FLYING HIGH INTO AMRIT KAAL

Context

- The article highlights the significant strides in the development of civil aviation sector in India owing to policy push by the Government of India.

Statistics Related to Civil Aviation Sector in India

- As per International Air Transport Association (IATA), India is the **third largest domestic aviation market** in the world after China and the US and is expected to **overtake UK** to become the **third largest air passenger market** by 2024.

- It is also currently the **7th largest civil aviation market in the world** and is expected to become the third-largest civil aviation market within the next 10 years.

India's Unique Tryst with Commercial Aviation

- The initial history of Indian aviation can be traced back to February 18, **1911**, when the first functional Civil Aviation flight from Allahabad took off for Naini over a distance of 10 km by a French pilot named Henri Pequet.

- **JRD Tata** became the first Indian to pass out with 'No. 1' endorsed on his flying license and later he piloted the first flight in the history of Indian aviation.

- Indian aviation kicked off in **1932** with the introduction of the first airline, Tata Air Services and JRD Tata later came to be known as the "**Father of Indian civil aviation**".

- By **1994**, India repealed all laws regulating the formation of airlines and allowed the introduction of scheduled private airlines.

- This led to new airlines like Jet Airways and ModiLuft along with government-run airlines like Air India and Indian Airlines.

- Currently, around **ten major airlines** are offering air services in the Indian skies, including AirAsia, IndiGo, SpiceJet, Vistara, Akasa Air, Air India, Jet Airways, etc.

What are the Government Initiatives to Boost Civil Aviation in India?

- **RCS-UDAN scheme**: To stimulate regional air connectivity and make air travel affordable for the masses the Centre had launched the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) in 2016.

o The scheme provides connectivity to **unserved and underserved airports** via the revival of the existing airstrips and airports and make flight operations to **Tier-2** and **Tier-3 cities** commercially viable.

- **Production Linked Incentives (PLI) for drones**: The government issued guidelines for PLI for drones and drone components while aiming to house a $1.8 billion drone industry by 2026.

o Coupled with this there has been a massive **liberalisation of the drone policy** under which 25 forms have been reduced to just five and 72 types of fees have been reduced to four.

o Also, approximately 90 per cent of airspace has been marked as '**Green'** under which **no permission is required to operate drones**.

- **Digi Yatra policy**: It aims to provide passengers a seamless experience and **hassle-free movement** at airports without the need for verification of ticket and ID at **multiple touch points**.

- **Krishi Udan Scheme**: The civil aviation policy aims to contribute in the area of agriculture by transporting perishable food products of farmers from the hilly areas, north-eastern states and tribal areas.

- **Rescue Missions**: The Ministry of civil aviation had been instrumental in rescuing Indians and foreign nationals during emergencies. For instance, under Vande Bharat Mission, India operated air bubbles to facilitate the travel of 1.83 crore passengers during the various COVID-19 waves.

o Further, **Operation Ganga** rescued 22,500 Indian students from Ukraine at the peak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Conclusion

- The industry's stakeholders should further engage and collaborate with policy makers to **implement efficient and rational decisions** that would boost India's civil aviation industry.

- With the right policies and relentless focus on quality, cost and passenger interest, India would be well placed to achieve its vision of becoming the largest aviation market in the era of India's entry into Amrit Kaal.

PERIYAR TIGER RESERVE

A four-day bird survey conducted by the forest department has identified 231 species of birds in the Periyar Tiger Reserve, of which 11 species of birds were not recorded during the previous surveys.

About Periyar Tiger Reserve:

- **Location**: It is located in the **Western Ghats of Kerala.**
- It was declared a **Tiger Reserve in 1978**.
- It **gets its name from the River Periyar** which has its origin deep inside the reserve.
- Two main **rivers, Pamba and Periyar drain** the reserve.
- It is home to many **tribal communities** including the **Mannans and the Palians.**
- **Terrain**: **Hilly and undulating** with a **maximum altitude of 2016 m.**
- **Vegetation**: It consists of **tropical evergreen, semi- evergreen and moist deciduous**
- **Flora**:
- There are more than **171 species of grasses**.
- Important flora includes t**eak, mangoes, rosewood, jamun, jacarandas, terminalias**, tamarind, royal ponciana, bamboos etc.
- **Fauna**:
- Includes **Elephants, Wild Pigs, Sambar, Gaur, Mouse Deer, Dole or Barking Deer**, Indian Wild Dog and Tiger.
- The major **four species of primates** are also found at Periyar - t**he rare lion-tailed macaque, the Nilgiri Langur, Gee's Golden Langur, Common Langur** and Bonnet Macaque.
- It Is also being considered as the **habitat of the elusive Nilgiri Tahr.**

INDO-TIBETAN BORDER POLICE (ITBP)

Recently, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approved the raising of seven new battalions of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) force.

About Indo-Tibetan Border Police:

- **Indo-Tibetan Border Police** is one of the Central Armed Police Forces of India.

- It is a specialized mountain force and most of the officers and men are professionally trained mountaineers and skiers.

- **Origin:** It was raised in 1962, in the wake of the Sino-Indian War of 1962 for deployment along India's border with China's Tibet Autonomous Region.

- **Status:**ITBP was initially raised under the CRPF Act. However, in 1992, parliament enacted the ITBPF Act and the rules there under were framed in 1994.

- The motto of the Force: "Shaurya-Dridhata-Karma Nishtha" (Valour – Determination – Devotion to Duty).

- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs.

G20 CULTURE GROUP MEETING

Ministry of Culture is organising the First G20 Culture Group (CWG) meeting in Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh from 22nd to 25th February 2023.

About the G20 Culture Group meeting:

- The working group will have four meetings and they will be held in Khajuraho, Bhubaneshwar, and Hampi.

- The theme of the Khajuraho meet is "**Protection and Restitution of Cultural Property".**

Key facts about Khajuraho

- Khajuraho is an ancient city known for its majestic temples and elaborate sculptures.

- The Khajuraho Group of Monuments is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** which was constructed by the **Chandela Dynasty** between 950-1050 AD.

- These monuments are built in **Nagara-style architecture** and ornamented with intricate and detailed sculptures.

- The monuments include **Hindu and Jain**

- According to historical records, there were 85 temples in the temple site in Khajuraho, covering 20 square kilometres, in the 12th Century AD.

BIG INFRASTRUCTURE PUSH FOR VILLAGES ON BORDER

Why in news?

- The Union Cabinet has approved the allocation of Rs 4,800 crore for the Centre's Vibrant Villages Programme for the Financial Years 2022-23 to 2025-26.
- Also, the Cabinet Committee on Security approved the induction of over 9,000 troops in the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).

Vibrant Villages Programme

- **Background:**
  - Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) was announced in the Finance Minister's Budget Speech 2022.
  - The programme envisages coverage of border villages on **Northern border** having sparse population, limited connectivity and infrastructure, which often get left out from the development gains.
- **Coverage**
  - The Centrally sponsored village scheme will cover the border areas of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Ladakh.
- **Aims**
  - To ensure comprehensive development of these villages, thereby improving the quality of life of people living in identified border villages.
  - To encourage people to stay in their native locations in border areas, reversing outmigration from these regions and contributing to improved border security.
- **Implementation**
  - The programme will provide funding for the development of vital infrastructure and creation of livelihood opportunities in 19 districts, 46 border blocks, four states, and one UT.

- o It will cover 2,963 villages with 663 villages included in the first phase.
- o The programme assists in identifying and developing the economic drivers based on local human and natural resources of these border villages
- o Key outcomes that have been attempted are: all-weather road, drinking water, 24×7 electricity – solar and wind energy, along with mobile and internet connectivity,"
- o With respect to tourism, regular field trips will be held for students as part of a Seema Darshan programme

- **Institutions involved**
- o Gram Panchayats will assist the district administration in developing vibrant village action plans.
- o Through this 100 % saturation of Central and state schemes will be ensured.

- **No overlap with Border Area Development Program**
- o The government has stated that VVP will not have an overlap with Border Area Development Program (BADP).
- ▪ The Department of Border Management, MHA has been implementing the BADP through the State Governments/ UT Administrations as part of a comprehensive approach to Border Management.
- ▪ It covers 460 border blocks of 117 border districts in 16 States and 2 UTs
- ▪ The programme aims to meet the special development needs of the people living in remote and inaccessible areas (within 0-10 km) situated near the international border.
- ▪ It also aims to saturate the border areas with the essential infrastructure.

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)

- **About**
- o ITBP is a specialized Armed Police Force of the Nation which was raised in the wake of Chinese aggression in 1962 with a modest strength of 4 battalions.
- o It was raised under an integrated 'guerrilla-cum-intelligence-cum-fighting Force' self-contained in supplies, communication and intelligence collection.
- **Role**

- o At present, the ITBP guards 3,488 km long India-China border ranging from the Karakoram Pass in Ladakh to Jachep La in Arunachal Pradesh.

- o Apart from this, the Force also has important roles in many internal security duties and operations against the Left-Wing Extremism in the state of Chhattisgarh.

- o ITBP also conducts relief and rescue operations as 'First Responders' for natural calamities in the Himalayan region.

- **Headquarter and administrative control**

- o The Force Headquarters is in New Delhi. It is under the administrative control of MHA.

  News Summary: Big infrastructure push for villages on border

- The Union Cabinet has approved two decisions:

- o raising of seven new ITBP battalions and

- o allocated ₹4,800 crore under the Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) to stop migration and boost tourism in villages bordering China.

- These two decisions are aimed at bolstering social and security framework along the China border.

  Counter to China at the LAC

- The government's decision to approve a financial package for border villages and upgrade security comes at a time when issues with China are still to be resolved along the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh.

- PLA troops are still squatting in the Depsang Plains and Demchok. China is also upgrading its infrastructure along the LAC.

BBC'S I-T SURVEY

Why in news?

- The income tax department continued with its surveys for the second consecutive day on the premises of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) at Delhi and Mumbai.

- o BBC is the national broadcaster of the United Kingdom, based at Broadcasting House in London.

- As per the officials, I-T surveys were conducted in view of the BBC's deliberate non-compliance with the transfer pricing rules and its vast diversion of profits.

What is Income Tax Survey (I-T Survey)?

- I-T Survey is conducted to collect information on hidden or undisclosed income and property. The survey comes under Section 133A and Section 133B of the IT Act, 1961.
- These survey sections allow the IT authority to enter only a business premise and not a residential premise of the assessee.
- The IT authority can verify cash, books of accounts, documents, stock, and place marks of identification on any books of account or other documents.
- The I-T authority may also impound and retain any books of account or other documents after recording reasons for doing so.
  o The provisions for impounding or seizing the goods were introduced only by the **Finance Act, 2002.**

What is an Income Tax Search (I-T search)?

- A search typically refers to what is called a raid — although the word raid has not been defined anywhere in the Income-Tax Act.
- However, "search" has been defined under Section 132 of the Act.
- IT searches include a thorough inspection of buildings, places of business, or residential places in tax evasion cases.
- Under this Section, the I-T Department can carry out a process of inspection by entering and searching any building where it has reasons to believe someone is in possession of undisclosed income or property like money, bullion, gold.

What is the difference between a search and a survey?

- Surveys are a milder form of search operations and their main objective is to find information. Whereas, searches are to find unaccounted wealth and records of such transactions.
- While surveys can be conducted only during business hours, searches can be conducted at any time.

- Surveys can only take place on the business premises, while searches can be conducted at any premises business or residential.
- In cases of non-cooperation, authorities conducting searches can break open any door or window; however, it cannot be done during a survey.

THE MENTAL HEALTHCARE ACT 2017: DOES IT PROTECT PATIENTS' RIGHTS AND DIGNITY?

Why in News?

- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in a report flagged the "**inhuman and deplorable**" condition of all 46 government-run mental healthcare institutions across the country.
- The NHRC's observations were made after visits to all operational government facilities, **to assess the implementation of the Mental Healthcare Act (MHA), 2017**.

What was the Background in which the MHA was Enacted?

- MHA's predecessor - the Mental Healthcare Act, 1987, **prioritised the institutionalisation of mentally-ill** people and did not afford any rights to the patient.
- It also provided **disproportionate authority to judicial officers and mental health establishments** to authorise long-stay admissions against the informed consent of the individual.
- The 1987 Act embodied the ethos of the colonial-era **Indian Lunacy Act, 1912**, which linked criminality and madness.
- Hence, the intention was never to define illness but to protect social order, which -
  o **Not only violates Article 21** of the Indian Constitution which protects personal liberty,
  o But it also indicates **a failure of the government(s) to discharge the obligation** under various UN Conventions (ratified by India) relating to rights of persons with disabilities.
- The MHA 2017 was a **watershed moment** for the right to health movement in India, after the enactment of the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act of 2016.**

- This was the first time a **psychosocial** approach (not only a psychiatric approach) to mental healthcare was adopted and has shifted from providing only treatment to centring the rights and the will of the person.

What Does the Mental Healthcare Act 2017 Say?

- **It discourages long-term institutionalisation of patients** and reaffirms the rights of people to live independently and within communities.

- The government was made responsible for **creating opportunities to access less restrictive options for community living** - such as halfway homes, rehab homes, etc.

- The Act also **discourages using physical restraints** (such as chaining), objects to unmodified electro-convulsive therapy (ECT).

- It pushes for the **rights to hygiene**, sanitation, food, recreation, privacy, and infrastructure and recognises that **people have a capacity of their own** (unless proven otherwise).

- It also empowers people to make "**advance directives**" and can nominate a representative for themselves.

What Needs to be Done to Strengthen Mental Healthcare?

- The State Mental Health Authority **should meet at least four times** (as mandated under the Act), to oversee that the entire mental healthcare system is functioning effectively.

- **The model of reintegration and recovery** (needs to be replicated elsewhere):

o **Chennai's Institute of Mental Health** launched five halfway homes, where people can access the confidence and skills needed to manage themselves outside a structured institution.

o **Kerala** has also started half-way homes and community living centres, providing rehabilitation to people who are abandoned by family members.

- The need of the hour is to implement **rights and recovery-based approaches** to change attitudes and practices on the ground.