

## **1. Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)**

### **Context:**

- Recently Our Honourable Lok Sabha Speaker has mentioned about the Inter-parliamentary Union, while he spoke against the resolutions that are about to be discussed in the European Parliament regarding CAA, 2019.
- He stressed that European parliament being a member of Inter-parliamentary Union, they should be mindful of respecting the sovereign processes of fellow legislatures (India) and it would not be appropriate for one legislature to pass judgement on another.

### **About IPU:**

- It is an international organisation of parliament, established in 1889.
- It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. It has permanent observer status at UNGA.
- **Slogan of IPU:** “For democracy. For everyone.”
- It aim to promote the parliamentary dialogue world-wide and works for peace and cooperation among the peoples.
- It works with close co-operation with United Nation Organisation (UNO), regional parliamentary organisations, international intergovernmental organisation and non-governmental organisation for the arbitration of conflict.
- It has transformed and became a center for dialogue and parliamentary diplomacy among legislators representing every political system constituting a unique platform for observing political opinions and trends around the world.
- India is a signatory to IPU.

### **Areas of Working- IPU:**

- Promoting Democracy Worldwide
- International Peace and Security
- Sustainable Development
- Promoting and Defending Human Rights

### **Functions of IPU:**

- Fosters contacts, co-ordination, and the exchange of experience among parliaments and parliamentarians of all countries.
- Considers questions of international interest and concern and express its views on such issues in order to bring about action by Parliaments and Parliamentarians.

- Contributes to the Defense and promotion of human rights- an essential factor of parliamentary democracy and development
- Contributes to better knowledge of the working of representative institutions and to the strengthening and development of their means of action.

## **2. Oslo Accords**

### **Why in News:**

- Recently, Palestine has threatened to withdraw from key provisions of the Oslo Accords if the US announces its Middle East Peace Plan.

### **About Oslo Accords:**

- It was a landmark moment in the pursuit of peace in the Middle East.
- It is a series of agreements between Israel and the Palestinians signed in the **1990s**.
- Actually a set of two separate agreements signed by the government of Israel and the leadership of the **Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)**—the militant organization established in **1964** to create a Palestinian state.
- Oslo I (**1993**) is formally known as the **Declaration of Principles (DOP)**. The pact established a timetable for the Middle East peace process.
- It planned for an interim Palestinian government in Gaza and Jericho in the West Bank.
- Oslo II is officially called the **Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement** on the West Bank and Gaza (**1995**), expanded on Oslo I.
- It included provisions for the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from six West Bank cities and about 450 towns.
- The pact also set a timetable for elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council.
- The interim pact was only supposed to last five years while a permanent agreement was finalised but it has tacitly been rolled over for more than Two Decades.

### **3. Anti-Satellite missile (ASAT)**

#### **Why in News?**

- India showcased its Anti-Satellite (ASAT) missile capability to the world as the ASAT weapon from Mission Shakti was unveiled on Republic Day.

#### **Highlights:**

- A DRDO marching contingent displayed the ASAT missile along with a second equipment, the Air Defence Tactical Control Radar (ADTCR).
- Anti-satellite weapons (ASAT) are space weapons designed to incapacitate or destroy satellites for strategic military purposes. Several nations possess operational ASAT systems.
- Although no ASAT system has yet been utilised in warfare, a few nations have shot down their own satellites to demonstrate their ASAT capabilities in a show of force. Only the United States, Russia, China, and India have demonstrated this Capability Successfully.

#### **Mission Shakti:**

- India conducted Mission Shakti, an anti-satellite missile test, from the Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam Island launch complex. This was a technological mission carried out by DRDO.
- The satellite used in the mission was one of India's existing satellites operating in lower orbit. The significance of the test is that India has tested and successfully demonstrated its capability to interdict and intercept a satellite in outer space based on complete indigenous technology. The capability achieved through the Anti-Satellite missile test provides credible deterrence against threats to our growing space-based assets from long range missiles, and proliferation in the types and numbers of missiles.

#### **Weaponization of Space:**

- The principal international Treaty on space is the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. India is a signatory to this treaty, and ratified it in 1982.
- The Outer Space Treaty prohibits only weapons of mass destruction in outer space, not ordinary weapons.
- India supported UNGA resolution 69/32 on No First Placement of Weapons on Outer Space. Equally, India supports the substantive consideration of the issue of Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) in the Conference on Disarmament where it has been on the agenda since 1982.

## **4. Biorock Technique for Coral Restoration**

### **Why in News?**

- The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), with help from Gujarat's forest department, is attempting for the first time a process to restore coral reefs using biorock or mineral Accretion Technology.

### **Biorock Technique:**

- Biorock is the name given to the substance formed by electro accumulation of minerals dissolved in seawater on steel structures that are lowered onto the sea bed and are connected to a power source, in this case solar panels that float on the surface.
- The technology works by passing a small amount of electrical current through electrodes in the water.
- When a positively charged anode and negatively charged cathode are placed on the sea floor, with an electric current flowing between them, calcium ions combine with carbonate ions and adhere to the structure (cathode).
- This results in calcium carbonate formation. Coral larvae adhere to the  $\text{CaCO}_3$  and grow quickly.
- Fragments of broken corals are also tied to the biorock structure, where they are able to grow at least four to six times faster than their actual growth as they need not spend their energy in building their own calcium carbonate skeletons.

### **Significance of the Move:**

- The technology helps corals, including the highly sensitive branching corals, to counter the threats posed by global warming.
- In 2015, the same group of ZSI scientists had successfully restored branching coral species (staghorn corals) belonging to the family Acroporidae (*Acropora formosa*, *Acropora humilis*, *Montipora digitata*) that had gone extinct about 10,000 years ago to the Gulf of Kachchh.

### **Coral Bleaching:**

- The Stunning Colours in Corals come from a marine algae called zooxanthellae, which live inside their Tissues.
- This algae provides the corals with an easy food supply thanks to photosynthesis, which gives the corals energy, allowing them to grow and Reproduce.

- When corals get stressed, from things such as heat or pollution, they react by expelling this algae, leaving a ghostly, transparent skeleton behind.
- This is known as ‘coral bleaching’. Some corals can feed themselves, but without the zooxanthellae most corals starve.

## **5. Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC)**

### **Why in News?**

- While addressing the Investiture Ceremony & International Customs Day 2020, the Union Minister of State for Finance & Corporate Affairs talked about the big role the CBIC will play in improving India’s Ease of Doing Business ranking.

### **CBIC:**

- The CBIC is the apex body for administering the levy and collection of indirect taxes of the Union of India.
- The Central Board of Indirect Taxes (CBIC) is a part of the Department of Revenue under the Ministry of Finance, Government of India.
- For more on the CBIC, check PIB dated 7<sup>th</sup> Nov 2019 under the heading ‘DIN System of CBIC’.

### **International Customs Day:**

- Annually held on January 26, International Customs Day (ICD) recognizes the role of custom officials and agencies in maintaining border security.
- It focuses on the working conditions and challenges that customs officers face in their jobs.
- It was instituted by the World Customs Organization (WCO).
- January 26<sup>th</sup> commemorates the day in 1953 when the inaugural session of the Customs Cooperation Council (CCC) was held in Brussels, Belgium.
- In 1994 the CCC was renamed World Customs Organization (WCO) and today customs organizations from 179 countries are WCO members.
- The theme for the 2020 commemoration was, ‘Customs fostering Sustainability for People, Prosperity and the Planet’.