VANDE BHARAT EXPRESS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently flagged off the inaugural run of Vande Bharat Express from Dehradun to Delhi. It is the 17th Vande Bharat Express train to the nation.

About:

- Vande Bharat Express, earlier named as Train 18, is India's fastest indigenous train which has been built by the Integral Coach Factory, Chennai under the Government's Make in India.

- **Timeline**: It was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi between New Delhi and Varanasi on February 15, 2019 and is running with no reported issues in the last six months.

- It is India's first semi-high-speed train which will run from Delhi to Varanasi, with halts at Kanpur and Allahabad, at a maximum speed of 160 kmph by covering the distance in 8 hours.

- It is equipped with world class passenger amenities like On-board wifi entertainment, GPS based passenger information system, CCTVs, bio-vacuum toilets, rotating chairs in executive class, etc.

- The express will have two travel classes: executive and chair car, similar to the Shatabdi.

- Further, it has intelligent braking system with power regeneration for better energy efficiency thereby making it cost, energy and environment efficient.

- It is also the first locomotive-less train in the country.

MUMBAI TRANS HARBOUR LINK

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed happiness over India's longest sea bridge Mumbai Trans Harbour Link.

About:

- This 22-kilometer long 6-lane sea bridge from Sewri to Nhava in Mumbai will ensure Seamless, direct connectivity between South Mumbai and Raigad.

- The bridge will also reduce distance between Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Raigad, Mumbai-Pune Expressway and Mumbai-Goa Highway, and save one hour travel time including fuel and transportation cost.

NITI AAYOG GOVERNING COUNCIL

The Eighth meeting of the NITI Aayog Governing Council concluded at the new Convention Centre in Pragati Maidan in New Delhi.

About:

- **What is it?** The Governing Council, which embodies NITI Aayog's objectives of cooperative federalism, presents a platform to discuss inter-sectoral and federal issues to accelerate the implementation of the national development agenda.

- **Timeline:** The First Meeting was held in February 2015, the Second Meeting in July 2015, the Third Meeting in 2017 and the Fourth meeting in June 2018.

- **Composition:** The Governing Council of NITI Aayog comprises the –

  o Prime Minister of India, Chief Ministers of all the States and UTs with Legislatures and Lt. Governor of Andaman and Nicobar Islands,

  o four Union Ministers as ex-officio members and

  o three Union Ministers as Special Invitees.

THE NEW PARLIAMENT: A FOUNTAINHEAD OF THE PEOPLE'S HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS

Context

- In its 75th year of Independence, India is set to witness a historic moment with the **inauguration of the new Parliament House** on May 28, 2023.

- After using a Parliament building that is nearly a century old and **symbolised a colonial era**, India finally has a new structure in independent India.

History of Old Parliament House

- The building, with a diameter of 560 ft and circumference of one-third of a mile, was **designed by Sir Herbert Baker, who along with Sir Edwin Lutyens** was chosen to design the new imperial capital in Delhi.

- Britain's Duke of Connaught had laid the foundation stone of Parliament House **on February 12, 1921**, and said it would stand "as the symbol of India's rebirth to yet higher destinies".

- According to archival documents and rare old images, a grand ceremony was held **on January 18, 1927 to mark the opening of the majestic building,** then called as the **CouncilHouse.**

The Need of a New Parliament

- **Narrow Space**

o Two more floors were added to this building in 1956 to accommodate more staff and other offices.

o The need for yet more office space led to the construction of the Parliament Annexe in 1975.

o In 2002, the Parliament Library was added to the complex. For similar reasons, an extension of the Parliament Annexe was constructed in 2016.

- **Lack of State-of-Art Utilities**

o Despite these new constructions in the Parliament, the need for modern facilities in the main Parliament House remained unfulfilled.

o In the present Parliament House, the **communications infrastructure and technology are antiquated.** The acoustics of all the halls need major improvement.

- **Distressed Infrastructure**

o It had to be retrofitted multiple times, which left **little space for further improvements**.

o A web of wires is squeezed under covers. The inner ceilings of both the Chambers and the Central Hall were provided with **safety nettings to prevent any tiles and plaster from falling.**

o The **multiple wirings for computers, air conditioners and security gadgets gave the complex a highly shabby look.**

o In 2012, the Rajya Sabha proceedings had to be adjourned due to **a peculiar smell coming out from AC ducts.**

The new parliament building is a part of a larger plan; **Redevelopment of Central Vista.**

The Central Vista Project

- The Central Vista is **a 3 km stretch** in the heart of New Delhi that runs **from the Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate.**

- It is flanked by large green spaces and significant structures such as Parliament, the Secretariat buildings, and the National Archives.
- The Central government is **redeveloping the three-km-long Central Vista and Parliament**.
- A common Central secretariat will be constructed for all ministries that are currently spread over many buildings across Delhi.
- The Parliament House and North and South Blocks will not be demolished, but their usage may change.
- The rest of the buildings that came up post-1947, including Shastri Bhavan and Krishi Bhavan, are likely to be demolished.

Features of New Parliament Building

- **Spacious Legislative Chambers**
- **Optimum Space Utilisation**
- **State-of-the-Art Constitutional Hall**
- **Sophisticated Audio-Visual Systems**
- **Superior Library Experiences**
- **Energy-efficient Parliament**
- **An Embodiment of Indian Heritage**
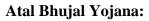
Conclusion

As a fountainhead of the people's hopes and aspirations, particularly those of the younger generations, the New Parliament would work as **a lighthouse to guide us in our ambitious journey to build 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat.'**

ATAL BHUJAL YOJANA

Recently, The fourth meeting of the National Level Steering Committee (NLSC) of the Atal Bhujal Yojana was held in New Delhi.

Atal Bhujal Yojana:

- Atal Bhujal Yojana (ATAL JAL) is being implemented as a **Central**

Sector Scheme since **April, 2020** in 8220 water stressed Gram Panchayats of 229 administrative blocks/Talukas in 80 districts of **seven States Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.**

- **Implementation Period:** for **5 years (2020-21 to 2024-25).**

- **Goal:** To **demonstrate community-led** sustainable ground water management which can be taken to scale.

- **Objective:** The major objective of the Scheme is to **improve the management of groundwater resources in select water stressed** areas in identified states.

- **Funding: Total** outlay of INR 6000 crores. Out of this, **INR 3,000 crores will be as loan from the World Bank** and INR 3,000 crores as matching contribution from the Government of India.

- **Program Components:**

o **Institutional Strengthening & Capacity Building Component:** This component is for strengthening institutional arrangements and capacities in the states.

o **Incentive Component:** The incentive component is for incentivizing the States for convergence amongst various schemes of the Central and State Governments.

- **Nodal agency:** The Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, **Ministry of Jal Shakti.**

Outcomes of meeting:

- Overall performance of the scheme is **satisfactory** and the achievements under Disbursement Linked Indicators are also noteworthy.

- The Committee decides Atal Bhujal Yojana should be taken up for **continuation for another two years** beyond 2025.

SUDARSHAN SHAKTI EXERCISE

Recently, The Sapta Shakti Command of the Indian Army conducted exercise 'Sudarshan Shakti 2023' along the western borders in Rajasthan and Punjab.

About Sudarshan Shakti Exercise:

- **Aim:** It aimed at starting the **transformation of the forces into a modern, lean**, and agile fighting combination **capable of leveraging**

new-age technologies.

- The exercise was designed to validate operational plans in a **network-centric environmen**t with elements of **combat power, combat support and logistic support**.

- These elements were exercised in a **synergised application** under all domains of enemy threat including **Grey Zone Warfare as part of high tempo operations.**

- **Scope and objectives**:

o Integrated use of force multipliers like **special forces and niche technologies** covering **drones, tethered drones, loiter ammunition** as well as key aspects of electronic warfare made it a unique event.

- This exercise also facilitated in meeting the stated objectives of **five pillars of transformation** enunciated by COAS General Manoj Pande in January 2023.

- 'Sudarshan Shakti 2023" highlights the **commitment of the South Western Command** and its associated units towards maintaining **a high level of operational preparedness** and capability to fight a technology intensive future conflict.

NITI AAYOG'S 'STATE HEALTH INDEX': KERALA, TAMIL NADU, TELANGANA TOP STATES IN COVID YEAR, DELHI WORST UT

Why in News?

- According to the NITI Aayog's annual 'State Health Index' (5th edition) for the Covid year of 2020-21, the three southern states of **Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana** emerged as the top performers among the 'larger states'.

- The NITI Aayog is learnt to have shared the report - **Healthy States Progressive India Report on the Ranks of States and Union Territories** - with the Health Ministry.

The State Health Index:

- It was launched by the **NITI Aayog in 2017** to measure the performance of states and UTs on a weighted composite score incorporating 24 health performance indicators clubbed under **three domains.**

- The Aayog brings out the index (annually) in collaboration with the **Union Health Ministry and World Bank.**

- **The objective of this index** is to not just look at the states' historical performance but also their incremental performance.
- **The index encourages healthy competition** and cross-learning among States and UTs and nudges states/UTs towards building robust health systems and improving service delivery through their **policymaking and resource allocation.**
- As a result, **the MoHFW had linked the index to incentives under the National Health Mission**.
- o This has been instrumental in shifting the focus from budget spending and inputs to outputs and outcomes.
- This index is an example of both **competitive and cooperative federalism.**

   Domains and Indicators of the Index:
- **The 'Health outcomes' include indicators** like neonatal mortality rate, total fertility rate, sex ratio at birth, immunisation coverage, proportion of institutional deliveries, etc.
- **The 'Key inputs/processes'** is a measure of health infrastructure available, including proportion of functional 24X7 primary healthcare centres, etc.
- **The 'Governance and Information' domain** includes average occupancy of three key posts at state level, average occupancy of the chief medical officer, days taken for fund transfer, etc.

   Highlights of the 5th Edition of the State Health Index:
- **Overall performance among the 19 larger states:**
- o **Top performers:** Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana have secured the top three positions in terms.
- o **Worst performer:** Bihar, UP and MP occupy the bottom three positions, ranking 19th, 18th, and 17th, respectively.
- o **Incremental performance from 2019-20 to 2020-21**: Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, and Odisha have emerged as the top three performers among the larger states.
- **In the category of smaller states**: Tripura has demonstrated the best overall performance, followed by Sikkim and Goa. On the other hand, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur occupy the bottom three positions.

- **Among the UTs**: Lakshadweep has secured the top position in terms of overall performance, while Delhi has been placed at the bottom.

DENOTIFIED, NOMADIC AND SEMI-NOMADIC TRIBES

Recently, A three-day national conclave on denotified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes concluded in Hyderabad.

About Denotified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes:

- The De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes are the **most neglected, marginalized and economically and socially deprived** communities**.**

- Denotified tribes (DNTs) are communities that were '**notified' as being 'born criminal' during the British regime** under a series of laws starting **with the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 and 1947.**

- These Acts were repealed by the **Independent lndian Government in l952**, and these communities **were "De-Notified".**

- These tribes somehow escaped the attention of our developmental framework and thus are deprived of the support unlike Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

- **Development and Welfare Board**:

  o It has constituted by the ministry **in 2019 on the recommendation of National Commission formed in 2017.**

  o The Board has been mandated to **formulate and implement welfare** and **development programmes** for these communities.

  Scheme for Economic Empowerment of DNTs (SEED)

- **Aim:** To provide free **competitive exam coaching, health insurance, housing assistance and livelihood initiatives** at community level and financial assistance for construction of houses will be provided to the members of DNT/NT/SNT Communities.

- An amount of 200 crore has been allocated for this scheme — to be spent over **five years from FY2021-22 to FY2025-26**.

- **Nodal Ministry**: Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry.

  The National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes

- The **National Commission** for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes was constituted by the Ministry **in 2005.**
- Its mandate was to **study the socio-economic conditions of the "most disadvantaged and vulnerable sections of Indian society"** and to identify measures for their development.