AVOID FURTHER DELAY IN CONDUCTING THE CENSUS

Context

- Recently, the government postponed the **decennial census** exercise (Census 2021) till at least September 2023, as it informed states that administrative boundaries would be frozen beginning July 1, 2023.

- It was intended to be conducted between 2020-21 but did not take place due to the spread of COVID-19.

Background

- The Census is the enumeration of the population of the country and it is being conducted at an interval of 10 years by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

- In the Census, data is collected on **demographic** and various **socio-economic parameters** like education, language, marriage, fertility, disability, occupation and migration of the individuals.

- It was first started under **British Viceroy Lord Mayo** in **1872** and the **first systematic census** in India was held in **1881**.

- The Census 2021 will be the **15th Census** and will be conducted in two phases, i.e., house listing and population enumeration.

- It will also provide a facility to the public for **self-enumeration** and for the first time, the exercise will use **Mobile App** for data collection.

- In addition to allowing online self-enumeration, enumerators will continue home visits to collect census data as in the past.

Significance of Census

- The Census provides **population data** and **characteristics**, housing and amenities for every village and town.

- It helps in **framing government programs** to uplift vulnerable sections and it is used to **validate or reject estimates** of various sample surveys.

- The Census data are used to **determine the number of seats** to be reserved for SCs, STs in Parliament and State legislatures and **delimitation of constituencies**.

- In case of panchayats and municipal bodies, reservation of seats for SCs and STs is based on their proportion in the population. Other than the Census, there is no other source that can provide this information.

- It is also the basis for **reviewing the country's progress in the past decade**, monitoring the ongoing schemes of the government and planning for the future.

Implications of the Delay in Census

- **Non-availability of reliable data:** Though India has population projections at the State and national level, but it is not feasible to get reliable projections at lower geographic levels such as for districts and cities until census is not conducted.

- **Limitation of sample surveys**: Information on the improvement in literacy and educational levels, economic activity, migration, etc., or the impact of schemes like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is derived from sample surveys.

o But these surveys cannot be used to find answers related to **literacy rates in villages or proportion of people in tehsil** getting regular potable water supply.

o Such information related to population characteristics, housing, amenities, etc., are provided by timely conducted census.

- **Ambiguity in granting reservation**: Delay in the Census means that the data from the 2011 Census would continue to be used to determine the reservation of seats for SCs, STs, etc., in legislature, local bodies, etc.

o Since many towns and panchayats have seen rapid changes in the composition of their population over the last decade, **delaying census would mean that either too many or too few seats are being reserved.**

WHAT IS PARSHURAM KUND FESTIVAL?

Recently, the Arunachal Pradesh government informed that Parshuram Kund Festival (PKF), is to be celebrated from 12 to 16 January 2023.

About Parshuram Kund Festival:

- It is a Hindu pilgrimage site situated on the **Brahmaputra plateau** in the lower reaches of the Lohit River and 21 km north of Tezu in the Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh, India.
- Devotees and sadhus take a holy dip in its water each year on the occasion of Makar Sankranti, in January.
- It is also known as the Kumbh of the Northeast.
- **Religious significance:** It is dedicated to a mythological figure **sage Parshuram.** This popular festival attracts pilgrims from Nepal, from across India, and from nearby states of Manipur and Assam.
- The project "Development of Parasuram Kund is sanctioned under the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive' (PRASHAD) Scheme of the Ministry of Tourism.

NATIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY (NHA)

NHA is introducing a new system to measure and grade hospital performance under the flagship scheme Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY).

About:

- The objective of the new system is to shift the focus of measuring performance of hospitals from **volume of services provided to the value of healthcare services.**
- The new initiative will introduce the **concept of 'value- based care'**, where payment will be outcome based and providers will be rewarded according to the quality of the treatment delivered.
- Under the new model, **the providers will be rewarded for helping the patients improve their health,** which consequently will reduce the effects of disease in the population in the long term.
- Under value-based care, the performance of AB PM-JAY empanelled hospitals will be measured based on **five performance indicators such as**: 1. Beneficiary Satisfaction; 2. Hospital

Readmission Rate; 3. The extent of Out-of-Pocket Expenditure; 4. Confirmed Grievances and 5. Improvement in-patient's Health-Related Quality of Life.

What is National Health Authority (NHA)?

- It is the apex body responsible for implementing AB PM-JAY. It has been entrusted with the role of designing strategy, building technological infrastructure and implementation of "National Digital Health Mission" to create a National Digital Health Eco-system.

- It is the **successor of the National Health Agency**, which was functioning as a registered society since 2018. Pursuant to Cabinet decision for full functional autonomy, **National Health Agency was reconstituted as the National Health Authority** in January 2019.

- **An attached office of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** with full functional autonomy, NHA is **governed by a Governing Board chaired by the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare.**

- It is headed by a **Chief Executive Officer (CEO), an officer of the rank of Secretary to the Government of India**, who manages its affairs. The CEO is the Ex-Office Member Secretary of the Governing Board.

- To implement the scheme at the State level, State Health Agencies (SHAs) in the form of a society/trust have been set up by respective States.

GLASS FROGS

Recently scientists gleaned insight into how glassfrogs –a species known for this ability – are able to achieve such transparency.

About:

- Glassfrogs live in the American tropics and are nocturnal amphibians that spend their days sleeping upside down on translucent leaves that match the colour of their backs — a common camouflage tactic.

- Their translucent skin and muscle allow their bones and organs to be visible – hence the name.

- Recent research has proposed that this adaptation masks the frogs' outlines on their leafy perches, making them harder for predators to spot.

How do some animals become transparent?

- Transparency is a common form of camouflage among animals that live in water, but rare on land.
- In vertebrates, **attaining transparency is difficult because their circulatory system is full of red blood cells** that interact with light. Studies have shown that **ice fish and larval eels achieve transparency** by not producing haemoglobin and red blood cells.
- Glassfrogs use an alternative strategy. Resting glassfrogs increase transparency two- to threefold by **removing nearly 90 percent of their red blood cells from circulation and packing them within their liver**, which contains reflective guanine crystals.
- Whenever the frogs need to become active again, they bring the red blood cells back into the blood, which gives the frogs the ability to move around -- at which point, light absorption from these cells breaks transparency.

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

Recently, Director General, National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), Government is working in Mission Mode to achieve 100% saturation of all Central Schemes having a huge socio-economic bearing on the common man.

What is National Centre for Good Governance?

- It is an autonomous institute under the aegis of the **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India.**
- It has been set up to assist in bringing about governance reforms through studies,
- It seeks to carry out policy-relevant research and prepare case studies
- It curates training courses for civil servants from India and other developing countries;

- It provides a platform for sharing existing knowledge and proactively seeking out and developing ideas for their implementation in the government, both at the National & International levels.

- It is governed by a Governing Body, under the Chairmanship of **the Cabinet Secretary.**

MV GANGA VILAS

Recently, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways stated that the Prime Minister of India will flag off the world's longest river cruise 'MV Ganga Vilas' from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh on the 13th of January 2023.

About MV Ganga Vilas:

- The luxury cruise will cover a distance of more than **3,200 kilometres across 27 river** systems in five States in India and Bangladesh.

- The 51 days cruise is planned with visits to 50 tourist spots including **World Heritage Sights, National Parks, river Ghats,** and major cities like Patna in Bihar, Sahibganj in Jharkhand, Kolkata in West Bengal, Dhaka in Bangladesh and Guwahati in Assam.

- The MV Ganga Vilas vessel is 62 meters in length and 12 meters in width. It has three decks, and 18 suites on board with a capacity of 36 tourists, with all the amenities to provide a memorable and luxurious experience for the tourists.

- The ship follows sustainable principles at its core as it is equipped with pollution-free mechanisms and noise control technologies.

OVER-APPLICATION OF FERTILISERS IN INDIA: HOW TO CORRECT THE WORSENING NUTRIENT IMBALANCE?

Why in News?

- According to the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers, urea and di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) sales have increased recently, regardless of the rise or fall in the global fertiliser prices.

- Global fertiliser prices skyrocketed in the run-up to and after Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, but have since dropped significantly.

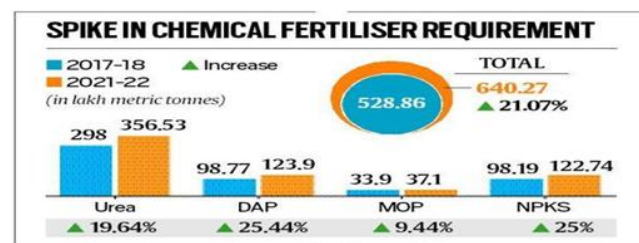**What is the current state of chemical fertiliser use in India?**

- **The fertiliser industry in India:**

  o Fertilisers (organic/inorganic) are **substances that provide one or more of the chemicals required for plant growth.**

  o As per industry experts, out of the **16 elements** necessary for plant growth, 9 elements are required in large quantities (major elements = primary and secondary), while the other 7 are needed in smaller amounts (minor elements).

    - **Nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium are known as primary plant nutrients;**

    - Calcium, magnesium and sulphur, as secondary nutrients;

    - Iron, manganese, copper, zinc, boron, molybdenum and chlorine as trace elements or micro-nutrients.

  o The primary objective of fertiliser industry is **to ensure the inflow of both primary and secondary elements** as are necessary for crop production in the desired quantities.

SPIKE IN CHEMICAL FERTILISER REQUIREMENT
- 2017-18 ▲ Increase
- 2021-22
(in lakh metric tonnes)
TOTAL
640.27
528.86 ▲ 21.07%

Urea 298 / 356.53 ▲ 19.64%
DAP 98.77 / 123.9 ▲ 25.44%
MOP 33.9 / 37.1 ▲ 9.44%
NPKS 98.19 / 122.74 ▲ 25%

  o However, the **sharp increase in the overall fertiliser requirement** in the country during the last 5 years, have resulted in soil nutrient imbalances.

- **Reasons for increased urea and DAP consumption:**

  o High subsidy on urea, DAP is a less expensive alternative.

  o Thus, price determines the choice of fertilisers, rather than NPKS or other macro and micro nutrients in the fertiliser.

VILLAGE DEFENCE COMMITTEES

Why in news?

- After militants killed six people in two days in the village of Jammu and Kashmir, locals have demanded that they be provided weapons to take on attackers.
- Responding to the demands, Lt Governor Manoj Sinha assured the people that they would get a **Village Defence Committee (VDC)** on the lines of those in Doda district.

News Summary

- Recently, Jammu and Kashmir L-G Manoj Sinha said that the **Village Defence Guards** (VDGs) would be set up in the UT.
- o The VDCs have now been renamed as Village Defence Guards (VDG).

What is a Village Defence Committee (VDC)?

- The VDCs were first formed in the erstwhile Doda district (now Kishtwar, Doda and Ramban districts) in mid 1990s as a force multiplier against militant attacks.
- o The then J&K administration decided to provide residents of remote hilly villages with weapons and give them arms training to defend themselves.
- The new scheme to set up VDGs in vulnerable areas of J&K was approved by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs in March 2022.
- Like a VDC member, each VDG will be provided a gun and 100 rounds of ammunition.

Why was the need to set up VDCs felt?

- The militancy that began in Kashmir in the early 1990s had spread to the adjoining Doda district by mid 1990s.
- The demand for arming the civilian population first rose after the massacre of 13 people in Kishtwar in 1993.
- As the killings increased, prompting the migration of Hindus from villages to nearby towns, the Home Ministry in 1995 decided to set up the VDCs.

How are Village Defence Guards (VDGs) different from VDCs?

- Both VDG and VDC is a group of civilians provided guns and ammunition to tackle militants in case of attack until the arrival of security forces.

- Under the new scheme, the persons leading the VDGs will be paid Rs **4,500 per month** by the government, while others will get Rs 4,000 each.
- In the VDCs, only the Special Police Officers (SPOs) leading them were provided a remuneration, of Rs 1,500 monthly.
  - The SPOs, the lowest rank in the J&K Police, used to be retired army, para military or police personnel.
- The VDGs will function under the direction of the SP/SSP of the district concerned.

What was the contribution of VDCs in the fight against militants?

- During the peak of militancy in most parts of Jammu division, the VDCs played a significant role in combating militancy.
- They were the most-feared armed groups among militants in areas where poor road networks delayed the arrival of security forces.
- The villagers, well-versed with the local topography, averted many militant attacks and helped in their capture and killings.

What controversies did the VDCs get into?

- Along with the successes, the VDCs also faced allegations of human rights violations and other crimes, including murder, rape and extortions.
- As per official figures placed on the floor of the erstwhile J&K Legislative Assembly in 2016, 27,924 civilians were serving in 4,248 VDCs across the state.
- After peace returned, there were demands from certain quarters to disband the VDCs in 2002.
- Over a period of time, the number of VDC members has dropped significantly, either because of their involvement in a criminal case, or the government taking back their weapons once they turned 60.

Why there is fresh demand for arming civilians?

- **Revival of attacks targeting minorities and non-locals**
  - Recent terror attacks in J&K have targeted minorities and non-locals.

- This targeted killing is aimed at creating an atmosphere of fear and damaging communal harmony
- This has revived the memories of the mass exodus of minority communities that took place in the early 1990s
- **Shift in strategy & new challenges in front of security agencies**
- Almost all civilian killings have been carried out by newly recruited terrorists or those about to join the ranks.
- Previously, full-time militants used to go missing from their villages or advertise themselves on social media. Thus, it was easy to track them.
- On the other hand, these part-timers are difficult to track.
- These neo-recruits of hybrid terrorists who beat surveillance with one-off attacks, helps Pakistan-based masterminds maintain deniability.
- Nearly all civilian killings were carried out using pistols. These weapons were brought in using drones from across the border.
- The pistols were delivered to these neo-recruits by Pakistani handlers specifically for the strikes and later taken back.
- This allowed them to conveniently return to their homes in populated neighbourhoods.