



News Analysis (27 Aug, 2021)

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Right to Privacy & Right to be Forgotten

Why in News

A case was filed by an actor in the Delhi High Court, pleading to remove the videos that were uploaded on the online platforms, without her consent.

- The court observed that the right to privacy of the woman is to be protected.
- On the other hand, online platforms questioned their **right to publish**.

Key Points

- **Judgement: Right to privacy includes the right to be forgotten and the right to be left alone.**
- **About the Right to Privacy:** In Puttaswamy v. Union of India case, 2017, the Right to Privacy was declared a fundamental right by the Supreme Court.

Right to privacy is protected as **an intrinsic part of the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21** and as a part of the freedoms guaranteed by Part III of the Constitution.
- **About Right to be Forgotten (RTBF):** It is the right to have **publicly available personal information removed** from the internet, search, databases, websites or any other public platforms, once the personal information in question is no longer necessary, or relevant.
 - The RTBF **gained importance after the 2014** decision of the Court of Justice of the European Union (“CJEU”) in the Google Spain case.
 - In the Indian context, the Supreme Court in **Puttaswamy v. Union of India, 2017** noted that the RTBF was **a part of the broader right of privacy**.

The RTBF emerges from the **right to privacy under Article 21** and partly from the **right to dignity under Article 14**.

- **About the Right to be Left Alone:** It doesn't mean that one is withdrawing from society. It is an expectation that society will not interfere in the choices made by the person so long as they do not cause harm to others.
- **Issues Associated with RTBF:**
 - **Privacy vs. Information:** The existence of RTBF in a given situation depends on its balancing with other conflicting rights such as the right to free expression or other publication rights.
 - For example, a person may want to de-link information about his criminal records and make it difficult for people to access certain journalistic reports when they google him.
 - This brings the person's right to be left alone, derived from Article 21, directly in conflict with the rights of the media to report on issues, flowing from Article 19.
 - **Enforceability Against Private Individuals:** The RTBF will normally be claimed against a private party (a media or news website).
 - This raises the question of whether fundamental rights can be enforced against the private individual, which is generally enforceable against the state.
 - Only Article 15(2), Article 17 and Article 23 provides protection against a private act of a private party that is challenged based on its violation of the Constitution.
 - **Ambiguous Judgements:** In recent years, without a data protection law to codify RTBF, there are some inconsistent and peculiar adjudications of the right by various high courts.

Courts in India have repeatedly either accepted or rejected the application of RTBF while completely ignoring the wider constitutional questions associated with it.

Government Steps to Protect Privacy

- **Personal Data Protection Bill 2019:**
 - To provide for protection of privacy of individuals relating to their Personal Data and to establish a Data Protection Authority of India for the said purposes and the matters concerning the personal data of an individual.
 - Framed on the recommendations of B N Srikrishna Committee (2018).
- **Information Technology Act, 2000:**

Provides for safeguard against certain breaches in relation to data from computer systems. It contains provisions to prevent the unauthorized use of computers, computer systems and data stored therein.

Way Forward

- The Parliament and the Supreme court to engage in a detailed analysis of RTBF and evolve a mechanism for balancing the conflicting rights of privacy and freedom of expression.
- In this digital age, data is a valuable resource that should not be left unregulated. In this context, the time is ripe for India to have a robust data protection regime.

Thus, the government should expedite the enactment of the **Personal Data Protection Bill 2019**.

Source: TH

Criterion for Deciding Creamy Layer

Why in News

The **Supreme Court of India** recently held that the **economic criterion cannot be the sole basis for deciding the creamy layer from among backward classes for the purpose of excluding it from the purview of providing reservation**.

The SC was hearing a petition challenging two notifications issued by the Haryana government sub-classifying backward classes solely on economic basis while fixing the criteria for creamy layer.

The debate

- 'Creamy layer' denotes relatively forward, better-educated and socially advanced members of OBCs
- The term was introduced by Sattanathan Commission in 1971, which recommended that 'creamy layer' should be excluded from quota benefits
- In Indira Sawhney judgment (1992), SC directed that 'creamy layer' among OBCs be excluded from quota benefits
- After a constitution bench judgment in 2018, the concept is applicable also to SC/ST communities
- The Centre has defined 'creamy layer' among OBCs as those earning more than ₹8 lakh per annum



Key Points

- **SC Verdict:**

- Recalled the **ruling in the Indra Sawhney-II case**, reported in 2000. **Haryana's notifications have violated the law declared in the Indra Sawhney judgment** by identifying creamy layer only on the basis of income.

- The basis of exclusion of 'creamy layer' cannot be merely economic - the **government cannot deny reservation to a person belonging to a backward community solely on the ground that he or she is rich.**

- **Social advancement, higher employment in government services**, etc, play an equal role in deciding whether such a person belonged to the creamy layer and could be denied quota benefits.

- The SC has illustrated that '**creamy layer**' would include "**persons from backward classes who occupied posts in higher services like IAS, IPS and All India Services** had reached a higher level of social advancement and economic status, and therefore, were not entitled to be treated as backward".

- People with sufficient income who were in a **position to provide employment to others should also be taken to have reached a higher social status** and therefore, should be treated as outside the backward class.
 - Persons from backward classes who had **higher agricultural holdings or were receiving income from properties, beyond a prescribed limit**, do not deserve the benefit of reservation.

- **Creamy Layer:**

- The creamy layer **sets a threshold within which OBC reservation benefits are applicable.**

- The creamy layer principle was **based on the fundamental right to equality.** Unless it is applied, the genuinely deserving person would not access the reservation.

- The **basis of exclusion should not merely be economic**, unless the economic advancement is so high that it necessarily means social advancement.

- While the income of a person can be taken as a measure of his social advancement, the limit to be prescribed should not be such as to result in taking away with one hand what is given with the other.
 - The income limit must be such as to mean and signify social advancement.

- **Creamy Layer as defined by the Central Government:**

The **Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)** have listed out various categories of people of certain rank/status/income whose children cannot avail benefit of OBC reservation.

- **Income:** For those not in government, the current threshold is an **income of Rs 8 lakh per year.**
 - The income threshold is supposed to be raised every three years.
 - It was last revised in 2017 (more than three years now).
- **Rank of Parents:** For children of government employees, the threshold is based on their parents' rank and not income.

For instance, an individual is considered to fall within the creamy layer if either of his or her parents is in a constitutional post; if either parent has been directly recruited in Group-A; or if both parents are in Group-B services. There are other criteria as well.

- **Constitutional Provisions Related to OBCs:**

- According to the Constitution, **Articles 15(4), 15(5) and 16(4)** confer power on a state to identify and declare the list of SEBCs (Socially and Educationally Backward Classes). As a matter of practice, separate OBC lists are drawn up by the Centre and each state concerned.
- The **Rohini Commission** was constituted in October 2017 under **Article 340** of the Constitution.
 - It had been constituted **to complete the task of sub-categorising 5000-odd castes in the central OBC.**
- The **127th Constitution Amendment Bill 2021**, restores the power of states to identify SEBCs, usually called OBCs.
 - The amendment was necessitated after the Supreme Court, in its Maratha reservation ruling in May, **upheld the 102nd Constitutional Amendment Act.**
 - The 102nd Constitution Amendment Act of 2018 **gave constitutional status to the NCBC (National Commission for Backward Classes)**, and empowered the President to notify the list SEBCs for any state or union territory.
 - The Amendment Bill **amends Articles 342 A** (clauses 1 and 2) and will introduce a new clause - 342 A (3) specifically authorising states to maintain their state list.

Source: IE

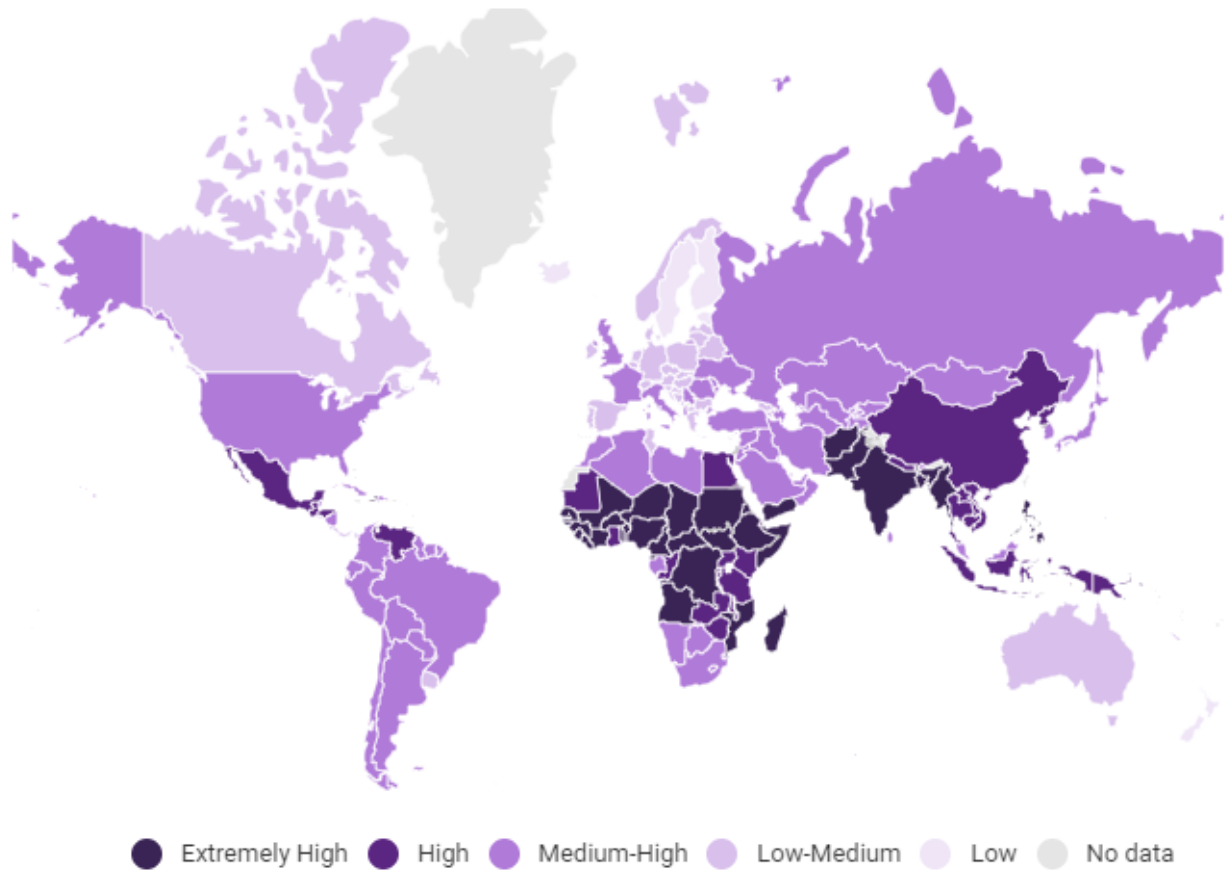
Children's Climate Risk Index: UNICEF

Why in News

Recently, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in collaboration with Fridays for Future launched a report named '**The Climate Crisis Is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index**'.

- It is the **first comprehensive analysis of climate risk from a child's perspective**.
- Earlier an analysis, based on Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) index, had shown the impact of Climate Change on children across the world.

Level of Climate Risk on Various Countries



Key Points

- **Children's Climate Risk Index:**
 - It **ranks countries based on children's exposure to climate and environmental shocks**, such as Cyclones and Heatwaves, as well as their vulnerability to those shocks, based on their access to essential services.
 - **Pakistan (14th)**, **Bangladesh (15th)**, **Afghanistan (25th)** and **India (26th)** are among four South Asian countries where children are at **extremely high risk** of the impacts of the climate crisis.

- **Indian Scenario:**

- **India is among four South Asian countries** where children are most at risk of the impacts of climate change threatening their health, education, and protection.
- It is estimated that **more than 600 million Indians will face 'acute water shortages'** in the coming years, while at the same time **Flash Flooding is to increase significantly** in the majority of India's urban areas once the global temperature increase rises above 2 Celsius.

Twenty-one of the world's 30 cities with the most polluted air in 2020 were in India.

- **Global Scenario:**
 - **Countries With Maximum Vulnerability:**
 - Young people living in the **Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau** are the most at risk of the impacts of climate change.
 - These children face a deadly combination of exposure to multiple climate and environmental shocks with **a high vulnerability due to inadequate essential services, such as water and sanitation, healthcare and education.**
 - **Impact of Climate and Environmental Hazards:**

Nearly every child around the world is at risk from at least one of the climate and environmental hazards which are **Coastal Flooding, Riverine Flooding, Cyclones, Vector Borne Diseases, Lead Pollution, Heatwaves and Water Scarcity.**

 - An estimated 850 million children – 1 in 3 worldwide – live in **areas where at least four of these climate and environmental shocks overlap.**
 - As many as 330 million children – 1 in 7 worldwide – live in **areas affected by at least five major shocks.**
 - **Inequitable Impact:**
 - There is a disconnect between **where GreenHouse gas (GHG) Emissions are generated**, and **where children are enduring the most significant climate-driven impacts.**

The children from **countries least responsible will suffer most of all.**
 - Climate change is deeply inequitable. While **no child is responsible for rising global temperatures, they will pay the highest costs.**
 - **Children are More Precarious:**

Compared to adults, children require more food and water per unit of their body weight, are less able to survive extreme weather events, and are **more susceptible to toxic chemicals, temperature changes and diseases, among other factors.**
 - **Nations Not Meeting the Climate Goals:**
 - The majority of the carbon emission reduction pledges for 2030 that 184 countries made under the **Paris Agreement** aren't nearly enough to keep global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius.
 - Some countries won't achieve their pledges, and **some of the world's largest carbon emitters will continue to increase their emissions.**

- **Recommendations:**

- **Increase Investment:**

Increase **investment in climate adaptation and resilience** in key services for children.

- **Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions:**

Countries must cut their emissions **by at least 45% (compared to 2010 levels) by 2030 to keep warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius.**

- **Provide Climate Education:**

Provide children with **climate education and greens skills**, critical for their adaptation to and preparation for the effects of climate change.

- **Include Young People in Decisions:**

Include young people in all national, regional and international climate negotiations and decisions, including at **COP (Conference of the Parties- A climate Convention) 26** (It will be held in Glasgow, UK in November 2021).

- **Ensure Pandemic Recovery is Inclusive:**

Ensure the **recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic is green**, low-carbon and inclusive, so that the capacity of future generations to address and respond to the climate crisis is not compromised.

Way Forward

- **Meet the Goal:**

In order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, **global net man-made emissions of carbon dioxide must be nearly halved by 2030**, and reach **“net zero” by 2050.**

- **Scale up Social Protection System:**

Scale up **adaptive and shock-responsive social protection systems** – such as grants for pregnant mothers and children - to **address the increasing impacts of climate change on children and their families.**

- **United approach towards child rights:**

More countries need to work towards their commitment in the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** to ensure every child is protected from poverty, for example by providing universal child benefits to improve children’s well-being and build resilience.

Source: DTE

Greater Male Connectivity Project: Maldives

Why in News

Recently, Afcons, an Indian company, has signed a contract for the **largest-ever infrastructure project in Maldives** which is the **Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP)**.

The project is the **result of bilateral consultation between India and the Maldives** and has been under discussion since the visit of India's External Affairs Minister to Male in September 2019.



Key Points

- **Greater Male Connectivity Project:**
 - It will consist of a **6.74 km-long bridge and causeway link between Male and nearby islands of Villingli, Gulhifalhu and Thilafushi**. It will use **renewable energy**.

The project is funded by a **grant of USD 100 million and a Line of Credit (LOC) of USD 400 million from India**.
 - It is **not only the biggest project India** is doing in the Maldives but **also the biggest infrastructure project in the Maldives overall**.
- **Significance:**
 - It is considered as the **economic lifeline for the Maldives** and will provide a **major boost to connectivity between the four islands** accounting for about half of the Maldivian population.
 - It will **add dynamism to the Maldivian transport and economic activities**.

- **India-Maldives-China:**

- The GMCP project would be **bigger than the Sinamale Bridge built with Chinese assistance** that connects Male with Hulhumale and Hulhule and was completed in 2018.

- Also the **Indian aid to Maldives in August 2020 was appreciated and contrasted with the previous expensive commercial loans to Maldives by China** which are being termed “**debt-trap diplomacy**” of China.

Wherein **China intentionally extends excessive credit** to another country with the **intention of extracting economic or political concessions** from the debtor country.

- The India-Maldives relationship suffered a setback when Maldives entered into a **Free-Trade Agreement (FTA)** with China in 2017.

However with the **election of a new pro-India government in Maldives**, the relationships have improved and Maldives is also considering pulling out of the FTA with China.

- At present, **India-assisted projects** in the region include **water and sewerage projects on 34 islands**, reclamation projects for the Addl island, a port on Gulhifalhu, airport redevelopment at Hanimaadhoo, and a hospital and a cricket stadium in Hulhumale.

India had also announced a **800 million USD Line of Credit to Maldives in December 2018**.

- **Recent Developments:**

- **Security Cooperation:** Earlier in August 2021, in the Deputy National Security Adviser-level meeting hosted by Sri Lanka, India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives had agreed to work on **“four pillars” of security cooperation.**
- **UNGA President:** In June 2021, **India welcomed the election of Maldives’ Foreign Minister** as the President of the 76th session of the **United Nations (UN) General Assembly (GA)** for 2021-22.
- **Mou’s:** In November 2020, India and the Maldives signed **four Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)** related to High Impact Community Development Projects and on Cooperation in Sports and Youth Affairs.
- **Relief Package:** In August 2020, India had committed to Maldives a **five-pronged package** including air, sea, intra-island and telecommunications to **help it deal with the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.**
- **Bilateral Bubble:** Maldives is the first South Asian country with which India started a bilateral **air bubble** during **Covid-19 pandemic.**
- **Bilateral Visits:** Since September 2018, India and Maldives have seen a number of bilateral visits.
 - **India’s Prime Minister visited Maldives** to attend the swearing-in ceremony of President Solih.
 - **Maldives President also visited India** in December 2018.
 - The **Home Minister of Maldives met the Indian Home Minister** in February, 2020.
- Maldives and India are members of the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** and the **South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC)**.

Way Forward

- This isn’t only about an ambitious project involving both India and the Maldives. The terms of the agreement call for the **completion of the bridge by 2023.**
- For India, **Maldives holds strategic importance** and showing that **it can deliver would help mitigate some concerns that may exist in the Maldives.**
- In accordance with the **Neighbourhood First Policy** of the government, India remains a committed development partner for a stable, prosperous and peaceful Maldives.
- Given the economic hardships being faced by Maldives due to Covid-19 pandemic and previous debts, **this project and previous packages will definitely warm up the relationship between both the countries.**

This will also **provide a strategic edge to India over China with regards to Maldives.**

Source: IE

Crop Insurance

Why in News

The **domestic general insurance companies are gradually reducing their exposure to the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)** to cut down their losses on account of high claims even as the Centre made the scheme optional and slashed its contribution.

PMFBY and the **Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS)** were revamped in 2020.

Key Points

- **About the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY):**

- **Launched in 2016** and is being **administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.**

- **Replaced** the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) and Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS).

- **Aim:** To provide a comprehensive insurance cover against the failure of the crop thus helping in stabilising the income of the farmers.
 - **Scope:** All food & oilseed crops and annual commercial/horticultural crops for which past yield data is available.
 - **Premium:** The prescribed premium is 2% to be paid by farmers for all Kharif crops and 1.5% for all rabi crops. In the case of annual commercial and horticultural crops, the premium is 5%.
 - Premium cost over and above the farmer share was equally subsidized by States and Gol.
 - However, Gol shared 90% of the premium subsidy for North Eastern States to promote the uptake in the region.
 - **Implementation:** By empanelled general insurance companies. The selection of the Implementing Agency (IA) is done by the concerned State Government through bidding.
 - **PMFBY 2.0:** The revamped PMFBY is often called **PMFBY 2.0**, it has the following features:
 - **Completely Voluntary:** Enrolment 100% voluntary for all farmers from 2020 Kharif.
 - Earlier, it was compulsory for loanee farmers availing Crop Loan/Kisan Credit Card (KCC) account for notified crops.
 - **Limit to Central Subsidy:** The Centre has decided to limit the PMFBY premium rates - against which it would bear 50% of the subsidy - to a maximum of 30% in un-irrigated and 25% in irrigated areas.
 - **More Flexibility to States:** The government has given the flexibility to states/UTs to implement PMFBY and given them the option to select any number of additional risk covers/features.
 - **Investing in ICE Activities:** Insurance companies have to now spend 0.5% of the total premium collected on information, education and communication (IEC) activities.
- **Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme:**
 - **Launched in 2016** and is being **administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.**
 - **Aim:** To mitigate the hardship of the insured farmers against the likelihood of financial loss on account of anticipated crop loss resulting from adverse weather conditions relating to rainfall, temperature, wind, humidity etc.
 - **Parameter:** WBCIS uses weather parameters as “proxy” for crop yields in compensating the cultivators for deemed crop losses.

Challenges in Implementation

- **Sustainability:** For Insurance markets to work they need- (a) Low risk; and (b) Low correlation in risk amongst those buying insurance.
 - Since the programme is aimed at covering risks of drought and floods, both assumptions are likely to be false.
 - This is because when bad weather hits, all regional farmers are affected (high correlation) and incidence of bad-weather is high (once in 5-7 years ie. loss probability of 14% - 20%).
 - The PMFBY states the premium rates to be 1.5-2% as the rest being subsidized by the government. This in the long term is bad and also encourages risk-taking especially for crops with low MSPs.
- **Claim Settlement Issues:** The role and power of Insurance companies is significant. In many cases, it didn't investigate losses due to a localised calamity and, therefore, did not pay the claims.

The State governments failed to release funds on time leading to delays in releasing insurance compensation. This defeats the very purpose of the scheme which is to provide timely financial assistance to the farming community.
- **Lack of Awareness and Grievance Redressal:** The farmers are not aware of the crop insurance schemes. There is a lack of a decent grievance redressal system and monitoring mechanism for speedy settlements of farmer complaints; at both the Centre and State Governments level.
- **Identification Issues:** Currently the PMFBY scheme doesn't distinguish between large and small farmers and thus raises the issue of identification. Small farmers are the most vulnerable class.

Way Forward

- **Awareness Generation:** Awareness generation will be one of the major challenges in the smooth implementation of the scheme.

The Government is also seeking active involvement of all stakeholders especially States and implementing insurance companies for the conduct of publicity campaign/awareness programmes in the rural areas to build farmer awareness about crop insurance schemes.
- **Bringing Behavioural Change:** A lot more needs to be done in bringing about a behavioural change regarding the cost of insurance being a necessary input and not a money-back investment.
- **Rationalising Waivers and Service Delivery:** Loan waiver schemes announced by state governments along with mandatory Aadhar linkage should be rationalised to enable PMFBY of greater coverage.

- **Role of Technology:** If the localized weather forecasting, drought risk, disease risk, soil analysis data which is now much easily available with technology can be made available to farmers they become pre-emptive of the risk and can plan that much better, thus reducing their losses.
 - The data can also help settle local level calamity disputes which can sometimes get tricky.
 - The technology can enable insurance companies to be better prepared and handle the premiums and settlements much more efficiently.
- **Beed Model:** The government can consider implementing the 'Beed model' of the crop insurance scheme. Under this plan, the insurer's potential losses are restricted.

Source: IE

Chikungunya Vaccine

Why in News

Recently, **International Vaccine Institute (IVI)** has announced that **Bharat Biotech's Chikungunya vaccine candidate (BBV87)** has entered into **Phase II and III clinical trials**. Currently, **there is no commercial chikungunya vaccine**.

Key Points

- **About the Vaccine:**
 - BBV87 is an **inactivated virus vaccine**, similar to **Covaxin**.

Inactivated vaccines contain viruses whose genetic material has been destroyed by heat, chemicals or radiation so they cannot infect cells and replicate, but can still trigger an immune response.
 - Bharat Biotech's Chikungunya vaccine candidate was developed in partnership with the **International Vaccine Institute (IVI)**.
 - Development of Chikungunya Vaccine is an initiative of the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**, as part of the **Global Chikungunya Vaccine Clinical Development Program (GCCDP)**.
 - It was funded by the **Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)** with support from the Ind-CEPI mission of the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India.

- **Chikungunya:**
 - **About:**
 - Chikungunya is a **mosquito-borne viral disease** first described during an outbreak in southern Tanzania in 1952.
 - The name is derived from the **local Kimakonde language** and means “to become contorted”, evoking the stooped appearance of patients suffering acute joint pain.
 - **Transmission:**
 - It is **transmitted to people through the bite of an infected mosquito**. It is most often spread to people by **Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus mosquitoes**. These are the **same mosquitoes that transmit dengue virus**.
 - Mosquitoes acquire the infection by biting infected humans or animals.
 - Weather conditions also affect their breeding and survival.
 - **Symptoms:**

Include severe joint pain, muscle pain, headache, nausea, fatigue and rashes.
 - **Treatment:**

Currently, there are **no vaccines or antiviral drugs available to cure Chikungunya**, and the treatment is only focused on relieving the symptoms associated with the infection.
 - **Reasons Behind the Spurt in Cases:** There has been an increasing incidence of vector borne diseases in urban, peri-urban and rural areas because of:
 - Haphazard **urbanisation**.
 - **Deficient water and solid waste management** leading to proliferation of mosquito breeding sites.
 - **Absence of specific antiviral drug** or vaccine.
- **Government Initiatives to Control Chikungunya:**

National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP) is a comprehensive programme for prevention and control of **vector borne diseases namely Malaria, Filaria, Kala-azar, Japanese Encephalitis (JE), Dengue and Chikungunya**.

It works under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.

Source: IE

Malabar Exercise 2021

Why in News

Recently, the Navies of the **Quad (Quadrilateral Framework) Nations** (India, the United States, Japan, and Australia) have participated in the **25th edition of the Malabar Exercise**, which began off the coast of Guam in the Pacific Ocean.

Guam is a US island territory in the North Pacific Ocean, which is much **closer to China in the East** than to the **US mainland in the West** making it an **ideal US military strategic outpost for Indo-Pacific operations**.



Key Points

- **Malabar Exercise:**

- It is a **multilateral war-gaming naval exercise** that was started in 1992. It began as a **bilateral exercise between the navies of India and the United States.**

Two more editions of the exercise were carried out in **1995 and 1996, after which there was a break until 2002** in the aftermath of India's nuclear tests.

- **From 2002 onward**, the exercise has been conducted every year.

Japan and Australia first participated in **2007**, and **since 2014, India, the US and Japan have participated in the exercise every year.**

- In 2020 **Australia joined the Malabar Exercise** on India's request in order to contain China in the Indo-Pacific region.

For the first time in over a decade, **Malabar 2020** saw the participation of all four Quad members.

- It is aimed **to support free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific and remain committed to a rules based international order.**

- **Malabar 2021:**

This is the **first joint maritime exercise within the framework of Quad in the Western Pacific** and apparently aims to frighten China. It is being hosted by the US.

- **Significance:**

- **Enhance Strategic Partnership:**

Such complex exercises have further **enhanced synergy and mutual understanding among the four navies in undertaking joint maritime security operations**, and will go a long way in further strengthening their already close strategic partnership.

- **Sustainable Indo-Pacific Coalition:**

A major step towards building a **sustainable Indo-Pacific coalition thereby addressing the massive strategic imbalance** generated by an economically and militarily powerful China.

There is a **consensus, among many major liberal democracies, that China threatens the international system**, liberal societies and a rules-based regime.

- **Peace through Sea:**

- It is not a coincidence that as **India-US ties improved in the mid-2000s, China was better behaved.**
- It is only **with economic strength and partnerships** such as the one that will be manifested in the Malabar exercise that **India can broaden its options with China.**

The **road to peace in the mountains may lie through the sea.**

- **Other Exercises with Quad Countries:**
 - **India- Japan:** **JIMEX** (naval exercise), **SHINYUU Maitri** (air force exercise), and **Dharma Guardian** (military exercise).
 - **India-US:** Yudha Abhyas (Army), Vajra Prahar (Military), Spitting Cobra, SANGAM, RED FLAG, COPE INDIA.
 - **India-Australia:** **AUSINDEX (Maritime)**, AUSTRALIA HIND, Pitch Black
 - **Passage Exercises (PASSEX).**

Quad

- It is a **four-nation alliance of India, Australia, USA and Japan** which was **established in 2007**.

The idea of Quad was first mooted by former **Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe**.
- It is often dubbed as an **"Asian" or "mini" North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**, and is viewed as a **counterbalance to China's military and economic clout** in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Interestingly, the QUAD, which used to be known as the quadrilateral security dialogue, is **now known as the quadrilateral framework to indicate it has gone beyond a narrow security dialogue**.

Source: IE

SAMRIDH Programme

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY)** has launched the **'Start-up Accelerators of MeitY for pProduct Innovation, Development and growth (SAMRIDH)'** programme.

Key Points

About the Scheme:

- To **create a conducive platform to Indian Software Product start-ups** to enhance their products and secure investments for scaling their business.
- Focuses on accelerating the **300 start-ups** by providing customer connect, investor connect, and international immersion in the **next three years**.
- To provide **investment of up to Rs 40 lakh to the start-up** based on current valuation and growth stage of the Start-Up **through selected accelerators**.
- Being **implemented by MeitY Start-up Hub (MSH)**.
MSH acts as a **national coordination, facilitation and monitoring centre** that will integrate all the incubation centres, start-ups and innovation related activities of MeitY.
- To further the Indian start-up growth which has seen the emergence of 63 unicorns and is **now the third largest unicorn hub** globally with a total valuation of USD 168 billion.
"Unicorn" is a term used in the venture capital industry to describe a privately held startup company with a value of over \$1 billion.

Source: PIB

KAZIND-21

Why in News

The **5th edition of India-Kazakhstan Joint Training Exercise, "KAZIND-21"** will be conducted in **Kazakhstan**.



Key Points

- **About KAZIND-21:**
 - The exercise is a **joint training between both the Armies**.
 - The **scope** of Joint Exercise includes professional exchange, sharing experiences in Counter Insurgency/ Counter Terrorism operations, etc.
- **Joint Military Exercise:** Prabal dostyk.
- **Importance of Kazakhstan:**
 - First, its **geo-strategic location**; second, its **economic potential**, especially in **terms of energy resources**; and third, its multi-ethnic and secular structure. Kazakhstan is the **most resource-rich country in Central Asia** and is **also India's largest trade and investment partner**.
 - **India and Kazakhstan actively cooperate** under the aegis of various multilateral fora including **Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA)**, **Shanghai Cooperation Operation (SCO)** and the **United Nations (UN)** organisations.

Source: PIB

Hackathon Manthan 2021

Why in News

The **Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D)**, in coordination with the **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)**, will launch an online hackathon "**Manthan 2021**".

Key Points

- **About:**
 - **Aim:** For **identification of innovative concepts and technology solutions** to address the challenges faced by **intelligence agencies**.
 - **Participants:** Selected youths from education institutions across the country and registered start-ups.
- **Organisations Involved:**
 - **BPR&D** was established under the **Ministry of Home Affairs** in the 1970s, with the primary objective of **modernisation of the Police Force**. It has to ensure the implementation of **Prison Reforms** as well.
 - **AICTE** is a **national-level apex advisory body** to conduct a survey on the facilities available for **technical education and to promote development** in the country in a coordinated and integrated manner.

Source: TH
