IASbaba's

MONTHLY MAGAZINE

February '17

PREFACE

With the present shift in examination pattern of UPSC Civil Services Examination, 'General Studies – II and General Studies III' can safely be replaced with 'Current Affairs'. Moreover, following the recent trend of UPSC, almost all the questions are issue-based rather than news-based. Therefore, the right approach to preparation is to prepare issues, rather than just reading news.

Taking this into account, our website www.iasbaba.com will cover current affairs focusing more on 'issues' on a daily basis. This will help you pick up relevant news items of the day from various national dailies such as The Hindu, Indian Express, Business Standard, LiveMint, Business Line and other important Online sources. Over time, some of these news items will become important issues.

UPSC has the knack of picking such issues and asking general opinion based questions. Answering such questions will require general awareness and an overall understanding of the issue. Therefore, we intend to create the right understanding among aspirants – 'How to cover these issues?

This is the **21st edition** of IASbaba's Monthly Magazine. This edition covers all important issues that were in news in the month of **February 2017**.

Value add's from IASbaba- Must Read and Connecting the dots.

'Must Read' section, will give you important links to be read from exam perspective. This will make sure that, you don't miss out on any important news/editorials from various newspapers on daily basis.

Under each news article, **'Connecting the dots'** facilitates your thinking to connect and ponder over various aspects of an issue. Basically, it helps you in understanding an issue from multi-dimensional view-point. You will understand its importance while giving Mains or Interview.

Must Read Articles: We have not included them in the magazine. Those following DNA on daily basis may follow it- http://iasbaba.com/babas-daily-news-analysis/

"The struggle you are in today is developing the strength you need for tomorrow"

All the Best ☺

INDEX

NATIONAL

Child Suffering in Conflict Zone

Introduction

Newspapers all over the world in the last couple of years have been featuring heart wrenching pictures of children who have been victims of the brutalities of war zones and crisis plagued areas of the world.

Media reporting of Syria crisis, refugee crisis in the Mediterranean region have consisted of images of dead, injured and distressed children. This has probably been the worst year for children casualties and sufferings since the World War 2.

The Spread of the Problem

It is however beyond imagination what these children go through in reality. The pictures can never state the actual level of suffering. They cannot capture the magnitude of actual suffering.

- Approximately 240 million children are living in countries such as Syria, Yemen and Iraq which are highly critical conflict zones and constantly under the impact of violence.
- The children are also subject to horrible treatment in terror struck and poverty struck African nations. The kidnapping of female children by Boko Haram in Nigeria is a case in point. Children in Somalia, South Sudan and Afghanistan face similar fate due to the presence of Taliban and its affiliate organisations.
- Other than violence, sexual assault, kidnappings a huge number of children also have to deal with problems and challenges with respect to livelihood security and internal displacement.
- Due to constant crisis children remain undernourished and out of school.
- Schools and hospitals are bombed during attacks by rebel groups and counter attacks by the government. This leads to reduced access to education and health facilities.

Global Response Strategy
Political and Institutional Strategy

- The United Nations and other humanitarian institutions such as UNICEF along with nations such as Sweden are making best efforts in alleviation of child suffering.
- Political solutions to crisis in nations such as Syria and the refugee crisis in Europe is the most important and reliable solution to this constant pain that children have to go through.
- There is also a need to strengthen the current humanitarian system's capacity to reach the children at greatest risk.
- Improved coordination between governments and relief organizations is essential for efficient and effective relief activities. They also need to ensure that development and relief initiatives are in sync with each other

Reformation and Innovation
- The institutions formed in the post World War 2 era worked on the principles of cooperation, dialogue and results. In these testing times of conflict and disaster, these institutions need to reform their way of functioning. The reformed approach has to be based on creativity and solidarity.
- Highly innovative solutions need to be introduced to fight emerging challenges. Children in extremist controlled areas which are cut off from the community need to be reached out to in the least time.
- Drones could be used to airdrop food and medical supplies. Mobile applications for monitoring the needs of children and tracking supplies could be highly instrumental.

Funding
- Funding methods need to be innovative and long term. Also the funding has to be reliable and consistent. It cannot be reduced on the excuse of austerity.
- Core funding should be promoted as it allows the UN and non-governmental organizations to act in a more flexible manner in case of emergencies and plan more strategically. This promotes quick relief.
- Sweden has recently doubled its contribution to the UN core fund for better results.

Conclusion
The challenge of this problem is at its toughest and only going upwards. New challenges need to be tackled with new methods. The world needs to come together and towards a new development agenda which makes relief and humanitarian assistance an integral part of policy making. Governments, NGOs, citizens need to be inspired to work together and in a reformed manner. Special care should be taken of aid and relief providing teams.

Connecting the dots
- The recent years have seen a number of conflicts, crisis and war zones emerging especially in West Asia and Europe. Highlight the ethical role and responsibility of various stakeholders which is essential to safeguard vulnerable sections of the society.

- Child population in conflict zones is one of the most vulnerable sections of the society. Highlight the problems faced by them and a suitable strategy to protect children and ensure their safety and rehabilitation.

TOPIC:
General Studies 1
- *Urbanization, their problems and their remedies*
General Studies 3
- *Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment*

Land use and climate change

Introduction
- Land use and land use changes can significantly contribute to overall climate change. Vegetation and soils typically act as a carbon sink as they store carbon dioxide absorbed during photosynthesis, loss of them disturbs the land.
- In such a case, the stored carbon dioxide—along with methane and nitrous oxide—is emitted, re-entering the atmosphere. These GHGs further contribute to global warming.
- There are two types of land use change- **direct anthropogenic** (human-caused) changes such as deforestation, reforestation, agriculture, and urbanization and **indirect changes** include changes in precipitation, extreme weather evets or increased carbon dioxide concentrations that force changes in vegetation.
- These land use changes trigger climatic changes which may be harmful for the global health. However, among these, urbanisation today holds the greatest challenge by drastically changing the land use patterns.

Since beginning
- Interaction between people and land is as old as human evolution. The relation of people and land changed in a major way when early hunter-gatherers started to settle down in the Neolithic transition and practiced agriculture.
- In Holocene (present epoch), which is approx. 11500 years ago, many plants were domesticated for agriculture. When agriculture was introduced, it also spearheaded many associated social and technological changes which led to dense human settlements, paving way for formation of early cities.
- Land use change, often to expand agriculture, causes direct habitat loss, but also has other effects such as fragmentation of remaining habitat and increased agrochemical inputs into surrounding natural (or semi-natural) habitats.
- Even today it is evident that the human interventions have transformed land, water and local ecologies. However, the human use of these ecologies have deeply affected the availability of resources.

- It has become clear in last 50 years that such has been the impact of human use of the earth and its resources that a geological transformation to the Anthropocene has already begun.
- *The Anthropocene is a proposed epoch dating from the commencement of significant human impact on the Earth's geology and ecosystems*

Drastic changes in land use
- Humans have used land in several ways. For example Forest areas are being cleared and replaced with oil palm plantations and agricultural fields are being cleared to set up industries. Thus, land use pattern has seen critical changes, especially due to growing population and distinct lifestyle.
- Another example of land use change is of expanding cities all over the world including India. The cities are today growing well beyond their formal limits. Urbanisation has transformed land use from agriculture and forests into industry, residential and commercial buildings and associated infrastructure, and horticulture.
- Urbanising areas grow and expand in different ways which includes some parts of the cities as planned whereas many portions are unplanned infrastructure, homes, slums and industries, waterbodies and marshlands.
- The peri-urban areas (outside city limits but not quite part of the rural hinterland) host the new development of industrial zones, sites from where groundwater is being pumped and transported to city, dumping of urban waste and growing high value crops for nearby urban centres.
- These land use changes are alarming for climate change because of their non-permanent nature, thereby proliferating and replacing changes at a rapid pace. For example, cars are replaced every decade or so due to new breakthrough technologies, phone technology is increasing leaps and bounds encouraging people to change phones in 2-3 years. This has led to growing e-waste dumping problems, especially in developing countries. Thus, resources are being used irresponsibly.

Effects of land-use on climate change
- The pattern of urban growth story and its periphery have implications on poverty, food, water, health, jobs and access to services.
- Interventions like converting agricultural land for housing or industry, filling up ponds and building housing complexes on lake beds, etc. impact ecosystem services and climate adaptation.
- The people who are dependent on ecosystem for their livelihood suffer the most. This affects the community structures. The natural ecosystem gets affected which threatens their survival too.
- As per scientists, land cover and land management generate drivers in climate systems that influence local and regional weather patterns. This is due to changes in aerosols,

carbon, nitrogen and other gases along with the moisture in the air, heat and light. This is the reason why the urban heat island effect is understood easily.

What can be done?
- Protecting waterbodies
- Conserving groundwater
- Reducing ecological footprint
- Living in more compact communities
- Converting non-forest areas to forest areas to increase flora and fauna diversity
- Increasing agricultural productivity than expanding agricultural land

These are good ways to address both climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The IVC example
- Climate change and its effects are concerning in the current era, which makes one curious to know how ancestors survived the climatic changes. Today, scientists are able to demystify the climatic patterns that occurred several thousand years ago through new research methodologies which gives insight into the same.
- Indus Valley Civilisation underwent a period of climate change about 4,000 years ago and used different subsistence practices to cope with changing environments.
- Water is considered to be the most critical factor in the survival of the civilisations. The availability, management and usage of water gave important insight into human adaptation and the resilience of subsistence practices in IVC.
- The north west India was subject to climate change during the period when the Indus Civilisation was at its height (2500 BC—1900 BC). During early Holocene, IVC was situated close to a deep lake Kotla Dahar (in plains of north western part of India) which could have been primarily monsoonal. The water level in lake decreased due to the sporadic rainfall and disruptions in the monsoon cycle between 2200 -2000 BC.
- This also led to one of the contributing parameter in the process of Indus de-urbanisation which shows that local Indus populations were already well adapted to living in varied and variable environmental conditions. That is why, there were variation in the subsistence practices used by Indus populations.

Connecting the dots:
- Land use and climate change are interdependent on each other. Do you agree? Critically analyse.

TOPIC: *General Studies 2*
- ***Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.***

The politics behind demonetisation

A background

- Demonetisation was marketed as a move to curb "black money" as well as to combat the proliferation of counterfeit currency tied to criminal and terrorist activities.
- The short-term liquidity crunch and following disruption to the economy have been profound. The immediate effects have been setback to informal economy which is cash-based and consists of 45% of GDP and 80% of the workforce, problems to farmers who received such a blow during rabi sowing season, slowdown in construction and allied industries saw migrant labourers returning to villages and the most hard hit were the rural poor who did not have access to cash due to the low penetration of bank accounts and ATM machines outside of urban centers.
- This led to even IMF downgrading its growth forecast for India's GDP during the current fiscal by 1%.
- Economists have come out with various analytical views and possible impact on India's economy due to demonetisation. Their views have been divided, particularly on the question of whether a one-time penalty on undeclared cash hoardings is likely to curb the future flow and accumulation of black money.
- According to some, demonetisation will permanently change the psyche of the tax evader, while other believe that more sophisticated ways (gold and foreign bank accounts) will be generated for tax evasion and black money hoarding.
- No doubt these issues will be resolved in an extended course of time. However, it is equally important to know what might have propelled the government to take such a drastic step.

Political motives

- The decision to scrap 86% of currency in circulation cannot be baseless or an arbitrary move.
- The government has been criticised for poor implementation of demonetisation which has impacted lives of many, especially poor. However, what is worth noticing is that apart from occasional hitting out at demonetisation, the move has been largely welcomed.
- This interests the one as to why would an elected government carry out such a disruptive policy, one with visible short-term costs to the public and highly uncertain long-term benefits?

Credit hungry

- Research on clientelism on poor democracies have noted that politicians are not easily able to give credible policy commitment to voters.

- This is majorly due to weak institutions of the state. They cause a breakdown between the enactment of public policy and its implementation. This erodes the voters' confidence for a strong policy action.
- This leads to voters not able to assign credit (or blame) for the success (or failure) of a policy. Hence, politicians have little incentive to establish policy platforms on which to compete.
- This is the reason why broadly beneficial programmes such as education and health, which critically depend on the implementation capacity of local agencies, are likely to be underprovided.
- However, this does not mean that public goods are not provided in such democracies. It has been observed that in such settings of no concrete policy action, politicians deliver public goods based on their visibility.
- They enact those features of policy on which the voters can ascribe credit or blame for. For example, in Africa where there are many poor democracies, the government expands primary schooling by abolishing school fees, for which they can claim credit.
- Though the poor implementation and quality of education services largely known, the politicians seek to reap reward by expanding access to primary schooling even when system fails to deliver quality education.

State still rules
- The post demonetisation shocks were visible in long queues outside ATMs and banks. These lines across the countries were served to reinforce the image of Leviathan's presence.
- The display of government's seriousness about corruption was hit on target. In addition to it, the media branding of demonetisation an anti-corruption measure further suggests that visibility was an important consideration to the government.
- It is not important if the policy achieve its economic aims or not, especially in the long run but what is achieved is that the voters have been convinced of government's earnest efforts to fight corruption.
- State action, however punitive to the public, is a sign of political effort.
- There are chances the government wins over its voters despite the hardships caused by them because they know that if public institutions don't function well, how is the government to be blamed for it. Thus, the govenremnt may take full credit for trying to curb black money.

Some hypotheses
- While the economic rationale of the move is being contemplated upon, there can be other political motives too which must have led to such a policy decision
- First, the ruling party needs to win assembly elections in UP. The data collected by the Association of Democratic Reforms makes it clear that compared to the BJP (65%), the

election funding of SP (83%) and BSP (100%) depends much more on unaccounted money. Hence this move was aimed at hurting adversaries disproportionately.

- Second, the PM needed a fillip to his image as his flagships programmes like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Digital India and Smart cities weren't helping in winning elections. And the 'Acche Din' were still eluding the common man. Targeting black money which was promised in 2014 could provide some material in campaigning.
- Third, now BJP is trying to be less dependent on RSS which remains obsessed with old ideas of Hindu revival. The turning point was cow protection campaign, which PM vehemently criticised but RSS did not. Thus, it was a time to move beyond certain beliefs as religion and culture fuel the organisational energy, not the economic policy.

However, none of these hypotheses have been proved. Though it is sure that demonetisation was an economic move which was politically driven.

Conclusion

The demonetisation policy has its first casualty in form of diminished faith in RBI where its independence has been put into question. Frequent rules and guidelines for deposit and withdrawal of money fuelled uncertainty. The criticism by former RBI governors and current employees and evident logistical ill-preparation indicates serious reputational damage. If the private investors lower their estimates of RBI credibility, India may lose access to capital, which it needs desperately to grow the economy. Hence, RBI needs to assure its independent existence.

The tax collection department will now have an increased role to play in collecting the taxes by unearthing the tax evaders and black money launderers. Recently released data showed that only 1% of Indians paid income taxes in 2013. This pattern has resulted into India's tax to GDP ratio being 16.6% which is much lower than 21% average for emerging economies and 34% for OECD countries. Hence, the state has to increase its ability to catch and punish tax evasion. This is possible only with reforms in tax agencies and bringing in professionalism to the operational and managerial faces.

Thus, demonetisation may be a primarily or only political move but it should not damage the Indian economy because of its weak institutional capacities.

Connecting the dots:

- In your opinion, is demonetisation an economic or a political move? Critically evaluate

TOPIC: *General Studies 2*

- ***Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.***

The H-1B visa conundrum

Background

- H1B visa is an employment-based, non-immigrant visa category for temporary workers.
- For such a visa, an employer must offer a job and apply for employee's H1B visa petition with the US Immigration Department. This approved petition is a work permit which allows employee to obtain a visa stamp and work in the U.S. for that employer.
- **Eligibility-** it is issued for a specialty occupation, requiring theoretical and practical application of a body of specialized knowledge.
- The U.S government issues 85,000 H-1B category of guest worker visas every year through a lottery system
- **India and H1 B visa-** the guest worker visa programmes that allows the movement of skilled workers to the U.S., which is used extensively by Indian IT companies.

The proposed change

- A comprehensive immigration reform through legislation has been as long pending issue in the US. But it is not easy to alter a law which accommodates all domestic constituencies in the country.
- As per report, the White House is ready with an executive order which targets H1 B visa workers. As per the draft copy,
    - The lottery system could be replaced with new selection method which would allow only the "the best and the brightest" as beneficiaries of the programme.
    - The salary eligibility for such visas to be raised to $100,000.
    - Spouses of H1B visa holders could lose their permit to work, which was granted by the previous Obama administration.
    - It will restrict the Optional Practical Training (OPT) work, a job training opportunity available for Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) Masters from a U.S university.
    - Envisages an inspector raj where Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will be required to carry out "site visits" at places where guest workers with L-1 visas are employed, intra-company transferees.
    - To reserve 20% of the H1B visas allocated annually for firms that have 50 or fewer employees.
- This initiation is further fuelled by introduction of atleast 4 bills on H1 B visa in the Congress to basically give employment to the US citizens and plug loopholes in the foreign talent hiring programme.

Why the change?

- The American companies are calling employees on H1 B visa, training them and then send them back to their host countries and ultimately outsourcing the job. This doesn't create job opportunities for Americans who lose on skills as well as opportunities.
- Also, it has been alleged that foreign companies bring in low-skilled talent to USA which again replaces the American worker.

- Hence, the changes brought into H1B non-immigrant visa programme thereby are furthering President Trump's campaign promise of 'Buy American, Hire American'.

Hurting India

- Indian software services industry which is already facing pressures on profitability and revenue, is the biggest target of US immigration reforms.
- If the order is implemented, Indian software biggies like TCS, Infosys and Wipro will have to make fundamental changes in their business strategies. With more American workers to hire to paying increased salaries, it may erode their operating margins by as much as 3 percentage points.
- If that is not done, then another option is to settle for a much reduced scale of business in their most important market.
- In any case, the profit margins are going to sink and new investments and business opportunities may take a hit.

Hurting America

- The push to protectionism would cast shadow over bilateral relationships with India. Collaterally it will raise troubles for US tech sector and broader economy as well.
- The proposed hike in the minimum salary levels for the specialised jobs held by H-1B visa recipients will hit not only Indian IT firms but also giants of Silicon Valley, including Microsoft, Google and Facebook which will ultimately hurt US economy.
- Also, it is required that skill-based criteria are used in addition to wage –level restrictions. If this doesn't happen, many US firms will struggle to fill mid-level jobs with qualified Americans and with visa restrictions, wouldn't be able to hire foreign workers.
- Reactively, the Indian IT companies which have been rapidly growing investors in USA for years would rather prefer to take back their operations back to India. Ironically, that could lead to job losses for American workers.
- Thus, the Trump administration need to think through all the possible outcomes that could result from such hastily made policies on immigration.
- The prevailing protectionist sentiment will lead to a sharp rise in on-shoring and near-shoring arrangements

Silver lining amidst the gloom

- If the immigration reforms take place, it might act as a catalyst for the transformation of India's information technology (IT) services companies. This has a precedence
- In 1981, the Reagan Administration forced the Japanese automobile industry to sign an agreement limiting exports to the US to 1.68 million automobiles a year.
- Such a deal was to protect US's automobile industry but it did nothing to help General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler to become more competitive. Instead, it boosted Japanese companies' fortunes in 4 ways

1. The ceiling on American imports, coupled with growing demand, allowed the Japanese manufacturers to raise prices and boost margins.
2. As they didn't have to compete on price, they started to differentiate themselves
3. They manufactured bigger cars as they could no longer sell as many small cars as they wanted to. This gave rise to premium cars such as Lexus
4. It forced the Japanese companies to localise manufacturing.

- Similarly, Indian IT companies now need to shift their business model from labour cost as the fundamental source of competitive advantage.
- They are facing challenges from various fronts such as commoditization, technology shifts, automation and growing protectionism. Hence, the shift should come to the business model from 'renting out IQ to creating IP'.
- No doubt, intellectual understanding alone is not seldom sufficient to drive transformation. A variety of factors –mindset, culture, capabilities, incentives, budgeting processes and the pressure to deliver— all together frame the future.

IASbaba's views- Way forward

Indian tech companies have helped create over 400,000 jobs in the US, paid over $20 billion in taxes in the past five years. They have also made a difference to 120,000 young Americans through various STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education initiatives. Thus, India's contribution to US economy has been no less significant. Instead of getting bogged down by foreign policies, Indian IT companies should now diverse their focus to areas like localise and near shore business, leverage new technologies— artificial intelligence, automation, telepresence and augmented reality etc. This model of offshoring will require less on engineers being on client premises.

The Indian IT services should now seize the opportunity to transform and they shall be perceived not as "Indian" or "body shops," but as global technology giants that don't need visas to succeed.

Connecting the dots:

- Are Indian IT companies dependent on H1B visas for their success? Discuss the role of new projected immigration reforms' impact on Indian IT companies.
- What are H1B visas? Are they a growth measure for Indian IT companies? Analyse.

TOPIC: *General Studies 2*
- *Salient features of the Representation of People's Act*
- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

Political Funding in India- towards more transparency?

The key features of budget 2017-18 on political funding was:

- *Need to cleanse the system of political funding in India.*
- *Maximum amount of cash donation to be received by political party will be Rs 2000/- from one person.*
- *Political parties will be entitled to receive donations by cheque or digital mode from their donors.*
- *Amendment to the Reserve Bank of India Act to enable the issuance of electoral bonds in accordance with a scheme that the Government of India would frame in this regard.*
- *Every political party would have to file its return within the time prescribed in accordance with the provision of the Income-tax Act*
- *Existing exemption to the political parties from payment of income-tax would be available only subject to the fulfilment of these conditions.*

Will it induce transparency?

- Earlier, PM had advocated for electoral reforms including tightening the noose around anonymous donations made to political parties.
- On recommendation of Election Commission, the budget 2017-18 capped anonymous cash donations to political parties at Rs. 2,000, one-tenth the current level.
- This recommendation was in place to check anonymous donations and curb parties that are formed only with the motive to avail benefits of income tax exemption available to political entities.
- As per Sec 29C of Representation of the People (RP) Act, 1951, political parties were allowed to accept donation up to Rs 20,000 from anonymous individuals and from companies other than Government companies.
- Then they were required to submit such details to the Election Commission under subsection 3 of 29C.
- Subsection 4 of Section 29(c) says that if any party does not submit this to the Election Commission will not be entitled to the 100% income tax granted under Section 13-A of the Income Tax Act.
- The political parties took advantage of it and declined to list the sources of up to 70% of their declared income, saying that the law does not require them to declare these (as they were obtained through donations below Rs. 20000).
- They can now use the same excuse to not declare donations below Rs 2000. As there is no limit to the number of people who can make contributions, the political party will now issue 100 receipts for Rs 1,999 for the same donation of Rs 2 lakh made in cash as it did earlier for Rs 19,999 by issuing 10 receipts each for same amount of donation.
- So, in the end, the government just reduced the cap on the amount which can easily be countered by increasing the number of anonymous donors.

- As per Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR), only 25% of the annual income of BJP and Congress comes from known sources. If the government had been serious about bringing in transparency, it could have done away with cash donations altogether.
- It was also reportedly said that no transaction of more than Rs 3 lakh will be permitted in cash to the political parties. However, it is not known if Rs 3 lakh is the ceiling for a day's collection, or for a week, a month or a year.

Electoral bonds

- The Finance Bill has proposed amendments to the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 to allow for the issuance of electoral bonds that individuals and companies can buy through commercial banks and to the Income Tax Act, 1961 to exclude donations received by these political parties through electoral bonds.
- The aim of the amendment is to exempt the parties from each year reporting to the IT department in order to continue to avail income tax exemptions.
- Here, Donors can purchase such bonds from designated banks and these bonds can be given to the desired political party.
- Since the books of the donors will not mention the name of the party, and the books of the party will not mention the name of the donor, secrecy can be maintained about the donors.
- Though the idea is good, it is impracticable. Each electoral bond will require a serial number which will have to be entered into the bank registers along with the names of the donors.
- If such a register does not exist, it could end up with unscrupulous political parties printing bogus electoral bonds (akin to the fake stamp paper racket or It could be similar to the fake SGL bonds that were pledged by Harshad Mehta).
- If there is a serial number and name against each electoral bond issued, it is only a matter of time before either the ruling party or anyone else with access to the top managers of the bank get the names of the donors and the serial numbers electoral bonds purchased.
- This move also requires new amendments to the RP Act which would only ensure that the political parties will not be required to disclose the identity of individuals and companies who make donations through electoral bonds bought from the commercial banks.
- Thus, Electoral bonds have the potential to make political party funding largely opaque.
- Hence, if these proposals were approved by the parliament, the combined effect of the amendment to the RBI Act, the IT Act and the RP Act would be that "many political parties are likely to strive to receive cash donations below Rs 2,000 only.
- And also, the political parties will be under no obligation to disclose any donation or contribution that they receive at all, unless it is made electronically or through cheques for contributions above Rs. 20,000.

Conclusion

The proposed change leaves open a wide window for manipulations and non-disclosures than increase transparency and accountability in political donations.

Hence, the democracy should not be pushed backward into an era of secrecy ordained by law. There are various measures through which political funding can be made transparent

- Completely removing cash donations option to political parties in the time when even small traders and common man start using digital means of transaction.
- Donors to give Aadhar card number which will count the number of times a donor gives money.
- Levy a cess or tax for the purpose of funding political parties and the elections. Even if a small tax of 0.5% of GDP is collected over five years from corporates and high net worth individual tax payers, it will create a corpus of Rs. 60,000 crores which the Election Commission can administer as a constitutional body.
- Implementing the reported statement of the finance minister – that cash donations beyond an aggregate of Rs 3 lakh will not be permitted.
- Bringing national parties under RTI and upholding Central Information Commission's decision of 2013.

If the government and political parties support the principle of transparency in political funding, the regulating agencies like the IT department and the Election Commission shouldn't be deprived of their power under the garb of reforms.

Connecting the dots:

- Is it possible to make political system in India completely transparent? Discuss

TOPIC:

General Studies 1

- *Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism*
- *Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India*

General Studies 2

- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

The fight against traditions- Nagaland women reservation

Background

- In 1992, the constitution provided for Municipal Councils in urban areas including reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, as well as women.
- While Nagaland is exempted from the Constitution's Panchayat system, it is bound by the Municipal Council system, including the 1/3 reservation requirement for women. *(Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram have autonomous districts & Councils formed*

Under Sixth Schedule of Constitution and thus exempted under Article 243M(2) to have a Panchayat)

- In 2001, Nagaland State Government enacted the Nagaland Municipal Act, 2001 but it did not include the constitutionally mandated reservations for women.
- Finally, the Nagaland government enacted the Nagaland Municipal (First Amendment) Act in 2006 which provided 33% reservation for women in urban local bodies (ULBs) in Nagaland.
- This has been opposed by all-male tribal bodies on the grounds that reservation for women in ULBs would violate Article 371(A) of the Constitution and **infringe on Naga culture, traditions and customary laws.**
- This opposition has made the local elections due in Nagaland for 16 years now and the 2017 elections for ULBs have once again been postponed.

The legal struggle

- In 2011, spearheaded by the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA), Naga women filed a writ petition in Guwahati HC, challenging the State government's refusal to hold municipal elections. The single judge bench directed the government to hold elections to municipal councils and town councils in 2012.
- Later the Nagaland government filed an appeal before a Division Bench of the Guwahati High Court, which stayed the previous ruling. One of the arguments put forward by the Nagaland government was the claim that implementing such a law would **'upset the peace' in Nagaland**.
- In 2012, the State Assembly adopted a resolution rejecting women's reservation in ULBs on the ground that it infringes on the social and customary practices of the Nagas safeguarded by 371 (A).
- Further, in 2012, a special leave petition was moved in SC which upheld in 2016 the single-judge ruling of the Gauhati High Court of 2011.
- So, the Nagaland government enacted the Nagaland Municipal (Third Amendment) Bill 2016, which revoked the September 2012 resolution, paving the way for women's reservation in ULBs.

Rights of women violated

- NMA has said that article **243(T) of the Constitution, which provides for 33% women's reservation** in municipal bodies, applies to Nagaland as well.
- But Naga Hoho, the apex body of Naga tribes — contends that article 371(A) gives precedence to Nagaland's customary traditions and laws over the laws passed by Parliament.
- Over and above this, the male-dominated tribal bodies assert that Naga society offers equal opportunity to their females. However, these are absolutely false claims.

- In reality, no woman has ever been elected to the state assembly in over 53 years of Nagaland's existence as a state. Only late Rano M. Shaiza in 1977 was sole representative in Parliament.
- Though village development boards have 25% seats reserved for women, but most of tribal bodies which act as the custodians of tribal culture and traditions are dominated by men. As a result, the property and inheritance rights are highly skewed against women.
- This system has been developed over the years to keep property with the community lest women deicide to marry outside tribe.

Violating the constitution

Differentiating traditional and constitutional

- The **tribal bodies who opposed the elections are not traditional institutions** recognised by Article 371(A). It provides a special status to Nagaland and protects its religious or social practices, customary law ownership and transfer of land and its resources etc.
- Similarly, the **ULBs are constitutional bodies** under Part IX of the Constitution and not traditional Naga institutions. Hence they have no right to mandate on its functioning.
- When the state government did not call off election to be conducted on Feb 1, these tribal bodies called bandh in state from Jan 28 to Feb 1. Despite the bandh, elections took place in several places on February 1. This shows that some towns did not agree with these tribal bodies.
- It has to be also noted that even before the bandh call, the focus had started shifting from women's reservation to issues of taxes and land ownership contained in the Nagaland Municipal (Third Amendment) Bill 2016.

Running away is not solution

- What is even more alarming that Nagaland government decided to write to the Centre demanding that Nagaland be exempted from Part IX A of the Constitution.
- Part IX A of the Constitution dealing with Municipalities contains a mandatory provision under Article 243T for 33% women reservation in ULBs
- According to them, with such an exemption, the issue will be put to rest and avoid further misunderstanding among the people.
- This clearly means that the government is washing its hands of the reservations and sacrificing the rights of Naga women because of traditional male ego.
- If such an exemption happens, Naga women will have absolutely no hope of entering into and participating in decision-making bodies.

Conclusion

Reservation for women is necessary in patriarchal societies like Naga society, where there is a historical culture of inequalities. Though Nagas don't practise sati, female foeticide and infanticide, and do not believe in dowry or the caste system, but Naga customs, culture and

traditions preclude women from inheriting land and participating in the decision-making process. Art 371(A) exactly protects these rights of women.

There is another challenge of how the issue is being portrayed among the masses. Debates around state like Nagaland due to its unique history are complex due to its special relationship with the Union of India enshrined in the Constitution and also insurgency problems. Using words such as 'upset the peace' may cloud over the judgement of central government who is not well-versed with ground realities.

Hence, 'one-size-fits-all' approach of policy making has to be changed and take into account local and ground realities while bringing solutions. Equally, the communities have misused their 'autonomous status' to perpetuate their own internal inequalities which needs to be taken into account.

Being a case of gender rights, this has to be addressed with a long term vision and not near gains. The women have to fight for their rights, be it triple talaq case or entering into religious institutions.

Connecting the dots:

- The world still believes in patriarchal values and political women empowerment is a myth in India. Do you agree? substantiate
- Exempting individual states from provisions of constitution of India will hurt the fabric of unity, secularity and equality. Examine.

TOPIC: *General Studies 3*

- **Conservation, Environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment**
- **Government Budgeting - issues**

Budget – Reforms on Election Funding

Introduction

The fundamental of a vibrant democracy is periodic elections. Elections to be meaningful should be conducted free and fair with a level playing field to all in the fray. The Representation of People's Act 1950 and 1951 aim to achieve the same through the Election Commission, a constitutional body. The problem in recent days has been use of immense money power in elections and hence disturbing the balance.

Issue:

The Union Budget 2017 saw the finance minister announce a slew of reforms aimed at cleaning the field of election funding. The four elements of the scheme announced by the Finance Minister to "cleanse the system of funding of political parties" are -

- First, he claimed to follow the Election Commission in proposing a ceiling of ₹2,000 on the amount of cash donation that a political party can receive from one person in a year.
- Second, he announced that political parties would be "entitled to receive" donations by cheque or digital mode from their donors.
- Third, he proposed a new scheme of Electoral Bonds.
- Fourth, he said that every political party would have to file its Income Tax return within the prescribed time limit in order to enjoy exemption from payment of income tax.

He insisted that this scheme will bring about "greater transparency and accountability in political funding, while preventing future generation of black money".

Analysis:

The second and the fourth components of this scheme are redundant, as these are no different from what the existing law provides for.

- It does not require a new law to say that political parties are "entitled" to receive donations by cheque or digitally. They were always entitled to this and were already doing so.
- We needed a new law to mandate that the parties would be "required" to receive donations by cheque or digitally. The Finance Minister did not propose any such thing.
- Similarly, the existing law requires political parties to file their income tax returns to enjoy tax exemption. The Finance Bill now proposes a new proviso in Section 13A clause (d) of the Income Tax Act 1961 that explicitly says that the return should be filed within the stipulated time limit.
- So far, all major parties have routinely flouted this requirement. Big national parties file their return months after the due date and many parties don't file the return at all. No one gets penalised for this non-compliance. The government really did not need this amendment if it had the will to enforce the existing law.

The case of *'Limiting cash donations'*

- The proposal about limiting cash donations to ₹2,000 has been widely misunderstood and therefore welcomed as a first step in the right direction.
    - Everyone was made to believe that the limit for anonymous donations, contributions that are exempt from reporting, has been reduced from the existing ₹20,000 to ₹2,000.
    - That is what the Election Commission (EC) had asked for in its revised compendium of Proposed Electoral Reforms in December 2016. The Finance Minister's speech claimed to follow the EC's advice.
    - The Finance Bill reveals something different. The existing limit of ₹20,000 on anonymous donation as per Section 23 of the Representation of the People Act (RPA) has been left untouched.
    - The Minister has merely proposed a new, additional, clause that limits cash donation from one source to ₹2,000 in one year.

- Notice that there was and is no requirement to disclose a contribution by cheque or digital transfer up to ₹20,000. There was and is no limit to how much a party can receive from anonymous donations.
- More importantly, there was and is no limit to how much overall a party can receive in cash from all sources put together.
- Following the **Law Commission's** recommendations, the EC had proposed that no party should be allowed to receive more than ₹20 crore or 20% of its overall donations from anonymous sources. The Minister did not pay heed to this.
- A small amount enters the coffers of the party and becomes party funds. A tiny fraction of party funds is placed in the bank accounts of the party to meet some expenses that cannot remain invisible.
  - The figures widely discussed in the media relate to that tiny fraction of party funds, which is a small proportion of political funds. Most of this is not voluntary contribution or donation.
  - Much of what political parties show as donations is black money generated by party leaders which is turned into white money by way of book entries as donations to the party.
  - So far, the accountant who had to covert, say, ₹100 crore had to make sure than the entire amount was broken down into entries of ₹20,000 or below. Now they will absorb the same amount by breaking it down into entries of ₹2,000 or below. All that the proposed law would ensure is more book entries and perhaps a higher fee for the accountant. Otherwise, it would be business as usual.

Trouble with '*Electoral Bonds*':
The new proposal of Electoral Bonds, although the detailed rules are yet to be framed, the basic outline of the scheme is clear.
- Anyone who wants to donate to a political party would be able to purchase bonds from authorized banks. This purchase will have to be in 'white money' against cheque and digital payments only.
- Once purchased, these bonds will be like bearer bonds and will not contain the name of the eventual beneficiary.
- These bonds shall be redeemable only in the designated account of a registered political party within a prescribed period.
- So, the donor's bank would know about who bought how much of Electoral Bonds, but not the name of the party which received it.
- The party's bank would know the amount deposited through Bonds, but not the identity of the donor.
- The Income Tax authorities and the EC would not know anything: reporting of donor, beneficiary, or even the amount of contribution has been exempted by amending the Income Tax Act Section 13A (b) and the RPA, Section 29C.

- The net effect, and indeed the purpose, of the Bonds will be that no one except the fund giver and the fund receiver would know about this exchange done in white money with full tax exemption.

Consider an example:

Let us think of a classic quid pro quo. A government favours a business house in a mining or spectrum or oil deal to the tune of ₹5,000 crore. Both of them have a fifty-fifty deal. Under the existing arrangement, the business house would have to either declare in its balance sheet a 'donation' of ₹2,500 crore to the ruling party, or find that much cash to secretly hand over to the party bosses.

If the payment is in white, the party will have to declare the amount and the name of the company to the Income Tax authorities and to the EC. Now, the company could simply purchase Election Bonds worth ₹2,500 crore and hand it over to the party. The company's balance sheet will show "purchase of Election Bonds" with no name of the beneficiary, while it enjoys 100% tax deduction on that amount.

The party will simply deposit the money in its account, with no obligation to report anything to the IT authorities or to the EC. It may well report an innocuous amount of, say, ₹3.8 crore as its annual reportable income! So much for transparency!

The Problem with the bonds:

Once introduced, these bonds will mask whatever little transparency exists in the current system. Instead of the usual practice of converting black money into white, these bonds will push white money into a grey, if not black, trail.

Indeed, the black money in politics might go down, as the white money has been provided a perfect cover of secrecy. Why would anyone give any money to a political party through cheque or digital payment and face all the hassle of disclosure?

Conclusion

The need for electoral reforms is less emphasised. But the reforms should be designed in the right spirit and aim to bring change at the ground level. The reforms in the current budget are less transparent than the transparency they seek to bring about.

Connecting the dots

- Critically analyse the need for electoral reforms in light of growing money power and issues of paid news.

TOPIC:
General Studies 3
- *Issues relating to intellectual property rights.*
General Studies 2

- *Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests*

India and IPR- what now and what next

Background
- India ranked 43 out of 45 countries in the US Chamber of Commerce's (USCC) annual IP index, just above Pakistan, which was added to the index this year, and Venezuela.
- In 2015, India was placed 37 out of 38 countries whereas US continues to be at the top of the index.
- The index ranked countries based on points received on various aspects of patents, copyrights, trademarks, trade secrets and market access, enforcement, and ratification of international treaties.

India is lagging behind
- The national IP policy cleared by the Union cabinet in May 2016 was considered a positive for the index.
- However, as per USCC, the policy failed to address the fundamental weaknesses in India's IP framework. The IP-intensive industries faced c**hallenges on the patentability of computer-related inventions** and Section 3(d) of India's Patent Act 1970 which relates to **restrictions on patenting incremental changes**.
- One of the factors that went against India was Delhi HC's ruling which **permitted photocopying of copyrighted material** for educational purposes.

Does it demand serious consideration?
- However, many IP experts have dismissed India's poor ranking. They explain that USCC's IP index is a work of fiction as it is benchmarked against the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement.
- India is even below Brunei, a nation known more for its rich royalty (not of IP) than innovation/ technology, only because it signed up to the Trans-Pacific Partnership.
- India has been complying well in four areas of the index
    - Protection of IP- India is TRIPS compliant
    - Protection of well-known trademarks
    - Design protection is in accordance with TRIPS
    - Brilliant border protection measures.
- But, India has not been objectively assessed in these parameters.
- Yet, India should continuously adhere to WTO agreements in order to save itself from unnecessary litigations.

Where India should focus?
- India's National Intellectual Property Rights policy is a boost but filling the large gaps in India's IPR regime must be **balanced with Indian trade and public interest**

considerations. This is with reference to **constant US pressure** to impose standards that go beyond those mandated by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

- The weaknesses of Indian IPR lies at
    - **Low private-sector research and development spending**
    - **Pending patent applications** (around 2,50,000) and **trademark applications** (around 5,00,000)- due to lack of patent examiners and prolonged examination periods
    - These bottleneck create real economic costs.

- A study on link between IPR and economic growth found a strong consensus on a positive relationship. The degree of benefits accrued may vary but the relationship holds true for both developed and developing economies.

- This is the reason why government's flagship initiatives—Make In India and Start-Up India—require a strong IPR framework.

Where IP law adherence is not a solution

- The last decade was almost engulfed in negotiation of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) in 1994 to the Doha Declaration clarifying its scope in 2001—for developing nations to balance their rights with obligations, particularly in ensuring access to medicines to all.

- It is a positive stand that Patent Act 1970 is compliant with TRIPS and not with more stringent US standards.

- Here, Indian government and courts have been judicious in stopping 'evergreening' of patents by global pharma multinationals who prevent new formulations of existing medicines from being patented unless they improve therapeutic efficiency. This helps them maintain market dominance and high prices.

- In 2012 Indian company Natco Pharma was allowed to make a generic version of German company Bayer's cancer drug Nexavar.

- In 2013, the Supreme Court denied Novartis a patent for its cancer drug Glivec, citing evergreening.

Breaking the old regime

- The present IP law is based on a 15th century old Venetian model which provides for that patents might be granted for "any new and ingenious device, not previously made", provided it was useful.

- Barring some tweaks here and there, these principles still remain the basic principles of patent law.

- Hence it is a bit paradoxical that when IP rights are meant to further innovation, the legal regimes themselves have been safeguarded from innovative experimentation.

- India has to do the experimentation and 'break' the IP standards. India's technological proficiency in pharmaceuticals came through the active breaking of multinational IP, yielding a world-class generic industry and affordable medications for public- local as well as global.

- Now the time is ripe to break the ancient IP paradigm of old laws as it rests on the assumption that IP and the technological information that it protects can be treated as real property.
- Centuries ago, there was a jurist which theorised that water could never be appropriated in the same way as land, since it "flowed". From that the notion of high seas developed which was available by all and no exclusive nation could claim it.
- Similarly, now is the time that IP regime is equated with water and provide access to all rather than equating it to land and making it a property.

Patent acceptance is not the same
- India has high rate of patent invalidation but the number are even higher (50%) in US and Germany. This has a reason behind it- the patent offices often get it wrong because of less resources, limited information etc.
- More than it, the art of adjudicating the merits of a patent rests on the subjective test of whether or not an alleged invention is cognitively superior to what existed before ("prior art"), leading to highly differential results across the world on the very same patent application.

The new challenge- Artificial Intelligence
- With incoming of age of artificial intelligence where machines can think as well as humans and are inventing by the dozen (since its now possible to code them with creativity, the skilled person could soon be this artificially intelligent machine.
- The more problematic will be the fact that the test of cognitive advancement that is central to patent law rests on the notion that person is skilled in that particular art/technology.
- Under AI's infinitely vast range, almost nothing would count as inventive or non-obvious, given that every potential combination of prior art (which is what most patents are about) is known or at least knowable to these machines.

Conclusion
The patents now present uncertainty of an order that is far more significant than most other legal instruments and are also inefficient even on their own internal economic logic. It is a little wonder that some of the finest minds in the technology space such as Elon Musk are now giving up on patents.

Hence, there is no point to be racing in the obsolete patent game. India should now leapfrog and think through alternative innovation incentives such as prizes and open source formats. It can be done in the same way as done in smartphones where huge cost was avoided that might have come with investing significantly in landlines, laptops and the like.

Connecting the dots:

- What are different types of IPRs? With respect to WTO's IP policy and US pressure, critically examine India's stand on IPR.
- What is India's new IPR policy? State its merits and demerits.

- **Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.**

General Studies 2
- **Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.**

Urban Governance Issues and Problems

Introduction

The rapid growth that India is seeing is visible in urban sprawl that is visible. This is reflective on the state of infrastructure, pressure on land, water and all basic necessities. Poor planning and lack of coordination between multiple agencies is leading to all the confusion and the subsequent issues.

Issue:

It has now become a truism that Indian cities are poorly planned and governed. Plans do not have complete coverage of our cities since they are constantly violated and a significant section of the urban population lives outside "planned" neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, the state religiously performs the ritual of master planning every 10 or 20 years.

Note: The article takes Bengaluru as a case study to make a general analysis of the problems.
- Bengaluru is now in the midst of drawing up its master plan that will guide the city's development till 2031.
- The planning process initiated by the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has come under severe criticism from civil society groups.
- In public consultations held by the BDA last month, citizens were critical of the planning process and even questioned the legitimacy of the BDA to plan for the city.

The dissensions brewing in Bengaluru are symptomatic of the larger crises in the institutional framework for urban planning and governance in India.
- India's urban planning system is seen as an *undemocratic*, *non-participative* and *top-down exercise* in which bureaucrats, aided by foreign consultants, draw up static master plans that will actually have limited influence in regulating urban development.

- Hence, it is worthwhile to examine the institutional infirmities that plague India's current planning system and explore whether there are any alternatives.

Urban planning and local democracy:
One of the fundamental issues with our planning process is the incongruence between urban planning and local democracy.

- Even though the 74th Constitutional Amendment sought to empower urban local governments to enable them to function as "institutions of self-government", they still have limited influence over how the city is planned.
- Urban planning, regulation of land use, and planning for economic and social development are functions listed under the 12th Schedule of the Constitution and hence States are expected to devolve these tasks to the Municipal Corporation.
- For metropolitan cities with a population of over 10 lakh, the 74th Amendment mandates the creation of Metropolitan Planning Committees (MPCs) which will integrate the plans prepared by local bodies within the metropolitan area.
- For every city with a population of over three lakh, the Constitution also mandates the setting up of Ward Committees to carry out municipal functions within the ward.

However, more than two decades after the passing of the 74th Amendment, we find that these institutional frameworks for decentralised governance are yet to take full shape in most cities.

- The legislations governing urban planning have not been significantly altered to ensure that these institutions are made an integral part of the planning process.
- Though the Union government in 1996 issued a Model Regional and Town Planning and Development Law, which requires Municipal Corporations to prepare local plans and the MPC the regional plans, most States have failed to incorporate these provisions in their planning legislations.
    - So, under the Karnataka Town and Country Planning Act, the Local Planning Authority responsible for preparing the master plan of Bengaluru continues to be the BDA and not the Municipal Corporation or the MPC.
    - Also, the legislation does not mandate that plans be prepared on the basis of public participation and merely asks for public comments on the plan after it is already prepared. Similar provisions govern other cities in India.

Hence, planning continues to be a top-down bureaucratic exercise, disconnected from the institutions of local democracy provided under the Constitution.

- An urban planning system, which is in line with the spirit of the 74th Amendment, would require that instead of development authorities — agencies only answerable to the State government — planning processes should be exercised at the legitimate units of urban local governance-Ward Committees, Municipal Corporations and MPCs.

- Such a multi-scale planning framework can help planning become an iterative process through which the needs and aspirations of various localities are incorporated into the plan for the metropolitan region.

Colonial legacy of town planning

One other key concern with India's current urban planning regime is that it is still based on the outmoded practice of static, land use-based master plans.

- The Town and Country Planning Acts of various States are principally based on a 1947 British legislation which has actually been significantly modified in the U.K.

- Under this planning regime, master plans are principally restricted to zoning which segregates areas into various categories: residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, etc.

- Our planning legislations do not require the master plan to design the transport, water and energy networks of the city. Even when master plans are comprehensive and integrate various sectors into the plan, these elements of the plan are not statutorily binding.

- What makes these sectoral plans even more difficult to implement is the fact that these functions are typically under the jurisdiction of multiple parastatal agencies.

Considering the institutional infirmities of the current planning regime, it is important to explore alternative approaches to urban planning.

- In an environment where municipal functions are carried out by multiple agencies, it is important to develop new institutional mechanisms for the inter-sectoral coordination and implementation of plans.

- We should also consider moving beyond static land use-based master plans and adopt a planning process which is more dynamic and responsive to the needs of the people.

- Instead of freezing plans for 10 or 20 years, there should be mechanisms providing for the periodic review of plans. An inflexible urban planning system which is ostensibly based on rationalistic and scientific criteria, and therefore "apolitical", is prone to be more exclusionary.

Conclusion

Hence, we should explore new frameworks for urban planning that respect the spirit of local democracy envisaged under the 74th Amendment, integrate multiple sectors within the plan, provide for multi-scale planning processes, and view the plan as a dynamic, living document

Connecting the dots

- Urbanisation is a natural consequence of development in any developing and emerging nation. What are challenges of urbanisation and associated problems in urban local governance in India? How does the constitution ease or complicate the process?

TOPIC:
General Studies 2
- **Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.**
- *Indian Constitution*- **historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure**

State Funding of elections

Introduction

The fundamental of a vibrant democracy is periodic elections. Elections to be meaningful should be conducted free and fair with a level playing field to all in the fray. The Representation of People's Act 1950 and 1951 aim to achieve the same through the Election Commission, a constitutional body. The problem in recent days has been use of immense money power in elections and hence disturbing the balance.

Three different views:
   1. **Left oriented view:**
Taking a positing in favour of state funding of elections:
- When we think of politics and money we tend to focus on how to control black money in politics which in turn finds expression in fixing expenditure limits on candidates and political parties. We need to shift our focus to how to infuse white money in politics.
- And instead of being obsessed with a ceiling on expenditure incurred by candidates and political parties, we should spend our energy on seeking a floor-level fund for everyone who is a serious contender in the electoral arena, if we want to ensure a level playing field.
- Since we have failed to develop healthy traditions of political funding, we need to think of some shortcuts.
- State funding of elections is part of a possible solution, though state funding by itself will not do away with the nexus of black money and electoral politics.

Infusing white money
- A political party/ candidate which/ who enjoys political support should not be thrown out of the political arena simply because of lack of funds.
- Any scheme of state funding of elections should be designed in such a way that it infuses a substantial amount of white money into politics in ways that are transparent and flexible.
- A proposal for instance (as picturised by Yogendra Yadav):
    - At the end of every election, every candidate should be reimbursed at the rate of ₹100 for each vote secured by that candidate in the elections.

- The money may be divided equally between the candidate and her party, to be deposited in a special bank account for this purpose.
- There could be a minimum qualifying cut-off of, say, 1% of valid votes polled, so as to deter non-serious candidates.
- There could also be a ceiling on reimbursement, say, twice the maximum permissible expenditure for a candidate in a constituency, so that a candidate and her party do not get more than what they need.
- The candidates should be allowed to adjust any permissible item of their election expenses against this amount.
- A party should be free to use their share on any expense already incurred on elections or any expense on political activity till the next election.

Would it cost a bomb? Over a five-year period, across one round of parliamentary and Assembly elections, it would cost around ₹5,000 crore.

- That is about 0.05% of the Central government's Budget for five years. What about black money? Yes, it won't disappear. But the dependence of political leaders and parties on black money will reduce.

Why pay more money to already cash-rich political parties for whom this may mean nothing?

- Because if the party workers know that the party has access to some legitimate funds, they would be able to make demands on their party.
- It would increase internal democracy and reduce the clout of moneybags within these big parties.

It would be something that improves the quality of our democracy is the best value for money and will go a long way in ensuring a clean democracy.

2. Right oriented view

State funding of elections is that vision that cannot fructify but refuses to fade away.

- Indian political parties, unlike western democracies, are not mere platforms to put some people into elective public office but are like standing armies that need continuous nourishment.
- They provide a calling card to millions who otherwise may not have a worthwhile identity or independent standing in the social and economic milieu — the syndrome of whole-timers, pracharaks and party apparatchiks, respectively.

Thus there are two aspects to the financing of the democratic process:

- The financing of elections from the panchayat level to Parliament
- The funding of political parties that is not election-specific but is an exercise in perpetuity for reasons enunciated above.

Disclosing sources

Candidates for various levels of elections are funded by myriad sources:

- friends, individuals who believe in the cause or ideology a candidate/ political party espouses, non-governmental organisations, corporates, NRIs, foreign governments and even criminal syndicates seeking patronage and protection.
- Any substantive initiative aimed at bringing transparency, accountability and cleanliness to the vexed question of political financing needs to address these aspects concurrently.

Under the existing legal dispensation,

- Election candidates are obligated only to reveal their spending and keep it theoretically within limits prescribed by the Election Commission, a ceiling routinely violated with impunity by every candidate in every election.
- They are under no obligation to disclose how much money they have collected and where it has come from.
- This needs to change. All candidates must reveal the sources of their electoral funding statutorily. In addition to the expense statement, a daily collection statement detailing the identity of the donors with their PAN card, Aadhaar card number, and full financial details must be filed with the expenditure observer overseeing every election.

Insofar as political parties are concerned,

- The Supreme Court must take suo motu cognisance of the recent Association of Democratic Reforms report that documented that 69% of the income of political parties between 2004-05 and 2014-15 came from unknown sources.
- This is happening because of a deliberately inserted exemption: Section 13 (A) subsection (b) of the Income Tax Act, 1961 that exempts political parties from even keeping a record of the source of donations below ₹20,000.
- Read in conjunction with Section 29 (C) of the Representation of the People Act 1951, it provides the legal architecture and immunity for the opacity manifest in political and electoral financing processes.
- It is a bit of chicanery if not insidiousness that it was a previous National Democratic Alliance government that in 2003 had raised the limit of anonymous donations from ₹10,000 to ₹20,000, and now the Finance Minister says in his Budget speech that it would be brought down to ₹2,000.
- This is nothing but mere eyewash since the law mandates that no records of donations below this threshold need to be maintained.
- Therefore, any and every political party will now claim that a substantive bulk of their donations has come from donors who have contributed ₹2,000 or less.

This exemption needs to be quashed by the Supreme Court because Parliament will never legislate to remove this insidious loophole. Collective vested interests would ensure its continuity. The identity of every donor to every political party irrespective of the amount donated must be in the public domain so that the Election Commission, Income Tax Department and other electoral oversight initiatives can verify their bona fides. These and a myriad other reforms are the way forward.

Conceptually, state funding of elections is based on the presumption that there would be then no private funding.

- The Election Commission simply does not have the wherewithal to ensure that. Moreover, elections are a democratic participatory process.
- If as an elector you are passionate about a candidate/ political party, isn't it logical to put your money where your heart or mouth is?
- State funding of elections is therefore antithetical to democracy itself

3. Centre oriented view:

To check corruption in elections, it is necessary to consider public funding of political parties — though certainly not of elections.

- It is important to understand the distinction between state funding of elections and state funding of political parties, and why the later is a saner remedy.
- It is impossible to keep tabs on money spent in elections. That's why it has consistently opposed state funding of elections.
- The issue here is one of black money and not white money. We cannot monitor how black money is put to use in bribing voters, in paid news, and other forms of transgressions, though we have been able to have some measure of success.

Funding parties post-election

- To give an example, for Vidhan Sabha elections, there is a ceiling of ₹28 lakh but we all know how that is breached just as we are aware of how money is spent in contesting these elections.
- We also know that politics cannot be run without money. So, I suggest that it is easier to monitor the funding of political parties which is a far more realistic goal than seeking state funding of elections.
- Political parties can be funded post-election based on their actual performance. We could arrive at some calculations based on the performance. We could, for instance, agree that for every vote obtained, ₹100 be given.
- Since the number of votes polled cannot be fudged, reimbursement based on polled votes would be accurate.
- As we know, the number of votes polled for each candidate, the actual votes cast, cannot be contested at all.
- So, if a candidate gets one vote, I will say, you take ₹100 and you will have no cause for complaints as the amount is based on your performance.
- No serious candidate, regardless of the number of votes cast in his favour, will bear a grudge.

In the last general election, 55 crore votes were cast. So, at the rate of ₹100 per vote it comes to around ₹5,500 crore. Is this adequate?

- This roughly corresponds to the amount raised by all political parties together in five years. This money can be distributed among the parties based on their poll performance and must be paid by cheque.
- No extortion. No bribes. No quid pro quo. Also, all private donations will be totally banned if we follow this system. And the party accounts will be subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

As for the question, why the public pay should for political parties, one easy answer is if you want honesty and transparency in governance, this is a small price to pay.

- Hypothetically, a thousand crores of public money is peanuts compared to the end result of ensuring transparency in elections.

If that is not acceptable,
- We should create a national election fund to which corporates and others can be asked to donate.
- Business houses can make donations to the parties they are beholden to and the funds will be disbursed according to your performance.
- Don't tax the public then and let only corporate houses make their payments to the national election fund.

A study, **'Political Finance Regulations around the World'**, by the *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Stockholm (2012),* in 180 countries shows 71 nations have the facility of giving state funds based on votes obtained.

This includes 86% countries in Europe, 71% Africa, 63% of the Americas and 58% of Asia. If it works well in so many countries, there is no reason why it cannot be implemented in India.

Conclusion

The need for electoral reforms is less emphasised. But the reforms should be designed in the right spirit and aim to bring change at the ground level. The reforms in the current budget are less transparent than the transparency they seek to bring about.

Connecting the dots
- State funding of elections is an idea that is in vogue from 2 decades now. Critically discuss the relevance of the concept in Indian context.

TOPIC: *General Studies 1*
- ***Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.***

Jallikattu protests and Culture

Introduction

India is a diverse country with rich cultural heritage and each contributing uniquely to India's identity in the world. The recent dynamics around Jallikattu and its justifications via protests and legislations raises a question on the true aspects of culture and society.

Issue:

The Supreme Court recently refused to stay the new piece of legislation passed recently by the Tamil Nadu Assembly may have been a relief for jallikattu supporters, but it came with the reminder to the State government "that maintaining law and order situation is its prime duty".

- The hundreds of youth who had taken to peaceful protest for the cause were nowhere to be seen in this moment of celebration

History and misrepresentation

It is said that those who ignore history are condemned to repeat it.

- Listing out the number of times students have protested, we seem to have learnt nothing from history, and there seems to be every possibility that these will recur in the future.
- In picking out verses to support jallikattu, scholars suffer from selective amnesia.
    - The most prevalent theme of Sangam literature is on the connections we have with nature.
    - Sangam poetry is replete with references to how our fortunes are inextricably intertwined with nature.
    - Among the many things it speaks about, such as music, art, dance, drama, emotions and food, games form one small facet of culture;
    - Jallikattu occupies an even smaller part and found support mostly from the pastoral regions. On the other hand, boat racing was for the coastal regions.
- Those who look to literature for support also look at it from a contradictorily western perspective — older is better and safer.
- If culture is what defined the Sangam period, then we have really missed the point.
    - Tamil has had a continuously evolving literary tradition beyond Sangam poetry which was discovered only a few hundred years ago.
    - Culture is also made up of **Bhakti** poetry that came after that, where poets used stories from the epics but not the Sanskrit alphabet.
- In a history of more than 2,000 years, focussing on one "sport" where a terrified animal is set upon by groups of men — which is also not how it was played in the past — doesn't seem to explain why so many young passionate individuals took to the streets with courage and conviction, and in a non-violent way.

What could have been the driving force in the protests?

- If we don't view history as a series of protests but as behaviors exhibited to fulfill basic needs, we get a different perspective.

- What has happened has happened, and the time and energy spent must not go in vain. It will not if we actually act on the needs because protests, like sharing social media posts, are strategies to fulfil needs.
- In a way, people are not very different from the bull that we see in video clips.
    - As humans, we may articulate it far better, but we are just living beings with needs. We have an imagination but our needs are the same, and these predict ours as well as the bull's behaviour.
    - Our fundamental needs are to ensure physical safety, which we experience most strongly in our gut; emotional safety, which we experience most strongly in our heart; and intellectual safety or the need for identity, which we experience most strongly in our head.
- When these needs are not met, we have corresponding fears. We then try to adopt various strategies to meet these needs and allay our fears.

Inspiration from inscriptions
- There are more than 50,000 temple inscriptions in Tamil Nadu which have nothing to do with religion and everything to do with administration and legal issues across the last 2,000 years.
- If we look at them as a source and in turn look at how these needs were met, we may yet be able to work on needs that were unfulfilled which made hundreds of youth take to the streets.
    - The current trend towards centralisation of power, for example within the ruling party, between districts and Chennai, and even between States and the Centre is alien to Tamil culture, if we use a 1,000-year-old past as a reference point.
    - This has robbed people, especially youth searching for jobs in a State that has seen little government-driven employment, of their need for an identity and security.
    - This is what resulted in the ripple that became a wave.

If only such display of power had been utilised when, for example, there was an oil spill off the coast of Chennai. Policymakers must stop residing in Tamil history for their glory and instead reference it to see what needs, they can meet, if they look at governance patterns of the past.

Conclusion
History and culture are valuable evidences and collections that need to imbibed from generations with clear message and protocols. It is important to ensure no misrepresentation of the same happens and for narrow ends. Youth of the day need to understand and appreciate history in that context and times. Justifying or demonizing anything of the past in current context is not justifiable.

Connecting the dots

- In light of recent incidents w.r.t Tipu Sultan and Jallikattu protests in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu respectively, critically analyse the role played by ancient history and culture on the modern day society. How is it used often for narrow political ends?

Related article:

Jallikattu and the debate surrounding it

http://iasbaba.com/2017/01/iasbabas-daily-current-affairs-21st-january-2017/

Jallikattu and the debate surrounding it (Part 2)

http://iasbaba.com/2017/01/iasbabas-daily-current-affairs-25th-january-2017/

TOPIC:

General Studies 1

- *Social empowerment*

General Studies 2

- *Development processes and the development industry the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders*

A gender scorecard for politicians

Elections in India

- Many Indians seem to approach elections like they would appear for examination.
- Here, the winners are predetermined due to being influenced by the "candidate/ party wave".
- Electoral loss is viewed as personal failure by the voter in marking the "right" answer.
- This attitude places tremendous barriers on risk taking and thus not allowing new politics or radical change to appear.

Where does the fault lie?

- The voters have mentioned explicitly that they will not vote a candidate with a cold track record on gender.
- Derogatory comments, crimes against women or espousing gender inequality are viewed as disqualifiers.
- Yet, sexist and even misogynistic politicians are voted in, and in many cases repeatedly with huge majorities.
- The parties almost never impose penalties against sexism, be it demanding a public apology or for more serious violations- dismissal, demotion or denial of ticket.
- The standard approach of parties have been explaining it or distance themselves from the comment.

- Hence there is a need to combat sexism in politics and usher in more gender balanced governance. And voters have to initiate their right to vote for a suitable candidate.

What can be done?
- Indian voters are known to research candidates using whatever tools are available to them before they vote.
- Hence when information on gender governance and parity are accessible to voters, they may likely include it into their vote.
- These parameters can provide direction to voters on whom not to vote for, whom to disqualify and whom to reject despite the incomplete picture available for selecting the candidate.
- However, this can make the elections bend towards a more equitable India by making gender scorecards easily available.

Background:
- In past 70 years, sex ratio at birth has fallen from 946 to 887 though literacy and higher education have risen for men and women.
- Only 20% of urban educated working-age women work compared to over double that for men.
- There has been 14 times increase in trafficking of minor girls in last decade.
- Women are barely 10% of central government employees and 11% of the parliament and state legislatures averaged.
- Expenditures towards universal programmes have failed to deliver to women their rightful share. Gender specific programmes are barely funded and utilised.
- Thus, India's progress on women's health, education, livelihood, political representation and other social indicators along with guarantee of constitutional rights is poor compared to men.

Gender Scorecard
What is it?
- It is a **report card on candidates and parties**
- It will **measure and rate their achievements on women's development and rights** across multiple axes.
- They are crucial in capturing evidence based metrics on gender inequity, disparity and imbalance in the system.
- Ideally, gender scorecards must be put beside with good governance scorecards for a balanced 360 degree assessment.
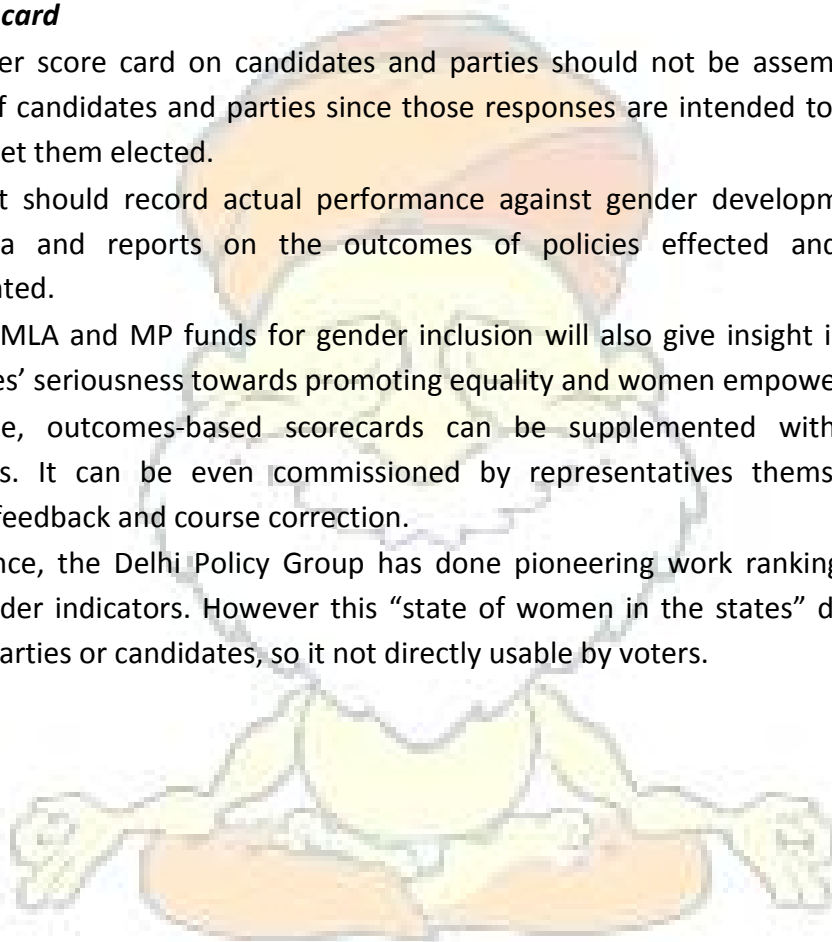
Used by?
- Voters

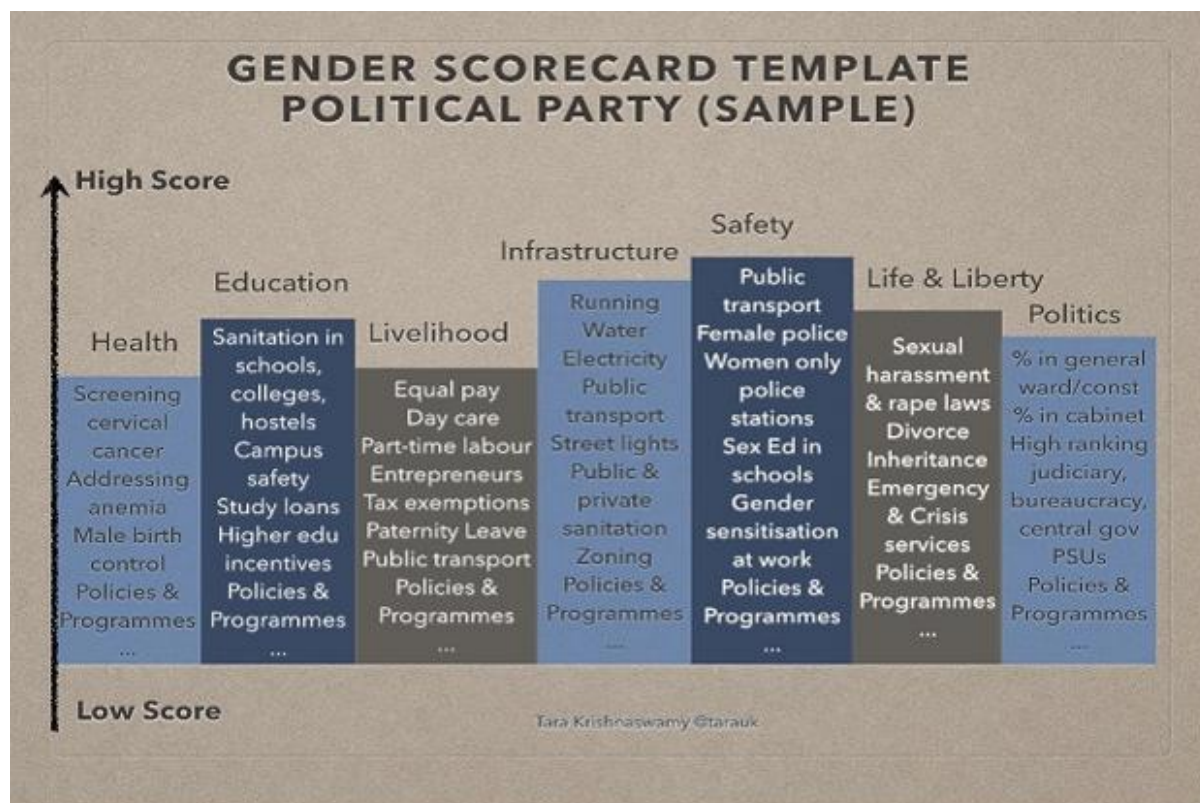- It will be a reference for them for their voting decisions at the local body, state or central level.

Who publishes it?

- Any group with non partisan or partisan interests that provides voters information on parties' and candidates' performance.
- Interestingly, many groups — media houses, think tanks, policy institutes, women's and advocacy groups and even parties themselves — can and should publish it.
- There are many groups such as Association for Democratic Reforms, PRS Legislative Research, IndiaSpend etc. which can publish it.
- It will be upto public to refer to the ones they trust the most and make choices.

Collating the card

- The gender score card on candidates and parties should not be assembled by taking surveys of candidates and parties since those responses are intended to say the things that will get them elected.
- Instead, it should record actual performance against gender development indicators from data and reports on the outcomes of policies effected and programmes implemented.
- Usage of MLA and MP funds for gender inclusion will also give insight into candidates and parties' seriousness towards promoting equality and women empowerment.
- Over time, outcomes-based scorecards can be supplemented with performance scorecards. It can be even commissioned by representatives themselves, for live tracking, feedback and course correction.
- For instance, the Delhi Policy Group has done pioneering work ranking Indian states using gender indicators. However this "state of women in the states" does not assess political parties or candidates, so it not directly usable by voters.

GENDER SCORECARD TEMPLATE
POLITICAL PARTY (SAMPLE)

Picture credit:
http://www.livemint.com/r/LiveMint/Period2/2017/02/21/Photos/Processed/genderscore-U10140993829pbE--621x414@LiveMint.jpg

A gender scorecard must evaluate a party or candidate in domains of

- Health
- Education
- Livelihood
- Infrastructure
- Safety
- Life and Liberty
- Political Representation

For parties, they should be assessed on bills passed and programmes implemented with success rates, and gender affirmative actions. Mere championing and lip service should not be counted.

What impacts the scorecard?
Availability of data on outcomes of policies and programmes.

- India has serious paucity of comprehensive measurements, proper data presentation and transparency.

- There are numerous announcements of programmes and schemes but the performance and outcomes are inadequately measured.

Difference in importance accorded

- It is important to weigh the verticals with the assumption that they differentially contribute to women's socio-economic development.
- For example, **lack of running water** have a multiplier effect on women's socio-economic progress as burden falls on them to fetch water for the family from distant sources. This leads to degradation of their education, employment and safety.
- **Lack of toilets or safe transport** can become overwhelming barriers for their development and safety.
- Thus it is **important to assign equal weights to the verticals**.

Conclusion

"What gets measured gets done" can be used as a method to steer socio-political change and combat gender imbalance.

Gender scorecards create healthy rivalry between candidates or parties and makes them accountable to deliver an India for all, while keeping voters in the dark expands poor politics.

Connecting the dots:

- What do you understand by a gender scorecard? How can it propel women empowerment in different spheres of society?

TOPIC:
General Studies 1

- **Role of women and women's organization, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies.**

General Studies 2

- *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.*

Old aged and elderly problems in India

Introduction

India has the highest demographic dividend it is said. Meanwhile it also true that the young population is ageing and it is time we take adequate measures to cater to their needs in all aspects from health care, infrastructure and social understanding.

Issue:

While India's celebrated demographic dividend has for decades underpinned its rapid economic progress, an equally counter force may offset some of the gains from having a relatively young population:

- Rapid ageing at the top end of the scale.

- This is a cause of deep concern for policymakers as *India already has the world's second largest population of the elderly, defined as those above 60 years of age.*

- As this 104-million-strong cohort continues to expand at an accelerating pace, it will generate enormous socio-economic pressures as the demand for healthcare services and tailored accommodation spikes to historically unprecedented levels.
  - It is projected that approximately 20% of Indians will be elderly by 2050, marking a dramatic jump from the current 6%.

- However, thus far, efforts to develop a regime of health and social care that is attuned to the shifting needs of the population have been insufficient.

- While more mature economies have created **multiple models for elder care**, such as –
  - Universal or widely accessible health insurance,
  - Networks of nursing homes
  - Palliative care specializations.

It is hard to find such systemic developments in India.

Actions needed:

- Experts also caution that as the proportional size of the elderly population expands, there is likely to be a shift in the disease patterns from communicable to non-communicable, which itself calls for re-gearing the health-care system toward *"preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative aspects of health".*

- Advocacy and information campaigns may be necessary to redirect social attitudes toward ageing, which often do not help the elderly enjoy a life of stability and dignity.

- As highlighted in **'Uncertain Twilight'**, (a four-part series in *The Hindu* on the welfare of senior citizens), the ground realities faced by the elderly include abandonment by their families, destitution and homelessness, inability to access quality health care, low levels of institutional support, and the loneliness and depression associated with separation from their families.

Indian Scenario:

On the one hand, the traditional arrangements for the elderly in an Indian family revolve around care provided by their children.

- According to the National Sample Survey Organisation's 2004 survey, nearly 3% of persons aged above 60 lived alone.

- The number of elderly living with their spouses was only 9.3%, and those living with their children accounted for 35.6%.

- However, as many among the younger generation within the workforce are left with less time, energy and willingness to care for their parents, or simply emigrate abroad and are unable to do so, senior citizens are increasingly having to turn to other arrangements.
- In the private sector, an estimated demand for 300,000 senior housing units, valued at over $1 billion, has led to a variety of retirement communities emerging across the country, in addition to innovations in healthcare delivery for this group.
- Yet the poor among the elderly still very much depend on the government to think creatively and come up with the resources and institutions to support their needs.

Conclusion

It is therefore important that a holistic policy action is designed and implemented at all levels. Further a well oiled structure should be in place for ensuring accountability in all aspects from health care, social dwelling and raising awareness in the society. Hence India needs to prepare to avoid a demographic disaster.

Connecting the dots

- As important it is to leverage a 'Young India' more important it is to plan for an 'Ageing India'. Critically analyse the current policy atmosphere for old aged in India and necessary reforms to ensure there is ageing with dignity.

TOPIC: *General Studies 2*
- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*
- *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*
- *Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes*

Right to education: Need of proper implementation

- It's been eight years since the Right to Education Act, 2009, came into force.
- The RTE Act has been touted to be a landmark legislation that seeks to realise the **fundamental right to education for all children in the age group of 6-14 years**.
- Yet it is being perceived as an ill-drafted and poorly implemented legislation.
- Many schools in country still suffer from **lack of adequate** drinking water facilities, playgrounds or the necessary infrastructure prescribed by the Act.
- There still exists cases of **corporal punishment** which has been banned by RTE.
- The **learning outcomes** which are the indicators of quality of classroom instruction, have been found to be badly low.

Thus, it shows that bureaucratic apathy and weak institutional mechanisms are some factors that have contributed to poor and less significant implementation of the Act.

However, there is relatively unexamined indicator of how the law has worked is its contestation in courts.

Litigation and RTE

- While studying cases in the High Courts and the Supreme Court from 2010 to 2015 which directly affected rights of a child under the RTE Act by a research centre, it was observed that some provisions of the Act are more litigated than the others.

More litigated issues

- As much as 49% cases on the RTE Act have dealt with questions of **access to education**.
- The reasons for this may be denial of admission, fixing age-limits for admission to a particular class, transfer of students from one school to another, and conducting screening tests at the time of admission.
- Thus, they feature prominently in the priorities of litigants.
- Further, out of the total disputes settled, almost 24% exclusively refer to **Section 12(1)(c) of the Act,** which mandates all **non-minority**, **unaided private schools** to **reserve 25% seats for children belonging to economically weaker sections and disadvantaged groups.**
- The denial of admission by private schools, delayed reimbursement by State governments to private schools, ambiguity over definitions of 'economically weaker sections' and 'disadvantaged groups' are some of the most prominent issues that have arisen in relation to this provision.
- There have been several cases of unaided private schools fighting with State governments over their perceived autonomy vis-à-vis obligations outlined in the RTE Act.
- Other issues included the **applicability of the RTE Act to minority schools**, applicability of the **no-detention policy to private schools**, and the definition of 'neighbourhood' for **admission into 'neighbourhood schools'**.
- While some of these issues are yet to be resolved by the court, others are yet to be enforced by schools themselves.
- It is still unclear if all unaided private schools and some specified government schools are prohibited from conducting admission tests/interviews, as a recent MHRD order significantly weakens this ban.
- Further, many private schools **continue to charge donations** from children, despite it being illegal under the RTE Act.

Less litigated issues

- The provisions which are relatively less litigated are **facilities for disabled students** prescribed under the Act. They account merely 5% of the total litigation.
- The provisions mandating **basic facilities and adequate infrastructure** in schools constitute 11% of the total disputes settled under the RTE Act.

- It has been observed that **fewer litigants** seem to have approached courts for relief over **infrastructural norms and availability of qualified teachers** as required under the RTE Act. However it does not mean that these norms are better implemented than more litigated ones.
- These provisions **impose positive obligations on States** for implementing the RTE Act and, therefore, must be progressively realised as it may not be high priority for litigants who are generally individual parents.
- The provisions on banning corporal punishment and prescription of pupil-teacher ratio in classrooms have not been contested at all, even though circumstantial evidence and news reports suggest clear violations of these.

Limitations of judiciary

- From the above types and frequency of litigations, it appears that the RTE Act remains under-enforced.
- The courts are usually demand-driven and give priority to issues that are brought forward by litigants. Hence, they still don't have the opportunity to go beyond injunctions and focus on long-term reliefs involving systemic reform.
- In very few cases, the courts have formulated monitoring mechanisms to ensure timely implementation of their orders.
- However in some cases the court's interventions were instrumental in the implementation of the Act. For instance, courts directed the Gujarat and Telangana governments to implement key provisions of the Act, including section 12(1)(c). This happened as late as in 2015.

Conclusion- Proposed reforms

- The judiciary is expected to play a significant role in enforcing the RTE Act.
- Courts have been acting and have to continue to **act as first port of call** in the absence of proper statutory bodies and grievance redressal mechanisms.
- However, it is imperative that judicial efforts be supplemented by **building awareness and strengthening grievance redressal mechanisms** under the RTE Act.
- This will lead to saving of litigation costs as well as remove the barriers to secure rights for parents and their children.
- Side by side, **strategic litigation across High Courts** should also be explored, for pushing implementation of the RTE Act by state governments.
- In a PIL filed in 2014 by National Coalition for Education in SC, it pointed out that at least 3.77 crore children between the age of 6 to14 years were not in schools.
- It also highlighted sluggish implementation of the RTE Act, leading the Supreme Court to direct all states and union territories to respond to these issues.
- Thus, more such **efforts by civil society organisations** will be useful in getting targeted judicial orders for the effective implementation of the Act.

- RTE is here to stay as its focus on educating all children is core objective of a developing India. Now the executive has to **strengthen education delivery mechanisms** and summon necessary **political will** to implement Act. Simultaneously, judiciary will continue hold government accountable and ensure the Act's enforcement.

Connecting the dots:
- What are the key provisions of RTE Act? Critically analyse its present implementation status.

TOPIC:
General Studies 1
- *Effects of globalization on Indian society*
- *Social empowerment*

General Studies 2
- *Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests*

General Studies 3
- *Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.*

Protecting the tribal rights

- RKIA an Emirati investor, recently initiated an investment treaty arbitration (ITA) claim against India under the India-UAE Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT).
- It sought compensation of $44.71 million after claim arose after a MoU between Andhra Pradesh and RAKIA to supply bauxite to Anrak Aluminum Limited, in which RAKIA has 13% shareholding, was cancelled.
- It is alleged that the concerns of the tribal population in those areas led to cancellation of the MoU.
- Similarly, in 2014, Bear Creek Mining Corporation initiated an ITA against Peru under the investment chapter of the Canada-Peru Free Trade Agreement, claiming violation of the investment obligations due to the withdrawal of mining concessions, allegedly as a result of the protests by indigenous peoples.
- These cases present an opportunity to evaluate the impact of the obligations of the host states under BITs on the rights of the tribal people.

BIT
- A bilateral investment treaty (BIT) is an agreement establishing the terms and conditions for private investment by nationals and companies of one state in another state.
- These types of investments are called FDIs.
- BITs are established through trade pacts.

- Most BITs grant investments made by an investor of one Contracting State in the territory of the other a number of guarantees, which typically include fair and equitable treatment, protection from expropriation, free transfer of means and full protection and security.
- Criticism- NGOs have spoken against the use of BITs, stating that they are mostly designed to protect the foreign investors and do not take into account obligations and standards to protect the environment, labour rights, social provisions or natural resources.

Tribal protection under law
- The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), 2007 recognises **indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination**, **autonomy** and their **right against forcible displacement and relocation** from their lands or territories without free, prior and informed consent, among other things.
- India has voted for in favour of this Declaration.
- Also, there is International Labour Organisation **(ILO) convention** concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, 1989. It is based on the "**respect for the cultures and ways of life of indigenous peoples**" and recognises their "right to land and natural resources and to define their own priorities for development."
- **India** is not a party to this convention but is **a party to the ILO Convention concerning the Protection and Integration of Indigenous and Other Tribal and Semi-Tribal Populations in Independent Countries, 1957**. Incidentally, this convention is outdated and closed for ratification.
- In India, the Constitution provides autonomy to tribal areas in matters of governance under the **Fifth and Sixth Schedules**.
- It was further fortified by the *Samatha v. State of Andhra Pradesh & Ors (1997)* judgment where **the Supreme Court declared** that the **transfer of tribal land to private parties for mining was null and void under the Fifth Schedule**.
- The framework for protection of the rights of tribal and indigenous people is further strengthened by the **Recognition of Forest Rights Act, 2006**. It **protects the individual and community rights of tribal people in forest areas** and their right to free and prior informed consent in event of their displacement and resettlement.

Business and investment promotion
- Xaxa committee report 2014 has highlighted that though the protection of the rights of tribal people are in place, they are regularly flouted.
- The state becomes more concerned about fulfilling contractual obligations towards the private investor instead of ensuring that tribals are not ousted from the land to which they are historically and culturally connected.
- Hence, the state has been clearly flouting the constitutional and legal principles.

- The evidence is in the fact that there have been increase in number of MoUs being signed by natural resources-endowed states with investors for facilitation of developmental projects.
- For instance, till 2014, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand have reportedly entered into 121 and 74 such MoUs, respectively, with various private players.
- Thus, these kind of stands and actions **alter the role of the state vis-à-vis the tribal people** as the state prefers economic expediency at the cost of the rights of tribal people.

Economic Development
- The states invite investments from domestic investors as well as foreign players whose interests are not only protected under domestic laws but also under the BITs.
- The purpose of BITs is to give protection to foreign investors while imposing certain obligations on the host state.
- For example, **if a development project involving a foreign investor in tribal areas leading to acquisition of tribal land is met with protest**, there may be **two possible scenarios**.
    1. The State government due to socio-legal and political pressures may **yield to the demand of the tribal people** to the detriment of the foreign investor, which is what has happened in the case of RAKIA.
    2. Or, assuming that the government continues with the project, the **judiciary may order the cancellation of permits** given to the foreign investor, which is what happened in the case of Vedanta in 2013.
- In both the cases, **foreign investors may drag India to ITA claiming violation of obligations under the BIT**, such as fair and equitable treatment or indirect expropriation.
- This perceived threat of ITA against the state may compel the latter to refrain from implementing tribal rights in the development project area.

A recent report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognises three main reasons for serious impact that foreign investments have on the rights of indigenous people:
1. Failure to adequately address human rights issues of tribal people in BITs
2. The perceived threat of ITA for enforcement of investor protection
3. Exclusion of indigenous people from the policymaking process.

Possible solutions?
Economic development and protection of tribal rights have to happen together as both have equal importance in country's development which is aimed at being inclusive.
Some suggestions that can be looked forward to are:
Including the tribal angle

- None of the 80-plus BITs signed by India contains even a single provision on the rights of tribals. Even the 2015 model Indian BIT does not contain any such provision.
- Thus, to avoid ITA cases by foreign investors, the government's approach should be to **include provisions relating to the protection of indigenous people in BITs**.
- Examples from world:
  - Canada has several exceptions to protect the rights of indigenous people in many of its BITs.
  - The Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement incorporates the rights of the Maoris from New Zealand also.
- Since India is going to renegotiate its existing BITs, it should **create a special exception for taking regulatory measures for protecting the rights of tribal people**, in which case it should have a textual basis in the BITs to derogate from investment protection obligations under BITs.

Maintaining balance

- The strengthening of BITs must go hand in hand with the implementation of domestic legislations for the protection of the rights of tribals, where the state does not consider tribals as impediments in the development process.

Involvement in policy making

- Tribal people should be given representation even in investment policymaking.
- This will help the state to bring in their concerns as well as development possibilities.

Connecting the dots:

- Protecting tribal rights and driving investments for economic development require a balanced approach. Critically evaluate.

TOPIC: *General Studies 2*

- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*
- *Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries*

NOTA option- Result yielding option

Background

- In 2013, Supreme Court of India upheld the right of voters to reject all candidates contesting the elections, saying it would go a long way in cleansing the political system of the country.
- In a major electoral reform, the apex court directed the Election Commission to have an option of 'None Of The Above' (NOTA) on the electronic voting machines (EVMs) and ballot papers in the *People's Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India judgment*.

- Thus, India became the 14th country to institute negative voting. But, NOTA is not **'right to reject'.** Here, the candidate with the maximum votes wins the election irrespective of the number of NOTA votes polled.
- This NOTA option is at the end of the candidates' list. Earlier, in order to cast a negative ballot, a voter had to inform the presiding officer at the polling booth. A NOTA vote doesn't require the involvement of the presiding officer.

The alternative before

- Before the NOTA option came in existence, people casting negative votes were required to enter their names in a register and cast their vote on a separate paper ballot.
- Under Sec 49(O), of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, a voter could enter his electoral serial number in Form 17A and cast a negative vote.
- The presiding officer would then put a remark in the form and get it signed by the voter. This was done to prevent fraud or misuse of votes.
- However, this provision was deemed constitutional by SC as it did not protect the identity of the voter.

NOTA in use

- The statistical figures for NOTA use are still small. On average, the maximum NOTA vote has been 2.02% of the total votes polled in any election cycle.
- Hence this proves that the perceived distrust of Indian voters against the political class seems exaggerated.
- However, it is worthwhile to look at patterns of NOTA voting to know how people have used their option of negative voting.
- In 2013, NOTA button debuted in four States — Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh and the former Union Territory, Delhi where it constituted 1.85% of the total votes polled.
- In 2014, the average NOTA vote share dropped to 0.95% in the Assembly elections in eight States — Haryana, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Sikkim, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Maharashtra.
- In 2015, the share of NOTA increased to 2.02% in Assembly elections held in Delhi and Bihar with Delhi polling 0.40% NOTA whereas Bihar polling 2.49% NOTA votes.
- There was some **active canvassing for NOTA** seen in 2016 Assembly elections in Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Puducherry and Tamil Nadu to express dissent against all the contestants.
- For instance, Kerala saw a group of women activists urging eople not to elect any candidate if no woman was present in the fray. In Tamil Nadu, a youth group campaigned for NOTA as a protest vote against corruption. However, NOTA vote share dropped again to 1.6%.
- In 2014 Lok Sabha elections, NOTA constituted 1.1% of the total votes.

- Thus, across the elections, the number of NOTA votes polled was larger than the winning margin in 261 Assembly constituencies since 2013 and 24 constituencies in Lok Sabha elections.

NOTA in BMC

- First time NOTA was used in the BMC elections and 1.91% of votes went its way.
- It means that on average, 386 voters selected NOTA in each of the 227 wards of Greater Mumbai.

It can be inferred that in the above constituencies, **NOTA votes did make a difference** to the election results assuming that in the absence of this option a majority of NOTA voters would have preferred one or the other candidate in the fray.

Even if the maximum number of votes cast is for NOTA, the candidate getting the most of the remaining votes would be declared winner. Thus, NOTA option would not impact the results of the elections as NOTA option on EVMs has no electoral value. This would encourage negative voting and candidates can be rejected in that constituency.

As per a former CJI, if the right to vote is a statutory right, then the right to reject a candidate is a fundamental right of speech and expression under the Constitution.

What does NOTA votes have to say?

- The **reserved constituencies** have seen a relatively larger number of NOTA votes. This points to the fact of continued social prejudice against political reservation for SC/STs.
- Constituencies affected by **left-wing extremism** have also recorded higher NOTA performance. Here it can be served as an instrument of protest against the State itself.
    - For example, constituencies like Gadchiroli, Jhargram, Kalyan Rural, Bastar, the Nilgiris and Nabarangpur have seen highest NOTA polled.
    - Given the disaffection among the people in these areas against the Indian state, these numbers are expected.
    - But at the same time, important to note that these voters have used the democratic means of NOTA to express their resentment rather than boycotting the polls outright.
- NOTA figures are comparatively higher in those constituencies which have seen a **direct contest between two mainstream national political parties**.
- This may also indicate people's disenchantment with these two political parties and yearning for alternatives.

Conclusion

The Indian voters seem to be using NOTA not just to show their disapproval of the candidates in the election but to express their protest against many things they perceive wrong in the political system. For now, a small number of of Indian voters have come to see NOTA as an instrument of protest.

Now is the time to explore these early trends of NOTA with more statistical and ethnographic analysis. NOTA as an option will become a meaningful means of negative voting only if it becomes a 'right to reject' rather than being a symbolic instrument to express resentment as it is now.

A PIL has been filed in Madras HC seeking the full 'right to reject' in place of NOTA.

Connecting the dots:

- What is NOTA? Examine the significance of NOTA in India's electoral reforms and compare with other similar measures around the world.

INTERNATIONAL

Relation between India and America 'First'

No change of stance from being a candidate to President
- Moments after the new US President assumed the office as 45th President of USA, his sole goal has been focus on 'America First'.
- This means that whatever USA does will have USA at its heart and rarely for larger global good.
- The present US president has two personalities: transactional and ideological
- The transactional personality being that all international relations are based on give and take where something is gained and something is lost.
- There does not exist any larger moral goal such as promotion of democracy, free market or human rights.
- The ideological personality of the President sees the world threatened by Islam, especially existence of Judeo-Christian civilisation. Thus, he believes in alliances to be build and wars to be fought to secure their survival threatened by Islamic terror.
- According to President Trump, no measure is too extreme in pursuing that objective of countering Islamism, as demonstrated by the attempted ban on citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries.

India's engagement with America
Relationship between India and America would travel non-similar paths as new US President would be open to dealing with India with an ideological frame of reference and a pragmatic, transactional one, simultaneously. However, what needs to be seen is the terms of deal and issues surrounding it. Some tentative suggestions that India should be watchful of:

- The defeat of Islamism could be common ground between US President and PM Modi who share ideological as well as pragmatic viewpoint.
- However, the contention point would be Indian government's continuing crackdown on U.S.-based Christian charities operating in India.
- In the transactional mode, there could be challenges faced by two as both the Heads of States have promised economic betterment or more precisely, job creation. The growth

of bilateral relations between both nations have involved movement of U.S. jobs to India, and of Indian workers to the U.S.

- Though the recent ties have been warm, India is not top of the mind for the new US administration.
- Thus, the onus will be on India to catch the attention of new administration while the US President opens multiple battlefronts domestically and internationally. Else, the status quo can be maintained for a while with continuing bilateral relation on numerous areas such as cyber security, intelligence sharing, space, disease control, maritime surveillance, agriculture, education and climate change.

Where India needs to look out

H-1B

- The Trump administration is locking down on misuse of H-1B visa by bringing in reformist measures in its allocation eligibility.
- The business model of Indian IT giants like Infosys, Wipro, TCS is based on their ability to locate a crucial part of their workforce in the U.S. who in turn support the operation of jobs carried out in India.
- However, due to political resistance to offshoring of services in US, these companies have hired Americans in their local workforce in recent years. So a crackdown on H-1B visas may not necessarily affect such companies as the Americans are anyways supporting the operations that are in India.
- But now, anti-H-1B campaigners have changed their focus and are targeting the business model instead of migrating workers. They want that companies should not relocate the jobs as restriction on workers coming to the U.S will not serve the purpose unless there is a system that allows work to be taken out of USA.

Defence

- The Trump administration looks willing to carry forward the ongoing cooperation between the two countries in defence.
- Also, it is willing to go a step further and favourably look at India's pending request for Avenger armed drones. Right now, Obama administration has cleared all defence deals with India except sale of 22 Guardian unarmed drones to be used for maritime domain awareness.
- After Obama administration designated India as a major defence partner, India's requests for high technology are now considered with a 'presumption of approval' as opposed to 'presumption of denial'.
- However, each request is individually scrutinised and the decision is largely a political one. This will want USA to get in return assurance of India being US partner in tackling China.
- With respect to India, it has been observed by many that India-U.S. relations is a case of American generosity. A section of U.S. establishment has always argued for extracting more in return from India.

- Here, USA intends to help India expand its power and prosperity to serve its highest geopolitical interest in Asia and globally.
- Recently, the U.S. Pacific Command Chief reiterated that India should now sign the COMCASA (Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement) that would enhance joint surveillance of Chinese vessels.
- Though there is a chance that President Trump would like to put pressure on China through regional powers and allies like Japan, Korea, and Australia as they have most at stake and proximate capabilities.
- The American generosity to India in defence will likely demand more from the relationship with India.
- India's demand for more pressure on Pakistan by US to take action against terrorist groups can have reciprocate demand from Trump administration to send Indian soldiers to Afghanistan. America has wanted India to send its troops to fight third party wars.
- Back in 2003, when India had closer relations with USA, the then government had considered sending troops to Iraq but it was aborted after domestic opposition. Hence, America has grumble against India's restraint in sending its soldiers to fight wars elsewhere.

Conclusion

Right now it is not clear if Trump team will be pro-active on India's bid for membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). It is now being also known that America doesn't command same power like it had earlier. However, it is believed by many that India and USA's relationship will foster with both its PM and President respectively prevailing their pragmatism over ideological affiliations. As pointed out by a former state department official, "Mr. Modi's Make in India approach and Mr. Trump's Buy American, Hire American can go together".

Connecting the dots:

- Will change in US administration likely to bring in change in improved India-US relationship? Analyse.

TOPIC:
General Studies 2
- *Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.*

General Studies 1
- *Role of women and women's organization, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies.*

Africa and its significance for the world

Introduction

Africa is considered the Dark Continent of the world with numerous possibilities. It has faced the discrimination and scourge of the world. Be it the world wars or the slavery and its associated dynamics Africa has been misused by Europe and America for centuries.

The world views Africa through the prism of problems. But it is a continent of hope, promise and vast potential. The need is to facilitate, energize and support the same in all platforms and dimensions.

Challenges faced by Africa:

Challenge #1: Africa's current economic growth rate is far too low.

Sub-Saharan Africa's GDP per capita (at constant 2005 prices) was $1,036.10 in 2014. At the 1.4% growth rate estimated for 2015, it would take Africa 50 years to double GDP per capita.

Challenge #2: African industrial development has been stalled since the 1970s.

Only one in five workers in Africa has a job in the wage economy. Historically, the only way to generate such jobs on a significant scale in developing countries has been by means of export-oriented manufacturing. But Africa has made little headway in growing export-oriented industries in the past four decades.

Challenge #3: The lives of most Africans are marred by poverty, hunger, poor education, ill health, and violence.

Although the poverty rate in Africa has dropped in recent years, rapid population growth means that the number of people suffering poverty keeps growing: from 280 million in 1990 to an estimated 330 million in 2012.

- Of the 20 countries in the world with the worst food and nutrition security, 19 are in Africa.
- More than two out of five African adults cannot read or write.
- Health outcomes are worse in Africa than anywhere else in the world, even though life expectancy at birth has risen and chronic child malnutrition has declined since the mid-1990s.
- Tolerance of domestic violence is twice as high as in the rest of the developing world. Incidents of violence against civilians are on the rise.

While this listing of suffering is true throughout sub-Saharan Africa, with regard to all these measures, life is particularly harsh for people living in the roughly 34% of Africa where states have collapsed to the point of irrelevance.

Challenge #4: Every year more Africans live in urban slums.

About 400 million Africans lived in cities in 2010, and 60% of those people lived in slums with no access to basic services. By 2050 that number is expected to grow to 1.26 billion. By 2035 half of all Africans will probably live in cities, with continuing urbanization expected thereafter.

Challenge #5: Corruption, corruption, corruption.

Perhaps the most upsetting sentence in *Foresight Africa* reads, "No reasonably democratic government in Africa has seen a rupture from corrupt and clientelistic modes of resource distribution."

Challenge #6: Imminent changes to the architecture of global trade will disadvantage African countries.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)—neither of which includes sub-Saharan African countries—will offset many of the trade benefits African countries currently enjoy under America's Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Africa's significance to the contemporary world

- Africa provides the majority of UN peacekeepers around the world.
- African nations are among the world's largest and most generous hosts of refugees.
- Africa includes some of the world's fastest growing economies.
- The recent resolution of the political crisis in the Gambia once again demonstrated the power of African leadership and unity to overcome governance challenges and uphold democracy, human rights and the rule of law.
- According to *Secretary-General of the United Nations* all of humanity will benefit by listening, learning and working with the people of Africa.

Looking ahead

- The plan in place should be to build a better future.
- The international community has entered the second year of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an all-out effort to tackle global poverty, inequality, instability and injustice.
- Africa has adopted its own complementary and ambitious plan: Agenda 2063.
- For the people of Africa to fully benefit from these important efforts, these two agendas need to be strategically aligned.
- It starts with prevention. Our world needs to move from managing crises to preventing them in the first place. We need to break the cycle of responding too late and too little.
- Most of today's conflicts are internal, triggered by competition for power and resources, inequality, marginalisation and sectarian divides. Often, they are inflamed by violent extremism or provide the fuel for it.

United Nations' role

- The UN is committed to working hand-in-hand with partners wherever conflict or the threat of conflict endangers stability and well-being.
- But prevention goes far beyond focussing solely on conflict.
- The best means of prevention and the surest path to durable peace is inclusive and sustainable development.

The Youth in Africa and necessary efforts

- We can speed progress by doing more to provide opportunities and hope to young people.
- More than three out of five Africans are under 35 years of age.
- Making the most of this tremendous asset means more investment in education, training, decent work and engaging young people in shaping their future.
- The need to empower women so that they can play a full role in sustainable development and sustainable peace.
- The African Union has consistently placed a special focus on gender equality and women's empowerment.
- *Secretary-General of the United Nations believes,* 'When we empower women, we empower the world.'

Conclusion

A higher platform of cooperation, gives the whole picture — one that spotlights the enormous potential and remarkable success stories in every corner of the African continent. With that perspective, we can win the battle for sustainable and inclusive development which are also the best weapons in preventing conflict and suffering, allowing Africa to shine even more vibrantly and inspire the world.

Connecting the dots

- Africa has been an unexplored wonder of the world with a mix of rich resources and high incidence of social malice. Critically discuss the necessary efforts the world should initiate to make Africa an equal partner in growth story of the world.

Related articles:

The Big Picture – India-Africa Ties: Where are they Heading?
http://iasbaba.com/2016/07/the-big-picture-india-africa-ties-where-are-they-heading/
India Africa Relationship – Kenya Focus
http://iasbaba.com/2017/01/iasbabas-daily-current-affairs-11th-january-2017/
In India it's time for Africa
http://iasbaba.com/2016/09/iasbabas-daily-current-affairs-2nd-september-2016/

TOPIC: *General Studies 2*
- *Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests*
- *Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.*

India should 'Look East' again

America is shaking

- President Trump has been criticised about his eccentricities, prejudices and his stereotyping of countries and peoples across the world.
- This, however, is mere reflecting of concerns and anger of whites across the US. Their lifestyle has been shaken by losing employment as industrial facilities migrate to other countries, and hence have a negative attitude towards globalisation.
- This is fuelled by perceived threats from 'radical Islam terrorism'. The oil-rich Sunni Arab countries like Saudi Arabia and UAE are supporting Trump to contain Iran and also asking Israel to go slow on settlements in occupied Palestinian lands.

In such circumstances, India needs to pay greater attention to its eastern neighbourhood, extending across the Bay of Bengal, the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea.

Picture Credit: https://www.welt-atlas.de/datenbank/karten/karte-0-9014.gif

'Look East' revisited

- India's 'Look East' Policy was crafted in an era when the Asia-Pacific was the fastest growing region in the world.

- India had concluded free trade and comprehensive economic cooperation agreements with ASEAN members (who were united in their approach to outside world), Japan and South Korea.
- Things started changing when China began defining its maritime boundaries in outrageous manner. This provoked tensions with its maritime neighbours — Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia.
- China used its economic dominance to attract countries such as Cambodia and Laos and caused tensions between ASEAN members on how to deal with Beijing's territorial ambitions.

TPP introduced and annulled
- The US administration under President Obama responded to Chinese dominance in South China Sea though its policy 'pivot to Asia'. Here it strengthened military ties and naval presence across the Asia Pacific.
- US challenged China's economic prowess by formulating a Trans-Pacific (Economic) Partnership (TPP) to facilitate trade and investment ties across the Asia Pacific.
- TPP consisted of US, Canada, Mexico, Chile, Peru, Japan, Australia and New Zealand, together with ASEAN members Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei and Vietnam.
- Given the vast size of US market and opacity of Chinese markets, the TPP was set to attract countries like Philippines, Laos, Thailand, Indonesia and Cambodia to join it and take advantage of larger markets and reduce excessive dependence on China.
- To counter TPP, China was working on promoting RCEP which also included ASEAN countries as well as India, to facilitate Indo-Pacific region in becoming a Free Trade Area.
- However, the newly elected US President annulled the TPP thereby making trade liberalisation a difficult affair between Asia and Pacific, increasing threats of growing Chinese economic and military power and rising concerns in East and Southeast Asia over it.

Increased role of New Delhi
- The collapse of TPP is a welcome step for India as its presence would have eroded India's competitive edge in the US.
- There was no way India, in anytime future, would have accepted the American imposed conditionalities on issues such as labour standards, intellectual property rights and arbitration.
- Now India has to focus on how best it can influence the direction of negotiations on the RCEP, so that its concerns on inclusion of the service sector and lack of transparency in Chinese policies on the exports of India's goods and services are met.
- America has expressed its concern over China's policies across its maritime frontiers. Especially it is concerned with China's maritime claims on Vietnam, where Exxon has interests in off shore drilling and exploration.

- In such a scenario, US knows that balancing Chinese power and its maritime boundary claims will need partners such as Japan, Australia, Vietnam, Indonesia and India.

Forming a trio

- However, US's attitude towards it allies like Australia and Japan is difficult to contemplate considering President Trump's bugle of 'America First'.
- The annulment of TPP raises doubts such as if America will be able to cope up with Chinese rising power or it shall simply abandon Asia to the mercies of Chinese supremacy.
- With America and China fighting their own battles, countries being impacted by them (India, Japan, Indonesia, Australia, South Korea, Vietnam and Singapore) need to steer a path that is steady and interest-based, avoiding both complacency and panic.
- India and Japan share a high level relationship with new partnerships in security, economic and political cooperation to together shape the regional order and not simply accept the results of US-China competition, collision or collusion.
- Australia has long been another leader in building a more robust regional security architecture. Alongside solid economic and people-to-people links, Australia-India security ties have intensified, including with an anti-submarine warfare exercise in the Bay of Bengal.
- Japan-Australia relationship is also bouncing back and noted the synergies in their Indo-Pacific strategies and identified India as a key third partner. The foreign secretaries of three nations have been regularly meeting annually which helps the maritime democracies to move beyond dialogue and build practical cooperation that helps all three and the wider region.
- India-Japan-Australia are the three best positioned to demonstrate new triangular approach to Indo-Pacific diplomacy.
- They can **indulge with each other on** security dialogues, intelligence exchanges, sharing of maritime surveillance data, capacity-building of military or civilian maritime forces in smaller countries in Southeast Asia or the Indian Ocean, technology sharing, agenda-setting in regional forums like the East Asia Summit and coordinated diplomatic initiatives to influence both US and Chinese strategic calculations.

Conclusion

The role of India as a regional power or regional critical member is growing to increase in future. Rise of India along with other nations to build a stable region is not to construct and Asia without America or contain China. It more about limiting regional instability rising due to their altercation. An India-Japan-Australia coalition will send strong messages to both China and America about their seriousness for political and security interests of its Asian neighbours.

Connecting the dots:

- With increased protectionist attitude emerging from western countries, how can India focus on 'Look East'?
- Regional stability in Indo-Pacific is possible only when US and China are together. Do you agree with the statement? Give reasons for your answer.

TOPIC:
General Studies 2
- *Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.*
- *Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests*
General Studies 3
- *Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth*
- *Issues relating to intellectual property rights*

TPP and its aftermath

Introduction
The **Trans-Pacific Partnership** (**TPP**), or the **Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement** (**TPPA**), is a trade agreement between Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States (until January 23, 2017) and Vietnam.

Concerns:
TPP was opposed extensively by progressives for the last two years because of its far-reaching provisions that increased corporate power over trade at the expense of workers and consumers. The agreement's damaging ambitions were most evident in the proposed provisions concerning intellectual property.
- The TPP provided explicit protections for *'biologics'* (drugs manufactured in a living organism, rather than through chemical synthesis), the first trade agreement to do so.
- More damagingly, the agreement mandated the protection of clinical test data submitted for marketing approvals, with pharmaceutical data obtaining five to eight years of protection.
  - This provision, called *'data exclusivity'* or *'marketing exclusivity'*, prevents a generic company from relying on the clinical test results of the originator in order to prove the efficacy of its drug.
  - It was justified using the argument that clinical trials are the most expensive part of drug development and hence there is a necessity to provide drug developers the ability to limit access to that data so as to incentivise research.

Impact:

Undermining accessibility

Though, on the surface, the provision looks reasonable, data exclusivity is a deeply uncompetitive policy that serves to undermine generic competition in a troubling way. In fact, it is possibly a stronger restriction than patent protection itself.

- Patent protection can be challenged if the product is not sufficiently novel, or violates existing national standards for obtaining patent protection, thereby clearing the way for generic competition. (This is, in fact, what happened to Novartis in India over Gleevec, an anti-cancer drug).
  - Simultaneously, generic companies can, and do innovate around patents and produce chemical entities that have the equivalent efficacy of the original drug.
  - But for the generic version to be able to come to the market, it is essential that it be able to use the proof of efficacy and safety that is generated by the clinical trial.
  - The restriction on the use of test data would therefore require a generic company to undertake clinical trials by itself, which is both unfeasible (in terms of expense) and unethical (since it would expose patients to trial protocols, during which some patients would have to receive a placebo when a proven cure is available).
  - As a result, in a country like India, even in a situation where there is no patent barrier, *data exclusivity* would allow for a period of five to eight years during which there is no plausible way that market access could be allowed for generics, thereby reducing access to cheaper medicines for the population.

- The provisions on **biologics** and **data exclusivity** in the TPP accompanied others — like
  - Extending patent terms beyond 20 years;
  - Weaker patent standards that would allow a greater number of secondary or ever-greening patents on pharmaceuticals;
  - Harsher intellectual property enforcement.

Leading public health organisations termed the TPP the worst trade agreement on access to medicines.

Legacy of TPP

The legacy of the TPP leads one to reflect on what it says about U.S. trade policy, particularly as it relates to public health and intellectual property.

- First, the developed world's ambitions for intellectual property will not die with the agreement. Indeed, what seems to be likely is that these damaging provisions will simply migrate to other agreements.
  - One of them is the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement which involves 16 countries. Courtesy of Japan and South Korea, the RCEP negotiations feature several of the intellectual property provisions of the TPP.

- This should be of great concern for access to medicines globally, as countries involved in the RCEP negotiations include key generic drug-producing countries, including India.

- Second, U.S. withdrawal from the TPP may change the **U.S.'s approach** to trade and intellectual property more in form than in substance.
    - In this process, the U.S. is more than likely to continue its vigorous campaign against perceived "violators" of U.S. intellectual property.
- Third, despite the public health impact of the TPP's provisions having gripped public discussion on the agreement, it is unlikely that these concerns will guide U.S. trade or foreign policy.
    - USA wants its trade policy to prioritise that foreign countries pay their fair share for U.S.-manufactured drugs, so that their drug companies have greater financial resources to accelerate development of new cures.

Conclusion

Though TPP seems dead with the new administration in USA calling it closed, it is evident that the stealthy global subversion of access to medicines through trade agreements and diplomatic pressure by the U.S. will continue.

With these efforts spilling across the developed world and into multiple trade agreements, there is now an even greater need for vigilance against the ever-expanding corporate control over medicines.

In India, we will need far greater government commitment to the use of the public health safeguards in our patent law to survive this era and ensure the health of the country's citizens.

Connecting the dots

- India is considered the 'Pharma of the world'. In light of stringent provisions of recent multilateral agreements critically analyse what should be India's response. Enumerate the effects on global health profile of the same.

TOPIC:
General Studies 2
- *Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.*
- *Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests*
General Studies 3
- *Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth*
- *Issues relating to intellectual property rights*

Israel and Palestine Crisis

Introduction

Israel is the world's only Jewish state, located just east of the Mediterranean Sea. Palestinians, the Arab population that hails from the land Israel now controls, refer to the territory as Palestine, and want to establish a state by that name on all or part of the same land. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is over who gets what land and how it's controlled.

Settlement and issues:

Settlements are communities of Jews that have been moving to the West Bank since it came under Israeli occupation in 1967. Some of the settlers move there for religious reasons, some because they want to claim the West Bank territory as Israeli land, and some because the housing there tends to be cheap and subsidized. Settlements are generally considered to be a major impediment to peace.

- Settlements create what Israelis and Palestinians call "new facts on the ground."
- Palestinian communities are split apart and their connection to the land weakened, while Jewish communities put down roots in territory meant for Palestinians.
- In effect, it blurs or constrains the boundaries of any future Palestinian state.
- For some settlers, this is the point: they want the West Bank fully incorporated as Israeli territory and are trying to make that happen.

Since Israel occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem five decades ago, about 140 settlements have been built in Palestinian territories that house more than 600,000 Jews. Despite frequent international criticism, successive governments have thrown their weight behind the settlement lobby.

Mr. Netanyahu, who is dependent on the right-wing coalition parties for his government's survival, has played along. Last month, his government approved plans for 2,500 new settler homes in the West Bank.

Recent changes and the concerns

Israel's parliament voted on a bill that expropriates private Palestinian land in the West Bank.

- The passage of legislation by Israel that would legalise nearly 4,000 Jewish settler homes on private Palestinian lands in the West Bank flies in the face of international law and norms.
- That the vote comes weeks after the UN Security Council demanded that Israel stop all settlement activity in the Occupied Territories, and an international conference attended by more than 70 countries urged both sides in the conflict to resume talks, shows Israel's disregard for international opinion and institutions.

Impact

- The legislation allows the Israeli government to expropriate private Palestinian land if the land-owners are unknown.
- If known, they will be compensated in cash or kind. However, the legislation, which for the first time since the annexation of East Jerusalem seeks to extend Israeli law to the West Bank, can be overturned by the judiciary.

Israel's Attorney-General has said he wouldn't defend the bill in the high court as it is "unconstitutional and violates international law".

However, this is unlikely to stop the ideology-driven settler movement and the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from taking more Palestinian land.

The Netanyahu government has shown no particular interest in resuming negotiations, while its right-wing allies are boasting of expanding Israeli sovereignty to "Judea and Samaria", the biblical names for the West Bank.

Conclusion

Now Israeli authorities feel emboldened by the election of new U.S. President. That would make peace yet more distant in West Asia.

The primary approach to solving the conflict today is a so-called "two-state solution" that would establish Palestine as an independent state in Gaza and most of the West Bank, leaving the rest of the land to Israel.

Though the two-state plan is clear in theory, the two sides are still deeply divided over how to make it work in practice.

Further reading: http://www.vox.com/cards/israel-palestine/intro

Connecting the dots

- The history of Israel-Palestine conflict has roots in past. How difficult is a permanent solution to the crisis in light of the new developments? What can be India's role?

TOPIC:
General Studies 2
- *Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.*
- *Important International institutions, agencies and fora their structure, mandate.*
General Studies 3
- **Role of *external state and non-state actors* in creating challenges to internal security.**

ISIS, Taliban and regional issues

Introduction

With ISIS gaining ground in Asia and spreading east towards Afghanistan and Pakistan, China and its ally Russia have taken initiative to bring Taliban to talking table. This has revived the debate of good and bad terror.

Issue:
India and Afghanistan took a hard line at the six-nation talks in Moscow on Wednesday, opposing the dominant view from Russia, China and Pakistan to involve the Taliban in reconciliation efforts.

Analysis:
Recently a conference organized by Russia in Moscow included Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran along with Afghanistan and India.

- Under pressure from Kabul and New Delhi, Russia, China, Pakistan and Iran have now agreed to maintain the red lines when it comes to talking with the Taliban.
- But Russia, China and Iran — each of them is already negotiating with the Taliban — did not commit to ending their talks with the Pakistan-backed group.
- India has long opposed any segmentation within the Taliban, because it considers the group a proxy of Pakistan, through which Islamabad wants to control Afghanistan.
- Other countries do not disagree with India's contentions, but their concerns about the Islamic State (IS) are different from those of New Delhi.These countries see the IS as their biggest terrorist target.

A report submitted to the UNSC Sanctions Committee last month said that the IS was recruiting fighters from the restive Afghanistan-Pakistan border region.

- Russia has made it known that it views the IS's growing footprint in Afghanistan as a greater threat as it expands into Central Asia, which Moscow considers a part of its strategic backyard.
- A narrative that is gaining ground, much to India's discomfiture, is that the global community must concede more to the Taliban so that the bigger enemy, IS can be eliminated.

India clearly has stated that Reconciliation efforts must be driven by the Afghanistan government and could only be facilitated by "friends and well wishers of Afghanistan," indicating that the previous round of QCG (Quadrilateral Cooperation Group) hosted by Pakistan was not acceptable.

- Referring to Pakistan's stand on "good/bad Taliban" echoed by officials in Moscow, and the talks between China and Taliban officials last year,
    - "The key challenge to the process remains a policy selectivity by some to distinguish between good and bad terrorists, even though terrorism is a common threat that confronts the whole region, where if one of us doesn't

stand firm against it, others' counter-terrorism efforts will not bear the results we all seek."

- Another point of contention that emerged was over the composition of the talks hosted by Russia.

- Afghanistan made a strong pitch for the United States to be included as one of its most important partners. It said it was a necessary part of all processes to "end war and usher in sustainable peace in Afghanistan".

Conclusion

The fight against terrorism can never be fought by might alone. It has to a united fight which brings all likeminded parties together with no difference of good and bad terror. Especially with the growing threat of ISIS it is important for bipartisan report.

Connecting the dots

- Critically discuss the role of multilateral organisations in curbing terrorism in light growing threat of ISIS and some state sponsored terror groups.

ECONOMY

Annual Budget 2017

Introduction

The Constitution refers to the budget as the 'annual financial statement'. In other words, the term budget has nowhere been used in the Constitution. It is the popular name for the annual financial statement that has been dealt with in Article 112 of the Constitution.

For the first time since independence budget has dovetailed the railway budget. Along with this the abolition of the distinction between Plan and Non-Plan expenditure and its early presentation, Union Budget 2017-18 marks another break from tradition.

Focus areas of this budget

In light of the government's ban of high-value currency notes that has dampened economic activity, particularly in the informal sector, it was necessary for the government to smoothen the economy with the current budget.

The budget has provided a long term framework to prevent regeneration of black money which was the main objective of the demonetization drive.

- Keeping the welfare intent intact programmes and schemes for the vulnerable sections of society, the Finance Minister has done his best to reduce all problems faced by the people as a result of demonetization.
- The tax rate for small and medium enterprises with an annual turnover of up to ₹50 crore has been slashed to 25%. This will give a boost to job creation.
- Corporate sector has not been offered much in terms of lower tax rates.
- Halving the personal income tax rate from 10% to 5% for those in the lowest tax slab of ₹2.5 lakh to ₹5 lakh not only puts more money in the hands of this segment, but is also a move to bring more people into the formal tax net.
- Taxpayers other than the above have been given a rebate of ₹12,500 each.

Impact:

There is a redistributive element in this budget with part of the revenue loss from above relief measures being funded by a 10% surcharge on the income tax of those in the income bracket of ₹50 lakh to ₹1 crore.

- The government is of the opinion that the demonetization has helped transfer resources from tax-evaders to the government. Also, the income tax collections from advance personal tax have risen by 34% in the first three quarters of 2016-17, after recording single-digit growth in the previous two years.
- The note ban has created a sense of fear in people who were evading taxes. Additional steps to tighten the hold over this category of people have been taken. These steps include:
    - Bar on cash transactions greater than ₹3 lakh
    - Pushing businesses to make all payments over ₹10,000 in digital format.
    - Rationalising the costs of non-cash payments.

Other measures:
- The government has tried to give a push to the infrastructure sector by categorizing affordable housing under infrastructure. A few changes in the tax treatment have also been incorporated to incentivize builders. In addition to this, interest subventions already announced for low-ticket home loans, could increase construction activity and job-creation.
- Higher allocation has been done for MGNREGA, irrigation and infrastructure projects.
- The government has not tried to alter the indirect taxes since it aims to introduce the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in July.
- N K Singh Committee which reviewed the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act has recommended deviations from fiscal deficit targets due to various structural reforms in the recent past.
- The government however has stuck to its fiscal consolidation road map.

Not a Populist Budget
The government has avoided the tag of populism and taken steps such as the following:
- A commitment to confiscate assets of big loan defaulters who have fled the country.
- Clean up the electoral funding by reducing the cash donation limit from any one source to political parties from ₹20,000 to ₹2,000. However, the government has to make sure that there is also a cap on the number of anonymous donors.

Railway Budget - Initiatives and reforms
It was first since independence that a general budget was presented without a railway budget. The proposals under the rail budget including railway safety are:
- A dedicated ₹1 lakh crore for five years for a safety fund - Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh. This fund can help in implementing measures suggested by expert panels such as the Kakodkar Committee.
- Other focus areas proposed under the budget are:
    - Acquisition of advanced signaling for train control
    - Elimination of level crossings for smooth operations

- Replacement of carriages of old design with the better-engineered carriages.
- On the commercial side, passenger tariffs are to be calculated taking into account costs, social obligations and competition from other modes of transport.

Indian Railways should focus on using higher capacities on identified travel corridors to provide safe, comfortable and affordable travel for all. This can be done relying on a rise in revenues from integrated freight solutions that the Budget has spoken of.

Conclusion

The budget is said to be low on populism and has received an approval from different stakeholders. It is also said to possess a long term framework for the benefit of the economy with larger reforms like GST.

Connecting the dots

- The budget is a political instrument but with ideological leanings. In light of the budget of 2017 outline the initiatives which are critical for reducing inequality and hence achieving inclusive growth.

TOPIC: *General Studies 3*

- *Major crops cropping patterns* **in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers**
- **Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing. Food processing and related industries in India- scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management.**

Budget 2017 and Agriculture

Introduction

The Union Budget 2017 announced a slew of measure to boost the agriculture sector. Higher agricultural credit, higher allocation for irrigation projects, a crop insurance scheme and increased allocations for MGNREGA to dig farm ponds were among the measures announced.

The concern raised is – will these help attain the goal of doubling the farmer's income by 2022, as outlined in the last year's budget and reemphasised again.

Issue

The Situation Assessment Survey of Agricultural Households in its NSS 70th round estimated that the average monthly income of the Indian farm household to be about Rs. 6,426 by. This included -

- Net receipts from cultivation,

- Farming of animals,
- Non-farm business
- Income from wages.

During the same period, the average monthly consumption expenditure per agricultural household was Rs. 6223. This shows that most of the earnings of the average farm household were spent in meeting consumption expenditures. For cultivation-related expenses, the farmer is mostly dependent on loans and the NSSO survey revealed that half of the farm households were neck-deep in debt.

Solutions:

For any real increase in income, farmers require higher returns for their produce.

Professor M. S. Swaminathan, founder of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation said that the recommendations of the National Commission on Farmers are implemented

- To provide the minimum price of the total cost of production plus 50%
- In the case of rubber, for instance, a Price Stabilisation Fund was established which helped farmers get better prices for their produce.
- Similar measures be introduced for other farm produce as well.

Problem with Agriculture Credit

- As far as the farm loans are concerned, the agricultural credit is mostly netted by large companies.
- Also nearly 50% of farmers are women, who often do not benefit from credit policies as they don't have land titles in their name.
- Unless land titling recognises female ownership of land for cultivation, half of India's farmers cannot claim institutional credit.

Other Problems:

- Chasing the goal of doubling incomes lacks clarity as to whether it is nominal incomes or real incomes that are referred to.
- It is also unclear whether it is income from agriculture or that of agricultural households being targeted.
- Agriculture will have to grow at 12 or 14% to realise such rise in earnings. (At present, the growth rates stand at a poor 1.2%, according to World Bank data.)
- The problem of economic viability of farming is one of rising input prices such as for fertilisers, pesticides and seeds and stagnating output prices as MSP is not rising.
- Protectionist barriers for Indian farmers are much lower now and there is little increase in expenditure for agriculture.

Climate change its impact on agriculture:

Tackling climate change and its potential impact also requires a budget to safeguard farmers.

- Given the drought and errant rainfall affecting farmers, the government's step to create five lakh more farm ponds that will work as a <u>drought-proofing measure</u> in gram panchayats.
- But everything depends on how well the schemes are executed on the ground.

Crop Insurance and Issues

- The crop insurance scheme aims to rightly protect farmers from the vagaries of the weather, allocations for which have been increased in the 2017 Budget.
- The terms of the <u>Pradhan Mantri Krishi Bima Yojana</u> spell out that the amount of insurance cover depends on the premium paid and extent of cover, so a farmer may not necessarily recover all losses sustained from crop damage in case of an eventuality.
- <u>National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change</u> – the government made only a paltry allocation of Rs. 130 crore to this Fund in the 2017-18 budget.
  - This is disturbing in the wake of the fact that the country faced unprecedented drought affecting 330 million people last year.

Agricultural Marketing, Subsidies and other issues

- The credit ratings agency ICRA welcomed the expansion in coverage of National Agriculture Markets (e-NAM), an online agriculture market, from 250 to 585 APMCs in the Budget.
- The subsidy hike of 6% for the phosphatic and potassic segment was also seen as a positive thrust for the manufacturers and traders of these fertilisers.
- Farmers needed an incentive to go organic as high input costs of fertilisers had raised farm debts. <u>Organic Farming</u> did not get any attention in the Budget.
- NABARD welcomed the hike in the corpus of the <u>Long-term Irrigation Fund</u>.
  - Focus on drip irrigation will not be sufficient, and though more funds were allocated for irrigation, no expansions of specific projects for irrigation were made during the Budget.
- The setting up of a <u>Dairy Processing and Infrastructure Development Fund</u> at NABARD, with a corpus of Rs. 8,000 crore over three years, was also appreciated by them.

Conclusion

Indian farmers do not constitute a homogenous community. There are rich, land-owning farmers and then there are poor, landless farmers.

It is observed that a new nexus was now emerging comprising farm contractors and big traders combined with rich landowners in rural India, which was replacing the feudal landowning structures of the past.

Also, in spite of food price inflation in recent times, farmers' gross income will not increase automatically. Being both producers and consumers of food, farmers do not stand to gain from inflation either.

The need is for a holistic policy that has multidimensional orientation.

Connecting the dots

- Agriculture is always a gamble in India with multiple factors being contingent. Critically analyse the budget provisions for agriculture and suggest the necessary modifications.

TOPIC:
General Studies 3

- *Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.*
- *Government Budgeting.*

General Studies 2

- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

Budget 2017-18: Focus on domestic growth

- The budget was presented at a historic moment in the Indian economy post the demonetisation decision.
- While it has been concretely known that rural economy has been one of the hardest hit sector of the demonetisation effect, concurrently, the global economic atmosphere is also changing as several governments in developed countries have become more protectionist.
- Hence, the export driven growth models followed by China in manufacturing and India in IT-enabled services are expected to have diminishing returns. (A point where at which the level of profits or benefits gained is less than the amount of money or energy invested.)
- This provides an opportunity for larger economies like India to shift away from export-oriented growth to domestic-consumption-based growth unlike smaller economies such as those of the East Asian nations which had limited domestic demand.

Boosting domestic consumption

- To shift the economy towards domestic-consumption-based growth model, the rural demand and demand among the poorer sections of society has to be increased significantly.
- This is possible only if productive jobs and productive enterprises increase considerably for the poorer sections of the society.
- This will enhance disposable income among the domestic population (*disposable income= the amount of money that households have available for spending and saving after income taxes have been accounted for*)

- For this, 'Make in India' will need to be combined with 'Make for India', 'Skill India' with 'Work gainfully in India' and 'Startup India with 'Feed, clothe, house and serve India'. Also, regional blocs are becoming more important and intra-regional trade is now taking precedence over global trade.

- However, with the current level of inequality, such a boost in domestic consumption is difficult to happen in the immediate future. Along with inequality, India also has very large increases in inequality since 1990.

- Though liberalisation helped India in reducing poverty with rural poverty reaching 30% in 2011 from 80% in 1990 and urban poverty from 40% in 1990 to 20% in 2011, these figures are not very encouraging when compared to nations like Vietnam and Indonesia which had higher poverty levels than India in 1990 but have been able to do better than India in reducing it today.

- This shows that equitable distribution in the gains from growth is required to boost the consumption capacity of the Indian economy.

Job creation

- One of the reason for huge concentration of wealth is increasing return to capital versus labour.

- In almost all rich countries and in most developing countries, the share of national income going to workers has been falling. This means that workers are capturing less and less of the gains from growth.

- In contrast, the owners of the capital have seen their capital grow through interest payments, dividends or retained profits faster than the rate at which the economy has been growing. Adding to it, tax avoidance by the owners of capital has increased the gap between returns to capital and labour.

- Hence, to balance this disparity, creating jobs in the economy is a paramount priority.

Budget 2017-18: Allocations to fuel domestic demand

- The government has emphasised on reducing risks in the poorer and weaker sections of society through large-scale insurance programmes and credit availability. As the economic shocks affect the poor significantly more than the rich or the middle classes, it is necessary to increase their ability to bounce back from economic shocks.

- The budget proposes to increase coverage under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana scheme to 40% in FY18 and 50% in FY19. The progress on this front is encouraging with 39 million hectares or 26.5% of all farmers covered as of December 2016.

- The target for agriculture and allied credit has been substantially set at Rs. 10 trillion.

- The allocation to the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana is up 71% when compared with the FY17 estimate.

- Also, the doubling of total corpus of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development's (Nabard) Long-Term Irrigation Fund and a new micro-irrigation fund are also important steps in this direction.

- Along with this, it is necessary to Increase allocation for construction activities such as roads and affordable housing as they are highly labour-intensive and employ low-skill workers.
- Allocation to Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana for affordable housing has increased allocation of 38.7% over FY17. Similarly, 44% increase in allocation to rural housing will also help push job creation and create demand in the rural economy just as **providing infrastructure status** to affordable housing will facilitate higher investments and create low-skilled jobs in this sector.
- The corporate income tax for SMEs having an annual turnover of less than Rs. 50 crore has been reduced to 25% from 30%. Also, special package for textiles and some other labour-intensive sectors will help to increase employment as well as push for a domestic growth driven economy.
- On the macro side, the public capital expenditure has been increased by whopping 24.5% with a view to attract private investment.

Conclusion

Private consumption is a measure of all the money spent by consumers in India to buy goods and services. This is a major part of the country's GDP (55% of GDP) and used as a tool to measure the robustness of the economy. Even though consumption received a jolt following demonetisation, the government refrained from giving a cyclical push through higher subsidies. Rather it chose to lift consumption by increasing investment in activities such as housing and construction in generating employment. Thus, though budget hasn't proposed big giveaways to the middle-class, its feel-good provisions may succeed in boosting consumer sentiment. Emphasis on outcome-based monitoring advocated by the government when carefully monitored ensure success of the initiatives. Such success would pave the way for the economy to substitute away from the focus on export-oriented growth to domestic-consumption-based growth.

Connecting the dots:

- Now is the time to shift from export driven economy to domestically driven economy. Discuss the ways to fuel domestic demand and consumption.

TOPIC: *General Studies 3*
- *Government Budgeting.*
- *Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.*

Budget 2017-18 and agriculture

Highlights

- The agriculture growth is expected at 4.1% following normal monsoon in 2016. This comes after dismal 1.2% increase in 2015-16, and a contraction of 0.2% in the year before.
- The Union budget gave a push to market reforms in agriculture, increased funding for crop insurance and set a higher target for farm credit. The move is to tackle distress in rural India.
- NABARD, the apex rural bank, has been charged with implementing schemes to improve access to irrigation and develop the dairy sector.
- However, the government's goal of doubling farm incomes in five years has still not been clarified regarding how it is expected to be done at a time when farm incomes have plunged due to lower crop prices due to demonetisation.

Budget braves

- The 'Transform, Energise and Clean India' TEC agenda of budget may seem like a new term but is, in fact, a continuation of various earlier initiatives of the Government.
- As per the Finance Minister, the budget for 2017-18 is on 10 important sectors, including farmers, infrastructure, digital economy and tax administration to transform, energise and clean India.
- Total allocation of Rs. 1.87 lakh crore for rural, agri and allied sectors is a welcome increase of 24% over the previous year.
- Along with it, the focus on development of rural infrastructure in the form of roads and a higher allocation for housing will energise the rural economy.
- NABARD sponsored research shows that rural roads can be virtually compared with the nerve system of a nation which enable building a healthy and equitable society.
- Though the overarching theme of doubling the incomes of farmers in five years involves lot of policy decisions and many pre-requirements, the budget has best tried to address some of them at a time.

The three major aspirations of the Indian farmer are

1. *Irrigation*
   - Improving irrigation efficiency is critical for agriculture since India only has 2.4% of the world's total geographical area, an 18% of the world's population, but only 4% of the world's total fresh water resources
   - To increase focus on irrigation, NABARD has been provided with an additional Rs. 20,000 crore under the Long Term Irrigation Fund (LTIF).
   - Alongside, a separate allocation of Rs. 5,000 crore has been made to push the micro irrigation agenda to achieve the goal, 'per drop more crop'.

2. *Crop insurance*
   - The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana has been provided an enhanced allocation of Rs. 9000 crore.

- The scheme will target to cover 40% of the crop area next year and 50% year after.
- As per the current scheme, the government had allotted Rs 5,500 crore under crop insurance for both Rabi and Kharif products.
- Under the Fasal Bima Yojana, farmer's contribution towards premium has been decreased to as low as 2% to be paid by farmers for kharif crops, and 1.5% for rabi crops making it possible to include the small and medium farmers to avail crop insurance.
- GIC and foreign reinsurers receive significant share of premium from crop insurance in India. Pre-agreed formulas are applied to determine sum insured and the related loss in each season.

3. *Continued income during lean season*
- For a non-farming period or lean season, the animal husbandry sector has been given encouragement.
- NABARD has also opined that development of dairy is critical to bringing sustainability to agriculture.
- There are numerous examples where farmers have shown their ability to manage inclement weather and market vagaries by investing in dairy as an alternate mode of income.
- The dairy cooperative network includes 254 cooperative milk processing units, 177 milk unions covering 346 districts and over 1,55,634 village-level societies.
- Till March 2013, about 15.1 million farmers have been brought under the ambit of village level dairy corporative societies. Yet, about 80% of this milk is being collected and distributed by unorganised sector in the form of 'doodhiyas', local sweet shops.
- In Budget 2017-18, Livestock got a boost with the proposal for a Dairy Processing Infrastructure Fund of Rs. 2000 crore which would grow to Rs. 8000 crore in three years.
- This allocation will allow NABARD to finance modernisation of milk processing units, encourage new bulk-milk cooling units, improve milk production and increasing modernisation of breeding facilities.

Focus on soil
- The Budget highlights the importance of soil health which is critical to farm production and productivity.
- Agriculture in many parts of India has been affected and soil has been impaired due to wrong usage of fertiliser.
- The proposal to create minilabs for soil testing continues the existing drive on Soil Health Cards.

Agri marketing

- The central government will urge state governments to delist perishables such as vegetables and fruits from Agriculture Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs) via amending Essential Commodities Act and allow farmers to sell such items directly to consumers to get a better price.
- Each e-NAM will be provided with Rs. 75 lakhs for cleaning and packaging of farmer produce.
- Also, additional 335 e-NAMs will be added to the 250 created in 2016-17.
- In an innovative move, the Budget seeks to integrate e-NAMs with commodity exchanges and enact a model law on contract farming.
- This model law will help the farmers get better value for their produce.

Off farm sector boost

- The growth of rural sector also depends upon the off-farm sector development which includes all economic activities such as household and non-household manufacturing, handicrafts, processing, repairs, construction, transport, trade, communication, community and personal services in rural areas.
- To boost this sector of rural economy, important proposals for skill building, developing over 600 district Prime Minister's Kaushal Kendras, India International Skill Kendras and SANKALP (Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood promotion Programme) are being promoted.

Agri credit

- The budget has set a target for disbursing Rs. 10 lakh crore ground level farm credit, up from Rs. 9 lakh crore in 2016-17.
- The challenge lies in the fact that more equitable spread of this agri credit is required as 40% of agricultural households still do not have access to banks. Hence, the credit flow is targeted to the underserved area.
- The banking sector has been demarcated its role for inducing more financial inclusion.
- To support it, there has been increase in Financial Inclusion Fund which will allow for more thrust on higher financial literacy and support the digitisation initiatives.
- Additionally, Rs. 1900 crore for three years are provided to Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies, the lowest tier of India's rural cooperative credit structure, to bring digital banking to rural doorstep.
- Computerisation of PACS will bring in more transparency in their working.

'Budget is not just a collection of numbers, but an expression of our values and aspirations' is a very apt statement defining agriculture and rural economy boost given by budget 2017-18.

Connecting the dots:

- Budget 2017-18 gives appropriate importance to rural and agricultural economy. Do you agree? Give reasons.

TOPIC:
General Studies 3
- **Conservation, Environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment**
- **Government Budgeting - issues**

Budget allocation to Ministry of Environment and issues

Introduction
Environmental conservation and biodiversity is always paid lip service in Indian policy making. Especially when it comes to budget allocation and expenditure analysis there is scarce data and subsequently less attention paid to. Further only headline making issues are budgeted and hence real issues loose much needed attention.

Issue:
The Union Budget presented this month has made a allocation of ₹2,675.42 crore to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), an apparent increase by 18.88% from last year.
But, the devil is in the finer details that display indifference shown to specific issues below that demand immediate policy interventions by the state.
- wildlife conservation,
- pollution abatement
- related areas
- Prima facie the budgetary approach to environmental protection appears to be as fragmented and flawed as the legal approach.
- Even as the issues of
    - Forest management
    - Resource conservation
    - Pollution control
    - Wildlife protection
    are manifest to be increasingly interconnected, they are treated in isolation with attention paid only at the macro-level.
- Often proactive measures for environment are disproportionately counter-balanced by lax regulation in other sectors such as energy and large industries.
    - For an illustration – dedicating funds, however large or small, for the Environment Ministry, in the complete absence of corresponding measures to boost alternative energy sources, place curbs on polluting industries and vehicles

and adopt sustainable development approaches to economic growth is a farcical exercise.

- In the current Budget too, while there has been an increase in allocation to the MoEFCC, funding for renewable energy forms, solar use in rural areas, etc. has been reduced.
- The pluses of additional funding have been offset by paltry efforts at consolidating environmental conservation.

Minimal budgetary allocation:

- In light of the increasing challenges faced by environment in India, budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Environment under various heads is palpably inadequate.
    - There has been superficial renaming of 'Clean Energy Cess' levied on coal, lignite and peat as 'Clean Environment Cess' with an increase in the rate of levy to ₹400 per tonne.
- Even as climate change and increasing pollution have been matters of great concern, a measly sum of ₹40 crore and ₹74.30 crore have been allocated to the **Climate Change Action Plan** and **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB),** respectively.
- While the *national capital* reeled under the heavy effects of air pollution, triggering heated debates on spiraling pollution levels in prominent urban pockets, the funding received by the CPCB is visibly unremarkable.
- Similarly, heads of environment and *ecology*, **coastal management**, **environmental monitoring** and **governance**, **National Afforestation Management** have received funds sketchily with no accompanying rationale for such allocations or a clear framework for their utilisation.
- The treatment of wildlife conservation has been no different, with ambitious projects like **Project Tiger** having the budget slashed by ₹30 crore and **Project Elephant** receiving a marginal boost of ₹2.5 crore.

Under-utilisation of funds:

- Budgetary flow for the schemes under the Ministry of Environment has been fluctuating in the past and can be best described as insubstantial.
- The rise and slump in allocations have been perplexing as they do not appear to have been based on receipts and expenditures of the preceding financial year.
    - In 2015, the total budget for the Ministry was reduced by 25% to ₹1,681.60 crore, only to be increased to ₹2,327 crore the following year.
    - Centrally sponsored schemes have also experienced similar ups and downs with Project Tiger witnessing a slash of 15% in 2015.
    - This time as well, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has been allotted an arbitrary sum of ₹8.15 crore.
    - Even as it is difficult to negotiate and coordinate with the State governments to chart an effective framework for conservation projects and streamline budgetary

allocation, the funds dedicated to Central bodies such as the NTCA intuitively appear to be insufficient.

- A closer breakdown of the actual expenditure shows that out of the ₹850.02 crore dedicated to implementing the Centrally sponsored core schemes, the total outlay was only ₹566.38 crore.
- These Centrally sponsored schemes include *Project Tiger, Project Elephant, Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats and Conservation of Natural Resources and Ecosystems.*
    - For instance, Project Tiger has barely managed to utilise half the funds allocated to it. The spectre of under-utilisation haunts State projects as well.

Priorities and problems

In the Fiscal Policy Strategy Statement, the envisaged outlook for the financial plan states that the "government will aggressively focus on the objectives of pushing economic growth… (and) has the prime responsibility of providing a safe and stable environment for the private sector to create wealth."

But there is need to balance the same with ecological and livelihood concerns.

Conclusion

The need to rein in mindless propulsion of industrial growth at the cost of environment is obvious, to address the problems of disappearing wildlife, increasing conflicts, deterioration of ecology and habitat destruction. For this, scientific, sustained and intensive measures of conservation are required. A small step in this regard would be to acknowledge the role of the environment in budgetary allocations and ensure rational dedication of funds.

Connecting the dots

- In spite of environmental moments dating back to post independence years India's progress in environment conservation and management is not noteworthy. Critically discuss the reasons behind the same in respect of budgetary allocations and associated issues.

TOPIC: *General Studies 3*
- ***Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.***

Bad Bank- A Bankable idea?

Background

- Economic Survey 2017 states that the total level of stressed assets (NPA + restructured + unrecognised) in public sector banks can be around 20% of their loan book.

- The gross Non-performing assets (NPAs) amount to Rs. 6.75 lakh crores and are mounting. This is 9% of the bank lending or 4.5% of GDP which is huge in numbers and effect.
- The crackdown on high-profile defaulter Vijay Mallya may be making headlines but now it is an urgent need to contain the rising NPAs. The **rising NPAs have almost stopped the lending by banks and investment by the indebted corporates concerned**.
- Private investment had actually started to shrink by 2015-16. The Economic Survey 2016 notes that in 2016-17, it may have contracted by more than 7%.
- NPAs are "an economic problem, not a morality play" as pointed out by Economic Survey. Hence, RBI governor has said that there is a need for "pragmatism" in dealing with the tensed issue of NPAs.
- The Survey has also acknowledged that RBI and government are running out of options and thus mooted a novel idea of a 'bad bank'. The bad bank will be a Public Sector Asset Rehabilitation Agency (PARA), with 49% government ownership.
- This makes the institutions realise that
    - **5/25 scheme**: It allows banks to extend long-term loans of 20-25 years to match the cash flow of projects, while refinancing them every 5 or 7 years. Until now, banks were typically not lending beyond 10-12 years.
    - **Strategic debt restructuring**: the banks who have given loans to a corporate borrower gets the right to convert the full or part of their loans into equity shares in the loan taken company.
    - **S4A (or Scheme for Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets)**: the liabilities of struggling company's debt will be bifurcated into sustainable and unsustainable portions. The banks will convert unsustainable debt into equity and sell it to new owner. The credible resolution plan is carried out be overseeing committee carried out by Indian Banks Association.
    - **Private Asset Reconstruction Companies**: The ARCs take over the NPA's from banks for fixed cost which is less than the NPA amount. NPA is transferred to ARC along with any security which is pledged while taking loan. Now ARC will issue security receipts for fixed interest rate and will raise money.
    = have not helped enough.

Design a bank
- The bad bank shall take over the bad loans and administer/sell them into the private markets.
- New RBI Deputy Governor has also expressed his views that a bad bank just by itself will not necessarily work. But it has to be 'designed right' instead.
- The key to the whole concept is **getting right the price at which the bank can sell off the assets to private investors**. If designed properly, the bad bank idea might work.

- Thus, here is an attempt to identify some fundamental principles that should apply to determine the 'right' price at which bad assets can be taken off Indian banks' — particularly public sector banks' — books.
- The reason is that
    1. The public debate on such matters too often focuses on the mysterious and sophisticated audience and ignores the bottom line implications.
    2. The bottom line implications are critical for well-being of the common man.
    3. Highlighting the bottom-line implications for the common man also serves an important purpose – they help form public opinion so that at least in future, the chances of such financial blow-outs are minimised or at least their severity is mitigated.
    4. The public needs to know who is responsible for permitting, or not permitting a problem situation to develop.
- Public sector banks account for 70% of total banking assets. The total scheduled commercial banks credit at Rs. 74,00,000 crore and out of it, public sector banks' share is about Rs. 50,00,000 crore.
- Out of this, Rs. 10,00,000 crores is the level of stressed assets. This is the quantum of bad assets that have to be taken off their books at a "right" price for all stakeholders — the banks themselves, the buyer and general public.

The principles
- Banking regulation is fundamentally founded on the idea that a regulated institution at all times should be "safe" and "sound".
- Safety and soundness in regulation is termed as solvency regulation in the jargon.
- Solvency regulation seeks to ensure that at least all small fixed amount creditors (that is, small depositors) do not suffer any loss when a financial institution goes insolvent.
- The core idea is that small fixed amount depositors should not suffer any losses when there is a serious deterioration in the value of a bank's assets vis-à-vis its liabilities.
- Thus, solvency regulation should ensure that **overall asset values should at all times be higher than liability values**.
- But currently, as the Economic Survey reports, it seems probable that at the aggregate level for public sector banks, asset values may be perilously close to falling below liabilities. Hence the need for a disaggregated approach to marshalling assets and selling them.
- The deposits held by individuals (considered as small fixed creditors) in total public sector banks' deposits is roughly Rs. 35,00,000 crore.
- Other key deposit holders are the government sector and private corporate sector at Rs. 10 lakh crore and Rs. 14 lakh crore respectively.

Role of PARA

- PARA is expected to clean up the balance sheets of banks. This will give them freedom to lend without encumbrance, even as they are recapitalised to the extent of the write-downs.
- This year's budget provided only for Rs. 10000 crore for bank recapitalisation, against last year's Rs. 25000 crore. This is to get a better view of with a view to arriving at greater clarity on the problem before committing the money.
- There are over 20 asset reconstruction companies (ARCs) in operation, many of them private players. But private ARCs have not picked up more than 4-5% of the book value of the NPAs.
- The reason is that the public sector banks are not willing to write down losses to the extent that the ARCs would like as they fear vigilance repercussions. Against it, the ARCs also cannot offer more when asset "resolution" is difficult.
- Hence, it will be crucial to see how PARA works where others have not been able to generate fruitful outcomes.
- While PARA as a government-owned entity, may be able to bring various creditors on board to agree on write-downs, it would also have to show urgency in recovering the cash.
- Even with the bankruptcy code coming into play, enabling the judiciary to put an end to protracted liquidation proceedings, PARA must be guided by an approach to revive industry wherever possible.
- A fine balance between institutional accountability and autonomy is called for.

Ultimately, the objective should be to get credit growth back to double digit rates, with checks and balances to deal with irregularities.
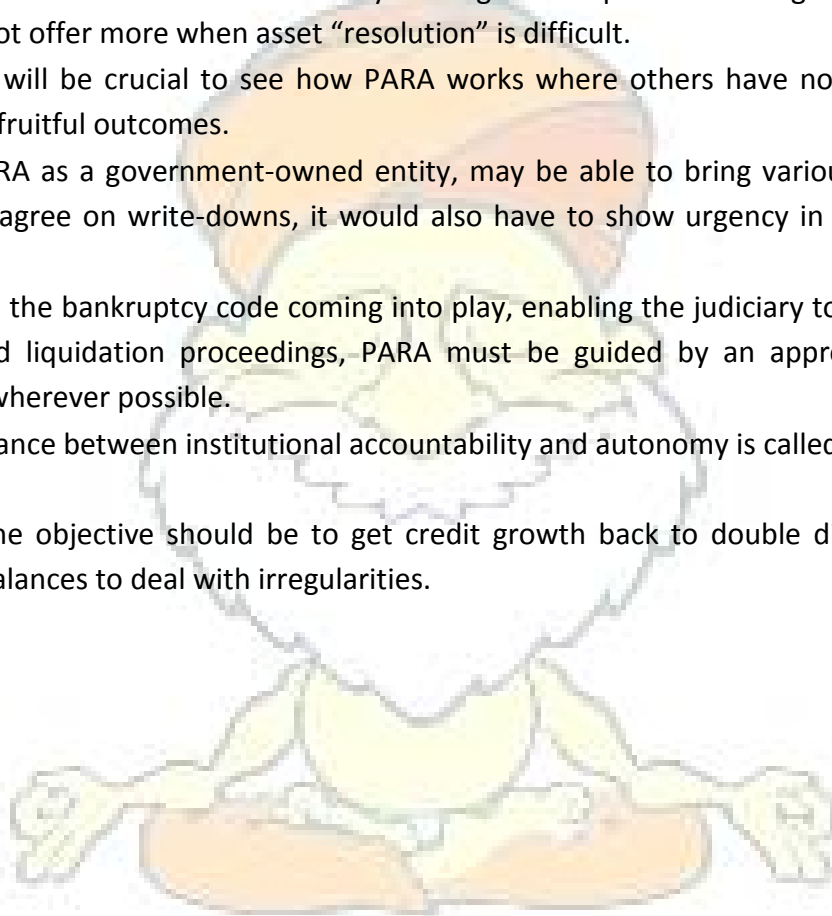
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

State of Science and Technology Research and significance

Introduction

Our lives are being transformed by technology daily. It is a reality that new tools like smart phones and the Internet and much more lies under the surface. Novel devices, materials and technologies have brought enormous benefits to our physical well-being in the context of medicine, housing, nutrition, security and sanitation, and to our mental well-being by transforming communication and socialisation.

Issue - Concern

Though we are happy to purchase smart devices and use medical equipment, we are less curious about how those technologies came into existence.

- For a country with rich history of science and research this is a state of irony.
- It is also ironic because India played a remarkable role, even under colonial rule, in planting the seeds of basic research from which they grew.
- For example, a currently promising breakthrough in testing for cancer, diabetes, asthma and malaria arises from 'resonant Raman scattering' and has its roots in C.V. Raman's research.

Curiosity drives social benefit

The spirit of inquiry and humanism is what lead to evolution in civilizations. Hence it is a part of our fundamental duties in our constitution.

- The simple fact is that transformational technologies arise from basic science.
- Abraham Flexner, founder of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, observed that *"throughout the whole history of science, most of the really great discoveries which have ultimately proved to be beneficial to mankind have been made by men and women who were driven not by the desire to be useful but merely the desire to satisfy their curiosity."*

- Like us, Flexner lived in an era when new inventions were transforming society — in his case these were radio, television, telephones and telegraphy.
- These transformations back to the path-breaking research on electromagnetism by James Clerk Maxwell and Heinrich Hertz, who sought to understand the fundamental laws of nature rather than work directly for the 'public good'.

Hence it is more curiosity and spirit of questioning that drives inventions, innovations than working for larger public good.

Some best illustrations of research and inventions-discoveries

The process by which fundamental research results in practical applications cannot be mapped out in advance.

- It is well known that in the late 1890s, **Wilhelm Roentgen**, experimenting in his laboratory, accidentally discovered a type of ray that could penetrate the human body, the 'X-ray'.
  - At the time, several wars had created a stream of wounded soldiers in need of treatment. There was no easy way to locate bullets lodged in the body, so surgeons had to poke a probe into the soldier's wound and wiggle it around to detect the bullet. This was excruciatingly painful and unsanitary.
  - Medical researchers made incremental improvements, but these were suddenly rendered obsolete by Roentgen's discovery that one could see through the human body. Thus, his research found immediate application, and saved more lives than all the people working on diagnostics for bullet wounds.
- In the case of lasers, the path from discovery to invention was longer, but the applications today are more wide-ranging. In 1917, **Albert Einstein** discovered that when an atom is energized into an excited state it can radiate light in two ways: by spontaneous emission and by stimulated emission.
  - This raised the possibility that photons (tiny quanta of light) could be emitted coherently, like soldiers marching in step. However, application of this concept had to wait until the late 1950s when physicists Arthur Schawlow and Charles Townes in the U.S. and Nikolay Basov and Aleksandr Prokhorov in the then Soviet Union suggested a mechanism to create coherent radiation — the laser, as it was eventually named. Two years later, Theodore Maiman constructed the first working prototype laser.
- Indian readers would be interested to know that soon thereafter, C. Kumar Naranbhai Patel, born in Baramati and educated at the College of Engineering in Pune, invented the carbon dioxide laser at Bell Laboratories.
  - This variant has played a key role in cutting and welding and as a laser scalpel in surgery. Today, the impact of lasers is incredibly wide-ranging — from dentistry, cosmetic surgery, eye surgery and tumour removal, to cutting, welding and drilling, to optical communications, guidance systems and data retrieval.

Significance of Research Institutions

- None of this would have been possible without understanding the interactions of photons and atoms via relativistic quantum theory and thermodynamics.
- It is noteworthy that the work of Schawlow and Townes was sponsored by the industrial giant Bell Telephones, yet the publication nowhere mentions any practical application. Maiman worked for another major industry, the Hughes Aircraft Company.
- These corporations were enlightened enough to understand that the path from basic science to application must be nourished like a garden, not engineered like a bridge.

Impact on inventions

Pure research in mathematics has also led to socially beneficial inventions. Here again there can be famous examples of how inventions have later on lead to best life changing experiments.

- Prime numbers, the building blocks of all numbers, play a key role in number theory — the 'purest' branch of mathematics and the field in which Srinivasa Ramanujan's genius flowered. Mathematician G.H. Hardy (who brought Ramanujan to England) wrote: "I have never done anything 'useful'. No discovery of mine has made, or is likely to make, directly or indirectly, for good or ill, the least difference to the amenity of the world."
- But Hardy was wrong. 'Public Key Encryption', on which today's password-based security systems are built, relies on the difficulty of factorising a whole number into primes. Once encryption became vital in daily life, centuries of mathematical insight into prime numbers became socially relevant. India's contribution did not end with Ramanujan.
- In 2002, Prof. Manindra Agrawal at IIT Kanpur and two undergraduates published a breakthrough result in 'primality testing', with likely implications for cyber security.

Conclusion

To secure our country's long-term future we have to generously support fundamental research, which provides the foundation and pillars on which technological applications are built. Fortunately, India today has a strong intellectual base spanning all areas of fundamental science.

But governmental involvement needs to increase substantially for us to be competitive. Basic science in India awaits sizeable initiatives from private industry too.

The Nobel Laureate, David Gross, recently observed that if India does not dramatically ramp up support for pure science, we will soon become "a user economy, service economy, buying goods made elsewhere, buying inventions invented elsewhere." Fortunately, we are in a good position to avoid this fate, but we must act now.

Connecting the dots

- STEAM (Science Technology Engineering and Medicine) are seen as not so rewarding occupations in India. Critically analyse the impact of the same on the economy and country's higher education landscape.

General Studies 3

- *Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life*

General Studies 2

- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

Time to formulate a law for data protection

- Government's push to 'go cashless', growing pervasiveness and penetration of Aadhar and the age of Big data has led to re-emergence of interest in privacy and data protection in India.
- *Big Data= extremely large data sets that may be analysed computationally to reveal patterns, trends, and associations, especially relating to human behaviour and interactions.*
- There are multiple laws which have impact on privacy of individuals- Information Technology Act, Aadhaar Act, Right to Information Act, and various other delegated legislation.
- But there is no comprehensive law or policy on privacy or data protection in India.

Right to Privacy Bill, 2014

- The Right to Privacy bill, 2014 has been lying redundant and has no future dim hope as the government has set no timelines for its reconsideration or re-enactment.
- The issue of privacy law arose when government of India said in the Supreme Court that "violation of privacy doesn't mean anything because **privacy is not a guaranteed right**", actually arguing that the **citizens of India do not have a fundamental right to privacy**.
- The Right to Privacy Bill, 2014 guaranteeing citizen against the misuse of personal data by government or private agencies was being prepared by central government. The objective was to uphold Article 21 of Constitution that states sensitive personal data need not be disclosed by an individual without prior consent to the data subject.
- This is a constitutional assurance provided for every citizen in India against misuse of personal data.
- The draft bill is yet to be discussed by the stakeholders and difference of opinions have to be solved.
- The penalty clause of the bill proposes enhancement of penalties of Rs 2 crore against any person or agencies in illegally using the personal data. Any official of telecom service provider is found guilty in misusing the personal data is subject to penalty of Rs 50 lakhs, illegally obtained personal information on false pretext is also subject to penalty of 50

lakhs. Stealth of personal data on the first attempt is subject to 10 lakhs and on repeated act penalty is enhanced to 20 lakhs.

- Though the bill is to protect personal data of an individual and ensuring privacy it has a proposed clause to exempt the intelligence and law enforcement agencies from its ambit. The special exemption clause in the bill states exemption of intelligence authorities from the scrutiny of Data Protection Authority. The bill aims at the scrutiny of intelligence agencies only by competent court.
- Hence, with the growing use of digital content, there is a glaring gap that needs to be filled legally.

5 elements to design a privacy law

Data collection

- The law should require the entities that collect the data to specify the purpose of collecting the data.
- The users should be provided with 'opt-out' clause so that they can withdraw their content from data collection.
- In Aadhar Act, Lok Sabha rejected the amendment that sought to introduce an opt-out clause which allowed the biometric and demographic information of the Aadhaar-number holder to be deleted. This has left the citizens with the unsettling feeling of having surrendered their biometrics permanently.
- The laws should specify the manner and form of preserving data, the time limits for retention and whether they recognize the "right to be forgotten".

Use and process of data

- Data is consistently being collected- **actively** through giving user information while registering for an app and **passively** through GPS tracking of movements on Google Maps, etc.
- Today, Big Data technologies have made it easy to extrapolate personal information about individuals. For example, a recent study found that an individual's Facebook "likes" reveal, with a reasonable accuracy, their ethnicity, religious and political leanings, sexual orientation, and personality traits.
- Thus, data collection limitation (how much information one reveals about itself) is not enough. The law has to focus on putting **limitation on usage of data** also by controlling how data controllers can use the information collected about their users. The onus has to be on entities that collect and control the data.
- This may also involve formulating rules of proportionality and the narrow modifying of exceptions that will govern the balancing of competing interests.
- India can also learn from European Union (EU) initiatives on data protection "by design" and "by default", which focus on **improving default privacy settings** so as to reduce subsequent regulatory intervention.

Sharing and transfer of data

- Currently there is no regulatory framework to control how data is shared by the data controller with third parties.
- Also there is no consideration of the different standards that govern the sharing of information with governmental and non-governmental entities, both within India and abroad.
- Indian law has to be able to deal with situations such as the Facebook-WhatsApp data-sharing policy (for commercial benefits) or the Apple-Federal Bureau of Investigation stand-off (for law enforcement).

Rights of users

- The data privacy law should also recognise the rights of users.
- Though it is yet to be decided if right to privacy is a constitutional right or not, but it is necessary that right to privacy atleast becomes a statutory right.
- Once again, EU Privacy law can become a guide here by recognising
  - **Rights to data quality**- ensuring accuracy of personal data by allowing individuals access and correction rights
  - **Data integrity**- ensuring security of data
  - **Data-breach notification**- requiring users to be informed of any privacy-related breaches
  - **Data portability**- allowing users to transmit their personal data across service providers

Supervision and redressal mechanism

- The success of any law depends on enforcement. More than focussing on writing laws, much attention should be given to effectiveness of redressal mechanisms.
- For example, in Aadhar Act, only UIDAI is permitted to initiate criminal action and not the Aadhaar number holder.
- Adding to it, the accompanying regulatory order envisages a grievance redressal "contact centre". However, the actual process of redress and the binding nature of such a mechanism is left unspecified.

Conclusion

If the "Privacy Right" has to be taken beyond "Data Protection", it is necessary to define "Privacy" as a "Sense of personal liberty felt by an individual without the constraints felt by him as radiated by people around him".

The availability and disclosure of data about an individual to the people around is the prime reason for these constraints to be felt by the individual. Hence one of the concepts of Privacy is to give the right to the individual to control how much of the information about himself he would try to share with others.

Thus as part of privacy protection mechanism, there can be three classifications "Personal Data, "Sensitive Personal Data" and "Essential Data". This classification is expected to provide a better foundation for regulation.

The new laws have to be broad enough to ensure their wide applicability and simultaneously flexible enough to adapt to technological changes. Along with it, their application to state and private sector, their different standards of application should also be clearly demarcated.

India has to be compliant with globally accepted privacy and data-protection standards so as to ensure utmost priority to privacy of a common individual.

Connecting the dots:

- Should there be right to privacy? Discuss.
- Data protection is one of the key elements for a robust cyber policy. Analyse.

TOPIC:
General Studies 2

- **Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.**
- **Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies**

General Studies 3

- *Science and Technology-* **developments and their applications and effects in everyday life**

ISRO and its achievements

Introduction

ISRO has led the Indian achievements in Indian roadmap of research and development from independence. This has resulted in huge benefits for India in diverse fields and has also given rich foreign exchange earnings through commercial ventures. This establishes the fact that a government organisation can excel irrespective of its regular rules and binds.

Issue:

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is an exceptional case of rarely an agency of the government of India associated with the development of cutting-edge technology and global standards in execution.

In fact, by launching 104 satellites from a single rocket, it has now set the global standard in a field (or more accurately space) in which only a few nations even dare to dabble.

- But what is it about ISRO that makes it stand for excellence when a plethora of government agencies suffer from severe challenges in terms of capacity and execution?

- What makes ISRO tick could help show us the way to create other high-performing government organisations.

More autonomy

- First, ISRO is fortunate that it reports to the Prime Minister and his office rather than a line ministry. This has been critical to its success.
  - In line ministries, ministers and bureaucrats have a tendency to micromanage their turf, and this includes autonomous bodies, agencies and enterprises.
  - More often than not, there will be a senior official along with a set of junior officials who have direct charge of supervising the affairs of an agency.
  - The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) works differently given that its remit cuts across all government departments. Its officials would certainly not have the time or the mindspace to supervise the affairs of a single institution.
- ISRO, therefore, has a real autonomy that most other government agencies do not.

Location matters

The geographical location of the organisation also matters in terms of creating an appropriate ecosystem to nurture excellence.

- A number of critical government-run organisations and enterprises are either headquartered in Delhi (because it's the seat of the Union Government) or are in places that have had some political salience to the ruling dispensation at the time they were set up. Neither scenario may be optimal from the point of view of an agency.
  - Being located in Delhi will leave it particularly vulnerable to the diktats of the parent ministry and the slow-moving, cautious culture of an omnipresent bureaucracy. And a politically salient location outside Delhi may not have the ecosystem to feed knowledge creation and build capabilities.
- ISRO, headquartered in Bengaluru, is distant from Delhi and immune from the capital's drawbacks. More importantly, it is located in the appropriate geography in what is India's science and technology hub.
  - It has the right ecosystem to attract talent and build its knowledge capabilities more than most government agencies do.
- Needless to say, human capital is critical to the success of an organisation. Unlike many government agencies which are staffed by generalists, ISRO is staffed by specialists right from its technocratic top management.
- ISRO is also more agnostic than most government agencies about cooperating with and working with the best in the private sector.
- The building blocks of many of ISRO's successes come from outside the government system.

Learning the right lessons

- From ISRO's example is crucial for India.

- - The conventional view is that the government is poor in project execution and if one looks at the state of infrastructure or of the quality of public services that is not an unreasonable conclusion to reach.
- What ISRO shows is that it is possible, indeed feasible, for the government to build high-performing organisations/agencies.
  - This is not an argument for a big government. Instead, it is an argument for building top quality institutions in a limited number of areas where the government's role cannot be substituted by the private sector.
  - Cutting-edge research and development in spheres where there may not be ready profits is one area the government should focus on building ISRO-like institutions.
- Defence could be one such. A completely reformed **Defence Research and Development Organisation** based out of Pune or Bengaluru (not Delhi) which reports to the PMO and which actively collaborates with the private sector would be worth considering.
- Or a central vaccine agency, based in Ahmedabad or Pune, which focusses on solutions to under-researched diseases.
- Of course, not every government organisation will be engaged in cutting-edge technology breakthroughs nor can every organisation report to the Prime Minister.
- Still, independence from line ministries is important for a high performing organisation.

The trouble is that it is not easy to change the nature of institutions by tinkering with them. There is a path dependency in the way institutions evolve.

Conclusion

The creation of high performing government bodies requires starting from scratch and focussing on a few basics: real autonomy from ministries, right geographical location/appropriate ecosystem, a team of specialists, partnership with the private sector and operating only in spheres where there is no alternative to government. The creation of a handful of such agencies could have a transformative effect

Connecting the dots

- Inspite of Indians heading the best global ventures abroad we have been unable to establish big ticket ventures within India. Critically analyse the reasons behind the same. How does an organisation like ISRO stand apart? What are the exceptions?

TOPIC: *General Studies 3*

- *Science and Technology*- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life
- **Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.**

Exoplanets and NASA's achievements

Introduction
Space Science has been an unbound field of exploration. It involves many such unexplained wonders that have been cause of enquiry and experimentation. Developments in the field have eased life in multiple manners from communication to life changing telemedicine and tele-education like experiences.

Issue:
- The quest to find life outside the solar system got a big boost with thediscovery of seven Earth-size extra-solar planets, or exoplanets, orbiting a dwarf star about 40 light years away.
- Unlike earlier discoveries of exoplanets, all seven planets could possibly have liquid water — a key to life as we know it on Earth — with three planets having the greatest chance.
    - This is by far the largest collection of Earth-like planets in the habitable **'Goldilocks' zone of a star** — neither too close nor too far from a star, which raises the possibility of liquid water being present on the surface.
- Only Earth has liquid water in the solar system. Less than a year after scientists announced the discovery of three planets orbiting the dwarf star, the team found four more through intense searches using several ground-based telescopes, including a 20-day continuous monitoring using the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Spitzer Space Telescope.
- Since the dwarf star is much cooler than the Sun, the dimming of light each time a planet passes or transits before the star could be easily recorded from Earth unlike in cases when planets transit a Sun-like bright star.
- Since the initial discovery of three planets was made using the **Chile**-based *Transiting Planets and Planetesimals Small Telescope*, the exoplanet system is called **TRAPPIST-1**.
- Unlike in the case of our solar system, the planets have apparently formed far away from the star and gradually migrated towards it; they share a similar formation history with the Galilean moons, which migrated towards Jupiter after formation.
- Another major difference in comparison with the solar system is the tight packing of the seven planets around the star.
- The closest planet in the TRAPPIST-1 system takes just 1.5 days to complete an orbit and the farthest one takes 20 days; the orbital period of the planets is also similar to the Galilean moons.

Significance:
With a fair possibility of liquid water being present on at least three planets, the focus is now on deciphering the climate and chemical composition of their atmosphere.

- As a first measure, scientists are keen to know if the planets are Earth-like, by ruling out the presence of hydrogen gas enveloping them.
- Mass estimates already suggest that the inner six planets might have a rocky composition, while the one with a low density may have a volatile composition due to the presence of an ice layer or atmosphere.
- The composition of the atmosphere can be identified by measuring the wavelength characteristics of light. Since the **TRAPPIST-1** system is close by and the star is cool enough, it would be easier to decipher the various critical features of the planets.
- If there is life on these planets, we would know this in about 10 years. The search for extraterrestrial life has just become more focused.

Conclusion

Spirit of enquiry and questioning has ensured life evolving on earth. This has further lead to increased understanding of extra terrestrial elements and life beyond. In this light the discovery of NASA holds high relevance. The discovery of seven exoplanets makes the search for extraterrestrial life more exciting

Connecting the dots

- In light of discovery of NASA how important does extra terrestrial life and activities are for life on earth? Discuss.
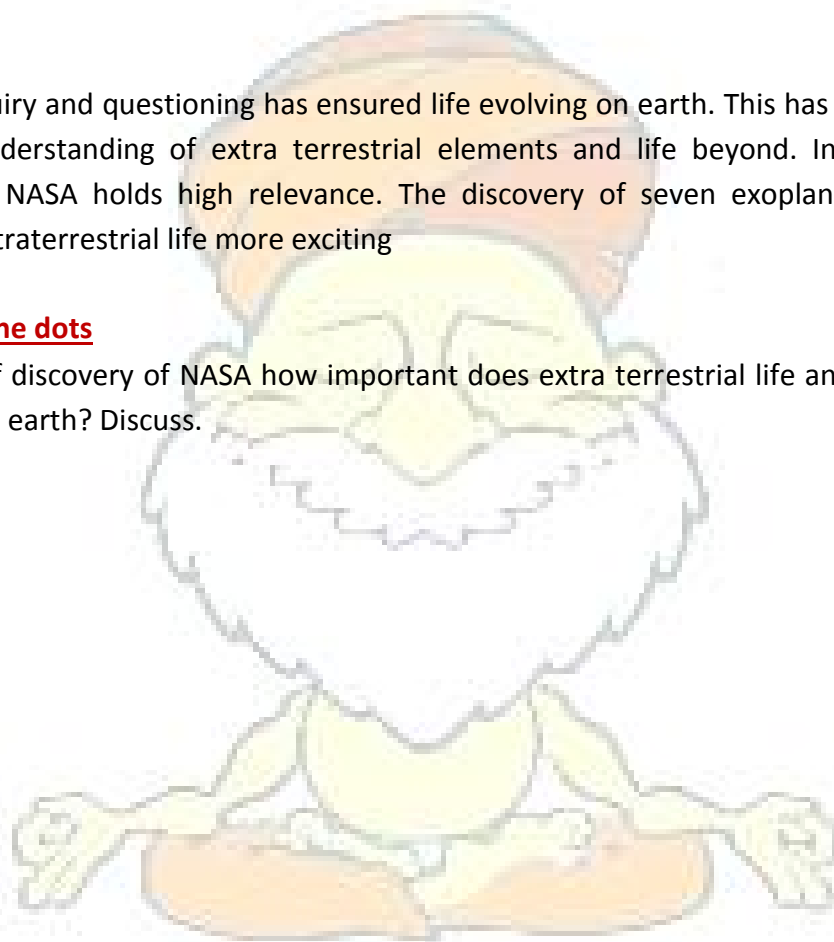
HEALTH

TOPIC:
General Studies 2
- **Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health**
- *Development processes and the development industry the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders*

Hospital Acquired Infections

Introduction

Health care in India is in a dismal state with issues ranging from affordability, accessibility and availability. In this light a serious concern is hospital acquired infections which are life threatening. The biggest problem is lack of awareness and apathy of the officials.

Issue:

A large number of patients who go to hospitals come back with something more serious. According to the World Health Organisation, at any given time over 1.4 million people across the globe suffer from a hospital-acquired infection (HAI). HAIs account for 2 million cases and about 80,000 deaths a year.

A 2015 study finds that the rates of hospital-acquired infections and antimicrobial resistance were markedly higher in India than those reported by the CDC in the U.S.

Key findings and challenges:
- *The first step to combat this situation is to improve hygiene practices and implement standard operating procedures at each step.*
  - *According to the president of the International Nosocomial Infection Control Consortium (INICC), Victor D. Rosenthal, who has been studying the problem for several decades- "Most HAIs are caused due to [a] lack of compliance with infection control guidelines, such as hand hygiene, [and] use of outdated technology," he says.*
- *The most common types of HAIs are bloodstream infection, pneumonia, urinary tract infection and surgical site infections.*
- *A study published in 2015 by the INICC led by Dr. Rosenthal, studied the rate of device-associated infection rates in 40 hospitals from 20 Indian cities over a 10-year period from 2004.*
  - *The study, which collected data from 236,700 intensive care unit (ICU) patients for 970,713 bed-days, found that rates of HAIs and antimicrobial resistance were markedly higher in India than the rates reported by the Centers for Disease*

Control and Prevention, the leading national public health institute in the United States.

- *The study found an incidence rate of 7.92 central line-associated bloodstream infections per 1,000 central line-days, 10.6 catheter-associated urinary tract infections per 1,000 urinary catheter-days and a ventilator-associated pneumonia rate of 10.4 per 1,000 mechanical ventilator-days in adult ICUs.*
- *The study reports that these high rates could reflect "the typical ICU situation in hospitals in India".*
- *The situation is further emphasised by the fact that administrative and financial support in public hospitals is insufficient to fund full infection control programmes, which invariably results in extremely low nurse-to-patient staffing ratios — which have proved to be highly connected to high HAI rates in ICUs — and hospital overcrowding*

Issue of overcrowding

- *Acknowledging India's serious problem of overcrowding of hospitals which leads to many basic hygiene processes being given the go by limited manpower is an important risk factor.*
    - *Having one nurse for three beds in an ICU is an important risk factor. With limited resources, there are limitations on providing a good enough manpower, proper guidelines, proper training, proper education, good behaviour, and right technology.*
    - *Today more than ever, pathologists are constantly in "catching up" mode trying to counter microorganisms rapidly mutating and adapting to existing known methods of treatment.*
- *And the persons most susceptible to infection are those whose immune system is already compromised, say after a surgery or a prolonged visit to the hospital.*
- *Referring to the overuse of antibiotic drugs, Dr. Rodenthal sounds a sharp warning to the overuse of antibiotics: "The misuse and excess use of antibiotics increase resistance. The approach should be to prevent infections and in the process bring down the HAI rate together with bacterial resistance, rather than waiting for infections and then treating them with antibiotics."*

Conclusion

Prevention is better than cure is an old adage but as relevant as ever. In a country where we still have a long way to make health a basic right accessible to all the least government can do is to raise awareness about HAIs and curb them through mandated best practices.

Connecting the dots

- Hospitals are more seen as dens of disease breeding than cure especially with reports on hospital acquired infections. Enumerate the probable lapses leading to the same. Also chart a solution to the same.

<u>TOPIC:</u>
General Studies 2
- *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.*

General Studies 3
- **Inclusive growth and issues arising from it**

<u>**Price Control of Cardiac Stents**</u>

Introduction
Health is a sector of concern in India's growth story. India still has a long way behind in making it a fundamental right. Especially in terms of non-communicable diseases which are emerging as silent killers Indians have shown high vulnerability. In this background it is necessary to make health care and delivery affordable and accessible by government of India.

Issue:
- Capping the prices of medical stents, which are used to treat coronary artery disease, by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) is an extreme regulatory measure necessitated by the market failure that afflicts the overall delivery of health care in India.
- Rising costs have led to impoverishment of families and litigation demanding regulation.
- Given the overall dominance of private, commercial, for-profit health institutions, and the asymmetry confronting citizens, correctives to bring about a balance are inevitable.
- Two important pointers to the need for cost regulation are available from research published in *The Lancet* in **December 2015**:
  - Nearly two-thirds of the high out-of-pocket expenditure on health incurred by Indians went towards drugs;
  - Even the meagre research data available showed that there was irrational use of medical technologies, including cardiac stents and knee implants.
  - Regulated prices can, therefore, be expected to make stents more accessible to patients who really need them, helping them avoid using up the weak insurance cover available, while also reducing the incentive for unethical hospitals to use them needlessly.
- It is worth recalling that there are over 60 million diagnosed diabetics in the country, and the average age at which the first heart attack strikes Indians is 50, a decade earlier than people in developed nations.
- At appropriate prices, and with a health system that pools the cost among all citizens, it would be possible to provide access to stents and other treatments for all.

Analysis:

Health-care providers often demand market-determined pricing of medical technologies on the ground that newer ones will not be available under a regulated regime.

- In the case of cardiac stents, this argument does not hold water since stakeholder consultations held by the NPPA in January revealed that there are **'huge unethical markups'** in the supply chain.
- It would serve the cause of medical innovation if costing is transparent, and a system of risk pooling is introduced to help patients get expensive treatment without high out-of-pocket spending.
    - It was estimated five years ago by the Planning Commission's expert group on universal health coverage that raising spending on public procurement of medicines to 0.5% of GDP (from 0.1%) would provide all essential medicines to everyone.
- What is necessary, then, is for a *two-pronged approach* to improve access to medicines and technology.
    - The Centre should monitor expenditures jointly in partnership with the community, use regulation where needed
    - Raise public spending on health
- Several developing countries have moved ahead on this path.

Conclusion

Well-considered price control is a positive step, but more needs to be done. The latest measure provides an opportunity to expand the availability of stents, and by extension angioplasty procedures, in the public health system. District hospitals should offer cardiac treatments uniformly. This should be a priority programme to be completed in not more than five years.

Connecting the dots

- The recent measure of price control on medical devices is seen as anti-market practice. Critically discuss the need for such measures in a welfare state like India. Will it inhibit innovation in the field? Justify.

TOPIC:
General Studies 1
- *Social empowerment*
- *urbanization, their problems and their remedies*
General Studies 2
- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

Faecal sludge management in cities

- When the city planners believed that once people use safe sanitation in their homes, the problem is resolved.
- However, the phrase of 'flush and forget' has resulted in a dire emergency.
- The reason is lack of proper faecal sludge management system.
- As per Centre for Science and Environment, between 70-90% of human waste goes untreated into the environment in the 75 cities surveyed.

Need for faecal sludge management
- Faecal sludge is any human excreta and water mixture that bears disease-carrying bacteria and pathogens that need to be safely treated before disposal into the environment.
- Faecal sludge management is the system in cities that safely collects, transports and treats faecal sludge and septage from pit latrines, septic tanks or other on-site sanitation systems.
- Unfortunately, the Indian cities experience lack of this service or lack of well management of it.
- This has resulted into
    - gross pollution of surface and groundwater
    - widespread disease through untreated disposal of pathogen-laden sludge
    - high costs of combating water-borne diseases to individual households
- Thus, a sound faecal sludge management system is of utmost importance in densely populated areas, where most residents are often not connected to conventional sewer networks.

The sanitation problems
- The sludge is most often **collected by unorganized private service providers** who use vacuum pumps or other types of pumps loaded onto trucks/vehicles that can enter high-density areas.
- The collected and untreated material is **usually dumped in the nearest water body** or open area, sometimes even in farmer fields. This is hazardous to safe and healthy living.
- These **providers are neither incentivised nor regulated** to take the sludge to a safe location for disposal.
- It has to be noted that **responsibility of providing effective faecal sludge management lies with local governments**, water authorities, water utilities, in partnership with formal or informal private service providers.

What to do?

- For efficacious citywide sludge management, faecal sludge should be **collected on a scheduled route instead of on-demand /call-for-service basis**. This will create **de-sludging to be a sustainable business** for service providers.
- For **alternatives to conventional treatment systems**, non-networked and innovative treatment systems and technologies should be used by cities. These include
    - Constructed wetlands
    - Anaerobic digestion and waste stabilization ponds
    - Co-treatment in sewage treatment plants
- These solutions together result in effective faecal sludge management treatment that is practicable both from an economic and operations stand point.

Role of stakeholders

- Faecal sludge management is not only an engineering or infrastructure solution, but a city system which requires strong collaboration among all stakeholders, especially government and citizens.
- There is a strong push by the national government to **provide technical assistance to states and cities to design and implement effective faecal sludge management systems** for their citizens.
- This will also equally require active cooperation of citizens else private service providers, city planners and administration will not be able to give effective and sustainable faecal sludge management.
- The **citizens** have to ensure that there is **regular de-sludging of their septic tanks**, ensuring that no untreated sludge leaks into their immediate environment. They should also **regularly pay** for the cleaning services provided by government.
- Similarly, the **service providers** should ensure **quality services to citizens** by not dumping untreated waste into the environment. They have to ensure **high maintenance of their vehicles**, ensuring that **service personnel are adequately protected from contamination** and that there are **no leakages** during desludging operations.
- Municipalities need to create facilities for
    - safe treatment and disposal
    - set up the right incentives and disincentives for adhering to safe disposal
    - create the right market structures to encourage private sector players to expand and sustain operations for both de-sludging and treatment.

Conclusion

There is an urgent need for stakeholders to take the action to tackle the sanitation problems of the cities. Lack of sanitation costs around 6.4% of GDP because of death and disease. India is losing approximately 1000 children everyday to poor sanitation. Thus, effective faecal sludge management is a critical step in saving these lives.

Connecting the dots:

- Critically analyse the sanitation management scenario in urban cities in India.
- What is faecal sludge and its management? What are the problems arising by it and how to tackle it?

SECURITY

Diaspora – Security concerns w.r.t. evacuations.

Introduction

The Indian Diaspora is a generic term to describe the people who migrated from territories that are currently within the borders of the Republic of India. It also refers to their descendants. The Diaspora is currently estimated to number over twenty million composed of "NRIs" (Indian citizens not residing in India) and "PIOs" (Persons of Indian Origin who have acquired the citizenship of some other country).

The Diaspora covers practically every part of the world. It numbers more than a million each in eleven countries, while as many as twenty-two countries have concentrations of at least a hundred thousand ethnic Indians.

Understanding:

According to the latest United Nations estimates, 244 million people, or 3.3% of the world's population, live in a country other than the one where they were born. By far, the most popular destination in 2015 was the United States, followed by Germany, Russia and Saudi Arabia. But the ranking should not be viewed as a popularity contest. Saudi Arabia shows up because it hosts an enormous number of migrant workers, not immigrants who resettle, as in the United States.

Indians make up the largest diaspora: 16 million Indians are scattered across the world, which partly reflects the country's demographic size (1.2 billion) and youth (median age is around 26).

Issue:

The increasing size and complexity of the diaspora requires the government to expand capacity and improve procedures. More than 11 million Indians now reside abroad and 20 million travel internationally every year.

As political instability rattles the West Asian region, which hosts more than seven million Indians, the government can no longer rely on heroic efforts by individual officials or quick-fix solutions. Despite extensive experience in conducting evacuation operations of its citizens abroad, India still needs to institutionalise best practices.

Previous experiences:

- On January 26, 1986, as New Delhi celebrated its Republic Day, South Yemen was being engulfed in a civil war that threatened the lives of thousands of foreigners living there. While Britain, France and the Soviet Union coordinated to jointly evacuate their nationals, the 850 Indians in the country were forced to wait for several more days until New Delhi finally managed to convince a merchant ship to pick them up.
- Fast forward almost 30 years, to April 2015, when Yemen was on fire once again. This time, however, the Indian government successfully conducted Operation Raahat to evacuate almost 5,000 Indians and nearly 1,000 citizens from 41 other countries. Besides Air India aircraft, the Indian Navy deployed vessels, and the Indian Air Force C-17 Globemasters for strategic airlift. Such unprecedented efforts and resources reflect New Delhi's new drive to protect the lives and assets of its citizens abroad in times of crisis.

Measures to be initiated

- First, the government will need to build on its rich experience in conducting more than 30 evacuation operations since the 1950s.
  - Studying India's history, best practices and lessons learned will help institutionalise them and avoid the need to reinvent the wheel every time a crisis erupts.
  - By supporting policy-oriented research at universities and think tanks to document the memory of senior officials, the government would also facilitate the transmission of their expertise to younger officials.

Preparing a manual

- Second, the government must avoid the *jugaad* (careless or reactive)approach.
  - Every evacuation case is unique, given the specific nature and location of the crisis, but this should not preclude an analytical attempt to formulate a blueprint that lists core tasks for all operations.
  - An inter-ministerial committee should prepare a manual with guidelines that establish a clear chain of command and division of competencies; identify regional support bases, assembly points and routes for evacuation; develop country-specific warden systems to communicate with expatriates; and establish evacuation priority and embarkation criteria.
- Third, India's diplomatic cadre must be given specific training to operate in hostile environments.

- ▪ As pointed out by a senior government official, when it comes to operating in complex theatres, "practice and preparedness make perfection".
- ▪ To achieve this, the government could instruct the police or army to train Indian Foreign Service probationers to operate in war zones; conduct frequent evacuation simulations and emergency drills; and create rapid reaction teams of Indian security personnel to be deployed to protect diplomatic staff and installations abroad.
- Fourth, the success of future operations will also rely on New Delhi's willingness to work together with friendly governments.
  - ▪ India will have to invest in cooperative frameworks that facilitate coordination among countries that have large expatriate populations in West Asia, in particular Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and among leading powers with evacuation capacity in the Indian Ocean region.
- Fifth, the government will have to assign a greater role to its armed forces, in particular by strengthening the Navy and Air Force's capacity to operate in tandem with civilian authorities.
  - ▪ It should, for example, direct the military to develop a non-combatant evacuation (NEO) doctrine, designate the Integrated Defence Staff as the nodal organisation to improve inter-services and civil-military coordination, direct the services to conduct more multilateral NEO exercises, and adapt military modernisation plans to increase capacity for out-of-area deployment and evacuation.

Using technology
- Sixth, to minimise redundancies, the government must institutionalise a permanent inter-ministerial coordinating mechanism for emergency evacuations, incentivise inter-agency cross-posting of officials dealing with diaspora affairs, and encourage State governments to create regional contingency plans.
- Seventh, to avoid cost inflation and delays, the government must establish a permanent civil reserve air fleet that pools aircraft from all Indian airlines based on pre-established requisition and reimbursement procedures.
- Eighth, the government will have to invest in new technologies to better monitor the diaspora's profile and mobility.
  - ▪ This can be achieved by encouraging more diplomatic missions to provide online consular registration forms, developing an online registration system for overseas travellers, utilising social media, and by making the Aadhaar card compulsory to facilitate biometric identity verification and reduce identity fraud during evacuation.

- Finally, the government must expand efforts to manage public opinion and be able to conduct a quiet diplomacy that is crucial to safely extricate Overseas Indians from conflict zones.
  - To reduce domestic pressures, it should embed media representatives more frequently in such missions, reassure the diaspora by ensuring that high-level political representatives are personally engaged, and avoid raising expectations by clearly distinguishing Indian citizens from people of Indian origin.

Conclusion

India has extensive experience in conducting evacuation operations, but to secure the lives and assets of Indians abroad, the government must avoid an ad hoc approach and seek to institutionalise best practices, bolster diplomatic and military capabilities, and improve coordination.

Connecting the dots

- With changing global security situation and dispersed Indian diaspora evacuation operations in recent times have been testing. Critically analyse the need for a comprehensive policy in this direction. Give you sketch of a probable policy dimension.

TOPIC:
General Studies 2
- *India and its neighbourhood- relations.*
- *Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests*
General Studies 3
- *Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.*

Pakistan- Is it finally serious on terror?

In news: Recently, Pakistan placed Hafiz Saeed, the mastermind of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks and head of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and its parent political organization Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), under house arrest. In addition to it, Pakistan also put JuD and Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation, JuD's front for charitable activities, on the terror watch list.
This brings forward the question if Pakistan is really serious on terror or is it a mere eye wash?

Pakistan and terror groups in Pakistan

- For India, the current set of actions were not credible enough to prove 'Pakistan's sincerity' to stop terror.

- Besides history and LeT under scrutiny, there is Masood Azhar and JeM which have emerged as a centre stage on jihadi landscape.
- They have been spearheaded 2001 Parliament attacks and recent Pathankot and Nagrota attacks and are openly organizing rallies and raising funds in Pakistan.
- Though it seems like a big crackdown on terrorist organizations that target India, but in reality, such action has been initiated against Saeed even before to fulfil short-term objectives.
- Later, the prosecution in Pakistan fails to build a robust case against him in a court of law. This leads to the usual cycle of house arrest, a court case, an investigation and insufficient proof leading to him getting a clean legal chit.
- Today, there are no major domestic cases against Saeed; neither is there a paradigm shift in Pakistan's terror strategy calling for action against all militant groups on Pakistani soil. So Saeed's house arrest was a surprise.

Why the sudden change of heart?
- LeT and JeM are widely regarded as Pakistan's strategic assets against India. Yet, a crackdown on only one and at this point of time can be attributed to few reasons.

JuD named in money laundering and terror financing report.
   - A plenary session of the 37-member Financial Action Task Force is upcoming and it may put Pakistan back on the watch list of "high risk and non-cooperative jurisdictions" under its global anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing regime.
   - Pakistan was removed from this list in 2015 but a report by the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering has raised some serious objections regarding "the financial traffic of JuD".

Travel Ban
   - The travel ban imposed by US President Donald Trump on the citizens of seven Muslim majority countries has led to speculation about Pakistan being included in an extended list.
   - The fear of loss of face could have persuaded Pakistani generals and civilian administration to solve their differences and act jointly against a major terrorist group to signal commitment.

Change of guard
   - With coming of General Bajwa, it is reported that he is serious about curbing the activities of groups like LeT and JeM. But more action, especially on JeM, would be needed for those reports to carry credence.
   - He had also replaced the chief of Inter-Services Intelligence within days of assuming responsibilities.

What next?

- The Good militant-bad militant distinction still stays in Pakistan.
- There is a section within Pakistan, which demands action against all militant groups and is keen that the establishment measures all the groups with same scale.
- Even the media reactions to the arrest have highlighted this point.
- However, the seriousness of Pakistan to act against the JuD will depend on the legal case it builds.
- Last time too, JuD and Saeed had escaped the judicial reprimand and same is expected to happen this time too as there are no visible plan of State to take on armed non-state actors.
- As JuD majorly focuses on Kashmir and keeps away from any major jihadist activity on Pakistani soil, Saeed has challenged the Interior Ministry to come up with even a single FIR against his cadres or organisations.
- Also, Hafiz Saeed is unlikely to protest strongly as he has alternatives to suit his trajectory. Earlier, after Lashkar-e-Taiba was banned in 2002, Saeed it appeared as Jamaat-ud-Dawa which was said to be a charity organization. This time he has already renamed JuD as 'Tehreek Azadi Jammu and Kashmir'.
- Further, as he will legally challenge the arrest, there are strong chances of a shabby trial leading to his freedom.
- In response to his house arrest, public protest has begun in criticising the government for its "bowing to foreign pressure and putting a sincere Pakistani like Hafiz Saeed under house arrest" which indicates that JuD will garner more political support in upcoming times.

Conclusion

Unless the Pakistani state has indeed taken a U-turn and decided to take on all militant groups including the JuD, there are chances that LeT and Saeed may emerge as winner-politically as well as in fulfilling their intentions. Its reactivation by another name will serve no purpose of curbing the terror activities as well as terror financing. This might all together lead to increase in problems for Jammu and Kashmir as well as rest of India.

Connecting the dots:

- Is Pakistan serious about ending terrorism on its home soil with its recent policy decision? Explain.
- India still believes that 'good militant-bad militant' formula exists in Pakistan. What is it? What are possible actions that can be taken/preparations done by India to protect its borders?

TOPIC: *General Studies 3*

- *Government Budgeting.*
- *Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.*

Defence status and Budget 2017-18

- In Budget 2016-17, the FM did something different from the past- he entirely skipped mentioning defence spending in his speech.
- In Budget 2017-18, he did make a passing reference to defence where he mentioned about a defence travel system and an online pension disbursement system.
- He has allocated a sum of Rs. 2,74,114 crore including Rs. 86,488 crore for defence capital for defence expenditure excluding pensions.
- The first thing left unsaid was that the budget estimate of defence pensions this year is a whopping Rs. 86,000 crore.
- When defence pensions are included, the overall defence budget amounts to Rs3.59 trillion, or 2.1% of GDP. When they are excluded, it drops to a meagre 1.6% of GDP.

The concern
- Falling defence expenditure is a critical concern in the present times.
- The china has been increasingly confrontational, US with its new President is becoming more insular about American interest and Russia is growing its friendship with Pakistan.
- Hence, there is a necessity to increase defence expenditure in few years.
- On the capital acquisition front, the situation remains the same. The government had slashed 9% in the revised estimate compared to budget estimate.
- In present budget, there is a nominal increase of 10% in the capital acquisitions budget over last year —but this is a net reduction in capital spending once inflation and slashed expenditures in the revised estimate are accounted in.
- Though Rs. 86,000 crore on capital acquisitions might sound like a large number, close to 90% of it is allocated to paying off instalments of money for past purchases such as Sukhoi fighter craft, aircraft carrier Vikramaditya, transport planes like the C130J Super Hercules and more. Thus, the available budget for future acquisitions will be about Rs. 10,000 crore and no more.
- In addition to it, the FM chose to refer to two quite mild schemes, the Centralised Defence Travel System and the interactive Pension Disbursement System instead of mention of important policy issues like the strategic partnership scheme and defence technology fund.
- More than 50% of the total expenditure on defence is expected to go to salaries and pensions which ironically will anyways not give satisfaction to the personnel.

Making a case for modernisation

- The paucity of funds in defence will adversely affect modernisation of the armed forces.
- But unfortunately, repeated underutilisation of the capital budget has weakened the case for higher allocations for new acquisitions.
- This makes it common to hear that there is underutilisation of the capital budget. One of the reason is that finance ministry rarely approves big contracts so that it can withdraw huge sums from the MoD to meet the fiscal target.
- Hence the MoD has to address the problem before it goes out of proportion. Simultaneously it is also true that the allocated amount would be insufficient if all contracts in the pipeline get signed during the next fiscal.
- But it is not as serious as the issue of insufficient allocation for maintenance of equipment currently in use.
- This maintenance of equipment in use, war wastage reserves including ammunition stock require sufficient funds to be managed.
- Thus sufficient funds and long term vision is required to maintain the armed forces for any unforeseen circumstances.

Defence Reforms

- Outside the budget, the liberalizing of FDI to 100% in defence with any FDI up to 49% foreign ownership under the automatic route is an encouraging route.
- This step aims to help in providing competition to a declining public defence production sector— and avoiding an excessively high defence import bill.
- However, with barely Rs. 10,000 crore allocated towards new capital acquisitions, Make-in-India-Defence might remain a slogan and nothing more.
- Hence with squeezed budget, it is necessary to kick-start defence reforms in the country.

Force rationalisation

- The Indian Armed Forces and especially the Indian Army is too person-heavy and needs some force reconciliation.
- Even China decided to reduce its troop size by 300,000 people in 2015.
- Raising more troops is an old mindset which needs to be changed. Recently India raised a troop of 80,000 strong Mountain Strike Corps directed against China.

Accounting reforms

- Just like railways, the defence ministry needs to urgently adopt accrual accounting.
- The true pension liabilities of the Indian Armed Forces are unknown.
- Even the Armed Forces need a good reckoning of their assets and liabilities to be prepared for future conflict.
- Hence, the recommendations of successive standing committees on defence for accrual accounting and zero-budgeting should be heeded now.

Make-In-India boost

- The focus on "Make in India" in defence needs to be revived.

- Since its introduction, no development contract has been signed so far for any "Make" project.
- A small allocation of Rs 44.63 crore for assistance to prototype development is not finding any takers.
- Hence, there should be projects that can be undertaken by Indian industry for indigenous design and development of prototypes of defence products with government funding.

Defence reforms and reorganisation is not limited to just budget. The defence minister can introduce new policies over the years for a better defence performance

Conclusion

The meagre increase of 6% in the official defence budget is grossly inadequate. Today there exists vast void in military capability and the diminished and incremental effect on modernisation and operational preparedness.

There is a need to augment resources substantially, particularly under 'stores and capital' procurement which have come under severe pressure in the last several years with a huge negative consequence on India's defence preparedness.

From the MoD's perspective, while the demand for higher allocations is a genuine one, it must also be fully geared up to utilise the available resources in a time-bound manner. An outcome-oriented monitoring of utilisation of outlays is needed as recommended by the standing committee in 2016. It is the only way to ensure that the focus shifts from ensuring full utilisation of funds to spending these wisely on the desired outcomes. There is hardly any merit in asking for more resources while the present capacity to utilise the available resources, particularly those under the capital head, is constrained.

Connecting the dots:

- What are the defence needs of Indian armed forces? Critically analyse.
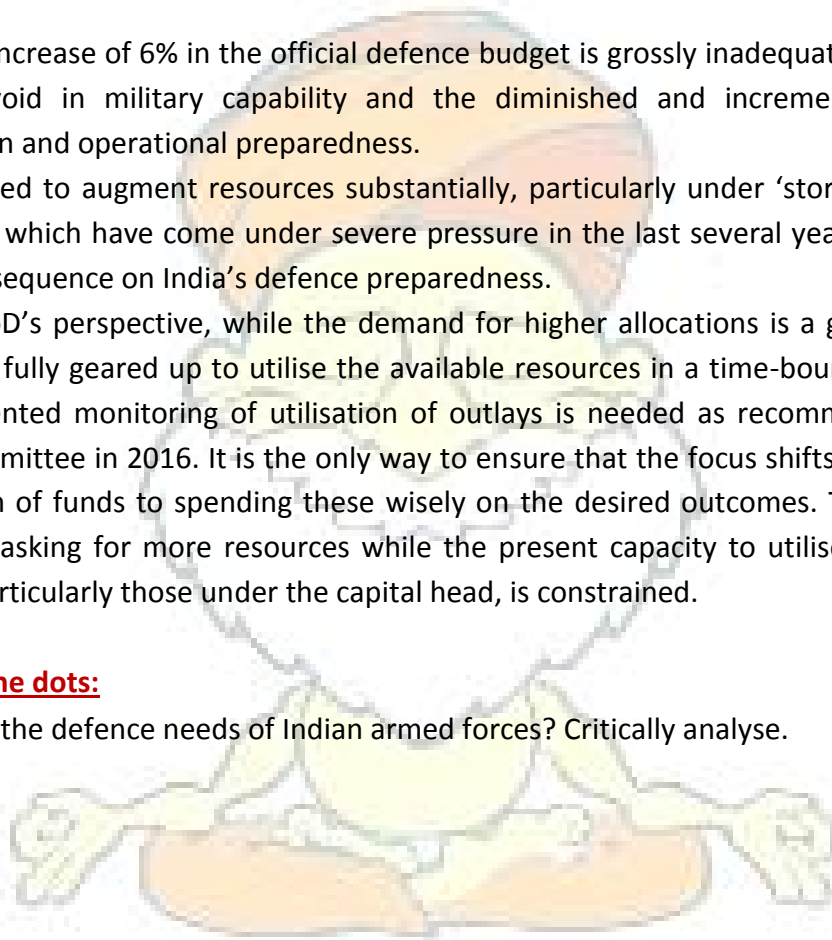
TOPIC:
General Studies 2
- *Bilateral, regional and global groupings* and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
- *Important International institutions*, agencies and fora their structure, mandate.
General Studies 3
- Role of *external state and non-state actors* in creating challenges to internal security.

Spread of ISIS in India

Introduction
Terrorism is a major challenge to the world today. Spread of ISIS and use of technology to carryout remote and lone wolf style attacks is spreading fear across the globe. India with porous borders and difficult neighbourhood is prone to challenges on the similar front.

Issue:
The arrest of two suspected Islamic State associates from Gujarat once again raises the question whether the terrorist group is finding support in India.

- Coincidentally, the arrests happened the same day that Hafeezudin T.K., one of the 21 persons who went missing from Kerala last year and were believed to have joined the IS, was reported to have been killed in a drone strike in Afghanistan.

If these allegations and reports are correct, it would show that the IS is gaining some influence at least among a handful of youth in India.

- In recent months, anti-terror officials have arrested young people from different parts of the country — in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, West Bengal and Rajasthan.
- The IS thrives on support from foreign jihadists, largely the young. Ever since the organisation declared a *'Caliphate' in 2014*, it has attracted tens of thousands of fighters from around the world.
    - It used two tactics — urging sympathisers either to travel to Iraq or Syria, its strongholds, and join the war, or carry out terror attacks in their own countries after declaring allegiance to the 'Caliph', Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.
- India has remained largely insulated from this trend. The number of Indians to have joined the ranks of the IS is very small.
- According to a December 2015 report by the intelligence company *Soufan Group*, the number of Indians who have joined the IS was 23, compared to 760 from the U.K. and 150 from the U.S.

The IS Phenomenon and India
The IS's censorious or strict, one-size-fits-all brand of Islam hasn't found much resonance in India.

- Given the unique and diverse nature of Indian Islam, it is extremely difficult for groups such as the IS to become popular among Muslims, as it did in parts of Iraq and Syria.
- But lone- wolf attacks, inspired by the IS world view and tactics, could pose security risks.
    - The IS is not recruiting people through local communities as in the case of other terror organisations or, as in Pakistan and Afghanistan, through madrasas.
    - The IS's medium is the Internet. It reaches out through online propaganda.
- It is all the more significant at a time when the IS is under attack in its core territories and is desperate to expand its reach beyond West Asia.
    - Of late it has carried out major terrorist attacks in India's neighbourhood — in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, including the deadly bombing at the Sehwan Sufi shrine in Sindh.
    - This outreach to South Asia should worry India.
    - To prevent the group from gaining a foothold on its territory, India needs high-level intelligence and counter-terror operations to continue.
- Equally important is better coordination between the state and Muslim religious leaders in countering radicalisation and having in place specific de-radicalisation programmes, as western governments do.
- It is important to not let these isolated arrests be blown out of proportion to target the larger Muslim population, which right-wing elements often try to do. Bigotry cannot be checked with bigotry.

Conclusion:

Terrorism like issue should be dealt with global consensus and most importantly bipartisan support. It should be politicized and this will help counter the spread of the threat. Measures should be holistic from security initiatives to social and political brainstorming.

Connecting the dots

- How can the spread of IS like groups in India be countered. Especially with the use of technology and remote reach as observed in recent days enumerate the measures that can be initiated.

WOMEN ISSUES

Sexual offences against women and policies to combat it

Introduction

Sexual crimes against women are on the rise. The crimes are widely prevalent in every society, though most of them remain undetected and unreported. In India, sexual harassment, molestation and rape of women are common. Most of these sexual crimes are being committed by relatives and close acquaintances of the victim. There is need to increase the public awareness (to increasingly report the sexual crimes) and speedily implement the existing laws to curb this growing menace.

Issue:
Last month, Minister for Women and Child Development Maneka Gandhi once again reiterated the need to set up a ***National Sex Offender Registry*** after a convicted sex offender allegedly confessed to raping hundreds of girls for over 10 years in New Delhi. These registries are not a novel suggestion. They have been operational in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and a few other English-speaking countries for more than a decade.

Understanding and Global examples:
Sex offender registration laws typically require offenders convicted of a sexual offence to periodically check in with law enforcement agencies, such as the police, informing them about where they are residing, their place of employment, and provide details of their physical description.
- These laws often place severe restrictions on where a previously convicted sex offender can reside and work.
- This in theory is meant to aid officials to track and monitor former sex offenders.
- The laws in the U.S. and South Korea go even further.

- They allow the public to access these records so that the community may be aware of a sex offender in their locality.
- This data is generally accessed through websites that will provide you the name, physical description, address, and photo of all the sexual offenders near you.

The minister in India has vouched for a similar system in India where the public can have access to such records.

Impact on crimes:

While sex offender registration laws and public access to these records create a sense of security to parents and residents, they have failed in making any significant difference in sex crimes. Sometimes they create more harm than good.

- Even in the U.S., where stringent registration laws with public access have been around for over 30 years, several independent studies arrive at the conclusion:
  - These registers are simply not reducing sex crimes.
  - A comprehensive study conducted by J.J. Prescott and J.E. Rockoff in 2010 conclude that although basic registration laws through which officials may track former offenders shows a marginal reduction in recidivism (namely, reoffending) by 1.1%, public notification laws, through which the public have full access to this data, undo this effect.
  - Instead result in an actual increase in reoffending. J.J. Prescott and J.E. Rockoff in their report note that, "notification laws may harden registered sex offenders, however, making them more likely to commit additional sex offences, perhaps because criminal behaviour is relatively more attractive for registered sex offenders living under a notification regime."
- The failure of these registries to show any empirical evidence of reducing crimes or reducing recidivism is significant while comparing the tremendous associated costs and damage they impose on law officials and former convicts.
- With no positive outcomes from these registries, these laws disproportionately result in severe hardships to former offenders.
  - As a consequence of being on the register, former convicts often find it very difficult to gain meaningful employment and have very limited options in finding housing as many localities are proudly branded as 'Sex Offender-Free Zones'.
  - Several studies find that because of open and free public access to these registries, former convicts often face threat, harassment and violence from other members of the community.
  - Their status as former sex offenders has the effect of stigmatising them for life, rendering reformation and a dignified life after prison impossible.

Juvenile crimes and disregard to laws

The most troubling aspect of Ms. Gandhi's suggestion is that she wants to include even juveniles and persons standing on trial for sexual offences to be on the register.

- The hasty proposal to include even under trial persons on the register ignores a basic consideration for civil rights of an accused person and the disproportionate impact it would have on their lives while only being accused of an offence.
- Similarly, the proposal to put children on a sex offender register displays a complete lack of understanding of their rights under the **Constitution** and our international obligations under the **UN Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).**

Other concerns:

For proposing a sex offender registry it is significant to have a look at how our sexual offences have been framed.

- At present, the Protection of Children From Sexual Offences Act, 2012 criminalises consensual sexual intercourse with minors and between minors.
    - Two 17-year-olds who have consensual sexual intercourse with each other can be imprisoned for a minimum term of seven years under this law if convicted.
    - A brief look at the cases registered under POCSO Act is sufficient to tell us that most special courts are now barraged with romantic cases instigated through complaints filed by objecting parents.
    - In the state of the current law, a person could possibly face the consequences of being on the register for a lifetime for having a consensual sexual relationship.

Remedies necessary:

- To effectively tackle the incidence of sexual offences will require a hard look at our own institutional failure in tackling these cases.
    - The rate of conviction for the offence of rape is at an abysmal 29% and worse still, the rate of pendency for rape cases is at a staggering 86.2% (National Crime Records Bureau, 2015).
    - A study conducted by the Centre for Child and the Law, NLSIU (2016) on the functioning of children's courts in Delhi found that 67.5% of victims do not even testify against the accused.
    - The study further found that conviction resulted only in 16% of the child sexual abuse cases in Delhi.
- With a poor conviction rate and a majority of cases still pending before courts, how would a register aid in preventing sexual offences by former convicts?
    - Even in the present case, where the former convict allegedly confessed to raping hundreds of girls over a period of 10 years, we must question why the investigative machinery failed completely. What happened to the complaints and investigations into these cases assuming that at least some of them registered a complaint?
    - Why did it take a decade for them to nab a dangerous criminal? Where is the institutional set-up and mental health evaluations to deal with violent sex offenders and pedophiles (Pedophilia or paedophilia is a psychiatric disorder in

which an adult or older adolescent experiences a primary or exclusive sexual attraction to children)

Conclusion

In the background of weak investigative and institutional machinery and overwhelming evidence showing that these sex offenders' registries simply don't work. The suggestion that the recent attacks in Delhi could have been prevented if a national sex offender registry had been implemented seems far-fetched and unrealistic. The Delhi attacks expose the glaring gaps in our existing systems that need to be urgently addressed before we jump to formulating new solutions. It can become another case of remedy worse than malady.

Connecting the dots

- The country and the world is suffering from a rise in crimes against women. In this light there are calls for radical solutions like a offenders' registry. How far can these go to solve the problem? Critically analyse.

TOPIC:
General Studies 1
- *Role of women and women's organization*
General Studies 2
- **Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.**

Sterilization tragedy and after-effects

Introduction

Women health is a concern across India. Especially reproductive health is a cause of concern and it is concern in remote areas and tribal regions. The sterilization tragedy in Chhattisgarh is still fresh in our minds.

Issue:

Women in Chhattisgarh are now facing a new crisis. Over 27 months after 13 women died and 65 took ill at a State-run mass sterilisation camp, the State government has now discontinued all sterilisation services. The botched event focused attention on India's dark history with family planning services.

After recommendations

Open camps, an important part of family planning services were discontinued as per the recommendations of a judicial commission headed by retired district judge Anita Jha.

- The state has complied with all the recommendations of the judicial commission. The doctor who performed [the] surgeries has been terminated and representatives of the pharmaceutical company which supplied [the] medicines are in jail.
- In compliance with the Supreme Court and the commission's report, open camps have been discontinued in Chhattisgarh

Impact:
As a result, women have turned to private clinics, if they can afford the ₹8,000- ₹10,000 bill.

- Government-run family planning services require going to neighboring Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh.
- Instead of providing quality sterilisation services in the aftermath of so many deaths, the government [has] responded by discontinuing the services.
- Health facilities, including district hospitals [have] stopped sterilisations. Tribal areas have suffered the most.
- It is only two years later that some community health centres [CHC] and district hospitals have started the services (Sulakshana Nandi, national joint convenor, Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, India-chapter of People's Health Movement.)

No focus on men
It has been a long-standing demand of the health movement in India that open camps be discontinued.

- However, they have to be replaced by adequate facilities at CHCs and district hospitals. It needs to be accompanied by awareness on male contraceptive methods such as condom use and vasectomy.
- There is no stress or campaign on male contraception.
- We have put the entire burden of family planning on women, but it is equally a men's issue.
- The government does not convince and cajole men into sterilisation the way it does for women.

Impact continued:
- Since the discontinuation of open camps, sterilisation rates in Chhattisgarh for both men and women have dropped drastically.
- According to Chhattisgarh's Health Department data, 1,35,407 were sterilised between April 2012 and March 2013.
- The number dropped to less than half in 2014-15, with only 52,082 availing the services. The number continues to be low.

Conclusion
The tragedy in Chhattisgarh was a wakeup call. It showed that there is high demand, especially among women, despite bad quality services. The government should have

responded by providing quality services to men and women, rather than withdrawing the existing services. It's as if the government is saying 'either you take bad services or nothing'

Connecting the dots

- Critically discuss the need for a comprehensive change in India's policy on family planning. Enumerate methods to promote male sterilisation and how is it related with societal structure in India?

TOPIC:
General Studies 1

- *Role of women and women's organization, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues*
- *Effects of globalization on Indian society, Social empowerment*

General Studies 2

- **Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health**
- *Development processes and the development industry the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders*

Medical termination of Pregnancy Act

Introduction

Health being a major issue of concern in India has areas like abortion and medical termination where lack of clarity and societal discourses that has resulted in many divergences. Especially abortions being a sensitive issue, pro-choice versus pro-life remain at the centre of an often acrimonious ethical, legal, theological and political debate across the world.

Issue:

- Pro-choice: are proponents who support choice of child bearer and hence support the cause of abortion at will.
- Pro-life: are proponents who support life in consideration i.e. the foetus which is considered life from the women's womb itself.

In India, pro-life versus pro-choice debates are confined primarily to academia, as the abortion narrative has been determined by the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act.

Pro-Choice:

- This pro-choice endowment was a need based public health strategy aimed at the alarming increase in the population growth before the 1970s.
- It was also targeted towards preventing maternal deaths from illegal abortions, carried out by back-alley abortionists. India was the first country to launch a **family planning programme** in **1952**.
    - The idea of this programme was to promote the use of contraceptives to delay or space out a pregnancy.
    - Whatever the family planning programme has tried over the years through different marketing strategies has only made a small dent.
    - Sterilisation remains the permanent method of contraception, after she or the family has decided on the desired number of children.
- Unfortunately, legalised abortion has become a convenient standby, as a woman can cite contraceptive failure to abort an unwanted pregnancy.
- Beyond the actual cases of true contraceptive failure, the easy access to abortion services has perhaps promoted a certain amount of irresponsibility, with women's rights often over-riding discussions on the rights of the unborn child.

Misuse of Pro-choice:
The next saga in India's abortion narrative was the mis-utilisation of the pro-choice endowment provided by the MTP Act.
- Son-preference saw voiceless women being coerced to determine the sex of the baby. The upsurge of selective abortion of female foetuses was accompanied by an explosion of imaging technology.
- Indian towns without life-saving healthcare services invariably have at least one ultrasound clinic.
- The profusion of ultrasound clinics and sex-selective abortion hastened the decline of the sex-ratio. So alarming was the decline that the **Pre**-*Conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PCPNDT)* had to be legislated.

Pre-Conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PCPNDT)
The PCPNDT denunciated the use of ultrasound scans, and placed regulations that often superseded the medical utility of ultrasound during pregnancy.
- For millions of women, the ultrasound revolution contributed to providing her one of the treasured moments during her pregnancy.
- It provided an opportunity to see her growing baby. Nowhere were guidelines prepared for pre-test counselling, to prepare her for an adverse report when the ultrasound detected an abnormality in the baby.

Public Health Strategy:

In the evolution of the down-to-earth public health strategy on abortion in India, the rights of the unborn child emerge in the ethically disturbing and medically unresolved issue that a pregnancy cannot be terminated after 20 weeks.

- The 20-week line is drawn on the understanding that there is a possibility of the foetus to survive and be viable outside the womb after this period.
    - The line is from Western data, and might be absolutely irrelevant to a woman in a remote area in India.
    - But this line places women in trouble, as it is not widely publicised. Few women and families are aware that a pregnancy cannot be terminated after this period, unless it is likely to threaten the life of the mother.
    - As a significant number of Indian women register late for ante-natal care, there is no option to terminate a pregnancy if something wrong is detected. In the same way, several birth defects are detected after 20 weeks.
- Women are left unprepared for the consequences, frequently carrying a pregnancy to term, with the distressing knowledge that something could be wrong with the baby.

Remedials:
- The benefits of the MTP Act to women in India are precious, but they have to be backed up with an appropriate socio-cultural and regulatory environment.
- There is a need for aggressive education on planned parenthood, and on the risk that women undergo when they use abortion as a means of contraception.
- Sonologists have to get together to ensure that counselling is provided to a mother before she undergoes a scan.

Conclusion:
In the debate between choice and life it is important to emerge at a middle ground. Underlying all these initiatives has to be the primary message, that each pregnancy is a potential human being. Even as the provisions of the MTP Act have to be treasured by Indian women, it has to be used with responsibility and respect towards the unborn life.

Connecting the dots
- MTP act has been a prominent legislation w.r.t. women rights. But it has been plagued by its misuse. Critically analyse the need for a revision in the contemporary context.

ENVIRONMENT

Degradation of lakes and the ecosystem imbalances

Introduction
Increasing urbanisation and the resultant encroachment of lakes, wetlands are a big concern. The ecological imbalance that results of the same is unimaginable and irreversible.

Issue:
The sight of a lake (in Bengaluru) on fire, with a massive of smoke that could be seen from afar, is a warning sign that urban environments are crashing under the weight of official indifference.
- If wetlands are the kidneys of the cities, as scientists like to describe them, Karnataka's capital city has entered a phase of chronic failure.
- No longer the city of lakes and famed gardens, it has lost an estimated 79% of water bodies and 80% of its tree cover from the baseline year of 1973.
- Successive governments in the State have ignored the rampant encroachment of lake beds and catchment areas for commercial exploitation, and the pollution caused by sewage, industrial effluents and garbage, which contributed to the blaze on Bellandur lake.
- The neglect is deliberate, since some of the finest urban ecologists in the city have been warning that government inaction is turning Bengaluru into an unliveable mess.

Remedial measures:
It is time the State government took note of the several expert recommendations that have been made, including those of the *Centre for Ecological Sciences* of the **Indian Institute of Science.**
- The priority, clearly, is to end pollution outfalls into the water bodies, which will help revive them to an acceptable state of health.
- Identifying all surviving wetlands and demarcating them using digital and physical mapping will help communities monitor encroachments,
- Removal of land-grabbers

- Restoration of interconnecting channels is crucial to avoid future flooding events.

India perspective:

Loss of natural wetlands is an ongoing catastrophe in India.

- A decade ago, when the **Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History** released a conservation atlas for all States using space applications –
  - It reported the tragic fact that 38% of wetlands had already been lost nationally; and shockingly, in some districts only 12% survived.
- The Centre has since issued rules for conservation and management, and chosen 115 water bodies in 24 States for protection support, but this is obviously too little.
- Moreover, research studies show that the concentration of heavy metals in such sites is leading to bioaccumulation, thus entering the plants and animals that ultimately form part of people's food.
- It should worry not just Bengaluru's residents, for instance, that soil scientists have found higher levels of cadmium in green vegetables grown using water from Bellandur.

Conclusion

More broadly, the collapse of environmental management because of multiple, disjointed agencies achieving little collectively and legal protections remaining unimplemented pose a serious threat to public health.

Every city needs a single lake protection authority. India's worsening air quality is now well documented, and most of its wetlands are severely polluted. Citizens must assert themselves to stop this perilous course.

Connecting the dots

- Urban sprawl and continuous encroachment has had it deleterious effect on the wetlands and hence the ecological balance. Critically analyse need to include ecology as a major component in urban planning. Identify the lacunae.

TOPIC: *General Studies 3*

- *Disaster and disaster management.*
- *Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment*

Chennai Oil spill- Environment loses to bureaucracy

Background:

- On January 28 2017, two cargo ships collided off the Ennore coast in Kamarajar Port causing oil to spill into the sea.

- Though the contents of the ship's cargo- LPG, spirit oil and diesel remained intact, the engine oil leaked out of the damaged ship.
- This Spill has caused pollution along the beach as well as threat to marine life.
- Due to wave action and the southern current, the spill spread some 34 km in the ocean.
- It has been already three weeks post the disaster which has exposed the lacuna in the State's disaster recovery mechanism, lack of transparency and coordination. However, many volunteers helped to clean the beach of oil spill.

The poor response
- After the accident, KPL delayed action and the response was utterly inadequate. There was no information about the spill in the public domain.
- Despite whatever the probe reports say, had response mechanisms swung into action, the oil spill could have been contained.
- On the contrary, Kamarajar Port officials issued a press release stating that "there is no damage to the environment like oil pollution and no casualty or injury to persons."
- This led to loss of precious time in cleaning the oil spill. In addition to it, they did not even reveal the actual quantity of oil spill leading to miscalculations in covering the area to contain the oil spill.
- The authorities should have acted immediately to contain the disaster — not act immediately to contain the damage to their reputations when a disaster happens.

Environmental damage
- The **marine life** along Ennore coast has been disastrously affected.
- **Bunker oil is heavy oil**. With weight and density, it will become like a tar ball, and sink to the sea bottom and settle on the sea bed. This will restrict the oxygen supply to marine life. Once fishes come into contact with the oil, their respiratory system will get affected and they will die.
- In addition to fishes, **Olive Ridley turtles** nest along the coast in Chennai, and also from Ennore to Pulicat are now facing threats. While the biggest dangers turtles face are from trawling nests — the oil spill is likely to cause major problems too.
- Turtles need to come up to the surface to breathe while in the sea. Sometimes, they ingest surface water while taking in air. The present water contains toxic oil which hey will ingest, ultimately leading to their death.
- The surface oil will be carried by currents and it will get deposited on floating seaweed. Young turtles live in the seaweed, which act as a shelter for them. Hatchlings are also known to swallow little particles in the water.
- While some news reports talk of **bioremediation** being carried out by experts, the sludge is reported to have a heavy concentration of nine heavy materials such as zinc, lead and arsenic which are non-biodegradable and cannot be removed by bioremediation.

- These will remain in the ecosystem for the foreseeable future, poisoning marine life all the way up the food chain and causing irreparable damage to humans as well as to the marine ecosystem.
- What is unexpected is that the **oil spill has spread till Mamallapuram**, about 60 km south of Ennore. It is also now reported that the slick has spread to Cuddalore in the south, will soon reach the Pichavaram mangroves and then northwards to affect the Pulicat mangroves.

Picture credit: http://mangrovesocietyofindia.in/tamilnadu.jpg

Livelihood hurt

- Loss in fish catch and polluted fishes has led to loss of livelihood of the fishermen.
- Due to the oil spill, nobody has gone out to fish. Labourers who are dependent on the fish trade, who used to make Rs. 400-500 a day, are hardly making Rs. 50.

- This has created problems for the family to survive. In a response to it, children might be expected to work to meet ends.

NGT Judgement
- In a Landmark NGT judgement — Samir Mehta vs the Union of India — in the aftermath of the sinking of MV Rak off the Mumbai coast, it was observed that "an oil spill has **significant negative impacts on marine ecology, particularly on the aquatic community**.
- **Impact of immediate nature** includes the **mortality of different animal species**, both microscopic and macroscopic invertebrates like molluscs, arthropods, echinoderms, etc. and vertebrates, especially fish.
- **Long-term impact** includes **changes in the community structure** caused mainly by changes in **physiological and biological behaviour** of different species in the community due to **differential impact of the oil spill**."

Administrative responsibility
- The Ministry of Defence **promulgated the National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan in 1996.**
- The Indian Coast Guard has been **demanding, for over 20 years now a State contingency plan from States**. Despite all States being asked to come up with a contingency plan, only a few have complied, as there seems to be no compulsion or obligation to submit a plan.
- Recently, the Tamil Nadu State Coastal Zone Management Authority requested all the Port Trusts to **prepare a Comprehensive Oil Spill Management Plan to detect the oil spill for their areas** since none of the Ports have a Comprehensive Oil Spill Management Plan, which is in consonance with the National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan of the Ministry of Shipping and Surface Transport, Government of India
- In fact, many of the officers involved in the clean-up operation and the whole oil spill privately admitted that this was the **first time they were dealing with such a problem**. While it was a learning exercise for them, it also exposed the lack of preparedness to deal with oil spills.
- Still many questions remain unanswered such as how much oil has actually been spilled into the sea when initial claim was just one to two tonnes, the Coast Guard put the figure at more than 20 tonnes and a report on the investigation to find out who was at fault and what action needs to be taken. This will still take considerable time though.
- There should be **transparency** about disaster-related information, especially details regarding the current status of the spill, or precautions the public needs to take which ought to have been widely disseminated by any responsible administration.

Health hazards
- Many people, who were involved in the clean-up operations, reported skin allergies and minor injuries.

- The skin allergies were due to the oil, while the minor injuries were from volunteers slipping on the oil-coated rocks.
- **Bunker oil is more toxic than crude oil**. It has **heavy hydrocarbons, polycyclic aeromatic hydrocarbons** – these are toxic compounds and could have an adverse impact on health. It is **carcinogenic** also.
- The volunteers have also complained of breathing problems.
- It was more worrying that there was lack of adequate safety equipment provided to those in the clean-up operations.
- Thus, the negligence of owners and authorities led to difficulties faced by humans and animals alike for no fault of theirs.

IASbaba's views

- The oil spill is destroying marine life, livelihoods and causing permanent damage to biodiversity.
- The massive **ramifications of the act has been sidelined** by the state as well as media to focus more on the political developments happening in state. This shows the cruel irony which allowed responsible to escape attention and accountability.
- Instead of authorities announcing that the spill containment work has been almost completed, they **should be truthful** in their work and allow containment and damage control until the damage is contained.
- The public needs to know how much damage has occurred, where and whether the damage continues, the safety precautions to be taken and till when.
- **Transparency in work and sharing of information** honestly is the very least that the public expects from its governments. The guilty must be brought to books and culpable owners/crew should be severely penalised.
- It must ultimately be ensured that the **polluters pay an exemplary price** for their mistake.
- Ordinary citizens have the power to move the government with their concerted and determined effort as seen in Chennai recently and this is the right cause for which citizens have to come together and force accountability and action from the authorities.

Connecting the dots:

- How does oil spill affect the biodiversity? Enumerate certain oil spill incidences of world in past which affected significantly to marine and human life.

ETHICS

Tackling political corruption

Background: While writing a separate order for restoring AIADMK Secretary's conviction and four-year jail term, the SC judge also highlighted the menace of corruption in public life and said it evolves from "moral debasement" of people. The order said that -

- Corruption is an **insatiable vice for self-aggrandisement by the corrupt**.
- They **take unfair advantage of their power and authority**, and those in public office also, in breach of the institutional norms, mostly backed by threatening loyalists.
- Thus, **both the corrupt and the corruptor are indictable** and answerable to the society and the country as a whole.
- The order also underlined that corruption by people's representatives is not only in **breach of the oath of office** but also in defiance of the undertaking to work for society.

Political corruption
- Corruption in high places is a malaise that is easy to diagnose but difficult to cure.
- Even when the corrupt are accused before a court, top politicians often pay their way through legal battles, and spend little or no time in detention.
- The conviction of AIADMK Secretary is a significant marker in India's legal and political history and there no denying that the judgment has strengthened confidence in the justice delivery system.

Yet, political corruption still has stronghold in India. The major cause of concern is weakening of political body and law governing the land. People in high office are not innately corrupt but they become so because the system gives them
1) An elevated sense of their worth
2) Opportunity

Despite the pride in regular elections being conducted, the biggest source of corruption are also the elections. The proceeds of corruption finds its way into funding election campaigns.

Even the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution, 2001 noted that "electoral compulsions for funds become the foundation of the whole superstructure of corruption".

Budget and need for transparency

Union FM announced four steps to increase transparency in the funding

1. A ceiling of Rs. 2,000 on the amount of cash donation that a political party can receive from one person.
2. Political parties are entitled to receive donations by cheque or digital mode from their donors.
3. A new scheme of electoral bonds.
4. Every political party will have to file income tax returns within the prescribed time limit in order to enjoy tax exemption.

These steps are expected to bring transparency and accountability in political funding while preventing future generation of black money as per government.

Political funding

- Union FM stated about government's intention to tackle opacity in collection of funds by political parties while presenting the budget.
- There is a **proposal to bring down anonymous or unnamed cash donations** by individuals to political parties **from the current Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 2,000**.
- In doing so, the finance ministry **accepted the recommendation of the Election Commission**, which had proposed prohibiting "anonymous contributions above or equal to the amount of Rs. 2,000".
- Though there is **no constitutional or statutory prohibition** on receipt of anonymous donations by political parties, **yet under Section 29C of the RPA 1951**, political parties have to declare all donations above Rs. 2,000.
- Once necessary laws are made, all political parties will have to mandatorily maintain names and address of donors who contribute amounts above Rs. 2,000.
- However, EC's recommendation that no party should be allowed to receive more than Rs. 20 crore or 20% of its overall donations from anonymous sources has yet not been heeded.
- True transparency in political funding will only be visible when there are no anonymous donations.

Electoral bonds

- The budget has also proposed an electoral bonds scheme, under which **donations would be allowed to be made to political parties by purchasing electoral bonds** from authorized banks.

- For it, the government would frame a scheme and an amendment would also be made to RBI Act.
- **Each electoral bond, not elector, will require a serial number** which will have to be entered into bank registers along with the names of the donors.
- If **such a register does not exist, unscrupulous political parties could print bogus electoral bonds** akin to the fake stamp paper racket and fake security bonds.
- It is also a good option to opt for state-funding of election expenses, however, paucity of funds with state is a major limitation for this option.

Conclusion

Corruption is a result of failure of balance of power. Power in the system has been now so extremely concentrated that governments have become unresponsive and corrupt.

Today, the politics has become so divisive and toxic that everything becomes "suspect". It is well known that almost all business houses seek a favour from the government of the day. Hence, the anonymity induces moral timidity and financial trickery.

Thus, more teeth should be given to the anti-corruption bodies such as Lokpal and Vigilance Commission, more fast-track courts should be opened for timely and effective justice.

Transparency in public life is a much-desired goal. For it, new norms of a level playing field will need to be institutionalized. For a stable, just and ideal social order as envisaged by our forefathers, every citizen has to be a partner in the process.

Connecting the dots:

- What is the meaning of political corruption? How is it generated? What are the consequences of such corruption and how to mitigate and finally eradicate it? Explain in detail.