

CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF (CDS)

General Anil Chauhan recently assumed charge as the country's second Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).



About:

- General Anil Chauhan was commissioned into the 11 Gorkha Rifles of the Indian Army in 1981 and has served a range of staff and operational appointments including that of Director General of Military Operations.
- The CDS post has been vacant for over nine months since the death of the first CDS Gen Bipin Rawat in a chopper crash in December 2021.
- This is the first instance since independence, of a three-star Lieutenant General rank officer taking over as a four-star General after retirement.
- The Chief of Defence Staff of the Indian Armed Forces (CDS) is the military head and permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) of the Indian Armed Forces.
- The Chief of Defence Staff is the highest-ranking uniformed officer on active duty in the Indian military and chief military adviser to the Minister of Defence.
- The Chief also heads the Department of Military Affairs.

DADA SAHEB PHALKE AWARD

President Droupadi Murmu recently gave away the National Film Awards for the year 2020 under various categories at the 68th edition of the ceremony.



About:

- The Dadasaheb Phalke Award was conferred on veteran actor Asha Parekh, an accomplished Indian classical dancer who has also been a director and producer.

- The Dadasaheb Phalke Award is India's highest award in the field of cinema.
- It is presented annually at the National Film Awards ceremony by the Directorate of Film Festivals, an organisation set up by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- The recipient is honoured for their "outstanding contribution to the growth and development of Indian cinema".
- The award prize consists of a golden lotus, a cash prize of ₹10 lakh and a shawl.
- The award was introduced by the Government of India to commemorate Dadasaheb Phalke's contribution to Indian cinema, who is popularly known as and often regarded as "the father of Indian cinema".
- It was first presented in 1969. The first recipient of the award was actress Devika Rani, "the first lady of Indian cinema".

ANNEXATION OF FOUR UKRAINIAN REGIONS BY RUSSIA

Russian President Vladimir Putin recently announced that Russia is annexing four regions of Ukraine.



About:

- The four regions being annexed are Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine and Kherson and Zaporizhzhia in southern Ukraine.
- The separatist Donetsk and Luhansk regions in eastern Ukraine have been backed by Moscow since declaring independence in 2014, weeks after the annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.
- The southern Kherson region and part of the neighboring Zaporizhzhia were captured by Russia soon after Putin sent troops into Ukraine on February 24, 2022.
- Together with Crimea that Russia annexed in 2014, Russia now claims 20% of Ukrainian territory.
- The four territories create a crucial land corridor between Russia and the Crimean peninsula, annexed by Moscow in 2014.

ARMED FORCES (SPECIAL POWERS) ACT

The central government has extended for another six months the application of the disturbed area under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, AFSPA in 12 districts of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.



About:

- The AFSPA will be extended for six months in nine districts -- Dimapur, Niuland, Chumoukedima, Mon, Kiphire, Noklak, Phek, Peren, and Zunheboto -- and 16 police stations areas in four other districts -- Kohima, Mokokchung, Longleng, and Wokha of Nagaland.
- It has been extended in certain parts of five other districts of the two northeastern states to facilitate the armed forces to continue the anti-insurgency operations.

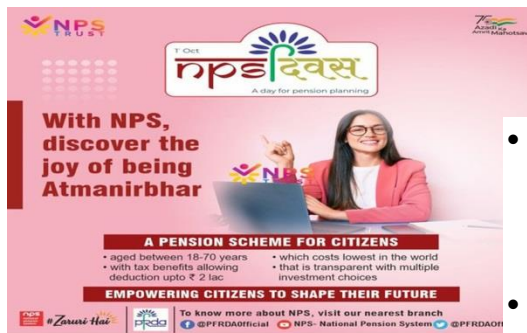
AFSPA:

- It is a law which gives armed forces (Army, the Air Force and Central paramilitary forces) the special powers and immunity to maintain public order in “disturbed areas”.
- **When is it applied?** It can be applied only after an area has been declared “disturbed” under section 2 of the act.
- **What is a Disturbed area?** An area can be considered to be disturbed due to differences or disputes among different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.
- **Who declares an area as disturbed?** Section (3) of AFSPA empowers the governor of the state/Union territory to issue an official notification declaring the state or a region within as a “disturbed area”, after which the centre can decide whether to send in armed forces.
- The ‘special powers’ of armed forces under Section 4 are:
 - ‘Power to use force, including open fire’ at an individual if he violates laws which prohibit (a) the assembly of five or more persons; or (b) carrying of weapons.
 - ‘power to arrest’ without a warrant; (Under section 5 the Armed Forces have to hand over the arrested person to the nearest Police Station “with the least possible delay”.

- ‘power to seize and search’ without any warrant any premise.
- These armed forces are immune from prosecution unless Union Government provides sanction to the prosecuting agencies.

NATIONAL PENSION SYSTEM DIWAS

Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority, PFRDA will observe 1st of October as the National Pension System Diwas (NPS Diwas).



About:

- It aims to promote pension and retirement planning among the citizens. PFRDA is organising this campaign under ‘Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav’.
- The pension regulator aims to encourage every citizen, whether working professionals or self-employed professionals, to plan towards creating a pension corpus to ensure a financially sound future after retirement.
- NPS subscribers will enjoy the benefits of tax deduction on contribution, power of compounding and reap the benefits of regular income after retirement.

G20 SHERPA

India recently participates at 3rd G20 Sherpa meeting in Indonesia.



About:

- A Sherpa is a personal representative of the leader of a member country at an international Summit meeting such as the G8, G20, the Nuclear Security Summit etc.
- The Sherpa engages in planning, negotiation and implementation tasks through the Summit.
- They coordinate the agenda, seek consensus at the highest political levels, and participate in a series of pre-Summit consultations to help negotiate their leaders’ positions.

- Sherpas are career diplomats or senior government officials appointed by the leaders of their countries.
 - The term is derived from the Nepalese Sherpa people, who serve as guides for mountaineers in the Himalayas.
 - There is only one Sherpa per Summit for each member country; he/she is assisted by several sous Sherpas.
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UGC ISSUES GUIDELINES FOR ENGAGING FIELD EXPERTS IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

In News:

- Recently, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued guidelines for engaging "Professors of Practice" or distinguished experts from various fields at higher education institutions.

The University Grants Commission (UGC): Background:

- The Sargeant Report was the first attempt to formulate a national system of education in India in 1944.
- It recommended the formation of a University Grants Committee, which was established in 1945 to oversee the work of the three Central Universities of Aligarh, Banaras, and Delhi.
- Soon after independence, the University Education Commission was established (in 1948) under the chairmanship of Dr. S Radhakrishnan to report on Indian university education and suggest improvements and extensions.
- It proposed reorganising the University Grants Committee along the lines of the University Grants Commission of the United Kingdom, with a full-time Chairman and other members.
- As a result, the UGC was formally inaugurated in 1953 by Maulana Abul Kalam, the then Minister of Education, Natural Resources, and Scientific Research.
- However, the UGC was established as a **statutory body in November 1956** by the UGC Act 1956.

- It is set up by the Ministry of Education's **Department of Higher Education**.
- A proposal to replace it with another new regulatory body called the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) is under consideration by the Government of India.

Mandate:

- The UGC has the **unique distinction of being the only grant-giving agency** in the country which has been vested with two responsibilities of:
 - Providing funds
 - Coordination, determination and maintenance of standards in institutions of higher education.
- **The UGC`s mandate includes:**
 - Promoting and coordinating university education.
 - Determining and maintaining standards of teaching, examination and research in universities.
 - Framing regulations on minimum standards of education.

News Summary:

- **Background:**
 - The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 had recommended integrating vocational education with general education and strengthening industry-academia collaboration in higher education institutions (HEIs).
 - Towards this, the UGC has taken a new initiative to bring industry and other professional expertise into the academic institutions through a new category of positions called “**Professor of Practice**”.
 - The UGC has not earmarked funds for the scheme and says that such experts can be paid through funding from industries or through the institution’s own funds.

About the "Professors of Practice" initiative of UGC:

- **Objectives:**
 - To develop courses and curriculum to meet the industry and societal needs and enable the HEIs to work with industry experts.

- To bring in distinguished experts from various fields such as engineering, science, technology, entrepreneurship, management, commerce, media, literature, etc., into the academic institutions.
 - To enable the HEIs to formally associate with persons of eminence and encourage them to participate in experiential learning, research, training, skilling, etc., and to play mentoring roles.
 - **Eligibility:**
 - Distinguished experts who have made remarkable contributions in their professions from various fields.
 - However, this role is not open to those from the teaching profession, serving or retired.
 - Those who have proven expertise in their specific profession or role with at least 15 years of service/experience, preferably at a senior level.
 - A formal academic qualification is not considered essential for this position if they have exemplary professional practice.
 - These experts will also be exempted from the requirement of publications and other eligibility criteria stipulated for the recruitment of faculty members at the Professor level.
 - However, they should possess the skills to carry out the duties and responsibilities
 - **Significance:**
 - This will help to take real world practices and experiences into the class rooms and also augment the faculty resources in HEIs.
 - The engagement of such experts will not affect the number of sanctioned posts and the recruitment of regular faculty members.
 - In turn, the industry and society will benefit from trained graduates equipped with the relevant skills.
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INDIA-US TIES: DEPTH & NUANCE

Context

- India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on recent visit to Washington remarked that the US decision to provide Pakistan with a \$450 million sustenance package for Pakistan's aging **F-16 fleet** was "not fooling anybody".

- He also questioned the merits of the US-Pakistan partnership, saying it had “not served” either country.

Background of F-16 deal

- **Initiation:** The US first gave Pakistan F-16s in 1980s as a reward for its assistance in the Afghan war.
 - The US supplied weapons and money to Pakistan to unleash armies of jihadis against the Soviet Army.
- **Closure:** When the US objective was achieved with the Soviet Union’s departure from Afghanistan, the US too resized its relations with Pakistan.
 - The **Pressler Amendment**, aimed against Pakistan’s nuclear ambitions, froze it out of military assistance.
 - Pressler Amendment: It banned most economic and military assistance to Pakistan unless the president certified on an annual basis that Pakistan does not possess a nuclear explosive device.
- **Rejuvenating ties:** A decade later, the Bush Administration not only approved the release of previously blocked F-16s, but also provided a refurbishment package, and sale of new F-16s.

U.S. stand on Recent F-16 deal

- **About US’ F-16 package to Pakistan:** As per Defense Security Co-operation Agency press release, the \$450 million package includes technical and logistics services for follow-on support of Pakistan’s F-16 fleet.
 - It involves participation in several technical coordination groups, aircraft and engine hardware and software modifications and support, equipment support, manuals, precision measurement, and a range of related elements of aircraft maintenance.
 - This is the first American military assistance package to Pakistan after the Trump Administration ended defence and security co-operation with the country in 2018.
- **U.S. justification for deal:** The proposed sale does not include any new capabilities, weapons, or munitions and will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

- The deal will support the foreign policy and national security objectives of the United States by allowing Pakistan to retain interoperability with US in ongoing counter-terrorism efforts and in preparation for future contingency
- **Moral obligation:** As per United States Secretary of State Antony J Blinken, Washington holds “obligation” to provide military equipment to ensure that Pakistan’s F-16s are kept capable to deal with “clear terrorist threats” from al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.

Implications of F-16 deal

- **U.S. indication to India:** Owing to U.S. concerns on India’s “lukewarm” attitude to the sanctions against Russia, its “neutrality” in the war and strategy of “issue-based alignment”, the F-16 gesture to Pakistan could have been intended to convey that disapproval in concrete terms.
- **U.S. signal to China:** In the geopolitical churn arising from the Russia-Ukraine war, the US is trying to break China’s hold on Pakistan with sweeteners of its own.
- The Pakistan Air Force now has more Chinese JF-17 Thunder fighter jets than F-16s, but it continues to rely on the ageing American aircraft, as seen in India-Pakistan 2019 skirmish.

India’s concerns related to F-16 deal

- **Daunting India:** As per the online portal Security Risks Asia, the sustainment programme for Pakistan’s F-16 fleet would enhance conventional deterrence versus India.
- **Demonstration:** The last aerial skirmish between Pakistan and India in 2019 during which the PAF brought down a MiG-21 flown by IAF pilot Abhinandan Varthaman showed that the F-16 is the aircraft that Pakistan will use in any future encounter with India.
- **Pakistan defying U.S. deal:** The U.S State Department expressed concerns to the Pakistan Air force chief in 2019 that the F16s had been moved to “unauthorised” forward operating bases in defiance of an agreement with the US.
- As per its agreement with the US, Pakistan must station the F-16s at the Jacobabad air base in Sindh, and the Americans were upset at evidence that they had been shifted from there.
- The letter, quoted by a US media organisation, said that such actions by Pakistan risked allowing these weapons to fall in the hands of “malign actors”.