News Analysis (07 Jun, 2021)

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Performance Grading Index (PGI)

Why in News

The Union Education Minister has approved the release of **Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2019-20** for States and Union Territories.
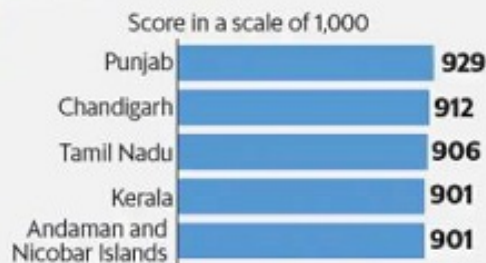
> The PGI is a **tool to provide insights on the status of school education in States and UTs** including key levers that drive their performance and critical areas for improvement.
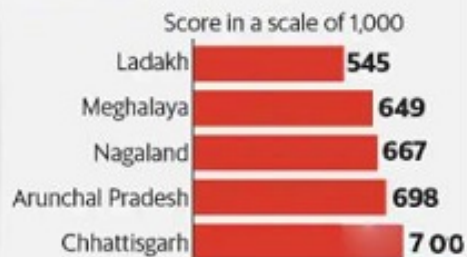

Improved performance

Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Puducherry, Punjab and Tamil Nadu have improved overall score in the performance grading index by 10%.

Score of states in school performance index

Top 5 states/UTs	
Score in a scale of 1,000	
Punjab	929
Chandigarh	912
Tamil Nadu	906
Kerala	901
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	901

Bottom 5 states/UTs	
Score in a scale of 1,000	
Ladakh	545
Meghalaya	649
Nagaland	667
Arunchal Pradesh	698
Chhattisgarh	700

Key Points

- **About the Performance Grading Index (PGI):**
  - **Background:** The PGI for States and Union Territories was **first published in 2019** with reference year 2017-18.
    The **PGI : States/UTs for 2019-20 is the third publication** in this series.
  - **Objectives:**
    - The PGI exercise envisages that the index would propel States and UTs towards **undertaking multi-pronged interventions** that will bring about the much-desired optimal education outcomes.
    - The PGI helps the States/UTs to **pinpoint the gaps** and accordingly prioritise areas for intervention to ensure that the school education system is robust at every level.
  - **Implementing Agency:**
    It is initiated by the **Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL).**
  - **Source of Information:**
    The information on the indicators are drawn from data available with the DoSEL from the **Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE)**, **National Achievement Survey (NAS) of NCERT, Mid Day Meal website, Public Financial Management System (PFMS)** and the information uploaded by the States and UTs on the **Shagun portal** of DoSEL.
  - **Methodology:**
    - The PGI is structured **in two categories**, namely, **Outcomes and Governance & Management** and comprises **70 indicators** in aggregate with a total weightage of 1000.
    - **Domains** under categories include: **Access, Infrastructure & Facilities, Equity, Governance process.**
- **Important Findings of the PGI 2019-20:**
  - **State-wise Performance:**
    - Shows that 33 **States and UTs have improved their PGI scores** in 2019-20 compared to the previous year.
    - **Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Puducherry, Punjab and Tamil Nadu have improved** their overall PGI scores by 10%.
  - **Inter-state Differential:**
    On a maximum possible of 1000 points, the range between the States and UTs with the highest and the lowest score is **more than 380 points** in the year 2019-20.

- **Domain-wise Performance:**
    - **Access: Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep and Punjab** have shown improvement of 10% or more in the 'Access' domain.
    - **Infrastructure and Facilities:** Thirteen states and UTs have shown improvement by 10% or more in 'Infrastructure and Facilities' while **Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Odisha** have improved their scores in the domain by 20% or more.
    - **Equity:** In 'Equity', **Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Odisha** have shown an improvement of more than 10%.
    - **Governance Process:** 19 states have shown improvement by 10% or more. **Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Punjab, Rajasthan and West Bengal** have shown improvement by at least 20%.

Way Forward

- A reliable, timely and participative information system coupled with a robust and efficient data analytics framework is the key to successful implementation of any Government programme.
- In the arena of School Education & Literacy, guided by the enabling legislative framework of the **Right to Education**, the **National Education Policy 2020** and visionary **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, Government Schemes like **Samagra Shiksha (SS)**, Mid-Day Meal (MDM) and similar such schemes by the States would deliver the desired result if they are monitored effectively.
- The framework of a real time data availability system (namely, UDISE+, Shagun, etc.) and an objective and holistic performance evaluation framework provided through the PGI would provide the right combination for effective implementation of policy in the School Education sector.
- A performance-based grant would provide the required incentive to the States and UTs to ensure their continuous and focused attention to this sector, which is crucial for overall growth and development of the country.

Source: PIB

US Suspends Retaliatory Tariffs on India

Why in News

Recently, the US **suspended imposition of retaliatory tariffs** against six countries, including India, that had begun imposing **digital services tax** on companies such as Google and Facebook.

Other than India, the countries slapped with this tariff proposal are **Austria, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.**

Digital Services Taxes

- **DSTs** are the **adopted taxes on revenues that certain companies generate from providing certain digital services.** E.g. digital multinationals like Google, Amazon and Apple etc.
- The **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)** is currently hosting **negotiations with over 130 countries that aim to adapt the international tax system.** One goal is to address the tax challenges of the digitalization of the economy.
    - Some experts argue that a **tax policy designed to target a single sector or activity is likely to be unfair** and have complex consequences.
    - Further, the **digital economy cannot be easily separated out from the rest of the global economy.**

Key Points

- **Background:**
    Tariffs were imposed after the office of the **United States Trade Representative (USTR)** noted that the **Digital services taxes adopted by India, Italy and Turkey discriminate against US companies** and are inconsistent with international tax principles.

    > **Under Section 301** of the **Trade Act of 1974,** the **USTR enjoys a range of responsibilities and authority to investigate and take action** to enforce US national interests under trade agreements and respond to certain foreign trade practices.

- **Reason for Suspension:**
  - **Multilateral Solution:**
    - To **allow time for ongoing international tax negotiations** to continue. The US is **seeking a multilateral solution** while maintaining the option of imposing tariffs under **Section 301** if warranted in the future.
  - **Damage to Global Economy:**
    - The six countries potentially impacted are passing through a weak post-**Covid-19** recovery and **opening a new trade war front could be damaging** not only to them, but also to the broader global economy.
    - The **combination of depressed economic activity** owing to the effects of the **pandemic** and tectonic **shifts in global supply chains** engendered by the **US' trade war** with China has **already left many economies in a weakened condition.**
  - **Change in Administration:**
    - Under the previous US government (Trump) USTR **was used to promote what his administration considered to be free, fair and reciprocal trade,** specifically to close the gap or **balance of trade** between the US and foreign governments.
    - However, the new administration (Biden) appears to be **seeking a middle path of waving the stick of the USTR** while **allowing some space for continued tax negotiations with the nations concerned.**
- **Impact on India:**
  - **Loss of Revenue:**
    - The **tax levied by the Finance Bill, 2021, could yield approximately USD 55 million annually.**
    - Negotiations with the US that may result in the scaling back of this tax would **imply that a part of this revenue would be lost to the exchequer,** depending on the final rate agreed.
  - **Impact on Exports:**
    - Close to **USD 118 million of India's exports** to the US would be subject to the **tariff proposed by the USTR, impacting 26 categories of goods such as:**
      - Basmati rice, cigarette paper, cultured pearls, semi-precious stones, certain gold and silver jewellery items and specific types of furniture products.
  - **Growth Prospects:**
    - Any escalation matrix of retaliatory taxation with the US **would damage its growth prospects at a crucial point in its laborious recovery.**
    - However, India will also not be able to **simply abandon its articulated intent to tax global tech firms,** which have generally enjoyed lowtax operations across numerous jurisdictions.

India's Tax on Digital Companies

- The government had moved an **amendment in the Finance Bill 2020-21 imposing a 2% digital service tax (DST)** on trade and services by non-resident e-commerce **operators with a turnover of over Rs. 2 crore.**
  - This effectively expanded the scope of equalisation levy that, till last year, only applied to digital advertising services.
  - Earlier, the **equalisation levy (at 6%) was introduced in 2016 and imposed on the revenues generated on business-to-business** digital advertisements and allied services of the resident service provider.
- The new levy **came into effect from 1ˢᵗ April 2020.** E-commerce operators are obligated to pay the tax at the end of each quarter.
- The idea is to **tax payments made to offshore entities which do not have a physical presence** here and therefore the income tax department cannot subject such income earned from India to tax.

Way Forward

- As India is racing towards becoming a digital giant, the 2% DST should be negotiated to avoid any hurdles in its implementation. **India should consider its options carefully at this juncture.**
- Further, there needs to be **international consensus on taxation on a digital economy.**

Source:TH

Chemical Weapons Convention

Why in News

Recently, the **Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)** informed the **United Nations (UN)** that in **17 cases chemical weapons were likely or definitely used by Syria.**

OPCW was formed under the **Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)** 1997.

Key Points

- **Chemical Weapons:**
  - A Chemical Weapon is **a chemical used to cause intentional death** or harm through its toxic properties.
  - **Munitions, devices and other equipment** specifically designed to weaponize toxic chemicals also fall under the definition of chemical weapons.

- **Chemical Weapons Convention:**
  - **About:**
    - It is a **multilateral treaty banning chemical weapons** and requiring their destruction within the stipulated time.
    - Negotiations for the CWC began in 1980 at the **United Nations Conference on Disarmament.**
    - The convention was **drafted in September 1992** and **opened for signature in January 1993.** It became **effective from April 1997.**
    - It makes it **mandatory to destroy old and abandoned chemical weapons.**
    - Members should also declare the **riot-control agents** (sometimes referred to as 'tear gas') **in possession** of them.
  - **Members:**
    - It has **192 state parties and 165 signatories.**
    - **India** signed the treaty in **January 1993.**
  - **Convention Prohibits:**
    - The development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, or retention of chemical weapons.
    - Transferring of chemical weapons.
    - Using chemical weapons.
    - Assisting other States to indulge in activities that are prohibited by the CWC.
    - Using riot-control devices as 'warfare methods'.

- **Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons:**
  - **About:**
    - It is an **international organization** established by the CWC in 1997 to implement and enforce the terms of the CWC.
    - By the **2001 Relationship Agreement** between the **OPCW and the UN**, the OPCW reports on its inspections and other activities to the UN through the office of the Secretary General.
    - The OPCW was awarded the <u>**Nobel Peace Prize**</u> in 2013.
  - **Headquarters:**
    - **Hague, Netherlands.**
  - **Functions:**
    - It is **authorized to perform inspections** to verify that signatory states are complying with the convention.
      - This **includes a commitment to grant inspectors** full access to chemical weapons sites.
    - It also **performs testing of sites and victims** of suspected chemical weapons attacks.
    - It also **provides for assistance to and protection of States attacked or threatened with chemical weapons**, cooperation in the peaceful use of chemicals.
- **Indian Initiative:**
  - The **Chemical Weapons Convention Act, 2000** was passed to implement the CWC.
  - It provided for the establishment of a **National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention or NACWC.** This institution, formed in 2005, is the **chief liaison between the government of India and the OPCW.** It is an office in the Cabinet Secretariat of the GoI.

Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (Hazardous Chemicals and Wastes)

- The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions are **multilateral environmental agreements**, which share the common objective of **protecting human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and wastes.**
- **The Basel Convention:**
  - It came into force in **1992, intended to reduce transboundary movements of hazardous waste** from developed to less developed countries (LDCs), and ensure their safe disposal as closely as possible to the source of generation.
    - **India is a member.**

- **Rotterdam Convention:**
  - It was adopted in **September 1998** by a Conference of Plenipotentiaries in Rotterdam, Netherlands and entered into force **in February 2004.**
    - **India is a member.**
  - It **covers pesticides and industrial chemicals that have been banned or severely restricted** for health or environmental reasons by Parties and which have been notified by Parties for inclusion in the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure.
  - The Convention **creates legally binding obligations** for the implementation of the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure.
- **The Stockholm Convention:**
  - It is a global treaty **to protect human health and the environment from Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). India is a member.** The Convention entered into force in **May, 2004.**
    - **POPs** are chemicals that remain intact in the environment for long periods, become widely distributed geographically, accumulate in the fatty tissue of living organisms and are toxic to humans and wildlife.

Source:TH

Project 75 India

Why in News

The **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)** has approved the issuance of a **Request For Proposal (RFP)** for the construction of **six conventional submarines** under **Project-75I (India).**

> **RFP** is a project announcement posted publicly by an organization indicating that bids for contractors to complete the project are sought.

Key Points

- **About the Project:**
  - This project envisages **indigenous construction of submarines equipped with the state-of-the-art <u>Air Independent Propulsion system</u>** at an estimated cost of **Rs. 43,000 crore.**
  - Project 75 (I), **approved in 2007, is part of the Indian Navy's 30 year Plan for indigenous submarine construction.**
  - It will be the **first under the strategic partnership model** which was **promulgated in 2017 to boost indigenous defence manufacturing.**
    - The <u>strategic partnership model</u> allows domestic defence manufacturers to join hands with leading foreign defence majors to produce high-end military platforms to reduce import dependence.
    - Acquisitions under the Strategic Partnership model refer to **participation of private Indian firms along with foreign OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) in '<u>Make in India</u>'** in defence.
- **Significance:**
  - **One of the Largest 'Make in India' Projects:**
    It will serve to facilitate faster and more significant absorption of technology and create a tiered industrial ecosystem for submarine construction in India.
  - **To Ensure Self-Reliance:**
    From a strategic perspective, this will help reduce current dependence on imports and gradually ensure greater self-reliance and dependability of supplies from indigenous sources.
  - **To Protect Indo-Pacific:**
    This is keeping in mind the rapid increase of nuclear submarine arsenal by People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) (CHINA) and to protect the Indo-Pacific from future domination by the adversary.
- **About 30-year Submarine Plan:**
  - The **Cabinet Committee on Security, in June 1999**, had approved a 30-year submarine-building plan which included **construction of 24 conventional submarines indigenously by 2030.**
  - **P75I succeeded the <u>P75</u>** under which six diesel-electric attack submarines of the Kalvari class, based on the Scorpene class, were being built at MDL (Mazagon Dock Limited) – the third submarine, INS Karanj, was commissioned in March 2021.
  - Of the total **24 submarines** to be built in India, **six** will be **nuclear-powered.**
  - India has **only one nuclear submarine, INS Arihant**, at the moment. The **INS Arighat**, also a nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, is to be commissioned soon.
  - **INS Chakra**, a nuclear submarine, which is taken on lease from Russia, is believed to be on its way back to the country of origin.

Defence Acquisition Council

- DAC is the **highest decision-making body in the Defence Ministry** for deciding on new policies and capital acquisitions for the three services (Army, Navy and Air Force) and the **Indian Coast Guard.**
- The **Minister of Defence is the Chairman** of the Council.
- It was formed, after the Group of Ministers recommendations on 'Reforming the National Security System', in 2001, post Kargil War (1999).

Source: TH

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

Why in News

On the occasion of the anniversary of **Maratha king's coronation day (6th June),** the Goa government has released a short film on Chhatrapati Shivaji.

Key Points

- **Birth:**
    - He was **born on 19th February, 1630 at Shivneri Fort in District Pune** in the present-day state of Maharashtra.
    - He was born to **Shahaji Bhonsle,** a Maratha general who held the jagirs of Pune and Supe under the Bijapur Sultanate and **Jijabai,** a pious woman whose religious qualities had a profound influence on him.
- **Early Life:**
    - He displayed his military zeal for the first time **in 1645** when as a teenager, he successfully **got control of the Torna Fort** which was under Bijapur.
    - He also acquired the **Kondana Fort.** Both these forts were under Adil Shah of Bijapur.
- **Important Battle:**

Battle of Pratapgad, 1659	Fought at the fort of Pratapgad near the town of Satara, Maharashtra, between the forces of the **Maratha king Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and the Adilshahi general Afzal Khan.**
Battle of Pavan Khind, 1660	Fought at a mountain pass in the vicinity of fort Vishalgad, near the city of Kolhapur, Maharashtra, **between the Maratha Sardar Baji Prabhu Deshpande and Siddi Masud of Adilshahi.**
Sacking of Surat, 1664	Fought near the city of Surat, Gujarat, **between Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Inayat Khan,** a Mughal captain.
Battle of Purandar, 1665	Fought between the **Mughal Empire and Maratha Empire.**
Battle of Sinhagad, 1670	Fought on the fort of Sinhagad near the city of Pune, Maharashtra **between Tanaji Malusare, a commander of Maratha ruler Shivaji Maharaj and Udaybhan Rathod,** fortkeeper under Jai Singh I who was a Mughal Army Chief.
Battle of Kalyan, 1682-83	**Bahadur Khan of the Mughal Empire defeated the Maratha army** and took over Kalyan.
Battle of Sangamner, 1679	Fought between the Mughal Empire and Maratha Empire. This was the **last battle in which the Maratha King Shivaji fought.**

- **Conflict with Mughals:**
  - He raided Mughal territory near Ahmednagar and in Junnar, 1657.
  - Aurangzeb responded to the raids by sending Nasiri Khan, who defeated the forces of Shivaji at Ahmednagar.
  - Shivaji defeated a large force of **Shaista Khan (Aurangzeb's maternal uncle)** and the Bijapur army in Pune,1659.
  - In **1664,** the wealthy Mughal trading **port of Surat was sacked by Shivaji.**
  - In June 1665, the **Treaty of Purandar** was signed between Shivaji and Raja Jai Singh I (representing Aurangzeb).
    - As per this treaty, many forts were relinquished to the Mughals and it was agreed that Shivaji would meet Aurangzeb at Agra. Shivaji also agreed to send his son Sambhaji as well.

- **Arrest of Shivaji:**
  - When Shivaji **went to meet the Mughal emperor at Agra in 1666,** the Maratha warrior felt he was insulted by Aurangzeb and stormed out of the court.
  - He was arrested and kept prisoner. The **clever escape of Shivaji and his son** from imprisonment in disguise out of Agra is legendary today.
  - After that there was peace between the Marathas and the Mughals until 1670.
  - The **jagir of Berar** which was granted to Sambhaji by the Mughals was taken back from him.
  - Shivaji in response attacked and recovered many territories from the Mughals in a short span of four months.
  - Through his military tactics, Shivaji **acquired a large part of the land in the Deccan and western India.**
- **Granted Title:**
  - He was crowned as the **king of the Marathas** on 6th June , 1674, at Raigad.
  - He took on the titles of **Chhatrapati, Shakakarta, Kshatriya Kulavantas and Haindava Dharmodhhaarak.**
  - The **Maratha Kingdom** founded by Shivaji grew larger over time and became the dominant Indian power in the early 18th century.
- **Death:**
  He died on 3rd April 1680.

Administration under Shivaji

- **Central Administration:**
  - It was founded by Shivaji for the sound system of administration which was greatly inspired from the **Deccan style of administration.**
  - Most of the administrative reforms were inspired from **Malik Amber reforms in Ahmednagar.**
  - The **King was the supreme head of state** who was assisted by a group of eight ministers known as the **'Ashtapradhan'.**
  - The **peshwa, also known as the mukhya pradhan,** originally headed the advisory council of the raja Shivaji.

- **Revenue Administration:**
    - Shivaji abolished **the Jagirdari System** and replaced it with **Ryotwari System,** and changes in the position of hereditary revenue officials which was popularly known **as Deshmukhs, Deshpande, Patils and Kulkarnis.**
    - Shivaji strictly supervised the **Mirasdars** who had hereditary rights in land.
    - The revenue system was patterned on the **Kathi system of Malik Amber** in which every piece of land was measured by Rod or Kathi.
    - Chauth and Sardeshmukhi were other sources of income.
        - **Chauth** amounted to **1/4th of the standard** which was paid to Marathas as a safeguard against Shivaji's forces raiding Non-Maratha territories.
        - **Sardeshmukhi** was **an additional levy of 10%** demanded from areas outside of the kingdom.
- **Military Administration:**
    - Shivaji organised a disciplined and efficient army.
    - The ordinary soldiers were paid in cash, but the chief and military commander were paid through **jagir grants (Saranjam or Mokasa).**
    - The army consists of Infantry i.e. Mavali foot soldiers, Cavalry i.e. Horse riders and equipment holders, Navy.

Source: IE

Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve and Vaigai River: Tamil Nadu

Why in News

The recently declared **Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve** in **Tamil Nadu** will provide protection to **Megamalai**, the **Vaigai's primary catchment**, in turn helping water levels to rise in the river.

Vaigai River
Data (c) OpenStreetMap Contributors and Diva-GIS

Key Points

- **About Vaigai River:**
  - **Origin and Tributaries:**
    - It **originates in the** <u>Western Ghats</u> (Varushanad Hills).
    - It travels through the **Pandya Nadu region** of Tamil Nadu.
    - Its **main tributaries** are Suruliyaru, Mullaiyaru, Varaganadhi, Manjalaru, Kottagudi, Kridhumaal and Upparu.
    - The Vaigai is **258 kms long** and finally **empties into the Palk Strait** near the **Pamban Bridge** in **Ramanathapuram district.**
  - **Heritage River:**
    - The Vaigai was the river that **flowed through the noted city of Madurai**, the **capital** (4th-11th century CE) **of the ancient and prosperous Pandya kingdom** located in southern Tamil Nadu.
    - The river finds a mention in <u>Sangam</u> **literature** dated to 3**00 before the Common Era.**
  - **Significance:**
    - The river fulfils the **drinking water requirement of five districts of Tamil Nadu** namely Theni, Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Sivagangai and Dindigul.
    - It also provides **irrigation to 2,00,000 hectares** of agricultural land.
- **Rejuvenation of Vaigai:**
  - Its **deterioration happened at the end of the 18th century** when the British started **deforesting the Megamalai region** which acts as a major catchment for Vaigai. Consequently, the **water flow in the river reduced gradually.**
    Some **2,00,000 people died** in this region during the **Great Famine of 1876-77.**
  - Following the famine, the British Crown **proposed diverting water from the Periyar river (Kerala)** and feeding it to the Vaigai through a tunnel.
    The Vaigai presently **gets about 80% of its water from the Periyar dam.** The **balance 20%** is obtained from the **major watershed of the Megamalai region** during the northeast monsoon season.
  - The **Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve** will **protect wild animals and the natural forests, their habitats** which **act as watersheds.**
- **Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve:**
  Establishment:
    - It was established **in February 2021.** It was jointly declared by the Centre and Tamil Nadu governments.
    - For this, the **Megamalai WLS** and the adjoining **Srivilliputhur WLS** were clubbed together.
    - Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve is the **fifth Tiger Reserve of Tamil Nadu**, and **51th tiger reserve of India.**

<u>**Source: DTE**</u>

Incredible India Tourist Facilitator Certification Programme

Why in News

Recently, on the occasion of <u>World Environment Day</u> **(5th June)**, the Tourism Minister appreciated the **Incredible India Tourist Facilitator Certification Programme (IITFC).**

Key Points

- **About:**
    - IITFC Programme is **a digital initiative of the Ministry of Tourism (MoT),** for the citizens of India to become a part of the booming Tourism Industry.
    - It is **an online programme** where one can learn about tourism at their own time, space, path and pace.
    - The successful completion of this programme would enable the learner to become a **Certified Tourist Facilitator** of the Ministry of Tourism.
- **Tourism & Hospitality Sector in India:**
    - In FY20, the tourism sector in India accounted for 39 million jobs, which was **8% of the total employment** in the country. By 2029, it is **expected to account for about 53 million jobs.**
    - According to WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council), India **ranked 10th among 185 countries in terms of travel & tourism's total contribution to GDP** in 2019. During 2019, the contribution of travel & tourism to GDP was 6.8% of the total economy.
    - **By 2028, international tourist arrivals are expected to reach 30.5 billion** and generate **revenue over USD 59 billion.**
- **Other Initiatives of the Ministry of Tourism:**
    - <u>DekhoApnaDesh Campaign</u>**:**
        It is an initiative to encourage the citizens to travel widely within the country and explore the wonders of India thus enabling the development of Domestic Tourism tourist facilities and infrastructure in tourism spots in the country.
    - <u>Prashad Scheme</u>:
        The Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive(PRASHAD) was launched in the year 2014-15 with the objective of holistic development of identified pilgrimage destinations.
    - <u>Swadesh Darshan Scheme</u>:
        - Swadesh Darshan, a <u>**Central Sector Scheme**</u>, was launched in 2014-15 for integrated development of **theme based tourist circuits** in the country.
        - Currently, there are 15 theme based circuits - Buddhist, Coastal, Desert, Eco, Heritage, Himalayan, Krishna, North-east, Ramayana, Rural, Spiritual, Sufi, Tirthankara, Tribal and Wildlife.

- **Recent Initiatives:**
    - In **January 2021,** the Union Tourism Minister announced plans to develop **an international-level infrastructure in Kargil (Ladakh)** to promote **adventure tourism and winter sports.**
    - As of March 2021, the **e-Tourist Visa facility** was extended to citizens of 171 countries.
    - The **Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) runs a series of Bharat Darshan tourist trains** aimed at taking people to various pilgrimages across the country.
    - **All India Tourist Vehicles Authorisation and Permit Rules, 2021:** It was **introduced by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways,** in which a tourist vehicle operator can register online for All India Tourist Authorisation/Permit.

Way Forward

- India's travel and tourism industry has huge growth potential.
- The industry is also looking forward to the expansion of **e-Visa scheme**, which is expected to double the tourist inflow in India.
- India's travel and tourism industry has the potential to expand **by 2.5%** on the back of higher budgetary allocation and low-cost healthcare facilities according to a joint study conducted by **Assocham and Yes Bank in 2017.**

Source: PIB

37th Anniversary of Operation Blue Star

Why in News

Recently, the 37th anniversary of Operation Blue Star was observed by the country.

Key Points

- **Operation Blue Star:**
  - It is a code name given to an **Indian Military Operation** to remove the separatists who were hidden inside the <u>Golden Temple</u> at Amritsar on **5th June 1984.**
  - The operation was ordered by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, primarily **to take control of the Harmandir Sahib Complex in Amritsar (popularly known as the Golden Temple).**
  - The Indian military entered into the premises of the temple **to drive out the Sikh extremist religious leader, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale** and his armed followers.
  - The operation had **two components** to it, **Operation Metal** which was the invasion on the temple complex and **Operation Shop** which was confined to the countryside of the state.
  - This Operation **helped in eliminating Khalistani terrorism.**
    - It **resulted in the death of Bhindranwale.**
    - Few months post-Operation Blue Star, **Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards**, followed by severe **anti-Sikh riots in Delhi.**
- **Background:**
  - **Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale wanted** the Indian government **to pass the Anandpur Resolution**, and thereby agree to the formation of **a separate state of Khalistan for Sikhs.**
  - Since 1982, this radical leader of Sikhism had managed to gain enough support for his cause and **by mid-1983 had set up a base inside the Golden Temple complex, with ammunition and his followers.**
  - Hence, Operation Blue Star was launched between **1st June and 6th June 1984**, with the aim of getting rid of Bhindranwale and his demands.

National Security Guard

- It is a **counter-terrorism unit** that formally came into existence in 1986 by an act of Parliament- <u>**'National Security Guard Act, 1986'.**</u>
  - Its headquarters is located in **Manesar, Gurugram.**
- The idea behind raising such force came in the **aftermath of Operation Blue Star**, Akshardham Temple attack and the assassination of former PM Indira Gandhi, for combating terrorist activities with a view to protect states against internal disturbances.

<u>**Source:IE**</u>