



News Analysis (28 Aug, 2020)

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Sub-Classification of Reserved Classes

Why in News

A five-judge Bench of the **Supreme Court** held that States can sub-classify the list of Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBCs) to provide preferential treatment to the **“weakest out of the weak”**.

Key Points

- The decision **overruled** a previous 2005 decision in **E V Chinniah v State of Andhra Pradesh and Others**, also by a five-judge Bench, that **state governments had no power to create sub-categories of SCs** for the purpose of reservation.
- Since a Bench of equal strength cannot overrule a previous decision, the court also **referred it to a 7-judge Bench**.
- The judgment was on the constitutional validity of Section 4(5) of the **Punjab Scheduled Caste and Backward Classes (Reservation in Services) Act, 2006**.

The act allows 50% of the reserved Scheduled Castes seats in the State to be allotted to Balmikis and Mazhabi Sikhs.

- **Judgment:**
 - **Reservation system** has created **inequalities within the reserved castes** itself. There is a **“caste struggle”** within the reserved class as benefits of reservation are being usurped by a few.
 - Reservation **was not contemplated for all the time** by the framers of the Constitution.

Article 334 of the Constitution had originally required the reservation of **elected seats** to cease in **1960**, but it was extended by various amendments. The latest one being the 104th Amendment extending it to 2030.

- If sub-classification is denied, it would **defeat the right to equality** by treating unequal as equal.
 - Article 14** guarantees everyone “**equality before law**” and “**equal protection of law**”. Equal protection of the laws means that amongst equals the law should be equal and treating unequals as equals will be violation of law.
- Among the SCs, there are some that remain grossly under-represented despite reservation in comparison to other SCs. This **inequality within the Scheduled Castes** is underlined in several reports, and special quotas have been framed to address it.
 - **Justice Ramachandra Raju Commission, 1997** recommended subdividing the SCs into four groups and apportioning reservations separately for each. It also recommended that **Creamy layer of Scheduled Castes be excluded** from receiving any reservation benefits in public appointments and admission to educational institutions.
 - In Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Bihar, **special quotas** were introduced for the **most vulnerable Dalits**. In 2007, Bihar set up the **Mahadalit Commission** to identify the castes within SCs that were left behind. In Tamil Nadu, a 3% quota within the SC quota is accorded to the **Arundhatiyar caste**.
- **States have the competence** to grant reservation benefits to SCs and STs in terms of Articles 15(4) and 16(4), and Articles 341(1) and 342(1).
 - **Article 16 (4)** provides that the State can make any provision for the reservation of **appointments or posts and in matters of promotion** in favour of any backward class of citizens who, in the opinion of the state, are not adequately represented in the services under the State.
 - **Article 15(4)** empowers the state to **create special arrangements** for promoting the interests and welfare of socially and educationally backward classes of the society such as SC and STs.
 - As per the Articles **341(1) and 342(1)**, the President of India, after consultation with the Governor, may specify, the castes, races, tribes or parts of groups within castes or races, which shall be deemed to be Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes.

Background

- In the **Indra Sawhney v. Union of India 1992** case, the Supreme Court held that it would be **perfectly legal for the state to categorise backward classes as backward and more backward**.

It also upheld the concept of ‘creamy layer’ within OBC to those who have overcome their backwardness. However, the concept of creamy layer in SCs and STs has been in debate since then.

- In the **E V Chinnaiah v State of Andhra Pradesh and Others 2005** case, the Supreme Court ruled that only the **President has the power to notify the inclusion or exclusion of a caste** as a Scheduled Caste, and states cannot tinker with the list.
- In the **M.Nagaraj & Others vs Union Of India, 2006** case, the Supreme Court said that the government **had to collect quantifiable data** showing backwardness of the class and inadequacy of representation of that class in public employment.
- However, in **Jarnail Singh vs Lachmi Narain Gupta, 2018** Supreme Court held that the government **need not collect quantifiable data** to demonstrate backwardness of public employees belonging to the SC/STs to provide reservations for them in **promotions**.

It also observed that certain caste groups or subgroups have “**come out of untouchability or backwardness** by virtue of belonging to the creamy layer”.

- Recently, the Supreme Court has ruled that reservation in the matter of promotions in public posts is **not a fundamental right**, and a state cannot be compelled to offer the quota if it chooses not to.

Way Forward

Dr B.R. Ambedkar described the Indian society as a gradation of castes forming an **ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt**. As is the nature of any hierarchical structure, no two castes are equal. The ones at the bottom of the ladder, those who have been most severely ostracised and subjugated, have not yet received the benefits of reservations as a tool to ensure their representation in society and government. This judgement will help **trickle down the benefits of reservation to the most needy** and establishment of an equal society.

Source: IE

GST Council Meet

Why in News

Recently, the 41st **Goods and Services Tax (GST) council** meeting was held to discuss the issue of compensating states on account of revenue loss due to **implementation of GST** and fall in **cess** collections.

GST Council

- It is a **constitutional body (Article 279A)** for making recommendations to the Union and State Government on issues related to Goods and Services Tax.
- The GST Council is chaired by the **Union Finance Minister** and other members are the Union State Minister of Revenue or Finance and Ministers in-charge of Finance or Taxation of all the States.

- It is considered as a **federal body** where both the centre and the states get due representation.

Key Points

- **Shortfall in GST and Cess Collection:**
 - The economic slowdown had reduced both GST and cess collections in FY 2019-20, resulting in a 40% gap (shortfall) between the compensation paid and cess collected. The central government paid over Rs.1.65 lakh crore in 2019-20 as GST compensation by utilising the excess cess amount collected during 2017-18 and 2018-19.
 - The state's GST revenue gap in 2020-21 is expected to be about Rs. 3 lakh crore, while cess collections are only projected to reach Rs. 65,000 crore, leaving a shortfall of Rs. 2.35 lakh crore.
- **Distinction in Shortfall:**
 - Only **Rs. 97,000 crore out of Rs. 2.35 lakh crore of the shortfall is due to GST implementation itself**, while the **rest is due to the impact of Covid-19**. The Centre **distinguished the GST shortfall** into two types:
 - Due to GST implementation itself.
 - Caused by the impact of Covid-19.
 - The Finance Minister termed the fall of GST revenue due to Covid-19 as **an act of God**. However, the **GST Compensation Act, 2017** did not foresee an act of God.
 - The GST Compensation Act, 2017 **guaranteed states that they would be compensated for any loss of revenue** in the first five years of GST implementation, until 2022, using a cess levied on **sin and luxury goods**.
 - **Sin goods** are goods which are considered harmful to society and individuals.
 - **Example of sin goods:** Alcohol and Tobacco, Candies, Drugs, Soft drinks, Fast foods, etc.
- **Offers Made by the Centre:**
 - It offered **two options** for borrowing by states to meet the shortfall:
 - A special window could be provided, in consultation with the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, so that the states can get Rs. 97,000 crore at a reasonable rate of interest, the amount can be repaid after five years (of GST implementation) ending 2022 from cess collection.
 - Another option is that this entire gap of Rs. 2.35 lakh crore can be met by the borrowing by the states in consultation with RBI.
 - The states have been given seven days to decide which option they want.
 - Also, states choosing the first option would **get 0.5% relaxation** in states' borrowing limits under the **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003**.
 - The borrowing plan is valid for FY 2020-21 only and the GST Council would review the revenue position next fiscal to decide on payments for 2021-22.

Way Forward

The GST council can consider increasing the cess or including more products under the cess or compensation levy can be extended beyond five years, to meet this GST shortfall.

Source: TH

World Urdu Conference 2020

Why in News

The World Urdu Conference 2020 is being organised by the **National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL)** from 27th-28th August 2020.

Key Points

- **Meaning:** Literally, the word Urdu (originally Turkish) means the **royal camp**.
- **Historical Background:**
 - Urdu had developed and flourished in Delhi during the period of '**Delhi Sultanate**' from 12th to 16th century and then during the period of '**Mughal Empire**' in Delhi from 16th century to 19th century when several court poets used this language in their great poetry and writings.
 - Its first major folk poet **Amir Khusrau** (1253-1325), composed dohas (couplets) and riddles in the newly-formed speech, then called **Hindavi**.
 - **Spread in South India:** When Delhi Sultanate and then Mughal Empire spread in the Deccan, Urdu spread in southern states.
 - The language derived even local words from the local languages of those states and developed as a '**Dakhni**' language which was a bit distinctive of Urdu language in the North.
 - The **divide between Urdu and Hindi** occurred under the **colonial impact**. Hindi and Urdu got split along religious lines with Hindi in Nagari script becoming identified with Hindus, and Urdu in Persian script identified with Muslims.
- **Contemporary Context:** Urdu is a major language of South Asia.
 - It is spoken in countries including **India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal**.
 - It has become the **culture language and lingua franca** of the **South Asian Muslim diaspora** outside the sub-continent, especially in the Gulf and the Middle East, Western Europe, Scandinavia, USA and Canada.
- **Relation with Hindi:**
 - Both Urdu and Hindi belong to the new **Indo-Aryan group** sharing the **same Indic base**.
 - Urdu and Hindi taken together form the **third largest speech community** in the world today.

- **Status in India:**
 - **Scheduled Language:** Urdu is one of the languages mentioned in the **8th Schedule** to the Constitution.
 - The **Constitutional provisions** relating to the 8th Schedule are articles **344(1)** and **351**.
 - Presently, 8th Schedule consists of the 22 languages namely (1) Assamese, (2) Bengali, (3) Gujarati, (4) Hindi, (5) Kannada, (6) Kashmiri, (7) Konkani, (8) Malayalam, (9) Manipuri, (10) Marathi, (11) Nepali, (12) Oriya, (13) Punjabi, (14) Sanskrit, (15) Sindhi, (16) Tamil, (17) Telugu, (18) Urdu (19) Bodo, (20) Santhali, (21) Maithili and (22) Dogri.
 - **Official Language of Different States:** It is one of the official languages in states like Kashmir, Telangana, UP, Bihar, New Delhi and West Bengal.
 - **Composite Culture:** Urdu is a language of **composite culture and interfaith bonds in India**.
 - Hindu-Muslim composite culture is a constructed concept of the **20th century** that describes **amalgams of Hindu and Islamic elements** in South Asian culture.
 - **Article 51A(f)** of the Constitution declares a solemn **fundamental duty** of every citizen to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture.
 - **Speaker Base:** The Urdu speakers in India number almost **44 million**. The largest numbers are in the state of **Uttar Pradesh**, followed by **Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka**.
 - These states together account for **85%** of the national Urdu-speaking population.
 - **Delhi** is the major centre of Urdu literature and publishing.

National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language

- NCPUL has become the **biggest Urdu networking hub** in the world.
- The National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language started functioning as an **autonomous body in 1996**. It comes under the **Ministry of Education**.
- It is the National **Nodal Agency** for Promotion of Urdu.
- NCPUL has also been assigned the **responsibility of promotion of Arabic and Persian**.
- **Major Objectives:**
 - To take action for making available in Urdu language, the knowledge of **scientific and technological development** as well as **knowledge of ideas evolved in the modern context**.
 - To **advise the Government** on issues connected with Urdu language as may be referred to it.

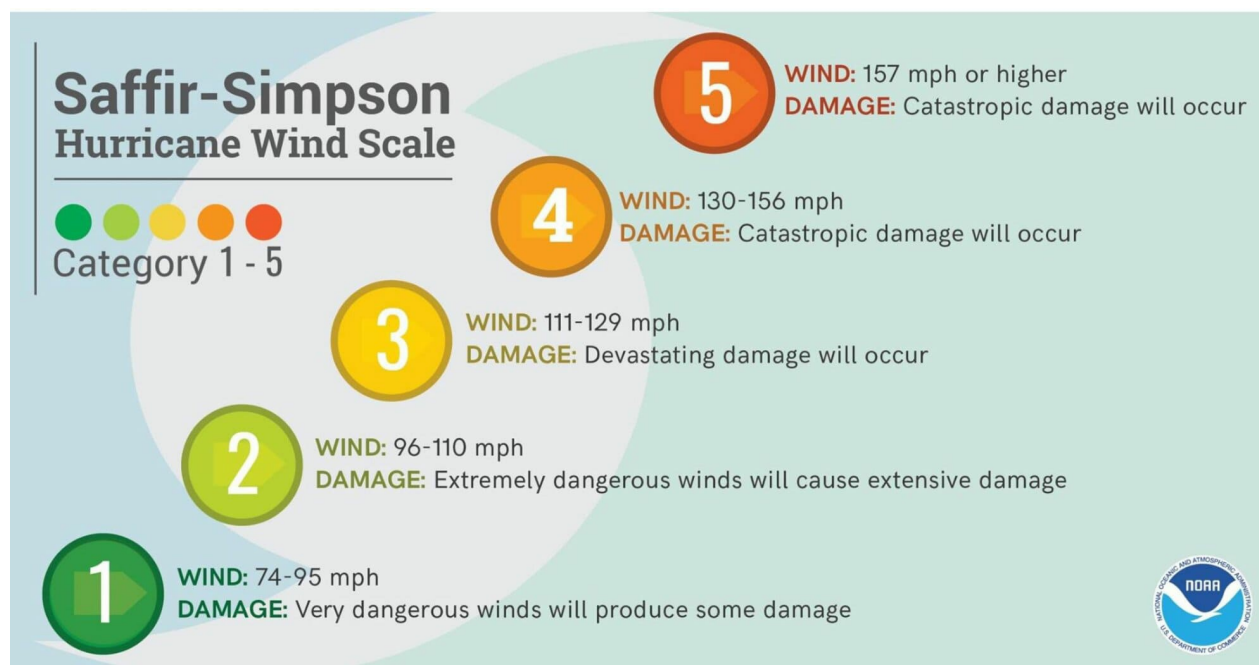
Source PIB

Why in News

Hurricane Laura, has made landfall in southwestern Louisiana (South Central United States) with wind speeds reaching up to 250 km (about 150 miles) an hour.

Key Points

- **Description:** Hurricane Laura is a **Category 4 storm**.
A Category 4 storm has wind speeds between 130-156 mph and can uproot trees and bring down power lines.
- **The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale:** Hurricanes are categorized on the **Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale**, which rates them on a scale of 1 to 5 based on wind speed.
Hurricanes that reach category **three or higher** are classified as **major hurricanes**.
It is because of their potential to cause devastating damage to property and life.



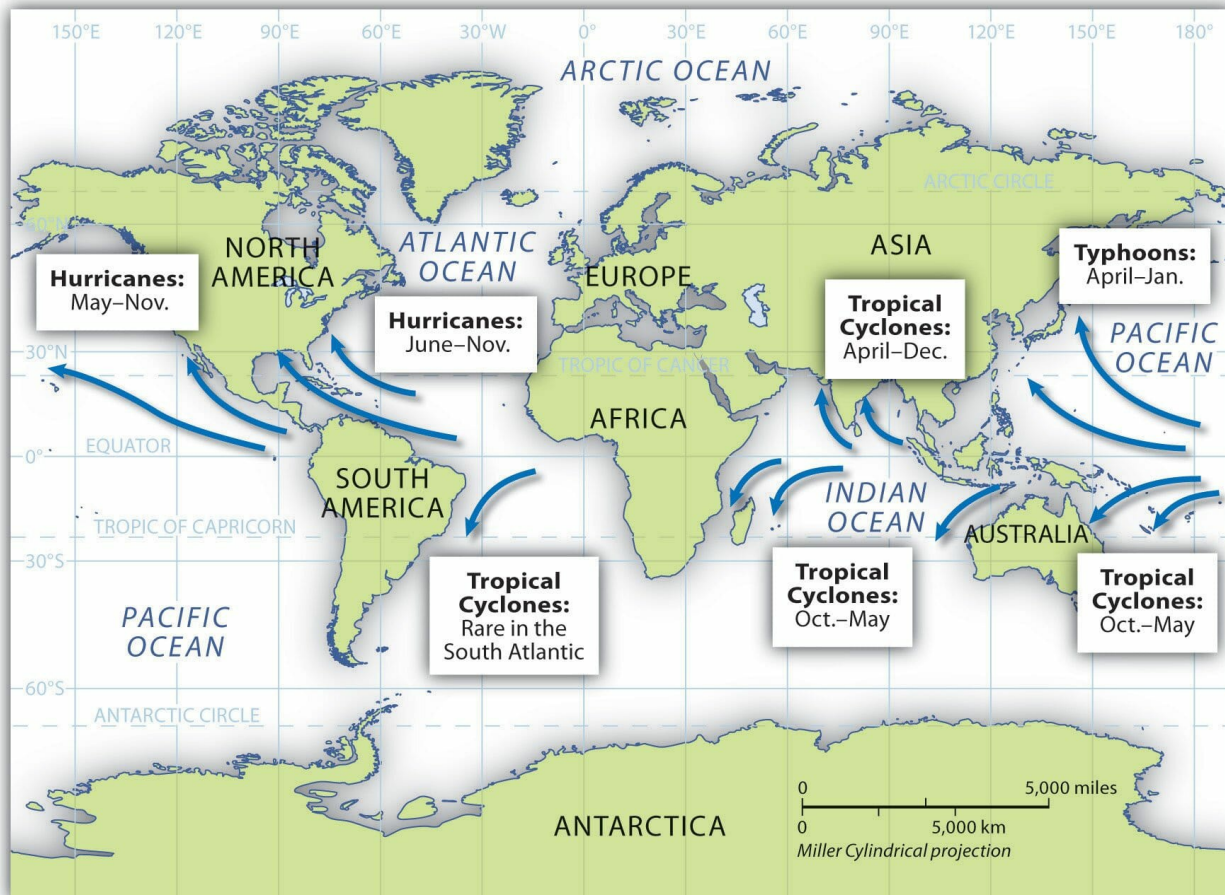
- **Timings of Hurricane:**
Two seasons of hurricanes are observed in the Atlantic and Pacific regions:
 - The **Atlantic hurricane season** runs from 1st June to 30th November .
 - The **Eastern Pacific hurricane season** runs from 15th May to 30th November.

Hurricane Hanna: It was the last storm which made landfall on the Texan coast reaching wind speeds of up to 90 mph, and was listed as a **Category 1** storm.
It was the **first** hurricane of the 2020 **Atlantic hurricane season**.

- **Hurricane:**

- **Origin:** Tropical cyclones or hurricanes use **warm, moist air as fuel**, and therefore **form over warm Equatorial water**.
- **Mechanism:**
 - **Low-Pressure Creation:** When the **warm, moist air rises upward** from the surface of the ocean, it creates an area of **low air pressure below**.
 - When this happens, the **air from the surrounding areas rushes** to fill this place, eventually rising when it becomes warm and moist too.
 - An **eye** forms in the centre. It is the calmest part of the cyclone. Before the wind reaches the centre it gets warmed up and rises upwards.
 - When the **warm air rises and cools off**, the moisture forms clouds. This system of clouds and winds continues to grow and spin.
 - This disturbance is fuelled by the ocean's heat and the water that evaporates from its surface.
 - Such storm systems rotate faster and faster.
 - Storms that form towards the north of the equator rotate **counterclockwise**, while those that form to the **south spin clockwise because** of the rotation of the Earth.

Worldwide Terminology of Tropical Cyclones:



Depending on where they occur, hurricanes may be called typhoons or cyclones. They are given many names in different regions of the world:

- **Typhoons:** tropical cyclones are known as Typhoons in the China Sea and Pacific Ocean.
- **Hurricanes:** In the West Indian islands in the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean.
- **Tornados:** In the Guinea lands of West Africa and southern USA.
- **Willy-willies:** In north-western Australia and
- **Tropical Cyclones:** In the Indian Ocean Region.

Source IE

Controlling Dengue Using Bacteria

Why in News

Researchers from the **World Mosquito Program** have used **mosquitoes infected with Wolbachia bacteria** to successfully control dengue in Yogyakarta city of **Indonesia**.

The World Mosquito Program is an Australia-based not-for-profit initiative that exists to protect the global community from mosquito-borne diseases.

Wolbachia

- Wolbachia are natural bacteria present in up to 60% of insect species, including some mosquitoes.
- However, Wolbachia is **not** usually found in the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, the primary species responsible for transmitting human viruses such as Zika, dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever.
- Wolbachia is **safe** for humans, animals and the environment.

Key Points

- **About:** The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, that spreads **Dengue** and other diseases such as **chikungunya, Zika** and **yellow fever** cannot do so when they are artificially infected with a bacterium, Wolbachia.

The bacteria Wolbachia “**inhibits**” **viral infection**, that is, even if people encounter mosquito bite, they will not be infected. This happens because bacteria does not allow the virus to **replicate** in the mosquito thereby minimising its number within the mosquito.

- **Method:** The scientists **infected some mosquitoes with Wolbachia** and then **released** these in the city where they **bred with local mosquitoes**, until nearly all mosquitoes in the area were carrying Wolbachia bacteria. This is called the **Population Replacement Strategy**.

- **Results:** At the end of 27 months, the researchers found that the **incidence of dengue was 77% lower** in areas where Wolbachia-infected mosquitoes had been released, as compared to areas without such deployments.
This method does not only block Dengue Virus but also **many other viruses** present in mosquitoes.
- **Mass Production:** A French company InnoVaFeed, which produces insects to feed livestock, is partnering with WMP to develop the first industrial-level production of Dengue- controlling mosquitoes.
- **Other Developments:** **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** also has been working on a similar project developing a strain of *Aedes aegypti* containing Wolbachia, known as **Puducherry Strain**.
The strain was developed at the **Vector Control Research Centre (VCRC)**, Puducherry in collaboration with Monash University in Australia.

Dengue

- Dengue is a **mosquito-borne tropical disease** caused by the **dengue virus** (Genus *Flavivirus*), transmitted by several species of mosquito within the genus *Aedes*, principally *Aedes aegypti*.
- Symptoms include fever, headache, muscle and joint pains, and a characteristic skin rash.
- There are four strains from Type I-IV, of which **Type-II and IV** are considered more severe.
- Incidence of dengue has **grown dramatically** around the world in recent decades, with a vast majority of cases **under-reported**, according to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**.
- WHO estimates 39 crore dengue virus infections per year, of which 9.6 crore show symptoms.
- India registered over 1 lakh dengue cases in 2018 and over 1.5 lakh cases in 2019, according to the **National Vector-Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP)**.
NVBDCP is the central nodal agency for prevention and control of six vector borne diseases i.e. Malaria, Dengue, Lymphatic Filariasis, Kala-azar, Japanese Encephalitis and Chikungunya in India. It works under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- The dengue vaccine **CYD-TDV** or **Dengvaxia** was approved by the **US Food & Drug Administration** in **2019**, the first dengue vaccine to get the regulatory nod in the US.
Dengvaxia is basically a **live, attenuated dengue virus** which has to be administered in people of ages 9 to 16 who have laboratory-confirmed previous dengue infection and who live in **endemic areas**.

Source: IE

NDC-Transport Initiative for Asia

Why in News

Recently, the NITI Aayog launched the “**India Component**” of the **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)–Transport Initiative for Asia (TIA)**.

Key Points

- **NDC–TIA:**
 - It is a **regional initiative that aims** to promote a comprehensive approach to decarbonize transport in **India, Vietnam, and China**.
 - In each of the partner countries, the NDC-TIA supports in making their sectoral contributions to the achievement of the **NDCs of the Paris Agreement**.
 - The NDC-TIA programme has a duration of 4 years.
- **Implementation:**
 - It is a **joint programme**, supported by the **International Climate Initiative (IKI)** of the German Ministry for the Environment, **Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU)**.
 - It is **implemented by a consortium of seven organisations**.
 - The **India component** is implemented by six consortium organisations. On behalf of the Government of India, NITI Aayog, is the implementing partner.
- **Focus:** The NDC–TIA India Component will focus on:
 - Strengthening GreenHouse Gas (GHG) and transport modelling capacities.
 - Providing technical support on GHG emission reduction measures.
 - Financing climate actions in transport.
 - Offering policy recommendations on electric vehicle (EV) demand and supply policies etc.
- **Benefit:**
 - The programme will help to **promote electric mobility** in India.
 - It will also support the development of policies and regulations to **promote electric vehicle charging infrastructure**.
- **India’s Transport Sector:**
 - India has the **world’s second-largest road network**, which contributes to maximum Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions through all means of transportation.
 - With increasing urbanisation, the fleet size i.e. the **number of sales of vehicles is increasing rapidly**. It is projected that the **total number of vehicles will be doubled by 2030**.
 - Therefore, the transition to a decarbonisation path for the transport sector in India is essential to achieving the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement for 2050.

Source: PIB

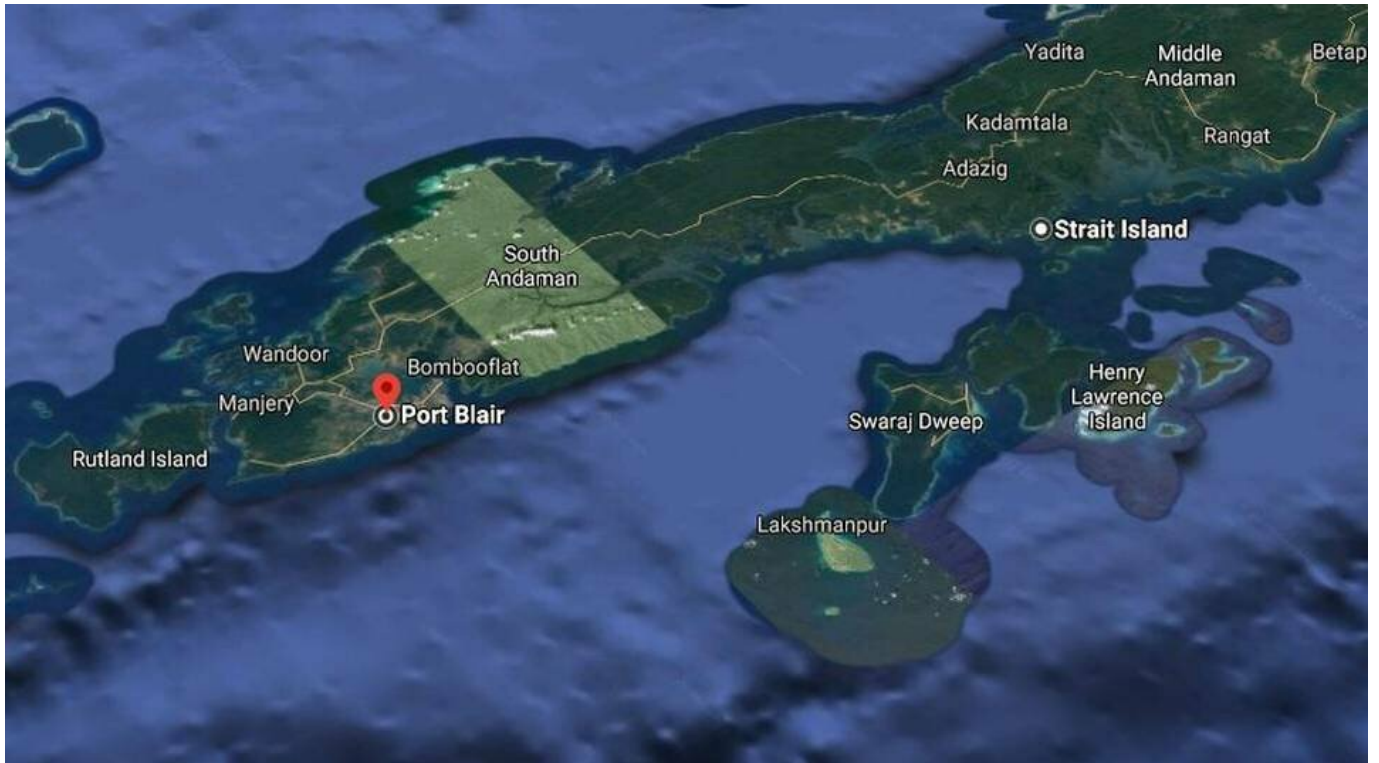
Indigenous People of Andaman and Nicobar

Why in News

The report of **Covid-19** cases among the members of the **Great Andamanese** tribe is a matter of concern as the total population of the tribe is already low.

Key Points

- **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG): Great Andamanese are one of five PVTGs** that reside in **Andamans archipelago**. The other four are: **Jarwas, Onges, Shompens** and **North Sentinelese**.
 - **Shompen** is the only PVTG in the region with **Mongoloid** features. The **other PVTGs** have **negroid** features. Some of them interact with '**Great Nicobarese**' - a **Scheduled Tribe**.
 - The **population of Andaman and Nicobar Islands' primitive tribes has rapidly declined** over the years. The **epidemics** and **crippling health crises** of the past have been seen to disproportionately impact these indigenous tribal groups.
 - **75 tribal groups** have been **categorised by the Ministry of Home Affairs** as PVTGs. The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** implements the **Scheme of 'Development of PVTGs'** exclusively for them.
 - **Article 366 (25)** of the Constitution provides a process to define **Scheduled Tribes**.
- **Great Andamanese Tribe:**
 - The tribe is based in '**Strait Island**' of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
 - The members speak **Jeru dialect** among themselves and their **number stands at 51** as per the last study carried out by Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti in 2012.
 - More than 5,000 Great Andamanese lived in the Islands before British settlers arrived in the 19th century.
 - However, hundreds were killed in conflict as they defended their territories from British invasion, and thousands more were wiped out in epidemics of **measles**, influenza and syphilis (a bacterial infection).



Source: TH

Amnesty International

Why in News

Amnesty International (AI) India has **demande**d an independent investigation into all allegations of human rights violations by the police during the **north-east Delhi riots**.

- On 23rd February 2020, riots broke out in Northeast Delhi **between Anti-Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019** and pro-CAA protestors. The violence took a communal turn and led to deaths, injuries and destruction of properties.
- Earlier, AI put forward its views on issues in **J&K** and the role of **Foreigners Tribunals** in Assam.

Key Points

- Amnesty International (AI) is an **international Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)** founded in London (UK) in 1961.
- It seeks to **publicise violations by governments** and other entities **of rights recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)**, especially freedom of speech and of conscience and the right against torture.
- In 1977, it was awarded the **Nobel Prize for Peace**.
- **AI India** is a part of the global human rights movement spearheaded by Amnesty International. It has its **registered office in Bangalore** (Karnataka).

Source: TH
