WHAT IS THE DEFENCE ACQUISITION COUNCIL (DAC)?

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) recently approved the capital acquisition of indigenously-developed military hardware worth Rs 70,584 crore.

About Defence Acquisition Council (DAC):

- **What is it?** The DAC is the **highest decision-making body** of the defence Ministry **on procurement.**
- **Objective**: To ensure **expeditious procurement of the approved requirements** of the **armed forces.**

- **Formation**: It was formed after the **Group of Minister's recommendations** on 'Reforming the National Security System', **in 2001, post Kargil War (1999).**

- **Composition**:
  o The **defence minister is the chairman** of DAC.
  o Its members include the **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)** and **chiefs of the Army**, **Navy, and Air Force**.

- **Functions:**
  o Give in-**principle approval of a 15 years Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan** (LTIPP) **for defence forces.**
  o **Accord of acceptance of necessity** to acquisition proposals.
  o **Categorization of the acquisition proposals** relating to 'Buy', 'Buy & Make', and 'Make'.
  o **Look into issues relating to single vendor clearance.**
  o **Take decisions regarding 'offset' provisions** in respect of acquisition **proposals above Rs 300 crore.**
  o Take **decisions regarding the Transfer of Technology** under the 'Buy & Make' category of acquisition proposals.
  o **Field trial evaluation.**

JAPAN-SOUTH KOREA SUMMIT

Why in news?

- Recently, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol met Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Tokyo - the first such meeting in 12 years.
- During this summit, both the countries agreed to resume regular visits between their leaders and take steps to resolve a trade dispute.

What are the issues between Japan and South Korea?

- **Colonization of Korean Peninsula by Japan**
  - Japan effectively colonized the Korean Peninsula between 1910 and 1945, in a regime that imposed Japanese names and language on Koreans.
  - During this period, Japan conscripted many into forced labor or forced prostitution in military brothels.
  - Japan paid $800 million in reparations to South Korea's military-run government in 1965, but this money was never distributed to victims.
  - Recently, Seoul has offered Tokyo concessions on South Korean demands for compensation over wartime forced labor.
  - However, it remains to be seen whether the South Korean public will accept reconciliation.
- **Longstanding territorial dispute**
  - The two sides also have a longstanding territorial dispute over a group of islands controlled by South Korea and claimed by Japan.
  - Regular visits between top leaders of both the countries were ended in 2012 after South Korean President Lee Myung-bak visited the disputed islands.
- **Escalation of tensions in recent years**
  - Tensions escalated in the past 10 years as conservative Japanese governments moved to rearm the country while stepping up attempts to whitewash Japan's wartime atrocities.
  - In 2018 South Korea's Supreme Court ordered Japan's Nippon Steel and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to compensate forced labour victims.

o In 2019, Japan placed export controls on chemicals used to make semiconductors and displays used in smartphones and other high-tech devices.

News Summary: What is the significance of this summit?

- **Shared security concerns in the region**

o Improved ties between South Korea and Japan could pave the way for the two U.S. allies to cooperate more closely on shared security concerns related to China and North Korea.

o Japan increasingly bolstered defense ties with the U.K., Australia, India and the Philippines.

o Hence, an improved relation between Japan and South Korea will further increase the security in the region.

- **For South Korea**

o South Korea is putting efforts to strengthen alliances to counter North Korea.

▪ North Korea has been expanding nuclear-capable missiles and issuing threats of pre-emptive nuclear strikes.

o For South Korea, stronger economic cooperation with Tokyo has become more crucial in the face of industrial supply chain disruptions and other global challenges.

- **For India**

o Improved ties between Japan and South Korea could potentially benefit India in various ways, especially in terms of economic and strategic relations.

▪ Japan and South Korea are two of India's largest trading partners in Asia.

▪ Both Japan and South Korea have significant technological expertise, and India has been trying to develop its technology sector as part of its "Make in India" campaign.

▪ From a strategic standpoint, Japan and South Korea are important partners for India in the Asia-Pacific region.

NIOT TO SET UP GREEN, SELF-POWERED DESALINATION PLANT IN LAKSHADWEEP
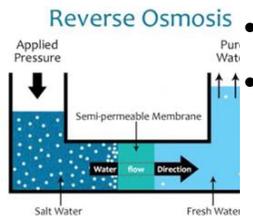
Why in News?

- Chennai-based National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) will set up a Desalination plant in Lakshadweep.

What is Desalination Technology?

- Desalination refers to the **removal of salts and minerals from water**.

- Today there are two main types of desalination technologies –

  o **Reverse Osmosis**

  o **Thermal Desalination**

RO Desalination:

- Reverse Osmosis (RO) desalination **uses the principle of osmosis to remove salt and other impurities, by transferring water through a series of semi-permeable membranes**.

- Osmosis involves 'a solvent' (such as water) naturally moving from an area of low solute concentration, through a membrane, to an area of high solute concentration.

- A reverse osmosis system applies an external pressure to reverse the natural flow of solvent and so seawater or brackish water is pressurized against one surface of the membrane.

- This pressure causes salt-depleted water to move across the membrane, releasing clean water from the low-pressure side.

- Seawater has **Total Dissolved Solids (TDS)**e., a measure of salinity, close to **35,000 parts per million (ppm)**, or equivalent to 35 g of salt per one litre/kg of water.

- An **effective network of RO plants reduces this down to about 200-500 ppm**.

- There are about 18,000 desalination plants in the world across 150 countries and **nearly half of Israel's water is sourced through desalination**.

Environmental Issues with RO Desalination Plants:

- Desalination is an expensive way of generating drinking water as it requires a high amount of energy.

- The other major environmental challenge it poses is the **deposition of Brine (highly concentrated salt water) along the shores**.

- The brine being deposited along the seashore is **triggering changes along the coastline and reducing the availability of prawn, sardine and mackerel**.
- Hyper salinity along the shore **affects plankton**, which is the main food for several of these fish species.
- Moreover, the **high-pressure motors needed to draw in the seawater end up sucking in small fish and life forms**, thereby crushing and killing them.

Is RO Water Good for Health?

- Earlier, **there were concerns that desalinated water was devoid of vital minerals such as calcium, magnesium, zinc, sodium, potassium and carbonates, referred to as TDS**.
- Highly desalinated water has a TDS of less than 50 milligrams per litre, which is pure, but does not taste like water.
  - However, **anything from 100 mg/l to 600 mg/l is considered as good quality potable water**.
- In today's times, **most RO plants put the water through a 'post-treatment' process whereby salts are added to make TDS around 300 mg/l**.
- Several of the home-RO systems that are common in affluent Indian homes also employ post-treatment and add salts to water.

About National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT):

- The NIOT was established in **1993** as an autonomous society under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences**.
- **Objective – To develop reliable indigenous technologies to solve various engineering problems associated with harvesting of non-living and living resources in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** which is about two-thirds of the land area of India.
- **Headquarters –** Chennai, Tamil Nadu

TRADE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR EXPORT SCHEME (TIES)

Recently, the Union Minister of State in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry informed the parliament that under Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES), financial

assistance for a total of 40 export infrastructure projects has been approved during 2019-2023.

About Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES):

- This scheme replaced a centrally sponsored scheme - Assistance to States for creating Infrastructure for the Development and growth of Exports **(ASIDE).**
- **Objective:** To **enhance export competitiveness** by bridging gaps in export infrastructure, creating focused export infrastructure and first-mile and last-mile connectivity.

- **Eligibility:** The Central and State Agencies, including Export Promotion Councils, Commodities Boards, SEZ Authorities and Apex Trade Bodies recognised under the EXIM policy of the Government of India; are eligible for financial support under this scheme.

- Under the scheme, financial assistance in the form of grants-in-aid is provided to Central / State Government owned agencies (or their Joint Ventures with major stake-holding by them) for setting up or upgrading export infrastructure in States / UTs.

- The States can avail of the scheme through their implementing agencies for infrastructure projects with significant export linkages like Border Haats, Land customs stations, quality testing and certification labs, cold chains, trade promotion centres, export warehousing and packaging, SEZs and ports/airports cargo terminuses.

- **Nodal Ministry:** The Department of Commerce (**Ministry of Commerce and Industry**) is implementing the TIES w.e.f. FY 2017-18 to assist Central and State Government agencies in creating appropriate infrastructure for the growth of exports.

E-POSTAL BALLOT FOR OVERSEAS INDIAN VOTERS

Why in news?

- An Election Commission proposal to facilitate **Electronically-Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) for overseas Indian voters** is under discussions with the Ministry of External Affairs.

- This was informed by the government in Rajya Sabha.

  Voting by overseas Indian voters

  What is the current process of voting by NRIs / overseas Indian voters?

- Currently, Election Commission of India (ECI) allows NRIs to register as overseas electors as long as they have not acquired the citizenship of another country.

- An NRI can vote in the constituency in which his/her place of residence, as mentioned in the passport, is located.

- He/she can only vote in person and will have to produce her passport in original at the polling station for establishing identity.

o Voting rights for NRIs were introduced only in 2011, through an amendment to the Representation of the People Act 1950.

- As per the government, **total number of overseas voters** on January 1, 2023 stood at over 1.15 lakh.

o In Lok Sabha elections of 2019, roughly 25,000 of them flew to India to vote.

  Origin of the idea of postal ballot

- A 12-member committee was set up after the 2014 Lok Sabha elections to study mainly three options — voting by post, voting at an Indian mission abroad and online voting.

o The committee ruled out online polling as it felt this could compromise "secrecy of voting".

o It also shot down the proposal to vote at Indian missions abroad as they do not have adequate resources.

- In 2015, the panel recommended that NRIs should be given the **additional alternative options of e-postal ballot and proxy voting**.

- The EC, in 2020, had written to the Law Ministry proposing NRIs be allowed to vote through postal ballots.

o Following this, the matter has been under consideration by the government.

  What has been proposed by the EC?

- To extend voting facility for NRI electors, EC had proposed the extension of Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) facility to these voters.

o ETPBS enables the voters to cast their vote on an electronically received postal ballot from their preferred location.

o ETPBS facility is so far available to:

▪ members of the armed forces and central armed police forces posted outside their home constituencies

▪ members of Indian embassies and diplomatic missions.

▪ Voters on election duty

▪ Voter above 80 years of age or person with disabilities (PwD)

▪ Voter who are under preventive detention

▪ Media persons (Journalist)

• According to the EC proposal, any NRI interested in voting through the postal ballot in an election will have to inform the Returning Officer (RO).

• RO should be informed in a time period not later than five days after the notification of the election.

• On receiving such information, the RO will dispatch the ballot paper electronically.

• The NRI voters will download the ballot paper, mark their preference on the printout and send it back.

• This ballot is to be sent back along with a declaration attested by an officer appointed by the consular representative of India in the country where the NRI is resident.

ZOJILA PASS

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) recently reopened the strategic Zojila Pass that acts as a gateway between the union territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir.

About Zojila Pass:

• Zojila Pass, also known as '**The Mountain Pass of Blizzards'**, is a strategic pass that **connects Kashmir Valley to Ladakh.**

• It is located on the **Srinagar-Kargil-Leh highway (NH-1)** at a height of **11,650 feet**.

• The pass remains **closed for almost half of the year** due to heavy snowfall.

- **History**:
- o It was the **site of the Indo-Pakistan War of 1947-48**.
- o It was **captured by militias aided by the Pakistan Army** in 1848, with the ultimate aim of capturing Ladakh.
- o However, the pass itself **was captured by the Indian Army** on 1st November 1948 in **an assault codenamed Operation Bison.**
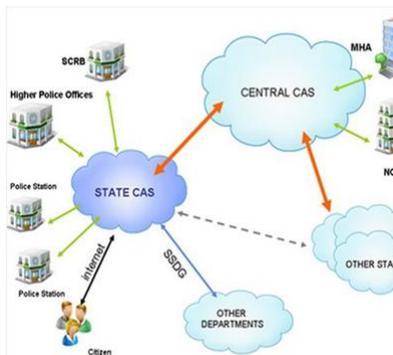
What is Zojila Tunnel?
- **Location:** It is an **under-construction** tunnel situated at **an altitude of 11,578 ft** (around 3,500 metres) on the **Srinagar-Leh Highway** in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The tunnel would provide **all-weather connectivity between Srinagar and Leh** on NH-1.
- **Total Length: 14.15 km.**
- It **will be India's longest road tunnel,** and **Asia's longest bi-directional tunnel**.
- It would be **9.5-meter wide** and 7.**57-meter high** in the **shape of a horseshoe.**

HOW TO USE TECHNOLOGY TO TRACK CRIME

Context
- The article highlights the critical need for seamless integration of technology across varied domains to track crime and aid in investigations.
- It also underlines the significance of coherent implementation of Crime and Criminal Tracking Network Systems (CCTNS) in this regard to handle scams like the recent one in Tamil Nadu.

Tackling Crime by e-Governance

- **Crime and Criminal Tracking Network Systems (CCTNS)**: It is a Mission Mode Project under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) of Govt. of India.
- o It aims at creating a comprehensive and integrated system for **enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of policing.**
- o This will be achieved through creation of a **nationwide networking infrastructure** for evolution of IT-enabled-

state-of-the-art tracking system around **'Investigation of crime and detection of criminals'**.

o   It thus seeks to **computerize Police Processes** (FIRs, Investigations, Charge sheets, Challans) and inter-link all Police Stations to **create a central database** by deploying **a Core Application Software (CAS)** in each state.

- **Inter-linkages in CCTNS**: The CCTNS feeds into the **Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS)** which covers e-courts, e-prisons, forensics and prosecution, leveraging technology to make criminal justice delivery more efficient.

- **Operability in CCTNS**: If a crime is committed, this requires five links to be dealt with, namely Investigation, FIR, a charge-sheet, prosecution and successful conviction.

o   Of these five, the last two have to do with ICJS and the way courts work. And rest three three links have to do with the police.

Way Forward

- The criminal **justice systems** should be **standardized, harmonized and integrated** since all citizens should be entitled to the same level of law and order, regardless of residence.

- In 2016, the MHA brought out a **model prison manual**. Many states haven't adopted this and have not updated their old prison manuals.

o   The **e-Prisons** should be implemented fully which seeks to computerize and integrate all the activities related to prison and prisoner management in the jail.

o   This will pave way for prisoners having access to Aadhaar, for enrolment and upgradation in the jail itself, thus making prison administration easier.

Conclusion

- The states need to have coherence in CCTNS implementation to appropriate its benefits fully by digitizing data, ensuring data migration, feeding FIR registration into CCTNS, launching citizen portals in a synchronous manner.

- This will pave way for India following principle of **"one country", "one police" and "one prison",** thus, ensuring justice by e-governance.