secretariat:** It will be set up at the National Institute for Urban Affairs (NIUA), with NMCG's support.
- **Participating cities:** Dehradun, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Srinagar, Begusarai, Bhagalpur, Munger, Patna, Berhampore, Hooghly-Chinsurah, Howrah, Jangipur, Maheshtala, Rajmahal, Sahibganj, Ayodhya, Bijnor, Farrukhabad, Kanpur, Mathura-Vrindavan, Mirzapur, Prayagraj, Varanasi, Aurangabad, Chennai, Bhubaneswar, Hyderabad, Pune, Udaipur and Vijayawada.

## OMICRON New variant of concern

- The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the recently-discovered B.1.1.529 strain of COVID-19 to be a variant of concern and renamed it 'Omicron'.

### B.1.1.529 strain

- The variant was first reported to the WHO from South Africa on November 24.
- The epidemiological situation in South Africa has been characterized by three distinct peaks in reported cases, the latest of which was predominantly the Delta variant.
- In recent weeks, infections have increased steeply, coinciding with the detection of the B.1.1.529 variant.
- This variant has a large number of mutations, some of which are concerning.