Union Cabinet approves LIGO-India

April 10, 2023

<u>In news</u>— Recently, the Union government has given the final go-ahead to India's Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory, or LIGO, project.

About the Project-

- The Union Cabinet's approval to set up a gravitationalwave detection facility in Maharashtra, a ₹2,600 crore project.
- It is one that will consist of a detector called the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory (LIGO), to be built in the image of the twin LIGO instruments already operational in the U.S.
- The facility's construction is expected to be completed by 2030.
- The observatory will be the third of its kind, made to the exact specifications of the twin Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatories (LIGO), in Louisiana and Washington in the U.S. LIGO-India will work in tandem with them.
- US lA third detector is being built in India as part of the LIGO-India collaboration in order to improve the detectors' collective ability to pinpoint sources of gravitational waves in the sky.
- The Cabinet's approval throws up two opportunities: first, India could become a global site of gravitational physics research, aiding training and the handling of precision technologies and sophisticated control systems, ultimately, cementing a reputation for successfully running an experimental Big Science project.
- Second, LIGO-India can demonstrate an ability to reckon

intelligently with Indian society's relationship with science, using the opportunities that Big Science affords.

- India has had a contested relationship with such projects, including, recently, the Challakere Science City and the stalled India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO).
- The project is jointly funded by the department of science and technology and the department of atomic energy.
- The mega-science project in astronomy promises breakthrough research, development of cutting-edge technology and opportunities for students and researchers.
- LIGO-India will be built by the Department of Atomic Energy and the Department of Science and Technology, with a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. National Science Foundation and several national and international research institutions.
- The U.S. will provide key components for the lab worth around Rs 560 crore.



LIGO & Gravitational waves-

• The LIGO is a giant L-shaped instrument. Each arm of the

'L' is 4 km long.

- Two laser pulses are shot through each arm at the same time, and they bounce off a mirror at the end to return to the vertex. A detector checks whether the pulses return at the same time.
- When a gravitational wave passes through the detector, the pulses are slightly out of time.
- Researchers use this and other signals to detect, record, and study gravitational waves
- Gravitational waves are emitted by very massive objects in the universe in extreme environments, such as when black holes collide.
- Just as light emitted by an object can be used to probe its electromagnetic properties, gravitational waves can be used to probe the gravitational features of the source.
- While two LIGOs can study gravitational waves, a third observatory is required to better triangulate the location of a source in the sky.
- A more ideal setup requires four observatories to record the same wave. To this end, researchers are setting up and upgrading detectors in Italy and Japan.