

MARCH 2018

# IASBABA'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE



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## 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](http://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 **34<sup>th</sup> edition** of IASbaba's Monthly Magazine. This edition covers all important issues that were in news in the month of **March 2018** which can be accessed from <https://iasbaba.com/current-affairs-for-ias-upsc-exams-2016-2017/>

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

**Also, we have introduced Prelim and mains focused snippets from November 2017 which shall guide you for better revision.**

**'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- <https://iasbaba.com/current-affairs-for-ias-upsc-exams-2016-2017/>

***"Today is the beginning of whatever you want"***

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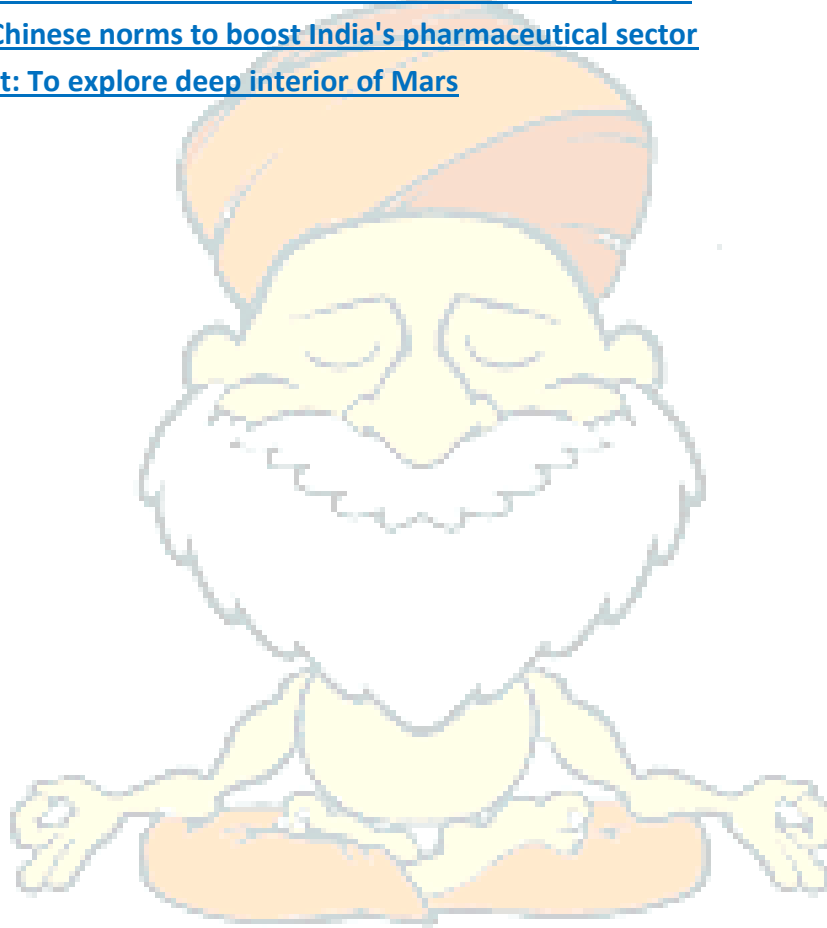
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## NATIONAL

### TOPIC

#### General Studies 2:

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

#### General Studies 3:

- *Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment*

### Reducing carbon footprint in India through Emission trading scheme

#### Background:

With hot summers, warm winters, increasing diseases, famines and droughts, and violent acts of nature, we can see how climate change is affecting our daily lives. To join other nations in the war on carbon, India needs to undertake a comprehensive approach, which can be done by establishing an emissions trading scheme (ETS).

#### Emission trading scheme:

An ETS is a market-based mechanism where a cap is set on the amount of carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases that can be emitted by covered entities.

The emitters can either *reduce their emissions* to adhere to the cap or *buy additional allowances* from other entities to compensate for their deficiency.

One allowance gives the right to the holder to emit one tonne of carbon. Imagine that 'X' emits 120 tonnes of carbon per annum. The ETS sets a cap of 100 tonnes of carbon per annum (equivalent to 100 allowances) on it. 'X' would have the option to either reduce its emissions to 100 tonnes of carbon or buy 20 allowances to cover the difference.

#### Regulator to implement the ETS:

A separate and independent regulatory authority must be set up to implement the ETS.

- The authority would ensure that the ETS is insulated from the political influence of climate sceptics.
- The authority must strive to educate emitters about ETS and inform them of cheap methods to reduce their carbon footprint.
- It must act as a 'technical consultant' when the emitters submit their 'compliance plans'.



- It must also plan for contingencies and be ready to use the tools at hand to prevent market failure.

#### **Inclusion or exclusion of industries under the ETS:**

- Highly carbon-intensive industries (such as the coal sector) would have to be included under the ETS to maintain its effectiveness.
- With respect to the other industries, State governments must be empowered to add to the list of covered entities after giving due weight to factors such as area-specific emission profiles, financial position of the entities, impact on the economy, and administrative costs. For instance, in Delhi, the commercial sector emits 30% of the city's total carbon emissions, and in Ahmedabad the sector accounts for a mere 4% of total emissions. It would be reasonable to cover the commercial sector in Delhi under the ETS due to its large contribution to emissions.

It would not make sense to cover the same sector in Ahmedabad, as the authority would have to bear unreasonable administrative costs to administer the ETS.

#### **Ensuring compliance:**

The ETS must obligate the emitters to design a 'compliance plan', setting out its own medium and long-term goals, with an explanation of how it would achieve them. The big emitters must be required to adhere to their compliance plans, and sanctions must be imposed in case of any non-compliance.

It is imperative to maintain the price of the allowances within a certain desirable range. If the price of the allowances is too high, it may result in increased non-compliance and force the emitters to reduce output, thereby hurting the economy.

#### **Controlling price volatility:**

There are three suggested measures for controlling price volatility: safety valve trigger, price-based market stability reserve (MSR), and banking.

#### **A 'safety valve trigger' mechanism:**

If prices touch a predetermined level, actions are initiated to drive them down. For instance, under the U.S. Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, if the price of the allowances touches \$10 after 14 months from the beginning of the programme, the compliance period is extended by one year. This mechanism allows the emitters to average out their emissions. For instance, say emitter 'X' (with a cap of 100 tonnes of carbon per annum) emitted 110 tonnes of carbon in the first year (due to sudden increase in the demand in the economy) and 90 tonnes of carbon in the second year. If the safety valve is triggered in the first year, X's



average annual emissions would be 100 tonnes, and X would not be required to buy any additional allowances.

### **Price-based market stability reserve (MSR):**

In the MSR, a certain number of allowances are released in the market if the price of the allowance hits a predetermined level.

Once the additional allowances are released in the carbon market, the supply would increase, leading to a reduction in the price of the allowances.

### **Banking:**

It offers respite to the emitters on an individual basis.

An emitter, in anticipation of high prices, would be allowed to 'bank' his unused allowances for the next compliance period.

However, such banking must be restricted to consecutive compliance periods and to a certain percentage of total emissions.

### **Conclusion:**

India can be part of the global mission to curb climate change through the above-mentioned Emission trading scheme. The government should explore this option.

### **Connecting the dots:**

What do you mean by Emission Trading Scheme(ETS)? Does India need one? Discuss.

### **TOPIC**

#### ***General Studies 3:***

- *Economic Development – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment;*

#### ***General Studies 2:***

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

### **National Finance Regulatory Authority(NFRA)**

#### **Background:**

Almost all major economies today have independent audit regulators, with the most prominent ones being set up between 2000 and 2005.

To share knowledge and experiences, the International Forum of Independent Audit Regulators (IFIAR) was set up in 2006. Today, IFIAR has 52 independent audit regulators worldwide. These facts indicate the significance, need and acceptability of independent audit regulators.

### Indian scenario:

In India, discussions on setting up an independent oversight body had commenced almost a decade ago, however it is only now that it is finally close to being implemented. The inclusion of an independent audit regulator, National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA), in the Companies Act, 2013 despite all the opposition, was in itself a significant step at the time. But it has stayed in limbo.

### Conflict with ICAI:

The arguments against setting up an independent regulatory body have always primarily centred around the fact that the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has sufficient safeguards to ensure that the process does not result in self-regulation, particularly with the lack of awareness regarding the extent of responsibilities of an auditor among non-auditors.

### Objective of NFRA:

- The overarching objective is to enhance audit quality which, in turn, will enhance investor protection and public interest.
- NFRA's extensive powers includes its ability to investigate, impose penalty and banning operations of auditors and audit firms.
- While we have witnessed penalisation of auditors (life time debarring) as well as audit firms (ban from undertaking specific work), we are yet to see any regulator in India prescribing *remedial measures*. NFRA will be addressing this shortcoming.

### Way ahead:

For the success of NFRA, we need to ensure the following:

- The body remains operationally independent.
- Its decisions are subject to scrutiny and are transparent.
- Members maintain highest level of independence and prohibiting conflicts of interest.
- Clarity in the inter-se relationships with the professional bodies, clear distinction in the respective roles and responsibilities
- The Government and those involved in the process of defining the role of NFRA need to provide enough and equal attention to the other objectives, such as setting standards, monitoring compliance and, most importantly, suggesting measures for improvement in quality of audits.

**Conclusion:**

Operationalisation of NFRA is a step in the right direction and will help in reinstating the confidence of stakeholders and regulators. Most independent audit regulators have been set up on the back of audit failures, inadequate reporting and recognising the inherent weaknesses in self-regulation. What works to our advantage is that there is enough experience and knowledge across countries in setting up such a body. Their best practices can be used by NFRA. This will be instrumental in ensuring a robust, world-class oversight mechanism.

**Connecting the dots:**

- The government has recently decided to operationalize the National Financial Regulatory Authority(NFRA). What would be the functions of this organisation and why is it needed? Discuss.

**Reference article:** National Financial Regulatory Authority(NFRA)  
<https://iasbaba.com/2018/03/iasbabas-daily-current-affairs-prelims-mains-focus-2nd-march-2018/>

**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

**India needs a law against genetic discrimination****Background:**

The Delhi High Court recently ruled against discrimination in health insurance by United India Insurance Company involving a person with a heart condition which was perceived to be a genetic disorder.

This is a critical court decision around the *broader question of discrimination on the basis of one's genetic predisposition.*

As technology for genetic testing and tools to gather family history and compile them in databases become cheaper and more widespread, it becomes imperative that due social and ethical consideration be given to genetic discrimination as the implications are far-reaching and can affect everyone.

#### **American precedent:**

- In the U.S., researchers recorded hundreds of cases of misuse of genetic information obtained through family history, genetic tests, or by employers and insurers accessing personal data. There are many examples of employers and insurers using genetic information to engage in discriminatory policies.
- In the U.S., the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) was signed into law in 2008. GINA provides *strong protection against access to genetic information and genetic discrimination in the context of health insurance and employment.* It prohibits insurers from “requesting or requiring” genetic tests from an individual or members of the person’s family, or using genetic information to determine eligibility or establish premiums. It also prohibits employers from “requesting or requiring” genetic information for hiring or promotional decisions, or when determining eligibility for training programmes.

#### **Other global examples:**

- Canada’s recent Genetic Non-Discrimination Act makes it illegal for insurers or employers to request DNA testing or results.
- Insurers in the U.K. are currently under a voluntary moratorium agreed upon between the Association of British Insurers and the government until 2019. Based on this agreement, results from genetic tests are not to be used for health or life insurance except for Huntington’s disease, which is dominantly inherited with a high penetrance.

#### **A complex future:**

The situation is likely to get worse as people become more accepting of predictive genetic tests and insurance companies insist on them; at the moment, they generally use family medical history as the basis for determining premiums.

In the medium term, there are also serious concerns related to the protection and privacy of medical and genetic data. Breaking into databanks is not impossible as even America’s Federal Bureau of Investigations and other secure firewalls have been breached.

**Indian context:**

India too needs a law that prevents genetic discrimination.

In this era of rampant genetic testing, we need to prevent discrimination and uphold “equal treatment under the law”. Equality under the law cannot have exceptions.

**Conclusion:**

Everyone has genes for some predisposition or the other, this being the human condition. There should therefore be no discrimination based on genetic information.

**Connecting the dots:**

- India needs a law against genetic discrimination. Discuss.

**TOPIC*****General Studies 1:***

- *Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism.*

***General Studies 2:***

- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*
- *Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.*

**Section 24, LARR Act: Controversies****Background:**

The government acquired land from private parties have long been the subject of heated dispute, often resulting in violent conflict.

A constitution bench of five judges has been set up to look into land acquisition law.

**The Land Acquisition Act of 1894:**

The colonial law had codified powers of eminent domain in strikingly draconian fashion. Landowners were placed at the state’s mercy.

Government was accorded vast discretion to expropriate land for supposed public use. Requirements of due process were scant.

### **The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (LARR Act):**

- The number of safeguards that the law legislates has made the process of acquisition manifestly fairer.  
For instance, it compels a social and environmental impact assessment as a precondition for any acquisition.
- Besides, it also acknowledges a need for a system of rehabilitation and resettlement for those whose livelihoods are likely to be affected by the transfer of land.
- The law provided for greatly enhanced compensation, consent of those whose land was sought to be acquired, and detailed rehabilitation and resettlement provisions (including employment, land for land, and other beneficial schemes). In other words, it changed the relationship between the state and the individual by empowering the latter against the former.
- It also included a retrospective clause. Section 24 of the new Act provided that under certain circumstances, acquired land could be returned to affected families.

At least partly, these protections intend to alter the traditional relationship between the state and the citizen.

#### **Compensation is the key: Section 24 of the LARR Act**

This clause concerns acquisitions made under the 1894 law, where compensation payable to a landowner from whom land had been taken prior to the year 2009 has already been determined.

In such cases, the new law stipulates, the state ought to have not only taken possession of the land but also paid the amounts determined as due, failing which the entire proceedings will lapse. This means that even where the state has put the land acquired to some use, its failure to pay the holder compensation would render the entire proceeding nugatory.

The state argued that each of the landowners from whom land was acquired had specifically been told about the quantum of money that they were entitled to receive. Since they neither disputed the amount fixed nor came forward to receive the money, the government claimed it deposited cash payable by it into its own treasury. According to it, this action was sufficient to negate the operation of Section 24.

#### **Indore Development Authority v. Shailendra, 2018:**

Ruled that in cases where a landowner refuses compensation, a payment into the government's treasury was sufficient, and that there was no attendant obligation on the state to deposit this money into court.

The Supreme Court decision in the Indore case does two things:

- One, it relaxes the existing definition of compensation paid from the active requirement of offering the compensation and depositing the same in court. Now, an offer followed by deposit in the government's own treasury is sufficient to qualify as compensation paid.
- Two, on the subject of physical possession, it lays down that the period where the government is prevented from taking possession of the land due to the operation of a stay order or injunction shall not be counted towards the stipulated five-year requirement.

Given that it is at variance with other Benches on the issue, this has now led to the constitution of a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court to decide whether the Section has to be interpreted expansively or in a narrow sense.

#### **Way ahead:**

A test had to be laid down to determine in which cases land could be returned to the original owners. The Supreme Court of India need to protect the individuals and make legislative safeguards stronger.

#### **Connecting the dots:**

- Discuss the issues pertaining to Section 24 of the land acquisition act.

### **TOPIC**

#### ***General studies 2:***

- ***Structure, organization and functioning of the Judiciary***

#### **Making the Supreme Courts' roster public**

#### **Introduction:**

The Supreme Court's "roster", the allocation of case categories to different judges of the SC, is to be made public.

This is a welcome step as it will promote greater transparency.

#### **Background:**

The ongoing crisis in the higher judiciary came to light when four senior-most judges of the SC held an unprecedented press conference indicating their loss of faith in Chief Justice of India (CJI).

The issue relates precisely to the manner of allocation of cases.



The manner in which sensitive cases were being allocated by the CJI to certain judges suggested that it was totally arbitrary and designed to ensure a certain outcome, in some cases favouring the Union government.

### **In the states:**

At least four large high courts — those of Allahabad, Bombay, Delhi and Karnataka — also make their rosters available on their websites.

A litigant in any of these courts, or a lawyer practising here, has already known for a while how cases are being allocated to various judges on the basis of subject matter. This level of transparency is only necessary.

### **Not enough:**

Making roster public is by no means necessary or sufficient to address the ongoing crisis of credibility in the Supreme Court of India.

- The crux of the issue lies in the absence of any norms or transparency in the manner in which the CJI exercised his discretionary power — to go beyond the roster and allocate specific cases to specific benches.

This continues to be a bone of contention and won't be resolved unless clear and specific norms are laid down guiding the CJI's exercise of discretion.

- The SC's roster allocation is far less detailed when compared to those of the four high courts mentioned above.

In the Delhi High Court, cases are divided between benches on the basis of not just subject matter but also by date.

In the Allahabad High Court, writ petitions are divided among the benches based on which local law they are concerned with.

The SC's roster on the other hand is just a list of case categories allocated to certain judges. No inter se classification or division has been made between the benches.

- The fact that the CJI's court will be the only one to hear Public Interest Litigations is also problematic.

PILs constitute a very small number of the total cases in the SC. But PILs are more likely than most other case types to raise important issues, and spark confrontation between the judiciary and executive.

Having only the CJI hear PILs in the present context, where questions over his integrity and independence have been raised, is problematic.

### **Way forward: Fine-tuning roster**

- A fine-tuned roster will *prevent two different benches from hearing the same kind of case and taking divergent views at the same time.*

This happens far more often than it should forcing the SC to set up larger benches to resolve the conflicting interpretations.

As seen a few years ago when different benches of the SC took different approaches to interpreting the Karnataka and the Gujarat Lokayukta laws as regards appointment of Lokayuktas within two weeks of each other.

- It will allow for *effective case management within the SC*.

Though judges in India are not specialists in any specific areas of the law, they will be in a better position to dispose of cases the more they handle the same kind of case. This can be concluded by the SC's own experience with a dedicated tax bench constituted for about one year.

- In putting in place the procedures and norms for the preparation of the roster, the SC has to ensure that the task is not left to each individual CJI but carried on through an internal mechanism that has some level of continuity and consistency.

#### Connecting the dots:

- Recent decision to make the Supreme Court's "roster", the allocation of case categories to different judges of the SC, public is a welcome step as it will promote greater transparency. Discuss.

#### TOPIC

##### *General Studies 1:*

- *Social empowerment*

##### *General Studies 2:*

- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*
- *Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes*

#### Making Indian women financially independent

##### **Introduction:**

"Our dream of New India is an India where women are empowered, strengthened, where they become equal partners in the all-round development of the country." Prime Minister Narendra Modi said this recently in his Mann Ki Baat.

This represents the aspirations of millions of women in India; women who are *not being restricted to participation in India's development trajectory but are also leading it.*

### **Making women financially independent:**

Socio-economic transformation is possible when a woman is financially independent and is empowered to make free choices.

### **Recent initiatives:**

- Since the launch of the **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana** (PMMY) in 2015, loans worth Rs 2.1 lakh crore have been sanctioned to women entrepreneurs. With *76 per cent of the beneficiaries being women*, Mudra is an emancipator for women who are breaking shackles, establishing enterprises.
- With a focus on the empowerment of women and SC/STs through access to formal capital, the **Stand-Up India scheme** was launched in April 2016. It provides loans ranging from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 1 crore. Of the 38,477 loans extended under the scheme, *81 per cent are to women*.
- Under **Ajeevika**, loans are given to self help groups to help them avail of livelihood opportunities. Loans to SHGs of women increased to about Rs 42,500 crore in 2016-17, 37 per cent more than the previous year.
- Without financial inclusion, financial independence is unachievable. **Jan Dhan**, with more than 16 crore women beneficiaries, has given an unprecedented boost to financial inclusion. Notably, the percentage of zero balance accounts has fallen to 20 per cent of the total accounts opened. This means more women are making use of their accounts.
- Out of 1.04 crore people who benefitted from the **Skill India programme** within the first year of its launch, 40 per cent were women. For women who have never received vocational training, Skill India has been an entry point into the job market and prosperity.
- To incentivise employment of women in the formal sector, amendments in the Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 have been proposed in this year's budget.

Women employees' contribution has been reduced to 8 per cent for the first three years of employment against the existing rate of 12 per cent or 10 per cent.

Women through above mentioned initiatives are not just becoming financially independent, but also job creators who employ more women in their communities. Entrepreneurship and financial independence provides multiple windows of opportunity for more women to join the workforce, sometimes without changing their cities or even stepping out of homes.

Conclusion:

"When we empower the women in a family, we empower the entire household. When we help with a woman's education, we ensure that the entire family is educated... When we secure her future, we secure the future of the entire home."- PM Modi.

### **Connecting the dots:**

- Discuss the importance of making women financially independent. Also discuss government's recent initiatives in this regard.

## **TOPIC**

### ***General Studies 2:***

- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*
- *Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.*

### **Curbing child sexual abuse: Will higher penalty work?**

**In**

**news:**

Haryana, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have introduced death penalty for rape of a child below the age of 12 years. Maharashtra and Karnataka too are considering it. These amendments provide a judge with the option of imposing the death penalty, and also increase the mandatory minimum sentence from 10 to 14 years.

### **Present system:**

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) was enacted in 2012 to address the growing sexual violence against children and the inability of the Indian Penal Code to deal with this concern.

### **The Act provides:**

- A graded classification of sexual offences against children, prescribes higher mandatory minimum sentences for such crimes.
- Mandates several processes and safeguards to ensure a child-friendly trial such as the designation of "special courts", child-friendly process of recording victim testimony, provision of compensation, protection of the identity of the child, etc.

- The Act also contains extensive mandates for procedures to be followed by the police, magistrates and medical personnel handling victims of child sexual abuse.

#### **The present system has failed:**

- Crime in India, 2016 revealed that 19,920 children were allegedly victims of child rape in 2016 alone. However, the conviction in 2016 for such crimes stood at an abysmal 28.2 per cent while a majority of cases (89.6 per cent) are still pending for disposal.
- A majority of child sexual abuse goes unreported. A Ministry of Women and Child Development study (2007) surveying 17,220 children from 13 states found that an alarming 53.22 per cent of them had faced some form of sexual abuse amongst which 52.94 per cent constituted boys. Only a fraction of the incidences of sexual abuse against children enter the criminal justice system, amongst which only a minuscule fraction end in a conviction.

Although more than five years have elapsed since the Act came into force, the system is full of failures and shortcomings.

#### **Understanding the reason behind low conviction:**

- A vast majority of victims turning hostile. The complex and sensitive nature of sexual abuse, coupled with the fact that in a large number of cases (94.6 per cent) the rapist is known to offender, result in victims turning hostile. The likelihood of the victim turning hostile is extremely high in cases of abuse within the family due to the pressure to “settle” or compromise the matter, lack of support systems, and other socio-economic factors which hinder the victims from effectively and confidently testifying against the accused.
- Where children do testify against the accused, several systemic gaps such as lapses in investigation, lack of child-friendly procedures, challenges related to age-determination, poor appreciation of the testimony of the child adversely affect the conviction rate.

#### **Why will higher penalties (capital punishment in this case) won't help?**

Higher penalties will only lead to aggravating the concern, particularly with regard to cases of incest. Without effective implementation of the law, a penalty — no matter how severe — will not work in reducing crime. The mandatory minimum sentences for sexual offences was already increased by the POCSO Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013 specifically to address growing sexual crimes. These penalties are rendered meaningless in the face of thousands of crimes that go acquitted, or worse, undetected.

**Conclusion:**

The low rates of conviction do not even have the effect of creating a fear of accountability in the first place. Instead of pursuing drastic remedies, we need to urgently devise ways to bolster the existing criminal justice and child protection systems and ensure higher convictions, higher reporting of offences, put in place preventive strategies, and address a large number of systemic and operational gaps.

**Connecting the dots:**

- Incidences of sexual assault against young children is on increase. The response to it must be thoughtfully planned based on what works. Analyze.

**TOPIC*****General Studies 1:***

- *Social empowerment*
- *Role of women and women's organization, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues.*

**Gender gap as biggest challenge to our demography****Introduction:**

India's demographic dividend, being a nation of young people, puts us at a great economic advantage over other ageing countries. There exist challenges in reaping the benefits of this dividend. India's woeful gender gap in the workplace makes us much poorer as a nation, economically and socially.

**Gender gap:**

About 48.5 per cent of Indians are women, that's nearly half of our population.

- The World Bank says that the share of Indian women above the age of 15 employed in our workforce is only 25 per cent. It was 34 per cent in 1991 and has been sliding steadily since. In China, the number is 60 per cent.
- According to the ILO, India ranks 121 out of 131 countries in Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP), one of the worst in the world.

Any talk of a demographic dividend is meaningless when one half of the population is just not participating in the economy.

**The reasons are many:**

- India is a deeply feudal, parochial and sexist society. Deep down, most Indians subscribe to the stereotype that a man's place is in the workplace, the woman's at home. For many Indian men, it is a matter of shame to see women in their families go out to work.
- There also exists a fear that financially independent women could challenge the men's assumed superiority and dominance in the household.
- Women too have internalised this thought. More girls may be going to school, yet this ethos is so ingrained that education may be a necessary but not sufficient condition for taking up employment.
- Even in urban and educated households, it is documented that women's participation in the workspace actually goes down with improvement in family incomes. As families earn more, they feel it is no longer necessary for the woman to work, the man's income is enough.

The above mentioned sub-optimal employment trends underscore the unequal status Indian women are accorded in households, particularly in rural and semi-urban India.

**Challenges:**

- The National Family and Health Survey reveals that more than half of Indian women do not even enjoy free mobility; they are not allowed to move out of their house unaccompanied by a male member.
- Even for women who are allowed to work, travelling to the workplace is a challenge. In many parts of India, there is either no public transport or the quality of it is so forbidding to women that going to work is not a feasible option.
- As agricultural prospects fade further, a large part of rural India keeps migrating to urban centres in search of work. This again puts women at a disadvantage; most often it is men who travel out with women left behind to tend to children and the elderly.
- Women with children face tremendous discouragement within their family setups to go out to work, further the absence of any childcare support infrastructure renders it impossible for mothers to continue full-time work.
- Safety in the workspace is another huge issue.

**Our neighbors are doing better:**

Our neighbours, other than Pakistan, seem to be doing much better on this front. The FLFP for Bangladesh is 57 per cent and Sri Lanka 35 per cent.



Reason-

Other than social factors, one reason could be the assimilation of women into the vibrant exporting sectors of these countries. The textile industry, in both these countries, employs millions of women.

### **Lesser opportunities for women:**

India has a strong IT sector, which employs many educated women but lacks a large enough manufacturing export sector which can employ less skilled women, who are much larger in number.

This may be the most significant economic reason for India's woeful female labour participation.

In the West, much of the recent discourse has revolved around a gender pay gap — women getting paid far less than men for similar job profiles. In our country, while pay gaps do exist, the real challenge is to get more women gainfully employed.

### **Conclusion:**

Decades of conditioning is not easy to undo, particularly in a society as conservative and regressive as ours. Such a low female labour participation comes at a huge cost, even to our GDP.

The social consequences of a larger assimilation of women into our workspace is immense. We need women, not just in our boardrooms but on our shop floors, in our factories and on our workstations.

***India needs its own MeToo moment, of a different kind.***

### **Connecting the dots:**

- Women in India faces the dual challenge of lack of jobs as well as of suitable jobs. This is not only hurting our economy but society too. Discuss.

## **TOPIC**

### ***General Studies 3:***

- ***Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.***
- ***Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc***

### **Transforming Indian Railways**

**Background:**

Indian Railways is at a crossroads.

Aided by the government's renewed thrust on Indian Railways's transformation, it can become a strong, profitable, reliable and publicly trusted organization. In the process, it can play a big role in serving India's fast-growing transportation needs.

On the other hand, if coherent measures towards efficiency upgradation are not formulated and executed on an urgent basis, then it risks becoming a burden on the economy.

**Concerns:****Intense competition:**

- Indian Railways has been fighting intense competition and losing. The organization that carried 89% of India's freight traffic in financial year (FY) 1951 was left with only a 32% share in FY12.
- Indian Railways is becoming second-best versus the airline industry, that has been growing in the last four years, as well as against the fast-improving road network.

**Deterioration in operational and financial metrics:**

In the last 10 years, Indian Railways has witnessed perceptible deterioration in operational and financial metrics.

This has been caused largely by a combination-

- Distorted top line growth.
- A huge jump in wage costs.
- Years of underinvestment.
- Profit margin is targeted at a paltry 3% , in FY18, reflecting Indian Railways's vastly reduced fund-generation capability into focus.

**Cross-subsidization:**

- Indian Railways's gross receipts (revenue) in the last 20 years have been artificially aided by an aggressive escalation in freight rates even though service standards remain patchy.

Its upper-class passenger fares too have witnessed regular inflation while airlines have dropped their fares substantially in the last three-four years. For example, air-conditioned, 3-tier fares have risen at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5% in the last five years—to about Rs2,500 for a Mumbai-Delhi trip, which is not too different from the airfare.

On the other hand, lower-class passenger fares have been static.

This system of cross-subsidization has been a key reason for the loss of market share.

#### Poor economics:

- During FY03-FY18, India's per-capita gross domestic product (GDP) on a purchasing-power-parity basis has grown by 200%, but the per-km passenger ticket price for second-class express trains has risen by just 20%.
- Indian Railways bears sizeable losses (of about Rs34,000 crore in FY17) on account of social service obligations, mainly on lower-class passenger fare discount

#### Under-capacity:

The total running rail track—the key capacity bottleneck—has grown at a disappointing 0.9% CAGR since FY01. This is despite the fact that more than 40% of Indian Railways's sections suffer from capacity utilization of more than 100%, as a result of which too many trains run on the same stretch of lines. Congestion causes train delays and leads to overcrowding in lower-class categories. This curbs the speed—to a sluggish 50 kmph and 30 kmph for passenger and freight trains, respectively—diluting Indian Railways's competitiveness further.

#### Way ahead:

- A railway regulator, if put in place, can lead the way in drawing up and implementing a fare-rationalization road map.
- Improvement in facilities, higher frequency and punctuality of trains, ease of travel and transportation, and enhanced safety are essential for Indian Railways to get back volumes.
- Wages that constituted 35% of gross receipts in FY08 have swelled to 62% in Indian Railways's revised budget for FY18. With such high fixed costs, the only way to improve financial sustainability is to augment capacities without inflating the manpower base, thus tapping the operating leverage to the maximum.
- To broaden capacities, an aggressive plan to double, triple or quadruple rail lines must be drawn up and carried out.
- The roll-out of **dedicated freight corridors (DFC)** can go a long way in easing traffic congestion, improving speeds, and reducing accidents by segregating freight and passenger trains.

By providing customized and efficient logistics services with faster and predictable transit times at low costs, DFCs can help Indian Railways in regaining lost market share. In addition, as freight traffic shifts to these freight-only lines, passenger trains too can see service quality improvement.

Thus, work on the two corridors, Dadri-Nhava Sheva and Dankuni-Ludhiana, must be expedited.

Also, work on the four other DFC projects should be commenced soon.

- Indian Railways seems to be progressing well on its multi-pronged medium-term overhaul plan with a capital investment target of Rs850,000 crore over the next five years. However, this may not be enough for its metamorphosis, especially for capacity augmentation, given decades of underinvestment.

### **Conclusion:**

A more potent plan to bolster revenue and efficiencies will need to be chalked out. This can be done with active private-sector participation on funding. Above suggested measures need to be and implemented aggressively.

### **Connecting the dots:**

- Indian Railway's transformation can become a strong, profitable, reliable and publicly trusted organization. For this multi-pronged approach has to be adopted to check the constraints. Analyze.

### **TOPIC**

#### ***General Studies 2:***

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

#### ***General Studies 3:***

- *Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment*
- *Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life*
- *Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology*

### **International Solar Alliance: Delhi Summit**

#### **In news:**

India, along with France, hosted the members of the International Solar Alliance (ISA), marking an important milestone in its efforts to take the alliance, which was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's brainchild, and supported ably by France, forward. The Alliance, which was inaugurated a few days after the 2015 United Nations Climate Change

Conference in Paris, became a treaty-based inter-governmental international organisation on 6 December 2017, with 61 countries signing the ISA agreement (and 32 of them ratified it so far). The Delhi Summit was co-hosted by India and France and was attended by 23 heads of states and governments from other ISA signatory countries.

### **The key idea of the ISA:**

Is to “harmonize and aggregate demand for solar finance, solar technologies, innovation, research and development, and capacity building”.

The ISA aims to mobilise \$1 trillion low-cost financing for massive deployment of solar energy by 2030 and bring together 121 countries that lie between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn that receive plenty of sunshine and are mostly developing nations.

### **Objectives of the ISA:**

- Mobilising more than \$1 trillion of investments by 2030 for massive deployment of solar energy.
- Global deployment of over 1,000GW of solar generation capacity.
- Making solar energy available at affordable rates, create solar grids and establish solar credit mechanism.
- Reducing the cost of finance and cost of technology.
- Enhancing energy security and sustainable development.
- Addressing common as well as specific obstacles that lie in the way of rapid and massive scaling up of solar energy in these countries.
- Act as a broader platform for deep diplomatic engagement on crucial developmental issues.

Although the ISA came into being on 6 December 2017, the Delhi summit marked the momentous occasion on which the alliance was given flesh and shape. Since 2016, the ISA has launched five programmes of action — rural and decentralized application; access to affordable finance; mini grids; solar e-mobility; and rooftop installations.

### **Delhi summit:**

- At the Summit inauguration, Prime Minister Modi set out a ten-point action plan for the ISA. This action plan includes framing of regulation and standards, consultancy support for bankable solar projects, concessional and less risky finances, all aimed at increasing the share of electricity produced from solar energy in the overall energy mix.
- PM Modi also announced the creation of a solar technology mission for R&D and 500 training slots for member countries.
- India also extended Line of Credit of up to \$1.4 billion for 27 projects in 15 countries at the summit, while France has committed to investing \$ 860 million by 2022 in solar energy in addition to the over \$ 369 million that it committed in 2015.

- President Macron and PM Modi inaugurated a 75 MW solar power plant in Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh.

### **Opportunities for India:**

The Summit has significant geopolitical implications.

The Permanent Secretariat of ISA will also be located in India at Gurugram, the first time that an inter-governmental treaty-based alliance will have its headquarters in India.

- This will allow India the opportunity to position itself in a key global leadership role in the arena of climate change, RE and sustainable development.
- The Indian leadership also sees its active role within the ISA as a reiteration of India's commitment to fulfilling its global commitment on addressing climate change in a time-bound manner and help boost global confidence in India's capacities.
- The ISA is not only expected to spur innovation in the RE space but also help make India a technological hub with independent manufacturing capabilities of RE equipment like solar panels, rather than being dependent on imports, through initiatives like 'Make in India'.

### **Financing:**

The ISA aims to raise investments of up to \$ 1 trillion by 2030. To facilitate the ISA secretariat and the ISA corpus fund, India has already contributed \$ 62 million.

The ISA has also partnered with international organisations like the European Investment Bank, World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Energy Agency.

The ISA has also invited several financial institutions to form a \$ 300 billion global risk mitigation fund.

### **Challenges:**

- One of the important challenges for the ISA therefore is to attract investments to fund the projects.
- Funding is expected to come from individual countries, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and multilateral development banks, securing adequate financing will continue to remain a challenge.
- \$ 1 trillion worth of investments needed by 2030 for the deployment of solar energy.
- While the cost of solar installations has been decreasing worldwide, it still remains high in many of the ISA countries. Hence, to further the spread of technology related to solar energy, reducing high tariff barriers is essential as such duties are detrimental to cost-effective solar deployment.

### **Cooperation in energy storage technology:**

Energy storage technologies have the potential to change the face of RE.

- Non-fuel minerals like cobalt are essential to energy storage technologies. Sixty per cent of global cobalt reserves are located in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is a signatory to the ISA.
- Chile, another signatory, is part of the 'lithium triangle' of countries that contain approximately 54 per cent of the world's lithium reserves.

Although Chile and Congo have yet to ratify the ISA agreement, cooperation with these mineral rich countries within the ISA can unlock large gains for solar energy.

### **Conclusion:**

There is great optimism that the solar alliance would help in pushing 'power for all' into a more realistic realm.

Furthermore, the ISA could be greatly beneficial in boosting technology transfer and emphasising the need for greater storage technologies. ISA member countries could also cooperate in developing an integrated electronic mobility ecosystem that is fueled by solar energy.

### **Connecting the dots:**

- The International solar alliance presents multiple opportunities for India. Analyze. Also, discuss its key objectives and challenges in its implementation.

## **TOPIC**

### ***General Studies 2:***

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

### ***General Studies 3:***

- *Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment*

## **Implementation of Forest Rights Act, 2006 in letter and spirit**

### **Introduction:**

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 or FRA was a landmark legislation that sought to restore the rights of forest dwellers over land, community forest resources and habitats, and the governance and management of



forests.

Prior to the FRA, 2006, most forest dwellers in the country were denied rights to their traditional forestlands since colonial times. The government had even classified some of them as encroachers on their own land.

### **In news:**

Even 11 years after implementation of FRA, there is much to be desired. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs' latest database of October 2017 reveals that out of 41,89,827 claims for land rights made by forest dwellers, only 18,24,27 have been accepted by the authorities.

### **Issues:**

- The recognition process of rights is poor, which has resulted in the rejection of thousands of legitimate claims made by forest dwellers. In some cases titles have been given over less area than what was legitimately claimed by forest dwellers.
- Of the total forest rights titles issued so far, the majority are of individual forest rights. Only less than 4 per cent titles recognise community forest rights. Though recognition of individual rights is crucial the community forest titles enable all the villagers, including landless people, to access, use and sell minor forest produce and use other forest resources.
- **Conflicting policies:**  
Instead of addressing the implementation problems, governments across the country have introduced conflicting policies that go against the spirit of the FRA. For example- Maharashtra issued a Village Forest Rules notification in May 2014 under the Indian Forest Act, 1927. These rules place the governance of forests in the hands of committees that are constituted and controlled by the forest department. Odisha, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and many other states have forced plantations on recognised individual and community forest areas without communities' consent.
- The Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) Act 2016 was passed to manage the more than Rs 50,000 crore fund to be used for plantation, despite protests from tribal organisations across the country. The CAF Act has been structured in a manner that it provides total control of the massive fund to the forest bureaucracy with virtually no political accountability and consent of the gram sabha for plantation activity in their recognised and potential community forest areas.
- Diversion of forests for industrial and development projects without settling forest dwellers rights and without their free and prior informed consent has been indiscriminately carried out.

**Way ahead:**

- Implementation of the Forest Rights Act, in letter and spirit, will not only help resolve the increasing land conflicts but also help uplift the economic and social status of forest dwellers.
- The government should realise that the Forest Rights Act is not an obstacle to growth. Rather, it can enhance the livelihood of people and promote sustainable forest management through collective action with legal sanction, scientific inputs and social process.

Case study: Pachgaon village in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra. A study reports that, after recognition of their community forest rights, the 65 households in the village have earned Rs 91 lakh between 2013-2017 as wages by harvesting bamboo in their community forest. There is a reverse migration happening in this village. The forest fires have come down drastically due to regular patrolling and monitoring by the villagers.

Like Pachgaon, there are hundreds of villages across the country which have been empowered under the FRA to access their customary rights over forestland. They have proved how the FRA can contribute to their livelihood and sustainable management of forests.

**Conclusion:**

The government should understand the potential of the FRA to address rural distress and not subvert its provisions. The state governments across the country should bring amendments to their forest law, especially laws related to minor forest produce, so that millions of forest dwellers will benefit from their access to forest resources.

**Connecting the dots:**

- Implementation of the Forest Rights Act, in letter and spirit, will not only help resolve the increasing land conflicts but also help uplift the economic and social status of forest dwellers. Analyze.

**TOPIC*****General Studies 2:***

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

- *Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections*

### The Cambridge Analytica scandal: Democracy at stake

#### **What happened?**

Recent media reports that a political consultancy that worked on President Donald Trump's campaign gained inappropriate access to data on 50 million Facebook users. The alleged scandal involving Cambridge Analytica's use of the data of more than 55 million Facebook users has reopened big questions about the organisation of the information order in a democracy. They have also revealed how the language of democracy is struggling to come to terms with complex technological developments.

#### **Who are Cambridge Analytica?**

Cambridge Analytica (CA) is a British data firm. The organisation has been drawing flak for its alleged role in influencing behaviour of voters in the 2016 presidential election campaign, and for helping the 'Leave' side in the Brexit referendum.

#### **What has the organisation done?**

The firm is alleged to have harvested data of tens of millions of Facebook users without permission in order to design a software to predict and influence people's voting preferences.

#### **From where did it collect the data?**

Dr Aleksandr Kogan, a psychology professor at Cambridge University developed an application, thisisyourdigitallife, to harvest data of Facebook users. Although the app was downloaded by 270,000 people (these people granted permission for data collection), it extracted personal information of each of the users' friends without consent. Kogan then passed on all the data collected through his app to CA and other companies.

#### **What kind of data were acquired by CA?**

When the app was downloaded, Kogan had access not only to users' basic information such as city of residence and details about friends, but also data from the profiles of their Facebook friends.

#### **How was the data used by the firm?**

Kogan's firm Global Science Research (GSR) offered users small amounts of money to complete a survey on the condition they grant permission to access their personal details through

Facebook.

This helped GSR to build personality and psychological profiles of millions of people. The data were allegedly used by CA to tailor its political advertisements for a group of individuals, whose likings and interests were already known to them.

### **How did this help Donald Trump in his presidential election campaign?**

CA performed a variety of services including designing target audiences for digital advertisements and fund-raising appeals, modelling voter turnout, buying \$5 million in television ads and determining where Trump should travel to get maximum support.

### **Issues:**

- The first issue at stake is what consent means in the new information order. The conceit, and attraction of the modern information order is that it does things with our consent, in our name, ostensibly to satisfy our desires. But given the complexities of data-sharing, possible third-party uses, or use by friends, through whom your data can be accessed, it is not very clear what we are consenting to, and whether the terms of that consent can be enforced.
- The regulatory approach often hinges on user consent and the growth of social media companies over the past decade is fair evidence that consent is not hard to obtain, even with the knowledge of private data being signed over.
- The fact that such vast amounts of data were so easily collected in the first place—and without breaking the rules —points to the larger issues to do with the economics of the internet.

### **Way ahead:**

Regulatory action can change this to a certain extent.

- Data localization conditions can ensure that user data collected within a country must be kept within it.
- Regulations can also compel businesses to adopt privacy by design principles that foreground user choice and consent. The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which takes effect from 25 May this year, has adopted this approach. Perhaps the most stringent data protection regime globally, it will be a litmus test for companies' ability and willingness to comply.

### **Connecting the dots:**

- What was the Cambridge Analytica Scandal? Discuss how the democracy is at stake in the new information order.

**TOPIC****General Studies 2:**

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

**General Studies 3:**

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

**Making electricity accessible to all: Choosing the right mix****Solar and wind power:**

- Solar and wind are eminently suitable for isolated deployment such as for powering irrigation pumps. An irrigation pump directly connected to a solar panel can be useful for a farmer as he doesn't have to depend on the grid.
- Making electricity accessible for isolated remote communities- In India, there are communities that have no access to the central electricity grid, or the supply from the central grid is unreliable.

A microgrid getting electricity supply from solar and wind, and connected to consumers in an isolated remote community, is helpful in providing electricity for lighting, in charging mobile phones, and small livelihood applications.

Consumers connected to a community managed microgrid can meet their minimum needs. Until the reliability of the central grid can be assured, solar- and wind-powered microgrid is the way forward for rural and remote communities.

**Moving forward:**

- Ongoing research in battery technologies must be carried on so as to bring down the cost of electricity storage and improve safety of storage, thereby paving the way for a large deployment of solar and wind.
- The International Solar Alliance can direct technology development towards the needs of all developing countries.
- Another option for large-scale penetration of solar and wind is to install gas-based power plants which can be ramped up and down fast. This will be possible only if overland or undersea pipes can be commissioned to transport gas from Central Asia and Iran to India.

**Overall:**

Solar and wind cannot meet even a quarter of India's projected electricity requirements. A

major share has to come from large hydro, nuclear and coal. Out of these three technologies, one has to prefer low-carbon technologies that is hydro and nuclear. Until electricity generation from hydro and nuclear picks up, coal has to continue to meet India's electricity requirements. Along with investment in solar and wind, the government must plan for increased investment in both hydro and nuclear.

### **Connecting the dots:**

- Energy security in India can be achieved by adopting a right mix of coal-based power along with renewable energies (hydro, nuclear, solar and wind).

### **TOPIC**

#### ***General Studies 2:***

- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*
- *Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections*

### **The Cambridge Analytica: What next?**

#### **Background:**

The massive data breach at Facebook not only shows the misuse of social media platforms for influencing a nation's political destiny but also warns us on the perils lurking in the digital world. The outrage since the breach came to light is justified given that millions of consumers have put their blind trust on Facebook, giving the platform access to their personal information including photographs, location and even their thoughts.

**Reference article:** The Cambridge Analytica scandal: Democracy at stake  
<https://iasbaba.com/2018/03/iasbabas-daily-current-affairs-prelims-mains-focus-22nd-march-2018/>

#### **Indian context: What makes India more vulnerable?**

- For millions of Indians, the discovery of internet itself happens through Facebook. There are over 2.2 billion users globally, out of that 250 millions of them are in India.
- While regulators in the US, China and the EU have put in place laws to address concerns around privacy and data protection, India has so far taken a piecemeal approach.

**Way ahead:**

- It is time for technology companies like Facebook to take the onus of creating awareness about data protection upon themselves. Like most human inventions, internet also has an evil side and this must be communicated as a statutory warning. The social media platform has provided some tools that help users determine how much of their data can be shared but not many know about it. As in case of latest breach, it took a data breach incident for Facebook to proactively highlight this security feature.
- Awareness should be backed up with strong data protection laws that impose heavy penalties on violators. Platforms like Facebook thrive on getting maximum user information. The entire business model around personalised advertising requires access to more and more user information. Newer technologies like artificial intelligence are also completely dependent on gathering user-specific information. Some of these activities could be legitimate but it needs to be clearly defined and communicated to the users.
- Consumers on their part should be cautious of sharing information online. Even harmless looking mobile applications are able to collect large amounts of data. This includes the user's contact list, messages, camera, and location, which may not have any direct correlation with the underlying service being offered.
- The experience world over is that many corporations are averse to installing even basic security if it involves investment. It is ultimately the management that has to take the call. High security is inconvenient and painful but is worth the money spent on it if the reputation of an organisation has to be protected.

**Connecting the dots:**

- The data breach at Facebook should be a wake-up call for technology companies, policymakers and consumers of data services. Discuss.

**TOPIC*****General Studies 3***

- *Awareness in the fields of IT, computers,*
- *Challenges to internal security through communication networks, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention.*
- *Linkages of organized crime with terrorism.*



## General Studies 2

- *Important aspects of governance.*

### Keeping Cyberspace safety and effective

#### **In news:**

The poisoning of a Russian double agent in the United Kingdom led to reports that the British government was considering the use of cyber weapons in response. That, in turn, led to a warning by Russia that it would retaliate in kind. In the event, the United Kingdom finally responded through that traditional expression of state displeasure, expulsion of diplomats.

#### **Concern:**

The above incident is indicative of the fact that the **militarisation of cyberspace is gathering pace**, and that efforts have to be redoubled to ensure that cyberspace continues to be used for peaceful purposes.

#### **Global efforts:**

The call for paying renewed attention to securing cyberspace has been made in recent months in various fora ranging from the private-sector led World Economic Forum (WEF) to the annual gathering of security experts, the Munich Security Conference.

- The WEF's Global Risks Report 2018 identified cybersecurity threats as one of the top five global risks and, in keeping with the new found focus on cybersecurity, has set up a Global Centre for Cybersecurity, expected to be launched in March in Geneva.
- At the Munich Security Conference, the UN Secretary General described the current scenario as one of "episodes of cyberwar between states" and "a permanent violation of cybersecurity".

#### **The present setup has failed:**

Though the number of fora and commissions discussing cybersecurity keep proliferating, they have largely lost their relevance-

- They have failed to provide fresh out-of-the-box thinking for official bodies to consider and take forward.
- They are also seen as too closely aligned with Western interests to have the credibility required to be taken seriously by all countries.

Norm competition in cyberspace-

- While many states still see utility in evolving norms, the focus seems to have shifted from negotiating norms with adversaries to shaping norms by like-minded countries, which sets

the stage for norm competition in cyberspace. These developments could result in a further entrenchment of the rival country positions and the eventual fragmentation of cyberspace.

Under-capacity of developing countries to raise the voice-

- An open, secure, stable and global cyberspace is required, especially for developing countries that are only now beginning to enjoy the fruits of digitalisation. But they neither have the heft nor the internal and external capacities to make their voice count in cyberspace.

#### **Way head:**

At the Global Conference on Cyber Space held in New Delhi in November 2017, following steps were listed:

- An International Cyber Disarmament Commission or a forum similar to the existing Conference on Disarmament.
- An open-ended working group or a smaller committee nominated by the UN General Assembly.

#### **Conclusion:**

Above all to tackle the challenges associated with cyberspace, States must be sufficiently enthused to work together on establishing regulatory frameworks, be it in the form of treaties or binding norms.

#### **Connecting the dots:**

- The issue of militarization of cyber space has become a prominent one in recent time. Discuss how the global community can tackle the challenge.

#### **TOPIC**

##### ***General Studies 1***

- ***Social empowerment***

##### ***General Studies 2***

- ***Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.***
- ***Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.***

### Dilution of the Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989: SC judgement

#### **In news:**

The Supreme Court in its recent judgement has diluted the stringent provision of denial of anticipatory bail in the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

The judgement states that public servants and private employees can only be arrested after a preliminary inquiry — that in the case of a public servant the appointing authority must give permission in writing (in the case of the public in general, the SSP's permission is needed) — and that a magistrate can extend arrest only after written permission is secured and anticipatory bail must be given unless a prima facie case of crimes is made out.

#### **Issue:**

- The appointing authority is hardly expected to give in writing permission to arrest his junior. If the appointing authority happens to be of the same caste or if the employee concerned enjoys a good rapport with him, he may not give permission at all.
- Political pressure may also be brought on the appointing authority or the SSP not to give permission to arrest the accused.

#### **Situation of Dalits in India:**

India has over 180 million Dalits.

- A crime is committed against a Dalit every 15 minutes. Six Dalit women are raped every day.
- Over the last 10 years (2007-2017), there has been a 66% growth in crime against Dalits.
- The NCRB data show that the rape of Dalit women has doubled in the last 10 years.

The figures represent only a tip of the iceberg since most Dalits do not register cases for fear of retaliation by higher castes. Even if a case reaches court, the most likely outcome is acquittal due to caste biases at every stage.

#### **Rationale behind exclusion of anticipatory bail:**

In the Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Prevention of Atrocities Act, Parliament had clearly noted that when Dalits assert their rights, vested interests try to terrorise them. Accordingly, keeping in view the special nature of crimes against Dalits, anticipatory bail was excluded.

Moreover, constitutionality of this exclusion had been upheld by a five-judge bench of the apex court in Kartar Singh.

**Issues with the judgment:**

- The court has deviated from the established judicial opinion on the subject. The Supreme Court had clearly said that anticipatory bail provision for the first time was introduced in 1973 and it is merely a limited statutory right and not part of right to life and personal liberty under Article 21.
- Also, Section 22 of the SC/ST Act already protects public servants from prosecution if they acted in 'good faith'.

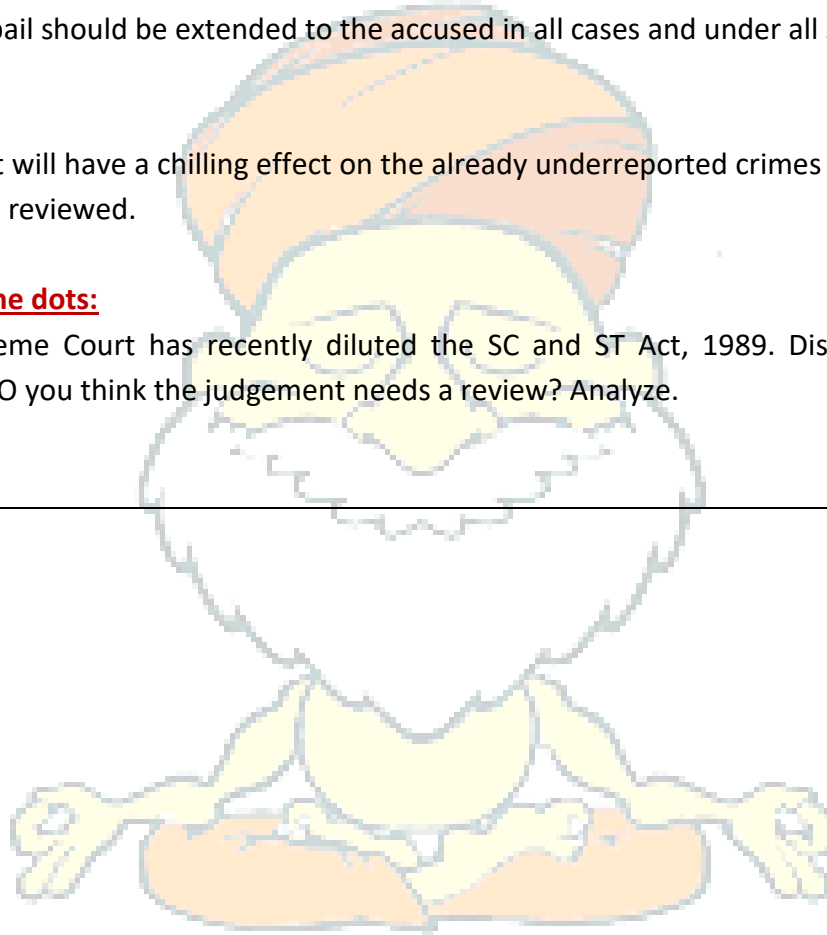
If there is concern about the 'presumption of innocence' of the accused, the protection of anticipatory bail should be extended to the accused in all cases and under all statutes.

**Conclusion:**

The judgment will have a chilling effect on the already underreported crimes against Dalits. And thus, must be reviewed.

**Connecting the dots:**

- The Supreme Court has recently diluted the SC and ST Act, 1989. Discuss the rationale behind. DO you think the judgement needs a review? Analyze.



## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **TOPIC**

#### ***General Studies 2:***

- ***India and its neighbourhood- relations.***
- ***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***

### **Evaluating Asian Infrastructure Bank(AIIB)**

#### **Background:**

The third annual meeting of the board of governors of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is scheduled to be held in Mumbai in June.

India is the AIIB's second-largest shareholder and is also a major recipient of loans from the bank.

The largest shareholder, China, hosted the first annual meeting in 2016 and the second was hosted by South Korea last year.

#### **About AIIB:**

- The multilateral development bank (MDB) was established in January 2016 with its headquarters located in Beijing.
- At the launch of the AIIB, there were 57 prospective founding members (including India) and 20 from outside the region (including France Germany, Italy and the UK). The membership stands at 84 as of end 2017 (the US and Japan being notably absent).
- The AIIB has an authorized capital base of \$100 billion *earmarked to address Asia-Pacific's acute infrastructural needs.*
- Its stated mission is *"to improve economic and social development in Asia by investing in high quality, financially viable and environmentally friendly infrastructure projects".*
- The bank's focus is on project financing on commercial terms.
- Beyond its own balance sheet, the AIIB aims to mobilize private capital to co-finance projects.

#### **Importance:**

The creation of the AIIB is a welcome initiative given Asia's monumental infrastructural deficit. A study by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 2017 estimated the Asia-Pacific region's

infrastructural needs at around \$22.5 trillion over 15 years (to 2030) or about \$1.5 trillion annually.

The economic and social benefits of funding infrastructural spending are immense—although lack of financing is not always the main constraint (i.e. there is a dearth of bankable projects mainly due to concerns about project preparation and structuring and an uncertain regulatory environment).

### **Chinese context: Concerns and suspicions**

- There were suspicions in some quarters about the long-term aims and intentions of the AIIB.

This was partly to do with the fact that the AIIB project was first announced in October 2013 simultaneously with Chinese President Xi Jinping's mooted Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The initial scepticism was therefore that the AIIB was primarily a vehicle to fund BRI-related projects to promote connectivity in Asia as well as to further China's strategic goals (diversify energy supplies and establish blue-water capabilities in the Indian Ocean, deploy its vast financial resources, and internationalize the renminbi).

- China is the AIIB's single largest contributor and holds around 28% voting share, giving it veto power over major decisions at the AIIB (as major bank decisions require at least 75% support).

The initial projects approved by the AIIB in 2016 were granted to China's close allies—mainly in Central Asia and Pakistan, as well as Oman, which was a strategic centre of trade and exchange along the historic maritime Silk Road.

### **AIIB as a truly collective institution:**

- Many AIIB-funded projects that have been approved have no obvious connection to the BRI.
- Nor are they concentrated among China's closest allies.

For instance, India was the single-largest borrower from the AIIB in 2017, with part of the Bengaluru Metro line and Gujarat rural roads each being granted around \$330 million loans. As of end 2017, AIIB had granted just over \$1 billion worth of loans for various infrastructure projects in India. Besides these, financing for another \$1.2 billion worth of projects from India has been proposed.

The fact that India (which has an 8% voting share in AIIB) has become an important recipient of AIIB loans is noteworthy and indicates the degree of independence of the AIIB from the BRI.

### **Complementing rather competing institution:**

AIIB officials have repeated the slogan "our bank is lean, clean, and green", i.e. an emphasis on rules-based style of governance, transparency in procurement and other policies, and environmental and social safeguards.

Increasingly, the AIIB is looking as though it will complement rather than compete with the work of existing MDBs such as the ADB and World Bank.

In fact, more than half of the AIIB loans to date have been co-financed with other MDBs.

### **Conclusion:**

Overall, rather than being part of a “new world order”, the AIIB appears to be well on its way to becoming a credible institution that promises to make an important contribution in providing regional and global public goods.

### **Connecting the dots:**

- Evaluate the performance of AIIB. Also, discuss how the initial skepticism no longer holds true.

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### **Mastering the Indian Ocean**

#### **Background:**

China has decided to become a major player in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Smartly playing its economic and diplomatic cards, China has established a chain of maritime footholds in Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, and acquired its first overseas military base in Djibouti last year.

#### **Recent developments in positive direction:**

- India's recent agreement with Oman providing access, for “military use and logistical support” in the new Port of Duqm, has raised hopes that India is, belatedly, strengthening its maritime posture in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- There have been other significant developments too; like President Ram Nath Kovind's visit to Djibouti and its recognition by India.
- The conclusion of an Indo-Seychelles agreement for creation of air and naval facilities on Assumption Island; and

- The agreement with the UAE for joint naval exercises.

### **Issue- Lack of over-arching vision:**

China has been releasing defence white papers every two years. Accordingly, Beijing has built a powerful navy that will soon overtake the US navy in numbers, lagging behind only in capability. New Delhi, on the other hand, has shown no tangible signs of strategic thinking or long-term security planning, as evident from a total absence of defence white papers or security doctrines to date.

The navy did spell out, in 2004-05, its own vision of India's maritime interests and challenges through a maritime doctrine and a maritime strategy. But, in the absence of higher strategic guidance in the form of a national-level document, they are of limited utility. Thus, the *absence of an over-arching vision which conceptualises the IOR in a 50-75 year perspective* that has led to the neglect of maritime issues critical to India's vital interests.

### **Examples:**

- The Chabahar port project should have been completed long ago, notwithstanding US sanctions;
- The offer of Agalega Islands from Mauritius should have been taken up years ago;
- the Maldives imbroglio should have been pre-empted.
- Our disregard of distant Mozambique and Madagascar remains a huge maritime "missed opportunity".

The IOR strategic agenda may be soon taken out of India's hands as the chairmanship of two important bodies, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) devolves on the UAE and Iran respectively.

### **Conclusion:**

In order to herald a renewed impetus to India's maritime outreach and for the actualisation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2015 "Sagar" vision, we need to have a coherent Indian maritime grand strategy.

### **Connecting the dots:**

- One of the important challenge in mastering the India Ocean is lack of a long-term strategic vision, unlike China. Critically analyze.

## **TOPIC**

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### Transforming the subcontinent: India-China-Pakistan cooperation

#### **Background:**

Despite being neighbors, India and Pakistan are among the least integrated nations in the world. Because of their unending mutual hostility, South Asia too has become the least integrated region in the world. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is in a coma. Sadly, the most populous region in the world has also remained home to the largest number of poor people in the world.

#### **Poor integration:**

- There are no direct flights between their capitals — New Delhi and Islamabad.
- The frequency of Delhi-Lahore and Mumbai-Karachi flights have become minimal.
- At less than \$3 billion annually, trade with Pakistan accounts for a meagre 0.4% of India's growing global commerce.

#### **Arguments:**

On the Indian side, it is said that terror and trade cannot go together. The Narendra Modi government has raised the bar higher — terror and talks cannot go together. On the Pakistani side, resolution of the Kashmir issue has become a precondition for any substantial bilateral cooperation. The needs of common citizens of India and Pakistan- employment, education, health care and food-and-environmental security- can be met only through regional cooperation, not regional rivalry.

#### **BRI as part of the solution:**

A three-way India-China-Pakistan cooperation is possible, and Chinese President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) provides a practical framework for such partnership. The government's opposition to the BRI is based, among other things, on the basis that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project under the BRI, violates India's sovereignty since it passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). It undermines India's long-term development and security interests.

#### **Counter-arguments:**

- CPEC does not recognise PoK to be Pakistan's sovereign territory.
- Both China and Pakistan have stated that they are open to India joining CPEC. China has also expressed its readiness to rename CPEC suitably to both address India's concerns and to reflect the project's expanded regional scope.

#### **Benefits for India:**

- The BRI will connect Lahore and Amritsar (also Delhi and the rest of India), the two sides of Kashmir (which all Kashmir-based political parties want), Sindh and southern Punjab with Gujarat and Rajasthan, and Karachi with Mumbai.
- By joining the renamed CPEC, India would gain land access, through Pakistan, to Afghanistan, Iran, Central Asia and western China.
- The CPEC-plus-India can also be linked to the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Corridor, thus creating a grand garland of connectivity and integration for the whole of South Asia.
- The rename CPEC is also indispensable for the success of two other mega projects that are critical for India's energy security and accelerated economic growth — the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) and Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipelines.

Connectivity, cooperation and economic integration are the only realistic bases for any future India-Pakistan settlement of the Kashmir dispute.

#### **Alternatives:**

- An alternative connectivity project by the "Quadrilateral" of the U.S., Japan, Australia and India. This is unlikely to take off. Even if it does, its developmental benefits to India will be limited since it will seek to keep China and Pakistan out.
- India's gains due to Chabahar are modest, and nowhere comparable to those that would accrue by India having a direct land access to Afghanistan through Pakistan.

#### **Conclusion:**

The proposed connectivity initiative would thus create strong new bonds of regional cooperation and interdependence, could also help resolve three long-standing geopolitical problems in the region, in which countless people have been killed — terrorism, Kashmir and Afghanistan.

To realise this vision of a resurgent South Asia, two obstacles will have to be removed blind nationalism and the unfriendly designs of extra-regional powers.

#### **Connecting the dots:**

- India-China-Pakistan cooperation can transform the subcontinent — joining a renamed CPEC would be a good start. Analyze.

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**Making the neighbourhood first again****Background:**

Almost four years after Prime Minister Narendra Modi began his term with a “Neighbourhood First” moment, by inviting leaders of all South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries to his swearing-in ceremony, India's neighbourhood policy seems to be adrift(unanchored).

New Delhi's connect with its South Asian neighbours is weaker than it has been for a very long time.

**Issues:****Governments in the SAARC region are not on ideal terms with New Delhi:**

- In the Maldives, President Yameen Abdul Gayoom has gone out of his way to challenge the Indian government, whether it is on his crackdown on the opposition, invitations to China, or even breaking with New Delhi's effort to isolate Pakistan at SAARC.
- In Nepal, the K.P. Sharma Oli government is not India's first choice.
- No matter which party is in power in Pakistan, the official dialogue seems difficult, especially with the military on the ascendant once again.
- In other parts of the neighborhood (Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bhutan and Bangladesh), where relations have been comparatively better for the past few years, upcoming elections could be of disadvantage for India.

**China's unprecedented forays into each of these countries:**

- In Nepal, China has opened up an array of alternative trade and connectivity options after the 2015 India-Nepal border blockade: from the highway to Lhasa, cross-border railway lines to the development of dry ports.
- In Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the Maldives and Pakistan, China holds strategic real estate, which could also be fortified militarily in the future.
- China stepped in to negotiate a Rohingya refugee return agreement between Myanmar and Bangladesh, host a meeting of Afghanistan and Pakistan's foreign ministers to help calm tensions and bring both on board with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) connection

between them and offered to mediate between the Maldivian government and the opposition.

This shows increasing involvement of China in internal politics of these countries.

**The government's decision to use hard power tactics in the neighbourhood has had a boomerang effect:**

- The “surgical strikes” on Pakistan of 2016 have been followed by a greater number of ceasefire violations and cross-border infiltration on the Line of Control.
- The 2015 Nepal blockade and a subsequent cut in Indian aid channelled through the government did not force the Nepali government to amend its constitution as intended.
- Mr. Modi's decision to abruptly cancel his visit to Male in 2015 did not yield the required changes in the government's treatment of the opposition. Warnings about Mr. Yameen's emergency in the past month have led to the Maldives cancelling its participation in the Indian Navy's “Milan” exercises.
- Even in Bangladesh, the Indian Army chief, General Bipin Rawat's tough talking last week about immigration has drawn ire there.

**Time for reversal:**

**Building soft power:**

India's most potent tool is its soft power. Its successes in Bhutan and Afghanistan, for example, have much more to do with its development assistance than its defence assistance.

Recent initiatives-

- After sharp drops in 2016 (of 36%) and 2017 (of 19%) year on year, the budget allocations for South Asia have seen an increase (of 6%) in 2018.
- After the Doklam crisis was defused in 2017, India also moved swiftly to resolve differences with Bhutan on hydropower pricing.
- The government has announced a tariff hike for energy from Bhutan's Chukha project, the first in several years.

**Tackling**

**China:**

Instead of opposing every project by China in the region, the government must attempt a three-pronged approach-

- Where possible, India should collaborate with China in the manner it has over the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic corridor.

- When India feels a project is a threat to its interests, India should make a counter-offer to the project, if necessary in collaboration with its Quadrilateral partners, Japan, the U.S. and Australia.
  - India should coexist with projects that do not necessitate intervention, while formulating a set of South Asian principles for sustainable development assistance that can be used across the region.
- This will all only be possible if India and China reset bilateral ties.

### Learning from ASEAN:

- There must be more interaction at every level of government.
- Just as Indonesia, the biggest economy in the ASEAN, allowed smaller countries such as Singapore to take the lead, India too must take a back seat in decision-making, enabling others to build a more harmonious SAARC process.

### Conclusion:

India must focus its efforts to return to a more comfortable peace, and to “Making the Neighbourhood First Again”.

### Connecting the dots:

- India needs to re-look at her neighborhood policy. Analyze.

### TOPIC

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### Global trade is facing the challenge of protectionism

#### In news:

The United States announced recently that it will impose tariffs on the import of aluminium and steel.

The World Trade Organization has warned that Mr. Trump's trade war could lead the world into another recession.

**Rationale given by U.S. President Donald Trump:**

- He argued that free trade is the reason why the U.S. suffers a huge trade deficit.
- He also believes that tariffs can help protect American businesses and jobs from the threat posed by foreign competition.

Mr. Trump hopes to protect American manufacturers who have failed to keep up with global competition through the means of restrictive tariffs.

**Importance of free trade:**

It allows free competition without any of the protective barriers imposed by governments. Such competition is believed to give consumers access to cheaper and better products from across the world, thus improving their standard of living over time.

**Fallouts of US's decision:**

- Restrictions on trade this will affect consumers across the world, which includes ordinary Americans, who will no longer be able to enjoy the full benefits of free trade across borders.
- Such steps can further boost populist forces that hold sway in many countries. It could once again revive protectionist sentiment which has been on the wane following the recovery from the global economic meltdown.
- In the U.S., the latest levy is expected to put at risk millions of manufacturing jobs that rely on these metals. Conversely, it is unlikely to create significant new employment in these two sectors given that current U.S. steel and aluminium production remain close to a 10-year average.
- A major global trade war can be ensued. In the 1930s similar war had disastrous results as it deepened the Great Depression.

**Global reaction:**

- The European Union (EU) has vowed to hit back by imposing retaliatory tariffs on the import of American goods. However, such knee-jerk reaction from the EU may only increase the burden on European businesses and their consumers. It might also spur further trade restrictions from the U.S., thus risking a full-fledged global trade war.
- Washington's traditional allies, who will be hit the most from the tariffs, have warned of bilateral retaliation on U.S. goods, besides mounting a challenge at the WTO.

**Does higher tariffs secure domestic industries?**

Many governments including Indian government adopt high tariffs on the pretext of saving domestic industries mainly the nascent ones.

The role of high tariffs in promoting domestic industries can have several unintended consequences.

- For instance, a report by the World Bank argues that high tariff and non-tariff barriers in the automotive sector in India and Pakistan might be reducing international competitiveness and slowing down the spread of world-class good practices in the value chain. The local original equipment makers (OEMs) in both countries do not face adequate competition due to high import tariffs of 60% and 80% on completely built units of passenger cars. This makes imports of cars prohibitively expensive, thus encouraging local OEMs to focus on the domestic market at the expense of exports. As a result, despite being the world's sixth largest auto producer by volume, India has less than 1% of global export markets compared with more than 3% for China.
- It has been reported that high tariffs have been tried for key industries in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Hong Kong, with unconvincing results.

On the contrary:

- The World Bank report also highlights an interesting contrasting case of the Indian auto parts sector- The sector has witnessed a gradual reduction in import tariffs since the 1990s (from 60% to an average of 12.5%). This has been a powerful catalyst to its global success, with increased production and exports.

Although tariffs play an important role in the competitiveness of countries, they are not the sole determinants.

Despite imposing high import tariffs, several Asian countries successfully raised export incomes and economic growth rates, whereas some countries in other regions achieved less success on both fronts despite lowering considerably their import tariff levels in the 1990s.

### **Conclusion:**

Ordinary consumers of all countries are likely to lose as a result of any trade war between countries.

Instead of retaliating with more tariffs, which could cause the current dispute to spiral into a full-fledged global trade war, the U.S.'s trading partners must try to achieve peace through negotiations.

### **Connecting the dots:**

- Global free trade is facing headwinds mainly because of U.S. Discuss the issue, importance of free trade and suggest measures.

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**Indo-French Cooperation: Naval Agreement****Background:**

French President, Emmanuel Macron is to visit India. The two leaders are expected to lay out a vision for bilateral strategic coordination for the Indian Ocean and back it with measures to facilitate operational cooperation between their security forces in the littoral.

**Need of strengthening the relationship:**

- As Russia reaches out to Pakistan, that special position now belongs to France. Paris has foregone the opportunity to sell major weapons systems to Pakistan and has focused on a strong defence partnership with India.
- For defence modernisation, the natural synergy between France's strategic capability and the size of the Indian market would come into play. India's defence relationship with France has steadily grown since 1980s; but it is yet to reach the full potential.
- For many in the Indian establishment, France's long-standing political support for New Delhi makes it an ideal partner in the regional commons. Paris has always stood by New Delhi, even in moments of crises.
- France has routinely assisted India with vital defence equipment and has also played a key role in pulling New Delhi out of its international isolation in the aftermath of the 1998 nuclear tests.

**Other factors:**

In the changed context of the 21st, India and France have many reasons to draw closer:

- The prospects of even limited American retrenchment.
- The rise of China and its power projection into regions as far away as the South Pacific, Africa and the Mediterranean.
- The tightening embrace between Moscow and Beijing.
- The breakdown of the loosening of bonds between Russia and Europe.

The turbulence in the spaces between India and France demand that Delhi and Paris pool their resources and act together.



**Expected naval cooperation:**

- The visit is expected to result in the signing of a reciprocal agreement granting French naval vessels access to Indian ports for repair and resupply, and Indian vessels the right to routinely use France's Indian Ocean military bases.
- Besides the French base in the Réunion Islands, Paris is likely to allow Indian warships to utilize its military facilities in Abu Dhabi and Djibouti, where the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) already operates a logistical base.

**Importance of naval cooperation:**

- Indo-French naval cooperation can be aimed at securing the critical sea lanes. Operational resources in littoral Asia can be pooled to effectively combat security threats—piracy, trans-national crime and terrorism—as also to build security capacities in the Indian Ocean.
- For New Delhi a nautical pact with France offers potential to expand of the Indian Navy's operational footprint across the Indo-Pacific region.
- France is the only European power with a strong military presence in both the Indian Ocean (Réunion and Mayotte) and the Pacific (French Polynesia and New Caledonia). Its utility as a catalyst for India's cross-theatre maritime outreach is immense.
- French facilities are likely to add to India's network of nautical outposts in the IOR, including in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Seychelles, where New Delhi plans to build and operate a military base.
- France's proficiency with military manufacturing and defence trade provides logic of a strategic partnership.
- French firms also have particular expertise in navigating India's choppy defence market, demonstrated by Paris' success in securing contracts for the Rafale aircraft and Scorpene submarines (Project-75).
- A partnership with the French navy in littoral South-East Asia would allow the Indian Navy to influence the security-dynamic of the Pacific, even extending operations to the Southern Pacific Islands.

**Conclusion:**

France has begun to loom large in India's geopolitical calculus. Its time Indo-French cooperation is strengthened further, by finding out synergies and working to meet the other's expectations.

**Connecting the dots:**

- Discuss the opportunities available for India when it comes to expected naval agreement between the two countries.

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**India-France relationship****Introduction:**

With French President Emmanuel Macron's recent visit to India, the India-France Strategic Partnership launched in 1998 seems finally to have come of age. In these two decades, both sides have gradually enhanced cooperation in diverse fields covering civil nuclear, defence, space, counter-terrorism, education, research and development in science and technology, culture, urban development, climate change, trade and economics and people-to-people contacts. The bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding signed, the detailed 'joint statement' and accompanying 'vision statements' on cooperation in space and the Indian Ocean Region, indicate that the relationship has received a momentum.

**A shared world view:**

- France has always been sympathetic to similar Indian claims based on its ancient civilisation. This is why both countries were quick to voice support for global multi-polarity once the Cold War ended.
- Defence cooperation with France began in the 1950s. Joint naval exercises, Varuna, date back to 1983.
- Cooperation in the space sector has continued since the 1960s when France helped India set up the Sriharikota launch site.
- After the nuclear tests in May 1998 when India declared itself a nuclear weapon state, France was the first major power to open dialogue and displayed a far greater understanding of India's security compulsions compared to other countries.
- It was the first P-5 country to support India's claim for a permanent seat in an expanded and reformed UN Security Council.

Today, it is a relationship of near equals.

**Establishment of a Strategic Dialogue:**

- Cooperation in defence, civil nuclear, space, intelligence sharing and counter-terrorism has grown.

- An agreement for building six Scorpène submarines in India with French help was signed in 2005.
- The ambitious offset target of 50% (nearly Rs. 25,000 crore), properly implemented, can help in building up India's budding aerospace industry.
- Terror strikes in France in recent years by home-grown terrorists have enlarged the scope of counter-terrorism cooperation to include cyber security and discussions on radicalisation.

#### **Recent developments:**

- B2B and P2P relations- In recent years, it was clear that for a wider partnership, strengthening business-to-business and people-to-people relationships was essential.
- Climate change and renewable energy resources, particularly solar, soon emerged as a new plank, reflected in the multilateral initiative of the International Solar Alliance.
- Another area identified was urban planning and management of services like housing, transport, water, sanitation, etc using the public private partnership model which the French have employed successfully.

#### **Maritime cooperation:**

- Like India, France has expressed concern about China's growing presence in the Indian Ocean Region. French overseas territories in the Indian and the Pacific Oceans provide it with the second largest exclusive economic zone globally. It has long maintained bases in Reunion Islands and Djibouti and established one in Abu Dhabi in 2009.
- The signing of MoUs regarding the provision of reciprocal logistics support to each other's armed forces provide the basis to strengthen joint naval exercises. Strengthening cooperation with France, particularly in the western Indian Ocean Region makes eminent strategic sense even as India develops its presence in Oman (Duqm) and Seychelles (Assumption Island).

#### **Trade:**

It has grown in recent years but at \$10 billion is half of the trade with Germany.

- Nearly \$16 billion worth of agreements was signed at the business summit. There are nearly 1,000 French companies present in India while over a hundred Indian businesses have established a presence in France.

#### **Educational links:**

Potentially, the most significant was the focus on youth and student exchanges. Currently about 2,500 Indians go to France annually to pursue higher education, compared to more than 250,000 from China.

A target has been set to raise it to 10,000 by 2020. The agreement on mutual recognition of academic degrees and the follow-on Knowledge Summit, where 14 MoUs between educational and scientific institutions were signed, is a welcome move.

### **Tourism:**

This is another area that has received attention. A target of a million Indian tourists and 335,000 French tourists has been set for 2020.

### **Other developments:**

- In the past, Indian companies saw the U.K. as the entry point for Europe; now with Brexit approaching, India can look at France as its entry point for Europe.
- Francophonie! The flagship programme of Smart Cities in which France is focussing on Chandigarh, Nagpur and Puducherry is taking shape.

### **Conclusion:**

The Strategic Partnership has already created a solid foundation; other aspects have now received the much-needed focus. Proper implementation can add to the growing strategic convergence that draws India and France together.

### **Connecting the dots:**

- Discuss how India-France relationship has evolved over time. Outline major aspects.

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### **India-Japan relationship: Reaching its potential**

#### **Introduction:**

In theory, it's hard to find two nations that make a better economic fit than fast-growing, populous India and rich, demographically challenged Japan.

- India needs technical expertise and investments to develop its infrastructure, while Japan has capital to spare and know-how to share.

- They have a common strategic objective in countering Chinese hegemony in Asia, a goal that can be best met in collaboration.
- They enjoy a rare historic amity, being geographically and culturally close, but not too close and, therefore, free of contentious issues such as border disputes.

### **Recent developments:**

The two governments in recent times have worked hard to upgrade ties.

- Regular high-profile bilateral visits have resulted into memoranda of understanding, some big-ticket projects, notably Japanese investment in India's first bullet train, and political avowals to grow the economic relationship exponentially.
- There are now 1,369 Japanese companies and over 4,800 Japanese corporate offices active in India.
- Japan currently ranks as the third largest investor in India.

### **Yet to reach its potential:**

The India-Japan economic relationship remains underwhelming both in relation to its potential, and to the ties that each nation shares with China.

- According to Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) data, China received about five times more Japanese investment between 1996-2015 (\$116 billion) than India did (\$24 billion).
- Japan-India two-way trade — \$13.48 billion in 2016-17 — is also a fraction of the \$350 billion China-Japan trade relationship or even India-China trade (\$84.44 billion in 2017).
- The share of India-Japan trade in Japan's total trade basket is barely 1% and it is a little over 2% of India's trade with the rest of the world.

### **Reasons behind:**

- Issues that plague foreign investors in India such as inadequate infrastructure, complex tax regulations and land acquisition problems.
- It takes Japanese companies in India longer than their Korean or Chinese counterparts to learn how best to localise their products for the Indian market. Example- The Japanese tend to think that the most important element is the quality of the air conditioner so that it is able to last without the need for repairs. But in India it is cheap to have an air conditioner repaired and technicians are abundant. The consumer is therefore more focussed on cost than durability.

### **Challenges:**

- The greatest challenge is cultural: an outdated and negative image of India. He said that employees picked for jobs in India often act as though they have drawn the short straw.

The larger corporations may realise India's potential, but small and medium enterprises are the worst culprits of this attitude.

- The difference in the cultural relationship to punctuality is another stumbling block. In Japan, being on time is akin to religion, whereas in India, punctuality rarely exists.
- Japanese corporations are strongly risk averse which makes it difficult for them to cope in the freewheeling, jugaad-proud environment of India, where flexibility and impromptu decision making are necessary skills in the businesses.

#### **Some measures:**

- Roping in Indian companies to develop and design Japanese products for the South Asian market could be one major way forward in deepening the bilateral engagement. Example- The recent collaboration between Japan's Panasonic and India's Tata Elxsi to develop smart solutions and products for Panasonic customers in India and the neighbouring region.
- The use of India as a manufacturing base for markets in Africa, a trend that is interesting to Japan's business strategists. Existing examples include Hitachi Construction Machinery's joint venture with Tata whose Kharagpur plant is a hub for exports to developing countries, as well as auto major Nissan, which exports the India-made Datsun 'GO+' to South Africa.

#### **Conclusion:**

Overall, the G (government) to G relationship is far ahead of the B (business) to B." Closing this distance is what is required.

#### **Connecting the dots:**

- The India-Japan relationship is yet to achieve its potential. Discuss.

#### **TOPIC**

##### ***General Studies 2:***

- *India and its neighbourhood- relations.*
- *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*

#### **India-Russia: Maintaining the relationship**

**Introduction:**

India has sought to retain strategic autonomy by maintaining a careful balance in its relationships with the major centres of power — notably the US, Russia, China and the European Union. This has never been easy because of the geopolitical rivalries inherent. The challenges we now face are unprecedented because of the determination of an aggressive China to become the sole centre of power in Asia.

**Reading****Russia:**

Although the US and powers like Japan regard the role of India as important in maintaining a viable balance of power in Asia, there are misgivings about Russia's approach to India. Moscow's policies are driven largely by the relentless hostility of the US to oppose and contain Russia's influence. Moscow has thus been literally driven into the arms of Beijing, resulting in a virtual Moscow-Beijing alliance to counter American hegemony.

**India-Russia:**

India has been endeavouring to maintain its strategic autonomy by seeking to expand its relationship with Russia. This is being done internationally by working with Moscow in forums such as BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the India-Russia-China triangle, which was initially promoted by Russia.

- India has also sought to complement Moscow's efforts to stabilise the secular Assad regime in Syria.
- While limited connectivity has served as an obstacle to trade with Russia, the defence relationship between the two countries remains vibrant. The approximately 270 Russian Sukhoi-30 fighters are the main element of the IAF's strike and air defence potential.
- Russian defence exports to India in recent years account for around 39 per cent of its total exports and far exceed the exports to China which, unlike India, has successfully developed a vibrant defence industry with significant export potential.

**Potential:**

- Russia and India have a mutual interest in carrying forward defence and security cooperation.
- India's trade with Russia remains limited because of problems in connectivity. However, mutual cooperation in investments in the petrochemical sector is substantial and significant. The recent \$12.9-billion deal for the acquisition of Essar Oil refinery by Russia's largest oil producer, Rosneft, is one of the single biggest foreign investments in India.

- There is also considerable potential for Russia and India to reinforce each other in executing energy and rail transportation projects in third countries such as Afghanistan and Vietnam. It is evident that India cannot match China's economic power in its relations with Russia. One should, however, remember that there has been grave mutual distrust between Russia and China for centuries. The Russians view China's meteoric rise and its growing population as a threat to their Siberian region and even to Vladivostok.

### **Conclusion:**

Both Russia and India have an interest in keeping their relationship forward-looking, in light of their common interest in developing a multipolar world order. Moscow needs to be told clearly that the Quad — the US, Australia, Japan, India — will primarily maintain a viable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region, even as India seeks a greater cooperative partnership with Russia.

### **Connecting the dots:**

- Both Russia and India have an interest in keeping their relationship forward-looking. Discuss the potential and the challenges involved.

## **TOPIC**

### ***General Studies 2:***

- *India and its neighbourhood- relations.*
- *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*

### **External balancing: As India's policy toward China**

### **Introduction:**

External balancing, that is, the forging of military cooperation with one state to deter or defeat a threat posed by another, is one of the principal means by which states cause and enhance security for themselves.

### **The security dilemma in India-China relations:**

India-China relations have continued to be subject to an underlying security dilemma. Since the 1960s, the security dilemma has manifested itself along three dimensions.

- While China is deeply suspicious of India's policy towards Tibet, India's apprehensions have centred on Chinese intervention in an India-Pakistan conflict.



- India seeks to maintain a dominant position in South Asia, but China has been working to neutralise India's predominance in the region.
- While China has successfully used Pakistan to maintain a balance of power in South Asia including through assistance for Pakistan's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes, India has increasingly become a factor in the East Asian equation during the last two decades.

The persistence of the security dilemma has, in turn, contributed to the perpetuation of Indian concerns about the conventional and nuclear balance with China as well as to competition between their militaries for positional advantage along the Line of Actual Control.

### **The two prongs of India's China policy:**

India has adopted a two-pronged policy for dealing with China.

- The first prong involves continued engagement, both bilaterally and in multilateral forums such as BRICS, SCO and the Russia-India-China trilateral, in order to maintain overall stability, deepen economic ties, and foster diplomatic cooperation on regional and international issues.
- At the same time, India has also sustained efforts to enhance its military and deterrent capabilities as the second prong of policy. In fact, it has been devoting considerable resources since the 1990s to acquire nuclear weapons and develop longer-range ballistic missiles as a deterrent against China. Further, in the latter half of the 2000s, India initiated a programme to build 'strategic' roads in its border states for improving connectivity and thus enhancing the ability to defend these areas. And, simultaneously, it also began to strengthen military capabilities along the China front by raising a new army strike corps, repositioning frontline aircraft, strengthening air bases and refurbishing advanced landing grounds.

### **An emerging external balancing component:**

There is an emerging third prong in India's China policy in the form of an incipient external balancing effort.

The evolution of India-US relations in particular but also of India's relationships with Japan and Australia as well as the budding quadrilateral cooperation among them indicates a growing convergence in their views regarding stability in the Indo-Pacific region. This growth in convergence is because of growing uncertainty about China's intentions in the wake of its turn towards an assertive foreign policy and disregard for the norms that have come to underpin the international territorial order by advancing territorial claims to more than 80 per cent of the South China Sea as well as to the sovereign territories of India and Japan.

**Inda-US:**

- In January 2015, India and the United States issued a joint vision for the Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean region, in which they affirmed the importance of “safeguarding maritime security and ensuring freedom of navigation and over flight throughout the region, especially in the South China Sea”, and proclaimed that their partnership “is indispensable to promoting peace, prosperity and stability in those regions”.
- India and America have steadily deepened bilateral defence cooperation to achieve their common interests, which include the maintenance of peace, security and stability as well as the protection of the free flow of commerce through support for a rules-based order.
- Accordingly, there has been a steady increase in both the number and content of joint military exercises to enable interoperability and even coordinated operations.
- The two countries have concluded a logistics support agreement to enhance the operational capacities of their militaries.
- Bilateral defence trade has risen from US \$1 billion in 2008 to over \$15 billion in 2017 and America has elevated India to the status of a ‘major defense partner’.
- India and the United states have also initiated the Defence Trade and Technology Initiative to transform their current buyer-seller relationship into a partnership that would co-develop and co-produce major defence platforms.
- There are indications that the US position on issues of key security concern to India is beginning to synchronise with that of India’s. For instance, during the Doklam crisis in 2017, the US expressed its concern about China’s violation of Bhutanese sovereignty and called for a “return to the status quo” through “a negotiated solution” that restores peace in the area.[49](#)

**With Japan and Australia:**

- In the case of India and Japan, the declaration issued in 2017 affirmed “strong commitment to their values-based partnership in achieving a free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific region ... where all countries ... enjoy freedom of navigation and overflight” and pledged efforts to “align Japan’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy with India’s Act East Policy, including through ... maritime security cooperation”.
- India and Australia have also termed themselves as partners in the Indo-Pacific. And they have also agreed to a detailed action plan to deepen and strengthen defence cooperation to give effect to their “converging political, economic and strategic interests”.

**Conclusion:**

Deepening of cooperation between India, on the one hand, and America, Australia and Japan, on the other, indicates external balancing as an element in India’s China policy. What form external balancing eventually assumes is likely to be a function of two factors: the scale and

intensity of China's challenge to the security and geopolitical interests of these four countries in the coming years; and, how firmly India and its partners commit themselves to each other and how much support they extend to each other in their respective interactions and conflicts with China.

### **Connecting dots:**

- Describe 'external balance' as India's policy towards China.

### **TOPIC**

#### ***General Studies 2:***

- *India and its neighbourhood- relations.*
- *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*

### **India's policy toward Tibet: Needs reform**

**In**

**news:**

The government's bid to ease tensions with China has been met with some criticism, particularly over a leaked memo to officials telling them to stay away from events that commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Dalai Lama's 1959 flight to India. Much of the criticism stems from the perception that the government is attempting to appease China by giving up its "Tibet card".

#### **Concern:**

- Clearly, giving in to China's aggression on the subject is the wrong pretext to nuance its Tibet policy, and as the government has said, where the Dalai Lama goes within India is a sovereign issue.
- However, the bigger error may be for the government to be using Tibetan refugees in India as a card in its relations with China.

#### **Deteriorating ties between India and China: Tibet is not responsible**

Ties between the two have deteriorated over the past few years for a number of reasons unconnected to the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan population in India:

- Border incursions, including the standoff at the part of Doklam claimed by Bhutan.
- India's strategic shift in line with the U.S.'s Indo-Pacific pivot that targets China.

- China's 'deep-pocket' inroads into South Asia.
- Differences on the international stage, including over the Nuclear Suppliers Group membership and terror designations to Masood Azhar.

It would be wrong to assume that these problems would go away if India were to make the Tibetan community and its leader less visible. Therefore, it is ridiculous to portray strictures on their activities as a 'peace offering to Beijing'.

### **Policy change towards Tibet:**

Indian strategists have handed down the idea of a Tibet card for decades. It is time to revise this policy with a thorough evaluation of the ground.

- The landscape of Tibet, now crisscrossed with railway lines, super-speed highways, tunnels and airports, has changed drastically in the past two decades.
- The Beijing-Lhasa railway line and other engineering marvels has made Tibet more self-reliant, with more jobs for the next generation.
- There's an ongoing demographic shift in Tibet, with Beijing populating areas with majority 'Han' Chinese workers, encouraging mixed marriages, and mainstreaming Chinese culture into the region.

### **Conclusion:**

The government needs a proactive policy that takes into account these new realities. Above all, the Indian foreign policy establishment needs to stop seeing the Tibetan population in India as a strategic tool.

### **Connecting the dots:**

- India needs to change its policy toward Tibet and also stop using Tibetan population as a strategic tool. Analyze.

## **ECONOMY**

### **TOPIC**

#### ***General Studies 2:***

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

#### ***General Studies 3:***

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

### **Jobs in the era of artificial intelligence**

#### **Background:**

There is no debate that advances in artificial intelligence and automation will effect profound changes in our world. There are growing concerns, or more specifically outright fears, amongst the working age population regarding the effect of technologies like AI on jobs in future, and with good reason.

#### **Challenge:**

- A recent study reported that the Indian IT industry alone is expected to see a loss of 6.4 lakh jobs (low and medium-skilled) by 2020 owing to the technology revolution and automation.
- Moreover, around 46 per cent of India's population below 25 years of age can be seen entering the job market with skills that will become obsolete at the time of their entry. This excludes 40 per cent of those in the age group of 26-55 years who are already employed in occupations which may be outmoded soon.

#### **Old fears:**

History has demonstrated that every technological shift, while eliminating certain types of jobs, has ultimately ended up creating more. Besides, at a broader level, these technologies always have had the power to solve some of the great problems of mankind. For instance, AI is already driving great advances in medicine and healthcare with perfectly accurate diagnosis and far better disease prevention.

- The Luddite movement- British textile workers in 1811 attacked and burned factories due to fears of machine operators robbing them of their livelihood.
- With the advent of personal computers and information technology in the 20th century many feared they would be replaced by computers.

Today, as we stand on the edge of a technological transformation which is evolving at an exponential speed, the same lookout seems quite natural although despite these concerns and fears.

**Issue:**

- Anything that requires middle skills will be made redundant first; low skilled and highly skilled jobs are comparatively less vulnerable.
- Without massive upskilling and quality higher education, it will not be possible for the middle skilled to move into jobs requiring a high level of skill.

An economic scenario where there is high unemployment consisting of individuals incapable of getting a job simply because they do not possess the required skills can become a reality if India doesn't prepare adequately for the future of jobs.

**Preparing ourselves:**

- Reinventing our higher education system and by providing the means for people to re-skill themselves significantly.
- A shift to lifelong learning is essential.
- As the pace of technological change quickens, we need to be sure that our youth keep up with the right skills to thrive in the ever-changing world of work.

**Conclusion:**

More efforts should be made to strengthen the focus on how to mend our higher education ecosystem altogether. Our employees need not compete with technology that can disrupt almost every other industry. Instead, it would be more meaningful to leverage synergetic complementarity between the two.

**Connecting the dots:**

- There is no debate that advances in artificial intelligence and automation will effect profound changes in our world. Thus, more efforts should be made to strengthen the focus on how to mend our higher education ecosystem altogether.

**TOPIC:**

***General Studies 1:***

- ***Social empowerment***

***General Studies 2:***

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

### **General Studies 3:**

- *Indian economy and issues related to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.*

### **Taking advantage of technology to create jobs**

#### **Background:**

Millions of jobs could be lost by 2020 due to various global disruptions — digitalisation, AI, automation, robotics, longevity, IoT, etc. At the same time, a few million jobs will be created in specific sectors. Of these, business and finance ops, management, and computer and mathematics-related job families will see the biggest growth. At the same time, some of the largest economies in the world — the US, the UK, Japan, South Korea — will face a significant gap between talent supply and demand with a net talent deficit position.

#### **India's tryst with technology,**

##### **On one hand:**

- Jawaharlal Nehru, educated in Britain and inspired by Fabian Socialism, placed technology-driven modernism at the top of his priority list. He was instrumental in creating world class institutions such as the IITs and NITs; he believed that technology would be the bedrock of India's transformation into a modern society and trained workforce.
- Leaders such as Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Rajiv Gandhi and Chandrababu Naidu did take the pain to pioneer policies, import computers and court global technological giants to create tech-driven jobs in India. Many believe the agglomeration of tech giants in Hyderabad and Bengaluru, and India's solid foundations on digital literacy, is an outcome of such efforts.

##### **On the other hand:**

- Deep-rooted distrust, and, to a large extent, the broader policy paralysis existed around promoting technology at a greater pace. Unfortunately, the overwhelming perception amongst some sections of stakeholders and policymakers is that greater induction of technology will only lead to job losses.
- In more recent times, job insecurity has fuelled the formation of unions in the IT/ITes sector which has so far remained untouched by unionisation.

#### **Unfounded fears:**

- Rather than causing job losses, technology has created new businesses, processes, products and systems which couldn't have been imagined before.

- They improved productivity, which led to a rise in wages and that drove the purchasing power upwards.
- This expanding purchasing power further created new business opportunities. According to one report, the internet created 2.4 new jobs for every one job lost.

#### **More job creation with greater technological penetration:**

- India stands out as the country with likely the largest talent pool surplus. India is positioned uniquely to capitalise on the opportunity that will be created through technological and other disruptions given India's surplus talent pool and strength in the identified job segments.
- At the heart of job-creation is our ability to create new businesses and entrepreneurs. Technology is a core enabler of this aspect. India is a global growth leader and a leading centre when it comes to startup ecosystems. As new businesses emerge and grow, technology-powered entrepreneurship will be a key platform for millions of jobs in India across all segments of society.
- Technology has enabled connectivity and provided increased access to opportunities. This in turn has led to a robust growth in consumer spending. This is a virtuous cycle which will further create demand for more goods and services and thereby create more business opportunities across all tiers and segments of jobs.

#### **What needs to be done?**

India must focus on a comprehensive policy framework that addresses three key pillars in an integrated manner:

- A calibrated national talent management approach through a deeper labour market analysis as talent scarcity, surprisingly or not, is also on the rise.
- Introducing strong elements of technology and innovation into the country's education curriculum, backed by systematic institutional collaboration.
- Focus on broadening and/or enhancing existing skill development/re-skilling programmes, including planning around job rotation and mobility support.

#### **Conclusion:**

How India can take advantage of technology to potentially create millions of jobs will depend on the Government's ability to establish an ecosystem that helps businesses to benefit from technology to drive innovation and growth. Above mentioned steps should thus be taken.

#### **Connecting the dots:**

- India can take advantage of technology to potentially create millions of jobs. This will depend on the Government's ability to establish an ecosystem. Discuss.



**TOPIC****General Studies 3:**

- *Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.*
- *Inclusive growth and issues arising from it; Effects of liberalization on the economy*

**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*
- *Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.*

**India's export subsidies: Issue at WTO****Background:**

US recently took action against India's export subsidies at the World Trade Organisation. This can be seen as another example of the superpower's growing economic aggression against trade partners.

**What is the issue?**

Last year the WTO had officially notified that India's per capita Gross National Income (GNI) had crossed \$1,000 three years in a row. According to WTO rules, countries can give export subsidies only as long as their per capita GNI is below \$1,000. Once it is established that the higher income is there to stay (with three consecutive years of GNI breaching the \$1,000 threshold), countries can no longer enjoy the special dispensation of export subsidies which is otherwise banned under WTO rules. India continues using export subsidies.

Expecting India to change a plethora of export subsidy schemes like the Merchandise Export from India Scheme (MEIS) used across sectors all of a sudden could be considered harsh. But, breaching the \$1,000 mark was something India could see coming.

The Foreign Trade Policy, which was announced in 2015, as well as the review of the policy announced last year, talked about the need to re-calibrate existing export promotion schemes. However, nothing was done on the ground.

## India's stand at WTO:

In its defence, India has said that it believes that it is entitled to an eight-year phase-out period. The contention is based on the argument that when the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures was implemented in 1994-95, the countries with GNI higher than \$1,000 got eight years to get rid of their export subsidies and, therefore, it should get the same. But the two situations are not comparable as initially the phase-out period was extended to give comfort to members when the pact kicked in and more than two decades have passed since then.

## Way ahead:

The government should hold wide-ranging discussions with industry and related ministries to look at the best possible alternatives to the export subsidy schemes which could include technology upgrading funds, capital expenditure subsidies and funds for research and development.

## Conclusion:

The government needs to draw up alternative schemes. All the ministries need to take the matter seriously and cooperate with the commerce ministry to decide on ways to continue extending support to exporters without violating WTO rules.

## Connecting the dots:

- US recently took action against India's export subsidies at the World Trade Organisation. What is the issue about? Discuss how India should move further on the issue.

## TOPIC

### General Studies 2:

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

### General Studies 3:

- *Indian Economy and issue*
- *Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.*

## Happiness in India: World Happiness Report

## Introduction:

In the UN's World Happiness Report, published a few days ago, reveals Finland, Norway and Denmark bagged the first three positions, the remaining Scandinavian countries (Sweden and Iceland) found themselves in the top ten rankings. India on the other hand is ranked terribly low (133 out of 156 countries) alongside some Sub-Saharan African countries, dropping 11 spots from last year. Most of the emerging economies — Mexico (24), Brazil (28), Argentina (29), Malaysia (35), Russia (59), China (86) — are placed far ahead of India. All the South Asian countries also ranked better compared to their big brother.

## Measuring

## happiness:

The World Happiness Report cannot correctly measure the subjective feeling of pleasure and comfort, let alone happiness. This index is basically an appraisal of the general well-being of a nation rather than an indicator of personal happiness as many misunderstand.

- Besides measures of prosperity such as income and healthy life expectancy, the key variables that are used to ascertain happiness are generosity, having social support in times of trouble, and freedom to make life choices.
- Another important variable is trust, which is measured by the absence of corruption in business and government.

## Unhappy India

How could we explain India's awful performance among otherwise comparable countries? There is no single or simple explanation, but it is worth taking a critical look at the underpinning reasons through the prism of happiness variables. The following five points are not answers, but pointers to the making of the 'Great Indian Happiness Tragedy'.

- Despite being one of the fastest growing economies, India remains a non-egalitarian country, with burgeoning levels of economic inequality. An Oxfam survey in 2017 has revealed that India's richest 1 per cent has cornered almost 73 per cent of the total wealth created in the country.
- India's public health spending is well below the global average (just 1.4 per cent of GDP), leaving the deprived millions to pitiable public healthcare facilities. Oddly enough, even the well-off Indian professional class, who can afford expensive private healthcare, are not guaranteed a long, healthy and happy life. The shocking case of the early fading physicians in Kerala, the so-called most socially advanced State in India, signifies how scary the emerging situation is.
- India has failed in building a trustworthy social support system, helping people when they are in real trouble.

An atrocious incident was recently reported from Uttar Pradesh, where a team of patrolling policemen lets two teenage victims of an accident bleed to death as they “didn’t want blood to stain their car seats”. A perfect example of how little people can trust the state machinery.

- India’s political system and business establishments are unable to manage big cash flows in a sustainable, responsible and transparent way. Corrupt and fraudulent practices still hold the key as exemplified in the Nirav Modi episode and similar occurrences.
- The timid Indian response towards the Asia’s most vulnerable refugees, despite being a country that once welcomed Tibetans and Sri Lankans, illustrates that generosity and altruism are giving way to pseudo-nationalism and self-obsession.

### Conclusion:

Certain conceptual and methodological lacunae do exist in the Happiness Index. But it clearly exposes the deep-seated flaws in our social foundations making any grand claim for an imminent ‘advanced’ India as nothing more than a wild fantasy narrative.

### Connecting the dots:

- UN's World Happiness Report though has few flaws exposes deep seated flaws in our social foundations. Discuss.

### TOPIC

#### *General Studies 2:*

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

#### *General Studies 3:*

- *Mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment*

### New classification of the MSMEs

#### **Introduction:**

The Union Cabinet last month decided to change the basis of classification of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This bodes well for this important segment of India’s industrial base.

**Present****rules:**

Presently, enterprises qualify as micro, small or medium enterprises if their investment in plant and machinery (for manufacturing units) and equipment (for service providers) is within the limits laid down in Section 7 of the MSMED Act 2006, which are as follows:

Type of Enterprise	Investment in Plant of Machinery	Investment in Equipment
<b>Micro</b>	Not exceeding Rs 25 lakh	Not exceeding Rs 10 lakh
<b>Small</b>	More than Rs 25 lakh but not exceeding Rs 5 crore	More than Rs 10 lakh but not exceeding Rs 2 crore
<b>Medium</b>	More than Rs 5 crore but not exceeding Rs 10 crore	More than Rs 2 crore but not exceeding Rs 5 crore

- Although Section 7(8) of the Act provides for the Advisory Committee constituted under the Act to make recommendations regarding the need for higher investment by MSMEs in plant and machinery or equipment for technological upgradation, employment generation and enhanced competitiveness, the investment limits have remained unchanged since the commencement of the MSMED Act 2006. These limits are too low in the contemporary context.
- Classification of enterprises based on fixed monetary limits also places newer units at a disadvantage vis-a-vis those set up in earlier years as the former have to invest more for the same type of plant and machinery or equipment.
- More importantly, self-declaration by enterprises as regards the cost of investment at the time of registration with the authorities concerned entails verification, adding to the transaction cost.

The Union Cabinet has decided to change the basis of classification from investment in plant and machinery or equipment to annual turnover without making a distinction between manufacturing enterprises and service providers.

**Amendments made:**

- **The revised classification and eligibility thresholds:**

Type of Enterprise	Annual Turnover
<b>Micro</b>	Not exceeding Rs 5 crore
<b>Small</b>	More than Rs 5 crore but not exceeding Rs 75 crore
<b>Medium</b>	More than Rs 75 crore but not exceeding Rs 250 crore

- An enabling provision will be also be made in the MSSE Act 2006 to permit the Central Government to vary these limits in future by simply issuing a notification. This will ensure that the monetary limits remain contemporaneous at all times as changing

these limits will not require a formal amendment to the MSED Act 2006, which is a time-consuming and cumbersome process.

#### **Benefits:**

- The new system of classifying enterprises based on annual turnover will be more reliable, transparent and objective as the qualifying criteria will be verifiable with reference to the data available in the Goods and Services Tax network.
- This will also reduce transaction costs as it will no more be necessary to carry out any inspection.
- With a more realistic criterion linked with annual turnover, many enterprises that presently do not qualify should come within the ambit of the MSMED Act, 2006 and benefit from a large number of schemes promulgated by the government for this sector from time to time.
- Existing MSMEs should also be able to invest more in plant and machinery and equipment without losing out on the benefits available to them.

#### **Connecting the dots:**

- The Union Cabinet has recently decided to change the basis of classification of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. What are these changes and why are they beneficial? Discuss.

#### **TOPIC**

##### ***General Studies 2:***

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

##### ***General Studies 3:***

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

#### **Making Inland Water Transport viable by engaging private sector**

##### **Background:**

India has nearly 14,500 km of navigable waterways, yet inland water transport (IWT) accounts for less than 1 per cent of its freight traffic, compared with ~35 per cent in Bangladesh and ~20 per cent in Germany. This is despite IWT's better cost arithmetic and materially less polluting nature. The cost of transporting one tonne freight over 1 km by waterway is Rs. 1.19 compared with Rs.

2.28 and Rs. 1.41 by road and rail, respectively. And the cost of developing an inland waterway is barely 10 per cent of a four-lane highway of similar capacity.

#### **Recent moves by the government:**

- The government has passed an amendment to the Central Road Fund Act, 2000, proposing to allocate 2.5 per cent of the funds collected for development of waterways.
- The budget for next fiscal has allocated Rs. 228 crore to the sector and allowed the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) to raise Rs. 1,000 crore from the capital market.

#### **Challenge:**

The sector's investment requirements are ~ Rs. 90,000 crore over the next few years to develop navigable routes, connectivity infrastructure to and from hinterland, terminals, vessels and repairing facilities.

#### **Way ahead:**

Public private partnership is the need of the hour. Given IWT's nascence, the government and IWAI need to work on two channels to draw private players in-

#### **Development of physical infrastructure:**

The government should focus on developing navigation, channel operation and maintenance, and external connectivity infrastructure.

Private players can undertake terminal development, cargo and passenger handling, and building low-draft vessels and related repair facilities.

#### **Policy level interventions:**

Incentivizing cargo transport through inland waterways is required to ensure there is enough freight to make physical infrastructure development viable, the following measures can be taken:

- Offering incentives, including tax subsidies, for transporting a portion of industry cargo through IWT.
- The Government can mandate/incentivise industries in the proximity of national waterways to use this mode for a portion of their shipments. Public sector entities such as Food Corporation of India, power plants and refineries can be similarly mandated.
- Higher road taxes can be levied on transportation of coal and inflammable material over longer distances because they are harmful to environment or pose a danger to those in proximity.

- Many waterways run parallel to transportation corridors and urban centres. For synergy, the government can promote industrial corridors along riverbanks and foster waterways-based industrialisation.
- Capital dredging, along with different waterways, will also offer opportunities to reclaim land along riverbanks.
- In many States, there are ferry services on national waterways, but these are mostly unorganised country boats. Terminal facilities are also woefully inadequate. Along with passenger terminal development, the government needs to offer financial support to ferry operators to improve safety and facilitate insurance coverage. The Centre and States need to join hands to package and market river tourism in a big way to trigger a virtuous cycle.

#### **Resolving the protocol route issue with Bangladesh:**

This is critical to the sector's development. Indo-Bangladesh joint dredging projects in on river Yamuna and on river Kushiya in Bangladesh have been long delayed. Completion of these projects will enable movement of larger vessels from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh to Sadiya in Assam through Bangladesh and crank up waterways cargo traffic.

#### **Conclusion:**

A holistic and concerted effort can change India's transportation landscape, de-congest arterial roads, and even improve quality of life across geographies. The above-mentioned policy interventions thus should be done on priority basis.

#### **Connecting the dots:**

- The government has taken various steps for the development of Inland Water Transport system. However, to make it viable the private sector should be engaged. For this adequate policy interventions should be made. Discuss.

#### **TOPIC**

#### **General Studies 3:**

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

#### **Creating enough jobs in India**



**Background:**

India's demographic dividend is both an opportunity and a challenge. By 2020 its estimated average age of 29 and dependency ratio of 0.4 will be the lowest in the world.

But finding jobs for 12 million young people entering the labour force each year, and millions transferring out of low productivity agricultural jobs, is a major and continuing task.

**Positive trends:**

- Allocation of labour is improving in areas where it is difficult to measure it.
- Productivity in the informal sector is growing at a higher rate compared to the formal.
- To some extent business is also migrating where labour is — to States and rural areas.
- The rapid growth in rural non-agricultural employment is one of the most promising ways rural incomes will rise. The rural share of India's workforce may still be 70 per cent but agriculture now accounts for only 64.1 per cent of rural employment.
- India's urbanisation is also proceeding faster than it is measured or recorded. Rapid growth in so-called census towns again suggests a rapid pace of non-rural employment growth.

**Shorter-term measures:**

These need to address current skills shortages and be flexibly adapted to the nature of the workforce and to industry requirements.

- Three-month training can equip first-generation literate rural school-leavers for retail malls.
- Three-month nano degrees can also re-train and equip industry workers with new skills.

Such short-term training can provide quality ladders, allowing workers to improve from whatever their level is and industry to find the required skills.

Removing two major bottlenecks-

- The completion certificate, government programmes require is difficult to get from the informal sector — this reduces the programme's contribution in general and to upskilling the informal sector in particular.  
There is a fear that government funds will be misused without formal certification. Flexible big data and aadhaar-based verification should be designed and accepted.
- Industry training programmes are less effective because industry bodies do not agree to common standards. They tend to vary with their foreign collaborators' needs. Regulators must ensure standardisation so that in-house technical training in one industry is relevant in another.

**In the medium term:**

Numbers available for the 2000s show *employment elasticity in Indian manufacturing was only 0.09 compared to a world average of 0.3.*

- In order to change this, labour laws that induce industry to substitute towards capital need to be modified.
- Relatively low-skill labour-intensive industries could be encouraged. These include textiles, electronics, chemicals and food processing.
- Skill programmes must better match industry requirements.
- Apart from manufacturing, construction has a higher employment elasticity of 0.19. Stimulus to low income housing, and signs of revival of construction in general, will improve job creation.
- The service industry will continue to be a major employer. Health and education services are severely under-provided. Their expansion at all levels will improve the capability of the workforce even while providing jobs.

The Indian Medical Council that creates entry barriers and chokes the expansion in the supply of doctors and nurses needs to be reformed.

New teaching facilities should be judged on the basis of accreditation and outcomes rather than infrastructure, and competition encouraged.

#### **Long-term measures:**

- The quality of primary education needs to improve.
- Tackling automation-It is feared automation will destroy jobs especially low-skill ones. For example, robots are being developed to cut cloth so that textile production can also be automated. Answering robots are already replacing workers in call centres. But historically, although technological change makes some occupations obsolete, it also creates new jobs, and raises income levels. Mechanical jobs get taken away, but new complex tasks are created. Rising levels and quality of education are essential for the mastery and creation of new highly productive jobs that should define the India of tomorrow.

#### **Connecting the dots:**

- In India, finding jobs for 12 million young people entering the labour force each year, and millions transferring out of low productivity agricultural jobs continues to be a challenging task. Discuss the measures to tackle this challenge.

## **GOVERNANCE / WELFARE**

### **TOPIC**

#### **General Studies 2:**

- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*
- *Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.*

#### **Affordable Housing for All: Providing more than loan subsidies**

##### **Introduction:**

The Government's promise of delivering over 22 million houses in the next five years is not without challenges

Affordable housing is defined by property prices ranging from about Rs. 1 to Rs. 2 lakh per dwelling, up to around Rs. 30 lakh.

##### **Critical juncture:**

The housing shortage in the country is still pegged at close to 19 million.

The Government has promised to deliver over 22 million houses over the next five years.

The road ahead is not easy.

- On the return on investment front, builders find it more attractive to construct high-value projects rather than low-value ones, with *smaller margins* to work with. The cost of construction of luxury properties does not increase proportionately with the overall cost of the property.
- If a builder does decide to develop a low-cost property, there is *uncertainty around the repayment capacity of individuals* looking out for such houses. Any change in the financial condition of the household can relatively easily result in a delinquency situation. Notwithstanding certain attractive loan-related subsidies (most importantly through the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna, PMAY), the cost of repaying a housing loan still remains higher than the rental yield in most cities.

Given these issues, it is more than likely that the country will face **both a demand side** (for buying rather than renting property in the low-cost housing segment) **and supply-side challenge** (increasing the pace of building more houses to achieve the Government's target by 2022).

**Way ahead-**

- Learning from others:**  
 In some countries, there is a growing sense that state-funded rental housing can solve a part of the problem. In the Czechoslovak Republic, Denmark, the Netherlands and the UK, as much as 30 per cent of housing is 'socially' created and rented out. Another partial solution can be via long-term subsidies for purchase of property. In the Netherlands, the so-called 'Koopgarant' programmes allow people to purchase property at a lower cost, thereby reducing the loan burden. A slightly different version of the subsidised owner-occupancy housing was formulated in Spain, which allows individuals to purchase property for a highly subsidised rate, and which can further be sold for the prevailing market rate only after a period of 30 years.
- We need to recognise that affordable housing issues cannot be solved only through making loans cheaper but through long-term financial support to the industry.

**Conclusion:**

The construction of affordable housing has one of the highest multiplier effects on the economy and given the Government's recent announcement to construct an additional 1 crore homes in rural areas, the Government needs to take additional steps over and above tax breaks and loan subsidies to address these issues.

**Connecting the dots:**

- Providing affordable housing to all in India seems to be an ambitious target to be achieved by 2022. Discuss the challenges and the way out.

**TOPIC*****General Studies 2:***

- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*
- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes*

**Bringing the MOTTAINAI concept of Japan to India: Keeping Environment Clean****The concept of MOTTAINAI**

MOTTAINAI is a Japanese word that literally means “wasteful”. It is used to express dismay at wasteful actions. It conveys the feeling of veneration that the Japanese people have towards the environment, and their firm resolve to protect it.

#### **The culture of MOTTAINAI in Japan:**

- In Japan, children are taught to eat every last grain of rice in their bowl, because even a single grain is too precious to be wasted, given the energy and resources invested in producing it.
- Japanese people perceive nature to be sacred. The ancient Japanese belief of Shintoism says that God is everywhere in nature, including the trees, mountains, and rice fields. This sense of reverence towards nature is also shared by the Indian people, since the environment is deeply embedded into the scriptures of Hinduism and Buddhism.
- Cherishing the “mottainai” spirit, Japan has cultivated a culture that follows the 3Rs: reduce (garbage), reuse, and recycle. One practical example of the 3Rs is the segregation of garbage. In Japan, it is obligatory to sort garbage before throwing it away. All garbage must be segregated into combustible and non-combustible piles; recyclable items must also be separated. This has become a habit, and it is done naturally and autonomously by each family as a regular activity.

#### **Way ahead for India: Lessons from Japan**

- Raising awareness and mobilizing the public. No tool works more efficiently and effectively than the education system and the network it wields. The youth must be encouraged to imbibe the “mottainai” spirit.
- Japan also once suffered from severe environmental pollution. In the late 1950s and 1960s, Japan enjoyed a period of high economic growth, riding on the booming heavy and chemical industries sector. Environmental problems still exist in the world, but there are many previous examples that India can use as references.
- A key solution is technology. During the period of heavy pollution in Japan, Japanese companies developed numerous state-of-the-art technologies to help reverse the situation. Technology for suppressing the production of dioxins released from garbage incineration is one such example. The harnessing of biomass energy from agricultural residues is another area in which Japanese companies are making enormous headway. Japan has also become a world leader when it comes to electric vehicles. Japan also has a long history of producing eco-friendly hybrid vehicles.

**The “Blue Sky Initiatives”:**

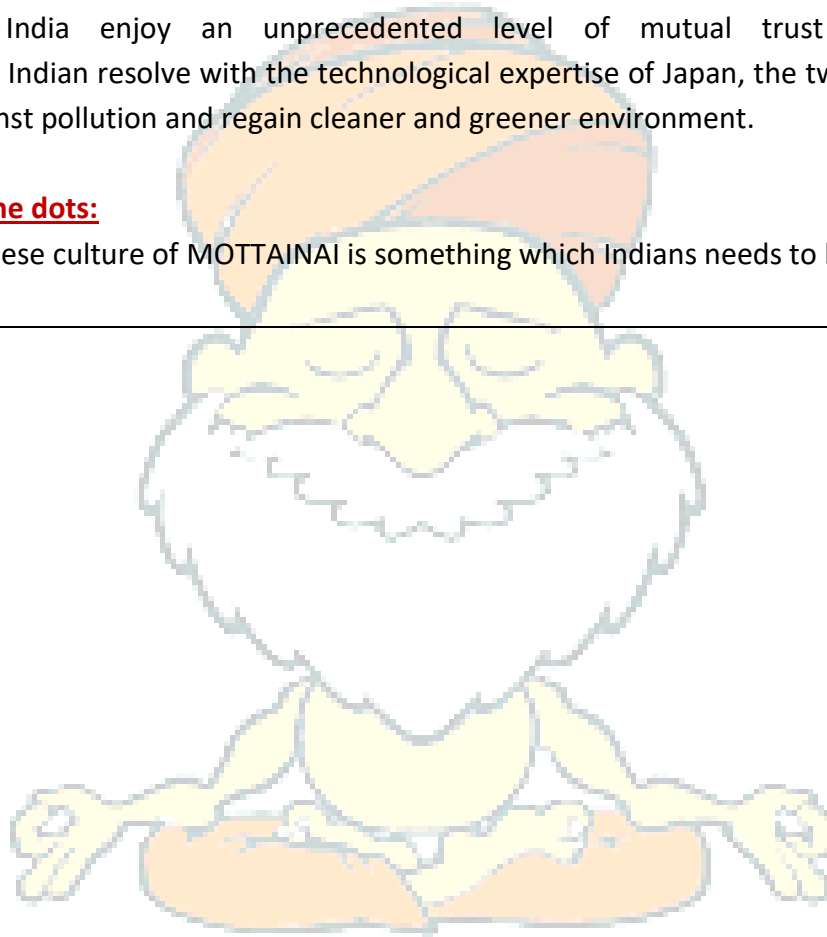
The Embassy of Japan in India has launched the “Blue Sky Initiatives”, which aim to mitigate air pollution by ensuring that the best and latest technologies will be made available to India. For instance, exhaust from coal thermal power plants is one of the primary causes of air pollution in India. Japanese companies have developed equipment that can filter out particulate matter.

**Conclusion:**

Japan and India enjoy an unprecedented level of mutual trust and friendship. By combining Indian resolve with the technological expertise of Japan, the two nations can win the fight against pollution and regain cleaner and greener environment.

**Connecting the dots:**

- The Japanese culture of MOTTAINAI is something which Indians needs to learn. 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*

#### **For the success of Modicare (NHPS)**

##### **Background:**

India recently began a bold experiment in the delivery of healthcare that, if successful, will bring medicine and treatment to 500 million poor and near-poor Indians. The success of the National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS)—known as Modicare, after Prime Minister Narendra Modi—depends crucially on whether people sign up for the service, whether they use it, and whether hospitals participate.

##### **Challenges:**

For India, the sheer scale of its programme magnifies its many challenges, including how to communicate the benefits of the plan, and how to encourage enrolment.

**Reference article:** National Health Protection Scheme: Challenges  
<https://iasbaba.com/2018/02/iasbabas-daily-current-affairs-prelims-mains-focus-28th-february-2018/>

##### **The demand side:**

- No matter how generous the eligibility criteria and coverage of Modicare, it will have limited effect unless eligible households enrol. Its predecessor, RSBY, suffered low uptake rates. Although it cost participants just Rs30 to enrol, only 54% of eligible families participated. Door-to-door enrolment may help.
- Modicare's impact will also be blunted if households do not use the programme to obtain care. For example, RSBY only increased utilization by 1 percentage point, to 2.8% of households. Reasons being- many households attempted to use the card but failed, many others forgot their insurance card or did not know to use it, the hospital or insurance company could not process the insurance card or rejected coverage.

**Solution:**

- The government must expend more effort on information and education campaigns.
- Structural changes planned under Modicare, such as using Aadhaar and hospital-based biometric ID, should reduce the paperwork and hassle costs for beneficiaries.
- In addition, Modicare must ensure that hospitals have functioning payment systems and do not turn away patients.

#### **The supply side:**

- Health insurance is worthless without accessible healthcare facilities. This is a critical obstacle for Modicare. Nearly half of Indian children live in villages without such services.  
Solution:  
Modicare cannot fix this problem in the near term. However, over time, by increasing the number of covered patients, an insurance programme can incentivize the private sector to build more facilities.
- A study shows that only few hospitals registered under RSBY actually provide any treatment to RSBY beneficiaries. An important reason is that RSBY pays hospitals lower-than-market rates for care.  
Solution:  
To address this, Modicare must pay more for treatment, and it should scale prices depending on the cost of land and labour in different locations.

#### **Other**

#### **factors:**

Sound financing and a strong data infrastructure are also important.

- Any financing scheme must be backed by a strong data backbone, without which claims can't be tracked and paid, and without which the plan will ultimately fail. India must leverage its IT prowess to get the data backbone right.
- With programmes of this scale, roll-outs matter. At Rs5 lakh in annual per capita hospital expenses, Modicare is over 15 times more generous than the Central government's previous health care programme (RSBY), and between two to three times more generous than any existing state programme. Insurance premiums are estimated at Rs1,100-1,200 per household per year, and the full programme could cost Rs12,000 crore. Efficient design and management are key to using these significant resources wisely.

#### **Conclusion:**

With an estimated 7% of India's population pushed into poverty each year due to medical expenditures, Modicare intends to provide an essential safety net for the poor. The government can learn from the lessons of RSBY to get Modicare's implementation right. The health of millions of Indians depends on it.



**Connecting the dots:**

- Discuss key features of National Health Protection Scheme(NHPS). Also analyze the demand and supply challenges involved.

**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*

**For the success of NHPS****Background:**

India recently announced an ambitious plan called the National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS) to provide government-sponsored insurance to roughly 500 million people or nearly 40% of India's population.

**Is the NHPS a good idea?**

Definitely yes. There are several reasons:

**Financial wellbeing:**

- India under-invests in the healthcare of its citizens and this is affecting the health and financial well-being of Indians.
- Out-of-pocket payments for healthcare services are very high in our country (about 70%, according to the National Sample Survey Office, 2014), which causes impoverishment to nearly 7% of our population.
- Health-financing policy directly affects the financial protection of people when direct payments that are made to obtain health services do not threaten their living standards.

So, the NHPS should be considered a significant move towards universal health coverage.

**Cost-effective:**

Providing insurance to the poor not only saves lives but is also "cost-effective". It provides good value for money as the benefits of insurance far outweigh the costs.

**Case****study:**

Vajpayee Arogyashree Scheme (VAS)- health insurance scheme in Karnataka. A study found that-

- VAS lowered mortality for covered conditions for BPL families and erased rich-poor disparities in mortality rates. Most of this reduction was due to fewer deaths from cancer and cardiac conditions, which account for the bulk of VAS claims.
- They found that people covered by insurance were more likely to seek healthcare for their health issues and symptoms (such as chest pain), had better access to tertiary care hospitals, and had better post-operative outcomes likely due to seeking care at higher quality hospitals.
- Insurance lowered out-of-pocket medical costs and lowered the chances of having catastrophic expenditures that are likely to push people into poverty.

**What more needs to be done?**

We need to pay attention to both the design of NHPS and its implementation:

**Making insurance easy to use**

Insurance that is difficult to use will not be used. Therefore, we need to streamline both the enrollment process and access to care once enrolled.

- The number of forms people face to enrol in NHPS must be minimized. Aadhaar makes it easy to verify eligibility and enrol. For this, Aadhaar should be made readily available to demographics where it does not exist.
- Once enrolled, access to care should be provided where people live. This is a challenge in rural India but can be addressed with innovative models. For example, In Karnataka, health camps organized by super specialty hospitals were successful in improving access to care. Telemedicine in Uttar Pradesh where patients at primary health centre are connected to specialist doctors in Andhra Pradesh for virtual OPD care.

**Right targeting:**

- A programme financed by public money needs to conserve resources. Therefore, we should provide government sponsored insurance only to those who cannot afford insurance on their own. "Mission creep" or mis-targeting, however, is a significant threat as we witnessed in the case of Aarogyasri, where nearly 80% of Andhra Pradesh's population reported having coverage while the scheme was exclusively aimed at population below poverty line. This is why the Aadhaar platform becomes fundamental to enrolment to the NHPS.

- In addition to targeting the poor, insurance should target health conditions where disease burden is high and effective interventions are available but underused.

### **Contracting with private hospitals and clinics**

Nearly 75% of out-patient department care and 55% of in-patient department care in India is exclusively from the private sector. Therefore, private hospitals and clinics need to be part of NHPS. We thus need to monitor them and create the right incentives for them.

- Not all hospitals should be eligible for NHPS. Only hospitals that meet certain quality standards should be allowed to serve NHPS beneficiaries. Quality should be measured not only by the infrastructure available at the hospital but also by actual patient outcomes achieved.
- NHPS should institute prior authorization for expensive medical procedures and surgeries. NHPS doctors should review the medical records of NHPS beneficiaries to make sure that the surgery is medically warranted and meets evidence-based guidelines.

### **Using data to learn and evolve**

The NHPS will have access to health information of 500 million people. This is an unprecedented amount of data and if curated well, it can have far-reaching applications.

- It can be used for comparative effectiveness research or understanding which treatments work in the real world rather than just in clinical trials.
- Treatments and interventions can be highly contextualized to local conditions. It can be used to advance personalized or precision medicine. That is, tailoring treatment based on individual genetic or other characteristics.
- It can be used to improve the health system and understand how different delivery and financing designs affect care outcomes and costs.
- It can be used to improve transparency by providing information on quality of care provided by different hospitals or clinics in India.

### **Conclusion:**

Not addressing health issue disproportionately affects the weaker and vulnerable sections of society – women and children.

A well run NHPS has the potential to become the cornerstone of India's healthcare needs for several future generations.

### **Connecting the dots:**

- Importance of an insurance scheme for country like India is immense, given it promotes financial well-being and is also cost-effective. In this light discuss steps required for successful implementation of NHPS.

**Also read:** For the success of Modicare(NHPS)  
<https://iasbaba.com/2018/03/iasbabas-daily-current-affairs-prelims-mains-focus-6th-march-2018/>

## 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*

### Tracking health status

#### **Introduction:**

As India moves towards creating structures for universal healthcare with the National Health Protection Scheme, we need to challenge following beliefs-

- Private practitioners are less suited to deliver healthcare services than public healthcare professionals based on the presumption that private practitioners are committed to profit while government doctors exist to serve the public. This has resulted into lack of institutional systems to rope in private practitioners into the public health system.
- Health outcomes of patients are immaterial, that there is no need to track patients or maintain records, spending more money on healthcare is enough.

The fear that the National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS) will promote corporate hospitals and put healthcare out of reach of the people exists. Whether it does or not will depend on the institutional systems that are put in place to regulate the NHPS.

#### **Tracking health status:**

It means that patient outcomes like disease, death, infection and so on, be regularly ascertained, reported and monitored. In some countries, it is routine to set up such reporting systems.

- In India, till date, there has been no institutional framework fixing such key indicators, nor is there any general rule mandating that these should be reported regularly, whether in the

public or private sector. Since India already have enough IT professionals for setting up such systems we can easily create one.

- Doctors, like all professionals, whether in the public or private sector, respond to institutional signals. If there is an institutional requirement to report patient-related indicators by the government, that in turn would pressurise the managements of private institutions to set up systems for tracking health status. In the absence of system-wide requirements, it is merely ideology and individual conscience that determines the quality of care available to patients.

### **Making private practitioners an important part of the public healthcare:**

- It is counterproductive to insist that private practitioners should not be an integral part of the overall government effort to provide good healthcare to people. Such an insistence makes the notion of maintaining disease-specific countrywide registers in which individual doctors and hospitals participate almost impossible.

A truly universal healthcare system is driven by protocols that care for the patient and integrate all practitioners. Once such a system is put in place along with regular reporting, the distinction between private and public becomes meaningless.

### **Conclusion:**

To successfully put care and quality back into healthcare, it is important to set up this kind of system to track the health status of patients. This will help remove smoothen the public-private healthcare debate.

### **Connecting the dots:**

- India lacks a system to track health status of its citizens. Discuss the importance of creating an institutional system so that a track can be maintained.

## **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*

### **Eliminating TB in India by 2025: Is possible**

**Introduction:**

With about 2.8 million cases, India is unfortunately the tuberculosis capital of the world. While the annual incidence has reduced from 289 persons per 100,000 in year 2000 to 217 per 100,000 in 2015, eliminating TB would necessitate a dramatic reduction to less than 1 person per 10,00,000.

**The ‘End TB Summit’:**

The Prime Minister launched a campaign to **eliminate the disease by 2025**, five years ahead of the global deadline.

**Steps taken by the Government to escalate the fight against TB:**

- Launch of a new National Strategic Plan in 2017.
- The thrice-weekly treatment regimen has also been changed to a daily fixed-dose drug regimen.
- In Budget 2018-19, Rs. 600 crore was allocated for providing nutritional support to TB patients.

**What more needs to be done?**

Apart from scaling up access to new diagnostics and drugs, we need to-

- Address the determinants of TB.
- Combat social stigma.
- Engage private practitioners.
- Strengthen research.

**Addressing the determinants of TB:**

Various factors, including overcrowding, poor hygiene, malnutrition and lack of access to clean cooking fuels, contribute to India's enormous TB burden. According to the National Family Health Survey-4 (NFHS-4), the prevalence of medically treated TB increases with more people sleeping in a room. Similarly, among households that depend on straw, shrubs or grass for cooking, TB prevalence was as high as 567 persons per 100,000 compared to 206 per 100,000 for households that use clean fuels.

How to address?

- Several flagship programmes of the Government including the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Housing for All, and the National Nutrition Mission have a critical role to play in preventing TB.

- Communities will also need to be engaged for reversing tobacco use and alcoholism, key drivers of the TB epidemic, through the health and wellness centres announced in the budget.

### **Integrating private sector**

Over 50 per cent of TB patients are treated by private practitioners. Patients often visit multiple private providers before reaching a Directly Observed Treatment Short-Course (DOTS) centre.

Issue:

- Delayed diagnosis and initiation of treatment not only jeopardises the patient's chances of making a timely recovery but also increases the risk of transmission to others.
- Further, there is considerable heterogeneity in the knowledge levels of private practitioners about the protocols for TB diagnosis and treatment.

Step taken:

TB was declared a notifiable disease in 2012, following which reporting by the private sector increased to 14.8 cases per 100,000 population in 2015, compared to only 0.3 per 100,000 in 2013.

To increase the notification rates further, the Health ministry has taken a landmark decision to make *non-reporting of TB patients a punishable offence*.

Moving ahead:

- Developing a comprehensive set of national guidelines could strengthen private sector engagement in TB.
- Efforts should be made to map and categorise private practitioners based on the nature of their education, experience and services provided.

### **Strengthening research:**

- We urgently require rapid and cost-effective point-of-care devices that can be deployed for TB diagnosis in different settings across the country.
- Additionally, new drug regimens are necessary for responding to the spread of drug-resistant strains as is an effective vaccine for preventing TB in adults.
- Operational research for optimising service delivery is also critical because it is often the case that diagnostics and drugs do not reach those who need them the most.

The India TB Research and Development Corporation launched in 2016 must play a pivotal role in accelerating these efforts.

### **Ending social stigma:**

TB is not a health issue alone. It is a broader societal challenge. Patients often hesitate to seek treatment or deny their condition altogether for fear of losing

social standing. The consequence is that TB becomes a death sentence for many even though it is a fully curable illness. Women are disproportionately affected with estimates suggesting that 100,000 Indian women are asked to leave their homes every year after being diagnosed with TB.

What needs to be done?

- Mass awareness campaigns like **'TB Harega Desh Jeetega'** can play an important role in breaking social taboos.
- Local communication channels such as community radios and street plays must also be leveraged.
- Children should be engaged through anganwadis and schools for disseminating accurate messages about TB to their families.

### Conclusion:

Eliminating TB by 2025 is a stretch goal no doubt but one that is not impossible if the public and private sectors come together to make the requisite investments in financing, research, human resource and technology. If anything, setting a target that is five years ahead of the global deadline signals much needed intent and ambition.

### Connecting the dots:

- The government has launched a campaign to eliminate TB by 2025, five years ahead of the global deadline. Despite the challenges involved, it is possible to do so. Discuss.

### TOPIC

#### **General Studies 3:**

- *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources*
- *Issues relating to poverty and hunger*
- *Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance-applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures*



## Outsmarting Tuberculosis

### **Background:**

The incidence rate of tuberculosis (TB) in India is estimated at 200-300 cases per 100,000 population per year. As a comparison, in western Europe it is five per 100,000 per year. India's estimated annual TB burden is 28 lakh, 27% of the global total; our population is only 18%. Every day 1,200 Indians die of TB — 10 every three minutes. The tragedy 1,200 families face every day is beyond imagination. No other disease or calamity has such Himalayan magnitude. We have become the TB capital of the world.

Infection with TB bacilli is the necessary cause of TB. Cough and blood in sputum occur only in lung TB.

TB can affect the lungs, brain, bones, joints, the liver, intestines or for that matter any organ and can progress slowly or kill in weeks.

### **Three processes: infection, progression, transmission**

#### **Infection:**

Infection occurs when TB bacilli are inhaled. Bacilli may stay in the lungs or travel to other organs. Infection is lifelong, with bacilli lying dormant. This phase is "latent TB", diagnosed by a tuberculin skin test (TST).

The "annual rate of TB infection" (ARTI) is about 1%. Cumulatively, 40% to 70% of us are living with latent TB. From this reservoir pool, a few progress to TB disease, one by one, 5-30 years, average 20 years, later.

#### **Progression:**

Progression occurs when bacilli become active, multiply and cause pathology; now we have "active TB".

#### **Transmission:**

When active TB affects the lungs, the bacilli find an exit route to the atmosphere, necessary for transmission.

### **Way ahead:**

- Beginning with schools, public education on TB and its prevention must replace ignorance and misconceptions.
- Transmission and infection- If no one spits in public places and if everyone practises cough and sneeze etiquette (covering one's mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing), the TB affected will also fall in line.

- A person with lung TB disseminates TB bacilli over several weeks. This is why TB treatment has not brought down the TB burden. To block transmission, treatment should begin as soon as a symptom shows up.
- Partnership with the private sector is essential for early diagnosis of TB. Delay in diagnosis is a fallout of the lack of efficient primary health care. Universal primary health care, a basic human right, and a diagnostic algorithm for early diagnosis are essential for TB control. Every country that has reduced TB incidence practises universal health care.

### Conclusion:

To outsmart TB bacilli, we must intercept infection, progression and transmission. What is needed is the concerted use of all interventions — biomedical and socio-behavioural. Any further delay may convert a controllable disease into an uncontrollable one, because of increasing frequency of resistance to drugs against TB.

### Connecting the dots:

- To outsmart TB bacilli, we must intercept infection, progression and transmission concerted use of all interventions — biomedical and socio-behavioural- is required. Analyze.

### TOPIC

#### *General Studies 3:*

- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues*
- *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector or Services relating to Health*

### Passive euthanasia: Made legal In India

In

news:

The Supreme Court recently upheld that the fundamental right to a “meaningful existence” includes a person’s choice to die without suffering. It has permitted a ‘living will’ by patients, authorising the withdrawal of medical support if they slip into medically irretrievable conditions such as irreversible coma.

***Passive euthanasia is now legal.***

### **The difference between passive and active euthanasia:**

- In active euthanasia, medical professionals, or a relevant authority, deliberately act upon a patient’s desire (such as giving an injection or medication) to cause the patient to die.

- In passive euthanasia, the patient dies because the mechanism that keeps the patient alive is removed (life-support machines, feeding tube, a life-extending operation, drugs).

Passive euthanasia is legal in many countries but active euthanasia is legal only in Canada, the Netherlands, Switzerland and a few states in the US.

### **The SC verdict:**

The core philosophy underlying the Supreme Court's verdict allowing passive euthanasia and giving legal status to 'advance directives' is that the right to a dignified life extends up to the point of having a dignified death. The verdict lays down a broad legal framework for protecting the dignity of a terminally ill patient or one in a persistent vegetative state (PVS) with no hope of cure or recovery. For, in such circumstances, "accelerating the process of death for reducing the period of suffering constitutes a right to live with dignity". The court has invoked its inherent power under Article 142 of the Constitution to grant legal status to advance directives, and its directives will hold good until Parliament enacts legislation on the matter.

### **'Living will', or an advance directive:**

A practice whereby a person, while in a competent state of mind, leaves written instructions on the sort of medical treatment that may or may not be administered in the event of her reaching a stage of terminal illness.

### **Past judgements:**

In the past 24 years, the SC has delivered four judgments on this subject.

- In the P Ratinam (1994) case, a two-judge bench held that the right to life includes the right to die as every fundamental right has both positive and negative connotations: Just as the right to "free speech" includes the "right to silence", the right to life includes the "right to die".
- The Ratinam verdict was overruled within two years by a two-judge bench in the Gian Kaur case (1996).
- In 2011, a two-judge bench headed by Justice Markandey Katju validated passive euthanasia in the Aruna Shanbaug case.
- But in 2014, a three-judge bench noted the inconsistencies in the 2011 verdict and made a reference to a constitution bench, leading to the latest verdict.

### **Implications:**

- The judgment is favourable to patients who will now be able to avoid needless medical interventions.

- The decision will also save a lot of money and agony for patients and their families, and prevent unnecessary treatments for the terminally ill.

#### Issues:

- There can be instances wherein the patient may have been coerced to write the will. Sometimes a living will written at a certain juncture of a person's life may not be applicable after a period of time when circumstances may have changed.
- To decide that there is no hope in continuing the treatment and that there is zero possibility of recovery precludes the astonishing ability of the human body to recuperate. As long as there is life, there is hope.
- Even with the legalization of euthanasia, the "choice" to die may sometimes not be the final prerogative of the patient. The patient could be too ill to decide. Here, the decision-makers possibly will be the medical team and the patients' relatives, not the patient.

#### Way ahead:

- India needs improved access to high-quality healthcare for the terminally ill, referred to as palliative care — right from the time an illness is diagnosed till the end of life. The WHO defines palliative care as a multi-disciplinary approach that improves the quality of life of patients with life-threatening illnesses, and their families, by relieving suffering and pain — physical, psycho-social and spiritual. As of now, there are six million people who need palliative care, while there are only 1,400 centres, making it one centre for every 4,300 patients.
- Living will make sense when coupled with a medical power of attorney and independent third-party monitoring. This will allow for a middle way considering all the interests at play: the right of the patient, the state's interest in human life, and the interest of the patient's family.

#### Conclusion:

The Supreme Court has taken a bold decision. It must be easy for a family to put into action a patient's desire to die and this will depend on how quickly the process of medical/judicial reviews and verifications take place. If done tardily and with insensitivity, the whole purpose can be self-defeating.

#### Connecting the dots:

- In one of the landmark judgement recently, the Supreme court legalised passive euthanasia along with providing guidelines for advanced directives. Discuss the implications of this verdict.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **TOPIC**

#### ***General Studies 2:***

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

- *Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.*

### **International Solar Alliance: Multiple opportunities for India**

#### **Introduction:**

India has often sit at the high table of global negotiations. On the contrary, it is also many a times seen by the rest of the world as a deal breaker on issues such as global trade and climate change.

#### **Background:**

The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is a breakthrough in our global positioning. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been a driving force ever since he first announced the idea at the India-Africa Summit in New Delhi in October 2015 and followed this up with more concrete moves during the United Nations climate change talks in Paris in November 2015, with France being an important partner. India has suddenly become a catalyst in the global attempts at capping climate change. This is *important in a geopolitical sense* when China is clearly expanding its global footprint. There are now 121 countries which have signed up for the global solar alliance.

#### **Domestic**

#### **commitments:**

Central to this new role in global affairs is the domestic commitment to generate 100 gigawatts (GW) of solar energy by 2022, part of the broader 175GW target for renewable energy. The strategic thought behind this: India has to push towards mass prosperity at a time when climate change is a huge concern.

#### **Key challenges: Ways ahead**

- Unilateralism will not do- Fighting climate change cannot come at the cost of halting the urgent fight against poverty. Global initiatives should always be seen through the lens of national interest. That is why an international alliance based on credible commitments is important.
- The rich countries that are responsible for most of the stock of excess carbon in the atmosphere as well as the high current levels of per capita carbon emissions (as against national aggregates) need to be pushed to provide asymmetrical funding for climate change mitigation and technology transfers. This will continue to be an important challenge for the global solar alliance.
- The shift to solar energy should not be seen only as a defence mechanism. It can also be an opportunity. The fight against climate change—and the broader move to low-carbon economies—is likely to create the next big technological wave. New technology will be the critical factor in the transition to a green economy which also grows rapidly, and India should take a shot at global leadership.

### Conclusion:

ISA thus offers many opportunities —from geopolitical advantages to economic benefits in the next wave of global innovation.

### Connecting the dots:

- International solar alliance offers many opportunities —from geopolitical advantages to economic benefits. Discuss.

### TOPIC

#### *General Studies 2:*

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

#### *General Studies 3:*

- *Conservation, Environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.*
- *Water Pollution, Wastewater management.*

### Nature-based solutions for water related issues

### Background:

This year's World Water Development Report makes it clear that nature-based solutions —

which are also aligned with the principles and aims of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — can offer answers to our most pressing water-related challenges. Business-as-usual approaches to water security are no longer viable. The water-related challenges we face today are immense.

#### **The issue of water scarcity:**

- The world's population is expected to increase from 7.6 billion (2017) to between 9.4 and 10.2 billion people (2050), with two-thirds of them living in cities.
- UN estimates are that more than half of this anticipated growth will be in Africa (1.3 billion) and Asia (0.75 billion). Therefore, those most in need of water will be in developing or emerging economies.
- Climate change is also impacting the global water cycle with wetter regions generally becoming wetter and drier regions drier. An estimated 3.6 billion people now live in areas that could face water scarcity for at least a month in a year, with that number increasing to 4.8 and 5.7 billion by 2050.
- The International Water Management Institute estimates that total demand could increase from 680 billion cubic metres (BCM) to 833 BCM by 2025, and to 900 BCM by 2050.
- By 2050, countries already facing water scarcity challenges may also be forced to cope with the decreased availability of surface water resources.

India faces major threats to its water security, with most water bodies near urban centres heavily polluted.

Inter-State disputes over river resources are also becoming more intense and widespread.

#### **Deteriorating water quality:**

Along with water scarcity, there is the issue of water quality.

- Since the 1990s, water pollution has worsened in most rivers in Africa, Asia and Latin America, according to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).
- An estimated 80% of industrial and municipal wastewater is released without any prior treatment, with detrimental impacts on human health and ecosystems.
- A Central Pollution Control Board report indicates that almost half of India's inter-State rivers are polluted. Sewage from 650 cities and towns along 302 polluted river stretches in the country increased from 38,000 million litres per day (MLD) in 2009 to 62,000 MLD in 2015. It found that the untreated sewage and industrial waste was a major cause of pollution in 16 of 40 inter-State rivers in the country.

#### **Way ahead:**

- Given the transboundary nature of most river basins, regional cooperation will be critical to addressing projected water quality challenges.
- Nature-based solutions can address overall water scarcity through “supply-side management,” and are recognised as the main solution to achieving sustainable water for agriculture.
- Environmentally-friendly agricultural systems like those which use practices such as conservation tillage, crop diversification, legume intensification and biological pest control work as well as intensive, high-input systems. The environmental co-benefits of nature-based solutions to increasing sustainable agricultural production are substantial as there are decreased pressures on land conversion and reduced pollution, erosion and water requirements.
- Constructed wetlands for wastewater treatment can also be a cost-effective, nature-based solution that provides effluent of adequate quality for several non-potable uses (irrigation) and additional benefits that include energy production. Natural and constructed wetlands also biodegrade or immobilise a range of emerging pollutants.
- Watershed management is another nature-based solution that can also spur local economic development, job creation, biodiversity protection and climate resilience.
- Nature-based solutions are closely aligned with traditional and local knowledge including those held by indigenous and tribal peoples in the context of water variability and change.

#### **Case of Chennai:**

Chennai in Tamil Nadu is a textbook example of how nature is being ignored in urban development-posed challenges. Unplanned urban development and unwieldy growth with no hydrological plan are causing many problems. Earlier, when there was heavy rain in catchment areas in the Chennai region, lakes, ponds, tanks, rivers and inter-linked drainage systems helped replenish groundwater, hold back some water and release the excess to the ocean. With development, a number of tanks and lakes in and around Chennai have been encroached upon by various stakeholders. The Pallikaranai marsh which acted as a sponge to soak up excess rainwater is now an over-run.

#### **Conclusion:**

Overall it can be concluded that, nature-based solutions are crucial to achieving our Sustainable Development Goals. Adopting them will not only improve water management but also achieve water security.



**Connecting the dots:**

- Discuss the water related issues in India. Suggest how nature-based solutions like watershed management, wetlands etc. can help solve the dual challenge of water scarcity and deteriorating quality.

**TOPIC*****General Studies 2:***

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

***General Studies 3:***

- *Conservation, Environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.*
- *Water Pollution, Wastewater management.*

**Water crisis in making****Background:**

The world is heading towards an unprecedented water catastrophe. A majority of the world's water systems that keep the ecosystems thriving and feed a growing human population have become stressed. According to NASA satellite data, about 21 of the world's 37 largest aquifers are running out too fast to be replenished; an additional 13 are declining at a faster rate. In its most recent data, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO, 2014) has highlighted that 45 countries were experiencing water shortages of less than a thousand cubic metres per person a year. Water scarcity is becoming increasingly common all around the world, as country after country hits the limit of what it can use. The World Economic Forum has also ranked water crisis among its top three global risks in terms of impact since 2012.

**Water crisis in India:**

- A report by World Resources Institute (2015) reveals that about 54 per cent of the wells across India are decreasing at a faster pace and almost 600 million people are at higher risk of surface water supply disruptions.
- According to a latest survey by the Central Groundwater Board (CGWB), the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka are in a worse state as far as ground water is concerned with decline rate much higher than the national average.

Given such an alarming situation, a World Bank report reveals that at least 21 Indian cities are moving towards zero groundwater level by 2020. If the present rate of groundwater depletion persists, India will only have 22 per cent of the present daily per capita water available in 2050, possibly forcing the country to import its water.

#### **Reasons behind decline in water availability:**

- Centuries of mismanagement of small water bodies is one of the prime reasons for a decline in water availability. The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE, 2015) reports that Chennai had more than 600 small water bodies during 1980s, but now only a fraction of them could be found healthy. Bangalore had around 280 interlinked tanks during 1960s which is reduced to less than 80 at present.
- Increased population pressure along with competing demand for water from different sectors (drinking, agriculture, industry and energy). The data published by the Central Water Commission indicate that agriculture alone accounts for about 85 per cent of all water use, mostly drawn from groundwater.
- A growing population, lack of adequate planning, crumbling infrastructure, indiscriminate drilling of borewells, large-scale consumption of water, and a false sense of entitlement in using water carelessly are causing water shortages.

#### **Cause of concern:**

India's current water requirement is estimated to be around 1,100 billion cubic metres per year, which is projected to touch 1,447 billion cubic metres by 2050.

According to a forecast by the Asian Development Bank, India will have a water deficit of 50% by 2030.

- India's water needs are basically met by rivers and groundwater.
- Water scarcity can lead to disastrous consequences impacting food production as most of the farming is rain-fed.
- With ground water catering to about 60% of the country's irrigation, 85% of rural water drinking requirements, and 50% of urban water needs, replenishing the aquifers is necessary.

#### **Government's**

#### **initiative:**

The government has come up with a Rs. 6,000-crore World Bank-aided **Atal Bhujal Yojana** with community participation to ensure sustained groundwater management in overexploited and ground water-stressed areas in seven States.

**Way ahead:**

- People should be sensitised about the judicious use of water and educated about water-retention dams and other conventional structures such as *eari, bawli, talab, anict, dametc.* to store water.
- The old practice of rainwater harvesting should also be popularised. Tamil Nadu has made mandatory installation of water harvesting structures in every house and this must be replicated in other States as well.
- Investing and promoting water-recycling, storm-water capturing technologies and micro-irrigation techniques in crop cultivation can also solve the problem of water scarcity.
- The cost effective method of reviving the traditional small water bodies under the age old practice of Kudimaramath should be given top priority.
- Micro irrigation practices like drip and sprinkler systems have to be promoted in a big way for efficient use of water for agriculture.
- Conscious efforts need to be made at the household level and by communities, institutions and local bodies to supplement the efforts of governments and non-governmental bodies in promoting water conservation.
- Sustained measures should be taken to prevent pollution of water bodies, contamination of groundwater and ensure proper treatment of domestic and industrial waste water.
- Reduce, reuse, and recycle must be the watchwords if we have to handover a liveable planet to the future generations.

**Conclusion:**

As emphasised in this year's theme on World Water Day by the UN, we need to connect with nature to help rebalance the water cycle in a sustainable and cost-effective way by planting new forests, reconnecting rivers to floodplains and restoring wetlands. Governments, communities, the private sector, and researchers must collaborate.

**Connecting the dots:**

- Governments, communities, the private sector, and researchers must collaborate if India is to avoid water crisis. Discuss.

**TOPIC****General Studies 3:**

- ***Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment***

**The Namami Gange Project: An assessment**

**Background:**

Rapid population growth, urbanisation, and industrial development have raised the levels of domestic as well as industrial pollutants in Ganga waters. According to July 2013 estimates of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), fecal coliform levels, biological oxygen demand, chemical oxygen demand, and a range of carcinogenic chemicals remain well-above acceptable drinking and bathing quality levels in all stretches of the river after it descends from the mountains.

**Initiatives taken:**

- The government launched the Namami Gange Programme, an integrated conservation mission with a budget of Rs. 20,000 crore to accomplish the objectives of effective abatement of pollution, conservation and rejuvenation of the Ganga. The project covers eight states and seeks to fully connect all 1,632 Gram Panchayats along the Ganga to a sanitation system by 2022.
- There have been many well-funded programs to combat pollution in past too. In 1985, the Ganga Action Plan (GAP) was launched to fund the establishment of sewage treatment plants and other large-scale pollution mitigation technologies. The plan was ultimately extended to other rivers through the National River Conservation Programme (NRCP).

**Poor progress of the Namami Gange Project: CAG's findings**

According to a new report from the CAG, the new push to clean the Ganga is not delivering results.

The audit team sampled 87 projects (73 ongoing, 13 completed, and one abandoned). The auditors' findings are quite startling.

- The Government had only used \$260 million of the \$1.05 billion earmarked for the flagship programme between April 2015 and March 2017.
- All of the projects studied had a consistent list of problems: unused funds, an absence of a long-term plan, and delays in taking concrete action.

None of the efforts made have been particularly effective.

Each round of evaluations provides a standard list of issues emerges:

- Delays in reviewing projects.
- Poor inter-agency cooperation.
- Funding imbalances across sites.
- An inability to keep pace with growing pollution loads.

As a result, none of the policies has had any visible impact on water quality.

**Governance system exists:**

- India has strong environmental laws: the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974; the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977; and the Environment Protection Act, 1986.
- There is also a large enforcement apparatus. Water quality is monitored and regulated by the environment ministry, the CPCB, and the associated State Pollution Control Boards.

**Where do India's water policies go wrong?**

- In India's electoral democracy, there is **little space for environmental policy**. Pollution has rarely been an electoral issue. Employment, economic growth, and poverty alleviation are more urgent. Elected leaders have few incentives to take on either the big polluters (which include the government's own companies and power stations) or the small-scale firms in industrial clusters that serve as vote-banks.
- High levels of regulation have created an elaborate **system of rent-seeking**. There are efforts to build sewage treatment plants (STPs), even though vast segments of the population along the Ganga does not yet have access to sanitation.
- The way India's environmental programmes are designed and implemented. The system is currently extraordinarily **top-heavy**. In 2014 "Ganga Manthan" was held where stakeholders from all levels of society were invited to submit suggestions on how the Ganga could be restored. In the subsequent years, however, there has been little follow-up. There is almost no mention of civil society or citizen participation, particularly for monitoring and sustainability of the operations.

**Way ahead:**

- Real solutions require **shared responsibility between the state and the people**. We need to prioritise citizen engagement.
- To encourage above we need more **publicly available data**, and more local analysis of this data. There is also a need for more **education and awareness** on the health effects of pollution, as well as the causes of pollution.
- Efforts need to be made catch agricultural and industrial waste before they run into the river.

- The government should take a **comprehensive look** at the interconnection between policies such as subsidies, electricity consumption, power use patterns, industrial development, and urbanisation plans.

### Conclusion:

A comprehensive policy for cleaning Ganga requires creativity, innovation, discipline, transparency and strong leadership. The cleanup of the Thames in London and the Rhine flowing through Europe suggest this is possible.

### Connecting the dots:

- Various initiatives have been taken by the governments to clean river Ganga. An analysis of these initiatives shows poor progress. Discuss in light of present report by the CAG on the Namami Gange project.
- For the Namami Gange project to succeed it is required that the government takes a comprehensive look at the issues involved and stakeholder participation is ensured. Discuss.

### TOPIC

#### *General Studies 3:*

- *Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment*

### The 'conserve and use' principle: Conserving Floodplains

#### Introduction:

Floodplains of rivers can provide a new source of water. They are a local, non-polluting, perennial and non-invasive source of water for urban centres.

#### Features of flood plains:

- Floodplains are formed over millions of years by the flooding of rivers and deposition of sand on riverbanks.
- These sandy floodplains are exceptional aquifers where any withdrawal is compensated by gravity flow from a large surrounding area.
- Some floodplains such as those of Himalayan rivers contain up to 20 times more water than the virgin flow in rivers in a year.

**Issue:**

Rivers today are facing problems of abysmally low flows due to an indiscriminate extraction of water for use in cities, industries and agriculture. They are also highly polluted because sewage and effluents are being released into them.

**Solution:**

A floodplains 'conserve and use' scheme, which is a socio-economic-environmental scheme, can provide water to urban centres along rivers; it can also engage farmers by providing them an assured income and restore rivers to a healthy condition.

**What is floodplains 'conserve and use' scheme?**

The 'conserve and use' principle demands that no more than is recharged by rain and floods each year can be withdrawn from this aquifer. This ensures that the groundwater level in the floodplains remains steadily above that in the river in the lean non-monsoon months when the river is often polluted. Drawing out any more water than is recharged can contaminate and eventually finish off the resource. If we conserve and use the floodplain, it can be a self-sustaining aquifer wherein every year, the river and floodplain are preserved in the same healthy condition as the year before.

**Conserving floodplains: Engaging farmers**

Preserving the floodplain in its entirety is critical for this scheme to work. This can be done by engaging farmers whose land will have to be leased for such an effort. Farmers today have an erratic income and this scheme can be realised through a public-private partnership, where farmers on this land tract of 1 km on either side of the river can be provided an assured and steady income for an acre. In addition, farmers can grow a food forest, fruit orchards or nut trees but not water-intensive crops on this land. It would guarantee not only a good farming income but also great earnings from the water for the farmers without taking the ownership of the land away from them.

**Conclusion:**

The 'conserve and use' will help curb illegal extraction of water, stop pollution by local agencies and industries and also encourage cities to be more responsible in their waste management. It will also help improve the quality of rivers, quality of life for citizens, and at the same time guarantee farmers a healthy fixed income. It should be seen as a new scheme of living.

**Connecting the dots:**

- What do you mean by conserve and use principle. The principle should be implemented for conserving our floodplains. Discuss.
- 





## AGRICULTURE

### TOPIC

#### General Studies 2:

- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*
- *Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.*

#### General Studies 3:

- *Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.*
- *Inclusive growth and issues arising from it*
- *Investment and Infrastructure*
- *Agrarian/Rural distress and Rural Development*

### Tackling agrarian distress: Analysing budgetary measures

#### Background:

This year's budget is being termed pro-agriculture (increased outlays to the agricultural sector and initiation of various programmes). But, closer scrutiny of the three major measures announced shows it may be less effective to tackle the agrarian distress. There are some real challenges confronting them.

#### 1st Measure:

- Raising the minimum support price (MSP) by at least 50% above the cost of production.
- The MSP will also be extended to all crops for which estimates on cost of cultivation and a remunerative price are to be ascertained.

#### Issues:

- Estimating the cost of production of commodities not covered under the scheme and their procurement procedures, if undertaken.
- The production cost, as calculated by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, is based on three different methods, termed as A2, A2+FL, and C2. -> A2 covers all paid-out expenses, including in cash and in kind, namely, cost on account of seeds, chemicals, hired labour, irrigation, fertilizers and fuel.  
-> A2+FL covers actual paid cost and unpaid family labour.  
-> C2 includes all actual expenses in cash and kind incurred in production and rent paid for leased land, imputed value of family labour plus interest paid.

In the last few years, the government has been giving MSP above 50% based on cost A2+FL, which is to be continued as per this Budget. But farmers, for many years, have been demanding that the raise in MSP be based on C2 instead.

- Also, little attention has been paid towards altering the ongoing 'high input cost and low output price' regime. Thus, the government must extend immediate help to farmers from rampant price volatility.

#### **Way out:**

The States can implement the 'price deficiency payment scheme' (difference between MSP and price received) as has been started in Haryana for some vegetables, and the Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana in Madhya Pradesh for select oilseeds. These schemes can also encourage small holders, including tenants, who constitute at least 86% of farmers, to sell in the regulated markets.

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Measure:**

- Developing and upgrading the existing 22,000 rural haats into Gramin Agricultural Markets.
- A corpus of ₹2,000 crore has been allocated in the name of the Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund for developing and upgrading marketing infrastructure.

#### **Challenges:**

The challenge is to ascertain the priority of the respective States towards it and ways to accelerate its pace.

#### **Way out:**

- Public-private partnership may help.
- Under market reforms, it will be important to link production centres with marketing through agri-value chains, which would require farmers to aggregate, form self-help groups, or farmer producer organisations.
- A hike in MSP should be supplemented with irrigation, and reduction in fertilizer cost.
- Also the launch of 'Operation Green' with an outlay of ₹500 crore to address the challenge of price volatility of perishable commodities requires State governments to bring various programmes under one roof, perhaps within the Agricultural Produce and Livestock Market Committee 2017, to help farmers.

#### **3rd Measure:**

Increasing institutional credit from ₹10 lakh crore in 2017-18 to ₹11 lakh crore in 2018-19.

The share of agricultural credit in gross domestic product in agriculture and allied activities has increased from 10% in 1999-2000 to 41% in 2015-16. The actual flow has considerably exceeded the target.

Therefore, targeting of the announced allocation to the poorer farmers and tenants in each

State will go a long way in improving their purchasing power and augmenting investment, which is currently low.

**Other issues: What more needs to be done?**

**Irrigation:**

- Close to 52% of net sown area (73.2 million hectares out of 141.4 million hectares) is still unirrigated and rainfed, in addition to the recurrence of floods and droughts due to climate change.

Despite its presence in the Economic Survey 2017-18, the subject has not received due attention in this Budget.

The plan is to take up 96 districts deprived of irrigation with an allocation of ₹2,600 crore under the Prime Minister Krishi Sinchayee Yojana — Har Khet ko Pani. The Centre will work with the State governments to enable farmers to install solar water pumps to irrigate fields.

- The Minor Irrigation Census 2013-14, published in 2017, warns of a tremendous increase in deep tube wells to more than 2.6 million in 2013-14, from 1.45 million in 2006-07, and the resultant decline in the ground water table. It is ironic that the government aims to install more tube wells while being worried about depleting groundwater.

**Way out:**

- A **location-specific policy for irrigation** with the identification of suitability of medium-major irrigation projects and/or minor or micro irrigation facilities is required to protect farmers from the adverse impacts of climate change.
- It must be supplemented with timely completion of pending canal irrigation projects, and strengthening of the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme by an increase in compensation and timely advice on weather.
- Technological interventions that update farmers about sowing and harvesting time and extension services can help prevent misfortunes.

**Investment in agricultural research and development (Ag R&D):**

India spends almost ₹6,500 crore on Ag R&D, which is not even 0.4 % of GDP from agriculture and allied activities.

This is a serious concern in view of the low annual rate of growth in agriculture in the last four years.

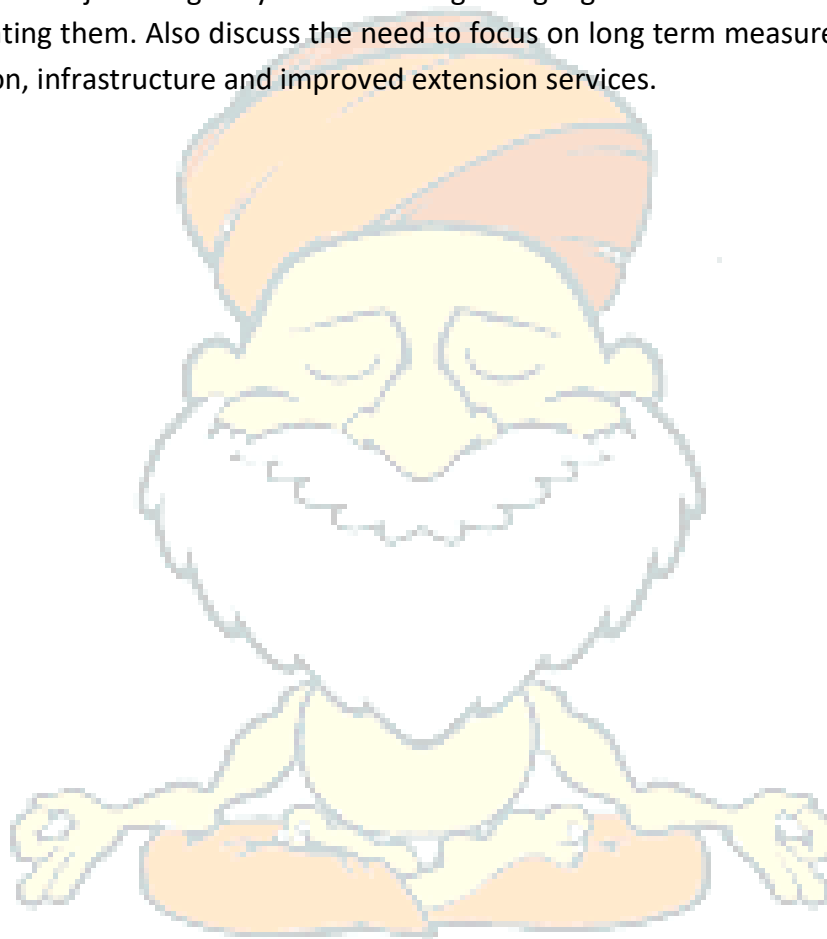
- More drought and pest-resistant crops are needed, along with better irrigation technology.
- Farmers also require interventions in the seed sector to raise production and diversify to alternate crops to induce higher growth.

**Conclusion:**

Rather than providing compensation and increased budgetary outlays, the government should assure doable action plans that quickly rescue them from price or crop failure. The long-term measures should be to accelerate investments in irrigation, infrastructure, improved extension services and institutions fully backed by a competitive marketing system.

**Connecting the dots:**

- Discuss the major budgetary decisions regarding agricultural sector and challenges in implementing them. Also discuss the need to focus on long term measures like investments in irrigation, infrastructure and improved extension services.



## **(PRELIMS+MAINS FOCUS)**

### **World's largest solar park in Karnataka**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Energy Security

**Key pointers:**

- Has been launched in Pavagada, Karnataka. It has the capacity of generating 2000 MW power.
- The mega project was conceptualized, planned & built in just 3 yrs.
- Known as Shakti Sthala, the solar park with the capacity of generating 2000 MW power was created by 2300 farmers.
- It is spread over 13,000 acres of land across five villages.
- No land acquisition happened for building the Shakti Sthala. Instead, farmers will get Rs 21,000 per acre as rental.
- The tariff per unit has been fixed at Rs 3.30 per unit.
- Pavagada, being the most drought-prone state, witnessed large scale migration over the last decade. The solar park provided employment opportunities and involved people's participation in power generation.

**Article link:** [http://www.india.com/news/india/worlds-largest-solar-park-with-2000-mw-capacity-inaugurated-in-karnatakas-pavagada-2920831/?utm\\_source=inshorts&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=fullarticle](http://www.india.com/news/india/worlds-largest-solar-park-with-2000-mw-capacity-inaugurated-in-karnatakas-pavagada-2920831/?utm_source=inshorts&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=fullarticle)

### **Tiger Conservation**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Environment, Conservation

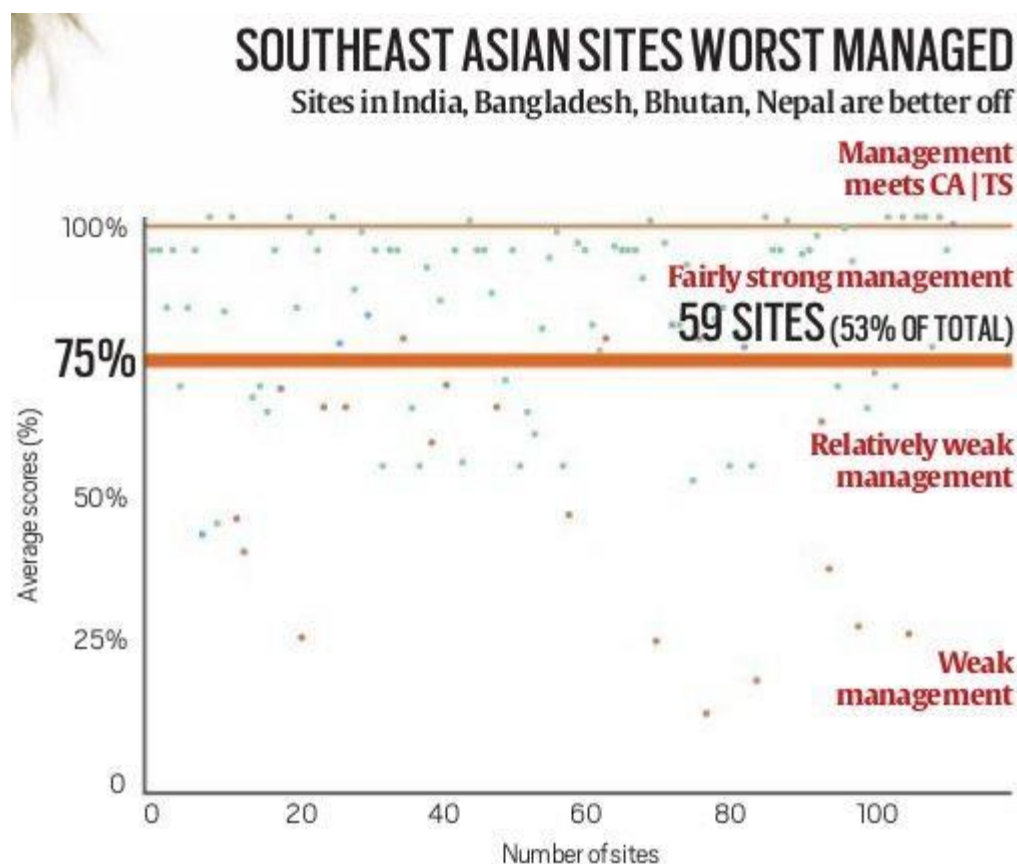
**Key pointers:**

- In November 2010, the first “Tiger Summit” in St Petersburg, Russia, endorsed a **Global Tiger Recovery Programme** aimed at *reversing the rapid decline of tigers*, and doubling their numbers by 2022.
- India was one of the **13 tiger range countries** that participated in the gathering, at which leaders committed to “drawing up action plans to *strengthen reserves, crack down on poachers and provide financial assistance* to maintain a thriving tiger population”.

**Concern:**

- A rapid survey across 112 tiger conservation areas in 11 range countries has now shown that at least a third of these areas are at severe risk of losing their tigers due to poor management.
- Three of the 13 countries, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia have lost all their tigers.





**85%** of sites in Southeast Asia (20 sites from Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, Myanmar) fall below the 75% line; remaining Southeast Asian sites are only just above it.

### AVERAGE SCORE FOR ALL 112 PARTICIPATING SITES

- East Asia (China and Russia)
- South Asia (India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan)
- Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand)

## ENFORCEMENT, PROTECTION ARE INADEQUATE

**14%** (16 out of 112) sites have intelligence-driven anti-poaching processes in place. 66 sites are in process of planning or developing such systems

**85%** of areas do not have staff capacity for effective patrol

ACTION	SOUTH ASIA, RUSSIA, CHINA	SOUTHEAST ASIA
IMPLEMENTED	43	13
INITIATED	33	27
PLANNED	14	19
NOT INITIATED	8	17
ABSENT	2	25

Pic credit: <http://images.indianexpress.com/2018/03/toger-explained.jpg>

**Reasons behind:**

- Three-quarters of the surveyed sites had insufficient staff and lacked adequate management infrastructure.
- Efforts to stop poaching, manage community relations, and ensure safe havens for tigers and other wildlife are not up to the mark.
- Very few sites had intelligence-driven anti-poaching processes in place.

**Article link:** <http://indianexpress.com/article/explained/whats-hobbling-the-global-effort-to-save-the-tiger-5083328/>

**National Financial Reporting Authority**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Indian Economy

**Key pointers:**

- As part of the government's effort to strengthen oversight of the audit profession, the Union Cabinet paved the way for an independent regulator.
- The regulator can now investigate both chartered accountants and their firms.
- The move comes nearly five years after the company law provided for such a body to strengthen oversight of the audit profession.
- Till date, there was no legal framework to punish errant CA firms, but now the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) will fill this legal lacuna.
- The NFRA's scope is being limited to cover CAs and CA firms involved in audit of listed companies and certain large unlisted companies.

**NFRA:**

- Will act as an independent regulator for the audit profession
- Oversight of auditors in respect of all public interest entities will shift to NFRA
- NFRA will have a Chairman, three full-time members and a Secretary

**Article link:** <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/article22900886.ece>

**Fugitive economic offenders Bill, 2018**



**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Indian Economy

**Key pointers:**

- It will be introduced in Parliament soon.
- Its enactment will force fugitive economic offenders to return to India to face trial for scheduled offences.
- This would also help banks and other financial institutions achieve higher recovery from financial defaults committed by such fugitive economic offenders.
- Cases in which the total value involved in such offences is Rs. 100 crore or more will come under the purview of this Bill
- The Bill will help in laying down measures to deter economic offenders from evading the process of Indian law by remaining outside the jurisdiction of Indian courts.
- All cases under this proposed law will be tried under the PMLA Act and the administrator will sell the fugitive's properties to pay off the lenders.
- It will override all other legislation, and will lead to confiscation of all the assets (including benami assets) of the fugitive in India.

**Who is fugitive economic corridor?**

If any individual who has committed a scheduled offence and against whom an arrest warrant has been issued by a competent court leaves the country, refuses to return to face criminal prosecution, he will be termed as a fugitive economic offender.

**Article link:** <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/article22900886.ece>

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**Only energy-positive campus in India**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Energy security

**Key pointers:**

- The Energy Management Centre (EMC), an autonomous institution under the Kerala government, has grabbed the global spotlight for its energy-positive campus, located at Sreekaryam in the State capital.
- The 'Global Status Report 2017: Towards a zero-emission, efficient, and resilient buildings and construction sector,' published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), has listed the EMC campus as one of the recent achievements in the deployment of key technologies for energy-efficiency in buildings.

- The 40,000-square foot building is the only one from India to figure in the list, along with five other projects worldwide.
- According to the report, the EMC's energy-positive campus was designed to allow natural cross-flow ventilation from building forms and openings.
- The EMC campus uses daylighting controls, CFC-free heating, ventilation and cooling systems, along with a halogen-free fire-fighting system.
- Solar reflectance index coating, combined with high-albedo painting and turbo-vents for passive cooling, has been used, and tropical rainforest trees help create cool surroundings.
- Only certified green construction materials, recycled wood boards, low-emitting paints and adhesives, and green-plus certified carpets have been used.
- Up to 94% of the built-up space is daylight illuminated.

**Article link:** <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/un-spotlight-on-keralas-energy-positive-campus/article22904990.ece>

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### Sea ice cover in Antarctica on decline

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Environment, Conservation

#### **Key pointers:**

- Sea ice cover in Antarctica has dropped to its second-lowest on record.
- Understanding the process of changes and the variability in the sea ice cover should be a "high priority".

#### **Importance of sea ice:**

- The ice cover plays a crucially important role both in the global climate system.
- It is a key habitat for a wide range of biota from micro-organisms to great whales.
- Sea ice conditions also have a major impact on shipping and logistical operations in the Southern Ocean.

**Article link:** [https://www.hindustantimes.com/science/antarctic-sea-ice-shrinks-for-second-straight-year/story-IPfJ34uBoM6k3RTjIOI33K.html?utm\\_source=inshorts&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=fullarticle](https://www.hindustantimes.com/science/antarctic-sea-ice-shrinks-for-second-straight-year/story-IPfJ34uBoM6k3RTjIOI33K.html?utm_source=inshorts&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=fullarticle)

## India International Skill Centres (IISC)

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- Inclusive development

### **Key pointers:**

- Workers will now have a chance to explore employment opportunities in a number of countries, including in West Asia and Japan, as part of the government's skill development programme.
- The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is working on establishing India International Skill Centres (IISC) to help those looking for jobs overseas get skills training.
- The IISCs will train the youth so that when they go abroad, they already have a skill. At present, most migrant workers who go abroad lead a difficult life initially.
- The scheme is being run along with the Ministry of External Affairs, which provides a pre-departure orientation training on language, culture and processes.

### **Pact with Japan:**

- The NSDC is also working on a programme to send youth to Japan, where they will be trained and will work for 3-5 years.
- The candidates will be trained in the newest technologies and live and earn in Japan for three to five years. The candidate will then have the choice to come back or to continue to work there.

As part of the Skill India Mission, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has for long spoken of sending India's surplus workforce abroad where skilled labour is required.

**Article link:** <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-news/article22927658.ece>

## Silent revolution in Organic living

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- Inclusive development

### **Key pointers:**

- Kottayam, the 'land of lakes, latex and letters' in Kerala and the first district in the country to achieve total literacy is now piloting a silent revolution in organic living, at the behest of the Mahatma Gandhi University headquartered there.

- The Inter University Centre for Organic Farming and Sustainable Agriculture at the University is driving the massive programme.
- Titled 'Jaivam,' this is a unique public education programme on organic means of living and chemical-free farm practices covering each household in the district.
- Jaivam will showcase the commitment of the university to transfer the knowledge generated in laboratories to the common man.

**Article link:** <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-others/tp-states/article22927703.ece>

### Committee to look into issues relating to Fintech space

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Indian Economy

#### **Key pointers:**

- The Centre has set up a steering committee to go into various issues relating to Fintech space in India.
- The committee will be headed by Subhash Chandra Garg, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs.
- The committee will consider means of using data with GSTN and data residing with information utilities such as credit information companies (CICs) and others in open domain with a view to developing applications for financing of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- It will also develop regulatory interventions e.g., regulatory sandbox model, that will enhance the role of Fintech in sectors identified for focused interventions.
- The idea is to facilitate ease of doing business in the Fintech sector.
- The committee has also been asked to consider how Fintech could be leveraged in critical sectors of economy.
- The committee will work with government agencies such as UIDAI to explore creation and use of unique enterprise identification number. It will also look into the possibility of international co-operation opportunities in Fintech with countries such as Singapore, the U.K., China and others.

**Article link:** <http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/centre-sets-up-panel-to-study-issues-in-fintech-space/article22931465.ece>

### Enhancing women safety by using technology

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper I, II - Social empowerment, Government interventions

**Key pointers:**

- Enhancing the safety net for women - especially for those travelling in cabs- Telangana police are integrating their HawkEye mobile application with the apps of online cab service providers and private companies.
- With this, an SOS message sent by a passenger travelling in a cab would automatically reach the Telangana police control room. Presently, such message sent through the app of an online cab service would reach only the company command centre.
- Once this is done, an SOS message sent by a passenger using Ola cab would simultaneously reach Telangana Police Control Room and the Ola company command centre.
- Police command centre staff would alert the local police station and the nearby police patrolling party using Global Positioning System tracking service.

**Article link:** <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/apps-integration-to-enhance-womens-safety/article22938551.ece>

### Mumbai and Delhi airport: World's best airport

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Infrastructure

**Key pointers:**

- Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport and Delhi's IGI Airport have been jointly adjudged the 'World's Best Airport' for customer experience in the 40 mppa (million passengers per annum) category.
- This was announced by Airports Council International (ACI). The ACI is a trade association with 1,953 airports from 176 countries among its members.
- The award was adjudicated by means of ACI's Airport Service Quality survey, conducted among millions of passengers. Passengers were surveyed across international airports for their feedback on 34 key performance indicators.

**Article link:** <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/article22954929.ece>

## IMPRINT- Phase II

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Science & Technology

**Key pointers:**

- In a major boost for research and innovation, the Centre had sanctioned Rs. 1,000 crore for the Phase II of the Impacting Research Innovation and Technology (IMPRINT) India programme.
- Under the IMPRINT-II, a fund will be created by the Department of Science and Technology and the HRD Ministry in which participation would come from the industry and interested Ministries.
- Under the IMPRINT-I Programme, 142 projects at a cost of Rs. 318.71 crore are under implementation.  
These projects cover crucial domains like security and defence, information technology, energy, sustainable habitat, advance materials, health care, nano technology, climate change, etc.

**Article link:** <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/rs-1000-cr-for-research-and-innovation/article22954547.ece>

## Economic inequality at workplace

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper I- Social empowerment

**Key points:**

- The World Economic Forum in its 2017 edition of Global Gender Gap Report estimated that it would take 217 years for the economic gender gap to be closed, mostly because the gap has widened.
- The same report estimates gender gap in politics would take up to 99 years to be closed.
- The education specific gender gap is estimated be reduce to parity in next 13 years
- The overall global gender gap can be closed only in 100 years across 106 countries that the report has been tracking since 2006.
- Economic inequality includes disparity in pay for the same work done by a man and a woman.

**India: Mixed progress**

India has made mixed progress on closing the gap in various spheres since 2006

- While it narrowed the gap in education and political empowerment, there has been slippages on economic participation and health and survival.
- Legislative changes such as the amendments to the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 if implemented well can help women with young children to return to work in the organised sector.
- The number of women elected to nine State Assemblies where elections were held in the past year has declined from 83 to 76, thus reducing their collective representation in these Assemblies from 7.9 per cent to 7.3 per cent.

**Women participation and GDP:**

- The IMF estimated that raising the level of participation of women in economic activity to bring it on par with men could increase India GDP by 27 per cent.
- The WEF Global Gender Gap report estimates that global GDP could increase by \$5.3 trillion by 2025 by closing the gender gap in economic participation by 25 per cent over the same period.

**Article**                      **link:**                      <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-news/article22973166.ece>

**"Udyam Shakti" Initiative**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper I- Social empowerment

**Key points:**

- **Udyam Sakhi** is an initiative to bring aspiring business women and their possible mentors together on one platform so that they could be hand-held through the process of setting up and running an enterprise.
- The portal will be launched by the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Ministry.
- The mentors, who would be extending their services on a voluntary basis, could be social entrepreneurs, senior executives, retired businesswomen, former bank officials or members of non-profit organisations.

**Article link:** <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-news/article22973170.ece>

### Diu becomes first UT to be fully solar powered

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Energy Security

#### **Key pointers:**

- Diu has become the first Union Territory of the country to run 100 per cent on solar power energy.
- The installation of solar power plants has resulted in significantly reducing the power loss which was earlier faced when the UT consumed electricity supplied from the power grid owned by the Gujarat government.
- On a daily basis, the Union Territory generates a total of 13 megawatts of electricity from solar power plants out of this 3 MW is contributed by rooftop solar plants and 10 MW by others.
- The solar power plants has provided big relief to the local residents in terms of bringing down the monthly bill charges.

**Article link:** [http://www.india.com/news/india/diu-becomes-indias-first-union-territory-to-operate-100-per-cent-on-solar-power-2933985/?utm\\_source=inshorts&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=fullarticle](http://www.india.com/news/india/diu-becomes-indias-first-union-territory-to-operate-100-per-cent-on-solar-power-2933985/?utm_source=inshorts&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=fullarticle)

### SC allows Passive Euthanasia

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II-

#### **Key pointers:**

- In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court recently passed an order allowing passive euthanasia in the country.
- The apex court, recognising “living will” made by terminally-ill patients who are likely to go into a permanent vegetative state, laid down guidelines for the same.
- The guidelines include who would execute the will and how nod for passive euthanasia would be granted by the medical board. The guidelines will be in force till legislation on the same is passed by Parliament.



- Justice Chandrachud today said, “Life and death are inseparable. Every moment our bodies undergo change... life is not disconnected from death. Dying is a part of the process of living.”
- Advance directives for terminally-ill patients could be issued and executed by the next friend or relatives of the person after which a medical board would consider it.

### **What is passive euthanasia?**

Passive euthanasia, defined by the SC in Aruna Ramchandra Shanbaug vs Union Of India & Ors, 2011, entails withholding of medical treatment for continuance of life, e.g. withholding of antibiotics where without giving it a patient is likely to die.”

### **Advance Directive:**

It lets a person decide in advance whether or not to be put on life support in case of terminal illness.

**Article link:** <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/supreme-court-recognises-living-will-of-terminally-ill-patients-allows-passive-euthanasia-5091712/>

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### **India commits \$1.4 billion for International Solar Alliance**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Energy security

### **Key pointers:**

- India recently announced one of the world’s largest investment plans in solar energy at the Founding Conference of the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- The \$1.4 billion line of credit will cover 27 projects in 15 countries and boost the much-required financial power to the solar sector.
- India will start a solar technology mission with international focus, which will cover all government technical and educational institutions.
- The Founding Conference was co-chaired by Mr. Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron.
- Mr. Modi presented a 10-point action plan aimed at making solar power more affordable while raising the share of power generated.
- Three issues that needs to be addressed — the solar energy potential in each country should be identified; mobilisation of finance; and the provision of a favourable framework.

**Article link:** <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/india-commits-14-billion-for-solar-energy-worldwide/article23043434.ece>

### **Founding Conference of the International Solar Alliance (ISA)**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Energy security

#### **Key pointers:**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set a target of achieving 100 gigawatts (GW) of solar power by 2022, accounting for more than half of the 175 GW the country plans to produce from renewable sources. This was announced at the International Solar Alliance (ISA) summit.
- It was announced at the summit that a **Project Preparation Facility (PPF)** has been set up by India to help partner countries prepare viable project proposals that can be considered for concessional financing under Lines of Credit. The PPF fills the capacity gap in identifying a need, conceiving a project and preparing a proposal.
- ISA envisages generating 1 TW (terawatt) of solar power by 2030.

#### **The Delhi Solar Agenda:**

- It was released after the summit.
- According to the agenda, the ISA will facilitate “affordable finance, access to appropriate, clean and environment-friendly technology and undertake capacity building.”

#### **About ISA:**

- The ISA is a coalition of 121 solar resource-rich countries created to address special energy needs and bridge gaps through a common approach.
- India will contribute \$27 million towards the ISA corpus, for infrastructure and for recurring expenditure over a five-year period from 2016-17 to 2020-21.

**Article link:** <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/article23043689.ece>

### **World's largest nuclear power plant soon to come up in Jaitapur**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II, III- International relations, Infrastructure

**Key pointers:**

- France and India reiterated their intention to start work this year on what could become the world's largest nuclear power plant.
- French President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged Electricite de France SA and India's monopoly atomic energy producer, Nuclear Power Corp., to accelerate discussions on a contract and start work at the site in Jaitapur, Maharashtra.
- Once installed, the Jaitapur project will be the largest nuclear power plant in the world, with a total capacity of 9.6 gigawatts.
- International equipment makers have been hesitant to move forward with projects in India because India's nuclear liability law exposes reactor suppliers to claims for damages during an accident.

**Facts:**

- Jaitapur, a small town on India's western coast known for its mango and coconut orchards.
- India's nuclear power capacity is about 6.8 gigawatts, barely 2 percent of the country's total generation capacity.

**Article link:** [https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/modi-macron-pledge-to-begin-work-on-world-s-largest-nuclear-plant-in-india-this-year/story-8nN58NXmqc11sNFe1NUQPI.html?utm\\_source=inshorts&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=fullarticle](https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/modi-macron-pledge-to-begin-work-on-world-s-largest-nuclear-plant-in-india-this-year/story-8nN58NXmqc11sNFe1NUQPI.html?utm_source=inshorts&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=fullarticle)

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**Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- International relations

**Key pointers:**

- 11 Asia-Pacific countries, including Japan, Australia and Canada, have signed the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.
- The CPTPP is, in effect, the original Trans-Pacific Partnership struck during the Barack Obama presidency minus the U.S.
- The CPTPP comes soon after the U.S. had made clear its plan to impose tariffs on the import of aluminium and steel in an attempt to protect domestic manufacturers. T

- The countries signing the agreement, which account for more than 13% of the world economy, have agreed to bring down tariffs on cross-border trade by as much as 98% after domestic ratification.
- More countries are expected to sign the CPTPP in the future, and there is hope that a post-Trump U.S. may join the bloc.

**Article link:** <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/trade-goes-on/article23009872.ece>

### India's first national academy to train police

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- Internal security

#### **Key pointers:**

- India's first national academy to train police forces in effectively safeguarding the Indian shoreline will soon start functioning along the Gujarat seafont.
- The Union home ministry recently sanctioned the launch of the National Academy of Coastal Policing (NACP) in the newly created Devbhoomi Dwarka district.
- The first-of-its-kind institution of the country will be created and run by a multi-agency team of paramilitary and defence forces and sharpen the response and skills of the marine forces of multiple states which have sea lines.
- The academy will train police personnel and other security agencies staff in maritime laws, seamanship, boat work, navigation, weapons handling, usage of sea guidance and surveillance gadgets and survival skills for long haul operations on the sea or during distress times when they may get stranded in these waters running up to 12 nautical miles from the shore.

India has a vast coastline of 7,516 kms touching 13 states and union territories (UTs). It also has around 1,197 islands.

**Article link:** <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/indias-first-coastal-policing-academy-to-start-from-next-month/articleshow/63257476.cms>

### India to eliminate TB by 2025

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- Government interventions

#### **Key pointers:**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently said India will fully eliminate tuberculosis by 2025, a good five years ahead of the global deadline of 2030, and has already started working towards achieving this goal.
- The Delhi End TB Summit is being organised by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare jointly with the WHO's South-East Asia Region Office and international coalition Stop TB Partnership.
- India is also implementing the National Strategic Plan for TB elimination that is backed by Rs. 12,000 crore in funding for the next three years to ensure every TB patient in the country has access to quality diagnosis, treatment and support.
- The new strategic plan adopts a multi-pronged approach which aims to detect all TB patients, with an emphasis on reaching patients seeking care from private providers and undiagnosed cases in high-risk populations.
- The latest Budget has proposed to set aside \$100 million to provide nutritional support to TB patients.

TB is the leading infectious killer in India. There were an estimated 28 lakh new cases in 2016, with over 4 lakh people succumbing to the disease, including those with TB and HIV.

**Article**                      **link:**                      <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-news/article23231926.ece>

### Philippines quits ICC

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- International relations

#### **Key pointers:**

- President Rodrigo Duterte pulled the Philippines out of Rome statute, the treaty underpinning the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- The Hague-based ICC announced last month it was launching a “preliminary examination” of Duterte’s bloody anti-drug crackdown that has drawn international concern.
- The Philippines ratified in 2011 the Rome Statute which underpins the ICC, giving the tribunal authority to investigate crimes on its soil.

#### **About ICC:**

- Opened in 2002, the ICC is the world’s only permanent war crimes court and aims to prosecute the worst abuses when national courts are unable or unwilling.
- It is headquartered in The Hague in The Netherlands.

**Article link:** <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/world/philippines-to-quit-international-criminal-court-duterte/article23241021.ece>

### **Bill to regulate the chit fund sector**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- International relations

#### **Key pointers:**

- A bill to streamline and strengthen the chit fund sector has been introduced in the Lok Sabha.
- It mandates video conferencing while the opening of bids and seeks to hike commission of foremen from 5% to 7%.
- The Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2018 is based on the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance and the Advisory Groups on Chit Funds set up by the Central government.
- The amendment bill provides for allowing the mandatory presence of two subscribers, as required either in person or through video conferencing duly recorded by the foreman, while the bids are being opened.
- It also provides for increasing of ceiling of foreman's commission from 5% to 7%.

**Article link:** <http://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/bill-on-chit-funds-sector-introduced-in-lok-sabha/article23111589.ece>

### **Indian-UK Joint Team to study Arsenic poisoning in Ganga**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- Government interventions

#### **Key pointers:**

- An India-UK Joint Team has won the Newton-Bhabha Fund for a project on Groundwater Arsenic Research in Ganga River Basin.
- The Department of Science and Technology has undertaken the project with the Natural Environment Research Council, UK, to find solutions to the water challenges faced in the pervasively arsenic-affected Ganga River Basin.
- The Indian team comprises representatives of the IIT Kharagpur, the National Institute of Hydrology, the IIT Roorkee and the Mahavir Cancer Sansthan and Research Centre of Patna.

- The UK team consists of representatives of the University of Manchester, the British Geological Survey, the University of Salford and the University of Birmingham.
- The team members involved with the project will try to assess how the problem of arsenic poisoning can get aggravated in the next 25 to 30 years and influence groundwater management practices and suggest water remedial technologies accordingly.
- The Newton Bhabha Fund, provided by the British Council, aims to bring together the UK and Indian scientific research and innovation sectors to find joint solutions to the challenges facing India in economic development and social welfare.

**Article link:** [http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/newton-bhabha-fund-for-arsenic-research-in-ganga-basin-118031301049\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/newton-bhabha-fund-for-arsenic-research-in-ganga-basin-118031301049_1.html)

### Target to double textile production by 2025

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Indian Economy

**Key pointers:**

- The Textile Ministry is targeting to double textile production and trade to \$300 billion by 2025.
- With the domestic production of textiles at \$110 billion and exports and trade at \$40 billion, the country's production of textiles at present is worth \$150 billion.
- To reach the target, the productivity and yield levels of both cotton fibre and synthetic will be stepped up.

**Article link:** <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-news/article23277009.ece>

### Promoting religious tourism in the country

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Indian Economy

**Key pointers:**

- In a bid to spur domestic travel, the government is planning to promote religious tourism in the country.
- Plans are also afoot to popularise yoga and Ayurveda among millennials, as part of efforts to reach out to people across the globe and get “millions of more people to India.”

- The number of domestic tourist visits in 2017 stood at about 1.8 billion, up about 12% from the over 1.6 billion in the previous year.
- The government has already approved two projects — **Swadesh Darshan Scheme**, wherein infrastructure will be built around places of tourist interest under the umbrella of 15 themes such as Buddhist Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Ramayana Circuit and Heritage Circuit Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive or **PRASAD scheme** that focuses on the development and beautification of identified pilgrimage destinations.
- The Tourism Ministry recently launched ‘**Yogi of the Racetrack**’, a minute-long advertisement on yoga, that received more than 11.5 million hits in a week.
- Foreign tourist arrivals in 2017 stood at over 10 million. This resulted in foreign exchange earnings of \$ 27.6 billion last year.

**Article link:** <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/govt-to-take-spiritual-route-to-spur-tourism/article23288838.ece>

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### 105<sup>th</sup> Indian Science Congress

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- Science & Technology

#### **Key pointers:**

- The 105th Indian Science Congress was inaugurated recently in Manipur.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi requested that all of India’s scientists spend 100 hours with 100 children every year. This would accelerate the spread of science in society.
- Technology, he said, will allow far greater penetration of services such as education, health care and banking to citizens.
- The Prime Minister said the government was committed to increasing the share of non-fossil fuel based capacity in the electricity mix above 40% by 2030.
- “Five years ahead of the WHO target India shall eliminate TB from the country in 2025,” he said.

**Article link:** <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/narendra-modi-asks-scientists-to-spend-time-among-children/article23274892.ece>

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### Karnataka modifies the criterion for an educational institution to be termed minority



**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II-

**Key pointers:**

- Making it easier for educational institutions to get the minority tag, the Department of Primary and Secondary Education has tweaked the eligibility criterion to set up minority education institutions.
- The older rules required a school to have 25% of the total number of students in an academic year belonging to a specific religious or linguistic minority community. But, the draft rules issued recently state that the institution can have 25% students belonging to any number of religious or linguistic minority communities.
- The other criterion of two-thirds of the management members having to be of a particular minority community remains unchanged.

**Article link:** <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/criterion-for-granting-minority-institution-tag-tweaked/article23306961.ece>

**Diluting AFSPA:**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- Internal security

**Key pointers:**

- The Centre has recently announced its plan to water down the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), 1958. A proposal is under consideration to make the Act more operationally effective and humane.
- The AFSPA is in force in several northeastern States.

The decision came after the Home Ministry decided to reduce the number of Central Armed Police Force personnel deployed in the northeastern States.

**Jeevan Reddy committee:**

Another official said there was no final decision to repeal the AFSPA as of now, but the Jeevan Reddy Committee report, which recommended so, was taken into account.

- The Centre appointed a five-member committee headed by Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy in November 2004 to review the AFSPA.
- The committee recommended repealing of the AFSPA.
- It recommended that the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, should be modified to specify the powers of the armed forces and the Central forces.

**Article link:** <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/centre-wants-humane-afspa/article23306854.ece>

### Prevention of Atrocities Act being misused: Supreme Court

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper I- Social empowerment

#### **Key pointers:**

- The anti-atrocities law, which protects Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes from casteist slurs and discrimination, has become an instrument to “blackmail” innocent citizens and public servants, the Supreme Court observed in a judgment recently.
- The past three decades have seen complainants — who belong to the marginalised sections of society — use the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989 to exact “vengeance” and satisfy vested interests.
- Instead of blurring caste lines, the Act has been misused to file false complaints to promote caste hatred, the apex court said.
- The current working of Atrocities Act may even “perpetuate casteism” if it is not brought in line and the court needs to intervene to check the “false implication of innocent citizens on caste lines.”
- The 1989 Act penalises casteist insults and even denies anticipatory bail to the suspected offenders.

The law is therefore used to rob a person of his personal liberty merely on the unilateral word of the complainant, the court said.

#### **Guidelines issued by the SC:**

- The SC has directed that public servants can only be arrested with the written permission of their appointing authority.
- In the case of private employees, the Senior Superintendent of Police concerned should allow it.
- Besides this precaution, a preliminary inquiry should be conducted before the FIR is registered to check whether the case falls within the parameters of the Atrocities Act and if it is frivolous or motivated.

**Article link:** <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/scst-act-being-used-for-blackmail-says-top-court/article23306862.ece>

### 'Ayushman Bharat — National Health Protection Mission' (AB-NHPM)

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- Government interventions in important sectors

**Key pointers:**

- The Union Cabinet recently approved the launch of 'Ayushman Bharat — National Health Protection Mission' (AB-NHPM).
- AB-NHPM will subsume the on-going centrally sponsored schemes — Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) and the Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme (SCHIS).

**Salient features of the AB-NHPM scheme:**

- This scheme has the benefit cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year. The target beneficiaries of the proposed scheme will be more than 10 crore families belonging to poor and vulnerable population based on SECC database.
- The Rs. 5 lakh per family a year cover will take care of almost all secondary care and most of tertiary care procedures. To ensure that nobody is left out (especially women, children and elderly) there will be no cap on family size and age in the scheme.
- The benefit cover will also include pre- and post-hospitalisation expenses.
- All pre-existing conditions will be covered from day one of the policy.
- A defined transport allowance per hospitalisation will also be paid to the beneficiary.
- Also, benefits of the scheme are portable across the country and a beneficiary covered under the scheme will be allowed to take cashless benefits from any public/private empanelled hospital across the country.
- AB-NHPM will be an entitlement based scheme with entitlement decided on the basis of deprivation criteria in the SECC database.
- **Public and private-**  
The beneficiaries can make use of benefits in both public and empanelled private facilities. All public hospitals in the States implementing AB-NHPM, will be deemed empanelled for the Scheme.
- Keeping in view the State specific requirements, States/ UTs will have the flexibility to modify these rates within a limited bandwidth. One of the core principles of AB-NHPM is co-operative federalism and give flexibility to States. There is provision to partner the States through co-alliance.
- The expenditure incurred in premium payment will be shared between Central and State Governments in specified ratio as per Ministry of Finance guidelines.

**Article**                      **link:**                      <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-news/article23317150.ece>

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### **Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana – “Saubhagya”**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Energy Security

**Key pointers:**

- The Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana – “Saubhagya” – is the Centre’s household electrification scheme.
- It aims to connect all households with electricity connections by December 2018.

**Progress:**

- The demand for power in the country is on a rise as new consumers are being connected under the Saubhagya scheme.
- “There has been a 6.5-7 per cent growth in power demand during the current fiscal compared to the last financial year. This is on the back of 35.96 lakh new households getting electricity connections under the Saubhagya scheme since October 2017.

**Article**                      **link:**                      <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-news/article23317153.ece>

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### **Putting a check on safety and efficacy of drugs**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II: Issues related to governance, Interventions in health sector

**Key pointers:**

- In an effort to close the tap on new drugs and combination medicines entering the market without regulatory approval, the Drug Controller General of India is writing to State regulators to review and recall such medicines already in the market.
- The DCGI has also urged the Health Ministry to alert State health authorities to not give manufacturing approvals to new drugs and combination medicines that have not been approved by the Central regulator or the DCGI.
- State authorities and large drug companies need to be aware that they should not be approving or marketing new drugs or FDCs respectively, that have not got DCGI approval.

- The 59th Parliamentary Standing Committee report on Health and Family welfare had flagged the issue that drugs sold without safety and efficacy trials put patients at risk.

**Article link:** <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-news/article23328270.ece>

### Genetic disorders to be included in insurance provided by insurers

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- Issues related to governance, Interventions in health sector

**Key pointers:**

- In a significant directive, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has asked insurers not to reject claims on the basis of exclusions related to genetic disorders.
- Genetic disorders will no longer be grounds for exclusion from health covers provided by insurers.
- The directive comes in the wake of a recent judgment of the Delhi High Court in the case of *United India Insurance Company Ltd vs Jai Parkash Tayal*, which held that the exclusionary clause arising from 'genetic disorders' in the policy is violative of Article 14 of the Constitution.

**Article link:** <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/article23317114.ece>

### African Continental Free Trade Area

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- International relations

**Key pointers:**

- Leaders of 44 African countries signed an agreement recently to create a free trade bloc. The deal was signed at a ceremony in Rwandan capital Kigali.
- The pact, which aims to build an African Continental Free Trade Area, will remove barriers to trade such as tariffs and import quotas.
- It aims at creating a single market for goods and services with free movement of businesses and investments

- Nigeria, South Africa and eight other African countries refused to sign the deal.
- The AfCFTA, according to the African Union, will pave the way for accelerating the establishment of the Continental Customs Union and the African Customs Union.
- The AfCFTA will make Africa the largest free trade area created in terms of the number of participating countries since the formation of the World Trade Organization, according to the AU.
- It could create an African market of over 1.2 billion people with a GDP of 2.5 trillion dollars, the pan-African bloc said.

**Article link:** <http://www.uniindia.com/african-nations-form-continental-free-trade-area/india/news/1176192.html>

### MSP of notified crops to be more than 1.5 times their cost

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II, III- Government interventions in important sectors, Inclusive growth

#### **Key pointers:**

- Addressing the nation in his 42nd 'Mann Ki Baat' on the radio, the PM said: "It has been decided that the MSP of notified crops will be fixed at least one and a half times of their cost."
- The MSP will include labour cost of other workers employed, expenses incurred on own animals and on animals and machinery taken on rent, cost of seeds, cost of each type of fertiliser used, irrigation cost, land revenue paid to the State government, interest paid on working capital, and ground rent in case of leased land.
- The cost of labour of the farmer himself or any other person of his family who contributes in agricultural work will also be added to the cost of production.

#### **Agri-marketing reforms:**

- A system is being set up wherein farms in any part of the country will have a market-connect.
- Twenty-two thousand rural *haats* in the country will be upgraded by creating the necessary infrastructure and these will be integrated with the APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) and e-NAM (National Agriculture Market) platforms so that the farmers do not have to go to distant places to sell their produce.

**Article link:** <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/article23351905.ece>

### GSAT-6A: A satellite designated to be used by the Armed Forces

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Science & Technology, Indigenous developments


**Key pointers:**

#### Aiming high

- GSAT-6A, similar to GSAT-6, is a high power S-band communication satellite
- Mission life: 10 years
- It is designated for the use of the Armed Forces

The satellite will help demonstrate and develop technologies like:

- Unfurling of a 6 metre S-Band antenna
- Handheld ground terminals
- Network management techniques useful in satellite based mobile communication applications



**Weight: 2,140 kg**

**Cost: ₹270 crore**

The GSAT-6A is scheduled to be launched from Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh on March 29. - ISRO

**Pic credit:** [http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/article23351176.ece/alternates/FREE\\_660/25bgbgmmmisroG103MB51J1jpg.jpg](http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/article23351176.ece/alternates/FREE_660/25bgbgmmmisroG103MB51J1jpg.jpg)

- GSAT-6A, the second predominantly S-band communications satellite, is set to be launched soon.
- It will complement GSAT-6, which has been orbiting since August 2015 at 83 degrees East longitude.
- The 2,000-kg-class 6A is more than a routine communications satellite. It is designated for the use of the Armed Forces and will not add any transponder capacity for general uses.
- The 6-metre-wide umbrella-like antenna GSAT-6A will enable mobile communication from anywhere via hand-held ground terminals.

**Article link:** <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/gsat-6a-to-give-armed-forces-a-shot-in-the-arm/article23351177.ece>

### New Vehicle Scrappage Policy



**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- Government interventions

**Key pointers:**

- The new vehicle scrappage policy targets to take polluting vehicles out of the roads and help the automobile industry register higher sales.
- The draft policy, released by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways in May 2016, mentioned about vehicles older than 15 years becoming eligible for benefits under the scrappage scheme but the criteria was reworked with benefits being applicable to vehicles older than 20 years.
- The scheme would come in effect from April 1, 2020, coinciding with the implementation of the BS-VI norms.
- Medium and heavy commercial vehicles (M & HCVs) that typically have a life of 20 years, would be eligible under the scheme.

**How effective the policy will be?**

- Very few vehicles would actually be older than 20 years in the current vehicular population- CRISIL Research said in its policy analysis.
- Analysts said the benefit offered under the scrappage policy would be 15% of the vehicle's price. But this advantage would be muted as prices of diesel vehicles were expected to rise 10-15% once the new norms (BS-VI) come into force.

**Article link:** <http://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/new-vehicle-scrappage-policy-may-need-tinkering/article23349924.ece>

**Draft Defence Production Policy, 2018**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II, III- Government interventions, Indian Economy

**Key pointers:**

- The draft Defence Production Policy, 2018 aims to create up to 30 lakh jobs and a total turnover ₹1.7 lakh crore in defence goods.
- It has suggested further liberalisation of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), by permitting up to 74% FDI under the automatic route. At present, up to 49% FDI is allowed through the automatic route, though no significant investment has come into the sector.
- It also hopes to achieve exports of ₹35,000 crore "in defence goods and services by 2025" and make India a global leader in cyberspace and AI (Artificial Intelligence) technologies.



- The policy says the vision is to make “India among the top five countries of the world in the aerospace and defence industries, fulfilling the objective of self-reliance as well as the demand of other friendly countries.”

**Article link:** <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/government-calls-for-public-responses-to-draft-defence-policy/article23349856.ece>

### SC verdict on honor killing

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper I- Social issues

**Key pointers:**



**Calling their bluff** A three-judge bench demolished the arguments made in defence of khap panchayats

- **Shakti Vahini**, petitioner NGO, wanted directions to the Centre and the State govts. to take preventive steps against honour crimes and a plan of action to curb them. It mooted special cells in each district that couples could approach
- The Centre said **honour killings are treated as murders**. Primarily, it is the responsibility of the States to deal with them. It was consulting the States on enacting a law to prohibit interference with freedom in matrimonial matters
- Khap panchayats argued that they were committed to spreading awareness on the permissibility of inter-community and inter-caste marriages, and **also campaigning against *sapinda* and *sagotra* marriages**. They also argued that the term 'khap panchayat' was a misnomer
- Court rejected the argument on recognition of matrimonial status, saying that courts will decide whether something is prohibited. Khaps, or any such assembly, **cannot take law into their own hands** or assume the character of a law implementing agency. Any kind ill-treatment by any assembly, by whatever name it is called, is illegal

**Pic credit:** [http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/article23368420.ece/alternates/FREE\\_660/th27-SC-KHAP--MGBQ3MNBQ01jpgjpg](http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/article23368420.ece/alternates/FREE_660/th27-SC-KHAP--MGBQ3MNBQ01jpgjpg)

- Coming down heavily on crimes committed in the name of honour, the Supreme Court recently upheld the choice of consenting adults to love and marry as a part of their fundamental rights.
- The apex court said, “Honour killing guillotines individual liberty, freedom of choice and one’s own perception of choice.”
- The court held that the consent of the family, community or clan is not necessary.
- It issued a set of guidelines for authorities to safeguard young couples under threat for marrying outside their caste or religion.

**Article link:** <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/honour-killing-guillotines-individual-liberty-says-sc/article23368421.ece>

### COMCASA: 2<sup>nd</sup> defence foundational agreement with US to be signed soon

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- International relations

**Key pointers:**

- India may soon sign the second defence foundational pact with the US — the Communications, Compatibility, Security Agreement (COMCASA).
- The pact will enable Indian military to obtain critical, secure and encrypted defence technologies from the other country.
- Being a 'Major Defence Partner' of the US, it is imperative for India to sign the mandatory three foundational pacts which allows greater interoperability between critical technologies and smooth facilitation of classified information.
- So far, India has signed only one out of the *three foundational agreements*, called the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA). It enables access to each other's military facilities for purposes of refuelling and replenishment.
- The three foundational agreements are- LEMOA, COMCASA and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA).

**Article link:** <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-news/article23369143.ece>

### 'e-Tribes:Tribes India' Initiative

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- Government interventions

**Key pointers:**

- The government has recently launched 'e-Tribes:Tribes India', an initiative for digital commerce at Tribes India outlet at Mahadev Road.
- It included launch of *e-commerce portal* of TRIFED, [www.tribesindia.com](http://www.tribesindia.com) and M-commerce, *android app* 'Tribes India'.

- The Tribes India banner was launched on Snapdeal, Amazon, Paytm and GeM for the marketing of tribal products through these e-commerce portals.
- With this, more than 55,000 tribal artisans connected to TRIFED will get access to local as well as international markets.
- TRIBES India organisation has set up an ambitious retail sales target of Rs 100 crores to be achieved during 2018-19 with the help of e-commerce.

**Article link:** [http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/oram-launches-tribes-india-e-commerce-portal-118032701382\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/oram-launches-tribes-india-e-commerce-portal-118032701382_1.html)

### India signs the Host Country agreement with the ISA

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Energy Security

#### **Key pointers:**

- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) have signed the Host Country Agreement.
- The Agreement will give ISA a juridical personality and gives it power to contract, to acquire and dispose off movable and immovable properties, to institute and defend legal proceedings.
- Under this agreement, ISA shall enjoy such privileges, applicable tax concessions and immunities as are necessary for ISA's Headquarter to independently discharge its function and programmes.

#### **Background:**

- The main objective of [ISA](#) is to undertake joint efforts required to reduce the cost of [finance](#) and the cost of technology for massive deployment of solar energy and pave the way for future technologies adapted to the needs of 121 countries lying fully or partially between the Tropics.
- ISA has presently four ongoing programmes: Scaling Solar Applications for Agricultural Use, Affordable Finance at Scale, Scaling Solar Mini Grids and Scaling Solar Rooftop catering to the needs of solar energy in specific areas.
- The ISA is the first international intergovernmental treaty based organization to be headquartered in India.

**Article link:** [http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-cm/isa-and-india-sign-the-host-country-agreement-118032700156\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-cm/isa-and-india-sign-the-host-country-agreement-118032700156_1.html)

### **Mobile internet users in India to reach 478 million by June**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Inclusive growth

**Key pointers:**

- The number of mobile Internet users in India is likely to reach 478 million by June said the report titled “Mobile Internet in India 2017”, published jointly by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and KANTAR-IMRB.
- The report attributed the popularity of mobile Internet in the country to its affordability.
- It said: “Urban India witnessed an estimated 18.64 per cent year-on-year rise, while rural India witnessed an estimated growth of 15.03 per cent during the same period (December 2016 to December 2017).”
- The report estimates that there are 291 million urban mobile Internet users and 187 million rural users as on December 2017.
- NTP (National Telecom Policy) 2018 with focus on new technologies like 5G is expected to promote better quality data services at more affordable prices and can be expected to help address the digital divides and promote internet penetration in the rural areas via mobile internet.

**Article link:** [https://www.hindustantimes.com/tech/india-to-have-478-million-mobile-internet-users-by-june-2018-report/story-B5Cn7KjiiPiWRLh05TBqOL.html?utm\\_source=inshorts&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=fullarticle](https://www.hindustantimes.com/tech/india-to-have-478-million-mobile-internet-users-by-june-2018-report/story-B5Cn7KjiiPiWRLh05TBqOL.html?utm_source=inshorts&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=fullarticle)

### **New Chinese norms to boost India's pharmaceutical sector**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper III- Indian Economy

**Key pointers:**

- Indian pharmaceutical and medical equipment manufacturers are set to gain in the China market, thanks to new regulatory norms notified by the Chinese government.

- China's General Office of the State Council has released new guidelines that aim at encouraging innovation in drugs and medical equipment.
- Authorities in China will now accept data collected from clinical trials conducted outside the mainland for applications to register drugs and medical equipment .
- India has been a major player in clinical trials and has been a destination for many pharma majors from the US and Europe.
- These new provisions are likely to offer faster drug registration and easier market access for Indian pharmaceuticals and medical equipment in China.

**Article link:** <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/article23396982.ece>

### **InSight: To explore deep interior of Mars**

**Part of:** Mains GS Paper II- Science and Technology

#### **Key pointers:**

- NASA will be sending the first-ever mission dedicated to exploring the deep interior of Mars.
- InSight - a stationary lander - will also be the first NASA mission since the Apollo moon landings to place a *seismometer*, a device that measures quakes, on the soil of another planet.
- InSight is like a scientific time machine that will bring back information about the earliest stages of Mars' formation 4.5 billion years ago. It will help us learn how rocky bodies form, including Earth, its moon, and even planets in other solar systems.
- InSight or the Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport mission, carries a suite of sensitive instruments to gather data. Unlike a rover mission, these instruments require a stationary lander from which they can carefully be placed on and below the martian surface.

#### **About Mars:**

- Mars is the exoplanet next door - a nearby example of how gas, dust and heat combine and arrange themselves into a planet.
- Looking deep into Mars will let scientists understand how different its crust, mantle and core are from Earth, the US space agency said.

**Article link:** <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/science/nasa-to-send-first-mission-to-study-heart-of-mars/article23389572.ece>



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