

**POLITY**
**Role and Power of Governor**

The Governor acts in 'Dual Capacity' as the Constitutional head of the state and as the representative of the Union government. In recent years, the bitterness between states and Governors has been largely about the selection of the party to form a government, deadline for proving majority, sitting on Bills, and passing negative remarks on the state administration.

- Due to this, Governor is referred to with negative terms like an agent of the Centre, Puppet and rubber stamps.

**What are Constitutional Provisions Related to the Governor?**

- Article 153 says that there shall be a Governor for each State. One person can be appointed as Governor for two or more States. A Governor is appointed by the President and is a nominee of the Central Government.
- It is stated that the Governor has a dual role. He is the constitutional head of the state, bound by the advice of his Council of Ministers (CoM). He functions as a vital link between the Union Government and the State Government.
- Articles 157 and 158 specify eligibility requirements for the post of governor.
- Governor has the power to grant pardons, reprieves, etc. (Article 161).
- There is a CoM with the CM at the head to aid and advise the Governor in the exercise of his functions, except some conditions for discretion. (Article 163)
- The Governor appoints the Chief Minister and other Ministers (Article 164).
- Governor assents, withholds assent, or reserves the bill for the consideration of the President passed by the Legislative Assembly (Article 200).
- Governors may promulgate the Ordinances under certain circumstances (Article 213).

**What are the Friction Points in Governor-State Relations?**

- Governor is envisaged as an apolitical head who must act on the advice of the council of ministers. However, the Governor enjoys certain discretionary powers granted under the Constitution. For example,
  1. Giving or withholding assent to a Bill passed by the state legislature,
  2. Determining the time needed for a party to prove its majority, or
  3. Which party must be called first to do so, generally after a hung verdict in an election.
- There are no provisions laid down for the manner in which the Governor and the state must engage publicly when there is a difference of opinion.
- The Governor has a 5-year tenure, he can remain in office only until the pleasure of the President.
  1. In 2001, the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution, held that the Governor owes his appointment and his continuation to the Union.
  2. There is the apprehension that he is likely to act in accordance with the instructions received from the Union Council of Ministers.
- In the Constitution, there are no guidelines for exercise of the Governor's powers, including for appointing a CM or dissolving the Assembly.
- There is no limit set for how long a Governor can withhold assent to a Bill.
- The Governor sends a report to the centre which forms the basis of the Union cabinet's recommendations to the President for invoking Article 356 (President's Rule).

**What Reforms have been Suggested?**

- **On Appointment and Removal of Governor:** The "Punchhi commission - 2010" recommended that there should be a provision for the impeachment of the governor by the state legislature. The state chief minister should have a say in the governor's appointment.
- **On the Use of Article 356:**
  1. The "Punchhi commission - 2010" recommended that Articles 355 & 356 be amended.
  2. The Sarkaria Commission (1988) recommended that Article 356 should be used in very rare cases when it becomes unavoidable to restore the breakdown of constitutional machinery in the State.
  3. Recommendations have also been given by the Administrative Reforms Commission (1968), Rajamannar Committee (1971) and Justice V.Chelliah Commission (2002).
- **On Dismissal of State Government under Article 356:** S.R. Bommai Judgment (1994): The case put an end to the arbitrary dismissal of State governments by a hostile Central government. The verdict ruled that the floor of the Assembly is the only forum that should test the majority of the government of the day, and not the subjective opinion of the Governor.
- **On Discretionary Powers:** The Supreme Court in the Nabam Rebia judgment (2016) ruled that the exercise of Governor's discretion Article 163 is limited and his choice of action should not be arbitrary or fanciful.

**Way Forward**

- Strengthening of Federalism: In order to check misuse of the office of governor, there is a need to strengthen federal setup in India. In this regard, the Inter-State council and the role of Rajya Sabha as the chamber of federalism must be strengthened.
- Reform the Method of Appointment of Governor: The appointment can be made from a panel prepared by the state legislature and actual appointing authority should be the Inter-state Council, not the central government.
- Code of Conduct for Governor: This 'Code of Conduct' should lay down certain 'norms and principles' which should guide the exercise of the governor's 'discretion' and his powers which he is entitled to use and exercise on his judgement.

**INTERNATIONAL RELATION**

**India- Srilanka Bilateral Meeting** Recently, in a bilateral meeting India has agreed to provide a grant to Sri Lanka to implement a 'Unitary Digital Identity framework', apparently modelled on the Aadhaar card. Both sides also discussed the fishermen's issue and India provided financial assistance of 2.4 billion USD to Sri Lanka.

- Earlier, India and Sri Lanka agreed to a four-pronged approach to discuss initiatives on food and energy security to help mitigate Sri Lanka's economic crisis.

**What is the Unitary Digital Identity framework?****About:**

- It is similar to India's own Aadhaar and under the proposed Unitary Digital Identity framework, Sri Lanka is expected to introduce a:
  1. Personal identity verification device based on biometric data
  2. Digital tool that can represent the identities of individuals in cyberspace and
  3. Identification of individual identities that can be accurately verified in digital and physical environments by combining the two devices

**Previous Attempts:**

- This is not the first time that Sri Lanka is attempting to digitise its citizens' identities. Just a few years ago from 2015 to 2019, the Sri Lankan government mooted a similar Electronic-National Identity Card — or E-NIC — that privacy advocates opposed on grounds that the state would have full access to citizens' personal data in a central database.
- Government also tried initiating the project as early as 2011. Neither project was implemented.

**What is the Recent Economic Support that India is Providing to Sri Lanka?**

- Beginning January 2022, India has been providing crucial economic support to the island nation in the grip of a severe dollar crisis that, many fear, might lead to a sovereign default, and a severe shortage of essentials in the import-reliant country.
- The relief extended by India from the beginning of this year totals over USD 1.4 billion — a USD 400 currency swap, a USD 500 loan deferment and a USD 500 Line of Credit for fuel imports.
- Sri Lanka is further negotiating a USD 1 billion assistance from India to help the country as it faces an unprecedented economic crisis.

**What was India's Stand on Bilateral Relations?**

- Expeditiously take forward mutually beneficial projects", which include:
  1. Proposals to enhance air and sea connectivity between India and Sri Lanka
  2. Economic and investment initiative
  3. Steps to enhance Sri Lanka's energy security
  4. Keeping the neighbours' "shared maritime domain safe from various contemporary threats", and cooperation in combating Covid-19 pandemic.

**What are Some Major Issues in India-Sri Lanka Relations?****Killing of Fisherman:**

- Killing of Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy is a lingering issue between these two nations.
- In 2019 and 2020, a total of 284 Indian fishermen were arrested and a total of 53 Indian boats were confiscated by the Sri Lankan authorities. In the current meeting both the countries discussed the Palk Bay fisheries conflict and reiterated the longstanding consensus to handle fishermen issues through "humanitarian approach and refrain from the use of violence".

**East Coast Terminal project:**

- This year (2021) Sri Lanka cancelled an MoU signed with India and Japan for the East Coast Terminal project.
- India protested the cancellation though it later agreed to the West Coast Terminal being developed by the Adani group.

**Influence of China:**

- China's rapidly growing economic footprint (and political clout as a corollary) in Sri Lanka is straining India-Sri Lanka relations.
- China is already the largest investor in Sri Lanka, accounting for 23.6% of the total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) during 2010-2019 as against 10.4% from India.
- China is also one of the largest export destinations for Sri Lankan goods and holds over 10% of its external debt.

**13th Amendment of the Sri Lankan Constitution:**

- It envisages devolution of necessary powers to the provincial councils to address the just demand of the Tamil people for equality, justice, peace, and respect within a united Sri Lanka.

**What should be the Way Forward for India?**

- A subterranean trust deficit exists between India and Sri Lanka yet neither Sri Lanka nor India can afford to have strained ties.
- However, as a much larger country, the onus is on India to carry Sri Lanka along. India needs to be extremely patient and avoid reacting to any pinpricks and engage Sri Lanka even more regularly and closely, especially at the highest levels.
- There is a need to step up our people-centric developmental activities while scrupulously staying clear of any interference in Colombo's domestic affairs.
- Nurturing the Neighbourhood First policy with Sri Lanka is important for India to preserve its strategic interests in the Indian Ocean region.

**SOCIAL ISSUE****SAMRIDH Initiative**

Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog, and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) announced a new partnership under the Sustainable Access to Markets and Resources for Innovative Delivery of Healthcare (SAMRIDH) initiative. The collaboration will focus on innovations across the healthcare landscape with the common goal to mount an effective response to the ongoing third wave of Covid-19 and build health system preparedness for future infectious disease outbreaks and health emergencies.

- The Planning Commission was replaced by a new Think Tank – NITI Aayog on 1st January, 2015 with emphasis on 'Bottom –Up' approach to envisage the vision of Maximum Governance, Minimum Government, echoing the spirit of 'Cooperative Federalism'.
- AIM is a flagship initiative set up by the NITI Aayog to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country.

**What is the SAMRIDH Initiative?****About:**

- In 2020 the Indian government, academia, and the private sector developed the innovative SAMRIDH blended finance facility to combine public and philanthropic funds with commercial capital to create and rapidly scale market-based health solutions. Blended finance is an approach towards financing where catalytic funding (e.g grants and concessional capital) from public and philanthropic sources is utilized to mobilize additional private sector investment to realize social goals and outcomes.
- It will improve access to affordable and quality healthcare for vulnerable populations in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, and rural and tribal regions.
- This initiative is implemented by a Technical Support Unit managed by IPE Global (a company).

**Objectives:**

- Bridge supply-side gaps in healthcare facilities to respond to health emergencies in the immediate, medium, and long term.
- Accelerate scale-up and adoption of innovative and market-based health solutions.
- Mobilize resources to support high impact health solutions and build sustainable healthcare systems.
- Promote local and comprehensive solutions at the community and facility level for vulnerable populations.

**Significance:**

- AIM and SAMRIDH will leverage philanthropic capital, and public sector resources to offset barriers for commercial investments in small and medium health enterprises to invest in and scale healthcare solutions.
- The new partnership announced will enhance SAMRIDH's efforts to reach vulnerable populations, leveraging AIM's expertise in innovation and entrepreneurship.

**How is it different from the SAMRIDH Programme?**

- The Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) launched the ‘Start-up Accelerators of MeitY for Product Innovation, Development and growth (SAMRIDH)’ programme in August 2021.
- It was launched to create a conducive platform to Indian Software Product start-ups to enhance their products and secure investments for scaling their business.

**What is the current Healthcare Landscape in India?**

- Although India’s healthcare sector has grown rapidly over the last five years (Compound Annual Growth Rate of 22%), Covid-19 has brought to the forefront persistent challenges such as a weak health system, lack of quality infrastructure, and lack of quality service delivery to vulnerable populations.
- India’s healthcare spending is 3.6% of GDP, including out-of-pocket and public expenditure.
  1. The combined total government expenditure of both central and state is 1.29% of GDP.
  2. India spends the least among BRICS countries: Brazil spends the most (9.2%), followed by South Africa (8.1%), Russia (5.3%), China (5%).
- The Government of India has launched the flagship initiative Ayushman Bharat (AB) Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) the world’s largest non-contributory Government-sponsored health insurance scheme that enables increased access to in-patient healthcare for poor and vulnerable families in secondary and tertiary facilities.

**PRELIMS FACT**

**Accelerate Vigyan Scheme**

Recently, the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), has invited applications under ‘ABHYAAS’, a program of ‘Accelerate Vigyan’ scheme, for summer season. SERB is an autonomous body of the Department of Science & Technology (DST), Union Ministry of Science & Technology..

**What is the Accelerate Vigyan Scheme?**

- "Accelerate Vigyan" (AV) strives to provide a big push to high-end scientific research and prepare a scientific workforce, which can venture into research careers and a knowledge-based economy.
- AV aims to expand the research base in the country, with three broad goals — consolidation / aggregation of all scientific training programs, initiating high-end orientation workshops and creating opportunities for training and skill internships.

**What are the Components of the Accelerate Vigyan Scheme?**

**ABHYAAS:**

- It is a program of AV scheme, is an attempt to boost research and development in the country by enabling and grooming potential postgraduate / PhD students by developing dedicated research skills in selected areas / disciplines / fields through its two components — high-end workshops (“KAARYASHALA”) and Training and Skill Internship (“VRITIKA”). This is especially important for researchers with limited opportunities to access such learning capacities / facilities / infrastructure.

**SAMMOHAN: It has been sub-divided into SAYONJIKA and SANGOSHTI.**

- SAYONJIKA is an open-ended program to catalogue capacity building activities in science and technology supported by all government funding agencies in the country.
- SANGOSHTI is a pre-existing program of SERB for the organisation of workshops.

**How are such Steps Helpful?**

- **Capacity Building:** The database of skilled manpower developed across different disciplines through all the sub-components of the AV would help in capacity building.
- **Social Responsibility:** The scheme also seeks to garner the social responsibility of the scientific community in the country.

**What are the Initiatives taken to boost S&T in Budget 2022-23?**

- An outlay of Rs 50,000 crore was announced spread over five years, for National Research Foundation. It will ensure that the overall research ecosystem of the country is strengthened with focus on identified national-priority thrust areas.
- The budget also declared the setting up of umbrella structures in nine cities for building better synergies among R&D institutions, Universities and Colleges supported by the government while also retaining their internal autonomy.
  1. This will be coordinated by the Ministry of Education, and a Glue Grant will be set aside for this purpose.
  2. The Department of Biotechnology is implementing the URJIT clusters (University Research Joint Industry Translation Clusters) which are being set up in 10 locations as per the Budget Announcement in February 2020.
  3. These will complement the activities of the Umbrella Structures.

## 2. Atal Tunnel

Atal Tunnel has officially been certified by World Book of Records as the 'World's Longest Highway Tunnel above 10,000 Feet'.

- World Book of Records UK, is an organisation that catalogues and verifies extraordinary records across the world with authentic certification.
- It was built by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).

### **What are the features of the Atal Tunnel?**

- The 9.02-km tunnel is the longest highway tunnel in the world above the height of 3,000 metres.
- It cuts through a mountain west of the Rohtang pass and shortens the distance between Solang Valley and Sissu by around 46 km and takes around 15 minutes to cover. Earlier, it would take nearly 4 hours to travel between the two points.
  1. Rohtang Pass (elevation 3,978 m) is located in the state of Himachal Pradesh.
  2. It is present on the Pir Panjal Range of Himalayas.

### **How is this Tunnel Significant?**

- **All year Connectivity:** The Atal tunnel is the first step towards all-year connectivity to Ladakh. The tunnel has the potential to link Ladakh to Manali and Chandigarh throughout the year, as it bypasses Rohtang Pass, which is snowed in through the winter months.
- **Strategic:** The tunnel provides a strategic advantage to the country's armed forces by providing year-long connectivity to border areas. It will save an entire day for troops and supplies as they move towards forward posts.
- **Avail Basic Facilities:** The residents of Ladakh who had to face immense hardship to avail even basic facilities like healthcare and food supplies now are able to reach Manali and connect with the rest of the country using this new tunnel. Essential commodities like petrol and vegetable supplies would also likely be available throughout the year.
- **Boon for Farmers:** The drop in travel time helps many, especially farmers whose precious crops like peas and potatoes will no longer rot in trucks before reaching the market.
- **Boost to Tourism:** The region has seen an unprecedented increase in the arrival of tourists, and in a little more than a year, the valley and the state have witnessed growth in the socio-economic domains.

## **DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns. Given the present situation for India, even though the gains from engaging Central Asia may be minimal, non-engagement could be costly. Do you agree? Comment (250 Words)**

### **Introduction**

As India deals with the post-pandemic world, a challenge is the loss of a friendly government in Afghanistan. This has increased the strategic value of India's relations with the Central Asian (CA) republics. Three of them — Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan to the north, and Tajikistan in the northeast — border Afghanistan.

- Regional cooperation to enhance the commonality of views with Central Asia, and counter the assertive Sino-Pakistani axis in Afghanistan is India's major motive.

### **Body**

#### **Perils of not engaging with Central Asia**

- India's economic activities in Central Asia have been hampered by the absence of land-access, resource constraints, great-power politics and slow implementation of the projects.
- Growing influence of China in Central Asia, China's One Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) seems to be a credible threat to India's objective on overcoming connectivity issues with Central Asia to ensure strengthened economic-political relations.
- Lack of accessibility: India does not share physical borders with any of the Central Asian states and the unstable situation in Afghanistan, impact of US-Iran tensions on regional connectivity projects and India's antagonistic relations with Pakistan has further complicated connectivity and trade prospects for India.
- Domestic challenges faced by the region, emerging from religious extremism, authoritarian regimes, terrorism, ongoing conflicts etc is in itself a challenge in furthering India's economic interests.
- India visualised the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI), and the North South Transport Corridor projects long before China's BRI, but our progress has been disappointing.
- Pakistan will never allow India the land-route access to Central Asia and our route through Chabahar and Bandar Abbas (Iran) has also been impacted due to the American sanctions.
- With the increasing influence of China on Iran, India will find it harder to develop its projects there

#### **Engaging with Central Asia**

