

**POLITY****Fundamental Rights to Reside and to Move About Freely**

Recently, while setting aside an externment order against a journalist, the Supreme Court (SC) ruled that a person's fundamental right to reside and to move about freely anywhere in India cannot be refused on "flimsy grounds". Externment orders prevent the movement of a person in certain areas.

According to the SC, the drastic action of externment should only be taken in exceptional cases, to maintain law and order in a locality and/or prevent a breach of public tranquility and peace.

**Key Points****Freedom to Move Freely Throughout the Territory of India:**

- Article 19(1)(d) of the Indian Constitution entitles every citizen to move freely throughout the territory of the country.
- This right is protected against only state action and not private individuals.
- Moreover, it is available only to the citizens and to shareholders of a company but not to foreigners or legal persons like companies or corporations, etc.
- The freedom of movement has two dimensions, viz, internal (right to move inside the country) and external (right to move out of the country and right to come back to the country).
  1. Article 19 protects only the first dimension.
  2. The second dimension is dealt by Article 21 (Right to life and personal liberty).
- Restrictions on this freedom can only be imposed on two grounds which are mentioned in the Article 19(5) of the constitution itself, namely, the interests of the general public and the protection of interests of any scheduled tribe. For example:
  1. The Supreme Court held that the freedom of movement of prostitutes can be restricted on the grounds of public health and in the interest of public morals.
  2. The entry of outsiders in tribal areas is restricted to protect the distinctive culture, language, customs and manners of scheduled tribes and to safeguard their traditional vocation and properties against exploitation.

**Freedom to Reside and Settle in any part of the Territory of India:**

- According to Article 19(1)(e) of the Constitution, every citizen of India has the right "to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India."
- The object of the clause is to remove internal barriers within India or any of its parts.
- This right is also subject to reasonable restrictions mentioned in clause (5) of Article 19.
- Right to reside and the right to move freely throughout the country are complementary and often go together.

**Article 19 of the Constitution**

- Article 19 entails freedom of speech and expression.
- It implies that every citizen has the right to express his views, opinions, beliefs and convictions freely by word of mouth, writing, printing, picturing or in any other manner.
- **Article 19 guarantees to all citizens the six rights. These are:**
  1. Right to freedom of speech and expression.
  2. Right to assemble peaceably and without arms.
  3. Right to form associations or unions or co-operative societies.
  4. Right to move freely throughout the territory of India.
  5. Right to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India.
  6. Right to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business.

**GOVERNANCE****National Mission on Edible Oil-Oil Palm**

Recently, the Prime Minister announced a National Mission on Edible Oil-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP), with an investment of over Rs 11,000 crore over a five-year period. However, some environmentalists have raised concerns over the disastrous impact of palm oil plantations.

**Key Points****About:**

- NMEO-OP is a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme. It is proposed to have an additional 6.5 lakh hectares for palm oil by 2025-26.
- It will involve raising the area under oil palm cultivation to 10 lakh hectares by 2025-26 and 16.7 lakh hectares by 2029-30.

- Oil palm farmers will be provided financial assistance and will get remuneration under a price and viability formula.
- The Viability Formula is a Minimum Support Price-type mechanism and the government will fix this at 14.3% of Crude Palm Oil (CPO) price. It will eventually go up to 15.3%.
- Another focus area of the scheme is to substantially increase the support of inputs/interventions.
- Special assistance will be given to replant old gardens for their rejuvenation.

#### Special Focus:

- The special emphasis of the scheme will be in India's North-Eastern (NE) states and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands due to the conducive weather conditions in the regions.
- To attract industry to the NE and Andaman regions, a provision of Rs 5 crore of 5 mt/hr (million tonne per hectare) with pro-rata increase for higher capacity will be given.

#### Objective:

- To harness domestic edible oil prices that are dictated by expensive palm oil imports and become self-reliant in edible oil.
- To raise the domestic production of palm oil by three times to 11 lakh MT by 2025-26.

#### Significance of the Scheme:

- **Raise Farmers Income:** It is expected to incentivise production of palm oil to reduce dependence on imports and help farmers cash in on the huge market.
- **Rise in Yields & Reduction in Imports:**
  1. India is the largest consumer of vegetable oil in the world. Of this, palm oil imports are almost 55% of its total vegetable oil imports. It imports the rest, buying palm oil from Indonesia and Malaysia, soyoil from Brazil and Argentina, and sunflower oil, mainly from Russia and Ukraine.
  2. In India, 94.1% of its palm oil is used in food products, especially for cooking purposes. This makes palm oil extremely critical to India's edible oils economy.

#### Concerns:

- **Impact on Tribal Lands:**
  1. The oil palm is a water-guzzling, monoculture crop with a long gestation period unsuitable for small farmers and the land productivity for palm oil is higher than for oilseeds, which create apprehension for more land to be given for oil palm cultivation. In southeast Asia, the plantation of palm oil trees has replaced massive tracts of rainforests.
  2. It could also detach tribespeople from their identity linked with the community ownership of land and "wreak havoc on the social fabric".
- **Threat to Wildlife:** Focus areas are "biodiversity hotspots and ecologically fragile" and oil palm plantations would denude forest cover and destroy the habitat of endangered wildlife.
- **Palm is Invasive:**
  1. The palm is an invasive species that is not a natural forest product of northeastern India and its impact on the biodiversity as well as on soil conditions has to be analysed even if it is grown in non-forest areas.
  2. Invasive species are non-native species that spread and interfere in a new ecosystem by posing a serious threat to the native biodiversity. They don't allow local species to grow and wildlife to move through.
- **Health Concern:** Oil palm requires 300 litres of water per tree per day, as well as high Pesticide use in areas where it is not a native crop, leading to consumer health concerns as well.
- **Farmers not Getting Fair Price:**
  1. The most critical issue in the cultivation of oil palm has been the inability of farmers to realise a remunerative price of fresh fruit bunches (FFBs).
  2. FFBs (Fresh Fruit Bunches) of oil palm are highly perishable and need to be processed within twenty-four hours of harvest.

#### Way Forward

- If similar subsidies and support are extended to oilseeds which are indigenous to India and suited for dryland agriculture, they can help achieve self-reliance without dependence on oil palm.
- A solution would be to grow oil palm on agricultural land if farmers are willing to do it and the government incentivises it.
- Lastly, the success of mission oil palm will also depend on import duty on crude palm oil. In 2012, It was recommended that whenever the import price of crude palm oil falls below USD 800 per tonne, the import duty needs to be raised.

- The transformation this crop has brought about in the lives of farmer communities in Andhra Pradesh can help emulate the same in the other potential states as well. A strong and robust, long-term policy mechanism will give this crop required push across India.

### ECONOMY

#### **Substantial Investment Subsidies for Solar Power**

In recent years, the Government of India has introduced several solar irrigation schemes like PM KUSUM, Suryamitra Skill Development Programme, SPaRC Program, etc. These schemes seek to provide Substantial Investment Subsidies (SIP) and incentivise farmers to conserve groundwater and energy, increase farmer income and enable more efficient irrigation. SIPs promise a low carbon footprint, consistent energy availability, zero fuel costs and low operational costs. However, there are some issues associated with these schemes.

#### **Key Points**

##### **About Substantial Investment Subsidies:**

- The Government of India through PM KUSUM has been promoting solar irrigation pumps by offering Substantial Investment Subsidies (SIP).
- The objective of SIP is to provide subsidies to farmers for buying and installation of solar pumps and power plants.
- The farmer will be able to use the generated solar power to meet the irrigation needs and the excess solar power will be sold to power distribution companies (DISCOMs) at pre-fixed tariff.

##### **Need:**

- The massive power subsidies in the Indian agriculture sector has led to development of the irrigation-energy nexus. Electricity in the agriculture sector is supplied at subsidised rates.
- This irrigation-energy nexus is characterised primarily by depleting groundwater and a growing debt burden of power DISCOMs. SIP can help in breaking this irrigation-energy nexus and provide other benefits.

##### **Advantages of Offering SIP:**

- **Eco-friendly Approach:** SIPs will help move towards a zero-carbon footprint in the groundwater economy by decreasing reliance on fossil fuel-based electricity production.
- **Providing Water and Electricity Security:** The west-south corridor spanning from Punjab to Tamil Nadu has lower groundwater availability than the Ganga-Brahmaputra belt.
  1. Farmers in this corridor also face frequent power cuts, low voltage and receive stable electricity only at night.
  2. The west-south corridor will benefit significantly from introducing SIPs since the region has many solar hotspots and receives peak sunlight hours.
- **Reducing Burden of DISCOMs:** It will also help relieve the DISCOM's subsidy burden from Rs 30,000-35,000 per year per SIP.
- **Favourable Condition for Solar Energy Development:** SIPs now, are more affordable, owing to the falling price of solar photovoltaic [PV] cells.
  1. The recent rise in diesel prices has naturally increased the costs of irrigation.
  2. Therefore, introducing SIPs may boost agricultural growth while curbing the need to lay rural electric networks.

##### **Associated Challenges:**

- **Over-exploitation of Groundwater:** The only possible drawback of SIPs could be the risk of the over-exploitation of groundwater since on-demand cheap power will always be available after introduction of SIPs in the corridor.
- **Favours Medium and Large-scale Farmers:** The schemes that are launched for solar energy promotion, gives preference to farmers who are already using water-saving micro-irrigation systems.
- **High Initial Cost:** Despite subsidies, the initial capital investment remains high, raising questions about the viability of SIPs.
  1. Moreover, the operation and maintenance of solar PV systems require trained professionals and machine components, which may be hard to find in rural areas.
- **Costly Grid Connection:** The financial costs associated with grid connection can be enormous.
  2. According to the Centre for Science and Environment, installing a 100-kilowatt solar-powered system to an electricity grid costs around Rs 85 lakh.
  3. Due to this, SIPs might not be the silver bullet to solve the irrigation-energy nexus.

### Way Forward

- Awareness programmes about efficient water management practices and the benefits of SIPs must be undertaken through existing networks of farmers.
- Apart from promoting Joint Liability Groups (JLG) among small and marginal farmers, their inclusivity in existing solar irrigation schemes must also be ensured.

### 2.Small Finance Bank

Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has received applications from two more entities under the “on-tap” small finance bank licensing guidelines of 2019. An “on-tap” facility would mean the RBI will accept applications and grant licences for banks throughout the year.

#### Key Points

##### About:

- These are the financial institutions which provide financial services to the unserved and unbanked region of the country.
- Registered as a public limited company under the Companies Act, 2013.
- Needs to open at least 25% of its banking outlets in unbanked rural centres.
- Required to extend 75% of its adjusted net bank credit to the Priority Sector Lending (PSL). The RBI mandates banks to lend a certain portion of their funds to specified sectors, like agriculture, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), export credit, education, housing, social infrastructure, renewable energy among others.
- At least 50% of its loan portfolio should constitute loans and advances of up to Rs. 25 lakhs.
- The maximum loan size and investment limit exposure to a single and group debtor would be restricted to 10% and 15% of its capital funds, respectively. They cannot extend large loans.
- If the initial shareholding by promoters in the bank is in excess of 40% of paid-up voting equity capital, it should be brought down to 40% within a period of 5 years.
- Subject to Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) and Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) requirements.
  1. Banks are required to hold a certain proportion of their deposits in the form of cash known as the CRR.
  2. This minimum ratio (that is the part of the total deposits to be held as cash) is stipulated by the RBI.
  3. The share of Net Demand and Time Liabilities that a bank is required to maintain safe and liquid assets, such as government securities, cash, and gold is termed as SLR.

##### Eligibility for Setting up SFBs:

- Resident individuals/professionals with 10 years of experience in banking and finance.
- The companies and societies owned and controlled by residents.
- Existing Non-Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs), Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs), Local Area Banks (LABs) and payment banks that are owned and controlled by residents.

##### Activities:

- Primarily undertake basic banking activities of acceptance of deposits and lending to unserved and underserved sections including small business units, small and marginal farmers, micro and small industries and unorganised sector entities.
- Undertake other non-risk sharing simple financial services activities such as the distribution of mutual fund units, insurance products, pension products, etc. with the prior approval of the RBI.

##### Regulations:

1. SFBs are governed by the provisions of the:
2. Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934;
3. Banking Regulation Act, 1949;
4. Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999;
5. Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007;
6. Credit Information Companies (Regulation) Act, 2005;
7. Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Act, 1961;
8. Other relevant Statutes and the Directives issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and other regulators from time to time.

##### Guidelines for ‘on-tap’ Licencing:

- **Capital Requirement:** The minimum paid-up voting equity capital / net worth requirement shall be Rs. 200 crores. For Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks (UCBs), desirous of voluntarily transiting into SFBs, initial requirement of net worth shall be at Rs. 100 crores, which will have to be increased to Rs. 200 crores within 5 years from the date of commencement of business.

- **Scheduled Bank status to SFBs:** SFBs will be given scheduled bank status immediately upon commencement of operations.
- **Payments Banks Conversion to SFBs:** The payment banks can apply for conversion into SFB after 5 years of operations if they are otherwise eligible as per these guidelines.

#### **Scheduled Banks**

- Scheduled banks are banks that are listed in the 2nd schedule of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.
- The bank's paid-up capital and raised funds must be at least Rs. 5 lakh to qualify as a scheduled bank.
- Scheduled banks are liable for low-interest loans from the Reserve Bank of India and membership in clearinghouses.
- All commercial banks, including nationalized, international, cooperative, and regional rural banks, fall under scheduled banks.

### **ENVIRONMENT & BIODIVERSITY**

#### **Leaded Petrol Eradicated Globally: UNEP**

Recently, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) announced that the use of leaded petrol has been eradicated from the globe.

#### **Petrol/Gasoline**

- Gasoline, which is also called gas or petrol, is a mixture of volatile, flammable liquid hydrocarbons derived from petroleum and used as fuel for internal-combustion engines. It is also used as a solvent for oils and fats.
- Originally a by-product of the petroleum industry (kerosene being the principal product), gasoline became the preferred automobile fuel because of its high energy of combustion and capacity to mix readily with air in a carburetor.

#### **Leaded vs Unleaded Petrol**

- The main difference between leaded and unleaded fuel is the additive tetraethyl lead.
- The combustion of leaded petrol causes the lead to be released into the air.
- Lead is a heavy pollutant that does damage not only to the environment but also to the people who are exposed to it.

#### **Key Points**

##### **About:**

- It is a milestone that will prevent more than 1.2 million premature deaths and save world economies over USD 2.4 trillion annually. It is a huge milestone for global health and environment.
- UNEP warned that fossil fuel use in general must still be drastically reduced to stave off the frightening effects of climate change.

#### **Era of Leaded Petrol:**

- Until the 1970s, almost all the gasoline sold across the globe contained lead.
- When UNEP launched its campaign named Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles (PCFV) against leaded petrol in 2002, many major economic powers had already stopped using the fuel, including the United States, China and India. But the situation in lower-income nations remained dire.
  1. More than 100 countries around the world were still using leaded petrol, despite studies linking it to premature deaths, poor health and soil and air pollution. Concerns were first raised as early as 1924.
  2. In July 2021, it was eradicated from Algeria - the last country using leaded petrol.

#### **Need of Eradication:**

- **Pollution:**
  1. The transport sector is responsible for nearly a quarter of energy-related global greenhouse gas emissions and is set to grow to one third by 2050.
  2. Adding that 1.2 billion new vehicles would hit the streets in the coming decades.
  3. It includes millions of poor-quality used vehicles exported from Europe, the United States and Japan, to mid- and low-income countries.
- **Global Warming:**
  1. Recently, a report named Climate Change 2021 by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that Earth's average temperature would be 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer around 2030 compared to pre-industrial times.
  2. A decade earlier than projected, the rise has raised alarm bells about the use of fossil fuels.
- **Health :** Leaded petrol causes heart disease, stroke and cancer. It also affects the development of the human brain, especially harming children.

**Significance:**

- The end of leaded petrol is expected to support the realization of multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), including good health and well-being (SDG3), clean water (SDG6), clean energy (SDG7), sustainable cities (SDG11), climate action (SDG13) and life on land (SDG15).
- It also offers an opportunity for restoring ecosystems, especially in urban environments, which have been particularly degraded by this toxic pollutant.

**United Nations Environment Programme**

- About: The UNEP is a leading global environmental authority established on 5th June 1972.
- Functions: It sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for global environment protection.
- Major Reports: Emission Gap Report, Adaptation Gap Report, Global Environment Outlook, Frontiers, Invest into Healthy Planet.
- Major Campaigns: Beat Pollution, UN75, World Environment Day, Wild for Life.
- Headquarters: Nairobi, Kenya.
- Agreements Administered/Provided Secretarial Functions:
  1. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
  2. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
  3. Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)
  4. Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal
  5. Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
  6. Minamata Convention on Mercury
  7. Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer

**IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**

**New Algal Species: Andaman & Nicobar**

Recently, concerns were raised against the Centre's proposed monetisation of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railways (DHR).

**Key Points**

**About:**

- DHR was built in the British era between 1879 and 1881.
- It is located in the foothills of the Himalayas in West Bengal.
- It is the most outstanding example of a hill passenger railway. Opened in 1881, its design applies bold and ingenious engineering solutions to the problem of establishing an effective rail link across a mountainous terrain of great beauty.
- It was declared a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) World Heritage Site in 1999.

**Other Mountain Railways Declared as World Heritage Sites:**

- Nilgiri Mountain Railways located in the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu (South India) (2005)
- Kalka Shimla Railway located in the Himalayan foothills of Himachal Pradesh (Northwest India) (2008)

**UNESCO's World Heritage Sites**

- A World Heritage Site is a place that is listed by UNESCO for its special cultural or physical significance.
- The list of World Heritage Sites is maintained by the international 'World Heritage Programme', administered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.
- This is embodied in an international treaty called the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972.
- India has 40 world heritage sites, 32 cultural, 7 natural and 1 mixed.
- In 2021, Dholavira (Gujarat) and Ramappa Temple (Telangana) have been declared as world heritage sites.

**2. West Nile Virus Infections**

Recently, Russia warned of a possible increase in West Nile Virus (WNV) Infections this autumn as mild temperatures and heavy precipitation create favourable conditions for the mosquitos that carry it.

**Key Points**

**About:**

- It is a member of the flavivirus genus and belongs to the Japanese encephalitis antigenic complex of the family Flaviviridae.
- WNV is commonly found in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, North America and West Asia.
- Older people, children and those with weakened immune systems are most at risk.

**Origin:**

- WNV was first isolated in a woman in the West Nile district of Uganda in 1937.
- It was identified in birds in the Nile delta region in 1953. Before 1997, WNV was not considered pathogenic for birds.
- Human infections attributable to WNV have been reported in many countries for over 50 years.

**Transmission:**

- WNV is an infectious disease spread by infected mosquitoes. It spreads from birds to humans with the bite of an infected Culex mosquito. It can lead to a fatal neurological disease in humans.
- The virus causes West Nile fever in around 20% of cases, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). It is related to the Zika, Dengue and Yellow Fever Viruses.

**Symptoms:**

- Those infected usually have no symptoms or mild symptoms.
- The symptoms include a fever, headache, body aches, skin rash, and swollen lymph glands. They can last a few days to several weeks, and usually go away on their own.
- If West Nile virus enters the brain, it can be life-threatening. It may cause inflammation of the brain, called encephalitis, or inflammation of the tissue that surrounds the brain and spinal cord, called meningitis.

**Treatment:**

- There are no specific vaccines or treatments for human WNV disease.
- The best way to avoid WNV is to prevent mosquito bites.
- Treatment is supportive for patients with neuro-invasive West Nile virus, often involving hospitalization, intravenous fluids, respiratory support, and prevention of secondary infections.

**DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns. Gender equality in the armed forces remains a distant dream as policy makers tread carefully and prefer a status quoist approach rather than to undertake reform. Analyse. (250 words)**

**Ans:**

**Introduction**

In a major step towards gender equality, the Supreme Court recently allowed eligible women to take the examination for admission to National Defence Academy (NDA) scheduled to be held on September 5, 2021.

**Body**

- Earlier, in a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court (SC) has upheld a Delhi High Court order of 2010 that seeks to grant permanent commission to women officers at par with their male counterparts. Along with granting a role to women in combat arms, the judgment essentially highlights the denial of equal opportunity in their existing roles for promotion to higher commands.
  - **Need for the permanent commissioning of women in the armed forces**
1. A quick look at the past records reveals, all the arguments put forth against giving women more responsibility have been answered by the armed forces by giving women greater responsibility in uniform — the IAF has allowed women to become fighter pilots, and the Army has sent them to tough UN peacekeeping missions globally.
  2. Women officers are already commanding platoons, companies and second in command successfully, with male soldiers accepting orders from them as part of a professional force.
  3. Now they are being excluded from commanding a unit, only on the basis that they are women. This argument doesn't hold water.
  4. A professional force does not discriminate on the basis of gender, it works because of training, norms and culture. Denying women the posts will be an "extremely retrograde step" and "will inflict irreparable injury" to their dignity.
- Indeed, the court's strong statements against the gender stereotypes employed by the government come as a welcome relief. Equally, ensuring that women can hold permanent commissions in the army recognises the equal effort and service that they put in.

1. **Gender is not a hindrance:**As long as an applicant is qualified for a position, one's gender is arbitrary. It is easy to recruit and deploy women who are in better shape than many men sent into combat.
2. **Military Readiness:**Allowing a mixed-gender force keeps the military strong. The armed forces are severely troubled by falling retention and recruitment rates. This can be addressed by allowing women in the combat role.
3. **Effectiveness:**The blanket restriction for women limits the ability of commanders in theatre to pick the most capable person for the job.
4. **Tradition:**Training will be required to facilitate the integration of women into combat units. Cultures change over time and the masculine subculture can evolve too.
5. **Cultural Differences & Demographics:**Women are more effective in some circumstances than men. Allowing women to serve doubles the talent pool for delicate and sensitive jobs that require interpersonal skills, not every soldier has.

#### Challenges faced by women to get permanent commission

- More than a year into the verdict, the forces proclaimed that 70 per cent of women were eligible for PC, receiving widespread praise.
- However, a more careful look at the data reveals that of the 70 per cent women deemed fit, only 45 per cent were commissioned.
- This figure stands in stark contrast to 90 per cent of Short Service Commission (SSC) male officers receiving PC in 2020.
- Apart from delaying the sentence enforcement deadline from May 2020 to September 2020 after a series of extensions, the force erected four additional provisions that women officers must now clear for a PC.
- This was also set aside by the court in March 2021. After this Centre asked for miscellaneous clarification to Supreme court, delaying the process further.
- In its March 25 ruling, the Indian Army was directed to positively grant permanent commission to all WSSCOs who obtained 60% marks in their assessment subject to their meeting the medical criteria prescribed by the army's August 1 2020 order and receiving disciplinary and vigilance clearance.
- In its defence, the army maintains that lowering physical standards for women would lead to "catastrophic results for the nation's security and sovereignty" and that women are seeking special treatment.
- Data presented in the Rajya Sabha revealed that there was only one female officer in the forces for every 16 male officers, with the ratio in the army being 1 to 26.
- The uncertainty around tenure length, combined with patriarchal attitudes, resulted in women tending to jobs such as routine desk work.
- The Centre states that although women are equally capable, if not more capable than men, there might be situations that could affect the capabilities of women such as absence during pregnancy and catering to the responsibilities of motherhood, etc.
- To then simply add women to this existing patriarchal setup, without challenging the notions of masculinity, can hardly be seen as "gender advancement".
- Sexual harassment faced by women military officers is a global phenomenon which remains largely unaddressed, and women often face retaliation when they do complain. However, a relatively small 2015 study, which questioned 450 members of the armed forces on sexual discrimination in their workplace, found that sexual harassment is rampant in the military.
- In reality, there are several factors behind the decision to include women in the forces, including using the illusion of gender progressiveness within the army to shame populations for their gender inequities, brand them as backwards and use this to justify military control. Women's inclusion is criticized as just another manoeuvre to camouflage women's subjugation and service as women's liberation.
- Acceptance of women in the military has not been smooth in any country. Every country has to contend with sceptics who consider it to be a counterproductive programme. Additionally, every country has to mould the attitude of its society at large and male soldiers in particular to enhance acceptability of women in the military.
- Most women feel that their competence is not given due recognition. Seniors tend to be over-indulgent without valuing their views. They are generally marginalised and not involved in any major decision-making. They have to work twice as hard as men to prove their worth. Additionally, a woman is always under scrutiny for even minor slip-ups.

- The government has argued that if a woman is taken captive by insurgents/terrorists or as a Prisoner of War (PoW) by an enemy state, then it would become an international and deeply emotive issue which could have an impact on the society.
- The natural physical differences in stature, strength, and body composition between the sexes make women more vulnerable to certain types of injuries and medical problems. The natural processes of menstruation and pregnancy make women particularly vulnerable in combat situations.
- Most women accepted the fact that their presence amongst males tends to make the environment 'formal and stiff'. The mutual comfort level between men and women colleagues is often very low.

#### Way Forward

- There are examples of women soldiers in combat roles like in Israel, Germany, US and Australia. Therefore, Indian armed forces must draw inspiration and move towards gender mainstreaming in the Indian armed forces.
- This gender equality can be achieved by establishing professional standards and adhering to them without any bias.
- The judgment needs to be complemented by a change in mind sets internally, for male officers continue to see women as best suited for adjunct roles and not as equals.

#### Conclusion

While ensuring that women get their rightful place to serve in the armed forces before introducing any measure to improve gender equity, it should not weaken the fighting capabilities of the sword arms of national security.

### DAILY QUIZ

Q1. The term "Seventeen Point Agreement" is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of:

- a. Afghanistan      **b. Tibet**      c. Hong Kong      d. Xinjiang

Q2. India has entered into Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with which of the following countries?

1. Bhutan
2. Nepal
3. Thailand
4. Singapore
5. Malaysia

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- a. 1, 2 and 4 only  
b. 1, 2, 3 and 4 only  
**c. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5**  
d. 1 and 2 only

Q3. K.V. Kamath committee was in news recently, is related to which of the following?

- a. doubling farmers income  
**b. restructuring of loans impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic**  
c. foreign direct investment (FDI) in e-commerce  
d. privatisation of Public Sector Banks

Q4. Consider the following statements about Innovation for Defence Excellence (iDEX):

1. It is an initiative of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
2. It aims to promote innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

- a. 1 only  
**b. 2 only**  
c. Both 1 and 2  
d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q5. Consider the following statements:

1. Rojdi is an archaeological site belonging to the Indus valley civilization.
2. The ancient city of Dholavira has recently received the UNESCO world heritage site tag.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

- a. 1 only  
b. 2 only  
**c. Both 1 and 2**  
d. Neither 1 nor 2