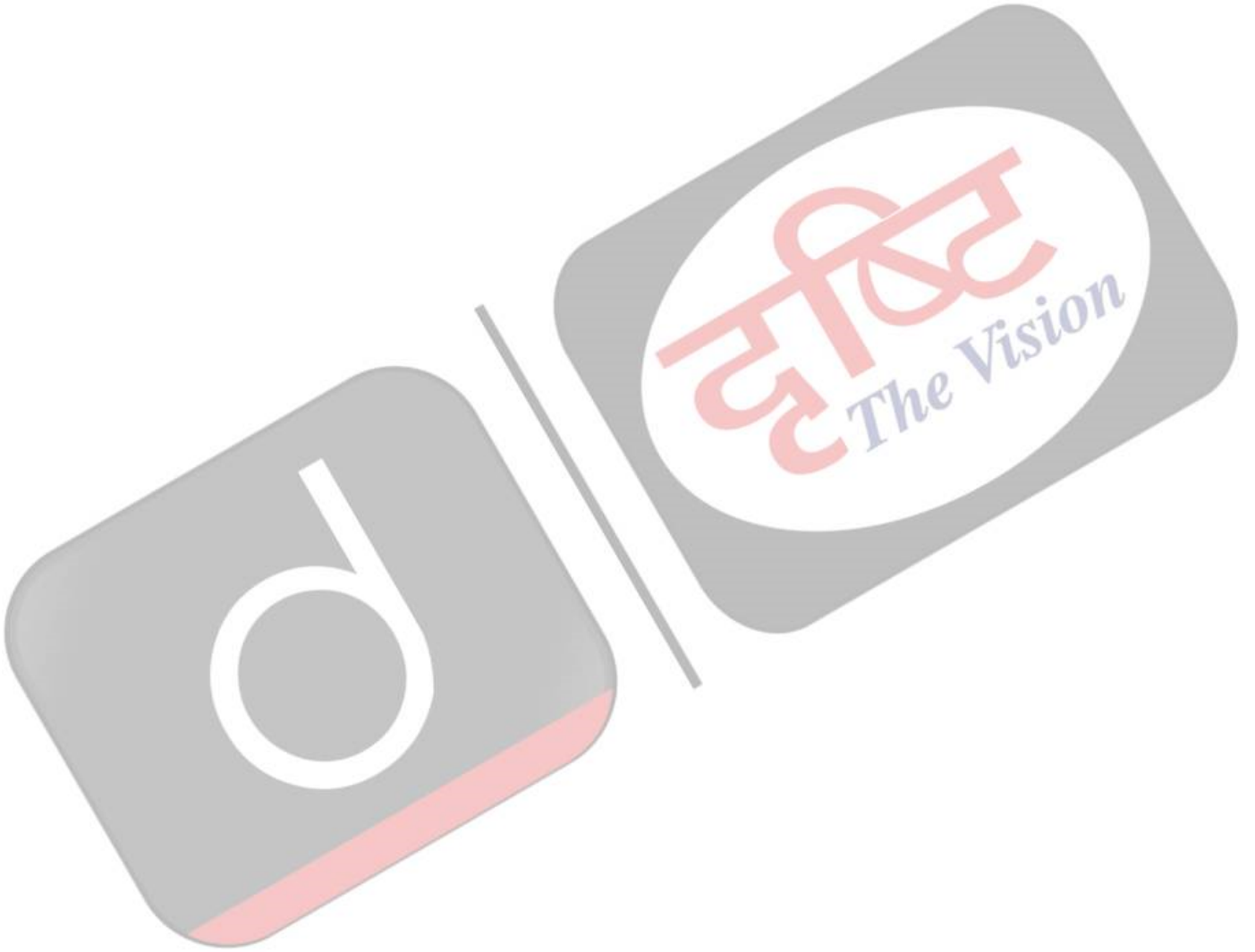




Bharatnatyam

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Bharatnatyam (Tamil Nadu)

Oldest dance form



Origins

Sadir: Solo dance Performance by temple dancers or devadasis.
Also referred to as 'Dashiattam'

References

In the book **Abhinaya Darpana by Nandikesvara**.
In paintings and stone and metal sculptures of ancient times.
Ex- On the **gopurams** of the **Chidambaram temple**.

Seven main parts of dance

Alarippu

- Basic dance postures.
- Rhythmic Syllables.
- It is meant to seek the blessings of God.

Jatiswaram

- Component of Nritha
- Devoid of expressions
- Different poses and movements.

Shabda

- Dramatic element with expressed words
- Praise of the glory of God.

Varnam

- Component of Nritya
- Combination of dance and emotions
- Synchronized with tala and raag, to express the story.

Padam

- Abhinaya (expression) of spiritual message
- Light Music
- Emotional Dance.

Jawali

- Short love-lyrics
- Faster tempo

Thillana

- Stage performance
- Pure dance (Nritha)

- The person who conducts the dance recitation is the **Nattuvanar**.

- **Bharatnatyam** is often referred to as the '**fire dance**'. Most of the movements in Bharatanatyam resemble that of a **dancing flame**.

- Bharatnatyam dance is also **known to be ekaharya**, where one dancer takes on many roles in a single performance.

- Equal emphasis: **Tandava and Lasya aspects**.

- **Principal mudras: Katakamukha Hasta**, in which three fingers are joined to symbolize '**Om**'

• **Instruments:** Mridangam, Violin or veena, Flutist C, Cymbal.

• **Performed** by solo female, Male and Group Dancers.

• **Famous proponents of Bharatnatyam:** Rukmini Devi Arundale, Yamini Krishnamurthy, Lakshmi Viswanathan, Padma Subramaniam, Mrinalini Sarabhai, Mallika Sarabhai, etc.



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India Saudi Arabia Relations

For Prelims: Countries neighbouring Saudi Arabia, Trade with Saudi Arabia

For Mains: India- Saudi Arabia Relations

Why in News?

Recently, the **Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Textiles** visited Saudi Arabia to attend the Ministerial meeting of the **India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council**.



What are the Key Outcomes of the Meeting?

- Streamlining efforts to carry out the declaration of investments of **USD \$100 billion in India** made by Saudi Arabia in February 2019.
- Endorsement of the **41 areas of cooperation** identified by the technical teams under the **4 broad domains of:**
 - **Agriculture & Food Security**
 - **Energy**
 - Technology & Information Technology
 - Industry & Infrastructure

- A commitment to carrying out **important projects in a timely way**. The following are some of the priority areas for cooperation:
 - **Digital fintech sector cooperation** through the operationalization of **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** and **Rupay Card** in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
 - Reiteration of **commitment to ongoing collaboration** on joint projects, such as the **construction of a refinery on the West Coast**, an investment in **Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)** infrastructure, and the creation of strategic petroleum storage facilities in India.
- **Discussions were also held on:**
 - **Institutional tie-up of the EXIM banks** of the two countries,
 - Mutual **recognition of standards**,
 - Establishment of **startup and innovation bridge**,
 - Strengthening collaboration in **infrastructure development**, particularly in the **domains of construction**,
 - **Railways etc.**

What is the India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council?

- The **Strategic Partnership Council** was instituted in **October, 2019** during the visit of the **Prime Minister of India to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**.
- **It has two main pillars:**
 - Political, Security, Social and Cultural Committee
 - Committee on Economy and Investments
- India is the **fourth country with which Saudi Arabia has formed such a strategic partnership**, after the UK, France and China.

How has India's Relations with Saudi Arabia been?

- **Oil & Gas:**
 - Saudi Arabia is currently **India's second-largest supplier of crude oil** (Iraq has been India's top supplier).
 - India **imports around 18% of its crude oil requirement** and around **22% of its Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) requirement** from Saudi Arabia.
 - Saudi Arabia will assist in setting up the **world's largest greenfield refinery at Raigarh in Maharashtra** by Saudi Aramco, Adnoc of the United Arab Emirates and Indian public sector oil companies.
- **Bilateral Trade:**
 - Saudi Arabia is **India's fourth largest trade partner** (after the USA, China and UAE).
 - In FY 2021-22, bilateral trade was valued at **USD 42.8 billion**.
 - India's **imports from Saudi Arabia reached USD 34.01 billion** and **exports to Saudi Arabia were worth USD 8.76 billion**. An increase of **49.5% over 2021**.
 - Total trade with Saudi Arabia accounted for **4.14% of India's total trade in FY 2021-22**.
- **Indian Diaspora:**
 - The **2.6 million-strong Indian community in Saudi Arabia** is the largest expatriate community in the Kingdom and is the 'most preferred community' due to their expertise, sense of discipline, law-abiding and peace-loving nature.
- **Cultural Linkages:**
 - **Haj pilgrimage** is another important component of bilateral relations between India and Saudi Arabia.
- **Naval Exercise:**
 - In 2021, India and Saudi Arabia started their first-ever Naval joint exercise called the **Al-Mohed Al-Hindi Exercise**.

Way Forward

- India can utilize the **friendly relations with Saudi Arabia** by convincing the kingdom to exercise

its **influence over Pakistan in controlling the [Taliban in Afghanistan](#)**.

- A joint collaborative effort of both economies will transform the Southwest Asia sub-region.
- Currently, **India has a trade deficit of USD 25.25 billion** with Saudi Arabia. India should focus more upon **promoting exports in various sectors**. It would enable us to **maintain the trade balance with the kingdom** while building healthy trade relations.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following is not a member of 'Gulf Cooperation Council'? (2016)

- (a) Iran
- (b) Saudi Arabia
- (c) Oman
- (d) Kuwait

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- The **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** is an alliance of 6 countries in the Arabian Peninsula – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, **Saudi Arabia** and the United Arab Emirates. Iran is not a member of the GCC.
- It was established in 1981 to promote economic, security, cultural and social cooperation between the members and holds a summit every year to discuss cooperation and regional affairs.
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

Mains

Q. The question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyse India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian countries. **(2017)**

[Source: PIB](#)

Amendments in IBBI Regulations

Why in News?

Recently, [Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India \(IBBI\)](#) amended its regulations to boost the value of stressed companies.

- The amendments in [IBBI \(Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons\) Regulations, 2016](#) have been done to **maximise value in resolution**.
- It will allow **the sale of one or more assets of an entity undergoing insolvency resolution process** besides other changes.

What are the Amended Regulations?

- The **Committee of Creditors (CoC)** can now **examine whether a compromise or an**

arrangement can be explored for a Corporate Debtor (CD) during the liquidation period.

- As many as 1,703 **Corporate Insolvency Resolution Processes (CIRPs)** ended up in liquidation till June 2022.

- The **regulator has permitted a resolution professional and the CoC** to look for **sale of one or more assets of the CD** concerned in cases where there are **no resolution plans for the whole business**.
- A **resolution plan to include sale of one or more assets of CD will be enabled** to one or more successful resolution applicants providing for appropriate treatment of the remaining assets.
- A **Resolution Professional (RP)** will have to **actively seek claims from known (based on the books of accounts) creditors of the company** concerned that will help in making available a clearer picture of the debt.
 - RPs will be required to provide an opinion on whether the company has been subject to **avoidance transactions within 75 days of the start of CIRP**.
 - RPs will now be required to **assess and report whether the company has completed any transactions** to siphon off funds prior to insolvency proceedings.
 - The regulations mandate that **any appointments made by RPs should follow a transparent process**.
- **Details of any applications** filed for avoidance of transactions will be **made available to resolution applicants before submission of resolutions plans** and can be addressed by the applicants in their plans.
- **The information memorandum is required to contain material information** which will help in assessing its position as a going concern, and not only information about its assets, thereby addressing a critical need of the market.

Why is the Significance of Amended Regulations?

- The provisions would **allow stakeholders to claw back lost value and would disincentivise stakeholders** from entering into such transactions.
- The amendments **enable a longer time for the asset** in the market.
- The amendments will **provide an impetus to better market-led solutions** for insolvency resolution.
- This will ensure that **better quality information about the insolvent company and its assets is available to the market**, including prospective resolution applicants, in a timely manner.

What is Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India?

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India was established in 2016 under the [Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 \(Code\)](#).
- It is a key pillar of the ecosystem responsible for **implementation of the Code** that consolidates and amends the laws relating to reorganization and insolvency resolution of corporate persons, partnership firms and individuals in a time bound manner for maximization of the value of assets of such persons, to promote entrepreneurship, availability of credit and balance the interests of all the stakeholders.
- It is a **unique regulator** as it regulates a profession as well as processes.
- It has **regulatory oversight** over the Insolvency Professionals, Insolvency Professional Agencies, Insolvency Professional Entities and Information Utilities.
- It has also been designated as the **'Authority' under the Companies (Registered Valuers and Valuation Rules), 2017** for regulation and development of the profession of valuers in the country.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Which of the following statements best describes the term 'Scheme for Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets (S4A)', recently seen in the news? (2017)

(a) It is a procedure for considering ecological costs of developmental schemes formulated by the Government.

(b) It is a scheme of RBI for reworking the financial structure of big corporate entities facing genuine difficulties.

(c) It is a disinvestment plan of the Government regarding Central Public Sector Undertakings.

(d) It is an important provision in 'The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code' recently implemented by the Government.

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- Several efforts were made by the RBI and the government to fight bad debts of banks. One of the measures included launching of Scheme for Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets (S4A Scheme) for addressing the large stressed assets of the corporate sector with banks.
- The S4A Scheme aims at financial restructuring of big debt projects by allowing the lender (bank) to acquire equity of the stressed project.
- The scheme makes financial restructuring of large projects and at the same time helping the lender's ability to deal with such stressed assets.
- **Therefore, option B is the correct answer.**

Source: IE

Stubble Burning

For Prelims: Bio-Decomposer, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Stubble Burning, Turbo Happy Seeder (THS) machine.

For Mains: Impacts on Stubble Burning.

Why in News?

Recently, the Delhi government announced that it would spray **Pusa bio-decomposer** free of cost over 5,000 acres of paddy fields in the city as this would **help in controlling stubble burning and air pollution during winter.**

What is Pusa Bio-Decomposer?

▪ About:

- It is essentially a **fungi-based liquid solution** that can soften hard stubble to the extent that it can be easily mixed with soil in the field to act as compost.
 - The fungi thrive at 30-32 degree Celsius, which is the temperature prevailing when paddy is harvested and wheat is sown.
- It produce **enzymes to digest cellulose, lignin and pectin in paddy straw.**
- **It is developed by the [Indian Council of Agricultural Research \(ICAR\)](#)** and named after ICAR's campus at Pusa in Delhi,
- It rapidly **converts crop residues, animal waste, dung and other waste into organic manure.**

- It is an inexpensive and effective technology for agricultural waste and crop residue management.
- **Benefits:**
 - The decomposer **improves the fertility and productivity of the soil** as the stubble works as manure and compost for the crops and **lesser fertiliser consumption** is required in the future.
 - The soil loses its richness due to stubble burning and it also destroys the useful bacteria and fungi in the soil, apart from causing harm to the environment.
 - It is an **efficient and effective, cheaper, doable and practical technique** to stop stubble burning.
 - It is an **eco-friendly and environmentally** useful technology and will contribute to achieve [Swachh Bharat Mission](#).

What is Stubble Burning?

- **About:**
 - Stubble (parali) burning is a method of removing paddy crop residues from the field to sow wheat from the last week of September to November, coinciding with the withdrawal of [southwest monsoon](#).
 - Stubble burning is a process of setting on fire the straw stubble, left after the harvesting of grains, like paddy, wheat, etc. It is usually required in areas that use the combined harvesting method which leaves crop residue behind.
 - It is a common practice in **October and November across North West India**, but primarily in Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Effects of Stubble Burning:**
 - **Pollution:**
 - Emits large amounts of **toxic pollutants in the atmosphere which contain harmful gases** like methane (CH₄), Carbon Monoxide (CO), Volatile Organic compounds (VOC) and carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.
 - These pollutants disperse in the surroundings, may undergo a physical and chemical transformation and eventually adversely affect human health by causing a **thick blanket of smog**.
 - **Soil Fertility:**
 - Burning husk on the ground **destroys the nutrients in the soil**, making it less fertile.
 - **Heat Penetration:**
 - The heat generated by stubble burning **penetrates into the soil, leading to the loss of moisture** and useful microbes.
- **Alternatives to Stubble Burning:**
 - **In-Situ Treatment of Stubble:** For example, crop residue management by zero-tiller machine and Use of bio-decomposers.
 - **Ex-Situ (off-site) Treatment:** For example, Use of rice straw as cattle fodder.
 - **Use of Technology-** For example **Turbo Happy Seeder (THS) machine**, which can uproot the stubble and also sow seeds in the area cleared. The stubble can then be used as mulch for the field.

What is Other Related Initiative?

- The State Governments of Punjab, National Capital Region (NCR) States and the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) have developed [detailed monitorable action plans](#) based on the framework by the **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)** to tackle the problem of air pollution.

Way Forward

As we know, burning stubble destroys a helpful raw material, pollutes the air, causes respiratory diseases

and worsens greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, the need of the hour is to **make constructive use of stubble as animal feed and further utilise technology** by enabling various alternatives like **Turbo-Happy Seeder Machine and Bio-Decomposer etc.**

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. What is/are the advantage/advantages of zero tillage in agriculture? (2020)

1. Sowing of wheat is possible without burning the residue of previous crop.
2. Without the need for nursery of rice saplings, direct planting of paddy seeds in the wet soil is possible.
3. Carbon sequestration in the soil is possible.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (d)

- **Zero Tillage, also called no-till farming, is a cultivation technique** in which the soil is disturbed only along the slit or in the hole into which the seeds are planted, the reserved detritus from previous crops covers and protects the seedbed.
- As per a study, it has been found that farmers in north India can not only **help reduce air pollution but also improve the productivity of their soil** and earn more profits if they stop burning their crop residue and instead adopt the concept of no-till farming.
- Under zero tillage, the direct seeding of wheat into unploughed soil and with rice residues left behind has proved very beneficial.
 - It saved on water, labour and use of agrochemicals, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and improved soil health and crop yield and thus benefitted both farmers and the society at large. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- **Direct Seeded Rice (DSR) is a viable option to reduce the unproductive water flows.** DSR refers to the process of establishing a rice crop from seeds sown in the field rather than by transplanting seedlings from the nursery.
 - Conventional rice establishment system requires a substantial amount of water. It has been reported that water up to 5000 litres is used to produce 1 kg of rough rice.
 - However, with increasing shortage of water, dry DSR with minimum or zero tillage further enhances the benefits of this technology by saving labour. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- No tilled soils tend to be cooler than others, partly because a surface layer of plant residues is present. Carbon is sequestered in the soil enhancing its quality, reducing the threat of global warming. **Hence, statement 3 is correct. Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.**

Mains

Q. Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata are the three mega cities of the country but the air pollution is much more serious problem in Delhi as compared to the other two. Why is this so? (2021)

Source: TH

Economically weaker Section (EWS) Quota

For Prelims: Reservation, Attorney-General of India, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, affirmative action, Basic Structure Doctrine.

For Mains: Implications of Economically weaker Section (EWS) Quota.

Why in News?

Recently, the **Attorney-General of India** articulated that the **10% quota for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)** of society does not erode the rights of the **Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes or the Other Backward Classes**.

What are the Government's Views?

- **Doesn't Harm Quota of Other Classes:** The **EWS quota** was given independently of the already **existing 50% reservation granted for the backward classes**, that is, the scheduled communities and the OBCs.
 - The **Attorney general** rejected arguments by petitioners that the exclusion of backward classes from the EWS quota amounted to discrimination, as they have been **loaded with benefits by way of affirmative actions**.
 - For example, the members of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities have been given several benefits under the Constitution, including **Article 16(4)(a)** (special provision for promotion), **Article 243D** (reservation in panchayat and municipality seats), **Article 330** (reservation in the Lok Sabha) and **Article 332** (reservation in state legislative assemblies).
- **Necessary to Uplift the Weaker Section:** The reservation for the backward classes, and now the EWS quota, should be considered by the court as “one single approach of the state intended for the upliftment of the weaker sections of the society”.
 - Altogether **18.2% of the total population in the general category belonged to EWS** and referred to the **Multi-dimensional Poverty Index** used by the **Niti Ayog**, which would be about 350 million (3.5 crores) of the population.
- **Confer the Constitution:** The **reservation** for OBCs, SCs and STs fall under different silos other than the EWS quota and it does not violate the basic structure of the Constitution.
- **Examples:** As per the written submissions submitted by government referred to how the top court had stood by the validity of the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009**.
 - The court had held that the 2009 Act **seeks to remove all barriers, including financial and psychological barriers** which a child belonging to the weaker section and disadvantaged group has to face while seeking admission and therefore upheld it **under Article 21 of the Constitution**.

What are the Opponent's views?

- The amendments **run contrary to the constitutional scheme**, where no segment of available seats/posts can be reserved, only on the basis of economic criteria.
- The amendments also run contrary to the judgment pronounced in the **Indra Sawhney V. Union of India 1992 case**, that a **backward class cannot be determined only and exclusively with reference to economic criteria**.
- The amendments **alter the 50% quota limit** set up in **Indra Sawhney V. Union of India 1992 case**, which according to the petitioner is a part **Basic Structure of the Constitution**.

What is Economically Weaker Section (EWS) Quota?

▪ About:

- The **10% EWS quota** was introduced under the **103rd Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2019** by amending [Articles 15 and 16](#).
 - It inserted **Article 15 (6) and Article 16 (6)**.
- It is for **economic reservation** in jobs and admissions in educational institutes for **Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)**.
- It was enacted to promote the welfare of the poor not covered by the 50% reservation policy for [Scheduled Castes \(SCs\)](#), [Scheduled Tribes \(STs\)](#) and [Socially and Educationally Backward Classes \(SEBC\)](#).
- It enables both the **Centre and the States** to provide reservations to the **EWS of society**.

▪ Significance:

- **Addresses Inequality:**
 - The **10% quota is progressive** and could **address the issues of educational and income inequality in India** since the **economically weaker sections of citizens** have **remained excluded** from attending higher educational institutions and public employment due to their financial incapacity.
- **Recognition of the Economic Backwards:**
 - There are many people or classes other than backward classes who are **living under hunger and poverty-stricken conditions**.
 - The proposed reservation through a constitutional amendment would **give constitutional recognition to the poor from the upper castes**.
- **Reduction of Caste-Based Discrimination:**
 - Moreover, it will **gradually remove the stigma associated with reservation because reservation has historically been related to caste** and most often the upper caste looks down upon those who come through the reservation.

▪ Concerns:

- **Unavailability of Data:**
 - The Union or state governments have **no such data to prove that 'upper' caste individuals**, who have less than Rs 8 lakh annual income, **are not adequately represented in government jobs** and higher educational institutions. There is a strong possibility that they are actually over-represented in these places.
- **Arbitrary Criteria:**
 - The criteria used by the government to decide the eligibility for this reservation is vague and is not based on any data or study.
 - Even the SC questioned the government whether they have checked the **GDP per capita for every State** while deciding the monetary limit for giving the EWS reservation.
 - Statistics show that the **per capita income in states differs widely** - Goa is the state having the highest per capita income of almost Rs. 4 lakhs whereas Bihar is at the bottom with Rs.40,000.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following are regarded as the main features of the "Rule of Law"? (2018)

1. Limitation of powers
2. Equality before law
3. People's responsibility to the Government
4. Liberty and civil rights

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a)** 1 and 3 only
(b) 2 and 4 only

(c) 1, 2 and 4 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: (c)

- The 'Rule of Law' may be defined as a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with human rights norms and standards.
- It requires, as well, measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness and procedural and legal transparency.
- **Key Tenets of Rule of Law**
 - **Equality before law, hence, 2 is correct.**
 - Equal protection of law,
 - Existence and preservation of liberty and civil rights, **hence, 4 is correct.**
 - Limitation of powers of executive and legislature, **hence, 1 is correct.**
 - Responsibility of government towards masses. **Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

Mains

Q. Whether National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) can enforce the implementation of constitutional reservation for the Scheduled Castes in the religious minority institutions? Examine. **(2018)**

Source: [TH](#)

47th AIBD Annual Gathering

For Prelims: Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD), 47th AIBD Annual Gathering

For mains: Role of Media during Covid-19 Pandemic

Why in News?

India's Presidency of the prestigious [Asia-pacific Institute of Broadcasting Development \(AIBD\)](#) has been extended for one more year.

- This was unanimously **decided by the AIBD member countries** at the two-day **General Conference of the Institute** held in New Delhi.

What is Asia-pacific Institute of Broadcasting Development (AIBD)?

- **About:**
 - The **Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD)** was established in 1977 under the aegis of [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural](#)

Organization (UNESCO).

- It is a unique regional **inter-governmental organisation servicing countries of the [United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific \(UN-ESCAP\)](#)** in the field of **electronic media development**.
- Its secretariat is situated in **Kuala Lumpur** and is hosted by the Government of Malaysia.
- **Objective:**
 - The AIBD is mandated to **achieve a vibrant and cohesive electronic media environment in the Asia-Pacific region** through policy and resource development.
- **Founding Members:**
 - The **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**, the **[United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#)**, and the **United Nations Educational, Scientific Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)** and The **Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU)** are founding organizations of the Institute and they are non-voting members of the General Conference.
- **Members:**
 - Broadcasters from 26 countries in the Asia Pacific region including India are full members of the organisation.
- **The 47th AIBD Annual Gathering:**
 - The 47th AIBD Annual Gathering/20th AIBD General Conference and Associated Meetings was **held in New Delhi**.
 - It witnessed a range of discussions, presentations and idea exchange sessions especially focusing on the topic of **“Building a Stronger Future of Broadcasting in post pandemic era”**.
 - A **five-year plan for co-operative activities and exchange programmes** was also finalised.
 - All the participating countries and member broadcasters **pledged to work together for a sustainable broadcasting environment**, latest technology know-how, finest content

How has AIBD Proved Significant in the Covid-19 Pandemic Era?

- AIBD leadership kept **the member countries connected online** during the **Covid-19** pandemic and also maintained a **constant dialogue on how media can mitigate the impact of the pandemic**.
- **Member countries were immensely benefitted through sharing of information** on the latest developments in the medical field, positive stories of Covid warriors and more importantly in countering fake news which was spreading faster than the pandemic.
- AIBD continued its **training and capacity building programmes even during lockdowns**. 34 training programmes were conducted in 2021 alone and were focused on tradition as well as emerging issues like climate change, green technologies, sustainable development, faster reporting, programming for children etc.
- With increase in the use of internet in broadcasting, **training of journalists in cyber security journalism has become imperative**.
 - AIBD is the first set up to take this up as part of its training programmes.
- It is the media which brought the world on one platform during the difficult phase and reinforced the spirit of one global family.

Source: PIB

Social Audit of Social Sector Schemes

For Mains: Social Audit of Social Sector Schemes and its benefits

Why in News?

Recently, the Rajasthan government has decided to **set up a specialised social and performance audit authority** to conduct social audit of schemes, a first-of-its-kind in the country.

What is the Significance of this Decision?

- **Ensure Public Accountability:**
 - The authority will **ensure public accountability, transparency and citizen participation** in implementation of government schemes, programs and services, and also conduct performance assessment of implementing agencies.
- **Assess the Quality Service Delivery:**
 - The authority will also **assess the quality service delivery** by the government schemes and programs.
 - It will also **perform people satisfaction surveys** to ascertain the outcome of various schemes.
- **Plan Social Audit and Performance Audit:**
 - The authority will **plan, conduct and finalise the social audit and performance audit of the government departments**, undertakings, schemes (central and state), programs, projects and activities in the state of Rajasthan.
 - It will **ascertain the efficiency and effectiveness of the services delivery** and whether public money has been spent economically.
- **Identify and Build Capacity of Civil Services Organisation:**
 - It will provide technical assistance towards effective implementation of various schemes and programmes; provide technical assistance to finance and planning department towards strengthening of annual plans and outcome budgeting; and assess the **quality standards of development and infrastructure works** in rural and as well as urban areas.

What is Social Audit?

- **About:**
 - Social Audit is the **audit of a scheme jointly by the Government and the people**, especially by those who are affected by the scheme or its beneficiaries.
 - Social audit is different from financial audits **which involve inspecting and assessing documents** related to financial transactions in an organization to provide a true picture of its profits, losses and financial stability.
- **Social Audit and MGNREGA:**
 - Under Section 17 of the MGNREGA, **all works executed under the program must undergo a social audit.**
 - Every Social Audit Unit is entitled **to funds equivalent to 0.5% of the MNREGA expenditure** incurred by the State in the previous year.
 - The audit **involves quality checks of infrastructure** created under the MNREGA, financial misappropriation in wages, and checking for any procedural deviations.
 - The report titled **'Social audit calendar vs audits completed'** was released recently by the Union Rural Development Ministry (MoRD) highlights that **only 14.29% of the planned audits have been completed in 2021-2022.**
 - The Ministry also held that failure to carry out a social audit of the [Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme \(MGNREGS\)](#) by states will invite action, including withholding of funds.
 - However, it is the **Centre that bears the administrative cost of these Social Audit Units**, and the inordinate delay in the release of funds has left many of these cash-strapped units nearly paralysed.
- **Challenges:**
 - **Lack of Administrative Will:**
 - The **lack of adequate administrative and political will** in institutionalising social audits to deter corruption has meant that social audits in many parts of the country are not independent of the influence of implementing agencies.

- The Social Audit Units of some states such as Kerala, Telangana, Himachal Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, had not received the administrative funds that the Centre owes them. Therefore, **auditors' wages have been delayed** by three months to one year.
- **Resistance and Intimidation:**
 - Social audit units, including village social audit facilitators find it difficult to even access primary records for verification.
- **Lack of People's Participation:**
 - People's participation has been minuscule due to the lack of education, awareness and capacity building among the common masses.
- **Absence of Independent Agency:**
 - There is an **absence of an independent agency** to investigate and act on social audit findings.

Way Forward

- Citizens groups **need to campaign for strengthening social audits** and make real progress in holding the political executive and implementing agencies accountable.
- **Team of social audit experts should be established** in each district who are responsible for training social audit committee members (stakeholders).
- **Training programmes should be created on social auditing methods** such as conducting and preparing social audit reports, and presentation at Gram Sabha.
- **The system of social audits needs synergetic endorsement** and a push by multiple authorities to establish an institutionalised framework which cannot be undermined by any vested interests.

[Source: TH](#)

eSIMs Technology

For Prelims: eSIMs Technology, Technology related to Telecommunication.

For Mains: Advantages and Disadvantage of eSIM Technology.

Why in News?

Apple Inc., an American multinational technology company, has come up without a **physical SIM slot** or an eSIM in order **to access mobile networks**.

Switch Operators at Will

Mobile phone users may soon be able to change operators on a whim, thanks to embedded SIM, or eSIM cards. Telecom providers will be able to raise their game to retain users, say company executives and experts

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Its uses...

Subscribers can use the eSIM to activate a mobile tariff plan without recourse to a physical SIM



Mobile number portability, which allows consumers to change operators without altering numbers, will become easier with eSIM

Who or what will suffer...

Carriers will have to work harder to retain or acquire new customers



This may lead to competition intensifying



Margins may be hurt as customer cost may rise

Telcos' Stance

Vodafone Idea & Bharti Airtel say they are ready to work with eSIMs

Airtel & Reliance Jio have already partnered with Apple to sell eSIM enabled Apple Watches

Its current application...

eSIMs are largely being used for IoT and Machine-2-Machine solutions

Challenges

The handset ecosystem is at a nascent stage

eSIMs adoption rate among consumers has been slow as it has been introduced only on high-end devices

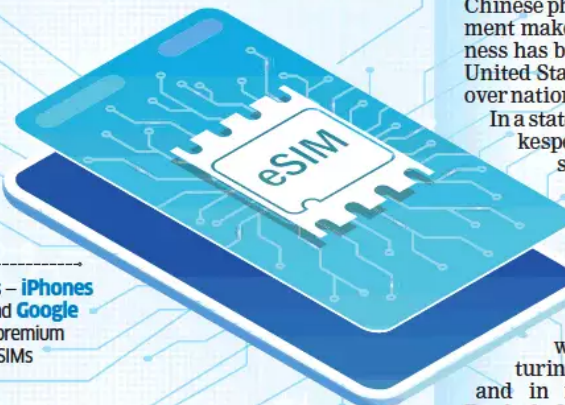
Only a few smartphones – iPhones XS, XS Max, XR and Google Pixel 3, which are premium devices – support eSIMs

Future Outlook

eSIM penetration in India is less than 1%. It is expected to grow to 25% by 2025



Globally, the eSIM market is estimated to grow to \$978.3 million in 2023 from \$253.8 million in 2018



What is an e-SIM?

- eSIMs were first established in 2012.
- It is **an embedded SIM**, which is permanently embedded in the same hardware of a regular sim card chip.
- Just like a traditional SIM card, an **eSIM also consists of some components**, which are part of a phone's internal organs. They also function the same way, acting as **a unique identifier for telecom operators** and other consumers to reach your exact smartphone when they make a call or send a text.
- However, being attached to the motherboard also allows re-programming, letting users switch operators **without having to replace any physical SIM cards**.

What are the Advantages?

- **Security:**
 - An eSIM provides security to sim theft, as there is no physical element to pull out and use in another device.
 - Attackers cannot use your phone after being robbed to breach your social media or bank accounts.
- **One less opening on your phone:**
 - One less opening on the frame of your phone reduce the likelihood of elements like dust and water entering the phone.
 - It also saves some space on the inside of the phone **to be used elsewhere**.

What are the Disadvantages?

- **Emergencies:**
 - If your phone stops working, runs out of battery or simply falls and gets a cracked screen, your communication is brought to a complete standstill with eSIMs. Traditional SIMs,

meanwhile, can be quickly pulled out of the affected phone and into another backup device or secondary phone.

- **Unusable in countries with no eSIM support:**
 - eSIM phones cannot be used in a country **where the telecom operators simply don't support the technology yet.**
 - This isn't an issue if your phone supports both eSIM and traditional SIMs, but is a problem on devices like the US-version iPhone 14, which will solely rely on eSIM alone.
- **Telcos have more control:**
 - An eSIM may save one's initial trip to the telecom operator's store to get a SIM card, but one has to rely on the operator while switching one's phone.
 - Operators may charge extra for **eSIM plans or for switching phones**, in the future.

[Source: IE](#)

Gun Violence

For Prelims: Arms (Amendment) Act 2019

For Mains: Challenges and Issues related to Society, Arms (Amendment) Act 2019

Why in News?

Gun violence is an issue that is hotly debated in different countries.

- Anti-gun activists have often pointed to the **killing of innocents in mass shootings** in public places and **called for a ban on the purchase of guns by civilians in US also** raise concerns over increasing **gun culture in India.**

What are the Arguments in favor of Access to Guns?

- Some people believe that **guns can actually make crime less likely** by raising the cost of committing a crime. They have particularly pointed out that it is hard to quantify the number of lives that have potentially been saved by civilians who held guns, leave alone the number of crimes that never happened **because the potential victims held a gun.**
- Some researchers have found that there is a **strong negative relationship between access to firearms among blacks in the US and incidents** of lynching. The finding implies that access to firearms helped blacks better protect themselves against incidents of lynching.

What is the State of Gun Ownership in India?

- The **Small Arms Survey of 2018** claimed that **civilian gun ownership in India** stands at an astounding 70 million, **second only to the US.**
 - The figure seems bizarre, given that gun licenses in India number just 3.4 million, over a third of them in Uttar Pradesh.
- **In 2016**, India ranked 3rd in terms of **gun-related homicides**, and over 90 % of the cases involved the use of unlicensed weapons. This indicates that the **seizure of illegal guns is just a small part of a larger problem.**
- According to the National Crime Records Bureau report of 2020, some **75,000 firearms were seized in that year**, about half of them from UP, which is widely known to be the hub of illegal arms manufacture.

What are the Gun Control Laws in India?

▪ Arms Act of 1959:

◦ About:

- It aims to be as extensive as possible to cover all aspects relating to the acquisition, possession, manufacture, sale, import, export, and transport of arms and ammunition in India.

◦ Requirements for Acquiring Gun License:

- The minimum age requirement for acquiring a gun license in India is 21 years.
- The applicant must not have been convicted of any offence involving violence or moral turpitude five years prior to commencing the application, not of an 'unsound mind' and not a threat to public safety and peace.
- Property qualification is not a criterion for acquiring a gun license.
- Upon receiving an application, the **licensing authority (i.e., the Home Ministry)**, asks the officer in-charge of the nearest police station to submit a report about the applicant after thorough vetting within a prescribed time.

◦ Other Features:

- It defines 'prohibited arms' as those that either discharge any noxious liquid or gas, or weapons that seek pressure to be applied on a trigger for discharge.
- It allows the use of smooth bore gun with a barrel of not less than 20 inches for crop protection or sport.
- **No entity is permitted** to sell or transfer any firearm **which does not bear the name of the maker**, manufacturer's number or any other visible or stamped identification mark.

▪ Arms Amendment Act 2019:

- The Arms Act amended in 2019 reduces the number of firearms that an individual can procure **from 3 to 2**.
- The validity of the license has been **increased from the present 3 years to 5 years**.
- It also enlists specific provisions on curtailing the use of licensed weapons to ensure social harmony.
- The **punishment of imprisonment is increased between 7 and 14 years**, along with a fine for the offense of acquisition, possession or carrying of prohibited ammunition without a license.
 - It prohibits the conversion of one category of firearms to another without a license.
 - Unlawful manufacture, sale and transfer are liable for an imprisonment term not less than seven years which could be extended to life, with a fine.

Way Forward

- One way is to impose severe gun controls and severely restrict who can buy or own a weapon. American laws are too loose and too lenient in this regard.
- India too needs to review and tighten laws relating to the acquisition and possession of firearms.

[Source: TH](#)