



## Current Affairs of the Day

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## NATGRID gets access to data from 14,000 police stations

- The **National Intelligence Grid** has signed an MoU with the **National Crime Records Bureau** to access the centralised online database on FIRs and stolen vehicles.
- First conceptualised in 2009, NATGRID seeks to become the one-stop destination for security and intelligence agencies to access database related to immigration entry and exit, banking and telephone details of a suspect on a “secured platform”. The project aims to go live by December 31.
- The MoU, signed in March, will give NATGRID access to the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems database, a platform that links around 14,000 police stations.

### Value added Information

#### About NATGRID:

- It is an ambitious **counter terrorism programme**.
- It will **utilise technologies** like Big Data and analytics to study and analyse the huge amounts of data from various intelligence and enforcement agencies to **help track suspected terrorists and prevent terrorist attacks**.
- It will **connect, in different phases, data providing organisations and users** besides developing a legal structure through which information can be accessed by the law enforcement agencies.
- NATGRID is a post Mumbai 26/11 attack measure.

#### Who can access the data?

- The database would be accessible to authorised persons from 11 agencies on a case-to-case basis, and only for professional investigations into suspected cases of terrorism.

#### Criticisms:

- NATGRID is facing opposition on charges of possible violations of privacy and leakage of confidential personal information.



- Its efficacy in preventing terror has also been questioned given that no state agency or police force has access to its database thus reducing chances of immediate, effective action.
- According to few experts, digital databases such as NATGRID can be misused. Over the last two decades, the very digital tools that terrorists use have also become great weapons to fight the ideologies of violence.
- Intelligence agencies have also opposed amid fears that it would impinge on their territory and possibly result in leaks on the leads they were working on to other agencies.

### Why do we need NATGRID?

- The danger from not having a sophisticated tool like the NATGRID is that it forces the police to rely on harsh and coercive means to extract information in a crude and degrading fashion.
- After every terrorist incident, it goes about rounding up suspects—many of who are innocent. If, instead, a pattern search and recognition system were in place, these violations of human rights would be much fewer.
- Natgrid would also help the Intelligence Bureau keep a tab on persons with suspicious backgrounds.
- The police would have access to all his data and any movement by this person would also be tracked with the help of this data base.

### Disabled are entitled to same benefits of SC/ST quota: SC

- The Supreme Court, in a significant decision, confirmed that persons with disabilities are also socially backward and entitled to the same benefits of relaxation as Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates in public employment and education.
- A three-judge Bench led by Justice Rohinton Nariman upheld a 2012 judgment of the Delhi High Court in Anamol Bhandari (minor) through his father/Natural Guardian v. Delhi Technological University.



## Govt. against virtual meetings of House panels

- The government has refused to allow virtual meetings of parliamentary standing committees despite repeated demands from the Opposition parties, citing confidentiality norms.
- In 2008, during Congress-led UPA-1, then Rajya Sabha Chairman Hamid Ansari had also weighed in in favour of maintaining secrecy of these meetings.
- The latest demand came from Congress leader and Chairman of the standing committee on science and technology Jairam Ramesh last Tuesday. The committee met on Friday.
- Presently, there are no provisions in the Rules of Procedure for holding virtual sittings of the parliamentary committees or allowing the committees to take evidence of official or non-official witnesses or experts through virtual meeting. The government has maintained that the rules have to be amended by the Rules Committee of both Houses of Parliament. This however, can be done only when Parliament meets.

## China, Iran close to reaching trade and military partnership

### Key Points:

- Iran and China have quietly drafted a sweeping economic and security partnership that would clear the way for billions of dollars of Chinese investments in energy and other sectors, undercutting the Donald Trump administration's efforts to isolate the Iranian government because of its nuclear and military ambitions.
- The partnership, detailed in an 18-page proposed agreement obtained by The New York Times, would vastly expand Chinese presence in banking, telecommunications, ports, railways and dozens of other projects. In exchange, China would receive a regular — and, according to an Iranian





official and an oil trader, heavily discounted — supply of Iranian oil over the next 25 years.

### Joint military training:

- The document also describes deepening military cooperation, potentially giving China a foothold in a region that has been a strategic preoccupation of the United States for decades. It calls for joint training and exercises, joint research and weapons development and intelligence sharing — all to fight “the lopsided battle with terrorism, drug and human trafficking and cross-border crimes.”
- The partnership — first proposed by China’s leader, Xi Jinping, during a visit to Iran in 2016 — was approved by President Hassan Rouhani’s Cabinet in June, Iran’s Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, said last week.
- If put into effect as detailed, the partnership would create new and potentially dangerous flashpoints in the deteriorating relationship between China and the U.S.

### Significance:

- It represents a major blow to the Trump administration’s aggressive policy toward Iran since abandoning the nuclear deal reached in 2015 by President Barack Obama and the leaders of six other nations after two years of gruelling negotiations.
- Renewed U.S. sanctions, including the threat to cut off access to the international banking system for any company that does business in Iran, have succeeded in suffocating the Iranian economy by scaring away badly needed foreign trade and investment.
- But Tehran’s desperation has pushed it into the arms of China, which has the technology and appetite for oil that Iran needs. Iran has been one of the world’s largest oil producers, but its exports, Tehran’s largest source of revenue, have plunged since the Trump administration began imposing sanctions in 2018; China gets about 75% of its oil from abroad and is the world’s largest importer, at more than 10 million barrels a day last year.



## Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission extended

- Central government has extended the deadline for distribution of free food grains under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission allocated to State governments till August 31.

### Value added Information

#### About Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission

- Under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Package, 5 kg of free food grains per person and 1 kg of free whole gram per family has been distributed to migrant labourers, stranded and needy families, who are not covered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) or State scheme PDS cards.

#### About Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)

- Under this scheme, free distribution of food grains is meant to be given as additional entitlement to the beneficiaries at the rate of five kg per month for five months — July to November.
- Beneficiaries include Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and Priority Household (PHH) cardholders.