ADOPT A HERITAGE 2.0 PROGRAM

Recently, the deadline for Submission of Applications for "Adopt a Heritage 2.0" Program has been decided as December 31, 2023.

About the Adopt a Heritage 2.0 Program:

- It is a revamped version of the earlier scheme launched in 2017 and clearly defines the amenities sought for different monuments as per **the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (or AMASR Act), 1958.**
- The programme seeks collaboration with the private/public sector companies / trusts / societies / NGOs etc. through their CSR funding who intend to provide, develop, and maintain 'amenities' at centrally protected monuments and sites.

What is Adopt a Heritage Scheme?

- It is an initiative of the **Ministry of Tourism,** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Culture and the Archaeological Survey of India.**
- It was launched in September 2017 on the World Tourism Day.
- Under it, the government invites entities, including public sector companies, private sector firms, as well as individuals, to develop selected monuments and heritage and tourist sites across India.
- The project aims to encourage these entities to become **'Monument Mitras'** and take up the responsibility of developing and upgrading the basic and advanced tourist amenities at these sites.
- The corporate sector is expected to use **corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds** for the upkeep of the site.
- The Monument Mitras, in turn, will get limited visibility on the site premises and on the Incredible India website.

RIVER CITIES ALLIANCE

Recently, the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) on behalf of River Cities Alliance (RCA), has signed a Memorandum of Common Purpose (MoCP) with the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI), representing 124 cities/towns situated along the banks of the Mississippi River, USA

About River Cities Alliance:

- It was launched in 2021.
- It is a first-of-its-kind Alliance in the world, symbolising the successful partnership of the two Ministries i.e., **the Ministry of Jal Shakti and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.**
- **Objective:** To provide the member cities with a platform to discuss and exchange information on aspects that are vital for **sustainable management of urban rivers,** sharing best practices and supporting innovation.
- The Alliance is open to all river cities of India. Any river city can join the Alliance at any time.
- The alliance has been launched **initially with 30 cities** namely Dehradun, Rishikesh, Haridwar, Srinagar, Varanasi, Kanpur, Prayagraj, Farrukhabad, Mirzapur, Mathura, Bijnor, Ayodhya, Patna, Bhagalpur, Begusarai, Munger, Sahibganj, Rajmahal, Howrah, Jangipur, Hugli-Chinsurah, Berhampore, Maheshtala, Aurangabad, Chennai, Bhubaneshwar, Hyderabad, Pune, Udaipur and Vijayawada.
- It focuses on three broad themes- **Networking, Capacity Building and Technical Support.**
- The Secretariat of the Alliance is set up at the **National Institute for Urban Affairs (NIUA).**

GREEN VOYAGE2050 PROJECT

Recently, India has been selected as the pioneer lead country for the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Green Voyage2050 Project.

About Green Voyage2050 Project:

- The overall goal of the Project is to support effective implementation of the **Initial IMO GHG Strategy.**

- It provides **support to developing countries** in their efforts to reduce **Greenhouse Gas** emissions from ships.

- The Initial IMO Strategy sets out a clear vision and levels of ambition, one of which is to reduce the total annual GHG emissions by at least 50% by 2050 compared to 2008.

- It is envisaged that the project will strengthen **MARPOL Annex VI compliance,** facilitate sharing of operational best practices, catalyse the uptake of energy efficient technologies and explore opportunities for low- and zero-carbon fuels.

  Components of the project

  - o **Component 1 –** Developing global tools to support implementation of the Initial IMO GHG Strategy
  - o **Component 2 –** Capacity building, policy and NAP development
  - o **Component 3 –** Strategic partnership development
  - o **Component 4 –** Technology cooperation, innovation and pilot demonstrations

- **Partnering Countries:**
  - o The countries participating in the GreenVoyage2050 Project are: Azerbaijan, Belize, China, Cook Islands, Ecuador, Georgia, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka.
  - o These countries are participating as either a New Pilot Country (NPC) or a Pioneer Pilot Country (PPC).

- The GreenVoyage2050 Project, currently in its first phase, is funded by the **Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment** for an initial period up to December 2023 (NOK 64.5 million).

LOK SABHA EXPELS MAHUA MOITRA

Why in news?

- The Lok Sabha expelled Trinamool Congress member Mahua Moitra over the "cash-for-query" allegation through a voice vote amid chaos.
- Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister had moved the motion to expel Ms. Moitra as per the recommendation of Ethics Committee report.
  - The report found her guilty of sharing her credentials with others, accepted gifts for favours from a businessman.

About the Ethics Committee:

- **Objective:**
  - It oversees the moral and ethical conduct of members and examines cases of misconduct referred to it.
- **Appointment of members in Lok Sabha Ethics Committee:**
  - The committee should not contain more than 15 members.
  - The members of the Ethics Committee are appointed by the **Speaker** for a period of one year.
  - The Committee is currently headed by the BJP MP Vinod Kumar Sonkar.
- **Function**
  - The committee can examine every complaint relating to unethical conduct of a member of Lok Sabha referred to it by the Speaker and make such recommendations as it may deem fit.
  - The committee can formulate a Code of Conduct for members and suggest amendments or additions to the Code of Conduct from time to time.
- **Procedure for complaints**
  - **Any person** can complain against a Member through another Lok Sabha MP, along with evidence of the alleged misconduct, and an affidavit stating that the complaint is not "false, frivolous, or vexatious".
  - **If the Member himself complains, the affidavit is not needed.**

- o **The Speaker** can refer to the Committee any complaint against an MP.
- o **The Committee does not entertain complaints** based only on media reports or on matters that are sub-judice.
- o **The Committee makes a prima facie inquiry** before deciding to examine a complaint. **It makes its recommendations** after evaluating the complaint.
- o **The Committee presents its report to the Speaker**, who asks the House if the report should be taken up for consideration. There is also a provision for a half-hour discussion on the report.

Ethics Committee vs Privileges Committee:

- The work of the Ethics Committee and the Privileges Committee often **overlap**.
  - o The Rules (for example, **the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha**) applicable to the Committee of Privileges also apply to the ethics panel.
- An allegation of corruption against an MP can be sent to either body, but **usually more serious accusations go to the Privileges Committee.**
  - o **The mandate of the Privileges Committee** is to safeguard the "freedom, authority, and dignity of Parliament".
  - o These privileges are enjoyed by individual Members as well as the House as a whole.
  - o **An MP** can be examined for breach of privilege; **a non-MP** too can be accused of breach of privilege for actions that attack the authority and dignity of the House.
- **The Ethics Committee can take up only cases of misconduct that involve MPs.**

WHAT IS THE 'KAVACH' SYSTEM?

The ambitious automatic train protection (ATP) system, Kavach, has so far been deployed on 1465 route km and 139 locomotives (including Electric Multiple Unit rakes) on South Central Railway sections, as per a government release.

About 'Kavach' System:

- It is an indigenously developed **Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system.**

- It was developed by the **Research Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO)** under the Indian Railway (IR) in collaboration with the Indian industry.

- It is a set of electronic devices and Radio Frequency Identification devices installed in locomotives, in the signalling system, as well the tracks, that talk to each other using ultra-high radio frequencies to control the brakes of trains and also alert drivers, all based on the logic programmed into them.

- Since 2016, the railways have been carrying out field tests for Kavach on passenger trains.

Applications:

- o It is meant to provide protection by preventing trains from passing the signal at Red (which marks danger) and avoiding collisions.

- o The system can alert the loco pilot, take control of the brakes, and bring the train to a halt automatically when it notices another train on the same line within a prescribed distance.

- o The device also continuously relays the signals ahead to the locomotive, making it useful for loco pilots in low visibility.

- o It also controls the speed of the train through an automatic application of brakes in case the loco pilot fails to do so.

- o It helps the loco pilot in run the train during inclement weather conditions, such as dense fog.

- o An added feature is the centralised live monitoring of train movements through the Network Monitor System.

RBI MONETARY POLICY UPDATE

Why in news?

- The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)kept the repo rate unchanged for the fifth time in a row at 6.5 per cent.
- While announcing various steps, RBI also said that it will lay down guidelines for web aggregators of loan products to bring more transparency to digital lending.

Digital Lending

- Digital lending is the process of availing credit online.
  - It involves lending through web platforms or mobile apps, utilising technology in customer acquisition, credit assessment, loan approval, disbursement, recovery and associated customer service.
- Its increased popularity amongst new-age lenders can be attributed to expanding smartphone penetration, credit range flexibility and speedy online transactions.
- It includes products like Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL), which is a financing option (or simply a short-term loan product).
  - BNPL allows one to buy a product or avail a service without having to worry about paying for it immediately.

Steps taken by to regulate digital lending

- RBI has been designated as the nodal department for dealing with complaints against unauthorised digital lending platforms as well as mobile apps.
- In August 2022, **RBI issued the first set of guidelines for digital lending** in order to combat illegal activities by certain players.
  - These guidelines were issued in response to the recommendation of the Working Group on Digital Lending (WGDL).
- In September 2023, Union Finance Minister chaired a meeting with appropriate officials and launched a **multi-agency crackdown on illegal loan apps**.
  - To curb the menace of illegal loan apps, the RBI has been asked to prepare a 'whitelist' of legal loan apps.
    - At the same time, MEITY has been tasked with ensuring only such legal applications (list prepared by RBI) are available on app stores.

- o The RBI has been entrusted to ensure that the registration of payment aggregators be completed within a time frame.
  - ▪ A payment aggregator acts as a third party responsible for managing and processing merchants' online transactions.
- o The RBI has also been entrusted with monitoring 'mule or rented' accounts that may be used for money laundering.
- o RBI has further been asked to review and cancel dormant non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) to avoid their misuse by such app operators.

WHAT IS THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT (CD)?

India's Foreign Secretary and the UN Under Secretary General recently exchanged views on the Conference on Disarmament, where India is poised to assume the first presidency for the 2024 session.

About the Conference on Disarmament (CD):

- • The CD was formed in 1979 as the single multilateral disarmament negotiation forum of the international community after agreement was reached among Member States during the first special session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) devoted to disarmament (1978).
- • It succeeded other Geneva-based negotiating forums, which included the Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament (1960), the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament (1962-68), and the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (1969-78).
- • The CD and its predecessors negotiated major multilateral arms control and disarmament treaties such as:
  - o **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**
  - o Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction **(BWC)**

- o Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling, and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction **(CWC)**
- o **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).**
- Currently, the CD focuses its work on the following agenda items:
  - o Cessation of the **nuclear arms race** and nuclear disarmament.
  - o Prevention of **nuclear war,** including all related matters.
  - o Prevention of **an arms race in outer space.**
  - o Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon states against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.
  - o New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons.
  - o Comprehensive programme of disarmament.
  - o Transparency in armaments.
- **Working:**
  - o The Conference is comprised of **65 member states**, including the five NPT nuclear-weapon states and 60 other states of key military significance.
  - o In addition, every year, non-member states participate, upon their request, in the CD's work.
  - o The CD has **three sessions each year.**
  - o The CD conducts its work by consensus.
- **Relationship with the United Nations (UN):**
  - o While the CD is independent of the United Nations, its secretary is appointed by the UN Secretary-General.
  - o It is required to consider recommendations from the UNGA, and it submits reports annually or more often to the UNGA.
  - o The CD adopts its own Rules of Procedure and its own agenda, taking into account the recommendations of the UNGA and the proposals of its member states.